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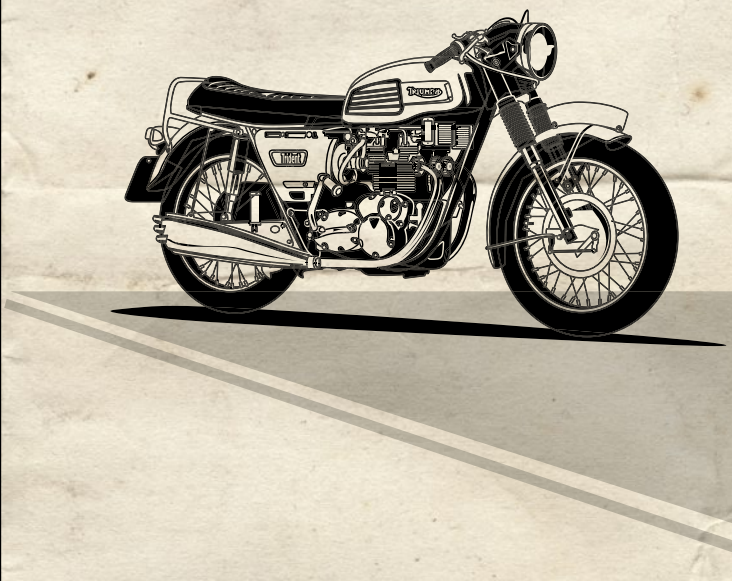

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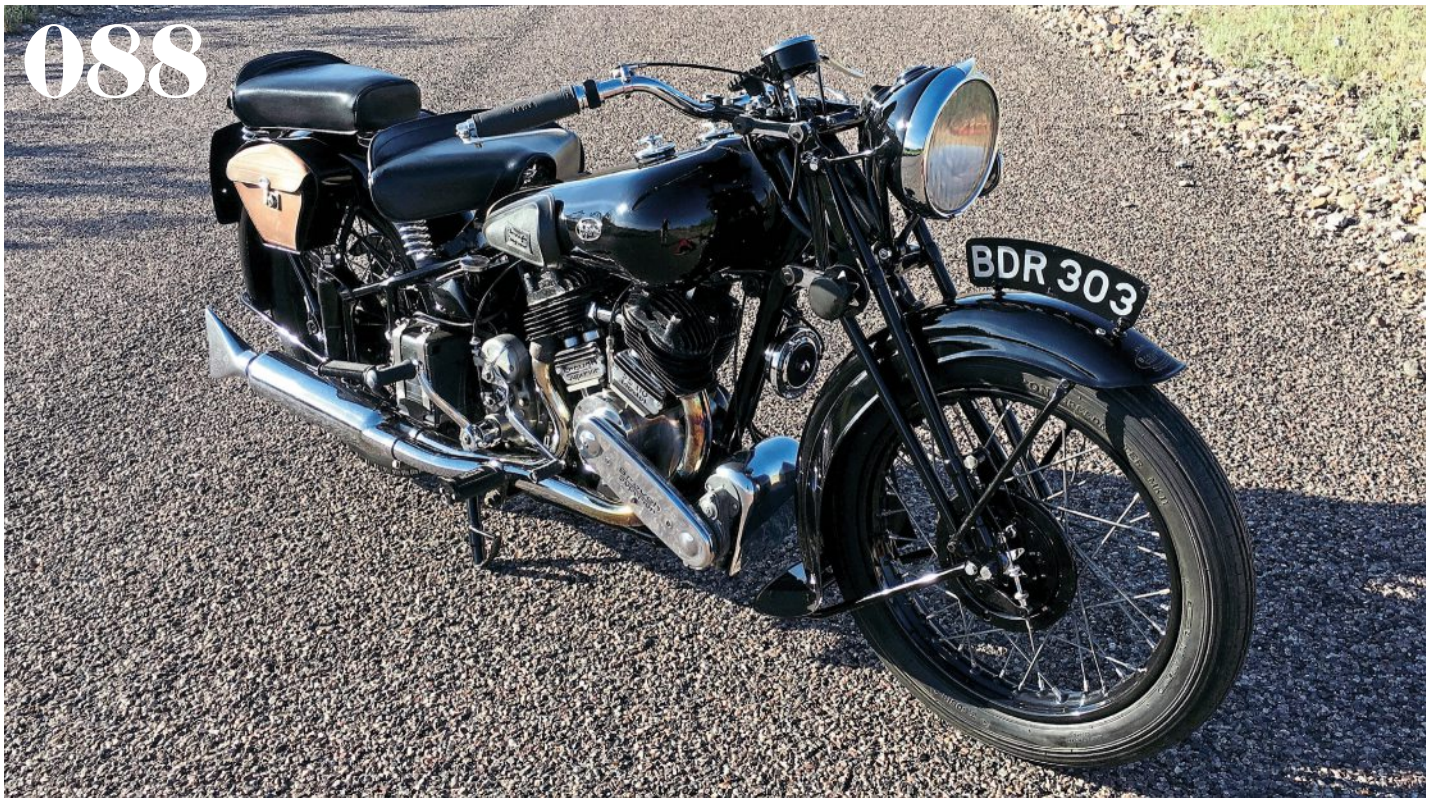

006 **RIDING LIFE**
Show-off events and buying jumble and things like that

010 **SUBSCRIBE!**
Save a little money, get the magazine a little early. Thrills beyond dreams. Hopefully

012 **TRIUMPH 650 TWIN**
A Tiger by another name

016 **MOTO GUZZI NUOVO FALCONE**
Laid back and single

020 **NORTON ES2**
Nice and easy, too

026 **LAVERDA 750SF**
Not red, but still Italian

032 **MATCHLESS G9**
London boy made good

038 **SWM GRAN MILANO**
Retro roadster; handsome too

044 **NEW WAVE CLASSICS**
Old dogs and new tricks?

052 **BIDDING FRENZY**
Failing to buy at auction

060 **WHAT YOU SAID**
Bravos and brickbats

062 **PAUL D'ORLÉANS**
Ageless and evergreen

064 **MARK WILLIAMS**
China crisis classics

066 **PAUL MILES**
Never meet your heroes

068 **TRIUMPH TR5 OUTFIT**
Ridden on the rough, no less

076 **NORTON COMMANDO RACER**
Getting the real low down

088 **BROUGH SUPERIOR SS80**
Black, too; little bling

098 **TRIUMPH TIGER CUB**
Rebuilt to sprint!

104 **SUNBEAM MCC**
Not exactly what you might expect

106 **BSA ROCKET 3**
Boosted Rocket

112 **READER ADS**
You already know what these are

130 **FRANK WESTWORTH**
Time to scoot

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FRANK WESTWORTH

MOVING ON

MINOR ODDITIES TIME here. I know you'll enjoy this. Guy I know has been rebuilding his not particularly elderly Brit bike since the dawn of time. It's more of an obsession than a hobby, and certainly more serious than a pastime. I'd dropped by for a free coffee and to offer yet more of the friendly abuse we've shared about this particular machine down the years. Because it had been years by then, such is the leisurely approach some of us take to rebuilds. Ahem.

He was sitting in his workshop, and waved as I rattled to a stop. I parked up before waving back – grim experience has revealed that falling over on a friend's deeply gravel drive is an unrewarding experience. One best avoided if possible. Tugging off gloves and helmet, I muttered muffled enquiries regarding his machine, which was in fact parked next to him and appeared strangely complete.

"Finished!" That was a small surprise. I'd considered his rebuild to a Forth Bridge painting exercise: reach one end, turn around and start again. Repeat. But no, obviously. I wondered whether it met his expectations?

"Just sent off the ads for it, mate." That was a bigger surprise. I may have twitched an inquisitive eyebrow. "Job done," he continued, smiling and making the coffee. "Time for something new." I glanced around his workshop, home to some truly tasty tackle, and I could see his point, strange though it might seem.

Almost exactly 30 years ago, I was sharing the first of very many conversations with one Mark Williams, then master of a small publishing empire, founder of *Bike*, *Which Bike?* and the excellent *Motorcycle International* magazines and publisher of several others. We were plotting to launch another, as chaps should when life starts getting a little predictable.

I fancied an old bike magazine, not least because my favourite bikes, long-term passion and general idiocy revolves more around them than around new ones. Mark was much more interested in a magazine dedicated to more modern – but second-hand – motorcycles. We compromised, and *Used & Classic Bike Guide* was the result, a handy little pocket-sized thing produced in the very best traditions of coffee table cottage industry, and mostly on kitchen tables. If you can remember those grubby monochrome pages, then you can award yourself a gold star.

Everything changes down the years, and the little magazine split into two, which is unusual… but hey! Hence the magazine you're currently looking at, the *Classic Bike Guide* – a rather different offering, to be sure. And that same Mark Williams still contributes to it, and we're still friends, and I've enjoyed the last three years working with a truly excellent team to produce it. Thanks to all – the best magazines are a team effort, and *CBG* has a great team.

This is another change, another departure. Mine this time. Welcome on board Matt Hull, who'll be steering *CBG* into its future while I relax and concentrate on riding, rebuilding and *RealClassic* magazine. The reason for leaving? Ill health. Nothing more. A recognition that willpower alone does not make a chap well!

That's it. See you out there.

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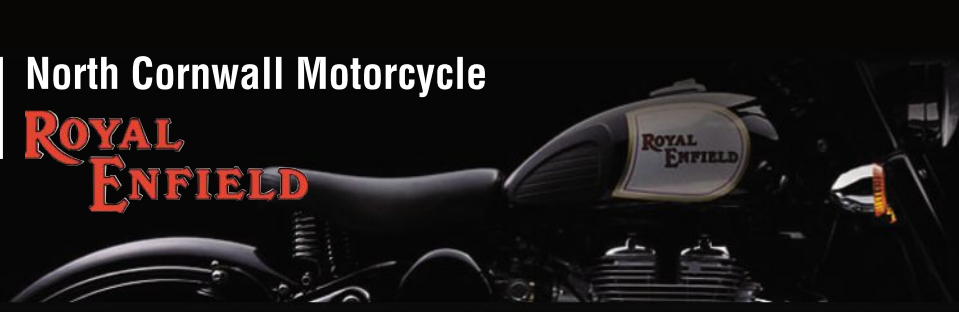

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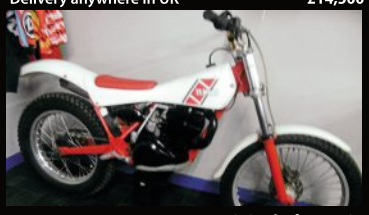

1986 YAMAHA TY. Very original fantastic condition, please see photos. It runs great and no dings and no damage. Great fun and very collectable. All bikes come with MOT and a PDI, PX welcome. Delivery anywhere in UK. £2,850

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Museum goes live with **Foggy and fast Freddie**

THE NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM is holding its fourth annual LIVE open day in November when there is a chance to visit the museum collection free of charge. The day includes an indoor autojumble and trade area, meet the experts sessions, plus the Museum LIVE race bike start-up feature.

There's also a Stars on Stage feature hosted by racing legend Steve Parrish. These one hour chat shows will feature multiple world champion Freddie Spencer and his wife Alex, and Ducati legend Carl Fogarty with his wife Michaela in a question and answer session. Other motorcycling personalities from the past and present will also be there with the guest stars making personal appearances to sign any favourite memorabilia you take along.

The event will also see the draw for the summer 2017 raffle to win a 1960 BSA Gold Star – with one of the celebrity guests choosing the lucky winner.

Raffle tickets are available to purchase online now from thenmm.co.uk or by calling the museum on 01675 444140.

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SEE PAGE **10** FOR MORE DETAILS

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CLASSICS IN CORNWALL

NORTH CORNWALL MOTORCYCLES has just relocated to swish new premises, situated slap-bang in surfer heaven on the Atlantic coast.

It's the perfect place to stop by for a brew – especially as the all-new Kick Start café alongside the showroom also serves a brilliant all-day breakfast.

NCM has been trading for the last quarter century, and if you ever visited the old premises then you'll know that things got somewhat cramped as the business grew in recent years. The new showroom fills four units on the outskirts of Bude, and the bikes on display now have room to be viewed over spacious two floors, alongside clothing and accessories.

Unlike some big bike shops which only accommodate modern motorcycles, NCM encompasses just about everything. You'll find around 100 classic and second-hand machines in stock, ranging from vintage veterans to standard British classics; plenty of cult Japanese superbikes from the 1970s, trick flat-trackers and carefully crafted café racers as well

TROPHY RIDE
Triumph TR5
P68

SWEET CHARIOT
Norton's low racer
P76

GENTS' EXPRESS
So obviously superior
P88

British ultrasonics can clean up

ULTRASONIC CLEANING IS flavour of the month when it comes to restoring motorcycle parts, especially with carburettors affected by the current use of additives and ethanol in petrol.

Few methods rival the use of ultrasonics for the thorough cleaning of engine parts, especially when replacement parts aren't easy to come by.

Engines are prone to carbon build-up, while layers of burnt oil can prove very difficult and time-consuming to remove. Ultrasonic cleaning can remove all manner of oil, grease, rust, paint, lubricant and dirt. Parts can be cleaned without recourse to harsh and dangerous chemicals or abrasives.

British company Hilsonic has been manufacturing and supplying ultrasonic cleaners for more than 35 years, with patented technologies and unique design and construction, all developed for exceptional performance and long unit life. For more information about the range of ultrasonic cleaning products for the classic bike enthusiast, log on to hilsonic.co.uk or contact: sales@hilsonic.co.uk

SLIGHT STARS AT STAFFORD

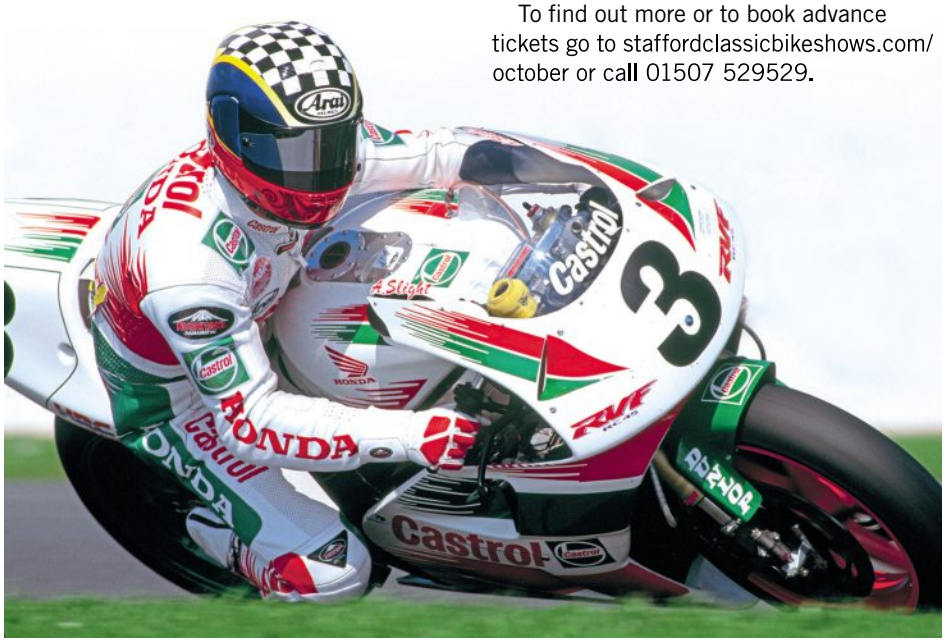
KIWI RACER AARON SLIGHT – undoubtedly the best rider never to win the World Superbike title – will be guest of honour at the 24th Carole Nash *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* Show over the weekend of October 14-15 at Staffordshire County Showground.

As fast and smooth on the track as he was flamboyant and controversial off it, and often sporting a multi-coloured Mohican haircut, Slight will have some entertaining tales to share with the Stafford audience. And with more than a decade racing in WSB, when the series was arguably at its peak for both factory Kawasaki and Castrol Honda teams, the friendly New Zealander will have plenty of great races to draw from.

The *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics* Show, the largest show of its kind in the world which majors on the later Japanese and European scene, promises the usual mix of almost 1000 trade and autojumble stalls, stunning club stands and private entries, Bonhams' record-breaking auction, live entertainment in the *Classic Dirt Bike* area and *Classic Racer* Grand Prix Paddock, and the live Restoration Theatre.

Tickets are £12 for adults, £11 for seniors or £3 for under-12s if bought in advance. Parking is free.

To find out more or to book advance tickets go to staffordclassicbikeshows.com/october or call 01507 529529.



as current sportbikes and touring motorcycles. The team even builds some specials in their own workshops, where the service department also provides everything from routine maintenance to a complete restoration, carb cleaning, electrical and mechanical overhauls and MoTs on machines of all ages and origins.

NCM is an award-winning Royal Enfield dealer and always has a range of new and used Bullets available. You'll also find Mash retro machines in stock, including the new Trackstar café racer. Browse around the old Britbikes and you'll be surprised to find more variety than just the usual Triumph twins. We zeroed in on not one but two beefy Matchless twins, a Sunbeam S8 looking glorious in golden livery, a pre-unit Triton so tidy you could eat that full English breakfast from it, and a really rather trick Triumph 750 bobber which you may be able to see hereabouts. There were even a couple of Kawasaki W650s for those people who want the traditional parallel-twin experience at the press of a button.

During the summer, the showroom and workshops are open seven days a week, although the café is closed on Mondays. Finding NCM can be a bit tricky as it's no longer on a main road: best to check the map before setting off to Units 1-4, Kings Hill industrial estate, Bude, EX23 8QN.

Visitors are very welcome to just stop by for a coffee and a natter, and now there's plenty of space to swing a leg over the saddle and try the bikes for size. **01288 355162 / ncmc.co.uk**

GO SOUTH FOR A BARGAIN AT EUROJUMBLE

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for a late summer ride or preparing for that winter rebuild it's time to plan a trip to Eurojumble.

The ideal destination for traders and visitors alike, the annual jumble is being held on Friday and Saturday, September 1 and 2. From tyres to tinware and engines to oil, there will be thousands of bargains to be had. Along with dedicated autojumble and club displays showcasing a range of

SEELEY SET TO ENTERTAIN BORDERS CLASSIC

THE BORDERS CLASSIC Bike Show will be pulling the crowds into its picturesque setting at the Lacon Childe School (founded in 1745) in Shropshire's Cleobury Mortimer on September 9 and 10.

This is the 30th show and organisers are proud to welcome a very special guest for the weekend – Colin Seeley.

He will be interviewed on stage both days of the show, talking about a life spent full of bikes that he saw as a dealer, a leading sidecar racer, a manufacturer and as a top-line team manager. Not to mention his time running the Brabham motor racing team and production facility. You can bet he was never bored!

Naturally, entries are welcomed from all Seeley owners, whether they have race bikes, road models or even the Honda powered trials models that are now a coveted collector's item.

The show features two halls of bikes, including club stands, with a bike jumble in the playground. On Sunday there's a firing up of the noisier road bikes and racers, aiming to be selected winner of the megaphone exhaust SWATS award; that stands for She Would Appreciate That Sound. It's presented in memory of Valerie Reynolds, who was the smiling presence at the cash desk for the first 25 shows.

The catering is one of the event's best features, all made at home by school parents or in the kitchen on the day by school staff and members of the Parent-Teacher Association. The cakes are just great!

Doors open at 9am both days and close at 5pm on Saturday and at about 4pm on Sunday, after the prizegiving is over. All proceeds from the show go to the Lacon Childe School funds, to benefit the pupils. Entry to the show costs £5.

Entries are welcome. Contact Jim Reynolds at 4 Childe Road, Cleobury Mortimer, DY14 8PA, or call 01299 270642 or 07410 977 212 or email uncle.jim@icloud.com. Or Facebook on bordersbikeshow.

stunning motorcycles, Dorset-based auctioneer Charterhouse will be hosting a sale of always varied motorcycles. Also set to return is the popular garage clear-out sale on Saturday, allowing one-day traders to come and sell their goods.

Tickets for Friday cost £9 in advance or £10 on the day. For the Saturday it's £8 in advance or £9 on the day. Camping passes are available too, allowing you to stay from Thursday through till Sunday morning for only £60 including show entry for both days and access to the evening bar and shower block. Parking is free for all visitors.

Eurojumble is at Meadowmead Farm, Ringwood Road, Netley Marsh, between Cadnam and Totton, Hampshire SO40 7GY.

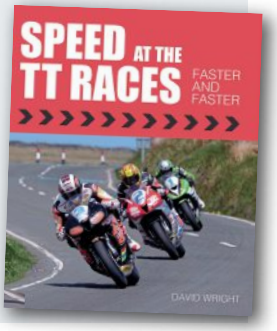
To book advance tickets go to classicbikeshows.com or call 01507 529529. Gates open at 9am on Friday and Saturday.

A CENTURY OF SPEED AT THE TT

WRITER AND VINCENT enthusiast David Wright has made his home on motorcycling's Mecca, the Isle of Man where, for more than 100 years the world's best motorcycle racers have pitted themselves against the gruelling 37¾ mile TT course.

The TT represents perhaps the greatest challenge that the sport of motorcycle racing can offer. David's new book, Speed at the TT Races, tells the history of the races, from yesterday's heroes riding the earliest single-cylinder, belt-driven machines with outputs of under 10bhp, to those coping with today's sophisticated four-cylinder machines giving well over 200bhp.

Top names in road racing – Collier, Wood, Duke, Hailwood, Agostini, Hislop, Jefferies, McGuinness, Hutchinson and the Dunlop dynasty – have all considered the pursuit of a Tourist Trophy to be their ultimate goal. Generations of riders have risked their lives to satisfy the desire to go faster than the next man and win a TT. In the process they have lifted lap speeds by almost 100mph. Exactly how that huge increase has been achieved is told in this book, which contains more than 200 photos from the earliest days of the TT to the current scene. Speed at the TT Races costs £25 and is available from The Crowood Press. Visit crowood.com



MONGOLIAN CHARITY TREK FOR AUSSIE DUO

A BRITISH BIKE dealer has come to the aid of two Australian riders on a transglobal charity challenge.

Jason Baptist and Leal Minnis have travelled to Worcester from Queensland to collect two very special SWM Superdual motorbikes – models unavailable in their home country – before setting off on their round-the-world effort, riding from Worcester to Australia via Mongolia. Italian bike specialist Streffords of Worcester are supporting the ride, providing necessary motorbike equipment and accessories.

The challenge will raise funds for Go Help, a UK-based charity that helps children in central Asia and Central America to gain access to education and healthcare. Jim and Nathan Strefford, the father and son team who run the garage, have sourced many accessories and parts from all over the world, and prepared the bikes ready for long distance charity challenge. Jim Strefford said: "We were inspired by Jason and Leal to support their challenge to raise money for this great charity helping disadvantaged children.

"Streffords is an SWM dealer and felt that we are ideally placed to support them with the build of the bikes."

Jason Baptist said: "The guys at Streffords are absolute legends and have been incredible in helping us to prepare the bikes for our overland adventure. It will take us six weeks to reach Mongolia and onwards by boat to Australia.

"Our long-distance ride seemed like an ideal opportunity to raise money for this wonderful charity which gives children in need a good start in life. Plus, we get to purchase the SWM motorbikes we have wanted for a long time and, after returning home to Queensland, we will enjoy riding these special bikes on Australian roads."

Further details about the charity's work can be found at gohelpcharityrallies.weebly.com. Anyone wishing to donate to Jason and Leal's charity challenge can follow their progress via their Just Giving page at justgiving.com/fundraising/mongoliarallyteamsixtyfiveroses CBG

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Above: Although this T120 started life as a T110, it's still stunning from mudguard to mudguard

Below: How the legend began. That is quite some speed for a 1950s motorcycle

1: Although the engine is very rapid, the front end struggles with the performance. Braking and steering came second to engine performance in the Triumph spec book

2: A pair of Amal Concentrics replace the original Monoblocs mounted on customised inlets

3: Single clock is a later magnetic variety: the original would have been a chronometric, possibly one of the handsome 'revulator' types

Hybrid vigour

There's more to this Bonneville than meets the eye...

WORDS & PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

THE PRE-UNIT TRIUMPH Bonneville is a design classic. It's the bike even non-bikers recognise.

On September 6, 1956, at Bonneville Salt Flats, American racer Johnny Allen secured the motorcycle land-speed record on a heavily modified Triumph Thunderbird T110 with a top speed of 214.17mph. Having cracked the world record Triumph turned its technological innovation into a marketing opportunity and launched the Triumph Bonneville.

Triumph began selling the Bonneville in 1959, fitting it with twin carbs and hot camshafts and designating the bike as the T120 – 120 being the claimed top speed, which was a little ambitious but even at 112mph, a more accurate estimate, the Bonneville was impressive. At £280 a new 'Bonnie' would swallow up half the average working chap's wage packet for the year, but an explosion of hire purchase, easy credit and good wages for the young made it a hit.

Triumph fitted the first Bonnevilles with the single downtube frame originally fitted to the 1954 Thunderbird, which wasn't really up to the power of the Bonneville engine, while the bike's easily changeable twin camshafts made it easier to tune than most of its rivals. Legend has it that this quest for speed inadvertently created the phenomenon of the Triton, as engines from crashed Triumphs found their way into the frames of blown-up Nortons.

By the time this particular bike left the factory, the old frame had been replaced by a twin downtube item known as the duplex frame which, while it had its own issues over the strength of bracing to the headstock, was a marked improvement. The front forks were carried over from the 1959 Triumph Bonneville but improved with the addition of two-way damping. The fork sliders were slightly longer to compensate for the move from a 19 inch front wheel to 18 inch. New upper fork shrouds and headlight brackets, finished in black, replaced the unpopular 1959 headlamp nacelle to create a motorcycling supermodel.

While wheeling this Bonneville around in the owner's back garden for pictures, it was notable just how light and well balanced a 650 Triumph twin is. A modern Triumph 675 Daytona, manufactured from lightweight alloy and plastic, weighs 185kg. A 1960 Triumph Bonneville, made out of aluminium, brass and steel, weighs 177kg. That 675 Daytona, with its fairing, twin cams, four carbs, four valves per cylinder, upside-down forks and monoshock, holds the 600cc class lap record at Thruxton, lapping at 110mph

BUY IT NOW

Venture Classics has this 1962 Triumph Bonneville T120R in sky blue and silver, and with its original buff log book. A UK machine with its original registration and matching numbers, the previous owner had it from 1981 to 2016. The bike was extensively restored some years ago by a Triumph specialist and has done under 700 miles since. To you, £14,500. Visit ventureclassics.com

last year. The Bonneville was lapping Thruxton at 100mph and more 48 years ago. Yamaha's R6 can just about manage 105mph laps.

The experts will notice that although this 1960 Triumph looks like a Bonneville with its twin carb head, it didn't start life as one. Restored in 1999, this was originally a single-carb T110, but is now registered as a T120. Originally sold in Perth in early 1961, it moved briefly to Dundee and at some point in its life it found itself relocated to Buckinghamshire before heading to Bristol.

While the engine internals are now standard Bonneville spec, the cylinder head is not – a later twin-plug racing head has been fitted. Twin plug heads were fitted to racing bikes to allow the fitting of different grades for different conditions. There was an added benefit in the days when plug quality was a weak spot as having two allowed a racer whose bike had ground to a halt with spark failure to rapidly swap around the leads and head off again. Anyone who has experienced the fragility of modern spark plugs will be envious. Today the HT leads are regularly changed round to make sure all the plugs get a regular work out. Those sparks are provided by a magneto, while an alternator sits inside the primary chaincase.

This bike isn't in the correct colours for a 1960 Bonneville either – it should be two-tone blue. Instead the paint job is that of a 1959 Triumph Trophy TR6. The single silencer high-level exhaust is also from a Trophy. An original 1960 Bonneville would also have had Monobloc carbs, rather than the more modern Amal Concentrics pumping the fuel in to this engine through custom made inlets, and with bellmouths that are rather longer than standard letting the air into the mix. A bashplate sits under the engine.

Brian, the bike's owner, is a committed Triumph rider, and has been since the 1960s when he paid £65 for a Tiger that cost him £14 a year to insure. ➧

PRICE GUIDE

£9000-£15,000

FAULTS AND FOIBLES

Owner maintenance can produce remarkable oil leaks and rattles. Some claim ground clearance issues on duplex frame models, poor handling on the single downtube bikes. Some electrical woes including voltage regulator, failing switches, poor-quality wiring and batteries damaged by vibration, which by now should have been sorted out. Remember the brakes are from the 1960s

ALSO CONSIDER

If you're in the market for a British sports twin like this, consider a BSA Rocket Gold Star or at least a quality replica. A later 1960s unit Bonneville will be cheaper and more up to date, while Norton's Dominator 650SS was both more powerful and better handling that the pre-unit Bonneville, though the engine could be more fragile

SPECIALISTS

Shropshire Classic Motorcycles
triumphbonneville.com
Meriden Motorcycles
meridenmotorcycles.co.uk
LP Williams
triumph-spares.co.uk
Draganfly
draganfly.co.uk

OWNERS' CLUBS

Triumph Motorcycle Owners' Club
tomcc.org

Above: Many bikes of this vintage have a long, interesting history. The engine may announce that it's a T120, but it started life as a T110, the siamesed high-pipe exhaust is more of a Trophy, while the duplex frame was fitted to all the 1960-62 big twins

Right: Twin-plug heads were fashionable among road racers for a while, usually using 10mm plugs in the centre position. It was an opportunity to run rather hotter plugs than the standard 14mm sparklers. If you find a head like this, check it for cracks

His current pre-unit twin does everything Triumph Bonnevilles are legendary for. It vibrates, for a start... though careful setting up means it's not as bad as the legend has it. Brian checks the Bonnie over after every ride, making sure nothing has vibrated loose. "You can usually hear it rattle," he says.

It leaks oil in the traditional fashion, despite Brian's best efforts, mostly around the rear of the primary chaincase where the gearbox shaft runs into it. There has been a single issue that caused reliability problems – a tiny copper washer that served as an electrical terminal on the end of one of the HT leads where it goes into the magneto fell off and as a result the lead wouldn't make a clean contact with the magneto, causing a misfire. It was one of those irritating faults that arises when the failure or loss of a very ordinary component worth just a few pence can mess up reliability.

And as with pretty much every motorcycle made prior to 1980, the brakes are a challenge to live with on modern highways and byways. A 1950s mix of a single leading shoe front brake and a half-width rear might have done the job in 1960, but they aren't going to cut the mustard today. "You develop the skill of reading the road well ahead," Brian says.

This Bonneville is closeto a perfect classic – reliable, useable, and good looking.

