



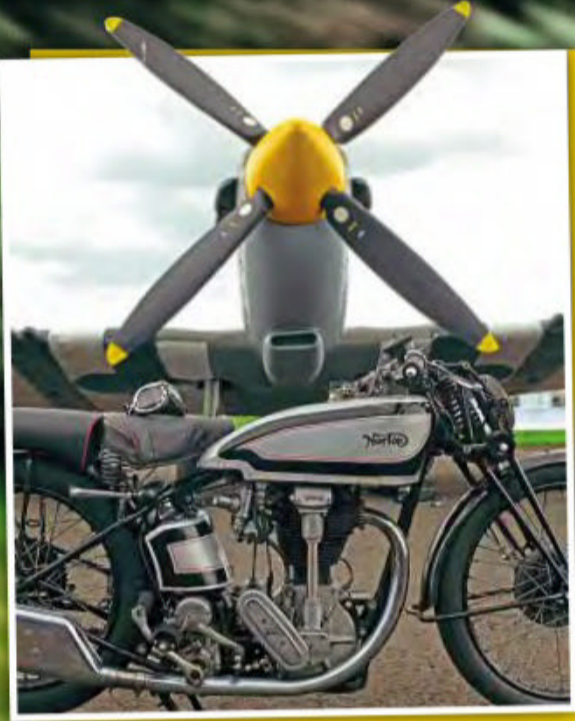
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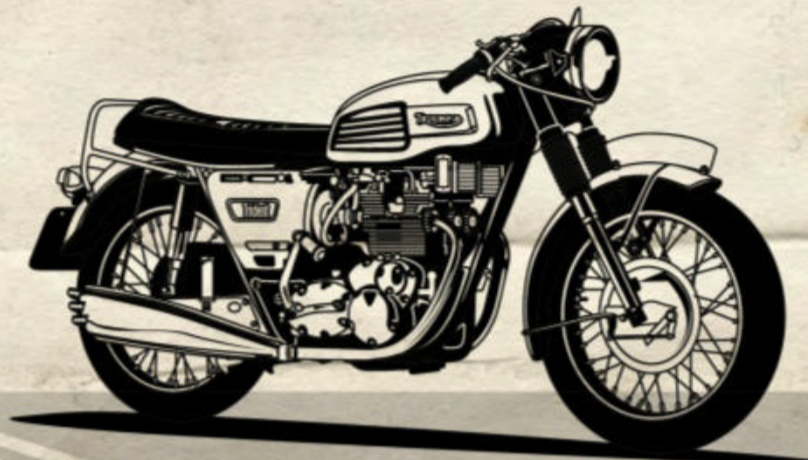
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Welcome



Old or new?

AT THE MOMENT I AM A LUCKY BOY AND have a varied concoction to ride. Royal Enfield have loaned me one of their new 650 Interceptors, which you can read about what it's like to live with on page 52. I've been enjoying the blend of 'hop on and go' of a new bike, with the 'that's a nice old machine; I used to have one' interaction with folks I come across. It's good to see the old name growing.

I POPPED IN TO SEE ANOTHER BRITISH manufacturing survivor recently, CCM. The factory, while small, was buzzing, with bikes everywhere, new models being assessed and a really positive feel to what is the oldest British bike manufacturer still in the UK. For a small player in the modern bike world, they really are punching high: it must be a constant battle being a small business in this large, corporate-led world. But the Spitfire and its derivatives are old-school, with light weight, a great single-cylinder engine and – get this – throttle cables!

And so from the new to the old. At the London Carole Nash Motorcycle Show it was plain to see that Triumph, Indian, Ducati et al were pushing their retro ranges, with the visitors looking favourably

towards the older-style bikes. So it was also great, when *Classic Bike Guide* was asked to get an interesting bike for the main stand. 'Something old and modified' was the theme, so my great friend Neville had the perfect bike, his 1100cc JAP side-valve engined Ariel WD. Complete with dirt, oil and grease adorning it, the 'Rough Inferior' really stood out from the shiny, shiny show bikes. The crowd loved it, but what was best was I had to ride it back to his on the Monday! Smooth, low but powerful, the JAP pops and bangs through town, but for an engine that started life powering a rotavator, it carburates beautifully. What a machine and I'd love to ride it more.

Another good friend needed some room in his shed while his Velo Venom (there's a buyer's guide for these great bikes on page 36) project takes shape, so to avoid damaging his Sunbeam, it now resides in my kitchen. The TT Model 90 is of 1931 vintage – the only year they were blessed with a chrome tank, but it's not run for years, there are a few foibles and the carb is flooding, so that's a nice toy to play with while the potatoes are boiling. I really can't wait to ride that, with its close gears, hand change and, its five-inch front brake...

Meanwhile, the B31 has been on off-road duty. I had planned to repaint the tank, but it's just too much fun to stay off! I even took my brother's Honda CG125 to MoT recently and I'd forgotten how much fun you can have on a tiddler – what is it about bikes? Any bikes?

So, with these gorgeous new bikes vying for attention over the old 'uns, who wins? Knowing you'll get somewhere without eau de la oil or having to fettle before, during or after a ride helps me to sway towards the new bikes – they require less mechanical knowledge, you don't need a workshop and they can even overtake. And starting is so much easier! But for me, when not in a rush, around the country, and being lucky enough to have the wherewithal to keep on top of them, I'll take the old 'uns mostly. "Nev, can I borrow the JAP again?"

Enjoy the weather if it lasts and be good.

Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com



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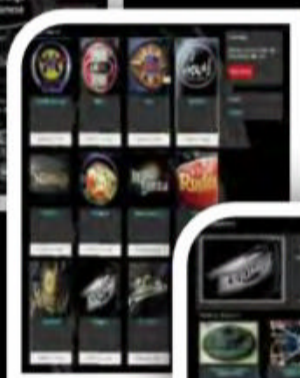
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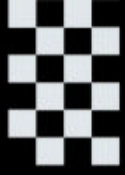
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■ Middleclass parenting at its best!

Oh, the shock – a father sitting on a motorbike, smoking, while his young son looks on. Nowadays, such behaviour could be seen as bad parenting; however, said gentleman is Graham Walker, who has just won the Lightweight TT race, and the young boy is one Graham Murray Walker.

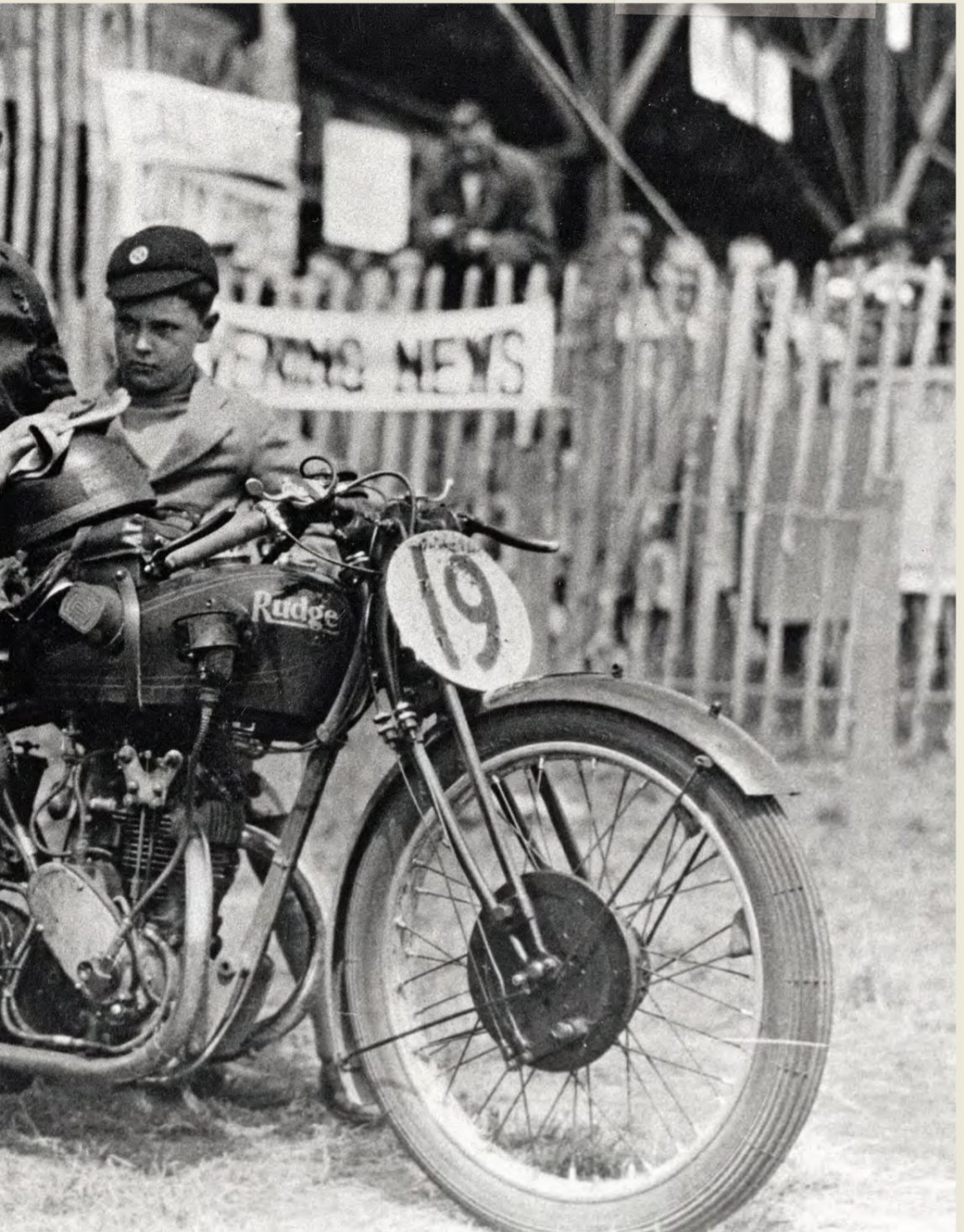
The year is 1931 and Graham Walker Snr has had a successful TT campaign for Rudge, winning the Lightweight race and coming fifth in both the Junior and Senior races. It was a strong year for Rudge against the might of Norton, though Ernie Nott, another Rudge-mounted rider, had led the Lightweight race by some margin until the final lap, when he crashed. Walker, Tyrell-Smith and Ted Mellors (on a New Imperial) passed Nott, who wilfully managed to nurse the Rudge back to finish a fine fourth.

Graham Walker raced Norton and Sunbeam bikes before competing on Rudges for four years at the TT and other races, including winning at the Ulster Grand Prix in 1928, the first time an average speed of over 80mph was recorded. He also raced trials at a high level for Sunbeam. Before racing, Walker had been a dispatch rider in the First World War and after he finished racing, he became editor of *Motor Cycling* magazine. He died in 1962.

Graham's influence rubbed off on junior. Murray Walker OBE, worked for Sunbeam, Rudge and Dunlop, before he became the definitive voice of motorcycle racing and then Formula 1 commentary. He was still involved in Formula 1 well into his 90s.

So this father and son have had a huge impact on many, many motorcycle and motorsport fans – Graham's parenting skills didn't turn out too badly, did they? **CBG**







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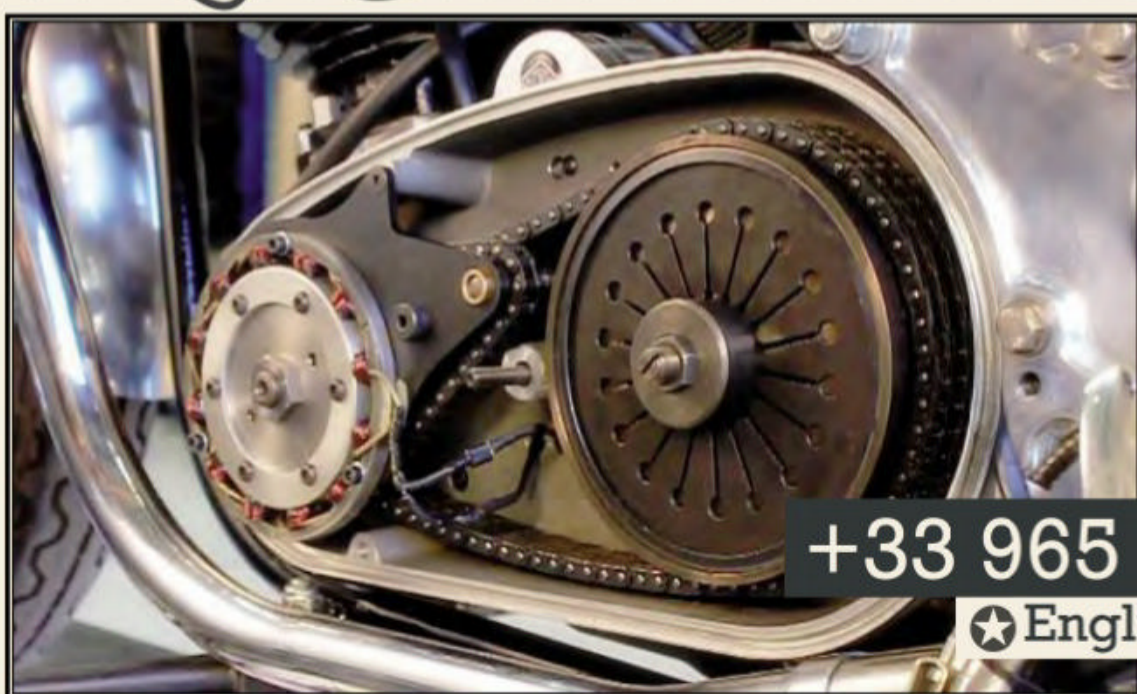
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Motorcycles

That matter

Vincent Grey Flash

The Vincent Grey Flash is one of the most iconic British competition machines from the 1950s. Rachael Clegg discovers that the Grey Flash – so recognisable for its chalky livery – lived up to its name in every way imaginable

AUGUST 1951: IT'S THE AUTO CYCLE UNION'S International Race Meeting at Thruxton circuit, Hampshire. The rain is lashing down, the sky is dark, spectators are sopping wet, but a certain teenager has baffled the crowds against all odds: John Surtees.

Despite the treacherous conditions at the Hampshire airfield circuit, Surtees has even beaten international motorcycle star Geoff Duke on some laps in the 1000cc race.

Surtees would, of course, go on to become one of the world's greatest motorsport racers ever – on two wheels and four – but in August 1951 he's a gangly teenage apprentice at Vincent on a fiver a week.

Surtees' machine is the newly-marketed Vincent Grey Flash, which is an apt moniker – it made its name by going very fast on this very grey day.

A report from that race, published in *Motor Cycle* on August 9, 1951 read: "The last event of the day, the final of the 1000cc event, brought no respite from the continuous downpour. John Surtees, on his Grey Flash Vincent, again distinguished himself. He appeared in first position on the first lap with Duke in fourth. By the third lap Duke was second, but it was another four laps before he could reach Surtees. However, Surtees would not let Duke get away and hung grimly on to his tail. Not until the last three laps could Duke make real daylight between his Norton and the Vincent."

The report continues: "Although some of the spectators had left before the end, a large crowd remained in the inclement weather for the prize-giving. In a short speech, Geoff Duke praised the remarkable riding of young John Surtees, who "made me ride so fast in the last race".

The report encapsulates the fact that – at least where short circuits were concerned – the Grey Flash and Surtees had made a huge impact. As Vintage Motorcycle Club's Vincent marque specialist Peter Green said: "Surtees really made his name on a Vincent Grey Flash and as such he and the machine are almost synonymous. He was an apprentice at Vincent and he built that particular Grey Flash by ▶







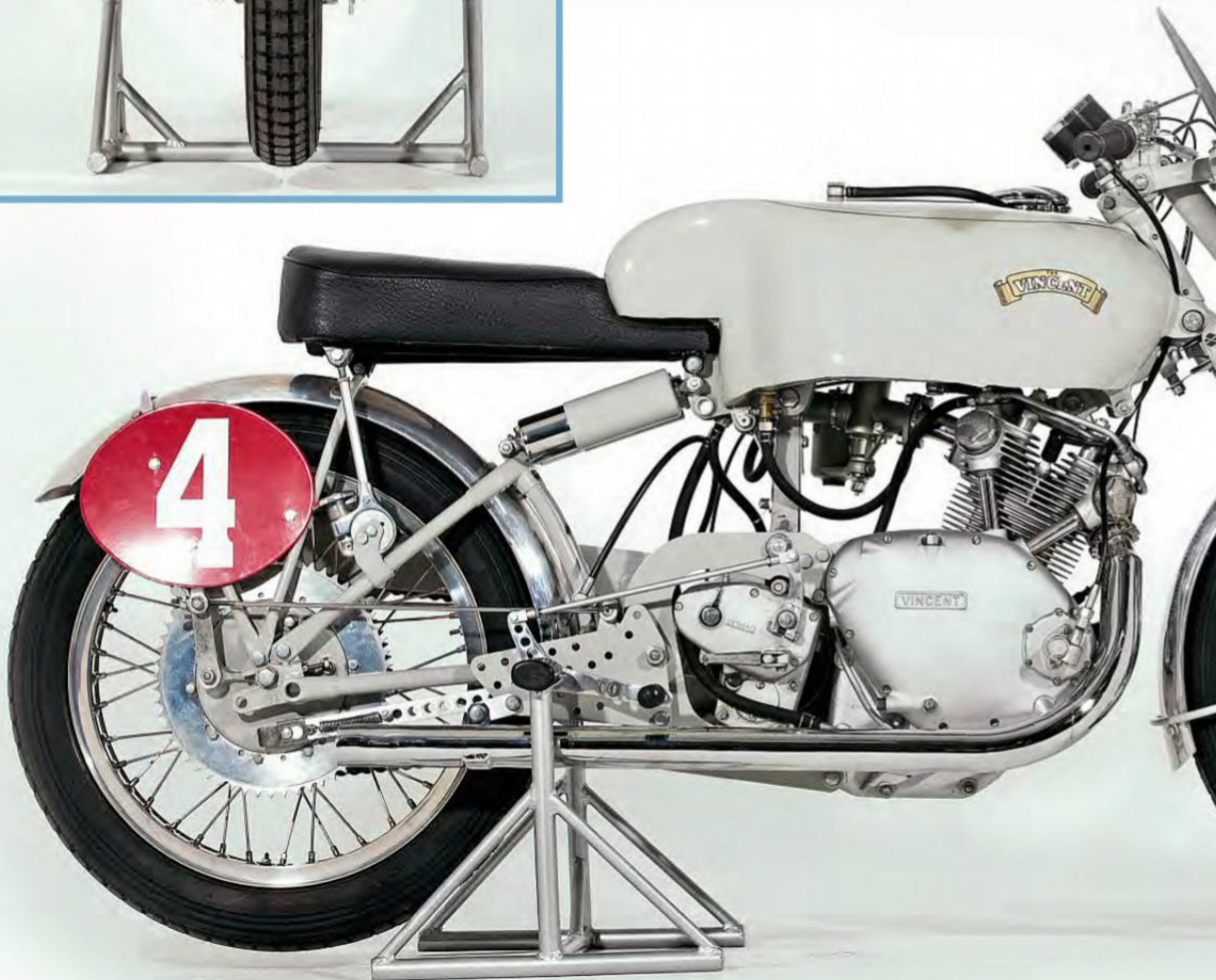
himself on the bench. The machine seemed to handle particularly well in the wet because its handling was very light and you could really make it go on a bend. The Grey Flash could also really 'hold' on to the road – much better than the Norton could. The Grey Flash was probably better on short circuits than longer circuits such as the Isle of Man TT.”

But then – according to Green – the Grey Flash was never designed to be an out-and-out race bike. “It had a high performance engine but really it was an upgraded Vincent Comet,” he said.

Indeed, the Grey Flash was a luxury version of the Phil Irving-designed Comet. *Motor Cycling* magazine described it as ‘a Comet produced to Black Lightning standards’. The Black Lightning, of course, is often dubbed as one of the first ‘superbikes’ – so much that it was the subject of Fairport Convention’s guitarist Richard Thompson’s hit Vincent Black Lightning. The Grey Flash, however, sat somewhat awkwardly between the Comet and the Black Lightning.

Nonetheless, Vincent had racing aspirations for the Grey Flash. The machine was listed as having three options: a machine that was stripped for racing at £349 5s; a road-ready machine at £368 6s and, for £381, a budding racer could buy a fully equipped Grey Flash ‘with all the extras necessary for stripping and preparing for racing’.

There were also some innovative features on the



Grey Flash, such as its lightweight chassis, which, like other Vincents, used the engine as a stressed member. The rear suspension set-up was also ahead of its time – arguably an antecedent to the monoshock system commonly used in 1970s Grand Prix machines.

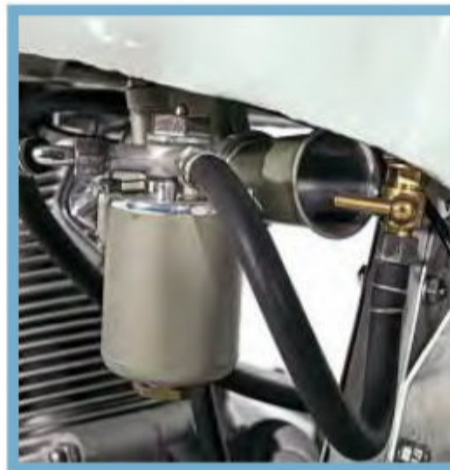
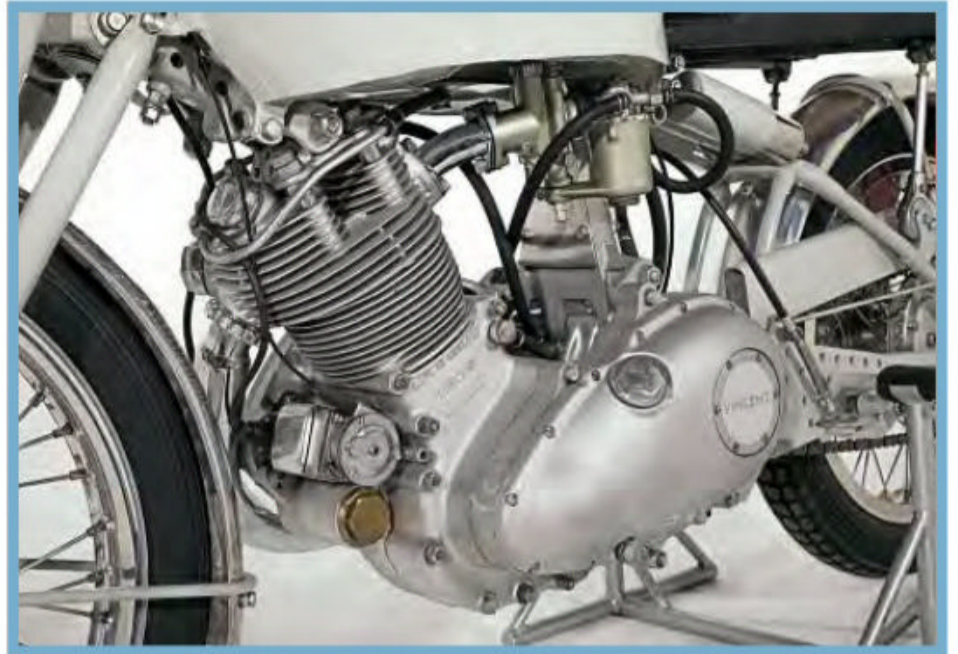
The Grey Flash – with its unique green-grey livery – marked a fresh start for the fledgling Vincent factory. It also represented Vincent's return to racing after the Second World War.

This was an important statement – both for PR purposes and technological development. Vincent and its forerunner, HRD, had a long association with road racing – a legacy it wanted to shout about – and who can forget that infamous photograph of Rollie Free in his bathing trunks aboard a Black Lightning at the Bonneville salt flats from 1948?

By 1950 Vincent was in receivership and its new controllers believed that entering the TT would give the factory the boost it needed. The Grey Flash was the chosen weapon for this road-racing assault, which was a hugely courageous – if not naive – move. The Grey Flash was, after all, a near-standard racer competing against the might of the Norton works machines with their brand new featherbed frames.

The marque entered four machines into the 1950 Senior TT. These particular Grey Flashes had special big ends and big valves but proved to be problematic in practice and, as such, were further standardised. The Burman gearboxes – fitted for the TT, had failed and as such, Albion gearboxes were fitted for the race.

Of the four Grey Flash machines to have entered the 1950 TT, only one finished. Its rider was Ken Bills, ▶



who finished 12th at 83.79mph – his fastest lap was 85.30mph. The only other Grey Flash to finish the race was that of privateer F. Fairburn, who finished second to last.

Elsewhere, the Grey Flash fared better, with Jonny Hodgkin and test rider, George Brown, featuring highly in races such as Scarborough, Eppynt and Gransden.

According to National Motorcycle Museum director James Hewing, the mere fact that Vincent had entered the TT increased sales. He said: “Our research showed that Vincent did benefit from entering the TT, even though it didn’t do particularly well at the event. It certainly did enough to stimulate public interest.”

Even today, enthusiasm for the Grey Flash remains strong, as Hewing says: “The Grey Flash is one of the most popular competition machines on display and it certainly gets a lot of attention. It is iconic – mainly owing to its striking, light green-grey powdery paint finish, which was unusual then and remains so today.”

Museum restorer Wes Wall, who helped bring the museum’s model – a 1951 499cc Series C – back to life said: “I remember working on that machine and it was ▶



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a lovely bike to restore. We went to great lengths to match the paint up with the original colour, as we had to have the tank restored. Luckily, we found a tiny area of the livery that we were able to match up to.”

The machine in these photographs is from the National Motorcycle Museum, the machine’s permanent home. Surtees’ machine was – more precisely – identified as F5AB/2B/3520 and supplied to Surtees in August 1950, exactly one year before he raced it to great success at Thruxton.

