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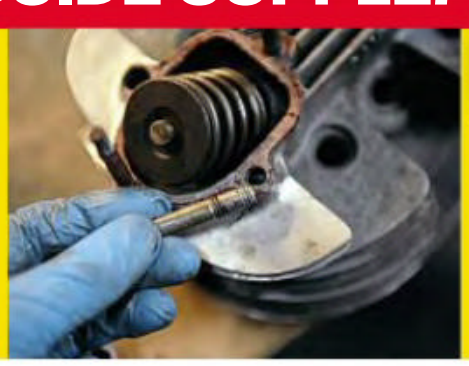

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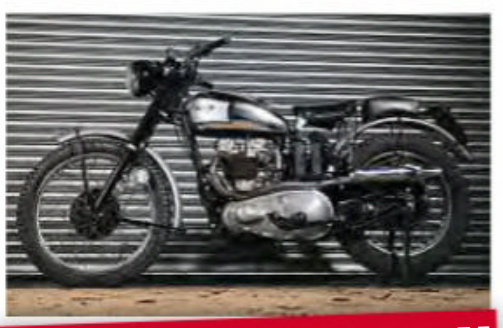

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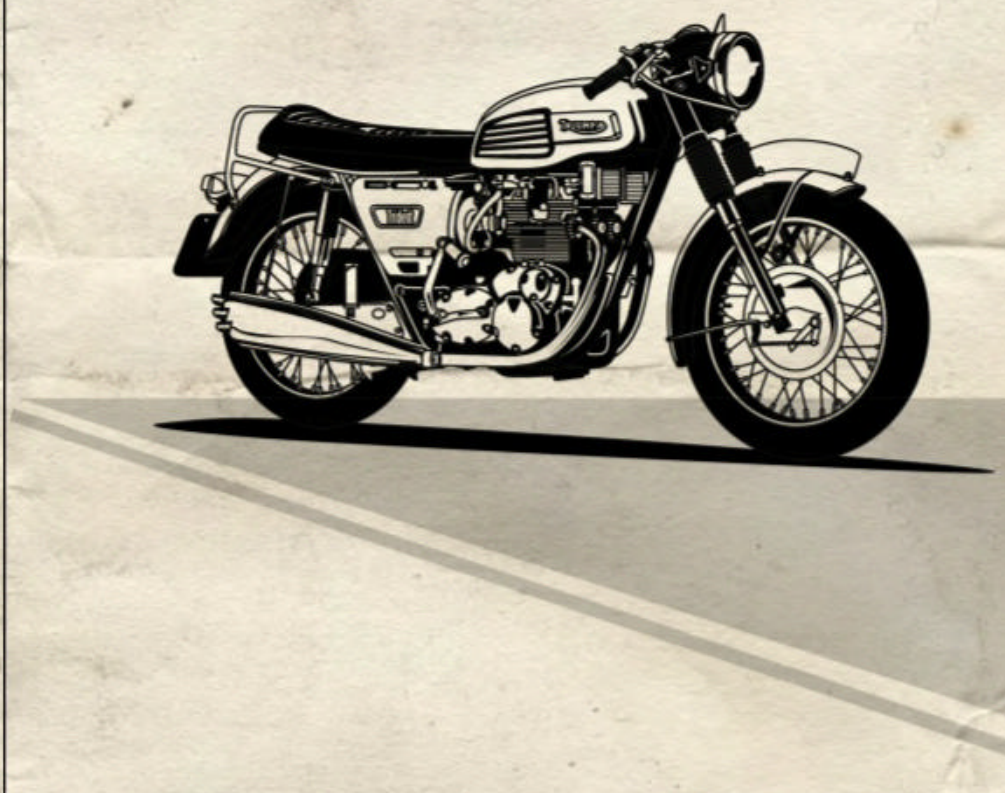

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Beauty is more than skin deep

‘How much? It’s not worth that.’ A commonly heard phrase when looking at a bike for sale. Especially a classic, or old, bike where there is no industry-wide guide book. It could be aimed at a rose-tinted owner, a simple chancer, or dealer. But it could be more meaningful than just someone wanting to extract as much money from the deal. It may be a true representation of the work, effort and trouble that has gone into that bike.

To be honest, it pees me off. You get know-it-alls in all forms of life, but how can you say a 1973 model is worth ‘X’; the same as an identical bike. They are, after all, 45 years old and have probably led totally different lives. So let’s look deeper.

One came from America and was then repatriated, has no service history, an age-related plate but has had a lovely, sumptuous paint job and some new silencers. The other, is not as chintzy. The seat looks saggy, there’s a little rust on the silencers and the tank is marked. But inside, the engine has been rebuilt by an ex-factory engineer, with top quality bearings, parts and has been set up correctly. Which would you go for?

I contemplated this after handing over several hundred pounds for some bottom end bearings and other unseen parts for my Norton single. Friends and I had agreed that it felt okay as was, but as the bike is apart and I’m going through it all, it seemed little sense to skip the fundamentals. Call it insurance. But it means I can’t afford a shiny exhaust for now, yet I’ll be happy knowing the business end is in good order.

Will it make it worth more? That depends on if I: (A) ever sell it (I am a hoarder), or (B), if the potential buyer realises what a tricky and expensive job it is. ‘How much?’ I may well hear…

This is in no way an advert, but I popped in to see Les, Kate and the lovely people at Norvil recently. Yes, the amassed parts for all different models are staggering, but it’s what you can’t see that I found more interesting. Les’s knowledge, earned through being in this game a long time, is staggering, and frankly at some points I felt it would be impossible to retain, let alone learn all people like him know. But thanks to Les and Chris, I went away wiser, more confident with my tasks that await and safe in the knowledge that these old bikes we love have got some future, thanks to this small world of suppliers that continue to source and make parts for our classic bikes.

We pay homage this month to the grandad of all modern Superbikes, the Honda CB750, on its 50th anniversary. I was lucky enough to ride one a couple of years back (thanks, David Silver – never did tell you that I almost left it decorating the boot of a car thanks to the rest of the bike feeling so modern, apart from the front brake…) and as someone who has spent most of their life on the latest bikes, I was staggered by how it felt like a modern machine. What on earth would it have felt like in 1969 after a life of British bikes?

If you did ride one early on, we’d love to hear what you thought then and how it was perceived. One thing I noted from an original test, that hasn’t changed, was how the front brake was never any good… Still, hope you enjoy!

Right, I’m off to the workshop. I’d love to tell you that I’m working on a bike; truth is I’ve got to weld up my daughter’s Morris Minor. More work you’ll never see or have appreciated – not even by an MoT tester nowadays…

Be good!

Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com

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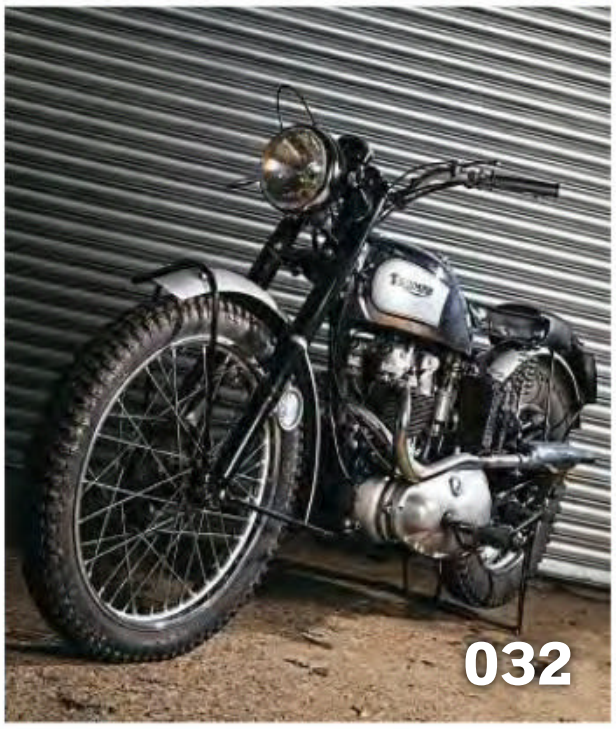

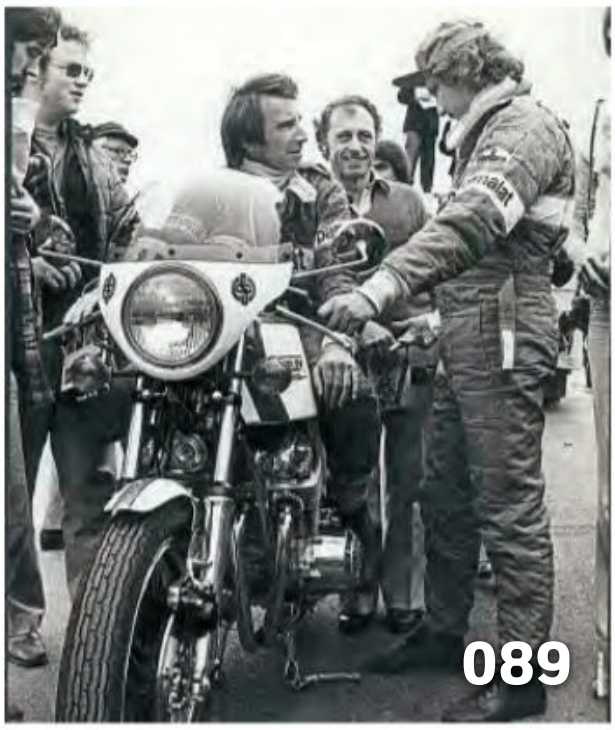

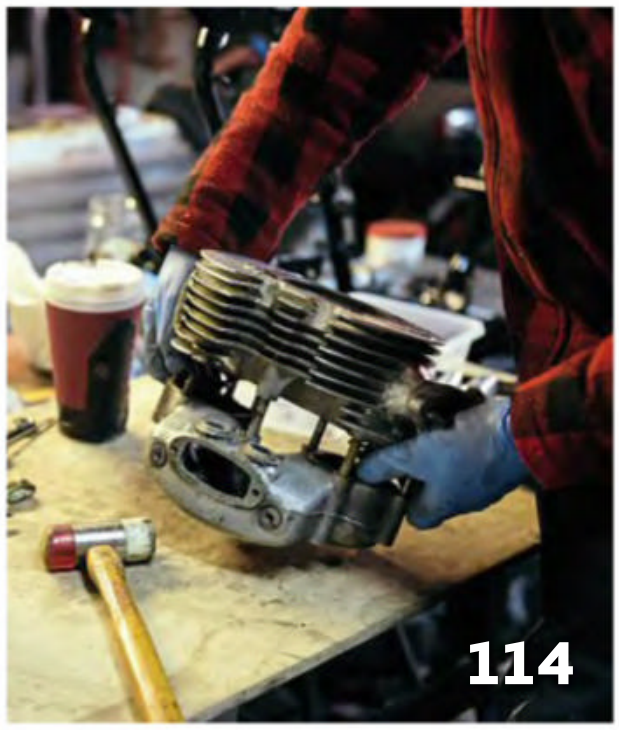

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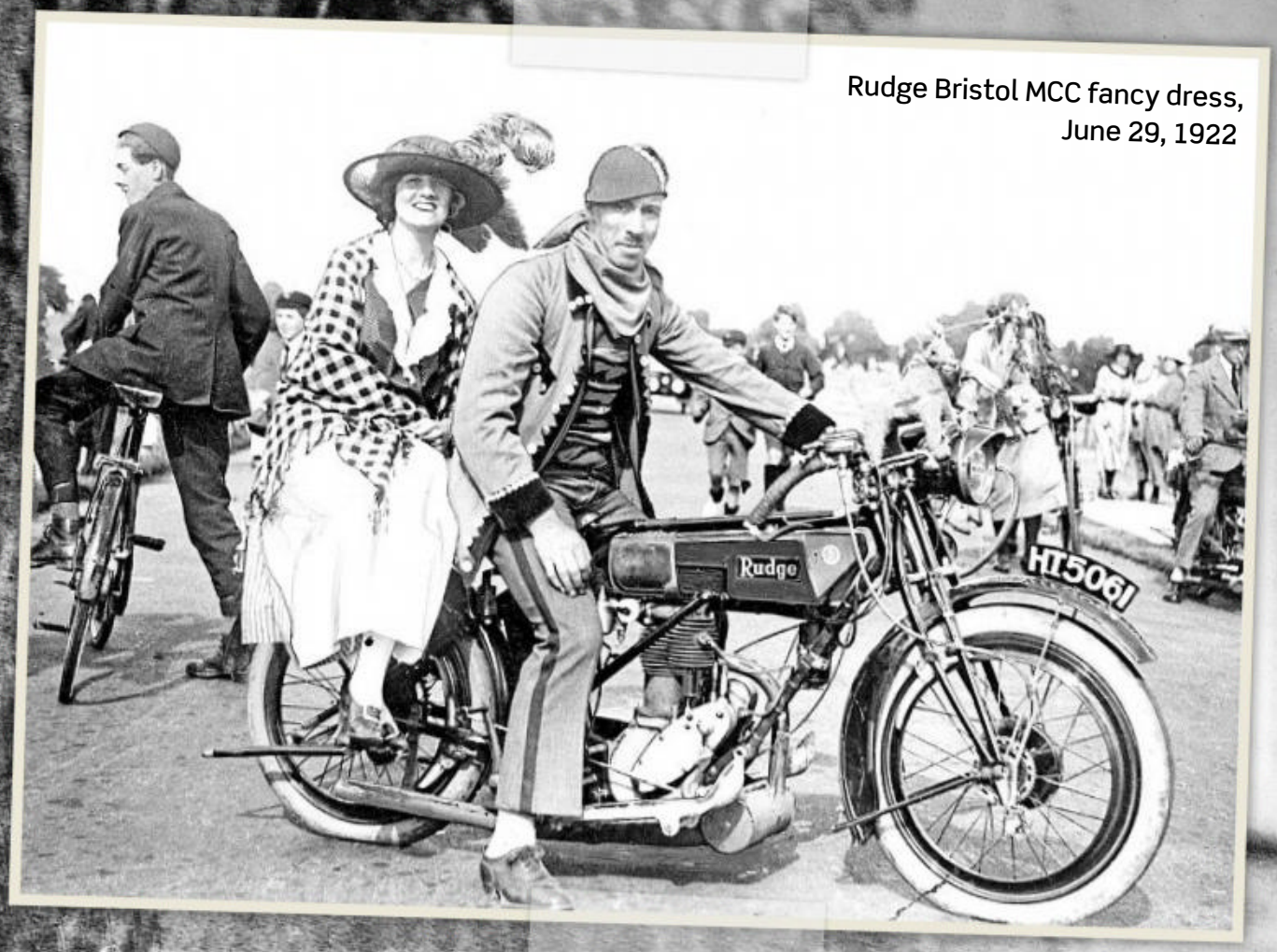
A gentleman of the GPO, clearing a postbox near Corley, while his Rudge Multi waits to be loaded. Thanks to the multi gear system (a little like a variomatic that modern scooters have as I understand) pulling a load proved little issue. Meanwhile, the chicken looks down to see if the postie has dropped any food... CBG



Rudge Bristol MCC fancy dress, June 29, 1922

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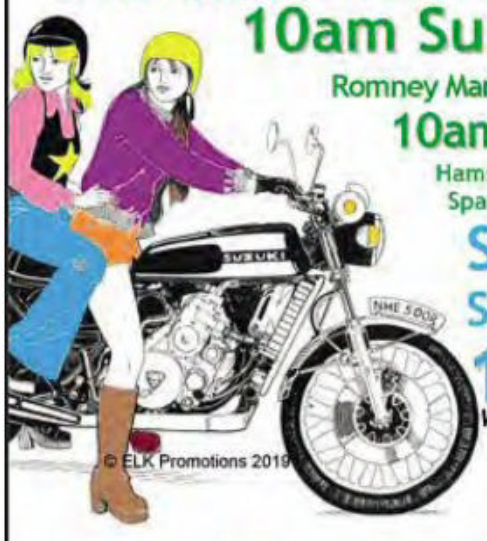

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That matter

The Rudge Ulster

The pride and joy of the Coventry-based Rudge-Whitworth factory, the Rudge Ulster was born out of self-congratulation

WORDS BY RACHAEL CLEGG **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** GARY CHAPMAN

THE SUN, AS THEY SAY, ALWAYS SHINES ON the righteous. So it seems only right that this 1937 Rudge-Whitworth Ulster is photographed in gleaming sunshine at Davolls classic motorcycles in Billericay, Essex.

This model was, after all, the pride and joy of the Coventry-based Rudge-Whitworth factory, born out of self-congratulation. Its name – Ulster – was a celebration of Graham Walker's factory win at the 1928 Ulster Grand Prix. It was a race in which he set the record pace of 82mph, winning the race at 80.08mph – the first time an international road race had been won at more than 80mph.

But it was necessary for the factory to proclaim its victory, as the marque had suffered something of a slump during the 1920s. To understand the creation of the Ulster, therefore, we must look at the context of Rudge-Whitworth's history….

Rudge has been immensely successful in the early days of the TT: in 1914 Cyril Pullin won the Senior TT race on a belt-driven Rudge Multi at a speed of 49.49mph. Then, of course, the First World War broke out, forcing the TT into a six-year hiatus. Rudge too entered something of a racing hiatus, investing little in race development with very few racing successes.

Geoff Davison, in his TT Anecdotes, said: "Curiously enough, there were no Rudge entries [in 1920], nor were there any the following year. The next Rudges we saw were in 1922; a vast team of them started and retired, but one – O M Baldwin – finished 14th."

He continued to report that there were no Rudge appearances for the next three years, apart from two that finished in the 1926 Senior, in 1927 just one Rudge entered, only to retire.

This hardly provided publicity material, especially for a factory whose machines were deemed some of the fastest on the market. Yes, Rudge's cutting-edge four-valve per cylinder format engines packed plenty of punch but their handling was lacking and as such

"The Ulster was a sort of over-the-counter racer that was a semi works machine. It was very fast and very easily modified to be a racer; customers only had to remove the lights and they were pretty much ready to go"

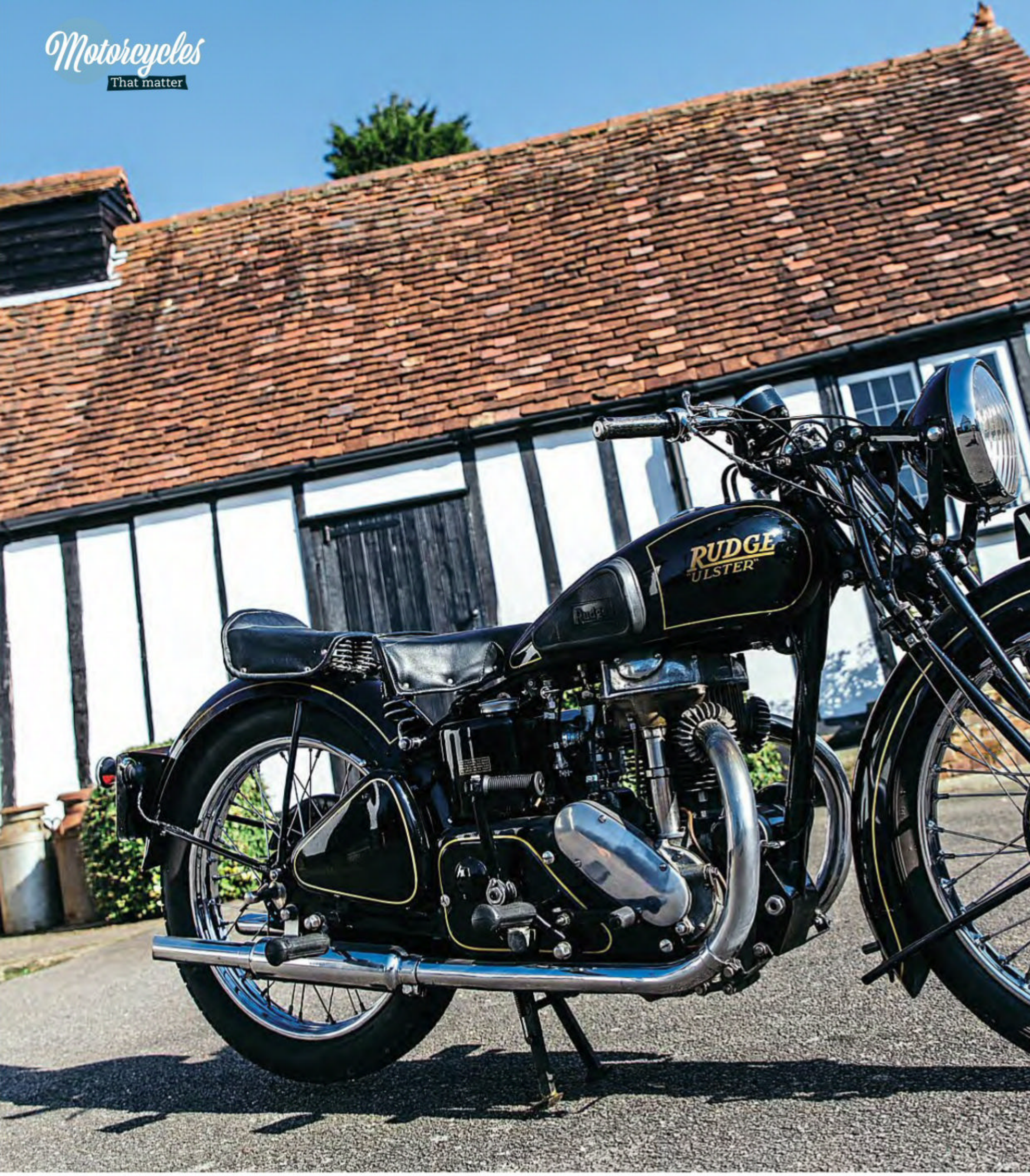
Rudges couldn't compete with the likes of Norton Internationals and Sunbeams.

So in 1927 racing manager and designer George Hack proposed a shake-up of Rudge's race efforts. The factory announced an all-out assault on the racing scene and began developing competitive motorcycles that would plant the marque's name back on the road racing map. Such was this drive to promote Rudge on the racing scene that its sales department printed handkerchiefs for TT visitors with the slogan 'When you see a Rudge go by, cheer and wave your hankie.' Added to this, the factory also employed Graham Walker as sales manager – who, as an established TT racer, also served as the Rudge works rider.

In 1928 the factory announced it was working on a new model. This model was to share the same power as its predecessor but with better handling, brakes and forks. Apart from the tried and tested four-speed gearbox, Rudge otherwise used brand-new parts on the machine.

Other changes – which were clearly geared towards a racing market – included twin, quick action filler caps and a tank capacity of nearly four gallons. This combination of easy, rapid fillers, along with its relatively large tank allowed for super swift pit stops during racing, in particular the IOM TT.

The machine's power output was 25bhp with a top speed of 90mph, making it the most powerful machine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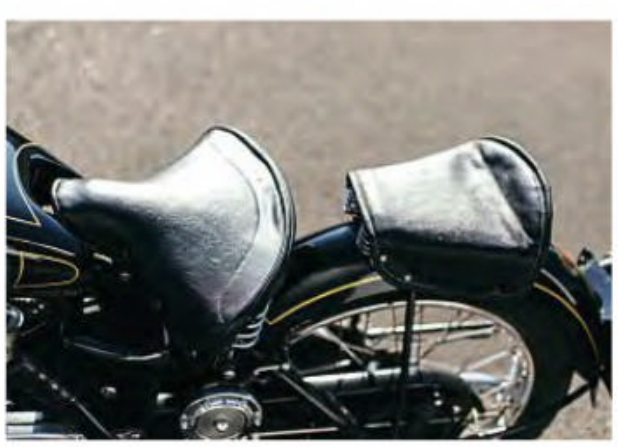

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of the 500cc class in its time, with the exception of Norton Internationals.

All this power and innovation was packed into a machine that – at least on the outside – looked pretty conventional. As Bob Currie wrote in his *Guide to Prewar Motorcycles:* "If there was a different way of engineering a component, that was Rudge's way… Yes, Rudges looked conventional enough; possibly the only feature which singled them out, at a glance, was the unusual lever on the left side" – this operated the machine's central stand.

Douglas Lambourne, chairman of the Rudge Enthusiasts' Club, said: "The Ulster was a sort of over-the-counter racer that was a semi works machine. It was very fast and very easily modified to be a racer, customers only had to remove the lights and they were pretty much ready to go. And as such the Ulster became a very popular bike in club races throughout the 1930s."

But one of the defining technological features of the Ulster was its braking, as Currie wrote: "There were huge, interconnected brakes at a time when rival makers had narrow linings of six-inch diameter drums." Lambourne said: "The Ulster was fitted with this braking system whereby the back and front brakes were applied, when you pressed on the brake pedal you were initiating both brakes – back and front. This spring-loaded braking system applied 75 per cent braking on the front and 25 per cent on the back. It was very revolutionary at the time."

Rudge-Whitworth also had its own metallurgy department, as Lambourne explains: "The company had an entire department dedicated to metallurgy and it tested all its own components. Even its designer, G L Hack, was a metallurgist, so the materials used on Rudges were not only tried and tested for longevity but cutting-edge for their time – such as high tensile steel. Some of the con rods, for example, are still in working order today – 80 years after they were manufactured."

Throughout the late 1920s, Rudge invested heavily in technological development and this was reflected in its racing results. The marque's 350cc machine finished first, second and third in the 1930 Junior TT with H Tyrell-Smith (with a fastest average of 71.08 mph), G E Nott (with a fastest average speed of 70.89 mph) and G Walker (70.77 mph), respectively.

But then, just as the marque was cementing its name in road racing and improving its machines, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 kick-started the deepest global trade recession in history. Like so many British motorcycle manufacturers at that time, Rudge suffered as a result. In regular circumstances, TT results like Rudge's in the 1930 TT would have boosted sales. But in the early 1930s sales were slowing. The company was struggling to recoup the enormous amount of money it had invested in its racing efforts. By 1935 sales of Rudges were down to 2000 – a drop owing not only to global economic circumstances but also to a price hike after Rudge-Whitworth had been taken over by the EMI Group. EMI set about making changes to Rudge-Whitworth's range of models – but this had a bearing on price, with a hike of £10.

On the Ulster, these later adaptions included an encased valve gear and a bigger bore carburettor. And by 1936 a fully-fledged competition model would set you back £73.10 – which was far from inexpensive. In 1937 – the date of the model pictured – a new Ulster 500cc machine cost a whopping £77.

But the 1937 Ulster model did have a lot to offer – as described in its lush rust-coloured brochure (a

curious colour scheme for a company hell-bent on metallurgical longevity). The machine's spec included a 499cc engine, four-speed gearbox, adjustable semi-sports handlebars, Dunlop 'universal' tyres, the 'Rudge patented proportional coupled brakes', and an option for a 'International Six Days' Trial type rear hub with– as stated in capital letters–ONE NUT RELEASE!'.

Curiously, the famous Rudge-Whitworth offset spoked wheels weren't mentioned in the 1937 brochure, though they were in the 1936 literature. The spoked wheels are especially interesting, as Lambourne explains: "Rudge's offset spokes were a unique design pioneered by Rudge and the same off-set spoke design was later applied to Ferrari wheels in the racing cars of that time. They were strong and light."

Rudge's sales began to improve as the 1930s progressed but again, fate would intervene: the war broke out in 1939 and the Rudge-Whitworth factory was requisitioned for the development of radios and later radar technology. The company made a modest comeback with the 'Cyclemaster' in the 1950s but it was merely a whimsical footnote in the marque's history. The marque best known for its power, punch and TT-winning prowess really died at the onset of the Second World War.

The 500cc Rudge Ulster in these photographs is at Davolls in Essex

But at least, thanks to the factory's focus on metallurgy and technological longevity, those few Rudges that are still with us are in relatively decent order. Lambourne said: "Rudges were so well-built, they really do stand the test of time and they were a quality machine of their day."

And he would know. "I have 12 of them," he laughs. "I got my first Rudge when I was a very, very young man – it was buried in a barn! And I've just been offered that one to buy again – it's just a matter of convincing my wife." CBG

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 499cc, **BORE:** 85mm, **STROKE:** 88mm; four-overhead valves per cylinder 'Rudge' system; bronze cylinder head; enclosed and lubricated valve operating gear **BRAKES:** Rudge-patented proportional brakes **PETROL TANK:** 'Aero' model finished in black and gold **WHEELS:** New type detachable rear wheel **TYRES:** Dunlop 'Universal' tyres **STANDS:** Lever-operated 'hernia saving' (as Bob Currie describes it) central stand **FINISH:** Black enamel on rustproof undercoat

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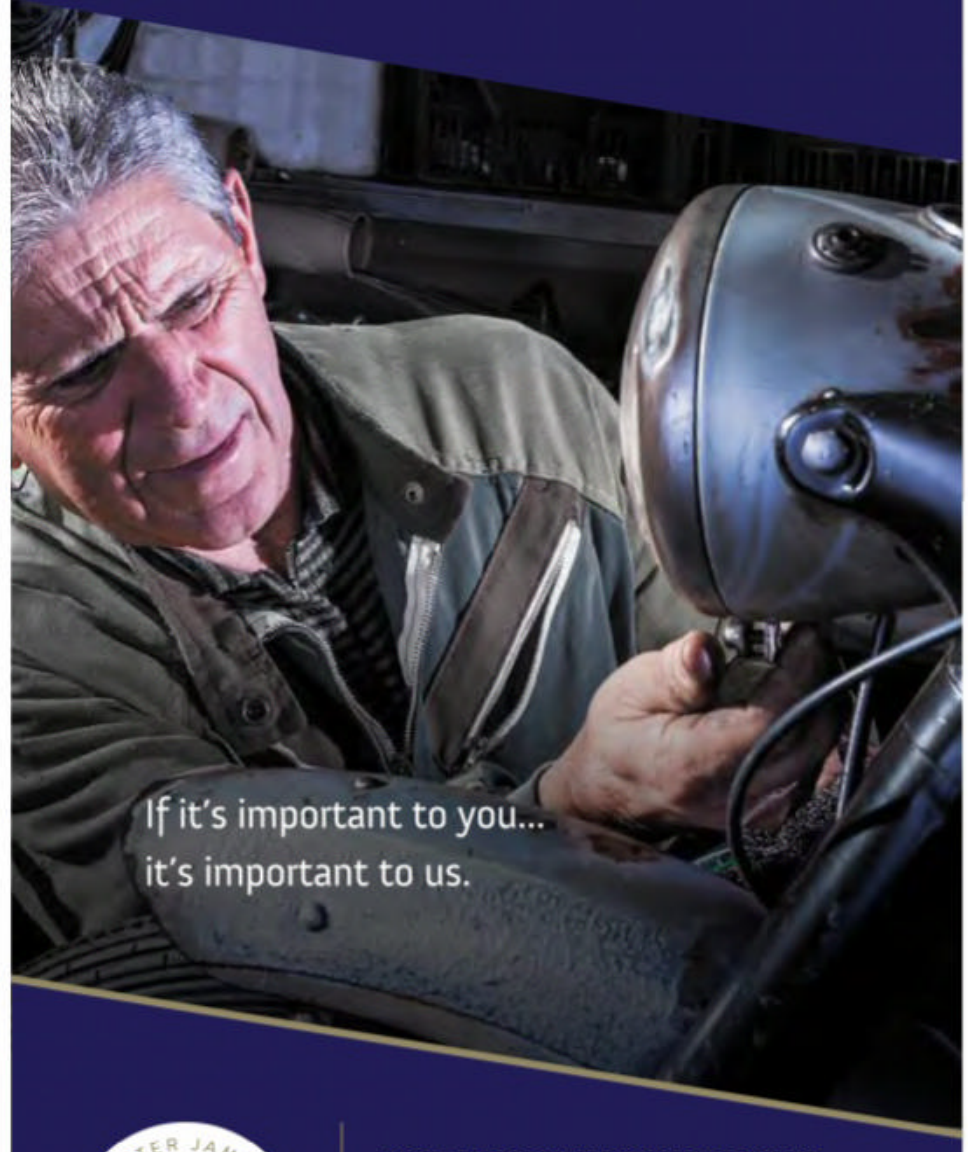

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Millyard and Miller to unveil stunning bikes at Stafford

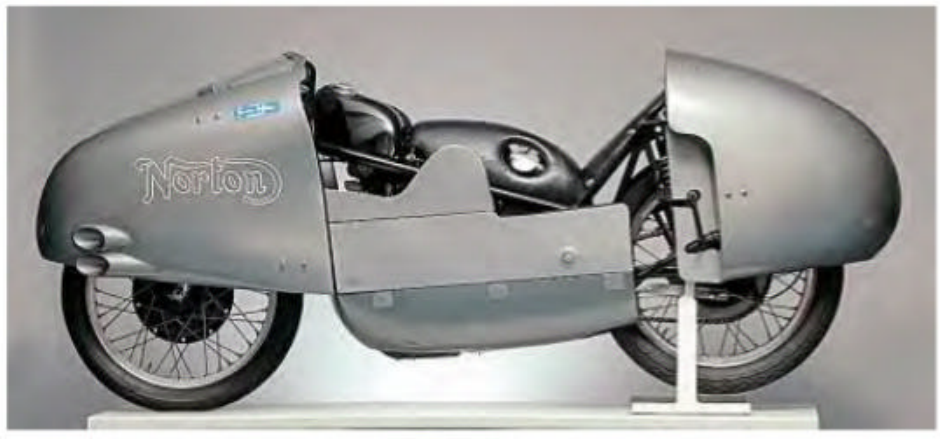
THERE IS LESS than a week to go until the arrival of the world's biggest classic bike show at Stafford County Showground, and there are some very special attractions lined up.

The Carole Nash International Clasic MotorCycle Show has traditionally had a decidedly British focus, and this year is no exception.

Specials builder Allen Millyard returns to the April 27-28 event to unveil his latest project, a unique Velocette V-twin based on a 1949 349cc Velocette MAC. Allen made his Velocette 698cc V-twin single-handedly at home in just two months, using and adapting as many original parts as possible. Using two 1950s Velocette single top ends, the engine is built around a one-off crankcase in a 1930s style frame. The Velo-V will be on show sponsor Carole Nash's stand in the main hall.

Regular show guest Sammy Miller is the founder of his own eponymous museum, now one of the largest motorbike collections in the world.

He will bring two incredible Nortons for display on the Footman James insurance stand in the main hall. The first is the stunning 1955/6 350cc Model F Norton. Influenced by Moto Guzzi's success with a machine that featured laid-down single cylinder engines, the Norton race shop worked on the similarly configured Model F.



The second is the 1953 350cc Norton 'Silver Fish' kneeler. This was an attempt to improve the obsolescent Manx Norton's performance with better streamlining, and its rider lay virtually prone to minimise the frontal area. The top tubes of the Featherbed-based frame splayed out around the engine, fuel was pumped from pannier tanks and the full aluminium streamlining immediately gave the machine its Silver Fish nickname.

With the show's theme celebrating 2019 being the 100th edition of the TT, visitors can also expect another incredible display of legendary TT machines. Among them is an original Joey Dunlop 1994 RC45, which saw the greatest TT rider of all time come home third in the 1994 Senior race, behind Steve Hislop and Phil McCallen.

The oldest of the TT motorcycles on display is a 1926 AJS GR10 500cc. The bike raced in the 1926 Senior TT, but interestingly its placing is not known. A total of seven GR10s took part in the race, with only three finishing – in third, sixth and eighth place.

Due to fire at the AJS factory in Wolverhampton, all records were destroyed, and so the bikes and frame numbers to riders are unknown to this day. The rest of the display consists of an ex-HG Tyrell-Smith 1932 works Rudge, which finished third in that year's Junior TT race; a minuscule 50cc Honda CR110, a three-cylinder MV Agusta and a 1984 Ducati TT2 with TT history.

Now in its 39th year, the Carole Nash International Classic MotorCycle Show is the place to be for any classic motorcycle fan. With loud and proud motorcycle start-ups, off-road displays, interviews with famous riders and personalities and a huge opportunity for shopping and rummaging through the sought-after items in the autojumble, it's easy to see why it is deemed the largest classic bike show in the world, attracting more than 30,000 visitors every year.

For more information, visit staffordclassicbikeshows.com

Classic vees and racers on the Bonhams bill

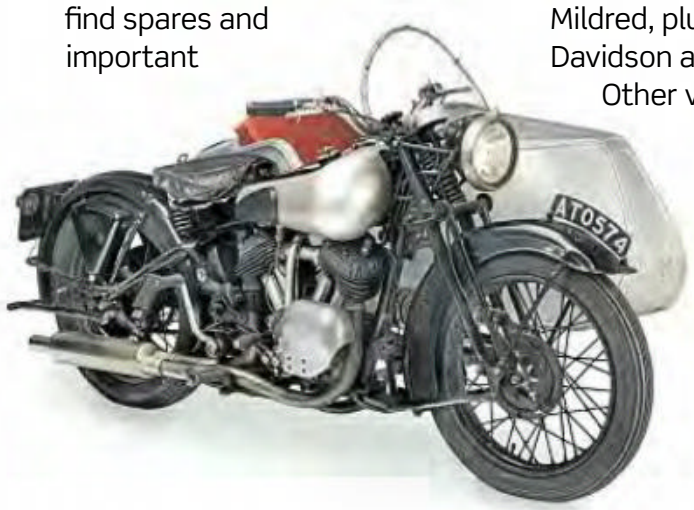
BONHAMS' ANNUAL SPRING Stafford Sale will be a marathon two-day affair, held at the International Classic MotorCycle Show in Stafford on April 27-28.

The sale offers a staggering variety of machinery, hard-to-find spares and important memorabilia – more than 600 lots are presently consigned.

There is a particularly strong entry of v-twin machines, with examples from Brough Superior made famous in TV shows Dad's Army and George and Mildred, plus Vincent, Harley-Davidson and Coventry-Eagle.

Other v-twin highlights include a 1922 Chater Lea 885cc 8hp combination (£12,000-£16,000) and the ex-Kaye Done, 1914 Zenith-JAP 'Gradua' Twin (£16,000-£20,000).

Although these are the stars of the show, there are more affordable offerings including a Norton Model 19s with a guide price starting at £2800, a Moto Guzzi V50 with a £2000 guide price and a pair of D7 BSA Bantams starting at £300. There are also a host of competition off-road machines and racing bikes. Saturday's auction will include a variety of rare spares, from mountains of magnetos to piles of pistons. Visit www.bonhams.com for details.



A warhorse and a pink Triumph set for Prescott

THE PRESCOTT BIKE FESTIVAL returns to the Gloucestershire hill climb on June 15-16. As ever, Prescott Bike Fest will feature an extensive display of historic, custom builds, race bikes, factory bikes, prototypes, shed builds and record beating machines... literally everything from Salon Privé class winner 1903 Royal Sovereign, to the 'Warhorse' – the world's fastest monowheel and everything in between.

The festival is renowned for its diversity of machinery and this year will be no exception. Famed for multi cylinder creations iconic motorcycle builder Allen Millyard will run five of his incredible home builds. From the ever-popular 4894cc 'Flying Millyard' V-twin; a bike designed around two cylinders from a Pratt and Whitney radial aero engine to a 1967 handmade replica of Mike Hailwood's iconic RC174 which recently scooped 'The Most Distinguished Motorcycle Award' at Salon Privé.

Unlike a static bike show, Bike Fest's excellent showcase of Paddock Specials features over 100 examples of rare racing machinery where you can meet the owners, watch them fire-up and tackle the historic hill climb.

All the classic marques are well represented with the likes of AJS, BSA, Royal Enfield, Matchless, Cotton, Ariel, Norton, Moto Guzzi, Triumph and Velocette, plus some lesser known ones. These include a 1927 Velocette KSS 350cc, sprung frame racer named 'Spring Heeled Jack', a rare 1964 Tohatsu 125cc racing twin and a 1967 replica of the famous Honda RC181 500/4 grand prix bike as raced by Mike Hailwood and Jim Redman.

Other racers on show include a Paton, Jawa, MV Agusta and a modern-day homage to the Kenny Roberts Yamaha TZ750 flat-tracker with the engine fitted into a bespoke chassis by Curtis Racing (CMR) in Canada.

Custom fans will enjoy a rare outing by the Diamond Mob Land Speed Racing Team record-breaking pink Triumph. A couple of years ago the old Anthill Mob Pink Triumph Drag Racing Bike was rescued by several members of the National Chopper Club to re-build the bike to land speed record specifications. The bike will take pride of place on the National Chopper Club stand.

Kickback will be displaying the best of custom and shed builds all under cover. A superb exhibition and showcase for contemporary customs and modified classics featuring the 80 finalists competing in the National Custom Show and UK Championships.

Aside from all the incredible machinery, Bike Fest includes plenty of 'off-track' attractions.

You can book a thrilling passenger experience in anything from a professional racing sidecar to a Morgan Three-Wheeler or Grinnall Scorpion, enjoy live bands, eat great food, wander round over 100+ quality exhibitors and the Kids Zone, plus see the odd famous person wandering about the paddock. All the proceeds from the event support the work of Nationwide Association of Blood Bikes and Severn Freewheelers.

Since its inception, Prescott Bike Festival has raised over £200,000 for charities. For 2019, the festival has teamed up with the National Motorcycle Museum and every visitor will get a 50% off voucher to visit the NMM.

Admission is £12-15 in advance and the event is held at Prescott Hill Climb, Gotherington, Cheltenham, GL52 9RD. For information and tickets visit www.prescottbikefestival.co.uk

£500 bonus for Triumph buyers as season starts

AS RIDING SEASON STARTS in earnest for many, Triumph is trying to entice buyers into the showroom with a range of offers.

Riders looking to get their hands on the Triumph Bonneville Bobber or the Bonneville T100 and Bonneville T120 range will receive a £500 personalisation contribution, which can be spent across Triumph's wide range of clothing and accessories or used towards Triumph Insurance or TriStar finance. Martin Hough, UK marketing manager at Triumph Motorcycles UK, said: "We have a wide variety of offers available across the Triumph Motorcycle range to kickstart the year for our customers.

Our forthcoming T-FEST season launch on May 11-12 gives customers the perfect opportunity to visit their local dealer, see our impressive range and book themselves a test ride on their next bike."

Offers apply until June 30 and are available through Triumph dealerships nationwide.

New man at top of Enfield

ROYAL ENFIELD AND its parent company Eicher Motors Ltd, has appointed a new CEO.

Vinod K Dasari is the new chief executive officer of Royal Enfield, and will also join the board of Eicher Motors as executive director. Siddhartha Lal, the former CEO, will remain the managing director of Eicher Motors.

Dasari began his career with General Electric in 1986 and became president of Cummins India Limited and Timken Company, where he was the Global Railroad business president in the United States.

He said: "Royal Enfield is an inspiring story and I am very excited to be part of such a fantastic brand. For me, working with a consumer brand will be a tremendous learning opportunity, and professionally, I am looking forward to the challenge of creating a global consumer brand from India."

Stars come out for Silverstone classic

THE STAR-STUDDED World GP Bike Legends will be back out in force at this summer's Silverstone Classic on July 26-28, fronting an enlarged motorcycle showcase at the world's biggest classic motor racing festival.

Featuring multiple world champions such as Wayne Gardner, Freddie Spencer and Raymond Roche, the presence of World GP Bike Legends has become a major draw at recent classics and their welcome return for the fourth successive year is certain to be another crowd-pleaser.

World GP Bike Legends will be helping to power a new bike zone, MotoWorld, putting a spotlight on the world of motorbikes with a commitment to the development of bike content through this exciting new joint initiative with the organisers of the classic.

Visitors will once again be treated to the stunning spectacle of some of the most beautiful looking and sounding racing bikes blasting around the full grand prix circuit ridden by some of the sport's top names.

Fans will be able to meet their heroes with autograph and photo sessions between the track demos. "There'll be the traditional warm biker welcome," promised Gardner, adding: "We always love to impress, inspire and entertain at great venues such as Silverstone – so it is wonderful to be back on the incredible classic bill for a fourth year in a row."

This year's track programme features special anniversary races for Bentleys, Capris and Minis plus evocative showdowns for classic Formula 1, Formula 2 and Formula 3 single-seaters all together on the same race-card for the first time.

As well as including unlimited access to both race paddocks plus trackside grandstands, tickets also provide admission to most of the funfair rides, infield attractions, interactive activities and amusements for all ages.

Also included are the vibrant live music concerts on both Friday and Saturday evenings.

Full details of all tickets as well as hospitality packages and weekend festival camping – can be found online at www.silverstoneclassic.com

Champ Tai scoops Torrens Trophy

KING OF SPEEDWAY Tai Woffinden has scooped another award to add to his growing list of honours.

The Scunthorpe-born speedway world champion was awarded the prestigious Royal Automobile Club's Torrens Trophy.

The trophy recognises an individual or organisation considered to have made an outstanding contribution to the cause of safe and skilful motorcycling in the United Kingdom, or to have made an outstanding contribution of technical excellence to further the cause of motorcycling in the UK or to have shown outstanding skill in international motorcycling sporting events in the UK. It has only been awarded 11 times in its history and only when the club feels that the achievement justifies it.

Last year Woffinden raced in to the history books when he won his third world championship title and became the most successful British speedway rider of all time, beating the mark achieved by speedway aces Freddie Williams and Peter Craven.

The committee unanimously agreed that Woffinden should be honoured for not only his outstanding racing achievement but representing Britain on a world stage".

Seven-time Isle of Man TT winner Mick Grant said: "His unflappable approach is an example many should try to copy. Last year in Slovenia he was excluded for being late to the tapes by a fraction of a second by a very biased referee. The names I called him wouldn't look good on his birth certificate. I saw Tai not kick his bike, and not verbally abuse the referee, but just come out stronger. He is a credit to the sport."

Former professional road racer and current MotoGP commentator Keith Huewen said: "I am delighted that Tai has been awarded the Torrens Trophy. Speedway is so often overlooked and yet is one of the toughest sports to consistently stay fit enough to take a title. Taking three is special."

Previous winners of the Torrens Trophy include racers, police officers, the Transport and Road Laboratory and BMW.

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Letters

Gonna get me a Bullet

I'm not as deeply into motorcycles as I once was and I plan to let all subs other than Motorcycle Classics expire, but I check all the Brit mags when I get to Barnes & Noble. I've never had one, but I still retain an undiminished weakness between the ears for the Bullet, so on my last visit I snatched your February issue without looking twice.

It seems there are people of low character everywhere – on the phone, on the internet, in the mailbox at the end of my drive, who would eagerly take advantage of the elderly, and now there's you. Good job, this issue is a keeper. My knee still remembers my SR500 from decades ago, but I know who has a Bullet without a strong attachment. And I'm feeling vulnerable. No beer for me 'til I recover. Or fail.

Dana Shifflett
McLains, Kansas (kay-yan-zuzz, subtly, without moving the jaw)
(RAF Mildenhall, 84-86)

A pair of Matchless G3s

Hello from New Zealand and thanks for producing the *Classic Bike Guide* mag. I enjoy reading the articles and find them very interesting.

I started riding British bikes at an early age, but as usual, marriage and mortgages meant selling them (reluctantly) for household items. Now I have reached retirement age, I don't own one, but am lucky enough to maintain and ride two Matchless G3L 350s owned by a lady friend. One is 1950, the other a 1949.

Her father owned the 1950 machine, the other was owned by her father's best friend. I renewed the carb on the 1949 as the original was worn. Both bikes have been rebuilt, start easy, run well and I am looking forward to some riding with my friend when she returns from the UK.

I'm lucky to be able to get advice and parts from two local bike enthusiasts, one being an AJS Matchless expert and the other a restorer of most makes of classic British bikes and cars, who goes by the name of Lord Nuffield.

Thanks again for producing this great mag and I look forward to many more.

Dennis Richards.

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CBB231B	56"	9 Dr chest	1460x615x490	£419.00	£502.80
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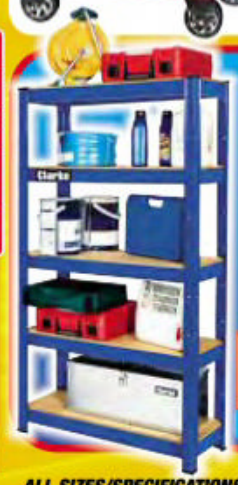

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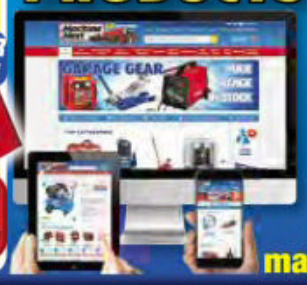

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7/250	2 HP	7	24ltr	£94.99	£113.99
11/250	2.5HP	9.5	24ltr	£109.98	£131.98
8/510	2HP	7.5	50ltr	£119.98	£143.98
11/510	2.5HP	9.5	50ltr	£139.98	£167.98
16/510*	3 HP	14.5	50ltr	£209.00	£250.80
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AP15	HVLP, 2.2mm	£27.99	£33.59
SP14/18C	1.4mm/ 1.8mm	£28.99	£34.79

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CHT304 33pce Metric/UNF/BSP	£32.99	£39.59
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Caliper kits won't break the bank

ONE OF THE irritating things about working on some 1970s motorcycles is the way you have to buy lots of tiny parts individually. When I rebuilt the front brake caliper on my XS650 I had to buy each seal, bit by bit.

Given that working brakes are quite an important part of motorcycle ownership, and that all the various now ancient rubbery bits rot at around the same rate, and the brake nipples are made out of tofu, this is a bit of a pain, as while you have the thing apart you might as well replace everything, right?

So when I was planning to rebuild the rear caliper I picked up at the Newark show, I was delighted to spot that Wemoto now offer TRK brake caliper repair kits. A new front caliper has already been fitted, but rear calipers are unobtainable.

The kit for the XS included all the parts needed: seals, boots, covers for the piston and nipple, a small quantity of rubber grease and clips, for the full repair of each caliper. There were also stainless steel nipples and copper washers.

