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FRANK WESTWORTH

SHOWING OFF AGAIN

"HAVE YOU SEEN the Enfield? The one outside?"

"No."

"It's just your kind of bike. Really is. Here…" the kind guy thrusts his cell phone at me and shows me a tiny, dark, out of focus photo of a bike. It may be black, but it's hard to tell. "But the price is ridiculous. You'd be better off with this BSA…" he swiped vigorously at his phone's screen and returns it to me. There's another image of another bike. It may also be black, but it's hard to tell. In any case, the conversation continues in an entirely pleasant and amiable way. And once it's over I go for a stroll and peer at both bikes, the Enfield and the BSA. Both are great. This is the glamour of magazine life at an old bike show, in this case the excellent Bristol bash.

As my chum had suggested, both bikes were interesting. And he was right about the RE being my kind of bike: it was a model I've always been interested in, very scarce, unusual to see in an unrestored state and rarely available. However, the point he was trying to make was that the Enfield cost a big lot of money. It would cost another big lot of money (and an awesome amount of time) to return to running order. It would also be a seriously lengthy journey of discovery – for me at least – as these are unusual machines and I know very little about them, apart from the faintly important factette that I like them and they're great to ride. The BSA, on the other hand, cost less than half the price of the Enfield and was allegedly a running machine. The point here being that only a complete loon would pay a lot of dosh for a non-running bike when he could pay a lot less for a runner.

I – of course – am that loon. I have also rebuilt many BSA bikes down the years, but have never laid a serious spanner on an Enfield, Royal or otherwise. And I'm looking for a project, something to get my mechanical teeth into over the next couple of years. The Enfield would certainly provide years of mostly harmless fun. I didn't buy it, because I decided that it was too likely that I'd fail at the project and have a bad time with that failure. Not because of the price.

Someone else will buy it, and will doubtless make a great bike out of a wreck. Because this is what people do. Some people. People who are more interested in the job than the cost of it, which is a very, very sweet place to be.

That's it. See you out there.

Frank Westworth
editor@classicbikeguide.com

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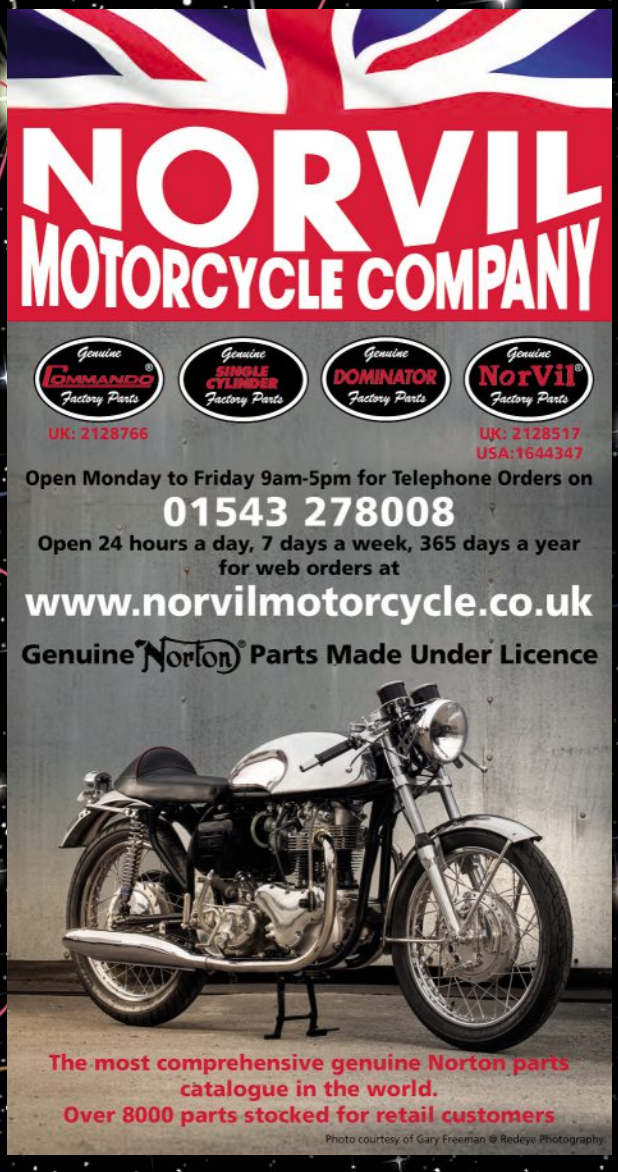
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NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM FRIENDS
WHERE LEGENDS LIVE ON

Museum pieces UNLEASHED



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PAGE 8

THE PRIZED BRITISH BIKES which form the National Motorcycle Museum's extensive collection spend most of the year safely displayed inside the five halls at Bickenhill near Birmingham. However, the NMM have made it their mission not to hide this two-wheeled treasure; you'll frequently find many of their most iconic machines on display and in action at events across the country. If you want to get even closer to the action, that's where the museum's 'friends' scheme comes in.

The NMM Friends are given exclusive access to unique activities which enable enthusiasts to get up close and extremely personal with the best of British bikes. The Friends' calendar kicked off with a winter workshop training day then, on March 25, members are offered the opportunity to ride some of the most exciting and valuable classic motorcycles from the museum's inventory. The first of three planned 'Classic Bike Tours' for 2017, this day gives participants the chance to ride their choice of classic machine, escorted around the rural roads of Warwickshire.

The day starts with an induction and closed-roads training; riders prebook one classic from a range which extends from a BSA C15 to a Brough Superior SS100. Each class of machine attracts a different fee, which includes insurance and lunch in the museum restaurant.

If you'd rather sample several different machines in a single day then the 'Try A Classic Bike' weekend on April 1 and 2 provides exactly that opportunity. Friends can ride a variety of motorcycles from the NMM collection on closed roads within the museum grounds. The bikes on offer will include a selection of veteran and vintage machines with lever throttle and hand change (training provided), as well as later classics from the postwar period. This could be your opportunity to finally ride a big V twin… A morning or afternoon session costs just £10 on top of the Friends' membership fees.

NMM Friends pay an annual subscription of £29.95 which gives access to all these events plus admission to the museum itself and many other benefits.

See thenmm.co.uk




AUCTION ACTION
Bidding at Bonhams
p10


SHOW STOPPERS
Winter classics
p20


VELO VENOM
Old-school style
p34

TRIPLE TWEAKS

THE ORIGINAL TRIUMPH Trident 750 triple was trimmed as an all-rounder/touring motorcycle, but it's a great basis for a more sporting special. Indeed, in the late 1970s Les Williams produced a modified electric-start T160 special edition known as the Legend. Rearset foot controls were included in the Legend's specification and these proved highly popular with T160 owners – but they've been out of production and unavailable for ages.

Now LP Williams, the BSA-Triumph triple specialist, has responded to popular demand and has manufactured a new rearset kit for T160s. The brake and gear levers bolt straight on to a standard machine and take about two hours to fit. The kit is made from CNC-cut alloys and stainless steel, and uses the stock rear brake master cylinder to keep things simple. The rearset kit costs £475 plus VAT and delivery.

See triumph-spares.co.uk



WHO KNOWS THE NORTONS?

THE NORTON OWNERS' CLUB would like to find the descendants of James Lansdowne Norton himself, the Birmingham founder of one of the greatest names in British motorcycle history. The club's vice-chairman, Barry Owen, is leading the search.

"We've visited James Norton's grave in Lodge Hill Cemetery in Birmingham and would like to arrange some restoration work," he explains, "but we do need the consent of his family before we start. We would like to maintain his memorial to honour the name of such a significant figure in the history of the industry."

If you know the Nortons, contact Barry on 07791 238802.



SLIM VISION

IT CAN BE TRICKY to find goggles to suit the narrow apertures of stylish modern open-face crash helmets. Many traditional goggles are simply too big, so Davida have introduced a new lightweight PMX design which combines a sleek and aerodynamic fit with good peripheral vision. The PMX goggles come with anti-fog, UV-protective and scratch-resistant polycarb lenses; their high density comfort foam creates a dependable windtight facemask while the adjustable elasticated strap has silicon grip strips to secure the goggles to your lid without damaging its finish.

PMX goggles cost £32.20 plus VAT and delivery. See davida.co.uk

NEW FED PRES

THE FEDERATION OF British Historic Vehicle Clubs has announced its new president and figurehead: Lord Steel of Aikwood, aka David Steel. The FBHVC is formed of 540 member clubs and trade supporters and exists to maintain the freedom of its members to use historic vehicles on UK roads. Lord Steel has been a stalwart supporter of this movement for many years and plays an active part in the All Party Parliamentary Historic Vehicles Group.

Said Lord Steel: "I am honoured to be asked to become president of the FBHVC, whose research and advocacy I greatly admire. Nobody can fill the shoes of the late Edward, Lord Montagu, whose achievements at Beaulieu were quite outstanding but I shall do my best to help advance the organisation."

See fbhvc.co.uk CBG

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Sold as seen

WORDS & PHOTOS BY NOLAN WOODBURY



WINTER AND MOTORCYCLING are usually an unfriendly mix, unless you're positioned within the bright lights of Las Vegas. Warmer? Yes, but only marginally so. A quick scan of the city's surrounding landscape found snow-covered peaks bordering the valley, courtesy of a recent weather front that cleared out just before Bonhams' event.

Inside the posh confines of the Rio Hotel, the offsetting glow and the ever-present casino ring-dinging bouncing from ornate panels and twinkling crystal can't quite distract from the aroma of greenbacks changing hands. I know the old saying: 'What happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas', but old timers know that mainly it's the money which stays in Vegas…

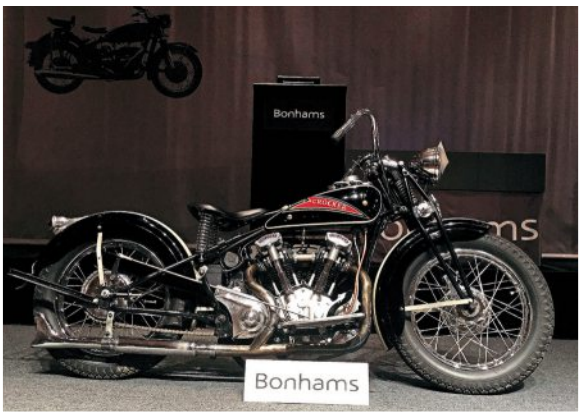
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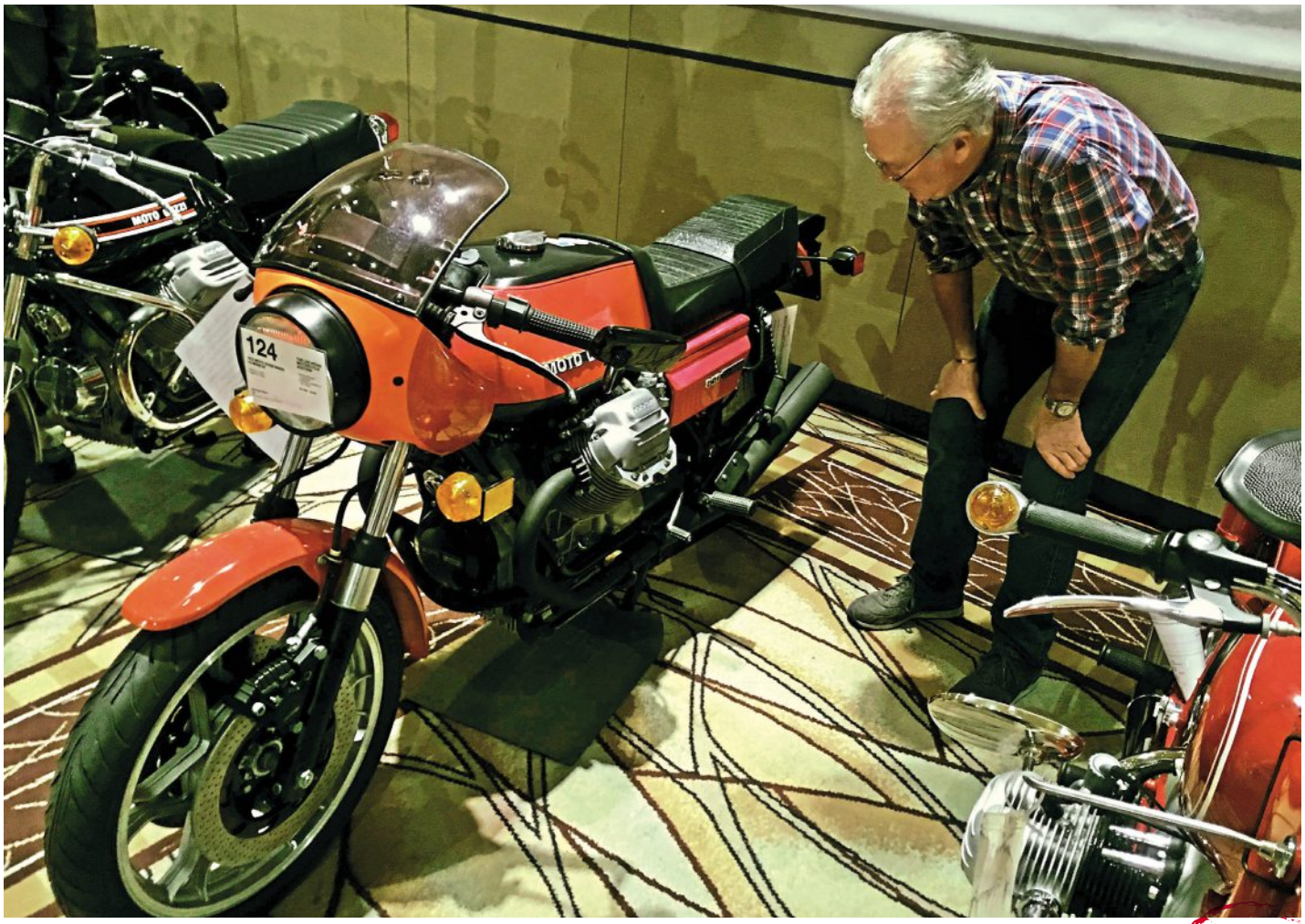
THE NEXT BONHAMS AUCTION of vintage and classic motorcycles is at the Stafford Show on April 23. See bonhams.com

Speaking of storms, the atmosphere caused by recent political upheaval on both sides of the Atlantic plays on bidder and buyer alike. Will the market rebound to bullish, or slide in safe?

It was for this very reason that Bonhams landed in a smaller hall this year, and the tight quarters had many grumbling. Despite the economic uncertainty, every hotel convention centre in town was booked full and auction attendance skyrocketed. So apprentice Alex (who contributed many of these photos) and I battled the crowds to select a sample from this year's 350-lot manifesto. As usual, the specialists at Bonhams provided plenty of things worth owning… if you felt the price was right.







MOTO GUZZI LE MANS 850

SOLD $15,525

THE FIRST SERIES Le Mans 850 twin, like this 1978 example, has become a wish list favourite. There's no arguing the machine's heritage.

Emerging from a 1920s start-up into a GP icon in the 1950s, Guzzi was out of the performance game until Lino Tonti mated his surefooted chassis with Mandello's signature engine. De Tomaso's flash transformed the V7 Sport into a modern classic but one which never quite escaped the 'workhorse' association, especially when compared with Ducati's thoroughbreds. The 900's racing pedigree plays a part in that, but the Le Mans 850's unsexy (and historically incorrect) connection to an old Guzzi-made military tractor might affect its curb appeal.

That's especially grievous, considering that the new engine, designed by engineers Carcano and Todero, was instrumental in saving the company. It's now acceptable to view the two-valve 844cc pushrod twin as extremely remarkable for a shaft drive sports bike. The truth is that Guzzi's tuned 850 was as fast (or faster) through the change up than that 864cc desmo, and far more durable.

Some aspects of Moto Guzzi ownership and the Le Mans still saves owners money in its current incarnation as vintage motorcycling's best bang for the buck.

Four decades ago it didn't matter that the touring cam was part of the 850's tuning or that the unpopular linked brake feature was included. The Le Mans sold. With dual 36mm Dell'Ortos, larger valves and a Hi-Po exhaust, the red Guzzi would sprint through the quarter with a 750 Suzuki triple and sail past a BMW R90S on top. Experienced Guzzi riders have no issues keeping up with any contemporaries but, leaving actual performance aside, the long, low Le Mans makes a great pitch just sitting there. Distinct as one of the last of the original series, this one's a US import with its DOT mandated sealed beam and mph clocks.

Bonhams says it was kept and never sold by a dealer in Kansas who ran it unregistered. The seller reportedly purchased the bike in 2010 and made it ready to run with a service and new tyres. The odometer showed 3200km. Intuition says it's a tidy original that's ready to ride, almost ready to show. Bidding stopped at a price $10k less than a comparable 900SS which sold later in the day.







BMW R42



LONG KNOWN FOR roadgoing reliability, the BMW motorcycle owes its performance heritage to engineering vision and skill.

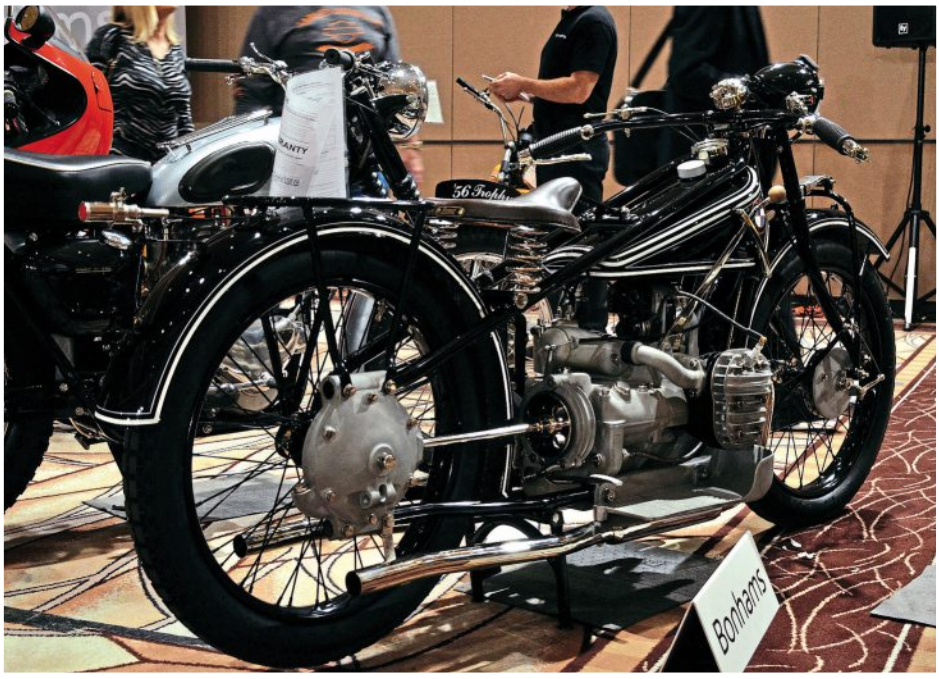
Official BMW records state that the previously designed boxer engine found new life in the R32 twin, launched in September of 1923 and quickly gaining a strong following. Turning the engine 90° to face both cylinders in the cooling stream solved a multitude of mechanical issues, and it offered BMW's lead architect Max Friz new options for driving the rear wheel too. Ultimately, the engine-speed flywheel and output transmission with driveshaft was chosen, but motorcycle engineers all over the world had realised the advantages of shaft drive years earlier.

Manufactured when paved roads were rare and electrical current pure luxury, the casting and forging techniques from a century ago have wrought nothing less than modern art. Intricate and brilliantly simple. Behold the infancy of mechanical technology. Praise the R32 as BMW's entry into the motorcycle biz, credit the sidevalve R42 as seen here for keeping it there.

Recognisable features include the traditional engine tunnel, a forged crank running on plain bearings, and the camshaft/pushrods sitting above. Bore and stroke measure square at 68 x 68mm. Modernish two-piece conrods attach to aluminium pistons that move inside cast iron cylinders lubed with pressurised oiling, and fitted with aluminium caps. The R42 had larger valves, more external finning, raised compression and a single 22mm carb developed especially for the engine. Output was 12bhp, five up on the R32.

The chassis shows lessons learned, with the engine repositioned for better weight distribution, and strengthened / straightened fork legs that retain the original's trailing axle, pivot arm and leaf-spring suspension. Note the heel-activated rear brake on the transmission output, dual-slide throttles and optional electric lights. Look down for the busy rear bevel drive housing that clamps the frame, mounts the rear fender above and the exhaust below.

There's a lot to admire here, and this stunning German resto dating from 1927 was touted as a machine capable of reliably carrying home the show trophies. Not as desirable here as pre-war American iron, estimates between $45-55,000 were floated, but the crowd in Vegas didn't bite.





NORTON COMMANDO 750

IT'S HARD TO SAY how many Norton motorcycle fans there are in the US.

Naturally the brand is well known and openly admired, especially where the Commando 750 is concerned. Regarding values, the typical Atlas or Commando has for years lagged behind the Bonneville, the latter imported in greater numbers. The Norton girls were fab but Triumph spent more on magazine adverts too, and that meant a great deal to those who recall the monthlies as a main source of info and entertainment. Few who rode both would consider the Triumph the better bike, and when (ex-Norton ace, now of Alabama's Barber Museum) Brian Slark delivered the first Commando to US dealers his series of sub-13 second quarter-mile passes drove the editorial point home. As the finest British parallel twin to date, the Commando legend spread far.

American Norton fans here probably read *Cycle* magazine, thanks to the staff's heavy involvement with the British and Italian brands. Sensing its future value, *Cycle* managing editor Phil Schilling used his inside contacts to order a full-up version of Peter Williams' AMA 750 production racer.

According to the full and complete documentation, work was primarily done by Williams at Norton's famed 'Long Shop' headquarters and delivered through importer Berliner in August of 1971. Added to the factory spec were hotter Norvil cams, 10.25:1 pistons, a pair of 32mm Amal Concentrics and racing exhausts. A Quaife five-speed gearbox was slotted behind the tuned twin, and the suspension was refined including a redesigned pivot bush for the lengthened swinging arm.

That six-gallon tank leads to a closer inspection that soon has the viewer drooling over the special parts, one-offs and provenance. The docs say the bike was tested then signed off by Williams before shipment, but years of static display since means the proddy racer requires a recommission before use. Since Shilling's passing nearly two years ago the Norton seems to have bounced around some. It was listed as sold on eBay for $29,000 in 2016 but didn't come near to that here. That slashed price raises some questions, but in my opinion this Commando was the most interesting motorcycle offered in Las Vegas this year.



SOLD $21,850









FEILBACH 1130

PREWAR AMERICAN MOTORCYCLES are a major draw for US enthusiasts and often the most valuable.

Usual A-list members include Indian, Harley-Davidson and Excelsior (with or without Henderson), but the Yankees were awash in smaller makers too. Wisconsin's Feilbach Motors listed 550cc singles and twins in 990 and 1130cc displacements.

Founder Arthur Otto Feilbach intended to supply exclusive, best-available type machines, but plans to expand the company with the shaft-drive Limited model were unsuccessful. Some commentators place crosstown rival Harley at the scene of that crime, but the innovative engineer's motorcycles are remembered for careful craftsmanship and rugged durability. Promoted as a powerful two-wheeled locomotive, the 1130cc Limited used offset cylinders for better cooling and dual camshafts. Showing surprisingly modern features like a twistgrip throttle and ignition advance, Feilbach's 10-year run from 1904 to 1914 produced very few machines, which makes this rare survivor even rarer.

Now beginning its second century of existence, the big twin had endured some rough treatment before Wisconsin enthusiast Joe Koller refurbished it into operational condition sometime during the 1980s. Koller apparently purchased the Limited from the founder's son, and was told the machine had been assembled from surplus parts after the factory closed. There wasn't quite enough left to finish it however, so the Limited was kept as a mix-matched example of a proud family heritage. Amazingly, a fellow Antique Motorcycle Club member found a complete set of original blueprints – printed on linen – at a boutique in Kenosha. These were used to replicate aluminium parts like the dual footrests.

Once the bike was running, Koller kept it that way. Credit all those who followed



for maintaining and not changing the Limited. Just past the battle scars, you can see the patina of authentic quality that's impossible to replicate and which would be ruined by restoration. The throttle turned easily and the controls I was allowed to touch were smooth and precise. This Feilbach Limited sold for a large sum, but that's a good thing I reckon. Any person willing to pay that much money for this motorcycle surely must wish to keep it alive.







HONDA CB750

SOLD
$8,050

VERY SOON THE CB750's 50th anniversary will roll around and, make no mistake, the vintage Japanese motorcycle has arrived.

No review of Japan's big-bore history can exclude the machine that started it all, and the Honda's market impact transformed the industry it would eventually control. In response, Honda's home market competition eventually followed a familiar pattern of conformity. Kawasaki was first to push the four-stroke inline engine ahead of its smoky fast two-strokes on the corporate masthead. Suzuki was next, delivering a succession of 750, 1000 and 1100cc dohc fours that took turns earning glory, but only after abandoning its production heritage. Proud Yamaha was last to enjoy the inline pride and praise, but all and more were owed something to the original ohc four.

The importance (and value) of the original 'Nano-San' established, one question remains: how far will that provenance reach? Browsing the rows we spot the ideal test subject for our little experiment in the form of one perfectly ordinary 1973 CB750. Titled and listed as a 1972 edition, any specification differences are minimal and there's no chance the extra year would add additional value. Or would it? The first sand-cast bikes are now gold nuggets, but the 750 drops in value towards the latter production years.

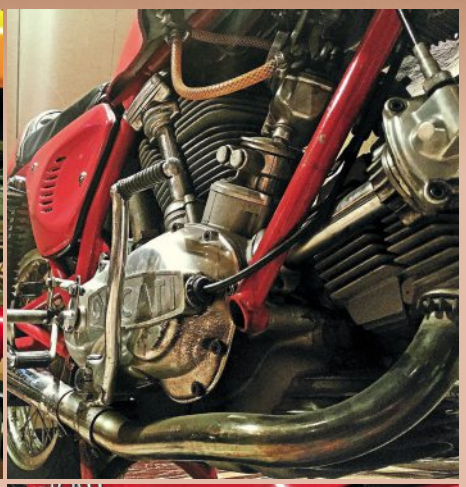
Described as a clean, maintained rider, a recent rehab addressed mechanical items but much of the original finish remains. My visual guesstimator deemed those claims valid, and despite the re-pop clocks this Honda had clearly been loved. Subtract some fees to determine the actual sale price, but even given this example's topflight condition that winning bid represents a sharp jump for what was once the most common big-bore on the planet. Intuition says the sporting sohc 750 F models (introduced in 1975) will be the next single cam to catch on, then perhaps the 750 Hondamatic.

Historically relevant and poised to expand the market, the whole of Honda's CB750 line is slowly becoming a sure thing.













DUCATI 750 SUPER SPORT

SOLD $90,000

A SINCERE THANKS to specialist Tim Parker for sharing some valuable time. I've long admired Tim's work as an author and his deep knowledge of the entire postwar motoring scene makes him an ideal answer man for the auction house.

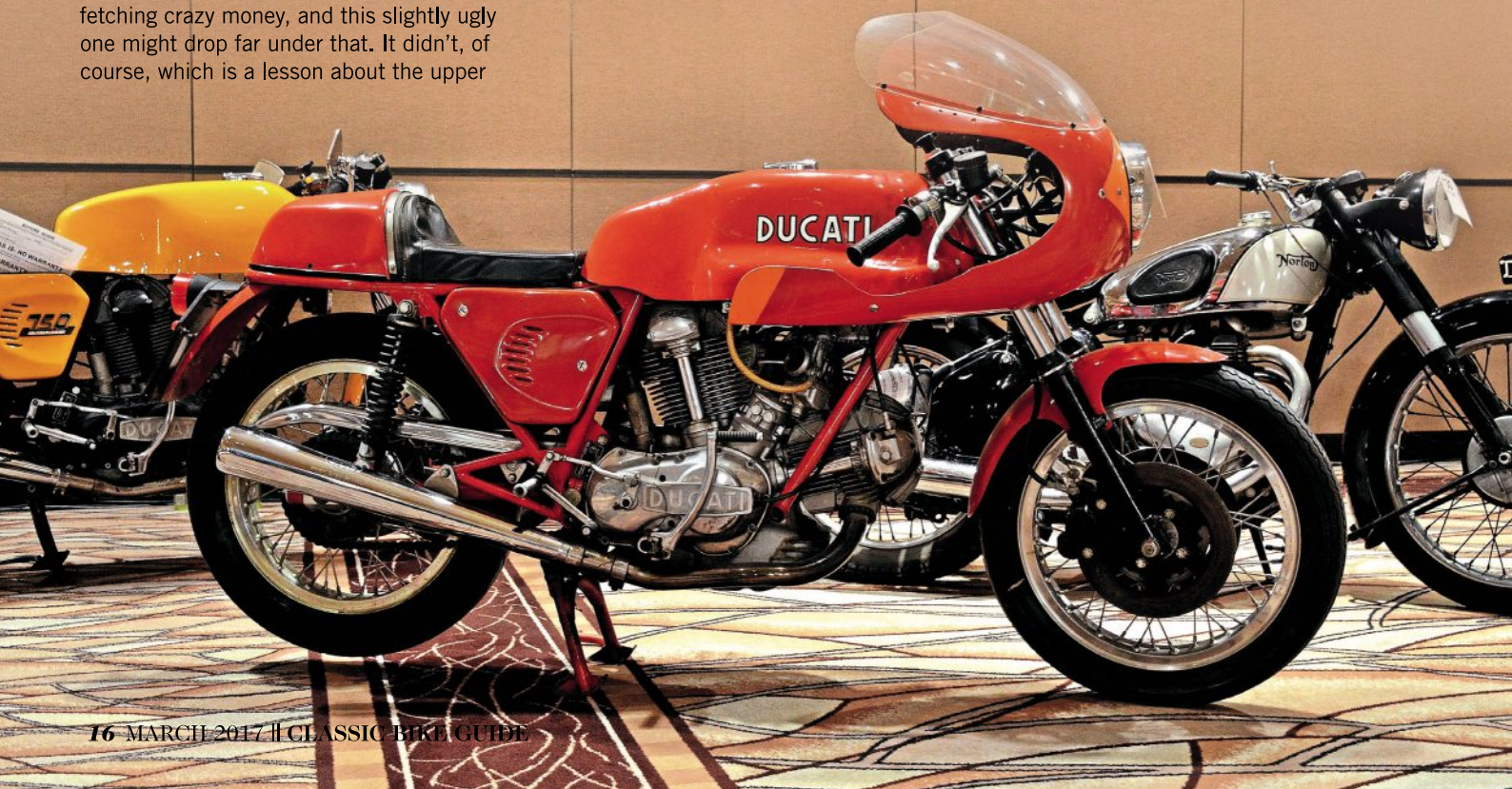
A joking question of what was worth looking at started the walking, pausing just briefly once or twice to point something out along the way. "This," was Tim's answer, stopping at the rocket red 750 Super Sport Desmo you see here. No words were spoken regarding the bike's non-stock finish, but that's how it often goes. Trying to wrap my head around it while noticing the missing speedo and muffler, Tim waved his hands generally towards the red Ducati.

"Look past all this and notice the originality underneath. There could be a rare opportunity here, and it has documentation from new. It's the talk of the auction." That's a nice way of saying green-frame roundcase 750SS Dukes are fetching crazy money, and this slightly ugly one might drop far under that. It didn't, of course, which is a lesson about the upper end of the scale.

The bike's history is deep. Purchased new in 1974 in Detroit by a General Motors employee, the dash was notched to clear the master cylinder and plenty of spray paint was purchased. The original 748cc twin had travelled just 30,000km when purchased by Italian bike dealer Larry Kline in 1989.

Kline replaced the weathered spokes, dropped in Imola cams and swapped the ignition after fixing the brakes with some Brembo parts. The Ducati was ridden when warm and parked in Kline's living room when it wasn't. His notes included plans to return the Super Sport to original, but the runny red has faded and the grimy alloy oxidised from 20-plus years of sitting.

No matter. This one proves value is more than skin deep, and the 750 sold for three times more than the superior 900SS. CBG



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1915 BRADBURY 6HP
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1922 RALEIGH 2¾HP
£4,500 - 5,000



1937 DOUGLAS 596CC AERO
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1937 MATCHLESS 982CC MODEL X
£26,000 - 33,000



1937 RUDGE 499CC ULSTER
£8,000 - 12,000



1940 VELOCETTE 349CC KSS
£12,000 - 16,000



One of only 15 produced
1949 VINCENT 998CC WHITE SHADOW SERIES C
£50,000 - 60,000



1951/33 MATCHLESS-AJS 495CC MODEL 10 CAMMIE SPECIAL
£6,000 - 9,000



The Freddie Frith, 1949 350cc World Championship Winning
1948 VELOCETTE 348CC KTT DOHC
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EVENT SHOW REPORT

Kick off!

Newark was certainly nippy in January, but there was a fine array of hot bikes on show

WORDS BY OLIVER HULME **PHOTOS BY** CHRISTOPHER DICKINSON



WHICH IS BEST – a winter show or a summer show? While there's a lot to be said for a day in the sun, inspecting some highly polished creation with a 99 dripping down your wrist, the winter show seems more purposeful and more friendly, somehow.

The Carole Nash *Classic Bike Guide* Winter Classic at Newark was no exception.

Thousands of people turned out to shake off the winter blues and whether engrossed in deep conversation about this and that in the comforting warmth of the Nottinghamshire halls, scrabbling round in boxes of brake calipers or seeking that right sized bolt to finish something off, Newark had the glow of happy campers revelling in their element. The numbers exceeded the organisers' expectations and it didn't take long before the overflow car parks were in action.

THE NEXT Classic Bike Shows event is the Carole Nash International *Classic MotorCycle* Show on April 22/23, 2017 at Stafford. See classicbikeshows.com



The George Stephenson Hall featured a good mix of ancient and modern, with competition trials, scrambler and race bikes rubbing bar ends with old Brits, gleaming Italians and some spectacularly tricked out Jap classics. A gleaming pile of BSA Gold Stars took pride of place at the centre of the hall. These were so splendidly presented it was hard to pick one favourite. And there was





AROUND THE JUMBLE

The autojumble was mostly situated under a large heated marquee, the big burners provided being a welcome addition by the organisers in case of inclemency, though the rain did hold off all weekend, and outside it was unseasonably warm. A goodly proportion of those attending headed that way from the off, just in case there was some diamond in the rough ready to be uncovered. A Triumph Adventurer TR5T project quickly found a buyer.

Along with the usual selection of clothing and tool sellers, vendors of chunks of alloy and wiring bits and bobs, there were a few complete, or at least partly complete bikes on sale. A very tired Royal Enfield Interceptor and a clutch of Triumph twins were on offer – one a rather lovely, if dog-eared, 500 café racer with a tank rack at £4250 that had wallet fingers twitching.

There was an immaculate Suzuki Katana, a cheapish Kawasaki KLR650, a pair of ropey looking RD400s, an RS100 Yamaha with a massive expansion chamber on it, and what for many was the most intriguing bike of the show – a 1964 Ukrainian side valve K750 Dnepr, complete with its original Soviet era logbook. The bike had a crowd round it all weekend – most of them trying to work out what it was.



great variety on the Vintage Japanese club stand, where a Suzuki T125 Stinger shared space with a jaw-dropping Yamaha RD/TZ 350 special, and a Kawasaki Z1-R looked better than any example you might have seen on the showroom floor in the late Seventies.

