

TRIUMPH -VS- NORTON

BUYING GUIDES ON BRITISH BIG GUNS

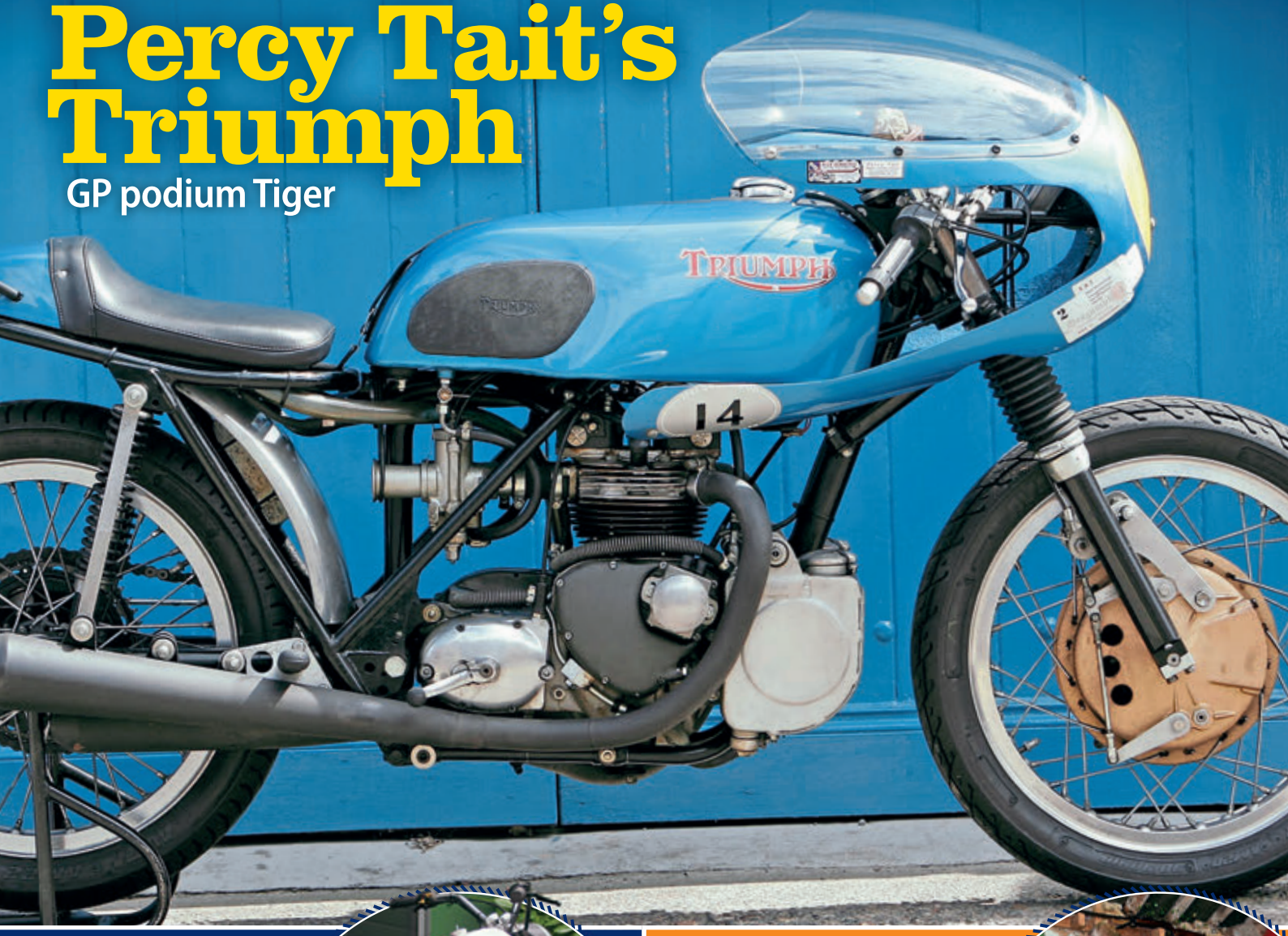
PLUS KAWASAKI Z1, BSA STARFIRE



CLASSIC BIKE · GUIDE

Percy Tait's Triumph

GP podium Tiger



BESPOKE BOXERS

BMW builds from Redmax and Kevils



BACK TO BASICS

Getting to know your British classic intimately



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CUSTOM 500

CARBON

ACE CAFE TONUP BLACK/WHITE



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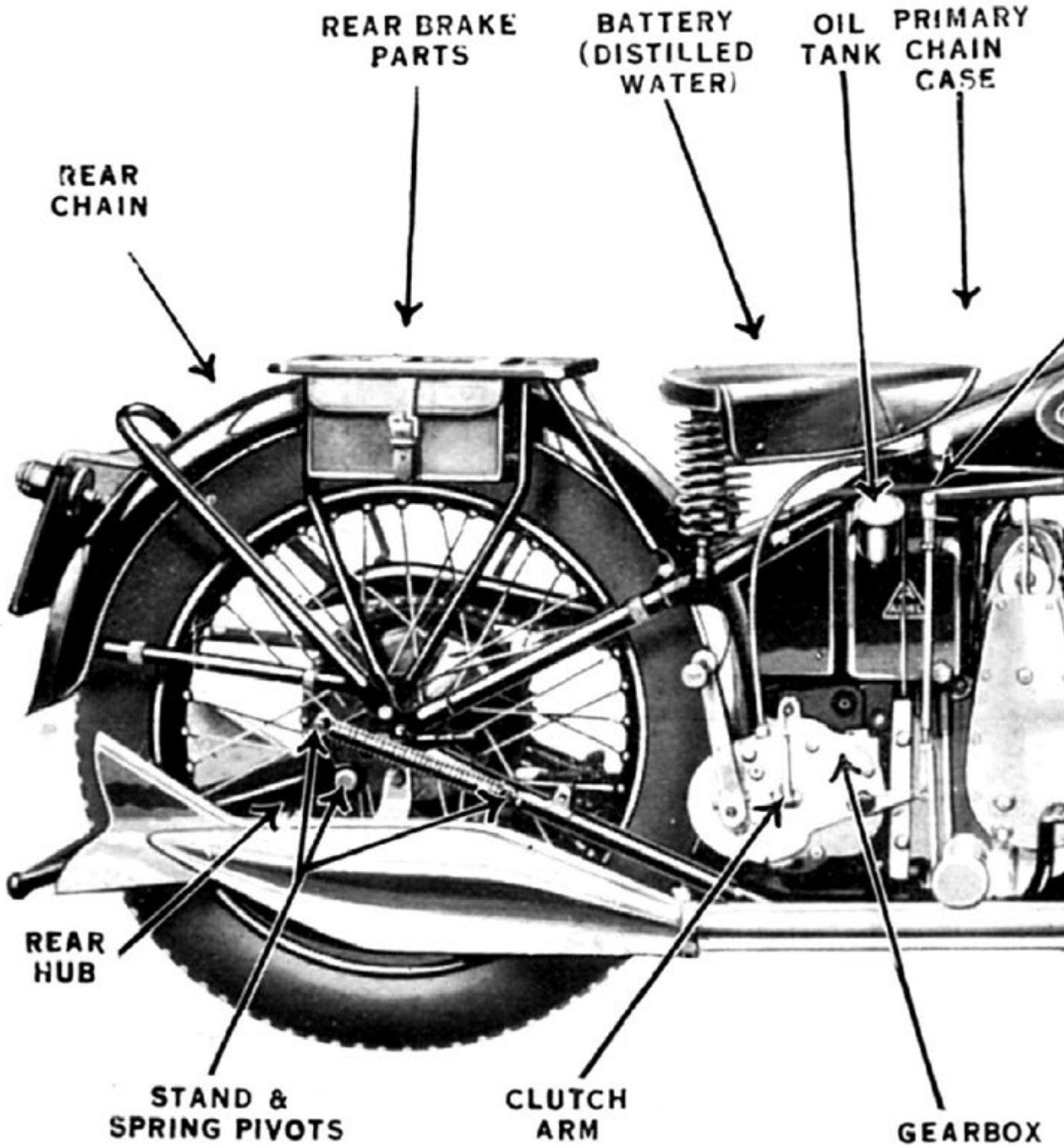
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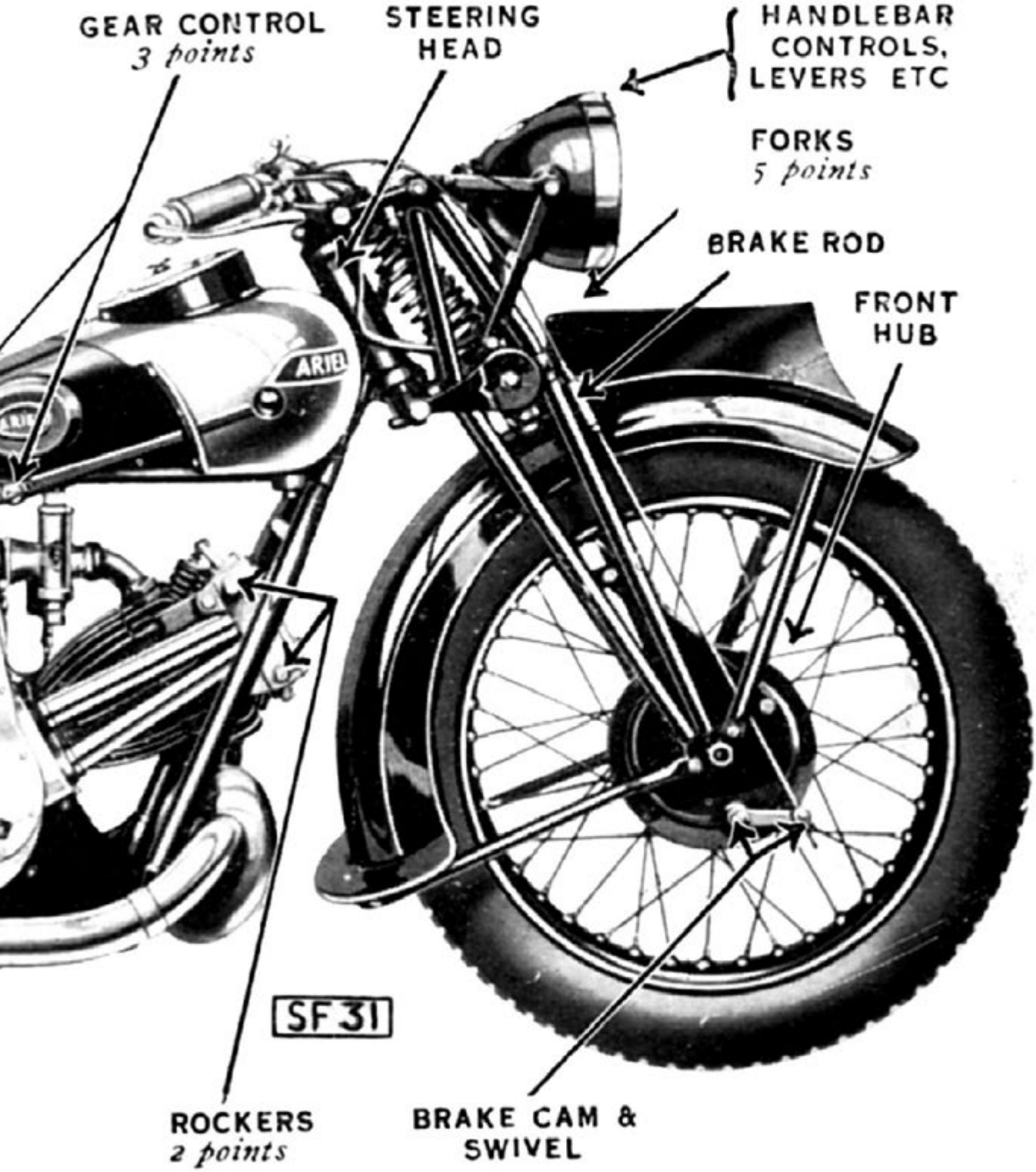
SHOW THIS TO your average car driver and they wouldn't believe what you were expected to do to look after your daily transport in 1931...

WHERE TO



64

LUBRICATE.


GEAR CONTROL
3 points
STEERING HEAD
HANDLEBAR CONTROLS, LEVERS ETC
FORKS
5 points
BRAKE ROD
FRONT HUB
ARIEL
SF 31
ROCKERS
2 points
BRAKE CAM & SWIVEL



Matt Hull

Inclusive

MY FIRST CAR was a Morris Minor. Bought it aged 15, learned how to restore it (badly) and loved it. Lowered, twin carbs and silly seats, I'd drive (badly) all over the country. When it broke I could usually fix it, or at least I could work out what needed fixing. Moggie owners are a friendly bunch and some other classic car drivers would give us the thumbs up, wave or smile. But to modern cars it was just an old heap, in the way. Beep. BEEP. "Get out of my way. My – (insert German marque here) – cost lots more than that so out of my way – I must get past!" – badly.

Bikers, motorcyclists, riders, call ourselves what you will, are thankfully not the same. We have our favourite types of bike, but last Sunday, blessed with cloudless, blue skies and perfect riding weather, I saw how inclusive our world of two wheels is. It was the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride, a charity ride around Suffolk which over 250 bikes took part in. Most riders took in the spirit of the ride, dressed in their finest cravats, tweed jackets and even shooting breeks, all in aid of a great cause. Gotta say though, the scooter riders trumped the bikers in the style-stakes – they looked sharp.

Before the ride everyone parked up. There were Indian Enfields rubbing footrests with Redditch examples, Harleys next to modern Triumphs, 1950s British bikes sitting beside 70s Italian bikes and 50cc learner machines with as many admirers as the 1800cc cruisers. Yet there was no snobbery, no looking down the nose and no bitching because 'That hub isn't original', unless my failing hearing didn't pick it up. It was purely a group of bikers gathered for a good ride on a sunny day, enjoying their bikes.

The ride was fun, but the ride to and from the meet on my own was the best I've had in years. My BSA didn't start first kick like it usually does, but the late September sun was high and it felt picture-perfect. I'm 40 miles from the meeting point, but being Sunday it was quiet and I had time, so chose a route other than just 'the fastest'. Cruising through the Brecks of Norfolk, trimming the timing and tuning the throttle I realised something had changed for me. I've had 22 wonderful years working in motorcycling, from courier to instructor to journalist, covering over one million miles on two wheels, but the emphasis has generally been on 'getting there'. Yet that day I had the same feeling I had with my Moggie (a lot of) years earlier – I was enjoying the experience of riding, timing gearchanges and listening to my machine to see if it was telling me of issues and knowing on my return I would have to check, adjust and fix at least something. And all at a speed to notice how incredibly beautiful that part of the world is. Oh, and that speed happened to coincide with a speed where my single wouldn't imitate a grenade…

Once home, a sportsbike-riding friend popped over to see how the bike had behaved after its 150-mile day. He 'doesn't do classics, can't get your knee down', but is nonetheless intrigued by their idiosyncrasies. So he nipped up the lane and back – in racing leathers – what a sight. And loved it. I tightened my loose mudguard and checked the plug while he made tea. Badly.

Biking. Modified or concours, scooters or bikes, classic, retro or modern, if you enjoy it, that's enough. You're included. Be good.

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Enfield's new twin could get Italian launch

ROYAL ENFIELD'S NEW high capacity parallel-twin is expected to be launched at the EICMA motorcycle show in Milan, Italy on November 7.

Enfield president Rudratej Singh posted a picture on Twitter of himself and CEO of Eicher Motors and Royal Enfield Siddhartha Lal testing bikes at Bruntingthorpe in the UK where the twin has been under development.

Spy photos captured in India have revealed two distinct bikes, a café racer along similar lines to the Continental GT and what appears to be a roadster motorcycle with classic lines built around the same chassis and with the same air and oil cooled parallel-twin engine. This new model could be named the Interceptor after the 750cc parallel-twin motorcycle made by Royal Enfield from 1960 to 1970. An Indian market launch is slated for early 2018.



Triumph pulls off a double with Bobber Black and Speedmaster

TRIUMPH HAS LAUNCHED a pair of new custom cruisers based on the firm's phenomenally popular Bobber platform.

Derived from the original Bobber, the fastest selling motorcycle in Triumph's 115-year history, the Bonneville Bobber Black has a more aggressive stance than its sibling with a fat 16 inch front wheel and chunkier 47mm front forks with twin discs. You can get the new Bobber in any colour you like, as long as it's jet black or matt black, with brief splashes of chrome, stainless steel and polished alloy.



A 1200cc liquid cooled 'high torque' Bonneville engine with Bobber tuning powers the plot along and Triumph has delved into its own and custom building heritage to build a bike with a single seat, a hard tail lookalike rear end, wide, flat bars, minimal bodywork and a sculpted Bonneville tank. Mudguards have a vintage inspired centre ridge and the rear wheel hub, though mated to a disc, has been designed to ape a drum. There's an old-style side-mounted ignition barrel, vintage look battery box, bar-end mirrors, Triumph's carb-styled twin throttle bodies, fork gaiters and gloss black bullet indicators.

Triumph hasn't skimped on the technology under all the retro style. There are ABS brakes, cruise control, traction control and switchable settings that provide full power road and rain modes and a torque assist clutch which reduces pulling effort. There is all-LED lighting and a state-of-the-art immobiliser with transponder incorporated into the premium Triumph badged key for maximum security.

The new 1200cc Bonneville Speedmaster follows the lines and the technology of the Bobber package with an altogether shinier look. With plenty of chrome and detailing the Speedmaster replaces the old 865cc air-cooled design and like the Bobber features minimal bodywork and a single clock. Unlike the Bobber it comes with two interchangeable seats – a solo and a twin – swept back bars, a fixed rear mudguard, forward pegs and what Triumph calls a nacelle-type headlight.

The Bonneville Speedmaster also has a larger 12 litre fuel tank for increased range. There is a massive range of accessories and clothing available for each bike, with 130 items for the Speedmaster alone, with everything from high bars for the Bobber Black to a chrome Vance and Hines exhaust for the Speedmaster. Prices have yet to be released. The Speedmaster and Bobber Black should be in the showrooms by next spring.

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST CLASSIC SHOW AT THE NEC

THE CLASSIC MOTORBIKE SHOW comes to the NEC Birmingham from November 10-12. The event welcomes classic bike enthusiasts from all over the UK and will showcase over 2500 classic cars and motorbikes. A diverse mix of marques will be showcased by 240 classic car and bike clubs, displaying rare and loved classics that span more than 100 years. As well as a huge number of vehicles, visitors can also take in the UK's biggest indoor autojumble, a haven of parts and spares for anyone working on their bike, as well as 650 specialist exhibitors and traders, offering a mix of products and services. Day tickets cost between £23.50 and £30. Visit **classicmotorbikeshow.com** for details.



Historic days out at Hinckley visitor centre



A NEW VISITOR Centre at Triumph Motorcycles in Hinckley is to open the doors on 115 years of motorcycling history.

The centre will open on November 1. The Triumph Factory Experience is free to visit and will showcase an exclusive collection of never-before-seen exhibits centred around the design, engineering and manufacture of Triumph's most iconic models.

Among the most exciting exhibits will be the most famous movie Triumph of all time – the Bonneville on which Steve McQueen attempted to jump the border fence in The Great Escape, which has been lovingly restored to working order.

Elsewhere, the two-wheeled stars from road, track and screen include the very first Triumph No1 from 1902, the Speed Triple ridden by Tom Cruise in Mission Impossible 2 and the latest race engine prototype for the 2019 Moto2TM championship.

In addition, visitors to the experience will also find a host of rare models including a 1919 Triumph 'Trusty' Model H, as used during the First World War, the 1959 Bonneville that shook the world and all the brand's legends with the Hurricane X75, T595 Trident and original '94 Speed Triple.

Visitors will also be able to book a guided tour of the Hinckley factory. This extensive behind the scenes tour of the engineering and manufacturing facilities will give an unprecedented insight into Triumph's approach to designing and building motorcycles.

For details visit triumphmotorcycles.co.uk/visitor-experience.

RIDE ALL ABOUT IT

MOTORCYCLING JOURNALIST Frank Melling has a new book, *Ride of my life*. Covering a wide range of bike tests from BSA Bantams to Manx Nortons, scramblers and speedway bikes to the bizarre Honda DN-01 super scooter, Melling adds his own amusing yet informed perspective and should keep you entertained throughout. The historical account of the last days of the BSA factory are particularly fascinating.



Ride of my life costs £7.99 and is available now from www.classicmagazines.co.uk or from WH Smiths.

Mahindra's BSA plans could have their mojo working

INDIAN MOTOR GIANT Mahindra, which bought the BSA and Jawa names last year, is to concentrate on the development of larger motorcycles using the two names at the expense of mass-market 50cc and 125cc machines.

Mahindra is to reduce the production of small petrol-driven home market bikes in favour of electric versions, while the new BSA models could be based on Mahindra's Mojo 300cc platform. BSA will be the main brand name in Europe, while Jawa, which was built under licence in India as the Yezdi for years and has a cult following, will be the brand for India and Asia. Licensing issues also affect the ability to use the BSA name in India.



A mock-up of a Mahindra BSA was used in a CBG at the end of last year I have attached a copy of it, but the site bears dire warnings of action if used without credit/permission...

Mahindra is developing the new models at its Italian development centre but has expressed an interest in carrying out some of the work in the UK. The first models are expected in 2019.

Last chance to win a Gold Star with the NMM

THE NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM summer 2017 raffle to win a 1960 BSA DBD34 Gold Star 500cc worth over £20,000 will be drawn during the afternoon of the Museum LIVE event on Saturday, November 4.



As well as the Gold Star, there's a second prize of a 1955 250cc BSA C11G and a third prize of a luxury weekend hotel break for two at the nearby Windmill Village Hotel.

There is still time to buy tickets which cost just £2 each and can be obtained via the museum on (01675) 444123 or purchased online at thenmm.co.uk.

The fourth annual Museum LIVE open day offers a chance to visit the museum collection free of charge. The day includes free museum entry, an indoor autojumble and trade area, meet the experts sessions, celebrity guests plus the Museum LIVE race bike start-up feature.

DUCATI SELL-OFF PLANS SHELVED

PLANS PROPOSED BY VW to sell Ducati have been shelved.

German Labour Union, IG Metall, which was representing the employees from Ducati, has said the Italian motorcycle brand will not be sold and will continue to be a part of the Volkswagen Group. Ducati CEO Claudio Domenicali told workers that VW had halted the company's sale, according to union leader Bruno Papignani. Speaking to business website Bloomberg, Papignani said FIOM CIGL, the Italian metallurgical workers' union that represents Ducati employees, was in opposition to the company's sale. The FIOM CIGL worked with its powerful German counterpart, IG Metall, to oppose Ducati's sale. Both Royal Enfield and Harley Davidson were reported to be interested in buying Ducati.



40-year-old bikes to be MoT exempt



IF YOUR CLASSIC motorcycle is more than 40 years old then from next year it could be exempt from having an annual MOT.

Current rules mean cars and motorcycles registered before 1960 do not need an MOT. A new 40-year-old rolling period has been announced by the government meaning from next year, cars and motorcycles manufactured before 1977 will not have to take an annual test to check if they are roadworthy. The new rules mean some 50,000 or so more bikes do not need an MOT test. It will be the owner's responsibility to make sure their vehicles could pass a test if required. Vehicles aged over 40 which are registered as Historic Vehicles are already exempt from road tax.

Roads minister Jesse Norman said: "We have decided to exempt most vehicles over 40 years old from the requirement for annual roadworthiness testing. These classics are kept in good condition by owners and not used regularly enough to warrant an MOT."

He added that the modern test was not relevant to these old cars and garages would struggle to certify them.

Sir Greg Knight, East Yorkshire MP and chair of the All Party Parliamentary Historic Vehicles Group said: "I welcome the plans to introduce a rolling 40 year exemption for the MOT test for vehicles of historic interest. This makes sense as the Treasury, for vehicle excise duty purposes, regards a vehicle as historic once it reaches 40 years of age.

"The MOT test is becoming progressively irrelevant for historic vehicles, which are exempt from emissions testing anyway and tests are increasingly being performed by young testers who do not know the first thing about old vehicles. This change does not mean that people will have carte-blanche to drive unroadworthy cars and owners will still need to ensure that their historic vehicles are in a roadworthy condition. Furthermore, anyone who wishes will still be able to submit their historic vehicle for a voluntary MOT."

Under the new rules vehicles that have been subjected to 'substantial change' will not be MOT-exempt. There will not be any legislation to define what a 'substantial change' means. Jesse Norman said: "Vehicles that have been substantially changed, regardless of their age, will not be exempt from annual roadworthiness testing. We do not propose to set out in legislation a definition of substantial change but will be including this in guidance so that it can remain more flexible and responsive. The exact wording for this guidance will be discussed with stakeholders and relevant bodies and published subsequently." The guidance issued so far only applies to cars. Motorcycle-specific guidance is due to be released later this year and will differ slightly.

Sir Greg added: "Figures from the Department for Transport reveal that currently while historic vehicles make up 0.6% of cars on the road they are only involved in for 0.03% of road casualties which shows that they are being cherished, maintained and driven carefully."



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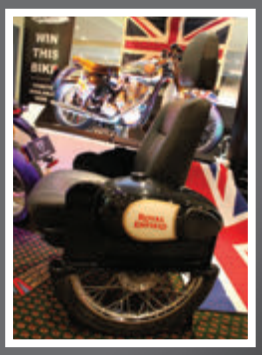
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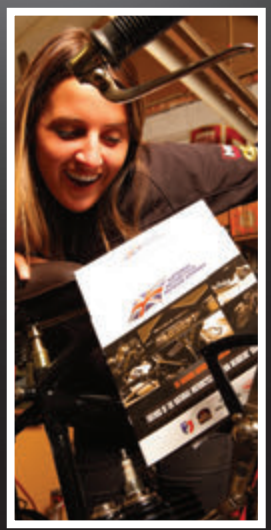
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The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride

Bury St Edmunds, September 24

THIS WAS THE sixth year running of the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride. Started in Australia in 2012 by Mark Hawwa, this unique, worldwide event aims to raise funds for men's health in general, with prostate cancer a priority and this year, due to one of the founding members' fight with depression, mental health.

The idea is simple – dress up in your finest gear and ride your classic, retro or custom bike at one of the 600 rides organised in over 95 countries to raise awareness of the issues affecting men, as well as fighting the often harmful stereotypes bikers suffer from. To date, the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride has raised nearly £6 million for research and treatment for men's health.

Classic Bike Guide went along to the inaugural Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, ride, organised by Bernard Adams and a group of passionate volunteers. Although one of the smaller meets around the world, over 260 scooters,bikes and three-wheelers attended, raising more than £11,500. After meeting up on the lawn of a lovely country house, the warm, sunny day saw riders chatting bikes, looking at each other's machines and admiring one's stylish attire. The ride took in some stunning, sun-drenched country lanes, to the seemingly packed streets of the historical Bury St Edmunds, all to the amusement of many, many onlookers. Just one police bike was needed to assist with this large procession – all helping to banish any ill-feeling towards bikes. At the finishing point was burgers and refreshments, a fitting end.

Bikes have always broken down barriers and the DGR was a perfect example of that. Hinkley Triumphs sat comfortably next to Meriden machines, three-wheeler Morgans parked next to Harleys and everyone embraced the day. And no one was taking themselves too seriously!

Triumph Motorcycles, Zenith watches and Hedon helmets all sponsored the UK rides, while local sponsors helped the individual rides. For more information, see www.gentlemansride.com or find your nearest ride on Facebook.









Yamaha XVS1100

GRAHAM POTTER, GREAT YARMOUTH

I've got a Matchless G80 and several other bikes, but the XVS is better for longer journeys. I wanted that Army dispatch look so as the bike was a little rough anyway, the frame was painted in stonechip for an older look, the wheels powdercoated by Aerocoat and the front wears a Firestone TT Classic, the engine was hand-painted and the cases powdercoated in crackle-finish. Bluecollar bobbers from the US supplied the rear fender and seat, which I then added rivets to. The headlight is a classic car spotlight but I've just got an 8in Miller headlight to go on.







Suzuki TU250

BOB AND KERRY, COLCHESTER

We bought these two years ago, one as a scrapper for just £600! The beige one has been done properly, I've done it all myself and spent a bit of time on the cylinder head ports and had it rejetted. It's also been respoked and the electrics were bad. The black one was quickly finished for the DGR last year – I've got to do it properly this winter. They're great to ride, comfy, light and cruise at 75mph. We use them mainly to go on the back of our camper, then we can bomb around France on them – they're perfect for it!













Triumph 'Bitza'

JOHN BULL, POTTER HEIGHAM, NORFOLK

I built this three years ago, it was an import from the States. The frame is from a 1969 Triumph Bonneville, the tank is an export tank, bigger than the one it originally came from – but it does give you a gallon more and it's got a 1971 Tiger engine. Trophy exhaust pipes set it off nicely, but you can't see the seven-plate clutch conversion, points and all the time it's taken to get it oil-tight! The notorious tappet adjustment nuts have been lockwired for example, as I don't like finding them on the side of the road!





Organisers Bernard and Lexi Adams with friends



BMW R75 special

PAUL HILL, BURY ST EDMUNDS

It's a 1979 R75 which I wanted as I like the disc brakes. It now has an R100RS engine, aluminium seat unit with a seat made from a spare I had for my 1965 BMW. Lots of effort, as always, is spent where you don't notice, like the really early headlight so I could have a speedo in the cowl, not the handlebars, and the extended gearchange. I also collect early BMW cars, so this fits in nicely.

Electra X

MICHAEL ESSENGER

This is a 2008 Electra X, the last of the carburetted Bullets. I wanted another bike after a 15-year lay-off and the Bullet seemed perfect. I had to find some Indian-style crashbars though, after someone dropped it… It has a Hitchcock exhaust, which I had to add a bracket to and a single seat which allows this brilliant rear luggage rack. The previous owner had fitted a lot of stainless parts, it's a really good example.











Triumph Bonneville T100

PETER HARRISON

It's the last of the air-cooled Hinkley Bonnevilles and has straight through exhausts, better air filter and SAI delete. Suspension now has Hagon shocks and the forks have Progressive internals. It's so much quicker now, and it's all thanks to the Triumph twin power – they really know these bikes. I've been all through the Picos and the Dolomites on it, then back through France.







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Some of the component and accessories featured in the photograph may not be a part of the standard fitment.

The Scottish Classic Motorcycle Show, Ayr

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

FROM THEIR FIRST show 28 years ago, the Ayr Classic Motorcycle Club has consistently put on a great event. It's obvious a lot of effort goes into ensuring the Ayr Classic Show remains one of the most relaxed and enjoyable for both the public and exhibitors. This year's show saw a new layout in the main hall, which made access easier and enabled a good view of the exhibits, without crowding. The sun was shining, which encouraged visitors to enjoy a great variety of stands outside and kept the ice cream stall busy, while some enjoyed test rides on new machines. The weather also ensured a very full bike park with a lot of interesting machines in attendance.

This year's show celebrated the 50th anniversary of the launch of Triumph's Daytona 490cc twin. Following Buddy Elmore's 1966 Daytona 200 win on a Tiger 100, the Tiger 100 was relaunched as the Daytona twin with a new head, camshaft and twin carbs. Five Daytonas featured as the centrepiece of the Ayr show's Meriden Marquee, ranging from a 1967 model to one of the last batch made in 1974, which was in the factory when the workers lock-in began at Meriden. Continuing the theme of Meriden twins there was a great selection on display from a 1951 sprung hub 5T 500 up to a 1980 Bonneville T140E.

One of the major benefits of the location is a great view of the bikes in action, from Ayr Racecourse's grandstands. This makes a nice change to some events where you can definitely hear but not see the action. The parades of classic racers, road bikes and Meriden Triumphs were well attended and included an alternative Daytona in the shape of a 1962 248cc Ducati. It was great to see and hear a variety of interesting machines in action including a Rudge Ulster GP special, Gilera Saturno Sport, Vincent Comet, MV Augusta Monza, BSA Gold Star, Triumph Bonneville, Triumph 5T, Ducati 900 SSD and a 98cc Excelsior Autobyk, which proved that pedal power can be rewarding.



BSA Firebird 1969



A65S COME IN many guises. The Firebird was made mainly for the export market so is quite a rare sight on these shores

Replacing the Hornet in 1968, the Firebird was built as a street scrambler with lights and silencers rather than open pipes. With styling aimed to appeal to the American market, this export model sports a sculpted tank, seductively shiny twin high-level exhausts running along the left-hand side with a balance pipe just in front of the silencers and a mesh leg shield. The final incarnation was oil in frame and was introduced late in 1970 by which time, sadly, BSA's days were numbered.

