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Yamaha YM1

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Happy New Year everyone!

Happy new year from all at *Classic Bike Guide*, we hope you all had far too much food, cake, drink and fun! Christmas time means many things to us all; personally it's a reset, a time to reflect and even relax. Hope you managed that too. But the nights are now drawing out (well, ish…) and it's surprisingly mild for the time of year – so let's go!

Neville, Maria and I decided to go and get dirty one sunny day in between Christmas and New Year, joining friends John and Tom for a bit of messy green-lane action. John had his Velocette MAC, Tom his Rickman-framed T140 that Neville built, Tom's friends borrowed his Honda XL and I tried to keep up on my Triumph Scrambler. Meanwhile Nev and Maria went off to play in the Series One Land Rover, chop wood and – er – drive through the hedge…

Tom blasted everywhere on his Rickman, the engine sounding fantastic through the Norfolk countryside. John's Velo was somewhat more sedate, but the trials tyres gave a sure footing and it got wherever John wanted it to. Pierre and his lovely lady were having a lot of fun on the Honda XL – a most capable 1980s bike – while my modern Triumph (all my bikes are off the road for a variety of boring and mundane reasons) struggled to get any grip with the standard tyres, eventually placing me unceremoniously into the hedge. And mud.. Still a great day was had by all.

And just before Christmas the Norwich Vikings held their trial at Cadders Hill, Lyng, just down the road, so we took boy on his electric Oset bike. We entered, but he's a little like his father and didn't quite get it; so we spent the time getting used to the hillside and roots. Every day is a school day, and I was very proud.

A new year brings new ideas and new impetus; so finishing the Norton is up there, as is getting the CZ and Maria's Benelli running. Oli's feature on Japanese 125s has got me thinking – the local weekly bike meets are less than 15 miles away and mainly on B roads and back roads (that's all we have in Norfolk…) so do we need 500cc bikes? 125s are cheap to run, don't take up much space and every ride will have you holding that throttle to the stop – how often can you say that about a big bike? We'll see if they get finished first!

We also want to go to some different events, so bring us your suggestions. Festival of 1000 bikes was great, the Bristol show doesn't disappoint, and I'd like to take some of the older bikes on some runs. Then there are the various club meets, and I fancy some old-bike green-laning in different areas. Your advice is, as always, most appreciated!

The list of old bike-friendly bike shops is slowly building, but we still need more before we can fill a page. Strangely, the South West seems well catered for, while the North West doesn't. As always, send your recommendations in to **editor@classicbikeguide.com.**

Also, we'd love to hear about your bikes, your clubs or what you like to get up to with your old machines. If you think other readers would be interested, let us know. Otherwise, let's hope we get a great riding year and we'll keep bringing you some great bikes and interesting stories.

Be good!



Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com

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Lightweight AMCs, heavyweight riders

Taken from original glass plate negatives, we see the new for 1958 AMC 250cc singles, the Matchless G2 and AJS Model 14. In the main photograph, we see the two models with Harold and June Lines, both successful grasstrack and scrambles riders as well as both car and motorcycle dealers in the Horsham area, too.

The AMC quarter-litre bikes looked good, with modern styling hiding their traditional pre-unit layout well and initial reports were favourable. *Motor Cycling* was one of the first to test the G2 and could get 72mph from the little machine, while a year or so later there came an off-road version, with a CSR model following in 1962. Parts were from the AMC cupboard; for example the front end was Francis-Barnett, and some said a little wobbly for it. Wheels were also 17in, so tyre choices were less and may have contributed to the feeling some got.

But, overall, the 250 single, whether wearing an AJS or Matchless badge, never got the world's interest to make it a huge success. The 350cc variants faired better, but this can work in our favour now, as prices for these models are still realistic, spares are available and the club is a great source of information. But buy as best as you can, as there were small changes throughout the years which are often not catalogued.

Lightweights often sit in the shadow of the 500s and 650s. But they can be a lot of fun, cost less and still provide a smile when riding. CBG



Motor Cycling test the Matchless G2 and manage 72mph.

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June Lines, husband Harold and the new AMC 250s.

LOYALTY REPAID
my John Player Norton

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY STUART URQUHART

Mac's John Player Norton has been with him for many years, starting life with him in boxes, bought for him by his late wife and it followed him around his travels. And now Mac has his Norton as he wants it.



PONDERING OVER THE PICTURES OF this fabulous John Player Norton, you might correctly label it as a 'replica of a replica'. But not so obvious is that this special and iconic Seventies racer has been created for everyday use by its proud owner.

Subtle clues to this special's exclusivity are everywhere – chic and timeless classic car mirrors, a bespoke and memorising cockpit that bristles with well-appointed instruments, plus a set of eye-catching and mischievous transfers – all of which

add charisma to this race replica's everyday practicality.

Look deeper and you might spot the single 32mm Amal concentric, or the cheese-grater air filter and insane 'twittering' peashooters. Even the single Norvil disc brake and Lucas period indicators could hardly be mistaken for track-focused kit.

Not honed for track life then, this 1973 JPN 750RR (get it?) was actually conceived as a unique and 'unapproachable' road machine; one that hides its road-burning intentions behind its red, white and dark blue tobacco-inspired fairing.

HI RIDER, REPLICA OR HOVERCRAFT?

But owner Mac's JPN Replica began life in quite a different guise. It was actually an 850 Hi Rider and belonged to his RAF colleague Martin when both lads were serving at RAF Kinloss. It was Martin who first embarked on the John Player transformation in the mid-Seventies when his Hi Rider began to develop engine problems. In a generous swap for the worn-out 850, Martin's benevolent father exchanged it for a rebuilt 750 engine – one, believe it or not, that was originally earmarked for a pet hovercraft project in Orkney (plenty of inland water!).

Martin was constantly fettling and improving his JPN project, but being a restless chap, he was always distracted by other projects and in constant need of project funds. So not long after he had the JPN running, he then sold it to another RAF colleague, only to buy it back again years later when the new owner found it too difficult to maintain. However, it was returned to Martin stripped and stored in several boxes, and 'in a bit of a state' according to Mac.

In a too familiar story, Martin never got around to sorting and rebuilding the boxed JPN and Mac offered to take it off his hands. Martin relented and the JPN then followed Mac around his various postings in the UK and Germany, still in boxes! This went on for countless years before Mac was stationed at RAF Coningsby in 1985. When not rebuilding engines for the RB199 Tornado F3, or distracted by a growing family, Mac's spare time was spent working on his Norton. Mac takes up the story...

"When not rebuilding engines for the RB199 Tornado F3, or distracted by a growing family, Mac's spare time was spent working on his Norton."

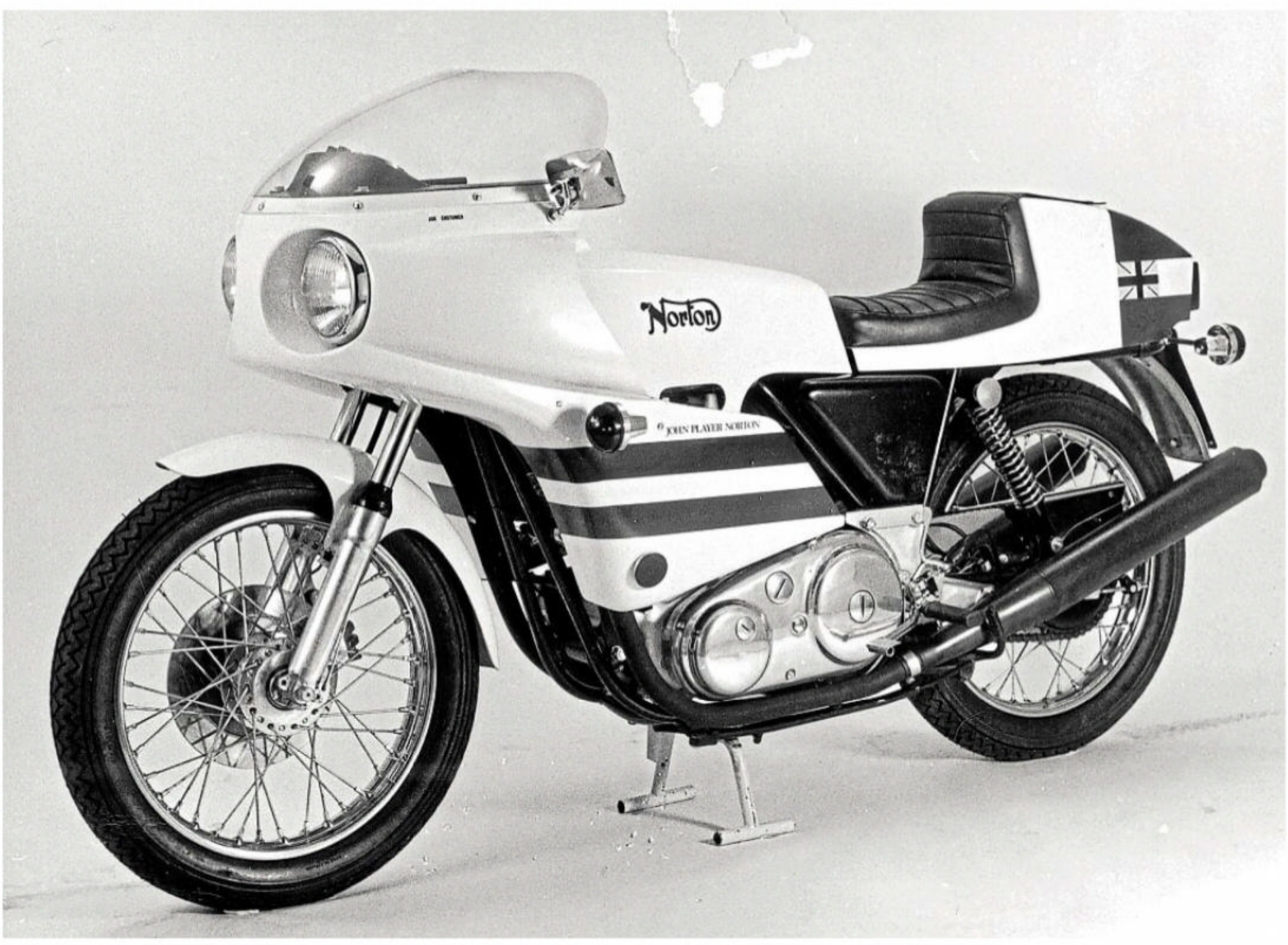
RATTLE TIN RACER

"I was blown away by the John Player Norton racers when they dominated racing in the Seventies, and especially by the famous win by Peter Williams at the 1973 IoM Formula 750TT. Every Seventies racing fan admired the winning partnership of Norton and cigarette brand elite John Player," said an enthusiastic Mac.

"I liked Martin's JPN replica from the day I saw it. I loved the styling, the noise, and its aggressive and unmistakable association to Seventies road racing. Like the cartoon character of the era – Ogri, the JPN had personality in spades – it looked the dog's bollocks! The Campbell 2/1 megaphone exhaust that Martin had fitted was incredibly loud; you could hear his Norton long before it came into sight.

"Martin's original rattle tin paint scheme was a bit wanting – especially his DIY Letraset graphics protected by 'yellowing' self-adhesive film.

"The Dunlop chrome wheels were starting to rust and the seat and exhausts were tatty if viewed up close, but I still wanted it – warts and all! So the Norton was bought for me as a first wedding anniversary present by my late wife.



"Subsequently, I then sold my Suzuki GS1000 for the funds to rebuild it and sort its many glaring faults. The 750 engine was becoming difficult to start and had developed a lumpy tick-over, so I ditched the twin carbs and replaced them with a 2/1 manifold and a single Amal. I retained and sorted the Campbell 2/1 system, but it was becoming embarrassingly loud.

"Unfortunately, while on a long run to visit an RAF pal in Leicester, the oil feed pipe parted company with the crankcase junction box, emptied the oil tank, and the engine, for want of a better word – imploded! The broken Norton was then abandoned in a friend's garage, and I was posted to RAF Laarbruch in Germany for a five year stint," sighed Mac.

RETURN TO THE UK

"While I was working abroad, I read up everything I possibly could about Norton Commandos. I compiled a usual suspects list about dodgy alternators, fidgety isolastics, premature primary wear, wet sumping/oil leaks, heavy clutches and poor disc brakes – plus sketched additions of other 'wants and desirables' all rounded off with a classy new paint job for my JPN."

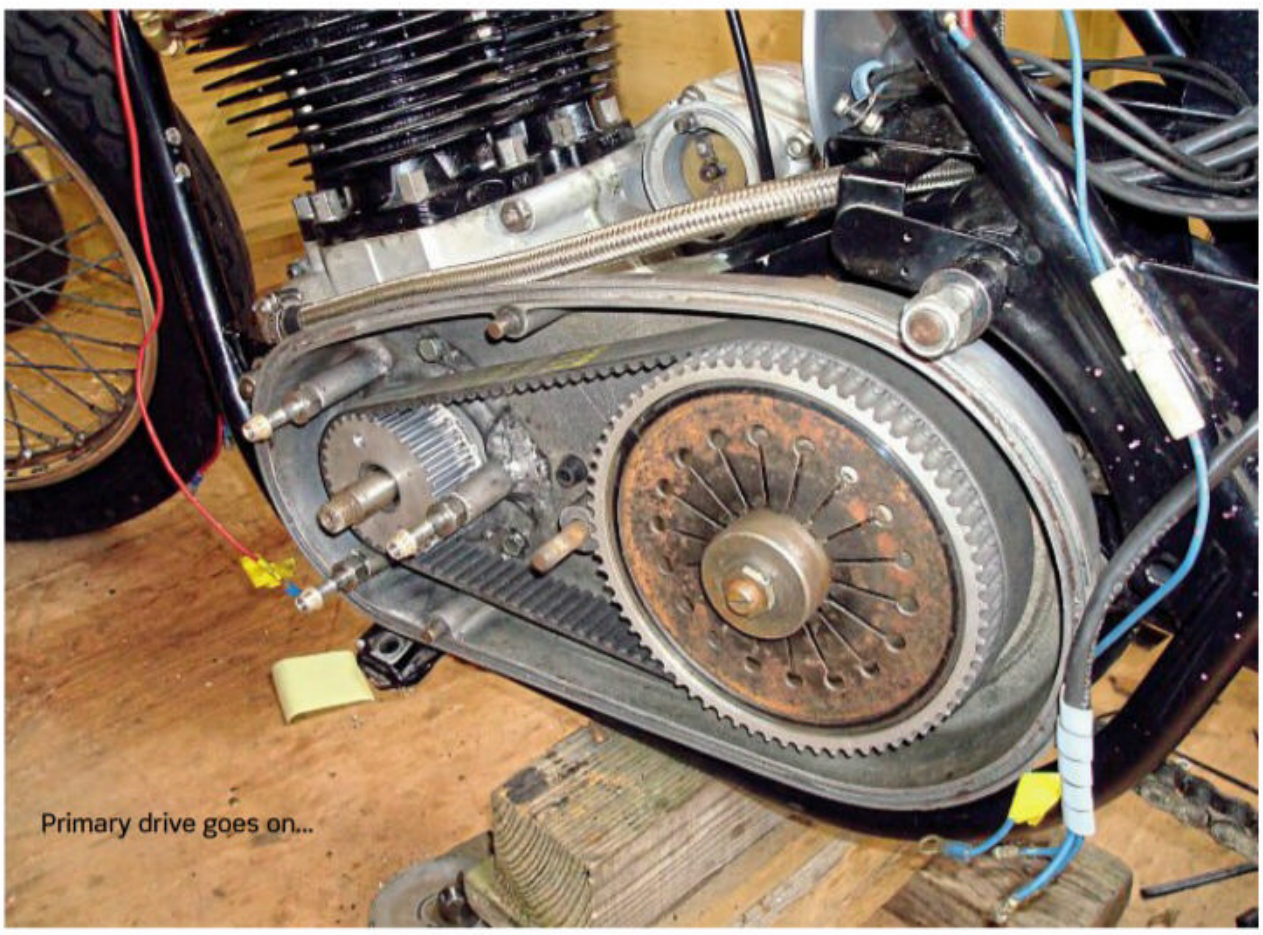
In the mid-Nineties Mac took up a post working on 'The Trembler Squadron' Tornado F3's at RAF Leuchars. Then, in 2001, a lucrative job offer in Equatorial Guinea saw Mac leave the RAF to work monthly shifts, one month on, one off. Offshore shift work afforded Mac plenty of time and funds to begin rebuilding his JPN. But he first had to build a shed to go around his bike!

"Once I had a work shed I began to rebuild the blown engine. I discovered the crankpin was already -0.80 undersize, and the crankshaft appeared to be ready to let go. An RAF friend found a couple of new cranks at various autojumbles. I sent the best crankshaft, including rods, new shells, pistons and new main bearings, to be balanced by specialists Bassett-Down Engineering in Sussex. At the same time the cylinder head was sent to Fair Spares (pre-Norvil days) to have the exhaust threads expertly repaired. As a precaution I also upgraded the gearbox layshaft bearing and fitted new oil seals to the box.

"On a visit to Fair Spares I bought a primary belt drive upgrade, plus a set of twin gearbox adjusters to correctly align the gearbox. I also bought a pair of header pipes and iconic peashooter silencers, because Les Emery advised against fitting the much quieter and characterless annular discharge exhaust system common to my model. It was good advice, as I just adore the peashooter's rasping and raucous exhaust note!"

Other parts such as the frame, subframe, swinging arm and yokes were powder-coated locally by IPF Coatings of Glenrothes. Mac used another local specialist, Barrie Brown of Windygates, to restore and rebuild the wheels using stainless rims and spokes; Barrie also vapour-blasted the original hubs.

Mac then fitted new TT100 Dunlop 4.10's back and front, with no adverse effect to the handling (as we will find out later). The swinging arm was modified by using a Mk3 Commando stainless spindle



"Unfortunately, while on a long run to visit an RAF pal in Leicester, the oil feed pipe parted company with the crankcase junction box, emptied the oil tank, and the engine, for want of a better word – imploded!"







with new bearings and Kegler clamps.

As the original harness was ‘a mess of tape, grime and loose wires’ Mac tackled rewiring the Norton by himself using mono coloured wires and plastic ID labels, a technique learned while working with offshore ROV’s (incidentally, Mac is colour blind – you should see his socks!). All the electrical switches and headlights are operated through relays, and the ignition switch was moved from behind the left side panel to the pilot cockpit. The old points were binned and replaced with a Boyer electronic ignition system supplied by RGM.

Mac fitted new bushes and seals before rebuilding the forks using Landsdowne progressive springs. RGM rear Koni replica shocks were added. A used front brake lever and re-sleeved master cylinder was also fitted in order to fit seamlessly with the period Lucas switchgear. Mac fitted Goodrich stainless hoses and softer compound RGM brake pads for improved braking. A new set of vernier isolastic mountings joined the upgrades.

The gorgeous bullet wing mirrors were an inspired choice over the standard rectangular Norton mirrors and these were sourced from a classic car heritage website and became a labour of love to fit correctly. Mac explained that using the supplied mirror fixings meant he could only see his elbows in the mirrors! So he fabricated a set of bespoke spacers in different profiles until he managed (by trial and error) to achieve an unobstructed rear view.

The cockpit interior received the same attention to detail, with the additions of a classic car voltmeter and analogue clock that sit well in front of the standard ‘green globe’ instruments. LED headlights and tail-light bulbs are also used. Beefed-up and anti-vibration fairing brackets were made from the box-section of a scrap Shackleton bomber’s ladder – one of the benefits of working for the RAF!

Once the fading and peeling stickers were removed from the fairing, tank and side panels, Mac sent them to Cupar Bike Paints for painting. The firm sourced the original JPN font that was used on



Peter Williams taking his JPN to victory in the 1973 F750 TT race

the lower fairing sections and laser cut new petrol tank transfers. The paintwork was delayed for several months when Mac decided to pay homage to his comic hero and commissioned a friend and artist to design a set of bespoke 'Ogri' transfers. Once approved, these were digitally printed and sealed beneath the hump's final lacquer coat – a truly inspired and unique signature.

TEETHING PROBLEMS

Mac's rebuild went smoothly and by April 2012 the JPN was on the road again. "Setting up the isolastics took considerable time and many runs before I figured out the best set-up. Some niggling electrical and fuelling problems surfaced during these early shake-downs, with periodic popping and backfiring through the exhausts. An erratic tick-over was another problem, although the backfiring was soon sorted by fitting a modern RGM twin output coil. Mac explains: "Ultrasonic cleaning failed to eradicate the lumpy tick-over, so I began experimenting with the carb's jetting and fuel mixture. I also had the carb modified by removing the welsh plug, tapping the plug hole and fitting a cut-down airscrew to allow for easier cleaning of the pilot jet. I then upped the throttle valve cut-away from a size 3 to a 3.5 slide and, as a result, she now starts easily and ticks over beautifully.

"Unfortunately, the engine blew a crankshaft oilseal, which was a result of heavy wet-sumping – even a careful regrind of the oil pump housing and cogs (as recommended by Norton aficionados) failed to stem the tide. Instead I made up my own Ogri-style anti-sumping valve (clamp) and it works a treat!" laughed Mac.

The clock mounting panel was found to be a poor fit and Mac ended up fabricating his own from aluminium plate. This onerous task took three weeks to cut, file and shape by hand, but Mac says he's chuffed with its snug fit and the polished factory finish he managed to achieve.

PERFORMANCE & RIDE

"My biggest concern about having never owned a Norton Commando was setting up the isolastics," said Mac. "I eventually set them tighter than recommended by the Norton manual, but as a result she handles and corners extremely well, although I don't like to push her hard! Generally, I rarely take the engine above 4000rpm, which equates to about 70mph.



"I also had the carb modified by removing the welsh plug, tapping the plug hole and fitting a cut-down airscrew to allow for easier cleaning of the pilot jet. I then upped the throttle valve cut-away from a size 3 to a 3.5 slide and, as a result, she now starts easily and ticks over beautifully."



"The engine is incredibly smooth after 2500rpm and I would definitely boast that this faired Commando is a joy to ride. I once took the Norton up to the ton, but thereafter the annoying buzz through the clip-ons had me limiting the top speed to 80mph, and no more.

"Then I hit on the idea of blanking off the clip-ons and filling them with lead shot to alter the resonating frequency of the bars – it worked a treat! On the odd occasion I open her up, the bars now remain calm – especially so with the new foam grips I've recently added.

"On faster roads the JPN fairing can be affected by strong cross winds, but most of the time she is extremely stable and offers superb protection from the elements.

"The ride is fairly comfy considering she's a race replica, but the fairing catches my knee over bumps and potholes, to the extent that I now wear knee pads to insulate my aging bones!

"One of the only downsides is the two-gallon roadster tank lurking beneath the fairing. Fuel stops are much too regular for my taste and I'd like to fit a bigger tank. The brakes are pretty good in the dry, otherwise the lever needs a good pull! Rear braking is fine but requires a generous 'foot lift' to reach the pedal due to the bespoke rearsets. I've also reversed the gear change action using a bespoke bracket to suit my befuddled GS Suzuki brain!

"I rebuilt this special exclusively for road use, and although it took me more than a decade to realise my dream road-burner, I'm so thrilled with the end result. The JPN is great for my style of riding but it does however involve the usual parking problem of being swamped by admirers – I seem to remember Ogri had the same problem! Anyway, the JPN was my dear wife's legacy to me and I will never part with it."

NORTON MONOCOQUE: A WINNING DESIGN

Thanks to a lucrative sponsorship deal with the John Player Tobacco Company in 1972, Norton was able to develop its impressive racing programme. With the help of in-house engineer and talented racer Peter Williams, Norton developed an inspired monocoque racer powered by a factory-tuned 750 Commando engine that was capable of 158mph. Although the first 1972 team bikes were sky blue and white, John Player's popular No.10 branded cigarettes influenced the famous red and black liveried racers that were introduced the following year.

Only three JPN racers were built for a single season (plus a prototype). Williams is credited in developing the advanced monocoque frame – a first in racing. In both Peter Williams' and Mick Grant's hands it proved highly competitive, scoring a string of podium finishes throughout the UK, and peaked with a famous victory at the 1973 IoM Formula 750TT by Peter Williams.

Unfortunately, John Player withdrew



its support in 1974, only weeks after Williams was forced to retire from Norton as a result of his devastating crash at Oulton Park.

History now records that the monocoque frame turned an obsolete British parallel twin into a winner.

With its lightweight and incredibly stiff structure, low centre of gravity and fitted with an impressive low drag fairing, the Norton monocoque racers were ahead of their time.

The monocoque frame may have only lasted for one racing season, but its proven success meant that the Williams monocoque would go on to influence the future of race-frame design.

In the early Nineties John Player returned briefly to motorcycle racing when they sponsored the famous Norton Rotary racers. CBG







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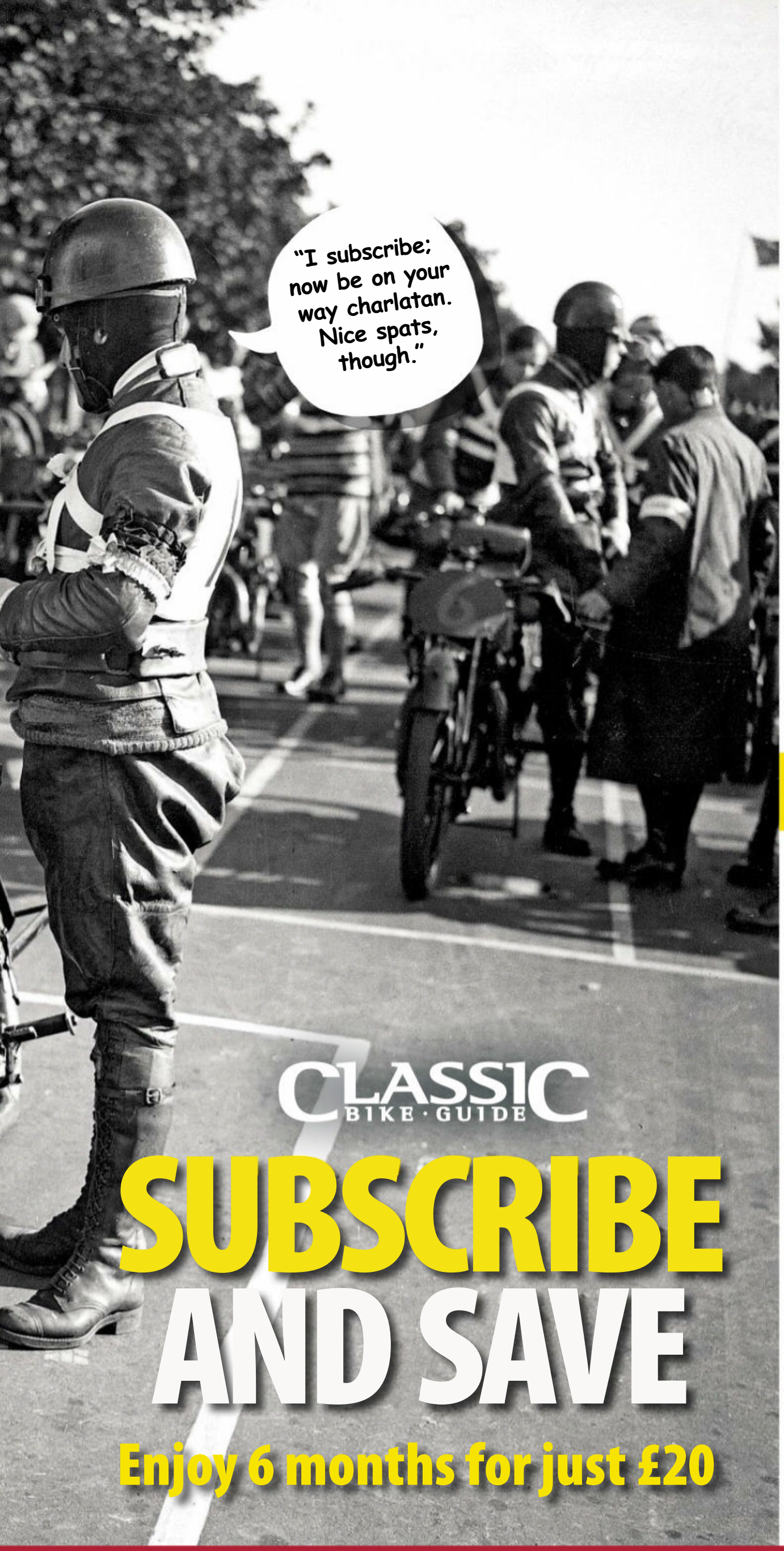
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NEW PRE-UNIT ENGINES

WILTSHIRE-BASED LAMB ENGINEERING has released details of a brand-new Triumph twin-based engine.

The pre-unit engine will feature a top end machined from aluminium billet on aftermarket crankcases. The new engines have been fitted with a 270-degree crank with new camshafts all designed by Larry from Lamb Engineering.

"It started when a customer came in with an old 1950s Triumph iron engine. I thought it was a really nice-looking engine, but it's hard to find good cranks, so I made my own with cams to match. I'm planning on mating it to a modern five-speed box from an Enfield," said Larry.

Most of the engine will work not only with new components from Lamb Engineering, but also with standard Triumph parts.

Two engines from the first batch have already been sold and one will be built into a custom special to go on display at a show in Cologne. Visit www.lamb-engineering.com to see examples of their high precision work.



NO CHANGE TO IMPORT/EXPORT RULES POST-BREXIT

ANYONE CONSIDERING THE import or export of a classic motorcycle from or to an EU country will not immediately face any new rules after the UK leaves the EU on January 31. There will also be no changes to rules affecting the import or export of motorcycle parts from EU countries until Brexit negotiations come to an end.

HMRC says the existing rules will remain in place during negotiations to secure a new trade deal with the EU. A HMRC spokesperson said: "Once we leave the EU formally on January 31, 2020, we enter an implementation period during which EU customs and VAT rules and regulations continue to apply. The NOVA service, which enables businesses and individuals to notify HMRC about vehicles brought into the UK from abroad, should be used as normal during the implementation period."



COLIN SEELEY

RACING LEGEND AND GENIUS FRAME DESIGNER

BRITISH MOTORCYCLE RACING legend Colin Seeley has died at the age of 84.

Starting out as an apprentice mechanic at 14, he started his own business at 18 and was an AJS dealer at 20. He then began racing, coming sixth in the TT in 1961 on a Matchless G50 powered outfit. As a sidecar racer, Colin, together with his passenger and shop mechanic Wally Rawlings, won many British and world championship races, including the 1964 Dutch TT, on outfits powered by Matchless G50 and BMW engines. Seeley was one of the first riders to eschew the use of a black leather racing suit, deciding instead to wear red; a move which helped raise his profile on the tracks as he was easy to spot in a pack.

In 1963 Associated Motor Cycles closed their racing department in a move that threatened the future of the G50 racing engine. This was still competitive in clubman racing, despite being considered obsolete by many. Seeley bought the race shop stock and tooling for G50, AJS 7R and Norton racers in 1966. He fitted a G50 engine into a frame of his own design and the Seeley G50 came into being.