Private entries were plentiful too. Lawrence Muxlow's GS750 café racer looked for all the world as if it had been transported through time from outside an early Eighties nightclub, and a trio of immaculate Greeves and Rickman motocrossers dazzled.

Italians were also well represented by the Italian Motorcycle Owners' Club, an interesting theme being the number of smaller capacity bikes. Sidecar racing world champions and four-time TT winners the Birchall brothers were kept busy all weekend with main stage appearances, being interviewed by regular compere Steve Plater, with the duo explaining the difference between track and TT racing, and the contrast between long and short outfits. Ben Birchall revealed that as well as racing outfits, he also has a penchant for Velosolex mopeds…

Over in the Lady Eastwood Hall there were more delights, including a clutch of Honda CBX sixes and a collection of insane turbocharged Suzukis. The Sunbeam club had packed their stand with twins aplenty attracting rubbernecking admiration. There was such exotica as one of 200 BSA Rocket 3 five-speed gearboxed specials built for US racing homologation purposes and a knowing wink from the Douglas club, whose barn find 1920s flat twin came complete with a bird's nest.

The warmth of the Nottinghamshire welcome in the depths of winter must surely have encouraged some of the newcomers to think about bringing their own bikes along next year.





HONDA CBX1000

It's faintly incredible to think that a motorcycle as important as Honda's CBX1000 had a production run of just five years. And It's almost as astonishing to think that anyone could dump a CBX in a barn for 14 years.

The CBX Riders' Club had a good cross section of the breed on show, including a pair of relatively stock models from the late 1970s, a Martin special with the engine shoehorned into a frame built for a 1974 CB750 four and a pair of immaculate white CBX1000C models in pearly white.

The CBX stunned the world when Honda wheeled it out in 1978 – a six cylinder 1047cc behemoth, with six carburettors, 24 valves and two camshafts, it was a world away from the SOHC fours the chaps from Honda had been turning out for most of the decade. Honda were definitely making a statement.

In its day it was the most powerful street legal motorcycle you could buy, with a top speed of 140mph and producing 104bhp at 9,000rpm. Small boys looked at it goggle-eyed, while riders wondered if it went as well as it looked – and it did.

The first model, the CBX1000Z, had all that engine tech in a relatively conventional frame with twin shocks. Although the big six looks impressive it's actually not a good deal wider than many big fours, because Honda put the alternator behind the cylinders, rather than at the end of the crankshaft.

Honda soon repositioned the CBX away from the sports market, and by



1981 had redesigned it as a sports tourer. The CBX100B and C left the showroom floor with a full fairing, Honda's take on monoshock suspension, the Prolink system, uprated ventilated double discs and a pair of colour-matched panniers, which, while stylish, don't look big enough for much more than a rain suit and a bag of sandwiches. This was a tourer for the sort of motorcyclist whose most important travel accessory was a credit card. They also cut the power by a smidgen to 98bhp, to comply with international regulations aimed at controlling the power of big motorcycles and comply with emissions regulations.

This Pearl White example of a CBX1000C

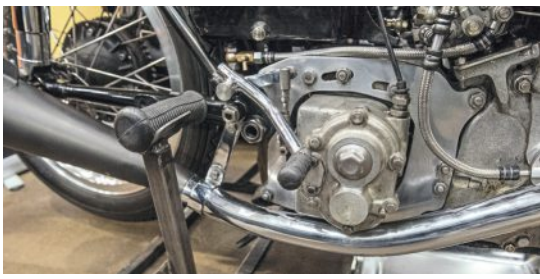


COVEL VELO

Sitting at the edge of the Velocette club stand was one of the more remarkable home-brewed specials from the days when 'building a bike' really meant it. The Covel 500 twin, which picked up the prize for technical interest, could almost be mistaken at a casual glance for a Honda CB450 twin in a Velocette frame.

The achievement of a young Velocette race mechanic in creating the Covel was notable, and the club has to be praised for saving the bike for posterity. It was built by Hedley Cox in 1950-51. Cox, who was already campaigning a Velocette KTT 350, wanted a 500cc roadrace bike to compete in the Senior TT and when Velocette refused to let him have one of their older machines, in a flash of inspiration, he decided to build his own. Taking two Mk8 KTT 350 engines, and using parts from Veloce Ltd's own scrap bin, he set to work.

Cox shortened the stroke to take



their linked capacity down to 500cc and mated them together. Bore and stroke are 74mmx58mm. Using stock KTT cylinder heads, pistons, connecting rods and crankpins, he made up special flywheels and mounted the two engines side by side. A special coupling was designed to join two inboard splined shafts, taken from an MSS, to link the two engines. And having built the engine he fitted it into his KTT 350 frame – the intention was to use both engines in the same plot, so he could have two bikes to ride on the Isle of Man.

The drive from the engines was taken to a KTT gearbox, mounted behind the







started its life on the road in the US, where the bikes were fitted with air forks and needle roller swinging arm bushes. The US spec bikes also had higher handlebar risers than the Euros, making for a slightly more upright riding position. Andrew Read's CBX left the US in the late 1990s and was shipped to Ireland. For reasons that are a mystery, the owner, rather than putting the bike on the road, stuck it into storage.

"It was found in a barn on the west coast of Ireland," said Andrew. "It had been left there for 14 years."

It says much for the quality of Honda's workmanship that nearly a decade and a half in the damp and salty air of its Emerald Isle sojourn did little to damage the mighty CBX.

"One side, which had been exposed, was a bit of a state. It was cleaned up and polished and the cam cover was taken off and cleaned up."

Andrew has yet to get to the middle carbs to buff them up, hidden away under the tank as they are. He described the work as a 'light restoration', but we suspect that there might be a touch of understated self-deprecation there. The only issue he's had is that the high beam idiot light keeps popping out of the dash.

This CBX has come close to winning an award. On a run out, Andrew stopped for some light refreshment in a pub, and when he got back to the run finishing point one of the organisers told him that they'd been seeking him out – but because he'd got back late, the best bike award had been given to another.

Would that all 'barn finds' were so well built, and so well preserved.





right-hand engine. A chain from the centre of the linked crankshafts went to a standard Velocette clutch. A centrally mounted chain also went to the linked KTT overhead camshafts, improving torsional stability, while another drove the twin's magneto.

Cox took the bike to the 1951 Manx, and tried the Covel in practice where it was found to rev to 8000rpm and was declared to be 'very fast'. Problems with the lubrication system emerged, including the mysterious appearance of 'foreign matter' – in this case fluff – blocking the oil jets to the big ends – but fortunately filters in the oil pipes stopped the fluff getting into the big end bearings.

Before Cox could compete the Covel, a nasty smash in the Junior race while lying fifth put him in hospital for four months and doctors told him not to race again in 1952. At the end of that year Velocette decided to retire from racing, and he was made redundant. He campaigned the Covel at short circuits, including Cadwell and Crystal Palace, but the bike was not a success.

Cox left the UK and went to live in the US, and the Velocette club approached him to rescue the engine, first for use as a centrepiece and later to mount in a KTT frame to display one of British motorcycling's 'what might have been'.

DUCATI SINGLES



There's something extremely appealing about 1950s and 60s Ducati tiddlers, especially if they come with the curvaceous and unique jelly mould tank. Michael Bracken brought two of his collection of small Ducatis to Newark.

Michael fell in love with Taglioni's watchlike masterpieces in 1958 on a visit to the TT, and bought his first in 1964, selling it in the early Seventies, to his regret. He made up for it and now has five bikes in his collection; a Diana 250 – known in the UK as the Daytona, a 200 Elite, two 175s and a 50cc scrambler. The roadsters get regular use on the tarmac around his home in Cumbria.

The 200 Elite was picked up half restored with most of the cosmetic work including the paintwork already done. He did all the rest of the work himself. He says: "It's got loads of power – it does 80mph easily – my wife followed me up the Kendal bypass and clocked me."

A trip to the Shetland Isles with a group of riders on much bigger machines was a revelation.

"I thought I'd get left behind, but I was able to keep up with no problems at all – a lot of them had trouble keeping up with me!"

His 175 Silverstone Super on the Italian Motorcycle Owners' Club stand picked up the prize for best paint, and building it has been a real labour of love.

"I found it in a shed in Lincolnshire in a terrible state," he said. "A bag of cement had been laid on the bike and had burst open. The whole engine was caked in it – inside the fins, everywhere.

"It took six years to get it right. I tend to work on my bikes when I can, sometimes







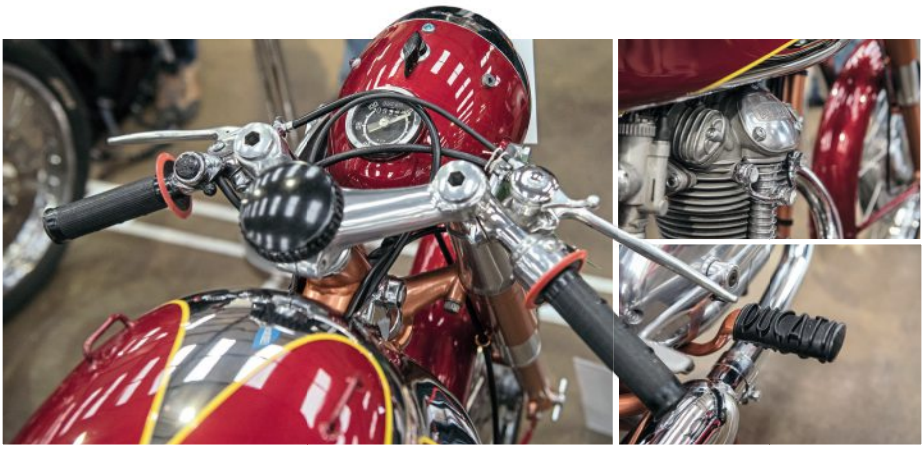


ROB NORTH

With so many bikes on show and with huge crowds swirling around them, it would have been easy to miss one or two gems. The huge number of classic competition machines and road bikes to choose from meant I walked past this Rob North Triumph Trident special three times before I realised what a jewel it was. It was only when looking down and spotting that a small square headlight had been discreetly inserted into the race fairing, that I realised that this isn't just any Rob North special – if there is such a thing. This a road bike replica, built to mirror as closely as possible the original racers.

The Rob North frame was initially designed by Doug Hele and improved by the expert frame builder when BSA Triumph group decided it wanted to take their Trident and Rocket Three bikes racing in 1970. Rob was asked to build eight frames for a F750 race team being put together to compete in the 1970 Daytona 200. 1970 and 1971 were successful years for the team in the US, but with BSA Triumph imploding, the money ran out for such ambitious things as race teams. The Rob North frame lived on and since then examples have encased many a racing and road special, and you can still buy one today.

Graham Holloway's Bike is at the top of the triple tree, as a real racer for the road. That classic fairing hides a 1973 Triumph



for hours, but If I go in and find things aren't going right after ten minutes, I'll step away and have a go another time."

Michael had the paint job done at a company local to him, Greta Motor Body Works. The job started with the pinstriping, with the whole of the jelly mould tank being painted white, and the other coats added over the top to create a perfect finish. Michael said: "After they'd done that, to make sure the colour balance was correct on the rest of the bike, they painted everything else the same shade of white, and the paint was laid over it."

The reputation of Ducati for producing bikes with flawless handling was made with these bevel drive singles.

"The handling is very good, very direct," said Michael. "You just point it in the direction you want it to go and it will just go there."





T150 engine, with bellmouths on the carbs ready to suck in passers by. A forest of period sponsorship stickers adorn the fairing, and period levers control the action of the clutch, while something a little more modern hauls on the twin Lockheed stoppers. It's this sort of practicality that makes the Trident so special – and useable.

Someone pursuing period perfection might have put tight-wound Girlings on the back, but Graham's bike has decidedly modern shocks. He could have touched up the minuscule chips on the front guard, but they prove that this is a bike that goes as well as it looks. Even the bulge on the sticker on the front of the guard added to the bike's appeal. And the judges obviously agreed – as I was inspecting the Trident, show judge James Robinson came by and plopped the Best Private Entry rosette on the seat. Graham has now won this prize three times in four years, each time with a different Triumph.



SMART ARIEL

Rob Smart's Ariel 500 HT5 trials replica looks stunning – and it has the ability to leave many a more modern bike behind in competition.

The original HT5 was based on the single-cylinder ohv 500cc Red Hunter, and became famous as the mount of trials legend Sammy Miller. Rob's bike has been brought bang up to date. The 500cc engine has been converted to a short stroke, and was built in 2012 with a Yamaha piston. The gearbox was fitted with wide ratio Mick Ash gears and Rickman hubs were laced into the wheels. A belt drive primary drive was fitted, and the bike drips with titanium and aluminium fasteners and parts as part of a determined weight lessening operation. Marzocchi shock absorbers and modified forks keep the whole plot stable.

These modifications have reduced the bike's weight to just 200lb. This is roughly two-thirds of the weight of a standard HT5, and not that much more than a 21st century 300cc GasGas. As a result Rob says the Ariel is as competitive as any more modern machine.

Rob said: "It took me about a year to build – I started with an engine and went from there. I've put Interspan electronic ignition on it, and that sits in the space where the magneto would have been. The bike is about as competitive as you can get. If you wanted to get involved in competition, this is what you would build."

Rob's bike was on the Owd Codgers MCC stand – a club 'formed by Old Bikers for Old Bikers and their friends', which runs classic trials and raises money for charities. CBG





Above: Four-pipe four. Stuff of dreams in the early 1970s

1: Mighty four-pipe array. Looks so-so today, caused hearts to break and worlds to fall back then

2: Classic clear clocks set a standard of their own. Actual clock is a bolt-on of course

3: Single piston caliper was okay – just about – when new. The caliper is mounted on an alloy plate which swivels to apply the second pad to the disc. The pivot always seizes in a salty Brit winter

4: The view from behind. Often observed by riders of trad Brit twins

Familiar four

In the past, this was the future…

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

WHEN HONDA UNVEILED their CB750 four in 1969, the Superbike was born.

In a world where a big bike mostly meant a high capacity pushrod twin, the CB750 was so far ahead of the game that it sent the British motorcycle industry into a tailspin. It is often considered to be the bike that killed a whole industry, stunning pretty much everyone who saw it for the first time, but there were plenty of people who saw it as overcomplicated and almost too refined. While Honda was selling CB750s by the tens of thousands, the Norton Commando was still winning the 'Machine of the Year' title in the UK year after year. The mighty Honda never managed to achieve that accolade. It took Kawasaki's Z1 to knock Norton off their pedestal.

It seems a touch unfair to blame Honda for the British industry's shortcomings – it's not as if Honda went out and built the CB750 with the intention of closing Meriden and Small Heath. They just wanted to build the best motorcycle the world had ever seen. New owners of CB750s suddenly had a disc brake, a hi-tech single overhead camshaft four-cylinder engine, an electric start, five gears, reliable electrics, fine switchgear and a reliable and comfortable ride, and found themselves derided as having bought a 'two-wheeled car', as if there was something wrong with a bike that had all those things. Honda's sales were unaffected by the nay-sayers. They sold 500,000 of these two-wheeled cars during their lifespan and the design set the tone for motorcycle design that lasted two decades and beyond.

By the time the K2 model seen here came out in 1972, most of the fixable shortcomings in the design had been ironed out. The first K series bikes were said to provide 67bhp, two more than the Harley-Davidson FX 1200 of the day. It was claimed to be capable of 125mph, this being backed up by optimistic speedometers.

The CB750 engine had an undersquare bore of 61 x 63mm making the capacity 736cc. From the CB750K2 onwards the four carburettors are linked, but on earlier machines the carbs had individual cables. Two chains from the centre of the crankshaft drive the gearbox, and another runs the camshaft. Drive is through a multiplate clutch and that five-speed box, and a chain takes the power from the gearbox to the rear sprocket. All those chains and gears whizzing around were a bit of a



1



2


3



4

weak spot. The primary chains can wear badly, a loud thumping noise at tickover is the best warning of this, usually only bikes that have been thrashed or not given their regular 1,500-mile oil changes suffer. Any CB750 which has signs of welding on the bottom of the engine is to be looked at warily.

You might have thought that Honda would have updated their ground-breaking design regularly, but it seems they were as stunned by their innovation as everyone else and by the time this CB750K2 hit the streets it didn't look a lot different from the machines that had preceded it.

The four-pipe K series remained in production with only a few changes to their appearance for the best part of the 1970s. Riders liked the K series so much so that when Honda tried to replace it in the UK with the sporty-styled F1 they had to keep a K on sale to keep the punters happy. A K series Honda is listed as weighing 235kg – a good deal more than a Bonneville or A65, but less than a T160 Trident.

The double cradle frame is conventional, and compared to other early 1970s Japanese bikes the CB handles well. Ridden sensibly, you're unlikely to get into trouble on a K2. The brakes, however, are not great. That stainless steel single disc and caliper mounted on an easy-seize pivot weren't really up to hauling the hefty Honda quickly to a stop in 1969, and have definitely been surpassed today. Stainless steel doesn't work well in the wet, and the caliper design means that it needs careful looking after. Fortunately, the drum on the back is a lot better. The forks are good and have made their way onto many a special, and the rear shocks are firm.

PRICE GUIDE

£2,000 for an imported project to £12,000 for a fully restored example

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Rot in the silencers and frame. Primary chains, internal tensioners and old rubber bushes are a weak spot. Front brake needs very careful setting up and regular maintenance. Regular oil and filter changes are a must

ALSO CONSIDER

Kawasaki Z650: faster and much sportier with a more sophisticated engine. Honda CB550K or F: cheaper, almost as quick and better handling. Honda CB750 F1/F2: not as pretty, with a sportier stance and less popular so cheaper

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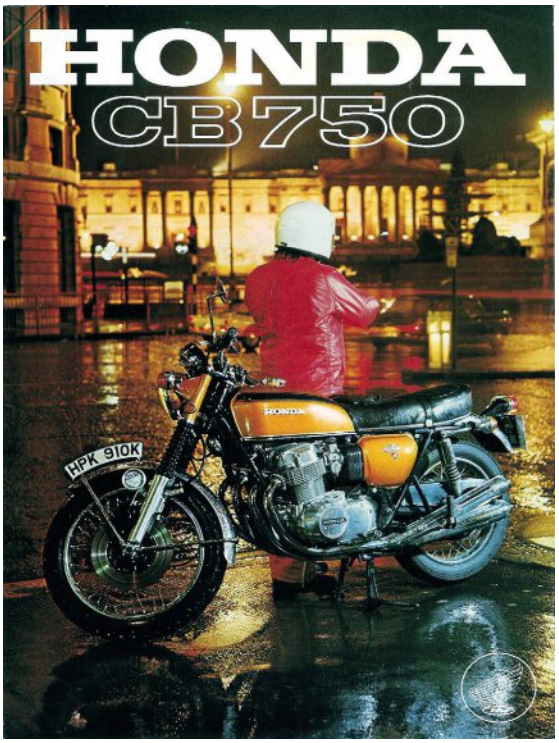
GMEC in Scarborough have this completely restored 1972 750K2 up for grabs at £9295. It's covered 35,000km and recently arrived from Italy; comes with NOVA docs ready for UK registration

More modern replacements are probably a good idea if your riding style is spirited.

Then there are those pipes. What's the point in having a four-cylinder motorcycle if you haven't got four dirty great exhaust pipes to tell everyone you've got one? Double walled in their original form, for many they're what the K is all about. But water condenses in the silencers and they rot from the inside out, even if the bike has spent its life in a warm climate. Replacements are hard to find. Currently, there are replica sets for sale online from Japan at more than £1500, not counting shipping, VAT, duty, etc. Owners tend to look after them if they've got a good set because otherwise the only option is a non-OE 4-1, which rather misses the point.



Above: Unfaired fours are still remarkably popular today. A passing fad, plainly…



MANUFACTURED: 1969-1977 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled sohc four **BORE / STROKE:** 61mm x 63mm **CAPACITY:** 736cc **COMPRESSION:** 9:1 **POWER:** 67bhp @ 8000rpm **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump **IGNITION:** Twin contact breakers fire two cylinders with wasted spark system **CARBURETTOR:** 4x28mm Keihin **TRANSMISSION:** Twin chain **GEARBOX:** Five-speed constant mesh **FRAME:** Welded steel twin cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Oil damped telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm with twin oil damped coil springs **FRONT BRAKE:** 290mm single disc with swinging piston caliper **REAR BRAKE:** 180mm drum **TYRES:** 3.25 x 19 front 4.00 x 18 rear **WHEELBASE:** 1,455mm **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6.3in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31.5in **DRY WEIGHT:** 235 kg **TOP SPEED:** 125mph

One sign of the past history of a CB750K is whether or not the nut heads on the tappet covers are damaged. Good tools might be readily available today, but this wasn't always the case for the home mechanic. More than a few of those who carried out work on a 1970s kerbside will have tried to remove the covers with their Honda toolkit spanners, inevitably rounding them off. The same goes for the 12mm head on the oil filter bolt, which is often replaced with a 17mm pattern alternative – a good idea in theory, but it's much easier to crack your crankcase tightening up a 17mm bolt. An aftermarket 4-1 could make getting to that filter tricky too.

There are lots of oilways and drillings and O-rings on a CB750 engine. Honda service intervals say that the oil should be changed every 1,500 miles and the oil filter every 3,000. With CB750s being treated as classic rides today, that's not too excessive, though back in the day a full oil change every two or three months would have been a bit of an expense. After 45 years, who knows what that engine has been through. Japanese metallurgy wasn't as good then as it is today, and most of the nuts and bolts will benefit from replacement if they haven't been swapped already.

Buying a CB750 will tick a lot of boxes for anyone putting their toe in the water of classic bike ownership. No special tools are needed for routine maintenance – even your metric spanners and socket sets won't need replacing. Spares availability is good and there are plenty of them about. Most of all, though, this is the first Superbike, and an acknowledged classic. It'll just have four times as many bits to worry about than most classics… CBG

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Honda CB750 SOHC



Triumph 3TA, 5TA, T110, T120, T140



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BSA Bantam D10, D14/4, B175

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BSA Bantam D10 & D14/4, B175 - ignition only	STK-177	£195	Triumph 3TA, 5TA, T110, T120, T140	STK-102D	£235
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WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

BMW LAUNCHED ITS first motorcycle in 1923, the shaft-driven R32 494cc sidevalve flat twin, the basis of the now instantly recognisable Boxer engine. The company's solid, reliable twins have certainly stood the test of time, with a plethora of models and variants in different guises, but BMW's lesser known singles are equally intriguing and well worth investigating.

BMW's first single cylinder machine, the 250cc R39, was launched in 1925, two years after the R32. This was followed by the 200cc R2 from 1931 to 1936, the 400cc R4 from 1932 to 1937 and the 1936 300cc R3 singles. Interestingly it was to be 70 years before BMW offered a chain driven option, and the 1993 Rotax-engined F650 was a significant change from BMW's standard powerplants.

The R4 was replaced in 1937 by the R35. Using the R4 engine as a basis, the bore was reduced to bring capacity down to 340cc; the cylinder head was taken from the less commercially successful R3. In common with its predecessors the R35 has a pressed steel frame, the last BMW single to do so. Other BMW models at the time had twin loop tubular frames, however, the R35 was a budget model so the pressed steel frame kept costs down, as did the telescopic forks with no hydraulic damping. Even without damping the telescopic forks were a vast improvement over the R4's forks which had a basic cantilever spring, friction dampers only being fitted to late R4 models.

Below: Single-pot Bimmers are rare in the UK, mainly because of their cost when new. They always were – and remain – distinctive

1: Dinky drive shaft, pillion footplate lifts neatly out of the way of the kickstart. Neat brass brake rod adjuster

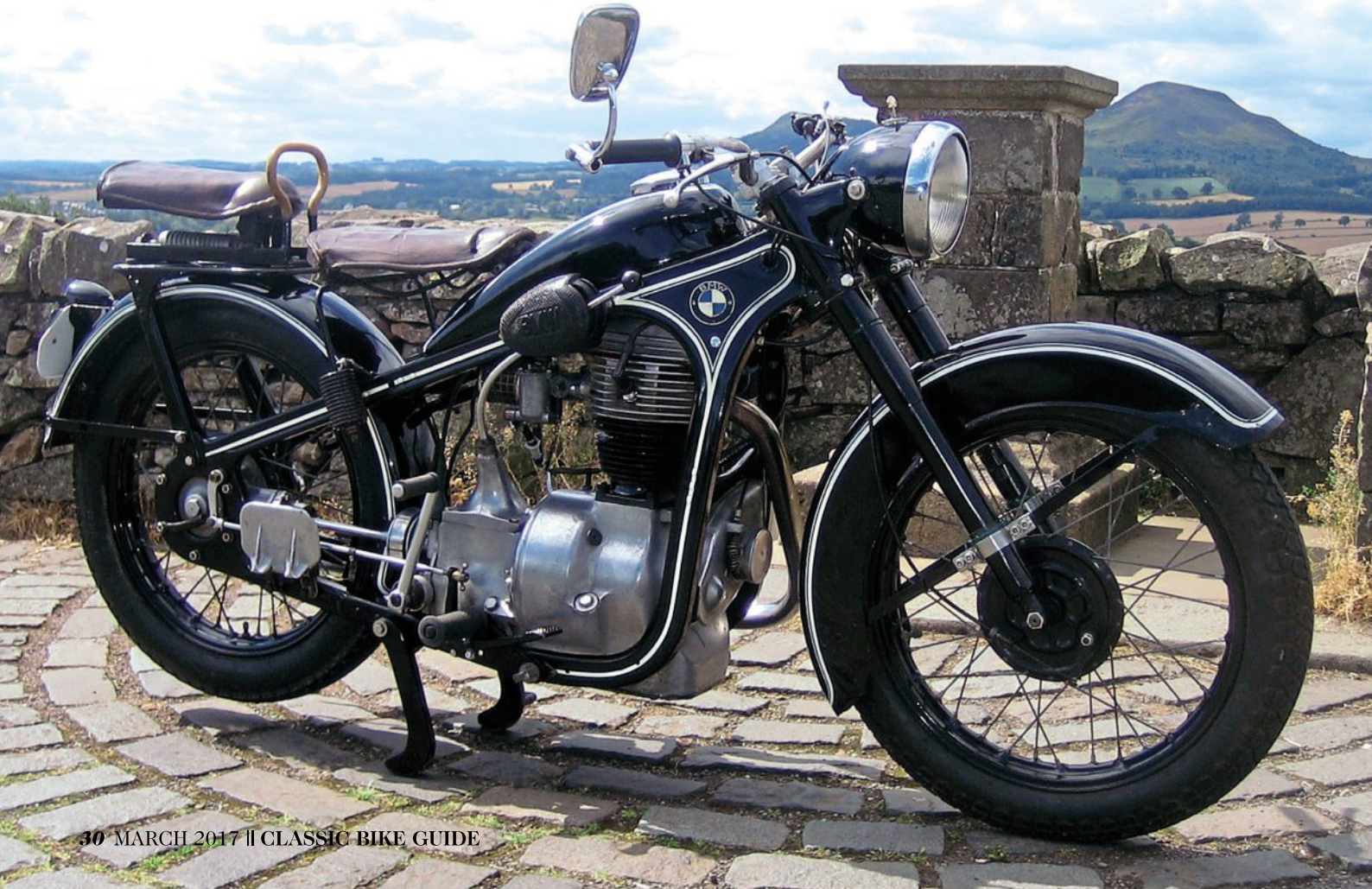
2: Grenzlandring badge adorns the toolkit cover, over a cubby which could double as a pie heater. Oil pressure gauge all the way from sunny Sheffield

3: Original leather sprung saddles are very comfy. Can you work out how the pillion seat's springing works?

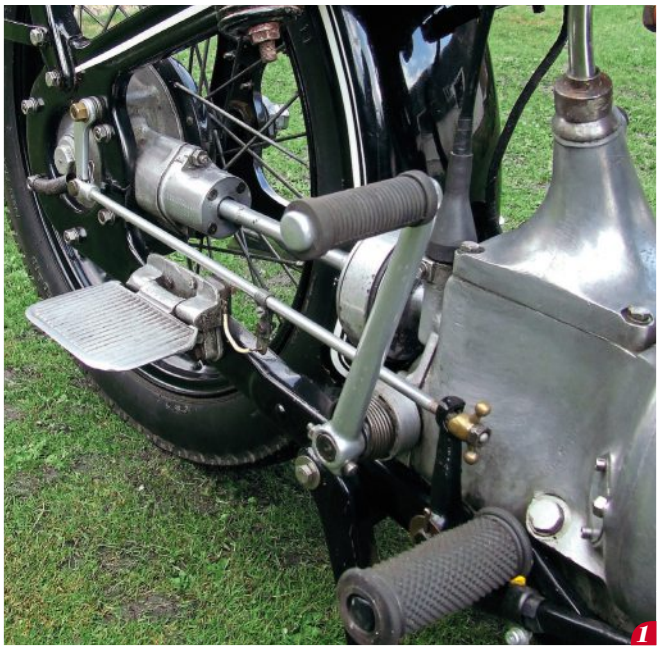
4: Hand gearchanges are not for everyone, but once you have the hang, they work well

The R35 may have been a bit basic and outdated, lacking some of the technical advances BMW had applied to other models, but it was cheap and cheerful, aimed firmly at the budget market. Simple, economical, strong and reliable, it was equally attractive to the general public, police and military, who bought R35s in large numbers for use in training and as dispatch bikes. Speed and agility were key to success on and off road; however, the deep front mudguard, while protecting the rider, had a tendency to pick up and trap a lot of mud behind the wheel, impeding off-road progress.

About 15,386 examples were produced prewar; engine numbers run from 300001 to 315387, frame numbers from 300001 to 315654. Production of the R35 continued until 1940 when it was decided it no longer met the demands of the military. At this point aircraft engine development took precedence, so motorcycle production was transferred from Munich to BMW's Eisenach plant. During the Second World War this factory suffered extensive damage, however, many bikes, engines and parts were stored nearby in the Kali salt mines. This included engines and parts for around a thousand R35s without frames.













Orders were given to blow up the Eisenach works to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy, but the Americans captured Eisenach before this could happen and the Eisenach factory came under Soviet control after the war.

Production resumed in 1945, including initial sporadic assembly of the R35 from existing stock. About 34,000 R35s were produced between 1945 and 1951, and improvements were made gradually – a foot gearchange was introduced during 1951, followed by long-awaited hydraulically damped forks.

In 1949 BMW in Munich took legal action to regain control of its trademarks and in 1952 factory ownership passed to the East German government, which finally enabled BMW to secure its familiar blue and white logo and resume car production. The Eisenach company was renamed Eisenacher Motorenwerk (EMW) and replaced BMW's logo with a red and white version surrounded by their new name.

EMW continued making R35s – later versions enjoyed the relative luxury of a plunger frame but pressed steel front brake plates replaced cast aluminium. It's thought that overall production at Eisenach ran to over 80,000 examples, finally ending in 1955/6. It's ironic that Soviet controlled production helped make the R35 one of BMW's best sellers, with the majority of EMWs ending up in the Soviet Union or Eastern Bloc. Postwar serial numbers ran from 200001.

The R35 is a truly charming machine. Photos alone don't do justice to a bike designed as a functional, reliable, affordable workhorse which managed to achieve all that combined with true beauty of form.

The simple elegant lines are a main part of its appeal and it's obvious a lot of thought has gone into every little detail. Each component is beautifully crafted so it looks anything but a budget model. The quality of construction is evident everywhere, from the deceptively spindly looking but hard-wearing shaft drive down to pillion footplates which hinge neatly out of the way for kickstarting. Rear brake adjustment by hand is easy, courtesy of a functional yet pleasing brass wingnut, while the air filter is a simple affair of wire mesh in a cage.

PRICE GUIDE
£4000 to £10k+

FAULTS & FOIBLES
Spares are quite difficult to source and are obtainable from Poland rather than Germany. Earlier models command higher prices and there is a lot of contention between BMW and EMW machines leading to some falsification of machines, so do your homework and carefully check paperwork and provenance

ALSO CONSIDER
Douglas Mk3; the British-built flat twin with torsion bar rear suspension and Radiadraulic leading-link front fork. Moto Guzzi Airone: slightly smaller 250 single, just as stylish, more available so less expensive

SPECIALIST INFO
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If you're determined to own an unusual, single-cylinder BMW, then you may well find yourself shopping on the Continent. Here's a later 250cc shaft-drive R27 model with Earles-type forks from the late 1960s, up for €7900 at Fuchs Motorrad in Osnabruk

Below: Pillion footplates give a bit of stability and the passenger gets a substantial grabrail too

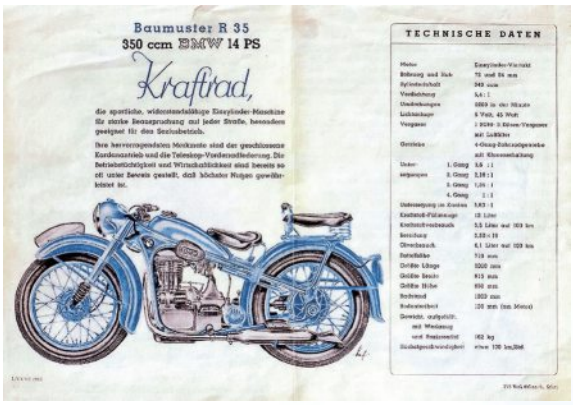
Right: Points and condenser reside at the front of the engine; check out the advance mechanism



These bikes were built to last with just basic routine maintenance and are exceptionally rugged.

According to the BMW archive in Munich, this machine was built in Eisenach in 1950, although it's suspected that it was actually built in 1948 and hidden somewhere until 1950. Its first owner worked in the Eisenach factory; subsequently it was used as a Post Office bike in Poland for many years. It was eventually spotted by a holidaymaker, who quickly cleared a space in his campervan and brought it over to Britain in the late 1980s.

Interestingly, the bike proudly displays a 1952 Motorsportclub Grenzlandring Wegberg badge. Grenzlandring was Europe's fastest race circuit from 1948 to 1952. The owner may have been inspired by the lap record of 134mph set by Georg Meier on a supercharged BMW 500 in 1949; however, the R35 was a much tamer beast with a top speed of 62mph – although its lines make it look faster.



MANUFACTURED: 1937 to 1955 (in various guises) **ENGINE:** Single cylinder ohv four-stroke **BORE / STROKE:** 72mm x 84mm **CAPACITY:** 342cc **COMPRESSION:** 5.4:1 **POWER:** 14bhp **CARBURETTOR:** single SUM type C K 9/22 carb **IGNITION:** battery with Bosch RD 47/70 2800 **LIGHTING:** 6V, 45W **LUBRICATION:** Forced feed wet sump **CLUTCH:** Dry single plate cable operated **GEARBOX:** four speed, hand shift **FINAL DRIVE:** shaft **FRONT BRAKE:** 180mm drum **REAR BRAKE:** 180mm drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** rigid frame, sprung saddle **FRONT TYRE:** 3.50 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 3.50 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 1360mm **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 130mm **DRY WEIGHT:** 342lb **FUEL ECONOMY:** 78mpg **SEAT HEIGHT:** 710mm **WEIGHT:** 162kg **TOP SPEED:** 62mph

The bike is quite high compression and kicks back occasionally but is easy to start once you have the knack. It's quite heavy, which is probably due to the shaft drive and the beefy frame. The pressed steel twin loop frame is unusual for the time, but postwar metal shortages probably made it easier to make, those shortages are also a reason why most of the bike is painted rather than chromed. The low centre of gravity and rigid frame give good handling on rough road surfaces.