The kits cost £17 each, which compares very favourably with those from some XS650 specialists, which only include the dust cover, seal, nipple cover and metal sealing ring and cost £17.50.

Adding on a nipple, caliper boot, grease and washers would double that. The quality of the TRK kits is equal or superior to the other kits too. Now all I have to do is get the old caliper apart...

The kits cover thousands of models from the 1970s to 2019, with popular manufacturers including Honda, Yamaha, Kawasaki, Suzuki, KTM and Triumph. Prices start at £9.25. Classic models covered include Honda CX 500, CB 750 F, GL 1000 and GL 1100; as well as Yamaha XS models, SR 500, XJ 650 and many more.

- **TRK Caliper Repair Kits**
- **From £9.25**
- **Visit www.wemoto.com.**

Gloves that will have you staying out for the summer

I'VE HAD THESE Rayven Air-Pro Gloves for a couple of years now. To me, good gloves are the next most important thing after a crash helmet and I have to admit that I'd always previously been a chunky gauntlet kind of a chap, with my current all-weather chunky gauntlets being a pair of Akitos picked up at the Bristol Show. They're good, but they do tend to get a bit whiffy in the summer.

When I got the Rayven gloves I wasn't initially convinced. They're short, so they don't stretch over the bottom of my jacket sleeves. They're summer weight gloves, so the fingers and cuffs are made out of a mysterious material called Keprotec, a Kevlar reinforced polyester fabric.

There's a couple of carbon-fibre knuckle guards on each glove, and supple cow hide palms and top panels. There's an elasticated wrist and Velcro cuffs, and a reinforced wrist panel, and they are lined with a close meshed version of Keprotec. And they are, by a long way, the comfiest gloves I've ever worn, superb for summer riding, with a perfect fit, and look good in a nice restrained shade of black without any ghastly graphics.

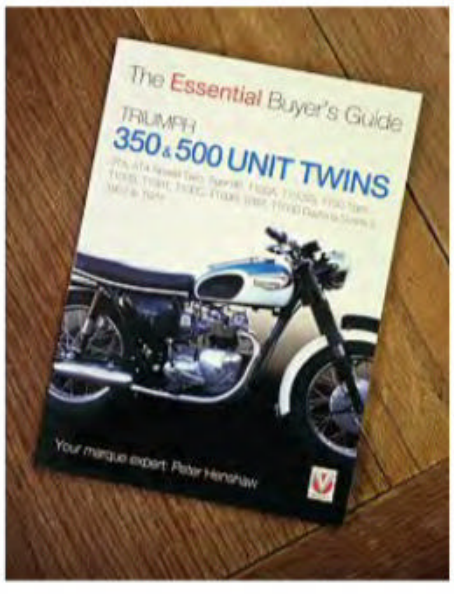
Despite their initial apparent flimsiness, they instil confidence and the mesh outer makes riding in them during hot weather a pleasure. The only real problem is that if you end up staying out longer than you expected things can get a little chilly at night, so I do tend to double up with gauntlets in a back pack if that seems likely. The only real issue is that Rayven don't list them anymore, but there are suppliers who still hold stock, especially in odd sizes, so try an internet search.

- **Rayven Air Pro Summer Gloves**
- **£31.99**
- **kickstartonline.co.uk**

Triumphant reading

THIS IS A handy little A5-size book for those interested in unit-twin Triumphs. It is by no means comprehensive, yet covers enough detail to see whether one of the models is for you, what to look for when buying one and how to look after it.

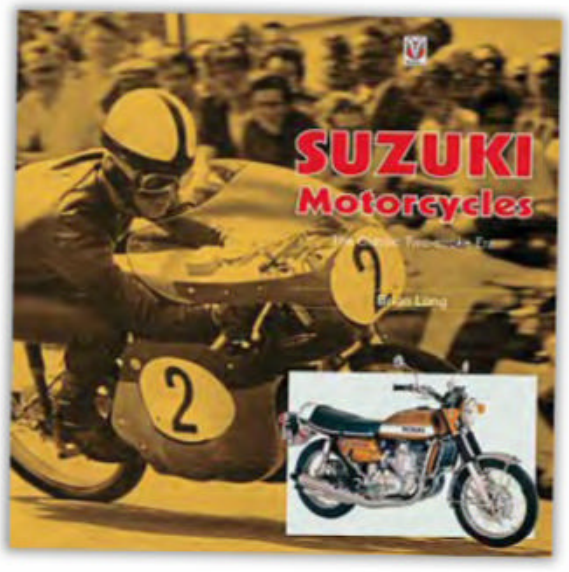
Triumph, along with other British manufacturers had a habit of naming their models in a way that makes it tricky to know one from the other. Henshaw's book helps by being written from a modern perspective and is brief enough to give you the information you need without a load of historical waffle. It even goes into spares prices, which could be very useful to the wannabe owner. I'd like a Triumph unit twin, preferably a Daytona, and it was interesting for me. Just got to find the money...



- **The essential guide to Triumph 350 and 500 unit twins**
- **By Peter Henshaw, Veloce publishing**
- **£12.99**

Suzuki Motorcycles

ANOTHER OFFERING FROM Veloce is this historically interesting Suzuki book. Totally two-stroke and more stinkwheels than you can shake a dipstick at. From commuter machines to factory race bike and from tiddlers to tourers, it's a damn good read. Covers more Suzukis from 1955 through to 1978 than most of us have ever heard of. With 170 pages packed with facts and images it's a must for anyone who's a fan of the Hamamatsu brand. Interestingly the author adds numerical suffixes to the various machines especially the 1970s bikes. This seems to clearly identify where in a model run each bike comes from. Being based in Japan, Brian Long, with numerous Japanese contacts, has much better access to the official Suzuki nomenclature than most of us. Seriously a hard book to put down!



- **By Brian Long, printed by Veloce**
- **ISBN 978-1-787112-12-14**
- **£35**

CBG Buying guide

Triumph TR5 A super bike came from humble beginnings

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.

Moto Guzzi V50

A truly everyday classic

BSA Bantam Bushman

The world loved it; we ignored it

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

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Triumph TR5 TROPHY

Take a look at the kind of motorcycles that British manufacturers were turning out in the mid-1930s and you can see why Triumph's 500cc twin was such a revolutionary design.

WORDS BY OLI **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** GARY CHAPMAN

WHAT IS IT?
Triumph's alloy-engined twin-cylinder off-roader

GOOD POINTS?
One of Triumph's best twins, capable on road and a winner off it

BAD POINTS?
Some model specific spares are going to be hard to come by. Be aware of this if buying a project

COST?
A project £4-5,000
Good runner £8,500-£12,000
Concours/museum quality £15,000-£50,000 (with competition heritage)

Most 350 and 500cc British motorcycles of the era were singles, mass market machines fitted with side valve or ohv engines, and anything bigger was likely to be a V-twin. While there were other more exotic concepts such as Ariel's first Square Four and the Matchless V4, the single held sway. But for now, the single had reached the limits if its development, and squeezing any extra power from the long stroke engines being produced just led to more vibration and unreliability

Triumph had already developed a twin, Val Page's 6/1 650. This was a handsome machine, but it failed to capture the public imagination.

In 1937 Edward Turner's Speed Twin 5T, the replacement for the 6/1, was launched and suddenly motorcycles got modern. The 5T model's cycle parts were largely the same as those used on Triumph's range of singles, but things were restyled, and it was the engine that made all the difference. Turner's new twin engine was lighter than its fellow singles, was as narrow at the crankcase and was essentially a twin-cylinder single, with both pistons rising and falling together.

The new 500 twin had cast iron cylinder block and head with removable alloy rocker boxes and a four-speed gearbox.

The two camshafts were in the simplest and most accessible locations fore and aft of the cylinders, and the lines of the engine were much less cluttered than those of their rivals. There was a vertically split crankcase of a concept that would stay in production until the late 1980s, with a built-up crankshaft. The use of a 360 degree crank meant that the same Magdyno fitted to the singles could be used.

The arrival of the T series forced rivals to come up with their own twins, and soon the compact and fast parallel twin became the wave of the future.

Sporty, stylish and smart, the 5T sold well for two years until the outbreak of war, when production ceased as Triumph moved to wartime production making tens of thousands of their OHV and side valve singles for the War Office. The bombing of the Triumph factory in Coventry saw production moved at first to a temporary factory in Warwick, before the establishment of a new plant at Meriden.

Triumph put the 5T engine to work in the war effort, and as the engine was lighter, smoother and shorter than their singles, they adapted it to become a generator powerplant which was used to charge the batteries that powered increasingly sophisticated radar equipment in Lancaster bombers and as an air portable unit that could be parachuted to troops on the front line. To keep the weight low, the 5T engine was fitted with a silicon alloy cylinder and head. The close finned alloy barrel kept cool with a fan.

In the postwar era, Triumph quickly turned from military to civilian production, and while rivals were repainting old WD models to fill the showrooms, Triumph relaunched their twin in two versions, the Speed Twin and the sportier Tiger 100. These were largely unchanged from 1939, apart from the use of two-way damped telescopic forks, which as well as being more modern than the girders reduced unsprung weight enormously, as well as offering six inches of travel.

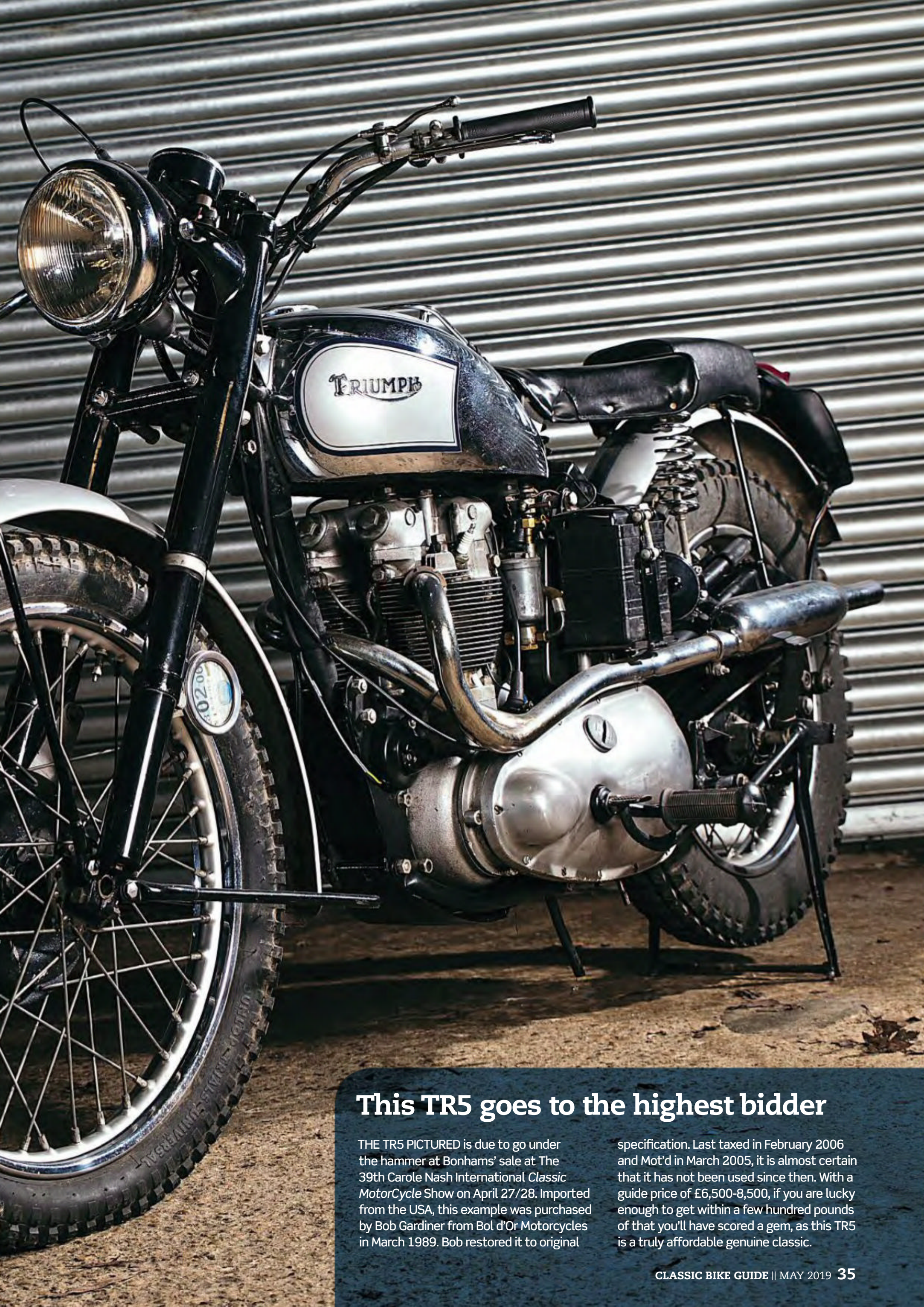
This desire to reduce unsprung weight moved to the back wheel with the introduction of the Triumph sprung hub, which provided a kind of rear suspension. The sprung hub was light, cheap, and would fit in the existing rigid frame. It was also complicated and prone to the mechanism dramatically exploding as the under-pressure springs would release themselves, should an inexperienced mechanic attempt to dismantle it. Triumph had a warning for the unwary cast into the hub.

The dynamo was separated from the magneto by now and was fitted to the front of the engine. A 1947 Speed Twin had a top speed of 84mph and would do between 58-94mpg. In 1948 the instrument panel in the petrol tank, one of the most prominent prewar throwbacks, was deleted and instead a small rack could be fitted onto the tank, which was a popular addition, except among those who were concerned about the impact on a gentleman's undercarriage under heavy braking.

In 1948 Triumph entered the ISDT with a new light 500 twin and as matter of expediency used some of the parts from the leftover alloy barrelled engines as used on the now war surplus generator. There was a twin carb Grand Prix racer which used the engine too – and around 150 were made with the square barrel used on the generator. The off-roader that won the ISDT and the International Vase for the UK spawned a production version, the TR5 Trophy.

The TR5 got a new frame and that too was another example of military/civilian expediency. The rigid frame was almost identical to that used on Triumph's TRW military side valve twin, a motorcycle designed for rough off-road treatment. Using the TRW frame as a base made the TR5 shorter than the T100 Tiger, with a more steeply angled bottom rail to the rear wheel.

"In 1937 Edward Turner's Speed Twin 5T, the replacement for the 6/1, was launched and suddenly motorcycles got modern"



This TR5 goes to the highest bidder

THE TR5 PICTURED is due to go under the hammer at Bonhams' sale at The 39th Carole Nash International *Classic MotorCycle* Show on April 27/28. Imported from the USA, this example was purchased by Bob Gardiner from Bol d'Or Motorcycles in March 1989. Bob restored it to original specification. Last taxed in February 2006 and Mot'd in March 2005, it is almost certain that it has not been used since then. With a guide price of £6,500-8,500, if you are lucky enough to get within a few hundred pounds of that you'll have scored a gem, as this TR5 is a truly affordable genuine classic.

"The Trophy had the bottom end from the sportier Tiger 100 fitted with milder cams and lower compression pistons"

The TRW frame had a short front downtube, with twin plates bolted to it extending down to the bottom cradle. The TR5 used a similar design, but with a large round hole in the plates to accommodate a dynamo at the front of the engine. Bigger wheels also helped off-road, these being 20 or 21 inches on the front and 19 at the rear. The TRW donated some other cycle parts, but the tank and other bits of trim were unique to the TR5. Mudguards were trimmed back to stop the wheels becoming clogged with mud, and a high level 2-1 Siamese exhaust system ran down the left-hand side to reduce weight and improve ground clearance.

The Trophy had the bottom end from the sportier Tiger 100 fitted with milder cams and lower compression pistons. There was a progressive throttle that opened the carb up more slowly at lower speeds to make the TR5 easier to handle as a trials bike. The shorter frame on the first bikes made it less of a handful off-road too. The stock of leftover generator cylinder blocks soon ran out and from 1951 the engine was updated with new die cast alloy barrels with finer-pitch finning and a rounded profile and revised alloy heads. These were shared with the Tiger 100 model. The Triumph sprung hub could be pressed into service by TR5 owners, but many disliked the vagueness of the handling using the system and stuck with pure rigid rear frames.

The TR5 was a versatile machine, with a claimed 95mph top speed, and the ability to win off-road competitions. An owner really could use it as ride to work transport week in and week out, then at weekends ride it out to all manner of competitions from scrambling to grasstrack to racing circuits, pull off the lights, bolt on a racing number and compete on it.

Triumph helped out the weekend sporting users by fitting the headlight with a plug in socket. The brakes were small, and the speedometer was mounted in the fork crown. The chrome on the tank, with painted on panels and Triumph logo, had to be replaced in 1953 because of the shortage of nickel during the Korean War, and the TR5 got a silver paint job with the thin chromed tank strip used on other Triumph models instead.

In 1955 the TR5 got a new frame, this time with rear springing. This was a logical move, as although serious competitors preferred the dependability of a rigid, big off-roaders were increasingly being used for on, as well as off-road, use. Competition teams by now were seeking out bikes that were smaller and lighter and had begun using Tiger Cubs for trial competitions. Meanwhile Triumph, seeking those all-important US sales, boosted the TR5 by 150cc to create the TR6 Trophy and this overshadowed the TR5 so completely that by 1958 it had vanished from the line-up as Triumph were busy replacing their pre-unit twins with their new unit construction engine.

The TR5 was one of those happy accidents, a machine of quality that was ideal for wide open spaces in the US, Canada and Australia while at the same time capable of coping with Britain's sticky mud and roads damaged by war and neglected due to austerity. It helped establish Triumph as the premier builder of popular sporty twins. CBG

Ace Classics keep the Trophy rolling

Ace classics, of lee in south London, have been Triumph pre-unit specialists since 1991, when founder Cliff Rushworth decided to solve the problems he was having getting decent parts to keep his beloved pre unit twins on the road, by having them made for him.

Regulars at bike shows and autojumbles the length and breadth of the nation, Ace Classics are the go-to supplier of pre unit spares.

We asked Cliff about his experiences keeping the TR5 Trophy rolling.

"The rigid TR5 is a proper off-roader with a really light frame. The frame had a very low seat and if you look at any old pictures of the TR5 you'll see most of the riders are standing on the footpegs. Later on they were basically just a Tiger 100 in trials trim.

"If you are looking for barrels and heads for the 1949 models, the square ones, they are virtually impossible to find and if you do find either then you'll pay a king's ransom for them."

Petrol tanks are another problem that Cliff has come across, and he doesn't recommend buying in a replica from India as they probably won't fit, will have the badge and rack holes in the wrong places and may leak.

"The first TR5 tank is impossible to find. It's a special two-gallon tank and the fuel cap almost touches the tank rack. Some people have used TRW tanks, but they are the wrong item. Frames are hard to find too. TRW frames do get used as the frame is almost identical, but those are getting really expensive too, at around £1,000 for a good one.

"From 1954 onwards they had almost the same engine as the T100 and again the petrol tanks are rare and nearly impossible to get. They are like gold dust – you need to look out for them and they don't have a seam down the middle. Cylinder heads are plentiful, but barrels are hard to come by.

"Tanks are another problem, from 1956 onwards. The 1956 ones were only made for one year. You'll pay £700-800 for a good one from 1956-59. I sold a dented one needing full restoration for £350 to a chap from India who was taking it back there to be restored.

"They were given full width hubs in 1957. The thing about the brakes is you can get two that look completely the same and some are perfect, and some are just useless. The full width ones are worse than the little single sider.

"The alloy barrel does make the TR5 a bit more rattly than Triumphs fitted with iron barrels, thanks to the close fins, and it's a lot noisier.

"Top speed on a T100 might be supposed to be 100mph, but its more like 85-90 and the same goes for the TR5. You'll be more likely to see around 70mph. Unless you have a tuned speedo…"

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 499cc OHV parallel twin **BORE/STROKE:** 63mm x 80mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 6:1 **POWER:** 19bhp **TRANSMISSION:** Wet multiplate clutch, four gears, chain final drive **FRAME:** Steel cradle **SUSPENSION:** Front, telescopic forks, rear rigid (sprung hub as an option) **BRAKES:** 7in SLS drum front 7in SLS drum rear **WHEELS/TYRES:** 3x20ins front and 4x19ins rear **WHEELBASE:** 53ins (1346mm) **LENGTH:** 80ins (2032mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31 ins (787mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 304 lbs (138 kg) **FUEL TANK:** 2.5 gallons (11.4 litre) **OIL CAPACITY:** 6 pts (3.4 litre)

Famous TR5 Trophies

A REBEL'S STEED

Inspired after seeing Marlon Brando ride a 6T Triumph Thunderbird in The Wild One, James Dean bought a Triumph TR5 Trophy. Phil Stern's series of iconic photographs of Dean show him on this bike. It was sold after the actor's death, and then was retrieved, restored and is currently displayed in a glass case at the James Dean Gallery in Fairmount, Indiana.

HAPPY DAYS ON A TR5

What might be the most famous TR5 in the world was seen by millions being ridden every week by Henry Winkler as The Fonz, in the popular and long-running American sit-com Happy Days. Legend says that he had to be pushed into shot as he couldn't ride a motorcycle when the show started. The mildly customized 1949 Trophy TR5 was provided by stuntman and Triumph dealer Bud Ekins, who removed the front mudguard, painted the fuel tank silver and changed the handlebars. The bike used in the show was put up for auction in October 2011.

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MOTO GUZZI V50

WORDS BY OLIVER HULME PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY CHAPMAN

FINDING A TRULY PRACTICAL CLASSIC is something of a hunt for the holy grail. If you've grown up with modern bikes with refinements like electric starts and brakes that work, then finding something you are going to be able to live with narrows the field considerably. If you've decided to avoid Far Eastern products, for whatever reason, the choice narrows even further.

However, the Italians continued making middleweights when the British had gone the way of all things. In the late-1970s Moto Guzzi came up with a smart little sports tourer which today is a great option. Moto Guzzi, who had developed their mighty 850 and one litre V-twins in the late 1960s had also been making their 500cc Nuovo Falcone singles which stayed on sale until 1976, their longevity partly down to the orders from the Italian police and military.

The big flywheel single was out-of-date by the time Alessandro de Tomaso took over Moto Guzzi that year and, recognising the demand in the Italian home market for a 500, Guzzi engineer Lino Tonti was told to come up with something new. He took a look at the big V-twin, and to all intents and purposes, shrank it.

Tonti created an updated three-quarter-sized version of the 850 bottom end to produce a 90-degree, wet-sump, overhead-valve V-twin with a dry single-plate clutch, five-speed transmission, shaft drive, electric starting and electronic ignition. Borrowing heavily from the heron head technology developed by Moto Morini, the new engine had flat cylinder heads, with the combustion chambers inside the piston and the pushrod-operated valves at 90 degrees to the head.

This improved torque, fuel economy and, as Morini had realised, made the heads much cheaper to make and simpler to put together. The alternator was on the front of the engine, the camshaft was driven by a chain and there was a canister oil filter – not something the Japanese had begun to use.

Everything else on the bike shrank too, from the tank to the brakes and wheels. The brakes used Moto Guzzi's own linked system, utilising a pair of Brembo discs and calipers at the front and another single disc at the back. A pair of Brembos on a light 500 would have been more than enough, but on the V50 one of the front discs was operated by the handlebar lever and the other front disc was linked to the rear, so that when you stepped on the foot pedal, both of them operated. The Guzzi linked system was years ahead of its time.

The cradle frame had detachable lower tubes to help get the engine out, a job that for a fairly-skilled mechanic could be done in about an hour. The current V7 750 frame contains some very similar features to that used on the 1978 V50. The shaft drive was one half of a swinging arm which pivoted from the gearbox.

Italy got the V50 first, and a V35 version was offered thanks to a change in Italian tax laws which were designed to protect Italian bike makers as the Japanese had moved to making 400s.

"The following year saw a price reduction from importers Coburn and Hughes who were able to undercut the Honda by £176. The result was that 2000 V50 Mk2 Guzzis were sold in the UK."

WHAT IS IT?

A charming, compact middleweight Italian shaft drive V-twin

GOOD POINTS?

Great performance, superb brakes, bags of style and buckets of character

BAD POINTS?

The finish and the electrical system. Both can be sorted with the application of money and time

COST?

Basketcase: £1000 plus
Good runner: £1800-£3000
Concour/museum quality: £5000-£6000

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 490cc OHV V-twin **BORE/STROKE:** 74mm/57mm **CARBURATION:** twin 24mm (Mk2) 28mm (Mk3) Dell Ortos **COMPRESSION:** 10.8:1 **TRANSMISSION:** five-speed gearbox, shaft drive **IGNITION:** electronic (MkII) points (MkIII) **FRONT WHEEL:** 3.60 x 18 **REAR WHEEL:** 4.00 x 18 **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic hydraulic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** twin oil-damped shock absorbers **FRONT BRAKES:** twin 270mm Brembo discs, one disc linked to rear **REAR BRAKE:** 235mm single disc **LENGTH:** 84ins (2133mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30in (762mm) **WHEELBASE:** 1395mm **DRY WEIGHT:** 348lb (158kg) **FUEL TANK:** 3.5 gallons (16l) **POWER:** 48bhp @ 7500rpm **TOP SPEED:** 104mph

The first of the 500 Guzzis to arrive in the UK in 1979 were updated models designated the V50 Mk2. It arrived at the same time as the Honda CX500, which although it had a similar layout to the V50 was a very different kind of motorcycle. Cycle World magazine said the V50 was: "As much like a CX500 as it is like a Harley".

The V50 Mk2 had electronic ignition, steel mudguards, oil damped forks and rear shocks and a Nikasil coating on the cylinder bores. The sump capacity was increased from the first models. The V50 Mk2 was originally priced at £1475 which was a competitive price for an Italian motorcycle that was up against the £1310 CX500. The following year saw a price reduction from importers Coburn and Hughes who were able to undercut the Honda by £176. The result was that 2000 V50 Mk2 Guzzis were sold in the UK.

The Mk2 had more than a few teething problems. The paint would flake off the tank and the front mudguard, the chrome would fall off the silencers, the ignition switch would fail, the forks would leak, and the early adopted electronic ignition system would fail at low mileages.

After less than a year on the road, Moto Guzzi launched the V50 Mk3. This had a plastic front guard which was cheaper and not rust prone, the brake calipers were relocated behind the fork legs and a halogen headlamp was fitted. The indicators with their easy-peel chrome got a more durable matt black finish.

There were engine performance mods with a modified exhaust and bigger valves. Most importantly, and in a retrograde but sensible step, the troublesome electronic ignition was dumped for old style points and a mechanical advance-retard mechanism under the plastic timing cover on the front of the engine. These didn't generally break down, or if they did, they were cheap and easy to fix, something that could not be said of the electronic system.

Points were also cheaper as a new fitment for the permanently struggling Guzzi factory. Today replacement modern electronic ignition systems are available for those who don't want to struggle with feeler gauges and dwell meters. The cam chain became a duplex with a tensioner, something that was missing from the Mk2.

Potential pitfalls with the V50 include blown head gaskets. Fortunately, the design of the engine is so simple, and the important bits are so easy to get at that stopping this from happening is simply a matter of retorqueing the head regularly and adjusting the tappets at the same time, which helps stop the exhaust valves from burning out.

There was a sporty version of the V50 too; the Monza. A kind of shrunk-in-the-wash Le Mans II, the Monza was a Mk3 with clip-ons, a dinky little cockpit fairing and rear sets, as well a seat that was a good inch lower. There were modifications to the engine too, which had a bigger sump, bigger valves, bigger carbs and changes to the rear hub gearing.

Lady riders, enamoured by the Italian good looks, light weight and ride height, took to the Monza in some numbers, and it remains popular with female riders to this day, as a flickable little stylish head-turner more than capable of embarrassing much bigger bikes in the nadgery. The Monza stayed in production until 1989, four years after the V50 III had left the showrooms, though the Italian Army kept buying them until the end of the decade.

ON THE ROAD

WHEN THE V50 was introduced, testers considered the V-twin to be charming, though a little idiosyncratic on the road.

The lack of a shock absorber on the shaft drive was said to cause the back wheel to lock up if you got the revs wrong while changing gear. The bike seen here, a 1983 model didn't have any such issues, though that could have been down to my desire not to thrash someone else's motorcycle into the ground, especially as it's for sale. Treating somebody else's 35-year-old motorcycle harshly is never a nice thing to do in any case.

The bike is an Italian market import which arrived in the UK several years ago. The finish showed that this was a bike that had been carefully looked after by a previous owner. Although badged as a V50 Mk2, the bike is in V50 Mk3 specification with points, a plastic front mudguard and calipers on the rear of the fork legs indicating that it's a later model.

The history of the bike isn't clear but at a guess it's a Mk2 that's had V50 Mk2 badges fitted, as this would have been a lot easier than upgrading an older model.

The engine made no nasty noises and there was nothing in the way of the alleged driveline lash. Perhaps 1980s road testers just rode the V50 harder than me. Starting from cold produced the momentary lurch from side-to-side reaction common to any transverse engines, but this vanished once the bike warmed up. Some motorcycles feel just right, and the V50 gave me an instant feel of confidence that it was going to go exactly where you squirted it, even on back roads of dubious quality.

The front brake was more than capable of slowing things down by itself, even though it was only operating a single disc, and a dab on the foot pedal rapidly brought things to halt in a safe and controllable fashion. With brakes like these, the V50 would be perfectly at home in modern traffic.

There were some typically Italian issues – the switchgear was something of a challenge as the designer, apparently a refugee from the Lego factory by the look of the units, shoved the buttons anywhere they could make them fit. The indicator button was mounted on top of the cluster and took a little while to get used to. A longer thumb would have been handy. The sidestand was also uncomfortably short for my tastes. I've often wondered if Italian sidestand designers are in cahoots with the manufacturers of indicator lenses and clutch levers!

Most parts are readily available, and a V50 can be had for a very reasonable price. This one, from a dealership and in excellent condition, was priced at near the top of the market at £3999. A bit of diligent searching will find you a road-worn runner with an MoT for not much more than half that; but be prepared for work.

In short, the V50 handled, would happily cruise at the legal limit, stopped almost as well as an ultra-modern 500 does, started at the push of a button, was light and easy to move about, and although compact, hauled my far from compact form around without complaint. You'll need to keep it clean to stop it from rotting away and update a few components, but this is an everyday classic motorcycle for every man and every woman.

Thanks to Classic Motorcycles Ltd of Northwich for the loan of the V50. Call Lawrence on 01928 788500 if you are interested in buying it

"There was a sporty version of the V50 too; the Monza. A kind of shrunk-in-the-wash Le Mans II, the Monza was a Mk3 with clip-ons, a dinky little cockpit fairing and rear sets"

LIVING WITH A MONZA

WE BUMPED INTO Carole Lockwood at the Bristol *Classic MotorCycle* Show, who, along with husband Tony, had brought along her immaculate Monza V50, resplendent in its Ultimate Bike Paint colour scheme.

It's Carole's second V50 – she sold her first some years ago, when she decided that hurtling around on a compact Italian thoroughbred wasn't a responsible way to behave. She bought the Monza because: "The older I've got, the less responsible I've got. Life is there to be lived. It's something a bit different, though it can be a bit hard on the wrists."

Like any Italian motorcycle, the Monza has its quirks. Tony said: "The weather can affect the electrics, which can be a bit suspect. It's got a Dynatec electronic ignition on it and a stainless exhaust. The fuse box, which uses old-fashioned ceramic fuses, can be an issue. Spares are okay, though finding a replacement duplex timing chain can be an issue if it wears, as they are hard to come by. The original K&N filters it had on it messed up the carburation a bit, so we've gone back to the original set up. You do have to look out for the bevel drive gear bearing collapsing too."

Carole, a keen IAM member, says one fellow IAM rider likes to ride behind her on runs, just because of the sound the Monza makes. "You have to give it a good talking to and a warming up before talking it out. The bike just looks so nice and you can do 200 miles on it no trouble at all. I've had it at well over 100mph on the Mallory circuit and hope to get it up to the ton at Thruxton later this year, and to get my knee down." CBG

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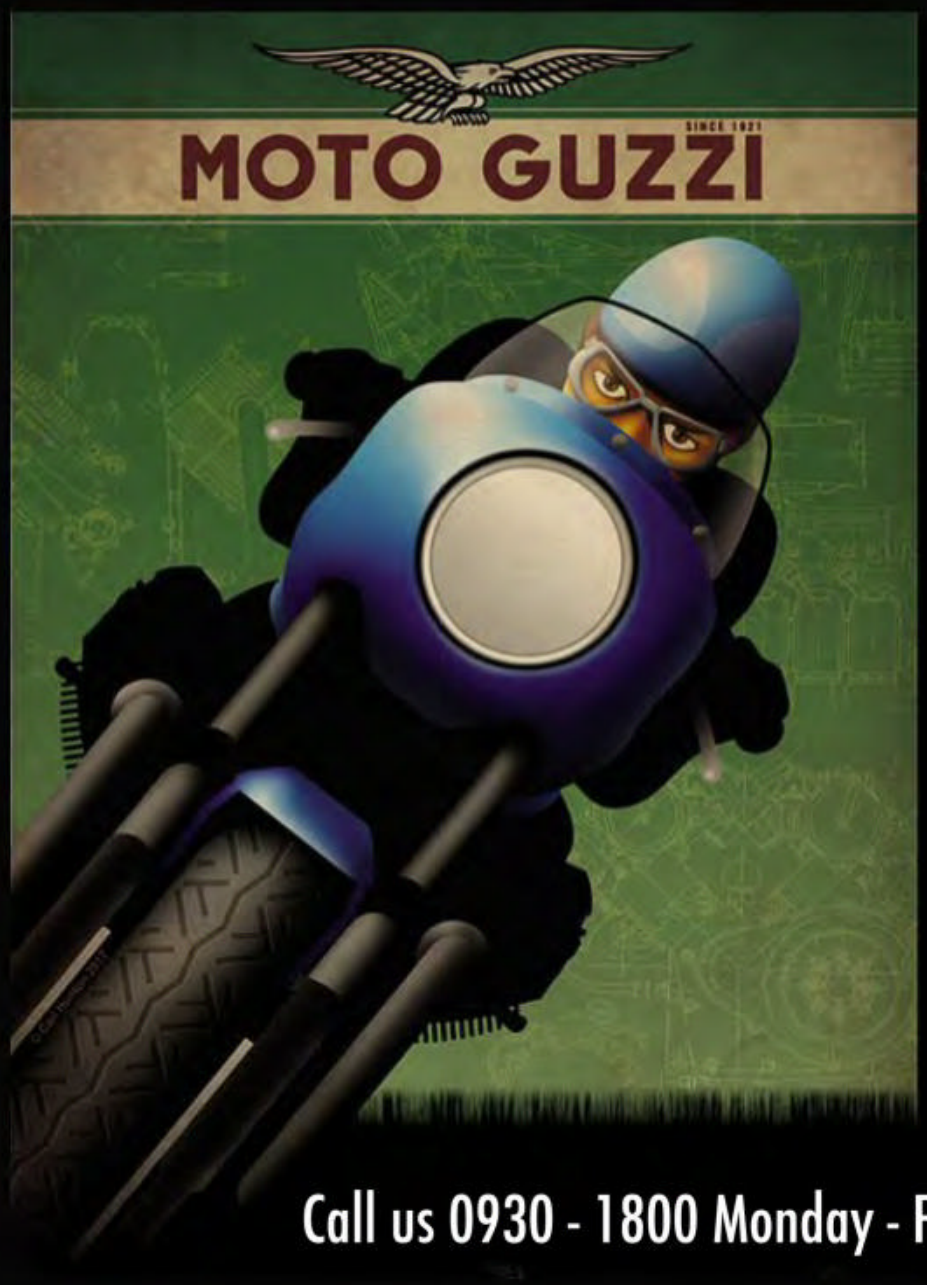

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BSA Bantam BUSHMAN

WORDS: OLI **PHOTOGRAPHY:** GARY CHAPMAN

In the early 1950s BSA could claim the title of the largest producer of motorcycles in the world – "One in four" went the famous slogan "is a BSA". The reason for this was partly down to the hard work of the German DKW company, not BSA's design shop. Its 125cc two-stroke engine had been offered around as war reparations and used by Harley-Davidson and the Soviet Minsk company, and the technology was used by Yamaha, MZ, CZ and Polish brand WSK among others.

In Britain it was hawked around various manufacturers, being offered to Villiers – which rather sniffily refused to look at it – and eventually was taken up by BSA.

BSA built a 125cc version of the engine which was a mirror image of the DKW powerplant and fitted it with a three-speed gearbox into a basic rigid frame, dubbing the bike the Bantam.

BSA produced anything from 250,000 to half a million Bantams (records are vague) between 1948 and 1971, making the little Bantam the biggest selling British motorcycle by a long way. It was not made at the BSA factory at Small Heath but at a satellite factory near Redditch, which unusually employed a high proportion of female workers.

The Bantam was the first steed of many a teenager, cheap to buy and a step ahead of the many Villiers-engined rivals. It was used to commute, to deliver telegrams and as the workhorse of the nation. It was tunable enough to make it competitive on the track and easily modified and light enough to perform off-road too, with trials versions extremely successful. Once it grew to 175cc and was given a swingarm it had a reasonable turn of speed too. It's fair to say that the sales of the Bantam helped BSA's finances and allowed it to build Rocket Gold Stars and 650 Lightnings and the like.

Like many of the machines in BSA's range, by the mid-1960s it was getting a bit long in the tooth and the Japanese had been gaining a foothold, not least with their neat 125cc dual-purpose trail bikes. In 1966 the company tasked its assistant export sales manager, Peter Glover, with finding a way of selling more Bantams. He was told the production line would be closed if he couldn't manage the task, leaving BSA with only the planned Ariel 3 tricycle as a lightweight commuter.

Over a discussion in a pub with BSA designers he came up with the Bantam Bushman. Peter devised a cobby little single with modified gearing, a startling orange and white paint job and a bunch of parts from BSA's stores including the forks from the BSA Barracuda 250 and the high-level big bore exhaust from the Bantam D14/4 Sports.

Peter told *The Classic Motorcycle* in 1993: "I got away with murder in those days. None of the directors knew anything about the project."

WHAT IS IT?

Almost the last of a line of BSA two-stroke singles

WHAT'S GOOD?

A perky little trailbike, easy to work on and simple to keep running

WHAT'S BAD?

Model specific spares availability is poor, and it has a primitive ignition system

HOW MUCH?

Basket case:
£1000-£1500
Good runner:
£3000-£4000
Museum/Concours
£5000-£6000

The Bushman was slightly larger and more substantial than the Japanese trail bikes it would compete with, yet BSA's US importers were unimpressed, as they wanted big beefy road bikes.

However, Peter realised BSA had an ace up its sleeve – The Commonwealth and former British Empire, strong markets for BSA products.

The Australians and New Zealanders would love it, he realised. Residual postwar loathing for Japanese products was only just starting to fade in some countries, and BSA had an international reputation and sales base in places where the sun had only recently set on the Union Flag.

BSA got to work and the Bushman promptly began to sell in big numbers. The Bushman offered a higher gear ratio than the stock Bantam and a modified frame and proved particularly popular in rural Australia and New Zealand due to its incredibly simple mechanics and light geometry.

The engine and gears were identical to the Bantam road models but a bigger rear sprocket by 10 teeth than the Bantam changed the ratios considerably, so much so that top gear ended up with the same ratio as the road bike's third gear. The front wheel diameter was larger by one inch, as was the rear. Fork trail was increased and the front down tube shortened, increasing ground clearance from seven to nine inches, and a bash plate was fitted.

The Bushman was kitted out as a practical machine for herding sheep in the Outback, with a single seat and a rack capable of taking sizeable loads to remote parts of the wide-open spaces the bike was designed for. The battery was removed in favour of a Lucas energy transfer ignition system and an under-seat paper air filter fitted to help keep the engine running when fording streams. Africa, too, was a big fan of the simple Bushman and it sold well in Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Rhodesia. BSA had already marketed a more primitive off-roader, and this had been dubbed the Pastoral, which was the name given to the Bushman for the French market. Meanwhile in Britain the Bushman was hardly seen, with just 300 released into British showrooms.

After a flurry of success abroad, the Bushman's sales quickly ran out of steam. The big problem was that the little BSA was plagued with problems caused by the ignition system, chosen so the Bushman wouldn't need a battery. Plus in the meantime the Japanese had started to take over the lightweight market. With decent lights and a vastly superior spec

there was no comparison between the Bushman and machines like the Honda CL175 which arrived in 1968.

BSA persevered with the Bushman and converted the D175 Bantam to Bushman spec with a dual seat, rack and a revised cylinder head with a centrally mounted spark plug. This location did mean owners had to take the tank off to get the plug out. They also ditched the centre stand. Inside the engine there was a considerable beefing-up with a new crankcase, cylinder head castings, a stiffer crankshaft, needle races in the clutch and all the nuts and bolts went from BSF/Whitworth to AF/Unified. This was an unusual thing to do to a model that was approaching the end of its life, but by 1970 BSA was operating in 'interesting times'. Despite the best efforts of the sales team, the Bushman was dropped that year and the D175 in 1971.

As a footnote, the affection for the Bushman and the BSA brand in foreign markets inspired a short-lived return for the name in the late 1980s. Using the Yamaha DT125 as a base, BSA-Regal, formed from the ashes of the NVT company, fitted crash bars, front and rear racks and tougher components to the little Yamaha to sell into emerging markets badged as the BSA Bushman. Around 100 were built.

Peter told* The Classic Motorcycle *in 1993: "I got away with murder in those days. None of the directors knew anything about the project."

It's interesting how a bit of a paint job can transform a motorcycle. When I was a callow youth in the late 1970s and a mate parked his D14 in the school bike sheds next to all the FS1E Yamahas and Honda 125s I felt the Bantam in standard form looked terribly dated, despite being less than a decade old.

But the orange and white paint job on the bushman we borrowed from Classic Motorcycles Ltd gives it a smart and purposeful look. Had I seen one like this at 17 I might have been more enamoured by British motorcycles.

As an 11 stone teenager I'd probably have looked a bit less absurd on a Bantam than I do now, and I was a bit concerned the Bushman might have had trouble hauling me around today.

Starting was a bit of a challenge, the lack of a battery meaning a certain amount of thrashing about on the kickstart from cold. The position of the kickstart crank and footrests makes life even more complex. Either the right foot has to be turned sideways to kick downwards, or you have to prod away with the ball of your foot to ensure that the toe of your boot snags the footrest. This might have been less of an issue in 1967, but with chunky modern riding boots it was a bit of a pain.

Once running, the little Bantam had little trouble dragging me away from a standstill, revving hard without feeling over stressed. The riding position was that of a classic trail bike and the whole bike felt solid and well built, far more so than tiddly Japanese trail bikes of the 1970s.

A brief off-road excursion in a muddy Cheshire field isn't exactly a long trip over the South African veldt, but the Bushman felt easy to chuck about with your feet up, and light enough to paddle about and rescue from a potential tumble if you got into trouble. The bike romped about, and slightly lower tyre pressures might have improved things still further.

On the road the knobbly tyres worked well, and the engine pulled purposefully, though the off-road gearing did make for a noisy ride if pushed along at full throttle. The suspension was as good as could be expected, and the brakes, which are tiny, were adequate, though keeping a decent braking distance was essential. The gearbox could have been slicker to be honest and third gear seemed to be the optimum for tarmac use. The zippy gearing and trail riding position would make it a grand town bike, as long as you could sort the starting out. The lighting, which was of the glow-worm-in-a-bottle type, could possibly be improved by reverting to a battery arrangement.

It was that most important of things, fun. Brapping about on it was a delight. It's not a great road bike for a long trip, and it's not a great trials bike either, but as a dual-purpose machine it's a laugh and a half.

The popularity of the Bantam in road racing means that there are specialists trying to find ways of making Bantams faster and more reliable. Rusty Rooster Motorcycles will sell you electronic ignition systems, while Rex Caunt Racing provides new flywheels, clutch components and 12v conversions. Bournemouth Bantams has stacks of spares.

"The riding position was that of a classic trail bike and the whole bike felt solid and well built, far more so than tiddly Japanese trail bikes of the 1970s."

Bushman

Bushman specific spares are harder to come by. The Bushman seen here is an import from France and was part of a collection of five near identical models. This one is a 1967 Bushman and it's got tiny but important details like the rare original headlight switch marked H for headlight and L for low (side), rather than the standard Bantam switch which should have I for ignition and E for emergency.

The original Dzus fasteners holding on the side panels are there and save fumbling round for an appropriate piece of small change to get them off. It is missing the red kill switch, with a stock Wipac black button instead, and the rubber bellows which should lead to the air filter has gone the way of all things, being replaced by a K&N which should keep the worst kind of debris out, providing you aren't trying to cross the Zambezi. That huge and ungainly chain guard is a stock fitting too, designed to clear the bigger sprocket and showing the Bushman's round-a-pub-table back-of-a-fag packet origins.

Building a replica is not beyond the wit of many a back-yard mechanic, but you can spot the real thing through the engine number, which should start BB175.

The Bushman is a cracker, and a great start for a novice classic owner. The tough two-stroke will take all manner of punishment, and the amount of mishandling they can withstand is impressive. The only real problem is availability as finding a good Bushman is going to be tricky, despite a small but steady flow returning to the UK, and the days of 50 quid Bantams are long gone. CBG

Thanks to Classic Motorcycles Ltd for the loan of its Bushman, which is on sale for £5500. Call Lawrence on 01928 788500.

SPECIALISTS:

bournemouthbantams.co.uk
www.rexcauntracing.com
www.britishbikebits.com

OWNERS' CLUB

www.bsabantamclub.com

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 172cc single cylinder two-stroke **BORE/STROKE:** 61.5mm x 58mm
COMPRESSION RATIO: 8.65:1 **POWER:** 10bhp **TRANSMISSION:** Wet multiplate clutch, four gears, chain final drive **FRAME:** Steel cradle **SUSPENSION:** Front, telescopic forks, rear twin shock
BRAKES: 5.5in SLS drum front 5.5in SLS drum rear **WHEELS/TYRES:** 3 x 19in front and 3 x 19in rear
WHEELBASE: 50in (1270mm) **LENGTH:** 78in (1981mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30.5 in (775mm)
DRY WEIGHT: 222lb (100 kg) **FUEL TANK:** 1.9 gallons (8.6 litre)

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PART NINE

MIKE HAILWOOD'S MACHINES

In this instalment, we reveal how fate played its hand not only in the career of 'Mike the Bike', but also in a much wider context – and with brutal irony – in the building of one motorcycle empire as another collapsed and crumbled. For now though, let's rewind to 1967, and start at the start...

WORDS: RACHAEL CLEGG **PHOTOGRAPHY:** MORTONS ARCHIVE

Hailwood must have breathed a huge sigh of relief as the 1967 season drew to an end. Worn out, weary of technical battles with Honda and disappointed at not winning the 500cc championship, the 27-year-old star was ready to start afresh for the 1968 season.

FATE, AS EVER, HAD OTHER PLANS, PLANS THAT would shape Hailwood's career for the next decade. For Mike, the late 1960s and early 1970s marked a period of gradual transition: From two wheels to four.

It was a transition that saw Hailwood competing at various non-championship events, including the Daytona 200 and even a Swiss hill climb, alongside establishing himself as a racing car driver.

Let's go back to the start...

It's winter 1967 in South Africa, and Mike Hailwood has been nominated not only for an MBE but also as Sportsman of the Year by the Sports Writers' Association. The latter – as noted in Mick Woollett's book Mike Hailwood: A Motorcycle Racing Legend – was for 'contributing most to Great Britain's sporting prestige during that year', though really it ought to have been for putting up with such an unyielding machine as the RC 181 (Honda 500/4). If only the Sports Writers' Association knew the half of it, they would have nominated him three times over.

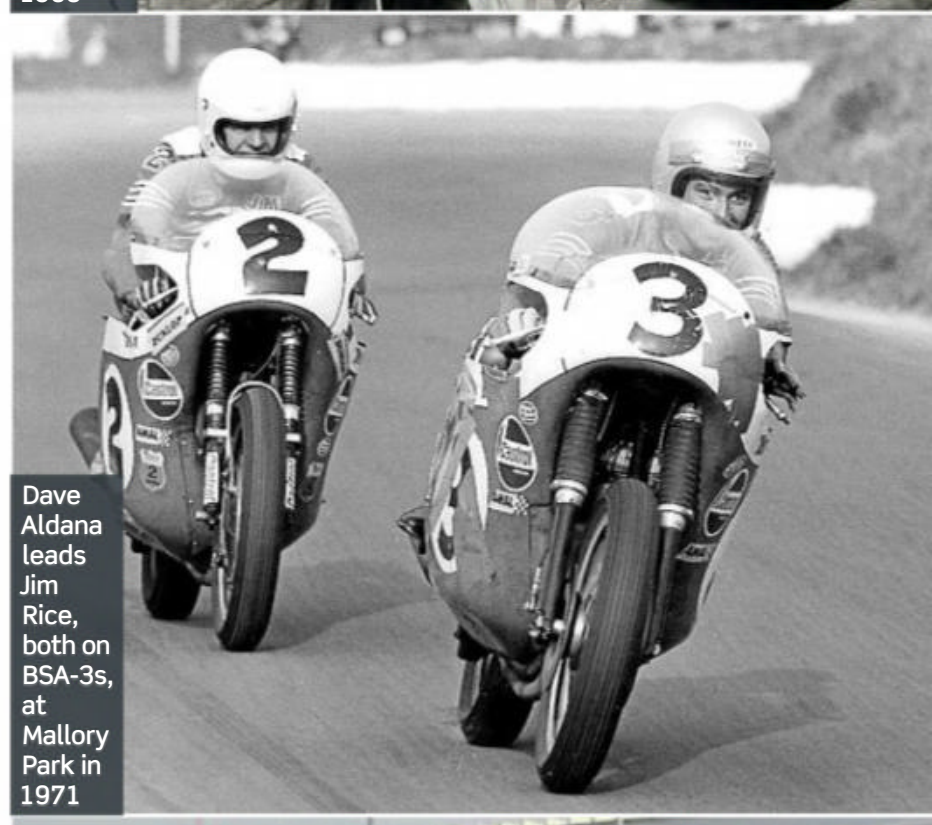
Indeed, as we saw in the last chapter, the 1967 season was immensely challenging for Hailwood and disappointing – he desperately wanted to beat arch rival Giacomo Agostini on his MV and win the 500cc championship, but his Honda RC 181 handled too badly for the job. Added to this frustration was Honda's reticence about putting it right – in spite of the team's seemingly infinite resources.