Despite competition from machines with more modern powerplants, Dave Croxford won the British 500 Championship on a Seeley G50 in 1968 and 1969. The Seeley frame had a duplex cradle in the Mk.1 and Mk.2 versions, before the down-tubes were abandoned with the Mk.3, a spine frame in which the headstock and swinging arm pivot of which were linked by tubes running diagonally above the engine. The Mk.4 introduced towards the end of 1970 featured a revised tubing layout and continued in production until 1973. There was even a limited number of hand-built G50-engined road bikes, the Seeley Condor. The Seeley Mk.2 frame is still manufactured by Molnar in Preston.

The Seeley frame design was also adopted by racers to create the Yamsel, holding a Yamaha 350 engine and creating a machine that trounced the opposition in the late 18960s and early 70s.

Honda commissioned him to create the Phil Read Replica Honda CB750 in 1977 using his own frame design – 150 were made until Read fell out with Honda. Undeterred, Colin Seeley then made 300 Seeley Honda fours with white bodywork and nickel-plated frames and for a brief period you could source one from official Honda dealerships.

He also worked with the Brabham F1 team for Bernie Ecclestone who he had first met when they both owned motorcycle shops in Bexleyheath in the 1950s.

In the late 1970s, Colin became deeply involved in charity work as a result of his first wife, Joan, dying from cancer. He established The Joan Seeley Pain Relief Memorial Trust and ultimately, together with his second wife Eva, ran it raising considerable amounts towards buying hospital equipment.

Colin Seeley died on January 7, 2020.







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YOUR OLD GEAR COULD HELP THE NMM

THE NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM wants your old clobber! The museum has installed a new 'dressing up' corner in the foyer, where young and not-so-young visitors can try out gear from yesteryear. Any clothing, especially period items, would be greatly appreciated. The museum is particularly keen on acquiring donations of suitable motorcycle jackets, helmets, boots and gloves in all sizes. If readers can help, please contact sarah@thenmm.co.uk.



CLASSIC CLUB BACKS KIDS CENTRE

THE MARTLET RUN, a classic motorcycle charity event for all two and three-wheeled vehicles, is being held this year on Sunday, April 19.

The event is being organised by the Sussex British Motorcycle Owners' Club and the proceeds will go to Kamelia Kids Children Centre in Worthing, a local registered children's charity for children both able-bodied and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The start and finish this year will be from the SBMOC club home base at Clymping Village Hall, which is one mile west of Littlehampton on the A259. Registration opens at 9am and the first bike will leave at 10am. Hot food, tea or coffee will be available at the start and finish, free for those who enter before the day of the event. Riders follow an unmarked route but with an accompanying route card and map for approximately 65 miles, but there is also a shorter route available of 35 miles.

At the finish there will be concours judging 1.30-2.30pm with awards presented immediately after the judging. To book your place on the run visit sbmoc.vpweb.co.uk/the-martlet-run



HAVE A ROARING 40TH AT BRISTOL

THE 40TH CAROLE NASH Bristol Classic MotorCycle Show is back this month, and to mark this special milestone organisers are turning the clocks back to the 1970s and 80s with a period birthday celebration.

Held over the weekend of February 1/2, at The Royal Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet, visitors get first view of many builders' winter restorations and the chance to scour the vast autojumble for that all-important part.

Watch the hammer fall in the Charterhouse auction on items such as a BSA Gold Star, a rare Ariel HS single and a late pre-unit Triumph Thunderbird which has a guide price of around £5-6000. Most importantly you can bathe in the sense of occasion generated by motorcycle club members and private entrants proudly displaying their classic steeds.

Visitors, traders and club members alike are encouraged to show off their best 1970s and 80s fashion sense with cash prizes available for the best outfits. There is a £100 per day prize for the best-dressed visitor in period clobber, and a £1000 cash prize for the best club stand.

Event organiser Nick Mowbray said: "Celebrating 40 years is a huge achievement for any show and we're looking forward to celebrating with all of the visitors, traders and club members alike. I can't wait to see the bikes that are on display this year as we have some truly remarkable machines on show for the public to enjoy."

Visit bristolclassicbikeshow.com

TAKE YOUR CLASSIC ON A TROPHY-WINNING ROAD TRIP

DO YOU WANT to challenge your classic this summer? The National Road Rally on July 4/5 is a navigational scatter rally organised in conjunction with the ACU and the BMF.

The event is not a race and each rider follows their own route, visiting different controls around the country, the only time stipulation is that riders complete their route in the allotted time.

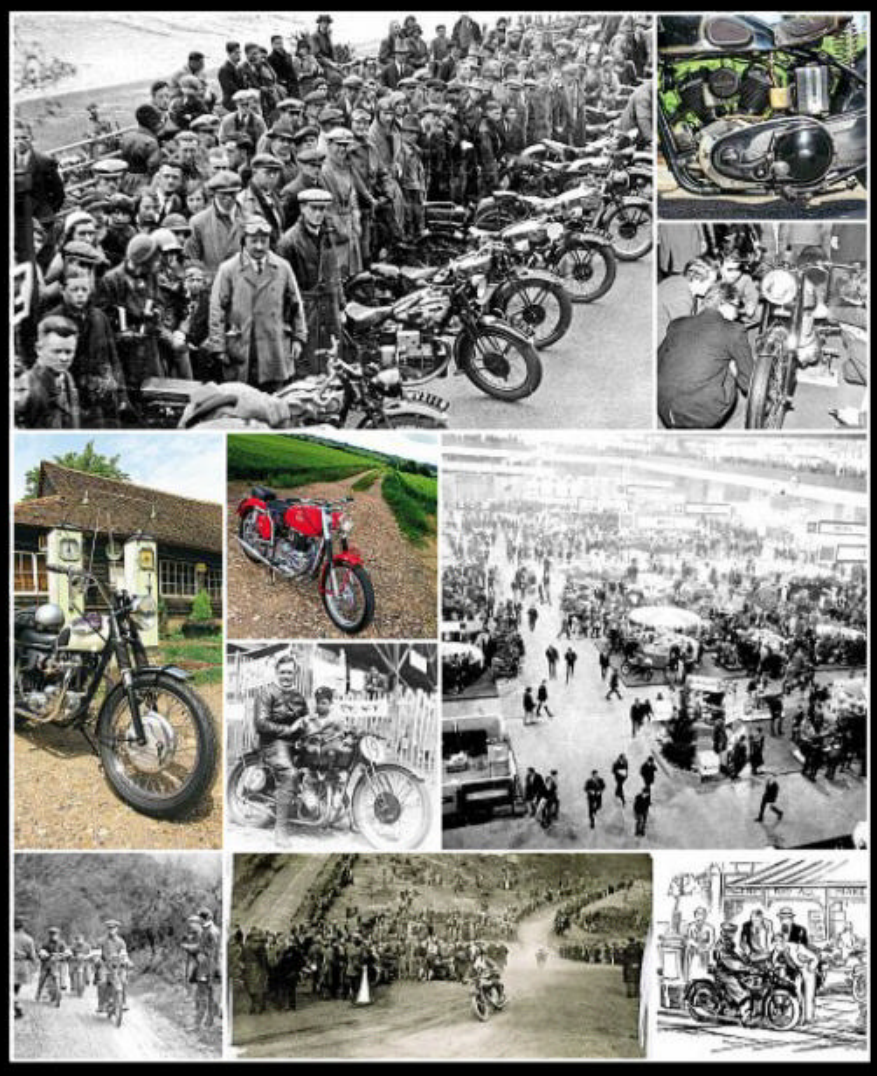
The number of controls each rider visits will depend on the award that they are competing for and the location of the controls will be issued to entrants two weeks before the event. Anybody with a full motorcycle licence can enter the National Road Rally, you don't need a competition licence or any previous competition experience to compete.



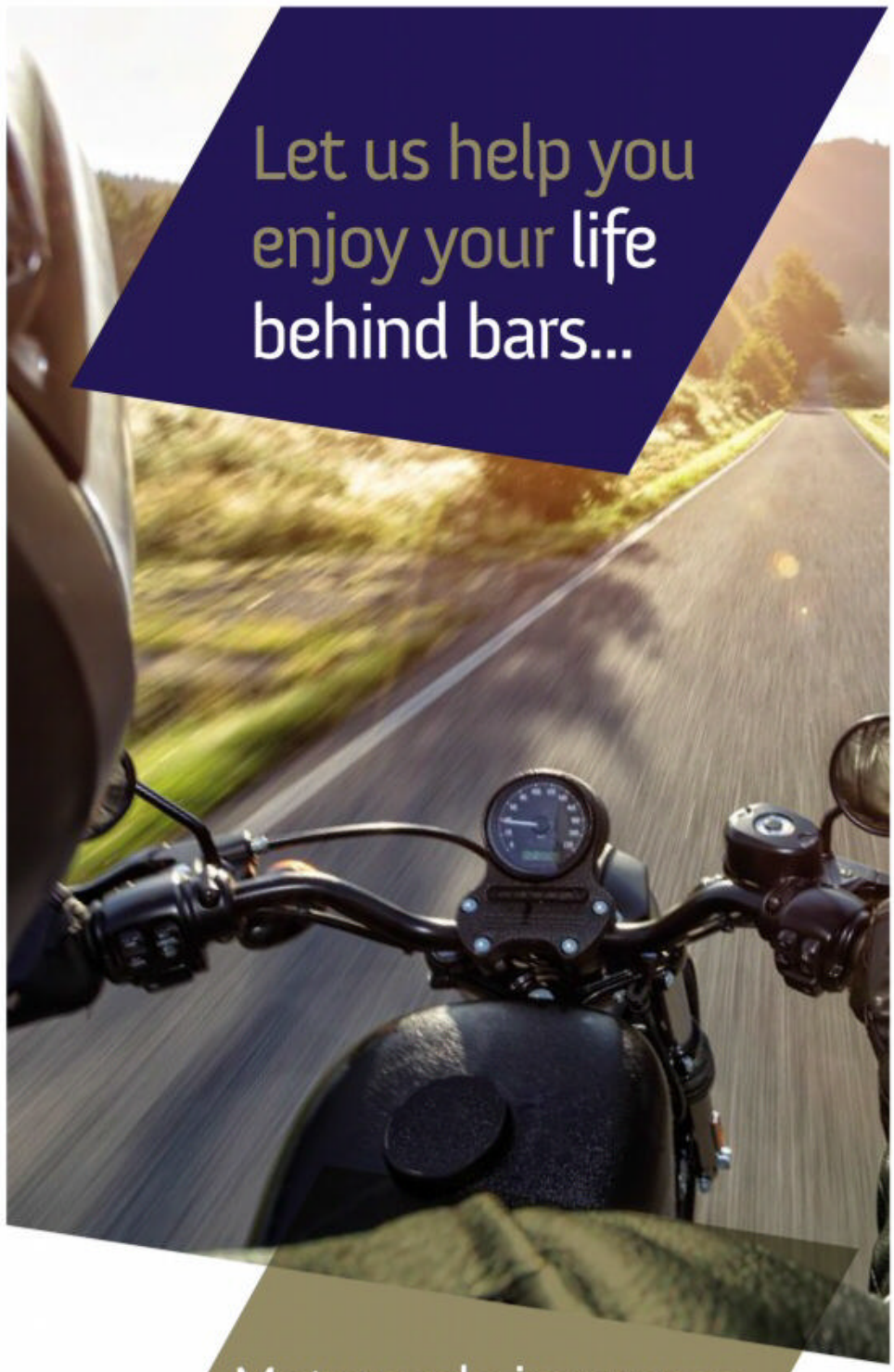
You can either enter online on the National Road Rally website or by post. Entry fees are between £30-35. For further details visit www.nationalroadrally.co.uk

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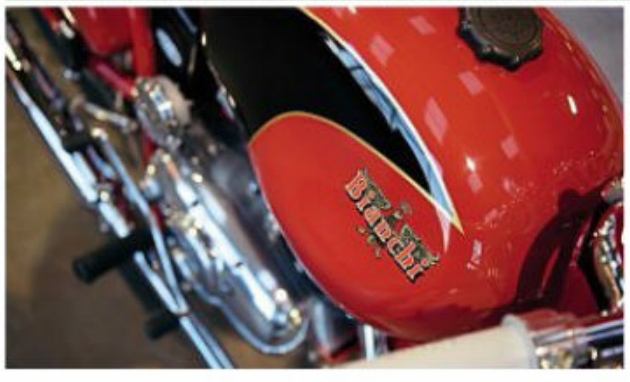
kicks the New Year off at Newark!

IT'S ALWAYS GREAT TO SEE BIG CROWDS AT the season-opening Carole Nash Classic Bike Guide Winter Classic Show at Newark. It's got a down-to-earth feel and has become a bit of a 'date' to have bike and scooter projects finished. And we got away with the weather again, Saturday being dry but windy and Sunday sunny and mild. The season opener spread out over the large halls, with more autojumble stands both inside and out than we remember for many years.

The Newark show might not have the presence of Stafford or Bristol, but it's still possible to find a surprise or two among the Gold Stars and glitter – bikes you wouldn't normally see, clubs you wouldn't normally meet and a glimpse into the burgeoning Scooter sub-culture – as well as a great soundtrack of Northern Soul and a background crackle of two-strokes being thrashed to the redline give Newark its own special feel.

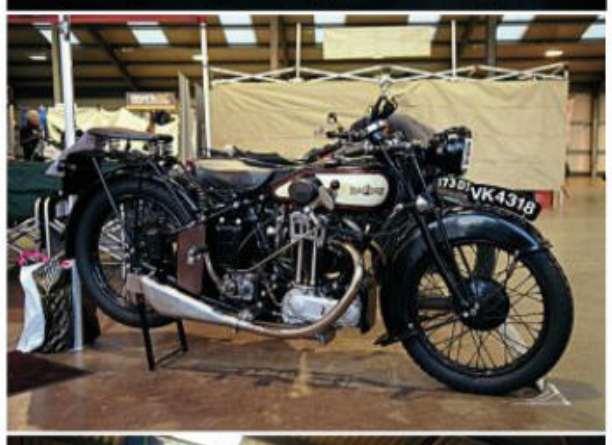
Special guest, World Superbike and MotoGP star, Pierfrancesco Chili, joined Steve Plater for some really interesting stories about the golden years of WSB, GP and fighting with Foggy! For a tenner, it's always a good show to kick the year off and the bikes, the scooters and the clubs didn't let us down.

















This remarkable creation is the work of John Davies. It's a Sunbeam S7, with a BSA A10 engine in it. However, as the S7 is an inline twin with a shaft drive, and the A10, erm, isn't, he turned the A10 engine sideways, and linked it to the Sunbeam drive arrangement, replacing the magneto with the alternator from a Japanese Kubota Lawn-Mower and putting a plate behind the BSA timing cover to allow the use of the Sunbeam's rubber engine mounts.

Robby Stone put a Honda 600 V-twin engine into the frame from a BSA Gold Flash. It's one of the best specials, because at first glance you don't realise what's special about it. It's the double-take that makes you go "what the...?" The radiator, tucked tightly in behind the front frame rails is from a CBR600 Honda, turned through 90°, while the oil tank now holds all the electrics. The filler cap is now the ignition switch.





This Francis Barnett was a budget model in its day, but still managed to win a lightweight TT. Described as being "made like a bridge" the frame is comprised of straight tubes, bolted together, and the whole bike could be supplied by Francis Barnett as a kit of parts, to avoid purchase tax. Note the imaginative use of a Nescafé tin lid on the toolbox.

Here's a rarity. A 1930 TWN Triumph twin, one of just a handful still in one piece and on the road. Made in Germany, it has a split single 250cc two-stroke engine and was found in France when it was unearthed during a house restoration. Legend has it that it was walled up in 1940 to stop the invading German army getting its hands on it and forgotten. It's almost as it was when it was awoken from its 70 years of slumber.





Attention to detail in any restoration is essential, as shown by the restorer who fitted this important period document to their Yamaha FSIE Sports Moped.

One game to play in the jumble at a show like Newark is “spot the next classic”. While most of the ‘proper’ classics have a value that’s well-known, looking around there were a few that might tickle your fancy. How about a Laverda 650 twin? Or a very clean Ducati 750SS, both for around £2200? Or another bike creeping up the rankings, Kawasaki’s Gpz900r? A few years ago, you could pick up a runner for around £1000. This nice example was £2700 and there was another for £2000. For British fans you’d be hard pushed to find a better offer than the TR7 Triumph Tiger priced at £4750 or, for the enthusiast, the road-registered John Banks replica BSA B50MX at £6000 might have tempted a few. And the bottom of the scale was a complete but very dog-eared XS250 Yamaha, last taxed in 1988, for £325. It needed everything doing to it and looked a ripe candidate for a quick matt black paint job, a pair of reverse cones and a brown seat.





NEWARK BEST IN SHOW

Best in show was justly awarded to this stunning restoration job on this 1970 T500 Suzuki. An immaculate build by owner Mark Morley, this must have been a real labour of love, with parts for old Suzuki two-strokes becoming hard to find. Oddly though, Mark said the parts were easier to find than for his Kawasaki 500 triple, parked next to it!



NEWARK BEST PRIVATE

The best private entry was Graham Holloway’s Triumph Blazer 250SS. This 1971 oil in frame 250cc single was recovered from Canada a few years ago as a rusty wreck, restored over the past two years and now has a finish you could eat your dinner off.



NEWARK BEST UNRESTORED

The best unrestored model was Dave Boarer’s 1934 Gilera 500 side-valve single, looking all the better for not being overdone. Or indeed, done at all.





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The gentleman's ride

One young Edward Turner designed what was one of the most ground-breaking motorcycles of its era. But time conspired to make sure this masterpiece forewent any magnificence – until now?

WORDS BY OLI HULME





WHAT IS IT?
The first mass-produced British superbike

GOOD POINTS?
The engineering is remarkable, and the whole plot is comfortable and easy to ride

BAD POINTS?
It can overheat, and oil leaks are common. It can be challenging to work on

COST?
Restoration project: A Square Four in bits will cost you from around £5000
Mint condition: While a good runner will cost £12,500 plus, a museum quality Square Four will cost anything up to £35,000

In 1928 a young motorcycle designer called Edward Turner arrived for an interview at the Ariel factory in Birmingham. He was trying to interest big manufacturers in his Turner Special, a long stroke 350cc single with a gear driven overhead camshaft.

He tried BSA first, but their response was lukewarm; so he hoped that Ariel would be more receptive. But it wasn't the Turner Special that piqued Ariel's interest, but a rough sketch on the back of an opened-out Woodbine packet for a new and very different engine: a 500cc with four pistons arranged in a square formation.

After several months of negotiation, Jack Sangster, boss at Ariel, decided to give Turner his big chance.

The Ariel Square Four was born in 1929, and it was worlds ahead of the opposition. As well as four cylinders it featured unit construction, wet sump lubrication, a horizontally split crankcase and an overhead camshaft. Despite being what looked on paper to be relatively complex, the original engine was compact enough to fit into the frame used by Ariel for a 250cc single. The resulting prototype weighed just 280lb and could travel at 90mph.

It was, basically, two parallel twin 250s, one behind the other, with the front crankshaft connected to the rear with centrally mounted helical gears. The concept produced a motor that was incredibly smooth for the day, as the twin cranks balanced each other out. One of the first road tests reported that you could balance a glass brim-full with water on the engine while it was running without spilling a drop.

The second prototype, which used the frame from Ariel's 497cc Sloper, was heavier than the first by some margin and used a Burman gearbox in place of Turner's original design. This, along with other modifications made for reasons of economy, put the weight up considerably. The Square Four was also found to run hot, not just because of the heat from combustion, but from the friction caused by having so many components moving against each other. The hotter it got, the slower it went.

After just a year on the market the engine was bored out to become a 600cc. Convinced of its potential as a sports mount, one Ariel employee, with the splendid name of Somerville Sykes, stuck a supercharger onto an engine and an unsuccessful attempt was made to get the Ariel, running on methanol, to cover 100 miles in an hour at Brooklands. Blown head gaskets caused the attempt to fail. In the meantime, Turner and his boss Val Page took a 500 engine and removed one of the crankshafts, producing a 250cc vertical twin that was so powerful the two designers wondered why they'd bothered with a four in the first place.

Buying guide – Ariel Square Four

In 1935 Turner carried out a major redesign which saw the Square Four become the softly tuned 995cc super tourer beloved of the upmarket sidecar-hauling buyer. Pushrods replaced the camshaft in operating the valves. This made the engine narrower and the engine's moving parts were reduced in number to improve reliability. The crankcase became vertically split, it moved to industry standard dry-sump lubrication and had a separate engine and gearbox.

Straight cut gears mounted outboard of the twin crankshafts kept everything turning, but this change to the drive gearing had an impact on the bike's sporting pretensions as the straight cut gears absorbed more power than the previous helical set up.

The new, bigger, Square Four was unveiled in 1935. Turner moved shortly afterwards to Triumph and after a hiatus caused by the Second World War, the Square Four was relaunched in 1946. It had telescopic forks and the Anstey plunger rear suspension system which had been first unveiled in 1939. This suspension design, with its multiple levers and grease nipples was as sophisticated a plunger arrangement as you could get, managing to keep chain tension constant, unlike most of the very basic plunger set ups which were usually little more than a pair of short shock absorbers welded to the rear end of a rigid frame.

The postwar Square Four was a beneficiary of the 'export or die' policy that saw most British manufacturing goods being sent overseas to raise much-needed foreign currency for a near-bankrupt postwar nation. The Americans, with their desire for cubes, found the 995cc engine desirable and most of the production crossed the Atlantic.

While the Ariel wasn't considered as a machine with sporting pretensions because of the low ground clearance and handling that was a little heavy, the loping power of the engine in straight lines more than made up for the need to slow down into corners. The Square Four continued in production until 1959, being regularly updated, the engine gaining an alloy head and barrels and, for the last models, four exhaust pipes.

By the late 1950s the Square Four had become something of an anachronism and Ariel's owners, BSA, decided to end production to concentrate on the Leader and Arrow two-stroke twins.

Meanwhile the Americans, whose regard for the big Ariel remained undimmed, scoured British suppliers and scrapyards for spares for many years to come.

MODELS:

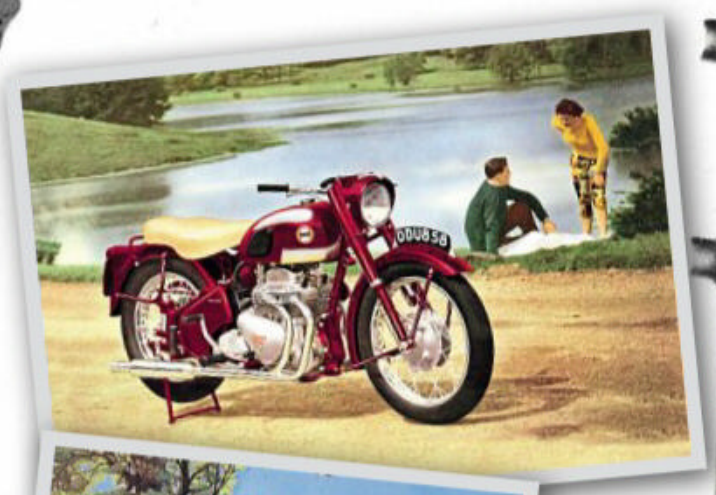
The first Square Four was a 500 with an OHC engine, launched in 1931. This was quickly replaced by a 600cc version to satisfy the sidecar-hauling market. These OHC models were expensive at £75 plus taxes, which limited their appeal. These models were coded as the 4F.

The OHV Square Four arrived in 1936 with the redesigned engine. There were 600cc and 995cc engines. This major redesign had the clutch in its own compartment, and the instruments were mounted in the petrol tank. Top speed of the 600 was around 60mph, and the 1000cc could almost top 100mph. These last prewar models offered the Anstey suspension as an option.

The 995cc 4G De Luxe returned in 1946 and was virtually identical to the prewar model, except in the matter of suspension. This featured telescopic forks and the Anstey rear suspension as standard. It retained the instruments in the tank arrangement.

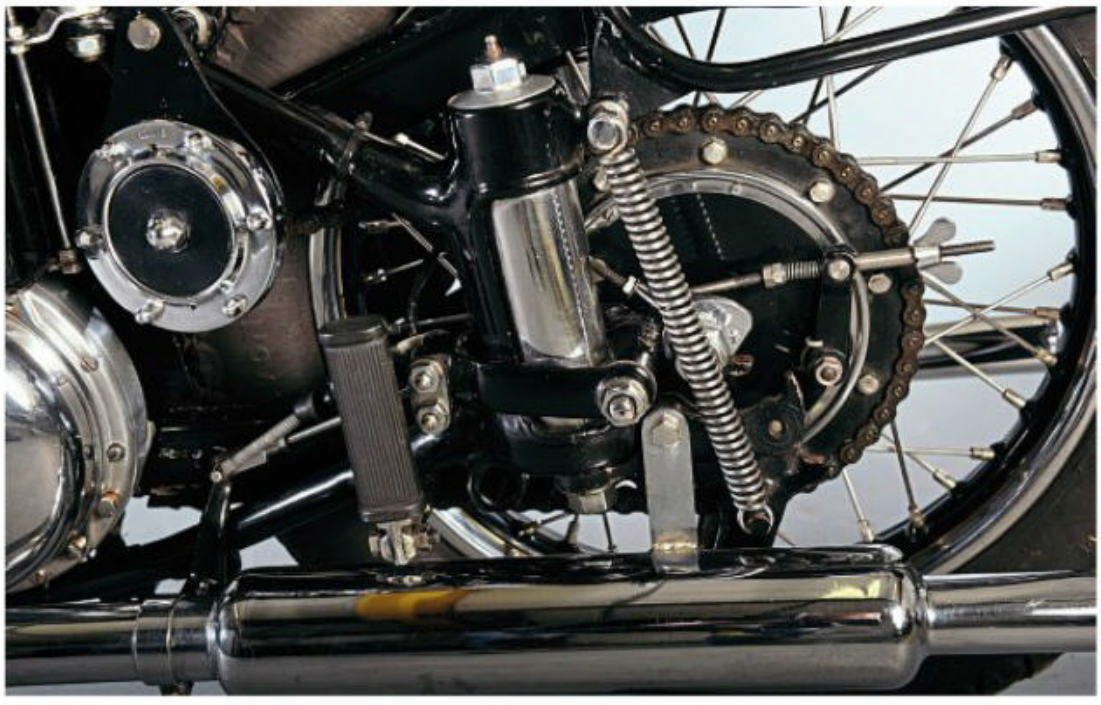
In 1949 the next redesign was dubbed the 4G Mk.I, despite four models coming before it. It had an alloy head and barrels. This made it 30lb lighter and cooling was improved as well. Despite this, the Mk.I still blew head gaskets regularly and retorquing the cylinder head was a regular task. The Mk.I also got uprated electrics, replacing the old Magdyno with a generator, distributor and coil ignition.

The last official Square Four was the Mk.II, which arrived in 1953 and stayed in production until 1959. The cylinder head was redesigned to accommodate four exhaust pipes and the inlet manifold and rocker cover were combined. A car type SU carburettor was fitted, requiring a frame modification to make it fit.

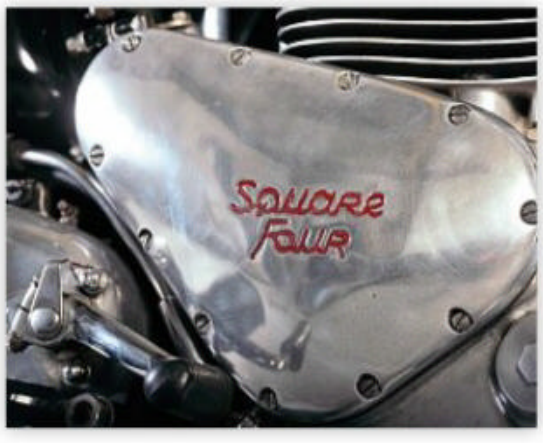




HRH Duke of Gloucester seen inspecting the Square Four-riding police escort at Adelaide during a tour.



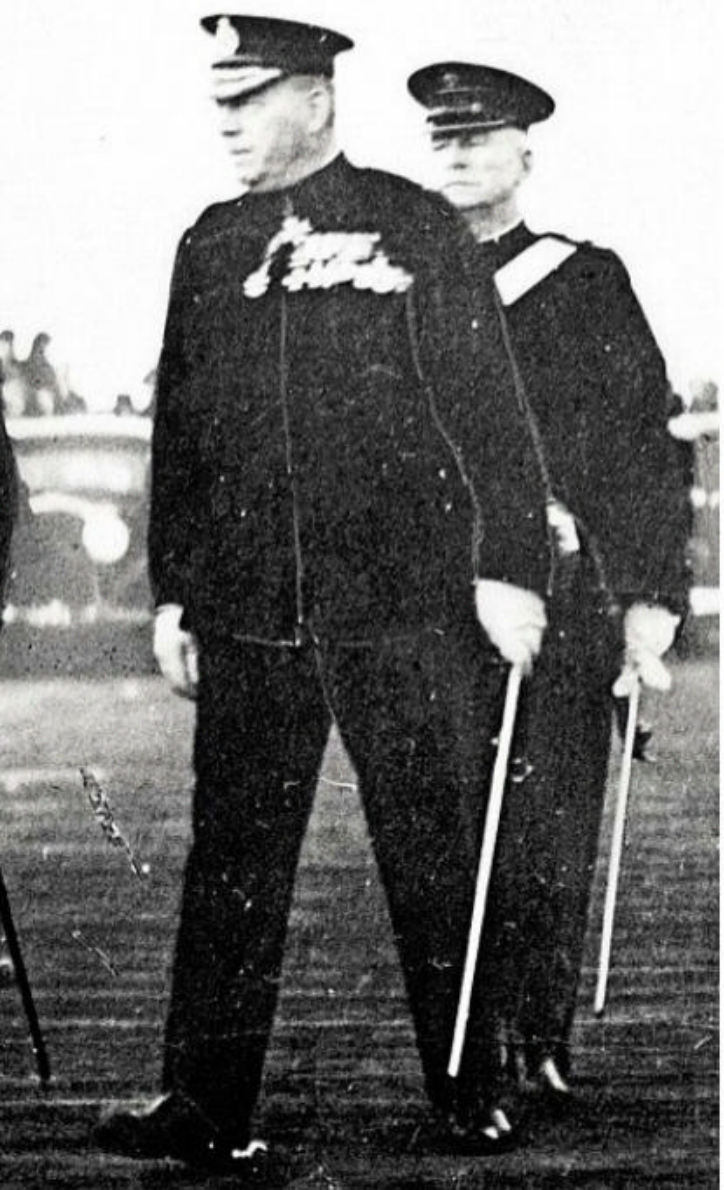






THE HEALEY SQUARE FOUR

In the early 1970s the Square Four made a brief and unexpected comeback thanks to two drag racing brothers, George and Tim Healey. The brothers had already breathed on the Square Four, getting twice the power from it. They bought all the Mk.II Square Four engines they could find and used an Egli spine frame to hold it. Between 1971 and 1977 the duo turned out 27 of their Healey 1000-4s, and the Healey looked for all the world like what it was – a fine, hand-built motorcycle for the discerning gentleman.



WHAT THE PAPERS SAID:

Just as today, the critics in the 1940s and 50s loved big, powerful motorcycles. Only Ariel and Vincent made a one-litre bike and although these big expensive machines weren't what most British buyers were looking for, the writers for *The Motor Cycle* and *Motorcycling* were another matter.