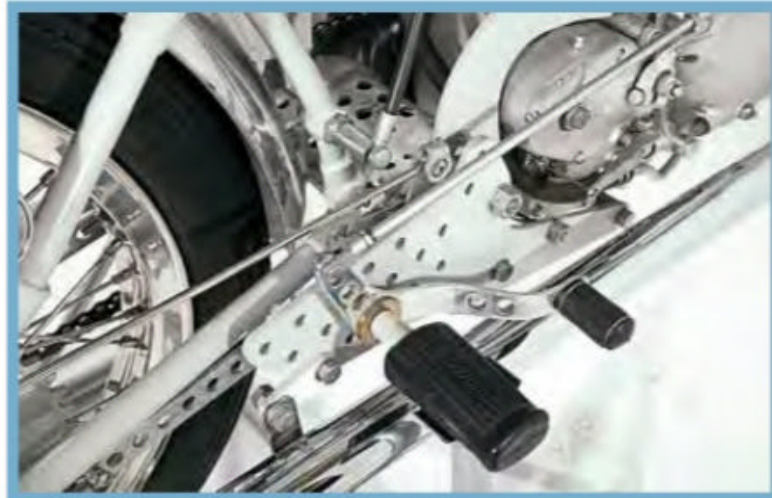
But it would be years before the late Surtees would be reunited with his machine, according to Wall, who met – by chance – the man who owned the ex-Surtees racer.

Wall said: “I got chatting to someone who had the Surtees Grey Flash for sale some years ago. He said the machine was sitting in his showroom for a good 18 months with no interest in it at all, until he got a call from John Surtees himself, who wanted to visit the bike the following week. But then – by sheer coincidence – another man visited in the meantime and bought it.

“Surtees dropped in the week later and was absolutely furious about the fact it had been sold to someone else, so he ended up buying it off the other customer. Apparently he’d spent a huge amount of time trying to track it down.”

At least the machine ended up with its original

The Grey Flash Series C 499cc machine stands in Hall Five at the National Motorcycle Museum



owner and rightly so, as Surtees and the Grey Flash are almost synonymous. Grey Flash summed up the machine’s appearance at Thruxton on that grey, wet day in which it literally whizzed past its competition. But the moniker is also something of a self-fulfilling prophecy as – Surtees aside – the Grey Flash wasn’t quite the machine that Vincent had hoped for. It failed to conquer the top 10 in the 1950 Senior TT and was far from a commercial success, despite a peak in sales following its 1950 TT entry.

The machine did not stand the test of time as by 1951 its production had ceased.

The production of the Grey Flash, quite literally, went by in a flash. **CBG**

SPECIFICATION:

ENGINE: Single-cylinder four stroke 84 x 90mm bore and stroke, 499cc engine
POWER: 35bhp at 6200rpm **FRAME:** Innovative ‘cradle’ frame in which the engine was a stressed member **SUSPENSION:** Cantilever rear suspension. **WEIGHT:** 330lb





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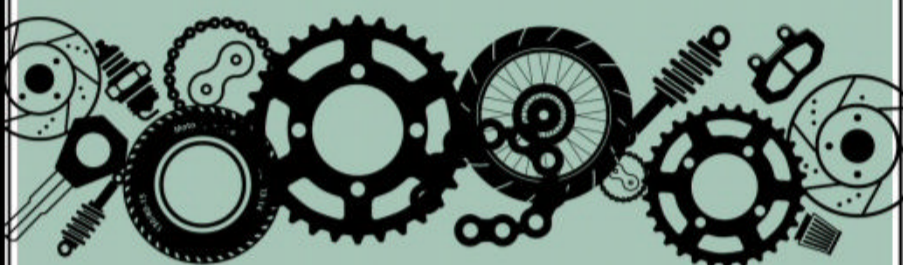
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Gates open: 9.30am

ADMISSION: Adult £7 Child/OAP £6

EARLY BIRD ENTRY (7.45am): £10

Free parking.



2019 DATES: SATURDAYS: APRIL 6, MAY 18, JULY 20, SEPT 14, OCT 26, DEC 7

CONTACT: Andy Kitchen TEL: 01507 529435 MOB: 07887 051652
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George Brown, development rider, Vincent
Grey Flash in action, 1950

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Manual creator John Haynes dies at 80

MOTORING LEGEND JOHN Haynes, the creator of the famous Haynes Manuals, has died aged 80.

Most riders have got an oily-thumbed Haynes manual on their bookcase, with more than 200 million sold worldwide.

Born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1938, Haynes built an Austin 7 special while at boarding school in the UK and printed his first manual detailing the work involved as a booklet, selling 250 copies.

The first true Haynes Manual, one of the first to give the ordinary rider and motorist details about how to fix their vehicle usually only seen in factory manuals, was printed in 1966. The collection has now grown so much so that there is hardly a vehicle in the world that doesn't have one. The collection has extended into outer space too, with manuals for the Saturn V rocket and the fictional Millennium Falcon.

He started the Haynes Motor Museum in 1985, which has grown to become one of the biggest private collections of classic cars and motorcycles in the UK. He was given an OBE in 2006 for services to publishing.

Warning for classic riders over tests and no-deal Brexit travel

OWNERS OF MOTORCYCLES that are MoT exempt are being advised that they should get them tested if they want to be sure they can ride them in Europe after Brexit.

Currently, the EU-wide Roadworthiness Testing Directive applies to exempt vehicles, but this would vanish in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

But the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs (FBHVC) has suggested that owners might want to submit the vehicle to an MoT test, even if it is exempt, so that they will be in possession of evidence that the vehicle has passed a roadworthiness test if local law enforcement requests.

The FBHVC has issued advice on what will be different if the UK leaves the EU on March 29 without a deal, with the first and main point being to consult Government websites. As Whitehall departments develop their plans, information is posted online on a regular basis. Other areas that might concern classic riders include vehicle and personal insurance.

The Insurance Directive will cease to be effective and there could be changes to how claims would be dealt with and travellers may require a Green Card to visit EU countries on their classic.

Also, not all EU countries accept the same Green Card. Your motor insurer should know the various rules.

A European Health Insurance Card will no longer be of any effect, so check current insurance cover to make sure it includes full health insurance, including, if required, cover against the occurrence of existing medical conditions.

Riders might also need an International Driving Permit and the bike will need an old-style oval GB plate. Not all local Low Emission Zones currently exempt historic vehicles. There may be some which exempt only historic vehicles from the EU. Riders will need to check locally.

The federation says this advice must not be regarded as complete or accurate, but says it is "a useful checklist".

New flat tanker roars out of the Welsh valleys

THERE ARE SEVERAL manufacturers of retro motorcycles, but few have gone as far as Mark Wardill to revive an old name and give their machine a period feel.

The Wardill Motor and Cycle Works was started in Carshalton, Surrey in 1903 by Henry Wardill Snr to repair and maintain cars, motorcycles and bicycles. In 1927 it became the Wardill Motorcycle Company Ltd, run by Henry Jnr and Percy Wardill to produce the Wardill Motorcycle with a revolutionary patented 'supercharged' two-stroke engine.

Now Mark, a direct descendent of Henry



Wardill, is re-launching the marque, with a brand-new motorcycle, the Wardill 4, so-called because the last Wardill, made in the 1920s,

was named the Wardill 3. The Wardill 4 uses a modern 250cc OHC engine.

Apart from the engine, every other part of the bike will be hand-made and finished in-house. It has updated girder forks, a hand-made aluminium petrol tank and a rigid frame made of T45 aviation strength steel. This is hand formed and tig welded. The Wardill is being made at a factory in the Welsh valleys.

The Wardill will give owners the chance to explore flat tank riding on a machine with a modern engine capable of propelling it at 90mph.

Each Wardill 4 can be tailored to the buyer's specification with an unlimited paint box of colours and a wide range of saddle leathers. Visit www.wardillmotorcycles.com





Are you up for the Kop?

THIS YEAR IS the 10th anniversary of the revived Kop Hill Climb Festival and organisers are calling for owners of interesting motorcycles to join them to run the hill or display their machines over the weekend of September 22-23.

David Barker from the festival said: "With entries opening at the beginning of April, we want to make sure we get some really exciting bikes attending this year, to ensure our 10th anniversary event is the best ever." Set in the picturesque Chiltern Hills in Princes Risborough, Bucks, the non-competitive hill climb,

which dates back to 1910, has firmly established itself as a major motoring festival since its resurrection 10 years ago.

"We have raised over £640,000 for local charities and last year we raised an incredible £110,000 and saw over 18,000 people through the gates. If you have an interesting bike over 40 years old, then we would love to see you," Mr Barker said.

The event started in 1910, when motorcyclists, looking for somewhere to stretch their machines, found the sinuous and steep Kop Hill road that climbs to the top of the Chiltern

Hills, but competition ended in 1927. Today, the Kop Hill Climb is no longer a competition, but a moving celebration of the history of the car and the motorcycle. It offers the chance to marvel at over 100 years of pioneering, mechanical progress powered by steam, gasoline, electricity, eccentricity and innovation.

The road is smooth and well maintained with a gradual climb to a one-in-six gradient halfway, then a short section of one-in-four. But for some the challenge is still there, particularly in the case of the older cars and bikes, with which being able to make

it to the top is an achievement in itself.

There is a raft of other attractions from motorcycle and car clubs display areas, live music, a trader's village and a Soapbox Challenge, where youngsters race on their own specially-built course. New for 2019 is the Engineering Village, where local craftsmen show off their skills across a range of car and motorcycle restoration and engineering processes.

Entrants can register for display or hill runs from the beginning of April at kophillclimb.org.uk

Kickback and enjoy Cotswolds bike fest

PRESCOTT BIKE FESTIVAL returns to the Gloucestershire hills on June 15-16.

The festival includes the best in custom builds, race bikes, factory bikes, prototypes, historic and record beating machines. The event features the popular 'Run the Hill' where more than 200 members of the public run the historic hill climb course on a range of magnificent machines. There will be paddock specials, celebrity guest appearances, thrilling passenger ride experiences, show 'n' tell, great food, live hot bands, a large exhibitor zone featuring over 100 trade exhibitors and a kids zone to keep youngsters entertained for hours.

This year, Prescott will also be hosting Kickback, the National Custom Show and UK Championships, displaying the best of custom and shed builds

all under cover. It is a superb exhibition and showcase for contemporary customs and modified classics featuring the 80 finalists competing for the National Custom Championships with 'Butchered Classic' and 'Young Builder' just two of the prized titles up for grabs.

Kickback is a platform dedicated to young, emerging and experienced custom engineers, both pro and non-pro, a true celebration of engineering and design excellence that embraces the modern custom scene and the new wave.

The winning bikes and builders have the opportunity to run their masterpieces up the hill after the awards ceremony. The proceeds from the event will go to the Nationwide Association of Blood Bikes and Severn Freewheelers. The Blood Bike charities provide a vital free out-of-hours medical



transportation service to the NHS. Since its inception, the Prescott Bike Festival has raised more than £200,000 for charity.

For 2019 the festival has teamed up with the National Motorcycle Museum and every visitor will get a voucher entitling them to 50% off entry to the

NMM. Prescott Hill Climb is at Gotherington, Cheltenham, GL52 9RD and advance tickets cost £12 for Saturday and £15 for Sunday, while under 16s get in free when accompanied by a paying adult. For further information and tickets visit prescottbikefestival.co.uk

Our pick

at the Carole Nash Bristol *Classic* Motorcycle Show

Even snow couldn't hinder the Bristol show and the South West always surprises. Here's six that caught our eye...

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
OLIVER HULME

THREE WEEKS SEPARATED the weekend when the Bath and West Showground was turned into a snow-covered winterscape, postponing the Bristol *Classic Motorcycle Show*, and the positively spring-like rescheduled event. The later date was much better for it. A few traders failed to show, but those who did had a busy weekend and the bikes on show were a much healthier mix than usual.

We were there, amateurishly attacking the front forks on a Triumph Bonneville, and a huge thank you goes out to everybody who stopped by to help out – including Nathan the fireman who managed to undo a bottom stanchion nut that had defeated us; Monty from Monty's Classics who helpfully pointed out before it was too late that we had put the stanchions on upside down and the unknown gentleman who lent us the fork leg extraction tool that he happened to have in his car and without whom we would still have been there.

We did get a chance to take a trip around the halls too, and there were some splendid and unusual machines to take a look at.



VINCENT RAPIDE 1953 TOURING MODEL

Andy Hopkins of Cheddar brought along his immaculate and well-used Vincent Rapide. This V-twin was built in 1953 and was the second bike built with the new die-cast engine. It was part of a batch designed as an export model for the Indian Sales Corporation of America as both companies were struggling for survival.

An effort to produce a 'Vindian', an Indian Chief with a Vincent engine, had floundered and although Indian imported a number of Vincents, Andy's Rapide never made it across the Atlantic, being sold instead to Kings of Oxford, the 50-branch dealership chain run by Mike Hailwood's father, Stan. It languished in Kings' Manchester shop until March 1954, when it was hitched to a sidecar

which three owners used as transport around Cumbria.

Last taxed in 1961, it sat in a selection of garden sheds, being slowly overhauled until 1997 when Andy bought it and spent two years stripping and rebuilding it.

In August 1999, Andy took it to the Isle of Man and went around the TT course on closed roads. He followed this up with a two-up 1200-mile trek through Spain, rode it through France and took it round the Montlhery race circuit. He rode it to Galway, Ireland then on the way back took it to a VOC rally in the midlands where, covered in camping gear and road dirt, it came third in the concours d'elegance.

Built to ride, while remaining immaculate,



the Rapide has done 48,000 miles in Andy's care while retaining the magneto and 6v lights. The completely oil-tight Rapide uses no lubricant between changes.

FRANCIS-BARNETT SPORTS CRUISER

Two splendid and slightly out of the ordinary Francis-Barnett Sports Cruisers were displayed by Stuart Elkes. While AMC brand Francis-Barnett was known for ruggedly basic commuters, these 250cc sports twins have a decidedly Italian flavour to them

and would have been enough to turn any early-Sixties teenage learner's head.

Stuart has two Sports Cruisers, both model 91s, one with the Villiers 2T engine and one with a 4T.

The 1963 bike has the 2T engine and sat in a shed for 34 years, in the hands of

an owner who had a power drill and an obsession with weight reduction, drilling holes all over the bike in an attempt to cut the weight. Stuart bought it in 2014, restored it and put it back on the road in 2015. It had only covered 11,000 miles when Stuart bought it, and has since put a further 2,500 miles on it, including three trips to the Isle of Man.

The 4T version is a 1965 bike, was first restored in 2001 by Norman Clarke and travelled 10,000 miles including a trip to Gibraltar and a Lands End to John o' Groats run. Stuart bought the bike from Norman in 2014, carried out a refurbishment and has since taken it to the Isle of Man and on the Loch Ness Rally.

"I've tried to keep them as original as can be, and they are brilliant bikes. The power is so smooth, they've got good acceleration, they're easy to start and they're fine handling"



DUCATI 450 SCR

Andrew Hunt's Ducati 450 was bought from an Italian website and was, he says, a good example of a "polished turd".

"Twenty-five per cent of it was wrong, but it looked good. I worked out that even if it was mechanically bad it was still less than half the market value, so I bought it. I'd never had one and always wanted one."

Andrew likes to carry out a winter project every year, and the 450 presented its own challenges. The generator was falling off the crankshaft and required considerable machining before it would stay on. There was plenty more wrong with it that required attention.

"It would have been dangerous on the road, missing important things like lock nuts on the brake arms," said Andrew, adding, "but there was enough there to make it all worthwhile."

Now completed, Andrew has covered around 2,000 miles on the immaculate



yellow beast and enjoyed plenty of trips on green lanes and by-ways around the Isle of Wight.

Andrew's next project involves a rare 1970s Laverda six-days trials bike, which was found missing its original two-stroke single Laverda engine. With these engines unobtainable Andrew has carried out considerable frame modifications to fit a Ducati 250 mill.



NIMBUS FOUR

It was designed by a vacuum cleaner manufacturer, has a pressed steel frame and exposed valve gear, and stayed in production for 25 years. Brought to the show by Charlie Cannon of the Bridport Classic Club, this most unusual motorcycle was ahead of its time and the breed carried out public service duties from 1934 into the early 1970s.

The Danish Nimbus inline four was designed by Danish father and son team Peder and Anders Fisker. Peder being one of the founders of domestic appliance makers Nilfisk. The Nimbus was the first production motorcycle with telescopic forks, had a frame made from steel strips, shaft drive, and a 750cc four-cylinder inline engine with exposed valve gear.

Charlie said: "Peder Fisker had wanted to design a motorcycle for the everyday working man so he made it cheap to run and as simple as possible. They



were used by the police and the Army, and as a general utility vehicle. You would see tradesmen riding them with ladders attached."

The Danish Post Office still used the rigid framed Nimbus until 1973.

You can tell this machine, a Sportsman, is an ex-military Nimbus because it has a British Smiths chronometric speedometer as the original fitting wasn't considered accurate enough for the Danish Army.



The toolbox is mounted under the engine and the rider's seat is suspended using two large rubber bands, giving the pilot a comfortable low-down riding position. Charlie has taken the Nimbus all over France and Spain, the Danish four taking the "up-hill-and-down-dale" trips in its stride. He left the rear-view mirror on the left-hand side, because when he rides it on the continent, it reminds him which side of the road it should be ridden on.

1971 GUS KUHN COMMANDO

We spent a good part of the weekend lusting over Shelagh and Ronnie Moore's Gus Kuhn Commando, resplendent in its green metalflake paint job.

Gus Kuhn Commandos were first built as production racers in 1968 in Stockwell South London and gave the Norton factory

a run for its money in the early 1970s. Search for the Gus Kuhn catalogue and you can find all manner of tuning spares, and four models including three street racers and a tourer, but none of them can hold a candle to Shelagh's green machine.

Creating this Gus Kuhn roadster, which was developed from the Kuhn racing Commandos, has been a seven-year labour

of love. "We've just put our stamp on it," said Ronnie, "It started as a box of bits, a Gus Kuhn engine and a frame."

Detailing includes the engraved Kuhn logo on the inside of the timing case.

It has a Mick Hemmings balanced crankshaft which has been polished, polished con rods and a belt drive clutch, allowing the use of a dry primary drive case with open mesh cooling for the clutch. It's got a Peter Williams camshaft, big valves, a gas flowed head, Dunstall 'silencers' and electronic ignition and a stunning paint job over the fairing and ethanol-proofed gel filled glass fibre tank and seat unit sourced from the USA.

Challenges included fitting stainless-steel spokes to the alloy drums as when built it was found that tightening the spokes had pulled the drums out of shape, meaning they had to be machined in order to work properly again.



1970 BSA BANTAM BUSHMAN

Winner of best competition bike, in a crowded field that included dozens of high and low-tech road racers and trail bikes, was this charming and humble BSA Bantam Bushman, owned by a delighted and surprised Roy Webb.

Not many Bushmans stayed in the UK, the model being built largely for export. The Bushman featured 19-inch wheels, a slightly different frame from the stock bantam which gave it better ground clearance, a high-level big bore exhaust, and an air filter that had its inlet under the seat, presumably to aid matters when traversing tropical streams.

This Bushman was built in August 1970 and shipped to Malawi, coming back to the UK in 1988. The owner rented a house



next door to Roy and it sat in the garage for several years until Roy was asked if he wanted it. "I was told if I wanted it, I could have it," said Roy, who then spent nine years restoring it, with several unobtainable parts being remanufactured.

Once finished he found the clutch a



handful so with the help of friends in the Salisbury Motorcycle and Light Car Club and Ray Box Engineering, a new clutch was designed, made from scratch, with a one-off aluminium basket, laser cut plain plates, Rex Caunt racing friction plates and a new cable, the lever is now one finger operation.

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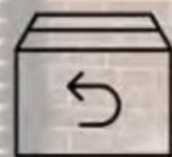
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- **30 National Motorcycle Museum Classic Bike Training Day:** Friends of the museum get the chance to try a variety of classic motorcycles. These events give friends of the museum the opportunity to ride a wide selection of machines from the museum's inventory. The training days are the perfect opportunity to ride bikes that most people haven't experienced, from the oldest pioneer single speeders through to the first exotic superbikes from names like Vincent. 'Try a classic bike' training takes place in a safe off-road environment and under the supervision and guidance of experienced museum personnel. A nominal cost to cover insurance applies to those taking part. Visit www.nationalmotorcyclemuseum.co.uk for more details
- **31 South of England Classic Show & Bikejumble:** South of England Showground, Ardingly, West Sussex RH17 6TL www.elkpromotions.co.uk
- **31 Great Spring Autojumble and Show:** Strathmore Hall, Forfar Mart, Market St, Forfar DD8 3EZ. Tel: 01738 551308.
- **31 Poachers Pre-65 Trial:** 10am start, Poachers Bag, Smiths Farm, Withcall LN11 9RL www.poacherspre65trials.co.uk

APRIL

- **1 APRIL ISSUE OF REAL CLASSIC**
- **3 VMCC (Dorset section) Lunch Meet:** Henstridge Golf and Leisure, Marsh Lane, Henstridge, Somerset BA8 0TG. Tel: 01258 860864. dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events
- **4 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes, Garstang:** Meet Riverside car park. Tel: 01772 782516.
- **5 MAY ISSUE OF THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE**
- **6-7 CRMC Classic Motorcycle Race Weekend:** This is the first weekend of the Classic Racing Motorcycle Club's 2019 calendar and it will feature more than 40 races and parades. Saturday practice starts at 8.40am, with the first racing at 12.45pm. Sunday racing starts at 9am. Castle Combe Circuit, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 7EY. Adults: Saturday £15, Sunday £20, weekend £30. www.castlecombecircuit.co.uk
- **6 LE Velo W Midlands:** Visit Velocette owners' club bring and buy, Aston by Stone Village Hall ST15 0TE. Tel Roy Gimbert 01785662594#
- **6 APRIL ISSUE OF OLD BIKE MART**
- **6 Kempton Park Motorcycle Autojumble:** Kempton Park, Staines Road East, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 5AQ. www.kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk
- **7 VJMC Autojumble:** The VJMC Popham

- autojumble will be held on Sunday, April 9 at Popham Airfield, Hampshire SO21 3BD from 8am to 2pm. Massive pitches just £10 each, public admission £2 per person. Catering facilities and toilets on site, free parking. Motorcycles and bike parts only. Just arrive, pay for your pitch – no need to pre-book!
- **7 Kenley Autojumble:** The Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamish Avenue. Caterham CR3 5FX (just off jct 6, M25) for satnav use CR3 5LT. Contact: Martyn 07772 169524/Anita 07971823314. Email info@kenleyautojumble.co.uk www.kenleyautojumble.co.uk
- **7 Kawasaki Sunday "Let the Good Times Roll":** Ace Café London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **7 Classic Scooter Show:** White Lion pub, 46 High Street, Baldock SG7 6BJ. Tel. Geoffrey 07963 609143
- **7 Sammy Miller Museum, Adventure Bike Ride In:** www.sammymiller.co.uk
- **7 April Fool's Run:** from Battlesbridge Motorcycle Museum, Battlesbridge, Essex. For further info email Pete: ppopham@yahoo.co.uk
- **7 Hoghton Tower Sprint:** Hoghton Tower is a straight-line sprint but still a very steep hill climb. The organisers of the sprint have been taking advantage of the good nature of Sir Bernard de Hoghton and his driveway leading up to his 16th century house for about the last 25 years. The sprint will feature classics, run-what-you-brung and specials. Hoghton Tower, Hoghton, Preston PR5 0SH. www.hoghtontower.co.uk
- **7 Malvern Festival of Transport:** Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcs WR13 6NW. Tel: 01484 667776. www.classicshows.org
- **7 VMCC (Essex Section) Early Easter Run:** Tesco car park, Maldon. Tel. Brian Irwin 01376 342885.
- **7 VMCC (Dorset section) Blandford Run:** Corn Exchange, Blandford Forum DT11 7AG. Tel: 01258 860864. <http://dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events/>
- **11-15 VMCC (Essex Section) Bluebell Camping Weekend:** Museum of Power, Langford. Tel: Lesley Willmore 07971 266167.
- **13 Bosun's Bike Bonanza:** Noon-6pm, bike of the hour prizes, landlord's choice and good food and beer. The Plough, Leech Pond Hill, RH13 6LT Lower Beeding, West Sussex.
- **13 VMCC Isle of Wight Section Show:** The Winter Gardens, Pier Street, Ventnor PO38 1SZ. Email keith.hadfield1@btinternet.com

- **13 Cirencester Autojumble:** Livestock Centre, Castle Market, Driffield Road, Cirencester GL7 5QY. Tel: 07831 421455.
- **13-14 Cardiff Motorcycle Show:** The South Wales Sunbeam Motorcycle Club will be holding its 27th Annual Classic and Modern Motorcycle show. A splendid and welcoming event, you can expect around 150 bikes of all ages, types, capacities and histories, from classics to specials, all housed inside three large halls. There is plenty of free parking, trade and jumble stands and a range of hot and cold refreshments will be available. Llanishen High School, Heol Hir, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5YL. Tel: 01443 435125. www.southwalesunbeamcc.co.uk
- **14 Ledbury Leader Grasstrack:** Sparrington Farm, Pencombe, Bromyard, Herefordshire HR7 4SL. Tel. Sally Palmer 07968 649327 or email sallyannpalmer226@gmail.com
- **14 British & Classic Bike Day + BSA Special:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **14 'Normous Newark Autojumble:** The Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts NG24 2NY www.newarkautojumble.co.uk
- **14 Sammy Miller Museum:** Royal Enfield Ride In, BMW Club Day. www.sammymiller.co.uk
- **14 Salisbury Motorcycle & Light Car Club, Five Valleys Charity Motorcycle Run:** starting from Salisbury Livestock Market. Tel: Dave Weston 01264 364186. Email: dweston49@btinternet.com www.salisburymotorcycleandlightcarclub.co.uk
- **14 VMCC (Dorset section) Tiddler Run:** Henstridge Golf and Leisure, Marsh Lane, Henstridge, Somerset BA8 0TG. Tel. 01258 860864. <http://dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events/>
- **14 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes:** Malham, (meet main car park). Tel: 01772 782516.
- **14 SBMOC Engineerium Charity Run:** Tel: Richard Bennett 01243 542928. www.sbmoc.vpweb.co.uk
- **14 The 29th Bottesford Easter Egg Run:** Rutland Arms PH, High Street, Bottesford, nr Grantham NG13 0AA. Tel: John Bartlett on 01780 762531 or 07790 583082.
- **17 Langport Bike Night:** Langport Bike Night is on every Wednesday over the summer and brings in scores of classics and hundreds of bikers every week, if the weather is good. A friendly and most convivial event, you'll see everything from modern sports bikes, customs, British classics and prewar flat tankers. Watch out for the much-loved Raleigh Runabout and the supercharged Triton that make regular appearances at

- 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.

