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## These times they are a' changing

**I**MAGINE YOU WERE INTERVIEWING AN MP for a job and they wouldn't tell you what they could do, but how terrible the other interviewees were; or if your child behaved like they see the MPs in the Houses of Parliament behaving. It's wrong, isn't it?

But by the time you read this it'll all be over; the self-important 'speak for us' brigade will have thrown insults, yelled, lied and promised the earth on a stick for the last time, and we can all go back to playing with bikes.

But wait; could old bikes be a solution?

I've a plan. Split the house into groups from different parties and give them an old bike to restore and get running.

A project focuses the mind and cooperation is essential. Finding each other's strengths, looking at what parts you can afford at present, working with each other, looking at whether something can be repaired or needs replacing and looking ahead to see issues you'll be facing once that part is done.

Is it a bit like running a country? Maybe us old bike enthusiasts should stand – no: back in the workshop, Hull...

Yes, it's cold, we're all tired of the world around and yes, nights are drawing in. But Neville and I had a right crack the other

day, riding around on a couple of his ES2s. The sun was up, the sky clear and blue and while it was cold, we didn't seem to feel it.

Winter riding's not for everyone, but you do get some wonderful rides – don't miss them! One reason we ride in the winter is that our bikes are not to show quality; they work, they get protected, but aren't treated like ornaments. So it was lovely to pop into friends Stu, Sue and Dodge's workshop the other day to see a Kawasaki Z900 being sympathetically brought back to life, but without fully restoring. Another usable classic on the road!

Motorcycle Live at the NEC was the usual bright lights and shiny show, but if you went, did you notice the amount of new bikes still taking inspiration from old styles? We're still trendsetters!

There are some nice new models coming out, and it was also good to see the Triumph Owners' Motor Cycle Club, Honda Owners' Club and the Matchless/AJS club there too, along with the National Motorcycle Museum, all of them helping to promote old bikes to the motorcycle world. We need fresh blood and often new enthusiasts will need help with these old machines, so keep sending us info

on any bike shops willing to work on old bikes so we can hopefully build a decent listing section. We've had a good amount, but need more. It'll be good for us all; just email me at [editor@classicbikeguide.com](mailto:editor@classicbikeguide.com)

Racer, tester, development rider, farmer and all-round good egg, Percy Tait passed away at the age of 90 in November.

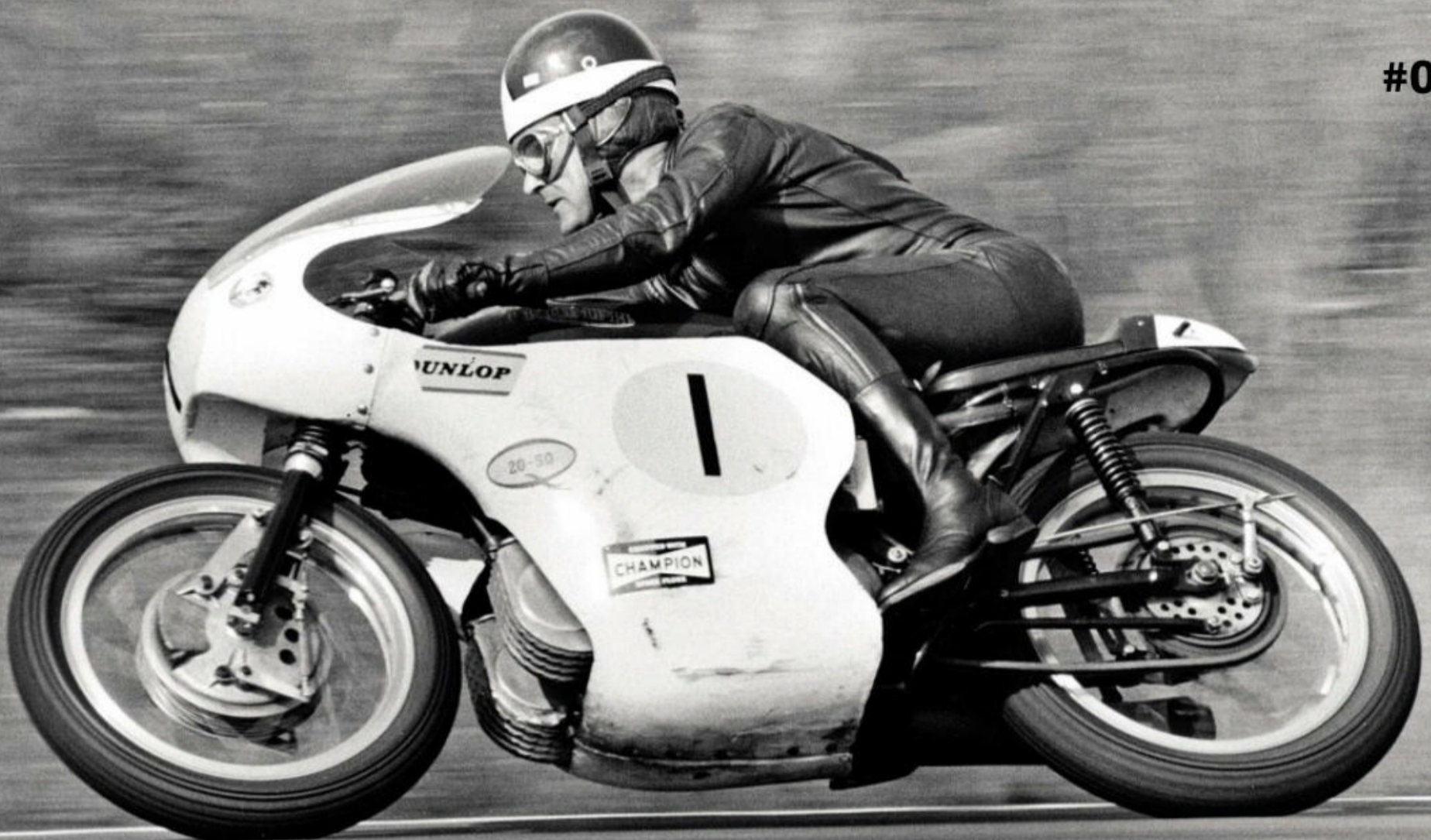
His life had touched so many that they couldn't get everyone into the crematorium. But there was an upbeat feel to this funeral, such was Percy's character, with many swapping funny stories and anecdotes. Hope you like the tribute on page 62.

It's boy's first trial on Sunday! Not sure how he'll do – if he's like his dad he'll probably get lost. But a friend has said I can have a go on their BSA trials; I hope I enjoy it, but I really can't afford another bike... and as you'll see further on in the mag, I've got Benelli crank seals and Norton parts to pay for – well when I find enough clothes to keep me warm in the pig shed that is...

Keep warm, keep smiling, have a mince pie for us and be good.

**Matt Hull**

editor@classicbikeguide.com



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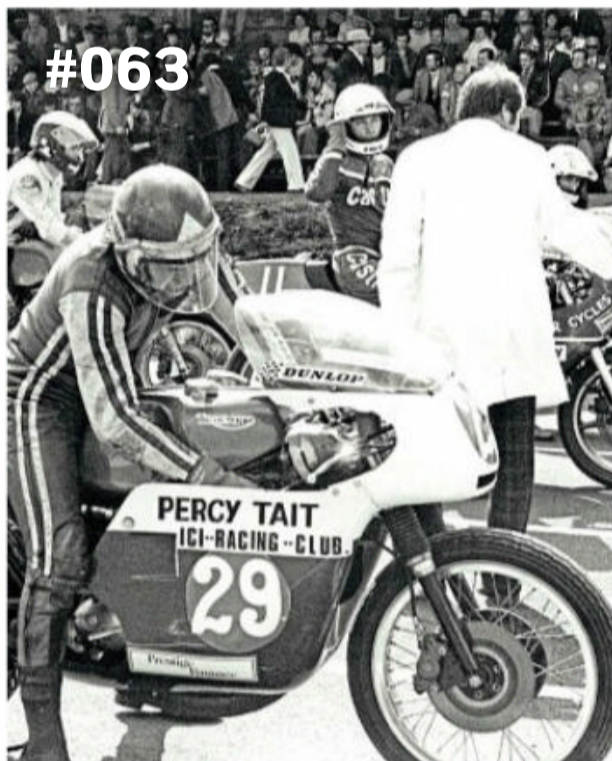
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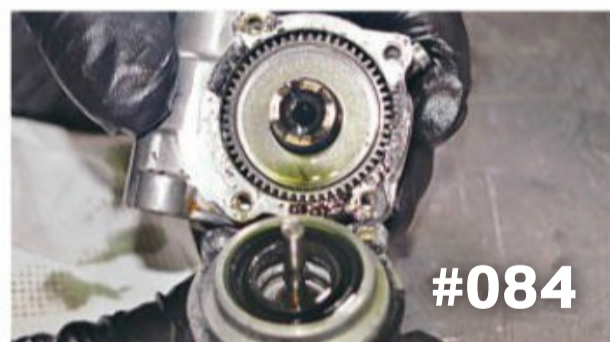
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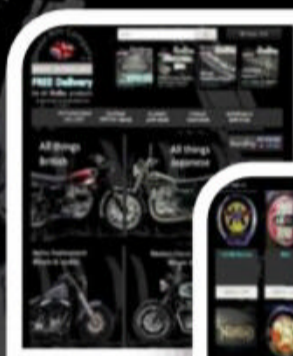
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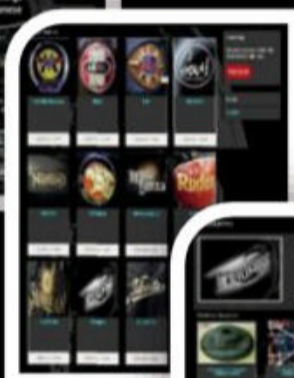
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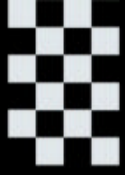
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From our archive

## ■ Percy Tait, 1929-2019

I never knew Percy Tait, but his name was one of the first I got to know when I came into the classic racing scene. I used to speak to his remarkable wife, Di, to try and get some time when he would be well enough to allow us to get some of his stories first hand, but sadly it was never to be.

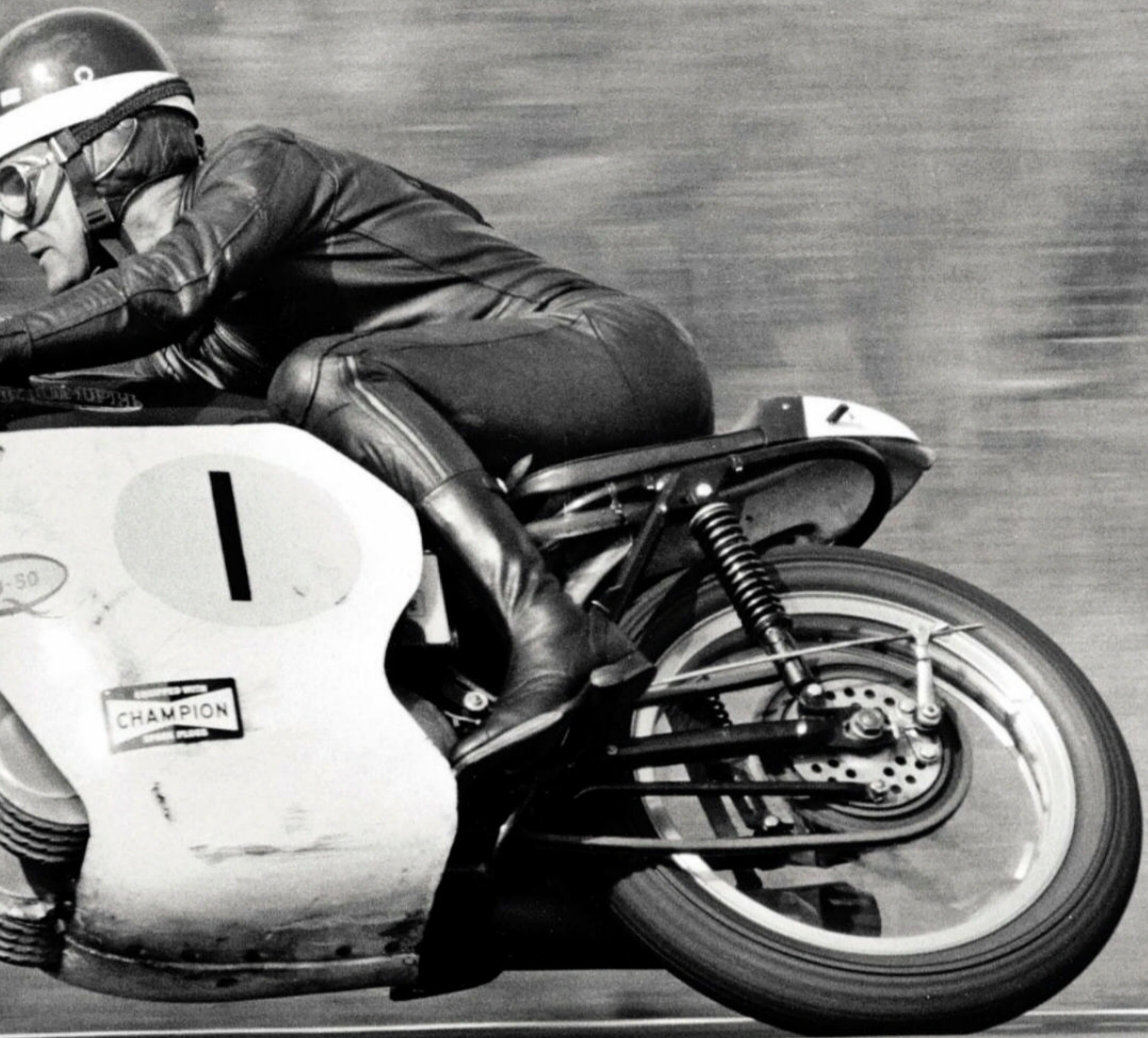
This farmer's son would become synonymous with Triumph, his day job of testing prototypes and new models mixed with racing at the weekends being well known. He also gained Triumph their greatest victory at the Belgian Grand Prix in 1969, coming second to one Giacomo Agostini on his all-conquering MV triple. Ago managed an average lap of 125mph, while Percy, the only man who had not been lapped, managed 116mph on his pushrod twin – not bad considering the two mechanics and Percy slept in a van in the paddock against the might of MV.

Percy was a member of the White Helmets during his National Service, helped Suzuki develop their racing machines, as well as Yamaha to help sort out the handling of the XS650. After a crash in the 1976 TT, Percy hung up his helmet and went back to farming, becoming a top sheep breeder.

It's a classic underdog story, good enough to insight a film – local boy does good despite inferior equipment, without much acknowledgment from his employers, who just saw him as an employee. And boy, did he have a sense of humour. Di once told me about the chilli sweets he would give to the MCN girls at the races, who, once out of the loo, would chase him around the paddock! Even when he was ill, I would be on the phone to Di and he was playing with his whoopee cushion. I've spent hours looking through the Mortons archive for pictures of Percy for the feature on page 63 and only when in the pits during a race have I seen any photos of him not smiling, or laughing. Last month we lost a good racer, a brilliant development rider, a prize-winning farmer and someone who was a great laugh. Thank you, Percy.

Matt, Editor . **CBC**





Percy Tait, Triumph Daytona 500cc, Anderstorp, 1969

*Motorcycles*

That matter

# NORTON

# P92

Rachael Clegg looks into another Norton that never was. There was also very little Norton...

PHOTOGRAPHY GARY CHAPMAN





Harley-Davidson

**I**N 1899 A BASSETT'S SWEETS SALES REP DROPPED several trays of samples while showing his confectionery to a client. In a desperate bid to rearrange them, he scrambled the various sweets together and in doing so created the multi-million pound product, known as Bassett's Liquorice Allsorts.

Granted, confectionery and motorcycles are very different industries, but there's a parallel to this story in this issue's Motorcycles that Matter: the Norton Project 92, or 'P92'. This was a mish-mash machine comprised of available parts across BSA, Triumph and Norton – a sort of 'Liquorice Allsorts' on two wheels – only, unlike Bassett's best-seller, this version never made it to market.

The P92 is essentially the machine that never was. Only three versions were built – one of which has been fully restored to running order and stands in the Sammy Miller Museum today. And it's a machine that crystallises the woes of the British motorcycle industry in the early to mid-Seventies.

It was during this period that the British motorcycle industry witnessed its biggest shake-up yet. In 1973 its three principal manufacturers, BSA, Norton and Triumph merged to form NVT (Norton Villiers Triumph). Its chairman, Dennis Poore, was tasked with the unenviable task of turning around what was essentially a sinking ship – one with millions of pounds worth of debt. Yet – curiously – amidst all this, he set up Norton Triumph International (NTI): the research and development arm for Norton Villiers Triumph. And it was here, at a place called Kitts Green in Birmingham, where the P92 was born.

Built in 1973/1974, the Norton P92 was essentially a feasibility study for Poore, one which NVT – no doubt –



***“And it was here, at a place called Kitts Green in Birmingham, where the P92 was born.”***





### SPECIFICATION

**TYPE:** single-cylinder, air-cooled, ohv **CAPACITY:** 499cc  
**CARBURATION:** 32mm Amal Concentric 900 **FINAL DRIVE:**  
 chain drive **TOP SPEED:** 95mph **WHEELBASE:** 54.5 inches  
**SUSPENSION:** Front telescopic / rear swinging arm **FUEL**  
**CAPACITY:** 2.5 gallons **BRAKES:** drum (front); drum (rear)  
**WHEELS:** wire-spoke **TYRES:** Dunlop **IGNITION:** battery/coil

hoped would serve as something of a silver bullet.

Here was a machine that required no new drawings and could be built from existing spares. Moreover, the P92 was lightweight enough for the everyman, but with plenty of torque. Norman Hyde was one of the Norton Triumph International (NTI) engineers who, along with Doug Hele, was involved with the development of the P92. He says: "We were working on a few different bikes and among them was the P92, which was a BSA 500cc single engine in the chassis of a 350cc Triumph Bandit. The idea of a 500cc single as a road bike was pretty awful but as a modern 500cc it was so much smaller than a 500cc Gold Star."

The Norton name, therefore, is something of a misnomer, as Norman explains: "The 'Norton' bit was just in name. This bike was just a prototype so you could call it 'XYZ' or 'The New Hairdo' if you wanted; the name didn't mean much really." In spite of the P92 – aka 'The New Hairdo' – being built from boxes of available parts, it was in fact a very well-designed, well-engineered model, as Sammy Miller says: "It's perfect; it handles really well – it is so smooth to ride."

The smooth handling is owing in part to the P92's use of Isolastics – the system Norton used on the Commando, in which vibrations were brought to a minimum thanks to the machine's engine being mounted with rubber mounts.

Mick Duckworth, whose book, *Triumph Experimental* explores this period of NVT's history, says: "The Isolastics system was one of the fundamental features of the Commando," he said. "The system was thanks to a man called Dr Stephan Bauer, who was a nuclear physicist brought into the industry by Dennis Poore. The story goes that they gave Dr Bauer a pillion ride on a Norton Atlas and he said 'you can't make a motorcycle that shakes and rattles like that'. So Poore insisted that they overcome this issue. Bernard Cooper and Bob Trigg came up with this idea of mounting the engine on rubber blocks. They devised a system based on the idea that the engine could only shake in certain axis and not all over the place."

Added to the vibration-reducing Isolastic system was the P92's frame: a tried-and-tested Bandit chassis which encased the 500cc BSA engine rather well. Mick

said: "That frame would have handled well because it was a Bandit frame." Norman bolsters Mick's point. "It was a nice little frame and you could chuck it about and have a bit of fun on it. The P92 had all the modern standard Triumph and BSA parts of the period – Triumph and BSA bits – not Norton bits: it was basically a 350cc Bandit but with a 500cc BSA engine and rubber-mounted."

In addition to solid handling and the three-point Isolastic system (with points at the cylinder head, front of the engine and beneath the gearbox), the single-cylindered P92 also featured large rear engine plates, a twin silencer exhaust system, a Lucas/Smiths speedo and telescopic front suspension. Moreover, the engine was installed at an angle – a shrewd design feature that allowed for the starter motor. The P92 – to satisfy the US and Australian markets – also had a left-foot gear change and right-foot rear brake.

Above all, the P92 looked great: the road-going scrambler had Triumph-style 18in wheels and a Norton Commando Roaster tank (which belied the fact that this machine was more Triumph and BSA than it was Norton). But as far as the powers that be at NVT were concerned, the P92 was a cost effective, internationally-marketable product – a potential silver bullet to a fledgling company.

And this was set out in black and white by development engineer Brian Jones who, in 1974, prepared the P92's feasibility report. His report read: "The study has now been completed on the basis of installing either a BSA B25 (250cc) or B50 (500cc) into a new bicycle which is based on the obsolete P30 (BSA Fury / Triumph Bandit) design and uses as many existing parts as possible, thereby reducing capital outlay, design, development and delivery times." ▶





However, despite its cost effective production, the cool-looking tank, Doug Hele's sloping engine design and the shake-free handling, the P92 never saw the light of day. The financial backdrop to its production proved too difficult. NVT had formed barely months earlier and the Triumph Meriden part of the conglomerate was resolved to protect jobs, which resulted in chaos. The workforce – desperate to preserve their jobs – blockaded inventory and made the factory off-limits to management. Added to this were poor sales and losses of up to £20 million. And then, as if all that weren't enough, Harold Wilson's Labour Government called it a day on public subsidies.

Thus the delightful, muscular P92 was never meant to be. As the former European sales director of Norton-Triumph, Mike Jackson, said in a 2004 interview: the P2 "...was one of the best bikes Britain never made."

Sammy Miller said: "It was another example of the British motorcycle industry dropping a goolie because it would have been better than the Yamaha XT 500 but the powers to be decided not to make it. The brains at the top, or lack of brains at the top meant that the P92 never went into production."

But at least one example stands – gleaming – at the Sammy Miller Museum.

Mick Duckworth's Triumph Experimental is available on Amazon and at [www.normanhyde.co.uk](http://www.normanhyde.co.uk).

The P92 is on display at The Sammy Miller Museum, Bashley Cross Road, New Milton, Hampshire B25 5SZ. Tel 01425 620777. Visit [www.sammymiller.co.uk](http://www.sammymiller.co.uk) for opening times. **CBC**



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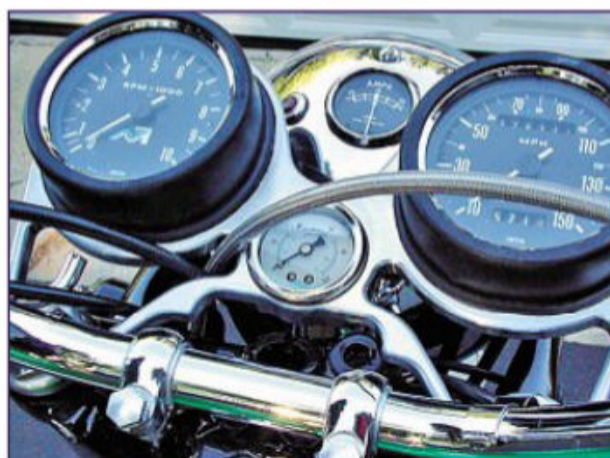
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Bob Rowe on his fabulous Model 90 Sunbeam, which he'd owned since new, during the 1954 London-Edinburgh Trial.

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# TEAM WILDCARD BAGS TWO RECORDS

**TWO CLASSIC BIKE** racers from Cornwall have broken two American Land Speed Records on the Bonneville Salt Flats.

Phil Betty and Miki Sprosen featured on our news pages back in July and revealed their plan to seize back the two land speed records for Triumph. The duo, who have been vintage and classic clubman racers for over 20 years, together form Team Wildcard. They are sponsored by Monty's Classic Motorcycles, who, like the racers, are based in the Tamar Valley in East Cornwall.

Before their trip, the 350cc pushrod engine record was held by a Moto Morini and the 650 record by a Kawasaki. After the first two days of racing, the bikes, a highly modified 1957 Triumph T21, owned by Lenny Diggins, and Miki's stock 1971 Bonneville, were just off the existing record times. They worked on their bikes well into the night and on day three, after a 5am alarm call, they went out on to the salt in the cooler morning conditions and scored the records they had come to gain. Phil took two seconds off the existing record for his class, squeezing over 98mph from the T21. Miki followed quickly

behind, initially taking two seconds off the 650cc pushrod production record, and he then returned each day to continue to break his own record, taking the final speed to over 106mph.

Phil said: "We had dreamt of coming to Bonneville and worked so hard to get those records, but none of it was ever a given. Then, when we both achieved our records in quick succession, it was quite possibly the best day of my entire life."

Miki added: "The Bonneville organisers, scrutineers and all the volunteers, plus all of the other racers and their supporting crews and families, are phenomenal and we cannot thank everyone enough for looking after us so well, especially the Edwards Racing team.

Our classic Triumph bikes caused quite a stir over there and it was brilliant to connect with the small number of other Triumph racers who were also competing. We would absolutely recommend that any interested racers make the journey to Bonneville. There really is nowhere like it and we'd be delighted to pass on any advice, or information, to any other British racers who are keen to discover



Team Wildcard on the salt



Miki and Phil with Monty and Ann at Monty's Classics

this epic experience. Our thanks also go to our sponsor, Monty's Classic Motorcycles and his parts supplier, LF Harris." The Team Wildcard riders are now considering conquering new FIM Land Speed World Records in 2020 on more modern Hinckley Triumph bikes.

## OGRI: EVERYBODY'S FAVOURITE

**THE IMMORTAL OGRI** was the proto-rocker that a certain kind of Seventies and Eighties rider wished they were.

Created by the genius that is Paul Sample, Ogrri, along with the hapless Malcolm, the frankly pneumatic Mitzi and Kickstart the dog, was a monthly part of British motorcycling life from 1972 to 2013, published first in *Bike* magazine and then, for four years, in custom bike publication *Back Street Heroes*.

In 2017 Laughing Gnome books published a special collector's edition of the strips called *Now to Make My Getaway: The Complete Compendium of Ogrri strip cartoons 1972-2013*. After the success of

this sell-out special edition, the publisher has enlisted the help of lifelong fans to help compile a lighter, slimmer, and considerably more aerodynamic volume: *Ogrri - Everybody's Favourite*. It features the 150 most popular strips including, to our delight, a personal favourite: 'The one where Malcolm mistakes a frozen canal for a shortcut'.

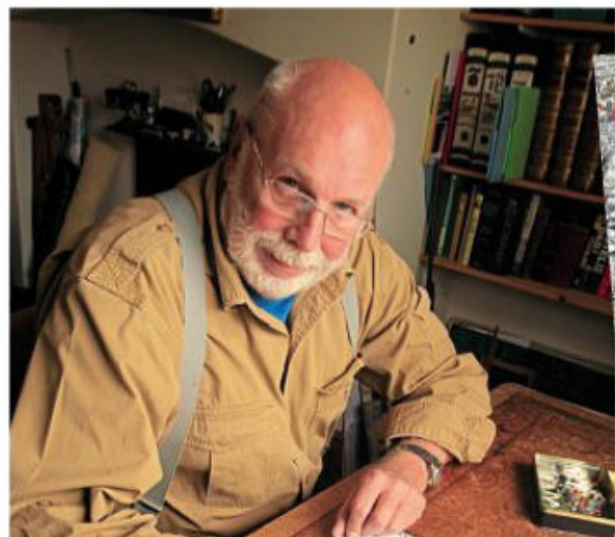
*Ogrri - Everybody's Favourite* has been selected by crowd-sourced nominations from the character's tens of thousands of fans. The book also features an enlightening interview with Ogrri's creator Paul Sample on the creative process, reveals that Kickstart was Paul's dog and

that he owns a pair of modern Triumph twins, a Sunbeam twin and an Enfield.

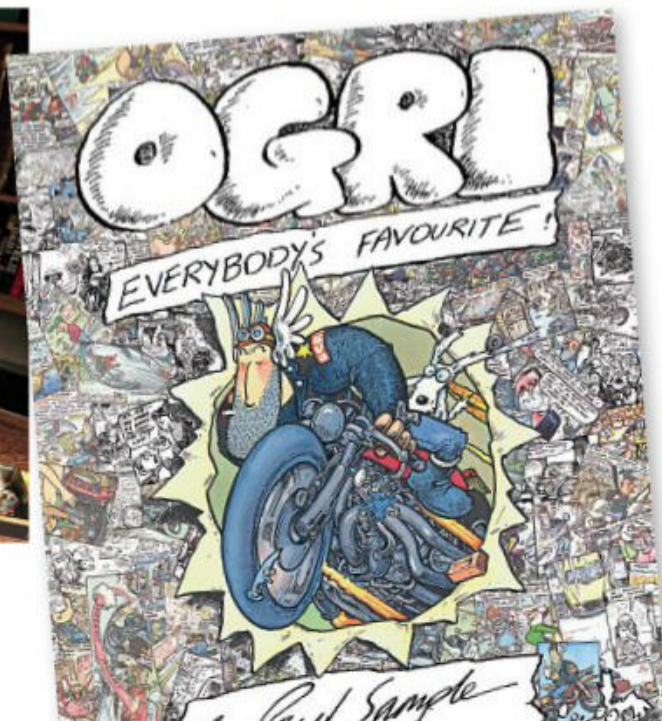
There are many never-before-seen illustrations drawn from his private sketchbooks. This splendid offering can be purchased from [teamogri.bigcartel.com](http://teamogri.bigcartel.com) for £24.99

### POST-CHRISTMAS HUDDERSFIELD MARKET JUMBLE

**PRISE YOURSELF OFF** the sofa and head to the Huddersfield Auto/Retro Jumble on Sunday, December 29 at The Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield. The event, situated in the picturesque Victorian market building, consists of up to 130 stalls selling car and motorcycle parts, accessories, tools, motoring literature, brochures, mascots, automobilia, workshop manuals, retro items, etc - in fact, anything concerned with motoring, with the emphasis on the older (and not-so-old) collectors car or motorcycle. There will be free trade papers and free street parking. A good selection of hot and cold refreshments will be available. Doors open at 10am and admission is £2.50, with children under 12 free.



