
Green goodness
MOTO GUZZI'S FINE V7
Miller magic
SAMMY AND HIS ARIEL SINGLE
CLASSIC
BIKE GUIDE
The Lure of the new
TRIUMPH BOBBER
TRIUMPH
Bobber
The OLD and THE BOLD
TRIUMPH TRACKMASTER

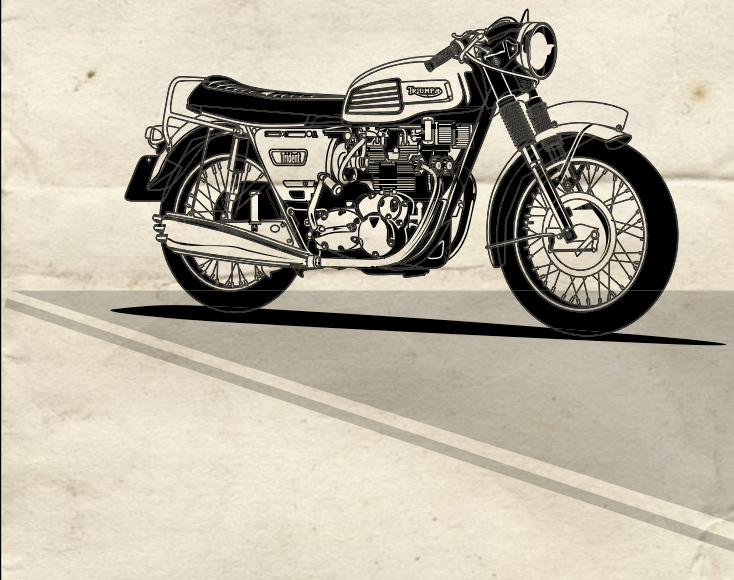
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FRANK WESTWORTH

VEE TIME

HAVE YOU EVER owned a bike for well over a decade yet never ridden it? Never even fired it up? Sounds stupid, no? And – take a deep breath – have you ever truly lusted after a bike, resigned yourself to never riding one, never mind owning one, and then somehow acquired exactly that bike? Can you imagine combining these two scenarios, odd though they are?

Well… let me share this. I've been an AMC – AJS and Matchless – nutcase since about 1971, when I bought a 1961 G12 Matchless on a Thursday and rode it from Ayrshire to Somerset overnight Friday. It ran perfectly. Remember at this point that the M6 was a short thing and the M5 mostly didn't exist. On the Sunday, I rode it back to Ayrshire, ready for work the following morning. You can do this when you're 18. I doubt I could manage it today.

Anyway. One of the Matchless machines I always fancied was their V-twin. Not the little jewel that is the Silver Arrow – a 400cc very narrow vee would be just too slow, I reckoned. I rode an Arrow once. It was indeed slow. Very lovely… but slow. The Matchless V-twin of my dreams was the Model X, a 1000cc sidevalver of resolute performance and truly handsome looks. Very basic, very robust, not fast but… resolute, as I said. I even borrowed a couple and delighted in their gentle and gentlemanly way of progressing. But they were always simply too expensive to justify.

Then I saw an ad in an old issue of *OBM*, which was probably being used to wrap chips or something. An affordable X. Not too far away. Heaven favours the bold, we're told. I called the number given and discovered that the bike was still unsold. Lots of viewers, all of them discouraged by the fact that it was nowhere near a runner and although it turned over on the kickstart there was no life – and no compression. And the wiring was hanging off – not that we care about that, do we? I made a bold offer. There was the traditional sharp intake of breath. Another figure – a higher figure – was suggested. And after a little while, an entirely polite little while, we reached a deal and I carted the old beast home on a trailer.

I could see no reason why the X refused to fire. It had sparks and it had fuel… but it had no compression. None. This is a bad thing. During the negotiation the vendor mentioned, in passing, like you do, that he might have ridden it from Bristol to Plymouth with the engine's oil supply turned off. Okay. The price reflected that. I'd already decided that this bike would be my retirement restoration, so I parked it in the house and left it. For over a decade. Retirement still seems too far away, so I spoke to a pal and he applied spanners and… it's a runner.

Roll on summer, then.

That's it. See you out there.

Frank Westworth
editor@classicbikeguide.com

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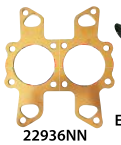

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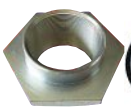

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Valiant performance

THE LATEST MODEL in English entrepreneur Paul Sleeman's continued expansion of the Hesketh motorcycle brand has debuted at the UK's London Motorcycle Show.

The Hesketh Valiant Supercharged is a performance-packed version of the company's normally aspirated limited edition Hesketh 24 V-twin streetfighter, all 24 examples of which have been sold at a cost of £35,000 each since Sleeman brought the aristocratic British trophy marque back to the marketplace in 2014.

Last summer saw the debut of a follow-up model, the more retro-themed Sixties-style Hesketh Sonnet café racer, which Sleeman says is selling well at a lower £25,000 price. However, customers will need twice as much money to buy the Valiant Supercharged when deliveries begin in the summer of 2018 – but in return they'll own what stands to be the most powerful series production British-built motorcycle yet made, with Sleeman anticipating its 210bhp output is likely to rise closer to 250bhp during the next 12 months of long term development at Hesketh's R&D base on the Isle of Man.

WORDS: ALAN CATHCART
PICS: HESKETH MOTORCYCLES



Below: There's absolutely nothing modest about the new machine's engine – or indeed its power output



In a continuation of its earlier sister bikes' Anglo-American theme, the Valiant is powered by an uprated version of the same US-built S&S X-Wedge air/oil-cooled ohv V-twin motor already powering the 24 and the Sonnet. In Valiant guise this 2097cc version of the engine has had its performance boosted from the Sonnet's 145bhp, via the addition of a Danish-made Rotrex centrifugal compressor driven off the crankshaft, and capable of spinning at up to 150,000rpm. The monumental 217lb-ft (295Nm) of torque at 3000rpm produced by the supercharged X-Wedge motor is delivered to the road via a six-speed Baker gearbox with belt primary drive, and a King Kong multiplate hydraulic clutch.

Hesketh engineers Iain Miles and Nick Arlett have been working with noted British tuning house TTS Performance. "Our target was to create a completely uncompromising motorcycle that's as extreme as possible in all areas of design and engineering, while remaining thoroughly rideable," says Paul Sleeman. "As is always the way at Hesketh, engineering and function took priority over styling, and using the world's largest capacity homologated V-twin engine did create many engineering challenges in terms of packaging the supercharger, the fuel systems and the exhaust, and managing heat effectively. TTS Performance have done an incredible job in delivering this within the timeframe given to them, and on budget.

"The idea of supercharging the bike came about because I wanted to push things a little harder to see how much extreme performance we could get out of the mighty X-Wedge motor, and S&S was eager to help out." That's not surprising, for this is the first time one of their customers has supercharged the X-Wedge V-twin engine for series production customer sale.

The Valiant name comes from Britain's RAF V-Bomber force of aircraft, which comprised the UK's strategic nuclear strike force during the 1950s and 1960s. The names of the three Bomber Command Main Force aircraft all started with the letter 'V'; Victor, Valiant and Vulcan.

"Hesketh previously used the name Vulcan on its new version of the V1000 motorcycle developed by Mick Broom back in the 1990s, and Vauxhall used the Victor name in the 50s," says Paul Sleeman. "So Valiant it was!"


MINOR METEOR
Tiny twin from RE
P38


ARIEL'S WINNER
Super single
P66


BOBBING ALONG
Old and new at once
P74

In creating the new motorcycle Sleeman says he set out to utilise as many UK suppliers and engineering partners as possible, beyond the American engine. The twin-loop chrome-moly tubular steel frame is similar to those used on the 24 and Sonnet, and is produced by GIA Engineering in Nottingham. The Valiant's extruded aluminium swinging arm carries an integral 4.5 litre oil tank for the dry sump engine, thus resolving the issues of space on the bike to mount the Rotrex supercharger. A British-made K-Tech inverted telescopic fork is used, along with twin K-Tech Razor shocks.

The Valiant carries Hesketh's own design of three-piece composite Astralite-style wheels machined from solid aluminium billet, then riveted together and shod with Avon Storm tyres. The twin floating 320mm front discs are gripped by Hesketh's own radially-mounted one-piece six-piston billet calipers made for them by Pretech in Reading, with a French-made four-piston Beringer caliper biting on the 250mm rear disc. The primary drive cover, rocker covers, supercharger shroud and fork yokes were all machined from solid aluminium billet by Billet World in Derby to Hesketh's design, while the carbon fibre bodywork is produced by ACT Performance in Surrey.

Paul Sleeman admits that the 150mph Smith's speedometer might be a tad pessimistic. "If development continues as well as it's started, I reckon a 200mph clock might be needed," he says. "It all depends what gearing we put on it."

Wheelie bars might also be a useful option….





PICS: ALAN TURNER

TRITON MAESTRO TO OFFER EXPERT ADVICE

RACING LEGEND DAVE DEGENS of Dresda Triton fame is guest of honour at the South of England Classic Show and Bikejumble on April 2 at the South of England Showground, Ardingly, RH17 6TL.

Dave will bring his original 1958 Matchless G45, hold his popular Bike Clinic in the Queen's Jubilee Show Hall, and will be on hand to answer questions from showgoers.

The show features five indoor halls housing a bikejumble, a motorcycle show for pre-1980 motorcycles, club stands and hundreds of machines on display. There will be a free BikeMart display-to-sell area for private vendors and cheap garage clear-out stalls are also available for £10. Gates open at 10am with last admission at 1.30pm. £6 for adults; £5 for over 65s; under 16s free.

See elk-promotions.co.uk



SPITFIRES FLY AGAIN





BRITISH MOTORCYCLE BUILDER CCM has sold every one of its latest road bikes before it goes into production.

The new 600cc CCM Spitfire was conceived and built by a small group of CCM mechanics and designers, working behind the scenes and developing their ideas in their spare time. With a free hand, they set about building their dream bike without the usual constraints of design objectives and bureaucracy, allowing their creative juices to flow. The result was a hit, with buyers snapping-up the whole production run within a few days of the launch.

The skills of veteran welder Ted Unwin, one of Alan Clews' original team at Clews Competition Machines in the early 1970s, were enlisted to work on a stylish tubular frame design that would underpin the fine componentry that the team had brought together. Ted recalled the story of the experimental engineering division of Lockheed Martin, which, once freed from corporate shackles, would go on to create some the organisation's finest products. The division would become known as The Skunk Works – so CCM followed their lead and the team became known as Skunkwerx.

CCM has a reputation as a builder of hand-crafted, high-end competition machines, which was born in the 1970s with Alan Clews' all conquering BSA B50 based competition specials. To ensure that the Spitfire does this heritage credit, the 600cc single cylinder solo streetfighter has Brembo brakes, upside-down forks, a monoshock rear, 19in flat-track wheels and a lightweight T45 competition spec steel frame. The engine bears some similarity to that in both BMW and Husqvarna machines, though it has markedly different casings. The bare metal frame is covered with a clear lacquer, intentionally revealing the artisan TIG-welded joints enhancing the machine's bespoke hand-built nature. Billeted componentry, digital clocks and a hand-crafted saddle complete the specification. The Spitfire's moniker was chosen in recognition of the aviation industry that lent the team their name, while at the same time ensuring this hand-built machine has a truly British identity.



The Spitfire will cost £7999 and the limited production run of 150 sold out within days of the machine being launched, with buyers placing a £500 deposit to get their hands on one. Production will begin in April and the new owners will pay half the cost of their bike before production starts, with the remainder payable on completion.

See ccm-motorcycles.com

ISLAND VENUE FOR TRIPLES BLAST



THE TRIDENT AND ROCKET 3 Owners' Club will take over a race circuit for their Beezumph 26 Rally this summer. Triple owners will gather at the Anglesey Race Circuit on July 14/15.

Rally tickets are £20 per person, which gets you entry, camping, food and entertainment on Saturday night and a rally badge. There is an organised run out on Friday, an autojumble, a presentation and the live music in the evening. Track day sessions will be available at extra cost on Saturday.

Contact Martin Rawson on 01642 648735 / beezumph.com



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RACE A BULLET

IF YOU'VE EVER watched a classic motorcycle belting round a short circuit and thought "I wouldn't mind a go at that," you now have the chance to try it free of charge.

Sue and Mark Whittaker, who are members of the British Historic Racing (VMCC Ltd) club, have put their hands in their pockets to build a low budget 350 Enfield Bullet racer which they are offering at no cost to classic racing fans. The idea behind the project is to give those who want to race or parade but can't afford the time or financial commitment, or just don't know how to prepare a race bike, the chance to take to the track.

The duo started racing with BHR in 2011 on a BSA A10 sidecar outfit and, like many other sidecar teams in the club, have been taking spectators out in the chair to raise money for an air ambulance and to give them a taste of the circuits.

Now they've taken that a step further by taking an Indian Enfield 350 road bike and turning it into a purposeful little racer for all. The Indian Enfield qualifies for historic racing because the design comes from the classic period, and this Enfield is as basic a racer as they come. The instruments have been replaced by a metal plate with 'One down three up R/H' written on it in place of a rev counter, and it's been built for a few pounds less than £3000.

So far nobody has crashed the Enfield, although there has been one engine blow-up. Riders are asked to pay a returnable deposit of £250 to cover the cost of any accidental damage. The bike is maintained, prepared for the circuit, scrutineered by licenced technical inspectors and even provided with fuel by Sue and Mark.

Donations to help keep the Enfield on the circuits are welcome. Among other conditions, racers need to be members of the VMCC and to have an ACU licence, while paraders need a full road bike licence. All riders must sign an indemnity waiver.

The Bullet is fully booked for this season, subject to cancellations, so if you want to try it out next year it's a good idea to get an application in now.

To find out how to race or parade the Enfield, mail Sue and Mark at enfield@whittakers.force9.co.uk

See britishhistoricracingclub.co.uk

HYDE'S HOT PARTS

HINCKLEY TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE owners have plenty to pore over in the 2017 Norman Hyde catalogue dedicated to modern Triumph twins. It includes something special for those who want to recreate the Sixties street scrambler look with the new SS high level exhaust system.

SS silencers are the original Triumph shape and are hand-made, polished and plated in England. Norman warns that these exhausts are not legal for use on British roads, and they may be illegal in other countries. The system fits all spoke and cast wheel Bonnevilles.



See the full range at normanhyde.co.uk

VETERANS PLAN IS ON THE DOT

TWO MORE FAMOUS NAMES from Britain's motorcycle industry are set to return to the roads. The names DOT and Levis will appear on the tanks of a range of new machines initially built in China but finished and made ready for the road in the UK. A three-model range of bikes will be produced at a workshop on what was once an RAF aerodrome near Wigan. The bikes will be built as part of the Veterans Garage project which helps military veterans find work and develop the skills they acquired in the services.

The range will include 125, 400 and 600cc machines bearing DOT branding with Levis machines coming later. Constructed initially in China, the bikes will be shipped to the UK and retrimmed to create bespoke models in Wigan. The Veterans Garage is part of a complex at Wigan's City Airport, also known as Barton Aerodrome. The garage uses the Grade II listed terminal building and will also include a classic car and motorcycle restoration workshop, restaurant and bar. A 15 acre site is being made ready to host bike and car shows and music festivals.

The first 400cc prototype is due to arrive in the UK in the next few months to get ready for the Euro 4 tests. The DOT 400 design will follow a retro street scrambler theme.

As well as motorcycles there will be a branded clothing range and profits raised will go towards supporting Veterans Garage.

See veteransgarage.co.uk





PIC: OILY RAG MOTOR CO

KICKBACK TURNS TEN

THE TENTH KICKBACK motorcycle show takes place on April 1-2. As well as having scores of stunning custom bikes on display, stunt shows and a wide range of trade stands the show is also hosting the finals of the National Championships for Customised Motorcycles, with the winners announced at 3pm on Sunday. There will be around 150 bikes on display including café racers, brat, choppers, drag bikes, trackers, streetfighters, cubs and rare classics.

Free parking, free show guide and a free poster for all visitors. Weekend tickets cost £9.50 in advance or £12 on the door (under-14s £2 in advance or £3 on the door – under-5s are free). Doors open noon til 6pm Saturday, 10am til 5pm on Sunday. The Kickback Show takes place at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire.

See TheCustomShow.com



HITCHCOCKS' ENFIELD COUP

MORE THAN SIX DECADES of Royal Enfield factory documentation has been secured by marque specialist Hitchcocks Motorcycles and will be used to manufacture rare and previously unobtainable Enfield parts.

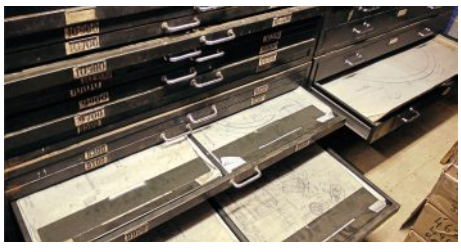
The documents are a treasure trove of detailed technical line drawings produced between 1906 and 1971, as well as a vast array of paperwork and parts information for everything from 700cc Interceptors to lawn mowers.

Hitchcocks has been negotiating the acquisition of the archive for 15 years and finally purchased the whole of the Royal Enfield assets from David Holder. David's father Matt bought the paperwork in the early 1970s as well as the assets and rights of Enfield Precision Engineers which built twin cylinder engines in Wiltshire for Norton Villiers when that company briefly took over Royal Enfield in the late 1960s. David still runs the family business, producing spares for most popular British makes including Norton, Triumph, BSA, Velocette, Vincent and Royal Enfield. Despite the chaos of the early Seventies collapse of the British motorcycle industry the intervention of Matt Holder meant the Royal Enfield archive has remained intact.

Allan Hitchcock said: "The amount of documentation initially produced by Royal Enfield was unbelievable, and it's even more astonishing that so much has survived after all this time. While David had been using many of the original technical drawings to manufacture parts, the remaining documentation had been stored and left virtually untouched."

Several van loads of documents and drawings are now safely with Hitchcocks. As well as their practical use, the technical drawings have a high aesthetic value. The 'arrangement' drawings, of complete motorcycles and major components are works of art. Hitchcocks has also acquired the twin engine despatch records, detailing the movement of these engines from the Bradford on Avon factory to the Redditch factory; the 'sanction and build records', covering all Royal Enfield motorcycles, including those made for Madras Motors. There are tens of thousands of individual items, which will take some time to classify, preserve, and catalogue.

See hitchcocksmotorcycles.com



NEW HOME FOR PARTS SPECIALIST

CLASSICBIKESHOP OF REDDITCH is that increasingly rare thing, a parts supplier which can sell you what you need over the counter as well as online. There are many sellers of parts for classics or specials on the internet but it's often hard to tell exactly what you are going to get until the box arrives in the post. ClassicBikeShop's business model is working well, with the shop and warehouse moving to new premises as sales increase.

The company ships orders to enthusiasts all over the world but customers can still visit the shop in Redditch to get what they need and get advice over the phone or over the counter, with an all-important cuppa. The shop sells everything from fork stanchions to engine parts and exhaust systems, and from tank bags to replica and custom seats. There is also a selection of specialist tools, from hard to find clutch extractors to buffing kits. The business started out as a traditional motorcycle shop and was opened in the late 1950s by scrambles champion Curly Rogers. What was once 'M J Rogers' is now internationally known as ClassicBikeShop and run by Curly's son Mike.

See classicbikeshop.co.uk CBG



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Brilliant Bristol

EVENT SHOW REPORT

Always one of the CBG team's favourite events, this year's Bath & West Showground experience was packed with great machines

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

THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE scene has good reason to be grateful to farming for its continued popularity. After all, if it wasn't for the nation's agricultural societies then classic bike builders would struggle to find somewhere to show off their creations.

The Royal Bath and West Showground at Shepton Mallet is used to having muddy boots stomping into its buildings from the car park, which is just as well. There was plenty of space in the big halls and heated marquees for the Bristol Classic Bike Show – a 37-year-old show that is older than a sizeable proportion of the bikes on display and more vintage than some of the visitors. That space gave clubs a chance to show off their creative mettle while building their stands. There were BSAs on rotating plinths, a Druid wedding and representations of period motorcycle dealerships, with the elbowroom giving lots of opportunities to get up close to see those important details that would otherwise get missed. Who knew, for instance, that Italian military Moto Guzzis were fitted with a second set of handlebars for the pillion so that officers would not have to hang on to a lower ranking serviceman?

THE NEXT Classic show is the International Classic Motorcycle Show at the Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Rd, Stafford, on April 22-23

VMCC members were given half of an entire hall for their stands, while Wells Classic Motorcycle Club picked up Best Stand for its Club House creation, complete with its own bar, workshop and period decoration. The Best Private Entry was a BSA A7 that oozed character and quality, while John Crudgington's V8 Norton Atlas deservedly won the Technical Interest category. And while there were plenty of immaculately restored bikes on show, the growing trend for retaining patina and for oily rag restorations was evident, with a delightful Matchless Clockwork Orange custom and an untouched 1948 Triumph Speed Twin attracting much attention.

A rusty 1950s Hungarian two-stroke tiddler picked up a Highly Commended rosette and the crowds around TE Lawrence's rather tatty Brough Superior and a dog-eared example of one of the few Vincent White Shadows built showed it's not just polish and elbow grease that gets you noticed – though it helps.





KAWASAKI H1 MACH III

Danny Capaldi's Kawasaki H1 Mach III has just a few thousand miles on the clock, and has a link with an American family tragedy in its history. Danny picked up the 500cc H1 as a US import in a pile of boxes – it had not been on the road since 1969.

The bike was first registered in Florida to a young rider, but his parents became convinced the legendarily ill-handling Kawasaki, with its challenging power delivery, would be the end for their son, so the H1 was taken apart to stop him riding it. The owner then headed off to serve his country in the Vietnam War a few months later. Sadly, the owner never came home again. The Kawasaki then sat in boxes for four decades before being brought to the UK.

Danny picked up the ill-fated Mach III two years ago. The engine was stuck solid, but careful disassembly revealed it to be in good condition – as it should have been, having covered just 1620 miles from new. The bike was 85% complete, and a lot of time was spent finding parts, though Danny has used some of the original, slightly timeworn pieces like the stainless steel mudguards and the chainguard. Danny, who was also showing his rather special Kawasaki 750 triple in a KH250 frame, says that despite the machine's fearsome reputation, the handling of the H1 isn't as bad as he expected, thanks in part to the use of modern rubber, which greatly improves matters. "You have to ride it like a Sixties bike, that's all," he said.



PANTHER M100

Geoff Stray's Panther M100 custom can be seen bimbling around the lanes around Glastonbury – the mystical Isle of Avalon – on a regular basis. The Panther was originally a 1956 model with telescopic forks and a swinging arm back end, but these late Fifties improvements by manufacturer Phelon & Moore were both ditched in an effort to improve the handling.

"Panthers were built for sidecar hauling and it was really quite heavy to ride as a solo," said Geoff, who has owned the Panther for seven years. "I put a rigid back end on it and girder forks on the front, and now you can throw it around like a 250." The engine has been fitted with a single port head, the front disc brake is from a Honda motocrosser and the tank is from a Greeves scrambler. The customised M100 shares a shed with another special – Geoff is building a Panther V-twin "from a pile of bits from various bikes" that he has slotted into a one-off Featherbed-type frame and which was also on show.









ROYAL ENFIELD INTERCEPTOR

Another machine that has made the trip across the pond is this Royal Enfield 1A Interceptor. While the H1 Kawasaki was orphaned by its young owner, this Interceptor was owned by one who Creedence Clearwater Revival would have thought of as a 'Fortunate Son'.

The 750cc twin was owned by the wealthy young son of a US Congressman, who thrashed it unmercifully around Washington during his university studies there. Lacking the required mechanical skills to keep a bike like an Interceptor on the road, he relied on the university maintenance fitter to keep it fettled. After being heavily crashed by a Japanese student who had borrowed it, the owner gave the remains to the fitter, who had been looking after it when he finished his studies and there it rested for more than two decades.

The 1967 750 sat rusting away in boxes until Mick Timms came across it in 1997 and shipped it back to the UK before starting a two-year restoration job. The bike cost him £2100 in 1997 and the restoration job done in Mick's domestic garage cost another £4000.

Mick produced the flawless paint job on the Interceptor at home. Although he has managed to knock out one big end, and the Interceptor needed work on the valves and guides, he remains deeply attached to the big twin.

The Enfield has picked up more than a few trophies over the two decades it has been back on British roads. Mick told us: "It is a lovely ride, and it's got all the power you need."









SEELEY HONDA 750

There might have been only 300 or so Seeley Honda CB750s produced, but they certainly had a lasting impact. Legendary frame-maker Colin Seeley had originally started work on a frame for the CB750 in 1974 when he was asked by Honda Britain to produce the Phil Read 750.

This was simply a stock CB750F1 with lots of expensive extras supplied by Seeley to make what was probably the first modern race replica and was certainly designed to cash in on Read's racing success.

After Read left Honda, Seeley got back to work on his own design, which had a proper race-bred frame to handle the Honda four. The striking Seeley Hondas were fitted either with the neat little nose fairing seen here or the full Read fairing.

Although around 300 Seeley Hondas hit the road, just six were made as complete machines by Seeley, the rest being sold as kits to 750 four owners around the world who were looking for a sportier frame.

While other frame builders were making raw, heads down, no-nonsense racers, the Seeley was conceived as a fairly civilised and practical high-speed tourer as much as a street racer, retaining its stock Honda engine. It looks far more like a factory produced special than other high-end bikes of the period, with bikes using plenty of donor parts such as forks, front brakes and instruments, as well as the engine.

This Seeley was originally used by Avon Tyres as a promotional tool for its Roadrunner range, and was later bought by photographer Ian Berry in 1978, who kept it until 2015. Its new owner, Geoff Wells, decided that he didn't want to subject the Seeley Honda to a nut and bolt restoration – his feeling being that the bike could only be original once. The paintwork, though slightly faded or rubbed away in places, has been left untouched. As one of the six production bikes, the logos – done according to legend by a signwriter who worked next door to the Seeley factory – would be next to impossible to reproduce, while decals were definitely out. Geoff says the 60bhp Honda engine is relatively tame compared to modern engines, but it's the handling of the Seeley that makes all the difference, being good enough to ensure cornering speeds can be much higher than those of its peers.











MASERATI 50 RACER

The Maserati 50 T2 SS has the same name on the tank as the one that the legendary cars bear. However, it was not produced by the famous Modena-based carmaker, but by a sister company.

Alfieri Maserati was founded in Bologna in 1914 and taken over by Modena-born industrialist Adolfo Orsi in 1937. A decade later Orsi founded a new independent company, Fabbrica Candele Accumulatori Maserati, which made items under the Maserati name, like batteries and spark plugs.

In 1953 Fabbrica Candele Accumulatori Maserati's directors decided to invest in manufacturing motorcycles, bought Bologna-based Italmoto and in 1956 the 50 T2 SS was launched. The earliest version was sold with pedals to help the little 3hp engine along. Changing gear and braking at the same time is something of a challenge, as the tiny racer has the clutch, gearshift and the rear brake all on the same left handlebar.

