

British  **bike guide** **Part 4**
Royal Enfield,
Sunbeam and Triumph



**Yamaha XS1,
XS2 and TX**
Japan's take on the
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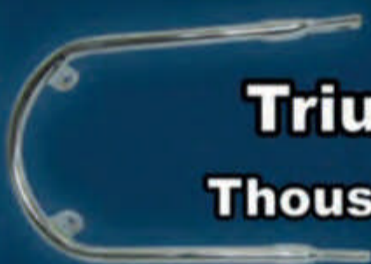
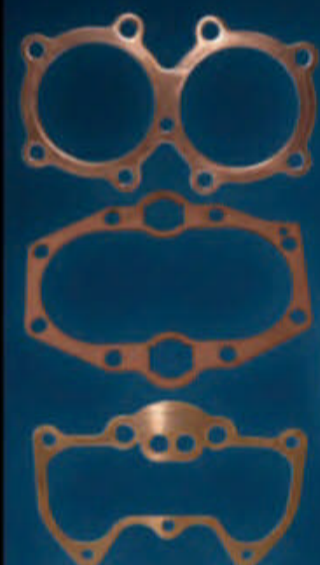


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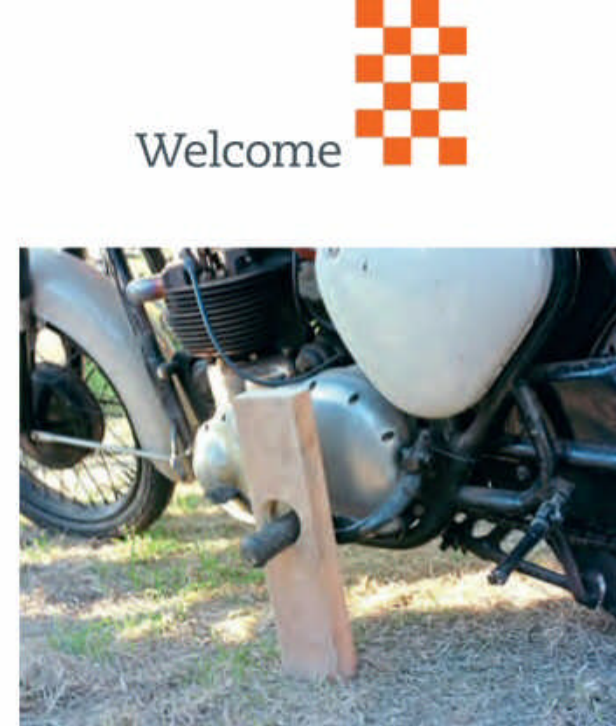
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Welcome



Welcome back - with care!

GREETINGS, ONE AND ALL, AND I HOPE you're well. With the wide Norfolk skies bringing us some wonderful weather, and some of the old bike gatherings starting up again, we've been soaking up the rays while enjoying the sight of some gorgeous bikes.

We are most lucky to have two fantastic meets, one at Old Buckenham, South Norfolk, on a Tuesday and one at the Whitwell and Reepham railway, North Norfolk, on a Friday. Each has their own feeling and catchment and both are within 20 miles of *Classic Bike Guide* HQ!

It's been great to see old friends, lovely to see what folk have been up to while tucked up at home and catch a drink under the summer skies, with a pootle on an old machine. The vast majority of people are being very respectful of what

the world is going through, with distances and a lack of hand-shaking; it's just a shame the age-old issue of a few numpties hell-bent on upsetting the locals with incredible talents of accelerating as fast as possible as they leave are still here. Who'll be moaning when it gets closed down?

This month I'm still using the 'Pig' (the BMW R100RT) for everyday riding, which though I mock, always has a few admirers at the bike meets... It's still running well though, and handles the local roads a treat. A service is due now the tank has been sealed (see page 74), and then changes are underway. The B31 is back out, too, running sweetly.

Got some great bikes for you this month, so hope you enjoy it. I must admit, I'd never really looked much at the early four-stroke Yamahas, so check them out

on page 33. And do contact me if you have a story or bike you think may be interesting or helpful to others; we'd all love to see it!

Classic Bike Guide is a magazine for those of us that love old bikes. If it doesn't do what you want it to, then we're doing something wrong. With the world changing, let's use this as an excuse to see what people would like to read. Send us your thoughts and email me at editor@classicbikeguide.com

Hope the weather lasts, have fun and be good

Matt Hull

editor@classicbikeguide.com



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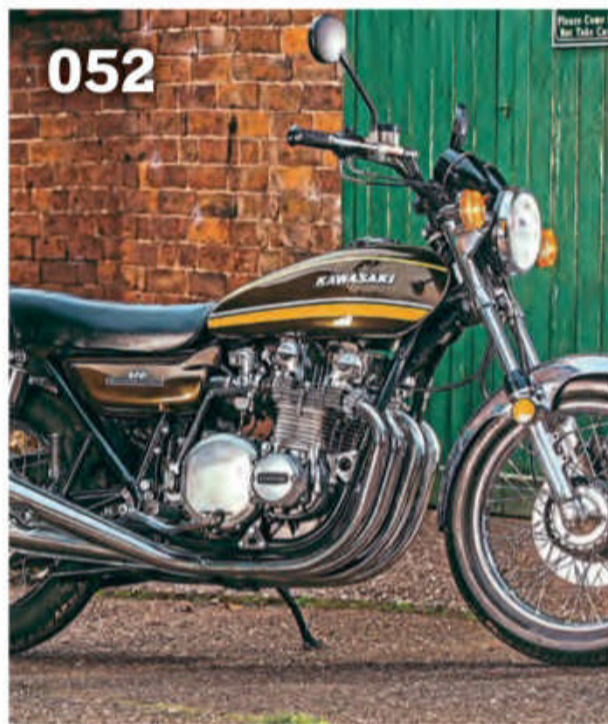
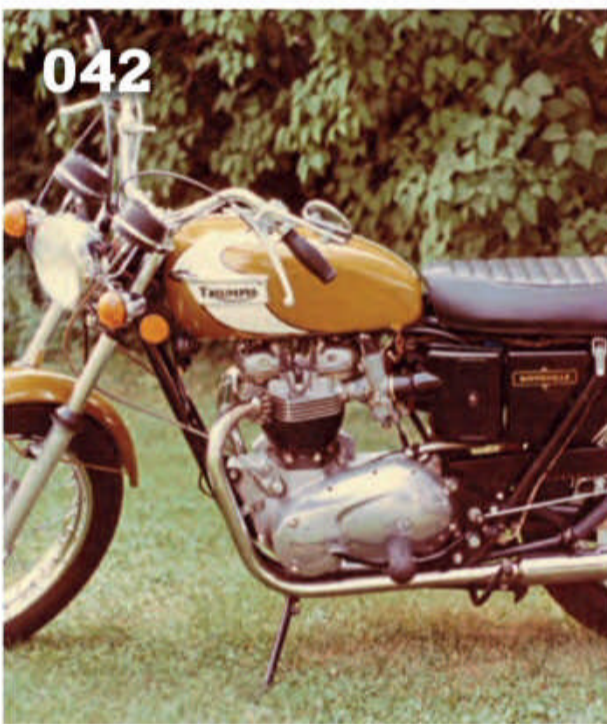
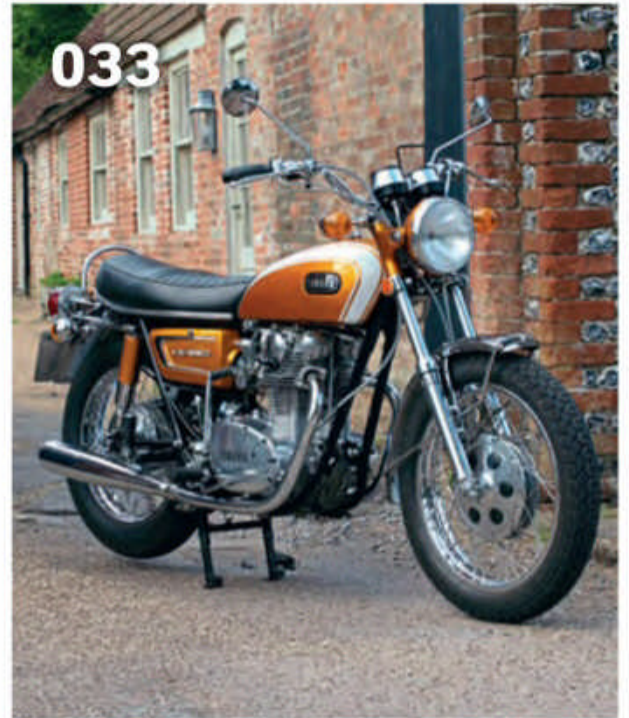
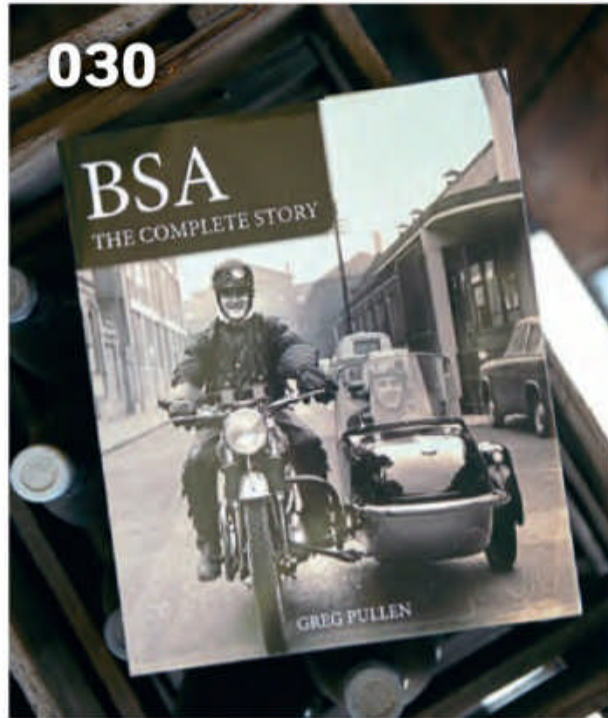
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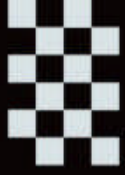
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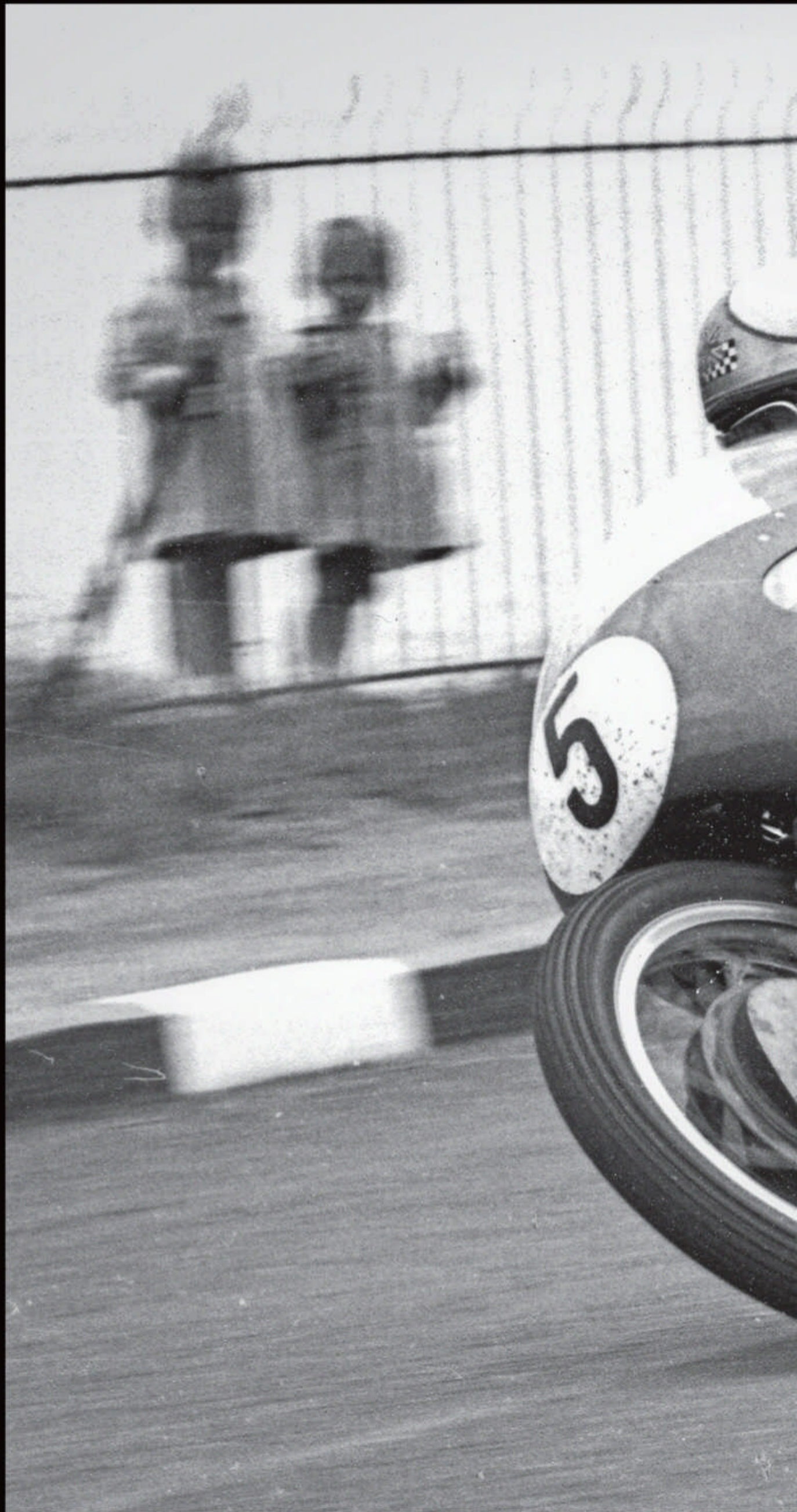


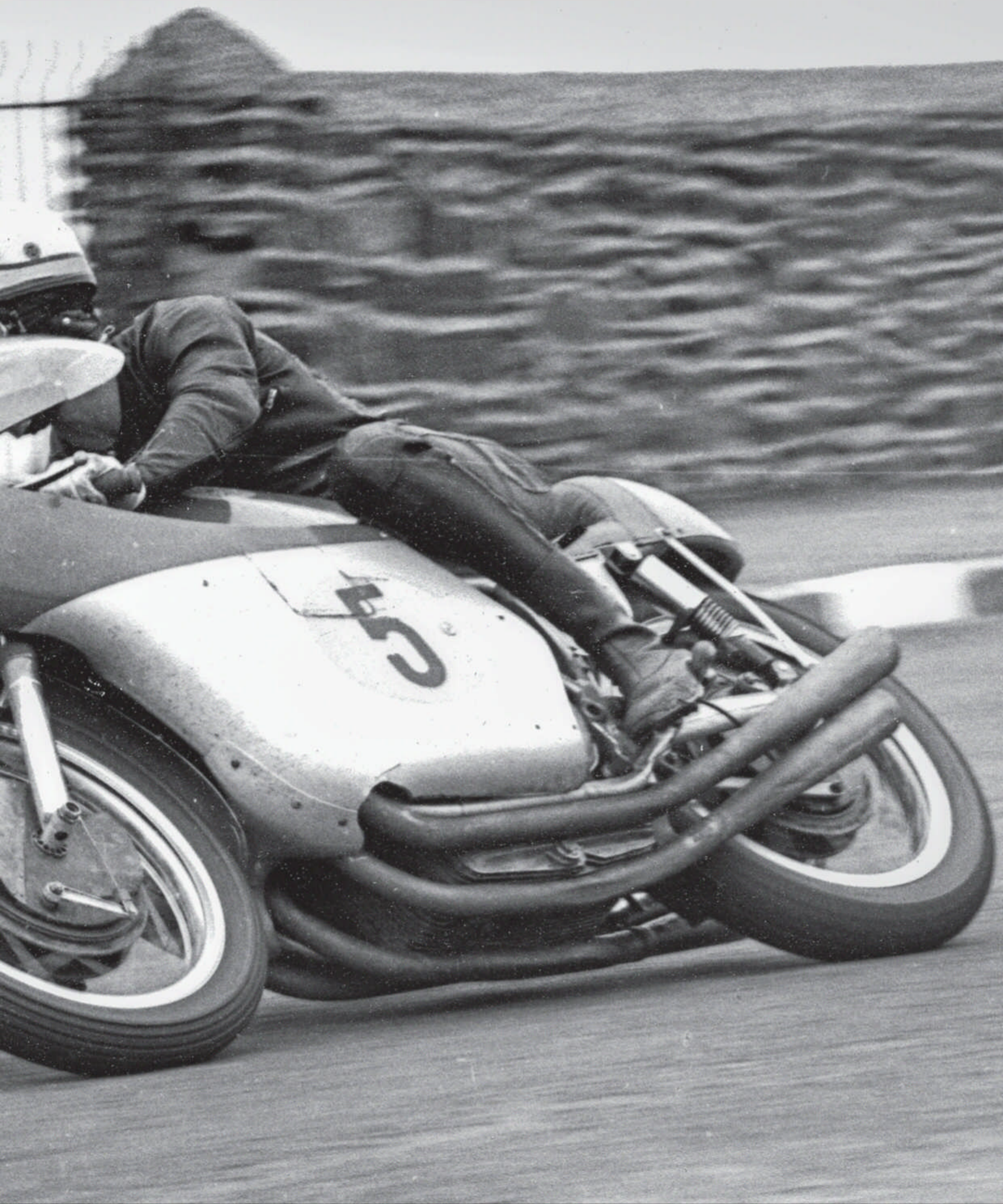
■ MV memories

As the two young girls watch Mike Hailwood round Signpost Corner, what are they thinking? It's 1963, the Senior, but does any of this matter to them? Maybe they're glad it's the final race of the week and it won't be so noisy!

The MV Agusta story is one of polar ups and downs. At the time this photo was taken in 1963, it was enjoying an up. Hailwood was current world champion, the Norton singles were no match and Mike would win this race by more than one minute from John Hartle on the aging, but still competitive Gilera 500s, with Phil Read more than four-and-a-half seconds behind John. Mike and MV would become World Champions again that year.

The four cylinder MV Agusta 500 was designed by the ex-Gilera designer, Piero Remor, alongside Arturo Magni, and remained competitive from 1950 until 1966, when the 500cc triple (based on the 350cc triple) took over. At first, the bike had shaft drive and girder forks, but over the years, morphed with the latest technology to be totally dominant. The engine also went to produce in the region of 75-80bhp by the end - from a 500cc designed in the late 40s. **CBG**





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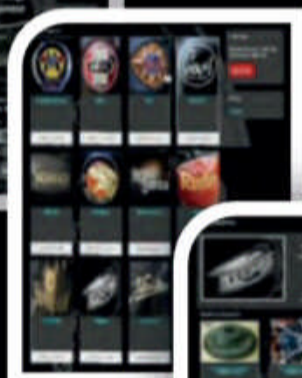
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1956 MV AGUSTA RAID 'MILITARE' 250

Defence of the realm: **MV**
MILITARY
MYSTERY

MV Agusta's Raid 250 was a practical, quick and well-built motorcycle for its time, and it also did its own national service

WORDS: ADAM BOLTON

PHOTOGRAPHY: SARA ZINELLI



IT'S THE EXOTIC FOURS THAT CAME OUT OF THE MV Agusta factory at Cascina Costa di Verghera that grab the attention. And fair enough too, seeing as human legends of motorcycle racing rode bikes just as legendary, creating a mythical and revered history around a factory that sadly bit the dry Italian dust in 1977. The fact is the motorcycling side of the industrial giant that was Agusta had to be sacrificed to balance the books. MV's motorcycle racing and production were embodied heart and soul by Count Domenico Agusta who had passed on in 1971, and none of the remaining Agusta family members that remained had either the passion, tenacity or know-how to want to carry on motorcycle production, or the racing, once it became clear they didn't even bring in a profit.

How different things were just 25 years earlier. MV's racing success was based on the economic prosperity and sales success of the 1950s that MV Agusta enjoyed. Their range of two-stroke and four-stroke machines, including models such as the Pullman 125, The Turismo Rapido 125, the 'Disco Volante' and the Sport CS 175, was a success with the public. Motorcycle sales in general were booming, and everything seemed rosy. It was to this background that the MV Raid 250cc model was first presented to the press and public at the April 1956 Milan Trade Fair. In a sector still dominated by smaller and sporty 175cc machines, it was a bold move for MV to introduce a model better suited for touring and longer excursions. A robust, single cylinder pushrod machine, the Raid was originally called simply 'Gran Turismo', but no doubt because the denomination GT was pretty generic, MV dealers were questioned and quizzed into suggesting a name suitable for the new model. 'Raid' was chosen – from the English word, but meaning in Italian a fast excursion or adventurous road trip by motor car or bike.

The Raid proved to be a reliable, efficient and strong bike, and it attracted the attention of the Italian Armed Forces. Everyone loves to wear a uniform in Italy, so it's best to realise that the phrase 'armed forces' can also encompass weathermen, postmen, forestry workers or the taxman. But this is where facts, fading memories and rumour about MV





military motorcycles begin to dissolve one into the other, like a great Italian mystery full of contradiction and argument, much like Italian society itself. I should know, I lived there for several years, and it was while I was there that I came across this military 250cc Raid. It had been sitting for many years in one of the many storage garages belonging to the proprietor of the local Fiat garage, Franco. He'd been passionate about bikes since he was young, and over the past 30 years had amassed a huge collection of bikes and scooters. Many had been left with him in part payment for work carried out on cars, or just given for free when the owner lost interest. MVs, Gileras, Benellis, bikes of all types, mainly smaller stuff, but impressive nonetheless. I used to pester him to let me go and have a look. "Don't ask me to sell anything though," he used to say. Typical canny Italian. The MV caught my eye, partly because it had an MV badge on it, and then mainly because it was painted in military drab green. Then, it was a Raid 250, already a fairly rare model of MV to encounter even in civilian trim. It was also in untouched condition. The tank had possibly been retouched at some point as the green didn't quite match the faded green on the frame, but apart from that, it was as it had been back in the late 1950s. The motor kicked over freely, and it probably needed little work to get it running.

"I bought that at a show years and years ago," said Franco, "I can't even remember when. It had spent its service life at a military airfield in the north of Italy, and then was sold off when it became obsolete. I knew it was a rare bike and in good condition, so I bought it. I've got the number plate for it, but no documents." Oh, those fateful words, so laden to those that know with gloom and difficulty, when referred to a motorcycle in Italy: no documents...


Roll on a couple of years, and my father-in-law Alfonso Zinelli was tiring of his modern, efficient, but ultimately bland Kawasaki VN800. He saw my passion for older bikes, and wanted something for himself. He's no stranger to biking, and we've got faded black and white photos of him coolly posed as a young 20 something on his Morini 175 back in the very early 1960s. "I wish I still had it," he'd moan. "Go and talk to Franco," I'd say, "he must have something." So Alfonso went to see Franco. Friends for 30 years, a deal could be struck between old mates (not with a young upstart like myself...). And it was. Amazingly, Franco, in exchange for Alfonso's admittedly pristine and obsessively maintained VN800, was ready to liberate himself of some old bikes. A 1966 Gilera 300 Extra twin, an Aermacchi Harley Davidson 350

single, and the MV Raid; all with some kind of provenance (i.e., a plate or documents or both), and to be put into running condition by Franco before exchange. At the time it was hard to see who had got the better deal.

The Raid was recommissioned after years of slumber – oil changed, valve clearances checked, timing checked, fuel tank cleaned out (and an inline fuel filter added just in case), plug changed, cables and chain checked, adjusted and lubricated, and carburettor thoroughly cleaned out. It started first kick, and ticked over like a Swiss watch. More like a Guzzi single than an MV.