It's always nice at shows to see a pictorial history documenting how a sadly neglected machine has been saved and restored (often to better than new condition). It is however unusual to see a series of photos documenting the complete restoration of two identical classic bikes at the same time. This Firebird is one of a pair imported from South Africa in the 1980s.

David recently completed a strip down and meticulous rebuild of both bikes over a two-year period. David's brother owns the other Firebird which has been treated to an Eddy Mead 750 conversion.

Both engines were handed over to SRM to rebuild with crankshaft conversions for a new oil pump system. Replacing parts where necessary, the Firebirds benefited from new wiring looms, stainless steel wheel rims, spokes and bolts. The stunning paintwork glows, David feels it is perhaps a bit closer to the Rocket 3 paint colour.

It is however, an appropriate colour for a Firebird and it's great to see this one rising from the ashes. David is currently enjoying running it in, reporting that it has plenty of grunt with the promise of a lot more to come.







Gilera Saturno Sports



DAVID FIRST SPOTTED a Saturno 15 years ago at the Italian MotoGiro, finally securing his 1949 Saturno Sport last year. Designed by Giuseppe Salmaggi, who previously worked for Belgian manufacturer Sarolea, Gilera's Saturno first appeared in 1940, in competition form. Quickly proving popular, particularly with racing privateers, it became known as a bit of an Italian Gold Star.

Postwar the Saturno became available in 1946 in Turismo form with cast iron barrel and head, or the Sport option with aluminium head and a small seat pad enabling a racing crouch or adventurous pillion. Gilera also manufactured versions for the police and military. The 498cc long-stroke unit construction OHV single was innovative for its time, with no obvious external oil lines or push rod tunnels.

The great thing about Italian classics is that all the factories took their own, often inventive, approach to addressing common issues such as damping. The friction-damped scissor suspension on earlier Saturnos is similar to the approach Moto Guzzi was to take with their Falcone a few years later. Gilera's patented rear suspension combined friction dampers with horizontal tubes containing springs at the rear of the frame. Later models saw hydraulically damped, telescopic forks replace the sprung girder forks, followed by the introduction of twin shocks.

David loves the eccentricity of it, when he pushes it out of the garage it all feels very loose but thankfully he says it handles beautifully and is a lovely bike to ride. The girder front end is fine as long as it's not too bumpy, flowing roads are really enjoyable. The brake drums are pretty skinny but they seem fine, later models boasted a full width front brake.

It looks fantastic with eye-catching original chrome tank; seeing it on parade it goes very well and sounds great too. David was delighted to win a prize and is looking forward to using his Saturno at some of the upcoming MacGiro events.









Triumph T100R 1972

ANDREW'S 1972 MODEL, built in December 1971, is one of the later Daytonas. When purchased about five years ago it looked terrible, with a brush painted tank. It was used daily until a recent restoration which saw the frame repainted and the tank resprayed three times until the painter (rather than the owner) was satisfied with it!

The engine was stripped and found to be suffering from a common Triumph problem – the sludge trap was solid and had to be drilled out. The gearbox had previously failed during a trip to Ireland and stuck in third gear. The selector fork split pin broke, the peg came up and it effectively nailed the cover on. The cover subsequently had to be cut out with an angle grinder to remove it. The clutch has been replaced and the wiring is being upgraded at present. It's being converted to use a modern three phase rectifier/regulator.

Stainless steel fittings have been used as much as possible with Andrew making up stainless steel bolts and heavier duty washers where appropriate. He also did all the zinc plating and polished it up.

As a youngster, he once spent hours trying, in vain, to true a wheel he was rebuilding. His mother, hearing him despair, told him to get out of the way. He was amazed when she had it sorted out in less than 10 minutes. He learned that, as a girl, she used to work in a ironmongers which involved building up bicycles from their component parts. With knowledge passed on from mother to son Andrew happily tackled and rebuilt the Daytona wheels with stainless steel rims and spokes.

The cylinder head is prone to the valve guides loosening off, a common bodge is to take the valve guide out, stick it in a lathe, knurl it and pin it back in. The rocker oil feed is down through the bolt but the bolts to the rocker feed had been put in upside. The rockers were consequently starved of oil and it seized on the valve. The valve guide had abraded the aluminium away so Andrew made up and fitted a 60 thou oversize valve guide but it needs a bigger one so that's next winter's job.

He experienced problems with the brake cam too, a spacer had been fitted on one side but not the other so it had no adjustment.

Andrew finds his Daytona will cruise all day at 55-60mph, but is easily capable of motorway speeds. Capable of 110, rather than tuning it up he's detuned it to make it more usable. He delights in riding it regularly, easy to manoeuvre with a nice seat height and cheap to run, the Daytona is a truly usable classic.

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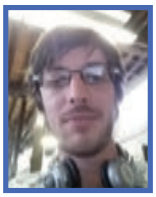


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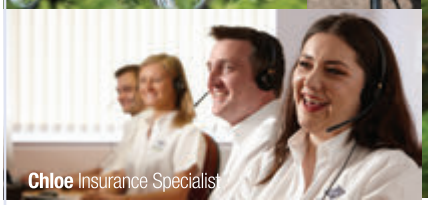
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Ducatis are a hit

Recently I was at Newcastle airport in a magazine shop searching for a good read for my flight back home to Hamburg.

What I saw I did not expect – I found your good *Classic Bike Guide*, with the 30 years of the Desmoquattro report, which I read with high interest. Brilliant.

I've been waiting for years for exactly such a report in my German motocycle magazine, MO Italian bikes. You did it and that's great!

I am the lucky owner of a 1992 851 S3 (Monoposto SP4 seat, according to a dyno test in the workshop some weeks ago it has 100bhp) and a 1999 M900 (carburettor).

I sent the frame and engine number to Ducati Italy and they informed me by phone that approximately 200 851 S3 bikes were built in 1992. I have no idea if that is right? The design, history and performance of the 851/888 is amazing.

It is very exotic when you appear with such a Superbike at the biker meets, most of the people have not seen the 851/888, as the 916 design and history is much more popular.

Thanks a lot and greetings from Hamburg Germany

Dominik Bertsch



CBG: *Glad you liked it Dominik, and your SP3 looks fantastic!*



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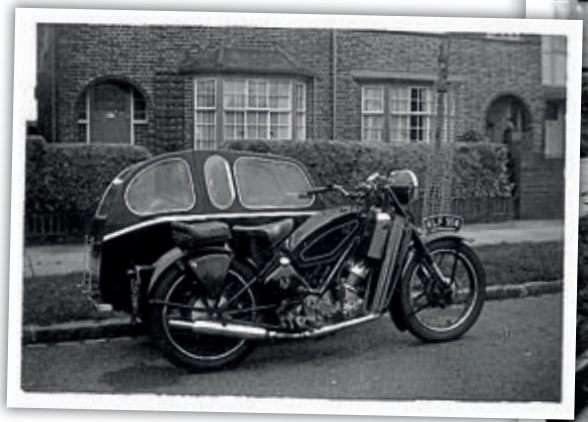
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That's my dad's bike!

Imagine my surprise when I saw the photo of Frank Westworth on a Scott on page 109 of the September issue of *CBG*. It's my dad's old bike and I have attached a couple of photos taken around the mid-1950s. He is in the sidecar in one shot, but I have no idea who the rider is. The other picture is the outfit parked outside our house in Heston. Dad always hankered after a Scott and eventually got one after many years of Panthers, but it was unreliable and he ended up buying a car.

Any idea where the bike is now? Is it one of Frank's collection of 'trusty steeds'?

Roger Messum





CBG: *Many thanks for the pictures of your father, Roger. Frank is looking into your dad's bike and will hopefully be in touch.*

Velocette advice



In the September issue of *CBG* I was very pleased to see a variety of interesting buying guides, some of which covered the new lighter bikes that some of us may be forced to consider when we can no longer kick over a recalcitrant 500 British single..

Having enjoyed those, I glanced at the Velocette MSS one.... Now, trying hard to disengage 'anorak mode' I was prepared to ignore vagueness or generalisation that can creep in...

I have to state an interest here as yes, I do own Velocettes. However, I was surprised to find such a piece included several errors.

I accept that mistakes can occur and dates can be forgiven as the factory was eccentric to say the least. But some points were wrong. The frame number always starts with 'RS' for swingarm Velos. It's the engine number that identifies the model: MSS, VM, VR, MAC etc. The gearbox prefix is significant also (14 for an MSS apart from very early ones).

Full width hubs were only ever an option on the MSS, half width ones were standard pretty well through production. They have been retro fitted to advantage on a number of bikes though.

The MSS (and other RS Velos) do not have a fixed gearbox, primary chain adjustment is carried out by moving it. Adjusting the clutch 'to do this you have to remove the left hand chaincase'. You would also have to remove the dynamo pulley and belt plus the final drive sprocket and chain to do this. In fact it's the front chainguard (two bolts).

I'm biased of course. I do own a 1956 MSS and they are lovely bikes to ride. I also own a 1960 Venom and 1965 Viper (in bits). If I could keep just one it would be the MSS.

I also have a 1954 B33 which is, agreed, cheaper and reliable but unremarkable. It's the bike I ride most – each to their own as they say!

Sorry to have rambled, I'll go back to enjoying the rest of the magazine and leave you in peace...
Adrian

CBG: *Many thanks Adrian, we have had a couple of enthusiastic Velocette owners commenting on the errors in the MSS piece – with hindsight we should have checked our sources on such a marque – no excuses.*
To make up for it, in the new year we are going to feature even more Velos, and we won't leave any stone unturned to get the best information on these fine machines!

Colour choice is personal

I thank my daughter for September's edition of *Classic Bike Guide* magazine, however the article on the 6T Thunderbird was just the same old story, running down the 1950 for its colour, yet always failing to mention that the colour wasn't the only change.

The carburettor changed from the remote float to the SU carburettor, thus changing the frame, introducing a hole for the air intake. The back light changed as the 1950 model did not have a brake light, a chrome badge was put on the front horn grill and the dual seat arrived.

These may be only slight changes but does it still make it the same bike?

I have a 1950 6T Thunderbird, I am the third owner and have owned it for over 40 years. The bike is genuine, 98% original. It was bought as a basket case (motor in one lump) and finally, 20 years later, had a total restoration rebuild by Hughie Hancox.

It seems when an article on the 1950 Thunderbird comes out there are only ever pictures of a 1952 and the put down of the 1950 colour continues.

In my opinion, the 1950 blue colour is actually like a chameleon, it can go from dowdy grey to seductive blue. If better paints were available then, the 1950 model would have been arguably perfect for its time.
Denis Kehily.

CBG: *The feature was on an owner's bike at a show and only quoting an American magazine at the time, which didn't like the colour. But thanks for the additional information, I hope it may be useful to other* CBG *readers looking at Thunderbirds.*

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What's going on

Know of a show, club meet or event that would be of interest to fellow classic bike enthusiasts? Then feel free to drop us a line with some details and we'll do our best to include it so others can enjoy it as well.

October

- 26-29 **Automobilia,** spares and classic motorcycle and car auction, Allington, near Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN14 6LJ. Visit www.richardedmondsauctions.com for listings
- 26-29 **2017 Dirt Bike Show,** Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire
- 28-29 **Footman James Classic Bike Live,** East of England Showground, Peterborough. Admission £12
- 29 **South of England Classic Motorcycle Show,** 10am, South of England Showground, Ardingly, Kent www.elk-promotions.co.uk
- 29 **Ipswich Bike Jumble,** Great Blakenham, Suffolk IP6 ONJ, admission £3



Must go!!

November

NOVEMBER

- 3 **DECEMBER ISSUE OF *THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE***
- 4 **NOVEMBER ISSUE OF *OLD BIKE MART***
- 4 **Rufforth Autojumble,** Rufforth Park, York. Tel: 01904 738620. www.rufforthautojumble.com
- 4 **Firework Frenzy,** Santa Pod Raceway, Airfield Road, Podington, Wellingborough, Northants, NN29 7XA. www.santapod.com
- 4 **Dee Atkinson & Harrison Auctioneers,** Classic Car, Motorcycle & Automobilia Auction www.dee-atkinson-harrison.co.uk or www.auctionhouse.uk.net/hullandeastyorkshire
- 4-5 **Charterhouse Auctioneers Classic Car and Motorbike Auction,** Classic Cars, in conjunction with The Footman James 17th Classic Vehicle Restoration Show, Royal Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 6QN www.charterhouse-auction.com
- 4 **The National Motorcycle Museum** will host the annual Museum LIVE event on November 4. Lots to see and do and you can visit the museum collection free of charge. Car parking £5. **(See news)**
- 5 **LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes,** Barley Visitor Centre. Tel: 01772 782516.
- 5 **Ace Cafe London,** Ton Up Day – England Expects. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 5 **Garstang Autojumble,** Hamilton House Farm (on A586, off A6), Garstang, Preston PR3 0TB Tel: Ian Sherrard 07836 331324 (day) or 01772 323654 (6pm-8pm) Email: info@garstangautojumbles.co.uk or visit www.garstangautojumbles.co.uk
- 6 **NOVEMBER ISSUE OF *REAL CLASSIC***
- 12 **Ace Cafe London,** Poppy Day Parade & Service – Military Vehicle Meet. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 15 **DECEMBER ISSUE OF *CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS***
- 16 ***CLASSIC DIRT BIKE* ISSUE 45**
- 16 **LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes,** Knott Working Men's Club, (fish & chips) Tel: 01772 782516
- 18-26 **Motorcycle Live,** The NEC, Birmingham will feature at least 38 manufacturers displaying machines and many of those will be showing off the latest in motorcycle design and trends. As well as the biggest manufacturers, there will be stands from many smaller home-grown companies. The Ace Build feature will present the four finalists in the show's custom-building competition. Visitors paying for reduced price on-site car parking at The NEC either in advance or on the day, will receive a voucher for half-price admission to the National Motorcycle Museum, which is adjacent to the venue. Motorcycle parking at the show is free of charge. For more information visit www.motorcyclelive.co.uk
- 19 **Ace Cafe London,** Ariel OC (Founded 1951 @ Ace) + Classic Bike Day. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 19 **Haynes Bikers' Breakfast Ride-In,** held on the third Sunday of each month this event is open to all marques. As well as meeting other bikers, participants can chat over a coffee and a hearty breakfast, from a full English to a bacon roll in Cafe 750. The museum cafe will be open from 9.30am. These events are free to attend and are an opportunity for vehicle owners to show off their prized possessions at the front of the prestigious museum. Haynes International Motor Museum, Sparkford, nr Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 7LH. www.himm.co.uk
- 19 **'Normous Newark Autojumble,** Newark Showground, Newark, Notts, NG24 2NY. www.newarkautojumble.co.uk
- 22 **DECEMBER ISSUE OF *CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE***
- 25 **Malvern Drive-In Classic Bike & Car Autojumble,** Three Counties Showground, Wye Halls and outside, Malvern, Worcs, WR13 6NW. West Midlands readers might want to take a trip out to Malvern for this, one of the last big jumbles of the year. A large classic car and motorcycle autojumble located in the recently refurbished Wye Halls. Lots of trade and autojumble stalls offering a great opportunity to locate those hard to find parts and accessories. Tel: 01484 667776; email:

info@classicshows.org or visit www.classicshows.org

- 25 **LE Velo Northampton gathering,** The Lamb, Stoke Goldington. MK16 8NR Tel: 01604 499858
- 26 **Huddersfield Autojumble Old Market Building,** Brook Street, Huddersfield HD1 1RG Tel: Jeff 07795 505388 Email: jeffpff@hotmail.co.uk
- 26 **LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes,** Dunsop Bridge, (meet main car park). Tel: 01772 782516
- 26 **Ace Cafe London,** Mud Pluggers Day. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 26 **Remembrance Day Coalhouse Fort,** East Tilbury, Essex RM18 8PB. Tel. 01375 844203. www.coalhousefort.co.uk
- 26 **Autojumble,** The Clitheroe Auction Mart, Lincoln Way, Clitheroe BB7 1QW. www.hoylespromotions.co.uk

December

- 1 **JANUARY ISSUE OF *THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE***
- 2 **DECEMBER ISSUE OF *OLD BIKE MART***
- 2 **Rufforth Autojumble,** Rufforth Park, York. Tel: 01904 738620. www.rufforthautojumble.com
- 2 **Southern Classic Off Road & Racing Show & Motorcycle Jumble,** Kempton Park, Staines Road East, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex, TW16 5AQ. www.kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk Tel: 01507 529435
- 3 **Ace Cafe London,** Bike Day + Ace Cafe Club Day Xmas Meet. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 3 **8th Southwell Toy Run,** Start: Admiral Rodney, King Street, Southwell, Notts, NG25 0EH. Tel. John 01636 812838
- 4 **DECEMBER ISSUE OF *REAL CLASSIC***
- 7 **LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes,** Glasson Dock, nr Lancaster. Tel: 01772 782516
- 9 **H&H motorcycle auction,** at The National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham.



The latest H&H auction at the NMM has already had a number of early entries to spark interest, such as a 1960 Royal Enfield Constellation entered with no reserve, a 1969 Triumph Bonneville that has been in the same family for 40 years, a 1960 Velocette MSS and a trio of Suzuki T20 two-strokes Visit www.nationalmotorcyclemuseum.co.uk for details

- 10 **'Normous Newark Autojumble,** Newark Showground, Newark, Notts, NG24 2NY. www.newarkautojumble.co.uk
- 10 **Ace Cafe London,** Bike Day and Paws n' Claws Pet Food Run. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 17 **Ace Cafe London,** Bike Day and Xmas Toy Run. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 17 **Ace Cafe London,** Xmas Carol Service. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 17 **Haynes Bikers' Breakfast Ride-In,** Haynes International Motor Museum, Sparkford, nr Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 7LH. www.himm.co.uk
- 20 **JANUARY ISSUE OF *CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS***
- 20 **JANUARY ISSUE OF *CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE***
- 21 **JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE OF *CLASSIC RACER***
- 26 **Ace Cafe London,** Cold Turkey Meet. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 31 **Huddersfield Autojumble (Christmas Do),** Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield HD1 1RG Tel: Jeff 07795 505388 Email: jeffpff@hotmail.co.uk
- 31 **Ace Cafe London,** Bike Day. www.ace-cafe-london.com
- 31 **Ace Cafe London,** New Year's Eve Party. www.ace-cafe-london.com



1962 Triumph Bonneville T120

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Iconic and irresistible

Instantly recognisable and loved by millions, it's easy to fall for the charms of the original pre-unit Bonneville.

WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

HISTORY LESSON

After the Second World War the American market began opening up to British manufacturers – pushed by the government to export. Building on the popularity of Triumph's 499cc Speed Twin, an increase in size created the 649cc Thunderbird 6T. Debuting at the Montlhéry speed bowl near Paris in 1949, the Thunderbird went on sale the following year. The single carburettor Tiger 110 followed in 1954. A light alloy cylinder head was introduced in 1956 with twin carbs offered as an optional extra.

In the quest for speed Triumphs were a popular choice for both road racers and world record attempts. On September 6, 1956, American racer Johnny Allen used a Thunderbird engine to power the methanol fuelled Texas Ceegar streamliner, setting a new motorcycle land speed record with a two-way average of 214.4mph.

On August 28, 1958 Bill Johnston set a new record for standard machines, using ordinary fuel, averaging 147.32mph, again at Bonneville Salt Flats. The American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) ratified Johnny Allen's record, but the Fédération Internationale de Motorcyclisme (FIM) refused to do so due to a technicality regarding the timing gear.

Triumph took legal action, with the ensuing publicity doing much to boost sales. In an inspired piece of marketing, Triumph hurriedly developed and launched the Tiger 120 Bonneville at the Earls Court Show in 1958. Citing the Bonneville as 'the world's greatest and fastest standard model' Triumph could not have anticipated just how enduring the name would become. It is the one motorcycle model name instantly recognisable to most people the world over. Wherever you stop, regardless of whatever British, Japanese or European bike you ride; large or small, classic or modern, standard or modified, people will almost always come over and mention the Bonneville.

Left: This Bonnie rolls easily onto the centrestand, which is deployed simply by standing on the lug.

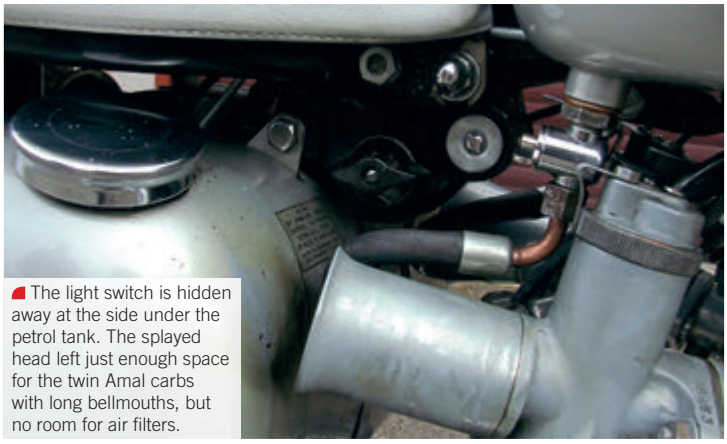
1 & 2: The Bonneville features slim bodied chronometric clocks and a lockable throttle stop that is really handy for warming it up.

3: Slim and agile, timeless styling.

Based on the same engine as the Tiger 110, the Bonneville saw the three-piece crankshaft replaced by a new, stronger one-piece design, with hotter inlet cams. Widely splayed inlet ports on the eight bolt alloy cylinder head accommodated twin Amal carburettors. Having no float chambers, these were supplied by a separate Amal GP chamber. This clamped onto the seat tube between the carburettor bellmouths, though some owners reported intermittent misfires and fuel starvation.

The T120 designation indicated the potential top speed. Percy Tait, Triumph's works tester (see pages 58-66 for more on Percy's exploits), may have managed 128mph at MIRA on a development bike, but the 46bhp production Bonneville was realistically more capable of around 110mph, although it possessed the potential for further tuning. Initially, the Bonneville shared the same single downtube frame as the Thunderbird. This featured a bolt-on rear subframe and rear fork (swingarm) assembly that pivoted on a pin. Attached at the base of the seat tube, this was subject to sideways movement and if not properly maintained, it was prone to wear and tear. A steering damper was fitted as standard and sporting extras included a rev counter and timing cover with rev counter drive, a quickly detachable wheel, humped racing seat plus the option of alternative gearbox ratios.

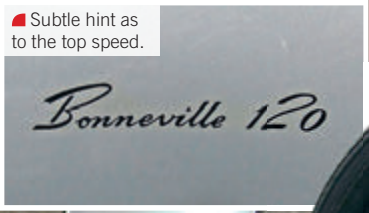
The fully shrouded fork legs, heavily valanced front mudguard and nacelle lasted only the first year. Apparently, the chunky styling, handier for the British climate, was not so popular in the sunny United States where stripped down bikes were the order of the day. The increased power and speed of the Bonneville outperformed the Thunderbird frame, so a new twin downtube, or duplex frame was introduced in 1960, accompanied by new fork shrouds with quickly detachable chromed headlamp and gaiters. Some early examples experienced a weakness with the frames cracking so a lower tank rail was quickly added to strengthen things.



The light switch is hidden away at the side under the petrol tank. The splayed head left just enough space for the twin Amal carbs with long bellmouths, but no room for air filters.



Bonneville legend.



Subtle hint as to the top speed.



Slim-bodied chronometric clocks and a handy parcel rack.



A long evolution from the Speed Twin, Edwin Turner thought the 650 was the maximum the twin could go to due to inherent issues with vibration.

Losing the Nacelle meant the light switch, having moved to under the front of the seat on the right-hand side, was no longer so easy to locate when riding. The speedo was now attached to the top of the forks, the mudguards lost a bit of weight and the separate float chamber for the carb was now suspended from a rubber mounting.

An alternator replaced the dynamo for lighting, but the magneto was retained with auto-advance as standard. Removing the dynamo meant changes to the shape of the crankcase, timing covers and also a change to the primary chaincase, to accommodate the stator for the alternator.

In 1961 the fuel issues disappeared with twin Amal Monobloc carbs introduced and a folding kickstart fitted as standard.

The final year for the pre-unit Bonneville was 1962, when the fuel tank was offered in a choice of three or four gallons.

Cycle World magazine launched in America in January 1962, with a glowing report of the Bonneville. The testers liked the light, compact and agile machine, finding it capable of easily exceeding 100mph, even with the rider seated bolt upright, although they said the power took a bit of getting used to. Its fairly bulky rider fought to keep the front wheel on the ground during the quarter-mile test from a standing start. 'Given sufficient time to completely familiarize ourselves with this vast and unaccustomed surplus of power, we could have done our tests with much less fuss – but it probably wouldn't have been as much fun.' It noted Triumph's extensive use of rubber mounting to counteract the vibration, reassuring its readers that 'there wasn't much vibration to worry about'.

The end of the pre-unit Bonneville



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MANUFACTURED: 1959-1962 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled OHV parallel twin **BORE / STROKE:** 71mm x 82mm **CAPACITY:** 649cc **COMPRESSION:** 8.5:1 **POWER:** 46bhp @ 6500rpm **CARBURETTOR:** Twin Amal Monobloc 376 **IGNITION:** 6V magneto **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, separate oil tank with twin plunger pump **CLUTCH:** Wet multiplate clutch **GEARBOX:** Four-speed non unit **PRIMARY DRIVE:** Chain **FINAL DRIVE:** Chain **FRONT BRAKE:** 8in (203mm) single leading shoe (sls) drum **REAR BRAKE:** 7in (178mm) single leading shoe (sls) drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic fork, hydraulic damping **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin oil-damped shock absorbers **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 19in **REAR TYRE:** 3.5 x 19in (1959/60), 4.00 x 18in (1961) **WHEELBASE:** 55½in (1410mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30½in (762mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 363½lbs (165kg) **TOP SPEED:** 115mph **PRICE NEW:** £280

came late in 1962 with the arrival of a new frame. Reverting back to a single downtube design, this heralded the arrival of the unit construction engine and gearbox for the 650s, with coil ignition.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO RIDE?

Our feature machine is one of the last pre-unit 1962 Bonnevilles. Bought three years ago from a dealer in England, it had been part of a collection, along with a Tangerine Dream Bonneville in two-tone Tangerine and Pearl Grey livery. The former owner found the Bonnevilles were too heavy for him and sold them, retaining his lighter 350 Triumph.

Its current owner, Bill, initially set out to buy the Tangerine Dream Bonneville but changed his mind. He found himself attracted by the styling of the machine; particularly the colour scheme, which sees the two-tone seat perfectly complementing the tank, with parcel rack, mouth organ badge and shiny chrome securing strap running down the middle of the tank and covering the tank ridge. This model features the duplex frame, which was apparently not that popular, lasting only a few years before yet another single downtube frame was introduced along with the unit engine.

Bill's Bonneville sounds fantastic but more importantly, it goes just as well as it looks. Bill says: "It's a total pleasure to ride. The Bonneville handles really well – it feels like it's sticking to the floor and the two-tone seat is very comfy with an agreeable seat height." The only minor issue Bill has noticed is that occasionally the carb float can jam, but he finds a light tap with a hammer easily clears it.

The Bonneville always attracts a lot of attention wherever he goes, with a beautiful combination of colours, styling and features. Soon afterwards Triumph started changing the colours annually and the unit Bonneville lost the toast rack parcel grill.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Steve Jackson, the editor of Nacelle, the impressive monthly Triumph Owners' Motor Cycle Club magazine, enjoyed owning and riding a pre-unit T120 for more than 20 years. Many machines have been put together from parts from different Triumph models, so he advises buyers who want originality to check the engine and frame numbers.

He also says that unless you want a world of pain, avoid anything that isn't complete! Due to the age of these machines, most have probably been rebuilt many times over the years. This can result in a variety of problems that can usually be attributed to misuse, neglect and people working on the bike without the necessary skills or tools. Over the years many machines have been 'bodged' by non-skilled owners, meaning there are numerous pitfalls to buying one. Join an



It's not unusual to find a T110 or TR6 converted to T120 Bonnie spec and sometimes re-registered as such too.

owners club and, if possible, try to take someone who has practical experience or knowledge of these machines with you when buying.

Edward Turner had been sure that 650cc was the realistic limit for development of his twin-cylinder design. Throughout the pre-unit Bonneville's lifespan measures were taken to quell the vibration that is inherently unavoidable in a parallel twin. The crankshaft balance factor was altered several times to find the most agreeable ride. Steve agrees the vibration means nuts and bolts do come loose if not checked regularly. After one particularly high-speed run many years ago, he pulled up at a set of traffic lights to find that the gear lever was missing!



Twin grabrails neatly mirror the curve of the rear mudguard.

Handling and braking of the early Sixties models can be 'interesting' and was greatly improved for later models. Pre-unit models had an interesting feature on the gearbox that went by the official name of 'Slickshift'. Any movement on the gear change lever released the clutch – an early attempt at a quick-shifter! Though this didn't always prove popular, which found some owners replacing this with a conventional set-up.

Steve says that for modern day use, fitting the late model twin-leading shoe front brake makes life much safer. Adding electronic ignition and a rectifier helps with running and charging. Oil filtration is extremely poor as standard so oil changes need to be frequent, but fitting an after-market exterior oil filter kit helps.

Steve used his 1960 pre-unit Bonneville daily to get to work and back for more than 10 years and he feels these machines can most definitely be used every day, but a weekly maintenance regime must be followed. A good 650 Triumph will definitely keep up with modern traffic but like many classic bikes, motorways are best avoided – after all, these bikes were designed before the motorway was part of motoring life.

All older Triumphs are reliable, as long as they have been built well and are maintained correctly. Maintenance should include regular oil changes and checking the valve clearances. Nuts, bolts and components should be frequently checked to make sure they are still tight. Bikes that retain the original ignition system will also need the points checked regularly.

If you're not mechanically minded, Steve says the T120 may not be the best choice, but this could apply to most classic British bikes. For a skilled person they are extremely simple to work on and repair, but finding someone nowadays who has the experience and specialist knowledge is becoming tricky. A local club should be able to help with someone in your area.

These machines are all over 50 years old now, which means a lot of components may be worn or wearing out. Steve finds spares to be reasonably priced, compared to modern items. Most maintenance parts are available. It's the main engine parts like crankcases, cranks, cylinder heads and gearbox parts, along with many chassis and frame items that can be tricky to find. Another problem is obtaining good quality spares. You should use parts from established suppliers and you can always ask for recommendations from the TOMCC. When parts are unobtainable, creativity is needed, but parts from other models can be used if originality is not the main concern.

But don't be put off – Steve's advice is to buy or build a good one, follow a strict maintenance regime and you will never regret buying a pre-unit Bonneville. CBG

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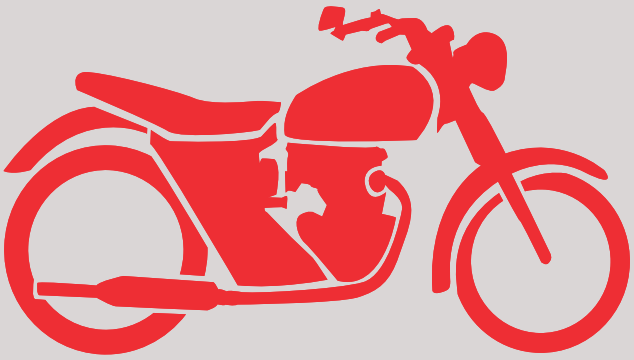
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As bought, better than money in the bank…







Original long sidepanels with subtle paintjob



GSX1400 rear shocks give a firm ride, perhaps a bit too firm…

Zeds always turn heads

Looks, styling, reliability, the Z1 has it all

WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

IN 1968 KAWASAKI was on track with its own 750 when Honda beat it in the race to launch the first true superbike, the CB750. So Kawasaki took some time to beef up the engine, developing and thoroughly road testing its now iconic 903cc Z1, ironing out any issues, before its US launch in 1972.

The sleek styling didn't disappoint, hinting at a machine with smooth acceleration and good handling. The only negative feedback at the time concerned the short lifespan of tyres and chain, perhaps not surprising in a machine with a claimed 81bhp, 125mph potential.

As a reliable, usable classic the Z1 is an attractive proposition. Spares availability is good with an engine generally regarded as pretty much bulletproof and easy to work on. The Z1 Owners' Club of Great Britain and the ROI boasts some members with immaculate, prize winning examples and others who take a more pragmatic approach, enthusiastically modifying, grinding, cutting off or improving anything they can, while still retaining that certain mystique that denotes "Zedness".