For the new season, Hailwood stated that he was not prepared to sign to Honda until he had tested its machinery for the championships. It was also rumoured Hailwood was in talks with Count Domenico Agusta – owner of MV Agusta – about riding for the Italian factory for the 1968 season.

But there was a curious silence from Honda. So curious, in fact, was this silence that even the motorcycle press commented on it. *Motor Cycle* ran a headline in 1968 which read: 'What are Honda up to? That's the question puzzling the motorcycle world'

Needless to say, plans were in flux. At least, they were until February 1968. Hailwood – writing in Ted Macauley's book Hailwood – said: "When I was suddenly summoned to Japan, I thought it was to

Mike looking on with his team manager Aika-san, 1968



Dave Aldana leads Jim Rice, both on BSA-3s, at Mallory Park in 1971

Jim Rice, part of the BSA effort at Daytona in 1971

1: Mallory Park April 11, 1971 – spectating at the GB v US match races are (from left) Mike Hailwood, Barry Briggs and Gary Nixon

2: Always one for a laugh, Hailwood turned up at Snetterton in 'flower power' gear – it was August 27, 1967

3: Mike, left, can be seen on the 'Highboy' while American racer Jim Rice is on the 'Lowboy'

test the season's new bikes. It came as a terrible shock when I found out the real reason: I was out of a job.

"Mr Sekiguchi took me out to dinner and told me that the factory wanted to spend more time and money on the development of the Formula One car because they were going into the commercial car market in a really big way. It must have been a quickly-made decision because the factory had made a new 250 and had almost finished a 350 and a 500 in preparation for the 1968 season.

"It was obviously too late for me to get a job anywhere else, as all the other works teams had settled their plans and their budgets for the coming season. Mr Sekiguchi offered to pay me not to ride any other products, and the money was so tempting that I signed a contract to that effect. He promised me a 250, a 350 and a 500 – the 1967 models – to race at national and international meetings, but on the understanding that I didn't enter them for the classics. The alternative, he pointed out, was a smaller sum of money as a settlement and freedom to ride where and what I wanted. But the money, as I said, was too good to turn down."

Honda paid Hailwood £50,000 not to ride – approximately £704,000 in today's money. But it did leave Hailwood 'in a bit of a void' as he reported in Chris Hilton's A Man Called Mike.

Honda, on the other hand, was desperately filling a void and fulfilling a vision – a gigantic one at that: Japanese car manufacturing. The marque's motorcycle efforts came and went in a flash, despite unleashing some of the most powerful, exotic machinery on the racing world.'

But it wasn't all bad. He did have 50 grand up his sleeve and three immensely powerful racing machines. He also had carte blanche to fix the frame on the RC 181, which he promptly sorted thanks to Reynolds' frame guru, Ken Sprayson.

Hailwood's racing endeavours included Oulton Park on a 500cc Seeley and the 1968 Italian GP – against Honda's contractual demands – on a Benelli. The latter was a last-minute swap from the three-cylinder MV after Count Agusta insisted that Hailwood finish second behind Agostini. He also won Mallory Park's Race of the Year in 1968 for the fifth time on a much improved RC 181.

BSA-TRIUMPH COMES A'KNOCKIN

Between races, Hailwood was holidaying in Switzerland and spending time in South Africa, where he was also competing in motorcycle and car races.

Meanwhile, 8800 miles away, at the BSA-Triumph headquarters at Small Heath, Birmingham engineers Bert Hopwood and Doug Hele were busy launching their BSA Rocket 3 and Triumph Trident.

These 750cc machines were Britain's answer to the American motorcycle market – a crucial one to BSA-Triumph's survival – both on regular roads and racing circuits. These machines were built out of one-and-a-half Triumph Speed Twins and both had a one piece crank with white metal big-ends. The cylinder barrels were also alloy, in both the BSA Rocket 3 and Trident. In fact, the machines were similar in most ways except for the incline of the engine: the BSA's was inclined forward at 15° whereas the Triumph's remained upright.

These machines were powerful and planted. But it was all very well creating such beasts: they now needed publicising. As the adage goes: 'Win on Sunday, sell on Monday'... so racing was the answer. Hopwood

and Hele embarked on creating racing machines for the Daytona 200.

Hele was well-versed in the racing scene: he had worked at the Norton factory under Joe Craig and was responsible for the 'Domiracer' on which Tom Phillis finished third in the 1961 Senior TT. He'd also developed the 500cc twin Triumphs on which Buddy Elmore and Gary Nixon won the Daytona in 1966 and 1967, respectively.

Now BSA-Triumph needed racers and naturally, Hailwood's name cropped up. Triumph test rider and racer Percy Tait was tasked with the job of tracking down Hailwood to invite him to join the team. Tait – according to Woollett – said: "He agreed straight away and didn't even ask about money."

Hailwood did, literally, have more pressing worries. In his book Woollett recalls an interview about joining the Daytona 200 campaign in which Hailwood said: "I'm quite prepared to have a go but have a put on so much weight I don't know if I'll be able to get back into my leathers."

These concerns were unnecessary. Not only did BSA-Triumph kit the entire team out with matching custom-made leathers, they also provided luxury accommodation, top class travel and security guards.

American Motorcycle Association star Dave Aldana was also riding for the BSA-Triumph team alongside Hailwood for the Daytona 200 in 1970. He recalls the leathers and the team's lavish spending – namely at the hand of team manager Peter Thornton.

"It was a good time. I remember the US BSA-Triumph team manager Peter Thornton spending money like crazy. We were flown everywhere on private jets so our team was at races refreshed whereas other riders had driven through the night to get to a circuit. But as for the Daytona 200, I remember my machine being different to that ridden by the

Top: Cars were becoming more of Mike's world

Above: Mike resplendent in his new BSA leathers for Daytona. Due to his break, he was worried he wouldn't fit in his old kit

British racers. The British bikes had better parts than ours, which worked out well for me because my bike blew up in qualifying so the team went to their storage place, which was an aircraft hangar near the airport, and replaced the parts. But there were two sets of parts – parts for the British riders, with pistons that had, for example, higher compression ratios – and parts for the American riders. They put the British parts on mine. I didn't know about this but I could see the difference because I started the race right at the back and then ended up in fourth place."

But the most obvious difference to the outsider between the British and American BSAs was the air cooler. Aldana says: "The main visual difference between the BSA Rocket 3 Hailwood raced and mine was the 'envelope' slot in the front fairing for cooling."

Known as the 'letterbox' air cooler, it became one of the defining features of the BSA Rocket 3s. But, however striking, it failed to do its job when faced with belting temperatures. When it came to the Daytona 200 race itself the BSAs performed well but heat put paid to a Hailwood victory. In spite of all BSA-Triumph's testing, it hadn't accounted for the blistering Florida sunshine over 200 miles of riding and as such, Hailwood's spark plug 'overcooked'. Hailwood retired after reading the race for 10 laps in the pits on lap 53. It was disappointing, to say the least: Hailwood had qualified second fastest with a lap of 152.90 mph.

Improvements were made for the 1971 Daytona 200 campaign, including a double disc Lockheed front brake. However, for Hailwood, they proved too powerful in qualifying as his front wheel locked while he was emerging from the banked track. Despite a fairly dramatic tumble, Hailwood was unhurt.

The team had a new recruit for the 1971 event too: Paul Smart. Smart, on a Triumph Trident, had

qualified fastest with an average of 105.80mph ahead of Harley-Davidson's Cal Rayborn and Mark Brelsford, BSA's Don Emde and Hailwood, who was fifth fastest.

But when it came to the race itself, Smart and Hailwood took the lead, dicing with each other for the first few laps. Then, on lap 15, Hailwood pulled into the pits with a burnt-out valve. British riders aside, the BSA-Triumph team smashed Daytona 200 with a 1-2-3 – Dick Mann (BSA), Gene Romero (Triumph) and Don Emde (BSA).

The BSA-Triumph team was firing on all three cylinders, and it was reflected in the US order books: In 1970 Stateside demand for BSA-Triumphs was up so much that dealers were screaming for more stock. But BSA-Triumph was not on the ball. The amalgamated company increased production but it was too little, too late: BSA-Triumph ultimately failed to match the sheer numbers required to meet the needs of the American market.

By 1971 BSA-Triumph was in dire straits. It sold off its state-of-the-art £850,000 production line – believed to be the most cutting-edge of its kind outside of Japan – and the bank refused further credit. To make matters worse, the London Stock Exchange suspended the sale of BSA-Triumph shares.

It is bitterly ironic that for the first time in years BSA-Triumph had finally invested in road racing technology after an R&D hiatus, only for its efforts to have been in vain.

The Rocket 3 and Trident were conquering races across the globe and yet BSA-Triumph had decided not to take the Rocket 3s to production, a move that displayed a chronic lack of vision given that the era of the superbike was a stone's throw away.

Honda, on the other hand, withdrew from racing because of its long-term vision: To enter into car manufacture. It was a vision that, quite clearly, paid off.

But British regrets aside, the BSA Rocket 3 and the Daytona campaign marked another chapter in Hailwood's racing machines. Short-lived, yes, but the Rocket 3 is now considered one of racing's classics.

All the while, while competing in race events, rumours were circulating as to whether Hailwood was going to fully quit motorcycles.

By 1971 he was heavily immersed in car racing – something that's often overlooked.

Above: The 1968 Triumph Daytona on display at the 1967 Earls Court Show, London

Below: Mike leading Joseph Siffat at Silverstone in a Formula 2 race

From 1969 to 1971 alone – alongside both Daytona 200s and umpteen national and international motorcycle races – Hailwood was racing in the Formula 5000 series (1969, 70, 71), the Le Mans 24 Hour race (1969) and competed in two Formula 1 Grand Prix races (1971).

Then, in 1972, it was announced that he was hanging up his motorcycle leathers for good. *Motor Cycle* reported this with the headline 'Hailwood quits – by order'. Hailwood had signed a contract with former motorcycle world champion John Surtees to join Team Surtees and compete in the European Formula 2 Championship and part of his contract was that he would not race motorcycles.

That period marked the downfall of the British motorcycle empire and the end of Mike the Bike's two wheel career.

Hailwood would go on to race in the Formula 1 championship, both for Surtees and for Yardley McLaren. But just as his F1 career was taking off, Hailwood crashed at Pflanzgarten at the Nürburgring, breaking his leg so badly he was forced to retire from racing altogether. Hailwood moved to New Zealand and became something of a recluse, aside from spectating at the TT.

But as we all know, that wouldn't last long...

In Part 10 of Mike Hailwood's Racing Machines: The Comeback. Rachael Clegg tells the story of Hailwood's Lazarus moment and one of the greatest victories in racing history. CBG

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RED HUNTER

Then and Now sees Rachael Clegg test an Ariel 347cc Red Hunter as part of the Davolls motorcycle collection. Here, she compares her notes with those of a contemporary report from 1946.

CULTURE HAS GIVEN ESSEX ITS FAIR SHARE OF BAD press over the years. In the 1990s there was Birds of a Feather and more recently – and infinitely more ghastly – The Only Way is Essex.

But today – a record-breaking warm March day – there isn't a silicon bosom, a tasteless pad or derma-filled trout pout in sight. On the contrary, we're in a 16th-century barn full of classic motorcycles and surrounded by leafy, winding, country roads. And Essex – at least this part of it, is utterly delightful.

But landscapes aside, we're here at Davolls in Billericay, Essex, to sample some of the classic machines in this rather exquisite collection, including a 1946 347cc Model H Ariel Red Hunter.

The machine is handsome, thanks to the Red Hunter's original designer Edward Turner, who revitalised the marque's single cylinder range in the early 1930s. Turner left Ariel for Triumph in 1936 but the Red Hunter remained one of Ariel's mainstay models. The machine provided the basis for the 40,000 Model W/NGs, which were supplied to the military during the Second World War and production of the original Red Hunter commenced after the war. The Red Hunter was in fact the first model to be announced by the marque in peacetime and as such, it's a particularly poignant machine.

GTP 469

This maroon-toned and chromed delight is from that 1946 post Second World War batch, and we're taking it to test. Moreover, we're comparing our test with one of the contemporary test reports from 1946 – published in *Motor Cycling* magazine.

At first, the Red Hunter proved to be a stubborn old thing – it took more than 10 minutes to kick-start, at one point flooding the engine. One is tempted to attribute this to lazy modern motorcycling, a lack of regular use or a (lack of) leg power but it seemed I was not alone: the 1946 test report describes how firing the Red Hunter up 'required a little care.'

But once started, the Red Hunter proved to be great fun.

To start with, it's a smooth ride – thanks to its telescopic forks. The Red Hunter smoothed out any lumps and bumps in the road – an observation that *Motor Cycling's* test writer reported in 1946: "Handling is super, the new telescopic forks possessing an extremely sensitive movement. One's first reaction was to opine that they were too 'soft' for safe control at near-maximum gait but experience quickly proved their amazing facility for simply swallowing pot holes or protruding manhole covers with unconscious ease at any gait."

Equally comfortable was the riding position. Granted, at 5ft 4in, I prefer a lower saddle whereas my colleague – writing in 1946 – suggested the saddle might be a little 'too low'. But height aside, the seat was comfortable – even after long stretches on the road, which added to the ease of riding the Red Hunter.

350 MOTOR CYCLING September 5, 1946.

Road Tests of 1946 Models.

Practical Impressions of the Smaller Red Hunter in its Post-war Form

(Above) The 1946 347 c.c. Red Hunter Ariel is listed at £138 8s. 7d., including purchase tax, with speedometer and pillion equipment shown as extras.

(Right) The engine of the Ariel, seen from the near side. Note the adjustable "bleed," behind the clutch cover, for lubricating the final chain.

THE current demand for sporting performance, coupled with pleasant touring manners and the all-important attribute of silence, has not exactly presented a new problem for manufacturers. So far back as 1932, strong efforts were made to produce machines which, despite their single-cylinder limitations, would offer a dual personality, combining high potential speeds with reasonable docility.

It was in those days that the Ariel "Red Hunter" series was created, to become an immediate success. Their popularity with the sporting fraternity was outstanding and a mounting list of successes in open competitions underlined their capabilities in the most convincing manner.

Modest Compression Ratio

When, therefore, we submitted the latest 350 c.c. "Red Hunter" to a road test, it was in expectation of an unusually robust performance, and the test graph supplies the wholly satisfactory answer. Present available supplies of low-octane fuel dictated the use of a low-compression piston and the test figures were obtained with a modest 6.75-to-1 ratio. Internal finish of the engine—the ports are ground and polished and the forged-steel flywheels reflect similar detailed attention—does much to ensure extra liveliness, of course, but the whole power unit is designed to cope with the stresses and loads consequent upon maintained high revolutions. It is noticeably free from vibration periods: the only time at which the engine could be felt to any degree was at a precise figure of 46 m.p.h., when a slight buzz from the telescopic fork covers was observed.

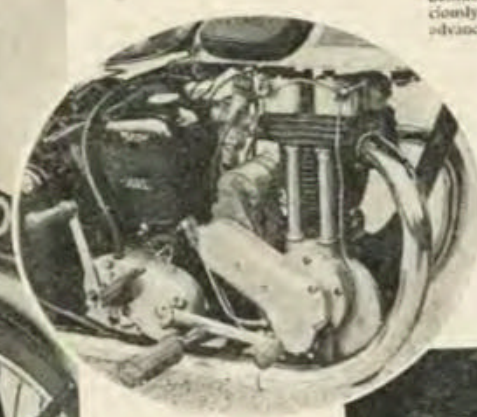
The valve gear could be heard at tick-over speeds, and there was a faint whine emanating from the timing chest, but once the engine was under load it became commendably quiet. Piston slap was evident when starting from cold, and it was advisable to maintain the ignition lever at no more than three-quarter advance for the first mile. To the rider with sporting inclinations, however, this would prove reassuring rather than annoying. Long periods of revving in the intermediate gears with less than 400 miles recorded, failed to tire the motor.

The machine under review was fitted with the optional two-port head, and, whatever may be the views of single-port protagonists from a full-blooded efficiency standpoint, the fact is that the twin silencers reduce exhaust bark to a completely inoffensive murmur. At 50 m.p.h. and above, the only audible evidence of progress came from rear-chain whirr and tyre hum, with the result that high speeds could be maintained without unwelcome fuss.

Handling is superb, the new telescopic forks possessing an extremely sensitive movement. One's first reaction was to opine that they were too "soft" for safe control at near-maximum gait,

The Ariel proved to be a comfortable mount, capable of attaining and holding a maximum of over 70 m.p.h., yet was eminently tractable "low-down."

The 347 c.c. Model N.H. ARIEL



(Above) Total enclosure of the valve gear, with the provision of removable plugs for access to tappet adjustment, ensures long life for the mechanism without sacrificing practicability. Note the rubber protector over the clutch-operating arm.

(Left) For the first time, telescopic forks appear on the Red Hunter. They are of Ariel design and they greatly impressed "Motor Cycling's" tester with their efficiency.

The new forks added considerably to the reputation which the Red Hunter already has as a mount for tackling rough going such as that seen on the right.

but experience quickly proved their amazing facility for simply swallowing potholes or protruding manhole covers with unconscious ease at any gait. The only factor governing speed on really rough surfaces was the rider's ability to control the rear end. With the machine at rest, it was easily possible to "bounce" the telescopic forks with a finger and thumb alternately pushing and pulling on the steering damper knob! This latter item proved ornamental, and not once in 2,000 miles was it called into use, whilst the new narrow bars gave excellent control under all conditions.

An Asset to Steering

Doubtless a contributory factor to this excellent steering was the 3.00 by 20-in. front tyre, which, on the test machine, was of the ribbed racing pattern—ideal for fast road work, but not so happy in mud!

Amongst the many arduous duties which the Ariel was called upon to perform was a 300-mile trip in a drenching downpour from the Midlands to the north-east coast, with flooded roads and a stiff facing wind as additional tests. Over the Pennines the Hunter proved its ability to pull heartily with a creditable 43 miles tucked into an hour's hard going, whilst the handling on all types of road surfaces induced absolute confidence. The front brake proved susceptible to the vile conditions, but occasional light application ensured its efficiency if an urgent need arose. Mudguarding is, of course, of the "sports" variety; thus fast, wet miles produced a certain amount of spray on the rider's back.

On the subject of fast main-road handling it was found that the cornering angle was governed by the footrests and silencers, and both items bore slight traces of contact, which indicates a need for caution when hurrying through fast curves with a machine which can be pinned down so easily.

Starting required a little care; too much flooding of the downdraught carburetter could easily bring the risk of wetting the plug. Therefore, it was desirable to depress the tickler judiciously, set the ignition at two-thirds advance, and give a single priming stroke of the pedal, whereupon a certain start would be assured every time. The air lever could be ignored entirely, although its employment may be useful in colder winter temperatures.

Two fingers were sufficient to operate the delightfully smooth clutch, which provided a silky take-off at all times, even on a 1-in-2½ gradient. Its large proportions, and consequent inertia, required a slight pause between upward changes to avoid clashing, while the pleasantly light foot gear-change was well up to accepted Burman standards. It was impossible to detect a trace of hunt from the gears, either on the drive or over-run, in any ratio.

Acceleration tests proved the Ariel's penchant for pulling, and a glance at the chart will show that only changes were made at comparatively low m.p.h. for this type of engine. Top-gear acceleration was unusually good, even from the minimum non-slush crawl of

BRIEF SPECIFICATION OF 347 c.c. o.h.v. MODEL N.H. RED HUNTER ARIEL

Engine: Single cylinder, o.h.v. 2-port; specially tuned and notch-tested; bore and stroke 72 by 85 mm. = 347 c.c.; compression ratio, 6.75 to 1; valve gear fully enclosed; ground and polished ports; polished forged flywheels; mainshafts carried in ball bearings; double roller-bearing big-end; Amal carburetter, with twist-grip control; Lucas Magdyno lubrication by dry-sump with gear pumps.

Transmission: Primary chain in polished aluminium oil-bath case; engine-shaft shock-absorber; both rims of rear chain protected by guards; four-speed gearbox operated by enclosed positive-stop foot-control; ratios, 5.7 to 1, 7.2 to 1, 10 to 1 and 15.3 to 1.

Frame: Cradle type; built-on gallon footrest lugs; spring-up rear stand; dip-up front stand; Ariel telescopic front forks with integral head-lamp supports.

Wheels: Chromium-plated rims, red centres. Dunlop tyres, 3.25-in. by 19-in. rear, 3.00-in. by 20-in. ribbed front; brakes fitted with speed fulcrum adjustment.

Tanks: Petrol tank chromium plated with red panels lined gold, capacity 2½ gallons; separate half-gallon oil tank, instrument panel mounted on petrol tank; detachable, facia-cum-inspection light fitted.

Equipment: Lucas Magdyno 6-volt electric lighting and horn with A.V.C.; head lamp with switch incorporated; rubber hand-grips.

Dimensions: Overall length, 85 ins.; height, 40½ ins.; width, 27 ins.; wheelbase, 55 ins.; saddle height, 28½ ins.; weight (tanks empty), 346 lb.; ground clearance, 5½ ins.

Price: £131 10s. 5d., including purchase tax, £179 4s. 7d.

Extras: Smith's speedometer, £4, including purchase tax £1 1s. 7d.

Makers: Ariel Motors, Ltd., Selly Oak, Birmingham, 29.

14 m.p.h. In bottom gear, with a half-retarded ignition setting, it was possible to walk alongside the Ariel up a 1-in-25 gradient. A "flying quarter" reading which, on the average of four runs, gave a fraction over 70 m.p.h., indicates a flow of healthy horses when it is considered that the slowest run against the wind brought a reading of 68.2 m.p.h.

Adverse weather conditions during petrol-consumption tests hardly favoured optimistic figures, but on several long-distance journeys a full 80 m.p.g. was obtained at 50-55 m.p.h. cruising speeds in more favourable circumstances. Oil consumption could scarcely be recorded, the level in the half-gallon tank dropping merely an inch in 2,100 miles.

The external appearance of the engine is excellent, the polished covers making routine cleaning a very simple task. Following our usual custom, the unit was left untouched for 1,500 miles, so that oil leaks might be observed. There was a very faint smear on the timing case at the end of this mileage and a barely detectable stain at the front of the polished aluminium primary chaincase, but even a severe critic could hardly refer to either as a genuine leak.

The Brakes

Mention has been made of brakes under the worst possible conditions with roads awash, and they deserve praise for a very full measure of retardation when tested. The front stopper, which came in for the major portion of work, proved sufficiently effective for all normal needs, bereft of snatch and light enough for two-finger operation. The well-placed rear-brake pedal, when used in conjunction with the front, provided stopping powers above average and well worthy of modern traffic conditions. Both brakes feature the Ariel system of fulcrum adjustment operating directly on the brake shoes and enabling fine settings to be obtained.

Taper fitting of the footrests allows exact positioning, and the bars can be swivelled in their clamps to suit individual requirements. The saddle position is low—a little too low, in the tester's estimation—but no discomfort arose following 150 miles non-stop.

No difficulties arose when normal maintenance jobs were tackled, the tappets being directly accessible when the screw-on caps were removed—whilst an elongated shank on the pivot bolt below the gearbox removed the necessity for acrobatics in primary chain adjustment. Should a need arise for inspection of the clutch, the Ariel method of enclosing it in a separate outer cover, held by four screws, avoids the usual breaking an oil-tight chaincase joint.

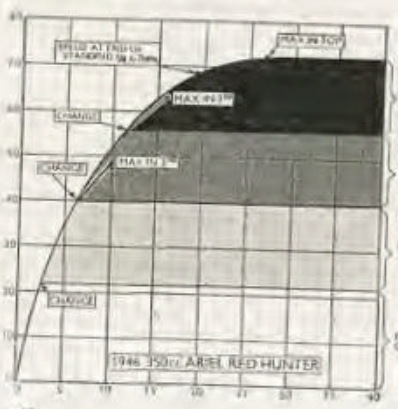
To say that the machine handled well on trials going would be superfluous comment, but in the negotiation of rocks and mud the downswept pipes proved a slight handicap, and narrow hairpins showed up a limitation in steering lock.

Equipment of the machine is good; the 2½-gallon tank carries an instrument panel with internally illuminated, gearbox-driven speedometer and oil gauge, the source of illumination being the usual and ever-handy detachable inspection light. A reserve tap gave sufficient fuel for at least 18 miles on gentle throttle openings and the toolkit contained a sensibly proportioned set of spanners. The pillion and rests illustrated count as extras under the present restrictions.

The "Electrics"

The lighting equipment is up to the usual Lucas standards. Fitted above the gearbox, and on the near side, the battery is well protected, yet readily accessible, and the rear-mounted Magdyno fulfils its functions with unobtrusive efficiency. In common with other modern machines, of course, an automatic voltage control unit is fitted beneath the saddle, and relieves the rider from much responsibility.

In the matter of smart appearance, Ariels have always set a particularly high standard with a happy blend of line and finish. This latest 350 c.c. "Red Hunter" will, if anything, further their reputation with its stylish combination of crimson, chromium, and black; a real thoroughbred in reputation and snappy performance. Devotees of the breed will find much to please them in the lusty manner of its going and ability to work with fussless haste.



MOTOR CYCLING

TESTER'S ROAD REPORT

MODEL N.H. 350 cc 'RED HUNTER' ARIEL

Maximum Speeds in:—

Top Gear (Ratio 5·7 to 1) 75 m.p.h. 3545 r.p.m. 27½ m.p.g.

Third Gear (Ratio 7·3 to 1) 64 m.p.h. 4092 r.p.m. (47½ m.p.g.)

Second Gear (Ratio 10·1 to 1) 48 m.p.h. 4228 r.p.m. 49 m.p.g.

Speeds over measured Quarter Mile:—

Flying Start 70·29 m.p.h. Standing Start 47·83 m.p.h.

Braking Figures On DRY TARRED Surface, from 30 m.p.h.:—

Best Brake 31 ft. Front Brake 42 ft. Rear Brake 47 ft.

Fuel Consumption:— Touring 71 m.p.g. Climbing 77 m.p.g.

Oil Consumption:— NEGLIGIBLE m.p.g.

WEIGHT (without tools) 348 LBS.

But there were some ergonomic glitches: the positioning of the rear brake and right-hand gear meant for awkward shifts from one to the other. Even for someone with small feet, the footrest, rear brake and gears felt to be too close together.

Gear changing was positive though the machine seemed to run in third and top gear more easily than it negotiated the lower gears. The Red Hunter is so comfortable at high speeds that it belies its engine capacity of 347cc. The clutch is extremely light – light enough for two fingers, even 73 years on from its manufacture.

In fact, the solidity and running of the 347cc Red Hunter is such that it feels more like its predecessor – the 497cc. In fact, a later review of the 347cc Ariel Red Hunter in *Motor Cycling* made exactly the same point – that the smaller machine is sufficient enough. The report, published on March 12, 1953, said: "So good is the general performance of the modern 350cc machine that a legitimate doubt might exist as to whether, for normal solo touring purposes, a machine of larger capacity is really necessary."

Granted, that review was published seven years after the 1946 Red Hunter rolled out of the Selly Oak factory in Birmingham but it is no less relevant. Even today, the 1946 347cc Red Hunter excels in its performance to the point it feels to be a much bigger engine.

And according to the 1946 *Motor Cycling* report the 347cc machine does this without making too much of a racket. The report reads: "The internal finish of the engine – the ports are ground and polished and the forged steel flywheels reflect detailed

attention – does much to ensure extra liveliness, of course, but the whole power unit is designed to cope with the stresses consequent upon maintained high consequences.

"It is noticeably free from vibration periods: the only time at which the engine could be felt to any degree was at the precise figure of 46mph, when a slight buzz from telescopic fork covers was observed."

But I found the machine much noisier than the report suggested. During the test I meandered down a tiny country lane, off which an elderly man was cutting his hedges. The noise of the machine caught his ear and he came running down the lane. 'Stop, stop,' he said, pleasantly, 'That sounds great! Can you turn it off so I can chat to you?' At which point I had to explain that I couldn't turn it off because it would take half a century to restart it, so the old man and I said our goodbyes and parted company.

So while the engine was far from quiet at slow speeds, at least its soundtrack was appreciated. At higher speeds the engine settled into a visceral 'bob bob bob bob,' which is equally sensational.

Considering seven decades have passed since the Red Hunter left the Ariel factory, it is an amazing machine – even by modern standards. Starting issues aside, this is a solid, muscular machine with a responsive engine and positive gearbox.

And it seems the 1946 reporter felt very much the same way: "In the matter of smart appearance, Ariels have always set a particularly high standard with a happy blend of line and finish. The latest 350cc Red Hunter will, if anything, further their reputation with its stylish combination of crimson, chromium and black: a real thoroughbred in reputation and snappy performance. Devotees of the breed will find much to please them in the lusty manner of its going and its ability to work with fussless haste."

And today, on this balmy hot spring day in Essex, I couldn't agree more. That is, once it's started up. CBG

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE: Single-cylinder ohv two port specially tuned and bench-tested, bore and stroke 72mm x 85mm 347cc power unit
TRANSMISSION: Primary again in aluminium
FRAME: Built-in pillion footrests off a cradle frame; sprung-up rear stand;
SUSPENSION: Ariel telescopic forks with integral head lamp supports
WHEELS: Chrome-plated rims; Dunlop tyres; 3.25 inch by 19 inch rear, 3 inch by 20 inch ribbed front tyre.
TANKS: Chrome-plated petrol tank with a 2.5 gallon capacity and a separate oil tank
PRICE IN 1946: £138-8s-7d including purchase tax.

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Fancy a day out?

APRIL 2019

- **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. 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. www.jukeboxfair.co.uk. Tel: 0208 393 2444. 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.com
- **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.
- **28 Bod's Custom Cycles open day:** Unit 11, Newton Farm, Ashchurch, GL207BE Tewkesbury 10am-3pm

MAY 2019

- **1 VMCC (Dorset section) Lunch Meet:** Henstridge Golf and Leisure, Marsh Lane, Henstridge, Somerset, BA8 0TG. Tel. 01258 860864. dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events/
- **1 Frasers Motorcycles of Gloucester:** will be having their first 'Bike Nite' in over eight years, there will be hot food, a bar and a raffle 6-8pm, Frasers Motorcycles, 261 Bristol Road, GL2 5DB Gloucester, Gloucestershire
- **2-6 RIDE Capitals Knievels 2019:** Wrexham - Monmouth - Carmarthen - Aberystwyth - Holyhead Wrexham. www.ridecymru.com. Email info@ ridecymru.com.
- **3 JUNE ISSUE OF *THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE***
- **3-5 BMAD Bike, Beer and Bike Festival:** BMAD attracts around 10,000 people and the Bikers Make A Difference (BMAD) charity has raised more than £450,000 for local organisations and families since 2003. Expect classics customs and sportsbikes, rock band and a host of other attractions spread along a mile of Paignton's sea front, Devon, TQ4 6BW. Admission from £5 for day tickets to £20 for a weekend pass. www.bmad.co.uk. Tel: 07800 727376. Email: mediacontact@bmad.co.uk.
- **3-5 Into the Valley:** Home Farm Barns, Sledmere, E Yorks, YO25 3XG. www.mapevents.co.uk. Tel: 0800 9883199. Email enquiries@mapevents.co.uk.
- **3-6 Taffy Drwg:** The Ancient Briton Pub, Brecon Road, Penycae, Swansea, S Wales, SA9 1YY. www. taffydrwg.co.uk. Tel. 07875 320304. Email: info@ taffydrwg.co.uk.
- **4 MAY ISSUE *OLD BIKE MART***
- **4 Bikers Blessing Service, St Paul's Cathedral, London:** One of the world's most famous motorcycle clubs, the 59 Club, will be attending a special Bikers Blessing Service in the centre of London and the club has organised two ride outs (or ride ins) to the service. One will leave the 59 Club HQ at All Saint's Church, Uxbridge Road, Feltham TW13 5EE at 1.30pm and the other from The Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge NW10 7UD. The service begins at 5pm. Visit www.the59club.co.uk
- **4-5 CRMC Classic Motorcycle Race Weekend:** Pembrey Circuit, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, Wales, SA16 0HZ
- **4-6 Llandudno Transport Festival (May Day Bank Holiday Weekend):** Bodafon Fields, Llandudno, Conwy County, North Wales, LL30 1BW. Great Orme and Conwy road runs, large seafront showground, held in conjunction with the Llandudno Victorian Extravaganza. www.llantransfest.co.uk
- **5 Acorns MCC Classic Scramble:** for both solo and sidecars and will be British Championship Round 2, M6 jct 15, ST5 4DR. Contact Roger Simkin 07971 950921, 01785 213277. Email: rog.ers@ btinternet.com
- **5 VMCC (Essex Section) meet:** Battlesbridge Antiques Shop, SS11 7RT. Tel: Mark Wilson 01702 512010.
- **5 VMCC (Dorset section) Bluebell Run:** Recreation Ground, Castle Lane, Okeford Fitzpaine, DT11 0RL. Tel: 01258 860864. dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events/
- **5 Sunbeam MCC 9th Ixion Cavalcade:** Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex. Email Ian Cockshull: ixion@ sunbeammcc.co.uk
- **5 Bowood Spring Classic Car & Motorcycle Show:** Bowood House, Calne, Wilts, SN11 0LZ. Tel: 01484 667776. Email info@classicshows.org or visit www.classicshows.org
- **5 Sammy Miller Museum, Despatch Riders Rally:** www.sammymiller.co.uk
- **5 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes:** Bull Beck Picnic Site, nr Caton. Tel: 01772 782516.
- **5 Yamaha Day:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **5-6 Notts Classic Car & Motorcycle Show:** Thoresby Park, Ollerton, Notts, NG22 9EP. Tel: 01484 667776. www.classicshows.org Email info@classicshows. org.
- **6 MAY ISSUE OF *REAL CLASSIC***
- **6 Stone Circle classic and custom ride-in bike show 2019:** Organised by the Wiltshire branch of the BSA Owners' Club and Avebury sports and social club, attendees are invited to bring along their own classic or custom bikes for display, or just park up at a friendly social gathering at an iconic location. Avebury's stone circle is a must visit while you are there and the roads across Wiltshire's chalk uplands are a joy to ride on, no matter which direction you are coming from. What better way to spend a bank holiday Monday? All profits to go to two local good causes. 11am-4pm, Avebury Sports & Social Club, Beckhampton Road, SN8 1RD Avebury, Wiltshire Avebury sports and social club.
- **6 Men of Kent VMCC's Kent and Sussex Velocette Owners' Club Annual Meet:** Hamstreet Hall TN26 2NW. Email: veloseckent@gmail.com
- **10 -12 You've Been Nabbed 28:** The Royal Cheshire Showground, Flittogate Lane, Tabley, Knutsford, WA16 0HJ. www.nabd.org.uk. Tel: 0844 415 4849. Email office@nabd.org.uk.
- **11 Rogue Jesters MCC Razornight:** Jollees Cabaret Venue, 279 London Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST4 5AG. Tel: 07941 333247. Email: rjdavis.sot@ gmail.com.
- **12 Sussex Car and Motorcycle Jumble:** 10am-2pm at Worthing Rugby Club, Roundstone Lane, Angmering, W Sussex BN16 4AX. Tel: 07774 655951 or 07760 793912.
- **12 Sidecar, Trike and Three-Wheeler Day:** Jacks Hill Café, A5 Watling Street, Towcester, Northants, NN12 8ET. Tel: John Taylor (Hedingham Sidecar Owners Club) 01788 578743.
- **12 Spring Autojumble:** Battlesbridge Antiques Centre, Essex. SS117RF. Tel: 01268 769000. www.battlesbridge.com/events.
- **12 BMW Bike Day:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com

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.

- **12 Classic Motorcycle Show:** Cafeplus, 6 High St, Baldock SG7 6AX. Tel: 07963 609143.
- **12 Motorcycle Show 2019:** Stonham Barns, Pettaugh Road, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 6AT. Tel: 01449 711111 www.stonhambarns.co.uk
- **12 Inspire Ride, International Bomber Command Charity Ride-In:** Lincoln. www.inspirelincoln.org.uk
- **12 Sammy Miller Museum, Spring Autojumble:** www.sammymiller.co.uk
- **12 The British Two-Stroke Club (Leicester Section) The Windmill Run:** Wymondham, Leics. Tel: Eric Hathaway 01162 750532.
- **12-18 North West 200:** NW200 Paddock, Portrush Road, Portstewart, Northern Ireland, BT55 7PT. www.northwest200.org. Tel: 02870 344723. Email: info@northwest200.org.
- **14 WAC Motorcycle Club bike night:** 7-11pm Tower Buildings, Perdiswell, WR3 7SN Worcester, Worcestershire
- **15 VMCC (Essex Section) Evening Run:** Danbury Park & Ride (Sandon). Tel: Lesley Willmore 07971 266167.
- **15 JUNE ISSUE OF *CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS***
- **16 *CLASSIC DIRT BIKE* ISSUE 51**
- **16 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes:** Barley Visitor Centre. Tel: 01772 782516.
- **17-18 Victory Rally:** Huntly Arms Hotel, Charlestown Road, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, AB34 5HS. Tel: 07562 422472. Email: victoryrally@btinternet.com.
- **17-19 The REALLY Rally:** Elveden Village Hall, Elveden, nr Thetford, Norfolk, IP27 3TJ. Tel: 07588 743334. Email reallyrally001@gmail.com.
- **18 Southern Classic Motorcycle Show & Motorcycle Jumble:** Kempton Park, Staines Road East, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex, TW16 5AQ. www.kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk
- **18 Scorton Auto & Bike Jumble:** Scorton, North Yorkshire Events Centre, DL10 6EJ. Tel: Bert 07909 904705.
- **18 Salutation MCC Charity One Nighter:** Birch Coppice Social Welfare Club, Watling Street, Dordon, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B78 1SY. www.salutationmcc.com. Tel: 07772 482544. Email: nigellast@hotmail.co.uk
- **19 Breakfast Meet:** Battlesbridge Motorcycle Museum, Essex SS11 7RF. All classic vehicles welcome. Tel: 01268 769000. www.battlesbridge.com/events
- **19 Rugby BikeFest:** Market Place and High Street, Rugby town centre, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 3PT. www.rugbytowncentre.co.uk. Tel: 01788 890789. Email: info@ucltd.co.uk.
- **19 Herts Auto Show:** Stanborough Park, Stanborough Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6DQ. www.hertsautoshow.co.uk. Tel: 01707 376020. Email: neil@hertsautoshow.co.uk.
- **19 Two-Stroke 'Blue Haze' Day:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **19 Clifford Arms Classic Show:** Email: barry.owen573@ ntlworld.com
- **19 Romney Marsh Bikejumble:** Marsh Road, Hamstreet, near Ashford, Kent TN26 2JD. www.elk-promotions.co.uk
- **19 Sammy Miller Museum:** Triumph meet. www. sammymiller.co.uk
- **19 VMCC (Dorset section) Giants Run:** Henstridge Golf and Leisure, Marsh Lane, Henstridge, Somerset, BA8 0TG. Tel: 01258 860864. dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events/
- **19 Wiscombe Park Hillclimb:** Southleigh, Honiton, Devon EX24 6JE from 7.30am-4.30pm
- **24-26 Breach of the Peace Rally:** Fort Purbrook, The Hill Road, nr Portsmouth, PO6 1BJ. www.sanzaru.co.uk. Tel: 07901 767887. Email info@sanzaru.co.uk.
- **24-26 Trikefest:** Littleport Leisure Centre, Camel Road, Littleport, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 1PU. www.trikesrus.co.uk Tel: 07815 784798 or 07931 724718. Email harleyjean@hotmail.co.uk.
- **24-27 The FIA/FIM Main Event:** Santa Pod Raceway, Airfield Road, Podington, Wellingborough, Northants, NN29 7XA. www.santapod.com Tel: 01234 782828.
- **25 Bideford Bike Show:** £3 per bike/trike, pedestrians free. There will be stands and stalls, food, music, a prize raffle and prizes for the best bikes. Quay Side Bideford EX39 from noon-5pm.
- **25 VMCC (Dorset section) Breakfast Meet:** Henstridge Golf and Leisure, Marsh Lane, Henstridge, Somerset, BA8 0TG. Tel: 01258 860864. dorsetvmcc.co.uk/events/
- **25 Sunbeam MCC Conyboro Autojumble:** Chiddingly, East Sussex. Tel. Rob Pond 01306 628297; 07907 694751. Email: robpond123@yahoo.co.uk
- **25 LE Velo Northampton:** The Sun Inn, Kislingbury, NN7 4BB. Tel: 01604 499858.
- **25-27 Chipping Steam Fair 2019:** Green Lane Showground, Chipping, Lancashire, PR3 2TQ. www.chippingsteamfair.com
- **25-27 5th Lechlade Annual Vintage Rally & Country Show:** Langley Lane, Clanfield, Oxon. OX18 2RZ E-mail info@lechladecollectorsclub.co.uk
- **26 Erskine Motorbike Meet:** starting from Park Mains High School, PA8 6EY. www.erskinemotorbikemeet.co.uk Tel: 07568 435353. Email: info@ erskinemotorbikemeet.co.uk.
- **26 RBLRB Day in aid of the Poppy Appeal:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe. com
- **26 Sunbeam MCC Conyboro Run:** Chiddingly, East Sussex. Tel: Rob Pond 01306 628297; 07907 694751. Email: robpond123@yahoo.co.uk
- **26 BTSC 90th Birthday Event:** Ranmore, meet at Dorking Halls car park, Surrey. Tel: 01483 272765.
- **26 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes, Clapham. Tel:** 01772 782516.
- **26-27 Cheshire Classic Car & Motorcycle Show:** Capesthorne Hall, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9JY. Tel: 01484 667776. www.classicshows.org
- **27 Margate Meltdown Run:** Ace Cafe London, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. london.acecafe.com
- **27 34th Yorkshire Classic Vehicle Show & Classic Land Rover Display:** Ripley Castle, Ripley, Harrogate, HG3 3EA. www.markwoodwardclassicevents.com. Tel: 01697 451882. Email info@markwoodwardclassicevents.com.
- **29 JUNE ISSUE OF *CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE***
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How things have changed

Eighty-five years ago is a long time; time for many changes to occur. When the Ariel Red Hunter first came out in 1932 the 500cc single was a sporty model, with a four-valve head – a rarity in 1932. Come 1934 the two-valve head became the norm, but to maintain the sporting pretensions of the Red Hunter, Ariel supplied the motorcycle with two pistons – one low compression for normal use, the other a high compression slug for competition.

Can you imagine that? Fear spreads through most of us should we determine that our bike needs a new piston – but 85 years ago, the idea of removing the exhaust, the carb, the rocker, pushrods and tubes, cylinder head and barrel, to fit a high compression piston for more oomph was considered 'usual practice'. I can't find anywhere where said sporty piston came with its own rings for ease of fitting in the paddock, or where the carb settings and jets had to be changed to optimise the enhancement.

Today, you can change the performance, ridability and many other areas like braking of a bike, at the touch of a button, often while riding! If you are able to take time to speak to any folk that would have been around at that time, spend time getting their stories, before, inevitably, it is too late to hear first-hand what life then was like. What a fascinating period of time, both good and bad, it must have been. I think we could all learn from it. CBG

Road Tests of 1934 Models

The 497 c.c. ARI

THERE was a time when the truly "sporting" motor cycle was quite different from its "touring" brother. Riders were prepared to sacrifice refinement of performance for mere speed and snap, and the fact that harshness and noise were part and parcel of the machine was accepted as a matter of course. Certain makers have now, however, discovered how to combine superlative performance with comfort, silence, and tractability—in other words, the term "performance" has taken on a fuller meaning.

This point is made evident by a road test of the 497 c.c. "Red Hunter," which represents a serious attempt to provide a machine of a truly sporting character which, nevertheless, behaves perfectly under normal touring conditions.

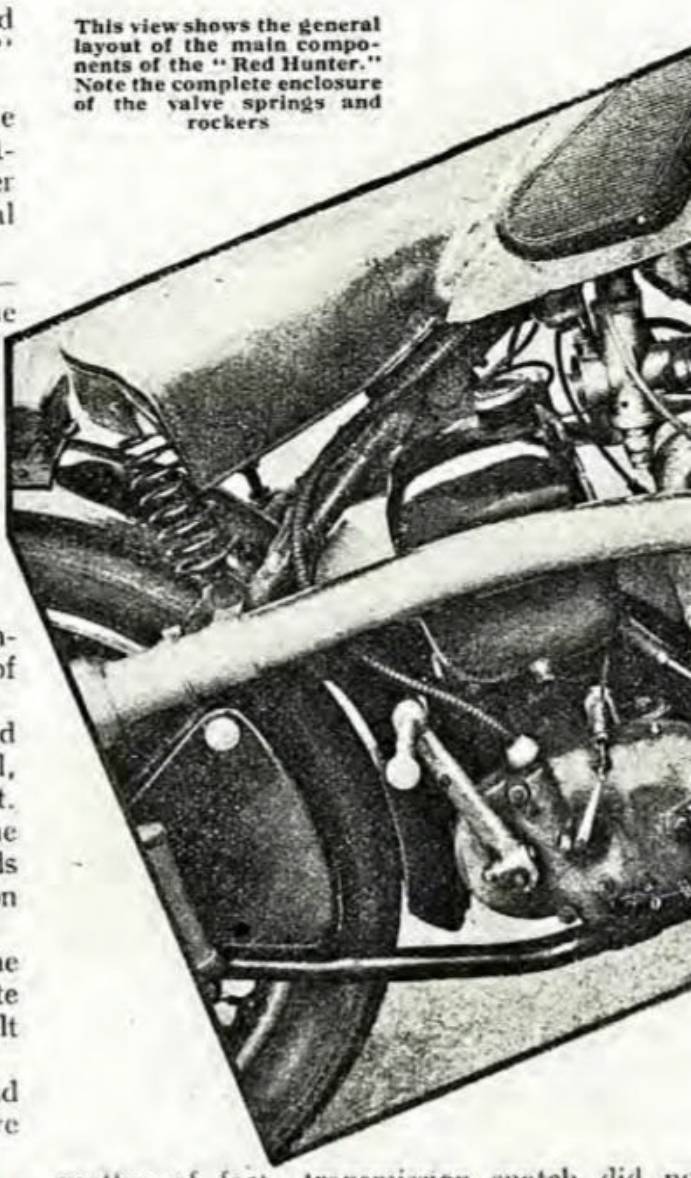
It is a big machine and a heavy one—360 lb. all on—but, although it was something of a load to push, the weight was not noticed when pulling the machine on to the stand. Nor was it noticed when starting the engine, for the simple reason that vigorous kicking was not necessary, and, therefore, the machine could be held quite steady without effort.

Actually, the engine was a good starter, provided that the carburetter was not over-flooded. In this connection, it was found expedient to shut the petrol tap on those occasions when the machine was left on the roadside and leaning to the right, as a very slight inclination in this direction resulted in an overflow of petrol and subsequent sluggish starting.

On Ariel machines the exhaust-valve lifter is operated by a thumb lever placed beneath the ignition control, and this method worked perfectly and without effort. At the commencement there was a tendency for the throttle to remain open, due, apparently, to sharp bends in the cable. After this point had received attention there were no defects whatever in the control system.

Slow running was very nearly phenomenal; the engine would continue to fire without missing a beat at a rate of r.p.m. reminiscent of Len Heath tackling a difficult trials section.

When starting away from rest, the clutch was found to be just a little "lumpy" and harsh, and gave the impression that the engine would stall u rather more throttle were given. Once the cl was right home, the engine could be throttle back if desired, when the machine would ru perfectly smoothly at very low speeds. As



This view shows the general layout of the main components of the "Red Hunter." Note the complete enclosure of the valve springs and rockers

matter of fact, transmission snatch did no noticeable on top gear—4.7 to 1—until the r running at 13 m.p.h.—an extraordinary low fi the weight and type of the machine are taken sideration. From this speed the engine woul well, accelerating evenly and smoothly with t fully advanced.

At the lower end of the scale, then, the pe was good; how about the other end? With compression piston, which gives a compressio 5.9 to 1, the highest one-way speed record speedometer was just over 85 m.p.h. In th direction a speed of 77 m.p.h. was attained mean of 81 m.p.h. This was not at all bad if more is wanted for sporting work there

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: Ariel single-cylinder o.h.v. two-port. 86.4 × 85 mm. (497 c.c.).
LUBRICATION: Dry sump; oil pressure gauge in tank-top.
CARBURETTER: Large bore Amal, downdraught type.
IGNITION: Lucas Magdyno.
GEAR BOX: Four-speed, with foot-operated gears. Ratios: 4.7, 6, 8, and 12 to 1.
CHAINS: Primary in oil-bath; rear chain guarded on both runs.
TYRES: Dunlop 26 × 3 in. ribbed front, 26 × 3.25 in. studded rear.
BRAKES: 7 in. diameter in each wheel.
PETROL CAPACITY: 3¼ gallons.
OIL CAPACITY: Half-gallon, in tank on seat tube.
WEIGHT: 360 lb., fully equipped with lighting and speedometer, and with petrol and oil.
PRICE: £65.15s. with lighting and speedometer (£57.10s. unequipped).
MAKER: Ariel Motors (J.S.), Ltd., Selly Oak, Birmingham.