Alfonso declared himself happy with the bike. Franco had given him the number plate that had come with the bike, and so Alfonso could now begin the long process


motocicli **MV** 250cc. a 4 tempi · 4 marce · modelli 1959



MV 250 cc. RAID EXTRA

CARATTERISTICHE

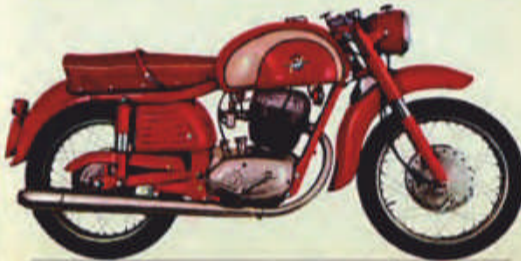
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MV 250 cc. RAID

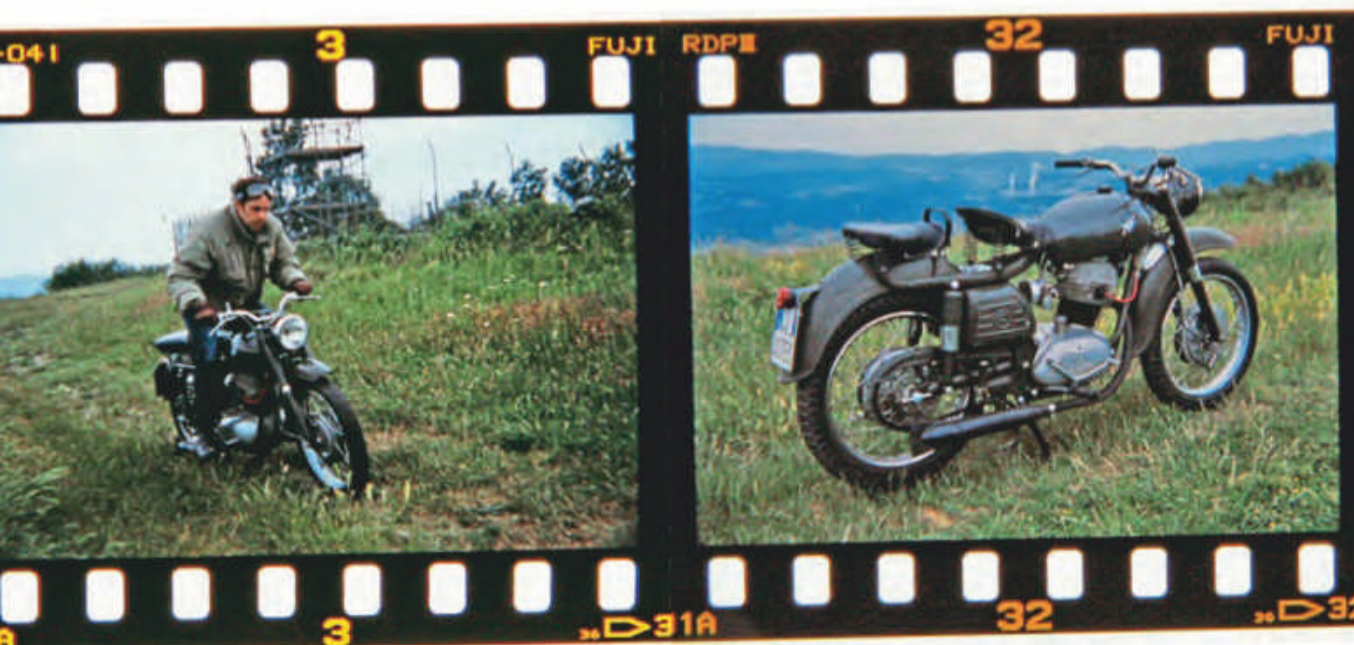
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CATERE REGINA EXTRA MOBILIOIL - MOBILDAR

The Raid proved to be a reliable, efficient and strong bike, and it attracted the attention of the Italian Armed Forces. Everyone loves to wear a uniform in Italy, so it's best to realise that the phrase 'Armed Forces' can also encompass weathermen, postmen, forestry workers or the taxman





of re-registering the bike to get it back on the road legally. No documents, remember? Now to explain the vagaries, complexities and impossibilities of the Italian vehicle registration system would need another tome of words in itself, but it was, and is, based on a number plate, not a frame number, to permanently identify a vehicle. Not sensible, when you consider that a number plate can be removed in 30 seconds, and a stamped frame number needs a whole different approach to remove or cancel. Problem for lovers of old bikes, and cars for that matter in Italy nowadays, is that many Italians in the past not keen to pay road tax, or possession tax, or a tax to scrap the bike, simply removed the number plate, tore up the documents and threw the vehicle into a bush. In fact, during the 70s and 80s, so bad was the non-payment of road tax due to it being exorbitantly high on bikes over 400cc, that the Italian equivalent of DVLC, called PRA, literally cancelled thousands and thousands of bikes from the system.

Recently things have changed for the better, but the system is still a bureaucratic nightmare to negotiate, as Alfonso was to discover. He went with the plate given to him with the MV to an office of PRA to carry out what's called a 'visura', literally a vision, or a look. PRA will sift through their now (but not all) computerised records and produce a printout of any history that belongs to the number plate supplied. The 'visura' for the MV came back as a Vespa 125... in other words, the number plate wasn't from the MV. Back to square one as it was impossible at that time to re-register a bike with no documents or correct number plate. To all intents and purposes the bike becomes scrap, only good for spares, but don't think about restoring it or getting it back on the road. Ridiculous and tragic; but fact. The amount of bikes I came across that were pointless buying or restoring because they lacked documents or a plate. And we think that in the UK and USA we have difficult bureaucracy!! I

challenge anyone to taste the frustrations of being a classic bike lover in Italy; it is certainly not easy.

The MV Raid became forgotten in the garage, all forlornly dressed up for action, but nowhere to go. What a waste, we both thought. Similar complexities also threatened the future of the other bikes Alfonso had acquired, so in the meantime he bought a Morini 250 Settebello GT to fettle, with regular documents, so at least it could be ridden and enjoyed.

After many long months, the Raid was finally and legally back on the road. There was still confusion over when the bike was made and who for. Every person or organisation either Alfonso or myself spoke to gave a different reply or theory. The classic bike expert from the Italian Motorcycling Federation adjudged the bike to have been made in 1956, and was destined for service in one of the branches of the armed forces. In fact, the logbook now notes 1956 as year of manufacture. The association of ex-MV Agusta ▶



workers, when asked for information, decreed that the bike was indeed a 250 Raid. They said that a certain number of examples, and they didn't know how many, were, in fact, built for the 'Guardia di Finanza', (like the Inland Revenue with guns), with a few modifications from the civil model. They also said that MV had never built bikes specifically for the Army, but had entered a tender in 1957 to supply bikes of a certain design to the Italian Army. Five examples were built, but Bianchi of Milan won the tender to supply the bikes. An Italian bike magazine feature claims only the 300cc version of the Raid introduced in 1959/1960 or 1961 (depending on who you read) was supplied to the Army! The famous, and virtually unique book on MV's output by Colombo also talks of military MVs being deployed, but say it was a 300cc, not a 250cc. Like many MVs produced, it seems the actual truth may never be known.

It's clear inspecting the bike that it's not a motorcycle for front-line use: no gun racks, or a snorkel on the silencer to allow for immersion in water, but the Raid lends itself to being used for all purpose of tasks. It's got a strong, robust look to it. Huge 220 drum brakes inspire stopping confidence just looking at them, and on the move they're well set up and efficient. The frame that uses the motor as a stressed member boasts beefy telescopic forks and rear shocks. On this the military version, the rear sub

frame is elongated and has brackets to accommodate the separate sprung saddles – the civil version has a long dual seat. Why the two saddles, also seen on other military bikes like Guzzi's Super Alce and the Gilera Marte? Apparently so that the officer riding behind didn't have to demean himself by holding on to the Private driving... I tried the pillion seat on the move, and it is, in fact, well sprung and comfortable, helped by the strong grab strap supplied. This bike also has a very handy and long side stand on the left-hand side, another feature the civil version lacks. Useful for a rapid abandonment of the bike when chasing impostors or tax evaders. A switch under the headlamp allows the battery to be isolated once the bike is up and running and powering itself with its flywheel magneto. Short and practical matt black Lafranconi fishtail silencer stamped 'emmevi' would be cheap to produce compared to the long chrome cigar-shaped silencers on the civil versions, but does its job sufficiently. Useful lockable toolboxes contain the battery and the regulator, and their design reflects the substantial finning of the rocker cover, cylinder head and barrel, and the finning even extends to the elegant alloy cover that gives access to the points on the left-hand engine cover. The decorative fuel cap also shows the Raid was designed, and not just built, although the civilian model was adorned with a beautiful chrome type. Super Pratica throttle body, choke and control levers are elegant and comfortable in operation. ▶





Mamma mia, what a palaver!! Beaurocracy, like only the Italians can...

This is what Alfonso had to go through to get his MV Raid 250 back on the road in Italy. Let's consider ourselves lucky over here.....

At one point, it looked as though the MV that Alfonso had bought would have to stay in the garage forever. Then by chance one day, I read in the Italian version of 'The Classic Motorcycle' about a new arrangement between the Italian Motorcycle Federation and the transport ministry that offered a glimmer of hope for the MV. Basically, bikes in a completely original condition, restored or not, but lacking documentation or a plate, could be re-registered for use on the road, subject to various conditions. I downloaded the forms required from the FMI website and rushed to tell Alfonso, who set to work.

- The owner has to be a paid-up member of a motorcycle club. He was already the member of an FMI affiliated owners club, so that was ok.
- A €52 (£36) cheque made out to the FMI.
- Lots of photos of the bike in all its detail.
- Then after a few days, the FMI classic bike expert for Tuscany contacted Alfonso to arrange inspection of the bike. This took place, and the expert took away all the forms, pictures and cheque and explained that he would send these, along with his inspection report of the bike, to the FMI Classic Bike Commission that met periodically and considered these cases.

Some weeks later, Alfonso called the FMI to be told that his bike had been accepted, all the paperwork received, and he would soon receive the certificate for the MV's addition to the FMI Historic Bike Register and a certificate that authenticated all the technical data about the bike. In fact, these certificates arrived a short time later.

- Next stage, the registering of the bike. Alfonso has to prove he is now owner of the bike, as it has no documents. He writes a letter of declaration to the local Police stating that he was in fact now the owner of the bike, he had bought it from Franco, and he had bought it years ago at a bike show.
- After making checks (the frame number maybe?), the Police reply with a letter confirming Alfonso's ownership. -Then, a letter from a qualified mechanic or workshop is required, stating the bike has been recommissioned to original condition. Franco supplied this letter.
- Another request from Alfonso, requesting that the bike be registered, is also required. Then another form describing the technical aspects from the 'Motorizzazione', or the local vehicle licensing office, has to be filled in. Another 50-odd euro have to be paid out for government and road taxes, and number plate costs.
- With all of the above present and paid for, Alfonso makes an 80-mile round trip to queue at the licensing office at Pisa, where he is given a date for the inspection of the bike.
- A couple of weeks later, Alfonso returns to the same office with the MV on a trailer for the inspection. Lights, brakes and tyres are inspected, and two mirrors must be fitted. If this inspection goes ok, it's another hour of queuing, but finally the much-desired number plate and temporary logbook are handed over.
- The temporary logbook allows 60 days of circulation with the bike.
- Within two months the permanent logbook will be ready, meaning another trip to Pisa to collect it.

With insurance paid however, the MV can finally once again be used on Italian roads.

They said that a certain number of examples, and they didn't know how many, were in fact built for the 'Guardia di Finanza' (like the Inland Revenue with guns)

**TECH SPEC -
MV AGUSTA RAID 250**

PRODUCED 1956-1962

4 STROKE SINGLE CYLINDER OHV

BORE/STROKE: 69x66mm

COMPRESSION RATIO: 7.2:1

POWER: 16bhp at 5600rpm

TIMING: Pushrod

IGNITION: Battery coil and points mounted on end of camshaft

CARBURETTOR: Dell'Orto MB22B

LUBRIFICATION: Wet sump

CLUTCH: Wet multiplate

GEARBOX: 4 speeds, change by heel/toe pedal

TRANSMISSION: Geared primary, final chain drive

FRAME: Open tubular duplex cradle

SUSPENSION: Front telescopic, rear swinging arm and rear hydraulic shocks

WHEELS: 2.75x19, chromed steel rims

TYRES: 3.00-19" front/3.25-19" rear

BRAKES: Drum, 220mm front and rear

DRY WEIGHT: 145kg

FUEL CAPACITY: 17 litres

WHEELBASE: 1340mm

TOP SPEED: 115kmh

Riding the bike is a doddle, and needed to be if green and inexperienced military conscripts had to use it. Ignition on, using the distinctive Aprilia ignition key in the headlamp, a couple of tickles of the Dell'Orto MB 22B carb, half choke on the handlebar, and a firm kick gets the engine running. The clutch is light, and the gears of the four-speed box engage easily with the heel and toe lever. When warm, neutral is sometimes hard to find, so the cable needs slight adjustment, but hey, it's Italian. On the Tarmac, the ride is excellent, and not stiff like many Italian bikes. The motor is torquey and tractable, and it's an enjoyable bike to be on. Comfy seat, well positioned bars and footrests. A nice upright position. It feels really planted, solid and stable, as if the lowish centre of gravity really makes a difference, and the noise from the silencer is certainly very fruity – after all, MVs are meant to sound like a real motorcycle, and this one certainly does, and only encourages me to give it more gas. Even the Veglia speedo appears to be reasonably accurate. Almost 8,000km are showing on the clock, and this is undoubtedly a genuine reading. This Raid is made more impressive for me in the fact that it really had sat around for so many years, and by the looks of things, has never been opened or apart.



When we reach our location, an old lookout tower and radio mast, I ride the MV all the way up to the tower on a mile or so of rocky dirt road and grass, and then circle the fence surrounding the installation. Tyres are just normal road tyres, the old-fashioned ridged front and sculpted rear (bought recently by Alfonso to replace the possibly original tyres that were on the bike), and I have to stand on the pegs at times to help balance things. The front forks in particular seem to have a fair amount of travel and they really soak up the bumps efficiently. It'd be interesting to fit a set of knobbles to this bike and see how it goes for real, but I guess the huge valanced mudguards would need to be raised even higher than they are together to allow mud and obstructions to clear them. I can see that back in 1956 the Raid would have been perfect as an all-rounder for the armed forces, whether barrelling along roads as part of a convoy, or checking perimeter fences at airports, aerodromes and military installations, AND making off reasonable road excursions when required.

Alfonso is very happy with his bike, and not surprisingly when you consider the hassles he's had to get it back on the road. It creates a lot of interest when seen at local classic bike shows, as people are surprised to see an MV Agusta that is not red! Alfonso now uses it as his everyday runaround, and for occasional longer trips around the stunning local countryside. When sat on the bike wearing his hunting clobber for the photos, he could well be a soldier from 50 years ago doing his watch. No, he doesn't use the bike when he goes out hunting wild boar (this is deepest Tuscany), and hadn't considered it either. Classic MV Agusta motorcycle roughs it through forest to catch dinner. Now that's a thought.... **CBC**



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LANGEN VEE IS A THRILLER

AN ALL-NEW, British-built lightweight two-stroke café racer is about to rip up the nation's streets and racetracks. The Langen, made in Wigan, will have a 249.5cc V-twin engine that produces an incredible 75bhp, which should propel this hand-built motorcycle to a top speed of 140mph. It weighs in at a featherweight 112kg. The 90° V-twin engine is an advanced fuel-and-oil injected unit developed by Vins Motors, a team of former Ferrari engineers who are based in Maranello, Italy.

The Langen was designed by Cristofer Ratcliffe, who for 10 years was the Chief Design Engineer at CCM Motorcycles, bringing to life motorcycles such as the ground-breaking GP450 lightweight adventure bike along with the CCM Spitfire range. Langen is Cristofer's nickname. The first, naked, version of the Langen was inspired by 60s café racers, with the intention being to remove pretty much

everything that doesn't make the bike go, stop or steer. With a delicious spine frame, clip-ons, twin Brembo discs at the front and another at the rear, traditional style Ohlins forks with gaiters and twin K-tech shock absorbers at the back, the Langen looks set to be a giant killer on the track and on the road. The design process focused on simplifying the motorcycle and greatly reducing weight using modern technology and materials along with components of the highest quality. Produced in limited runs, the Langen will be fully customisable with bespoke geometry and ergonomics for each individual owner. Even the petrol tank has been designed with lightness in mind, being made of carbon fibre with a

gold leaf inlay, to match the gold anodised componentry.

Cristofer has set up Langen to promote Great Britain as a leader in motorcycle development and manufacture. He says: "They are pure and raw. The intention is to build 100 UK specification bikes to order. If there's a demand, we'll then build 150 bikes for the international market."

By limiting the sales to the UK market at first, the Langen will avoid having to conform to complex type approval regulations surrounding the sale of bikes elsewhere in the world.

Early indications are that the motorcycles will cost just under £30,000, depending on the customer's required specification. Visit langenmotorcycles.co.uk



Interceptor is the best seller

ROYAL ENFIELD'S INTERCEPTOR 650 hit a significant target when it became the best-selling motorcycle in the UK in June. Royal Enfield is emerging as the fastest growing brand among the top 10 motorcycle manufacturers in the UK over the past five years. A series of attractive finance offers, aimed at reducing as many barriers to entry as possible, has helped boost sales. As well as transferring senior staff members from India, Royal Enfield have been recruiting other high-flyers from Suzuki, Kawasaki and Harley Davidson. There are seven new UK dealers in Oxfordshire, Central London, Essex, Dorset, North Wales, East Midlands and Cornwall. Buyers can now use a tool on Royal Enfield's website to configure their bike with accessories enabling a complete look to be built and priced prior to placing an order, while during lockdown the company ran a click and deliver service so that customers could purchase motorcycles online and have them safely delivered to their front door. Arun Gopal, Head of Europe for the brand said: "Royal Enfield's strapline is, British Roots, Indian Soul and as the longest continuous manufacturer of motorcycles in the world, we are a heritage brand whose birthplace in the UK has always been a source of celebration and inspiration."

ON SEPTEMBER 27 thousands of motorcyclists will don their most dapper riding gear to take part in the landmark 10th Distinguished Gentleman's Ride, but with a significant difference. Triumph and the Movember Foundation will join forces for this year's event.

On DGR day, thousands of gentfolk worldwide are invited to 'ride solo' to fundraise in support of the research against prostate cancer and for mental health support. Dubbed Ride Solo Together, the 2020 DGR will be for the first time a solo event, in which participants will embrace the spirit and mood of the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride by riding alone or with a passenger from the same household. This new format will enable riders to comply with



the different social distancing regulations in place in each country, while sharing their passion for motorcycles, and still contribute to the Movember cause and spread awareness through social media. The event has been attracting an increasing amount of riders year after year since 2012,

and in 2019, new fundraising and attendance records were set. \$6M was raised for the cause with more than 116,000 riders participating across 104 countries. Triumph is donating four brand new motorcycles from its Modern Classic range to be gifted to the three highest fundraisers

worldwide and to the winner of the Gentefolk Competition. If you want to put on your best tweed, dress dapper, wax your moustache, and take part in the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride this year, you can get more information or sign up by visiting the DGR website at gentlemansride.com



MUSEUM LIVE POSTPONED

ANOTHER MAJOR EVENT has succumbed to you know what. This year's National Motorcycle Museum LIVE event, which was due to take place at the end of October, has been cancelled. The museum bosses say that operating an event as popular as Museum LIVE simply isn't possible under Covid-19 related restrictions, and in particular, the issues caused by social distancing requirements.

Museum bosses have thanked everyone who has supported the event over the last six years and have assured bike fans that it will return even bigger and better in October 2021.

The museum currently remains closed following the launch of the Covid-19 Reopening Appeal. To support the museum and possibly ride away on a new old stock Norton Commando from the 1970s, a 1948 Ariel NG 350c or a 1959 BSA B31, visit nationalmotorcyclemuseum.co.uk

Let Ogri protect you

AS THE NATION is asked to don face coverings when out and about, motorcyclists are likely to find this less of a chore than most as the silk scarf, bandana or snood is a regular part of our wardrobe anyway. One of the better quality products comes from Buff, who have produced a new neck tube in homage to legendary biking icon and creation of artist Paul Sample, Ogri. The Classic Ogri Buff can, according to the manufacturer, be worn in 13 different ways, though to be fair over your mouth and nose is likely to be the most common arrangement these days. The Ogri Buff costs £16 and may or may not make admirers swoon with admiration. visit teamogri.bigcartel.com/product/classic-ogri-buff



MOTORCYCLE ICONS SHOWCASED AT SALON PRIVÉ

MOTORCYCLES PLAY A key role in the Salon Privé Concours d'Elégance and the event attracts owners and enthusiasts from around the world. This year will be no different and is set to include two classes for two-wheeled machinery. The Exceptional Motorcycles and Exceptional Competition Motorcycles categories will be a central part of the event when it returns to Blenheim Palace in September. Several historic motorcycles have already been confirmed for the prestigious concours, including a rare and valuable 1974 Ducati 750SS 'Green Frame'. One of only 401 produced, all of which were hand-built and overseen by technical boss Fabio Taglioni, this example was sourced from Spain by its current owner and returned to the UK for a full restoration.

Together with a 1976 750SS by Newton Engineering and 1975 900SS that have also been entered, it completes a full set of round and square-case Ducati v-twin motorcycles. It will be the first time three examples of this kind have been exhibited together in the UK. "The Motorcycle display will showcase the best that design and engineering have given us," said Anthony Godin, who, along with Mike Jackson, is part of the selection committee who will have the difficult task of judging. "Visitors will get to see the great café racers of the 1950s and 60s, to Choppers from the 1970s and wacky racers from the 1980s."

The experts from the International Chief Judge Advisory Group will perform their duties on a 'virtual'

basis on September 23, with all bikes being meticulously inspected and class awards decided upon. The class winners and runners-up are selected by the jury, while the top prize, Most Spectacular Motorbike, is chosen by the Duke of Marlborough.

The Salon Privé Concours d'Elégance takes place on Wednesday, September 23, and the full event runs until Saturday 26. Ticket buyers have been guaranteed a full refund should the event be cancelled, and should the Government impose maximum event guest numbers which sit above the bookings, money will be returned on a last-in, first-out basis. Visit salonpriveconcours.com

COLOURFUL HIMALAYANS

INTERESTED IN A Royal Enfield Himalayan, but disappointed with the colour schemes available? Watsonian have added a splash of colour to the Himalayan, with three special edition options. Best known as the UK's leading and longest established sidecar manufacturer, Watsonian are also a Royal Enfield main dealer and decided to experiment with different colour schemes on the popular adventure sport bike during lockdown. Based on brand new 400cc Royal Enfield Himalayans, the fuel tank, front and rear mudguard are all resprayed, with headlight grille and handguards added during reassembly. Customers can choose from postbox red, sky blue and mustard yellow, and other colours may be offered in future. "We

imported Royal Enfield into the UK from 1999-2013, prior to becoming a franchised dealer, so we know the bikes inside out," explains Watsonian MD Ben Matthews. "Painting the mudguards, as well as the tank, really makes these specials stand out from the crowd. And if you want a sidecar to match, we can help with that, too!" Available exclusively from Watsonian, special edition Himalayans sell for £4,895 on the road, which includes paintwork, headlight grille and hand guards, plus full manufacturer warranty. For more information call 01386 700907 or visit watsonian-squire.com



New

RETRO



DUCATI

SCRAMBLER 1100

BY ADAM 'CHAD' CHILD PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE DICK

The big Scrambler has had a few tweaks to keep it in shape. Chad finds out what it's like to ride.



