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We get to BSA

Part 2

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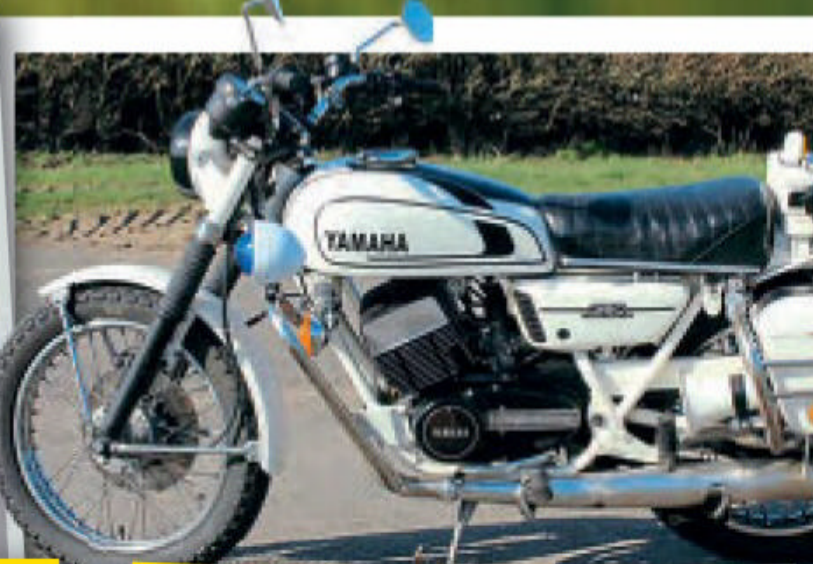
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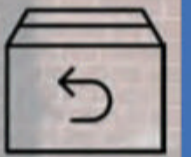
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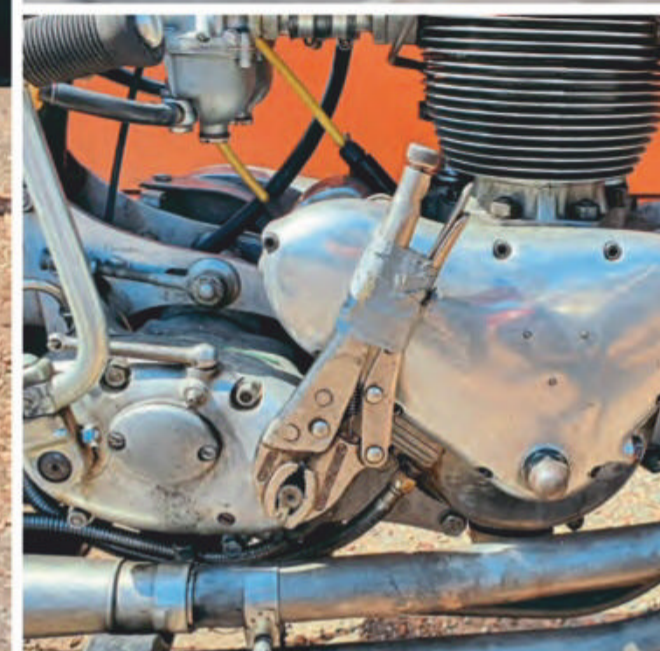
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Welcome



What have you bought? Ha!

IT IS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING THINGS US old bike lovers can do; acquire a new bike. A seed of a particular model is sown, followed by copious evenings researching, reading about the history, looking for common parts with other models, asking folk what to look for and what to avoid. Then you find one.

There follows the infamous cat-and-mouse, with you playing the stoney-faced poker player as you go to view a possible purchase, giving an impression you're not really, really keen and just want to buy it. A deal is done. Getting said machine home and yet more discovery starts. Pulling panels off, listening for noises, trying it out on a ride. It's a period of extreme sensations, of excitement, of fear, of what joy is to become.

My recent experience was a little different. I'd spilled my inner feelings about the R100RS last month, so my research was there. Then Neville rang up: 'Found you a BMW. It's cheap, needs a few bits. I told him you'd have it'. Oh.

A cheap BMW, and an R100 no less? One that hasn't been turned into some city banker's idea of a café racer? I did some quick calculations, realised I couldn't afford to buy it, realised I didn't need it, and shot straight over to see it...

One letter had been omitted from the description – it was an R100RT, not RS. There, in front of me was the full-on, barndoor-faired version; bubble burst.

Oh, and it was an ex-police one, in white, complete with blue stickers and crashbars. To this ex-dispatch rider it was like swearing in front of mother. Oh.

Still, it's a boxer, has the briefcases strapped to the sides, rocks when I rev it and the RT is only a few panels and handlebars from metamorphosing into an RS. And I can paint. I bought it.

I'll spare you the work needed to bring it back to life, but it sailed (with that fairing you have little choice) through an MoT, taken at the same time as Nev's flat tracker. I'd ridden the long way to make sure all was okay, while Nev had ridden down the dirt lanes and through the ford, somehow losing the gear lever. Luckily, a passing Land Rover lent him a set of mole grips for a most elegant hand change! They managed to find a lever, tested the bulb horn and we were both allowed out to play.

Since the lock up has been loosened I've been bimbling around the coast, adjusting the carbs at the side of the road, enjoying that fairing and being on a bike that's new enough to be reliable, but old enough to have soul; to communicate with you. I may have found the happy medium. I can even carry heavy camera gear without guilt. I've spent much of my life dreaming of sportsbikes, so this is a relaxed antidote; the old 'ex-job' tourer bringing a different experience to my B31, or the modern Triumph Scrambler.

Meanwhile, I've been pestering the Norton and BMW parts world and we are so lucky in this little world of old bikes to have such a good back up. All I spoke to were open, working around the issues, all had the parts I needed and considering how many of certain parts they must sell in a year, prices were reasonable. Thank you!

Elsewhere, we popped over to shoot Neville's flat tracker in the garden and Maria has been trying to get the Benelli to fire, but it isn't playing ball. The Norton is getting some love, and Nev gave me an American book about Triumph that is most interesting to look at, seeing the history from the US point of view.

Hope you're all enjoying the weather and doing what you can to keep smiling in this crazy world. We'll keep bringing you the best features we can, so enjoy the mag!

Be good

Matt Hull

■ editor@classicbikeguide.com

PS

Thanks for all the emails you're sending in, it's great to hear what you've been up to. Keep them coming!

#010



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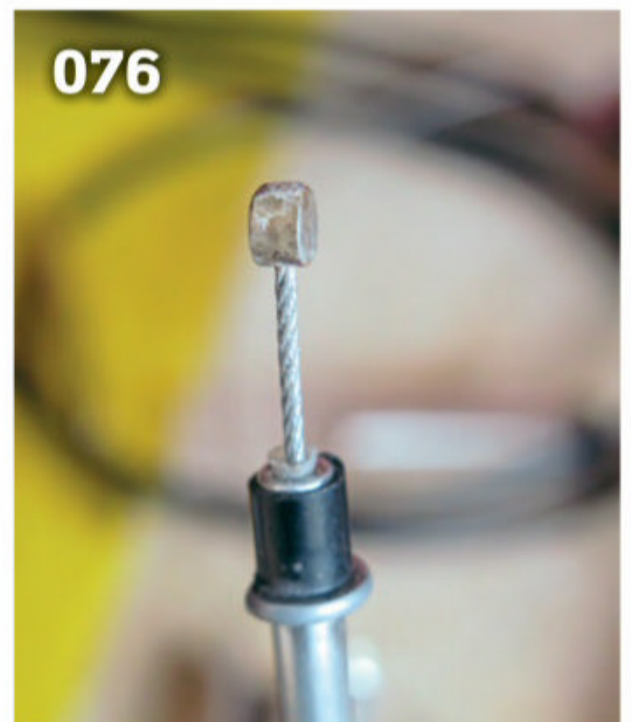
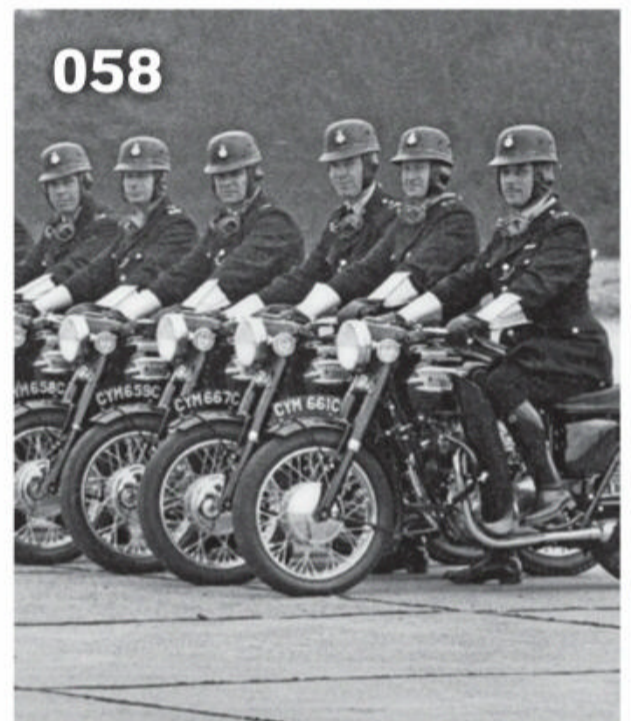
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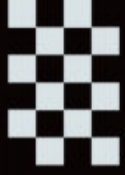
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■ Behind the name - Sunbeam

It is a wonderfully provocative and positive name, Sunbeam, isn't it? It is said that William Marston's good lady wife looked at a bicycle he had made and commented on the sun glistening in the black and gold finish; possibly down to the quality from the training and experience he had gained as a Japanner (like modern powder-coat or enamelling but better). After mastering this trade, in 1877 Marston built a successful bicycle company and even started making cars. And the name of the factory in Wolverhampton? Sunbeamland, of course.

After early tests with motorised bicycles had ended in tragedy, Marston disliked motorcycles. But when the car trade slumped, there was little choice.

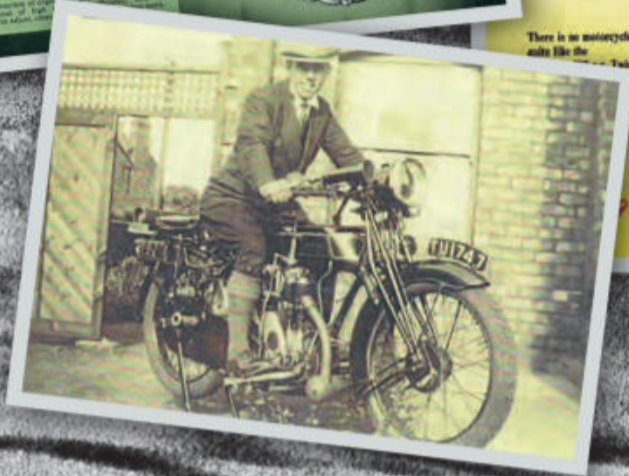
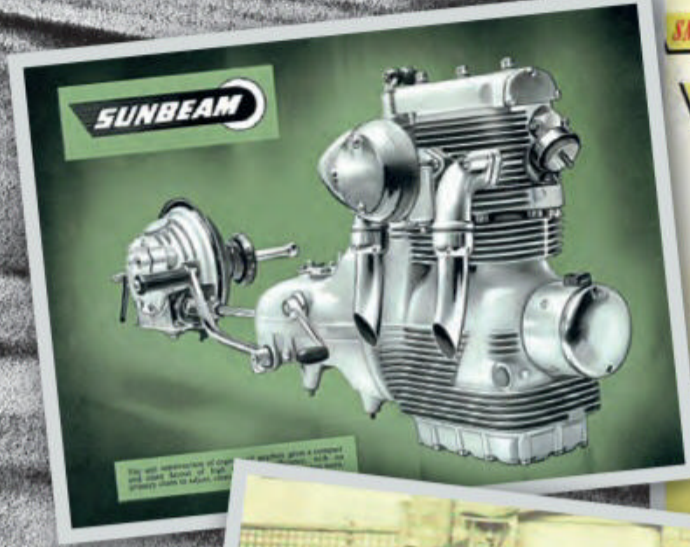
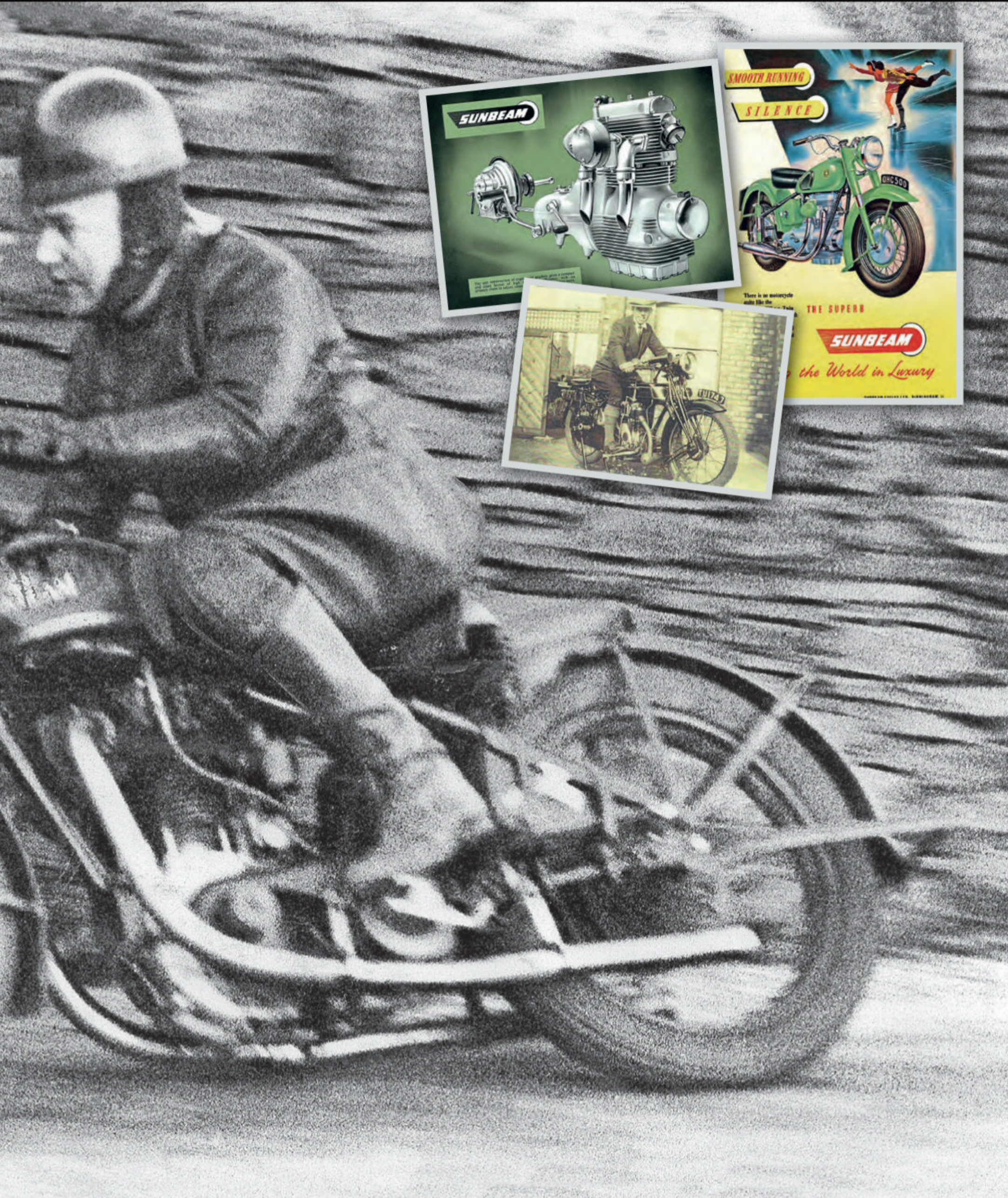
The name was quickly associated with quality machines, well built and cleverly thought out. Competition successes helped this, with trials and road racing triumphs around the globe. The TT especially helped; the Isle of Man course known as a true test of strength and reliability in the early days. Howard Davies (who went on to found HRD) came second as early as 1914, while the first win came in 1920, for Tommy de La Hay. After that, Sunbeam became one of the bikes to have, with Alec Bennett winning in 1922 and Charlie Dodson in 1928, as well as a string of top 10 places.

Sales were good, but fine build quality backed up with sporting pedigree was not enough - the First World War changed everything for everyone, as did the following years. The Marston family suffered from illness and both his eldest son and William Marston died in 1918.

In 1919 the company became part of Nobel Industries, a company that made dynamite amongst other things, started by the creator of the Nobel peace prize, Alfred Nobel. Why did they buy Sunbeam? Who knows. Sunbeam continued well through the Twenties, when in 1928 Nobel became part of a new conglomerate of chemical companies to be known as ICI. To them, Sunbeam must have been a tiny concern, but bikes and cycles in smaller and smaller numbers kept being made until 1937, when what was left was sold to AMC.

And still that wasn't enough to stop the Sunbeam radiating. Erling Poppe designed the S7, with an unusual, inline car-type engine, complete with wet sump and shaft drive. It was expensive, but nicely finished and must have looked very, very different to the other bikes around in 1946. The S7 and later S8 had issues, but continued until 1956, with many still to be seen ridden today. The Sunbeam story is no fairytale, but get the chance to ride one and enjoy - the Sunbeam still shines. **CBG**





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CORONA

competitor

Neville Cushing got bored during the lockdown, so in seven isolated weeks he dug around his sheds, behind his sofa and produced this handsome, road-legal flat track weapon

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT





FOR MOST PEOPLE WHO START PROJECT BIKES from scratch, the vision of that mythical finished article is what drives them on. In their mind, so much is planned that an accurate shopping wish list is formed. It's a good, practical and sensible way to go about building a bike. The internet, books or magazine articles all help, with previous folks' attempts and experience; so the end result is more or less a proven build.

Then there is the serial bike builder's way. This is less organised, as it relies on their natural, visual talent to 'see' a bike in their heads. It is often joined with an unnatural ability to make, engineer or create anything, from anything. Well, nearly.

The look, even the purpose of their bike will be taken from stock they accumulate over decades. Spot them at autojumbles; they're the ones that see something, never seemingly asking questions of year, or model; just 'how much'? Too much and they'll move on – remember, it's not for anything – yet. They walk round a sale, see a tank they like, and buy it for when it's needed. Go to a friend, see a frame, and buy it, or swap it, for when an engine comes along to suit it. Some bits are found for a purpose; but most will be in the shed, or sheds, for years; waiting for the right mission; waiting for their time to be useful. Oh, and the 'serial builder' will use the word 'just' a lot. Like fabricating an exhaust is 'just popping a load of pipes together'...

Neville is most definitely in the 'serial builder' group.

A man of few words; well, few words without a joke in between, Neville knows how to build a bike. And tractors. And cars, stationary engines, wood chip augers. As an example, the 'Rough Inferior' he let me race at the Bike Shed Festival last year; an Aerial WLG/Red Hunter frame, stretched to take the JAP KTOR V-twin from a Rotavator. Or the Fordson Major, with a Perkins engine, air brakes and now, thanks to his son's help, four-wheel drive with a Roadless front axle. Oh, and he also spent many years rebuilding traction engines. None of which you'll find on the internet, or

in books – it all comes from that ability to 'see' the solution to a problem. See the theme?

Back to the bike in hand. The point of all this scene-setting is the ability to envisage how a bike will be, when made from parts brought together. I'd been receiving the odd photograph on my phone of the build (taken by Neville's neighbour – making stuff he can do, modern technology less so), and I know his bikes of choice are always dirtbikes; but when I first saw those exhausts and the low-slung nature of the bike, it took me for six. It's part speedway bike, part flat tracker, part dirt bike, part poster bike. And I love it.

"The idea just come from my head. I had a Tiger 100 engine, well, most of one, which I've always liked, so I just wanted something like a TR5 Trophy or Tiger 100 frame; a rigid-type thing. But they all cost a lot of money so I thought I'll get some old rigid frame. Then I dropped onto this one and modified it a bit and, urm, there it is," explained Neville.

Why that style – did you decide before, or after you found the frame? "Well, it was a bit of both, really. I like old track bikes, I like the look." A few years ago Neville took an old 1200 Sportster fitted with knobblies, naturally, to watch Dirtquake, a fun dirt track festival of inappropriate bikes at Kings Lynn speedway track. In the early days you could rock up and have a go, so there he was, racing round with the likes of Guy Martin. Since then, plus the scores of times we've all watched 'On any Sunday', Neville has enjoyed the thought of flat track. Hence this fine machine.

The frame is BSA A10, around 1957. It was a rigid frame that had been modded to take the alloy plates for the rear wheel. It was based on either a Sonicweld or Trackmaster-type frame (these were American frame builders that made frames for US oval racing). Looking at photos, I think it's more Sonicweld. The alloy plates for the rear made it quick and easy to adjust the height of the rear wheel and the wheelbase to suit the oval circuit.

The frame was a hell of a mess; both down tubes



Honda yokes modified to fit A10 frame





Racing magneto tucked away

were mangled so these had to be cut out and new ones had to be made and bent exactly. Then a friend, Steve, who is an artist with any type of welding, replaced them. "That's nice and straight now." The alloy plates are on their second incarnation, too, the 3/8th plate being replaced by a sturdier 1/2ⁱⁿ with more meat to accept some mudguard stays.

At the front is all the gubbins from a Honda XL250, complete with a 21in wheel. "I like the small brake." It can have an 18in or 19in for flat track tyres, as the forks have plenty of movement. To get the 1980s Japanese front end to fit, Nev machined up a two-piece sleeve from some pipe to allow the BSA inner race fit on the thinner Honda stem, with ball



Nev likes large sprockets. Rear plates can be swapped quickly to adjust for different tracks

The exhausts, made from shortened BMW silencers, look spot-on



bearings supplied by Draganfly. Pirelli MT43 tyres give grip for the trails, but good handling on the road. To complement the front, at the rear is a BSA 18in QD rear wheel. The sprocket was cut by Talon, ¼ width, 520 chain, but then Neville had the inner cut out to fit the wheel.

The motor was meant to be the Tiger 100 engine in the shed, which only needed a few parts and putting together. But ever the one to spot a gem, Nev saw this complete engine while at a friend's workshop, and it turned out to be tuned, too. Nev likes building his engines, but this one, sitting there in all its glory and with shiny bits inside, was too tempting. The exact spec isn't certain, but: "it has high compression, E3134 cams in it, twin concentric carbs, racing mag (Alex from Matchless engineering, a friend who rebuilds mags were right jealous when he saw how good it was inside), a good crank and rods but you can't really see what they are. But that goes good. Well, now," smiles Neville.

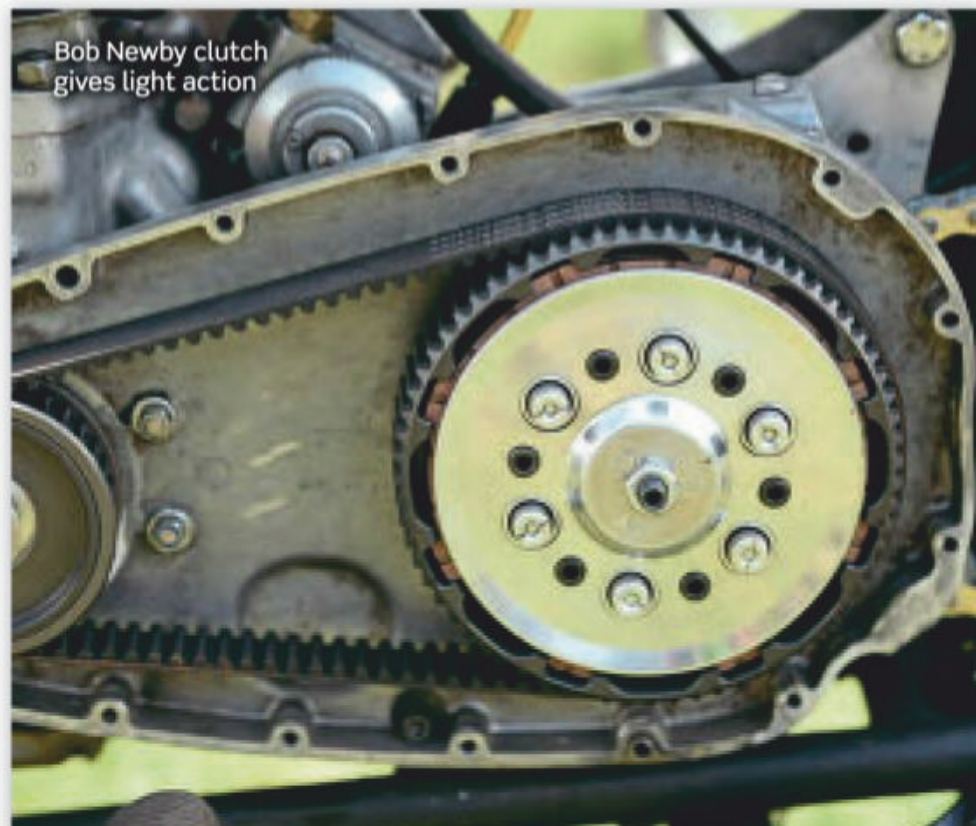
Getting the new motor to run was a little tricky. It fired, but didn't keep running. The mag was suspected, so the modern, soft brushes were replaced with some old-style ones from the hoard. The carbs were tweaked and fettled, but still nothing and they looked a little scruffy and gummed up, so a new pair of 928 concentric Premier carbs were ordered. Then the new NGK plugs were swapped for an old pair of platinum ones hanging around; and it fired up and ran beautifully. Even the experts miss the simple things, occasionally...

Fitting the engine was relatively simple, using the alloy Converta plates, but the oil feed and return pipes wouldn't work with the new oil tank, so a block had to be made and fitted with the pipes turned the other way.

The exhausts, however, took a lot more thought. The downpipes are TT ones, modified to fit the 500cc head, then bent and adjusted to stack on one side. But silencers were tricky. "Everyone use those cheap ones like your racer (he says pointing at me...) but I wanted something different – shorter, but with a reverse mega-look." In the end, while rifling through another shed for something, Nev rubbed up against a spare BMW boxer he has (as you do). The original BMW exhausts are Keihan, beautifully made and stainless steel. But they're too long, so out came the grinder, chopping the return at the end and shortening the front. Superwelder, Steve, then drilled the rear baffle out, repaired the insides and welded the shortened pair together. The result is unique, perfect for the bike, isn't too loud and should last forever!

Neville, how did you sort the gearing? "Well if you can't pass a Morris Minor then it's too low a gear. Thi'll be too low for road riding, but I've got good road bikes and I'm obsessed with large sprockets... Because that's all I can remember from Lyng Scramble (Cadders Hill track is 10 minutes down the road) when we used to go as kids from school. I can always gear it up at the front, or on the Bob Newby belt drive I always fit. They give a lovely light lever and you don't have to worry about a chaincase, then. And round here (Norfolk) that gearing, it's good fun. There's a BMW in the shed if I want to go fast for miles. This one's good for down the lanes and up the hedges; it's the style I like."

Getting detail from Neville on such a unique bike is fun, as long as you can understand: "That's been right





When we said it was built in a shed...

difficult with this lock in – at first I had pram wheels that I couldn't get the gearing set up for, and a treacle tin for an oil tank. But I got there in the end, I'm lucky I know a few people; I'd ring 'em up, offer 'em £20 and a dozen toilet rolls, and got the part needed..."

The tank is an alloy one, which was destined for a Gold Star scrambler. "I spent all week cleaning it up, painting it and popping the stickers on; then the first time I popped some fuel in the paint ran; I'd not lacquered it." The mudguards were both lodgers from the sheds, while that beautiful oil tank came from a local BSA specialist and friend, Alex, at Matchless engineering in Norwich. The shed supplied the ex-Velocette saddle, that Nev then made a hinge and sprung base for, which can be lifted "so your arse don't get wet..."

The small parts, the parts that take hours to make, have a functional, if rudimentary feel to them. The mudguard stays and the brackets made from scratch, the brass oil fittings found and stored for years, waiting for their time to shine. And the liberated parts; the footrests made from the draw bar of an International tractor and the rear wheel stand made from a Triumph 3T that spent 50 years in a field pit, immersed in water, rescued and given a new life. The speedo adds to the minimalist, racing theme; but isn't perfect. Neville smiles: "The speedo reckons a half-hour is 25 minutes; tha's nowhere near; the odd cyclist comes past, but on the lanes that's perfect. 40-50mph is where it likes it. It's a back lane scratcher and off-road it's all good. Now it needs the world to open and to be on a flat track." ▶



Effie wonders if white is Neville's best colour...

This Beezumph is a culmination of a vision, of parts available, of skills learned, of friends made, and helped, massively, by the world closing down for weeks, giving the time to practically finish it in just seven weeks. Just last week, the Beezumph had its first journey for an MoT, via the local ford, some green lanes, naturally, where it then passed with the addition of a bulb horn. Next was straight to the Post Office to get its free tax and the long road to getting all those small details begins. Except Neville loves it just the way it is. And when the world reopens, we are hoping to race it in the vintage flat track championship, where it should fit right at home.