The owner of our bike here, Scott, definitely falls into the latter category with a 1973 Z1 that positively oozes the 'Zed' X-factor. Bought around nine years ago he's always liked them, having been in the Z1 Owners' Club for a number of years, previously owning a Z1B and a Z1000R Eddie Lawson replica. Then a friend told him about a Z1 for sale – it was a non-running wreck, so he swithered about buying it, but was advised by a fellow club member that it'd be better than money in the bank.

Having been stored in a damp, windowless shed, the Z1 was covered in rust and bird mess. There were dents in the tank and the seat fell apart when touched. All the chrome was badly rusted, with the



Scott advises buyers to beware of cam chain tensioners. The engine is bullet proof as long as you change the oil and filters regularly every 2000 miles

forks and shocks totally beyond saving.

Back home, everything was completely stripped in preparation for a rebuild, which turned out to be just as well. When Scott stripped the barrels off the first thing he found was a broken cam chain tensioner. The Z1 still ran and more amazingly was quite quiet, but it is something to be aware of on old Zeds.

Scott replaced all the cam gear, fitting a new cam chain, plus aftermarket cam chain guide wheels and sprocket from Liska. These are solid billet aluminium with a roller bearing rather than the stock rubber roller. He says it might run a bit louder but should last longer. He fitted new valves too, it's still on the standard bores so he put new rings in and got them honed.

Scott didn't initially intend to fit upside down forks but happened to have a pair from an FZR1000RU handy. Having supplied details of the frame and offsets, a set of alloy yokes were manufactured to fit the frame and forks. The forks are shorter than standard and didn't come right to the top of the yokes as the bike would sit too low, so a set of top spacers was made up.

Although Scott's Z1 is heavily modified, it retains the looks and styling which first attracted him. As always the devil's in the detail. Like many specials, a lot of things which aren't always immediately obvious took hours to get right, like the spacing of the discs, which also came off an FZR100RU. Scott's machine sports standard Z1 hubs front and rear, with a standard Z1 rear drum brake. The more modern R1 brakes had to be spaced out to suit the forks and enable fitting. Spacing the rear wheel to suit the ZRX100 swinging arm was also time consuming and necessitated the removal of the rear footpeg hanger loops. Scott has retained these so the frame could always be returned to standard by a future owner if desired.

Scott stripped all the switchgear, cleaned and painted it all up, finding the wiring in surprisingly good condition. The little red writing was a labour of love, but the switchgear now looks as good as the day it left the factory. Originally Scott fitted a mini clock which incorporated the rev counter, speedo and idiot lights. After a while he decided he wanted to make it look more original, so last winter was spent undoing a lot of what he'd previously done to fit later Z1000 clocks. He had to feed wires back up through to the switchgear for the indicators again, completely rewire and solder it, adding decidedly dinky little LED indicators.

A nice period Lockhart oil cooler from the 1970s came with the bike, so was refitted. Rather than having braided hoses round the side of the engine Scott hid the hosing so as not to detract from the look of the engine. He also fitted an oil pressure gauge.

The clutch is quite heavy so he opted for a hydraulic clutch kit, which required the clutch pushrod to be shortened. Sadly he hasn't found any significant improvement over the original cable operated clutch, though it might be slightly smoother. The headlamp came off eBay. Scott liked the shape, size and look of it but found that LED bulbs weren't great in the dark so has fitted an HID kit, too.

Scott's Z1 has the proper early tank with the seam tucked right underneath rather than on the edge. The dents were filled and it was initially painted black with a reddish fleck through it about six years ago, then Scott opted to add the standard design in an eye catching candy apple red about three years afterwards.

Suzuki GSX1400 shocks with softer springs are now fitted but need to go softer still as he still finds it too firm. He leant the shocks forward a bit by fitting them in a different position. Years ago he owned a Z1B which was pretty much standard and a really nice bike. He recalls it moved around in the corners a bit more than this one does, even in a straight line it tended to weave ever so slightly.

The original chrome carb covers polished up well, with the middle ones unpolished. Scott prefers stainless to chrome, opting for a PMC Monaca stainless steel exhaust from Japan, as recommended by a friend. The workmanship is fantastic and the

MANUFACTURED: 1972 – 1975 (Z1/Z1A/Z1B) **ENGINE:** Air cooled DOHC four cylinder four stroke **BORE / STROKE:** 66mm x 66mm **CAPACITY:** 903cc **COMPRESSION:** 8.5:1 **POWER:** 81bhp @ 8500rpm **TORQUE:** 54.2lb-ft @ 7000rpm **CARBURETTOR:** 4 x 28mm Mikuni VM28 SC **IGNITION:** 12V Battery, alternator, points and twin coils **LUBRICATION:** Wet sump with gear driven pump **CLUTCH:** Wet multi plate **GEARBOX:** 5 speed constant mesh **PRIMARY DRIVE:** Straight cut gears **FINAL DRIVE:** Chain **FRONT BRAKE:** Single 296mm disc with twin disc option **REAR BRAKE:** 200mm single leading shoe (SLS) drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Oil damped telescopic **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm twin shocks **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 4.00 x 18 **WHEELBASE:** 58½in (1486mm) **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6½in (165mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32in (813mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 510lb (231kg) **ACCELERATION QUARTER MILE:** 12 seconds standing start **BRAKING:** 29 foot at 30mph **TOP SPEED:** 130mph

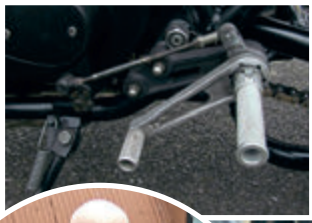
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Mikunis cleaned up nicely


Tarozzi rear sets with a hastily modified gear change linkage sacrificed by a GT550.

Below: The adjustable levers came from China as a kit with a cute little brake fluid reservoir which was less effective, so Scott refitted the original. The bar end mirror is well made in stainless and gives a surprisingly good field of vision for about £45. A totally different look to standard but very appealing




Scott regularly tweaks things, planning major changes over the winter



Period Lockhart oil cooler, swoopy, sexy pipes

compound curves are really attractive. However, beauty comes at a cost, around £1100, though still cheaper than a replica Z1 exhaust system at around £1250. The springs hold it all on and it was easy to fit. It is incredibly simple to take off too, just one bolt undoes it then you remove the springs off and off it comes. You simply release the springs at the header, remove the down pipes and the flanges stay bolted to the head. The exhaust is very deep at the front with just over 3in of ground clearance but Scott's only grounded it once going over a speed bump.

Initially he set it all up going by the colour of the plugs and how it felt on the road. He put it on a Dyno to get the carbs set up and it was found to be running lean. Tweaking the carbs made a huge difference – opening the throttle at 60mph now gives a really crisp response.

Scott found his Z1 easy to kick over, but it doesn't currently feature a kickstart as the original was rusty, luckily, the electric start is fine. He says a Z1 is a good choice if you're not mechanically minded as they are reliable and simple to work on with easy access to everything. Owners' Club members are approachable and knowledgeable with the bonus that their website is good for spares, but you have to be quick.

HOW MUCH?
£7000 - £15000

TIPS
Restoration using original/replica parts can be pricey, which is why many owners opt to customise them. Chrome is generally good quality but exhausts are pricey to replace. It's worth fitting a genuine gasket (£11) on the alternator cover as this is prone to leak.

ALSO CHECK OUT
Kawasaki Z1000 more readily available. **Kawasaki Z650**, smaller, cheaper to buy.

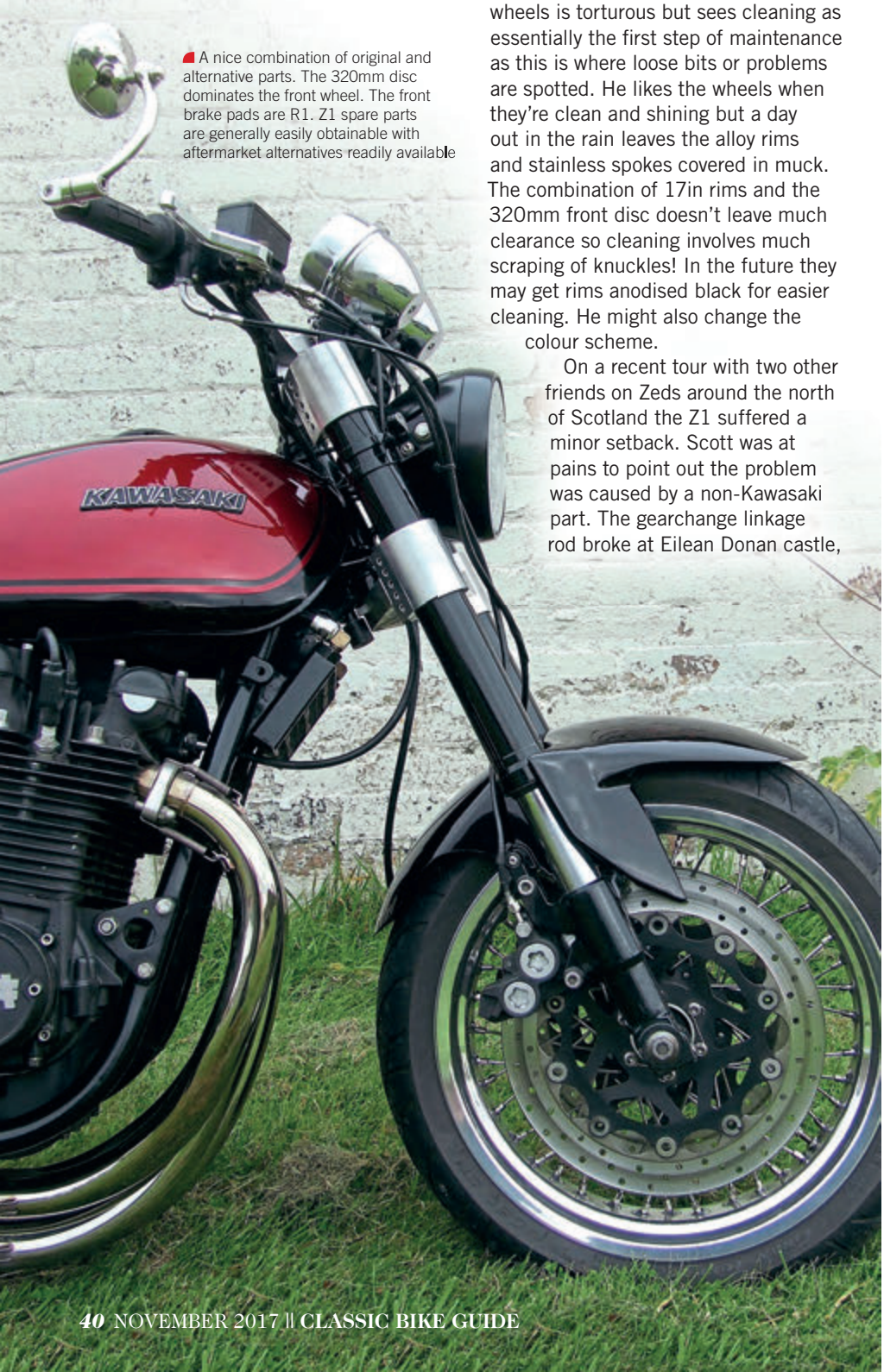
THOSE IN THE KNOW
Z-Power, which also offers a free workshop manual and parts list download on its website z-power.co.uk

WHERE DO WE JOIN?
Z1 Owners' Club of Great Britain and ROI z1ownersclub.co.uk


Moriwaki points cover and oil pressure gauge, no kickstart required

Scott finds it a good bike for touring and commuting, a basically good all-rounder. The handling and cornering are good, it sticks well to the road which Scott attributes to the 17in front and rear wheels. The standard 19in front and 18in rear give a different ride.

Scott advises potential buyers to always try and get one you've heard running, make sure you know what you're buying and that it is correct for the year. They are all so similar engine and frame wise from 1972 to 1978 but things can often be changed. Scott's has a later engine but it doesn't bother him. Although he has customised his Z1 to suit him, it could be put back to standard if required.



A nice combination of original and alternative parts. The 320mm disc dominates the front wheel. The front brake pads are R1. Z1 spare parts are generally easily obtainable with aftermarket alternatives readily available

The initial build took just six months but Scott finds he's always making improvements and planning tweaks for the winter months. The Z1 has been back on the road for five years now, covering 15,000 miles on it. It handles well in both the wet and dry, never misses a beat and doesn't get pampered, but this is the only bike he really goes to town on when cleaning and polishing.

Scott admits that cleaning the wheels is torturous but sees cleaning as essentially the first step of maintenance as this is where loose bits or problems are spotted. He likes the wheels when they're clean and shining but a day out in the rain leaves the alloy rims and stainless spokes covered in muck. The combination of 17in rims and the 320mm front disc doesn't leave much clearance so cleaning involves much scraping of knuckles! In the future they may get rims anodised black for easier cleaning. He might also change the colour scheme.

On a recent tour with two other friends on Zeds around the north of Scotland the Z1 suffered a minor setback. Scott was at pains to point out the problem was caused by a non-Kawasaki part. The gearchange linkage rod broke at Eilean Donan castle, towards Kyle of Lochalsh. The next 17 miles along Loch Carron stuck firmly in third gear were challenging to put it mildly. Showcasing how tractable the Z1 engine is, Scott managed to start in third gear and negotiate the A890, one of Scotland's most interesting roads. Stuck in third gear the Z1 coped admirably with all the bends, hills, tunnels, cliffs, adverse cambers, single track sections, passing places, stops and starts, although he says it's an experience he's not keen to repeat.

At Strathcarron they spotted a shaft drive Kawasaki GT550 laid up. The owner kindly sold Scott the gear change which matched the splines on the Z1 and the local garage welded an extension into the shaft. This must have come as a significant relief to Scott, enabling a more confident approach to the steep climb and single track hairpin delights of 'Bealach na Ba'. The challenging Pass of the Cattle climbs steeply, almost from sea level to 2053 feet, leading to Applecross, and is not for the faint-hearted. Free to use all five gears again, Scott enjoyed the rest of his trip round the west coast.

Z1 KNOWLEDGE – HOW TO SPOT A GOOD Z

Immaculate Z1s can fetch upwards of £15,000. If you're interested in buying one originality and condition are key to the price. Chris from the Z1 Owners' Club advises that pricing totally depends on originality – the list of date stamped parts on a Z is quite extensive. Date codes relating to the date of manufacture of components can be found stamped on many components such as the swinging arm, rear brake torsion bar, handlebar switchgear, carbs, shock absorbers, wheel rims, plus many other parts.

The date code generally takes the form of the year followed by the month e.g. 3 6 or 3 0 6 would indicate June 1973. In cases where the month is denoted alphabetically F would indicate June. Other components have ink stamped dates giving the day of the month too. Later models appear to have more date stamped components. Bewilderingly some date stamps have a different format, so it's worth doing some research.

If you want a totally original example the date stamps all have to be in sync. For example if a bike is May 1973 registered, all date stamped parts must be prior to that to achieve top value. Obviously some parts may have been replaced due to wear and tear. Speedo and tacho faces also relate to the year of production.

Dave Marsden's Original Z1 Restorers

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Left: Miniature indicators sit unobtrusively

Right: The undie guard at the back was bought through the Z1 Owners' Club. Comprising four or five bits of alloy, precision cut to bolt on this allowed the light to be moved further under the tail piece and only cost about £30

Guide is regarded as essential reading. John Brookes' Z1 and Z2 Restorer's Parts book also offers a comprehensive guide to what bits belong where, with clear pictures, part numbers and tells you where you should expect to find date stamps.

The frame number is stamped on the steering head with the engine number visible on the right side crankcase – most bikes have a higher engine than frame number but this isn't always the case.

In all 19,651 Z1s were produced, followed by the Z1A (25,673) and Z1B (33,564), which are largely the same but with some key differences. The Z900 and KZ900 followed. 1972 Z1s command the highest price, the lower (earlier) the number the better. Condition and originality being key to prices, and a very original Z1B can potentially command a higher price than a Z1.

Dave Marsden of Z-Power has been living with, and working on Zeds, for over 40 years. He says if you are buying as an investment generally the earlier the model, the better, but later models are probably better for riding. The 1976 Z900A4 had better twin disc brakes, improved forks, the frame was strengthened with thicker walled tubing which improved the handling and a three-fuse system improved electrics. Smaller 26mm Mikuni carbs were introduced, marginally reducing the power and top speed. The tank was restyled giving a bit more capacity, while a locking petrol cap and seat gave better security. The Z1 launched in the US in 1972, the UK had to wait until 1973.

Kawasaki over-engineered the Z1 so any problems tend to be common to any classic bike of that era. Dave sells a lot of wiring looms (£145) and electrical components, as these can go brittle over time. There can be corrosion in the switchgear and the charging system is a potential weakness. Z-Power offers a combined regulator / rectifier (£95) which is a good option.

Dave says about 95% of Z1 parts are readily available, Kawasaki still supplies about 40% of them. Where original parts are no longer available about 40% of

components are remanufactured. Mikuni carb parts can be a problem but the carbs can be restored if you still have all the bits. You can't buy wheel hubs but they can be renovated. Z-Power supplies aftermarket spokes (£90 set) and rims (£245 pair). Second-hand hubs can go for silly money on eBay.

Remanufactured exhaust systems to the distinctive original spec cost about £1250, but a selection of four-into-one exhaust systems are available ranging from about £350 upwards. Z-Power sells about 20 sets of original style exhausts each month, surprisingly not always for Z1s, they are also popular with Z1000 owners.

Swinging arm, wheel and steering head bearings experience the same wear and tear you'd expect on any machine of this vintage. Taper roller head bearings are a big seller. A lot of Z1s by now have electronic ignition fitted but Dave advises the original Nippondenso condensers work well and shouldn't put buyers off.

The weak point, as with many 1970s bikes, is the ignition coils. Dave supplies Japanese copies (£70 pair) which look like the originals, and offers Dyna coils (£185 pair) as an alternative.

Customers often spend thousands doing up their Zeds but they are very good investment bikes. If you're considering buying a Z1 for restoration Dave advises buying a machine with the most original parts. If the exhaust isn't perfect it will be costly to replace but original parts can be re-chromed. He's currently restoring a Z1B, opting to rechrome the wheel rims to retain authenticity. If you're buying to ride and enjoy, check the electrics and shocks. Dave recommends modern shocks and Bridgestones for good road holding. There was talk of a Z1 high speed wobble but unless you're going to be thrashing everywhere there's little need for a steering damper, although they are available at £62.

Some genuine parts are surprisingly cheap – a clutch lever is only £8.50. Replica parts are reasonably priced, a set of indicators costs £88, a headlamp £69, speedo cable £15, seat £185, mudguards £125, a complete set of replica clocks is £285 or you can get the clocks restored at about £85 each.

The only minor issues Dave cites are an occasional snapped engine stud, usually caused by owners changing exhausts without the proper tools, and side panel lugs snapping when not located or handled correctly. Again these can be an issue on any bike of that era. Fork seals only fail if the forks are in poor condition and pitted.

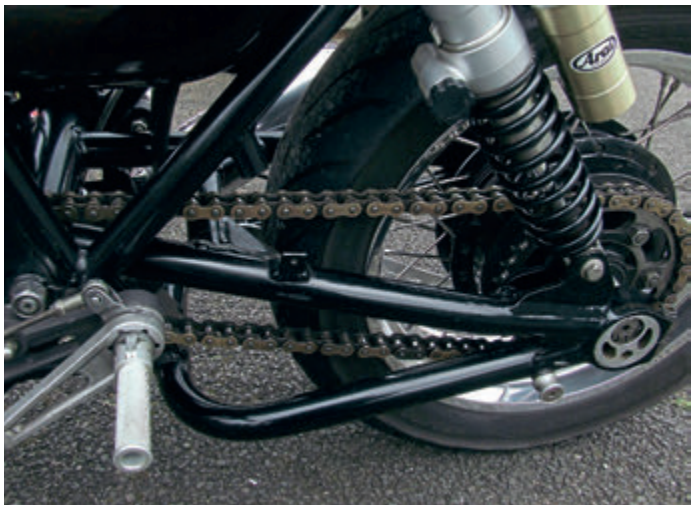
The single disc was fine in the 1970s but Kawasaki offered a twin disc option and the double disc conversion is popular giving a bit more stopping power in modern traffic. Early models featured a chain oiler as a 630 chain, the biggest available at the time, was fitted as standard. A conversion kit is available which enables a 530 chain to be fitted, giving a greater choice of chains.

Riding a Z1 can be deceptive, with engine and performance having stood the test of time they don't always feel like 40-year-old bikes. They are possibly initially more daunting than a British twin, but are easy to work on. CBG

Thanks to Chris and Dave for their assistance and knowledge. Also to the Scottish Military Vehicle Group and Kampfgruppe Schottland which provided an interesting backdrop at Cultybraggan Camp for the photos.

Right: The rear foot peg hangers have been removed to allow clearance for the ZRX100 swinging arm but could be reinstated if required

Below: Scott obtained an aftermarket Giuliari seat dating from the 70s or 80s, a friend cleaned it up, leaving it looking brand new. The chrome trim mirrors the line of the very long, earlier shape, sidepanels, later models had shorter sidepanels. The hump and seat push soft panniers forward a bit but they sit okay for touring with a towel underneath to protect the paintwork







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-CLASSIC- PRODUCTS

SW-Motech Legend saddle bags

- **£130.68 each bag**
- **£53.99 universal strap**

motohaus.com

THESE SADDLE BAGS are superbly made of hardy materials so they should last for years, they look great on a modern retro or classic bike, come with waterproof inner liners and, thanks to clever adjustment, they seem to fit every bike I've ever thrown them over. But, at over £314 for the set, they should be. They are quoted as 9.8l bags, which means nothing to me, but together I can take a few days clothes, tools, waterproofs and still have room for sandwiches.

For another £38 you can opt for the larger ones, which increase capacity by a third. Once fitted they are very secure, easy to remove and are really good looking.

The Legend range includes matching shoulder bags, tailpack and tankbag to complete the look. If you're not bothered about style, a budget set of unbranded panniers will cost you around £100 or you could make some from army bags, if you're really tight. But these will last for years and you get what you pay for.



Hood armoured jeans

- **From £122.99**

hoodjeans.co.uk

RIDING JEANS ARE great for classic bikes and these Hood jeans have become my favourite over the nine years I've had them. Thick, hard-wearing denim is reinforced with a Para-Aramid lining to give good protection, while still being comfortable when off the bike. I've tried many different makes over the years, with some offering more protection than the Hood trousers, but they're so heavy and often uncomfortable – you would be better off wearing leathers or textile trousers.

This particular style has now been replaced with the K7, which have a traditional cut and look. As the lining is one-piece, they don't have any stitching around the knees, making them look like traditional jeans. The inside is soft and doesn't rub, even with the optional knee and hip armour fitted (level one £30, Level two £42), which is adjustable for the best fit. With three of us at *CBG* wearing them, we really can't find any criticisms.

Draper 400A Lithium jump starter/charger

- **£119.94**

drapertools.com

THIS COULD BE invaluable for touring and is just the right size to tuck away under the seat or in the toolbox. It's a compact, powerful jump-starter and charger, with USB outputs and a work lamp with multiple settings (constant, SOS and flashing) as well.

It should give all but the largest flat batteries enough boost to start the engine, including cars, but it is also capable of delivering charge for recharging batteries where your dynamo has cried enough – though it is only rated as a 12v charger.

This little unit weighs just 400g (under 1lb), is really reasonably sized and is fitted with two USB slots to charge your phone or sat nav. And the torch could prove invaluable. At just under £120 it's much more expensive than others on the market, but I spent £40 on a similar product and it lasted for two months – I'd rather spend more and have one that I know will work when I need it.



Spada Stelvio jacket

£199.99
spadaclothing.co.uk

THE STELVIO IS an unusual-looking jacket, but it ticks all the right boxes, including price. You can tailor the fit nicely with plenty of adjustable Velcro straps and the sleeves have poppers to get it just right. It has a thermal removable lining, which I haven't had to use in anger yet, due to the mild weather. I have put it in at night to see what a difference it makes and you'd be looking at fridge freezer levels of cold to need more.

For when the weather is nicer it has cooling vents on the back that, when opened, don't really do a great deal, but if you open the large vents on the front – which are held open by magnets and could do with being a tad stronger as they give up at around 70mph – they are fantastic at keeping your core nice and cool. Comfortable and also very flexible, even with the CE armour it comes with, this is my favourite fabric jacket of the year by far.

The Stelvio is far better than the price would have you believe. What it offers is quality and more pockets than a commando would need. The waterproof inner liner has not yet let me down, and I've ridden in some ruddy awful downpours.

The outer shell gets a bit heavy when wet but the liner holds out all the moisture, this includes all the pockets, the best of them being the one on the bottom of your back, which is ideal for holding a small pair of waterproof over-trousers.

If there was one down point, and I'm really struggling, it's that the thermal lining pokes out of the sleeves a little and if you are in a downpour and wearing it without gauntlet gloves, it would get wet and possibly wick up your arms slightly.





Laser tools ⅜in Whitworth sockets, deep and standard

Standard, £22.39
Deep, £22.97
toolconnection.co.uk

GOT A BRITISH classic? Tempted to use metric or AF spanners and sockets? Stand back before you round off that bolt and get a set of Whitworth sockets. Laser tools produce quite a few items for classic motorcycles, but these are a must. Nicely made and available in ½in or, like these, in ⅜in drive, they are hard wearing with no cheap chrome plating chipping off and they feel like they'll last as long as the bike. They even come on a socket rail so you won't lose one. I've put red tape on mine to easily distinguish between Whitworth and the AF sizes, which have black tape, while my metric sizes are always kept in the other tool chest to avoid confusion.



Kriega R8 bumbag

£75
kriega.com

THIS IS THE best quality bumbag on the market by miles – after all, if it has your phone, wallet and tablets in (that age I'm afraid) then you need to trust it won't end up lying on the road because a cheap clip has broken.

There's no chance of that with this, it's extremely hardy and Tardis-like in its ability to swallow so much stuff. It even comes with a toolroll that fits in the larger pocket. The smaller pouch has a dry bag, whereas the larger main area is not waterproof - pay 5p for a supermarket bag and it's job done. The outer is tough, rubberised nylon, the strap is easy to adjust and loosen so you can slip it to the front and it has a useful carabiner eyelet on the side. CBG

HOW MUCH?
£11,000–£13,000

A MORE REALISTIC BIKE WOULD BE
Mk.2a Commando, cheaper and essentially the same as the JPN without the fairing and body kit

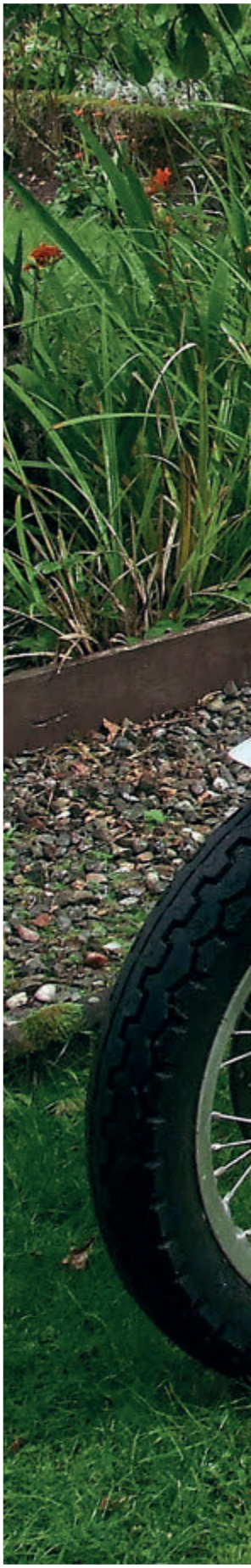
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WANT SOMEONE TO TALK TO?
Norton Owners' Club









Race rep, not a smoker

With futuristic looks for its time, the JPS Norton would adorn many a poster, yet only around 200 were ever made.

WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

THE JOHN PLAYER Norton was, in Norton's own words: "A street-legal production replica of the road-racing machine Norton ace Peter Williams rode to victory in the 1973 Isle of Man TT, the Commando 850 Café Racer is indeed the ultimate ride. Designed without compromise for maximum aerodynamic stability, its features include twin headlights, full fairing, clip-on handlebars, quick-release gas cap, rearset footpegs and a high-backed racing seat. The Norton Commando 850 Café Racer is unquestionably an optimum machine for high speed motorcycling."

Capitalising on race success, the John Player Norton was designed to be bought and enjoyed by the public. Designer Mike Oldfield worked on improving the styling and appeal of the machine which was originally conceived as a café racer.

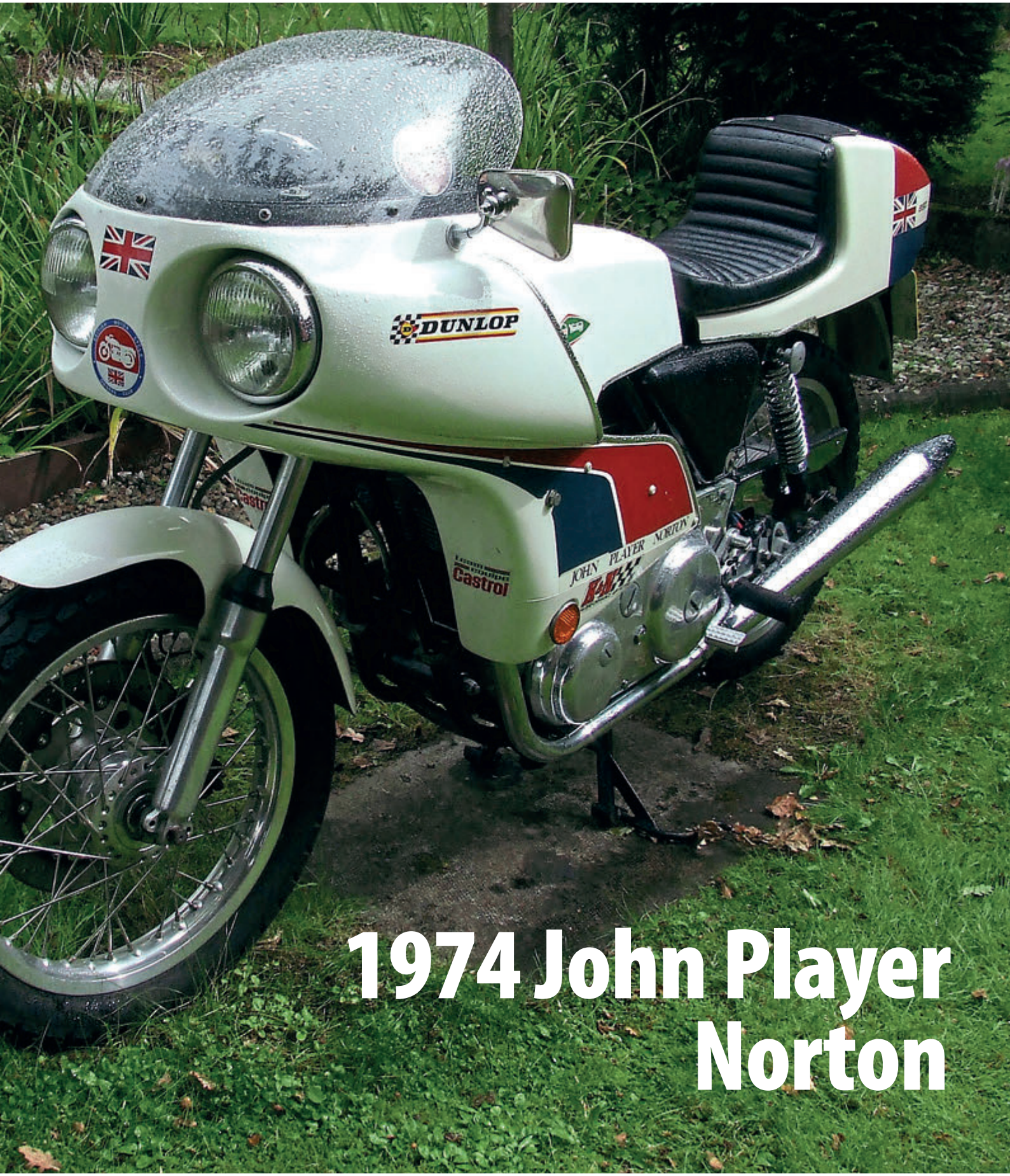
The race team were entering endurance races with a twin headlamp fairing, so Mike incorporated this into the design of the race replica. The headlamps were powered by a high output alternator, the petrol tank started out as a standard 2⅕ gallon (imperial) Roadster tank, extended to around 3½ gallons allowing for longer distances between fuel stops. The steel tank was hidden underneath a moulded glass fibre cover which swept down at the sides, attaching to the fairing by four fasteners on each side. A neat glass fibre mudguard hugged the front wheel and a racing seat with cavernous hump accommodated the toolkit, leaving plenty of space for a sandwich, flask and waterproofs. The matt black chromed exhaust system was fitted with bean can silencers, clip-ons and rearsets completed the look.