This model has a lot more to offer than other smaller BMW singles, which can be a bit gutless. The engine is sweet and reassuringly responsive and it's a pleasant ride. Hand gear changes take a bit of getting used to and for some can be an acquired taste. The previous owner wasn't too comfortable with it and finally decided that the R35 wasn't for him and sold it on.

If you're lucky enough to get your hands on a R35 it'll attract attention wherever you go. It's no road rocket but handles and stops well, perfect for B-road joy where it's sure to put a smile on your face. CBG



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Images supplied by Mortons Archive.



The old black and gold

It's an icon, sure. But it's also a great bike

WORDS BY OLIVER HULME **PHOTOS BY** JASON BRYANT

1: The drive side shows off the unusual primary arrangement. There's a belt drive to the generator (an alternator here; dynamos when new), and the final drive chain is outboard of the clutch

2: Veloce's take on suspension and silencing was its own. The rear shocks' top mountings could be moved to adjust them, while the trademark 'fishtail' sounded truly distinctive

3: This Venom has done a lot more miles than this, and we can genuinely say it has been 'clocked'

4: Velocette gearboxes are as idiosyncratic as their engines; but work well – like the engines

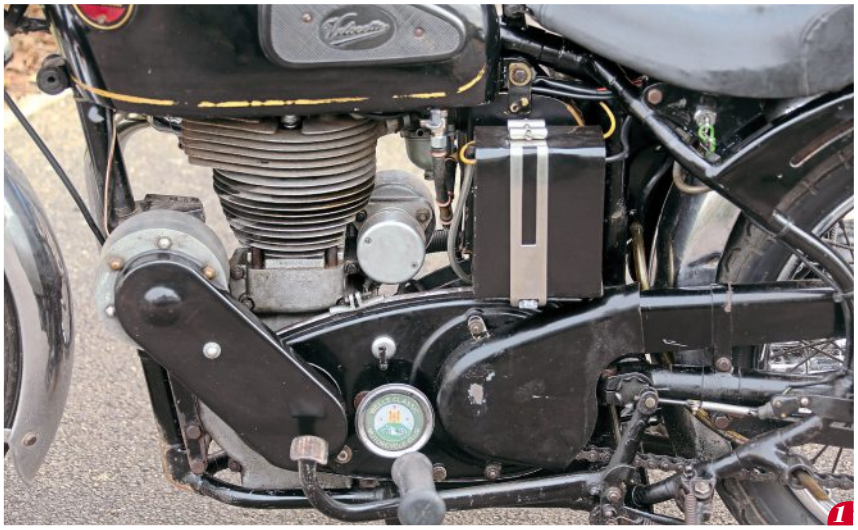
WHETHER THOUGHT OF as a gentleman's ride or an engineer's machine, these days the Velocette Venom 500cc single is always considered to be a high end, sophisticated motorcycle beloved of a particular kind of serious enthusiast.

They are adored by owners, gawped at by showgoers and taken for spirited blasts along country B-roads in the summer. Yet machines like the Venom were originally built for a different role. This was a sporty road bike that was a cut above the rest and ready for hard graft, day in and day out. The Venom still holds the 24 hour world speed record set in 1961 for a 500cc motorcycle, at an average speed of 100.05mph.

The original Velocette pushrod engine was born in 1933 in 250 and 350 forms, and the basic design remained pretty much unchanged until production stopped in 1970. The Venom was developed from the 1954 MSS 500 and introduced in November 1955 at the same time as the 349cc Velocette Viper. The tweaked engine produced 36bhp, had a fairly hefty 8:1 compression ratio and the high cam, short pushrods and hairpin valve springs were designed to cope with high revs. Although by the mid-60s the design was considered antiquated, the lack of innovation may have contributed to the engine's longevity – if ain't broke…

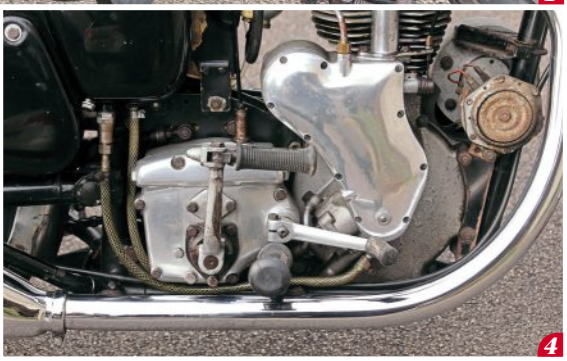
Even so it's hard to imagine today that anyone would use a Velocette Venom for hacking through central London on a daily commute. That said, the 1959 model featured here spent a good part of its life blasting through the traffic in all weathers from Brixton to Oxford Street. Peter Banks paid £15 for his Venom in 1973, much of it in boxes, and it's been with him ever since. "I had a mishap on my Vincent Rapide and cracked my forehead, probably because I hadn't looked after the forks properly. So I bought the Venom because it seemed more suitable for commuting."

Peter rebuilt the bike and used it for 13 years in London. When he relocated to Somerset, the Venom









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came with him. After regular use on the county's roads in the 1990s, it was laid up for a few years before being re-fettled in 2014.

The electrical system was modified in the 1970s. The engine originally had a belt-driven dynamo mounted on the front of the engine. The dynamo was missing when he bought the bike, but rather than simply replace it, Peter converted it to use an alternator providing 12 Volt electrics, still driven by a belt. These days you can buy a 12V alternator conversion off the shelf, but in the 1970s such things weren't available.

Peter is a furniture maker by trade, and describes himself as 'a craftsman, not an artist'. To solve his alternator problem in 1973 he made two wooden pattern moulds, and used them to cast a new housing out of aluminium. It sounds easy when you say it like that, doesn't it? He had the casting machined to fit a 12V alternator which was originally used on a Triumph police bike. This has run the bike's electrical system ever since. It almost looks like it was made for the Velo. The uprated system meant he could fit a set of Honda indicators, which were a useful addition on the daily grind through the big smoke.

Sparks were originally provided by a magneto, but when that went the way of all things the 12V system meant he could replace it with a Lucas Rita electronic ignition system, driven from the old magneto drive.

A sheaf of receipts dating back to 1973 shows that the bike's reliability has been formidable. The bills show no major work, beyond a frame straightening job, and there are a myriad of nuts, bolts and clips priced in pennies, a clutch cable, several tyres, inner tubes and clips that make up most of the bills. Peter got a clockmaking friend to repair the Smiths Chronometric speedometer when a gear wore out, hence the low mileage on the clock.

One of many favourite Velocette topics is the clutch. This is unusual in both operation and location, being mounted with the final drive chain on the outside, far from normal practice. On this Venom the clutch has been untouched since the bike was put back on the road in 1973.

"The clutch is operated by a thrust race in a gate, which pushes the clutch diaphragm," Peter explained. "On the original the thrust race uses ball bearings that wear a groove in the diaphragm, but this one uses a roller bearing instead so it doesn't have that problem. When building the clutch, you have to concentrate on making sure the plates are completely flat and true. The clutch has a bad reputation, but this one has worked perfectly ever since I built it. There's no drag on it at all." Pulling on the lever feels like using the clutch on a modern road bike.

I spoke to former technical secretary of the Velocette Owners' Club John Hannis about some of the issues surrounding ownership of a Venom. He said: "It has been said that the only people who should own Velocettes are engineers. The thing about them is that they have to be put together properly. When this has been done they are perfect."

He agreed about the complicated nature of the clutch operation. To adjust the clutch, you have to

PRICE GUIDE

£6500-£15,000 depending on spec and provenance

FAULTS & FOIBLES

If you're not mechanically inclined, you'll need to learn fast. A certain level of skill is essential if you are going to look after it yourself. Kickstarting is a knack, and the tallness of first gear will require some skill in pulling away. Don't ride the clutch and look after it to avoid warping the plates. The engine should run with mechanical quietness

ALSO CONSIDER

BSA Gold Star for those with deep pockets and less inclination to refinement. AJS Model 18 / Matchless G80, not as sophisticated or complex as a Venom, but solid, dependable and considerably cheaper

SPECIALISTS

Grove Classics
groveclassicmotorcycles.com
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Above right: Great bikes need good brakes, which these are, and the fork works well enough too, despite appearing spindly

remove the left-hand chaincase, insert a tool into a hole in the middle of the shaft from the gearbox and grasp the back wheel, rotating back and forwards as the adjustment is made. It's the kind of procedure you have to have a feel for.

First gear is fairly tall, and there is a small gap between third and fourth. Those who don't like the gearing will find that specialists can now supply five and even six speed conversions for the Venom.

John says the bikes are known for leaking oil from the pressed steel primary chaincase, which the engine breathes into. But Peter's bike hardly leaks a drop.

Although the kickstarter is very low-geared, starting the engine is a breeze for someone like Peter who has lived with the bike for so long. After tickling the carb, pulling in the decompressor, finding the right spot, and pushing down firmly, he can start the big 500 single sitting down. Those less convinced of their ability to do this will find that specialist suppliers now offer an electric start kit.

Peter's Velo came fitted with a bellmouth on the carb, but his craftsmanship came in to play, and he has made an air filter cover out of a brass sheet, after being taught how to shape the metal by a silversmith.

The bike came new with chromed panels on the petrol tank, but when acquired in 1973 it was looking shabby, so the chrome came off and a lustrous black paint job was added. Peter stove-enamelled bits of the bike black in his kitchen oven. These days he's more inclined to use smooth black Hammerite, primed, brush painted, rubbed down and given a run-free second coat.

John Hannis says the Velo is a very nice bike to ride, and revels in being revved hard. "The handling is pretty good, and provided the engine is properly put together they are pretty reliable," he said.

The handling almost certainly benefits from the frame being largely derived from the Velocette KTT racer. Peter's bike still uses the original Woodhead-Monroe adjustable rear suspension it came with – the shocks are moved forwards for solo use, and to the rear for a pillion. The full width 7.5in front brake and 7in rear are described as 'pretty good' for single leading shoe items, and were excellent in their time. They were certainly powerful enough to save Peter's bacon when an errant motorist hit their brakes in front of him. "I grabbed everything and ended up going sideways, then let the brakes off, straightened up and kept going round the outside." he said.

Spares availability is good, there are several specialist suppliers with the owners' club running a comprehensive spares operation as well and manufacturing small batches of spares. As well as outlets offering 12V conversions, starter motor kits, and five- and six-speed gearbox conversions there are even complete new crankcases on offer, at a price.

Actually getting your hands on one of the 6000 or so Venoms made is likely to be one of the biggest problems for the would-be owner. They aren't cheap, and they change hands rarely. The Velocette OC magazine will usually have a couple in the For Sale section, in various states from projects in boxes starting at £3500 to fully restored.

But those lucky enough to possess one don't seem inclined to part company with this fine example of the best in British motorcycling. CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1956-1970 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv high cam single **BORE / STROKE:** 86mm x 86mm **CAPACITY:** 499cc **COMPRESSION:** 8:1 (standard) **POWER:** 36bhp @ 5700rpm **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, gear pump **IGNITION:** BTH magneto (BTH racing optional) **CARBURETTOR:** Amal monobloc 389 (TT optional) **TRANSMISSION:** Chain **GEARBOX:** Four-speed foot change **FRAME:** Brazed lug chrome-moly tube, single downtube duplex cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Veloce tele forks, hydraulic damping **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm twin Woodhead Monroe shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 7.5in sls drum full width alloy hub **REAR BRAKE:** 7in sls drum, full width alloy hub **TYRES:** 3.25 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 54in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31 in **DRY WEIGHT:** 375lb **TOP SPEED:** 102mph

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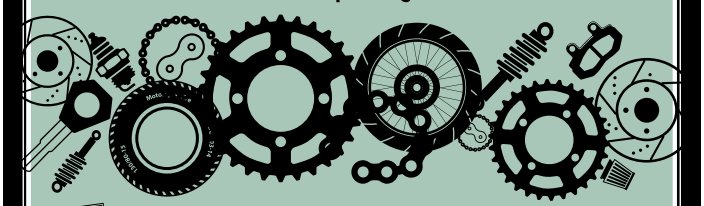
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Funky five hundred

A 40-year-old high-tech twin enjoys a new wave lease of life

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY JOE MCDONALD

Above: Take a fairly forgotten, unremarkable parallel twin and transform it into an object worthy of desire

1: Running in all weathers without a front guard carries electrical risks. Look closely and spot the neat alloy guard protecting the sparks

2: Slim bike and wide bars; always a recipe for handling thrills

3: One of Yamaha's early attempts at four-valve heads. They suffer from the effects of heat and missing maintenance

4: Red Max seat in white. Popular resting places, and it's easy to see why

THIS IS TONY'S Yamaha XS500. We all know the XS650 makes a great flat-tracker. They were even fitted with big-bore kits and raced quite successfully in the States. But Tony was on a tight budget (and we also all know how that feels) and didn't have the funds to throw at one of the bigger Yams.

Undeterred, he scored this 1977 XS500 off eBay for a mere £250 and went from there. And 10 months later, not having spent a fortune, this is what he ended up with.

In actual fact, the XS500 was a great choice in the end. It's quite a cool looking motor in its own right. With its dohc top end, rather than the 650's single cam, it's only actually 1.5bhp less powerful than the bigger twin. The 180° XS engine was rather more complicated than the original 650 or your average British parallel twin: eight valves were considered pretty exotic in 1976. It also incorporated a counter-rotating balance shaft and counterweights to subdue vibration, two trochoidal oil pumps to ensure good lubrication and an electric starter for instant action.

All this and more engineering complexity were needed to help Yamaha's middleweight twin compete with Honda's middleweight fours. It didn't quite succeed; from new the XS500 tended to run rough at low revs and feel flat in the midrange. It only really got into its stride above 6000rpm, and suffered from considerable lash and lag thanks to all the gears and cogs in the drivetrain.

The Yam's conventional chassis, with an entirely familiar steel tube double cradle, tele forks and twin shocks, performed rather better on the road, winning the XS some plaudits for its compact yet comfortable stance, supple suspension, compliant handling, unexpected cornering ability and vibe-free revving.

The brakes – single discs at each end – were also a significant improvement over most middleweight competitors, which typically made do with a rear drum.



1


2



3



4

However, the looks of the XS didn't match its high-tech spec. Nor was it entirely reliable. The first models had some problems with warping valve seats, so later cylinder heads were changed to round exhaust ports to help the heat dissipate. Heat remained a problem, frequently causing the head to fracture. The balancer and camchain arrangements needed regular attention.

The XS offered good roadholding, but it was no lightweight, so hardly came into the tarmac-tearing roadburner category. When it went out of production in 1979 there were few who mourned its passing – and fewer still today who consider it to be wildly desirable. This makes the XS one of the more easily affordable Japanese classics, and the 500's chassis and styling lend themselves to flat-tracking without too many hassles.

Which also suited Tony well, as this is his first custom build.

He had messed about with old scooters for many years and done lots of restoration. However, there's a big difference between simply getting something back to standard, as opposed to mixing and matching parts and ideas to create something that never existed in that form before. But clearly Tony has a good eye, as he's got the profile just right.

It was also important to Tony to do everything himself. So he refused any help because 'that's how you learn'. So he'd done a little bit of welding in the past, but he had to do lots of practise, self-teaching himself as he went along, before he was ready to commit to tackling the exhausts. He used the original downpipes, but bought some 45 and 90° bends and bits of straight pipe to create the twin-pipe system, bringing both pipes sweeping up to semi-high-level on the right-hand side. Then the cut-down shorty silencers were still too loud, so he made up some baffles to fit inside.

Tony also cut and adapted the rear subframe to take the Red Max XR seat unit, before making up his own seat base in laminated plywood then covering it himself. Other mods include moving the ignition under the seat and generally cleaning up the top yoke area, along with removing some of the excess

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Check that no spark plug threads have stripped (or plugs snapped off). Engine needs regular maintenance at 2000 mile intervals, esp balance chain and camchain adjustment. Semi-auto camchain tensioner cracks with age. Rapid cam wear can be prevented by frequent oil changes

ALSO CONSIDER

Yamaha RD400: the two-stroke alternative. Honda CB350: the sensible, sohc alternative. Kawasaki H1 Mach III: the absolutely insane alternative. Honda Superdream: the almost inevitable reality

SPARES

wemoto.com

OWNERS' CLUBS

TX/XS500 forum: xs500forum.com
Vintage Japanese: VJMC.com

BUY IT NOW



Triad in Brighton have just imported three TX500s (as the XS was originally known in the USA) from 1974/75 for restoration or conversion. They come with NOVA import papers and duties paid. Mileage between 19k and 47k. Prices from £1200 to £1400 – find them on eBay



Above: Moody stuff. Possibly significant powerlines above…

lugs on the alloy fork sliders. A petrol tank from a 1978 XS250 needed new mounts to make it fit, so Tony knocked those up in short order, then Flanders flat-track bars and Triumph Thruxton rear shocks complete the stance, along with Dunlop Trailway Dualsport tyres front and rear on the original Yammie cast wheels.

Tony also did the paintwork himself, although his original idea was to have the tank and seat blue with white stripes. In the mad rush to get it finished for an event it got as far as this primer stage, and since then it's grown on him... so it may well stay this way now.

A trip back from the Hotrod Hayride also showed the shortcomings of having no front mudguard, as the spray shot right up under the tank and shorted out the coils. Not one to spoil the lines by fitting anything to the front forks, he knocked up a little alloy plate that sits neatly between the front downtubes – problem solved.

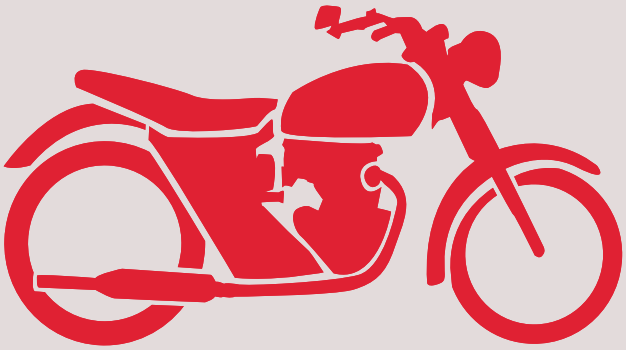
The other difficulty was how to carry any tools on such a clean minimal-looking bike without cluttering up the lines. The answer came in keeping a tool roll behind the side number plate, and having a small cut-down spanner attached to the keyring for access. Neat.

And with that the bike was done. Tony's more than pleased with it, and so he should be. It's a cool looking, good riding, reliable bike, interesting and individual and all done without spending a fortune. For a first build that's a large measure of success. As Tony puts it: "I had a good idea of what I wanted, and I'm quite pleased to have achieved it, it came out pretty much exactly as I wanted." CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1973-78 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled eight-valve 180° dohc twin **BORE / STROKE:** 73mm x 60mm **CAPACITY:** 498cc **COMPRESSION:** 9.8:1 **POWER:** 48bhp @ 8500rpm **TORQUE:** 32.5lb-ft @ 6500rpm **LUBRICATION:** Wet sump **CARBURETION:** 2x 38mm Mikuni **IGNITION:** Battery / coil **TRANSMISSION:** five-speed **FINAL DRIVE:** Chain **FRAME:** Duplex tube full cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin shock, preload adjustable **FRONT BRAKE:** 267mm disc **REAR BRAKE:** single disc **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 3.50 x 18 **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32 inches **WEIGHT:** 450lb wet **FUEL CONSUMPTION:** 45mpg **ACCELERATION:** 14.36 second standing quarter miles **TOP SPEED:** 105mph

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LETTERS

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RIDINGLIFE



CLASSIC & CUSTOM

CLEARLY I'M IN the custom camp, as you can see from the photos. I'm currently building another café racer, a Norton Gold Star. Mind you, I do have a mint Vincent as well. I used to show Jaguars at concours.

Rarely does any bike comply to authentic concours standards: they have nearly all had modifications of some type: stainless steel, over-polished etc, etc.
Garry Laurence









HE AIN'T HEAVY

ANOTHER GOOD ISSUE last month. A little too much modern for me, although like most motorcyclists I want our UK firms to succeed. Hopefully one will see the light and make some 125s and 250s. Why are the bikes so large and heavy? Everything else we buy is lighter (TV sets for instance) and a lot cheaper in real terms. With modern materials and technology bikes should be much lighter.

The Wanderer? I'm amazed that only four survived, as this bike was the trusty Triumph of the First World War on the German side.

Paul Miles talks about a thousand mile limit. I don't think so! I have a Berini moped, 1.2bhp. In mid-September I zeroed my milometer and did a 30 mile rally, since then I've popped up to town (¾ mile), round to friends (1½ miles) and with odds and sods like this my milometer now reads 198. So going nowhere at 23mph I've done 160 miles. On a real bike, a thousand miles would soon be knocked off.
Chris Harper

Not all retro-styled modern bikes are heavyweights: Mash and SWM offer sensibly-sized 400cc singles if you find that 1200cc twins are too unwieldly. Although advances in ergonomics mean that a brand-new Bonneville Bobber, for instance, is every bit as easy to manoeuvre as a Meriden-built T140… ***CBG***



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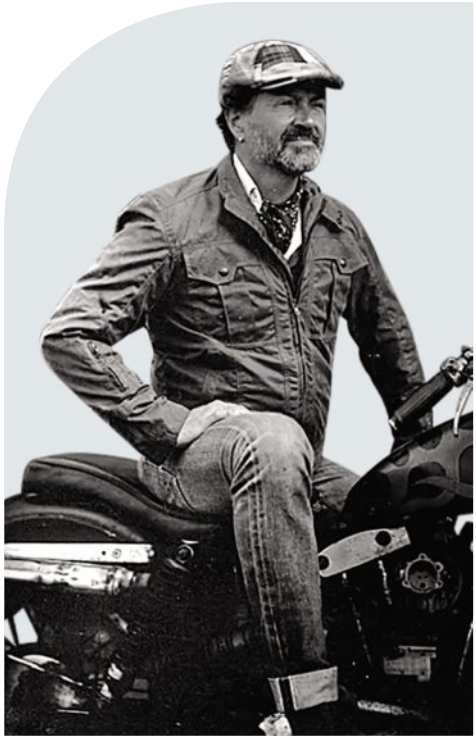
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PAUL D'ORLÉANS

What happens in Vegas, everyone knows

Motorcycle wars in the salerooms

THERE ARE NO secrets in the old-bike world; eventually, it all comes out. Even those sworn to secrecy are as leaky as Dear Liza's bucket; Dear Henry might fix it, but by then the contents have spilled. So it was in the 2017 iteration of the Las Vegas motorcycle auction wars. This year a particularly aggressive Mecum blanketed Bonhams' Thursday slot with a four-day glitzy cattle auction of over 1000 bikes. Did the punters show disapproval of Mecum's excessive product and hardball tactics? Hardly; sale rates for Mecum's lots on Wednesday/Thursday – mostly low-priced machines – were over 90%.

Bonhams had a venue change from the laissez-faire Bally's to the ironically uptight Rio Casino, with dozens of 'hospitality' workers barring bidders from entry as their numbers exceeded 350. Attendees were forbidden close inspection of the bikes during the auction proper, and rudely palmed in the standing-room crowd, out of ill-defined 'fire lanes'. I say, let the place burn, and never return. Bonhams has a hard think ahead regarding their Vegas strategy; for the sake of a civilised space to buy motorcycles, let's hope they roar back for 2018.

With no Cyclones, Brough Superiors or Vincent Series A Rapides to buoy the results at either venue, the great black hope for 2017 was an ultra-rare 1936 Crocker hemi-head bearing serial #8. With a reserve of $500k, the owner clearly felt he had a million-dollar baby on his hands, but the catalogue description noted the mixed provenance of engine and chassis, and cheap talk circulated about replica cylinder heads, or worse. It certainly weakened the resolve of bidders, whose confidence extended to $360k and no more (exactly the price, btw, of the previous Crocker to sell at auction, at Bonhams), leaving the angry owner to push the bike himself off the podium. Don't take it personally, sir; it's just business.

Perhaps wisely, Bonhams didn't make the Crocker its cover girl, reserving that privilege for a 1914 Feilbach Limited V-twin in original paint, with a long string of documented provenance; it was a stunning, complete machine, and fetched a deserved $195k plus fees. A string of exceptional Ducati racers from the Silverman collection had mixed results, and even a few bargains, as the Sports, Super Sports, and F-whatevs went mostly below estimate. Then again, Italian sports jobs have always had mixed results in Vegas.

That left the mind-numbing Festival of 1000 Bikes at the South Point casino, with 36 hours of auctions roaring in its massive concrete horse arenas. The good news; no psychedelic vomit carpets, and clean photo ops. The bad news; no carpets at all, and plenty of sore legs and feet. As one might expect with so many motorcycles, it took dedication to see them all, and only the lonely could succeed; everyone else saw everyone else, meaning, it's impossible to stride through this global motorcycle convention without a hail fellow every 10 yards. I certainly failed to inspect them all, but with over 100 Triumph twins alone at the venue, a thorough inspection seemed futile.

The highlights? The Hendersons! Two 1913 examples of the 'Deusenberg of Motorcycles' fetched over $100k, but the star of the whole weekend and unexpected prize money champion was a 1912 Henderson four-cylinder, a first year 'torpedo tank' model with perfect original pinstriping, and claimed original tyres! Talk among the cognoscenti suggested, as usual, this would be the first million-dollar bike, but it 'only' fetched half that, at $490k plus fees, which more than doubled the sale price of any other machine at Vegas.

Hendersons are revered in the USA for their dedication to quality and gorgeous lines, much like a certain British V-twin, but of course, William Henderson designed his own engines too. Henderson could be considered the father of the American four-cylinder motorcycle craze, as though Pierce built one first (1909), Henderson spawned both the Excelsior-Henderson fours (when he sold his company in 1918 to Schwinn) and founded Ace in 1919, which became the Indian four from 1927 onwards. Early Hendersons are revered as the most elegant of all, and a first-year model, with its Böhmerlandishly long chassis, is the one to find. They were the first motorcycle to circle the globe (under Charles Stearns Clancy's helm), and spanning the Century, won the Motorcycle Cannonball Endurance Rally last year.

After a huge representative sampling of the vintage and collectable bike market, I can report its health is stable, if not robust. With the US dollar unusually strong, the annual cadre of Europeans mostly selling, not buying this year, and while the blue chips retained their value, there were signs of slippage too.

What's hot? Vintage dirt bikes and 1970s/80s Japanese sport bikes. Everything else is flat to pear-shaped. I'd suggest we all invest in riding, and keep our interest rate high. CBG

'The great black hope for 2017 was an ultra-rare 1936 Crocker hemi-head bearing serial #8. With a reserve of $500k, the owner clearly felt he had a million-dollar baby on his hands…'

WHO IS PAUL D'ORLÉANS?

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

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MARK **WILLIAMS**

As are my customs

According to wilful iconoclast Williams, originality is something to be sniffed at…

THE HON. MR WESTWORTH'S EDITORIAL in last month's issue fascinated me – as it always does – and even though some of it was way above my intellectual pay-grade – as it always is – it re-awoke internalised arguments about the originality, or otherwise, of the aulde motorbykes that make our lives worthwhile.

On the one hand there is the original-is-essential brigade, on the other the originality-doesn't-matter wallahs, which broadly summarises the factions I think Frank alluded to. And in that case, I'm with him. (Because I know which side my metaphorical breed is battered.) However, what's become fairly clear to me from recent experiences, is that the former crew hold sway, certainly regarding postwar British marques and models. Indeed it's clear from recent auctions I've been to, classified ads I've scoured and fleaBay entries I've clicked on, matching numbers and original specs bestow on virtually any such machine a premium of between 25 or 30% over the asking price of a visually similar one that's been mucked about with. And I use the term 'mucked about with' in the pejorative sense that the sticklers for authenticity sneerily confer on anything else.

So one could reasonably argue, which I damn well will, that originality has primarily become a construct enabling sellers to ramp up their prices and buyers to ensure that what they consequently purchase will become a nice little earner, whether as a nest-egg for their retirement or an agreeable way to supplement their income. And in the case of certain traders, as the basis of their businesses.

And ever the equivocal, I've mixed feelings about this, too.

Every classic car or bike I've owned has been neither in its original condition nor, as a consequence, bought at anything approaching maximum so-called market value. And for why? Well of course they've all been in various stages of old nail-hood or at best, 'requiring a little TLC'. To an extent this is because I've inspected them pre-sale to determine what's been wrong with them and how much it'd cost to provide remedies… or at least as best I could. Sometimes, nay usually, I've been unduly optimistic, but eventually that hasn't prevented me from enjoying riding or driving them.

So in direct contrast to those who buy and sell these highly original and invariably painstakingly restored old machines, mine get used, probably not every day, but definitely used. I personally wouldn't buy a bike, classic or otherwise, that I wouldn't ride as often as my hideously onerous lifestyle permits – go on, feel sorry for me. And returning to Frank's editorial, I see nothing shameful about modifying them to suit my purposes and predilections, otherwise known as 'customising'. Which is where it gets a bit tricky.

In the 1970s when I was relatively richer and more focused than I am now, I bought a series of brand new bikes – mainly Yamahas, Suzukis and a lone Laverda – which I modified, in the case of off-road machines to make them work better for my intended purpose, i.e. trailriding and enduro racing, and with roadbikes largely for aesthetic reasons; e.g. the XS-2 which I arguably if arrogantly claim as the prototype for the entire street-tracker phenomenon some 40 years later.

And beyond that hallowed decade, I've modified other bikes both new and second-hand to make them handle or perform better or more reliably, and riding them more comfy. I'll not bore you with the details this time, but they included marques as diverse as Moto-Guzzis, Kawasakis, Yamahas and BMWs. True, my earlier comments about the enhanced if wrongly applied cash value of originality largely affecting British marques doesn't include the BSAs, Triumphs, Greeves and DOTs I owned in the Sixties, but in fact I 'customised' them too – again with no shame or regret.

But as Rowena Hoseason's illuminating feature on tricked-up Goldies, again in that last issue affirms, the mods applied to Chris Spaett's bike made it not only more durable but infinitely more rideable. Moreover my pal Nick Bramley has a nice little business doing the same for the more lowly BSA Bantam, and I recently visited a well-known top-end restorer who routinely upgrade customers' prides and joys in ways that torpedoed their originality but made them far more pleasing to own and actually ride.

Strictly speaking, perhaps none of this is what's currently regarded as 'customising', although taking the term literally, it of course is. But although for reasons of penury I must now flog the CB400N-based street-tracker that I built (with the aforementioned Mr Bramley's considerable help) I am already searching for an affordable replacement, something that's estimably rideable and reliable. And d'you know what?... everything that meets those criteria happened to be literally and in current parlance perceived as 'customised'. In recent weeks they've included an Enfield Bullet, a Yamaha XS250 and 750, a BMW K75S, any number of Hondas and even a Matchless G3CS replica. The only bike I definitely couldn't afford but really, really lusted after was an Aprilia Motò 6.5, unaffordable precisely because it was entirely original… So where does that leave me?

Answers on the back of a tenner c/o *CBG* Towers, please. CBG

'In direct contrast to those who buy and sell these highly original and invariably painstakingly restored old machines, mine get used, probably not every day, but definitely used…'

WHO IS MARK WILLIAMS?

Williams is a serial motorbicycle magazine junkie, having published, launched and edited *Bike, Which Bike?* and *Motorcycle International* among others. This means he's tested, ridden and even owned more bikes than is probably good for him



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PAUL **MILES**

The Sixvolters

All about voltage, watt?

I'M A SIXVOLTER, it appears. You may well be, too. Did you even know? I've certainly been living in blissful ignorance up until now.

It all started when the uncle of a friend popped by to visit. My buddy had mentioned that I had 'hundreds' of old bikes (tsk, it's only dozens) and would be more than happy to show some of them to him. I, of course, had little say in the matter, merely being a sort of petrochemical curator. The father's brother duly arrived and cast a critical eye over the glistening arrays of oily junk.

Visitors always seem to ask the same two questions: which bike is the most valuable and what one is your favourite? Both enquiries are almost impossible for me to answer. At one time I owned an incredibly rare Kawasaki Z1R factory turbo. It was, by far, the most valuable bike in the shed, but if I proffered it up as such I'd be met with incredulous looks as they'd say 'But it's just a Kawasaki', before waving at an old BSA and suggesting I was one cylinder short of a V8. As for the favourite – what day is it, today?

Uncle Belgravia asked the favourite question, as I knew he would. I waved at the Rudge and suggested it might be that, before immediately qualifying the remark by pointing out the old Gilera patiently awaiting the DVLA's largesse to be bestowed upon it. 'Often referred to as the Italian Gold Star', I intoned with pompous gravitas, before suggesting it might even be, gasp, better than the Rudge (madness, I know). He examined a few more bikes, straightened up and declared "So, you're a six-volter, then."

Now, I get easily confused and still use a magic marker to draw an arrow on the dynamo, so this statement meant little to me; illumination was required. It seemed to him that most of my favourite bikes have six volt electrics. And you know what? He's right. Not all of them, but several, certainly.

This was not a conscious decision. I never set out to own and ride motorcycles from a particular era; in fact, I loathe the inflexible attitude that seems to prevail in the classic scene. The obsession with which we need to pigeonhole things can blinker us from some fantastic riding opportunities. I actually know some people who would never, ever, ride a Japanese bike under any circumstances. The idiots; it's much easier to push a Japanese bike home, folding footrests don't hit your calves. At shows, I still haven't quite grasped the concept of post-vintage, either. What does that really mean, anyway?

As my interest in motorcycles has followed its natural arc of progression, I went from then-new sports mopeds, to modern hyperbikes. Like most of us I then regressed back to the bikes of my youth. Growing up in the 1970s, they were invariably Japanese or Italian, British bikes were old news by then. But once I'd owned or ridden what appeared to be every bike made in that decade there was only one logical direction for my interests to head – further back.

Once safely coddled in the swinging Sixties, a whole new experience was waiting there to be discovered. All the bikes had kick-starts, not just the tiddlers. Totally different from 'my' decade. Go slightly further back and most bikes had just the one cylinder, requiring, gasp, some technique to start. An irresistible chance to polish my one-upmanship skills. With one pot came magnetos, and an extra lever to play with. Sprung bicycle saddles and girder forks were now within reach.

I would suggest that there is a metaphorical line in the sand, drawn around 1970. Bikes after that date have electric starts, powerful ignitions and bright lights. They are closely associated with today's modern machines. But motorcycles constructed before then will have to be kick-started, require more mechanical attention and be far more involving to own and ride.

Give a younger rider a 45-year-old Honda CB750 and they'd be able to press and go. They'd declare it slow and suggest that it required more than one disc brake, but it would all feel familiar, albeit dated. Now put them on a decade older 1960 BSA Gold Star. Our heroic young pilot would have to understand the principles of manual advance magneto ignition, right foot gear change, drum brakes, tickling carburettors – and that's before he tries to kick it! Once rolling, there would be a lot of riding re-education required to get the best out of a half-litre single, unlike the super flexible fours of the 1970s.