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- **17 MAY ISSUE OF CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS**
- **18 MAY/JUNE ISSUE OF CLASSIC RACER**
- **19-21 Tsunami Riders MCC's Let Loose Rally:** Eltham Town FC, 176 Footscray Road, Kent SE9 2TD. www.tsunamiriders.org.uk
Email secretary@tsunamiriders.org.uk
- **19-21 Festival of Power:** Santa Pod Raceway, Airfield Road, Podington, Wellingborough, Northants NN29 7XA. www.santapod.com Tel: 01234 782828.
- **20 North West VMCC joint section bike meet and display:** Ghost Bikes, Mercer Street, Preston PR1 4LQ. Tel: Henry Gregson 01772 686883.
- **20 Scorton Auto & Bike Jumble:** Scorton, North Yorkshire Events Centre DL10 6EJ. Tel: Bert 07909 904705.
- **20 South Midlands Autojumble:** Ross-on-Wye Livestock Centre, Overross, Ross-on-Wye HR9 7QQ. Tel: 01989 750731. Details: southmidlandsautojumble/facebook
- **20 VMCC (NW area) Joint Section Gathering and Bike Display:** Ghost Bikes, Mercer Street, Preston, Lancs PR1 4LQ
Email. henrygregson9@gmail.com
- **20-22 Maidstone Tattoo Extravaganza:** Detling Showground, Detling, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3JF. Email info@maidstonetattooextravaganza.co.uk
www.maidstonetattooextravaganza.co.uk
- **21 Lothian & Borders Classic & VMCC's Classic & Vintage Motorcycle Show & Autojumble:** Drill Hall, Walkershaugh, Peebles EH45 8AU. Email dennisbelleville@gmail.com
- **21 Rocket III Owners' Club Meet:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **21 Reading MAG Easter Bike Show:** Reading Abbey Rugby Club, Peppard Road, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8XB. www.readingmag.org.uk
Email bikeshow@power247.co.uk
- **21 Huddersfield Auto/Retro Jumble (Drive It Day):** Old Market Building, Brook Street HD1 1RG. Tel: 01773 819154. www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com



- **21-22 The Easter Motor Show:** Weston Park, near Telford, Shropshire TF11 8LE. Tel: 01484 667776. www.classicshows.org
 - **22 Ashford Classic Motorcycle Show & Bikejumble:** Ashford Livestock Market, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent TN24 0HB www.elkpromotions.co.uk
 - **24 Langport Bike Night:** (See April 17) Eli's Rose and Crown, Langport, Somerset TA10 9QT
 - **24 MAY ISSUE OF CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE**
 - **25 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes:** Ribchester (meet main car park). Tel: 01772 782516.
 - **27 Pembrokeshire Vintage and Classic Motorcycle Show:** 10-4pm Haverhub (The Old Post Office) Haverfordwest SA61 1BG
 - **27 VMCC (Dorset section) Breakfast Meet:** Henstridge Golf and Leisure, Marsh Lane, Henstridge, Somerset BA8 0TG. Tel: 01258 860864. <http://dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events/>
 - **27 Sunbeam MCC AGM:** Llama Centre, Wych Cross, Forest Row RH18 5JN.
 - **27-28 The Jukebox Show & Retro Fair:** Brighton Racecourse, Freshfield Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 9XZ. Tel: 0208 393 2444. www.jukeboxfair.co.uk
Email info@jukeboxfair.co.uk
 - **27-28 The 39th Carole Nash International Classic Motorcycle Show:** Classics, autojumbling, shows and star guests from the world of TT racing. See our news pages for more details. County Showground, Weston Road, Stafford, ST18 0BD. www.classicbikeshows.co.uk
 - **28 Drive it Day Breakfast Meet:** Battlesbridge Motorcycle Museum, Essex SS11 7RF. All classic vehicles welcome. Tel: 01268 769000. www.battlesbridge.com/events
 - **28 Sarum Spring Bike Show:** Laverstock and Ford Sports Club, 23 Church Road, Laverstock, Salisbury, Wilts SP1 1QX. Tel: Chris 07518 638186 or Tags 07921 854834. Email sarumbikertrev@gmail.com.
 - **28 Italian Bike Day:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
 - **28 The 12th Suffolk Classic Motorcycle Show:** Stour Valley Business Park, Brundon Lane, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 7GB. Tel: 01787 881803.
- Would you like your event, bike night or gathering to appear in these listings?**
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Letters

Eventful times with my BSA C10

A letter by Alan Freke has reminded me of an event with my first motorcycle, a 1954 BSA C10L. It was 1962, I was 16 years old and purchasing my first motor vehicle, a used motorcycle.

My mother had suggested a bike, her parents had travelled around England for many years on a bike and sidecar. It seemed a good idea to me at the time as I needed transport to get my first job as a car hop at a drive-in restaurant and there were no late night buses.

After looking at a James, my dad thought it best to get the BSA as he was more familiar with four-stroke motors and BSA were a popular brand when he was young.

My first ride around the block was uneventful and exciting. However, the second ride was not to be – the battery was dead so after an overnight charge a further attempt was made. This time the ride was somewhat longer but the battery died again.

I removed the primary chaincase cover to see if there was a loose wire somewhere. There were a lot of loose wires, the resin on the Wipac Energy Transfer unit



had dissolved a long time ago. We tried to get the thing to work many times, my dad even enlisted the help of a Masonic friend, a heavy-duty locomotive mechanic, but it became easier to take shorter rides and recharge the battery before going to bed!

A replacement Wipac would have to be ordered from Fred Deeley's and cost too much at the time.

As time went on, the clutch needed some attention, so I took the friction plate to Fred Deeley's where upon they handed me a bag of cork inserts and showed me how to replace the worn corks. It seemed easy enough, and my auto school teacher let me take my bike and project to school where I could work on it in class.

The finished friction plate was resurfaced in the wood

shop by holding the plate against the large sanding wheel, doing both sides, then reinstalled back in the bike. I was pretty proud of myself; I had completed my first repair without outside help.

A day later, my bike was parked out front of our house on the shoulder of the road and I wanted to go for a ride to Deeley's to look at the new bikes. I kick-started the bike, then my hand slipped off the clutch lever. The bike jumped forward then died. I tried to restart but something was terribly wrong, with strange noises coming from the transmission.

I took the three-speed transmission apart and couldn't believe what I was looking at – the mainshaft was broken in half!

I took the broken pieces

to Deeley's by bus where the parts guys gathered around and looked in amazement: what kind of bike did that? They could not believe a C10L had the power to break its transmission mainshaft.

What was even more amazing was they had one in stock. They blew the dust off it and sold it to me.

The culprit was my new clutch, it gripped very well.

I kept the bike for a year then sold it to buy a used 1953 A10 650.

**Derek Smith.
Brackendale B.C. Canada**

P.S: Here is a picture of me on a 1949 McCormick Deering. I pull a hay ride trailer one day a year around a trail in the bush as a free event during our annual Fall Fair.

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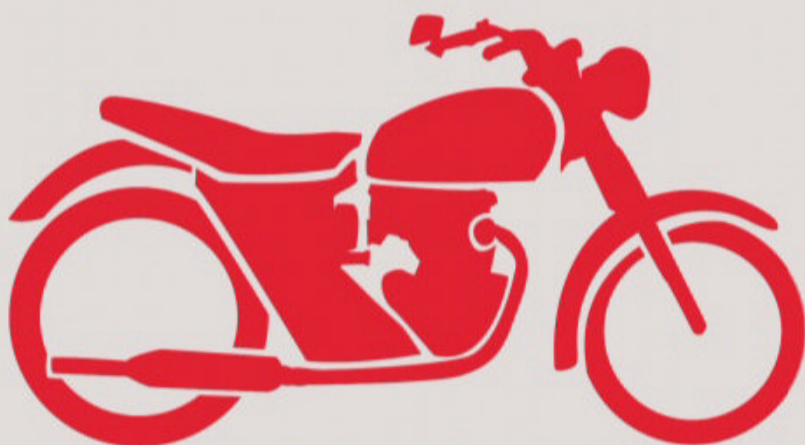
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Products

Davida Jet Helmet

I'VE WANTED A Davida Jet Helmet for ages, but the price has always been the sticking point for me. I know that you cannot put a price on your skull, but with a £300 plus price tag they've been a bit beyond my pocket. I have been making do with a cheap open-face that didn't really fit right and instilled no confidence whatsoever, and a Givi flip-front that does the job well but ensures that you look ridiculous riding around with the front up.

When my local branch of Harley and Ducati dealers, Riders, announced they were having a one-day helmet sale and offering 'up to' 50% off Davida products,

it had to be investigated.

I wasn't holding out much hope as most helmet sales seem to feature a lot of XS and XXL helmets and nothing in between, as well as mythical 50 per cent discounts.

On this occasion I arrived at 9am, expecting a queue of bargain hunters and they weren't there, so I had plenty of time to try out the helmets and happened across this rather splendid job in medium with an orange stripe and black and white chequered flag finish, which appears to be a decal covered with clear coat, rather than just a sticker. The hand-finished glass fibre exterior finish is superb, and the leather lining feels great.



It fits the crown of my head perfectly, which is something of a rarity. This fits all the way round so effectively that it cuts out external road noise to a far better level than ear plugs. You can still hear what's going on, but you are no longer deafened by wind noise.

Goggles are secured by a Velcro tab at the back, which I prefer to the usual pop stud and instead of the now ubiquitous ratchet fastener it's got a pair of old-fashioned D-rings on the chin strap. I've never got on with ratchet fasteners which I find fiddly to adjust, and the D-rings are vastly better at keeping the thing on tightly. They're also handy if you want to lock your open face helmet up to your bike.

I've pinched the traditionally styled goggles off my old open-

face for now, but the Jet has quite a low crown that pushes them down a touch, so I'd better start saving for a new pair of Aviator or Ariete goggles that might fit better.

The only other snag I've come across it that the helmet fits so snugly that its near impossible to get my spectacles on with the helmet on my head. Fortunately, I can get the Jet over my bonce with glasses on, though taking it off sends them crashing to the floor.

Those tiny niggles apart, I'm chuffed to bits with my new Davida and should have bought one years ago. And yes, it really was half price. Bargain.

■ £299

■ davidahelmets.com

Sealey's latest catalogue is a must-have

GARAGE EQUIPMENT SPECIALISTS

Sealey have launched the latest version of The Tool Catalogue Their new larger size catalogue contains 1204 pages with 9800 total lines. There are more than 1000 new products and it contains over 2000 consumables. It's the must-have reference for automotive technicians, engineers, farmers and serious DIY

enthusiasts. It also makes good bathroom reading.

Sealey say that all products are thoroughly tested by their engineers for quality, performance and compliance before they are included in the range. In addition, Sealey tools are supported by warranties, aftersales service and technical support. Sealey say this ensures that even

the oldest and most loyal tools can continue to work alongside new and innovative models. The new catalogue is available from Sealey stockists nationwide or you can request your copy from the Sealey website.

■ Sealey Catalogue
■ Free
■ www.sealey.co.uk



Tempting spring upgrades from SRM

OWNERS OF BSA and Triumph twins and singles whose steering is a little awry will find SRM's latest suspension upgrades a tempting offer.

There are progressive fork springs which reduce brake dive and help to prevent bottoming out of the forks under extreme braking. An internal damper rod kit is available which provides rebound damping, which is not present on the original forks. And the SRM steering head taper roller bearings give a light positive feel to steering and improve the handling of the bike in general.

The kit includes the upper and lower bearing sets and is a direct replacement for the original ball bearings, cups and cones.

Prices vary depending on the model, and the contents of the kits, but as a guide a kit containing progressive fork springs and taper roller bearings to fit BSA twins or B31/Gold Star singles costs £90.90. Visit the SRM website and search for Chassis & Front forks upgrades



- Suspension upgrades
- From £43.70
- shop.srmclassicbikes.com

Pick a winner

WHAT ON EARTH are these doing here? Well I thought they may be useful when servicing a rifle, but they have proved their weight in gold in the workshop, too. Tight seals are a doddle to remove now, and scratching the years of paint from the frame and engine numbers made me think they were made for the

job. Even the mirror has come in handy! They are not strong, but if you use them carefully then they are a useful, if a little odd, addition to the toolbox.

- Dental pick kit
- £6
- eBay.co.uk



Oils away

I ALWAYS WANTED one of these and like a genie's lamp, this one caught my eye. And rebuilding a couple of engines recently, my new oil can has proved invaluable, allowing me to quickly apply a drop or two of the golden nectar to those metal on metal surfaces like cams and rings, so on initial start up there should be no contact, even before the oil pump starts feeding the engine. And, it's red so it matches my tool chest!

- Second-hand oil can
- £3

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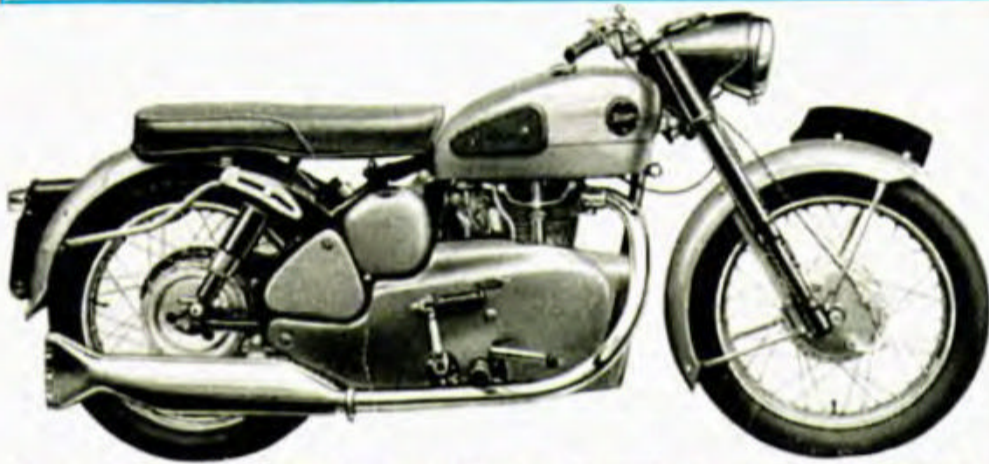
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CBG Buying guide

The VIPER 350 & VENOM 500 SPECIAL



Standard finish in Pale enamel. With anodised minium motif on petrol

The Viper and Venom "Special" models have been introduced into our range to give riders the opportunity of owning a quality built machine at prices well below those ruling for our standard models. The "Specials" have the same performance as their more expensive versions, whilst a new full width steel hub provides for the braking.

The mudguards, stays, toolbox, rims, oil and petrol tanks are in pale blue enamel finish, whilst the petrol tank is set off by an attractive anodised aluminium motif.

The remaining parts are finished in black. Pillion Footrests, Stoplight, Larger Aluminium alloy hubs and Chromium plated wheels are available as extras.

The Viper "Special" is powered by a 350 c.c. o.h.v. air cooled single cylinder engine with a four-speed foot change gearbox. In the Venom "Special" is fitted a 500 c.c. o.h.v. air cooled single cylinder engine. They are identical Viper and Venom Engine Units as fitted to the "Sports" models.

Should you be tempted, here are a few tips to stop you getting carried away...

- Speak to those in the know – clubs, owners, specialists. Is this the bike for you?
- Get some quotes – how much are parts, how easy are they to work on and how much will it cost to insure?
- See if you can have a go on one. This may be tricky, but if you have comprehensive insurance a kind owner or dealer may let you try one out.
- If you can't do all the jobs yourself, will your local dealer be prepared to work on it?
- If you're unsure of any of the above, email us at editor@classicbikeguide.com and if we can't help, we'll try to find someone who can.

Velocette Venom The best British single ever?



Royal Enfield Interceptor

New bike, old charm



Moto Guzzi

Good luck buying one, but a super bike!

Our aim is to bring you as much detail as we can on a specific model so you can work out if it's the sort of bike you would like. Brought to you by specialists, all the information we bring you has been checked as much as we can – however if you spot anything amiss let us know so we can tell others – the best information often comes from owners! You can always reach us at editor@classicbikeguide.com



Velocette Venom

WORDS BY OLI PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE/GARY CHAPMAN





WHAT IS IT?

A powerful British sporting single



GOOD POINTS?

The engineering is superb, the handling fine and the performance astonishing



BAD POINTS?

The design requires a lot of skill to keep the bike running at its best, adjusting the clutch is a challenge and it can be tough to start.

COST?

A Venom in bits will cost you around £3,500, while a good runner will cost £8-10,000. A museum quality Venom Thruxton can cost close to £30,000

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A MOTORCYCLE that's easy to live with, ideal for day-to-day use and can be looked after at home by an owner with a modicum of skill, it could be a Velocette Venom is not for you. The Venom is for those with time on their hands, the patience of a saint, the skills of an engineer and a desire to be completely involved with their two-wheeled chunk of aluminium and steel.

Developed from the updated MSS that had arrived in 1954, the Venom had its conception not in the company's factory in Hall Green, Birmingham, but on the west coast of the

USA. The importers, hoping to develop a competitive scrambler to meet customer demand, had tuned the latest all-alloy MSS engine for competition. While the scrambler wasn't a huge success, the details of the engine modifications made their way back across the Atlantic. British tuners, dealers and racers fitted similarly powerful units into MSS frames and entered them successfully into production endurance racing competitions. These successes allowed dealers to persuade the factory to bring out a sports roadster and the results were the 500cc Venom and the 350cc alternative, the Viper.

Velocette's reputation for quality and good handling, combined with these tuning mods, made the Venom a potent high-speed bruiser. This became abundantly clear when in 1961 an Anglo-French team took a Venom to the bumpy Monthlery circuit near Paris. The Venom averaged 104.66mph over 12 hours. They managed a 24-hour average of 100.05mph as well, breaking the circuit record. Not a bad effort for a motorcycle that was heavy, a little antiquated and had many a quirky engineering feature. The record still stands.

The 499cc engine can take a lot of tuning, producing 40bhp or more. Part of the reason for the engine's strength was Velocette's meticulous design. The valves being operated by short pushrods helped, as did the crankshaft assembly which was well supported and stiff. The primary chain arrangement was tucked tightly into the crankcases and this helped keep the load on the crankshaft bearings light. The drive sprocket sat outboard of the clutch, making changing the final drive gearing simple, which was useful in the days when racers would ride their bikes to the circuit. This did mean that the Venom had Velocette's infamous clutch arrangement.

This had 16 springs and 12 plates. Adjusting the clutch could be a bit of a challenge and vast screeds of text and advice have been written about this device, some more accurate than others. The best way to go about it is to acquire a copy of 'The Red Book', Velocette's official workshop manual and follow its advice carefully. The clutch lift mechanism



and adjustment procedure are unique to Velocette, with adjustment involving the use of special tools, rotating the rear wheel and operating the kick-start. The plate clearances need to be minimal, or the clutch won't free off. Setting it up can be a challenge for the inexperienced, to put it mildly. Paul Miles, columnist of this parish, wrote elsewhere that setting up a Venom clutch: "appears to require setting up at least as precisely as a trembler switch on an atomic bomb." Don't ride the clutch at traffic lights as you'll find very quickly the clutch will start to slip.

The pressed steel primary chaincase was notorious for leaking and required the use of a unique double channelled rubber seal. Velocette suggested that if using a Venom on the track, carrying oil in the primary chaincase was unnecessary. They proposed leaving the drain plug out and fabricating an auxiliary tank with a length of pipe and a carburettor jet to drip oil onto the chain behind the clutch.

Starting can be a challenge thanks to the low-g geared kick-start. It requires patience, learning and technique. The Velocette manual for the Venom has a section dedicated to the appropriate starting procedure. If starting from cold,



first flood the carb then set the advance/retard lever halfway, if you have one. Velocette were pioneers in the use of automatic advance retard mechanisms, and the basic Venom won't have the lever, while sporting models with racing magnetos will have one.

Now find Top Dead Centre (TDC). Pull in the valve lifter, let the pedal return to the top, and then push it down all the way to the stop. Let it return to TDC and give it a long swinging kick, being careful not to damage your shin on the oil tank, following the stroke through all the way to the bottom and Bottom Dead Centre. At this point it will either start or result in your thrashing away at it desperately while sweating and cursing until you get a spark of life.

The stock Venom used 6v Miller electrics up to 1962, with a belt-driven Miller dynamo, lighting equipment and loom with a Lucas magneto. After 1962 this was changed to a Lucas dynamo, and the separate dynamo/magneto ignition arrangement continued until production ended in 1970. Fitting a tachometer could only be managed if the rider had also specified a manual racing magneto, as the automatic unit could not take a tachometer drive.

WHICH VENOM IS YOUR POISON?

The Venom came in several versions for the road. The Venom was launched in 1956, with the Clubman arriving in 1960. In 1961 they were joined by the fully faired Venom Veeline and Venom Clubman Veeline and by the Venom Special in 1963. The Thruxton was made from 1965 to 1970.

Velocette were trendsetters when they wrapped the bottom end of their bikes in a glass fibre enclosure, which at least stopped the rider getting too much oil on their flannels and saved the factory money as they didn't need to polish the engine and gearbox casings. Velocette purists would ditch the enclosures in favour of a traditional look and easier access to the engine and gearbox. The 'Special' was a lower budget Venom with the enclosure, without chrome on mudguards, stays or wheel rims, using the old-style Venom tank.

The Clubman was fitted with an Amal TT carburettor, a manually controlled BTH racing magneto in place of the standard unit and a close-ratio gearbox, with the compression ratio raised to 9.3 to 1. The glass fibre enclosure was removed, and there were highly polished crankcase and gearbox castings. It looked a lot like a stock Venom to the untrained eye, with the

racing handlebars the giveaway. It came with rearsets, lowered handlebars and a steering damper. Buyers could specify a megaphone silencer, a rev counter and light alloy wheel rims.

To mark the success of a racing Venom at the Thruxton circuit, when the Velocette won the 8-hour Thruxton 500 endurance race, a new version appeared on the Velocette stand at the Earls Court Show in 1964. This was partly the Venom Thruxton, a true racer for the road. Early Thruxtons were blue and silver but soon they were offered in the traditional black and gold finish.

The Thruxton was as much a hit at the coffee bar as it was on the circuit. It had high compression pistons and the exhaust valves made of Nimonic alloy, a material made from nickel, chromium, titanium and aluminium, also used in the first jet engines. Plenty of sporting riders swore by changes to the gearing. Reinforced engine plates and huge Amal TT or GP carbs were fitted, using a petrol tank with a cut-out to accept the carburettor bell mouth.

There were competition TT magnetos, ridiculously low clip-ons and modifications to the forks to provide two-way damping. Over nearly six years 1108 Thruxtons left



the Hall Green factory. The 45bhp Thruxton with its 10:1 compression piston, hairpin valve springs, gas-flowed head, big valves, downdraft intake and alloy rimmed wheels was still winning TTs in 1967. One of the last road-going Thruxtons from the factory was tuned to produce 46.5bhp and had a top speed of 133mph, which is not bad for an OHV 500.

As well as having an engine that performed like a 650, the Venom handled as well. This was despite the use of a lugged, braze-welded frame of a type most manufacturers had long discarded and which still had sidecar mounts, even on the Thruxton. There were Velocette's in-house set of forks, while the Woodhead Monroe rear shock absorbers could be slid along the top slotted mount to meet a rider's specific requirements, forward for solo riding, backwards for two-up. To adjust the final drive chain the rider had to put the shocks in the solo position. The brakes, especially the later twin-leading shoe item fitted to the last models were excellent. Thus equipped, the Venom would stay ahead of almost anything of a similar capacity on the track or on the road.

Should you buy a Venom? It depends. You'll need to learn mechanical skills that are largely dying out unless you are fortunate to have them already. A well-equipped workshop will be an advantage. Shared knowledge is a wonderful thing, so join the Owners' Club and befriend other Venom owners. Watch out for Venoms being turned into Thruxton lookalikes, unless of course that's what you want, just don't pay Thruxton prices for it. What you'll get is a challenging, high quality, high performance classic that will hold its value and turn heads for as long as people still know how to operate a kick-start.

And for those who think they might like to take to the track rather than risk their Venom on our potholed roads while mixing it with mad motorists, the Velocette Owners' Club runs a unique scheme to encourage people to keep riding their motorcycles at full chat. Any member who races a Velocette at a circuit can claim £40 start money for each race they take part in, paid at the club AGM at the end of the season. The VOC is the only club of its kind to do this.

Ray Thurston, the Velocette Owners' Club's Thruxton expert shares his thoughts about Venom and Thruxton ownership: "The Venom is a very nice motorcycle and the Clubman is even better. On a Clubman you'll get a TT carb and a BTH or TT magneto. Ace bars are better than low clip ons, and the Clubman had ordinary one-way damping on the front forks rather than double damping



which you got with competition models.

"The Clubman has a bigger tank and footrests or rear sets in steel. Later aluminium set ups are better, as are the 2LS brakes fitted from 1964 on. The Venoms had semi close ratio gear clusters and there were two choices of racing ratios.

"Gearbox sprockets go from 18 teeth on the standard Venom to 22 teeth on the Thruxton. The Thruxton had a four-and-a-quarter gallon tank, with a cut-out on the right-hand side for the carb bell mouth, while the Clubman Mk.II had the standard square tank with an alloy strip. Thruxtons used Amal 1 3/8-inch GP carbs until late 1968-early 69 when there was a burglary at the factory and their stock of GP carbs was stolen, so they went over to using Amal Concentrics. These were really good and the Thruxton with a Concentric on would actually tick over. The only disadvantage is that they wear out. Lots of people fit Mikunis today.

"A Thruxton would do 48mph in first, 68 in second, 90 in third and 110 in fourth, covering a standing quarter in 16.2 seconds, and still do 60-70mpg.

"I'm not an engineer but I have been riding for a long while – my dad helped me do the clutch when I was a teenager and I didn't touch one afterwards for years. He always said: 'Get the Red Book [Velocette's workshop manual] and follow the instructions to the letter.' If you take it step

by step and it's in good order, it's not as complicated as people fear. Just remember you can't adjust the clutch on the cable.

"I was contacted a few years ago by a chap called Sam from New York, who had bought a Thruxton 20 years ago, and he said as he was getting older, he was having difficulty kick-starting his Thruxton, and the clip ons were putting all the weight on his thumbs. He said 'what can I do?' so I asked him how fast he rode these days and he said he would usually ride it from 50-70mph with occasional bursts at 80mph. I suggested that he fitted a slightly softer camshaft and lower compression piston to make it easier to start, and raise the bars, fitting ace bars or even standard bars and change the rear sets for standard Venom controls. He still got close to full Thruxton performance but found it softer to start and more comfortable to ride. I also suggested fitting 12v electrics and LED lights.