Paul Sample



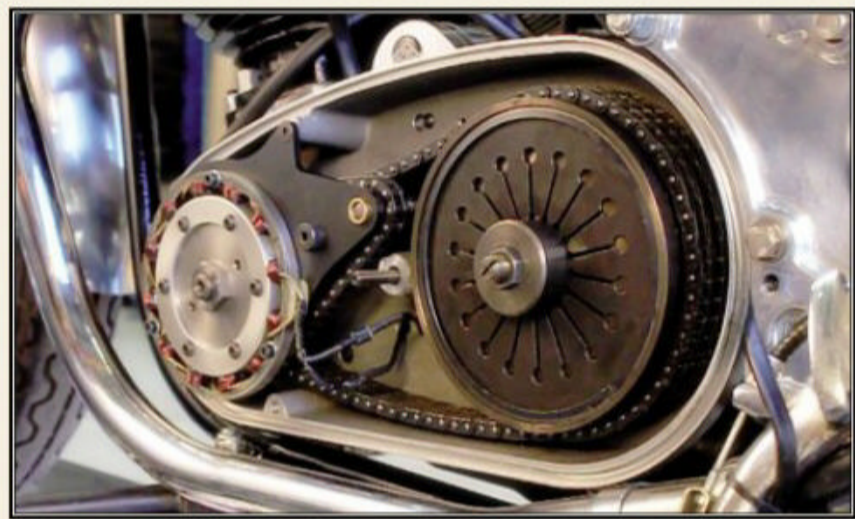
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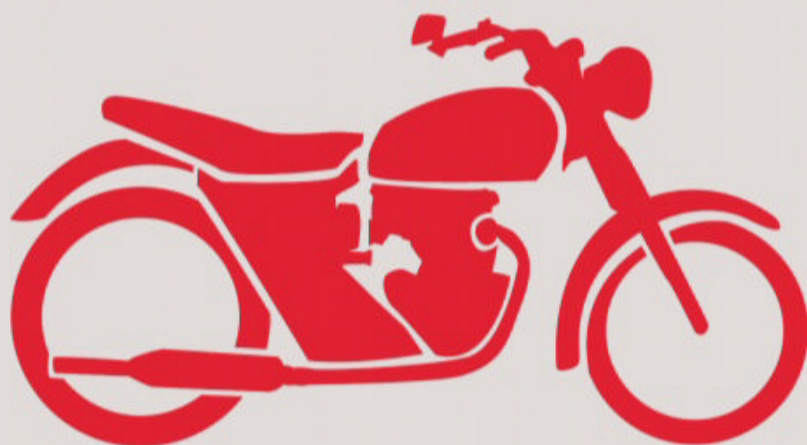
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## JOIN IN THE US TRIBUTE TO WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ON TWO WHEELS

**BRITISH RIDERS ARE** invited to take part in a three-week ride across the US in the summer.

Women's Motorcycle Tours has released the official dates, routes and opening of registration for the Suffragists Centennial Motorcycle Ride (SCMR2020). Coinciding with the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote in the US, the female-focused, three-week cross-country motorcycling event will begin on Friday, July 31 and end on Sunday, August 23.

Attending the cross-country event will provide multiple experiences for all disciplines of motorcycle riders in celebration of the centennial of women's suffrage. It's not a cheap way of seeing America, with fees from \$995 to \$8000 and the need to ship over your own bike, hire in the US or buy one and sell it at the end of the trip, but it promises to be the experience of a lifetime. The Suffragists Ride welcomes all riders, male and female, and all brands of motorcycles. Visit [centennialride.com](http://centennialride.com)

## CAFÉ KIT WON'T LEAVE YOU FAZED

**CAFE RACER KITS** (CRK) have announced details of their latest bike conversion kit. Following the success of the Honda and

Triumph kits, the latest offering turns Yamaha's naked sports Fazer FZS600 into a TZ250-style street racer. CRK offerings use bikes that were once popular and are now cheap second-hand steeds and the Yamaha fits the bill nicely. A scruffy Fazer, with some road wear, can cost less than a £500, which makes it ideal as the basis for a conversion and spares are still readily available.

No welding is required for the conversion, but the builder will have to chop off part of the rear subframe, which is replaced by a bolt-on flat mounting plate and covered by an old-style tail piece. There's a bolt-on number plate bracket and an LED combination rear light and indicator unit, as well as a nose fairing with all brackets needed to fit it. There's also a headlight, hugger, front mudguard, chainguard, rearset conversion kit and radiator shield, too.

Ian, from CRK, said: "Our kits are all designed to allow anyone with a shed or

garage and some standard tools to build themselves a great special. We have had some customers with zero experience who had to go out and buy a set of spanners to complete their bikes.

"We also have customers who are more seasoned builders who have taken the CRK parts unpainted and then developed their own additions by fabricating custom side panels, exhaust systems and body panels." The Fazer kit costs £1800 and will be available from January. Visit [caferacerkits.co.uk](http://caferacerkits.co.uk)



CRK's new Fazer kit

## MOTO MORINI GO RETRO WITH TWIN

**MOTO MORINI HAVE** entered the retro modern classic market by reviving an old look and something close to an old name.

The new arrival is a 650cc twin, dubbed the Moto Morini 6½, or Seiemmezzo, which takes its styling cues from the famous Moto Morini 3½ 350cc V-twins of the 1970s. It follows street scrambler fashion with dual purpose tyres and has high and wide scrambler type bars. The 6½ follows the current fashion for compact twin seats sticking out to the rear with no obvious means of support. The number plate and

rear light are fitted to a bracket bolted to the swingarm, which is sure to be rapidly relocated to the tail piece by most buyers.

The new Morini is one result of the takeover of the brand by Chinese motorcycle builder Zhongneng, which have continued production in Italy.

Rather than a V-twin, the new 6½ has a modern liquid-cooled 650cc parallel twin engine and will be available in full power and A2 licence restricted versions.

The price and release date of the 6½ have not yet been confirmed.

## WATSONIAN'S CLASSIC COMBOS

**SIDECAR MANUFACTURER WATSONIAN** have launched new sidecars for modern classics from Triumph and Royal Enfield.

A Prescott sidecar has been created for use with the 1200cc Triumph Bobber Black. The combo featured the popular Prescott body shell, based on a design dating back to 1946 and originally made using surplus RAF Mosquito reserve fuel tanks.

Customers can choose from a menu of components, such as wheels, mudguards and lights. The Triumph Bobber Black, for example, has a 16in spoked wheel, with black hub and wheel rim, Triumph Bobber front guard for a mudguard, LED lighting and a genuine leather seat. Prices for the Prescott sidecar start at £4495.

For the Royal Enfield Interceptor there is a new kit to fasten a sidecar to one of the popular twins, comprising a sub-frame that bolts to existing mounting points on either side of the bike, providing sturdy and secure locations for the four arms that attach the sidecar. Made from tubular steel, the kit is powder-coated for a long-lasting finish and sells for £475. It can be used to attach any of the eight sidecars currently produced by Watsonian. If you want the whole package off the shelf, Watsonian can supply complete outfits. Prices for an Interceptor and Grand Prix sidecar in standard colours start at £12,500.

There is also a fitting kit to turn the Royal Enfield Bullet 500 Trials into an off-road outfit matched with the International Trials sidecar. Trials fitting kits cost £375 and Watsonian can supply a complete outfit from £9000. For more information, call 01386 700907 or visit [www.watsonian-squire.com](http://www.watsonian-squire.com)



Watsonian's new Interceptor outfit



# Motorcycle Live 2019

What we liked at the UK's largest motorcycle show



The National Motorcycle Museum put on a good display



CCM brought some nice early examples to show their heritage



Carole Nash always find some interesting machines



Indian went to lengths to show some lovely Scout examples





## Products

# BDK magnesium throttles for 2, 3 and 4 cylinder engines

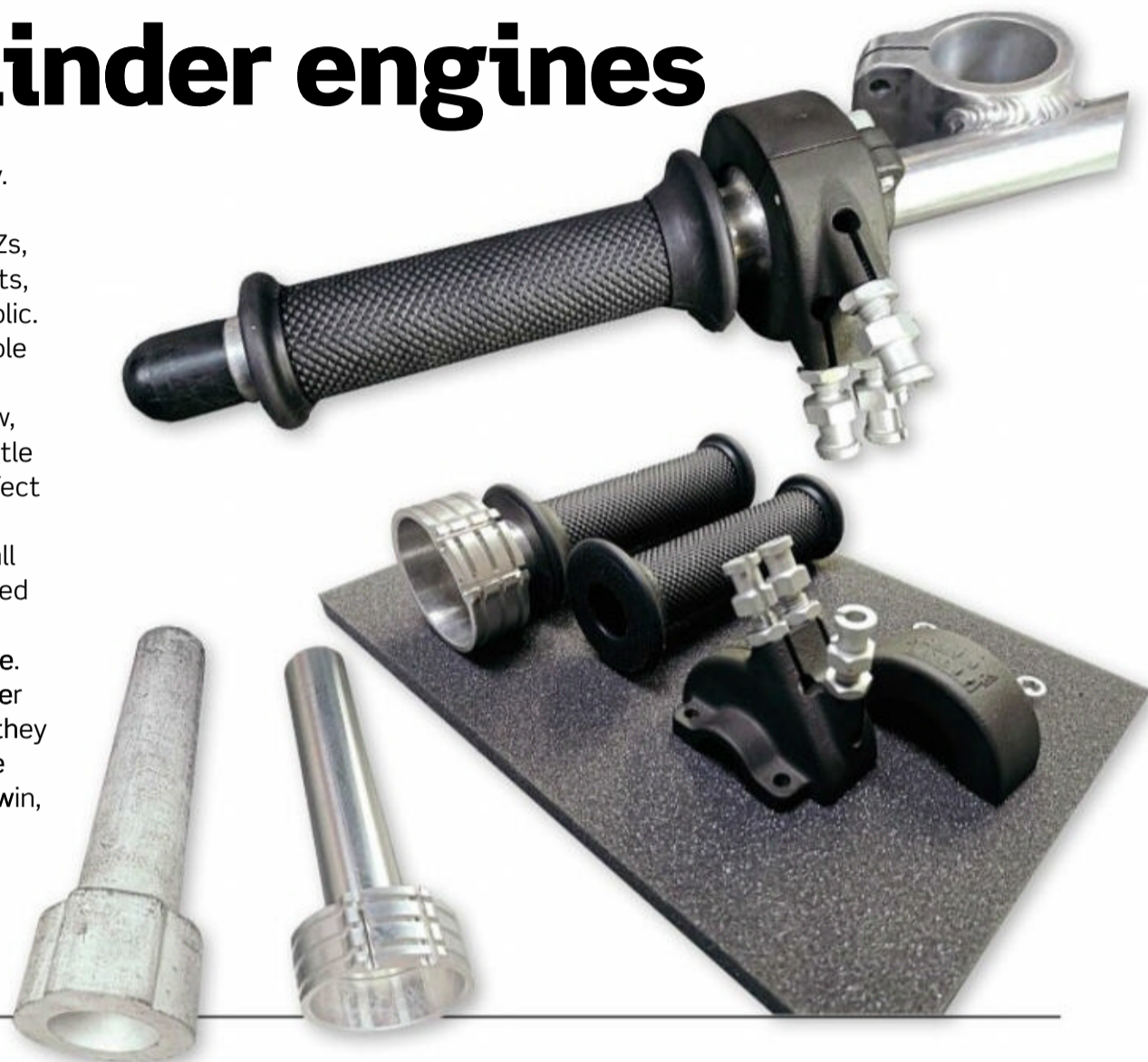
**IF YOU ADMIRE** engineering, these are a thing of beauty. BDk race engineering are fanatical two-stroke experts that practice what they preach, racing anything from TZs, to VFR400s to a Jawa 350 V4 two-stroke in classic events, including Chimay and on road circuits in the Czech republic. They tune, modify and rebuild some of the most incredible machines and every time I pop in I learn something!

They also make parts, like racing generators, and now, the lightest throttles I've ever seen. A magnesium throttle body, cast and then hand-machined individually for perfect alignment for either two, three or four throttle cables, which are operated by a magnesium throttle tube. It is all cast and then machined in the UK and then it's chromated to prevent corrosion. I picked one up and could hardly believe it – my eyes felt like my hands were deceiving me.

Suitable for any multi-cylinder bikes from four-cylinder RG500s to three-cylinder GT750s or twin-cylinder RDs, they are obviously designed for racebikes where every ounce counts, but they could equally be at home on a British twin, or a road bike that wants for nothing. You may not need one, but boy, they are so beautiful you'll find an excuse!

■ [bdkraceeng.co.uk](http://bdkraceeng.co.uk)

■ Around £400 depending on spec



## Elevation T Spirit 3 Brown boots

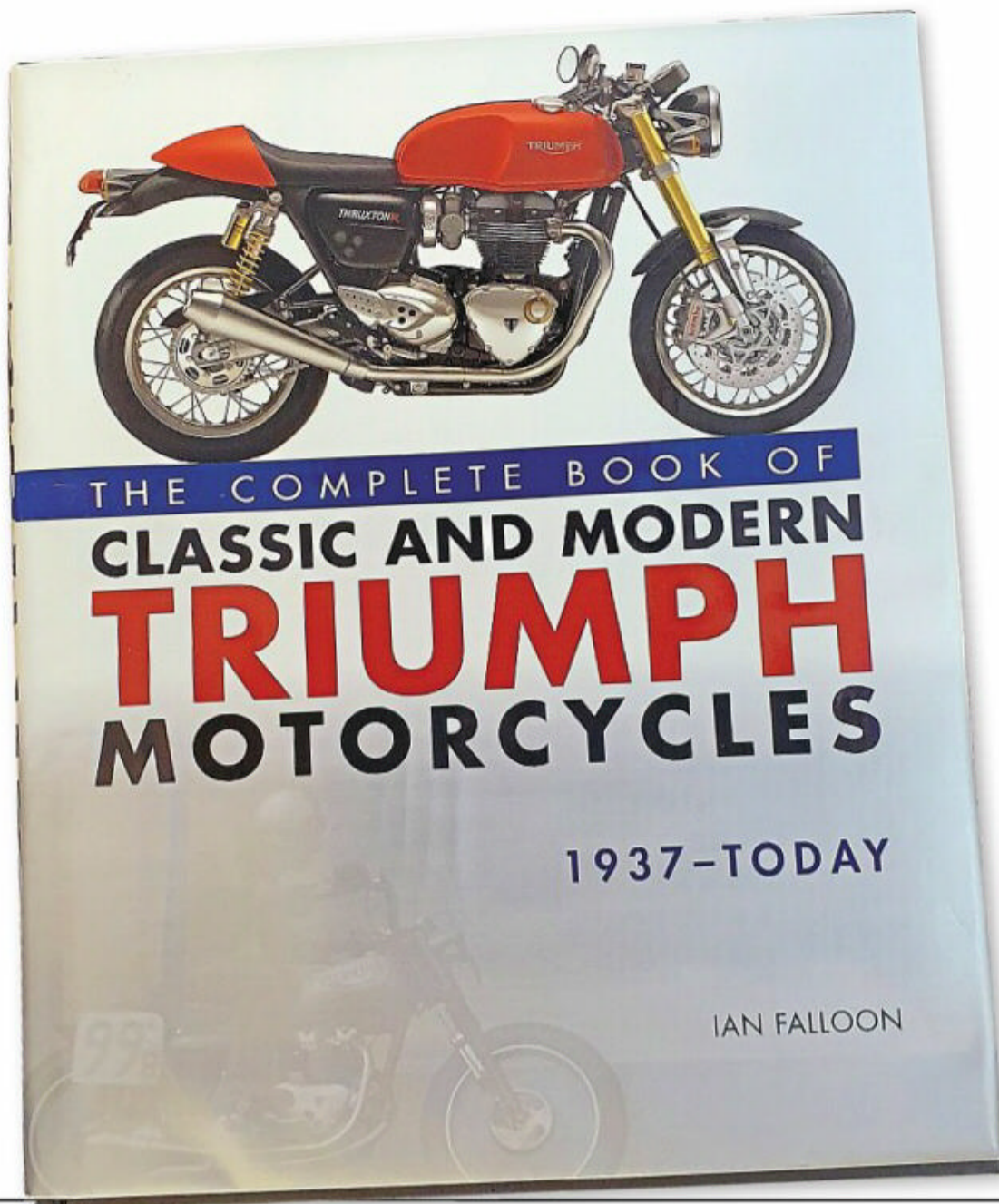
**THESE TRIALS-STYLE** boots may have a frankly ridiculous name, but that's where the bad points end. They are perfect for trials bikes, off-roading and wading through streams when you need, but they also make damn fine winter road boots.

The construction looks first rate, though only time will tell on that front. But they are bedding in nicely, with enough movement for gear changes, both left or right-hand and deft rear brake control. They are stiffer than traditional road boots, mind. The sole has plenty of grip and the outer, leather-suede finish looks gorgeous, though make sure you take note, as once you start using them they won't look like that for long!

Adjustment is great, plenty of room for those with larger calves, yet fine for those with narrow feet. Overall, some great boots for those that like an adventure-styled boot, good protection (especially from the kick-start) and look like they'll last for a good few years. They're also around half the price of some equivalent, so great value.

■ [Tri-motive.com](http://Tri-motive.com)

■ £219.00



## The complete book of Triumph motorcycles, 1937-today

**THIS IS A** new edition of the original book, which was published in 2015. Where it differs from many books on Triumph motorcycles, is the time it covers. Though the introduction gives you the early years, it concentrates on the company from the launch of the Speed Twin, through the good times, then the bad and continues through the Hinckley years, when the name was bought by John Bloor.

To a Triumph fan there is very little you won't already know. But as a resource or for those new to the marque, it is great. Easy to read, simple to find the area that covers the model you're after, Falloon has researched the data you need, the dates and the specifications.

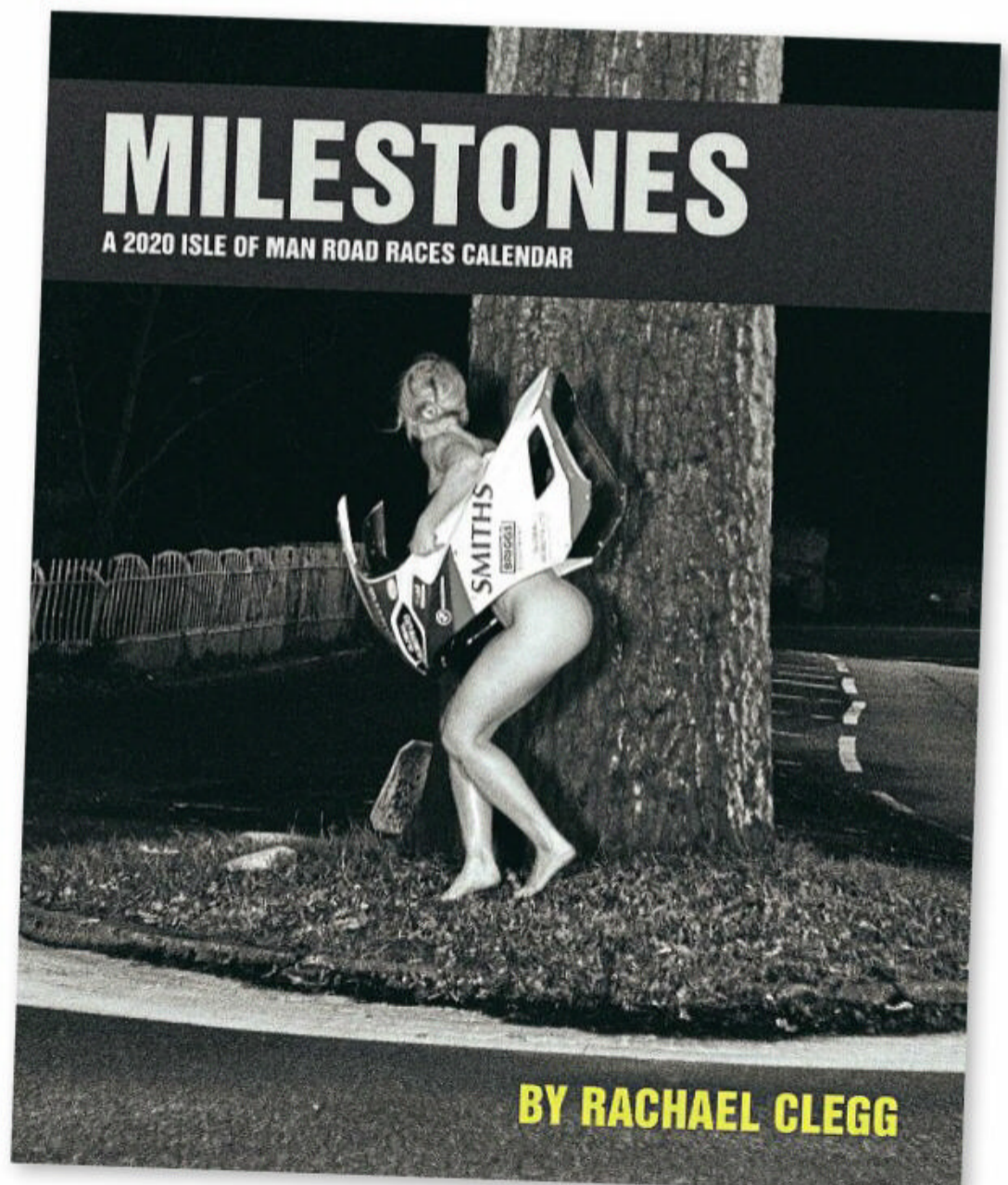
Ian Falloon has written many motorcycle books and I've always found them accurate and well researched. If you are looking to expand your knowledge of Triumphs, then this is a good place to start.

- By Ian Falloon
- [Quartoknows.com](http://Quartoknows.com)
- £35

# Milestones IoM road races calendar

A **DUMPER TRUCK**, 100 tennis balls and Peter Hickman's TT-winning fairing are just some of the props in this year's Milestones calendar. Brought to you by artist, Rachael Clegg, who also writes for *Classic Bike Guide*, the cult calendar – which is now in its ninth year – is a visual celebration of the TT's history, with each image re-creating an incident from the event's past. Peter Hickman, Giacomo Agostini, John McGuinness and John Surtees have all graced Milestones – albeit in surreal form. The photographs and print quality are beautiful; imagine it as a piece of art that changes every month and is also useful!

- [Rachaelclegg.com](http://Rachaelclegg.com)
- £25



# VELOCETTE

## MAC

The gentleman's ride, Velocette's 350cc MAC can be somewhat demanding, but it is also a very rewarding bike to live with

WORDS BY OLI PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY CHAPMAN

**V**ELOCETTE SINGLES ARE KNOWN for their style, substance and perhaps unfairly for being challenging to own. If you don't have the skills of an engineer so the myth goes, you'd better acquire them along with your MAC, Viper, MSS or Venom, or at least know someone who knows their way around these classy creations.

If you get one that's been poorly put together then you should be prepared for months, if not years, of hard work and frustration in getting it to run properly. But if you manage to lay your hands on a good one, you'll be lucky enough to own one of the very best British motorcycles ever built.

Of all the Velo pushrod singles the MAC 350 is the easiest to live with. Softly tuned and capable, the MAC was a contradiction; a sophisticated workhorse. The first MACs produced just 14bhp, and had a top speed of around 75mph, which hardly sounds like an earth-shattering performance, but it was faster than Velocette's K series OHC 350. As a cooking model the MAC was rejected by those after speed and power, but you could ride one at close to full chat all day long without vibrating machine or rider to bits. Velocette sold nearly 25,000 MACs, despite the fact they were considerably more expensive than their AMC and BSA rivals. It was the bike that saved Velocette when the much admired LE, in which the company had so much faith, returned poor sales.

The MAC originally arrived long before the LE in 1934 and was developed from

the 250cc MOV by increasing the stroke by 40%. The prewar MAC had girder forks until 1939 when Velocette went into wartime production, re-branding the MAC as the MDD and MAF for wartime use. It re-emerged unchanged as the MAC in 1946 and in 1948 it got Dowty air forks for a few years, before adopting Velocette's own oil damped forks. In 1954 it got rear suspension and remained in production until 1959.

### TWO MACS TO SAVOUR

Graham Drinkwater's rigid MAC was put together from the remains of two 1952 models, relocated back to England after a sojourn in Ireland. The two bikes were bought in the late 1990s to be a source of spares to rebuild the prewar MAC owned by Graham's father, George. When the original rebuild was finished there were enough parts left over to build a single 1950s bike.

In his back-garden workshop, Graham turned that pile of parts into one of the sweetest riding machines you could hope to find, packed with the kind of apparently minor modifications that turned a good bike into a great one. For instance, the front brake has been improved by removing an inch and a half of the trailing edge from the linings. The forks were overhauled, a steering damper was fitted, and taper roller bearings were used on the steering head.

The petrol tank is correct for a rigid MAC, with the filler cap on the left-hand side and a large indentation in the





#### WHAT IS IT?

A comfortable classic single



#### GOOD POINTS?

The engineering is superb, the handling is predictable and the performance is as good as it gets for a Fifties 350



#### BAD POINTS?

The design requires a lot of skill in order to keep the bike running at its best and it can be tough to start

#### COST?

A MAC in bits will cost you around £3000, while a good runner will cost £4000-plus. A museum quality MAC should cost £5-6000



bottom of the tank to accommodate the cylinder head. Later, Velocette relocated the cap to the right-hand side after it was realised that you couldn't fill the tank to the top if it was on its side stand. The toolbox and oil tank are original, with Velocette using a filter in the oil tank, moving it from under the timing cover. Graham is not a fan of oil taps, a common modification. He says: "You only have to forget to turn the tap to on once..."

There's the optional extra sprung pillion seat. The arrangement for removing the rear wheel gives some idea of the care and thought that went into the design of the MAC. The rear wheel is QD (quickly detachable) and in order to get the wheel out you must remove the rear portion of the mudguard. The simple but clever bit is that by undoing two nuts on the top of the mudguard, you can lift it clear of the wheel, and Velocette deliberately fitted extra-long electrical wires to the rear light



**GRAHAM'S DAD GEORGE** bought his 1935 Velocette 350 MAC in 1941 for £38 and it's now in the care of Graham's brother, Colin. Colin tells the story of its near-death and resurrection: "In 1947 George took his MAC to the Isle of Man TT and while on the island he helped one of the racers who was riding a Velocette. The racer had missed a gear on a practice lap and bent a valve. George arrived as they were trying to restart the bike after the rebuild, he pointed out that they had the timing set wrong and being a REME mechanic sorted it out for him, he was then told to go and test ride it. On his way home on his MAC he collided head on in Bristol with a speeding Austin 7 full of students travelling on the wrong side of the road. George suffered a fractured skull and a broken wrist. He later appeared

in court as a witness where the driver of the Austin 7 was prosecuted and was found to be on the wrong side of the road going around a bend too fast.

"The wrecked Velo was left in someone's front garden and when a copper inspected the damage he noticed it was still displaying a Manx tax disc, but luckily behind it was the UK one, but the copper gave Dad a quiet telling-off for his heinous crime when he appeared as a witness at the court when the student was prosecuted."

The MAC then spent 52 years in the corner of garage before being restored by Graham. By the time it was finished, George had trouble starting it, so Graham fitted an electric starter. The restored 350 is now used by Colin on summertime rides.

so you can rest the guard on top of the bike and get the wheel out.

Graham describes the engine as fairly standard, though some might consider that a bit of an understatement. The bottom end is standard, but fitted with new main bearings, but he found that the barrel had been bored out to 40 thou oversize. The problem with this was that the required 40 thou Wellworthy pistons are unobtainable. However, research found that the standard Triumph Daytona piston, which are plentiful, was the correct dimensions for a 40 thou over Velo barrel, though Graham did have to ream out the small end bush on the Velo conrod to make it fit. The original cylinder head was replaced with a modified alloy head from a later Viper. This, when found at an autojumble, had no inlet valve fitted, and Graham soon realised this was because the inlet port had been opened out, and there wasn't a valve available that would fit, so he had one made to a mix of Viper and MSS dimensions. The cam is from an MSS. The large fishtail exhaust with its complex internal baffles makes more difference to the performance than you

might think. "You need the fishtail to make the engine run properly," says Graham.

"When the exhaust fell off my Venom, I fitted a pattern Gold Star silencer because that's what I had handy. It was a real job to start it, and just wouldn't go properly until I put the right Velocette silencer back on."

The MAC runs 12v electrics, with a 60w Lucas dynamo replacing the old 45W Miller item. There's a BTH magneto from APL magnetos in Salisbury and a modern regulator inside an old six-volt Miller casing. While some owners of Velos retrofit magnetos with manual advance/retard mechanisms, Graham feels the automatic system used on the MAC is perfectly suited to the job: "You just have one less lever to worry about."

Graham's MAC is no cosseted classic, which is evident from the sat nav mount on the handlebars. "My bikes are there to be ridden," he says. The MAC is used all year round and is a regular attendee at the Dorset Velocette Club's 200-mile Bob Foster run, held in October every year.

Graham said that the best way to keep them running sweetly is to give them a bit of stick. "If you build them properly you

can jump on a MAC and just ride and ride. What you need to do is keep the engine buzzing and don't let them labour at low revs in too high a gear. You won't hurt a Velo engine by revving it hard. They're virtually indestructible and have been seen happily revving over 8000rpm."