I would, therefore, contend that we forget the outdated classifications seen at shows and in future have just two categories. One for 'modern' motorcycles, with bright lights, electric starts and left foot gear levers and the other for the true classics: the six volt bikes.

My name is Paul, I am a Sixvolter. There, I'm out, loud and proud! CBG

'I would suggest that there's a metaphorical line in the sand, drawn around 1970. Bikes after that date have electric starts, powerful ignitions and bright lights…'

WHO IS PAUL MILES?

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

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GRAND NATIONAL

Triumph's ohv twins could go very fast. This is a re-creation of a very, very fast Triumph, then…





WORDS & PHOTOS BY NOLAN WOODBURY. ADDITIONAL IMAGES FROM MORTONS ARCHIVE

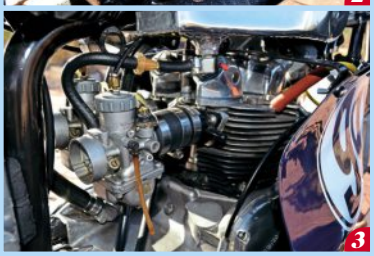
RIVALLED IN HISTORY only by Harley-Davidson, the Triumph name grew to become synonymous with motorcycling itself. Internationally cherished, especially in the USA, Triumph was stealing races (and customers) from the Milwaukee maker before Japan had laced its first wheel. That changed, but Triumph of Meriden showed the fighting stamina of a veteran, holding fast and winning against this new opposition even when logic demanded otherwise. Success at the Daytona International Raceway added a new model to the docket, bucking the trend against North America's generally limited interest in road racing. It all got much more engaging with the emergence of another famous name – Triumph's Grand National champion Gary Nixon.

Originally introduced in the late 1930s as a performance uprate for the Speed Twin, Triumph's original Tiger 100 twin was a spectacular machine with rakish lines and nearly 30bhp. More versions followed postwar, including scramblers and tuned supersports models and swinging arm suspension. The big news for racers in 1951 was the Tiger's new alloy engine and the introduction of a factory speed parts catalogue. Traditional in layout and proportion, the redesigned unit that replaced it had updated dimensions with a new cylinder, head, crankshaft and top end. The new twin was faster than ever, and then Tri-Cor in the USA made even more of it for those brave enough to ask for it.

Initially branded simply as the T100R, the unit-construction twin carb 500 of 1967 was tailor-made for production racing. Straight out of the factory gate the 490cc motor delivered 39bhp at 7400rpm thanks to its racing E3134 cams, chunky $1^{17}/_{32}$inch inlet valves working in a remodelled combustion chamber, revised exhaust valves with improved heat resistance and a pair of 376 Amal Monobloc carbs. Hepolite 9.75:1 pistons could be added to the mix, pushing the 337lb motorcycle to 110mph or more. The Triumph twin which took top honours at the Daytona 200 was a brisk machine indeed.











Outright speed isn't everything – as many trad Triumph riders know all too well. The T100R benefited from engineer Doug Hele's experience during its development. Hele helped to develop Norton's Manx, and knew a thing or ten about creating a chassis that would allow the rider to exploit everything the engine had to offer. The 500's new frame used a fully triangulated steering head, with a rigid top rail and bracing tank rail, changing the fork angle from 62 to 65 degrees. The rear frame incorporated more triangulation around the swinging arm pivot with bracing plates – and the swinging arm itself was wider, which permitted the use of a bigger back tyre.

1: Without its fairing, the Triumph is revealed as a tiny, tidy machine

2: The innocent-looking gearbox contains a rare Tri-Cor close ratio cluster

3: A brace of 26mm Mikuni carbs replaced the original Amals, inlet lengths tuned on a dyno, too

4: Gary Nixon raced under the number 9, so as a tribute, this machine is a 99. Well, it is a twin, so…

Finally, Triumph had a 500 production racer with a well-matched engine and chassis. Enhanced by Tri-Cor it carried Gary Nixon to victory in 1967 – the last time Triumph won the Daytona 200. That was a convincing swansong, however, with six of the top-ten riders being mounted on Triumph 500 unit twins. No wonder marque enthusiasts are still inspired to pay tribute to that mighty achievement.

"You can blame Evan Wilcox," says Don Freeman, who started building the racer you see in the photos from the remains of a disassembled 1969 T100R. "The vintage road racing scene was clicking in the US Pacific Northwest during the 1990s, and Evan was into it. Sensing some interest he encouraged







me, saying the racing was cheap and fun. When I mentioned the Triumph 500, Evan threw out the idea of making a replica of Nixon's 1967 Daytona winner."

Since gaining notoriety for producing fine aluminium hardware, Wilcox joined former Team Obsolete wrench Bardsley Donovan to assist in the search for Tri-Cor speed. "Without them," Freeman says, "this bike wouldn't exist." Repaired and raced for one last season after a serious crash, Freeman mothballed the 500 until 2000, then sent it to Shane Leathers in Chicago. Three years passed until father Mike Leathers trucked the twin to Arizona with visions of turning the old racer into a vintage showpiece. "The crowd wants to hear it run," says Leathers, "so I'm fabricating a remote starter. It's extremely loud. The old Avons are becoming a bit of an issue, but it's in top running condition."

The breakdown shows as a mix of original, modified and custom machined pieces, joining the old crankcases with a newer (post-1969) C-series frame. Using tricks learned from bolting up fast Kawasaki triples for the street, Freeman had a good grasp on the necessary cycle parts and how he wanted the Triumph to fit together. "I leaned on Donovan for the engine building," Don clarifies. "Especially when the serious modification began. Our goal of making reliable, competitive power meant lots of experimentation and special parts." Part of that addresses the mundane, yet time-consuming chore of making cables and controls until Don shifted the focus away from the process and towards the results. "We binned this, kept that, and the Triumph was among the fastest in its class, but I don't think we ever raced in the same configuration twice".

5: Exhausts follow 'classic Aermacchi design', work well, and will set off car alarms in the pits

6: Take a pushrod roadster twin engine and compete at world class with it. Why not? They were simpler days

7: The 1968 works 500 Triumph, in all its monochrome wonder

8: Although they appear to be in period, the front forks are 35mm Yamaha RZ350 forks held in Italian yokes















Stretching just 53" between axles and reaching mid-thigh, Leather's arrow-narrow Triumph is positively diminutive. Even when propped on its rear wheel race stand. Freeman laid up the fairing glass work on self-made moulds to resemble Nixon's Daytona winner with input from Donovan, who inspected Nixon's championship bike during its time at Team Obsolete in New York.

"The tank and seat were the second pair made by Evan, but the first he sold," tells Don. Wilcox remembers it well, waiting tables at night and making tanks during the day. Earning international fame for his skilful handiwork, the alloy shows nary a flaw, save for a generous amount of weld on the rear stay. The blue and white paint mimic the authentic colours, and as a show of respect Leathers replaced Nixon's traditional #9 with a pair of them. "The original numbers were casino-style, but it didn't seem right to copy it exactly."

Under all that appealing style remains most of the Daytona's single downtube cradle, splitting underneath to support the engine but with heavy trimming of the rear loop and unneeded bracketry. Typical of the later C-series frames, an additional strut running under the top tube joins more bracing around the headstock, this one grafted with 35mm Yamaha RZ350 forks held in Italian yokes. The shouldered Akront rims were laced by the owner (again, with instruction by Donovan), the front being a machined-to-fit 4LS originally found on Suzuki's GT750. "Rules dictated a rear brake," recalls Freeman, "and I found a tiny Rickman conical hub while digging through some old spares. It never failed to gain a comment from the other racers, but I never used it."

Developed for its 1958 launch, the 490cc unit is unique with its separate cavities for the transmission, crankcase and primary drive, but the rest followed conventional unit construction practice.

"Development initially followed Stan Shenton's 'Triumph Speed Tuning' book," smiles Freeman. "But I quickly learned that Tri-Cor race parts were just as unobtainable in 1990 as they were in 1967." A copy of the 1951 Tri-Cor catalogue shows a tantalising

1: Continuing that theme of development – as racers always did – the front anchor started life hauling down a Suzuki GT750. Handsome 4ls device, too

2: The rear hub and brake were intended for a lightweight Rickman, not that the brake's ever used

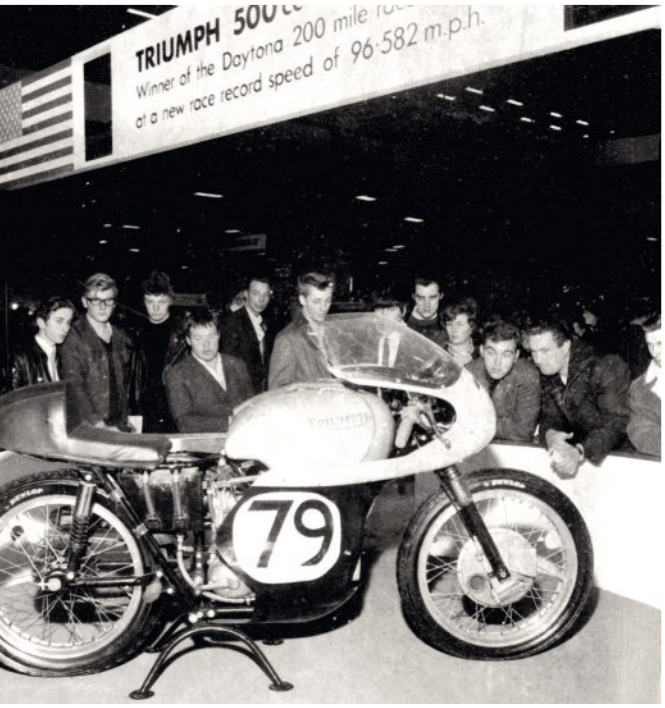
3: Rather fine hand-crafted alloy tank performs petrol can duties

4: Truly space race. We are totally perturbed by the helmet. The bike? You can guess what it is, probably. Gary Nixon riding, apparently

Below: Two views of the inspiration: one of the last of the works racing 500 twins. The feature machine pays homage, it does not copy







Left: Buddy Elmore's Daytona winning Triumph racer. Another 500 flier from Meriden

array of goodies for the T100; pistons, carbs, top ends, clocks, cams and a special racing exhaust. More? Low bars and a gallon oil tank, lines included. Period writings covering the Tri-Cor-built twin returned impressive power gains that sent the Tiger to 120mph and more… providing one followed the factory instructions closely. Added research revealed the frustration of tuners who followed after parts supplies dried up, and even more folk saying that availability of Triumph-Corp's speed secrets were never easy to obtain. Or cheap.

Freeman said early tests using the Daytona's stock 'hemi' head with 10:1 pistons saw the engine fall flat at 7000rpm due to insufficient flame travel. "The solution was the pre-Daytona squish band head (found digging through yet another pile of spares) fitted with the larger-sized valves. Not something you can throw together in the garage."

Don reports that the Daytona cases were different to the earlier versions and the pushrod tubes did not align. "A bit of mill work and special O-rings solved it." Because the high-comp pistons available were only designed to fit with the original combustion chamber, so a special set of slugs was machined from Arias blanks. "We were gaining. The pistons and shaving the head for 11:1 compression brought the engine to life."

At the end, Donovan replaced Freeman and raced the rebuilt T100 to the 500cc points lead at Portland International Raceway, losing the crown in the last race due to excessive noise. It's amazing to learn that the engine spun close to 9000rpm on the straight, no doubt aided by the ball-bearing timing and roller drive-bearing upgrade from 1969. Other top-end details include Black Diamond valves with race springs, Kenny Harmon #54 cams and a salvage yard oil tank. 26mm Mikuni carbs on straight inlets nudged the Amals out, the critical tract length optimised by Freeman's trial and error and Bardsley's dyno.

"Development ceased just as belt drives were becoming available. The rotor was replaced with an alloy blank and an alloy clutch faceplate was added. Evan's exhaust follows classic Aermacchi design. They weren't dyno developed, but tripped car alarms in the pits." Wilcox fashioned two systems for the racer, the second a two-into-one.

Leathers replaced the broken and scattered total loss Boyer Brandsen ignition with a new one, but the 500's beefy Barnett clutch and ultra-rare Tri-Cor close-ratio four-speed gearbox remain. The bike's bumped or spun to life as the kick-start shaft was cut to provide clearance for the reversed shift lever.

Not surprisingly, a strong connection remains between Freeman and the racer. Its resemblance and performance compared to an actual works Triumph is nothing short of remarkable. What started as a quasi-replica grew into something else entirely, given the names and places involved. "It's based on 1930s technology, but the 500cc unit is one of the great Triumphs. Kenny Dreer (of Norton Commando fame) and I got into an argument after a few beers. He said the 650's a better engine, but when I pointed out that the 500 would pass it after vibrating itself to pieces, he had to agree."

As a tribute, Mike Leathers' Triumph T100R pays homage on multiple levels. For just as the colourful Nixon was instrumental in drawing new US crowds, so too was the Triumph twin's uncanny ability to thrill spectators and reward riders. That's vintage excellence, and Leathers can attest to the Daytona as a scene stealer.





1: Hot engines demand oil coolers. Official

2: Ready to ride…

Below: The trad proud owner shot. Don Freeman with his tribute Triumph, as well as a couple of trophies, too

"It's important that motorcycles like this are preserved for future generations," says the owner. "There's considerable talent and history built into this Triumph. Most collectors see old racers as junk, but the racing shaped those famous production models." Here's yet another in approval of the effort. A rolling monument to greatness past. CBG

1969 TRIUMPH T100R

ENGINE: 490cc. 11:1 pistons, H&C cams, 26mm Mikunis, Boyer Brandsen ignition **TRANSMISSION:** Tri-Cor close-ratio four-speed in reversed racing pattern **CHASSIS:** Single downtube cradle, stripped and trimmed for racing **SUSPENSIONS:** Yamaha forks, Ceriani yokes, twin Koni shocks **BRAKES:** Suzuki/Rickman **SPECIAL FEATURES:** Evan Wilcox tank, tail and exhaust. Don Freeman glass fibre

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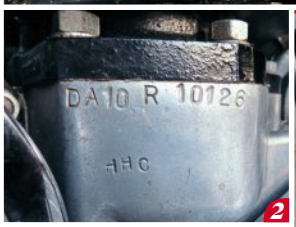
DESTINATION *Fun!*

BSA's top of the range roadster may have been 'competition equipped' but its real role was as a crowd-pleasing road-burner. Fifty years later, its vivid performance still thrills rapid riders

WORDS & PHOTOS BY STUART URQUHART. ADDITIONAL IMAGES FROM MORTONS ARCHIVE

"I BLAME TATTIE WATT for turning up at our local bike meet on a sparkling new BSA Rocket Gold Star. I was barely in my teens, but ever since that life-changing summer day back in 1963, I've dreamed of owning one," laughed Derick. But it would be 33 years before Derick could make his dream a reality. His dream bike appeared for sale and a quick phone call established it was genuine and allegedly originated from Derick's hometown in Scotland. So he phoned a knowledgeable friend and together they scrambled down to West Yorkshire to check out whether it was the real deal. It was.


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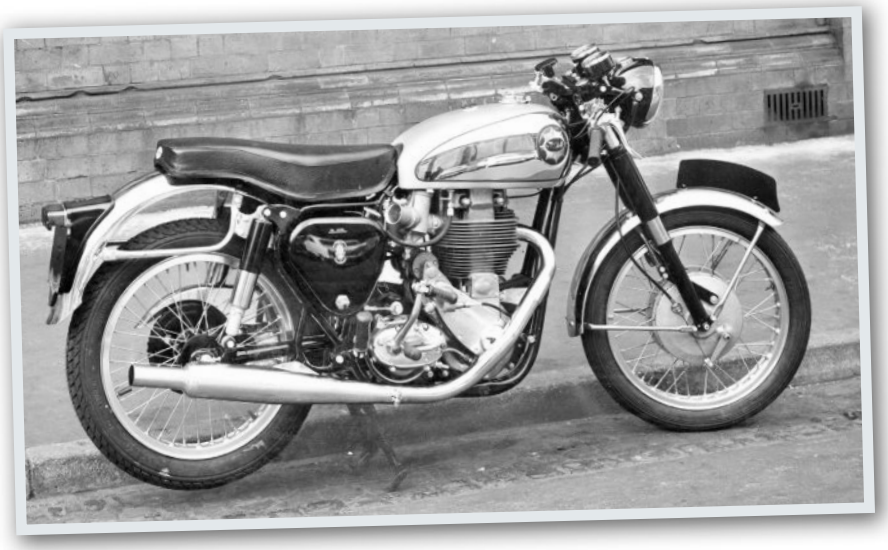
The RGS has been acclaimed by some as the world's top road-burner, ahead even of the mighty Honda CB750 and iconic Triumph T120 Bonneville. If the RGS really is the world's finest – or at least one of the best classic bikes about – how can we separate the real thing from one of the countless replicas being bounced around today's marketplace?

Aficionados might point to a well-documented history or better still an official letter of authentication from the BSA Owners' Club – these days the majority of genuine machines will have one or both. However, there are also plenty of tell-tale visual clues, the most obvious being a Super Rocket engine nestling in a Gold Star type duplex frame with no oil pump kink and rearsets only.

1: Slotting an easy-starting and rapid twin engine into a bicycle normally powered by a cantankerous single seems like an obvious thing to do. Makes you wonder why BSA didn't do it before

2 & 3: Numerology is especially important with pricey machinery like this. Check the numbers with the relevant owners' club before parting with cash. It pays to examine them carefully, too, checking for signs that they've been altered

Below: In case you'd forgotten, this is a final version of the original singular Gold Star, seen here in 1961



Next clue should be an RRT2 gearbox and a rev counter drive positioned at the front of the engine's timing case. Another tick in the RGS box is the beautiful silver and chrome petrol tank with its distinctive breather pipe and large BSA Gold Star tank badges. All are present and correct on Derick's dream machine, including a well-documented history, proving indeed that his RGS is the genuine item – lucky him!

History credits Clubman's TT winner Eddie Dow as the inspiration behind Small Heath's decision to blend obsolete Gold Star cycle parts with their top gun Super Rocket engine. Consequently BSA created their most stunning roadster twin of the 1960s – the A10 Rocket Gold Star. The new twin became an instant sales success and 1584 were manufactured between 1962 and 1963, with many being exported to the US in off-road guise. Although the Rocket Gold Star was never a bona fide competition machine, it was nevertheless a sought-after motorcycle on both sides of the Atlantic. The new model's specially constructed Gold Star type frame and forks were already competition proven, and when wedded to BSA's popular Super Rocket 646cc engine it was a recipe that could only enthral the UK's horde of café racing teenagers.

With a bore and stroke of 70 by 84mm, a high-lift Spitfire camshaft, a compression ratio of 9:1 and a respectable output of 46bhp at 6250rpm, the RGS was good for a genuine 110mph, matched only by Triumph's T120 Bonneville of the time. However, BSA's optional RRT2 close ratio racing gearbox and











siamesed Goldie exhaust system (good for another 4bhp, they say) gave the RGS a competitive edge, if not on the road then clearly in café car parks up and down the country. The Amal Monobloc carburettor and KF2 magneto were akin to the Spitfire's and the chrome four-gallon petrol tank and headlamp shrouds, QD headlamp, rubber fork gaiters and slim profile chrome mudguards were a nod to BSA's famous Gold Star road racing singles. A host of factory options were also available. Derick's example would appear to have many, including the desirable close-ratio gearbox and Smiths tachometer.

"Obviously I checked the bike's provenance before I parted with any money," recalled Derick. "To me the fact that this RGS originated from my home town was very appealing. So too were receipts detailing engine work undertaken throughout 1994 by BSA specialist SRM. The seller also produced a BSAOC dating certificate and a valid letter from the Gold Star Owners' Club confirming that my prospective buy was originally consigned to motorcycle dealer George McLean Ltd of Dundee. Unfortunately the same letter also stated that the original registration number was missing, and should have been prefixed 'PTS' – the only downside to an otherwise perfect example. I seem to remember biting the seller's hand off!"

Back home, Derick's RGS proved to be reliable thanks in part to SRM's engine work and timing side needle-roller bearing conversion. The engine's big ends had been reground to -20 and the cylinder re-sleeved back to standard size. Other receipts listed new pistons, inlet valves, collets and valve springs, a reconditioned oil pump and polishing of the cam followers. A dynamo chain and sprocket were also fitted and several damaged rockerbox threads sorted – nice to know that SRM hasbreathed its magic into the RGS's lusty engine.

Famed Gold Star specialist Len Haggis also supplied replacement front fork springs, stanchions and steering-head bearings. Len also laced the hubs to Akront deep-flanged alloy rims that add credibility to the café racer look.

4: The dynamo lives behind the Clear Hooters horn (no, really), while sparks are provided by the Lucas magneto behind the cylinders. A rare glance at an authentic BSA rearset brake pedal, too

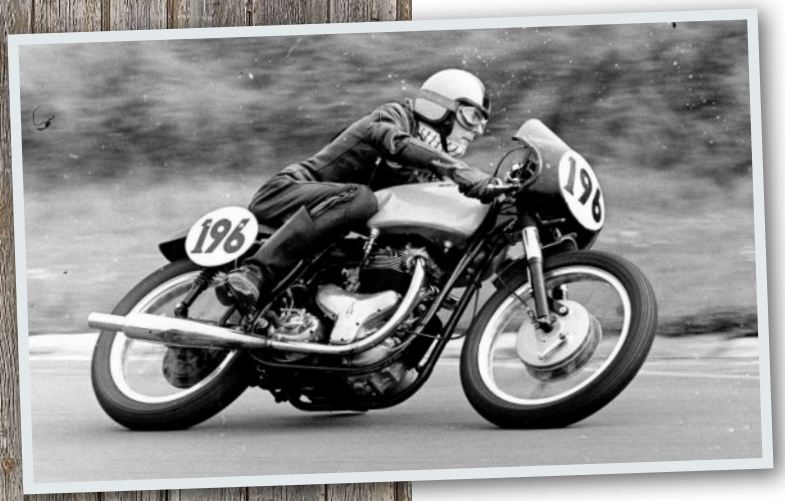
5: Lots of cool stuff for the committed café racer here. Ace bars, alloy rims, rear-set rests and much more

6: This machine is fuelled by an Amal 389 Monobloc. Some owners fit other carbs to their bikes, presumably in search of something mysterious

7: As always with BSA's pre-unit twins, sparks were supplied by a Lucas K2F magneto, complete with manual timing adjustment. You can see the cable for that clearly here

8: BSA's fabled 190mm front brake was intended for track use and can be challenging on the road, especially at low speeds. Alterations and even improvements are available

9: The way it was; a Rocket Goldie in suitably moody Sixties pose



Above: Although the singles were more usually associated with racing, the Gold Star twins were decent track performers. Here's one Derek Best exercising his at Brands

Left: Derick the proud owner appears happy. Well, he would, wouldn't he!

Readers perusing the pictures will hopefully agree that Derick's RGS has the desired patina of a mostly original and untouched motorcycle. However, it wasn't long before the elegant petrol tank developed a persistent and frustrating leak. Derick takes up the story: "I began using the bike on regular runs and club meets and noticed the rear of the petrol tank was dripping fuel. This led me to suspect a leaky tap, but on closer investigation I found that the tank's inner seams were badly rusted and that petrol had begun misting around the seams and fuel lines, giving the appearance of faulty taps. I was gutted, because a repair would mean taking the bike off the road.

"Following BSAOC advice I sent the tank to expert Nick Paravani whose repairs included the addition of two new sides and a section of the base. I was amazed to learn from Nick that original RGS petrol tanks were made from nine component parts. Another club member put me in touch with The Dent Doctor who arranged to meet me when he came north on a fishing trip to the Tay. He returned home with two salmon and a BSA Gold Star petrol tank which he expertly chromed, painted and pin-striped to a stunning and durable finish.

"Then more use introduced a spell of poor starting," Derick winced. "So I took the bike to Simon Linford Engineering – the same knowledgeable friend who held my hand in Yorkshire when I was negotiating to buy the bike. Simon discovered that the magneto points were failing to operate properly and subsequently rewound the armature, fitted a new magneto cam ring plus a set of points – parts which immediately restored one-kick starting. Simon also rewound the dynamo and opened up the joy of moonlight driving to me. I remember many starlight blasts to my local chippy," chuckled Derick.

"Then an erratic tickover was attributed to a worn carburettor. Once that was renewed, the engine responded with new vigour and a delightful tickover. I've since enjoyed years of trouble-free riding until last year, when the battery began to lose its charge overnight. A new battery failed to sort the problem. So a friend fitted an isolation switch across the battery when his electrical meter traced leaking current to a faulty winding on the voltage control box. I bought a solid state replacement which I've yet to fit. However, my prized Goldie is now behaving and running extremely well."

Many other classic enthusiasts share Derick's passion for BSA's venerable twin. The cooking roadster pre-unit twins with softly-tuned engines would plod on forever. The A10 is a true classic and fortunately Golden Flash models are numerous and great value machines. Tales of engine seizures caused by premature failure of the 'vulnerable' timing bush are largely just scare stories. The A10 is a mechanically robust design. It is also an easy classic to fettle, giving long and rewarding service when properly maintained. Although Derick's Rocket Gold Star has benefitted from SRM's timing bush conversion, this is normally a mod recommended for highly tuned, competition engines.

Desirable and genuine Rocket Gold Stars are becoming scarce to the extent that even replicas are beginning to fetch dizzy premiums. I queried Derick as to why the RGS appealed so much to him and this was his reply: "BSA got the Rocket Gold Star styling right first time. The twin Smiths instruments mounted high above the headlamp and the chrome and silver petrol tank with its oversized badges are fabulous cues to BSA's competition singles. The siamesed Goldie exhausts, alloy wheels and drilled 190mm front brake look fantastic. The same can be said of the scratcher's view over the petrol tank. The engine has plenty of power and the RRT2 gearbox is a must if you want to exploit the lower gears and punch through the ton in third. It's such an exhilarating motorcycle to ride and it's rewarded me with loads of hurls and the occasional fright!

"Some press reports I've read claim that the RGS engine is hard to live with, but mine pussyfoots through towns as easily as it thrashes around the countryside. I've owned many modern and classic bikes, but if I'm being honest with myself, my current Aprilia Tuono has too much power; by contrast the RGS is well behaved, perfectly balanced and has a power-to-weight ratio that is ideal for the road. For my own motorcycling needs the RGS is a fabulous all-rounder and I will never part with it!" ➧


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1: Classic clocks, both Smiths chronometric devices. The tacho is driven from the oil pump, strangely…

2: Little things; the fuel tank should carry this charming breather. Presumably the cylinders sucked fuel too fast for the little hole in the filler cap

3: The forks were BSA's own, and work well as standard, although there's a range of upgrades recommended by the fast lads

4 & 5: Things are simple round the back. The rear stopper is always rod operated (some lesser BSAs used a cable), and the 'crinkle' hub allows QD removal. The speedo drive is from the gearbox, in case you were wondering


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Fortunately, however, Derick was prepared to part with it for a short while to facilitate a test ride. The RGS was warmed up and waiting, and Derick supplied the necessary instructions. Leaving the choke and manual advance as set, the footrest is folded upwards to permit the kickstarter's swing through. You gently ease the engine past compression and, after tickling the single Monobloc carb, swing down on the kickstarter and simultaneously blip the throttle. Get this right and the rider is instantly rewarded with a mighty bellow from the Goldie silencer.

I selected first and fed in the light action clutch, only to wobble ungainly across the road and abruptly mount the opposite verge, before precariously wobbling down the road again, dragging my feet, with the engine revving its nuts off! Much guffawing drifted from the car park. In the excitement of firing up the RGS I'd forgotten to bring the footrest back into play and couldn't find it with my probing right boot – instead I'd inadvertently tapped the box into neutral!

My first thought was that Derick would be thinking he'd loaned his precious to an absolute cretin. My second was to save face by thumping down the road in first gear then use my throttle hand to drop down the offending footrest as the throttle snapped shut and stabilised forward momentum in engine braking mode – perhaps only possible with a RRT2 box, I mused. But the technique worked, and soon bike and novice were on their way again with a gratifying roar.

The handling instils much confidence, but the brakes require planning ahead, especially if clipping along country roads. The slick and utterly dependable RRT2 gearbox seemed quite 'normal' although its subtle ability to build rapid speed in the lower gears is obvious. The clutch was a delight, the transmission quiet. No false neutrals appeared at any time during my flight and the box remained slick and positive in selecting all the available four gears. At all times the RGS felt secure and planted, and ripping through bends became a sheer joy. Over bumpy roads the rear shocks outclassed the front forks, which felt soft and under-damped. Progressive springs and heavier fork oil would help to help stiffen up the front end.

The engine is strong and lively; outright astonishing to an RGS newcomer when accelerating hard in first gear. It's easily capable of launching the unsuspecting pilot into orbit. There was no excessive tappet noise during the long burn either, despite the alloy cylinder head. Unfortunately, the test day roads proved damp and greasy, restricting any urge to really open her up – even so, acceleration in second and third gears proved very impressive. The symphony exiting from the single Goldie silencer was extremely addictive, taunting the rider to ignore the damp and winding roads and let the engine's full potential loose.

Suddenly, in full flight at around 4000rpm in third gear, a loud chattering interrupted the fun. Derick had warned about engine vibes he had recently experienced at 60mph. The vibrations intensified with revs and sounded similar to a severely pinking engine. Fortunately I'd experienced a similar attack on my own Devimead Lightning and as soon as I stuffed my glove under the petrol tank's end, the thrumming ceased – either the tank was loose or its dampening rubber was adrift. A simple fix, much to Derick's amusement.

On country roads the modern Avon Speedmasters brush aside pot holes and road debris with barely a flick of the RGS's head. With its short bars (not clip-ons) and excellent ergonomics (kind to your back), it's a comfy ride aboard this red, black and chrome missile. The dual seat cossets your bum too, and the hand and foot controls are well positioned, as are the rearsets, once your feet work out where they are!

Best of all, when a coffee break beckons, you'll park up and find yourself engaged in friendly conversation. The Rocket Gold Star's a crowd-pleaser, no question. CBG



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VINCENT
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WORDS BY ALAN CATHCART **PHOTOS BY** KEL EDGE



TO BE INVITED to ride a historic and unrestored 66-year-old motorcycle, that's almost certainly the last 100% original example of the most desirable series production model ever made, by any manufacturer, is an act of generosity as well as implied trust on the part of its owner Nicolas Dourassoff. It was important to repay such generosity by bringing it back in one piece. For the ex-Jack Ehret 1951 Vincent Black Lightning is living history on two wheels, with just 8682 kilometres from new on its 300kph Smiths clock, almost every one of them in anger.

These kilos now include my two dozen laps at the Carole race circuit on the outskirts of Paris, to which Nicolas brought the battle-scarred warrior. It had been recommissioned for use by Patrick Godet for me to ride on a regular sunny afternoon track day. However, so that I could properly sample how a Black Lightning should perform without paying due deference to the bike's age, Godet also brought along a recently built 100% authentic Black Lightning Replica which he'd created for another of his customers, Englishman Peter Fox. Peter had already covered 1200 street miles on it, pronouncing it "huge fun, and incredibly impressive once you get it revving, when it feels like you're being pulled along by a huge bungee cord!"

Thanks, Peter – I couldn't put it better myself. That is indeed the impression you get on the Ehret Vincent once you see its Smiths Chronometric rev-counter's needle track its way with traditionally jerkiness to the 3800rpm mark, whereupon the bungee cord releases and you're swept to what must have been unthought-of speed by mid-20th century standards. Nothing much happens below those revs, though, so you have to coax the engine into meaningful action with a dab on the Ferodo clutch's light-action lever. But from that access point to its inbuilt poke onwards, the paragon of performance – that all the Black Lightning's records and race victories proclaim it to be – makes itself apparent.

In no time at all the rev counter's showing the 6000rpm mark, at which point you must stab the extended gearlever downwards with your right foot to hit a higher ratio of the four available. There are such massive amounts of torque even by today's standards that the Vincent just lunges forward in the next higher gear when you get back on the throttle again, noting as you do so that its action seems unaccountably smooth, considering how worn the self-evidently ancient cables sprouting from the right handlebar and leading to the twin Amal 10TT9 carbs appear to be.

That's because, in recommissioning this retroracer for track action in accordance with Nicolas Dourassoff's belief that historic bikes should be seen and heard in action, not stuck in a garage on permanent static display, Patrick Godet has been at pains not to destroy the truth of time.

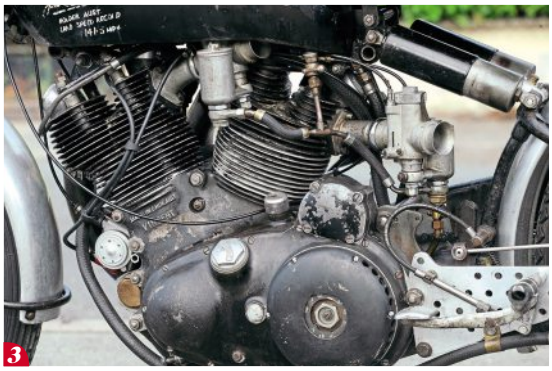
"Once Nicolas decided to preserve the bike in its current state, and not ask me to restore it – which was 1000% the right decision – I wanted to make sure that all the new parts I fitted were as least obvious as possible," he says. "But to make it safe to be ridden took quite a lot of work, because the engine parts were very worn, and the crankshaft had been repaired in a funny way. So we stripped the bike totally, and rebuilt it using the original spec parts we have manufactured using the original Black Lightning drawings that we've obtained. But they're all inside where you can't see them, so while the throttle and brake cables may look old, all the internal wires are brand new, to give a smooth action. We've also converted it to run it on petrol rather than methanol, since of course we now have much better fuel available today than they did back then."



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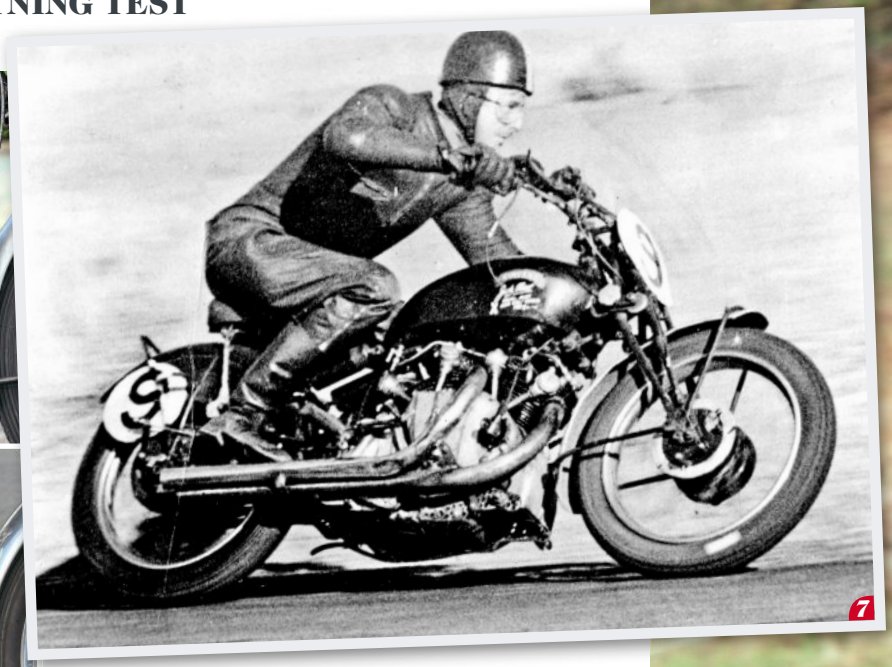
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However, even though the crankcases were quite worn, they're still the original ones with the main bearings resleeved, rather than Godet's modern magnesium copies which he's used on Peter Fox's Replica. He has, however, fitted new pistons, liners, valves, dual valve springs, Mark II Vincent cams, cam followers and oil pump to the Ehret bike's V-twin motor, while retaining all the original parts which these have replaced for Dourassoff to hold on to.