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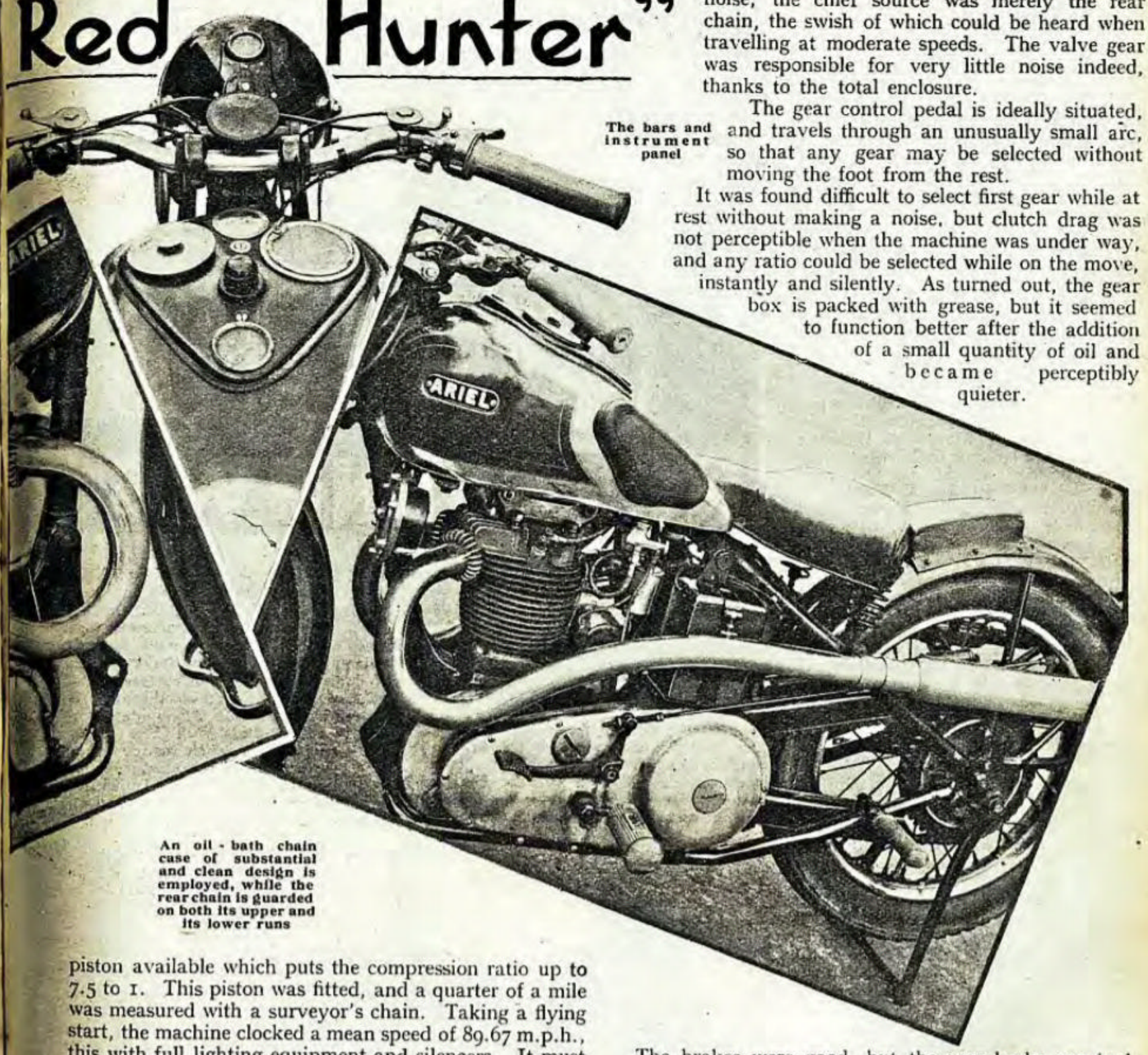
"Red Hunter"



The bars and instrument panel

An oil-bath chain case of substantial and clean design is employed, while the rear chain is guarded on both its upper and its lower runs

piston available which puts the compression ratio up to 7.5 to 1. This piston was fitted, and a quarter of a mile was measured with a surveyor's chain. Taking a flying start, the machine clocked a mean speed of 89.67 m.p.h., this with full lighting equipment and silencers. It must be borne in mind that with this piston in use the machine is not suitable for the ordinary purposes of the ordinary rider, and no part of this road test other than the timed quarter-mile was carried out on the high-compression ratio.

The accelerative powers of the "Red Hunter" were excellent. In second gear, 8 to 1, only 6 secs were needed to accelerate from a steady 20 m.p.h. to 45 m.p.h. The same test on third gear, 6 to 1, took 7.8 secs., and in top gear (4.7 to 1) the time taken was 12 secs.

Acceleration was not accompanied by undue noise. Actually, the exhaust note was unnusually quiet and free from any objectionable quality. As for mechanical noise, the chief source was merely the rear chain, the swish of which could be heard when travelling at moderate speeds. The valve gear was responsible for very little noise indeed, thanks to the total enclosure.

The gear control pedal is ideally situated, and travels through an unusually small arc, so that any gear may be selected without moving the foot from the rest.

It was found difficult to select first gear while at rest without making a noise, but clutch drag was not perceptible when the machine was under way, and any ratio could be selected while on the move, instantly and silently. As turned out, the gear box is packed with grease, but it seemed to function better after the addition of a small quantity of oil and became perceptibly quieter.

The brakes were good, but the rear brake required adjustment on three occasions in 700 miles. The particular type of lining employed, it is stated, requires rather a long time to settle down, after which it will give trouble-free service without constant adjustment.

The rubber mounting of the handlebars assists in damping out shocks and eliminates much fatigue. The riding position was very comfortable and the steering was good at all speeds, just a little damper being desirable when travelling really fast.

The petrol consumption worked out at approximately 76 m.p.g. at an average speed of 35 m.p.h., giving the machine a range, on one tankful of fuel, of about 250 miles. Oil was used in negligible quantities and none was added to the tank during the whole 700 miles.

STEVE COOPER

Steve looks at café racers – not the British variants, but the ones built and accessorized by UK dealers in the 1960s

"Your only potential competition would come from a Kawasaki triple fan with a trio flat black Dencos spitting hydrocarboned hate at all and sundry"

If you are a lover of brochure perfect machinery then you very probably ought to turn the page now, as I'm about to extol the virtues of café racers...or rather absence of them from the current scene. Yes I know there's currently a raft of the things on the custom scene but I'm not referring to the hipster, beardy type with man-bun, made-by-someone-else, only paid £10k for it, run it three times a year sort of café racer.

If that's your scene then good luck to you but it's not how they used to be back in the day. Whilst I can appreciate taking something blatantly incapable of being a lithe, single focussed, missile and turning into a pale and vague facsimile of the same, I still fail to see the allure. Paint it any colour you like, drop on a glass fibre front guard and single seat, bolt on some retro indicators etc, but it's still a Kawasaki Z200 commuter underneath etc.

No, I'm lamenting the loss of the Read-Titan Honda 500/4s along with the serried ranks of tuned, suited and booted Yamahas that used to pervade the scene. Companies such as the late lamented Granby Motors of Ilkeston, Dugdale Yamaha, Ham-Yam and Sondel Sport did much to boost the sales of the tuning fork brand and even more for the sales of its engine parts. If triples were your thing then the likes of Ian Dyson or FLF could supply you stunning body kits for your Kawasaki. And Suzukis weren't overlooked either; with doyen of 1960s parallel twins, Paul Dunstall, supplying semi-official sets of bodywork.

Many bikes thus equipped were little more than standard machines in posh frocks yet they looked the part and, generally, their owners rode these machines as if their very lives depended upon it. Long before the British aftermarket manufacturers tooled up to produce Allspeed and Micron cans, enterprising importers took on agencies for American made expansion chambers. If you rocked up riding a Yamaha RD350 sporting a pair of J&R exhausts menacingly crackling away then your only potential competition would come from a Kawasaki triple fan with a trio flat black Dencos spitting hydrocarboned hate at all and sundry.

With the Mikunis suitably rejetted there was little out there on the road to touch these kitted-out missiles. In the earlier portion of the 1970s two-stroke tuning in the UK was almost a black art with few genuinely grasping the subtleties of the required techniques. The best anyone looking for more stinkwheels power could hope for was a porting job done by a mate's mate who raced them successfully. The end result was inevitably an almost unrideable machine with an innate appetite for pistons and rings.

Whilst most companies would sell owners kits to update their machines, a few would sell complete machines ready built. The budding owner would specify colour, equipment and the like then await the delivery date. Taken aback by the stunning beauty and potential of their brand-new machine few ever gave a second thought to the standard seats, tanks and exhausts they'd probably paid for but were never going to use.

These perfectly good components doubtless ended up being sold to owners of standard machines who had thrown them down the road!

Sondel Sport of London even went so far as offering engine upgrades to the larger capacity Yamaha twins offering an engine based around the ubiquitous RD350 but stretched to almost half a litre. Billed as suitable for track racing or fast roadwork the motors relied on various pistons and conrods from Yamaha's dirt bike ranges allied to offset crankpins and reworked crankcases... few if any are known to have survived.

Right from the arrival of the Japanese motorcycles into the UK a sub-culture of improvement, upgrading, modifying and tweaking began. All of those named above and numerous others offered a plethora of custom made parts and tuning goodies for what was, ultimately, a very transient business opportunity. New models made last year's look obsolete overnight and anyone looking to trade in non-standard machine took a serious hit money-wise. Almost without exception the tricked up cafe racers of the 1970s were either scrapped or broken for spares thereby scattering the trick stuff to the four winds. On that basis, if anyone is looking to get rid of a complete Read Titan Stiletto or a Sondel Shadow I'd happily take it off your hands and possibly give you a better price for it....at 1970s values obviously! 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

In rust we trust. Paul buys another bike but faces the ultimate decision – restore or keep original?

"For me, life is too short to waste two years on a rusty relic, I'd rather be out there riding them"

In a recent article I mentioned a friend who plans to 'restore' a bike to perfect running condition yet ensure it wears all of its 60-odd years as faithfully as possible, warts an' all. At the time I questioned whether I could ever own such a machine as, after all, I'm a self-confessed fan of shiny and have always refused to accept motorcycle patina as anything other than the assemblage of rusty and dented metal that it really is. Luckily for me, my current tastes veer towards the vintage, which, if you're not on an American Facebook page means pre-1931 and not something just out of warranty.

Ninety-year-old bikes are very old and there are really only two types one might reasonably expect to encounter at this age point – large lumps of rust being euphemistically punted around as 'projects' or restored bikes that may or may not be actually working. For me, life is too short to waste two years on a rusty relic, I'd rather be out there riding them and gravitate towards the finished motorcycle that only needs some gentle recommissioning. Until now.

About three weeks ago a good friend mentioned that he was off to view "an old Douglas twin" and would I like to go along for the ride? I would. Updated intel suggested that it wasn't just one Douglas for sale, but three and the trio had apparently been in regular use by the owner until he was sadly taken ill. By some fortuitous coincidence I'd just sold a 1960s café racer that I'd not been using, so had the two vital ingredients necessary for an enjoyable day out poking around someone else's garages, cash and a space in my shed.

The two-hour journey flew by as we speculated on the bikes. They were likely to be mid-to-late 1930s we surmised and being in regular use, in good to excellent condition. My buddy, let's call him the other Paul, had already mentally committed to one and so I said I'd have another, just to keep him company you understand and nothing to do with the purchasing red mist that I never suffer from; oh no.

The moment eventually arrived and as the garage doors were cast open, I felt like Howard Carter sans pith helmet as I entered the tomb… I mean garage, and saw three bike-shaped outlines covered with blankets. With a flourish the vendor swept aside the covers to reveal…three really rusty bikes. Oh. Pushing out into the daylight, all six flat tyres squealing their protests they looked if anything, even worse. Now, you can't really tell from my profile picture, but those glasses I wear are rose-tinted, so after careful consideration of perhaps five seconds I'd decided on which one I wanted (the one he also chose, of course and he got first dibs, damn) and how much it was likely to cost me to strip and rebuild it.

However, as the vendor continued his story, it became obvious that all three were indeed, in regular use and the condition of the bikes was pretty much as they left the factory nine decades earlier. I soon found myself agreeing with the other Paul that yes, they were too original to restore and the only play was to recommission them and leave them as found. The paperwork confirmed that all the bikes dated from 1930, making them eligible for VMCC vintage events, so the deal was duly done. Paul has his shiny-ish example, I the rusty-ish one and we each own 50% of the third!

Up on the bench, the Duggie needed only gentle fettling, oil and tyre changes and a little attention to wiring and cables before it burst into smoky life after more than a decade of slumber. Everything works as it should and it's a delightful motorcycle to ride. All three bikes are variants of the same, 600cc fore and aft twin design, so our plan is to rope some poor sucker into riding the third bike and attend vintage events like an especially terrifying, non-singing version of the Beverly Sisters.

But, my Douglas is really, really scruffy. I could overlook this to a certain extent whilst it was on the bench being spannered, but it actually makes my teeth hurt looking at it. Taking solace from sympathetic online comments and yes, real people admiring its rusty flanks and peeling paint (where some still clings on like barnacles to the Titanic) only goes so far. The riders with whom I've most closely identified with, we merry band of polishing brothers, have either stayed silent, or made only the shallowest of weak platitudes- 'it sounds nice' or 'those engines were supposed to be good'; the unspoken condemnation that a shiny bike would sound and run equally well not being lost on me.

So, do I restore, or in rust must I trust? Help! CBG

(ED: Leave it be – you can restore anything, anytime. But you can't take it back.)

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

THE LAW IS AN ASS

Paul takes a fascinating look into the historical pastime of – speeding. And it may surprise you.

I'VE BEEN DUG-IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, TRYING TO finish a book about the history of café racers, their long bloodline in the industry, and the subcultures that have sprung up surrounding them. Their genotype of brash, peculiarly dressed speed freaks goes far back in time, past the origin of motorcycles themselves, with kindred spirits popping up in literature reaching back centuries.

Obviously, a fast horse was the preferred mount before the 'Noughts, with unsanctioned 19th century riding and illegal carriage racing clubs looking very Fast and Furious, set to a William Tell Overture soundtrack (and yes, steel-tyred carriages drift around corners). The word 'furious' actually became a legal definition of speeding in the United Kingdom Stage Carriage Act of 1832, which made it unlawful to endanger the safety of paying carriage passengers by 'furious driving'.

Dark days followed, with the overall speed limit in the UK dropped to 10mph in 1861, then 4mph in the countryside (2mph in the city) in 1865. When these oppressive limits were raised to a blanket 14mph with the Locomotives on Highways Act of 1896, jubilant motorists organised a run from London to Brighton, which is still celebrated as the Pioneer Run. In 1903, the UK's maximum speed limit was raised to 20mph, which remained the case until 1930.

I had a revelation while digging through very early issues of *The Motor Cycle*, looking for clues of first-generation café racers: all their photos of road trials and competitions showed illegal activity! Before 1907, unless you raced at Crystal Palace, you were probably competing on a public road, and breaking the maximum speed limit even on hill climbing tests, because nearly every motorcycle since 1869 could exceed 20mph. The motorcycle press of 1906, for example, was filled with weekly reports on the location of speed traps, and tales of riders fighting summonses, using the same tactics as today: challenging the accuracy of timing devices.

Riders were encouraged to join motoring clubs that provided legal representation, and the AA seemed to be mostly concerned with stationing scouts to warn riders and motorists of approaching speed traps. Such was the AA scouts' effectiveness that policemen were spotted crawling over bridges on all fours, or muddling through hedges, to avoid being spotted. Accurate speed timing could only be done in pairs, with policemen using hand signals and stopwatches over measured distances, which gave little hope of an accurate reading.

All this foolishness regarding 21mph travel gave rise to tremendous resentment of and disrespect for the police, and not by the usual oppressed classes. Early riders, and early motorists even more so, were generally well-heeled, as vehicles were expensive, and fairly impractical, and took a significant investment of cash and time to master. Thus, the upper-middle classes became the object of regular police attention: a novel situation. Tensions between citizenry and the Law were old news, though, and while Charles Dickens is credited with popularizing the phrase 'the Law is an Ass' in Oliver Twist (1838), it was first published back in a 1653 Henry Glapthorne play, The Parricide. Presumably, since the Law is, in fact, an ass, the phrase is much older.

It's amusing to read reports of upstanding organisations like the Motor Cycle Club (MCC) and its various local sections organising competitions in explicit contravention of the law. It's hard to imagine the AA today calling members to a remote country road for an afternoon's illegal sprint racing, but that was the position of clubs in the 'Noughts. Events were organised in 'profound secrecy', with riders meeting at a local venue, then being handed slips of paper noting the location of the road they intended to use. Often, organisers would negotiate with the local constabulary for permission and police oversight, but many contests were simply shut down by roving police, or riders handed summons for speeding at a far corner of the impromptu road course, before the organisers got word they'd been spotted.

Occasionally magazines posted photos of the offending officers at an event, with the sub-heading, 'the winning team'. Still, there were a few sympathetic policemen in the countryside, who granted permission for events and helped marshal traffic on open roads, not that there was much traffic in those early days.

Somehow, the image of our Edwardian forbears 'breakin' the law' in their starched collars and neckties is comforting. I've certainly done my share, regardless (actually, because of) the general 55mph limit in the States, which would have seemed an outrageous touring speed in 1906. In the 1990s, I spent as much time above 100mph on my Velocette Thruxton as I could manage, joking about a cumulative attempt to equal their 24hour record. Such speeds seem modest today, but in truth, while our motorcycles have the capability for the double-ton, where on earth would we use it? CBG

"Thus, the upper-middle classes became the object of regular police attention: a novel situation."

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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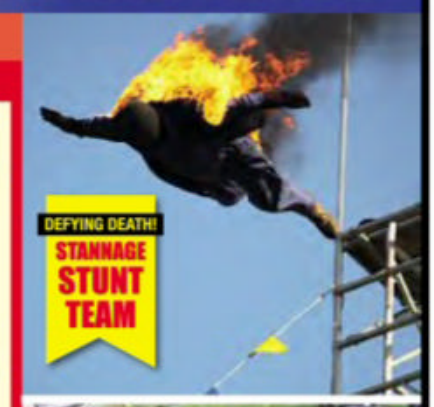

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50 YEARS OF Honda CB750

I WONDER HOW *MOTOR CYCLE* JOURNALIST, MIKE Woollett, felt when he had a quick spin on the brand-new Honda CB750 at Brands Hatch on April 9, 1969 – as the bike was en route to being displayed at the motorcycle show in Brighton. Do you think he realised what he was riding and what effect that bike would have on the future of motorcycling?

Almost 50 years ago to the day we first saw the CB750 in the flesh in the UK and the Honda Superbike still feels amazing. It's not the speed or handling and it certainly isn't the brakes; it's the way it feels so – new. Before the CB bikes were rapidly evolving. Then the CB750 (yes, and soon after the Kawasaki Z900) came along and have set the precedent for the next half a century. Things have obviously improved, but the basics come from the Honda CB750.

So we've brought together a few stories to celebrate the mighty machine. Steve Cooper rides one of the earliest UK bikes, while Phillip Tooth takes a look at how both Colin Seeley and Bimota looked at improving on the standard. We hope you enjoy, and Happy Birthday, Honda CB750.

First on a Honda

"Motor Cycle" sports editor Mick Woollett became the first British journalist to ride the 750 cc Honda four when the Cycle and Motor Cycle Association held a pre-Brighton Show press day at Brands Hatch on Thursday.

"It's delightfully smooth and comfortable to ride," said Mick after completing six laps of the 1.25-mile short circuit.

"The five-speed gear box is a joy to use, the gears slip in with just the lightest pressure—a real knife-through-butter job.

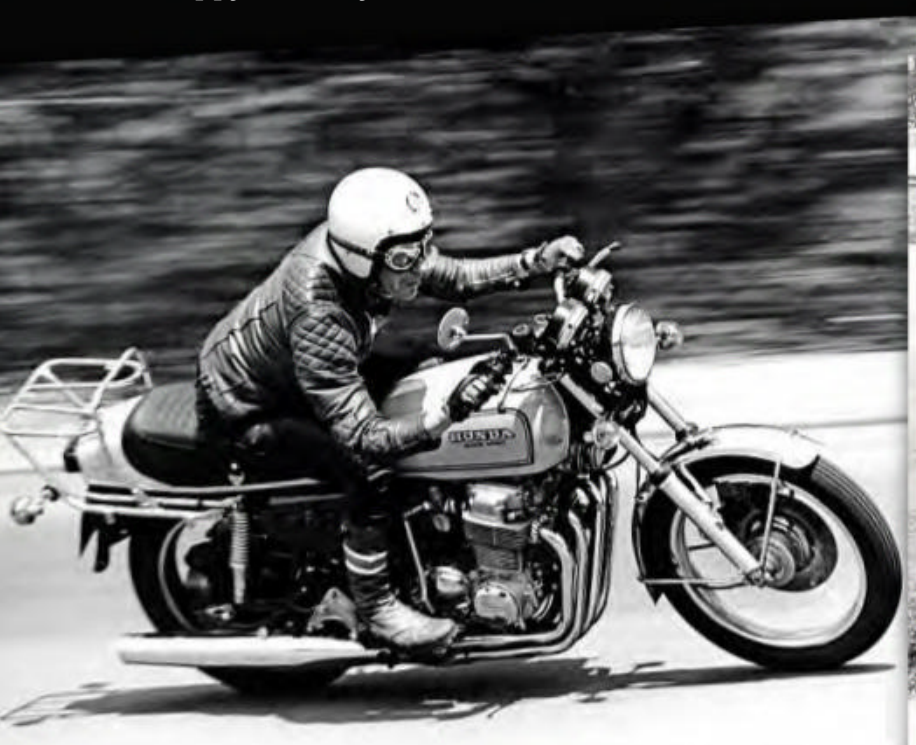
"As you'd expect from a 67-bhp four-cylinder engine, there is plenty of urge through

tourer rather than an out-and-out sports model.

"The rear brake is excellent, but the front disc seems to lack power. Perhaps it needs bedding in before it really starts to work.

"Handling appears to be good but I certainly did not put it to any sort of test. The bike was due to leave for the Brighton Show immediately after the test-ride and I didn't want any embarrassing moments explaining why I'd dropped it.

"Certainly as a two-wheeled status symbol some beating, and that electric an added touch of luxury."



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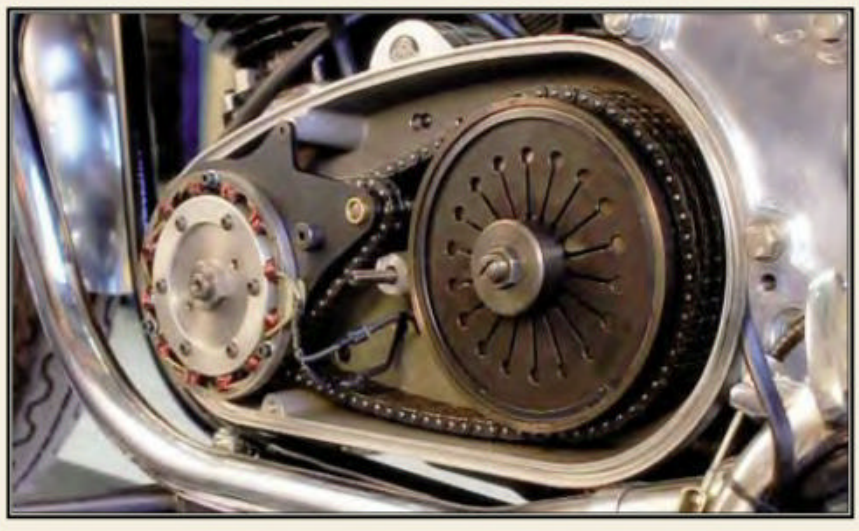

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The Honda CB750

After this bike, nothing would ever be the same again.

WORDS AND EMOTIONAL JABBERING BY STEVE COOPER **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** GARY CHAPMAN

50 YEARS OF Honda CB750

It's genuinely hard to believe that the bike in camera dates from early 1970 and is from the first batch of 30 CB750/4s to be sold in the UK. And amazingly it's also the next chassis number on from 'YLY', the first 750/4 sold in the UK.

As if that's not enough, what's even more amazing is that not only is it ticking away with the precision of a Swiss watch but I've been given unfettered access to it. Oh, and while we're dealing in superlatives, I'm finally getting to ride a Honda 750/4. Mad as it might sound for someone who now scratches a living from old motorcycles, I've never piloted an example of what must surely be one of the most iconic machines to ever come out of Japan.

When unveiled at the 1968 Tokyo Motor Show, Honda's new baby threatened to make every single other machine obsolete overnight.

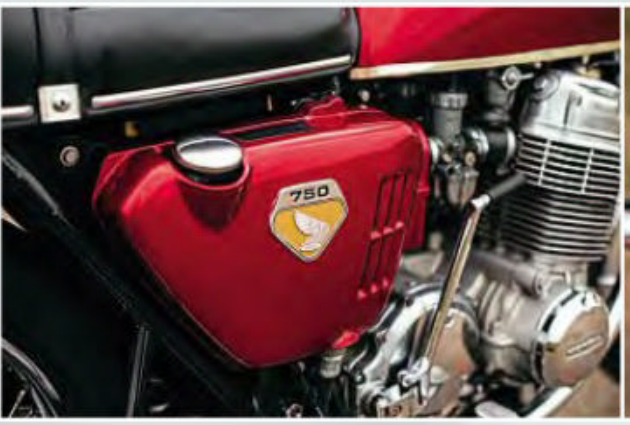
The public had only just got their heads around OHC (overhead cam) engines in small Hondas and here in metal, rubber and plastic was a full bore, 750cc, four cylinder motor. This was the very fabric of dreams and totally unknown outside the race track.

The likes of Velocette and Norton had played, but normally shied away from such over-engineering. To add to both sophistication and bragging rights, the engine also had an electric start, four carburettors and the front forks ran a disc brake for crying out loud – a disc brake! Okay, so that might sound like nothing special now, but 50 years ago Honda's CB750/4 was full-on exotica and bordering on the incredible.

Back in the UK most large capacity bikes were still 650 twins and Norton's all new (ish) 750 Commando was seen as state of the art. Over on the other side of the pond, Harley-Davidson was still 'making large' of having overhead valves on its road and valve motors in its flat track competition bikes. No one had come up with something as technologically advanced for consumption by Joe Public.

Push rod twins had been state of the art until BSA/Triumph launched its, still push rod, 750 triples and here was an apparent oriental upstart challenging the status quo. In reality Honda had already done just that five years earlier with the DOHC CB450, a machine the powers-that-be back in Blighty had banned from competition due to a supposed 'illegal method of valve operation'. And yet the truth and the future had been there for all to see if they'd wanted to.

From as early as the late 1950s Honda had been rolling out stunning machines of such technical brilliance they defied belief. When the wraps came off the CB750/4 you can't help but wonder what was going through the mind of Edward Turner, mercurial doyen of the British motorcycle industry. In a visit to Japan earlier in the 1960s Turner had been quietly impressed by Honda's facilities but went on record to state the Japanese weren't capable of producing large capacity machines... it's a shame no one had bothered to tell Honda!



"By the time the 750/4 reached the general public Honda had quit GP racing because they had nothing left to prove"

Meanwhile back to our test machine... it's warmed up nicely and is ready to play. Throw a leg over the seat and roll the bike off its stand then marvel at just how familiar it all seems.

This bike and the others that followed laid down a blueprint that manufacturers still, generally, adhere to today. The big, green faced gauges give the bike a feeling of class, sophistication, high end specification almost, and if they're not quite as legendary as the massive speedo Vincent used on its big twins, they're damn close. First gear goes in with a slight shudder and then we're off on a wave of torque and power. These grand old dames of the superbike world are impressive now; 50 years since they first turned a wheel, so heaven only knows what they must have felt like when they were new. The most obvious and abiding initial impression of this, one of the earliest CB750s in the UK, is just how astonishingly easy it is to ride. The whole experience is just so innate and natural to a point where, it's fair to say, if a lad of the 1960s could competently ride a leaner bike they could have ridden this incredible piece of kit. An hour or so adjusting to the size and mass of the Honda and perhaps a bit longer to adapt to the reversed foot levers and they would have had it sussed. It's simply so unlike anything else of anywhere near the same potential performance of the time; the Honda is instantly rider friendly in ways Bonneville, Commando or Interceptor owners couldn't imagine.

The bike does everything you ask of it, and more, without drama; you can feel when there's a need to change up or down a gear simply by the engine note. There's no intrusive vibrations as peak power in each gear is approached and no transmission jerking when you're in too low a gear. Seamless, precise and sophisticated are the key words here. The bike will happily potter around on a whiff of throttle or hurtle over the horizon on a fistful; it does this time after time and yet, when you get to a road junction, ticks over at exactly the same revs as it did before. Nothing falls off, nothing comes undone, nothing fractures or breaks – like it or not, back in 1969 this was the future.

Subsequently, detractors have ventured that Honda have historically made soulless, boring, anodyne, characterless machines, and if this means they lack the faults which some pass of as 'character' then, yes, they are guilty as charged. However, supporters of the marque counter with a much better description of the big four's character – it's almost viceless. And if that means the machine comes with said levels of sophistication, then so much the better.

But let's be clear on this, viceless doesn't mean soulless – far from it. The big Honda has a character all of its own, yet when it was launched it was a unique personality no one had experienced before. If there's a genuine need to define the bike then it has to be its willingness to run hard and fast without issue or drama.

Open the taps and let those four pots breathe in deep; you're almost instantly transported with indecent haste towards the horizon. In 1969/70 it was almost counterintuitive to work bikes repeatedly hard hour after hour; those that did knew the price they'd

be likely to pay; and yet the Honda actually relishes the challenge. Many questioned how the bike was capable of being ridden so hard so often without any apparent issues; the answer is as simple as it is technically state-of-the-art. While you are sitting on the back of a singularly unique beast, beneath you – running at previously infeasible speeds – are a raft of components that have been developed from countless race track experiences. By the time the 750/4 reached the general public Honda had quit GP racing because it had nothing left to prove. It had won innumerable titles, built machines that flew counter to perceived wisdom and proved it was the master of precision motorcycle engineering. Arrogance possibly? Well, yes and no. Honda was aiming high with the 750/4 and it was a line in the sand that, corporately, the company felt no one could cross in the short term even if, in

"New production techniques, new working practices and, crucially, a greater understanding of their customer base by senior management would see motorcyclists infinitely better served."

four short years, Kawasaki would upstage the CB750/4 with its DOHC Z1 – which itself had been a 750 but thanks to the CB, had to be placed back on the drawing board.

Back on Her Majesty's finest tarmac, I'm having a stunningly good day on the candy red and gold 1960s rocket ship. Each time the revs build the air box emits a rasping note as it drags in the air necessary to allow those four pipes to wail as the engine gets into its stride. Those original silencers pay lip service to the name and emit a delicious note that, then as now, is only just the right side of a race track. Not only did Honda ensure its new sport machine looked and felt good, it sounded incredible as well.

If, half a century on, the first of the transverse fours still impresses, is it any wonder the classic world now holds the CB750/4 in such high regard?

It was the world's very first superbike and it's still a supremely sophisticated and classy act. Reading our resumé here you might very well think that this is a Brit-bashing exercise, yet it's emphatically not; it's simply an overview of late 1960s history. New production techniques, new working practices and, crucially, a greater understanding of their customer base by senior management would see motorcyclists infinitely better served.

The Honda CB750/4 displayed precisely how motorcycles would be designed in the future, and we're living with its legacy to this day.

50 YEARS OF Honda CB750

COSTS AND OPTIONS

When it comes to the SOHC CB750 the world is your oyster... well, almost. It'd take a whole edition of *CBG* to cover every model, its merits, differences and prices, so we'll neatly sidestep that one.

You can pay £161,000 for a pre-production example and £1500 for a rough high mileage late model, but somewhere in between there's a CB750 for you.

As a rule of thumb, the older the model the more the seller is likely to be asking but only on the assumption that you compare like with like. The UK received lots of K2 models for a number of years before leaping up to the K6. As always, buy the best example you can that offers the most original parts; this way, as and when you come to sell, you shouldn't lose out.

American imports can be good bets but do your homework before committing. The US received every model Honda made so it makes sense to avoid a pick-and-mix mongrel. In general terms the later the model the easier it will be to live with.

Honda refined the CB750 throughout its life and made each successive model just a little easier to use. Anyone buying an example today won't be after outright speed, so the differences in top end between a K2 and K6 performance-wise are largely academic. Every K model 1969-77 looks generally similar, but the 1978 has a different profile with smooth silencers and a two tier seat.

John Wyatt of Rising Sun Restorations, a CB750 expert, recommends three later Hondas as representing good value, being less fussy to own/fettle and making for good riding bikes. The K6 and K7 are the last of the line, totally sorted and effectively bomb proof. The CB750A is a two-speed semi-automatic, cheap as chips, reliable and a sensible left-field choice.

Honda took a long while to respond to Kawasaki's Z1 and initially stumbled somewhat when delivering the CB750 F1.

Some suggest it was rushed into production and poorly executed; whatever the reasons it's certainly not the most popular CB750/4 out there. However, the subsequent F2 is an exceedingly well thought-out final hurrah for a bike that was now a decade old. Both it and the F1 have different styling but the latter is a cracking, if rare, piece of kit now. Honda carried on with the CB750 moniker after an all-new DOHC-engined bike was launched. This and subsequent DOHC 750/4s are outside the scope of this article.

FAULTS & FOIBLES

As previously mentioned. it's possible to buy a perfectly decent looking CB750 that's been constructed from several models. With an eye to subsequent sale some years down the line, expert input can pay dividends. Either Google Honda SOHC or contact the VJMC to access the raft of expert knowledge out there.

The front disc brake on any of the earlier Hondas is never better than okay. The design relies upon a pivot that can seize/wear; the device also requires adjustment which some owners overlook.

Carburettor synchronisation pays dividends in terms of smooth running and it'd be a brave buyer who purchased a CB750 that didn't have its original air box. Bargain basement examples will probably run aftermarket exhausts and many won't have been re-jetted to suit.

CB750/4s are capable of seriously impressive mileages but rely on oil and filter changes to achieve this along with motorcycle-specific oil. Any CB750/4 will now be getting on in years, those last SOHC models are 40 years old. Silencers can and will perforate, electrical systems may have corrosion and/or high resistances and seat bases may be rotted through. Fortunately there's a lot of reproduction parts, but having decent OEM kit to start with makes life easier. Finally, know that high mileage CB750s can be noisy, but this doesn't necessarily mean there's anything wrong. The motor runs a pair of primary chains and these can often wear differently over time.

NEVER STOP LEARNING

Back in the 1960s when Honda was competing in almost every class at GP level, the twin cylinder, DOHC, 50cc machines were beginning to get seriously threatened by Suzuki's two strokes.

In one particular race on Japanese soil team honour was at stake and Honda needed to win. The rider was told the R&D team and mechanics had been up half the night fettling and tweaking the engine to get the best from it and under no circumstances was the rider to exceed the new, revised, redline on the tacho. In the race the Suzukis had a small edge over the Hondas and it looked likely the strokers were going to win. On the last lap the Honda rider overtook the leading Suzuki and screamed to win. Back in the pits the mechanics were initially delighted but then asked how the win had happened. The reply was to the effect that he's ignored the red line by some 1500-1750rpm. The R&D top brass went ballistic, arguing the rider could have blown the engine up and lost a potentially valuable race.

A loud exchange of views ensued until Soichiro Honda walked into the pits asking what was going on and the Honda boys gave him a deferential view of the potential disaster. Mr Honda then asked the rider who explained what he'd done and why. The oriental genius then barked orders at the pit crew who instantly removed the still warm engine from the bike and laid it in the back of his Toyota estate car. Mr Honda thanked the rider for his hard work and sent the engine to the R&D centre for analysis. The next season the 50cc twin reappeared as per its last race but with the red line revised by 1750rpm.

Honda never accepted a limit had been reached or a mechanical task was impossible until something was proven, and it was precisely this mind set that delivered the CB750/4 and a legion of other, supremely reliable, air cooled fours. Happy birthday, CB750. CBG

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Seeley-Honda

50 YEARS OF Honda CB750

The Seventies Superbike

One specialist bike manufacturer stood head and shoulders above all others in the 1970s. His name was Colin Seeley. Here's how he transformed the Honda CB750...

WORDS: PHILLIP TOOTH **PHOTOGRAPHY:** TOOTH, GREENING ARCHIVE

AS COLIN SEELEY GAZES AT THE bike that carries his name on the fuel tank his face breaks into a huge smile. "I've designed a lot of motorcycles in my time," he says. "But this is the one I'm most proud of. My company was a minnow compared to mighty Honda but we built a bike that handled better than any CB750 and looked a lot better as well. And it still looks stunning today!"

If Colin was smiling, you should have seen the look on owner Jack Machils' face. He was ecstatic. "What a compliment!" says the Frenchman, who has owned this bike for nine years. The engine was lifted from a 1976 CB750 F1, but the forks and triple discs are off the F2 version.

"The engine was taken out to 836cc and a sports camshaft fitted before I bought it," says Jack. "But it was low on compression so I rebuilt it with Wiseco pistons, new valves and guides. I also upgraded the electronic ignition with Dynatek coils. And that's a Mocal oil cooler mounted under the headstock."

Colin had checked his records. "We sold this particular frame kit SH7-775F in June 1978, so it is one of the last ones we made," he says, before adding: "Frames with the F after the frame number are for the CB750 F1 Honda, while an F before the frame number indicates an F2."

PROTOTYPE

Work started on the Seeley-Honda concept in January 1975 and the prototype, with a Yoshimura 812cc engine supplied by Dixon Racing, completed a 4000km road test before they were ready for production. The main section of the nickel plated frame was fabricated from 17 gauge (1.4mm wall thickness, 38mm diameter) Reynolds 532 tubing, with 14 gauge (2mm wall thickness, 32mm diameter) for the rear section. It was triangulated at the steering head, which carried taper roller bearings, and at the swingarm area. And, as always on a Seeley, the bronze welding was precise and perfectly executed.

Since the frame engine pick-up points were identical to the Honda original, the light weight/rigidity factors were more evident when riding the bike than looking at it. Actually the alterations are considerable. The standard Honda had a single tube connecting to the upper end of the steering head while Seeley's layout features twin tubes. The Honda includes gussets and reinforcing struts in the steering head area, while on the Seeley there are none. Curved tubes run from tank rails to the swingarm pivot point on the stock Honda, while the special's specification is straight and strong. The Seeley swingarm was just like the one used on the Suzuki triple that took Barry Sheene to the FIM Formula 750cc championship the previous year, and the spindle was designed to take the stock Honda hub.

"I've designed a lot of motorcycles in my time... but this is the one I'm most proud of."

Colin's original framing operation was carried out on a four-pipe CB750 with 27° rake. This was increased to 28° (although the position of the engine relative to the front wheel remained unaltered) and trail became 127mm for high speed stability. The engine was dropped 13mm and the wheelbase shortened by 51mm. How's that for fine tuning?

As you would expect on a cafe racer, the footrests were sited higher and further back so that the rider leant into the wind. Suspension modifications were confined to the rear (unless a Seeley racing front fork was ordered), where American S&W shocks took over from stock Honda components. When using the stock 67bhp F1 as the basis, the rear hydraulic brake cylinder was discarded and replaced by a smaller Pagehiln unit. Weight saving depended on the extent of the modifications: a Honda-Seeley frame swap was worth 4.5kg, while going to the ultimate with American-made Lester light-alloy wheels, single seat and other goodies got rid of another 18kg.

Colin had learnt a lot from his time managing the manufacture of Brabham BT40 Formula 2 racing cars, so when he decided to have the bronze welded frames built in batches he gave the contract to Arch Motor Company in Huntingdon, near Cambridge. They specialised in racing car chassis production so were skilled enough to make exact copies of the Seeley

"The workmanship was so good that we had no problem getting approval from the TÜV test authority in Germany in July 1976."

original. As Colin says: "I knew they were good. And they knew I wouldn't accept anything but the best."

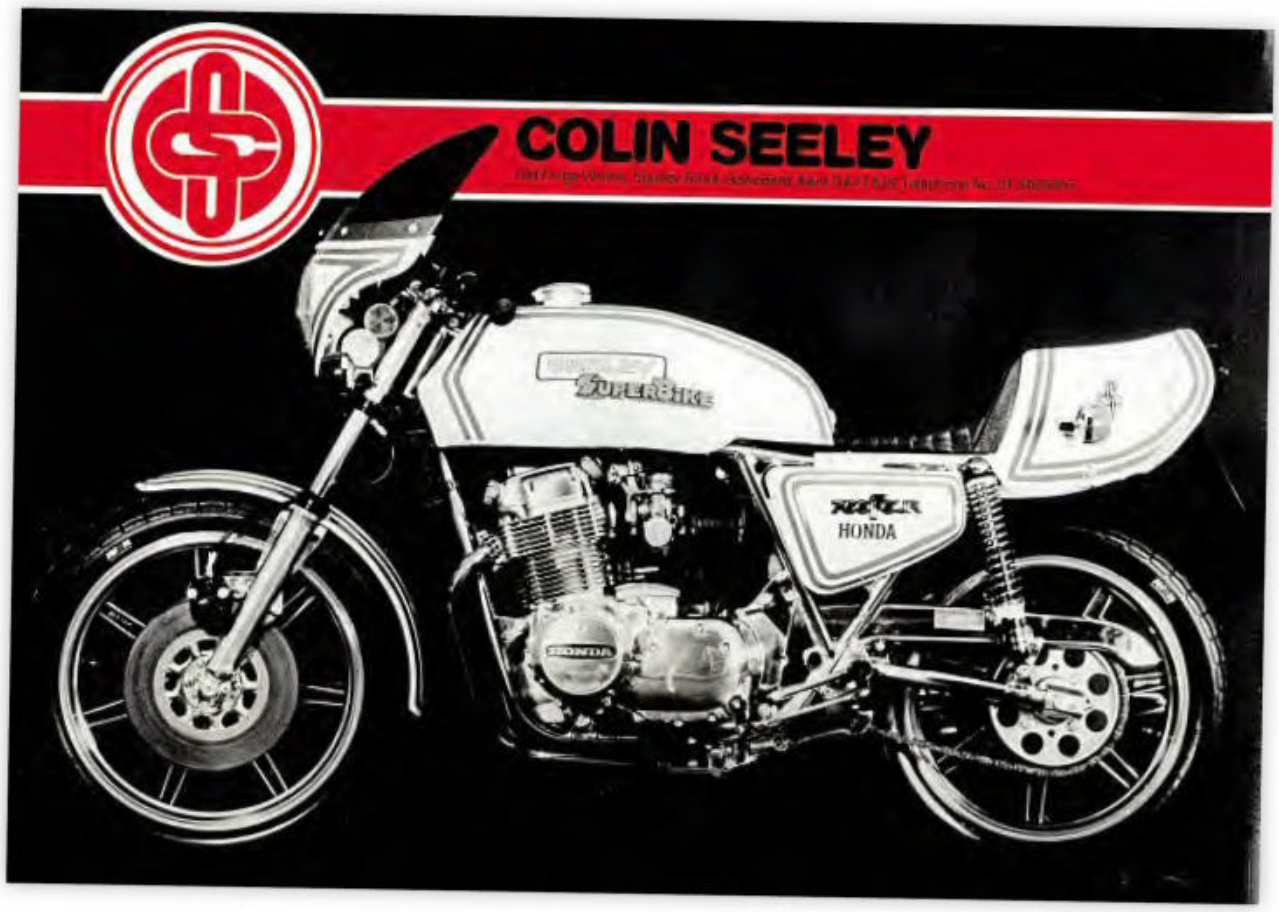
The 20 litre fuel tank was hand fabricated from aluminium by John Pearson, who made tanks for Seeley race bikes, while glass fibre was used for the seat base and bikini fairing. Colin did much less manufacturing at this time, preferring to concentrate on design and development.

Only a small number of complete Seeley-Hondas were built at the Old Forge Works in Belvedere, Kent – and no wonder. Honda wouldn't sell him engines so Colin had to buy a brand new CB750 F1 and that had a list price of a shade over £1000. By the time the Honda was stripped and rebuilt with the new Seeley frame, tank and seat plus Girling or S&W multi-rate shock absorbers, Hunt plasma sprayed light alloy discs, Lester wheels with Avon Roadrunner tyres, and a Yoshimura 810 or 1000cc big-bore kit with head porting and road race cams courtesy of Dixon Racing, the price had rocketed to around £2000 of two-wheeled one-upmanship.

Of course, you didn't have to go that far to get Seeley handling. Colin also offered a kit so that customers could carry out their own conversion – the price for a frame, petrol tank, single seat and Lester wheels was £1295. The frame was designed to take all stock Honda parts except the petrol tank and seat. "You could bolt on the CB750 forks, oil tank, exhaust system, brake pedal, wiring loom – the lot," explains Colin.

"I could do the conversion in a day, but I would expect any competent mechanic to do it in less than 20 hours."

The first production Seeley-Honda was delivered in March 1976. It may have been one of the most expensive motorcycles that you could buy, but you get what you pay for. A Seeley-Honda with the 810cc



Yoshimura kit was entered in the 1977 Isle of Man Formula One TT by Honda dealer Mocheck Motorcycles and with Tony Rutter in the saddle it lapped at 101.9mph to make it the fifth fastest in practice, with Phil Read on the Honda Britain quickest with a 105.53mph lap.

"Yes, I am really proud of the Honda-Seeley," says Colin.

"It was a handsome bike, and it handled beautifully. The workmanship was so good that we had no problem getting approval from the TÜV test authority in Germany in July 1976." In fact, besides exporting them to his German distributor Gundolf Birke in Hanover – he took 96 frame kits with tanks and seats, and sold them at a retail price of DM3108 – Colin also exported the Honda-Seeley to Sweden, USA, Australia, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Austria, Spain, Belgium, South Africa and France – a total of 308 frames.

The name Colin Seeley is known and respected by everyone in motorcycle circles. He's been involved with every branch of the business, from racing to retail, for the past 22 years. From designing and racing his way up to British Champion in the sixties and winning six Isle of Man T.T. silver replicas, through to developing and building works team frames for Ducati, Husqvarna, Barry Sheene's '73 Suzuki's and John Cooper's unbeatable Yamaha, his fame has grown.

Experience and specialist knowledge gleaned from involvement in racing over the years have now come together to produce what is probably the finest, most exclusive bike and frame unit in the world. Designed for normal road use to racing standards the Seeley Honda is the great riding experience. Seeley's hard won track record and meticulous engineering skill and application alone have created it.

Why not discuss your future requirements with Colin — use your dreams and his expertise to create the ultimate machine. Whether you choose a completed bike or a frame unit you can rely on the reputation that the name Seeley stands for.

Specifications

The Seeley Honda Frame unit is designed solely to suit the standard 1969 four cylinder engine and components i.e. front forks, wheels, oil tank, battery box, exhaust system and all electrics etc. Conversion kits are available for the Honda K, Series F1 / F2 or complete hand built orders are undertaken.

Frame

Seeley design duplex cradle fabricated from Reynolds 531 high quality Chrome Molybdenum tubing and Smiths Welded. Finished in polished nickel plate or stove enamelled. A 28° steering head angle from vertical gives more stability at high speeds. Steering head fitted with taper roller bearings top and bottom. Due to weight saving in the fabrication of the Seeley frame softer front fork springs can be fitted to help achieve maximum performance.

Swinging Arm

A fully braced swinging arm running in Phosphor Bronze bearings incorporating a unique, precision chain Adjustment system developed from Seeley's racing machines.

Body work

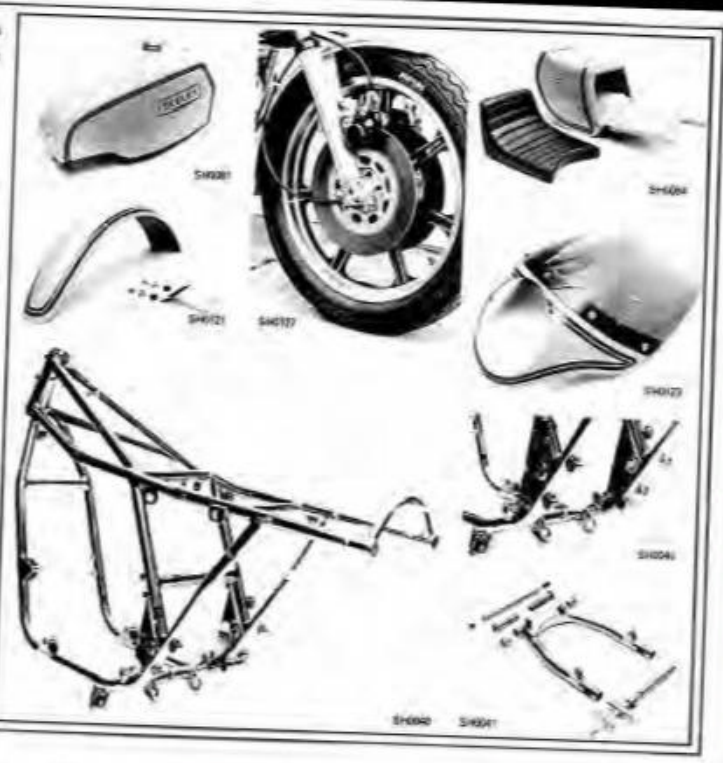
Glass fibre front mudguard, Dkini fairing, seat with trash box (Single or Dual as required). Two types of Tank 4.5 gallon for Dual Seat and 5.5 gallon Supertank for single seat. Stark hand beaten Aluminium fitted with Monza type Quick Action filler caps.