"I don't know if I'd do anything different," says Neville, with the hint of a smile as he looks at his machine. And that is all the proof you need of a great specials builder. **GTG**

Many thanks to Alex at Matchless engineering, Norwich, 01603 630180, for all things BSA





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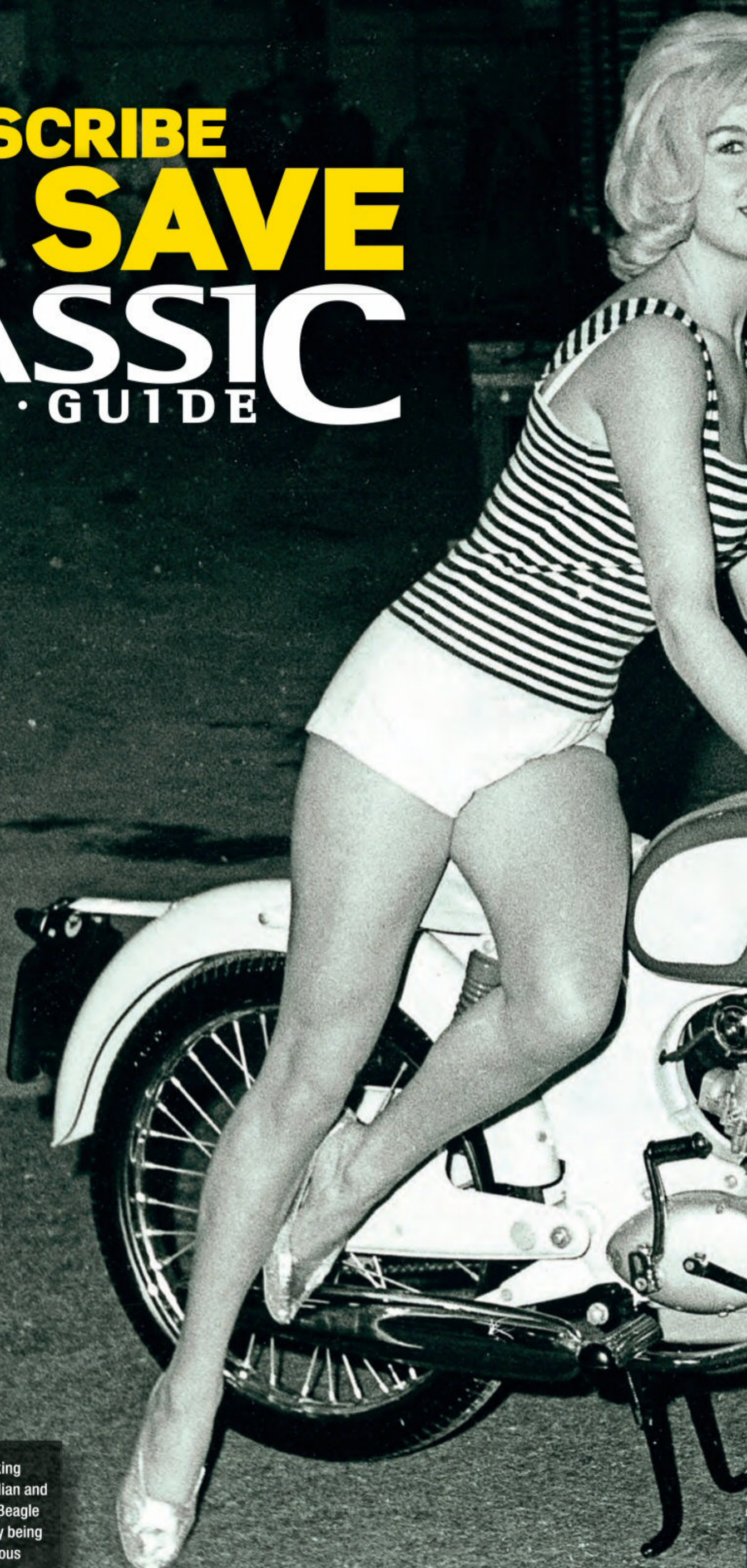
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The BSA Beagle was Edward Turner's good-looking response to the ever-growing threat of small Italian and Far East bikes, like Honda's Super Cub. But the Beagle only lasted a year, due in part to the top end only being lubricated by misting from the bottom end, dubious electrics and the strength of the Honda 90.



I only popped out to get a copy of Classic Bike Guide. I'm not worried about Mr Turner's engine design knocking the top end out, but someone's stolen my leathers and the lights are rubbish...

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Who's your classic biking community champion?

CLASSIC INSURANCE BROKERS

Footman James want to celebrate the champions in the classic vehicle community – from the members clubs couldn't do without, to the friend who always pops by in your hour of need.

Footman James will choose one person each week to celebrate, with that person receiving a Lego vehicle model of their choice up to £150 and a £150 donation to the charity of their choice.

Frank Hambleton, chairman of the Buxton Motorcycle Club was nominated by Stephen Edwards who said in his submission: "In the short time the club has been set up, he has built the club up to over 300 members, raising thousands for charity and getting people of all ages out on their bikes.

"He attracts some big names to speak at the monthly meetings and with his fellow committee members always puts on really good meetings and run outs. He is well known in the Buxton community as well. He is an all-round good bloke."

Frank was the chairman and secretary of the North Staffs VMCC prior to becoming chairman of the Buxton club. He has a passion for all bikes, old and new, including a 1975 Honda CB500T, a 2002 Fireblade, a Royal Enfield GT Continental he uses for club runs and a Yamaha MT09 Street Rally.

Frank has asked that Footman James donate his £150 charity donation to the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, with the club matching this so that £300 in total will be donated.

To nominate a classic community champion visit www.footmanjames.co.uk/classic-community-champion.

JAWA FANS FACE A LONG WAIT FOR SINGLES

THE ARRIVAL OF new Indian-built Jawa four-stroke singles in Europe is some distance off, according to the UK importers.

The new retro-styled Jawa singles have been a big hit in India and are built by Mahindra, who also own the rights to use the BSA name worldwide.

The Jawa name is well thought of in India, where they were built under licence in the 1960s and 70s, before being rebranded as Yezdi. The new Jawas mirror the old 1960s Jawa two-strokes in appearance.

While a few of the Indian Jawa models have turned up in Europe, the factory in Czechia continues to build the traditional two-stroke twins that have been the mainstay of production for decades, as well as a new range of 400cc four-stroke singles.

The Indian Jawas will require much development before they can be sold in Europe, where the total sale of motorcycles is one twentieth of those sold in India.



David Angel from F2 Motorcycles, the UK Jawa importer, says that although he has been bombarded with enquiries about the new Indian Jawas from potential customers, there is a long way to go before the new models are ready to hit the European market.

He said: "There's been a lot of interest from EU dealers but there is a huge distance to go before they can be approved for sale.

"Spares availability and finish will also need attention before we can consider selling them."

Some four-stroke Jawas are available in the UK, however. F2 Motorcycles are selling the Czech-built OHC 400 Jawas in standard, combination and café racer formats, as well as a new Scrambler model, alongside the company's traditional range of two-stroke twins. For details visit www.jawamotorcycles.co.uk.

SRM are rolling again

BRITISH ENGINE SPECIALISTS

SRM have reopened their Aberystwyth workshops and are taking webshop orders.

In line with Government guidelines, the company have to operate using social distancing and so work may take slightly longer than usual to pass through the workshop. Because of travel restrictions in Wales, any items requiring work should

preferably be sent in by post or courier. SRM can arrange a collection if necessary.

An appointment can be made to drop work off, but the travel restrictions should be taken into account. At the time of going to press travelling more than five miles from your home is not permitted except when essential and dropping off your A65 cylinder head might not



be seen as essential travel by the authorities. Contact SRM on 01970 62771 or visit srmclassicbikes.com.

BIKE T-SHIRT TO BACK NHS

SPARES SPECIALISTS WEMOTO

are backing the NHS with this year's charity T-shirt.

For the last five years, the profits of Wemoto's charity T-shirts have been destined for the Manx Grand Prix Supporters' Club, a charity Wemoto has wholeheartedly supported for many years and will continue to raise funds for. However, in light of recent events, the south coast specialists have decided as a one-off this year to raise funds for the NHS.

Created by Wemoto's inhouse designer, the profits raised from the sale of 'The Motorcyclist' T-shirts will go to the NHS Charities Together or Association of NHS Charities, as it is formally known.

The charity provides £1 million to the NHS every day to help fund and deliver a service that is above and beyond what the NHS can provide on its own. The 2020 NHS fundraising T-shirts are available now from wemoto.com for £10.



Visit: www.wemoto.com/components/clothinghelmetsandgoggles/tshirts



Call for motorbikes to be post-lockdown travel solution

FOLLOWING PROTESTS FROM riders' rights groups, the Government has backed the use of motorcycles for day-to-day travel rather than public transport as the nation emerges from lockdown.

The Coalition of Motorcycling Organisations had criticised the omission of motorcycles in Government thinking around transport post-lockdown.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps suggested that encouraging people to commute by bicycle will be a key part of proposals for transport as travel restrictions for the pandemic lockdown are eased; however, motorcycles were not mentioned. Following the submission of its 'Ride COVID Safe' White Paper, a Government minister said that using motorcycles was to be encouraged too, along with other private vehicles to reduce the pressure on public transport.

Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Motorcycling Group, Chris Law MP, said: "I very much welcome this initiative and the partnership between the organisations which created it. Motorcycling does have an enormous role to play in any transport policy if we are to see a long-term reduction in congestion and pollution, and the Parliamentary Motorcycle Group has long advocated this. The riders' code announced last week provides invaluable advice to those using motorcycles during the Covid-19 crisis, and I urge all motorcyclists to take it into account and ride safe

during these extraordinary times. As Chair of the APMG I strongly urge ministers and the DfT to fully recognise motorcycles as a transport mode."

In a written response to a Parliamentary Question raised by Christopher Chope MP, Rachel Maclean, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for Transport) and MP for Redditch said: "The Department's guidance issued on May 12 refers to 'Private cars and other vehicles' as an alternative to using public transport, and encourages the public to 'consider all other forms of transport before using public transport'. This would include private vehicles such as motorcycles and mopeds where the journey to be made is appropriate. Motorcycles are an important way of getting around, and we are working on a number of projects, including sorting out potholes, which are a problem for people on motorcycles and other two-wheeled vehicles. I encourage people to adopt the electric motorbike."

The Coalition is still awaiting a formal response from the Department of Transport. They have also sought but still await feedback from the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the National Police Chiefs Council. The Coalition of Motorcycling Organisations consists of the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG), the Vintage Motorcycle Club (VMCC), the Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) and the British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF).

PLANS MADE FOR STAFFORD'S RETURN

THE STAFFORD CLASSIC

Motorcycle Show, originally set to be held in April, has been rescheduled for a second time and merged with its 'sister' October event.

The spring and autumn Stafford shows are the biggest of their kind in Europe, but following Government advice on the coronavirus pandemic the show was originally rescheduled for August. Now the show will take place at the Stafford County Showground over the weekend of October 10 and 11.

A spokesman for organiser Mortons Media Group said: "The safety and well-being of our visitors, exhibitors, partners, contractors and staff is the most important factor and the key reason for postponing the event. The events team has been continually monitoring the latest public health and Government guidelines regarding the evolving Covid-19 situation and acting in accordance with their advice."

All ticket and trade bookings will be honoured for these new dates. For ticket enquiries contact Mortons' customer services on 01507 529529 or email customerservices@mortons.co.uk

For all trade enquiries contact the shows team on email exhibitions@mortons.co.uk

The outbreak has hit other

events. In Belgium the Chimay Classic series has been cancelled. These include Classic Bikes on July 17-19, Open Trophy July 24-26 and Supermoto on August 16. The Belgian Government has issued a "prohibition to organise a mass event until August 31" and there may be no staff for the circuit hospital.

The Classic TT has also succumbed. The Isle of Man Government and the Manx Motor Cycle Club, the race organisers of the Classic TT and Manx Grand Prix, have taken the joint decision to cancel this year's events which were due to take place between August 22 and September 4 on the Isle of Man.

Llan Bike Fest, scheduled for August, has been cancelled. The organisers had hoped that the situation would have eased sufficiently by August to allow the event to run as planned but having carefully monitored the development of the situation the organisers decided they would be unable to hold the festival effectively while ensuring the safety of those on site.

The VMCC has cancelled the Festival of 1000 Bikes and the Banbury Run along with other local branch events. Have you rescheduled an event? Don't forget to let us know. Email editor@classicbikeguide.com.

A light touch for your interceptor

ELSEWHERE IN THIS month's magazine you will find an article on cable making. If you don't want to make them yourselves, Royal Enfield Interceptor owners who are finding the clutch a little stiff are being thrown a lifeline by cable specialists Venhill.

Designed and made in Britain, the 'Featherlight' cable provides a lighter, smoother action, improved feel, and increased durability compared to the OE version. Each one features Venhill's high-quality Featherlight cabling: marine-grade stainless steel inner wire that resists stretching and a Teflon liner, for minimum friction and a



lighter action. It also removes the need for lubrication. Venhill cables are a straight swap with the originals. The Featherlight clutch cable retails at £24.14 and is available in black, blue, green, grey, orange, red and yellow. It fits all models of the 650 Interceptor (2019 on). Visit www.venhill.co.uk or call 01306 885111 for further details.



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The logic is clear – if you want a haircut, you don't go to the supermarket. So, if you want a certain part for your classic motorcycle, then you approach the companies that deal in parts and expertise in those very models. And look what we have here – a number of specialists whose focus is on certain makes and models of classic motorcycle, just the job!

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Letters



STAR LETTER

Motorcycles and physics together

Just a quick note to thank you for a great magazine! As a motorcyclist I look forward to every edition of *CBG* and enjoy it so much from cover to cover.

As a motorcycling physicist I was even more overjoyed to find in the May edition the usual array of interesting subjects plus in the editorial a potted history of Isaac Newton contributed by Ashley Watson. Motorcycles and physics between the same covers – it doesn't get much better than that!

It is true that Newton self-isolated from the plague but then, because of his reclusive nature he spent most of his life alone, although he did spend time with the Royal Mint, the Royal Society and the University of Cambridge. Newton had a most unattractive nature, being vain and vindictive with no hobbies except his work, had no friends and never married. Although this was attributed by some to his being abandoned as a young child by his mother I have my own theory to

explain his lack of an affable personality. You see, in Newton's time there were no such things as motorcycles!

Had he been able to take a quick blast on his Harley or a sedate bumble around the lanes of his native Lincolnshire on my beautiful R/E Classic 500, he would have turned out quite differently – lovable, friendly, considerate and happy, just like the rest of our motorcycling community!

Dr Peter Wright

THIS MONTH'S STAR LETTER **WINS**

The writer of this month's Star Letter wins a Weise Michigan jacket worth £169.99.

Subtle, classy retro design cues mark the Michigan out from the crowd. Quilted shoulder stitching and upper-arm stripes round off a high-quality textile outer shell. Find out more at thekeycollection.co.uk



Heard of a Flandria?

While in lockdown I am catching up on my stash of *CBG* (I work away from home a lot normally). Just read the March issue with the article about Classic European 125s.

I think you missed one. When I was a lad, we had a bloke come to our village to see a girl that lived there. We used to congregate on an old farm track across the fields where we took it in turns to ride up and down on a moped; a Garelli if memory serves me correctly.

Anyway, this lad turned up on a 'proper' motorbike, not a moped and while he and said girl were 'playing' in the undergrowth we were actually allowed to ride this wondrous thing.

Bearing in mind that I was about 14 years old it seemed huge to me and it remains in my memory as the first proper motorcycle I rode, with gears and everything.

What was it? A Flandria. Apparently, it was made by a Belgian company that usually made pushbikes. But this bike existed because I rode it. And from that day to this (over 40 years!) I have never seen another one. An internet search doesn't dig up much about Flandria bikes and most of them are 50s so they may not have made a 125. But if they didn't.... I'm pretty sure Motobecane did! Anyone else know of a Flandria?

Chris Cooper

The love of boxers – and that one's mine!

The article by Owen Howells was great reading and reminds me of similar rides covering long days and dashes for ferries. The old boxer just purred on no matter what. Simple to maintain and giving that feeling of confidence that you will get to your destination with as little effort as a motorcycle can demand.

I've a couple of little comments for any readers contemplating ownership of an RRS. First, the twin shock model featured didn't end in 1981, it went on to 1984 with the limited edition of 500 bikes, each having a number on the fairing (I think); so not a break from 81-86. I've had four in total including the later mono versions which I will add are also a great bike; a bit lower seat height and although it is 10bhp less, I don't recall it being apparent when on the road.

Steve comments on the indicator switch; is he not confusing this with the later 1100-1200s? The switch is simply left for left and right for right like any other bike!

The machine above is actually mine and has been for 29 years. I can update Steve and readers on the issue of the centrestand. I renewed the two bolts, one was bent, and bushes since then and it's a hell of a lot easier to use. Also the side stand was renewed and the toe piece isn't hiding as much as the previous one.

Some useful information related to the main stand: You can remove either wheel without support of a jack etc as the bike is balanced and will rest



on either remaining wheel.

You'll notice the neat TIG or MIG welding, can't recall which, that cured the oxyacetylene problem of introducing rust into the joints during manufacture. Even the seat upholstery was marine quality PVC for durability as mine is still in situ and the handlebar grips are tapered outwards to suit the shape a hand takes when holding them; so much thought went into them.

I fitted a clutch on mine at 83k miles, first time and it's wasn't difficult. I read another article in one of the mags were the writer said the engine had to come out to do a gearbox so your comments are harmless compared to that! Use quality mineral 20/50 oil and genuine 'bendy' filters at the recommended intervals,

don't economise!

The rear disc brake is a begger to bleed. It has to be unbolted and held upside down whilst bleeding and then you are rewarded with a brake lacking any real functionality. I found this with my CB500T front brake and fitted a TLS from a CL450 which has way surpassed the disc and the front now dips when braking. Some people used the early RRS rear drum brake/wheel on their bikes to get an efficient stopper. My CB750K0 is worse, useless in fact.

I can recommend an RRS to those looking for a classic bike to actually use as a bike. The longer the journey the more ones sees the benefits of the design and the whole concept of the machine.

Karl Chadwick

Shiny and Oozer ride again!

Alan Davison (May 2020) writes about people quizzing him on how much his classic is worth, saying how annoying it is. I think there's a sub-species of us bikers on clunkers that don't get those comments. It's populated by riders of non-shiny, lightly oozing bikes of the make and year maybe that Matt rides; but there the similarity ends.

Who are these lucky un-pestered souls? Well, you can

sometimes pick them out in the bacon booty queue by their grubby (but serviceable) waterproofs, seams often reinforced with non-matching tape and battered open-face helmets.

The chirpy chappy who straightaway asks the value of the shiny classic of its loving owner tends to avoid Mr/Ms taped waterproofs. He casts but a glance on faded paintwork and

has no wish to hear the start-up whirl of tightly meshing pinions on the Oozer of indeterminate age. Instead he heads straight to pester poor Shiny's owner. Meanwhile Oozer owner gets his/her sarnie and tea, then fires up the old nail and putt-putts off for the next 100 miles of classic-riding joy, smugly wondering if poor polite Shiny's rider will ever be let on his way.

Chas



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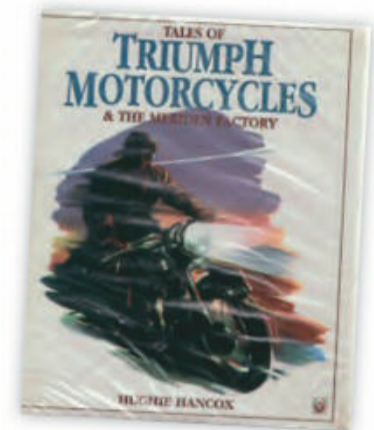
RECENTLY THERE'S BEEN PLENTY OF opportunities to catch up on your reading. I've been given a large collection of copies of *The Motor Cycle*, 1956-59, that I've been devouring, while my shelves already groaned with reference volumes and other tomes found at shows and jumbles.

Books by Roy Bacon and Bob Currie are regularly

perused, as are Rupert Ratio's books on BSA Unit Singles.

Then there are books that have less in the way of technical information but tell a fascinating tale – the story of the steady rise and rapid fall of the British motorcycle industry.

Here are four books on the subject – if you haven't got at least one of them, you're missing out. – Oli



Save The Triumph Bonneville - The Inside Story of the Meriden Workers' Co-op

JOHN ROSAMUND

THIS BOOK DOES a decent job of telling the Meriden Co-op's story from the point of view of the factory workers. Rosamund was a welder when he joined the company in 1970 at the age of 25, became spokesman for the welders, and in 1977 became chairman of the Co-op's board of directors.

The book is a little hard work in parts but is as good an example of one man's recollections as is available. The first chapters dealing with what went on during the sit-in and factory takeover are personal and fascinating. The Meriden Co-op successfully survived for a decade in the toughest of circumstances and deserves having its place in history recorded.

There's quite a lot of information about some of the projects that Meriden came up with on a shoestring, including some rare pictures of various factory customs. The Co-op's efforts to tie-in with Moto-Guzzi get a look in. There are details of one bike I wasn't aware of, a sadly stillborn effort using a modified T140 Bonneville frame

with a bored out 900cc Triumph Trident engine in it to create an all-British superbike, which looks very fine.

There's also some behind the

scenes stuff about a deal that was very nearly signed between Triumph and Suzuki, where Triumph would build Suzuki models in the UK in a new factory.

There was also another mooted but ultimately unsuccessful deal with Armstrong, who were making bikes for the Army at the time.

The bikes from the last years – the sparkly Jubilee and royal wedding models, the challenging appearance of the TS8-1 are featured heavily. The desperate struggle to keep things going in the early 1980s is told with an inevitable tinge of sadness.

The book does suffer a little from the density of the information, with lots of detail about politics and finances and loan agreements gone bad, unpaid rates bills, and many behind the scenes machinations, which make some sections a tough read. But if you are interested in the Meriden story as much the bikes, it's a fascinating record of the times.

The story of what was one of the most successful British workers' co-ops deserves its place in history, as without it Triumph as we know it now would never have existed. Indeed, if you visit the People's History Museum, in Manchester, which is an otherwise splendid place and tells the story of Trade Unions and that sort of stuff, you'll find shelves of books and academic studies on the likes of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders Work-In, which lasted a year, and not a single item about Meriden in the 1970s and 80s. They need a copy of this book.

■ **Veloce Publishing. Out of print and available used from £18-30**

■ **Amazon Kindle ebook £8.99**

■ **ISBN: 975 1 845842 65 9**

Tales of Triumph Motorcycles and The Meriden Factory

HUGHIE HANCOX

IN CONTRAST TO Rosamund's story, this book by Triumph tester Hughie Hancox is suffused with the joy and excitement of building motorcycles in the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

Hancox worked in Meriden's experimental department, road testing, the toolroom and service repair shop and dealt with dealers in the UK and abroad. It's a delight.

Hancox has a light and easy writing style, the book is scattered with anecdotes and amusing tales about his time at the display team the White Helmets; the camaraderie in the factory and the frankly outrageous behaviour of some of the testers that would never be allowed today.

There are many rare and exotic pictures, and he doesn't pull any punches on the products Triumph were turning out. His chapters on the Tina scooter and the problems that arose in the dying days of the BSA Triumph group are shocking and hilarious. He reveals that at one point Triumph shipped at least one Daytona to a dealer without an oil pump because the bike had been put in the wrong queue at the rolling road, a move that caused consternation at the dealers as they did the pre-delivery inspection and couldn't work out why the oil wasn't going back to the tank.

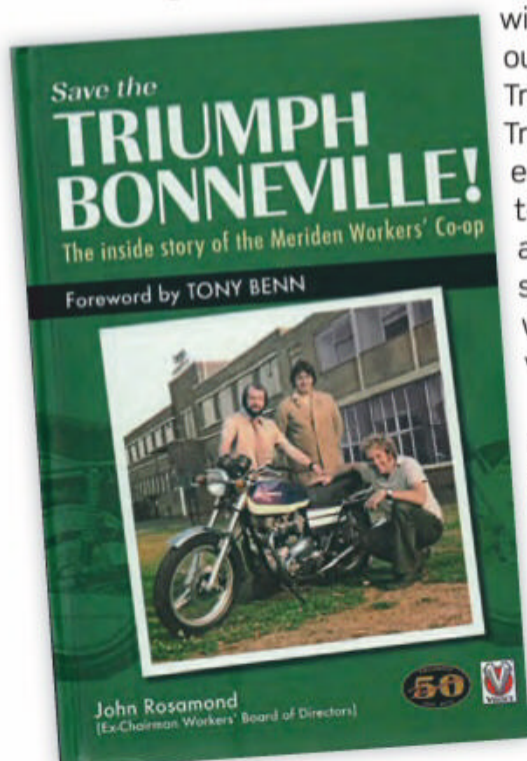
He also tells of the day he changed a fuse for one of the typing pool and nearly caused a strike because he hadn't called for an electricians union member to do it; and of spicing clutch centres from the stores destined for production bikes for the USA after everyone had gone home, then discreetly sending them to British dealerships so they could do warranty repairs.

The book should be on the shelf of anyone with a passing interest in British motorcycles. Hancox clearly loved his job, and it really comes through in his writing.

■ **Veloce Publishing www.veloce.co.uk. £19.99**

■ **Amazon Kindle £10.04**

■ **ISBN: 1 874105 57 X**



Whatever happened to the British Motorcycle Industry?

BERT HOPWOOD

NOW OUT OF print, 'WHTTBMCI' could have been subtitled "Bert Hopwood Sticks the Boot In". Hopwood comes across as opinionated, irascible and blunt, but then he did design several of the classic engines that kept the British industry on top for decades, so perhaps he was more than entitled to his opinion.

The first half tells of Hopwood's early career, switching between Ariel, Triumph and Norton and AMC and BSA and back to Triumph. The latter part deals with the actual collapse, and his conclusion that the biggest problem was that BSA management didn't actually like motorcycles.

Interestingly, it was written in 1981, two years before Meriden finally closed and at the time his critiques raised a few eyebrows there. There's a lot of score-settling, with trade unions, management and Bonneville creator, Edward Turner, all getting the treatment from Hopwood's acid-dipped pen. In retrospect most of his criticism looks to have been entirely justified. He didn't seem

to like many people, except perhaps Triumph engineer Doug Hele.

There are lots of interesting details about prototypes and unbuilt designs. A 650cc Bonneville engine in one of the frames from the cancelled Bandit/Fury 350 looked promising, and the early Wankels also get a look in, with BSA branding and what looks like an A65 Spitfire petrol tank before they became Nortons.

Hopwood's own designs for a modular range that never made it off the drawing board also make an appearance. The designs range from a 200cc single to 1200cc V5 and their style is very much like the T160 Trident. Hopwood's descriptions of his own working practices are fascinating, as was his habit of getting into furious rows with famous senior managers ranging from Edward Turner to Joe Craig at Norton, from the entire board at AMC, to NVT boss Dennis Poore, then writing detailed and angry resignation letters, reproduced in the book, and then instantly

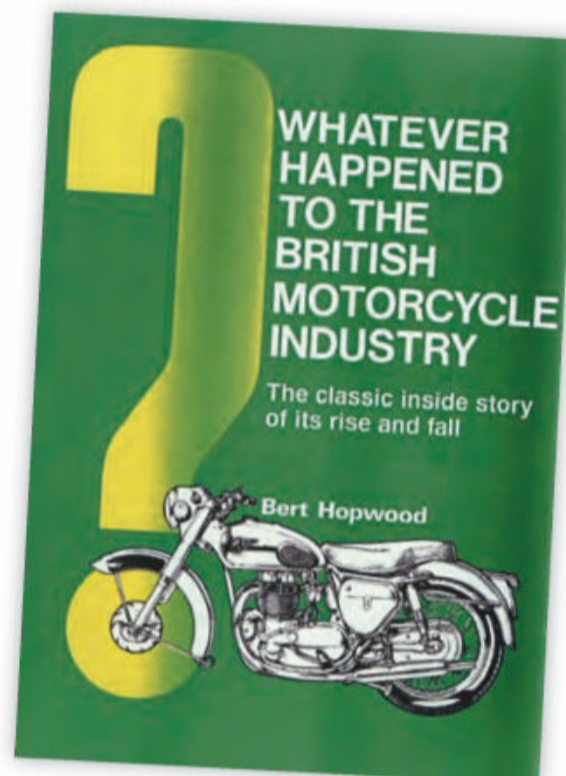
walking into another top position at a rival.

The book has been out of print for many years, and commands huge prices on the internet selling sites, where £60 plus is not unusual. Perhaps a reprint might be in order.

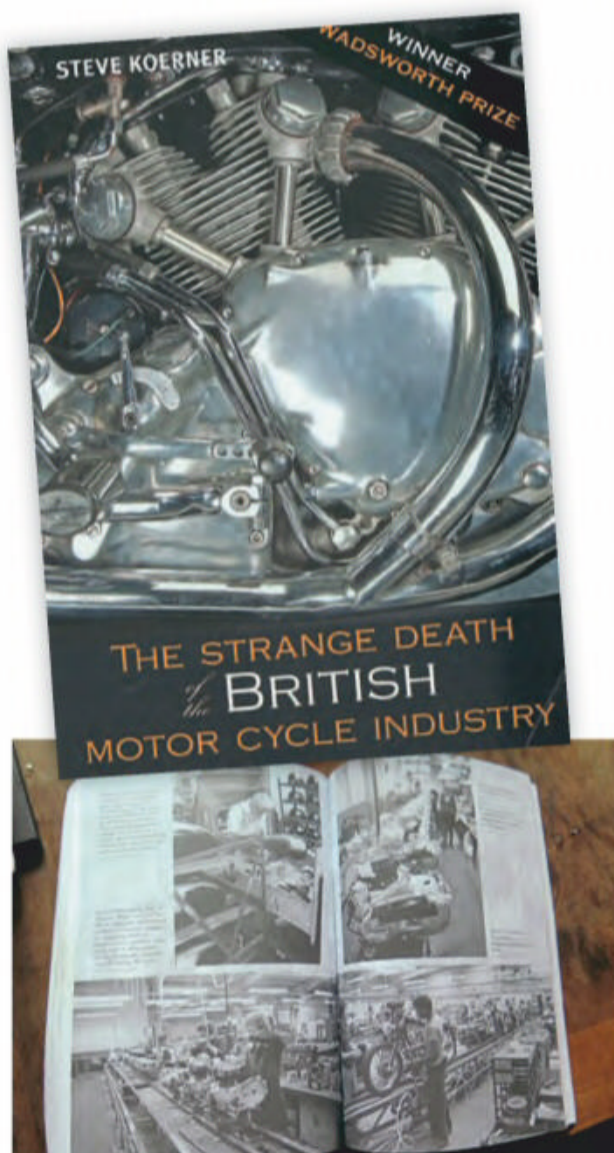
■ Haynes

■ **Out of Print: try Amazon.co.uk for secondhand examples**

■ ISBN: 1 85960 427 7



The Strange Death of the British Motorcycle Industry



STEVE KOERNER

UNLIKE MOST BOOKS about the subject, The Strange Death isn't written by an insider, but by a historian, and is all the better for it.