Graham's MAC is as accurate a rebuild as any other Velo of the period. He says: "It's got standard type tyres and chrome rims and black handlebars. The 1952 MAC was listed with black rims, but you could ask for any trim, including chrome bars, as they were trying to sell as many of the rigids as they could and were chucking them together with whatever they had handy."

### SPRING INTO ACTION

There are only two years between Graham's rigid and Terry Hannis' sprung MAC, but they're very different machines on the road. Terry's MAC hasn't moved far from the shop that supplied it in 1954 when it was one of the first sprung Velo singles to come out of the factory. The last rigid MAC models had not been big sellers, as buyers were waiting for a sprung frame. ▶

### SPECIFICATION

**ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv high cam single **BORE/STROKE:** 68mm x 96mm **CAPACITY:** 349cc **COMPRESSION:** 6.75:1 (standard) **POWER:** 14-16bhp@5700rpm **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, double gear pump **IGNITION:** Lucas or BTH magneto **CARBURETTOR:** Amal Monobloc **TRANSMISSION:** Chain **GEARBOX:** Four-speed foot change **FRAME:** Brazed lug chrome-moly tube, single downtube duplex cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Velocette tele forks, hydraulic damping **REAR SUSPENSION:** Rigid or swinging arm with twin Woodhead Monroe shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 7in sls drum **REAR BRAKE:** 7in sls drum **TYRES:** 3.25 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 54in **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 28inch (rigid) 30.5in (sprung) **DRY WEIGHT:** 326/355lb **TOP SPEED:** 75mph



LEFT: George and a chum in Cheddar Gorge

BELOW: George's MAC and a lady friend at Creg on the TT course



Terry says: “It’s what riders were waiting for. Why buy a new rigid, when you could have a sprung frame?”

The sprung MAC had the company’s trademark rear suspension system with its distinctive adjustable sliding top shock mounts for the Woodhead Monroe rear shock absorbers. These could be slid along the top slotted mount to meet a rider’s specific requirements – forward for solo riding, backwards for two-up. To adjust the final drive chain the rider had to put the shocks in the solo position. Like the Rigid, the MAC uses Velocette’s soldered together in-house set of forks derived from those designed for the diminutive LE 200cc flat twin, though the forks built for the bigger Velocettes at least had oil damping.

First registered in East Coker, near Yeovil, Terry’s MAC rested in an outbuilding at nearby Montacute House for 30 years before he got his hands on it. With everything there but looking a

bit careworn after its time lurking in the darkness, a restoration to stock was taken on. Like Graham’s rigid, the sprung MAC has a more modern 28mm Amal Concentric carburettor. “They just make it run better and an air filter was deemed unnecessary,” Terry says. It has the later, physically bigger gearbox, and the stock seat comes with a little extra padding.

Apart from that, and a 12v conversion, the sprung MAC is pretty much as it would have looked when it came from the factory and got into the hands of a Somersetian with an eye for quality.

### MACS ON THE ROAD

Starting a Velo single is, according to legend at least, a bit of a challenge, which is down to the way the kickstart is geared. On most old bikes the kickstart is linked to the mainshaft of the gearbox, and a single kick should turn the engine over twice. A Velocette kickstart mechanism works

off the lower layshaft and for each kick this turns the engine over once, hence it’s legendary reluctance to start – especially if it has not been put together with care. It requires patience, learning and technique to master the long swinging kick needed to bring it into life. You flood the carb, find top dead centre (TDC), pull in the valve lifter, let the pedal return to the top, and then push it down all the way to the stop. Then you let it return to TDC and give it that long swinging kick, following the stroke through all the way to the bottom and bottom dead centre. At this point it should start if, as was the case with both these MACs, everything has been set up properly. When we had it chuffing away, Graham advised that you shouldn’t leave a Velo to tick over unattended, as it can jump into second gear by itself and throw itself to the floor in a huff.

It came as something of a surprise to discover that there wasn’t a great deal of

BELOW: Graham Drinkwater’s dad, George’s MAC after it’s unfortunate meeting with an Austin 7

BOTTOM: George’s MAC today



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difference in comfort between the rigid and suspension equipped bikes. The sprung saddle on the rigid absorbs most of the bumps and the slightly lower riding position is easy to get used to. Both bikes feel all of a piece, though the rigid felt a little more sure-footed, even over the bumps and gravel.

Although the MAC is 'just' a 350, it feels larger than that, because it's the same physical size as its bigger brothers. You also realise as soon as you sit on either bike just how purposeful they both feel. The handling was excellent on both. The sit-up-and-beg riding position on the rigid was near-perfect. There are low handlebars, and low-set, very wide footrests. That gearshift might look huge, but it stays out of the way until you need to use it. The sprung model's ride came close behind – a little sportier and just as comfortable.

Once you have got it running and rolling along, it's important to look after the clutch. Graham says: "You need to knock it into neutral before you stop, or you'll burn the clutch out in no time."

This neutral finding on the move is easy to do, thanks to the quality of the gearbox. The broad spread of the gears means that once you are rolling, gear changing is an occasional task rather than a constant chore.

If the sprung Velo was the only one I'd had the opportunity to take for a ride, I would be raving about it. The way the power comes out, the riding position, the overall class of the thing – it all felt just right. It felt like a gentleman's mount, albeit perhaps a rather rakish gentleman, one possessed of a moustache suitable



## THAT CLUTCH THOUGH...?

**BECAUSE THE CLUTCH** is mounted inboard of the final drive sprocket, the mechanism is very slender. With an engine arrangement that is already very narrow and compact, it's unlike almost any other clutch, with 16 tiny springs mounted in a ring behind the slender clutch basket. The clearances between the plates were correspondingly narrow and unlike a more conventional clutch, with a central pushrod, the plates are separated by a bush pushing on one side of the centre so the plates 'peel' off.

Riding the clutch rather than slipping into neutral could mean those clearances could run out very quickly. If it did you

would have to remove a plate on the chaincase and use the Velocette clutch adjusting tool. This is a steel rod with a flat on one edge, which was inserted into the clutch through a cover on the primary chaincase and the adjustment is affected by rotating the rear wheel and operating the kickstart. To stop inexperienced home mechanics from trying to bypass this adjustment ritual, Velocette hid the cable adjuster under the petrol tank on later models to discourage inexperienced riders from trying to fiddle with it. To be fair to the MAC, the clutch tends to suffer less on the 350 than on bigger and more powerful Velo singles.



for twirling. Vibration was little more than a light rumble and the engine emitted little more than a soft 'chuff' until opened up, when it turned into an under-the-breath snarl. At 14bhp, or 16bhp for the sprung model, the MAC produces little more power than a modern 125, yet neither machine felt as if it was about to run out of breath at any time.

When I got the chance to try out the rigid MAC, the result came as a complete surprise. I must admit to being less experienced with bikes devoid of shock absorbers than those with bouncy back ends, but this was a revelation. It is a motorbike that feels planted and precise. The impact of some decidedly dodgy looking potholes was soaked up by the sprung seat and where corners were less well surfaced or worse, crumbling, the solidity of the frame shrugged off the impacts. "Providing you accelerate properly, if you go into a corner at 40, you should come out of it at 50," says Graham.

The MAC is a machine that feels just right. It's a holistic motorcycle, far more than the sum of its parts, everything is a seamlessly interconnected part of a whole. It was designed by people who really thought about what they were doing. No short cuts, no components chosen from a parts bin. The MAC is a whole thing, built to work in the best possible fashion. **CBIC**



## WHY NOT TRY:



### AMC SINGLES

An AJS Model 16 or Matchless G3 should definitely be on your shopping list. A good AMC 350 will come in a lot cheaper than a Velocette, to the tune of thousands of pounds. Originally a rigid, and always fitted with telescopic forks, like Velocette, the AMC rigid framed bikes jumped past the use of plunger frames to rear suspension in 1949. It'll be easier to live with than a MAC, as it is simple and practical and could be kept going with minimal maintenance. It also, like the Velo, comes in black and gold.



### BSA B31

The B31 350 single was introduced in 1945, and it beat all BSA's rivals to the punch, as it was one of the first new models available. It had a rigid frame and saw BSA's first use of telescopic forks. Slightly more powerful than the MAC, the B31 produced 17bhp but even so it was slower than the Velo. BSA first offered plunger rear suspension on the B31 with a swingarm rear suspension frame available from 1954. Solid and comfy, it's not as classy as the MAC, but it would be easier to live with.



### ROYAL ENFIELD BULLET 350

Launched in 1948, the Bullet has had the longest production run of any motorcycle. It arrived fully formed with Enfield's own brand of two-way damped telescopic fork and a swinging arm frame. The Bullet has a torquey 350cc engine than can plod along gently, but it can be surprisingly spritely if asked. It handles well too. In production from 1948 to the present day in Redditch and in India, the only downside is that the Bullet doesn't quite have the class or exclusivity of a MAC.



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# WINTER!

Old bikes don't need wrapping up for the winter. We spend the day with a brace of ES2s and have a chilly blast

**WORDS** MATT AND NEVILLE

**PHOTOGRAPHY** CHIPPY 'I'VE GOT A 5 SERIES' WOOD





**N**EVILLE CUSHING, FRIEND, mentor and creator of interesting vehicles, has a fondness for Norton's mainstay-single, the ES2.

He has two; a swingarm 1956 model that is standard apart from the exhaust from a speedway bike, upswept 'cowhorn' handlebars from when it was hauling a sidecar and a rather rudimentary, yet effective centrestand spring.

The second bike, also a 1956, started life as a plunger-frame that Nev got with other spares when he bought the other one, which he took back to hardtail, fitted Ariel girder forks, a stationary engine magneto, alloy mudguards, a modified Japanese fuel tank modified to look a little like the 500T tank, Dunlop saddle and a somewhat diminutive exhaust silencer, which surprisingly works well. The engine plates hold a motor from another deal and are water-jet cut from titanium sheet, helping this feel rather lightweight and confidence-inspiring.

Nev likes to use his bikes; if it's not icy, you can ride. And as Norfolk 'roads' (tracks) are usually covered in – er – mud, let's call it, there's little point in having a fleet of beautifully shining machines, as you'd never ride them. These machines are cleaned with WD40 and a rag, not soap and a sponge, and in our eyes, they look all the better for it, but each to their own.

Our day starts cold, but sunny. A new set of Pirelli trials tyres are being fitted to the off-road bike, but neither have been started for a few months, as other bikes have been in favour. In fact, I notice the road bike has precious little fuel and the advance/retard cable has broken. "That'll be alright boy. Just kick it," shouts Neville. After a quick tickle, it starts first kick, smoke filling the garden. "Keep it runnin', it'll have dry sumped. Get it all back in the tank," I was told. Neville rides a lot and doesn't believe in oil taps. "You've only got to forget it once," he says. Yet others swear by it – whatever works for you.

Our first-kick pride diminished quickly ▶



# A lesson in history – are you sitting comfortably?

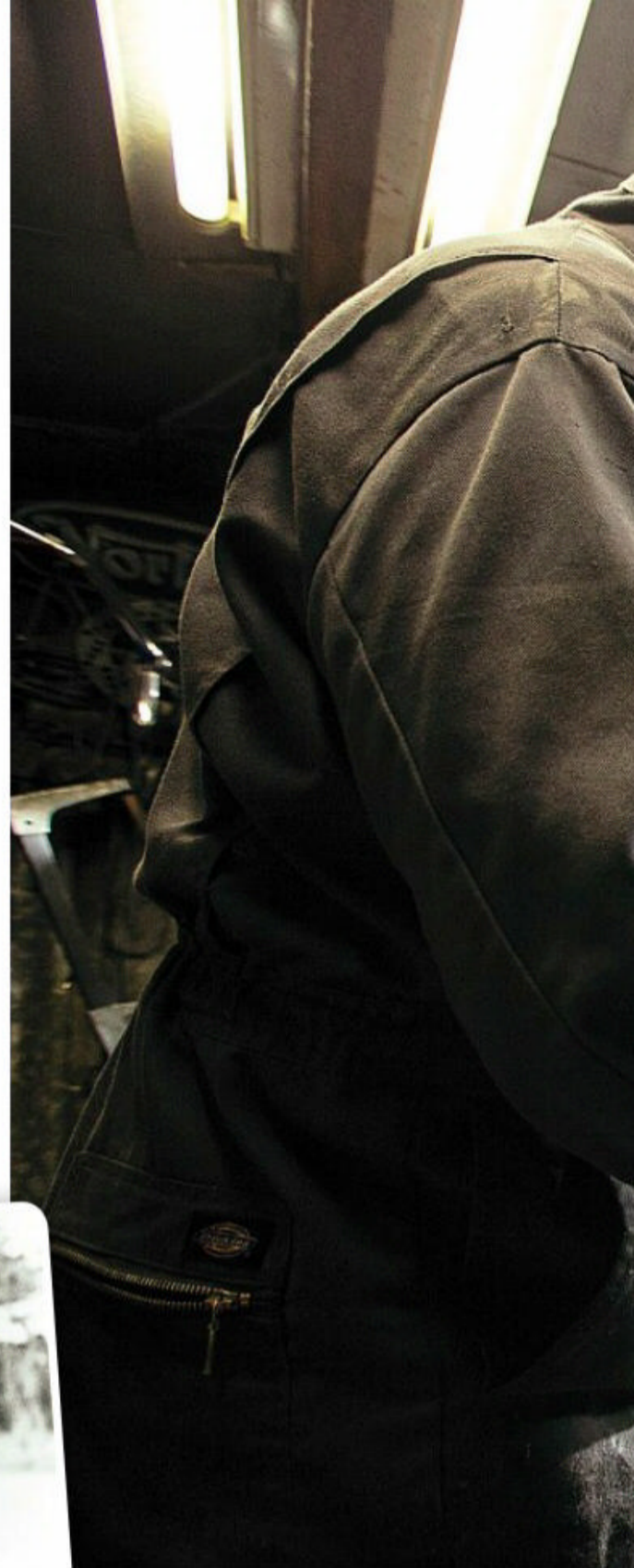
Considering the ES2 was in production for just under 40 years, there are still several facts around the model that cannot be clarified. For example, which came first, the CS1 or the ES2?

Also the name. Some say it stands for 'easy start' as with a good magneto an ES2 should start first kick. Others say it was named after Ernie Searle, engine tuner and TT racer of that first prototype in 1927, coming 17<sup>th</sup> that year. However, it is the founder of the VMCC, Titch Allen, who says that Walter Moore, designer of the ES2 and CS1, believed it was simply manufacturing code. 'E' was for extra cost from the costing department, 'S' stood for sports and the '2' meant it was the second model in the sports line up, after the Model 18. Titch thinks this is the most sensible answer, as it was similar to the JE model; 'J' for Junior and 'E' for extra cost. But the truth may never be known.

Wherever its name derives, the infamous 79mmx100mm long-stroke engine is simple, relatively strong and, if looked after, reliable. It also shares many parts with the smaller Model 50 and larger Model 19. And it's been in production since 1927, with the prototype raced (or should that be tested) at that year's TT by Searle. Many say the bottom end was created from the Model 18, but it is more likely it was based on the

CS1 overhead camshaft engine, designed around the same time. While the overhead valve engine has changed little over time, the earlier bikes had exposed valve gear and the mag drive from the left side, like the CS1 engine. It consequently changed to the right, the valves became enclosed to keep one's slacks clean, but as a whole, they are easy to get parts for from the likes of Norvil, though they are not as well supported as the twins.

Gearboxes changed over time, frames went from rigid, to plunger, to swingarm, to featherbed and then slimline featherbed, and lastly, thanks to the mess the industry was in and the buying public's wants, the ES2 became a badge-engineered Matchless, still a good bike, but the ES2 and that long-stroke engine had gone. 1962 was technically the end, though many bikes took up camp in dealerships, unwanted, so there will be those registered later.





with the sight of fuel gushing out of the tickler. No amount of tapping the float bowl would stop it, so it was off with the bowl (simple on an ES2 – just loosen the clamp and twist the carb round so you can get to the screws) and sure enough the float was full. A quick rummage discovered a spare float and all was good.

The off-roader wouldn't kick over though, so new petrol was poured in, the plug warmed with a blow torch and some brake cleaner went in the carb. Boom! Up she started, and after checking the oil was returning to the tank, we were ready to go.

Norfolk is covered in wonderful, single-track back lanes that are perfect for old bikes. We track here and there on familiar routes and, because of the nature of these wandering byways, our speed never gets so high that we get too cold. The bikes have different gearing, but are happy at any speed and that pull of the big single allows effortless riding on these often tight and twisty lanes. My ignition adjuster has a snapped cable, so it's running full advance, so the power is instant and there aren't the steep hills on which you'd need to retard. The brakes aren't brilliant, but when the surface is slippery, they're better than modern stoppers, which are too harsh. I'm finding the road bike

really quite comfortable, thanks to the swingarm and standard seat, while Nev is happy bouncing around on his compliant tyres and saddle. When he's not bugging around through old pits...

When we find them, we start to head down some BOATS, or Byways Open to All Traffic, which are unmade, or unmaintained lanes. Neville, with his lightweight off-road tyred bike, is fine, while I'm slipping around. But while he's trying to soak me in the puddles, I'm still smiling. This is fun!

The local ford is flowing. Undeterred, Nev flies through, while I stop, wondering how waterproof the electrics are. In the end I go over the footbridge, while he's enjoying having some photos taken of his river crossing. Watching, I can't get over how the permanently low winter sun is lighting us so beautifully through the leafless trees. This is work, yes?

The bikes sound glorious together. Neither have original exhausts and both are loud, but that thump-thump that only a long-stroke single can give is a soundtrack that is perfect for this kind of riding. If we were on modern off-road bikes with gory-bright clothing and Star Wars helmets, we'd be public enemy number one. But two old boys with open face lids are a lot less intimidating. And we're on Nortons. Horse ▶

riders, walkers and children smile and wave, and if we can, we wave, smile or honk back.

We stop at a local café for warm coffee and naughty-but-nice cakes (Corners nursery and farm shop, Beetley). It's also a curiosity shop-cum nursery, so we wander around looking at the tractor seats, sack barrows and ploughing paraphernalia. The owners are friendly and come over to admire the bikes, while we laugh about various tales of slipping, sliding and other daring-do.

Winter does have its issues, like the fact that by 3pm it's time to head back. And the off-roader has no lights, so it's back roads back, too. A quick rinse down, a spray of protection and the brace of ES2s are packed away, waiting for when we both have time to do the whole thing all over again. That's a benefit of having real bikes, in real condition. The coast next time, or is that too organised?

I totally understand if your pride and joy is packed away for the cold months, but you are missing out on some great riding days. And the ES2 may have spent most of its life as a mundane cooking model, but it's a superb tool for these kinds of shenanigans and one that could also cruise at 60mph all day, should you wish.

I'm sure that the new Nortons will be great and I am looking forward to trying them. But would we have been smiling as much after a day on them in December? I doubt it. **CBG**



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# Twin Twins

## 2020 NORTON ATLAS 650 NOMAD & RANGER:

We've heard about them and seen the pictures, but what are Norton's 650 twins like to ride? Alan Cathcart heads to the factory to find out

PHOTOGRAPHY KEL EDGE



2020 NORTON ATLAS 650 NOMAD

## WHAT'S THE STORY?

Norton's decade-long ride down the comeback trail under the ownership of Stuart Garner is now reaching fruition, with production commencing before the end of this year of the historic British marque's twin Twins – its 650cc parallel-twin Atlas range.

Launched at the Birmingham NEC Show almost a year ago and initially available in Nomad and Ranger street scrambler versions, the Ranger is more decidedly dual-purpose than the Nomad. Priced at the upper end of the middleweight market, the Nomad should retail at £9995 on the road, with the Ranger at £11,995. Compare this to, for example, a Kawasaki Versys 650GT at £8649, these two all-new motorcycles presage what Garner promises will be a constantly expanding range

of entry-level models in the Norton range – all without in any way impacting on the company's current air/oil-cooled Commando 961 retro twin, which continues in production in Euro 4-compliant form alongside its 1200 V4 Superbike family, which entered production a year ago.

The Atlas duo are direct spin-offs from those 1200 V4 models. The liquid-cooled, eight-valve, dohc parallel twin, wet-sump motor is common to both versions and is essentially representing the front cylinder bank of the 72° V4 engine, with the same chain camshaft drive up the left side of the Atlas motor, which is fitted with a 270° crank; common to all parallel twins, thanks to its balance. This has been stroked slightly to obtain a full 650cc, so that instead ▶



2020 NORTON ATLAS 650 RANGER



of the V4's 82 x 56.8mm format the Atlas engine now measures 82 x 61.5mm, in which guise it delivers the same 84bhp at 11,000rpm at the crank (vs. 64bhp on the Versys) on each model, with 47.20lb.ft of torque (45lb.ft for the Kawasaki) peaking at 9000rpm, running on 11:1 compression.

Norton uses a dedicated engine management system from Mechatronic on the two Twins, the same supplier as on the V4, with twin 48mm Jenvey throttle bodies, each with a single Bosch injector (compared to two on the V4) and a ride-by-wire digital throttle, but as yet no choice of different riding modes. The six-speed extractable cassette-type gearbox with straight-cut primary gears uses the same ratios as the V4, with a cable operated oil-bath clutch, and a single gear-driven counter-balancer to eliminate undue vibration, which it indeed does.

This extremely compact engine was entirely developed in-house at Norton, according to the company's head of design, Simon Skinner – but its commercial manufacture is linked to a deal Norton made almost at the start of the project to supply Chinese giant Zongshen with a 650cc twin-cylinder engine design for volume manufacture on its production lines in China. As part of that, Zongshen will be supplying certain key parts to Norton with which they can manufacture their own, more powerful version of the motor, including the horizontally-split crankcases, the eight-valve dohc cylinder head and both crankshaft and camshafts, leaving Norton to source the other parts



necessary to build the engine locally in the UK. Essentially, this means Norton has found a dependable Asian supplier of key parts at affordable prices, without having to copy its near neighbour, Triumph, in establishing its own factory in Thailand or elsewhere to achieve this.

“Zongshen approached us late in 2016 after we'd taken the V4 engine design back in-house (from R&D firm Ricardo – AC), and soon after we'd begun work on drawing up the Twin,” says Skinner.

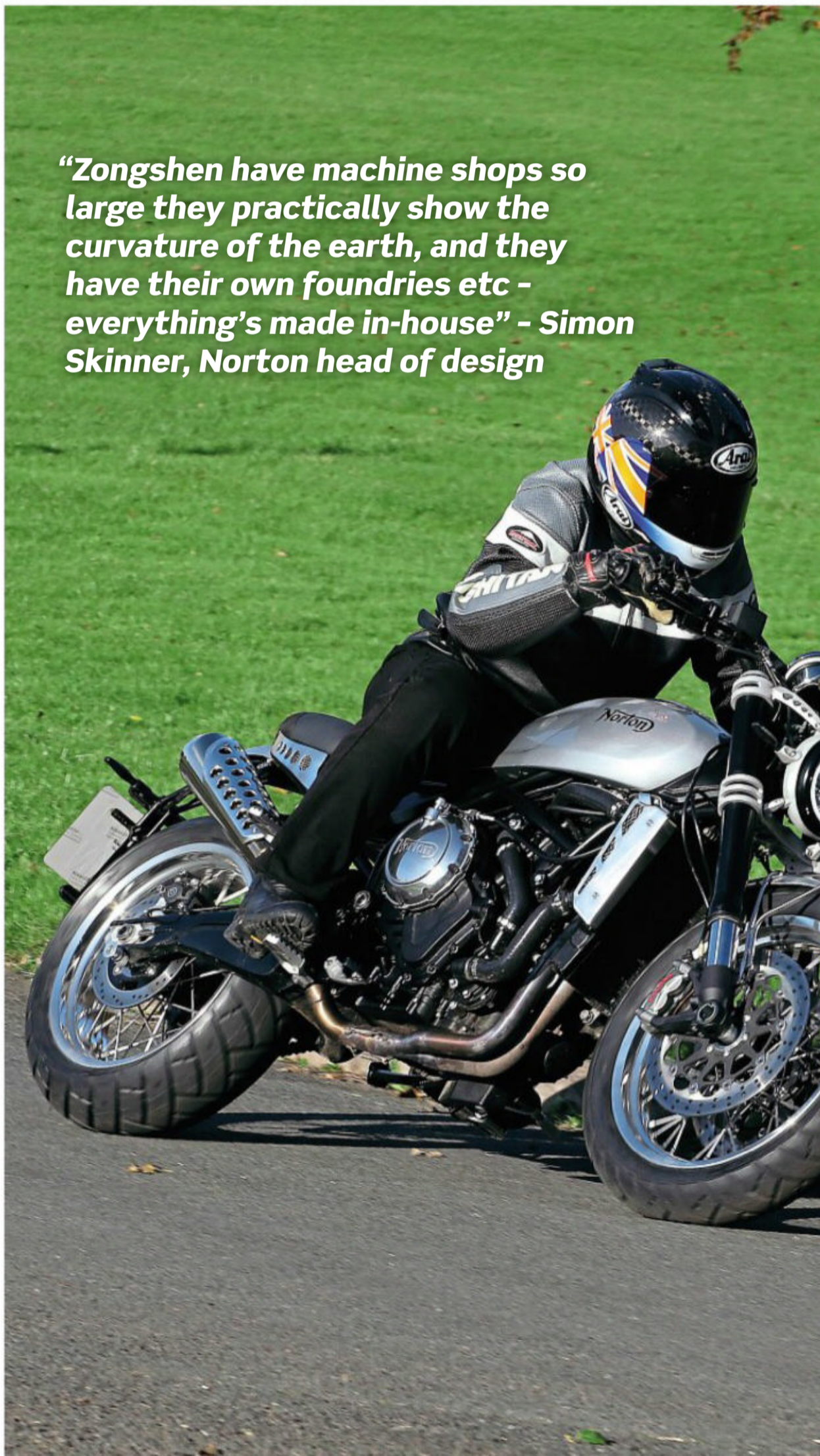
“They'd read about our plans for such a bike in a magazine article, and knocked on our door to see if we'd be interested in working together on the engine, which

we were. It's exactly the same motor, except ours is branded as a Norton, while theirs is branded a Zongshen in their home country – but it's exactly the same motor, though theirs will have a lower state of tune in keeping with their target customers' needs. It's been engineered and developed by us, tooled by them, and will be assembled by both firms in their respective countries.

“Obviously, our over-riding mantra is the quality of the parts we receive from them, but when you look at the size of the Zongshen business, where they make 14,000 engines a day, if they have a quality issue which they only find out



**“Zongshen have machine shops so large they practically show the curvature of the earth, and they have their own foundries etc - everything’s made in-house” - Simon Skinner, Norton head of design**



about after two weeks of production, the recall costs would be immense. So their control over the quality of their tooling and components is the best I’ve yet seen in any manufacturer, and they’ve made a massive investment in the latest world-class machine tools. The company is immense – raw materials come in one end of the factory, and motorcycles come out the other – they make everything themselves. They have machine shops so large they practically show the curvature of the earth, and they have their own foundries etc – everything’s made in-house. Last year they built 4.5 million engines and 2.5 million complete motorcycles, so it’s a huge business it’s good to partner with.”

Norton owner/CEO Stuart Garner concurs: “Once we started talking with Zongshen we found that none of the bigger Western manufacturers would work with them, because they’d see that as helping a competitor. Yet Norton can do so since they’re a small-capacity engine/mass-market manufacturer, and we’re a large-capacity engine/niche-market company. So we’re very happy to work with them, and vice versa, and working with us was a perfect way for them to develop a premium engine at the high end of their range. We’ve negotiated a non-brand deal only for engineering – so they have no rights to use the Norton name – under which we’ve given them certain design rights over our 650 engine, with engineering support from Norton, under which our engineers have been going to China to help them get that engine into a new generation of Zongshen models. So it’s a deal which works really well for Norton, and all the money we earn from it gets reinvested back into the Norton brand here in Britain.”

The several manufacturers in Italy and elsewhere such as Fantic Motor and FB-Mondial which already purchase Zongshen single-cylinder motors to equip their range of bikes, are eagerly awaiting the chance to purchase Chinese-manufactured versions of the Norton 650 motor for their forthcoming range-topping twin-cylinder models – though Stuart Garner insists that under his agreement with Zongshen, Norton has the right to veto supplies to any third party manufacturer it considers to be a direct rival.

The Atlas duo’s UK-developed engine is fitted in a tubular steel perimeter chassis – again, entirely designed but also manufactured at Norton – with the engine as a semi-stressed component, and an aluminium swingarm mount either side. A fully-adjustable 50mm Marzocchi-made upside-down fork branded as a Roadholder (the name given



60 years ago to the suspension on Norton's legendary Manx GP racer and its streetbike spin-offs) sits at a 24.5° rake on both models, but the Ranger has 200mm wheel travel against the Nomad's tauter 150mm range. Its the same at the rear, where the braced cast aluminium swingarm operating a Marzocchi monoshock adjustable for rebound damping and spring preload (but only with a C-spanner) via a rising-rate link, gives 150mm of wheel travel for the Nomad, and 200mm for the Ranger.

Despite its dual-purpose focus, the Ranger carries the same front end brake package as the Nomad, which wouldn't look out of place on a one-litre Superbike. The twin 320mm Brembo fully-floating front discs are gripped by the Italian firm's four-piston twin-pad radial Monoblock calipers, though the switchable dual-channel Continental ABS will help riders, who get too enthusiastic with their right fingers, stay out of trouble. At the rear there's a 245mm disc with twin-piston Brembo caliper, altogether stopping a bike that weighs 178kg dry in either guise, according to Skinner (against 181kg on the Versys), split 50/50 front to rear. Both bikes use a 17in rim on their rear wire wheels, with a front 19-incher on the Ranger, shod with Avon's new Trekriders dual-purpose rubber, whereas the more Tarmac-focused Nomad uses the firm's slightly less knobbly Trailrider tyres, with an 18in front. This results in a 1446mm wheelbase for the Nomad, versus a rangier 1470mm stride for the, er, Ranger...