Rear dampers and springs to our recommendation can be supplied for your particular use.

Static wheelbase middle of slot rear wheel adjustment 56.5"
Seat height 30"
Rear Chain length 88 links.

Options

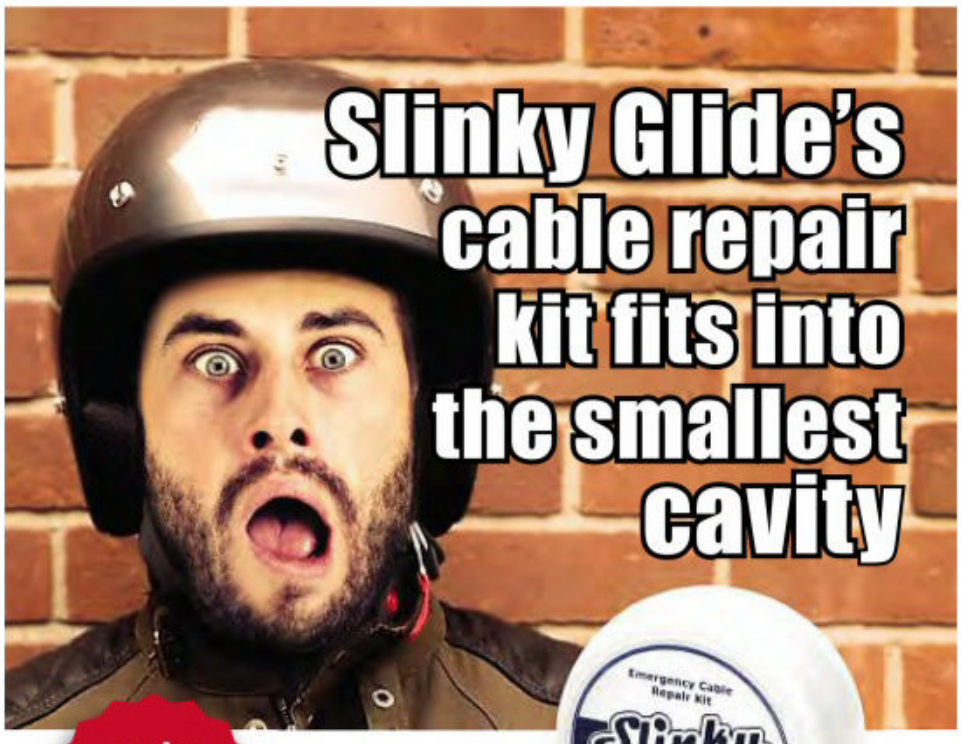
Lester wheels. Dual front Hurst disc brakes. Avon Roadrunner tyres.



Colin had achieved what was for many enthusiasts the impossible: a quality machine, which ran like a Japanese motorcycle but handled like the best British bike. So was it worth the money? The looks alone are worth it, but it makes even more sense when you ride one.

With 18kg carved off the porky CB750 F1, a shorter wheelbase and lower seat, a Seeley-Honda feels so much nimbler when given the quick-flick treatment through fast bends. It goes exactly where you want it to and can be lent to ridiculous angles with the bike holding a steady line. There is no hint of wallowing or any tendency to flop into a bend. The cafe racer style is surprisingly comfortable and the mild strain on the arms disappears as soon as speed builds up. Straight line blasts up to 170kph are effortless. Low speed handling is good, no doubt thanks to the shortened wheelbase. Top speed? With a Yoshimura kit the Seeley-Honda is good for 134mph at 10,000rpm.

So what's the final verdict? The Honda F1 may have been a good bike, even if it was a bit too civilised for any motorcyclist with red blood in his veins. But the Seeley-Honda is in a class of its own and is probably the ultimate 1970s cafe racer. In fact, Honda Britain was so impressed with Colin's creation that it commissioned him to make replicas of the bike on which Phil Read won the 1977 Isle of Man Formula One TT. That meant he didn't have the resources to continue with the Seeley-Honda project and the last kit was sold at the end of 1978. CBG



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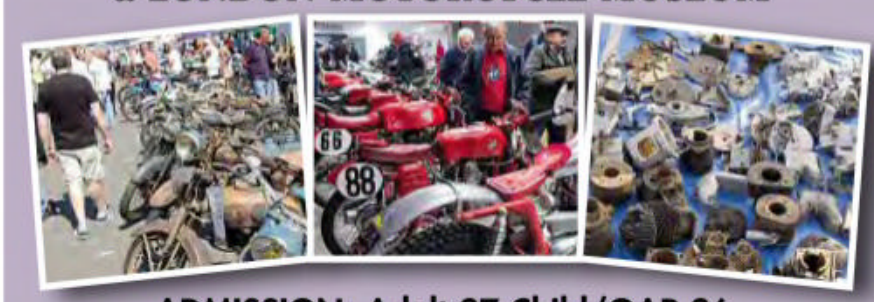

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Bimota HB1

The first Bimota wrapped a Honda CB750 engine in a classy Italian chassis. Sold as a kit, only 10 were produced... and we've managed to track down No. 4.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: PHILLIP TOOTH

"When Honda brought out the CB750 he had to have one."

50 YEARS OF Honda CB750

BIMOTA IS THE BUILDER OF ULTRA-EXPENSIVE, exclusive and beautifully built motorcycles that are way beyond the bank balance of many motorcycle enthusiasts. But that has never stopped anyone drooling over the Italian exotica whenever they saw one parked up, or dreaming of owning one after being overtaken through a series of curves just a little too easily.

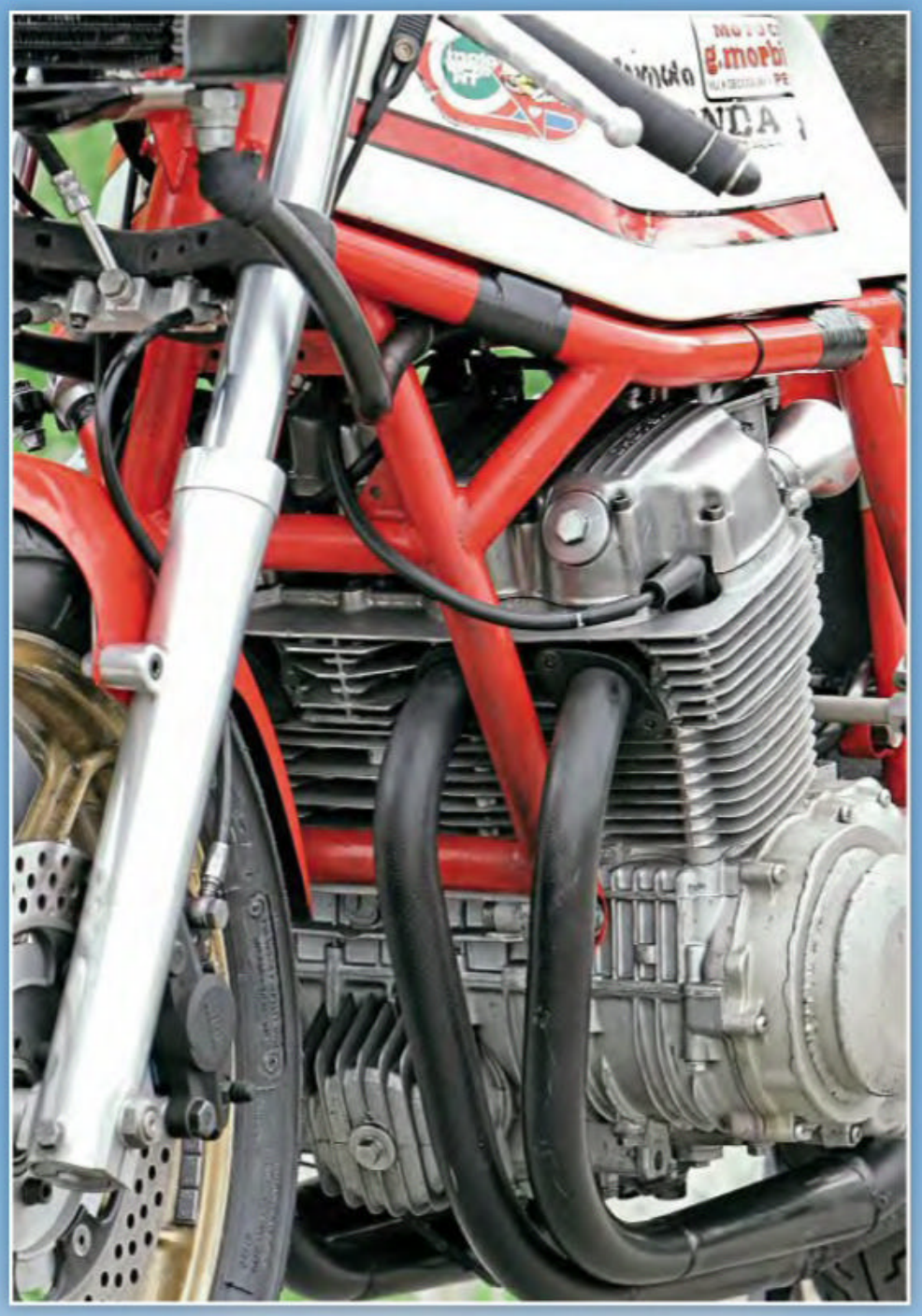
But although Bimota has a formidable reputation thanks to the way its motorcycles handle, the company only came into being because Massimo Tamburini crashed when he found out that the engine of his Honda CB750 had more performance than the chassis could cope with.

In 1966 Valerio Bianchi and Giuseppe Morri joined forces with Tamburini to form a company to make air conditioning ducting systems. But what could they call the new enterprise? Using the first two letters of their family names they came up with Bi-Mo-Ta. There wasn't much spare time for Tamburini to indulge in his passion for motorcycles but he still managed to transform one of the ugliest MVs of all time into a racer with lights. He took a 1968 600cc Four and threw away the frame, forks and cable-operated twin discs, built his own frame and fitted Ceriani forks, Fontana brakes and glass fibre tank and seat unit. And to maximise the power output he converted it from shaft to chain drive. He also modified bikes for local riders around Rimini, where Bimota was based, making them faster, lighter and better handling.

When Honda brought out the CB750 he had to have one. But the best that Japan had to offer didn't perform as well on the track as his MV and he dumped it on the fast Quercia bend at Misano in September 1972. Tamburini decided to build a frame that would do the single overhead cam four cylinder justice.

Instead of Honda's full cradle frame, he used the engine as a structural member. Two tubes ran back from the bottom of the fully triangulated headstock, following the lines of the petrol tank, before dropping to the swingarm and rear engine mounts. Two more tubes travelled from the top of the headstock to either side of the front of the engine, where they were jointed by a horizontal tube and bolted to the upper ➧

HONDA



Cesena Corse
821
DUNLOP

crankcase. A third tube gave added rigidity between the headstock and the seat tubes that extended back to support the triangulated rear suspension mounts for the twin Marzocchi shocks.

A box-section swingarm was crafted out of steel plate, with an eccentric chain adjustment at the spindle to ensure perfect wheel alignment.

Tamburini, a self-taught engineer and designer, used thin-walled chrome-molybdenum tubing for his extremely stiff frame, bent by hand or with a plumber's pipe bender, argon-arc welded to produce neat, strong joints. Japanese mass produced frames of the time used mild steel tubes and often had welds that looked like they had been splattered with bird shit.

The first-ever Bimota motorcycle used a Ceriani fork and Fontana double-sided twin leading shoe drum brake, soon swapped for a twin disc, although the rear remained a Fontana drum. The frame was painted orange, while the glass fibre petrol tank and seat unit were finished in black. The orange and black fairing carried the legend Meccanica Bimota.

Tamburini's creation was unveiled at Misano in 1973, when racer Luigi Anelli put it through its paces. The test was watched by a journalist from Italy's top motorcycle magazine, and his following article resulted in a stack of enquiries for frame kits.

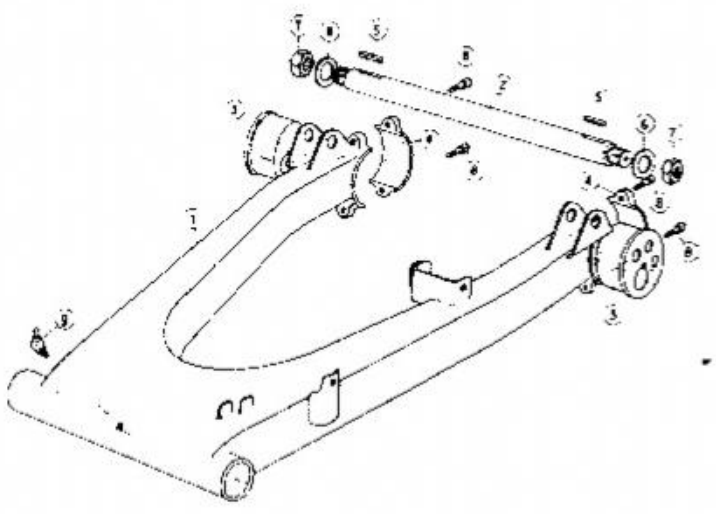
It was crunch time. Bianchi had left the company and Morri was being seduced by Tamburini's vision for a new type of motorcycle. Bimota stopped making air

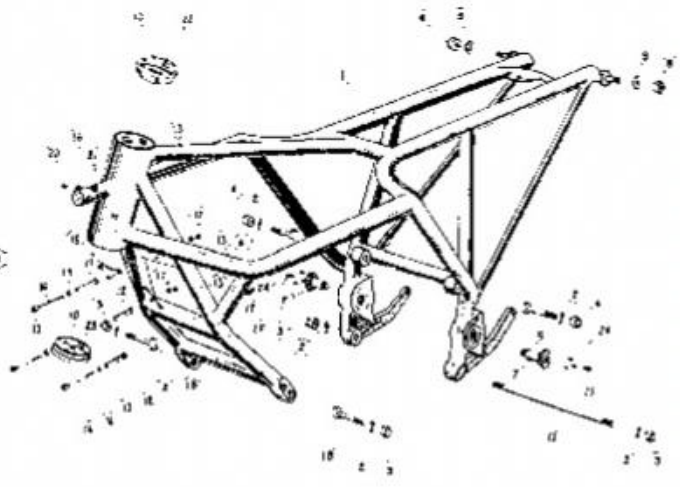
conditioning to concentrate on motorcycles. Soon it were offering kits to transform the stock CB750 into a roadburner that lived up to Tamburini's philosophy: the ideal motorcycle would be a 750 with the weight of a 500 and the performance of a 1000.

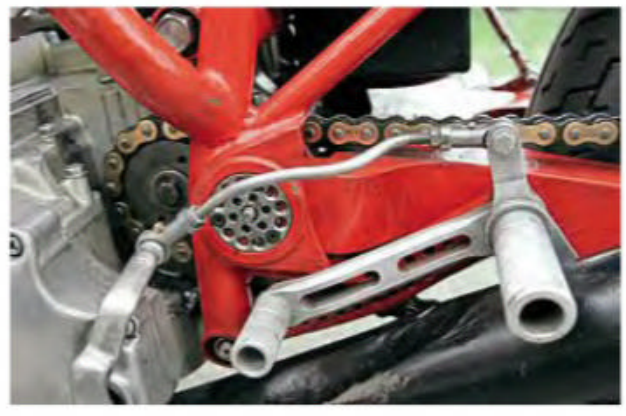
Besides the frame and box section swingarm of the experimental Honda Bimota, the kit included six-spoke magnesium wheels with Brembo discs, Ceriani forks, four black exhaust pipes that tucked neatly under the engine and ended in individual megaphone silencers, and beautifully carved alloy footrests. The glass fibre petrol tank and front mudguard, and a seat incorporating the rear light and mudguard, were all made in the Rimini factory, along with the welded and machined components.

Only nine frame kits and one complete HB1 were produced, making the Honda Bimota one of the rarest of Italian exotica.

Dutch magazine *Motor* tested a kit-form HB1 in 1976. They were impressed with the extremely compact look and feel, and liked







the race-style single seat and gas tank. Plus they loved the welding on the frame, which they described as so precise and exact in their execution as to be almost invisible. On the road the Honda Bimota performed faultlessly, and was given the accolade 'the best motorcycle ever tested'. Not bad for a specialist manufacturer just starting out!

Other Japanese engines were used for road bikes in the 1970s, and Bimota developed a model nomenclature that is still used to this day: two letters, followed by a number. The first letter identifies the engine manufacturer (H for Honda, K for Kawasaki, S for Suzuki, D for Ducati, Y for Yamaha – you get the picture) while the second letter is always B for Bimota. The number indicates the sequence of models, so the 2007 DB6 is the sixth Ducati engined Bimota.

After the HB1, Tamburini was asked by Italy's Suzuki importer to use the GS750 engine for his next masterpiece – the SB2 (the SB1 was a TR500 twin cylinder water-cooled racer).

Making its debut at the 1977 Bologna show it was offered in kit form or as a complete motorcycle, with a spectacular wrap-around 'perimeter' frame weighing just 8.5kg, monoshock suspension and swooping bodywork that hid a petrol tank slung beneath the engine. Very expensive, only 140 SB2s were made. The final Bimota roadbike of the 1970s was the KB1 – the first major commercial success for the company, with 811 kits and 16 complete motorcycles sold. Launched at the 1977 Milan show, the KB1 used a Z900 or Z1000 DOHC four again wrapped in a tubular chrome-moly perimeter frame.

The KB1 had a monoshock unit mounted almost horizontally (the SB2 was mounted vertically) while the swingarm had eccentric cams at both engine and wheel spindle ends – the front one to get the optimum position for the suspension, and the rear to adjust chain tension. Buyers could stick with Kawasaki brakes and forks, or go for magnesium Campagnolo wheels, Brembo Serie Oro brakes and the Marzocchi fork with its 36mm stanchions as used on grand prix racers. There were three versions of the KB1, each with minor changes, before production ended in 1982.

Tamburini left Bimota in March 1983, and after a spell with Team Gallina and 500GP he joined Cagiva Research Centre in February 1985. His later masterpieces include the Ducati 916 – the most iconic motorcycle of the 1990s – and the MV F4.

Bimota has survived some difficult times lately, but is still in the business of making motorcycles with cutting edge style, technical excellence and superb quality. It took them 25 years to build the first 11,000 motorcycles – less than Honda make in 48 hours. You might meet the nicest people on a Honda, but if you want exclusivity you need a Bimota. CBG

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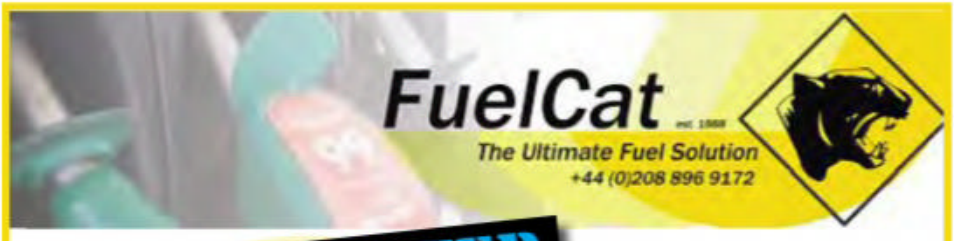

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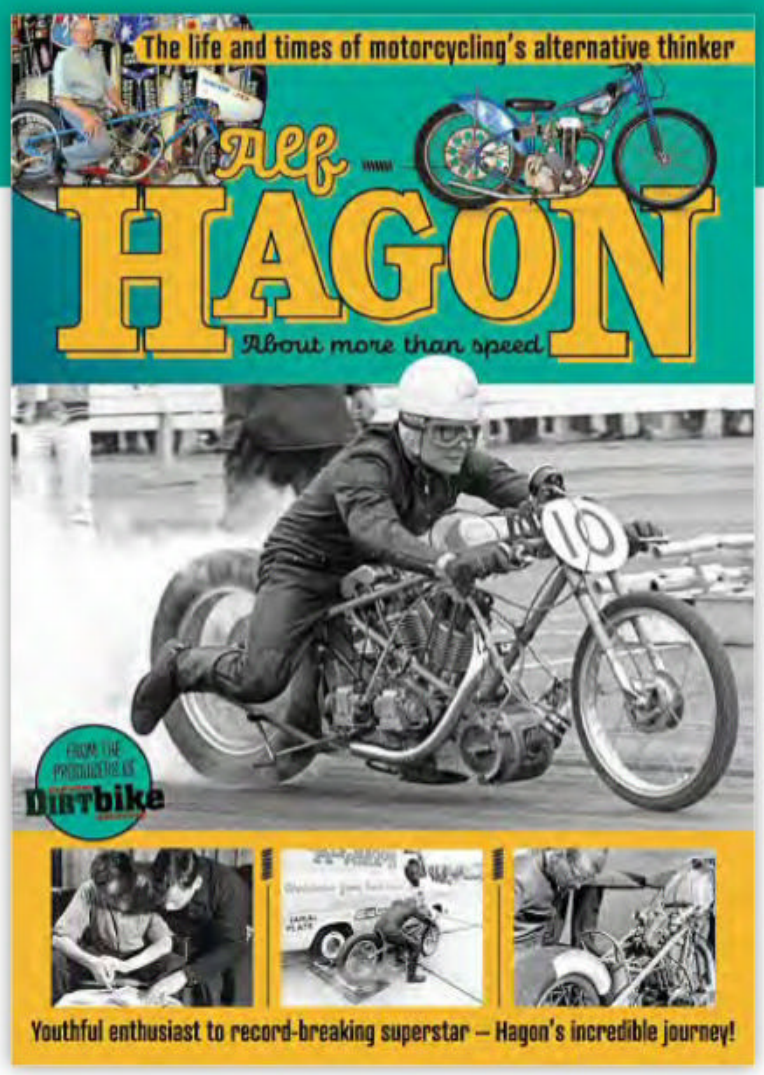

Alf HAGON
About more than speed

East London born and bred, bespectacled Alf Hagon is perhaps the most unlikely looking person to power a motorcycle past 200mph.

Like many youngsters in post Second World War Britain, Alf did his early motorcycling on all sorts of scrapyard rejects, utilising the still-to-be-cleared bomb sites which seemed to exist everywhere as his training grounds.

Alf found he had a talent for engineering, machine development and what would become known as 'blue sky thinking'.

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Ring-ding-ding – a taste (and smell) of new two-stroke

WORDS BY MATT **PHOTOGRAPHY** GARY CHAPMAN

MANY THANKS TO DAVID AT F2 Motorcycles Ltd for letting us ride his demo 350 Classic.

'It's a shame you can't buy a new two-stroke' I heard recently at a show. Well, for those that need to, you can, thanks to Jawa and their UK importer, F2 Motorcycles.

The Jawa 350 Classic is almost the same bike the Czech Republic factory have been building since the late 1960s and despite what some may think, is mostly better for this lack of updates. The Jawa was built for transport, as they have always been, and reliable transport at that. So the parallel twin is not some peaky monster, with power only towards the redline. The 350 Classic is built for torque; though admittedly compared to other two-strokes – this is no stump puller! But it will whisk you around quite comfortably in keeping with the modern traffic around you.

So as many of us rarely ride two-stroke bikes nowadays, so let me attempt to bring you the benefits of the unfairly named stink wheel that I encountered.

Firstly, it isn't a stink wheel, unless it's only had small runs, hasn't been used for a while or is worn out. This 350 Classic had a good few miles on it and didn't smoke, started easily and carburetted cleanly.

It is also, thanks to the simple engine, really light. Added to this, the frame doesn't have to be some fourth bridge-style creation, all-in weight with fuel and oils is around 160kg, or 350lb. And with the low standard seat height of 820mm (32in) this is a perfect bike for those who find most bikes too heavy, too tall or both. And forget worrying about the kick-start; while the 350 has one, there is also electric start.

Riding takes a little time to get used to the sound, where the power is and the total absence of engine braking. I loved it – it's familiar enough to not worry, but engaging enough to be fun experimenting. In short, don't be afraid to rev the bike, keep the engine spinning, and feel for when the 23bhp and the

23.5 lb.ft torque is best served for you.

The lack of engine braking makes for such a smooth ride, especially with the four-speed gearbox. But it takes a little time to get a feel for it after riding four-strokes. Cruising speed is around 55-60mph, with top speed around 80mph; but this bike isn't really for that.

The design of the 350 Classic may be old, but it is, and has always, been fitted with a quick shifter! As you push down or lift up the gear lever, a cable pulls the clutch in, meaning you don't have to! It's so simple and apart from pulling away and coming to a stop, your left hand can just rest. Not a perfect system, but lovely to use and another intriguing feature.

With a lightweight bike the suspension doesn't have to work so hard. The Jawa is set up as a comfortable cruiser and on the Fen roads around F2 motorcycles, where bumps and pot holes are quite common, the soft spring rates were perfect. And yet as I upped the cornering, there seemed to be plenty of support. Don't get me wrong; I'm sure it is nothing more than simple, basic shocks and forks, but they work fine on this bike.

David, who showed me around the bike, explained how the Jawa factory had replaced the original drum front brake a few years ago with a 265mm front disc and twin-piston caliper – so be careful! It felt fine to me, though the power it offers could easily overcome the Kenda TT100 look-a-like tyres it comes with, and of course, there's no ABS. So, one finger it is. The rear drum works well and looks suspiciously like the rear drum on my 1973 CZ175 – but if it works, I'm happy.

There has to be a couple of niggles, but they are small. The speedo is accurate, but the rev counter gets confused with the two-stroke engine; so just use your ears. The bike likes no throttle at all when first starting, so just a little choke, then hit the starter. Even after a good run, the engine gets cold quickly, so again, a little choke and no throttle – or it'll flood. And I have to say, the paint finish on the tank is somewhat – cheap. Yet the chrome, alloy and frame look really well finished.

Once you've got used to the size of the bike, the two-stroke engine and the long gearlever (which doubles up as a kick-start) that's great for when wearing workboots, the Jawa 350 Classic is a superb, small-size, usable and fun classic. With well-made sidestand and centrestand, fully enclosed chainguard and comfortable seat, it could keep you on the road all year and F2 give you all the help, assistance and more when you buy one. This includes their own booklet on how to overcome common issues. I have to say, I've never known a distributor who has more interest in their bikes and customers and less interest in money – it is to be applauded in this modern world!

The Jawa 350 Classic is for a limited group of people, admittedly, but I fail to see what one of my favourites, the Royal Enfield Bullet, can offer over the Jawa. Speed, cruising ability and all-round workhorse tendencies are all similar. And this is the best part – a brand-new Jawa 350 Classic is £3895 on the road. As well as good back up, F2 also offer tune ups, higher gearing and panniers, all at prices that would make any Honda dealer wince – value is excellent. For a cheap to buy, cheap to run bike that is easy to ride, modify, customise and, crucially for some, small and lightweight, the 350 Classic makes a lot of sense. CBG

JAWA 350 CLASSIC

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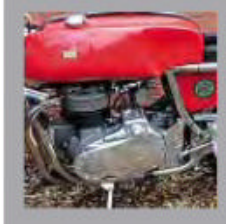

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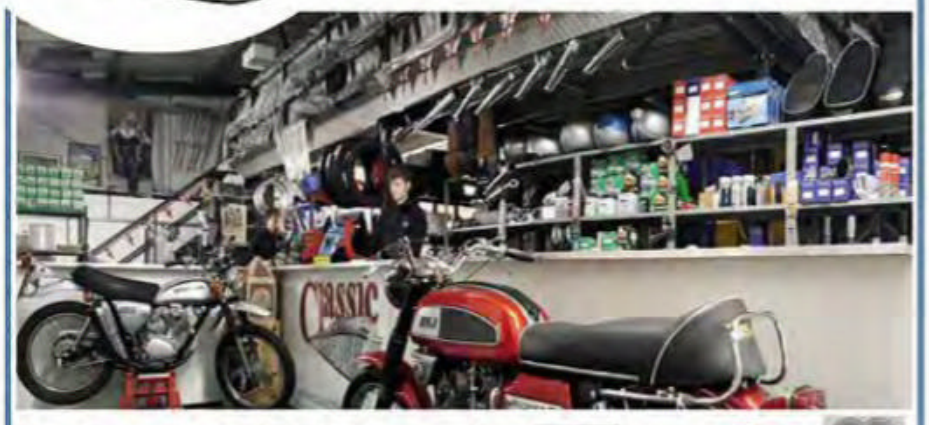

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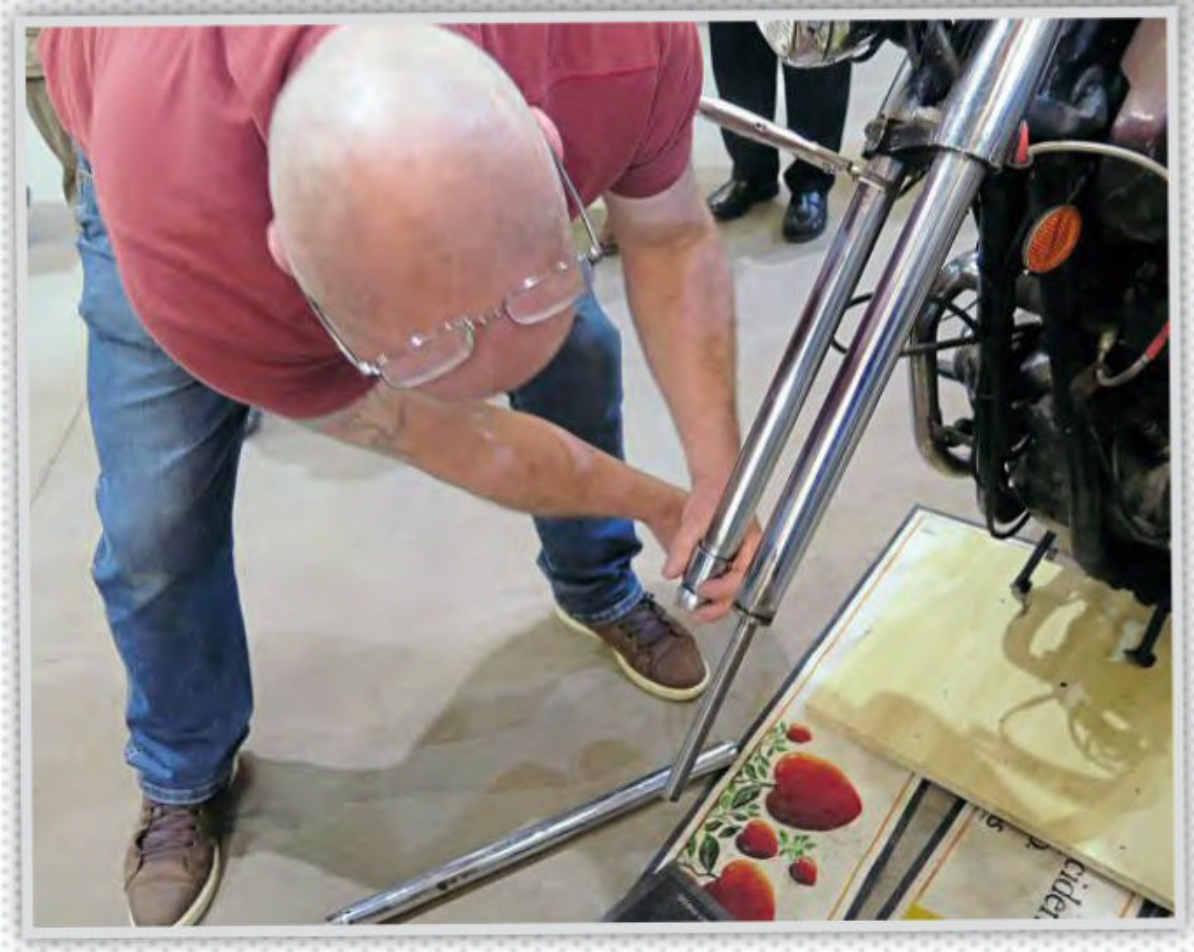
CBG Workshop

Tanks a lot to the man in the pub

Not a lot has been going on in Oli's garage this month. The Bonneville needs an oil change and the clutch and throttle cables have been rerouted. Vague plans are being made to swap the clutch springs and plates for a set bought from a chap in a Northumberland pub last summer. In the meantime, a rare replacement petrol tank, found at Stafford last year and which is for his US-Spec BSA Starfire Street Scrambler, is being prepped for a respray to original style. The old one, though original, is riddled with rust worm inside and while the outside has a lovely patina, it does have a tendency to seep fuel from a few locations.



▲ **Project Norton**
We start the long road to rebuilding

◀ **Rebuild your Triumph forks**
Oli gives his Cerriani forks a refresh

How's that work?

Tyres

As long as they're not flat at the bottom, eh?

BACK IN THE OLD DAYS

Before the 1930s, motorcycles often had beaded edge rims to hold the tyres on, as the tyre had no reinforced inner edge. These tyres had to have pressures of between 50-70psi to keep them from falling off the rim when cornering! Since then, most tyres have steel-wired, or 'wired on' tyres which keep them securely on the rim with a lot less pressure.

HAVE A LOOK AT WHAT YOU'VE GOT

Tyres are made from rubber, which goes off with time and the sun's ultra-violet. So for the last 20 years, tyres have had to have their date stamped on the sidewall so we know what we're buying. This helps in the classic world as many of the old patterns are still used; so if looking at buying a tyre and it has no date stamp, then it's over 20 years old…

TUBE OR TUBELESS?

Wire laced wheels are not air tight, so have to run tubes. And don't forget your rim tape – a band of rubber that prevents the tube from chafing on the spoke nipples, causing a puncture. Alloy wheels are largely airtight, so can run tyres without a tube. But check if unsure – a tube in a tubeless tyre can overheat and melt.

SIZE MATTERS

Old sizes were imperial, the most common sizes being 3.25 or 3.50 (the width in inches) by 19(in) on the rear, with 3.00 or 3.25 x 19 front. Some race bikes and Vincents liked to use 20in or 21in wheels – 20in tyres are getting hard to find. Later bikes and European or Japanese bikes use metric tyres, for example a 130 (width in mm) 80 (the tyre wall height as a percentage of the width) by 18 (strangely, the wheel width is still measured in inches!)

OLD STYLE OR NEW?

Dunlop had a PR gift when Malcolm Uphill managed the 100mph lap at the TT on Dunlop TT100 tyres. But as a whole, Avon were the go to, with an SM rear (Safety Mileage) and a Speedmaster front. The SM is quite square in profile with a jagged tread pattern and the Speedmaster looks ribbed. These classic tyre styles are still great for your bike and have the added bonus of being made with much, much better, softer, grippier rubber. So there really is no excuse to keep riding on dangerous, out of date tyres. Most classic tyres are still crossply as opposed to radial – this is the way the tyre is made inside.

Or you can go for a more modern style tyre like Avon Roadrider, which look more modern, but are offered in many classic sizes. Off-road tyres are well catered for, with Heidenau and other makes offering trial-style tyres in classic rim sizes.

CONDITION

Just because your old bike isn't the sporty version, doesn't mean your tyres can be knackered. Regularly look for cracks or crazing on the sidewalls; the first sign of the ultra-violet rays of the sun breaking down the rubber compound. Check the tread for foreign objects like screws and thorns, but don't remove them until you're home – or you could get stuck if it had pierced the tube and sealed itself!

The tread has to be 1mm deep to be road legal, but that is a minimum – cars are 1.6mm. But the way it has worn can show you a lot, too. Worn more on one side than the other? Your wheels are misaligned, so check with a straight edge – the rear chain adjustment is often the culprit. Worn in the middle quicker than you thought? You could be running too much pressure. Worn on the edges more and you're not a racing god? Under inflation could be the issue.

Look for bulges in the sidewalls as classic tyres are not as stiff as modern ones, and every year check your tubes and wheels as rim corrosion can cause rust, causing punctures.

FEEL THE PRESSURE

Check the manual, ask at the club, but as a starting point, most postwar bikes should be around 28psi front, 33psi rear, with rigid-framed bikes slightly lower. But see how it feels and adjust to taste. CBG

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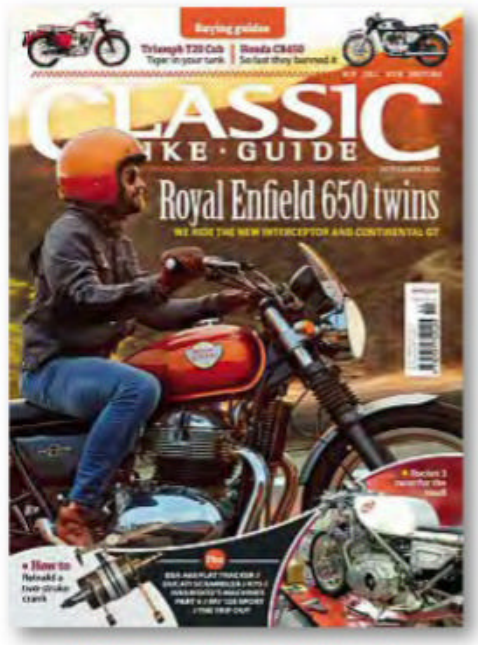

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Undo the small screw to drain the forks, and these four 7/16th inch nuts and the mudguard stay bolt to get the wheel off

Rebuilding Triumph forks

To make life fun, Oli rebuilt his T140 forks at the Bristol show!

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLI

REPLACING THE STANCHIONS/FORK TUBES or fitting new seals to Triumph/BSA 'Ceriani' type front forks isn't complicated or beyond the skills of an average home mechanic, but it is quite possible to muck it up. At least one special tool will come in handy, and so will a certain amount of upper body strength.

To hold everything together during this job, do one fork leg at a time. This makes life easier and will stop the headlight falling out of position.

First, drain the fork legs of old oil into drip trays by undoing the two drain screws at the base of the leg. Doing this the day before is a good idea. If you compress the forks a little with the screws out, it will squirt some of the oil out too.

Now put the machine on the centre stand, putting a block of wood underneath the stand to lift the front wheel a little higher. Remove the front wheel by unbolting the four nuts on the fork end caps and the bottom mudguard stay. Mark the two caps to be sure you fit each one back on its correct side. To make life easier, while everything is still under tension, try to loosen the damper rod Allen screws that are at the bottom of the forks. Either use an Allen key, a powered impact driver if you have one, or a cordless drill/screwdriver set on reverse. Don't undo them all the way, unscrew the chrome caliper cover and loosen the nuts holding on the caliper. If you do this with the mudguard still in place it will make life a lot easier.

THINGS YOU WILL NEED

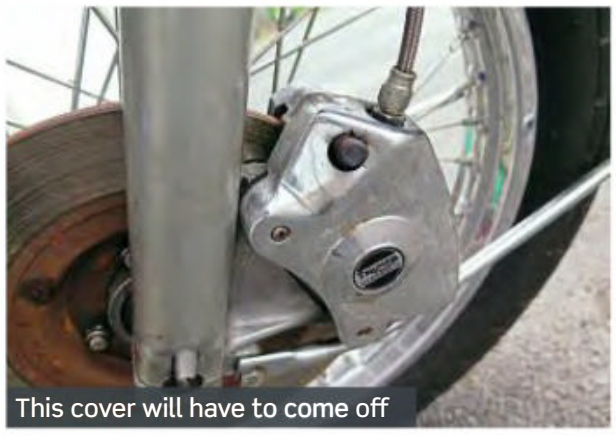
PARTS

Stanchions, springs, seals, dust caps or gaiters, 2 x dowty washers, 400ml of 20W fork oil or ATF

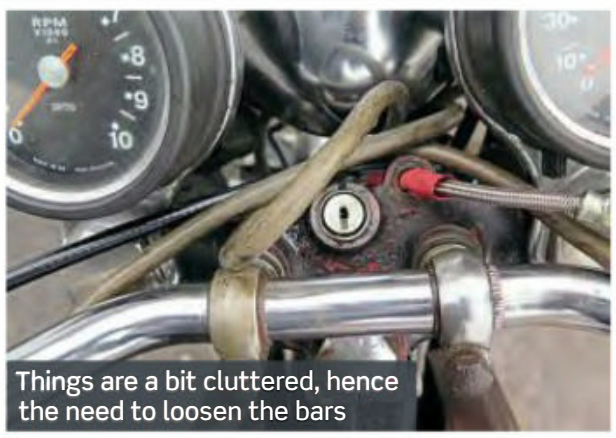
TOOLS

- A good selection of AF spanners, Allen keys and sockets including a 1¼ and 1½ inch sockets or spanners.
- A small crosshead screwdriver
- A large old blade screwdriver or two
- One large and one small large copper/hide/plastic hammer
- A workbench with a vice (optional)
- Special tools if available: A fork stanchion puller and a damper rod locking tool

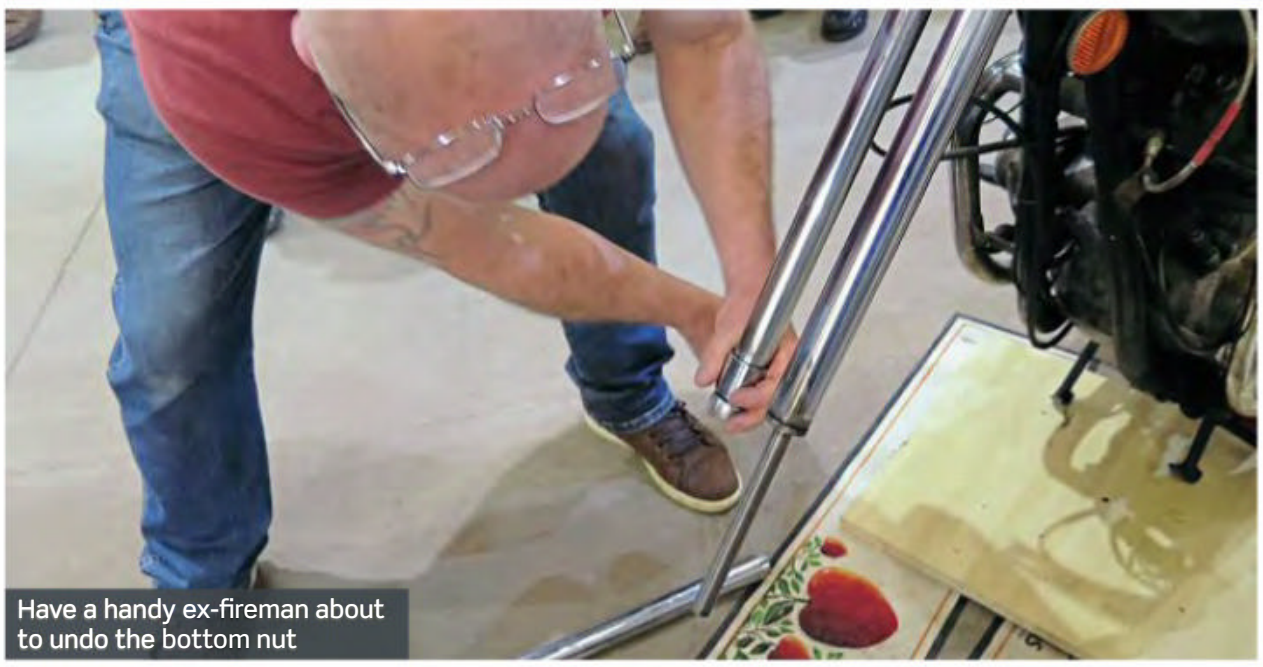
The fork stanchion puller


This cover will have to come off

There are two 9/16th inch nuts holding on the P-clamps. Don't lose the washers!


Things are a bit cluttered, hence the need to loosen the bars

Cap off and the spring removed, the fork leg is ready to be removed


Have a handy ex-fireman about to undo the bottom nut

The puller in place

Undo the two nuts under the top yoke holding in the p-clamps out of the anti-vibration mounts and pull them out. Undo the two fork caps with the 1½ inch socket/spanner and remove the instruments, if they are the type bolted to the fork caps. Remove the Allen bolts that are clamping the fork tubes into the yokes

Unbolt the mudguard and remove it. Remove the caliper while leaving the hose connected. Use a piece of wire or bent welding rod to suspend the caliper from the frame and reduce strain on the hose. Using a ½ inch Allen key, unscrew the fork tops.

Remove the spring from the fork leg. If you have been able to loosen the damper rod, completely remove the Allen key from the bottom of the fork leg. If not, use the special tool to hold the damper and undo it. The tool is a long tube about half an inch across with two small lugs at the bottom that lock into slots in the top of the damper rod.

If you can't find one, you might be able to use a long screwdriver. With the Allen screw removed, pull the lower leg downwards and it should come free. A drip tray underneath is advisable. Push the damper rod up into the fork tube. Undo the large nut in the bottom of the tube with the 1¼ inch socket/spanner. This may be very tight.

Withdraw the damper rod and throw away the old dowty washer on the bottom. This has a rubber seal on the inside and should be replaced with a new one.

Now comes a tricky bit. If you have old stanchions, they will almost certainly be stuck in the yokes, and this is where the fork puller comes in handy for the first time.

Assemble the puller and screw the business end fully into the thread at the top of the stanchion. Now apply some firm but not excessive blows to the top of the puller.

With luck, this will free the leg off. If it doesn't, try opening the pinch slot a little in both top and bottom yokes by tapping old screwdrivers into them. If you are replacing the stanchions and are not worried about damaging the chrome, try twisting them with stilsons, vice grip pliers or a strap wrench. Once it starts to move you should be able to twist the leg out. It is possible to get the stanchion out with a hammer and punches, however, it can damage the fork yokes, so be extremely careful. Buying or borrowing the special tool is not only safer but will save hours of struggle.

So, now the leg is out, the dismantling and reassembly can begin.

Clean out the fork leg and prepare to replace the fork oil seal. There is a special tool for this, which is a flat piece of steel with a notch in either side. It should be fairly easy to make one. Alternatively, protect one side of the seal area with a piece of angled metal and prise the old seal out a few mm at a time with a screwdriver. This is easier said than done, and a sturdy workbench with a vice to clamp the leg in will come in handy and reduce the chance of drawing blood.

As you are going to put a new seal in, destroying the old one isn't a problem. Be careful not to gouge the soft metal of the fork leg in the process. Clean the area and push the new seal in as far as you can by hand, and then tap it into place, either using a socket the same size as the seal as a drift or tap firmly all the way round the seal with a small soft hammer.

Now insert the new stanchions into the yokes. Older designs are nearly identical at each end, while newer versions, which can be used on old forks, have the top end slightly narrowed for about six inches where they sit under the headlight brackets and this section will have a duller finish. Make sure you get them the right way around or you will damage your seals.

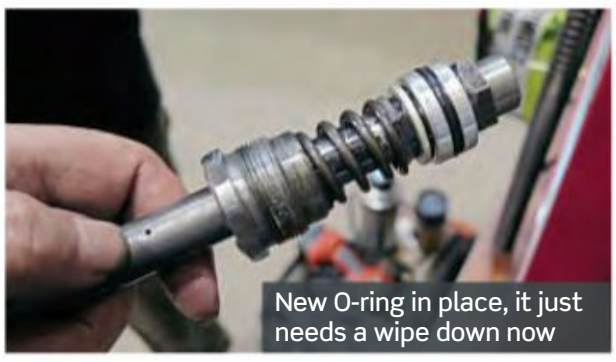
Slide the stanchion as far into the yoke as you can, screw the puller into the top and pull the stanchion into place by twisting the long central screw threaded rod on the tool with the T-bar. Without the tool you'll have to use a large soft hammer and success cannot be guaranteed.

Replace the O-ring on the damper assembly and put the damper rod into the hole on the large bottom nut, refitting it to the stanchion.

Fit either the dust cap and top rubber or the gaiter, depending on your preference, onto the stanchions. Now dab some sticky grease onto the bottom of the damper rod and use it to stick a new dowty washer in place, then carefully slide the lower fork leg into place.

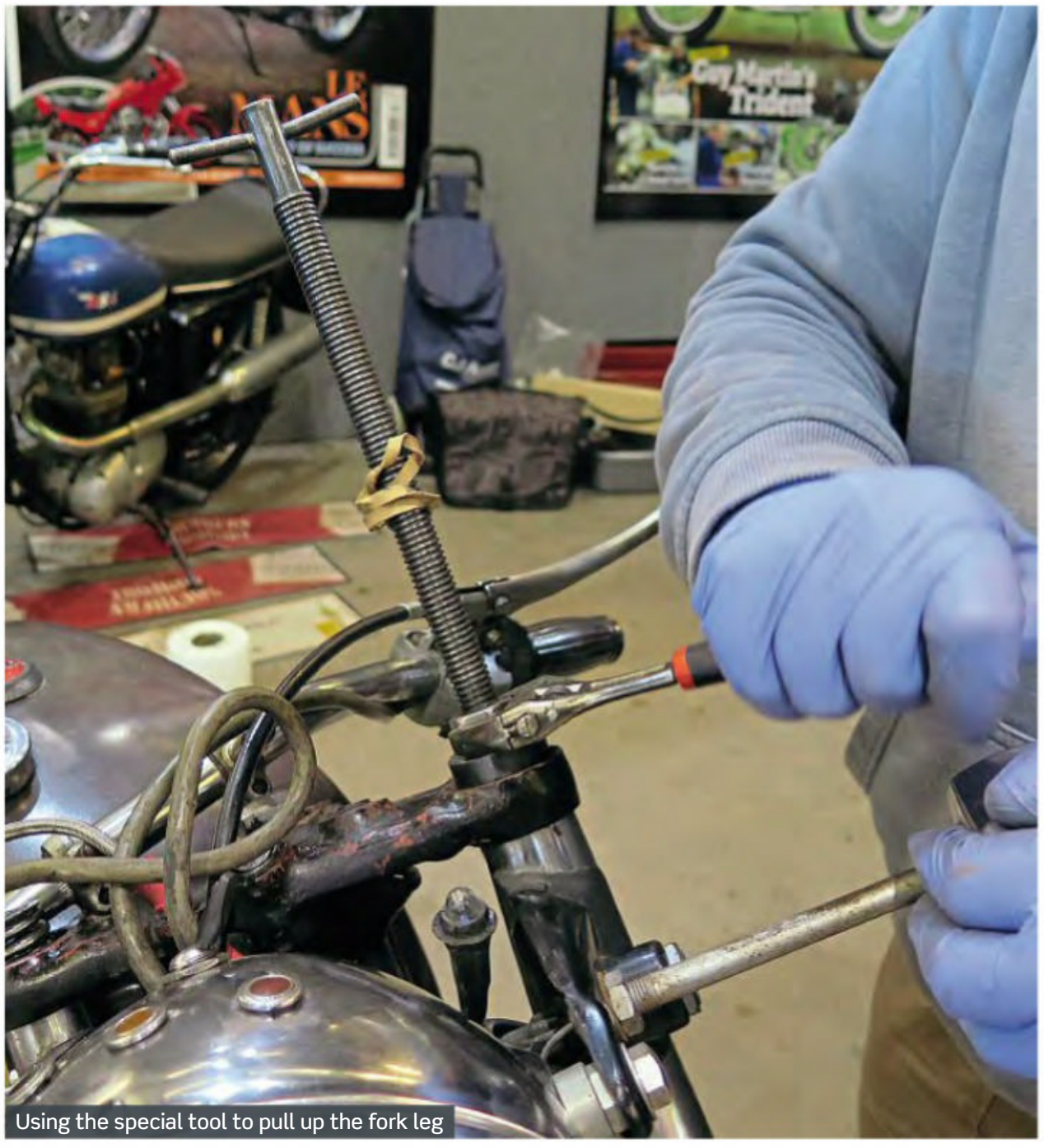
The new stanchions are back in place

New seal in place



New O-ring in place, it just needs a wipe down now

Dowty washer stuck on the bottom of the damper rod with sticky grease



Using the special tool to pull up the fork leg

46 years under compression has had an effect on the old springs (top). Note the dull area on the bottom stanchion, designed to make refitting easier

A little light grease around the seal, though not too much, may be worth it here. Once the leg is where it should be, refit the leg by tightening the damper rod Allen screw. If the damper rod spins, then holding the damper rod in place with the special tool, by putting the spring back in place or by using a long screwdriver, push the gaiter or dust cap in place over the seal.