It's not messed about with, and comes with that all-important sheen acquired by a much loved and respected old friend. CBG

ENGINE: Air cooled, OHV, two-valve twin **DIMENSIONS:** 71mm x 82mm **CAPACITY:** 649cc **OUTPUT:** 46bhp at 6500rpm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 8.5:1 **FUEL/IGNITION SYSTEM:** twin, filterless 1-1/6in Amal Monobloc carbs, magneto ignition **TRANSMISSION:** Non-unit four-speed gearbox, chain primary drive, wet clutch **CHASSIS:** Steel, twin downtube frame **SUSPENSION:** Telescopic fork, hydraulic damping, Rear – 2 x oil damped shock absorbers **WEIGHT:** 390lb/177kg **WHEELBASE:** 54.5in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30.5in **BRAKES:** Front 8in full width sls drum; rear 7in half width sls drum **WHEELS/TYRES:** Front – 3.25 x 18 Dunlop, Rear – 3.50 x 18 Dunlop. **FUEL TANK:** Four gallons **TOP SPEED:** 112mph

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Solidly single-minded

Made for the military, becoming a cult classic

WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

MOTO GUZZI CREATED its first four-stroke horizontal single in 1920, launching the production Normale the next year. Guzzi developed its singles in a variety of road, race and military incarnations until the first Falcone 500 arrived in 1950. Sportier and lighter than its Astore 500 stablemate, the Falcone benefited from Guzzi's racing heritage and was equipped with components previously found on Guzzi's race machines. Significantly cheaper than the Dondolino racer, the 23bhp Falcone had the potential, with modification, to achieve similar performance.

From 1953, the Falcone became available as the 18.9bhp Turismo, which replaced the Astore, and the 23bhp Sport. Around 7500 Falcones were produced from 1950 through to 1963, many for police use.

When Moto Guzzi went into receivership the Italian government stepped in and eventually, with state backing, the Nuovo Turismo emerged in 1967.

The NT was created specifically for the police and military and used the Sport engine and Turismo carburettor. It ran 6.5:1 compression, output just over 19bhp and was produced until 1968.

Below: The Nuovo Falcone is quirky and not without charm, and its external flywheel is certainly eye-catching

1: The mighty flat single with its mighty flywheel can be started by the equally mighty motor atop the gearbox

2: Fairing deflects the worst of the weather but can be a hindrance in high winds

3: Robust metric speedo can provide an illusion of great speed

The following year, again due to police and military demand, the Nuovo Falcone was introduced. Around 15,000 were produced over the next seven years, about twice as many as the original Falcone.

The engine remained largely the same, retaining the same oversquare 88 by 82mm bore and stroke as Guzzi's original 1920 single, but with a modernised four-speed gearbox and wet sump. Electrics were upgraded to 12V and coil ignition.

The NF sported a new, steel double-cradle frame with rear shock absorbers rather than the cantilevered friction dampers of the original Falcone. Significantly heavier than its predecessor, it was slightly slower, with a top speed around 75mph.

In 1972 the Nuovo Falcone was offered to the general public as the Civile. A slightly increased compression ratio of 7:1 raised the claimed top speed to 87mph although few ever exceeded 80 without a long downhill run. A beige version, the Sahara, arrived in 1974. Some military machines were stockpiled, complete or in bits which meant that low mileage examples could still be bought until about 2005 when stocks were finally depleted.

Jake bought our feature bike, a 1972 NF, 15 years ago. It was imported as an unused bike but, although the engine and transmission appeared to be brand new, it had obviously been built up from bits. The fork shrouds were rusty under the paint, the sprocket carrier had a big gouge out of it where the chain had clearly come off, and the wheel rims had obviously been chromed over existing rust. They've since been rebuilt with Italian stainless steel rims.

Jake's bike was made for the Italian military but the fairing is from the Yugoslavian national army military traffic police, hence the blue lights and remains of the JNA logo. The steel panniers are Yugoslavian, too (the Italian ones are more square).

The panniers and fairing were recovered from a friend's Serbian import which was converted into a lightweight bobber where they were surplus to requirements. Originally Jake's machine would have sported a rather distinctive double-decker silencer, which was huge and heavy. Nuovo Falcones like to breathe and won't run well if the silencer is too restrictive, so Jake added a touch of Americana to his bike with a Harley Sportster pipe (subtly modified with a square point chisel) and a Harley footrest rubber over the kickstart.

PRICE GUIDE

£3,000 to £5,500

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Standard, well-maintained machines can cover big miles with few issues. Primitive oil filter and oil pressure probs can cause poor camshaft lubrication, wear on the timing side bush, sticking inlet valve causing contact with the piston, and the inlet valve seat dropping out. Gearboxes suffer from poor shimming during manufacturing so benefit from re-shimming to correct specs. Ex-military bikes, subjected to squaddie's feet, can suffer from bent selector forks. Recommended upgrades include an extra oil feed to the inlet valve, external oil filter, lighter valves with softer springs (the stock ones are very heavy, so the valves hammer the seats)

ALSO CONSIDER

An original Falcone Turismo or Sport: lots more kudos for lots more cash. Guzzi V50: the less eccentric Italian, more choice, some lower prices. Honda XBR500: the Japanese interpretation of a classic bike single

SPECIALISTS

North Leicester Motorcycles northleicestermotorcycles.com
Gutsibits: gutsibits.co.uk

OWNERS' CLUB

Moto Guzzi Club GB: motoguzziclub.co.uk
The Mighty Falcone Virtual Owners' Club: nuovofalcone.createaforum.com

BUY IT NOW

Ready for the long haul: this 1972 Nuovo Falcone comes with electric start, indicators, modern switchgear, digital speedo, Scottoiler, a lightened flywheel and lowered seat. £4250 from northleicestermotorcycles.com / 01530 263381

As these machines were produced for a military contract and needed to be reliable, the charging system dynamo and control box are by Bosch, with lighting provided by CEV. When Jake first got it, the bike would cut out periodically as the plug fouled. The original Bosch coil failed so it now uses a British Leyland Mini 12V coil. The Civile came with a Bosch Dynastart, a meatier dynamo fitted with two sets of field coils, which can be used as a starter motor by pressing the button to drive the flywheel through the fanbelt. You press the button to spin it up, then once it's churning you drop the valve lifter and it starts. The 22lb flywheel keeps it going for quite a few turns…

As Moto Guzzi exported the NF to several overseas armies, the owners' manual is conveniently in English. The recommended starting method is to pull the valve lifter in and keep on kicking until you build up lots of speed on the flywheel, then drop the valve lifter and it'll start. Jake however finds it easy to start it just like any other single, by taking it over top dead centre and kicking. It always starts first kick anyway; if not he knows he's got a problem and gets his tools out!

1: Low, long and very strong, the Guzzi flat singles are quirky and entertaining, always!

2: The Airfix paints used to touch-up the petrol tank don't quite match the Italian military palette…

3: Always a practical form of transportation, this NF sports a 6" cable tray bolted to the rear carrier to accommodate camping kit

Whereas the earlier Falcone boasted numerous grease nipples the NF is somewhat lacking in this department. The swinging arm bearing is a plain bush bereft of a nipple so fitting one is recommended. Although there are springs and oil in the forks there's no hydraulic damping, so it's a bit bouncy. The rear suspension is similarly basic but the rider's comfort is taken care of by a sprung saddle. To onlookers it can look somewhat strange, as the rider bounces around out of sync with the suspension…

MANUFACTURED: 1969 to 1976 **ENGINE:** ohv single cylinder **BORE / STROKE:** 88mm x 82mm **CAPACITY:** 499cc **COMPRESSION:** 6.85:1 **POWER:** 32bhp @ 4,800rpm (Civilian edition) **CARBURETTOR:** Dell'Orto VHB 29A **IGNITION:** Bosch 12V coil, dynamo or Dynastart **ELECTRICS:** 12V 150W **LUBRICATION:** wet sump **CLUTCH:** multiplate wet clutch **GEARBOX:** four-speed constant mesh **PRIMARY DRIVE:** gear **FINAL DRIVE:** chain **FRONT BRAKE:** 200mm 2ls drum **REAR BRAKE:** sls drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** telescopic fork **REAR SUSPENSION:** swinging arm, twin shock **TYRES:** 3.50 x 18 **WHEELBASE:** 1450mm **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5.9" **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31" **WEIGHT:** 214kg **TOP SPEED:** 79mph

Municipal versions came with legshields, crash bars and a leatherette skirt over the bottom of the screen which combined to give reasonably good weather protection. Jake prefers a naked engine so removed as much as possible, just keeping the handlebar fairing. Dispensing with the cover means that the huge flywheel is clearly visible to entertain onlookers. The primary drive is by helical gear and the engine effectively runs 'backwards'.

As it was created for military use, everything on the NF is very substantial and extremely robust. The frame's tube are very strong, it's all triangulated and the centrestand is huge. The result is a heavy bike which thankfully doesn't feel it, as the weight is carried low down. Jake reckons that the 2ls front brake is very effective when set up properly. Over the years, nothing much has gone wrong with this machine which has been a relief as some items, particularly gearbox parts, are quite hard to come by; engine parts aren't so bad. You can upgrade the oil pump by fitting a modified a V7 oil pump which has a larger capacity.

With a military-geared Nuovo Falcone everything happens very, very slowly. Changing gear from first to second, the rider must wait for the engine to slow down or otherwise it just 'crunches'. This means you've just about stopped again so a lot of owners start in second as first is so low. The Militare has a 35-tooth rear sprocket, often changed to 33 teeth to be the same as the Civile. It is possible to go down to 31 teeth by fitting a specially-made Talon sprocket, but then the bike can struggle with a head wind or going up a steep hill. Jake's discovered that the NF looks so convincingly like a 'proper classic' than when he's riding it no-one actually expects him to go very fast. Its happy cruising speed is about 55mph, when he can just relax and enjoy the ride. CBG

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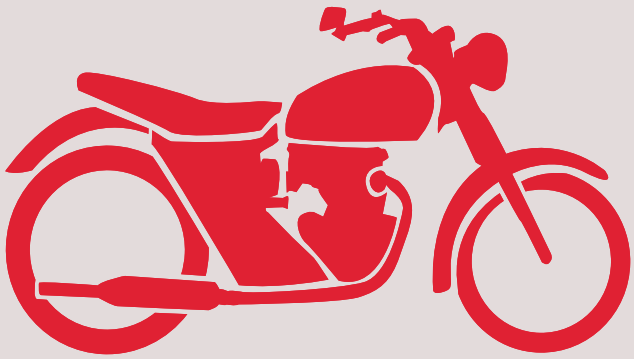

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It's easy to take the plunge with Norton's big single

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

Above: After much effort, owner Bob finally found a pair of bar end mirrors with rubber fittings inside, which keep them attached and in position

1: One of the more successful British engine designs, the Norton single offers both decent performance, charm and visual appeal

2: Temporary fix to prevent over-charging and overheating of the battery. Not too common a complaint with Lucas 6V electrics

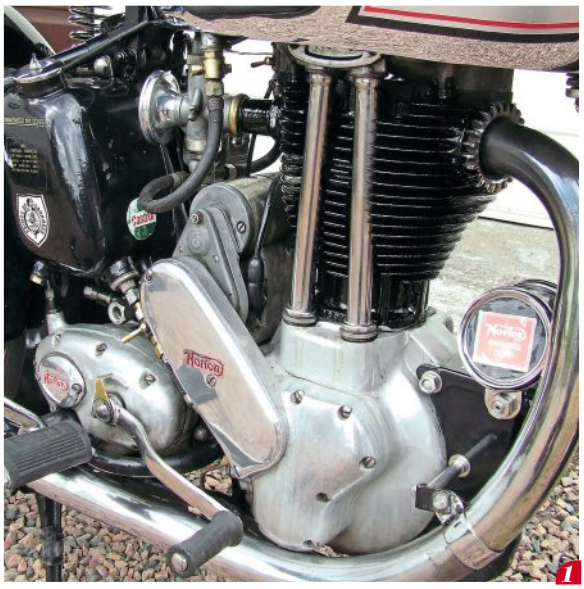
3: A Royal Enfield mesh cover fits the Amal carb's intake nicely

4: Norton's Model 18 and ES2 singles from the same model year can be distinguished by the rear suspension on the latter. It works well, but a sprung saddle is still a good idea

THE 1939 INSTRUCTION manual reassures ES2 owners that 'the reliability of Norton products is such that trouble of a serious nature on the road is practically unheard of'. This very much depends on your definition of 'trouble'. My own father owned ES2s, decades ago. One day he rounded a bend to find a flock of sheep filling the road. With collision inevitable, he hit a sheep, spun 360 degrees and stopped; still astride his bike. A policeman was suitably impressed by this obvious endorsement of Norton's claim as the 'world's best road holder'. The rider was happier when his Norton was 'unapproachable'. In fact he was so shaken that he sold his ES2 for a mere £2, forever after regretting his decision. You'll need to pay a lot more nowadays, but if you're looking for an enduring single it'll be worth it.

While Norton notched up an impressive string of TT and other race victories, their road range expanded at a slower pace. Until the arrival of the Dominator twin in 1949, buyers could choose from a Norton sidevalve or ohv single, both of which saw gradual development over the years. Norton's long-serving Big 4 633cc sidevalve spanned four decades from 1908 until 1948, with capacity reduced to 596cc from 1948. Several 490cc incarnations joined the range over the years, the Model 16H being the longest lived.

Using their 490cc sidevalve engine as a basis, Norton developed their first ohv engine for 1923 in the rigid-framed Model 18. The 1927 Olympia Show saw the launch of two new Norton 490cc singles. The ES2 used the same 79 x 100mm ohv engine as the Model 18 and retailed in 1928 for £79. This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sporting single featured a new, full cradle rigid frame, girder forks, steering damper and three-speed gearbox. Plunger rear suspension became an optional extra in 1939 shortly before Norton production switched solely to sidevalves for military supply.

Returning in 1947, the ES2 sported a plunger frame and Norton's famous Roadholder forks. 1951 saw the introduction of the laydown gearbox, with reduced gear lever travel. Swinging arm suspension arrived in 1953 along with a dual seat – but this is not the sporting Featherbed frame. The following year saw improvements in the braking department with a new 8in front brake. For 1957 the headlight was updated, incorporating the ammeter, speedometer and a combined lighting and ignition switch. The ES2 finally benefited from the famous wideline Featherbed frame and alternator electrics in 1959.

Sales brochures extolled the reliability of the ES2, a machine used by RAC patrolmen to cover more than a million miles each year in all weathers. The slimline Featherbed frame was introduced in 1961. In 1962 straight handlebars and a sidecar spec build were offered as options, and other extras included a fully enclosed chaincase and chrome mudguards.

A steady workhorse rather than a road rocket, the ES2 (in common with the Big 4 and 16H) was often to be found tugging a sidecar attached to mounting lugs present as standard on the frame. The handsome pushrod engine was pretty conventional, with the big end running on a roller bearing, which was typical of British bikes of the time. Our plunger-framed feature machine, built in 1952, was first registered in 1953, the same year the swinging arm frame was introduced. Spending its first years in Shetland, this machine changed hands as it slowly migrated south through the islands.

Two years ago, Bob was looking for a Norton single and had the choice between a Big 4 or the ES2. A ride on each decided it. The Big 4 was nicer looking and didn't need so much work but was slower, whereas the ES2 had a bit more pull in it. Although it needed a lot more work, Bob knew the extra effort would be worth it. When purchased, the ES2 was in a very sorry state with oil everywhere.

PRICE GUIDE
£4500 to £8000

FAULTS & FOIBLES
Primary chaincase leaks are common. ES2s were commonly used as sidecar tugs so check frame and handling in case of distortion. It's normal to expect a drop or two of oil from the overflow as this prevents it getting into the magneto

ALSO CONSIDER
BSA M33; a lot less ££, available in rigid and plunger frame variants. Ariel VH500 Red Hunter; similar cash and kudos. A modern Royal Enfield Bullet; cheap, plentiful and equipped with an electric hoof

SPECIALISTS
Norvil
norvilmotorcycle.co.uk
RGM
rgmnorton.co.uk

OWNERS' CLUB
Norton Owners' Club
nortonownersclub.org

BUY IT NOW

Motorcycles Unlimited are offering this 1954 ES2 for a sniff under £8k – which is what you might expect to pay for a twin, never mind a single. They explain that it's been 'beautifully rebuilt built and crafted to exact specifications only using the best and most original parts.' Certainly looks shiny

This unfortunately didn't stop the rust. Even the Roadholder badges were rusty, but Bob managed to polish them up. Original tinware is increasingly hard to find but Bob persevered, eventually managing to acquire a replacement rear mudguard.

He stripped the bike completely. Everything was powder-coated by Matt Spence at Glenrothes who gave the frame, mudguards, rests, headlight and associated bits a really good coating, with the added benefit of a quick turnaround. Bob likes a bit of bling so the plunger spring covers were chromed

Above: A tap was fitted to the oil feed to stop wet sumping. Just remember: oil on, petrol on

Right: The ES2 as it appeared when Bob bought it. Both oily and rusty: that's quite an achievement

rather than powder-coated and he's snuck a few extra chromed bits in here and there. The pushrod tubes were replaced, the oil tank welded and the gearbox needed a bit of fettling to improve gear selection.

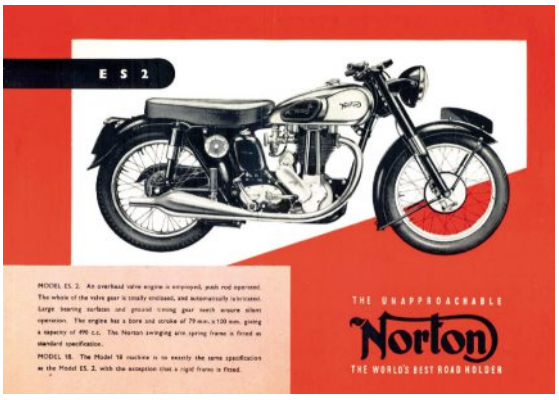
The wheels were respoked with stainless steel rims, then finished with a black central strip and red pinstriping, matching the detailing on the tank. The original, pear-shaped tank was due for replacement. Bob prefers the shape of the new chrome tank but had problems with it. Soon after it was painted and fitted, Bob noticed that petrol was seeping underneath and lifting the paint. The tank was resprayed but the problem recurred so the tank is headed for a third attempt. Bob's fitted corks under the cap and around the filler neck to stop further damage.

Once running, the ES2 was overcharging and melted the battery – which has since been replaced. A bit of plastic has been inserted to stop it charging temporarily, and Bob plans to fit a new regulator in the future, possibly relocating it to prevent overheating.

Replacing the original saddle, Bob fitted a new, taller bracket to raise the saddle up and give his legs a bit more room. He finds the seam on the new saddle extremely uncomfortable after a while, with little option to change his riding position. The saddle is going to be built up, to give a bit more cushioning, and reupholstered with a red pinstripe to match the paintwork.

Bob's ES2 starts easily, usually first or second kick, handles well and runs really nicely. He likes the beat of the single, how it roars when he opens the throttle up. Describing his ES2 as 'good looking and demanding', Bob feels it is a work in progress, always needing something. He bought a new Norton horn but it just wouldn't work so he bought and fitted another one. Wee niggles like the tank and wiring still need to be ironed out. Bob's aim is to get it as good as he can, replacing bits as he goes along, bringing it up to scratch to ensure it has a long future ahead of it. It is obviously now a very different machine compared to the one he bought.

Theories abound as to the origins of the 'ES2' designation. It might stand for 'Enclosed Springs', or E for Extra cost, S for Sports and 2 for the second version of the ohv engine. In any case, owners find the ES2 easy to own, work on and ride – hence the Easy Two nickname. CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1928-1939, 1947-1963 **ENGINE:** ohv four-stroke single **BORE / STROKE:** 79 x 100 mm **CAPACITY:** 490cc **COMPRESSION:** 6.45:1 **POWER:** 21bhp @ 5000rpm **CARBURETTOR:** Amal 276 **IGNITION:** Lucas Magdyno **LIGHTING:** 6V battery **LUBRICATION:** dry sump, pressure feed by gear type oil pump **CLUTCH:** multi plate **GEARBOX:** four-speed **PRIMARY DRIVE:** chain **FINAL DRIVE:** chain **FRONT BRAKE:** 7in sls drum **REAR BRAKE:** 7in sls drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Roadholder tele forks, oil damped **REAR SUSPENSION:** plunger (1947-1952) **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 3.25 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 54½in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6½in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30in **WEIGHT:** 379lb **ACCELERATION:** 18.6s quarter mile **BRAKING:** 27½ foot from 30mph **TOP SPEED:** 78mph **PRICE NEW:** £193 13s 6d (1949), £204 2s (Sept 1953)

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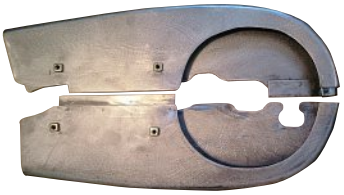

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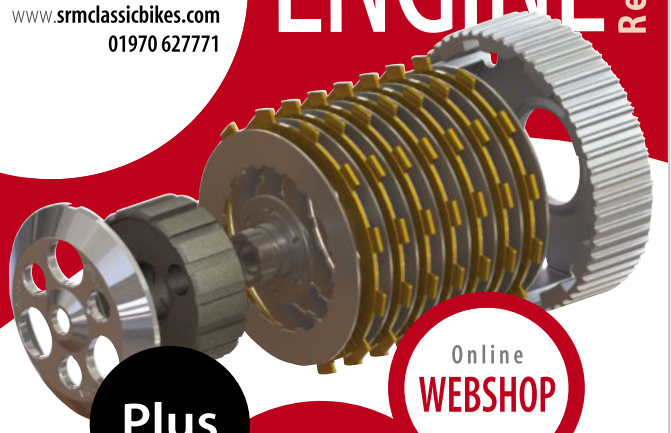

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Super stopper

Laverda's substantial 750 is much more than just a fancy front brake

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

Above: It's not too usual to find a Laverda of this generation in blue. Although cynics often comment on a visual resemblance between the engine and a mid-60s Honda, the reality of the Laverda is rather different

1: Race-style seat option came with a handy lockable tool box

2: Substantial oil-tight engine casings; the kind of rev counter drive which is hard to miss and an early exhaust system with balance pipe. It's hard to miss the sound of a Laverda twin approaching, but twin horns give just a bit more warning

3: Francesco Laverda's front brake gave the SF its name and was entirely essential when it came to decelerating the 500lb mass of the fuelled motorcycle. Similarly, the single Brembo disc fitted to the later SF2 in 1974 was rapidly paired with a partner

4: Nippon Denso clocks replaced the earlier Smiths items and involve less guesswork...

BEGINNING WITH THEIR 75cc four-stroke Turismo in 1950, Moto Laverda quickly gained a strong hold on the market. By 1954 they were producing 9000 machines per year and a 100cc machine was added to the range. Participation in races, particularly endurance and long distance where reliability, strength, performance and handling rather than speed alone, provided Laverda with a long string of wins which raised their profile. Placing Laverda firmly in the eye of the buying public, this made their machines a popular choice among road and race riders alike.

In the mid-1960s, due in part to the advent of small affordable cars, Laverda, like many other manufacturers suffered a severe slump in sales and found themselves urgently looking for an answer. Massimo Laverda, son of Moto Laverda's founder, Francesco, headed to America to check out the market and plan for the future. Small capacity motorcycles had formed the basis of Laverda's range since 1950 but Massimo realised that a larger, sportier model was now required.

Initially a 650 twin was developed in an effort to compete for a share in the market alongside the British, BMW, Moto Guzzi and the Japanese. The 650cc prototype debuted in 1966 at Earls Court and displayed distinct elements of the bikes which Laverda had studied and analysed – Honda's CB77, Norton's 650SS and BMW's R69S. Following refinement, the 650 twin was launched in 1968 and the 750 followed shortly afterwards. Becoming the 750GT it entered the American market badged in red, white and blue as the American Eagle, promising 'an entirely new experience in luxury, comfort and handling characteristics, plus top performance… from a moderately tuned, vibration free overhead cam engine'. Evel Knievel was given sponsorship and an American Eagle to promote the brand, using it successfully for several jumps. The Eagle's wings were soon clipped, however, by Honda's 750/4 which sold for $200 less.

Featuring the same tank with kneepads as the 650, the GT's touring aspect was emphasised by optional extras including a sump guard, higher handlebars, rear rack, panniers and crash bars. A Sport version, the 750S was developed with higher compression giving

60bhp at 7000rpm, 8bhp more than the GT. Laverda's race team won every endurance race entered with the 750S in 1970 and the Dutch were so impressed by the superior handling of the Laverda 750 that it outsold Honda's CB750/4 in the Netherlands.

The 750SFC (*Super Freni Competizioni*), half-faired 135mph endurance racer was developed, boasting a large drum brake designed by no less than Francesco Laverda himself. Developed from the 750SFC, the 750SF Super Freni (Super Braker) followed. Grimeca brakes used in earlier models had earned a poor reputation for grabbing at low speeds then fading with hard use, so the SF and SFC boasted a nine-inch 2ls front brake. Superb handling ensured much success in both production and endurance races.

The SF soon saw the introduction of a new shape tank, without kneepads, and the option of a dual seat or a single race style humped seat with integrated lockable toolbox. The first 750SFs to arrive in Britain were sold by Slater Brothers, Laverda's UK distributers, for £685, £5 more than Honda's CB750/4.

Built in true Laverda style, the 750 powerplant was seriously over-engineered, with a crankshaft which ran on four ball and roller main bearings. While Norton and Triumph were still using shells, Laverda was using needle roller bearings for the big ends. Designed to perform at high speed over many miles, the engine was accompanied by a substantial and weighty frame. The rigidity of the frame minimised vibration, unlike some of its contemporaries. The all-alloy motor was split horizontally, rather than vertically like British twins, while wide joint faces also helped keep the engine oil-tight. The overwhelming impression of Laverda's twins and triples is that they are extremely solid and obviously built to last. The 750SF is no lightweight, weighing in at 480lb dry: fuelled up the weight exceeds 500lb. Once moving, however, the weight isn't apparent and the most obvious aspect is how well the SF handles.

Avoiding the problems commonly associated with Italian electrics, Laverda used the best components available at the time. Bosch supplied a chunky 150 Watt dynamo, ignition system and headlamp; the similarly substantial starter motor came from Nippon Denso. Switchgear initially came from Lucas and clocks were provided by Smiths but these were replaced by Nippon Denso equivalents on later versions. As was usual with Laverda's flexible, low volume production, and also depending on the availability of parts from external suppliers at the point of production, it's not unusual for components to vary on individual machines.

In an effort to deal with noise regulations, the SF1 which followed featured new style, larger Dell'Orto 36mm accelerator pump carbs, a cylinder head developed from the SFC and a new exhaust system with larger diameter pipes connected by a

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This 1973 SF1 has just 28,000 miles on its clock and is in 'exceptional' condition. Comes with a long MoT, fitted with Jota bars. £8995 from M&S Motorcycles in Newcastle

Above: Laverda's big twins demand a decent degree of owner/rider input, but the rewards are sufficiently high to maintain high demand. And they even have a right-foot gearshift, too

large collector box beneath the engine. This saw an increase in power with a claimed 65bhp at 7000rpm. The large Bosch headlamp was also replaced by a smaller CEV item.

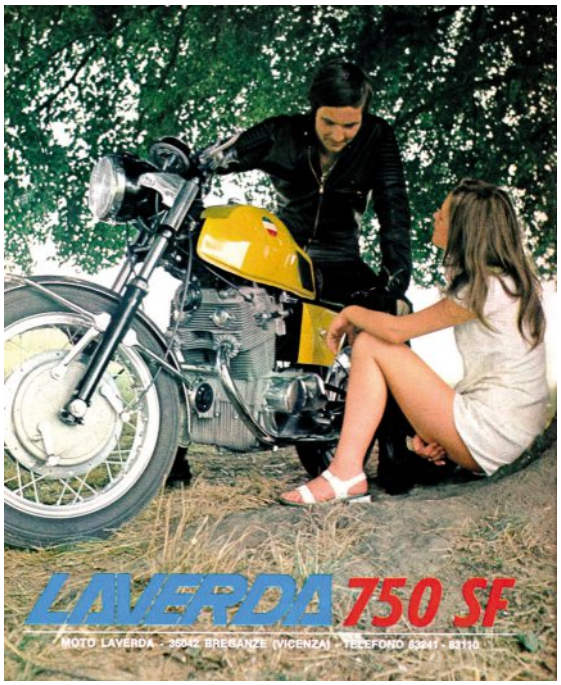
The next incarnation, the SF2, saw the introduction of a single Brembo front disc. This was soon replaced by double disc brakes with an associated increase in diameter of the Ceriani forks from 35 to 38mm.

The final 750 SF sportster variant, the SF3, was styled along similar lines to Laverda's triples with a stepped dual seat, tail piece and five spoke cast alloy wheels with a rear disc brake. The SF became Laverda's best seller and around 18,000 were produced from 1968 to 1977.

Our feature machine was purchased three years ago, and it came with the original Laverda manual. Running to 92 pages, this handy owner's book conveniently contains exploded diagrams of all components, accompanied by a complete parts listing. Packed with practical information, it heads straight into routine maintenance with detailed diagrams and clear step-by-step instruction for jobs (split neatly into those which do and don't require the engine to be removed from the frame). This factory-supplied handbook puts many larger volumes from larger manufacturers to shame.

Dating from 1972, this 750 features the CEV headlamp, twin horns and an earlier exhaust system with a balance pipe connecting the twin downpipes. Ground clearance for enthusiastic cornering is better than that of later models where the bulky collector box reputedly grounds quite easily. The clocks have been restored, and the odometer reads in kilometres with the speed shown in miles per hour.