The same thing applies for the original 20 inch rear wheel, which has been replaced on the bike by a 19 incher, on the grounds 20in racing tyres are no longer available. Now shod with rear Avon GP rubber matched to a front 21in ribbed Avon Racing cover, the Ehret Vincent tracked well through Carole's Mickey-Mouse infield section, with good grip delivered exiting either of its pair of hairpin bends, which on most racebikes ask for bottom gear. Not on the Lightnings, though, thanks to their reserves of torque and the way they break into a gallop very quickly in second gear once you've straightened up, just by fingering the clutch lever lightly to send the surprisingly responsive engine's revs soaring to the sound of thunder from the straight exhausts, whose stirring hard-edged note denotes heaps of valve overlap.

1-4: Comparing the original and the replica Vincents is an illuminating exercise. Similarities in purpose and differences in execution have provoked much debate at *CBG* HQ

5 & 6: One area in which motorcycle performance has improved beyond all recognition is here. Vincent brakes were entirely top flight back in the faraway long ago, but today they are just not up to it. On road or track



7: As it was: Jack Ehret equalling Geoff Duke's outright lap record at Mount Druitt in 1955

Above: Riding the replica. Sir Alan gets all the tough jobs…

Below: Boys having fun. Sir Alan riding (hard) with Ehret bike owner Nicolas Dourasoff on his Egli Vincent 500



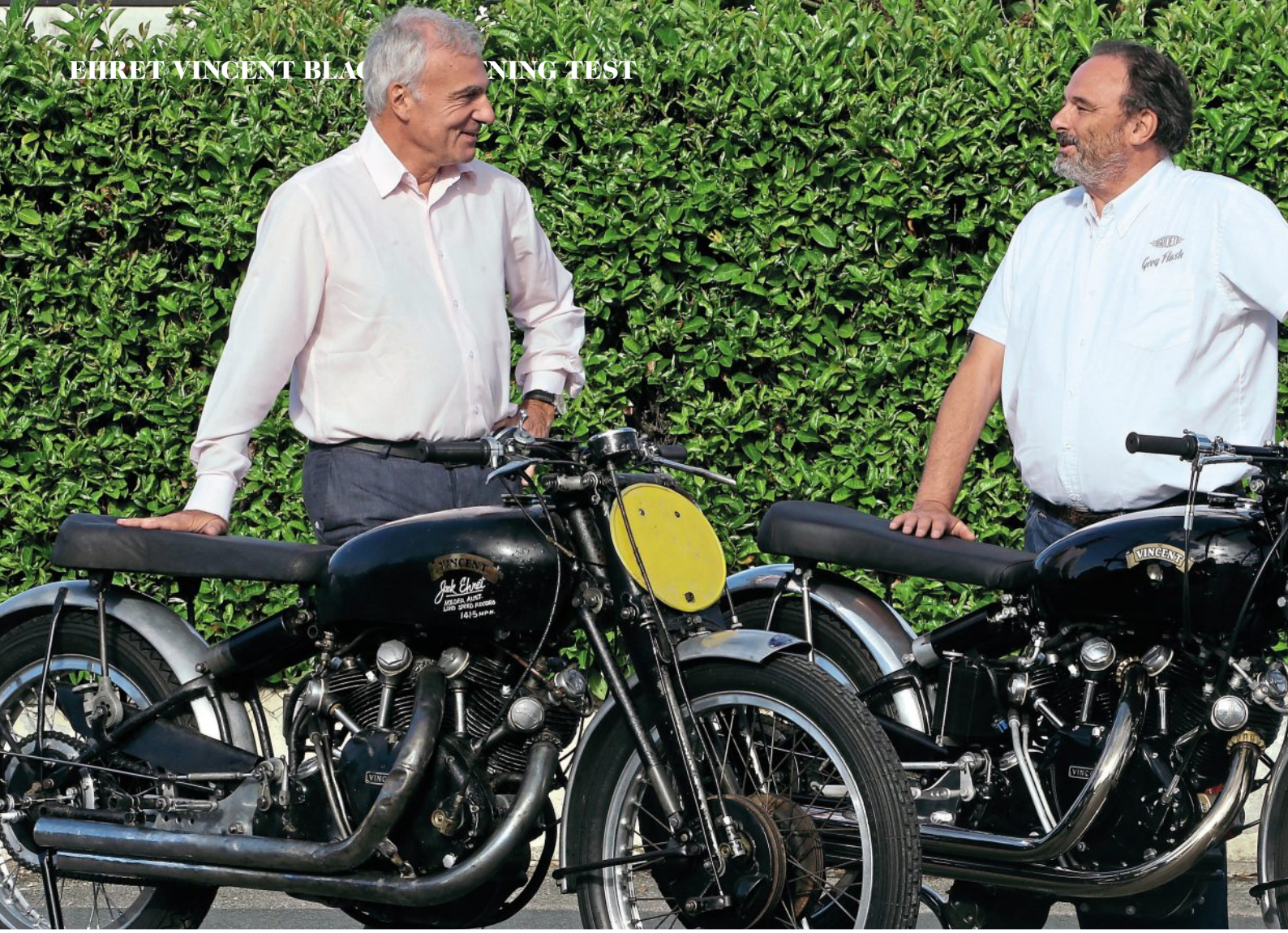
When that happens you find yourself thundering past the R6 Yamahas and 600 Hondas that have out-manoeuvred you in the infield section, only to let them fly past you once again when you anchor up miles earlier for the next hairpin – just as they're probably about to hit top gear!

The brakes on the Vincent are easily the worst thing about riding it, and you need heaps of respect for your braking markers, because basically there's absolutely nothing held in reserve – instead, what never works very well to begin with gets progressively worse as the pair of tiny 7in (178mm) single leading-shoe drum brakes fitted at each end (the extra one at the rear for Ehret's sidecar use) fade massively. These, incidentally, carry brand-new Godet replica aluminium brake plates rather than the original Lightning magnesium items, since these are too fragile to be safe, and Patrick is still working on producing magnesium replicas. I doubt they'll work any better than these do when they come along – and the ones on the Fox Replica are just as bad. Probably no single aspect of two-wheeled engineering has improved so much in the past 66 years as brakes, and for a 150mph motorcycle the Vincent's stoppers are definitely on the weak side. Plan ahead!

The fact that the Black Lightning didn't stop very well was probably not perceived by the factory as being an issue, inasmuch as other much slower bikes weren't any better than a motorcycle primarily designed to go fast in a straight line. Still, the Lightning won three Isle of Man TT races, as well as many short circuit races around the world, where presumably its massive engine performance coupled with rear suspension that was streets better than anything else on two wheels back then, more than made up for the braking issue.

Its focus on straight-line performance is also perhaps one reason that the Black Lightning's gearchange is so awkward, so that thanks to the straight exhausts running under the right footrest, it's very hard to get your foot under the lever in order to change down for a corner. Patrick Godet has fitted a sort of extension sleeve to the hollow foot lever which helps a little, but it means you have to take your foot off the rest to grope around under the lever to hoick it upwards in order to shift down under braking – a necessary assistance to those poor stoppers. The problem is certainly caused by modern riding boots being much more robust and protective than the soft, thin ones used Back Then, making the space left by Vincent between the pipes and the footrest insufficient today, and the same problem occurs on the Fox Replica with an identical exhaust system.

"I often set off from a traffic light or stop sign in second gear," says Peter Fox. "There's so much torque you can do that, without slipping the clutch too badly."



Riding Peter's Replica alongside the Ehret artefact at Carole allowed me to give the Black Lightning's handling a good cross-examination, and I was genuinely impressed how light and precise the steering was, and how much turn speed I could keep up even with the skinny 21in front tyre fitted.

I remember testing Patrick Godet's Vincent Speciale, the 1000cc Lightning-ised racebike he brought over to Britain in the mid-1980s, on which ex-GP rider Hubert Rigal defeated the cream of British Manx Norton riders to win the Vintage Race of the Year at the tight Brands Hatch short circuit – not a Vincent track, you might think! – and again at Snetterton. As an ex-Vincent owner who'd been distinctly unimpressed by the handling of my Series C Rapide, I was amazed back then at how well the Godet Vincent steered. The same thing is true today of the Lightning Replica, which moreover displayed no trace of the dreaded shimmy the Girdraulic forks will expose you to if the links are the slightest bit worn. I can't say I rode the Ehret bike hard enough to find out if it did that, but the Replica was very confidence inspiring in turns, as well as gloriously torquey and fast once you get the revs dialled up above that 3800rpm power threshold.

"The Lightning is not a bike designed for race circuit use," says Patrick Godet. "If you want to do road racing you must make an exhaust which goes underneath the engine so you can have a proper gear lever, because with the two straight pipes it is not nice for the rider. If you look at pictures of Black Lightnings being road raced they always have the gear lever raised higher, which is just as bad and is why we are extending the lever. I have never quite understood the way they did that, but it has so much more performance that you don't need to change many gears – it goes in every gear!"

I'll say. Throw a leg over the seat, and you discover the Vincent is low and narrow beneath you – it feels much smaller than a 150mph bike of the Fab Fifties has any right to. The one-piece handlebar is quite narrow and flat, but with upturned ends which deliver a comfortable leaned-forward mile-eating stance, while still giving good leverage in the tight turns that proliferate at Carole.

The Vincent's low-speed handling is slightly ponderous, though, with the distinctive Girdraulic forks' forged-aluminium girder blades describing a lazy arc as you lean into a turn, feeling all the while like they're about to fold in on themselves. But this never happens, of course, and instead the handling becomes more assured as you up the pace, with greater precision in steering than the relatively primitive telescopic forks of the day. No wonder John Britten and Claude Fior, two farsighted modern day technical gurus who are both sadly no longer with us, developed alternative versions of the Vincent blade forks three decades later for their exercises in alternative two-wheeled thinking.

Above: Owner Nicolas Dourasoff with Patrick Godet

1 & 2: Both bikes carry speedos to match their tachos; the kph clock looks more impressive

3: Out on the track. Times change, things move on…

4: Castlereagh Speed Trials, 1952. Jack Ehret and his machine





1



2



3

By the standards of the day the Vincent's ride quality was excellent, too, the cantilever rear suspension with a single hydraulic damper and twin spring boxes under the saddle eating up the few bumps on the Carole circuit.

But it's that torquey, great-sounding 84 x 90mm 998cc V-twin engine that's the real star of the show in the Back Lightning. Producing 70bhp at 5600rpm, it makes every one of those horses count, delivering a level of performance that, while more than satisfactory today, must have been truly mind-blowing by the standards of Back Then.

Acceleration is forceful above the 3800rpm threshold, and with the crack of the straight exhaust pipes echoing in your ear, it's a real thrill to wind open the light-action throttle, and to feel the wind on your helmet intensify as the needle cranks round that speedo parked in front of the revcounter. Phil Irving's masterpiece motor delivers a level of performance that nothing else could live with on 1950s roads – or tracks.

Nicolas Dourassoff's ex-Jack Ehret Vincent Black Lightning is not just an ultra-desirable collector's item, but provides an entirely faithful window onto the refined but still raw-edged level of performance which Philip Vincent's motorcycles delivered over 60 years ago. How wonderful that its new owner rides and enjoys it, rather than wrapping it up indoors as the mechanical objet d'art it undoubtedly is. Meanwhile – I wonder where my Rapide ended up?



4

HISTORY ON WHEELS

More than six decades ago, the Vincent Black Shadow delivered the most performance from a street-legal vehicle that money could buy, on two wheels or four.

Officially timed at 122mph, it out-sped the Jaguar XK120 sports two-seater which was then the world's fastest production motor car, making the Shadow the first true superbike of the modern era. Vincent's countless road racing and speed record successes testified to the inherent performance wrapped up in the British firm's 50° V-twin engine – so much so that attempts to run a 1000cc Clubmans TT in the Isle of Man foundered after just three races, all won by Vincents with the rest nowhere. Indeed, in the final 1950 edition, only Vincents took part.

Nothing else on two wheels could compete with the vivid performance and exceptional handling – by 1950s standards – delivered by the 998cc motorcycle created by legendary Australian engineer Phil Irving, the man who would later produce the Repco V8 engine which powered Jack Brabham and Denny Hulme to a pair of Formula One world titles in 1966/67, a decade after the sad demise of the Vincent marque.

The ultimate Vincent was the Series C Black Lightning, a production version of the bike on which Rollie Free had broken the AMA's Land Speed Record in 1948 on the Bonneville Salt Flats, and with a similar engine specification. First exhibited at that year's Earls Court show and available only to special order, the standard Black Lightning was supplied in racing trim, with rev counter, Elektron magnesium alloy brake plates, special racing tyres on alloy wheel rims, rear-set foot controls, a solo seat and aluminium mudguards. This reduced the stripped-out Black Lightning's dry weight to 360lb against the road-going Black Shadow's 458lb complete with lights and a horn. Its 998cc air-cooled high-camshaft dry sump ohv 50° V-twin engine was upgraded with higher-performance racing components, including Mark II Vincent cams with a higher lift and more overlap, stronger highly polished 85 ton Vibrac conrods with a large-diameter caged roller-bearing big end, polished flywheels, and Specialoid pistons delivering a 13:1 compression for methanol fuel. The combustion chamber spheres were polished, as were the valve rockers and streamlined larger inlet ports blended to special adapters, and fed by twin 1¼in (32mm) Amal 10TT9 carburettors.

A manual-advance magnesium-bodied Lucas KVF-TT magneto ran 34° advance as standard ignition timing, with two inch-diameter straight-through thin-gauge exhaust pipes removing hot gas. The Ferodo single-plate clutch's cover featured centre and rear cooling holes, while the four-speed gearbox was beefed-up to transmit the extra power, amounting to at least 70bhp at 5600rpm, compared with a road-going Black Shadow's 55bhp, and a top speed of 150mph or even more.

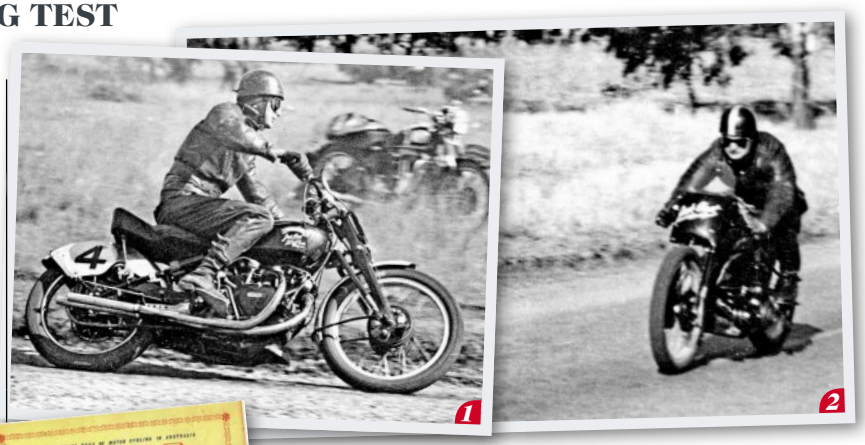
The Black Lightning's genesis is the stuff of legend for Vincent enthusiasts, and it essentially began with London Vincent dealer Jack Surtees, the father of future world champion and Vincent factory apprentice, John. He'd been racing a Norton sidecar with some success, and in 1947 ordered a Rapide with some special tuning parts. This engine was built at Vincent's Stevenage plant alongside a second such motor, which was then loaned to the firm's experimental tester, George Brown, who gave the ensuing bike its competition debut at Cadwell Park at Easter 1947.

For the unlimited capacity Hutchinson 100 race at Dunholme later in the year, Brown's special Rapide was further improved, allowing him to finish second in the race to Ted Frend's works 500cc AJS Porcupine – a bike that would win the inaugural 500cc World Championship in 1949. However, unlike the AJS, the Vincent could be refitted with silencers for Brown to ride it the 120 miles back to the factory after the race!

In this guise, it was tested soon after by journalist Charlie Markham of *Motor Cycling* magazine, who was ecstatic in his praise for the special Vincent, pinching the title of Rudyard Kipling's poem Gunga Din to describe it. In this a British army officer's life is saved by a lowly Indian water bearer, prompting him to remark: "You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din". Markham's inference was that the Vincent's capabilities far exceeded his own, and the nickname stuck, so that Brown's increasingly successful bike henceforth became known as Gunga Din. Strange, but true…

Gunga Din's specification was largely adopted on Vincent's new production Black Shadow – the uprated version of the Rapide that famously needed a special 150mph speedo instead of the standard 120mph item. The engine of the new model, at first produced in very limited numbers, was stove-enamelled black, and to assist with publicity, Gunga Din also had its engine painted black, with Brown continuing to race the machine to successive British hillclimb, sprint and short circuit victories, including a win in the Unlimited capacity class in the first motorcycle race meeting held on the new Silverstone circuit.

Phillip Vincent agreed to sell a specially-prepared Black Shadow to wealthy American enthusiast John Edgar. The machine was to be ridden by Rollie Free at Bonneville Salt Flats in an attempt on the AMA's Land Speed Record, which at that stage was held by Harley-Davidson. To meet the scheduled September 1948 date for the attempt, much midnight oil was burned at the factory to produce the necessary go-faster bits, and Edgar's engine was run-in on the test-bed before being installed in a Black Shadow chassis and tested at Gransden airfield. With Brown aboard, it ran easily to 143mph and would have gone faster had the runway been long enough. In Utah, Free, famously clothed in just a pair of swimming trunks and with his legs stuck out behind him, succeeded in smashing the AMA record, leaving it at 150.313mph over the measured flying mile.





1: Ehret racing the Lightning at Bathurst in solo form, again in 1953

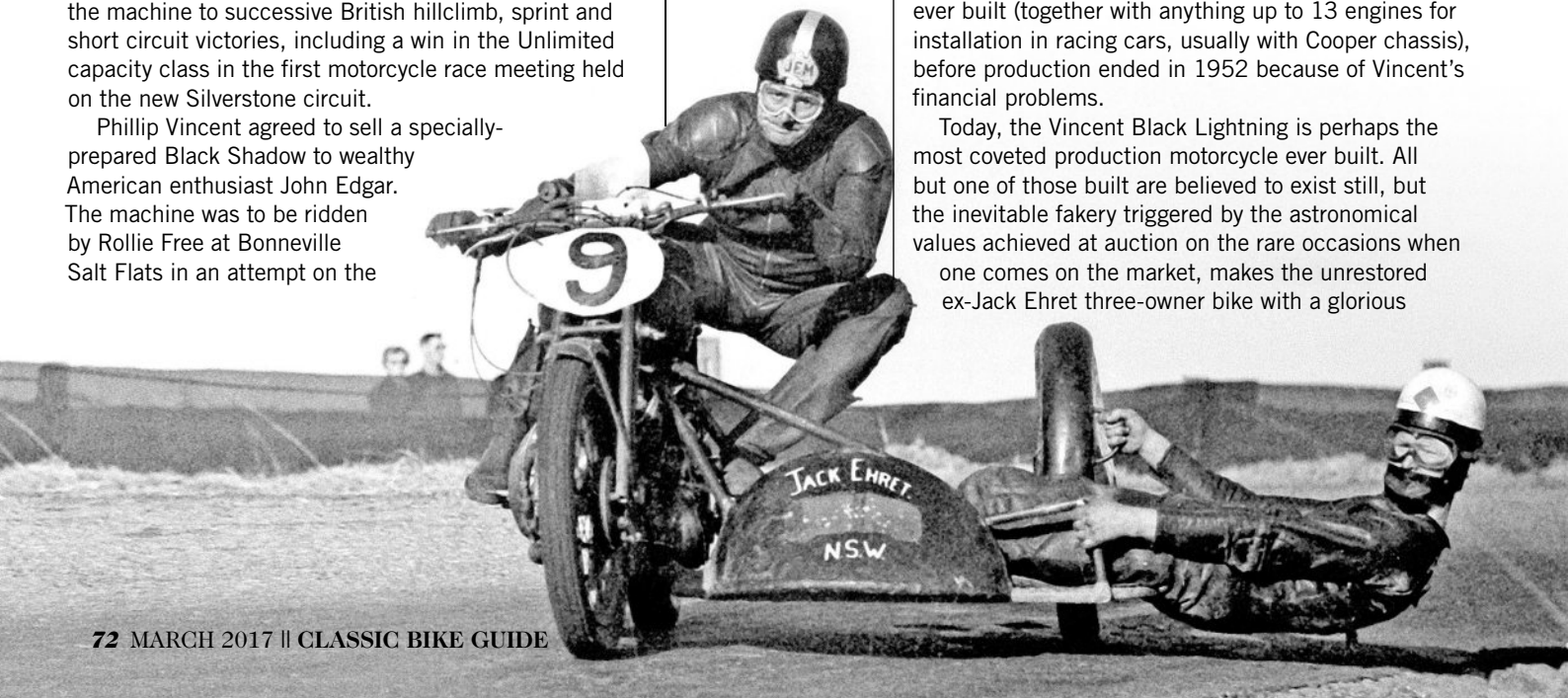
2: Ehret's best run of over 149mph at Gunnedah

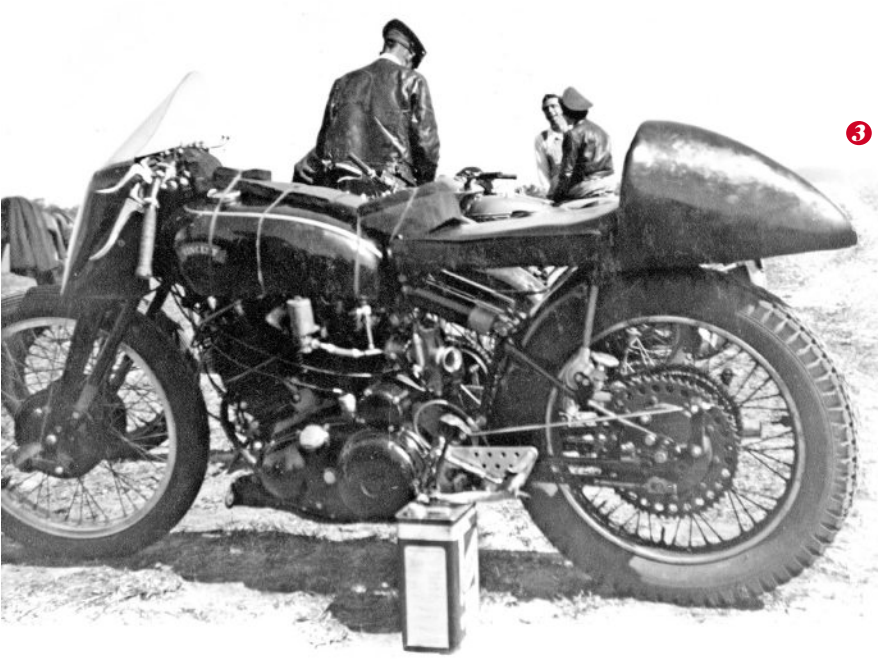
Below: Ehret at Mount Druitt in 1953 with passenger Stan Blundell

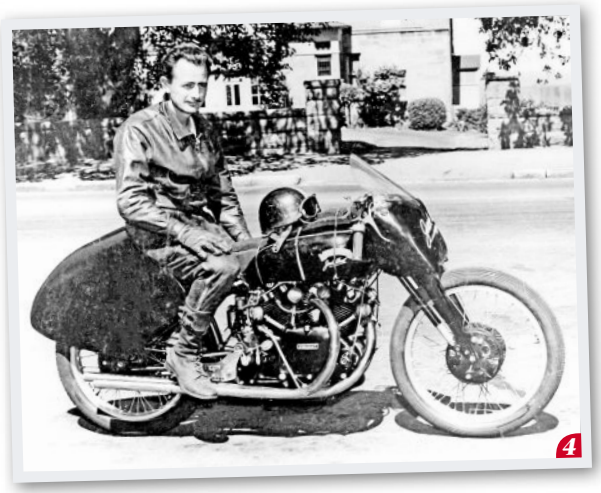
The idea of producing a special racing model based on Free's record-breaker was a logical progression in what was to be a very big year for the Vincent HRD company. London's Earls Court show, which had not been held since 1938 owing to the outbreak of war, was revived in November 1948, to tremendous support from British manufacturers. There, Vincent launched its new Series C V-twin models, now fitted with the company's own Girdraulic forks and hydraulic rear damper, alongside the new, more affordable single-cylinder Comet, and the thrilling Black Lightning production racer, details of which were kept secret until just before the show, mainly because it was still being built right up to the day before the show.

The completed Black Lightning caused a sensation at Earls Court, despite its then-enormous £400 price tag (plus a hefty £108 purchase tax). It's generally accepted that only 33 complete customer versions – all Series C except for one Series D model – in addition to Rollie Free's first 1948 Series B prototype were ever built (together with anything up to 13 engines for installation in racing cars, usually with Cooper chassis), before production ended in 1952 because of Vincent's financial problems.

Today, the Vincent Black Lightning is perhaps the most coveted production motorcycle ever built. All but one of those built are believed to exist still, but the inevitable fakery triggered by the astronomical values achieved at auction on the rare occasions when one comes on the market, makes the unrestored ex-Jack Ehret three-owner bike with a glorious







unchallengeable racing history, a rare and immensely desirable slice of motorcycle history.

The first two 'Lightning-ised' engines for Surtees, and Brown's Gunga Din were numbered F10AB/1A/70 and F10AB/1A/71 respectively, and the special Shadow sold to John Edgar in July 1948 was F10AB/1B/900. Subsequent Lightnings all carried the '1C' middle number, and the third of these to leave the factory, F10AB/1C/1803, was sent to Sydney, Australia in March 1949 and purchased by champion sidecar racer Les Warton.

In the four years from 1949-1952 beginning with Warton's machine, six complete Black Lightnings plus one engine went to Vincent agents in Australia, the company's second largest export market after the US, with two more privately imported, one via Singapore. One of the eight such bikes thus imported was raced in 1949 by flamboyant Sydney rider Tony McAlpine, who became virtually unbeatable in Unlimited class events aboard the Black Lightning, winning 12 major races from 13 starts. Only sheared rear sprocket bolts prevented a perfect score when he had the 1950 Australian TT at Bathurst in the bag.

For the 1951 European season, McAlpine decided to try his hand overseas. He secured a 7R AJS for the 350cc class, and finished 13th in the Isle of Man Junior TT at 83mph. In between races, Tony worked at the Vincent factory at Stevenage, and with the factory's blessing, assembled his own Black Lightning with engine number F10AB/1C/7305 and frame number RC9205. This was completed on June 5, 1951, and tested on July 19 at Gransden airstrip alongside Gunga Din, achieving a speed of 130mph in third gear and according to McAlpine out-accelerating Gunga Din by a clear 30 yards on each standing start sprint run.

3: The Less Pleasing Side of the Vincent, according to designer Phil Irving

4: Ehret publicity photo, taken before his record attempt at Gunnedah in January 1953

Below: Jack Ehret Motorcycles, Gardiner's Road, Mascot, complete with his Jaguar Mk.VII parked outside



Tony's final race appearance in Britain in 1951 before sailing for home was at Boreham Aerodrome, a very fast circuit, in a programme which included an Unlimited race. For the meeting, Phillip Vincent invited Tony to ride Gunga Din, and he did so with great verve, sliding speedway-style through the turns to demolish a field that contained riders of the calibre of Geoff Duke on a factory Norton. McAlpine then sailed for home, taking with him the new, unraced Black Lightning.

However, while he originally had no plans to return to Europe, after receiving a generous sponsorship offer from Shell, plus the nomination as Australian representative for the TT, he decided to return for 1952. To save money and stay clear of injury he didn't race during his brief return visit to Australia, and put the Vincent – still unraced – up for sale.

The £500 price asked for the Black Lightning would have bought a couple of nice houses in Sydney at the time, and buyers were scarce. One of the few riders with sufficient funds to buy the Lightning was car dealer Jack Forrest, a talented rider who always had competitive machinery.

At the 1951 Australian TT held at Lowood in Queensland in June, Forrest was the star of the show, winning the Junior race on a KTT Velocette and the Senior on a Manx Norton. He had a third mount for the meeting, a Vincent Black Shadow on which to contest the Unlimited class, and he was out in front in that race too before a split fuel line sprayed methanol over the rear tyre. Although he controlled the resulting skid, his race was over.

Forrest had now seen that a well-tuned Vincent on a fast circuit was still superior to even the best Norton, so when the opportunity to acquire McAlpine's unraced Black Lightning came along, it proved irresistible.

He took possession of the bike in time for the first meeting held at Mount Druitt where he set a sizzling pace in practice, but lasted less than a lap in the race when the big twin oiled a spark plug. At the Australian TT at Bathurst one month later Forrest was again spectacularly quick in practice, reportedly topping 140mph down Conrod Straight. In the programme-ending Senior Unlimited TT, Harry Hinton made a slick getaway from the push start and led over the mountain on the first lap, only to have Forrest blast past his Norton single on the first run down Conrod Straight as if he were standing still.

Across the line to complete the first lap, Forrest had the front wheel pawing the air, and rocketed up Mountain Straight with Hinton trailing in his wake.





A few hundred metres later, at Quarry Bend, it all went wrong, and Forrest and the Lightning clouted the fence, without serious injury and with mainly superficial damage to the bike. The experience seemed to break the love affair with the Vincent, for Forrest set out to acquire a new Manx Norton, and placed the Lightning for sale with Sydney dealer Burling and Simmons.

There it sat for some months until it was bought for the same £500 price Forrest had paid for it by Jack Ehret, 29, who himself had two suburban Sydney motorcycle shops. He had Vincent experience too, and had actually won the race at Mount Druitt on a loaned Rapide after Forrest had oiled the plug. With a fledgling business to run, Ehret wasn't exactly flush with funds, but knew that if he didn't get hold of the Lightning, one of his racing rivals would. And so F10AB/1C/7305 found a new home, where it would remain for the next 47 years.

'Black Jack' Ehret's experience as a crowd-pleasing daredevil at Mascot Speedway and elsewhere stood him in good stead when it came to controlling the Lightning, and his first major outing at the Australian TT at the Little River circuit west of Melbourne on Boxing Day 1952 saw him finish second to Maurice Quincey's Manx Norton in the Senior Unlimited TT. At that time the Australian land speed record was constantly under attack, usually from Vincent riders, so in January 1953, Ehret selected a remote stretch of road between Gunnedah and Tamworth in western NSW to challenge Les Warton's Vincent record of 122.6mph. Despite constant minor problems, which included breaking the gear lever on the first run when he recorded a one-way speed of 149.6mph, and breaking an oil ring in the rear cylinder, he averaged an officially timed 141.509mph to smash the record.

Ehret claimed the attempt had cost him in excess of £1000, but he considered it well worth it in sales promotion for his business to earn the coveted certificate from the Auto Cycle Council of Australia – even if on his way back to Sydney he was booked by the police for travelling at 38mph in a 30mph zone on his Vincent record-breaker. Must have been the kilometre speedo!

Ehret's crown as Australia's fastest man was short-lived, though, with West Australian Harry Gibson, also Vincent mounted, raising the record to 144.90mph four months later. Then in December the same year, Col Crothers on his Vincent set not just a new motorcycle record, but the fastest time for a car or bike at 146.40mph.

Over the next five years, Jack Ehret and the Black Lightning record-breaker were regular fixtures at Australian road race meetings, with the Vincent appearing in both solo and sidecar guise, often both in the same day, with Stan Blundell in the chair. Ehret and the Lightning wound up Australian Title points leaders in 1954 ahead of a host of famous names. Undoubtedly its proudest moment as a solo came at the much vaunted International meeting at Mount Druitt in February 1955, where 500cc world champion Geoff Duke was the star attraction with his works four-cylinder Gilera. Duke had demolished the opposition in his previous starts on his Australian tour, but on his home track, Jack Ehret was fired-up for

Above: The Vincent's unique (at the time) suspension systems were advanced for their time, and work well, if demanding a certain familiarity. Rear wheel is fitted with two sprockets – the other's for sidecar haulage

Below: Ehret riding to two wins in his final appearance on the Lightning at Oran Park in 1978





action, and fancied his chances in the Unlimited TT. Reporting on his tour in the British motorcycle press, Duke wrote: "Ehret made a poor start in the Unlimited event, whereas I was first away, and piled on the coals from the beginning. Thereafter I was able to keep an eye on the Vincent rider approaching the hairpin as I accelerated away from it. Although he was unable to make up for his bad start, Ehret rode to such purpose that he equalled my fastest lap, and we now share the honour of being the lap record holders." After this scintillating performance, Jack then bolted on the chair for him and Blundell to win the Sidecar race!

But there were low points too, such as a massive crash at Mount Druitt in October 1954. Ehret was leading the Unlimited TT when he entered the corner onto the top straight too fast and fell heavily, with the Lightning somersaulting down the track before it was struck by Keith Conley's Matchless G45, which had been right on Jack's rear wheel when he crashed. With both riders lying unconscious on the track, third place man Bob Brown stopped to render assistance until officials arrived. Both Jack and Keith recovered with little more than bruises and concussion, but both the Vincent and the G45 were considerably the worse for wear.

One win that had eluded Jack Ehret so far was the Australian TT at Bathurst, but he put that right at Easter 1956, winning the Sidecar TT with passenger George Donkin. Perhaps with this goal achieved, Jack and the Vincent became less frequent competitors, and when Mount Druitt closed in 1958 the Black Lightning was mothballed for 10 years.

In 1968 Ehret made a comeback of sorts at Oran Park, with the Lightning now fitted with 16in wheels and John 'Tex' Coleman in the chair.

Despite the long layoff, Jack didn't disgrace himself, finishing a fighting third in the sidecar race. But a further decade passed before he brought the Black Lightning out for one more outing, again at Oran Park. By this time, the Vincent was in a different class – Historic – and Jack showed all his old fire to demolish the field to win both his races by almost a complete lap.

Above: Nothing unnecessary at all. The 1000cc V-twin carries no flab. Every components is there for a mechanical reason. Non fashion – immortality in metal

Its last appearance was at the then-new Eastern Creek circuit in 1993 where Ehret lapped the entire field in winning both Historic Sidecar races passengered by his son John, then removed the chair for John to ride it in two solo races, thus fulfilling a promise he'd made to him. According to Jack, the Vincent finished on the rostrum in 80% of the races he entered during his 40 years of racing the bike.

Thereafter, the Lightning began a long hibernation in a Sydney shed while Jack Ehret started a different life running nightclubs in the Philippines, before it was finally put up for sale in 1999, not long before Jack Ehret passed away unexpectedly on July 7, 2001, aged 78.

