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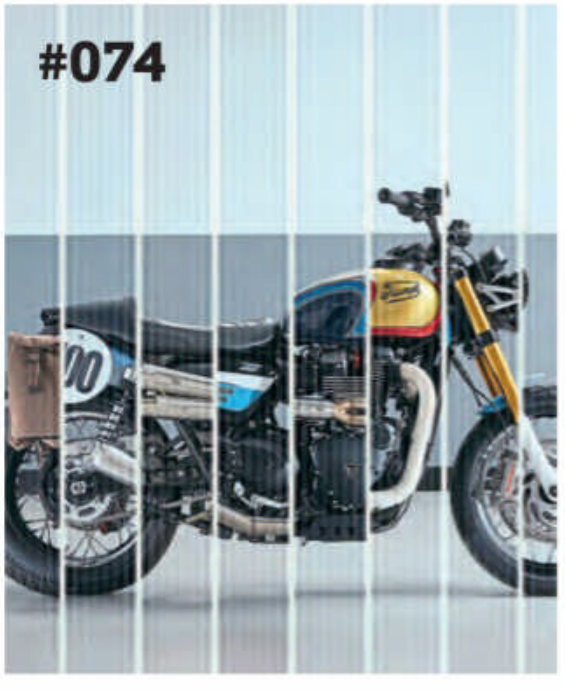
















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It's that time of year...

LATE SEPTEMBER, LEADING INTO OCTOBER often treats us with surprising, if brief, spats of warmth and sun. Quick – cancel other plans, ring your buddies and enjoy those impromptu rides you hadn't expected. I need to remember that if we stay out too long, the headlight I've been ignoring – you know, the one that while it may technically emit light, said light doesn't seem to hit anything – needs fixing...

I adore this time of year. You may need another jumper towards the end of the day, but you're riding through autumnal landscapes, the roads are not as busy with myopic tourists as they are in August, and with slightly more dense air, your engine just feels a little stronger. Although, because you never quite know when 'that last ride' will happen, I can't help thinking about 'that list' of jobs needing doing once said bike is workshop-bound for winter.

Yet our plans have again been scuppered, thanks to the world's new pest. So while the retiring sun normally curtails our local meets, it's not being allowed in groups that has stopped it this year. But that needn't stop riding, or, providing all involved are sensible and precautionary, popping round to see those who you know may be on their own, or struggling with a project in the shed.

And so it came that word spread about long-time friends and experts, Whitmore engineers closing at the end of the week. The sun was glorious, so the excuse – I mean plan – was to head to Whitmores, then to the North Walsham museum and back.

Neville and I were both BMW boxer-mounted, so John felt like he had to be riding a horizontally-opposed engine, so he chose his Velocette Valiant Veeline, which had been running badly-enough to be languishing at the back of the shed until the pair of them tore out the electronic ignition and reinstated the points. It now sounds superb and though not fast, I love following it. This was to be its first decent ride for many a year.

Riding was wonderful. The roads were ones I rarely use, the traffic was light and the Veeline sounded terrific; as long as John kept it revving. It didn't like idle. The boys at Whitmores were on good form; you can read about them on page 50. The ride to the museum was through such unspoiled areas, it almost felt like a discovery. You'd notice very little of this beauty in a car.

The museum was as great as ever – if you're in Norfolk you must look it up. It has little order and is more collection than museum, but Steve and George Harmer welcome all and Nev got Steve to start up their Henderson four. After a ride back our boxers had covered around 70 miles and apart from nowhere to have a bacon butty, all were happy!

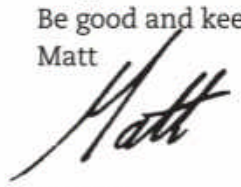
The BSA is regularly out with Maria: "The gearchanges feel more natural, I'm starting to use the engine braking more to counter the crap brakes and I still can't start it when the engine is warm – just like Matt can't!" So in any spare time we're looking for a Triumph 5TA project of some sort.

Meanwhile, our good friend's Sunbeam is coming off display in the kitchen to be fettled for next year, Nev's on the hunt for Norton dolls head 'box parts, Maria's been fixing the advance cable on Nev's ES2 and she found a photo of her Uncle Dee on his old bike – complete with GP barrels. It's in the genes.

We're so lucky to enjoy a hobby that enables us to get out, even in these peculiar times. Martyn popped round recently, in the rain, on the way to the tool shop with his M20 and home-made box chair. His bike and him go back a long way and what a great workhorse. So while there's been few shows and we can't meet for now, our bikes can still do what they were designed for – take us for a ride. If they get dirty, clean 'em. Just check your headlights work well enough!

Be good and keep smiling

Matt



Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com

Not just tiddlers

This photograph, which is marked having been taken in August 1921, shows James was not 'just' a small bike manufacturer. Seen at the Spa racetrack in Belgium some 28 years before the track held its first Grand Prix, this James looks like the 496cc V-twin model, built for racing at the TT and Grand Prix races.

The Motorcycle reviewed the model at the 1920 Olympia show and said of it: 'Twin engines of 500cc are nowadays rare, but the popularity of the 3½hp V-twin James is little likely to suffer for that reason. As a solo machine it has the merit of lightness combined with power, and with large footboards and a comfortable riding position it is a mount which can be ridden a considerable distance in the day without causing a feeling of fatigue to the rider. The position of the magneto high up behind the rear cylinder ensures that it is protected from wet, and it is at the same time accessible.'

The bike boasted the company's own design of engine, which 'was capable of 60mph without further special tuning'. In 1922 James improved it further with longer exhausts, taper valve springs and better lubrication to help the sidevalve engine, and the frame was lightened.

James Sports, 1921: 3½ hp; 64x77mm (500cc); twin-cylinder four-stroke; side-by-side valves; drip feed lubrication; Amac carburettor; Thomson-Bennett chain-driven magneto; three-speed sliding gears; chain drive; 26x 2¼in tyres. Price £135. CBG