FOR 2020, THERE ARE TWO NEW Scrambler 1100 models to choose from. First, you have the standard Scrambler 1100 PRO (£11,295) with wide bars, which you'd normally associate with the traditional Scrambler. Then, if you wish to spend a little more money, the £12,795 Scrambler 1100 Sport PRO uses the same air-cooled engine but fully adjustable, Öhlins forks and an Öhlins rear shock, with lower bars, more café racer-style bar end mirrors and in matt black.

Revised fuelling for 2020 to make both models Euro-5 compliant hasn't meant any loss of refinement. If you haven't ridden a Ducati twin for a few years, that infamous snatchy fuelling is all but a distant memory. From small throttle openings, it is smooth and precise, with usable torque from low down in the rev range and a willingness to pull away from slow speeds in a tall gear, a doddle around town. The handsome air-cooled 2v per cylinder engine can trace its routes back through the Ducati family, and a remarkably similar motor was used in the Monster back in 2011 when, without tight

emission laws, it produced a quoted 100bhp. Some, of course, will only look at the peak power and feel a little short-changed, but that figure only tells a part of the story. The Italian-made engine is one of the most attractive motors you can buy while the new, double-stacked exhaust is a huge visual improvement over the old model and looks classy. Thankfully, it sounds as good as it looks and has a nice little burble at tick-over and a charismatic chorus on the throttle. It's not as soulful as older generation air-cooled Ducatis, but taking into account the regulations Ducati has had to conform to, it's impressive. I, for one, am happy Ducati stayed with a soulful air-cooled motor. This is usable, unimposing performance, yet still enough to have fun with. When I first rode the original 803 Scrambler back in 2015, I loved its style, image and handling, but as an experienced rider was left a little deflated by a shortage of power. I wanted another 20-30bhp, just a little extra grunt to chase the odd bike down a country lane, and Ducati answered my wishes with the 1100. Just keep short-shifting through the smooth gearbox while enjoying successive dollops



DUCATI SCRAMBLER 1100

NEW PRICE £11,295/ £12,795

CAPACITY: 1079cc

BORE X STROKE: 98 x 71mm

ENGINE LAYOUT: L-twin

ENGINE DETAILS: Air-cooled, desmodromic, 4v

POWER: 86hp @ 7,500rpm

TORQUE: 65lb-ft @ 4750rpm

TOP SPEED: 130mph (est)

TRANSMISSION: Six-speed

AVERAGE FUEL

CONSUMPTION: 45-55mpg

TANK SIZE: 15 litres

MAX RANGE TO EMPTY

(THEORETICAL): 165 miles

RIDER AIDS: Cornering

ABS, traction control,

three rider modes

FRONT SUSPENSION:

Marzocchi 45mm inverted/

Öhlins 48mm inverted

FRONT SUSPENSION:

Fully adjustable

REAR SUSPENSION:

Kayaba monoshock/

Öhlins monoshock

REAR SUSPENSION:

Pre-load and rebound

FRONT TYRE: 120/80

ZR18 Pirelli MT60RS

REAR TYRE: 180/55

ZR17 Pirelli MT60RS

RAKE/TRAIL: 24.5°/111mm

WHEELBASE: 1514mm

SEAT HEIGHT: 810mm

DRY WEIGHT: 189kg

WARRANTY: Unlimited

miles/2 years

MAINTENANCE:

7500 miles/12 months

WEBSITE:

www.ducati.com/gb

of grunt. If you find yourself revving the Scrambler PRO above 7500rpm and towards the soft rev limiter then, sorry, you've purchased the wrong bike. Ride the torque, however, and it is more than quick enough, especially as it weighs just 189kg dry.

As you'd expect from a relatively low-revving air-cooled twin, fuel economy isn't bad, ranging from high 40s to low 50s. The sculpted 15-litre fuel tank gives a range of around 155-170miles, which isn't bad. The ergonomics are accommodating, more so on the standard PRO, with its relaxed riding position. On the sportier Öhlins-clad Sport version, the bars are lower and straighter, giving an aggressive stance, especially when compared to the standard PRO model with its traditionally wide Scrambler bars.

On the move you immediately feel the Scrambler's plus points: ease-of-use and natural ability, which is mainly down to its intuitive handling and that low weight. There isn't a getting-to-know-you period with the Scrambler, instead it's into the first series of corners with confidence. The suspension is controlled, but isn't too sporty-firm; in fact, the ride is comfortable and plush, which is

an achievement given there's no rear linkage on the suspension. You roll into bends, carry corner speed, feel the feedback through that quality suspension, and use the torque on the exit. The Pirelli MT60RS rubber might be styled like race wets, but the tyres handle and grip far better than they look, plus you have cornering ABS on the way in and lean-sensitive traction control on the way out. Mid-corner there is ample ground clearance; this Scrambler isn't afraid of lying on its side.

The Ducati safety pack comes as standard on both models (rider aids to me and you) and is identical on both machines. There's excellent cornering ABS and also lean-sensitive traction control, which can be deactivated at a standstill.

To make life simpler there are three rider modes – City, Journey and Active. City mode cuts 10bhp, offers a soft throttle map and increases the traction control. Journey and Active are both full power, but have different engine and throttle characteristics, and TC settings. It's relatively easy to change between the modes on the move – you don't have to be an IT expert to work it all out.

Non-intrusive ABS is always a bonus, but you could argue whether you really need changeable traction control or a rider mode that reduces the Scrambler's 86hp any further, especially on perfect summer days (like we had on test) when the grip seems endless. I'd imagine many Scramblers will find themselves in the fashionable cobbled city streets of Rome, Paris and Barcelona, and piloted by relatively inexperienced riders. It would certainly be embarrassing to high-side on wet and cold cobbles as you leave a fashionable restaurant.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, CHAD?

I was a fan of the old Ducati Scrambler 1100, and really like the air-cooled simple platform. I rated the old bike's simplicity, yet it was sophisticated, stylish, handled, and just had enough power to make you giggle. However, Ducati has now upped the game even further and I love the new styling. BMW and Triumph offer more power from their Scramblers, but for many this air-cooled Ducati will be the one. Now just decide on your chosen style, get out there and look good. **CBG**



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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

Investments?

Steve Cooper is concerned about a number of problems with old bikes as investments, but does, I feel, overlook a few points.

Firstly, old vehicles in general are not subject to Capital Gains Tax on sale. Sell an old picture or 'antique' collectable, and our government takes its slice. Ok, they are not bothered at most of the sums old bikes go for, but if a Vincent Black Shadow were a picture, its sale would have HMRC knocking at your door if you did not declare its sale in your tax return. But this is not the case for old cars or bikes. Sell a Ferrari 250GTO for a few million and it doesn't, apparently, worry the tax man. Hence its value as an investment, and which, partly, explains the explosion in this part of the market. At its worst, as I am told by a friend who supplies equipment for McLaren cars, and who tells me that the majority of

their output goes straight into a heated garage and never turn a wheel except to get the dealer stamps in the service logbook...

Secondly, bikes are just so easy to collect. Even as a penniless student in the early 70s, on a full grant, I salted away a few bikes, almost without effort. For instance, the M33 article reminded me of an M21 and sidecar I and a mate bought as a runner for £20, in 73, or a job lot of three Sunbeams in boxes – two S7s and an S8, for £60. All you need is a shed. And it is clear that many of the old bikes featured belong to blokes with sheds that have more than two or three bikes. Cars are much more of a problem, as you do not need to tell me. In my part of London, a secure lock-up garage is often worth considerably more than any car inside.

Thirdly, talking about the



STAR LETTER

early Seventies, in Bike magazine of that era, Ogri, irritated by a beautiful unused machine, 'borrowed' an 'investment' bike, I think it was a Triumph, from a neighbour's shed overnight and gave it a good thrashing, so the idea has clearly been around for a while.

For further example, I worked as a hired hand at the first classic car and bike sales at Alexandra Palace, run by Mike Carter of PennyWise Motoring, in 1973, where tasty machines

went for what then seemed silly prices.

And remember - you can only ever ride/drive one vehicle at a time!

Michael Powell

Matt: *You raise some essential points I feel many overlook, Michael. I still feel that bikes are for enjoying – for riding, for tinkering and for looking at; as an antidote to what you do for a living. Unless you work for a bike magazine...*

Engineering – you're always learning

I thoroughly enjoy following your exploits in CBG and often think what an ideal job you have. Good for you, I say.

Anyway, without wishing to be patronising or big-headed, I thought I might be able to impart some hard learnt tips on some general engineering topics.

Firstly, when assembling crankcases for end float measurement, I think a good practice is to actually bolt the cases together as if for final assembly. A pain to do up and undo, but it gives a much more consistent reading. This principle applies to many similar assemblies, be they motorcycle or not. (By the way, I like Opel Kadetts or any proper car where the rear wheels are driven.) I also think you are correct

in saying that heat used to push bearings in may have added to the problem of the clearance closing up. It must be allowed to dissipate to aid the best possible readings.

Hole tapping – I hope it was a typo when you quoted 5.5mm as the tapping size for M8. It should have been 6.8mm. Trying to tap out more material is not generally a good idea and will lead to broken taps and poor threads. As a general rule of thumb, if you can't remember all the metric tapping drill sizes, just subtract the tread pitch from the thread diameter. So $8 - 1.25 = 6.75$. this is taken up to the next practical drill size of 6.8. Also, always use lubrication when tapping, especially on aluminium as it clogs so easily.

I hope I haven't caused any offence in my comments, that was not my intention. If you are in need of any machine work for your bike projects send me an email. I may be able to help as I run my own small engineering company with CNC machines as well as the usual manual stuff, etc. If it's bike related and depending on the amount of machining, you probably won't get an invoice either.

Keep up the great mag.

Pete Selfe.

Matt: *Many, many thanks, Pete. It is a learning curve and with advice from knowledgeable engineers like yourself, we will get there! I hope others find this useful.*

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My stable

Here are a couple of my bikes that I have rebuilt. 1960 BSA with a 1954 bb34gs engine, café racer and my 1972 Daytona t100r. The Triumph had a full nut and bolt rebuild last year. The BSA is great fun to ride on the road!!

Paul Rees
 Matt: Paul, they look fantastic - I'm most jealous!



THIS MONTH'S STAR LETTER **WINS**

The writer of this month's Star Letter wins a pair of Weise Union gloves worth £69.99. Retro style meets modern protection in this smart summer design. Full grain leather, TPU knuckle armour and touchscreen compatible. Find out more at thekeycollection.co.uk



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Products



BMW system 7 carbon helmet

■ Bmw-motorrad.co.uk

■ £525 (seen for as low as £325 new)

Think that sounds expensive? Before you start writing in, a good friend of mine had a simple topple off the other day and his cheap helmet split, knocking himself out. He now has to take it easy thanks to delayed concussion – but he was lucky. Want to wear a cheap helmet; or even worse an old helmet? It's your decision; but if you've tested as many, knocked yourself out as much as I have and have to live with the permanent damage, you wouldn't. Your choice.

My journeys range from nipping out to the bike meet, to rides around the coast, to across countries; so the flip up design suits perfectly. I've now had three BMW helmets and I like their light weight, their ability to have a very low chin bar when it's raised and I seem to have had a BMW-shaped head, until now.

HISTORY LESSON

BMW actually pioneered the idea of a full face helmet with a folding chin bar as far back as 1978. The helmet law had only been in place since 1973 (incidentally wearing a seatbelt was only made law in 1983, 10 years later – work that one out) and full face helmets were still relatively new, with the majority of riders wearing open face helmets still. Working with German helmet manufacturer, Schuberth, who had been making military helmets, they also quickly realised the importance of aerodynamics, hence the intriguing golf ball-style dimples seen in earlier System helmets.

This new System 7 is apparently the first helmet made by BMW and not just designed by them. First impressions are it is light, thanks to the carbon fibre shell. It has the

easy to use ratchet strap, which personally I don't like but it is easy to use, even with gloves on.

The drop down sun visor is nicely shaped, has a dark-enough tint to help on bright days, but not too dark to make shadows black, and the visor has a tab to open it on both sides – a feature many could do with.

Flipping the chin up is simple and because of the clever hinges, it doesn't stick up like a satellite dish, so riding with it up at lowish speeds is not neck-straining.

The interior is sumptuous, though similar to the outgoing System 6 and not quite as luxurious as the rival Schuberth C4Pro I've tested. I also had to adjust the interior for my head shape at the front using a dessert spoon (reshaping the polystyrene interior),



Daytona Lady GTX boots

■ Bikerheadz.co.uk
■ £409.99

These are genius and I have recommended the Lady Star GTX boots since I was teaching motorcycling in the Nineties. Made for those with smaller feet, they have top leather, amazing protection and grippy soles, but the main point is the Lady Star is built specifically to have a built-up insole inside - 25mm at the rear and 8mm under the toes. This gives you so much more confidence because you can reach the floor easier and feel more in control.

They are comfortable from the off and have a Gore-Tex membrane, so will keep you perfectly dry. You may think £400 is expensive, but they will last you for years and what price would you pay for being



safer and feeling more in control? The Daytona Lady Star GTX boots are true unsung heroes for those that benefit and therefore one of the best products in motorcycling. Matt

which I have had to do on the Schuberth and on Shark helmets, but never before on BMW. Maybe it was because of Covid haircuts!

Once in and adjusted it's all-day comfy, the cheek protection coming round nicely and the brow a nice height for touring or upright bikes, but this is too low for sports positions as a rule.

I've tried the new lid on as many bikes as I can and it is just as quiet as its rivals or predecessors. The neck seal is perfect and chin bar has two wind deflectors, one is removable, making wind noise less and keeping rain out. The peripheral vision is superb, too, but venting is where BMW (and Schuberth) helmets let themselves down compared to race-style lids. It works well on a naked, but touring bikes just don't get the

airflow and you end up flipping the chin bar up whenever speed is low enough. That's the compromise of a quiet helmet, I guess.

The System 7 has another weapon - you can remove the chin bar completely, making it into an open face helmet. While noisier than an open face, it works alright and you can still use the drop down visor; though it isn't as strong as the main visor. Unfortunately, the method of removing and replacing the chin is terrible, and feels like you're about to break it or your finger.

For distances and poor weather, this is my go-to helmet. Is it better than the rival Schuberth? For me, yes, as the chin area is more spacious; others may find the Schuberth better. Either way, they are both great places to stick your head. Matt

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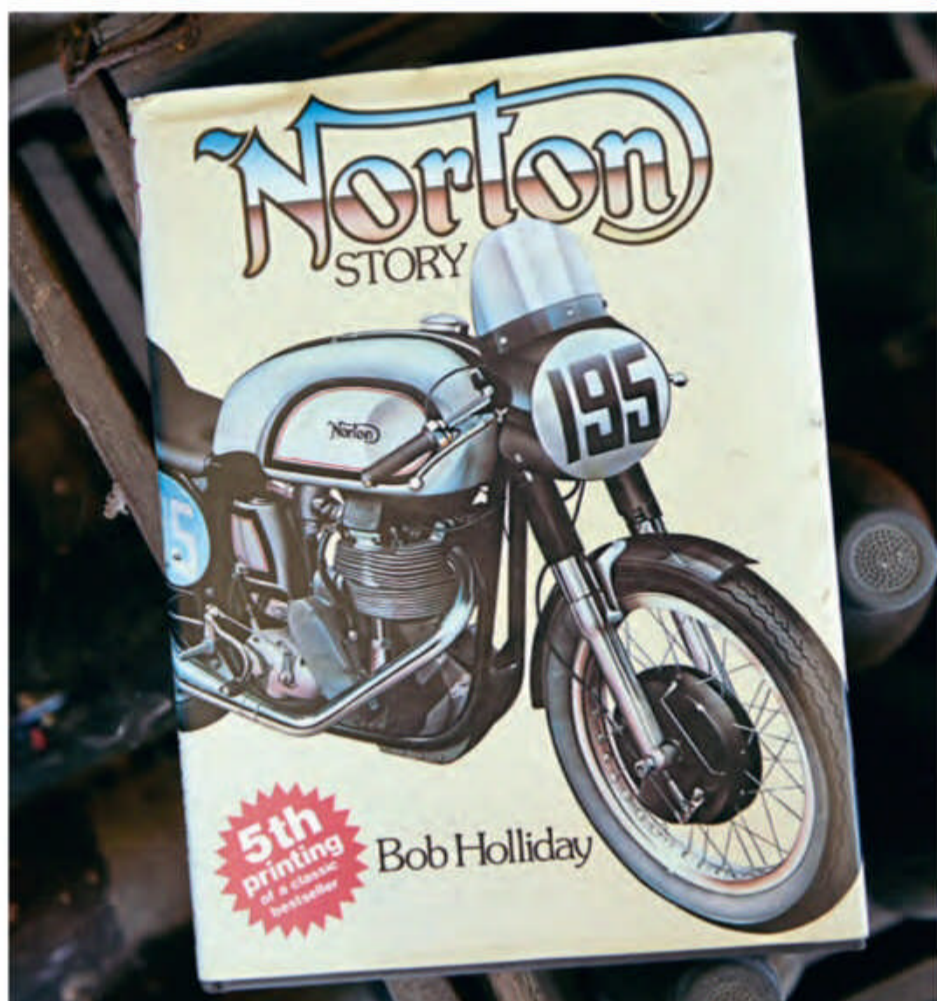
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Bookworm

This time Matt has been avoiding sleep and the TV to bring you balanced book reviews



Norton story

BY BOB HOLLIDAY

I love old bikes, but I wasn't there when they were made, I wasn't a worker in the factory and I don't remember them as a child. So my knowledge has to come from talking to folk and reading books – and I must trust them. Not being the most academic person, they must also be easy to understand.

Bob Holliday's Norton story is just that. The timeline of the early days is great, once you can picture it in your own head, and this book just seems to talk in my language. That's the

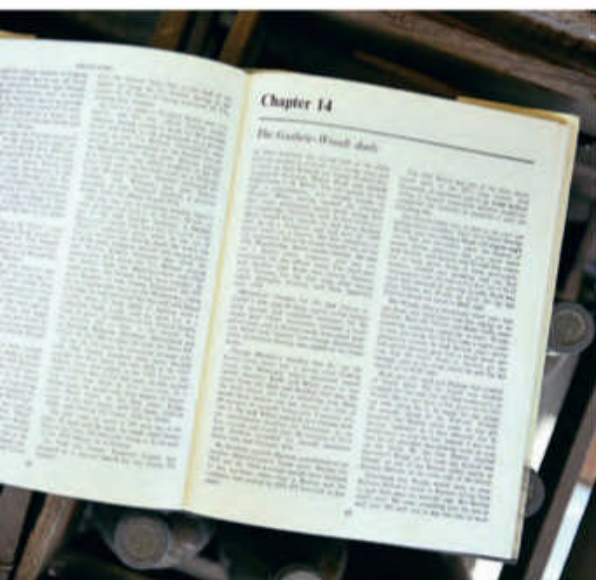
period I had trouble with; J L Norton dying early, constantly changing names of models, and too much of Norton's history is wrapped up around the racing that it's hard to work out how they stayed afloat – which they didn't.

Having said that, it is also a timeline for changes to racing, and the TT in particular. While its importance came and went, the original reliability trial, keeping an eye on fuel used, would soon turn into a race, as it is today.

Speed tests, races and business ups and downs all add to Holliday's book, the easiest of the Norton histories to understand, if not the most in-depth.

Holliday was editor for *The Motorcycle* after the war, so witnessed it first-hand. If you know your Nortons, then you may well already know a lot of this book. But if not, I've thoroughly enjoyed it and learned a lot.

■ Second hand from £8



BSA – the complete story

BY GREG PULLEN

Greg's book starts at BSA founding, looks at where they were based, what that area looks like now and how the company rose to be the largest motorcycle manufacturer in the world.

It also covers how the great British management structure of ego, complacency and not understanding your product line or customer meant it all came crashing down.

It is a story of BSA that incorporates elements about the bikes, and is nicely put

together with chunks on different makes within BSA and makes a lot of sense, though I have to say photo choice – mostly modern photos – are poor and could have been improved with archive photographs to add context.

Overall though, it is a perfect present for BSA owners, and as always with Greg, is well written and most informative. Well worth it.

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YAMAHA

XS1, XS2 & TX650

Japan's overhead cam take on Britain's best to be the world's top dog. BY STEVE COOPER

FOR A COMPANY THAT MADE ITS REPUTATION with two-strokes, Yamaha has always had something of a thing for large capacity four-stroke twins. Think the Ducati aping TRX850, its 850/900 TDM cousin, or how about the massive trail iron, the Super Ténéré XT1200? Recently the firm has enjoyed amazing success with the DOHC 700cc MT-07, yet this is a love affair which goes back to the late 1960s.

XS1 GENESIS

Yamaha's seminal 650 twins were created in response to a 1965 USA move towards cleaner air. The nascent bill was due to be enacted in 1968 and so, just as Yamaha's smoking twins were becoming popular stateside, it looked like they might well be doomed. Therefore Project 049, headed by Daisuke Tanaka, commenced in August 1967 to develop a market-competitive four-stroke twin. The bike's origins were absolutely atypical and didn't follow what many might view as a conventional or industry standard route to designing an engine from scratch. Yamaha had worked with Toyota throughout the 1960s and by 1964 had cooperated successfully enough to co-develop a six cylinder engine destined for the Toyota Crown. A year later the same team/project had a DOHC version ready for the super-sleek 2000GT sports car that would later appear in the James Bond film, *You Only Live Twice*.

Initially and not a little bizarrely, Yamaha initially considered dabbling with a 650cc two-stroke twin,

but soon realised it was a flawed concept. With Toyota's blessing the 650cc four-stroke twin copied two cylinders from the car with a 1mm reduction in bore size, but ran with just a single overhead cam for simplicity. Rather than follow the rest of the 2000GT's architecture, Yamaha rather cleverly went with what they knew best – a ball and roller bottom end that was, in essence, a larger version of their hugely successful YR1 350 stroker twin.

This also allowed for a low pressure, high volume oil pump which, allied to substantial joining faces on the horizontally split crankcases, effectively precluded any oil leaks. Initial cam designs did little for power output with the engine making no more power than a period 350 stroker twin. However, by using the computer of Yamaha Musical Instruments at night, the team had the all-new motor delivering reliable 53bhp at 7000 rpm.

Both the bike's transmission and chassis borrowed from the then state-of-the-art YR1 350, which had only just been launched that year, but for inlet technology Yamaha went offshore. Working in partnership with Japanese carburettor maker Mikuni, Yamaha developed a CV carb system that was made under licence to Solex. The reasons for going down this relatively unorthodox route were smoother running, improved fuel consumption and reduced emissions. The bike broke cover at the 1969 Tokyo bike show with export models readied for delivery in America early the following year. ▶



Options and choices

It's the original 1970 XS-1, known affectionately as The Green Grandad, that's said to be the most desirable-cum-valuable. However, most Yamaha 650 aficionados aren't of the bikes-as-investments brigade. Availability really dictates what choices you have and no one is likely to be miffed if they get an XS1-F instead of a 1B! The XS-2 does have the benefit of an electric start for those who need a helping hand and the front disc is more than just good. There seems to be a lot more USA red/white XS-2s within the UK market than the European versions, yet either option will still make for a fine Japanese classic. Perhaps the bargain bike of the quintet is the TX650, which regularly seems to get overlooked and undervalued.