"The most important thing is to make sure everything works properly. Does the clutch feel nice and light? It should do if it's been set up properly. It should start first, second or third kick – good starting is usually down to having a clean plug and making sure the carb is nice and clean too. Venoms look good and are great to ride. If you are looking at buying one, search for one that's been used, not necessarily the shiniest one. ▶

"The Venom averaged 104.66mph over 12 hours. They managed a 24-hour average of 100.05mph as well, breaking the circuit record. Not a bad effort for a motorcycle that was heavy, a little antiquated and had many a quirky engineering feature. The record still stands."

“Velocette were trendsetters when they wrapped the bottom end of their bikes in a glass fibre enclosure, which at least stopped the rider getting too much oil on their flannels.”



A spares guru's point of view

Mike Fotherby runs Grove Classic Motorcycles, Velocette spares specialists for nearly two decades.

He says that parts availability for Venoms is excellent, with hardly any parts unavailable.

“You can get just about everything apart from frames and gearbox casings.

“If you wanted to make a Venom better, you could fit the later 2LS front brake fitted to the Clubman from 1965 onwards and fit electronic ignition. The Venom has got a reputation for being hard to start and this is because of the kick-start operating in a way that means you only get a single spark per kick if relying on the magneto. Using electronic ignition means you can get 15 sparks each time. Properly set up they'll start without too much trouble.

“You can upgrade the suspension, but it won't make a great deal of difference. Some people fit the two-way damping system, but I find that a little soft. You can fit sidecar springs and thicker oil to stiffen it up again.

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Many thanks to Rob Drury for riding his Mk.2 Clubman for photos, and his superb lean angle!

“Velocettes didn't have many mechanical weak points. There's no failure of big ends or bearings or things like that. The frame design is old fashioned and a bit big and heavy, but they still handle well. I believe they wanted to upgrade it, but just didn't have the money.

“Lots of people want to upgrade Venoms to Mk.II Clubman or Thruxton spec, with clip-ons, rear sets and separate headlights, but riders are also getting older now and want to be able to sit up and see over the hedges rather than having their heads down. The thing about Venom ownership is that it's a good idea to have a bit of an understanding of what you are taking on.” 

■ **Thanks to Classic Motorcycles Ltd of Northwich for the use of three of their Venoms for these photographs. Call Lawrence to see what is in stock, on 01928 788500, or see the back page of this magazine**

SPECIFICATION

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

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1928 Moto Guzzi Corsa 2V

The C 2V, which means 'Corsa Due Valvole' or two-valve race bike, was the first Guzzi racing machine, created just seven years after the factory started. And lucky Adam Bolton gets to ride it!





MAKING A TRIP TO ITALY TO TEST CLASSIC bikes has obvious pleasures, but I assure you that it's also very hard work! What it never is, is predictable, and even with the planning and organisation that I put in at my end, it's impossible to really know what might happen or what I might end up riding, as the Italian way of doing things is just – different. And that makes things slightly stressful, very exciting – or both.

This time around was no different and the weather wasn't its usual Mediterranean self either. "It's been lovely here," everyone tells me, "you must have brought the English rain with you."

Then a casual mention of a Moto Guzzi competition machine by a contact of mine got my pulse racing. A couple of phone calls later and I'm promised: "We can go there tomorrow and see it."

The day arrives with blue skies and sunshine



and a trip to San Miniato, which sits between Pisa and Florence, sees us rolling up at an underground workshop and garage. I'm met by Sandro Laici and Giuliano Tamburini, both warm and enthusiastic in their greetings: "We're members of the Moto Storiche Toscane – welcome!"

They open the doors to reveal a treasure trove of machines, sidecars, old helmets, posters and engines. I've been in this situation many times before but the excitement of seeing so many fine motorcycles in one place never fails to hit home. I spot at once various Moto Guzzi singles, a Falcone, a GTW, a Sport 15, all lovely, but then I spot another, older Guzzi skulking towards the back, low and lean, no lights, and hand gear change.

"Which one do you want to ride?" I'm asked, now happy and relieved. Understandably, owners don't want some unknown from across Europe jumping on their pride and joy, especially when it hasn't been specifically arranged in advance (which strictly speaking this hasn't), though they were told that I was in the area and are enthusiastic to see a copy of CBG that I keep with me.

I then point to what has to be the race bike. "Ah, the 1928 Moto Guzzi C 2V. Good choice!" says Sandro, and Giuliano begins to prepare to fill up the fuel tank and I start to change into my leathers.

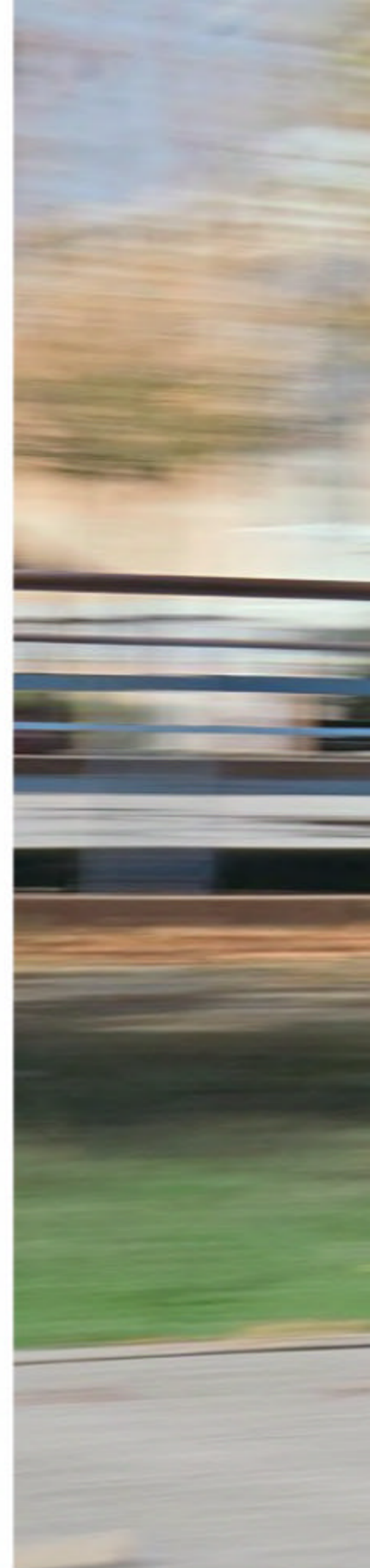
RARE MACHINE

This motorcycle is significant for various reasons, not least for its rarity and probable value. For a start, the Moto Guzzi concern started manufacturing in 1921, so this model is the result of only seven years of progress for the marque. Carlo Guzzi was convinced of the merits of racing motorcycles to develop and sell road machines, and the C 2V, which abbreviates 'Corsa Due Valvole', or two valve race bike, was the first Guzzi product of this desire.

The horizontally placed single cylinder motor was derived from the first Guzzi ever made, the GP, and the flat single layout was to remain the preferred choice of the majority of Guzzi road and race machines for the next 50 years. An over square 88mm x 82mm cylinder gave 498.4cc, and the motor and three-speed gearbox were of unit construction, which was virtually unheard of at the time of the 2 CV's introduction in 1923.

The C 2V featured overhead parallel valves, exposed pushrods and rocker arms and valve springs, and dual ignition, and its low weight of only 130kg allowed it to be propelled to a heady 75mph, putting out an estimated 17bhp at 4200rpm. Best of all, the C 2V could be bought as an over-the-counter privateer race bike and raced by anyone who could afford the price. The C 2V raced in the 1923 edition of the Giro d'Italia, as well as the Circuito del Lario, and became a popular machine for racers taking part in hill climbs and dirt road races. The bike was also the prototype of the 500cc machines raced throughout the latter part of the 1920s at the Isle of Man TT, so represented an important machine for Moto Guzzi. The C 2V was also the first Guzzi to be finished in the rosso rubino or red colour that Guzzis were to become famous for.

Giuliano explains the provenance of this particular machine from 1928, and you just couldn't make up stories like this: "My brother was on holiday in Reggio Calabria, in the south of Italy, in about 1981 I think it was. He happened to drive past a scrapyards, there were lots of them in those days, and he noticed an old bike hanging from the jaws of a crane, ready to be smashed or crushed. He went directly in, recognised that the



Above: Adam enjoys the C 2V, with 1928 ground clearance!

Top left: Sandro Laici and Giuliano Tamburini, members of the Moto Storiche Toscane, a wonderful collection of Italian motorcycling history

Left: The C 2V is one of the earliest racing bikes Moto Guzzi produced



“He happened to drive past a scrapyards, there were lots of them in those days, and he noticed an old bike hanging from the jaws of a crane, ready to be smashed or crushed.”

motorcycle was an old Guzzi of some sort, and had a word with the owner at once, expressing an interest. The owner was happy to do a swap, for three motocross bikes of some sort!”

Back in the late Seventies, trials and cross bikes were still all the rage in much of Europe, so Giuliano and Sandro bought three bikes, drove them down to Reggio Calabria, and did the deal. “It’s probable the man didn’t know what the Guzzi was, as in those days they were just old bikes with no value to most. Being a race bike, it would not have had a registration or documents, and would have been an even less appealing machine to hold on to.”

The lack of documents wasn’t a problem for Giuliano and Sandro to discover the gem they had ended up with, as the frame number tallied perfectly with Moto Guzzi’s archive. The C 2V had been constructed at Mandello del Lario in 1928, and sold to Guzzi dealer Mario Altomare of Cosenza, who had been a dealer since 1923, on March 28, 1928 precisely.

The price of the Guzzi would have been roughly 10,000 lire. Sandro explains how the pioneering Moto Guzzi dealerships had to operate: “Dealers had to pay up front for machines and then sell them on. Bikes were ridden down through Italy from Mandello and

delivered to the dealers personally. It’s almost sure that Altomare had a firm order from a customer who wanted to race, and that this bike was the one delivered.” Sadly though, this Guzzi’s life as a racer will remain unknown as there is no history or records of the bike between 1928 and 1980, despite Sandro and Giuliano’s efforts to jog Altomare’s memory in the years preceding his death in the early 1990s.

TEST TRACK

Without hiring Mugello or Monza, finding places to ride these machines isn’t always easy but Sandro points over to what seems to be an old cycling or running track in the distance. “We’ll take it there,” he says, and he proceeds to easily and quickly start up the Guzzi, and accompanied by Giuliano on an old Gilera, they ride helmetless and noisily to the track. It’s ideal, though I’m not sure about the legalities of it all, but I just go along with it...when in Rome (or San Miniato) and all that.

The Guzzi sits on its stand, resplendent in the sunshine. Sandro explains that he was given the job of restoring the Guzzi by Giuliano, and his years of working in the industrial machinery business had given him the skills and know-how. “The Guzzi was luckily pretty much complete when we acquired it,”

“The bottom of the exhaust is just three inches or so off the floor, as are the foot pegs with the ‘Guzzi’ brand beautifully cast into them. The handlebars are low and wide and remind me of a board track racer’s bars”

he explains. “There were a couple of levers missing, as was the exhaust pipe. The oil lines were wrecked, and the fuel tank was dented and bashed about. The motor was given a fairly straightforward rebuild, with all new bearings. Worst part was the top frame tube that was completely distorted and broken by the crane, which had grabbed it in the scrapyard. It was the toughest part of the restoration, replacing this frame tube, while keeping the frame straight on a jig.

“The paintwork has been done in the same nitro-cellulose paint they would have used in the factory in 1928, to the correct Lechler colour code for the period.”

In fact, the C 2V wears the ASI brass plaque only given to motorcycles in Italy that are already in, or restored to, impeccable original condition, and Sandro and Giuliano are rightly proud of this, especially as only 400 or so C 2Vs were ever constructed.

LOUD AND RAW

These Guzzi motors may seem slightly messy to some, with the oil and fuel pipes criss-crossing here and there, and the bacon slicer flywheel taking up most of the space on the left, but at least the motor is compact and lacking in height, which allows it to be slung so incredibly low in the tubular rigid frame, but it is so recognisably Moto Guzzi, which I like. The bottom of the exhaust is just three inches or so off the floor, as are the foot pegs with the ‘Guzzi’ brand beautifully cast into them.

The handlebars are low and wide and remind me of a board track racer’s bars. I’m surprised to find a conventional throttle, not a lever, though the advance/retard, decompression, air and brake and clutch levers are all as to be expected. The advance/retard controls a Bosch magneto mounted on the top of the crankcase, and the throttle controls an Amac 28.5mm race carburettor. The kick-start is on the left, and tucked neatly away behind the big flywheel, and while I prepare myself, Giulio starts up the Guzzi. The sound

through the straight through exhaust pipe is just loud, raw and stirring, and rather intimidating.

An elderly lady walking nearby sensibly leaves the area, while at the same time someone strange-looking on a bicycle with a can of beer in his hand just draws nearer. It’s like entering the arena, and though not quite Christians to the Lions, the fact that I’m about to ride this venerable and valuable (that’s roughly double the average salary valuable) round my own track in the middle of a civil Tuscan town makes me sweat.

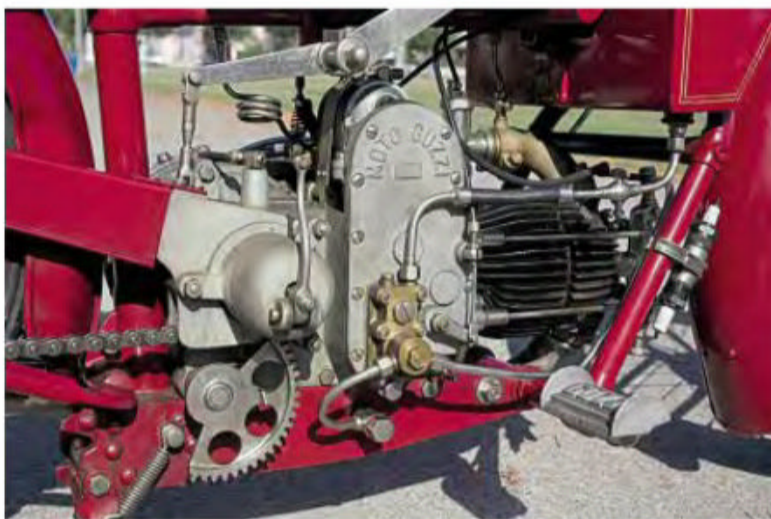
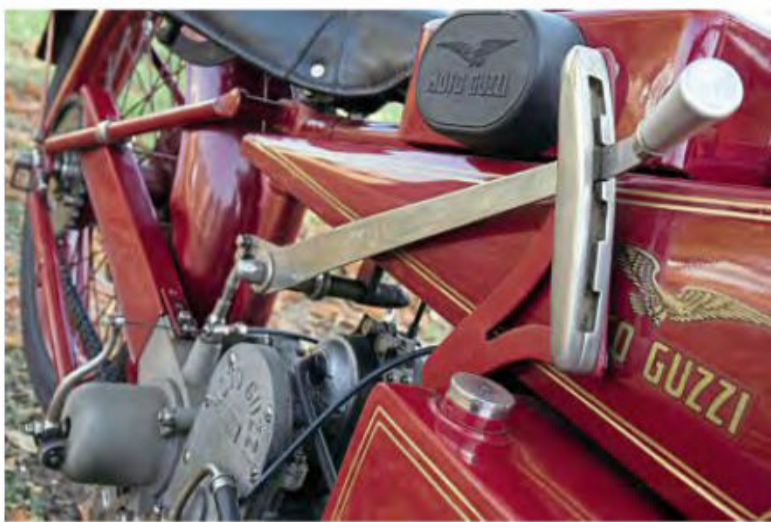
I engage first gear by pulling up with the hand change, mounted on the right of the tank, and off I go. The bars feel wide, but I become accustomed to them quickly, and in fact, the Moto Guzzi proves really quite easy to ride. The hardest part of riding this kind of motorcycle in my opinion is coordinating the throttle off, clutch in and gear change procedure, but there’s nothing to worry about on the C 2V, as the big flywheel’s momentum just keeps the Guzzi rolling forward without much of a lapse in speed.

Okay, the gears crunch a bit even though the clutch is light to use, but that’s to be expected, and with some deliberate and precise actions, I soon find that I can get into third and top gear and be accelerating away before braking and changing down for each of the four bends on this ‘track’.

The brakes work enough to scrub off some speed but are from 1928 after all (this is one of the first of the C 2V’s to have a front brake!) and I find it better to just change down a cog, use engine braking and enjoy the wild sound through the nickel-covered exhaust pipe. Though I try and see what effect the advance/retard mechanism has, the straights aren’t really long enough to notice much elongating of the Guzzi’s gait, and I’m on the flat, so I leave it alone.

Encouraged by the smiles on Giuliano and Sandro’s faces, I continue to do lap after lap of the track, impressed by the handling of the Guzzi, and it’s very exciting to lean into the bends, though I’m mindful





of how close the pegs are to the ground after sensing one of them grind ever so slightly. The motor is wonderful, and set up very nicely to respond smoothly to any rider's demands. Quick acceleration is limited by the bacon slicer spinning for all it's worth, as well as the size of our mini track, but the huge torque and flexibility of the engine is just fantastic, and useable. In fact, I can feel that third gear is geared high (apparently two teeth extra on the cog), and the Guzzi wants to be given full steam ahead and an open throttle on a track or long fast road to be appreciated properly as a race machine.

At the same time, the engine is so low revving that you can also pop pop along at walking pace if required, and it reminds me of times in the past when I have seen Italian owners of Guzzi singles holding impromptu competitions to see who can get their motor to run at the lowest rpm without stalling. I can feel that this must have been a very quick machine in its day.

I eventually have to be forcibly flagged down for photographs, so enjoyable is the C 2V to ride round and round, and I'm conscious I might never get the opportunity again. What a thrill, and I'm amazed the local carabinieri haven't turned up.

Sandro points out some of the racing accessories and details: the quick release filler cap that is hinged on both fuel and oil tanks, with a butterfly type

Above: Adam gets used to the front brake; though this is one of the first of this model to offer one! Despite its looks, the C 2V is surprisingly easy to ride

friction mechanism that means no time is wasted unscrewing threads; the beautiful damper that adds to the stiffening of the two springs at the top of the girder forks, and still with brass manufacturers' nameplate; the large but elegant steering damper mechanism bolted to the top frame rail for stiffness; the spare spark plug holder on the right hand frame down tube. And he proudly points out that the original Brooks sprung saddle, which was ruined in the scrapyard, was reupholstered in local leather from Santa Croce.

The Moto Guzzi C 2V is a fine racing motorcycle, and so modern for its time. I've been invited back to try out other vintage Guzzis, so I can't wait to compare.

Thanks to Giuliano Tamburini and Sandro Laici of Moto Storiche Toscane for letting me test this beautiful and rare motorcycle for CBG. **CBG**

1928 MOTO GUZZI CORSA 2V

BORE: 88MM **STROKE:** 82MM **CAPACITY:** 498.4CC **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 5.25:1
POWER: 17BHP 4200RPM **VALVE TYPE:** OHV **NUMBER OF GEARS:** three **IGNITION:**
 dual ignition with Bosch magneto **CARBURETTOR:** Amac race 28.5mm **LUBRICATION:**
 Geared oil pump and oil tank **TRANSMISSION:** primary gears, secondary chain
WHEELBASE: 1410mm **FRONT SUSPENSION:** sprung girder forks with racing friction
 damper **REAR SUSPENSION:** rigid **WHEELS:** painted steel rims and spokes, 19 x 2.51n
TYRE SIZE FRONT: 3.00 x 26in **TYRES SIZE REAR:** 3.00 x 26in **DRY WEIGHT:** 130kg **FUEL**
TANK CAPACITY: 11 litres **OIL CAPACITY:** 3 litres **MAX SPEED APPROX:** 85mph

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New

RETRO

What's the new **ROYAL ENFIELD** like to live with?

A lot has been said about the Interceptor 650. So Oli and Matt try living with one in the UK. What's it like?

WORDS BY OLI AND MATT PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY 'I'VE GOT MAN FLU' CHAPMAN

THANKS TO GV BIKES IN TAUNTON AND MOTOGB, IMPORTER, FOR THE LOAN BIKES.

THIS IS A BRAND-NEW MOTORCYCLE. IT'S A 650CC twin, looks pretty good and is easy to ride – and it costs £5500. On the road. With three year's warranty and three year's breakdown cover. So, is there a catch?

WHAT OLI THOUGHT

The other day I saw an ad for a CB350 twin from 1975, describing it as a middleweight. It's a mark of how our expectations have changed that Royal Enfield's new 650cc parallel twin is now counted as one of those middleweights.

I went for the Interceptor rather than the GT, as I personally think it's the better looking of the twins (other opinions are available). I'm also getting a bit stiff in the joints and increasingly wide around the waistband, so a café racer crouch isn't for me. First impressions being the clean lines and all the gubbins tucked away, no mass of tubes and pipes many Japanese retros suffer from. The switchgear is simple and straightforward. The indicator switch is flip on, push off, just like those on my old Yamaha XS650 twin. There's a kill switch, a starter button, a horn and a dipswitch, and that's it. There are two clocks that are neat, with a mere handful of warning lights in the speedo and a digital fuel gauge – something that puts me off the Triumph Street Twin is the complicated single clock look.

Sitting on the Interceptor, I was immediately enamoured by the sit-up-and-beg riding position and I could keep my feet flat on the ground at a standstill. Paddling it around to take pictures, I did wonder if it would be a little tall for those less than 5ft 8in or so. The seat is thin and without a frame modification or

shortening the shock absorber height there's not going to be any way of easily lowering the ride height by much. Finish is good, much better than the early prototypes, with nice thick paint on the tank and frame, braided hoses, alloy rims, and there's a neat lockable panel for the tool kit.

There's a restrained rorty noise from those two big silencers, which I expect would be the first thing to get dumped by a new owner.

Within a few hundred yards it's immediately clear that this is a motorcycle that's going to be easy to get to grips with. The wide semi trail-type bars make it easy to flip about and the riding position is perfect for reading the road a long way in front. Once they've got the model established, this is going to make a corking street scrambler, fitted with high pipes and road/trail tyres. It pulls away easily, with nothing more than a rustle from the 270-degree crank twin. There's just a very faint vibration to remind you it's still running. The clutch is light, and the gear shift is superb, as good as anything from Japan.

Once out of town and onto a muddy and potholed B-road the Interceptor is in its element. It's completely sure-footed and forgiving, the suspension is comfy without being squishy, and you can just chuck it into a bend and come out grinning the other end, keen to do it again, only a few miles an hour faster next time. Legal limit riding is easy. I relied almost entirely on the front brake, which, although just a single disc, easily pulls things to a halt.

Fuelling is faultless. For me it's got one too many gears, perhaps to satisfy the Indian market demand for ▶





a 100mph motorcycle, but for me the most fun was to be had between third and fifth, when it'll whizz past slower moving vehicles and carve through traffic with ease. Just drop it down a gear, the way people always used to, give it a handful and you're off, past, and searching for the next target.

Initially I wondered if the seat might be a bit uncomfortable on a long ride but the more I rode it, the comfier it got.

The bike feels light and I expect a shorter, slighter rider would have no trouble slinging it about. It makes a great city bike as much as it does a back-road scratcher. Some have concerns that a bike that's 'just' a 650 wouldn't make much of a tourer, but a screen fitted would allow you to travel for hours on an autobahn.

I do think it's possibly a bit tall for some. Apart from that, this is a smashing middleweight motorcycle that will have you grinning from ear to ear. If they'd had a delivery date for the red and black one with the black wheel rims, I'd have been hard pushed not to put my money down. Five-and-a-half grand? Bargain.



WHAT MATT THOUGHT

Oli's verdict on the Interceptor is similar to many friends I've invited to try. Easy to ride, quick enough, with good engine braking and comfortable. In a word – friendly. Oli almost bought one! So he has played good cop; am I to play bad cop?

I didn't know what to expect from the Interceptor 650. I've owned Enfield singles before and they have their foibles, but then we know that and therefore forgive them. But a brand-new twin? First impressions mean a lot, and with less than 50 miles on the odometer, won't be tainted by previous riders, but maybe by a still-tight engine.

Paint finish is lovely on the tank, however they seem to have an odd-blend of silver/grey paint for the engine casing, headlamp holder and other sundries, like the old Bullets. Elsewhere chrome abounds, some real and some plastic. Clocks read well (though the speedo is brighter than the rev counter as it has mph and kph which looks odd at night), while ignition barrel and switchgear look cheap, as do the indicators and the welding on the top of the downpipe.

But the large silencers (they have catalytic converters in them) have a perfect finish, as do the alloy wheels and the polished handlebars, complete with cool brace.

It's taller than I hoped. I thought with Royal Enfield trying to make a bike for the world market it would be lower, just an inch would have made a big difference. And I can't lower the suspension as it's on its lowest preload setting.

Its largest rival, Triumph's Street Twin, is about the same weight (202kg-445lb) but is that inch lower. It also happens to be around ▶



What others thought

Pete, who rides a Matchless G3L but has had many bikes, both old and new, wondered why the 270 degree crank. 'Why does it need to sound like a V-twin and not a parallel twin?' We muttered about economy and emissions. We also looked at the suspension, with the preload on the rear shocks so little we could increase the preload platform by hand. Yet the forks are through the top yoke.

Rob, who had let me ride his wonderful Velocette Venom Clubman, liked the ease of ride and overall package. 'It is so easy and intuitive to ride' he smiled.

Hutch, a British bike specialist was a surprise: I thought he wouldn't like it. He was away for ages, 'which is a good sign' Shelley, his better half, told me. 'That's a good bike' said Hutch on his return. 'Bit soft, but enough power and enjoyable'.

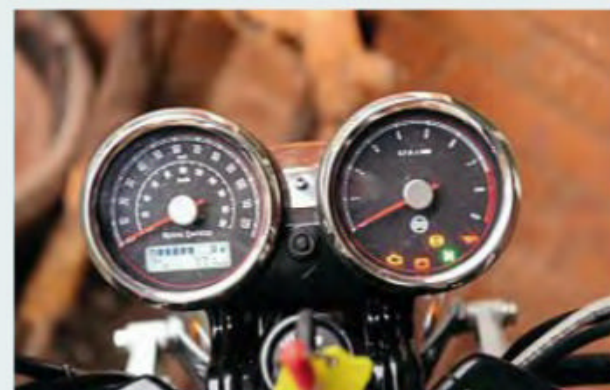
£2500 more expensive. Will it hold its value more than the Enfield? Will its finish last longer? Only time will tell.