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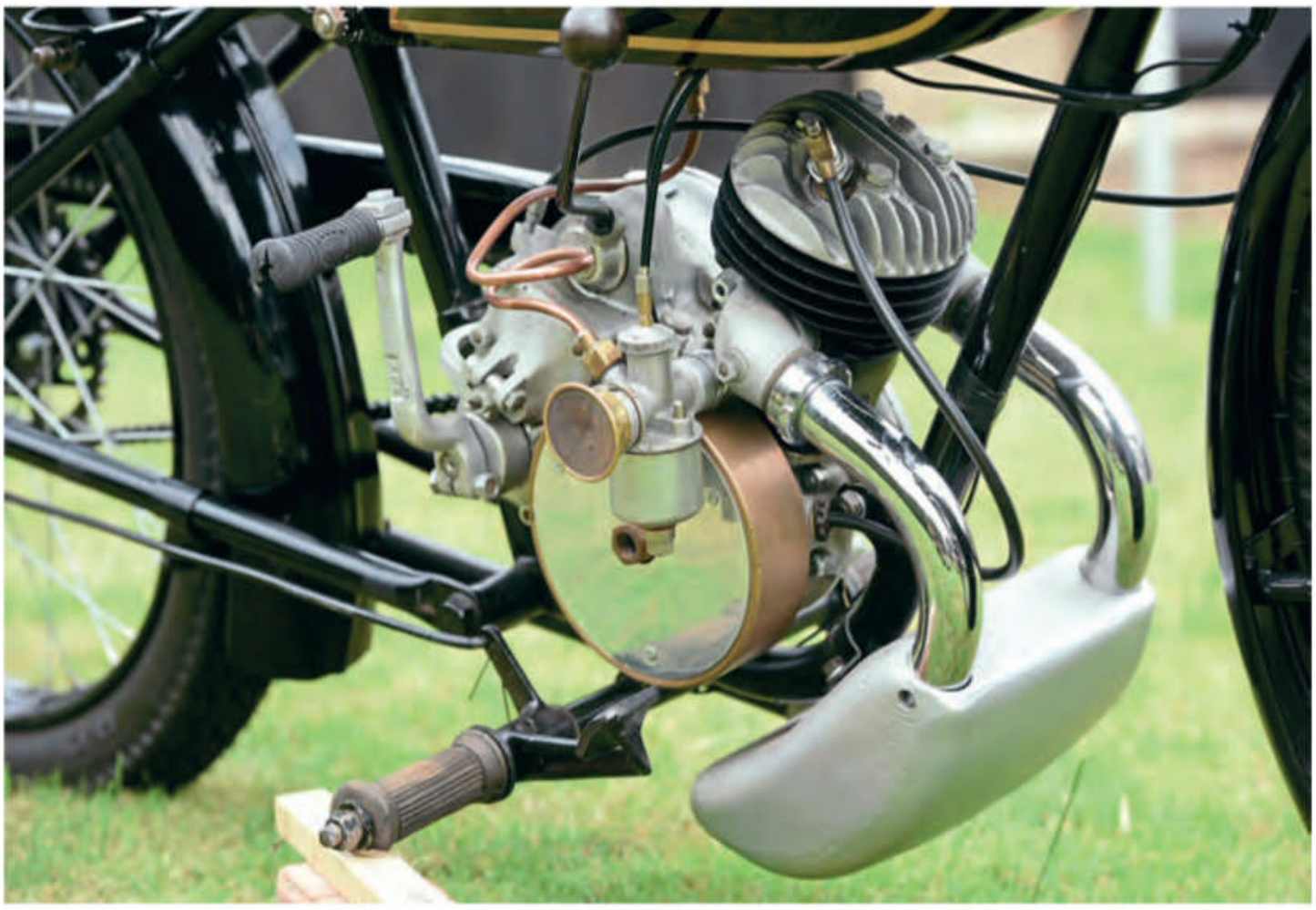
WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT
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James I17 125 ts

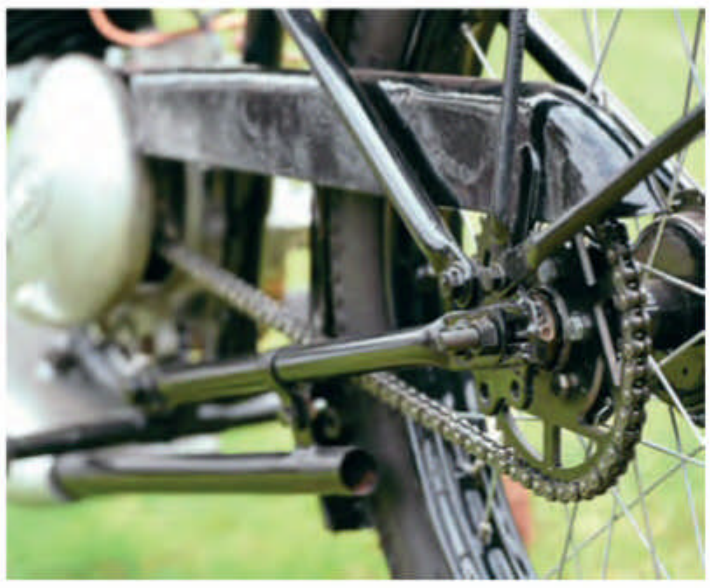
1937 Ultra lightweight

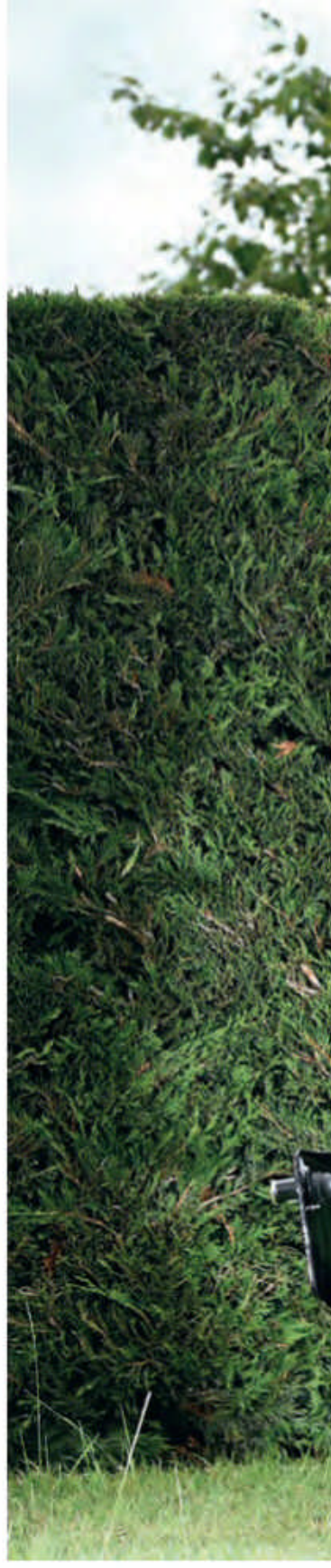
This beautiful little bike would quite possibly never have been saved, had it not been for 'a bargain'


BVF 426
The Famous
JAMES











IN 1937, JAMES WAS DOING ALL RIGHT. THEY HAD been building bicycles, motorised bicycles and motorcycles since before 1902 and had a reputation for innovative designs, like the 'Safety', which had hub-centre steering and their own design of engine. They had to move to larger premises in Greet, just south of Small Heath, Birmingham and continued to grow.

James bikes were known for quality and in 1911 the company bought Osborn motorcycles, one of the first British small two-stroke manufacturers. But they were also designing and building 500cc V-twins like the Model 7 which later grew to a 750 and with a healthy, broad range, the company enjoyed a good period after the First World War.

In 1930, a short-lived manufacturer, Baker Motorcycles was bought, including the patent for their bolt-together, 'brazeless frame'. Along with the widely available, and more importantly, reliable Villiers engines, James started its reliance on the small two-strokes, until the four-stroke James engines were no more, thanks in part to the worldwide economic troubles.

The I17 that we see here is a rare machine, from 1937 – possibly the only year it was made. It quite probably follows from one of Baker's designs of



"it was his father. He said 'There's a couple of motorbikes for sale in a shed near Downham Market. Go make him an offer' "

bolt-together frames, presumably to reduce the time it took to make a frame, or to reduce the amount of skilled workers needed? It came complete with Villiers engine with its compact nature and unit construction. Even the girder forks are pressed steel. But it would be the last flat tank James model, because the next year or so, James brought out the ML125 (Military Lightweight), or 'The Clockwork Mouse' as it became known, with its saddle tank and easy to use Villiers 122cc engine; 6000 were ordered by the MoD for the Second World War. You can see many parts of Denny's James I17 have been carried over to the ML125. Those pressed forks, front drum and wheel, Villiers engine unit were all in use for the Clockwork Mouse.