The Maserati cost its owner just £10 at an auction 20 years ago, but it came without engine casings, so a broken engine was acquired for £25 to finish it off. An almost identical example went under the hammer with Bonhams in 2014 with a guide price of £7500, so it looks like that was £35 well spent. It currently lives in a hallway, thankfully oil-tight, otherwise it might have been banished to the depths of a garage for leaking on the carpet.





SUZUKI RE5

Suzuki's Wankel-engined RE5 very nearly bankrupted the company. The futuristic rotary cost an enormous amount to develop, yet it only stayed in Suzuki's catalogue for two years. The RE5 was the company's top-of-the-range machine and Suzuki did all it could to make the bike completely original and distinctive.

The rotary theme ran from the circular 'tin can' instrument console through to the completely spherical 'popsicle' indicators and to a circular rear light mounting. Surprisingly, the RE5 shared very few parts with the rest of Suzuki's other big bike of the day, the GT750. This added to the production costs, as did the promise to completely replace any engine that developed a fault within the 12-month warranty period. Suzuki's desire to individualise the RE5 even ran to the petrol flap that, though almost identical to that fitted to the GT, had a slightly different profile to its sisters.

Daryl Plenty restored this RE5 over a period of seven years and it was displayed on the Vintage Japanese Motorcycle Club stand. The rotary engine is extremely thirsty, using a tankful of petrol every 80 miles before going onto reserve, at which point a light appears on the dash – it glows brighter as the fuel level drops. Daryl says that quirks like this are part of the fun of owning an RE5. He also says that modern oil technology has helped improve the engine's longevity. The RE5 is the bike he uses most of all. "It hates being in heavy traffic and is over-complicated – for instance, there are five cables running to the single carburettor. But the engine is so smooth that it's great to ride and it has never let me down."









HARLEY-DAVIDSON DL 750

Paul Lydford's 1930 Harley-Davidson DL 750 had pride of place on the Wessex Vintage Motorcycle Club stand.

The company introduced the sidevalve V-twin for the 1929 model year and sold nearly 6000 machines in 1930. The model D was sometimes referred to as the 'three cylinder Harley', because of the vertical position of the dynamo at the front of the engine. It took Paul just four months to turn what was a rough and leaky example with shot-away wheel bearings into the pristine example on show – and this was despite his having a heart attack halfway through the build.

Restorers of old Harley-Davidsons have their own issues during rebuilds, not least the supply of parts. These are available from the US but often at an eye-watering price.

One item missing from the DL 750 is a side panel transfer. Paul found one online for a few dollars, which would have been acceptable. The $27 postage charge wasn't. Anyone interested in acquiring this example of Milwaukee's finest should keep an eye on the small ads, as Paul has decided that it will soon have to go on the market.







TRIUMPH T150/160 TRIDENT SPECIAL

Jerry Weare's Triumph Trident raised a few eyebrows, not least because of the Slippery Sam logo on the side panels. Finished three weeks before the show, the T150/160 hybrid had previously existed as Jerry's creation 'Bubble' before Joeby's Airbrush Art and a lot of late nights in the garage gave the flat-track custom a whole new look.

The Slippery Sam paintwork was Joeby's idea and Jerry, who has his own more traditional Slippery Sam Trident, overheard mutterings from purists at the show suggesting it had been misnamed or was intended to confuse. Jerry originally built the bike in 2000. It features a 1974 T150 five-speed engine fitted with a Norman Hyde 850 kit in a 1975 T160 frame. The engine came from a motorcycle dealership in South Dakota, while the frame was picked up at a Bath and West Autojumble some years previously. The top end of the engine had to be modified to fit into the frame, as the T150 has a different configuration to the T160 and the throttle could only reach a quarter of its travel. Jerry fitted the throttle rack and cylinder head from a T160 and the inlet stubs from a BSA Rocket 3 to make it fit.

Suzuki provided the suspension, with a GSX750R front end and a GSX1100 rear monoshock. The mudguard was originally designed for a trailer, and the seat was moulded in clay by Joeby before being formed in fibreglass. The three feet-wide homemade handlebars have been tidied up, with the starter and horn buttons in the end of the bars, operating a VW relay, and with the wires running inside the bars. The oil tank was made by Somerset Forge to a cardboard pattern provided by Jerry. The bike saw plenty of road life before its current incarnation, taking Jerry on trips across the UK and Europe. This slippery creation is sure to see more.























VELOCETTE VALIANT

Sometimes a manufacturer comes up with something that should be perfect, but which simply doesn't capture the imagination of the public. So it was with Velocette's Valiant flat twin. Launched in November 1956, the Valiant was a development of the Velocette LE, once beloved of the nation's police forces. The engine was based on the shaft-driven sidevalve LE engine but was converted to an OHV layout with air cooling.

The 200cc commuter was in direct competition with a horde of domestically produced Villiers engined two-strokes, and the showroom price was more than enough to put off buyers looking for something to simply get to work on. The 250cc learner law that came about in 1960 meant the Valiant with its 60mph top speed was too small to attract that market, while the advent of the Italian scooter took the commuter market by storm, and in the end fewer than 2000 Valiants left the factory.

This Valiant is owned by Khrystal Jensen, and was bought as a non-runner, largely due to a previous owner fitting a Honda 6V ignition coil. This was an error that was soon rectified and the Valiant saw the road again. CBG

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Going for gold



THE BSA GOLD STAR has been part of motorcycling folklore for 80 years and at this April's Carole Nash International *Classic MotorCycle* Show the Goldie will take centre stage in the Restoration Theatre. Expert hints and tips on all things related to restoration and maintenance will be on offer once again at Stafford, and this time the Restoration Theatre will be run by the Gold Star Owners' Club. The group's technical officer John Luke will offer invaluable advice applicable to a variety of marques and models during nine sessions over the weekend, during which he will rebuild a mid-1950s BSA Gold Star DB32.

BSA's stunning super-sports single never fails to turn heads and inspire owners and onlookers – as the electric Goldie we featured a couple of months ago so beautifully demonstrated. You can be sure the 20 examples on display on the Gold Star Owners' Club stand in the main hall will inevitably attract a crowd. If you want to see the 350 going under the spanners for mechanical surgery, here's what's happening and when:





EVENT SHOW PREVIEW

RESTORATION THEATRE TIMETABLE

SATURDAY

- **Session 1:** Assemble front wheel, mudguard, handlebars and clocks
- **Session 2:** Install engine plates and gearbox
- **Session 3:** Install engine
- **Session 4:** Install primary drive
- **Session 5:** Install oil tank, rear mudguard and seat

SUNDAY

- **Session 6:** Install rear wheel, chain, rear brake rods and set alignment
- **Session 7:** Install exhaust system and carb
- **Session 8:** Clip up cable runs and install petrol tank
- **Session 9:** Install final fixtures and fittings



BIGGEST & BEST

APRIL'S STAFFORD SHOW is another jam-packed two-day affair, and there can be few places in the world where classic bike enthusiasts can go and enjoy so much in one place at one time.

Among the many highlights will surely be the several hundred trade stands and autojumble plots that will pack into every corner of the venue offering all the parts, spares, projects, tools, memorabilia, kit and accessories you could possibly imagine. There's also plenty to see on club stands, in private entry displays and outside in the *Classic Racer* GP Paddock, *Classic Dirt Bike* Experience and classic motorcycle cavalcade. On stage being interviewed throughout the weekend will be three-time World Superbike champion Troy Bayliss, and wrapping up proceedings on Sunday is Bonham's record-breaking Stafford Spring Sale.

Discount advance tickets are now on sale, with a one-day adult pass costing just £12 when purchased before the deadline of 11.59pm on Sunday, April 16. There are further savings for senior citizens and under 12s, plus free parking at the venue.

Tickets and info: staffordclassicbikeshows.com / 01507 529529



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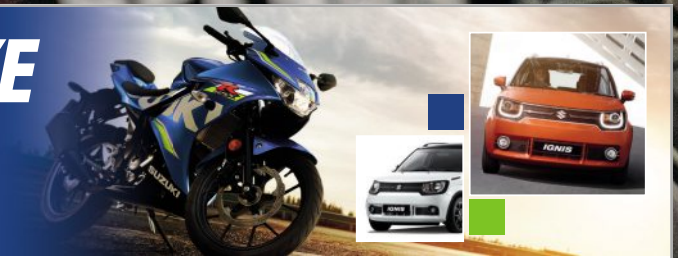
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On Rocket road

Overshadowed by Bonnevilles, there are some good buys in Beezerland

WORDS & PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

Above: Stylistically the Rocket was unlike anything else coming out of a British factory at the time

1: The 'power egg' in all its glory. Siamesed pipes were standard fitment in 1964, twin pipes cost extra

2: The primary chain case should contain SAE10-30 oil. It should not leak, also, but early versions can. Owner bodging and narrow joint faces cause this

3: An unfussy dash with the optional rev counter. Both clocks deserve their anti-vibe rubber mounting

4: Some practical touches: an almost full final drive chain cover and a QD rear wheel too

5: Big side panels on a big bike. The screw heads on the panel retainers weren't big enough for a coin bigger than a sixpence – but a sixpence didn't produce enough purchase to undo them

THE BSA A65 and A50, launched in 1962, dragged the look of the British big twin kicking and screaming into the 1960s. The sleek lines of the bikes were a world away from the more mechanical look of their rivals on the market.

The move to a unit construction engine was a big one for BSA and these machines were flagships, replacing the highly respected and much loved A7 and A10 twins. The engine cases sported what became known rather strangely as the 'power egg' look and the large side panels gave the machine a 'smooth' look. This was a trend at the time: Triumph had bathtub enclosures and the Ariel Leader and Velocette Vogue did their best to not look like motorcycles at all. The stylish curves were a hit with many and when rebellious schoolboy Malcolm McDowell stole a brand-new motorcycle from a dealership in the 1968 Lindsay Anderson film If... it was an A65 he rode away on. When a James Bond villain was dispatched by an assassin on a rocket firing motorcycle, it was an A65 the director chose as the mount for the killer.

Under all the panels and polished casings the A65 followed principles established by BSA for the model that preceded it, the A10. A 360 degree crankshaft is fitted, there is dry sump lubrication and valve operation is conventional from a single camshaft mounted behind the cylinders. The pushrods run in the cylinder block, so avoiding the chance of oil leaks from exposed tunnels. BSA gave the bike coil ignition, an alternator and a triplex primary drive chain driving a four-speed gearbox and a three-spring clutch running in an oil bath, originally designed for drag racing.

The big change for riders was the reversing of BSA general practice with regard to gear shifting: up-for-up was introduced. Although considered a unit-construction engine, the gearbox was separate in the engine casings with its own oil supply. The cylinder bores are marginally undersquare, with a bore and stroke of 75mm by 74mm, there is an alloy cylinder head and an integral rocker cover.

There was plenty of metal on the first models, fitted as they were with big, heavily valanced mudguards front and back and a headlamp nacelle, so there was plenty of opportunity for riders to increase speeds by junking weight. This, in turn, means that much of the original tinware has long been cast into the builder's skip of time, making such items hard to come across today.

When the A65 was launched, BSA kept versions of the A10 on sale as the basis for its highest performance machines – the A10 Rocket and Rocket Gold Star. Whether this was to use up old









BUY IT NOW



We couldn't find an A65R, but DR Classic Motorcycles have this 1966 A65L Lightning for sale. It's said to be a good starter and runner with good brakes, new rev counter, speedo, good gearbox and clutch. Priced at £5250. 01283 536379.

stocks of A10s, or possibly to let owners uncover any mechanical niggles on the new bikes before a performance option of the A65 was offered is anyone's guess.

The A65 was shorter than the A10 by two inches and had a higher seat height at 31.5in. With the A10 finally off the scene in late 1963, the A65R Rocket seen here was introduced, priced at £308 11s. To improve performance the compression ratio was raised from 7.5:1 to 9:1 to produce 42bhp at 6800rpm. A new high lift camshaft and a heavy-duty clutch tested in International Six Day Trials were fitted. A steering damper was added to make controlling the bike at high speeds easier.

The big, sensible, painted mudguards of the Star twins were replaced by slender chromed items, and the headlamp nacelle went too, replaced with chromed upper fork shrouds and a chrome headlamp. The old-style metal fork slider covers were replaced with sportier rubber bellows. For the first year of production the Rocket came with a 2-1 siamesed exhaust system as standard and all the bikes came in flame red. Options for the buyer included a twin pipe exhaust system, a rev counter that required the fitting of a modified timing cover to take the drive from the engine and a 12V option. An Amal Monobloc carb squirted the four star into the engine.

Model names didn't last long in the Sixties and at one point there were 11 A50 and A65 models being offered by BSA at the same time. As the marketing men needed to shift more and more bikes in a shrinking market, the A65R Rocket only lasted two years in the sales brochure before being replaced by the A65L Lightning in September 1965.

Shortly after the 1963 launch, road testers from Motor Cycle pushed the A65R to 108mph. The frame, which on the face of it looks very similar to the A10, was said to give good handling. Early Rockets were fitted with half-width 8in front and rear brake hubs, while some bikes, like the one seen here, went with full width items. With the passing of the years it's hard to know why this early Rocket has full width hubs, especially when some later Lightnings had half width items. Perhaps it was down to the factory using whatever BSA had in the parts bin at the time, or perhaps an owner has added the full width items as an upgrade. A previous owner of this Rocket has modified the front brake by the expedient of drilling a lot of holes in the front drum, in an attempt to improve cooling.

Owner Dave Whitehouse bought the Rocket as his second British classic, having started out with a BSA C15. Dave says: "The gears are nice and slick, and the brakes are rubbish. You need to plan where you want to stop about two miles ahead." The Rocket is described as "lovely and smooth", so much so that he used to have to make sure his wife Lynne hadn't fallen asleep on the back. This problem is now solved by Lynne buying her own Harley.

He has encountered only two issues with his Rocket – one a minor issue, a broken gear selector spring, and one major issue, familiar to many A65 owners.

Dave's Rocket is rarely thrashed, with speeds of about 55-60mph considered a comfortable maximum. Anything higher can result in mechanical catastrophe, as happened with this bike on a short ➧

PRICE GUIDE

£3000-£8000 depending on spec and provenance

FAULTS & FOIBLES

If the main crankshaft bush and oil pump haven't been changed, budget for new items. Brakes on early models are poor. The clutch doesn't take kindly to being ridden at a standstill

ALSO CONSIDER

Triumph T120 Bonneville; more expensive. Norton Dominator 650SS; more expensive and rare. Royal Enfield Interceptor Mark I 750; unusual and very interesting

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Above: Perfectly pleasant and practical classics, these single carb BSAs. Their rep for crank troubles is both exaggerated and fixable…

motorway run when the engine let go in a big way. "We were on a run down to the coast, and the conrod went through the side of the engine and everything locked up," said Dave matter-of-factly.

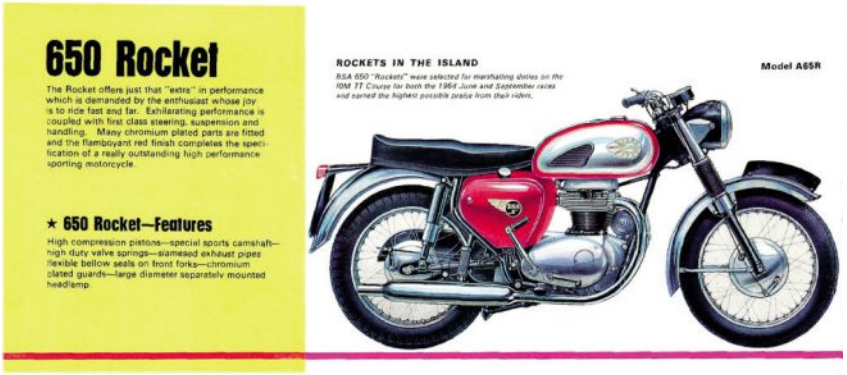
This could have been down to two weaknesses of the A65 design. These are the fitting of an alloy oil pump that could warp and fail to deliver enough pressure, and that oil being sent to the big ends via the timing-side main bush and through the crankshaft by the overworked pump, resulting in an under-oiled left big end bearing. At high revs, the already weak oil pump was trying to pump oil into the centre of the crank working against centrifugal force, with the result that the left-hand conrod could fail.

There were quite a few issues with the A65 engine when new, such as a badly designed Lucas points cam that bounced the points at high speed, a fairly stiff clutch and heavy primary chain wear. There were irritating design touches. The screw heads on the side panel retainers were supposed to be undone by using a coin, but the crossheads weren't big enough for a coin bigger than a sixpence – and a sixpence didn't produce enough purchase to undo them. The toolbox was too small for the tools provided. These were tiny issues, but more than enough to irritate a new owner.

Another problem owners reported was that the BSA factory simply wasn't putting them together very well, which meant plenty of trips back to the dealership to have faults rectified. They were thought of as leaky and vibratory, and there was also poor spares availability – which was unsurprising given the number of variants. And if British dealers couldn't get spares, it must have been a nightmare for those on the other side of the Atlantic, where BSA sold most of their bikes.

Today, any A65 that's still running will probably have been taken apart and put back together many times, so most of the niggles should have been sorted out. There are a good number of companies who have been providing the improvements BSA should have offered back when the A65 was gracing the showrooms. You can find firms that will balance your crankshaft, sell you a 900cc big bore kit, fit a needle roller crankshaft bearing, supply an uprated oil pump, offer five-speed gearbox conversions and convert your cylinder head to use unleaded petrol.

Buying an A65 of whatever vintage is not hard, with plenty to choose from in all kinds of conditions and at plenty of prices, though with the plethora of models, it's possibly best not to set your heart on one particular type of machine. They might not quite have Triumph's glamour, or Norton's class, but if you get a sorted one, or sort one yourself, they're an interesting and less expensive alternative. Dave, who bought his A65 restored from a dealership, fell for the Rocket the first time he saw it. "It's one of my favourite bikes," he said. "I go everywhere on it." CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1963-1965 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv twin **BORE / STROKE:** 75mm x 74mm **CAPACITY:** 654cc **COMPRESSION:** 9:1 **POWER:** 45bhp@6250rpm **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump **IGNITION:** 6v Lucas points **CARBURETTOR:** Amal Monobloc **TRANSMISSION:** Triplex chain **GEARBOX:** Four-speed foot change **FRAME:** Twin downtube duplex cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic forks, hydraulic damping **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin Girling three position shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 8in sls drum **REAR BRAKE:** 8in sls drum **TYRES:** 3.25 x 18 front 3.50 x18 rear **WHEELBASE:** 54in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 7in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31.5 in **DRY WEIGHT:** 390lb **TOP SPEED:** 108mph

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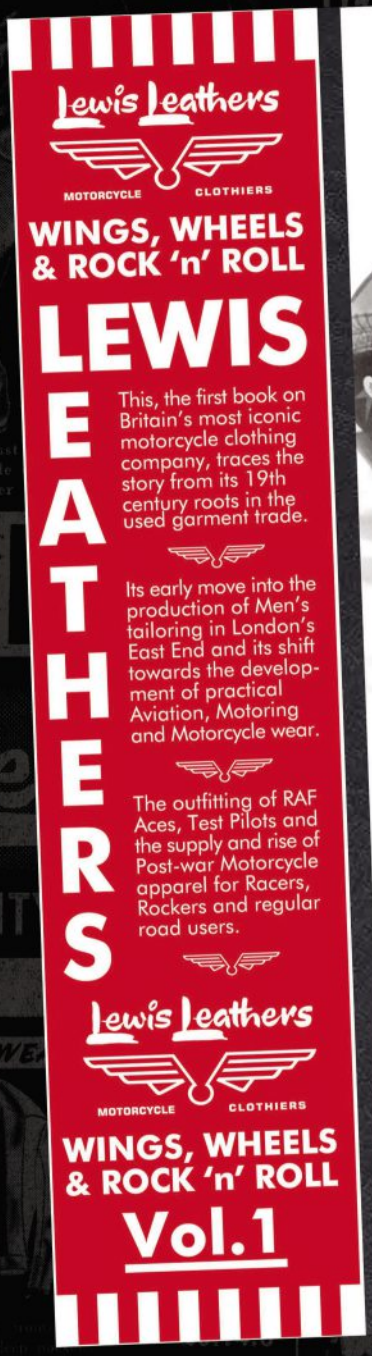


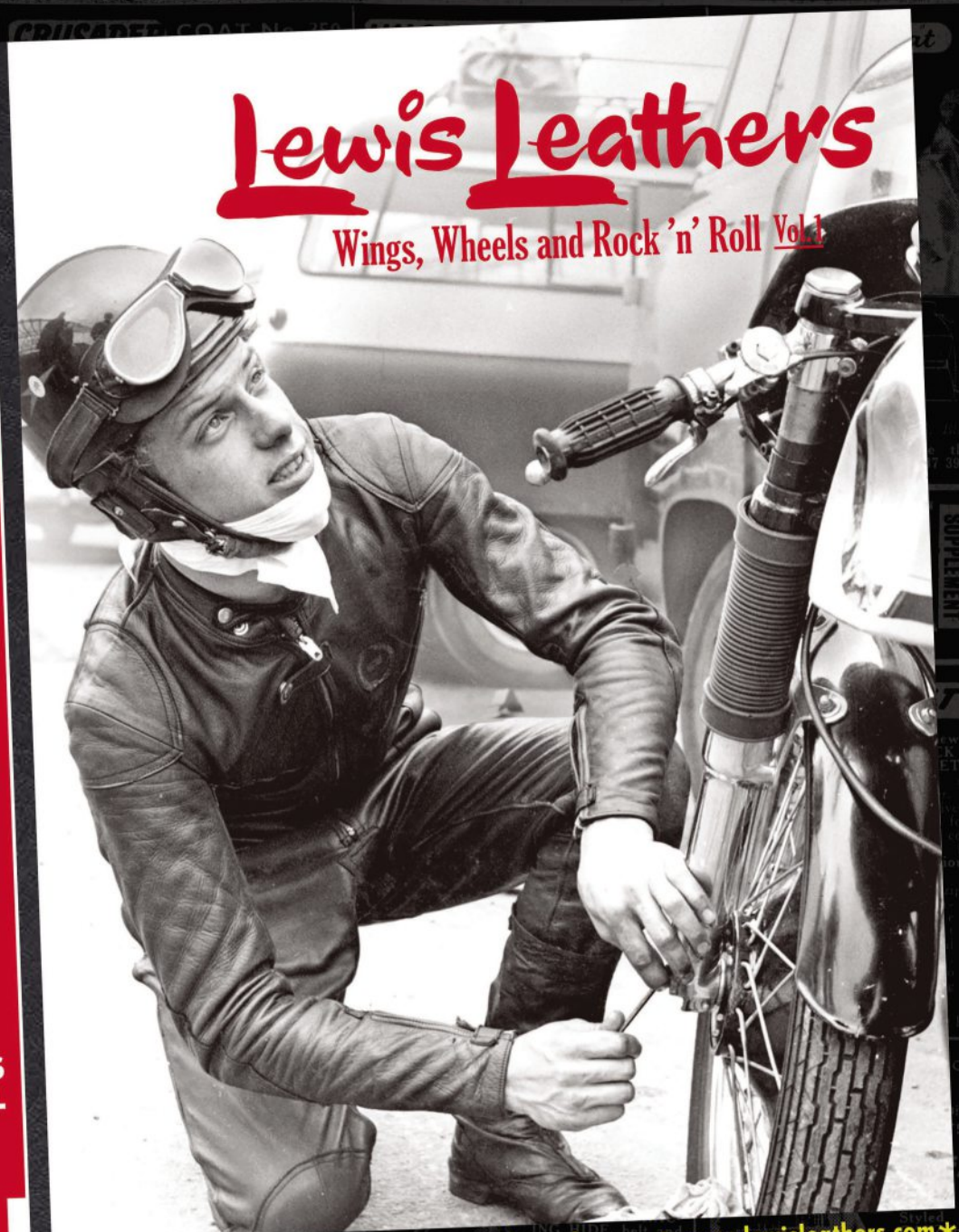
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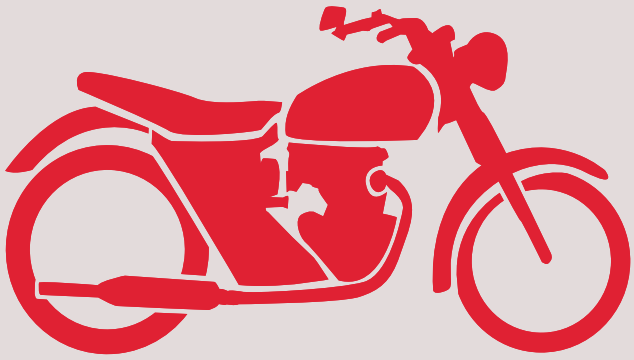
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Great tourer

Almost civilised and almost sensible, Suzuki's GT550 is actually a triple treat

WORDS & PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

Above: It sort-of shouts out 'Nineteen! Seventies!' Or maybe 'polish me…'

1: Not just a gimmick, the Ram Air system really works, and the kickstart can come in handy at those flat battery moments

2: Behold, a rare set of unfogged clocks. Many lenses of the time developed a curious orange-brown tint. Very hipster, possibly

3: Three cylinders, Ram Air cooling and a little extra bracing on the downtubes to help cope with it all

4: Hagon shocks help keep the rear end behaving itself, and bring their own extra chrome to ease those need-to-polish-everything panic attacks

5: Poor brakes marred the GT, especially in the wet. Fit modern replacements if you enjoy life – or ride more gently than the engine suggests

6: Only Suzuki strokers offer a view like this. Three pots… four pipes

SUZUKI LAUNCHED THEIR range of big two-stroke triples in 1972 with less than perfect timing. The GT arrived in a world that was just about to start worrying about air pollution and an oil crisis. Despite the company's tendency to build highly strung two-stroke screamers and the success of their TR500 racers, Suzuki's roadster strokers were nothing like the equivalent offerings from Kawasaki and Yamaha. Far from being like the peaky, hairy, sports bikes on offer from their rivals, the turbine smooth GTs, with their rubber-mounted engines, were more akin to Honda's fours when it came to the riding experience.

The GT550 was the least popular of the triples, though sales of the model of more than 60,000 in six years, hardly marks it down as a failure. The GT380 was the most popular of the range, followed by the legendary GT750 'Kettle'.

The GT550 is not just an overbored version of the 380. It is bigger all round, with a bigger frame and wheelbase, and comes out chunkier and more comfortable to ride than its little brother, though a tad less exciting. The torquey engine suffers from none of the powerband issues that Kawasaki triple owners have to deal with and a good GT550 is a useful classic, which 40 years on, you can use day in and day out.