Engine-wise, the bike is as described before. No pointless 'engine modes' to bother with. Brilliant gearchange, great throttle connection and while Oli thought too many gears, I feel sixth is perfect for those wanting to spend time on main roads. 60mph is just under 4000rpm in top, with 70mph just 500rpm higher, so you can cruise main roads like any modern bike. No unwanted vibes either.

The handling is okay, until you start pushing on, when confidence wains from a lack of feedback or damping of the soft spring rate. And the geometry is odd. But then fast riding isn't the remit for the Enfield. At normal speeds balance is good, the bike never gets twitchy – quite the reverse in fact. A good pothole does send a shock up your bum, just like the early Hinkley Bonnevilles suffered from. And the front spring rate is so soft hard braking easily gets the ABS twitching. And it's not a powerful brake: The Kawasaki W650/ W800 had worse, but the 'W' was the most pitiful brake I've encountered on a modern bike, so beating that is little to be proud of.

Steering lock is perfect, giving low-speed confidence, along with the rear brake that gives good feel. That seat looks thin, but I found it fine, even for a whole tank full. The pegs take a little getting used to, because the clutch casing sticks out, pushing your right leg out, but the left peg places your foot further out than your right! Many old bikes do the same, but you get used to it. Tyres felt fine, well adapted to the bike and look great.

The steel tank will happily take a tankbag, while the silencers are not too high to impede panniers. A good toolkit hides behind the lockable side cover. The pillion grab rail is ugly but effective and holds bungees to the pillion footrests for



luggage. Why do the rear shocks need a remote reservoir? And while the downpipes cool quickly (I think they're double-skinned for noise), you have to wait at least half an hour for the silencers to cool enough to put a cover over it – they get seriously hot.

I managed over 500 miles and thoroughly enjoyed the Enfield, with the engine loosening up, mpg getting better – I was getting around 125 miles to an £11.50 fill up, but that increased to 145 – and the brakes were coming alive. I could whizz to the shops for grub and the engine fuelled perfectly, with no cold-start hunting; or I could cover 250 miles up to the office and back, with no bum, wrist or leg ache, in a day.

CONCLUSION

The classic fans liked the ease of use mixed with the feel of an old bike, while the modern riders liked the looks and the

ease with which it could be personalised – bars, silencers, seats and lights all look easy to exchange.

The suspension is poor and affects braking when riding hard, but then if that's how you ride you wouldn't buy an Enfield – it's fine for normal use and gives an old-fashioned comfort. I've been told the engine will easily develop more power over time, but for now 45bhp is plenty. It makes you use the bike and feels like you're in control. It's fun, it's easy to ride and it's not expensive.

So is it better than the Street Twin? No, but for the price, then yes. Think about what you want your bike for, have a demo and the answer will become clear. But for now, the Royal Enfield Interceptor 650 gets a thumbs-up from us. **CBG**



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PAGES 20 & 21



STEVE COOPER

I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW

Steve's workbench is in a mess, so he ponders the question why and how does it get like this?

“My only defence, such as it is, has been lifted from John Lennon's book of quotes – ‘life is what happens while you're making other plans.’”

WHAT'S ON YOUR WORKBENCH CURRENTLY?

I only ask because mine looks like 1980s robot and cheeky metallic android Metal Mickey has just yacked up all over it. Normally I don't work in such a tip but you know how it goes sometimes... or is it just me? In no particular order we have: a 14/15mm ratchet spanner I've used just the once, the bottom half of a Yamaha CS3C motor, several head and base gaskets for same, a pair of RD350 indicators that have been resident for at least 18 months, two baffles from an AS1 that need welding, four new condensers for my Suzuki Stinger, a wiring loom from a Yamaha YCS1C I have no recollection of ever buying and a pair of carburettors soaking in cleaning solution.

You might very well, and quite reasonably, think that's more than enough but as I type there's also a very heavily repaired petrol tank from a very rare Honda sitting there happily as the recently applied tank liner cures.

Why this level of carnage you ask? My only defence, such as it is, has been lifted from John Lennon's book of quotes – ‘life is what happens while you're making other plans’. It's a fatal truism that seems ever more apposite as I hurtle through my supposed golden years. Hypothetically I'm notionally retired or, at best, semi-retired but in actuality I've never been busier and occasionally ponder how I ever found time to go to work and hold down a full time job.

On the premise of the well known edict that work expands to fill the time available I can only assume a similar, if less well known law applies to work benches and their capacity to carry ‘stuff’. Even so, the surface is reaching close to critical mass so something has to be done.

I would use the space underneath but that's fully occupied by DIY detritus I studiously try to avoid using. Oh, and a pair of Kawasaki EN450 carburettors whose origin remains a total and utter mystery as I've never owned one, worked on one or ridden one.

It's readily apparent that the bench needs a damn good sort out and that is, indeed, scheduled. The spanner can go back in the

drawer, the motor can go back in the frame and thereby use up the serried ranks of gaskets, the indicators can be fixed to the RD which is an easy win, the condensers can be dropped in the box conveniently labelled ‘Stinger’, and the wiring loom dropped back into the odds-n-sods box at the rear of the garage. This then only leaves the baffles which my mate Iain will weld and the carbs which need to be rebuilt then attached to the engine. Oh, and the tank which will be reunited with its owner shortly.

So, despite the apparent mayhem, there is a plan and I will have a tidy workbench which will surely tweak the collective noses of the Gods of Chaos.

Doubtless the entire cycle will be repeated ad nauseam and in perpetuity but to what end? Well obviously the workshop keeps me from getting under the feet of my much better half and, to a degree at least, generates some income as I write about the various bikes I work on. This, in turn, allows me to buy components, tools or even, (please God no I don't need any more), another project. But surely that's not the reason? No, I do all of the above and more simply because I find the process hugely mentally rewarding.

Whether it's a wreck turned into a working motorcycle, a wiring loom repurposed, a set of forks stripped down for a mate or some switch gear resurrected, I get a real sense of achievement. I know when I've done a decent job and, because I am usually the end customer, I have to ensure the work will stand up to scrutiny.

The standards set are my own and, crucially, genuine ones. There's no clipboard holding, idiotic, middle manager, assessing what I do and marking me down regardless however hard I work. I don't have to go ‘the extra mile’ simply to advance someone else's career and I'm not expecting to be paid a paltry bonus at the end of my labours either. My rewards come from a job well done and a bike that runs properly and makes me smile when I ride it.

This latterly found career I seem to have may not pay much but I tell you this...it's the best job I've ever had... tidy or not! **CBG**

Steve Cooper once had a real job pretending to be an industrial chemist but is now a classic motorcycle journalist, serial restorer, editor of the VJMC's Tansha magazine and perpetually obsessed by Japanese bikes of the 1960s & 70s. He likes two-strokes so much he often smells of semi-synthetic 2T!



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PAUL MILES

ROLLER CALL

Riding with others has its good and bad points, especially when there is a varied collection of bikes. Paul muses over the challenges of a successful run

“With this method everyone gradually shuffles forward and has their turn as a mechanical signpost for the others. In theory, this is brilliant, but from my experience the reality is somewhat different”

WENT OUT FOR A RIDE YESTERDAY – JUST setting the scene for you. It was a ‘regular’ event for the VMCC. In club parlance that means a run for any bike that’s over 25 years old. We had a great turnout and there was the usual eclectic mix of machines that only the VMCC members can really put out there.

Rubbing shoulders with 1970s BMW airheads and Japanese fours were an assortment of old British drippers, anywhere from the swinging Sixties backwards to the roaring Twenties. This presents somewhat of a logistical challenge, at least in theory. It would be reasonable to assume that 1980s man astride his 1000cc behemoth would be able to lope along at an altogether more impressive rate of knots than old Bob riding the 350 Velocette his dad bought for 11/6d in 1933. And you’d be correct, it is. So where’s the issue?


Riding in a large group has very little appeal for lots of us, there’s a lot to be said for the old adage ‘he who rides fastest, rides alone’. But we’re supposed to be a club, riding together in a show of leathery solidarity towards a common objective, which is, of course, the halfway coffee stop. So imagine, if you will, a group of several dozen machines, all playing follow my leader in a giant snake for 60 miles. But, only old Bob knows where the coffee shop is and he leads the way, his 90-year-old Velo belching smoke and oil as it finally reaches his optimal cruising speed of... 31mph. Immediately behind him is Rodney Racepace riding his 25-year-old newly-eligible Ducati 916, slowly melting from the overheating V twin and wishing his wrists were made from concrete. Line astern is not to be recommended when riding in a large gaggle of mixed abilities and machines.

Its for this reason an especially vindictive motorcycle god gave us the ‘drop-off’ system to further raise our blood pressure. In theory, it’s a fantastic plan. The ride can comprise of any number of machines, with only the ride leader and a tail-end Charlie actually needing to know the route details. The leader sets the route and the pace and, every time they need to turn or cross a roundabout the rider immediately following is instructed to wait at the junction. This allows everyone behind to see the direction of travel intended and only when the tail-end Charlie finally catches up do they re-join at the back of the ride. With this method everyone

gradually shuffles forward and has their turn as a mechanical signpost for the others. In theory, this is brilliant, but from my experience the reality is somewhat different. It’s almost impossible for the route leader not to be aware of the limitations of some of the riders and so they invariably set a sedentary pace, something I loathe. Secondly, I’ve yet to participate in a drop-off ride where somebody doesn’t miss a turning! God forbid anyone should break down: that really mucks things up.

Here in Dorset we have adopted the pre-published route method. Every entrant is issued with a ‘tulip’ map, as used in rallying for years. Simply put, you are instructed to, for example, turn left at the King’s head after 17.1 miles, then turn right at the junction marked Upper Khyber at 23.5 miles and so on. It’s all very straightforward and lets people ride together in much smaller groups of similar mechanical abilities, or indeed, alone. But how do we read this magical sheet that directs us unerringly to a slice of bread pudding and large white coffee? After all, if you have to fold it and stick it down your jacket then you’d be stopping every few minutes to check your whereabouts and blowing your chance at the buffet. The answer is, of course, a map holder, or as we call them in the VMCC, a route roller.

Available from the club shop, they resemble a mini mangle with the rolls connected by transparent plastic sheets. The route is inserted between these sheets and by simply winding one of the rolls the directions magically appear, segment by segment. This roller is clipped to the handlebars and is easily viewed from the saddle. Except it isn’t – the thing is rubbish. The rollers don’t exert sufficient tension so the plastic film billows around and the clips fit perfectly in position to no motorcycle yet made. What tends to happen, as it did for us yesterday, is one hero assumes the mantle of a samurai warrior, strapping the roller to the handlebars and bravely leading a small group of girder fork riding lunatics around damp country lanes at breakneck speeds (relatively speaking), all implicitly trusting their leader not to get them lost and therefore miss the cake – it’s all terribly British.

What about satnavs I hear you say. Please, we’re the Vintage MotorCycle Club, not Americans. 

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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PAUL D'ORLÉANS **A MISSPENT YOUTH GONE AWRY** Paul laments his misspent youth. Or was it?

“Before that cultural shift, I wore the perfume of dodginess with pride, having discovered the joys of Nortons and Velocettes, and trusted my reputation to their magnificence.”

THIS ONE IS FOR THE YOUNG 'UNS, LIKE MY 21-year-old stepdaughter, Gwen, who's at Oxford. Because when I was her age, although I'd finished university, I did not have plans. One cannot live on a barista's wage in American cities anymore, so graduates are expected to have ambition, and are judged lacking if they do not. But I was a lacker. I certainly had pursuits and prioritized splitting the air with my helmet, crouched low over a gorgeous, hand-built machine as the dials on its chronometrics went tick, tick, tick over 100 on the dial.

T E Lawrence claimed speed was man's second oldest urge, and while he seems to have ignored the primary, he certainly indulged speed on a succession of seven Brough Superiors, which he could afford from the sale of his books. Now there's a model for any speed-mad biker who can write. But I was not a self-identified writer at 21.

I don't mean to cast a golden mist on the 1980s, but one could eke out a living on a minimum of labour then, and still buy motorcycles. Maybe it's still possible, but not in San Francisco. I'd learned to paint houses to pay tuition, and kept the habit in civilian life, though adamantly not full-time. I joked at being semi-retired, as my finest hours were spent tinkering with rusty old junk, as vintage motorcycles were viewed before the Art of the Motorcycle. While that Guggenheim exhibit shot classic bike prices through the roof, it was also a handle for non-bikers to grasp: garage moles were adding value to art objects. I don't know where money sits on the Lawrence's hierarchy of urges, but ordinary folk understand pursuits with a pound value, and after 1998, collecting rusty old junk became semi-respectable.

Before that cultural shift, I wore the perfume of dodginess with pride, having discovered the joys of Nortons and Velocettes, and trusted my reputation to their magnificence. One is never alone in such eccentricity, and my cadre of café racer fans dubbed itself the Roadholders MC, and did exactly what speed-mad bikers have always done, hanging out and riding together. Our rival club was the British Death Fleet, its name stolen from a Falklands War headline on a newspaper tacked to the ceiling of our favourite watering hole, Specs. Yes, theirs was the better name. One of our club (Robin Tuluie) was still at UC Berkeley

studying physics, riding his Commando to classes, and on weekends, stripping the lights for vintage racing. Rob raced under a nom de plume, fearing a cut-off of school funds if dad found out. His self-tuned Norton did well, and we wore his victories like a flower in our caps, as Lawrence said of the Brough SS100 at his RAF camp.

By 1987 Roadholder Adam had opened the Ace Cafe on Folsom Street in SF, because the London Ace was then a tyre shop, and we were torch-bearers of café racer history. Unlike the original, our Ace featured both a bar and great food. I still didn't have plans, but dug hard into old books and magazines about bikes, amassing stacks in a quest to over-stand motorcycle history. It was a practical obsession, as I was buying every oddball two-wheeler in old men's sheds and far-flung dealers, from Ambassadors to Zeniths, hailing from Argentina to New Zealand. I treasure the faxed photos of a late SS100 engine in Buenos Aires, with its promises of being 'virginal, untouched, and perfect'. Yes, I bought it, and soon found a complete rolling chassis in Uruguay, as one did before the internet.

While Rob the Roadholder was simultaneously getting his PhD in Texas while winning at Daytona with his home-made, self-tuned racers, and Adam's Ace won dine-'n'-design awards, I took a few months to explore the Soviet Bloc (with Denise the Roadholder) on a pair of humble MZ TS250s. We started in London, staying for weeks in a now-demolished Victorian squat near Elephant & Castle, rebuilding their inevitable broken second gears in the living room.

In Warsaw, I sketched needed parts on notepaper: most were greeted with a headshake, with one or two lucky nods (spark plugs and a generator, but no tyres or light bulbs). This wasn't part of a plan, but was definitely a Master's degree in geo-political motorcycle touring.

I didn't see Rob the Roadholder for 25 years, and by then he was head of R&D at Renault F1, near Oxford. He won two world championships using a tuned mass damper in the chassis, then two for Mercedes F1 with a 2000-piece hydraulic computer that self-levelled the car. Now he's at Bentley, and back at two wheels with the Ducati MotoGP team. I've found myself with a career in motorbikes too, after a misspent youth pursuing a silly hobby, and riding far too fast. What went wrong? **CBG**

Paul D'Orléans 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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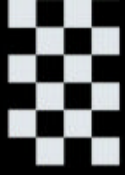
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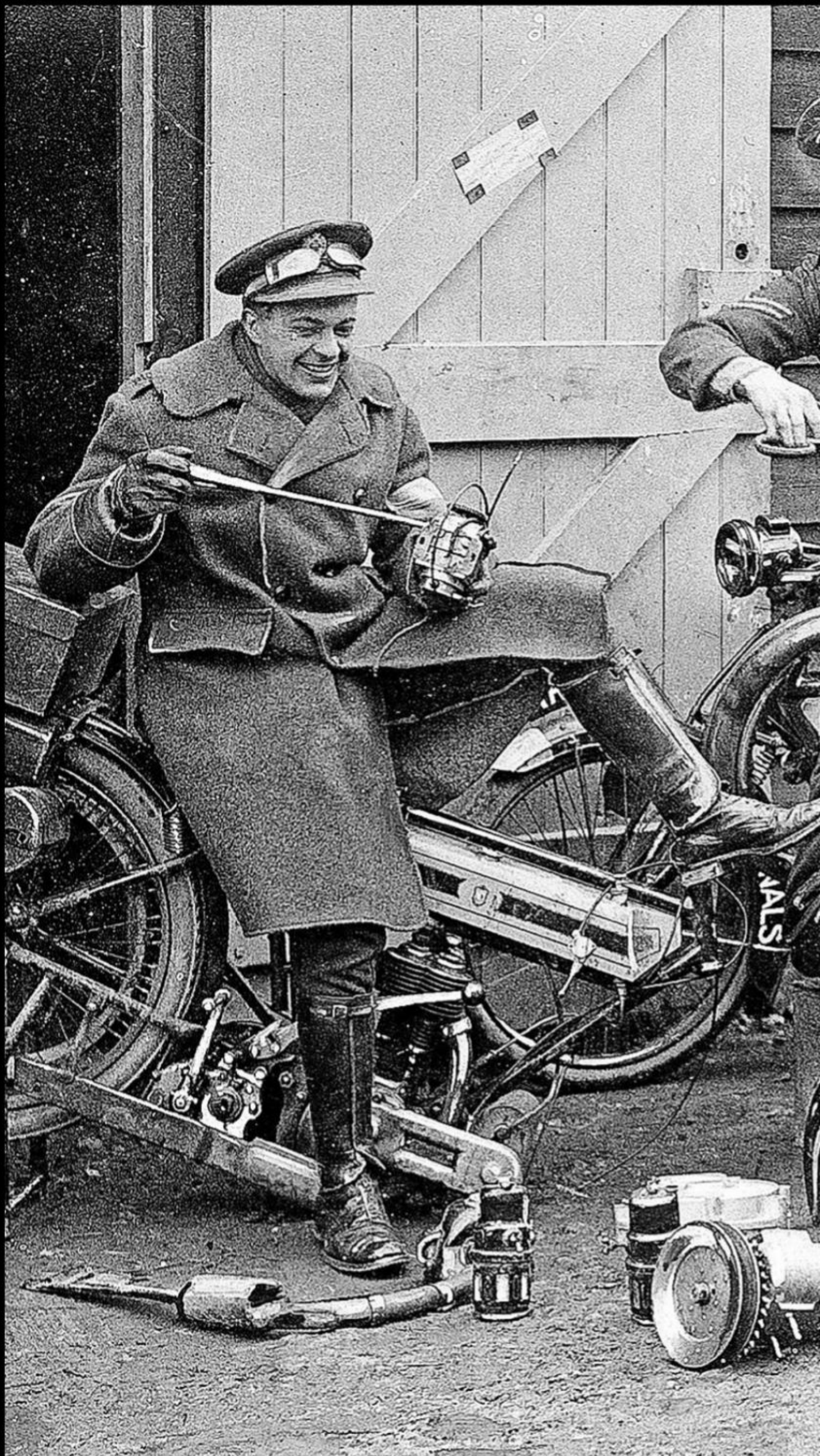
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■ ARCHIVE POSTER

A light-hearted moment from the First World War with 60th Signals Royal Engineers despatch riders enjoying a maintenance day with their Model H Triumphs. 'Old machines, turned up and trued, to order. We push and go? Perhaps' reads the sign.

The wheel being trued by the gent having his hair 'cut' looks like it has seen a little too much action, but how brave and resilient the chaps were to still have such ability to keep their spirits high. **CBG**





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German Red Indian Scout

Until seven years ago, this Indian Scout had been owned by just one man. But this American was built, and has spent its life, in Germany.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GARY CHAPMAN





INDIAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MARQUE AT the very forefront of motorcycle design and technology in the opening decades of the 20th century. Today, Indian is remembered mainly for its powerful, large-capacity V-twins, the first of which appeared in 1907. The Springfield firm's first twin was based on its highly successful 'F-head' (inlet-over-exhaust) single-cylinder model, and this type of engine would continue to power the road-going 'Iron Redskins' until a new 61ci (1,000cc) 'flat head' (side-valve) V-twin – the Powerplus – was introduced for 1916.

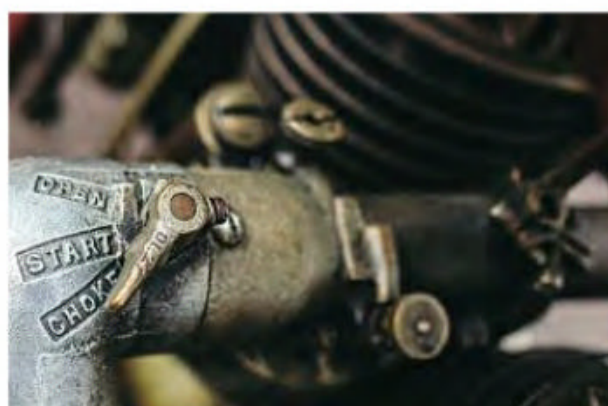
A smaller Indian V-twin model, the 37ci (600cc) Scout, joined the Powerplus in 1920, soon gaining a deserved reputation for durability; so much so that 'You can't wear out an Indian Scout' became its advertising slogan. Contributing to this longevity was the use of gears for the primary drive rather than the customary chain, and this unusual feature would endure until 1933.

A 45ci (750cc) variant was first offered in 1927 and then in April 1928 the 101 Scout appeared featuring a revised 750cc 'flat head' engine in a new, longer-wheelbase frame. This sporting machine would prove an immense success for the Springfield firm, so much so that its replacement in 1931 by a heavier Chief-framed model was greeted with dismay.

Introduced in 1934, the Sport Scout went some way towards retrieving the Scout's reputation, featuring a lighter 'keystone' (open) frame and European-style girder forks. Lighter and faster than its immediate predecessor, the Sport Scout was just what enthusiasts and racers had been crying out for, and today remains a favourite among discerning Indian owners and riders.

Copies of the Indian Scout were built





Like it?

This beautiful Indian will be auctioned by Bonhams at the 39th Carole Nash International *Classic Motorcycle* show, at Stafford, on April 28/29.

The guide valuation for the Indian has been set at £16,000-20,000.

I had to see it for myself, as the photographs looked amazing. But also, there is undoubtedly a story of how Mr Rinfart managed to hold on to such a machine – an American machine – in wartime Germany. There are unconfirmed reports that it was bricked up in a cellar so it shouldn't be confiscated!



in Germany by Max Bernhardt & Co of Berlin and marketed under the 'Mabeco' name using engines manufactured by Siemens & Halske. Sidevalve models displacing 596cc and 749cc were offered initially, together with an overhead-valve '750' from 1925. Changing the colour scheme from green to red turned out to be a bad idea as Indian responded with a lawsuit that ended with Max Bernhardt & Co's liquidation.

The German firm quickly resumed production as 'Mabeco-Werke GmbH', though on this occasion with models that were less obviously cribbed from Indian.

It would appear that Indian subsequently licensed German production to Berthold Bielagk of Berlin, whose name appears on this 1927 machine's VIN plate (Indians were assembled in Germany at this time as a way of avoiding high import duties). These German-built Indians incorporated various locally sourced components including, in this case, Bosch headlights and a steering damper supplied by Carmen Werke AG of Stuttgart. This machine also carries the nameplate of the supplying dealership: Friedrich & Leverentz of Charlottenburg.

This Scout comes with an original German registration document (*Kraftfahrzeugbrief*) dating from 1937, stamped in July that year and again in



December 1950, on both occasions to the same owner: 'Bertrand Rinfart' (or similar), whose profession is listed as 'engineer'.

We are advised that the regional television station NDR Ferensehen ran a report on this Indian in 2007, describing it at that time as a 'one-owner' motorcycle.

The current owner purchased the machine circa 2012 from Klassische Automobile GmbH & Co KG, Wuppertal. Equipped with luggage rack and leather panniers, this rare German-assembled Scout appears to be highly original and would grace any collection of Indian Motorcycles. **CBC**



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INTERNATIONAL NORTON

Sandy Bloy has had an affinity with cammy Nortons since the tender age of 19. He found this model and it has been beautifully brought to the condition you see here

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: STUART URQUHART



WAS LOST IN A DAYDREAM. SUDDENLY THE COCKPIT radio crackled (a text on my mobile) 'What's the plan old boy - over?' probed Squadron Leader. 'Leaving at 9am Squadron Leader,' I replied, '... should rendezvous with you around 10.30am, given a fair wind and no bogies... I'll be flying the old girl today sir, in the off-chance of some terrific pics alongside the old Spit - over.' The radio crackles mechanically once again: 'Tally-ho old bean, will have the kettle on, all's quiet here... the Spitfire and Tiger Moth await your arrival - have a good flight, over and out.' The radio went silent (mobile text concludes as Mr Smiley pops up). I instinctively smiled back and flicked off my radio (phone)... the daydream ended.

DAY'S FORECAST: BLUE SKIES

I was tingling with excitement - this was shaping up to be a blue skies day and one never to be repeated. Soon I'm thudding along the Tay Estuary on the old girl, a 1938 Ariel Red Hunter, and I'm reminded of my last visit to the Scottish Aero Club's open gathering.

Back then we were buzzed by a Spitfire that suddenly crested a forested hill, banked swiftly to my right, and then held a level course several metres above the silvery Tay. I recall I could clearly see the pilot's face, fixated on my Ariel as we snaked along the narrow road in almost perfect formation. I stopped at the roadside as the Spitfire roared vertically into the sky and I fumbled hurriedly for my camera. As the screaming machine completed a shallow loop, it levelled out once again over the Tay and I fired off several shots - hoping that I'd managed to capture both plane and motorcycle in my digital lens. Then the Spitfire banked gracefully, turned, and crossed the Tay in seconds flat, making a B-line northwards to where I imagined nestled Scone Airport.

I remember being elated and boasted freely to friends about my close encounter, only to feel slightly deflated when I learned much later that I had been harried by a modern replica Spitfire. In my naive excitement I could have sworn that my ear drums were being attuned to a Merlin V12 on full song. ▶



Today however, I was assured we would meet the real thing. When I arrived at Scone Airport the fields adjacent to its runways were already buzzing with crowds of enthusiasts, fussing and polishing a myriad of modern and classic aeroplanes. The Spitfire I had come to see was far off in the distance, but unmistakable in its Second World War insignia and familiar form.