Koerner is an excellent writer who covers all the bases, and has done his research forensically, while his distance from the subject – he's a Norton-owning Canadian – allows him to see things rather more clearly than most.

The in-depth analysis is impressive and the book works on several levels. It can be read as an academic treatise suitable for a doctorate – there are 67 pages of footnotes and references. Or read it as a history of the British motorcycle industry from the earliest days to the apparently dying gasps and then unexpected resurrection.

There are some fascinating period photographs, some from Canada, some the US and others rarely seen from inside British factories, which reveal a lot. Did you know, for instance that the ill-fated and poorly designed BSA Dandy scooter was built exclusively by female workers on a special production line? Or that Ariel Square Fours were built using flimsy-looking one-foot-wide wooden benches as bike ramps?

He lays some of the blame at the door of Number 10 Downing Street, pointing out that while The Japanese and Italian Industries were heavily supported by their Governments, the British Government didn't care, leaving the industry to survive on its wits. While other countries had protectionist policies on the import of smaller bikes, the British attitude was to just let them trade freely.

Written in 2012, Koerner also gets the chance to touch on more modern bikes – Hesketh and Hinckley Triumphs get a look-in. He largely discounts the idea that it was the Union's fault, and ultimately puts it down to British management's inability to change, along with trade tariffs, the Honda Cub, and so on. This is hardly a series of stunning revelations, but the evidence is gathered in such forensic detail, it reads like a dense thriller you know the end of, but still gets you involved in future readings as you go back to see what you missed the first time out.

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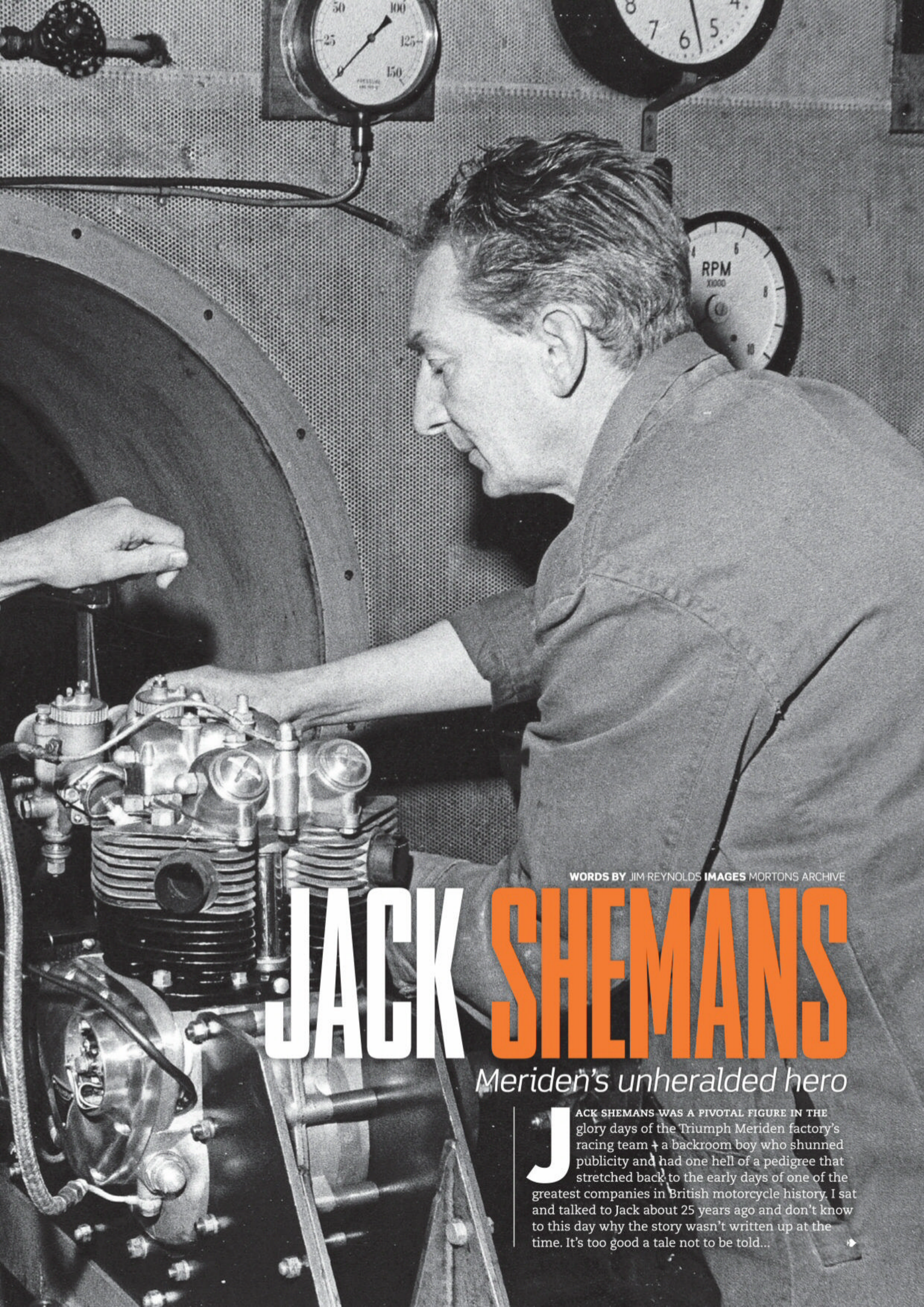
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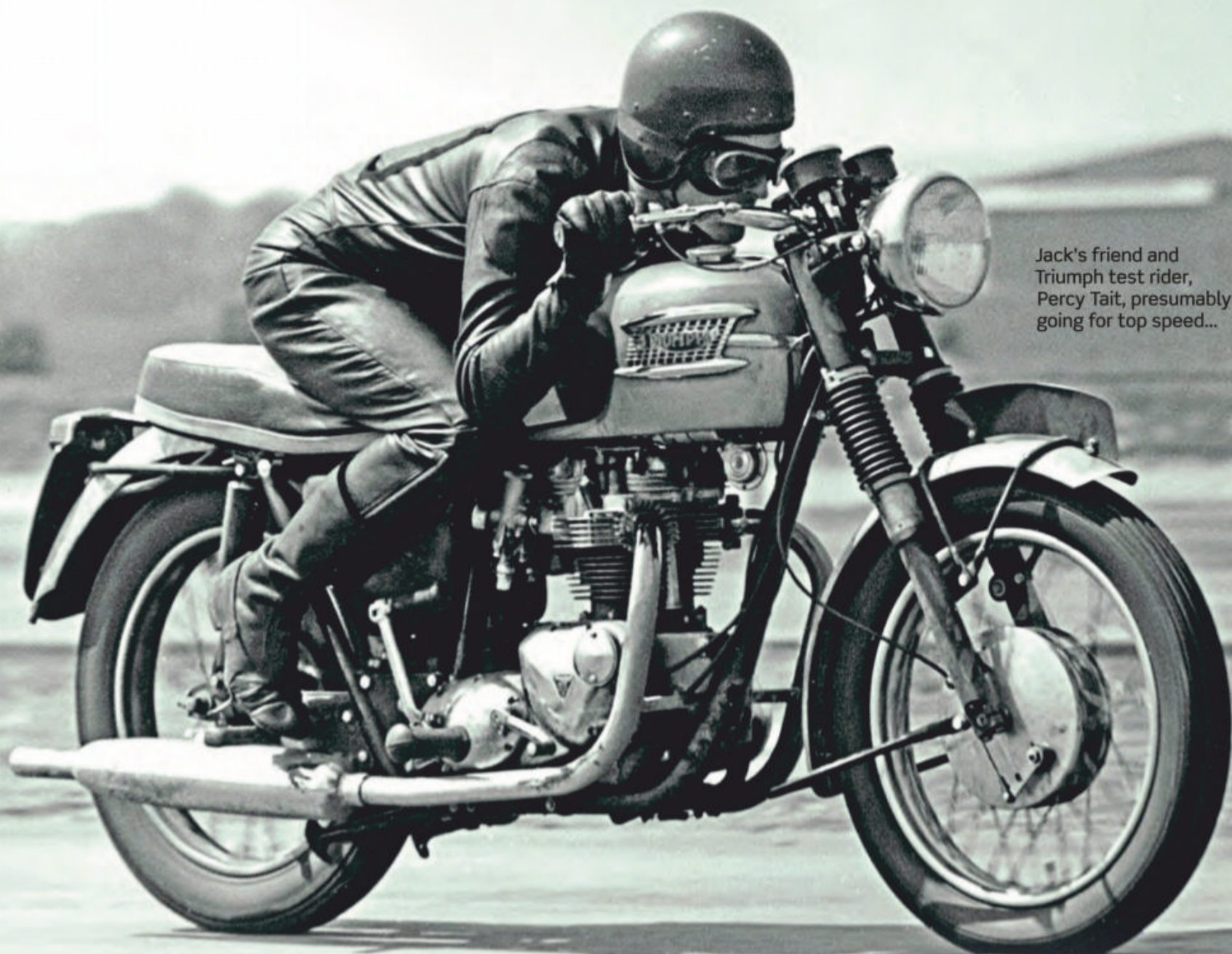


WORDS BY JIM REYNOLDS IMAGES MORTONS ARCHIVE

JACK SHEMANS

Meriden's unheralded hero

JACK SHEMANS WAS A PIVOTAL FIGURE IN THE glory days of the Triumph Meriden factory's racing team — a backroom boy who shunned publicity and had one hell of a pedigree that stretched back to the early days of one of the greatest companies in British motorcycle history. I sat and talked to Jack about 25 years ago and don't know to this day why the story wasn't written up at the time. It's too good a tale not to be told... ▶



Jack's friend and Triumph test rider, Percy Tait, presumably going for top speed...

Jack's father George joined Triumph in 1910 as Seigfried Betjeman's chauffeur and progressed to become a tester, riding for the company in the TT in 1913, 1914 and finally 1921, when he logged his best finish, 11th in the Senior race.

"I remember father telling me they had to open Keppel Gate and close it after them in the early days," said Jack. "In one race he crashed up on the Mountain, hit a telegraph pole and lay there for a quarter of an hour, got up and finished the race!" They were tough old boys racing over Snaefell in those days.

"He rode in the Continental Circus, travelling by train to the big European races in the 1920s and he won a gold medal in the 1920 International Six Days trial as a member of the factory team. Nine Triumphs started and nine won gold. He also did a 500 mile race at Brooklands and had a diploma signed by A V Hepplewhite (long-term timekeeper at the track). He went on to the Triumph car factory and won the International Alpine Rally three times in a Southern Cross model with a Coventry Climax inlet-overhead and side-exhaust valve engine.

"When the Triumph company went bust, the car side was sold to Standard and the motorcycle business to Jack Sangster. Dad remained with them, at Dale Street in Coventry and when they moved to the new factory at Meriden after they were bombed out. He was in charge of silencer and component parts production."

Young Jack didn't go straight into the bike industry after he left Stoke School in the mid Thirties, but was one of the best three candidates for an apprenticeship

at the Daimler factory, where he didn't finish the course as he moved on to the Armstrong aircraft factory and technical fabrication work. With the outbreak of war in 1939 he was drafted into the Army and the Combined Operations Bombardment Unit. "Went all over the world, directing fire to the enemy positions," was his modest summary of time spent as the unit's dispatch rider and fitter.

"When I was demobbed my old job didn't exist and I was looking for something when the local doctor asked me if I'd teach his daughter to drive. We were out one day, passing the Triumph factory at Meriden and I stopped the car and asked the chap in the gatehouse if they had any jobs for fully skilled fitters." He walked straight into an interview with Frank Bruce, who told him the company had just started on the development of a new project called the Spring Wheel; he was hired. "Then I went back out to the car to carry on the lesson.

"The Sprung Hub was Edward Turner's design, he copied it from railway bogies, but made the sliders curved, to keep chain tension constant. When it came out, everyone thought it was marvellous. I moved on to the engine benches when the swinging arm frame came in, where we worked on selective assembly. You didn't just put things together, you had to do selective assembly, checking them on jigs. That's why Triumphs were so quiet, they used to boast that when you turned one over, all you could hear was the oil pump working."

"At one time 80 percent of output went to Australia, then all of a sudden the Aussies put an embargo

on British bikes. Edward Turner had a tannoy put in and addressed all the workers, telling us the wind of change was here and we must find new markets. We were working a three-day week temporarily while Turner was opening up the American market. He had Rita Hayworth (big in every way Hollywood star) there to pose on a bike, but he also opened East and West Coast distributors. Everybody lived in dread of him, he was a hard man but very fair.

"In 1964 I moved up to the experimental department, where we all had to wear ties – it was the Holy of Holies. I remember the Tina scooter was breaking frames and Turner called me in with a micrometer to check the gauge of the frame tube. He said "That's the problem – under gauge!" had it altered and the problem was cured.

"Turner said if we made a good product we didn't need to race – they'd sell themselves. Doug Hele came into the company a year after I'd joined the experimental and he had a ready-made team there. Percy Tait, myself on engines and Arthur Jakeman on cycle parts. We set about the Tiger 100, working through the back door, every weekend for two years. We worked on it for nothing, just for the love of racing. It was a very tuneable engine and we upped the power from about 33 to 52bhp, I actually saw 54 once on a very special motor. Doug's ambition was to get 100 horse power per litre.

"It was very flimsy, we broke everything in the early days. Cranks, cylinder barrel – three fins up, split straight in half – and crankcases at the rear mounting lug.. Doug modified the crank with bigger radiuses to cure that problem.

"The Americans asked Doug to do an engine for them and I built it under his supervision. The Yanks were so thrilled with the way it went, they wanted a complete bike done next year. Doug went over with that, on his own."

The Tiger 100 was a centre of constant development. "The timing side plain bush main was inclined to nip up, so I built the case up with weld and remachined it to take a roller bearing, then peened the outside of the case to hide the weld. That came into production, a benefit of racing development." It was a quick engine in serious competition, but occasionally had rather public problems: "In the 1965 TT Percy was just into second place when the flywheel bolt broke and he was out!"

Hele had a way of standing his ground, as Shemans saw more than once. "At Daytona in 1971, the British prepared triples had the front brake calipers behind the folk legs, but the American prepared bikes had them in front. We were asked to change them because they weren't homologated, but Doug won the day after a lot of talking. Dick Mann won that race on a so-called BSA, but it was built at Triumph. They disqualified him because his fuel tank was too big, so someone leaned against the bike and when they measured it again, it was alright!"

Jack's work on the 500cc twin saw him travelling to events as part of a very modest team, including the 1967 Belgian Grand Prix at the magnificent



Triumph Tina, that Jack helped to fix after they were breaking frames



Norman Hyde, who Jack went to work for while the Triumph factory had the protests

"The sprung hub was Edward Turner's design, he copied it from railway bogies, but made the sliders curved, to keep chain tension constant. When it came out, everyone thought it was marvellous"

Spa-Francorchamps circuit. "We were allocated the same pit area as Ago because we were considered a works team... They hadn't heard of Percy Tait and the Italians didn't want to let us in. Arthur Jakeman was a tough lad in those days and we had to force our way in."

So how big was this unknown British works team? "The works Transit, Percy Tait, Arthur and me." Spares for the Grand Prix campaign? "A spare wheel, one maybe. We certainly didn't have a spare engine. And we slept in the van, too – called it the Meriden Hilton." There was one occasion when the intrepid trio got thoroughly lost in a foggy journey to another European race and they ended up sleeping in the van on the central reservation of an unidentified dual carriageway!

The 1967 Belgian is part of Triumph racing lore today. "At the end of the first lap, Percy was in the lead and at the end of the second lap he was still ahead; the MV mechanics were going spare."

According to Percy Tait, Ago was trying to give Angelo Bergamonti on the Linto a tow, but realised the Triumph was disappearing up the road and got a move on to take the lead and score the win the world expected. "Percy averaged 116mph for the race and was a good second to Agostini. Afterwards we got a lot of respect from the MV mechanics," Jack remembered. For a development of a pushrod production engine, it was an heroic result.

Not that the work was very lucrative: "We were not paid extra for working weekends until 1969. Then we'd get a bonus for the extra work, not on our hourly rate, just an extra sum." Nor were working conditions always what you might expect factory engineers to enjoy: "We did two 500s for Paul Smart and Ray Pickrell in the Manx Grand Prix, with Percy there in an advisory capacity. The workshop was a scrubby little garage and the bench was a plank on two upturned chimney pots. One day Ray broke down and hid the bike behind a hedge so it wouldn't attract attention, and it took a long time for the blokes to find him. Pick was pretty cold by the time they arrived and needed a pee. Percy said to do it at the side of the van, then got into the van and drove away." That was typical of Tait the joker.

Jack had a great respect for Ray Pickrell: "He was brilliant, the hardest rider. If he got threaded up, which the 500 would do, he wouldn't let it off. And such a quiet, unassuming bloke. The first time he went down Bray Hill flat out, we'd been in the Casino until 4am the night before, but once he'd done it he was okay."

Another man he admired a great deal was Malcolm Uphill, who would reward the work of the experimental department with historic Production TT victories in 1969 and 70. "Malcolm was the most stylish. He knew the TT course better than anybody and the exact gearing he wanted for the conditions. He'd stand up, wet his finger and feel the wind. If he reckoned it was against him somewhere on the course, he wanted the gearing down half a tooth.

"Everything we learned on the 500s was passed on to the triples; cam timing, port sizes, pipe lengths and carbs, all ready to convert the triple into a racer."

That knowledge was well applied when the factory

tackled the Bol d'Or for the first time, with Paul Smart and Tom Dickie sharing a triple with Shemans and Jakeman once more in attendance. "I think it was Paul who dropped it in practice and we set to and sorted it out, but there was no time left for proper practice. Come the race and they were doing really well, in the lead. You had to keep on top of the lap scorers, or they'd nick you a lap, so you had to do your own lap scoring." He knew how popular the British invasion was in the pre-race presentation, when there would be a rocket fired and the national flag of the target team floated down; the crowd booed the Union Jack. They never quite got over meeting the Duke of Wellington and his lads, did they?

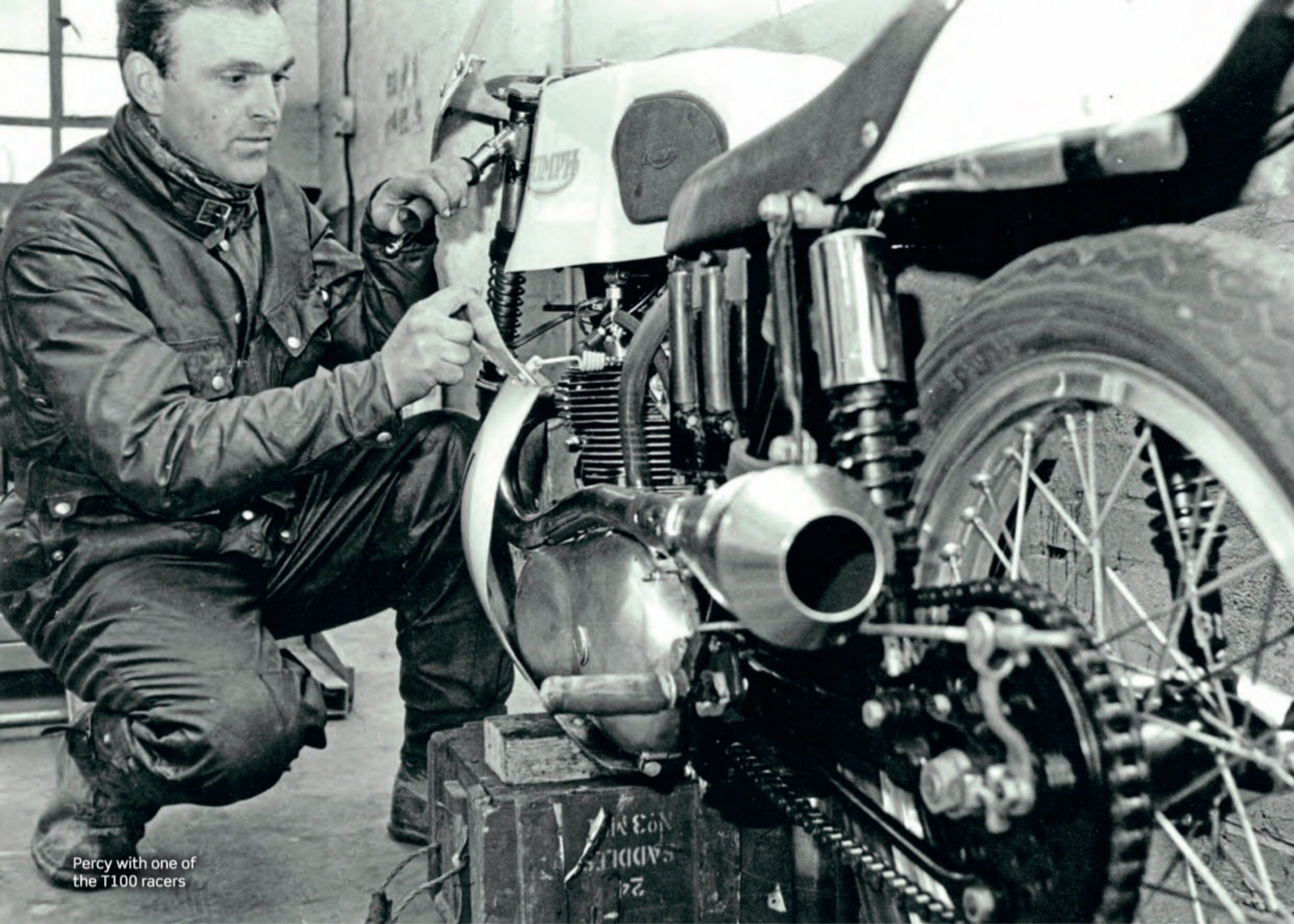
"Arthur and me were on the go for 24 hours on top of getting the bike sorted out. I've never been so knackered in my life!" The Trident took the chequered flag, defeating a Japauto Honda to do so. "Paul and Tom confessed to Arthur and me that they hadn't planned to race for 24 hours, but they were so impressed by the way Arthur and me had worked to get it mended that they just rode it and actually won."

One of Jack's developments brought a new word into the Triumph technical lexicon. He developed a trio of Amal's Concentric carburettors with a special gas flowed inlet trumpet to replace the more difficult to tune GPs. "They gave about half a horsepower less, but the bike was more tractable." The works tuned engines gave between 82 and 85bhp and the minor power loss was acceptable with the easier ride; eventually every team bike was modified. In a tribute to Shemans's work, Doug Hele referred to the new units as 'Shemozzles'.

Life wasn't always smooth with the triples. Like the 1971 Trans Atlantic Challenge and the first round at a chilly Brands Hatch: "For some reason we'd decided to run on R40. We'd always been on Duckhams 20/50, but someone had decided we'd change. But it was too cold for the oil to circulate and Pick's big ends went. We took the bike down to Paul Smart's boatyard in Maidstone, Norman Hyde brought a new crank down from the works and me and Arthur rebuilt the engine in four hours – on 20/50. Ray won both races and I remember standing in the middle of Brands Hatch, and Doug Hele saying "Who is this Pickrell?"

"We did tests on the viscosity of the oil and at the temperature it was that day. R40 just wouldn't go through the oil ways, so we enlarged them. That was introduced to the production T160s, another spin-off from racing."

It was around this period, with Paul Smart in the team, that they hit a problem with one of the triples at Daytona. Paul's bike refused to start and after an urgent search and analysis session it emerged that the handlebar-mounted ignition switch that Lucas had made especially for the bike was just shorting out. Nil sparks, nil performance. Jack threw away the faulty switch and used whatever was around to fabricate a working version, taping the broken end of a hacksaw blade that just had to be pressed to earth to kill the engine. Paul finished the race, but Jack couldn't remember just where, and the works fitted something more serious when they got back home. But Paul Smart kept that hacksaw blade fragment as a souvenir and when the bike was rebuilt by Jack



Percy with one of the T100 racers



Malcolm Uphill, another of Jack's friends

“In one race he crashed up on the Mountain, hit a telegraph pole and lay there for a quarter-of-an-hour, got up and finished the race!” They were tough old boys racing over Snaefell in those days.”

in Norman Hyde's workshop many years later, that hacksaw switch was taped back in place.

It wasn't all racing in the experimental department and Jack built a variety of units in the constant search to improve the product. "Like a 180 degree crank triple – very smooth but it had a funny exhaust note. And I built a T140 with a dummy cast iron horizontal piston on a balancer shaft. It smoothed the engine a hell of a lot and the idea was that it would eventually be the oil pump." Where that went he couldn't remember, only that it was fitted into a Norton frame. He also put together a T140 unit with a 180 degree crank: "Not very successful vibration wise..."

"Out of the 180 degree triple came the four cylinder engine that I built. Four sections all spigotted together and held with countersunk Allen screws. There were never any drawings made – it was a secret between Doug Hele, Alan Barnett the foreman and me. There was a hell of a lot of Devcon plastic metal used and if it can still be run, it's a tribute to that plastic!"

This was the unit that Doug Hele unveiled to NVT chairman Dennis Poore, who had long complained that the company was losing ground to the Japanese makers because it did not have a four cylinder model to compete; his was the decision to pursue the rotary engine that went on to power Nortons for both road and record-breaking racers.

The closure of the Meriden works saw the experimental work moved into Kitts Green in east

Birmingham. "There was nothing there when we moved in," recalled Jack. "We started off cleaning the floor and painting the walls, then getting benches in." From that humble beginning came the development of the T160.

But he had a lot of happy memories of the humorous side of life with the company. "Les Williams was one of the greatest pranksters," he explained. "He put a plastic bag of ice inside one of the tester's helmet and when it got a bit warm it all melted down his face." That was as the man was moving on a bit, down the A45 dual carriageway to work, and the poor chap thought he was haemorrhaging.

"Or wiring the door handles up through high voltage coils. Someone would open the door and get about 12,000 volts through his hand!"

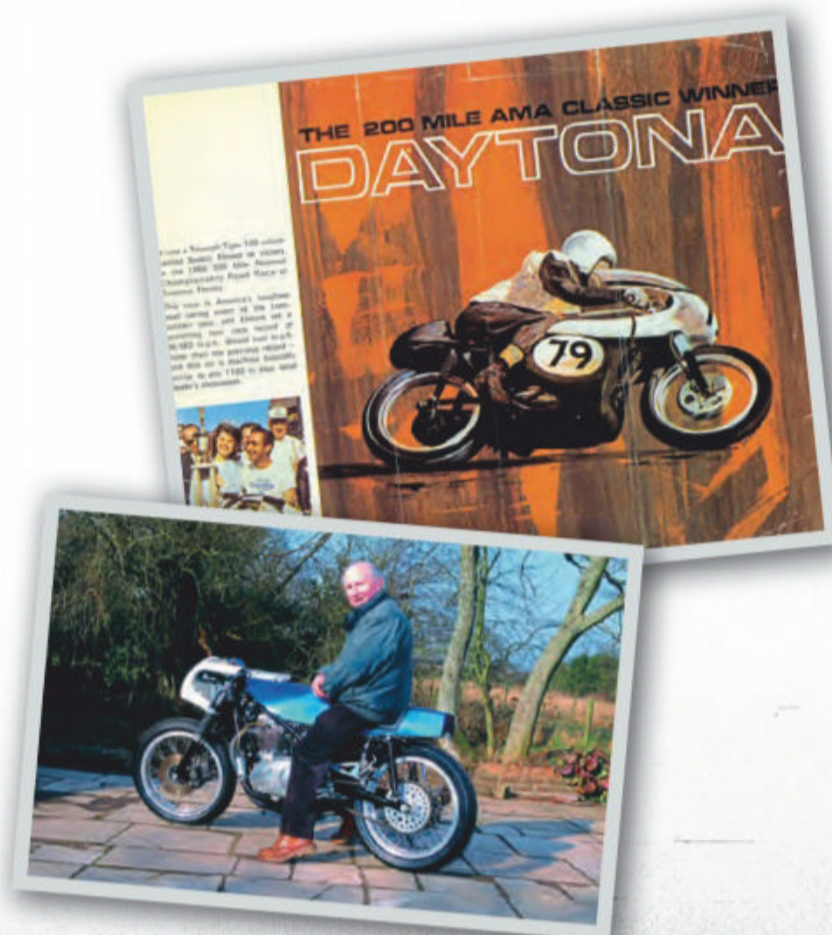
No man could pull such tricks and not get a response from a bunch of original thinkers. "Les used to come to work on a Tina scooter and was complaining about it getting slower and slower. We'd stuck a cork up the silencer with a one eighth hole drilled through it, so it wouldn't blow out but would slowly coke up.

"Les had built a four-wheeled Tina (In the Meriden heyday) and Edward Turner drove it up the road. He was impressed, but there was no separate taxation class for it, so it was dropped."