Suzuki's model numbering was somewhat arcane and went J, K, L, M, A, B. The first GT550J model was built to a higher specification than the later GTs and got the four-leading shoe ventilated drum front brake from the first GT750. On the second model Suzuki followed the prevailing fashion and fitted a disc brake, which isn't up to modern roads and wasn't much cop in 1974 either. More than a few owners had their discs drilled and fitted the extra disc, master cylinder and caliper from the GT750. The GT550 engine had Suzuki's own innovation, the Ram Air cooling system, as its unique selling point. On the first bikes this was a cast alloy finned shield that was bolted to the top of the cylinder head. Although derided by some as a gimmick, the Ram Air shield helped cooling air reach the middle cylinder and trapped it there briefly, helping the whole engine to operate at uniform temperatures. Later models featured a pressed alloy shield in place of the original casting and that did the job just as well.

Early bikes also featured engine covers with the Suzuki name cast into them – replaced on later models by cheaper stickers. As the design was tweaked each year, some of the tinware went from painted to chrome. The side panels got progressively smaller with those on the last model, the GT550B, having satin black paintwork. The make-up of the clear plastic on the instruments was later changed, as the early clocks faded to brown in UV light, which was a bigger problem in sunny California than in the UK.



1


2



6


3


4


5

The four-pipe exhaust was a splendid bit of flash, with the bottom two pipes coming from the central cylinder, and a balance pipe (ditched on later UK models) sitting just in front of the engine. An internal valve system was included that was intended to reduce smoky starting, redistributing unburnt two-stroke oil to the cylinders rather than spitting it out into the exhaust pipes.

The first bikes had three individual free-flowing carbs that produced the power more smoothly than the later linked bank of three, which were bunged up with modifications in a vain attempt to make the engine burn fuel more cleanly. The addition of the linked bank of carbs also saw some extra ports cut higher into the cylinders, which were fitted with Nikasil plated bores, a move intended to increase performance and engine life. This Nikasil treatment might have been an innovation when new, but today it can be a liability.

Simon Nethercott, of Alpha Classic Motorcycles, specialises in rebuilding and restoring Suzuki and Kawasaki triples and has this 1976 GT550M as his personal ride. When bought it had bore problems. "I've got early model barrels and a crankcase on it. Replating the Nikasil Bores can cost £400, but I had some of the older barrels and the crankcases from an early one in my stock, so I used them when I realised they needed doing. It makes for a better bike all round. Power delivery is much smoother and getting the rebore done cost £100," said Simon. First oversize pistons came from a Japanese supplier and cost £70 for all three, including rings and pins.

Weak spots on the GT include a fault common to many Japanese bikes of the period, with the starter motor clutch prone to wearing out at relatively low mileages. With the bike fitted with an effective kickstart, this problem is often just ignored by owners. "Mine works. Sort of," said Simon.

The GT is a little thirsty – the factory claimed 41mpg, but Simon reckons his does about 30mpg. The three sets of points can be tough to set up, and Simon recommends sorting this out by fitting the Newtronics electronic ignition system rather than the Boyer Bransden offering. This, he says, is harder to fit, as the Boyer system requires each cylinder to be set individually.

PRICE GUIDE

£1500 (project) – £6500 (restored/original)

FAULTS AND FOIBLES

Thirsty, poor disc brakes, failing rectifiers and some machines have starter clutch problems. You cannot rebore the later Nikasil plated cylinders

ALSO CONSIDER

The Honda 500/550 Four has equivalent performance and a touch more sophistication, while Yamaha's XS500 is marginally slower and more mechanically complex. Suzuki's own GS550, the replacement for the GT, is a fine machine that helped change motorcycling forever, while the Kawasaki Mach III 500 is an exciting if evil handling beast that is not for the faint hearted

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GT550s are not exactly thick on the ground, and it could take some time to find a good one. Classic Motorcycles have a 1974 example of the 550's bigger selling smaller stablemate, the GT380, on sale at £3,999. 01928 788500

Below: Interesting technically, simple in execution, fun to ride and great to look at. Recommended

As with any old two-stroke the crank seals can get brittle, reducing crankcase pressure and resulting in an engine that won't start. It's not a good idea to run too far on reserve, as that can weaken the mixture, which can, in turn, damage the engine. The charging circuit is as notoriously unreliable as any Suzuki of the period, but although there are plenty of alternatives, Simon recommends fitting the original regulator/rectifier, which is available from Suzuki for £90. He's just finished rewiring a late GT fitted with a cheap pattern unit bought online for £40 that melted down the bike's whole wiring system.

Another thing to watch out for if buying spares online is to avoid pattern brake parts. GTs use Suzuki's own threads on the brakes, not Metric Fine. Brake nipples and banjo bolts have a different taper as well, so you need to use real Suzuki parts to get a good fit.

Pretty much everything is available for the engines, at a price. These include marginally longer conrods and thicker base gaskets for bikes that have had crank rebuilds. The mudguards are the same as those on the GT750, which are available new from Suzuki, but although it looks similar to the GT380, hardly anything is interchangeable with the smaller model.

The GT550 tends to attract the kind of rider who is interested in go rather than show, according to Simon. "With most restorations people want bikes to be perfect cosmetically, but GT owners aren't like that. Most of them just want a good engine rebuild and to have a good bike to ride. There's a lot of time involved in rebuilding an engine. But when they are built well, they last well. It's not a sports bike in the slightest – it's happy enough at around 80mph."

Even though it can be ridden in a docile fashion, Simon says the 550 is more than a match for the 750 everywhere apart from on motorways. "On normal roads, the 550 is faster, and flicks into corners better than the Kettle. The braking is utterly pathetic though," he said. "Handling wise it's not the sharpest tool in the box. The front forks go up and down, and you might as well throw away the shocks. I fitted Hagons, which help. It's not terrifying to ride, but you have to remember it is an early Seventies Jap bike." CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1972-77 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled 120 deg ram air-cooled two-stroke triple **CAPACITY:** 543cc **BORE AND STROKE:** 61x62mm **LUBRICATION:** Suzuki CCI system **COMPRESSION:** 6.7:1 **POWER:** 48-54bhp@6500rpm **TORQUE:** 24.5lb-ft@4500rpm **CARBURETTORS:** Mikuni VM type round slide **IGNITION:** triple contact breakers **LIGHTING:** 12V 11AH **CLUTCH:** Wet multiplate **GEARBOX:** Five-speed **PRIMARY DRIVE:** Gear **FINAL DRIVE:** Chain **FRONT BRAKE:** 4ls Drum (GT550J) Single disc (all other models) **REAR BRAKE:** drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** telescopic oil damped forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin shocks **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x R19 **REAR TYRE:** 4.00 x R18 **WHEELBASE:** 57.7in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31.5in **QUARTER MILE:** 13.5sec **BRAKING:** 35.4ft from 30mph **TOP SPEED:** 110mph **TORQUE:** 38.8 ft lbs@ 6000rpm **WEIGHT:** 212kg fuelled

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Minor by name, but not by nature



WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

ITS NAME INDICATES a smaller powerplant than the 692cc Meteor and Super Meteor, but the 'Meteor Minor' designation unjustly plays down the bike's own star qualities. Often overlooked in favour of larger Royal Enfields, particularly the Constellation and Interceptor, the Meteor Minor is an extremely pleasant machine to own and ride.

The Meteor Minor used the same lightweight welded tubular frame as the 248cc Crusader when it arrived in April 1958 to replace Royal Enfield's 500 Twin. Initially available in two levels of trim, the 'Standard' featured a sprung saddle and six inch front brake. The De Luxe featured a dual seat, seven inch front brake in a full width hub, deeply valanced front mudguard, fully enclosed rear chain and a quick release rear wheel which had previously been an optional extra on the 500 Twin and Bullet. Both Minors sported a siamesed exhaust system. The casquette, deep front mudguard and 17 inch wheel gave the impression of a heavier machine, but the 496cc Meteor Minor was actually lighter and faster than the 495cc 500 Twin. *The Motor Cycle's* period road test indicated 97mph – albeit with a following wind. Royal Enfield's Airflow fairing could also be fitted to boost touring performance.

In 1960, the toolbox design changed, which meant that the coil and tool roll migrated to the nearside while the ignition switch and battery moved to the offside. The air filter is in a chamber in between, accessed by removing the nearside toolbox lid and unscrewing the hex bar inside. The inner panel then comes away with the coil attached, revealing the air filter. The toolbox lid has a handy integrated storage compartment…

The Standard was replaced by a Sports model in 1960 with a larger tank and special cams, valves and springs increasing the power from 30 to 33bhp. Later Sports models featured a dual six inch front brake, then they became the 500 Sports Twin in late 1962. 1963 was their final year, when they reverted back to a seven inch sls front brake, and twin pipes became an option.

Above: The famously 'relaxed' Albion gearbox, complete with its neutral selector, bolts onto the back of the engine, which has its oil tank cast into the crankcase

Below: RE's 500 twins are under-valued, but are entertaining and interesting. They're also low and light, and easy to handle

1: Inside the primary drive. Alternator, clutch, slipper tensioner and an effective sealing ring too. Oh... and the scissor clutch

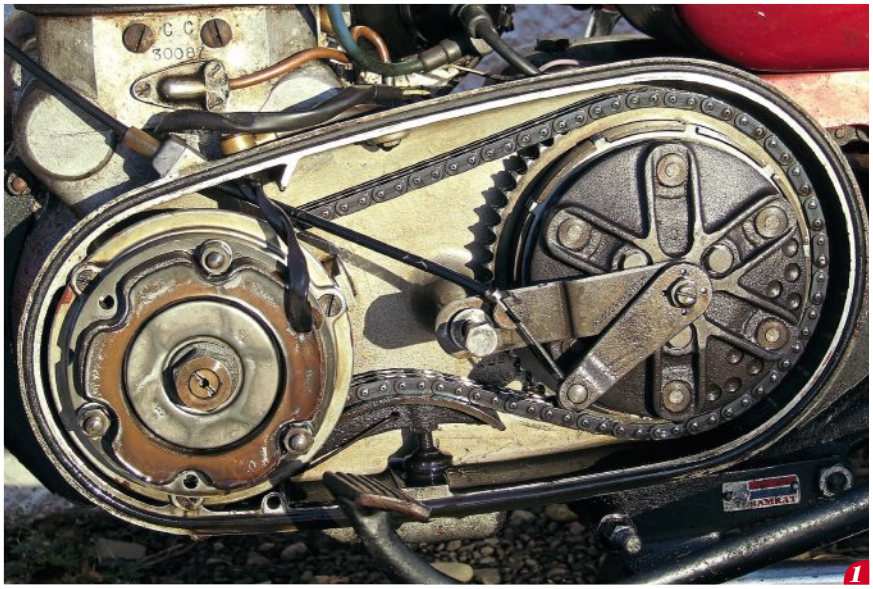
2: RE's primary chaincase was a long-ago lesson in neatness and effectiveness. Just a single nut holds it on. It should not leak

3: Cast aluminium casquette houses the instruments while neatly covering the handlebar clamp and hiding wiring

4: The clutch was designed for the 700cc Constellation and works well in both bikes…

5: The Samrat sidestand is an easy to reach alternative to the original spike













In common with the Bullet, the Minor's oil tank is cast in with the crankcase and the gearbox bolts onto the back of the engine. The centrestand is attached to the engine mounting plates, which can be frustrating. If you want to take out the engine then you have to remove the centrestand, which leaves you looking for a means of supporting the bike – and milk crates are not readily available these days. You're supposed to be able to leave the gearbox in situ, but this is easier said than done due to the long threaded rods which attach the gearbox to the engine being difficult to extract.

Royal Enfield designed the heavy-duty scissor clutch to deal with the power of the 52bhp Constellation, without making the clutch overly heavy to operate by hand, so it should not show any stress in the Meteor Minor at 30bhp. A thing of beauty, the much maligned scissor clutch works with few problems if you keep an eye on the springs, cable and ball bearings. The clutch is operated by a scissor action with four ball bearings seated within indents between the two levers. When the clutch lever is pulled in the outer lever is pulled up and the ball bearings ride up the side of their indents, effectively drawing the pressure plate against the clutch springs and releasing the plates. This also shares the load among four ball bearings instead of one, and the clutch assemblies were statically balanced to avoid vibration.

The engine is a stressed part of the frame. The threaded holes behind the toolbox on the frame can be used for Royal Enfield's own pannier rack system.

When purchased, this machine had a different paint scheme, a Concentric carburettor, no air filter and a non-standard fuel tap. All worked fine but the Concentric carb was a bit thirsty. On its first main outing to a Royal Enfield rally in Northumbria the engine started spluttering and eventually died. It was soon discovered that the tap had no reserve position and the bike had to be pushed uphill and freewheeled down for several miles to the first petrol station. Needless to say the tap was the first thing to be replaced, quickly followed by a new Amal Monobloc 376 carburettor with the correct jetting, and an air filter element.

PRICE GUIDE
£3000 to £4000

FAULTS & FOIBLES
Watch out for worn clutch springs, the clutch cable drying out where it runs near the left exhaust pipe and for oval bearings in the scissor clutch. Some owners fit Bullet clutches or even clutches from another marque, but a well set up scissor clutch is fine

ALSO CONSIDER
Royal Enfield 500 Twin; somewhat stodgier and fairly rare. AJS Model 20/ Matchless G9; decently frisky in CSR trim if you can find one, similar prices. BSA A7; many more made so a better selection available today

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Those in the know tend to snap up any available Meteor Minors, so they seldom stay 'for sale' for long. You might find its bigger brother instead, like this 1959 Super Meteor 700. £6999 at classicbikes-sussex / 07989 751567





1: A genuinely bargain entry to Brit twin bikes is here, out standing in its field

2: The 500 twin engine fits into a frame intended for a 250. It goes well, then

A further problem was noticed while tuning the new carb. This manifested itself as a little whistle that could be heard down near the carb itself. At first it was attributed to an air leak at the carburettor manifold, but more persistent examination showed it to be a slight warp in the cylinder head where it joins the block. Both heads were taken to Blanefield Precision who helpfully skimmed the teensiest smidgen off them.



MANUFACTURED: 1958-1963 **ENGINE:** OHV Vertical Twin **BORE / STROKE:** 70 / 64.5 **CAPACITY:** 496cc **COMPRESSION:** 8:1 **POWER:** 30bhp **CARBURETTOR:** Amal Monobloc **IGNITION & LIGHTING:** coil, Lucas RM14 70 watt generator, 6v 12ah battery, rectifier, Lucas seven inch headlamp **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, oil tank cast into crankshaft **CLUTCH:** scissor **GEARBOX:** Albion four-speed **PRIMARY DRIVE:** duplex chain **FINAL DRIVE:** chain **FRONT BRAKE:** seven inch sls drum **REAR BRAKE:** seven inch sls drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** RE telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Girling twin shock **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 17 **REAR TYRE:** 3.25 x 17 **WHEELBASE:** 53.5 inches **GROUND CLEARANCE:** six inches **SEAT HEIGHT:** 29.5 inches **WEIGHT:** 370lb dry **BRAKING:** 32ft at 30mph **TOP SPEED:** 90mph **PRICE NEW:** £274.9s

This bike's front mudguard and chainguard appear to be from a Standard model; the De Luxe's deeply valanced mudguards can be hard to source. It's been treated to a new paint job in Polychromatic Burgundy, some new bars and the seat has been recovered. The missing petrol tank rubbers will be reaffixed at some point in the future.

A Samrat sidestand was fitted as an alternative to Royal Enfield's spike, which is okay on grass but not always so good on tarmac. The Samrat stand requires the longer hex bar from a 1999 Bullet to fit it.

Kick-starting small Enfield twins can be a bit weird. This one gives no indication that it's thinking of starting and feels like there's no compression. This takes a bit of getting used to as it actually starts extremely easily – usually second or third kick, then first kick once it's warmed up. Other owners have similar feedback so it's nothing to worry about. The Albion four-speed gearbox carries the traditional Enfield neutral selector. This is extremely useful when you've just had to do an emergency stop or you've really cocked up the gears, found a load of false neutrals, and need to start again from a known point into second gear... quite handy when the owner's spent some time on a BSA and swaps nonchalantly onto the Meteor Minor, forgetting that the gear pattern is the opposite way round.

With a comfortable 29½ inch seat height and 17 inch wheels it's very easy to start, handle and manoeuvre, and is reassuringly well balanced and stable even at slow speeds. It's fun to potter along, but to bring out the best from it you really need to rev and work it; taking it further before changing up results in a much more sporty ride. The Meteor Minor is an interesting and affordable alternative to the more readily available larger twins. CBG

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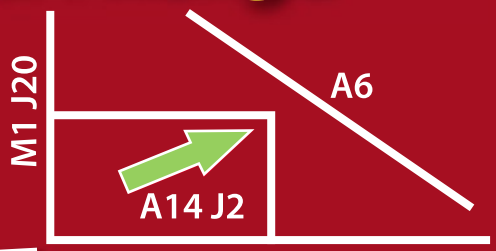
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Slim, sexy, sporty

Long, low and lean: an enduring influence on Guzzi's subsequent sportsters

WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

Above: This machine's gearshift is on the right; up for first and down for the rest

1&2: Curiously triangular toolbox is ideal for carrying tools and tubes, even if they're not triangular

3: The seat hinges at the rear for access to fuses and battery

4: The pilot's view is pretty much unique to Moto Guzzi: then as now, really

5: Both Dell'Orto carbs are tucked neatly away to avoid tall riders' knees. Neat head protectors, too

6: The neutral light is orange and the green light underneath lets you know when your lights are on. The hydraulic steering damper is either on or off. Starting is via the rather large starter button

7: Footrests are fixed position, and the rear brake switch is operated by the cable

IN A SUCCESSFUL attempt to retain its longstanding role as suppliers of police and military motorcycles, in 1963 Moto Guzzi started work on a replacement for the Falcone. Replacing the long-serving 499cc Falcone single required a faster, more modern machine and Guzzi's 703cc V7 shaft drive V-twin certainly fitted the bill.

Designed for a long service life with easy access for straightforward maintenance, the V7 evolved into the 757cc V7 Special for Europe and the Ambassador for the USA, followed by the 844cc Eldorado. These were robust, reliable tourers rather than sports bikes, but several lightweight V7s were developed that were very successful in setting speed records. This enabled further development and redesign into the V7 Sport.

Created by Guzzi's chief engineer Lino Tonti, the V7 Sport was the firm's first production sports bike and had serious race potential. Capable of over 120mph, it was the fastest production motorcycle in 1971/72, and came with a price tag to match. This machine spawned generations of Guzzis whose distinctive lines reflect their obvious ancestry. Capitalising on all that nostalgia, Moto Guzzi recently launched its V7 III.

Abandoning the tubular steel cradle frame used by the earlier V7, Tonti designed a whole new frame around the engine. Running the top rail between the cylinder heads enabled the frame to be lowered to achieve a reasonable 29½in seat height. The engine became a stressed member, with the lower frame rails detachable for easy engine access and removal.

Weight was further reduced by lightening the flywheel, replacing the large generator with a significantly smaller Bosch alternator on the front of the crankshaft and fitting a smaller Bosch starter motor. The engine capacity was reduced slightly to 748cc and a five-speed gearbox was introduced.

A minimum of 100 machines had to be produced in order for the V7 Sport to qualify as a production racer. Initially there was no space on the production line, so the earliest machines were created in the racing department. The very first pre-production V7 Sports had red frames and are known as the 'Telaio Rosso' models. Hand-built with sandcast casings, they featured a new camshaft, chromed cylinder bores, polished crankshaft and conrods with a different primary drive and gearbox to those used on later models. They now command high prices and are very difficult to authenticate without stripping the



1


2


3


4


5


6


7


8

engine to check. A red frame doesn't prove anything, so if you can afford one it's definitely a case of 'buyer beware'.

The owner of our featured bike had always lusted after a V7 Sport and was lucky enough to find this late 1973 model four years ago. Having tidied up the paintwork, he's had plenty of opportunity to enjoy it, happily confirming that it goes just as well as it looks and is very well made. It's still quite light with the long, low Tonti-designed frame giving good roadholding and stability at speed. Acceleration is on a par with a modern 750 Guzzi and it is economical for its size too: a range of over 200 miles is easily achieved.

Initially, the V7 was equipped with a twin drum front brake with four leading shoes and a massive 2ls drum brake at the rear with a substantial, rather unusually styled anchor. Later models like this had the option of twin Brembos at the front, while the 750 S3 featured linked triple disc brakes. The drum brakes are great but the front can be very difficult to set up, being a double-sided 2ls arrangement.

The camshaft on this machine is gear-driven but the following year's 750S was driven by chain; considerably cheaper in manufacturing costs than the gears. Other cost-cutting measures saw a less effective rod replacing the rear brake cable.

The V7 Sport abounds with interesting and thoughtful touches. This was the first bike to feature fully adjustable handlebars. The swan-neck clip-ons move up and down, plus backwards and forwards, so you can raise them right up or drop them right down, café racer style, which is definitely more fun. Surprisingly, although the seat height is relatively low, the rider's footrests are quite high up and are not adjustable, being mounted on the same bar as the pillion pegs. This can be uncomfortable, particularly for taller riders. If you're not a purist, rearsets can be fitted for comfort on longer journeys, but remember to keep hold of the original pegs to retain the bike's standard spec.

The carbs are angled in to give the rider's knees more space. The rider's manual advises leaving the carb levers raised for a few seconds after starting in the hot season and a few minutes in the cold season. Generally, the latter applies in Britain… ➧

PRICE GUIDE
£10,000 to £14,000

FAULTS & FOIBLES
Oil changes are crucial to longevity. Worn gearbox parts can be costly to replace. The optional plexi-glass fairing can improve handling, if you can find one.

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8: 'Swan neck' bars clip-on, so the range of adjustment is wide, if a little clumsy

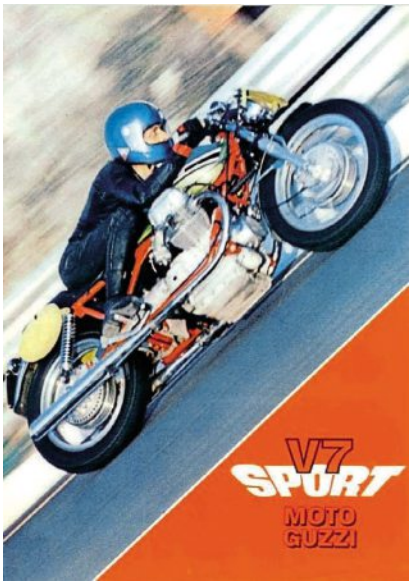
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There were less than a thousand S3 750s built for just one year in 1976, which makes it almost as sought-after as an original V7. This one is close to stock apart from later switchgear. £12,500 from madeinitalymotorcycles.com / 01449 612900

Below: The Guzzi frame is a masterpiece, with hardly a curved tube to be seen. Straight lines and triangulation make for considerable stiffness

The stainless steel rear mudguard hinges up to facilitate easy removal of the rear wheel. The circular tail-light is very distinctive, with the lights' wires hidden underneath. The rear brake light switch is neatly incorporated into the cable, which protects it from the elements.



MANUFACTURED: 1971 – 1975 **ENGINE:** Air cooled 90 degree OHV V-twin four-stroke **BORE / STROKE:** 82.5mm x 70mm **CAPACITY:** 748.388cc **COMPRESSION:** 9.8:1 **POWER:** 70bhp @ 7000rpm at crank (52bhp @ 6300rpm at rear wheel) **CARBURETTOR:** 2 x 30mm Dell'Orto VHB 30C carbs **IGNITION:** 12v twin coil, points, distributor **LIGHTING:** 12V, 32Ah battery, alternator **CLUTCH:** twin plate dry clutch **GEARBOX:** five speed **PRIMARY DRIVE:** helical gear **FINAL DRIVE:** cardan shaft **FRONT BRAKE:** 300mm twin disc Brembo (early models had 4 leading shoe drum) **REAR BRAKE:** 220mm 2ls drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic with sealed internal damping units **REAR SUSPENSION:** Koni twin shock **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 18 **REAR TYRE:** 3.5 x 18 **WHEELBASE:** 57.8in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5.9in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 29½in **WEIGHT:** 468lb **TOP SPEED:** 129.2mph **ACCELERATION:** 13.1 secs over 400m **FUEL CONSUMPTION:** 32mpg **PRICE NEW:** £1350

The seat also hinges at the rear, opening front to back with storage underneath for tools and space for the typically monstrous 32Ah car battery required for starting, which does, at least, do away with the need for a kick-start. The light under the seat that comes on when you open it so you can see the fusebox in the dark is an unusual feature…

Unusually, the optional sidestand is right at the front, so you need long legs to deploy it or you need to be good at balancing a bike while groping about underneath! Some of the earlier ones are spring-loaded, so careful positioning is crucial. Thankfully, the V7 Sport does have a centrestand as standard.

The exhausts follow the line of the frame, sweeping straight back with a smart shark's gill feature on both sides of the silencers at the rear. Crashbars were fitted as standard, but the owner has also added the finely-detailed rockerbox protector bars. Slim and symmetrical, viewed from above, the twin rear grabrails mirror the shape of the tank and give the Guzzi a decidedly feminine form.

If you've always fancied a classic Moto Guzzi the V7 Sport is hard to fault. Designed to be easy to service, the only bind on later models is the oil filter, which is inside the sump, so the sump needs to be removed to clean it. A conversion is available to make it easier with a screw-on oil filter. Being an earlier model, this bike has a gauze filter, and is still running happily on points ignition with no problems. The rider's handbook advises oil changes at 1800 miles, checking the tappet clearances, gearbox and shaft drive oil levels at the same time. Oil changes on these are at 6000-mile intervals, along with stripping and cleaning the carbs.

You'll need to dig deep to pay current prices. Fewer than 4000 V7 Sports were produced and their reputation for reliability, handling and speed has made them highly desirable – all of which is reflected in the cost. CBG



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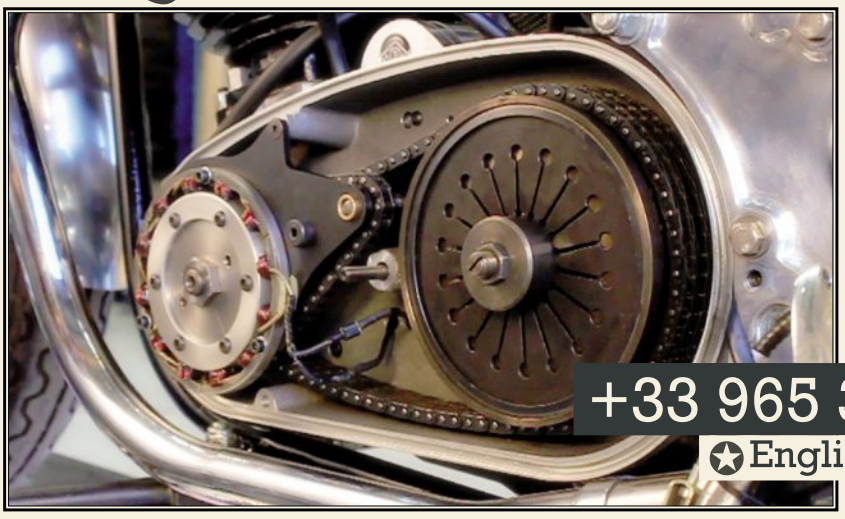
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Pretty, basic

Yamaha's dressy XVS650 Dragstar hides a neat machine beneath the frills

WORDS & PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

Above: The Hulk. The big number 3 on the tank is a reference to one of the new owner's children

1: Those pipes are just about long enough to avoid trouser scorching

2: Whitewall tyres and green plasti-dip paint

3: The Yam has a neat shaft drive and well-hidden rear mudguard mountings

4: There's a green theme here. Also a tall front end with just a single disc. No front mudguard: it won't go out it the wet, honest

5: Just a touch of blatant product placement

CHOPPERS, CUSTOMS, CAFÉ RACERS and bobbers all come from the same basic root. The principle is that if you make your motorcycle lighter by junking all the heavy extra bits and pieces put on it by the original manufacturer you'll end up with a better, faster motorcycle. In the USA the legend is that this idea came from riders of Harley-Davidsons and Indians who wanted to compete on level terms with the faster, smaller, lighter bikes coming out of Bracebridge Street, Plumstead, Meriden and Small Heath. Those choppers from the US soon became more extravagant and shiny until it wasn't so much the performance as the appearance that became the reason for their creation.