But before I could admire the UK's most distinguished fighter plane I had a date with my good friend Sandy Bloy and his equally iconic Norton International. As I chuffed around the aerodrome's mini-roundabout, my prewar Ariel attracted the attention of several grinning aviators and I knew I was going to be in perfect company. Sandy has a classic motorcycle business located within the airport grounds and through his many contacts we had permission to photograph several of his classics alongside some of the classic aeroplanes that would be 'dropping in' to the Scottish Aero Club's gathering. The only requirement was that we would display some classic motorcycles for the wandering crowd to appreciate and enjoy – marvellous!

My task for this feature was to capture Sandy's stunning Model 30 in close proximity to the Aerodrome's Spitfire. The possibility of including a period Gypsy Moth was also on offer, should its pilot/restorer consent to us taking pictures on the day. I was determined to use both opportunities to set up some period-style shots of bike and planes – possibly even include the Gypsy Moth's pilot. As it turned out both planes were made available and the bi-plane's

pilot William could not have been more helpful. To my astonishment William simply manoeuvred his bright red Gypsy Moth by hand to assist in composing the photographs – he and a skilled member of the ground crew simply positioned the bi-plane by manoeuvring it tail-first around the Norton! The results can be judged hereabouts.

SANDY'S INTERS

Sandy owned his first cammy Norton at the tender age of 19. "My dad was a Norton man and he encouraged me to get into motorcycles at a very young age," said Sandy. "He was a London plumber making a decent wage, but even so, he couldn't afford a camshaft Norton and settled for an ES2. Back in the early Fifties an International Norton could cost a year's wages – roughly the same price as an Austin 7 or a Morris 8. But with dad's financial clout, I built myself a cammy special made from disparate parts – a Triumph front end, BSA seat, and a home-made exhaust system with similar DIY rear plunger suspension, which really didn't work wonders in the handling department," Sandy laughed.

"Then I dabbled with a grasstrack cammy Norton; which being another 'bitza', wouldn't run well enough to go racing, never mind a run to my local cafe. But all the time I was building experience. So when I bought my third cammy Norton, it went so well that I decided to invest in a DIY Humbrol paint job for the model's pie-crust petrol tank, only to watch it dissolve before my very eyes after a blow-back of Castrol R splattered across the tank during a spirited blast down our high



street! Not long after I'd laboriously repainted the tank in cellulose, the seat suddenly broke in half as a result of the stresses of constantly bump-starting the motorcycle. Depressed with my run of bad luck, I sold it on. Many other bikes came and went before we moved north," concluded Sandy.

However, Sandy's fourth cammy Norton that is featured across these pages is no 'bitza' and is a fitting testament to his long-accrued restoration skills. Sandy bought the machine from a local Perthshire motorcyclist in 2016. The International Model 30 was a rare find and involved a lot of patience and 'word of mouth' research by Sandy to uncover the bike's location and then convince its elderly owner to part with it.

Sandy takes up the story: "Since my earlier experiences with Norton cammy singles I'd been keeping one ear to the ground for another one to turn up. Any that I managed to source were located down south or were being offered by specialist dealers for eye-watering premiums. Through a VMCC friend I received a strong lead concerning a dilapidated Norton single of unknown pedigree that languished in a Perthshire village shed – just several miles from my front door!

"Being a Norton man, naturally my curiosity was aroused, so I began to ask around about the bike. I was soon pointed in the direction of a retired Perth & District Club road racer known as 'Auld Willie' – a local celebrity of the Sixties who raced Tiger Cubs at Errol and Gask Airfields. On calling Willie up I discovered he was well into his Eighties – but I was

Left: What a sight: Model 40 International Norton, prewar Ariel Red Hunter and a Gypsy Moth, all at Scone airfield.

Right: Sandy's Norton is as original as he could get it, largely thanks to his skill and its previous owner, racer 'Auld Willie'. Not bad for an ex-sand racer!





“Sandy owned his first cammy Norton at the tender age of 19. ‘My dad was a Norton man and he encouraged me to get into motorcycles at a very young age’”



surprised when Willie said that he already knew me from previous visits to my old motorcycle dealership in Perth. Before concluding our conversation Willie invited me to his home for a coffee and a chat on the proviso that I brought along an interesting classic that we ‘could enjoy a gid auld blether o’er’ – as Willie put it,” chuckled Sandy.

So, one sunny summer day Sandy obliged and popped round on a recently restored Big 4, much to Auld Willie’s delight. Willie invited Sandy over several more times for a natter and the pair shouted back and forth at one another (for Willie turned out to be quite deaf!) before on Sandy’s fourth visit, Willie asked if he would like to see his old Norton.

“I was astonished that Willie’s old bike turned out to be a Model 30, although it had seen better days. I was really expecting a Big4 or an ES2 – because not once during our discussions did Willie hint at the bike’s heritage – although on several occasions he had teased me about racing a cammy Norton in his youth.

“Willie invited me to roll back the dusty canvas cover and have a closer look. The Inter looked original and complete. Covered in a coating of oil and grime it certainly looked as though it had been stored under canvas for several decades. I then learned from Willie that the Norton was an ex-sand racer that had once belonged to an old friend from Ayrshire. Apparently the Inter had notched up an extensive racing history, even before Willie had bought it. Eventually our conversation turned to its deteriorating condition and lack of use – but it would take several more visits and gentle hints from me before Willie asked if I would like to buy it. Of course he knew what it was worth, but I was glad to meet his price for such a genuine machine.”

THE BUILD

Once Sandy had the Model 30 back at his premises he discovered excess play in the top bevel gear bearing that prohibited him from firing up the engine. Although Sandy could boast a long association with Norton SOHC singles, he decided to rope in a friend, John Lamb, who is an NHS prosthetic limb designer and has an unrivalled career in mechanical engineering.

“The starting procedure with a racing Norton International is the time-honoured bump-start. I had no desire to keep up this exhaustive practice and swapped the Sturmey-Archer close-ratio gearbox for another, which just happened to be fitted with a



Above: Sandy and Cuz when younger

Below: One of Sandy’s previous cammy Nortons

kick-starter. But because my racing model had rearsets, John suggested he could fabricate a folding kick-starter in his shed, which now works a treat!” beamed Sandy. “From receipts and previous chats with Willie we knew the engine had been serviced by Stewart Nichol, a respected mechanical engineer from Perth. Stewart had also fitted a standard piston (7:1) and matching cylinder at the time.”

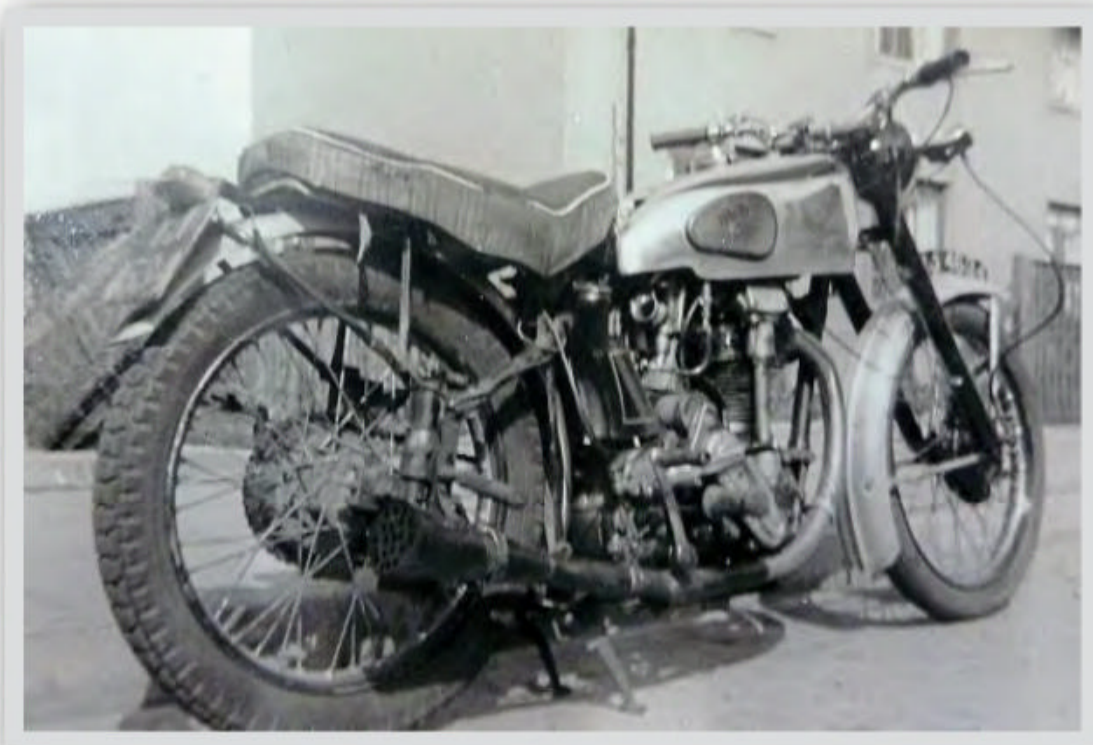
However, Sandy soon discovered that the overhead cam’s top bevel gear had worn out its supporting bush – to the extent that the damage had extended to the bush housing as well. John simply turned up an oversized phosphor-bronze bush and repaired the damaged seat. The only other engine mods the lads carried out were the fitting of new valves, guides, seats and hairpin springs.

John also made up alloy brackets to support the Brooklands exhaust that Sandy had purchased for road use (the Inter came with straight pipes and no silencer). John then rebuilt the front forks and added a modified spring to help elevate the Model 30’s low ground clearance. In the meantime, Sandy focused his attention on fettling and re-jetting the Amal TT carb to suit his new Brooklands silencer. The BTH competition magneto produced a weak spark when bench tested and was sent to Stewart Macclesfield to be reconditioned. The beautiful pie-crust petrol tank’s original paintwork was carefully polished before being protected with a new lacquer top coat.

The original rubber seat had unfortunately collapsed – a common ailment caused by constant bump-starting, so saddle and bum-pad were restored to their former glory by car trim experts Jim Watt of Almondbank. The lads had now turned the restoration corner and were ready to start rebuilding the Model 30. In a matter of weeks the International was complete and stood resplendent in Clubman’s trim in Sandy’s workshop. Both lads then took a step backwards to admire the fruit of their labours before John broke the dreamy silence with: “That there’s a good ‘un!”

A GOOD ‘UN

According to Sandy a properly set-up camshaft Norton should require no future fettling – unlike a pushrod single; not that Sandy would say anything against the sibling ES2, as he currently runs one as his everyday



“Covered in a coating of oil and grime it certainly looked as though it had been stored under canvas for several decades. I then learned from Willie that the Norton was an ex-sand racer”

workhorse. Sandy just prefers the Model 30's tough build and racy look – who could disagree?

“As soon as we had the Inter up and running she kept snapping valve lifter cables,” groaned Sandy. “We fitted a heavier cable and replaced the original lightweight lifter with a clutch lever that John modified to sort the problem.

“I have served my time starting Velo's – so starting the Inter poses no problem and she usually starts up first or second kick. However, on the odd occasion, the Amal TT carb can prove temperamental. The usual starting procedure is to first prime the carb by depressing the enriching lever (no tickler is provided), then set the ignition lever to fully-retarded and ease the engine over compression by engaging the valve lifter – and then just go for it! A hefty boot will usually be rewarded with a first or second kick firing. There is no idler screw on a TT carburettor, so you need to keep the engine turning over by deft use of the throttle.

“Another quirk is the abrupt cut-off of fuel on a closed throttle which results in a gorgeous ‘baaaaaar’ from the Brooklands silencer... especially when deploying full engine braking... sheer joy!” grinned Sandy.

I was surprised when Sandy pointed to the absence of any speedo – a common practice on racing machines. But according to Sandy the long stroke engine (79 x 100mm and 29bhp) delivers a top whack of 92mph, although the rigid frame limits hooligan speeds on anything but the smoothest road surfaces. Of course, Sandy couldn't resist poking fun at his ‘bulk’ and reckoned he'd hit the ton on his Inter if he was more catwalk model than Incredible Hulk.

Sandy summed up: “Handling on most roads is generally very good – even with its Thirties-designed Webb girder suspension (I noted Sandy's frowning eyebrows). The gear ratios are similar to my ES2 and the clutch action is also very light, so riding in modern traffic is quite possible. The brakes are very good too. I would say this Inter delivers a ‘good old days’ riding sensation – with its booming exhaust, reek of hot oil and its utterly engaging ride. When out and about in the countryside, most of my pals hang back to enjoy the sound of the Inter singing its heart out. Some, I am led to believe, even revel in the reek of cooking vegetable oil and the eddying waft of Castrol R.

“As long as the rider treats this revered classic motorcycle with the respect it deserves – an International Norton will always be a thrilling machine to own and ride. I've loved them since I was a lad.”

HOW MUCH SIR?

In the hands of legendary racers Freddie Firth and Jimmy Guthrie, the Norton International became one of the most desired motorcycles of the Thirties. These rigid models are becoming extremely scarce and attract correspondingly high premiums. The interim telescopic fork/plunger frame model is more common and hence it is the more affordable option – if you can call a Norton Inter ‘affordable’ when asking prices are generally streaking north of £10k.

In most enthusiasts' eyes, post 1957 featherbed Inters have become the truly ‘unapproachable Norton’. Whether offered in original spec or as a modern copy-cat example of this amazing machine, they command stratospheric prices at auction, or from specialist dealers. Depending on specifications, build and provenance, prices can soar beyond an eye-watering £30k.



Above: Perfect timing! The author's Ariel admiring the Spitfire as it passed at low level

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H3148CBG	COLLAR - VALVE SPRING BOTTOM - ES2/18/19/50 - PRE 1959	£19
20179CBG	COLLAR - VALVE SPRING BOTTOM - ES2/50 - 1959 ONWARDS	£5
H3147CBG	COLLAR - VALVE TOP - ES2/18/19/50 - PRE 1959	£19
20178CBG	COLLAR - VALVE TOP - ES2/50 - 1959 ONWARDS	£6
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460051CBG	CONTACT BREAKER ASSEMBLY - MAGDYNO SINGLES - PRE 1958	£40
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463121CBG	GEAR - STEEL - MAGDYNO SINGLES	£41
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8834CBG	JET - OIL CONNECTION - 1/16H/18/19/20/50/ES2 - 0.281" DIAMETER	£17
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21653CBG	SPROCKET - DISTRIBUTOR - MODEL 50/ES2 - 16 TEETH	£22
16821CBG	SPROCKET - ENGINE - 20 TOOTH - 50/ES2/19S - DYNAMO MODELS ONLY	£25
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MIKE HAILWOOD'S MACHINES

In this chapter, Part Eight: The Bucking Bronco, Rachael Clegg chats to Hailwood's team-mate Stuart Graham about the 1967 season, and lifts the lid on the two-wheel monster that was the RC 181.

PART EIGHT

WORDS: RACHAEL CLEGG PHOTOGRAPHY: MORTONS ARCHIVE

The near sonic boom of the Honda Six was one of the most defining sounds of the 1966 World Championship season. Its jockey – as we saw in the last chapter – was Mike Hailwood, who competed in the 250, 350 and 500cc classes for Honda. But in spite of his cutting-edge machinery, the latter part of the 1966 season and the 1967 season proved immensely challenging, not least because of one very awkward beast: the Honda 500/4 – otherwise known as the RC 181 – the ‘Bucking Bronco’.

IT'S JULY 4, 1966 AND A BATTERED JIM Redman is lying in a hospital bed. He, along with numerous other riders, are in Liege Hospital recovering from a treacherous race at one of the world's most treacherous racing circuits, Spa Francorchamps. The 500cc Grand Prix event at the Belgian circuit was marred by treacherous rain, causing Redman and many other riders to skid and crash.

Among his hospital visitors are Mike Hailwood and 24-year old Cheshire lad Stuart Graham, who had just finished second that weekend behind Giacomo Agostini. But more of that later...

Graham remembers the event vividly: “We always visited our injured pals on the Monday after the race, so across the paddock Mondays became ‘Krankenhaus Monday’.

“Anyway, that day we thought we'd pay a visit to Jim. Mike was there too and as Jim was lying in the hospital bed Mike said: ‘You've really dropped me in it now Jim’ to which Jim said: ‘You'd better get young Stuart here on a bike.’”

But Redman's quip turned out to be racing prophecy.

“I had done really well at the Belgian GP, finishing second on my self-prepared G50 Matchless behind Agostini on a works MV and that, combined with my other results from the previous rounds, meant that the stats were really good for me – I think I was even third in the entire 500cc World Championship at some point.”

His results had certainly caught the eye of the Honda camp.

“I was at the Sachsenring in the privateers' bit of the paddock when my friend and Honda rider Ralph Bryans came to collect me and take me to the Honda

camp because the manager wanted to speak to me.

“Ralph gave me a heads-up as we walked through the paddock that Honda wanted to ask me to ride for them, so I was nervous and apprehensive at the time, but also very excited.”

He took me to the Honda camp – it was clearly a works set-up but by no means anything like you see today. They had huge vans and seemed to have lots of mechanics, all in matching overalls with caps and gloves. It was all so professional. Aika-San then asked me if I would ride for them in the 250cc class.”

That meant only one thing: riding the notorious Honda Six. Needless to say, it was a baptism of fire.

“I hadn't even raced at the Sachsenring and yet my first outing was to be on the Honda Six – a new machine and a new track. And not just any machine: a six cylinder, seven-gear bike with 16,000rpm. I was used to a single-cylinder Matchless G50! The sheer power and the sheer noise of the Six was frightening.”

Graham's recruitment was to lift Hailwood's burden. Redman was out for the foreseeable future and so the task of competing in the 500cc class was left to Hailwood. And that was no easy feat. The Honda RC 181 was a hugely powerful machine but – put simply – its frame couldn't cope. Mike repeatedly complained about the machine's handling to Honda, but to little avail.

The 1966 season was full-on for Honda, it was competing in the 50cc, 125cc, 250cc, 350cc and 500cc World Championship classes with a retired Redman, Stuart Graham, Luigi Taveri, Ralph Bryans and Hailwood on its team. But all that changed



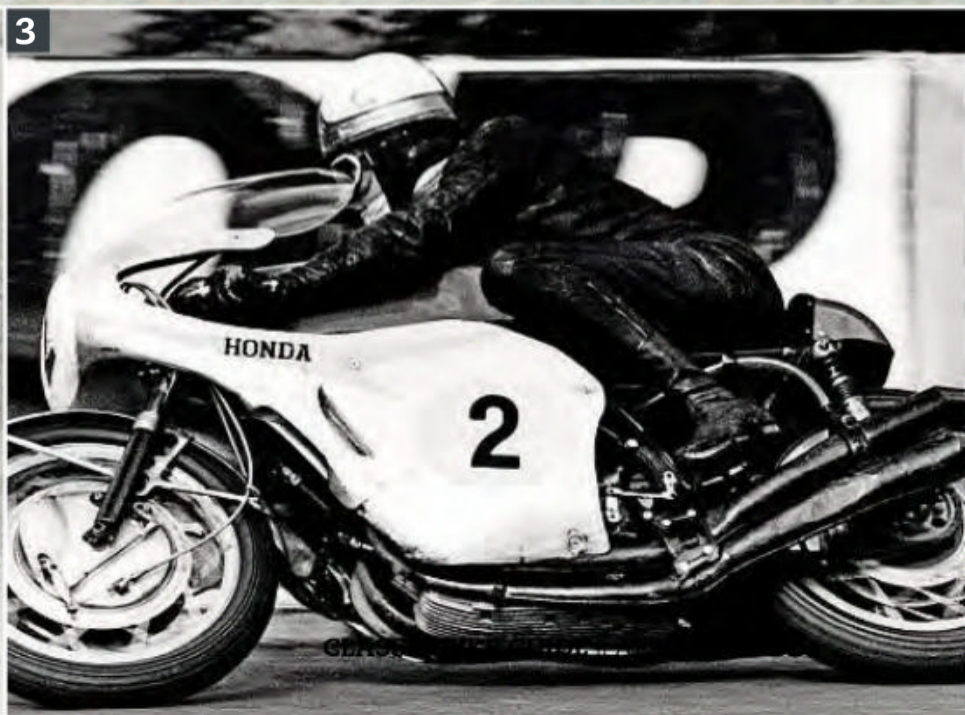
Main: Mike Hailwood riding the Four at the start of the 1967 Senior TT race.

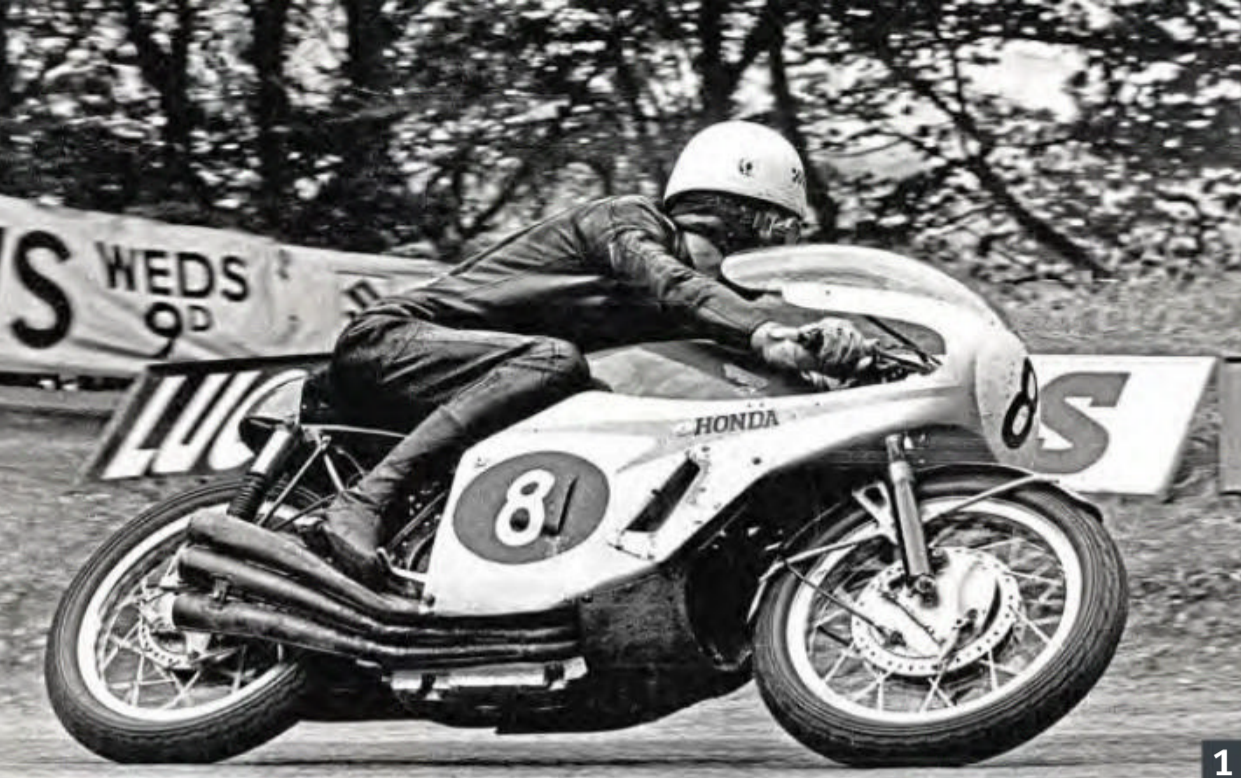
1: 1966, Senior TT, Quarter Bridge

2: 1966 Ulster GP

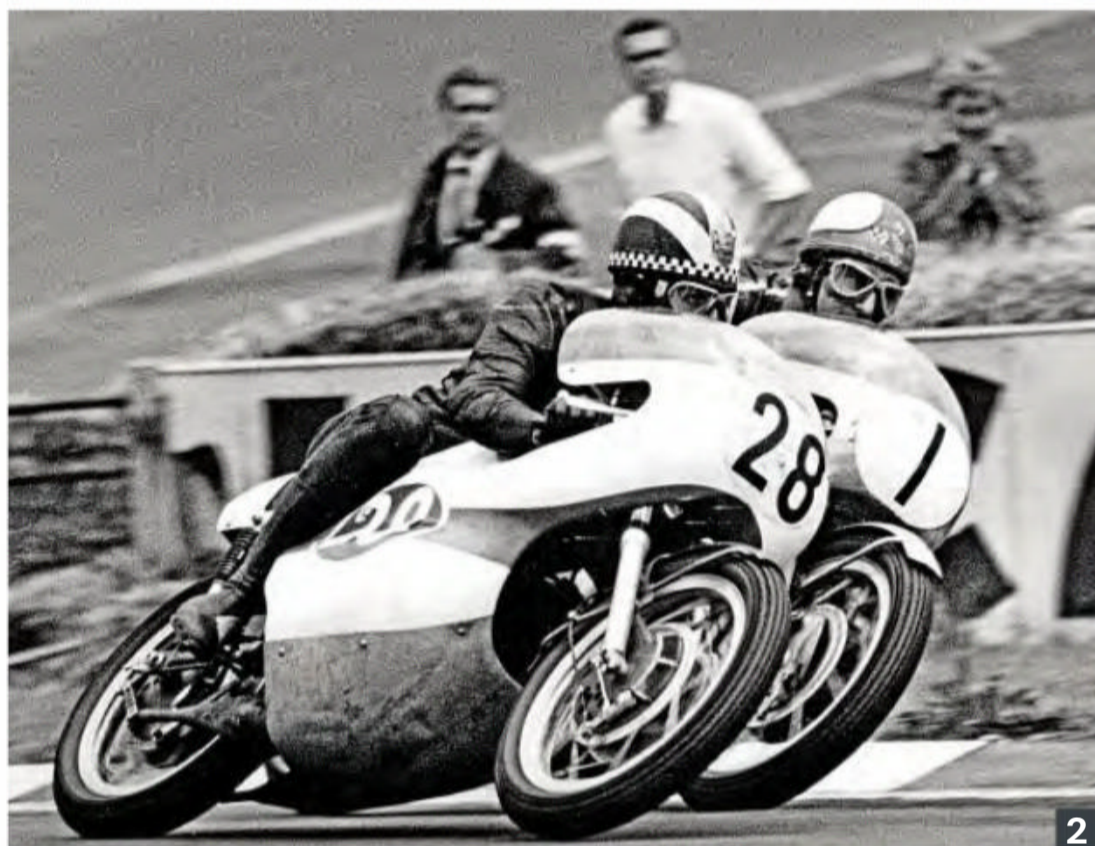
3: In the '66 Senior TT, Mike won with record lap **STUART GRAHAM**







1



2

at the end of the season. Honda decided to withdraw from the smaller classes and concentrate on the 250cc, 350cc and 500cc races. Taveri retired, Graham was swiftly snapped up by Suzuki, but Bryans remained with Honda as, of course, did Hailwood.