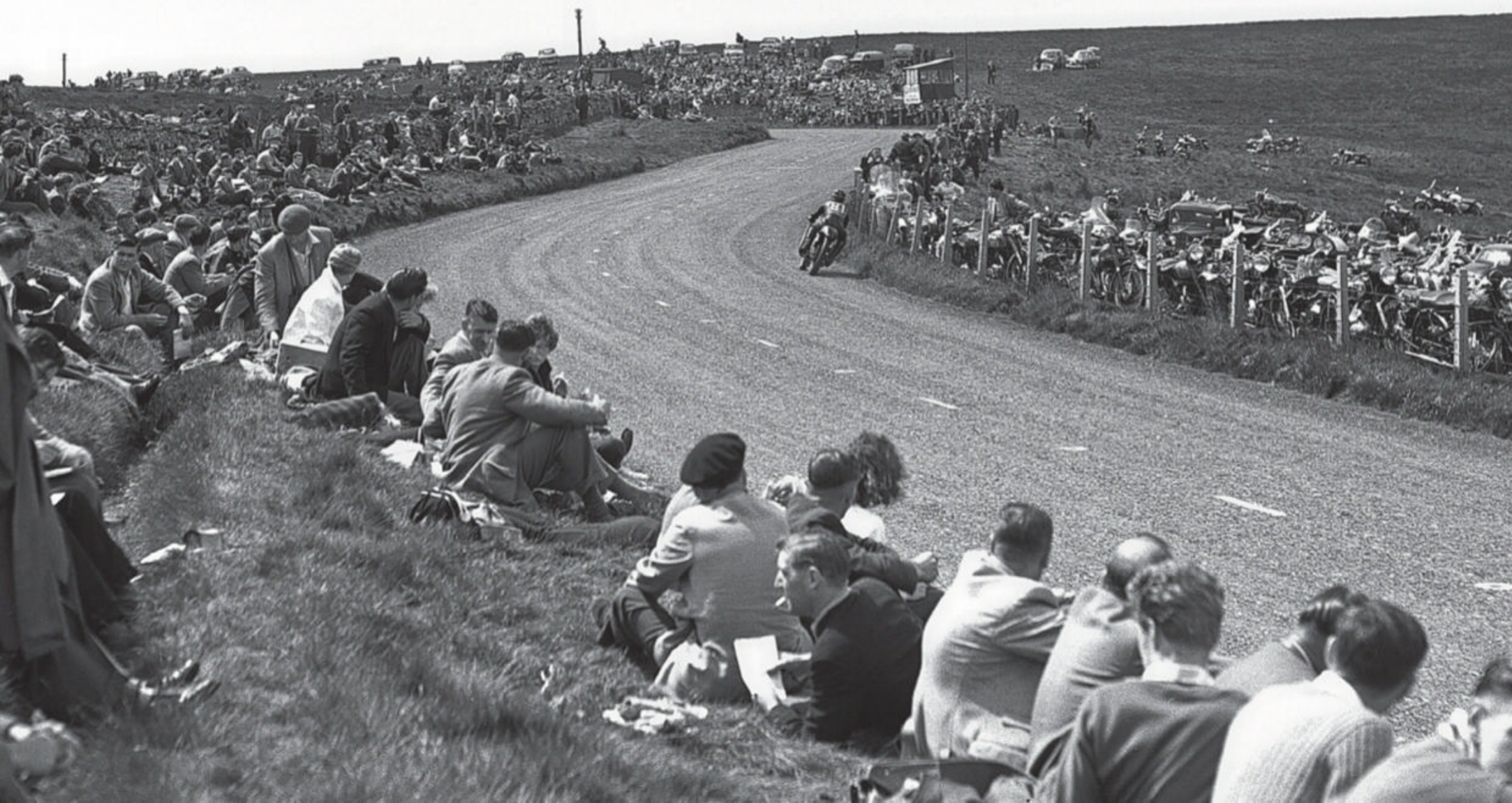
When Triumph at Meriden was closed and the famous sit-in began, Jack moved on to work at Norman Hyde's, where Doug Hele spoke of his team and described Jack as "The best technical fitter I ever saw." We have to bear in mind that he worked on new engines at a time when prototypes were built from components produced to the design drawings, which meant a skilled man like Jack Shemans making sure everything fitted as it should and modifying by hand if that was necessary. Computer aided design left that work behind, but in earlier days a fitter of Jack's

standing would fettle the collection of parts presented to him until he had a unit ready to be fired up and begin the process of maturing into a working and reliable bike.

He ended his days building engines for private customers, both for road and racing use. Always the quiet one, never given to shouting, he earned respect from all who worked with him in the best way possible – by doing the job really well. **CBC**



Above: Les Williams- 'One of the greatest pranksters' said Jack
Below: Keppelgate at the TT in 1960. Back when Jack's father, George Shemans was racing there, you had to stop and open the Keppel gate and then close it again!



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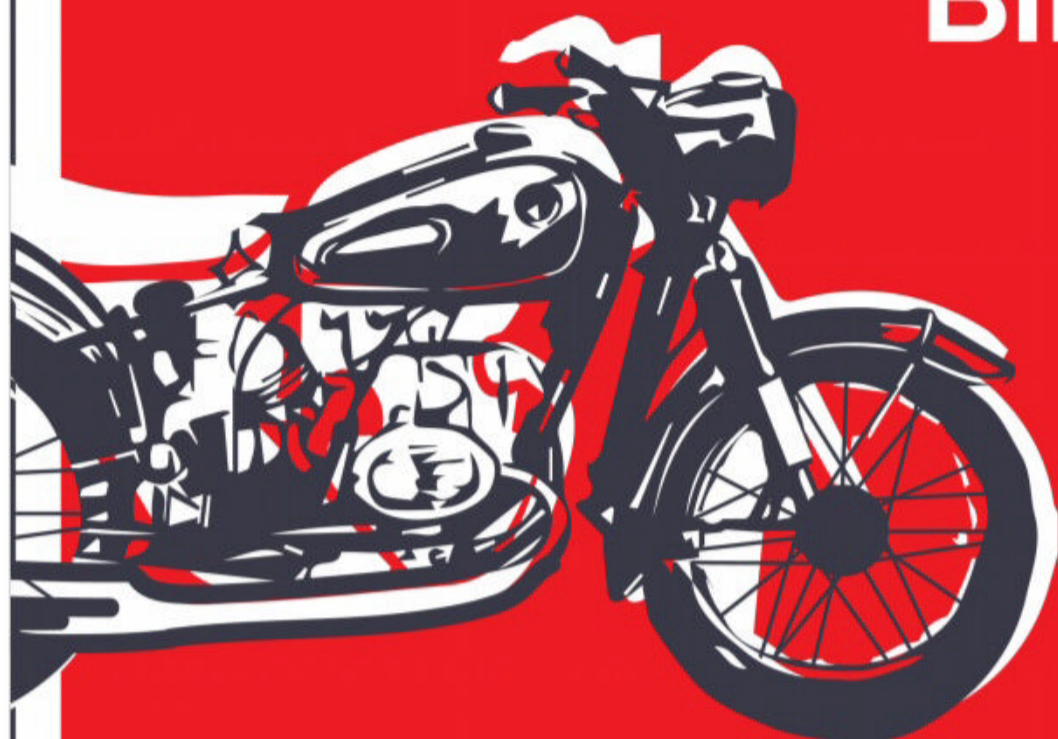
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AJS

Silver Streak

Movin' on the queen's highway,
lookin' like a streak of lightnin'
- Chris Spedding, Motor Bikin'

WORDS BY OLI HULME, PHOTOS BY GARY CHAPMAN

WHAT IS IT?

A prewar, competition spec, rigid-framed roadster



GOOD POINTS?

The ride and feel are excellent, and the engine is a gem. And that styling...



BAD POINTS?

The brakes aren't exactly earth-stopping, and original part finding will be a challenge.

COST?

Basket case:

£2-3000- Oily rag

runner: £7-8,000

Concours £13,000





T WAS MY FIRST RIDE OUT SINCE LOCKDOWN TWO months earlier, a round trip of 80 miles or so on my modern, monoshocked, upside-down-forked Husqvarna with the big fat tyres. I was going to see Mike Larcombe's 1938 AJS 250 Silver Streak.

This is not a shiny all over concours AJS, but it is still rather lovely to look at. The 250 and 350 Silver Streaks are, Mike says, very similar: "It's quite a useful bike and I don't think there's a great deal of difference between the 250 and 350.

"I think that unlike a lot of bikes the 250 was a sleeved down 350, rather than the 350 being a bored out 250. That's one of the reasons it's so nice to ride. It's quite light, lighter than the average bike from back then, and 50-60mph is no problem at all. Handling is very good. We've got this one running on total loss electrics, just draining the battery, with the magneto providing the sparks. All the electrics are in the hole on the petrol tank."

Introductions over, it was time to take it to the road. The Silver Streak hadn't been started for a year, and it took a few prods to get it running, then it stopped again, started, stopped, coughed a little. I took it off the rear wheel stand and decided to try it while in the saddle, so if it did start, I could get it nicely warmed up.

This stand worked really well. These rear wheel stands can be unusual to handle for those not used to an older bike, but with something as light as the Silver Streak, it's easy to operate and you aren't left clutching the rear guard in a panic, hoping you've got the procedure right and worrying the lot will tumble one way or the other. You haven't even got to screw it in place, like some Vincents I could name.

Sitting on the AJS I kicked it a few times to no avail and had a feeling the carb needed tickling, so searched for the button. This was as hidden as it could be, sitting on top of a float chamber which is lurking in the darkness under the petrol tank. You can't reach it with your left hand and a triple-jointed finger would be handy as you try to get at it with your right. Still, after a little digit contorting, and four or so pushes, and a couple more prods on the easy to operate kick-starter, it burst into life. Then I stalled it and needed to do the tickling thing again.

This time it was right on the money – we're all a bit grumpy when woken up after a long sleep after all. This Silver Streak has taken part in the 65-mile Dorset VMCC Giants run, performing faultlessly all the while, so once it had warmed up, all was well. It's got a one-up-three-down gearbox, and the gear lever is substantial and requires a good lift off the foot peg to operate. Once the oil had warmed up a bit, there was no real crunch into first, and future changes were as smooth as any modern gearbox. Better than a lot, in fact. There was an easy to find neutral and just a gentle but positive 'snick' as you went up and down. The torque was impressive for a 250. Once you found the right gear for the road, you barely needed to change at all.

You are down low on the sprung saddle and sitting on this lovely old girl, with her rigid rear end and two inches or so of girder travel, was like being in an armchair. It was considerably comfier than my modern Husky. And the AJS fair flew along, with next to no vibration, and a lovely chuff-chuff-chuff coming out of the silencer. Handling was as sure-footed as you like, not a wobble or a squeak. There's an impressively tight turning circle and the low height and weight made it handy to paddle about. Burbling along the narrow Devon lanes felt effortless, there were no outrageous rattles, and everything just felt... Well, you know when you've got on a bike that just feels right? It was like that. It felt like it could go on forever.

This particular Silver Streak of lightning might not be totally original. The all over chrome has gone, the headlight is polished brass, and the mudguards are alloy. The low-slung exhaust isn't standard but could have been specified as an option. The last word on its originality goes to Mike Larcombe: "I do think a few people miss the point of what riding a motorcycle is about. These bikes were for riding. They were used to ride to work, to ride to a weekend race meeting, take part in a race and ride home again, where they'd be just leant against a wall until it was time for work again. If they were lucky, they'd get covered in oily rags.

"Better a bike with the wrong bits on it that runs, than a bike in a shed, waiting for the right bits, that doesn't."

THE SILVER STREAK: A HISTORY

Prewar motorcycles sometimes look a little under finished to modern eyes. They are mostly painted in brown and green and black enamel, and frequently used silver paint instead of expensive chrome plating. But, thank goodness, this was not always the case.

At the end of the 1930s the world was still sluggishly emerging from a decade or so of grinding poverty since the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression. Wars and invasions were breaking out everywhere. The world was a dangerous place, but it was exciting too. There were plenty of opportunities for the young daredevil to get his adrenaline buzz, not least on two wheels.

The motorcycling world had endured a shake out. Several brands had vanished, and others had been absorbed by rivals. AJS had succumbed to the worldwide crash in 1931, and been taken over by the Collier Brothers, who owned Matchless.

In the midst of this, in 1938 someone in Plumstead decided this was the time for something shiny and outrageous. Well, it had worked for Brough Superior... And so was born the AJS Silver Streak. You could get one of these glittering marvels as the 22ss 250, the 26ss 350 or the 18ss 500. The 350 version, the most common, was a seriously sporty mount and cost around £60 in 1938, or about £4,000 today. ▶

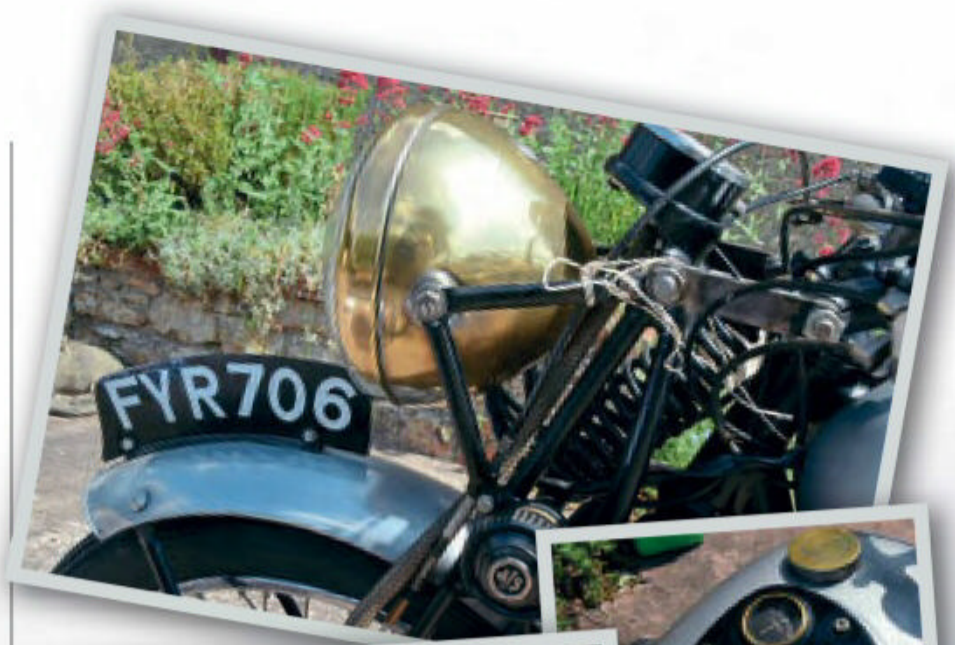
As a base, AJS used their standard single cylinder engine, but swapped the twin port head on the standard bikes for a single port head on the Silver Streak and then set to work on making it the best engine they could. It was hand-built from components checked in minute detail for compatibility. The cylinder head was polished, and the ports too. Only the very best would do. They used a four-speed gearbox which was quite racey for the time, and buyers could specify one of three states of tune. A 6.6:1 piston, an 8.18:1 or a mighty 11:1 item for those with fortitude, access to special racing fuels, confidence in the engineering and a right leg as strong as Jesse Owens'.

Many experts will tell you the Silver Streak came with a 26T trials frame, but marque expert Rob Harknett, prewar specialist of the AJS and Matchless Owners' Club, says that the factory parts lists confirm this competition frame was not used for Silver Streak.

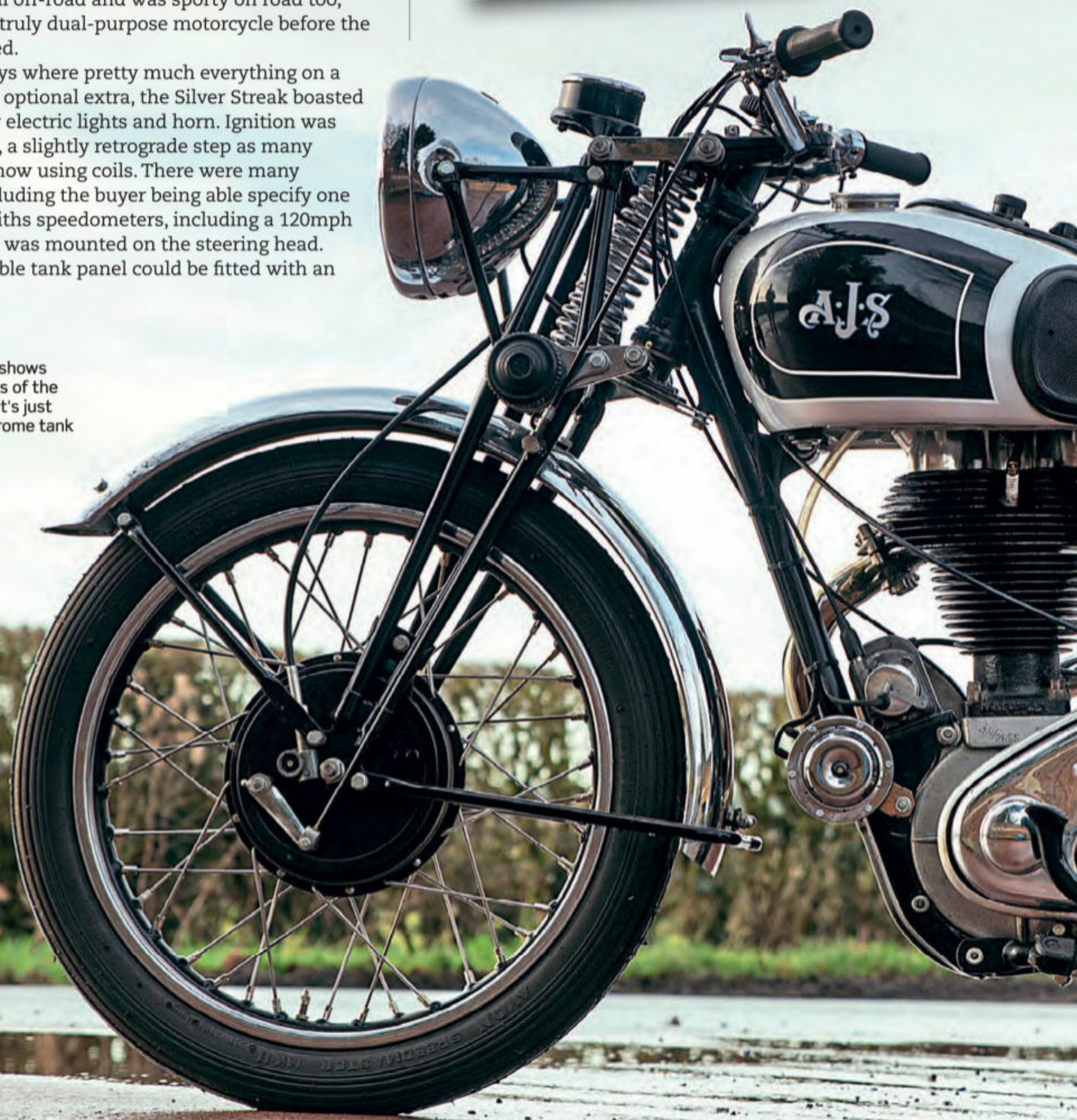
It came with an upswept exhaust and 26in exterior-measured tyres. The frame geometry and a design with decent ground clearance meant it could perform well off-road and was sporty on road too, making it a truly dual-purpose motorcycle before the name existed.

In the days where pretty much everything on a bike was an optional extra, the Silver Streak boasted high quality electric lights and horn. Ignition was by magneto, a slightly retrograde step as many bikes were now using coils. There were many options, including the buyer being able specify one of three Smiths speedometers, including a 120mph item, which was mounted on the steering head. The removable tank panel could be fitted with an

This example shows the great looks of the Silver Streak; it's just missing its chrome tank



This example has some of the fittings in brass, not chrome



eight-day clock and came with an inspection lamp and ammeter. A stop light was extra as were a pillion seat and footrests. There was gold tank lining and the decals were silver grey and blue on SS models. The rear mudguard transfer, unlike the gold AJS logo on the 22, 26 and 18 models had the words Silver Streak.

The Motor Cycle was impressed with the Silver Streak. They tested a 250 which they said was a little heavy but could perform as well as most 350s. Despite the high state of tune, the SS was said to be comfortable at speed, with none of the harshness usually found in sporting mounts, no doubt due to the precision construction. Top speeds of well over 70mph were possible and it would pull in top from 14mph.

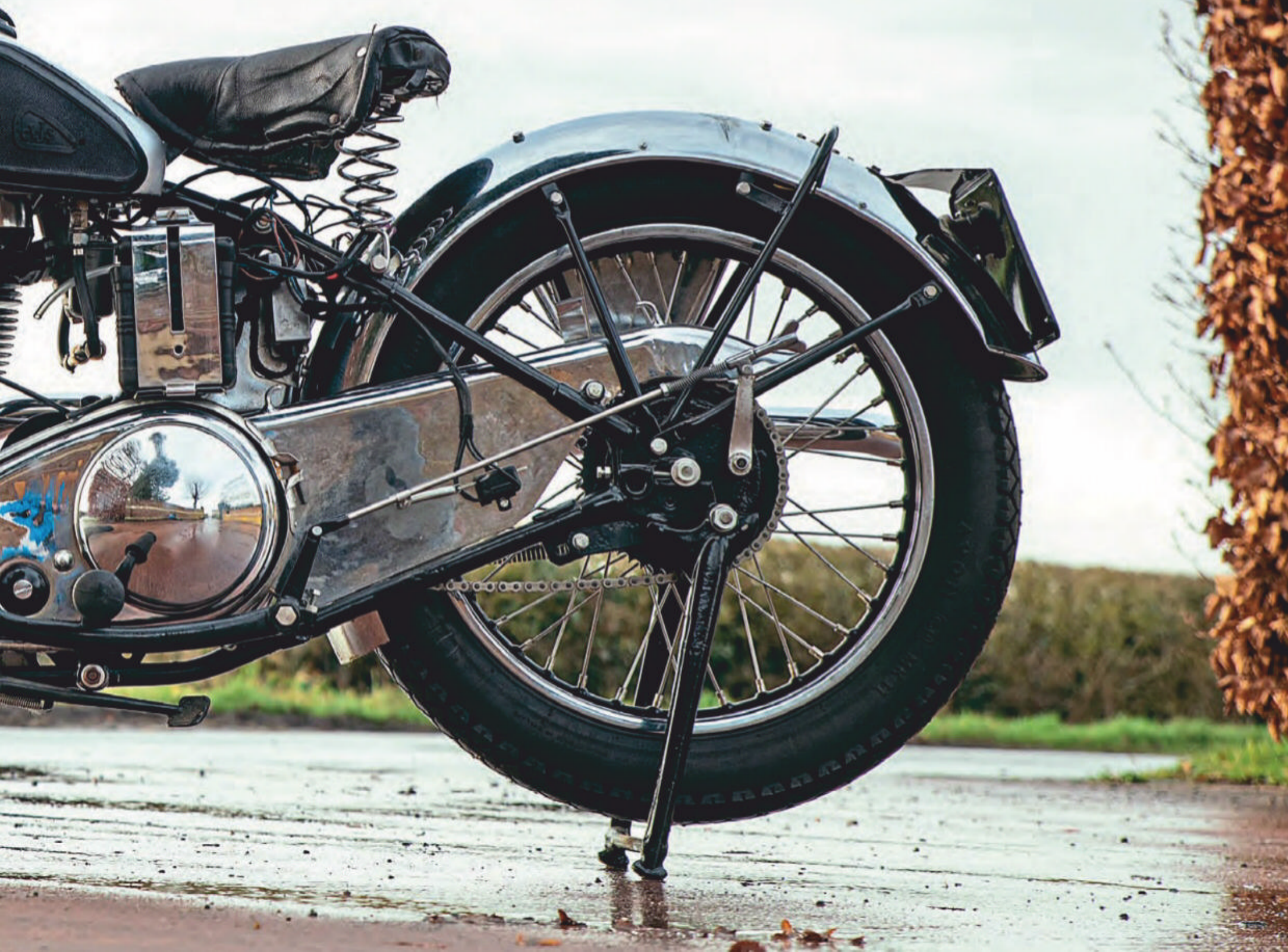
But it wasn't the performance or the fine engineering that first caught the eye. It was the chrome. Where once black enamel had ruled the roost there were acres of the shiny stuff. You got chrome mudguards, chrome headlamps, chaincases, chain guards and fork links. There were chromed wheel rims (with a classy black line in the middle, as you can overdo things), chrome on the oil tank and toolbox and the seat and fork spring and most dramatically, all over the petrol tank too. AJS were proud of their plating shop and claimed their chrome was as tough as enamel. Special polish was required in extreme circumstances, but AJS said that the finish only required a duster or a polishing mop to keep it tip top.

The need to care for the unusually shiny trim was recognised in the owner's manual. This gave very precise instructions on cleaning the chrome,

including avoiding the use of the conventional metal polishes available as they contained acid that would eat into the finish. Removal of any corrosive salty deposits that might appear should, they advised, be done with a chamois leather or specialist chrome polish if the blemish was severe.

This motorcycle had class written all over it. The Silver Streak was gorgeous and was also significantly modern. It arrived just 10 years after AJS had been turning out flat tankers. It had decent lights and a gearbox with a proper kick-start. It had a pre-monobloc carb, but one that used the same starting process with a tickler that Amal persevered with for decades. The clutch was light, and the gearbox a Burman item that was close to faultless. The brakes were good and the handling useful, even if the front girder forks were at first glance a little spindly and insubstantial. Setting up the single spring girder involves fine adjustment of the dampers. Too loose and things might flop about. Too tight and you'll struggle to get it round a corner. It's got a low centre of gravity, which aids the handling.

The Silver Streak fits into that glorious period in British motorcycling history between the basic, primitive flat tanker with its hand oil pump and acetylene lighting, and the increasing complex world of telescopic forks and rear suspension. A simple motor bike, with just enough on it to keep it rolling, just an engine and wheels and a frame, and the shine. It offered freedom and excitement and, in the Silver Streak, glamour as well. The best of all possible



worlds. AJS themselves didn't hold back in their claims for the Silver Streak, saying, with some justification the singles were: "Definitely the most handsome motorcycles ever offered to the public. The AJS Silver Streak is the answer to a sportsman's dream".

ORIGINALITY

The Silver Streak was only made in 1938 and 1939 with a mere handful of 1939 models registered in 1940. Even though they were a premium model they were not entirely beyond the grasp of every man, the 350SS being £4 more expensive than the standard model (around £270 in today's money). They are highly sought-after and finding one will cost you twice or even three times the price of a more prosaic AMC single of the period.

You need to check carefully that the object of your desire isn't a fake, and even with all the checks possible you can never be truly sure. Rob Harknett points out that a correct engine number just confirms that the left-hand crankcase is the real thing. The Silver Streak in these pictures is certified as the real deal, though it does lack one significant feature, the full chrome tank. Chrome doesn't last, and rechroming a blemished old tank is no easy task..

Finding parts for such a machine is always going to be a lengthy task, especially after 80 years. The outbreak of war meant that lots of the components used quickly went out of production, as AMC went over to producing G3 and G3/L singles for the armed forces. Some owners use a G3 manual for a lot of the settings and technical detail on a Silver Streak. It's hard to restore any motorcycle of this age to completely original specification and even harder if the model is a hand-built to order machine like the Silver Streak. Line-drawn catalogue images show a

slightly different exhaust, but advertisements show this silencer as being correct. Some images show black painted toolboxes and a completely different gearbox, yet period photographs show the gearbox fitted to this model as correct. It should have an exhaust clamp with three circular fins.

The sales brochure says the toolbox and girder fork links should be chromed, yet the catalogue image shows them in black. Had it been chromed, the tank should have had a black panel below the instrument panel. The mudguards should have a rib down the centre and of course for true period accuracy there should be a 'cheese cutter' front numberplate. On this bike the front wheel might be off a different machine and the brake is not standard. The horn, guards and numberplate are not Silver Streak, and the saddle springs would have been stiffer. Eagle-eyed AMC experts might spot a Matchless toolbox (the knob and hinge are in different places) The oil tank cap is also Matchless. There's a correct head and rocker box but from a 1939 model.

It is documented as being a genuine Silver Streak with a certificate from the AJS/Matchless Owners' Club confirming that both the frame and engine numbers are correct for the model.

With so few made and examples of the Silver Streak rarely turning up for sale, they really are part of a sellers' market. This one was sold for just under £10,000, while you can expect to pay a good bit more for one with the elusive full chrome tank. **CBC**

Thanks to Rob Harknett from the Owners' Club, to Lawrence at Classic Motorcycles Ltd and especially to Dave Robson, custodian of Mike Larcombe's Silver Streak and to Mike Larcombe for the loan.

8in headlight, blueprinted engine, trials exhaust - was there any bike prettier?