When launched in 1974, the styling was seen as futuristic. But the gleaming white body kit hid a stock 1974 828cc Mark 2A Commando, sometimes with taller gearing but no tuning or performance enhancements. A few are known to have been produced with the short stroke 750 engine, which could be detuned for street use. Available to the buying public from April, around 200 genuine John Player Nortons were created by the factory, either at Norton's Wolverhampton plant or at Andover, with approximately 120 heading overseas to the USA.

1: Handy gear change reminder, one down and three up. The indicators have been removed but the eyebow paddles remain attached to the switchgear

Right: As always it's best to try before you buy. In order to assume the position you need an element of fitness and flexibility – racing style with clip-ons and rearsets not being the comfiest thing around town

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1974 John Player Norton



Marketing disaster struck at the end of 1974, when John Player Tobacco withdrew sponsorship. This may have influenced sales as some machines sat in dealers for quite a while. The price probably had a bearing too. The streamlined JPN race replica with Avon twin headlamp fairing and body kit, commanded a hefty £160 premium over the cost of a stock Commando, leaving buyers with a scant 50p change out of £1000. Unluckily for buyers this is still the case today. A very tidy standard Commando might cost £9000 or £10,000 whereas a genuine John Player Norton can command up to £13,000, being seen as highly collectable and some sellers ask a lot more.

OUR EXAMPLE

Our feature machine was repatriated from Canada where it had been used for classic racing. It runs a standard 828cc Commando engine, which has not been tuned as far as owner, Bill, is aware. He finds it a fun bike but not ideal for doing any great distance as his weight is all on his wrists.

It has the original twin Amal carbs, runs really smoothly and goes well. The ignition is a four position key, to the left gives parking lights, then ignition off, next position on, last position lights on. The twin headlamp fairing probably made it look a bit like a police bike in the 1970s – if it came up behind you, you'd get out of the way. The original matt black bean can exhausts have been replaced with chromed pea shooters. Bill tried in vain to source a set of bean cans but they are now pretty scarce. There's a neat extension on the linear chain guard which stops chain spray onto the back wheel.

Removing the seat enables access to the oil tank. Bill's noticed a bit of a buzz caused by vibration so he plans to insert clear nylon 'O' rings between the fasteners which connect the glass fibre tank cover to the fairing. This should allow a bit of flexibility but prevent rubbing between them. The actual petrol tank, hidden underneath, is also roughly painted white with rubber pads inserted to prevent chaffing with the cover.

Gino Rondelli of the Norton Owners' Club has owned many Commandos, including a genuine JPN and a Mk.3-engined replica over the years. He says although the JPN is basically just a Commando with a body kit, it appears faster than a standard Commando because the fairing is very aerodynamic. He admits it wasn't best suited to town work, with clip-ons and rearsets, but on the open road with the fairing he could sit at 90mph mile after mile with it just purring along. If it rained his hands were kept dry by the fairing too, as the rider effectively sits inside it.

FANCY ONE?

The JPN were all based on Mk.2a Commandos, randomly chosen off the 1974 production line and dressed up, although the 1975 brochure showed one as a Mk.3. Most specific JPN parts were available until recently, with Sprint remanufacturing the original Avon fairing. Unfortunately no records were kept of serial numbers to help identify genuine ones and there's no easy way of verifying the authenticity of them. Potential buyers need to get as much proof of provenance as possible, they were easy to make up and there are plenty of non-factory produced replicas about.

The two things that give a fake away are normally the petrol tank and the identification plate which is on the top frame tube rather than the headstock, as the fairing mounting brackets are clamped on there, the same as the Interpol. You need to take off the tank cover to check the petrol tank is the way it should be (roughly finished and extra-long). The Avon fairing is meant to have a sticker on it, but Gino doesn't remember one on his.

Roger, from specialist RGM Norton, has owned several JPNs and advises the engine, frame and gearbox numbers should match with the frame number located on an ID plate beneath the seat at the front. Beware of fakes though as ID plates are readily available and easily stamped, however, the circle with lines across is harder to fake. The glass fibre components are mostly available as reproductions although the little glass fibre petrol tank filler cap with its odd fastener is often overlooked. The petrol tanks were standard steel Roadster tanks with the back cut off and a crude extension welded on. They were crudely finished and painted a cheap matt black. If the tank shows indications of proper factory paint or is well

MANUFACTURED: 1974 **ENGINE:** OHV parallel twin **BORE / STROKE:** 77mm x 89mm **CAPACITY:** 828cc **COMPRESSION:** 8.5:1 **POWER:** 60bhp @ 5900 rpm (claimed) **CARBURETTOR:** Twin 32mm Amal Concentrics **IGNITION:** 12V battery, coil and points **LIGHTING:** 45/50 watt headlight, 6/21 watt tail light **LUBRICATION:** **CLUTCH:** Wet multi-plate **GEARBOX:** Four speed **PRIMARY DRIVE:** Triplex chain **FINAL DRIVE:** Chain **FRONT BRAKE:** 10.7in (272mm) disc **REAR BRAKE:** 7in (178mm) sls drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin Girling shocks with adjustable preload **FRONT TYRE:** 4.10 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 4.10 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 58in (1473mm) **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6¾in (171mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31½in (800mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 435lb (197kg) **ACCELERATION QUARTER MILE:** 13 sec **BRAKING:** 23 ft 4in at 30mph **TOP SPEED:** 120mph est **PRICE NEW:** £999.50

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The Petrol tank is hidden underneath a moulded glass fibre cover which sweeps down and connects to the fairing


No luggage carrying capability except for the spacious hump. Hagon shocks have replaced the original Girlings


The rider sits in rather than on the JPN, clip-ons sheltered by the fairing help with streamlining.


Twin Lucas headlamps, found to be surprisingly good at night in the 1970s, and the look helped clear traffic out of the way when cruising

finished it's probably not an original JPN tank. The clip-on handlebars were butted up to the stanchion clamps, not across the front as is far more common. Probably the easiest way to spot the difference on the fairings is by the original bracketry which was pretty good.

Rear supports are very difficult to copy as they were cast alloy and nicely shaped. These are fitted between the zed plates and frame, replacing the standard spacers. The front mounting brackets are also well made with the bottom cross brace clamps nicely shaped around the frame. Copies are often little less than a U-bolt which will mark the frame.

Joe Seifert, from specialist Andover Norton, also owned a JPN. He says the petrol tank is an elongated version, which doesn't look like a pressing, with the weld going round it. Some parts, like the footrest arrangement, were not used on other models but then everything can be re-manufactured. The problem with identifying a genuine JPN is that there is a gap in the production records and the books seem to have gone into the skip.

Gino says if someone is specifically looking to buy a John Player Norton, the chances are they probably already have another Norton or two in their shed. As so few were made officially, they come up for sale very rarely but any coming up for sale at an auction house should have good supporting provenance, proven as far as it can be.

As long as the machine is running, buying advice is the same as for any bike. Check the general overall condition is good and for signs of wear and tear... and abuse – as a lot of them were abused. For example ex-police bikes were often made into road bikes. These were often really rough with high levels of use, meaning everything was pretty well worn on them.

The centre stand wobbling about can indicate a worn gearbox cradle and high mileage. Gino's just changed the gearbox cradle on his Commando, albeit after about 160,000 miles. Everything on it was worn but the bike was still going well, which proves how durable they are.

He says for a while it was a bit difficult to get good quality cam shafts, second-hand ones weren't lasting long either. This appears to be fixed now and they're lasting longer.

Gino sees the Mk.2 (JPN or Commando) as mechanically strong and basically bulletproof as long as it's put together properly and well looked after. He finds they tend to be longer lasting than the Mk.3 Commandos. There are a lot, particularly online, which look really pretty with the correct parts, but don't ride or handle well. This could be because the Isolastics aren't set up correctly, the swinging arm bushes are worn... or could just be down to poor maintenance.

The gearbox layshaft bearing can go. This is obvious if, when you take off in first gear, the kickstart moves back, this indicates the bearing is on the way out. Otherwise gearboxes and clutches are pretty good.

Wet sumping is more of an issue these days as bikes are no longer used as daily transport and the oil pumps are often worn. If you leave the bike for a week and go to use it at the weekend, check your oil first. If it's all drained into the sump this is generally because the oil pump is worn. If the oil level is below the gauze filter for the feed you'll have to drain the oil out of the sump and pour it back in, otherwise you will wreck it. This is not the case in all Nortons, just some.

Andover Norton now manufactures new oil pumps which Gino says work a treat, costing about £200, although he has rebuilt old oil pumps with varying degrees of success. He advises, for Nortons in general, fitting a one way valve on the breather system so you're running the crankcase at negative pressure all the time. A valve off a Yamaha XS650 fits into the breather, making a huge difference to oil leaks and to the power it produces. Gino says if you have a bike that's already set up really well and fit a one way valve in the breather system you'll find the revs go up by about 500rpm at tickover because the engine is running more efficiently.

As with any machine, regular maintenance is key. On a Commando this means regular oil and filter changes, every 1000 to 1500 miles, depending on how you use the bike. They are less than straightforward as you need to drain the crankcase, drain the oil tank and change the filter. This is time consuming but gives you a chance to check everything else at the same time. Exhaust roses can work loose and fall off. Keep an eye on the oil, particularly if you're just using it on short journeys. Depending on the breathing system, the oil can emulsify. It'll need thoroughly cleaning out and the oil tank draining thoroughly as it could have water at the bottom. It's a good idea to give it a good clean out with an air line annually.

Tappets should be checked at 2000 miles, but generally they won't need adjusting. On the JPN remove the eight screws and remove the tank cover. The fairing is wide enough that there's loads of room to work on it, but it can be a tank off job.

Gino says there was an issue with the original front brake design. The bore size on the front brake master cylinder was too big so the hydraulic pressure wasn't very good and they felt a bit wooden. You can get them sleeved to 13mm or fit another master cylinder. RGM offers a sleeving service or a kit so you can do it yourself and Andover Norton offers a direct sleeved down replacement for around £230.

The Isolastics can be converted to the Vernier adjusted Isolastics. These were fitted as standard to the Mk.3. You can get conversion kits or shim them, which isn't too hard a job.

The Commandos were designed to run on TT100 tyres. Gino likes Avon Roadriders which he says handle and last pretty well, managing about 4000 miles on the back and 8000-10,000 miles on the front. It's best to check with experts regarding modern tyre pressures.

Roger agrees that, in terms of reliability, the standard 850 Commando which underpins the JPN has been tried and tested, with excellent spare parts availability. For the JPN, Sprint still offers remanufactured screens, with stickers for the fairings available from RGM, while some aftermarket parts are available too. Few machines still sport the original exhaust systems and these can no longer be reproduced in black chrome. RGM develops and manufacture components where required, Roger says a black ceramic or stove enamel finish would be feasible, however, demand would be unlikely to justify the costs involved.



Above: The JPN is striking from every angle. The curve of the fairing is beautiful, the stripes accentuate it

Right: Norton's isolastic rubber mounting system reduced bad vibes, promising a velvet smooth ride...

Below: The brakes are good, particularly the impressively large foot wide front disc with Grimeca calliper supplied by RGM. 18in wheels have replaced the 19in originals at some point





Andover Norton stocks some genuine JPN spares; alternator rotors (£80 + VAT), alternator stators (£84 + VAT), headlamps, mirrors, indicators, warning lights, some decals and nuts and bolts for the fairing and tailpiece. It also offers a range of go faster goodies and often remanufactures components – however, RGM and Andover Norton find they don't sell many specific JPN parts as most machines are not in regular use.

Gino feels the Commando is one of the classic British bikes you could still use for good everyday transport, but short journeys aren't ideal as this is when you encounter emulsifying issues with the oil. Roger and Joe admit they didn't find their JPNs particularly comfortable, which may be another reason most are now in collections rather than on the road in regular use. CBG

Thanks to Gino Rondelli, Roger Myers of RGM Norton and Joe Sephyr of Andover Norton for their time and assistance.



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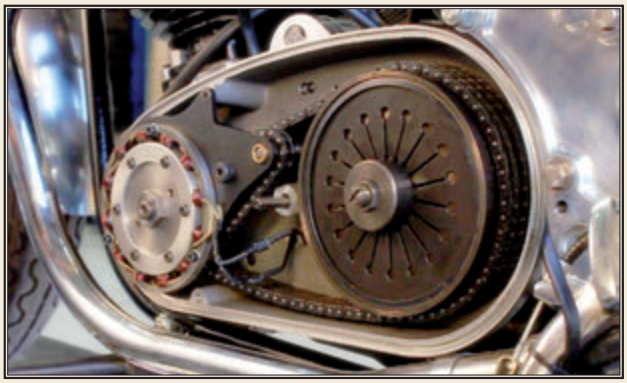
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Mark Williams

Different strokes

As Williams casts around for his winter project, he reckons it may well go up in smoke

GOOD NEWS – KTM has released a new two-stroke engine. Good, because we all thought that the noisy, smoky, smelly and environmentally horrid two-stroke engine was dead – which I've long regarded as a shame.

From a technical perspective two-strokes are a no-brainer. They fire each time the crankshaft rotates, rather than on every other occasion like a four-stroke, so they can make 50% more power on a like-for-like basis. And they have far fewer parts so are lighter, easier and cheaper to manufacture. But to achieve a smooth delivery of that extra power, they need all sorts of extra valving and porting, and even with oil injected into their moving parts rather than mixed in with their fuel, they smoke. Which environmentally sensitive legislatures have steadily moved to outlaw.

The new KTM engine gets around this with a patented system, TPI, or Transfer Port (fuel-) Injection, the benefits of which are self-explanatory. Allied to a sophisticated engine management system this maximises combustion efficiency across a wide rev range. But that's enough about new machinery… for now.

I've owned lots of 'strokers, tested dozens of 'em and feel rather conflicted on the subject. My faves were Suzuki's GT500 and GT550, Yamaha's RD350/400 and when I really needed a bit of a fright, Kawasaki's KH500. Plus I raced a brace of Yamaha DT175s, a Cotton-Minarelli 175 and a Suzuki PE175. And my first few bikes that instilled the bug were two-strokes too - Bantams, Greeves and Dots. Fond memories of all these resurfaced the other weekend when I attended the local classic show, a modest affair held on our town meadow where my two Hondas were easily the newest machines displayed amidst a sea – well actually a small pond – of ancient Velos, Ariels, Nortons etc. But what really jogged the memory was a 1970s MZ ES250 Trophy which a builder friend of mine had recently bought in Holland. To be honest, it wasn't a pretty sight.

Of course this particular MZ began with a distinct disadvantage in the looks department. It has a massive, square-ish headlamp cowl-cum-dashboard which appears to extend backwards into its fuel tank and has one of the largest front mudguards known to man which sits between a leading-link suspension arrangement that appears to have been designed for a small lorry. The MZ had all the patina, rust and congealed gunge of a long abandoned barn find. Which, being a bit of a maverick, is how he likes his bikes to look, though he's assiduous about maintaining them mechanically.

When we were packing up to go home, it started second prod of its awkward left-hand kickstart and smoked into vigorous life. More than could be said for any of the other aulde and mainly British ironware that sat alongside it. (My two machines were the only ones with electric starters, but even they proved a bit recalcitrant.) Off Andrew went in an agreeably pungent cloud of smoke, leaving me once again smiling and wondering whether my next classic/ custom project ought to be a two- rather than the four-stroke powered nonsense I'd already got in mind.

So then I started considering what such a project might realistically be? Using the traditional nostalgia route we amateur spannermen follow, it ought of course to be one of the models mentioned earlier – a 1970s twin or triple Suzuki or a fire-breathing Kawa, but a little light research revealed that even rough examples of such will likely set you back two grand, and parts supply is patchy and expensive, which accounts for prices upwards of six grand for a genuinely original one and more if it's fully restored.

Despite being more plentiful than the Suzys when they were current models, I was shocked to discover the same applied to air-cooled Yam twins, near basket cases bearing £2k-plus price tags, although parts do seem more available. Kawasaki triples? Forget it… unless you've got a bit of a death wish and at least £10,000 in your bin.

Then, just as my two-stroke faith ebbed away, I remembered my friend's MZ. A quick blimp through fleaBay found such East European fodder starting at under a hundred quid… now we're talking. Further investigation revealed just about any MZ part you could want for thoroughly sensible prices, e.g. £18.50 for a set of ETS clutch plates compared with £51 for a GT550 and a gasket set just £16 versus £83.

And these are bikes that are as weird, sorry, distinctive-looking as one could possibly want, so now the two-stoke truly isn't dead, let joy be unconfined… and possibly the madness begin. CBG

'When we were packing up to go home, it started second prod of its awkward left-hand kickstart and smoked into vigorous life. More than could be said for any of the other aulde and mainly British ironware that sat alongside it.'

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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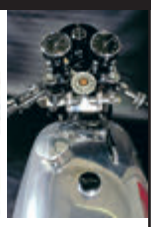
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Paul Miles

The right tool

Mr Miles contemplates the apparent need for so many bikes...

MY DEAR OLD dad used to impart words of wisdom that were often a variation on the 'right tool for the job' theme; As a boy I remember he patiently watched me trying to use a coping saw to cut some metal for my Raleigh Chopper, spraying myself with tiny shards of blade yet failing to do precious little damage to Nottinghamshire's finest work.

So it is for me with motorcycles, it seems. At sixteen, I was a 'kid with a Fizzie' and would use said moped to travel the length and breadth of the country with a small cohort of like-minded souls. The unsuitability of a sports moped with a top speed of 45mph for a 600 mile round trip to Cornwall and back never entered our heads, these were our bikes and so off we went, carrying spare pistons, barrels and even crankshafts, safe in the knowledge we wouldn't be taking all this additional weight back with us as the spares would always be used in one moped or another. We owned but one bike each, to be pressed into service as required.

The Fizzie went, to be replaced by larger and faster bikes, enjoyed in much the same way as before, excepting the realistic possibility of taking a pillion. I toured Europe as a teenager on a Mk.1 Guzzi Le Mans, complete with clip-ons, open exhausts and gaping, unfiltered carbs, thinking nothing of it, simply strapping a tent to the saddle before riding to Dover.

Roll on a few years (okay, decades) and the garage now contains not one bike, but several. No longer do I own a Swiss Army knife motorcycle, being all things to all people, but a selection of machines, differing in capacity, style and age, all displaying different capabilities. Lucky me. Or am I?

Now, I'm faced with far tougher decisions. My local VMCC is staging a meeting and show at a local pub. So, it's a show, which means something nice and shiny, reducing my available options by 50%; only the polished half of the garage dwellers is to be considered – unless it rains. It involves some riding, culling the wary remainder still further – let's be honest, I'm not sure I'd trust some of them to start at all, let alone perform reliably there and back to a local event. But it's local, after all, so virtually no riding. The opportunity presents itself to take one of the crown jewels out for a rare spin, the excruciatingly uncomfortable, achingly beautiful, excessively noisy, wildly focused – Egli Vincent. Perfect. Only a few miles to endure and it'll look glorious in the late summer sunshine. What's more, I can justify continuing to possess such an otherwise pointless bike.

I wheel it out of the shed and it looks magnificent, radiating dark, glossy menace like a... shiny, black menacing thing. My wife remarks I look absurd as I stretch out along what she refers to as 'the dark penetrator'. I don't care, being immune to her hateful comments. A brief saunter to the assembly point, just a couple of miles, but already the back, neck and wrist pain has begun to materialise. No matter, its only 10 minutes to the pub from there.

I arrive in a wave of noise and chrome, penetrating the assembled throng. Nobody notices as I stumble off, as crook of back and hard of hearing as Quasimodo. Then, I'm handed a route map. Why? I know the pub, it's just down that A-road, even I can't get lost from here. Turns out that, not only are we displaying our bikes, there's a jolly 40 mile saunter through the beautiful Dorset countryside first.

There follows the most painful, uncomfortable 90 minutes of my life as I attempt to ride the world's most uncomfortable motorcycle up and down the narrowest, grass-strewn, unused lanes Dorset has to offer. Did you know Dorset has the most torturously curved road in Britain? It's called Zig Zag Hill, look it up. Guess where we went? Twice, up and down.

Eventually, we arrive en masse. The bikes look great lined up outside the pub and everyone sits around, supping and chatting. Except me, I'm curled up on the verge in a foetal position, back in spasm and unable to comprehend how I could have used such an inappropriate machine for this ride; almost anything would have been better, especially the Norton Dominator I callously shoved aside in order to reach the Egli.

To make matters even worse, one chap rode in from a nearby town... on his Fizzie. Had a lovely little ride, he told me, uses it a lot, his only classic, very comfortable... CBG

'There follows the most painful, uncomfortable 90 minutes of my life as I attempt to ride the world's most uncomfortable motorcycle up and down the narrowest, grass-strewn, unused lanes Dorset has to offer.'

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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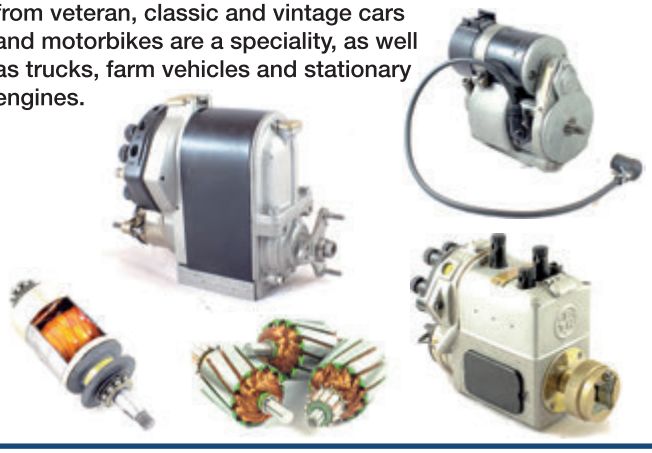


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Paul D'Orléans

What colour is your dystopia?

Today's robotic cars remind Paul of heading around the Eastern Bloc in the Eighties, looking for hidden two-wheeled gems

THEY'RE ALL OVER my neighbourhood – self-driving cars. Their awkward rooftop apparatus gives them away, the spinning hats and blocky geegaws – they're the dorks of the road.

The big sell on autonomous cars is safety, but our self-driven future begs several questions: will there be self-riding motorcycles, and will motorcycles as 'free radicals' continue to be allowed on the road in a non-driving future?

A generation has now grown up with hand-held computers and social media, and I wonder at their total dependence on apps for social interaction. How autonomous will they be? Motorcyclists treasure their ability to go where they please – part of that feeling of 'freedom' – but motorcycle sales are down in developed countries, and more importantly, the age of riders has risen dramatically. In short, kids aren't inclined to ride motorcycles anymore, they'd rather sext or Snap or 'gram in the back seat of an Uber.

Permit me the diversion of a story: in 1987, I was convinced by a London pal to explore the Eastern Bloc, to look for vintage motorcycles to buy and export. I got visas for East Germany, Poland, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia – my expected route in and out of 'enemy territory', as Ronald Reagan dubbed it. The plan was to ride across Europe, past the Berlin Wall, to explore the mysteries of the East. I didn't know any Americans who'd spent time in Communist countries, barring a few sneaks who'd gone to Cuba (via Mexico). My girlfriend Denise and I spent six weeks in a squat amidst a row of long-vanished Victorian houses near the Elephant & Castle tube station. We bought and refurbished a pair of mid-1970s MZ TS250s – one of which was purchased via 19-year-old Ian Hatton, who today runs Verralls Motorcycles in Handcross. He was then a 'dogsbody' for Brian Verrall in his London Tooting showroom, but I was only five years older than Ian and we got on well in the 'old man's world' of vintage bikes.

Both MZs broke their second gears while splitting lanes in London traffic; we learned to 'ride London' by following motorcycle couriers! The MZs' toolkits were sufficient to dismantle the machines entirely, barring the puller needed to remove the clutch. How ironic to meet legendary Velocette guru Geoff Dodkin in his guise as MZ dealer / repairman; I was already a Velocette fanatic, with a 1966 Endurance back in San Francisco. Geoff sorted both MZ engines, and regardless of saddling both machines with five months' worth of clothing, tools and camping gear, we experienced no further problems with our bikes in the next 6000 miles. MZs were never imported to the US, but left such an impression that I found a grey-market import a few years ago, which is my favourite loaner for friends to ride (and it too, broke its second gear recently).

Two days before we left San Francisco, a Polish housepainter I'd never met gave me the keys to his Warsaw apartment, his mother's phone number (rare back then), and the names of his best friends. Warsaw became our home for six weeks, while we explored by motorcycle, an unforgettable adventure in a world without money (or much else frankly), but also without advertising, neon, billboards, or any visible commercial activity. I feel like Blade Runner's Batty recounting that lost Communist world – watching men plough fields behind draft horses, their boots clotted with dirt, their bare backs beaded with rosy-gold sweat diamonds as the sun lowered behind plane trees, turning the world colours not seen since Courbet painted that man doing that thing, 100 years before. And, every adult male we met had spent time in prison for political crimes.

Our ultimate goal was Leningrad, to see the Hermitage Museum, but before we attempted to cross into the Soviet Union, we discovered it was impossible to enter Soviet territory on a motorcycle. We were free to wander its satellite countries, but motorcycles were too difficult to track by the KGB, whose agents followed Western auto-driving tourists within the mother country.

Motorcycles are random, unpredictable, small enough to hide, difficult to keep track of, and slip between other vehicles stuck in traffic. The same qualities that vexed the KGB will make it difficult for a communicating network of self-driving cars to deal with motorcycles, especially vintage ones with no on-board computer. The vast, interconnected supercomputer network we have created may bristle at random vectors like old motorbikes. I can't predict, but do wonder at the consequences of a system that knows where I am at all times, can tell me anything I want to know and can now drive a car. Meanwhile, actual humans are threatening nuclear war, shooting from high windows in Las Vegas hotels and riding 80-year-old motorcycles on public roads.

The first two problems are far too complicated for an algorithm, but the last is solvable, which worries me. CBG

'The same qualities that vexed the KGB will make it difficult for a communicating network of self-driving cars to deal with motorcycles'

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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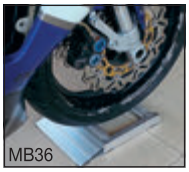
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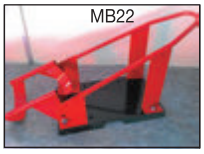

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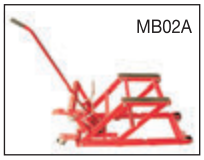

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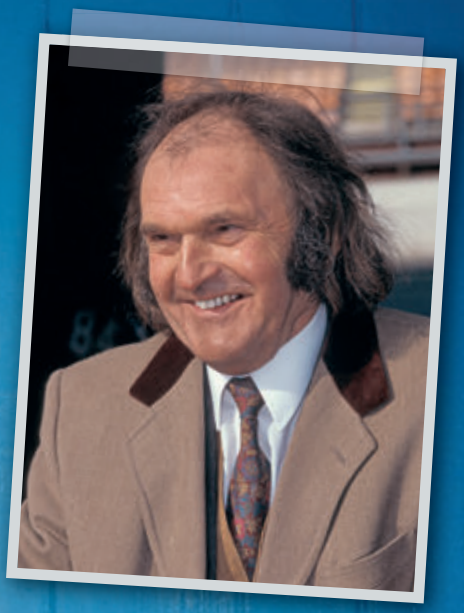

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SB32


NEW
MB51

Tait's Triumph

When Percy Tait started work at the Meriden factory the last thing he must have been dreaming of was that one day he'd be riding a Triumph in a World Championship Grand Prix. This is how it happened.





WORDS AND PICS: PHILLIP TOOTH

Percy Tait started racing in 1947 on a 350 Triumph. When he proved just how good a rider he was, he then raced on borrowed Gold Stars, KTT Velocettes, Manx Nortons and AJS 7Rs. So when he was conscripted into the army and his sergeant heard about his racing exploits, the young Percy quickly found himself in the squaddie's dream job – riding with the White Helmets, the Royal Signals Motorcycle Display Team. Jumping Triumph twins through blazing hoops and balancing the full squad on a single motorcycle was the army's way of showing the public that signing up could mean more than square bashing – for the lucky few.

After Percy was de-mobbed he got a job on the Meriden production line, but his riding skills soon saw him poached by the experimental department as a test rider. And his boss quickly encouraged him to get back into racing at the weekends.

When design engineer Doug Hele left Norton to join Triumph in 1962 (with a brief spell at Ford in between) he was given the job of sorting out the questionable handling of the Bonneville. As chief experimental tester, Percy was the man to put the new unit 650 through its paces and give feedback on the stiffer single-downtube frame and stronger swingarm pivot that Hele designed for the 1963 model. They made a formidable pairing.

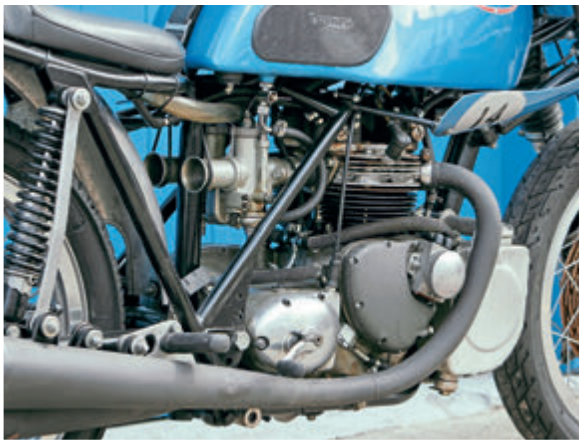
Besides riding and racing Bonnies, Tait was also expected to put everything from Tiger Cubs to Tigress scooters through their paces. But one of his favourite motorcycles started life as a Tiger 100.

THE DAYTONA IS BORN

Triumph had introduced unit construction to the twin-cylinder range with the 350cc Twenty One of 1957. A 500 (actually a 490cc) version was offered for the 1959 season, with the same 'bathtub' rear enclosure as its little brother. But that was a tourer – it was another year before the first unit construction Tiger 100 prowled the streets. The T100A was better, but with an over-square engine that should have thrived on revs – the bore was 69mm and the stroke just 65.5mm – performance was disappointing. American and European riders wanted more and in 1962 they got it with the first of the hot Tigers – the T100SS. A good one would produce around 34bhp at 7000rpm, enough for 100mph with a smooth spread of power up to the 7000rpm redline.

Most of Triumph's twins were sold in America and a win at the famous Daytona 200 race would go down well Stateside. When BSA-Triumph bosses decided to go for glory, Hele had just five months to build six racers, based on T100SS twins. Fortunately, he was able to use his Norton experience where he developed the 500cc Dominator-based Domiracer of 1961. And he had Percy to evaluate.

The new T100R twin-carb specials were sent over for the 1966 Daytona 200-miler. Hele was so determined that his twins would be right for 1967 that he oversaw the race preparation himself. But things did not go to plan. Factory riders like Gary Nixon, Dick Hammer and Buddy Elmore all suffered big-end failures caused by too much oil going to the tappets and not enough to the main bearings.