Laverda's 750s can be something of an acquired taste; they rev far higher and vibrate much less than a traditional Brit 650 or a late T140. But the Italian is nothing like as smooth and easy-going as a Japanese machine. It's raw and invigorating; a motorcycle to be mastered. The SF's standard clutch can become tiring during extended periods of town work (clutch mods are available) but some owners enjoy blipping the throttle when stationary at traffic lights and setting off car alarms... Laverda's larger capacity machines really come into their own out of town. On open A-roads the 750SF is a sure-footed and taut performer which is more than capable of sustaining motorway speeds if needed. CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1971 (SF) to 1978 (SF3) **ENGINE:** sohc 360 degree twin **BORE / STROKE:** 80mm x 74mm **CAPACITY:** 744cc **COMPRESSION:** 9.95:1 **POWER:** 60bhp @6600rpm **CARBURETTOR:** 2 x 30mm Dell'Orto **IGNITION:** 12V battery, coil and points **LIGHTING:** dynamo **LUBRICATION:** wet sump **CLUTCH:** seven plate **GEARBOX:** five-speed **PRIMARY DRIVE:** triplex chain **FINAL DRIVE:** chain **FRONT BRAKE:** 230mm 2ls drum **REAR BRAKE:** 2ls drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Ceriani tele forks, hydraulically damped **REAR SUSPENSION:** swinging arm, adjustable twin shock **FRONT TYRE:** 3.50 x 18" **REAR TYRE:** 4.00 x 18" **WHEELBASE:** 1465mm **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 7½" **SEAT HEIGHT:** 33" **WEIGHT:** 218kg dry **ACCELERATION:** 14.55s quarter miles **BRAKING:** 31ft from 30mph **TOP SPEED:** 118mph **PRICE NEW:** £995 in 1972

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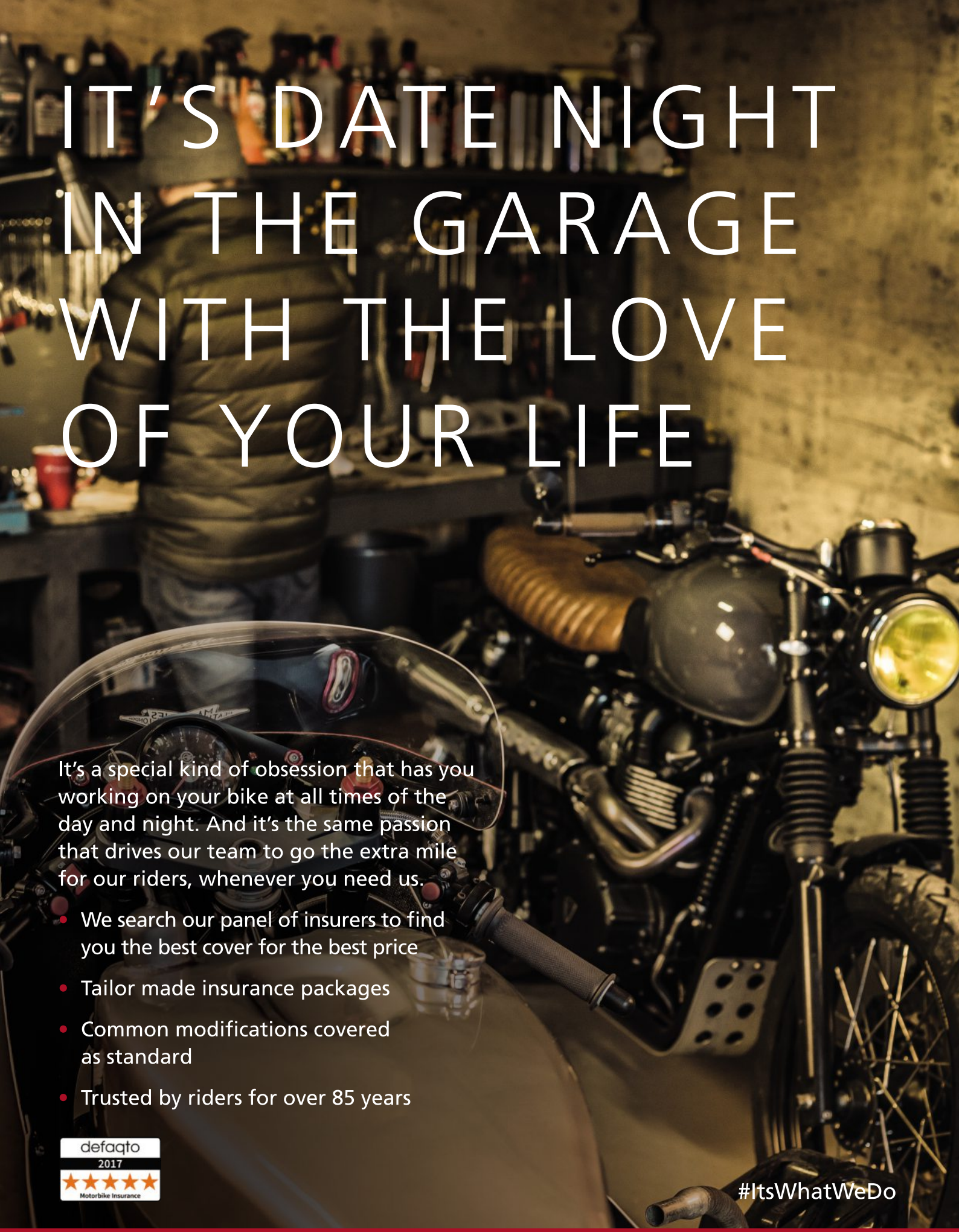

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Overshadowed by 650s by the end of the 50s, Matchless's 500 twins make excellent sense for today's classic rider

WORDS & PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

Below: Timelessly handsome and gentle tourist twin from Matchless. Comfortable and capable

1: Considered by many to be one of the best gearboxes of its day – and certainly one of the longest-lived – the AMC/Norton box is light and precise to use, and is very robust

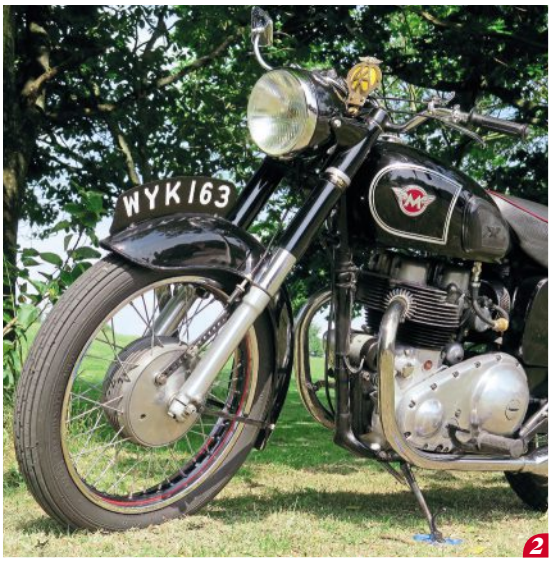
2: AMC's Teledraulic front fork was one of the best when introduced in 1941, and was still okay a decade and a half later. But like the brakes, it was fast becoming obsolete as the 1960s approached

AMC'S AJS AND MATCHLESS brands were late to the parallel twin party, with Triumph and BSA beating them to the showroom floor in the late 1940s. Given that AMC were designing the unit construction DOHC 500cc Porcupine racer in 1945, their first roadgoing twin offerings – the Matchless G9 and AJS Model 20 – were conventional beasts by comparison. But when they appeared at the Earls Court Show in 1948 they were considered by some to be streets ahead of the competition and were very modern-looking motorcycles. They had dual seats, megaphone silencers as a Matchless option and were fitted into swinging arm frames from the start, unlike their rivals.

The bikes had a gloss black and shiny chrome finish, with the first G9 being dubbed the Super Clubman – also available in flash red and chrome. In those days when the manufacturers' mantra was 'export or die' it took a while before the G9 appeared in UK showrooms – most of them went to the US, with the bikes finally going on sale on the home market in late 1949. Marlon Brando, who used his own Triumph twin in The Wild One, was pictured on a desert scrambler version of a Matchless for publicity shots for the movie.

The cycle parts would become standard AMC, using their own Teledraulic front forks and the famous jampot shock absorbers as well as plenty of interchangeable parts from other models. The engine was intended to be a good bit tougher than others on the market thanks to AMC using a triple bearing crankshaft – they were fitted with a hefty twin gear oil pump. The engine used separate barrels and heads, with the rocker pedestals cast integrally with the heads.

While they may have stolen a march on their rivals with their first models, the basic design changed little over the course of the next few years, the first significant change being made in 1952 when a new Burman gearbox was adopted across the AMC range. Later the jampot shock absorbers were dumped



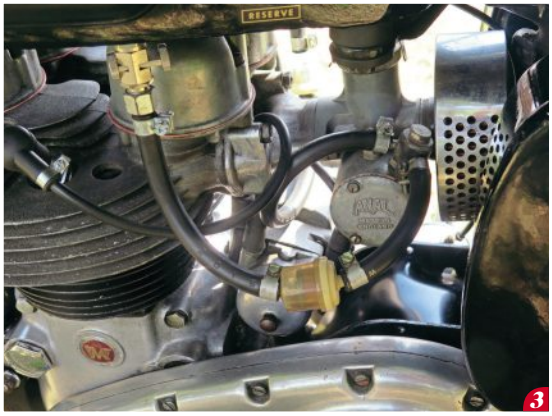
for more conventional Girling items with an AMC model-specific clevis bottom mount. In 1957 the gearbox was changed again as AMC introduced their own design and used it in their AJS, Matchless and Norton marques. This box proved to be excellent, and continued in production until Norton Commando production staggered to a stop in 1978.

Later twins were fitted with full-width brake drums, which were again seen as an improvement over the earlier half-width variety. A Lucas magneto is mounted behind the engine and there are a pair of camshafts front and rear, driven by gears inside a handsome timing cover. A front-mounted dynamo, later changed to a crank-mounted alternator, provided the electricity.

The twin-cylinder engine underwent a number of capacity increases and the 500cc version had ceased to be regarded as a performance mount by the end of the 1950s. Instead it had become a sensible and smooth family man's ride to work machine, ready to hitch up to a sidecar for high days and holidays, and which was easier to start than the 500cc singles also available. Production of the G9 was finally discontinued in the autumn of 1961, although the 650s carried on for another five years.

This particular 1959 Matchless G9 is decently standard, if not entirely original. It has heavily valanced touring mudguards, and retains the dynamo at the front of the engine, marking it out as a de luxe model; the standard twin using the cheaper alternator and coil ignition by then. It has more conventional exhausts rather than the fruity-sounding megaphones also in favour at the time, and, strangely, the oil tank is from a 1956 single, noticeable because there are no ribs surrounding the logo. And the engine started life in an AJS.

Simon, the current owner, isn't overly concerned about this. Like many a classic owner he bought the Matchless to share the garage with a much more modern machine, in his case a 1000cc Kawasaki KLV 1000 adventure trail bike. The Matchless is there to provide something to ride on good summer evenings and weekends rather than being a cosseted concours classic, a task the G9 performs admirably. Rarely if ever would you see Simon trying to exceed 50mph from the softly tuned 500 twin, which had a top speed of 90mph in its day. This gentle use means the G9 uses 70mpg.



3: Lucas K2F magneto provides the sparks, an Amal Monobloc mixes the fuel. Excellent alloy primary chaincase replaced the earlier pressed-steel version for 1958

4: AMC paid a lot of attention to cooling their twins, as well as attempting to make the top ends quiet and oil tight

PRICE GUIDE

£3500 to £6000

FAULTS AND FOIBLES

Although comfortably smooth at touring speeds, the twins get unhappy if thrashed. Regular oil changes are essential. Watch out for camshaft rattles and blocked oil filters. Mysterious leaks can occur between the cylinder base and crankcase, which can be fun to fix. Front brake is weak. The engine will sump into the primary chaincase if left standing, resulting in pools of oil upon start-up

ALSO CONSIDER

A good BSA A7 can be found for around the same price as a G9 and has similar all-round ability and spares availability. An early Royal Enfield 500 Twin or the very different Meteor Minor have the Matchless's exclusivity in a sportier package

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DR Classic Motorcycles have this splendid 1957 G9 for sale at a reasonable £4450 with stainless rims and megaphone silencers. Visit classic-motorcycles.net

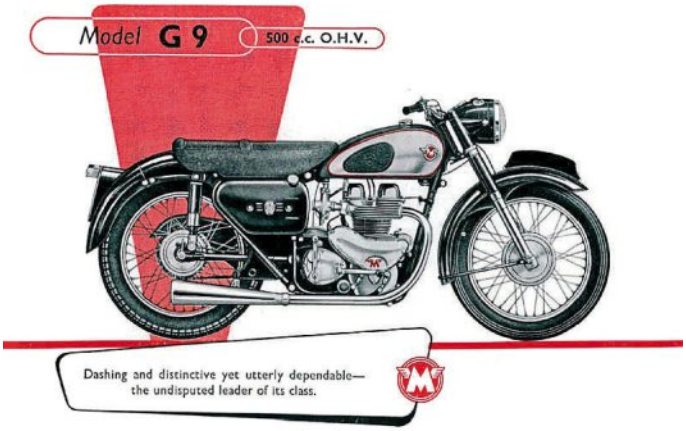
Above: An entirely competent back roads machine for anyone, with excellent spares back-up. Matchless 500 twins make good buys

It has the one-up-three-down right-foot shift Norton gearbox and just 59,000 miles on the clock. Early in the current ownership it needed an exhaust valve fitting, but apart from that has required just one modification since the G9 came into Simon's possession two years ago. On one hot evening ride out the Amal Monobloc carburettor, which was at that time fitted with a standard open bellmouth intake, had the slide seize in the open position. This caused a moment's concern and considerable over-revving before the engine was silenced. The carb was dismantled and although it wasn't clear if it was the hot weather that had caused the slide to expand and jam, or whether a piece of road dust had made it stick wide open, a Triumph-type pancake filter was bolted on as a precaution. The problem hasn't arisen since. Apart from these few issues and some light maintenance, Simon hasn't had to lay a spanner on the Matchless. The dynamo/magneto arrangement works perfectly, and the battery is there solely to supply energy to the minimal lights. He uses commonly available 10W-50 motorcycle oil and adds a dash of Redex to the petrol tank when filling up.

The Matchless is easy to start, requiring just a single prod to bring it into life. Simon says that the G9 is much more fun to ride round Somerset's lanes than a more modern machine, and says it's the most comfortable bike he's ever ridden, with the 58-year-old saddle better than the gel seat on his Kawasaki.

Handling is described as 'adequate but not scary' while the tyres have been changed from the ribbed Avons it came with originally for some more workmanlike efforts from the same factory.

These often-overlooked Matchless and AJS twins might not have the glamour of their rivals, but they are way ahead of the competition when it comes to a look of class and gentlemanly sophistication. Perhaps next time you are looking for a classic you should, as their 1950s advertising said: 'Make it a Matchless'. CBG



MANUFACTURED: 1948-1960 **ENGINE:** Air cooled, OHV, 2-valve dry sump twin **DIMENSIONS:** 66mm x 73mm **CAPACITY:** 498cc **OUTPUT:** 33bhp at 6800rpm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 7.7:1 **FUEL/IGNITION SYSTEM:** Single Amal Monobloc carb, Lucas K2F Magneto ignition **TRANSMISSION:** Non-unit 4-speed gearbox, chain primary drive, wet clutch **CHASSIS:** Steel, single downtube cradle frame **SUSPENSION:** Telescopic fork, hydraulic damping, Rear: 2 x oil damped Girling shock absorbers **WEIGHT:** 390lbs **WHEELBASE:** 55.25inches **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30.5inch **BRAKES:** Front full width sls drum, Rear full width sls drum **WHEELS/TYRES:** Front – 3.25inch x 19inch, Rear – 3.50inch x 19inch **FUEL TANK:** 3.75 gallons **TOP SPEED:** 90mph

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Made to measure specials appear to be the modern way

WORDS & PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

Above: What the modern rider rides to the modern cafe bar, so we're assured

1: Clip-ons and clocks with white faces. Who could ask for more?

2: The compulsory EFi system and ABS control sit behind the engine

3: Upside-down forks and a Brembo caliper, along with ABS set up and alloy rims, make this a decently modern alternative

THE CAFÉ RACER has never really gone out of style, and the factories have recently cottoned on to the idea that riders are happy to buy them new rather than building them themselves. Yamaha and Triumph are turning them out in some numbers. Ducati, which has been making them for longer than anyone, has turned its Scrambler into one. Lower the capacity and the cost a bit, and Enfield is producing its period-feel Continental GT and Mash, their spindly Italianate pastiche, the Trackstar TT40. Italian firm SWM has brought an Italian-Chinese dish to the party with their Gran Milano 440, but their package, which comes in at the same price as the Mash and a few hundred pounds less than the Enfield, is a far more modern offering than either Enfield or Mash, as far as the equipment is concerned, at least.

You tuck yourself into SWM's Gran Milano 440, rather than sit on it. Push your behind up against the neat single seat hump, get your knees firmly wedged under the edges of that curiously shaped tank, stick your feet onto the nicely finished rear-sets and hands on the low and narrow clip-ons and you'll want to head straight for a coffee bar, ideally one a fair distance away. The riding position certainly feels fast, despite the bike having nothing more than a slightly smaller and detuned 1980s Honda 500 engine to propel it along.

If you are hankering after a smart little café racer and your budget doesn't quite stretch to a Triumph Thruxton, then you're probably the potential buyer of a Gran Milano. This is no thrown-together parts bin factory special and neither is it trying to ape some misty-eyed remembered past. Apart from the engine's origins, the rest of the bike is bang up to date. And that engine is now powered by a smooth fuel injection system to comply with Euro 4 regulations rather than a lumpy old carburettor.

The air-cooled four-valve 445cc dry sump single is fettled by Italian brand SWM, using selected components added to an engine unit from the

1

2

3

company's Chinese owners, Shineray. The chassis is a conventional tubular steel twin shock frame, similar to that fitted to SWM's other classics. But it's got up-to-the-minute Fastace multi-adjustable USD forks and a pair of chunky Fastace shocks at the back with a box section swinging arm. Having been forced to fit ABS brakes to the bike by the latest Euro 4 specifications, SWM did not skimp on components, fitting a top-spec Brembo four-pot front brake caliper – as used on Norton's 961 – mated with a crinkly edged disc on the front and a twin pot caliper at the back.

A pair of stainless megaphone-style exhausts swoop backwards and upwards with a lovely bronzed sheen. The baffles are retained by little more than a circlip and a tiny blob of easily ground-away weld, should you want your SWM to sound the part as well as look it. Unlike many other machines using similar engines, SWM seem to have managed to sort out emissions while using a single rather than double catalytic converter, and instead of unsightly sausage-like additions to the pipes at the front of the engine, everything is neatly tucked away in a collector box under the engine. The SWM also has a substantial oil cooler tucked in under the headstock, which will be a useful addition on what is a hot-running mill.

The footrests are quite high, and an average height rider won't have trouble stretching to the neatly finished bars. It's a very Italian riding position, but with a very un-Italian and comfortable solo seat. SWM also provide new owners with a dual seat to go with the Gran Milano, complete with grabrail, high pillion rests and a different rear light assembly, though at a guess this extra won't spend a lot of time out of the box as the Gran Milano is set up for solo riding.

Fire it up and the 445cc motor settles down quickly to a classic-style idle. You're going to need to wring its neck a bit to get the best out of what is a surprisingly revvy single and it feels as if it's uncomfortable and noisy plodding along at low revs, probably because of all the balance shafts and chains whirring around inside.

PRICE GUIDE

£4,999 or a little less, depending

FAULTS & FOIBLES

The gearbox is the SWM's weakest spot. While it moves up and down the box smartly, it is the neutral finding that might irritate in town riding. After a long ride you might find the riding position wearing, and if you are of a shorter or taller stature, make sure it fits you

ALSO CONSIDER

The Mash TT40 is a more traditional looking ride with a nose fairing at the same price, while the Enfield Continental 535 GT has a classically British look. Secondhand, look out for one of the rare but excellent Honda GB400 singles from which the SWM engine is derived.

INFORMATION AND DEALER CONTACTS

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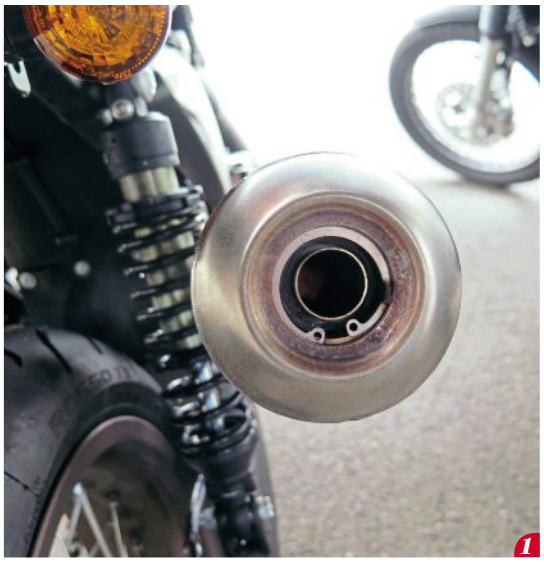
Thor Motorcycles have this SWM Gran Milano, a new 2016 retro café racer on offer at £4999. High spec and in bronze. Contact them on 01208 831774, 07876 343663 or colin@thormotorcycles.co.uk



1: A few minutes with a file and the baffles are out, making the machine louder … if no faster

2: The seat and hump can be removed and a dual-seat substituted

3: Our man in Varese tries the Gran Milano for size

There is an easy solution to this, which is to just open it up at 4,000rpm, which will see the bike leap forward nicely. The rider is definitely in control on the Gran Milano, with a relatively modest 30bhp on tap. The superb ABS brakes will haul what is a relatively light plot to a halt safely and smoothly in all weathers. It's hard to imagine the Gran Milano getting you into any trouble.

ENGINE: Air and oil-cooled, SOHC, 4-valve single with twin counterbalancers and chain driven camshaft **DIMENSIONS:** 90mm x 70mm **CAPACITY:** 445cc **OUTPUT:** 30 bhp and 27 ft lb of torque at 5,500 rpm. **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 10:1. **FUEL/IGNITION SYSTEM:** 36mm electronic fuel injection, electronic ignition with adjustable advance and digital control, electric start. **TRANSMISSION:** Gear primary drive, 6 plate wet cable-operated clutch, 5 speed constant mesh gearbox. **CHASSIS:** Steel, single downtube frame with double-tubed lower subframe. **SUSPENSION:** Front – Upside-down telescopic hydraulic fork fully adjustable, Rear double-hydraulic shock absorber fully adjustable; spring preload adjustment. **WEIGHT:** 319lbs/145kg (dry) **LENGTH:** 82 ins **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32ins **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 7.2ins **BRAKES:** Front, 320 mm floating disc four piston Brembo caliper. Rear 220mm fixed disc twin piston caliper with ABS **WHEELS/TYRES:** Front – Pirelli Diablo Rosso 2 120/70-17 Rear – Pirelli Diablo Rosso 2, 150/60-17, spoked wheels, alloy rims. **FUEL TANK:** 4.8 gallons **TOP SPEED:** 90mph (est) **PRICE:** £4,999 plus otr charges **INFORMATION:** www.swmmotorcycles.co.uk

The Gran Milano is a fun ride with the balance shaft equipped engine vibrating enough to remind you that there is stuff going on below you, but not enough to feel uncomfortable. As on other new SWM models, the gearbox is a little sticky and neutral can be a challenge to find sometimes.

The test bike had a decent set of Pirelli tyres fitted as standard and although the clip-ons make the steering a little heavy at very low speeds, it lightens up nicely once you get going.

A rev limiter kicks in at around 8,800rpm, well short of the 10,000rpm redline on the tacho and the top speed is about 90mph, but the sorts of roads this little bendswinger is built for are not about top speeds. This a is a bike for those long-forgotten A-roads that snake alongside Britain's motorway networks and for well-surfaced country B-roads, ideally on journeys with a pub, café or meeting place at the end of them.

The café racer stance makes the Gran Milano less suitable for long rides than its sister, the Gran Turismo. The buyer is likely to be someone with a classic or two in the garage who wants something that will always get to where it's going without making a fuss, but which also looks good. It's interesting enough to stand out from the crowd and after a hard day at work the possibility of grabbing your helmet, jacket and keys and heading out on a Gran Milano will almost certainly see you choosing a longer route home than is entirely necessary. CBG

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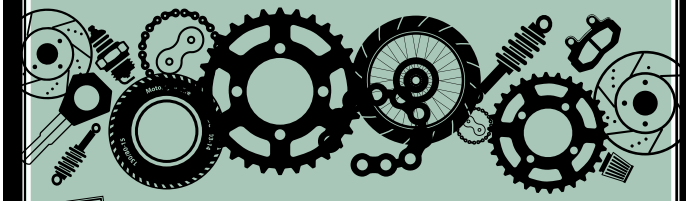

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Customising classics

Purists may feel the need to look away at this point. Is nothing sacred when the customiser gets a grip?

WORDS BY ROB DAVIES **PHOTOS BY** THE BUILDERS THEMSELVES

RIDERS HAVE BEEN altering and modifying their bikes pretty much from day one. While some just want to go that bit faster, others have sought a more individual style to satisfy their creative urges.

Thus the 20th century spawned a range of what I would loosely call 'bike fashions' to include bobbers, choppers, brats, cruisers, street scramblers, café racers and more. Customising was well on its way long before the film Easy Rider came out in 1969, and many – even me – were influenced by the two stars of that movie: the bikes. Some have even committed the dastardly deed – according to some – of customising classic bikes! I can almost feel the shaking of heads from here.

The purist may balk at even the idea of converting say a Vincent or a Brough into a café racer, but I am not going to be drawn into that today. All I wish to do is show you some of the beautiful bikes that are being made by some of the leading customisers from around the world, and maybe an insight into the work and philosophy of the guys who are presently at the cutting edge of the customising scene.

As you are no doubt are aware, the custom scene is huge and global, and Triumph has not long released its latest creation; the Bonneville Bobber. Personally speaking, bobbers are my least favourite style. However – and it's a big however, I have to admit – the bike is growing on me. I should add that it has some clever and innovative features, such as the faux hardtail with its cleverly hidden monoshock. Still, it will be fascinating to see how many of these bikes sell over the ensuing years.

So, right now, I am going to kick off with two creations from the Sinroja brothers – Rahul and Birju – now based in the UK.

Above: The author on his chopped BSA A10 in 1971. "I was pretty proud of this bike back in its day, but it could have done with a raked frame – ah well…"

Below: Replica of the customised Harley-Davidson ridden by Peter Fonda in the movie Easy Rider. The fuel tank of this bike was signed by the actor

Right: Sinroja's BMW R80 Monolever

1: Clean lines, custom leather seat with diamond stitching

2: Minimalist clock and matching leather to the fork tops

3: Sinroja's R3 BMW R100 R Monolever

4: A digital display and warning lights have been skilfully fitted into the top yoke

SINROJA CUSTOM BUILDS

Rahul was born and raised in a small town of no great note in the vast Indian subcontinent, where motorcycles are a ubiquitous daily requirement. His father ran a business manufacturing moulds for shoe soles and injection moulded plastic toys.

As a boy he was fascinated with machinery, and was inspired by his father to make some of his own playthings. At the age of 16, the family upped and moved to England, where he was quickly absorbed into the educational routine of his new country, finishing with a degree in mechanical engineering. He stripped down motorcycles for fun.

While the skills and knowledge he had acquired were percolating below the surface, Rahul was inspired by a visit to The Bike Shed in London, being instantly smitten with the breadth and depth of the motorcycling scene. His first serious build – which he called his R1 – was designed around a 1989 BMW R80 Monolever. The idea behind this was to produce a simple and clean bike, having smooth lines without the usual clutter of cables. The bike was to have a high quality finish, utilising the finest accessories.

Even though the donor bike had been generally looked after, Rahul insisted that everything including the engine came apart to receive individual attention before being rebuilt. The frame, after being de-tabbed and sandblasted, was sprayed gloss black before being fitted with Hagon customised shocks and upgraded fork springs. Motogadget was chosen to supply the speedo and keyless ignition.

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The paint scheme was chosen to give the bike a modern feel, but with a nod to the old school it has BMW pinstripes on the fuel tank. Finally, to balance the brown leather diamond stitched seat, the forks were also covered with the same material – by his mother.

For the R3, Rahul gave the bike the full treatment, which meant full engine, gearbox, carbs strip down. All the electronics were binned too and replaced with brand new wiring by Towza at Towzatronics with the aid of the highly reliable M-unit and the whole set of Motogadget accessories like the front and rear indicators, speedo, grips, M-switches and RFID ignition. The wheels to hold the mighty Coker Beck tyres were custom made with 16 inch stainless rims and spokes thanks to Hagon. Now the beast had a good grip!

While the strip down/mocking up was going on, Rahul came across a set of Yamaha R1 upside down front end forks on eBay – scouring eBay is part of a builder's life. ➧

TRICANA

Jonathan Natario started his Tricana Custom Bike building business in 2011, not long after completing a very tasty Moto Guzzi café racer.

Until 2013 the bike building was just a small affair – this is how these things usually start – but it was the only regular work he had. Then Jonathan decided to move from Portugal to Switzerland, where he commenced working as a motorcycle mechanic in a Harley-Davidson dealership, so bike building had of necessity to take a back seat. Later in 2015 came the opportunity to restart Tricana after renting a garage that had once been a Ducati dealership. It made sense to restart the Ducati business since the equipment was still in place. Later Jonathan added Aprilia to the business.

Featured here are two of his most beautiful custom projects based around a Moto Guzzi and a Triumph Bonneville.

Left: Jonathon astride his customised Bonneville

1: Love the paintwork, but those handlebars look awkward

2: Some tank and seat details

3 & 4: The seat of desire

5: Tricana's seriously fabulous Moto Guzzi

6: The bike they simply call Chrome. Built from a Honda CB900F. Seen here in the build stages

7: The Valkyrie. The original Valkyries were built between 1996 and 2003. A 1500 – later 1800cc – engine derived from the Honda's GoldWing, but with very many differences

8: The finished article. Do you think bikers will ever fall out of love with chromium plating?

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2 WHEELS MIKLOS

This is a closely-knit band of three guys based in Guildford, Surrey. Miklos (Mike) Salamon is the founder and owner. His main focus is sourcing of bikes and parts, design and sales. Alan and Dave are two talented men with many years of motorcycling experience, They run the workshop activities, including fabrication.

2WheelsMiklos restores classic bikes and builds custom bikes on a commission basis. The business also looks after Miklos' 40-strong classic collection – which is open to the public Mondays to Saturdays.

In 2012 Mike's formal business life wound down, and he decided that it was the right time to have a real go at the classic bike scene. "My objective was to find, restore and ride the great bikes of my era. My view on restoration was that the machines should be mechanically and electrically sound and good bikes to ride. They should also be pretty shiny and good looking. I am not wedded to originality for the sake of originality. I also have a real interest in different engine configurations, so some bike have been added to the collection mainly because they are different. Given that I am a mining and not a mechanical engineer, I reckoned that the restorations would be mine to manage, but not to actually do.

6

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"The number of bikes and associated projects grew apace. Along the way it became apparent that the collection would rapidly outgrow the room available at my home. I also realised that I really wanted to get more personally involved in the actual restoration process.