While the ML125 had the success, Denny's I17 wins hands-down on looks. It has perfect dimensions; the engine is the right size for the wheels; the frame may be bolted together but has an elegance and even the expansion chamber of the Villiers engine fits with the look. It is a beautiful motorcycle, even when you stand next to it and realise it is so small!

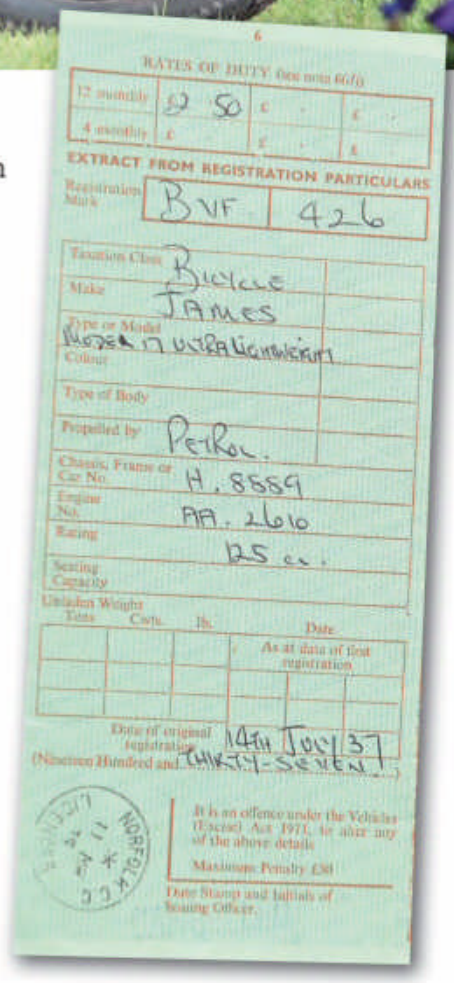
Denny answered the phone in the late Sixties one evening; it was his father. He said: "There's a couple of motorbikes for sale in a shed near Downham Market. Go make him an offer."

"So I popped round. There was a 1945 Cotton and this little James. They were nonrunners and both had been hand-painted. The chap wanted £100 for both and after a little haggle, I got them for £75. When I got home, I slung 'em in the shed and forgot about them.

"They were in my shed for many, many years, until I moved home. This could be their chance to be restored – but: 'Once in, I put the pair in another shed, but it wasn't as waterproof as the last, so slung some covers and old carpets over them and forgot about them for years – again," explained Denny.

There are a mountain of reasons people don't, or can't get on with projects. Having served his apprenticeship in agricultural engineering, Denny later became a lorry driver, so was often away. And he was also a successful hot rod racer. When he wasn't working or racing, Jill and himself loved caravanning; so the Cotton and the James had to wait their turn; though every so often Denny would turn his attention to it in short bursts.

"Then about 15 years ago, I thought I better have a proper look at those motorbikes. I had modern


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Colour:

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Rating: 125 cc.

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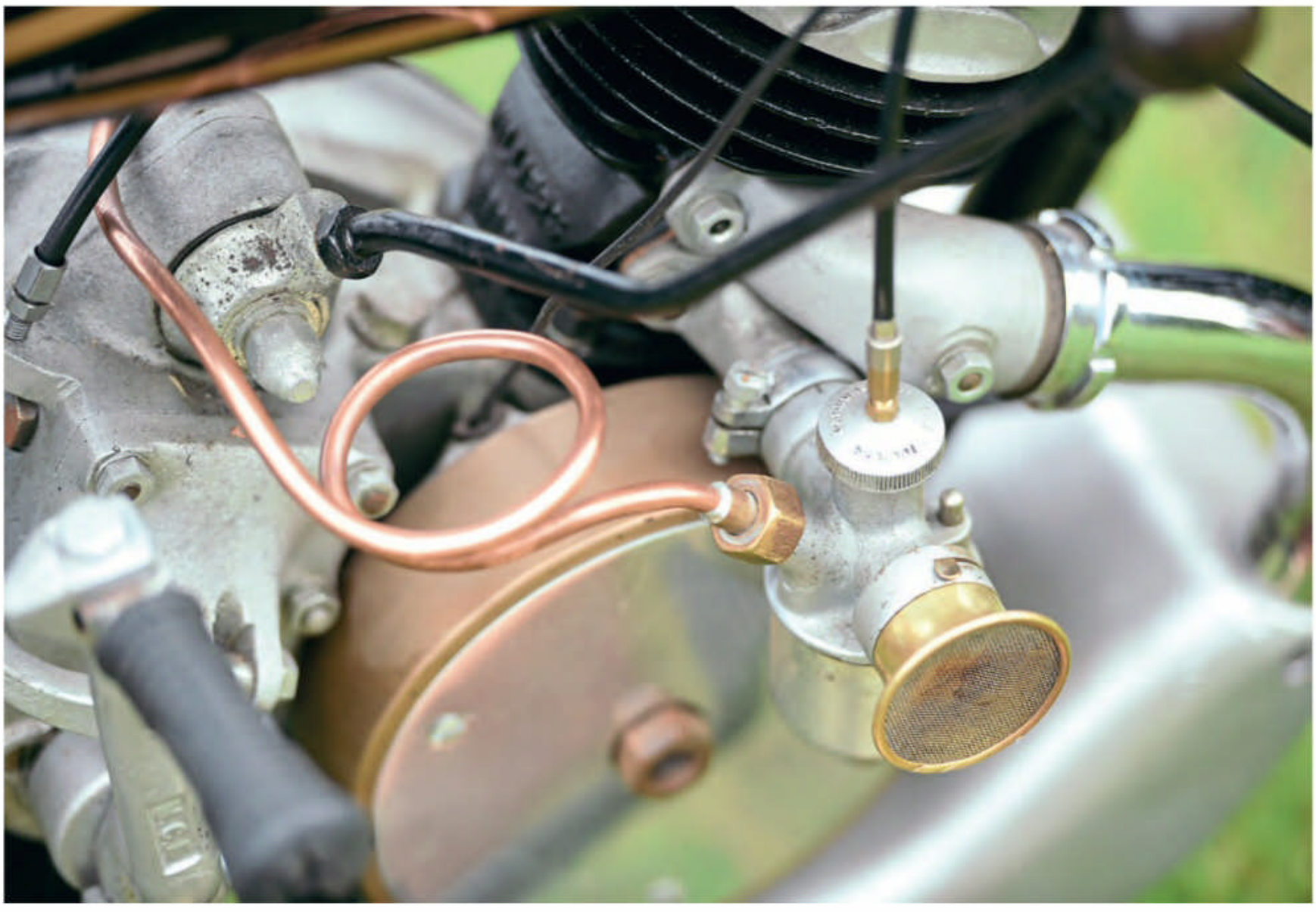
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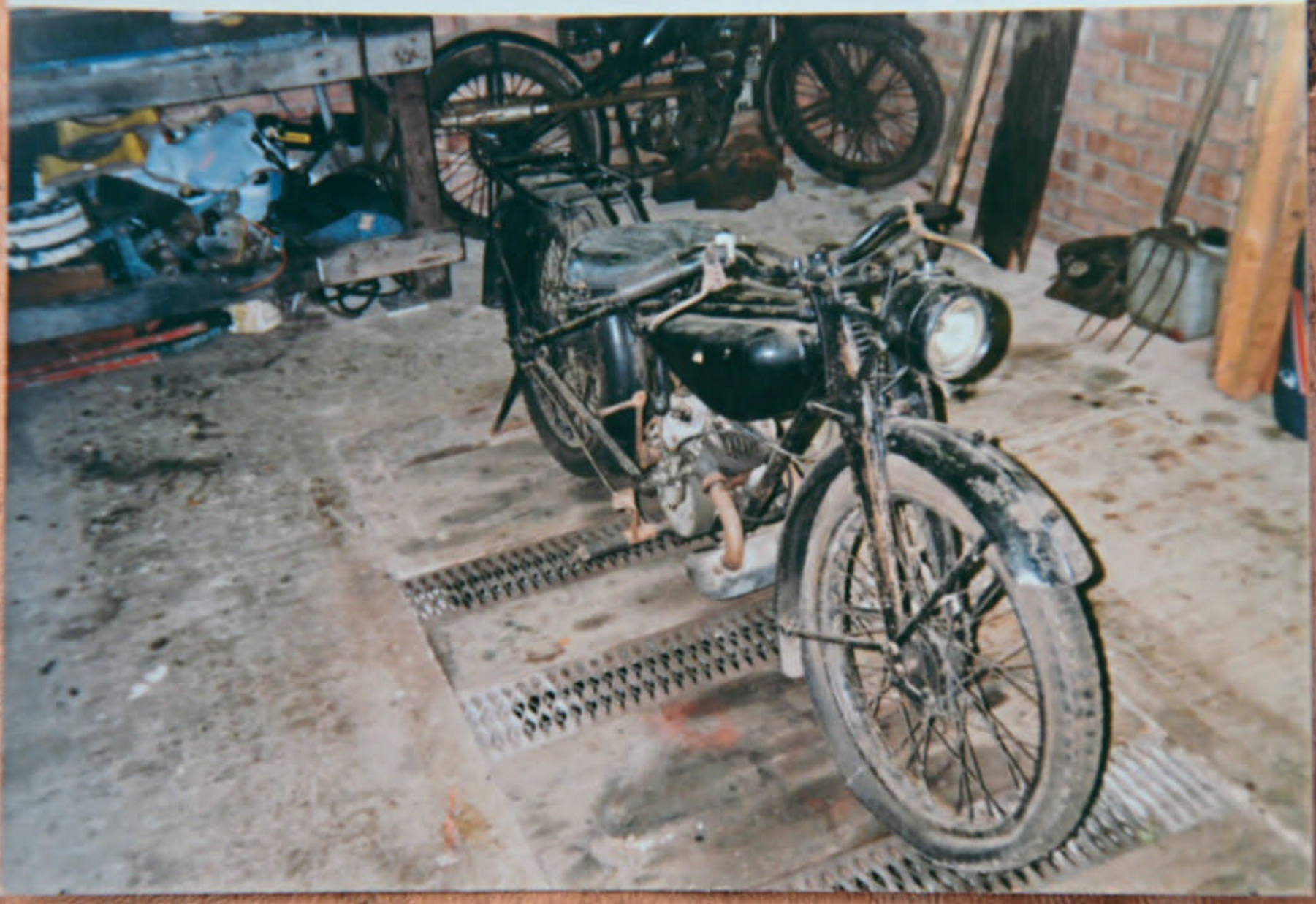