As on the eye-grabbing V4-SS, the styling of both Atlas models was designed by Simon Skinner himself in his home design studio, which actually transpires

to be a rather humdrum location: "It was done at home where I'm undisturbed, and I get fed coffee by my wife, straight on to CAD on my laptop on my kitchen table!" he says. "What I wanted to do was to not make a retro bike, but to not make an ultra-modern one, either – I wanted to bring in an older generation without alienating younger people. Still, I think anyone who knows Nortons really well from back in the Sixties/Seventies will recognise some of the shapes on the bike, particularly around the fuel tank. But the styling is essentially based around the ergonomics and the functionality – for example, the very low 15-litre fuel tank allows you to stand up on the bike easily if you're going off-road. We have several more variants on this platform already planned, but first we have to get these first two up and running in production."

Norton claims 'several hundred' orders are already under deposit for the two bikes, with a 70/30% split in favour of the more Tarmac-focused Nomad.

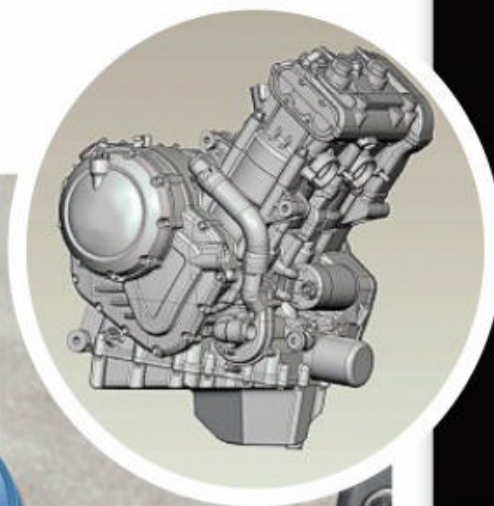
### THE RIDE

The chance for a first ride on the pre-production prototype versions of both the Norton twin Twins came on a glorious autumn day in the Derbyshire countryside north of Norton's 228-year-old stately home headquarters – Donington Hall. The original 45,000ft<sup>2</sup> factory and 10,000ft<sup>2</sup> welding and fabrication shop nestle in the middle of the 80-acre estate and have just had another 12,000ft<sup>2</sup> of covered space added to accommodate volume production of the range of Twins. Starting with the Atlas Nomad, I was immediately thrilled by the fruity-sounding aftermarket exhaust fitted to the bike, which probably



won't be Euro 4 legal, but still wasn't too offensively loud that I mentally cringed riding through villages, as on the company's open-pipe Domiracer hotrod I rode recently. It was no louder than a Triumph aftermarket pipe on one of its mid-size triples, but has exactly the same effect, delivering a sporty feel-good factor to riding the bike.

That's a sentiment enhanced by the engine's performance, for the way that Skinner & Co. have tuned it, this is a switch-hitter of a motor, with a very welcome split personality. Below 6000rpm, it's an amiable all-rounder of a bike, happy to plonk along at low speeds in third or fourth gear in traffic or through town, where the accommodating suspension's generous, well-damped, travel delivers good ride quality over the increasingly prevalent lumps and bumps of Her Majesty's highways. But when you show the Norton an open stretch of road and wind up the revs, and from six grand up to the 11,000rpm rev limiter, it's unbelievably quick-accelerating, with the ultra-flat torque curve that fast-forwards



## NORTON ATLAS 650 NOMAD (RANGER) – SPECIFICATION

**ENGINE:** Liquid-cooled parallel-twin four-stroke with four valves per cylinder, 270° crankshaft and chain-driven double overhead cams with idler gear

**DIMENSIONS:** 82 x 61.5mm **CAPACITY:** 649.57cc **OUTPUT:** 84 bhp/63kW at 11,000rpm (at crankshaft) **TORQUE:** 64Nm/6.53kg-m/47.20lb-ft at 9000rpm

**COMPRESSION RATIO:** 11.5:1

**FUEL/IGNITION SYSTEM:** Electronic fuel injection and engine management system with Mechtronic ECU and 2 x 48mm Jenvey throttle bodies, each with a single Bosch injector

**GEARBOX:** Six-speed extractable cassette-type with straight-cut primary gears **CLUTCH:** Multi-plate oil-bath clutch with cable operation **CHASSIS:** Twin tube seamless steel perimeter chassis with engine as semi-stressed component, and aluminium swingarm mount. **SUSPENSION:** **FRONT:** Fully-adjustable 50mm Marzocchi Roadholder inverted telescopic fork with 150mm wheel travel (200 mm) **REAR:** Braced cast aluminium swingarm with Marzocchi-made Roadholder monoshock and rising rate link with 150mm wheel travel (200 mm) **HEAD ANGLE/TRAIL:** 24.2°/110mm (114 mm) **WHEELBASE:** 1446mm (1470mm) **WEIGHT:** 178kg dry **WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION:** 50/50% **BRAKES: FRONT:** 2 x 320 mm Brembo fully-floating stainless steel discs with radially-mounted four-piston twin-pad Brembo Monoblock calipers with Continental ABS **REAR:** 1 x 245mm Brembo steel disc with two-piston Brembo caliper with Continental ABS **WHEELS/TYRES: FRONT:** 110/80R18 Avon Trailrider (120/70R19 Avon Trekrider) on 2.50in (3.0in) wire-spoked aluminium rim **REAR:** 180/55R17 Avon Trailrider (170/60R17 Avon Trekrider) on 5.00in wire-spoked aluminium rim **SEAT HEIGHT:** 824mm (867mm) **FUEL CAPACITY:** 15 litres **TOP SPEED:** Over 125mph **MANUFACTURER:** Norton Motorcycle Ltd., Donington Hall, Castle Donington, Derby DE74 2SG, UK

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you towards the horizon. The Norton's contained weight doesn't hurt, but it's the fact that it's much more powerful than any of its mainstream 650cc competitors from Kawasaki or Suzuki, which makes it so much fun to ride. Aprilia's forthcoming RS660 will probably be targeted at the Norton, but the British bike is here and now and about to start production, whereas the Italian twin is still a work in progress. From 8000rpm especially, there's an extra hit of performance from the Norton motor, which propels you even harder. This is a very invigorating bike to ride, and the single counter-balancer does its job well – there are no undue vibes at any stage in the revband, despite the engine being rigidly mounted in the frame, so no need for Norton's old-time Isolastic mounts to cope with the tingles!

I was glad to discover that the Nomad's

handling was capable of harnessing this performance – I was about to write 'slightly unexpected' but this is, after all, one-half of a 200bhp-plus Hypersports motor, so it stands to reason that it should deliver thrills, but without spills. I think what made it unexpected was the sight of an 18in front wheel and Avon's Trekrider dual-purpose rubber on the bike – but although this was the first time I'd ridden a bike with these tyres, I was pretty impressed by their level of grip. They delivered sufficient lean angle to scrape the Nomad's low-mounted dual-purpose



footrests with rubber inserts quite badly, to the point that I really do think they need to be raised. In fact, the Nomad's a bike with a split personality that's a little incongruous. It's really an Atlas café racer, both in styling and capability, and much more than a putative off-roader – making it really neither one thing nor the other. I'd like to raise the footrests and stick full-Tarmac tyres like Pirelli Angels on it, maybe with a 17in front wheel – though the 18-incher fitted doesn't slow the steering down unduly. But full respect for those outstanding brakes, with the Continental ABS, which cut in occasionally but not over-eagerly on leaves in country lanes. Like I said, this motorcycle would make a pretty fine café racer, and doubtless Norton will produce one soon based on the Atlas platform, especially with the Nomad's 824mm seat height being ideal for such a bike.

Riding the Ranger confirmed this – if you want to go off-road but to ride Tarmac to get there, or to go to work to earn the money to buy the bike in the first place, this is an excellent model on which to do so. The Ranger's taller 867mm seat still allowed me at 5ft 10in stature to touch both feet down at traffic lights, but coupled with the 19in front wheel, made it a confidence-inspiring trail ride along hard-surfaced lanes and muddy tracks.

The low-speed rideability of the engine again came to the fore – but just like the Nomad, show it an open road and the

Ranger speeds along very nicely, with just the upright riding position to contend with in terms of windblast. Still, 75mph cruising was lots of fun, and this is a true all-round motorcycle with added reserves of power when you want it. And the good-looking seat on both of the bikes was pretty comfy, too.

One thing I must especially compliment Skinner and his men on is the faultless Atlas gearbox. The shift action is short, precise and instant – it's so effective that you don't even need to use the clutch changing down through the gears – not that using its light-action lever is any hardship, making both Atlas twins ideal town bikes, especially the Ranger, on which you sit high enough to see over traffic quite easily. But the choice of ratios from the V4 is also inspired – the top four in the six-speed gearbox are quite close together, allowing you to really keep the engine in the boil if you're revving it out. But down low it's sufficiently flexible that you can pull away in sixth gear from as low as 2000rpm, or about 30mph/50kmh, without any real transmission snatch, making this a flexible friend of a motor – but with performance on tap when required.

"We got a little bit of criticism for our gearbox in the Commando 961," says Skinner, "so we've very much taken that on board, and worked super hard to make that shift action really slick, both up and down the 'box." Mission

accomplished, I'd say.

A combination of British design skills and Chinese manufacturing expertise at the right price augurs well for the long-term future of the Norton brand. The new family of Twins has already made a promising debut in the rain-hit 2019 Isle of Man TT Lightweight race for 650 Twins, when Peter Hickman took a brand-new, street-legal Superlight version of the marque's all-new twin-cylinder family, with a more powerful 102bhp twin-injector version of the same parallel-twin motor in the Atlas duo, and despite the bike never having turned a wheel under its own power in coming straight from the Norton assembly line to the 37.73-mile track, within four laps it had lapped just 16sec slower than the class lap record. He went on to finish eighth in the race after some minor problems, lapping at over 120mph on a bike he'd never ridden before. That's how good a package Skinner and his team have masterminded in this new family of bikes, and it's going to be very interesting seeing what other variants with a 100% Tarmac focus they come up with next. **CBG**



**"One thing I must especially compliment Skinner and his men on is the faultless Atlas gearbox. The shift action is short, precise and instant"**

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## STEVE COOPER

**A little Yamaha tries its best to defeat Steve. Is it a curse of the restorer?**

*“The engine arrived in three plastic washing-up bowls and showed signs of abuse, neglect, and possibly seizure”*

**T**HERE'S A SAYING THAT RUNS: NO GOOD DEED goes unpunished – and there's more than a grain of truth to it. A particular case in point has to be the small Yamaha AS1 twin that has blighted my life for longer than I care to remember.

For those that don't know, the bike was probably the one machine that really put the tuning fork brand on the map. As fast as many of the period needed and easily capable of embarrassing most 250 singles, the AS1 was, arguably, the original pocket rocket. If the bike has one foible it's the styling which is rather staid yet, perversely, this only adds to the machine's appeal. For many 'Yamoraks', the ownership of an AS1 is something of a rite of passage and thus, duly afflicted, I too felt the need to own one.

Said exemplar had previously spent 35 or so years in a damp, Welsh coal cellar, in large pieces, where the storage conditions had done little to enhance its looks. When my good friend Phil tipped me the wink on this gem he also assisted in extricating it from its dungeon. His reasoning was that he needed to assure himself I got everything I was entitled to for my £75.

Assisting the guy who was delivering the bike, Phil managed to slice his hand open on what had once been a rear mudguard... and thus the cycle of self-penalisation began.

The engine arrived in three plastic washing-up bowls and showed signs of abuse, neglect, and possibly seizure. Having assured myself that there was indeed a full motor's worth of giblets I did what any sane enthusiast would do – gave it to someone else to sort out! My mate Peter, who can build these motors in his sleep, offered to help so it seemed like a good plan, especially as he also had the tooling and a good stock of spares. Not too surprisingly the crank needed a full rebuild but annoyingly one end of the crank had a thread battered beyond redemption, with the other end sporting a flywheel taper bent at a jaunty angle. The crank's rebirth involved four people, numerous trips to and forth, plus countless hours for everyone involved delving into boxes of discarded parts. Once again no good deed goes unpunished!

Fast forward some years later and I'm sorting out an issue for a mate who happens to mention he has a spare, rechromed, AS1 rear mudguard and would I like it as payment? Yes of course! Especially knowing a decent used

example can easily make £350. With the bike sorted and precious guard rehomed everyone is happy. Well, until I look at a dry build several years later. What looked like a perfectly good guard turns out to be worryingly thin in places and is now rusting badly. Investigation revealed the chromer never washed out the plating solution properly and it's been eating away at the steel from the inside, leaving me with a serious repair. An emerging theme here folks?

The same year the AS1's guard was dechromed for a tenner and handed back for repair, if viable. The decision was made to restore the wreck as a JDM (Japanese Domestic Market) model which allowed to some licence with the forthcoming repair and the locating of the rear light bracket-cum numberplate mount. Know that the guards on period Yamahas are made from pressed steel sheet just 0.6mm thick (thin?) and you'll appreciate the potential challenge. Their strength is all in the double skinned mounting points and rolled edges; fortunately both were substantially free from rot. A plan was hatched that involved tinned steel patches, gas torches and lead puddling. One of my good mates wanted to see how these black arts were practised so we had a pleasant Sunday fettling.

Suitably sorted, the rear guard returned to the chromer for sorting via heavy copper plating prior to nickel and chrome and against all expectations the damn thing didn't fall apart or otherwise disgrace itself. Feeling the project in general and the guard in particular might just have turned a corner, I found myself feeling worryingly confident but, fear not, Lady Luck was about to do a number on me again.

The plating was indeed better than I'd hoped for and even if the surface has a few marks, it would work alongside the rest of the bike; not so much patina as signs of a hard life then a period in rehab etc. But no, once again the curse of the coal cellar Yamaha struck. So intent was I on showing someone how to lead puddle I actually managed to overlook two of the rear light mounting holes I needed to fill in. See what I mean about no good deed going unpunished?

And yet all of this and more is, surely, the very nature of tinkering around with old motorcycles? If it was easy everyone would be doing it. Me? Oh I'm digging myself another hole working out how I can fit a better brake into the front wheel. Spade please! **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!

# Past, Present and Future



## BSA Owners' Club

1958

Past

### Brief history of the BSA Owners' Club

The BSA Owners' Club was formed in 1958 by a group of local enthusiasts looking to share their knowledge, skills and expertise – and above all else to have fun.

Long before the internet was even a twinkle, the club spread the good news and other groups were formed with full factory support from BSA Headquarters in Armoury Road, Small Heath, Birmingham.

An annual 'Field Day' for fun and games was established on the company sports and test ground adjacent to the factory complex, bringing together club members from all corners of the country.

Soon the good news reached the many countries where BSA had a strong presence and a network of like-minded BSA Owners' Clubs was formed.

The universal, common theme of enjoying BSAs led to the creation of an Annual International Experience, typically a week-long event hosted by a different country each year.

### BSA Owners' Club now

The International scene has grown over the past six decades with well-attended events, typically 400 to 500 participants, scheduled for many years to come.

The UK branch and group network is very active with a busy calendar of meetings, camps and participation at shows and local events. The Annual Rally and free-to-all-bikes Open Day at Spring Bank Holiday remains a major success, with a massive ride-in and display of all makes and ages of bikes.

The focus on enjoyment and fun has earned members the title of 'The Happy People' – especially pleasing as they are almost 4000 strong and growing in number each year.

Perhaps some of the most intriguing recent developments have been a big increase in younger members taking over their dad's and grandad's bikes and the increasing number of active female riders of BSAs, perhaps following the example of the club president, Norma Burgess-Lowe.

Technical support and advice is freely available within the club and a thriving international network of specialist suppliers ensures the bikes can continue to provide reliable high-mileage pleasure for the foreseeable future.

### What's next?

The internet and the world wide web are clearly a major factor in the future of the club. However, the primary focus will always be on members. A quick search online will reveal the vast array of social media groups run by members for members.

The theme adopted by the club for 2020 is to support and grow the UK branch network with encouragement to form new local groups and to increase official participation at more local events, always with a view to inviting more 'Happy People' to join the largest single-make classic bike club around.

2020

Present

20??

Future

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## PAUL MILES

Paul debates old bike prices

*“Motorcycles are actually usable devices and, in my ever so humble opinion, need to be out there on the road as much as possible”*

**A**S I WRITE, THE WIND AND RAIN IS POUNDING on the glass and my garden furniture has been swept into a pile of confusion against the shed; today is not the day to be out riding. Instead, I've mostly been idly browsing the interweb and magazines for what I laughably call 'research' and the same topic keeps reoccurring – are classic bike prices falling?

My first reaction on reading this was 'who cares if they are?' But there is a bit more to it than that. Classic motorcycles are no different in many ways to anything else 'collectable', be it stamps, inkwells or bowler hats (I know a chap who owns a biscuit from Captain Scott's Antarctic expedition, paid a fortune for it; we went "ooh" when it was unveiled before immediately being put back in the tin; all very odd). After all, classic motorcycles come in all shapes and sizes, have documented, traceable histories and a specialist collector can focus on just one aspect of them if they so wish – only prewar Triumph singles, or Yamaha two-stroke twins, for example. So far, so very stamp collecting.

Where they differ from the Penny Blacks however is that, unlike the stamp, which can only be licked the once, a motorcycle can not only be looked at, handed round (sort of) and admired, but it can actually be started up and ridden, at least in theory.

And this is a really important difference; motorcycles are actually usable devices and, in my ever so humble opinion, need to be out there on the road as much as possible. An example – I happen to own a pretty rare vintage bike, the Zenith with a V-twin JAP engine; it makes a Brough look as everyday as a Honda.

Restored in the early 1990s and barely having turned a wheel since, the zeroed speedometer boasts just 40 miles. However, in the time between its restoration and my purchasing it (26 years), the Zenith had been sold three times, doubling in value on each occasion; I have the sale records, it was always at auction.

So, over the course of a quarter of a century it had only ever been used as an investment and not as an actual vehicle. I bought it, had it on the road within three days and, substantial teething issues aside, it's proved to be every bit as good as the 1927 brochure promised.

However, all that riding comes at a price – literally. By using the Zen it's no longer a concours machine, nor is it an original condition

unrestored motorcycle. Now it has become an 'older restoration in good riding condition' in auctioneer-speak.

To have preserved my 'investment' it would have been best if I'd never started it, but then the hole in the petrol tank, badly assembled oil pump and sundry other small issues would have remained undiscovered. But, would that have mattered if it were never going to be ridden?

Hence the possible reason why impossibly tatty, sorry *patinated* original machines are so much in demand these days. Being in original finish, however ratty, lends them an air of respectability and riding them can hardly make it worse. I'm sure you've admired an old scuffer and made positive noises about the original paint (you can just see a scrap of it there, under the tank), secretly thinking that a thick dollop of two pack black gloss would improve things no end.

But leaving them looking as if they've been owned by Stig of the Dump for eight decades doesn't affect the value at all and means you can even, horror, consider actually riding part of your investment portfolio.

No, the bikes that are really suffering from investor fatigue are the postwar classics from the 1950-70s, machines made to a price and in great quantities. If you hanker after a vintage Zenith, they're not exactly thick on the ground and, assuming you could even find one there would be the challenging job of convincing the owner to sell it. Chances are he's already aware of its scarcity and the offer would need to be astronomical to even make his moustache twitch. These sorts of bikes, and their owners, are effectively immune to the vagaries of the stock market or fashions.

A 1960s British twin, conversely, stamped out in their tens of thousands, are currently cluttering up the online listings. Great bikes to ride, certainly; but collectables?

It won't last, of course, and prices are bound to rise again, so my suggestion is that, if you've ever fancied a BSA A65 or Triumph Bonneville, prices will never be lower than they are right now and there are lots to choose from. Plus, of course, if there's a sudden rush to buy all these cheaper twins, prices are bound to rise! It's a win/win.

Ride safe and have fun out there, especially on a scruffy bike; it'll possibly even increase its value. **CBG**

**Paul Miles** is a lifelong Londoner who rides every day and regards a prewar classic as perfectly suited to urban commuting. A contact lens specialist by profession, he nowadays appears to be a full-time rider, breaker and fixer of old bikes. Entirely fails to understand the concept of patina or winter lay-ups.



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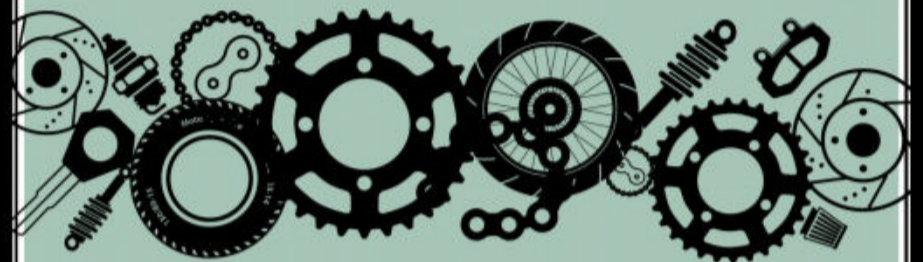
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## PAUL D'ORLÉANS *The Italian job*

Paul heads, starry-eyed, back to the Seventies

*“Ladies’ skirts grew so short they almost needn’t have bothered, while every form of media was suddenly awash in procreational hormones.”*

**N**O ONE IS A GUEST WITHOUT EXPECTATION. AS a five-year guest of the Petersen Museum in Los Angeles (guest curator that is), my job is to pull rabbits out of hats annually for their motorcycle exhibitions. This year, we travel back in time to Italy, exploring ‘motorcycles of the sexual revolution’ (the unofficial subtitle), an era coinciding with the adolescence of baby boomers in the 1960s, and surging through the 1970s. It was the era when recreational sex was legalised and normalised, when gentlemen grew their hair, their sideburns and their moustaches, while the hem of their trouser widened considerably, as did the width of their neckties. Ladies’ skirts grew so short they almost needn’t have bothered, while every form of media was suddenly awash in procreational hormones, and the world was laid with shag carpeting.

Nothing happened that hadn’t been happening since the dawn of time, but what had been discreetly hidden in brown paper wrappers became legitimate fodder for exploitation in the commercial sphere. That included motorcycles, whose advertising in the 1970s went from ‘you meet the nicest people’ to ‘your priapic extension awaits’. But, the Petersen Museum, unlike every modern art museum in the Western world, has a strictly G-rated policy, and references to such vital matters as sex are not permitted on their walls. So, a straight-jacketed curator must find creative ways to infer that sex exists, and changed the motorcycle industry, yet save the juicy bits for the catalogue to come. The exhibition is called Silver Shotgun.

Ducati chose to embed their top-of-the-range 1971 Desmo singles with a coarse silver metallic gel coat in their fibreglass bodywork, a finish that had never been used on a production motorcycle before. It was distinctive, eye-catching and very much of the period, although only Norton chose to follow suit with a similarly silver Commando. The silver shotgun Desmo singles were pure café racers, and while Ducati did not sell hundreds of thousands of them, their mere existence resonated like a power chord from a glam rock band, heralding the dominance of Italian motorcycle design for the rest of the sexy Seventies. Not sales dominance of course, as the cash machine rang mostly for Japanese fours, but in every other metric of motorcycle goodness: excellent styling, superior handling and brakes, and the mantle of the fastest production motorcycles in the world. Between

the Ducatis, MV Agustas, Laverdas and Bimotas, there was nothing in the world to compete in overall excellence. And if you start whining about dodgy electrics and flies in the gel-coat, I’ll strip you of your Fu Manchu, because you’re missing the point. It was the Italians who gave motorcyclists exactly what they had been fantasising about for generations: incredibly fast motorcycles that handled and performed like the GP racers they were derived from, and looked absolutely amazing. The best 1970s Italian bikes weren’t perfect, but they were better in their imperfection than any other machines of the era.

In my estimation, the pinnacle machine of the 1970s wasn’t a pure-bred, but a hybrid, combining the most innovative chassis design of the era with the hand of the best stylist of the next three decades, and a technically advanced engine from Japan. The 1979 Bimota SB2 was sex on wheels, with outrageous bodywork shapes that screamed ‘flares and sideburns’, developed by a man who would soon earn his place in the stylist’s pantheon, along with Edward Turner and George Brough: Massimo Tamburini. With a Yoshimura-tuned Suzuki GS750 motor punched out to 850cc, the SB2 wasn’t wildly powerful, but it was on par with the best of the era with 80+hp. What was more interesting for Bimota’s first street bike was its adoption of 100% cutting edge racing technology for its chassis, in an era when Japanese motorcycle wallowed around corners like the three-legged hippos they were, and British motorcycles... they didn’t exist, did they?

The SB2 frame was fascinating, and remains Bimota’s most unusual, barring the hub-centre Tesi models. It was the first real perimeter frame on a production motorcycle, and it was quick-release: the frame could be split apart in minutes, and the frame halves had conical fittings so they self-aligned when cinched together. Throw in an adjustable steering head angle, monoshock suspension, and the best craftsmanship in the industry, and you have half the recipe for success. What really cinches it for me, though, is Tamburini’s styling. Marcel Duchamp painted the futuristic “Nude Descending a Staircase” in 1912, and it took until the 1970s to see a motorcycle that looked like Sophia Loren descending a staircase in her negligee and a light breeze: simply outrageous. The Bimota SB2 makes me feel the same way. And despite my declarations of an imminent garage sell-off, I might need one. **CBG**

**Paul D’Orléans** is a writer, artist, sartorialist and photographer. He’s best known as The Vintagent for his long-running blog and judges concours such as the Quail and Villa d’Este, consults for Bonhams auctions, shoots digital and tintype photographs, and is curating an exhibit on café racers at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.

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# The CBG Winter Classic is almost upon us once again

Classic Bike Guide will be at the Winter Classic with special guests on hand for workshop wisdom. Stuck on a restoration? We may be able to help you – come along and see us.

**O**VER THE WEEKEND OF JANUARY 11/12, 2020, the regulars from CBG will be on hand at our stand at The Carole Nash Classic Bike Guide Winter Classic to share stories, give advice and help you on your way with your bikes.

We're lucky enough to have a good group of friends that are only too keen to help each other out with helpful tips or lessons learned the hard way in the past! So who have we got for you?

Experienced engineer and old bike guru, Hutch from HTE Motorcycles, will be on our stand at Newark Showground. From 1930s British bikes up to 1980s Japanese machines and Harleys of all years, Hutch has probably seen it, worked it out and sorted it.

He's helped CBG over the last few years with all sorts, from a 1959 Matchless G3 to a 1973 Honda CL350. He's also been building a beautiful prewar Velocette and my favourite of his stable, his Norton Atlas 750. So bring your questions! He won't be able to sort it there and then – I've told him not to bring tools – but

hopefully he will have an answer for you to get you moving in the right direction.

Alongside Hutch will be Neville, who is bringing two of his creations for people to see – his Norton ES2 scrambler with girder forks and his JAP/ Ariel. Neville is master of getting bikes to work using whatever is at hand, like magnetos from a stationary engine, or an engine from a rotavator!

Sometimes we need to think outside of the normal solutions and Nev, who has worked on cars, bikes, tractors and steam engines, is the perfect man to answer any questions of a slightly more oddball nature.

Between them, Hutch and Neville, should be able to help you sort your bike issue, within your budget.

So, feel free to come along and say hi. We'll be having a laugh on our stand at 10.30am and 2pm, generally at my expense, but also listening to show visitors' questions and seeing if we can get to the bottom of their problems. After all, the show is a great place to discover a fix, because hopefully you can find the part you need! ▶





# What's on

## MOTOGYMKHANA:

This fantastic feature made an appearance at the *Classic Bike Guide* Winter Classic for the first time in 2019 – and will be back for 2020!

Situated outside the Main Hall – we're encouraging our visitors to book on to have a go at the event; it really will make for a fantastic day out!

Described as the “grassroots motorcycle sport for everyone” Moto Gymkhana is a riding skills challenge involving quick changes in direction, bursts of speed, ruthless braking and accurate control. Ridden against the clock, the obstacle courses are designed to test the rider and not the bike, so can be done on any roadworthy motorcycle or scooter.

**To take part, you must book in advance with Moto Gymkhana (details below) and bring the following:**

- Your full riding gear
- Your licence

**Slots available on both Saturday and Sunday:**

- 10:00 x 3 people
- 10:30 x 3 people
- 11:00 x 3 people
- 11:30 x 3 people
- 12:00 x 3 people
- 13:30 x 3 people
- 14:00 x 3 people
- 14:30 x 3 people

When spaces are gone, they're gone! For more information, and to book your slot, please visit: [motogymkhana.org/uk/](http://motogymkhana.org/uk/)



## TRADE & AUTOJUMBLE:

Trade stands at the Carole Nash *Classic Bike Guide* Winter Classic are both varied and plentiful! Hundreds of traders are in attendance, selling anything from leather jackets to vintage machine manuals. Make sure that you go round all the halls on site, because you never know what you'll find around the corner; be it a recently refurbished bike ready to go straight on the road, or a project crying out for some love, destined to go straight up on the workbench when you get home!



## CLUBS:

Both classic bike and scooter clubs are regarded as the jewel in the crown at this event. Keeping the heart of the scene beating through their work-hard, play-hard approach, the owners' clubs take pride of place wherever they pitch up! They help make the show what it is with their phenomenal collections of incredible machines, not to mention their love for classic bikes and scooters! For 2020, we're proud to have more clubs coming to the show than ever before – so much so that we're having a rejig just to make sure we can fit everyone in! Cash prizes are up for grabs for the best three club stands that go out of their way to put on a good display – who will be the top three in 2020? You'll have to stay for the awards presentation at 3pm on Sunday to find out!