"This led to taking premises at Astra House in Cranleigh, the establishment of a formal workshop and recruitment of Alan Wells. By the end of 2013 we again could see we were outgrowing our space. So we took the decision to move again and to use this as the catalyst to start serving the public as well. Since mid-2014 our premises are at Stag Hill on the A3 south in Guildford. Workshop capacity has been doubled and Dave Taylor joined at the same time. In our new facility we have built some 20 customs, increased the collection to 40 bikes and done numerous whole or part restorations for customers.

Featured here are a custom Honda CB900F café racer and a Honda Valkyrie (1500cc flat six) tracker.

8

6/5/4 MOTORS

6/5/4 Motors is a bike building company based in chilly Stockholm, with Johan Orrestedt, Johan Nordin and Daniel Jakobsson turning mainly old bikes into high quality café racers, scramblers and street trackers.

Together they started to build bikes in 2012 and became a business two years later. They have a garage in Södermalm, Stockholm, situated below Johan Orrestedt's Surfshop that sells surfboards, clothes, outdoor gear and great coffee. The 6/5/4 garage is divided into two parts: where 6/5/4 Motors wrench bikes for clients, and where they rent out space for people who want to work on their own custom bikes. Currently they have 40 tenants.

"We build customised motorcycles – mainly motorcycles with knobbly tyres since we think the best way to enjoy a motorcycle ride is in the dirt…"

Above: The 6/5/4 guys tweaked the Triumph's lines by raising the rear of the fuel tank slightly to straighten it out. They also built a new seat on a plastic moulded base, covering it in black leather. The frame rails were trimmed down slightly and mounts added for the turn signals. The rear guard and the slimmer side covers are JVB Moto parts. The most obvious visual cue is the Arrow two-into-one exhaust system – an aftermarket part specific to the Scrambler

Below: This cool green Ducati 860 GT is as cool as a combination of chocolate and mint – in fact you may wish to ride it and then eat it. The guys had some very particular ideas for the project, so they settled on the GT as a donor. The spectacular engine, the iconic tank and that flat frame line were too good to overlook. Finding an 860 GT in Sweden seemed like an impossible task. However, after a month of hunting around, the team struck gold with a mid-1970s GTS variant. The owner was a Ducati aficionado who had kept the bike in a barn for years, so it took huge promises to keep the bike 'more-or-less' original to pry it from his hands

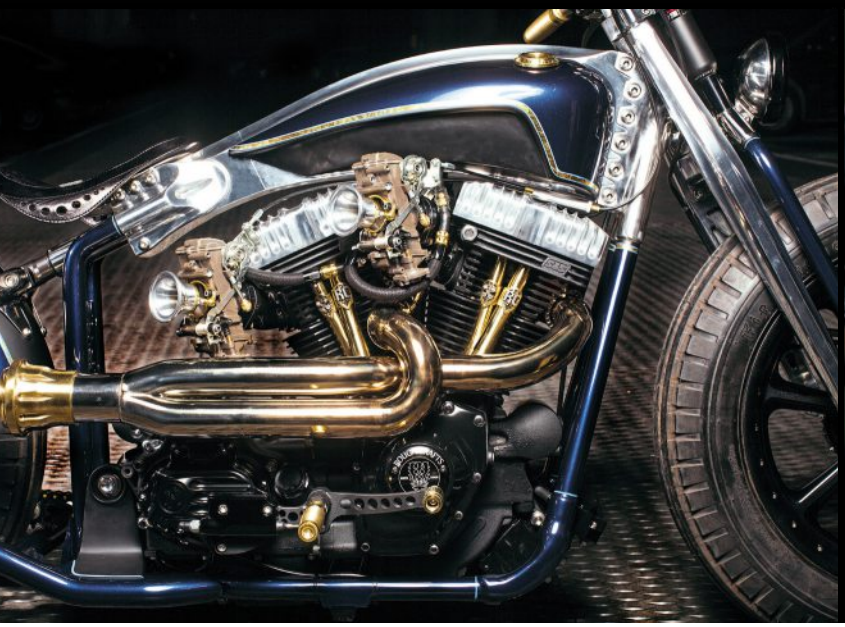
WINSTON YEH, ROUGH CRAFTS

I have to admit that Winston is one of my favourite designers. Though still a young man, he has such a great talent and a natural eye for what makes a beautiful bike; so I am going to be indulgent and feature my favourite of his many truly wonderful creations.

Winston Yeh, who is now back in his home country of Taiwan after a spell in the US, would confirm with a grin that nerdy young kids who play with such mind stretching toys as Lego Technics can and will grow to be wildly creative adults. Since founding his custom bike company back in 2010, Winston has gone on to win some very prestigious awards for his motorcycles.

When a friend at the college of Art and Design in Pasadena bought a flighty Yamaha 150, Winston liked it so much he bought one of his own, and started a lifetime of tinkering with two-wheeled machinery.

His break into bike design was a unique journey. While still at college he won an eBay collection of bike parts, and promptly drove over to the seller's address to pick them up, only to discover that the building was the headquarters of Performance Machines, guys who design and make bolt-on accessories for Harley-Davidson. The manager asked kindly why an Asian kid would want these parts. Winston explained that he was studying art and design at the local college. The manager introduced Winston to the head of the company's design department, the famous Roland Sands, who was intrigued by Winston's attitude. Winston showed Sands some of his designs of graffiti walls that he had recently done, and Sands invited him to decorate one of their interior walls! Winston took up that challenge and got on with it. They were impressed.



Two weeks later, Winston was invited back to design T-shirts, and ended up working for Performance Machines for the next nine months as graphic designer. During that productive period, he soaked up new information and then took his new skills and knowledge back to his home country of Taiwan, where his company, Rough Crafts, has built a niche global reputation, receiving praise from many... including his former mentor Roland Sands.

Urban Cavalry was commissioned by Harley-Davidson Taiwan. "It's unexpected to hear them giving me 100% freedom of design and direction of the bike, so I decided to go the total opposite of what 'Harley people' usually expect to see for custom, to reverse the usual Harleys' heavy, bad stopping and lazy suspension. I decided to go the full performance route, but still trying to keep the 'Rough Crafts look' intact. I chose a Dyna platform, as I think it's got the good bike size/engine power balance and the potential for good handling.

The whole bike is based on vintage lines, with all modern tech. The look was going for a vintage rigid/springer bike but made with modern CNC billet and tubing bolted together.

It's a soft tail with underseat rear shock and billet rear wheel mounts. The front springer forks use air shocks. Front and rear Beringer inboard brakes are used with the rear modified to make a vintage drum brake look. The engine has dual front S&S heads with dual FCR carbs, Rough Crafts custom made billet lifter blocks."

This all sounds like a list of individual bike components, but Winston's eye is on every detail. He has named the bike after its secondary colour, the semi-gloss grey by Air Runner, but for me, the jewel-like quality of that blue with its gold pin stripes is simply sublime. CBG

Top left: Is this art or what? A close up of Winston's metalwork, and there aren't enough superlatives to describe this view

Below: Rough Crafts' Urban Cavalry

Top Right: A view of the beautifully and cleverly designed aluminium billet backbone that divides the fuel tank into two halves. Into the left half goes all the electrical gubbins, while fuel goes conventionally into the right half

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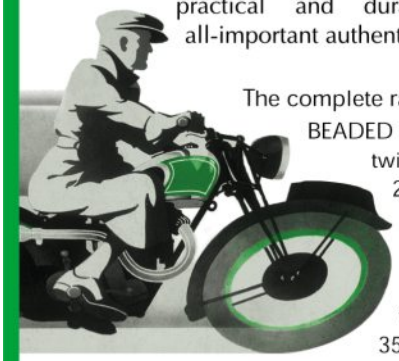

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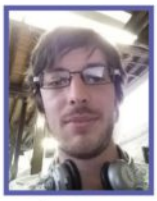

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WORDS & PHOTOS BY OLIVER HULME

HUNTING FOR A CLASSIC? You can trawl the classifieds for hours, or hunt through the dealers who advertise in magazines and have websites to trawl through. Some of the dealers will have bikes which will be immaculate, but rather more rare are those sellers that have a collection of restorable relics. Finding somewhere with a good mix of all kinds of classics at reasonable prices is no easy task. Most of the time they will be miles away, with several visits needed before the money changes hands and you wheel or ride away your purchase.

But if you are the kind of buyer prepared to take a chance, to find a potential bargain and pick it up in an instant, then an auction is the place to be.

Richard Edmonds' classic car and motorcycle auctions are held regularly near Chippenham in Wiltshire. In the past the bikes have been outshone by the tents full of Ferrari and Mercedes supercars, but their June auction saw their biggest collection of motorcycles yet to go under the hammer – the variety was impressive. You could bid on rusty veterans, shiny thundering beasts from the 60s, Japanese classics and some decidedly modern offerings, all at affordable guide prices.

If you are a seller, the Edmonds auctions have an added attraction – there's a flat £30 seller's fee; though extra costs falls on the buyer. With 12-20% on top of their bid to add to their asking price, buyers have to have a rapid grasp of mental arithmetic. And they'll be making their decision in the middle of what can an adrenaline rush too, which is something you're never going to experience in a dealership trying to knock the seller down a few pounds. But if you set your top price, keep your nerve and stick to it, you might just make off with a bargain.

The next Edmonds' auction is on October 26-28, with the vehicle auction taking place on October 28. Visit richardedmonds auctions.com

1973 TRIUMPH ADVENTURER 500

TARGET ONE AT the auction was this Triumph Adventurer. These bikes feature a single carb 500cc Triumph twin engine in a modified BSA B50 off-roader frame. The Adventurer and the US version of the bike – the Trophy Trail – are the flavour of the month for many. Some very dog-eared Trophy Trails are coming back to the UK from across the pond and appear on offer unregistered and needing restoration at £5,000 and more. A well sorted and restored Adventurer will set you back £8,000. It looks like the model that could be the next Triumph X75 Hurricane, the factory custom triple that Triumph couldn't give away in the UK when it first appeared but will now cost you £30,000.

The Adventurer was the last new 500cc Triumph model made in the Meriden factory and was built in relatively small numbers with lots of unique parts.

Edmonds had an Adventurer on offer, or at least 60-70 per cent of one – with a guide price of £800-1,000. But what you saw was what you got. There was no carb, no wheels, brakes or controls and no electrical componentry barring a pair of coils. The seat was tired but the alloy tank was good. The engine had the coating of white alloy corrosion typical of a mill that had clearly spent a lot of time in the open or at in least damp storage, though it had been sealed from the elements.

The bike was UK registered and should have been a UK model, but the frame had possibly spent a lot of time in the open too, before a coat of black paint had been applied to cover up surface corrosion, something that would need stripping off for refinishing. There was no sign of a frame number, which could have been painted over, but the engine number matched the log book. There were a few interested punters so it seemed unlikely that the self-imposed budget of £1550, to which you should add almost £200 for the buyer's premium, was going to cut it.

When the lot came up there were also a number of telephone and internet bidders, and it started at £800. It headed past the £1550 limit in a heartbeat, bounced past £2000 and was secured at £2100 by a telephone bidder. As a result, there is no Adventurer in the garage.

1999 TRIUMPH ADVENTURER 900

THERE WAS ANOTHER Triumph Adventurer on offer, this one a Hinckley 900 triple. The hefty water-cooled, 12-valve triple engine has the same 885cc lump as the Triumph Thunderbird 900, and that model's steel spine frame and other cycle parts including front forks, rear shock, wheels and brakes.

The Adventurer was a sort of factory custom, being fitted with raised handlebars, a large rear mudguard, extra chrome on the engine, cam and radiator covers and megaphone-shaped silencers. It was one of the best-selling bikes in the late 90s Triumph line-up.

With a long-held hankering after a Thunderbird in mind, the Adventurer was on the target list for a bid. This machine was from a deceased estate and research indicated that the owner was one of those almost mythical bidders who bought bikes, became bored with them and parked them up after a few thousand miles. With a guide price of £1,500 - 2,000 it looked affordable even if the expected price went beyond that, especially as a squint at the internet showed that a 900 Adventurer can go for £3,000-4,000. However there was just one snag. A large cardboard sign on the clocks indicated that the engine had no oil in it. That meant that if won, it would be impossible to start, let alone ride home and it was going to be a big lump of motorcycle to store. The bigger question and to which there was no satisfactory answer was why was the oil drained?

Some of Triumph's 900 engines had an issue with the primary drive, and if this was the case with the Adventurer, it was going a big and possibly pricey engine removal job to recover it. When it came to it, the bravery needed to take on the task escaped this bidder. But someone has got a bargain as the Adventurer was knocked down for just £1,100 and the decision not to bid will haunt for a while, with only the consolation being that what was really desired was a Thunderbird.

1978 SUZUKI GT185

THIS LITTLE 1970S two-stroke twin was next on the list of desirable buys. Disc-braked with Suzuki's Ram-air cooled engine, the GT185 was an archetypal teenage tearaway's steed when new, usually piloted by those whose pocket couldn't quite run to a 250.

Most of these little screamers have rotted away by now, despite being sold in big numbers, but this example was in good condition, having been owned for much of its life by a more mature rider. At first appearance, the non-original paintwork could have meant it would be ignored by the purists, but the chrome was in good condition and apart from a little fraying around the seat and the occasional ding on the tank it looked like a good option. It had a MoT, ran and was SORNed.

1918 TRIUMPH MODEL H

NOT ON THE buying list but utterly desirable was this 1918 Triumph Model H. The Model H was born in the First World War, and 57,000 of them were built – mostly to help reduce the army's reliance on horses.

A 550cc sidevalve single, the Model H became known as 'The Trusty' as it proved reliable in wartime conditions, despite a weakness in the front fork spring – despatch riders would strap a leather belt around it as a precaution.

The Model H was almost obsolete by the time the war ended and it didn't have enough speed for racing, which was one of the principal markets for motorcycles at the time, so huge numbers of WD surplus bikes were dumped on the market. Production ended in 1923.

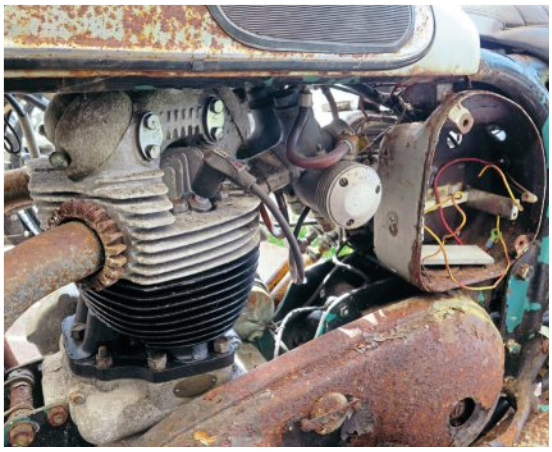
This Model H is the archetypal barn find. Built in February 1918 for the War Department, it entered civvy street in 1919, being bought by one Nathaniel Carter. In 1926 he wheeled it into a dry barn, and there it stayed until 2013, when Nathaniel's sister gave it to her nephew. Even the original tyre pump was in place on the front forks, the magneto sparked, and it is rumoured to have briefly run, despite having a broken valve-lifter cable. The Model H came with a copy of the original log book. With a guide price of £6-8,000 the hammer fell at £8,200 and we almost hope the new owner keeps it in this condition.

With a guide of £1,000-1,500 it could be affordable, and given that it was surrounded by a horde of British classics the hope was that it was going to be overlooked. A top bid of £1,100 was decided upon but the growing popularity of 70s Japanese two-strokes had been overlooked. Auction staff indicated that it had been one of the most enquired after lots.

The bidding started at £600 and skipped up in £20 and then £50 jumps. Bidding wasn't as frenetic as expected, but it made it to £1,000 and then another bidder jumped in with a £1,100 offer. While there was the temptation to break the self-imposed limit and take it to £1,200 it was resisted and at that point the hammer fell. He who hesitates is lost.

1960 NORTON 650

ONE FOR THE keen restorer was this 1960 Norton 650. Lightly café racered at some point in the past 57 years, the 650 was covered in a layer of grime and dust – as all the best barn finds are. Most of the tinware was present, though there wasn't a sign of one side panel or the front mudguard, while the rear had been replaced by an elongated café racer seat designed for two. The clocks had been fitted on lower mounts and the chrome on the tank was done for. In a wideline Featherbed frame, the 650 had frame and engine numbers that were not even close to matching, which might be important for a collector, but less so for someone just looking for something to ride. While it looked like a big job, the complete nature of the Norton meant it was a realistic project, with not a lot to source, but a lot to renovate. With restored mid-60s 650 Nortons currently nudging around the £8,000 mark the guide price of £2,000 to £3,000 looked like realistic numbers, even given the bike's lack of heritage and similar lack of originality – no Norton 650 engines were used in wideline featherbeds. Bidders obviously agreed and it slipped past the £3,000 mark to £3,100 before bidding ended.



2003 YAMAHA FJR 1300

SOMETIMES THE BIKES on offer just don't seem to capture the punter's imagination. This Yamaha FJR1300 was close to spotless and from the same estate as the Triumph 900 Adventurer. The bike had been unused since its MoT ran out a year ago. A big, mile-munching beast with very few miles on the clock, the Yamaha was an example of a machine that had been a cutting-edge sports tourer back in its day and had been offered with an estimate of £2-3,000. But for some reason it didn't pique any interest at all and despite the best efforts of the auctioneer it slumped to just £1,000 without a single bid before being withdrawn.

BSA MÉTISSE 350

THIS MÉTISSE FRAMED special looked like being a lot of fun for a buyer. Although covered in a fine layer of garage grime, the Métisse frame and tank were in excellent condition. Unusually for a Métisse off-roader, this frame was road-registered and looked like it needed nothing more than the installation of a hot BSA unit single engine to hit the roads and trails. This should not have been much of a problem given the relatively easy availability of the engine units, even if the one that came with the bike turned out to be scrap – although that engine certainly looked sound from the outside. It came with a log book, factory brochure and an original buyer's receipt indicating that someone had paid £3000 for the frame kit alone. The Métisse had the appearance of being a real pocket-sized gem and with a guide price of just £1200-1,800 it had a few wallets twitching. Sadly for the buyers, but not the seller, that turned out to be wide of the mark and the package was hard fought over, finally selling for £4,200.

1962 BSA A10

THIS BSA A10 was a rather lovely beast, built up for reliability and comfort rather than show. It featured alloy head and full width alloy brake hubs, and the seller had splashed out £1,000 on an SRM conversion including the company's famous main bearing upgrade. As well as that, the head had been reworked so the old engine could run happily on unleaded fuel. The high pipes were a delightful addition – this was a bike that looked ripe for a new owner to go out and enjoy straightaway, with the only issue being a wildly out of shape sidestand. It was the kind of machine that comes up so very rarely – an honest and under-restored British classic.

For some reason it just couldn't attract any excitement in the hall. It took a while to get it up close to the £3,000-3,500 guide price, the hammer finally falling at £2,700, leaving the top bidder waiting as the auctioneers negotiated with the seller to see if they would let it go for less than the cost of a new Chinese 250.

1976 HARLEY-DAVIDSON ELECTRA GLIDE

THERE AREN'T MANY motorcycles as all-round American as the Electra Glide. This is a big machine, and was an imposing beast when this particular bike rolled off the line in 1976. From memory the only bike that could beat it in Top Trumps was the Münch Mammoth.

The Electra Glide was so named because it was fitted with an electric start, which was something of an innovation for the Milwaukee firm. The big beast was sold as a 1200 until 1979 when it was offered as a 1300. Similar machines following the basic concept are still on sale today – Harleys are consistent, if nothing else.

This particular Harley has suffered a little from being stored in the UK climate after being imported from Florida in 1999. Some of the aftermarket ancillary bits were covered in flaking chrome and there was white corrosion on the alloy parts. It was used on the road as recently as two years ago and was ridden into the auctioneer's tent. If it reached the guide price of £5-6,000 it would be a challenge to turn into a shining example and Harley-Davidson were notorious for making tiny tweaks to their engineering which can make sourcing parts an issue.

But it was all there and included the original fairing, top box and panniers, all of which were in good condition.

Bidding was sluggish, and didn't get the first bid until it fell to £2,000, growing slowly until it reached £3,700. This was a good price for someone prepared to put the work in, or indeed for someone who just wants to turn a jet washer on it and use it as it is.

1964 BSA B40

ANOTHER BSA THAT failed to make its guide price was this smart BSA B40 single. The 350cc B40 was developed from the C15 250 and served as a military mount and police machine as well as being a popular ride to work transport for many a worker in the 1960s. There were lots of B40s made and spares availability is good, but the guide price of £2,550-2,750 was possibly viewed by many as a bit optimistic for such a workaday machine. This one also suffered from an incontinent gearbox and was leaking oil like a true British classic, although cosmetically it was in an excellent state having undergone a major restoration job. It had been converted to 12V electrics and came with logbook, a meticulously prepared journal indicating just how much work had been carried out, including receipts, an original BSA service book, and a spares catalogue. Indeed it could be this level of preparation which had fixed the seller's price, which was by no means excessive. Sadly, there were no takers for the venerable 350 at the required price, and it was withdrawn after only making it to £1,800.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY PAGE 8

OTHERS

THE DIFFICULTY OF predicting what people are prepared to pay for classic motorcycles was most evident at this auction. A rotting Bantam with no documents was given a guide price of £100-150 but sold for £320. A tiny Honda Dax monkey bike was estimated at £200-400 but sold for £1,450, while a tidy 1970s Honda CB750 Four estimated at £3,000-4,000 limped as far as £1,950 and stopped. A Honda CB250N SuperDream optimistically priced at £2,200-2,500 made £1,600 before bidding ended. Variety in all things, then. CBG

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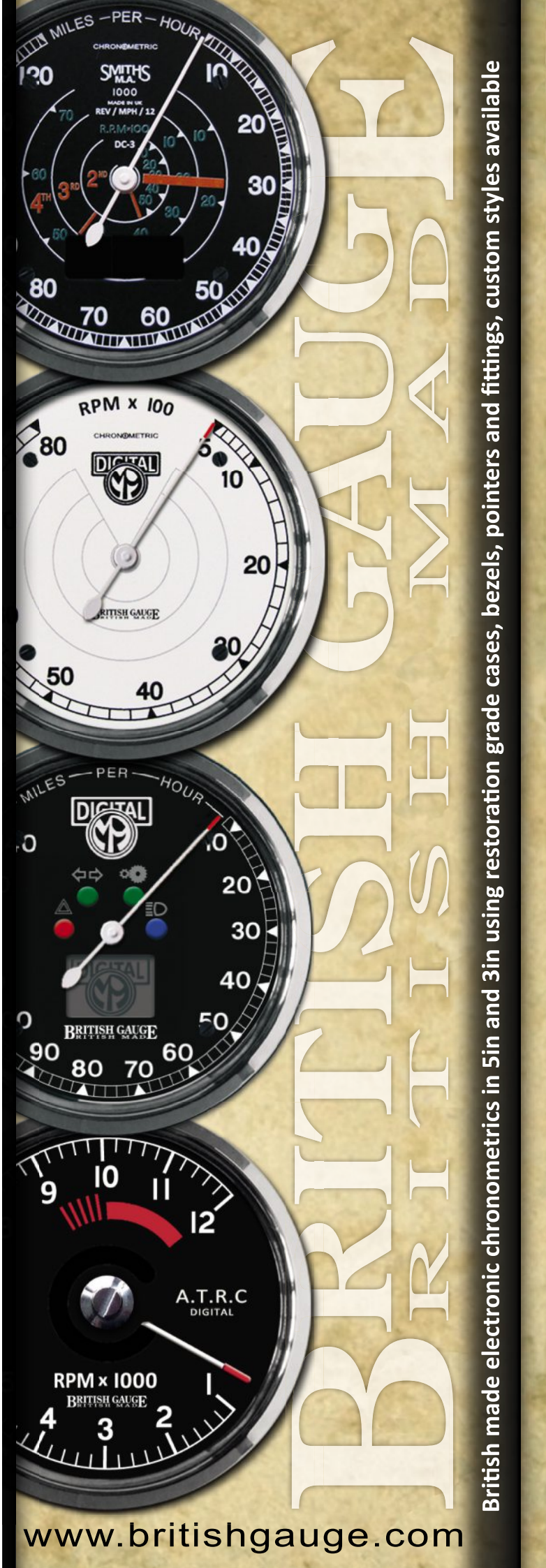

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RIDINGLIFE

THREE CYLINDERS GOOD

FRANK MELLING'S VIEWS were definitely a different slant on the 750 BSA-Triumph triple and, while thought provoking and informative, the article was also bizarrely negative. The collapse of the British bike industry is tragic and well documented. To suggest that the Rocket 3 / Trident should shoulder some of the blame is certainly controversial. I don't agree, but anyway it's pointless.

The triple was the best that could be developed at that time due to the lack of investment in R&D and modern tooling combined with factory politics and myopic management only concerned with short-term profits, as personified by Edward Turner. The triple was a casualty of a failing industry and not a cause. Hence the designers were constrained by production realities and worn out machinery. So no horizontally split engine cases, no ohc, no electric start, no disc brakes, etc.

Surely it is not the fault of the machine or Doug Hele that BSA management delayed the launch by years? Melling acknowledges the constraints Doug Hele dealt with in developing the triple. To call him a wonderful engineer but a "garden shed designer" is a laughable insult to a true engineering genius, even if it was tongue-in-cheek (or not). Surely any blame for the design lies with BSA management for diluting resources on the ill-fated Bandit / Fury, and who employed Ogle with a poor brief and not the engine designer?

Melling states "three cylinder machines have a fanatical following and their acolytes will hear no wrong of them". I own two triples and I'm a member of TR3OC. I'm neither an acolyte or a Luddite. I'm a Brit bike enthusiast and I particularly like triples. They have no more faults than any other old British clunker. They benefit enormously from modern upgrades and engineering to produce a thrilling riding experience.

The styling was controversial, perhaps it was ahead of its time as most manufacturers adopted rectangular styling in the 1980s. Many of these have not aged as well. Nowadays triples are relatively rare and distinctive bikes that draw positive comments from bystanders and enthusiasts alike.

Melling concludes that a "sublimely restored Rocket 3 is one of the most impressive motorcycles in the world and rather cheap at £15,000". At least we agree on that! Then he suggests that a BSA Spitfire is a better bike and £6000 less. I hardly think so. The weak points of the original triple (no electric boot, only four gears, Amals and drum brakes) are equally present on a Spitfire of similar vintage but apparently this doesn't matter on a twin. Objective journalism…

In any case, only speculators and certain dealers are punting Rocket 3s at £15,000. A T150 is basically the same bike. It benefits from further factory development in later models, and a good T150 can easily be bought for under £9000, although prices are rising. For the performance, sound and riding experience, a well-sorted triple represents a real bargain compared to many other classic bikes. The ray gun silencers are now viewed as an iconic design, and rightly so.

As a proud triple owner, I feel better now.
John Rimmer

ATLAS, AT LAST

IT WAS NICE to see a positive review of the Norton Atlas. I bought a low mileage but cosmetically challenged example several years ago, and right away understood why there was all the fuss about the featherbed frame and Roadholder forks. The torque is fabulous and it doesn't vibrate. However, it also didn't stop, until I added a 2ls brake with stiffening kit. But after owning several pre-unit and unit Triumphs, I was converted.
John Anton

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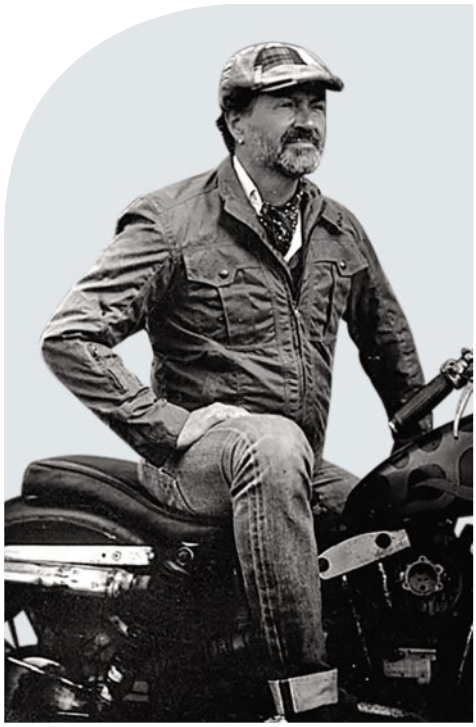

PAUL D'ORLÉANS

Ageless and evergreen

Inspiration is everywhere; we just need to recognise it

IT WAS BACK at Wheels & Waves #1 – that's 2012 – when I first heard the query: "Have we crested the new wave of customs?" I wrote a column here in *CBG* about the same subject, four years ago, and came to a negative conclusion. Actually today, I viddied a Piaggio Ciao moped transformed into a sleek turquoise drag-racing sled, complete with supercharger. I'd never seen a Ciao anything like so transformed, even though the Moped Army movement predates the Alt Custom scene by several years. Nobody mentions it, but the mopedistas deserve credit for injecting new life into the world of motorcycles. Yes, it was mopeds that started this revolution, and as most people learn to ride on small bikes, how totally apropos a whole new scene grew from our mutual humble beginnings. Not that the moped gang are humble, mind you.

In a related note, also today I reminded the Ignorant of Instagram (oh, it's a time consuming job, and I'm a jerk for doing it) that the Harley-Davidson was never the exclusive subject of customisation in the 1950s, neither before nor after. Even the notorious Galloping Gooses, Hells Angels, and Boozefighters rode Triumphs, BSAs, and anything else they could get their impecunious mitts on; they rode and modified what they could afford, which was, basically, anything cheap. As my friend Mike Vils, an employee of 'Big Daddy' Ed Roth in the late 1960s, would say – it was 'no money' bike building. Nationalism and brand loyalty came much later. Even Sonny Barger admits he 'had no politics' until he and the Oakland Hells Angels spontaneously waded into a Berkeley protest march against the Vietnam War, circa 1969, and began busting heads (with the local police watching on). His political epiphany coincided with the sale of Harley-Davidson to AMF, and the rapid downward slide of marque's quality control and reliability. Had it not been for the suddenly nationalistic, xenophobic political tendencies of their domestic base, the venerable H-D would no doubt have gone the way of Indian.

Which is a roundabout way of saying 1: Don't believe the hype, and 2: the Alt. Custom scene is amazingly inclusive, and made of durable stuff. I was at Wheels & Waves in June, at the ArtRide exhibition, and was approached by a charming gent from Indonesia, whose custom shop I'd written about for The Ride: 2nd Gear (Thrive Motorcycles). I've also written about shops from Vietnam, Bali, China, India, Russia, Ukraine, Mexico, etc. What I loved about Thrive was the unique, strangely architectural take on bodywork design, like a cross between a 1960s MZ Trophy and a model for a Brutalist housing project. Clearly, from the Piaggio Ciao I mentioned previously, not only am I capable of being surprised by new customs, but also that surprise happens frequently.