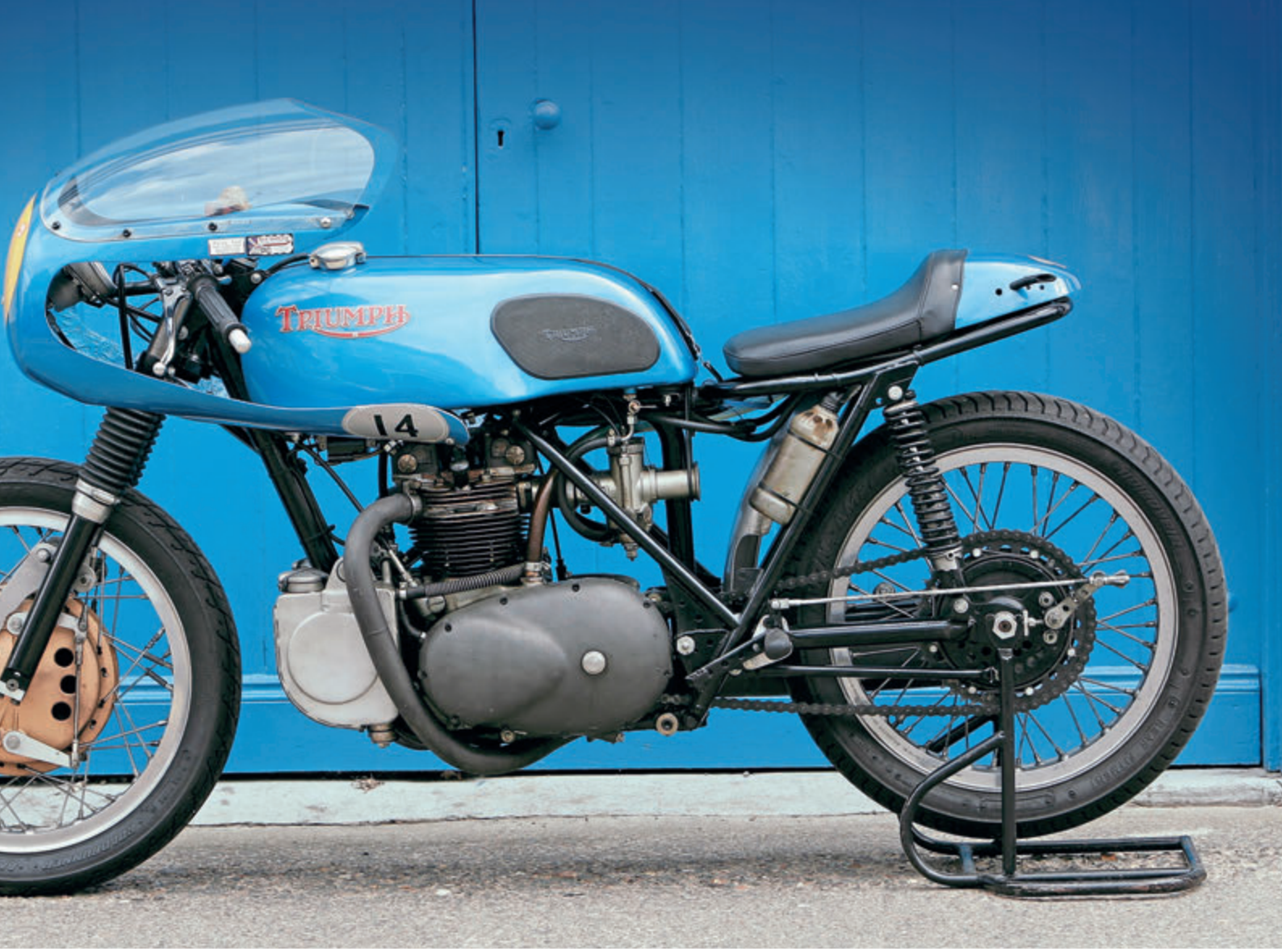
Nixon finally decided to use a back-up bike prepared by Triumph's Baltimore distributor, while Elmore was left with an engine built the night before the big race with parts salvaged from blown-up engines. But this time it held together, and Texan Elmore took the flag ahead of a brace of 750 flathead Harleys to set a new race record of 96.38mph for the high-banked Speedway track. Triumph couldn't pass up a marketing opportunity like that, so before the year was out they introduced a twin-carb version of the T100 for the road, called the Daytona.

The T100T Daytona Tiger put out 39bhp from 7400rpm thanks to big 39mm inlet valves, Bonneville specification cams and tappets with shallow radius feet. The exhaust valves were the same size as the Tiger 100, but used steel with a higher heat resistance rating. Two Amal 27mm Monobloc carbs

Top: Experimental gearbox, 30mm Amal carbs, balanced pipes and lightweight frame – the culmination of many, many hours of development

Centre: A tacho and a sponge – what else do you need? Note the copious lockwire

Bottom: Crossing the Glencrutchery crossroads during the 1968 TT. Riding with an injured hand, Percy retired later with engine trouble









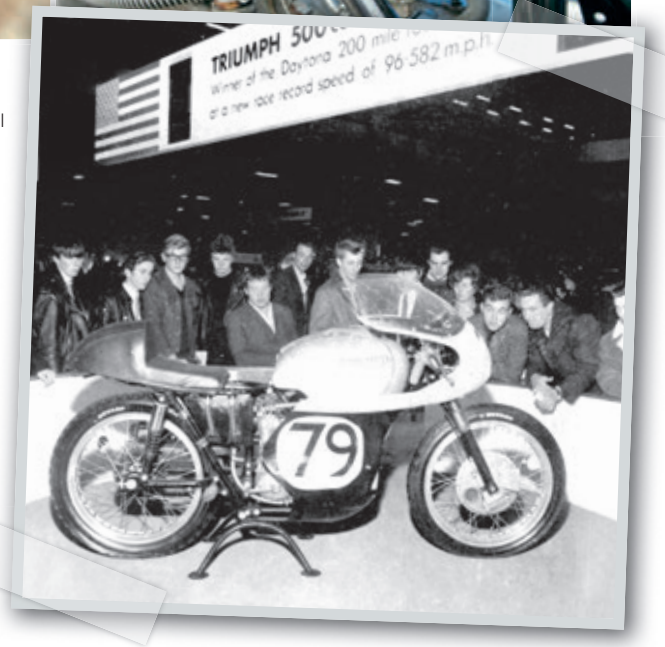
were mounted on slightly splayed inlet stubs, with the float chamber on the left side Amal supplying the fuel to both carburettors. The compression ratio was a heady 9:1.

Back at Meriden, Hele went to work to sort out the oil pressure problems. Another six T100R specials were prepared for the following year's visit to Daytona and Percy tested them all, to select the best for Nixon and Elmore. Besides the 750cc Harley-Davidson flatheads, this time the Triumphs would be up against 350cc Yamaha twins and Team Hansen's 11,000rpm Honda CB450s. But Hele's babies performed faultlessly, circulating the Speedway at over 136mph on open megaphones. Nixon won with a race average of 98.22mph for the 200 miles, with Elmore in second place, a lap ahead of the first of four Harleys. The other four Triumph

Above: Simply beautiful

Centre: Lower oil tanks, exhausts shaped for cornering, Lucas 3ET energy transfer ignition and Amal's finest

Right: After the Daytona victory Triumph lost no time in using the bikes for marketing



riders finished seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th. And the Japanese threat never materialised.

THE FINAL SPEC

So what did Hele have to do to get that sort of performance out of a 500cc pushrod twin? Simply adding a second carburettor to the T100SS engine, hotter cams and followers, and using bigger diameter hollow pushrods to prevent flexing let the engines rev higher, but Hele was after a good spread of power, as well as top-end performance.

Jack Shemans, the chief test-bed operator, locked himself away in the test house for months on end, searching for an extra fraction of horsepower here and there. He made a note of every modification they made to an engine before running it up on the dynamometer. So instead of the stock 45° included valve angle, the 1966 Daytona engines had modified heads with 39° included valve angles, and ran a compression ratio of 9.75:1. Bigger inlet valves passed the mixture from twin 1 3/16in (30mm) Amal GP2 carbs that were flexibly mounted on reinforced 4in (100mm) rubber hoses. These hoses both maximised the induction tract, and helped insulate the carbs from vibration and prevent fuel frothing in the single 'matchbox' float chamber mounted between them.

Sparks came courtesy of a special Lucas 3ET energy transfer ignition unit bolted to the outside of the magnesium timing chest cover and driven by an Oldham coupling from the exhaust camshaft. The primary drive cover was also a lightweight magnesium casting, although the cylinder barrels were stock cast iron painted to look like alloy.

Thanks to the use of magnesium castings, alloy tanks and frames made from lightweight T45 chrome-molybdenum tubing (the Accles and Pollock equivalent of Reynolds 531) the Daytona Triumphs weighed just 315lbs (143kg) ready to go – a T100SS weighed in at 337lbs (152.8kg) dry. Power output of the 1966 Daytona racers was 46.5bhp at 8200rpm.

The 1967 engines used a 0.030in (0.76mm) hand scraped squish band in the combustion chambers and a 11.4:1 compression ratio for better gas turbulence and faster fuel burning, without the pre-ignition mice eating holes in the high-dome Manx-style pistons. Inlet ports were also re-profiled, tapering them down towards the valve heads to build up gas velocity.

Above centre: Left, Percy with Rob Gould, after winning the Brands Hatch 500-mile race in 1967

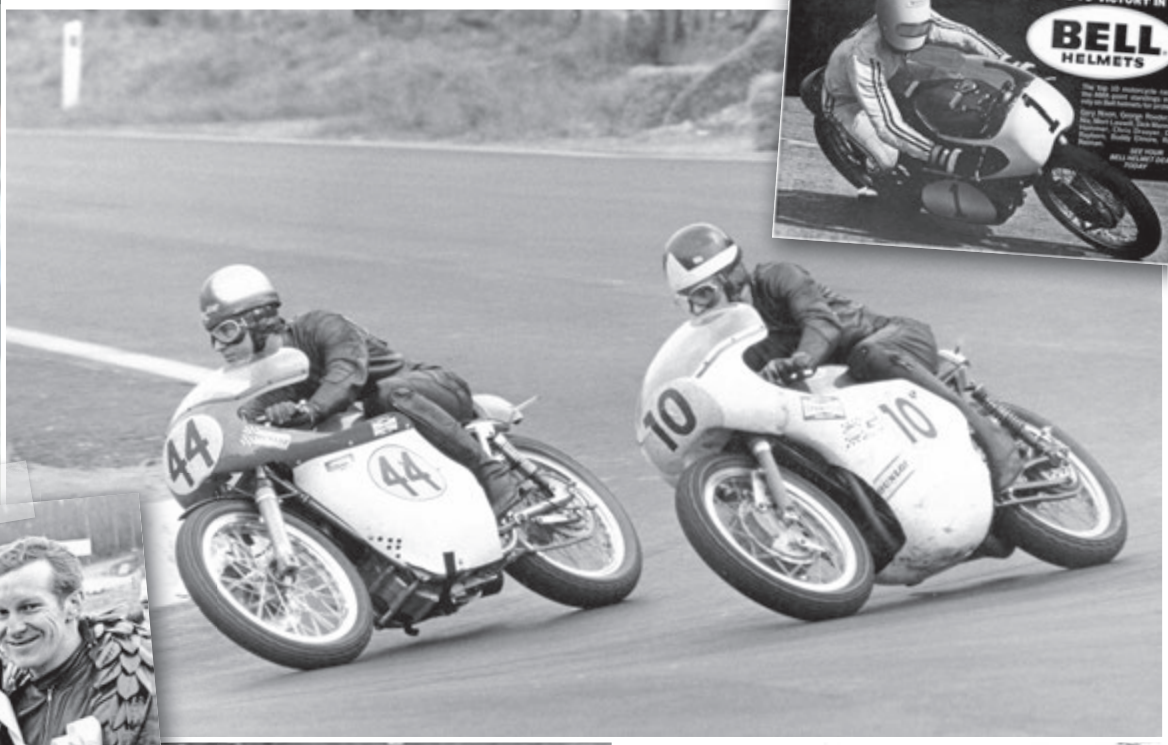
Below: A number of special parts used at the Belgium GP when Tait came second to Ago







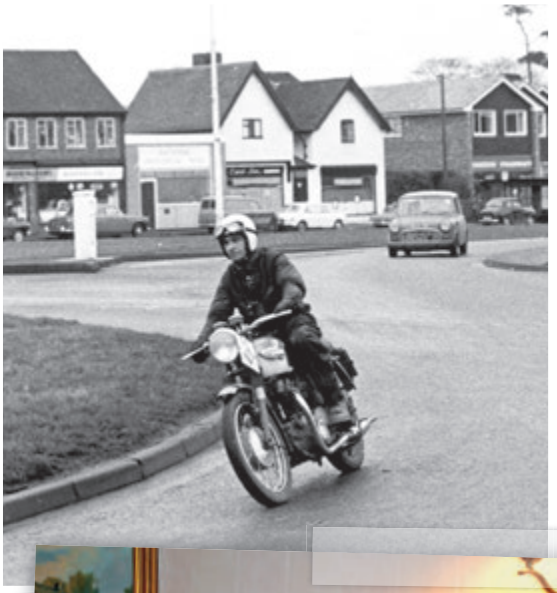












Above right: Alan Barnett on a 496cc Kirby Métisse leads Percy on his 500 Triumph at the Belgium Grand Prix on July 6, 1969

Centre right: Percy on testing duties in the UK. Note the trade plate!



The stock engine breather was a timed valve in the inlet camshaft that vented to atmosphere, but Hele decided it might not cope with the continued high rpm of a racer. So the timed valve was junked, along with the oil seal from the drive-side roller main bearing. Three tiny holes (1/16in or 1.6mm) were drilled in the crankcase wall level with the bottom run of the primary chain, and a length of 20mm bore plastic vent tube was fixed to a hole in the top of the inner half of the chaincase. Now crankcase pressure breathed into the chain case, carrying with it oil mist that lubricated the duplex chain. And because the vent tube was so big, no oil was lost but it ran back into the chain case instead.

Power was increased to 50bhp at 8000rpm. Shemans noted that there was no loss of power all the way to 8700rpm and even at 7700rpm there was 49bhp available. If you let the revs drop to 6500, the dyno still recorded 44bhp, so these babies had the power to pull hard out of corners as well as deliver at the top end.

Handling was improved by lowering the top frame tube by 1½in (40mm), stiffening the swingarm with gusset plates in the corners, strengthening the steering head and shortening the fork tubes to increase trail. Two-way damping shuttle valves in the forks improved the ride and were adapted for the 1968 production T100 range. But Hele had to look outside the Triumph parts bin for decent brakes – the 1967 Daytona racers used 8¼in (210mm) double-sided twin leading shoe Fontana drums



instead of the puny TR6-style single-sided brakes used in 1966, although the rear brake remained a Triumph 7in single leading shoe.

DAYTONA SUCCESS BRINGS MOMENTUM

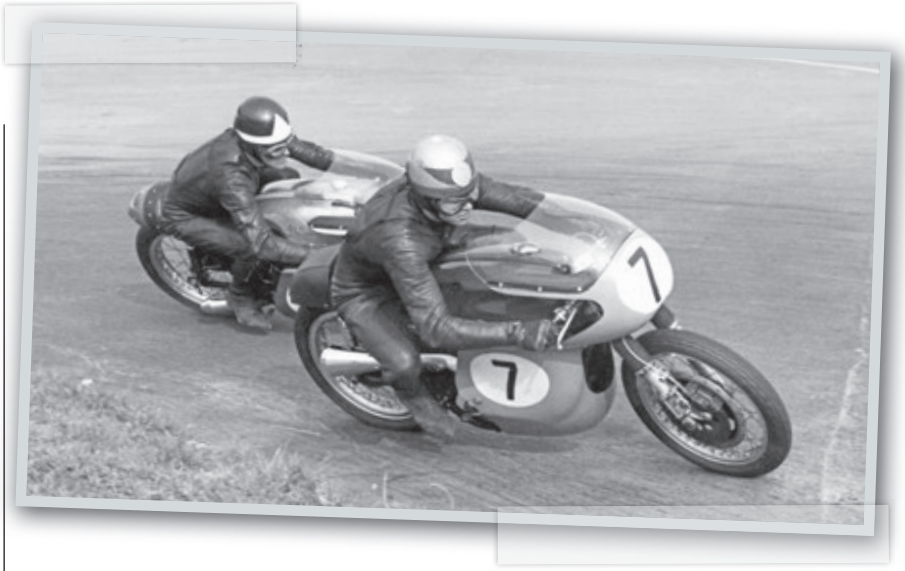
After the Daytona 200-miler, the Triumphs remained in the States so they could be used in American Motorcyclist Association events. But the experimental department wasn't going to let all that experience go to waste, and when the Isle of Man Production TT started in 1967, the hot money in the 500 class was on a win for Percy. It was no secret that he would be riding a Daytona that was tuned almost as much as a racer, but in the end it wasn't to be.

Before the race the engine only fired on one pot and he struggled around the first lap, calling into the pits for a plug change. Leaving the pits, Percy's red mist came down as he set off down Bray Hill for the second time, but the front tyre punctured when the forks were fully compressed at the bottom, and his race was over.

But it wasn't the end of his T100 Daytona. It became something rather special.

Percy's Trumpet was so highly developed by 1968 that he entered the Senior TT. Now there were two separate alloy oil tanks mounted in front of the crankcase. This helped lower the centre of gravity while increasing the amount of oil carried, and as the tanks were in the air stream, there was no need for an oil cooler as used on the Daytona bikes.

The 500 twin was amazingly quick for a modified road bike, and with Percy's ability to squeeze the last drop of performance out of it he could blow Manx Nortons into the weeds. But an accident before he left for the Island meant that the plaster cast came off his wrist just a few days before his first practice session and he had to be pushed away when starting by his mechanics. But that didn't stop him turning in the fastest Senior time in practice, despite atrocious weather conditions.



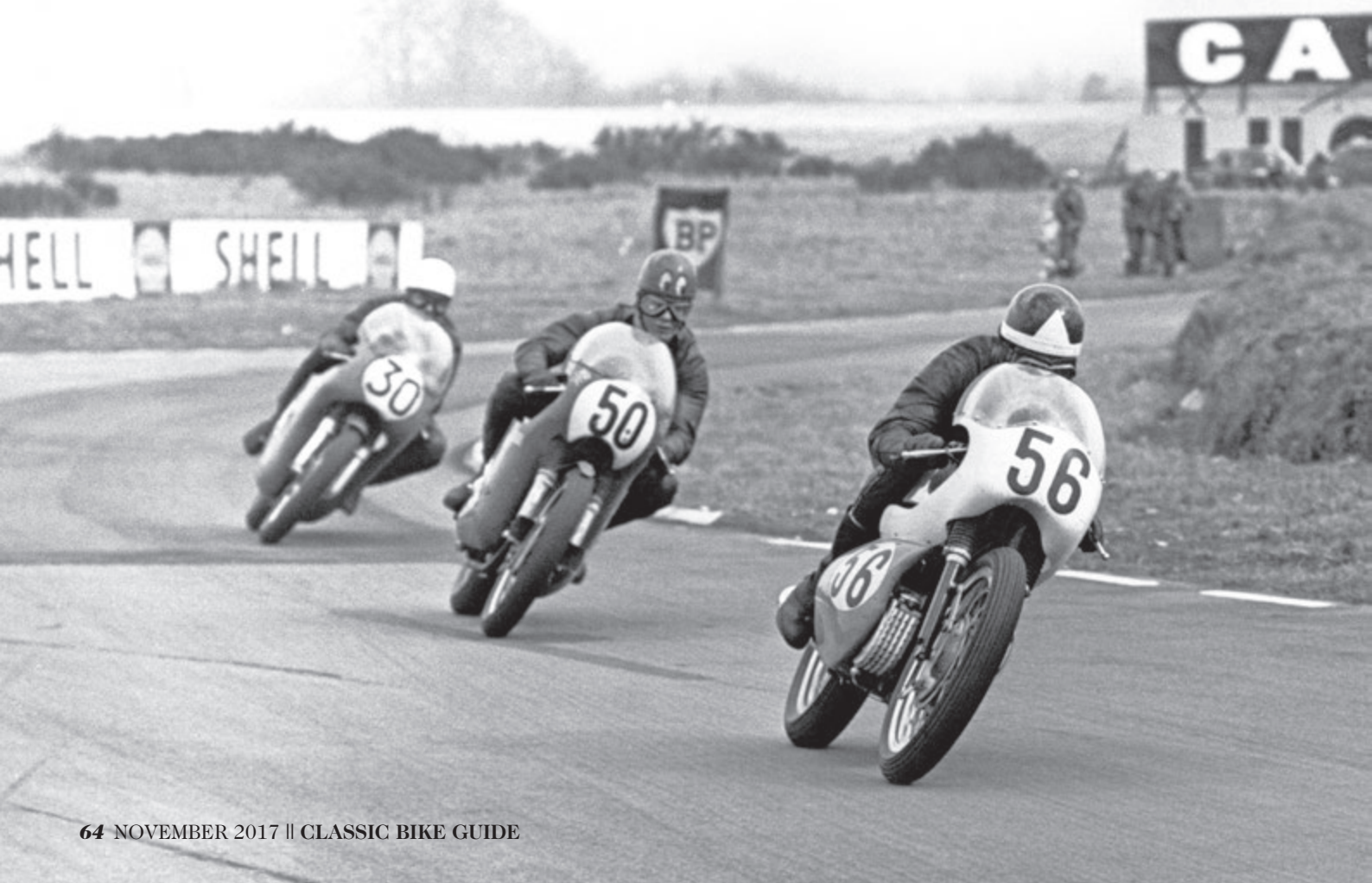
Above: Dave Croxford leads Percy Tait in 1967

Below: Tait leads John Cooper. Note the low-mounted oil tanks

Right: Large 210mm Fontana drum and twin oil tanks can be seen

The sun came out for the race and at the end of the first lap the Triumph was lying in eighth spot. Percy moved up to fifth at the end of lap two, but had to retire at Hillberry with engine trouble. Of course, Agostini and MV took the top honours.

Percy and Hele had high hopes for the 1969 Senior TT where Percy was up against 42 Manx Nortons, 29 Matchless G50s, Suzuki, Honda, Paton and Linto twins, an assortment of hopefuls on everything from a Velocette Thruxton to a BMW or a BSA Gold Star – and a solitary MV triple, in a field of 116 riders. Percy was also riding a Bonneville in the Production TT and during his first practice session, on the short stretch between Sulby Bridge and Ginger Hall, a tooth broke off a second gear pinion in his experimental five-speed transmission. The rear ➔




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14
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wheel locked up and the Bonnie threw him down the road. Percy was taken to Noble's Hospital with a broken collarbone.

SPA – THE CROWNING GLORY

It seems the Triumph rider and his Daytona attract bad luck, but remember this bike was totally experimental – and Percy and his 500 Trumpet weren't finished. Less than a month after breaking his collar bone, he was at the ultra-fast Spa Francorchamps circuit for the Belgian GP. The virtual disappearance of works teams had taken the shine off the World Championship series, but Percy still managed to inject a bit of life into the 13 laps of the old nine-mile circuit.

Ago cleared off on his MV Agusta triple to win at 125.8mph (202.533kph) but Percy finished second with an impressive 116.74mph (187.88kph) average for the 113.7-mile distance (183.56km), ahead of 15 other finishers. It was a great result at a demanding circuit that just two years later would be shortened, through safety fears from Formula One drivers.

Despite his bravery, Percy wasn't showered with rewards when he returned to Meriden. Unlike other works riders, he just received his usual test rider's salary. Some factory aces were even given their bikes after a race, but the best Percy ever got was a Parker pen and pencil set. He was just looked at as an employee doing his job by the management. But he was an employee who was racing in the World Championship, in Belgium, against Ago.

WHERE IS SHE THEN?

Percy finally bought his old racer from the factory but when he decided to concentrate on sheep farming, he sold it to Mick Hemmings, a classic Norton and Triumph specialist in Northampton. Along with the Triumph came a load of spares, including parts used in that 1969 Spa outing and a notebook with detailed descriptions of engine mods over the years. Mick wouldn't let us copy too much information from the book, but he did reveal that the inlet valves are 37mm and the exhausts 34mm; it uses different tappets to the Daytona bikes, and lightened line-contact rockers. Titanium valve collars and collets keep reciprocating weight down. The bore has been opened out to 70mm to make this T100 a full 500cc. Of course, the crankshaft assembly and alloy conrods have been polished and lightened and the rocker cover is magnesium.

Although the Amal GP2 carbs have 1 3/16in (30mm) chokes, the inlet port adaptors have 1 3/32in (28mm) bores while the rubber connecting hoses have 1.25in (32mm) bores. Main jets are 230, and full ignition advance is 42°. It all adds up to an impressive 52.5bhp at the gearbox output shaft and an important piece of Triumph history. CBG







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Persevering Percy

TT, 1974



This cracking shot shows Percy Tait on his ex-works Triumph 748cc triple, exiting Governors Bridge in the 1974 Formula 750 race. He finished fourth.

The TT that year was hit by bad weather and the shortened Senior was run on a Thursday, as the Formula 750 bikes were now faster. But despite the name, it was Yamaha that upset the rulebook and locked out the podium, with Chas Mortimer, Charlie Williams and Tony Rutter all riding the overbored, 352cc two-stroke twins that were more reliable and easier to ride in the conditions than the larger machines.

The works Nortons retired, others pulled out and the Yamahas battled amongst themselves. But it was Percy who kept the big triple going, through the wind and rain, for his second best TT finish of the 17 races he started on the Island. Two years later, following growing criticism from riders and the ACU, the TT was stripped of its world championship status.

For a copy of this photograph, see www.mortonsarchive.com

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Learner laughs

Remember when your biking story started? Did you have fun? So do you really need 650cc bikes to have fun now? We buy ourselves a 250 to rediscover fun.

WORDS MATT HULL AND OLI HULME



When I worked with modern bikes I always giggled at riders that felt they needed the largest possible engine. Adventure bikes were the most fun – buying a bike that is able to tackle duties off road as well as on is a great idea – double the fun. But instead of a lightweight, nimble, non-threatening machine, the most popular seller was a 260kg leviathan that only a riding god could tame. This brought embarrassing low speed drops, inadequacy off-road and possibly the end of riding enjoyment – all for the sake of having the biggest engine.

Smaller bikes are no second-rate choice. Track riders often get more satisfaction on a Ducati 748 over a 916 and, given a nice B-road, a Velocette 350 Viper could be more engaging than a 500 Venom. Lighter weight and a more willing engine demands more focus, although it does usually mean getting used to the sound of a higher revving engine.

The most fun I can remember having on two wheels was a 50cc Honda Vision. We had to take a couple for MoT, so, dressed in full leathers, a couple of us raced through the city on these shopping trolleys, extracting every last mph from the heavily restricted engine and trying not lose it at any cost.

Despite this, we all seem to aspire to a larger bike – is it an age thing or have we just forgotten the enjoyment of smaller bikes?

LOOKING FOR A BIKE

The idea was simple – find how much fun you could have on a lightweight classic. The Japanese 250cc and even 125cc bikes have gained classic status and, with it, classic prices. The British learner 250cc bikes don't have the same ethos, however the prices are similar. But which bike should you choose? BSA Bantams are featherweight and plentiful, with spares readily available. Some of the many Villiers-engined bikes such as Francis-Barnett, James and, for the well-heeled, Greeves, are also lovely machines, but not quite quick enough for what we wanted. A 250 was the goal. The Matchless/AJS, Triumph Tiger Cub and Royal Enfield Continental GT were all possibilities, but then, within a few miles of me, this Starfire turned up.







FINDING THE STARFIRE

This 1970 Starfire was unoriginal, with powder coated rims, Renthal off-road (but really old style) bars, extra warning lights in the headlight shell for main beam and ignition, an oil filter from a car, electronic ignition and a rack made from a modern bike. The paintwork was nice, the tyres were new, as were the stainless spokes and the seat had been nicely recovered. But the beauty of this bike is that I know its two most recent owners.

John had owned it for a while and the engine was in a bad state. So RTS racing products rebuilt it using a second-hand crank, rod and a new piston from a Speed Twin, machined to fit. The cylinder was bored and sleeved to accommodate the new piston and the head received new valve guides and the aforementioned oil filter conversion was fitted to help prevent it all happening again. There were also receipts for a new Amal carb and every MoT

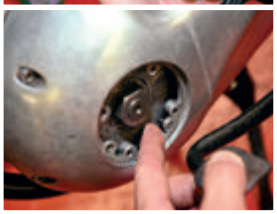






certificate since 2001. He swapped it and another bike for an A10 from Hutch, at HTE Motorcycles. So, after some Norfolk-style haggling and bartering (no animals were involved), a deal was struck with Hutch, the current owner, who taught me the recommended starting procedure taught (kick over with clutch in to free clutch, taps on, tickle carb, one kick, tickle again, ignition on and then go for it) and after a reminder that the little unit single is one-down, three-up, it was off to relive my sorely missed past. As with any new bike, care is paramount at first – though this, I'll admit, didn't last long – the short-stroke, quick revving engine acted like the devil sitting on my shoulder. The brakes braked well, the suspension suspended nicely and boy did that pepped up engine want to sing. Loudly, opera-style.









GIVING IT THE ONCE OVER

Hutch hadn't really had more than a "couple of blasts around the lanes" and had been too busy on customers' bikes to prep the little B25, so we both thought that a check, service and MoT were wise precautions. My little blast ended at another bike shop, Dave Wicks Motorcycles, where we checked it all from front to back. The oil was clean, though the primary case need a little top-up, the idle needed raising slightly and a new brake light was fitted as the old one had developed a little wear, as they often do, stopping it from working efficiently.

That was it and so it was off to Stu, the Ministry man, who would hopefully exchange my £27.50 for an MoT certificate.

Watching a poker face professional poke, prod and test your newly-purchased pride and joy is a tense experience, but a little later, an advisory-free certificate was duly handed over. Time to play!





SO WAS IT WORTH IT?

Definitely. If you choose the right road and you are in the right state of mind, riding the Starfire is nothing short of hilarious. The short-stroke engine is rev happy like an Eighties' Japanese bike, but with the classic starting procedure and right-hand gearchange. The revs take some getting used to after my B31, but the noise both on and off the throttle is addictive, again aspiring to be on the naughtier side. The lack of girth and weight takes so many inhibitions away.

To someone more used to a pre-unit plunger bike, it feels modern. The gears can be changed relatively quickly, the engine accelerates so nicely, with no advance or retard to worry about. The high bars feel in-period and put you in a kind of butch-like stance, ready to dab a foot as you enter into a mud-strewn country corner, before firing out. In town that same stance gives a real feeling of being in control, with the great low-speed acceleration getting you into and out of roundabouts with ease.

There has to be a time when that lack of cubic inches lets you down. Should you venture onto an A-road or a motorway, then you could keep up with lorries, but if you have a shred of mechanical sympathy you'll end up hating yourself for the torture you're subjecting the bike to. You could gear it up, but then the pep out of corners would be watered down. Long journeys could be a real turn off, although the amount of vibes you get through the seat or the bars is small.

So where does a classic learner bike fit into your life? A larger classic is a marvellous thing, with legs, looks and pedigree. But a smaller bike is perfect for a weekly meet or a country lane blast. For learning the basics of maintenance and having a British classic without the weight but with comparatively quick steering, it's great. As a second bike, it will always be the one you use to 'just nip into town' or 'just pop over to see Fred'. Most importantly, I have found that it puts that adolescent smile firmly on my face and images of a time long gone flood back, although hopefully my riding is better than it was... CBG

BSA STARFIRE

WORDS BY OLIVER HULME



THE BSA 250cc unit single was the bike that kept Britain's teenagers moving in the 1960s. When BSA realised in the late Fifties that the government was going to introduce laws limiting learners to 250cc machines, it knew it had to do something. Its 250 offering at the time was the C12, a heavy and pedestrian pre-unit single, which was going to compete for the business of thousands of learners with Royal Enfield's sporty Crusader and Ariel's revolutionary Arrow and Leader two-stroke twins.

Casting around for a solution BSA decided on a redesign of sister company Triumph's 200cc Tiger Cub, straightening the cylinder up and boosting the capacity to 250cc. Launched in 1958, the C15 Star was a softly-tuned commuter at first but BSA soon got to work making it more attractive to the youth market. The SS80 was the first road sports model, with a hotter engine and a claimed top speed of 80mph. Production of the C15 range continued until 1967, when the staid commuter and its mildly sporty stablemate were replaced by the altogether flashier C25 Barracuda.

The Barracuda was all-new, with a stiffer frame and a much more powerful big-fin engine producing a claimed 25bhp. This revved to 9000rpm with a 10:1 compression ratio piston and was fitted with a 'super sports' camshaft. There was a very smart new fibreglass petrol tank, big sculpted



fibreglass side panels and a humped seat. The whole deal knocked spots off the look of the old C15 and it was a worthy rival to the Japanese 250s then hitting the market.

The Barracuda had slender lines and used several parts from bigger bikes in the BSA range, which made it attractive to learners. The front forks were BSA's own items and similar to those fitted to the company's A series twins. There was a big chrome Lucas headlight and an optimistic 125mph Smiths speedometer, Girling shocks with exposed springs at the back, a QD rear wheel and 12v electrics.

The problem with the Barracuda was that BSA didn't realise how hard a teenager could hammer a motorcycle. At 17 you could go and buy one of these snarling little cats on the never-never and thrash the guts out of it. Many did, often with disastrous results. The hard riding, mixed with minimal servicing, meant that the engine suffered, with the result that many C25 bottom ends failed under the strain.