bikes and I think the reason the old ones got some attention was I wanted a Fireblade and needed a little bit of money.

"I looked into how much they might be worth, which led me to speaking to George at the Norfolk Motorcycle Museum. They valued the Cotton at £700; I said £1000 and we ended up at £800 – not a bad profit for some shed space. So off I went to buy a 1997 Honda CBR900RR Fireblade, off Bernard Matthews' son. I had that bike for years, and only sold it three years ago, at that point I was 75 so I thought a Suzuki Bandit would be more comfortable!"

With the James uncovered and more time on his hands, Denny started on it again. He had stripped the frame around 20 years ago and the parts were sprayed then, which had stood the test of time well. The tank was very rusty inside, so Tank Care Products blasted it inside and coated it, as well as getting it painted and having the lines and decals fitted and lacquered over. "It was one of the first things I did," says Denny.

A mutual good friend, Superwelder Steve, repaired the mudguards by using two bad ones to make one good one and repaired the chainguard. Looking at them now, you would never know they were not brand-new.

The wheels had also previously been repainted and rebuilt about 10 years earlier, and Denny is pleased it has kept the original rims. Despite the rarity of the model, James often used the same parts on different models, so Denny managed to get new sprockets, a new chain, brake linings and new tyres, although the rear sprocket had to be sent off for a company to replicate. The Terry seat had a new leather cover, new



cables were made where needed, but much of the chrome work just needed a good clean.

The engine and gearbox were given to Villierservices of Brierley Hill, near Stourbridge. These are the 'go to' folk for all things Villiers, and they replaced anything that needed doing: new big ends, mains, clutch, all the engine bearings, the corks in the clutch, primary chain and sprockets, plus went through the whole of the three-speed gearbox. It cost £600 and that's a few years ago, but it came back ready to fit in the bike.

"They have everything. There's nothing you can tell them about a Villiers engine," says Denny.









Happily, it all went back together, with Denny's engineering background coming in handy. "I had to clean a lot up, sort threads and the exhaust took a lot to make nice, but there was very little missing. The carb is a Villiers carb, but the bellmouth was missing. So we took the caravan up to Newark for a weekend and I popped into the auto jumble. There I found a man with a box of carb parts, and I found one with the bellmouth. I asked him how much, he said a fiver, or a tenner for the carb too. It fitted a treat and I thought I had a float as a spare now, as well. Except when I opened the new carb, it was empty."

With the bike finished, Denny has a dilemma – he cannot start it yet as he had a new knee recently and can't kick it over! And he could get used to the hand change gears, with the lever throttle, but it may take some time.

"'To be truthful, I did it up good enough to ride in a club, or to sell. I'm not sure what to do with it. Bonhams were interested as they hadn't seen one, but then it might be nice for Sunday morning rides. But then again, I keep saying I'll buy a tractor!

"When I left school I did my apprenticeship at J J Wrights, the local agricultural engineers in Dereham. So I've always had an interest, you know; Dexters, Super Majors, standard Fordsons – we used to make our own big end bearings, white metal, scrape them in with a big file and the old engineers blue. But I don't want to work on them – just ride them. You're talking for £4-4500 for a Dexter now, they're going up!"