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: 347cc air-cooled four stroke single **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 6.6:1 **CARB:** Amal Competition **TRANSMISSION:** four-speed Burman gearbox **FRAME:** Cradle rigid frame **SUSPENSION:** Girder type front forks, single spring, twin damper adjustment, rigid rear, sprung seat **BRAKES:** 4-inch front and rear hubs **WHEELS/TYRES:** 3.00x26 front, 3.50x26 rear **ELECTRICS:** 6V dynamo, magneto ignition, 8in headlamp





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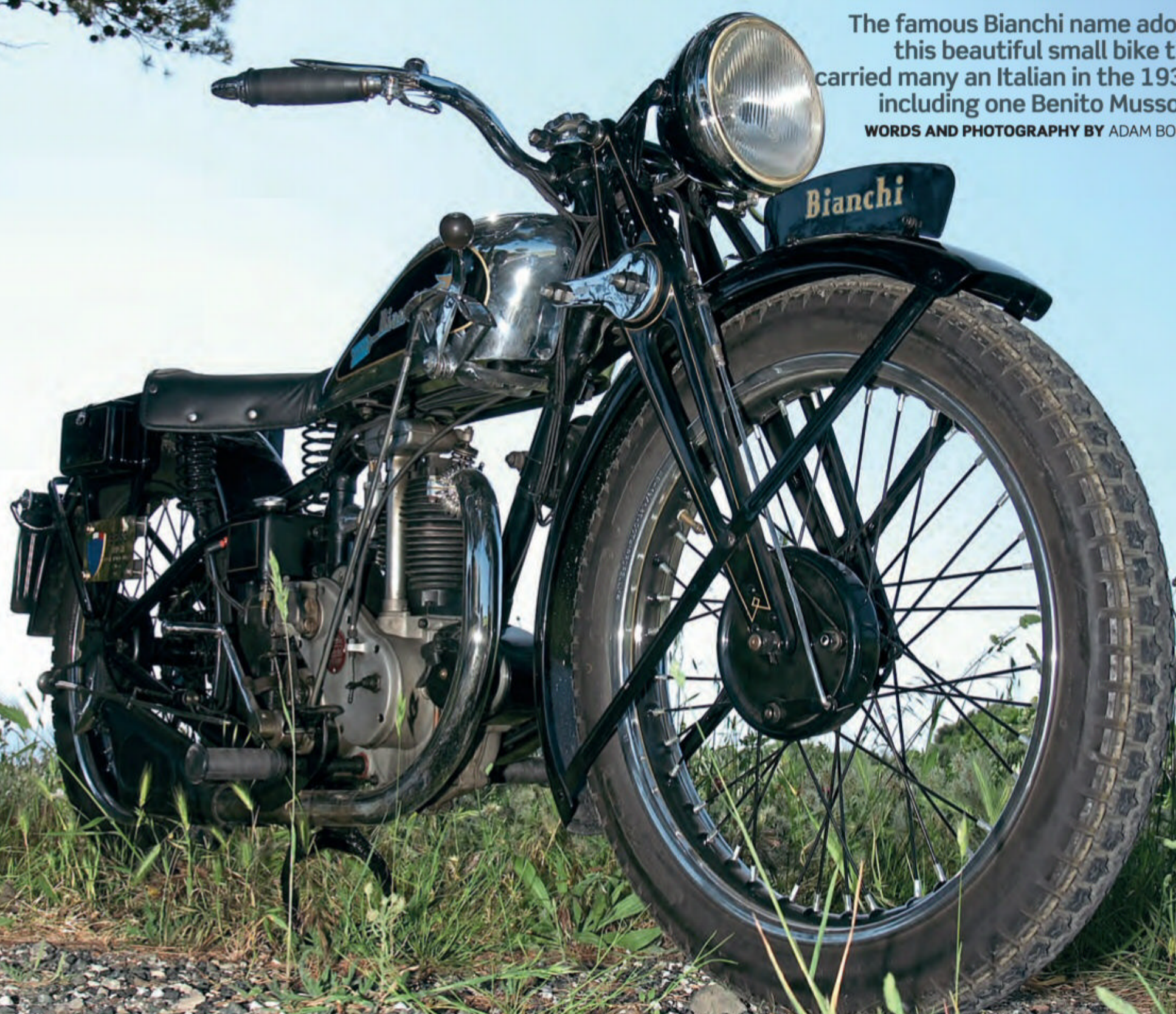
1934

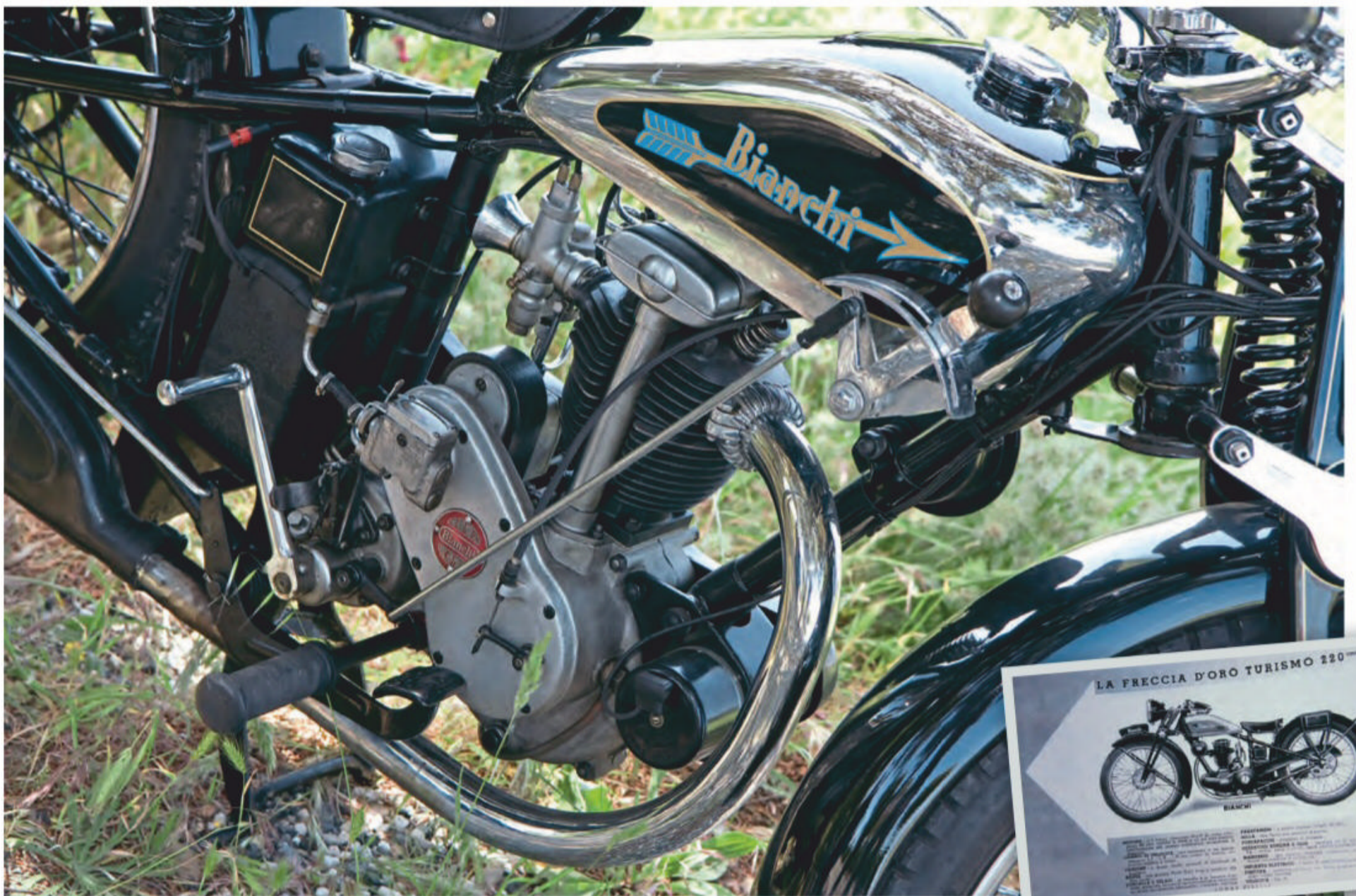
Bianchi

Freccia d'Oro Turismo 220cc

The famous Bianchi name adorns this beautiful small bike that carried many an Italian in the 1930s, including one Benito Mussolini

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM BOLTON





THE PRECISE DATE SEEMS TO BE UNCLEAR, BUT some time in 1932, and in an act of pure nationalist propaganda, Benito Mussolini was photographed on a motorcycle, and proclaimed 'Primo Motociclista' or 'First Motorcyclist' of Italy. He was awarded membership number one of the 'Moto Club d'Italia', and the motorcycle was given the numberplate '1 Roma' – both in reality just empty gestures considering that thousands of Italian motorcycles had already been designated their registration numbers, and many of their riders were already signed up members of the Moto Club d'Italia by 1932.

The motorcycle used to establish 'Il Duce' number one Italian motorcyclist on was a 1931 Bianchi 175 Freccia d'Oro. Bianchi were the old and first masters of Italian motorcycle manufacturing, its founder, Eduardo Bianchi, having attached an engine to one of his bicycles back in 1897; so by the early 1930s were a well-established company. Frera, another grand Italian manufacturer with a story that went back to 1905, also made fine motorcycles, producing 50,000 units in the 1920s, but the economic crisis bit hard – and it is thought that the photo of Mussolini on a Bianchi tipped the balance the wrong way. By 1939 Frera was no more, but Bianchi was lauded as the 'Grande Casa Nazionale' until their factory was wiped out by Allied bombs in 1943.

The Bianchi name lived on through its cycling exploits with the multi-time champion Fausto Coppi, and continues to do so today. Its motorcycles too continued to sell after the war until production was ceased in 1964, but the Freccia d'Oro is a sought after motorcycle from a golden era of Italian motorcycle manufacturing. The very nicely restored Freccia

d'Oro I have the pleasure to ride is a Freccia d'Oro 220cc Turismo from 1934, a bored out version of the 1932 model and no doubt devised to ride the wave of Bianchi nationalist popularity afforded by the Mussolini photo opportunity, as well as taking advantage of a new up to 250cc tax exemption.

Owner and restorer is Antonio Fulceri, whose collection includes a tasty selection of Italian motorcycles of all ages, but it wasn't a model he was particularly searching for.

"Back in 1999 I had met, through a friend, a person called Alessandro, an engineer who worked at the European Space Centre. We had a common passion for old cars and bikes, and he let on that he had the remains of a Laverda 750 SF in his garage in Rome, and would I like to rebuild it and restore if for him? I agreed, but then when went to pick up the bike, I also spotted the Bianchi in a corner, and was smitten by it."

No surprise, as the now beautifully restored Bianchi is a very attractive motorcycle. Its chrome-laden fuel tank is adorned with gold pin-striping, flashes of glossy black paint, and the distinctive gold arrow with blue trim striking through the Bianchi logo. There is nothing remarkable about the technical design of the Bianchi and is typical for the time – rigid open cradle frame, sprung girder forks, and a four-stroke 220cc overhead valve single cylinder motor with a separate three-speed box operated by hand – but its elegant simplicity was what appealed to buyers. For today's rider, the exposed valve springs, fishtail silencer, Bosch magneto and long tank-mounted hand gear change lever make you think vintage motorcycle, but at the same time a cable throttle, neat bar-mounted chrome horn switch and integrated headlamp ammeter are all thoroughly



modern. Interestingly enough, the nationalist fervour that existed in the 1930s that extended even to banning the use of foreign products hadn't quite affected Bianchi by the time this Freccia d'Oro was built; the cylindrical rear light is a proud 'British made' Miller product, the carburettor is an Amal, and the ammeter is a Smiths unit with 'Made in England' printed on its face. Amals would soon be mandatorily replaced by very Italian Dell'Ortos, 'inglese' Smiths by Veglia and John Bull rubber grips by Italian rubber components.

Alessandro struck a deal with Antonio, offering the Bianchi as part payment in return for Antonio getting the Laverda SF back on the road. "That was fine by me, as he was more passionate about big bikes from the 1970s, and I liked the Bianchi very much. It also had all its original documents from new, which in Italy is an important issue, because it's difficult to get an old bike back on the road without them. Without a doubt this Bianchi would have been hidden well during the war as otherwise it would have been undoubtedly requisitioned."

Antonio shows me the yellowed, Sellotaped original logbook for the Bianchi, which shows that it had only had a couple of owners from the Rome area, which corresponds to its Rome registration plate. "Alessandro told me he had originally bought the Bianchi back in 1960, by literally accosting the then owner who had come to a halt at a junction astride the machine, and asking him if he would sell, which he did!" From that point on, the Bianchi remained in Alessandro's garage, in original and more or less complete condition.

"Restoring the Bianchi didn't really present any particular problems," says Antonio, "though the cylinder was worn and did need a new liner. The rest of it was in good condition and needed little work, so it was more or less a case of changing the required bearings and rebuilding with a new gasket set. Rechroming a fuel tank is never easy but this one has come out beautifully, and really set off by the paint and pin-striping carried out by a local expert."



Finishing his explanation of the Bianchi, Antonio then surprises me by saying: "Right, help yourselves, I have to get back to work, so enjoy yourself," and he departs, leaving me, photographer Marco and friend and fixer Nedo slightly shocked but happy at the prospect of a sunny day and several beautiful Italian motorcycles with the keys in them to try out.

It also helps that where Antonio lives is just off an old winding coastal road that runs from Livorno all the way to Rome, ideal for testing the Bianchi.

The Freccia d'Oro starts easily enough, using a touch of the air lever on the right-hand bar, the ignition retard/advance on the left-hand bar, and a hefty kick on the right-hand side mounted and non-folding kick-start lever. This bike runs a total loss lubrication system so I check through the glass of the curiously named Hajot Simplex Mk2 oil pump, actuated off the end of the Bosch magneto and featuring a dial to control the oil flow – and am content to see the black stuff trickling through happily.



TECH SPEC

ENGINE: Air-cooled, four-stroke, single ohv cylinder, automatic oil pump lubrication **CAPACITY:** 220cc **BORE X STROKE:** 63x67mm **TRANSMISSION:** three-speed separate gearbox, hand gear change, **CLUTCH:** cork/metal plates **FRAME:** Rigid, open cradle type **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Sprung girder forks with friction damping **REAR SUSPENSION:** rigid frame, Terry sprung seat **BRAKES:** front and rear drum **FRONT TYRE:** 3.00 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 3.00 x 19 **ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:** 6 volts battery, 30 watts, electric horn, magneto ignition, Bosch headlamp **CARBURETTOR:** Amal Fuel **CAPACITY:** 10 litres **OIL CAPACITY:** 1 litre **POWER:** 3hp **TOP SPEED:** 52mph/85kmh



The pushrod operated valves and their springs chatter in the open air and I'm half tempted to remove the nickel-plated cover that hides the rockers arms, but decide against it. It's a lovely sounding motor, mechanical and mellow at the same time.

I head off towards the coastal road, getting used to the Bianchi and its foibles, if any. I love hand gear change motorcycles, there's so much pleasure to be gained from changing gear smoothly and from the ritual that it involves and that smidgeon of danger by taking your hand off the handlebar for a second or two. The Bianchi gearbox is quite smooth, the clutch light and smooth, and I enjoy getting up some speed and into third gear. The road is fringed by pine trees and large, beautiful art nouveau villas on one side, and the bright blue sea on the other, and a smattering of 1930s Art Deco, or 'fascist era' buildings such as the local railway station also appear – things haven't changed much here over the decades, and the Bianchi's 1930s lines fit in perfectly. When I enter a small, pretty and very posh seaside town, the Bianchi

turns heads with its flashing chrome, old-timer looks and distinctive exhaust note.

Even though the state of the Italian A and B roads isn't great, the Bianchi's suspension copes very well. The large and wide seat is generously sprung so the rider doesn't really feel what the rigid rear end is doing. The front girder forks are equipped with a large and long spring and friction dampers, and they are good – only in bigger unavoidable potholes do they jar slightly. The magnificent knurled steering damper with enamelled Bianchi logo is all that I can see looking down, apart from the ammeter of course, but it's enough to remind you that what you're riding has class and a refined finish. The brakes are small but adequate for the power the engine provides – it's a torquey little motor and most enjoyable in third gear at speeds of between 35 and 50mph.

In the days when there was less traffic, the Bianchi would have been a perfectly adequate lightweight performer for most, and it was a best seller helped by its very good all-round performance against price. ➤

Mussolini's Motors – myth or mystery?

Whether Benito Mussolini had a genuine and authentic passion for motors or not is hard to tell, but his image as the leader of the Italian people, and therefore 'first sportsman of Italy' was often associated with motorcycles and cars.

He was famously photographed cutting corn with a sickle, and mixing it with the peasants whilst wearing a pair of motorcycle goggles on his head. The famous Bianchi shot increased his image as a man of motors, and he was also often photographed at the helm of aeroplanes, cars and tractors.

There are two Bianchi motorcycles purported to have been Mussolini's in the villa at Predappio in Italy which was his childhood home, and on an Italian website there is currently a 1933 Bianchi 175 that is also claimed to have been the property of 'Il Duce'.

Mussolini was also connected to cars, one of which was a 1935 Alfa Romeo 6C 2300 Pescara Spyder, and that recently changed ownership at auction for lots and lots of money. The matching numbers car was a special order by Mussolini, and was raced by his personal chauffeur Ercole Boratto in the 1936 Mille Miglia, finishing third in class.

Ten years ago, a box kept in the Italian State Archive containing some of Mussolini's last few effects in his possession when shot by partisans was opened and examined. It was said to have contained just grey mechanic's overalls and a motorcycle helmet covered with lambskin. Legend has it that you can still hear the ghost of Benito roaring through his favourite five towns on the coast road south of Rome on a big Moto Guzzi...

Like most good singles it does vibrate slightly, and after some spirited riding along a superb, long, empty stretch of road, I turn around and at that moment look down towards the wooden pommel of the gear lever, and am horrified to see the chrome screw that holds it on spinning furiously having somehow unscrewed itself – missing – gone. In fact, the three of us spend the next half-hour scrabbling in the roadside and gutters trying to find the screw and washer that had probably been on the Bianchi since it left the factory in Milan in 1934, but to no avail – I feel like a vandal.

We get back, photos taken, and I confess nervously to Antonio about the screw, and he's absolutely fine about it – "no problem, I'll get another," he laughs.

"I admit that I love this bike, and now as my friend Alessandro sadly died in 2004 it has taken on more of a sentimental part of my collection. I also admit that I only get to ride it maybe three or four times a year, but when I do, it reminds me what a satisfying ride it is. It's light, agile, and has a lovely sound, and a carefully thought out design."

I have to agree, and it's easy to understand how the Freccia d'Oro sold so well in the 1930s. **CBG**





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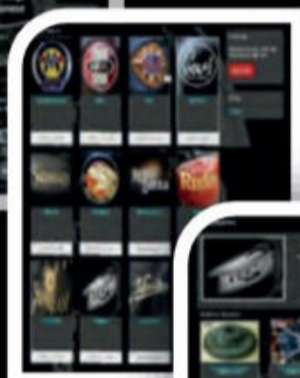
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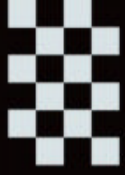
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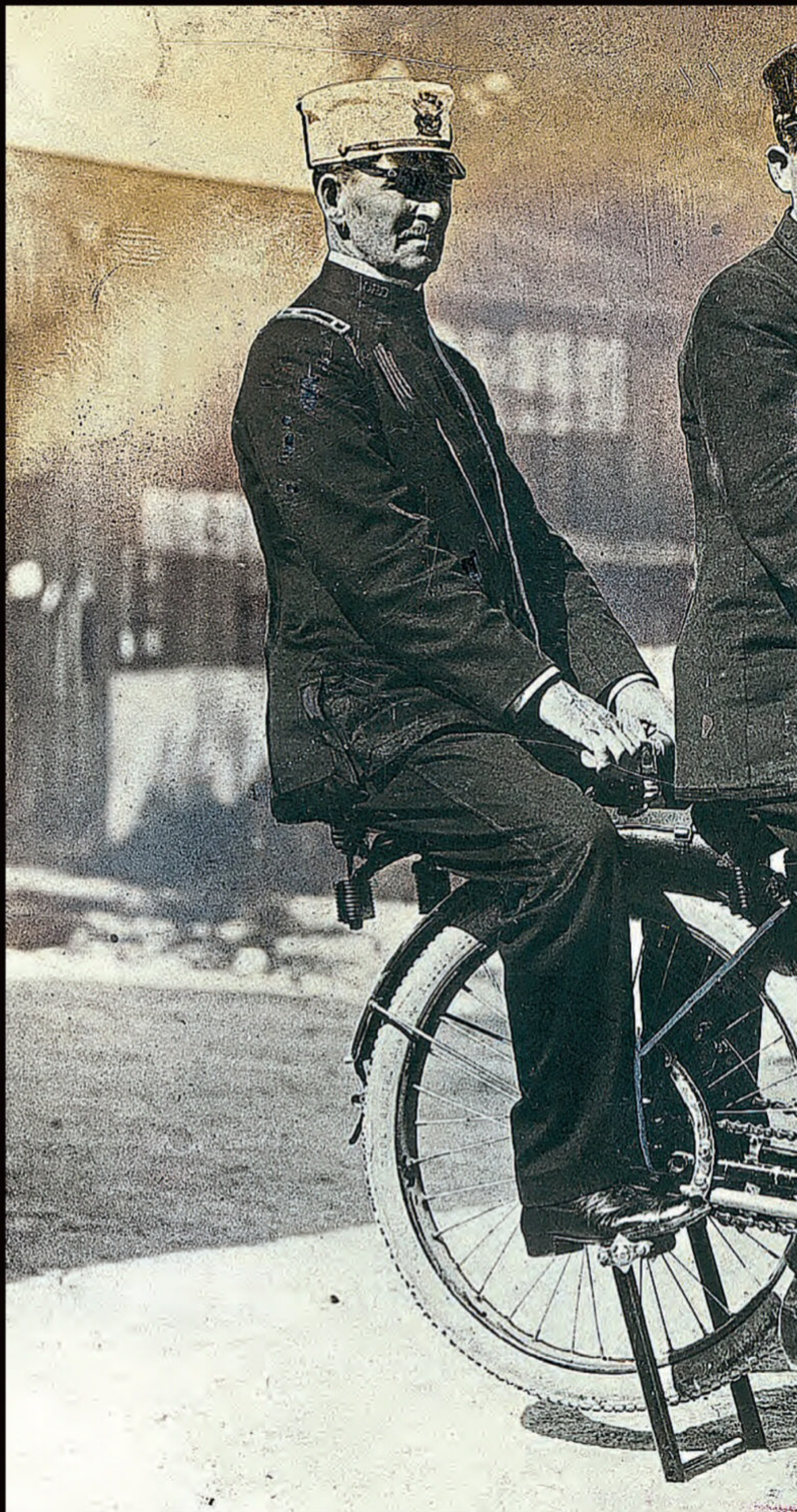
■ Boys in blue

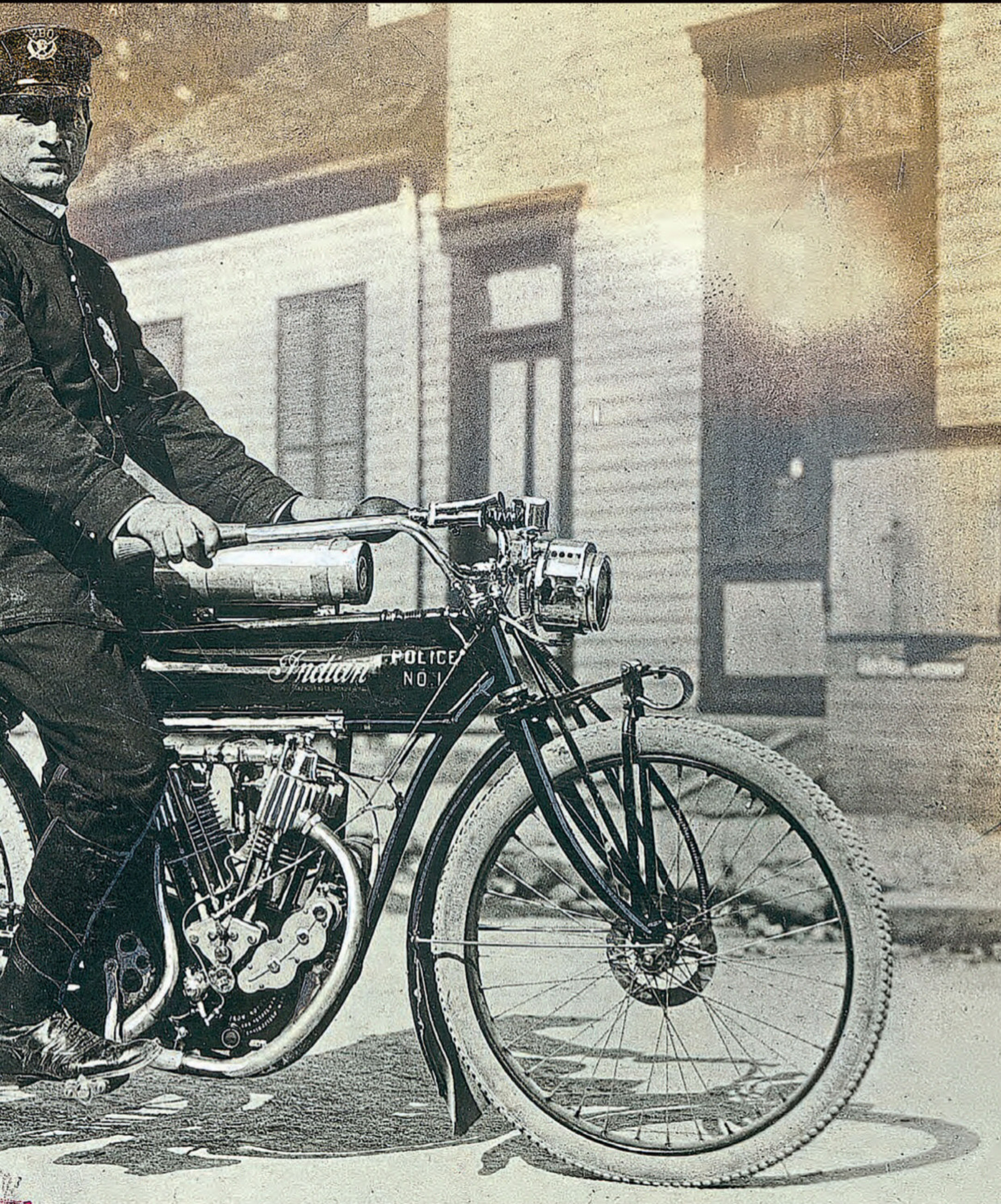
It may be a V-twin, but I fancy my chances at getting away!

Indian may live in the shadows of their Milwaukee rivals these days, but in the early 20th century were leaping ahead with technological advances.

Leaf-sprung front ends, rear suspension, two-speed gearboxes and electric lights were all elements we take for granted that Indian introduced to the USA. But gradually, Harley-Davidson got the bulk of the US police market and Indian has, up until now, endured a rough ride commercially, with world wars, the Great Depression and buy outs.

Today, since giant Polaris has owned the company, Indian seems on the up, with, it has to be said, a more up-to-date line-up than Harley. But I'm sure there's enough riders for America to have two large motorcycle firms. And as far as the police departments in the US go? They mostly ride BMWs... **CBG**





'OI - STOP RIGHT THERE!'



The police have used many machines to get them around, from the Velocette LE to the mammoth tourers of today. But a two-stroke Yamaha? Ian Kerr MBE investigates...

ONCE UPON-A-LONG-TIME-AGO, THE ORIGINAL Triumph factory at Meriden appeared to rule the world in terms of police motorcycles. Forget the British Empire, Triumph were literally everywhere that required police officers to be mounted on two wheels, apart from the USA, where Harley ruled the roost after the demise of Indian.

Somewhat ironically though, it was Douglas and Chater Lea that provided the majority of official police motorcycles for the Metropolitan Police in the early 1920s after the formation of the Met Traffic Division in 1919, although officers had been allowed to use their own personal mounts for escort duties when required prior to the purchase of motorcycles.

Triumph do though get an early foot in the door with a few motorcycle combinations being mentioned in 1921 for the purpose of directing and controlling traffic in the official history. But, it was after the 1930 Road Traffic Act resulting in higher speed limits for cars that more motorcycles were purchased, including BSA solos and BSA and Matchless combinations, to deal with the many new motoring offences created like dangerous driving.

Along the way even Brough Superior got a small part in the development of the police motorcycle, but it was not until just prior to the Second World War that a Triumph appeared in the official list of purchased vehicles for the capital's police force.

In 1938 Douglas, Matchless, Norton, Panther and Rudge are listed as official machines for Motor Patrol duties. After the war it is Triumph who dominates, not forgetting Velocette with their famous LE 'Noddy' bike for officers attached to stations, before being replaced by the Panda car! But for most, it is Triumph who are most closely associated with the forces of law and order, even though they came to service use a lot later.

Triumph's success was due in the main to one man, Neale Shilton, the international sales manager for Triumph, who during his 22 years with the Midlands-based company, created the famous Saint (Stops Anything In No Time) and sold it throughout the world to police and the military.

In 1968 when he resigned, he was taken on by Norton Villiers Triumph (NVT) to design a police bike with the resulting Norton Interpol, a bike not without its problems it has to be said.

When NVT hit the skids in 1975 he failed to keep the 'Interplod', as it became known, going, so he jumped ship to BMW and thanks to his contacts quickly helped the German brand effectively take over the UK police market from 1980. (His autobiography, 'A Million Miles Ago' details his career as well as being a good read about Triumph and Norton towards the end!)

Since then BMW, along with Honda have managed to survive as one of the major suppliers to the world's police forces, but now face serious competition from the likes of Yamaha. In between there has been the much lauded Honda Pan European and Kawasaki have had a brief nibble, but these days it is just a two-horse race, in the UK at least. Believe it or not, in Europe Yamaha are the number one supplier to the forces of law and order and they have quite a history with the police bike market, albeit with much smaller bikes in other countries and continents around the world.

THE RD350B

Take the RD350B police model profiled here, produced in 1974 for the 1975 market, it was in fact one of a batch ordered by the Royal Malaysian Police in early 1975.

It still wears the same paint scheme it did during its five year stint at the sharp end of policing and all ▶



the emergency warning components and radio are also present and correct and from the same period.

Having finished its service life for some reason the bike was imported into France and used by a private owner in the same service condition, before being tucked away in a barn when it started developing problems. It was then found a few years ago by 'Master Mechanic' who had always wanted an RD, but had been unable to afford one in his youth.

An extensive rebuild of the motor then took place including the addition of electronic ignition, with the control box now in place of the battery under the single seat, and the battery now located to the nearside pannier. Originally the owner's intention was to rebuild the bike as a civilian spec machine, but thankfully he realised that he would be destroying the bike's history, so he left well alone apart from the engine and refreshing safety items like the brakes.

Unfortunately, (and perhaps understandably?) for him though, the Gendarmerie would not leave him alone and every time he rode the bike on the road, he came under scrutiny. Often it was just out of curiosity, but in the end it became too much and he offered the bike for sale and it was imported into the UK by a member of the Historic Police Motorcycle Group (HPMG).

Despite popular opinion, there's no evidence to suggest that 'RD' in the model designation stands for 'Race Derived' but a look at its lineage shows it definitely was. In fact, Yamaha started racing in Japan with its first motorcycle in 1955, the 125cc YA-1 known as 'Akatombo' or 'Red Dragonfly'; due to its brown-red paintwork. It won many races, including the prestigious Mount Fuji event, beating Honda who had dominated the event prior to Yamaha's involvement. Ironically, Yamaha only started racing to promote domestic sales which were sluggish, but seeing how racing promoted the brand they were to continue using various races to promote the new models that were coming thick and fast off the drawing board. These included 250cc machines with the designation

YD and in 1962 came the first 250 production racer, the TD1.

In the UK, Yamaha factory rider Fumio Ito came close to winning the 1963 Isle of Man TT aboard the 250cc Yamaha RD56. But a bad pit-stop cost him 38 seconds, losing to Jim Redman on a Honda as a result by 27 seconds!