Custom bike building starts on the street before becoming mainstream, and a supply of suitable machines at low prices is needed to keep things healthy. As that supply of basic modifiable bikes started to dry up, building a custom bike on a budget became harder. That was until the arrival of the recent trend for Bobbers, a subculture of bike builders that owes much to their ancestors of the 1950s. Bobbers are being built in sheds and garages across the world – you'll see them at city centre bars, hip clothing outlets and coffee shops, sometimes on the street and sometimes as interior decoration.

This 1998 Yamaha XVS650 Dragstar bobber is a good example of the breed. Yamaha's 650 street cruiser has developed a dedicated following since replacing the XV535 and was in production and on sale in the UK until recently. You can still buy a version in the US. Christened The Hulk because of the green paint job, this is the creation of a young four-man team of builders, Bristol Bobbers, who have rented a shed at the back of a pub to work on their creations. While the BB crew would love to make a full-time business out of what they do, at the moment they work in their spare time with an almost evangelical zeal.

The foursome started creating 125cc bobbers for learners – like they themselves were at the time – before they moved to bigger machines. Their stated aim is to get more learners and young riders into buying and building their own bikes. There's a big generational gap in custom bike building and







the foursome has found that it is influences from the classic bike scene as much as anything that are helping them gain the skills they need for bike building.

The Hulk is their latest build. The XVS design turned out to be a great starting point for a bobber. The bike was built from a very road worn Dragstar found looking sorry for itself by the side of a road in the Midlands. The bike had 21,000 miles on the clock and was a daily use machine that had spent its time outside in the cold. The Yam was sourced on Gumtree and bought for £1300. When it arrived at the workshop the bike's battery was dead, the control cables were snapped and the brakes wouldn't work. A week was spent giving The Hulk some TLC. The brake hose and throttle, clutch and brake cables were all replaced and the wiring tidied up by heat shrinking it, a new battery was fitted and the bike was serviced. Then, having ensured they were starting with a running bike, the BB team set about taking it apart again.

The big rear fender and all the added Yamaha bling was taken off – it turned out that all that plastic and metal at the rear could be removed without affecting the rest of the bike beyond needing a new rear light and numberplate mount. The front mudguard was also junked. The lack of a front guard on the finished bike is explained away at MoT time by declaring that the bike is only used in good weather, which is absolutely not a fib in any way. The rear mudguard was an offcut from another guard that had been made for an earlier bike. This was hung from a solid metal bracket made from an offcut of scrap steel.

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FAULTS AND FOIBLES

Most XVS650s will have had a fairly sedate life. A hard used example may show signs of failing chrome plating on both plastic and metal parts. The single front disc is just up to hauling the bike to a stop, but only just. Crankshafts can fail on high mileage under-serviced examples

ALSO CONSIDER

Honda's VT700/750 can be found marginally cheaper and features a chain drive. Suzuki Intruder 700-800 features more of a chopper look. Yamaha XV535, the Dragstar's predecessor, has a spine frame leaving fewer options for the customiser.

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A bike built like this by Bristol Bobbers costs £4,000, depending on the price of the donor bike. Lucky 13 was built to a customer's spec. Takes at least two months. bristolbobbers@gmail.com.

The loop cradle frame and pseudo-rigid rear suspension of the XVS added to the ease of customisation as the bike was stripped to its bare bones. Jax from the BB team said: "The framework was really rusty and had to have a bit of brush treatment and a spot of welding on a badly rusted bracket before being repainted with good old Hammerite smooth black." Smooth black Hammerite is the BB weapon of choice when it comes to frame painting. The key to a good finish is the proper preparation of the surface and doing the work with the atmosphere at the right temperature, as well as giving the freshly painted surface plenty of time to cure.

The tank had taken a bit of a battering, so a lot of filler work was needed before priming and spraying. The job was done in the workshop's makeshift gas/paint booth, which was made from scrap wood and plastic sheeting. The engine was prepared for a new look by using a mixture of household chemicals and engine cleaner with whatever small brushes they could get their hands on. Jax said: "We find cheap pound shop oven cleaner works well because of its obnoxiously high chemical count, along with some pound shop wire brushes."

The engine was painted with some high-temperature paint out of a rattle can, the rocker covers were sprayed green along with the front end, the wheels and the tank and mudguard before another coat of black gloss was applied over the top to create a black and green tank and guard. The handlebars were purchased from an eBay seller who made them to custom specifications. The tank top instruments and the controls are stock Yamaha parts. The seat was also commissioned from an eBay seller who charged £80 for the white leather and black pinstripe covered perch.

With the big Dragstar seat gone, something needed to be done to shield the electrical parts of the XVS from the worst of the weather. A tray for the seat was cut from 2mm aluminium then coated with a waterproof rubber roofing felt, then this was bolted to the frame via some hidden custom fastenings, keeping the wet stuff out of the sparks. With the old comfy saddle replaced by that single seat, the bike takes on a very different physical aspect to the Dragstar even though the frame is untouched. Indeed all the bolt holes and fastening points remain, so a future owner could bolt the old Yamaha rear end back on, should they wish to, with little difficulty.

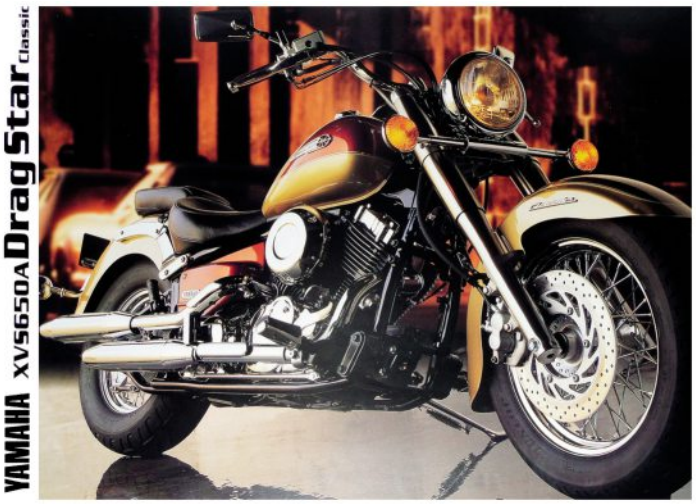


Above: The big number 23 on the tank refers to the new owner's other offspring, apparently. Life is a mystery, so forth

The bike was fitted with short, loud pipes as requested by its future owner, with the BB signature titanium wrap. Exhaust wrap is almost de rigueur for a bobber, and the titanium type doesn't fade or fall apart like other wraps. With the pipes so short the engine does have a tendency to occasionally spit flames out below the rider's legs. The pipes were custom built by Infinity Exhausts, who are more used to creating systems for high-end street racers and for sports cars from Ferrari and others and made the straight through stainless pipes to the team's specification. The Hulk sounds like an incoming helicopter. Despite the unbaffled exhausts the original air filter was used and the bike was found to perform well with no need for rejetting.

The Yam still averages around 40mpg which is about standard, and the engine has more than enough power at the rear end, being more than capable of pulling away from a standing start while spinning the back wheel like a drag bike. That shaft drive also keeps everything looking clean and tidy, with the advantage of not throwing a spray of lubricant all over the back of the bike and the rider.

The whole build – which including the original purchase came in at a cost of less than £4,000 – hangs together as a purposeful, usable motorcycle while at the same time looking as classy as heck. While one shouldn't gush, it's good to see that a new generation is trying to create its own scene from the roots up. CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1997- 2008 **ENGINE:** 649cc air-cooled V-twin; SOHC, 2 valves/cylinder **POWER:** 40hp@6500rpm **TRANSMISSION:** 5-speed; multiplate wet clutch **FRAME:** Steel tube/double cradle **SUSPENSION:** F: Telescopic fork, R: Single shock with adjustable preload **BRAKES:** F: 298mm disc, R: 200mm drum **LENGTH:** 92.1 in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 27.4 in **WEIGHT:** 567lb **FUEL CAPACITY:** 3.5 gallon

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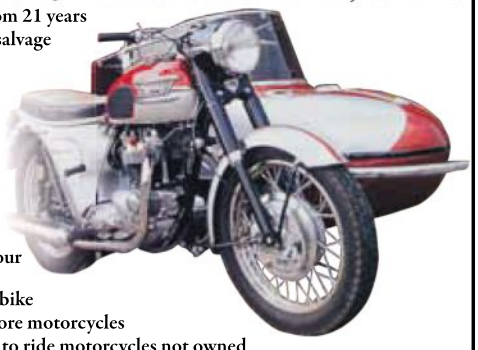
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HANDSOME HUNTER

INTERESTING ARTICLE ON the Ariel 650 twin in the Feb issue. I went the same route with my Ariel 500 special. Bought it in 1970 for £35 from a friend for use commuting into London, then clocked up thousands of miles. It's a 1952 VHA engine in a 54 frame; that's how I bought it. Over the years it has been developed as seen here, with its last refurbishment about 10 years ago. The engine has been tuned with porting and lightened valve gear and polished steel flywheels. The exhaust pipe was made up from an old AJS item, cut and shut to fit and then chromed. The front forks have modified damping and the rear shocks are old racing Girlings. The seat was re-covered early on by Leightons. Mudguards are stainless with ally fittings.

The paintwork on the tanks was done by my son, Graham, who is a prestige car restorer and I did all the other work by myself.

David Kidd







SPECIAL K

I BOUGHT *CBG* specifically for the article on the BMW R90 special. I was a little disappointed to see how inaccurately the machine was described with K1100 front and rear ends. I would suggest that they are in fact from an early K100 with later model wheels. K1100s have paralever rear ends and the front ends sport four-pot callipers and fully floating discs with an integral fork brace and two-piece mudguard.

Notwithstanding my criticism of the description, it is still an interesting machine. The bit which fascinated me was how the drive shaft and the gearbox were joined and the way the rear frame had been strengthened to cope with the single sided swinging arm but alas no mention in the text.

Phil Oughtred



The owner provided the info about the bike, which is usually the most reliable method of getting our facts right – but it's not always infallible, of course… ***CBG***

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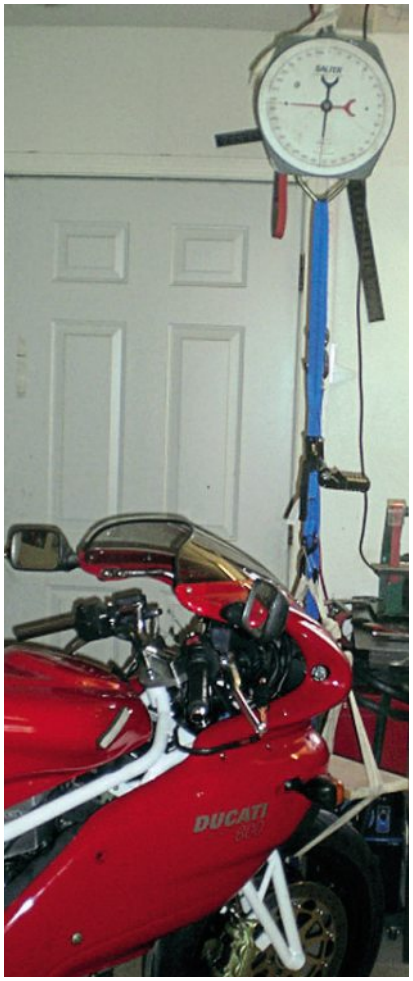
THE LIGHTER SIDE

THANKS TO MARK WILLIAMS for taking the time to write about my saga in the February issue. I am far from the motorcycle world here in California, and am bemused by the very popular farm implements (otherwise known as Harley-Davidsons) that abound here.

Looking back to the 1980s, Vernon Glashier won the 83 Bemsee 500cc single class on Hossack1, a Honda XL500. In same year Peter Knipe won the Bemsee 250cc single cylinder class on the second Hossack with a Rotax engine. So at the end of 1983 it was two for two: two championships on the first two Hossacks. Later Vernon moved to the National Single Cylinder series which he won in 1986, 87 and 88. This was on the first bike I built, Hossack1, which was close to 10 years old when it won its last championship.

The Ducati you see here was built with only one purpose, to show the weight advantage. The motorcycling world generally sees weight reduction as a material thing, citing super new materials of various types. I set out to show this is not true. The Ducati uses the same materials at the same sizes and in dealing with only the front of the machine I saved 25lb!

Norman Hossack



I JUST READ Mark Williams' paean to Norman Hossack in your February issue – but while agreeing that this type of front suspension is extremely beneficial, I'm afraid I must correct him on its origins.

Hossack should never in fact have been allowed a patent on his design, because by the time he built his first racer which allowed him to obtain it, Frenchman Claude Fior had already secured FIM Endurance Championship points with a bike he built himself using a comparable front end design. Fior never patented the design, as a piece I wrote when BMW debuted the Telelever on the K1200S, explains.

The new Brough Superior SS100 uses a Fior fork front end, but Claude Fior did not design this application of his system as Mark states, because he passed away in 2000.

Alan Cathcart

PRACTICAL TRANSPORT

GREAT ARTICLE ABOUT the Velocette Venom in the March issue. It's nice to see a bike of that age which not been totally restored.

I always wanted one back in the day but never managed to get the pennies together – I had to make do with a Bantam and an Ariel Arrow.

I do still ride but I am afraid my machine comes from Japan.

Great magazine, keep up the good work.

Pip Burman

There's never any need to apologise for owning and riding any motorcycle, Pip. Thanks for your kind compliments. ***CBG***

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READERS' RIDES

This month, GeraldT gave us these glimpses of



his Ariel VHA project – the all-alloy 500 engine in a swinging arm frame. It's nearly done, apparently, so we're looking forward to seeing the entire bike when it's let loose on the road once again.



In the middle of last winter RickS said there was too much snow to get out on his BMW outfit, a 1964 machine fitted with an R90 engine. So instead he worked on his 1967 R69S which has covered just 23,000 miles from new. "Very fun to go slow!" he reckons. "Can't wait for the warmer weather," he says. Any day now, Rick…



MichaelS reckons his Aermacchi TV350 "would be a fun to ride if only I could lose two stones in weight! It's a pity as this slim lady has only covered 1300 miles since her complete overhaul." The work was done in Italy then Michael's uncle took the bike to Austria. "I inherited the little 'Harley' but I'm way too big for it so I'm looking for a good home for her. My other bikes are a Kawasaki W650 and one of the last 900 Thruxton Triumphs. They are a bit more my size!"

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TRIPLE TREAT

JUST THOUGHT I'D COMMENT about the excellent article on the Suzuki GT550 in the March issue. I have several and am just starting my third 550 resto. I like them and know quite a bit about the marque. However, none of us knows everything and there are bits in the feature that will be filed away in memory for future use. I like the comment about the one in the article costing £825 in 1975. My first one cost £610 in 1972!

It's nice to see that *CBG* is doing more with modern classics nowadays, the bikes that are relevant to many of us out here. I currently run two Suzuki GT550s, a GT750 currently undergoing a complete redo, another 550 just starting the strip/rebuild process back to what my first one back in 1972 looked like, and I hope to buy my dad's old Ariel VB soon. Different horses for different courses.

Keep up the good work. Looks like I'll have to subscribe now as you're getting more relevant to my interests.

Alan Hodgson

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And here's one which got away. Polly fondly remember this 750 Commando. "It was my partner's back in 2002 when we got it. Came from a collector in Birmingham and was absolutely mint; polished and loved. Sold it 2005: sad to see it go…"

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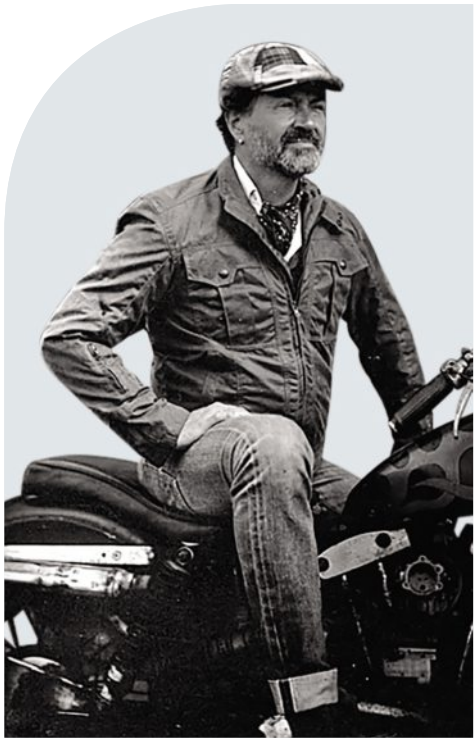


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PAUL D'ORLÉANS

Dangerous language

Male-female conversation is not the battle of the sexes; it's parallel universes…

THE PHONE CALL went like this: "The Brough has seized; I fear it's the big end." "Are you making fun of me?" I asked. I'd hoped this was a simple 'honey bring the van' call, but it quickly devolved into slapstick. My sweetheart was feeling sensitive about her (not very) big end, and my emphatic use of the term had disturbed her. "Isn't there another word for that part? I don't like it." The likely gap between this phone call and my van appearing stretched further with every word, with the rising possibility that my casual description of the Brough's crankpin bearing – its big end – just might nix my chance of a ride.

Male-female conversation is not the battle of the sexes; it's parallel universes winking in and out of visibility, like that Star Trek episode with Kirk stuck in another dimension in a space suit, appearing to Lt Uhura like a hologram. "Did you say big end?" She unplugs her headset and stomps into the elevator, leaving Kirk floating in space for the next thousand years.

Earlier that afternoon, a gap had appeared in my schedule, like a shaft of light between clouds, beckoning me to abandon my desk and tackle some landscape on two wheels. It was finally time for a first foray on my 'new' 84-year-old Brough Superior 11-50, which was recently reborn in the hands of a talented rider-restorer. Charlie had put 175 miles on her since torquing the last bolt, and in that period had discovered two new leaks in the fuel tank, while the tank-side shift lever pivot had popped off, as had the H52 headlamp's large light switch – luckily a repro. All that was fixed, and on my first 'round the block' ride, the decorative aluminium passenger footrest plug fell off, which I rescued after it had only been run over by a car or two. Instant patina! But the big ride, over the Golden Gate bridge and up Mt Tamalpais, was the first real test, with a five-mile highway blast followed by a long twisting climb up a perfect motorcycle road, on a brisk day promising kindness to the motor.

I had total confidence in the model, if not the machine itself, as I'd ridden one just like it across the USA. With Suzie Heartbreak on the back, we cruised a steady 65-70mph on straights, and showed the Cannonball pack 'the way' from Florida to Washington state. That bike was a totally original 1933 11-50, while mine had sat in boxes for who knows how long, and who knows why. Charlie had discovered one 'why', as the crankpin's retaining nut was screwed finger-tight within the bolted-up crankcases, and on inspection, was duff anyway. A total rebuild taking a leisurely 10 years followed, and my nagging with offers of a lot of money finally convinced him to be paid for his efforts, and relinquish the beast to me.

Just in case, I slapped my magnetic tank bag on the Brough's broad back, with sufficient tools for tightening up any looseness and inspecting any moderate faults. A little fiddling with the idle and she sang like a bird through San Francisco's hills, showing the great strength I'd come to love on the Cannonball; I was hoping an easy highway lope would reveal itself too.

So it proved, with those few miles of six-lane disappearing very quickly, when I pointed her to the turn off, and up the mountain. A twisting mountain climb and a willing motorcycle of great character; that to me defines happiness on two wheels, and beyond. I've spent many thousands of hours leading to, and riding away from, such sublime moments, which themselves become timeless, leaving only the stain of pleasure in the memory.

But home and appointments beckoned, so the great bull was turned around for the romp back down the mountain, and the reminder that uphill requires little braking, while gravity and momentum make hard demands on a Brough Superior. In short, playground bullies could never call a Brough 'retarded', as they do no such thing; their brakes are notoriously lousy, especially the front, which does nothing – I might as well be riding a chopper. Brakes weren't the issue, though, when after a long downhill on the overrun I pulled in the clutch for a hairpin, and the engine stopped. Releasing the clutch after the curve made a dramatic skid, and no restart. Uh oh. Letting the beast cool down (it was 42°F in the sun) produced no further rotation via the kicker, and the call to my personal rescue service, noted above.

Phone consultations with Brough experts produced a lot of big end talk, and exasperation from my beloved, but in the end (ha!) it seemed the idle was too lean, and the bore too tight, for the mighty bull. My next phone calls will endlessly repeat the words boring, tight, clearance, seizure, and richness; Auntie Agony, is my relationship safe? CBG

'Playground bullies could never call a Brough 'retarded', as they do no such thing; their brakes are notoriously lousy, especially the front, which does nothing…'

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**

Rumbles in the jumbles

The way we buy bits for our beloved old nails is changing, and according to Williams, perhaps not for the better

LIKE MANY IF not most *CBG* readers, I love a good autojumble. The chance to rummage around trestle tables groaning with bits and pieces I don't actually need and pay for them with money I don't really have is a guilty pleasure, albeit one that I can't really afford the time to indulge. But none of that, of course, stops me from doing it. Laid out as they usually are on mushy grass pitches, boxes of rusting clutch plates, camshafts, springs, and other unidentifiable – by me at least – items that their vendors blithely assume will make all the difference between a runner and a non-runner further entertain if not excite me.

And yes, I have regularly acquired stuff from jumbles that has proven vital to a restoration or custom-build, most recently a Honda CG125 fuel tank for a mere £25, a CB400N fuseholder (£10) and an alloy rear mudguard of indeterminate but ancient British origin, (£17). But I've also noticed recently that there seem to be fewer and fewer such treasures being offered by autojumblers both amateur and professional, indeed amateur autojumblers in particular seem to be less and less prevalent at the shows I go to, and I wistfully think I know why.

Before I loftily let rip on that, the key phrase here may be 'the shows I go to', because with one small and very local exception, the jumbles in question are always adjunct to classic bike shows, such as the Stafford and Bristol & West bashes (although I have also been to Kempton a couple of times in the last decade), and perhaps things are a bit different at pure, unadulterated flea market style affairs. But what I've noticed at the events I *do* visit is that the jumblers' pitches, which are almost entirely outdoors, are being replaced by traders selling new stuff – tools, accessories, *faux* vintage signs, exotic unguents, clothing etc. – if indeed they're being replaced at all.

So why is this?

Well the most obvious reason is the internet. Why would you get up at 4.30am, load your van and drive 150 miles to stand in a chilly, wet field in the hope that someone will pay you £15 for a badly pitted B44 kick-start or rusty Enfield seat base when, with a few clicks of a mouse from the comfort of your own living room, you can bung it on 'fleaBay' where customers across the UK and indeed the world can find what they're specifically looking for? And what's more are willing to pay for the carriage… not least because it means that *they* don't have to get up at sparrowfart, drive 150 miles and then pay a fiver to tramp round in the cold, sustained only by greasy burgers and weak coffee and still *not* find what they're after?

But there are of course other explanations for the decline of jumblery. The most obvious of which is that the supply of good-ish used parts for the mainly British machines that were once, and arguably still are, the bedrock of the classic bike movement, is drying up. The machines in question have, as I've ranted here before, become so expensive even in their ambiguously-tagged 'barn find' condition that 'breaking for spares' has almost become a thing of the past, and such second-hand parts as there once were have consequently become much scarcer. (Testimony to this, if you're in any doubt, is the growth of 'remanufactured' parts, many of which are an improvement on the originals. And most of these are sold via the internet or mighty organs such as this magazine).

It's certainly true that as Japanese machines built during the 1970s and 80s have to a growing extent become the objects of nostalgic desire in the last two decades, demand for *their* used parts has escalated, but the problem here is that Oriental engines generally have many more of them than their British predecessors and the relatively vast and frequently changing model specifications mean that they're much harder to find. Which of course is why a few canny marque specialists like David Silver and Crooks diligently source NOS and pattern items from around the world which they can sell at premium prices, again mainly online.

So what does all this mean for the joy of jumbling? Well even I can't be too smugly sure, but I think the decline in numbers that I've subjectively noticed in recent years will continue, which of course I consider a great shame. But conversely and as a friend of mine recently and wryly observed, the brand-new bikes of today which will presumably assume classic status in the mid-21st century could open up whole new opportunities for those shrewd enough to buy them now, perhaps slightly second-hand. Storing their new-ish Norton Dominators, Ducati Panigales or Hinckley triples in a nice, dry shed for a decade or so could prove lucrative when as their quickly superseded ECUs, fuel-injected throttle bodies and cast-alloy chassis parts become unavailable, third generation owners search desperately to replace them. And you certainly wouldn't want to buy such specialised but vital componentry sight-unseen over the internet, would you?

'Why would you get up at 4.30am, load your van and drive 150 miles to stand in a chilly, wet field in the hope that someone will pay you £15 for a badly pitted B44 kick-start?'

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

Giving it all away

So here's a plan. Find a young rider and give him one of your bikes.

ADMIRING THE THRONG at a classic meet or show is one of my favourite pastimes. Opportunities to ridicule mates who have grown too fat or bald should not be passed up. Less fun, of course, is seeing their much-loved classic bikes increasingly being left at home as their aged limbs begin to struggle with the rigours of riding the dream machines of their youth.

First to go are the clip-ons, replaced with 'touring' bars, to save the back. Then it's out with the high compression pistons, before changing suspension and saddle to something a little, erm, kinder to the posterior. The last stop before the inevitable is fitting an aftermarket electric start to maintain dignity when only three blows of the kick-start lever may be managed. It comes to us all, in the end, the inevitable? This is that new-ish bike, of course, often a modern pastiche of the cherished but unused classic. The bike of their youthful dreams becomes increasingly little more than a garage ornament, gathering dust at home and reminding us of our lost youth on a daily basis.