## SCOOTER WORLD & MOD RADIO:

It's not just classic motorcycles that will be celebrated at the Winter Classic, with the popular Scooter World hall making a welcome return! Local scooter clubs, private entries and traders will be in attendance, filling the two extra halls to create a scooterman's idea of heaven! The 2019 event saw our biggest and best Scooter World yet, and we're currently making plans for an even bigger and better experience for 2020's show – we've even had to make more room for displays, and a new custom bike and scooter section too! Mod Radio will be making a return to the hall; bringing the atmosphere up to a level it is now well known and loved for. This year you can also expect some live interaction with Mark and Ruth of Mod Radio, including interviews, games and entertainment!

## Pierfrancesco 'Frankie' Chili

As our superstar guest of honour is joining us for the whole weekend at the show, here's a bit more about him...

World Superbike legend Pierfrancesco (or 'Frankie') is best remembered in the UK for his battles with rival Carl Fogarty. His incredible career stretched back into the 1980s with spells in 125cc, 250cc, 500cc GPs and World Superbikes.

Bologna-born Frankie had a long and successful career in racing, winning the 125cc European Championship in 1985 before moving on to the Grand Prix 500cc and 250cc World Championships before cementing himself in World Superbikes – claiming 10 pole positions and 17 wins.

Many will recall the Italian superstar winning the controversial 500cc race in Misano in 1989, where slippery conditions had meant other top riders refused to restart the race after a downpour made conditions treacherous. And who can forget the post-race dressing gown incident with Carl Fogarty at Assen in 1998?

In his day, Chili rode more than 400 top-level races, winning a European Championship, five Grands Prix and 17 World Superbikes races. He competed professionally for two decades, before retiring at the age of 42 in 2006 due to a broken pelvis.

He claimed 17 wins in all, 29 fastest laps and ten pole positions during his World Superbikes days – from his first involvement in 1995 to his last race, at Magny-Cours, his 276th career start. Very few riders have ever come close to him for having such a huge, dedicated and universal fan base. It's safe to say that 'Frankie' was always the star of the show.

Make sure you catch Frankie live on stage with Steve Plater throughout the weekend.



## WIN TICKETS TO THE SHOW!

*Classic Bike Guide* is giving away five pairs of tickets to the Carole Nash *Classic Bike Guide* Winter Classic show – that's £120 worth of tickets to be won!

If you fancy a day out on either Saturday 11 or Sunday, January 12, 2020 at Newark showground, surrounded by all things classic bikes and scooters, star guests and live action, you need to get your name in the hat!

All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning is head over to:

[www.newarkclassicbikeshow.com](http://www.newarkclassicbikeshow.com) and enter your details online. Entry is completely free, but you must enter before 31/12/2019 to be in with a chance.

Terms and conditions apply. The winners will be the first five names selected at random. There are no cash alternatives available. To view the privacy policy for Mortons Media Group (publisher of *Classic Bike Guide*) please visit: [www.mortons.co.uk/privacy](http://www.mortons.co.uk/privacy) **CBG**



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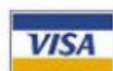
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# REMEMBERING

## Percy

We look back at one of the great unsung heroes of British motorcycling, Percy Tait

**T**HE IMPACT OF THE ROYAL CORPS OF Signals Motorcycle White Helmets Display Team on British motorcycle competition in the 1950s can't be overstated.

Many members of the team became highly competitive on track, on trials courses and on scrambles mud. But not many had the impact on the world of motorcycling of Percy Tait.

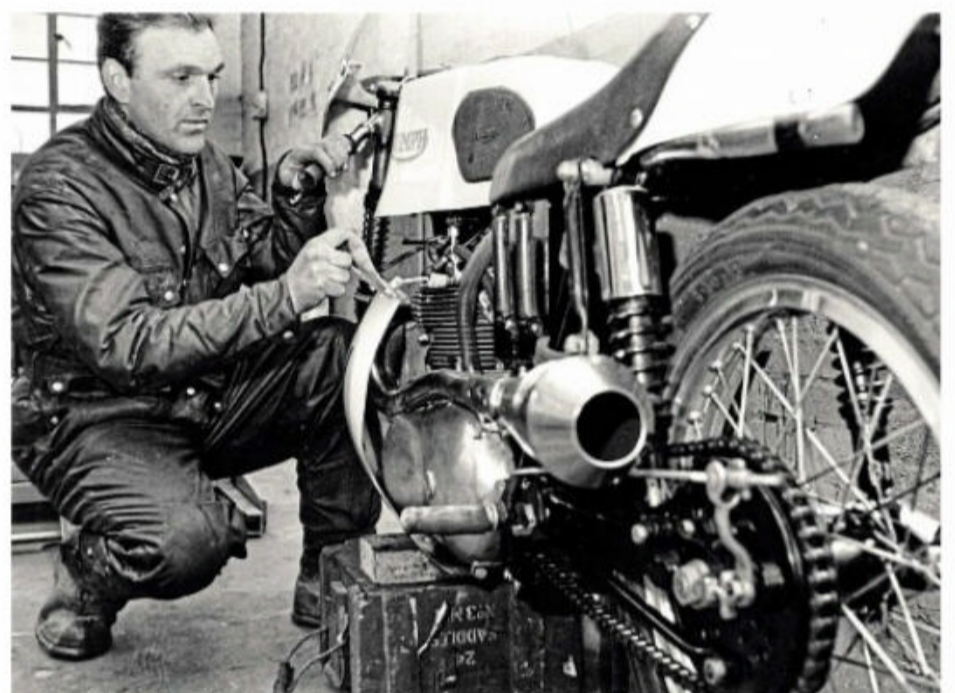
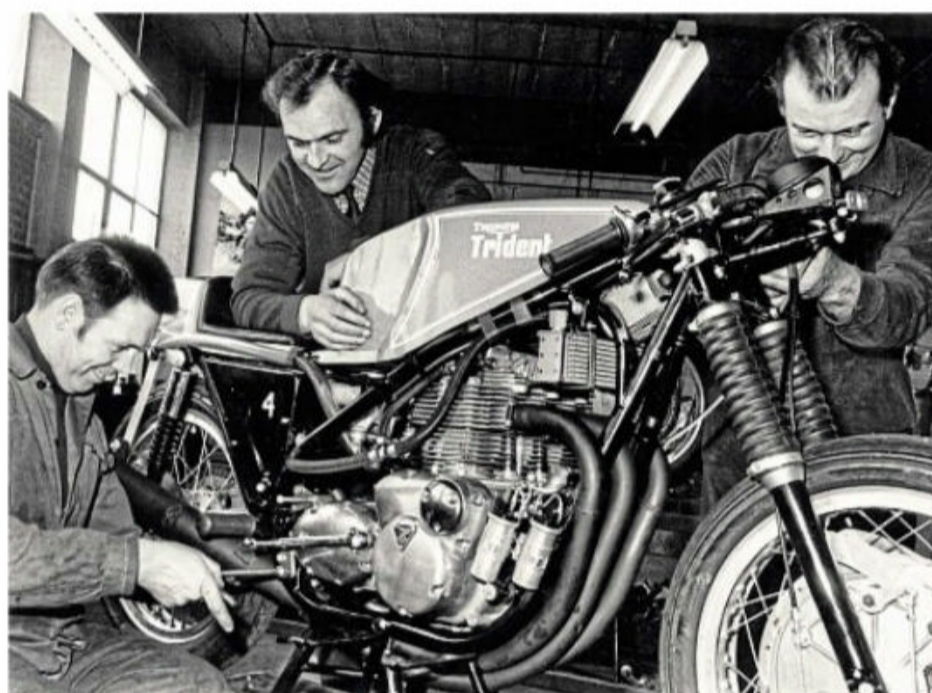
Percy was born on October 9, 1929 within a stone's throw of what would become the site of Triumph's Meriden factory. He started racing at the age of 18 in 1947 on a 350 Triumph, then progressed through the racing ranks on borrowed Gold Stars, KTT Velocettes, Manx Nortons and AJS 7Rs. Along with most young British men in the 1940s and 50s, Percy found his life and ambitions put on

hold by National Service and joined the Army. Fortunately for Percy, and for the motorcycle industry, his service took place before the outbreak of the Korean War, and even more fortuitously his sergeant had heard about his racing exploits, so Percy spent a year of his 18-month military service riding with the display team.

The team was a great success as an Army recruiting tool and as publicity for Triumph, training Percy and hundreds of others in the gentle art of jumping a Meriden twin through blazing hoops, over fences or carrying an entire squad on a single machine.



## Remembering Percy



### FUN AND GAMES DURING MERIDEN TESTING TIMES

Demobilisation saw Percy get a job in the obvious place for him, Triumph's Meriden factory, which had been built during the Second World War just down the road from the family farm.

Starting on the production line, his riding skills soon saw him recruited by the experimental department as a test rider. He lived so close to the factory that he could leave his farm on his bike as the 8am pips started on the radio and clock in at the factory three minutes later, just in time to avoid having 15 minutes docked from his pay for arriving late.

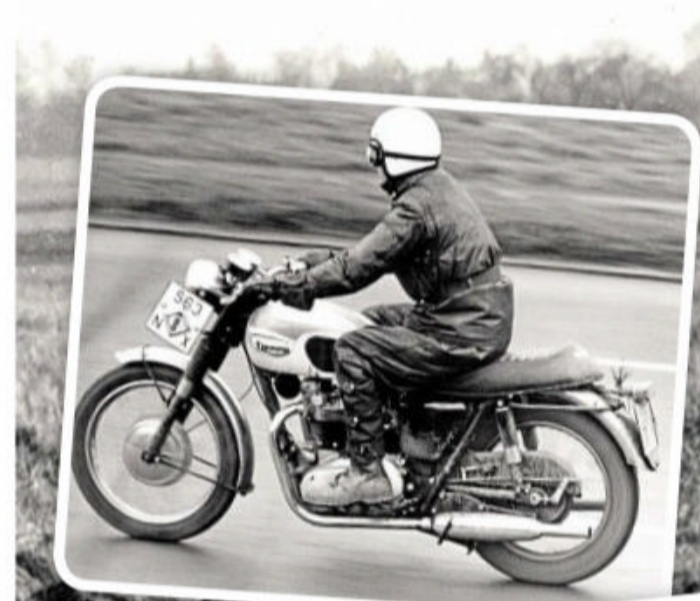
Crowds of Triumph workers would watch him leave at the end of the working day, then stand listening to his three-minute 100mph charge home on an unsilenced prototype! Percy's legendary penchant for practical joking came to the fore too. He was known for pranking Meriden workers and fellow testers, and for terrifying young apprentices by taking them on hair-raising lunch break pillion rides through Meriden village, sliding sideways through traffic obstacles.

But he didn't always get it all his own way. John Rosamond, later chairman of the Workers' Board during the Meriden Co-operative years, told a tale of when Percy was road-testing one of the notoriously

poor handling and unreliable Triumph Tina 100cc scooters on the Meriden Mile, a stretch of road that the testers were ordered to achieve 100mph on in those pre 70mph limit days. He said two long-suffering colleagues rode up behind him on a pair of Triumph twins, each grabbed hold of one of his arms and accelerated, propelling the tiny Tina to speeds it really wasn't designed for before letting go. Percy had to use all the skills he had learned on Gold Stars and 7Rs to come to a halt.

Hughie Hancox, in his excellent tome *Tales of Triumph Motorcycles*, wrote that Percy, who he referred to as Sam, was left dangling when a fellow long-suffering but equally mischievous tester who had been drenched in one of Percy's pranks, slipped the hook of an engine hoist onto his belt and left him hanging in the air at the end of a shift. He was also the target of a roadblock mounted by Northamptonshire police on the then-new M1, as they were fed up with his regular 100mph-plus test rides on a prototype Bonneville. Unable to catch him, one day they closed two lanes of the motorway to slow the traffic to a crawl and he was caught, to the delight of the frustrated traffic officers.

But in court, while he was fined for speeding, the magistrates dropped a





dangerous driving charge on the grounds that he was safer than most drivers would be at much lower speeds.

Away from the fun and games, Percy helped Doug Hele sort out the questionable handling of the early Unit Bonneville when the pair developed the stiffer single-downtube frame with its stronger swingarm pivot for the model. In early 1966 he was instrumental in helping bring the T150 Trident from design shop to production line. And all the while Percy was a farmer as well as being Triumph's main experimental test rider.

He would cover a thousand miles a week, sometimes doing his daily mileage before breakfast and then working on the farm. These tests would take place in all weather conditions, and Hughie Hancox recalled that his ability to stay upright in wintry conditions was astonishing. Asked by fellow tester Bert Whatmore how he managed to ride on packed snow

and ice, Percy responded: "It's easy, you've got to relax. Whistle or sing to yourself but don't tense up." Good advice, but unlikely to be helpful for those of us without Percy's nerves of steel.

### PERCY ON THE TRACK

Percy's formidable track abilities kept him at the top of the tree. As well as racing Triumphs he would campaign in the 1960s on a specially built Royal Enfield with a Villiers Starmaker engine and on a Husqvarna, among others.

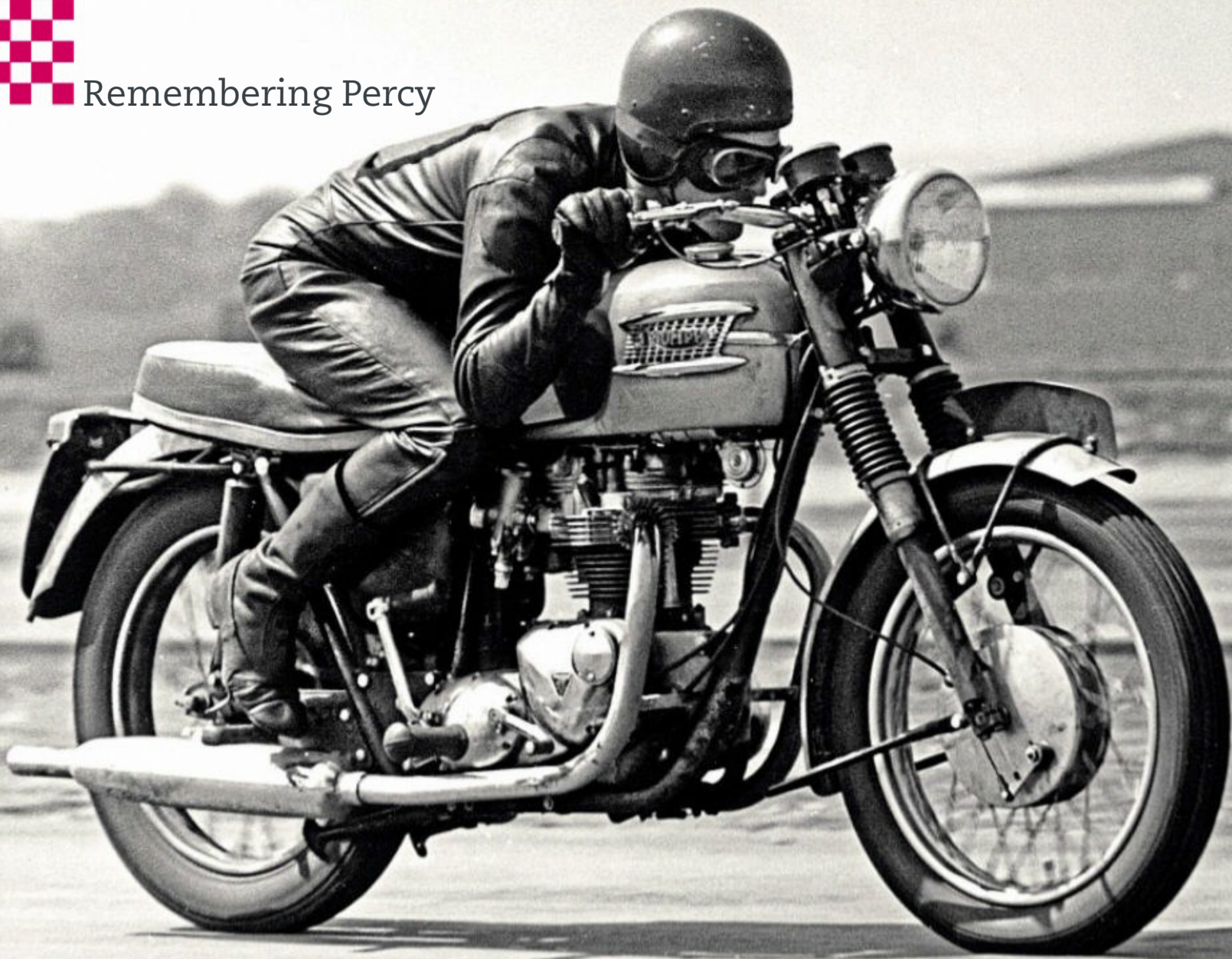
Testing and racing could be also be dangerous work and Percy broke his collarbone when he was thrown off a prototype Triumph when the gearbox seized at speed during the 1968 Isle of Man TT. His determination on the track led, indirectly, to Triumph winning the Production TT with a Bonneville that lapped the road circuit at 100mph in 1969.

At the Thruxton 500 endurance race, Triumph engineer Brian Jones realised that the race team was having trouble handling the racing Bonneville when he spotted Percy plunging his hands into a bucket of cold water after one of his hour-long stints on a Triumph twin. He was trying to soothe the blisters that had appeared on his hands after hours of hard riding. Following this, Jones worked with Doug Hele on improvements to the Bonneville's chassis and these helped seal an Isle of Man TT victory for Malcolm Uphill.





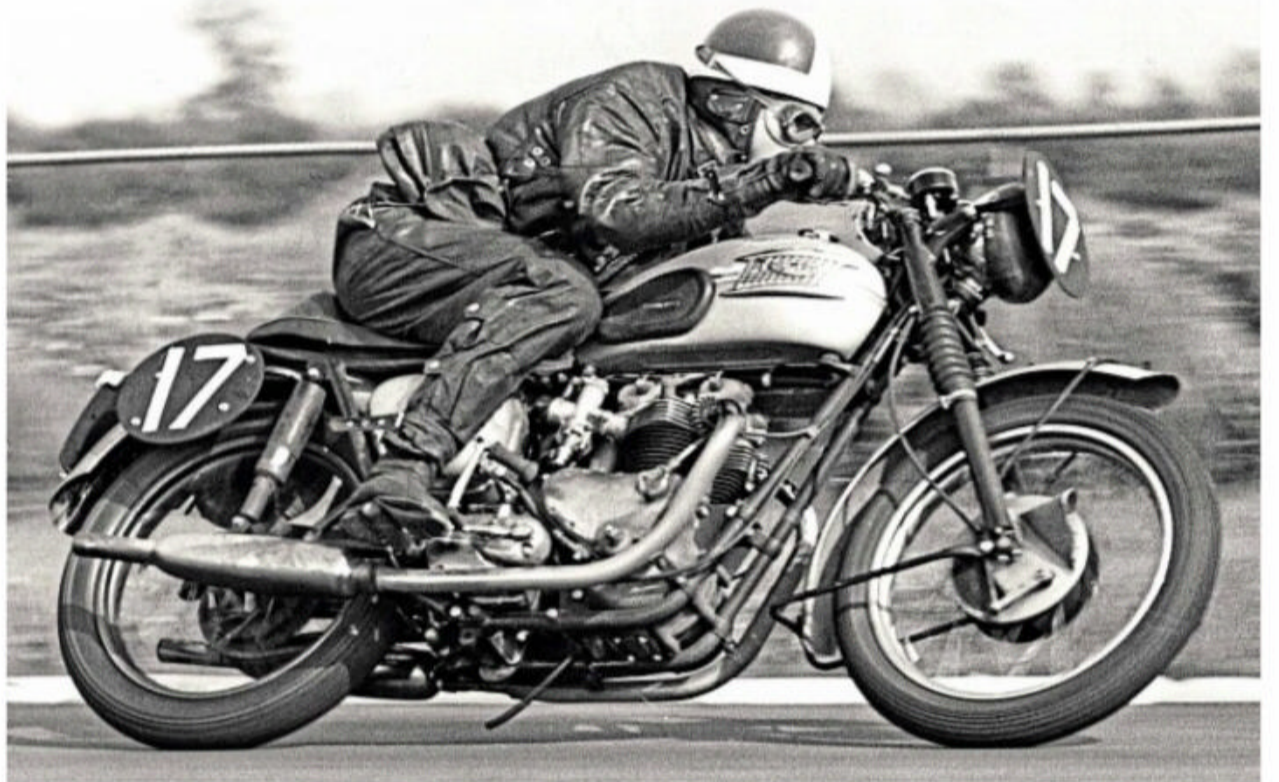
## Remembering Percy



Perhaps his greatest achievement on the track was finishing second to Giacomo Agostini, who was campaigning a three-cylinder MV in the 1969 Belgian GP. Mechanics Arthur Jakeman, Jack Shemans and Percy had travelled to Spa in a Ford Transit van where they slept with the bikes. At the end of the race it was revealed that his highly modified 500cc Triumph Daytona had averaged 116mph. With second place Percy had given Triumph their only Grand Prix podium finish until the 765cc Triumph-engined Moto2 GP bikes took to the track last March.

He was part of the Triumph Trident race team with Paul Smart and Gary Nixon too, and in 1970 Percy was riding a Trident racer when, during the Bol d'Or 24-hour race, engine difficulties and escaping oil covered the bike being used by Percy and co-rider Steve Jolly, which resulted in the bike being dubbed 'Slippery Sam'; a name that stuck. The following year, along with Ray Pickrell, Percy won the Bol d'Or on a Trident.

In 1971 BSA-Triumph launched the Anglo-American Match Races which were held in the UK at circuits such as Brands Hatch, Mallory Park and Oulton Park. Percy was the GB team captain and was backed up by John Cooper, Paul Smart, Ray Pickrell and Tony Jeffries. The American team of Gary Nixon, Jim Rice, Dave Aldana, Dick Mann, Don Castro and Don Emde felt they were disadvantaged because the British racers were on home tracks, but also because the British team had a new double cradle frame designed by Rob North. Percy had advised North to modify the frame



by increasing the steering head angle and shortening the fork legs. The engine was moved forward and upward by a few inches to increase the load on the front axle. This change reduced the wheelbase of the bike and North restored it by simply lengthening the swinging arm, and the frames were christened the Low Boy.

The last participation of the Trident on US soil was when Percy took Slippery Sam to the Daytona 200 in 1974, when the by now aging triples were competing with the likes of Yamaha's two-stroke TZ 700. Tom Kidd and Percy took to the famous track, but sadly both Trident machines retired.

He raced a Ducati Imola 750 in the Canadian Grand Prix in 1972 as part of a team that included Bruno Spaggiari and Richard White. Percy realised after

checking the practice lap times that Spaggiari's Imola was faster than the other two machines in the team. His solution to this performance imbalance, possibly inspired by a partisan Italian management determined to get their man in front, was to swap the machine's racing numbers and use the Italian rider's Ducati. Percy came third, the highest position for the Ducati team in that GP. He also rode a Kawasaki endurance racer at Bol D'Or in 1974.

Percy's attitude to life would have got him into trouble in today's more safety conscious racing scene. Slapping a fellow rider on the back while passing them or leaning over and fiddling with a rival's goggles while alongside at full throttle, weren't unheard of incidents.

With his job as works tester and factory-

supported racer for Triumph ending in February 1974, Percy acquired a racing Ducati from legendary Italian specialist Coburn & Hughes. With support from the dealership Percy raced it at many British circuits in the second half of that year, including Snetterton, Darley Moor and Mallory Park, and demonstrated it for them at press and customer track days, although he experienced several mechanical problems which meant the bike made a couple of return trips to the Ducati factory.

When the Ducati partnership ended Percy got his hands on one of the most challenging racing machines ever made, a Yamaha TZ750. He kept racing until 1976 when he was hurt in a crash at the TT while riding a Triumph triple, 'Son of Sam'. In the 1970s he also helped Suzuki develop their 500cc Grand Prix bike for Barry Sheene, and in 1975 came second on a Yamaha in the Classic TT, his best placing on the Island. When his racing career was over, he was still regularly turning out for occasional parades at circuits like the TT.

#### **SAVING THE XS650**

Just as Percy would race Japanese, Swedish and Italian bikes, he wasn't wedded to Triumph in the road bike development stakes either. In 1972 BSA-Triumph was

collapsing into chaos, and management was ignoring the company testers unless they only gave the management good news.

A desperate Yamaha employed him to try and work out what was wrong with the handling on their XS2 650cc twin – a machine that competed directly with Triumph's twins. Road testers and owners had reported terrible handling problems following the launch of the XS, but Yamaha had been unable to reproduce the issues on their own test tracks. Yamaha got together a team of top racers to give their opinion on the XS and among them was Percy. Once he had tested the machine and delivered a scathing and accurate verdict, Yamaha took him to Japan for further development work.

Percy, whose tens of thousands of miles testing Triumphs had all begun on the gravelly and potholed roads of the West Midlands, soon realised the Yamaha test track wasn't a proper reflection of the roads the XS was being ridden on in the real world. He suggested the best way to find the source of the problems was to rip up the asphalt on the corners and put a lumpy road surface down. Once the flexible flyer was dealing with normal British-style road conditions, it was a lot easier to work out what was wrong. Percy suggested Yamaha extend the frame by a few inches, widen

it and reinforce the steering head and the swingarm mounts. Extra bracing was added to the subframe mounts where they met the down tube. The rake also got attention, the new frame mirroring the geometry of the Manx Norton. The engine mounts, at the front, top, bottom and rear of the engine were strengthened too. Multiple small frame gussets previously added by Yamaha to the XS2 were beefed up and made to look tidier. Adding 30lb of steel to the XS650 was the downside of all these modifications, but the upside was that the big twin handled acceptably.

The new XS650B was well received, and Percy's involvement in the improvement was something of a selling point for British buyers, and regularly referred to in period road tests, with not a little patriotic pride. ▶



***“Percy’s attitude to life would have got him into trouble in today’s more safety conscious racing scene. Slapping a fellow rider on the back while passing them or leaning over and fiddling with a rival’s goggles while alongside at full throttle, weren’t unheard of incidents.”***





## Remembering Percy

### CHAMPION SHEEP AND SUZUKI JEEPS

When his racing and road development work became less in demand, he kept riding, but moved into selling cars, owning a highly successful Suzuki dealership chain with three showrooms in the Midlands until he sold the business in 2001 and his retirement was announced.

Instead of putting his feet up however, he kept working and started picking up trophies in a completely different field. With his wife Di at their farm at Broughton Hackett near Worcester, they became champion sheep breeders. Their rare breed bleus du Maine, charollais and rouge sheep from the Knighton flock won top trophies at the Royal Show, the Royal Welsh Show and the Scottish Highland Show.

Percy Tait died on November 17, 2019 a few weeks after his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. **CBG**



### Ken Talbot, chairman Triumph Owners' MCC writes:

**HAVING BEEN BROUGHT** up to love Triumphs I suppose it was inevitable that Percy would become God to me. Everyone knows about his racing exploits but there was another side to him. Before I give a couple of insights into this there is one race I must mention.

Many people of my generation always think of John Cooper and Ago when asked about the best race that they witnessed. Now, while I too was at Mallory that day, I did witness what to me was a closer race. This took place at Oulton Park and featured Percy on Triumph's amazing 500 and Dan Shorey on Ray Petty's over-bored Manx.

These two swapped the lead time after time during the race until in the end they were credited with identical times, but Dan declared the winner (I still haven't worked that one out). The outcome for me was not so good as I had parked my Thames van just down from the start/ finish line and was on the roof. Jumping up and down while cheering on Percy left a nasty dent in the roof. On a lighter note, I wonder how many of today's stars would turn up at a local Triumph Owners' meeting, enter and win the Max Wall lookalike and walk competition! Percy did.

During the 1960s most police forces used the Triumph Saint as their main motorcycle and the riders near to Meriden would often call in for a brew. On the day in question one officer, who Percy knew well, had done just this and had been spotted by Percy who shortly after set off to test a Bonneville.

Travelling down the Meriden Mile at high speed, Percy spotted the policeman and promptly slapped him on the back while travelling, shall we say, very fast. Sadly, for Percy this was not his friend but a completely

unknown officer who was not amused. In Percy's words: "I received the biggest rollicking of my life." As he held two driving licences for different parts of the country it would be interesting which one was in use that day.

On another occasion the Meriden Works manager approached Percy and asked him to collect a garden roller and deliver it to his house. Now at this time Triumph used a Thunderbird with an open backed sidecar attached to collect stranded motorcycles. So, taking a young apprentice to assist him, Percy duly set off on the outfit and collected said roller. The apprentice was sitting in the box holding onto the roller - no health and safety in those days. On the route to the manager's house the road passed through a ford which Percy did not slow for but hit the water at about 55mph. As can be imagined there was a great cascade of water and everything disappeared. Looking to his left as the water cleared Percy was amused to see his young assistant flat out on the box floor hanging onto the roller which was now bouncing along behind at over 50mph!

Just before the start of one race which included world champion Phil Read, Percy gave him a sweet to suck to help keep his

mouth moist. Unfortunately for Phil the sweet had been filled with curry powder. This led to Phil having a go at Percy telling him that if he took his racing more seriously, he could be a good rider!

Percy was one of the Meriden workers who did his National Service as a member of The Royal Signals Motorcycle Display Team, long before they became known as The White Helmets and could lay claim to being one of a very few who jumped Beecher's Brook on the Grand National course.

In his spare time Percy has bred racehorses, pigs and finally, award-winning sheep. Now he is helping to tend a more heavenly flock. God rest you Percy, you will always be my hero.

One last note, my wife Jan and I have been married 50 years in January. The first place I ever took her was to Oulton Park where the great man was demonstrating the new Triumph Trident. We honeymooned on our Tiger 100, wearing, of course, Percy-styled helmets. Jan still has hers signed by Percy.