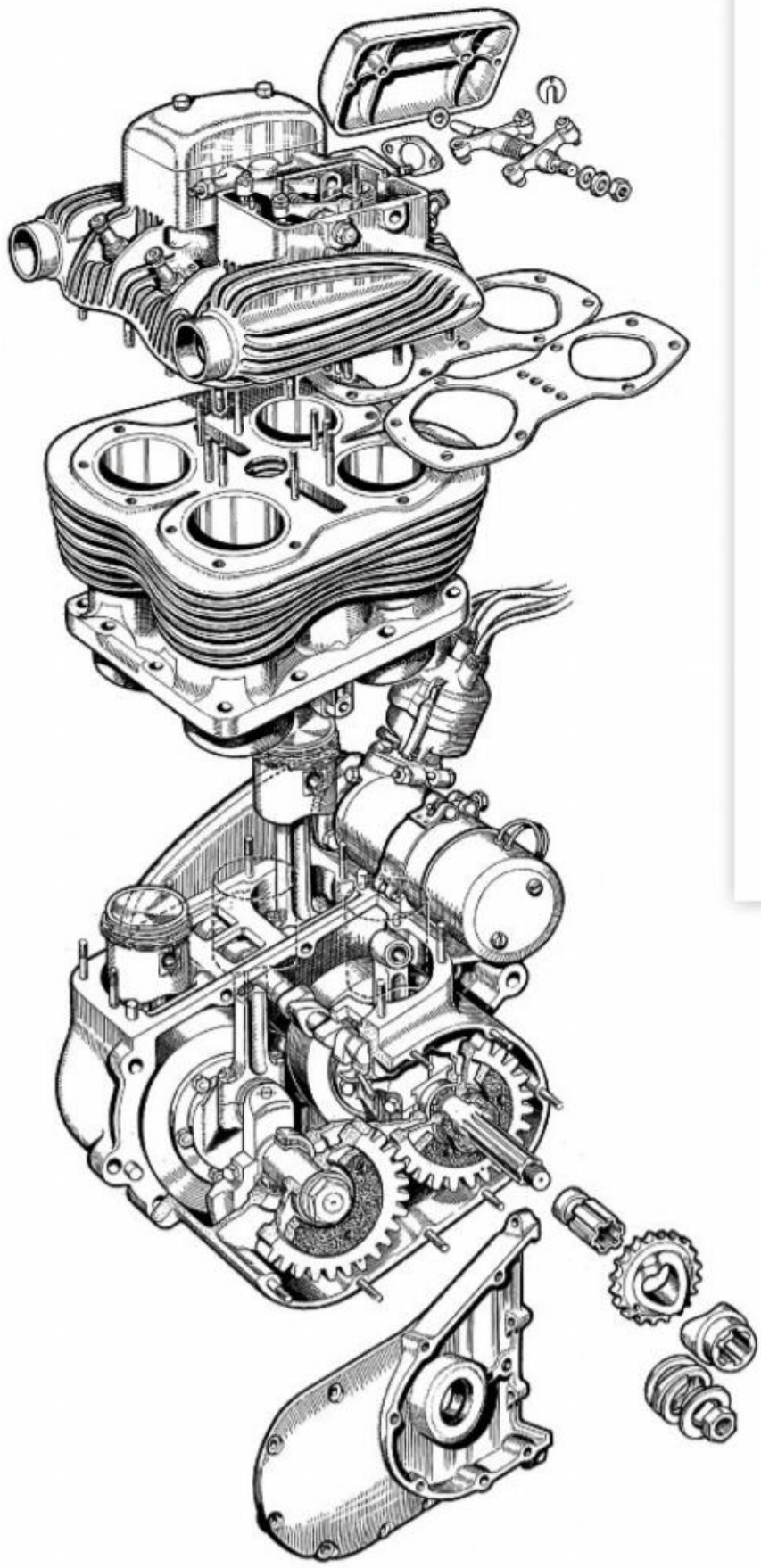
Motorcycling tested a Model 4G in the early 1950s. The Mk.I model tested had the alloy barrels and an alloy head and coil ignition but retained the instruments in the tank arrangement. The tester adored the big Ariel which they felt: "combines the docility of a side valve with an out-and-out performance that can be equalled by very few vehicles whether two or four-wheeled". The tester was shocked by the performance that was achieved without any "fuss and bother" while the sit up and beg riding position was comfortable with the only issue being the number of insects collected by the rider. Acceleration was "breathtaking", the silencers were quiet enough to avoid the attention of any waiting policemen and to force the rider to use the horn to warn pedestrians that they were about to be mown down. The Ariel, said the writer, gave the rider "a sense of smug superiority towards other users of two-wheeled machinery".

In 1953 *The Motor Cycle* rated the Square Four's smoothness and flexibility. It was docile but had open-road potential to satisfy "the most hardened road-burner". Acceleration was "smooth, quiet and unhesitant", and had "an urgency matched by few road-going vehicles". The Ariel would cruise at 50, 60 or 70mph on next to no throttle, which was significant in days when fuel economy was paramount.

The test bike, a Mk.II, had smooth gears, the lights were "adequate" and the only reported fault was a spark plug that cut out while riding the Square Four on flooded roads. It had a "high degree of handleability" although it would ground easily if a pillion was carried. Brakes were said to be extremely powerful and suspension was a bet-hedging "adequate and worked well". Top whack was 107mph and fuel consumption was between 50-57mpg.

An earlier test in *The Motor Cycle*, in January 1950, was of a Mk.I with a Watsonian Avon sidecar attached. This, the test said, made it ideal for ride-to-work transport during the week, family outings at the weekend and 300-400 mile a day trips for the hard riding enthusiasts, with journeys on the outfit made at speeds equivalent to those of a 500cc sports mount. It was, they said: "A thrilling mount with scintillating performance plus excellent road manners."

A sign of how times have changed is the description of the starting procedure from cold. It was "easy", it was said. "It was necessary only to turn the engine over four or five times with the carburettor bi-starter control in the out position. Then with the ignition switched on and the throttle rather less than a quarter open the engine would respond to the first real dig on the kick-starter."



OWNERS' CLUB
Ariel Owners' Motor Cycle Club
arielownersmcc.co.uk

SPECIALISTS
Draganfly
draganfly.co.uk
Some specialist parts are also available through the owners' club

Thanks to Roger Gwynn at Draganfly and to Jon Chick







WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Roger Gwynn, who founded Ariel specialists Draganfly, knows the Square Four inside and out, so we asked him what to look out for:

"One of the downsides or advantages of owning a Square Four, depending on your point of view, is that one is constantly accosted by members of the public saying things like 'I used to have one of those', 'they overheat on the rear cylinders' and 'they are forever blowing head gaskets' etc. There is some truth in the latter two. The iron Square Fours do run very hot and the rear cylinders will seize if bored to the recommended clearance; simply bore them to the top limit and they are fine.

"The Mk.Is did have a habit of blowing head gaskets as the large lump of alloy would expand much more that the steel studs, which would compress the gasket, which would then leak. The owner would then tighten the head down with the result that the studs would pull out of the low-grade alloy as there was no compression left in the gasket. As the nuts that hold the head down are between the fins of the cylinder and are awkward to get at it is not unusual to find that a frustrated previous owner has smashed the fins off below the nuts in order to ease the chore.

"Head gaskets made of a modern material, combined with a better understanding of the problem resulting in





The Square Four torque was superb for sidecar duties

a comprehensive set of instructions mean that it is now possible to build a Mk.I engine that will stay together, not that it is an easy task, but the bikes are very nice to ride, some owner's preferring them to the later Mk.II.

"The Mk.II still has a tendency to pull head studs but nowhere near as badly as the Mk.I and modern gaskets are available for that engine as well. Many more Mk.IIs have survived than Mk.Is as they are inherently more reliable with their detachable exhaust manifolds and redesigned rocker boxes.

"The model names can be confusing, partly because they have common names in daily use. All three of the main 1000cc ohv Square Four are called 4G (4 for the number of cylinders and G for deluxe). When the engine was redesigned for the 1949 season the factory added Mk.I to the model name, so it became 4G Mk.I and likewise when the engine was redesigned again for 1953 it became the 4G Mk.II. These are usually referred to as 4G 1937-48, 'iron SQ4, Mk.I 1949-52', aka 'alloy two-piper', and Mk.II 1953-58, aka 'alloy four-piper'. The factory tended not to use the Mk.I/II part as the quoting the year was sufficient to know what the bike was.

"The 4G had a couple of siblings, the 4F in 1937 and 1939-40, which was a 600cc version and the 4H in 1939-40, described as a 'slightly less luxurious version' with a smaller petrol tank and sporty mudguards.

"The Mk.I was made with and without a panel tank as it spanned the period over which the tanks changed, so 1949 and 1950 would have had the panel tank but 1951 and 1952 would have had a plain tank with an oil pressure gauge in it.

"If a bike being offered for sale is claimed to have had a rebuilt engine, prospective purchasers should ask if it was built by someone with experience of these engines and how many miles it has done since the rebuild. If it has covered several hundred miles the engine is likely to be a good 'un, otherwise it should be considered to be a pig in a poke.

"Many engines that we rebuild have recently been rebuilt only to have problems and frequently these have been built by professionals who ought to know better. It is not unusual to find that the crankshaft sludge traps have not been cleaned out, causing reduced or no oil supply to number four big end, the one furthest away from the pump. Sooner rather than later the big end seizes, breaking a conrod, smashing the crankcase and cylinder. An engine with

18 MONTHS WITH A SQUARE FOUR

SOMETHING OF A fan of Ariels, Jon Chick added a Square Four to his stable 18 months ago. It's currently in the throes of a little electrical work, with the replacement of the original Dynamo with an Iron Horse 300w alternator imminent. Apart from the alternator to come, a canister oil filter conversion and an Amal concentric carburettor, the Square Four is standard.

"I'm sorry to say I don't know anything about the bike's history. I bought it from a chap in Newcastle, who had never started it, and he had bought it from someone who had spent a lot of money on it, but whether it ran or not I'll never know. I'm fitting the alternator as the dynamo isn't really up to running lights. The alternator kit also removes the need for the regulator.

"It's a 4G Mk.1, very quick, and very smooth. It's got one of the first aluminium engines and the two exhaust pipes. It still suffers in the heat a bit, and you just have to keep it as cool as you can. I retorqued the cylinder head after 600 miles using a bicycle torque wrench as anything else is just not sensitive enough.

"When I first got it, the engine was over oiling, until I realised the builder had connected the narrow pipes to the oil pressure gauge, and the wider hoses to the cylinder head, when it should actually be the other way around. I have had some trouble with fuelling, as the Amal and the filter aren't really suited to the Square Four because of the heat from the engine.

"I have been a bit disappointed by the quality of some pattern parts. I bought a distributor cap and there were big differences in the clearances on the terminals. The paint job was excellent, and I really like the quality of the enamel on the tank badges. The exhausts are also very good indeed."

One issue Jon has found with the exhausts is that under hard braking, the front mudguard can foul the left-hand pipe, which can be a nasty shock for the rider. The exhaust ports are not equidistant from the centreline of the bike where they exit the head and the left-hand down pipe has a kink in it to accommodate this.

"It's quite noisy at the top end. On a Mk.1 engine, there's always a possibility that someone has fitted the Mk.2 camshaft, and a mismatch like that might be the reason for the noise. I haven't taken the bottom end apart, so I have no idea if it's got the right cam in.

Jon hasn't yet found the limits of the handling or the performance. "It just rides really nicely. Whichever gear you are in, you can just open the throttle and it surges away. The gearbox is beautiful. It's very forgiving and such a smooth thing to ride."



unknown history or one that has done a lot of miles without having been stripped down must have the sludge traps cleaned out, even if running well as it is only a matter of time before the same problem happens. I know of many of these bikes that have seized after being ridden hard in spite of running well for the occasional Sunday jaunt.

"New main bearings must be bored in line with the drive side bearings for a reliable bottom end. The standard oil pumps are fine when in good condition. If not, Morgo pumps are available, but these can cause problems due to the sheer volume of oil that is pumped round the engine, unless additional and larger breathers are fitted.

"There is so much power available over a very wide rev range that the gearing can be raised significantly but this can mean that keeping the battery charged can be a problem. Twelve-volt conversions do not work well as suitable armatures and field coils are not available, meaning that the dynamo will not cut in until quite impractical road speeds are achieved, especially if the lights are used. There is however, a very good alternator conversion available.

"There are numerous other minor points to watch out for on the engine but essentially the engines are not that different to standard practice, apart from there being four of everything, which increases the cost and makes any job more long-winded. Once in good condition they are no more or less reliable than any other bike of the period, they just take longer and cost more to fix when they go wrong. To change a head gasket on an Ariel VB single takes 12 minutes – or 14 if it is hot. On a Square Four it is about six hours, if nothing goes wrong.

"Generally speaking, the supply of parts is good, considering how few bikes were made. Conrods, big end shells, pistons, valves, camshafts and followers are all available. Most of the cycle parts are shared with the rest of the range so are generally good, mudguards, seats and most parts except petrol tanks are readily available.

"Hard to find parts include Mk.II crankcases, 4G rocker boxes but new ones are in the pipeline, outer primary covers for all years, again new ones are in the pipeline, Mk.II rockers and support blocks and Mk.I/II cylinders and heads in good condition. CBG



Twenty-seven Healey 1000/4s were produced in the 1970s with twice the power and an Egli frame

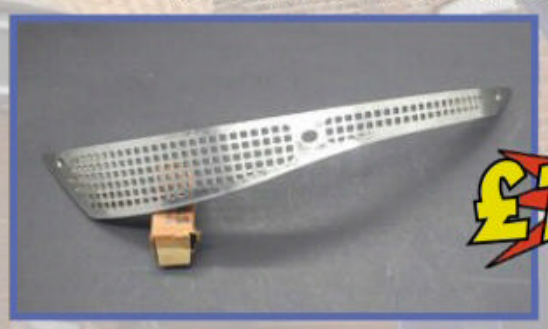
"but essentially the engines are not that different to standard practice apart from there being four of everything, which increases the cost and makes any job more long-winded"



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small bikes rule

Do you really need a big bike? Smaller bikes are unthreatening to ride, easy to work on, easier to store, cheaper to run and most of the time just as much fun! In the first of a few features looking at small bikes from different continents, we look at some Japanese classics.

WORDS BY OLI HULME **PHOTOGRAPHY** JASON CRITCHELL/ MORTONS ARCHIVE

Lusting after classy British twins, lithe Italian stallions or big Japanese fours is part and parcel of classic biking. Most of us want one, many of us have got one, and some more than one.

But sometimes a big beast isn't what is needed. Perhaps something cheaper to own, run and ride might appeal. Something that will slice through 21st century traffic like a Stanley knife, but still has that classic feel. Something smaller, such as an easy-to-live-with 1960s or 70s 125 could be what's called for, something you can just jump on every day and just ride when the idea of mounting a great chunk of iron and alloy is too much to handle.

The engineering might be less complex to look after. They're easy to start, and easy to ride to their full potential. Maybe you're returning to motorcycling years, or even decades, after last taking to the road. There are classic fans who never passed their tests back in the day, exchanging their 250 Yamaha for a Mk.II Ford Escort as the realities of day to day life caught up with them.

There are youngsters interested in classics they can ride on L-plates and benefit from cheaper insurance, and there are parents and grandparents who would like their offspring to get the classic bug from day one.

Compared to modern machines, there are no ECUs, no fuel injection or ABS to worry about. In most cases they were built with points and coils instead of electronic ignition and faults are easy to diagnose. There are engines that are as basic as they come, easy to start and to keep running.

If you are still on L-plates, a pre-1983 125 doesn't need to be restricted. And unlike a modern 125, which will plummet in value the moment you wheel a new one from the showroom, an old one can sell for pretty much what you paid for it. And they are cheap to run. Get a 40-year-old 125, and you'll pay no road tax, won't need an MoT, the insurance will be buttons, especially if you add it to an existing policy, and some will sip petrol like a reluctant participant in dry January.

Here then, is a guide to the classic Jap tiddler, the motorcycles that got the world mobile and caused so many to get the biking bug. Prices are ranged from complete running examples to nut and bolt restorations.

HONDA

If you want a four-stroke engine, and reliability, you'll have the nicest time on a Honda. The only real issue for the modern rider is that these little Hondas were smaller than their equivalents today, and you might feel a little silly draped over such a diminutive steed. One way round this is to buy the trail bike version of these machines, which were often physically bigger, though a trail bike is likely to have led a harder life.

1960S HONDAS

There are two things to consider when looking at small capacity Hondas. One is going to be parts availability, and the other is affordability. We asked David Silver, the go-to supplier for classic Honda parts for his take on Hondas little offerings.

David said: "The C92 and SS125 models can be hard to find spares for, especially things like exhausts. You just can't get exhausts for the ss125 at any price, and other bits can be quite expensive. The SS125 is also getting quite expensive now too and is very sought after."

C92

Honda started making performance 125s in 1959, with the C92 Benly. The C92 had an ohc twin cylinder sloper engine in a pressed steel frame. Styling was very much of its time, and you either loved or hated it. There were big pressed steel mudguards, leading link front forks and enclosed shock absorbers. The two valves per cylinder engine had a chain-driven overhead camshaft. The primary drive was by gear to a multi-plate clutch running in oil which lubricated both the engine and the four-speed gearbox, and there was a fully enclosed chain final drive.

The electrical system was six volts, but which managed to spin an electric starter. The C92 pushed out 11.5bhp when new, about the same as a modern, restricted 125. The later CB92 was a good deal sportier, with slimmer mudguards and no enclosure for the rear chain. It had an eight-inch TLS front brake that rivalled that fitted to many a much bigger British bike, and produced an impressive 15bhp at 10,500rpm. Prices for the C92 range from £1500 for a complete project to £3000 for a good clean runner. A restored CB92 can cost upwards of £6000.

SS/CL125 TWIN

An update of the C92, the SS125 twin launched in 1966 was a good deal sleeker. With a slimmed down engine and a tidier pressed steel frame, the twin looks like it should be a sprightly little performer but was actually less powerful than the CB92.

Originally released as the CB125 sports, CD125 tourer, and CL125 street scrambler, the following year Honda used the same package to offer eight models. At the top of the range was the SS125. On this Honda had ditched the electric start, and there was a neat part-pressed steel part tube-frame, and a pair of tiny carburettors. At time of going to press Classic Motorcycles of Northwich (see our back pages) had two smart restored bikes in stock, at just under £3000 each.

CB125S/J

The CB125S joined the twins in 1971 and was a more conventional looking bike. With a 122cc OHC single cylinder engine in a part tubular, part pressed steel frame, the 125S was made by Honda from 1971–1985, though it had left UK showrooms by the early 1980s. The engine redlined at 9500rpm. Honda tried to give the 125S sporty pretensions by adding a rev counter.

Later engines were marginally bigger at 124cc and there was work to the cylinder head, which was badly needed, providing a separate cam cover rather than a single casting. The camshaft ran straight into the head and this wore rapidly, especially in the hands of impoverished youths who could not afford regular oil changes, which are needed every 700 miles.

Apart from the modification of the cylinder head, the only changes to the 125S were to paint schemes and trim. It'll keep up with the traffic, maintaining a steady 55mph and sips petrol, using just a gallon every 100 miles. The CB125J was the same machine, but fitted with a cable operated disc.

David said: "The 125S and the J are a good choice, they were smart little bikes, and were easy to run. The parts are available and there's a lot of second-hand stuff out there too."



You can pick up slightly dog-eared but running 125S from £800. Restored models are closer to £2500.

CG125

A hard-working commuter 125, the CG arrived in the mid-1970s and was fitted with an OHV engine that was close to bulletproof.

David: says: "The CG125 is a good bike, there are tons of parts out there and the bike didn't change a great deal. The CG is the most practical of the lot."

Designed to work day in, day out, the CG was produced from 1976 to 2008 in Japan. It is still being made in Pakistan. Production for the European market was eventually moved to Brazil in 1985 and it was also made in Turkey. Simple and easy to work on, hard wearing and devoid of frills and fancies, the CG was one of Honda's longest-lived models and remained largely unchanged until EU emissions regs finally caught up with it.

You'll see lots of CG 125s as embryonic customs with tiny brown seats and no mudguards. A stripped-down CG can be a hoot. The design was 'borrowed' wholesale by Chinese manufacturers and used around the world until those pesky regulations forced the retirement of the design and its replacement by the engine from Suzuki's GS125.

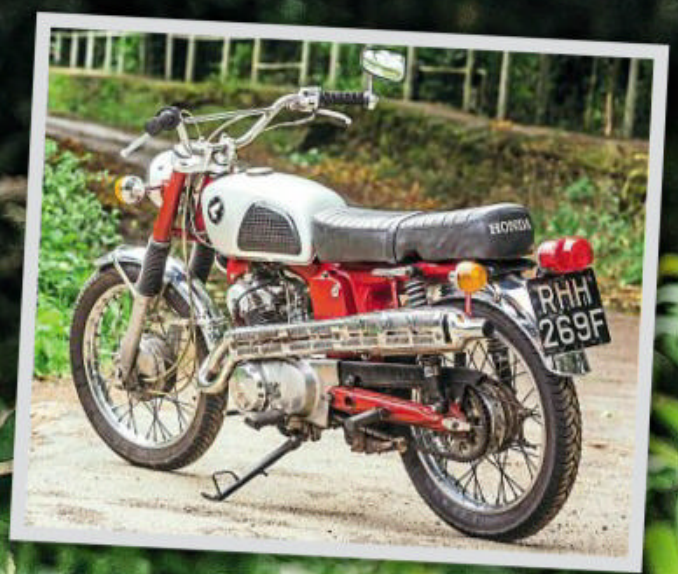
Late CG125s are available from a few hundred pounds, while earlier ones come at £800-£1200. You will see bobbed and café racered CGs being offered for £3000 but whether they sell at that price is anyone's guess.

CB125T

Looking for the ultimate, unrestricted 125 four-stroke? Look no further than Honda's little late-1970s jewel, the CB125T.

David said: "The CB125T is about the best choice for you. It was sold in Europe but not in the USA. It's got quite a sophisticated little engine, even though it doesn't have an electric start. It's a lot less restricted than the later CB125TDC, and a much nicer bike. Service parts are readily available and most of the rest are easy to find too."

Stripped down to its bare essentials, the tiny twin poked out 16bhp (just three





less than a new Royal Enfield 350 Bullet Classic). The styling was a of its time and a little angular, and the quality of some of the component parts could be iffy, but it went like stink. The major weak spot was also found on the later CB125S, a cable operated disc brake which was awful, lacked any kind of feel and suffered badly in wet weather. Discs had become de rigeur on sports bikes, even 125s and the cable operation was simply cheaper to make. But you got a 125T to go fast, not to stop. A custom version, the CM125, was popular, and you can see its genes in the styling of modern offerings from Lexmoto and AJS. The CB125T can still be found for less than £1000 if you are prepared for something that needs lots of work. A good restored one will cost around £2500.

BIGGER BROTHERS

If you aren't limited to a 125, then some of Honda's bigger small bikes are worth considering. David said: "The CB175 was a pretty bike, with an electric start, two carbs and nice lines and the CB200 that came after it was also a good bike. The CD175 was a lot more agricultural, though the CD185/200 Benly from the early 1980s is worth a look too."

The CB/CL175 from the 1970s (the CL only available as an import) are sweet little things, with twin carbs and an electric starter. They're light enough to make them easy to handle, with that little bit of extra punch to make them less hard work over longer distances. The CB200 that replaced the 175 wasn't quite as nice as the CB175, with angular styling and, on the Mk.II, a cable operated front disc. The mid-70s commuter CD175 was a cooking model with a single carb and only a kick-start. It had big mudguards and chrome tank panels and other styling cues that made it look a little like a two-thirds size British twin. CD175s have something of a cult following, and this is reflected in rising prices.

The CL175 is currently easier to find than the CB, having survived in kinder weather conditions abroad. Expect to pay £1000 for an import project, and £2500-3000 for a nice runner. CD175s start at £800 and rise to £2000.

KAWASAKI

Kawasaki didn't go big on 125cc road bikes in the UK in the early 1970s, preferring to sell learners their 250cc triples and KE trail bikes. Meanwhile in the USA and elsewhere they sold a lot of smaller trail orientated two-strokes.

FIRST STEPS

The first motorcycle to bear Kawasaki branding was the Meihatsu 125-500, launched in 1955, a basic 125 with a plunger frame and fitted with a Kawasaki KB-5 engine, which had the Kawasaki name stamped into the engine casings. A Japanese roadtest reported that the engine had covered 50,000 miles without breaking down and the bike had the highest top speed in its class. It was later rebadged as a Kawasaki.

In 1962 Kawasaki launched their B8 125 which sold well in Japan. It had a significantly updated version of the piston ported B7 engine that produced 11bhp and had styling common to many Japanese motorcycles of the time, with shrouded shocks and forks and a large slab-sided petrol tank. A tuned motocross version took the first six places in the 1963 Japanese 125 championships. It was badged as being made by Kawasaki Aircraft, which was pretty cool.

KH100/125

Kawasaki didn't have an official factory presence in the UK until 1974, but the machines were imported by Bill Smith in Chester from 1968. The first officially imported 125s arrived in 1976 with the KH125, a sporty little number that took its styling cues from the bigger KH models and had a two-stroke disc valve five-speed engine with the carb under the right-hand engine casing. It was simple and well-built and to emphasise its quality spec had a cable operated front disc. It had reported top speed of 74mph. In 1982, just as the 125 learner laws kicked in the KH was restyled, being given the look of the GPz fours with square headlight and angular tank and a slightly smaller carb to take the power down to a legal 11bhp.

The KH left the UK market in the mid-1980s, being replaced by the water-cooled AR125, but stayed in production for worldwide sale until 1998 largely unchanged which means there's pretty good spares availability. £400-£1500

The was also a KH100 version, Originally called the G7 and launched in the late 1960s, unlike many manufacturers who simply reduced the bore of their 125s to get them into cheaper tax and insurance brackets, the G7/KH100 was a completely different bike with a different engine, frame and sleeker lines from the 125. Fitted originally with a drum brake, the 100 later got alloy wheels and a hydraulic disc. £500-£1500.

KC100

To sell alongside the KH100, Kawasaki introduced a basic commuter model, the KC100 Companion. This was a revival of the original G series and used the same tank as the 1970 model. While it was built down to a price, the engineering was up to Kawasaki's usual standard. It sold in reasonable numbers, and not being a sports model is likely to be easier to find in good condition lurking in the back of sheds. It's small, so won't suit the larger of build. £250-£1500.

Z200

You also might consider Kawasaki's smallest 1970s four-stroke, the Z200

single launched in 1976. It won't get you enormously excited, but as a budget classic Jap the Z200's OHC electric start single is well worth a look and has the dimensions of a full-size machine. The engine is good, strong enough to be bored out and end up in the Z250 roadster and KL250 trail bikes. £300-£1500

SUZUKI

Suzuki embraced the tiddler market with a vengeance and if you are looking for a small two-stroke, they've got something for everyone. Their two-stroke tech was ahead of the game thanks in no small way to the former MZ racer Ernst Degner, who defected from East Germany in 1961 and took a lot of the German company's expertise with him to Japan.

There were two streams of 100cc and 125 manufacture at Suzuki – you could have a simple piston-ported commuter from the early 1960s or an out and out twin cylinder sports offering.

THE BLOOP

The B100/B120P singles arrived in 1966. With a 118cc two-stroke engine and a pressed steel frame, the B100 was a straightforward conservative model with reasonable performance and good reliability, producing 10bhp and more importantly fuel consumption a miserly 100mpg plus. Renamed the B120P, production continued until the mid-1980s, but the model was dropped from UK catalogues in 1978. £400-£1200.

A100

Alongside the B120, Suzuki sold the disc valve two-stroke A100, a lighter and slightly sportier single which had the same dimensions as the much loved AP50 sports moped. Unlike the AP50, the A100, launched in 1966 had a practical enclosed chain and shrouded forks and shock absorbers. Named the Go-Fer in the USA, for a 100 the A100 developed a healthy 9.3hp. Early models with chrome tank panels are among the best 1960s small bikes and hold their value well. £300-£2500.

GP100/125

In 1978 Suzuki replaced both the A100 and the B120p with the GP100 and 125 singles which were, apart from the capacity, identical. The biggest difference between Suzuki's singles and their twins was that the twin-engine used reed valves while the single cylinder engines had rotary disc valves. The first GP had a drum brake, but this swiftly became a disc. In production for just three years from 1978-1981 they were straightforward and a little bland but still excellent cooking models for the beginner rider, and the beginner restorer. £250-£1500.

T125/STINGER

Alongside the singles were the twins. Starting with the T125 in 1967 the little twin followed Suzuki's styling practice used on their bigger T-series bikes with a chrome-panelled humped tank over a conventional cradle frame. It had twin carbs and produced an impressive 15bhp.

Good as it was, the Suzuki 125 you really wanted in the late 1960s was the dynamic T125 Stinger. It was racer styled with a pair of high level exhausts and a five-speed box, two near horizontal cylinders and a pair of down draught carbs. Weighing in at less than 230lb, 305lb less than the original T125, it produced slightly more power, revved higher and was considerably faster thanks to the weight loss. The Stinger, if you can find one is a real gem and will turn heads everywhere you go. £2000-£5000.

GT125

In 1974 Suzuki introduced the GT125. This model had ram-air cooling of the cylinder head, which for the 125 was more of a styling exercise as the bigger Suzuki two-strokes also got the ram-air treatment. It was similar in layout to the bigger GT185 but had a shorter wheelbase and a physically smaller engine so there are not a lot of interchangeable parts. Unusually for a 125 of the period, it had 12v electrics and weighed around the same as the Stinger, while producing 16bhp. Later models had a hydraulic front disc, which wasn't up to much in the wet. Parts will be hard to find, and the littlest GT would have been thrashed unmercifully as the original teenage owner tried to keep up with 250cc rivals. £500-£4000.

GT185

The GT185, launched at the same time as the GT125, might be a better bet for those looking for extra performance and easier starting. It had an electric starter/generator combination in which the starter got things going and then became the source of electrical power once the engine got spinning. With a 21bhp engine and more substantial componentry than the GT125, the GT185 has the major advantage of being included in the Suzuki Vintage Parts programme with many new parts still available. £600-£2000.

YAMAHA

Like Kawasaki, Yamaha weren't big on providing small bikes for commuters in the UK market, concentrating on more powerful sports models. Their 250 and 350 two-stroke twins and 500 and 650cc twins established Yamaha's reputation for sporting prowess and quality engineering. But they still did amazing things with their tiny two-strokes.

YG/YB100

Yamaha's long lasting YG and YB100 commuter is a smart little bike that bears some resemblance to the much vaunted FS1E sports moped. A simple two-stroke single with a pressed steel frame, it has much to recommend it, and with other





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bikes.suzuki.co.uk/vintage-parts-programme
Crooks Suzuki (Suzuki)
www.crooks-suzuki.com

bikes at the time attracting the cash of the teenage market, a YB100 is likely to have suffered less from over enthusiastic throttle hands. The early YGs are prettiest. With a few changes over the years while retaining the same basic principles, the model stayed in production from 1963-2007, a lifespan which speaks volumes.