THE BIKES

The initial 1970 XS1 in candy mid green with white decals is the purest of the breed and, predictably, the most expensive now. Half a century on after its launch, an original version still has all the qualities that made it such a surprising success within the pivotal USA market. Despite the soft rear shocks and handling that would never threaten Norton Featherbed models, it really isn't the jelly-on-a-plate quality the bike's detractors would have you believe. Its key virtues are its innate ability not to leak oil, an electrical system which was streets ahead of the various Luca, Wipac et al and, for a big bore parallel twin, a surprisingly acceptable level of vibration. Yamaha knew that vibes were the design's Achilles heel and therefore, rather sensibly, introduced rubber mountings at all and any key areas that might suffer from being stressed. Period road tests of the launch model from America were unswervingly positive. The bike's finish was regularly commended, everyone loved the punchy motor, more than a few journalists actually praised its handling, and no one found its near 110mph top end was slow. It looked like Yamaha's first four-stroke was a success.





“Its key virtues are its innate ability not to leak oil, an electrical system which was streets ahead of the various Luca, Wipac, et al and, for a big bore parallel twin, a surprisingly acceptable level of vibration”

1971 saw Yamaha taking on board the various comments and feedback from their dealers as they prepared for the bike's European launch. Changes to footrests, rear brake pedal and kick-start levers all reflected vital customer survey findings. A subtle tweak of the pistons reduced compression ratios slightly and twin-walled exhaust tubing was drafted in to reduce noise levels. The bike was available in most of Europe, but not in Britain; some argue Yamaha's importers simply didn't think they could sell the XS1-B against the offerings of BSA, Norton and Triumph. The original XS1 was never sold with indicators as standard (they were offered as an option), but in America at least the XS1-B was suitably equipped with the front units mounted off the top nut of the forks. In Europe and Australia the bike seems to have been sold (if not marketed) as an XS1-F model with a rectangular rear light and indicators mounted on the headlamp ears. Regardless of market, both the B and F models were now painted in candy orange which, in reality, looks suspiciously like Fizzy gold. ▶



Faults & Foibles

Age is probably the bike's greatest issue. The generator's insulation tends to decay with age, leading to poor charging so one rewind with wire utilising modern coatings is a good idea along with a solid state regulator/rectifier unit. The springs on the advance/retard unit can go weak over time and the HT coils have been known to die. The oil filtration system is two gauzes and the lower sump one can split. High mileages are well documented and generally without major issues; valve guide oil seals can decay over time, leading to smoking on the over-run. If the motor has a weak spot it's probably the little ends of the conrods which run directly on to the gudgeon pins. Poor oil change regimes and/or low levels can exacerbate the problem.



1972 saw the biggest change – the big twin now came with a self-starter as standard. Yamaha had been caught napping by Honda's CB750/4 and more importantly its fitment of an electric foot. Half a litre of oil capacity was sacrificed to install the starter motor outside of and underneath the engine. A car-type Bendix engaged with a series of gears to turn the motor over aided by a decompressor on the RHS exhaust valve. Rather cleverly, Yamaha fitted a pull-lever beneath the twist grip that pushed the valve off its seat whilst activating the starter motor. In a flash Yamaha had aced the big brit twins in terms of bragging rights and swiftly won itself more customers. The XS-2 also now came with a rather competent disc front brake grasped by a twin-piston caliper, made under license. Paint schemes changed to embrace Yamaha's global roll out of the all-new Europa look. America and Canada received the XS-2 in candy red and white with Japan/Australia/Europe variously getting the black and candy orange with yellow pin striping or the black and candy dark red with yellow pin striping. Mitsui Machinery, the then UK importer, was reluctant to commit and remained concerned that a still relatively buoyant Triumph factory's products would still eclipse the big Yam. On this occasion they were correct; an overtly negative road test did little to enhance sales of the UK's sub-80 units with some still unsold three years later.



“Don’t expect to feel like a big bore Honda CB450 because the crank in the Yamaha is a 360 degree type, not a 180 as per the Black Bomber”

1973 saw the XS-2 rebranded as the TX650. Yamaha had embarked on a campaign of parallel twins including 350, 500 and 750, all based around a vibration reducing balancer system. The 650 really had no commonality with the other machines, but a commercial decision was taken that the name would change regardless. The bike, sometimes referred to as an XS-2B, varied little from the previous model other than a fresh paint job in pale candy blue with gold and black graphics. ▶

Owning one now

The entire range is well served for parts and pretty much anything other than the frame, hubs, engine castings, gears and the like have been reproduced at some time or another. This includes engine bearings, valves, guards, badges and even tanks. The bike has a desperately loyal following and there really isn't a problem that hasn't been solved over the last 50 years. Seat pans are known to rust away and passenger grab rails are notoriously hard to find. Most of the pattern parts out there seem to be fine in use with the one caveat of pattern points; aftermarket Japanese are generally ok, but the cheap sets from SE Asia are often simply dire. The OEM tank badges for the XS1 & 2 are impossible to find, but good-quality replicas have been made.





In 1974 the bike became variously either the TX650A or XS650, depending upon market. But the design had been significantly revised and updated so we'll leave all of that for next month.

THE RIDE

If your reference point is big British twins then you're likely to feel worryingly at home on an XS1/XS2/TX650. Other than the foot pedals around the wrong way, everything else will seem relatively normal. The heart and soul of these early 650 Yamaha twins is the engine and it really is unlike anything else of the period to come out of Japan. Don't expect to feel like a big bore Honda CB450 because the crank in the Yamaha is a 360 degree type, not a 180 as per the Black Bomber. There's plenty of grunt down low with more than sufficient urge as the revs build to six grand where maximum torque lives. Unlike push rod twins, the motor is happy to rev and, in fact, happily thrives on large numbers at the tacho's face. The XS1 variants with drum brakes at both ends are as good as most British bikes and arguably less fussy in set up when compared to the later conical hub types. The disc on the XS2/TX650 is both significantly and substantially better than a Honda's of the period and, with decent, modern quality pads, will work well in the wet. If you needed more reassurance about the calipers' efficiency, know that it's a ferrous version of the alloy units used on racing TZs! The ride has, historically, come in for more than its fair share of denigration, but it's genuinely not of the 'widow maker' variety. Ridden how anyone with half a brain would ride a modern classic now, it's more than just ok. If there's one potential criticism it's arguably the high bars on models imported from America, but it's also a quickly fixed minor issue. **CBG**

Tenuous links, myths and half-truths

Scour the web and you will find numerous references to the fact that Yamaha's 650 twins are, in fact, little more than upgraded copies of the Japanese Hosk and/or Showa 500cc parallel four-stroke twins. There are also references to both of these engines being strongly influenced by West German manufacturer Horex and an implied link that the 650cc XS series engine is somehow related to this European manufacturer. The various associations are, to be brutally honest, feeble to say the least, but the venerable Yamaha twin does deserve to have its name cleared.

At the beginning of the 1950s Horex embarked upon a 500cc OHC twin engine design aimed purely at racing with the motor built around a four bearing crank for reliability. By 1952 the bike had gained a second camshaft and the name Emperor. A couple of years later road-going versions with a single cam went on general sale in 400 and 450cc guises. At the same time Hosk was looking to move on from copies of European singles so naturally looked to the West as it had all the other Japanese firms for inspiration – thus the Hosk 500 was born. Fellow motorcycle producer (and later suspension specialists) Showa latterly bought out Hosk and, naturally, offered the 500 under their own name... so far, so good. Where the story gets cloudy is in 1960 when a burgeoning Yamaha starts acquiring knowledge and expertise via tactical acquisitions, including Showa. This rather obvious, if questionable series of convenient links has led many to assume that the XS1 and it spawn are little more than re-engineered and enlarged Showas/Hosks/Horex. Although some will likely remain fixated by this apparent conspiracy theory, the fact remains that Yamaha themselves have always stated the XS1 was a fresh design and not a re-hash. Quite possibly they may have looked inside a Showa 500, but only to glean insight. If the big bore twin was ever 'inspired' by anything European it was the big British twins that they looked at – only with a typically Japanese take on the engineering. If you need further proof, compare the Yamaha's bore and stroke alongside a BSA A65!



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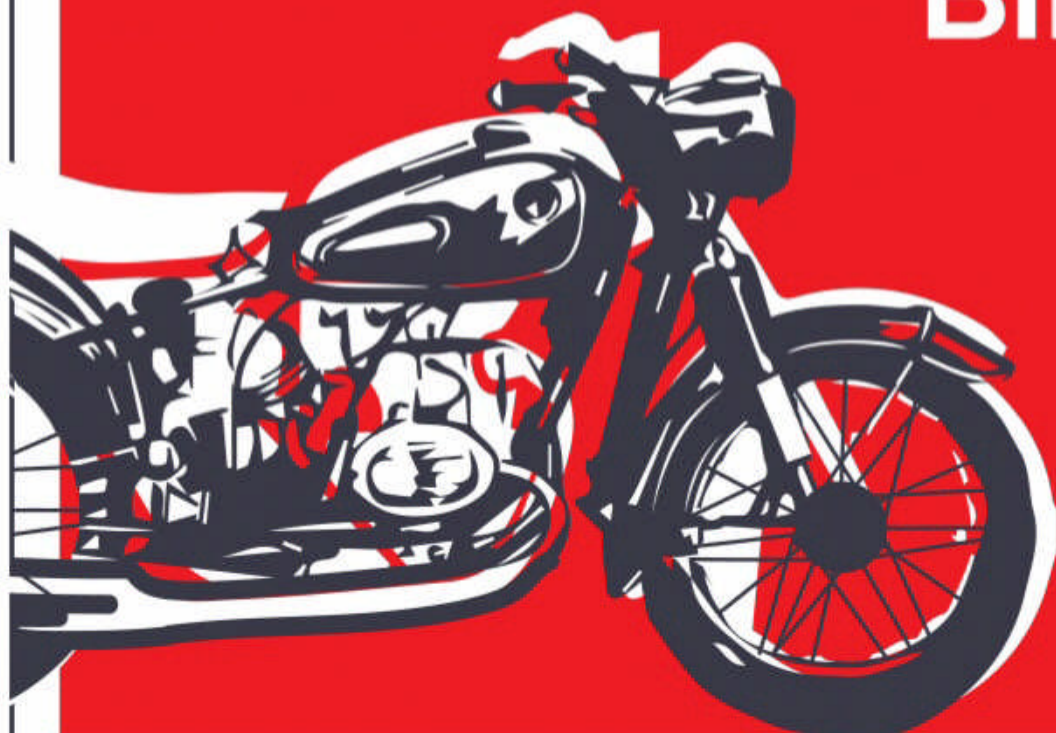
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Next month

Ariel HT3

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Made in Britain

We go to see those still making classic bikes in the UK

The 1939 International Six Days Trial

When the gentile sport of trials found itself surrounded by the beginnings of the Second World War

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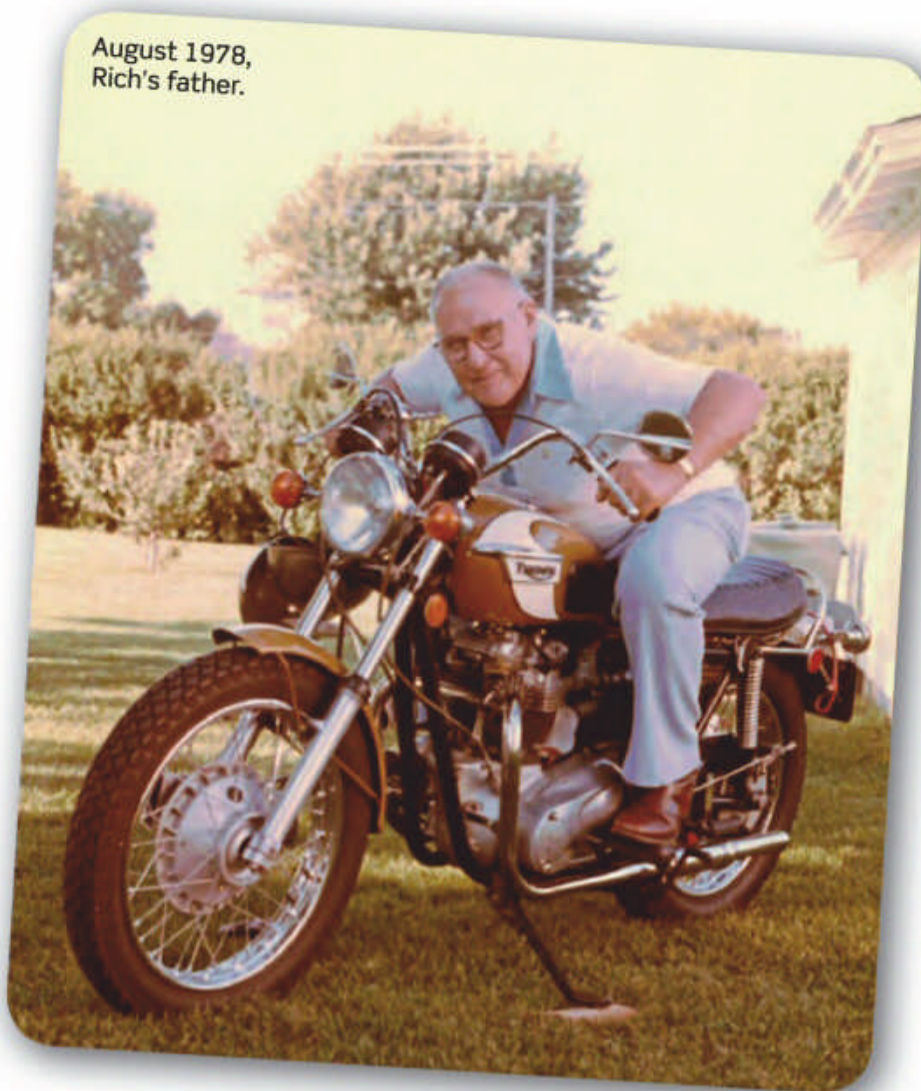


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August 1978,
Rich's father.



TRIUMPH T120R

**THIS STORY HAS IT ALL - A NEW TRIUMPH WITH ITS RISE AND FALL,
REBIRTH AND EVEN SOME SINISTER GOINGS ON...**

BY OLI HULME, RICH AND RYAN MUELLER PICTURES COURTESY OF RICH AND RYAN MUELLER

IN 1971, WHEN RICH MUELLER LEFT THE ARMY, Triumphs, Nortons and BSAs were popular in northern Illinois. The first thing he and riding buddy Glen did once they were out of uniform was to buy new Honda CB450 twins, but when his friend got the urge for a Bonneville and got a used 1970 Triumph, Rich decided to follow suit.

In March 1973, Rich walked into Morrie Gauger's Triumph dealership in Richmond, northern Illinois, and rode out on a brand new Triumph Bonneville T120R. He put around 12,000 miles on the Bonneville over the next 10 years or so.

While the first Oil-in-Frame Bonneville had a bit of a reputation for problems, not least the seat height, at six feet tall this didn't bother Rich.

"Things were pretty partisan over here. You rarely came across people who would ride a Brit and consider a Japanese bike or vice versa," says Rich. "The Harley boys had their own clique. And the Jap bikes took off when Honda brought out the four cylinder models. Of course, the big 4-stroke Jap bikes were top dogs for all-out speed, but they could not compete for cool, as Steve McQueen set the example with his Triumphs. The different brands all had their loyal devotees. Myself and my pal Glen had some of each – the pair of 450s Hondas, our Triumphs, and Glen with his Harleys after that.

"My pal Glen and I typically rode on weekends around a two county area, no long road trips per se. The seat on the 72 is not exactly cushy after several hours on the road. We used to joke that it was like riding a fence rail by the end of the day. Glen had a succession of bikes, while I had a young family and the 72 T120 was it for me. He had a 74 T140 after I bought the T120, then a Harley Sportster a couple years later, and an 80 cubic inch Harley after that, likely an FL series. I had no trouble keeping up on the Bonnie, until he would finally pull away in 4th gear."

With Triumph's management in confusion and the Meriden blockade in place, you might think that getting spares for the T120 might have been an issue, but despite Triumph's reputation at the time, Rich only needed to visit Morrie Gauger for spares once, to replace a scored piston. "That was the only mechanical issue, and the need to purchase spares, that I ever had with it."

In 1983 the Bonneville went into long-term storage at a friend's small farm. Initially it was stored inside a garage, but as the years went by, unbeknownst to Rich, it was moved to a different outbuilding that was less protected from the elements and the T120 was left to decay. ▶

“Of course, the big 4-stroke Jap bikes were top dogs for all-out speed, but they could not compete for cool, as Steve McQueen set the example with his Triumphs”



A FAMILY REUNION

In 2016 Rich's son Ryan bought his first home, which came with a garage that had plenty of room for motorbike fettling. Of course, the thing to do was get the Bonneville loaded up and brought to its new home to be revived.

It was a bit worse for wear. Over the years mice had nested under the seat, chewing up wiring and causing a significant amount of corrosion from their droppings. Ryan set to work to rehabilitate

the Bonneville with the goal of returning it to the road in mechanically sound, reasonably original condition. Despite the lengthy sojourn in the outbuildings, most of the parts could be renovated and re-used. The mice had done their worst on the wiring loom, so a new one was fitted, as was Podtronics reg-rec. This meant the Zener diode and selenium rectifier could be done away with. The rear taillight was upgraded with LED board conversion and Ryan cleaned and re-built the Amal carburettors, fitted new wheel bearings, cleaned and adjusted the brakes, and fitted new (and period appropriate) Dunlop K70 tyres and tubes.

The years are never kind to seals, so the forks got a strip down and a new set, while the original steering head bearings were cleaned and re-packed with fresh grease.

The hi-rise bars that had been fitted by Rich were dumped in favour of reproduction stock bars. Those shiny megaphones are the same ones that were fitted in Meriden in 1972. “I found the original mufflers in Dad’s crawspace (loft),” says Ryan. “He had removed them not long after buying the Bonneville, in their place mounting a pair of peashooter-style

mufflers. Thankfully, those aftermarket mufflers remained on the bike when it went into storage, and they bore the brunt of the elements and corrosion. The original megaphones went into plastic garbage bags and were stored in the crawspace for decades. Time was far more kind to them, and I was able to polish them up and re-install them on the bike.” Cables got changed, the clocks were refurbished and NJB shocks replaced the old original Girlings.

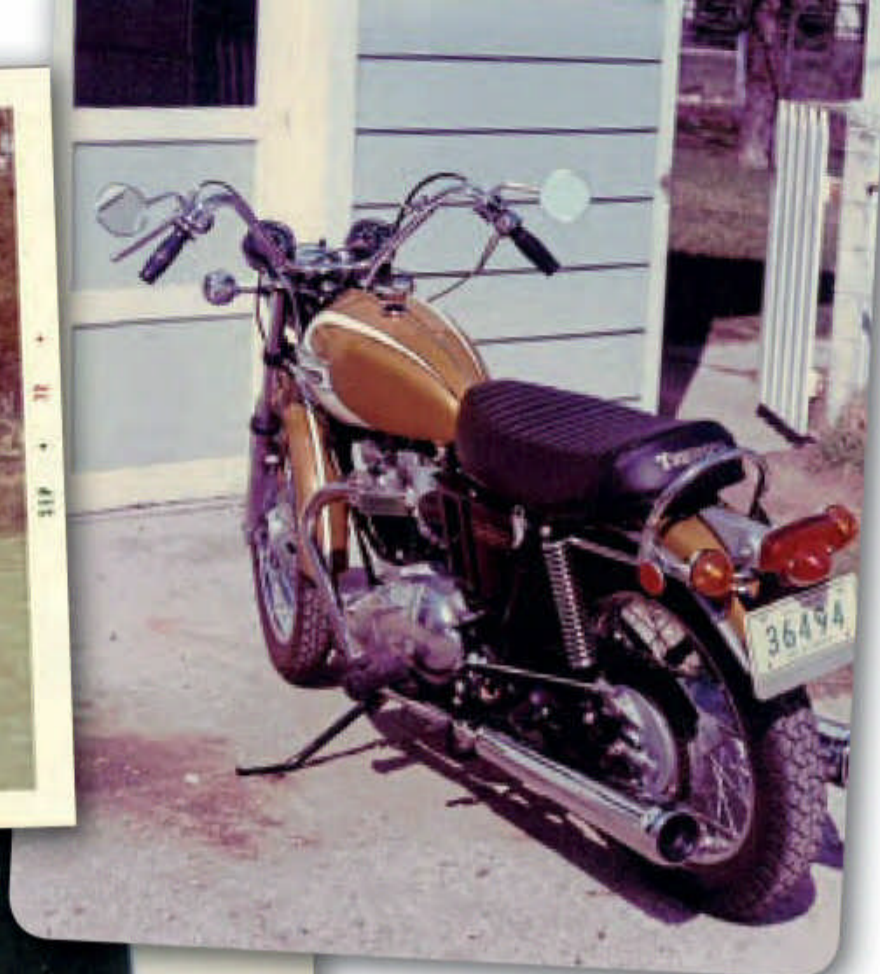
Ryan says that finding the few items needed to get the T120 rolling again wasn’t as hard as you might think. “I haven’t been in the parts-buying game long enough to know what vintage Triumph parts availability has been like historically here in the States, but I can say it is pretty good right now. Procuring spares has been about as easy as buying anything else online. There are about four or five suppliers in the States that I regularly turn to when searching for parts, and they almost always have what I need – usually multiple options to choose from at that. I have sourced most of my run-of-the-mill parts from suppliers in the US, simply because the cost of shipping is much less



Ryan on his uncle's Harley.



1972 - Rich and Glen's Hondas.



Left: 1974, Rich's T140.



Left: 1974 - T120R and T140.

Below: Pre-refurb.

of a factor. I have sourced parts from the UK when the item was more specialised and/or less commonly available from US suppliers.

"The rest of the work was largely cleaning, painting and polishing, but there is still more to come. I did not fully strip and re-paint the left-side side cover, instead I tried to clean and spot re-paint the corroded areas to preserve the original paint and decal application. While cleaning it up I noticed a sizable bump on the bottom corner that was not present on the other cover. Upon closer inspection I discovered it was a paint drip that had dried hard. I get a bit of a kick out of the fact that this tiny little imperfection from the spray gun of a worker at the Meriden factory has survived all these years, so I figured I had best leave it alone for now."

Ryan says: "There is still corrosion here and there, and I have tried to balance stabilising the condition with leaving things original. Thankfully, all is well with the engine thus far. Apart from the top end coming off and having to repair the scored piston, it has never been apart."

"The next significant work will be removing, cleaning and re-painting the



swing arm. It is the last area with a fair amount of mice-related corrosion and needs to be addressed before it begins to affect safety. The gearbox has also become a bit fiddly – occasionally you end up between 2nd and 3rd gear. It has dropped out of 3rd a few times, and downshifting is a bit rougher than I think it should be. I plan to perform an inspect and repair as necessary on that this fall.”

There aren't a lot of classic British bikes near Ryan's home of Urbana. "I mostly stick to the country roads, as they tend to seem safer and more enjoyable. That being said, I do venture into traffic on the T120R as well, and so far I haven't had any issues. I think I ride conservatively and defensively anyhow, and I try to be cognisant of the fact that I am on a 48-year-old motorcycle with the original drum brakes. I try to leave plenty of stopping distance and minimise positioning or situations that increase the odds of needing to stop aggressively. The few times where I have had to stop quickly, the brakes did the job without complaint or unnecessary drama. Thus far

I have not had any mechanical issues with the brakes. I have not yet needed to replace the original shoes – though the fronts are now on the last click of the adjusters, so I have



“The gearbox has also become a bit fiddly, occasionally you end up between 2nd and 3rd gear. It has dropped out of 3rd a few times, and downshifting is a bit rougher than I think it should be. I plan to perform an inspect and repair as necessary on that this fall”



THE FIRST OIL IN FRAME TRIUMPH TWIN – WAS IT A DOG OR A DELIGHT?