The new owner was Franc Trento, owner of Melbourne-based Eurobrit Motorbikes, and a noted Vincent enthusiast who fortunately determined that the Lightning would not be restored and retired to a museum, but would be kept in exactly the same 'as used' condition he'd acquired it in. It had been returned to its original specification with 21in front and 20in rear wheels, with a very rare big-fin drum front brake and a double-sided rear one for Sidecar use. Far from becoming a static piece, the Lightning was then regularly displayed, including taking to the track at the Broadford Bike Bonanza at Easter 2009 and 2010. But in 2014 Trento sold the bike to French collector Nicolas Dourassoff, who shipped it to France, where local Vincent expert Patrick Godet has now sympathetically recommissioned.

In its 66-year existence, Vincent Black Lightning engine number F10/AB/1C/7305, frame number RC 9205 has so far clocked up 8587 kilometres (the kilometre speedo was fitted from new in 'European' specification) and virtually every single metre has been covered in pursuit of glory. And as far as Nicolas Dourassoff is concerned, 7305 isn't ready to be tucked up in bed in a museum just yet. CBG

SPECIAL THANKS
to Old Bike Australasia editor Jim Scaysbrook for supplying the historical data in this article.

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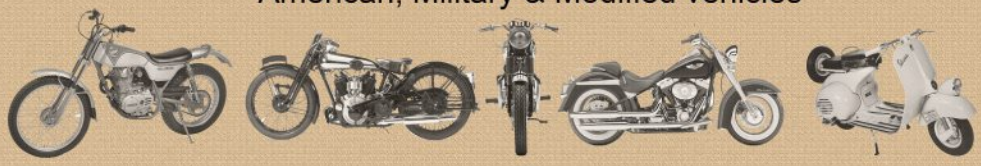
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WORDS & PHOTOS BY GRANT FORD

IT'S A 'MARMITE BIKE' and opinions vary, love it or hate it. When I first spied the ugly nose cone protruding from a crate I thought, that's got Sachs appeal...

One of the founding fathers of two-wheeled transportation and created in 1895, Fichtel & Sachs produced their first motorcycle in 1904. Ernst Sachs always enjoyed a passion for two wheels, especially within the cycle racing fraternity. He was an accomplished engineer who was granted the patent for the Torpedo freewheeling bicycle hub in 1894, just prior to going into partnership with Karl Fichtel. The company continued with ball bearing manufacture before moving on to install small capacity engines into modified bicycle frames.

After Fichtel died in 1911, Sachs took over the remaining shares before he too passed away in 1932, leaving his son Willy to continue the business. Willy fell in with the Nazi party and it is sometimes claimed that every German tank was supplied with Sachs ball bearings and clutches. Post war, Willy was interned by the Americans and upon release committed suicide. The remainder of the Sachs empire had Willy's son Gunter Sachs at the helm, but he preferred the playboy lifestyle and after the death of his first wife, he went on to marry actress Bridget Bardot in 1966, followed by Mirja Larsson, a Swedish model in 1969.

During the Sixties the company took control of the popular DKW brand, producers of the RT125; the motor which formed the basis for BSA's Bantam and got Suzuki moving. The Wankel-powered Hercules W2000 was one of Sachs' achievements, purchasing the motorcycle manufacturer in the late Sixties just prior to Gunter selling his remaining shares in the company. He would follow his father in a tragic way, also committing suicide in 2003.

German company Mannesman bought Sachs in 1987 along with suspension supplier Boge and the name Sachs continues today supplying OE clutches and suspension parts to many manufacturers around the world.

Was the turbulent but brilliant engineering history of Sachs the reason I purchased a B805? No. My biking history resembles most folk; SS50 Honda followed by the two-stroke terrors of the RD and KH, 250s mostly, then on to a CBR600. As I got older and the bank balance looked healthier I launched into the Superbike brigade, including several offerings from the GSX-R range, the ultimate being the 1100R, the last of the oil-cooled beasts. This – along with the Sachs – remains one of the few machines I haven't watched sliding along the road without me still attached to the seat.

Having endured a few years delivering packages around London in the 1990s, where long hours in the saddle were the norm, one particular Suzuki VX800 earned me a good living for over 100k miles; this would influence the Sachs decision. Away from the chaos of the city, a new life beckoned and what else would a country boy require? A Honda Blackbird, obviously. Being skittled by an errant driver on the big Honda was messy and would also influence my Sachs decision; along with the nine speeding points on my licence.



1: Although the heart of the Beast is a Suzuki engine, the eye is too distracted by the rest of it to notice

2: Sachs offered piggyback lights before they became the fashion, an eye-catching vision, even in 2004

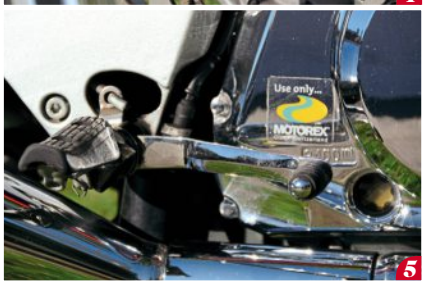
















3: The Grimeca clutch reservoir is tiny while the choke has a strange two-position operation requiring a hot engine before disengagement

4: Braided brake lines are standard, and there's negligible disc wear after 16,500 miles, proving the quality of the parts used

5: The footrests are well positioned, offering comfort on longer trips. The oil level window is tricky to see with just a sidestand to play with

6: Stock Suzuki shaft drive with German BEHR hand-laced rims, not unattractive against the slash-cut Japanese exhaust

7: Leak-free original Bitubo shocks work very well, although corrosion has attacked the chrome plating on the springs

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Although middle age was approaching faster than my bald patch could cope with, I wasn't willing to curtail the passion – no need to explain; I am preaching to the converted here. One Saturday ride, discovering new twisties around which to improve my skills, I found a tiny establishment featuring mainly off-road machines near Selsey Bill; a retirement paradise where Madness took their Morris Minor…

Anyway, in this shop (which sold nothing of any consequence) was a wooden crate, the top was open and protruding forth was the nose cone of the B805. The proprietor was keen to show me the single page brochure that accompanied this German-built masterpiece (he only had the one), explaining that this was number 16 of just 150, and this was my one-time chance to own it. So, after 30 minutes' consideration of the unattractive features of the bike (of which there are plenty) I bought it; a decision I have not regretted since. ➧



Inspired by the success of the B805 (this is a relative thing) what Sachs wanted to build next was this, their Beast. Sadly…

BAVARIAN BITZA

Sachs insisted that their motorbikes and scooters stood out from the crowd and with the 1000cc Beast prototype (originally intended to use a Swedish Folan V-twin engine) and their MadAss moped range they also offered some of that famous German humour. With styling that says 'we do it our way' (maybe one reason the company has faced financial meltdown) Sachs did offer the buyer something unique; individuals' judgement would determine their success.

The original concept came from Target Design, the same minds that produced the Suzuki Katana, and suddenly the vision offers some similarities. They also had a hand in BMW's R100 GS Paris Dakar rep from the 1990s but in 2002 the first of the 150 limited edition B805 machines were launched… onto an indifferent public. At the time one German motoring scribe, who may have enjoyed visiting several Bavarian bierkellers, wrote 'The Sachs B805, creative minds of avant-garde brainstorming, a design forged by a motorcycle manufacturer not weakened, has the chance to go beyond a concept study'. Blimey, somewhat over the top even allowing for the mad translation, and while the designs may have been penned near the snowcapped peaks of the Alps (very 'Sound of Music') all of the 150 bikes were hand-built in the Sachs Nuremberg factory.

That said, this Sachs was not simply a home grown affair, far from it. A tubular steel frame constructed on site accepted the motor and gearbox lifted straight from Suzuki's VX/VS/Intruder range, tweaked slightly for the B805 to supply around 60bhp with 70-plus Nm of torque. Shaft drive took the power through to alloy rims supplied by German manufacturer Behr, quality certainly as they still look impressive 12 years on. Upside-down forks were purchased from Italian supplier Paioli, who have been around for a century, supplying globally from Yamaha GP racers to Guzzi and Bimota road machines. Rear shocks are courtesy of Bitubo from Italy, as are the Grimeca brakes, which also adorned current Aprilia and KTM machines; ideal in a Top Trumps game of bike parts with fancy names.

The question is, does all this translate to an incredible riding experience? Well, no. The B805 does everything well but nothing brilliantly. Much of the base machine is straight from the company's earlier 800 Roadster, a rather nondescript machine which did what it should for £5700. This was a comparable amount to the cost of the era's Japanese mid-range machines (but more than most) available at the turn of the new millennium. My B805 would be reduced down to £5995 when I handed over a 50 quid deposit in July 2004, and as this machine was numbered 16 I surmised that it had been in the crate for at least a year. I recollect riding away from the dealers, happy with my purchase. I hadn't even taken a test ride. I felt at home straight away and convinced myself that it would go much faster once run-in. It didn't, and maybe that's a good thing.



1



2



1: It says Sachs on the frame and Suzuki on the motor, but the detailed chrome finishing is impressive

2: Every B805 came with a numbered plaque. They also employed the strange digital box, several of the functions are still a mystery…

3: The seat unit is easily removed, revealing the ignition unit, tool kit and the battery. Still the original, 12 years on

4: Paioli forks will bottom out on very poor roads, but otherwise work well

5: Unfamiliar curves, angles and even a mostly unfamiliar engine. Much to recommend it to anyone after reliability and rarity

LIVING WITH THE LIMITED

Mechanically there are very few issues with the Sachs, either in performance or maintenance. Parts are still available for all of the Suzuki equipment and the reliability has proved impeccable. The fuel tank, like all of the bodywork, is plastic. If care is not taken when refitting parts, they will crack when tightened and they are not replaceable; therefore, if this one hits the concrete it's curtains.

Originally, the tank featured a large graphic in black proclaiming 'B805' and being anti-sticker I felt obliged to remove it. Cheap tyres don't sit well on what is a weighty girl, but with the rear suspension set to take my bulk (I'm no Tinker Bell either) the handling is precise and enjoyable. The front brakes are superb, early road tests written by those much more proficient than I confirmed this, and they have saved my blushes several times.

Motorways are a chore. The B805 is much more at home on A-roads as Suzuki's gearbox is happy to be worked, and although too many revs create

ENGINE: Suzuki four-stroke 45° V-twin, liquid-cooled, 805cc. **BORE:** 83mm **STROKE:** 74.4mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 10:1 **POWER:** 58hp (42.5kW) at 6000rpm **TORQUE:** 71Nm at 4000rpm. Overhead camshaft, chain driven, four valves per cylinder, 2 Mikuni 36mm carbs. Digital transistor ignition (CDI), electric starter, secondary air system. Five-speed gearbox, primary drive via gears, multi-disc oil bath clutch, cardan/shaft drive, double loop steel tube frame. Paioli upside-down (slide tube 40mm) forks. Bitubo adjustable rear shocks **SPOKE WHEELS:** Fr 3.50 X 17, Rr 4.50 X 18 **TYRES:** Fr 120/70 ZR 17, Rr 160/60 ZR 18 **BRAKES:** Fr 2x Grimeca two piston calipers, disc diameter 320mm. Rr drum brake diameter 180mm **LENGTH/WIDTH/HEIGHT:** 2130 / 830 / 1070mm **WHEELBASE:** 1475mm **SEAT HEIGHT:** 770mm **TANK CAPACITY:** 17 litres







Below: Some effort is required as the bends get tighter, but for normal riding the Sachs glides through the curves with ease

nothing but noise and vibration, the low down torque offers enough to escape from all but the fastest of four-wheelers. The exhaust note has increased and improved over the years (the baffles are probably rusting out) and the seat is perfect for eight hours on the move.

Part of the Target design included a lack of clocks; no speedo or rev counter, just a small electronic box with instructions in German. Most useful. It does however offer speed, revs, Volts, water temp and a milometer which reads 26,500 kilometres travelled; a friend's multilingual girlfriend explained all. The wiring to this unit and the ignition switch has been a pain since the early days; ultra-thin with poor connections, forcing several days with a multimeter and some rerouting of the original spaghetti. But In 12 years I have only replaced service items and tyres; the worst task involved replacing both air filters, one for each carb.


SACHS

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A FUTURE CLASSIC?

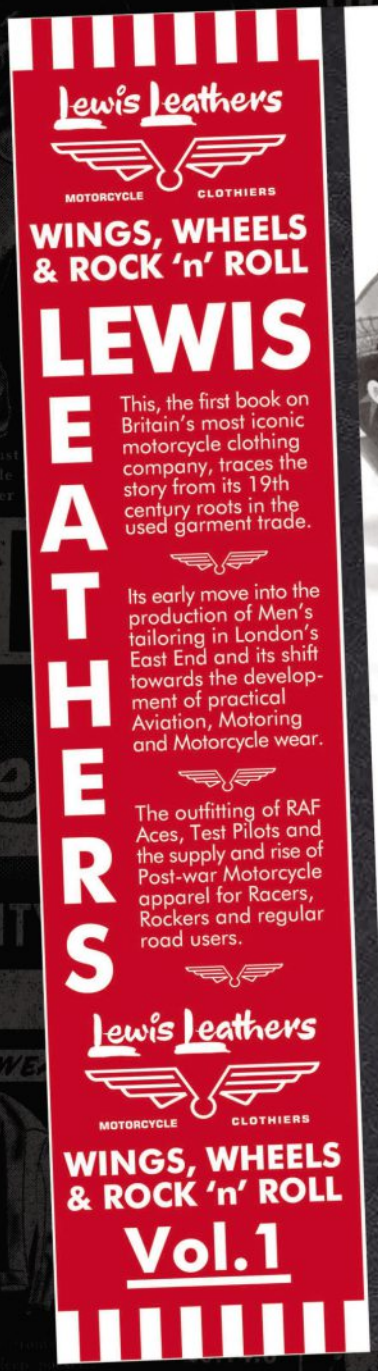
This always depends on the marketplace and like anything else supply and demand is a factor. The prices of used B805s did fall away over the first few years and the odd machines appeared at half their showroom sticker price, but more recently they seem to have recovered slightly. Limited – tiny! – production numbers ensure that I'm never short of someone to talk to, the question 'What the hell is it?' occurs regularly and while the styling was often subject to derision a decade ago, it's much more acceptable in 2016. With the bike market full of stealthy shapes and brutal designs, the old Sachs offers far more normality than it did at launch.

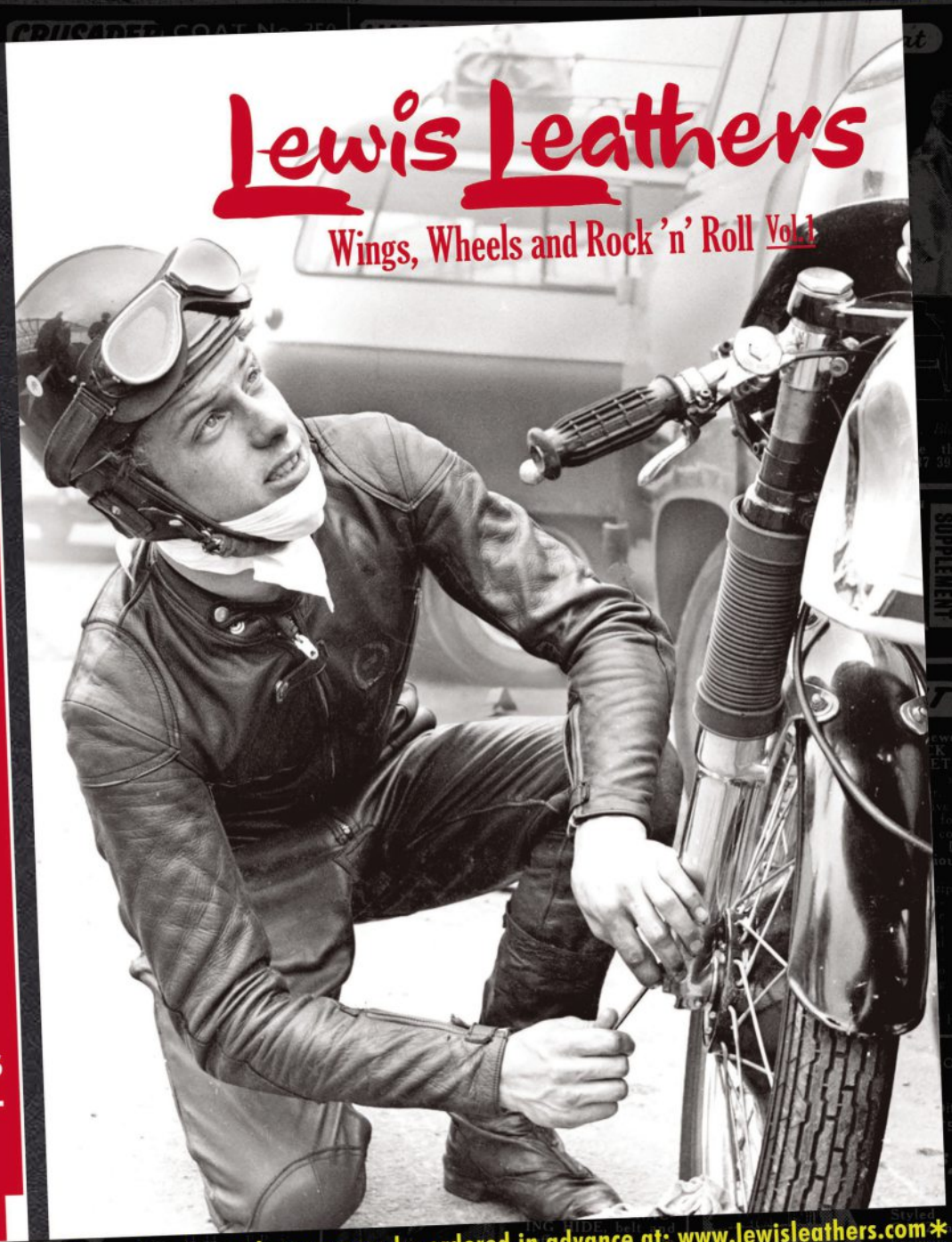
So, should you desire a bike that doesn't offer high performance, is comfortable, doesn't go wrong, costs nothing to run, will introduce you to new people who all ask the same question and makes you the only person in town with a strange orange and chrome café cruiser? If your answer to the question is in the positive, then this unicorn of motorcycles could be for you – and it seems far more relevant today than it did in 2002.

As middle age heads relentlessly towards retirement I wouldn't trade this multi-brand curiosity, in fact I wouldn't mind a second one. Current dealer offerings are all too hot for me; being too old for the vindaloo I am not ready for the korma either; the Sachs B805 is different, more paella for the pre-pensioner. CBG

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European Classic Bike Guide



For some riders, owning an Italian or German motorcycle is a lifelong ambition or simply the status quo. For others, European classics can be an all-new experience; an experimental exploration into unknown territory away from the safe haven of Japanese reliability or a traditional Brit. Moving from a modern motorcycle to an older machine of the same marque is an obvious route for any rider on a quest to find his or her first classic. But be warned: riding from Paris to Dakar before breakfast on a liquid-cooled BMW R1200GS does not necessarily prepare you for the awesome experience that is owning an R45 airhead. Similarly, although a modern Ducati Monster may indeed be descended from a 1980s Pantah, one is a monster in name only, while the other…

So take care to identify exactly which kind of Continental classic you actually want to own and ride (or not). If only a Jota will satisfy your soul, then fine. But you might find you prefer a later Guzzi Le Mans, or even an early Hinckley triple, come to that. Oh yes: Hinckley Triumphs. To keep you on your toes, you will find these listed in this Guide rather than with the traditional British bikes.

Before you spend your money on the Continental classic of your choice, go ride a few of the bikes on your shortest short list. Join the relevant owners' club – that part is essential; join the club before you spend your money – so you can meet owners, maybe even ride their bikes, and learn about the reality of life with your dream bike.

It is always a great idea to study prices too. Stay aware of the movements in the market; it's so much better to buy an MV for Morini money than the other way around!

This guide will definitely develop over the coming months: if your favourite model isn't mentioned then do send us the details for future inclusion.

How to use the guide

This guide provides an overview of Continental classics. We focus on the marques and models which are the most popular, familiar and/or easily available in the UK. We'll enlarge and update it as time goes by and we trawl the marketplace, and this Eurobike guide will alternate with similar info covering British and Japanese classics. We offer you just two prices; the *CBG* High Price is for a top-notch, top-spec model in excellent condition. You might not win concours awards with the bike, but you'd expect to be a contender. At that price, your target machine should have a new MoT, its tyres should sparkle, its chrome and alloy should be excellent. Its paint should not be dull, and it should run like the dream machine you're after. Oil should not dribble from its casings, it should start easily and readily. If it has more than one carb, then they should be balanced and the bike should tick over reliably. There should be no smoke, and although a stack of receipts is not essential, you should find evidence that whoever did the restoration work knew what they were doing. Cables should be entirely un-frayed, the controls should fall readily to hand and foot, and the lighting system should both lighten the darkness and charge its own battery. Accept nothing less.

Also accept that if you make the increasingly astute decision to buy from a trader then you are quite likely to pay more than our High Price. Traders make a living supplying folk like us with the bikes we want, tolerate endless tyre-kicking, usually accept trade-ins, and they should provide decent after-sales service. All this costs them, and they need to make a profit.

The *CBG* Low Price is for a complete motorcycle. The bike may have the dregs of an MoT. It will certainly run and ride, although it may not be entirely sorted. Most of all, it may not be standard, the engine and frame may not have been paired in the factory, it may be cosmetically challenged, with rusty exhausts, a split seat and drooping unlubricated cables, and sundry systems may not work. It may be a less popular version of a popular model: a Guzzi Nevada springs to mind. It may easily be what we used to refer to as a 'working' bike. Classic workers are less common now than they once were, but they are still about.

There are two other categories for which it is entirely impossible to quote prices. The first is the entirely original and unrestored motorcycle. These machines are – obviously – increasingly hard to find, and some folk will pay a high premium for them. Indeed, 'barn find' machines often fetch astonishingly high prices simply because they are unrestored… although you can rarely know that for a fact. Lots of older, 1980s, say, restorations are passed off as 'original' barn finds. Often they're not original at all. And they may not have been found in a barn.

The second category is the concours winner; the completely elegant machine which is better by far than it was when it first invaded a showroom. When these bikes change hands in the public marketplace (and many of them change hands inside clubs, advertised only by word of mouth) their prices can be very high indeed. We cannot offer guidance here; what you pay is up to you.

Happy hunting…

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SEE P8 FOR DETAILS

AERMACCHI

An aircraft manufacturer which began building bikes after the Second World War, Aermacchi built scooters and a few small capacity four-strokes before Harley-Davidson bought half the firm in 1960. Thereafter they crafted a range of light and reliable racers, much loved by privateers and highly successful on track. H-D became full owner in 1973 (and sold the company to Cagiva in 1978), so many small-capacity military Harleys built before 1978 are Aermacchis under the skin. Few models made it to the UK originally: spares supply and specialist support is sporadic.

Chimera

172cc (60 x 61mm) ohv single || 300lb || 60mph || 1956-60

THIS FULLY-ENCLOSED ODDITY carries its single cylinder engine horizontally mounted, and was intended to be a sporting roadster. It fell somewhat short of the mark but spawned the firm's subsequent range of roadgoing singles and the highly regarded Ala d'Oro racer. A 250cc version was also offered. Both are rare in the UK (fewer than 300 built in total), and hence guaranteed to attract attention.

Prices
low £3500 || high £6000

Aermacchi Harley-Davidson 250/350

344cc ohv single || 320lb || 90mph || 1969-74

ALSO KNOWN AS the 350 Sprint, several of these flat-singles have made it to the UK in containers from the US alongside more well-known Italian machinery. A genuine and interesting alternative to both the trad Brit 350 singles and the mainly Japanese competition. More trad than you might expect, with a right foot shift for the four-speed box and no electric start. Great to ride, though, and spares aren't bad as long as you don't mind importing them.

Italian built Sprint 250s retained spine frame of the Chimera. Later, heavier, bikes had tubular frames, aping the style of the V-twins, and an electric start.

Prices
low £2500 || high £5500

SST 250

242cc 2T single || 276lb || 80mph || 1976/77

LIGHTWEIGHT, SEMI-TRAIL STYLE learner-friendly single with oil injection. Variable quality from the AMF years and flaky finish ensured few survive today. Parts difficult to obtain

Prices
low £1000 || high £2500

APRILIA

A motorcycle manufacturer for nearly 50 years, Aprilia initially concentrated on off-road and racing two-strokes. In the mid-1980s a collaboration with Austrian engine supplier Rotax brought about the Tuareg, one of the modern world's first 'adventure-sports' models although no one called it that at the time. Then came the four-stroke Pegaso roadsters (first a 600 and then a 650, sharing its engine with BMW's F650), and increasing success in 125 and 250 Grand Prix racing which spawned a range of two-stroke repli-racers.

Motò 6.5

649cc (100 x 87.2mm) ohc single || 300lb || 95mph || 1995-2002

DESIGNED BY FRENCH style guru (and motorcyclist) Philippe Starck as a chic city bike, the Motò 6.5 divided opinion. Practical riders sought out BMW's F650 or Aprilia's own Pegaso instead, but the Starck found favour with a select few thanks in part to its low saddle height and nimble footwork. Build quality wasn't wonderful however, and unique components become fragile and hard to source with the passage of time. Worth looking longer to find a well-kept, low mileage example.

Prices
low £2500 || high £5000

SOLD AS SEEN



MOTO GUZZI CALIFORNIA 2, 1983

Very tidy condition, some age-related wear and tear. Overhauled brakes, carbs, shockers. Recently serviced. Stainless exhaust pipes and balance box. Screen and luggage, New MoT. SOLD FOR £3100

BENELLI

Before and after the Second World War the Benelli family built high-quality lightweight roadsters and enjoyed some success in GP and TT racing, initially with their dohc single and then with the 250/4 which took the world 250 title. One brother left to found Motobi, which was reabsorbed into Benelli in 1962. During the 1950s and 60s their customers bought mainly 125 two-strokes and 250 four-stroke twins; then came the heavyweight four-strokes when De Tomaso took over in 1971. A spell in the doldrums was followed by a more recent revival in 1999 with the 900 Tornado.

2c Electronica

231cc 2T / 285lb || 90mph || 1972-86

TWO-STROKE PREMIX TWIN. Light, simple and fast, the electronic ignition 250

lasted more than a decade in production. Crude compared with Japanese equivalents, it enjoys considerable success in classic racing. Spares plentiful from mainland Europe.

Prices
low £750 || high £3000

Quattro
231cc (44 x 38mm) ohc 4 || 275lb || 90mph || 1974-79

MANY INTERESTING AND certainly alternative models are still coming out of Italy. Such as the small capacity Benelli fours built in the de Tomaso era. Tiny engine revs to 11k, apparently safely, and although spares may well be rather rare, if you want a bike to talk about more than ride, this could be it. Also sold as the Moto Guzzi 254, so you have a choice.

Prices
low £2000 || high £4250

Tornado
643cc (84 x 58mm) ohv twin || 410lb || 85mph || 1970-76

THIS EXTREMELY SHORT-STROKE vertical twin is something of an acquired taste. Its buzzy yet grunty engine displays characteristics that fall part-way between its British and Japanese four-stroke contemporaries. First versions came with a useful 4ls front brake; the revised model from 1972 gained electric start and an extra carb but lost power. Also badged as a Motobi, the Tornado is interesting rather than exciting.

Prices
low £3000 || high £5000

Sei
748cc (56 x 50.6mm) ohc six || 520lb || 118mph || 1972-78

THE WORLD'S FIRST production six-cylinder motorcycle shares many similarities with Honda's 500/4 but the overall package is considerably more accomplished than one-and-a-half-Hondas. It's not wildly rapid but the smooth power delivery suits the responsive handling. However, the three carbs need frequent attention and the six-into-six exhaust is vulnerable to corrosion. Owners often convert the odd duplex final drive chain to a standard modern chain. The later 900 version (1979 to 1985) incorporates a range of more practical mods including a more durable Silentium six-into-two exhaust; the bodywork on either model can be a challenge to remove.

Prices
low £7000 || high £12,000

BIMOTA

These limited edition, super quality superbikes were specifically designed to get the best from their Japanese supersports engines and hence run rings around the original donor bikes. They incorporate innovative engineering (hub centre steering) and top-notch components (carbon fibre frames, lightweight wheels). Early models especially are essentially hand-built trackbikes; later editions rather more mass produced. Prices for all depend on provenance, history and condition.

DB2
904cc desmodromic V-twin || 373lb || 140mph || 1993

THE ALL-ITALIAN DB2 epitomises Bimota values: hand-built, lightweight and rare. With around 600 built it is perhaps the most accessible Bimota. Beautiful and focused, it out-performs the equivalent Ducati 900SS air-cooled model. But cambelt changes require engine removal so are often neglected. Paoli suspension requires careful set-up.

Prices
low £6000 || high £8500

BMW

Immediately after the Second World War BMW re-started production with an updated prewar design incorporating a plunger frame and tele forks, and this formed the basis of its range until 1955. Then came Earles forks and a new swinging arm frame, although the engines retained their trademark, simple, low oil pressure ball / roller bearing pushrod flat-twin layout. Equally simple 6V electrics (not a fuse in sight) and magneto ignition take care of the sparks department. Four-speed box and the fuss-free shaft drive started the 'ultimate tourer' legend. Major redesign for 1969 re-introduced tele forks and a bolt-on subframe. The new twin engines used a high oil pressure plain bearing one piece crank incarnation, with the cam under the crank driven by a duplex chain. Alternator 12V electrics, coil ignition, and an electric starter as standard on all but the smallest model. The initially short frames gave way to a longer version to overcome handling foibles. Airhead twins lingered long after the four-cylinder K series was expected to replace them due to astonishing customer loyalty. Excellent spares supply on most models from a range of specialists. Finding a truly original one is tricky and expensive, in part because many parts are interchangeable between the /5, /6 and /7 machines. Bikes can be extremely high mileage, or pampered, under-used toys. Cheap, smaller models from the 1980s have recently become popular as the basis for café / custom specials.

R51/3
494cc (68 x 68mm) air-cooled flat twin || 24bhp / 420lb || 80mph || 1951-54

AFTER THE STOP-GAP R51/2 re-established BMW's twin-cylinder credentials in 1948, it was followed in 1951 by the /3 with its single gear-driven cam and crankshaft mounted generator. A workhorse 600cc R67 went through /2 and /3 evolutions, and was joined by a sporting 35bhp R68 in 1952. R51s and R67s were often attached to sidecars.
All this generation are rather more quirky and less refined than the R50s and 60s which follow them. Beware very high-priced examples offered by overseas sellers: inspection before purchase essential.

Prices
low £8500 || high £13,000

R50/60
494cc (68 x 68mm) air-cooled flat twin || 26bhp / 430lb || 85mph || 1955-69

HANDSOME, RUGGED AND reliable, these multi-purpose shaft-drive middleweights evolved into /2, S and US models, the latter using tele forks instead of an Earles front end. Well-made and durable, they were costly to buy back then (and declining sales almost finished off BMW). 2ls front brake better than the norm for the time. Now affordable, easily sourced, relaxing to ride and enjoyable to own. Failing magneto coils cause bad starting when warm, and cast brake drums crack with age.

Prices
£7000 || high £10,000

R69/69S
594cc (72 x 83mm) air-cooled flat twin || 35bhp / 445lb || 110mph || 1955-69

A FAST SPORTS-TOURER for its time, the R69 was joined by the 42bhp R69S in 1960. US tele-forked version only built for one year from 1968. A luxury motorcycle which commands a price premium. Worth pursuing if you absolutely must own this model, but most riders will prefer a later /5 series Boxer, or if you really want an Earles fork bike then

an R60S represents much better value.

Prices
low £10,000 || high £23,000

R50 / R60 / R75
498cc (67 x 70.6mm) air-cooled flat twin || 32bhp / 430lb || 85mph || 1969-73

AN IDEAL INTRODUCTION to classic motorcycling, the /5 generation of BMW twins feel modern enough to be familiar (tele forks, 12V alternator electrics, indicators, CV carbs, electric start) but still retain the marque's unique charm (and a kickstart for many years). Four-speed gearbox soon replaced by a five-speeder. The 749cc 50bhp R75 was no faster than the R69S it replaced, but easier to live with on the long haul. Excellent new and used spares supplies, plenty of info available about sensible mods and upgrades. Truly usable classics.

Prices
low £2000 || high £5000

R90S
898cc (90 x 70.6mm) air-cooled flat twin || 67bhp / 475lb || 125mph || 1963-76

THE TOP OF the range /6 model, BM's landmark performance sports tourer grabs an entry all of its own. Refined, stylish and supremely capable, the S can still cruise comfortably all day. High mileage examples may need clutch, gearbox and final drive overhaul. A very few touring R90/6 versions surface, with S-type styling grafted on, but do not command the price premium of the real thing.

Prices
low £5000 || high £15,000

R45/65
473cc (70 x 61.5mm) air-cooled flat twin || 35bhp / 400lb || 95mph || 1978-85

THE R45 WAS rare, slow and uninspiring when new and remains so today, which explains why they're a popular model to hack into a cheap street special. Beware the 26bhp German-market version which is equally charm-free and even less rapid. R65 started out with 45bhp but a similarly ineffective single front disc; look for later models with twin Brembos and 50bhp. LS model is even semi-stylish. Gained Monolever rear suspension in 1985. R65 provides a competent compromise: decent performance, sensible prices, less mass than bigger Boxers.

Prices
low £1500 || high £3000

R80/100
797cc (84.8 x 70.6mm) air-cooled flat twin || 50bhp / 475lb || 105mph || 1977-95

WHO KNEW WHAT the R80G/S would spawn? The first G/S was supposed to replace the standard R80 (itself a development of the /7 version), but things worked out rather differently. BMW tried to discontinue the twins but public demand kept airheads in production into the Monolever incarnation. The engines softened, peak power fell to 60hp, finish deteriorated and handling improved. The disc brake that had been fashionably installed astern on the larger capacity machines was replaced with a drum. The final developments were unfaired, restyled Paralever types that borrowed heavily from GS experience. RT versions for serious tourists only; RS fairing provides surprisingly levels of wind / weather protection. Common problems include rotten seat bases and tanks that rust around the fuel tap. Engines can snap crankshafts (uncommon), leak oil around pushrod tubes, or wear valve guides at higher mileages. Carbs sometime dump fuel all over your feet, the Paralever R100GS had a reputation for eating shaft joints, and the gearbox can be a weakness; specialist suppliers offer exchange services that can be a better option than trying a rebuild yourself. Earlier bikes generally cost more; Paris-Dakar GS replicas especially so (up to three times the price of the standard bike values below).

Prices
low £1500 || high £5000

K75
740cc (67 x 70mm) liquid-cooled inline triple || 75bhp || 450lb || 120mph || 1984-95

THE BEST OF the early K series bikes; smooth, quiet and quick. An excellent all-rounder if a little daunting for the home spannerman. C-model has small headlamp fairing: the later S-version with non-plunging front fork and frame-mounted top fairing is a much better bike. Optional ABS from 1990 on, likewise a lower seat. RT version came full dress with ABS as standard,

Prices
low £1500 || high £2500

K100
987cc (37 x 70mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 90bhp || 510lb || 125mph || 1982-92

LESS CHARACTERFUL AND enjoyable to own than the 750 triple, and generally more expensive. Naked version wasn't popular when new but attracts more attention now so commands a small price premium. Capable of clocking up massive mileage (quarter-million miles not known). Weak points after 60,000 miles are the clutch, camchain tensioner and gear drive from crank to clutch. Many demobbed police machines on the scene.