THE TWINS

It was with their diminutive twins that Yamaha really shone. First the AT90 twin arrived in 1966 for the Japanese market, followed quickly by the 100cc YL1, which had a distinctive humped petrol tank and a pressed steel spine frame. Steve Cooper described the noise of the tiny twin as being "like a pair of demented chainsaws."

AS1/AS3

In 1968 Yamaha took the YL1 engine out to 124cc and restyled it, dubbing the new model the AS1. It featured a very high specification for its day with an auto lube two-stroke pump and a steering damper. But it was the styling that really got teenage blood rushing. Away went the bulbous tank and pressed steel construction, and instead there was a flat-topped tank and a spindly steel tube backbone frame with the engine as a stressed member. Britain's teenage tearaways loved it. On the back of Yamaha's success on the track and with drop-dead gorgeous styling that looked more Italian than Japanese, the AS1 helped cement Yamaha's reputation as the consummate builder of sporty two-strokes.

In 1971 the AS1 was replaced by the AS3. Mechanically near identical to the AS1, the styling was less angular and followed the look of all the Yamaha two-stroke twins until the late 1970s and the arrival of the coffin-tanked RD range. It was slightly larger and heavier than the AS1, but still weighed in at 230lb, had splendid drum brakes and produced 16bhp. Prices from £500-£2500

RD125

A replacement for the YAS3, the RD125 arrived in 1974 with a top end redesign that included Yamaha's reed valve induction system. Many parts on the RD were common to those used on the FS1E sports moped, which, given the passion for these sixteener specials has resulted in a lot of bits being hoovered up for pricey sports moped restorations. The 1976 RD125DX had the FS1E's hydraulic disc and a coffin tank with the speed blocks that had become a Yamaha trademark. The little twin stayed largely unchanged until the end of production in 1979 apart from the introduction of cast wheels and electronic ignition and a revised paint job. Unsold RD twins hung around in the showrooms until 1982 when the last few were snapped up by buyers wanting to beat the new restricted 125cc engine regulations. £1000-£2500

RS100 RS125 RXS100

Alternatives to the RD or YB models are the RS and RXS 100/125. This dinky little single was designed as a slightly more potent commuter than the YB100 and is a surprisingly nimble machine. The RS was launched in 1974 and the 125 version gained a disc front brake in 1977. The RXS100 replaced the RS in 1981 and this updated, and a little flashier model stayed in UK markets until 1996. The RXS has a small but enthusiastic following. A popular model in the Far East, where it was on sale until 2004, you can get performance upgrades including expansion chambers and big bore 145cc kits if you search hard enough. Some impressive sporty conversions can be found too. £250-£1800

RD200 - A POCKET ROCKET

Above 125cc, there is the RD200, a bigger version of the RD125, like the GT185 it has the combined electric start/generator. The RD200 is great fun to ride and will keep up with a 250 if ridden in a spirited fashion, with better drum and disc brakes than the 125, you can have a ball for not a lot of cash on an RD200. There was also a short-lived, de tuned single carb RS200 which, given that it's a detuned version of an already top-notch engine is well worth a look. £1200-£4000. CBG





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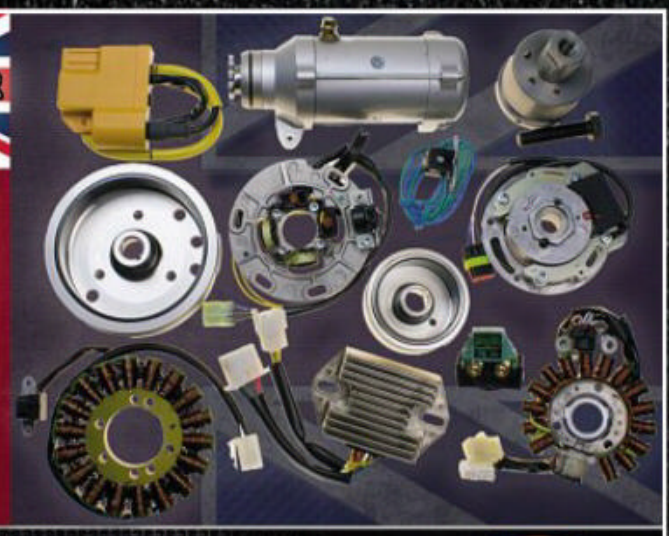
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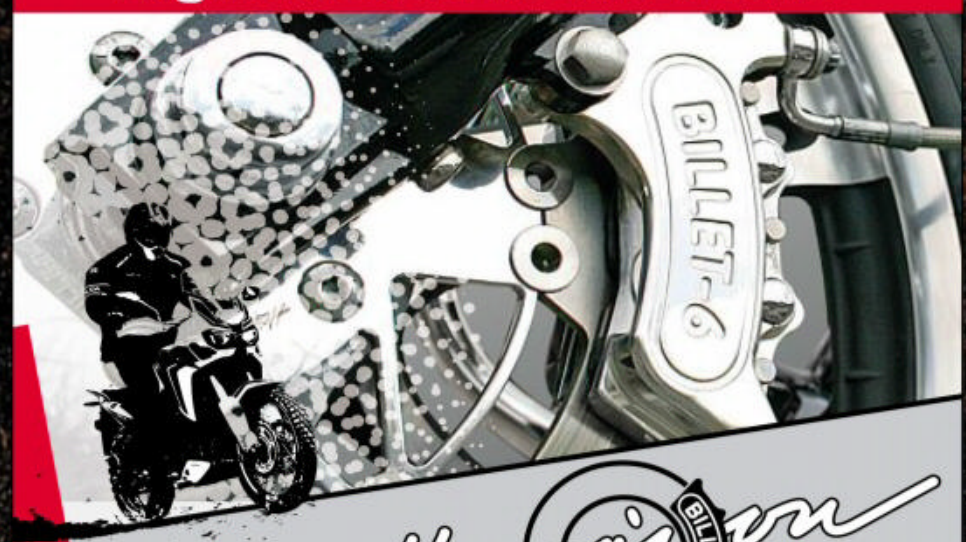
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The Ducati Americano 1958

AMERICAN FANCY

Ducati were on the rise, but needed to break the US market. A difficult task with small bikes, so Taglioni upped the style

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: PHILLIP TOOTH



Times change, and today the Ducati Americano looks about as kitsch as a pizza ashtray. But when this bike rolled out of the Bologna factory gates in 1958, it turned heads for all the right reasons. With its sweptback cowhorn bars and a saddle festooned with chrome stars, the Americano was taking Ducati Meccanica from the racetrack to the good old US of A.

The story behind Ducati's exotic overhead cam singles started in 1954 when Fabio Taglioni walked into his new office at No3, Via Antonio Cavaleri, Ducati. His task: to design a motorcycle that would win races. Up to that time the factory used converted road bikes for the classic Italian long distance road races like the Milan-Taranto and Motogiro – and they stood no chance against real racers entered by other Italian marques.

Ducati bosses decided that if they wanted to win the popular 100cc class they needed something a little more exotic than the simple 98cc overhead-valve single used in the 98 Sport that was the flagship of the 1954 range. With just 6.8hp and a top speed of only 56mph it was never going to light up the roads, let alone fire the imagination of Italian teenagers.

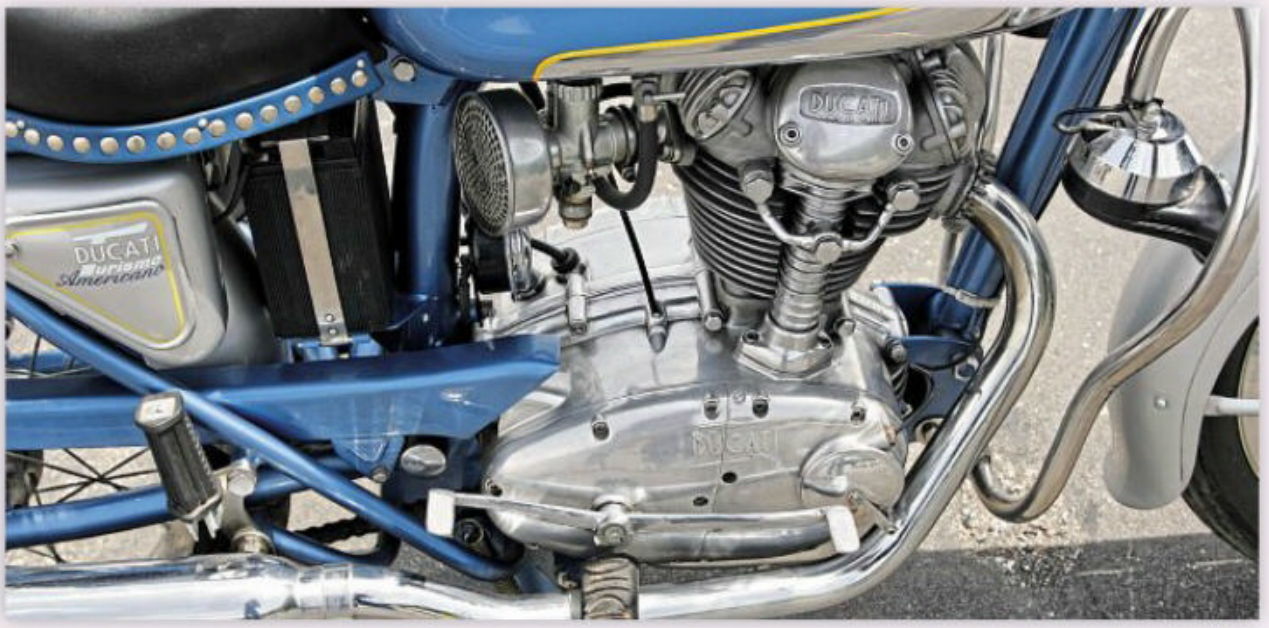
What Taglioni came up with was a technically advanced bevel driven single-overhead camshaft design. The 100cc Gran Sport may have been fitted with lights, a horn and kick-start but make no mistake – this was a real racer. With a bore and stroke of 49.4 x 52mm, the 98cc single used a forged piston to give a compression ratio of 8.5:1. A steeply downdraught 20mm SS1 Dell'Orto carburettor with a huge bellmouth fed the mixture into the combustion chamber. Exposed hairpin valve springs were used so that they could be changed quickly if they tired in a long distance race. Ignition was by reliable 6v Bosch oil-filled coil.

Because this was never going to be a production motorcycle, the crankcases were sandcast to keep down costs. The air-cooled engine was canted forward by 10 degrees for better cooling, with oil carried in the sump. Straight-cut gears were used for the primary drive, with a close-ratio four-speed transmission. Ducati claimed 9hp at 9000rpm for Taglioni's masterpiece, and a top speed of over 80mph.

While the engine might have been technically advanced, the cycle parts were more mundane, with a single-downtube open cradle frame that used the engine as a stressed member, telescopic forks and twin shocks controlling the swingarm. Running on 17in wheels and skinny 2.75in tyres, the Gran Sport weighed in at 80kg before a drop of petrol splashed into the lightweight aluminium fuel tank.

Ducati had entered the 1953 Milan-Taranto and Motogiro with a motorcycle based on the pull-rod Cucciolo engine in the 75cc class where Petrucci finished an impressive third; then in 1954 with the pushrod 98S when their best rider finished

"Ducati claimed 9hp at 9000rpm for Taglioni's masterpiece, and a top speed of over 80mph"



SPECIFICATION 175T AND AMERICANO

ENGINE: Air-cooled sohc single with bevel drive camshaft **BORE X STROKE:** 62 x 57.8mm **CAPACITY:** 174.5cc **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 7:1 **POWER:** bhp @ 7500rpm **LUBRICATION SYSTEM:** gear oil pump, wet sump **IGNITION:** battery and coil **CARBURATION:** Dell'Orto MB 22 B **DRIVE:** Helical gear primary, chain secondary **FRAME:** tubular steel single downtube. Engine as stressed member **BRAKES:** 180mm drum front, 160mm rear **TYRES:** 2.50 x 18 front, 2.75 x 18 rear **LENGTH:** 1980mm **SEAT HEIGHT:** 580mm **DRY WEIGHT:** 108kg **TOP SPEED:** 68mph

a lowly ninth. Now it was time for the Gran Sport to show its paces. In March 1955 Degli Antoni romped home to win the 100cc class of the Giro with a 61mph average. Next up was the Milan-Taranto, and again Antoni triumphed, covering the 870 miles distance at a stunning 64.1mph average. Behind him was a string of Ducatis filling every place back to no. 13. Taglioni was one very happy man.

And so he should have been. A streamlined version of his 98cc baby broke over 40 world records at Monza in November 1956, including records for motorcycles up to 250cc. Riders Mario Carani and Santo Ciceri did a fastest lap at over 105mph and even covered 1000km (621 miles) at a record-breaking 96mph. The bevel-drive Ducati was fast – and reliable. Within a year of its debut the Gran Sport had become unbeatable in its class in Italian production racing.

But although Taglioni carried on developing the Gran Sport into a 125cc double-overhead camshaft and of course the Desmodromic racers, his bosses knew that production models paid the bills. So Taglioni went back to the drawing board – and came up with a bevel drive overhead cam road bike.

The first of the new roadsters were the 125S sports model and two 175cc versions, one aimed at the sporty rider and the other at the tourist. These three were to become the foundation of Ducati's four-stroke designs. The 125 spawned 100 and 160cc variations, while the 175 grew to 200, 250, 350 and even 450cc. Taglioni's bevel-drive roadsters would be produced in Italy for 18 years.

The bevel drive roadsters made their debut at the Milan Show in November 1956. Like the Gran Sport, the 175 was an all-alloy unit construction engine with the camshaft drive by vertical shaft and bevel gears on the right, although they were helical gears for quieter operation instead of the straight-cut gears of the racer.

Production models also featured helical gears in the primary drive instead of straight cut. Like the Gran Sport, the crankcases were split vertically with a large, finned oil sump. The engine's bottom end featured a robust ball and roller bearing assembly. Both 175T









"Track success in lightweight races didn't count for much in the USA, so Joseph Berliner of importers Berliner Motor Corporation of New Jersey asked Bologna to come up with a model especially for American riders"



(Tourismo) and the 175S (Sport) shared the same 62 x 57.8mm engine. The short-stroke was to give low piston speeds and the big bore to allow for maximum valve size. All versions featured a wet multiplate clutch with four-speed transmission, operated by a heel-and-toe rocking pedal on the right. Anoraks will note that 'Ducati 175 Bologna' was cast into the triangular cover at the top of the camshaft on the first production run, but later models stated simply 'Ducati'.

The 175T's engine was softly tuned with a 7:1 compression ratio and a Dell'Orto MB 22 B carburettor to give 11bhp at 7500rpm. It was enough to push the Tourismo to a top speed of 71mph while sipping petrol so slowly that a litre could take you 350km.

But the star of the show had to be the 175S. While the Tourismo was fitted with a small solo saddle and was finished in dark red with white panels on the 17-litre tank (with equally boring black and white or black and red tank options), the Sport was finished in a sparkling metallic cherry red for the tank, mudguards and toolboxes with metallic gold for the frame, forks and swingarm. Metallic gold panels on the petrol tank made the 175S a real stunner.

With a compression ratio of 8:1 and a sporty UB 22.5 BS2 Dell'Orto breathing through a velocity stack instead of the Tourismo's air filter, the Sport delivered 14bhp at 8000rpm and a top speed of 84mph. Now that was impressive – in 1956 the most you'd get out of a BMW R50 was 90mph, while a 500cc AJS would top out at 80. With a race-bred chassis, Taglioni's bevel-drive Duke might have been a giant killer but it was hardly a gas guzzler, almost matching the petrol-sipping economy of the Tourismo.

With sales on the up in Europe, Ducati started a sales drive in the Middle East, North and South America, and Australia. But track success in lightweight races didn't count for much in the USA, so Joseph Berliner of importers Berliner Motor Corporation of New Jersey asked Bologna to come up with a model especially for American riders. Fortunately, Taglioni was a brilliant stylist as well as an engineering genius and he came up with the Americano. Take a look at Harley's full-dresser Hydra-Glide and you'll see where he took his inspiration from.

The Americano hit the US with as much razzmatazz as a cowboy leading a rodeo parade. Metallic blue paint electrified the frame, chainguard, fork and swingarm; silver-painted valanced mudguards and tool boxes brightened the look, and lashings of chrome added even more sparkle. Borrowed from the 100 Sport, the chrome plate and electric blue gas tank was pinstriped with gold and carried the 'Ducati 175' script at the front.

Swept back bars wide enough to grace a Texas Longhorn carried cushioned Tomaselli grips and sparkly plastic clutch and brake lever covers. Crash bars every bit as curvaceous as Marilyn Monroe protected the paintwork – and the stacked Silentium silencers – in case of a tumble. Twin airhorns along with the stock electric horn blasted a path through rows of boring commuters.

And as if that wasn't enough, the

seat was as impressive as any cowboy's saddle, its blue skirts decorated with over 100 chrome studs and a couple of stars that wouldn't look out of place on John Wayne's chest.

The Americano might only have the 11bhp of the 175T but the motor was unburstable. You really could hold the throttle against the stop all day long without worrying about blowing it apart. The engine might have been remarkably smooth for a single, but that didn't stop the needle of the 140km/h Veglia speedometer swinging wildly so that you never knew whether you were travelling at 80 or 120.

Those cowhorn bars knock a few mph off the top speed, but thanks to the Silentium silencers at least you wouldn't frighten the horses. Although this Ducati looks every inch the American cruiser this is not just a boulevard poser. Marzocchi forks and rear shocks endow the Americano with excellent handling – use those wide bars to turn in late and you'll soon ground out the centrestand or silencer. Full-width brakes (180mm at the front, 160mm at the rear) are more than up to the job of pinning the 108kg Americano down. You could even make the front wheel lock up without too much effort.

Ducati sales were helped by the adventures of two intrepid travellers who set off from Bologna on 30 September 1957 for a world tour on 175cc Tourismos. Leopoldo Tartarini (a one-time Ducati factory racer who later founded Italjet) and his friend Giorgio Monetti covered 37,000 miles as they travelled across five continents and 42 countries with all their worldly goods packed into cardboard suitcases strapped to the rear carrier. The little Ducatis performed faultlessly and they returned to a hero's welcome almost a year later on September 5, 1958.

But a mere 175cc was never going to be enough for the Yanks. When the Sport was bored out to 67mm to produce the 200cc Elite – an 18hp, 90mph projectile – Berliner was on the phone straight away to ask for a 200cc Americano. Launched for the 1959 season it was a mere shadow of the original. Gone was the studded seat, air horns and twin Silentiums. All that separated the 200 Americano from the Elite was a detuned motor, a new petrol tank (later to find a home on the first 250 Monza) to replace the Elite's classic 'jelly mould', and the crash bars. It wasn't a success, and production of the big Americano didn't live long enough to see the end of 1960.

The Americano look didn't end there. By the early 1960s Berliner Motor Corporation was selling over 80 per cent of Ducati's production. So when Joe Berliner asked them to design a motorcycle to take on Harley-Davidson in the heavyweight cruiser market, they came up with a massive electric start 1257cc 90-degree V4. There were crash bars, valanced mudguards, cowhorn bars, Silentium silencers and a seat with chrome studs and stars (editor's note: the Apollo has Db on the petrol tank to signify Ducati-Berliner). But they didn't call it the Americano. The Americans had started their manned space flight programme and the race to put a man on the moon. So they called it the Apollo.

Special thanks to Alessandro Altinier, who restored this Americano. Check out **www.altiniermotorcycles.com** CBG



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STEVE COOPER

Rose-tinted visors

Steve looks at the silly money asked for the top classic bike and blames it on – magazines...

"Lust after an early Honda 750/4 by all means but be prepared to pay for the privilege. If it's a three-quarter litre SOHC Honda you want, then look at the later K6 or K7."

The classic bike press is almost certainly guilty of raising enthusiast expectations above and beyond reality. It's a given that collectively, the serried ranks of classic two-wheeler titles subliminally coerces its readership to aspire to owning the most iconic of machinery.

If you're in any doubt on that score just pick three magazines that major in Japanese iron and make a 12-month tally as to what appears on the front cover. Without doubt you'll be ticking off Honda CB750/4s, Suzuki GT750s along with Kawasaki H2 750s and Z1 900s. These are the aspirational artefacts of the Seventies and a similar scenario is often repeated over the Eighties as well.

When I first began scribbling about bikes, I was told that big bikes on front covers helps sell magazines on newsagents' shelves and, after all, publishers print magazines to make money. That's a perfectly reasonable thing to do, but repetitive and reoccurring usage of superbikes on front covers also has a negative effect on dedicated enthusiasts.

It's not too hard to disenfranchise your readership if you consistently headline and champion the cream of the crop. Yes, of course, people like to read about these high end machines but very few can actually afford them. Many who couldn't afford a H2 or a 750/4 back in the day can't find the cash now either. And repeatedly telling them what ground-breaking, fearsome, evil, scary, unbelievable pieces of kit these machines are even now only rubs salt into the wound.

There's a raft of decent Japanese classics out there that don't have to cost the earth and are often one hell of a lot more real-world relevant. Even better, these regularly overlooked machines are often better as practical, every day, classics.

Starting off at the top of the heap if your budget won't stretch to a genuine Kawasaki Z1, have a look at a Z900A4; they're not as cheap as they once were but you still get four pipes, four pots and two cams for a whole lot less. Even better, take a long hard look at the Z650 with similar styling, bags of character, a lot less weight and still relatively inexpensive.

Even if Suzuki Kettles aren't up there in terms of price with a Z1 they're not exactly being given away either. Their immediate replacement in the guise of the GS750 is still a bargain route into superbike ownership and those that know them would argue they're better than many of the period. Based on the Kawasaki 900's engine you get power, handling and still have some money in the bank.

No Kawasaki triple is ever cheap but if it has to be a Special K look at the 400s; almost as quick as a 500 without the iffy handling or premium price tag. Alternatively, consider the final KH500s which may not have the same reputation but are still stunning to look at and make all the right sounds for less dosh. No two-stroke triple will ever be cheap but Suzuki's GT550 and 380 are the overlooked bargains in this sector. They may be carrying a little bit more weight but they're hugely involving to ride and, dare I suggest it, actually practical as well.

Lust after an early Honda 750/4 by all means but be prepared to pay for the privilege. If it's a three-quarter litre SOHC Honda you want, then look at the later K6 or K7. The 6 has the profile of the early example while a 7 has a unique style all of its own. Either way you get a 750/4 devoid of niggles and have money left over.

Apparently in Yamaha world it's the air-cooled RD400 and liquid-cooled LC350 we're supposed to salivate over and, money aside, why not etc. However, if it's VFM (value for money) we're looking at then a decent air-cooled RD350 will seriously undercut the £8000-£10,000 being commanded by the 400 and still be a giant killer. Alternatively treat yourself to an RD350 YPVS complete with the legendary power valves and run rings around those pesky LCs; cheaper, better handling and faster too. And if you really want the look of the coffin tanked RDs, give an RD250 post 1976 serious consideration; because you will still be impressed.

In the end, even three or four decades on, we're all being subjected to media hype and peer pressure to choose certain bikes others consider are the best. And yet the reality is that many who buy a so-called icon are disappointed in them. Technology has moved on leaving all these machines and many more long, long behind. If you want to ride fast and hard buy a modern machine, don't throw your heard earned cash at a bike someone you've never met says is what you should aim for. Go for the practical option and enjoy it for what it is and not for what someone else reckons is better. CBG

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

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PAUL MILES

Knights of the road

Paul laments the days when a gentleman doing a good deed stood no risk of being chased by lawyers for attempting to help.

"A new word has crept into the vocabulary of every organisation. That word is litigation and it's arrived at the doors of motorcycle clubs throughout the UK."

There has been a fair bit of debate within the Vintage Motor Cycle Club of late and this is nothing new – its good to talk after all. But this latest topic of conversation centres around something we've always assumed just happens – I mean of course, the breakdown van. Being the *Vintage* club implies that the sphere of interest is mainly with bikes that tend towards the ancient. This is no longer true of course, as nowadays it's anything 25 years or older, but when the club was founded after the Second World War, old bikes were, indeed, just that. Mostly flat-tankers, belt drives and surface carburettors, reliability was never the prime mover in the decision to ride one.

With that in mind, there has long been a tradition within the VMCC to provide support for their long-suffering bikes and riders in the form of a breakdown van (not to be confused with a broken-down van, that's something else entirely). Our intrepid pilot could set out on a run, safe in the knowledge that, should the worst happen, a knight in oily-armoured overalls would be along at some point to sweep him up into the womb-like safety of the van. All you needed to do was sit at the side of the road, break out the beef paste sandwiches and wait for the volunteer driver to turn up in his fishmonger's van, pressed into recovery service just for the day. Why a fishmonger? (other trades are available) you may ask. The answer – the recovery van was supplied and manned by a volunteer, freely giving up of their time and missing out on the riding fun in order that the rest of his section doesn't. It has always been like this, so much so that we've pretty much taken it for granted. Until now.

Blame whomever you like, but pretty much as soon as lawyers were no longer restricted to polishing the brass plates outside their offices and were allowed to advertise their services, a new word has crept into the vocabulary of every organisation. That word is litigation and it's arrived at the doors of motorcycle clubs throughout the UK.

A VMCC section near me recently put on a run for its members and about 40 took part in a gentle perambulation around the countryside. One of those riders dropped their bike – it happens to the best of us. The upshot was that the bike suffered damage to the right-hand side and was deemed to be unfit for further participation. No matter, the breakdown volunteer was summoned and the Norton was loaded on to the trailer (be honest, when did you last see a fishmonger's van?). Unfortunately, a strap broke during the recovery and the bike fell off the trailer, sustaining further damage, but this time on the left-hand side.

The Norton owner was then faced with some stark choices, he could either inform his insurance company that ALL the damage was a result of the initial crash, which would be a lie, or tell the truth. He chose the latter option, as it was right and proper. The insurance company duly paid out on the damage caused in the initial incident, but understandably felt the additional destruction was outside their remit and prompted him to pursue a claim against the breakdown driver. Which he then did – to a volunteer, remember. The recovery driver checked his own insurance and found that they were only covered to transport their own vehicles and not other peoples', so no help there. Faced with the prospect of leaving their volunteer member hanging out to dry, the section rallied around to raise the money required to pay off the Norton owner, whom I'd imagine doesn't join in on many runs with them now.

That's an impossible situation, for the insurance company who understandably shouldn't have to pay for damage caused by a third party; for the rider, seemingly compelled into asking for compensation from an unpaid volunteer and mostly, of course, for the breakdown volunteer, who is expected to pay for accidental damage incurred while doing a good deed.

This, sadly, is the world we now live in. The discussion within the VMCC, and a situation that applies to ALL clubs that stage riding events, is whether to continue offering such a service if the drivers and clubs are ultimately to be held liable. Specialist event breakdown cover is available – at a price. The cost, for typical smaller events, would be prohibitive however, working out at about £5 per head on smaller runs. So we (the VMCC) seem to be moving towards advising sections not to offer breakdown support on most runs.

No longer then the cheery wave and smug grin as you motor past your stranded friend, because they're not going to be rescued. Perhaps it signals a return to the good old days when you always stopped and offered support, tools and replacement parts. But whatever you do, don't let them trip over your spanners. 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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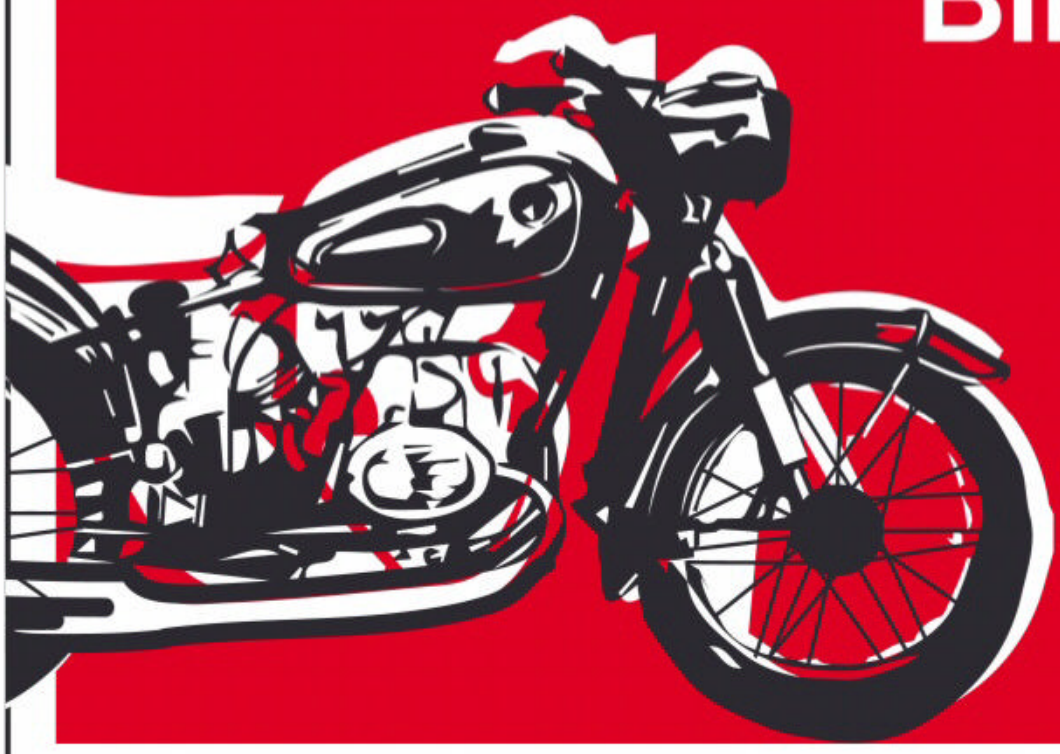
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1974 Ducati 750ss

Illustrations and Words by Martin Squires

1972 Imola 200

The 1974 Ducati 750ss is a highly desired superbike, not only due to its small production number, but the fact that the production version is incredibly close to the Imola 200 race-winning machine of 1972.