We're also concerned about the lack of young people interested in our passion. Who will be the custodians of these machines when we're all too old to ride any longer? Equally important, who will actually buy them when the time comes to cash in on our investments? (You may recall telling your significant other that it was better than keeping it in the bank. At some point that's coming back to bite you on the aforementioned posterior). Certainly not younger riders, they can't afford them, at least, not the bikes they'd like to ride. Just like us when we were their age, they want to ride 650 twins, Harleys, Commandos and GS1000s. But their meagre budgets stretch only to keeping the one bike on the road for both commuting and weekend fun.

So here's a plan. Find a young rider and give him one of your bikes. No, don't look so horrified, it makes sense, honest. I know lots of riders with multiple machines stashed in their leaky sheds, some of which seldom see the light of day. Worse, some of us collect unfinished projects aplenty and seldom ever actually complete one.

All you need to do is find a younger enthusiast, preferably a guy or girl known to you – nephew, neighbour, perhaps the daughter of a close friend. Tell them that you are going to let them keep and ride one of your lesser-used classics for, say, three years. It will be their job to pay for the maintenance and insure it, releasing you from the chore and expense, not to mention the extra shed space. After the agreed time is up, the bike is then returned in fine fettle – we all know bikes like to be used – or sold at the new market value which is likely to be higher.

Result! You've had somebody looking after one of your machines for a while, it gets ridden and you've gained a younger friend for life and created a classic motorcycle convert. Even better, do the same with a project. Make a vague promise to help them if they need it and get them to keep a tally of the expenses involved in returning the machine to working order. After the three years are up, sell it on and split the profits.

I can see no flaws in this cunning plan. For us it's a chance to create space, reduce overheads and instil a love of old clunkers in the next generation – the future buyers of our 'investments'. For them it's a once in a lifetime opportunity to expand their two-wheeled horizons at a vastly reduced outlay.

If you've got more than, say, four bikes at home, you really won't miss one very much. And think what you stand to gain; a new friend, a regularly ridden and cleaned machine, a potential future buyer when you finally hang up your leathers for good and of course, that warm, fuzzy feeling inside from actually doing something good.

I've put my motor where my mouth is. A 27-year-old near me is currently riding around on a side valve, hand-change Harley, courtesy of Doctor Paul's shed of endless disappointments. He loves it far more than I ever could (it's not a rotary engined Rudge, after all) and we have a written agreement that specifies the period of ownership, what I expect from him and what may or may not be done to the old girl during his stewardship – no angle grinders or exhaust wrap. I trust him of course and that's the critical thing. He popped round last week to help me with some very heavy lifting, nothing to do with motorcycles. Came round on the Harley... CBG

'I know lots of riders with multiple machines stashed in their leaky sheds, some of which seldom see the light of day. Worse, some of us collect unfinished projects aplenty and seldom ever actually complete one...'

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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WORDS & PHOTOS: PHILLIP TOOTH **ARCHIVE IMAGES:** MORTONS ARCHIVE

THE TOP TRIALS IRON OF ALL TIME

With more than 1,300 trials wins during his long career, many consider Sammy Miller to be the most successful trials rider ever. But he is also a formidable motorcycle developer. Here's how he came to turn a humble Ariel into the definitive trials iron of the four-stroke era







No motorcycle in the history of trials competition comes anywhere close to the amazing tally of wins racked up by a 497cc Ariel with the registration plate GOV 132. It started out as a works 1954 Red Hunter model HT, but don't let that 'works' prefix fool you. The success of GOV was down to the riding and development skills of an Irishman by the name of Samuel Hamilton Miller.

Sammy Miller started his trials career in 1953 with a bike he built around a 1929 Matchless 250 frame and a new 197cc Villiers engine. After honing his skills in events around his native Belfast he entered the 1954 Scottish Six Days Trial, riding to the May event and home again with an award as the second best newcomer.

Back in Ireland he tried his hand at road racing and won the Cookstown 100 on a battered old AJS 7R. After just a couple more races he was offered a ride on a 200km/h 250cc NSU Sportsmax production racer, and a 350 Manx Norton. He showed what he was capable of by finishing second to John Surtees, on another Sportsmax, in the 1955 Ulster GP and finishing third in the Italian GP. Sammy was second again in the 1956 Ulster GP behind Taveri's 250 MV, and after watching him in the Isle of Man TT he was offered a ride with the Mondial works team for the 1957 World Championship.

But none of that stopped Sammy from riding in trials. He was working on a 197cc James but came to a dead end when the Villiers factory didn't have the engine spares he needed. The 1956 Scottish was just a week away. So he took his troubles to Terry Hill, who sponsored him on the NSU. Hill knew the man in charge of the Ariel competition shop, and after a short phone call he told Sammy that one of the new HT Ariels was on its way. And that it was a pukka factory job.

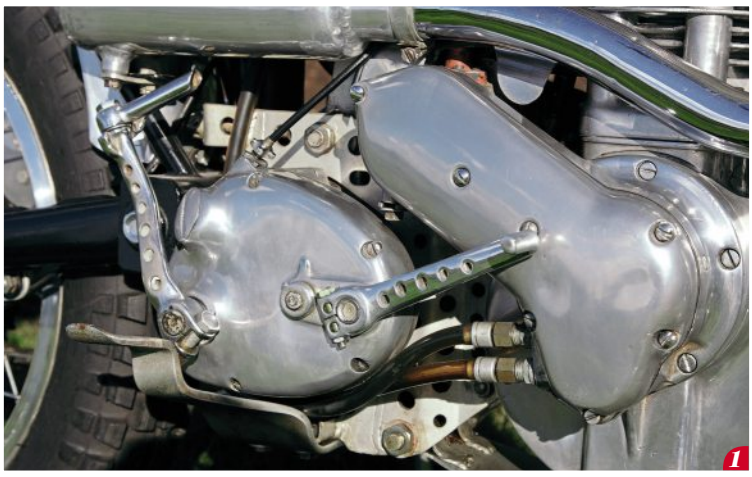
Two days later Sammy was waiting at Belfast docks as GOV 132 was lifted out of the ship's hold and lowered onto the quayside. "It looked huge," he recalls. "I kept thinking, there must be another Ariel

Above: By the standards of its day, Sammy Miller's Ariel was radical indeed

1: Careful weight loss is evident everywhere

2: Attention to detail is simply stunning. The left leg of the swinging arm contains the lube for the chain. You can also observe that the rear shock mounts above the arm – slimming down and raising the back end compared to the stock arrangement

3: More careful detailing: the neat alloy plate covers the magneto, helping to keep water and much at bay, and houses the obligatory speedo. If you peer a little, you may also spot that the carb's float chamber has a transparent cover, so the height of the float is visible













coming off soon... something smaller!" But there was no mistake. This was Sammy's ride.

As soon as the dockers slipped the ropes he climbed on board and rode the big thumper back to his workshop. "After the little James it felt like I was sitting on top of an elephant," jokes Sammy. "I had to get a move on if I was going to have GOV ready for the Scottish."

The Red Hunter name, and with it the VH designation, first graced a 500 Ariel in November 1931, but back then the cylinder head featured four valves and the bore and stroke were over-square at 86.4 x 85mm. Fast riders were impressed with the 90mph top speed and marvelled at the plonk-ability of the engine.

That engine would slowly evolve. First the four-valve head was swapped for two valves and in 1934 the valve gear was enclosed for the first time. A year later Ariel's top designer Val Page changed the bore and stroke to 81.5 x 95mm and offered both twin-exhaust port and single-port options. For 1938 there was a new head with cast-in tunnels for the tops of the pushrods and positive lubrication for the rockers instead of relying on oil mist. Anstey pivoted-arm plunger-type rear springing was available in 1939, with telescopic forks announced in 1946.

For 1950 there was one new competition model – the Red Hunter VCH, supplied in scrambles or trials trim and geared to suit. The engine was the all-alloy VHA unit, with the pushrods now enclosed in a tunnel cast into the cylinder barrel. Both versions used a rigid frame and tele forks, although the scrambler could be ordered with plunger suspension. A road version using the all-alloy engine, the VHA was available for 1952-3 only, after which roadster Red Hunters came with an iron barrel and alloy head. The Red Hunter in 500cc VH and 350cc NH forms finally got a swinging arm frame for the 1954 season.

4: The Miller machine is a truly excellent example of weight loss and careful, clever development. A particularly neat touch is the way the silencer exhausts through the rear guard, the intention being to clean the tyre…

5: The original… and the best



But off-road motorcycle sport had become more specialised, and two competition versions of the Red Hunter were made available in 1954 to replace the VCH. The HS (S for Scrambler) version had the roadster's welded duplex cradle frame and box-section swinging arm fabricated from steel pressings, a dual seat, Lucas racing magneto or Magdyno with QD lighting set, and an Amal TT carburettor while the all-alloy engine with its 9:1 compression ratio came from the VHA.

The HT (T for Trials) version had a rigid frame with a single downtube for a shorter wheelbase, a Lucas Wader waterproof magneto, Amal Monobloc, Burgess air filter and Lycette saddle and ran a 5.6:1 compression ratio. Both models used 4.00 x 19in rear and 3.00 x 21in front Dunlop Universal tyres, a 2.5 gallon petrol tank and chrome plated mudguards, while the HS used roadster gear ratios and the HT a wide cluster.

Back then, many trials riders thought that swinging arm suspension was too heavy and a rigid bike gave better grip, but that all changed when Royal Enfield brought out a trials version of their swinging arm Bullet. Ariel had to follow, and so in 1954 they built a prototype HT with a modified lightweight frame and swinging arm... and registered it as GOV 132.







Before C M Ray took GOV 132 to Scotland for the 1955 Six Days Trial he loaned it to a number of hacks (that's journalists) to try. The new all-welded lightweight frame used a large diameter top tube, with a single front down tube and a saddle pillar tube. Two smaller diameter tubes were joined in a V-shape to the top tube at the point where it was welded to the saddle tube, to support the tops of the Armstrong damper units, the saddle and mudguard. Rear suspension was through a swinging arm pivoting on a Metalastic bush mounted on the saddle tube. A pair of bolted-on rear side-stays – the only curved tubes in the frame – provided some resistance to twisting. The new frame, including swinging arm, weighed just 0.9kg more than the rigid frame and GOV had a wheelbase that, at 53in (1350mm), was just about acceptable for a trials iron.

Like the production models, GOV's engine had ground and polished ports, a highly polished conrod and steel flywheel assembly with a double-row caged roller big end that weighed all of 10kg. A new cam with quieting ramps, a smaller exhaust valve and a 27mm Amal Monobloc instead of the 30mm choke size of the roadster improved low speed running without hampering peak power – a claimed 26bhp at 5,800rpm. The specially produced GB47 Burman gearbox was slimmer than the roadster box, and had ratios of 6.02, 9.46, 14.7 and 19.3 to 1.

Above: Ariel's production trials bike has always been a device of functional beauty. This is a 1956 example

1: Starting post. This 1956 production Ariel HT shows off the handsome engine and its Burman gearbox, as well as revealing how little actual frame was employed. No lower rails, just a steel plate to carry footrests, etc

2: 'December 1959, and Sammy Miller shows his Ariel the way forward.' We're not entirely certain what that 'official' caption means, but it's a great shot of the master and his HT

3: Sammy Miller didn't ride just the one Ariel off-road. Here he's aboard an Arrow. Sammy and Jeff Smith aboard a BSA C15 set out to conquer Ben Nevis

4: A man of many talents. Here's Sammy Miller riding a 250 Ariel at Silverstone in May 1961

Production HT models went on sale in September 1955 with the stock all-welded box-section Ariel roadster swinging arm, and an alloy full-width front hub with a smaller 2.75 x 21in front tyre. Light alloy mudguards and a two-gallon petrol tank helped keep weight down to 290lb. That was an impressive 30lb lighter than a 350 AJS and a massive 46lb lighter than a BB34 BSA.

But while the journalists were impressed, Sammy wasn't. Back at his workshop the spanners began to fly. The seat was lowered by 'what felt like 150mm' by replacing the saddle with a simple leatherette covered pad, and the alloy petrol tank lowered by cutting out the bottom and rewelding so that it sat further down the top tube. The toolbox and oil tank were also modified while a local blacksmith heated and bent the footrests into just the shape that Sammy wanted. After a quick ride around his Belfast practising ground, the Ariel was back on the night boat and heading for Scotland. Ernie Smith, the Ariel Comp Shop manager, almost went white when he saw the works bike line-up at the start, but it was no fairytale ending for Sammy's debut on GOV. Gordon Jackson won the Scottish on a 350cc AJS.

But Sammy finished second in his class and beat all the Ariel factory riders. Ernie called him over at the finish and asked him if he'd like to hang on to

















GOV 132. Sammy jumped at the chance, but trials riding was going to take a back seat for a while. There were a couple of motorcycles waiting for him in Italy.

With six- or seven-speed gearboxes the 125 and 250cc DOHC Mondial racers were certainly fast, and Sammy was hungry enough to win a World Championship. But it was the Italian Tarquinio Provini who always got the best bikes, with Sammy and team-mate Cecil Sandford left with second-best. Provini didn't seem to appreciate that to win you have to finish, and when his engines blew up the Englishman and the Irishman were there to hoover up the points.

Sandford won the 250 World Championship ahead of Provini and Miller for a Mondial 1-2-3. The Irishman also finished fourth in the 125 class, so he was looking forward to the next season. But the Italians had a surprise in store – and not a nice one. Along with Guzzi and Gilera, Mondial were pulling out of Grand Prix racing.

So when he was asked to go over to Selly Oak, Birmingham and join the Ariel Competition Shop it didn't take long to pack his bags, load up GOV and catch the boat to England.

"For the next couple of weeks I was knee-deep in drill swarf and filings as I carved excess weight off GOV," recalls Sammy. The process of getting the wet weight down to 245lb had begun in earnest.

More trials success came as the weight was shaved off and Sammy racked up a string of firsts through 1958, even though he was restricted with what he could do to GOV as the factory wanted him to use only Ariel parts – and the bike had to look like a HT. Then the top brass at Selly Oak (or it might have been Small Heath, because BSA owned Ariel) dropped a bombshell. In 1959 Ariel stopped making four-stroke motorcycles to concentrate on the Leader 250cc two-stroke twins.

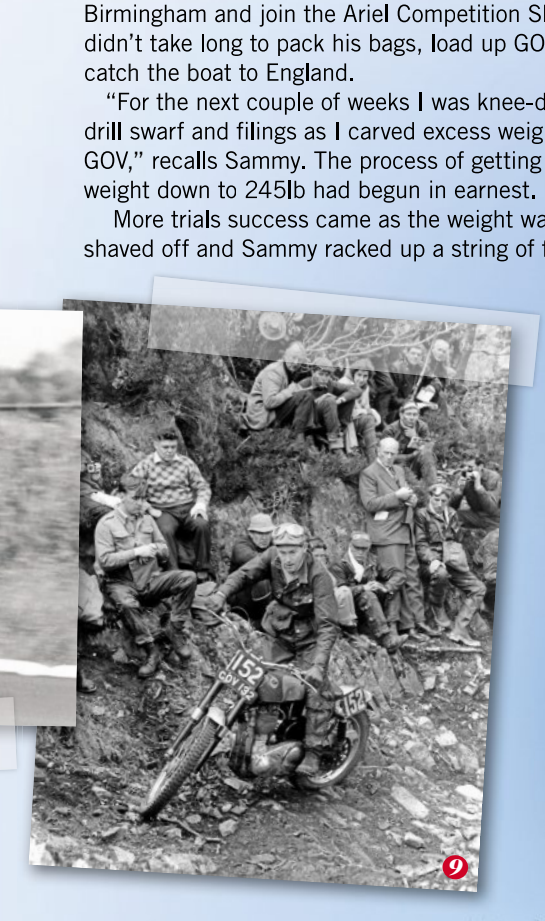
This put an end to the Comp Shop. But Sammy had a guardian angel. Mr Whistance, the MD of Ariel, moved him to the development department and gave him permission to work on GOV one day a week, and to represent Ariel in trials unofficially – much to the disgust of BSA, whose riders Sammy kept beating. When the Ariel factory closed, Sammy bought GOV 132 for the nominal sum of £1 and moved to Small Heath's BSA works, where he found a corner of the BSA Comp Shop to quietly carry on his development work. ➧

5 & 6: Both hubs are Ariel components, taken from the 250cc Leader road bike

7: Such extensive use of glass fibre was rare back then, especially for engine components like the primary chaincase. The oil filler is just about visible – lube was carried in the frame's seat tube

8: Still riding perfectly: Miller and his machine

9: Back to 1960, where we find Sammy Miller riding in that year's Scottish Six Days Trial, here on the section known as the Devil's Staircase. He won the award for the best over-350cc machine





The first thing he did was to make a new oil bearing frame out of Reynolds 531 tubing. A large diameter seat post carried 2.75 pints of lubricant, while the welded rear subframe was angled down, in effect raising the engine to provide more ground clearance. The left tube of the swinging arm carried oil to lube the drive chain. By moving the upper mounting points for the Girling shocks forward he could use longer dampers for more wheel travel, and he slimmed down the rear of GOV by mounting the bottom of the shocks to the top of the swinging arm rather than at the side as on the HT.

Sammy cast his own alloy top fork yoke to push out the fork angle to 63.5 degrees, while at the same time shortening the wheelbase to 52in to quicken the steering. Long Norton Roadholders with modified damping replaced the Ariel forks, while lighter and smaller six-inch single leading shoe brakes from the Leader replaced the seven-inch HT stoppers. Glass fibre was used for the primary chaincase, the one gallon slimline petrol tank and the seat/mudguard unit. An alloy cover kept mud off the gearbox, kept the BTH magneto dry and housed a speedometer – a legal requirement for trials where sections were linked by public roads.

Although the stock GB47 gearbox was used, a three-plate Manx Norton clutch replaced the two-plate Burman. He ditched the engine shock absorber to keep the primary drive as slim as possible. The engine was treated to a 7.5:1 compression ratio and Sam's own design of camshaft, while the inlet manifold was straightened out so that the Monobloc tucked in neatly. A small alloy silencer exhausted through the rear mudguard so that hot gasses warmed the tyre and blasted it clean.

By 1964, when Sammy last won the Scottish Six Days Trial on GOV 132, he had created the best four-stroke trials bike ever seen, racking up 380 wins and victory in six British Championships.

After six memorable years with Ariel, Sammy was approached by a little-known company by the name of Bultaco. They wanted him to develop a two-stroke trials motorcycle to take on the mighty four-strokes. The British press was certain that Miller would be out of the running for years. But it was the start of a new era. A week after the official announcement that he was joining the Spanish company, Sammy won first time out on the new 250 and by the end of the Sixties he was twice European Champion.

"When I got the contract from Senor Bulto, I wrote across it 'Null and void if I do not win half of all trials entered'. Everyone thought I was mad, tearing up a contract if I wasn't good enough. But I knew I could win if the bike was right, and if they wouldn't let me develop that bike I wanted a get-out."

It seems that Sammy had learned something from his Mondial days...

You can see GOV 132 and about 300 other great motorcycles at Sammy Miller's museum. Check out www.sammymiller.co.uk CBG



Above: Off went the Ariel's original own-brand front end; forks replaced by Norton Roadholder legs gripped by Miller's own yokes

Below: Man and machinery. Perfect harmony



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TRIUMPH
Bobber


Bobber
1


1200
TRIUMPH
2


Bobber
3


TRIUMPH
4


Bobber
5

1: Myth made metal. Only a few short years ago it would have been impossible for a major manufacturer to build bikes like this

2: No engineer needs so many fasteners to hold down an engine cover. Stylists, however, do

3: What the fuss is all about. Massive brainpower, cunning and complexity to produce something that looks simple. But is not

4: Rear suspension. In both senses

5: Building such a pared-back bike means that all the current regulatory nonsense must be squeezed into a tiny space. Here it all is, from catalysers to the brains behind the injector pumps

6: Bob's front end is pretty conventional…

7: All the hard work went on round the back





Triumph's all-new Bonneville Bobber is a stylistic and dynamic tour de force from a company that makes bikes that are quite unlike anything else in the marketplace, especially those powered by three-cylinder engines. But the Bobber isn't another triple – instead, it's the latest member of the British manufacturer's massively expanded, thoroughly re-engineered, born-again-one-more-time Bonneville parallel-twin range. It's a modern British take on a Yankee-style hot rod that's cool-looking, capable and competent, as the chance to be one of the first group of journalists to ride it through the streets of Madrid and out into the surrounding Spanish hills on a sunny winter day's press launch, adequately proved.

For those not au fait with this iconic piece of two-wheeled Americana, the Bobber was the forerunner of today's Custom bikes, initially concocted in the late Forties and early Fifties by GIs returning home from war. To do so, they invariably used a Harley-Davidson or Indian as the basis – but also vintage-era Triumph twins of the Marlon Brando Wild One pre-Bonneville generation. As more and more war veterans were demobbed, the massive shortage of civilian machines ramped up prices, leading them to acquire now-unwanted military dispatch bikes that they then 'bobbed' by cutting back the rear fender, aka the mudguard – hence the term 'bobtail' – as well as stripping off other unwanted parts to make the result as light as possible for street racing.

Going from a dead stop to flat out as fast as possible was the bobber's mantra, as practiced in the illegal street drags staged throughout the USA back then. There were plenty of uncompleted freeways comprising Eisenhower's fledgling Interstate Highway System on which you could drag race pretty safely – often for big money in side bets – before the freeways got completed and such racing became commercialised, after they built special drag strips to take it off the streets. So a Bobber represented a minimalist approach to bike building that was made for go, not show, hence anything that didn't constitute a necessity was deleted. Kind of like on the latest variant of the 10-strong Triumph Bonneville family…

The Bobber later mutated into the Chopper in the Sixties – but that's another story, though it's worth noting that in today's America the garish, raked-out custom Choppers that were all the rage a decade ago, before the advent of sub-prime mortgages, are now so very yesterday. The clone manufacturers who built them have mostly gone to the wall, leaving the more minimalist and far more rideable Bobber-style Customs to enjoy a resurgence. Hence one of Harley's recent best-sellers has been the Bobber-style Forty Eight, and while the Indian Scout, Moto Guzzi V9 Bobber and Yamaha XV950 Bolt are also firmly in its firing line, Triumph's 'authentically' styled new Bobber arguably encapsulates better than any of them the minimalist styling ethos, muscular stance and purposeful attitude of a period bobber.

It's available in four colours, all with the same black-painted, all-new tubular steel frame, with the Jet Black base model costing £10,500 including 20% UK tax, the Ironstone (a light matt grey) and Morello Red an extra £125, and the two-tone Competition Green and Frozen Silver with hand-painted striping 300 quid more than the black-is-beautiful version.

Bobbers didn't much happen in Britain first time around in the late 1940s. Function mattered back then, not form, at a time when motorcycles were mostly viewed as basic transportation. That makes Triumph's decision to bring the Bobber concept to a global market in 2017 with a bike that's been under development for almost four years, more like building a present-day British factory Custom with a transatlantic retro slant, than history recreated. The result looks fantastic in the metal, with brilliantly executed styling of a bike that will only be sold as a single-seater, and which, in spite of the low 690mm default height of the seat that'll make the Bobber accessible to riders of all heights, proved really comfortable on a 130-mile day's ride.





1



2

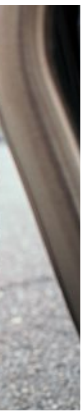
The floating aluminium seat pan surmounted by a nicely stitched foam pad is surprisingly accommodating, with zero numb-bum syndrome after a day spent sitting on it. It's adjustable forward and up or rearwards and down over a 30mm range, albeit only with tools. This is complemented by a simple quick-release function for the single round instrument clock that lets you adjust its angle to suit your stance.

The footrests are quite far back and positioned fairly normally – though not for this style of bike, where with its slammed styling hugging the highway you might expect they'd be further forward, so you could stretch your legs out. But at 5ft 10in tall I never felt cramped, nor were my knees or hips sore after my day spent bobbing around central Spain, and indeed the wide, flat handlebar delivers a really relaxed stance.

It's a nice bike to ride, letting you chill out when you want to, or carve curves when you, and it, both feel like it. Watch out for those low-slung footrests, though – you must be ready to slam on the brakes











3

when you suddenly realise you're going too fast to make the turn, because it's physically impossible to crank her over any more!

Although the non-adjustable KYB suspension has limited travel, with the front 41mm fork offering just 90mm of wheel movement and an even more reduced 77mm from the monoshock rear, Triumph's engineers, led by its R&D chief Stuart Wood, have cleverly brought two factors into play here in delivering an improbable amount of ride comfort, as well as compliance.

It looks at first as if the Triumph has a traditional Bobber-style hardtail rear end that's devoid of any suspension. Then you discover the KYB monoshock nestling snugly beneath the seat in what appears to be a direct-action cantilever rear end, thanks to the cutely crafted, so-called 'swing cage' operating the rear suspension. But the Bobber's cleverly packaged laydown monoshock is actually worked via a linear rate link hidden away low down, which gives good control over rear wheel damping. Wood & Co also went looking for a company to make them a special set of tyres for the Bobber, which would provide enhanced suspension via added flex in their specially designed sidewalls.

They found that company close at hand in US-owned but UK-based Avon, which produces the specially-developed 19in front crossply and 16in radial rear Cobra AV71/AV72 duo equipping the Bobber's great-looking black-rimmed wire-spoked wheels – a skinny 2.50in front and 3.50in rear. This combo delivers relaxed, confident steering, as well as excellent grip within the restrictions placed on the Bobber's turn speed by the fact that you'll ground out the flip-up footrests at relatively minimal lean angles. What was most noticeable was the way I could feel the rear 150/80R16 tyre flexing gently beneath me as we rode over the plentiful speed-calming 'sleeping policemen' in the streets of Madrid and surrounding towns and villages.