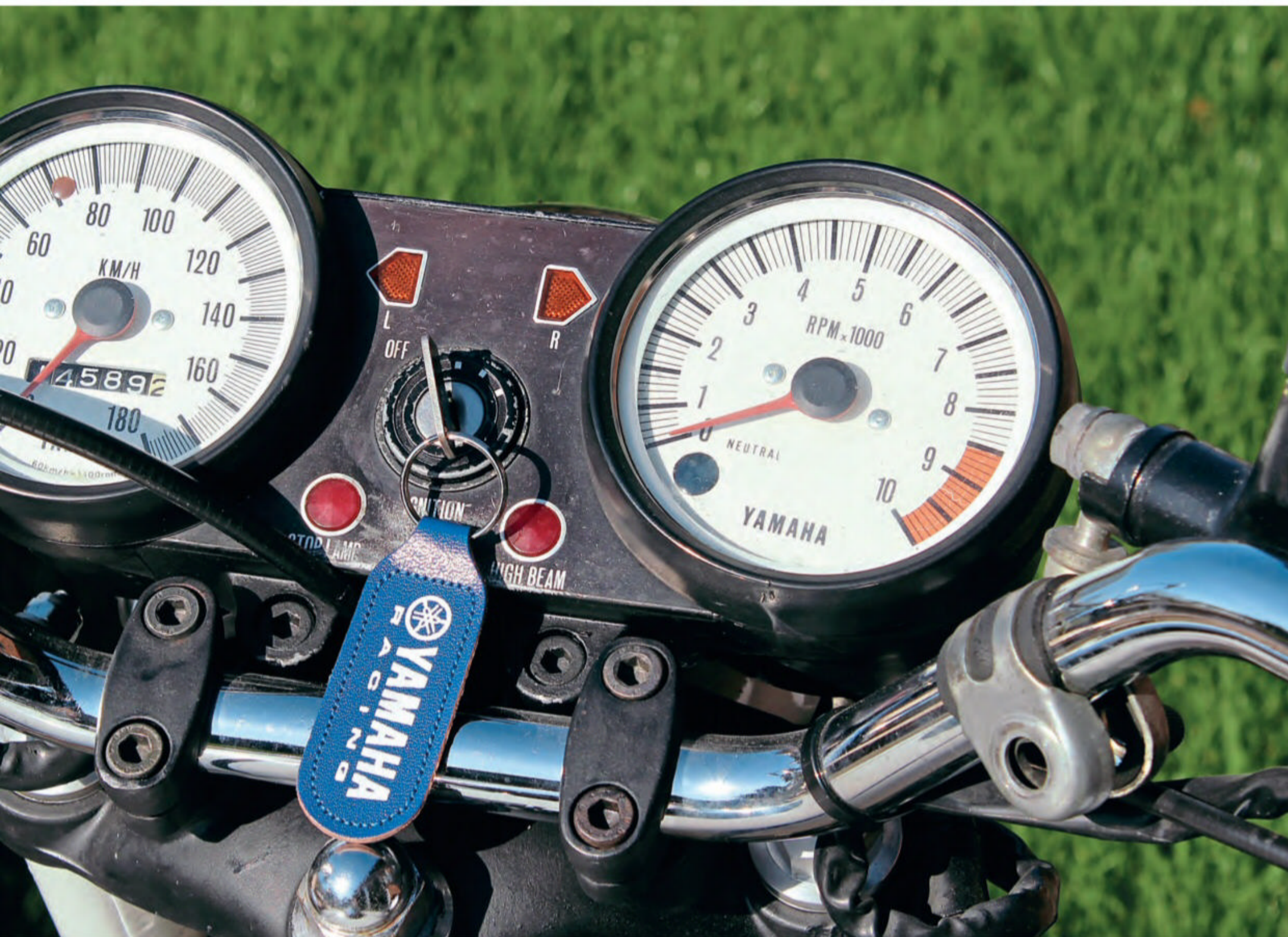
Ito's compatriot, Hiroshi Hasegawa, was fourth behind Bill Smith, also Honda-mounted. From then on the likes of Phil Read took world championships, the first in 1964, and the factory dominated the 125 and 250cc class around the world up to 1968, when the factory pulled out of racing.

In 1965 Yamaha changed the face of two-strokes, removing their big drawback of mixing oil and petrol in the tank with the launch of the new 'autolube' system, which mechanically metered oil to the big ends, bearings and cylinders. Then in 1967, Yamaha launched its first 350cc street bike, the YR-1; little more than a big-bore version of Yamaha's 250cc twin and a follow-on from the 305cc YM-1 that had appeared in 1965.

Three years later the five-speed R5 appeared, before the first of the RD range appeared in 1973 in 200, 250 and 350 format, and followed later by a 125cc version. It was quite a significant model as the engineers changed to reed valves placed in the intake, replacing the piston porting used in the R5. A result of revised port timing was the engines had a wider power-band, so became slightly more civilised and easier to ride. The machines were also the first to see the words 'Torque Induction' on the side-panels and they had seven transfer ports instead of five previously, with new heads and cylinders compared to the R5 predecessor.

The integral gearbox also gained a gear, making six speeds on offer to the rider who also got a disc brake at the front to enable them to stop the bike from speed. (Interestingly in the UK the first machines had the sixth gear blanked off for some reason!) During its two years of production, nothing changed apart





from the colour schemes, before the 350 morphed into the RD 400 and the infamous LC range appeared, complete with its own race series!

Interestingly a licensed version of the RD350B was later assembled in India from 1983 until 1990 under the brand name, Rajdoot. There were two models for the Rajdoot 350 – High Torque and Low Torque, although neither were as popular as the Yamaha model beforehand and were unreliable, possibly as they were nearly 100% Indian in terms of parts, which suffered at the time with little real quality control.

Back to the Japanese version, the dimensions and appearance of the road bike frame are very similar to the Yamaha TZ250 and TZ350 series factory road race bikes, differing mainly in weight and front fork rake. It should be said though that the RD frame is nearly twice the weight of the TZ frame thanks to all the additional bracketry.

The RD rolled along on 18in wheels front and rear with a drum rear brake complementing the powerful (for its time) single disc front brake.

Again at the time, the Yamaha RD350 was universally liked by the period motorcycle press, testers praising its race-bred performance and broad power-band, stable handling all backed up by decent brakes.

Certainly most journalists liked its bend swinging capability combined with overall nimble handling, useful in congested towns and cities which is no

doubt why Yamaha chose it to become suitable to be sold as a police model in various countries who did not need the larger British and American machines.

When riding one now, you have to remember that things have drastically moved on and riding a two-stroke is now somewhat alien with its quite distinct narrow power-band as opposed to the more linear power we have become accustomed to on modern four strokes. Likewise, the riding position is more on, or above, rather than 'in' the bike's contours, the single seat on this still being narrow and functional rather than overly comfortable.

What was then regarded as good handling might now be regarded as not so good, but in fairness it is predictable within the limits set by the skinny (3.25f and 3.50r) period Dunlop tyres. As for braking, well some twin leading drum brakes from the same period give a little more confidence, but you learn to adjust your riding style to suit!

So the police bike differs little from the 'civvy' version in terms of the basics and will just top the magic ton providing you work the bike hard through the gears, but this would have been sufficient in the environment it was sold into. A white-faced 180kph calibrated speedo with a lock capability (nothing new here then?) to show the errant motorist the speed he was being reported for sits alongside the rev counter and warning lights that shows the rear brake being applied.

Staying with the handlebar area, the switch gear is very different from the high street version with controls for the large round red and blue lights mounted on the large front crash bars, which show signs of having been tested in the past, saving the rest of the bike and rider from damage.

A set of crash bars envelop the top opening panniers which later appeared on the later Yamaha FZ750 police bike (and others like the XJ900) as did most of the police equipment on this RD350. On the nearside these offer a mounting point for the large klaxon like siren that actually doubles as the bike's horn or audible warning device and despite the single seat the pillion footrests are still present.

Behind the single seat sits a small, neat radio box with the microphone mounted on the nearside. On top sits a small amber light while a neat spring arrangement enables the ticket to be securely held in place while written on a neat flat surface in front of the short radio antenna.

The rear indicators have been repositioned in a vertical manner and rear reflectors fitted, but no police coloured flashing lights of any description face rearwards, unlike current machines. However, it is very much like any modern police bike in that it remains very much a production model with some extra electrical warning items and contrary to popular belief is not tuned or performance enhanced in any way. (A Police BMW RTP is actually slower than most middleweight sports bikes in terms of top speed!)

It has to be said that it is rare to find an unmolested machine such as this, still fully-equipped with lights and even the police radio, so no surprise that you do attract some unwanted attention when out and about, even with the lights taped up!

Still it does provide an interesting exhibit at shows of the Historic Police Motorcycle Group (HPMG) and proves that size isn't everything and it should always be borne in mind that you will never outrun a police radio no matter how many ponies you may have lurking in the engine! **CBG**





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Motorcycling and the police

A PERFECT MATCH

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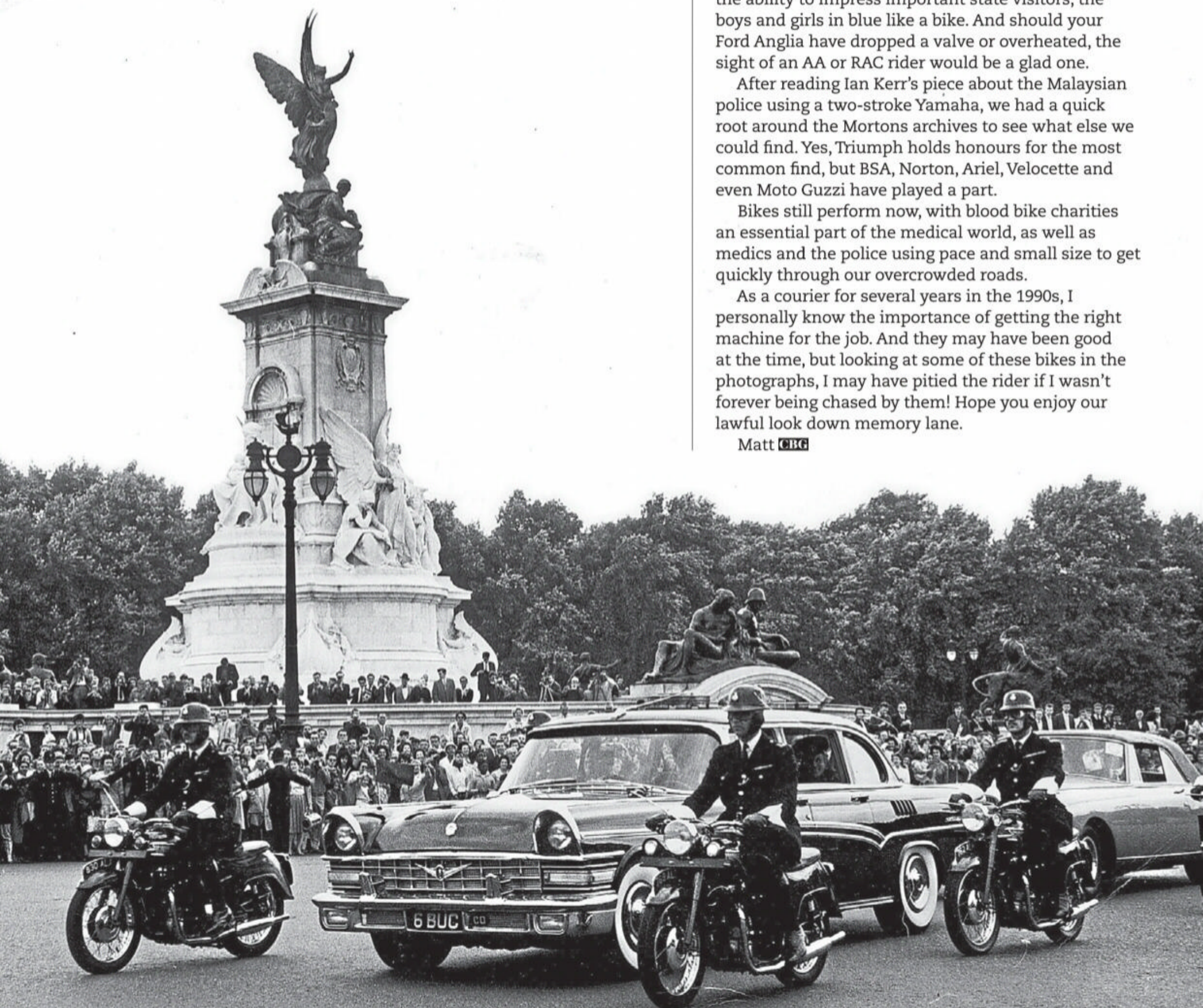
From early days where bikes were the only way to get around for most, to the large-capacity bikes for pursuit nowadays, the needs of a copper have been met. Fairings, carrying capability, reliability and even the ability to impress important state visitors, the boys and girls in blue like a bike. And should your Ford Anglia have dropped a valve or overheated, the sight of an AA or RAC rider would be a glad one.

After reading Ian Kerr's piece about the Malaysian police using a two-stroke Yamaha, we had a quick root around the Mortons archives to see what else we could find. Yes, Triumph holds honours for the most common find, but BSA, Norton, Ariel, Velocette and even Moto Guzzi have played a part.

Bikes still perform now, with blood bike charities an essential part of the medical world, as well as medics and the police using pace and small size to get quickly through our overcrowded roads.

As a courier for several years in the 1990s, I personally know the importance of getting the right machine for the job. And they may have been good at the time, but looking at some of these bikes in the photographs, I may have pitied the rider if I wasn't forever being chased by them! Hope you enjoy our lawful look down memory lane.

Matt 





1. The BSA A65 rider has a neat fire extinguisher and radio fitted, compared with the ex-army radio of the officer in the road. Building work in the background shows how safety has improved, and the rider's boots show how rider safety has too!

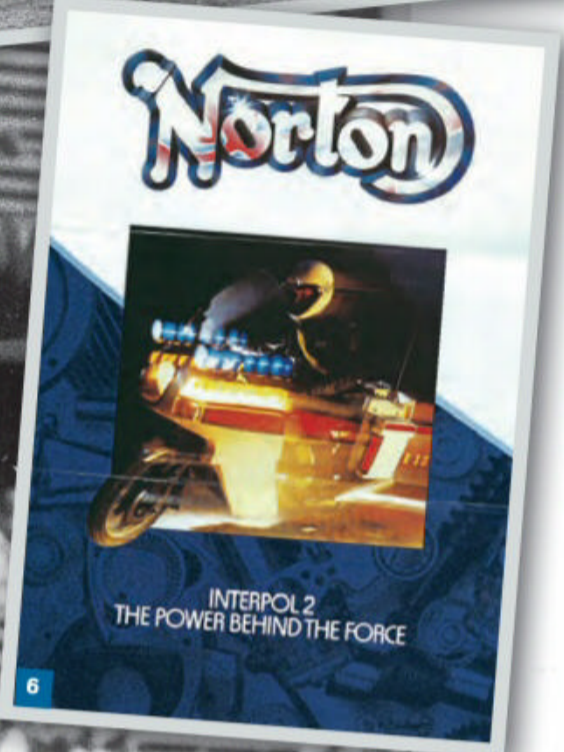
2. Looking at the face of the rider, these soldiers have been caught at some speed! BSA made many V-twins, not for racing, but using the power mainly for hauling sidecars, as seen here.



3. This was to be the last of the Police Triumphs, the 1981 T140ES.

4. 'Available in either two or four valve heads' according to this leaflet. 10in discs, sintered pads, rubber-mounded engine (for the protection of the radio) and contoured seat. It even boasts electric start - in 1983...





The British were not the only nation that would show how proud they were of their motorcyclists. Here are some of the German police force at the Berlin Police Show, 1958 in the Olympic Stadium.



5. A Triumph Trident - now that would have had the traffic division queueing up to ride that one at speed!

6. Norton Interpol 2. You couldn't buy one unless you were buying a fleet of the rotary-engined tourers. Pleasingly modern in styling.

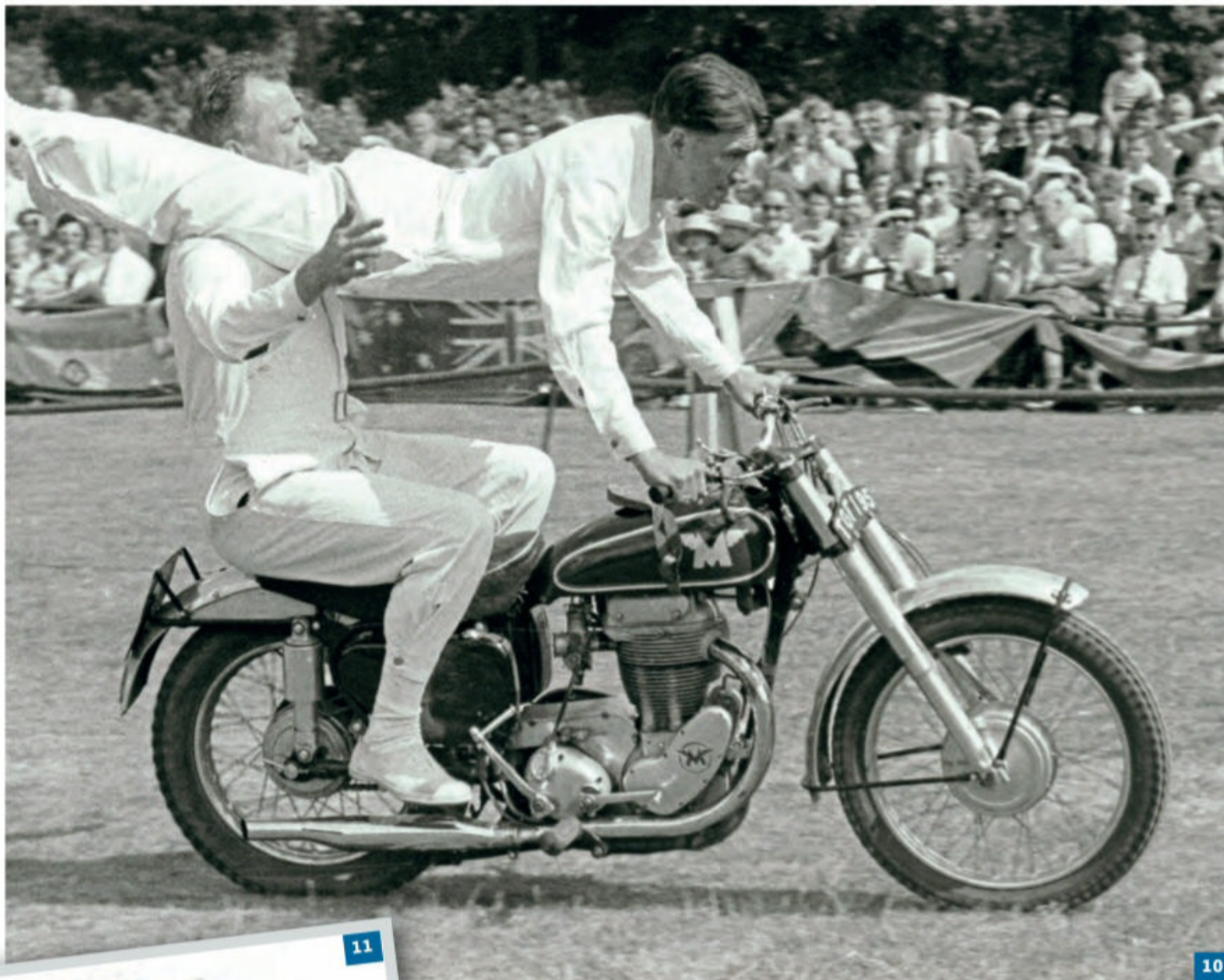
7. An RAC patrolman gets the 'you don't wanna go that way' from a cabbie. The Norton rider has a day-glow vest, but not sure about the 'safety' jumper!

8. Tank-mounted radios could cost as much as the bikes and were the cause of many serious injuries to riders.

9. British bikes, especially Triumphs, got everywhere. Here is a Triumph Speed Twin being used by Fijian police 1966.

Welsh registered Triumphs line up for training.





10. A Matchless gets abused during the Metropolitan Police Motor Club's third annual gymkhana, on June 23, 1957.

11. The Italians always seem to do it with more style...



10



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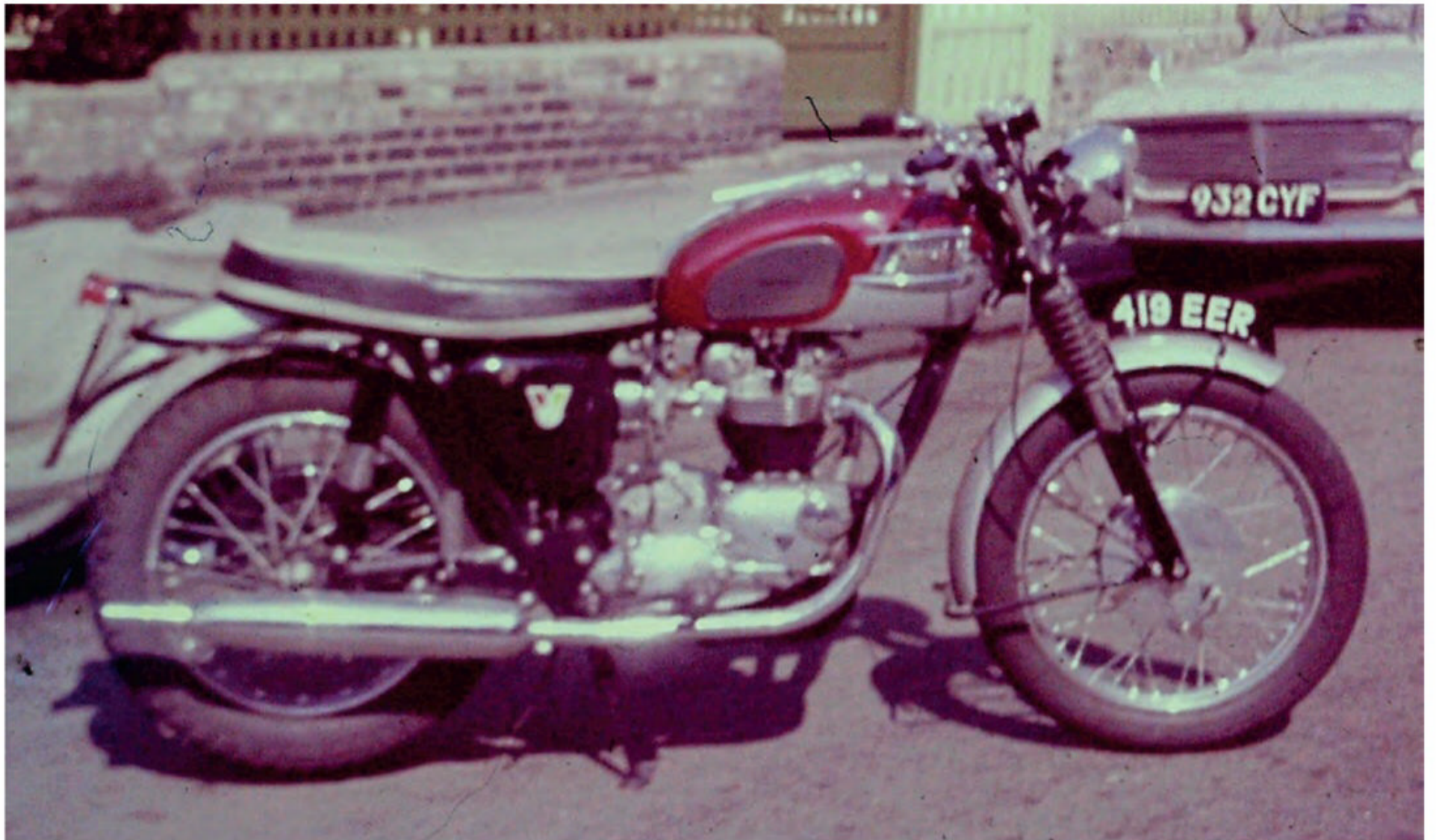
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Motorcycling Memories & the Search for a 60s superbike

1964 Triumph Trophy TR6SS, reg. 419 EER

From time to time over the years I would dig out the old photos of yesteryear, in particular those that relate to my motor cycling days of the mid 1960's, they bring back fond memories of a simpler, more carefree period in time. However of all the bikes / cars I have owned over the years, there is only one that's haunts me - The Triumph Trophy TR6SS.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN PLANT



BY THE TIME I MADE IT TO THE RIPE old age of 14, I knew I wanted to get a motorbike. So I started working before and after school and at the weekends so that when I reached my 16 birthday and I could apply for my provisional licence and (hopefully) afford to buy my first motorbike.

Even at the age of 14 I already had my heart set on a Triumph Bonneville, to me there was no other bike that could get close to generating the 'must have' feelings in my heart / head. The law back then stated that learners could only ride a bike with a maximum capacity up to 250cc, so my first bike would be something more suitable not to mention safer for a novice, than a Bonneville. During the next two years, that seemed like an eternity, I saved what I earned, sold some of my records and my beautiful 10-speed racing pushbike.



By the time of my 16th birthday and whilst still at school, I was lucky enough to be able to purchase my first motorbike, which was a 250cc Ariel (Golden) Arrow SS.

It turned out to be a good choice and it served me well, time passed and at my second attempt, I managed to convince the driving examiner to pass me! Then my thoughts returned (they never really went away) to my dream of the big Triumph twin, the Bonneville.

However fate was to play a part in the process. Now working, my route to and from work each day took me past a small bike shop and one day on my way home, as I passed the bike shop, I spied, taking pride of place in the small window on an elevated platform, a beautiful Triumph; my mistake was stopping to take a look.

I could see straight away that this was not a Bonneville but a Trophy because of the single carb and the tank colour of 'Flamboyant Scarlet / Silver'. This was a Triumph Trophy TR6SS (photo below), it was a case of I must have this beautiful Triumph, but there was a price to pay, as well as the obvious financial one!

PQ

Not a Bonneville but a Trophy because of the single carb and the tank colour of 'Flamboyant Scarlet / Silver'. This was a Triumph Trophy TR6SS

Back then shops of all kind did something called 'Lay Away'. I did not have enough money for the minimum deposit required to get my hands on this beautiful bike, however the shop was willing to 'Lay Away' the Trophy, for an initial deposit and a regular weekly payment until I had built up enough for the minimum deposit required. Plus I also had then to convince my Dad to sign as guarantor for the HP, not an easy task! Then, and only then, would I actually be able to ride away on my new bike.

However there was an additional 'Sting in the Tail' - The shop would only 'Lay Away' the Trophy on the additional condition that I sold them my Ariel Arrow SS then and there, forming part of the

deposit! So I 'paid the price', sold them my Ariel and spent the next two-three months without any bike - that's how much I wanted the Trophy.

At this point there are two questions that may come to mind: Was the Trophy worth the wait? And would I do it again? Absolutely.

When I eventually got it, the Trophy was all I expected and more, a superb bike against any measure you cared to use. It had a four gallon tank and the long 'Resonator' silencers, the sound that came out of them could only be bettered by a BSA 500 Gold Star, plus if the Goldie was running on Castrol R, the sound plus the smell was addictive.

The Trophy was a joy to ride every day, it was just waiting for the open road, a twist of the throttle and the horizon came up fast, very fast.

In the early 1960's Triumph's had a reputation for interesting handling characteristics. I can only say that my experience with this 1964 model Trophy was that no matter what you asked of it, it delivered. All thanks to Doug Hele's mods, to the frame in 1963 and forks in 1964, I'd say. On a straight road with the speedo in three figures, or pushing through 'S' bends, even if you had to back off the throttle whilst still cranked over, there was no twitching; the Trophy was as always rock steady. No 'Featherbed' required.

However, approximately 18 months later in about 1966/7, I sold the Trophy - not one of my better decisions.

THE SEARCH BEGINS

I retired a few years ago and so have had the time to start the search for my 'Old Friend' - The Trophy. My search began with some (incorrect) as it was to turn out, assumptions, which basically were that the Trophy would look exactly as I last saw it (Ref the 1964 photo below) maybe needing some refreshing and for the right price the current owner may be willing to sell it. How wrong was I to be!

I placed adds in various publications - No Responses.

Contacted the DVLA, they wrote back saying they could not divulge details of the current keeper (Data Protection) for the reason of contacting them to view and possibly purchase a vehicle. In the back of my mind I already knew their response but I thought let's try anyway.

Searched the internet and auction houses - No Joy.

Contacted the TOMCC, the Trophy was not on their database, add placed in their magazine - No Joy.

Then I placed an advert in the VMCC magazine, and lady luck smiled, I was contacted by someone who had found the Trophy as a wreck in the early / mid 1970's and carried out a superb restoration - see below. When the restoration was completed, the law about front number plates not being required had come into force and so the Trophy's front plate was never refitted, and as luck would have it and after all these years, he still had the front plate. We exchanged photos and to my surprise with photos I received, came the 'Original Front Plate'. We have since met up, and regularly keep in touch.

The restorer sold the Trophy to a friend in 1976, who I believe is still the current owner.

Last road tax expired 30th September 1978.

Throughout this search I have had help from the TOMCC, various sections of the VMCC, plus responses from total strangers (Motorcycling Fraternity), but still the Trophy remains ELUSIVE!

IN SUMMARY

I believe the Trophy to be laid up in the South Hertfordshire area, in good hands, but out of sight. I can provide the current owner with photos of the Trophy in original colours and some early history. We could reunite two bikers (Restorer and his Friend) who have not seen each other in over 40 years. And lastly, I hopefully could get to see my 'Old Friend' the Trophy again.