Whatever Denny decides, he has kept a rare survivor of a great British manufacturer on the road. Its frame is a direct linage from Baker motocycles, and the finish is befitting of James. And yet if you fancy, it's small-enough to put in the living room. What a wonderful machine. CBG

SPECIFICATION:

ENGINE: Villiers 125cc twin-port deflectorless piston engine **IGNITION:** Flywheel magneto **CARBURETTOR:** Villiers **LUBRICATION:** Petroil **RATIO:** 16:1 **EXHAUST:** Twin pipes to expansion box. Twin tailpipes **GEARBOX:** Three speed – direct hand change **BRAKES:** 4in **FRAME:** Bolt up tubular frame and pressed blade forks **WHEELS:** 25in well section rims – black enamelled, red lined with Goodyear 25 x 2.75 tyres **CENTRESTAND:** Adjustable footrests with rubber pads **TANK:** Two gallon finished in black, lined gold **SEAT:** Terry saddle **LIGHTS:** 5½in headlamp. Direct lighting set. **EXTRAS:** Toolbox and toolkit, grease gun, tyre inflator, Wide, ribbed section mudguards

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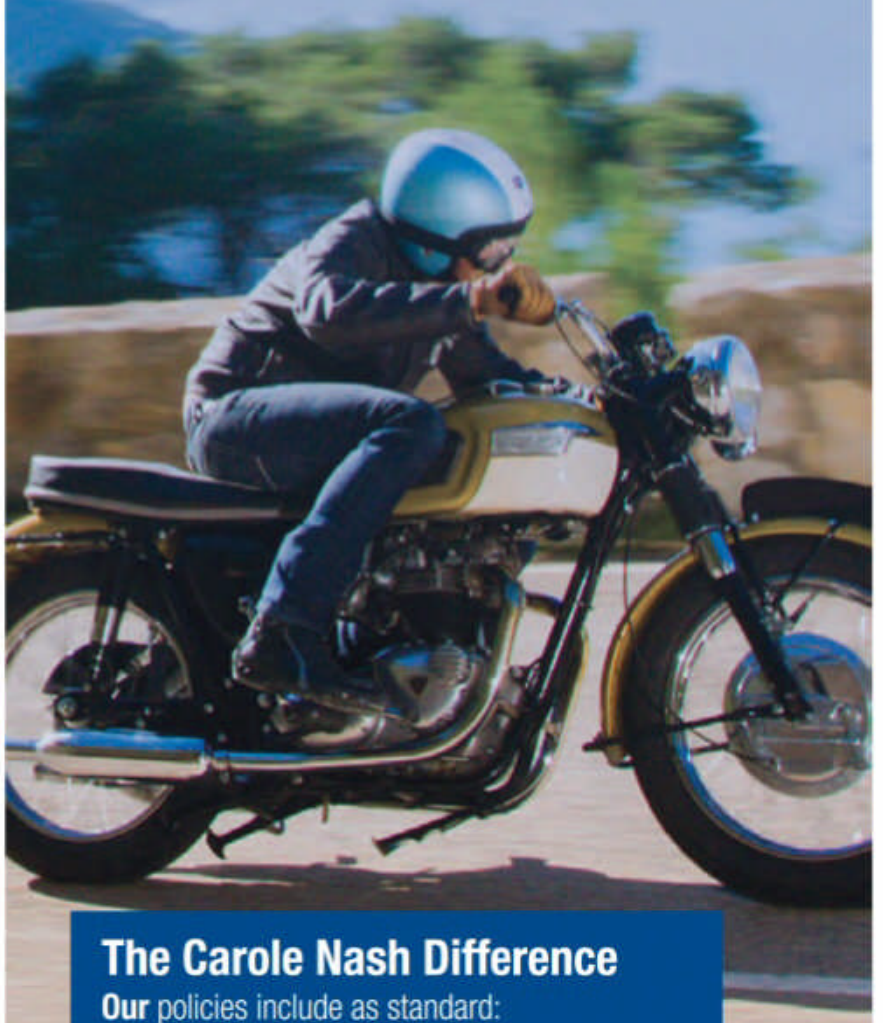
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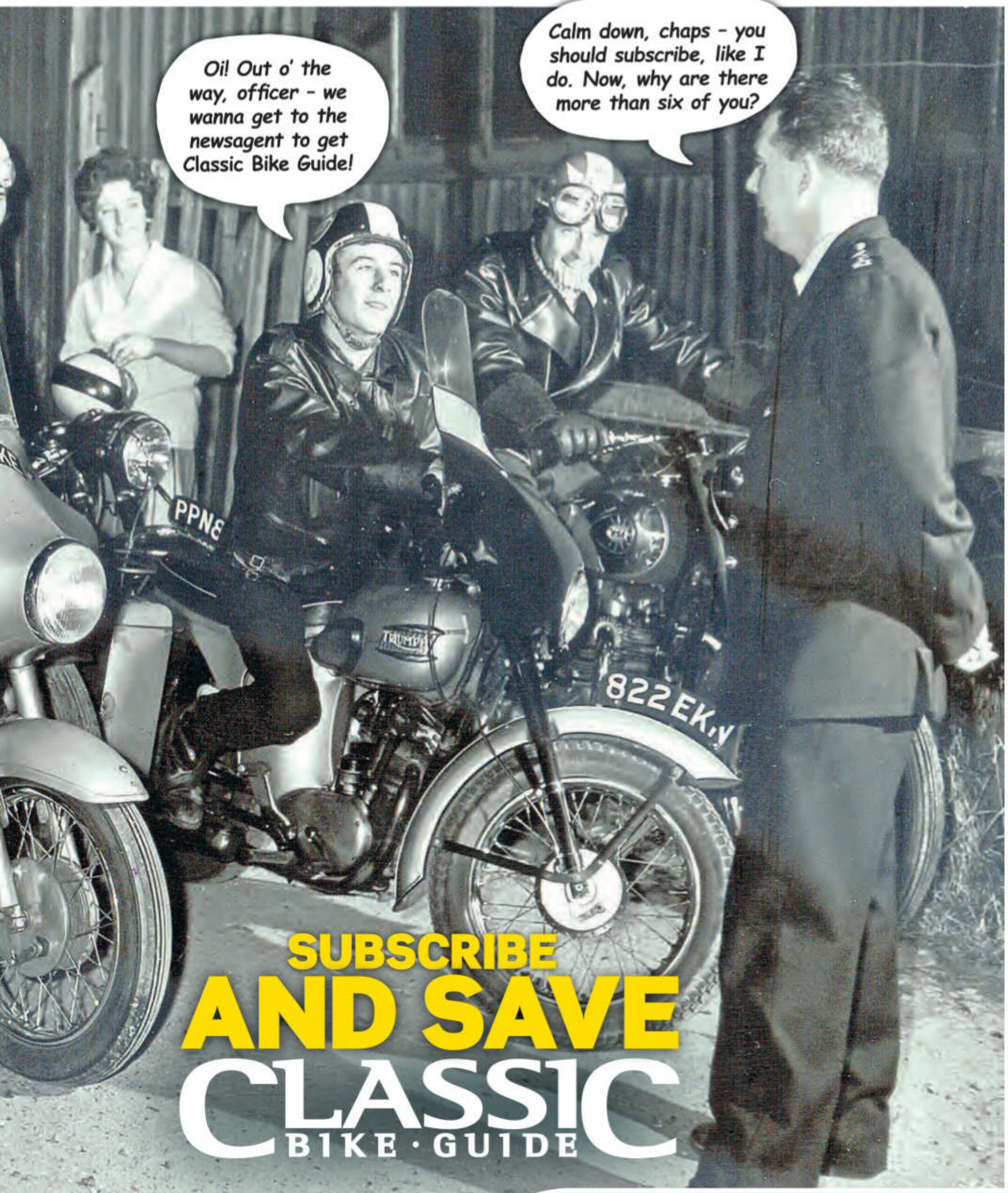
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Next month



TR6C

they don't come much better than this replica

BMW R18 - The largest boxer ever breaks cover
First ride - what's it like riding an old British bike for the first time?
Pipi Harris - we look back at his two and three-wheeled life
Honda CBX 1000 - restoration **How to fit -** new valve guides

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Salon Privé 2020
Blenheim Palace, September

The only show this year? We weren't sure, so we popped along.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT

THE SALON PRIVÉ IS A CAR concours event primarily, however, with the worldwide issues, shows have been cancelled and more and more vehicle launches were touted to be taking place at the Salon Privé, so I found myself on a damp Wednesday having a look.