Prices
low £1000 || high £2500

K1
987cc (37 x 70mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 100bhp || 515lb || 150mph || 1987-92

A COLLECTOR'S ITEM if ever there was one... but not a machine you want to maintain at home. One of the most effective fairings ever designed, matched with an improved 16-valve motor with Bosch fuel-injection, Paralever rear suspension and revised steering geometry. ABS optional. Functions perfectly as an eye-catching Sunday ride or as transport for the serious traveller. Examples which retain the garish original colour-schemes worth more than re-painted ones.

Prices
low £3000 || high £6500

SOLD AS SEEN



JAWA 125 TWO STROKE

Lovely condition for an oldie. Full MoT. Chromework is not the best on the exhaust and handlebars but completely useable. If this type of bike is your thing I don't think you'll find a better one. SOLD FOR £421

CAGIVA

Bucking the trend of the late 1970s when most European motorcycle manufacturers were in deep decline, Cagiva started building bikes in 1978 with a range of 125cc to 350cc two-strokes, inheriting the Aermacchi / Harley-Davidson factory. Majoring on moto-cross and off-road models, Cagiva then adopted Ducati four-stroke engines in 1983 and bought the whole Ducati business two years later. A cycle of expansion and buy-outs followed, during which time some interesting motorcycles briefly saw the light of day.

Elefant

748cc (88 x 61.5mm) desmo L-twin || 420lb || 100mph || 1987-96

THERE ARE SMALLER (350 and 650) Elefants, but only the two larger herd members (750 and 900) were officially imported to the UK. All use Ducati motors; the 900 gets trick suspension bits and a touch more torque, while the 750 suffers somewhat from a soft front end, weak brakes and catalytic strangulation. A low cost way to experience a mostly-modern Italian, but remember the engine demands as much attention as it would in a Ducati chassis.

Prices
low £500 || high £1500

DUCATI

One of the most iconic Italian marques, Ducati was famous first for its high-performance overhead cam singles with desmodromic valve control, then the bevel-drive big twins, onto subsequent generations with belt-driven cams and arguably the most beautiful production motorcycle ever built. Much loved by journalists (who only ever ride the best examples in tip-top condition and don't have to pay the maintenance bill), most models are demanding yet rewarding to ride. They can also be challenging to own, but there's plenty of specialist support, a decent spares supply and a thriving owners' club. The majority are single-minded sportsters: look at Guzzis instead if you intend to go touring.

Mach 1

249cc (74 x 57.8mm) ohc single || 250lb || 105mph || 1965-69

THE FASTEST 250 road bike of its time, quicker even than Yamaha's top two-stroke, the Mach 1 was a development of the Diana / Daytona models, so it's also known as the Diana M3 Super Sport. Early narrow case models are the most sought-after and tend to end up in collections. Beware hacked around classic racers being touted under the Mach 1 banner.

Prices
low £7000 || high £10,000

Scrambler 250 / 350 / 450

340cc (76 x 75mm) ohc single || 132kg || 85mph || 1962-76

THE RECENT REVIVAL of the V-twin powered Scrambler model produced an instant surge in interest in the older, single-cylinder Ducati Scramblers. These started life in 1962 as 250 singles, running until 1968, then received new engines and were offered in both 350 and 450cc sizes. Excellent machines to ride, provided you can start them. Spares are not easy, although a couple of specialist dealers can help.

Prices
low £2000 || high £5500

750 Sport / SS

748cc (80 x 74.4m) ohc 90° twin || 335lb || 120mph || 1972-76

DUCATI'S ENTRY INTO the superbike stakes produced a stunner, highly sought after in all its guises. Started as a naked café racer with spring valves. Desmo head arrived in 1973 to transform the Sport into the Super Sport with a 10bhp boost. Sleek and stylish with its half-fairing, the beautifully balanced roundcase 750SS brings racetrack performance to the street (long wheelbase steering characteristics require some acclimatisation, however). Prices shown are for the Sport; well-kept examples of the SS now cost as much as Vin twins and live in museums. If you want a 1970s Ducati to ride, look at the later square-case models (1975 to 1981); the favoured model in that range is the 1978 900.

Prices
low £15,000 || high £35,000 (original round-case 750SS £90k+)

Darmah

864cc (86 x 74.4m) ohc 90° twin || 410lb || 110mph || 1977-81

THE SQUARE-CASE 860 GT arrived in 1974 and combined a racing chassis with an updated, gloriously torquey soft-tune engine, let down by poor starting, feeble electronic ignition, flim-flam ancillaries and a single front disc. GT/GTS styling not to all tastes. Most folk prefer Tartarini's 900SD Darmah which also benefits from the SS camshaft, Bosch, Lucas and Nippon Denso components. Electric start only from 1980. Rare SSD version comes with cockpit fairing; SS Darmah built in 80/81. All related models suffered from rapid rot and unsightly corrosion, so benefit from refurbishment and careful cleaning.

Prices
low £4000 || high £9000

Pantah

499cc (74 x 58mm) ohc 90° twin || 405lb || 110mph || 1979-86

SWAPPING FROM BEVEL gears to belt-drive for the L-twin's overhead cam reduced production costs considerably, and established the pattern for subsequent generations of Ducati sportsters. The SL500 was followed by a 600 in 1981, and then the pick of the bunch (but hard to find) SL650 in 1983. Original exhaust systems hard to find; an awkward second gear is an early sign of gearbox deterioration.

Prices
low £3500 || high £5500

Paso

748cc (88 x 61.5mm) ohc 90° twin || 465lb || 130mph || 1986-92

ALMOST BADGED AS a Cagiva, the 750 arrived first with the trad Dell'Orto replaced by a Weber carb giving slicker throttle response (but a slight hiccough at low revs). 750 joined by the six-speed, water-cooled 906 in 1989, both with 16 inch front wheels. Fuel injection and 17 inch wheels from 1991 with the 907ie. Swooping all-enclosed bodywork discourages those riders who prefer more conventional Ducatis, so they miss out on a well-finished, highly competent sporting twin. A real way to experience Ducati twin performance without paying the usual price premium.

Prices
low £1000 || high £4000

Monster

748cc (88 x 61.5mm) ohc 90° twin || 400lb || 115mph || 1993-2000

WHILE MOST ROADSTERS and retros are cut-price shadows of their superbike siblings, the first generation 750 and 900 air-cooled Monsters are every bit as good as their SS counterparts and far more user-

friendly. Avoid the stunted 600; beef up your clutch arm; check for a full service history and signs of drop-damage from the spring-up sidestand.

Prices
low £1500 || high £3500

916
916cc (94 x 66mm) ohc 90° twin || 440lb || 160mph || 1994-98

NUMEROUS OFFSHOOTS AND special editions have diluted the appeal and impact of the original, but the early eight-valve water-cooled world superbike winner is still a genuine wonder of the motorcycling world. It established a style which is commonplace today (under-seat exhausts, single-sided swinging arm). If you can't afford a 916 the 748 offers all the style if not the total thrill. Either way, look for a scrupulously maintained machine with full service history. Avoid trackday hacks with 'improved' specification. Prices for standard BP model.

Prices
low £3000 || high £12,000

GILERA

Famous for their Grand Prix victories, which included a string of world championships with Geoff Duke at the helm, Gilera also manufactured a range of road bikes both before and after the firm was swallowed up by Piaggio in 1969. Lightweight four-strokes from the 1970s, including the 125 Speciale Strada and 150 Arcore, can normally be found at prices which aren't entirely terrifying, and some 175 ex-military machines also come onto the UK market.

Saturno
498cc (84 x 90mm) ohv air-cooled single || 22bhp / 386lb || 85mph || 1940-59

STARTING LIFE AS an outright racer in 1940, the long-stroke Saturno featured alloy engine cases, an iron head and barrel, hairpin valve springs, gear-driven primary drive, a four-speed gearbox, one of the most substantial sumps known to man, girder forks up front and Gilera's own horizontal spring system at the rear. The Turismo and Sport versions were updated in 1951 with a tele fork front end and full-width alloy drum brakes, and conventional twin shocks followed soon after. Racing versions are renowned for their light weight and nimble handling. Exotic and technically interesting, this is a connoisseur's machine best suited to an expert owner.

Prices
low £10,000 || high £18,000

Nuovo Saturno
492cc DOHC liquid-cooled single || 45bhp || 301lb || 115mph || 1988-91

BUILT AT THE request of the Japanese (!), the twin-cam single housed in a trellis frame is a sporting delight. Electric start and high quality components provide singular fun and tremendous handling. Comfort is high for such a small machine. Only 50 officially imported into the UK.

Prices
low £2250 || high £4500

LAVERDA

After building legions of workaday runabouts during the 1950s, Laverda moved into production of quality 200cc twins and 125cc singles. They entered the big-bike scene in the late 1960s with their OHC parallel twins, originally intended for the US market, which proved to be ferociously fast and hard as nails. The first triple was mooted in 1969 but the world had to wait until 1973 for this legend in the making. The dohc 500 twins of the late 1970s were resurrected 15 years later as 668 streetbikes. All Laverdas are uncompromising and challenging; some have become slightly more civilised with modern upgrades. Very few marque specialists but plenty of online expertise from other owners, and a dedicated club.

750 Twins
744cc (80 x 74mm) ohc air-cooled twin || 65bhp || 480lb || 115mph || 1970-77

ENGINE LAYOUT APART, the Laverda 750 twins have little in common with their British counterparts of the mid-1970s, the Italians being higher revving, harder, harsher and generally faster. Only 549 SFC proddie racers were built between 1971 and 76, so they're rare and expensive as well as being far from pleasant to ride on the road. The GT tourer is often overlooked; smooth, torquey and less stressed than the SF, but still unmistakeably Italian. Drum-brake SFs look and feel more classic: there's a middle-era model with wire wheels and a single disc; final twin disc / alloy wheel machines more affordable. All benefit from modern electronic ignition systems.

Prices
low £3500 || high £9000

Triples
981cc (75 x 74mm) dohc air-cooled triple || 80bhp || 470lb || 130mph || 1973-85

BRUTAL AND BRILLIANT, Laverda's legendary triple began life as the 3C and was then tuned and tweaked into the Jota by Slater Bros for the British sportbike market, creating one of motorcycling's enduring icons. Offshoots include SFC proddie racer, fully-clad RGS tourer and the 1200 Mirage. All are fast and unforgiving. From 1982, a 120° crankshaft altered the engine firing order to smooth its output. Clutch action improved (but is still heavy for humans); gearchange shifted sides over the years. Very rare to find a decent Jota for under £10k now but good 3C/Ls and Jaramas still sell for around £6k.

Prices
low £6000 || high £15,000

500 Twins
497cc (72 x 61mm) dohc air-cooled twin || 44bhp || 105mph || 385lb || 1977-1983

SOLD AS SEEN



PUCH VZ50 MOPED 1973

13 months MoT. Last used on the road 25 years ago, then relegated to the back of his garage, where it was left to rust in peace. Took about a year to restore. I've concluded that I am not going to use it, so I had it MoT'd today. SOLD FOR £560

THE SIX-SPEED EIGHT-VALVE triple-disc braked Alpino started life with so much performance potential in hand that its descendants were still competitive two decades later. Given a loud pipe, a solo seat and a bikini fairing for the UK market, the sporty Montjuic was and is still a single-purpose hard-revving rascal. The Alpino is by far the nicest 500 to live with, but is hard to find. Formula 500s are for racers only. Avoid the neutered 350s made for the Italian home market (or buy one cheap and convert it back to 500 spec).

Prices
low £4000 || high £12,000

Zanè Twins
668cc dohc oil-cooled parallel twin || 70bhp / 120mph || 440lb || 1996-97

BUILT JUST DOWN the road from Breganze at Zanè, the 668 and then 750 twins were based around an old development of the 500 engine, dusted off and updated. While the water-cooled 750s were certainly more powerful and sporting, the 668 oil-cooled streetbikes are more characterful. The combination of light weight, low mass and superb balance make the Ghost / Strike our favourite. Few models sold hence rare today, and spares and expertise are limited. Top quality components throughout make current prices seem like a snip, however.

Prices
low £1500 || high £3500

MOTO GUZZI

Moto Guzzi has been building motorcycles since 1921, from 50cc flyweights to the current range of 1200cc V-twins. The company has created innovative world-class racers alongside basic boot-camp bikes for the military. Like many European motorcycles, Guzzis can be an acquired taste. Some riders never develop an appreciation of them: others persevere through the learning curve and develop a life-long passion for the marque. Guzzis tend to be more agile than BMWs, but less extreme than Ducati and Laverda sportsters. Most folk immediately associate the marque with V-twins, but their characterful singles and lively lightweights shouldn't be discounted. Expertise and spares supply is generally excellent for the postwar popular models, and there's a massively active owners' club offering technical support and social solidarity. Newcomers to the marque may be tempted to try a modern retro first – these retain much of the marque's intrinsic charm but don't hold their value like older bikes.

Falcone
498cc (88 x 82mm) air-cooled single || 26bhp || 470lb || 80mph || 1950-76

FOR ITS FIRST half century, Guzzi majored on the manufacture of flat singles, the most famous of which is the Falcone. Sports model arrived in 1950 with tele forks, a fully-enclosed cylinder head and the firm's unusual take on swinging arm suspension at the back. In Turismo trim the Falcone was capable of covering massive distances in some style. This indefatigable nature encouraged the military to adopt its successor, the Nuovo Falcone, from 1971. The latter is affordable and rideable; the original has become a collector's machine. The Nuovo Falcone differs considerably from its predecessor, incorporating a duplex loop frame, Grimeca brakes, electric start and a laid-back attitude to velocity. Quirky but charming, Nuovo Falcone values (below) are typically less than half of those for the original models.

Prices
low £2500 || high £10,000

V7 / Sport / 750S
748cc air-cooled 90° V-twin || 52bhp || 120mph 1965-75

GUZZI'S FIRST BIG twin, the initial 703cc shaft-drive roadster was impressive, simple to maintain, but somewhat sluggish. For 1971 it was overhauled by Lino Tonti to create the iconic V7 Sport with a capacity boost, five-speed gearbox and big drum brakes. Later 750S models are more practical but less treasured; 750S3 from 1975 has triple Brembo discs. Never as fast nor as quick-steering as the Ducati opposition, nevertheless the Guzzi sportsters were bikes you'd choose for a long day in the saddle. Essential 703cc engine internals now almost unobtainable, so early motors are being rebuilt at 757cc. If you're not fussed about owning this specific model, then there's more choice of Le Mans sportsters at lower prices.

Prices
low £9000 || high £15,000

850-T3/4/5/California
844cc (83 x 78mm) ohv 90° V-twin. 55bhp || 490lb || 120mph || 1974-83

THE 850-T DEMONSTRATES the versatility of Guzzi's venerable V-twin engine, transferred from the sporting 750s to create a superb range of rewarding roadsters and comfortable tourers with masses of torque and a tremendous charm. The T3 from 1975 gained triple discs; then came 16 inch wheels and Nikasil cylinder linings in the 1980s. Capacity rose to 948 and then 1064cc in the early 1990s. Guzzi's ponderous transmission and linked brake system don't suit everyone; finish was never brilliant; switchgear and electrics are weak; seat bases likely to rot on early Ts; fragile plastics shear and snap… so patience is a virtue during home servicing. However a good California, carefully maintained, can last a riding lifetime.

Prices
low £3000 || high £6500

Le Mans
844cc (83 x 78mm) ohv 90° V-twin. 70bhp || 440lb || 130mph || 1976-93

VISUALLY STUNNING, THE Le Mans is almost as impressive to ride as it is to behold, offering a near-exemplary mix of power and poise. Less highly-strung than a Laverda, better over long distances than a Ducati, more brutal than a BMW. Over successive incarnations it developed from being an outright sports superbike into more of a sports-tourer, via the 1978 Mk2 with new angular fairing and Nikasil bores; 1981 brought the heavily revised Mk3 with square cylinder heads, smoother carburetion, new exhaust, uprated suspension and styling; then grew to 978cc as the Le Mans 1000 from 1984 to 1993, initially with 16 inch front wheels. Final versions feel and are significantly more chunky than the earlier, lean'n'lively models. Shaft seals wear; suspension suffers and starters give up the struggle. Exhausts rot and original finish flaked off frames. Very first 'round' tail-light examples sell for three times the price of a Mk3.

Prices
low £3500 || high £12,000

V35/V50/V65
490cc (74 x 57mm) ohv 90-degree V-twin || 45bhp || 340lb || 105mph || 1977-90

THE LIGHTWEIGHT GUZZI range succeeds in condensing the marque's characterful aspects into a tidy, compact package. Well engineered, sprightly and with superb handling, they're still not quite as quick on their tyres as a Morini 350 but are far less harsh than a Laverda 500. Shaft drive and a comfortable ride endears them to many longer distance riders, even if the extra mass does slow the 350 somewhat. Finish and

electrics typically flaky; Nikasil coated bores appreciate regular oil changes, especially on the more sporty Monza models with rev-happy riders. Developed into the V65 series, then the four-valve head Lario. 650s especially are truly pleasant mid-size roadsters with decent grunt and great handling. Affordable and fun; a great introduction to the marque's classic motorcycles without spending ££ on a famous name.

Prices
low £750 || high £4000

Centauro
992cc (90 x 78mm) 8V ohc twin || 95bhp || 224kg || 1996-2001

HALF-MAN, HALF-HORSE, THE Centauro is here entirely because it's one of the editor's favourite bikes. 8-valve 'ohc' version of the Guzzi 90° Vee, links through the shaft drive to the back end and delivers its power with great gusto and little subtlety. Handling is unique to this generation of Guzzis (much the same running gear as the sporty RS and 1100 Sport), braking is excellent and the styling is plainly its best feature.

Prices
low £2500 || high £3500

MOTO MORINI

Don't be misled by their relatively small capacity: Morini Vees are among the most satisfying and enjoyable classic bikes to own. They're the perfect introduction to Italian motorcycles if you're transferring from Japanese bikes, and are equally suitable to Britbike riders seeking something smaller / lighter equipped with an electric foot. Not so great for six-footers, however (look at the physically bigger Guzzi range instead). Small capacity singles scored competition success in the 1960s but the 350 V-twins of the 1970s and 80s justifiably attract most attention in the classic world. There's an excellent dedicated marque specialist with decades of experience, and a thriving, active riders' club. Avoid horror story 'for restoration' projects being offered ridiculously cheap on the Continent unless you're familiar with the marque and with import paperwork.

Sport / Strada
344cc (62 x 57mm) ohv V-twin. 39bhp || 320lb || 100mph || 1974-83

UNIQUE 72° HERON-HEAD V-twins with a splendid chassis and limitless charm. Surprisingly rapid for their capacity, both Sport and more relaxed Strada can be ridden to their absolute limit without the need for brute force (unlike many bigger Italians). Weak electrics, paintwork and chrome are all fixable these days. Light and physically compact (which can translate as 'cramped' for taller riders). Prices similar for both models; three grand secures a reasonable later edition with electric start, disc brakes and cast wheels. Drum-braked wire wheel models fetch big money. The 478cc versions (Maestro and Sport) from 1978 are little better than the 350s, their horsepower gain offset by a similar increase in mass. Less revvy than the 350s, the 500s are less popular so values are somewhat lower.

Prices
low £2000 || high £7000

Dart
344cc (62 x 57mm) ohv V-twin. 34bhp || 320lb || 100mph || 1988-91

A FULLY-FAIRED SPORTSTER formed from the fusion of the Morini motor with the Cagiva Freccia frame. Electric start, 16 inch front wheel, poor electrics, plastic panels very hard to replace. Surprisingly pleasant to ride, not really rapid but superb handling. Rare 400 version available in some markets.



LAMBRETTA Li125 Series 3, 1964.

Italian import, first reg in the UK in 1998. The body of the scooter is in very good condition with just a few blemishes. When bought it had had a full engine rebuild, but for the last 10 years it has been stored in a garage. SOLD FOR £2150

Prices
low £2800 || high £4500

Kanguro / Camel
344cc (62 x 57mm) ohv V-twin. 35bhp || 340lb || 90mph || 1981-89

CRACKING TRAIL BIKES available as 350s and 500s with electric hoof and decent road manners. Variety of twin shock and then monoshock incarnations. X models prone to cracking frames at footrest mounts. Too heavy for serious off-road competition but fun for green lane frolics.

Prices
low £750 || high £2500

MV AGUSTA

The winner of more than 60 world championships, the MV marque is so liberally doused with stardust that it can be tricky to find the roadgoing motorcycles behind all the competition glitter. No classic era MVs are cheap. The name alone doubles the price of what might otherwise be considered a fairly average 1970s 750-four. Nor are the roadbikes necessarily better performers than their Italian counterparts; a Ducati SS is probably quicker and more agile than an MV 750S. Almost every other example offered for sale is either an Agostini 'replica' or has been signed by him at some stage in its lifetime. Considerable care is required before buying a 750S or America: check provenance and paperwork carefully before parting with £40,000-plus.

350 Twins
ohv twin || 28bhp || 90mph || 1971-76

DEVELOPED FROM MV'S 250, the firm's first production 350 roadster used a pushrod parallel twin engine with Dell'Orto carbs and a five-speed gearbox, housed in a superbly designed and crafted frame and hidden behind a red racing fairing. Both GT and Sports versions gained 12V electrics and electronic ignition in 1972, then were replaced by the square-case Ipotesi for 1975 with a power

boost to 34bhp. The motor had to be pushed hard to extract its performance and buzzed badly at high revs, so few riders bothered with much beyond 70mph. Now one of the few affordable MVs left available, but you'd probably be better off buying two Morinis for the same money.

Prices
low £3000 || high £7000

MZ

Former East German manufacturer with impeccable competition credentials, MZ sold a small range of two-stroke machines in the capitalist West. Although they were always sold on their bargain prices, in fact the engineering and materials quality was way higher than most other bikes from Europe. After decades in the unfashionable doldrums, the often unconventionally-styled MZs are now finding favour with classic enthusiasts, attracted by their low(ish) current process, high quality and easily available spares. All MZ strokers – and the later Rotax-powered 500s – were intended to be sole transport, all weather machines, capable of high mileage with low maintenance. As well as enclosed chains, you get enclosed drum brake mechanisms, alloy rims and even alloy frames in some cases.

TS / ETZ125 / 150
123cc two-stroke single. NU3 || 11bhp || 240lb || 80mpg || 60mph

LIGHT WEIGHT AND unusual styling put many off what is actually a robust and almost indestructible machine. Keep putting oil in it and it will keep going. The 150cc version looks and goes and costs much the same. TS became ETZ in 1986 and is the one to go for. It collected the 'Luxus' tag in 1992, put on different bodywork to be offered as the Roadster in 93, and grew alloy wheels, a black engine and a headlamp cowl as the Sportstar (which was the model built in Turkey, of all places).

Prices
low £250 || high £750

TS / ETZ250 / 251
243cc two-stroke single || 20hp || 300lb || 65mpg || 85mph

STARTED LIFE AS the Trophy and developed into ETZ model via TS250 and Supa 5 versions. Luxus models have a front disc and all the MZ virtues of solid construction, sound design and long life. They even have a form of autolube which does away with the MZ pre-mixing ritual. Late 70s / early 80s bikes went through some severe main-bearing hassles, but should be sound enough now. Early models can wear points quickly, so it's worth fitting aftermarket electronic ignition systems. Became the Saxon Tour / Saxon Fun in 1993 with new bodywork seats and tanks. The one to have is the ISDT replica. If you find one of these you've found an excellent machine indeed. Briefly revitalised (MZ suffered from reunification) as MuZ, offering developed versions of the strokers as well as a small range powered by Rotax 500 four-stroke singles. The Yamaha powered versions are rare and unattractive.

Prices
low £350 || high £1500

ETZ300 / 301 Luxus
291cc two-stroke single || 130kg || 23bhp || 60mpg || 75mph

MUCH THE SAME story as the 250/251 examples. This Luxus arrived in 1987 as a 300, grew to 301 in 92, gained electronic ignition and switched to being made in Turkey in 95. The Saxon Tour and Fun versions came along in 93 with suitable fairings and accessories.

Prices
low £450 || high £1500

500R / Silverstar
494cc four-valve OHC single || 35bhp || 145kg || 55mpg || 85mph

STARTED OUT IN 1992 as a basic roadster with air-cooled Rotax four-stroke engine. Became a Silverstar in 94 with almost (for an MZ) attractive tools. Country version is supposed to be an off-roader and puts out slightly more power, Tour variety got a dinky fairing and bigger seat. All have basic MZ benefits for four-stroke fans – cheap, reliable and slow.

Prices
low £550 || high £1750

Skorpion
659cc five-valve Ic dohc single || 47bhp || 170kg || 43mpg || 100mph

MUZ ENTERED THE Nineties (five years late) with a range of Yam XTZ powered bikes. The Tour is actually the roadster, while the Traveller does the lugging bit with fitted panniers and full fairing, and the Sport, erm, sports a half fairing.

Prices
low £650 || high £1200

NSU

After flourishing in the inter-war years, NSU emerged from the Second World War by building thousands of cycles, mopeds and lightweights before creating some truly innovative and influential machines in the 1950s. Their competition success and inventive engineering undoubtedly inspired Honda in subsequent decades. The marque gives the classic enthusiast the choice between bread and butter bikes like the Quickly, and more exotic models of great engineering interest. Check spares and specialist services carefully before committing to a particular model.

Max / Supermax
247cc (69 x 66mm) air-cooled ohc single || 17bhp || 345lb || 72mph || 1952-63

GROUND-BREAKING IN SO many ways, this sprightly 250 single combined a pressed-steel monocoque frame with a leading-link front fork and a pioneering rear suspension system that tucked its single, centrally mounted rear shock absorber out of sight. Inside the engine was just as unusual, for NSU employed the 'Ultramax' method of driving the single overhead cam. The result was a rapid, reliable, well-engineered machine, endowed with excellent steering. Various offshoots and developments included the Standard and Special, the racing Sportmax, then the Supermax from 1956 and the US-market Scrambler as well as some 297cc, 21bhp versions. All this makes the Max one of the top-quality European machines of its era and fairly collectible today, but not necessarily easy to restore or rebuild with few UK specialists or support.

Prices
low £3000 || high £7000

OSSA

Spanish-built motorcycles from 1949-83. Competition-bred two-strokes for off-road and street use. The Franco-era company suffered from poor organisation, limiting their appeal despite considerable racing success. Collaboration with English trials rider Mick Andrews ensured total domination of the ISDT in the early 1970s and road racing successes in the 250 class. Rugged and

reliable, they remain very rare outside their native Spain.

250T/ TE / Copa
244cc 2T single || 27bhp || 235lbs || 95mph || 1975-83

PRE-MIX 2T SINGLE with punchy, off-road derived motor and five-speed gearbox. Available in traditional 'touring' street guise and in tuned 'cup' version for production racing. Late model F3 Copa built in minuscule numbers for national racing series (included because columnist Paul Miles has one!).

Prices
First find one...

TRIUMPH

If you're seeking the earlier Triumph bikes built by the men of Meriden then go look in the 'classic British' guide. Here we highlight a few of the Hinckley machines from the John Bloor era, which started production with the T300 series in 1990. The modular liquid-cooled dohc engine proved to be remarkably robust in long-term use, a little dated by comparison with the Japanese competition but blessed with that rare attribute in modern motorcycles; a distinctive character all of its own. As they age, so some models some have developed a definite cult following. Mechanical issues are rare (sprag clutches being one well-known weakness). From 1993 many processes moved in-house and quality improved. The T500 range arrived in 1997 and falls outside our scope. For now...

Super III
885cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled dohc triple || 115bhp || 460lb || 140mph || 1993-94

AN OFFSHOOT OF the 900 Daytona with all the gruff grunt of the triple sportster and a 20bhp power boost. Fully faired and certainly collectible with uprated six-piston brakes, carbon fibre accessories and tweaked suspension. Few still survive so values rising.

Prices
low £1800 || high £3000

Speed Triple
885cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled dohc triple || 98bhp || 460lb || 135mph || 1994-96

THE SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR to Laverda's Jota, the original Speed Triple is perhaps the ultimate modern factory café racer. Five-speed gearbox detracts somewhat from the fun (can be converted to six gears), and many owners fit higher bars to give a more relaxed ride. Aggressive, sleek and (reasonably) agile: the first classic from the Hinckley factory. The 750 version, built for just one year, doesn't quite command the same respect.

Prices
low £1500 || high £3000

Daytona 1000
998cc (76 x 55mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 120bhp || 515lb || 130mph || 1991-92

THIS SIX-SPEED SHORT-STROKE four feels like a throwback to an earlier era. It demonstrated that the new Triumph engine could certainly snarl, but didn't have the handling to match the Oriental sporting opposition. The 900 Daytona triple was sweeter and easier to live with; the 1200 Trophy was a better tourer. In the way of these things the memory of the 1000 has mellowed with age and the few that remain are becoming sought after.

Prices
low £1000 || high £2800

Daytona 1200
1180cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 147bhp || 495lb || 145mph || 1993

SOLD AS SEEN



MZ ES 250/2 TROPHY, 1973.

Excellent project, V5 in my name. All I had time for was to clean the carb, change the spark plug and clean the points. The bike fired second kick! The tank will need some attention; rust and old oil at the bottom. I used a fuel line to start it. SOLD FOR £490

A BIT OF a beast by any standard, the short-lived 1200 Daytona was the fastest, most powerful and most expensive bike built by Triumph in the firm's early years. Few sold new so very rare now, but still capable of a massive turn of speed, with power and torque delivered at more accessible revs than most Japanese counterparts. For muscle-bike enthusiasts only.

Prices
low £1200 || high £2800

Thunderbird 900
885cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled dohc triple || 68bhp || 460lb || 100mph || 1995-2004

REVIVED TRIUMPH'S FIRST attempt at a 'classic' styled machine was in fact more of a cruiser until the Thunderbird Sport came along in 1997, complete with six-speeds, twin front discs and faux X-75 Hurricane styling. Detuned (the 68bhp can be elevated easily to the 82 of the Sport) and gentle, the gentle triple is extremely easy and relaxed to ride – a good cruiser, although the decision to blank off sixth gear remains a strange one. Also available as the Adventurer and legend TT, these machines offer a lot of classic riding for little money.

Prices
low £2000 || high £4000

E&OE

There will be errors and there are certainly omissions. Correcting them is likely to be too big a task for the *CBG* simpletons, so your assistance will always be appreciated. If you want us to add / remove / improve an entry, drop a note to editor@classicbikeguide.com and we'll credit you for any changes which result. Similarly, if you've recently sold or bought a bike, drop us a pic of it with the price, and we'll use it when there's space ... with anonymity if you prefer! CBG

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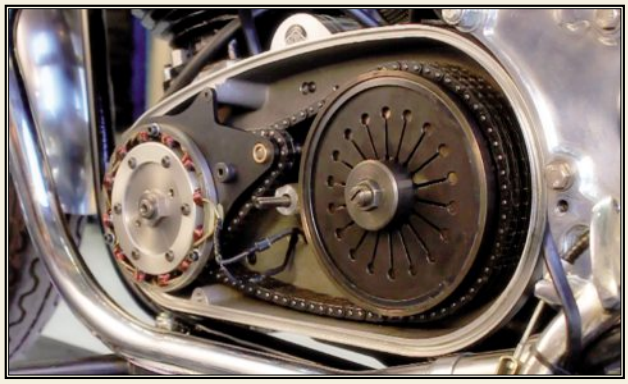
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WORDS BY ROB DAVIES **PHOTOS BY** PAUL WATERFIELD AND ROBIN HORTON

HIGH REVVING, WHIM-WHIM two-strokes (that's my version of their noise by the way) were the sound of the Seventies. I know because I had one, and so did several of my mates. Yes they were smoky, but there was no talk of degradation of the planet then; that was for the next decade.

The build quality – see the tail light for instance – and handling were never the best, while the literal Japanese to English manuals were hilarious and impossible to understand, but boy were those bikes quick, and that's why we loved them. Paul Waterfield never lost his love for the type, and now he owns about a dozen of the beasts, from mid-range to big Suzukis and Kawasakis. One or two of them required a lot of work and effort to restore the good looks; hence the GT550 for today.

The GT550 Suzuki came out in 1972 as a competitor to the Kawasaki H1 Mach 3. It is a three cylinder, air-cooled two-stroke engine, but featuring some advancements in oil usage over earlier smoky two-strokes, plus a new air cooling system. It cost £825 when new and developed over a six year period from the J model, with such yearly changes as removal of the rubber fork gaiters, disc brakes instead of drum, different exhausts and a few minor styling changes. In essence it was the middle brother to the larger GT750, or the 'Kettle' as we called it, and its small brother the GT380. For some reason – possibly styling – it was outsold by both smaller and larger bikes. It was fitted with both kick and electric start, but not electronic ignition. Colour range was exotic, not like those dull colours of the Sixties. The GT colour swatch kicked off with such glorious names as Aztec Gold, Redondo Blue, followed by Larado Red and Hawaii Green for the L model, while the final B models of 77 were Uranus blue and spark silver.

Above: Unfairly neglected in classicland according to some. Interesting bikes, these, and lots and lots of polishing opportunities



During this period, two-strokes – by the nature of their operation – suffered from a couple of problems. Firstly, the heads got very hot, which tended to cause the middle cylinder not to operate as efficiently as was desirable, and also they tended to collect unburned oil and fuel at the bottom of the crankcase during tickover, which then produced clouds of blue smoke when the revs were turned up. Suzuki worked hard to reduce both of these faults with this model.

So, they designed the Ram Air System; a simple arrangement featuring a metal cowl that surrounded the three cylinder heads and funnelled air past the finned area. The ubiquitous rounded fins of the two-stroke can look very ordinary, but the angled newly designed square looking head with its Ram Air logo in black was quite a style change – maybe even a Marmite moment.

To counter the excess smoking when opening the throttle, Suzuki placed a scavenging system at the bottom of the crankcase, which essentially sucked up the oil/fuel and mixed it in with the incoming fuel. The 550 had an oil pump and reservoir that pushed oil to all the necessary places such as the pistons and bearings without the need to pre-mix oil and fuel like the old engines.

CBG: So, Paul, how did you come to own this bike, and what state was it in?

Paul Waterfield: I paid £350 for the bike in 2010, and also gave one of my older bikes in part exchange. The Suzuki had been lying unused and unloved in a damp shed for 15 years, so as you can imagine it was in extremely poor shape – but I love those old two-strokes and saw the potential. The throttle and cables were seized solid, the carbs were totally gummed up, and it had been modified with a glass fibre Dutton kit to give it a 'Barry Sheene' look; so that lot had to go for a start. I then set about getting replacement parts such as mudguards and seat. Some bits came from eBay, while the seat was purchased at the Stafford Show. No fresh fuel had been in the tank for some years, so first I used an acid cleaning kit on the inside before washing it out.

CBG: And then?

Paul: One of the first things I did was to get the original exhausts re-chromed. I knew that the engine was basically okay, as the previous owner had put oil down the plug holes, but unfortunately he forgot to inform me that he had drained the oil from the gearbox – more of that later.

I have my own ultrasonic cleaner, which is big enough to get a set of carbs in, so I stripped them down and in they went for about half an hour. I know that people use a variety of solutions for a variety of subjects. I often use ordinary tap water with a dash of white vinegar or detergent; this usually gets the job done.