The Barracuda name lasted just a year before the renamed B25 Starfire hit British dealerships, as the name Barracuda had been sold under licence in the USA. The frame on the C25 and B25 is a strong affair, proving itself more than capable of handling the much bigger B44 Victor 441cc engine. The front brake went full width and the high compression piston was retained, though BSA decided to drop the valve lifter that had made the C25 easier to start. The tank was changed to steel and grew in size when the government banned fibreglass petrol tanks. In 1969 the Starfire got an excellent full



SPECIFICATION (1969 MODEL)

ENGINE:
Dry sump 249cc single OHV Compression Ratio 10:1

BORE AND STROKE:
67x70

POWER:
25bhp@8000rpm

CARB:
28mm Amal Concentric

PRIMARY DRIVE:
Chain/wet multiplate clutch, four-speed gearbox

IGNITION:
12v coil and points

WHEELS/TYRES:
Front 3.25x18; rear 3.50x18

BRAKES:
Front 7in full width 2LS; rear 7in half width QD

FUEL TANK:
3.25gallon/14.75l, steel

OIL CAPACITY:
4 pints/2.3l

SEAT HEIGHT:
31in/787mm; length 82in/2083mm

WHEELBASE:
52in/1321mm

GROUND CLEARANCE:
7in/180mm

DRY WEIGHT:
302lb/137kg.

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width seven-inch TLS front brake and rubber gaiters replaced the steel fork shrouds.

The 1969/70 Starfire was as good as it got for a British 250, with modifications to the engine breathing to help with oil retention at high revs. BSA dropped the sculpted fibreglass side panels for an exposed oil tank and smarter, smaller effort on the other side, which improved the lines. Replaced in 1971 by the B25SS with conical brake hubs and an oil in frame design, it was debatable that progress was a good thing.

On today's roads a Starfire is huge fun. They turn heads on the high street and anyone parking up a Starfire will quickly find themselves approached by ladies and gentlemen of a certain age wanting to talk about it. They, or their long-gone teenage love interest, will have had one in the Sixties or Seventies. They're perfect for nipping down to the shops, to the pub or blatting along deserted B-roads to a bike night. You can jump on a Starfire and, after giving the beast a couple of healthy prods, it will burst theatrically into life.

They're loud mechanically, partly because of the long pushrods from camshaft to cylinder head and partly because of the big undamped fins. The use of across the range BSA cycle parts makes them solid performers and makes keeping one going a breeze, as there are multiple parts suppliers.

They beg to be thrashed a bit and the gearbox doesn't require too much stirring. Once you get it into fourth gear and you roll back the throttle, be prepared for rapid and noisy progress, while keeping an eye on the oil pressure light, if you have one, or an ear open for unwelcome noises. They don't even vibrate that much. Despite their slightly unjust reputation for fragility, if you get one with the bottom end sorted out, a job most people who are still running one these days will have had done, with decent filtration and electronic ignition, a late Sixties Starfire will have you grinning from ear-to-ear.

It's worth fitting a lower compression Fleetstar piston or a compression reducing cylinder plate. These days you are unlikely to be trying to keep up with a 650 Lightning or trying to outrun a police Ford Zodiac. The Starfire is a great, affordable introduction to classic British motorcycles and just the thing to have sitting in the garage for when you feel like being a teenage hooligan again. Just be prepared to fight through admiring crowds to get to it when it's parked up. CBG

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BMW Flat-Twin

WORDS OLIVER HULME **PHOTOS** RUTH ACKROYD



BMW FLAT-TWINS have a lot going for them when it comes to the creation of specials. It's a surprise it took so long for the venerable boxer to grab the attention of those who like to put their own mark on a motorcycle.

The two-Boxers are big, solid and the design is a relatively simple one. The pushrod engines are fairly easy to work on and the important bits are easy to get at. The shaft drive rear end tidies things up neatly at the back, with none of the oily and primitive engineering challenges that a chain drive gives.

The frame is strongly constructed and you can simply remove things to turn a slab-sided chunk of Bavarian metal into something sparse and relatively sporty. The late Seventies and early Eighties R-series twins didn't change much fundamentaly

Customs



during their production history. Customised R-series twins have become a common sight in the past few years, many following the same basic form.

A typical R-series custom will have a cut-down seat, trimmed mudguards and short exhaust system. Airboxes are replaced by individual cone filters and there is often a matt paint job to emphasise the ruggedness of the build. Firestone pattern, dual-purpose or knobbly tyres seem to be the fitment of choice which, given that many of these beasts end up on potholed and slippery city streets, might be an odd decision, but custom building is often more about form over function.

You can still buy a complete if tatty R80 or R100 for around £1000 if you search long enough and that gets you a lot of motorcycle for the money.

UNCLE TUNGSTEN

Redmax Speed Shop in Devon builds bikes that are a touch out of the ordinary and have been involved in the creation of a pair of airhead BMWs that don't follow the trends. The two BMWs seen here have been built from a pair of R100RT tourers and are refreshingly different.

Roger Matthews passed his BMW to Redmax in 'big chunks' to complete and turn into his copper leaf bedecked roadster, Uncle Tungsten. Roger said: "I kept restoring old British bikes and then immediately selling them. My mates asked me why this was and after thinking about it I realised it was because I just didn't like riding them. So, the idea of building the BMW special was to build something that was exactly what I wanted. Then maybe I wouldn't sell it."

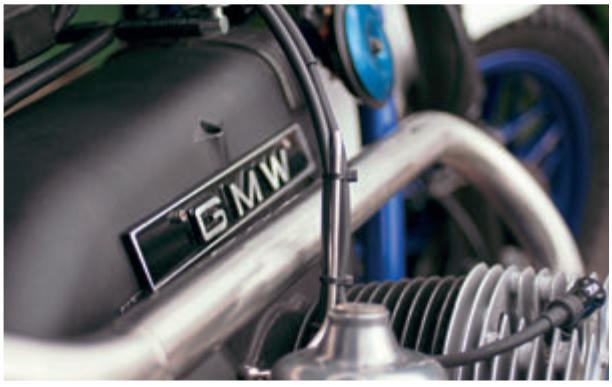
Before he started on the project he came up with his own checklist of what he wanted the bike to be. There should, he decided, be nothing on the bike that didn't need to be there. It should be all metal except for the seat, grips and tyres. A cafe racer with clip-ons was discounted as he wanted something that was easier to ride. And it needed a two-into-one high-level and loud exhaust system.

Roger took his original inspiration from articles and features in custom magazines including the French Café Racer publication. Realising that the high-quality BMW specials featured were right up his street with the engineering, highly functional designs and inherent elegance the big attractions, that was what he plumped for.

Having got the idea of what he wanted to build, the hunt was on for a suitable donor bike. He decided his base bike should be an early 1980s R100 which would mean he got twin Brembo front stoppers and a twin-shock rear end.

A request for help finding a donor bike on an internet forum turned up a 1981 R100RT which was surplus to the seller's requirements and priced at an attractive £600. The bike was bought and trailered to





Above left: The GMW is owned by Glenn Moger, the craftsman behind the custom seats used on Redmax customs. The tracker look comes from Redmax off the shelf tank and seat unit with a modified rear subframe.

Above right: A Boxer build from Kevils, where they believe the new R nineT model is the reason high-end BMW customs are on the decrease.

Is the BMW custom bubble bursting?

Kevin Hill, of Kevil's Speedshop in Paignton, is less confident than some about the future of BMW customising, especially at the top end of the custom-building market.

Kevin is a veteran of BMW customising and has built more than 100 flat-twin customs. He says the market for roadgoing BMW customs has "died a death". The main reason for the collapse in people wanting to buy custom-built BMW twins? He says it is BMW itself, with the launch of its own roadster the R nineT which owners can personalise from the factory.

Kevin says: "This is high-end customising and people shell out a lot of money for a good one – £15,000-£20,000. But the R nineT has changed that. When it came out, that was the beginning of the slide. BMW can produce one for every day of the week. These are off-the-peg factory produced bikes that anyone can go and buy off the showroom floor. The irony is that a few years ago when BMW wanted bikes for a show, it came to me because it hadn't got anything of its own. Now we know they just wanted to get a feel for the market."

Kevin also feels that a lot of the bikes seen at shows or displayed on plinths in shops aren't the real thing. "It's all image related. People look at the pictures and don't realise that the bike is unrideable. The builders get professional photographers in to take picture of a bike that wouldn't even go. It's all about selling t-shirts, apps and stickers, and that's just the way it is."

Kevin has moved on to building bikes from more affordable Japanese machines that allow greater opportunities to use his creative juices – though he does currently have one BMW R80 street scrambler for sale. "That's the market, I suppose," he says.

Kevin also fears that plans for new congestion charges in central London – for some years the home for the BMW custom scene – will kill the style stone dead. "If you've got to spend £15 a day just to ride your bike, you're not going to bother."



Devon where Roger stripped the bike and everything he didn't need was sold off until all that was left was the engine and drive, frame loop, forks and tank. The engine and gearbox were taken to BMW specialist James Sherlock in South Molton and the team there stripped the whole thing to the casings which were blasted. The engine was then reassembled with new bearings and seals throughout.

Roger rebuilt the forks with progressive springs, a stainless top yoke and he removed the castings on the fork sliders that originally housed the reflectors so the sliders were smooth. Any brackets on the frame not needed were off.

Roger had decided that the original alloy wheels were not what he wanted. He said: "I wanted spoked wheels so had sold the original snowflake alloys. I knew that the only way to go for the front wheel to keep the twin discs and go to spokes was to find an ex-police front hub. These are thinner than normal and scarce as hen's teeth, changing hands for around £500. eBay quickly turned up a pair of front and rear wheels for £800. I had them rebuilt with stainless spokes and polished original rims by Doug Richardson in South Molton.

"I had meanwhile found Redmax Speed Shop. As soon as I met Steve Hillary I realised I had found the right place. They were totally open to my ideas and had all the skills to finish the bike. Steve, Rachel, Steve's dad and Glenn could not have been more helpful. I enjoyed every minute of working with them. I gave them the bike in big chunks together with boxes of parts I had bought – LED headlamp, rear shocks with remote reservoirs, Smiths digital speedometer, throttle, billet controls, etc."

To give the engine a more period look the angular rocker covers of the original R100RT engine have been replaced with earlier, more rounded castings.

Red Max did a dry build, rebuilt the carbs, designed and built the exhaust and provided the seat base, made all the brackets and fabricated many other parts including the battery holding seat hump. The frame was painted "to look like mercury" and then the final build was begun.

The paint scheme and copper leaf work was done by master sprayer Joeby in Wells, Somerset. Glenn Moger made the seat pad and matching hand grips in leather, and with these finishing touches the bike was completed.

Roger raves about the bike's performance on the road. "The bike is light and flickable – certainly in comparison to the donor bike. It's fast enough and accelerates like a stabbed rat. It causes a stir wherever I take it and I just love it. Best bits are the paint with the copper leaf and hand pinlining, the very silly air screen which was the result of a few minutes of madness at Red Max, the exhaust and the sound it makes."

The bike needed a name that reflected its all-metal theme and Roger dubbed it Uncle Tungsten, the title of the autobiographical book, one of Roger's favourites, by renowned neurologist and BMW fan, Oliver Sacks.

The bike was finished just in time for Bike Shed 2016 and was one of three bikes that Redmax showed









that year. It caused a lot of interest. The whole project took nine months.

Anyone who has built or rebuilt anything knows that target costs are a moveable feast – almost always upwards – and Uncle Tungsten was no exception. The target build cost was £7k but Roger got through £13k in the end. "Attention to detail has its price," he says. "I would recommend the later twin-shock Brembo front end airhead to anyone looking to build a special. Go for the R80 - R100 range, since the smaller bikes are just a bit too low powered for their weight."

THE GMW

A different take on BMW twin customising comes from Redmax's own seat-making maestro Glenn Moger. Although based on another R100RT Glenn eschewed the roadster look with something a lot closer to a flat tracker, which is something of a speciality at Redmax HQ in Devon.

The bike now bears ironic GMW badges, standing for Glenn Moger Works, rather than the original BMW logos. Glenn says he "junked all the unnecessary parts", built a small subframe for the seat and fitted off the shelf Redmax tank and seat units.

One move later duplicated on Roger's bike was the removal of the cast aluminium air filter box from the R100 engine.

With the original filter replaced by individual carb



mounted units, the box just wasn't needed any more and was replaced by an item from Motorworks made just for this purpose. The removal of the box gives the engine a sparser, less angular look. The engine was gas flowed with new valves and guides fitted and the original complex electrical system replaced with a solid-state charging board, with the battery relocated to below the rear of the engine.

The angular headlight comes from a Harley V-Rod. The mudguard was heavily trimmed at the front and is virtually invisible at the back. The instruments were replaced by a single sat-nav controlled speedometer.

The exhausts are fitted with tailpipe silencers from a VW Beetle. Glenn says: "It sounds like a loud BMW with that added whistle you get from VWs, at the same time."

Footrests come from a Suzuki GSX1000, and the brakes are as standard as this was a budget build. The original wheels were used and along with the frame, were powder coated blue.

A lot of the work was carried out in the only space Glenn had available at the time the project started, the cramped rear of his VW T4 van. The original planned build time was supposed to be six months. "It took two-and-a-half years in the end."

SPARES FOR YOUR SPECIAL

The simplicity of the BMW flat twin's construction means that building something entirely personal is not beyond an averagely talented home builder. Motobins in Spalding supplies parts for all kinds of BMWs and has a dedicated café racer section selling bits to that market. David Binswanger of Motobins said: "It all started about three or four years ago and has been going strong ever since. People have been taking barn finds and doing everything from extreme customs with modified engines and frames to simple bikes with bolt-ons."

As the R-series twins have become popular with both restorers and customisers, the supply is starting to dry up, and the prices have been rising.

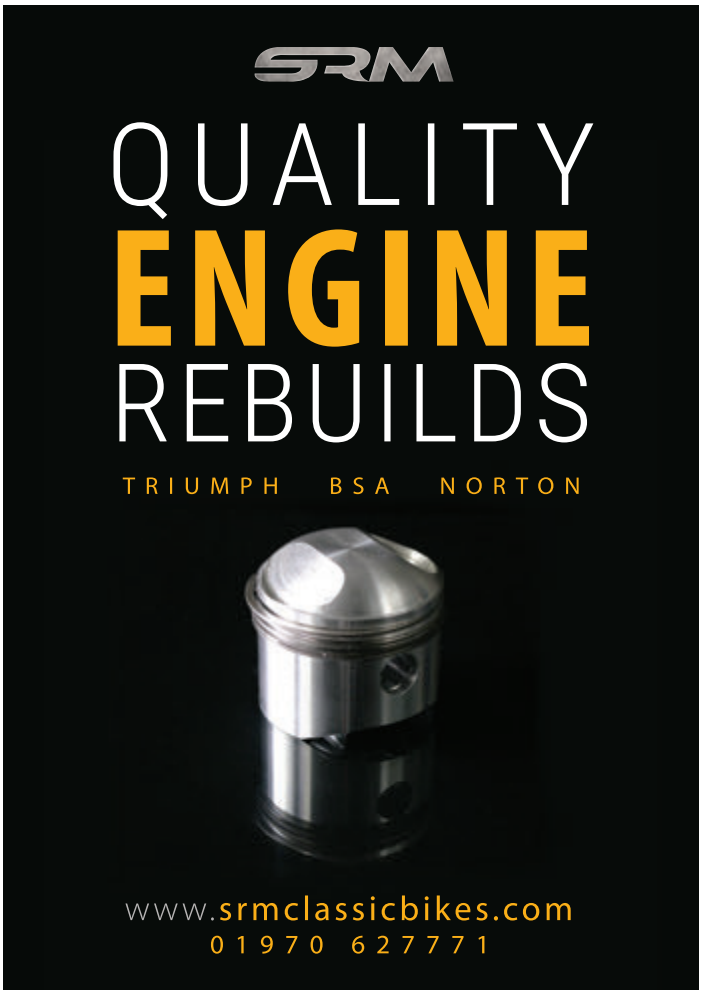
"You used to be able to pick up a twin for £500 or so, but prices are going up, and you might pay around £1000. We have a dedicated café racer section and sell people all kind of parts, for café racers or bigger projects."

Popular parts are items like megaphone exhausts, cone-shaped air filters and solo seats, which are suitable for the shed builder. For the more enthusiastic customisers, there are Dell'Orto carburettors and big bore piston kits. Restoration work is less common in the UK than elsewhere with many Motobins customers for original parts coming from Japan or the US where the big twins were less common. In the UK it is more usual to get riders looking for practical parts.

David said: "For a lot of people it's just to keeping their daily commuters going." CBG

Uncle Tungsten was originally an unloved R100RT. Some of the many mods include older rocker covers, tail unit, rare spoked wheels and much more. Many, many hours were spent getting the look the owner wanted, including beautiful paintwork by Joeby.





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OIL – WHO DO YOU BELIEVE?

You have several choices – and the more people you ask, the more it will become confusing, as everyone has an opinion. Originally, most British bikes would have used either straight oil, which is just oil, or monograde oil, which is a straight oil but with some additives. You had to change the oil to suit the temperature as a heavy 50W oil would be no good in winter and a thinner 30W would not do its job in summer. Modern multigrade oil changes its properties to suit, giving a better range of operating temperatures, but a lot also have detergents in which hold carbon and deposits until the oil flows through the filter. Older bikes don't have good filters and so an older engine could be damaged by old crud floating around. Our bike was recently rebuilt and has always run on mineral multigrade, so should be fairly clean inside. Most classsics don't do that many miles, so check with a specialist of your model and change it every 1000 miles to be safe.

Getting to know you

Working on your bike can be as satisfying as a good ride, once you know how. We look at how to go through some basic maintenance to make sure your ride on a British bike isn't a sour one.

In our modern world of cars that need for nothing but petrol in between 20,000 mile services, it may come as some surprise when you first get into classic bikes, just how much you're expected to tinker. Even modern bikes need daily and weekly checks, but older models need so much more love.

Maintenance is an essential part of owning an old bike, but don't look at it as a chore. More riders are coming to classic bikes with little experience of mechanics but it isn't daunting – in fact, you get to know your bike more intimately, spot issues before they become a problem and it helps you to understand the workings better. Many people get addicted to it and spend more time working on their bikes than riding.

This month we are going to look at working on a British bike and the sort of basic jobs you would be looking at if starting out, or if you've just bought a bike. We're using a 1954 BSA B31, a pretty traditional Brit classic, so most jobs on other marques or models should be similar.



CLEANLINESS NEXT TO GODLINESS

Working on a clean bike is the best way to spot issues and prevent causing new problems. I'm sure your classic bike is pristine, but get into all the nooks and crannies you don't see. Soapy water is okay to get road grime off bodywork but for engines and cycle parts use maintenance spray like GT85 or WD40 with a soft rag and use spray-on brake cleaner with a toothbrush for those tricky to get to, or oily areas. Once clean, a protective solution like ACF50 or Scottoiler365 creates a protective barrier if used regularly.

WHAT TOOLS DO I NEED?

We are lucky enough to have a hydraulic bike ramp, they start at around £300 new, or you can make a bike bench from wood for about £60. Thankfully, most British bikes have a centrestand which is fine for most jobs. As we're looking at British bikes this month, you will need some Whitworth spanners and sockets – these differ from metric and AF tools, so be aware. You can buy these new (see page 43), but you should find most sizes for pennies at an autojumble. You'll need an oil can for lubing, a grease gun – I bet there is someone you know that has one they never use, some penetrating spray and general lubricant with a straw for cables. There are more specialised tools, but these will do for now.

Oil change

Here's a look at changing your oil. This is always done once the oil is warm, so a good excuse for a ride first!

PRIMARY DRIVE OIL

This holds the oil that lubricates the primary chain and to an extent, the clutch. On our bike the plug is at the bottom on the inside of the casing and there is a level plug on the outside. First, check the tension and condition of the chain – if it's too slack it needs adjusting which we'll look at another time. Once you have drained it, replace the sump washer with a small smear of silicone on each face, then fill until it starts to trickle out of the level plug behind the rear brake pedal and tighten that up. It doesn't need a lot – our B31 took around 150ml of 10W/40 Multigrade, or 30W-50W Monograde, depending on the time of year.





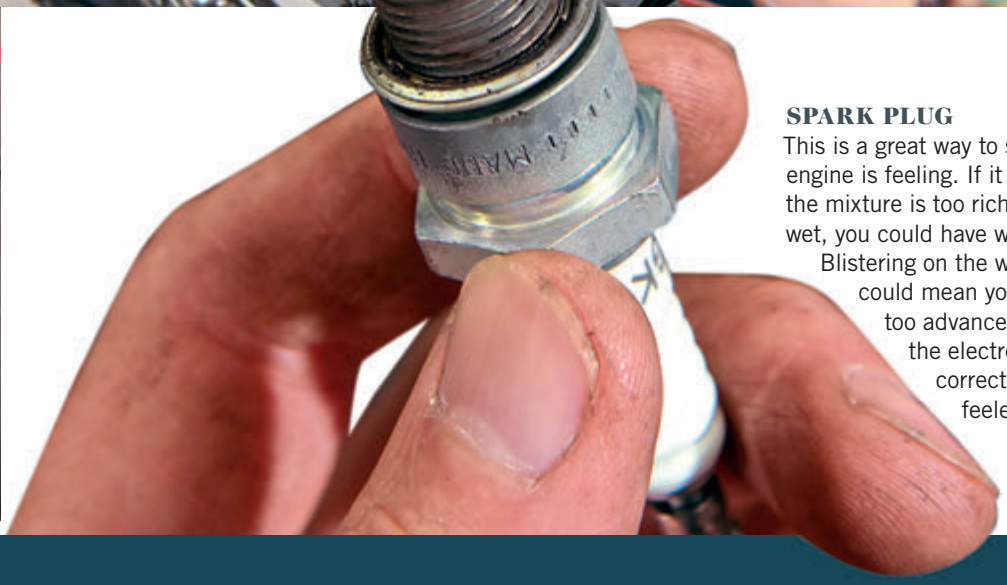
SUMP OIL

Our bike had a single sump plug with magnet fitted to hold onto any ferrous swarf floating around, as standard this engine should have a plate with four screws and a gasket, making things a little messy. As this is a dry sump engine, there should be little oil in and once drained replace the gasket, again with a little smear of silicone sealant on both faces, then refit.



SPANNER CHECK

Whether the bike is new to you or not, it's always wise to perform a spanner check on every fastening. Commonplace on racebikes before they head out on circuit, simply go round every fixing to make sure nothing has rattled loose. Torque settings are not commonly found in literature of the day and modern fastenings would differ to those made in the 1950s, but a handy rule is that a standard spanner is deliberately the length it is so your average mechanic could tighten a nut or bolt as tight as the length of spanner allowed. But this is a rough guide and remember that alloy, brass and fibre washers will all need less force. If you regularly find a bolt coming loose, use threadlock or even consider lockwiring it.



SPARK PLUG

This is a great way to see how your engine is feeling. If it is black, the mixture is too rich, black and wet, you could have worn rings. Blistering on the white insulator could mean your ignition is too advanced. Make sure the electrode is gapped correctly with feeler gauges.

CBG Tips

Using the wrong spanner or socket is the most common way of rounding off old nuts and bolts. Use the correct tool (Whitworth for most 1950s and 60s British bikes), and if the fastener is rusty, clean it with a wire brush and use penetrating oil to have the best chance of it releasing.

OIL TANK

Dry sump engines need an oil tank, so this needs to be drained. On most British bikes there is a drain plug on the oil tank but on our B31 you have to drain by removing the main union, which also houses a gauze filter. Remove the toolbox for easier access and make a funnel from cardboard to route the oil into a container. Clean the gauze filter with brake cleaner. Once drained, have a quick peek inside to make sure there is no debris, replace the fibre washers and tighten up.



GEARBOX OIL

This has another tricky to get to sump plug and like the primary drive, another level plug. Gearbox oil is thicker so takes longer to drain and we used ST90 gear oil, recommended by Rock Oil to have the right additives for a classic 'box.



CBG Tips

Brake cleaner can be bought from motor factors in a five-litre bottle and decanted into a pump bottle. This saves money and is perfect for cleaning off oil from engines, wheels and of course, brakes.

FINAL DRIVE

Your final drive chain needs to have the right amount of slack (between ¾-1 inch on our bike when sitting on it) to get the best possible gearchange without torturing the rear wheel bearings and gearbox output bearings. Lube it with chain lube, roughly every 300 miles, or more often if it's raining. If your chain has a split link, it's essential that the chain link has the open end at the rear and the closed end at the front in the direction of the chain's travel.



SPOKES AND WHEELS

A quick way of checking the tightness of spokes is to flick them with your nail and listen for any that sound dull – they could be loose. A spoke spanner should be able to tighten them up. Also spin your wheels to make sure they're straight and true. If not, a wheel builder will be able to adjust them.



TYRES

The legal limit of tread on a bike is one millimetre over three quarters of the tread, so check you have plenty more than that. Look for cracks, bulges in the sidewall and age – old tyres can be lethal. Classic bikes have less power than modern ones, but you should still get the best you can for cornering and braking duties. Pressure used to be set very low, but modern manufacturers recommend slightly higher – our B31 would have been set at 16psi front, 22psi rear, but with trial and error 22psi front, 25psi rear is better. See what feels right for you.







BRAKES AND CABLES

We can look at brakes another day, but make sure you have a good action at the front lever and rear pedal without too much free play. If you need to adjust them, check how far out the adjusters are – if you're towards the limit the chances are your linings are wearing thin, or cables are stretching. Ideally you want around 3mm (¼in) free play at the lever so that the brakes don't pull on when the steering is turned. Check the soldered ends of the cables for fraying and use a cable oiler to get some multi-purpose oil down the cables to help lubricate and prevent rust.

Grease nipples

There are many grease nipples on older bikes. If it moves or pivots, it needs oiling or greasing. Many British bikes will have nipples on the front brake pivot, front forks, steering head, clutch arm, rear suspension, rear wheel and even the seat. If done regularly, most should only need a couple of pumps for the right amount of grease, though you can feel the gun go stiff if it's packed in there – just be careful not to over-grease the brake pivot.

LEAKS

'That's how you know it has oil in it' you'll often hear. But it doesn't have to be. Use good quality gaskets with a fine smear of silicone sealant on each face, and with the correct oil and everything torqued up as it should be, you should have relatively few. But there will be a some small ones, so keep an eye on them.



CBG Tips

Make sure you have enough light. A headtorch can be bought for a few quid and shines where you're looking. LED inspection lamps are great too. If building a shed for your bike, use strip lights rather than bulbs for a more even spread of light.

Lights and electrics

These can be six-volt or 12-volt, positive or negative earth. Some will have been modified over their life, so make sure you know. To check it all works, start the engine and turn on the headlight. A bike with a dynamo should see the light get brighter as you rev the bike from idle. Later bikes have alternators which are more efficient than dynamos.

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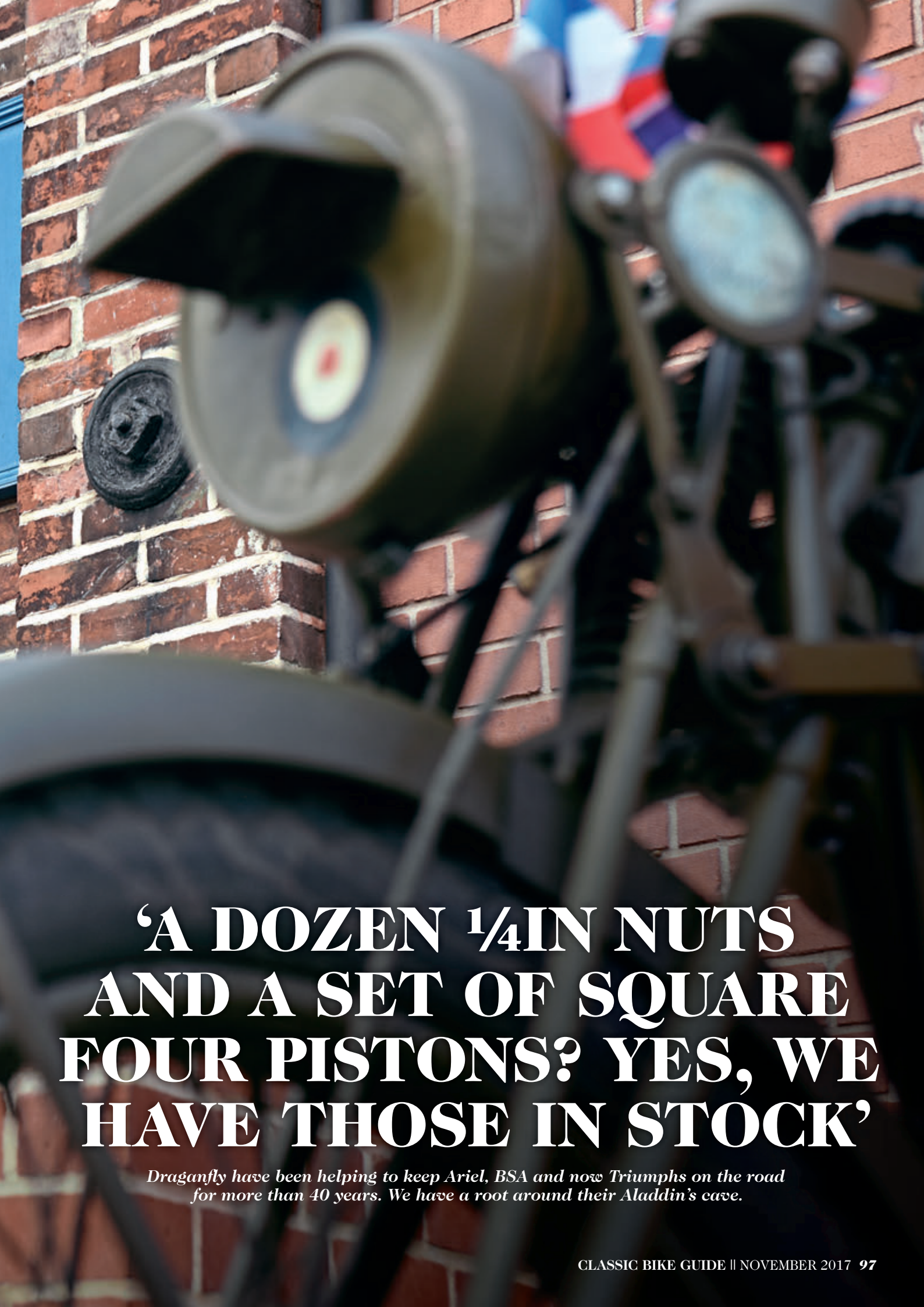
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‘A DOZEN ¼IN NUTS AND A SET OF SQUARE FOUR PISTONS? YES, WE HAVE THOSE IN STOCK’

Draganfly have been helping to keep Ariel, BSA and now Triumphs on the road for more than 40 years. We have a root around their Aladdin’s cave.





In the quiet market town of Bungay, Suffolk, tucked between the town theatre and some houses, a large old mill resides. Outside, a Military M20 sits next to a Hinckley Bonneville and a pile of spares, waiting to be catalogued. This unusual building houses one of the largest reasons you still see Ariels and BSAs on the road. It's the home of Draganfly Motorcycles.

No one leaves school dreaming of starting a parts business for obsolete bikes. But back in 1976, Roger Gwynn, who, amongst many other jobs had served his engineering apprenticeship at Rolls Royce Aerospace ("It sounds posh, but if you lived in Derby at that time, that's where you worked," laughs Iain, Roger's son, who now runs Draganfly), was at that time living in London, running a small motorcycle and scooter repair shop in Walthamstow.

One day, he was offered an Ariel Huntmaster for the princely sum of £60 to replace his recently deceased Francis-Barnett. It was this bike that would start the lifelong fascination with the marque that he has become synonymous with.

Soon after, Roger and friend Jim were offered a load of unwanted Ariel spares from renowned North London motorcycle shop, MCS. Roger wasn't too sure what he'd bought, but loaded up a sidecar and took them to a local Ariel club rally, returning that night, somewhat richer, but with what seemed like just as many parts. The business had a direction.

Specialising in supplying Ariel spares rather than the more popular BSA, Triumph and Norton, meant that Draganfly had its own market – albeit a smaller one – Ariel had produced a fraction of the bikes that the likes of BSA had.