Cars are the main theme, with many marques introducing new models, including Rolls Royce. There were helicopters for sale, incredible yachts and even a flying car – from the Netherlands, of course. Away from the status symbols though were some simply incredible classic cars, which were a joy to see up closely.

Thanks to the virus, space was everywhere and numbers of people were limited, meaning you could really get close and have a good nose around. I appreciate this is a bike magazine, but there are not many of us that would not enjoy













looking at the craftsmanship on show.

The bikes, around 25, were all concours winners in waiting – but when everything is special, nothing stands out! Judges included TV's shed-dwelling Henry Cole and racer, Steve Parrish, who took a particular shine to Richard Duffin's Suzuki RG500, which sounded wonderful once started up on the rollers – a four-cylinder two-stroke at a predominantly car-oriented show was a sound to behold!

Then there was a terrific collection of Ducatis, sitting together. The 1975 900ss sat next to a recently restored 1976 750ss, which was slightly outshone by one of the 401, 1974 Ducati 750SS 'green frame' models, all hand-built and overseen by Taglioni himself. These first bikes had right-hand gearchange and were the celebration of Paul Smart's famous Imola victory.

An AJS Model 2A V-Twin looked a tremendous machine, and in keeping with the super cars around it; while the MV Agusta 750 needed no introduction, bringing colour aplenty. The only (?) Norton P6A prototype took me some time to take in all those details and differences that never made it into production; I wonder what it's like to ride compared to the Bert Hopwood-designed Model 7 that came out instead, in 1948.

My favourite was the stunning Ducati 851 owned by Simon Turner. Previously owned by John Surtees, it was bought new by none other than Oscar Rumi, frame builder extraordinaire in the 1980s and 90s, to study the frame geometry and set-up; 'though for which engine we're not sure' explains Simon.

After 20 years it was sold to Gianni Pironi, who was a friend of John and swapped it for a Manx Norton! It is fitted with an 888cc Corse motor, but the bike has never, ever been started! In fact it has rarely been outside, as even the white cable ties were not yellowed, nor the original brake discs scored.

"Are you tempted to ride it?" I asked Simon. "Six months ago I took all the fairings off, stood back and thought – wow. Every single nut and bolt put on there are exactly where they were put in the factory in 1989. And I thought, what gives me the right to start that? So I left it. But I have other toys!"

This was my poster bike growing up, I built a model of one and to see such a unique example was worth the trip in itself. Thank you for letting it get wet so everyone can see it, Simon! CBG

New bikes

MV Agusta had their stunning Super Veloce on show with Krazy Horse, while CCM showed off their new Blackout, looking mean and purposeful, fresh from filming duties in the new Scarlett Johansson film, Black Widow. But the star had to be new boys on the block, Langen, with the Two Stroke. This 250cc V-Twin that's made in Wigan acted like a people magnet when it was started up; the two-stroke soundtrack taking a lot of people back to their youth and the unique, simplistic look capturing their imagination.

Salon Privé is not a bike show, but for those who like cars too and enjoy a day of the high life with lobster and champagne, it may be worth a look next year.









Left to right: Hank of Trike Design, Norman Hyde, Simon Weston, Charlie Bevan and Paul of Trike Design. Photo by Tony Smith

TRIKE APPEAL FOR FALKLANDS VETERAN

AN APPEAL HAS been launched to help Falklands veteran Simon Weston CBE realise a lifetime's ambition to ride a motorcycle.

Known for his charity work and his recovery from severe burn injuries during the Falklands War, the campaign has been launched by industry veteran and record-breaking rider Norman Hyde.

Norman said: "I learned of Simon's passion to ride a motorcycle when we met, and that is where the idea started. With the help, kindness and support from fellow motorcycle riders, veterans and friends within the industry, I believe we can make his dream come true."

Simon sustained serious injuries on *RFA Sir Galahad* in 1982, making it impossible to operate the controls on a traditional motorcycle. Norman, who worked as a development engineer for Triumph in the 1960s and 70s, opted for the idea of a modified trike.

"I have always wanted to own a motorcycle," explains Simon. "My injuries prevent me from operating hand controls on a normal motorcycle, so I could never ride one. This opportunity makes me keener than ever to taste the sense of freedom that riding a trike will give me."

Triumph Motorcycles has donated a new Bonneville T120 to be the base for the bespoke trike build. Trike Design, located in Simon's home town of Caerphilly will build it. Norman has already received offers of support from fellow-motorcyclists impressed by Simon's determination and charity work, with the Triumph Owners' Club pledging £2000 towards the total project cost of £25,000.

To support the campaign, visit the **simonwestontrike JustGiving** page online.

CLASSICS ON THE CALENDAR

Mike Harbar's T160



THE ANDY TIERNAN Classics Charity Motorcycle Calendar for 2021 is now on sale. Artist Mike Harbar has once again been at his easel, providing six pieces of artwork for the calendar.

The pictures include a BSA Rocket 3, a Triumph T160 Trident, a Wankel-engined Norton Classic, a Harris Matchless G80, a Honda CB750 and a Suzuki RE5 Rotary.

Proceeds from the sale of the calendars go to the East Anglian Air Ambulance – the 2020 calendar raising £2022 to help keep their helicopter flying.

The cost is £11 incl postage in the UK, £17 in the EU and £20 elsewhere in the world. For further details, visit Andy's website www.andybuysbikes.com

END OF THE SPORTSTER LINE

THE LEGENDARY HARLEY-DAVIDSON Sportster, in production since 1957 in various guises, is to vanish from European showrooms. Harley-Davidson France say the venerable Sportster range will make a quiet exit from Europe due to the upcoming Euro5 emissions regulations.

The pushrod, two-valve, 'Evolution' engine has been used on the Sportster since the 1980s but cannot be updated to meet Euro5 regulations.

Also dropped by the French Importer is the budget 750 Street model. It is not clear at present whether the UK will still require vehicle manufacturers to comply with the Euro5 regulations should there be a no deal Brexit. Values of used Sportsters are likely to be affected if the model is no longer available in the UK.