That entertaining, novel stuff emerges regularly from the global ideas factory shouldn't surprise me at all. Innovation, difference, and uniqueness have been the rule in the exploration of what happens between two axles since 1867. It's when we're no longer excited by random bike photos that the industry is in big trouble, which pretty much defines a generation of bikes post-1990 for me. New bikes got plasticised, custom bikes seemed to be all about fat tyres and oversize S&S motors, with lurid, lowbrow paint schemes and bikini babes de rigueur. If you need a naked woman to make your bike interesting, your bike isn't interesting.

Perhaps I was always so inclined, but it seems my bent towards vintage machinery starting in the 1980s had much to do with the dwindling aesthetic joy I felt from new motorcycles. Things only got worse, to my eye, as the years progressed, barring the occasional masterpiece from Tamburini et al. Old motorcycles, with timeless shapes from the pen of an Edward Turner or George Brough, always brought pleasure, a desire for ownership, and a lust for riding. That's exactly the job of good design. How things got so bad in the Dark Years is another subject (ah! Another column idea), but the corporatisation of design schools certainly had a hand, as did the sheer expense of producing new models, which turned big companies into knock-kneed scaredy-cats.

How amazing was the Moped Army's impact on motorcycling? They showed the way; that bikes could be just for fun, that riding something utterly silly didn't mean you'd ride alone, and that there's no reason to be afraid to chop cheap bikes. Twenty years later, industrial motorcycle design teams admit to copying customisers' ideas and trends to guide their new models, and OEM bikes are looking interesting again.

The ArtRide thing is leading the industry. Will the wave crash? Yes. Times change, motorcycles change, politics change. I guarantee, we'll look back on this period of motorcycling as an absolute golden age, when all things were possible, and wacky, gasoline-swilling art pieces could be ridden on public roads. Dig it, and do it now. CBG

'I guarantee, we'll look back on this period of motorcycling as an absolute golden age, when all things were possible, and wacky, gasoline-swilling art pieces could be ridden on public roads…'

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**

Instant classics

Williams thinks that the Chinese may've got it made

I DIDN'T, AFTER all, attend the annual Wheels'n'Waves custom bikes festival I ambitiously alluded to in May's column, partly because I didn't trust that my customised Honda Ascot, with its iffy electrics and teeny fuel capacity, would get me there and back. And I couldn't really go on anything as conventional as an unmodified K75 and not get sneered at. But there was also the little matter of taking over a week out of my busy schedule for no pecuniary gain whatsoever; i.e. I couldn't get anyone to pay me to write about it.

No surprises there in this blighted age of dwindling magazine readerships and attention spans decimated by digital dystopia, but the whole business of classical and customable classic bike travel does open up the tendentious issue of newly minted nostalgia. In case you hadn't noticed – and you'd be quite wise not to have done, at least blood pressure-wise – lots of modern motorcycle manufacturers are offering models that draw heavily on the design cues of the past. And I'm not, as I've touched on in past columns, just talking the short-run, big ticket brands like the revived Brough Superior and Norton outfits: if you want a bike that looks sort of old but performs like a sort-of modern Superbike and you've got the wallet-capacity to warrant it, then good luck to you.

But what are more pertinent to me and my sternly proscriptive bank manager – well manageress, actually – are a whole slew of smaller capacity machines made by companies you may never have heard of, names like Mutt, Herald, SWM, Sinnis and one you may have heard of ('cause I've tested 'em for this magazine), Mash.

In fact to say 'made by' is a bit of a fib, because with the arguable exception of SWM, which are at least assembled in Italy, these names amount to little more than badges and livery applied to run-of-the-mill production models made in their thousands in huge Chinese factories. But therein lies the rub, or at least the nub of the matter.

One of the common criticisms levelled by the contemporary motorcycle media, and justifiably so, is that Chinese bikes are of old fashioned designs, patchy build quality and limited performance – just like many of those built here in Britain in the 1960s and 70s which at least in appearance they resemble. The very good reason for this, at least for the looks and the performance, is that the engines they use are licensed or in some cases knocked-off versions of air-cooled, single cylinder motors found in Hondas, Suzukis and Yamahas from the 1970s and 80s. And although some of these huge Chinese companies like Shineray and Zongshen have stuck these power plants into what at least superficially look like modern Japanese sportsbikes, they look more appropriate in what look like old fashioned commuter and off-road machines from – what else? – the 1970s and 80s.

So bikes like Mash's RoadStar and TT400, Sinnis' 250 Retrostar and several derivations of the 250cc and 125cc-engined models offered by Herald and Mutt all look and indeed are suitably retro – 'retro' being the posh term for 'old fashioned' and frequently misused for 'classic'. Mutt has even and somehow got the rights to the New Imperial brand name which it's applied to several obviously old looking models, including one that uses the same 400cc engine that powers the Mashers. And talking of ancient brand-names, after the demise of the UK factory AJS never really disappeared, with small-scale production of Starmaker and Rotax based off-roaders continuing at the late 'Fluff' Brown's Andover works, and it now flourishes with the import of various Chinese bikes, most notably the café-racer styled Cadwell 125 built by Jianshe.

And having road-tested quite a few of these bikes, I have to say that although not entirely up to current standards of Japanese or European build quality, they look and feel very similar to the build quality of 30 or 40 years ago and as I've already noted, with performance to match. The difference, of course, is that these new, old-looking machines cost lots less than most old, old-looking machines. And although they certainly won't appreciate in value as they get old and get used, they will probably get used far more than those real classic bikes which venture gingerly out on the road only on high days and summer holidays.

And as I've already mentioned, most of these new ranges offered for sale in Britain include several different iterations of the same basic air-cooled, single cylinder motor and twin-shock chassis, be they street scrambler, café-racer, flat-tracker or classic commuter, so it's easy enough to find something that would meet your need for nostalgia, if indeed you have one. And I do. So for example, Mash's DirtStar or RoadStar would've suited my need for something sprauncy and appropriately 'different' to ride down to France for the Wheels'n'Waves wingding, and if they weren't quite 'different' enough, then as with Mutt Motorcycles, fully customised versions are available via third-party colleagues, albeit at a price.

Indeed because these bikes really are much cheaper than what's on offer from mature, mainstream brands – a Mash Roadstar is £3999 compared to, say, £5799 for Honda's current CB500, the Sinnis 250 RetroStar just £2499 – they're an attractive proposition for naive optimists like me who think they can build something special out of something that isn't already special enough. And something special that works. CBG

'Bikes like Mash's RoadStar, Sinnis' Retrostar and several derivations of the models offered by Herald and Mutt all look and indeed are suitably retro – 'retro' being the posh term for 'old fashioned'…'

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

Never meet your heroes

When overpriced and overvalued mean the same thing…

THEY SAY YOU should never meet your heroes, it will end in disappointment. I think I broadly agree with that statement, having met a couple of musical legends who sit high in my personal pantheon and finding them to be either dull or boorish. There was of course that time I met Bryan Ferry and was too star-struck to even speak, my brain preferring to simply flap my mouth in his august presence until he, correctly, assumed I must be the idiot the village had lost earlier that week. He remains untouchable to me.

I've also enjoyed the surreal experience of sharing a midweek curry meal with one of the greatest living grand prix riders of all time, a King among his peers. It was certainly memorable. But some racers, like many footballers, are very, very good at their chosen profession, yet not necessarily the best company.

Bikes, too. You've got a bucket list of lottery win-busting classics and so have I. Lots of people lust after a BSA Gold Star; there's a very good argument in favour of keeping that lust unsated. A challenging riding position, racing gearbox and carburettor issues do not always make a good first impression. One of my buddies recently spent a long day in the saddle of a Laverda Jota, his boyhood bedroom pin-up. On handing it back at the end of the day he declared it an interesting experience, but one he'd never wish to repeat, so bad was the pain in his back, neck and wrists.

And so it was that I found myself riding down for a rendezvous with one of my two-wheeled greatest desires. It was a pre-war V-twin with hand change and a very distinctive petrol tank. Even better, it was for sale and rendered vaguely affordable due to a slight wrinkle in the provenance, all-important at this end of the market. When I talk affordability, it still cost the equivalent of three Gold Stars (the new bitcoin), but remained the only possible way into this most exclusive of riding clubs. In order to buy it I would need to sell several of my nicest machines, so the actual riding experience had to be at least as good as all of the others, preferably at the same time.

Getting closer, I began to think of it as 'my' bike, had a new name for it, something that rhymes with Boanerges and wondered if I could get a crash helmet with Arab headdress attached. I was in a very good place inside my head.

The bike glistened in the sunshine and it looked… incredible. This bike, as lovely as I'd hoped, was, however, sold as a budget bitsa when new, a way for the factory to use up stocks of old parts gathering dust. And it rode like it, too. Although a mid-1930s machine, it rode like a bike from early the previous decade. Large wheels and very skinny tyres, terrible forks and a primitive motor, never was engineering progress made more apparent than now. It was, frankly, awful. The kind of bike you might wheel out of the shed basking in the gasps of admiration from your mates and then push quickly back in lest they suggest going for a ride on the wretched thing. Or buy as an investment, of course.

And there's the nub of the problem. This legendary machine was highly expensive, highly prized and highly collectable, but failed in any meaningful way to be a fun bike to actually ride, the real point of them, surely? Too new to mix with the Banbury drippers, too much of a boneshaker to hang out with the guys on their relatively sophisticated Thirties machines, it seemed a bike lost in translation, somehow. The company was famous for its supersports machines, of course, and the dealer just happened to have a couple in stock, priced well into six figures territory.

I would contend they no longer function as motorcycles when they reach that point, rather they belong as part of a portfolio of alternative investments, alongside the vintage wines and rare stamps. Each to their own, of course; their money to do with as they wish, but surely, bikes are for riding? I can envisage a time, in the not-too-distant future, when the only occasions we might see and hear such machines running will be at exclusive revivals; the sort of place I wouldn't get an invite to, of course,, and the biggest classic shows. How long before Vincents go the same way? Followed by Gold Stars, Rudges and so forth. I've already been advised not to ride one of my bikes because 'it's too valuable to use' on the road. What am I supposed to do with it, then? It's useless as a hat stand or coffee table.

The Arab headgear rests atop my welding bottles, it looks almost human… CBG

'The kind of bike you might wheel out of the shed basking in the gasps of admiration from your mates and then push quickly back in lest they suggest going for a ride on the wretched thing…'

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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Past times present

A very special bike gets a new lease of life

WORDS BY PHIL MATHER **PHOTOS BY** CHRIS MATHER

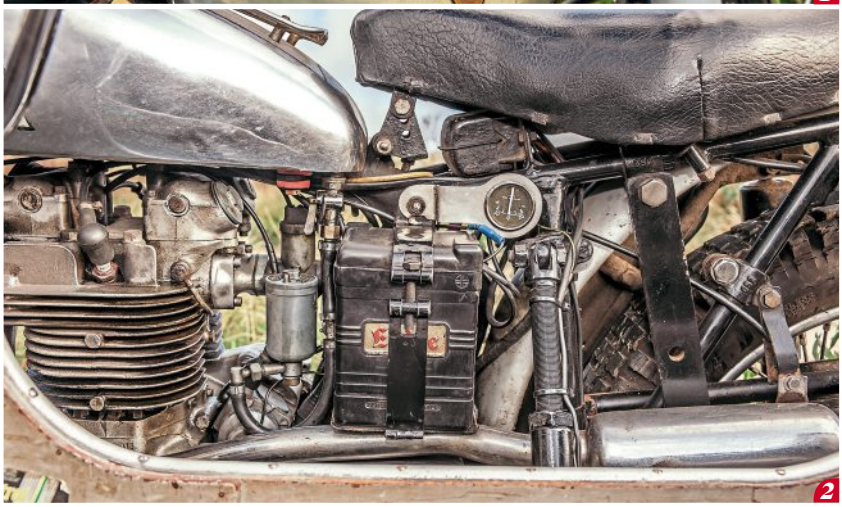
In this day and age the chances of stumbling across a forgotten gem of a motorcycle are few and far between. Almost all machines 'of a certain age' have a guardian or two keeping a watchful eye on their whereabouts, even if that isn't the eye of the current owner. I guess that says more about the attitude of the times we live in rather than a genuine concern for the well-being of a piece of old but interesting and, dare I say it, valuable hardware. But that's life. Barn finds, even if they truly are unearthed unexpectedly in some remote rural backwater, seem to automatically command a monetary cachet unrelated to any realistic valuation of their worth.

However, the thought for today is be patient, hold on to your dream, you never know what's waiting for you around the corner. Cheering words to lift the spirits, I hope, and which go some way to introducing the background to this story of a bike not so much abandoned forlornly in the back of a shed to gather dust and moulder, but rather parked in the corner of a motorcar workshop where its carer would give it the occasional wipe with an oily rag. It might even still be there if fate hadn't intervened.

For many of us, a motorcycle represented the first opportunity to break free from the trammels of the bus, the bicycle, the tram or the tube train. For Syd Lang, getting a motorcycle meant he no longer had to row to work each morning across the Penryn Estuary to his job in a boatyard, where he was serving an apprenticeship. True, the journey by road took longer because he now had to go around the estuary rather than over it, but it was more fun, even if he could only aspire to a 250cc BSA C10 sidevalver for transport. And at weekends the bike offered all manner of opportunities to travel.

The C10 soon made way for a Velocette which was followed by a BSA C15 which should have been the best of the bunch but for the fact that it kept nipping-up. Possibly, just possibly, the C15 suffered from Syd's 'heavy right hand'. I think everybody will agree that once you've got the hang of riding a motorbike it isn't long before you get the urge to see what it'll do. Clearly 'not enough' was the answer. Syd next got himself a 500 Norton, at which point his parents drew the line, ruling the Norton too powerful, so he settled for a Triumph 21 – the 'whispering twin' as he calls it – which he owned for five or six years.

In the meantime Syd had finished his apprenticeship as a ship's carpenter and joined the merchant navy. He did a stint on fishing boats and sailed on the maiden voyage of the SS *Canberra* to Australia in 1961. "That was a busy schedule," he recalls. "Three months on the go, the satisfaction of the passengers being paramount all the time. A complete contrast to when I was working on cargo boats bringing apples back from Port Huon in Tasmania; a leisurely four months out followed by a two-month dash home so that the fruit would be fresh when we landed."



1: Observe the untapped bosses on the sides of the alloy barrels. These were originally cast in to enable cooling ducting to be fitted when a version of the Triumph engine was used in electrical generator sets for the MoD

There wasn't much time for motorcycling in those days, but Syd readily admits that "growing up where I did the sea was in my blood and so it had to come first". A friend looked after the Triumph for him when he was away, so it was always up and running and ready to ride when he got back, and when he got married and started a family the bike provided

essential transport – and the money to buy a new carpet for the home! "That was how it was in those days. Nobody was flush. When you needed a bit of extra cash you sold the bike."

Inevitably, motorcycling went on the back burner for, well, quite a while, the best part of 30 years in fact, until a chance conversation in a pub got the better of his curiosity. Visiting relatives in Sussex, he'd popped into the local for a pint and got into conversation with one of the regulars. "'Ere, you're interested in bikes," the chap said. "I know a bloke who wants to get rid of one. You interested?" There are days when it pays not to be in a hurry, days when your mobile gets mysteriously switched off or simply left in the car. For Syd Lang, this was one of those days.

"The bloke took me to a car workshop in Cuckfield, a little village not far from Haywards Heath, and the owner showed me the bike. It wasn't a bit like anything I'd been expecting but I took to it right away. I hadn't got a clue as to what it was apart from the fact that it was an old sidecar outfit and it looked like it would be a lot of fun to ride. So I bought it. I think we were agreed it was a good outcome all round – the bloke had a bit more space in his workshop and I had a motorcycle again, although I seem to remember I was a bit late back for dinner. Never mind."

It was only after Syd had taken the Triumph outfit to his local VMCC branch meeting that he learnt just how special his new bike was, particularly as for most of its life it had been owned by only one person and that person had transformed it into a superb example of a 1950s trials machine and carefully maintained it as such throughout his ownership. That person was George H Quantrill, whose name can be found on the old log book and various service stickers found on the inside of the sidecar body recording oil changes – always Castrol XL, XXL or GP, monograde 30, 40 and 50 weight engine oils suitable for both road and competition use and still available today in Castrol's 'classic' range.

Sadly George had died sometime in the late 1980s and had left his motorcycle, and his cherished Austin Healey 'frog eye' Sprite, to the mechanic who had cared for them over many years. While the Sprite had provided fun motoring for George and his wife Dorothy, the bike was his passion. He was a long-time member of the Brighton and District Motor Cycle Club, who organised numerous trials and scrambles events every year in the 50s, 60s and 70s, and if George wasn't competing he would be in the thick of it as a marshal. One-time club trials secretary Peter Crook recalls that his earliest memory of George was of him tearing up the seafront in Brighton during the annual Speed Trial. Another time Peter was spectating at the Welsh Two-Day Trial when who should come along but George and Dorothy riding as travelling marshals.

2: It makes sense to run the exhaust between the bike and its sidecar, and the ammeter might have been put there to give the passenger something to view during quiet moments. Or not

3 & 4: A truly remarkable feature of the Trophy is its rear end. Originally a rigid frame, this one was modified way, way back with a swinging arm conversion. There were a few available back then, some from well-known builders and others from sources less familiar. The conversions certainly offered more suspension travel than the original sprung hub

5 & 6: Triumph's sls front brake is excellent on the rough, gentle and reliable. Less startling on the road, however. Observe the two cables running the brake lever on the hub. The second of these is operated by the sidecar brake pedal, so the machine has linked brakes

7: Sitting next to the silencer is a compressed air bottle. A neat touch allowing a rider to alter pressures between off-road sections

1

2

The bike George rode was always the Triumph. He bought it brand new from the factory in 1949. Years later he confided in a neighbour that the machine, a 500cc Trophy, was one of six specially prepared by the competition department and only sold to members of the general public with the proviso that they would be used in sports events. Given the bike's pedigree, the fact that it took its model name from the company's outstanding success in the Italian ISDT of 1948, and the prestige that owning such a bike would carry, there was never any doubt that George would honour his commitment.

For a while George kept the Trophy as he had bought it but before long the bike's main failing became all too apparent. While other British manufacturers had been quick to adopt swinging arm rear suspension on their machines, Triumph retained the rigid rear frame, offering the rather risible option of their 'sprung hub' (or spring wheel as they called it then) to those who could afford it. The spring wheel was supposedly a pre-war brainchild of Triumph's Edward Turner which never got into production before hostilities broke out, although ET might just have cribbed the idea from the sprung wheels that made up the undercarriage of the Westland Lysander aircraft.

The concept is simple – an axle sandwiched between huge upper and lower springs built into the rear hub – but in practice the assembly is heavy and offers limited movement. Fine for an aircraft landing and taking off from a grass strip, not so good for a motorcycle hopping and skipping down the road. Unfortunately, as was always the case, Mr Turner knew what was right for everybody else so the spring wheel stuck around.

Fortunately for everybody else, Irishman Rex McCandless (better known latterly for his 'Featherbed' frame for Norton) had been applying his little grey cells to solving the problem of keeping the hopping wheel on the ground. Rex was a motorcycle racer prone to bouts of inventive genius and he devised a swinging fork rear suspension assembly that could be grafted on to most rigid framed production motorcycles of the time. Rex demonstrated the efficiency of his system by equipping the Irish grass-track racing team in 1946 and, based on their success, he was able to sell the manufacturing rights to the motorcycle accessory company Feridax and hand them a bulging order book.

Thumb through a copy of *Motor Cycling* from the

DETAILS, DETAILS

period and you're more than likely to turn up an advert inviting you to "modernise your rigid machine now." For a little over 20 quid you got a bolt-on swinging arm conversion (AJS, Matchless, BSA and Triumph; other makes £26) which included mudguard stays, a choice of shock absorbers and carriage. It had been used, so the advert said, in the TT and the ISDT and tested by *Motor Cycling*. It was strong and lightweight and very suitable for trials – go on, you know you want one.

George Quantrill certainly did, and he wanted a sidecar too because he and Dorothy were about to become regular entrants in the long distance Exeter and Lands End Trials. The sidecar is a typical competition chair of the period, coachbuilt by Canterbury Sidecars with a hardwood frame and plywood panelling skinned over with aluminium. The wheel is sprung with its own shock absorber for some degree of passenger comfort, but there's no avoiding the fact that the passenger will be required at times to hang out over the side or add their weight at the back end to enhance rear wheel traction. Hence the low-cut sides and the generously padded mudguard and rear squab. There's a grab rail across the front of the cockpit if circumstances require the passenger to hang on and a dainty step plate to help with getting in and getting out – or maybe extreme acrobatics when weight is really needed over on the left-hand side. The sidecar has road lights and, most essential for night trials, a map reading light inside underneath the grab rail.

1: The sidecar wheel is also sprung to match the bike's back end. It's also braked, offering rather more control over a machine used on the rough than relying entirely on the bike's brakes

2: Luxuries! Not only does the sidecar boast a windscreen, but there's also a nice shiny grab handle and even a reading light. Who could ask for more?

The sidecar also has a braked wheel operated by an independent foot pedal located alongside the bike's rear brake pedal. Sidecar lore dictates that on left-hand bends you slow the third wheel and drive the bike around the chair; conversely, on right-handers you slow the bike and swing the chair around the bike. But if you just want to stop, you plonk your boot squarely on to the two pedals. To add further sophistication to the business of stopping, George linked the bike's front brake to the rear brake pedal via a cable – hence the two cables at the front hub. If you're ever in a situation where you have to balance throttle control with braking, that could prove to be a very useful mod.

Speaking to members of the Brighton and District MCC, there are still a few who remember George and his unbounded enthusiasm for motorcycling.

He liked nothing better than taking the outfit out locally 'for a squirt' as he called it – he was certainly no slouch when it came to road riding and was reputedly blasting down the Brighton bypass on the day before he died. And he never tired of loading the Triumph into a van and heading off to Wales for the International Six Day Enduro or to Farleigh Castle near Bath in Somerset for the British Motocross Grand Prix, as attested by the stickers on the sidecar. By that time, the early 1980s, he was no longer competing, of course, the Trophy was a good 30 years past its prime, but nevertheless it must have caused quite a stir wherever it was parked up.

What are fascinating are the detail mods which you will seldom find on a 'restored' competition machine. Immediately obvious are the cut-back headlight brackets that allow the light to be tucked in between the fork legs and the absence of any headlight shell. The reflector is mounted directly into the flat front panel that carries the number plate. On the reverse of the panel are located classic dashboard type switches for both the bike and sidecar lights. There are grease nipples on the brake and clutch cables and a breather is set into the top of the petrol tank just forward of the filler cap.

A small clock is mounted underneath the handlebar on the right-hand side and an ammeter is located in a rather stylish bracket above the battery. The battery itself is a modern six-volt unit tucked inside the shell of an old Exide battery. Towards the rear outside of the sidecar, adjacent to the dumpy exhaust silencer, George mounted a compressed air bottle so that the pressure in the tyres could be adjusted depending on whether he was riding across country or on tarmac. When he found that it was empty, Syd Lang took the bottle to a local depot for a refill but was informed that first the bottle would have to be tested and issued with a certificate. At a considerable cost. Don't you just love Health and Safety. How they would view the lead bars, neatly bundled in cardboard and tied with cord in the manner of a kinbaku ropework master, that serve as ballast in the sidecar I don't dare think about. An unsafe load – possibly. But essential, surely, when negotiating tight left-handers without anybody in the chair.

And so we come to the million dollar question – what are Syd's plans for the future. Does he adhere to Edward Turner's belief that the lines of his rigid framed twin are beyond perfection and that, logically, the McCandless swinging arm is an abomination that he would be well rid of? Does he feel that the paintwork is scruffy and the chrome is in desperate need of attention? And what about those oil leaks?

Thankfully, there is too much pleasure to be had riding the Trophy just the way it is. Maybe not quite in the manner of George Quantrill – Syd regularly gives an elderly gentleman a lift to VMCC clubnight so daredevil antics are not called for. But there is still plenty of lustre left in this old gem to keep it running for many, many more years. CBG

Above: The sidecar's a Canterbury, designed entirely for trials outfits like this one

Below: Thanks to club members, we located a photograph of the original owner, George Quantrill, with his wife, Dorothy, who regularly used to passenger in the chair.

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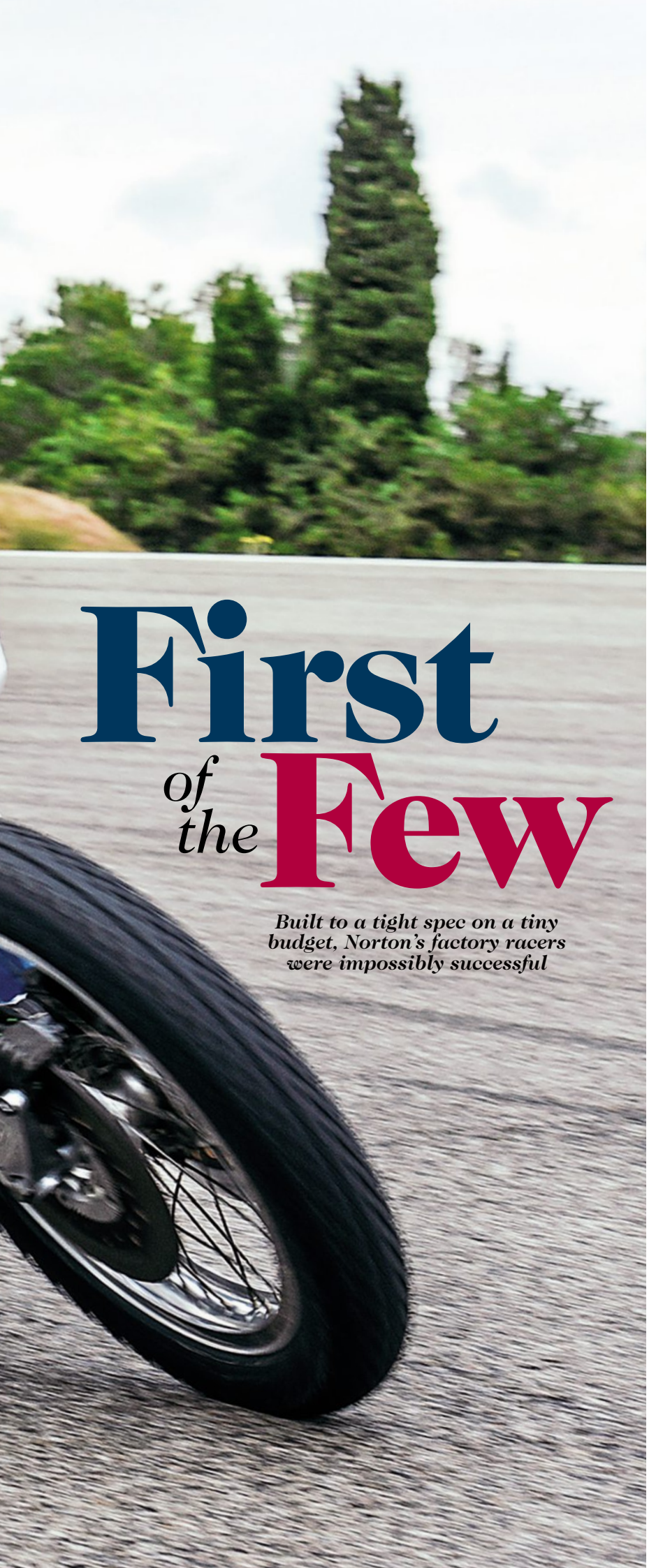


First of the Few

Built to a tight spec on a tiny budget, Norton's factory racers were impossibly successful

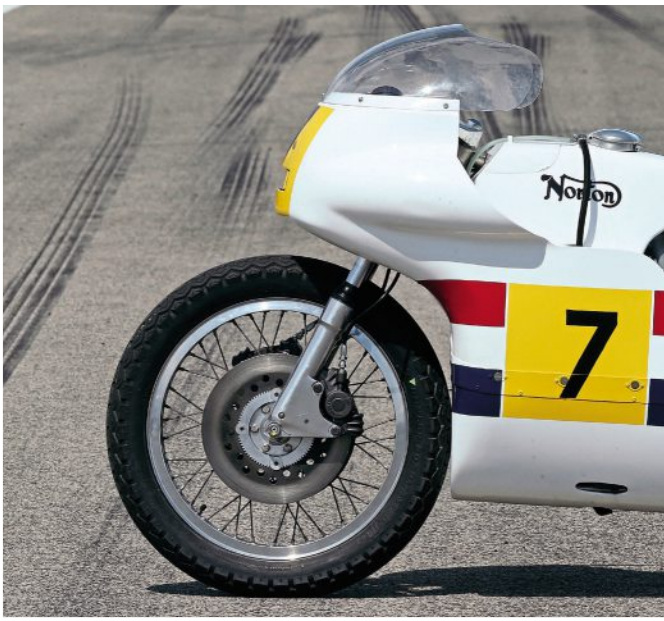
WORDS BY ALAN CATHCART
PHOTOS BY KEL EDGE, KIKE MAYOR, KYOICHI NAKAMURA

Five of the low-slung Pannier-tank John Player Nortons which made their debut in the 1972 Daytona 200 were constructed that year, all of which appear to have survived, including the one whose competition career continued longer than any other in the hands of Norton's Spanish importer, Juan Antonio Rodes. This machine now belongs to Barcelona-based Norton *aficionado* Joaquín Folch, one of no less than three John Player Nortons which made their way to Spain after their racing days with the factory team were over. Since 1976 and the closure of the Norton factory, all three bikes have been owned by Folch, who for many years used to commute to work in Barcelona traffic on a succession of Commando twins supplied by Rodes' company, Challenge Motors. The trio of racebikes now sit on display in his magnificent private motorcycle collection, alongside the 1973 Isle of Man TT-winning JPN Monocoque Folch acquired from Peter Williams, plus one of the liquid-cooled Cosworth-engined Challenge F750 bikes which briefly replaced them before Norton's demise. All are maintained in running condition, and are regularly brought out to be exercised on track.

I was fortunate to be invited to ride the 1972 Pannier-tank JPN at the seaside Calafat circuit south of Barcelona. Having ridden both Joaquín's TT-winning JPN Monocoque as well as the Arter-Matchless G50 with which Peter Williams so consistently punched above his weight against the Italian multis and Japanese strokers, I was prepared for the way I had to carefully feed myself into the snug, low-slung seat.