If you could help, please contact me! 07981 530392 / email - trophytr6@talktalk.net

Alan Plant 

BRITISH BIKE GUIDE

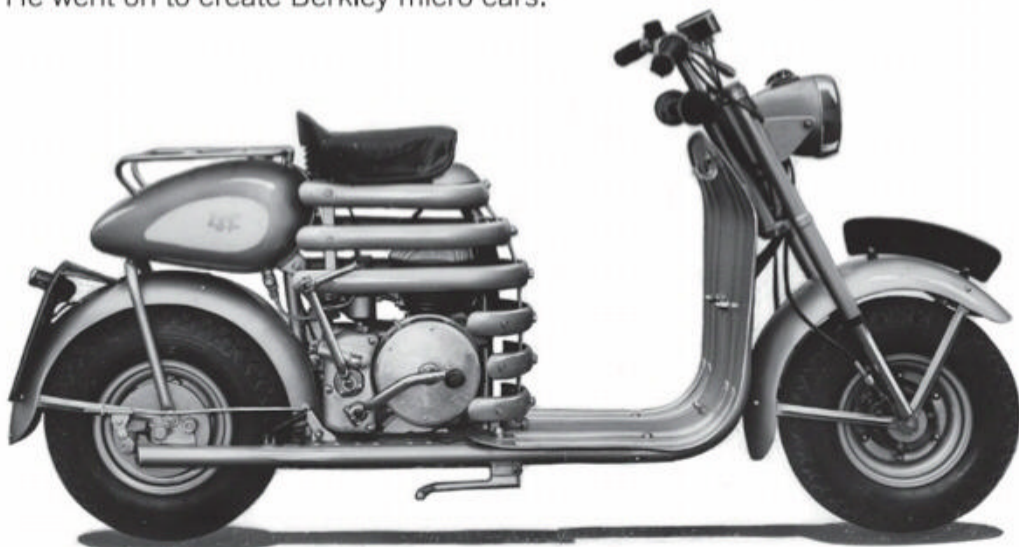
PART TWO



This month we continue our look at the British bikes available since the Second World War and have a look at BAC, BSA, Cotton, DMW, Douglas, Francis-Barnett and James

BAC

Lawrie Bond came from working as a designer in the aeronautical and steam lorry world, when after the war he created the 'Minibyke'. This unusual, almost 1930s American-looking machine (if you squint) was made from aluminium with the usual Villiers 98cc two-stroke engine. The idea was sound; the engineering less so. With no suspension and questionable front 'forks' it failed, as did the more conventional 'Lilliput' and 'Gazelle' that followed. He went on to create Berkley micro cars.



BSA

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

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

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

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

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

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

B33

499cc ohv single || 420lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1947-59

Enlarged B31, with more torque so longer legs. Possibly the classic 1950s workhorse, this one will run and run. Plunger suspension from 1949, then the admirable BSA swinging arm frame arrived in 1955. Alternator/coil ignition in 1958. Similar values for the M33, which is essentially an ohv (B33) engine in a sidevalve (M21) bicycle. All extremely straightforward to maintain and easy to live with: a solid bet for any beginner with great parts back-up and plenty of knowledge and help.

**Prices:**

low £2750 || high £4750

C25 Barracuda (66-67) Starfire (68-70)

249cc ohv single || 330lb || 60mpg || 75mph || 1966-70

Restyled C15 with a bit more go, but at the expense of some reliability. Better suspension, lighting and braking were added, and they can be surprisingly charming – and quick-steering, as the later frames were increasingly

based around those used on the off-road models. Revs like a modern bike, with the gearchange of a modern bike. Became the B25 Starfire in 1968. This is a better bet as it is more reliable and less vibratory following a mild detuning. Also sold as the Fleetstar for fleet users.

Prices:

low £1750 || high £3000

**C10 (45-57), C11(45-55), C12 (56-58)**

249cc singles || 320lb || 75mpg || 55-65mph

Pre-unit, postwar utility bikes, negligible go, stop and handling. Many consider them to be dull, although they provided stolid ride-to-work reliability for the many thousands who could afford better than a bicycle. Some spares are

hard to find now, and BSA built these bikes to a price affordable by the blue collar heroes of the day. Less sought-after than Bantams, which is a little mysterious as they are a lot less common and just as much fun. The earlier models also offer cheap entry into the rigid world.

Prices:

low £1200 || high £3000

C15 Star

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 70mpg || 70mph || 1959-67

A redesigned if conventional and basic 250, with neat, but restrained streamlined styling and unit construction. Some suffered bottom end and ignition troubles; most just whined on and on (from the valve gear), as the basic design was rugged enough. Massive numbers were sold, which meant that even

in the 'classic' age they were so plentiful that they are often neglected.

Buy with care, 1970s learner riders and commuters did terrible things to them. Sports version was the SS80, which was quicker and less reliable. C15T and C15S will cost more. Before paying a lot more for a T or an S, make sure they're genuine.

Prices:

low £1500 || high £3250

**B44 Victor**

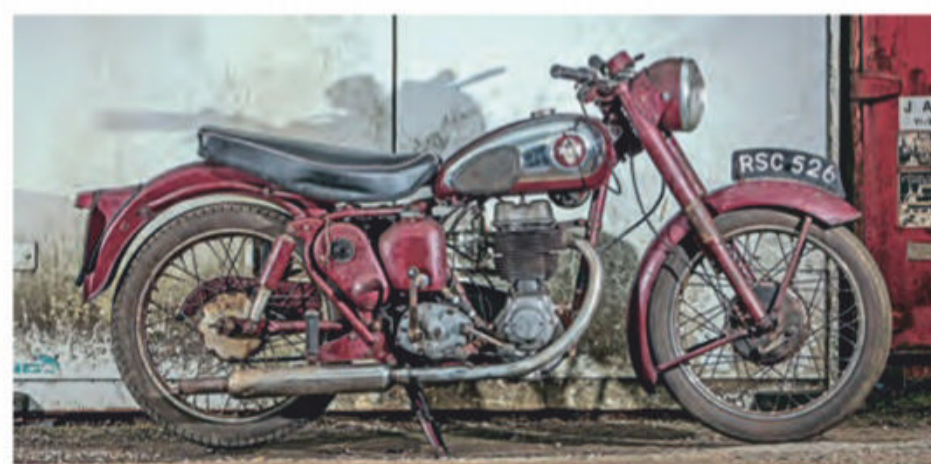
441cc ohv single || 335lb || 65mpg || 85mph || 1966-70

Another C15 stretch with more go and more vibration. Engine bottom ends can be fragile if abused, despite their heroic Jeff Smith scrambles heritage. But better bearings and

modifications are around now. Also sold as the Shooting Star, not to be confused with the twin of the same name. Engines still popular with off-road warriors. Can be hard to start, so they say. You have been warned...

Prices:

low £2250 || high £4500





A10
646cc ohv twin || 440lb || 55mpg ||
105mph || 1951-63

A classic in more than just name, the A10 was sold as the Golden Flash with flash style, the Road Rocket with a bit more go, and as the Super Rocket with a little more than that. Many plunger Flashes spent their working lives hauling sidecars and

may still lean in that direction. The A10 engine in BSA's swinging arm frame is arguably one of the best postwar Britbikes: robust and easy to ride a long way, if less rapid than the Triumph alternative. The Rocket Gold Star was a super-sports version with Gold Star cycle parts and tuned engine. These can fetch £20,000+ but are highly fakeable, so be very careful. An A10 is a fine motorcycle;

the only worry can be high-speed braking on the later models. SRM main bearing and uprated oil pump conversion are plusses when looking to buy.

Prices:
low £4000 || high £9000.

RGS low £9500 || high £20,000; but
check with the club to authenticate

B31
348cc ohv single || 365lb || 80mpg ||
75mph || 1945-59

Trad Brit single, often leaky and rattly, but can run up very high mileages with very little maintenance. Find an early one with solid or plunger frame for greater agility and charm. They are faster and sweeter than later heavier examples. Common mod was to fit a Triumph T140 piston.

The 350 engine shared the same bicycle as far bigger B33 and can be leisurely as a result, especially the (post-1954) swinging arm bikes. The last models, with coil ignition and alternator electrics, should be worthwhile contenders for anyone who wants to ride regularly. Good spares availability, too.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £4500



B25SS
249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg ||
0mph || 1971-72

The last of the long C15-based series, with a new oil-bearing chassis and smart street scrambler clothes for BSA's final rescue attempt. Naming it the Gold Star 250 didn't help sales or credibility. Also called the B25 Victor and rebadged as the Triumph Trailblazer/Blazer SS. As

with all 250s, these suffered from learner neglect, so buy carefully and change the engine's oil frequently. Most spares are around, though quality can be extremely variable. The last are probably the best of all the BSA 250 singles and are entirely practical classics.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £5000

B32 Gold Star
348cc ohv single || 360lb || 65mpg ||
85mph || 1949-57

Amazing what a name and reputation can do for prices. Souped-up single with a flashy suit and better brakes than lesser models. The DB32 is the one to buy with its excellent duplex frame, although the price is high. Spares availability and quality

are excellent and owners' club support is guaranteed. Check paperwork closely: look on old documents for evidence that it has always been a Goldie and isn't an over-priced replica.

Prices:
low £9000 || high £15,000



**A50 Royal Star**

499cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 90mph || 1962-66

Unit-construction replacement for the A7. A fine if slightly sluggish machine with all the style of the 650s but with less go and fewer vibes. Smoother, though, and the rare sporting versions are highly entertaining. Bargains can sometimes be found and they make good working bikes. 12v alternator electrics and seriously simple maintenance make them entirely practical riding machines, while many unexpectedly fine comp models have been reimported from export markets, adding to both variety and appeal. Export styling is rather more adventurous than UK home market, too. The engines shouldn't leak and they shouldn't rattle, but they often do...

Prices:

low £3500 || high £6000

B50SS

499cc ohv single 340lb 60mpg 85mph 1971-72

The last of the C15 stretches. Striking street-scrambler style fails to disguise the overstressed power train. Also known as the B50 Gold Star and B50T Victor. Conversion to electronic ignition can transform it to one of GB's best-ever singles, although starting it is a definite skill, and kickbacks can be killers. The most amazing exhaust system in the world on the US-only Triumph-badged version. Agile and quick, regular oil

changes and a fully charged battery are essential. Drink plenty of beef tea before starting.

Prices:

low £3000 high £5500

**B40**

343cc ohv single || 305lb || 80mpg || 75mph || 1960-65

Stretched C15, with more torque and a cast-in pushrod tunnel to distinguish it from its 250 sibling. Never wildly popular, they are nonetheless sound and usually reliable if treated kindly. Plenty of ex-WD bikes about. These are better bets, with good off-road type frames, an unusual set of gear ratios and better oil filters included. Most old soldiers appear to have been converted into trials

irons, somehow. The sports SS90 version is now very rare.

Prices:

low £2000 || high £3000



B34, DB34, DBD34, Gold Star
499cc ohv single || 410lb || 55mpg || 110mph || 1950-62

Prices:

low £14,000 || high £24,000

The Legend itself. Fun on the open road, but antisocial and awkward in traffic. Vastly overpriced thanks to a vast over-reputation, which masks their charm from many newer riders. Rewarding to own and to learn to ride properly. Spares and club support are excellent. Beware of fakes; buy from someone you trust, and always with a warranty. Superb specialist services and updated, uprated components are readily available, mostly intended to boost performance. This is a truly legendary motorcycle, and for once the legend is a real one.



BSA

M20 and M21

496cc (M20), 591cc (M21), sv single || 425lb || 55mpg || 65mph || 1945-55

Once ubiquitous antiquated sidevalve slogger, kept in production by WD contracts and sidecar hauliers such as the AA. Little go and little stop but very rugged riders, simply oozing character. Stretched to 591cc in 1946 (as the M21, until 1963), with similar performance but greater thirst for both petrol and oil; yet massive fan base and can be made to go well. Parts mostly available.

Prices:

low £3500 || high £7000. Military models £5000+



A70 Lightning

751cc ohv twin || 425lb || 50mpg || 120mph || 1971

US-only homologation special, intended for Stateside racing. Very rare – beware the imitator! These unusual engines were once popular with heroic chair racers. Spares are hard to find, and they're no faster on the road than the 650.

Price:

High – if you find one.



A7

497cc ohv twin || 420lb || 55mpg || 90mph || 1946-61

Splendid twin, with smooth power and typically fine BSA steering. Early models may be more sought-after, but post-1950 bikes, with A10-based engines, are better for spares. Immense reliability and charm. Recommended to anyone who enjoys motorcycling off the M-ways. Started out as a rigid, gained a redesigned



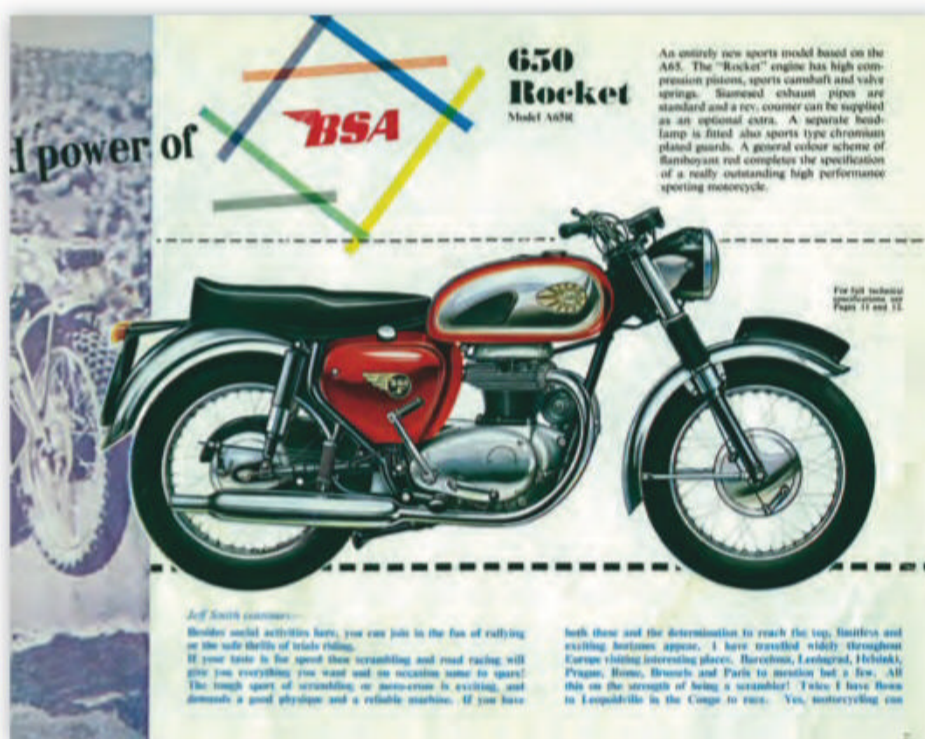
A65

654cc ohv twin || 425lb || 55mpg || 120mph || 1962-73

The unit-construction replacement for the A10. The A65 has a poor reputation as a vibrator and a leaker of oil, which means that they can often make good buys for riders. Get one while you can! In fact, the single-carb twins are no more rough than any other 650 twins. Spares are plentiful, if of unusually variable quality. Late (post 1971) bikes have the same oil-bearing frames as 71-83 Triumph twins and provide fine steering. Very late (1972) bikes are very good indeed, and are hard to fault as practical bikes – they even stopped leaking after the 1971 redesign. Sold as the Thunderbolt (tourer), Lightning (sports), Spitfire (cafe racer) and Firebird Scrambler (street scrambler). Problems tend to be electrical and easily fixed. Specialist engineering sorts suspect bottom end oiling, as in all BSA twins.

Prices:

low £3500 || high £6000



engine and a plunger frame, was later redesigned again to fit into the swinging arm frame. Iron-engined rigids are especially fine. Only fault is the sometimes dismal 6v lighting but that's hardly unique to BSA and is fixable with modern components, as is the magneto ignition. A7SS Shooting Star is the sporty one with similar go and a higher price.

Prices:

low £3000 || high £5750



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Bantam

174cc two-stroke single || 230lb ||
85mpg || 65mph || 1948-71

The most widely sold of all BSAs, the Bantam (which was the one true learner bike of its day in the eyes of some) is apparently immortal, being plentiful even today and having an excellent owners' club of its own.

It began life in 1948 as the 123cc D1, grew to 148cc as the D3 in 1954 and to 174cc as the D5 in 1958.

The one to look for is the 1968-71 D14/4, which has four gears,

smartish styling, good handling and general reliability. The ones to ignore are possibly the plunger-framed versions. All Bantams can be reliable and very economical to run provided that they are built properly. Spares are plentiful and cheap, and modern ignition systems and engine seals can transform them. An easy introduction to classic Brits and exhilarating to ride on back roads.

Prices:

low £1000 || high £2750

**A75R Rocket 3**

740cc ohv triple || 520lb || 35mpg ||
125mph || 1968-72

Arguably the first Superbike, the Rocket 3 was quite a sensation when launched, with its vivid acceleration, unconventional styling, high top speed and excellent steering. The bikes are in great demand, and can be expensive to run, although parts supply is good from several expert and specialist suppliers. Rewarding to own and ride, they can accept the disc brakes and electric starter from



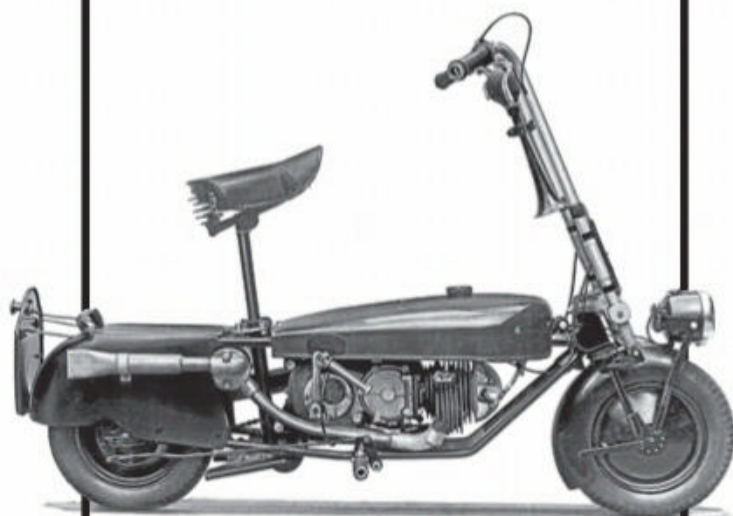
the T160 Trident. The late US market bikes are glorious to behold! Fascinating machines. They share an excellent owners' club with Triumph's Tridents.

Price:

Low £7500 || high £14,000

CORGI

After the war, Brockhouse engineering took the Commando Welbike with its designer, John Dolphin, and produced it as the Corgi for the public. Where the troops had issue with its poor off-road abilities, on road it was better, if not the most stable. More than 25,000 of the 98cc, two-speed bikes were made and sold in Europe and in the USA under the Indian Papoose name, from 1947 until 1954.



COTTON

In the years before the First World War, Frank (Bill) Cotton trained as a lawyer, but preferred working at Levis motorcycles. During the inter-war years, Cotton enjoyed sporting success, including a certain Stan Woods' first TT victory, as well as filling the top three places in the 1926 Junior. The bikes had Villiers or Blackburne engines and Cotton concentrated on getting the bikes to handle well. But the Second World War wasn't kind, with the company in trouble.

Post War, Cotton retired and sold the company, who now used mainly Villiers single or twin-cylinder two-stroke engines from 200-350cc with Armstrong forks and attractive, if slightly unfinished looking chassis. The scrambler and trials world liked them, with circuit success coming to Derek Minter and Bill Ivy. But a small motorcycle company is a hard beast to feed, Villiers stopped supplying engines so Minarelli units had to be bought, sales dropped and Armstrong industries took it over in the 1980s.



DMW

Short-lived (1940-70s – no one is sure when they stopped making bikes), Leslie Dawson was a racer who started helping other competitors with their bikes and quickly ended up building his own, under the name DMW (Dawson Motor Works – or Dawson Motorcycles Wolverhampton).

Little known, but Dawson held the first patent for the rear swinging arm and was at the forefront of telescopic fork development, calling them 'Telematics'. By the 1950s

Dawson had emigrated and the DMW range had Villiers engine models which continued through to the Seventies, when the line of bikes seemed to make way for selling Villiers engine parts and engineering complete engines for other companies.



DOUGLAS

The small Bristol manufacturer that always seemed to be in financial difficulty, but which produced some interesting boxer twins, albeit with variable production quality despite the BMW-like across-the-frame flat-twin design, with the crank's axis in line with the frame's centreline. Douglas turned the drive through 90° and used a chain final drive rather than a shaft – unlike Velocette's flat twins. Douglas bikes are relatively rarely offered for sale outside of the owners' club, which is the only reliable source of spares.

Dragonfly

348cc ohv flat twin || 395lb || 55mpg
|| 75mph || 1954-57

Oddly styled touring 350 twin, featuring Earles forks and a faired headlamp/petrol tank, as well as conventional rear suspension. An involving, unusual machine with a rev-happy engine providing almost adequate performance and with excellent steering, but dire brakes and limited specialist support.



Prices:
low £4000 || high £5000

Mark Series

348cc ohv flat twin || 340lb || 65mpg
|| 75mph || 1949-51

Hard to find for sale, even harder to find on the road. Fine handling for their day, but a little fragile in the power dept. Once called "the Bugatti of motorcycles". The engineering is innovative, with their own take on suspension at both ends, including a truly unusual

reliance upon torsion bars. The engines are sweet, smooth and gentle. Avoid the initial (teething troubled) 135 model. The Mk.3 Sports is the acknowledged one to have; 80-Plus and 90-Plus sporting versions are faster and boast better brakes for a frighteningly high price.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6500



FRANCIS-BARNETT

Part of the AMC group, F-B built sturdy and plodding two-strokes using both the Piatti-designed AMC engine and the better Villiers unit in a variety of capacities and styles. Not at present very highly regarded by the classic crowd. F-Bs are cheap enough to provide a lot of fun in the old bike milieu, and are reliable if looked after. Scarce spares, apart from for the Villiers engines.

The amazingly styled Fulmar, had a small AMC engine to propel its unusual frame, leading link front forks and swoopy bodywork slowly along. Other models include the Cruiser twins (1989 and 91), which had almost acceptable performance. Prices for the whole range are similar and



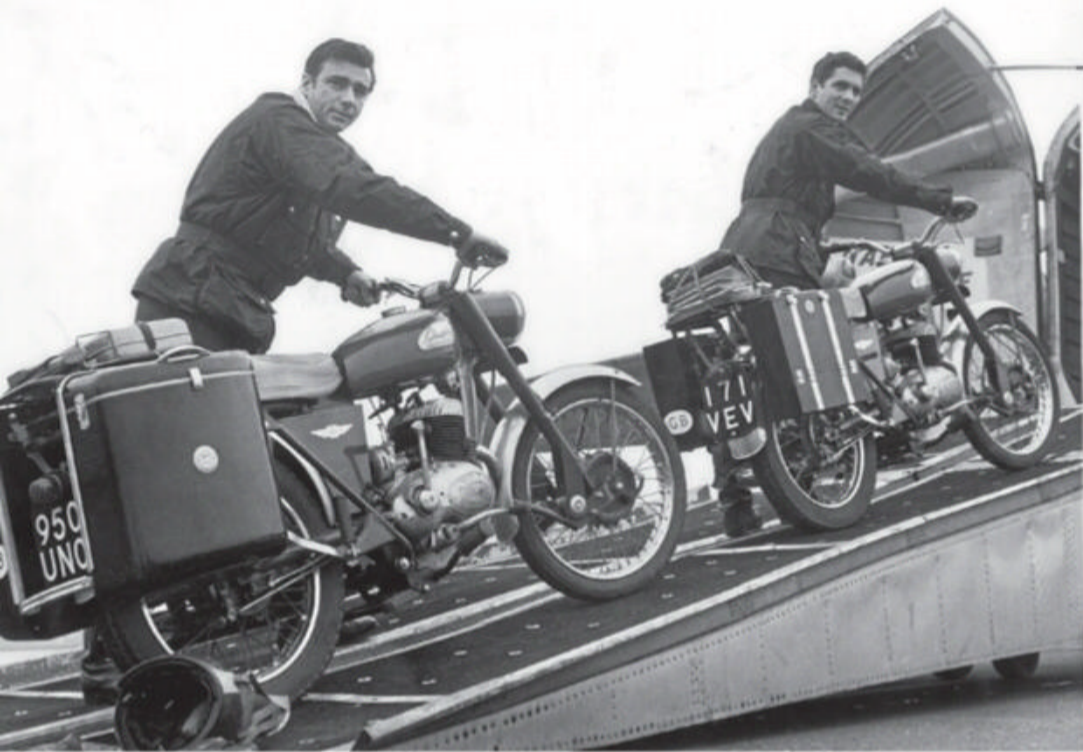
low. Owners' clubs are friendly, both their own as well as the British Two-Stroke.

Prices:
low £850 high £2250

GREEVES

Built in Thundersley, Essex, the Greeves' range of lightweight, competition-based machines were always a bit different from the more mundane commuter bikes with which they shared the use of Villiers engines. The most striking features are the alloy beam-based frame and leading-link forks, which used rubber in torsion as the spring medium.

Any bike that could be described as 'off-road' will command a higher price, but the roadster models, using both Villiers singles and twin engines, can provide superb steering, some style and a little performance. Silverstone road-racers are highly coveted by both collectors and riders, while the less than subtle Last Coaster is a personal favourite.



Prices:
low £2250 high
£4500

HESKETH

Launched to a troubled Great Britain at a troubled time (miner's strike, three-day week), Lord Hesketh's monster V-twin turned out to be an expensive flop, largely because the splendid-looking power unit was inadequately developed, overheated the rear cylinder and lacked the sophistication required by those spending around £6000 on a motorcycle in 1982. It was also ridiculously heavy. Panned by the press, Yet at least one of *CBG's* regular crew likes the V1000. Production

of a sort dribbled on for years, including a relaunch using more modern suspension and brakes as well as a bigger version of the original engine. There are still a few low-mileage examples about, which could make sense, especially if they have been updated with the EN10 kit of improved engine parts. Spares supply is strangely excellent. The current Hesketh concern is more about developing versions of its new and current range of V-twins using an S&S engine, rather than its own.



V1000
992cc dohc V-twin || 560lb || 35mpg
120mph || 1982-84

Also sold as the Vampire with a striking full enclosure, the unfaired V1000 is let down by a noisy engine, a stiff gearchange and a very tall riding position. The rest of the machine is pretty good, using the best parts from

European suppliers of the day, and most of the faults can be eliminated with redesigned parts developed by Mick Broom. Many of the criticisms come from those who've never ridden one, and those who ride them usually like them.

Prices:
low £10,000 || high £18,000

JAMES

The other AMC two-stroke builder, probably most well-known for the Cadet and Captain commuters, which at the time were seen as a trifle dull. Once again, the better buys are those that are powered by Villiers rather than Piatti-designed AMC engines, and the very late (1966) Superswift twin is probably the one to find. Some machines were built with the Villiers 4T unit, which is a little less slow.

The James Scooter (which was sold as the Matchless Papoose in the US!) is the one to avoid — unless you truly are a collector of lost causes. However, a lot of low-cost, high-amusement riding can be had from any of the James range, and they can't depreciate much. Like most British two-strokes, they have a dedicated band of expert fans.