Of all the Triumph twins, the early Oil in Frame (OIF) models from the 70s were the most controversial. Introduced in 1971, these Triumphs had an unhappy birth. The last of the pre-OIF twins have become loved and respected as the pinnacle of the twin's design. With the decision to radically change the frame, when the team at Umberslade Hall Technology Centre – set up by parent company BSA – came up with their new frame they were always going to have a tough job winning hearts and minds.

The late 60s twins had been so popular in the US that Triumph had to place press adverts apologising for not being able to make enough of them to meet demand. For 1971 Triumph had the new frame for their biggest twins.

The frame, using a design that was also used on the BSA twins, was said to be too tall for the average rider, especially if you were a Brit, who tended to be smaller in stature than their American cousins. When the frames arrived at Meriden the workers found that they couldn't get a complete Triumph twin engine into the frame without removing the rocker boxes. Efforts were made quickly to modify the frame, but by now the first, flawed bikes were in the showrooms and along with the height, new owners discovered more faults. The OIF design has the filter in an inaccessible spot just behind and below the engine, where it collected all the crud from the road. The early frames fractured and leaked there too, cracking

around the centre stand pivot. Vibration caused brackets, petrol tanks and mudguards to fracture, until they were beefed up for the 750 twins. With the factory facing financial and industrial relations crises, owners saw their new bikes languish in workshops, waiting months for warranty parts. Where Triumph once had trouble supplying enough twins, they now had warehouses full of unsold bikes as buyers walked away. Adjustments were made to the frame and the seat height was lowered, sometimes by the simple expedient of fitting a thinner seat, and eventually by lowering the frame tubes.

The early OIF 650 twin has the conical hub brake front and rear, a good-looking item that features a sexy air scoop at the front. A poorly set up conical hub will perform badly, but a bit of care will make all the difference. It should be remembered also that criticisms of the brake at the time were largely down to fade during hard braking and hard riding, neither of which are likely to apply to modern ownership. Those forks were a new design in 71 too, with alloy bottoms, and represented a marked improvement on the older design.

Thanks to its largely undeserved reputation, an early OIF Triumph twin is likely to be the cheapest way of getting into big Triumph ownership. Even if it is still running around today, most of the 50-year-old faults will have been sorted. It'll be £3,000 or more cheaper than a pre-OIF model, and a fair bit cheaper than a later 750, too.

“The late 60s twins had been so popular in the US that Triumph had to place adverts in the press apologising for not being able to make enough of them to meet demand”

a fresh set on the shelf awaiting fitment. I have fully disassembled both front and rear brakes, cleaned all components, re-assembled and adjusted. Apart from the fiddly bit of re-fitting the shoes with the return springs, I did not run into anything particularly tricky with either front or rear brakes. Maybe there is something more difficult about fitting new shoes with the conical hub front? I don't know, but I will soon find out.”

The Triumph seat latch for these model years is a source of bemusement. Ryan has found the seat latch only performs its duties when you're not seated on the bike. When you sit on the seat it compresses the rubber bumpers between the seat and frame, so the distance between the latch and catch is reduced and it falls open. Whenever the rider dismounts, they will find the latch hanging open. “Maybe it's only there to protect the seat from being thrown open by giant gusts of wind, or to discourage very lazy lookie-loos, I just don't know.

“People out in the yard will often look up as I go by, as the sound of a classic British twin is not very common around these parts. I am pretty much on my own where I live. This area tends to be mostly Harley-Davidsons or other V-twin cruisers, sportbikes, and the occasional adventure bike. I have seen a couple of Hinckley Triumphs around town, but I cannot recall seeing any other classic Triumphs on the road in my area.”



Ryan tends to keep the revs low and treats the Bonneville with care, rarely passing 70mph. “It just seems like unnecessarily hard work for the old girl. I find the sweet spot for relaxed country road cruising to be about 50mph. 60mph works well for higher speed highway cruising.”


SPECIFICATION

MANUFACTURED: 1971-1973 **ENGINE:** Twin carb 649cc parallel twin
TRANSMISSION: 4-speed; multiplate wet clutch **FRAME:** Steel tube oil bearing double cradle **SUSPENSION:** F: Telescopic fork, R: Twin shocks with adjustable preload **BRAKES:** F: 8-inch conical hub drum, R: 7-inch conical hub drum **LENGTH:** 87.4in **SEAT HEIGHT:** 32in **WEIGHT:** 384lb (dry) **FUEL CAPACITY:** 2.9 gallons



The internet has become an invaluable source of information to help with the rejuvenation. Workshop and parts manuals were found online, and YouTube has been helpful as well. "At times it can be worth what you paid for it, but it is at least helpful to see assemblies come apart or go back together, to help the mind's eye form a clearer picture of what the exploded drawing in the parts manual is showing me, or the process being described in the workshop manual."

In the absence of any knowledgeable classic Brit owners in his neighbourhood, online forums at triumphrat.net and britbike.com have come in handy. Without the ability to connect with other classic British bike enthusiasts through those forums, Ryan says the task would have been much more difficult.

With the Bonneville on the road again, Rich got the itch to ride again. "We found him a gently used 2014 T100 SE from a family friend. The 865cc engine is very nice, very smooth, a joy to ride, but it does lack the character of the classic 650cc engine. I house and maintain the T100 for him, and he comes down for visits and we have the opportunity to ride together, which is pretty special." 

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DARK TIMES IN RICHMOND, ILLINOIS

Gauger's Motorcycles, where Rich bought the T120R in 1973, is now called Morrie's Place, and is owned and operated by a gentleman named Ed Zender, who began hanging out at Gauger Motorcycles back in the 80s.

Morrie Gauger and his wife Ruth started out as BSA dealers in 1954 from a farm shed and added on the marques of Triumph, Norton, Matchless and BMW. The roof of the shed was made from the old packing cases that Triumph shipped bikes in from Meriden. Even into the early 1990s the shop did not have running water, a toilet or heating, let alone a phone. Morrie had a farmer's mentality, and didn't believe in using banks, stashing cash in various locations around the farm. In 1993 the couple were brutally murdered. Initially it was thought they had been killed by their son, who was convicted and sentenced to death, later commuted to life in prison. He spent three years protesting his innocence, saying that a confession had been obtained under duress. The courts decided the conviction was unsafe and released him. Even then the Police believed him to be guilty and kept searching for evidence to convict him a second time. In 1997, however, an informant passed information to the Police that confirmed the couple had been killed in a botched robbery attempt by two motorcycle gang members, who were searching for Morrie Gauger's hidden money. The gang members had escaped the scene with just \$15. The pair were convicted of the killings and are now serving life terms. Ed Zender purchased the business from the Gauger family, operating from the same small farm before building a new shop eight miles away.

Ryan plans to take the T120 on a trip to recreate some of the photos from 1973 at his grandparent's former home, and to visit the new Morrie's Place. After all, he still has the original bill of sale and coupon for a free oil change and first service.

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From our archive

■ Kawasaki, we salute you!

The Japanese giant has always made some interesting machines, so over the next few pages we bring you both the Z900 and 500 H1.

But this month, we've also been rooting through the Mortons archive to bring you some of the best shots we have of early racing Kawasakis that we've not seen before. Hope you enjoy! **CBG**

Right: Phil Read was tempted back from retirement in 1977 to ride for Kawasaki in the UK vs USA races at Brands Hatch.

Below: Kork Ballington in 1981, on the 500cc GP bike at Donington





Above: Graham Bailey in the 1973 Senior TT, on a 498cc Kawasaki - in tartan paint!

Below: Richie Sunter on a 250cc Kawasaki in the 1974 Scottish Trials





Kawasaki Z900

Remembrance of Things Fast, Forty Years On



Rod Kerr has been writing about bikes for more years than he cares to remember, and takes a recently restored Kawasaki Z900 to re-live a certain photograph. Is it as good as he remembers?

CAN IT REALLY BE 40 YEARS SINCE my youthful self and old school pal, Pete, borrowed a sparkling Kawasaki Z900 and terrorised the Midlands, taking photos along the way? Yes, I'm afraid it can, which makes me feel older than Methuselah's grandfather.

The black & white photographic masterpiece of bike reflected in a large puddle was shot in 1979, using a primitive device called a 35mm film camera. For younger readers, perhaps I need to explain that in those days the only digitals we had were the things attached to our hands and feet (or not, if you rode a BSA 650).

Taking photos was an involved business then, starting with buying a roll of film for the equivalent of about £25 in 2020 terms, then paying about the same again to have the images developed and printed, which took a week. After a second visit to Boots, you handed over another £10 in return for up to 36 glossy pieces of paper (or a bijou box of transparencies, aka 'slides').

It was quite likely that a significant proportion of these would be over-exposed, or under-exposed, or out of focus, or be pictures of someone's nostrils that had strayed into the frame. You get the picture (or often didn't).

The alternative for true enthusiasts was to set up a darkroom in your shed and spend a few hours breathing chemicals that almost certainly caused

serious medical conditions. The DIY route, theoretically, gave an expert the chance of manipulating the image.

It can be revealed that the lower part of the Z900 blow-up seen here was deliberately left to stew in the developing fluid for longer than the upper part, hence its contrast and clarity. Or maybe we turned the bike and camera upside down? No, that would be silly.

To go boldly back to 1979, the photo then disappeared, presumed dead, for about 25 years, until it was unearthed in the back of a picture frame containing another great masterpiece, credited to some French geezer called Monet. In the light of a 2004 day, a flood of Kawasaki 900 nostalgia gushed forth, including the mystery of where exactly the photos were taken.

A plan was hatched. How about a 1979 re-enactment, riding the same bike on the same roads to a similar puddle and taking the same shot for posterity, then writing a story about it for then magazine, *Classic Mechanics*? Good idea, but various snags immediately surfaced, including the impossibility of acquiring the very same Z900. While Kawasaki's King has a good survival rate, tracking down a particular bike without a registration as guidance would be a tall order, even for Inspector Morse.

Instead, I could substitute a Z900 of the same vintage. By a quirk of fate I live not far from the Classic Bikes emporium, which happens to specialise in the big

Kawasaki fours and usually has about 25 in stock. Better still, most of these need test riding before going out to new owners, which killed at least two proverbial birds with one stone...

As with the 1979 jaunt, it was also fortunate that Summer was with us in 2004, so no weather issues, in theory. As a consequence, however, this meant the required large puddle was tricky to organise and beyond the control of chief Z1 designer, Gyoichi Inamura. We must accept that even the mighty Kawasaki Heavy Industries couldn't guarantee the weather, but for once a flash thunderstorm or a portable flood would have been welcome.

Inevitably, shortage of time also meant that 1979's official photographer wasn't available 25 years later. At the time, family commitments took precedence over searches for lost youth on motorcycles.

Looking back, I mused on how it was that so many people had mobile phones and email, yet you still couldn't contact them. Bring back the carrier pigeon, I say. In 1979 'cell phones' were a dot on the future horizon, of course.

For further scene-setting contrast, it seems incredible now, but 1979 was the year Mrs M. Thatcher took up residence as Prime Minister, handbag primed for action. Although she was pushed out of office in 1990 and died in 2013, I'm sure she would have been thrilled to bits by another mention in a classic motorcycle magazine. 2004's PM was 'young' Tony Blair, who had been in position for seven years by then and outstayed his welcome, to coin an understatement.

Among other things, the Conservatives

'A plan was hatched. How about a 1979 re-enactment, riding the same bike on the same roads to a similar puddle and taking the same shot for posterity, then writing a story about it?'

had promised lots of new roads, many that had been planned decades ago, often going back to before WW2. Great, but by the time plans had been put into action, it was known that traffic volumes just increased to fill the new spaces. More on that later.

So, back in 2004 again, I picked up the nominated Z900 and headed south on a balmy day, appreciating once more the big Zed's convenience as a mode of transport, rather than just the fastest motorcycle on the planet. Thanks to smaller 26mm carbs and a more stifled exhaust, the figures were slightly down on the first model of 1972, which clocked a standing quarter in 12.5s and boasted a top whack of 130mph plus. Not that it mattered too much after the rest of the Japanese big four and the Italian squad had introduced faster (super)bikes in the later 70s (Ducati 900SS, Laverda Jota and Moto Guzzi Le Mans), against all the odds.

Whatever, the Z900 is generally considered as superior to the Z1, with better handling and a smoother engine. Both are pretty coarse compared with more modern straight fours, though. None of your contra-rotating balancers here, m'lad, so those secondary vibes feed through to the rider at higher revs. Old King Zed's limit was about 9000rpm, a tame effort compared with the later crop of 10,000+rpm screamers.

The 2004 story continued:

'...Pause to fill up with unleaded costing as much per litre as a 2-Star gallon did when the Z900 was new, then out through the town. Plenty has changed. Twice as many sets of traffic lights and roundabouts; new houses everywhere; sprawling industrial estates; funny red cycle lanes that no one uses; half as many petrol stations; no big British car dealers; speed humps; chicanes; pedestrianised streets; railings to stop people walking into the road and killing themselves; traditional industry replaced by giant car parks; and DIY warehouses. What a mess.

The biggest change is in traffic density, though. Even on a bike, it probably takes twice as long to get from one end of the town to the other now. But we made it eventually, emerging from the urban limit briefly before entering another 40mph zone almost immediately.

A time-warped 1979 rider might have then been confused by the dangerous behaviour of his fellow travellers at this point, who were all suddenly slowing down for no good reason. Yes, we were in Gatsoland, where nearly everybody sticks exactly to the posted limit, even if it

'The first model of 1972 clocked a standing quarter in 12.5s and boasted a top whack of 130mph plus'



means panic braking and looking anywhere except at the road. Whatever George Orwell had predicted, the idea of being watched over by cameras would have seemed fanciful by road users of the Seventies...

Fiddle the figures a bit and you can see that I was moaning about the same sort of issues. Traffic was bad in 2004, but look at it now. OMG, as they didn't say then! My remark that it probably took twice as long to get through town was all too true, but from around 2010 onwards the roads had reached saturation point, thanks to councils with a mission to build as many houses as possible, without thinking much about infrastructure.

Back to this year's re-enactment; having reached the town centre seizure there's nowhere to go. Just too many vehicles. Even a pushbike can hardly get through. I eventually had to escape the bottlenecks by going in almost the wrong direction and do an extensive loop adding miles to the journey, on potholed lanes intended for horse-drawn traffic. And this in the middle of the day, the quieter time, allegedly.

On a more trivial note, while the wide Kawhorn handlebars aid slow-speed travel, they are in danger of clipping mirrors if you do try to filter traffic lanes; definitely a silly way to fall off. Especially so on an absolutely mint Z900 wearing the last set of genuine OE exhausts in the universe, a contributing factor in its valuation somewhere around £20k...

A lot of money, you say? Not really for a machine that's been painstakingly re-built, taking many expert hours. In 1979 a secondhand Z900 went for about £1000, a few hundred less than its cost new. By 2004 the going rate was more like £5000 for a decent specimen with original parts, the 900 now being established as 'classic'.

At the time, plenty of other Japanese bikes, including the Honda CB750, were still waiting to be appreciated. The snag was that in the 1980s many UK market Z900s were customised, wearing four-into-one exhausts, different paint and had lost their intake plumbing to make way for K&Ns. Apart from making a lot of noise, 'tuned' engines of this type usually ran badly and produced less power, hence the rush to import standard bikes from overseas.

As time marches on, the trend is for superficially similar bikes to command very different prices, based on whether they come with sought-after and rare parts. The original OE pipes on the test victim illustrate the point. Aficionados will also note the 'KZ900' badges, shorter rear mudguard and single front disc of US models.

While I was busily going round in circles, I was reminded of one comparatively novel feature of 21st Century travel – the stop-start engine. Stalling in traffic used to be bad news, but modern cars have a system that does it deliberately after due analysis of the vehicle's operating mode.

At its most basic level, the engine will be stopped when the car has been static for a certain time, so saving fuel. At least, that's the idea, but the bottom line is affected so much by driving conditions and driver style that the true picture is hard to guess. What we do know is that cars are becoming larger and heavier all the time, which is definitely not a Green thing, or planet saver.

Stop-start would no doubt have seemed a complete nonsense to a 1970s rider. The Honda 750 Four gave electric feet to the masses, yes, but a large proportion of bikes on the road still had to be kicked into life. Can you imagine some unfortunate soul on a BSA 500 single trying to negotiate jams with an engine that falls silent after a few seconds, then needs 26 sweaty kicks to re-start?

On a historical note, after a brief period with emergency kickstarts stashed under the seat, manufacturers gave way to the inevitable and deleted the entire

'Then there are SMART, but dim motorways that seem to go directly against common sense. The planners already know, but that doesn't stop them from continuing to convert the M6 in the Midlands'

mechanism. In Kawasaki's case this came about after the Z900 had turned into the Z1000 and its derivatives, losing two of its bugles – and some of its reliability, unfortunately.

Apart from stop-start, over the last 15 years our roads have been invaded on a small scale (so far) by hybrids and 100% electric vehicles. Again, this may or may not help to save the planet in the long term, but on an everyday basis they have a negative effect on road safety. As a pedestrian, I've had a few near misses with stealth cars that creep up as I step off the kerb.

Then there are SMART, but dim motorways that seem to go directly against common sense. The planners already know, but that doesn't stop them from continuing to convert the M6 in the Midlands. I'd certainly avoid them in an old vehicle, but then new vehicles can just stop dead, so that will make me take to the cart tracks again.

My present-day meanders were curtailed by the weather. Occasional bursts of watery sun faded and I was suddenly aware that my mission to take a repeat photo was in jeopardy. Well, Cannock, actually, which was mainly a mining town in the 70s, but has now spread over the slag heaps and

re-invented itself
as a hive of
high-tech
industry.
My

destination was the adjoining Chase, an AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) that was originally a William the Conk royal hunting ground. The present Queen gave up on that sort of thing a few years back, so now it's probably known mostly as a mountain biking centre, with no internal combustion engines allowed.

Rumbling around the area found a few prominent puddles, but not in the exact 1979/2004 location, which has been modified by the people who maintain the Chase's natural beauty. There's just about enough space left to wheel in some Kawasaki natural beauty. Sadly, fading light defied even 21st Century digital cameras to take artistic pictures. In fact, it's hard to tell the difference between colour and black & white!

The photo shoot confirmed the Z900's practicality once again, with a sidestand that worked on soft surfaces. Simple things can make a big difference, as any simple Ducati owner (me, for instance) who's watched their bike topple off its stand can confirm.

Forty years ago I didn't care much about practicality. Posing in a 1979 puddle, I was probably concerned most about whether the 900 would do 130mph, as

attained by ace road testers. By 2004 I had grown up slightly and realised I wasn't Bazza Sheene incarnate, so speed was of relatively minor importance. Note that I was already moaning about the state of the roads and other people's bad driving. The latent Victor Meldrew was taking hold!

Fast forward 15 years to 2020 and my sensibilities have changed again. Sorry to be maudlin, but gazing into the camera lens, I reflected that a large number of those who were part of my previous world are no longer with us, including a depressing number of fellow motorcyclists.

The star of the story is still very much with us, however. Launched in 1972 and now approaching its half century, Kawasaki's iconic, dohc four, is as good as ever. Better, in fact, if you buy a handbuilt example, as seen here.

See you in
2030. **CBG**





Kawasaki Z900RS

Reading Rod's feature about re-visiting Kawasaki's Z900 led me to finish the story for you - what's the new one like?

WORDS AND PICS BY MATT

I'VE NEVER RIDDEN A Z1 OR Z900; OF any model or vintage. I've heard the stories, seen men older than me ogle at Kerker four-into-one exhaust-clad examples at bike meets and wondered what they'd be like. But Kawasaki have got their new Z900, the Z900RS; would it give the experience of the original, or is it just a modern bike hiding behind vintage clothing, with bland manners?

The feeling and look of the original bike is there in much more than the tank as you walk up to it. The wheels, seat unit and rear tail, the four-into-one exhaust that cunningly hides the catalytic converters, all help the feel, even if we all know it's a bit faux. But it cannot be an original - it wouldn't be allowed for a start. So as a look-alike it's fine.

The 950cc four-cylinder engine is smooth from the moment you stroke the starter button, and will give you 110bhp if you need it, but the torque comes from anywhere, meaning you can

be really lazy with the gearbox unless you're chasing critters on sportsbikes. And what I really, really like is the fact that the throttle feels connected to the engine - not a computer that then checks all the sensors, then allows you what it thinks you want. Recent BMWs and Triumphs I've ridden are getting to the stage where I feel as isolated from the sensation of riding as a modern car. The Z900 has traction control to look after you, and you can turn it off for skids and wheelies (or trackdays), but it hides what it's doing from you, at least giving the impression you're in control.

First to fifth gears are nice and close, while sixth (oh yes, count them old timers) is an overdrive, making longer journeys a nicer experience. Clutch is light and the change is typically Japanese - near perfect. And this one, kindly lent to me by Seastar Superbikes in Norfolk, had only done around 40 miles.

Handling gives the feeling of quality damping. It's not over-tired with the

usual 120/ 180 sizes and while the Kawasaki has a stiffer feel compared to a Honda, it's purposeful without being sporty or harsh. In fact, with the near-perfect riding position for me (six-foot tall) it felt spot on. Brakes are plenty for the power and weight. Another point I liked was the weight; while no lightweight at 215kg curb weight (what exactly is that, Kawasaki UK?), and an 835mm seat height, it feels controllable and not like you could drop it at any moment. Allied to a great, tight turning circle and that good riding position, slow speed riding, confidence when parking up and even U-turns proved no problem; sign of a balanced bike.

I still haven't ridden a Z900; the new Z900RS is not the original. But it is a great homage for today's world and needs. It looks good, rides brilliantly and, crucially, makes you feel good riding it. With a decent-size tank and a comfy pillion perch, I'd find it hard to fault the Z900RS - apart from currently they're largely sold out... **BIKE**



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A massive thanks to Tony and Vince for letting us try out their demonstrator Z900RS. You can, too. Give them a ring on 01508 471919, or see their website at seastarsuperbikes.co.uk Prices start at £10,399.