Paul Smart reluctantly agreed to ride for Ducati after being persuaded by his wife, Maggie. He also admits that he was initially unimpressed with the Ducati when he turned up to Modena for practice. Having just come from a race in Atlanta where he had ridden 'One of the most evil handling motorcycles in the world', a works Kawasaki, this four-stroke twin seemed like a rather nostalgic machine. Ducati had tried many top racers as they had big dreams for their highly developed engine, but had been turned down as it was unproven. Smart took up the mantle and after 10 laps of practice he didn't have much to say; a few adjustments were made and he was out for another 10 laps. Due to having just come halfway across the world Smarts mood wasn't great and he was feeling pessimistic. In an interview with rideapart.com in 2012, he remembers:

*"...when I came into the pits I was ready to criticise and rip the bike to bits, but as I came in I knew something was up. The whole team was jumping up and down, clapping and patting me on the back. It seems I had just broken the world Champion Agostini's Modena record — on street tyres!"**

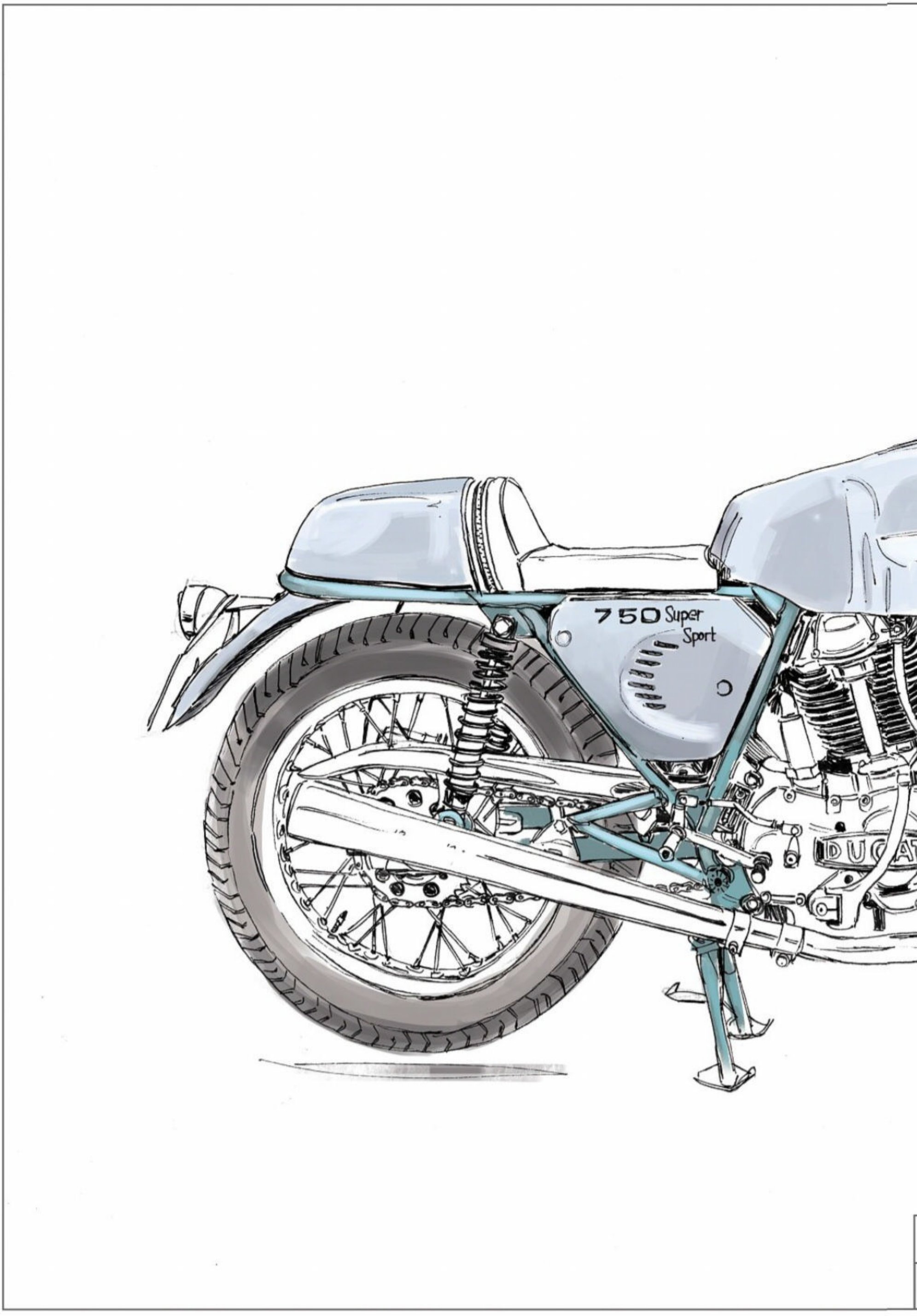
Despite this, come raceday at Imola, one of the events of the year in Italy, Agostini was on pole and the field was full of good riders on competitive machines. But the Ducati's were up there, already causing rumblings in the pits from those that had regretfully refused a test ride. Team Manager Fredmano Spairani was so convinced that they were going to win on home turf, he told Smart and his teammate Bruno Spaggiari to agree to split the prize money as they would be taking first and second, if they did this they could keep their machines.

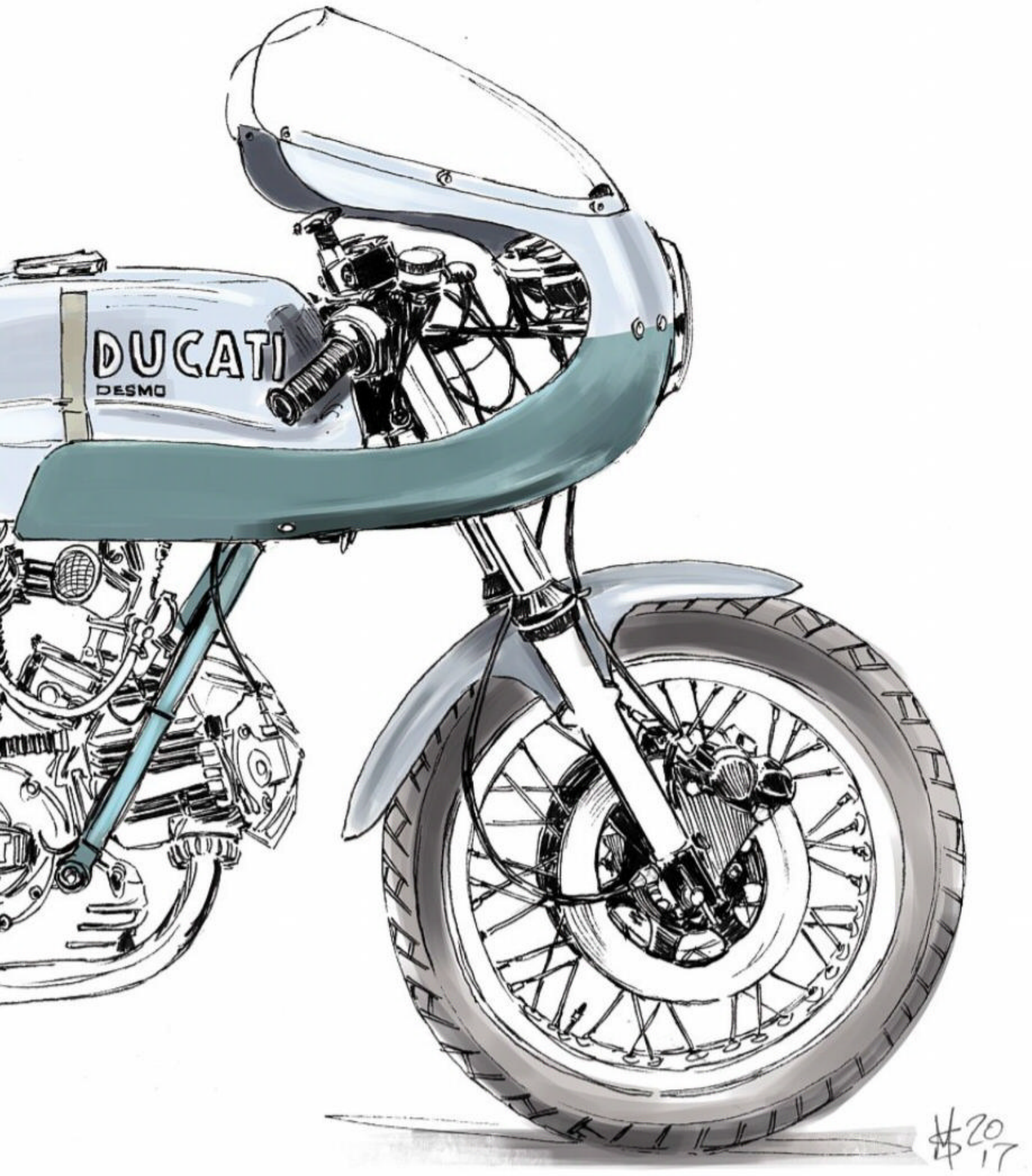
The circuit is an old style Grand Prix affair which runs around the hills behind the old town of Imola. These were public roads but the circuit was designed for the racers to hit high speeds during the 200 mile race. Smart and Spaggiari were hitting speeds of 150+ mph on the circuit and managed to stay out in front and fulfil Spairanis' prophecy by placing first and second respectively.

*"Bruno and I crossed the finish line first and second, and I think I relaxed for the first time since boarding the plane Atlanta. The realization of what you had done really hit when riding the bike back into pit lane and seeing the faces of the entire race team, especially Taglioni and Spairani. Total elation. They had gambled and their bet paid off."**

Smart did get to keep the 750ss on the condition that he campaign it in international races in the UK. Keeping his word he went on to win the Hutchinson 100 at Brands Hatch beating the current champion Phil Reed, another great piece of marketing for the Ducati factory.

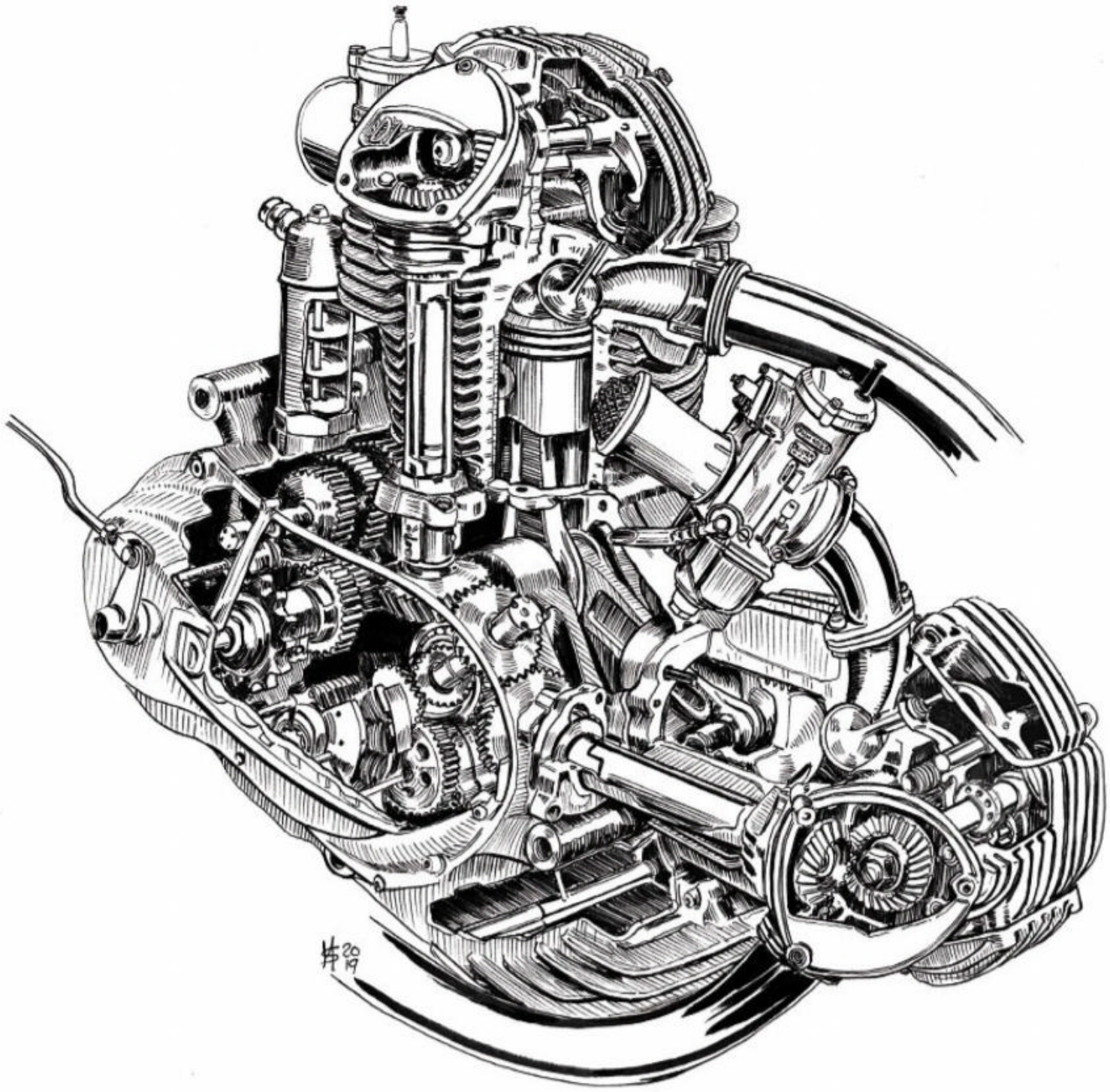
*Paul Smart interview, rideapart.com


750 Super
Sport



References: DUC750SS_001	Sketchbook Travels: STOCK Motor Cycles Ducati 750ss	Drawing No: 002
Artist: MARTIN SQUIRES Date: May 2017		Amendment: 0

1974 Ducati 750ss



The machines that won the 1972 Imola 200 were based on the 750 Sport roadster, released in the same year. Ducati afficionados would have to wait two years until the factory released their first real race replica, this was the 750ss. Only 401 of the original “round case” version were produced, the only round case to use desmodromic valve gear.

Fabio Taglioni, chief designer and technical director at Ducati, had been using desmodromic valve systems in Ducati racers since the late 1950s. The system wasn’t new at the time, it can be seen in patents as far back as 1896. Since then it had been used by various parties including Mercedes-Benz who used it in their Formula One cars of 1954-55. The first Ducati “Desmo” was the 125 Grand Prix.

Valve springs had become a limiting factor in engines running at higher revolutions, as they could cause valve float, being unable to apply enough force to close the valve.

“The specific purpose of the desmodromic system is to force the valves to comply with the timing diagram as consistently as possible. In this way, any lost energy is negligible, the performance curves are more uniform and dependability is better.”

Fabio Taglioni

In order to *“force the valves to comply”* the desmodromic system uses a stronger return mechanism in the form of rocker arms to close the valve.

The 750ss was very close to the 1972 winning machines. The engine, the large Imola fuel tank and round back seat unit were the same, while the fairing was a cockpit version rather than the full fairing as used on the race bikes. Design-wise the cockpit allowed the engine to shine, giving it a more desirable and stylish look.

With only a limited number made in the first place the numbers were destined to dwindle further over time, not only to the usual wear and tear but to the fact that they were mainly being used for racing, due to the power delivery of the desmodromic valvetrain and the Delorto PHM40A 40mm carburettors.

A famous example of this is a 750ss turned racer named Overdog campaigned by Phil Schilling (tuner) and Cook Neilson (rider and editor of Cycle Magazine at the time). Overdog was very competitive at club level and by 1977 the 750ss was bored to 883cc and renamed ‘Ol Blue due to the change in colour to dark blue. In the same year ‘Ol Blue famously beat all at the AMA Superbike race at Daytona. Highly publicised as this was through Cycle Magazine, Ducati knew they had something to offer the racing community, due to cases such as this, in return it would generate more publicity for the brand.

Ducati encouraged their dealers to sell 750ss machines to racers who would campaign them on the track, by providing over-the-counter race kits to further the performance of the 750ss. Stock examples of the 750ss are extremely rare as a result of this initiative; most were modified for racing, not only were the engines tuned and blown up, frames were modified and the fibreglass tanks would deteriorate under race stresses.

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PAUL D'ORLÉANS

May I plug you in, Edward?
Paul looks at motorcycle designers Page and Turner and wonders when such masters will grace the electric bike world with their skills...

"Despite the pie-in-the-sky possibilities of electric technology, we've yet to see a George Brough, Edward Turner, or Massimo Tamburini working in the electric motorcycle sphere."

Blame it on Tolstoy: my winter reading list has inspired ruminations on beauty – or the lack of it – in motorcycle design. There isn't much rolling on two wheels I consider to be beautiful today, and I wonder how much we ever saw, as a percentage of what's available?

Beauty is not a science, nor are there rules one can follow to create it, much to the chagrin of mediocre artists, writers, and industrial designers. Take, for example, the curious story of two titans of the British motorcycle industry: Valentine Page and Edward Turner.

Page, the elder statesman and a talented engineer, has his fingerprints all over the 1920s and 1930s offerings of Ariel and Triumph, and he designed dozens of excellent machines. Solid as a rock was Page. You could build an industry on such a man, and the British did. Yet none of his motorcycles could be called elegant. His designs reflected his mind: competent, rational, and methodical: the exact enemies of beauty.

It was his protégé, a vain megalomaniac, who took Page's designs and made them beautiful. The story of Turner's magical transformation of Page's Triumph single-cylinder line-up, with sexy names like 2/1 and 5/5, into the Tiger 70 and Tiger 90, is well known in the history of motorcycles. Turner was a master stylist, and (for better or worse) took a lot more engineering risks than his mentor. By drawing up new sheet metal for Page's Triumph singles, they became the best-looking motorcycles in the industry, and very popular too, which saved the company's bacon in the mid-1930s.

Turner ditched Page's solid 6/1 650cc parallel-twin motor, and installed his much simpler twin-cylinder engine in the chassis of the Tiger singles to make the Speed Twin. Page's 6/1 engine was a better engineering job, with a single camshaft and more robust construction, like a helical gear primary drive, but nobody wanted it because it was ho-hum. Turner's was a lovely motor, and a timeless design. His motorcycles are stand-outs in the industry, and examples of industrial design whose appeal endures far beyond the lifespan of the product.

Despite the pie-in-the-sky possibilities of electric technology, we've yet to see a George Brough, Edward Turner, or Massimo Tamburini working in the electric motorcycle sphere. Granted, Brough, arguably the first motorcycle styling genius, appeared some 25 years into legitimate mass-production process of internal-combustion motorcycles, and we're only about 10 years in with ebikes, but we've had a vehicle design industry for over a century, and transportation design schools for half that, so why are electric motorcycles generally so uninspiring, or downright ugly? Not-beautiful ebikes are damping the growth of the industry, much as boring design isn't helping traditional motorbike sales. Nobody has actually needed a motorcycle for 50 years or more, unless they live in a third world country, so the dangerous and costly toy you're selling should, at the least, be very appealing, if not absolutely beautiful.

I'm a big fan of the concept of electric motorcycles. I curated the first-ever exhibit of ebikes in the world, 'Electric Revolution' at the Petersen Museum. The motorcycle industry looks a lot like 1901 today, with dozens of small manufacturers popping up around the world; and I find this exciting. Do I own an electric bike? No. They are generally fugly. There are exceptions, but they tend to be extremely limited-production gems, like the Cake Kalk or Walt Siegl Motorcycles' Pact. As a whole though, the ebike industry makes really ugly motorcycles. Why is this? We are witnessing a real-time change of design priorities: the rules have been blown wide open, and all we have left as fixed points are two wheels, a handlebar and a seat. That is total freedom to create, but Alan Moore (the writer of the graphic novel V for Vendetta) noted that 'freedom is terrifying'. Contemporary motorcycle designers, along with their out-on-a-financial-limb employers, seem terrified to embrace their tremendous opportunity. Perhaps the lack of defined limits is too much largesse for designers to work with?

People become amazingly creative when given parameters, but that's no excuse. I want my electric equivalent of a Brough Superior SS100, or a Speed Twin, but we haven't seen anything approaching timeless from the electric motorcycle industry. The stark contrast between Walt Seigl's supermotard Alta custom and the vast majority of electric bikes tells me one thing: brilliant designers are working, just not in the EV industry. Until then, I'll keep riding my noisy, leaky, polluting vintage bike, because it's beautiful, and they're not. 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 Scrambler is great, but the Trophy always won the toss

New
RETRO

I MAY BE OLDER, BUT I'M CERTAINLY NOT wiser. Luckily-enough to go on the International launch of the Triumph Scrambler 1200 in Portugal, I fell for it hook, line and sinker – something a journo should never be doing. But the looks, the power and the feel of this naked adventure bike had me under its spell, especially after a day riding on road and a whole day riding off-road, with proper off-road tyres. I could imagine one sitting at home; a big statement for someone whose job it has been to test most new bikes from the last decade.

And so it came that I was custodian of one from April through to this January. When I first saw it I was still taken by it and together we have covered more than 8000 miles. From rural Norfolk to meetings in the middle of London, Aberdeen, Manchester, Goodwood and Brighton with photographic gear, airports fully loaded and countless fun runs around East Anglia, the Triumph has had a couple of years' worth of riding packed into 10 months. Oh, and I love taking it off-road, where I can. And taking pillions. It's like my go-anywhere donkey, but with the pace of a racehorse.

The engine is lovely. It gives silky, stepless power up to a quoted 89bhp, with 81lb.ft of torque. So it pulls from anywhere; in fact sometimes you just run out of revs. Those two hulking 600cc pistons are so smooth, despite their size and yet give enough 'character' to feel authentic. The fins are not just cosmetic, but the radiator shows the reality. You just can't make a powerful bike these days that will pass emissions and noise tests without being water-cooled.

THE GOOD BITS...

Also, can you imagine any old engine with 600cc pistons that gives as polite manners when cold, as when warm? Unlike the similar engine in other Bonnevilles, the Scrambler has just one throttle body to allow the frame to be narrower, so the exhaust could be routed where it is. But this doesn't cut power and increases torque. The crank is also lighter, to improve inertia for off-road riding.

The gearbox is perfect for the engine, with great ratios and a superb final gear. It feels like you've one more to go at first, yet you can take it well up the rev range, without it feeling at all unusual. Clutchless up and down changes are faultless and it is one of the best gearboxes I've used recently.

The handling is as good as it gets for a bike featuring off-road tyre sizes and long-travel suspension. With quality forks and twin rear shocks, all adjustable, you can get the Scrambler feeling totally neutral in the corners, giving predictable, accurate handling without turning into a plank. And the brakes are superb!

The electronics can be what you want them to be. If you like twiddling, then there are five different rider modes that optimise the engine characteristics, ABS and traction control. For example, off-road mode turns the traction and ABS off and smooths out the power delivery. Rain mode gives really soft power delivery and puts the traction control on red alert.

There is also what all manufacturers are going crazy about, a fancy dash. It tells you everything and just like your phone, you can change it all to suit you, plus you can get it to talk to your phone or camera. If you so wish. Oh, one small feature I really liked; the buttons light up at night.


...and a famous footballer

This helped the Scrambler become a reality...



Big daddy and its little sibling

Head for your local green lanes and you're on a bike that is as good as any off-roader that weighs around 200kg. The Metzeler Tourance tyres look like they'll work, but won't, unless its spring or summer and the ground is nice and hard. To enjoy anything more than farm tracks, you'll need proper knobbly tyres or you'll get stuck in ruts, spin the rear and lose the front. But with the right tyres, it's great, eating up gravel roads and keeping up with more single-minded bikes; just remember it weighs significantly more than those bikes you're out with…

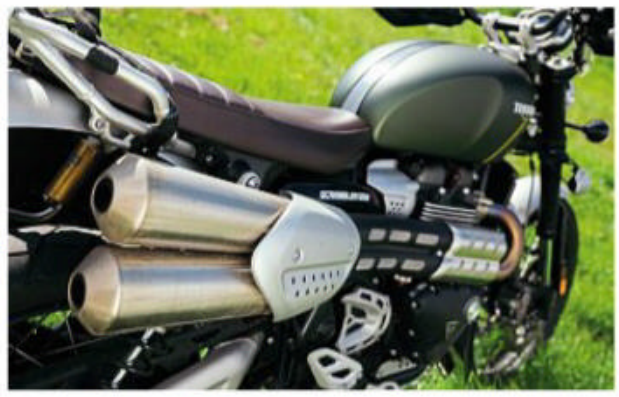
The quality of finish is superb. I have always left long-term test bikes outside to speed up any deficiencies in the finish and the Triumph is holding up extremely well. Just one nut has come loose and the headlight, which is absolutely fantastic, has a narrow beam, so that needed adjusting for me vertically. Even the chain, which on older Triumphs was on the cheap side, has been fine, needing just a couple of adjustments. The Tourance tyres have done well too – they've still got tread on them although they are squared off from motorway miles – but more than 8000 miles is good.

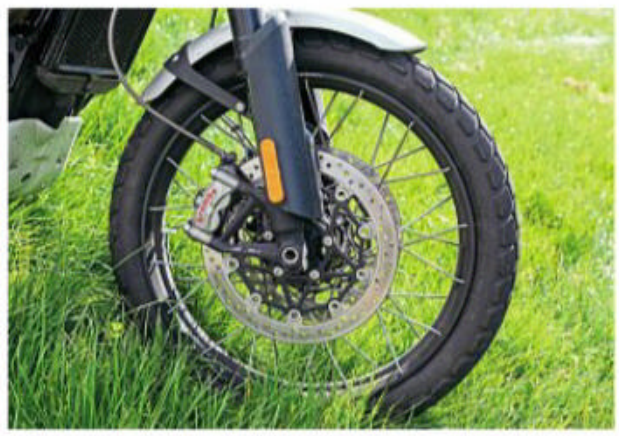
The cost is subjective, but compared to the rivals, looking at what the Scrambler 1200 offers and how well it seems to be made, plus Triumph depreciation, The Scrambler 1200 XC looks good. £11,500 on the road, a 500-mile service (for around £50-£75) then minor/major services at 10,000 mile intervals, which are around £300/£500 as an estimate. Nothing has gone wrong, the insurance is not high and the couple of tumbles I've had off-road have broken nothing.

THE NOT SO GOOD BITS...

The engine has a peculiar practice of increasing the revs when stationary as you let the clutch out. This is due to the lighter inertia crank and Triumph not wanting you to stall. But if you then bring the revs on to meet the clutch, the revs seem to dip. The fly-by-wire throttle adds to the fluffy response and it can make slow speed riding, or pulling away on a tight turn, a little hit and miss. Now, there may be an update to the software that I haven't had, but two-up, filtering or trying to pull out in that tight space becomes more guesswork than I would like.

The seat is rubbish. It looks thin and it is thinner than it looks. Fuel stops are anything between 130-175 miles and you're glad when that light comes on. I realise that looks are important, but my posterior is more important… and the pillion seat is even thinner, therefore firmer, while their right leg is pushed out by the silencers; so it really isn't a nice place for a pillion to be. It's a real shame, because the bike can really eat the miles.







Added to the poor seat, is the naked bike wind protection; or lack of. Being just over six foot, I'm upright so long journeys are tirsome if cruising at higher speeds. Moving back on the seat helps this, and there is a taller screen available.

That signature exhaust that looks and sounds magnificent, is just too hot on a warm day, especially in traffic. With two catalytic converters your right inner leg cooks like a Sunday joint, especially in textile trousers. I don't have an answer, as it looks so good and it needs to be as it is for emissions, plus of course, it is great on a cold day…

The chain, as with all Bonnevilles, is on the right-hand side. There's nothing wrong with this, but it feels most strange lubing your chain with the other hand – and I'm left-handed!

The keyless ignition is totally pointless. And supid. Every other ride it flashes to tell you it can't detect the key, so you frantically pat down your pockets. And you need to take it out every ride to put on your steering lock or to undo your filler cap. Triumph, throw it away or make everything keyless.

In the summer, when I didn't have to go more than 100 miles or so, I had a choice of the Scrambler or the 1953 Triumph Trophy TR6. I liked riding the Scrambler – but I loved riding the Trophy.

AND SO?

The Triumph Scrambler 1200 was designed as a Bonneville that really could go off-roading, which it can. It can also cruise, get you through the city, take you for country cruises and look great at the local bike meet. It has some foibles, but what bike doesn't?

My biggest issue is who is it for? It's great at off-roading; but who in their right mind would take a near-£12,000 motorcycle with road-based tyres off-roading enough to exploit its ability? Put off-road tyres on and the torquey engine will finish them off in no time on tarmac. Or just buy an off-roader for a couple of grand? It's great at cruising, but you'll miss the lack of protection and the seat will just pee you off. It's great at commuting, filtering and heading around B roads; but so are smaller, cheaper bikes.

I just can't work it out. I love the Scrambler 1200, but I don't get it. Maybe that's why it had such an effect on me when I first rode it.

So it comes down to you – does it fit what you want from your bike? If it does fit your needs, then boy, you won't be disappointed. It's a real do-it-all bike, it's a safe financial bet (well as much as any new motorcycle can be) and, well, do you know of a better-looking new bike? CBG


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We have a go on:

YAMAHA YM1

Yamaha's 1960s street scramblers are an example of how the Japanese bike makers were starting to get their machines just right. Steve finds a rare YM1 and does what he loves to do – give it a blast

WORDS STEVE COOPER **PHOTOGRAPHY** GARY CHAPMAN

As the Yamaha organisation found its feet following tentative exports to the United States of America, it realised that two things substantially aided sales: successful racing results and an active development programme.

Racing at the Catalina GP, a tarmac and dirt event, had brought Yamaha a significantly wider audience. Fumio Itoh may only have come sixth in the 1958 race but he'd also beaten some seriously big names and brands at the same time.

There's even a newsreel of the event where the narrator makes light of the strange Japanese Y-A-M-A-H-A and its rider: history would show his cynicism was desperately misplaced.

Spurred on by this and other successes, Yamaha had a rolling programme of development which soon saw their two-stroke twins rapidly developing.

Initially based around the German Adler MB250, the firm swiftly took the design to levels of performance few would have credited. The early YDS1 and YDS2 were well received stateside but the pivotal sea change came when the third iteration, the YDS3, arrived on both sides of the Atlantic.

Arguably this is the bike that cemented the Yamaha brand with customers and spoke volumes about the mind-set of the Yamaha R&D team. Fast, rev happy, reliable, sure -footed and, crucially, crammed full of fun and character, it was pretty much an instant hit globally.

Sharper than both comparable offerings from Honda or Suzuki the YDS3 rapidly became the fast rider's missile of choice. However, following the old American adage that there's no substitute for cubes, fans of the bike were clamouring for more power.

Yamaha came late to the party that was motorcycle construction and had some catching up to do. Without the same level of resources or experience as their rivals, the company did things very much their own way and it's a facet of the firm even to this day – Yamaha has always been somewhat maverick. With neither the resources nor finance to design a totally new machine from scratch, the YDS3 was effectively reworked, but in Yamaha's own unique way.

Whereas others might simply go for a bigger bore, Yamaha opted to both increase piston diameter and increase the stroke length, thereby creating the 305cc YM1. Installed in the existing 250 twin's chassis the firm effectively had a new model without all the attendant hassles of making something totally novel.

The bike and its progeny would act as a stopgap for just a few years, giving the firm vital breathing space that would then allow them to go to the next level. Sales of the YM series enhanced Yamaha's reputation and, most importantly, added an extra revenue stream to their finances. The YM1 was never officially imported to the UK but *CBG* has a rare opportunity to sample one – and it's a peach.

If you know something of your early Japanese strokers you might very well reckon the red and white twin to be a YDS3 when viewed from the right-hand side. It has similar panels and overall profile to the 250 and the only obvious giveaway is the 305 badge tacked onto the left-hand side, almost as an afterthought. The main colour (Candy Red in this instance) covers most ▸

We have a go on:

of the tank, both oil tank and side panel, the tops of the shock absorbers, half of the front suspension as well as the headlamp body. Aesthetic counter points come courtesy of both the white tank panels and the black/white seat combination, the latter being something of a Yamaha signature design through the mid-Sixties.

The bike's appearance is unquestionably conservative but at this juncture the Japanese stylists were finally doing their own thing rather than slavishly following German motorcycle designs. A pair of decent sized guards, the rear being valanced, keeps the worst of the road dirt off the rider whilst the deep chainguard, in theory at least, keeps oil off the bike's rear end.