The '72 JPN requires an idiosyncratic approach to firing it up. Firstly, to prime the carbs from cold you must push the bike around with the plugs out or better still, sit on it and bump up and down in the seat a few times to work the swinging arm-operated fuel pump – just as on the Daytona BoTT-winning Ogier Laverda I used to race for its creator Maurice Ogier, which had a similar system. With a relatively low 10.3:1 compression, starting is quite easy with a good push, but then as you warm the bike up you can either ride gently round the paddock looking for bumps to keep the fuel flowing, or else sit on it and repeat the bouncing act while running the engine. I thought this was nonsense until it started spluttering on me as I sat there stationary and revved it like a normal bike to warm the engine. So – all together now: one, two, WHOOPS-a-daisy...

1



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Although still basically a tuned-up longstroke 73 x 89mm Commando engine rather than the later short-stroke motor of 1973 onwards, the transmission in the Folch Pannier-tank JPN was updated in light of later development by the Rodes team, using parts from their two '74 spaceframe bikes, to resolve this critical problem of the first-year JPNs. It thus features the redesigned primary drive, incorporating an extra outrigger bearing as well as a dry clutch, which together with speeding up the gearbox and fitting a crankshaft located shock absorber in the transmission, removed this reliability concern. This fact was well illustrated by the bikes' reliability in the gruelling stop-and-start Spanish street circuits of the early '70s. It finished every race in its debut 1974 Spanish season, and Benjamin Grau won all four races *en route* to the Spanish F750 title in 1975, this time on a '74 spaceframe bike. This also makes the gearbox of the Pannier-tank JPN unusually satisfying to use, with a light, smooth clutch action which can easily be worked with a pair of fingers, two-stroke GP-style, if you prefer, and allows the engine to be kept working in its powerband just by slipping it in a controlled fashion exiting a tight corner like the Calafat hairpin at the end of the main straight.

That's an important benefit, because it means you can avoid having to use bottom gear which, though higher on the five-speed Quaife close-ratio gearbox than on a standard Commando road transmission, is low enough to mean chattering the rear wheel if you change into it at racing speeds on the overrun into such a slow bend. Moreover, there's quite a gap between first and second gears, although the rest of the ratios are pretty close together. It's best to use second gear most of the time for even the slowest of turns. This makes you appreciate the light clutch action all the more, because you will have to slip it slightly to get good drive – something that the Spanish two-stroke aces who raced the Norton in Spain would have been quite used to doing!

The right-foot one-up gearchange is slow but precise, so long as you take your time and don't try to rush the change, although with the heavy cast-iron

flywheels still fitted to this the longstroke engine, it doesn't lose revs too quickly, making quick-shifting less vital. Power comes in quite low down, around 3,500rpm with twin megaphone exhausts as fitted, rather than the two into one system which was originally favoured, with the Kröber rev-counter perhaps optimistically redlined at 8,000rpm. "I never revved my engines above 7,400rpm," says Peter Williams emphatically, "and then only if I really had a fight on my hands. It was said they were safe to 8,000rpm even in long-stroke form, but I always changed up at 7,000 revs if I could, and didn't do too badly in races as a result!" Indeed not…

The engine in the Folch Pannier-tank JPN indeed seemed happiest taken to around 7,300rpm before changing up, with a noticeable surge of extra power from 5,400rpm upwards, with the close-ratio gearbox making it easy to stay within the powerband. Unusually, the ever-present vibration which is an inevitable feature of such an engine with a two-up 360° crankshaft didn't seem to get any worse the higher you revved it, though you certainly can't ever forget you're riding a British-built parallel twin with no balance shafts, which leaves your extremities tingling for a few minutes after dismounting the bike. That said, the JPN rubber Isolastic engine mounts do make a considerable difference to rider comfort, as I know from having ridden a Seeley-framed Kuhn Norton 750 racer with a rigidly-mounted engine. I'm still recovering!

1: Removal of the fairing reveals exactly how low the machine actually is

2: Also based on the roadgoing design (basically a 1957 roadster item) the gearbox boasted five speeds, but was still the weakest link in the whole motorcycle

3: Because a major selling point of the road Commando was its Isolastic rubber mountings system, the racer used the same arrangement

4: Tucked away beneath the fairing and tank lives a remarkably familiar engine, closely based on Norton's road engine of the day. Although the frame appears superficially similar to the road Commando, it's considerably different

5: A fine example of that rare machine, a 150mph British racing twin

Right: The whole point of the design exercise was to reduce the bike's frontal area, as seen here

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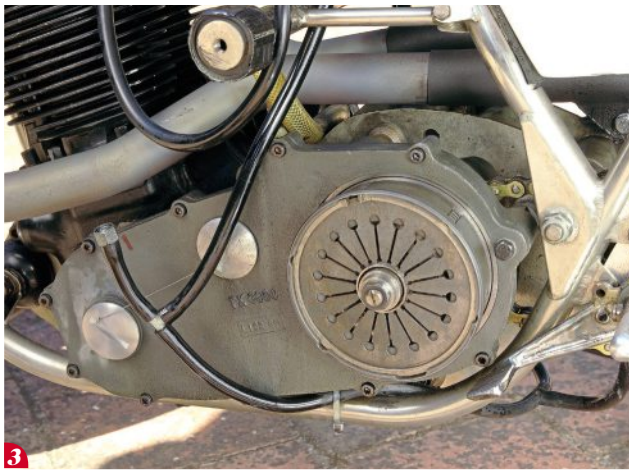
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The JPN's low-slung riding position is actually pretty comfortable, more so than many race-replica roadbikes are today with their frontwards weight bias, which tires the hands and shoulders. Sitting in rather than on the Pannier-tank JPN as you do, I found to my surprise that it wasn't at all cramped, especially for my longish legs. So you don't drag various bodily extremities on the ground without a good deal more lean angle than I was prepared to risk on the 19-inch Dunlop TT100 front tyre and 18-inch rear.

The problem was the all-enveloping bodywork which Peter Williams designed for the bike in pursuit of speed, after a session in the MIRA wind tunnel at Nuneaton. This envelopes the handlebars very closely – but while this may have been OK 45 years ago when riders all wore relatively thin leather gloves with zero additional protection, there simply isn't enough space between fairing and handlebars for hands covered with modern protective hardware to clasp the grips properly. I could only manage to ride the bike by gripping the ends of the handlebars and levers, which scarcely promoted confidence. And thanks to having a finger deficiency on my right hand, there was no way I could borrow a pair of gloves thin enough to fit. Pity.

Interestingly, I've ridden the later '73 TT-winning JPN Monocoque and both of Joaquín's '74 spaceframe bikes several times, including in the Isle of Man TT Parade, and they don't suffer from the same problem, probably because on both of them Williams moved the handlebars closer to each other by narrowing the fork yokes. He did the same thing on the final version of the Arter Matchless which I've also ridden, and there he cut slots in the fairing to make space for your hands, and let the ends of the bars rotate without fouling the bodywork.

Still, even if I'd been able to ride the Norton properly in something approaching anger, I couldn't have dreamed of trying to emulate Peter Williams' approved version of taking corners flat out drifting front and rear wheels in unison! "People won't believe me when I say I could go into a corner, lay the bike over on its side, get both the front and rear wheels sliding, then keep it in a two-wheel, controlled drift round any corner faster than Druids at Brands Hatch," says Peter. Well, I do, because I saw him doing it, but that doesn't mean the rest of us mortals can do the same. The Williams technique requires you to keep up momentum at all costs, rather than brake hard, then get on the power to make the turn. The resultant cornering speeds with an underpowered four-stroke twin like the '72 Norton I rode were therefore quite probably higher than a modern day Superbike – only that the acceleration of today's bikes is so much greater.

This in turn dictated the use of quite narrow tyres like the ones fitted to the test JPN, though I was surprised to find the mix of wheel diameters used on it. Norton began the 1972 season at Daytona with 18-inch rims front and rear, then went to 19-inch wheels once they got back to Britain since they ran into ground clearance problems with the bike's low build, and needed the extra space these supplied. But I didn't think they ever raced with a 19-inch front and 18-inch rear as fitted to the Folch machine, yet from magazine photos taken on the bike's arrival in Spain early in 1974, that's how it came from the factory.

This surprises me, because the result is a rather cumbersome, slow-steering bike that's a real handful to persuade round any of Calafat's several slow turns, even if it sat rock-steady through the fast sweeper leading onto the front straight. In spite of the short 1390mm wheelbase, thanks to a 50mm shorter swinging arm than when the Norton factory team raced the bike, the handling frankly resembles a British version of the Ducati big twin of the same era with its much longer 1500mm wheelbase. The Norton will stick unerringly to the line you choose for

Bottom left: One pannier fuel tank. The deep wells are for the rider's elbows: little point in producing a tiny motorcycle if the ride can't hide inside it

1: It's very cramped in here, with hardly any space at all to operate the levers and handle the steering business

2: Front forks were plainly based on the roadster's, although the sliders are rather different. Each of the twin callipers mounted to the same design of slider so one was positioned in front of the forks, the other behind it

3: Unique primary chaincases made the power train a little less wide, and the diaphragm spring clutch was run dry

it, but if you change your mind halfway through the bend and want to tighten your line, forget it!

This was not at all the nimble, nippy, fast-handling 750 with the stature of a 500 that I'd been expecting, and I think the reason is quite straightforward. The JPN team would probably have fitted whatever old wheels were to hand to sell the bike on to Rodes after they'd finished with it, and would have used something they didn't need any more. The 1973/74 JPN bikes featured disc rear brakes, therefore an 18-inch wheel which happened to be laced to an 8-inch single leading-shoe Manx Norton drum brake as used in the 1972 season would have been surplus to requirements, as would a 19-inch rim with twin front discs that would have been replaced for 1973 by an 18-incher. Put the two together, and the bike would roll out of the team's Thruxton door *en route* to Spain without being ideally set up for racing at all. Indeed, it would have had quite different steering geometry and weight distribution from that intended owing to the imbalance in ride heights.

But Rodes' Challenge Motors team probably didn't realise the reason for what was presumably a pretty heavy and slow-steering bike. Instead, they tried to make the JPN handle quicker by shortening the swinging arm by 50mm to produce the present 1390mm wheelbase. Combined with the low centre of gravity, this does indeed make for a bike which is easy to flick from side to side in a more or less straight line, like at the Calafat chicane, but doesn't steer very well in a tighter turn. The lazy gait of the JPN in a corner has all the hallmarks of a bike with too much rake and/or trail, and that ties in well with the scenario outlined above.

However, this lack of finesse in the steering department is nothing compared to the brakes, which are frankly pretty poor. Now I know how and why Peter Williams went in for two-wheel drifting round corners, for the simple reason he couldn't get the bike to stop in time for them! In fact, he even opted personally for just a single front 11¼-inch disc, but he was the only one of the various JPN riders to reckon this was sufficient, and everyone else used twin front discs, with one Lockheed caliper behind its fork leg and the other mounted in front, to enable the original single-disc sliders to be used rather than having new ones recast for the second disc.

Brakes were apparently a particular problem for the JPN team in their first two races in 1972, at Daytona and Imola, and though development improved matters, especially with a different leverage ratio for the AP master cylinder, it was never a strong point of the bike in spite of the cast iron discs used, and the Lockheed calipers which worked just fine on other machines of the era, like the 750 Ducatis. Maybe the pads fitted to the Folch pannier JPN are wrong, maybe it's the master cylinder, but whatever the case, the front brakes are rather wooden and unresponsive, and you have to squeeze VERY hard, pray even harder, and stamp hardest of all on the rear drum, if you want any acceptable stopping power. Oh, and also use the not inconsiderable degree of engine braking available, and give thanks for having the gearbox modifications which allow you to reverse-load the primary drive like that, and get away with it!

The pannier-tank JPN would have most been at home on fast, open circuits like Silverstone and the pre-chicane Imola of 1972, with sweeping corners where its sure-footed handling and low build would come into their own. In spite of its 42in screen height, ultra-low compared to modern Superbikes or 600 Supersports, you sit low enough in the comfy, well-upholstered seat to be able to tuck right away behind the screen, remarkable given that the oil tank for the dry-sump engine is located beneath the seat. This enabled a relatively lightly-tuned air-cooled pushrod twin to break the 150mph barrier with only 76bhp at its disposal. This is a remarkable feat, even if on a tight circuit like Calafat, where the low 365lb dry weight becomes evident on acceleration out of slow turns, that sort of straightline performance can't be apparent. Yet this '72 JPN was no less than 2.5in taller than its Monocoque successor – but without building this Pannier-tank bike first, Peter Williams could not have created this paragon of Classic era chassis design, the bike that in terms of engine performance did the most with the least 45 years ago.

Above: This is a tiny, ultra-compact machine

1: Joaquin Folch with three JPN racers. 1972, 73 and 74. Who could ask for more…

2: As well as holding the rear wheel, the swinging arm's vertical movement also operated a mechanical fuel pump, feeding fuel to the carbs. Rear brake is a vintage item, originally from a Manx Norton racer

GENESIS OF THE PANNIER-TANK NORTONS

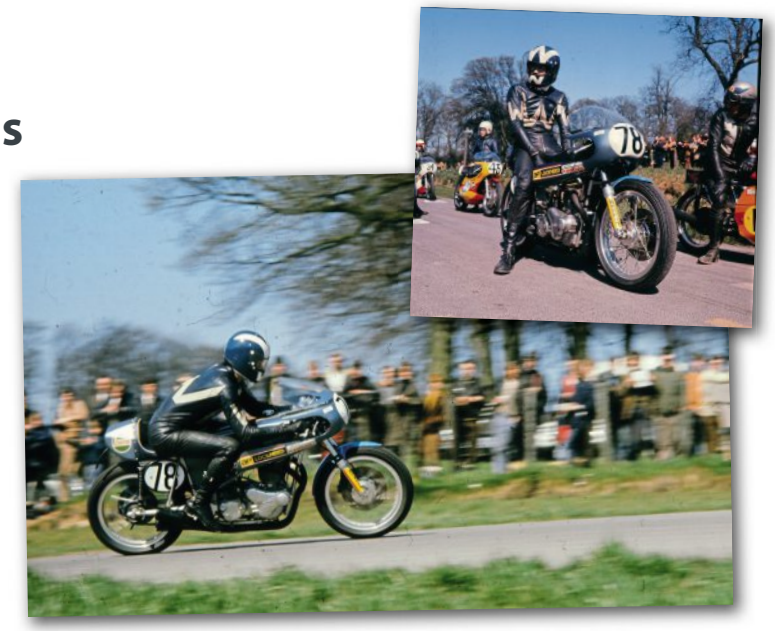
The JPN story began in 1971 when Peter Williams, a Norton development engineer who successfully combined his day job with going Grand Prix racing aboard the Arter-Matchless G50 in his spare time (imagine that today!), was given a budget by Norton chairman Dennis Poore to build a one-off Open-class Experimental racer using the firm's production 750cc Commando engine.

This performed promisingly, convincing Poore, himself a former car racer, that it'd be worthwhile for Norton to go racing in the new Formula 750 class in 1972, where its BSA/Triumph rivals were already tasting success.

The Norton Villiers Performance Shop at Thruxton circuit was given over entirely to development of the new F750 racebikes designed by Williams, with former Suzuki factory GP rider Frank Perris appointed as team manager.

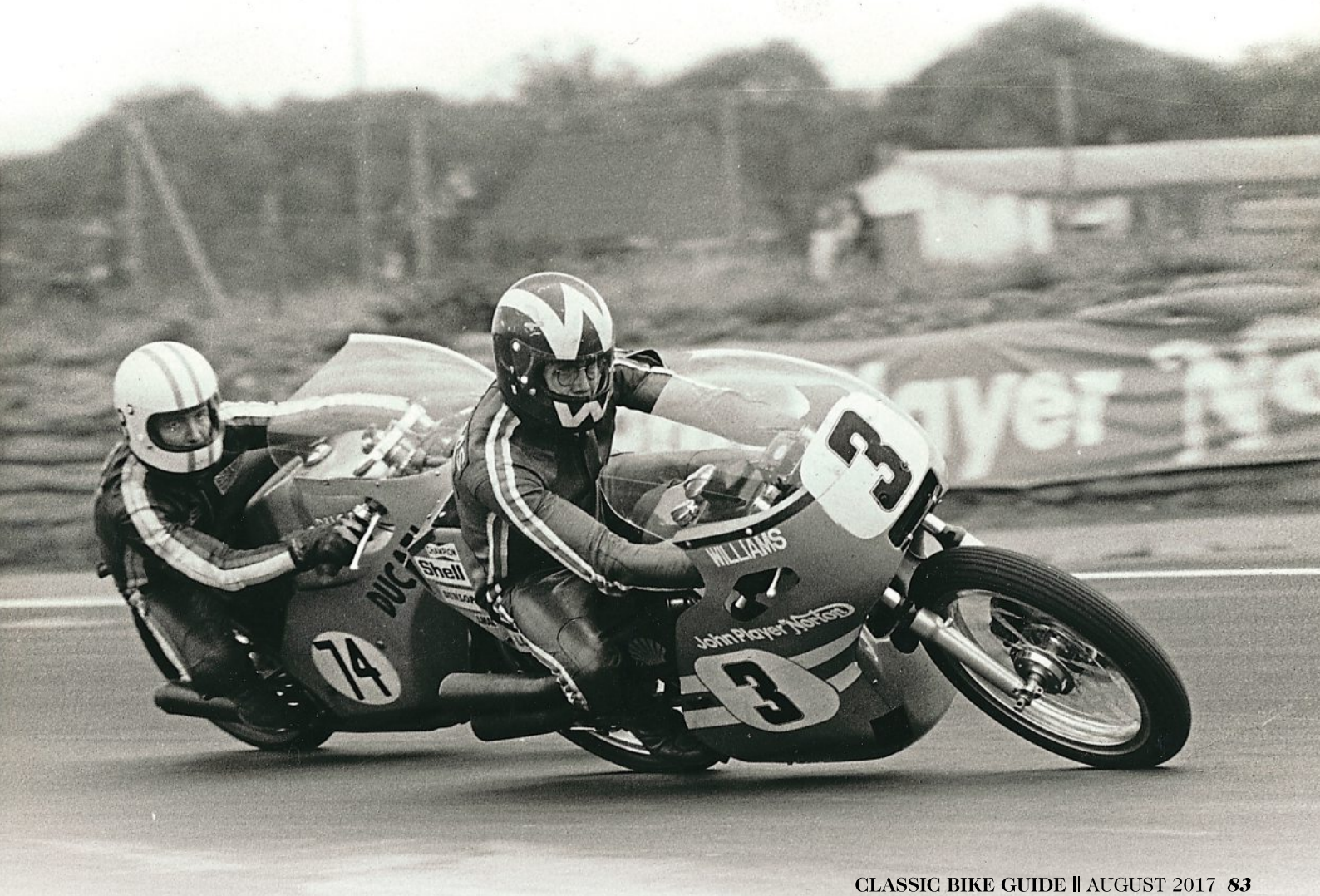
Poore used his contacts in the motor racing world to persuade Britain's Imperial Tobacco, which had brought cigarette sponsorship to Formula 1 in 1968 with Gold Leaf Team Lotus, to sponsor the Norton race team via its John Player brand. This was the first example anywhere in the world of a bike racing team fully supported by an outside sponsor – let alone a tobacco company. John Player Norton had been born – a fact advertised in race paddocks by the team's sumptuous 100mph race transporter, based on an American Dodge V8 van, which also doubled as a mobile workshop.

At the team's official launch in November 1971, John Player executives laid down a tough deadline for the new équipe to beat: two machines had to compete in the Daytona 200 in just 10 weeks' time. This fast tri-oval speed bowl presented a daunting challenge to a team relying on the limited power of a 360° twin-cylinder four-stroke motor, whose origins lay in the 1948 Bert Hopwood-designed Dominator engine which had formed the backbone of Norton's production for over 25 years. (By a stroke of irony, Hopwood was by then engineering chief at the rival BSA/Triumph factory, whose three-cylinder bikes were to be the principal rivals of the fledgling Norton team.)



Above: Peter Williams on the Norton 750 prototype at Cadwell Park in 1971

Below: Snetterton 1972, and Williams leads Paul Smart on the Imola 200-winning Ducati. The fairing is growing, now requiring cut-outs for the rider to operate the handlebars



JOHN PLAYER NORTON PANNIER-TANK RACER

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Fortunately, designer Peter Williams had access to the MIRA wind tunnel at Nuneaton. This enabled him to demonstrate that, with a very reduced frontal area delivering the lowest possible wind resistance – the key element in his design mantra, as first incorporated in the Arter-Matchless G50 – it would be possible to attain a top speed of more than 150mph with the slightly modified Norton Combat higher-compression (10.3:1) version of the Commando street motor.

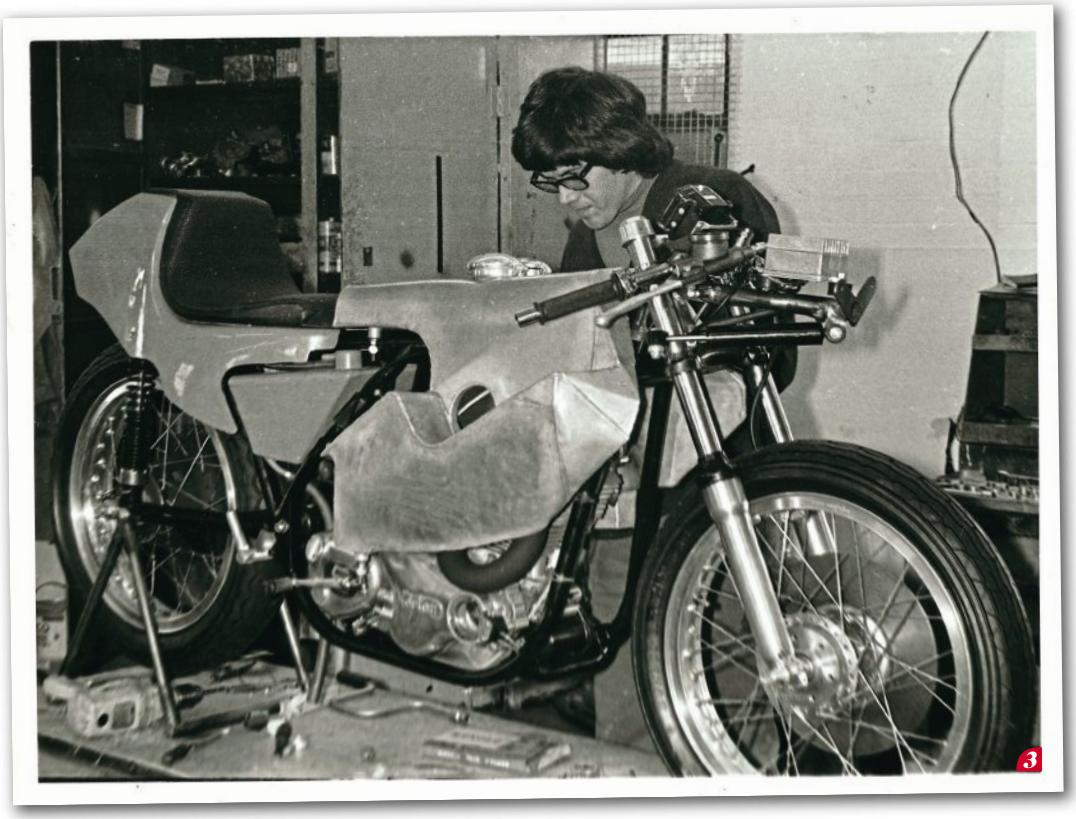
"150mph was a purely nominal figure," says Peter today, "but it gave us something to aim for!"

When the first hastily-completed JPN machines were uncrated in the garage area at Daytona Speedway in March 1972, onlookers saw for the first time the future hallmarks of the Williams-designed Norton twins. Decked out in John Player's livery of royal blue with white stripes, the JPN twins looked smaller than many 500 singles – yet they were full 750cc machines, incorporating the lessons learned in the wind tunnel.

"We knew we'd have our hands full with the Suzuki triples," recalls Peter Williams, "since although they had appalling handling they did produce around 115 bhp, and so were very fast on the banking. We could out-handle them – but with at that stage only 69bhp at 7,000rpm, just 14bhp more than the standard Commando engine, we had to find a way of increasing our top speed.

"The other problem was that we had to carry 24 litres of fuel to be able to get away with at least one less fuel stop than the Suzukis and other much thirstier machines – but how to do this without jacking up the centre of gravity and increasing the frontal aspect, as well as having a fuel tank so big that the rider would be unable to tuck himself away behind the fairing, and would thus increase the frontal area, and so reduce speed?"

Williams resolved this by copying a format which his father Jack, creator of the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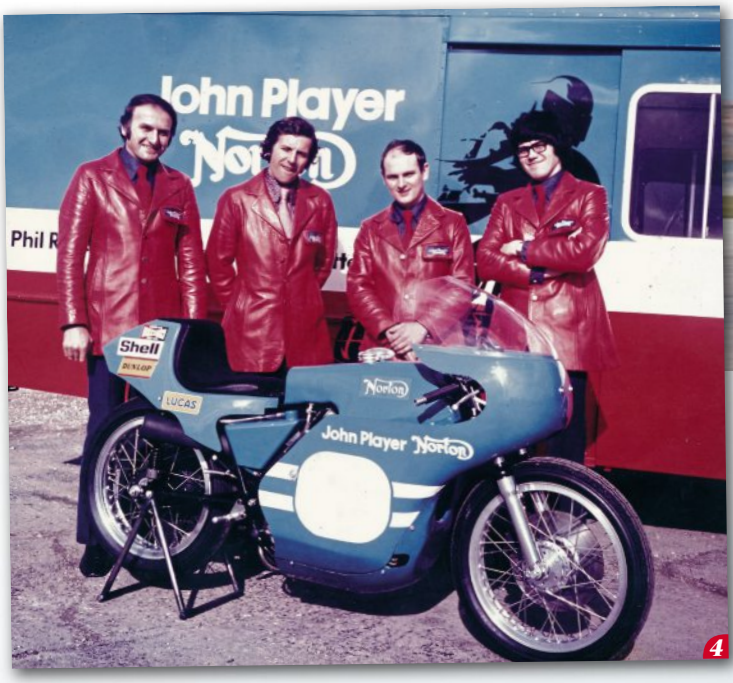
1: Norton JPN being prepared in Norton race HQ Thruxton in 1972

2: Daytona 200 1972, the JPN machines have made it. Peter Williams in the saddle

3: Peter Williams in the Norton workshop at Andover with the 1972 pannier-tank JPN

4: John Player Norton team unveiling, 1972. Frank Perris, Phil Read, Tony Rutter and Peter Williams

5: Phil Read rides the Daytona 200 banking in 1972



4

5

Matchless G50, had inherited when he became chief engineer at AMC late in 1954, the year in which Rod Coleman won the Junior TT on the unfaired but low-slung AJS 7R3A, complete with a one-piece pannier fuel tank draped over the frame.

His son Peter adapted that principle for the 1972 JPN, by fitting pannier fuel tanks which partially enveloped the engine, and were carefully shaped to seat the rider down low, thus completely filling the otherwise 'dead' space between the fairing and motor, with the dry-sump engine's oil tank carried under the seat. This in turn dictated a mechanical fuel pump working off the swinging arm to pump fuel to a small header tank above the engine, which then fed the twin 32mm Amal Concentric carbs.

The ensuing low-slung frame indeed permitted the desired low frontal area to be achieved, and Williams' design format was completely vindicated when both he and Read topped the 150mph mark in wide-open one-lap qualifying on the Daytona bankings, with Phil lapping at 155.17mph. A highly satisfying race debut for the brand new bike saw Read finish fourth, after leading for four laps mid-race. Particularly satisfying was the fact that his was the first 'real' F750 bike home, behind three 350cc Yamaha two-strokes, and ahead of all the Suzukis, BSA/Triumph triples, Harley-Davidsons and suchlike. This generated good publicity in the key American market, even if Peter Williams' DNF with gearbox problems was a less favourable pointer to the future. CBG

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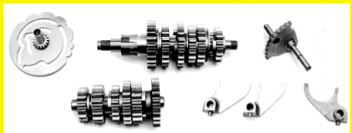

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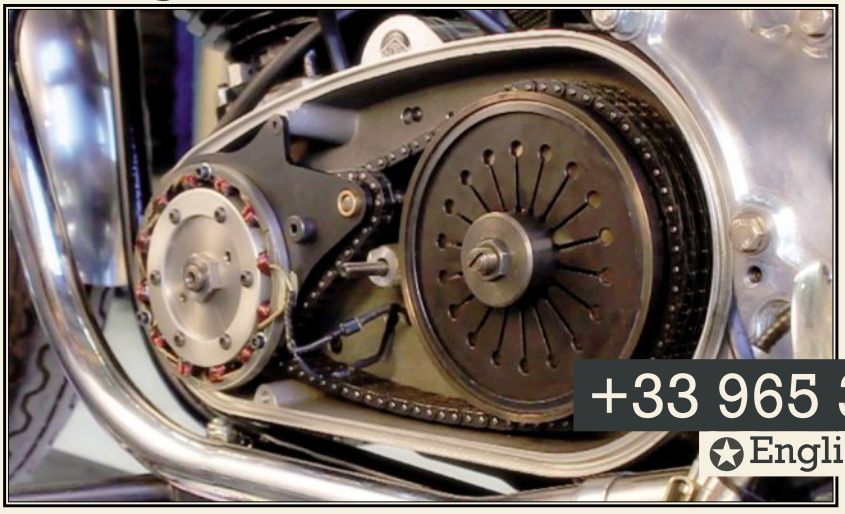

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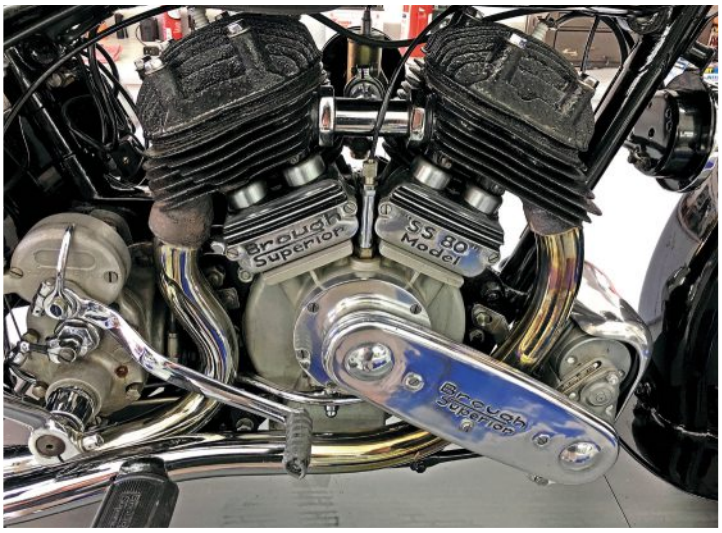
WORDS BY NOLAN WOODBURY **PHOTOS BY** NOLAN WOODBURY/BROUGH SUPERIOR MOTORCYCLES SAS

There's a certain risk for those who reside at the top, for fame is often fleeting. Yet the 'Rolls-Royce of motorcycles' remains high on many motorcyclists' wish-list, almost a hundred years after the first Brough Superior took flight. Write a roster of supersportsters, racers and other exotica to attract the upscale client, and you'll find that on value alone the Brough Superior is included in this hierarchy… even if opinion is divided as to why. Was it some speed advantage from the Brough's tuned engine, or the unmatched lustre of its cycle parts?