Honda, after all, had already won World Championships in the smaller classes, so they had nothing to prove. In addition to this, the Japanese factory had ambitions elsewhere – Formula One, which was (unsurprisingly) haemorrhaging vast funds.

But when it came to two wheels, Honda's efforts and aspirations were pinned on one man – Hailwood.

Honda flew Mike out to Japan to test the new 500/4. He was furious – his trip meant he would miss two lucrative British race meetings. Honda refused to postpone the trip by a week, in spite of Hailwood's pleas.

So one can only imagine Hailwood's further frustration when he came to test the RC 181. Its engine was updated for the 1967 season but its frame remained the same.

In fact so bad was the chassis that Hailwood wrote to frame builder Colin Lyster and asked him to build a frame for the RC 181 as soon as possible. The frame was duly built – in Milan – but Honda refused him permission to race it in the World Championship series.

Adding to Hailwood's woes was the extraordinary threat posed by Yamaha's new fours. Bill Ivy, fellow racer and Hailwood's pal, said his new Yamaha four was 'a rocket' at top speed. This was not music to Hailwood's ears.

The first race was in Barcelona – but there was no 500cc class. Hockenheim was next and by now, 'Mike the Bike' was gravely concerned about the forthcoming season.

Speaking of the 1967 season, motorcycle journalist and Hailwood's confidant, Ted Macauley, said: "In the





long time I have known him I have never seen Mike as nervous as he was after joining Honda. It is remarkable that, despite his apprehensions, he achieved a series of breathtaking results. With sheer riding skill and courage he had to compensate for the shortcomings of the machinery. He had to battle constantly against brilliant opposition and, at the same time, fight against what should have been his one ally: the machine itself."

Macauley's observations – noted in his book, *Hailwood*, were accurate. In Hailwood's and Peter Carrick's co-written book *Bikes*, Hailwood said: "I had wondered just what I had let myself in for, riding the big Honda. It was a brute of a machine, with immense power, but the frame was diabolical. Despite my protests during 1966 and 1967, Honda never did much to put it right. They were all for giving machines more power, but seemed to have a blind spot when it came to appreciating the deficiencies of the frame. I'm convinced nobody at Honda realised how difficult the 500 was to handle. In comparison the MV was docile."

Hailwood – in *Bikes* – went on to say: "Despite all their investment, effort and ambition, Honda failed to win the championship, which meant more than any other in terms of prestige and showroom

sales. But for my part I felt I couldn't beat Ago, given equal machinery."

But this wasn't just a technical obstacle, it was life-threatening, especially considering the safety of circuits in the Sixties, many of which were on roads, as with Spa and Circuit Clermont-Ferrand, whose 'barriers' comprised of the Puy de Dome's mountain rock base.

Settings such as this, combined with the fierce competition, provided a terrifying set of challenges for Hailwood, challenges one certainly wouldn't want to face on a motorcycle referred to as the 'Bronco' because of its bucking and bouncing.

A potent illustration of how unwieldy this machine was comes from fellow racer John Cooper, who offered to see what the machine was like for himself. He said, as reported in Chris Hilton's *A Man Called Mike*: "I rang up Mike – I can't remember how it came about – and I said: 'How about me having a ride on that 500?' He said 'if you want to come down and fetch it, it's in the garage at Heston'... I did go down. Mike said: 'I shouldn't bother if I were you because it's so bad but if you want to you can... You'll find it's pretty rough' – and it was true, by God. Before I left he said: 'Wherever

1: Stuart Graham on the Honda 6 at Ramsey Hairpin, 1966

2: Hailwood and Read on 250s, Brands, 1967

3: Mike and a young Stuart Graham, 1966

4: Mike and Jim Redmond looking serious at the Ulster GP

5: Go on!

"Honda flew Hailwood out to Japan to test the new 500/4. He was furious as his trip meant he would miss two lucrative British race meetings. Honda refused to postpone the trip by one week, in spite of Hailwood's pleas"

KEN SPRAYSON



Mike Hailwood, 350cc Honda 4 in the Brands Hatch 100, 1966



1



2

you fall off, put a mark on the track and I'll know where it happened for when I race there."

Cooper took the bike to Snetterton and said: "I opened it up crossing the start and finish line and it went bloody sideways."

In *Bikes*, Hailwood said: "It wasn't just the matter of trying to win, it was trying to stay on the thing. It really was the most frightening experience."

But the 1967 season wasn't all bad. The 350cc machine – the exquisite six-cylinder RC 174 – was light, agile and it absolutely decimated all the competition. The machine was essentially a six-cylinder 250 but enlarged to 297cc by means of two 17mm inlet valves and two 14.5mm exhaust valves per cylinder. This, combined with the 24mm round-slide carburettors, allowed 17,000rpm. And it was light too, weighing just 118kg (260lbs).

The RC 174 was essentially a petit podium star, winning Hailwood and Honda the 350cc championship with three rounds to go. That, combined with a victory in the 250cc class on the improved Honda Six, certainly iced what was a hard season's cake.

And as for the 'Bucking Bronco' – the RC 181 – it bounced Hailwood to a second place in the 500cc Championships. Not bad for a recalcitrant 500. That said, however, besides Agostini, the rest of the field was predominantly comprised of single-cylinder British machinery, and they were significantly less powerful in comparison.

Graham had a successful year too, finishing third in both the 50cc and 125cc classes.

Speaking today from his Cheshire home he says: "I look back at that period and feel so lucky. It really was a remarkable time to be racing. I had Hailwood as a teammate and I had the privilege to ride what has to be one of – if not the most – exotic racing machines in history – the Honda Six. And it really was a truly incredible bike that has given me truly incredible memories."

In the next instalment of *Mike Hailwood's Machines*, we take a look at the 1968 season and the machines that satisfied Hailwood's insatiable two-wheel appetite, while being banned from GP competition. **CBC**



3



4

1: Jim Redman, Aika and Mike Hailwood

2: Peter Howdle & Mike Hailwood, at Snetterton, 10th April 1966. They got around in those days

3: Jim Redmond, before his accident

4: Mike's '66 victory, his eighth



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Panther M100

flat track custom

Geoff Stray usually saves his time for V-twins, but this gorgeous Panther keeps stealing him away

WORDS: ADAM BOLTON **PHOTOGRAPHY:** MARCO GIULIANI





LEGEND SAYS THAT PANTHERS WERE BUILT FOR hauling sidecars around and transporting Foreman Arkwright from his home to t' mill. And just as their first owners were a special breed, those who retain a passion for Panthers these days are unusual among classic bike enthusiasts. For the most part it's not about polishing a shiny example within an inch of its life and taking it out once in a while. Rather, Panther owners like to ride their big sloper singles all the time, in all conditions. They like to tinker, and they like to improve the breed. But even so, Phelon and Moore's creations aren't for customising, surely?

Yet deep in the heart of Avalon, one owner has turned a Cleckheaton workhorse into a snarling big cat, and something a world away from cobbled streets and loaves of Hovis. Like any good custom, Geoff Stray's Panther M100 flat tracker was reborn from a pile of parts and several boxes of spares.

"It had been in someone's shed in Glastonbury for 26 years," says Geoff. "When I found it, it had a sidecar frame with it, which I left behind, intending to pick up later. I never did, which is something I regret now.

"It was all in bits with the heavy wheel hubs and I was going to restore it to original, until I discovered the swingarm part of the frame was slightly bent, so I used a bolt-on rigid back end."

Denuded of its telescopic forks and swinging arm rear end, the M100 might not quite look as if it would be more at home on California's boulevards, but it would certainly have cut it in Chelsea's Kings Road in the late Sixties. The telescopic forks originally fitted were of Panther's own design and were Phelon and Moore's in-house replacement for a Dowty air-sprung item. The Panther's forks were primitive in their original version and heavy, designed as they were to cope with the rigours of sidecar hauling. Geoff went to specialist frame and fork makers Metal Malarkey, who came back with the one inch over girder items seen on the Panther today, fitted with a custom made Hagon damper. The updated girder-fork tech reportedly provides better service on the road than the original telescopic items, which were technically a more modern design.

Geoff said: "The tubes Metal Malarkey used are a lot thicker than you would normally find with girders and the bike handles so much better than one fitted with Panther forks."



Above: Girder forks were made by Metal Malarkey, with a Hagon shock on duty

Below: Geoff may ride his Panther single, but is somewhat obsessed with V-twins - check out his website, diagnosis2012.co.uk

The wheels were made by specialist builders Talon and were fitted with wavy disc brakes and the calipers from a Honda CRF 250/450. The wheels were the most expensive part of the build, with the combination of wheel rims and hubs an example of the best in the art of wheel building. Geoff said: "Even when you put them both on the scales together, they weigh less than just one of the Panther's original wheels and hubs."

The petrol tank, which was picked up at the Shepton Mallet show, is of unknown origin, but Geoff believes it might be from a Greeves scrambler, and he designed the Panther's tank badge himself. The handlebars are flat track items from Redmax, while the brake reservoir and levers were sourced at a motocross breaker.

Ignition and minimal electrical system is provided by a Lucas Magdyno coupled with a solid-state rectifier. The Panther is no slouch, with the legendary torque taking the beast at 60mph up the notoriously steep and seemingly never-ending one-in-seven Bristol Hill from the city of Wells.

After problems with the original Amal Monobloc carb, Geoff substituted it with a brand-new Concentric item. The magneto was overhauled and once equipped with an MoT the Panther made it onto the road in 2011, winning its first prize, 'Most Desirable Panther', at the owners' club's West Dorset Rally.

Metal Malarkey made the exhaust system which, while very stylish, Geoff found was a little loud for everyday use. "The first time I started it up I caused a cattle stampede," he admitted. "And I did 600 miles on it in a weekend a couple of years ago. By the time I got home my ears were ringing." The bike has now been fitted with a VW Beetle-type baffle, which reduced the ear-shattering, cow-scaring roar to a more muted but far from restrained deep-throated thump. A further top-secret design for the exhaust is on the drawing board. From the above you might get the impression that Geoff is a just a skilled bolter-together of other people's parts rather than a bike builder, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

As well as being a Panther fan, a writer and a bus driver, Geoff has an obsession with V-twins, so much so that he has a website that you can find by searching 'V-twin obsession'. His website is dedicated in part to persuading Harley-Davidson fans that Mr Harley and Mr Davidson did not invent the V-twin with a history of the early V-twin concept discussed in considerable detail. As well as the beautifully put together Panther flat tracker, there's a handful of other projects on







the go. A Dresda-framed special is coming to life in a downstairs room. The special is a Panther 120-based 1300cc V-twin of Geoff's own design, using the crankcases from an M120 (heavily modified) with an extra Panther cylinder grafted on where the magneto should go. While the frame follows the lines of the Norton Featherbed, it's been custom built to fit the new V-twin. After being exhibited at the Shepton show, the Panther V-twin is currently undergoing further development. It uses Buell conrods, and after many experiments trying to get the Panther cam gears to fit and function properly in the modified crank cases, Geoff has now skimmed two gears in half and Dresda are currently working on a lightweight valve operation for him, so the new gears are not overstressed.

Next to the Panther twin is another V-twin, based on two BSA B50 top ends in a Norton frame that Geoff was offered at a bike show and felt he couldn't turn down. And sitting on a straining kitchen chair is a Howard 1340cc side-valve V-twin. The Howard was built in Australia in the 1930s and intended for use in heavy-duty agricultural rotavators. A few Howard engines have found themselves in motorcycle frames, but the biggest drawback of the design for two-wheeled use is the crankcase, which is made from cast iron. This is a great fit for a heavy rotavator, but makes it less practical as a motorcycle powerplant. Geoff also

has his home-built JAP twin-engined BSA special, the Jabsawocky. Work is needed on this, as it leaves a cloud of vision-obscuring smoke everywhere it goes.

Outside again, Geoff gives a demonstration of how to start the Panther. This is no rapid process, and not suited to those who want a quick getaway.

Geoff explains: "You have to tickle the carb and engage the 'half-compression lever', which is the lever on the timing case on the exhaust side, since this is a single-port Panther, pull the clutch in and kick it over once or twice to free the clutch. Then you give it full magneto advance and choke, kick it a few times with the handlebar-mounted valve-lifter pulled in to wet the plug, tickle the carb again, get it to top dead centre, and then just past it is using handlebar-mounted valve-lifter; kick it again and then it will start. And you have to remember to disengage the half-valve lifter after it starts, or it will make an odd noise!"

Forewarned by previous experience, Geoff first checked carefully that there were no bovine observers waiting to be spooked before he demonstrated the procedure. As promised, the Panther burst into snarling life before settling down and the muffled thump of a Panther's famously slow tickover bounced off Glastonbury Tor, the noise a suitable symphony to accompany the passage of a fine example of an old English custom. **CBC**

"Geoff has an obsession with V-twins, so much so that he has a website you can find by searching V-twin obsession"

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It'll come in handy if you never use it

Using a tap or a die to cut a thread may seem an unusual operation for the average job, but as we spend most of our time working on old machines, I forgot how often these useful tools can also be handy in revitalising existing threads.

Having painted the Norton frame and metalwork, it was inevitable that some paint would have found itself where it shouldn't, or corrosion still be present in some threads. But using the correct taps and dies not only cleaned them up, but also helped reshape the now 60-year-old parts, which should hopefully make the rebuild that little bit easier. Just remember to write down somewhere if you lend a friend one size or another, or, like me, you'll go to use your tools, only to find the size you want missing...



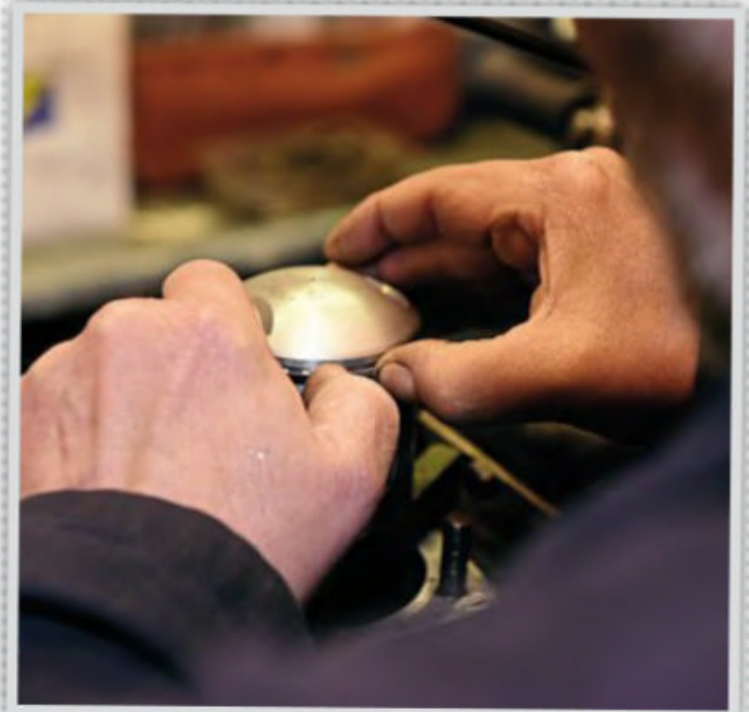
▲ Repair your tinware

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▲ Norton project

Frame and metalwork get prepped and painted



▲ Matchless rebuild

Top end goes on – it's nearly there



How's that work?

Taps and dies

Work on an older bike will soon require a tap or die. What are they and how do they help?

WHAT ARE THEY USED FOR?

A tap and die are used to cut, chase, repair or clean threads in nuts and bolts. A tap looks like a nut and is used to cut the thread on a bolt, whereas the die looks like a bolt and is used to cut the thread in a nut.

They are made from hardened material and have channels in them to aid the removal of material. It is essential to be using the correct tap or die for the thread you are attempting. We'll look at different threads next month.

You will, at some stage, need taps and dies. Virtually every component on your machine is attached to its neighbour by a thread of some kind or other. It doesn't matter whether you're fettling British, Continental, European or Oriental iron; sooner or later you'll hit a problem that can only be addressed by a tap or die.

At its most basic of uses a tap will evict rust from a threaded hole and a die will recut a thread on a shaft or spindle. Once you've got a set of both you will genuinely wonder how on earth you got by without them.

And if you're into restorations, rebuilds, repairs and the like, a set of taps and dies are frankly indispensable. It soon becomes custom and practice to blow out any blind holes on a freshly vapour blasted casing with an airline, then run a tap down them to ensure there's no blasting media left behind. Likewise if your powder coater has forgotten to mask off the top shock absorber mount on your recently refinished frame it's just a moment's work to run a die over the threads.

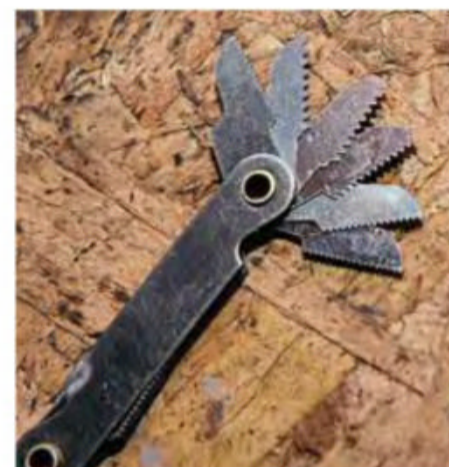
Buy quality over quantity every single time when it comes to taps and dies. Little causes more pain than a cheap tap that's snapped off in a precious casting ...and especially so when said casting is bolted into a frame! Check out what you need with clubs, social media, forums etc and come up with a three part list. Section One is the thread sizes you will always need, Section Two covers those threads you will encounter occasionally and Section Three the oddball sizes you might realistically only buy when you absolutely need them.



The die, an M6 x 1, is held in the die spanner. The cut-outs are for the swarf or dirt to escape. Be very careful how you initially line up on the thread



The tap in its holder. Like the die, the cut-outs in the thread are for swarf to escape



A thread gauge to show what pitch you have

HOW DO YOU USE THEM?

Use a thread gauge to make sure you're using the right tap or die. Always use lubricants when cutting threads – cutting compound is good but maintenance spray works well too. The first cut is most important to get straight, so take your time. Feel is so important here, but cut around a third of a single thread, then back the tap or die off to remove any swarf.

WHICH ONES DO I NEED?

Never assume that all the threads on a bike are the same. Most British firms used a variety of threads such as Whitworth, AF, UNC, UNF, plus cycle threads for added hilarity. Metric machines sometimes use fine threads instead of normal/coarser

types. Pre-1968 Japanese bikes run JIS (Japanese Industrial Standards) not the more common ISO threads. Therefore, invest in a thread gauge for each type of thread you expect to encounter, they're cheap and can save a lot of heartache. A decent micrometre never goes amiss either and takes the guesswork out of assessing external diameters.

Lastly, never overlook the value of having a thread file on hand to deal with the worst levels of thread damage; you can always dress the finished result with a die. Properly equipped your project will come together so much faster. **CBG**

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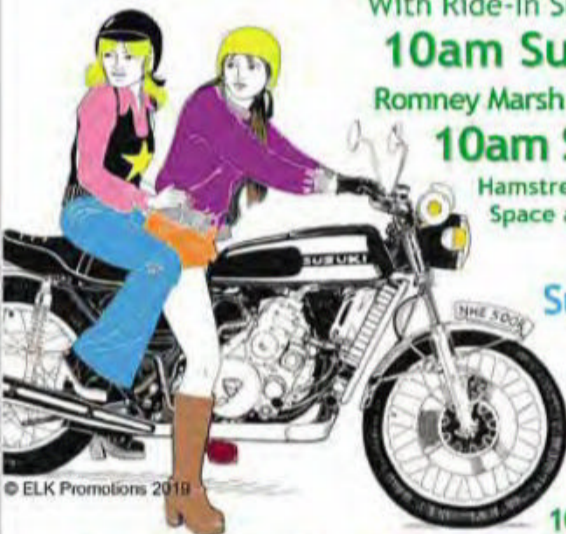
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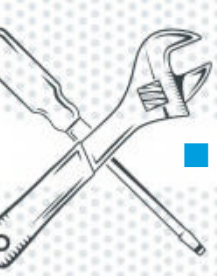
Saving tinware

How to preserve those irreplaceable steel pressings

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BY Steve Cooper



IF YOU OWN AN OLD BIKE THEN YOU'LL HAVE SOME pressed metal on it somewhere, guaranteed. What's also immutable is the fact that steel panels corrode if they're not looked after. Seat pans, side panels, mudguards and the like will all rust; even oil tanks have been known to rust from the outside in. With a painted finish you can normally see how good or bad the metal is beneath simply by whether there are rust blisters or corrosion induced spider webs between the base coat and the steel. ▶



With chrome plated panels you often only find out you have serious rust when it breaks through to the top surface or your mudguard collapses from its mounts and falls onto a tyre. What follows is a series of steps and techniques that deal with freshly rechromed mudguards, but everything is readily transferable in one form or another to just about any metal panel. Taking action before a panel falls apart takes up infinitely less time, effort and money than tracking down a replacement rear guard for a rare Sixties machine!



Right: This is typical of an old steel guard that's been badly stored or left untreated. There's double skins here that form part of the mounting system and these will happily hide serious corrosion.



Half the guard is rust-free, with just the other half to sort out.



Everyone has their favourite rust removing chemicals but regardless of what you use, ensure every surface is properly soaked and especially the double walled sections. Occasional agitation, draining, rinsing and re-immersion normally speeds up the process



And that's some irreplaceable mudguards armoured against corrosion. Yes, okay, you may not necessarily endear yourself to rivet counters or show judges, but you will have tinware that's unlikely to rot. If you rate riding over exhibiting then you'll know this approach makes sense. Obviously, nothing is fool proof and if you're the hardy type that rides through the winter, then a good hosing down to remove any road salt is a must. Beyond that, and in addition to adding some paint to mudguards, you might want to consider adding something like Waxoyl to the hidden surfaces of metal panels and inside reinforced double pressings. This clever alternative to traditional underseal has a fantastic and well-deserved reputation for keeping corrosion at bay. Other similar (and different) protectants are available, so there's no excuse for not using something! ▶

Above: Rinse off whatever you're derusting with lots of water and then remove the water from every crevice with isopropanol or methylated spirits. This will remove the water from seams and crevices. Allow the parts to dry using an airline if you have access to one.

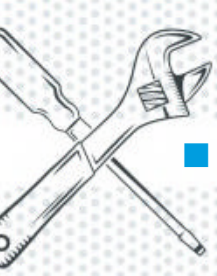
Right: If there's any corrosion still lurking, treat it with a dent quality rust converter, such as this. Use a dropper or a syringe to inject into double skins and inside rolled edges.



Now mask up every through-hole you can find; it'll make cleaning up later so much easier.



The instructions might say don't do this, but it makes the next stage considerably more effective – a tiny drop of thinners in your chosen protective paint works wonders.



With a large artist's brush, run paint into every rolled edge and twin walled pressing you can find. It might get messy but it adds a considerable protective barrier.



Working around the guard, systematically cover the rest of the surfaces, double checking that areas such as cable clips and spot-welded reinforcements are covered from all angles. Apply a second coat if necessary.



Above: Once the paint has dried and cured, remove the masking tape, then rub off any paint that's crept through with thinners on a rag and finish off with a polish... job done.

One final point with regards the corrosion protection and freshly rechromed panels... always wash double skins and rolled edges carefully with lots of hot water. Chrome plating uses a range of highly aggressive and corrosive materials and while any decent plater will always rinse off plating solution from your parts, they don't necessarily have the time to evict every last morsel of post-plating reactants. If you can see orange or brown exudations trickling down from blind pressings, then the chances are what's inside is potentially corrosive. Evict every last gram now! You really don't want to be spending good money on fresh chrome, simply to kick off some more corrosion do you? **CBG**



Not everything is readily paintable and with tubular structures such as this mudguard brace a quality protectant is the weapon of choice. Personally, I cannot recommend this stuff highly enough.

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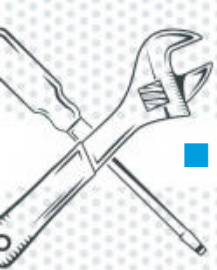
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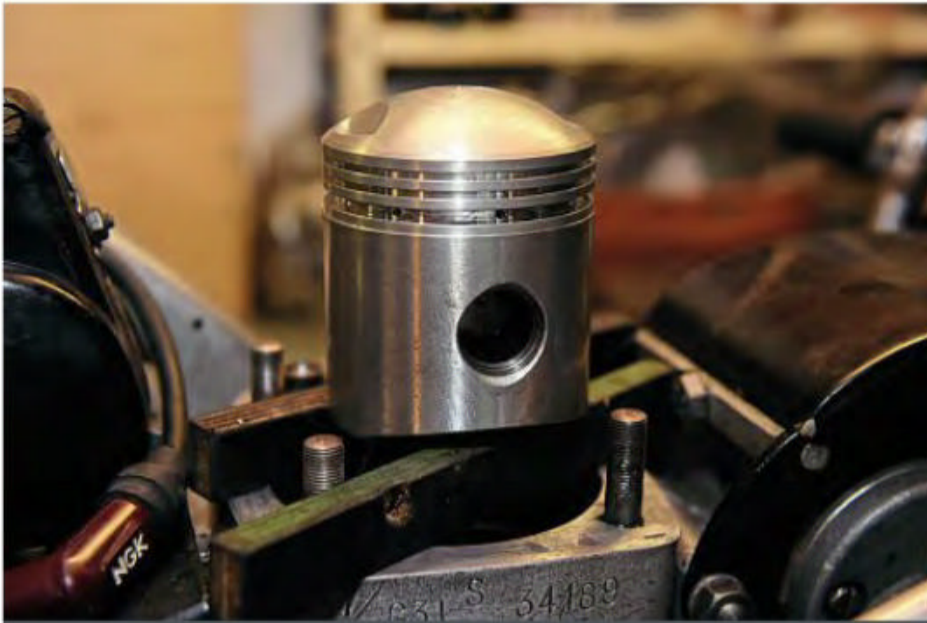
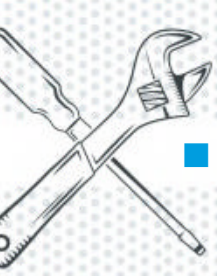
Matchless top end rebuild

Our single-cylinder Matchless G3L had its head rebuilt last month, so now it's time to start putting it all back together.