The YM1 was produced to be a practical machine, hence the enclosed suspension at both ends, oiling points along the various cables plus grease nipples on the brake pivot arms and the gear linkage. Fitted with a 12-volt dynamo, points and coils the bike's electrics were standard, dependable Yamaha fitments from the likes of Mitsubishi and Hitachi.

The striking speedo-cum-tacho gauge in the headlight follows the market trends of the time. This initially takes a little getting used to but, blissfully, both needles swing in the same direction unlike some Japanese bikes of the period. Our test bike runs a full set of genuine Yamaha indicators; these would have been a dealer fit option when the bike was new. Having purchased the bike to be ridden on the road, the current owner managed to track down a set of indicators and lenses fairly easily via trade contacts and the VJMC. The actual indicator switch on the left bar was an extremely lucky internet find from the USA costing just over £100 including shipping and taxes… well sometimes you just have to have the right parts!

Moving the YM1 around ready for our road test it feels low and weighty, which is pretty much standard fare for the Yamaha twins of the period. Iron barrels add to the overall mass and the frame is a relatively chunky piece of engineering in its own right.

Firing up the elderly twin is a fairly straightforward affair once the lever of the unusual twin union tap is pushed downwards. With the choke lever flicked down on the pair of Mikuni VMs it only remains to turn on the ignition via the switch in the right-hand side of the headlight binnacle.

For the uninitiated the kick-start is mounted on the left, an artefact of the bike's German ancestry, but once sussed out it's easy to use. One kick from hot or two from cold has the 305cc motor running and the choke can be flicked up fairly quickly ready for the off. Ah, yes, here's one of the YM/YDS foibles; they all run engine speed clutches which take a little getting used to. Just like many MZ singles the entire clutch mechanism is going around at engine speed and, for the unwary, it all feels just a little

"Yamaha came late to the party that was motorcycle construction and had some catching up to do. Without the same level of resources or experience as their rivals, the company did things very much their own way"



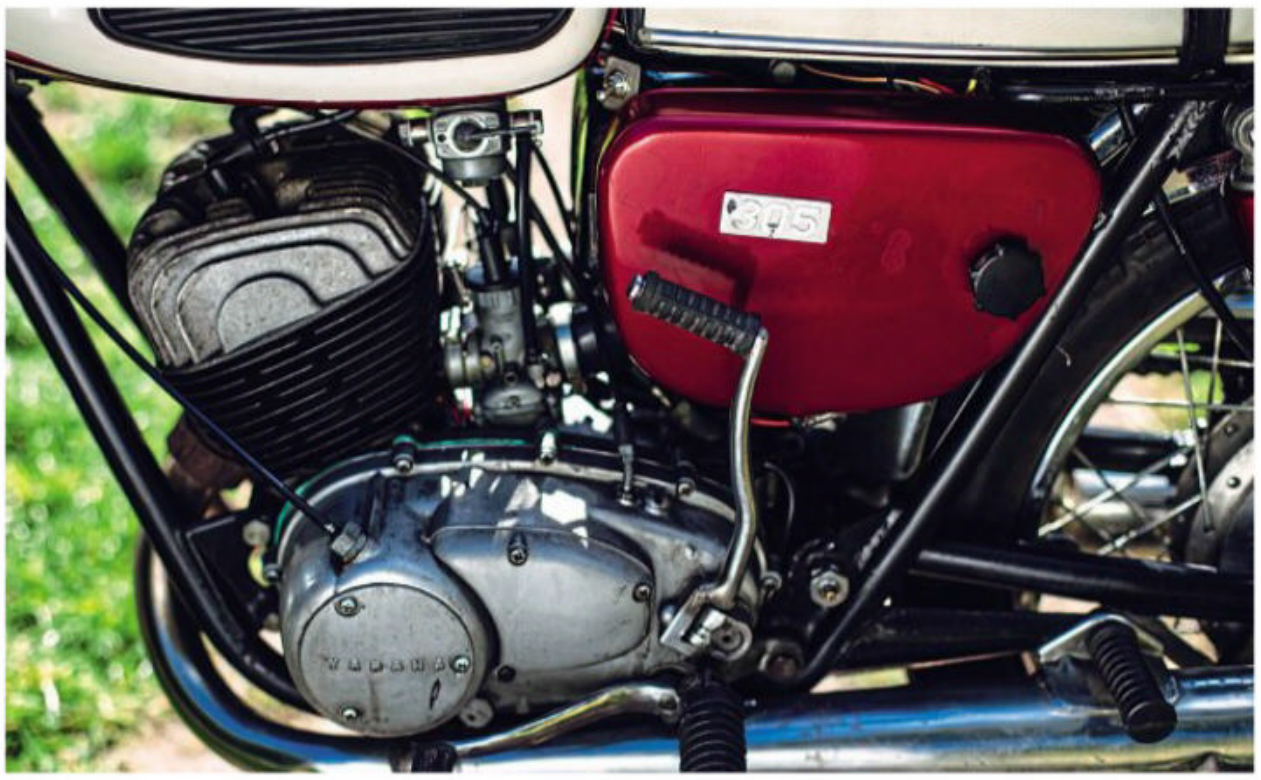




SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE TYPE: 305cc two-stroke, air-cooled, twin **ENGINE BORE AND STROKE:** 60.0mm x 54.0mm **CLAIMED HORSEPOWER:** 29bhp @ 7000rpm **MAXIMUM TORQUE:** 20.3ft/lb @ 6000rpm **TRANSMISSION TYPE:** five-speed/chain **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 7.1:1 **CARBURETTORS:** 2 x VM24 Mikuni **BRAKES – FRONT:** Drum **BRAKES – REAR:** Drum **FUEL CAPACITY:** 17.8 litres/3.9 gallons **OVERALL LENGTH:** 2005mm (78.9in) **WHEEL BASE:** 1295mm (51.0in) **WIDTH:** 780mm (30.7in) **HEIGHT:** 1050mm (41.3in) **DRY WEIGHT:** 163Kg (359lb)





alien. Too little revs and the motor bogs down momentarily which in turn prompts the rider to add revs, which then seems to make the clutch feel grabby. Once your brain is suitably recalibrated the clutch is no longer an issue, until you forget next time!

Once underway, the bored and stroked motor pulls well and gets a surprisingly fast wiggle on. Gear changing requires a firm foot and touch of feel; YM gearboxes apparently can be a tad on the notchy side but once again it's all part of the learning process of getting to terms with a machine from more than 50 years ago.

The bike can be hustled along at a fair rate of knots and even if the suspension is primitive by today's standards it's still both safe and entirely capable. At speed the bike is light yet not in the least bit flighty; its mass keeps it planted on the road in ways RD350 owners can only dream of!

Before getting too gung ho with someone else's pride and joy it's always a damn jolly good idea to get a feel for the brakes. Having ridden and owned Yamahas of similar vintage I've more than an inkling of how they're going to behave and I'm not wrong. Both brakes are more than up to the job and only, perhaps, feel just a little bit wooden but I'd put that down to the period OEM linings. The front is a fairly substantial twin leading shoe device with its partner being a conventional SLS unit. What impresses me here is just how good the

The owner's tale
Martin Kemp

I have always liked the look of the early YDS Yamahas, so a YM1 made a lot of sense – the looks of the YDS3, with an engine producing 20% more torque.

The YM1 engine is a delight to ride, a lovely induction roar (as long as you wear earplugs), and a willing and very torquey engine, which is only let down by the large gap between 4th and 5th gears and slightly ponderous gear selection. The crankshaft mounted clutch is light to use and is only slightly grabby.

The bike handles and stops very well, even with the original rear shock absorbers. Happy at 60mph two-up, up to 70mph cruising speeds are possible solo. The YM1 has so much character and really is the best of all the early generation Yamahas. Having ridden it to the IoM Classic TT in 2018 I can also state it's a very usable and practical bike.

For anyone who is used to riding a RD400 or 350LC, the bike picks up revs far slower, being fitted with a much heavier crankshaft. Also it doesn't have a power band like the later RD400 or 350LC. In fact it's completely devoid of a power band, just a lovely linear spread of power...I love it.

We have a go on:



"At speed the bike is light yet not in the least bit flighty; its mass keeps it planted on the road in ways RD350 owners can only dream of!"

rear anchor is when you take into account all the attendant pivots, rods and linkages used to get the braking force from the right foot pedal over to the left-hand face of the rear hub.

The more I ride the YM the more it makes sense and within 20 minutes or so we're getting on famously flying around the lanes of Hampshire. I'm revelling in the torque this oversized 250 is putting out and really getting the hang of the middle three ratios that suit what's best described as 'spirited riding'.

Top gear, fifth is effectively superfluous for today's photoshoot simply because it's so high. Just like many Japanese bikes right up to the early 1970s, top gear is effectively little more than an overdrive. Working that elderly 305 motor is unquestionably a pleasure not a chore but I am conscious of an ever-present roar and it's not coming from those rakishly slash cut silencers either. Most of the decibels are coming out from under the seat as the primitive, pressed steel, air box rasps away at the country air.

The set up makes for an extremely loud drone that, over long distances, could have some serious impact upon your hearing; ear plugs are probably mandatory when riding YM1s!

Other than the bike's deafening roar and its engine speed clutch it's actually a remarkably relevant machine to ride even more than half a century after its inception. Its road manners are more than acceptable, its engine still eminently usable in modern traffic. Both the YM and its 250cc YDS3 brother neatly mark a transition period in Yamaha's development of the seminal lightweight two-stroke twin.





Our bike in camera is effectively a generation on from the four-speed YD1 and YD2 yet just one of a series to run engine speed clutches. The bike also still holds true to its German ancestry with vertically split crankcases and this will still be the case for the next pair of 250s as well.

The subsequent YDS5 and YDS6 250s will both run similar engines but with clutches mounted in the more conventional location. Ultimately the YM 305 series were stopgap models until Yamaha had the resources to produce a true, full on, 350cc stroker twin. And as luck would have it we just happen to have access to one, so look out for what is possibly Yamaha's most significant two-stroke twin ever and one most *CBG* readers probably have never even heard of! CBG

Variations on a theme

The YM1 landed in the States just as the street scrambler scene took off. Essentially road machines with dirt trail pretensions, the genre proved to be remarkably successful and all the major players swiftly jumped on board the gravy train.

Prerequisites included high bars (often braced), exposed suspension and the obligatory high pipes. Yamaha had been in the vanguard of the faux off-road movement with a raft of converted road machines culminating in the YDS3 based 250cc Big Bear, named after a famous American off-road race.

The bike proved to be a huge hit and so it was inevitable the YM1 would receive a similar makeover. The resultant YM1C sold well across the 1966 model year and apparently was used off-road, some were even brave enough to use it in competition!

1967 saw a visually similar YM2C that actually embraced a key element of the all new YR1 Grand Prix road bike. Although the engine cases remained vertically split the clutch was now on the layshaft which necessitated a seriously revised gearbox. If any bikes mark Yamaha's transition from vertically to horizontal split engine cases it has to be both the YM2C (along with its street brother) and the YR1 350.

By 1968, street scramblers were becoming yesterday's must-haves and Yamaha had a much more focussed dirt bike in the wings. Designed with huge American input the DT1 trail bike would be the final nail in the street scrambler's coffin.

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From the dealer's Perspective

Where there's muck, there's brass – what exactly goes on behind the scenes of a classic bike dealer? Steve Cooper looks at the reality of one dealer who imports many bikes and parts

WORDS STEVE COOPER

MOST MODERN COMPANIES ARE set up and run around something called 'a business model' and for many it's a good thing to work from – a plan – but not necessarily if your line of trade is old motorcycles and their spare parts.

To succeed in this rather specialised game you'll be needing an innate knowledge of the subject matter, a decent business brain, the ability to move with market trends and be pretty good at spinning a large number of plates at any one time, whilst answering emails and dealing with customers.

Selling old motorcycles isn't the most straightforward of exercises and it's unimaginably difficult to predict what will sell and what won't; therefore a good and varied stock should aid sales.

CBG spent a day with David Wise, proprietor of Moto Classic.com and his son Henry looking at the classic market and some of the bikes available. Perhaps one of the most surprising things is that the business isn't automatically rammed with high end, big money bikes; but then again the likes of BSA Catalina scramblers, sand cast Honda CB750s and Munch Mammoths have a nasty habit of potentially tying up lots of money for long periods of time.

Sat in serried ranks of desirable classics, Suzuki GSX-Rs rub shoulders with small Ducati singles, Mobylette mopeds jostle for space alongside Bimotas, Mexican built Carabellas share shelf space with Bultaco Metrallas and Fantic 125 Regalorita Comptitziones nuzzle against Honda Monkey bikes. Perhaps you'd not automatically consider a Benelli step-through for £250 as your next bike but experience suggests that this and others like it won't be sitting on the floor too long.

Over in the corner is a 50cc Puch Cobra sport moped-cum-off-roader and there's a very tidy Ducati ST2 with full touring kit that looks rather tempting.

We were in for an interesting day...

CBG – So how do you go about sourcing machines and parts for sale?

DW – We set up our own company in Japan some years ago and it's proved a very shrewd move as we can see Japanese classic motorcycles will be





an ever growing part of our business.

When a Japanese collector decides to move on his bikes or parts we are in the right place at the right time and with all the local contacts who can expedite shipping, storage etc. We also bring in a lot of machinery from Italy and Spain; it never ceases to amaze us just how many people are still out there with seriously significant collections of older bikes.

Some compendiums of older machines are totally unknown to anyone outside the owner's family, whilst others are well known about. We recently acquired the entire stock of older, rare, Honda spares from the late Dave Ayesthorpe's estate. A couple of local VJMC guys have been helping us sort and identify the countless parts and we're confident we'll be helping many classic Honda fans with their ongoing projects.





Hopefully this significant cache of spares will kick-start numerous stalled restorations and rebuilds. Coincidently quite a large amount of our stock comes from deceased estates now; it appears to be a global phenomenon where enthusiasts have collected parts no one else wanted decades ago. We'll always follow up on leads to bike/parts collections we're given but generally sellers contact us rather than us chase them.

CBG - Most people will automatically assume there's easy money to be made in this business; is that true?

DW - Stock is getting more expensive as more and more people wake up to the value of what they have. On average we probably only agree and shake hands on 40% of the collections of bikes and/or spares offered to us. Knowing when to walk away is vital if we're to make reasonable profits. We may get a chance at a collection someone thinks is worth £100,000 when, in reality, we'd only be looking at £12,000 tops.

Negotiation is key to getting a price that everyone is happy with; if we can get this right at the time of purchase then currency fluctuations and exchange rates aren't too much of an issue. If we, as dealers, pay too much then that cost ends up being passed onto customers and no one wants to be paying over the odds. Therefore we have to be realistic about what we buy in.



CBG - Looking at the current market, what's selling well?

DW - It's a surprisingly chaotic mixture if we're honest. British bike parts, especially from the last few years of production in the 1970s, sell very easily. The youth of the period are now looking to acquire or restore the bikes they could only dream of back then. We've also seen a lot of interest in sending Japanese bikes back to Japan which might sound like madness but it's not. Japan has a large number of collectors and these people are often looking for the Japanese machines that were not sold in Japan, i.e. American or European market export models.

We've seen quite a surge in sub 50cc machinery sales where riders are looking for something older, classic yet reliable that will allow them to take part in charity runs; small bikes certainly have a significant future in our experience. The motorcycling demographic is definitely getting older and we're now selling lightweights, electric start or easy to ride machines to these clients; if it keeps older riders on two wheels that has to be a good thing.

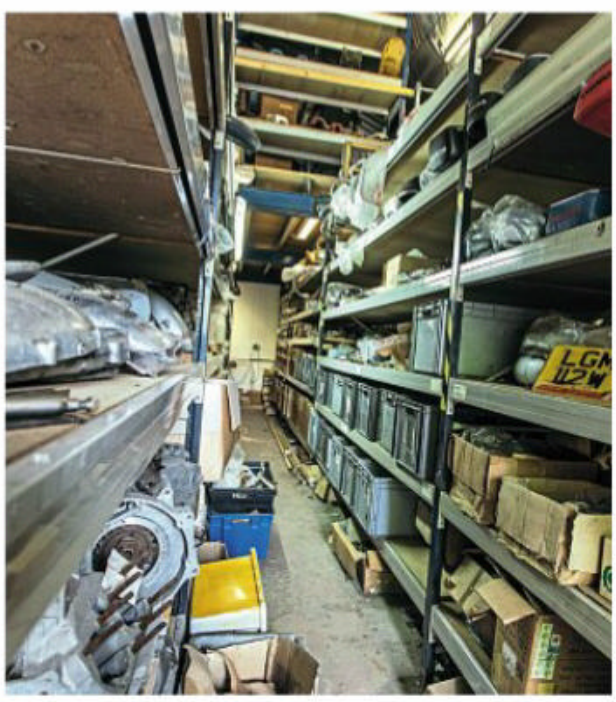
We also see good sales for what used to be called grey imports before the bubble burst but not necessarily on the high end sports 400 four-strokes or 250 strokers that used to be in demand. As an example we generally have a handful of Kawasaki Esrtellas in stock and these reliable four-stroke singles sell to riders who might like the idea of BSA C15, B25 etc. but don't necessarily want the attendant maintenance and servicing issues.

And we've definitely found that the classic off-road is growing massively; vintage enduro bikes are strong sellers, as are scramblers and trials machines.

"We may get a chance at a collection someone thinks is worth £100,000 when, in reality, we'd only be looking at £12,000 tops. Negotiation is key to getting a price that everyone is happy with."









CBG - Do you find your business is becoming more seasonal?

DW - To a degree, yes. We tend to buy bikes and stockpile over the winter period when we're not too busy with customers. This gives us the time to sort, appraise, catalogue etc. Ideally, just like everyone else in this business, we like 'easy win' machines and projects. If a potential customer can see and hear a bike running then they are a lot more likely to buy a runner come springtime. Full-on project bikes seem to sell all year round regardless.

CBG - Some dealers seem to run a side line assisting in personal imports. Is that something you can help with?

DW - We might be able to help but it's really not our core business. There's potentially a lot of work and we'd much rather bring in a container full of bikes simply because of the economics and the ease of managing all the paperwork. However, we can offer





the following advice for anyone who wants to import a bike on their own: Make sure you get a certificate of deregistration from the vendor or company selling the bike as this will certainly aid dating with the DVLA. Always ensure you have the NOVA paperwork in place and if you're going through a third party don't accept any excuses for not having it; HMRC are hot on this now. If you're buying from Japan you really do need to check that the bike hasn't come from the Fukishima area where the nuclear power station went down. Bikes from the nearby areas have to be checked for radiation!

CBG - Is there such a thing as 'the correct location' to sell a classic motorcycle?

DW - Yes, very much so and knowing where to place a given machine can have a huge impact on its price/value; a perfect example would be something like an Ossa Yankee. This is a machine built in response to an American agent's request for a large capacity off-road machine. The Spanish factory basically combined a pair of 250cc singles to deliver a 500cc, two-stroke, twin.

Very few people in the UK even know what an Ossa Yankee is and we'd probably struggle to sell one here for sensible money. However, put the self-same bike into the auction at Mecum (in the USA, said to be the world's largest vehicle auction) and we know for certain the bike would sell for double its UK figure.

And dependent upon what the bike is, its condition and who might be interested, the prices can go really mad. We occasionally have the Austrian PUCH DS50 for sale but, to be honest, there's not a lot of interest for them in the UK, so a tired one might make £500. Now take a half decent one and offer it within its home market and we could possibly see £5000!

It sounds crazy but then consider the UK cult of the Yamaha FS1E… can you really see an American collector paying £6000 for one? Selling the right bike in the right place has a massive impact on value.

CBG - Do you think the market is sustainable and where do you see yourselves in the future?

DW - In the medium term, the level of interest is likely to remain high in our opinion. Bank interest rates are still low and many enthusiasts who have some disposable income are looking for some enjoyment rather than worrying about poor returns.

It's perfectly possible to buy an older bike as a runner, have some fun with it, maybe even go touring on it, then sell it for the same money or even make a profit a year on.

As you may have spotted I have something of a passion for Bultacos and we're now looking at commissioning production runs of hard find parts such as fork tubes, tinware etc. At present we're only looking at Spanish machines but who knows what else we might consider in the future? We're also looking at building replicas of unusual Bultacos simply because the original bikes are mega rare and hideously expensive. Only seven Mk15 Bultaco Pursangs were ever made and, if one comes up for sale, it will easily make 40,000 Euros. We've made the frames and found suitable running gear so now we're adding Yamaha YZ250 engines and interest is strong.

CBG - Thanks guys!

From our time at Moto Classic it's very apparent that the classic motorcycle scene is extremely buoyant and continues to weather the vagaries of recession, Brexit and the like remarkably well.

Even if old bikes and their components aren't as cheap as they once were, both are still in huge demand and there are still sources of supply. What's also apparent is that not everyone is focussed on the high end stuff. There's massive interest in the unusual, the obscure and even the downright weird. Or to put it another way there's ultimately always a buyer for a bike out there somewhere; it's just a case of getting the pair together.

And if you were curious as to what a bike costs from dealers like Moto Classic who buy by the container load then here's a small slice of what was on offer when we visited: A seriously cute Gilera 125 with period patina could be yours for £1495, just £200 more would see you taking home Honda's bombproof VFR750 and if you had five grand burning a hole in your pocket you could find yourself torn between a rather tidy BSA A65 or a supremely smart Bimota YB7.

Between those to self-set limits there was a raft of other, interesting machinery and something guaranteed to catch your eye… so it was just as well we left the credit card at home!

Our thanks to Moto-Classic.com CBG

"The motorcycling demographic is definitely getting older and we're now selling lightweights, electric start or easy to ride machines to these clients; if it keeps older riders on two wheels that has to be a good thing."









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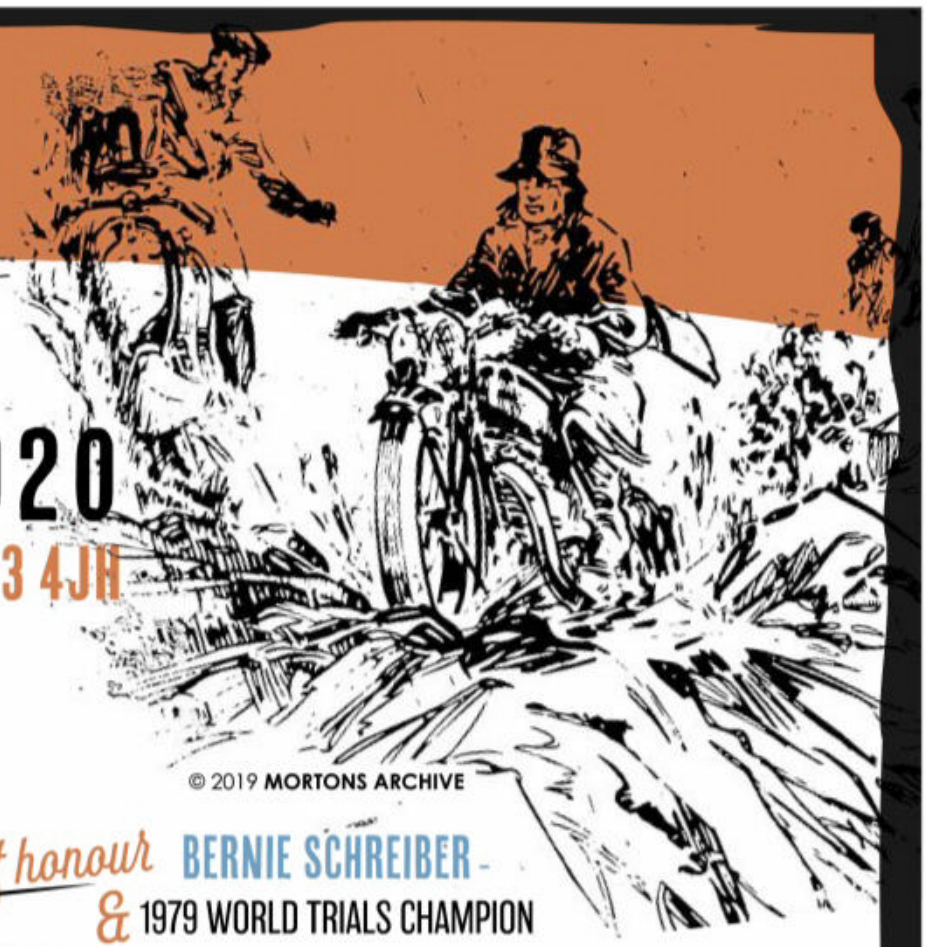
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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY ROBERT DAVIES AND TIM RILEY

BSA ROCKET THREE

Road and Track bike

Where does inspiration come from? If we all knew the answer to that, we would all be millionaires – possibly. But what about the inspiration to build a particular motorcycle – where does that come from? This month we are looking at what inspired Tim Riley to build a BSA Rocket Three Cafe racer that could do it all

A completely delightful restoration performed by Mick Holmes on a 1969 BSA Rocket Three. For this motorcycle BSA went to the design firm of Ogle, hoping for some kind of design inspiration, but instead got the 'bread bin fuel tank and ray gun silencers'



WAS IT A SIMPLE LOVE OF CLASSIC TRIPLES that inspired Tim Riley?; an expensive set of clip-ons that had been hanging around with nothing to do for several years, or was it childhood memories of his mother's connection with the old BSA works?

Maybe it was all these things, and more. Deep down, Tim wanted a machine that carried the original DNA of the Beeza, but the power, reliability and modern technical additions that would truly make it a bike fit for the 21st century. Also, he intended the bike to be a dual purpose machine; to be a great bike to take on the track, but also to take him on adventures around the continent. Was it possible to produce a motorcycle that could elegantly do both?

However, just to put things into perspective, let us contrast the old with the new just for a moment – a 1969 model that Mick Holmes, a devoted BSA fan restored in recent years. In 1969, when BSA and Triumph were also at their wits end, and money was tighter than the proverbial, both companies were sending stuff over to the States as fast as they could.

As a consequence it was increasingly difficult, nay almost impossible to get the same bike here in the UK where they were being built. This particular machine started life in California, before it was repatriated back to the UK in 1984. During its time abroad, the bike received one good rebuild on the engine, receiving new cams and a Boyer electronic

ignition. Once back home in England, two owners threw more cash at it before the latter owner passed away, and the son was left to sell off his father's precious collection.

When Mick purchased the bike in 2007 for £3300, it hadn't run for a quite some time, and had been left in a poorly maintained and scruffy condition. Hence everything had to come apart – didn't it?

A 21ST CENTURY CAFE RACER

Tim, who initiated this particular build, had a set of 1968 Rocket 3 crankcases (there are three crankcases on a triple) from Holland of all places, from some years ago, and had sensibly stowed them away until a suitable time arrived.

That time came in late 2017, and Tim took his engine along to Les Whiston's Trident MCS workshop in the West Midlands, a company well known in the racing world that specialises not only in the manufacture of Rob North frames, but just as importantly, in the latest upgrades to BSA Rocket Threes and Triumph Tridents (more of Les' work later). Tim asked them to build the rolling chassis to incorporate his engine and so make a bike equally at home on the race track.

CBG: WHY A ROCKET THREE, TIM?

"The family joke is that I had the bike built just for the clip-on handlebars, and there is some truth in that. I had these Tommaselli clip-ons that I had bought way back in 1977, they have an angle that you don't see any more. Then I got hold of some standard BSA Rocket Three crankcases in Holland – as I already had the major part of a performance engine that had been lying in pieces in my workshop at home.

"But there is a deeper reason of course, and that's simply because I love these classic triples, and have a family connection with BSA. My mother was a shareholder for BSA for some years so there was always a connection with the company. While the shares never made her rich, my exposure to brand marketing and to the Small Heath factory had a big impact.

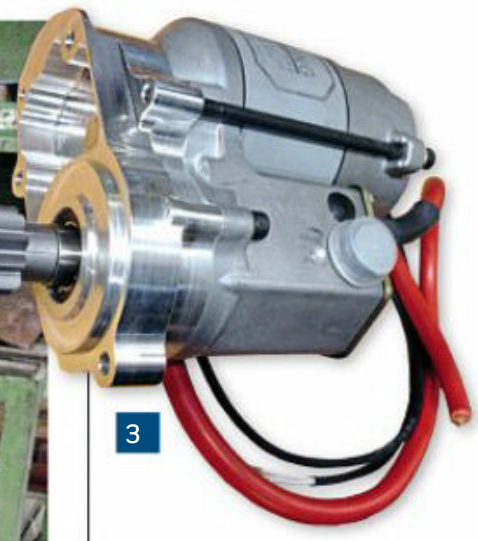
"At Mallory Park I used to watch the Rob Norths as part of Transatlantic Teams and I loved them so much that I eventually owned, and then sold, a Rob North F750 (albeit with a Norman Miles frame) but about eight years ago I felt the need to get back on a 'North' triple. I have known Trident MSC for



1. And the latest Rocket 3 following more than 40 years of technical development

2. Crankcases and a set of clip-ons by Tommaselli were the catalyst for construction





3



5



6

some time, knowing that Les had bought the rights to produce the frame, so I asked Les to build the rolling chassis."

BSA and Triumph stopped making the Trident and Rocket Three back in the first four years of the 1970s, but that classic triple engine had much potential wrapped up in its design that was aching to get out. Some enthusiasts and engineers could see that, and, as time went by, individuals including Richard Peckett (P&M), Neil Beadling (Nova Classics) and importantly, Les Williams and ex-race Shop colleagues turned their attention to the engine, starting to develop it as the power unit for a classic racer. Les Whiston has helped by continuing to reproduce the Rob North chassis and hard to source engine performance parts.

I asked Tim what specifications he asked for to produce a machine for road and track; a project that took around 18 months from start to finish.