The final word must go to the great Mike Hailwood who on presenting Percy with a copy of his book, Mike the Bike had written: "Percy, you old bugger, you taught me all I know."



**5\*** Reviews

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Buying guide

# HONDA CBX 750

Nestling under the 'classic' radar, Honda's CBX 750 is an Eighties throwback that gives many modern luxuries

**WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY** ROB DAVIES. **MANY THANKS TO** MARVIN NICHOLLS



**IMAGINE THIS: BACK IN 1984 A YOUNG MAN NAMED Marvin Nicholls stared through the window of a motorcycle shop, with his face pressed against the glass. Eagerly, he lusted after a gleaming, red, black and chrome Honda CBX 750 that was rotating slowly on a turntable. Could he afford one? Of course not – they were the latest offering from Japan.**

Fast forward to our day and mention the letters 'CBX' in casual conversation, most bikers will immediately think of the 1000cc magnificent inline six. Indeed, the CBX 750 appears to be one of the forgotten bikes from the rich heritage of the 1980s; but not for Marvin – for he patiently waited nearly 20 years until he had the money – and the opportunity, and bought two. Are they that good?

The Honda CBX 750 has typical 1980s styling, being similar to its close competitors the Kawasaki GPZ, the Suzuki GSX-R and the Yamaha FZ. The separate fuel tank, seat and lights of the previous decade had been rejected for the angular flowing design that made it look as though the bike was going fast, even at a standstill.

Today, there are many good reasons for considering this machine because it is a pretty decent all-round bike, and if you're nostalgic for 1980s designs (dash included) then it is a nice blend of the old and the new. Like the Honda 650 Nighthawk of the very same decade, it has similar engine design features that included double overhead cam and self adjusting tappets. These were not only quiet but never needed maintenance – well, hardly. It came with a half fairing and tinted screen. Compared to other sportsters, the Honda's fairing may look a little inadequate, but it works surprisingly well, so that the rider sits in a comfortable pocket right up to and over the magic ton.



**1.** Swapping the old kilometre clocks for something closer to home

**2.** The single shock air suspension unit – pumped up through a Schrader valve

**3.** Engine cutaway showing clearly the direct drive from crank to clutch

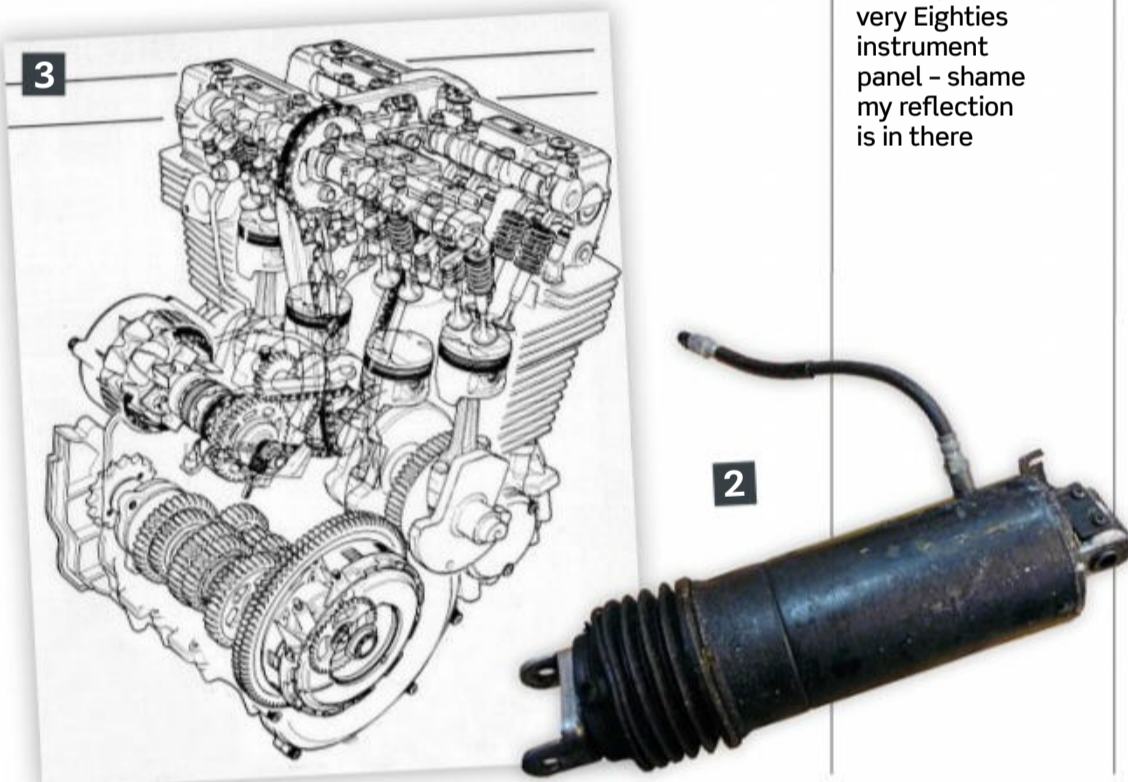
**4.** Nice, clear but very Eighties instrument panel – shame my reflection is in there

The CBX 750 was designed to appeal to the conservative rider who wanted the classic inline four, whereas the Honda VFR, a complex V-four was a totally different beast. The CBX however, has come a long way developmentally from its earlier CB750 ancestor.

The new lump was not much like its ground-breaking predecessor; the engineers had taken steps to trim its measurements in every dimension. Width was reduced at the bottom of the motor by moving the high output alternator from the end of the crankshaft to behind the cylinders on top of the gearbox next to the starter motor. Here it's driven by a chain from the centre of the crankshaft. Some commentators criticise the CBX for maybe having too many internal chains (three in total), but our friend Marvin has seen his bike do over 30,000 miles without any chain mishaps whatsoever. I suppose it all comes down to good maintenance in the end.

Height was lost by the novel method of reducing the depth of the sump. So where did Honda stick all the oil? They copied BSA and put some of it in the frame. Yes, the two forward down tubes take up a slice of the lubricant and along with the oil cooler at the base of the fairing, help to keep everything at a reasonable temperature. Incidentally the other three manufacturers all chose to go with either water or oil cooling, so the Honda is one of the last bikes to have traditional air-cooling fins and carburetors – Keihins in this case. The oil filter is kept in its usual handy location at the front of the engine. Finally, the length of the engine was trimmed by cutting out any primary drive chain so that the clutch is driven directly from a gear wheel on the crank.

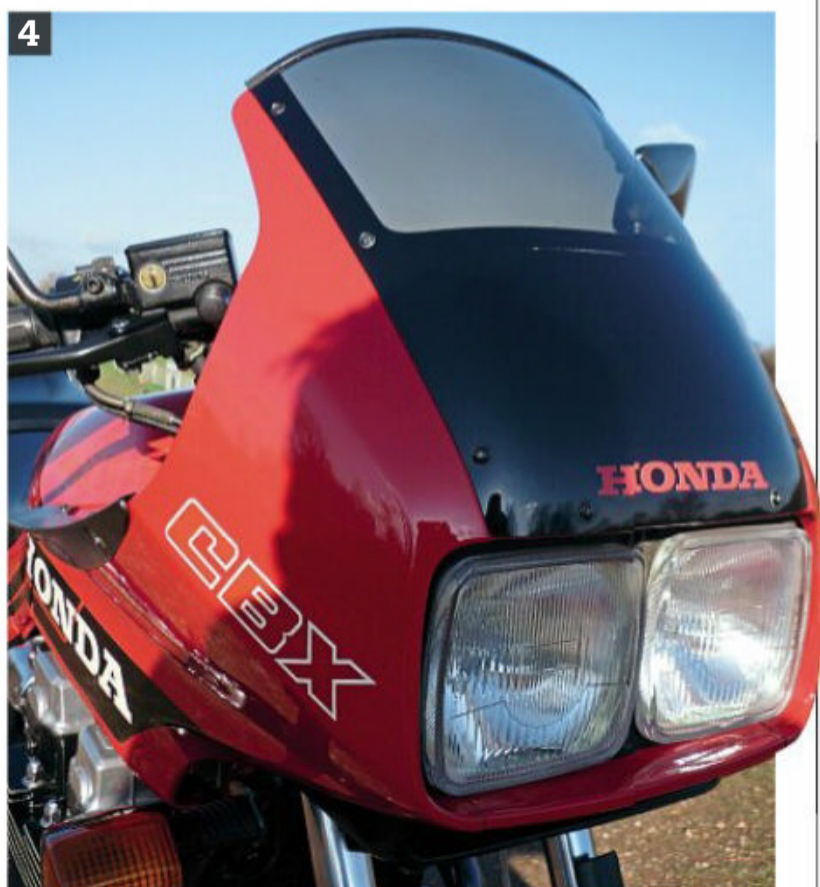
It was at the top end though where Honda did a revamp. The camshafts are hollow for lightness, and as mentioned earlier, the oil-filled hydraulic tappets are amazingly efficient. No it wasn't a revolutionary system, because Harley had used them for years before – but Honda made them better. As you may know, oil is non compressible, but get air into the system and they stop working. Therefore the lubrication system has to have a means of supplying air free oil to the tappets. Oil is pumped up from the crankshaft main bearing gallery to a separator chamber mounted inside the crankcase. Any air bubbles rise to the top of the chamber. The bubbly oil – if we can call it that is then pumped to the alternator bearings – they don't mind, while air free oil is drawn from the bottom of the chamber and pumped to the camshaft bearings. It then drains down into



defoaming chambers mounted above the tappets – clever eh?

All the early scribes and testers of the CBX were suitably impressed by the handling and general comfort of the 750. Comfortable cornering is aided by the smaller and narrower 16in front wheel and tyre. The front forks are of a beefy 39mm tubing with an anti dive function at the bottom of the sliders called TRAC – which actually works. There are four settings to choose from on the TRAC unit – which admittedly does not noticeably alter the feel, but there is also a three-position rebound switch at the top of the forks, which for your average British roads is perfectly adequate.

The frame, with its large diameter spine tube is nicely rigid – not like the early days of Japanese bikes – so that any high speed weave is eliminated and you can do the ton with confidence – not that you want to go that fast of course. In the 1980s, Honda started to use computers to design their frames. Different load and ride conditions could be applied to a virtual frame simulation; this did away with the need to keep making and testing expensive prototypes. The same design process also added a bit of vertical height to the main chassis so as to allow better access to the engine. Now the head, block and pistons can all be removed once the fuel tank and coil are off.



**1.** Artificial but nicely done bellmouths to outside of the Keihin CV carbs

**2.** The artistic sweep of 1980s styling where fairing flows through fuel tank to rear of the bike

**3.** Notice the similarity – this is the Honda 650 Nighthawk – pretty much the same engine and carbs.

**4.** A well designed half fairing is all the rider needs for a comfortable day out – no pressure. And the twin headlights look okay too

**The camshafts are hollow for lightness, and as mentioned earlier, the oil-filled hydraulic tappets are amazingly efficient. No, it wasn't a revolutionary system because Harley had used them for years before – but Honda made them better.**

The rear Pro Link suspension is similar to its larger six-cylinder brother, being air operated with a preload of 0-57 psi, filled and adjusted through a Schrader valve that sits on a handy extension hose behind the right-hand side panel. When Marvin purchased his bike back in 2000 he wasn't totally happy with the suspension. Being a hefty lad, he thought the unit a tad too spongy, leaving the seat too close to the wheel. So, he removed the unit and extended it by just over an inch by welding a piece in. This has lifted the back of the bike to his own preferred setting and he assures me that the handling has not been affected.

Build quality and details for 1980s Hondas are generally very good, though the car style clock layout may be a Marmite factor. When Marvin bought his first CBX it was an import with kilometres on the faces – he has just bought a set of clocks with mph on, so is about

to convert to UK increments. Spares for these machines – like other bikes of over 40 years vintage are a bit thin on the ground, so that’s why he made the wise decision to buy a cheaper second bike so as to cannibalise parts. The standard exhaust system is a typical four into two, with a collector box underneath the bike. Sadly, exhausts and collector boxes are probably the first items to rust; and in this case both exhausts are new, while the collector box has had new sections welded in. Some owners have ditched the standard exhausts for a Motad four into one – they sound great, and lose some weight but don’t have that balanced look about them.

Gear selection on the CBX is as good as it gets – which comes as no real surprise for Honda addicts. The six ratios are well appointed and close for smooth acceleration, and the motor pulls well from 3000rpm onward. It’s not known for its low down torque, but it does make up for that when you go past the 6000 mark. It’s an engine that likes to rev. The hydraulic clutch is sweet to operate, while the brakes, with their twin discs (solid ones showing their age) up front are simply excellent, pushing the tyres to their maximum.

I was impressed by the excellent condition of Marvin’s bike. This machine had obviously been kept out of the very worst weather and well maintained. I was somewhat surprised at the chrome dummy bellmouths at the rear of the outside carburettors. They are obviously a nod in the retro direction, but after a bit of indecision I rather think I like them. A standard air filter sits under the rider’s seat. The twin headlights are a UK style but single headlights were fitted to overseas machines. Nevertheless the CBX is typically blessed

with Honda’s good electrical and lighting equipment and the fuel gauge can, and does work well on this bike, no matter what others may say.

If comfort is high on your list for a classic Japanese, then the CBX will not disappoint. The capacious seat is padded like a firm mattress, and the riding position is well thought out for long journeys. The handlebars are a clip-on design but are mounted high on the fork tops and angled backwards. On similar styled bikes such as the ubiquitous cafe racer, this would be a recipe for trapped thumbs at full lock, but the Honda’s bars provide plenty of room between tank and bars.

**5.** Twin pot calipers and discs of 281mm provide plenty of stopping power

**6.** Twin pot rear caliper and single disc at the rear

**7.** Left side of engine showing alternator and hydraulic clutch – oh and old type tax disc, just for show.



Marvin Nicholls – one very proud owner



Being an 'Old School' engine, and I mean in this case having carburettors, it is a thirsty beast with no pretensions of being energy conscious. Ride it hard and you won't get more than the low 30s to the gallon. Take it for a nice lazy Sunday run and you will add another seven or eight miles to the tally, but not much more. Fortunately the fuel tank is ample at 22 litres so the bike still has a decent range between fill ups.

The clutch is a two-way item, designed to cope with any backload caused by either poor downshifts or sharp deceleration in low gear, like a modern slipper clutch. Half the plates then slip and prevent the rear wheel from hopping as the suspension attempts to extend itself to the limit of its travel. This is achieved by a two-piece clutch centre, the outer part of which is equipped with a sprag clutch that allows the outer portion to rotate in either direction. Under normal operation – you and I that is – the sprag clutch is engaged, allowing drive to be transmitted in the usual way. Put a backload through it and the sprag clutch disengages – allowing the plates to slip. Good eh?

So in conclusion, the Honda CBX 750 goes well and handles well – once set up for the rider – and it's comfortable to boot. 1980s styling is not everyone's cup of tea, but if it is, and you even like the dash – it has its own charm – then you may find this uncommon bike right up your street. If you're looking to buy one, then look at the condition and mileage and listen for any tell-tale rattly chains that may be on their way out, unless of course you plan to do the whole engine strip down thing and get it like new – nothing wrong with that. The good news is that the bike is well down the general must-have list and therefore you may well indeed grab a bargain, or two, like our friend Marvin. **CBG**



**1.** Honda have always attached a lot of importance to effective oil filtering. Just don't burn your fingers on the exhausts when doing this one

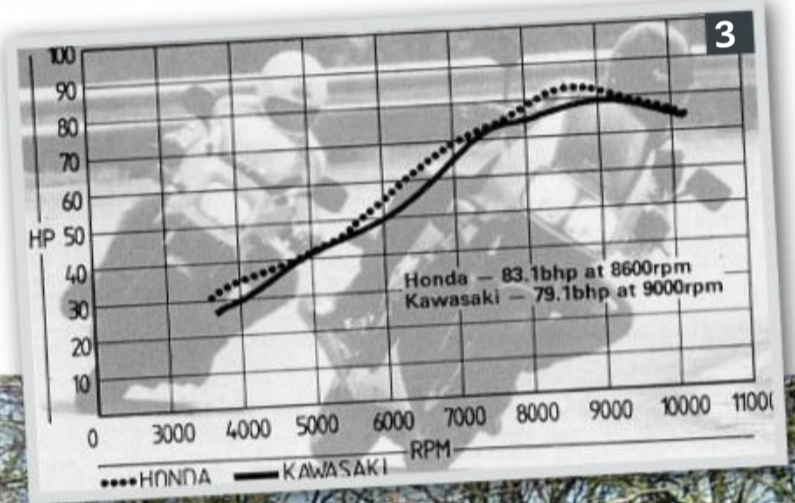
**2.** Silencers and collector boxes are usually the first to rot. Here are nice new ones. Notice the adjuster for the rear suspension doesn't do a lot I'm afraid

**3.** Power curves for the CBX and Kawasaki GPZ R750 of the same year

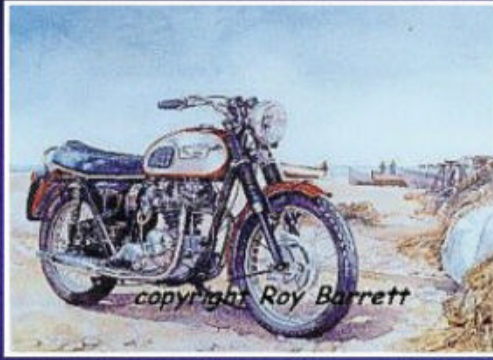


## HONDA CBX SPEC AND PERFORMANCE

**MAX SPEED:** 130mph **STANDING START ¼ MILE:** 12.20sec **FUEL CONSUMPTION:** BEST 43mpg - WORST 32 **ENGINE:** DOHC In-line four cylinder, four-stroke. Bore and stroke -57x63. **PISTON DISPLACEMENT:** 747cc. **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9.3-1. 83 BHP at 9500 but sources vary. **GEARS:** 6. **FUEL:** 22 litre tank with 4 x Keihin CV 34mm carbs with transistorised ignition system and spark advance. **FRONT TYRE:** 110/90V16. **REAR TYRE:** 130/80V18. **BRAKES:** front double discs of 281mm; two piston caliper, and single disc on rear. **DRY WEIGHT:** 481lb. **OVERALL LENGTH:** 85.6in. **SUSPENSION:** Telescopic front forks with air assist and three-way rebound with TRAC. Rear is Pro Link Monoshock air unit with preload and three-way damping.



## ROY BARRETT (Artist)



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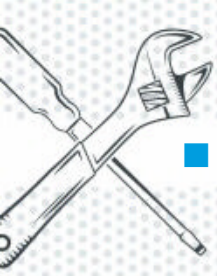
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# ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

This amazing Indian Junior Scout was once a box of bits – and an incomplete one at that.

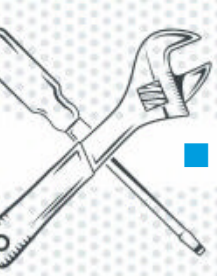
WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY STUART URQUHART





**I**'M A SUCKER FOR RESCUE PROJECTS, AND they don't come much better than this amazing restoration story. Casting a casual glance, one might assume this all-American motorcycle to be a concours restored, 1936 Indian Junior Scout. But peer a little closer and you might just notice the modified primary chaincase and the Triumph dry clutch that lurks within; or perhaps the tell-tale Mikuni carburettor or the Indian's unique tractor-style saddle has raised your appreciative eyebrow. Each has an extraordinary story to tell, as do a sack-load of other hidden mods that await discovery.

Hard to believe then, that this gleaming red machine was resurrected from a box of disassociated parts by CBG reader Tony Adams. Prised from the shed of one of Scotland's best loved punk rockers, the box of rusted parts was secured from Indian Motorcycle guru Alan Forbes – aka Eugene Reynolds of rock band The Rezillos fame. Looking at the picture of Tony's ▶



original purchase, it's hard to believe that he possessed the ability – never mind the belief – to create a living, breathing motorcycle from the box of odd bits that many might label as junk. But Tony is no ordinary chap...

Curiously, Tony is a vibration technology design engineer (retired). He's also a modest chap, and you'd never guess he was tasked in building a vibration test rig that would test NASA's Mars Landing Robotic Exploration Vehicle (see pic). Therefore one might assume that conjuring a rare Junior Scout from a rusting pile of old metal might be considered 'small potato' by our talented design engineer. In fact, as we discussed his impeccable restoration, Tony jested that the project had posed a far bigger challenge than building test equipment for the Mars exploration vehicle!

**CYCLE WORK**

The hunt for parts as rare as Indian designer Charles B Franklin's teeth introduced Tony to USA specialist Jerry Greens (Engineering). The search for a missing front mudguard also led Tony to Tiele Dienst, an Indian specialist based in

Germany. However, when the mudguard arrived, it proved to be the wrong profile for a Junior Scout. Undeclared, Tony secured the help of professional panel beater Andrew Goodfellow. Tony explains: "I was gutted to discover the Tiele Dienst front fender actually belonged to a later Scout model, so I turned to my friend Andrew for help. Andrew is an amazing craftsman and a well known fabricator of Austin A7 body panels. As friends do, we help each other out by swapping skills; Andrew fabricates all my sheet metal parts while I return the favour by taking on his machining requirements – it's a perfect win-win relationship!

"In order to reduce the new mudguard to a narrower profile to fit my Junior Scout, Andrew first had to remove a two inch centre section before welding the two remaining halves back together. Andrew then used a professional shrinking machine to re-radius the mudguard before deftly beating out the mudguard's lower tail-flute. Such is Andrew's skill that the re-profiled mudguard is now indistinguishable from an original Junior part."

*"In order to reduce the new mudguard to a narrower profile to fit my Junior Scout, Andrew first had to remove a two inch centre section before welding the two remaining halves back together"*





Another problem was the lack of wheels. Tony did have one rear hub, but not a matching front. One was sourced from a different model Scout, but required cutting in half and the removal of the centre section to achieve the correct width for his Junior Scout. Both halves required further machining and the addition of location bosses before they could be brazed back together. The hubs were also re-engineered to accept modern (sealed) ball races. The brake drums were skimmed and oversize

linings were bonded to the brake shoes. The brake shoes were then assembled onto the back plates and mounted on a lathe, small shims were inserted on the brake cams and the linings machined to the same diameter as the brake drums. This has resulted in a very efficient braking system that hardly required bedding-in.

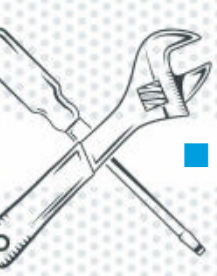
The wheels were rebuilt using black powder coated steel rims by local wheel builder Barrie Brown of Windygates. The rims were later shod with Dunlop K81 tyres.



Tony was kept busy making other cycle parts such as missing front and rear axles and brake pedals and rods. The hand gear lever's connecting rod and mudguard support brackets were also fabricated in mild steel before being painted black. Small parts that Tony couldn't make himself were laser cut by Reekies of Arbroath – such as the engine and gearbox mounting plates, and front and rear brake arms. Tony then sourced a pair of footboard rubbers and gave them to Andrew as templates to allow the Austin craftsman to produce a set of matching running boards and support mountings in steel.

“While Andrew was making a set of running boards, I was involved in fabricating a set of bespoke handlebars and a handlebar mount – a process which involved the accurate measuring of the girder forks,” said Tony. “I soon noticed that the girders had been bent in a rather unusual manner, and off to one side – a common practice used by wall-of-death riders to help keep the motorcycle gravity-defying, while both machine and rider belt around the vertical wall at speed!

“Unfortunately, the practice results in one-directional steering when wall-of-death Scouts are returned to road use. In order to restore normal road manners some carefully-applied heat and straightening in a hydraulic press



was required. I also treated the girders to a new set of bushes and shims before painting them gloss black.”

Tony also explained fabricating the handlebars was no mean feat: they consisted of no less than 10 separate parts – all welded, brazed and silver soldered together, and finally powder coated to replicate the Indian factory’s original black enamel finish. The exhaust pipes and the silencer were supplied by Jerry Greers.

**ENGINE WORK**

The engine was missing several key components including its primary drive and clutch, Linkert carburettor and ignition ‘snuff box’ (more of which later).

At the outset Tony decided to beef up the engine’s capacity from 500 to 600cc. This work was undertaken by renowned engineer Simon Linford. The flywheel assembly was rebuilt with new bearing shafts (a very skilled job in itself) then rebalanced to suit a set of larger pistons. Simon also line-bored the crankcase halves to suit new oversize bearings then rebored the cylinders to match the pistons. Both cylinder heads were skimmed and machined to make space for larger inlet valves. Matching solid copper cylinder head gaskets were also fitted.

While the engine was away, Tony sealed the crankcases and gearbox using Glyptal Red Insulating Enamel to protect against the risk of porous casings – apparently a problem on some prewar Indians.

Another quandary was the absence of a primary drive – Tony only had a gearbox shell and a couple of rusty old cogs! Although a gear cluster was eventually supplied by the resourceful Jerry Greers, the primary drive required a radical solution that would leave many restorers well and truly stumped. Over to Tony again...

“From the beginning I decided to fit a primary belt drive, much as with modern Harleys. My own opinion is that the Junior Scout transmission and single plate clutch are antiquated at best; the clutch for instance has one enormous and oversized pressure spring – a device which is much too powerful and certainly not conducive to deftly slipping or feathering the clutch. The net result is the clutch is either IN, or OUT,

and there are no half measures. So as you can probably imagine, smooth getaways are a daunting prospect. But with no clutch to speak of, and the absence of primary parts, I decided to reinvent the wheel,” chuckled Tony. “So I sketched up plans for a belt drive system that would operate with a modern Triumph clutch. Utilising a 22T engine and 48T primary pulley and driven by a standard belt, the system would deliver an almost perfect 2:1 drive ratio.”

This led to the complex task of designing and machining a bespoke gearbox mainshaft to drive the modified Triumph clutch/pulley wheel. So Tony designed a modified mainshaft based on an original factory part. Tony then sent his design to machine specialist RES Engineering of Dundee which turned up a bespoke mainshaft at very reasonable cost. He then made a matching clutch basket by reworking a standard pulley wheel on his lathe – including the intricate machining of

*“Tony is also a wiz with electronics and naturally he designed and made an ignition system from scratch. The distributor, cam and points, plus the unit’s right angle gearbox drive were all missing, so Tony made up a snuff box”*



the bearing housing. The slots for guiding the clutch plates were cut using a wire spark erosion process by RES. The front pulley was also machined by Tony to fit the engine crankshaft.

A missing carb was substituted with the Mikuni equivalent from specialist Motocarb of Liverpool, with Tony making up a special manifold adapter to fit. Tony would highly recommend Motocarb: "You simply supply them with your engine specifications and Motocarb return the appropriate size of carb with jets to suit – a marvellous service!"

One of the last jobs was enlisting his friend Andrew to modify the outer primary cover to accommodate the bespoke belt drive – please applaud the casing's delightfully sculpted 'cooling' hole!

### FINISHING TOUCHES

Tony is also a wiz with electronics and naturally he designed and made an ignition system from scratch. The distributor, cam and points, plus the unit's right angle gearbox drive were all missing, so Tony made up a snuff box. This is an ignition box which is mounted below the carburettor and contains a disc with two slots 159° apart, plus a Hall probe.

The Hall probe is connected to a dual outlet ignition coil (one outlet for each plug) via clever electronics which deliver a spark to each cylinder at the right moment and another spark which does nothing – hence the term 'a wasted spark system'. Fortunately, this arrangement negates the need for a distributor and a rotor arm.

Tony's electric know-how means his Indian now burns LED bulbs and 'ticks' on a modern Lithium battery.

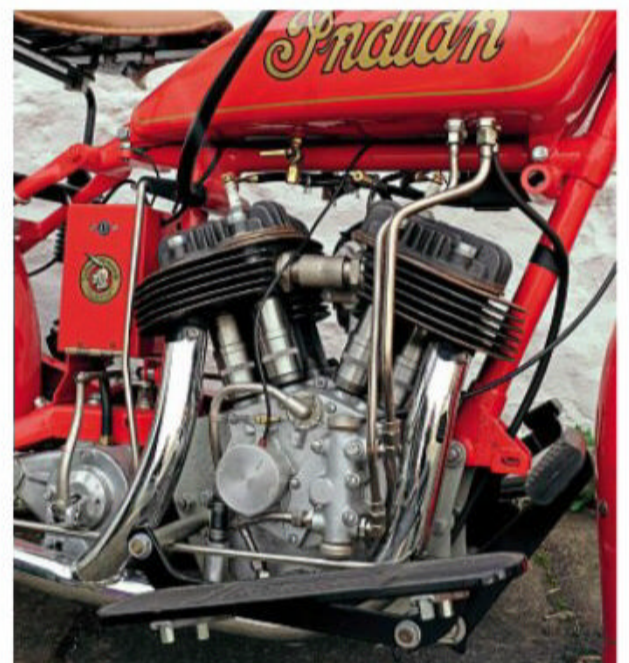
By design it's a total loss electrical system, but as the bike is rarely used after



sundown, the battery only requires the occasional top-up.

The interior of the two-piece petrol tank was primed and sealed before the stunning bright red paintwork and gold coach lining was skilfully applied by Bob Falconer of Arbroath. Bob is a highly renowned airbrush artist – and it shows. The sparkling chrome work was undertaken by Agbrigg Plating of Leeds and complements Bob's paintwork very well – to the extent that Tony's head-turning Indian is now fit for a carnival parade.