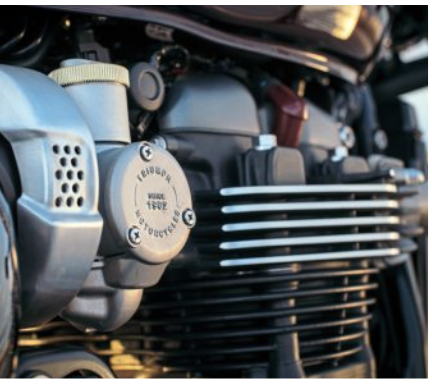
Form indeed meets function – the Bobber looks cool, but it's also good to ride. Plus build quality is ➧

1: In keeping with that old stripped-back basic theme, Bob is untroubled by over-braking. The rider, however, may consider advance planning

2: Wide, flat bars, a single clock, non-vibe mirrors… and you can take on the high street. We mean highway…

3: Sir Alan of Cathcart: well-known easy rider

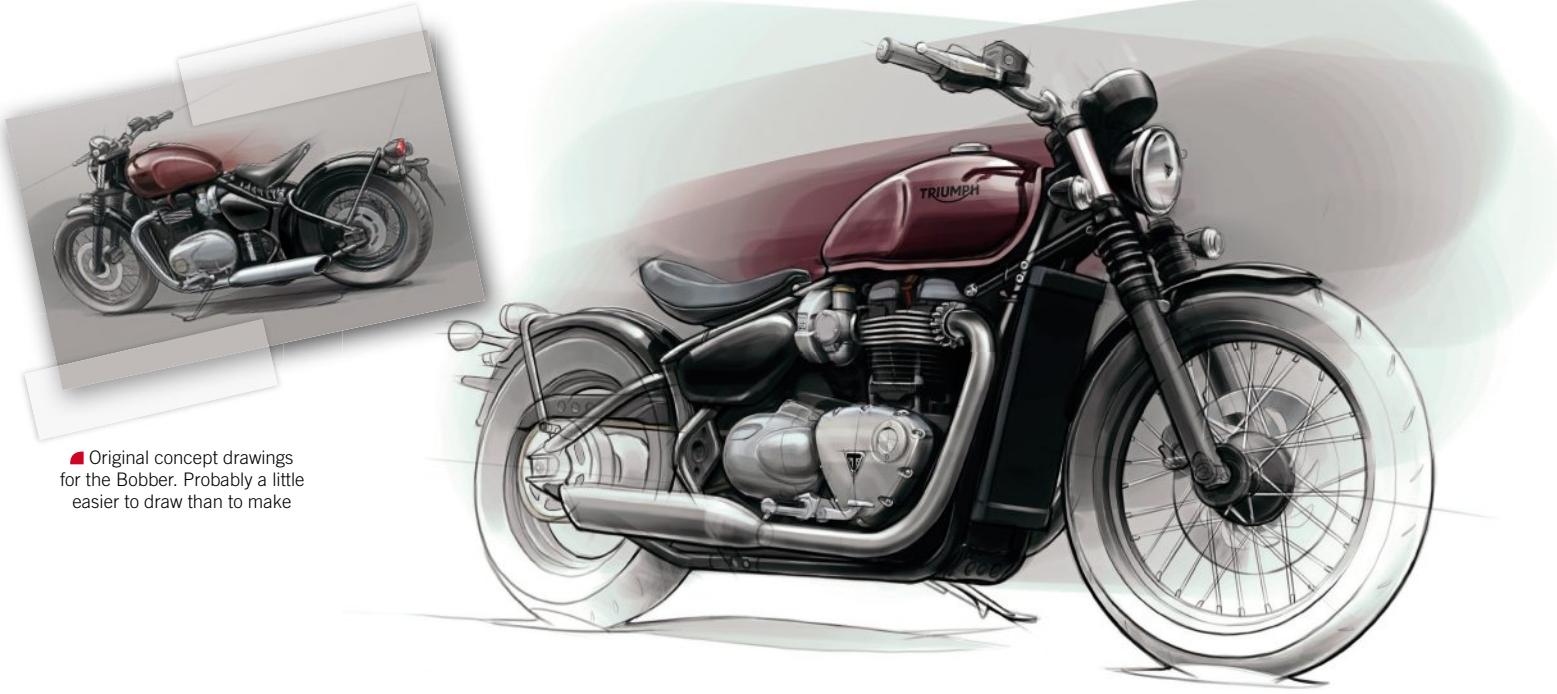
Below: Detailing is everything







Making it happen



Original concept drawings for the Bobber. Probably a little easier to draw than to make

very high, as is now usual for bikes built in Triumph's trio of Thai factories.

The KYB fork is kicked out sufficiently to deliver visual street cred in a bike with such front-loaded styling that the semi-detached looking rear wheel seems to be still riding through the last town you just left. But at a 25.8° rake it's far from excessive, especially combined with a mere 87.9mm of trail – these are sportbike stats. Although the rangy 1510mm wheelbase calms everything down properly, the Bobber is very much at home cranking from side to side through a succession of sweeping fourth-gear turns, and thanks to its long stride it's super-stable at any kind of speed. Because of its low-down cee-of gee that further helps it ride bumps well, and combined with the reduced contact batch of its skinny front 100/90-19 tyre, the Bobber's also pretty nimble in rounding tighter turns in city streets or mountain hairpins. It has no right to handle as well as it does.

Triumph's HT/High Torque version of the new-for-2016 liquid-cooled 1197cc eight-valve T120 Bonneville 97.6 x 80mm parallel-twin engine with its 270° crank and chain-driven single overhead cam, has been adapted to play a key role in the Bobber's rideability. This retuned version employs twin Keihin throttle bodies that, as usual, are cleverly disguised as carburettors, plus a new dual airbox intake system, resulting in an ultra-flat torque curve that makes it almost irrelevant which gear you throw at the Bobber out of the six that are available. In fact, that's two too many. A four-speed gearbox would be sufficient on a bike that will let you gas it wide open in top gear from just 2300rpm upwards with zero transmission snatch, and on which 103Nm of torque is delivered at 3000rpm. Peak grunt of 106Nm is obtained just a thousand revs higher, but although it makes 10% more torque at 4500rpm than the T120 (which peaks with 105Nm at just 3100 rpm), this then falls away beyond 5500 revs, and there's just 76Nm available by the time the revlimiter you have no business ever encountering in real world riding cuts in at 7000rpm on the ride-by-ride digital throttle.

This offers two easily selectable riding modes, Road and Rain. These both deliver the same full 76bhp power output at 6100rpm, just with different degrees of urgency via separate dedicated throttle maps. Using the sweet-shifting gearbox to keep the engine turning in the slightly fatter part of the horizontal torque curve between 3000-5000rpm is the way the Bobber will invariably be ridden, with the switchable single-stage traction control on hand to keep the wheels in line. Doing this delivers a decidedly thrilling hot rod roar from the Bonneville motor's double skinned stainless steel twin exhausts, with their slash-cut peashooter silencers and signature catalyst box under the gearbox.

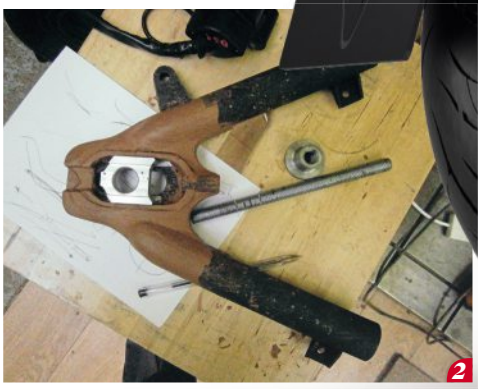
Complying with Euro 4 requirements has once again allowed Triumph to deliver

1 & 2: Even something as simple as the rear wheel spindle mounting starts out as a drawing. Every proportion is important to the look, as special builders everywhere know too well. Work in progress: that same part, modelled in clay

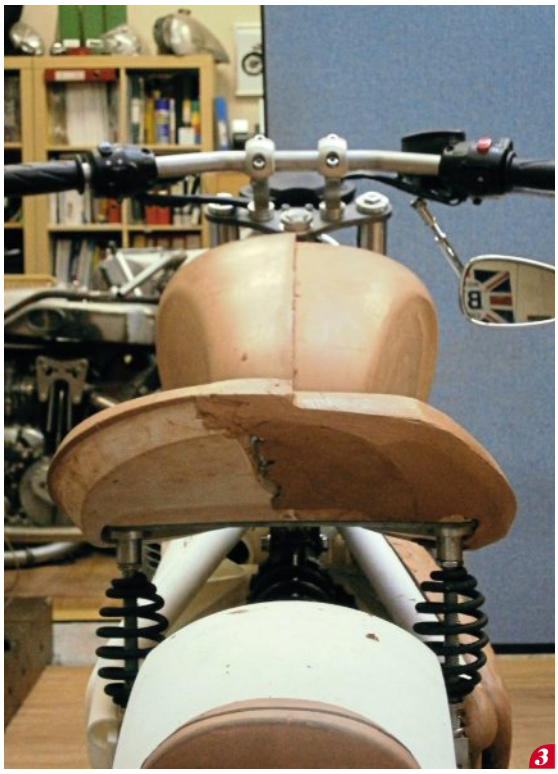
3: Working in clay allows relatively cheap alternatives to be considered. Is that inspiration in the background?

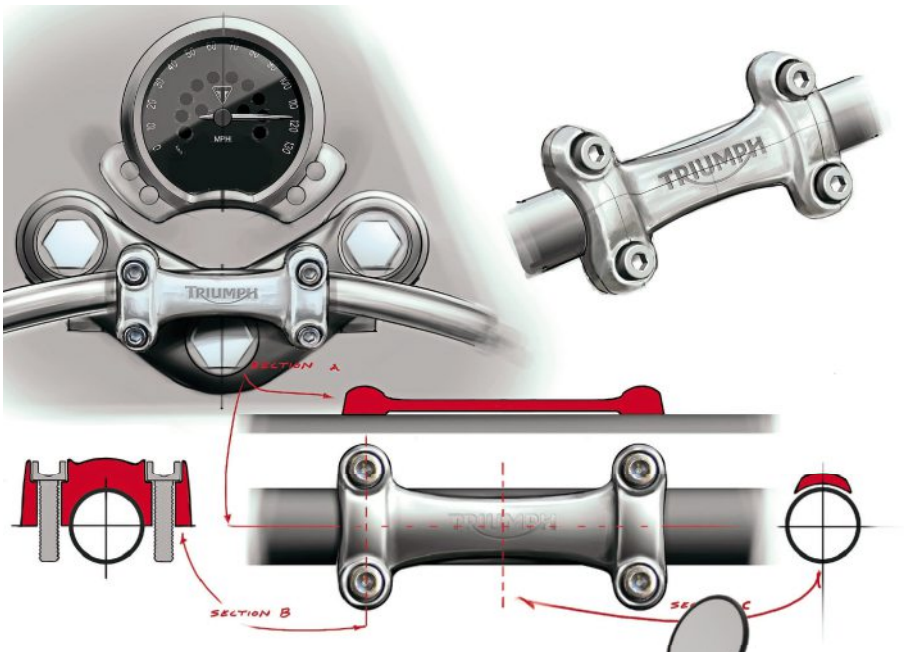


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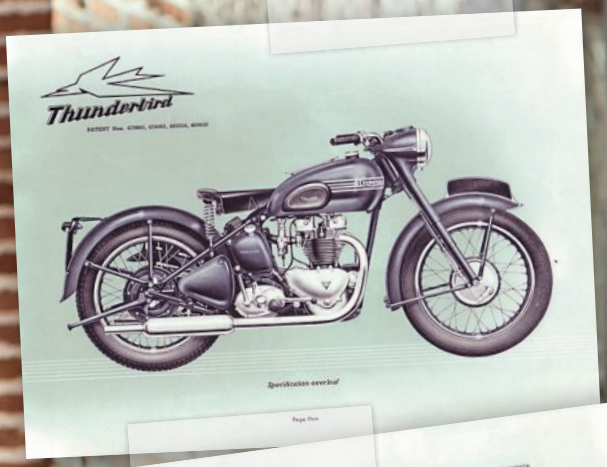
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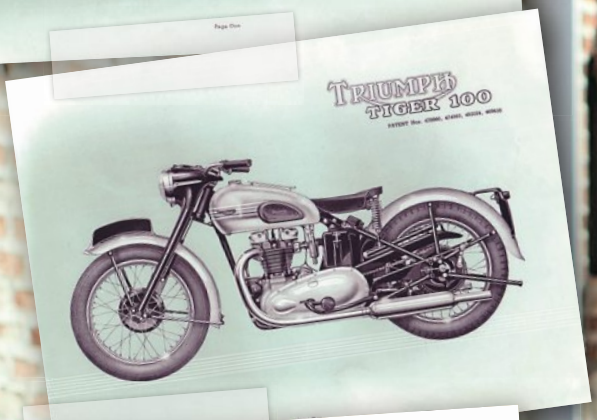




a great-sounding bike that's replete with torque at the expense of a little outright power, which is absolutely not an issue on a chilled-out stylebike like this. In fact, sticking the 900 Street Twin motor in the Bobber, rather than the more potent 1200 version Triumph has ended up using, wouldn't have significantly detracted from the bike's appeal, at ➧

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reduced cost. Or maybe that's coming later...

The Bobber's T120 Bonnie motor has considerable reserves of performance, even if at heart it's a flexible friend spinning at just 2500rpm at 60mph, while just 4200rpm gives 100mph. As well as a smooth, linear power delivery, with zero vibration at any revs thanks to its twin balance shafts, this bike is ridiculously forgiving and easy to ride, with just the single Nissin two-piston front brake caliper and 310mm disc combination the only thing to watch out for in stopping a motorcycle weighing 228kg dry from any sort of speed.

Though it certainly looks cooler with just the single disc, Triumph's new stylebike is essentially under-braked. Panic stops require you to stand on the much more effective rear 255mm disc and single-piston floating caliper to haul the Bobber to a halt, aided by the reserves of engine braking still retained in the settings for the torque assist – aka slipper clutch. This has a really light lever action that makes riding the bike in town and/or traffic quite untiring, so your left hand won't cramp up in the urban use I bet most Bobberists will mostly put their steed to, especially with its 9.1-litre fuel tank reducing range to little more than 100 miles.

My fuel warning light illuminated after just 68 miles on the good-looking, very readable single round clock, which has an analogue speedo dial with a digital panel. You scroll through this via the I-button on the left bar, accessing the gear position indicator, tacho, odometer with twin trips, fuel level, range to empty, average and current fuel consumption, a clock, service indicator, riding mode and traction control

settings. There's no ambient temperature reading, though, which would have been nice.

Few people buying a Bobber will leave it in standard trim, and Triumph knows that. There's a huge range of more than 150 accessories in the company's aftermarket catalogue developed specifically for this model, so you can get your own Bobber exactly how you'd like it. There's a variety of luggage options that can make this a practical traffic tool for riding to work, with briefcase or tools in a side bag.

Expect the Ducati Monster's dominance of the cool commute market segment in cities like London, San Francisco, Paris or yes, Madrid, to come under serious threat. Consider the Bobber's suspension, well able to handle bumpy urban surfaces, ABS fitted as standard as part of the Euro 4 compliance, and service intervals now stretched to 10,000 miles or 16,000km. Add those to lots of neat period-looking standard design cues there to be flaunted in delivering extra pride in ownership, like the battery box with its stainless steel strap, effective bar end mirrors, rubber fork gaiters, cut-down front mudguard, lockable fuel cap and classic-look LED taillight. But the heated grips that Triumph thankfully fitted to the test bikes to cope with Madrid's shivery morning winter weather are an accessory, same as the cruise control kit that's also available.

There's even a couple of options to enhance performance, including a fully-adjustable Fox rear shock, plus a range of new Bobber exhausts from Vance and Hines that are still Euro 4 compliant. In case you need help getting started in designing your own customised Bobber, Triumph has also created two so-called Inspiration Kits: a traditional-looking 'Old School' package with ape-hanger bars, and a drag racing 'Quarter Mile' effort instead using clip-ons.



Above: A bonus of the low-slung metal is that the rider gets to feel heroic without needing to be heroic. But you do not ride this to out scratch racers

Here's the bottom line. Triumph's new retro stylebike will be a sold-out success around the world, and the firm's biggest problem is going to be meeting demand for a model that's as good to ride as it is to look at. Oh, that and deciding what to build next on this new Custom platform for the Bonneville motor, incorporating its all-new frame and dedicated engine tune. A Street Tracker, anyone? Gotta happen… CBG



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TRIUMPH

WORDS BY PHILLIP TOOTH
PHOTOS BY PHILLIP TOOTH & DAN MAHONEY

TRACKMASTER
FOR THE ROAD

Heinz Lange watched some dirt track racing, loved the bikes, So built his own. This is it...

"The first time that I saw a Trackmaster framed Triumph was when I was at Daytona for the AHRMA classic race series," says Heinz Lange, who had flown to the US from his home near Frankfurt. "One evening, a bunch of us went to watch dirt track racing. The way those guys charged their Trackmaster twins into the corners, eased off the gas and then wound the power on to send the bike sideways with a rooster-tail of cinders shooting from the back tyre was awesome. Close racing, lots of noise and beautiful motorcycles – what's not to like?"

A couple of years later, on another trip to the US, he called in on a British bike meet north of Los Angeles. "There was a bunch of guys riding street legal Trackmaster framed Triumph and BSA twins," recalls Heinz. "Those bikes had style – not just the paint jobs and the shape of the dirt track seats and tanks, but the way that everything which wasn't needed for the bike to function had been stripped off. That's when I started dreaming about building one for myself."

Another year passed and he was back in Daytona. "There was a flea market but I was stuck in the paddock rebuilding the gearbox on a BSA triple, so I told the guys to keep an eye open for anything I could use to build a street legal Trackmaster," he explains. "Then one of my friends came back and told me he'd found an engine from a 1971 Bonneville T120R that was just what I needed." And there was another good find. "There was a guy selling new old stock Ceriani forks still in their original boxes – just like the forks that were fitted to Trackmaster frames in the 1970s. So in one weekend I found two major parts for my project."

TRACKMASTER TRIUMPH

With no broken cylinder fins, rounded-off nuts or damaged screw heads, the 650cc twin certainly looked like it was in good condition... from the outside. But when Heinz got it back to Germany and stripped it down he discovered one botched, broken or worn out component after another. "The crankcase and crankshaft are the only parts that I used from that engine, but it only cost $500 so I can't complain," he laughs. He ditched the heavy iron barrels for alloy components, and found a much better cylinder head which he ported and gas-flowed. Heinz also fitted full race camshafts. Amal Concentrics would be rubber mounted on inlet stubs to reduce fuel frothing in the float chamber.

The original four-speed gearbox cluster was swapped for a five-speeder out of a T140. "It fits straight in," confirms Heinz, who also splashed out on a belt primary drive conversion with an alloy clutch basket. "These simple modifications to the drive train transform the performance on the road," he adds.

It's time for a short history on dirt track frames. Before 1968, the top dirt track racers were all using rigid frames. But then the American Motorcyclist Association lifted frame restrictions and Californian Ray Hensley made a nickel-plated swinging arm frame from TIG-welded 4130 chrome-molybdenum aircraft tubing. When AMA Grand National champion Gary Nixon put his Triumph engine in the new Sonicweld frame and rode it at the end of the season Louisville Race of Champions he couldn't believe how good it was. Neither could the guys eating his dirt. Triumph endorsed the stronger and much lighter Sonicweld, and riders were queuing up to place their order.

Hensley and his business partner Ken Watkins split in 1969 and Hensley started Trackmaster. And boy, were those frames good. The large-diameter top tube extended from the headstock to below the swinging arm spindle and carried six pints (2.8 litres) of engine oil. Steel plates joining the top tube to the duplex cradle stiffened the headstock. By





1


2

Above: Scarily similar to Triumph's own post-1971 oily frame, the Trackmaster is rather more graceful, taut and somehow tense

1: Trackmaster oil-bearing frame fills from behind the steering head, unlike Triumph's own, where the filler lives beneath the seat nose. Detailing here is excellent

2: Machined from billet, the fork yokes are made by Staracer, but the owner Heinz machined the mudguard clamps

3: Handsome 650 Triumph go-motor, complete with all-alloy top end; any pounds lost is performance gained

4: Chain adjustment slots in the swinging arm can also be used to lengthen or shorten the wheelbase. Yes, really...

5: Concentrics are rubber mounted to prevent frothing in the float chambers. Replacement rocker cover doubles as top end breather

6: This is a road machine, so carries foot controls on opposite sides. A Trackmaster used on dirt tracks has gear lever and brake pedal on same side. Circuits run counter clockwise…











Right: Front end – as on original Trackmasters – is direct from Italy

Inset: The main frame tube extends below the swinging arm and doubles as the oil tank, which is why there's a wire-locked drain plug

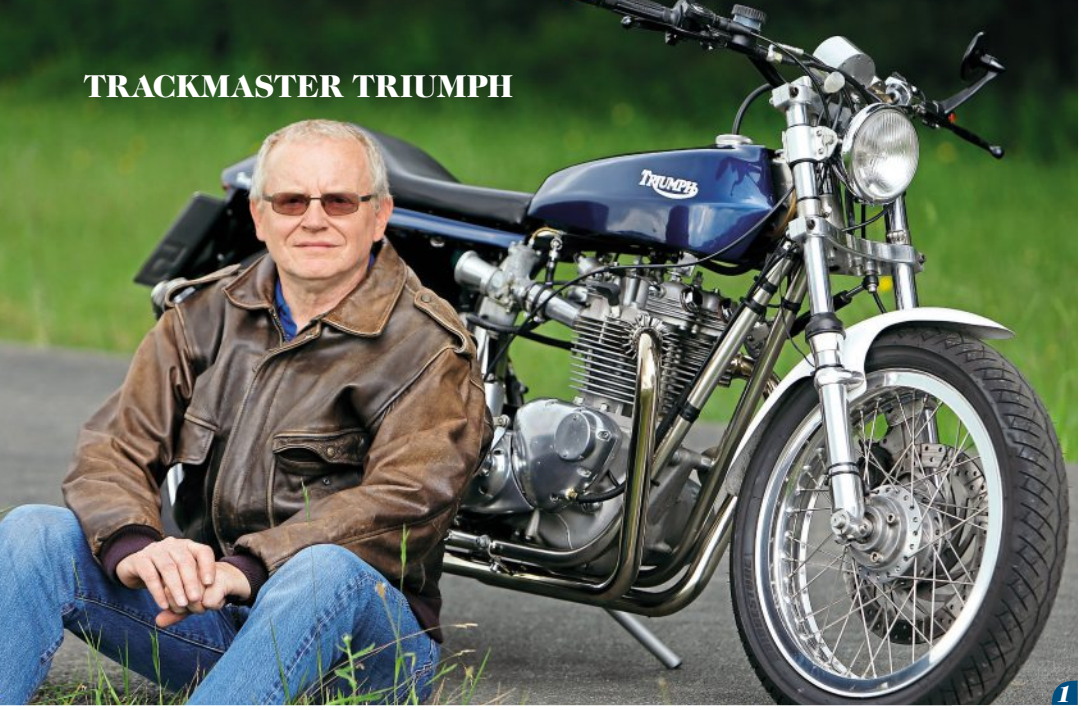
the end of the 1971 season, seven of the top 10 dirt track racers were using Trackmaster frames. That year, a couple of employees left Trackmaster to set up Redline frames, which later bought rival Champion. When Hensley decided to answer the call of the wild and relocate to Canada, Trackmaster moved through a series of owners. Then Hensley returned to the US and started another company to make dirt track frames – Staracer, the company now based in Wichita, Kansas and owned by Roger Attebury.

With the engine rebuild progressing, Heinz telephoned Staracer and asked Attebury to build him a frame. "Roger was busy working on dirt trackers for racers but said he'd have more time at the end of the season, so I should call back in the autumn." And that's when Roger pointed out that the short wheelbase and steep head angle of a short-track frame would make a terrible street bike, although popping wheelies would be easy. He convinced Heinz that what he really wanted was a Trackmaster-style frame with the steering geometry set up for the one-mile ovals, which have faster, longer straights.

It was two years before the frame and swinging arm arrived in Germany. Also in the crate were Staracer's gas tank and seat unit, and top and bottom fork yokes for Heinz's Ceriani fork. He was impressed with the quality. "Roger had made all the mounting points for the 1971 Bonneville motor, so it would fit straight in without engine plates. The welding was perfect, and the nickel plating – well, it looked superb. It took a long time, but it was worth waiting for."



TRACKMASTER TRIUMPH









1: Heinz Lange and his handsome creation. New wine, old bottles, things like that

2: Keep your eyes on the highway…

3 & 4: Anchorage is supplied by BMW, single discs at each end, both originally intended for a 650 single. Grimeca calipers do the gripping stuff

Heinz had a pair of hubs from a T140 Bonnie in his stock of Brit bike spares, which he stripped down and rebuilt with spacers to fit the Ceriani fork and Trackmaster swinging arm. While a dirt tracker doesn't have a front brake, a dirt track bike used for TT racing – which is run over a dirt track with left and right turns and at least one jump – does. Because his fork legs were destined for a 1970s dirt tracker, they didn't have lugs to carry a brake caliper. Heinz machined U-shaped clamps from alloy to secure the mudguard and the Dural plate on the left side that carries the Grimeca caliper. Front and rear discs were recycled from a BMW F650 single.

Wide, black anodised alloy handlebars contribute to the street tracker look but, with so much gleaming nickel and alloy, Heinz decided he needed a dark colour for the tank and seat unit to give the bike some balance. "I fell in love with 'china blue metallic', a paint used on the Peugeot 406," he says. French fashion collides with American style and German passion.



A Boyer Bransden ignition supplies the sparks, and there's a small battery hidden under the seat unit. To be street legal in Germany, Heinz had to fit a headlamp and a neat LED stop and tail-light. There's also a combined tachometer and digital speedometer, which takes its reading from a sensor on the front wheel. Thin-wall stainless steel exhausts – a whopping 2.5kg lighter than mild steel – are tucked under the frame, with carbon fibre Devil end cans (two of four designed for a Kawasaki ZX-10R) saving even more weight. With the gas tank topped up and ready to go, this street legal Trackmaster weighs in at only 138kg (304lb), about 35kg (78lb) less than a Bonnie.

That low weight and the race-bred frame makes the Trackmaster Triumph a perfect tool for carving through country back roads. Those Bridgestone Battlax tyres really grip. Pitching into a corner couldn't be easier, and if you need to change your line part-way through a bend the wide bars offer precision control. Heinz fitted a small hydraulic damper in case the steering felt frisky; although I'm not sure it's needed. The Cerianis are nicely damped, and the Hagon rear shocks with their progressive springs complement the Italian forks perfectly. Braking is impressive, but I'd prefer the footrests to be lower and further forward.



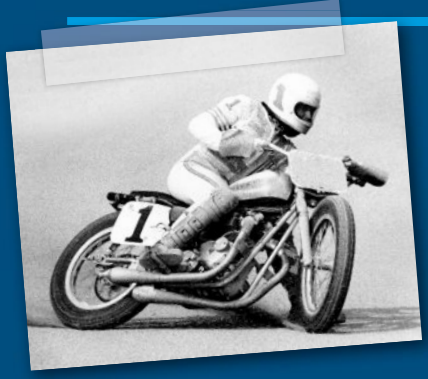
On his way to being named AMA Rookie of the Year in 1972, Gary Scott (64R) power-slides his Trackmaster Triumph into a turn at Ascot Park.

Sponsored by a Los Angeles Triumph dealership, he qualified for 21 of the 24 Nationals, and scored two wins to finish the season runner-up to factory Harley-Davidson rider Mark Brelsford.

Trackmaster frames dominated that night's racing at Ascot. Keith Mashburn (19) with a Trackmaster Yamaha, and Kenny Robert (back, left) on a Champion-framed XS650 punched to 750cc, were two members of the newly-formed Yamaha race team. Sammy Tanner (7X), one of the big names in the 1960s, was on a Sal Acosta Trackmaster Triumph while 1970 Grand National Champion Gene Romero (back, right) rode a Triumph Trident engined Trackmaster.