"The most common improvements generally speaking are electronic ignition to replace points and condensers; improved handling due to modern shocks, progressive springs and new damping

3. Ark Racing starter motor. Very reliable

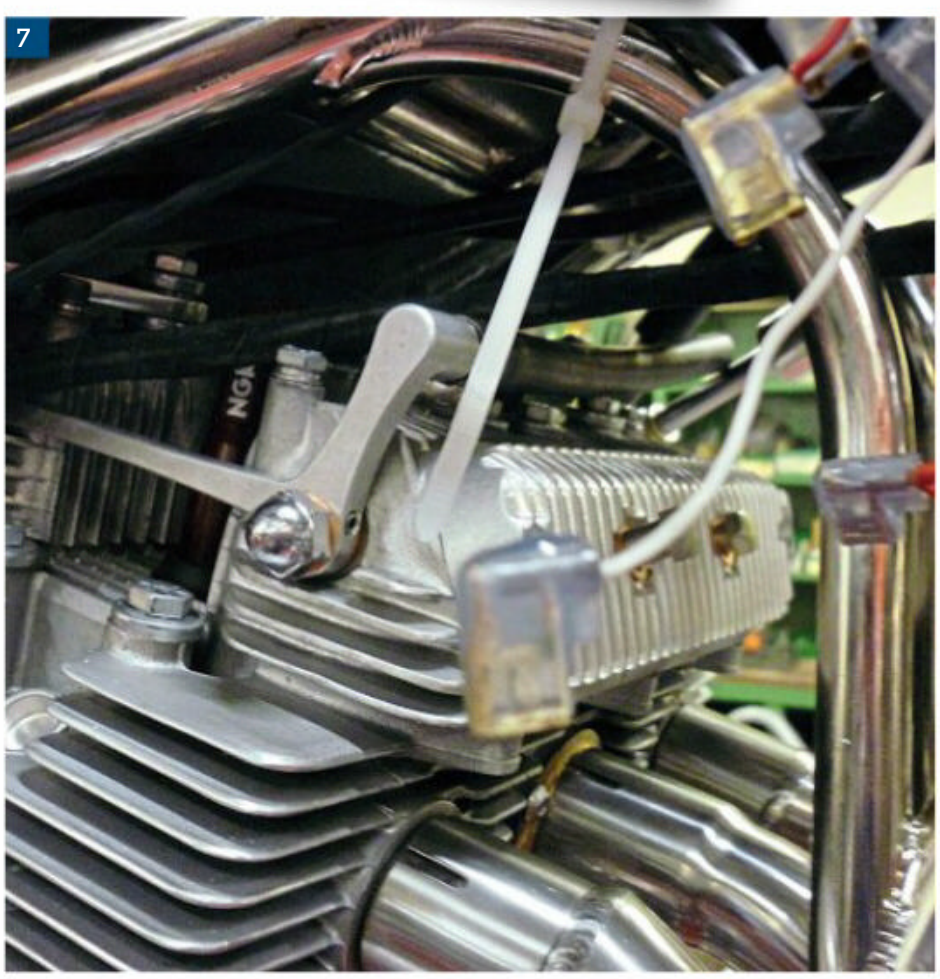
4. Rob North frame being built in the jig

5. Belt drives are far superior in every way, from the traditional chain; in this case to take the strain of the starter motor and 90+BHP motor. The front pulley and belt is from Bob Newby who specialises in these items. The clutch is Norton diaphragm, with bronze plates

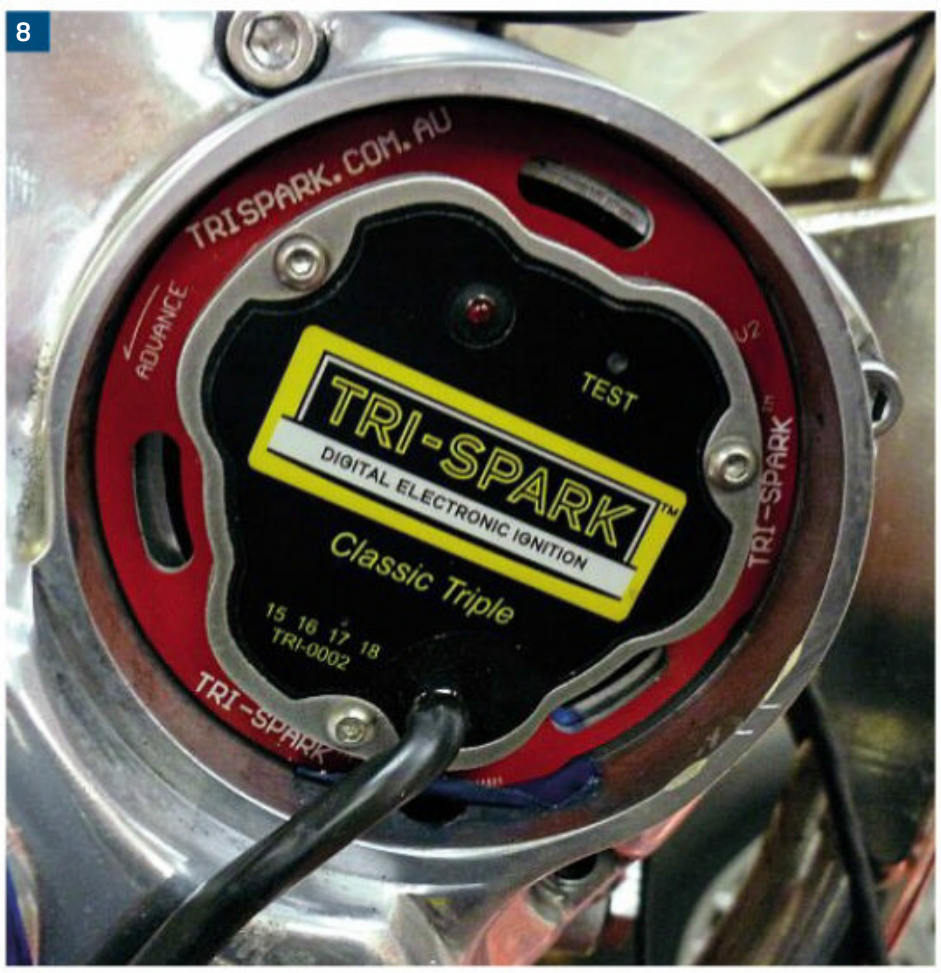
6. A standard 1969 R3 Head with angled side located plug holes

7. Sort of similar, but light years ahead. Apart from the noticeable central plugs, the race spec such as gas flowing, lightened valves and rockers all lies beneath.

8. Tri Spark ignition



7



8





1. 1969 Rocket 3 rider's view

2. The clock faces may look similar, but are now completely digital, while the switch gear is now very 21st century. The angle of the Tommaselli clip-ons can now be clearly seen, and yes they do feel much more comfortable than others that come out straight. And of course the engine has an electric start

3. Outer gearbox casing and internals

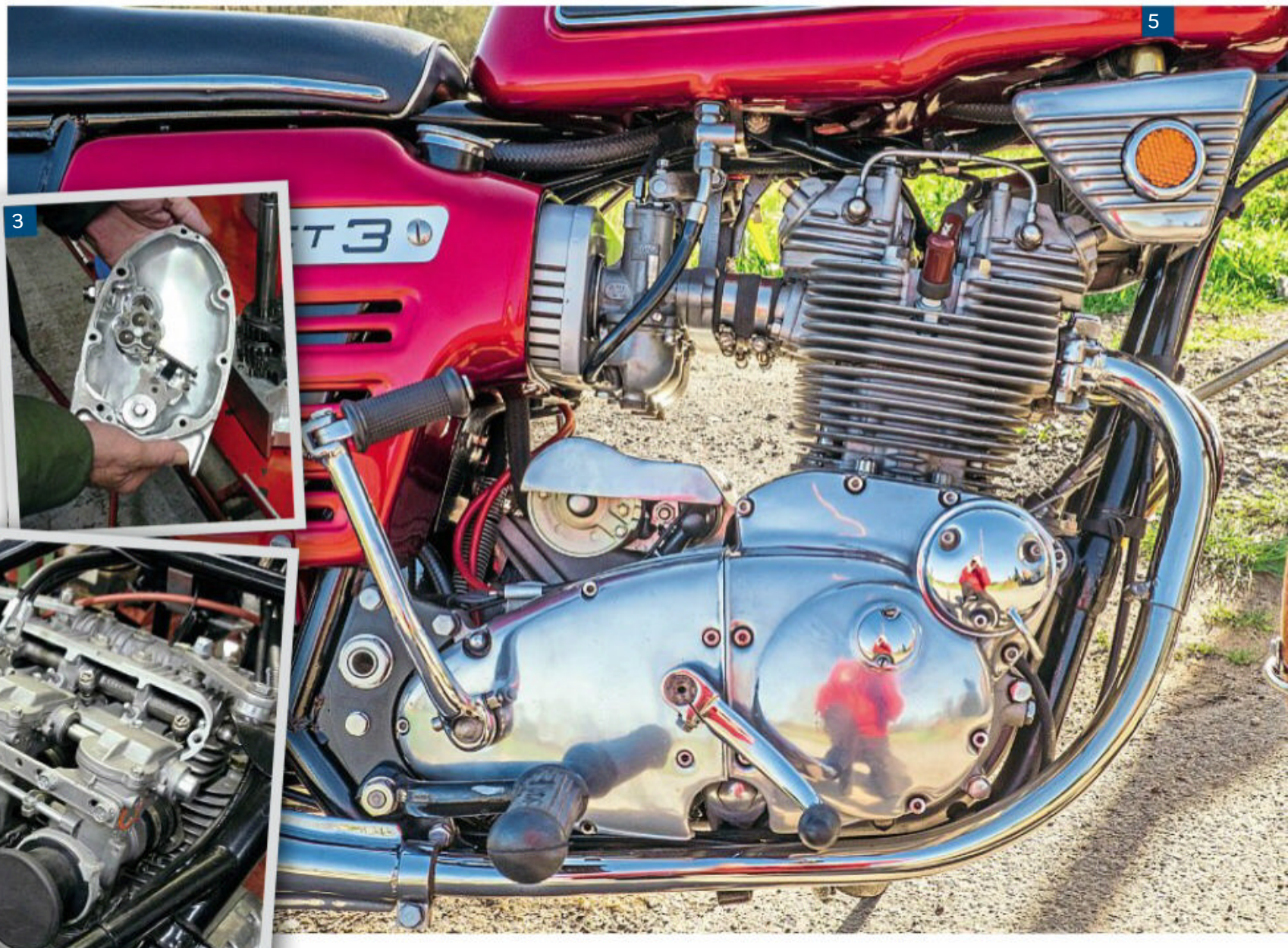
4. Keihin CR Carburettors; and you can just see where the rocker cover is missing for adjustments to tappets

5. You can see why so many people love this engine 50 years on, it had so much potential for development.

systems; lighting, and of course an increase in power output. Essentially I was aiming for a bored and stroked race engine – it is now 930cc – but with a nod towards some practicality by having standard compression to allow the bike to be used for fast road touring.

"I intend to take the bike to France later this year. The engine has a lightened and balanced billet crank, Saenz steel rods, Nova Classics barrel and a gas flowed and centre plugged head, prepared by P&M (Peckett and McNab, who started designing and building frames back in the 1970s). All valve gear has been lightened and uses a 51B race cam. The 51B cam was designed and developed by Megacycle Cams in the US. They are a specialist cam makers for many classic machines. The 51 B has a profile where the dwell angle, or the opening time, is increased for better breathing. This cam is fitted to most racing triples. The standard cam is the factory developed TH13. The gearbox is standard T160, but oil flow to the whole engine is improved by an uprated 50/30 pump. This means that it has 50% higher return and 30% better feed.

"Suspension is all by Maxton, an engineering company in Cheshire that is renowned for its quality suspension units. Most of Maxton's customers are racers, which is a testimony to their units; but there is a growing number of road riders and specialist builders who are turning to their products. As for the electronic ignition, I went with the tried and tested Tri Spark system that I also use on my T160 and my



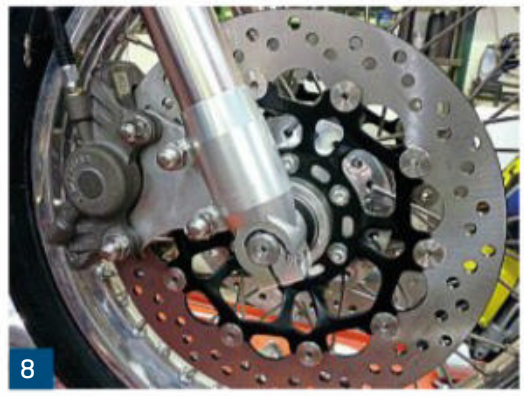




6. Tim is by no means the only customer for Les Whiston's rolling chassis. This one was for Carl Cookson, who wanted a cafe racer spec. CR Racing front suspension but with Lockheed calipers. A much modified Rocket 3 engine increased to 930cc, adjustable clip-ons with custom grips and LED indicators at the very tips. Stainless Exhaust system. Chromed CR adjustable suspension units. Rear sets and linkages set into the curved rear of the Rob North frame. The full race fairing has been cut in half – but with style. Both hubs made in-house. Gorgeous



7. Rob North frame in Ducati metallic silver, British Racing Green tank and front mudguard. The down pipes have been made in-house, but Tim commissioned black ceramic coating for the exhaust to give durability and better temperature containment



8. Maxton suspension with original magnesium AP race calipers; discs Peckett & Mcnab



9. A BSA Rocket 3 – but not as we know it – moves confidently into the 21st century, capable of road or track days, with all the advancements of modern technology. And yes, these bikes will always be desirable and collectable

WHO IS LES WHISTON?

Most people who are into bikes have heard of the enigmatic racer-turned TV star, Guy Martin; but who exactly is Les Whiston? Les Whiston is one of the most amiable, quiet, unassuming but talented engineers, who lives and works in the West Midlands; but is the man that Guy Martin goes to when he wants a new bike built.

Guy Martin met Les at the Isle of Man TT in 2015. Les had an end garage at the event, and Guy came along saying that he wanted to ride the wall of death, but with a BSA Triple. Guy's father owned a Rocket 3, so it was inevitable that Guy developed a fondness for these big triples. Unfortunately Guy then had a serious accident which kept him from this challenge for about a year.

Initially Guy wanted to use the original Amal carburettors, but Les urged him to use a set of Keihins. Guy ploughed ahead, fitted the Amals, but it wasn't long before he contacted Les to say that he was having trouble getting the engine to run right. So a courier quickly conveyed the Keihins to Guy which solved the problem. Amal carbs certainly have their place on a standard engine, and they are the historically correct carb; but – you can't beat modern technology for racing success.

Also I have to point out that Les has a very busy business to run, making spare parts and on rare occasions, building a complete bike. However, it is the Rob North frame and variations of the Rocket 3 and its Triumph stablemate the Trident that he specialises in – this is his bread and butter. But then a few years back, his regular work was interrupted by Guy, who requested that not one but two specialist bikes be built. And as time went on, and Guy's bikes took up more and more of Les's time, his regular customers were pressing him to get their bikes finished too.

All of this put increasing pressure on Les through the first half of 2017 to try and get the race bike ready for the 2017 Classic TT. However, the first machine that Guy wanted to use was the unique bike to take on the dangerous wall of death challenge in 2016. And he pretty much assembled this himself from the parts Les supplied (roughly 85% of the bike). Once this unusual and special bike had done its job, Guy wanted a bike that he could take to the TT Classic races, for he had set his heart on this type of competition.

And just as a note for anyone who may have watched the wall of death challenge on YouTube, to see Guy riding a V-twin Indian; this was done more as a promotional effort, and the Rocket 3 wasn't even seen. That's TV advertising and big business for you.



1

1972 road-going Rocket 3. Keihin CR Special Racing carbs were chosen over the more traditional large bore Amals, as I wanted to avoid having to 'tickle carbs' every time I started the bike. The Keihins are 31mm smooth bore/round slide, while the usual Amals are 32mm.

"The frame is finished in Ducati metallic grey, while the tank and seat unit is in glorious British racing green. Also tailored to the rider is a very tasty mid green diamond stitched racing seat by Bill Roberts.

"I wanted a solid, reliable starter motor system, which was supplied by Ark Racing of Willenhall, and is fitted beneath the carburettors. It's a powerful unit, small and compact, powered by a Lithium gel battery and this combination will perform more than adequately, hopefully continuing to do the job for some time."

Once the roads dry out *CBG* hopes to discover just how Tim's bike has turned out. Thanks go to all at Trident MCS – Rob North Triples, Dudley, and the owner, Tim Riley for additional pictures CBG



2



1. Guy Martin collecting his (similar) BSA Triple Classic racing machine – also built by Les Whiston in Dudley 2018

2. Guy and Les Whiston discussing the fitting of the fairing

3. A very stylish cafe racer and track bike, with dry clutch, classic headlight and clocks. Matching fuel tank and race seat, all fitted neatly into a Rob North frame

3

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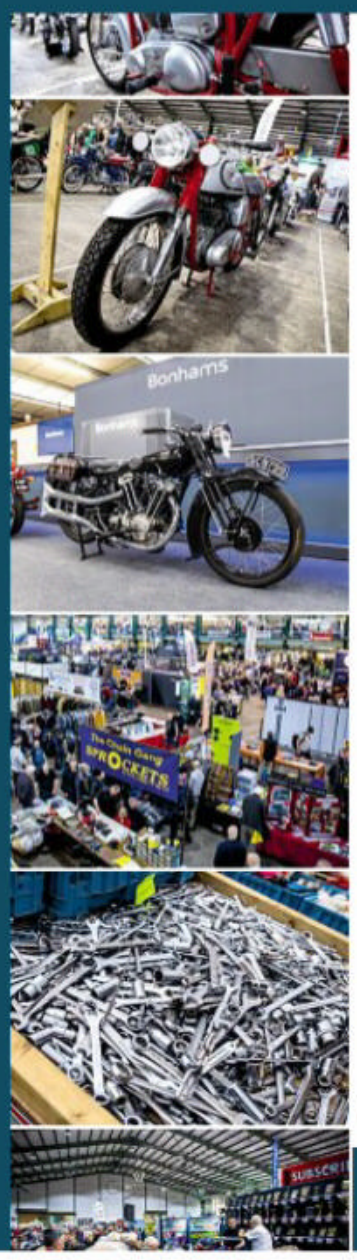
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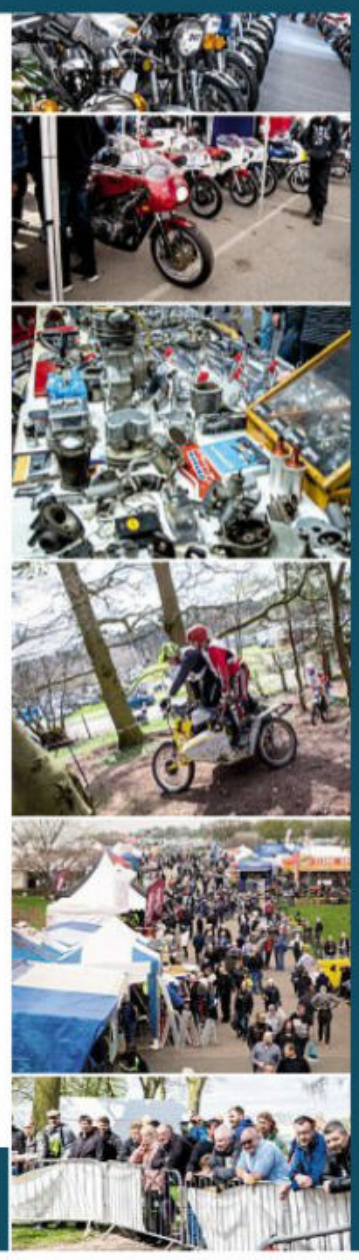
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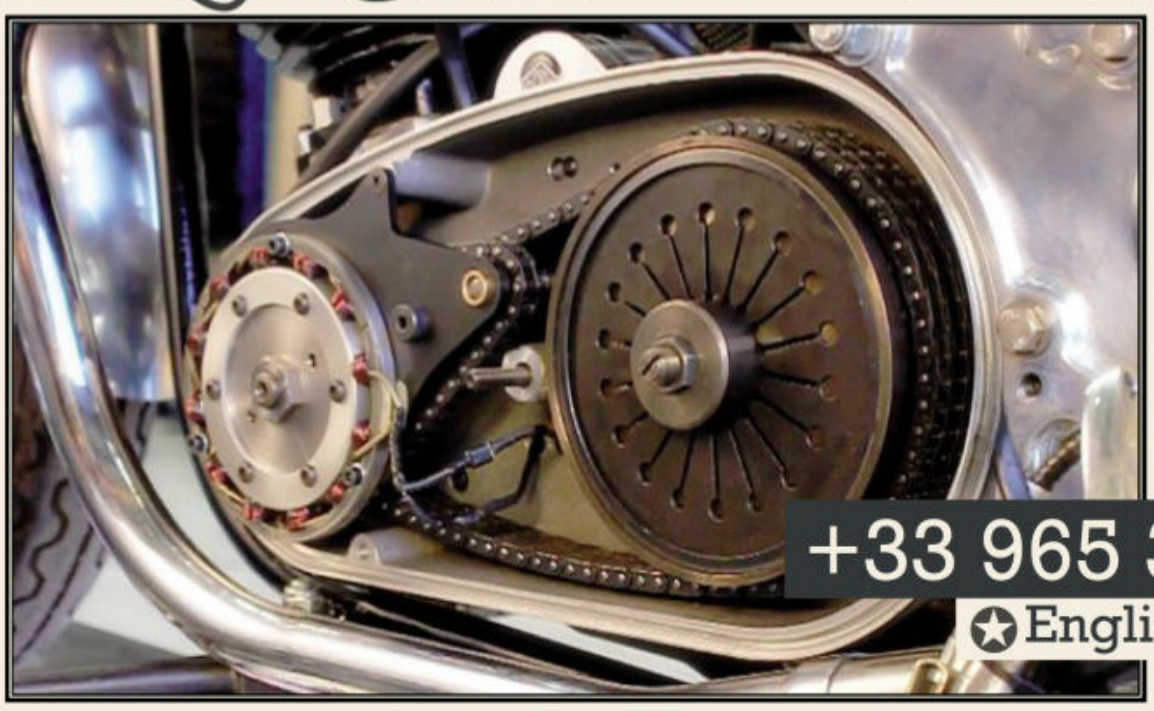
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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY STEVE COOPER

ALUMINIUM PARTS, LIKE ENGINE casings or fork legs are generally polished and lacquered, painted or even just polished. But over time, stone chips, salt and ultraviolet light break down the coating, allowing the finish to get very second-hand.

Gradually the finish delaminates more of the protective coating to a point where the casting grows a furry grey overcoat. Painted cases can be cleaned back, filled where necessary and then repainted; all in all a fairly straightforward job.

Polished case rectification takes a little more effort. It's a messy job but we can do it at home. There are several DIY polishing solutions out on the market and it pays to have a look at what's available. Our friends at Perfect Polishing have supplied a restoration kit for us to use.

BASIC PREPARATION

The kit should do pretty much all we need for an average bike and comes with the all important dust mask etc.

This is a messy and noisy job with bits of mop, alloy and buffing soap getting flung about, so a dust mask, strong gloves and safety specs are the absolute minimum needed to work safely; I also add in a disposable boiler suit and earplugs.

Make sure absolutely nothing like sleeves, cuffs, belt etc can get drawn into the polishing mop. To be able to polish effectively the alloy needs to be free of grit, grease, dirt and protective lacquer. The first three can be easily removed with a brush, some bike cleaner and hot water. The lacquer needs more aggressive techniques and paint stripper is normally very effective in removing this. It's also possible to blast lacquers and paints



off but bear in mind the surface may be slightly rough; it's okay for paint primer but will take some extra buffing to get back to a smooth surface.

Here I'm using gelled aerosol type stripper which clings to vertical surfaces while it does its job. Another option is to use one of the more aggressive abrasive kits with either satine mops or abrasive polishes. However, remember that whilst these abrasive processes will remove overt damage, they are also marking undamaged alloy. Because we are dealing with abrasive there will be a need to

remove the fine scratches imparted on the alloy by the process.

With the alloy clear of dirt and coatings we can get a good look at the metal underneath and make a reasoned assumption as to how good or bad it is and what steps we need to take. If the alloy is just dull and unmarked it's viable to start with the coarsest mop (a sisal one in this case) and some polishing soap of the corresponding grade. However, if the alloy is badly marked, scratched or pitted it may be necessary to bring in some strong arm tactics. Huge pockmarks or holes are better treated with one of the alloy welding kits advertised within *CBG*; with a bit of practice it should be possible to effect good repairs.

This Yamaha XS650 side case had suffered from damp storage and was quite seriously corroded but it has been brought back to a uniform condition with emery cloth, DIY flexible sanding blocks and decreasing grades of wet-and-dry paper. I'm also using a second cut file to carefully shave off any big dings while still preserving the original profile and then redressing as above.

By using progressively finer abrasives (whether by hand or on a mop) it should, with time, be possible to get a surface that will readily polish up to an acceptable level.

Finally, unless you have a workshop area you can dedicate to polishing it's probably best to do it outside; it's inevitably a messy process and you don't want the debris all over your bikes or work area.





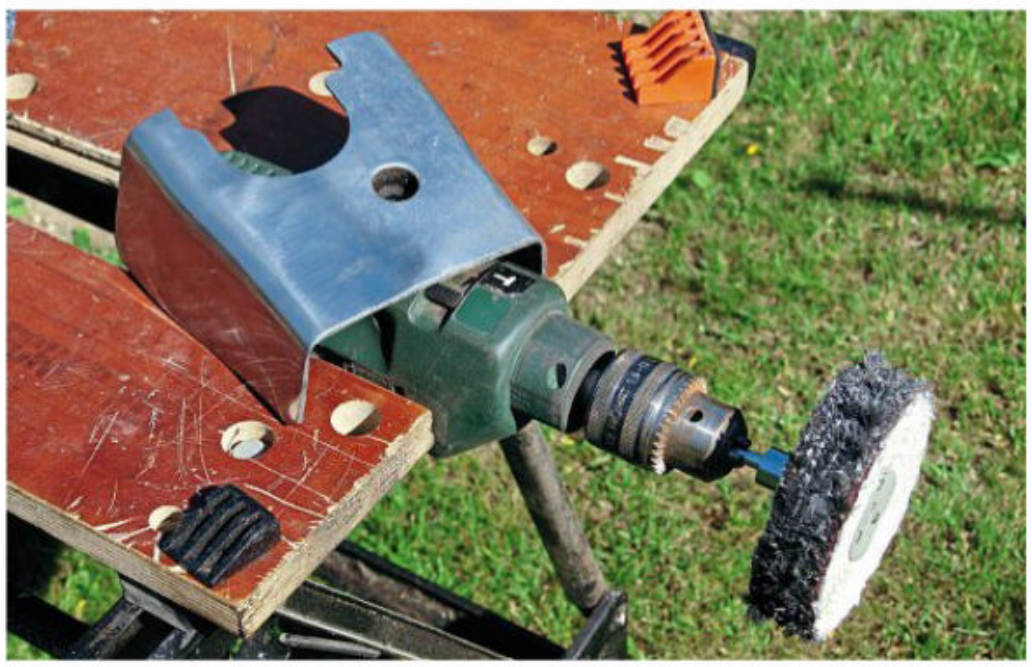


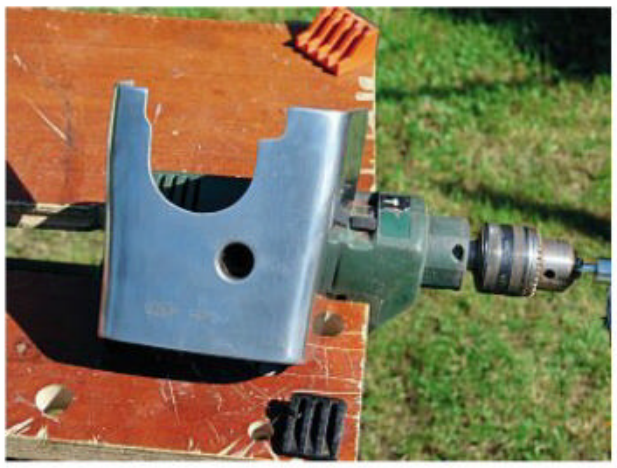
ON THE MOPS

Selecting the appropriate tail or pig for the direction of rotation of our drill or grinder, the sisal mop is screwed on. With the mop running we can add some of the buffing soap designed for that specific mop; a quick one or two second application is normally sufficient. Now we can finally bring the alloy (in this case a rare carb cover) into contact with the mop and by applying pressure the dull surface can be removed. More soap is added when the buffing tails off. It's important to move the work piece around to prevent hollowing; also the angle of attack should be varied so that the alloy is not all polished in the same direction. If this happens you will see parallel tram lines along the surface that will show up on the finished item.

The sisal mop is used until the work piece is uniformly buffed and further polishing doesn't enhance the sheen. Next we move onto the second, softer, stitched, mop which will remove the coarser mark of the sisal one. Again using the appropriate buffing soap we can repeat the process using similar techniques. The second cut mop is often the one that does a lot of the work but at a slower overall rate than the coarser sisal version. There's sometimes a tendency to think the effects are tardy and add extra soap. If this happens it's possible to end up with extremely tenacious, big black, smeared, scuds of soap and metal particles on the polished surface – the









excess soap can be removed by carefully running a clean wire brush over the rotating surface of the mop if necessary.

Don't be tempted to use abrasives or an old brick to do this as any hard particulates picked up on the mop will then damage the article being polished. Wire brushes are generally unlikely to leave bristles in the mop face.

Finally, we're onto the soft calico mop and removing the polishing marks left by the stitched mop. Time taken here to cover every facet of the substrate will be rewarded with a gleam that will satisfy most of us. Then we need to rub the surface over with some Vienna lime to remove any residual polishing soap, grease or finger marks and the job's a good'un as they say.

All that's left to do is possibly give the readily oxidisable surface a coating of protective wax polish and it's time to move onto the next job. Sharp-eyed readers will note I've not polished out the marks in the top face of the carb cover. As the intended bike has a patina of wear I've elected not to go over the top but rather carry out a sympathetic refurbishment.

If there's a fair amount of polishing to do it makes sense to do it outside and have sufficient mops and buffing soap on hand. Always allow more time than you think the job will take if you're new to this and aim to finish a certain number of parts with the final calico mop rather than do all the roughing out in one hit. Firstly you can then do something else next time rather than get terminally bored with a bike's worth of polishing; secondly you get to see some genuine results for one day's work rather than moving from dull grey to slightly brighter grey.

Polishing power

As with all things, the amount of energy expended on a job dictates how good the results will be; it's not all about how hard you polish though.

The annoying phrase 'don't work harder, work smarter' is very appropriate when it comes to polishing. Within reason a larger power source will give better results, you'll need to expend less time/effort/energy and there's less likelihood of damaging the shiny bits.

Bench or post-mounted grinder/polishers generally have the guts to do the job but you need to match the mop size to the motor's capabilities. As a rough rule of thumb a 370-500w electric motor should cope with a 6in mop. For 8in mops you'll need a minimum of 500w and more if you can get it.

On intricate castings or small parts it's viable to use a cordless or normal powered drill.

The bottom line here is that if the mop slows down substantially you don't have sufficient power to hand. Also consider the size of the work piece. Large objects may be heavy and it's probably easier to polish something like a bike wheel on a bench with a 4in mop on a drill than it is to hold the wheel up to a bench-mounted 6in mop.

It's also worth investing in a kit that comes with the smaller dolly mops (1in, 1½in & 2in) as these can be a godsend. The larger mops cannot get into recesses or tight spaces but the smaller mops can get into the nooks and crannies. Don't throw a dolly mop away until you're absolutely sure it's beyond use; it's guaranteed that you will need a worn down 1in version the minute you bin it.



Keeping it in perspective

It's very easy to get just a little too obsessive with polishing and lose sight of what you are trying to achieve. Before you know it your 1977 350 twin looks more like a something from a certain cable channel's bike building series.

Most of our machines were never particularly well polished when new, the alloy castings were delivered en masse from the foundry, experiencing a few nicks and dings along the way. After a quick clean they would have been linished on a belt sander to remove any casting flash and polished; if we're honest they were generally just shown a mop if they were lucky.

Following a vapour degrease to remove any polishing soap the alloy was sprayed with a clear lacquer and that was as good as it got. If you look critically at an NOS engine case you can see the nicks and dings; whether to take them out is a call only the owner can make.