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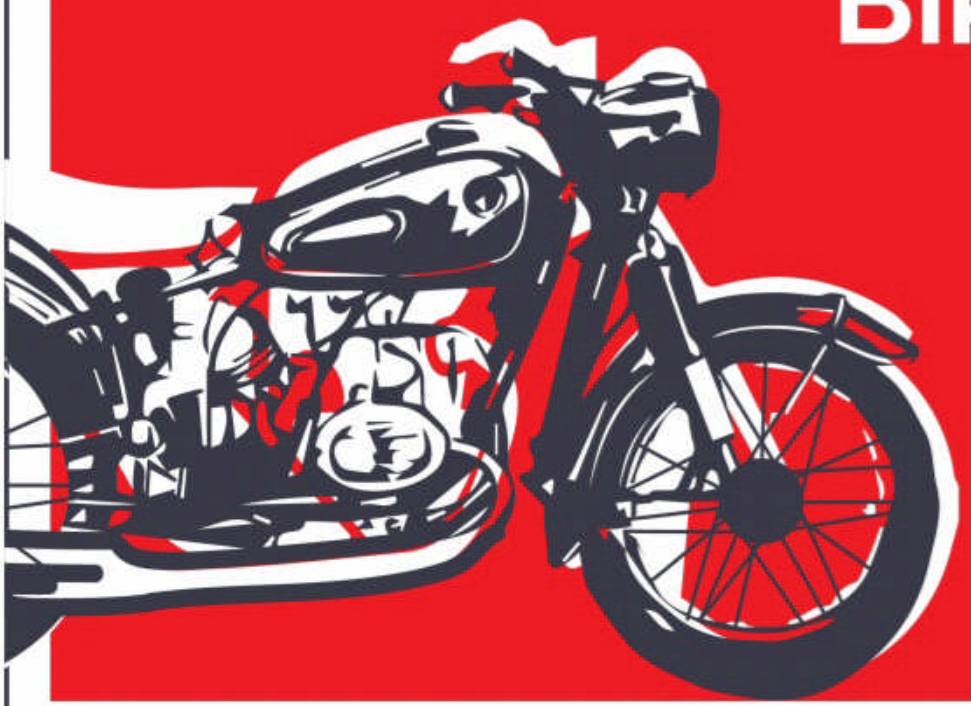
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Letters



Italians do it their way

I've just read your article on the RAID MV Agusta in the September issue.

It brought a smile to my face as a few years ago my mate, Graham Salter, and I encountered similar bureaucracy. We were riding the Moto Giro D'Italia; Graham on an old Trident and me on a 650 Matchless.

Riding along down a twisty road with a very long drop to the bottom, Graham's rear numberplate came off and flew over my head down the valley. As we were not long into the trip we decided to fit a cardboard one and reported this to the local police station/palatial HQ. Met with what can only be described as the best uniformed women and men police officers we've ever seen – then it started.

After explaining in our best Italian-ish, forms were pointed at and documents thoroughly inspected, as were both bikes. Much chatting, pointing, rubber stamping and phone calls later, we were thinking we should have just kept on riding. Two hours later with a wave of the hand, we went away none the wiser for what had just happened.

Later in the day, at a T-junction coming out of town, there was parked a fully police-liveried Lamborghini Diablo with two female police officers outside the car looking at us. Off we went, only to find a speed trap 100 yards down the road with a couple of bikes pulled up receiving tickets. Very easy as you were trying to believe what you had just seen further back – entrapment Italian-style in the best possible way.

To round off the day we had a police motorcycle escort through a town and onto a magnificent hotel in the hills. Minutes after the police got off their bikes, their top boxes were opened, hats and guns put in the box and beer taken out!

What a trip, only in Italy.

Steve Sawyer

That's worth a tenner!





Hubby's brother had this in a shed in their parents' back garden, and they said they wanted rid.

So, my husband gave his brother a tenner for it as he hadn't looked at it for 20 years and didn't want it!

He emptied the tank, filled it with fresh petrol and after a few kicks and bit of time it started.

About six to nine months later, a lot of searching the internet and a new paint job, my husband Gordy restored it to the beauty it is now. It's a cracker.

Elaine Clements

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I'll never forget riding the Kawasaki H1







Hope all's safe and well with everyone, keep up the good work with your brilliant magazine.

Have just finished reading the September issue and really enjoyed the article on the Kawasaki H1. The article really brought back some memories for me.

In the late 1960s and early 70s, while serving an apprenticeship at the local steelworks in Lincolnshire I initially had a 1958 speed twin, then an original '63 BSA Rocket Gold Star and a '69 Bonneville (both of which I now wish I had kept).

We frequented Kays cafe in Brigg and regularly had rides to local race meetings at Cadwell, Mallory, or if not, to the coast.

One day, one of my friends said that a friend of his knew someone who worked in a shop in Grimsby; they had a new model in and did I fancy going for a ride. We went over there, it was a H1! 500cc against my RGS 650cc so no problem (I thought).

Tentatively leaving the shop on board this small(!) motorcycle, I set off, and knowing the roads around that area, knew where I was going to go; along Laceby bypass dead straight until you got to the roundabout. Surprising myself by the way the bike went I was enjoying myself approaching the roundabout when I thought it about time to apply the brakes and slow down, using engine braking, as for four-stroke bikes.

I could have slowed down quicker by putting my feet down! Luckily, I got the bike round the roundabout without falling off, but must say that the ride back to the shop was more sedate than earlier. I decided not to buy one, but still think they are wonderful machines.

I now have a Suzuki and Triumph race replicas, as well as a Harley rep, which is up for sale

Tony



THIS MONTH'S STAR LETTER WINS

The writer of this month's Star Letter wins a pair of Weise Montana 150 gloves worth £99.99. Ditch the bulk without compromising on warmth. Waterproof, with a 150 gram Thinsulate® Supreme inner liner, secured with mcFit® Technology. Find out more at thekeycollection.co.uk

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HJC RPHA 90S flip up helmet

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The new HJC flip up helmet is a little deceiving. Pick it up and it doesn't look like a flip up. Have a feel, try the visor mechanism and vents – it feels like a nice sporty helmet. Only the red catch at the bottom of the chin gives you any hint the chin bar comes up. It's light, too – not as light as a modern racing helmet, but light enough to ride all day, even on upright classics without any fairing protection.

While the outside is a pretty standard lightweight composite, inside feels sumptuous and I have to say, as good if not better than some of the Japanese brands – certainly better than the BMW System helmet I use. Whether it stays like that (my previous BMW helmet was still like new inside after five years) is another matter. But the cheek pads can be changed for new or different sizes. The visor is easy to use, has great peripheral vision and it comes with an anti-mist insert. The strap is an easy to use metal buckle and the drop-down tinted visor works nicely, too.

This is a very nice helmet, and not just for the price – it feels a lot more expensive. HJC are a brand that just seems to be gaining confidence which is nice to see, as the long-standing opposition seem to have rested on their laurels. This is a great, all-year round helmet.



Classic Superbikes
by Frank Melling

- **classicmagazines.co.uk**
- **£7.99**

Classic Superbikes is a collection of super bikes, more than superbikes. Frank Melling has put together a range of machines he likes after riding them and gives a heart-felt account of his experiences, along with some background, too. From the earliest Triumph Speed Twin, to the latest Moto Guzzi V7, there is something for most in here.



- **rg-racing.com**
- **£5.99**

Helmets get stinky, especially coming out of a sweaty summer, or after being damp and wet in winter. Spray this R&G Gleam helmet fresh into the helmet and it puffs up like squirty cream – it's quite dramatic! But once it calms down and you wipe away any excess, your lid will lack that old dog smell and feel more like a new helmet. It leaves a kind of lemony smell and it takes a few minutes to dry, but of all the sanitisers I've tried, this one actually seems to work – providing you like the smell of lemons! Use it regularly to keep it fresh. You can also use it in gloves.