Now put the spring back in. Springs are so cheap these days that replacing them is a good idea if you don't know how old they are. My new springs were a good inch longer than the old ones, after 46 years of service.

If using progressive springs, put the tightly wound end at the top. Refit the drain screws and, with the springs in place, add 200ml of 20W fork oil or ATF. If you put the oil in and then the springs, chances are you'll end up covered in fork oil if you drop the spring in as it will squirt it all out again. Put the lug on the bottom of the fork top cap into the top of the spring, and while compressing the spring by pushing it downwards, tighten the nut up again. Tighten the yoke pinch bolts.

And we are all done. Just the rest of the bike to do now...

Job nearly done? Stop for a cup of tea

Repeat the procedure for the other leg assembly, then refit the caliper, mudguard, front wheel, ensuring the correct bottom fork caps are used on each side, and tighten the four nuts at the bottom of each leg in a diagonal sequence. Refit the instruments, refit the handlebars, check everything is nice and tight. Finally, pump the brake lever to make sure the brakes work first time and you will be good to go.

Thanks to Sean Carr for giving up a weekend to assist, Geoff from GV bikes and Garry for moral support, Nathan for the use of his strong right arm, the unknown hero who lent me the fork puller and Monty from Monty's Classic Motorcycles for selling me the bits, turning up on Sunday to point out what I'd got wrong and providing copious cuppas. Top chaps all. CBG

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Project Norton ES2

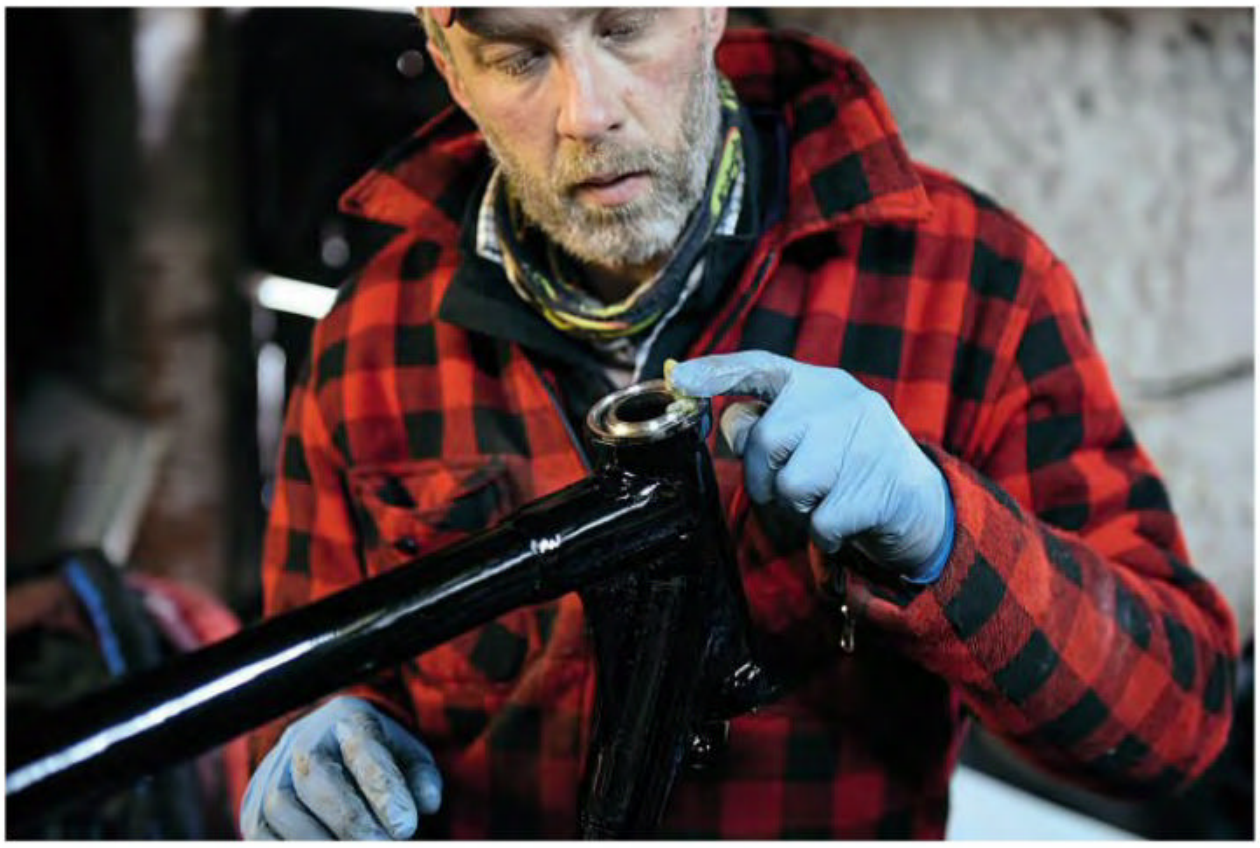
PART FIVE

Off with her head!

How bad is the cylinder head of our ES2? We delve inside the head of a 62-year-old...

AFTER LAST MONTH'S highs with the first part of Project Norton finished, I could look at the shiny frame and swing arm and finally see through the last few months of searching through the parts, working out what was what, a plan of action, where my limited finances would be needed and whether I'd bought more than I could do. It does serve me right for buying a box of bits I suppose, but it was the only way I could get into Norton ownership.

Races seemed okay after cleaning gunk out with brake cleaner



Plenty of grease is needed and helps to keep those damn ball bearings in place

Though I'd forgotten to get the top bearing cover sprayed, was good to get forks in

FRAMES AWAY

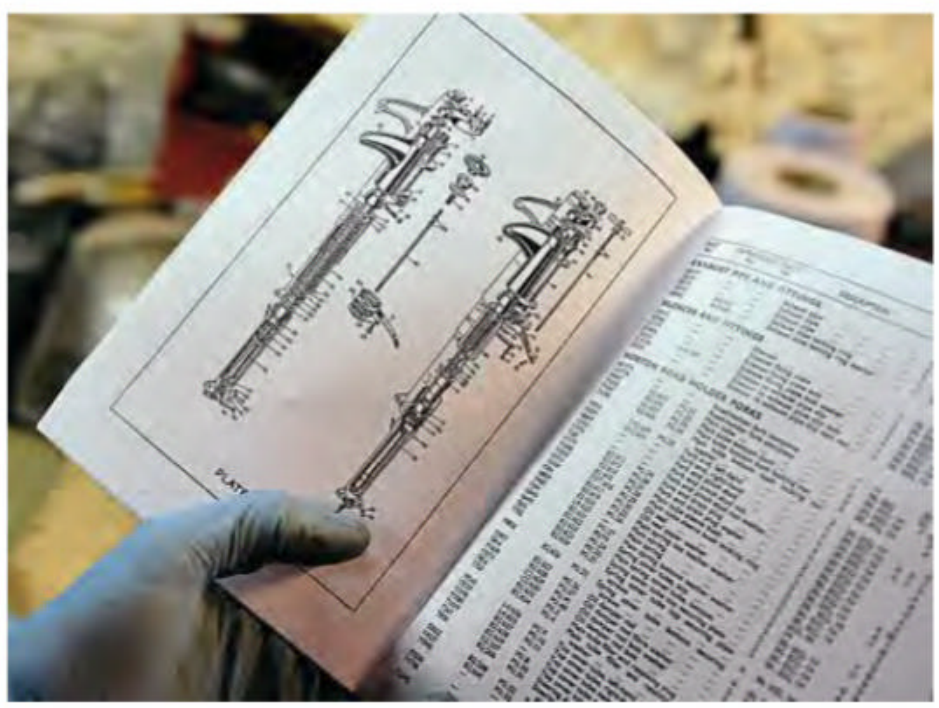
With the cradle sitting there, it was easy to get the project moving, so I decided to put the yokes and forks in; partly to see what, if anything, was missing and partly to help prevent the finished parts from getting damaged in the crowded workshop.

The previous owner was great at keeping things, but I still have to identify parts, like the upper cup that covers the top head race and the steering damper arm. So they'll have to get done when the mudguards and boxes are done. But for now, the races looked in good order, all the balls had been saved in a coffee jar, so everything was cleaned, greased and pressed into action. The forks then went in loosely with springs, covers and headlight holders, and while I need a couple of the small screws that hold the spring covers to the bottom yoke, again, they are safer than sitting on the bench and it is starting to look bike-like; a big confidence boost.

The swing arm bushes felt okay, but while I want to watch the costs, it seems pointless to have a bike all apart and not renew them. So a new set cost me £39 from Norvil, not bad for new metalastics specifically made for a 60-year-old bike. But what is more concerning is I have to press the old ones out and press the new ones in to a freshly painted swing arm. A press is the only way, but some jiggery-pokery will be needed to set up the press as they both come out of one side.

The rims have arrived from Hagon – they were finished ages ago but – erm – I'd given them the wrong phone number! They look gorgeous, but I've never built a wheel before (I have tried) so I'm going to get a friend to help me do one where I can watch and learn properly, then hopefully do the second one myself, with the safety cushion of them looking over my shoulder.

Ball bearings were cleaned overnight in petrol



The old parts manual has handy exploded diagrams

CYLINDER HEAD

After admiring Steve's welding to create new fins, I stripped the head with trepidation. Had I just wasted his time on a scrap head? I soaked it in a bucket of diesel for a couple of days in the hope of freeing up anything seized, then attacked the bolts holding the rocker box to the head. The correct socket (XXX/XXX) was a snug fit that needed a gentle tap to go on, so they will need replacing. The thinner nuts at the ends needed an 11mm spanner – you never know what tool you need!

With some sympathetic persuasion of the rubber hammer type, the two halves separated to reveal to loose studs, both with knackered helicoils. One will repair, but the other had been butchered and left very little aluminium around it. I was concerned, thinking it may need filling with weld and tapping, but engineer Hutch thinks it would be best to make a brass infill, knurled and glued in place, which we can then tap. He did explain about how alloy and brass are dissimilar metals and how it worked, but I'm just not clever enough...

The valves came out once the studs on the outer of the heads were removed with a stud extractor so the valve compressor would fit. The exhaust was stuck firm, needing a good clout to free the collets; bear in mind if you're doing this to have some eyes (with safety specs of course) watching where the collets may fly!

Nuts had expanded so needed socket tapping on

Once removed – use one of those natty magnets on a stick, or a tiny screwdriver to get the collets out – don't get your fingers anywhere near those compressed springs – we removed the double springs. To check the valve guides for wear, with the valve opened around ¼in (roughly where they are fully opened) we wiggled it (technical term) around. There are many phrases I cannot put in print – but it was loose. The valve looked okay – straight and with a face that would clean up. The inlet came apart much more easily and wear was acceptable, especially when you feel it with oil on the valve stem – which is how it is when running. And the seating faces looked good that side, too.

Finally it's all apart. One helicoil insert, one specially made bronze insert and two valve guides to go

Stripped thread is a worry, as original helicoil has used up too much alloy around it

Valves could recover, but exhaust will be replaced

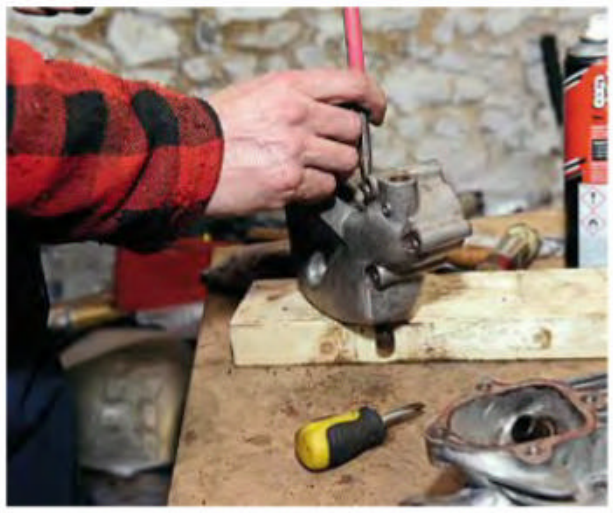
You can see the rocker cover thread on left is too large to fix

The exhaust guide definitely needs replacing so we may as well get a new valve – Hutch said it's always best to get those from the same supplier for better tolerances. And we'll replace the inlet guide while the tools are out, but we'll reuse the inlet valve. The previous owner had already bought new springs, so they'll go in. As with many jobs, there are different methods; we will try local heat with an oxy torch and a good blow, while fitting the new ones will involve pipe freeze spray on the new guides and heating the head. Some guides need to be measured exactly as you fit them – luckily the Norton ones have a lip which you press up to.

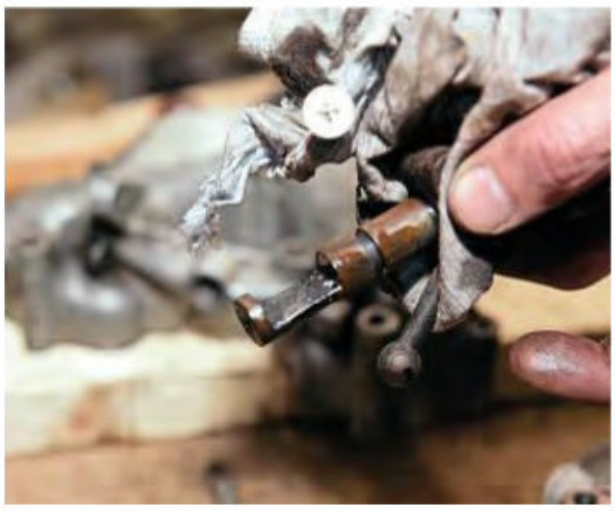
Then we have to machine the welding on the face. We'll have to be really careful not to skim the face that bolts to the head, as otherwise the oilways that go between head and barrel won't seal and these aren't known for being oil-tight as it is.

But all this is going to cost. Guides are £18.50 each, a new valve is £19.50 and the nuts will end up around £30. The machining work will add up, too. Beans on toast it is.

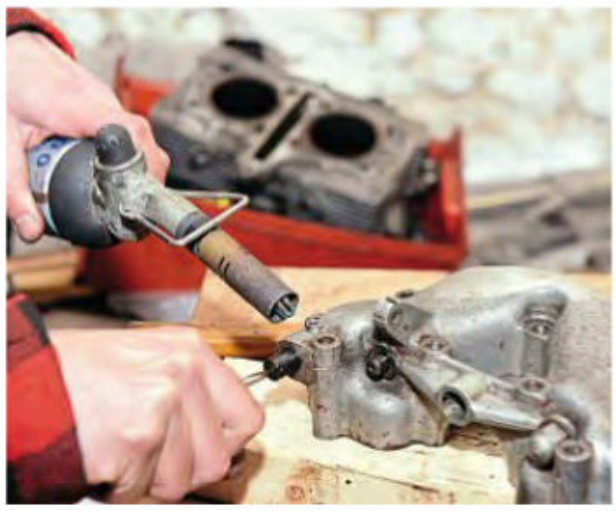
Rockers came out with heat and persuasion, but rockers need rebuilding



Politely 'asking' the rocker shafts to come out



Valve lifter looks reusable...



... After being 'persuaded' to come out with heat, oil and screwdriver

TROUBLE WITH ROCKERS

To remove the rocker arms, you undo the bolt on the rocker shaft and use a punch or copper mallet to knock out the shaft. Watch for the spacer, the shim and spring, noting how they go in. The rocker arms are badly worn, there's no way they can be reused as is.

You can have them welded up with stellite rods, which is a hard enough material, but you have to then finish them to exactly the correct depth. But as yet, none of the parts suppliers have rockers, so unless I can locate some from club members or at the Stafford show, it'll have to be the way. I'm running out of favours…

The rocker shafts, spacers and springs seem okay, and the exhaust valve lifter which had seized came back to life with heat and oil, so it's not all bad.

TO POLISH OR NOT TO POLISH

With the shiny new fins I thought about polishing the head and rocker cover, but then I'd lose all the knocks and dents in the alloy finish, which to me is part and parcel of the 62-year-old bike. The fork bottoms and crankcases are the same, so I'll clean it all up in the ultrasonic cleaner and leave it at that. It is, after all this work, for riding. CBG

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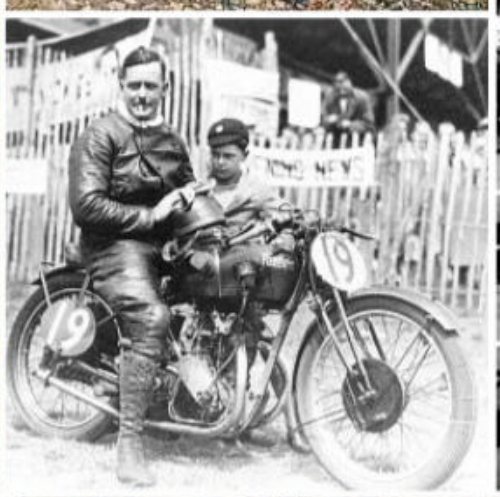

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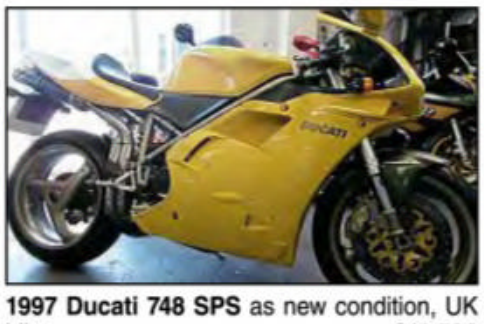

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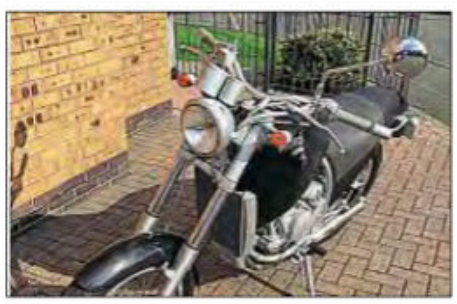

APRILIA MOTO 6.5 Philippe Starck rare UK model, vgc, only 3,400 miles, all docs inc orig owners h/book and warranty cards etc. Tel. 07796 395269 for info/photos. Man.

ARIEL ARROW 1960, matching numbers, buff log book, very nice bike. Tel. 07513 269252 Stoke-on-Trent.w

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

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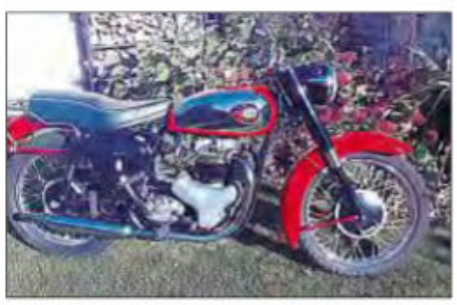


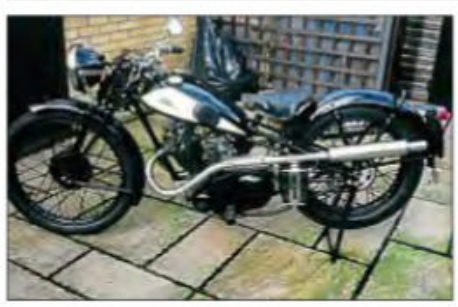
BSA Super Rocket, 1960, fully restored mechanically & cosmetically, refurbished magneto & dynamo, new carb, tyres, exhaust & brakes. Tel. 07802 499294. W Yorks.

BSA A10 GOLDEN FLASH 1955, with Watsonian chair, superb show cond, rides as well as it looks, health forces sale, £8000 ono. Tel. Pete 07879 483529 for extra info. 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 D14 175cc, 1970, new seat, new chrome wheels etc, professional respray blue, show bike, like new, rebuilt engine, bills to show, £1500. Tel. 0161 2191070. Lancs.

BULTACO SHERPA T, year 1973, fully restored and in good condition, owned since 2002, £1350. Tel. 07880 832185 Hampshire



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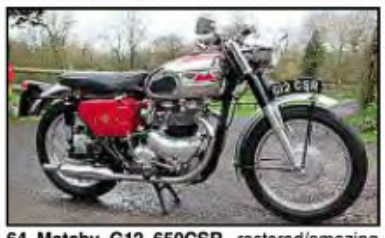

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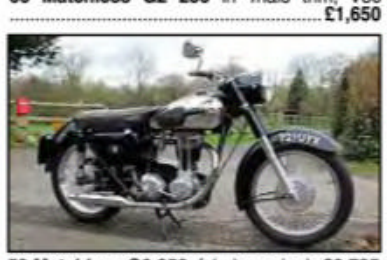

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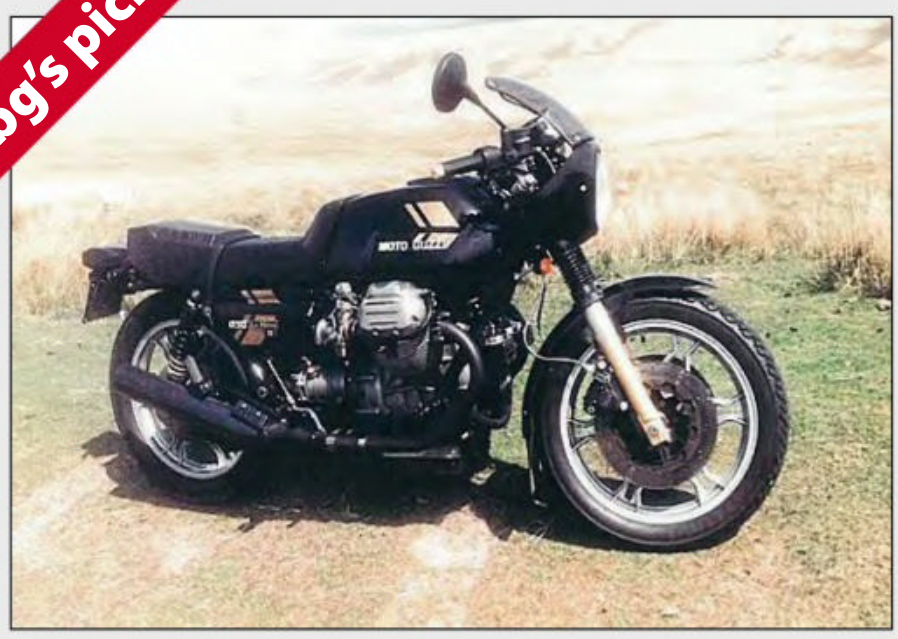

MOTO GUZZI Le Mans 2, 1980, Special Edition, one owner, good paintwork, corrosion free, excellent extras, quality spares, £10,750. Tel. 07947 423998. Powys.

KAWASAKI H2 1972, unrestored US import, new s/arm bushes (metal), wheel bearings, tyres, orig rims, modern ign, MoT, offers on £10,000. Tel. 07952 913506 Email: ataylor@mayfran.eu W Mids

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MATCHLESS G2 250cc, 1962, good condition, recently restored, 10,170 miles, £3300. Tel. 07882 057601 South Wales

MATCHLESS G80 1955, on Sorn, green laner style, good brakes, suspension, no lights, alloy rims, 21" front, good tyres, new seat, 500cc single. Tel. 01482 643946. E Yorks. michaelburrell1941@gmail.com

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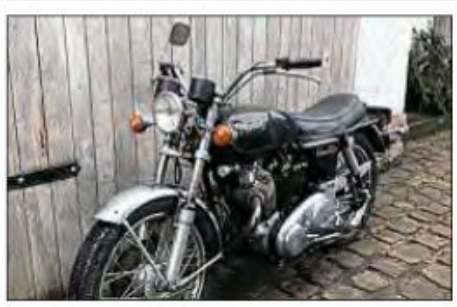
MV AGUSTA 350S IPOTESI 1977, S reg, V5C, very nice original condition, 1,045 miles, good runner, £4000. Tel. 0777 4816630. Notts.

NORTON 1960, Jubilee racer road registered, been signed by John McGuinness on the tank, engine spares included, £3200 ono. Tel. 01509 212218. Loughborough.

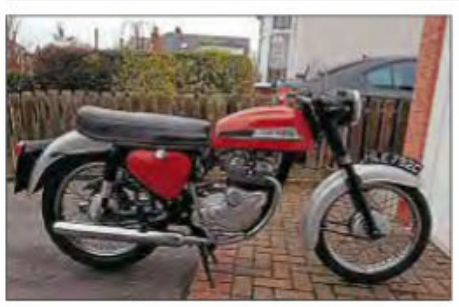
NORTON ATLAS 1967, matching numbers with history from science museum records, only one built this spec, vgc, £7750 ono. Tel. 01763 272339. Herts.

NORTON COMMANDO Mk 2 A 850, 1975, previous owner 36 yrs, mint, all s/s fasteners, 31,600 miles, primary belt drive, Boyer ign, Harrison f/disc brake, £9250 ono. Tel. 01883 348187. Surrey.

NORTON COMMANDO MkIIA, 1974, full krauser luggage, uprated front brake, belt drive, Boyer electrics, £6900. Tel. 01769 551705 Devon.



NORTON COMMANDO 850, 1974; also 1966 T120R Bonneville; 1971 T120R Bonneville; 1971 TR6C Trophy; 1964 BSA A65 650; 2002 Ducati 750SS, selling at fair price. Tel. 07365 297414.



NORTON JUBILEE 1965, good condition, paint and chrome good, new rear tyre, engine and gearbox good, start first kick, ready to ride, £2450 ono. Tel. 07860 824454. Northumberland.

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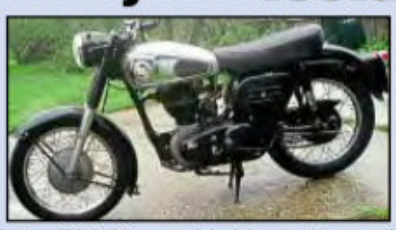

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BSA C15 FSS80 1966 ..... **£2950**
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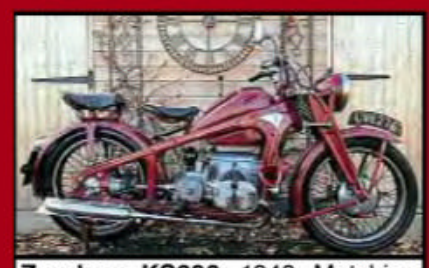
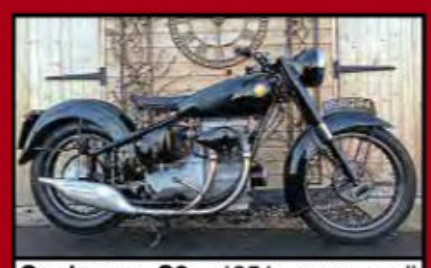


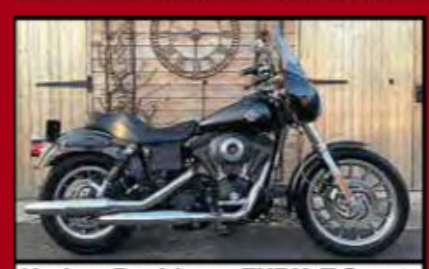
Zundapp KS600; 1940; Matching No's; last owner 50 years; engine & gearbox rebuilt; runs and rides well **£16,250**

BSA Rocket Gold Star; 1963 RGS frame; 1962 RGS engine fitted; RRT2; Borrani Rims; TLS 190 brake; lovely **£15,850**

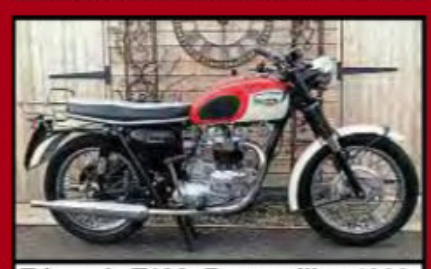
Triumph TR6SS; 1962; matching numbers; older high quality restoration but still very lovely and correct **£12,250**



Sunbeam S8; 1951; very well restored some time ago and still very lovely; runs and rides beautifully **£5,500**



Harley Davidson FXDX T-Sport; 2001; rare model & very nice to ride; ex Frank Westworth, good history **£6,350**



Triumph T120 Bonneville; 1966, Matching No's; single carb head fitted but T120 head etc with it' very nice **£7,995**

BSA A10 Gold Flash; 1962; original registration; SRM engine rebuild; very correct; runs & rides really well **£5,750**

Moto Morini 3½ Sport; 1978; UK Supplied machine, 1 owner from new until last year; runs & rides extremely well **£5,500**

BSA Super Rocket, 1963, original restoration; fully restored including SRM engine rebuild; very lovely **£6,995**

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Honda VFR800 Anniversary; very original 27k miles, very nice example **£2,250**
Honda CB650; 1979; Blue; rare model, very original inc exhausts, lovely **£4,500**
Honda CB500 Four; 1972; Gold & Black; very nice & correct looking example **£5,250**
Triumph 6T Thunderbird; 1963; Matching No's; nice example running well **£6,750**

Triumph Tiger 110; 1962; Matching No's; Kingfisher Blue & Silver; lovely **£7,995**
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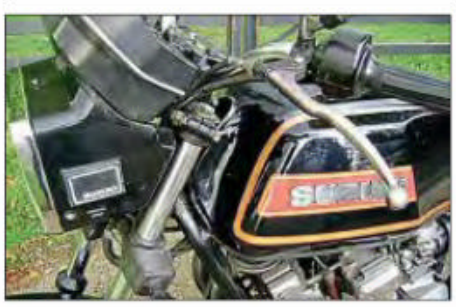
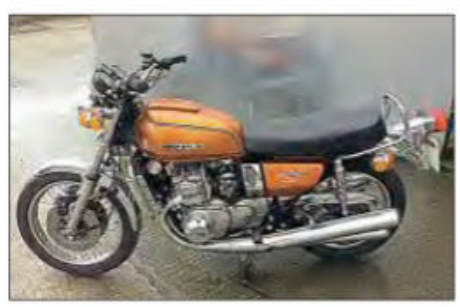
SUZUKI GS850 1988, with Watsonian chair, good condition, full s/h, two previous owners, 15k miles, MoT. Tel. Celia 07867 504779; 01202 575026. Bournemouth.

SUZUKI GSX1100ES six months MoT, new plugs/oil, brake seals, 42,000 miles, UK bike, £1525. Tel. 07422 516869. Cornwall.



SUZUKI GSX750ET 1981, MoT April, 62,000 miles, restored mechanically, electrically and fuelling, rehoned cylinders, refreshed top end, £1625. Tel. 07944 295672 Middx.

SUZUKI GT200 X5, 1981 lots of new chrome, new front mudguard, battery, tyres, seat cover, jets, runs, sounds lovely not import, £3000 ono. Tel. 07583 069656 Stockport.



SUZUKI GT750M 1976, vgc, restored 2012, still has original pipes, new crank bearing and seal Nov 2018, £10,500 ono. Tel. 07799 785888 (eves); 01288 359788. Cornwall.

TRIBSA BSA A7/A10 frame, 1957 Triumph 6T engine, Triumph alternator primary cases, BSA gearbox, coil ignition, Dellorto carb, V5 present, £6750 may take p/x. Tel. 01328 700711. Norfolk.

TRITON MORGO 750cc, 1960, Norton Featherbed frame, Kirkby Rowbotham dry belt clutch, Nourish flu road race engine, 11,800 miles, Over £10,000. Tel. 07980 646186 nigelcramman@gmail.com Glos.

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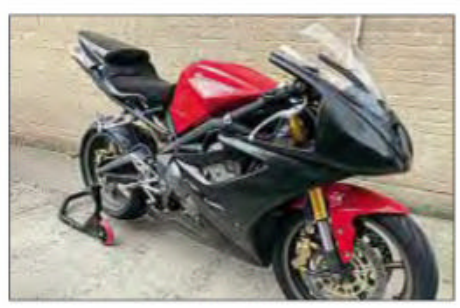

TRIUMPH Daytona 675 with track bodywork, 2009 model, 11,077 miles, V5 on Sorn, some service history, £2600 ovno. Tel. 07901 681465. Devon.

TRIUMPH Tiger 110, 1962, pre-unit mag alternator, duplex frame, looks like tangerine dream, not to be missed, £6500. Tel. 01376 343559 Essex.

TRIUMPH Thunderbird 900, 1996, 24,000 miles, MoT Oct 2019, £3200 ono. Tel. 07518 925786 eves. Northumberland.

TRIUMPH 3TA 1959, 350cc, matching nos, fully restored and resprayed, rides well, age related reg no, show condition, £4000. Tel. 01209 314141. Cornwall.

TRIUMPH 3TA 1961, matching nos, spare engine overhauled, lovely bike, 12v halogen lights, reliable, never let me down, MoT exempt, no time wasters. Tel. 01908 385889. Newport Pagnell.

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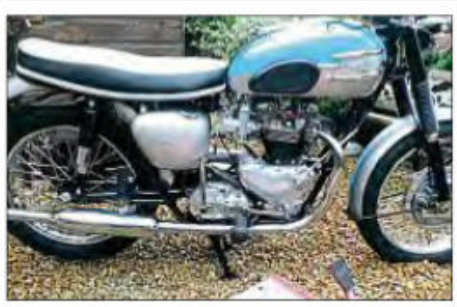

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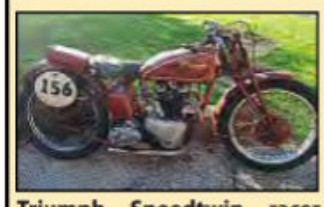

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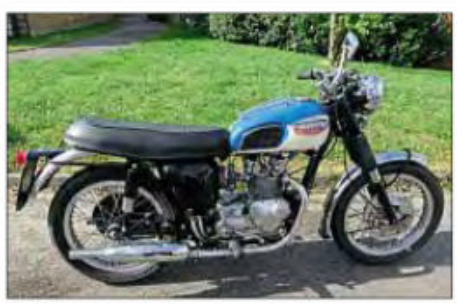
TRIUMPH SPRINT 1993, caspian blue, one owner from new, original immaculate condition, always garaged, 24,000 miles, on Sorn, £3200 ono. Tel. 01323 740011. Sussex.

TRIUMPH T100 Bonneville, 2007, vgc, MoT, comes with extras and original parts, £5300 ono. Tel. 07900 465517. West Sussex.

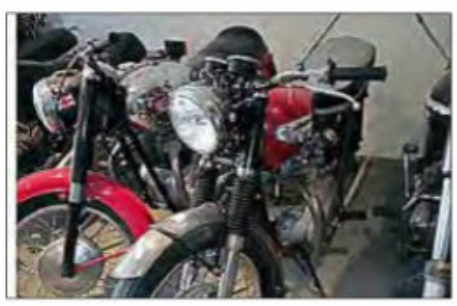
TRIUMPH T100 Bonneville, 2014, vgc, 9400 miles, service Nov 2018, Norman Hyde rack, Givi topbox, Scottoiler, MoT, £4500. Tel. 01455 828366. Leics.

TRIUMPH T100C Trophy, unfinished project, it wants wiring and exhaust and few more jobs to finish it, has matching frame and engine nos, £3800. Tel. 01782 518953. Cheshire.

TRIUMPH T100S 1968, unfinished project, matching frame and engine nos, NOVA dating cert, needs wiring, damage to fins on one side of cyl head, orig part restored, £4500 ovno. Tel. 07932 566321. E Sussex.



TRIUMPH T100T Daytona, 1968, 51,000 miles, MoT April 2019, comprehensively refurbished past six months, £6000 ovno. Tel. 07801 808552. E Yorks.



TRIUMPH T120R 1966, v clean orig 1971 T120R Triumph Bonneville, 1974 Mk 2 850 Norton Commando, 1964 BSA 65, 1971 TR6C, 2002 Ducati 750SS, grab a bargain £6750. Tel. 07365 297414 for enquiries.

TRIUMPH T120R 1971, project, OBM 1986 to 1988, 7800 miles, full history, reliable great looking bike, £6499. Tel. 01342 716859; 07938 007435. W Sussex.

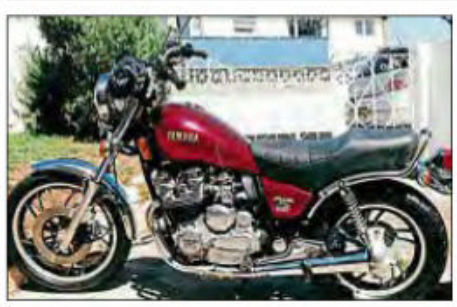
TRIUMPH T140E Bonneville, 1978, match nos, orig Dunlop rims, rebuilt engine, frame and forks in 2015, p/coated frame, e/ign, used regularly, MoT, 20k, runs well, £6250 ono. Tel. 077990 75752. Edinburgh.

TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD GT 1963, matching nos, good honest bike, needs tlc, £4500 ovno. Tel. Gordon 07837 865016. Notts.

TRIUMPH TR6 Trophy, 1968, matching numbers, fully restored, MoT & V5, plus build sheet, genuine Triumph workshop manual & owners handbook, £8250. Tel. 07746 639782. Kent.

TRIUMPH TRIDENT 1993, 750 Cafe Racer, classic style British bike, in good condition, reliable, strong performance, MoT July 2019, £2300. Tel. 07788 646345. Yorks.

TRIUMPH TROPHY T100C 1969, only 8,460 on the clock, UK reg, t&t exempt, new tyres, match frame and engine nos, MoT, imported from California, £5750 ovno. Tel. 07932 566321. E Sussex.



YAMAHA XJ650 1981, Maxim custom model, excellent working order and condition, recent service, MoT, nice chrome & paint, £1500. Tel. 07504 327299. Devon.

YAMAHA YZ6 2004, 20,551 miles, MoT Aug 2019, excellent original condition, just serviced, well maintained, £1900. Tel. 07563 362172. W Mids.

YAMAHA YZF750R 1993, 37,000 miles, MoT, good condition, standard bike inc exhausts, Exup, forks, brakes serviced, runs & rides well, £2250. Tel. 07879 430868. Glos.

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BMW 1100GS 1997, black, 61,643 miles, £1600. Tel. 01452 856036. Glos.

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HONDA BENLY CB92 parts tank, silencers etc, all very rare parts, reluctant sale of investment parts to clear. Tel. 01522 703687. Lincs.

HONDA CB750 1971+ Workshop Manual, Honda Motor Co publication, £20. Rear brake, light switch Triumph; handle bar light switch Triumph; new old stock gear change rubber, Triumph, £20 the lot . Tel. 01204 397033. Lancs.

KAWASAKI GTR1000 1993, full MoT, 2020, fully refurbished, tyres, battery, oils, seals, £2200 ono. Tel. 01434 240263. Hexham.

MANX GOLDIE unfinished project, complete, unmodified rolling chassis, tanks, wheels etc, complete 500 engine, GP carb etc, may separate, pristine condition, would make superb Triton. Tel. 01276 932987. Berks.

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NORTON MOD 50 1964, Slimline frame, 12v electrics, indicators fitted, alloy rims, tank treated by Tank Care Products of Norfolk, black/white, vgc, £5000 ono. Tel. 01284 762067; 07989 927650. Suffolk. ptr.howard41@gmail.com

SUZUKI GSXR750WN 1992, 33,000 miles, blue, white, many new parts, bills to prove, on Sorn, £2500 . Tel. Richard 01243 948518. West Sussex.

TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE 1964, very rare, T120 TT matching numbers concours collectors machine, multi show winner, for sale or exchange for smaller concours rare machine, cash adjustment either way, £15,950. Tel. 01522 703687. Lincs.

TRIUMPH TIGER 110 1962, pre-unit mag alternator Duplex frame, looks like tangerine dream, not to be missed, hansom bike, £6500. Tel. 01376343559. Essex.

TRIUMPH TR65 1982/83, fitted Yamaha front end, needs rear wheel, barn find, £tel. £1900. Tel. 07877 329607. Ayrshire.

TRIUMPH TROPHY 1993, vgc, Givi luggage, 30k miles, £1450. Tel. 07722 749635. London.

TRIUMPH TROPHY TR6R, 1966 in stunning Pacific blue and white, the bike has been restored to a very high standard and never used, so must go, I am looking for offers around £7500 and happy to answer any questions. Tel. 07742 165860. Northumberland.

VELOCETTE LE model, 200cc. Tel. 07903 124199. Cleveland.

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BSA B31 1958, £175; complete, fully enclosed, original rear chain guard, sound condition, suit S/A frame, pair nearly new HD silencers, off late 883 Iron, £100. Tel. 01297 489578. Dorset.

BSA GOLDSTAR swing arm, 8" single sided front wheel, will need new rim, photographs available, buyer collects, £230. Tel. 07857 146199. Bristol.

GEARBOX for 1957-58 BSA, good, £90 no offers. Tel. 01495 313881. Gwent.

ITALIAN PARTS: large accumulation various makes, includes Ducati, Benelli, Cagiva, Laverda, Morini sell or exchange anything considered. Tel. 07833 906288. Essex.

MANX SPARES rev counter, anti vibration mounting, f/b cable with guide set, f/glass rear mudguard, oil tank protector, r/wheel adjuster, set Reynolds alloy steering adjuster, £95. Tel. 01276 932987. Berks.

MATCHLESS/A.M.C rigid rear stand in good condition, £40. Triumph pre-war oil tank, fair condition, £35. BSA Bantam original handlebars fair condition, £20, will post at cost. Tel. Simon 01284 753974. Suffolk.

MK 1 CONCENTRIC CARB 932, good condition, £85 ono. Tel. 01883 348187. Surrey.

NORTON FASTBACK tail fairing, good condition, £115 ono. Tel. 01883 348187. Surrey.

PETROL TANKS Triumph Saint, £100. Cub hump type, £50. BSA A65 f/glass flip-up cap, £60 all good condition c/w badges, taps, cap, £200 the lot, may swop Bantam spares. Tel. 07842 287137. Northants.

STANLEY HEADLAMP Reflector Moped/Motorcycle, no bulb holder, but good condition, grp housing scrap 4-1/2" diameter, £5 (£3 p&p). Tel. Richard 01842 819969.

SUZUKI RGV125 OE front disks, good condition 2 of £30 each; also Yamaha TZ125 front disk, £30, will post out at cost. Tel. 01226 297119. S Yorks.

TRIUMPH SPARES Pre-unit crankcases, 5T, 6T Speedtwin engine complete, year 1955 approx, running, very rare TR5 Square head, Trophy engine, full rebuild, perfect, many new parts, much more, £2000. Tel. 07443 642408 anytime. West Yorkshire

TRIUMPH SPARES: mid 1950s, 6T Thunderbird pre-unit crankcases, £185. Alloy pre-unit Tiger 100 cylinder head. 10mm centre plug modification, no broken fins, bare, £165. Pair of rocker boxes and rockers complete for T100, £150. Tel. 02476 443801. Coventry.

TRIUMPH SPARES: pre-unit, three sets of crankcases 5T, 67, also complete engine 500cc speedtwin running, year 1954 approx, ring for prices p&p at cost, all good. Tel. 07443 642408. West Yorks.

TRIUMPH T100 12 volts, coils with all brackets ready to bolt on. Tel. 01933 355796. Northants.

TRIUMPH T120/TR6 PARTS. Pair exhaust downpipes in excellent condition, (changed to Siamese), £85; original Lucas chrome headlamp shell in good condition but no perfect, £40; Tiger Cub silencer, vgc but not the best quality, suitable off-roader, £15; BSA RGS original rear open number plate, excellent condition, £48; A7/A10 etc rear number plate (closed type) needs small repair, £15. Tel. 01865 762859. Oxon.

TRIUMPH TIGER 100SS frame and swinging arm log book applied for, £250. Tel. 07877 329607. Ayrshire.

TRIUMPH TR6 1962, exhaust pipes and silencers (Burgess pattern), excellent condition, chrome perfect, £220 ono. Tel. 01883 348187. Surrey.

TRIUMPH UNIT construction type clutch (3 spring) as fitted to 350/500 models, complete clutch with spare plates, good condition but needs a set of roller bearings as some are missing, can post but quite heavy, £50 ono. Tel. 01865 762859.

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TYRES. 300 x 19'' ribbed front, S/m Mk 2, vgc, £20 ono; Honda Fireblade, front 16'', Pirelli Diablo, used but plenty left, £20 ono; 165 x 15'' classic Pirelli Cinturato, vgc, hardly used, £25 can post but prefer collection. Tel. 01865 762859. Oxon

VELOCETTE 350 MAC crankcases for sale, Triumph pre unit 4 spring clutch new and complete, Matchless 350 front forks and yokes, Velocette Mac 350 gearbox, Tiger Cub gearbox parts, Matchless 350/500 frame, front wheel, brake plate, cylinders and heads, Velocette MAC cylinder and heads, James Comet L1 parts, swinging arm, rear mudguard, frame, wheels, Excelsior Skutabike frame, other parts available open to offers. Tel. Paul 07912 395132. Kent.

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BSA BANTAM or similar two stroke wanted either runner or restoration project, have cash and will travel. Tel. 07538 696157. Midlands.

BSA PROJECT wanted anything considered, any size or condition, single, twin or even a Bantam, have cash and will travel, Triumph also considered. Tel. 07932 948153. Notts.

CYCLE MASTERS winged wheel auto cycle or parts wanted. Tel. 07790 168224. Warwickshire.

GOOD LATE B33 BARREL and piston wanted. Tel. 07857 146199. Bristol. Email. surferkane@gmail.com

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NORTON 850 Commando cylinder head wanted. Tel. 01803 866763. Devon.

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PROJECT BIKE wanted any age or condition, looking for a winter project, more rust the better, like a challenge. Tel. Mike 07422 516869. Cornwall.

PROP STAND for 1956-58 BSA A7, 500cc. Tel. 01495 313881. Gwent.

PUCH MAXI wanted, any condition. Tel. 07790 168224. Warwickshire.

SPEEDOMETER Smiths chronometric for British bike wanted in working order or needing repair. Tel. 07538 696157. Midlands.

TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE wanted, 1963-1966, any condition considered. Tel. 07453 808808. West Midlands.

TRIUMPH DAYTONA 500 wanted 1973/74, matching numbers in good condition. Tel. Steve 07887 836973. Yorkshire.

VILLIERS ENGINED BIKE wanted for restoration project, older the better, single or twin, road, off road or race bike, anything considered, but prefer Greeves, Dot, James, Excelsior etc. Tel. 07984 929634. Midlands.

WANTED 1960/70S TOY model bikes by Britains, Timpo, Lone Star, etc. And plastic garage figures, soldiers, knights, cowboys and plastic garden. Tel. 07823 443474.

WANTED ANY BRITISH bikes, BSA, Triumph, Norton etc, basket cases, part built bikes, projects, cash paid on collection. Tel. 07443 642408. West Yorkshire.

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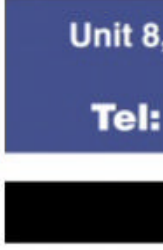

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FRANK WESTWORTH

IN SEARCH OF THE LOST CAUSE

Frank reveals his passion for one of BSA's less successful models, the Beagle. If you don't think fun can come in small packages, think again

"But yes, a BSA Beagle. Possibly my favourite of very, very many lost causes, although there is another... Have you seen a Beagle? Have you ridden one? I thought not."

LOST CAUSES... WE ALL KNOW WHICH BIKES were lost causes, although I'd bet that we all have our own lost cause lists, and I'll bet that they're not the same. I'd go further – I'd bet that some of the bikes you'd dismiss with a healthy dose of sneer would be bikes I'd happily donate a few shillings to load into The Shed and gaze at in wonder for years to come. Lost causes are the direct opposite to icon bikes – those machines before whose gleam and glamour we genuflect in religious awe. I have of course ridden lots – lots! – of both kinds of bike. Tolerance is its own reward.

Possibly because of some forgotten misdemeanour in the land of longago, I recently found myself gripping the grips of a bonzer Beezer, a very shiny twin basking in the alleged heritage of a similarly styled single. It was very loud and very uncomfortable and very fast, too, the only one of those three facts which I shared with Proud Owner. But my inadequate enthusiasm may have been evident, because without a trace of a laugh he remarked that maybe this … this would suit me more? He pulled a cover from another motorcycle. Cue the indescribable sound of a jaw dropping.