TENACITY AND PERSEVERANCE BY HUTCH (HTE MOTORCYCLES 01328 700711)

WORDS, PHOTOGRAPHY AND INANE QUESTIONS BY MATT





With the small end, gudgeon pin and piston fitted, Hutch uses a couple of bits of wood to keep the piston safe so we can fit the rings.



The rings need their gap checked, so they need to be fitted to the bore. They should be square to the bore and below the unswept area of the bore, so Hutch uses a micrometer to ensure.



With the ring in place, feeler gauges will show the gap. The manual says 0.006 thou minimum and a maximum of 0.30 thou - our new rings are on the tight end of minimum. If the rings are too tight, the ends need filing down with a ring tool or engineer's stone.



Fitting the rings can be tricky. Strong thumb nails are the best tools! Our G3 has identical top rings and a one-piece oil ring and Hutch set the gaps at 120° to each other. Watch where the conrod cut-outs are at the base of the barrel.



Hutch is a believer of Wellseal, which he paints on to help seal the minor dents in the top of the crankcase. Paint it on a grease-free surface, leave it for two minutes, then apply the gasket.



Some engines have a bevel at the base of the bore to help the rings in, but the G3 needed a ring compressor. It went on nicely and smoothly. Thanks to the 'controlled build' procedure (basically bagging and labelling during the strip) we know the barrel had the wrong bolts fitted, so we found some proper ones.



Torque figures are the time-old procedure of using the length of a spanner to determine how tight. But as a key, Hutch uses two fingers and torques up the four nuts evenly until his fingers go white. This should be fine for the first 50 miles. We then drop some oil into the bore to move the piston up.



Bring the piston up to top dead centre on the compression stroke. You'll know this by having your fingers on the tappets and when they're both down it's the compression stroke - the exhaust tappet will be up (to open the valve) every other rotation.



We fit the pushrod tubes to the head before fitting. According to the manual there should be a metal washer in the pushrod tube recess for the top rubber to seal to. Ours had two, which could explain why one tube had split.

NEXT MONTH

We get the ancillaries on and see if our Matchless wants to reward us for all our hard work! **CBG**

RUBBER GREASE!

Use rubber grease on items like the pushrod tube rubbers. It's non-hydrocarbon, as normal grease is hydro, as is the rubber, so they break each other down.

With the tubes seated, the bottom O-rings fitted and the head sitting as it should, clean the head bolts and threads, checking for any sign of necking - where the bolts have stretched slightly, making one area thinner. Replace if you notice this, or they will strip their thread, or even snap.



Pull the head down evenly, tightening the bolts evenly and gradually. The manual says 'tighten until all the bolts are fully home'. Like with the barrel, use common sense and feel and if unsure, see if someone else will feel what you are.



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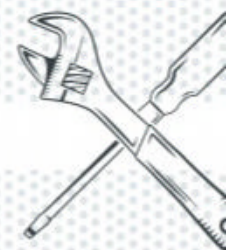
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Project Norton ES2

PART FOUR

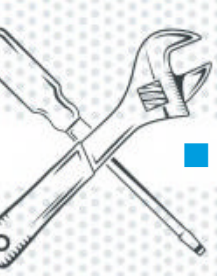
THE PREVIOUS OWNER of our 1956 Norton ES2 had the frame, swing arm and other parts carefully shot blasted and then brush painted them in red oxide primer to prevent the parts from rusting. This has worked brilliantly, so they just needed rubbing down before I could get them in the booth for primer and a nice top coat of hard-wearing black two-pack. But good though the red oxide is at protection, boy is it hard work to rub down! Cars I've done in the past can

Rubbing, rubbing, rubbing. A paint finish is only as good as the preparation, but boy is it tedious. Until you see the final finish, then it's all worthwhile...

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT

SPECIAL THANKS TO: NICK AND JACK AT ASHTONS CLASSIC BODYSHOP (01362 692271), ELK PROMOTIONS, STEVE THE WELDER (THANKS BUDDY YOU ARE AN ARTIST!)





be sanded down with an orbital sander, but a frame and swing arm has no flat surfaces, so it all has to be done by hand. And after 20 years, it is hard work!

Find a comfy chair and just keep rubbing. I used 180-grit discs which should go on an orbital sander, but instead of the usual paper-backed variety, I used some that are like a fine wire netting, which are less prone to getting clogged up. Working at my good friend Nick's bodyshop, Ashtons Classics, I used a sanding block where possible as it puts more force through the pads – but it still took more than a day to rub down the parts. A good cuppa every so often helps you to see the areas you've missed – there was a lot of tea and every time I rechecked the frame I found more areas I'd missed – it's a laborious job.

The frame numbers had almost disappeared, being filled with the thick red oxide, so I took a dental pick to them to dig out the digits, which will hopefully help with regaining the V5 when the time comes. I'll also fill any cavities with some waxoil when finished, to help prevent rot in the future.

Other parts to prepare were the fork tops and the fork spring covers. I love aluminium and so it seems a shame to paint the alloy

fork tops, but this bike is to be as original, so black they will be. The 'Roadholder' brass badges had seen better days and as you can buy them new, I drilled out the soft brass rivets so I could spray them and replace the badges later with spangly new ones.

The only parts I didn't attack were the tank, front and rear mudguards, numberplate holder and the oil tank and toolbox. I'll be honest, I just got fed up with all the rubbing down and didn't want to rush them; I also reasoned that as it'll be some time before they're fitted, they're less likely to get chipped or marked if I paint them at a later date.

PAINTING

I've painted many things, from outside with aerosols to inside a professional booth – but I hadn't done the latter for many, many years. So Nick was immensely helpful allowing me time in his booth when he was on another job. When the time came and all the prep was finished there was no time for celebration, so Nick mixed up the High-build primer with its actuator and reminded me how to use his gun. Last time I'd used a spray gun they had the reservoir underneath, which often limited the angle you could hold the gun,



Use your fingers to feel as well as the light to see if you've got the right finish

but nowadays the guns hold the paint at the top, making life much easier.

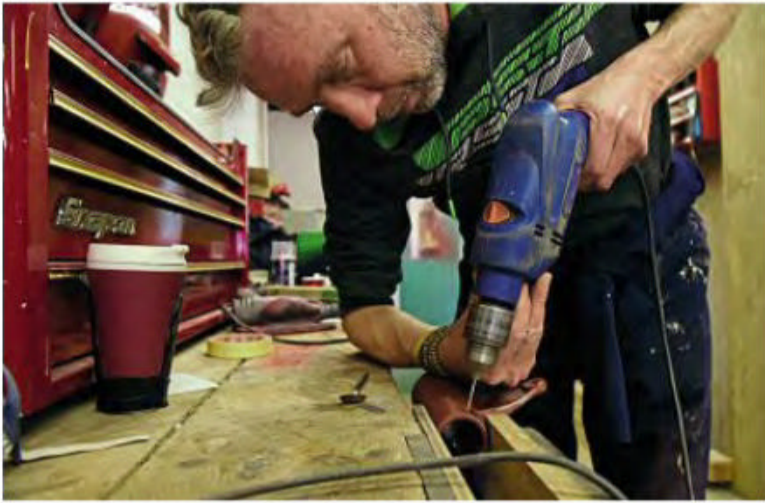
Primer is easier than top coat after a break – it's thicker so doesn't run as easily as top coat, but being just off white it's also more tricky to see how much you've put on. 'Let the finish come to you' was what Nick told me and he's absolutely right. 'The hard work is done, so don't rush this part' I thought.

The result was what I wanted, plenty of primer on so I can rub down with 400-grit in preparation for the top coat (800 if you are using a base coat and then lacquer), but not so much it runs.

Top coat was next (after more rubbing

I tried to get the years of paint from the joins in the frame and also the frame numbers. 180-grit was right for the frame

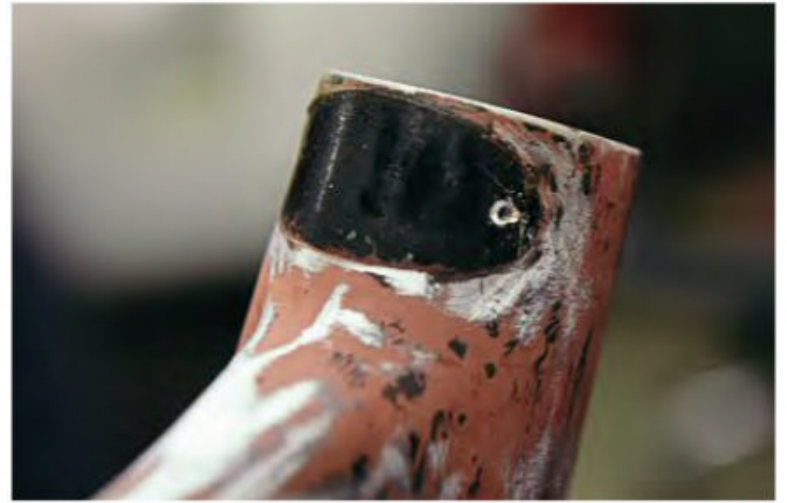




Left: Removing the 'Roadholder' badges

Right: The original finish under the badges is beautiful! Hope we get somewhere near

Below: Nick has forgotten more than I'll ever know and I can see where the costs go when someone paints something for you



down but I won't bore you anymore – I think you've guessed there's rather a lot) and Nick showed me there is a range of different hardeners, some quick for speed, some slower for more control. Nick can obviously use the fast, but mixed my top coat with the slower hardener, to allow me more time. You want to be applying a coat evenly all over, then another before the first has become too matt-looking. That helps it adhere to itself, building up a nice finish and a good hard protection.

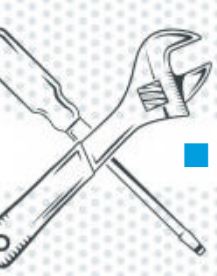
I found the top coat felt 'thinner'

to apply than the primer, and was much more conscious of runs. The small gun proved really useful with the frame, being able to work in and out of all the areas to get an even coat all round. I also had a tank from my Suzuki in there which I sprayed first, which really helped me get my eye in; being a larger surface it was easier to see the finish I was getting.

By the end of the day I was really pleased with the finish. A couple of runs will need flattening back but otherwise we have a good basis to start the rebuild! Now I just have to prepare the tanks and mudguards... ➔



I loved the job, but would happily pay someone to do it next time. The amount of work and tools needed easily makes sense!



CYLINDER HEAD

Another friend, Steve the welder, has turned his skilled eye to the cylinder head and its broken fins. I thought it would be a disaster and I'd be on the look out for a new head, but Steve carefully cleaned up the broken edges, then made some cardboard templates and used 3mm chequer plate with the pattern ground off to replace the broken fins. It took him ages, especially having to work out how to get the TIG torch in such confined spaces.

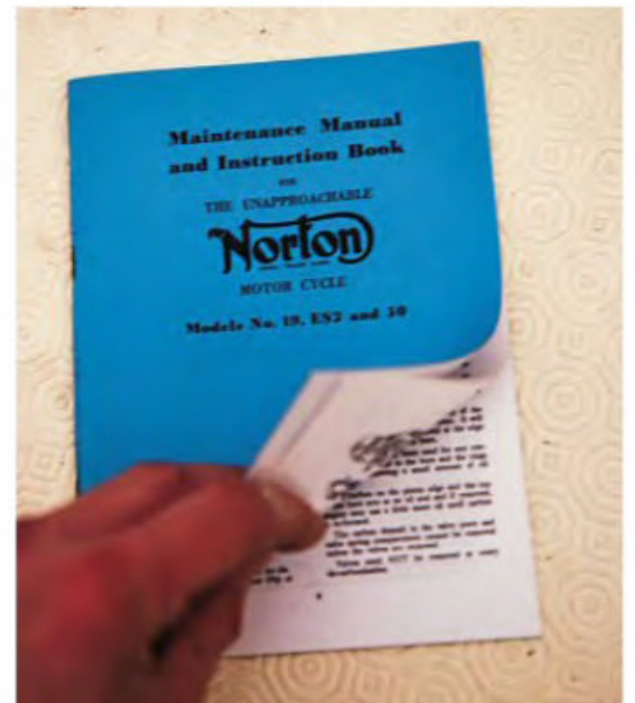
The result is incredible, he has even followed the contours of the existing fins and it looks as good as new. The butchered inlet where the thread should be for the carb inlet couldn't be saved, so he used his TIG to tidy that up and ground it down. And this was all while he was

busy fixing his Suzuki and its twisted crank. Thanks, Steve!

Another thanks has to go to ELK Promotions, who are well known for running the Ardingly, Romney Marsh & Ashford Classic Motorcycle autojumbles, but also reprint some valuable literature. They kindly sent me the Norton Singles maintenance manual which will come in all too useful very soon.

The wheels unfortunately didn't show up, but the brakes are all waiting so no worries.

Next month we'll concentrate on stripping the head and seeing what horrors await, and if there are still no rims then it's the turn of the bottom end. After all this rubbing down I can't wait to get stuck into the engine and 'box. **CBG**



Elk-promotions produce these handy reprints for all different bikes and should prove useful.

I thought this was scrap, but Steve the welder/wizard came to my rescue. Thanks buddy! These geniuses walk among us - just ask at your local bike club, or at bike meets for a local hero





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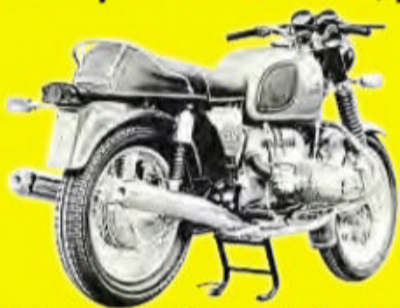
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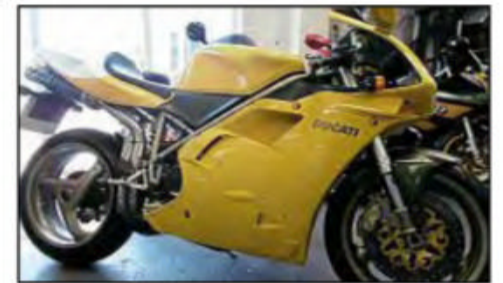
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AJS S5 very rare, from 1931, barn find, nearly excellent condition, engine turning free, all is there and very original, £17,895 offers invited Tel. 07536 571741 London



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ARIEL Square Four, Mark II, (Four piper), 1953, maroon and black, in good condition, £11,500 ono. Tel. 01495 759234 Gwent



ARIEL ARROW 1960, matching numbers, original reg, very nice bike Tel. 07743 370641 Stoke-on-Trent



ARIEL LEADER 1965, C reg, starts and runs well, bike as photo but all original tinware included, owned for five years, stored in garage, £2550 Tel. 01296 711081 Bucks



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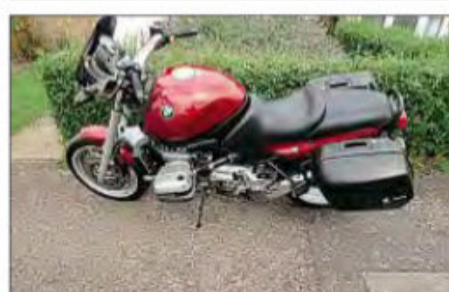
BMW R75/6 1976, 14,872 miles, documented providence fair condition, Surefoot sidestand, twin front discs, Boyer ignition, £3750 Tel. 07940 319166 Surrey



BMW R80 good condition, MoT August, stainless exhaust, crash bars, Krasuer cases, regularly used in VMCC runs, £1800 ono Tel. 01453 542855; 07810 697904 Gloucs



BMW R80 1985, good condition, MoT, used regularly on VWCC, runs, Avon Tyres, well maintained, £1800 Tel. 01453 542855; 07810 607904 Gloucs



BMW R850R 1996, low mileage, great tyres, ignition key operated panniers, lots of service history, trickle charge connector, £2200 Tel. 07905 032280 Bedfordshire



BSA Super Rocket, 1960, fully restored mechanically and cosmetically, refurbished magneto and dynamo, new carb, tyres, exhaust and brakes Tel. 07802 499294 West Yorks



BSA Gold Star Catalina replica 840cc, has a Triumph stroker motor in it, ring for details, £13,000 ono Tel. 07779 742629 Cornwall

Andy Tiernan

Est. 1972



1929 AJS M5 350cc..... £6,000



1958 BSA Bantam D5 175cc£1,275



1925 BSA Round Tank 250cc £6,500



1936 BSA B18 250cc OHV £5,500



1965 BSA B40 350cc..... £3,500



1976 Honda CB125S£1,775



1955 Norton 19S 600cc£6,350



1940 Royal Enfield K 1140cc £27,500



1955 Triumph Terrier 150cc £2,500



1964 Triumph TRW 500cc£5,750



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1929 AJS Big Port 350cc late saddle tank model.....	£7850
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1929 AJS M5 350cc fine late vintage.....	£6000
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1955 BSA C11G 250cc loads of money spent.....	£3250
1925 BSA Round Tank 250cc vintage lightweight.....	£6500
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1920 CLYNO 269cc handsome vintage lightweight.....	Reduced £6250
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BSA Barracuda C25 project, rare 1967 one year only model 250cc, matching engine & frame numbers, most parts there, £1450 ono Tel. Brian 07479 470445 Leics



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BSA 500 1953, quite rare, original condition, original parts, very tidy, matching numbers, old log book, £4500 Tel. 01626 355256 Devon



BSA B31 350, 1957, 9500 miles, Ally wheel rims, solid state voltage controller, V5C present, non transferable reg, £4650 may take p/x Tel. 01328 700711 Norfolk



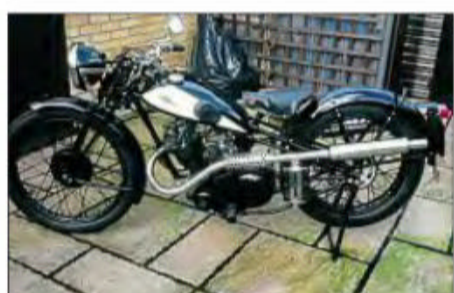
BSA B50 Victor, MX 1973, very little use, electronic ignition, conical hubs, Gold Star head full 499cc, last British 4 stroke Tel. 01327 261038 Northants



BSA C12 250cc, 1958, genuine unrestored example, owned four years, but not used, on Sorn, £1850 ono Tel. John 01737 813034 Surrey



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DUCATI 900SS 1998, 21,391 miles, on Sorn, beautiful bike with extras, ring for details after 6pm, £3150 ono Tel. 07976 807624 Herts



FRANCIS-BARNETT Kestrel, 1955, 10C Villiers engine 150cc, V5, very nice original condition, needs a little fettling to finish it off £1895 poss swap classic car/bike project Tel. 07501 084121 after 6pm or w/ends



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HONDA 250 Super Dream, 1979, air cooled, four stroke parallel twin, six speed transmission, never used, £7995 Tel. 07835 925885 Tyne & Wear



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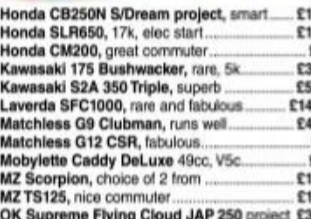
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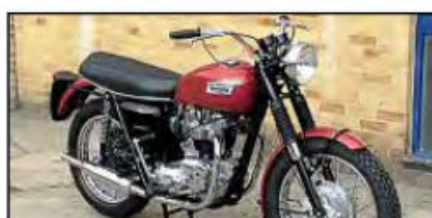
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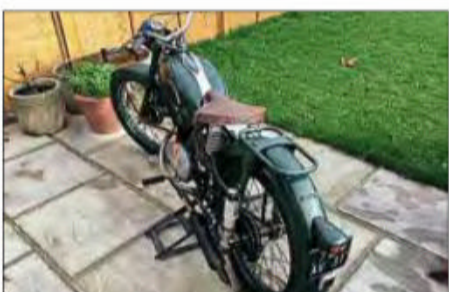
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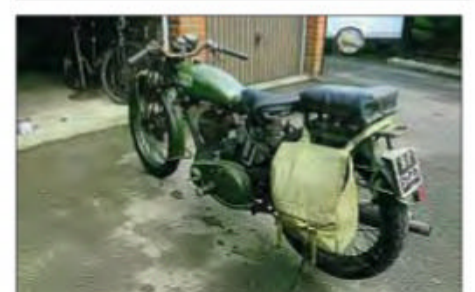
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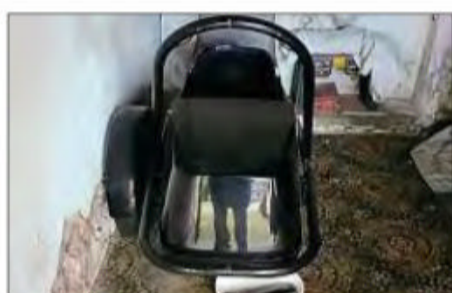
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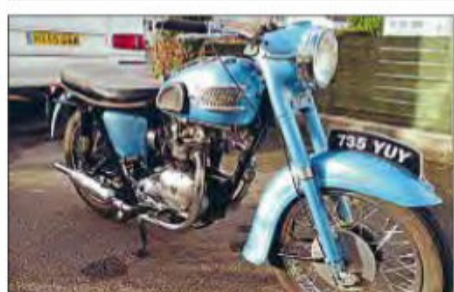
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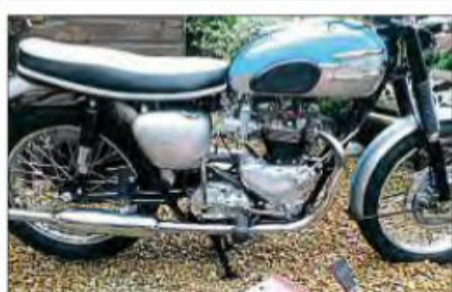
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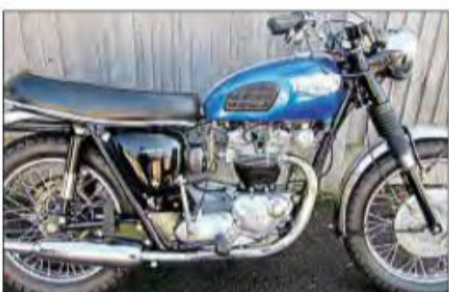
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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Special tools and the special fools who don't use them...

“The first puller had a different thread to the clutch centre itself, the second had the correct thread but stripped as soon as I applied a spanner, and the third – hallelujah – worked perfectly.”

IN THE BIG RED DRAWER AT THE BOTTOM OF THE big red toolbox in which I imaginatively store tools, there lives a very old, very patinated, possibly collectable Jiffy bag. It has scribbling on the outside, which suggests that the contents are ‘Frank’s Pullers’. And this is true. Inside the big bag resides a motley assortment of pullers. Pullers are good. Pullers are great. Things go better with pullers ... certainly better than with a fizzy drink, which allegedly dissolves teeth.

Most of my pullers are for AMC machines – no surprise there, given that I’ve built more AJS, Matchless and Norton motorcycles than all of the sundry others put together. And they’re all decently simple and basic things. The most exotic – if anything to do with a Matchless could very honestly be so described – is the hairpin valve spring compressor for the singles. It’s easy to compress those springs with other types of spring compressor, but it’s easy-peasy if you use the right one. Oh yes. Years of practice and self-denial have proved this.

Elsewhere in the big drawer of potentially identifiable and almost certainly useful tools lie assorted other special tools, not all of them pullers or compressors, and even less of them hammers or tyre levers. Is that a joke? No. Not really. I recently had the misfortune to be reminded of a Triumph I once failed – in a manly, heroic way – to fix. Not least because some previous owner had attempted to remove the clutch with tyre levers and a large hammer. There are two things wrong with that approach: 1) it doesn’t work, and 2) it destroys the crankcase. The former is mildly frustrating, the latter is a great reason to bolt it all back together and flog the bike pronto. Caveat emptor always provides a good excuse for butchery.

However, in these great days when everything is available for everything at the flick of a mouse, finding special tools is not the utter chore it once was. Gone are the days when a chap was compelled to sit clutching a Bakelite handset to one ear while attempting to squint at the details on a tiny 1950s parts list, whose pages were almost transparent due to immersion in oil, while some gruff thug at the other end of the line revealed a detailed

– if considerably inaccurate – knowledge of the enquirer’s parentage. Nowadays all is digital delight.

So how come it took me three attempts to acquire a puller to remove a BSA clutch? Each of the three attempts was successful – a puller arrived every time. The first had a different thread to the clutch centre itself, the second had the correct thread but stripped as soon as I applied a spanner, and the third – hallelujah – worked perfectly.

There is, of course, no excuse for selling a tool with a thread so cheesy that it simply pulled out at the first sign of stress, but the incorrect thread was a puzzle. The supplier is reputable and I’ve dealt with them before. So I asked nicely, like you do. No screaming down a telephonic device for this ancient hippy, oh no. I’d quoted a part number. I can recite it if you like. It’s etched into my memory. So how?

“Ah,” came the considered reply. “Ah,” he said again. I sighed in sympathy. “BSA used three different threads in the same puller because there are three different threads in the clutch.” Confusion was mine. I said thanks, being a polite soul, and cracked open a bottle of something fortifying. And diligent research revealed it was true. There are three pullers with three threads to fit the three different centres used on visually identical clutches. One day I may need the puller with the mysterious thread. I hope not. I may give it to a special friend for a birthday surprise. Or just leave it in the bag marked ‘Frank’s Pullers’.

Memory twitched, as it occasionally does, and reminded me of that long-ago Triumph, where the entire engine had been reduced to rubbish by the lack of a single, simple puller. That not-very special tool would have saved the day, and the words ‘caveat’ and ‘emptor’ would have been left unabused. A puller like this costs around a tenner. A complete engine rebuild including a new set of crankcases? A lot. A big lot.

There’s an antique saying, something about a ha’porth of tar. It’s nothing to do with Tarmac tearaways but everything to do with tools and the fools who don’t use them. Some owners should come with a health warning... **CBG**

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 columnist 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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