The meticulous finish of the bespoke alloy parts, paintwork and chrome is transparently obvious, even from the photos. The appreciative layman can only

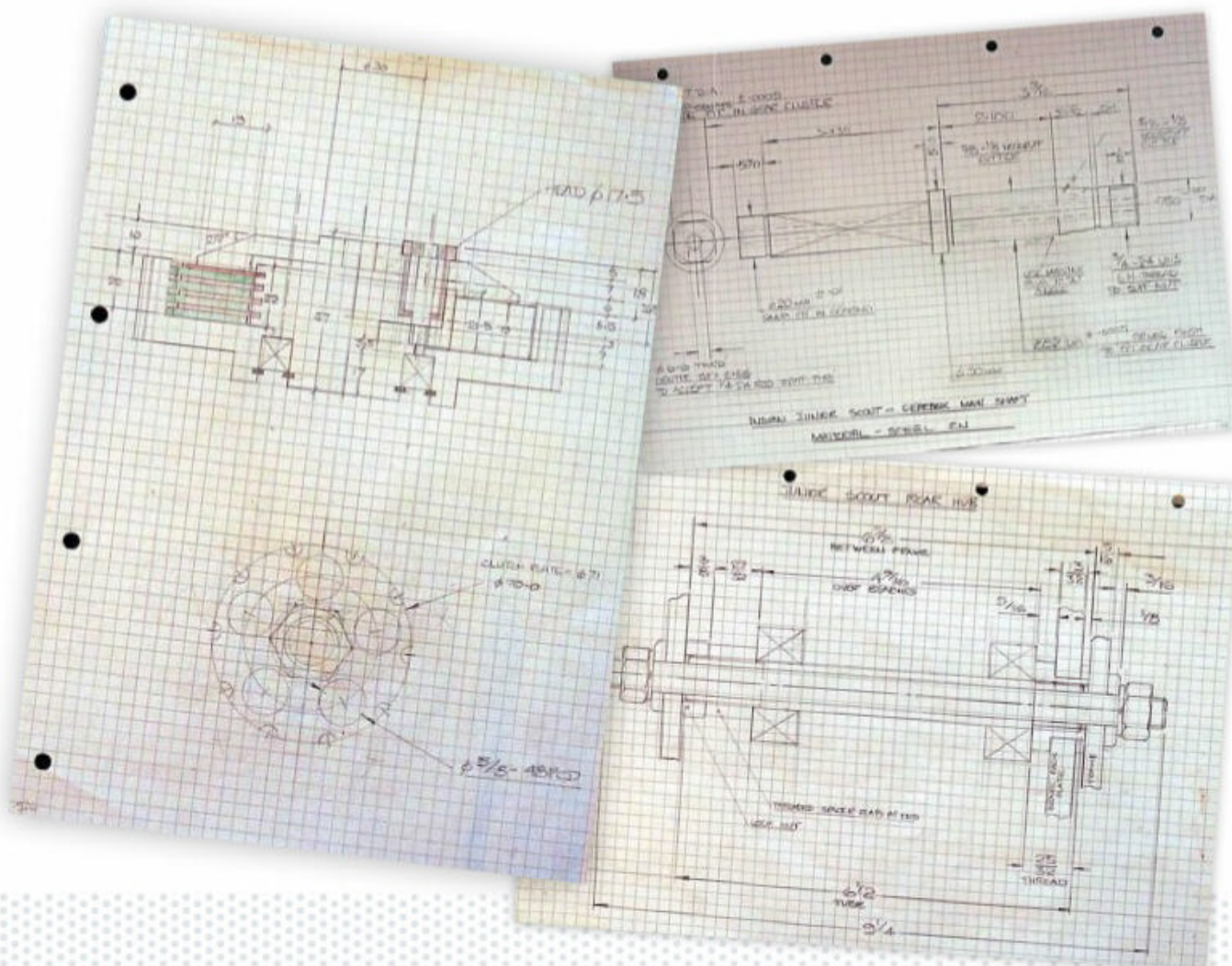


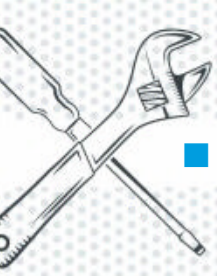
gawp in wonder at this very special classic. It is to Tony's credit that he managed to create such an exciting and elegant motorcycle from such a small collection of surviving parts.

### USING & RIDING

But after two years of design, fabrication and tireless dedication, Tony finally tightened up the last nut and bolt and added the last drop of mineral oil, before fuelling up his gleaming Indian in the early spring sunshine. Previous test firings in his garage had proved that the engine responded well with the new Mikuni carb. The time had arrived for a shake-down road test.

"When the time arrived, I was very excited at the prospect of a debut ride," said Tony. "I can remember joking nervously with my wife that perhaps I should just wax and polish the Indian and hang it on our living room wall. But instead, I began the familiar starting





procedure of turning on the fuel and applying full choke (no tickler on a Mikuni carb). Then I gently turned over the big V-twin engine to prime the bores. Next step was retard the ignition and then give her a mighty 'kick' – didn't she fire up on the second kick!" beamed Tony.

Indians make use of a rather awkward system of left-hand throttle and a right-hand ignition control twist grip; the rider's left foot operates the clutch via a rocking pedal and the right foot is responsible for braking. So if like me, you are only familiar with British bikes, you then have to retune your mind to these subtle differences.

According to Tony it doesn't take long to acclimatise to the change – nevertheless, your scribe chickened out of an opportunity ride, lest he put a dent in Tony's P&J.

But as one would expect, Tony's debut ride went like clockwork: "I'm lucky to have owned several Indian Scouts.

"On this latest model, I was pleasantly surprised with the instant power that flowed freely from the rebuilt and over-bored 600cc engine. The upgraded belt-drive transmission has delivered a welcome death-blow to the often criticised heavy clutch and clunky gearbox of the Scout models. I am still thrilled with how smooth and silent the transmission has become. Gear changes are fluid and

precise and the engine delivers excellent acceleration with smooth mid-range power – so overall, much as I'd hoped for. It was a sensational and uplifting first ride!

"After constant use the Indian has exceeded all my expectations. If I was to be hyper-critical of the Junior model it is perhaps hampered by its lightweight frame flexing over harsh road surfaces – I refer to the modern scandal of unrepaired pot holes! Much to my peril, I've discovered that romping along on country back roads is fraught with danger. The classic rider must scan well ahead these days to avoid dented pride or an undignified launch from the saddle.

"Road surfaces aside, the engine has improved with use and provides an endless rush of useable torque. Gliding along at 55mph is a real grin and my previous two years of solitary confinement has certainly paid dividends... I just don't expect my wife will agree!" Tony heartily laughed.

"I set out to build a bike that would be easy to start; a pleasure to ride; was utterly reliable, and easy to maintain. Although it's early days, I seem to have achieved my goal."

Judging from Tony's infectious grin as we discussed his Indian, it looks as if I may have passed on the ride of a lifetime. But Tony doesn't sit still for too long, so

I'm looking forward to see what wonderful creation he comes up with next.

### THE PROBLEM WITH INDIANS

Expensive and rarity are just two of the problems in owning an Indian. If you are lucky enough to find a classic Indian, then consider yourself part of an exclusive club.

Membership doesn't come cheap though: basket cases can fetch upwards of five grand and on-the-road examples start at a hefty 12 grand, depending on model and spec. Then there's the hassle of sourcing missing parts for a restoration, or just to keep your model running. Spares are extremely rare and original tin-ware is either thin on the ground or no longer exists. According to aficionados some rare model mudguards, petrol tanks, period instruments and headlamps are all used up. Parts do occasionally turn up, but are usually traded as swaps through club affiliation.

\*Alan Forbes is a respected and knowledgeable trader in classic Indian motorcycles. He finds Indians and imports them for his clientele. But this can take several years, so patience is required to enter into Indian ownership – as is a healthy wallet!

Alan has a workshop near Edinburgh that stocks classic Indian motorcycle projects and runners for sale. **CBG**



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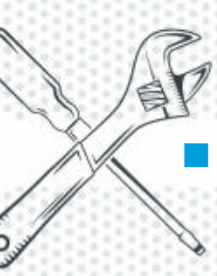

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# How to overhaul a two-stroke oil pump

Why would you use any oil pump of unknown condition?

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY STEVE COOPER

**T**HE INTRODUCTION OF AUTOMATIC oil injection dramatically changed the way the bike-buying public felt about two-strokes. In an instant the laborious and tedious ritual of premix fuel was ancient history and stinkwheels motorcycles became substantially more user friendly.

From the early 1960s when Autolube, Injectolube, Posi-Force etc first appeared, right through to 2004 when the last Aprilia RS250s rolled off the production line, a combination of rotary and reciprocating motions have been feeding oil to crankcases, main bearings, inlet tracts and cylinders. Effectively, self-

lubricating two-stroke pumps generally require little maintenance other than bleeding post rebuild, perhaps checking the pump stroke or adjustment of their pull cables.

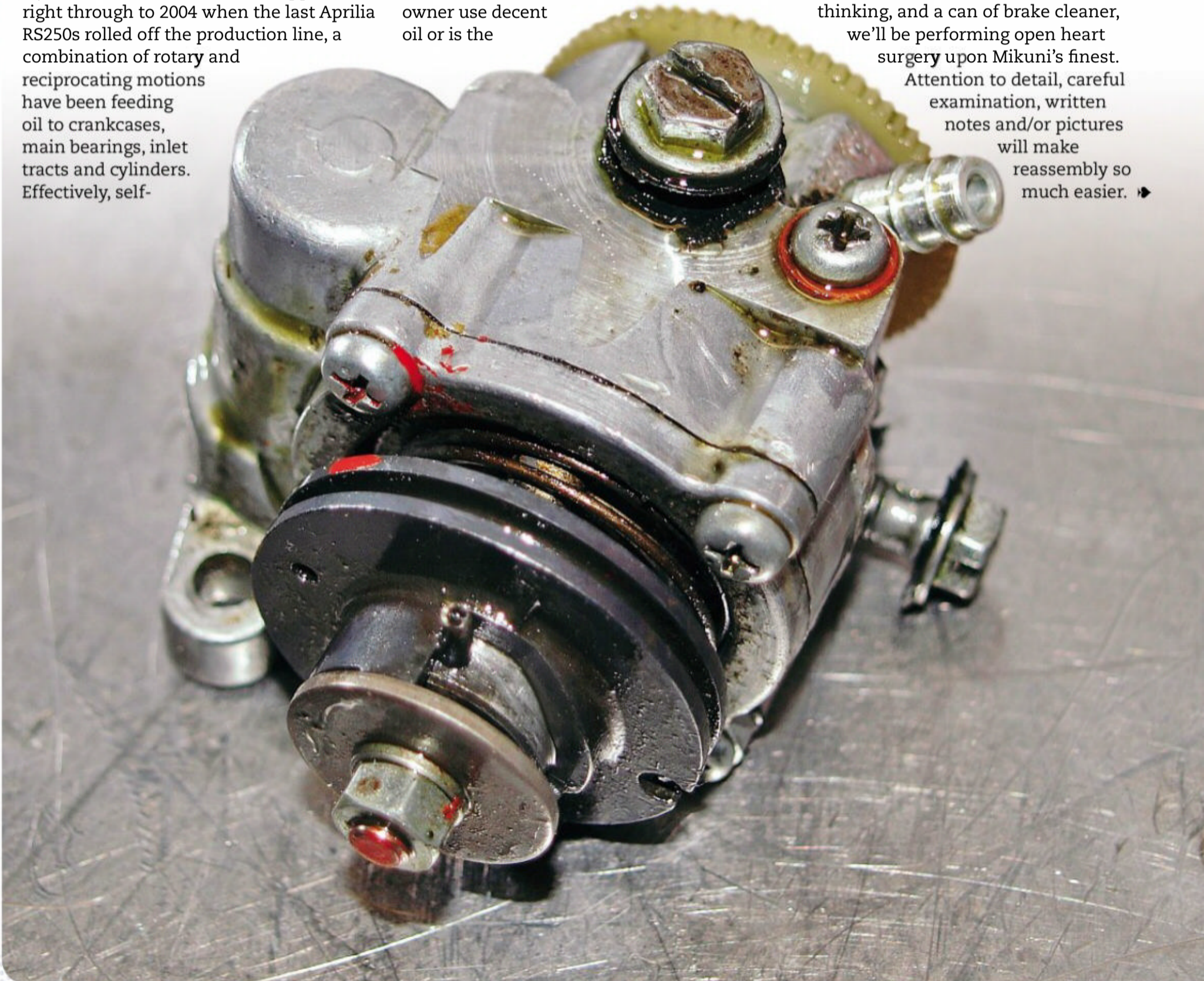
That might be your perception of what's necessary, but what about the pump on that project you're about to rebuild? Do you know the pump's history? Has it sat disconnected for years gradually filling up with dirt? Did the last owner use decent oil or is the

pump partially clogged with heaven knows what? For the sake of an hour's work, some gaskets and seals, is it really worth chancing that freshly built engine?

This month we carefully dissect a typical Yamaha twin oil pump. We have a rebuild kit to hand, some decent quality screwdrivers, a Dremel and a clean workbench.

With a few precautions, a weather eye on not simply ripping stuff apart without thinking, and a can of brake cleaner, we'll be performing open heart surgery upon Mikuni's finest.

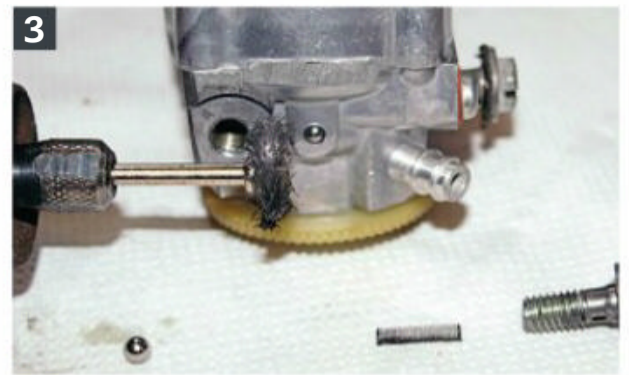
Attention to detail, careful examination, written notes and/or pictures will make reassembly so much easier. ▶





**1:** Beneath each banjo bolt is a spring and ball bearing; these stop the tank emptying its contents into the crankcases. Clean and safely store ready to use.

**2:** The old banjo bolt washer will probably stick to the pump but don't be tempted to reuse, fit a new one every single time.



**3:** Gently pry off the old washer then clean the gasket surface with brake cleaner or similar. Stubborn residues and corrosion are best removed with a rotary tool and stiff metal brush.



**4:** Remove the priming thumb wheel but ensure the pin is kept safe, it's an odd size and, annoyingly, not readily available.



**5:** Using a decent quality screwdriver remove the four screws holding the pump together then pull the front end of the pump away from the main body. A gentle tap with small hammer will help to break the gasket's bond.



**6:** Inside we can see the driven gear wheel and some of the grey detritus that's built up on the central boss. Don't be tempted to remove components willy-nilly, for reasons that will become apparent shortly. Clean the insides and remove all of the old gasket.



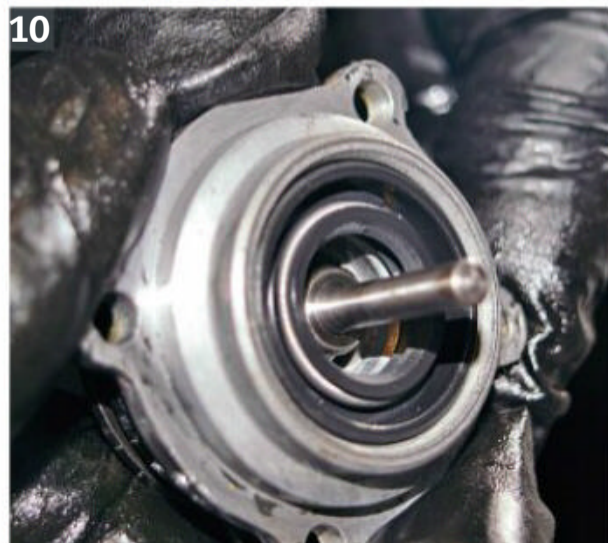
**7:** Indicated by the screwdriver is a seal that's easily overlooked, a new spare is towards the front. This seal should always be changed.



**8:** A typical Yamaha oil pump overhaul kit. Ours come from Alisdair Cowan of YDS Parts. Whatever you use ensure it's high end quality, not cheapo... your engine is depending on the pump!



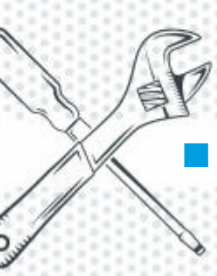
**9:** Note the seal's orientation and depth to which it was fitted BEFORE removing it from the pump top! Carefully prise out the old seal then clean.



**10:** Now carefully fit the new seal, ensuring it's the right way round and located squarely.



**11:** Sitting inside the drive gear are two tiny spring-loaded pins that act as part of a freewheeling mechanism. DO NOT DISASSEMBLE with very good reason. The pins and springs have a well-deserved reputation for flying out and getting lost. Simply spray with brake cleaner and allow to dry.



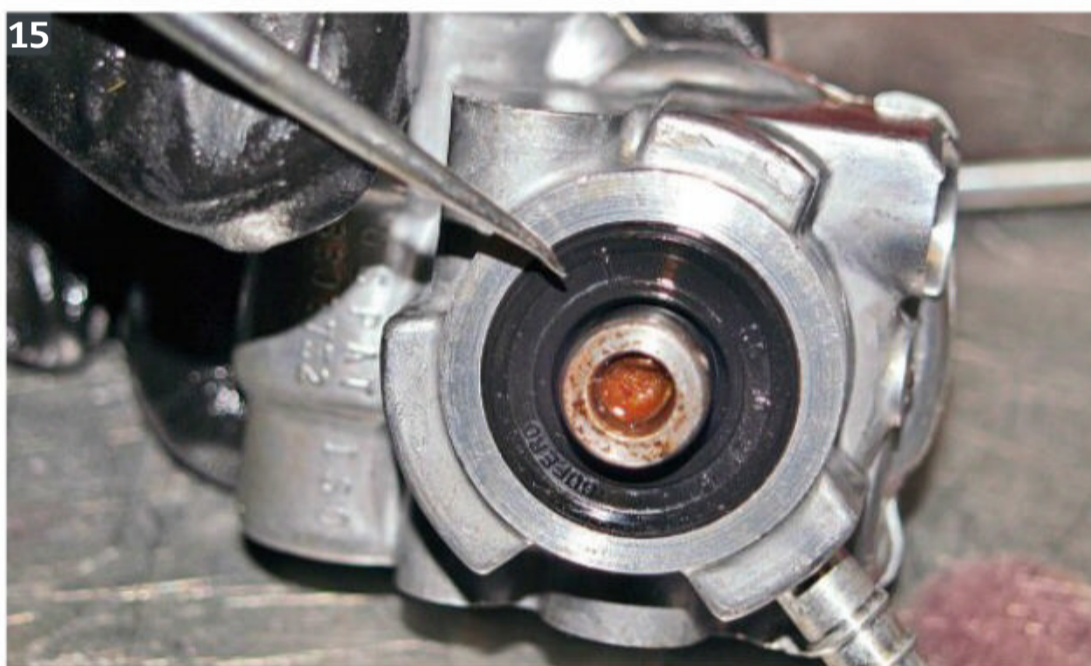
**12:** We now need to remove the seal behind the thumb wheel. The muck on the old seal is the crud we've washed out of the pump so far. Always check the old and new seals, ensuring they carry similar codes.



**13:** With the seal popped out we can wash away the goop that's accumulated at the lowest end of the pump. Most is of what's here is liquid but some is old, jellified, oil. Once clean the new seal is pressed in place.



**14:** Now to rebuild everything starting with the end plate and driven wheel; it's vital that the shim and wave washer go back and in the correct order. Lubricating the components dramatically helps but it can still be a struggle....



**15:** ...until the shaft emerges fully through the lower oil seal. The shaft is likely to be much tighter through the new seal, so work it through carefully with controlled pressure.

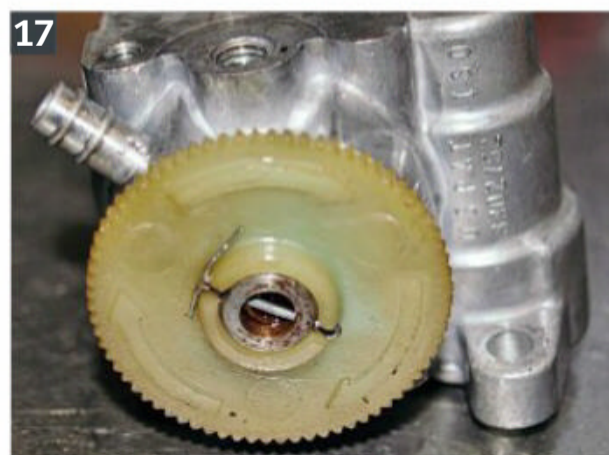
Two stroke oil pumps rarely see anything in the way of servicing and, in reality, the manufacturers never issued service books to the general public. If a pump failed in use it was normally with drastic consequences that often wrote off the engine. A cynic might suggest that was why there were no service books!

However, decades later it makes sense to look inside what is effectively the beating heart of a two-stroke. It may not be necessary to rip apart the pump of a bike you use regularly but any project machine of unknown background really ought to warrant a look-see.

Even if there aren't any leaking seals it's likely that the old oil in an unused pump will have gone off to some degree. You wouldn't use oil from a 40-year-old can because it will almost certainly have decayed... so why trust the self-same in your oil pump? **CBG**



**16:** Replace the pump pulley housing onto the main body using a new gasket but do not add any silicone jointing compound or similar which would be highly likely to block the pump.



**17:** Before tightening up the screws, refit the pump priming wheel and the uber-rare split pin. If the plastic wheel won't fit easily then the seal hasn't been seated properly. Once you're happy tighten the four screws.



**18:** Replace the ball bearings and springs then add some two-stroke oil, temporarily holding everything in place with the banjo bolts. Bolt the pump back in place using a new gasket. Reconnect both the supply pipe and delivery tubes (using fresh fibre washers) then bleed the pump.

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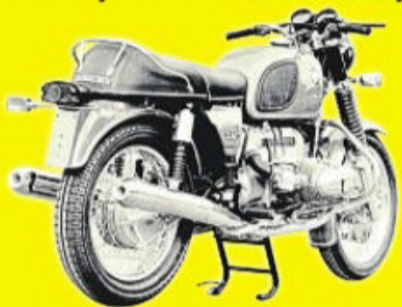
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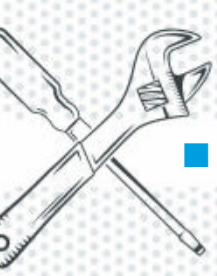
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What we've been up to

# BENELLI 125 ENDURO

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY MATT

It's running, but does Maria's off-roader need surgery to be easier to ride?



**F**IRSTLY, CAN I PERSONALLY apologise for there being little progress in the workshop for the last few months. The weather has been great for riding, I had loan of a wonderful TR6 to ride and life has got in the way. I'm back in the pig shed, and just need to take stock of priorities. Still, I'm sorry.

After getting the Benelli running a few months ago from years of being parked in various outbuildings, it was frustrating Maria that a few gremlins were taking the fun out of riding the little two-stroke.

This 1978 Enduro model is in lovely, original condition, with under 2000kms on the clock. It also has rare, unbroken glass fibre mudguards, an unmolested tank, the original exhaust and what appears to be

the original Pirelli tyres on it – so despite these little 125s not being worth a fortune, it should be a great, usable classic around the Norfolk lanes.

But it doesn't like to idle. Or, after a couple of minutes, run. The petrol is fine, the carb has been cleaned up, though nothing has been replaced and there's a spark from the simple self-generating system. There seems to be little difference between the choke being on or off, other than revving more freely at the higher revs when it's off. So what can the problem be?

125 two-strokes are mostly simple, but they only need a small issue to cause a big issue. And because of the amount of time it's spent parked up – a lot – my pessimistic mind keeps coming back to crankcase seals. These commonly dry

out through long periods of being laid up and let air be sucked into the crankcase. It could tie up with the fact it takes a couple of minutes for the engine to start creating, but because it means engine out, strip and then find some rather uncommon seals, I keep looking for other possibilities.

I ended up talking to BDK race engineering, local two-stroke geniuses. Although the Benelli is just a 'hum-drum' machine, they love all 'dingers' and have, in no uncertain terms, told me to not be so lazy, get the engine out and they'll help me to split the crankcases and replace the seals. And while we're in there, we may do the mains, too. I've never rebuilt a two-stroke, though I've blown a few – so I'm looking forward to this. **CBG**

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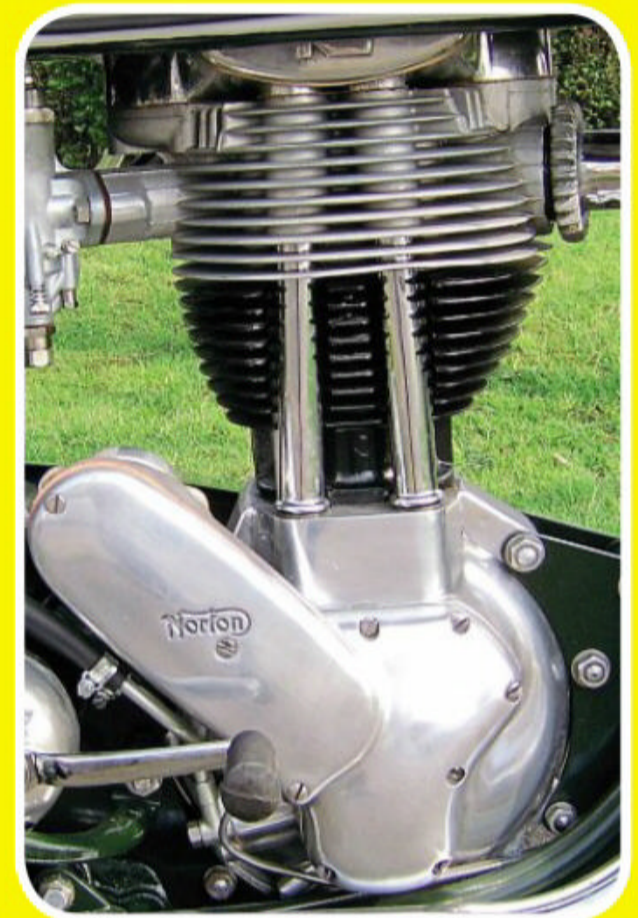
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| H3/147CBG   | COLLAR - VALVE TOP - ES2/18/19/50 - PRE 1959 - EACH               | £22  |
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|               |  |      |
|---------------|--|------|
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| A2/139CBG     | GUIDE - VALVE - EXHAUST - SIDE VALVES 1, 16H - 1947 ON           | £8   |
| A2/138CBG     | GUIDE - VALVE - INLET - SIDE VALVE - 1, 16H - 1947 ON            | £8   |
| 8932CBG       | GUIDE - VALVE - INLET - SIDE VALVE SINGLES - PRE-1946            | £8   |
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| C3/64CBG      | SPINDLE - VALVE LIFTER - SINGLES - O.H.V. MODELS ONLY     | £13  |
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| 50007CBG      | TAPPET - ES2, 19, 50 - 1957 TO 1963                       | £70  |
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| C2/691INCBG   | TAPPET - INLET - 16H & BIG 4 - 1946 TO 1955               | £70  |
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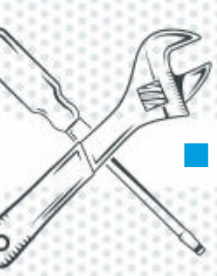
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# In the shed PROJECT NORTON - IT'S BACK!

After months without any love, the ES2 is back on the agenda. But where to start?

WORDS, PHOTOS AND GUILT MATT

**L**IKE THE BENELLI, I MUST APOLOGISE for the lack of Project Norton column inches in the last few months. I'll be honest, the riding weather was good, there were many shows, I was waiting for some favours on the engine and, to be frank, I couldn't justify spending more money on it.

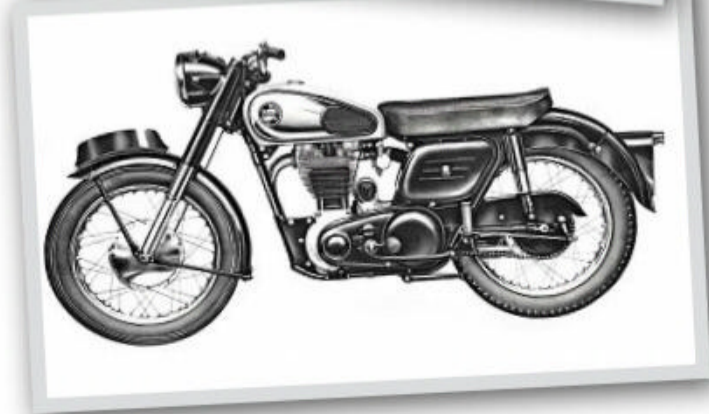
But it's back to the coal face and I'm reinvigorated by this. First things first though - what's the plan? Organising out-sourced jobs, time management, priorities and debating whether to repair or replace are all important factors in a restoration. In some respects, the work is the easy part!

## CHASSIS AND BODYWORK

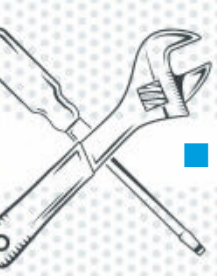
The dry build highlighted the amount of small, but crucial elements needed. Mudguard stays seem unimportant, but they are needed to find where to drill the holes in the new rear mudguard before painting. The oil tank has the right fittings

in the correct place for mounting to the frame, but the opposite toolbox has come from another bike. It is the correct shape from what I can see, though this era that came just before the Featherbed frame seems uncommon/less popular, plus images in books and on the internet are mostly taken from the right-hand side! But it has a number of holes and some lugs missing, so I need to work out which ones are needed. Both tank and toolbox then need panel-beating/filling as they've spent a good few years knocking around.