A Beagle! Be still my beating thing – this was no time for a heart attack brought on by emergency enthusiasm. But yes, a BSA Beagle. Possibly my favourite of very, very many lost causes, although there is another... Have you seen a Beagle? Have you ridden one? I thought not.

It's always been fashionable to sneer at the BSA management's inability to triumph over Honda in the desperate days of the late Sixties. I disagree with most of the sneering, so will ignore it. One of the many major moans was that BSA had deserted the bread 'n' butter end of the market, just allowing Honda's commuter bikes to run slowly away with the commuter consumer. Those moaners had plainly forgotten the noble BSA Beagle – and had possibly ignored its stablemate Ariel Pixie entirely. Their loss.

What do you mean, you've never heard of the noble BSA Beagle? Talk about sheltered lives.

After tottering from the grossly uncomfortable perch of the fire-breathing (sigh) big twin, I just had to go for a blast on the Beagle. A blast on a Beagle? Okay, more a gentle bumble than a searing blast, but who cares, really? BSA tried to make a 75cc Edward Turner engine into a thing of wonder … and while even the most enthusiastic baby bike fan would struggle to claim it as a success, and while its entire production run of around 3200 was probably a quiet afternoon's output at Hamamatsu … it was actually pleasant to ride. And easier than a Honda Cub for someone more familiar with basic motorcycles.

But a lost cause? Certainly was. BSA had understood the lessons Honda (and some European manufacturers) had provided about building most of the motorcycle out of cheap steel pressings rather than tubes. The Beagle was tubeless, in one sense at least. The frame was a set of pressings, as were parts of the forks and the swinging arm. It had a leading link front end, too, and the engine dangled from the spine frame – not unlike many Japanese commuter machines. It should have worked, but it didn't. Maybe it was too bike-like for the commuters who really did want a step-thru scooter.

So the more memorable of the two BSA machines I rode that day wasn't the snort-ripping big twin, a bike worth untold thousands of pounds and beloved of everyone on the planet. With odd exceptions. The baby Beagle, complete with its Bantam fuel tank, was so crackers that if it had been for sale I would have bought it. That's true. The owner liked it as much as I did. He sold the big shiny twin almost immediately after I rode it, too. I can understand why. And he still has the Beagle.

So lost causes? Never write them off. Instead add to your life's delight by discovering more of them, like the most interesting Velocette of them all – the Viceroy. A flat twin stroker with the engine in front of the rider and the gearbox under the seat? And it's a scooter, too. Can't fail, as we might have said in 1960, or not…

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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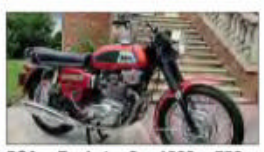
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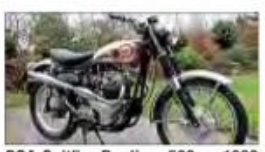
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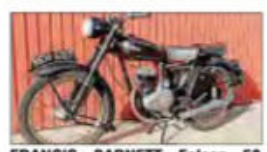
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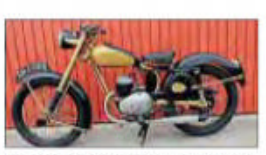
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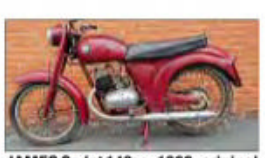
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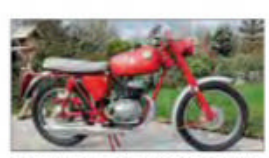
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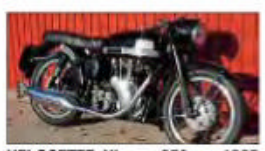
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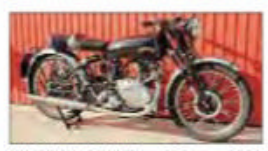
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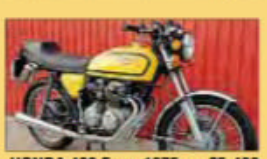
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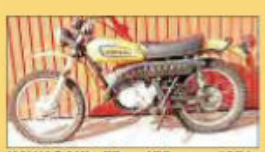
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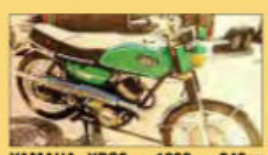
YAMAHA YDS6, 1969, 246cc £3,500

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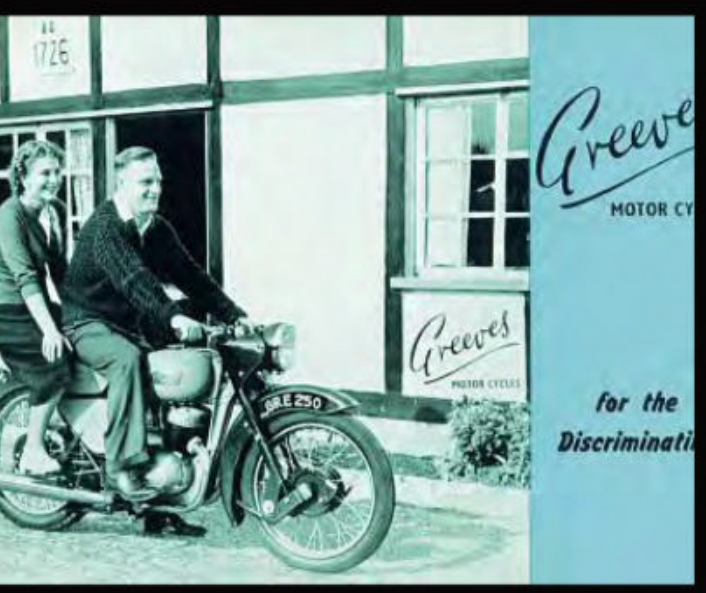

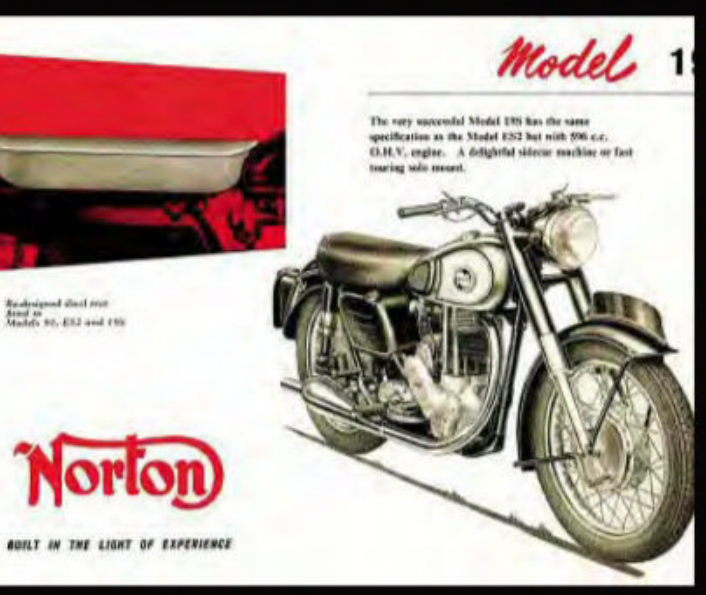

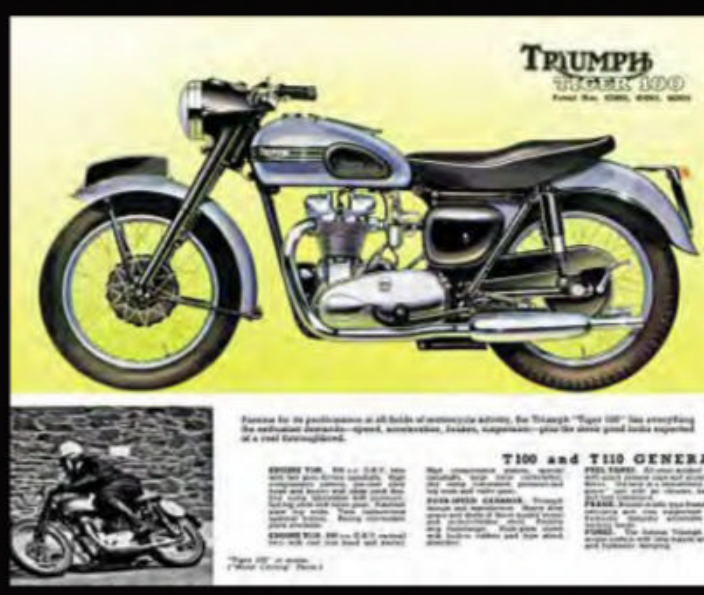

2019

Your guide to the most popular postwar British bikes

IDEAL MOTORCYCLES

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1978 AJS FB Red Devil. Rare. Penultimate bike build. One owner, low mileage, new engine seals and engine over hauled. **£3995**

1957 Ariel HT5 500cc Trials machine. This machine still retains the original air cleaner, tool box, foot pegs and original 19" rear wheel rim. Runs well. **£12,695**

1950 BSA ZB34 Competition Machine. Completely rebuilt including engine, gearbox & wheels.Very rare. Wonderful condition - lights & original buff log book. **£12,999**

1968 Cheney BSA 441 Victor Enduro Ceriani forks, Grimeca front &rear brakes. Alloy fuel tank. Gearbox overhauled. New battery. Enduro tyres fitted to Akront rims. Ready to ride. **£7.895**

1976 Cotton Javerlin 250cc DMW/Villiers engine. Completely rebuilt. A very rare and desirable machine - only 1 of 23. **£4995**

1968 Cotton Trials Villiers 37A engine. Rebuilt - MP forks and yokes. Beta rear shocks. Original engine & chain guards. Road Registered V5c. **£3895**

1966 Greeves Anglian Trials Prototype & works machine built and ridden by Allie Cameron. **£6850**

1976 Greeves MkII 380 QUB Griffon 'Unused' one of two held as spare for the Royal Artillery Display Team. Purchased from the Factory in Jan 1979. **£14,000**

1957 Matchless G80CS replica. Completely re-built, lovely condition with road gearing. **£6250**

1951 Norton 500T In restored condition. Wheels rebuilt, rims re-chromed. Correct mudguard stays, forks & yoke front brake plate. Matching number machine. **£14,695**

1953 Panther Mk3. Very rare. Fully restored. 1 of only 5 ever built with the Stroud Y alloy head. Fitted with Dowty forks. Rear center stand. OHV. Dating certificate. **£18,995**

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1954 Triton. Cafe Racer. Norton-Manx frame. Triumph T140E parellel head, original fibreglass. Engine completely rebuilt by ourselves. **£9975**

1966 Triumph Bonneville Immaculate condition. Triumph road test bike with proven history. **£12,995**

Tiger Cub Bantam engine. Highly modified - swing arm, foot pegs, electronic ignition, air filter, oil tank, BSA forks. Famous ex-rider/author's bike. **£4250**

1995 Triumph Trident 900. 7800 miles. Most desirable colour scheme. Was in long term storage. Lovely condition. Fully serviced & MOT. New tyres. **£3795**

1967 Triumph Trophy 650cc Rare colour scheme. Front brake upgrade. Alloy wheel rims. Good condition. **£9695**

1952 Triumph Trophy Special Started as Triumph TRW - modified to a Trophy style machine. Wide ratio gear box, forks, shuttle valve system, Akron rims **£9995**

1953 Triumph Trophy TR5 Matching engine and frame number. Older restoration. Beautiful condition. **£15,350**

1959 Velocette Venom. Cafe Racer in Clubman spec. Alloy rims. Rev. Counter. Twin leading shoe brakes. Green log book. **£11,950**

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Welcome to temptation!

Welcome to Classic Bike Guide's *British Bike Guide. It's quite a simple beast, just a few column inches about some of the main bikes built from the end of the Second World War, with an archive or contemporary photo to help identification. Much of it was written by our very own Frank Westworth, so there are some personal observations and opinions. It's not definitive, it's not a store of the British bike industry and it's not a buying guide. It's just there to give a brief insight into the many, many bikes manufactured in the UK that may be of interest to you, or indeed someone you know, who may be getting into the world we all (mostly) love.*

WHICH ONE?

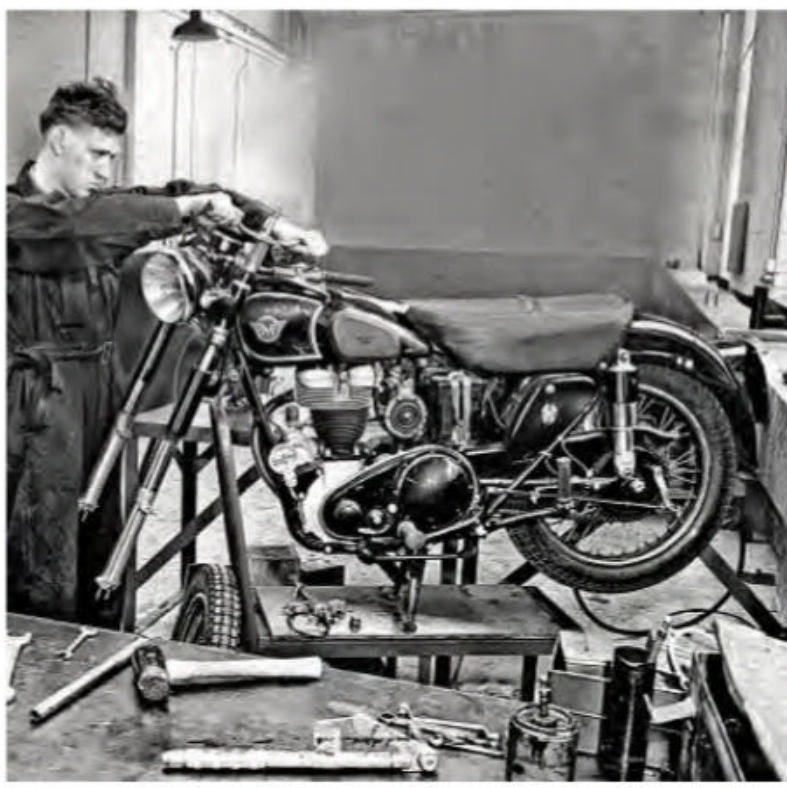
Buying a(nother) classic bike is easy, getting the right bike for you is slightly less so. But if the classic bug has firmly bitten and your savings are currently sizzling away in your pocket, there are a few honest, even harsh, questions you need to ask yourself before you decide which bike to go for.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO USE IT FOR?

If you're used to a modern bike with turn-key reliability, power aplenty and you are planning to cover decent miles, then a later bike, maybe even a modern retro-styled bike, would be best. If, on the other hand, you're after something for the monthly VMCC bimble, then you can look for something a little older, even an oddball. However if, you're after a project to provide time and solace in the workshop, then you need to look for spares availability and if wise, a project that's as complete as possible. Oh, if only I'd been told this before...

Unless you grew up with British bikes, identifying which classic is your own particular dream may be tricky. Many bikes had several names, yet often there were prewar and postwar models with the same name, yet totally different. Then there were the technology changes as models evolved – unit or pre-unit, girder forks or tele-forks, rigid, plunger or swinging arm frames, side valve, overhead valve or overhead cam engines. And is the reg original? What is easy – too easy – to get wrong is the exact spec, and as a result the price.

There are, for example, many different



Triumph Bonnevilles, and if you decide that your life will only be complete if shared with a Bonnie then you need to know which sort of Bonnie you want to share it with. It all sounds simple, but it's not. Sometimes. If you know you want a 1965 T120TT and nothing else, you'll be fine.

Sticking with the Bonnie idea, if you want the whole 1950s Rocker thing – complete with pre-unit charm, genuine Edward Turner styling and a glorious tangerine paint job – then you are not going to be happy with a 1972 T120 rather than a T120 from 1959. This applies to all marques and all models. Before you spend your money, ride a few of the bikes on your shortest shortlist. Join the relevant owners' club, join the club before you spend your money – so you can meet owners, maybe even ride their bikes, and learn about the reality of life with your dream bike. This is essential.

If you've narrowed it down to a couple of candidates, chosen whether you want a concours machine, runner or project, it's now a case of looking at prices. Classic bikes don't benefit from an industry-wide price guide, such as Glasses Guide or the CAP book. Prices are whatever people think their bike is worth, or what they feel they can get for it. The prices in this publication are purely there as a rough guide, taken from our own classifieds, auction prices and industry experts, but they're just a guide. There's no easy way around this, you just need to do your homework.

You need to become an expert. Follow bikes online, in auctions and from dealers. And of course, they will all be different and in different conditions. Do the numbers match? Are you bothered if it's reflected in the price? After all, most bikes will be more than half a century old and rarely original.

Look at a bike that seems okay apart from some tarnished mudguards and iffy spokes. Budget at least £125 per wheel and mudguards, depending on whether you can find new/old stock or if you're happy with pattern parts, for around £300. Paintwork is getting more and more expensive. Don't trust the bloke who says he'll do it for a couple of hundred - you'll regret it. In fact, be careful who you do trust. Ask around; there's a lot of experts out there...

Never lose sight of your goal – there are minefields, but once through you should have a depreciation-free way of having a lot of fun. We hope this guide inspires you and remember, should you have any questions, please contact us at editor@classicbikeguide.com. Enjoy.

The Classic Bike Guide team.

A-B

AJS & MATCHLESS

By 1950, Associated MotorCycles Limited in South London was building bikes under both AJS and Matchless badges. At one time, AMC boasted the largest factory in the world dedicated to motorcycle production. In 1953 it acquired the Norton marque, at first keeping production in Birmingham but eventually moving Norton in with AJS and Matchless in 1962. AMC also built James and Francis-Barnett motorcycles (also in the Midlands and not at Plumstead). So the varied range of models offered under the AMC banner stretched from 98cc two-strokes all the way through to stonking 750cc four-stroke Superbikes. The company was also successful in two-wheeled sports, and apart from the dedicated and highly specialised road-racers it also built a lot of competition-based roadsters. The whole lot collapsed in 1966, and was reborn as Norton-Villiers, concentrating on the Norton Commando series and a range of two-stroke AJS off-roaders.

Model designations are shown for AJS, with Matchless equivalents shown in brackets, as the two marques increasingly differed only in finish and trim styles. The bikes are very solid, well-engineered and rewarding to ride. Spares are plentiful, and there is an excellent and very active owners' club.

ARIEL

Ariel, which built its range of high-quality machines in Selly Oak, Birmingham, was a part of the BSA group of companies, and the BSA influence became greater as the years rolled by.

Its machines always had a carefully crafted air of quality, with thoughtful styling and finish. The singles were conventional in design, strong and reliable performers with a solid competition heritage to complement their build quality.

There are two twins, the 500, which is an Ariel design, and the 650, which is a lightly redesigned BSA A10. All Ariel machines used Burman gearboxes despite the increasing use of BSA Group components in other areas, and they have a gloriously prewar primary chaincase design, complete with a dry clutch running in its own external housing. Gear changes are typically Burman; slow but sure and silent if adjusted properly. The famous Square Fours, with their cylinders arranged in a square and running two crankshafts, are some sort of pinnacle of British engineering, although they can be expensive to restore. The final flourish was the introduction of the Leader/Arrow range of two-stroke twins, and when these were discontinued in 1965, Ariel was no more. We will ignore the Ariel 3... Spares okay (one good specialist dealer, and the entirely excellent owners' club), apart from tinware.

In common with most other major manufacturers, Ariel entered the postwar world with a range of mostly rigid machines, but was a little ahead of the mainstream game in that it'd introduced its sprung frame just before the Second World War on the Square four. It was an unusual design, more clever than most. After the war, it offered rigid and springer frames, finally introducing their own excellent swinging arm frame in 1954.

BSA

At one time, BSA was the largest motorcycle manufacturer in the world and there are still many of the products of its Small Heath, Birmingham factory, around today. The BSA range was huge, covering all areas of road riding and competition and was exported to just about everywhere.

Many originally exported BSAs have been repatriated over the years, which keeps prices competitive. If you are a newcomer to the old bike world, then a BSA of some description could well be your best bet. They're significantly less expensive than equivalent Triumph and Norton models, have an active owners' club and many spares suppliers with plenty of repro parts being made.

BSA offered a wide range of machines; singles, twins and triples, as well as the once-ubiquitous Bantam, probably the most famous small-stroker of them all and an inexpensive way to play with straightforward mechanicals.

The BSA way was a path of steady development, and although it built models as rapid as any Triumph, which handled as well as Nortons, Beezers were never rated so highly. BSA – a big concern that included Triumph – left the 1960s on top of the world, and entered the 1970s on a rapid slide to oblivion. The dohc 350 twin was stillborn and the radical new frame designs introduced in 1971 were largely ignored because they used the same old single and twin engines.

Be careful when buying bikes from 1971-73; threadforrns changed in a strange sequence, so parts that appear perfect for a particular bike might not fit at all. For example, all the unit single engines look similar, which they are, but they are not the same; they changed constantly and sometimes radically through the years.

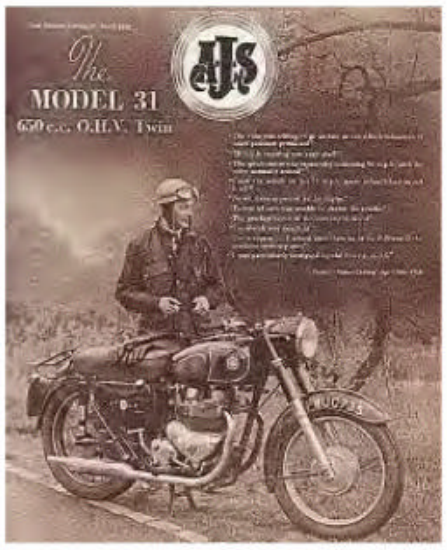
The failure and collapse of BSA is one of the saddest episodes in British industry. Always join the superb owners' club.

Matchless G15/45

749cc ohv twin || 430lb || 50mpg || 105mph || 1962-63

Conscious of the ever-growing demand for more power – particularly in America – AMC stretched its engine out to 750cc and offered the Matchless G15/45 (there was no AJS equivalent) for sale in the US. It was strangely unsuccessful. Myth suggests that the engine was unreliable, vibratory and not very good, but repatriated bikes are very pleasant, beefy torque-deliverers, and sound in wind and limb. The idea of a 750 twin was resurrected in 1963-64, but the new model used the Norton Atlas engine to power a range of models collectively known as 'AMC hybrids'.

Prices:
low £7500 || high £11,000... if you can find one



Model 31 (Matchless G12)

646cc (72 x 79.3mm) ohv twin. 430lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1959-66

The most common AMC twin. The earliest models were plainly a stroked stretch of the 600cc Model 30, and developed an over-exaggerated reputation for fragility. The early 650 crank was supposed to be delicate, but only the alternator versions, which carried the massive alternator rotor on a drive-side crankshaft extension, had problems. AMC responded by forging post-1960 cranks in a very tough nodular iron. The post-61 models are very sound, if slightly staid, machines. In common with the rest of the heavyweight range, they acquired Norton forks and wheels for 1964, along with 12V electrics. Again, genuine CS and CSR versions will hold 25% higher prices, but watch out for fakes.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £7500

Model 8 (Matchless G5)

348cc (72 x 82.5mm) ohv single || 350lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1960-62

Bigger version of the Model 14, built with better forks taken from the early 1950s heavyweight but with a slightly feeble brake from the two-stroke range. They provide a better ride than the early 250s, although by 1962 there was nothing between them apart from better torque. The 350s didn't last long as they competed with AMC's own heavyweight 350 singles, without being better, just slightly lighter. Surprisingly quick and pleasant to ride, and currently enjoying rising prices along with their 250 stablemates.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £4250

Model 16 (Matchless G3)

348cc (69 x 93mm until 1963, then 72 x 85.5mm) ohv single || 400lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1945-66

Soundly engineered and finished trad Brit single. AMC singles are immensely strong, engineered to cover countless miles with little maintenance and no complaint. They started as rigid machines very close in spec to the wartime Matchless WD G3L, then switched to swinging arm suspension as the end of the 1940s approached, avoiding the 'plunger' rear suspension used by others. The late 1950s models with alternator lighting and half-decent brakes matched to fine handling are the most common, although the rigid-framed models have a considerable minimalist cachet and are rising in value at the moment. Also unusual, although not particularly popular, are the 1964-on versions, with their (relatively) short-stroke engine, Norton forks and wheels. Rigids fetch the highest prices, but spares for the later ones are easier. Very easy bike to live with; very few faults.

Prices:
low £2200 || high £3750
(CS comp models a lot more)

Model 30 (Matchless G11)

593cc (72 x 72.8mm) ohv twin || 410lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1956-58

As Norton (under AMC ownership) took its 500cc Dominator 88 and stretched it into the 600cc Dominator 99, so AMV stretched its own 500 twin, simply over-boring it a little to provide the extra capacity. This is the least common of the AMC twins, and the 600s have been described as the best model in the series. The sports (CS) version is very unusual, very handsome and will cost an easy £1000 more than an equivalent standard roadster, and the very rare CSR version may fetch even more.

Prices:
low £3500, high £7500

Model 33 (Matchless G15)

745cc (73 x 89mm) ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1964-68

Following the sales failure of the G15/45, AMC dropped the donkey from its Norton Atlas 750 twin into an AJS/Matchless chassis to create the Matchless 750 twin. The result is a terrific motorcycle, more rewarding to ride than the sum of its parts. The legendary Atlas shakes are much reduced in the hybrids, perhaps because the heavy-lugged AMC frame absorbs more energy than the welded Norton Featherbed. The 750 hybrids came in three forms, a Mk.2 UK-style roadster, a CS street scrambler and a CSR café racer. Confusingly, the CS and CSR can be similar, especially US-spec models. The AJS versions are very rare and therefore expensive.

The final hybrids used the same engine squeezed into the cycle parts of the Matchless G85CS scrambler, replacing that machine's ohv alloy 500 single, to produce the P11, P11A and Ranger 750, often badged as Nortons. These machines are addictive, rare, highly sought-after and highly priced!

Prices:
low £6000 || high £15,000

Model 14 (Matchless G2)

248cc (70 x 65mm) ohv single || 340lb || 75mph || 1958-66 || 85mpg

AMC understood that it needed a lightweight four-stroke motorcycle to rival Triumph's Cub and BSA's C-range. Intelligently, they used a bicycle based on its James two-strokes and designed its own new four-stroke engine to fit. That engine appeared to be of 'unit' construction (where engine and gearbox are built into shared castings), but the gearbox was separate and cylindrical, attached to the crankcases by a pair of steel straps. The 250s and the similar 350s were not a commercial success and are not widely sought-after today. However, they are fun to ride (CSR 250s in particular) and offer a low-cost intro to classic motorcycling with plentiful spares and simple construction for straightforward spannering. Prices are currently rising, as the demand for physically smaller old bikes increases. The best bets are the AMC-forked versions and the late CSRs. As with most AMC models, the 250 was available in standard, 'S' (chrome mudguards), CS (off-road styling), and CSR (cafe-racer) versions.

Prices
low £1500 || high £3000

Model 18 (Matchless G80)

498cc (82.5 x 93mm until 1963, then 86 x 85.5mm) ohv single || 400lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1945-66

The 500 version of the very traditional AMC single really is a bigger version of the 350, with a bit more of everything, especially torque. Excellent riders' machines; classic in every way. They share almost all the components apart from the piston, flywheels, barrel and head with the smaller engine, which gives them a tendency to knock out some pattern big ends very quickly. However, this is not the problem it was, as the quality of AMC spares continues to improve. This is a pleasant touring motorcycle, with good handling and comfort allied to a relaxed 60mph cruising speed. It's easy to convert a 350 single to a 500 as the strokes are the same, but to run smoothly they also need the 500's flywheels. When considering a machine that claims a competition heritage with engine number suffixes C, CS or TCS, check with owners' club before buying.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6000
(CS comp models a lot more)

G80

499cc ohc single || 390lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1987-90

Early starting and finish problems would appear to have been overcome on the later bikes, and the G80 makes a pleasant, practical, comfortable classic styled bike for everyday use. If you have a choice, opt for the electric start and twin front discs, just accept that you'll pay more for one of these. The once-famous marque was offered a new lease of life from a new home in Newton Abbot in Devon. Only one model was offered; a Rotax-engined 500cc single, either with or without a second front brake disc to handle the power of the electric start (a joke). The frame, designed by Triumph engineer Brian Jones, is oil-bearing, light and neat. Many spares are available from either the company (L F Harris) or from Rotax. The G80 suffered from over-pricing, sadly, and didn't do well.

Prices:
low £2100 || high £4000

Model 20 (Matchless G9)

498cc (66 x 72.8mm) ohv twin || 410lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1948-61

AMC's twin took a different path from the already established designs from BSA, Triumph, etc. So the engines are unusual, having a third main bearing between the cylinders, and separate barrels and cylinder heads. The engine is a notably clean design, with no external oil plumbing to spoil the lines and leak at the joints. It was never particularly popular with the sporting riders, although it was a handsome motorcycle and reliable enough. There were no rigid-framed or plunger-framed twins. Gradual development included the switch from a Burman gearbox to one of AMC's own design (aka the Norton gearbox, which went on to handle the power of the

Commando!) in 1956. The 'jampot' rear suspension was replaced by Gang units the following year. This is a good, reliable conservative motorcycle. Late ones are rare and very good, with alternator electrics and excellent duplex frames. Early jampot models can have odd handling and poor brakes.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £4000

Leader

247cc two-stroke twin || 330lb || 55mpg || 70mph || 1958-65

A radical concept; a wholly enclosed, fully faired touring motorcycle, with a range of accessories that almost defied description in the 1950s. One of the few wholly original designs to emerge from the postwar British industry. Especially recommended to those who still enjoy leisurely lane cruising. The fairing is excellently effective, and the only real downside is the poor braking. Check that the pressed-steel beam frame is not rotted, especially around the suspension pick-up points. Comfortable and clean.

Prices:
low £2200, high £3500

VH (Red Hunter)

497cc ohv single || 375lb || 55mpg || 85mph || 1932-58

A very sound big banger, which started life as an unusual four-valve racer for the first year or so, but by 1934 gained a two-valve top end. Gradually became more refined and road-based. Often with a beautiful maroon finish (like the rest of the four-stroke range) and great reliability. Rigid models are always good to ride, though some consider the later swinging arm machines to be the best riders and the most oil-tight. HS (scrambles) and HT (trials) comp versions are very highly sought-after and highly priced as a result, so check that what you're buying is the genuine article. Ariel's singles are still under-rated, too, and are more affordable than many others, despite their excellence on the road.

Prices:
low £2800 || high £6000

Colt

197cc ohv single || 270lb || 80mpg || 65mph || 1954-60

A smart-looking utility single loosely based on BSA's C11 with added Arielness. A faintly unusual idea, as 250cc was a more popular capacity both for commuters and learner riders. Spares good for the engines; Ariel-specific parts less so.

Prices:
low £1500 || high £2500

KH (Fieldmaster)

498cc ohv twin || 390lb || 65mpg || 90mph || 1948-58

Sweet touring twin with a unique motor in standard Ariel cycle parts. Engine spares can be hard to find, and the bikes are quite a rare sight these days. The engine is unique to the model, and is unusual in having its pushrods at the outside corners of the block. The 1953-only all-alloy KHA is the most rare and will cost more. Available with rigid, Anstey link plunger or swinging arm frames. The all-iron rigid twin is a particular charmer, not unlike Norton's iron twins in the way it rides.

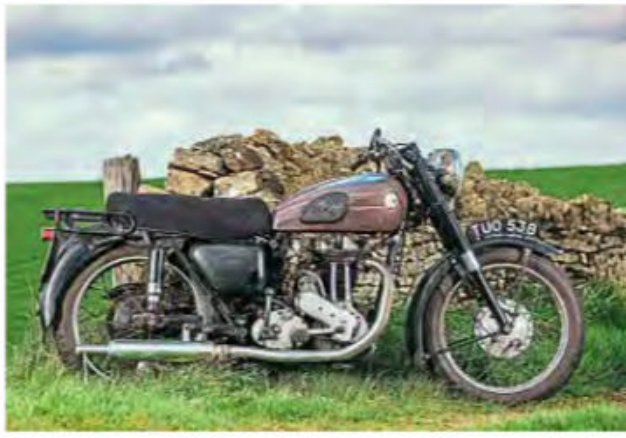
Prices:
low £3500 || high £6250

FH (Huntmaster)

648cc ohv twin || 400lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1954-58

Solid touring 650 twin, with a BSA A10-based engine that retained the tractable, quiet iron cylinder head to its end. Probably the most usable Ariel twin because of the easy availability of engine spares, and upgradeable using any sporting BSA A10 components. A stylish but sometimes slightly more expensive alternative to an A10, entirely capable of long-distance two-up travel. However, like other Ariels, the tin bits are scarce, although the rise of replica parts has eased this somewhat. The brakes can be marginal, although they were deemed sufficient for sidecar use in their day.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £6500



NH (Red Hunter)

347cc ohv single || 365lb || 70mpg || 75mph || 1945-58

A handsome working single in the trad Brit mould. Few special virtues or vices. The unusual Anstey-link plunger models can be challenging to ride and interesting to own; the excellent swinging arm frame handles rather better. The single engines are all developments of a prewar design, and their ancestry is plain to anyone who observes that their single oil pump is almost identical to that fitted to countless Triumph twins. Few faults, although the Lucas Magdyno can be expensive to refurbish.

Prices:
low £2200 || high £4000

Square Four

997cc ohv four || 480lb || 45mpg || 100mph || (Mk.1 and Mk.2) 1949-1959

The famous British postwar four is a machine of immense appeal, considerable mechanical noise and great smoothness. Early models are supposedly prone to overheating, and the solo handling can be a little exciting at speed, not least because Ariel never put its swinging arm Four into production and the Anstey link plunger rear end can struggle with the weight and performance. The brakes can also struggle to cope with the speed and mass. For all that, the Squariel is a highly desirable and functional bike with a unique cachet. Mk.2 bikes easier to rebuild.

Prices:
low £10,000 || high £16,000

VB

598cc sv single || 370lb || 50mpg || 60mph || 1945-58

One of the last of the side valve sloggers (along with BSA's M20 and M21); great reliability, massive charm and almost no performance. Like a lot of side valves, they offer an alternative experience to more common ohv singles. If you have a choice, go for the rigid, which boasts considerable character, the swinging arm model rather less so. Do not expect great acceleration or excitement.

Prices:
low £2750 || high £4250

Arrow

247cc two-stroke twin || 305lb || 55mpg || 75mph || 1960-5

A stripped-down Leader, built to utilise spare capacity in the Ariel works and then found to be popular with learner riders, the odd-looking Arrow was smooth and fast by the standards of the time, although it was also smoky and underbraked. Also built as the Sports (or 'Golden') Arrow (20hp, 80mph) and finally as the 200 Arrow. Active club, spares mostly available and a capable, if small machine that will always have people looking at it, thanks to the pressed steel frame.

Prices:
low £2200 || high £3500

C15 Star

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 70mpg || 70mph || 1959-67

Redesigned basic 250, with neat but restrained streamlined styling and unit construction. Some suffered bottom end and ignition troubles; most just whined on and on, as the basic design was rugged enough. Massive numbers were sold, which meant that even in the 'classic' age they were so plentiful that they are often neglected.

Buy with care, 1970s learner riders did terrible things to them. Sports version was the SS80, which was quicker and less reliable. C15T and C15S will cost more. Before paying a lot more for a T or an S, make sure they're genuine.

Prices:
low £1500 || high £3250

B33

499cc ohv single || 420lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1947-59

Enlarged B31, with more torque so longer legs. Possibly the classic 1950s workhorse, this one will run and run. Plunger suspension from 1949, then the admirable BSA swinging arm frame arrived in 1955. Alternator/coil ignition in 1958. Similar values for the M33, which is essentially an ohv (B33) engine in a side valve (M21) bicycle. All extremely straightforward to maintain and easy to live with: a solid bet for any beginner.

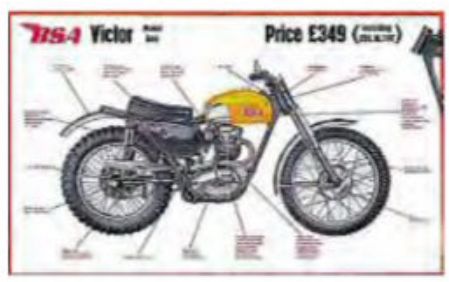
Prices:
low £2500 || high £4000

B44 Victor

441cc ohv single || 335lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1966-70

Another C15 stretch with more go and more vibration. Engines can be fragile if abused, despite their heroic Jeff Smith scrambles heritage. Also sold as the Shooting Star, not to be confused with the twin of the same name. Engines still popular with off-road warriors. Can be hard to start, so they say...

Prices:
low £2250 || high £4500



C25 Barracuda (66-67) Starfire (68-70)

249cc ohv single || 330lb || 60mpg || 75mph || 1966-70

Restyled C15 with a bit more go at the expense of some reliability. Better suspension, lighting and braking were added, and they can be surprisingly charming – and quick-steering, as the later frames were increasingly based around those used on the off-road camp models. Revs like a modern bike. Became the B25 Starfire in 1968. This is a better bet as it is more reliable and less vibratory following a mild detuning. Also sold as the Fleetstar for fleet users.

Prices:
low £1750 || high £3250

C10 (45-57), C11 (45-55), C12 (56-58)

249cc singles || 320lb || 75mpg || 55-65mph

Postwar utility bikes, negligible go, stop and handling. Many consider them to be dull, although they provided stolid ride-to-work reliability for many thousands who could afford better than a bicycle. Some spares are hard to find now, and BSA built these bikes to a price affordable by working-class heroes of their day. Less sought-after than Bantams, which is a little mysterious as they are a lot less common and as much fun.

Prices:
low £1200 || high £2750

A10
646cc ohv twin || 440lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1951-63

A classic in more than just name, the A10 was sold as the Golden Flash with flash style, the Road Rocket with a bit more go, and as the Super Rocket with a little more than that. Many plunger Flashes spent their working lives hauling sidecars and may still lean in that direction. The A10 engine in BSA's swinging arm frame is arguably one of the best postwar Britbikes: robust and easy to ride a long way, if less rapid than the Triumph alternative. The Rocket Gold Star was a super-sports version with Gold Star cycle parts and tuned engine. These can fetch £20,000+ but are highly fakeable, so be very careful. An A10 is a fine motorcycle; the only worry can be high-speed braking on the later models. SRM main bearing and uprated oil pump conversion are plusses when looking to buy.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £6500.
RGS low £9500 || high £20,000

B31
348cc ohv single || 365lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1945-59

Trad Brit single, Often leaky and rattly but can run up very high mileages with very little maintenance. Find an early one with solid or plunger frame for greater agility and charm. They are faster and sweeter than later heavier examples.

The 350 engine shared the same bicycle as far bigger machines, and can be leisurely as a result, especially the swinging arm bikes. The last models, with coil ignition and alternator electrics, should be worthwhile contenders for anyone who wants to ride regularly. Good spares availability, too.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £4000

B25SS
249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

The last of the long C15-based series, with a new oil-bearing chassis and smart street scrambler clothes for BSA's final rescue attempt. Naming it the Gold Star 250 didn't help sales or credibility. Also called the B25 Victor and rebadged as the Triumph Trailblazer/Blazer SS. As with all 250s, these suffered from learner neglect, so buy carefully and change the engine's oil frequently. Most spares are around, though quality can be extremely variable. The last are probably the best of all the BSA 250 singles and are entirely practical classics.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £4500

B32 Gold Star
348cc ohv single || 360lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1949-57

Amazing what a name and reputation can do for prices. Souped-up single with a flashy suit and better brakes than lesser models. The DB32 is the one to buy with its excellent duplex frame, although the price is high. Spares availability and quality are excellent and owners' club support is guaranteed. Check paperwork closely: look on old documents for evidence that it has always been a Goldie and isn't an over-priced replica.

Prices:
low £9000 || high £14000

B40
343cc ohv single || 305lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1960-65

Stretched C15, with more torque and a cast-in pushrod tunnel to distinguish it from its 250 sibling. Never wildly popular, they are nonetheless sound and usually reliable if treated kindly. Plenty of ex-WD bikes about. These are better bets, with good off-road type frames, an unusual set of gear ratios and better oil filters included. Most old soldiers appear to have been converted into trials irons, somehow. The sports SS90 version is now very rare.

Prices:
low £2000 || high £3000

A50 Royal Star
499cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1962-66

Unit-construction replacement for the A7. A fine if slightly sluggish machine with all the style of the 650s but with less go and fewer vibes. Smoother, though, and the rare sporting versions are highly entertaining. Bargains can sometimes be found and they make good working bikes. 12v alternator electrics and seriously simple maintenance make them entirely practical riding machines, while many unexpectedly fine comp models have been reimported from export markets, adding to both variety and appeal. Export styling is rather more adventurous than UK home market, too. The engines shouldn't leak and they shouldn't rattle, but they often do...

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6000

B34, DB34, DBD34, Gold Star
499cc ohv single || 410lb || 55mpg || 110mph || 1950-62

The Legend itself. Fun on the open road, but antisocial and awkward in traffic. Vastly overpriced thanks to a vast over-reputation, which masks their charm from many newer riders. Rewarding to own and to learn to ride properly. Spares and club support are excellent. Beware of fakes; buy from someone you trust, and always with a warranty. Superb specialist services and updated, uprated components are readily available, mostly intended to boost performance. This is a truly legendary motorcycle, and for once the legend is a real one.

Prices:
low £14,000 || high £24,000

B50SS
499cc ohv single || 340lb, 60mpg || 85mph || 1971-72

The last of the C15 stretches. Striking street-scrambler style fails to disguise the overstressed power train. Also known as the B50 Gold Star and B50T Victor. Conversion to electronic ignition can transform it to one of GB's best-ever singles, although starting it is a definite skill, and kickbacks can be killers. The most amazing exhaust system in the world on the US-only Triumph-badged version. Agile and quick, regular oil changes and a fully charged battery are essential. Drink plenty of beef tea before starting.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £5000

A65
654cc ohv twin || 425lb || 55mpg || 120mph || 1962-73

The unit-construction replacement for the A10. The A65 has a poor reputation as a vibrator and a leaker of oil, which means that they can often make good buys for riders. Get one while you can! In fact, the single-carb twins are no more rough than any other 650 twins. Spares are plentiful, if of unusually variable quality. Late (post 1971) bikes have the same oil-bearing frames as 71-83 Triumph twins and provide fine steering. Very late (1972) bikes are very good indeed, and are hard to fault as practical bikes – they even stopped leaking after the 1971 redesign. Sold as the Thunderbolt (tourer), Lightning (sports), Spitfire (café racer) and Firebird Scrambler (street scrambler). Problems tend to be electrical and easily fixed. Specialist engineering sorts suspect bottom end oiling, as in all BSA twins.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6000

M20
496cc sv single || 425lb || 55mpg || 65mph || 1945-55

Once ubiquitous antiquated side valve slogger, kept in production by WD contracts and sidecar hauliers such as the AA. Little go and little stop but very rugged riders, simply oozing character. Stretched to 591cc in 1946 (as the M21, until 1963), with similar performance but greater thirst for both petrol and oil.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £7000. Military models £5000+

A70 Lightning
751cc ohv twin || 425lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1971

US-only homologation special, intended for Stateside racing. Very rare – beware the imitator! These unusual engines were once popular with heroic chair racers. Spares are hard to find, and they're no faster on the road than the 650.

Prices:
High – if you find one.

A75R Rocket 3
740cc ohv triple || 520lb || 35mpg || 125mph ||1968-72

Arguably the first Superbike, the Rocket 3 was quite a sensation when launched, with its vivid acceleration, unconventional styling, high top speed and excellent steering. The bikes are in great demand, and can be expensive to run, although parts supply is good from several expert and specialist suppliers. Rewarding to own and ride, they can accept the disc brakes and electric starter from the T160 Trident. The late US market bikes are glorious to behold! Fascinating machines. They share an excellent owners' club with Triumph's Tridents.

Prices:
low £7500 || high £11,000

Bantam
174cc two-stroke single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph || 1948-71

The most widely sold of all BSAs, the Bantam (which was the one true learner bike of its day in the eyes of some) is apparently immortal, being plentiful even today and having an excellent owners' club of its own.

It began life in 1948 as the 123cc DI, grew to 148cc as the D3 in 1954 and to 174cc as the D5 in 1958. The one to look for is the 1968-71 D14/4, which has four gears, smartish styling, good handling and general reliability. The ones to ignore are possibly the plunger-framed versions. All Bantams can be reliable and very economical to run provided that they are built properly. Spares are plentiful and cheap, and modern ignition systems and engine seals can transform them. An easy introduction to classic Brits and exhilarating to ride on back roads.

Prices:
low £1000 || high £2750

A7
497cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg || 90mph || 1946-61

Splendid twin, with smooth power and typically fine BSA steering. Early models may be more sought-after, but post-1950 bikes, with A10-based engines, are better for spares. Immense reliability and charm. Recommended to anyone who enjoys motorcycling off the M-ways. Started out as a rigid, gained a redesigned engine and a plunger frame, was later redesigned again to fit into the swinging arm frame. Iron-engined rigids are especially fine. Only fault is the sometimes dismal 6v lighting but that's hardly unique to BSA and is fixable with modern components, as is the magneto ignition. A7SS Shooting Star is the sporty one with similar go and a higher price.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £5750

D-H

DOUGLAS

The small Bristol manufacturer that always seemed to be in financial difficulty, but which produced some interesting boxer twins, albeit with variable production quality. Despite the BMW-like across-the-frame flat twin design, with the crank's axis in line with the frame's centreline, Douglas turned the drive through 90° and used a chain final drive rather than a shaft — unlike Velocette's flat twins. Douglas bikes are relatively rarely offered for sale outside of the owners' club, which is the only reliable source of spares.

FRANCIS-BARNETT

Part of the AMC group, Francis-Barnett built sturdy and plodding two-strokes using both the Piatti-designed AMC engine and the better Villiers unit in a variety of capacities and styles. Not at present very highly regarded by the classic crowd. F-Bs are cheap enough to provide a lot of fun in the old bike milieu, and are reliable if looked after. Scarce spares, apart from for the Villiers engines.

GREEVES

Built in Thundersley, Essex, the Greeves range of lightweight, competition-based machines were always a bit different from the more mundane commuter bikes with which they shared the use of Villiers engines. The most striking features are the alloy beam-based frame and leading-link forks, which used rubber in torsion as the spring medium. Any bike that could be described as 'off-road' will command a higher price, but the roadster models, using both Villiers singles and twin engines, can provide superb steering, some style and a little performance. Silverstone road-racers are highly coveted by both collectors and riders, while the less than subtle Last Coaster is my personal favourite.

HESKETH

Launched at a wondering world as yet another Great British world-beater, Lord Hesketh's monster V-twin turned out to be an expensive flop, largely because the splendid-looking power unit was inadequately developed and lacked the sophistication required by those spending around £6000 on a motorcycle in 1982. It was also panned by the press, although at least one of *CBG's* regular crew likes them. Production of a sort dribbled on for years, including a recent relaunch using more modern suspension and brakes as well as a bigger version of the original engine. There are still a few low-mileage examples about, which could make sense, especially if they have been updated with the EN10 kit of improved engine parts. Spares supply mostly excellent. The current Hesketh concern is more about developing versions of its new and current range of V-twins using a proprietary powerplant rather than its own.

DOUGLAS

Mark Series

348cc ohv flat twin || 340lb || 65mpg || 75mph || 1949-51

Hard to find for sale, even harder to find on the road. Fine handling for their day, but a little fragile in the power dept. Once called 'the Bugatti of motorcycles'. The engineering is innovative, with their own take on suspension at both ends, including a truly unusual reliance upon torsion bars. The engines are sweet, smooth and gentle. Avoid the initial (teething troubled) 135 model. The Mk.3 Sports is the acknowledged one to have; 80-Plus and 90-Plus sporting versions are faster and boast better brakes for a frighteningly high price.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6500

Dragonfly

348cc ohv flat twin || 395lb || 55mpg || 75mph || 1954-57

Oddly styled touring 350 twin, featuring Earles forks and a faired headlamp/petrol tank, as well as conventional rear suspension. An involving, unusual machine with a rev-happy engine providing almost adequate performance and with excellent steering, but dire brakes and limited specialist support.

Prices:
low £4000 || high £5000

FRANCIS-BARNETT

The amazingly styled Fulmar, had a small AMC engine to propel its unusual frame, leading link front forks and swoopy bodywork slowly along. Other models include the Cruiser twins (89 and 91), which had almost acceptable performance. Prices for the whole range are similar and low. Owners' clubs are friendly, both their own as well as the British Two-Stroke.

Prices:
low £850 || high £2250

HESKETH

V1000

992cc dohc V-twin || 560lb || 35mpg || 120mph || 1982-84

Also sold as the Vampire with a striking full enclosure, the unfaired V1000 is let down by a noisy engine, a stiff gearchange and a very tall riding position. The rest of the machine is pretty good, using the best parts from European suppliers of the day, and most of the faults can be eliminated with redesigned parts developed by Mick Broom. Many of the criticisms come from those who've never ridden one, and those who ride them usually like them.

Prices:
low £10,000 || high £18,000

GREEVES

Prices:
low £2250 || high £4500

J-P

JAMES

The other AMC two-stroke builder, probably most well known for the Cadet and Captain commuters, which at the time were seen as a trifle dull. Once again, the better buys are those that are powered by Villiers rather than Piatti-designed AMC engines, and the very late (1966) Superswift twin is probably the one to find. Some machines were built with the Villiers 4T unit, which is a little less slow.

The James Scooter (which was sold as the Matchless Papoose in the US!) is the one to avoid – unless you truly are a collector of lost causes. However, a lot of low-cost, high-amusement riding can be had from any of the James range, and they can't depreciate much. Like most British two-strokers, they have a dedicated band of expert fans.