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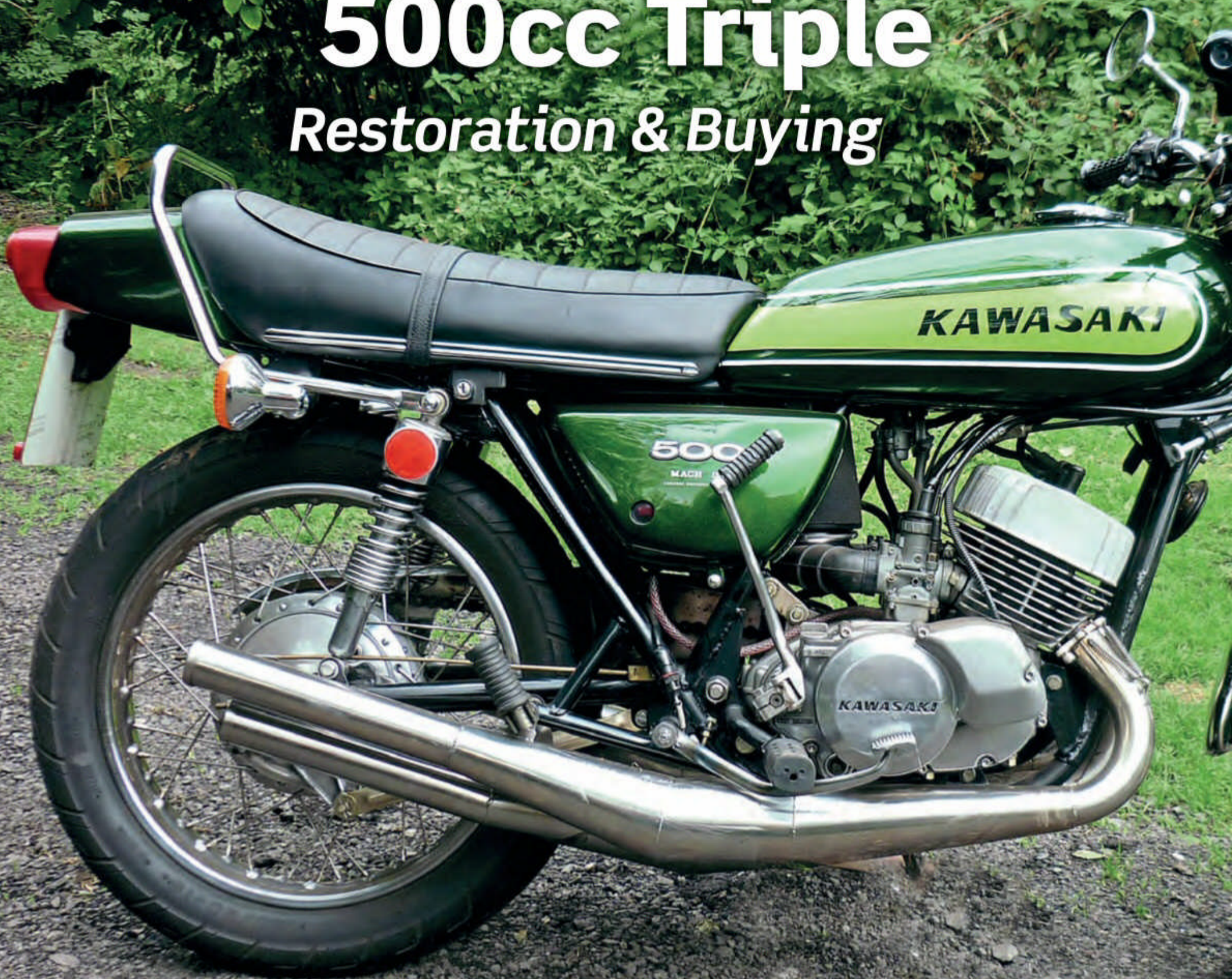
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KAWASAKI H1 MACH 3

500cc Triple

Restoration & Buying



Lean, mean and green, a 1973 model

WORDS AND PICS BY ROB DAVIES

For the perfect mix – no, sorry, it's not a cake. Take one whole, well-trained engineer turned motorcycle restorer, and one whole – well, nearly – discarded and unloved 1973 Kawasaki H1 500cc Triple. Put them both in a shed (most essential) for six months or so, return and throw open the door to find one cool classic motorcycle.

THE IDEA – EVERYTHING STARTS WITH AN IDEA – for Kawasaki's big triples came during the late 1960s. The Kawasaki company, a large, diversified concern even then, desired a larger share of the lucrative US market in motorcycles. After spending several decades supplying smaller capacity two-stroke machines, the only way was upping the cubes.

So, as legend has it, the design project was handed over to the very same chaps responsible for the Japanese Bullet Train and jet aircraft. The result was two of the fastest bikes on the planet: the H1 500cc two-stroke triple and a little later its

bigger sibling, the 750, also a two-stroke triple.

The new, lightweight 500 Mach III would then, on test, howl its way through the quarter-mile in just under 13 seconds – this is 1969 by the way – and it would leave every BSA, Triumph, and even the latest Honda 750 Four as a dot in a soft blue haze. Yes, the Mach III, introduced to a new generation of young red-blooded Americans – and indeed everyone else on planet earth – to the exciting world of often unplanned wheelies in at least the first three gears. For the Japanese, it was a whole new way of committing Hari-kari, while Kawasaki was to make additional profit from selling new rear mudguards



The new, lightweight 500 Mach III would then, on test, howl its way through the quarter-mile in under 13 seconds - this is 1969 by the way - and it would leave every BSA, Triumph, and even the latest Honda 750 Four as a dot in a soft blue haze



and lights... Which leads us oh so nicely to this month's restoration.

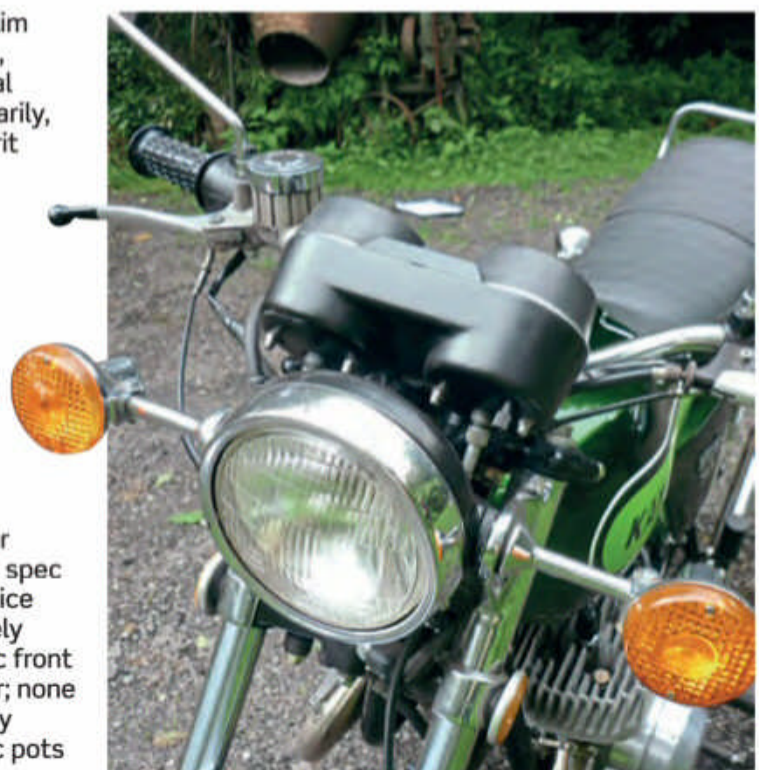
Roy Deeley has recently commenced trading as 'Acme motorcycle restoration and repair' in Halesowen (01384 634970), a word not often used these days, but apparently emanating from the Greek meaning 'Pinnacle of excellence'. The West Midlands - and Cradley Heath in particular - has long had a proud and distinguished reputation for its engineering skills. But, as history teaches us, technology, or manufacturing roles, never stay static. So for the last year or so, Roy has left his factory work behind to restore motorcycles, and any general engineering work for other bikers as well as himself.

The Mach III presented on these pages is his own special possession, because if these machines were around when you were a teenager, it's impossible not to have a warm feeling well up in your heart when you see one.

As you may guess readily from the pictures - if

Above: Nice slim gorgeous lines, and the general view - momentarily, for all those Brit 650's - shame

Right: Right from the start, the Japanese companies were safety conscious with good clear indicators - US spec ones here. Notice the rather nicely made hydraulic front brake reservoir; none of those crappy modern plastic pots





you're an eagle-eyed sort, familiar with these bikes – you will have noticed the largish side reflectors denoting that it is indeed an import from the US. And yes, sadly, it had languished for many a moon under the stars, alone, doing absolutely nothing. But then, joy of joys, Roy got his sticky mitts on it, and the Kwak has never looked so good in its glossy dark green metallic finish.

But as you can also readily guess, a lot needed doing to get the engine's infernal internals decent before it would propel anyone along the Tarmac at anything like a speed that would raise a heartbeat.

The Mach III appeared in the US in 1969 with a white sculpted fuel tank and blue racing stripe along the lower part of the tank, and special Dunlop K77 tyres. The engine was a three cylinder, inline two-stroke with a displacement of 499cc (30.5 cu in). A V-twin had been considered, but the inline had kept the inner cylinder suitably cool. It had Mikuni VM 28mm carburettors and like all crankcase-scavenged two-strokes, the H1 had an all-roller-bearing crankshaft with six main ball bearings and four rubber seals. These were modern times, so there was no messy mixing of oil and petrol; a tiny three-outlet metering pump, located above the crank's primary pinion, varied the oil supply from a small tank to each cylinder according to throttle opening. Because the industry was always thinking about warranty, these pumps were factory set to lay heavy smoke on full throttle. As certain guys accumulated experience, they sometimes were able to notch this back considerably.

Oil was supplied to three crankcase drillings, each supplying oil to one main bearing of each cylinder. When the Kawasaki appeared at 60x58.8mm bore & stroke, it was completely straightforward – three cylinders in line with a tall alternator/ignition cover adding inches of width on the left, and with its geared primary drive to a 5-speed gearbox on the right. The keynote of Kawasaki's design was to price this model to sell in serious numbers. That meant giving up fancy stuff such as the rotary intake valves of their previous A1/A7 twins in favour of the simple and cheaper option of piston-controlled intake ports.

Trouble is, with all two-strokes, as time goes by seals wear and the whole thing grinds to a halt. That's why Roy had to do a total engine strip, and perform a good job with new crank seals and bearings. If you take a peek at the crank with its 60 degree conrods, it's sitting happily on a truing jig, to make sure that all is within the one degree tolerance that Kawasaki originally set. "Getting these cranks apart is no easy matter," remarks Roy, and he takes me around to a 30-ton press he has built to pull apart these little beasts. Now all together again, the engine sits neatly back in its re-painted frame to see another day.



And the truth is the H1 quickly acquired the reputation of dreadful handling. A simple test usually isolated the cause

Above: The middle pot sits right behind the front wheel – shame really – that's why the fuelling has to be right

Top left: Pretty decent build quality on the bars and clocks, but these clocks have suffered from rain damage, and will need cleaning out at some stage

Top middle: After-market exhaust may be all that you can get. Shame that Kawasaki had two on the one side and one on the left – balance dear boys, please. Nice chrome chain guard, but it was the 70s after all

Top right: The very early bikes had TLS – one disc is slightly better, but the brakes were decent stoppers

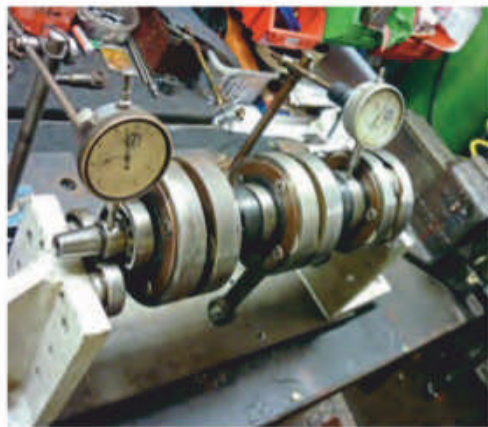
Wheels were re-built and re-spoked; paintwork was done by the local firm of MotoPaint – also Cradley Heath – keeping it local. In the UK in the early days, these Kawasakis came with points ignition, while our American friends got the full electronic ignition package – like this one. The only thing that Roy hasn't been able to do – yet – is to re-furbish the clocks, and I noticed that they have let water in at some point. It's a work in progress, as they say.

What about handling? Didn't the 500 and 750 have a terrible reputation for bad handling in the day? The truth is the H1 quickly acquired the reputation of dreadful handling. A simple test usually isolated the cause. Remove the rear suspension units, pop off their springs and stroke the dampers up and down to see if there is equal damping. In some cases, a stock damper could lose its oil in a few miles. But the reputation persists, as if the H1's chassis was not a technical construction, but rather an evil monster out to kill you. Yes, engines in that era were mounted far back, and yes, wheelies were easy with H1 power, but there was plenty of good steel in the chassis, and a pair of Konis or Girlings made a rideable suspension package.

What if you wish to buy one, maybe as a project,

an investment, or as a reminder of a long-lost youth? I looked on the internet – obviously – and sales wise, decent bikes are going from between £6500 right the way up to £13,000; quite a stretch, and all dependant on how good the bike is both from looks and mechanics. Some spares are easy to get hold of and you can get regular bits from Cradley Kawasaki, the Kawasaki shop in Northampton. BUT, some parts, like decent exhausts for instance, are rare indeed, and if you do come across a set, they will command a price. If you're looking to buy a nice example, take a look at the plugs – are they all the same grade? – because some guys put a different one in the middle to help sort out the slight hotting up of the centre cylinder. And what is the colour like on those plugs? Is the outer rim black with a nice tan centre, or does the centre plug have a white centre denoting very hot running? Look under the seat. Is the steel seat pan going rusty around its rim where rain has got in? Is the clutch tough to pull in? This may just be a tight cable, stuck pressure plate, which happens after long storage; or maybe the operating worm gear simply needs a bit of oiling. And then, of course, there's the question of engine noise. Is there excessive rattling? Unfortunately, this is the minefield of second hand purchasing, so take a veteran of two-strokes with you. Much depends on who is selling. What does your gut instinct tell you about the integrity of the seller?

All this information is/was too academic for the 1970's teenagers, who learned that you could, if you were mad enough – and there were some that would – with the engine running and in gear, stand over the bike, weight on their feet, rev it, dump the clutch to spin the tyre, and sit down. And for them, it was the coolest bike ever; one that could raise the hairs on



the back of your neck, or send them grey in less than 13 seconds. The soft smell of rubber and slowly dissipating blue smoke, along with a thin black line on the Tarmac, was evidence that the Kwak had departed to trounce yet another Brit 650.

Indeed, its performance was everything that Kawasaki had promised, but heaven help you if you forgot to lean forward and put all your weight over that front wheel.

Restoration by Roy Deeley (Acme engineering), Cradley Heath, 07428 731291. ACME-MOTORCYCLES@HOTMAIL.COM

Above: This is the press; the thing that gets the crank apart

Top left: The 500 crank, now with new bearings and seals – essential stuff

Bottom left: It was often the excellent glossy paintwork that helped to clinch the deal

Below: I'm starting to wish I had one – it is rather beautiful





Kawasaki H1 500 triple

Steve Cooper, knower of all things Japanese, gives his take on whether a H1 could be a good idea for you.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH ONE OF the legendary 'Widow Makers' was riding pillion on a race tuned H1B, circa early 1974. This vile device screamed like a choir of banshees, handled appallingly two up and delivered vibrations through the seat and footrests like little else I've ever ridden. Was I hooked? No, just bloody traumatised!

If you're after the raw, moonshine, bootleg, distilled-in-the-back-yard 1970s two-stroke power experience, then a H1 is the weapon of choice. However, if you're looking for a degree of civility buy a Suzuki GT550, or a Yamaha RD350 if you want power and handling – it's all relative mind you!

The H1 Mach III was built to get Kawasaki's name out there and it unquestionably met that brief. It was the fastest 500 of the period and the swiftest down the quarter mile by some margin. Back then that was more than enough to gain both a reputation and enthusiastic customers. This was more

than enough to complete the mission while Kawasaki got on with designing big four-strokes.

As is the way with most period Japanese machinery – over the years the performance dropped as the handling improved – marginally. By the end of the model run, the 1975 H1F and 1976 KH500A8 were no longer the manic, evil-minded missiles they once were, but they could still surprise the unwary/naïve/stupid.

Throughout its lifespan the bike earned a reputation for bad handling which was, to some degree, justified. With too much weight on the rear end the earlier machines were always going to have questionable road manners, but over the years Kawasaki gradually managed to move more mass towards the front, but arguably never really addressed the issue.

Just like its 750 offsprings, the 500s always ride best on decent quality rubber inflated correctly, and a decent set of European shocks will never go amiss.

The bike changed a lot over its eight-year model life and it's relatively easy to come by a bitsa-cum-hybrid, so expert input is always a good idea. Many key parts for the earlier models are notoriously hard to source so an example missing vital components is best avoided. Exhaust systems are notoriously hard to find, air boxes fetch a king's ransom and the CDI units used on some of the models are expensive to repair. To add to the fun the H1E, H1F and KH500 run a perplexingly complex single phase, permanent magnet, alternator and that utilises five individual brushes!

Everyone should sample a H1 at least once, if only to decide whether they actually want one; some are instantly smitten whilst others walk away shaking their heads. If you still want one, buy a complete example not a bike in boxes – but be prepared to scale a learning curve. The H1 is significantly more than just your average 1970s stroker twin with an extra cylinder! **CBG**

“The H1 Mach III was built to get Kawasaki's name out there and it unquestionably met that brief. It was the fastest 500 of the period and the swiftest down the quarter mile by some margin.”

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BRITISH BIKE GUIDE

PART FOUR

This month's travel through the alphabetical maze of British manufacturers, we find Royal Enfield, Sunbeam and Triumph



ROYAL ENFIELD

From its Redditch works, RE built a remarkably wide and always respectable range of sensible staid singles and twins, which were at one time mostly famous for their inability to retain oil.

The company listed two ranges of singles, one based on the Bullet and the other on the unit-construction Crusader. There was also a rather nice Villiers-powered 250, the Turbo Twin, which is very rare.

The twins came in 500, 700 and 750 capacities, arguably the best of which were the late Interceptors, which have Norton forks and front wheel, and go as well as they look.

All heavy models used the Albion gearbox, which was outdated by 1956 and can be slow through the gears with an odd neutral-finder lever to play with. Spares for most models are very good, with much interchange between Brit-built Bullets and their Indian descendants.



Bullet

346cc ohv single || 365lb || 70mpg || 70mph || 1949-63

Enfield's rather underrated version of the trad Brit single, distinguished by intriguing detail design. Less common 500 version with more torque is perhaps a better machine, but both steer extremely well. British-built Bullets much more valued than Indian ones, but can benefit from upgrades using later

components from Indian machines, notably brakes. Tremendously practical machines for the classic rider and a perfect first old bike experience.

Prices:

low £2500 || high £5500



Bullet/Electra/Continental

346cc/499cc ohv single || 390lb || 80mpg || 80mph || 1955-present

Production of Bullets continued in Chennai, India, long after it ended in Blighty. Quality is dubious until mid-1990s, with incremental improvements since then. Official UK bikes always built to a better standard than grey imports.

Electra-X came with lean-burn engine and five-speed gearbox. Fuel-injection and unit construction from 2007. Latest version boosted to 535cc for café racer

Continental GT model. Heaps of choice, great value, excellent spares supply and enthusiast suppliers. If you fancy a classic riding experience without most of the angst, and if your pockets do not run to a Gold Star, try one.

Prices:
low £1200 || high £4000

Crusader

248cc ohv single || 330lb || 75mpg || 75mph || 1956-66

Unit construction single with good handling and oil leaks. Also offered with a five-speed gearbox (the Super 5), which had something of a reputation for unreliability.

Prices:
low £2000 || high £3000

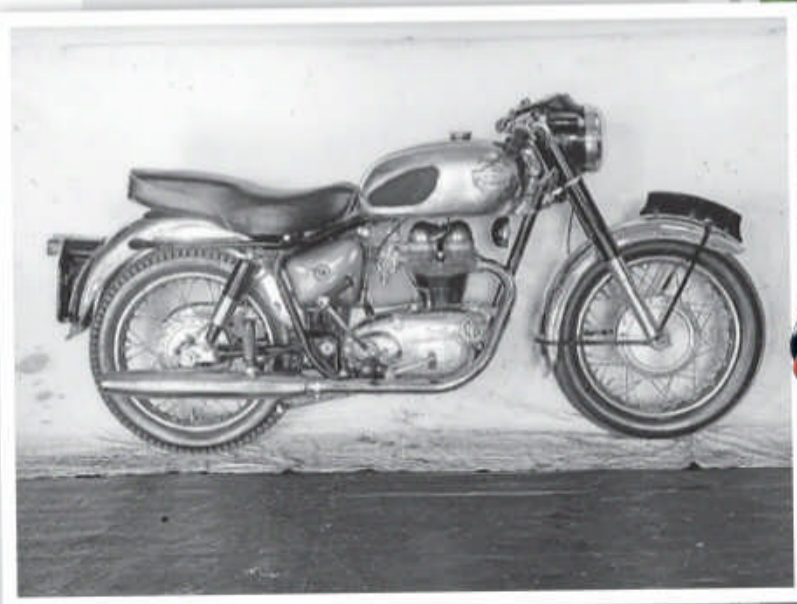
Continental

248cc ohv single || 320lb || 65mpg || 80mph || 1962-67

Re-styled version of the five-speed Crusader, with more watt, vibration and oil leaks. Many owners ditched the difficult five-speed gear cluster and replaced it with a four-speed set. Oddly heroic semi-racer styling on the GT model proved remarkably popular,

and the name lives on in the current new Indian offerings.

Prices:
low £3000 || high £5500





Constellation/Interceptor Mk.1
692cc/736cc ohv twin || 435lb || 45mpg || 110mph
|| 1958-68

A race-bred sports development of the Super Meteor. Very fast, but earned a deserved reputation for fragility and external lubrication.

The later and larger Interceptor Mk.1 was a little better. These beefy machines offer a price/performance balance which is currently rare among British bikes, so try one.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £7500



Interceptor Mk2
736cc ohv twin || 442lb || 112mph || 50mpg ||
1968-70

A serious contender for Britain's best-ever big (parallel) twin. A super re-design of the old engine lifted it into the near-bulletproof bracket. Crushing handsome good looks, good handling and an immense power spread, no oil leaks. Norton forks and front brake are very effective, and the only let-down is the gearbox, which has a chasm between third and top. The Rickman-framed offspring is sheer magic, but it was all too late to stop RE from going under.

Prices:
low £5500 || high £11,500

Meteor Minor
496cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 85mph || 1959-63

Developed from the rare '500 Twin', the small RE twin is a much underrated machine, which goes and handles very well, although some spares can be elusive. Unjustly ignored by far too many riders for far too long,

this combination of a 500 engine in a 250 bicycle deserves more than just a second glance.

Prices:
low £2500 || high £4500



Clipper
248cc ohv single || 350lb || 85mpg || 60mph ||
1953-57

Gentle and rare. Even rose-tinted retro-vision doesn't help much with the performance.

Prices:
low £1750 || high £2200



Super Meteor
692cc ohv twin || 430lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1952-60

Another underrated twin from Redditch, with good manners and excellent rideability. Very good tourer. Developed into the Constellation for 1959, with better styling, better handling, less

reliability and 110mph. Try one and be (pleasantly) surprised.

Prices:
low £3250 || high £5500

SCOTT

Made post-war in Birmingham by the Aerco Jig and Tool Company, which took over production from the Shipley factory and compromised the long-established specification with sophistication that just seemed to add weight. An intriguing mix of old and almost modern with sweet manners if you're not in a great hurry. Remember, Scott engines are two-stroke twins and are not like any other engine you'll have encountered. Only ever buy one from someone you trust who knows what they're selling. Fascinating machines, with ingenious solutions to problems you didn't know existed.



Squirrel

596cc two-stroke twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 80mph || 1947-mid 60s

Quirky, torquey, and for the individualist only. Changes a plenty over the years. Unique. Absorbing to own and rewarding to ride.

Prices:

low £6000 || high £10,000

SUNBEAM

The Sunbeam name was acquired by BSA (from AMC) during the Second World War and was re-launched in 1946 as an upmarket tourer. Sadly, the S7/S8 series machines were never fully developed and sales were disappointing. Most wearing

spares available from one major and expert source. Clever engineering, well made and a true alternative to all other British 500cc parallel twins, the unique ohc inline twin engine is an underrated gem from its day.



S7

490cc ohc in-line twin || 490lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1946-47

Intended as the ideal touring motorcycle, with a rubber mounted, unit construction, understressed power unit, driving via a shaft. Comfortable and handsome, but the S7 was let down by sluggish performance and ponderous handling.