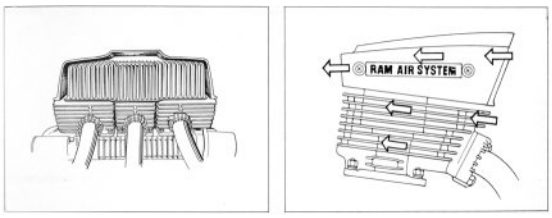
The small rubber caps on the tops of the carburettors had perished, so they had to be replaced. Kits are easy to get hold of. And then I rode the bike around for quite a while until I decided to restore it to its former glory.

Other things to check with carburettors are the rubber boots that join them to the head and often to the airbox too. After years of heat and vibration they can easily develop fine cracks which are difficult to see, hence the need to inspect them closely when you remove them from the engine. If you are in any doubt as to their structural integrity, it's always best to replace them, otherwise you may have loads of trouble trying to get the engine running correctly as air will be sucked in through the cracks and tuning will be impossible.

Above: Seat and fuel tank have been removed to reveal the scruffy underbelly of the bike after years of neglect. What restorers need to note at this point is where control cables and wiring looms run, and the positions of the clips that are used to keep them in place. All frames are a variety of a few basic designs, but here the GT shows not one main backbone, but three tubes that join just behind the fuel tank and re-join at the steering head

Inset: More of the seriously well engineered top frame structure and a close look at the coil positions and the cowl that forms the Ram Air System

Right: Diagram of the RAS as drawn in the original handbook



CBG: And then you started the restoration?

Paul: Then I started to strip everything off the bike, and my tip at this stage is to photograph everything, especially the wiring and where cables are routed. There are all sorts of clips and ties throughout any bike, and if you don't note where these are, cables or wires will not reach, or will get in the way of something else. The designers thought all of this through when they made the bike, and it's a mistake to try to be clever and do it differently – unless you're brilliant of course. As for the electrical system, many of the connectors had to be renewed; I bought my bits from Vehicle Wiring Products, but the magazines are always advertising companies that supply electrical parts.

CBG: What about the frame and wheels?

Paul: The rims were okay, but the spokes had had it. I had both wheels re-spoked with stainless steel spokes for £65 per wheel. Stainless are not standard, so you may not win a prize with them for originality, but they certainly look good and more importantly they last. I knew that powder coating was not used during the 1970s, so as this is a 1974 L model I decided to repaint using an etch primer to start, and finish with a professional gloss black. If you go to a proper car bodyshop you can buy larger than usual spray cans that give an excellent finish. ➧


1


2



3

1: Close-up of the bike's centre section showing airbox and battery position. The battery has leaked but the worst part will be at the bottom. Frame paint is in remarkably good condition

2: Although the chrome on both mudguards has lasted well, both will have to be replaced. The chainguard and rear light assemblies only requiring polishing

3: Rubber parts on the carburettors have shrivelled, and there is a tear in the rubber boot connecting to the airbox. These will be replaced while making sure that the more important connections between carbs and cylinders are free of cracks

4: The original sales invoice of GT550 in 197. Just £825

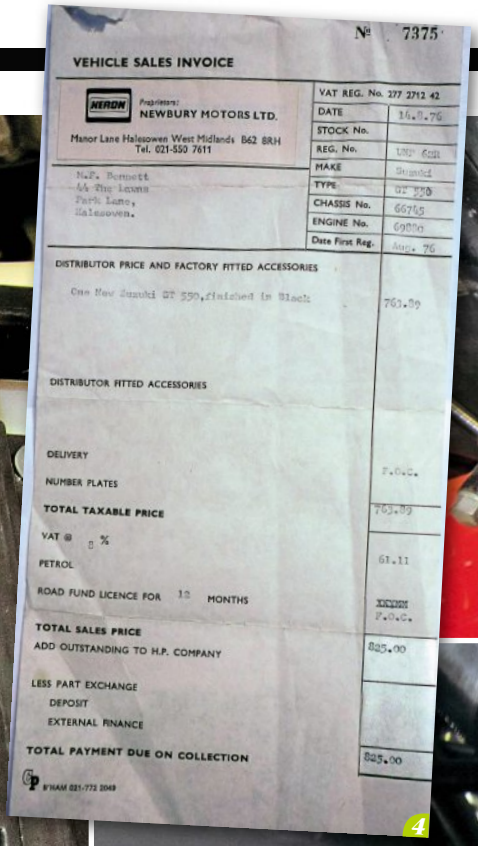
NOTES ON CHROMING

There are probably several chroming companies in your area, so it is worthwhile checking out which is the best; the cheapest is NOT always the best choice for quality. In essence there are two forms of chrome plating; Hard Chrome, is a covering of several thousandths of an inch, and is used for fork legs and bearing surfaces, whereas purely decorative chroming is only a few millionths of an inch thick (chromium is expensive stuff). The process includes several steps, and they are: strip – polish; copper plate – polish; semi bright nickel plate, bright nickel plate and finally chrome plate.

As you can see it is a lengthy and laborious process (hence the price) with the basic plating process sequence being copper, nickel and then chrome, and the copper tends to fill in the smaller irregularities. You may ring round and get widely different quotes, but remember that some companies who are not used to working on motorcycle parts which require a decorative and outdoor resistant finish may skip the copper altogether. So you can't beat going on personal recommendation, or going in to the works to ask questions and view the sort of finish that they produce.



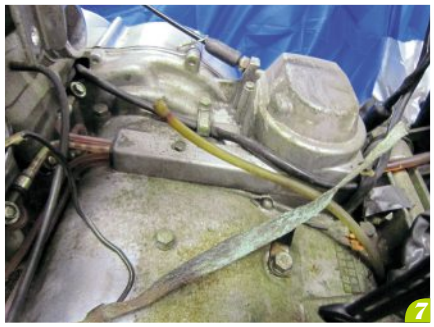


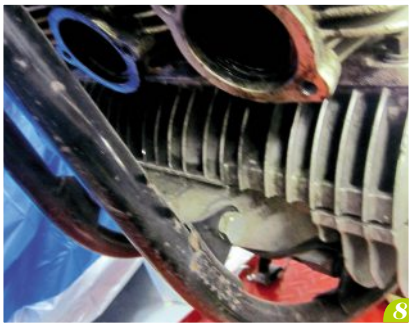


















5: Bottom of the frame, engine mount and brake switch arrangement. Take lots of pics before dismantling to aid the rebuild. For example; the earth strap. Easily missed

6: The steering lock lives under the steering head. Treat it gently, they can be a pain if they seize locked

7: Once the carbs and airbox have been removed, you can see how the aluminium has oxidised on the top of the gearbox

8: Once the exhausts have been removed the engine's scruffy front is revealed. Because access for cleaning here isn't easy, year-round riders can corrode badly

9: Head and barrels have now been taken off to reveal a decent engine, and how the oil lines are arranged

10: Inside the crankcase where the gear selector lies things are very clean indeed. Suzuki fits thin metal plates with channels into its gearboxes to ensure that splashed oil is directed to where it needs to go. Clever, but it's necessary on reassembly not to forget them or to put them the wrong way round

11: Headlights are generally stuffed with wires and connectors. Get them in the wrong place and the headlight assembly will never fit – or work













CBG: You also have your own bead blasting kit, don't you?

Paul: You tend to collect certain things over the years, and I like to use small glass beads when I blast parts, it gives a better finish. One of the worst objects was the battery box. Battery boxes are usual made of steel, which means that if you have a battery which leaks even a small amount of acid over the years (note: always make sure that your battery is vented with a rubber hose below the bike) then that box will corrode away at a fast rate. This was what had happen on the Suzuki, but once bead blasted and then primed and painted, it came up very well.

CBG: There was a problem with the gearbox?

Paul: Only due to it not having any oil in it, and I knew that this was the case before I started the strip. When the engine was out of the frame I took the gearbox apart and saw that most of it was beyond repair. So I went along to D&K in Stoke on Trent, which specialises in bike breaking, and bought another gearbox. With some gear shafts, the actual cogs are heat shrunk onto the shaft, so that it's virtually impossible to get them off, and it may be necessary to replace the whole lot.

From then on it was a case of using the photographs I'd taken earlier to start putting everything back together again. ➧



1: Ultrasonic cleaners like this can be bought for around £150 and will treat motorcycle items as large as a set of carburettors. Paul uses water with a dash of white vinegar or a detergent

2: Re-chromed exhausts. Rims and rear shocks were also in reasonable condition, and everything has now been well polished. Paul decided to have the hubs re-spoked with stainless; there is no joy in trying to clean up rusty/scruffy spokes

3: Suzuki cockpit complete with distinctive clocks. Only 2848 miles from new!

4: Great result. Professional paint and plate really do set off a Seventies bike

5: Gratuitous back end bling shot. So, so Seventies, this

6: The detailing and construction are first class. Accurate assembly depends on understanding where and how parts fit


GT550
GCI
RAM AIR SYSTEM
SUZUKI
4


GT550
5


SUZUKI
RAM AIR SYSTEM
GT550
6


SUZUKI
GT550
RAM AIR SYSTEM
SUZUKI



CBG: You say that the internet was useful for locating some parts?

Paul: On occasions you can find it very difficult to locate a particular part for your model. But if you use websites like Gearhead.com or Kawasaki Resources (I have several Kawasaki two-strokes), say, for parts like mudguards, you may find that the manufacturer used the same part on another model. Once you have the part number, you can then often fit the available part from one model onto your own. And now that the bike's finished, and taking into consideration that it has only done 2800 miles from new, I'm pretty sure it's worth a lot more than I paid for it. CBG

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2017 Brand new Royal Enfield built in the new factory, all fuel injected, electric and kickstart. **ROYAL ENFIELD CLASSIC 500.** We are the largest award winning dealer, we do an upgrade kit for this bike please ask why! this bike is the new ARMY model, looks just great! demos available! this bike is in stock!



2017 Brand new Royal Enfield built in the new factory, all fuel injected, electric and kickstart. **ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET 500.** We are an award winning dealer and here is a new colour for the classic EFi, a great retro bike upgrade to your spec please ask.



2017 Here we have a Brand new bike! **MASH ROADSTAR.** Its French with 2 year warranty! Siemens fuel injection, 4 valve XBR motor! 5 speed, elec & kick start, 13 ltr tank & only 140 kgs!! Looks like a Bonnie! But half the price..... and what a great price!!! It looks fantastic see photos!! All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK. £3,750



2017 MASH TT40 . Order yours now. Brand new Cafe as seen on MCN, classic bike etc ABS, Bosch fuel injection, Honda XBR motor elec and kick, only 140k, what a great bike and fantastic to ride, book your test ride now. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. DELIVERY ANYWHERE IN UK **£4,699**



2017 MASH DIRTSTAR. This is the new LTD Mash scrambler done in the same style as the Steve McQueen bike, it is a must see bike in our showroom! Two year warranty. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK



1997 TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD. Here we have an as new condition rare Thunderbird, just stunning. Lots of history, old MOT's etc. All standard and a great colour in jet black (please see photos), must see in our showroom. This must be one of the very best and low miles. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK. **£4,499**



1966 TRITON ROADSTER This must be one of the best Tritons i have seen! Very well built. 500cc Triumph motor. This bike is all as new. All rebuilt. Must see in our showroom. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK **£13,950**



1982 BMW R100 This is not your ordinary R100 painted with cafe seat etc. This bike is a 1976 race spec American R100s, Engineering perfection!! Fortune spent on it. Full engine rebuild, Braced frame. Just perfect. Must be viewed. See 20 photos. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK **£14,500**



NORTON COMMANDO 1971

What a great Norton. Must be the best available. Full nut and bolt restoration back in 2013, 3000 miles since rebuild. Matching numbers, UK bike 146977/146977, over 13k spent on restoration plus cost of bike. We cannot fault it, very easy to start and just looks stunning. All bikes come with MoT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK.



2005 ROYAL ENFIELD TRIALS
What a great bike it looks just fantastic lots of high quality British parts fitted, over £3500 spent on this great bike (please see photos). In fact the photos do not show how nice this bike is, only 3000 miles! This bike must be viewed. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK **£3,799**



1929 ALCYON A2 TOURISTE. RARE. Restored condition (please see photos), engine 403260 175cc, stunning. The only one for sale in UK. French built 1929! Full engine rebuild. All working and running. Full paperwork, date certificate etc. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK **£5,699**



HONDA CB750. Fantastic! Restored condition, rare Honda Matic 750, lots of history and spares, runs and rides as it should and very collectable! All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK. **£4,950**



1999 TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD SPORT
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1969 TRIUMPH TIGER COMPETITION
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1955 BSA C11. A two owner bike from new, same reg from new. Lots & lots of history, owners book, service book, full rest. and in as new condition, just perfect . Must be the best available. Must see in our showroom. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK. **£4,899**



1982 HONDA CB450. Here we have a very rare CB450A auto. Stunning condition very low miles. Must be seen! A great smooth ride, must be the only one available. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK. **£3,250**



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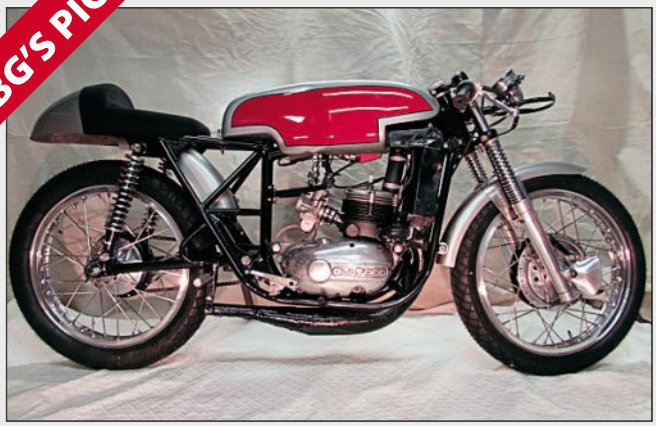
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BMW 700GS 2015, 3459 miles, perfect condition, 21 months left on warranty, always garaged, Akrapovic muffler, RKA tank bag, BMW top box Tel. 92923 27510 georgebuchamp@gmail.com USA



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BMW R100RS 1979, 9800 miles, fully restored, matching engine & frame numbers, original ATE (brakes), Brembo (brakes) & BMW parts inc, £6495 no offers. Email. barryedwards1958@gmail.com



BMW R65 1981, immaculate, matching numbers, unrestored rare machine, £2450 Tel. 01664 474638 Leics



BMW R75/5 1973, superb all round condition, think this is one of the best you will see, lightly restored, just serviced Tel. 07702 709063 Northumberland



BSA 650cc Star Twin, 1963, good runner, good condition, MoT, new rear shocks, fuel taps and rear tyre, £4900 Tel. 07855 092420 Somerset



BSA Golden Flash, Watsonian combination, professional rebuild, records of restoration, very well sorted & rides well, £6000 Tel. 01342 842031 Surrey



BSA Lightning, 1965, good condition, SRM oil conversion, original rims but slightly pitted, £4600 ono Tel. 07563 164912 Cornwall



BSA A10 1959, 650cc, fitted with Squire side car, correct numbers and registration, rebuilt wheels, £4250 Tel. 01529 413579 Lincs



BSA A10 Golden Flash, 1956, V5, non transferable number, recent new tyres & alloy sump plate, starts & rides well, in nice useable condition, £5500 Tel. 01328 700711 Norfolk



BSA B20 1937, four speed hand-change, excellent restored condition, starts & runs well, £5500 Tel. 07967 041307 Northumberland



BSA BANTAM 68, long MoT, on Sorn, rebuilt as a hobby in Sportsman style, only want what it has cost me, £1600 Tel. 01424 845651 East Sussex



BSA C15 1967, Model G the last and best, 20,000 miles, one previous owner, £2500 Tel. 07758 354370



BSA GOLDSTAR 250, 1971, nice condition, new rims, spokes, polished hubs new paint, £2500 ono Tel. 07563 164912 Cornwall



BULTACO SHERPA 340, 199B, has had full rebuild lots off money spent too much to list, please call for info, £4000 Tel. Chris 07713 138615 Lancs



BULTACO TSS 125cc water cooled road racer, 1966 model restored to a very high standard, engine number M-600480-6, £12,000 ono Tel. 07584 197453 Cornwall

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1953 Triumph T100 Tiger Pre-Unit - Wonderful pre-unit Triumph in excellent condition. Restored a few years ago. You won't find too much to nit-pick here **£7,750**



1933 Sunbeam Model 9 600cc - This motorcycle is very rare it's a 600cc engine and an original Sunbeam 4 speed gear box as you can see it's a column shift. The bike has undergone at some point in its 74 years had some restoration (tank paint) but it's our belief most of the bike is in its original form. We highly recommend viewing you will not find one of these on the market today in this condition **£10,999**



Triumph 750 Café Bonneville - This is a very special machine built by Denmark's "Bonneville Per" Matching numbers with 3,000km since build. Starts first kick and roars like a bat out of hell. Lightened/balanced crank with American con-rods. Flat slide carbs, dry clutch, Scitsu rev counter, Center plug modification to head Ceriani front forks +more! **£12,500**



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HONDA five bikes all need total restoration, one CR250 1987; one Honda Montessa, two Montessa, one CB250 Tel. 07340 931759 Essex



HONDA 750 Four, 1978 & 1979, one runs, one needs a little work, bought as a summer project but never found the time Tel. 07817 935121 Lancs



HONDA CB250N 1980, + carrier, Siamesed exhaust and throw over bags, £1900 ono Tel. 07748 713909 Devon



HONDA CB350 twin, super condition, runs great, 13,000 miles only from new, 1971, American import registered by me, MoT, £2850 Tel. Steve 07814 355571 Lancs



HONDA CB400 Dream, 1979, MoT Sept 2017, runs well, new battery, also spares, would make a good restoration project, £600 Tel. 01255 427983 Essex



HONDA CB650Z 1981, MoT April 2017, very good clean condition, £2950 Tel. 02392 382619 evenings only Hampshire



HONDA CB750 K7, 1977, MoT to Sept 2017, 45,000 miles, all original condition, reliable runner, garaged, dry weather use only, £3800 ono Tel. 01726 75517 Cornwall



HONDA F1 1976, Cafe Racer, in good condition, runs well, 30,000 miles, £2000 Tel. 01255 553865 Essex



HONDA XL125 1978, Trials conversion, beautifully finished, runs sweet, new tyres, rims, paint, plating, brand new Hagon shocks, reg on day time MoT, £1500 Tel. 07792 094969 Oxfordshire



HONDA XL185 1981, twin shock, original V5, lightly restored new shocks, seat, C&S, s/steel exhaust, gold silencer, MoT, £1950 Tel. 07784 783964 Lancs



JAMES CADET 150, 1958 era, up and running, V5 applied for, £1100 ono Tel. 01793 618229 Wiltshire



JAMES CAPTAIN 1959, all original, been kept in a bedroom for 35 years, good runner, original reg number (buff & V5C), £1250 ono Tel. 01295 262337; 07733 976310 Oxfordshire

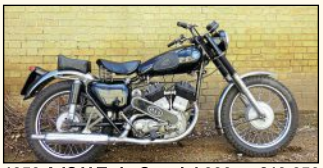
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KAWASAKI KH500 A8 A8, 18,300 miles, MoT until April 2017, very tidy some spares included in sale, £5750 ovno Tel. 01458 445399 Somerset



LAVERDA 1200 1981, 180 degree, r/h change, genuine 17k, almost full history, MoT, new tyres, Falcon shocks, lots of history, superb condition, £8000 Tel. 07900 801714 Somerset



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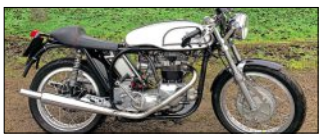

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BSA C15 year 1964, make good trials bike, £1550 bargain V5C docs with bike can deliver at cost Tel. 07443 642408. West Yorkshire.

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GARAGE CLEARANCE 1946 BSA B31 complete rebuilt, V5C, road legal, no tax or MoT needed, £4250. Di Blasi off road, not road legal, £425. Triumph pre unit dual seat, good condition, £60. BTH magneto good spark, new points, pick ups etc, with auto advance, £375. Honda moped 49cc, 1979, road legal, V5C presend, £350, pick up or plus postage Tel. 01612 245447 9am to 9pm, 07714 235463. South Manchester.

HONDA SILVERWING 650cc, wanted must be top condition with all the bits, fairing, panniers, topbox etc, good price paid Tel. Bob 01234 768981. Beds.

HONDA XL250 complete bike stripped for restoration, was running, all parts present, 1978, framework powder coated, ready to put together, Haynes manual included, V5C present, £890 ovno Tel. 01799 550489. Essex.

JAWA GZ350 1980, bought in a fit of enthusiasm a few months back hardly used as prefer my BMW, it has electronic ignition, and been converted to 12 volt, there's a long MoT, and it's in good clean condition or I wouldn't have bought it, a quirky machine, but rugged and surprisingly nippy, £825 Tel. 01842 819969. Norfolk.

SUZUKI GS550 first reg 1980, but 1979 model, has been on Sorn for five years, stored in dry garage, service history, bills, less than 100 miles since last MoT, not original, but sensible mods, £1650 Tel. 01373 228814. Somerset.

TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD Adventurer, 1996, good condition, 23,900 miles, AC Cobra paint job, sounds fantastic, £2900 ovno Tel. 01993 837051. Oxfordshire.

VELOCETTE VIPER 1956, 350cc, excellent condition, 45 miles since professional engine overall, must be seen, £7500 Tel. 07531 542964. Durham.

YAMAHA RADIAN 1987, 600cc, four cylinder, vgc, MoT September 2017, new Dunlop tyres, proper retro bike, may swap or p/x twinshock trials bike or TY mono, £1400 Tel. 07967 953272. Herefordshire.

Parts For Sale

AJS & MATCHLESS SPARES: large quantity mostly AJS/Matchless garage clearance, too many parts to list, £200 Tel. 01522 703687. Lincs.

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AMAL TYPE 510 matbox remote float chamber as new condition, used for one summer, bought for £140, yours for £95 Tel. 07758 354370. Lancs.

BMW R20 petrol tank, 1938, £250. R/mystic clock volt meters inc pods wiring loom etc, £250. Smiths speedo circa 1920, £250 Tel. 01512 608612. Liverpool.

BSA B50MX CCM ENGINE matching pair, good condition, gearbox is missing Tel. 09854 00022. Email. markkampe@hotmail.com

BSA GOLDSTAR touring cams never used, matched pair bought for my DB32, £100. Also advance timing pinion for same, £45 Tel. 01695 557277; 07758 354370. Lancs.

CENTRE STAND taken off BSA rigid model, but not sure if correct, phone for measurements, £30 will post Tel. 01865 762859. Oxfordshire.

HONDA CB250N/CB400N starter motor plus a couple of (? Honda) exhaust rings, £6 + postage Tel. Richard 01842 819969. Norfolk.

HONDA CX500 (not Euro) rear carrier rack for sale with indicators, prefer collection West Norfolk, but postage possible Tel. 01842 819969. Norfolk.

HONDA NTV650 petrol tank, green nice condition, £95. Triumph sprung hub, rear wheel, £250 Tel. Steve 07551 665928. Sussex.

MANX original magnetic rev counter, ATRC 2652/N, £850. Amal matchbox, original float chamber, £125. Dolphin fairing and fitting for Norton requires, screen, £45 Tel. 01276 491687. Berks.

MATCHLESS G80S petrol tank, both tool boxes, front, rear mudguards, valanced number plate will email pics, £350 Tel. Dave 01617 669852. Manchester.

MONTESA COTA 348 complete front forks with 65mm extensions, front wheel, damaged hub, Akront alloy rim, alloy petrol tank, seat, plastic tank assy, brake plate etc, £160 Tel. 01235 820985; 07710 151453.

KAWASAKI KLR250 engine & seat, wheels etc, need the space, £400 ono Tel. 07901 783386. Lincs.

NORTON wideline dual seat, in good useable condition, £85 prefer buyer collects Tel. 07798 866071. Middx.

NORTON COMMANDO Mk 3, 1976, genuine girling shock absorbers, vgc, £75. Lucas S700P chrome headlight shell, small dent, £25 Tel. 01902 331807. Wolverhampton.

NORTON COMMANDO 750 engine, gearbox, belt primary single carbkit, sweptback pipes, plates for wideline box of new parts for engine and gearbox, £2500 ono Tel. 01560 485449. Ayrshire.

NORTON DOMINATOR front wheel hub, very good condition, £70. Also new centre stand for T120, T110 etc, £60 bargain, B31, B33 stand new Tel. 07443 642408. West Yorkshire.

NORTON FORKS complete 7" alloy top yoke clip ons like new, plus pair of sliders, original steel top yoke chrome seal holders, £875 Tel. 01276 491687. Berks.

SIDECAR CHASSIS 1940s, large mudguard and 19" wheel + tyre, some fittings, good condition, no rust, £125 Tel. 01524 843902. Lancs.

TRIUMPH PARTS outer primary chain case cover original T1601, £285, filter cover, E486 £5. Unit air leaver 7/8 bars, £5. Stop light switch 31437, £2. Unit gearbox parts, ring for details, plus post Tel. 01933 355796. Northants.

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ARIEL SQUARE 4 Mk1 & Mk2, in restored condition, Sunbeam S7 in restored condition, Indian Chief or Scout in good running condition, for older enthusiast Tel. 01622 685517. Kent.

BMW R80G/S wanted 1981 to 1987, running condition, cosmetics not a problem Tel. 07920 095019. South Yorks.

BSA B31/33 wanted a pair of B31/33 Dynamo type primary chaincases or just the inner case please, also any other parts to help rebuild Tel. 01865 762859. Oxfordshire.

BSA BANTAM pannier frames wanted for GPO, B175 curved rail type, any GPO parts seat carrier, etc Tel. Steve 07551 665928 or text. Sussex.

BSA BANTAM C15 or similar wanted for winter restoration project, most things considered, pay cash and travel to collect Tel. 07984 225937. Leics.

BSA TWIN or single wanted, either runner or restoration project, A10, A65, B31, B33 models ideal, but anything considered, any condition Tel. 07932 948153. Notts.

DOES ANYONE HAVE wartime BSA M20 reg no, YLN 95G? Swansea say that this bike is Sorned, ring me I have interesting information on the bike Tel. 01992 504816. Cheshire.

HONDA OR KAWASAKI project bike wanted, anything from 1970s/1980s 50cc to 1000cc, pay accordingly, any condition 2 or 4 stroke, prefer within 75 miles of Derby Tel. 07984 950257.

VELOCETTE LE has anybody got an Amal type 19 carburettor complete and useable for my LE Tel. 01248 681466. Conwy.

TRIUMPH UNIT TWIN wanted either runner or restoration project, T120, T140 5TA etc ideal, but anything considered, any condition anywhere Tel. 07932 948153. Notts.

VILLIERS 1F PARTS wanted, sprocket cover with clutch arm mechanism and pushrod assembly for same Tel. 07504 976426. Lancs.

VINTAGE SPEEDOMETER like Smiths or similar the type that was fitted on the handlebars of a bicycle or moped in the sixties/seventies, together with front wheel drive gear and cable Tel. Mike 07702 001509. East Sussex.

WANTED BSA M20 girder fork model in any condition, complete or not, genuine cash buyer Tel. 07943 595413. West Midlands. Email. garysmith8441@yahoo.com

WANTED GRIFFIN 1970s motorcycle crash helmet to display with classic bike, any condition considered Tel. 07896 871451 evenings. North Yorkshire.

WANTED NSU QUICKLY and Cyclemaster, complete machines or just parts, also 60s 70s 80s mopeds Tel. 07790 168224. West Midlands.

WANTED PANTHER MODEL 70 350cc or Model 60, 250cc 1946-1948 Sloper cylinder head, Rocker Cover, Pushrod telescopic tubes and pushrods, WHY? Tel. 01284 753974. Suffolk.

WANTED PLEASE PARTS: for my 1973 T120V Triumph Bonneville, high handlebars, new indicator set, traditional grips and air intake boxes, left and right with hoses Tel. 07460 457280.

WANTED TRIUMPH TR5 pre unit, 1954 to 1959, must have matching numbers and original reg no, must be right in all ways Tel. 02920 733956. Cardiff.

YAMAHA SZR660 PARTS required, would consider part bikes Tel. 07944 055467. Lincs.

Miscellaneous

BOOTS: genuine 1960s Mike Hailwood, with faint signature inside, good condition, size 8, £90. Jeans leather by Akito, size 34, 30, immaculate, £60. Jacket leather 40" chest, immaculate £80. Helmet & visor size large, excellent, £40 Tel. 01748 810529. North Yorkshire.

BOOTS: GAERNE for trials or racing, red, size 11, good, £25. Frank Thomas paddock, white, size 6, new unused, £25 Tel. 01495 759234. Gwent.

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MAGAZINES FOR SALE all classic: CBG, Dirt Bike, Classic Mechanics, BTSC collection, only North Kent, ring for details, best offer secures. Tel. 01634 270476. Kent.

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SPEEDWAY STAR & NEWS MAGAZINES 51 of, 1969 to 1970, £40. Carl Zeiss Jena binoculars with case 8x30, vgc, £38. Beck Kassel binoculars 7x35 made in Germany, £38 Tel. 02086 414238. Surrey.

THE VILLIERS 125cc Mark 9D Engine Gear Unit handbook all original from the Villiers engineering workshop April January 1948, £6.50 plus £1.95 p&p Tel. 07929 255662. North Lincolnshire.

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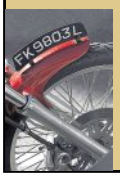
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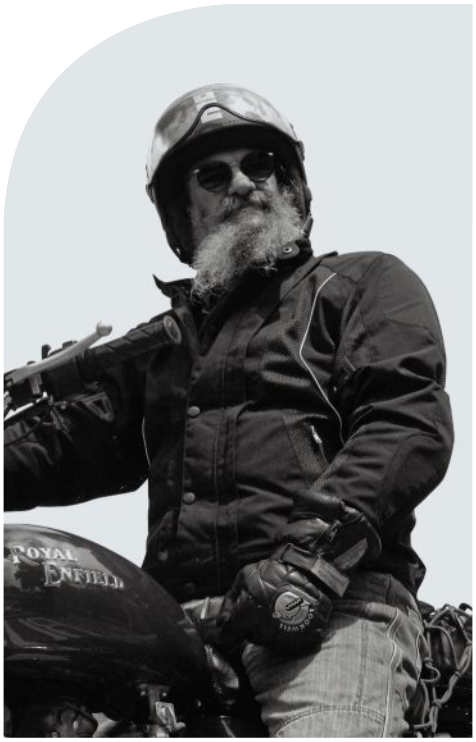
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FRANK WESTWORTH

Famous last words

Summery dreams are made of this

LATE SUMMER, MAYBE autumn. It's not always easy to tell the difference unless you keep a calendar in your head. Which I do not. In the occasionally UK what this often means is that not only is the rain less cold, as all the jokes tell us, but we can also be blessed with giant celestial entertainments in the flashy form of thunderstorms. These are very exciting. Particularly so when sitting inside one aboard a motorcycle and reflecting with careful nonchalance than you are the highest point for miles around, out there on the blasted heath. Or hammering moorland, in this case.

The rain was of the heavyweight hosepipe type, none of your common nor garden effete garden sprinkler nonsense here. Mid-afternoon and the dark was midnight itself. Apart from the flashes. How many man-killer Volts are there in a thunderflash? The water was running upwards inside my visor. I was entirely wet. My feet were submerged, which meant that the Norton's spark plugs were also underwater. Likewise the exhausts, which run very hot indeed on rotary engines, explaining the billowing clouds of steam which failed to improve the clarity of my vision. The engine, however, continued to run fine, as did the lights. Thunderbolt and lightning arrived at exactly the same moment, which apparently means something significant in meteorological terms, but in my vision appeared the rear end of a Nissan Micra – a form of car, apparently. I changed down to second and followed it. Seemed sensible.

There was so much free-flowing water that it was impossible to see where the road surface turned from well-washed Tarmac into muddy grass. I trusted in the Nissan Micra's superhuman ability to see more than I could. After all, even Nissan Micras are blessed with windscreen wipers and screen demisters, unlike most motorcycles. We ploughed on together. Stalwarts. Or idiots. You choose. I wished I was anywhere else. Almost anywhere else. Why, why, why do we do this? Why was I doing this at exactly this moment? This is idiotic. Only an idiot would do this. This was hateful, horrid and seriously dangerous. Also terrifying.

Quite suddenly the rain stopped. It didn't ease, or lessen, or anything. It simply stopped. The sun appeared, high in the west – which was straight ahead. The sun is very blinding. I peered through the water on my specs, on both sides of the visor, into a blinding LSD dazzle of rainbows and insane diffraction patterns and glued my attention to the rear of the Nissan Micra, which was accelerating. Heroic types, drivers of Nissan Micras, plainly.

The road was a river, pulling up to clean down my lenses was plainly impossible, so I followed that Micra; for possibly the first time in my entire riding life I was glad to be stuck behind a slow car.

And then I started to grin. I could tell this because the frozen soaked gritted muscles of my face went 'ping' in an odd way. The grin was followed by a laugh. As our speeds rose, so the airstream banished the water from visor and specs and the sun's warmth dried things while I watched in wonder. Not the road. The road was a river, although the surface of the outer lane was now visible through maybe a half-inch of clear water. I accelerated past the Nissan Micra, raising a happy hand to thank the driver for guiding us all safely through the horror show. I doubt the driver even knew there was a bike behind. It doesn't matter anyway.

A quick glance down at the clocks revealed two things. Firstly I was low on fuel – I knew I would be, so no shocks there. Second, the engine temperature gauge had plainly failed because the needle had dropped from the bottom of the scale. And… as I stared, that needle rose slowly and steadily back into its comfort zone, and we celebrated by accelerating up to clear road cruising speeds and the temperature normalised and everything dried out.

Some miles further on, everything was vivid, sparkling and brand new. The air was crisp, the skies bright blue and the roads drying fast. The Norton headed into a fuel stop. I filled it, posh petrol as a special reward for my mechanical friend, and strolled back outside, finding a BMW raising the tone of the place and parked behind me. Its rider was sitting at a picnic table, somewhat incongruously – an alien battle figure in a domestic setting. I joined him. He nodded back to the hills we'd just passed, and he laughed. I laughed too. Idiots both of us. Fools. Foolhardy clowns. I said as much. He laughed some more and said something wondrously incomprehensible. I stared. Maybe he actually was an invading alien in battle armour. 'No English!' he roared with laughter. So did I.

We rode off together; he turned off into a quaint village, I headed for the west coast. Happy. Delighted. A foolishness shared. A delight shared. An accomplishment shared. Why do fools ride to the point of terror? Because of afterwards.

Roll on summer. CBG

'In my vision appeared the rear end of a Nissan Micra – a form of car, apparently. I changed down to second and followed it. Seemed sensible…'

WHO IS FRANK WESTWORTH?

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

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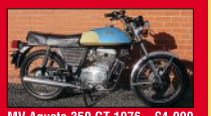

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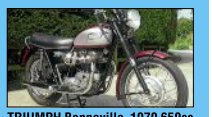

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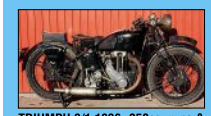
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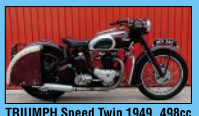

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