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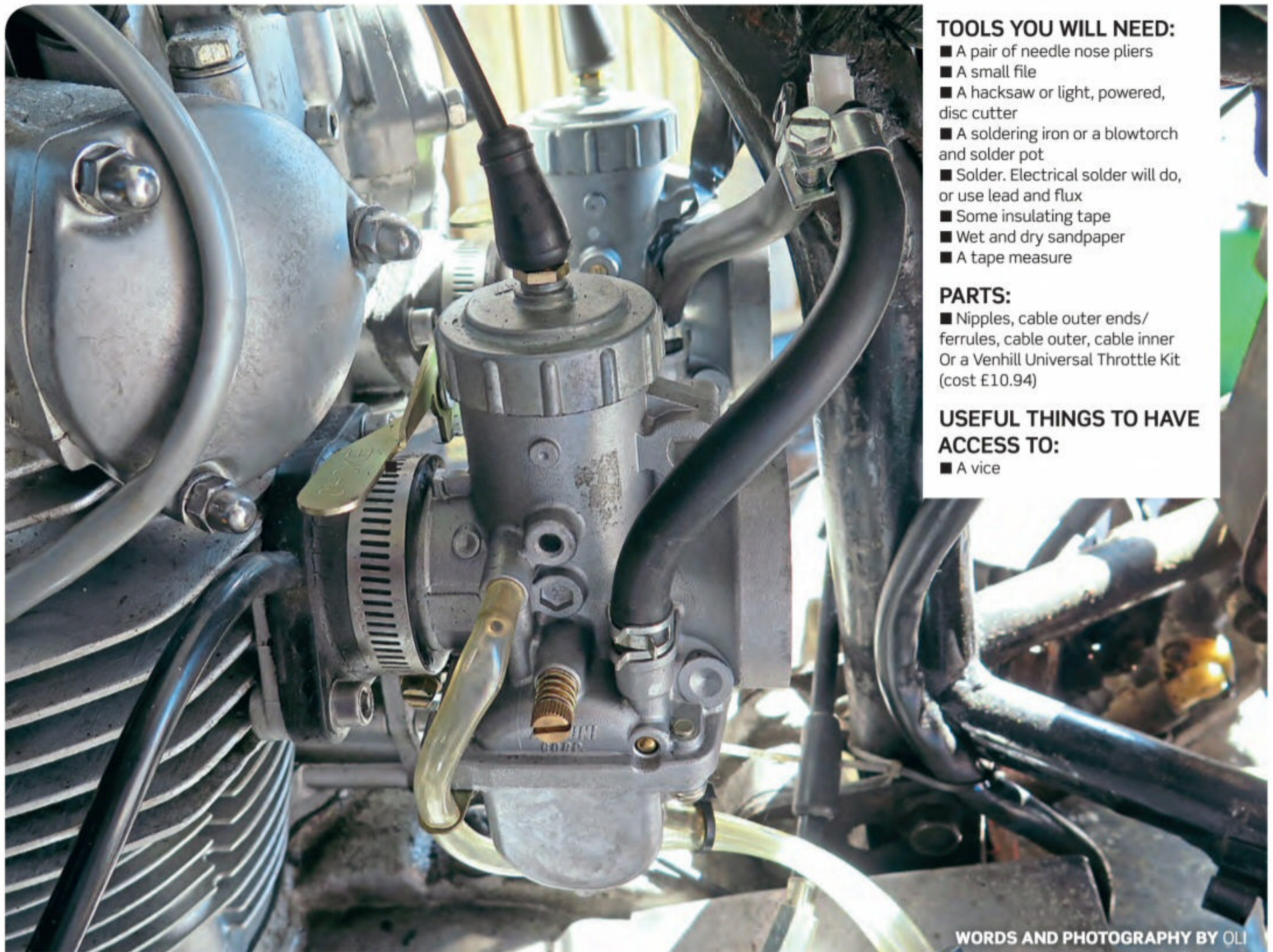
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TOOLS YOU WILL NEED:

- A pair of needle nose pliers
- A small file
- A hacksaw or light, powered, disc cutter
- A soldering iron or a blowtorch and solder pot
- Solder. Electrical solder will do, or use lead and flux
- Some insulating tape
- Wet and dry sandpaper
- A tape measure

PARTS:

- Nipples, cable outer ends/ ferrules, cable outer, cable inner
- Or a Venhill Universal Throttle Kit (cost £10.94)

USEFUL THINGS TO HAVE ACCESS TO:

- A vice

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLI

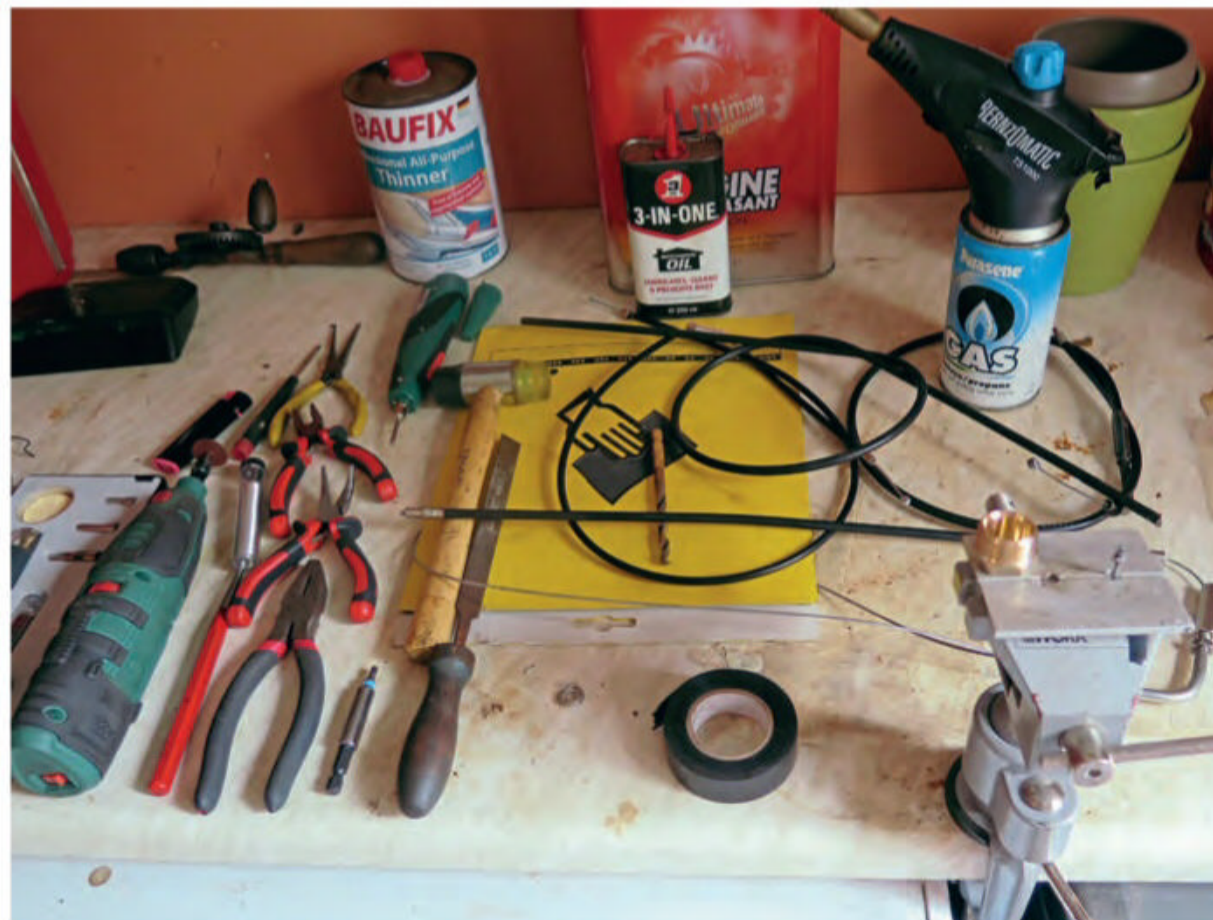
How to make a cable

RECENTLY MANAGED TO FIND A PAIR OF NEW-OLD-stock Mikuni VM34 slide carbs for my Yamaha XS650 at an auction. The original and worn out BS38 carbs are CV versions and operate using a single throttle cable which opens the butterflies in the carb bodies. The VM34s are traditional slide carbs, which need a throttle cable each.

The new carb set came with these twin cables, joined to single throttle cable at a converter that sits just shy of the steering head, under the tank. The XS650 Special/US Custom these cables were designed for comes with high bars, but while my bike is also a Special, I long ago ditched the high bars for a set of flat drag bars, as I quite like motorcycles that handle properly. As a result, the single cable was about 18 inches too long, and needed to be shortened.

I'm not keen on hacking about at already perfectly serviceable kit, and in any case a decent spare throttle cable is handy to have, so rather than just spending time tracking down nipples and chopping up the existing cable, I decided to make my own and purchased a Venhill universal throttle cable kit.

The Venhill kit consists of a long cable outer, an even longer length of galvanised wire inner cable, some



rubber covers and a selection of adjusters, ferrules/cable ends and nipples.

Before getting to work making the cable, I needed to make sure the shortened item would fit and would be of the correct length.

The Venhill cable comes with a nipple already attached at the carb end. I therefore needed to cut the cable to length at the throttle end before attaching the cable adjuster and throttle nipple. This involved a good deal of checking and fitting before it was done.

The first issue was the use of the converter. Even though there were four different spare cable ends and one 6mm item fitted already to the cable outer, none of them matched the converter, which had a 6mm hole, so I had to gently ream out the hole in the converter with a 7mm drill to accept the fitted cable end.

This done I now needed to select the correct fittings for the throttle end. The various connectors in the kit would have been fine for most British bikes and would have worked on the Yamaha, but to fit an adjuster I would have needed to split the already short outer near the twist grip and put one section on either side. On the original Yamaha cable a guide tube and adjuster sticks out of the bottom of the twistgrip, and for the sake of neatness I wanted to retain it, so I cannibalised one from a now redundant new cable salvaged from the old carbs.

Then I had to match the correct ferrule for the cable outer with the correct adjuster from the four ferrules in the pack and the two adjusters.

Next, I needed to measure the outer so I could cut it to length, taping it in position and ensuring it would attach to the throttle without it snagging or stretching at full lock.

The new cable was going to be quite short. After fitting it, measuring it, fitting the tank and checking the length and the amount of play again, I taped the adjuster to the outer at the appropriate place, and clamped the cable outer in a vice.

Rather than using plier type cutters or a hacksaw to cut the outer, which can untidy things to a cable if you are not skilled, I used one of those cheap Dremel copies you find in German-owned supermarkets. It did cut the cable neatly, and I could grind the few burrs off, getting through several tiny cutting discs in the process. Next the outer cable ferrule was popped on and secured with a light blow from a punch. The adjuster was fitted, and all seemed to go together nicely. I also had a lot of cable outer left over which went into the 'might come in handy later' pile.

The next step was to measure the cable inner, and to solder the nipple to the throttle end.

Again, measuring was required, so I used the original cable as a template. While it was far too long in itself, the actual length of exposed end was going to be the



same length, no matter the length of the completed cable.

The cable inner was then trimmed off using my rotary tool. A little insulating tape around the cable at the cutting point helped reduce fraying.

SOLDERING THE NIPPLE

The Venhill kit uses galvanised wire so you can use lead and flux or electrical solder, the kind used by plumbers and electricians.

First I needed to make sure the end of the freshly trimmed cable was completely free of dirt and grease, ➤



so it was cleaned off with some acetone, some wet and dry paper and wiped clean of bits of metal and grease.

After sliding the nipple on with the wide hole towards the open end, the cable needed to be 'birdcaged'. This is a process which involves opening up the strands of wire at the end and bunching them back together again to make a tiny cage. Venhill makes a tool set for this, involving some punches and clamp to be put in a vice. It's very neat and would be very useful if you were making lots of cables. But at upwards of £100 it's a bit of an expense. I made something similar out of two right angled pieces of alloy and drilled a 1.5mm hole in it, with a 4mm countersink.

Then I used a small punch, tapping it with a soft hammer, to create a rather less neat birdcage than the Venhill tool would have provided, but it still worked.

I slid the nipple up to the birdcage, pulling the cable down so the birdcage was snug inside the nipple, with a few strands sticking out and enough space for the solder to penetrate.

I made a solder pot utilising a brass plumbing pipe end and melted electrical solder into it with blowtorch to fix the nipple to the end by dipping the nipple into the melted solder.

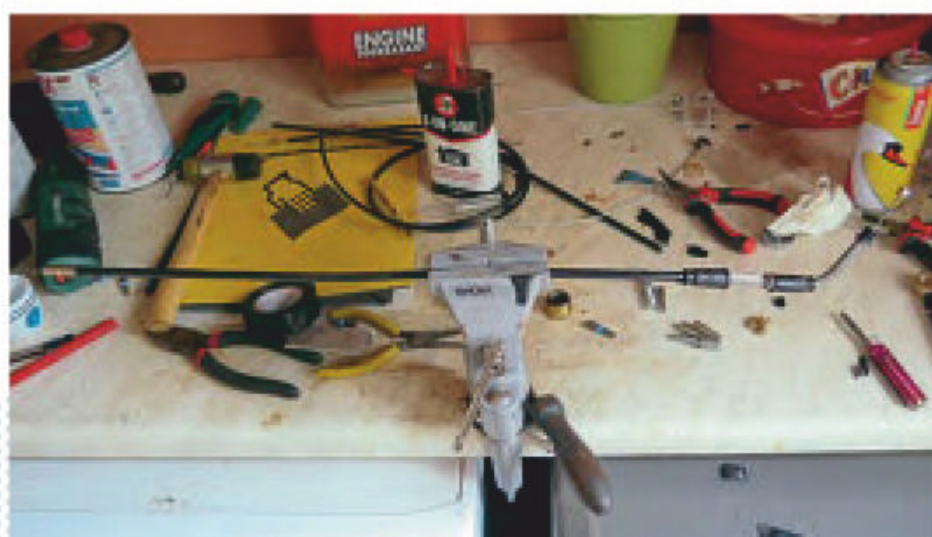
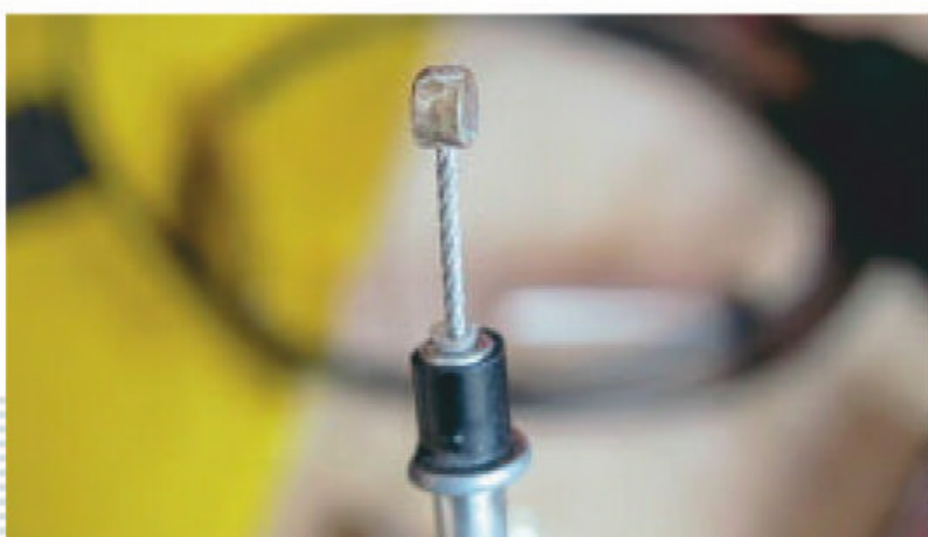
Using the solder pot helps make sure the solder penetrates the wire strands, and completely covers the nipple. Using a soldering iron to heat the cable is tricky. With different sorts of metal involved, if you are not careful you get blobs of solder everywhere, except where you want it. I had to try not to get any solder on the cable on the other side of the nipple, as this makes it inflexible and puts it under strain when in use.

It was dipped in water to cool it and wash any flux off. The end was dried, cleaned and a small file used to get rid of any excess solder and exposed cable strands so it would fit smoothly into the twistgrip. A little light oil - Three in One will do it - gave things a bit more protection, and the cable was complete.

The basic principles used here are the same for heavier duty control cables for clutches, but you really need to be confident of your ability if you are going to tackle a brake cable. A failed throttle or clutch cable might leave you stranded. A failed brake cable doesn't bear thinking about.

Good quality pre-made cables for most popular models are available relatively cheaply, so making your own is a task you'll only need to perform in an emergency, if you simply can't get the right cable, if you like doing this sort of thing or if, like me, you're fitting something non-standard.

Making a cable does require you to know how to solder and to have some mechanical competence with hand tools. It is a really good idea to practise soldering with spare lengths of cable before doing the final assembly, and I made half a dozen practice birdcages before I got that part of the process right. Cable making is satisfying to do and a useful skill to have. **CBG**



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C3/104CBG	BALL END - ROCKER - OHV SINGLES - 1946 TO 1957	£17
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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
C3/1105SCBG	BOLT - ROCKER BOX-1/4" X 26 THREADS PER INCH-ALL OHV SINGLES	£9
D37/108CBG	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
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H2157CBG	COLLAR - VALVE - TOP - 18, 19, 21, 25 & 44 - 1923 TO 1927	£22
2157CBG	COLLAR - VALVE - TOP - 18, 19, 21, 25, 44 - 1923 TO 1927	£22
16133CBG	COLLAR - VALVE - TOP - 18, ES2, 19R, 19S, 50 - PRE-1959	£19
NM16133CBG	COLLAR - VALVE - TOP - PRE-1959 - FITS INLET AND EXH.	£19
H3/148CBG	COLLAR - VALVE BOTTOM - ES2/18/19/50 - PRE 1959 - EACH	£22
A2/148CBG	COLLAR - VALVE SPRING - HOLDS COLLETS - 16H & BIG4 - EACH	£22
2156CBG	COLLAR - VALVE SPRING FOR COTTERS - 16H - 1922 TO 1929 EACH	£22
A3/147CBG	COLLAR - VALVE SPRING TOP - 18, 19, 50, ES2 - PRE-1959	£9
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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
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8897ACBG	KIT - ROCKER COVER + INSPECTION - OHV - PRE-1946 - PLATED	£14
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8898ASSCBG	KIT - SCREWS - ROCKER BOX + INSPECTION COVER - PRE 1946	£14
A2/156KITCBG	KIT - STUD, NUT & WASHER - CYL/HEAD - 16H & BIG 4 - SET 9+9+9	£56
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187379KITCBG	KIT - VALVES & GUIDES - MODEL 50 - 59 TO 63 - INCLUDES CLIPS	£58
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D37/156CBG	NUT - CYLINDER HEAD SLEEVE - ES2, 19, 50 - 1956	£8



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C2/691INCBG	TAPPET - INLET - 16H & BIG 4 - 1946 TO 1955	£70
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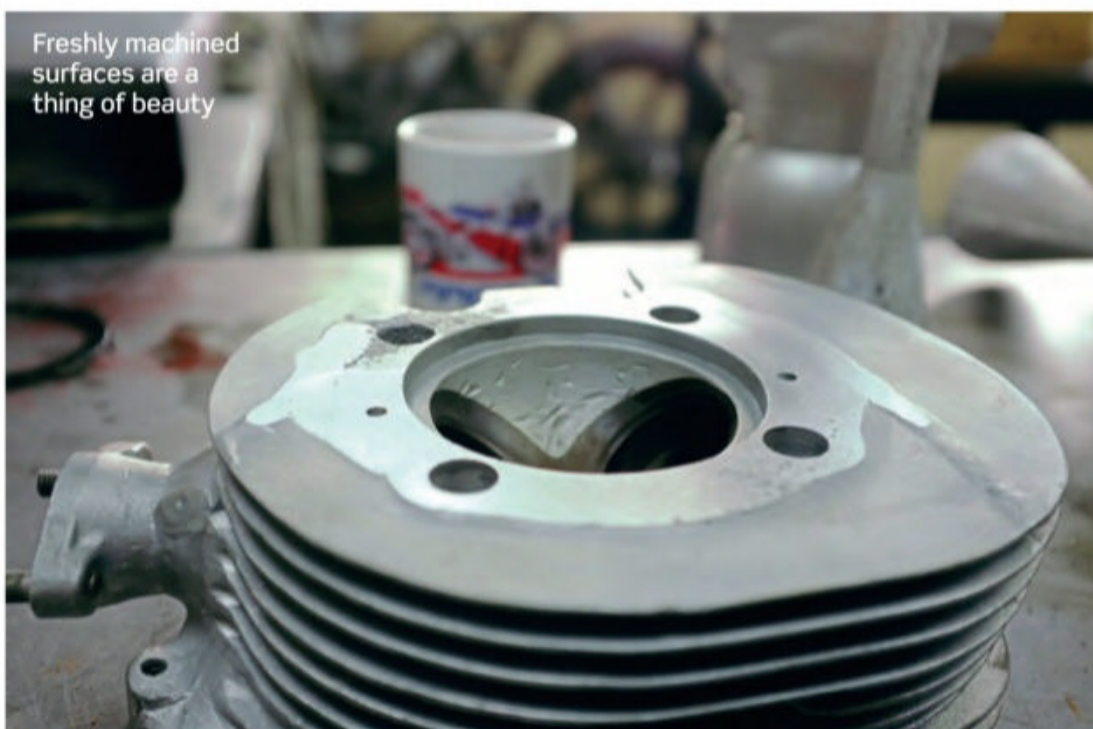
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Freshly machined surfaces are a thing of beauty

“I thought initially I’d take more off the crank as the fit to the ball bearing was still too tight. But it just didn’t add up”

TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK. I’M NOT learning to dance, but this is how my attempts at building a Norton ES2 are going. I’m going to repeat this until I am riding it around; do not buy a box of parts masquerading as a motorbike...

Last month I shimmed up the bottom end. And this is the reality of life on a magazine; quite often a project has to wait several weeks until worked on again – life, work, family and, in my case, an old car engine and a BMW boxer got in the way. But while in the workshop measuring tolerances in my Opel Kadett engine (well someone has to like them) I had a feeling – that sixth sense – that something was amiss with what I’d done on the Norton. So I measured the crank end float again and there was nothing. So I popped the cases apart. Sounds easy, but it involved more heat to remove the crank from the outer ball bearing.

I guessed I had been measuring the float with heat still giving a tolerance, but once everything was a similar temperature, it all closed up. I thought initially I’d take more off the crank as the fit to the ball bearing (the crank has two expensive roller bearings, one each side, with an additional, cheaper ball bearing on the output side to give a helping hand) was still too

Filing the cut end of the bar to clean the thread with a die



Bearing shims came in different thicknesses - must be even both sides



A thread gauge made sure I used the correct tap!



In a little, out a little, to rid the hole of swarf



tight. But it just didn't add up. I'd kept the original bearing and tried that, which felt fine. So do I keep rubbing down the crank, which feels wrong, to fit the new, unbranded bearing from a Norton specialist, or use the old bearing which was an SKF (a well-known, good make) which felt fine and fitted perfectly? I don't know what it's done in life, but I refitted the old bearing. It fits perfectly, is quiet when spun up and has no sideways movement, the numbers are right and this isn't a race engine.

Refitting it had to wait, as I had decided to fix the primary chaincase fitting. This is a part of the crankcase which has a thread coming out to help hold the chaincase in place, but some butcher beforehand had broken it, then fixed it with chemical metal. To be fair, it had stood the test of time, but the constant heating up of the case and the repair cried 'enough'. So superwelder, Steve, rebuilt the area with TIG, having first drilled a hole on the inside to help prevent the build-up of gases as he filled the old hole.

I wanted to use an M8 thread as that's what I had closest to the old fitting, so I drilled a 3mm pilot on the pillar drill (to help keep it vertical) and then a 5.5mm hole, which I then used an M8x 1.25 tap to create a good thread. After cleaning up the thread on the bar I'd cut, I popped it in for now but may make another with an untapped area that should help prevent any oil coming through the thread. I'll use Loctite 270 which is a fairly permanent thread lock.

Getting everything back together felt much better and with everything seated correctly, square and in place, I had 1.45mm (0.057in) endfloat. Slightly too much, but the bearings came with spacers, and I'll try to get just under the recommended 0.50in (1.27mm) as the joint sealer will add a little.

For sealer I'm using Wellseal. It can be a little runny, so Neville recommended I squeeze out what I need and leave it for an hour or so, in which time it starts to harden slightly and is easier to use. But that has to wait for the tappet guides to be repaired, which need the other crankcase heated up to fit, once the tappets have been repaired, as they can only be fitted with the guides.

So while waiting for more parts and for jobs that have come to a halt due to the world closing, the never-ending search of jobs to do continues with the piston. In good order, I had the barrel honed out to match it, so spent a little time dressing the piston ▶

“As a note, the Norton manuals do not recommend cleaning the old carbon out of the piston ring gaps if you're using the original rings”



lands and cleaning the piston ring gap of carbon. For this I use my trusty dental picks – which have so many uses I’m amazed you can’t buy them from tool shops. I also popped the rings down the barrel to check the ring clearance, which should be .008- .010in for compression rings (the top two rings) and the oil ring (bottom, thicker ring). As a note, the Norton manuals do not recommend cleaning the old carbon out of the piston ring gaps if you’re using the original rings.

The gudgeon pin fits beautifully to the little end of the con rod, but will need pressing into the piston, with the ‘one in freezer, other heated up’ method I guess, too. We are starting to get there.

SORT YOUR HEAD OUT

I really thought this month would progress more, now the lockdown was less restrictive and I had ordered a few parts. Matt at BDK heated up the cylinder head to be able to remove the valve guides, which were worn. They use a very serious piece of kit, a single hot plate – which is also to be seen to cook lunch sometimes! Still, it works perfectly and Matt used the method of using spit to see if it sizzles at the edge to determine the best heat. Charles then held it (with welding gloves) while Matt used a special drift to pop out the guides. And a bit of Coke can...

Judging by the marks in the combustion chamber, a valve had lost its head at some point, probably leading to new guides being fitted. However, if you don’t get the heat hot enough, removing old guides can also have you removing some alloy from the head. A typical ‘old boy’ fix is to sleeve the new (now undersize) guides with a drinks can or similar. Therefore, my new guides flapped around in the holes, and were pronounced useless. I’ve ordered some oversize, for which we’ll have to ream out the hole for.



Heating the head to remove the valve guides



Trying to get the crank dressed to fit the new bearing



A lot more freeplay now!



Fantastic welding by Super Steve!

While there, I also sorted the mounting face on the mill. This was from when superwelder, Steve, had repaired the broken fins. Because the barrel has a lip which corresponds to a recess in the head, I had to be careful, taking small skims until I was happy. At least that went well!

In magazine world, project bikes were always about how to do guides and amazing bikes at the end. I'm struggling, to be honest. Machining and specialist jobs mean relying on others, which means money, which is hard to come by, or favours, which leaves me feeling guilty. Working on older engines means most jobs for me are new, so it's a learning curve, too. And just trying to keep the momentum seems difficult at times. It may not be a typical magazine build, but it is real; so if you feel like a project of yours is hard sometimes, I know how you feel.

But there is a glimmer of light in the distance. I sold yet another bike recently, so there is a few quid available; but then I haven't touched the gearbox yet and if it was from the same bike as the engine, heaven only knows what condition that'll be in! We'll see very soon.

Next Month: The plan is sort the tank and get the engine together and in the frame. We can but hope! **CBG**



I'm smiling because it's still not going anywhere...

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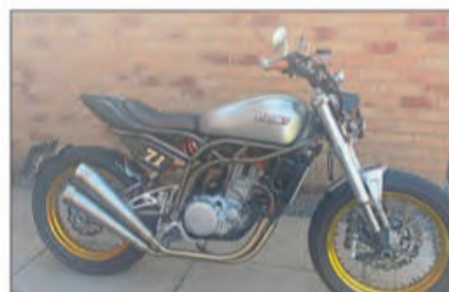
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Miscellaneous

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

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VESPA HELMET label reads new Maxmode Demijet TOBS6685, 1985, size 55 made in Italy, manufactured 07/2000 complete with Vespa badge, £65 p&p £7 UK only. Tel. 07756 567248. Dorset.

YAMAHA three sales brochures for RD125, RS125, RS100 with Eddy Grimstead, plastic wallet for above. Tel. 01582 601467. Beds.

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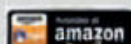
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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

It's all about knowing when to stop. Or indeed to start...

"I decided that there was no point in even pretending that I was going to restore the cosmetics. To do that would cost more than the bike's ever been worth and to be quite honest I like the tired looks of the old ruin.."

THERE COMES A POINT IN A BIKE'S LIFE ON THE road, or indeed off the road and parked in a shed, when stark choices face its presumably proud owner. This point – in my life at least – is never planned for. It simply arrives. It's like hearing with weary resignation the familiar misfiring exhaust beat of your least favourite biker bore chugging up outside your house, leaving you with no room to run away ... or even to hide convincingly. Self-isolation is not a new thing around these parts.

You must be familiar with this pivotal point. There you are, surveying the rusty, leaky relic of what was once a gleaming lean machine, envy of both of your friends and a scourge of the highway. 'Time for a ride', you whisper to yourself, *sotto voce*, unconvincingly. Of course it won't start. And if it does fire up a bit you remind yourself that it's a good job it's a twin, because at least one of the cylinders is still working. Some of the time.

And speaking of time, this is plainly time for a bit of a rebuild. Why this usually happens at the start of summer I have no idea. But it does. The roads are clear, the skies begin to shine, the bike falls apart. It was ever thus. The point to start twirling the spanners and reinforcing the optimism arrives at the same point as the time to start riding the priceless classic relic rather than the dull 100bhp modern rubbish. But before bounding into action like a week-old gazelle, you need a plan. Without a plan there will be chaos, which is okay, and expense, which is not, at least domestically. Sometimes. Ahem.

I decided that there was no point in even pretending that I was going to restore the cosmetics. To do that would cost more than the bike's ever been worth and to be quite honest I like the tired looks of the old ruin. To you or to anyone else it may look like an embarrassing reminder of how even the greatest of sporting machines can suffer from uncaring neglect at the hands of a philistine, but to me it's just hard-earned patina. Rust may be rust, but this is my rust. I don't care what you think.

And the power train works very well. It should; I've never opened it up. All I do is change the oil and filters and plugs. That would be the misnamed spark plugs, because they do not spark. Even changing them fails to produce a spark. I know when I'm beat.

The Lucas K2F magneto returns from a trip

across the country (without the bike attached, which may be a first for this machine) and the spark plugs now spark. Encouraging. I'll just tidy up the... hang on, what about The Plan? Make it run, ride it. That was it. No mention there of whipping out the swinging arm to replace the bushes and pin – although I did want to fit another rear mudguard for no sensible reason, and if the wheel's out anyway, it's not a terrible job to do the bearings. Stop! I shout at myself. Shut up! I reply, because replacing the bushes is hardly a cosmetic job, now is it?

I talk to myself a lot while flinging spanners in the shed I like to call The Shed. It's just as well that there's rarely anyone else there, and the cats are immune to the foulest of language. But no. The swinging arm can wait until I refinish the frame. Because what I do not need is mission creep. Replacing the incorrect mudguard with another incorrect mudguard is part of A Project, which is longer than A Plan. It may be dynamically meaningless, but I want to do it. Replacing the frame's finish can wait until the fork gaiters split. Again. Because replacing those (again) involves dropping out the forks and at that point it might be worthwhile stripping out all the hideously corroded engine plates and fasteners, and while I'm at it, the seat is the wrong one and the front brake still doesn't really work despite being a sturdy 2ls effort intended for a Commando – a machine of even more performance than my Matchless, hard though it may be to imagine such a thing.

And I know – suspect – why the brake doesn't work but I am not taking the front wheel out again... At this point I was actually shouting at myself, which some consider to be a sign of sanity.

It runs. Actually it runs well. The engine may smoke like a destroyer trying to dodge the Stukas, and it may clatter like an army of navvies hammering their way through a big slab of granite, but it runs. Okay, so it still pours out its oil, but...

The time has come to ride it. I like the way it looks, sounds and goes. This is the point at which to call a halt to the fiddling, and head out to the freshly unlocked-down coastal roads. To pause, take a photo, and wonder whether the AA still answer calls in these unusual days. Not that I'd need them, no. Of course not, what would be the point of that? **CBC**

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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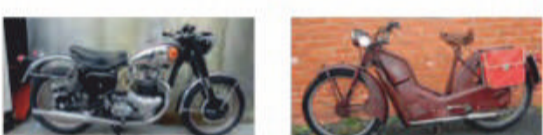
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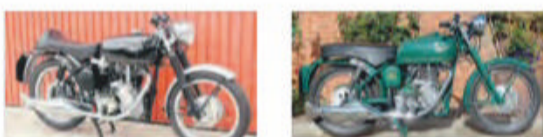
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