Japanese alloy tends to have fairly high zinc contents and this manifests itself on occasion as a grey/black line. Normally this zinc rich seam will run right through the casting and is therefore impossible to polish out. If you stand back a few feet from the job most of these marks cannot be seen so don't beat yourself up for no good reason.

Preserving your hard work

Having got the alloy back as you want, it's worth considering how you'll retain the effect. It shouldn't be necessary to use abrasive metal polishes on a regular basis so look for a good wax polish or one of the more benign metal polishes that are now available. Metal polishes that contain preservatives and/or waxes normally bring back the lustre and leave a protective coat. As long as water and oxygen are excluded from the metal surface the underlying polishing work should remain largely unaffected.

Hand polishing

It's quite viable to polish the odd piece of alloy by hand using any one of the well known metal polishes. The results are eminently acceptable and it's a viable method for small articles or one-offs. However, if you have a number of parts to shine, a set of mops makes a lot of sense.

CONCLUSION

The results speak for themselves here. Polishing is without doubt a messy job but it's also disproportionately satisfying. An hour or so spent in the workshop with some grotty old bits of festering alloy quickly produces something to be proud of. Polishing can provide a therapeutic break in a restoration project; when you're waiting for parts, the penetrating oil still hasn't done its job or it's too cold to spray that side panel, there's normally something that needs a session on the mops. Crank up the polisher and, for once, bask in your own reflected glory. CBG





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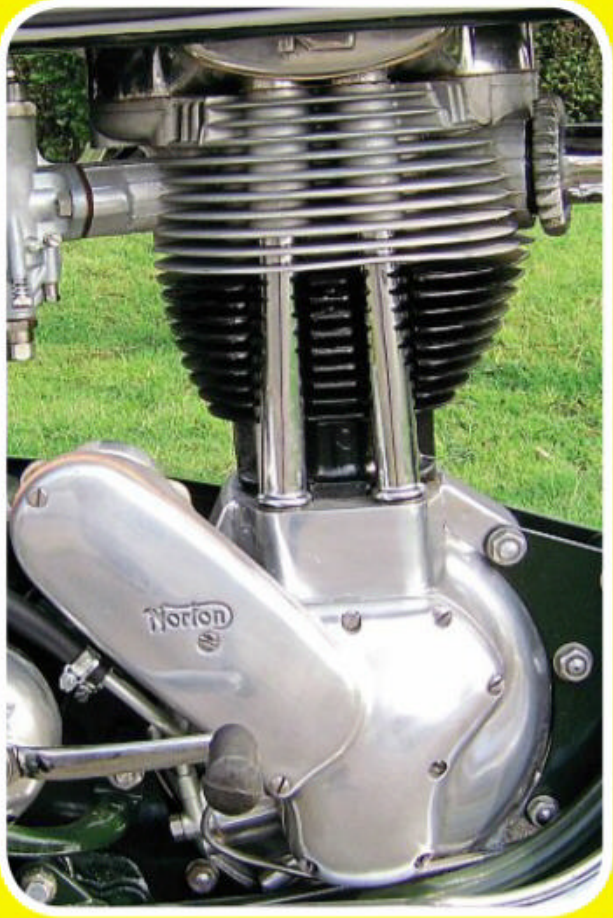
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C3/104CBG	BALL END - ROCKER - OHV SINGLES - 1946 TO 1957	£17
13821CBG	BALL END - ROCKER - OHV SINGLES - 1958 TO 1964	£17
NM22095CBG	BEARING-BIG END ASSEMBLY-INC. NUTS-ES2/50/16H/BIG 4/19R/19S	£199
022095CBG	BEARING - BIG END - ES2 - WITH NUTS - 1959 to 1963	£199
A2/75CBG	BEARING - BIG END - WITH NUTS - 1, 16H, 18, 19, ES2	£199
2020CBG	BEARING - BIG END - 1, 16H, 18 - 1926 & 1927	£199
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A2/32CBG	BEARING - MAIN - ROLLER - OHV & SV SINGLES - EACH-2 REQUIRED	£40
A2/31CBG	BEARING - MAIN - ROLLER ES2, 50, 16H, 19S, - EACH - QCB MAK	£40
C3/700CBG	BOLT - BANJO - ROCKER OIL FEED - ES2, 18, 19, 50 - PRE 1958	£19
C3/110SSCBG	BOLT - ROCKER BOX-1/4" X 26 THREADS PER INCH-ALL OHV SINGLES	£9
D3T/108CBG	BOLT - ROCKER COVER SECURING - ES2/18/50/19R/19S-7 REQUIRED	£10
13805CBG	BOLT - ROCKER FEED - ES2 & 50 - 1958 TO 1964	£10
E4102CBG	BUSH - LITTLE END - 1, 16H, 18, 19, 20, 50, ES2	£13
C3/93CBG	BUSH - ROCKER - 18, 19, 50, ES2 - EACH - 1946 & 1947	£10
NM13804CBG	BUSH - ROCKER - EACH - 19, 50, ES2 - 1958-1964 - 2 REQUIRED	£10
13804HCBG	BUSH - ROCKER - ES2 & 50 - 1958-1964 - WITH SIDE HOLE	£11
13804CBG	BUSH - ROCKER ARM - 19, 50, ES2 - EACH - 2 REQUIRED - 1958-1964	£10
C3/96CBG	BUSH - ROCKER ARM - OHV SINGLES - EACH - 2 REQUIRED 1946-57	£10
C3/96HCBG	BUSH - ROCKER ARM - OHV SINGLES - WITH HOLE - 1946-1957	£11
2201CBG	CAGE - ROLLER - R/ARM 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 34 & 44 1923 TO 27	£52
4102CBG	CAGE - ROLLER - ROCKER ARM - 1928 TO 1931 - EACH	£52
19080CBG	COLLAR - VALVE - BOTTOM - 18, ES2, 19R, 19S, 50 - PRE 1959	£18
NM19080CBG	COLLAR - VALVE - BOTTOM - OHV - PRE-1959 - FITS IN/EXH	£18
H2157CBG	COLLAR - VALVE - TOP - 18, 19, 21, 25 & 44 - 1923 TO 1927	£22
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050687CBG	CYLINDER HEAD OVERHAUL KIT - 350 OHV SINGLE - PRE 1959	£56
050686CBG	CYLINDER HEAD OVERHAUL KIT - 500 OHV SINGLE PRE 1959 BRONZE	£59
050685CBG	CYLINDER HEAD OVERHAUL KIT - 500 SINGLE - PRE 1959	£57
8910CBG	DISTANCE PIECES - ROCKER BOX - ES2, 18 & 20 - PRE-1947	£46
C2/63CBG	GUIDE - TAPPET - 16H & BIG 4 - 1947 TO 1955	£50
C3/63CBG	GUIDE - TAPPET - 1946-1954 - ES2, 18, 19, 50	£50
19800CBG	GUIDE - TAPPET - ES2, 19, 50 - 1957 TO 1963	£50
K4/63CBG	GUIDE - TAPPET - ES2, 19, 50 - 1955-1956	£50
9119CBG	GUIDE - VALVE - 18, 19, 20 & ES2 - PRE-1946	£15
C188CBG	GUIDE - VALVE - 18, 19, 20, ES2, 50 - PRE 1959	£9
A3/140CBG	GUIDE - VALVE - 18/ES2/19R/19S/50 - FITS INLET OR EXHAUST	£9
8933CBG	GUIDE - VALVE - EXHAUST - SIDE VALVE SINGLES - PRE-1946	£8
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A2/144CBG	SET - SPRINGS - VALVE - MODELS 1 & 16H - 1946-1955	£17
037000SETCBG	SET - VALVES & GUIDES - 18, 19, ES2 - 2 + 2 - PRE 1959	£67
0370009SETCBG	SET - VALVES & GUIDES - ES2 - 2+2 - 19 TO 64 - LESS CLIPS	£74
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FROM THE WORKSHOP

Don’t believe the hype

Armchair experts, forums and accepted knowledge can sometimes steer us in the wrong direction...

When we got the Benelli 125 Enduro running after its shed-dwelling years, it sounded fine. We’d cleaned the tank, the carb, the points, replaced the plug and this saw the bike fire up without battery, thanks to the self-generating system. We were victorious!

But it wouldn’t keep running for more than a few minutes at a time. There also seemed very little difference between on and off choke, though it generally started easily, after a few minutes of stalling. I’d cleaned the carb and even found the settings for the float needle valve; so that had to be right, you’d think? So the conversations started, and, dare I say it, the internet searching; the answer must be out there.

This all came back to the same answer: crankshaft seals. As it had been standing for many years, these innocent-looking seals are known, on all two-strokes, to be a common failure point. They dry out and let air in as the piston rises, causing a vacuum in the crankcase and weakening your mixture. This could be a simple job, but due to the Benelli being rare, I cannot find a specialist, a workshop manual or someone who could tell me; so I’d be working in the dark.

Then a chat with Steve Cooper, our resident ‘stroker’ fanatic, helped immensely. “If they were badly worn, it wouldn’t run for that long and wouldn’t run like that. They could be leaking, but there’s something else.” So was that good or bad? What it had done, was get me out of believing anyone and not thinking about what the engine was doing.

ULTRASONIC CLEANING

Diagnosis. It starts all right, revs nicely, if a little hesitant in areas, runs for a few minutes and then stops. And it doesn’t idle. Plug is new and doesn’t look oily, fuel is new, oil is new. I haven’t put a fuel filter in and I’m not running with the six-volt battery fitted, as I don’t have one.

I’ve tried running the engine with the left side case off so I can spray oil around the seal, hoping the engine note would change, which it didn’t – but I can’t check the other side.

So off came the carb. Again. After stripping it, an easy job, Hutch put it into the ultrasonic cleaner for a few hours. It came out looking similar as it was already clean, but I still needed to clean out the residue of powdery deposits left behind as it was over Christmas and I just left it!

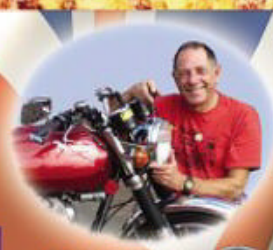
Putting it back together and rechecking the float needle valve, I realised the shaft the float is on is seized and you can only pull it out; meaning I cannot check the state of the needle valve. It works and it’s set, but I’ll keep an eye out for a replacement.

So how does it go now? With Christmas and the CBG Winter Classic at Newark, I haven’t had time! But I promise to have more news on that and even the Norton, next month. CBG



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Letters

Tell us what you're thinking or what you've been up to!
Email to **editor@classicbikeguide.com** or write to: *Classic Bike Guide*, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR.

More wheel building advice

I have just read the August issue of *CBG*, and found the wheel building section of particular interest.

I have built and repaired wheels for many years, learning from my brother Arthur back in the Fifties. He was a wheelbuilder at Brown Brothers in north London but at weekends he would do his private jobs at home and taught me the craft.

Your man Hutch's method is spot-on, the only difference is that I dab a spot of Vaseline on the threads and dimples to lubricate and deter water ingress. Also, a Workmate with home-made attachments is a very good workstation. I also use a King Dick spoke key, that will fit all spokes from kiddies' bikes to sports cars.

After you have built the wheel, properly fit it to the bike without the tyre and see how it looks. If the bike is a custom, bitsa or basketcase, you will be very lucky if it looks correct and it is more likely that the offset will have to be tweaked, but only do this if the wheel spacers are correct.

Once you are happy with the look, file off any spoke ends or burrs that may later puncture your tube, fit the rim tape and then the tyre can go on, but make sure that the tyre wall indicator rings look concentric to the rim. A badly fitted tyre will make all your setting up a waste of time.

Well that's it, job done! You can now tidy up, wash your hands and sit down with a cup of tea and admire a job well done!

Matt, I know you love your B31, please find enclosed a photograph of mine, it's a 1957 model and has lived with me for 31 years.

Pete Johnson



Appreciation for the Suzuki B120

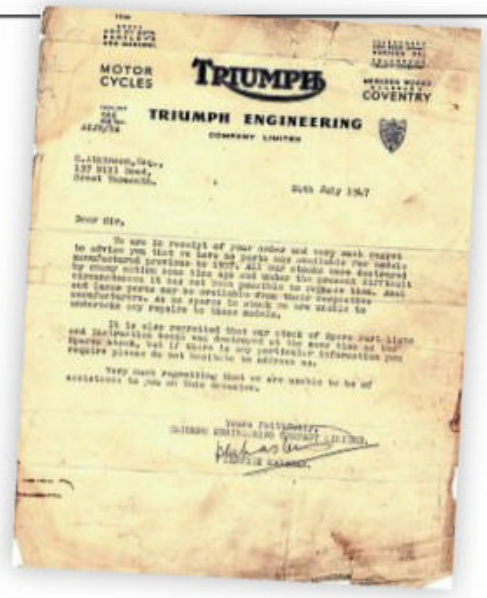
I enjoyed the recent article about the Suzuki B120, I have owned one for three years and love it.

I had the engine rebuilt by Martin at Slipstream Tuning and have bought many items on eBay, including NOS hubs, carb covers and wing mirrors. Over the winter I will rebuild the wheels with stainless steel spokes. Motorcycling Monthly of June 1977, did a 10,000km test and anybody from the office could use the bike and in one particular week clocked up 2000 miles, one trip to Exeter, Plymouth, Oakhampton and back to London.

Next was a trip to York and back; South Wales and back; then the bike was ridden to Ramsgate, Dover, Brighton and back to London – all without failing once. A big shout out to the boys at Battlesbridge Motorcycle Museum for their advice.

Kim




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Coventry devastation

In the December issue of *CBG*, page 14, I was interested to see the Coventry Eagle article and reference to the bombing raid on Coventry in 1940. I remembered that I had a Triumph letter from 1947 showing that they were still having problems with spares over six years later. I thought this might be of interest to you and your readers.

John Bridges

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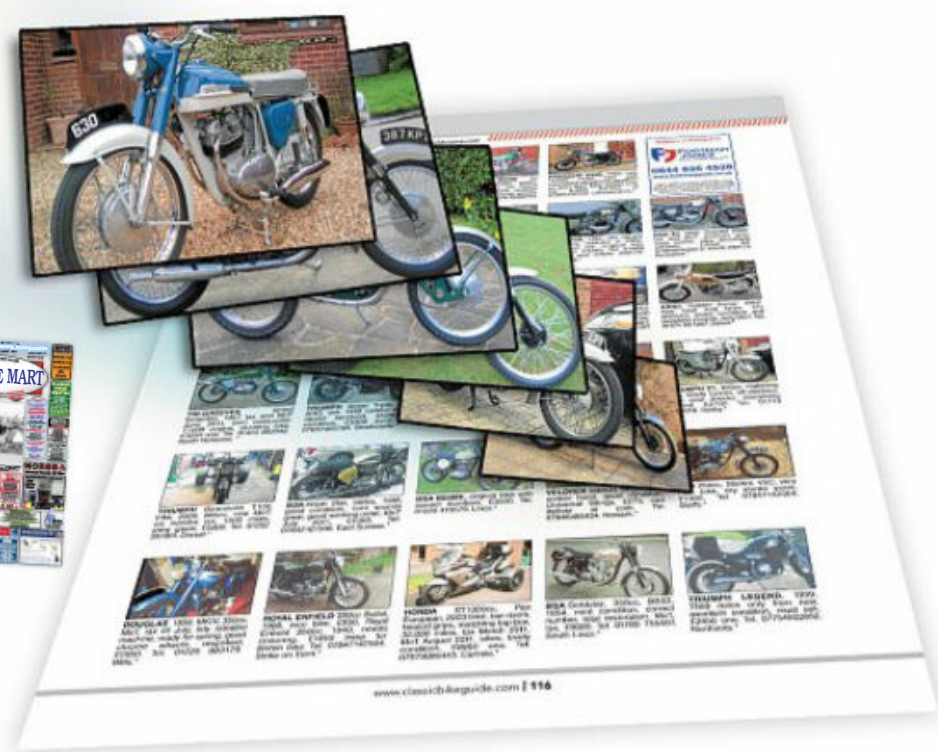
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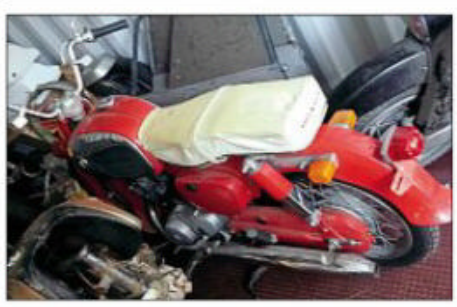
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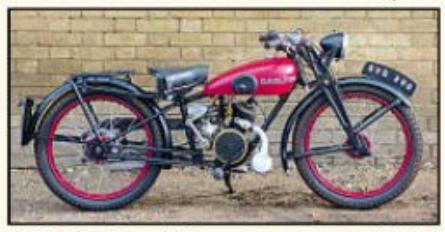
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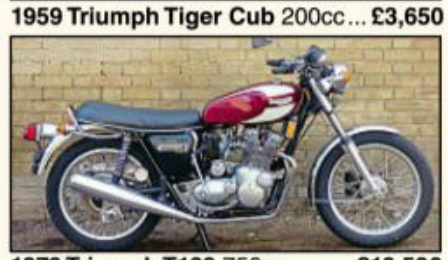
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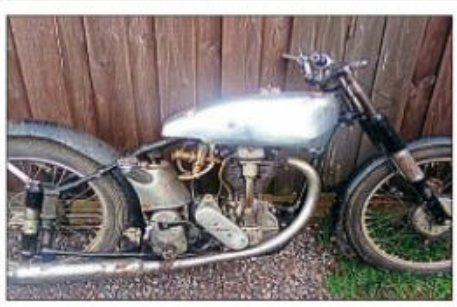
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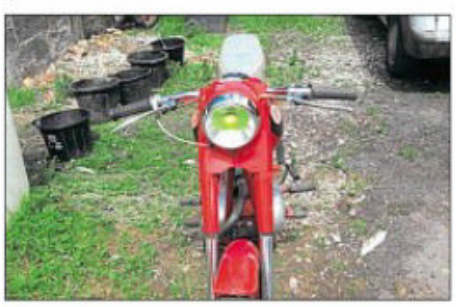
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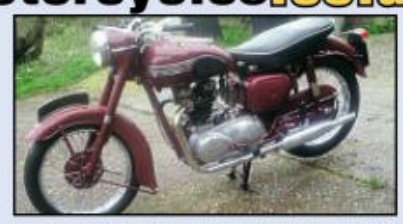
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BRITISH SPARES AMC, Matchless, A10 etc, all must go, ideal for autojumbler, large quantity of sockets, tools, etc, must collect, open for offers. Tel. 07443 642408. Leeds.

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.

DUCTI 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.

FULL ONE PIECE fibreglass fairing for Triumph Bonneville in candy red with good screen and mirrors and indicators, plus fitting brackets, all in good condition, came off my 2005 T100 but could fit most bikes, £120. Tel. Ken 07840 569086. Bedfordshire.

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.

HONDA SPARES frames including swinging arms, CB400F, £125. Two CB 125S, £75 each. Also GL petrol tank looks as new, £100. CD175 tank, needs some work, £25. Various other spares mostly Honda, collect only, from London or possibly Colchester area. Tel. Harry 02077 20478. Email. cheshireca@gmail.com

HONDA CB250N Superdream, full bike breaking for spares all parts available, can deliver or post? Tel. 07496 583885 between 6-9pm. Tyneside.

HUSQVARNA 250/400WR SPARES rear wheel with trials tyre, £35. Air box with filter, £30. Rear fender, £10. Fork gaiters, twist grip, £15. 250 crankcase with gears and flywheel assembly (B/E and 3rd gear faults), £35. Oversize fuel tank, £35. Rear shock with arm, £35. Tel. 02077 204758. London.

LUCAS COMPETITION MAGNETO K2FC 11 60 42368D, removed from a 61 Bonneville, currently generating a good spark and functional at time of removal, in good clean condition, further details/ photo's available, £300. Tel. 07866 667242. Derbyshire.

NRE RACING ENGINE 750cc 180 crank, very good condition, very little use, £5600. Tel. 07522 246113. Scotland.

SUZUKI GSXR750S RAD injection full bike breaking for spares all parts available, can deliver or post? Tel. 07496 583885 between 6-9pm. Tyneside.

TRITON pre-unit alloy alternator engine plates, £40. Commando Fastback original F1/glass, p/tank, green c/w cap, sound, £85. Commando cams (3) for refurb. Tel. 01772 783774. Lancs.

TRIUMPH T120 T140, T160 rebuilt front wheel rechromed Dunlop WM2 19" stainless spokes, £200. Listing T160 rear wheel. Tel. 07714 190997. Lincs.

TRIUMPH T160 rear wheel, original Dunlop WM3 19" rechromed galvanised spokes no internals in hub, £250. Tel. 07714 190997. Lincolnshire.

TROJAN MINI-MOTOR 1950s engine c/w tank, carb, exhaust, generator, not run for many years, £195. Tel. 07951 536578. Herefordshire.

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

VELOCETTE VENOM Metisse, Venom Clubman engine in ex-Tom Kirby frame, with full history, BTH mag Seymour head and wheels, central oil tank, ex competition complete bike in vgc and ideal for road use, £8750. Tel. 01865 874534. Oxon.

WESLAKE ENGINE 900cc in bits, 3 boxes of parts, £3000. Tel. 07522 246113. Scotland.

Wanted

ARIEL PIXIE silencer wanted. Tel. 01942 607368. Lancashire.

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.

BIKE LIFT/RAMP WANTED anything considered, can collect, contact with details, please leave message if unable to answer. Tel. Brian 07970 000774. Email. brianjfielding1@gmail.com

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

BSA A65 ENGINE wanted, also parts considered, including complete/incomplete non runner/runner. Tel. 01305 826670. Dorset.

CLASSIC BIKE wanted, any year, price or condition, top price paid, collect anywhere. Tel. 01513 742466. Lancashire.

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

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

LOOKING FOR a motorbike/ moped project for my 10 year old, more work it needs the better, in bits anything, he needs a challenge can be any size cc, can pay a fair price. Tel. 01872 241852. Devon/Cornwall.

MANX SEAT WANTED 1953/4 original seat in useable condition, even if tatty. Also 1953/4 Featherbed Inter parts wanted, especially original tool tray and photos of Inter's in 1954 Clubmans. Please email recycledreading@gmail.com

MOTO MORINI 350 Strada/ Sport parts wanted, front brake lever or complete assembly (drum brake model, clutch lever or assembly, headlight unit or bulb holder, handlebar switch, ignition switch, horn, tool box, fuel taps, interested in other parts or project bike etc, please email details (photos if possible), please leave message if unable to answer. Tel. Brian 07970 000774. Email. brianjfielding1@gmail.com

ROYAL ENFIELD REZ/ Ensign, year 51-55, Amal carb 223/3. Tel. 0702 876137; 07940 099212. Essex.

SINGLE MOTORBIKE TRAILER wanted cheap, Bucks, Herts area. Tel. John 07788 768313. Bucks.

TRIUMPH TIGER CUB T20, 1959-60, reasonable price, must be all original, no basket case please. Tel. 07717 338587 anytime. Staffs.

WANTED 19" 40 hole WM2 rim to fit BSA 8" single sided brake hub, need not be pristine - to be painted, or complete front wheel with good chrome/ stainless rim, with or without brake plate. Tel. Alan 01633 894042. South Wales.

WANTED 70S moped or motorcycle, must be original and complete, must be cheap. Tel. 07866 919488. Herefordshire.

WANTED BELL STAR HELMET 1970s, medium or large must be in reasonable condition and full face, good price paid for right helmet. Tel. 07772 330033. Essex.

WANTED FOR BMW R65, 1980, top instrument console, must have no cracks, splits etc. Tel. Mike 07511 688088. Birmingham.

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, Cyclemaster, Raleigh runabout, any older type mopeds. Tel. 07790 168224. West Midlands.

WANTED PARTS FOR Panther Model 10, 1956, most needed are front forks but other parts considered. Tel. 07767 331809. Aberdeen.

WANTED TRIUMPH TSS engine or project bike. Tel. 01162 376046 after 6pm. Leicestershire.

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.

YAMAHA YDS5 wanted, private enthusiast seeking either a complete bike or any parts available, WHY? Tel. Richard 07769 715916. Lincolnshire.

Miscellaneous

BOOKS: 'Motorcycles and How To Manage Them', circa 1960, (33rd Edition), as new, £15. 'The Book of the Triumph Twins', circa 1969, (13th Edition), as new, £15. 'Motorcycle Care & Maintenance', (David Frost), circa 1963, pages yellowed, but clean, otherwise as new, £10. Tel. 02086 995307. London.

DUCATI 750 1974, original Factory Parts Book, GT8 Sport, £100 inc post. Ducati Bevel twins, Restoration Guide, 1971-85, Falloon, £50 inc post. Morini 31/2 Harglo Service Manual, £15 inc post. Tel. 01492 530908. North Wales.

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.

LEATHER JACKET and jeans, black, 44" jacket, 38" jeans, by Stein, very good, £65. Also classic motorcycling legends very rare 34 no plus spares, all excellent, £120. Tel. 07831 201856. Lancs.

MOTOR BIKE COAT Weise Avenger jacket with detachable inner lining, black, size 'L', as new condition, £79. Tel. Ron 02086 995307. London.

MOTORCYCLE HYDRAULIC LIFT Clarke Strong arm 450kg, little used, £350 or very nearest offer. Tel. 07379 511898. East Yorks.

NITRO HELMET virtually new unworn 'Flip-Face' still in box, £43 cost over £60. New waterproof Rayven motorcycle trousers, medium, £17. Tel. Richard 01842 819969. Norfolk.

SINGLE BIKE TRAILER two spare 10" mini wheels, jockey wheel, £85. Tel. 01613 309814. Manchester.

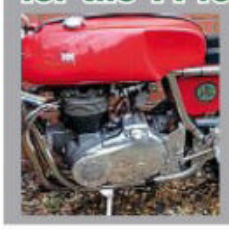
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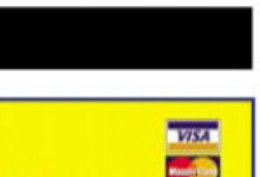
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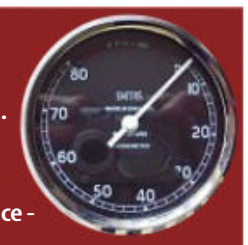
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SUBSCRIPTION ||
Full subscription rates (but see page 18 for offer): (12 months 12 issues, inc post and packing) – UK £52.80. Export rates are also available – see page 18 for more details. UK subscriptions are zero-rated for the purposes of Value 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 54921. 715-572-4595 chris@classicbikebooks.com

PRINTED BY || William Gibbons & Sons, Wolverhampton. ISSN No 0959-7123

ADVERT DEADLINE || February 6, 2020
NEXT ISSUE || February 26, 2020

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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Owning a rare bike is a rare delight. Until it needs those rare spares...

"They're great bikes and were built by one of the biggest bike builders in Britain, so how come they're rare? And they are – when was the last time you saw one?"

RARE BIKES CAN BE RARE BIKES FOR MANY reasons. Maybe they're limited edition, short-run cosmetic jobs based on more mundane machinery: Triumph's Jubilee Bonneville waddles slowly to mind, as does BSA's Rocket Gold Star. Maybe they're rare because the factory built a tiny number for homologation reasons, like Matchless's entirely excellent G50CSR or an exotic Ducati, the exact model of which I cannot now remember. Not that I've ever been in the market for a rare Ducati. Brief experience with a totally mundane and ordinary and mostly unremarkable Ducati put me off such anguish. But we have all occasionally stumbled over bikes which are rare because nobody bought them.

Consider the utterly superlative in every way 1964-66 Matchless G12CSR. They're really rather rare, their AJS equivalents even more so. They're great bikes and were built by one of the biggest bike builders in Britain, so how come they're rare? And they are – when was the last time you saw one? See?

Their rarity is explained by two familiar words written in a familiar order: Triumph Bonneville. Matchless CSR Twins were built for fast lads, and fast lads bought them in decent numbers until Triumph – and to a lesser extent BSA – improved their own sporting twins while Matchless did not. Much.

When the CSR 650s first hit the Brit streets in 1959, they were among the top performers. They went very well, steered very well (after 1960) and had mostly adequate brakes. Certainly their brakes were as mediocre as those of the opposition. They looked good, too, but that's hardly unique in fast lad land. The snag was that Triumph reinvented their Bonneville while Matchless sort of… didn't.

By the time the last big change landed on the CSR in 1964, it was that famous cliché – too late and too little. Even replacing the venerable AMC Teledraulic fork and the associated mediocre front brake with Norton's excellent Roadholder fork and even more excellent eight-inch front anchor failed to stop the decline. So very few folk bought them, hence their rarity today. I've owned one for almost a decade, and rode it as much as possible for as far as possible when I acquired it. It's a 1965 CSR and had all the bits I wanted, including great big winged 'M' badges on a glorious chrome tank. How could anyone resist this in 1965?

They're rare enough for experts to sidle up and remark slyly that it would be a better bike if some idiot hadn't replaced the original forks with naff Norton junk. My, how I can sneer.

The handsome, youthful previous enthusiast owner had lightly modded his machine to suit his own tastes, which a chap is entirely entitled to do, and I spent many merry months finding original bits to replace the original bits he'd thrown away. The problem with rare machines is that no one breaks them. The factory went pop in 1965, so there are almost no NOS bits anywhere, even in the US, which has long been a source of rare bits for rare bikes. I tried though, pointless diligence being my middle names, and finally acquired everything to restore the bike to its original irresistible glory. Apart from one part. The rear mudguard. There are no rear mudguards for sale anywhere in the known universe. If you have one, name your price.

I followed numerous blind alleys. A great friend and one of the most noted Norton experts on the planet suggested that the guard might be the same as the Norton slimlines – the Matchless's front guard is indeed shared with those Nortons. I acquired one. It's not the right one. Despair. Or rather, a teeny tiny niggle, because I'd like to repair the ravages of too many years riding through the wintry salt and I only want to strip the thing down once and rebuild it once – with the correct mudguard, please.

And then, last year, while doing something important with an urgent deadline I found myself staring at my mudguard on j! I stared. Then I stared some more. Of course, I bought it. Of course, I paid too much – who cares! I've never seen another one for sale! Of course, it arrived. Of course, it was in better condition than advertised. Of course, it fits perfectly. Of course… it's not the right one. I compared the guard hanging in the frame with a brochure shot and with pics of a 1965 G12CSR for sale at auction years ago and hung my head. What is it? What've I bought? I have a spare guard for the non-CSR 1965 650 twin, and it's similar but…

The snag with rare bikes is the rare spares. I now have an entirely unobtainable rear mudguard for an even more rare Matchless. For a Matchless G15 Mk2. Anyone want a swap? 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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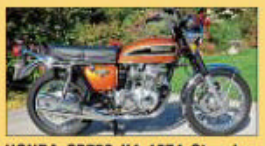


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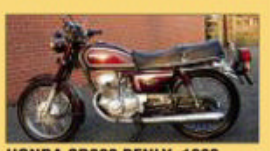
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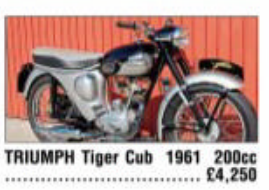
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