Genuinely hand-built with old-world craftsmanship, the Brough was sold on the notion that it would deliver much more than a standard production machine in return for the extra time and trouble given to each component. This tended to isolate George Brough Jr's masterpiece from anything less than the dedicated rider, although many who bought the original bikes new weren't necessarily wealthy men.

"It wasn't just snobs who bought the Brough," explained one long-time owner. "The savings gained from never needing another motorcycle also appealed to the penny pincher."



Left: The later SS80 Broughs used a litre V-twin sourced from AMC and used by them to power the Matchless Model X (as here) and the AJS Model 2. Whereas the Matchless used a Burman gearbox, the Brough preferred a Norton mechanism. A mysterious choice

1: The engine's origins are reflected in the engine number. Whereas an engine intended for a 1938 Matchless X would have been prefixed 39/X, the Brough engines used BS/X – both stamped by the AMC works

2: The single Amal carb feeding the cylinders lives on the left, with the T-shaped inlet tract passing between the cylinder on its way to the inlet valves. This must have ensured an odd hot mixture

Below: The tremendously black 'all-weather' finish is rare today on a Brough Superior. Modern owners prefer the more familiar sporting shine

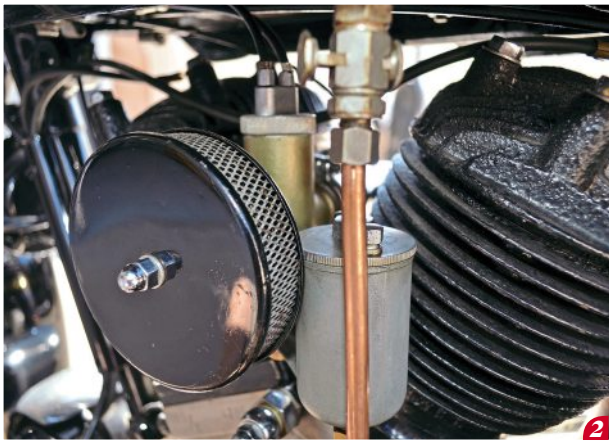
Our featured SS80 was dispatched on December 7, 1938 and sent by rail to Snells Motor House in Plymouth, Devon. Factory records held by the BS Owners' Club show that BDR 303 was registered immediately, and quite possibly for municipal use. The SS80 had travelled to another continent by the time it reached 60 years of existence. That was when TJ Jackson took possession of it from a Florida auction house. The Brough arrived as a clean, unmolested example which had been previously restored but wasn't running. It used to be that TJ was known as a fast Kawasaki drag racer, but that scope expanded after opening the performance service shop he and wife Pam ran for 35 years. As the classic and vintage movement developed, so a growing number of old-timers on hand signalled their passions and the debate heated considerably when the Brough moved in.

"I paid too much, or so I thought," says the owner, who recently began an exclusive restoration service. "Now I wish they'd had two."

It's common knowledge that Brough Jr built a variety of models powered by a succession of proprietary engines, but that's possibly the smallest part of the story. Most of each machine, including the body parts, controls, electrical components and upholstery came from hand-picked vendors. V-twins loom largest in the Brough mystique, sized from 680 to nearly 1100cc and originating primarily from noted inventor and cinema technician John Alfred Prestwich, who knocked out a few sidevalve and ohv engines when he wasn't making movie cameras. In 1935, Matchless (and later, parent company AMC) took over as the main supplier. Throughout this period of production, GB Jr's reach proved remarkable, building up an impressive line of cars and experimental designs, even car engine-powered rigs like the Austin Four.

Once lost behind the scenes, historians have since identified several important players on the engineering team, most notably Bruce Alvey and Harold Karslake. In his book Brough Superior, Peter Miller recites with wonder the good fortune that followed George Brough… or which simply fell into his lap. The famous Rolls-Royce advert slogan was one such stroke of luck, for had it originated with the Brough Superior company then it certainly wouldn't have flown. Instead it was coined in press coverage and the fear of litigation was replaced by a friendly alliance.

1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Much more than just a clever marketeer, Brough's skill as a rider also ensured a thorough pre-delivery test, each machine cleared for sale only after passing his critical inspection. The bikes' lack of ill-temper of the type typically displayed by over-tuned sportsters seems to support claims that Brough's vision for the brand changed, shifting emphasis in the early 1930s from ultimate sportsman to swift tourer. There might be something to it, exemplified by the featured SS80 which was built à la carte with deluxe plunger suspension, Druid front fork and the rare all-weather finish. Coming late in BS production, this SS80 drops you into a sea of inky black – far more reserved and regal than the flashing, chrome-covered ohv racers. Trading dazzle for extra durability, BDR 303 is kept at the ready. It shrugs off almost eight decades and jumps to life, flowing eagerly through changes up the gearbox and holding its line in complete confidence. Parked appropriately for admirers to adore, it's plainly obvious that the Brough was styled like a classic Hollywood leading man; squared chin and cut to perfection. Holding over four gallons, the petrol tank's span is only rivalled by the saddle and one can only guess the time component supplier Cranford spent on those sweeping mudguards. Photographs fail to capture it fully.

3: Brand everything as though it's your own… Both lighting and sparks are powered by a Lucas Magdyno, mounted low down and behind the front tyre, hence the efficient splashguard

4: That Norton gearbox, with the Norton logo machined from the top of the housing for the positive-stop mechanism. This is not a precise box and the foot lever has a very long travel

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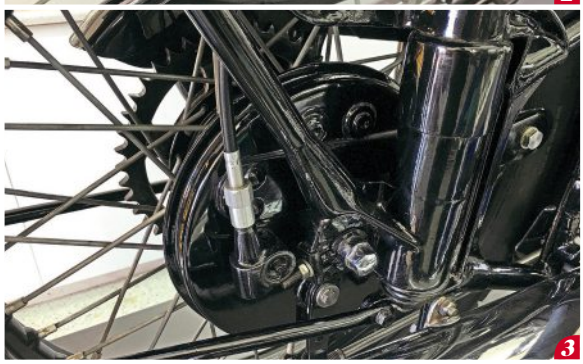
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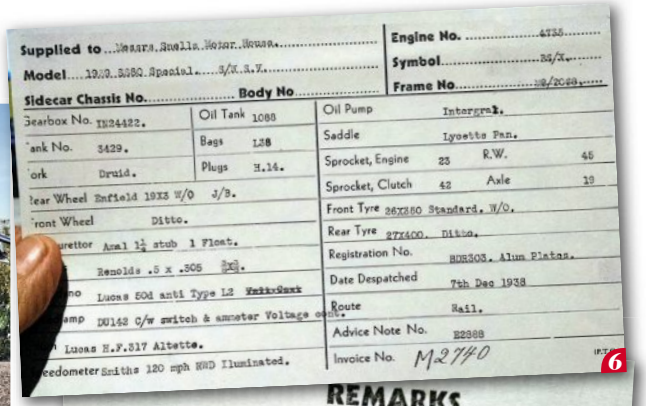
Establishing a reputation for composed travel, the Brough Superior frame is a signature in-house component. The sections are brazed together, with iron lugs, while a single large diameter downtube and upper tube run in different directions from the steering head before splaying into a generously cross-braced double cradle. The Druid girder fork fits an aftermarket damper and polished links. Look lower to spot the Enfield hubs with both wheels (19in) and brakes (8in) being uniform in diameter. "A true anti-lock system," smiles owner Jackson, suggesting an alternative plan if the riding includes traffic. Although it was restored in the late 1980s, it is still possible to inspect some impressive finishing under the frame's thick enamel. Workers filed the lugged joins clean of excess brazing before paint was poured over, spun even, oven baked, then prepped for another coat until the desired result was obtained.

BROUGH SUP 2017

REVIVING LEGENDARY OLD names to gain new fame is hardly a new idea, but the path taken to reclaim old glory is scattered with the bones of those who've died twice. On the surface, mining the public adoration for a hallowed old marque seems an ideal business risk considering that market-in-waiting, but a forgery, no matter how well executed, can never match the original.

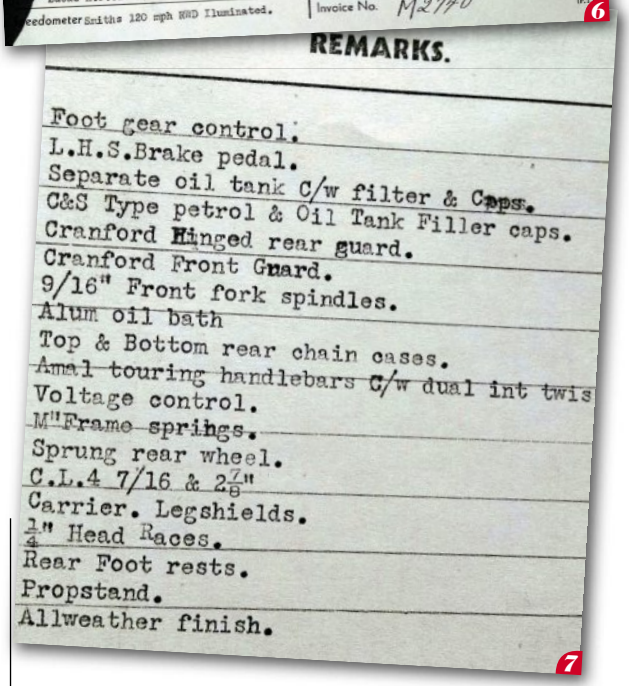
Left: Aiming to reproduce the excellence of the great name, the new Brough Superior is a truly remarkable machine

Given that certainty, many questions arise on the subject of Mark Upham's new Brough Superior. Obviously having the funds for the daunting task of a scratch-built superbike, there seems more at play with Upham than simple marketing. Prior to the start-up, original ohv racers were prepped by Upham for land speed attempts, followed by the crafting of painstaking replicas in the classic JAP/SS100 pattern. In 2013, Upham hired Paul Taylor and former Triumph/ Buell engineer John Keogh to develop an innovative new GP racer that fitted a spec-built Honda 600



Supplied to ...Messrs. Smells Motor Mouse.
Model ...1939. SS80. Special. ...S/X.S.Y.
Sidecar Chassis No. ... Body No. ...
Engine No. ...4735...
Symbol ...SS/X...
Frame No. ...SS/2089...

Gearbox No. TN24422.	Oil Tank 1086	Oil Pump	Intergral.
Tank No. 3429.	Bags L38	Saddle	Lycetts Fan.
Fork Druid.	Plugs H.14.	Sprocket, Engine 23	R.W. 45
Rear Wheel Enfield 19X3 W/O J/B.		Sprocket, Clutch 42	Axle 19
Front Wheel Ditto.		Front Tyre 26X380 Standard. W/O.	
Carrettor Amal 1½ stub 1 Float.		Rear Tyre 27X400. Ditto.	
Renolds .5 x .305 [illegible].		Registration No. BDR303. Alum Plates.	
Lucas 50d anti Type L2 [illegible]		Date Despatched 7th Dec 1938	
Lamp DU142 C/w switch & ammeter Voltage [illegible]		Route Rail.	
Lucas H.F.317 Altette.		Advice Note No. B2388	
Speedometer Smiths 120 mph RND Illuminated.		Invoice No. M2740	



REMARKS.

Foot gear control.
L.H.S.Brake pedal.
Separate oil tank C/w filter & Caps.
C&S Type petrol & Oil Tank Filler caps.
Cranford Hinged rear guard.
Cranford Front Guard.
9/16" Front fork spindles.
Alum oil bath
Top & Bottom rear chain cases.
Amal touring handlebars C/w dual int twis
Voltage control.
M"Frame sprihgs.
Sprung rear wheel.
C.L.4 7/16 & 2⅞"
Carrier. Legshields.
¼" Head Races.
Rear Foot rests.
Propstand.
Allweather finish.

Slanted 50-degrees to form a classic V, the SS80's 990cc twin was lifted directly from AMC's own Matchless and AJS variants to find new life in the Brough's upscale neighbourhood. The crankcase is aluminium and holds iron cylinders cast with cavities at their base to access and adjust tappet clearance. The polished, finned plates that fit over make a suitable spot for model identification. Measuring bore and stroke even at 85.5mm, Brough requested shaved flywheels and the knife-and-fork conrod arrangement, more aggressive cam timing and increased compression, found by placing special lightweight pistons under a milled cylinder head.

An external pipe lubricates the timing chest, courtesy of the engine's automatic oiling system. Tuning details taken from BRD 303's factory build card include a single float 1¼in Amal carb, and sparks generated from a Lucas magneto. According to club officials the 23-tooth engine sprocket indicates the bike was intended for solo use. As per specification for 1939, the four-speed foot shift transmission is from Norton, replacing the discontinued Sturmey-Archer.

It seems redundant to go on about the Brough's grandiose style, a popular topic any time the brand is covered. Still, the level of excellence is so high that even repeated visits turn up a new tidbit not noticed before. Suffice to say, the SS80 left quite an impression on someone more accustomed to flat-black Italian tinware. ➧

1: One dark desert highwayman, ready for the off

2 & 3: Both brakes are 8-inch sls devices and struggle to perform well on modern roads

4: The fuel tank is a thing of wonder, hand-made from several steel sections brazed together

5: George Brough certainly knew how to seize the spotlight. On its launch in 1922, the SS80 became the first sidevalve-engined motorcycle to lap Brooklands at more than 100mph... with GB Jr at the helm

6 & 7: Provenance is important here, as is history

in a frameless carbon-fibre monocoque. The success of the Brough Superior Moto2 paled in comparison to the technology it introduced, and suddenly a pattern was established.

Rather than knocking off modern Brough copies, Upham, to his great credit, is recreating the spirit and drive that made Brough truly superior. "One of the hotels in Las Vegas removed all its Elvis memorabilia because nobody knew who he was," remarked Brough enthusiast Jay Leno when asked about the new production. "So I believe the new bikes are a great thing,

A contemporary take on a classic engine layout

and I want one!" Made to order with fastidious attention to detail and a rich, smooth finish, the new SS100 uses a mix of tubes and titanium parts to hold a purpose built, 997cc dohc V-twin set at 88 degrees.

This was sourced from Boxer Design in France (where the bikes are assembled) but developed and built by another French firm, Akira Engineering. Meeting Euro 3 tests, the base engine with six-speed transmission cranks out 100bhp at 9800rpm, but a Sports version adding 40 more is available.

Made to recall the style of the classic Castle front end, this Brough's spec sheet lists a Fior-type wishbone fork and rear monoshock made from cast aluminium. The four-pot radial front calipers and vented 230mm rotors are made to order by Beringer, and there's a choice of wheel designs too; the standard 18-inch, 18-spoke hoop is CNC machined. The fork angle is 23.3 degrees, dry weight is 410lb and there are three colour options Traditional, Full Black and Titanium.

MotoCorsa list the price as £52,999 in the UK.

Above: Letting those good times roll…

Below: When an SS80 left the factory it did so accompanied by a personally GB-certified 80mph top speed. Each engine had to be capable of at least 30bhp as measured on a Heenan and Froude dynamometer

"I've often thought of taking it down and making it new again," says Jackson. "So far I've resisted that, as it works so well with just normal maintenance. I did replace the magneto and swap the kickstart lever after a club member pointed it out as the wrong part. Keeping something this old can be a challenge, but if you own a Brough or want one I'd recommend joining the owners' club. It's proved invaluable to me."

Vintage owners in Arizona would do very well to contact Jackson for Brough or any type of restoration work, as BDR 303's cracking state of tune isn't credited solely to the builders…

Life at the top subjected BS to some natural criticism, especially given that so much of the machinery was engineered by competing firms. Many fine machines entered the big-bore arena during motorcycling's infancy, yet each failed in some important way to replace the Brough Superior as the ultimate example of prewar motoring excellence. Truly fine art crafted from iron and alloy, TJ Jackson's SS80 makes an undeniable point of distinction the eyes and ears cannot ignore. CBG

Personality Jay Leno's 1925 SS100 Sprint Special

JAY LENO ON BROUGH SUPERIOR

ACTOR, COMEDIAN AND talk show host extraordinaire Jay Leno's current television series Jay Leno's Garage allows more people to witness what the riding celebrity has always been; a certified gearhead. Something his friends and colleagues have known for years. My first meeting with the late-night icon was more of a spotting as Leno entered a So Cal vintage bike show on a jet-powered rocketbike, followed by his workshop foreman on a Black Shadow. Visits to his hangar-turned-workshop/museum followed, hospitably arranged by good friend and right-hand man John Pera. Always happy to talk Brough Superior, Leno's knowledge of the brand is impressive indeed. He displays hands-on experience, gained through years in the garage.

CBG: Brough Superior is clearly a favourite of yours. What's the attraction?

JL: I'm an avid fan and wanted one for years, but there is no overwhelming singular reason. It's many things… the construction, performance, styling. The staying power. They were hideously expensive new, the cost of a small house or more. Like any motorcycle from the 1920s/30s you're actively involved, and that makes you feel more a part of the process. It's like conducting an orchestra; simultaneously controlling the timing, fuel, air flow and gear selection with your hands and feet. On a Brough, and especially a really tuned version, the engine's power and light weight gives it a whole different character. Shifting into third and seeing 70mph. It's fantastic. You'll never see someone ride a Brough Superior wearing ear buds. You want to hear it all.

CBG: Which era; JAP or Matchless?

JL: Yeah, the JAP engines. I'm very attached to my 1939 SS100 Matchless, but for different reasons. George Brough changed direction about half-way through the production era to focus more on roads and distance. Comfort and luxury with Rolls-Royce type appointments. The first bikes had more grit and I've managed to bring in some very early examples, including a 1921-built machine. The advancement for the era is simply astounding! Riding my ex-Isle of Man 1925 SS100 with its KTOR engine is a revelation, 50 to 52bhp and 370lb. That's a 90-year-old motorcycle with exposed valve gear flying by you on the highway at 70mph. It's brilliant.

CBG: Do you have a favourite?

JL: The 1925 SS100. Looking at the engine is like looking at the back of a watch. This one has been modified for racing and has a different carburettor, but what's amazing is when everything is right, it starts first kick and isn't fussy at all. I love reaching down for the hand shifter and pulling it up into the next gear. The cogs in the Sturmey-Archer three-speed box mesh with a precision click that's as good or better than any transmission I've tried. You upshift and feel the torque. I can often shift it up or down without the clutch. It's a superbike! The first superbike. I've said the 1939 SS100 Matchless is a favourite too, so I suppose it might depend on mood.

CBG: What is Brough Superior mainly remembered for?

JL: The quality. English craftsmanship. These machines have held up incredibly well because of who they were built for. English riders tend to hold on to their machines longer. You can also say speed, but nearly everything is so fast now that aspect of the Brough Superior is under-appreciated. Going on about doing 100mph seems a little boring, until you realise George Brough did it first (in a production sense) and did it with flair. Boldness. So many of the older bikes were rough and dull, they looked more like farm equipment than motorcycles. For me it's the finish, the polished metals, nickel and high grade alloys, the brazed-from-pieces fuel tanks and fenders, hammered and filed by the skill of a different generation. I'm a very big fan of George Brough Jr and admire his innovative ideas. His talent as a salesman, and showman. History belongs to those who light it, and that's what George did with his Brough Superior.

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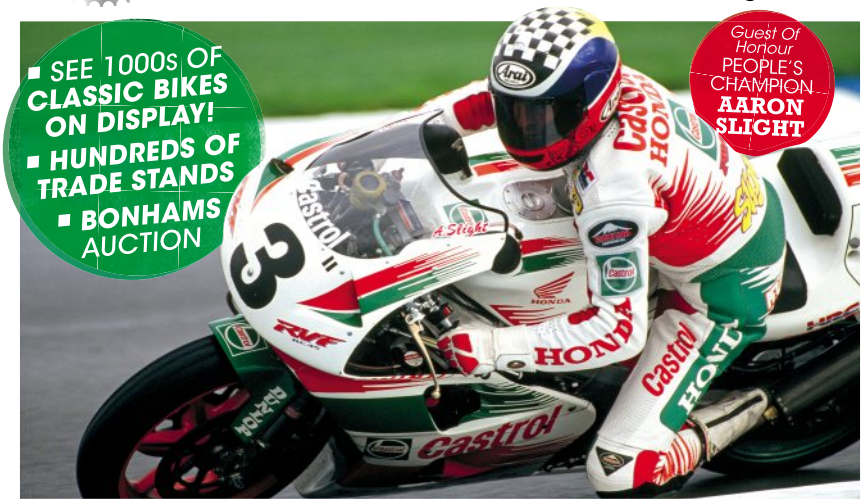

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Built to sprint

One rather special Triumph Tiger Cub. A conversation between CBG's Rob Davies and Chris Davies (no relation).

PHOTOS BY CHRIS DAVIES AND ROB DAVIES

AS I STOOD outside Chris Davies' garage, I could hear and feel the sound of soft thunder coming from inside; a sound that gently vibrated the side wall. And I knew straight away that the throaty roar came from no ordinary Tiger Cub. As I entered the workshop, Chris and Mark were running the punchy little engine up for the very first time. The confident sound of this not-so-little engine with its shiny reverse cone mega was now deafening, and exhaust fumes slid quietly out through the vent system.

"I'm just warming it up!" shouted Chris above the raucous revving, and I nodded in acknowledgment. So I propped myself up against the wall, admiring the simply beautiful lines and finish on this – what is essentially to be a racing machine. Then when the engine was duly warmed up, Chris cut the engine, smiled a smile of satisfaction, and we retired to the office for a cuppa. Chris Davies has been tinkering with Triumph Tiger Cubs for some years, but over the last five years has turned what was a hobby into a pretty busy full-time job, ably assisted by his wife Mary and assistant Mark. Mark disappears to make the teas.

Above: It's a Cub, Jim, but not as we know it…

1: A non-standard 69mm piston (Cubs are usually 63mm) that was fitted to the engine when Chris received it, but the barrels were later bored out to 70mm along with a new piston. Cubic capacity will now be about 300cc

2: New conrod, now fitted with a roller bearing and not a bush. Many early Cubs failed at this point

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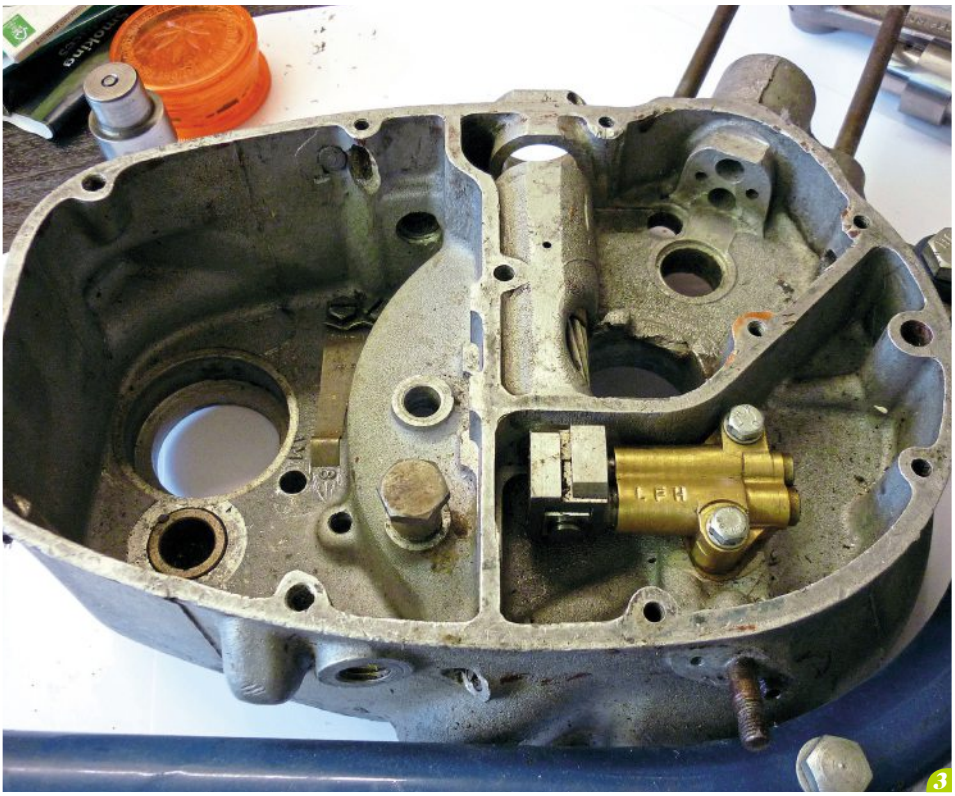

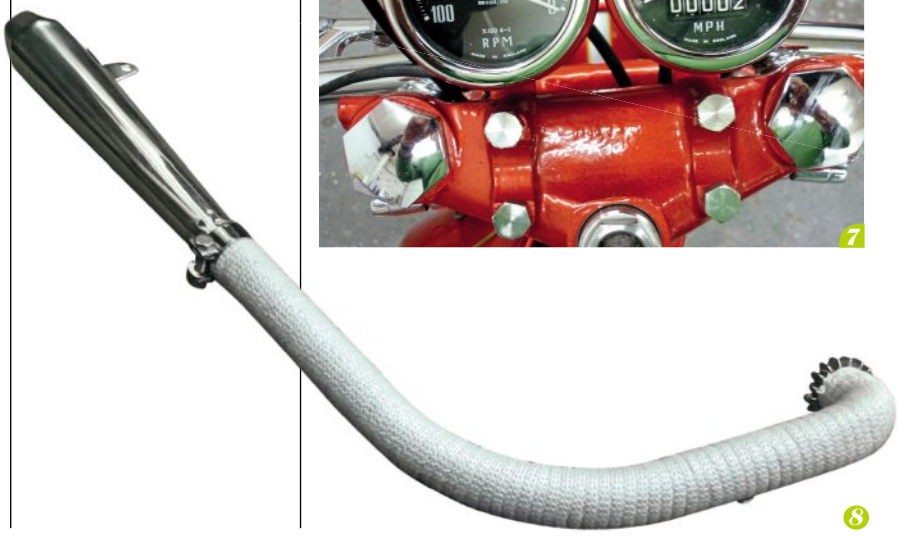

CBG: I bet you're pleased with that, aren't you? It's the sweetest sounding Cub I've ever heard. Powerful too.

CHRIS: I am. I took the bike to the Stafford show, where it got lots of attention, but I never did start it up. But now I know it runs well, and I can now start to steadily run it in ready for the racing next season.

CBG: That's not a standard Cub engine, is it? Perhaps you can tell us its background?

CHRIS: I wish I knew more about its history really, but there is possibly a factory connection because, as you can see, there isn't much standard about that engine to start with – even before I got to work on it. I had it from a friend who'd had it for some time and not done anything positive with it. He gathered that it had been used for some kind of competing, and the story was that it had done 112mph, but that's about all he knew.

Later he let me have the plunger frame from the Cub's predecessor, the Triumph Terrier. They had never been together in the past, but were now about to be permanently joined.

CBG: So how come you decided to turn this Cub/Terrier into a race machine?

CHRIS: At first I just used the engine as a talking point, but later I met some people in The Straight Line Club who do top speed racing for various classes down at Pendine Sands in Wales, and I don't know where these crazy ideas come from, but I suddenly decided that this was exactly the bike to take there.

CBG: And you started with the engine?

3: Improved LF Harris plunger oil pump, fitted by Chris

4: That Harris oil pump and its drive

5: Standard cam on the left, and the long dwell cam to the right

6: Electronic ignition by Electrex World

7: Speedo on the right – not a Cub item apparently as this one goes up to 100mph. The rev counter is a counter-clockwise unit, as fitted to US models

8: Standard wrapped exhaust pipe but with a slightly larger welded end to fit the head. The silencer is more 'sporty' than standard

CHRIS: Oddly enough I started with the petrol tank, deciding that I wanted something classy and different. I have always loved the shape of the Brough Superior fuel tank so I approached Roger Good in Shropshire – he specialises in metal fabrications – and asked if he could make one. Now there is a story, because it's the only place I know that does metal fabrication without any electricity that I could see! And you won't find them on the internet either, they just get work by word of mouth. Anyway, I took the frame over, left it with them and returned for the finished item. As you can see, it has the gorgeous lines of the Brough, and looks perfect for a racing tank. Later on, when I came to need an oil tank, I sought their advice on what style of tank I could fit, and they suggested one like the Norton, where it wraps around the central frame tube – and they made that for me too.

CBG: The paintwork is fabulous, even on the engine cases, and it has a great sheen. Did you do that yourself?

CHRIS: Yes, here in the workshop. It's BSA Firecracker Red. Apparently when the factory did this painting the first coat was black, followed by silver and then the red. We used a very bright silver and then the red, and as you can see, you get that candy luminous finish which attracts the eye.

1: First coat complete

2: Mark putting the delicate finishing touches to the 'Brough' fuel tank

3: The Terrier plunger frame, now painted

4: The very stylish 'Norton' style oil tank. Designed as a one-off for this special bike

5: Mikuni carburettor. Notice also the aluminium oil cooler at the top of the head being fed by a copper pipe. Oil drains from the rocker box into the pushrod tube and down into the crankcase

6: The ignition coil has been niftily camouflaged as a rectifier and painted blue. It's made of bolted sections of aluminium

7: One non-standard round Cub barrel, and behind is a crankcase breather

8: In Chris's workshop. A much later Cub in the foreground, and the racing version being worked on behind it

9 & 10: Leather stylish seat complements the slim classic lines of the 'Brough' style tank

CBG: Any modifications to the frame?

CHRIS: Only the addition of a steering damper – we welded on some brackets – you need to have one of those fitted if you intend going really quick. But apart from that, it's a standard Terrier plunger frame that was sand blasted and then sprayed. You can't get new bits for these frames anyway, only good second-hand parts.

CBG: And the engine and gearbox?