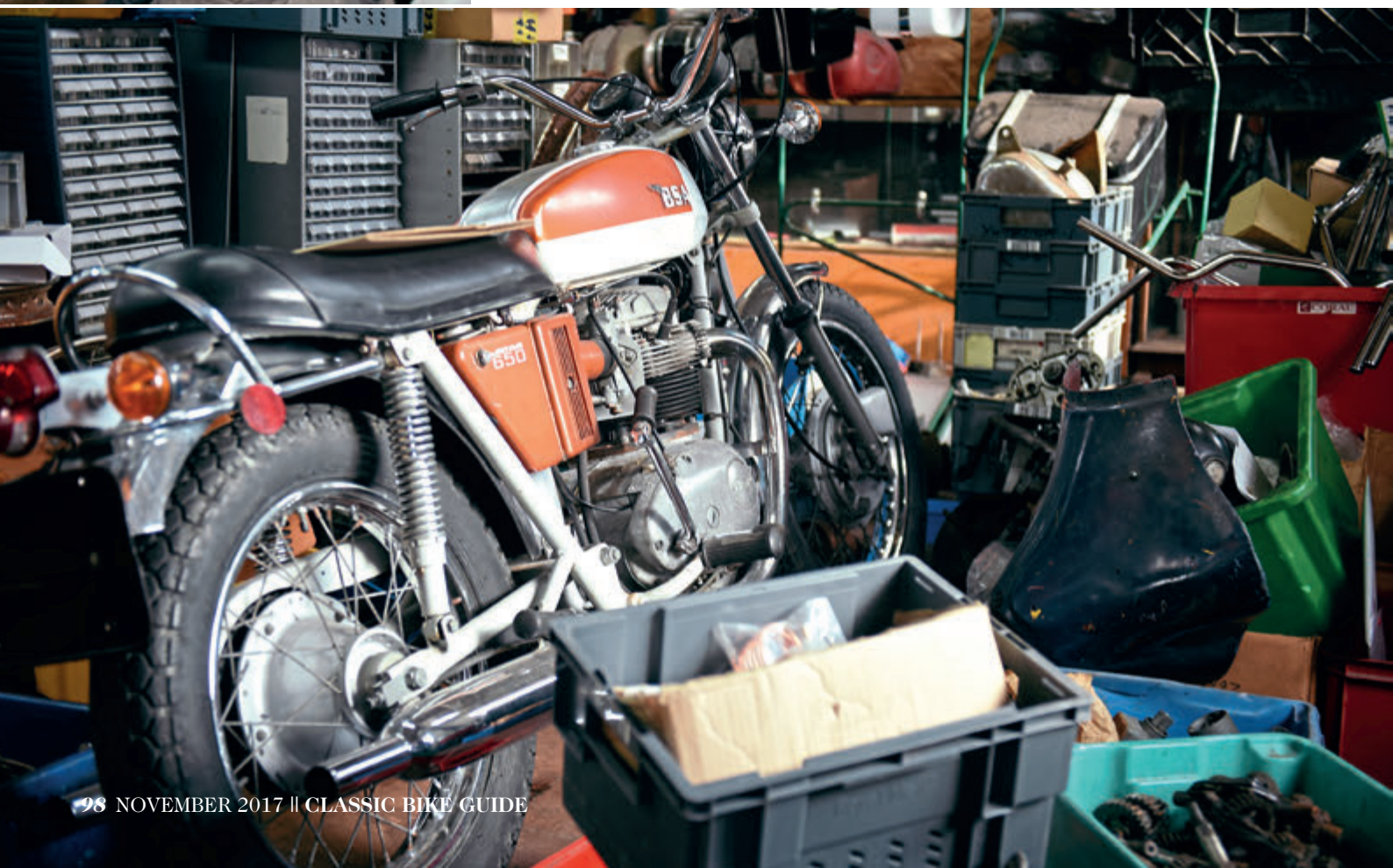
A move for Draganfly to Leytonstone – in the Seventies a huge populous of bike shops and breakers – helped with more space, so as other dealers were clearing old stock, Roger and his new partner, brother Graham, could take it on.

"My father has a talent for cataloguing, firstly with card files and lists and more recently with computers – we have always known what we have and what we don't. And to know which part is right for the customer's bike," explains Iain.

The business was becoming that of mail order, so a brave move to Suffolk in 1984, for more space and a taste of the country life – allied to cheaper premises than London – gave yet more room to expand. BSA hadn't figured with Draganfly apart from the fact that the Ariel FH 650 engine has many similarities with the A10 650, thanks to Ariel being acquired by BSA in 1951, but in 1996, Roger's purchase of BSA stock and records, including crucial parts manuals from Michael Freeman and the long-standing dealer, Lewis's of Weybridge, changed all that.

Concentrating primarily on pre-unit BSAs initially, the sheer amount of parts necessitated the team's attention to detail, creating new part numbering systems, while also finding parts that customers wanted that were rare or unobtainable, leading to remanufacturing of vital parts.

Since then, Roger's wife, dogs, daughter and son have, and still do, work there, with Iain taking the reins since Roger has taken a back seat: "I first started with Mick (who





Ariels

Iain shares his father's passion for Ariels: "They're a very underrated machine, my father has ridden to Poland on one. Their part numbers and engine designations are common sense and they're generally great to work on. You can get most parts easily, though a few gearbox parts are hard to find and Square Four crankcases are unobtainable – you would have to buy a complete engine.

"They're eccentric, but fabulous bikes! The Mk.1 Square Four had a few problems with overheating rear cylinders and the design of the head means it can be really tricky to get to some fastenings, it can be frustrating. The Mk.2 was much better. But you have to know them, like the alloy heads and barrels heat up on a run, then once it's cooled, the head bolts will be loose, with maybe a little oil leaking. So you tighten them but next time you ride and the top end heats up, it could pull the head bolts out of the bottom end. It's just one of those idiosyncrasies.

"Mostly though, they're clearly thought out and reliable – if you keep the sludge trap clean, or fit an external oil filter. If not, you can lose a con rod. But generally, the main problem we see is they don't get used enough – they need using. The owners' club is the best reason to buy an Ariel – it's fantastic and made up of real eccentrics. They're really passionate, always ready to help and love their rallies!"

If looking at an Ariel, or a BSA to a lesser extent, worry less about the mechanicals – most are available and if looked after, bombproof. It's the tinware that is tricky to find, as they changed so regularly over the years.

joined in 1989, adding to the Ariel and BSA expertise of Draganfly) who would throw me into the wheelie bin to compress it down. My sister helped out too and models for the adverts – but she has a fantastic ability to remember part numbers and locations."

MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Iain and the gang have moved with the times, with a fantastic website allowing customers to order from across the world. "When I first started," explains Iain, who studied IT, "the computers didn't even have hard-drives. Everything was on card file. Gradually, we have managed to upload as much information as possible to help the customer find the right part, helped by Roger's knowledge and fastidious records. He used existing part numbers and created a variation of them for new parts, which is still in use today, by various people. Even new updated parts, like a three-plate Ariel clutch centre, other companies are using our numbers. Our key to success is accuracy and knowledge. If a customer says a part we've sent is wrong, it's normally because their bike has a non-standard part or it was a changeover bike – a model in between years.

"Without the work my father put in to get the accuracy correct, we'd be nowhere. We have a map on the wall with a pin in each country we have a customer in. There's not a continent we don't sell in to. I've just taken an order from Fiji – you have to know your facts, the return postage bill would cost a fortune."

CAN'T GET IT? BETTER MAKE ONE THEN

As original parts have dried up, so new suppliers were sought, but issues of quality or supply have always been an issue. Says Iain: "Finding someone to make a part isn't the problem – but finding someone to make a part to our specification, to our amounts and to our time requirements, seems impossible. So we've invested in a four-axis mill to manufacture items and we also make our own glass fibre panels. That way we control the quality and the supply."

And it's working, as it's not just the most common parts, but the parts that are most difficult to find, even parts like crankcases are being looked into.

"For example, we can build a completely new front wheel for a 1938 Ariel – drum, brakeplate, bearings, spokes, nipples," smiles Iain. "We have had customers ring and ask if we do parts for a certain model that they're thinking of buying, because if we don't then they won't buy the bike."

With the glass fibre workshop already in action, Draganfly bought the rights and moulds to Craven Equipment in 2007, famous for authentic panniers and top boxes. Again, the ability to control the quality of the end product has meant this range of accessories remains high. These glass fibre panniers look really rugged, but keep to a traditional style while giving a classic-style practicality to your bike – and they're proving popular, with sales strong across the world.







TRIUMPHANT

In 2016, Draganfly bought out Supreme, a Triumph specialist. Despite being popular bikes, these are Ariel and BSA specialists, so cataloguing and even identifying all the parts has been – interesting.

"I was walking along the isles recently and noticed an item I didn't recognise," says Iain. "I asked Colin (who looks after the stock control) and he said 'It's a brake caliper piston.' I know what one is, but I've never had one in stock before!

"The game is the same, get to know your product, your customers and learn what they want so you can help them – I just don't know the answers to their questions as much as I'm used to – yet."

DOWNSTAIRS...

As you walk down the stairs to what would have been the windowless storeroom and boiler room of the old mill, you find how Draganfly used to be. Shelving, 12ft high, is brimming with dusty wheels, tanks, engine parts, Leader chassis, gearboxes and frames. It's like an entire autojumble in a tiny, enclosed space. But look closer and you'll notice every single part is labelled meticulously.

But that's where the old finishes and the new world begins.

"The whole of the downstairs was like this – a scrapyard-style mass of used spares. But we're gradually taking more of it away to make room for manufacturing and the workshop," explains Iain

As you walk through, light hits you and the smell of the glass fibre workshop hits your nose, while the sound of the machining hits your ears. It's a hive of activity, Graham is laying up mudguards, Harry is finishing some panniers and Bob is making parts on the lathe, while Chris is forming some stainless steel handlebars (once polished it's hard to tell them from chrome ones, but the finish is better and they don't rust) and Mick is rebuilding an Ariel.

There are many parts in Draganfly – you find yourself walking past rows of boxes and you just have to open one up to see what's in there. You may find washers, nuts, needles, spoke nipples or gauze filters – on their own not exciting, until that 60-year-old bike you own needs one. Then you're glad these parts are available, off the shelf.

But more surprising than the vast array of parts, is the staff's knowledge – just two examples are Mick and Chris. When *CBG* was there, Mick was rebuilding a Mk.1 Square Four that had destroyed itself from blast debris being left in the crankcases by a previous owner. Mick, who commutes 30 miles a day on his WD BSA M20, has also just finished a 1915 Douglas. This isn't just a job.

Chris is a self-taught engineer, and has built some incredible bikes at home, under the Kellascat customs name. "I've got a rigid Ariel single that I've crafted the barrel and head from a VW Beetle to." Why? "Because they're cheap and because I can." Fair enough!

Who would have thought back in the Fifties that a company would be out there, 70 years later, manufacturing and supplying parts for your then, new motorcycle. We are lucky that companies like Draganfly do, and even more importantly, have the advice, knowledge and enthusiasm to help us keep our bikes on the road. CBG

Did you know?

Draganfly gets its name from the fact that founders, Roger and Jim, wanted to go drag racing – hence Drag-an-fly.



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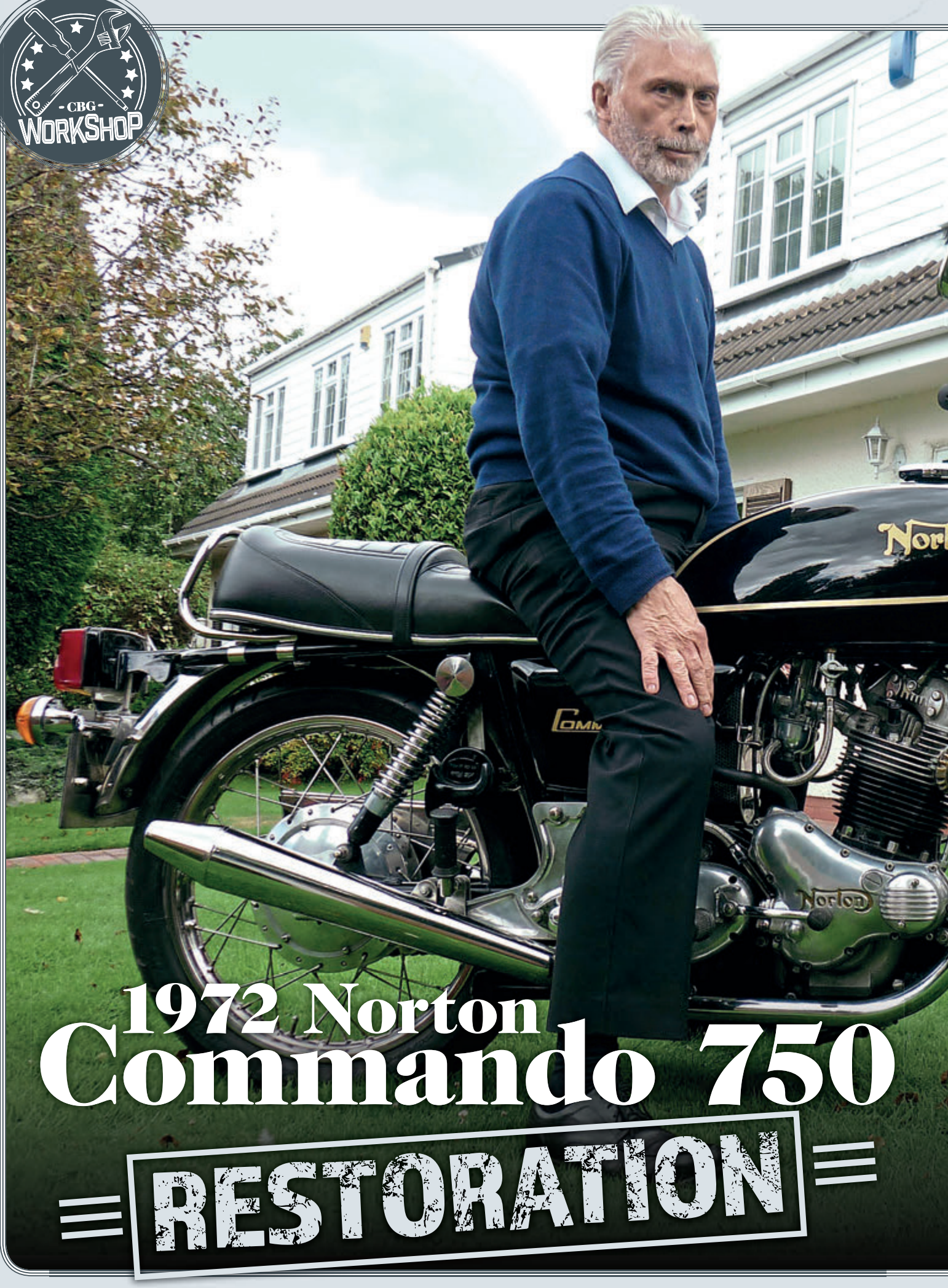
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1972 Norton Commando 750

RESTORATION



1995 and the 1972 Norton being taken apart. The original cast iron front disc is still in place

Tony Clements got more than he bargained for when he bought this 750 Commando. But the end result was worth it

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY ROB DAVIES

Tony Clements bought his 750 Commando from an elderly local chap – local to Wolverhampton that is. Sadly the bike hadn't in truth been looked after, and in many ways it was remarkable that the bike was even usable. Had Tony been told a few teeny porkies about how wonderful this bike was? I'm sure many of us have been told many fine stories about how marvellous a bike is, only to find out the real truth once we have parted with the money and got it home. Never mind – a Commando is what Tony wanted, and it was a Commando that Tony got. Fortunately he was fully prepared for a total restoration, and for that he wasn't disappointed.

CBG: Tony, looking at the pictures, the bike doesn't look too bad when you received it?

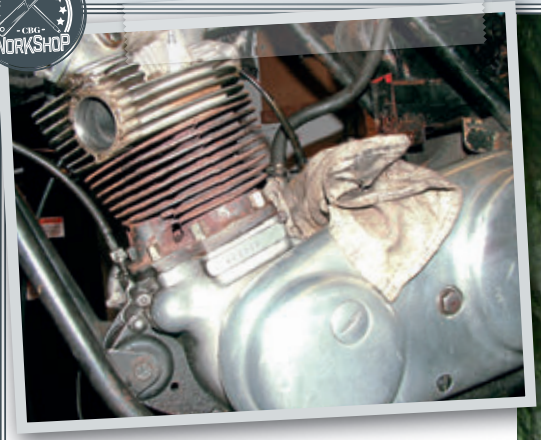
Tony: Maybe not, but you can't check a bike out from a picture can you? The previous owner insisted that he had been to the Isle of Man and back on it – but in what year? I'm guessing it was probably not long after the TT started – when was that by the way? I couldn't see how this bike could have been on a recent long journey, for when I bought it in 1995 for £2750, the throttle was pretty much seized – so how had the engine been worked?

The threads on both exhausts had long been stripped and the downpipes were held to the head with bits of wire. In fact, the exhausts were dangling down and loose and I couldn't understand how the bike could be kicked off in that state. So yes, as you say, on closer inspection – and after parting with the cash – I soon realised that the bike was a lot worse than I initially thought. I realised that everything needed attention.

I knew that the seat had had it, so that ➧



The offending bits of wire that held the down pipes in place have been binned. Note the well rusted battery box. The front and rear Isolastic suspension points can be clearly seen



The useless head having no threads to hold the down pipes in place. Tony doesn't realise yet that there has been no oil in the gearbox for some time. The old black rubber crankcase breather tube is seen venting from the top of the case into the oil tank, where it gives some positive pressure to the oil



The frame has had the ultimate treatment of powder coat and two pack paint. The front light holders (shrouds) are stainless steel. These had been bent and required careful straightening



The twin parallel pinstripes and Norton Logo on the side of the fuel tank make this no simple spray job – it's a scalpel job on the slim masking tape at the corners. The Norton decals from Norvil are the sticky backed variety



The cradle joins the engine to the gearbox and helps hold both in place. It has been painted and is ready to go back in place



Pazon ignition system for Norton engines

would have to be replaced. I was prepared for that, but I didn't realise the bike had been fitted with the wrong clocks – so they would have to be sourced and replaced and the correct clocks aren't cheap.

I found suitable ones at the Stafford show and had them restored by Popples, who are experts with motorcycle clock repairs.

The Isolastic suspension was completely shot, in fact it was so far gone that the whole engine rocked alarmingly from side to side. And it didn't take long either to come to the conclusion that the engine needed a complete strip down. This was where I started to part with a lot of money (at this point Tony shows me a thick wad of receipts) for completely new parts. But again, I won't complain because I could see the finished bike in my mind's eye.

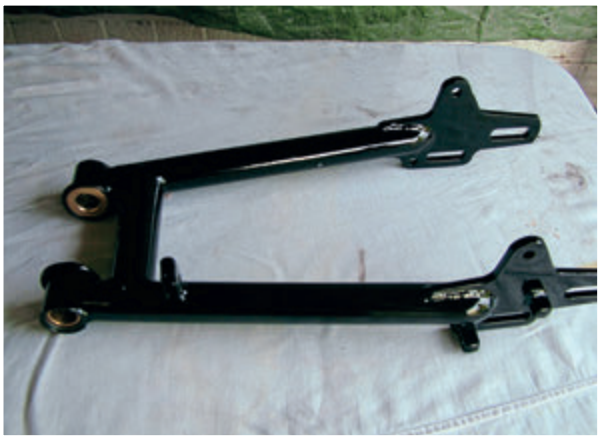
CBG: I reckon that every good restorer needs to look at his purchase in this light don't you?

Tony: You're right. You have to have a vision of a perfectly finished bike, to see right past the rust, worn paint and faulty mechanics. I won't go into the complete list as it is extensive, but it included a new head, all new bearings, mudguards, gearbox kit and master cylinders.

With the Commando engine, Norton was pushing a design to its limits as far as power was concerned. When the Combat engine came out in 1972, Norton were in big trouble, for they had many new bikes returned for repair with wrecked main end bearings and broken crankcases – the big end bearing took the strain. They knew that the design had been pushed to the extreme and had the good sense to have the crankcases strengthened with extra



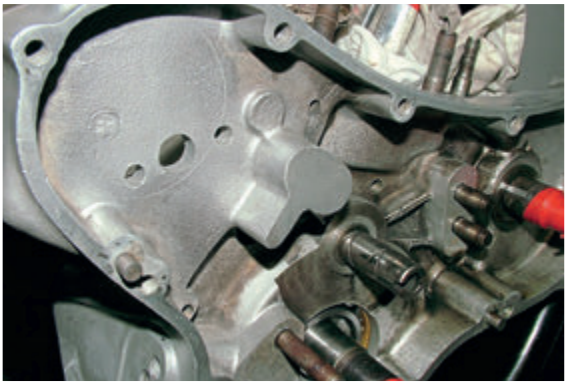
Norvil will reproduce the VIN plate for you, which helps authentically finish the bike off



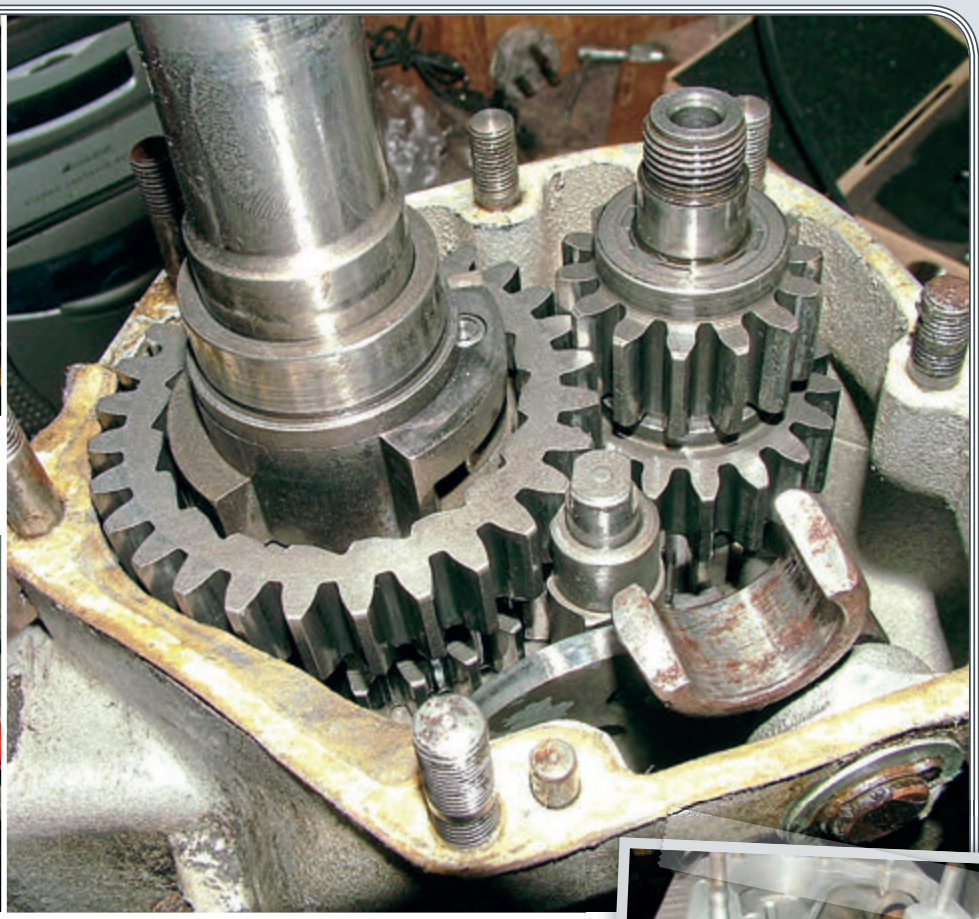
The swing arm has had new bushes fitted (and O ring) and is also now painted and ready to go back in the frame. Tony fitted a nipple at the end of the swing arm so that oil could be flooded into the bushes. Some say that only SAE 140 will do, but maybe they are being a bit too picky?



Respoked wheels courtesy of Central Wheels – Birmingham, and restored standard rear hub. These were the first tyres (Avon Runners) to be fitted by Tony which proved skittish; so were swapped for Road Riders



Inside the Norton timing case. At the bottom of the picture you can just make out the brass cage of the 'Superblend' bearing. The larger hole at the top left is the modified breather hole, which relieved a lot of the crankcase pressure in the later engines



Above: The gears and selectors. The main shaft had been turned 'blue' by running it with no oil, but when measured and fitted with new bearings it proved okay

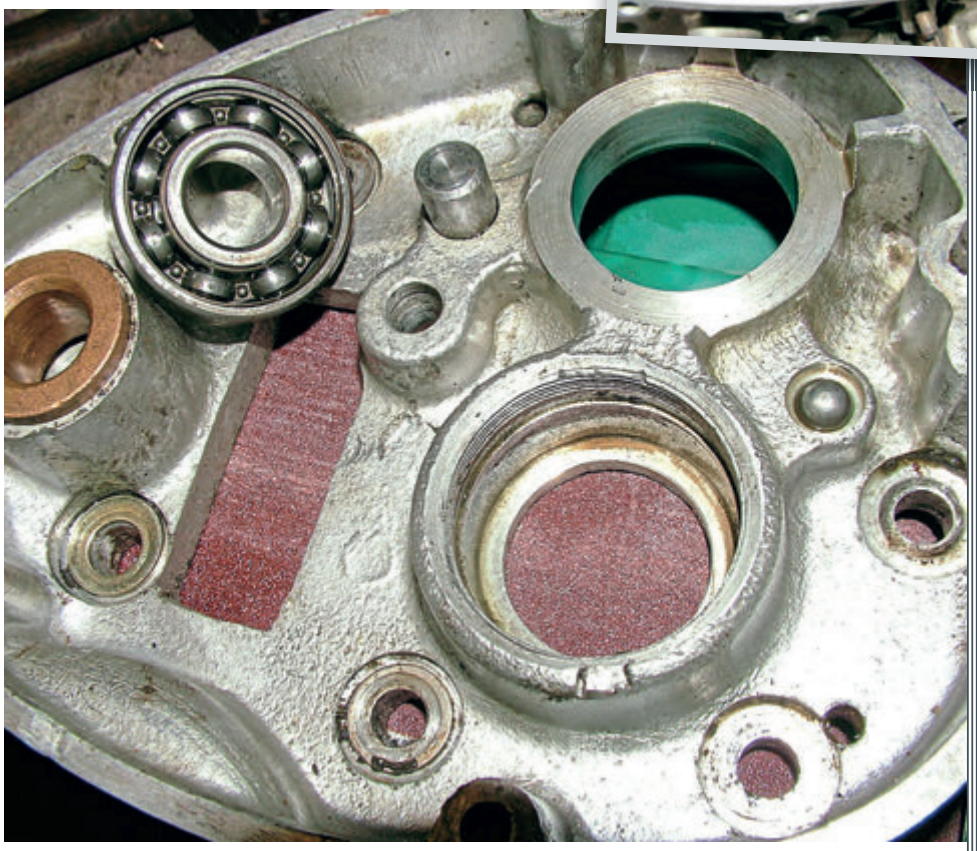


Right: This photo of the inside of the crankcase shows the added webbing to the casting. It was necessary to contain the increase in power of the later engines

webbing internally. Unfortunately this hadn't been enough. The Combat engine had been given higher compression due to a lowering of the head, plus high lift cams. I could see that the aluminium head was scrap as soon as it came off. There were broken fins; the exhaust ports were stripped, and the valve guides rattled around. Probably the biggest mistake I first made was to have this head repaired. And then as soon as it was finished, and I had paid out about £500, Les Emery at Norton specialists, Norvil, showed me a brand new gas flowed head. I stood there in a kind of disbelief, but instantly knew that I had to have that new head, because essentially I wanted to have the best bike possible.

I don't have a money tree in my garden – I wish I had, but I started this project with the desire not to scrimp. I can't see the point of doing a job if you're not going to do your very best, and produce the best. The new cylinder heads were over a grand and I hadn't stripped the rest of the engine. Nevermind.

When I got the rest of the engine out of the frame and separated the crankcases I was horrified to find that one small piece of the inner case had previously snapped off and been put back in place with superglue, or something like it, that must be some kind of record. I had the cases repaired – properly – with TIG welding at Harthills in Bilston. ➧



End case of the gearbox, a new ball bearing race is about to be pressed into its seat. Some restorers like to put the case in the oven and the bearing in the fridge – others heat the case – carefully with a blow torch. Whatever method you prefer, the bearing has to be pressed down into its seat squarely, and all the way home

CBG: You mentioned changing the bearings? It seems that a whole mythology arose surrounding the new bearings?

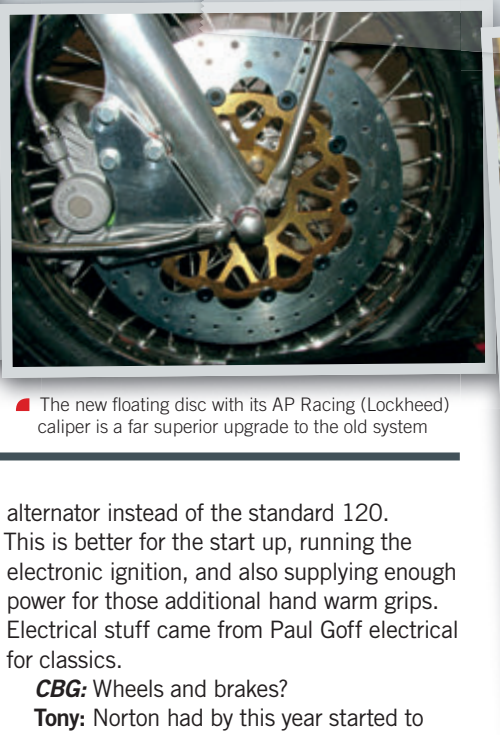
Tony: Norton developed and started to use main end bearings that had the noble title of 'Superblend'. This bearing was indeed superior to the original roller bearings with the steel cage. For instance, it had a brass centre section that the redesigned rollers ran in. The bearing was called a barrel bearing – to differentiate it from the ordinary bearings. And then – as rumours have their start, the story about this bearing grew, morphed, and got passed around that the rollers had a very fine barrel shape – by where they were not parallel in their cross section, but were slightly convex near the centre of each roller.

There has been a lot of internet chatter regarding this topic, but we have recently discovered that there is no truth at all to this tale. To prove the matter once and for all, there is an elegant little video on YouTube that shows one of the rollers being measured by an extremely sensitive instrument attached to a monitor display – and the rollers are like all other rollers – parallel along their length but with a small radius at each end to make it easier to slide the inner race into the outer race once the two parts have been fitted to the crank and its case.

Just as a matter of interest, 'superblends' are also being fitted to Triumphs and probably other engines that require a superior bearing – oh and there is one in the gearbox of the Norton – well at least in mine. A worn Commando gearbox can have the irritating habit of dropping back into gear after it has been placed into neutral – new bearings put an end to that little niggle.



Many gearboxes – like this Norton, have a spring and rounded locater to ensure that each gear locks into place



The new floating disc with its AP Racing (Lockheed) caliper is a far superior upgrade to the old system

Finally, I have a very nice picture of the gearbox main shaft as it has a blued finish; whoever ran the bike last didn't bother to put any oil in it – so you can imagine how hot it got. Nuff said about bearings!

CBG: You decided to fit a primary belt rather than keep the chain drive?

Tony: The belt drive conversion is not cheap, because the belt alone is pretty expensive, and you also have to change the drive pulley as well as the clutch outer basket. There are two advantages though. Firstly, the drive doesn't need to be oiled as per the chain version and also it is much quieter. However, you have to make sure that the drive and clutch line up perfectly. A chain will tolerate being out of line a few degrees, but a belt will not, so you have to spend a bit of time aligning the gearbox perfectly with the drive.

CBG: Electronics and ignition?

Tony: Pazon is the popular conversion for the Commando, and I fitted a 200 watt alternator instead of the standard 120. This is better for the start up, running the electronic ignition, and also supplying enough power for those additional hand warm grips. Electrical stuff came from Paul Goff electrical for classics.

CBG: Wheels and brakes?

Tony: Norton had by this year started to fit a single disc and caliper arrangement, but it wasn't an attractive item, nor was it an effective stopper, so I opted for the later 13in disc. This isn't a cheap alternative, in fact it comes out at around £1000, but you can't put a price on safety can you, and with this brake it's a one-finger job. With the back brake, everyone in our club has had their drum brakes lined with high friction linings, this is done locally by Industrial Linings. They take your brake shoes and fit a superior woven lining.

CBG: Now, I know that you like to do as many of the jobs as possible yourself, and one of those is painting. But, talking to some of your bike club colleagues, I hear that some of you go a tad over the top with your frame coatings?