Ascot Park, the legendary half-mile dirt track oval, was built on an old city dump near Gardena, California. With seating for only 7500 spectators the venue was always filled to capacity for AMA Grand National events, as well as for the weekly professional half-mile and TTs. Races might be between eight, 12 or 16 riders, all on full throttle as soon as the flag dropped and aiming to be the first man into turn one, throwing their bikes sideways and sliding on their steel shoes with the back tire spinning, jockeying for position to be first out of turn two. Originally called the Los Angeles Speedway, it opened in 1957 and featured tight semi-banked turns, long straights, and a clay surface that was slippery in the daytime but became tacky when the evening sea mists drifted in.

As Romero said: "Days, it's like wax paper, and nights, it's like flypaper." Ascot closed in 1990 when its final AMA Grand National Half-Mile attracted a record standing room only crowd of 11,000.



Left: The Louisville half-mile, and Gene Romero shows his style on a Trackmaster Triumph – the bike that gave him his Grand National Championship title. He's wearing white leathers emblazoned with the Triumph logo and No1, but a bit of dirt never hurt anyone...



Left: Photographer Walt Mahony managed Trackmaster Racing Frames for Ray Hensley for a time, before buying the company in late 1971. He owned Ascot-winning Triumphs that he loaned to riders like Ron Moore.



Right: Texan Sammy 'The Flying Flea' Tanner was only 5ft tall and weighed about 100lbs but he was tough. And fast. He won four of his seven Grand Nationals at Ascot, when he rode Trackmaster framed BSAs and Triumphs. He also raced a Trackmaster Norton.



Move the quick-action twistgrip a micron and the tuned engine responds instantly, but be careful if you don't want the front end to start pawing the sky. Tap-dance on the gear lever and the Trackmaster Triumph disappears into the distance surprisingly quickly.

"Yes, it's a lot of fun," grins Heinz, who is obviously pleased with his work. "When I'm riding with my friends, they tell me that the further I am in front the louder my exhausts sound. I just tell them to ride a bit faster!" CBG

TRACKMASTER TRIUMPH SPECS

ENGINE: 1971 Bonneville T120R **CONFIGURATION:** Vertical Twin **CYLINDER HEAD:** OHV **CAPACITY:** 649cc **BORE/STROKE:** 71 x 82mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9.0:1 **COOLING:** Air **FUELLING:** two Amal Concentrics R35 932, 32mm chokes **POWER:** 55bhp @ 6500rpm **TRANSMISSION TYPE:** Five-speed **CLUTCH:** Wet multi-plate **PRIMARY DRIVE:** chain **FINAL DRIVE:** chain **CHASSIS FRAME MATERIAL:** Tubular Steel **FRAME LAYOUT:** Single oil carrying top tube, open cradle **RAKE:** 65 degree **TRAIL:** 75mm **SUSPENSION:** Front: Ceriani 35mm. Rear: Hagon twin shocks **WHEELS/TYRES:** Wheels: Morad (Spain) alloy rims, modified T140 hubs, stainless spokes. Front: 18x2.5 front, 18x2.5in rear. **Tyres:** Bridgestone Battlax. Front: 110/80-18M/C 58V. Rear: 130/80-18M/C 66V **BRAKES:** Front: BMW 300mm disc, Grimeca caliper Rear: BMW 240mm disc, Grimeca caliper **DIMENSIONS:** Weight: 138kg **SEAT HEIGHT:** 750mm **WHEELBASE:** 1380mm **FUEL CAPACITY:** 7L **PERFORMANCE FUEL CONSUMPTION:** 6l/100km **TOP SPEED:** 150Km/h (depending on sprocket size)

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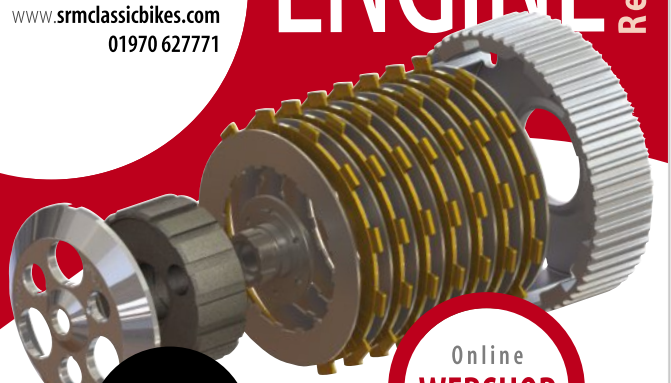
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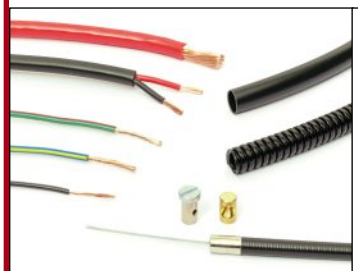


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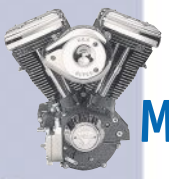
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Rebuilding the Bimmer

Fancy a challenge? Rebuilding an airhead BMW can be its own reward

WORDS BY ROB DAVIES AND COLIN WILLIAMS **PHOTOS BY** COLIN WILLIAMS

AFTER BEING RAISED on the good old British names of BSA and Triumph during the golden years of the 1970s while at the same time being spoon-fed such patriotic films as 'Reach For the Sky' and 'The Cruel Sea', I was primed to believe that the motorcycle itself was as British as fish and chips. And then… I came to do my first write-up of a BMW restoration, a company that's as German as lederhosen. So, I thought to myself, better do your homework first, just to get the facts right. And I have to say that I was shocked – nay, stunned – as the truths kept poking me in the eye. Yes, poor reader; I am going to upset you – shock you, even – by the declaration that the Germans beat us to it. Yes, they invented the motorcycle. Not only that, but the first motorcyclist was also a person of Teutonic origin – not the finest bit of detective work I have ever done…

The four-stroke internal combustion engine was patented by Dr Nikolaus Otto in 1876. His assistant, a certain Gottlieb Daimler, went his own way in 1883 to develop his own version of the engine and promptly dropped it into the frame of a beefed-up, two wheeled, wooden – yes I said wooden – bicycle contraption. Actually, it had two small stabilising wheels just like a kiddie's first bike, but we won't split hairs at this point. Then, his son Paul, went for a six-mile ride on it – well, why wouldn't he?

The trouble is, once started on my path of learning, I couldn't stop and the thing gets worse, much worse. No no, don't cry – not just yet. You know Triumph and Velocette, those fine old British names? Well, both companies were created by Germans. You don't believe me? Triumph was founded by Siegfried Bettmann in 1886, while Velocette was formed by Johannes Gutgeman in 1905. So now that I have successfully upset everyone with what Morpheus in the movie 'The Matrix' succinctly refers to in the line 'All I am offering is the truth' I had better get on with this month's resto tale of a BMW R100.

Bayerische Motoren Werke (I always wondered

1: How it begins. Optimism, a sense of anticipation… and then reality sets in. This machine started life as a BMW R100RS, a flash sports tourer

2: Isn't it lovely to buy a bike with the pistons sticking out of the side? At least you know they are there. You can't ride it home, though

3: Things are coming together. The repainted frame and rear mudguard look good together, and the wise builder has put pipe foam around the lower frame to protect the paintwork when the lump finally goes back in

4: This tank has had better days. At this point the calculator comes out. Is it better to repair the original or replace it second-hand?







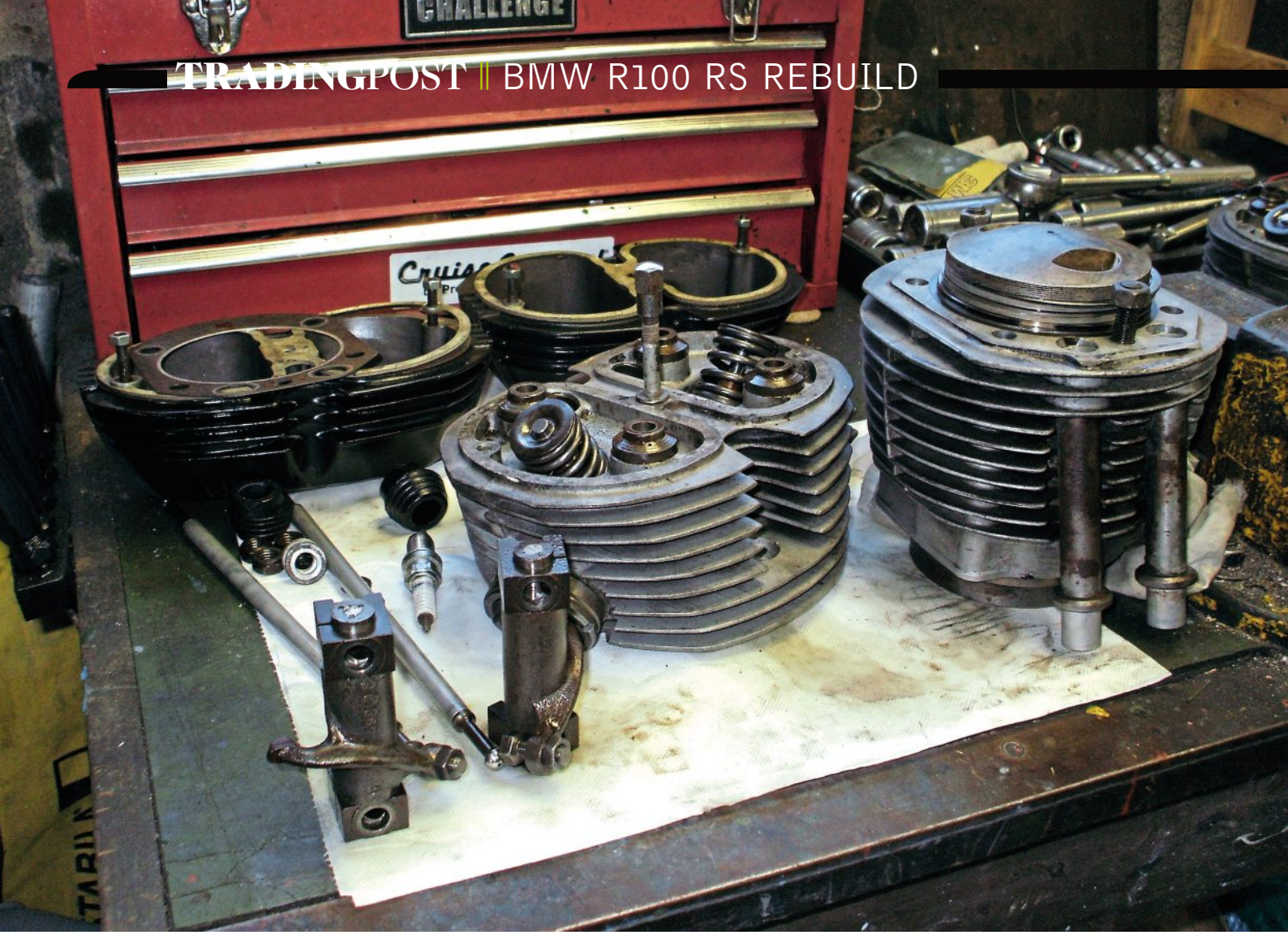
5: There comes a point in many projects when the most sensible course of action appears to involve a scrapyard skip. However, the frame's already in primer, so…

6: Inspiration time. The first truly working motorcycle was German. This is a replica of the wooden 1885 Gottlieb Daimler, with metal rimmed wooden wheels – just like the carts of the day. Courtesy of the NSU Museum Neckarsulm, Germany



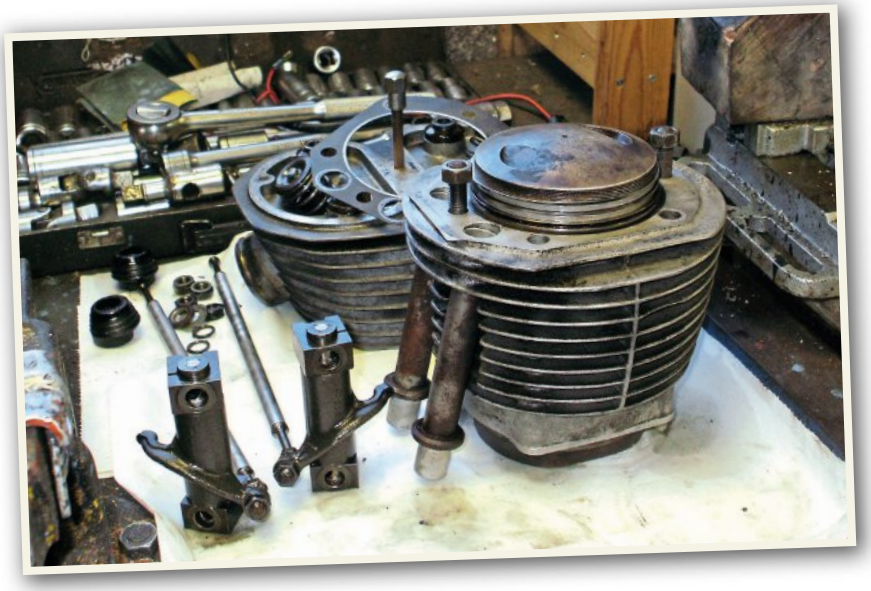
what 'BMW' stood for) started out making aero engines, but in 1920 it wisely and fortuitously went into the motorcycle business and started turning out opposed air-cooled twins. Personally, I have never been an aficionado of the type (when I was in school their engines were likened to a suitcase with two grapefruits attached – not a flattering description) but you have to give BMW their due, as they do make a reliable, solid machine. So solid in fact, that the basic design hardly changed over the next 60 years – so maybe that's some kind of record and recommendation at the same time.

It's at this point that we come to the subject of projects, and how many guys take on a project and then realise that it's way, way, beyond either their abilities, their time or simply that they just get sick and tired of having a half-finished job lying around in the garage. Anyway, that's what happened to this sorry example of a 1977 model. But even Colin – who took on the challenge – had second thoughts when he finally got the beast home. So I'll be gentle with him.



CBG: So Colin, you say you travelled a long way and were just a tad disappointed?

Colin: Just a bit. I purchased the bike in March 2009 from a friend who knew I liked BMWs. He had bought it as a project, but really being a British bike enthusiast he had at some point lost the enthusiasm for it and never got around to getting it finished. Now it was in his way. I agreed to take it off his hands after seeing a couple of photos, as we live over 100 miles from each other.



Above: There is nothing delicate nor fragile about a BMW engine's top end. Check out the beefy rockers and their mountings

Below: And that is quite a piston, too. The pushrod tubes are out of sight, so their cosmetics don't matter much. Check the pushrods for straightness, however

CBG: Your friend didn't tell you how bad the bike was before you set out on your journey, did he?

Colin: What I didn't know was that the BM had been stood outside uncovered for the last couple of years minus its spark plugs and rocker boxes, and it was in a much worse state than the photos implied. However, as I had travelled all that way with my bike trailer and it was a mate, I took it anyway.

CBG: And then you got it home and turned the lights on?

Colin: When I got it home and had a good look, I became even more disillusioned. I knew the fairing and panniers were not with the bike and it had no keys, but then I also discovered that the petrol tank was rusted through and the carbs, rockers, pushrods and front exhaust pipes were also missing. The fork stanchions were rusty, as were the wheel bearings and steering head bearings. This was going to be a total rebuild, but not a full-on restoration, as I just wanted a bike I could use and it had to be on a budget. So, I stripped the bike completely and got the frame sand-blasted. I then gave it two coats of red oxide primer and finished it with two coats of good quality black hand-brushing enamel.

CBG: It's always handy to have an expert on tap, wouldn't you say?

Colin: I was very lucky at the time to have the legendary BMW expert Richard Defazio just up the road. It was about the time Richard was retiring and closing up shop. But he still had a lot of second-hand spares, which proved invaluable, along with his knowledge and advice. I purchased second-hand fork stanchions from James Sherlock Motorcycles, and second-hand shocks from Richard Defazio. The bike had cast 'snowflake' wheels, which I discovered had been prone to collapse, and BMW had issued a recall. However, after contacting BMW I was informed that the wheels on this bike were not part of the suspect batch. I replaced the steering head bearings and the wheel bearings with bearings from a local bearing supplier.

CBG: Okay. And the engine and gearbox were even worse?

Colin: I'd been told that the bike had been taken off the road originally as the engine had developed a knocking noise. On stripping the engine down, I found that three of the flywheel bolts had started to undo, causing a knocking sound against the clutch cover. The barrels had rust damage so there was nothing for it but to have the engine rebored. I got the late Alan Brown in Bristol to do the rebore – an excellent engineer, who worked out of his garage at the end of his garden – and I purchased pistons from FW Thornton.

The engine all went back together perfectly





Above: Colour choices are always in the eye of the beholder, and it's always fun to be reminded of what a difference detailing can make

Right: Early wheels had a nasty habit of cracking where the spokes connected to the hub. This was rectified later, fortunately

Below: Another tiny miracle from the project boys. Well done Colin. It lives!





with new bearings from Moto-Bins. The final drive bearings did not need replacing but I did replace the large oil seal. The gearbox was just a case of new bearings and oil seals, but the clutch plate was worn out, so I replaced that.

CBG: Well done! Next?

Colin: Once the engine was back in the rolling chassis, it was like the proverbial jigsaw situation, and I started piecing the rest of the bike back together using stainless steel fastenings. Richard Defazio had a second-hand tank and I used the petrol cap off the old tank as a new one was ridiculously expensive. He also supplied me with the front pipes and carburettors, which I stripped and rebuilt.

I refurbished the brake callipers with a rebuild kit, and purchased a new master cylinder, which I mounted on the handlebars as opposed to under the petrol tank. Richard also supplied an ignition switch with key. Handlebars were found at an autojumble and the switchgear was supplied by Moto-Bins.

My mate Chris Hawkins (a very knowledgeable restorer) had a seat that I purchased and another friend had some BMW panniers for sale.

Above: Back in the Seventies BMW wanted to escape the idea that its bikes were for old guys, so it invited stylist Hans Muth to give their twins a makeover. He came up with the R100RS… which is rather less exciting without the superb fairing, however

1: The air filter lives inside the engine, keeping everything neat, while the Bing carbs are angled to avoid the rider's feet. There's much evidence of clever thinking

CBG: So just the painting and rewiring now? I say this because we all know that the wiring is the easiest part of the job – isn't it?

Colin: I rewired the bike myself; no probs. Then I bought a new battery – you've got to buy something new after all – from a local bike shop.

I decided to spray the bike myself, so I got all the gear together, and all went well… until a few weeks passed by and I discovered to my horror that the paint had started to craze!

No crying or swearing please, this is a family oriented magazine. I admitted defeat and took everything along to a local spray shop. And I have to say that they did an excellent job – no going crazy any more.



1



2



3

2: Of course, BMW provided an ergonomically sound lifting handle to ease operation of the solid and easy centrestand. And, of course, the choke lever is mounted to an engine casing…

3: Like so many engines, frequent oil and filter changes – genuine parts only please – every 5000 miles are the essence of a long and happy life. Greasing to the rear bevel drive is also important

4: Fitting a bikini fairing protects the clocks and allows an extra instrument or two. The top speed of 125mph was not bad, but the fact that it could hold 100mph for days on end was impressive. And yes, that is a kph speedo



4

CBG: And time wise? How long did this take?

Colin: Altogether, the project took me about 18 months, and I have to admit, the bike was a pleasure to ride. Later, a friend of mine, who was always admiring the bike, made me such a tempting offer that I couldn't refuse. He still has it today.

Conclusion: There's no point in being overly patriotic. It is better to realise that we are part of a worldwide family, and that we benefit from all our neighbours – especially the clever Germans and Japanese – in fact we benefit from anyone who can make a decent motorcycle to ride. CBG

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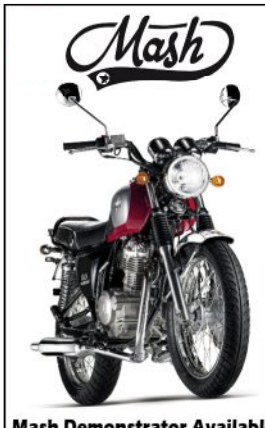


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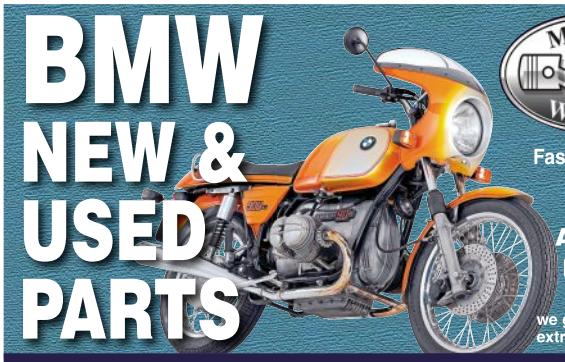
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Dressing up

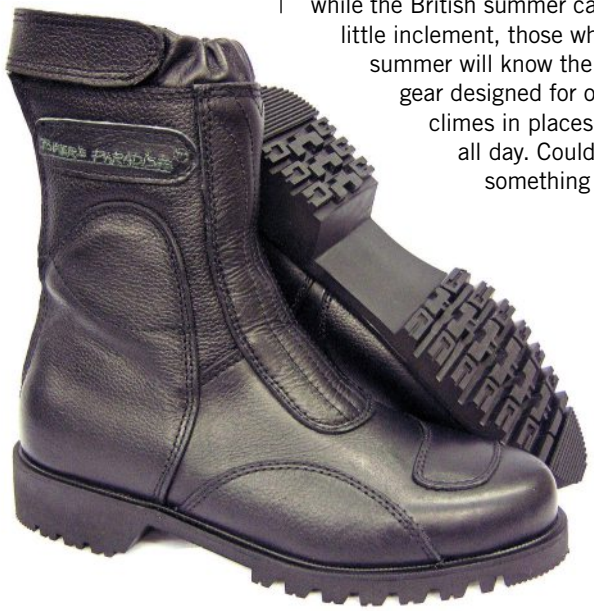
Summer's approaching. Time to sort out new waterproofs…

WORDS BY OLIVER HULME

Below: Halfway between lightweight sports boots and knee-high tourists, these Viking Warriors (really) are easy to wear and have a decently grippy sole, too. Ideal for muddy fields…

SUMMER IS COMING, and anyone who rides all year round will know the uncomfortable feeling of sweat trickling down their back and the smell well-worn all-weather gear acquires after a long ride on a hot summer day.

Most people will shed layers to keep things comfortable or open their jackets to ensure a cool flow of air – which is all well and good until you find an angry wasp between jacket and T-shirt, and while the British summer can sometimes be a little inclement, those who head south for the summer will know the discomfort of wearing gear designed for our moist and temperate climes in places where the sun shines all day. Could it be time to add something a little more purpose made for the summer to your riding wardrobe?



Right: Never, ever ride without decent gloves. You don't need gauntlets and vast padding in summer's heat (ha!) but you want to protect those fingers and palms. These from Rayven. They avoid that attractive sweaty palm and wet dog odour, apparently

Biker's Paradise is selling its Rida-Tec Ultimate Summer Riding Jacket (£199.99) for just such a purpose. At first glance the Rida-Tec jacket looks like a conventional bomber style leather jacket. But on closer inspection the jacket is very different. Lined in mesh cotton, that mesh extends to large panels front and back, with more mesh panels in the sleeves and perforated leather allowing cooling air to flow through. The jacket is fitted with removable and adjustable Viscotec armour on the shoulders and elbows. Unlike hard armour, Viscotec is a memory foam rubber which absorbs energy, slowing the impact to the bones and helping prevent bone injury as well as abrasions. The memory foam, although pre-moulded, changes shape to that of body contours, making the jacket extremely comfortable and the armour almost undetectable externally. The jacket also has a back protector.

A central main zip with Velcro straps holds the jacket closed. There are two external zipped pockets, two internal Velcro pockets and one internal zipped pocket. Leather stretch panels at the back of shoulders and elbows allow for ease of movement. There are zipped cuffs with Velcro straps on the end of the sleeves.

Many jackets tend to favour the short armed, but the Rida-Tec sleeves come to the end of the wrists, with a snug fit allowing the use of lighter weight armoured summer gloves rather than those with a



Left: Kevlar lined jeans are a good summer choice, and come in a wide range of styles. The fashionable camo pants – complete with Kevlar of course – are from Draggin Jeans, as worn by several of the *CBG* crew

Below: Our man Oliver strikes cheery supermodel pose. No rain today, then. This is the Ultimate Summer Riding Jacket

As with jackets, anyone who uses the same riding trousers as they've been wearing all winter in the summertime will know that it's going to take a bit more that a spray with Febreze to make them less noxious after a hard ride. Biker's Paradise also holds a range of Kevlar riding jeans in stock, both in heavy 14oz denim (£89.90) and in lightweight 12oz denim (£84.90). These trousers have built in Kevlar reinforcement on bum, hips, knees and shins and you can choose to have optional armour at the hips and knees. The jeans come with a 34 inch inside leg as standard and can be shortened free of charge for those more diminutive in stature. And being jeans rather than riding trousers you can put them in a washing machine.

cuff that stretches half the way to the elbow. There are adjustable side straps for a snug fit, which gather the jacket at the bottom even for those with extended stomachs to cover. There is a connecting zip for some models of jeans as well. How cool is the jacket? Wearing it on a February evening for a trip to the corner shop is like riding in a T-shirt with body armour.

The mesh panel isn't going to be much good if you get caught in a summer rainstorm, and Bikers Paradise can provide a reasonably priced over-jacket (£39.99) to slip on if the rain comes. This folds up into its own compact pouch and has a belt to keep it handy round the waist. They also recommend a Staycool base layer (£16.50) that helps with keeping you cool – or indeed a Staywarm shirt that retains body heat – which could be useful if you find yourself out later in the evening than you expected or if the weather takes a sudden turn for the worst. These combinations make the Ultimate Summer Riding Jacket every bit as practical a consideration as that old waterproof you've been hacking around in all winter, and is a good deal more stylish.



Rounding off the ensemble, particularly for those who have opted for jeans rather than tight round the ankle riding trousers, Bikers Paradise recommends the Viking Warrior Ankle boot (£99). With a slightly wider fit than normal boots to allow room for boot socks, these are a good all round sports touring boot with protection in ankle and footrest areas and with extra leather for gear change. In a move that doesn't follow current fashion the boots have a back zip with a Velcro tab fastener at the rear of the boot, a chunky non-slip sole and a leather and foam lining.

All these items are available for both sexes at the same price. Biker's Paradise – bikersparadise.co.uk or visit the shop at 7 Portway Close, Tile Hill, Coventry, CV4 9UY.

An appropriate match for the jacket are Rayven Air-Pro Gloves (£31.99). These short gloves are made of cowhide panels and feature an abrasion resistant nylon mesh that allows air to flow around the fingers. There's carbon fibre protection on the knuckles, a reinforced palm, dual density foam finger protectors and a Velcro cuff strap as well as pre-curved fingers and an elasticated wristband. They're a comfy glove and a far better option than taking the risk of heading out with no gloves at all.