Prices:

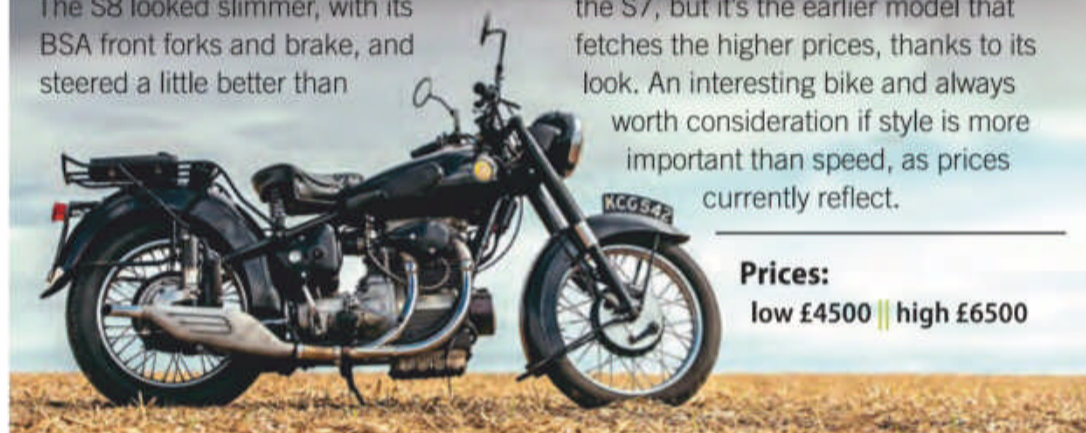
low £4500 || high £8500

S8

490cc ohc in-line twin || 490lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1948-57

The S8 looked slimmer, with its BSA front forks and brake, and steered a little better than

the S7, but it's the earlier model that fetches the higher prices, thanks to its look. An interesting bike and always worth consideration if style is more important than speed, as prices currently reflect.



Prices:

low £4500 || high £6500

Tiger 100

498cc ohv twin || 370lb || 60mpg || 100mph || 1946-57

Sports version of the 5T, with same comments and more performance. The all alloy engine is a rattler, but is a mover – it's a shame so many ended up in Tritons and Tribsas. Riding an early swinging arm model can be (a little too) exciting, though the TR5 off-road models are simply

superb. Like all pre-unit Triumph twins, prices are rising steadily again, for many reasons... including fashion.

Prices:

low £4000 || high £8500, TR5 a lot more



TRIUMPH

These chaps started the British obsession with parallel twins just before the Second World War and kept them in production until 1988 (latterly at the LF Harris works in Devon), before John Bloom began again at Hinckley. The excellent availability of spares for most of the post-war models makes them very popular with riders in the classic world, and they are indeed very practical and plentiful bikes. Huge numbers of US-spec Bonnies and Tridents have come back from the States, along with quantities of NOS spares. Triumphs are often mechanically noisy, and with less than perfect steering on the 1950s and early-60s twins. Triumph also built some oddly pleasant scooters — they're really alternative! Spares supply is ample (but quality variable); the owners' club is active and enthusiastic, and both twins and triples have benefited greatly from modern re-engineered components. If you absolutely must have a Triumph then you'll happily pay the price premium that the badge commands, but if you started here simply because it's a familiar name then go look at BSAs for a softer entry to classic Brits. Lady Hinckley Triumphs have achieved 'classic' status already.



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TR6 Trophy

649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 55mpg || 105mph || 1954-73

American originated semi off-roader, which through the years evolved for the UK as a roadster replacement for the Thunderbird, with more stability and similar performance. Bonneville improvements usually ended up on the Trophies too, and many consider the single-carb engines to be sweeter than the twin-carb Bonnies. Engine prefix TR6P denotes an ex-police bike. US and UK versions of these machines can differ widely, and many export machines are on the home market now. The Thunderbird name was also used for the late (1981-83) short-stroke TR65; an excellently revvy rider's machine but fairly unusual.

Prices:

low £5000 || high £10,000

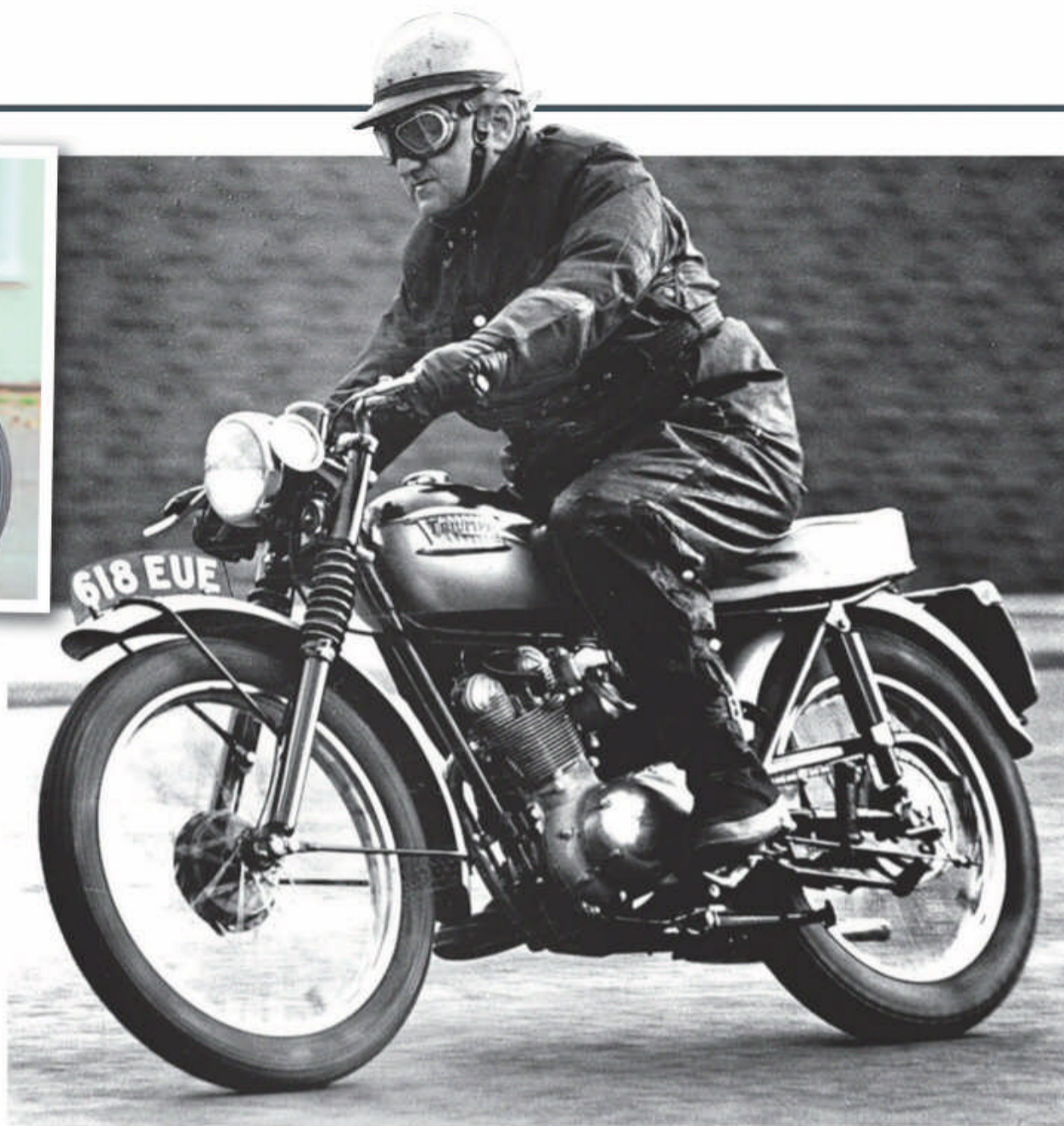
TR25, Blazer SS

249cc ohv single || 320lb || 55mpg || 80mph || 1971-72

A neat street scrambler based around the BSA B25, which is identical bar the styling and badges. Don't be put off by their poor reputation; used sensibly, with frequent oil changes, they can be fun and practical to ride. Triumphs appear to fetch higher prices than BSA, oddly. The oil-bearing frame is excellent; two different front brakes were used, both can be made to work well. Earlier TR25W Trophy is as uninspired as the BSA Starfire, which it really is.

Prices:

low £1250 || high £3200



Tiger Cub

198cc ohv single || 230lb || 85mpg || 65mph || 1954-68

Developed from the earlier 150cc Terrier, the Tiger Cub was a great learner bike of its day. Sold in off-road form as well as roadster, many have also been converted for use in pre-65 trials. Some suffered from weird wiring, weak brakes and big-end bearings. The late ones are probably the best,

with the BSA Bantam rolling chassis. Massively popular today, and priced way beyond their rarely exciting performance.

Prices:

low £2500 || high £4500

3TA Twenty One

348cc ohv twin || 360lb || 70mpg || 80mph || 1957-68

Also called the Twenty One (21 cu in = 350cc), this was the first unit-construction Triumph. Bizarre 'bathtub' rear-end styling makes them stand out; odd handling, feeble brakes and sporadic sparks make you wonder why they sold so well. Sporty version was the Tiger 90, which was nicer and lasted a year

longer. When fitted with more modern electrics to aid their reliability, these are another example of a current shift away from big heavy twins to lighter, more handleable machines.

Prices:

low £3500 || high £5500



5T Speed Twin

498cc ohv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 90mph || 1946-57

Early post-war models have weak forks and brakes, copious leaks, rattles and poor roadholding. No wonder they sold well! Avoid anything with a sprung hub if you enjoy riding rapidly. Engine is sweet and willing, and just a few miles will reveal the reason for the enduring popularity of Triumph's twins. Despite their weaknesses,

they are fine riding machines. Spares availability is excellent, and the quality of those spares has improved radically in recent years. Very active club too, and the rigid twins are riding high.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £8000



Tiger 110

649cc ohv twin || 420lb || 60mpg || 109mph || 1953-61

Sporting upgrade of the 6T, and an entirely pleasant machine to ride, the T110 was intended to be the fast 650 demanded by the Americans, who bought boatloads of them. Eclipsed by the arrival of the T120 Bonneville in 1959,

the T110 was phased out soon after. The last year, 1961, was a particularly fine machine, with a unique-for-the-year duplex frame.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £7500

TR65 Thunderbird

649cc ohv twin || 408lb || 75mpg || 100mph || 1981-82

Truly excellent short-stroke short-lived version of the oily frame Triumph twin, basically a TR7 Tiger with the stroke reduced to 71.5mm (from 82mm). Intended as an economy entry-level Triumph, the originals boasted very little chrome, no tacho, a black finish to many of the engine covers, a drum rear brake, and a single-sided black coated exhaust. Later machines were offered with both tacho and a conventional exhaust. Highly recommended. Smooth, easy starters, and just about unburstable. If you stumble over an example of the seriously rare trial version,



the TR65T, do not hesitate. A rare gem indeed.

Prices:
low £3500 || high £6000, TR65ST very rare and expensive



6T Thunderbird

649cc5 ohv twin || 400lb || 95mph || 1950-61

Big, soft and smoothish tourer with customary Triumph plus and minus points. Sports version was the Tiger 110 (1954-61), which was faster without too much vibration. The iron-head 650 with a sprung hub frame is viewed by some as the best of all Triumphs, and they are excellent riding

machines. The current fashion for bobbers and the like has raised the awareness of tele-rigid machines too, so do not hesitate too long before buying.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £7500

T120 Bonneville (Unit construction)

649cc ohv twin || 410lb || 50mpg || 115mph || 1963-74

The unit Bonnie. The most famous British twin of them all; hugely well documented development history fills many books (buy one). 1966-70 bikes fetch the highest prices and are arguably the best of a good bunch. Look for the excellent brakes, small tanks and decent

12v electrics. 1971-74 oily-framed five-speeders (T120V) are the safest, with a disc as well as the fifth gear, and they are easily the cheapest.

Prices:
low £5000 || high £12,000



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BRITISH BIKE GUIDE

5TA

498cc ohv twin || 385lb || 50mpg || 85mph || 1958-66

Unit-construction replacement for the 5T, with 'bathtub' rear enclosure, puny frame and a monster front mudguard. Crisp engine, interesting handling at speed, almost adequate brakes. The engine is faster than the frame; excitement guaranteed.

The T100A was the first unit Tiger 100; looked more like a motorcycle, and lasted until 1961. It was followed by the T100SS (1962-65), the T100 (1966), took a great leap forward to become the T100S (1967-70), and the T100T (1967-70) with a quicker motor. This became the T1000 (1971-72), and finally the T100F7 Daytona (1971-73). Later models are usually better and some really handsome machines have been repatriated down the years, too. Original bathtub enclosures are now very hard to find (riders of the time did the wise thing and binned them), although re-manufactured items surface every so often. Practical fun bikes, with much charm and relatively light weight.

Prices:

low £3500 || high £6000



T140 Bonneville 750

744cc ohv twin || 440lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1973-88

A symbol of the dark days of industrial unrest at Triumph's Meriden, Coventry works, the Bonnie somehow weathered the storm and remained available. It sold on character alone, and was kept in production after the final demise of the Triumph Engineering Co. by LF Harris, finally being withdrawn in 1988 to make way for his new Matchless G80 model. First T140s were actually 725cc, but those are rare now. UK versions suffered from some dire styling, while the US versions always looked a lot better. Early models are usually faster, though as the years passed and development resources shrank, the big battle was to maintain compliance with US

emissions standards. This effectively reduced the performance to keep down the noise. Late machines are arguably the best, with some very attractive limited-edition models, and with a usually effective electric start taking the strain. Clean Bing carbs are less desirable, but the US market demanded them, and it's easy enough to regain that lost performance. Affordable and reliable, if not as charming as older incarnations. The first and last of the classic Brit twins?

Prices:

low £3500 || high £8000

TR5T Adventurer

498cc ohv twin || 330lb || 80mph || 1973-74

Triumph 500 unit twin engine in oil-bearing 250 single scrambler cycle parts. Fairly rare, under-geared and under-braked, but handsome, popular and frisky. One of the most peculiar exhausts ever, and unique instruments!

Prices:

low £5000 || high £7500



T150/T160 Trident

740cc ohv triple || 503lb || 37mpg || 120mph || 1968-75

Fast and exciting, with excellent steering and early 750 Superbike performance. The disc-braked versions stop well, and the electric-start T160 is a very fine all-rounder

indeed. A little more money, reliability and further development could have kept the Tridents in production for several more years, and had the T180 Thunderbird III made it into production it could have sold well. Everyone should have one, at least once. Good spares supply; several specialists

have continued development and improved reliability, but they still require dedicated owner input. And as well as being rapid, they're also thirsty for both fuel and oil.

Prices:

low £4500 || high £10,000



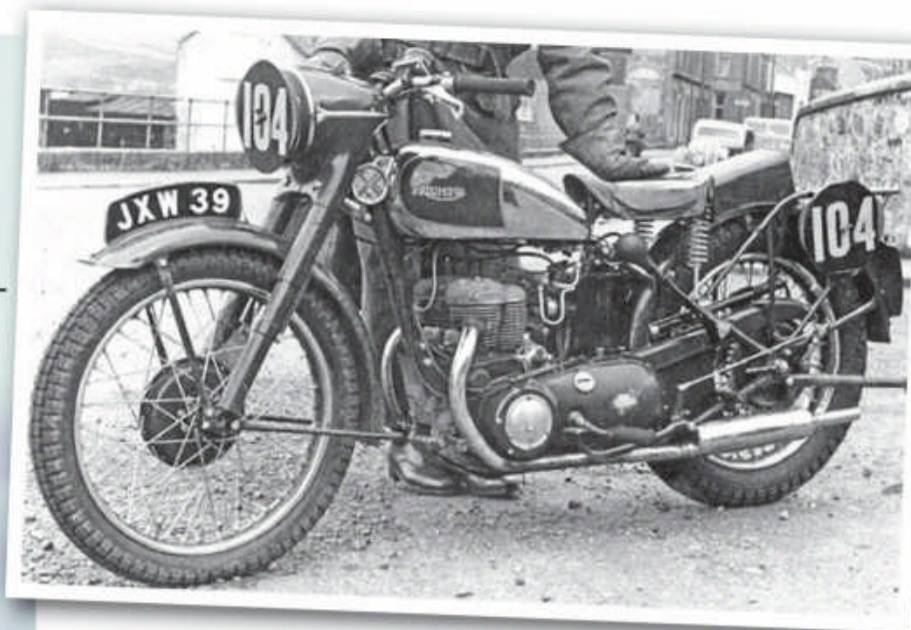
T120 Bonneville (Pre-unit)

649cc ohv twin || 400lb || 50mpg || 110mph || 1959-62

Super-sports pre-unit 650; always a favourite among café racers, with lots of power, noise, shakes and wild handling at speed. A cracker, but beware fake lash-ups at high prices. The Bonneville

name adds to the price, but if you must have one...

Prices:
low £7500 || high £15,000



TRW

498cc sv twin || 375lb || 65mpg || 70mph || 1948-65

Quietly charming military machine; delightful, if leisurely. Rigid rear end and sprung saddle provides 'vintage' feel, with added benefit of reasonable brakes. Many parts interchangeable with Trophy trials model, so many were converted. Many were civilianised after being demobbed; modern ironies find numerous examples now converted back to military trim.

Prices:
low £4250 || high £6500



TR7 Tiger 750

744cc ohv twin || 440lb || 60mpg || 110mph || 1973-88

Single-carb version of the Bonnie. Similar performance, less charisma than the T140, but in many ways a preferable machine. Smoother, usually, easier to keep in tune, and a little more frugal, not least because of the single

Amal carb. Super-rare bright yellow TR7T Tiger Trail is a gem... if you can find one.

Prices:
low £4500 || high £7500, TR7T a lot more

TSX

744cc ohv twin || 421lb || 55mpg || 100mph || 1981-82

A fascinating attempt by Meriden Triumph to produce a 'soft chopper' — a factory custom. Bonneville powerplant and main frame, but with clever styling tweaks and a 16" back wheel coupled with detail changes to produce a striking and unusual machine. Few sold, so rare and overpriced, but charming to ride as well as stand-out distinctive, while retaining the T140 virtues of excellent spares availability and easy-to-live-with-ness.

Prices:
low £6500 || high £9500



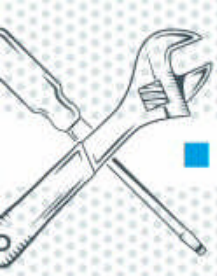
TSS

744cc ohv twin || 420lb || 45mpg || 120mph || 1982-83

A Bonnie with an eight-valve head. A little more performance and a certain cachet, maybe, but uncertain reliability. The machine should have provided a sporting performance, and was certainly faster than a contemporary T140, but a lack of development resources denied it a decent run. Eight-valves, twin discs, an electric start and subtle styling — as well as rarity — command high prices. Get past the almost inevitable initial problems and discover the charming, rapid machine Triumph always intended the TSS to be.

Prices:
low £6000 || high £10,000





How to:

Seal a fuel tank

We look at the job many of us will have to face at some point; sealing our tank

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY: MATT

WITH MASSIVE THANKS TO IAN POTTER AT TANK CARE PRODUCTS –
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THERE ARE MANY REASONS YOU NEED TO SEAL A fuel tank. Steel tanks often suffer from rust and corrosion getting into the petrol and blocking fuel systems, or worse, water sitting in the fuel for years while stored and corroding the tank completely. Glass fibre tanks can also suffer, especially from ethanol damage. Plastic tanks are not immune either, with some modern tanks swelling from modern fuels. You may need to replace an existing sealer, as there could be splits, or rust could have formed underneath. You can change the rubber hoses and even carburettor floats; but tanks need to be sealed.



OUR TANK

Our 1989 R100RT tank was rusty from an excess of water and condensation building up over years. We know this because there were pinholes in the top of the tank as well as the bottom near the tap exits! And most boxer tanks I've seen of this era have a red coating inside, which is probably an anti-corrosion coating from new. Neville had brazed and then leaded the tank holes, but we wanted to seal it to be sure.

DIY OR NOT?

The kit to do a large tank like the BMW (the largest kit Ian does) was £60, which included the rust removers, but not the petseal remover. Then you need brushes, plugs, tape, mixing jugs and possibly blasting or welding equipment. The job can be a horrible one, which takes time and needs space and certain tools. You can have a go like we did, because you're as tight as me, or because you wanted to have a go yourself (my excuse). Or, for a reasonable hourly rate, Ian at Tank Care Products will happily treat your tank for you, using his special blasting tools, ovens and TIG welding ability where needed. He also offers tank painting and vinyl logos. Ring Ian on 07834 415921 for an idea of cost.

WHAT IS TANK SEALER?

As anyone who has got petrol in their eyes knows, it's not nice stuff. So to protect your tank from petrol takes an equally potent material, which chemically adheres itself strongly to the inside of your tank. A sealer should last for years and withstand hot and cold weather, the odd knock and, of course, being always immersed in petrol. But thanks to the awkward shape of a fuel tank and the limited ways to get a sealer in, this is a tricky job to get right and the key is all in the prep, according to Ian, at Tank Care Products, who helped us seal our BMW tank. Ian's sealer is a two-pack epoxy sealer, which is regularly adjusted to suit the latest petrol ingredients.

STEP ONE: PREPARING THE TANK - WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

Irrespective of the sealer, you need to make sure the tank is cleaned and prepared inside or nothing will stick to it. If it has an old sealer in, that needs to be dissolved, rust needs to be converted and removed and old, stale fuel also needs to go. It goes without saying that most of the chemicals and acids used here are not nice to say the least, so gloves, protecting paintwork and ventilation need to be seriously tackled.

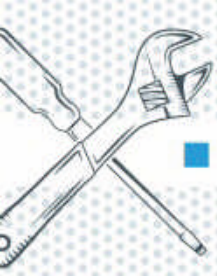
Tanks have one or two holes in for fuel taps, pumps or even fuel level gauges. These need to be bunged up with stout dowels, as they will also need to be



removed several times and then re-instated. Larger holes may need gaffer tape to fill.

Lastly, you need to consider temperature, depending on what the sealer manufacturer recommends. Ian has found his epoxy sealer

works around 22°C or above for the sealer to flow well. Too cold and you will risk not getting full coverage, so Ian also has an insulated area with heat lamps to help.



REMOVING SEALER

To remove an old sealer you'll need to soak the tank for several days with a 'petseal remover', that soaks into the old sealer and either dissolves it, dries it out or otherwise attacks it so you can get it out. Some bungs will have to be made for any tap outlets, from wood, cork or dowel. Messy and time consuming, how long it takes depends on the old sealer. "It's not uncommon for me to have to cut holes underneath a tank to get areas you can't reach from the filler, or even to remove large lumps of old sealer," explains Ian. Once you're happy all the sealer has gone, it's time to tackle any rust or corrosion.



The next few stages will take a few hours and need to be done in quick succession to prevent rust forming and to get a good finish.

REMOVING OLD FUEL AND GREASE

This degreasant is mainly to remove stale, emulsified fuel deposits or grease which could protect the rust from the rust killer. Mixed with warm water, it doesn't take much (think Jizer), but is essential to help the new sealer get a firm grip on the tank. Rinse out.

REMOVING RUST

Our tank hadn't been sealed before, but it was rusty and it had suffered from pinholes, which Nev had filled, but we wanted to make sure. Some rust removers claim to make the rust back into steel, but I cannot see how that works, so prefer the ones that remove the rust using acid. This was what Ian provided and included a rust remover which you keep in for several hours, regularly shaking the tank. Ironically it's mixed with hot water, but does do a good job of clearing the rust, just like the rust killer you would use on bodywork. ▶



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REMOVING RUST (2)

As the rust remover is finally removed, flash rusting could occur. So in the kit is a rust removing powder you mix with water again, which will help prevent this rapid flash rusting.



PREP FOR SEALING

As the tank needs to be clean, grease-free and dry to take the sealer, the final prep is an alcohol-based liquid that helps to dry the tank out. A few shakes to get into all the nooks and crannies and then let it out. Now dry with compressed air for several minutes. Some have used vacuum cleaners taped to the filler with success, while I used a blower used to dry bikes after cleaning, which worked a treat.



SEALER

The two-pack sealer comes pre-measured, so you just need to find something to pour it all into and stir it up. As the BMW tank is so large, I needed to cut up a milk bottle, but it worked fine. As you stir it the grey hardener lets you see if any part hasn't mixed thoroughly, then pour it in, making a note of how quickly it is moving.