A properly sorted Norton engine and gearbox. A stainless air filter has replaced the original black steel one. Optional bronzed exhaust fittings do add a stylish touch to the front of the head



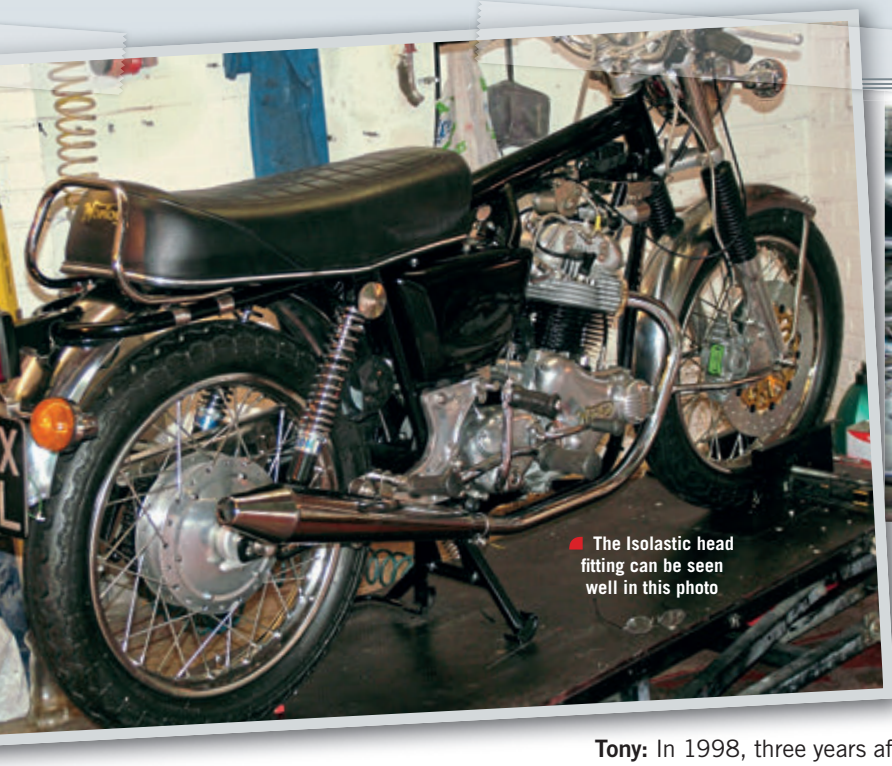
Return and feed oil lines must be made secure at both ends. An inline oil filter has been fitted (underneath) Note the stainless steel gear box adjuster



Left: Clocks and headlight now in place. Note that only green dot faces were used by Norton; supplied and fitted by Poples

Below: After three long years, the bike is coming together. Tony made his own stainless footrests as a milling exercise – he does get a bit carried away with his stainless fittings.





The Isolastic head fitting can be seen well in this photo



Above: A brand new genuine Norton seat has been fitted – but will it do for the man of perfection?

Right: An NGK plug showing good running colours. The outer ring (electrode) should be black – but not sooty; while the inner ceramic core around the central electrode should be brown to straw in colour.

Tony: I like to have the frame and swing arm powder coated, but then I flat that off with wet or dry and finish it with two pack spray paint (Lechler paint). That way, you get an excellent finish that will last forever. I know that some will say that this is a bit over the top, but again it's a job I don't want to do twice.

TEETHING PROBLEMS

CBG: Tell us a couple of the problems you had to get the bike right once it was all finished.

Tony: In 1998, three years after I started the project, I had to have a year off due to illness. The bike was painted and ready to go, and Indeed for ten miles or so it would run great – and had a lovely tickover. But as soon as the engine was well and truly hot, it would start to run rough – really rough.

I couldn't understand what on earth was going on, because essentially everything was new. But you go through this mental check sheet. For instance, the head and valves were new. The timing was right, both with the valves and with the ignition. So then you ask yourself if it's the carburettors – because they are usually the second thing to check after you know you have a spark.

The Amals were brand new, but I bought a second set – as you do – no difference. I had the correct Champion spark plugs N7s, so what was it? And don't forget, at this point I had spent over £10,000 on what was essentially a new bike.

I took the plugs out lots of times and had a look and bought some more – lots more – N7 plugs. I must have gone through many sets of plugs, but after running the engine

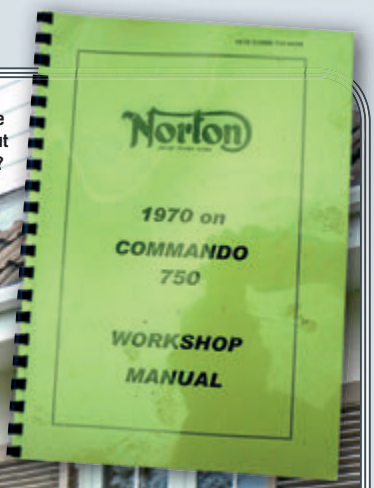


With those upswept megas, the 750 Norton Commando really is a beautiful machine – a classic by any standard



Tony Clements and his machine. Note the stepped seat by Leighton's of Birmingham

What would we do without them eh?



for a short while, the rough running would always come back.

When I looked at the plugs, they were black on the outside and black on the inner electrode, so I did the logical thing, and leaned off the mixture as much as possible – this only made things worse. One day, my son – who happened to be following me said 'I can smell unburnt fuel coming out of the exhausts' and it was at this point that I was really discouraged and ready to give up.

Some time later, I mentioned the problem to another friend who also had a Commando; and he had the remedy. 'You know how to solve that problem? Put some Japanese NGK plugs in. The problem with the Champions is that they don't always run hot enough – especially if you're not giving the engine a lot of work to do at high revs.'

Could something that simple solve the problem? I put the correct NGK plugs in and it was a different engine; smooth no matter how long the ride, and with a good and steady tickover – I can't tell you how much better I felt.

I quickly discovered when I went for a ride how powerful the Commando is in its acceleration, and I found myself sliding along the bench style seat and having to grip the bars tightly. So I went along to Leighton's, an old established seat firm in Birmingham and got them to make me a stepped seat – much better. The other thing that made the bike so much better to ride was changing the Avon Road Runners for Road Riders, and at last, long last, I had the bike I had dreamed of. CBG



A close look at the Norton rider's controls.



An air horn on both sides helps to keep the bike balanced! And that stepped seat almost turns it into a café racer, such was the original styling

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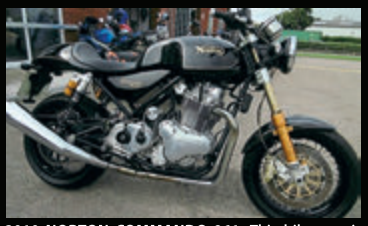
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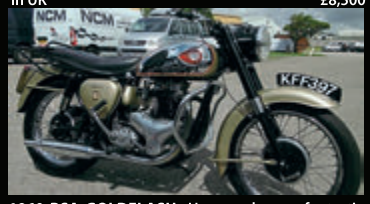
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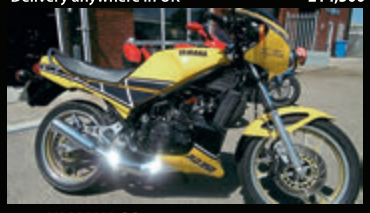
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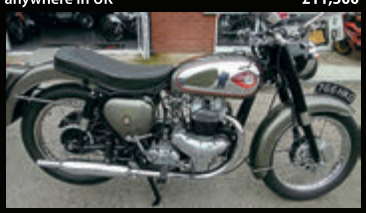


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ARIEL VHA 500 comp special, Maz forks, Suzuki wheels, HT type gearbox, AMC frame and clutch, no V5, not used, £2750 Tel. 01757 706448 North Yorks



BMW R1100RT 1996, 46,000 miles, good condition for year, full MoT, ABS, BMW luggage, charging socket etc, £2100 Tel. 07960 715045 Suffolk



BMW R60/6 first reg 1976, not restored, but in good condition, several new parts, everything works, regularly serviced and maintained, MoT Nov 2017, £2500 ono Tel. 01609 881616 North Yorkshire



BSA A50 1962, 500cc, nice looking bike that rides well, vgc, MoT April 2018, owned six years, £4500 ono Tel. 02392 599905 Hants



BSA BANTAM 1971, model B175, good condition, nice reliable ride, electronic ignition, some spares, tools & instruction book, MoT March 2018, £1500 ovno Tel. 01354 655236 Cambs



BSA C12 1956 model, plus some spares eg barrels, cylinder head, pistons etc, many new parts fitted, gearbox needs a little attention but works okay, £2600 ono Tel. 01803 854400 Brixham



BSA GOLD STAR 1955, 350cc, totally renovated to an excellent standard, offers over £15,000 considered Tel. 01526 353453; 07922 544786 Lincs



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BSA LIGHTNING 1970, restored and immaculate, perfect genuine tank and side panels both chrome & paint, no dents, all matching genuine numbers, £5500 ono Tel. 01946 728053 Cumbria



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1927 Douglas EW 350cc.....£10,500



1931 Excelsior 98cc..... £2,000



1961 Panther 120 650cc..... £6,500



1931 Royal Enfield GL 350cc £9,000



1927 Sunbeam 350cc £9,250



1931 Sunbeam 9 500cc £9,250



1955 Velocette MAC 350cc £6,350



1964 Velocette Vogue 200cc.....£3,250

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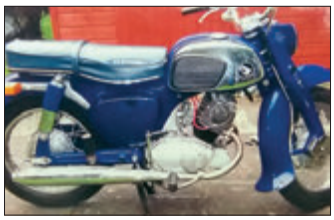
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HONDA C92 BENLY 1964, vgc with matching numbers, only 21,000 miles, new tyres, wheels and battery, £3275 ono Tel. 07709 015433 Northern Ireland



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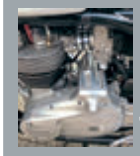
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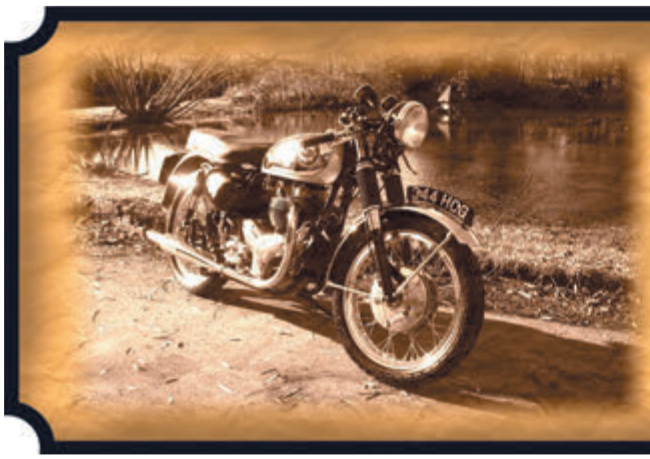
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TRIUMPH T140 1980, matching numbers, four previous owners, recently covered over 200 miles since rebuild, runs fine, vgc, MoT, £6000 Tel. 07931 975223 West Midlands



TRIUMPH T20 1962, 19,968 miles from new, no MoT bike has not been used but is a runner, matching numbers, engine restored by Bob Gibbs, £3000 Tel. Jim 07891 336045 Portsmouth



TRIUMPH T20 Tiger Cub, 1961, MoT May 2018, Mikuni carb conversion, good tyres, Hagon shocks, 13,000 miles, smart bike, £2750 or may p/x Tel. 01328 700711 Norfolk



TRIUMPH T90 1964, stunning restored prize winner, 12V & EI conversions Ethanol proofed, easy starter with long MoT, £4250 Tel. Phil 07889 992117 Lancs



TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 1981, 650cc, very good condition, 24,000 miles, lots of new parts, £3250 Tel. 07879 772788 Lancs



TRIUMPH TR25W Trophy BSA B25 Starfire Trail roadbike, twin-shock, green lane project, frame (TR25W, 1969?) & S/A, petrol tank Tel. 07570 110003 Derbyshire



TRIUMPH TROPHY T100C April 1970, full nut and bolt, restoration no expense spared only three in the UK, 6068 miles only, £9500 ovno Tel. 01189 734072 Berkshire



TRIUMPH TR6 650 Trophy, rare model r/h gear change, five speed, 500 miles since rebuild, MoT, £5400 Tel. 07740 796452 Warwickshire



TRIUMPH TR6 TIGER 1971, US spec reported, 1991, excellent condition, good to ride, MoT February 2018. Tel. Dave 07814 104934 Cardiff



TRIUMPH TIGER CUB nice bike in good condition, 1964, matching engine and frame number, £2950 Tel. 01214 431638 Birmingham



TRIUMPH SPEEDTWIN 5T 1949, sprung hub model, very original, correct numbers, VMCC cert, vgc, full history, perfect mechanical order, £7950 Tel. 07732 381560 Gwent



TRIUMPH T20 Tiger Cub, 1961, MoT May 2018, Mikuni carb conversion, good tyres, Hagon shocks, 13k miles, smart bike, £2750 or may p/x Tel. 01328 700711 Norfolk



TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 1997, 15,000 miles only, all MoT's & various service bills recently spent £600, tyres, brakes etc, runs fantastic, good condition, £2950 Tel. Bob 07768 715329 Surrey



VELOCETTE KSS 1939, good condition, previously restored in 2001, current owner past 14 years, full history offers around £12,500 only serious interest Tel. 07763 598304 North Yorkshire



VELOCETTE MAC 350cc, 1958, very good condition, runs & rides well, previous restoration, still in excellent condition, £5750 Tel. 01243 670258; 07771 632749 West Sussex



VELOCETTE LE MK 3, extensive overhaul, 1000s spent engine, new carb part rewire fitted, indicators full fairing, well sorted tidy bike, ride or show, MoT, £2450 Tel. 01248 681466 Conwy



VELOREX 560 SIDECAR sidecar, refurbished in grey primer paint so add any colour of your choice, suits classic and modern bikes, 200cc onwards, £650 Tel. 07427 149706



YAMAHA RD250 1976, very good condition, 22,000 miles on clock, £4450 Tel. 07982 420737 Derbyshire

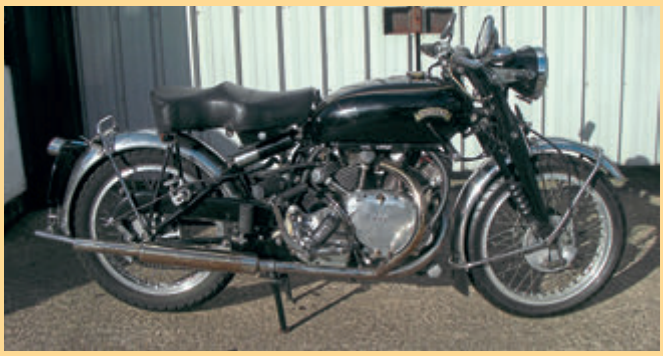


YAMAHA XS650 Special 2, 1981, reg US import, 27,000 miles, sound motor, new chain, sprockets and battery, ride or refurbish, tatty front fender, new MoT, £1150 Tel. 01524 62117 Lancs

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AJS 250 Model 14, been used this summer, needs paint, chrome, tlc, V5C, frame headstock out of alignment, hence price of £600. Tel. 07958 795335. Teesside.

BSA A10 above average condition, runs very well, black & chrome with siamese exhaust, Gold Star pipe, full years MoT, can deliver locally, £7000. Tel. 07827 798969. Essex.

BSA BANTAMS 1959, D7, black, complete oily rag condition, runner. 1970, B175 blue, complete clean condition, runner, £2000 for both. Tel. 07813 458452. Notts.

BSA M20 1953 restored to a useable condition, tax/MoT exempt ready to ride away and use or finish of restoring, mechanically sound needs cosmeticly finishing for showing, new wheels, spokes, tyres, dynamo, magneto is good I have put electronic ignition on but could easily be returned to points with the right parts . Tel. 07912 065248. Cheshire.

BULTACO SHERPA 250cc, 1978, (Model 198B) fully rebuilt with lots of new parts fitted ready to trial, bike in very good condition, bike located in Fife Scotland, £2000. Tel. Ian 01337 258515; 07776 010601.

HARLEY/AERMACCHI 250SX 1975, for spares or repair, largely complete spare frame and fork legs included, no paperwork, £650. Tel. 01244 880958. Chester.

HONDA NTV700 1990, red, excellent condition for the year, bike as been tuned to a small degree to improve the performance of the machine, polished ports inlet and exhaust rebored to 700cc race exhaust, upside down Ohlin forks, triple calliper front brakes, single race seat, nice paint scheme, the machine as been checked from front to back and has had a service, excellent tyres, new brake pads front and rear. Tel. 07971 651258. Mid Glamorgan.

HONDA REVERE NTV600 1989, dismantled, ready for restoration, powder coated frame, some new and replacement parts, new tyres etc, £900. Tel. 01938 553083. Powys.

HONDA VT500E 1986, starts and runs well, slight dent on left of tank otherwise in very good condition, £600. Tel. Steve 01254 607767. Lancs.

MV AGUSTA 125 1952, tax, MoT exempt, concours condition, V5 reg, £5100. Tel. 07774 253129. Surrey.

NORTON CLASSIC No 28, as featured in Classic Bike Guide January 2017, £12,500. Tel. 07715 579019. Perthshire.

ROYAL ENFIELD 350 Bullet, 1962, bought bike three years ago with the intentions of using it, it has been in my garage from the day I purchased, the bike is in excellent condition as only done mileage back and forth for MoT 30 miles on the clock genuine, MoT January 2018, £1850. Tel. 07971 651258. Mid Glamorgan.

SUZUKI GS500F 11,000 miles only, very good condition, refurbished swingarm, runs great, no MoT but will easily pass, £1100. Tel. 02083 114230. London.

SUZUKI RE5 1975, dismantled, new rotor housing, Suzuki manual, £2000. Tel. 07986 772793. Lancs.

TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE Trident T100SS wanted buy private enthusiast for project, anything considered, complete, runner, crashed or abandoned project, cash collect. Tel. Tony 01932 563982. Surrey.

TRIUMPH T100 1967, TLSFB heavy duty cable new front rim new Siamese exhaust + original remote oil filter new Pazon ignition & battery, MoT, August 2018 historic tax (free!) clean standard condition, £4500. Tel. 01474 746854; 07789 260740. Kent.

TRIUMPH T100C (US spec) totaly rebuilt, refurbished, as new, 600 miles, hardly run in, wants new home with caring owner, asking £4500, this is a 1970 bike. Tel. 01162 367765. Leicestershire.

TRIUMPH T595 24,000 miles, major service done, new chain & sprockets handle bar, conversion few cracks in fairing, good reliable bike, £1500 ono. Tel. 01594 823940. Gloucestershire.

TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 1981, 650cc, very good condition, 24,000 miles, lots of new parts, £3250. Tel. 07879 772788. Lancs.

TRIUMPH TIGER CUB 1956/57 project matching numbers, lots of new parts, £1100. Tel. 07544 397724. Cheshire.

YAMAHA XJ600 motorcycle a future classic, this machine as been checked front to back all necessary lubrication as been carried out, oil and filter change, new air filter, new battery, new clutch cable and lever, seat recovered, tyres are all good, first to see will buy, £1095. Tel. 07971 651258. Mid Glamorgan.

Parts For Sale

BMW R100 USED SPARES: regulator/rectifier from 1990 machine, (Telefunken 12141244477), £10, plus good throttle cable, £5, postage £3. Also as new BMW 'R' Series Haynes manual, £10. Tel. Richard 01842 819969. Norfolk.

BMW R850R sports exhaust by Black Widow Performance Systems, less than 1000 miles, taken off my bike when sold, cost over £200, £130. Tel. 01482 643946. East Yorkshire.

BSA A10 ENGINE complete with frame, forks, wheels, oil tank, as much as possible for build for chop. Tel. 07857 926724. Lancs.

CAFE RACER SILENCERS pair tulip upswept, pair short reverse cone mega, pair replica Dunstall retro, used once only £50 per pair. Tel. 01646 601773. Pembrokeshire.

HONDA CB400T DREAM box of engine parts too many to itemise £50. Tel. 07904 520394. Essex.

DUCATI 400SS SPARES engine needs top cylinder, £350. NS400 cylinders tuned, not DIY job, two exhaust gutted, one standard, for leg, £500. Tel. 07816 043480. Staffs.

G9 CRANKCASES 1955, very good, £75. B25 crank assembly, new alloy rod fitted, £150. Two C15 engine units one complete, other part complete. Tel. 01262 488672. East Yorkshire.

HARLEY BUDDY SEAT its original but will need restoration, last used in the eighties on a Panhead! Could post but would prefer the buyer collects. Tel. 07798 866071. Middx.

HONDA CB750 SOHC kickstart, 1969 onwards, £25. Tel. 07979 949654. Cheshire.

HONDA TL125 engine, £110. Big bore piston and barrel kit, £70. Seat, £25. Tel. 01455 841691. Leics.

IKON BASIX rear shocks to fit Hinckley Bonneville SE with 17" cast wheels, part number 76-3043, massive improvement over standard shocks, unmarked, perfect condition. Tel. Tom 01914 880694. Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

KNOWLEDGE OF BMW K75S? anyone in the Sussex area with a good knowledge of BMW K75s? My otherwise reliable machine has developed an electrical problem and a misfire on the over-run, which the local garages do not have the immediate knowledge to fix. Any help welcome! Tel. 07817 943154. West Sussex.

NORTON DOMMIE fr/brake plate c/w shoes, £30. Ditto Bar, £15. Lucas light/ignition switch PLC 5, £15. Villiers carb V508C, £10. Commando r/foot rests, £10 pair. Clutch tool, £7. Roadster grab rail. Tel. 01772 783774. Lancs.

PIATTI ENGINE cica 1959 from Francis-Barnett trials bike, 250cc, 95% complete, spares, repair, phone for further details, £350 ono. Tel. 01952 223087. Shropshire.

SMITHS SPEEDO DRIVE no BG 5115/607 14.9 ratio No 5, £15. Reliant Robin/Kitten 100mph speedos x 3, Classic Mechanics 90+ (some early). Tel. 01772 783774. Lancs.

SUZUKI TS/TC185 PARTS wanted for early models upto 1976, complete/incomplete bikes considered or running/non running. Tel. 01305 826670.

TRIBSA T110 ENGINE in A7 frame, Morgo 750cc, too much to list, please call for details, £7995 ovno. Tel. 01132 526552. West Yorks.

TRIUMPH PRE UNIT DYNAMO big bearing type 750cc motor complete, fitted with Lucas K2FC manual magneto, has Triumph Nicasiled alloy barrels with ten stud splayed head, Morgo gear pump fitted, can supply carbs if I get a good price for the lot. Tel. 07779 742629. Cornwall.

TRIUMPH SPORTS CUB 1961, engine/transmission, unit only, totally rebuilt by Meriden off-road, unused since, R-cam, 9.1 piston, £1750 ovno. Tel. 07961 948279. Somerset.

Wanted

ANY MAKE OR SIZE classic motorcycle wanted in any condition from a basket case to one in nice condition, cash waiting. Tel. 07811 189755. Staffs.

ANY MOTORCYCLE or moped projects, any condition or age, looking for a project for me and my young boy trying to get him off the computer must be near Cornwall, Exeter, Devon, can traval a little bit if the old van makes it. Tel. 01872 241852; 07422 516869. Cornwall.

ARIEL RED HUNTER wanted either NH or VH350 or 500cc, any condition considered but should be complete, South West Area. Tel. 07964 514984. Somerset.

ARMY MOTORCYCLE WANTED any condition, anything considered, eg BSA WDM20, WDB40, BMW, Flying Flea, G3L, Triumph TRW, Harley WLA, Welbike, Paratroop bicycle, Willys Jeep etc, will travel your price paid. Tel. 07538 696157. Leics.

CYCLEMOTOR, BROCKHOUSE, CORGI autocycle or vintage moped wanted, either runner or restoration project, anything considered, will travel. Tel. 07983 832076. Staffordshire.

DMW LEDA front wheel nuts for Earles forks, top hat type £20. Tel. 07393 584173 call evenings. Worcester.

KAWASAKI Z650 Z750 Ltd, wanted, anything considered, project or done, private buyer cash waiting. Tel. 07565 712371. Stourbridge.

LOOKING FOR A SET of 10 stud barrels for my Bonnie T140, want standard or plus 10s need to be reasonably cheap as I have over spent on this bike and I will never get it back although the bike won't be sold, but it's driving me crazy. Tel. 01628 668799. Bucks.

LUCAS 3ET COILS wanted as fitted to energy transfer ignition. Tel. 01933 355796. Northants.

MAGNETO BOSCH ZE1 wanted dead or alive. Tel. 01543 262466. Staffs.

OLD LAMBRETTA PROJECT scooter wanted for a restoration project, if anybody has anything please contact me. Tel. 07531 320948. Isle of Wight.

PETROL TANK WANTED trials, suitable for Matchless G3L trials bike, any condition, alloy prefered, but any considered. Tel. 01978 842668. Clwyd.

ROYAL ENFIELD 350 project required for winter project, decent engine and frame together, no silly prices. Tel. 01524 733604. Lancs.

RUDGE 250 WANTED basket case project. Tel. 01978 842668. Clwyd.

WANTED NSU QUICKLY or just parts, also wanted cycle master winged wheel and Puch Maxi or any parts . Tel. 07790 168224. Warwickshire.

YAMAHA YDS3 complete seat or base only required, 1964-65. Tel. 01384 371386. West Midlands

RUDGE WANTED 250-500 (early thirties) model, project any condition, (bare bones) or goer, have collection of bikes may exchange. Tel. 01978 842668. Clwyd.

TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE T120, 1968-1969, reasonably priced. Tel. 07821 021162. Oxfordshire.

TRIUMPH TWIN WANTED in any condition, runner or project, any model considered from early rigid pre-unit to 750 unit oif (including 3TA/5TA), Triton or other non-standard bike ok, even a chopper, any spares welcome, will travel, your price paid. Tel. 07538 696157. Leics.

VINCENT COMET or Velocette Venom wanted as renovation project, anything considered with or without V5. Tel. 01748 811676; 07810 434147. Yorks.

WANTED AJS 1928 or 1929, K12 or M12 side valve 250cc cylinder head or a complete engine, can exchange a 500cc K9/M9 engine or other swaps like a vintage speedo vintage leather saddle etc, or good price paid, please help. Tel. Mike 01307 830318 and leave a message.

Miscellaneous

ACU TT BADGES 60s to 90, 33; 18 ACU TT programmes, 63 to 93; 24 TT Special Newspapers, 63 to 74; three LP TT Sound Stories, £100 the lot will split, buyer collects. Tel. 01964 204771. East Yorkshire.

CLASSIC BIKE MAGAZINES continuous run from issue 1 3/78 to issue 242 3/00, boxed up, need space, £100 buyer will have to collect. Tel. Alan 07733 113451. Southampton.

CLASSIC BIKE MAGAZINES: 100 copies approx, excellent condition, £10. Tel. 01285 861462. Glos.

HARD BOUND VOLUME of the first twelve issues of The Classic Bike magazines in perfect condition, offers invited. Barry Sheene autograph on plain white paper, offers invited. Tel. 01189 478362. Berks.

LADIES BLACK LEATHER motorcycle jeans, size 12, 27" inside leg, little used, £30. Tel. 01503 240732. Cornwall.

MATCHLESS OWNERS MANUAL 1953-69, clean, £17.50. Matchless, AJS post war singles and twins, restoration, Roy Bacon, Niton Publishing, mint, £25. Tel. 01403 732206. West Sussex.

MQP TRAVELLER JACKET XL black/red removable inner body warmer, hardly used, £35. Swift black trousers XL with leather seat and knees, never worn, £30. Tel. 01277 821691. Essex.

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TWO PAIRS BLACK LEATHERS JEANS for sale, pair Richa jeans, 34" waist, 32" long as new, £35. Pair 1 XS jeans, new unused, 36" waist, 32" long, £55. Tel. 01708 450968. Essex.

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Frank Westworth

Famous Last Words

The magic of show business... just like that

"I HAD ONE exactly like that." A stout fellow was staring in a critical manner at a Norton parked on a stand. A show stand, that is, not a centrestand, in case that's important. Accuracy in all things is my motto.

"Yeah, me too." It is always pleasant to reinforce camaraderie, even where none exists. Peace in our time and so forth.

"Mine was black." I nodded appreciatively. The bike on the stand was a delightful – if slightly improbable – shade of red. Just like mine... but not like my companionable observer's, plainly. He had more revelations in store. "Mine was a Bonneville." There is no answer to that. No polite answer. I feigned a profound interest in the red Norton, the one just like a Triumph, somehow, and gazed upon it. It was a little red Roadster, a Mk.3, just like the one I'd ridden for a very long time... only a lot more shiny and clean. Very clean.

A long-time friend joined me. "Your old Bendy, huh?" he laughed, as did I, irony being a fine thing best shared hot.

"I wish!" We laughed some more, as friends do. Then he shook his head at me.

"No, fool – it really is your old one." I cannot reveal what I replied to this, as we're peaceable family-friendly folk at *CBG*, but can suggest that it cast doubts upon his sanity, his eyesight and his heritage. And more. He laughed louder – there may have been a bar involved earlier in both our days – and towed me around to admire the bike's backside. The registration number was indeed strangely familiar. It was exactly the same as that on my own old Norton. Sobering rapidly, I perambulated, which is legal in the UK and in public, contemplating the machine in considerable detail. I had shared several miles with this handsome and very shiny indeed motorcycle. I'd spannered on it and even cleaned it occasionally, as well as passing many an idle hour admiring it, not all of them while awaiting the arrival of the man with the van to carry us home.

I recalled with some fondness the chunk of paint knocked from beneath that tank almost exactly a week after a new shiny paint job – the perils of a slipping spanner attempting to hammer-tighten an exhaust locking ring. Shock! The paint was perfect. How come the lovely deep-boom bean can silencers were no longer adorning those wobbly exhaust pipes? Replaced by clichéd and too-loud peashooters. The excellent Ikon rear shocks – with the black springs I'd insisted on when the rest of the bike had still been painted in its original black? Gone! Replaced by ubiquitous and... pause for breath... and chromed Hagons.

And the seriously mighty Norvil front brake? An anchor which would have slowed down an aircraft carrier from the ton (Okay, okay, aircraft carriers are ships and lack disc brakes, but I'm ranting here – okay?). Replaced by a pair – a pair! On a Norton! – of what appeared to be Triumph discs with AP racing calipers. How... strange.

I peered under the seat. This is also still legal but is best done in private. I pulled up the collars of my coat around my ears, the best to appear inconspicuous. On my old bike – which would be this shiny fake machine – the neat hinge which allows the seat to be raised in a civilised way and to be locked... the bracket for that hinge had been hacksawed off by a previous owner of no great skill, and the seat was held on by the alloy bobbins which were such a sweet styling statement on a Commando. This frame's bracket and its lug were present and as-original, but not as they'd been the last time that my own graceless derriere had graced the seat. Which was a different seat, of course. And the drooping rear seat loop? The loop droop caused either by carrying huge weights in a stupidly mounted top box or possibly by both rider and passenger being sumo wrestlers? That had gone. The bike had an entirely new frame.

This was, I understood quite suddenly, not my bike at all. It was a rebuilt impersonation of my bike. All of its history, its character and its charm, had been stripped off and probably sold on eBay. Restoring an old bike from non-working to working, from scruffbag horror to less scruff and less horror... they're fine and indeed noble pursuits. However, stripping away everything which worked fine thank you very much and simply turning a great bike into a shiny replica of a great bike...

I stared and stared. Observed that its mileage had decreased by 75% recently, somehow. Another Nortonista wandered close. "You're Frank, aren't you? Didn't you ride a Commando like this?"

"Not very like this." Sometimes honesty is the only policy. CBG

This frame's bracket and its lug were present and as-original, but not as they'd been the last time that my own graceless derriere had graced the seat. Which was a different seat of course.

Who is Frank Westworth?

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

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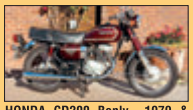

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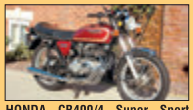

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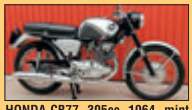

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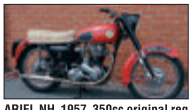

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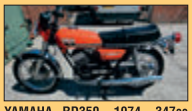
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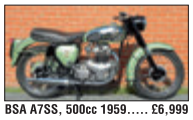

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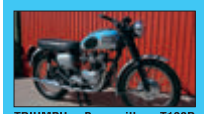

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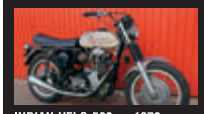

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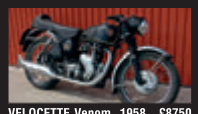

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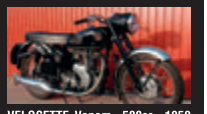

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