Visit www.rayven.co.uk to see the full range and details of your nearest stockist. CBG

Right: Caught out in that rare and unexpected summer monsoon while wearing only a lightweight jacket? Try an overjacket like this. Added waterproofing, and easily carried




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WORDS BY OLIVER HULME **PICTURES BY** CHRISTOPHER DICKINSON AND BONHAMS **THANKS TO** JONATHAN HOARE FOR THE HEADLINE

YOU'VE DECIDED THAT you want to buy or sell a classic bike, but where do you start? If you are buying then the dealerships such as those who advertise in *CBG* are obviously a good bet, but you will be paying a tidy price and many of these machines will have been restored. For some the actual restoration process is part of the fun.

You could scour the small ads, too and there's bound to be something there that attracts you, but you can almost guarantee it's going to be on the other side of the country – or in a different one altogether. And there are certain internet auction sites or small ads selling portals that are packed with bikes that seem to rapidly skyrocket in price, or have decidedly dubious provenance – that is… if they exist at all and aren't from the fevered imagination of an internet scam artist. Beyond that you could spend years rummaging in farmers' barns and outbuildings in search of that elusive Vincent or Brough without success. Or you could join an owners' club or rely on the recommendations of friends and acquaintances. Or you could try a classic bike auction.

If you plan on buying a bike at an auction it's worth doing a lot of groundwork. Try to visit an auction or two before you actually set out to buy, just to get used to the pace and the environment, which can seem intimidating at first.

Check the catalogue entries and the bikes in the hall carefully. The chances are there will be some late additions that aren't in the catalogue and auctioneers tend to dot them around the running order rather than just gathering them up at the end of the sale. There could be a bargain or two in the late entries that haven't attracted so many bidders. At the Charterhouse auction at the Bristol Show a late entry Triumph Daytona 500 made £3400 and looked well worth the money. Don't set your heart on one particular machine, that way madness, frustration

Above: Decent auctions always offer plenty of variety

1: Fancy a four? How's this for a collection of Ariels?

2: As well as complete machines, most auctions offer lots of spares

3: There are always price surprises at auctions. This seriously personalised Norton Atlas failed to reach its estimate

4: A BSA A7/Honda 750 four, christened by its creator the Rocket Four, made for an interesting lot with plenty of potential, and was knocked down for £2000.



1



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and a drained bank account lay. Track the auction catalogues and try and find one that has multiple options for you – at Shepton Mallet there were five BMW flat twins of various vintages that went under the hammer from between £1500 and £4600.

Matthew Whitney, from Charterhouse, says that many buyers are currently looking at bikes from the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. He said: "We're buying back our nostalgia. Prewar sales are slackening off a bit, though earlier bikes that fulfil the Pioneer Run criteria and are useable are still commanding good prices. People are looking for something that's untouched, a restoration project that's complete, warts and all."

Although buying at auction might feel like a step into the unknown, you might find it a safer way to buy than picking up a machine privately. You can get a good look at the lots, and you can take your time inspecting the object of your desire without a nervous seller hovering around trying to distract you from blemishes.

Matthew said: "We check registration, frame and engine numbers to make sure the bikes haven't been stolen and they get HPI checked. Catalogue descriptions have to be accurate and we like to visit the owner and take a look at the machines before they are brought for sale."


32
ONDA







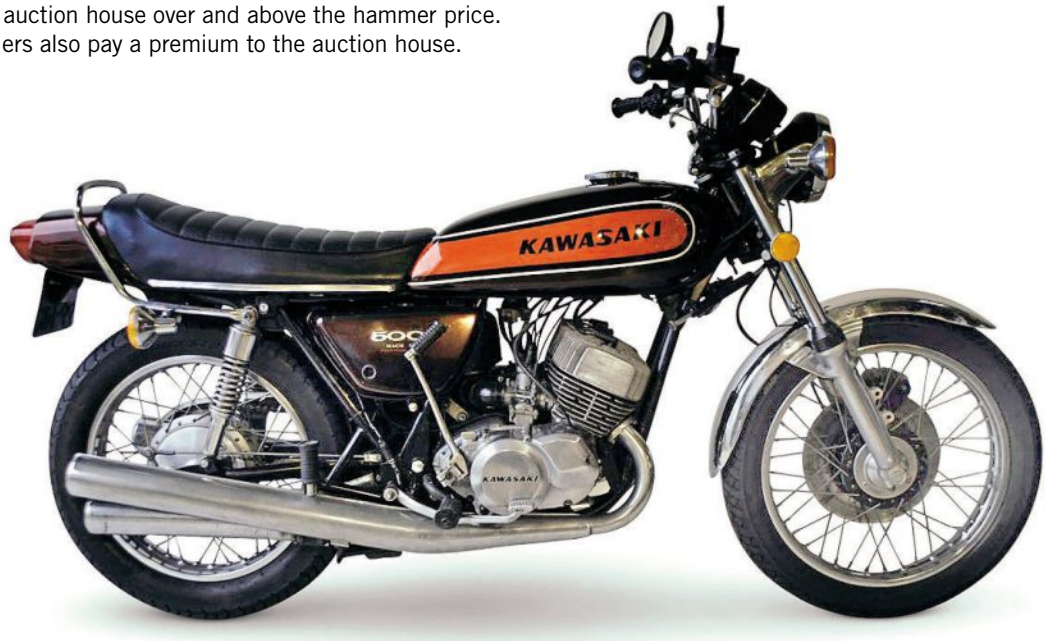
International auctioneers Bonhams, who will be at Stafford in April, offered 759 collectors' motorcycles last year in the UK and sold 641 of them, raising £8.8 million. Ben Walker, from Bonhams, says that provenance is all-important for both sellers and buyers. Engine and frame numbers that match add a premium, as do original factory paint, a low number of previous owners and low mileage.

"Buying will come down to personal preferences. Some people will be looking for British bikes, others for Japanese," he said. "Some will be looking for pre-1914 machines and others for bikes built from 1920 to 1930. There are niches within niches. Estimates are usually set at a pretty reasonable level to attract bidders and sometimes they'll go for more and sometimes less."

Ben advises buyers not to look at their purchase as an investment. "Look at it as something to buy because you'll enjoy taking it out for a ride. Work out not just what the bike costs on the day, but also how much you will pay to maintain, insure and restore it. If you do decide to sell it later and it turns out to be worth more than you paid for it, that's just a bonus."

Set yourself a budget and stick firmly to it – and most importantly don't forget to take the buyer's premium into account. This is the fee a buyer pays the auction house over and above the hammer price. Sellers also pay a premium to the auction house.

Different auctioneers have different premiums. Charterhouse charges buyers 10% of the hammer price with a minimum fee, while for Bonhams it's 15%. The rate can go higher – one Bristol auction house had a restored BSA A65 up for sale with what looked like a low guide price of between £2000 and £3000 but put its 21% premium on the sale and that £420-£630 extra can put a big dent in your wallet. Charterhouse charges sellers 5% of the hammer price and for that you get a valuation and the lot included in the sale catalogue and online. Bonhams charge sellers 10%, with a minimum fee if the bike is unsold.



Left: The MoT'd and running Honda Pan European behind went for little more than half the cost of the two XL250 trail bikes

Top right: Two rotting XL250 Hondas attracted furious bidding at Shepton Mallet

Right: Buying back our nostalgia. This 1974 Kawasaki Mach III has been consigned to the Bonhams sale at Stafford. Estimate £6500 – £7500

Different auctions have different markets. At the Charterhouse auction there were 47 lots, mostly of Sixties and Seventies machines. Bonhams' auction at Stafford in November had 255 lots, including memorabilia, basket cases from the 1920s, a 1990s Moto Guzzi Imola and going right up to a £117,000 Vincent Black Shadow. You can expect further financial theatrics when Bonhams put one of only 20 Vincent White Shadows in front of a buying public – they recently sold a restored one at an auction in Las Vegas for £300,000. They expect 170-200 lots to go on sale at Stafford this April.

Auction houses are there to sell bikes, so don't be nervous about getting in touch before the sale either by email or by calling for advice. Ben said that Bonhams is always happy to take calls from would-be buyers.

Once the sale starts, bikes are called in lot order one at a time and the auctioneer describes each one to the crowd of buyers. It is very important to listen closely to what the auctioneer says, as extra details may have emerged since the catalogue listing, such as engine numbers that don't match the documents or additional paperwork that may have turned up. The auctioneer will ask for a starting bid on the bike and he/she controls the bidding to reflect the interest from the auction floor. Typically, bidding is done in £10 or £20 increments up to £1000 and then jump to £100 per bid. If you are interested in a vehicle, bid clearly by raising your hand or catalogue. Don't worry that you might have accidentally bought a 1966 Raleigh Runabout because you scratched your nose. Auctioneers will only take clear indications of a bid. If you are worried about going over your limit, you can submit a maximum bid to the auctioneer and let them do the work – you won't even have to attend. That means he or she will add your bid, usually known as a commission or proxy bid, to the buyers list and it will not go over your limit. If you want to take on the challenge of the hall there's no need to dive in right at the start of a lot – waiting a short while as the room settles down is worth trying. You'll be bidding against fellow enthusiasts and collectors, unknown people at the end of telephone lines and on internet connections and dealers who have come to top up



Above: Quality Hondas like this 400/4 are at the top of the desirability scale

Below: Something for everyone… at a price





1&2: There should be something at every auction to suit every pocket. How could a chap choose between this 1948 Panther 348cc Model 70 (guide price £2000-£3000) and the 1949 Vincent 998cc White Shadow Series C (guide price £50,000-£60,000)?



their stock or who are bidding on behalf of customers.

Sales are currently split 50/50 between hall bidders, those on the phone and those using the internet. The auctioneer is trying to make as much money for the seller and the auction house as they can, so you will get plenty of warning before the hammer goes down. If you are the top bidder and the reserve is met, the bike will be sold to you. Sales at bike show auctions require payment for and collection of lots the same day or within 24 hours, before removal and storage fees start to apply. These fees are not cheap. If bidding did not reach the reserve value set by the seller, the lot will be sold provisionally to the top bidder. The auctioneers then contact the seller to see if they will accept the bid – more likely than not, the bike will be sold this way.

What is commanding big prices? There was frantic bidding going on at Shepton Mallet over a pair of 1970s Honda fours that went over their guide price. A 1979 CB400/4 reached £5500, while a 1976 CB750 reached £6500. Some British machines struggled to make their guide prices, with the exception of a 1974 Norton Commando, for which the hammer fell at £8000 and a BSA Bantam that sold for £2500. Meanwhile, a Matchless G15/45 didn't get close to its £8000-£9000 guide price and a pair of Norton Atlases also failed to make the money expected.

Auctions do throw up oddball items that attract bidders. At the Bristol Show auction a pair of wrecked Honda XL250 trail bikes that a few years ago would have ended up in a skip, made £1600, a BSA/Honda special reached £2000 and a restored Norman Autocycle £1000 – beating its estimate and selling for more than both a very well sorted Honda Pan European that went for £900 to a London based dealer and a near mint condition Honda CBX550, also sold to a dealer at £950.

Ben Walker suggested that just going to a sale with no intention of buying is part of the fun. "Stafford is a fantastic event. A lot of people come just to see what happens and see what bikes are selling for. The stuff on sale tends to set the market." He also recommended keeping your hands on the auction catalogues. These well-produced glossy publications soon become collectors' items in their own right. **CBG**



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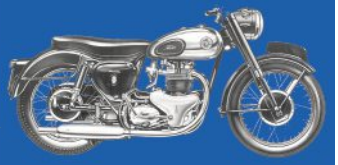
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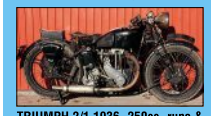

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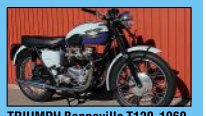

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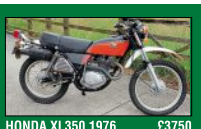

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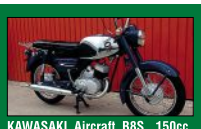

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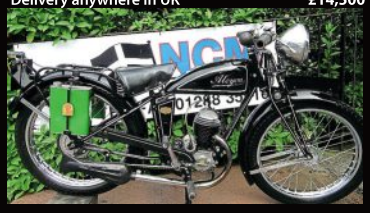


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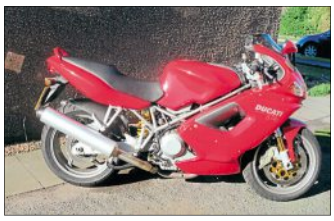
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HONDA HORNET CB600 2001 reg, 14,000 miles, Smartwater protected, vgc, good tyres, chain etc, good runner, new battery, £1900 ono p/x older Brit bike + cash why? Tel. 01900 814767



HONDA VT125 Shadow, vgc, a few scratches & dents associated with age of bike, correct leather panniers & frame fitted, MoT, 13,500 miles, £1300 ono Tel. 07719 793074 Northamptonshire



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 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



KAWASAKI 440 LTD lovely clean, low mileage example, 1984, new battery, engine oil, spark plugs, fork seals Tel. 07821 654890 Warwickshire



KAWASAKI GPS750R 1985, on a Sorn, engine runs, £795 ono Tel. 07779 677137 Cornwall



KAWASAKI GPZ305 1992, 85% complete, too many parts to list but includes frame, hub (spindles), fork yoke, saddle, engine & most brackets, nuts & bolts, £300 ono Tel. 07979 038565 West Midlands



KAWASAKI GTZZP5 750, 1990 shaft, vgc, new Road Rider tyres, shocks & battery, starts on the button & drives like a dream, MoT, £3550 ovno Tel. Allan 07957 582771 London



MATCHLESS G2, 1958, trails bike, fitted with 350 barrel and heads, vgc & great to ride, MoT & tax exempt, Tel. 07545 131414 Cornwall



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Triumph Thunderbird 6T 1953 .....**£11250**

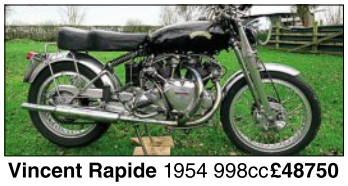

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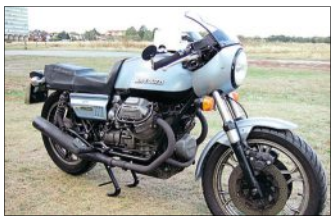
MOTOBECANE MOBYLETTE 1963, registration number 925 WKR, dry stored 20 years, engine runs, on V5C & brown log book, £500 Tel. 07599 949532 Kent



MOTO GUZZI Centauro, 1998, very rare, 1000cc, vgc, 9000 miles, white power suspension fuel injection, new rear tyre, £4100 ono Tel. 01577 862107 Tayside



MOTO GUZZI custom Florida, 1990, 17,000 miles, 1990, MoT, nice engine, gearbox, brakes, £1750. Garage dolly, £90 Tel. 01234 213911 Bedfordshire



MOTO GUZZI Le Mans 1, 16,000 miles, MoT, runs great, original unrestored unmolested condition, all genuine Mk 1 except, 1975 frame number hence low price, £6500 Tel. 02085 556357, 07949 249668



MOTO MORINI 1980, repainted powdercoated & overhauled, new C&S, electric-start, Hagon shocks, exhausts, Avon RoadRiders, mint condition, £4250 Tel. 07788 442155 Avon



MZ TS250A 1978, rare East German Army bike, authentic spec with panniers, fuel can, flags, light stick etc, £2395 Tel. 01895 624554 Middlesex



NORTON COMMANDO 850 Mk2, 1974, MoT August, vgc, matching numbers, electronic ignition, 19,736 miles, two previous owners, £7500 Tel. 07710 905760 Greater Manchester



NORTON COMMANDO 1971, extensive refurb 2000 miles ago, alloy tank, electronic ignition, matching numbers, new carbs, £6850 ono Tel. 01536 261862 evenings



NORTON DOMINATOR 1959, previous owner Malcolm Uphill, RGM belt drive, Borrani rims, new valves & seats, £5500 Tel. 01291 672491 Gwent



NORTON DOMINATOR Deluxe 500cc, 1961, total nut & bolt rebuild approx 20 years ago, only one former keeper, not been ridden last 11 years, £5900 ovno Tel. 07491 984528; 07948 835145 Derby



RALEIGH RM12 Super 50, 1966, vgc, full paperwork & runs, vary rare, first to see will buy, £1600 Tel. Mick 07802 717116 Northamptonshire



ROYAL ENFIELD 2001, matching Watsonian GP Manx sidecar with private plate handlebar fairing, leg shields & panniers will come with the bike, £4000 ovno Tel. 01420 23243



ROYAL ENFIELD rare 1963 new Bullet 350cc, extremely reliable, owned for 10 years, Unit Construction, 12V, tachometer, original condition, £2995 inc spares Tel. 01832 731844 evenings



ROYAL ENFIELD Continental 250, 1963, in excellent mechanical & cosmetic condition, stunningly beautiful, original BH transferable reg number, ride or display, £4400 Tel. 07870 812805 South Yorks



ROYAL ENFIELD 500 Bullet 2005, electric start, right hand side gear change, vgc, 4970 miles, 10 months MoT, £1650 Tel. 07557 331964 Leics



SUNBEAM Model 10, 1931, lovely restored example of this very rare 350cc ohv twin port hand change machine, everything works, first kick starter, £6750 ono Tel. 01217 779380



SUNBEAM 1929, Model 8 twin port, original engine, frame, gearbox, registration number old log book, very good all round condition, good Banbury bike, £7750 Tel. Mike 01654 712193 Gwynedd



SUNNIS RETRO Star 250, (Triumph should be), 2015, 2295klm's, one owner, as new, super retro lightweight, £1800 Tel. 01702 526247 Essex



SUZUKI GS750 starts & runs but will require carbs cleaning as not used since 2014, garaged, non standard Micron exhaust system, no MoT, £925 Tel. 07881 457991

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56 AJS Model 30 Special, lovely twin £4,500
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67 BSA B40 ex MoD £2,950
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TRIUMPH Speed Twin project, 1961 engine, 1966 frame Tel. 07712 532596 Lincs



TRIUMPH Bonneville, 1967, very nice clean condition, fitted Spanish Akront rims, needs & comes with new battery & fork gaiters to be fitted, £4950 Tel. 07920 428127 Coventry



TRIUMPH Silver Jubilee, 1977, new tyres & silencers, needs tidying for MoT, 16,654 miles, matching, correct numbers, original Jubilee certificate, £4500 ono Tel. 01159 244636 Notts



TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE 1969, Thruxton Replica, superb faultless condition, 10 stud 650cc, five speed, fully serviced, low miles, £10,900 ono Tel. 07986 909423 Essex



TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE 69, same owner 27 yrs, always garaged, fully restored in 93, 15,000 miles since, some paint starting to lift on rear mudguard, £7500 Tel. Rob 07740 132100 West Sussex



TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE TR7V Tiger, 750cc, 1974, five speed, matching numbers, 17,563 miles, MoT expires 23/07/2017, new Yuasa battery, £4250 Tel. 01843 604258 Kent



TRIUMPH DAYTONA Super Sports, 1968, complete restoration by a dealer (Clarks Classics) 1145 miles since, MoT & dating certificate, £5499 ovno Tel. 01832 731844 evenings Northants



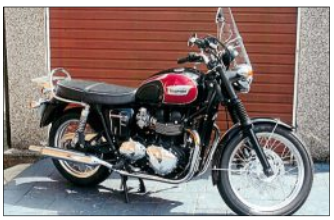
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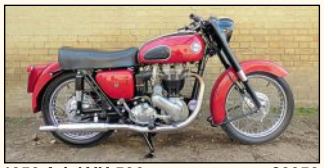

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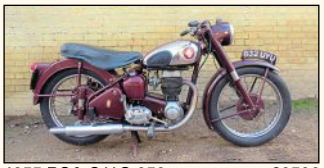

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TRIUMPH T150V matching nos UK bike, Boyer ignition, MoT July 2017, call for more details, £8500 Tel. 01656 724874



TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 1962, pre-unit 6T, MoT Oct 2017, matching numbers, crash bars, front rear bathtub model, iron head, 10,000 miles since rebuild, £6750 Tel. 01271 343790 Devon



TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 1960, vgc, 2000 miles since refurb & engine overhaul, 12 volt electrics, starts & runs very well, MoT, £5950 Tel. Richard 07930 381401; 01274 298405 West Yorks



TRIUMPH THRUXTON 2011 EFI, 3950 miles, service history, MoT, some modifications, LED lights, Predator exhausts, vgc, owned from new Tel. 07764 971180 Cheshire



TRIUMPH TIGER CUB SL Model, 1961, very rare motorcycle, V5C present, non matching numbers, very original, some new parts, good runner Tel. 07831 481814 Mid Glamorgan



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TRIUMPH TR6C 1969, very good condition, quite a rare model, just put on Sorn, £8500 Tel. 01382 370684 Tayside



TRIUMPH TR6P Saint, Jan 1971 reg, matching nos, 30,000 miles, vgc, Boyer ignition, recent engine rebuild little use since, MoT, £5750 Tel. 07484 711864 Derbyshire



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YAMAHA WILD STAR 1600cc, year 2000, 28,000 miles, Vance & Hinds pipes, an eye & ear catching brilliant bike, vgc, £4750 Tel. 07931 689021 Herts



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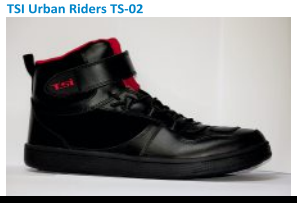
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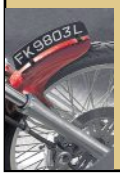
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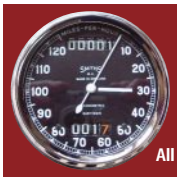


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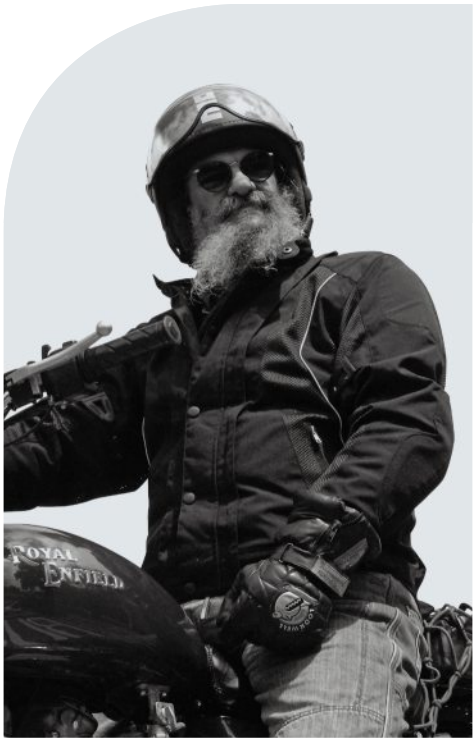


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This painting of Neil Kelly aboard his Velocette Thruxton at Quarter Bridge in the 1967 TT was created by Neil Adcock. "Kelly won the race with his Velocette colleague Keith Heckles coming second," explains Adcock. "Kelly recorded the fastest lap with an average speed of 91mph and was clocked at the Highlander speed trap at 121mph. This was very much the swan song of the Veloce factory at Hall Green, with Thruxton production ending and the closure of the factory in 1970."

View and purchase more of Neil's artwork at openthrottleart.co.uk



FRANK WESTWORTH

Famous last words

Trying times, tyring times…

MALLORY PARK, SOMETIME in the mid-1970s. Barry Sheene and Kenny Roberts have been duking it out around the tiny track. Think Transatlantic Trophy races, for that is what it was. In the last race, Kenny had beaten Barry. Somehow the Brit crowd didn't mind and cheered like nutcases after what had been a superb race.

"What tyres are you using, Barry?" Then as now, race commentators have a slick line in original questions.

"Round and black," revealed our hero. Everybody cheered. In the background the microphone was picking up a curious singsong.

"It's good to be on Goodyear!" sang the world champion, to the tune of an American TV ad. The crowd cheered more. Barry said something to said American champion at that point, but this is a family magazine, so…

Tyres are vital things – everyone knows that, it's a cliché and like all the best clichés it's also a truism. Whenever my riding pals and I get together to talk bikes, the subject of tyres almost always rolls along. After the great oil debate and condemnation of modern fuels, usually. It is sometimes difficult to stay awake, but a chap should try, out of politeness if nothing else. There are two views – which is why I did the heads-up with the Barry and Kenny chat. There's the 'anything will do so long as they're round and black and have tread' approach. I was that way for years – especially my more impoverished years. And then there's the 'only a fool would ride a Norton Commando on anything other than Avons' view. I fell into that road many years ago.

Because… my Commando does indeed ride really well on Avon tyres. That said, Commandos – old ones – are largely unfussy about tyres, certainly at the speeds I ride. Unlike the Norton Commander, the water-cooled fully faired tourist rotary. From new, these came fitted with Pirellis, which were fine… for a couple of thousand miles. By that stage they were vague. I replaced mine with new ones – same result. A fine fellow assured me that Metzelers were the answer. I tried them. Not so. Another fine fellow insisted on Dunlops – he was wrong too. My local bike shop plainly had a special deal with Michelin, so I fitted a pair of those – and they were okay. Very pressure sensitive, but that's… okay. Nothing more than that.

And then another fine fellow demanded that I tried the then-new Avon Roadriders. I did. The bike immediately ceased its vague feelings of discomfort and tendency to weave gently when loaded. Brilliant. I've used them ever since and recommended them to anyone unfortunate enough to be within earshot. They're fitted to any bike I actually ride. They're great. Then I bought an unspeakable American V-twin with bald tyres and uncomfortable steering and replaced them with Avons. The uncomfortable steering failed to improve. I knew the tyres were great, so I replaced the steering head races. The fork bushes. The wheel bearings – both sets, because a lot of front end vagueness starts at the back. No change.

Okay, so the American monster plainly steers less well than I remembered from the earlier identical machine I rode for some years, and which had in fact taken over major mileage hauling from the Norton Commander. Memory dims, as we would all agree if only we could remember. It clouded my riding pleasure, though, and I carried on experimenting with tyre pressures until … a friend with a similar American affliction remarked that his own beast had reverted to predictably good handling and accurate steering when he switched to Dunlops. Dunlops were OE when both his bike and mine were built, back at the century's turn. Okay, thought I. Dunlops.

Wait up, came back. Go for the Dunlops with the marque branding moulded into the sidewalls, he said. I laughed. Of course I did; that's obviously just branding – an excuse to charge more money for the same tyre. No it's not, he retorted with some vigour. They work better. I may have sneered a little at this point. Shameful, but likely. But when MoT-time rolled around this week I fitted a set of H-D branded Dunlops to replace the excellent Avons.

The bike's transformed. Just. Like. That. I am unsure whether this is the power of suggestion, complex physics or simple magic, but quite suddenly it's heel-dragging time again. It's hunting down excuses to ride time again. Just like that. The major snag with knowing that you're right is that often you're wrong. With tyres as with all things. A lesson learned. I should've believed the shop when they told me that the steering and suspension bearings they'd replaced were in good condition before they threw them away. We live. We learn. CBG

'Commandos – old ones – are largely unfussy about tyres, certainly at the speeds I ride. Unlike the Norton Commander, the water-cooled fully faired tourist rotary…'

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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1939 AJS V4

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