This is where I found it tricky. With tape firmly over the filler hole, I'd been used to shaking the previous concoctions, but the sealer is much slower to move around inside. And it is going off all the time, so you have to plan where it's been and where it needs to go. With 750ml in the BMW tank there was plenty, but because you cannot hear it splashing around, I found it tricky to keep a track of

where I'd covered. So I had to keep removing the tape on the filler and peering in with a torch to see!

Ian's tips were essential. Make sure the top of the bridge and the front and back are covered - areas he often sees have not been covered well enough. Don't be afraid to use a fine art brush attached to a stout piece of wire if you need to touch up the breather tube, or any other parts not covering. And as said, make sure the temperature is warm enough to keep the sealer moving inside.

Once you're happy it is all covered inside, including the filler, drain the remaining sealer into the bin through the fuel tap holes. The tank will now need around 6-7 days to cure, with the more air flowing through to remove vapours, the better. Ian uses (and sells) mini USB-powered fans to help. ▶

ADVERTORIAL

PAIN RELIEF DELIGHTS DAVID!

Biker, David Revill of Nottinghamshire had been in constant pain for years. He had problems with his hands, neck, spine and elbow. When his friend told him he should try a Bioflow magnetic therapy wristband, David contacted independent distributor, Jenny Ryan.

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results. Sheila says, "I'm getting out of chairs much more easily and my frozen shoulder is much better. I'm now getting a good night's sleep for the first time in years and people keep telling me I've got my smile back!"

Barry says, "I felt an improvement very quickly. I'm now walking further and have been unexpectedly signed off from my physiotherapy as I've improved so much. It's great to be able to get about without help. Last week I started taking my bike out again and am absolutely thrilled at the thought of getting back to riding it regularly."

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HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S WORKED?

Some tanks should be easy to see inside, while others, like the BMW one, are very tricky, thanks to the large bridge in the middle. I used a powerful shooting torch through the tap hole and a dentist's mirror to check around, with the only part needing a little more being the breather tube. Luckily there was enough left in the milk bottle and I could reach with an artist's brush. If there are larger areas you've missed, you can add more sealer as long as you do it before the sealer has cured.

WOULD I DO IT AGAIN?

No, to be honest. I would pay someone like Ian to do it. Mainly because they have all the extra tools that make the job easier like sand blasting and welding, they know what to do and there is so much to go wrong if you don't get it right. I'm glad I've tried it, the tank seems to be alright, but next time I'll happily pass the job on! **CBG**





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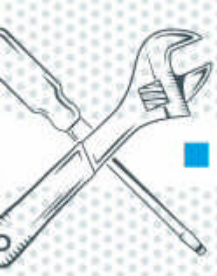
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WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT



New/old stock rings had surface rust, but cleaned up alright

THINK I'M LEARNING MORE ABOUT MYSELF THAN I AM about British bikes with this Norton. What I know is less than I think, my confidence is less than I presume and jobs I've never done take so much more time because I'm not used to doing it. And like anyone else who is working, trying to find time for projects is a never-ending challenge. So while hold-ups are crushing, every success is a big success.

Last month I hated the bike. It was my fault; I'd rushed putting the engine together and ruined the piston oil ring. So I left it untouched and certainly unloved, for several weeks. And then I realised it was close to deadline (I'm writing this as I go to the printers tomorrow) so I had to start again – quickly!

PUT A RING ON IT

Luckily I had ordered a new set of +0.30in rings at another £54. These were blatantly new/old stock, Wellworthy compression rings and a Hepolite oil control ring, so all good. But despite the original greaseproof paper, they had got damp at some stage and were all suffering from light rusting. This seemed to come off with an oily rag and didn't affect the scraping side as much as the top and bottom, so I'll just run them.

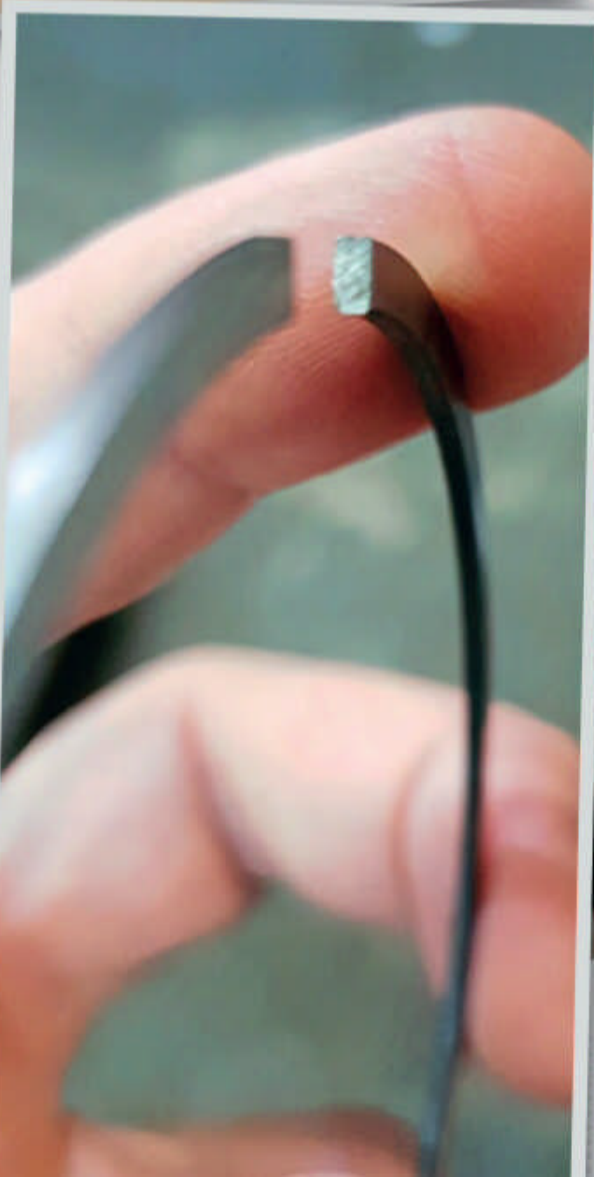


Above: Head studs back in tightly

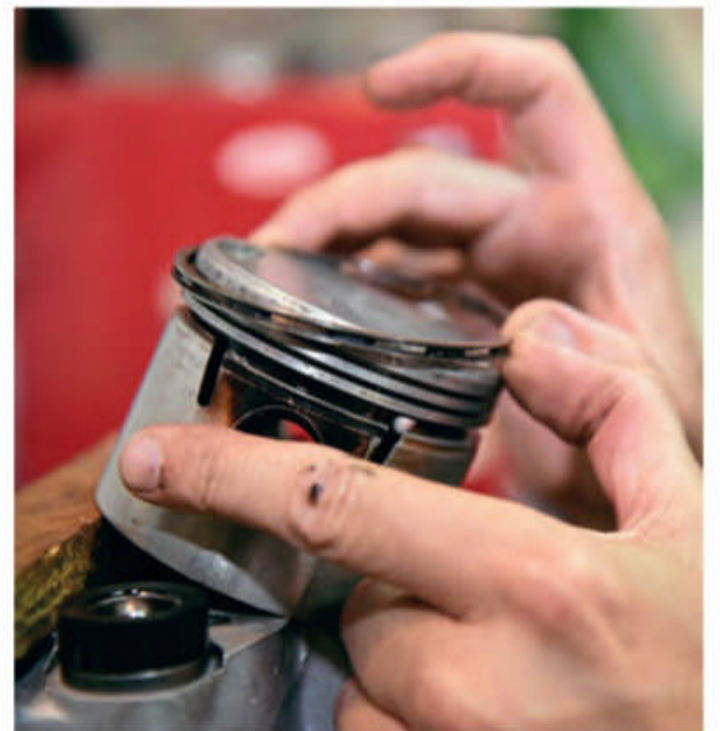
Left: Top ring was marked 'TOP', which helped

Left: But middle ring didn't and needed a magnifying glass to see shape of ring to dictate how to fit

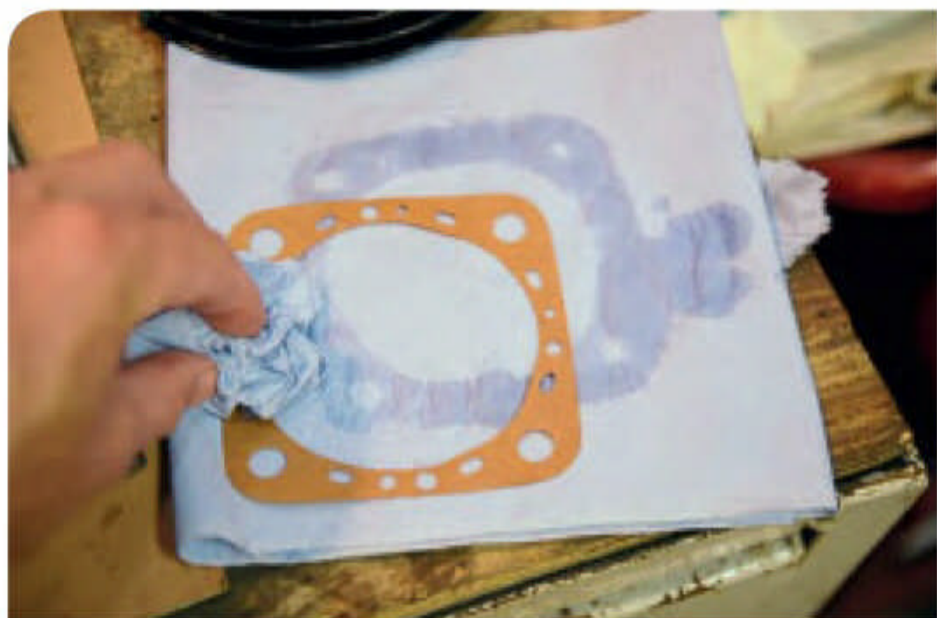
After checking the ring gap in the bore as was suggested on the old ring wrapping, the new rings went on easily enough, with just thumbs as tools and plenty of oil. After that I made sure the ring gaps were all 120 degrees apart to prevent too much blow by, then carefully, very carefully, and using just my fingernails, eased the rings into the barrel. There was no drama, no need to think about using tools and within a minute the barrel was in place – well nearly... ▶



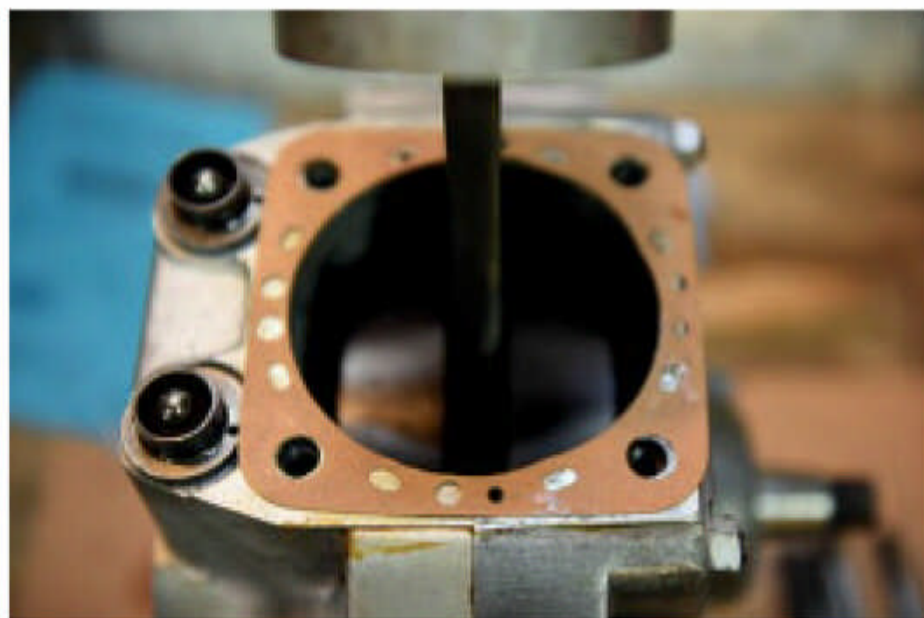
After checking rings were right length



It was time to fit up, then space gaps 120 degrees apart



Soaking the base gasket to come back to size, then drying out



Three oilways need to be clear, so Wellseal helped stick the gasket in place



Above: Rings in, gasket fits - whatever next?

Left: Head gasket also doesn't fit - Oh well, should be glad you can still buy parts for 60-year-old bikes...

SHRINKY DINKY

If you read last month, you may remember the base gasket was too small and Nev had suggested it had dried out and needed soaking in warm water. Duly done, it was then a case of drying off and fitting it with some Wellseal to make sure it didn't block the three oilways that go from the crankcases up the barrel to lubricate the rockers and so on.

It still wasn't a perfect fit and some deft scalpel work was needed to clear the pushrod tubes and oilways. Later on I'd find the head gasket was also a poor fit too, needing some considerable time to enlarge the inner hole to fit over the barrel. They came with the bike, so not sure where they came from and I guess I should be lucky you can still get parts for 60-year-old bikes in 2020.



Left: Oil pump got a good working with oil and feels like new

Below: Putting the cam gears back in place

BOTTOM END ISSUES

With the barrel on, that visual improvement gave me a real push. So on went the cams and timing gears with a new woodruff key to hold the pinion gear to the crankshaft. Then on went the worm gear for the oil pump drive, which is a reverse thread. But I stopped there, to inspect the pump itself. At first it felt stiff, but with some oil in, it quickly felt smooth, if tight still, which I would say is about right. It is recommended not to open it up and a new one costs around £200, so I will run with it as when it comes to starting it up I can see if the oil is being worked through. And it saves another £200.

The timing gears, or cam gears, have shims fitted to eliminate end float. While nothing has changed, I want to set this up correctly, but while I can check for 'perceptible' float on the inlet cam, the exhaust cam can only be tested while the crankcases are apart, so I'll have to put that one down to learning.

The oil pump fitted up once the studs were fitted, but I had to turn the crankshaft to fit the worm gear to the gear on the pump. So I made sure there was plenty of oil down the bore. Mental note – don't stand behind the bike when it's started up... ➤



“The exhaust cam can only be tested while the crankcases are apart – so I’ll have to put that one down to learning.”



Above: Double valve springs and modified spring seats fitted



Right: Using the lathe to get the spring seat to sit flush with new valve guides

GETTING AHEAD

Now I'm buzzing, so on with the head. With the brand new (and massive) valves fully lapped in and the new over-size guides fitted, it was time to fit the valves. When I bought the bike there was a bag of new springs, but they measured the same as the old ones, so I have some spare valve springs. However, the spring seats and spring caps and valve collets are original, and while one set fitted, the other spring seat didn't fit around the new valve guide. I tried filing the .30 or so needed, but I was getting nowhere with hardened steel. So it was on to the lathe and I took it out just enough to fit around the guide. It's little jobs like this that really make the engine and indeed the bike feel like your own.

Next, I found all the parts needed to put together the rocker box. But they could all really do with a visit to the blasting cabinet, so that can wait. The pushrod tubes also have poorly-looking chrome; I could buy new ones, but can't afford to replace something just because it doesn't look good, so I may blast them and paint them, or I'd really like to buy some copper tubes from Mike Pemberton at Pushrod Performance – but I haven't dared ring up to enquire yet...

Below: We're not there yet, but we're getting a little closer

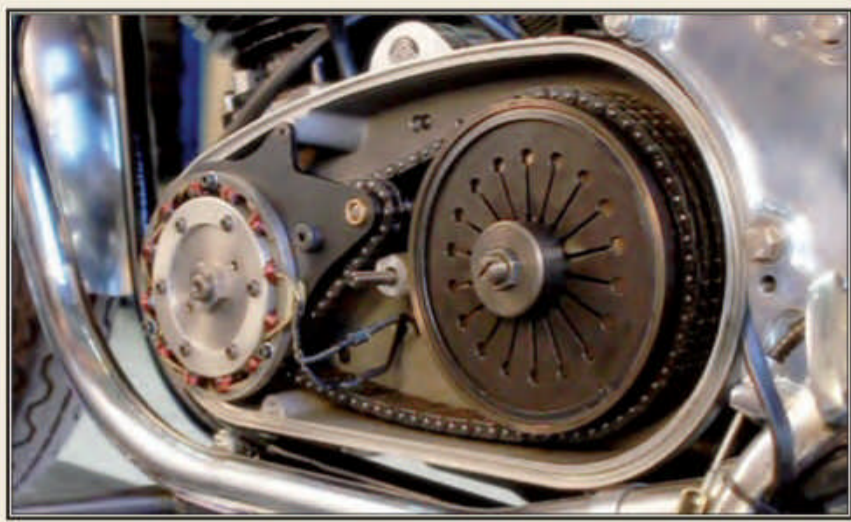
CARB DIET

Lastly, I put the Amal 376 Monobloc together, after cleaning most of it up. I also ordered a spares kit of needle and jets, plus any gaskets and a shiny new throttle twist grip. I'll make up the cables and I'll order or find a choke lever as I forgot that!

WHAT'S NEXT?

Once deadline is over I'm going to spend a morning blasting so I can get the rocker box together and the head fitted. With timing gear set up and dynamo drive sorted, it should be time to fit the engine, so I best get the plates painted. Forks need finishing, gearbox needs checking, tyres, brakes; oh blimey. But we're starting to make progress. **CBG**





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HONDA MTX200 rare nice restored condition, 1984, B reg, red, white and blue, gold anodized rims, little bit of history, import model, 4k, some previous MoTs, realistic offers, £3150 ono. Tel. 07812 603393. Bristol.

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KAWASAKI ZL1000 1987, spares or repair, no accident damage, all parts present, offers. Tel. 07964 482455. Berks.

MOTO DUCATI 98cc Sport, 1956 for restoration, very complete, largely untouched, has NOVA paperwork, ideal Future Moto Giro machine, only selling due to purchase of Morini, a scarce sporty early Ducati Lightweight just pre Taglioni, £1200 ovno. Tel. Simon 01284 753973; 07783 277629. Suffolk.

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HONDA XBR500 David Silver replica exhaust system brand new change of plans no longer required cost £380 accept, £280 collect or plus postage. Tel. Derek 07754 534366. West Yorkshire.

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MZ SCORPION wanted, bashed crashed or abandoned project. Tel. Mark 07775 811417. East Sussex. Email. markfairweather11@hotmail.com

TRIUMPH 5TA FORKS 1966, wanted yokes not require. Email macdonald864@btinternet.com North Yorkshire.

WANTED PANTHER Model 10/4 parts or whole donor bike, mainly need front Earles fork, front wheel hub, seat and engine (Villers 9E 4 speed) Tel. David 07673 31809. Aberdeenshire.

YAMAHA YDS5 PARTS anything considered even a complete bike, WHY? Tel. Richard 07769 715916. Lincs.

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Miscellaneous

BOOKS Classic Bike Service Guide (Jeff Clew), brand new, £18. The Book of the Triumph Twins, 1969, good clean copy, hardback, some wear, £12. Motorcycle Care and Maintenance (David Frost), hardback, pages yellowed but otherwise very good, £12. Tel. Ron 02086 995307. London.

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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Nights are drawing in; time to don that autumn anorak...

“Although it is cheerily charming, chock-full of character and charisma, it is also very slow, poorly braked and steers precariously, and its dual seat and jampot rear ‘suspension’ combine in a spine-threatening way to make every decent ride a sales opportunity for any passing chiropractor”

THIS MOST PECULIAR OF YEARS HAS SEEN terrible things done to my previously decently large store of parts. The Shed contains a lot of them, parts, that is, and lots of them are what we currently refer to as ‘new old stock’. In other words they date from the time when the bikes were at least vaguely current and have never been previously used. NOS (you can work that out) has become some sort of bizarre mantra, suggesting that they are rare golden nuggets panned from the old bike timestream by wise, nay prescient, chaps bent on preserving our motorcycling heritage. Which may of course be true, however...

I’ve been practicing Pointless Rebuild Therapy for several months now, and this has confirmed what I had always feared to be true: lots of the parts packed into 1950s, 60s and even 70s famous marque packaging are just junk. Sad but true.

Here’s another only mild surprise: the older the parts, the more likely they are to be of decent quality. For shining example: I have recently been retaining my battered sanity by hurling both abuse and spanners at a most glorious AJS which is the same age as I am, almost exactly. Weird, huh? To be effective, PRT needs to involve endless messing about fixing things, but not actually with a genuine intention of getting the bike back on the road. Just hurling those spanners and that abuse to produce a runner, not necessarily a rider.

And why? Where is the reasoning in that?

Because I remember why I stopped riding the old AJS in the first place. Although it is cheerily charming, chock-full of character and charisma, it is also very slow, poorly braked and steers precariously, and its dual seat and jampot rear ‘suspension’ combine in a spine-threatening way to make every decent ride a sales opportunity for any passing chiropractor. I replaced the 1953 AJS with a 1966 AJS, which was impossibly better in every sense. And I have not become younger nor fitter since 1984 or so. Trust me on this.

Happily, I was able to source almost every part of the old Ajay, which demanded replacement from my buried piles of parts, most of them NOS. There is a huge satisfaction

involved here. I stared sadly at the deeply corroded studs, which hold together the front engine plates. They’re original, cadmium plated, and their nuts are seized solid. They also look vile. A furtive scratch of the memory cell suggests that I bought a set from Happy Hamrax in the late 1970s for this very bike and have lugged them around through several house moves, only two of which were caused by divorces.

I park my Howard Carter replica archaeologist’s hat at a jaunty angle and begin the dig. It doesn’t take long to unearth that exact bundle of bits, still in their oily brown paper wrapping. They are still as-new, still caddy plated and still have their AMC factory nuts and beautifully chamfered washers. Of course I don’t fit them. They’re too good for that. They can wait until I restore the bike, possibly in 2053 to celebrate our joint centenary. Meanwhile, I strip out the corroded originals and clean them up. This takes days, and is almost as satisfying in a PRT sense as reclaiming the 1953 petrol tap, which I’ve also accomplished at the cost of only several hours and a pair of NOS replacement corks. All is joy.

A little while ago, and for no sane reason, I rebuilt a 1971 BSA. As my youth was indeed satisfyingly mis-spent, I also have a lot of NOS spares for that, mainly because in 1973 or so dealers were just throwing them all away. I can reveal that most of them are scrap and do not fit. I can similarly reveal that there is no spanner satisfaction in re-discovering this sad fact several times.

Which would have been less of a concern in normal autumns, where a chap could don his autumn anorak (and if anyone gets that reference, claim your £5 note from the Editor) and delve deep into those piles of random bits you can only find at autojumbles. The problem here is plain; as I write this there are almost no jumbles on the horizon, and none of the famous few are near me.

Oh well. This is plainly A Sign. It is plain that I should dig out another 1950s AMC relic and perform another almost pointless resurrection. And why not? Pass me the hammers... **CBG**

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

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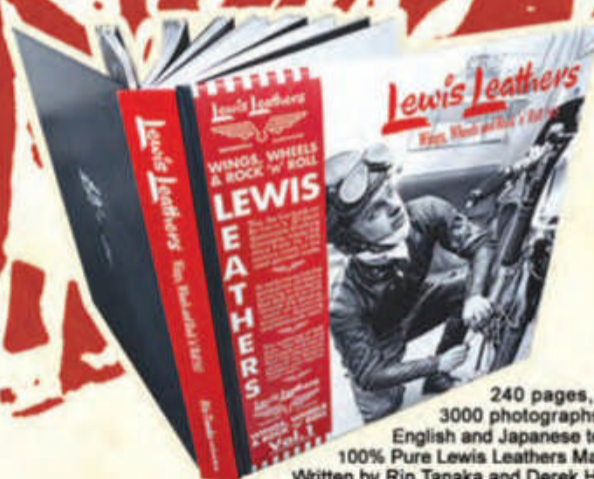
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