While the wet and dry is out, the tank can be cleaned inside and rubbed down outside. It's in good condition, but I can't find a definitive answer on whether to chrome it or paint it silver. Chrome tanks look great, but my Norfolk wallet would whince at paying for a tank to be plated, only for most of it to then be rubbed down and painted! So I think a nice silver with coachlines and then lacquer should keep it looking good, while saving several







# What we've been up to **REPLACING VALVE SPRINGS**

Oli hears a rattle that reveals a broken valve spring



**T**HE TOP END ON A BSA STARFIRE HAS a tendency to rattle but the noise from the valve gear of mine sounded excessive, and when I removed the side cover over the valve clearance adjusters a curl of metal was revealed which looked a lot like a bit of valve spring.

Being a pushrod single, checking this was easy and it could be achieved by removing the rocker cover. To do this I had to take the tank off, then remove the engine head steady and then undo the eight nuts holding the cover on. B25s have two springs on each valve and inspection indicated that the internal spring on the exhaust port was loose, and I deduced that this was the spring that was damaged.

Draganfly sent a set of replacement springs in 24 hours. Next was to remove the carb and exhaust by undoing five nuts. Say what you like about the British motorcycle of the late Sixties, they're a doddle to work on. Sometimes.

The head is held on by four main studs with two more studs around the pushrod tunnel. While the barrel studs are UNF, and use  $\frac{5}{16}$ <sup>th</sup> nuts, the two tunnel studs use BSC nuts requiring an open ended  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch Whitworth spanner. You must use an open-ended spanner on these nuts as you cannot get a ring spanner between the stud and the head casting on the right-hand side. You can't get a socket

to the barrel stud nuts either. Once the head was undone, a couple of taps with a soft hammer saw the whole plot released. Using a simple valve spring compressor to, erm, compress the spring, I fished the collets out with a pair of tweezers and got the broken part out.

With the exhaust valve mechanism dismantled, the next question was how far to go. The Starfire hasn't covered that many miles and apart from the broken spring, the head was in excellent condition. I decided not to change the inlet springs, as all was working properly there. Just fit the new springs, clean it all up and put it back together. Getting the valve collets back in while the spring compressor did its work was easier using tweezers and a blob of gear oil to hold the collets. I only dropped a collet twice. A sharp blow with the soft hammer on the valve cap made sure everything was properly seated. Then I annealed the new and very stiff solid copper head gasket, to make it soft enough to seal. A blowtorch and a tray full of water worked well. We shall see later if it is oil-tight.

Next was to torque the head down, but as I said earlier, I couldn't get a torque wrench to two of the nuts. I went back to my days as a trainee motor mechanic (semi-skilled). The trainer, Derek, hardly ever used a torque wrench on an engine, preferring to work by feel. Not being quite

that confident but remembering the theory, I set my wrench to 28lbs/ft and slowly tightened the four nuts in a criss-cross fashion, using the torque wrench on one side and a spanner on the other, in diagonal sequence. By holding the wrench near the socket end, I could estimate what it should feel like using the spanner held at the same distance. It's hardly a GP mechanic level of precision and sophistication, but it's a Starfire, not a Gold Star. Once everything is running for a bit, I'll go around it all again and check how things are.

The next job is to refit the pushrods, rocker cover, the carb and the exhaust, set the valve clearances and then start her up – he says, with as much confidence as he can muster... **CBG**



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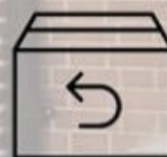
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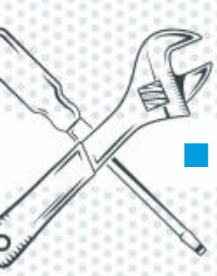
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# RESTORATION: **TRIUMPH** **TIGER CUB 1963**

We look at the baby Tiger and what a great classic project it can be with the help of the late John and Luise Williams

**PHOTOGRAPHY** JOHN AND LUISE WILLIAMS AND ROB DAVIES





**1 & 2:** The Cub as purchased in 2004. Most parts are original and in situ, but not the bikini panels, which are so hard to obtain. Traditional Triumph knee pads and mouthorgan badge.

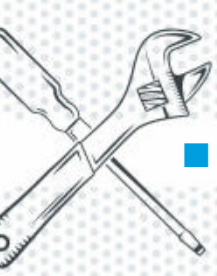
**T**ODAY, THERE IS MUCH AFFECTION FOR THE Tiger Cub, which just goes to show how rose-tinted glasses can remove memories of 'problem' bikes of the past. Also, modern touches such as improved oils and electronic ignition have made the bike much better.

Luise Williams's enthusiasm and pride in her gorgeous 200cc Tiger Cub is palpable and totally understandable. As a riding machine it not only fits her like a glove, but it has won her several prizes at events around the country; but more importantly, with the help of her husband, she restored the bike back in 2004. Luise was raised by her parents with a motorcycle in front of her and a spanner was placed in her hand as soon as she was able to hold one. She has the credentials.

#### **THE CUB**

The boast was that the Terrier – the 150cc predecessor of the Tiger Cub – was designed by the great Edward Turner in eight weeks. What a shame he didn't spend a bit more time on the design and then the bike may have been much better from the beginning. Mike Estall, researcher and writer of the book *Tiger Cub – The Bible*, informs us that Turner's flawed philosophy was to remove as much of the thickness of the aluminium crankcase as possible; not only to save weight but also to save money at the same time. Unfortunately this led to an 'under-engineered' engine and lots of recalled machines.

The Cub was unveiled at the Earls Court Show in 1953, went on to be produced until its final year in



**3:** This shot shows the true nature of the beast and how much work will be required to get this lot looking like new.

**4:** Paintwork finished - by a very good friend and fellow club member. Chilli red - not a Cub colour but a Triumph one nonetheless. Notice the raised central rib on the mudguards - essential if one wants to be exact.



**5:** Frame now finished; but this toolbox doesn't seem to fit, and another one was needed. The replica bikini panels are well made and look truly authentic - and they'll never rust.



**6:** A truly quality bit of chroming to all parts.



**7:** Front forks have had the new seal treatment. Notice that on Cubs, the electrical cables from horn and switch went neatly through the handlebars.



**8:** The neat little engine with its polished rocker covers is back in its frame. Toolbox and oil tank look resplendent in Chilli red

1968 and came with the same charismatic Triumph look as its larger brothers, the 500 and 650 twins. The Cub came fitted with a streamlined instrument nacelle containing headlight, light switch and speedometer.

Compared to the Terrier, the Cub had a different flywheel assembly, barrel, piston - almost squarer at 63mm x 54mm; a newly styled cylinder head, a larger Amal

332 carburettor and an extra tooth on the gearbox sprocket. The Cub sported wider tyres while the mudguards had a central raised rib. Whereas the Terrier only had a single seat, the Cub was equipped to carry a pillion passenger. With its sportier raised exhaust (a lower one was optional) the engine produced 25% more power and immediately attracted attention and sales. The motorcycling press was impressed

with its ease of starting, top speed, acceleration and general handling.

There were many changes over the years, due to general improvements, styling and colour schemes. The 1957 season saw the introduction of a new frame - goodbye to the old plunger system of rear suspension - and hello to new forks. Previous forks had been filled with grease with no effective damping. Now that there was hydraulic



**9:** With its chunky wheels and tyres, the Cub was as much a man's or in this case a woman's machine. Or indeed with a single seat it made a very successful trials machine.

**10:** While many bike levers were rolled items, Cubs had chromed solid brass lever - not a lot of people know that



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11: Paint work is exemplary, as is the chrome work.

damping, plus a swinging arm rear, there was greater rider comfort. As for the engine – the one-piece crankcase was swapped for a two-piece design giving better engine strength. The timing side main bearing was changed for a ball race, while in 1962, the distinctive bottle shaped ‘distributor’ was taken away and the points went into the right side timing case – with a nice chrome circular cover. The same thing happened to the BSA C15 as it went to the Starfire.

Also over the years, issues of excessive engine noise were addressed, but never fully solved, while silencers slowly increased in size through 1956-8. In 1958, the company replaced the Amal carb with a French Zenith, but Amal were already working on a replacement for the 332, and the Amal 32 appeared on export models in 1961. The 32 looked very much like the Zenith, and was the carb of choice until production ended.

It is interesting to note that Mike Estall makes the erudite statement in his book that Meriden continued to make improvements to the Cub, and yet as soon as the machine reached a more refined and sound state, its production ceased. Such is the way of technology – and the effect of its competitors.

The early round barrel was increased in overall size to an oval shape to improve cooling, and this too was finally replaced by the ‘square’ shape in 1965. In that very same year, production of the Cub went from the Triumph factory to the parent BSA works at Small Heath – a situation that pleased no one, but alterations to the Bantam style frame did not come till later – another controversial move.

Sadly the hybrid BSA/Triumph machine did not receive much affection from the

BSA or Triumph camp, such was/is the devotion of either followers.

**CBG.** The Cub was in a pretty poor state when you bought it in 2004?

**Luise.** It was; so it was a total strip down – in the spare bedroom – that’s the advantage of a smaller bike. All the paintwork had to be done; every bit of chrome work including the exhaust and down pipe was sent off to be replated, while the frame got powder coated and then sprayed. Sounds a bit over the top, but it will last forever – hopefully. The bikini side panels as they are called, were missing and the original metal ones are rare and pricey – if you can find them in a condition that is worth restoring.

Fortunately the writer of the Cub Book, Mike Estall had a handful of glass fibre panels made, and we bought a set from

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12: The Triumph nacelle was a design of its day, but does look rather neat with its switches.



13: The later Amal 622, and now the points are behind that neat round chrome cover.

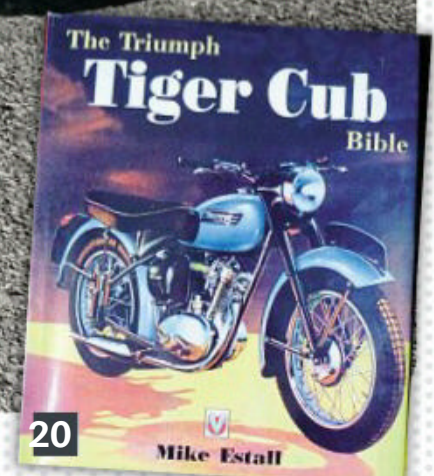
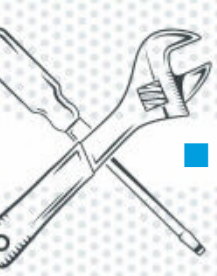
him. The old rusty rims were scrapped, and we had new stainless ones fitted at Central Wheels of Birmingham. The seat had rotted away. It’s a metal frame with foam and a cover. So John, my useful husband, welded new metal around the seat edge, and I fitted a cover and sponge bought from Leighton’s, a seat specialist also in Birmingham – £30 not bad. The engine didn’t need a rebore, just valves and guides; as for the outside of the engine, it simply needed a good clean with a wire brush and then a polish. The barrel was sprayed with Hammerite.

**CBG.** And now you have a reliable bike that takes you all the way to the Isle of Man Manx GP and back, and wins prizes. Can’t be bad.

■ Sadly, both John and Luise passed away in the summer of 2019. They will be missed.



14: . Luise at the Isle of Man Manx GP



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**15:** Traditional rear shock arrangement came after the early plunger frames.

**16:** Good finning on the oval barrel and its head was essential to prevent the engine from overheating; one of the early problems with the Cub.

**17:** After lugging rather heavy bikes around, it was rather a pleasure to pop this bike on its centrestand.

**18:** A good looking bike from every angle - Edward Turner got most things right.

**19:** A well upholstered seat is an essential element of any rebuild.

**20:** If you want the low-down on the Triumph Tiger Cub and its predecessor the Terrier, this is the book. VELOCE PUBLISHING

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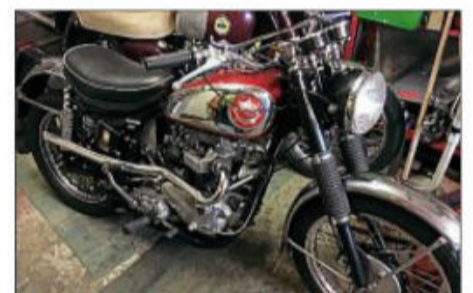
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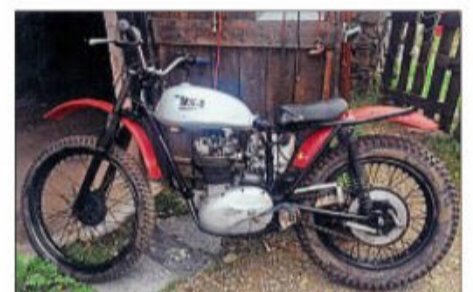
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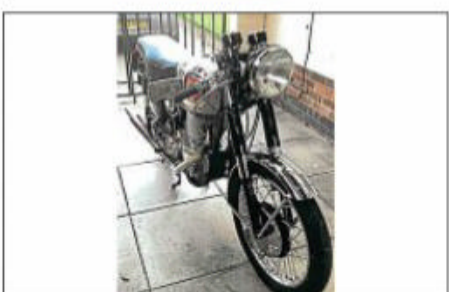
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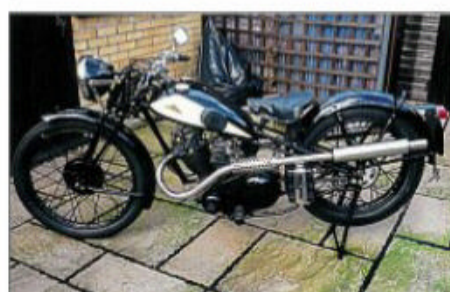
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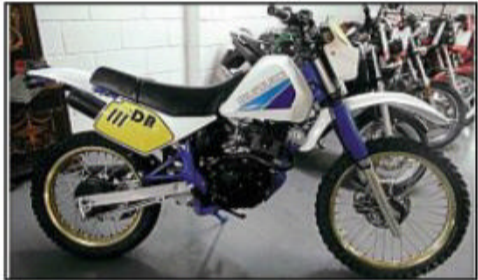
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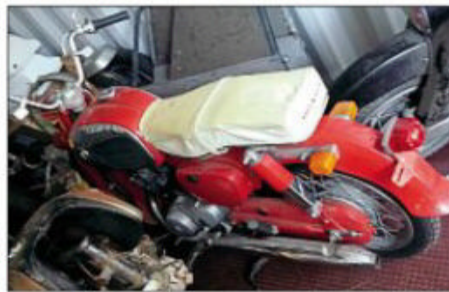
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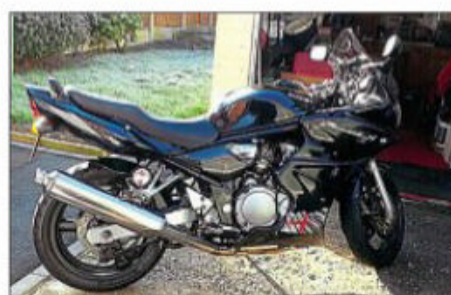
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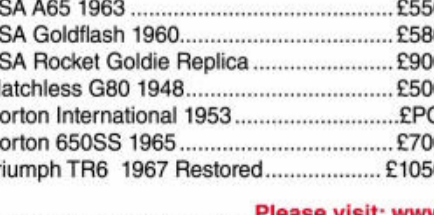







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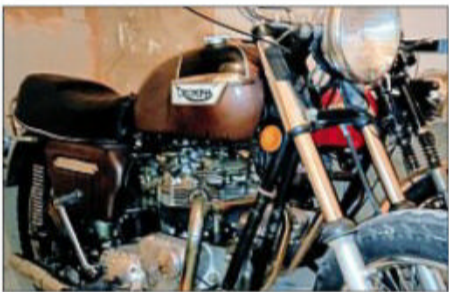
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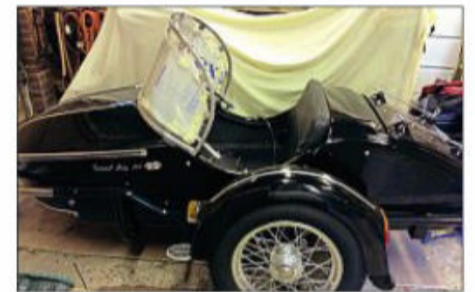
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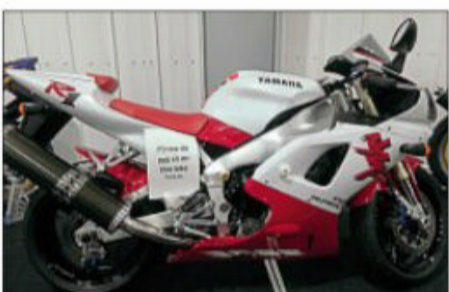
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**CCM** 350cc fun bike, 1989, only 50 of this model made, rebuilt Rotax 2 stroke engine, big end, mains and all gearbox bearings, powder coated frame, new swinging arm and steering head bearings, new mudguards, seat recovered, white power shock, Marzocchi forks, very light affordable CCM not registered but all numbers present, starts and runs well, needs finishing but all hard work done, ideal Vinduro, £1850. Tel. 07876 642107. Lincs.

**DOUGLAS MK4** 1950, in black and silver, good original condition, easy starter, excellent runner, everything works as it should, transferable reg no, new gel battery fitted, £4200 ono. Tel. 01179 041333. Bristol.

**DOUGLAS MK5** 1952, polychromatic green, not run since respray, waffle box, silencer, new exhaust pipes, new wheels, tyres, handlebars, saddle, battery, original transferable reg, £4200 ono. Tel. 01179 041333. Bristol.

**HONDA CB250 K1** 1970, red/white, chrome replated/replaced except silencers/ex pipes, new seat, mudguards solid, 18,127 miles only, tank repainted, new tyres, silencers/ex pipes obtainable, paintwork redone, many parts replaced, £3500. Tel. 01702 294289 anytime. Essex. Email. ronbrown40@tiscali.co.uk

**HONDA DREAM** 50cc, 1997, brand new, never been started, a replica of the 1962 Works Racer, a rare collector's item, part of a private collection, blue chip investment, £6300 ono. Tel. 01522 703687. Lincs.

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**BMW R75-R80** 1972-1996, petrol tank with tool box on top, no dents, £250. Tel. 07572 581870. Staffs.

**BSA A10** B31 etc, Norton Commando clutch conversion complete. Tel. 07811 271702. Caerphilly.

**BSA A65 CRANKCASES** bare two pairs, early and later, £125 pair. Clutch and engine sprocket/primary chain assay, £35. Cam, £20. Tel. 01772 783774. Lancs.

**BSA BANTAM** GPO pannier frame, B175, £99. GPO mirror nos, £99. Telegram boys uniform, £99. B175 626 carb, £55. Various speedos Bantams, phone for details. Tel. 07396 270365. Brighton.

**DUCATI DELLORTO SS1** 27A mm carburettor, a beautiful piece of Italian design used only to complete the Italian Moto Giro event after which it was removed from the bike. It has the specifications embossed in the body and is green tagged, no longer have a need for this carb which cost £1000, part with it for £450. Tel. 07772 949092. Northumberland.

**FAIRING:** Police Avon Dolphin fairing, off 1967 Triumph 650, inc screen, it will need refurbishing, very tough material, screen may be salvaged, £30. Tel. 07768 976086. Lancs.

**GARAGE CLEAROUT:** Honda GX160 engine, oil alert, excellent condition, £90. Honda carbs GX100, GX120, GX160, £8 each, GX, GX200 GX240/270, GX390, £12 each, Bellemix 240V motor, £40. Tel. 01209 831969 after 6pm. Cornwall.

**HARLEY-DAVIDSON** original buddy seat, in reasonable condition, sound base but could do with new foam and cover, unused for many years, suit panhead, shovelhead etc, £125 prefer buyer collects. Tel. 07798 866071. Middx.

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**VELOCETTE LE** frame, forks, wheels, engine, gearbox, loads of parts, No V5, good project, £350. Tel. 07939 502774. Cheshire.

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**ARIEL PIXIE** silencer wanted. Tel. 01942 607368. Lancs.

**AUTOCYCLE** cyclemotor, flying Flea, Brockhouse corgi, British moped or similar, small motorbike wanted for a restoration project, damaged or incomplete ok, will travel. Tel. 07983 832076. Staffs.

**AUTOCYCLE OR MOTORBIKE** project wanted, looking for me and my 10 year old boy, can be anything, running or not, in bits. Tel. 01872 241852. Devon.

**BMW R90S** wanted, ideally to restore or needing work, but anything considered. Tel. John 07836 758534. Durham.

**BROCHURES AND SALES** catalogues wanted for pre-war motorcycles, Norton, Triumph, BSA, Indian, Harley, Vincent, Velocette and any other makes why? Tel. 01457 872788. Lancs.

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**BSA GOLD STAR** parts still wanted, DBD34 crankcases, DB32 exhaust cam, magneto drive pinion, cylinder head, good price paid for good parts and will collect. Tel. 07719 856049. South Yorks.

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**DOES SOMEONE** know how to replace a BSA C11 three speed kick start quadrant, happy to pay for help. Tel. Mike 07976 414531. Nottingham.

**FRANCIS-BARNETT** James, Greeves or similar wanted for a restoration project, will travel. Tel. 07983 832076. Staffs.

**HONDA VT500** 1989, workshop manual wanted please. Tel. 01763 208955. Cambs.

**INFO WANTED** on 1961, AJS 145, 764 CXB, if still out there please make contact. Tel. Pete 07831 141541. Milton Keynes.

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**PANTHER MODEL 100S** c 1960 registration, no. 85 THK, Essex, frame no. 27423, still exists? sold some time ago for restoration, would be interested in possible purchase if considered. Tel. 01284 753974; 07783 277629. Suffolk.

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**WANTED FOR AJS** 1930, R12, 250cc timing chaincover with oil pump or oil pump parts only. Tel. Albert 02088 944704. Middx.

**WANTED NSU QUICKLY** Puch Maxi, Cycle Master, Power Pak, Trojan, autocycles or just parts. Tel. 07790 168224. Warks.

**WANTED SOMEONE** to help or advise on the timing repair, or electronic replacement to my Triumph T110 which was working! Cash available, bike Nottingham central. Tel. 07976 414531.

**WANTED VINTAGE/CLASSIC** leather jackets, jeans, boots and sheepskin lined flying jackets. Pudding basin/open face helmets, goggles and related ephemera. Tel. Neil 07413 935748. Hants.

**Miscellaneous**

**BOOK "A SINGLE PURPOSE"** by Jeff Clews, (Irish tel no has to be changed by using English prefix to first few nos. Tel. 04333 42972. Ireland.

**LEATHER GAUNTLETS** with Kevlar & Thinsulate, size XL, black, brand new and still with tags attached, cost £75, sell for just £39. Tel. Ron 02086 995307. London.

**BOOK:** 1968 of the Triumph Twins (2) Motor Cycles History Development part one, 1955. Brampton Bros Birmingham old book illustrated catalogue established 1852. Single Motorbike trailer wanted cheap, area Bucks, Herts. Tel. 07788 768313.

**EVEROAK GRAND PRIX** open face helmet (white) complete with peak, size medium, very good condition, undamaged, no scratches, never sustained impact, original box, plus Halcyon goggles (fair condition) and good leather gloves, £125. Tel. Ron 02086 995307. London.

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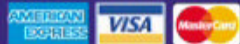
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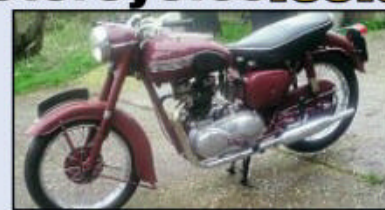
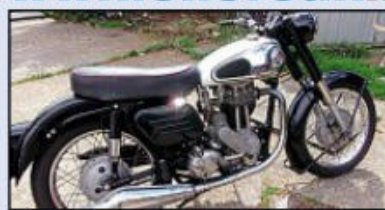
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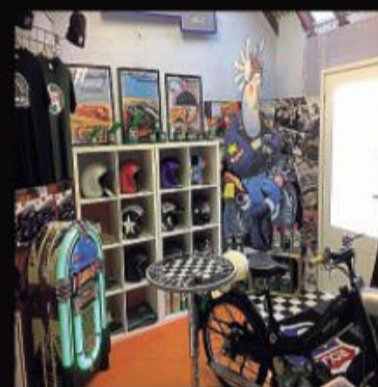
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(12 months 12 issues, inc post and packing) – UK  
£52.80. Export rates are also available – see  
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zero-rated for the purposes of Value Added Tax.

**DISTRIBUTION ||**  
Marketforce UK Ltd, 5 Churchill Place, Canary  
Wharf, London E14 5HU. 0203 787 9001

**USA SUBSCRIPTIONS ||**  
CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE (USPS:002-674) is published  
monthly by Mortons Media Group Ltd, PO Box  
99, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6LZ UK. USA  
subscriptions are \$54 per year from Motorsport  
Publications LLC, 7164 Cty Rd N #441, Bancroft WI  
54921. Periodical Postage is paid at Bancroft, WI  
and additional entries. Postmaster: Send address  
changes to CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE, c/o Motorsport  
Publications LLC, 7164 Cty Rd N #441, Bancroft WI  
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**PRINTED BY ||** William Gibbons & Sons,  
Wolverhampton. ISSN No 0959-7123

**ADVERT DEADLINE ||** January 9, 2020  
**NEXT ISSUE ||** January 29, 2020





## FRANK WESTWORTH

### Famous Last Words

Old Triumphs are real Triumphs, the new ones aren't as good. Discuss...

*“Some madman actually stole the Jawa – the steering of which was locked, leading to an entirely mental image of hapless idiot riding in endlessly pointless circles”*

**I**T TOOK A REMARKABLY LONG TIME, BUT suddenly and at last I find myself using a Triumph twin as daily wheels again. For the first time since 1976/77, in fact. Which is not to say that there hasn't been a steady stream of twin-pot Trumpets passing through my hands over the years, because there has, inevitably, but very few of them – remarkably few, in fact – inspired me to ride them much, to view them as that go-to motorcycle, rain or shine, long or short journey.

Way back in 1976, a summer of truly staggering sunshine, enormous heat and vast drought, a summer which had pundits and politicians alike proclaiming that the end of the world as we know it was nigh, I was riding a Triumph. Climate fright is nothing new, but that was the first encounter I'd enjoyed with both the doomsayers and a T140V Bonneville. Life surely could not improve? I was young, I was riding a bike which was less than a year old, and I was living in North Wales, home to outstanding riding roads, roads to which I still flee most summers, just to take a little delight in the moorland wildness.

To the point. That staggering summer was followed by a seriously cool winter. Snow, ice, salt, sliding and low-speed falling off. The One Bike was that 1975 750 Bonnie, a right-foot shift refugee from the Meriden sit-in which was by far and away the most new and the most expensive machine I'd ever ridden, never mind owned. I loved it. It was very low mileage when I bought it down in Crewkerne, so I ran it in again and learned how to ride it. It replaced a 350 Jawa, and they are remarkably different machines. In very many ways. Some madman actually stole the Jawa – the steering of which was locked, leading to an entirely mental image of hapless idiot riding in endlessly pointless circles – then they plainly realised their mistake and dumped it into a convenient canal. Strange but true.

The Bonneville just decomposed beneath me through the winter. It was relentlessly depressing. Brackets broke, minor stuff fell off – minor stuff like the indicators, which unscrewed so the headlight rotated into zeppelin-spotting mode; not entirely useful at 0200 while crossing the Llandegla moors. The finish just evaporated, despite my atypically heroic attempts to keep it clean. That was

a losing battle, given that it lived under a heavyweight cover in a farmyard, but I washed it with religious zeal and was rewarded by being able to remove the paint from the swinging arm with the cleaning brush. If the paint was more tenacious, it would always come off with a thumbnail. QD paint was never on the options list, I suspect.

The ignition system became gloriously sporadic. Some days it would start instantly, first kick. Others ... it would refuse to start at all. So faced with the threat of the sack from my unusually gainful employment, I acquired a 1959 G9 Matchless, which was 100% reliable and its elderly finish was resistant to winter salt and required no cleaning. Its engine of course was graced with the Trad Brit Protective Coating System, and sprayed oil over itself to keep corrosion at bay. It was a bad day when that excellent feature was dropped.

The Triumph's final straw came when I was riding home from somewhere else. It was night. It always is. Gradually the Bonnie's bulbs blew, until I was reduced to riding at 5mph, cursing with desperate vehemence, my darkness illuminated only by the hallucinatory left-hand front indicator twirling and flashing on its (rusty) stalk. It was a dark day. Night. I transformed the Triumph into a Norton Commando, which never ran properly, and vowed that I'd never again trust any lengthy trips or employment prospects to a Triumph twin. Singles and triples? They've been okay. Mostly.

So what an exceptional delight it is to be able to report that last summer's go-to bike was a Triumph twin. An accidental Triumph twin, in fact, as I didn't even know that the Street Scrambler existed until I stumbled across one resting outside a cafe in town. How fine. I thought it looked great, was the right size, wore almost no chrome at all and was – well – cobby. Never was a word more accurately descriptive. And when I acquired the machine, it was almost exactly the same age as that T140 had been when I got rid of it. Almost 3000 miles later, the Scrambler is still that go-to bike. I always want to ride it. Nothing breaks or falls off. It's easy on mud and greasy roads. Triumph twins? They're great.

Moral? Never say never again. They're famous last words indeed... **CBG**

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

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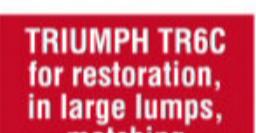
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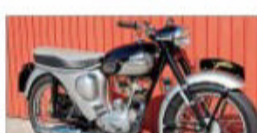
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