NORTON

An AMC company from 1953, Norton moved from its Birmingham base to the London AMC works in 1963 as part of the parent company's struggle to stay afloat. It built a wide range of machines including side valve sloggers, ohc singles and ohv twins. Famously better roadholding than the Triumph competition although many riders prefer the Triumph's perky power delivery: always more expensive than BSA, AJS or Matchless equivalents. Following the AMC crash of 1966, the new Norton Villiers concern concentrated on twins, launching the Commando in 1967 and relying on variants on this theme until production ceased in 1977.

A revived successor company produced several hundred twin-rotor Wankel-engined machines between 1983 and 1992, which have become accepted as classics despite their strangeness. The modern range of 961 Commandos is still current, so not considered here, yet. Spares supply is excellent for the classic twins, reasonable for the singles; likewise for the rotaries despite the demise of the factory. An excellent owners' club, which supplies an increasing range of obscure spares.

PANTHER

Built by Phelon and Moore in Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire, Panther motorcycles inspire huge loyalty in their owners and seem to spur them on to incredible feats. As well as the galaxy-spanning big slopers, P&M built a range of lighter four-stroke singles and a range of two-stroke lightweights powered by the ubiquitous Villiers engines and featuring Earles forks. They also imported the Terrot scooter in a vain tilt at the scooter market. Panthers have little performance but great charm. Active and completely eccentric owners' club. Spares okay.

JAMES

Comet/ Cadet

98cc/ 150cc two-stroke single || 260lb || 80-100mpg || 45mph || 1950-58

The later Comets were very similar to the Cadet, other than the smaller engine and make lovely, affordable classics. All James' bikes are fun on the right roads, with the right company, though the 250cc bikes make more sense.

Prices:
low £750 || high £2000

NORTON

16H

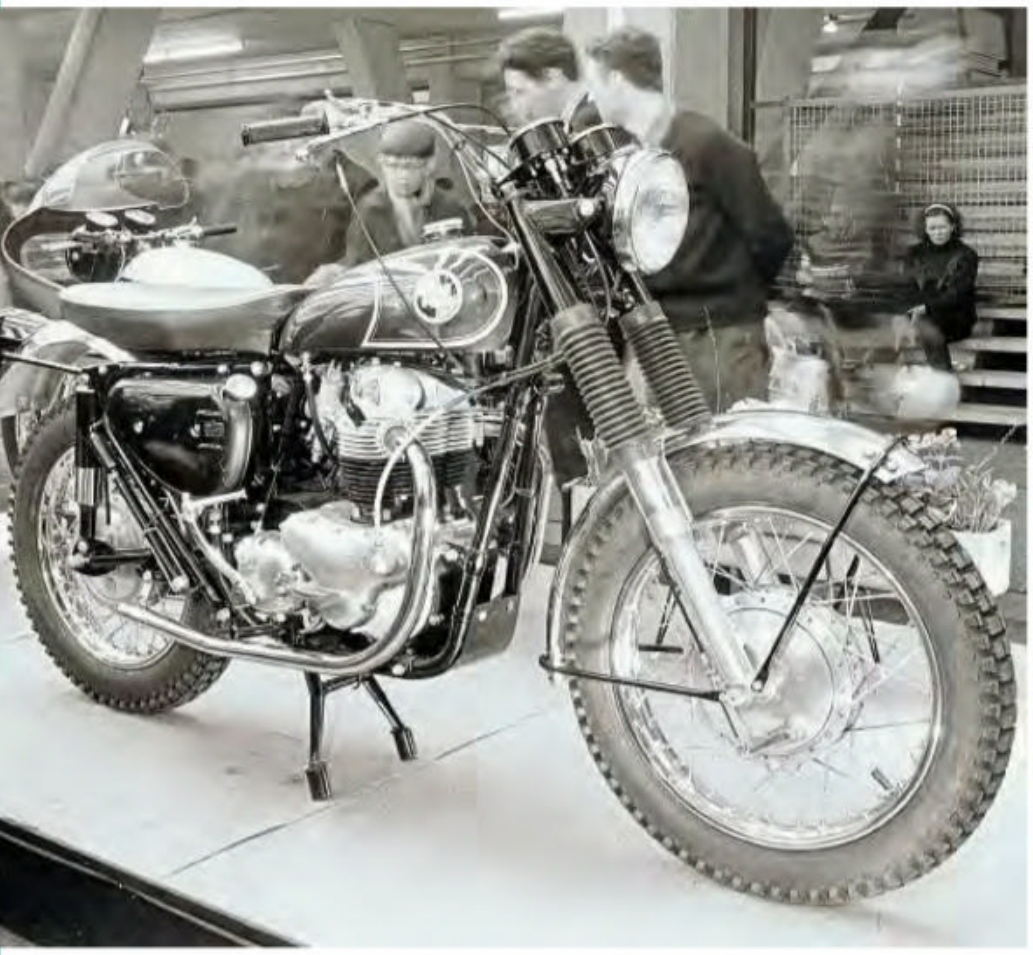
490cc sv single || 365lb || 55mpg || 65mph || 1945-55

Most un-Norton-like slogger with less performance than a modern 125. They do have much charm though, and some riders prefer them to BSA's equivalent M20, which was also a favourite with Second World War soldier DRs.

Used to be found with family chair attached and completely worn out, now usually observed at military revivalist meetings.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £5500 (military models more)

NORTON



N15CS

745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1964-68

Norton Atlas engine in a Matchless chassis and off-road clothes makes for a wild early trail bike. Mainly sold in the US as 'desert sleds'. Loads of noise, vibes, excitement.

Strangely, the Atlas engine shakes rather less in the Matchless's lugged frame than in Norton's all-welded Featherbed. Visual stunners, and with on/off road performance to match.

Prices:
low £7000 || high £12,000

Model 30 (International)

490cc ohc single || 360lb || 60mpg || 95mph || 1946-58

Cammy sports single that offered similar performance to the 88 twin but required much more effort to achieve it. Good looks, class and oil leaks fail to justify the high prices. Kamshaft kudos is invaluable, however,

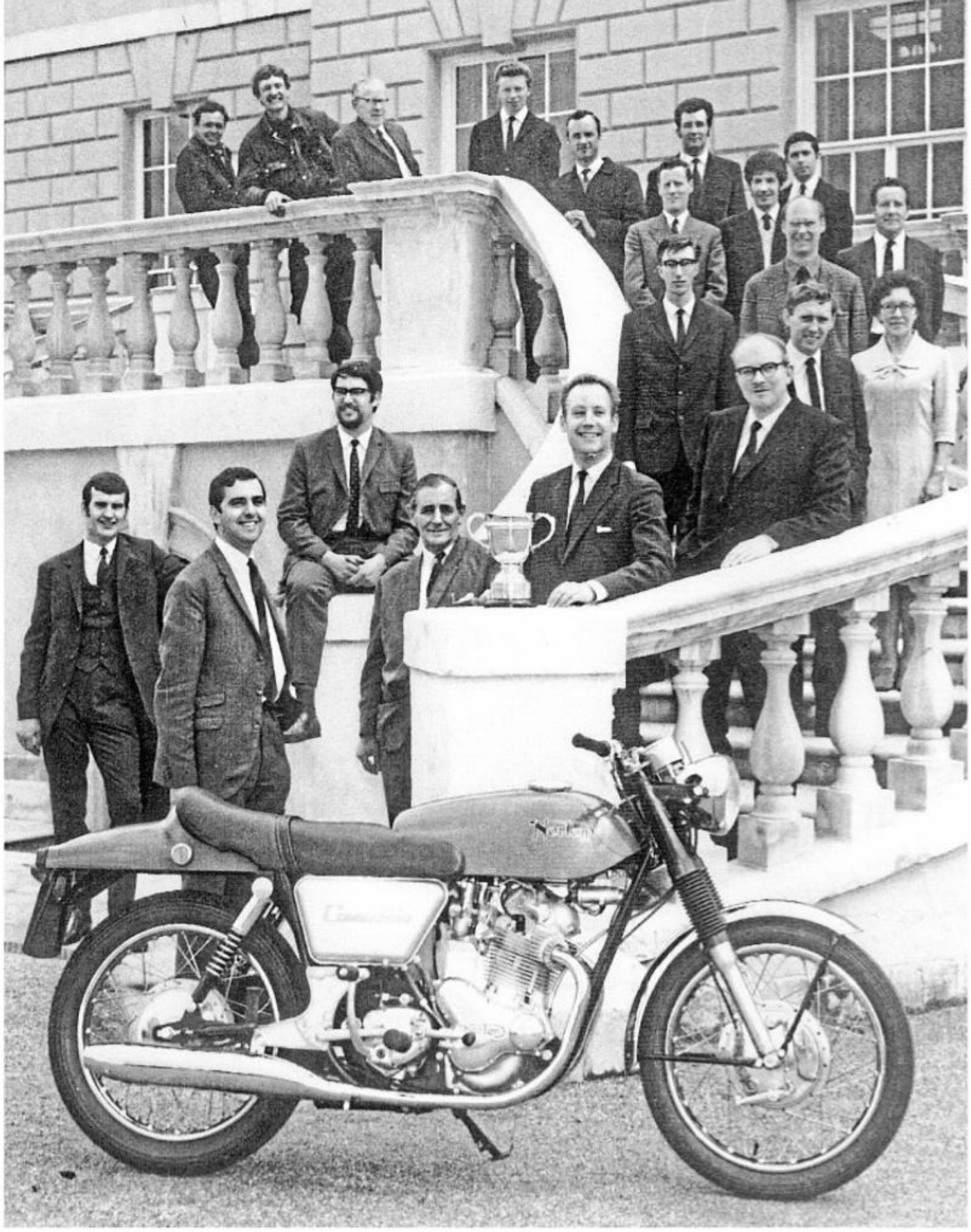
Prices:
low £18,000 || high £35,000

Model 40 (International)

349c ohc single || 340lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1946-58

Fussy camshaft single, aka the international, a distant road-going relative of the racing Manx models. Featherbed bikes are probably the best, but are ludicrously expensive. Experts are out there; identifying them is rarely easy. Parts are expensive.

Prices:
low £20,000 || high £30,000
and more...



NORTON

Commando
745cc ohv twin || 450lb || 55mpg || 125mph || 1968-73

828cc ohv twin || 450lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1973-77

The last stretch of the Dominator engine. The increasingly stressed engine's increasing vibration was tamed by the Isolastic rubber frame mounts, at the expense of some steering precision. Early versions used what was basically an Atlas engine; the 850 was much more refined, less prone to oil loss and less rapid. Sold as Fastback (with unusual styling), Fastback LR (bigger tank), Roadster (small tank), 'S' (high pipes and small tank), HiRider (bizarre custom thing), Interstate (vast tanked tourer), John Player Special (fake racer) and as a real proddie racer. 1975 brought us the Mk.3, complete with a single disc brake at each end and an electric start. This was the butt of much humour at the time, but modern replacement starter motors and modern batteries completely cure starter woes. Possibly the best Brit twin, certainly a genuine British Superbike, with all the charm of the big engine without the vibration. Spares supply is excellent: endless opportunities to upgrade engine and ancillaries. Superb owners' club.

Prices:
low £6000 || high £12,500

P11/P11A/ Ranger 750
745cc ohv twin || 400lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1965-69

Definitive US desert racer, with the Atlas lump in Matchless G85CS scrambler cycle parts making a beast of a bike. Very rare and very fine street scrambler. Take care when buying, as the frame can be delicate around the footrest mounts, and remember that the bike's Teledraulic fork does not accept the Norton 8in anchor.

Prices:
low £7000 || high 11000

Model 7
497cc ohv twin || 413lb || 60mpg || 90mpg || 1948-52

An unusual Norton twin, with a gentle iron-head version of the Dominator twin engine in a plunger bicycle similar to that of the ES2. Handling nowhere near Featherbed class, but an interesting and comfortable machine. Debatable if it's worth any more than the equivalent BSA A7, but always priced higher.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £8000

Model 50
348cc ohv single || 400lb || 75mpg || 75mph || 1956-63

Gentle trad Brit single with nice manners and gentle performance. Post 1959 models are the most expensive, with the famous Featherbed frame, decent alternator electrics and good looks, but the earlier non-Featherbed machines are charming, much cheaper and have a better riding position. Very few Featherbed M505 survive, most were turned into Tritons...

Prices:
low £4500 || high £7500

650SS / Mercury
646cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1960-69

Stretched 99 with better performance, greater vibration and the slimline Featherbed chassis. Very fast but harsh with it. The final Featherbed twin was the Mercury, built alongside the Commando until 1969 with a single carb, light mudguarding and no tacho. Smoother and more relaxed than the 650SS; possibly the most pleasant of all Featherbed twins.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £6500

Big 4
596cc sv single || 400lb || 50mpg || 65mph || 1947-54

Prewar relic intended to haul vast loads great distances very slowly. Overpriced by the name on the tank, but serene to ride. Some engine spares are difficult to find.

Prices:
low £4000 || high £8000

ES2 Mk.2 & Model 50 Mk.2
1964-66

Matchless machines with Norton badges and bearing no resemblance to 'real' ES2s. Built for some odd marketing reason for a short time before the AMC collapse. Very rare now; price as AJS 350/500, plus invisible rarity Norton factor.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £5000

99
596cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1956-62

Stretched 88 with a little more speed and vibration. One of the best of the entire Dominator series. Shared the same cycle parts as the other Featherbed twins and developed with them. Single carb, gained an alternator in 1958 and the slimmer slimline Featherbed in 1959. Very popular, too, so prices will continue to rise.

Prices:
low £5500 || high £8500

F1
588cc twin rotary || 162kg || 32mpg || 135mph || 1990-92

If you want to preserve a machine for posterity, buy an original F1, if you want to ride a bike, buy the later F1 Sport. Water-cooled rotormotor with Yamaha gearbox in exotic alloy beam chassis and staggering styling. Overheated in traffic, but brilliant to ride on the open road. Superb handling and considerable rapidity. Buy a bike only with a known history and preferably a service record.

Prices:
low £15,000 || high £30,000

Model 18 / ES2
490cc ohv single || 380lb || 60mpg || 75mph || 1947-62

Norton's trad Brit single. An average performer in all areas until the Featherbed frame gave it brilliant handling for 1959. Again, it's a pleasant bike, but a lot of the Featherbed ES2s were converted into Tritons. Opinion suggests that the M18 and ES2 are among the best trad British singles of them all. The M18 (1945-54) is essentially the plunger ES2 less the plungers; i.e. it retained the earlier rigid frame but used the Roadholder front end.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6000

Electra
394cc ohv twin || 360lb || 55mpg || 75mph || 1963-65

Rare electric start version of the Navigator with a few more ccs and indicators. The best of the lightweights and pretty civilised for 1963. Provided the electrical system's in decent condition, the starter is reliable enough too. Light and agile, with great steering and stopping. It even has indicators. Prices are rising, reflecting the Electra's appeal to older riders looking for light weight, good brakes and almost reliable electric starting, uncommon in British bikes.

Prices:
low £4000 || high £6500

Atlas
745cc ohv twin || 420lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1963-68

Stretched 650 with no more go but plenty of vibes. Huge amount of torque makes for a very relaxed cruiser, but vibration spoils the thrill of the acceleration. Still a good bike, and rewarding to ride, although much overshadowed by the Commando in the classic era.

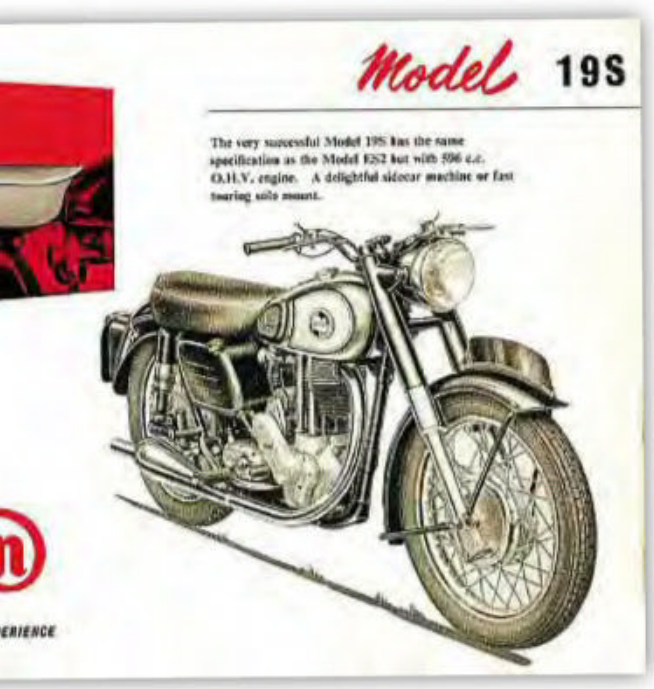
Prices:
low £5000 || high £7000

88

497cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1951-66

The first Featherbed-framed roadster twin and a fine motorcycle. Brilliant steering, excellent brakes and smooth (if a little noisy) motor make for a good time. Frame layout can produce leg-ache after a long run. Also available as the 88SS which had twin carbs, a siamesed exhaust and was quite quick.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £7500



Model 19

596cc ohv single || 385lb || 60mpg || 70mph || 1955-57

Monster 600 single intended for the chair-pullers and with little to commend it except rarity and the Norton name on the tank. No more on-road performance than the 500. Suffix 'S' stands for Sprung (not Sports, silly) and 'R' for Rigid. Very long stroke engine makes it a master at climbing mountains as well as hard to start.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £4750

Interpol 2

588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1983-88

The most common of the rotary series. Built for police and fleet use, the spine frame and ultra-smooth rotary engine, allied to a BMW RT-style fairing, fully enclosed drive chain and hard Craven-type panniers produced an excellent touring machine. All rotaries depend on informed maintenance. Modern ignition systems and lubricants liberate them from their early unreliability. Marzocchi forks and Brembo brakes add to the riding pleasure. Buy with care, and budget for a specialist rebuild before use.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £6000

Jubilee

249cc ohv twin || 350lb || 75mpg || 65mph || 1958-66

Well-designed but underdeveloped and sometimes poorly assembled unit-construction twin engine in AMC group lightweight chassis. Suffered from oil leaks, mechanical disasters and the less-than-robust Wipac electrical bits. Deluxe version looks smart if you like your bikes in skirts. The James-style forks and wheels deny cred from an otherwise interesting machine. The unit-construction lightweight twin engine is in intriguing design; easy to work on, and should be robust, with its huge main and big-end bearings. Oddly, its reputation is less than that.

Prices:
low £1700 || high £3000

Commander

588cc l-c twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-93

Norton replaced the air-cooled Interpol 2 with the more refined liquid-cooled Commander. Built in parallel for fleet/police use and the civilian market, it replaced the Italian components of the IP2 with running gear from Yamaha's XJ900. Excellent fairing, and twin batteries to provide confidence for private users as well as major electricals for the police. Early machines offered only non-removable hard panniers, while the last ones were fitted with detachable Krauser items. Buy with care; rotary engines respond badly to neglect but are fast and reliable when properly set up.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £7500

PANTHER

Navigator
349cc ohv twin || 350lb || 65mpg || 75mph || 1960-65

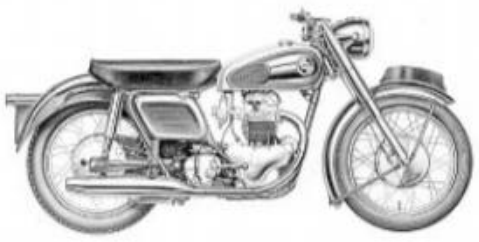
Enlarged and more useful Jubilee with Roadholder forks and an 8in front brake. Enough performance for cruising the byways and excellent handling. Expensive (for a lightweight) but wieldy and manageable. Handsome too, in a baby-Dommi way, and quick enough, if not fast.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £4000

Classic
588cc twin rotary || 498lb || 40mpg || 110mph || 1988-89

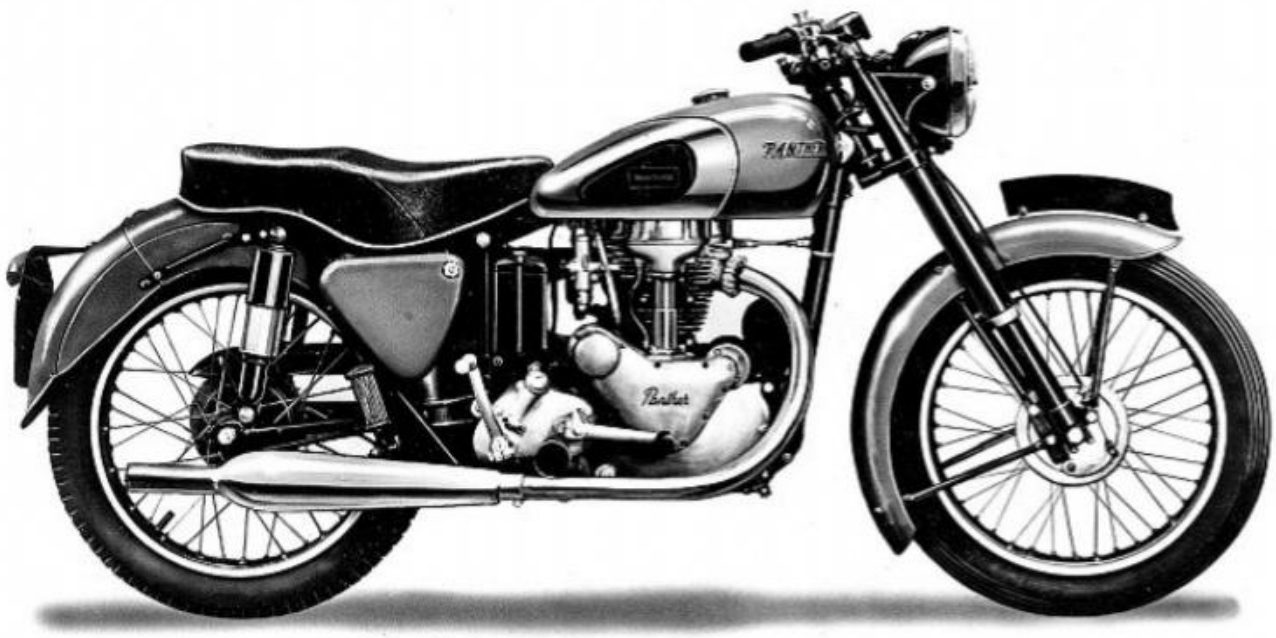
The first civilian rotary Norton. Neat traditional style and unique performance. 101 built and sold. Check that it really is a Classic and not a reupholstered police Interpol 2. Some spares are hard to find, such as tachometers.

Prices:
low £7000 || high £11000



Model 77
Rare twin; basically a 99 engine in a non-Featherbed swinging arm bicycle very similar to that used on the same-year ES2 single. Comfortable, calm bike to ride, and intended mainly for sidecar use. US riders could buy the Nomad, a desert sled version of this machine with great styling and better performance.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £5500
(Nomad a lot more)



Models 65/75
248/348cc ohv singles || 340/350lb || 75/65mpg || 63/72mph || 1947-62

A pair of very traditional British singles with a pedigree dating back to Boudica at least. Rugged, simple, immortal and distinctly non-sporting, they were equipped with about the best tele-forks to have been made in Britain; Dowty's 'Oleomatic' (pump-up, air-sprung) units. Worth a ride for these alone.

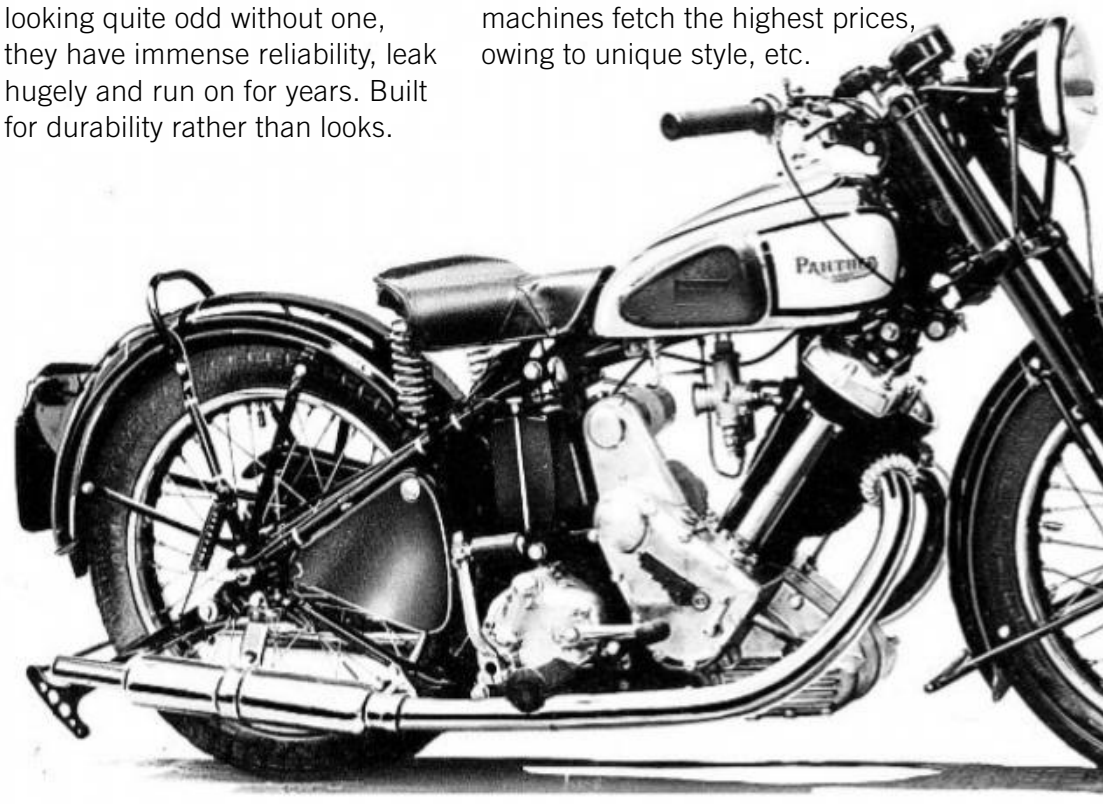
Prices:
low £1750 || high £2500

Model 100
598cc ohv single || 440lb || 60mpg || 75mph || 1946-63

Intended as a chair-puller, and looking quite odd without one, they have immense reliability, leak hugely and run on for years. Built for durability rather than looks.

Supremely charming to own. One of Brit biking's great characters, they famously inspire remarkable devotion in their owners. Rigid machines fetch the highest prices, owing to unique style, etc.

Prices:
low £4000 || high £6500



Model 120
646cc ohv single || 440lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1959-65

Enlarged but little different. "Notably more troubled than the Model 100," said historian Steve Wilson. Some spares are rare, but the owners' club can usually help.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £6500

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R-T

ROYAL ENFIELD

From its Redditch works, RE built a remarkably wide and always respectable range of sensible staid singles and twins which were at one time mostly famous for their inability to retain oil.

The company listed two ranges of singles, one based on the Bullet and the other on the unit-construction Crusader. There was also a rather nice Villiers-powered 250, the Turbo Twin, which is very rare.

The twins came in 500, 700 and 750 capacities, arguably the best of which were the late Interceptors, which have Norton forks and front wheel and go as well as they look.

All heavy models used the Albion gearbox, which was outdated by 1956 and can be slow through the gears with an odd neutral-finder lever to play with. Spares for most models are very good, with much interchange between Brit-built Bullets and their Indian descendants.

SCOTT

Made postwar in Birmingham by the Aerco Jig and Tool Company, which took over production from the Shipley factory and compromised the long-established specification with sophistication that lust seemed to add weight. An intriguing mix of old and almost modern with sweet manners if you're not in a great hurry.

Remember Scott engines are two-stroke twins and are not like any other engine you'll have encountered. Only ever buy one from someone you trust who knows what they're selling. Fascinating machines, with ingenious solutions to problems you didn't know existed.

SUNBEAM

The Sunbeam name was acquired by BSA (from AMC) during the Second World War and was relaunched in 1946 as an upmarket tourer. Sadly, the S7/S8 series machines were never fully developed and sales were disappointing. Most wearing spares available from one major and expert source. Clever engineering, well made and a true alternative to all other British 500cc parallel twins, the unique ohc inline twin engine is an under-rated gem from its day.

TRIUMPH

These chaps started the British obsession with parallel twins just before the Second World War and kept them in production until 1988 (latterly at the LF Harris works in Devon), before John Bloom began again at Hinckley.

The excellent availability of spares for most of the postwar models makes them very popular with riders in the classic world, and they are indeed very practical and plentiful bikes. Huge numbers of US-spec Bonnies and Tridents have come back from the Slates, along with quantities of NOS spares. Triumphs are often mechanically noisy, and with less than perfect steering on the 1950s and early-60s twins. Triumph also built some oddly pleasant scooters – they're really alternative!

Spares supply is ample (but quality variable); the owners' club is active and enthusiastic, and both twins and triples have benefited greatly from modern re-engineered components. If you absolutely must have a Triumph then you'll happily pay the price premium that the badge commands: but it you started here simply because it's a familiar name then go look at BSAs for a softer entry to classic Brits. Lady Hinckley Triumphs have achieved 'classic' status already.

Bullet
346cc ohv single || 365lb || 70mpg || 70mph || 1949-63

Enfield's rather under-rated version of the trad Brit single, distinguished by intriguing detail design. Less-common 500 version with more torque is perhaps a better machine, but both steer extremely well. British-built Bullets much more valued than Indian ones but can benefit from upgrades using later components from Indian machines, notably in the braking department. Tremendously practical machines for the classic rider.

Prices:
low £2000 || high £4500

Bullet / Electra / Continental
499cc ohv single || 390lb || 80mpg || 80mph || 1955-present

Production of Bullets continued in Chennai, India, long after it ended in Blighty. Quality dubious until mid-1990s, incremental improvements since then. Official UK bikes always built to a better standard than grey imports.

Electra-X came with lean-burn engine and five-speed gearbox. Fuel-injection and unit construction from 2007. Latest version boosted to 535cc for café racer Continental GT model. Heaps of choice, great value, excellent spares supply and enthusiast suppliers.

If you fancy a classic riding experience without most of the angst, and if your pockets do not run to a Gold Star, try one.

Prices:
low £1200 || high £4000

Constellation/Interceptor Mk.1
692/736cc ohv twin || 435lb || 45mpg || 110mph || 1958-68

A race-bred sports development of the Super Meteor. Very fast but earned a deserved reputation for fragility and external lubrication. The later and larger Interceptor Mk.1 was a little better. These beefy machines offer a price/performance balance which is currently rare among British bikes, so try one.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £7500

Interceptor Mk2
736cc ohv twin || 442lb || 112mph || 50mpg || 1968-70

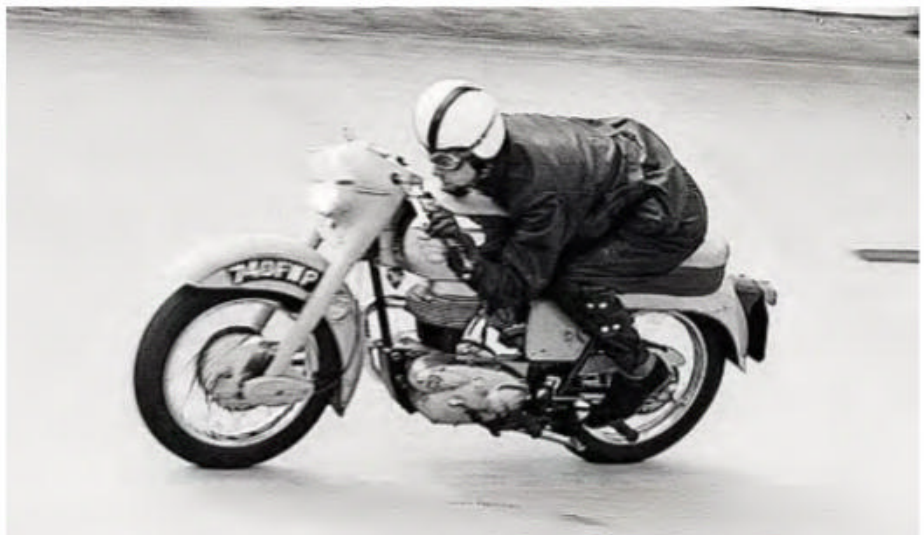
A serious contender for Britain's best-ever big (parallel) twin. A super redesign of the old engine lifted it into the near-bulletproof bracket. Crushingly handsome good looks, good handling and an immense power spread, no oil leaks. Norton forks and front brake are very effective, and the only let-down is the gearbox, which has a chasm between third and top. The Rickman-framed offspring is sheer magic, but it was all too late to stop RE from going under.

Prices:
low £5500 || high £11,500

Meteor Minor
496cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1959-63

Developed from the rare '500 Twin', the small RE twin is a much underrated machine, which goes and handles very well, although some spares can be elusive. Unjustly ignored by far too many riders for far too long, this combination of a 500 engine in a 250 bicycle deserves more than just a second glance.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £4500



Crusader
248cc ohv single || 330lb || 75mpg || 75mph || 1956-66

Unit construction single with good handling and oil leaks. Also offered with a five-speed gearbox (the Super 5) which had something of a reputation for unreliability.

Prices:
low £2000 || high £3000

SCOTT

Continental
248cc ohv single || 320lb || 65mpg || 80mph || 1962-67

Restyled version of the five-speed Crusader, with more watt, vibration and oil leaks. Many owners ditched the difficult five-speed gear cluster and replaced it with a four-speed set. Oddly heroic semi-racer styling on the GT model proved remarkably popular, and the name lives on in the current new Indian offerings.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £5500

Super Meteor
692cc ohv twin || 430lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1952-60

Another under-rated twin from Redditch, with good manners and excellent rideability. Very good tourer. Developed into the Constellation for 1959, with better styling, better handling, less reliability and 110mph. Try one and be (pleasantly) surprised.

Prices:
low £3250 || high £5500

Clipper
248cc ohv single || 350lb || 85mpg || 60mph || 1953-57

Gentle and rare. Even rose-tinted retro-vision doesn't help much with the performance.

Prices:
low £1750 || high £2200

Squirrel
596cc two-stroke twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1947-mid 60s

Quirky, torquey, and for the individualist only. Changes aplenty over the years. Unique. Absorbing to own and rewarding to ride.

Prices:
low £6000 || high £10,000

S7
490cc ohc in-line twin || 490lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1946-47

Intended as the ideal touring motorcycle, with a rubber mounted, unit construction, understressed power unit, driving via a shaft. Comfortable and handsome but the S7 was let down by sluggish performance and ponderous handling.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £8500

S8
490cc ohc in-line twin || 490lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1948-57

The S8 looked slimmer, with its BSA front forks and brake, and steered a little better than the S7, but it's the earlier model that fetches the higher prices, thanks to its look. An interesting bike and always worth consideration if style is more important than speed, as prices currently reflect.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £6500

TRIUMPH

TR6 Trophy
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1954-73

American-originated semi off-roader, which through the years evolved for the UK as a roadster replacement for the Thunderbird, with more stability and similar performance. Bonneville improvements usually ended up on the Trophies too, and many consider the single-carb engines to be sweeter than the twin-carb Bonnies.

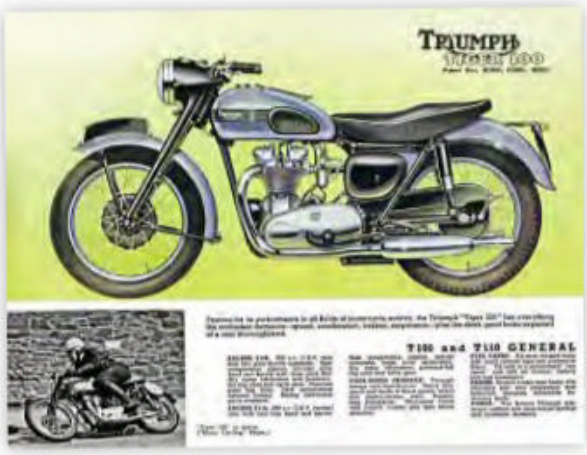
Engine prefix TR6P denotes an ex-police bike. US and UK versions of these machines can differ widely, and many export machines are on the home market now. The Thunderbird name was also used for the late (1981-83) short-stroke TR65; an excellently revvy rider's machine but fairly unusual.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £10,000

Tiger Cub
199cc ohv single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph || 1954-68

Developed from the earlier 150cc Terrier, the Tiger Cub was a great learner bike of its day. Sold in off-road form as well as roadster, many have also been converted for use in Pre-65 trials. Some suffered from weird wiring and weak brakes and big-end bearings. The late ones are probably the best, with the BSA Bantam rolling chassis. Massively popular today, and priced way beyond their rarely exciting performance.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £4500



Tiger 100
498cc ohv twin || 370lb || 60mpg || 100mph || 1946-57

Sports version of the 5T, with same comments and more performance. The all alloy engine is a rattler, but is a mover – it's a shame so many ended up in Tritons and TriBSAs. Riding an early swinging arm model can be (a little too) exciting, though the TR5 off-road models are simply superb. Like all pre-unit Triumph twins, prices are rising steadily again, for many reasons... including fashion.

Prices:
low £4000 || high £8500, TR5 a lot more

TR25, Blazer SS
249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

A neat street scrambler based around the BSA B25, which is identical bar the styling and badges. Don't be put off by their poor reputation; used sensibly, with frequent oil changes, they can be fun and practical to ride. Triumphs appear to fetch higher prices than BSA, oddly. The oil-bearing frame is excellent; two different front brakes were used, both can be made to work well. Earlier TR25W Trophy is as uninspired as the BSA Starfire, which it really is.

Prices:
low £2250 || high £3200

3TA Twenty One
348cc ohv twin || 360lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1957-68

Also called the Twenty One (21 cu in = 350cc), this was the first unit-construction Triumph. Bizarre 'bathtub' rear-end styling makes them stand out; odd handling, feeble brakes and sporadic sparks make you wonder why they sold so well. Sporty version was the Tiger 90, which was nicer and lasted a year longer. When fitted with more modern electrics to aid their reliability, these are another example of a current shift away from big heavy twins to lighter more handleable machines.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £5500

5T Speed Twin
498cc ohv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 90mph || 1946-57

Early postwar models have weak forks and brakes, copious leaks, rattles and poor roadholding. No wonder they sold well! Avoid anything with a sprung hub if you enjoy riding rapidly. Engine is sweet and willing, and just a few miles will reveal the reason for the enduring popularity of Triumph's twins. Despite their weaknesses, they are fine riding machines. Spares availability is excellent, and the quality of those spares has improved radically in recent years. Very active club, too, and the rigid twins are riding high.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £8000

Tiger 110
649cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg
109mph || 1953-61

Sporting upgrade of the 6T, and an entirely pleasant machine to ride, the T110 was intended to be the fast 650 demanded by the Americans, who bought boatloads of them. Eclipsed by the arrival of the T120 Bonneville in 1959, the T110 was phased out soon after. The last year, 1961, was a particularly fine machine, with a unique-for-the-year duplex frame.

Prices:
low £4500, high £7500

TR65 Thunderbird
649cc ohv twin || 408lb || 75mpg || 100mph || 1981-82

Truly excellent short-stroke short-lived version of the oily frame Triumph twin, basically a TR7 Tiger with the stroke reduced to 71.5mm (from 82mm). Intended as an economy entry-level Triumph, the originals boasted very little chrome, no tacho, a black finish to many of the engine covers, a drum rear brake and a single-sided black coated exhaust. Later machines were offered with both tacho and a conventional exhaust. Highly recommended. Smooth easy starters, and just about unburstable. If you stumble over an example of the seriously rare trial version, the TR65T, do not hesitate. A rare gem indeed.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6000 || TR65T very rare and expensive

5TA
498cc ohv twin || 385lb || 50mpg || 85mph || 1958-66

Unit-construction replacement for the 5T, with 'bathtub' rear enclosure, puny frame and a monster front mudguard. Crisp engine, interesting handling at speed, almost adequate brakes. The engine is faster than the frame; excitement guaranteed.

The T100A was the first unit Tiger 100; looked more like a motorcycle, and lasted until 1961. It was followed by the T100SS (1962-65), the T100 (1966), took a great leap forward to become the T100S (1967-70) and the T100T (1967-70) with a quicker motor. This became the T1000 (1971-72) and finally the T100F7 Daytona (1971-73). Later models are usually better and some really handsome machines have been repatriated down the years too. Original bathtub enclosures are now very hard to find (riders of the time did the wise thing and binned them) although remanufactured items surface every so often. Practical fun bikes, with much charm and relatively light weight.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6000

T120 Bonneville (Unit construction)
649cc ohv twin || 410lb || 50mpg || 115mph || 1963-74

The unit Bonnie. The most famous British twin of them all; hugely well-documented development history fills many books (buy one). 1966-70 bikes fetch the highest prices and are arguably the best of a good bunch. Look for the excellent brakes, small tanks and decent 12v electrics. 1971-74 oily-framed five-speeders (T120V) are the safest, with a disc as well as the fifth gear, and they are easily the cheapest.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £12,000

T140 Bonneville 750
744cc ohv twin || 440lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1973-88

A symbol of the dark days of industrial unrest at Triumph's Meriden, Coventry works, the Bonnie somehow weathered the storm and remained available. It sold on character alone, and was kept in production after the final demise of the Triumph Engineering Co by LF Harris, finally being withdrawn in 1988 to make way for his new Matchless G80 model. First T140s were actually 725cc, but those are rare now. UK versions suffered from some dire styling, while the US versions always looked a lot better. Early models are usually faster, though as the years passed and development resources shrank, the big battle was to maintain compliance with US emissions standards. This effectively reduced

the performance to keep down the noise. Late machines are arguably the best, with some very attractive limited-edition models, and with a usually effective electric start taking the strain. Clean Bing carbs are less desirable, but the US market demanded them, and it's easy enough to regain that lost performance. Affordable and reliable, if not as charming as older incarnations. The first and last of the classic Brit twins?

Prices:
low £3500 || high £8000

6T Thunderbird
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 60mpg || 95mph || 1950-61

Big, soft and smoothish tourer with customary Triumph plus and minus points. Sports version was the Tiger 110 (1954-61), which was faster without too much vibration. The iron-head 650 with a sprung hub frame is viewed by some as the best of all Triumphs, and they are excellent riding machines. The current fashion for bobbers and the like has raised the awareness of tele-rigid machines, too, so do not hesitate too long before buying.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £7500

T150 / T160 Trident
740cc ohv triple || 503lb || 37mpg || 120mph || 1968-75

Fast and exciting, with excellent steering and early 750 Superbike performance. The disc-braked versions stop well, and the electric-start T160 is a very fine all-rounder indeed. A little more money, reliability and further development could have kept the Tridents in production for several more years, and had the T180 Thunderbird III made it into production it could have sold well. Everyone should have one, at least once. Good spares supply; several specialists have continued development and improved reliability, but they still require dedicated owner input. And as well as being rapid, they're also thirsty for both fuel and oil.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £10,000

T120 Bonneville (Pre-unit)
649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1959-62

Super-sports pre-unit 650; always a favourite among café racers, with lots of power, noise, shakes and wild handling at speed. A cracker, but beware fake lash-ups at high prices. The Bonneville name adds to the price, but if you must have one…

Prices:
low £7500 || high £15,000

TR5T Adventurer
498cc ohv twin || 330lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1973-74

Triumph 500 unit twin engine in oil-bearing 250 single scrambler cycle parts. Fairly rare, under-geared and under-braked but handsome, popular and frisky. One of the most peculiar exhausts ever and unique instruments!

Prices:
low £5000 || high £7500

TRW
498cc sv twin || 375lb || 65mpg 70mph || 1948-65

Quietly charming military machine; delightful if leisurely. Rigid rear end and sprung saddle provides 'vintage' feel, with added benefit of reasonable brakes. Many parts interchangeable with Trophy trials model, so many were converted. Many were civilianised after being demobbed; modern ironies find numerous examples now converted back to military trim.

Prices:
low £4250 || high £6500

TSS
744cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 120mph || 1982-83

A Bonnie with an eight-valve head. A little more performance and a certain cachet, maybe, but uncertain reliability. The machine should have provided a sporting performance, and was certainly faster than a contemporary T140, but a lack of development resources denied it a decent run. Eight-valves, twin discs, an electric start and subtle styling – as well as rarity – command high prices. Get past the almost

inevitable initial problems and discover the charming, rapid machine Triumph always intended the TSS to be.

Prices:
low £6000 || high £10,000

TSX
A fascinating attempt by Meriden Triumph to produce a 'soft chopper' – a factory custom. Bonneville powerplant and main frame, but with clever styling tweaks and a fat back wheel coupled with detail changes to produce a striking and unusual machine. Few sold, so rare and overpriced, but charming to ride as well as stand-out distinctive while retaining the T140 virtues of excellent spares availability and easy-to-live-withness.

Prices:
low £6500 || high £9500

TR7 Tiger 750
744cc ohv twin || 440lb || 60mpg || 110mph || 1973-88

Single-carb version of the Bonnie. Similar performance, less charisma than the T140, but in many ways a preferable machine. Smoother, usually, easier to keep in tune, and a little more frugal, not least because of the single Amal carb. Super-rare bright yellow TR7T Tiger Trail is a gem... if you can find one.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £7500
TR7T a lot more

V

VELOCETTE

One of the most individual of English bike builders, Velocette's great postwar hope was the LE flat twin, which was expected to sell in vast numbers as a bike for everyman. It didn't, and the Hall Green factory had continual cash-flow difficulties as a result.

Even so, it built some great singles until the money finally ran out in 1971. Enthusiasts provide a wide range of improvements for the Veloce original, and all the singles command higher prices than most other Brit equivalents.

VINCENT

Probably the most widely discussed British marque, this small budder of high-quality, expensive motorcycles soldiered on with high-performance twins until 1955, when even rebadging NSU tiddlers couldn't save it. Considering their ultra-high value, it is good to see so many on the road. Spares plentiful, if rather expensive. A superb owners' club and riding community ensures their survival and desirability.

VELOCETTE

Venom
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 55mpg || 95mph || 1956-68

Sports single in the old tradition. Quick, precise steering and high cruising speeds make it a desirable machine. Although out-dated by the 1960s, Velo enthusiasts kept it in production after all its rivals had fallen. Venom Clubman is the most highly prized, highly priced and hard to ride.

Prices:
low £7500 || high £15,000

MAC
349cc ohv single || 370lb || 70mpg || 75mph || 1952-60

Velo's own trad Brit single is a charming machine with good steering and reliability. An excellent working bike; easy starting, smooth, nimble and comfortable. Ideal introduction to the marque and an affordable way to sample Velo single magic.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £7000

LE
192cc sv l/c flat twin || 250lb || 100+mpg || 55mph || 1949-71

A truly heroic (commercial) failure. For years, British motorcyclists had cried out for a water-cooled, silent, sophisticated, shaft-driven bike with built-in legshields. But they didn't buy it, probably because it was too civilised, odd-looking or just gutless. LEs are pleasant little machines with a style of their own, a dedicated following and their own owners' club. The ohv unfaired Valiant roadster was frail but flew.

Prices:
low £2000 || high £3500

MSS
499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 80mph || 1953-68

Gentle touring 500. The last of a breed, with good steering, comfort and reliability; plus the traditional separate gearbox, Miller electrics and strange clutch. Probably the easiest of the Velo singles to live with, boasting good main-road performance, fine handling and always adequate braking.

Prices:
low £6000 || high £9000

Thruxton
499cc ohv single || 390lb || 50mpg || 105mph || 1964-71

Last of the line, and priced alongside BSA Gold Stars and Inter Nortons, with which they share the market's stratosphere. Often tough to start, requiring The Knowledge to make them give their best, they are only suited to the truly committed (and wealthy).

Prices:
low £17,000 || high £25,000+

Viper
349cc ohv single || 390lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1956-69

Sweet 350 sportster whose roadholding outperforms the engine. Like most trad Brit heavyweight 350s, its bigger brother sold better.

Prices:
low £6000 || high £9000

Vogue
192cc sv l-c flat twin || 330lb || 95mpg || 55mph || 1963-68

An attempt at updating the LE with neat glass fibre bodywork. Very attractive and practical bike, but with less performance than the Ariel Leader. Rare now but charming to ride.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £5000

Rapide/Black Shadow

998cc ohv V-twin || 460lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1950-55

Sold as a tourer (Rapide) and sportster (Shadow), the big Vin has a fearful reputation to live up to and largely succeeds. Genuinely capable of holding their own in the modern motorway world, the big twins attract addicts to their unique engineering and riding experience. Electric starts and other upgrades are now increasingly considered acceptable. Prices are in the stars, and show no sign of falling. Few owners are disappointed, and they can't afford to be.

Prices:
low £20,000 || high £HUGE...

Comet and Meteor

499cc ohv single || 400lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1948-54

Half of the famous V-twin (half the size, half the appeal, less than half the price), the Comet and Meteor share most of their cycle parts with the big twins, which keeps up the cost, but have a Burman gearbox rather than Vincent's own, making them a little less charismatic in the eyes of some. Good to ride, quick and with excellent steering. Meteor less common, with Brampton forks, whereas the Comet had Vincent's Girdraulic front end.

Prices:
low £15,000 || high £25,000

Black Prince and Black Knight

998cc ohv V-twin || 490lb || 50mpg || 110mph-125mph || 1955

Based on the Series D chassis, the Black Prince was a result of Vincent listening to its customers and looking at the perceived popularity of a cleaner, enclosed motorcycle. One of the first bikes to incorporate glass fibre fairings, the Black Prince was decades ahead of its time, but too early to help save Vincent. Decidedly tall to ride, enclosed fairing also pushes your legs out, but it's still engaging, as all Vincents are.

Prices:
low £25,000 || £high If you have to ask...

BSA Owners' Club

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