CHRIS: The barrel was certainly not standard, and the same went for the piston. Sadly the piston had obviously had some kind of collision – probably with the crank at some time in the past – so I had the barrel bored out to take a 70mm piston, taking the cubic capacity to just under 300cc. The old engines used mainly bushes, but Triumph did do an upgrade in 1965. Now we can supply con rods with roller bearings – as you can see in the picture – and these are far superior. Also we machined and fitted a much better oil pumping system made by LF Harris.

In the head we have larger valves of course, and use the larger inlet valve on the exhaust side. Cams are Big Bear from the US; they aren't any higher, but if you look carefully from the side, the cam is wider, has more dwell, which keeps the valves open longer. And as you have pointed out, we didn't fit the Amal carb for this bike because we wanted real performance, instead we fitted the Mikuni 26mm. I dare say we could have gone for a slightly bigger carburettor, but this one seems to work well; gives good throttle response and a sure tickover. Not that you need a tickover for racing, but it helps.

Early Cubs, as you probably know, started out with a distributor like bottle with points that later changed to a side points setting; but now we fit electronic ignition by Electrex World – it's fault-free and requires no maintenance. At the top of the head is a Webco oil cooler. The Cub turns out a lot of power for its size and needs all the cooling it can get. ➧

There are four possible gearbox ratio sets for the Cub. They are low wide, close ratio, extra close and ultra-close. And it's the latter that's generally used for racing. At the moment we have a 47-tooth sprocket fitted to the rear wheel, but will take a 52 to Pendine just in case we need to alter the ratios.

CBG: It's obvious from the outside of the engine that there has been lots of strengthening to the crankcases. Did you do that?

CHRIS: No; that webbing behind the barrels is how it came. Like I said, this engine had a very different start in life from its standard brothers. Obviously there had been lessons learned from the failure of earlier Cubs that had been pushed to the limit, and weaknesses had come to the fore. These extra gussets take the strain.

CBG: How about the wheels and exhaust? Oh, and that rather lovely seat?

CHRIS: We used the standard hubs, after cleaning and painting of course, while the alloy rims were built by Central Wheels in Birmingham. We had the seat designed and made in sheet steel then covered in real leather, and the matching stitching all adds to a professional look.

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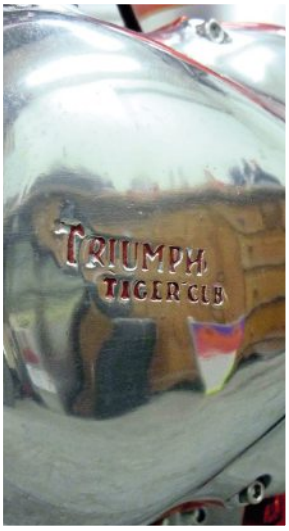
CBG: So now, Chris, it's all about running the engine in and getting it ready for Wales? But are you sure you're not a bit too tall for this bike? (I am now looking at Chris and mentally measuring his long frame up with the smallness of the Cub frame)

CHRIS: I am a bit big for the bike – just look at where I have had to put the rearsets. I'll just have to crouch down and get on with it.

CBG: We wish you every success… CBG



1: Will records be broken on Pendine Sands with this slimline beauty?

2: One of the 'plunger' units and some very rear-rearsets to suit Chris's height

3: Standard front forks but with the addition of a steering damper. Would you like to do 100mph on a Cub without one?

4: Ready to race. If beauty won races, this would be a champion!

ENTER THE DRAGON

The SWSMCC: an all-marques enthusiasts' organisation, based in South Wales

WORDS BY OLIVER HULME
PHOTOS BY JOSH CAPALDI / SWSMCC

IF THERE WAS ever a club whose name both echoes its origins and could be confusing for new members it's the South Wales Sunbeam Motorcycle Club. The club was founded in 1978 by a group of friends in the Cardiff and Pontypridd area who all rode and enjoyed their Sunbeam S7s and S8s. Membership grew steadily, welcoming motorcyclists with all makes of machine. As the years have passed the club now includes members with all kinds of marques and machines, from custom Yamaha SR500s to a rare 1952 Bown 98cc two-stroke single – one of the few Welsh-built motorcycles.

Above: The South Wales Sunbeam MCC holds an annual two-day show at Llanishen that attracts hundreds of visitors to view the wide variety of machines, old and new

The club started to host a two-day motorcycle show in 1988 at Llanishen High School in Cardiff, where the school welcomed the club with open arms, and it still does today. This year the SWSMCC held its 24th Classic and Modern Motorcycle Show with more than 150 bikes of all shapes, sizes and makes. Machines on display ranged from cammy

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Velocettes from the 1930s to a fearsome 216bhp Kawasaki superbike. Off-road bikes included an early Greeves Griffon scrambler and a display of Spanish trials bikes from the last 30 years. British bikes included Goldies, Bonnies, Interceptors… right down to Bantams from the 1950s. The Best In Show award went to an Indian 741 from 1944, resplendent in maroon paintwork, closely followed by a breathtaking Honda CBX1000. Profits were shared with the school. The show is now Wales' largest and longest running two-day classic and modern bike show.

Club members attend all the major shows in the west of the country and beyond, being founder exhibitors at the Stafford Show, right from its earliest days when it was held in Manchester. They offer a warm welcome in their regular spot on the balcony. They also support the Bristol Show at Shepton Mallet and host film nights, club outings, quizzes and technical talks. The club meets on alternate Mondays at the Ship Inn, Llantwit Fardre, where there is a warm Welsh welcome to visitors from across the country.

Club members will be out and about at events throughout the summer.

See southwalessunbeammcc.co.uk CBG

1: Club member Danny's Yamaha SR500 flat-tracker, which has a certain Kenny Roberts style to it

2: This very rare Bown 98cc two-stroke, one of a bare handful of Welsh-built motorcycles, was seen at the club's Llanishen show

3: You'll find members of this Sunbeam club (not to be confused with at least two other Sunbeam clubs!) at events all over the place, not just in their South Wales stomping ground

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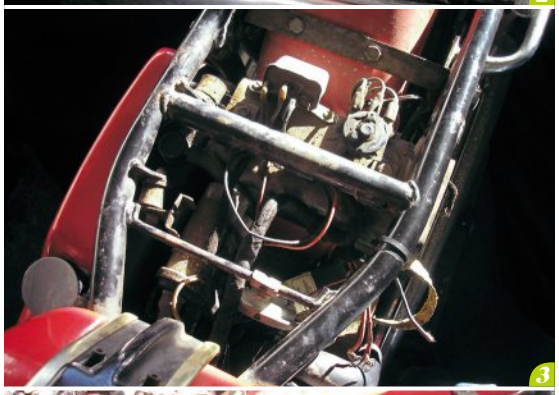
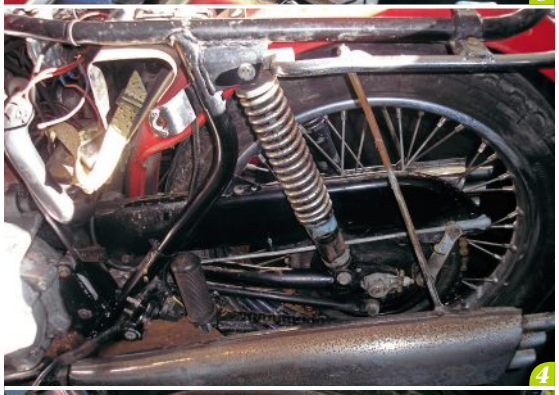
Rocket Revived

Should all rebuilds include an upgrade? Particularly when that upgrade's an electric starter…

WORDS BY ROB DAVIES
PHOTOS BY MICK HOLMES, ROB AND ROBIN HORTON





1: The Rocket 3 as bought in 2007. It's only when you have done a restoration yourself in the past that you can see how much work lies ahead; a lot

2: The angular side panels, with their 'vents' concealing the oil tank and battery, were not the favourite design of many. Rear shocks are not original, but amazingly that hideous metal rod holding up the rear of the silencer is – and there's one on each side! The ray gun silencers were replaced on later models with more conventional 'cigars'

3: The story unfolds as the seat is lifted out of the way. Even the spiders have had enough

4: Compare the welding on those rear lugs with what the Japanese were turning out in the 70s

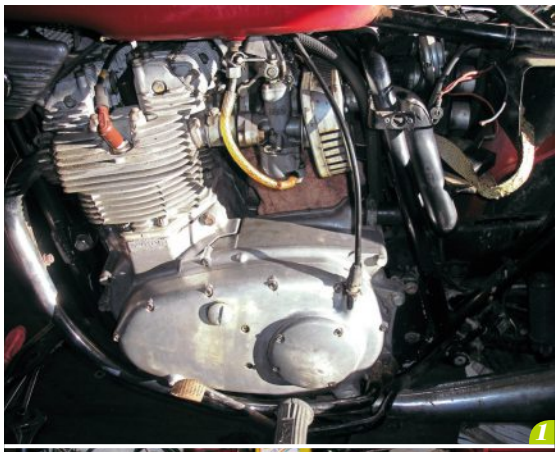
5: Hubs and fork legs were worth keeping, but not the rims. The front drum brake was replaced in later models by the notorious conical hub

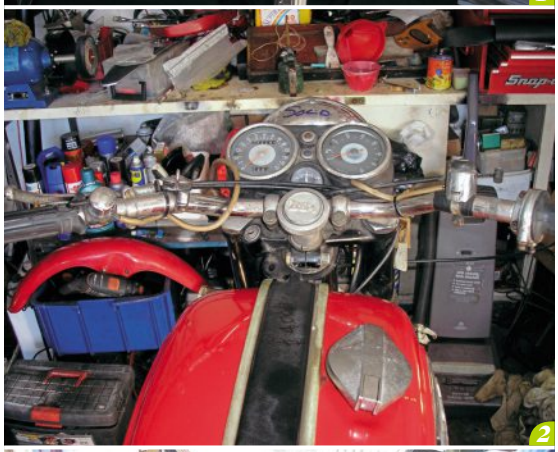
6: Styled not by BSA but by professional stylists. Controversy all the way

WHAT MADE A leading motorcycle manufacturer go to a third party design team – in this case Ogle – is one of life's great mysteries. Perhaps they really did believe that this lauded group would come up with a marketing miracle that would sell thousands of machines, and thus save BSA/Triumph's bacon. In the end they came up with the fuel tank, side panels and ray gun exhausts that adorned the 1969 Rocket Three. What a great shame that they didn't initially invite the input of the American head of BSA, who later came up with a truly sleek shape – the Craig Vetter designed Hurricane – but sadly by 1973, the world of motorcycle desire had moved on. Nevertheless, in recent years, Marmite rules apply. Mick Holmes had always wanted a Rocket Three, but coping with the frustrations of getting one running well enough to enjoy cost a packet, and nearly sent him over the edge into deep depression. "Was it worth it?" I asked him, and got a wry smile in return.

In 1969, when BSA and Triumph were at their wits end and money was tighter than the proverbial, both companies were sending motorcycles over to the States as fast as they could. As a consequence it was sometimes difficult to get the same models here in the UK where they were being built. And we have to admit that the quality of the build sometimes just wasn't there, but we will come to those niggly little faults later on.

This particular machine ended up in California, before it was repatriated back in 1984. During its time abroad, the bike received one good rebuild on the engine, getting new cams and a Boyer electronic ignition. Once back home in Blighty, two owners threw more cash at it before the latter owner passed away, and left the son to sell off his father's precious collection. Also, at some point in its history it was take from the standard 750 to 850 with a new set of barrels – but the same head. When Mick bought the bike in 2007 for £3,300, it hadn't run for a while and had been left in a poorly maintained and scruffy condition. Hence everything had to come apart – didn't it?





Above: A beautiful engine from all angles -no wonder the classic race boys love them. Is this the best-looking Brit engine?

1: The triple engine's slim drive side was made possible by shifting the alternator over to the timing case.
No electric starter here – yet

2: Remarkable to observe how much of the original machine has survived the passage of time, from the grey-face Smiths clocks to the US market kill button

3: Some neat detailing by BSA, with the bifurcated pipes from the centre pot wrapping past the duplex front downtubes, with the tacho drive rising between them all

4: Some months later. Much work and hard cash have produced a transformation

CBG: So you got it in your garage and looked at it for a while?

Mike: These Rocket Threes are great looking bikes – well I think so – and nowadays are much sought after as they can be much modified, improved and tuned for racing. That's what a lot of guys want them for these days.

CBG: But you didn't want to go racing?

Mike: No! I had a nice growing collection of classic bikes and wanted to clean this one up and take it back to standard – with a few improvements of course. It was obviously a US model, with the handlebar-mounted kill switch, but before strip down, I did get it running and thought – well, it runs OK. Famous last words. All the paintwork went off to Dream Machine for a Candy Red colour scheme – love that colour. Meanwhile the frame went to the powder coaters. I cleaned up the original hubs, they were fine after fitting new bearings, but the rims had had their day, so the wheels went for rebuilding at Central Wheels, to be fitted with stainless spokes and new chrome rims. I fitted new bolts and fasteners throughout, and bought new rear shocks as the ones fitted weren't original. The clocks went off to Pople's for rebuilding.

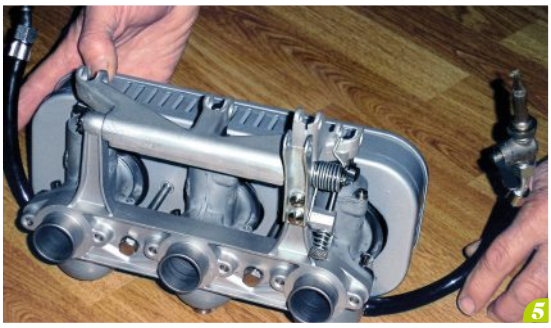
I then spent ages over the chainguard trying to get it straight. Having a background working with metal, I used my panel beating techniques to get it looking pretty good, but then noticed

from a parts illustration book that there should be an extension section dropping down to the lower chain run. This had obviously been cut off at some point, but I found one at Burton Bike Bits. The original downpipes were strong enough but required rechroming, but the ray gun silencers had gone rusty and thin in places – I don't expect that happened while it was in California!

CBG: It was at this point that things started to get expensive?

Mike: I guess I spent well over £6,000 on new parts and machining to get it back to showroom condition, and that included buying new 750 barrels to go under the standard head; that at least was still OK but did need a total clean up along with new valves and guides. I also cleaned up the original Amal Concentric carbs, and fitted new jets.

The original forks were in good condition, only requiring powder coating to the lower legs, but they also needed new bushes, and this was where I hit a bodge job. At the factory, a lug had been welded onto the lower leg for the mudguard to bolt on to. Whoever had done the welding had blistered the metal inside the leg. Then, when the inner stanchion had been fitted with its nice new seals, it must have been forced past this obstruction. So, when I came to pull the leg out, it just wouldn't come – well, not quietly anyway. Great persuasion was needed to get the inner leg out. That was just another frustration along the way, and a sign of poor workmanship.

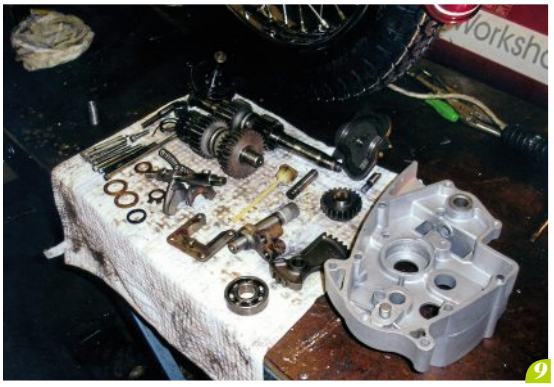


5: BSA engineers spent some time ensuring that three carbs could work well together, hence the gantry – and they work best when fitted with the stock airbox, some experts say

6: Engine going back together after new bearings and a crank regrind. Two of the three crankcase 'halves' are visible here

7: Head and rocker boxes after cleaning. The top end shows off the BSA triple's Triumph twin roots

8: Inside, new valves, springs and guides should improve the clean running



9: The gearbox only required a change of bearings. Not that they were worn, but why not while the engine was in pieces? Very solid piece of kit, this

1: Powder-coated frame, and crisp new coils. Later they were changed while hunting down an engine fault

2: The BSA had a dual-cradle frame arrangement like its A65 stablemates, but the Trident had a single down tube like its Triumph twin companions

3: One proud owner and rebuilder, Mick Holmes has every reason to be cheerful

4: Compare this close up of the engine with its former state and you can see how much work has gone into every detail. The starter motor can be seen under the polished cover

CBG: And when it was all finished and looking great, you started to get more problems?

Mike: Quite. It would start really easily and run smoothly, but as soon as the engine got warm, it would start spitting and running rough. When you took the plugs out, at least two would be sooty and fouled up, and thus commenced the long road to diagnosis. Even though I had done the carbs myself, I swapped then for another good set and the problem remained. I never suspected the Boyer ignition, so in desperation I sent the carbs to local Wolverhampton Trident specialist Richard Derby, who put them on his own bike, which ran perfectly – well, it would, wouldn't it? So I listened to lots of sage advice and started checking everything I could think of, such as valve timing and spark plug types and changing stuff like the coils.

Twelve months of sheer frustration followed until eventually someone suggested I try changing the Boyer black box. I did and the problem was solved. The unit – even though checked – was not advancing the timing once the engine was running.

CBG. Time to enjoy the bike?

Mike: There's nothing like a well sorted bike with a good start and reliable tickover, but with the Mk1 there was no electric starter, so I fitted the one that was fitted later to the T160. This entails a change from chain primary drive to a special belt that will run in an oil environment, using a T160 clutch basket. The starter motor and associated bits came from Dave Madigan in California. It's smaller and more powerful than the Lucas unit, and I made a new aluminium cover similar to the T160 but smaller, managing to squeeze a larger 11 Amp battery under the seat. I used the kickstart once – for old times' sake, and just to see if it worked. It did.

I did at one point consider changing the gearbox from the standard four speed to a five speed, but I was quickly informed that they were getting rare and thus pricey. The six speed Quaife gearbox was available, but for the amount of mileage that I do, the price just didn't justify it – Google Quaife gearboxes and see how much they are; it's the cost of another bike.

CBG: So what's it like to ride?

Mike: Things certainly liven up after 4,000 revs, but I would describe the power delivery as smooth rather than earth shattering. And there is a definite smoothness to the engine. In a sense you get the best of both worlds, by losing the older parallel twins' vibrations, but retaining the characteristic low down torque, but without adopting the weight and width of a fourth cylinder. The handling is sharp and secure, but at my age I'm not about to start grinding the centrestand on corners. Back in 2010 I had a great time at the Isle of Man TT, getting familiar with the bike while clocking up 792 miles over the course of the week, and now that the teething troubles are well in the past, I am very happy to take the bike out and show it off. CBG

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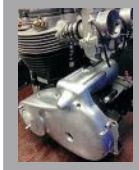

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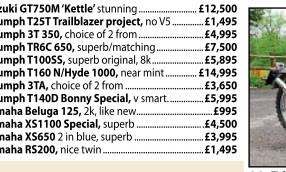

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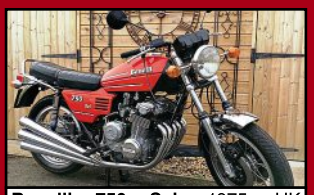

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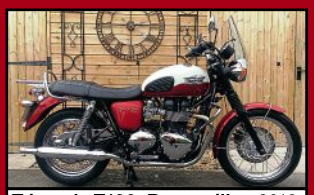

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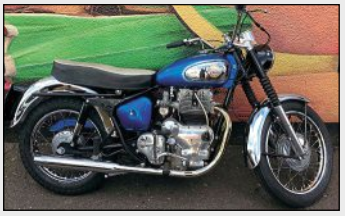
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MIKUNI CARB 32mm kit for T140V, £175. New Boyer for Norton Commando, £85. Triumph TR7, 1978 project, 80%, £2500 all plus postage. Tel. 01560 485449. Ayrshire.

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MV AGUSTA F4 750cc tank, red, £250; air box cover, (small chip), £100. Tel. 01554 777209. S Wales.

NORTON COMMANDO 750cc camshafts, one STD the other an S cam, in vgc at £50 each plus postage. Tel. 01832 731844. Northants.

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PANTHER Model 100, pre monobloc carb, restored as new by leading specialist £200. Lucas MS1 armature, new old stock, £75. Tel. 01926 770123. Warwickshire.

R1200GS LC 2013 onwards, front engine guard, cylinder guards, Puig hugger, £110. Tel. 079320 47132. Chester area.

SINGLE BIKE TRAILER h/duty, silver/black, powder coated, 10" mini wheels, spare, new tyres, steel mudguards, 4ft lighting board, jockey wheel, brand new, ready to go, £400 ono. Tel. 07944 518704. West Midlands.

TRIUMPH DAYTONA 675 2006, end can, never used, £100. Tel. 07787 525198.

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE 1050cc, standard exhaust, full system, 2006, good condition, £100; front discs, £25 each; Triumph Bonneville, 1972, silencers, T120, £30 each; seat, £30; BMW LT110 clocks, £35; fairing, £90. Tel. 01785 851977. Staffs.

TRIUMPH SPEED TRIPLE low level, MIVV carbon silencer, road legal, fits 2011-2016, cost £300, excellent condition, offers; also Triumph pillion grab rail, fits same, cost £105 offers. Tel. 07974 385213. Shrops.

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TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE 675cc, 09, rear sets, levers, brake clutch, seat, hardly used, £40. Tel. 01268 699718. Essex.

TRIUMPH T120R 1961 timing cover with rev counter drive, genuine part needs polish, £265. Sprung hub wheel, £250. T/C manifold, £50. Tel. 07551 665928. Brighton.

TRIUMPH TIGER 800 Leo Vince LV one stainless silencer and link pipe, carbon strap, unmarked, little use, £100. Tel. 01242 678949. Cheltenham.

WINDPROOF MID LAYER SUIT comprising long sleeve top, leggings, socks and gloves, two suits for sale, one size large and one size extra large, £40 per suit (plus p&p if required). Tel. 01604 905850. Northampton.

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BMW BOXER WANTED by Airhead enthusiast, consider anything from early seventies, through to mid nineties, rough or mint, or even spares considered, will travel. Tel. John 07836 758534. Tyne & Wear.

BSA BANTAM single switch D1-3, nos wiring loom for 1959, 125 model. Tel. Steve 07551 665928. Brighton.

BSA BANTAM D7 1959, peanut tank and suitable single seat, serviceable condition, why? Tel. 01952 223087. Shropshire.

BSA C10L 250cc wanted? Books, bits and photos of BSA 1955 C10L side valve, cash offered by OAP biker. Tel. 07904 421059. Merseyside.

HONDA 70cc, 1979, new services and MoT, good condition, very low mileage, £1475 ovno. Tel. 01453 750227. Gloucestershire.

HONDA CB450 OR 500T wanted for restoration, early 1970s, complete bike with V5. Tel. Marc 07511 688088. Birmingham.

HONDA CL450 A1 condition. Tel. 01935 840818. Somerset.

HONDA CRF450R front forks 2005 or later wanted. Tel. 01254 246451. Lancashire.

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NORTON rigid cradle frame or similar to take a 500 OHV engine. Tel. 01209 213386.

SUZUKI DR400S twinshock parts wanted, anything considered, including complete/incomplete non runner. Tel. 01305 826670. Dorset.

SUZUKI TS250 1969/71 Savage parts wanted, anything considered, including incomplete/complete, non runner. Tel. 01305 826670. Dorset.

TRAIL BIKE 1970/80s, runner or project, eg Honda XL, Yamaha DT, Suzuki T5 or similar, anything considered, green laning intended use. Tel. 07984 950257. Derbys.

TRIUMPH TR6 or Bonnie wanted by elderly enthusiast, late sixties bike with matching numbers in very good to excellent riding condition, preferably from long term ownership. Tel. Neil 01788 811919. Warcs.

VINCENT RAPID WANTED in unrestored or restored condition, cash waiting. Tel. 01748 811676; 07810 434147. Sunderland.

VINCENT RAPIDE or Comet wanted anthing considered, restoration project, need not have matching numbers will travel. Tel. 01748 811676; 07810 434147. Nth Yorkshire.

WANTED FOR MATCHLESS G2/G3 Speedo head and ampmeter, I think Norton lt weight & Franny B will fit, hoping you can help. Tel. Dan 01298 79316. Buxton.

WANTED FRONT LEFT INDICATOR including stalk and clamp, for 1986 Honda XBR500. Tel. 07530 239439. Suffolk.

WANTED MOTORBIKE PROJECT for me and my boy, older and rusty the better, can pick up Cornwall, Devon, Exeter area, may travel a little more. Tel. 07422 516869. Cornwall.

WANTED NSU QUICKLY or just parts, also wanted any older type mopeds Honda, Suzuki etc, any autocycle or parts, cycle master winged wheel. Tel. 07790 168224. Warwickshire.

YAMAHA SR500 wanted in any condition by enthusiast. Tel. 01539 536390. Cumbria.

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JTS MOTORCYCLE JACKET leather, black with two grey stripes running horizontally across shoulders, back and chest, hardly worn, 44" chest, excellent condition, £45 plus p&p. Tel. 01889 563794. Staffs.

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MAGAZINES: 170 Classic Bike; 128 Classic Motorcycle, six large boxes weight 280lbs, mint condition, £65 buyer collects. Tel. 07539 204262.

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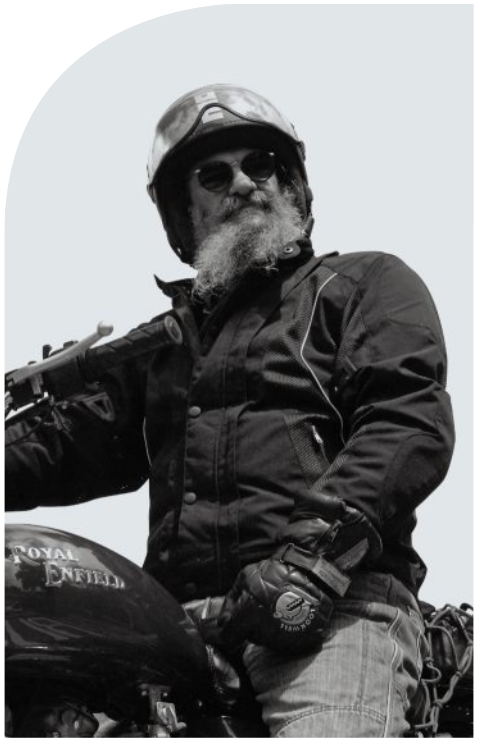

FRANK WESTWORTH

Famous last words

Healthy discussion

I HAVE BEEN unwell. Lots better now, thank you for asking. Everyone gets unwell, it's a perfectly natural thing and is usually as unremarkable as falling over when intoxicated or singing atonally while happy and hopefully unobserved. What is always rather more remarkable than a touch of colic or similar is the reaction of other people. Rather wonderfully in these strange days when a decent proportion of the populace appears determined to exist in a stage of ongoing rage, lots of folk of my acquaintance – and even some friends – offered excellent advice along with strong drink and sympathy. Both entirely welcome, by the way.

By far and away the most perplexing suggestion was that as I am now evidently both ancient and unwell – only one of these being a permanent situation, hopefully – I should ditch this tiresome motorcycling nonsense and acquire a scooter. I may have choked a little at the suggestion, but as I was snout down into a plate of healthy greenery at the time I probably disguised this as a minor food attack. Politeness is all when dealing with the simple-minded.

A scooter? The first two-wheeler I was entrusted with was such a beast: a disastrously slow and evil handling Vespa with a character so fearsome that walking was always the preferred option. Its owner, a large chap who picked cabbages for a living, was trying to sell it. To me. I'd almost believed his protestations of friendship up to that point. Anyway, I took my very first allegedly powered flight aboard it. I was certainly sober by the time I reached home. Note that memory is fickle: I'm assuming that I was youthfully intoxicated at the time, otherwise I would never have dared ride it.

Scooters have moved on, apparently, and are now somehow popular with former bikers and wannabee former bikers – bikers who are still bikers but who wish they weren't. People are mysterious. My well-meaning friend still maintains a fleet of almost desirable motorcycles. Whether or not they actually are desirable probably depends upon your current state of intoxication. But he rides a scooter. Okay. And he suggests that I should too. That somehow this would improve something. I gazed limply at his enormous black offering. It's huge. Really. He disputed this, claiming that a low centre of gravity, footboards and the ability to carry a bag of groceries beneath the seat made it somehow… great.

The next time we met up, I parked my vast, ungainly, unwieldy, statemental and unsophisticated American V-twin next to his tiny, svelte, perfectly balanced, high-tech groceries carrier and revealed to his doubting gaze that his machine was longer, wider and indeed taller than mine. And my vast American V-twin looks, sounds and rides like a motorcycle, not a device for carting the quinoa from Waitrose to domicile. Pistols at dawn? Nope. Just a lot of grinning and sly digs and much coffee… or was it tea? Surely scooter riders drink camomile and asparagus infusions rather than heroic black treacly coffee?

But what is it with this entire 'You should get a…' lark? Magazine scribblers are often asked which bike they'd recommend. I've no idea why. Look at the bikes scribblers actually own and ride – what they pay out their own money for. Rotary Nortons. Everyone should ride rotary Nortons. Or not, of course.

I was festering myself into a genteel lather about this presumption while rumbling homeward a couple of days later. The rain was persistent, the skies brighter to the south and west, my eventual destination. Grumble, went I. Grumble and rumble went the American style statement between my knees. And then, just south of Monmouth on the glorious bop which is the A466, I pulled up. Just to breathe in the trees and gaze for a moment at the beauty all around. The rain spat and bounced off the exhausts, steamed gently off the rocker boxes and I switched off just to savour the silence and hiss.

The sun came out, shining through the rain as through a shower of tiny prisms. The rain stopped. One of those profound 'sigh' moments. Only motorcyclists know this – maybe horse and pushbike pilots too. Okay, and hill walkers.

And as I thumbed the starter, unleashing a little mechanical clamour into the quiet, I understood my scooter-riding friend. I understood that he was concerned – for me. Concerned that I might be about to step down from a half-century of riding, from moments like this. That being unwell would somehow condemn me to a life of isolated, insulated car driving. I understood that his suggestions were entirely positive. And I understood what friends are for. CBG

'Magazine scribblers are often asked which bike they'd recommend. I've no idea why. Look at the bikes scribblers actually own and ride – what they pay out their own money for…'

WHO IS FRANK WESTWORTH?

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

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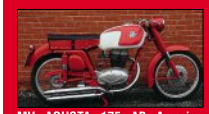
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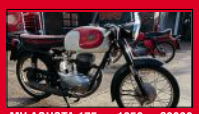
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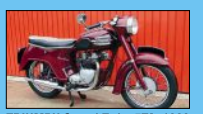
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