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WORDS BY OLI HULME
PHOTOS BY GARY CHAPMAN

Forgotten 750s

The thousands may have stolen the limelight by then, but these 750s kept showrooms alive. What are they like now? Oli tries two out

KAWASAKI Z750 TWIN

IT IS CURIOUS HOW SOME THINGS LODGE IN THE memory. Back in the late 1970s, as I was failing to pay attention in sixth form, I lived next door to a chap who worked for East Midlands Allied Press in Peterborough, more commonly known as EMAP. I had a moped, and he would generously bring home surplus copies of their motorcycle magazines and hand them over. There would be the stodgy and staid Motorcycle Mechanics, offering such delights as showing you how to fit a new cam chain to your CD175. And there was the then-iconoclastic Bike, the attitude of which was much more to my taste.

In February 1979, they printed one of their supertests, marking the launch of the new Honda CB750Z and pitting it against Yamaha's XS750, Suzuki's GS750 and Kawasaki's Z750 twin.

I cannot remember what Bike said about the Honda, Suzuki or Yamaha, but the Z750 test's conclusions have stuck with me. Bike hated it. Compared to the triples and fours it was slow, they said. It was heavy, overcomplicated for a parallel twin and didn't handle. The big problem, according to Bike, was the then-new American emissions regulations. They had strangled the Z750. The re-routing of exhaust gasses and the two inadequate carburettors had ruined the DOHC twin. It was, they said: "A motorcycle all bunged up with snot".

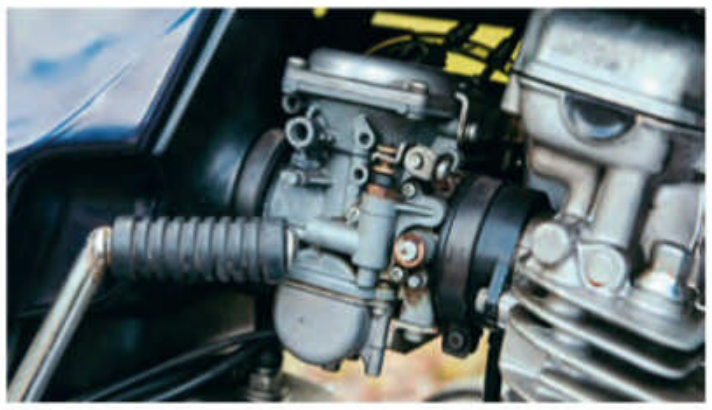
It was this phrase that stuck with me. Ever since then I've been firmly convinced that the Z750 twin was an absolute dog. Why would Bike magazine lie to me? The Z750 did sit a little uncomfortably in Kawasaki's range. Their last 750 had been the utterly terrifying two-stroke triple, and the twin was surrounded by the teenage hooligans four of choice, the Z650, and the legendary, if by then a little long in the tooth, Z1000. It was also, often, Brown, which is never a good colour for a motorcycle. The mystery is, why did Kawasaki build a bike like this in the first place? The answer could be a kind of corporate nostalgia. Kawasaki's first bike four-stroke had been the W1 650 parallel twin, a licence-built copy of the BSA A10. The Z750 filled that hole.



"The Z750 did sit a little uncomfortably in Kawasaki's range. Their last 750 had been the utterly terrifying two-stroke triple, and the twin was surrounded by the teenage hooligans' four of choice"









So I wasn't expecting much when I turned up at Somerset Classic Motorcycles to try out their Z750.

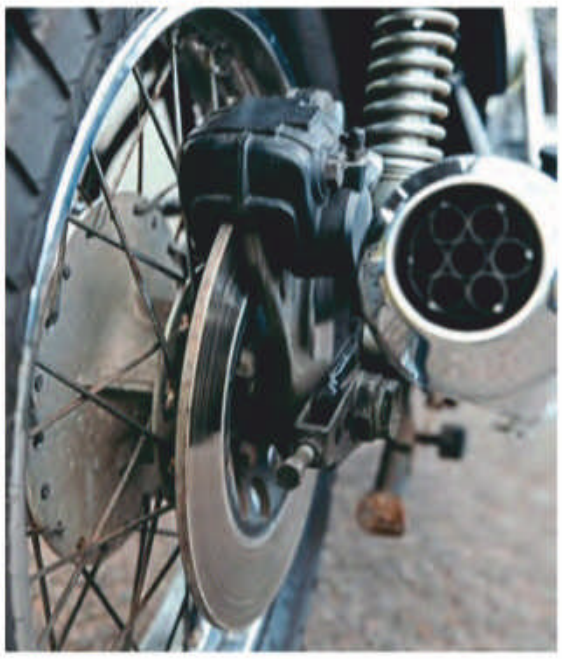
It was badged as a KZ750, Kawasaki adding the K to the front of their bikes in the USA. This import was straight off the boat. It had been given a service including oil, oil filter and plugs. They cleaned the points, put in new clutch plates and springs and fitted a new chain and sprockets. And at first glance it looks in pretty good nick, apart from a dent in the tank. It's also not brown, but a far classier shade of dark blue, which is a bonus. It's covered 17,000 miles from new and this light use shows. The original hefty and unwieldy exhaust system, which would have had ugly and heavily seamed silencers and a collector pipe, had been replaced with two custom made stainless steel downpipes and a couple of decibel type megaphones.

The big twin is just that. The powerplant is around a third larger than that of a T140 Bonneville, and a lot chunkier than Yamaha's XS650. This is because there's a heck of a lot going on in there. There are a couple of chain-driven balancer shafts to smooth out the vibes driven off the centre of the 360-degree crankshaft. The chain also drives the oil pump.

There's a very large electric start, spinning the engine using another chain, and two camshafts, driven by a long, single row, chain. Valve adjustment was through shim and bucket, as on their fours.

You might think, that with all this stuff hurtling around inside, the Z750 might produce a lot of mechanical noise – but it doesn't. The carburettors are Mikuni BS38 CV items, nearly identical to those fitted to the XS650, which were fine when new but can be troublesome 40 years on. But aren't we all? It was claimed to produce 55bhp, something that was disputed in the press. Cycle World suggested that 40bhp was closer to the mark. Yet another chain, a











Morse Hy-vo, took the power to the drive train.

The big twin fired up on the button and quickly settled down with a throaty burble to a healthy tickover and, after a few minutes to warm up, which seemed like a kind thing to do, first gear was engaged.

And there was a massive surprise. I'm used to a Triumph running on Amal concentrics, and the worn out Mikuni BS38s on my Yamaha have recently been replaced by slide carbs, and both have a pretty quick take off. I was expecting that traditional momentary delay as the CV carbs pumped enough fuel to get things rolling. Now either it was the twin cams, or that the carbs were still in tip-top nick, but the big Z shot off faster than either of its rival twins. It was something of a revelation. Where was the promised snot?

A quite delicious exhaust note bounced off the hedgerows. It appeared I'd been lied to all those years ago and the Z750 was a very willing mount. Still, the single disc was bound to be rubbish at pulling all the Zed's 559lb up, right? That disc, a big, stainless, item along with the caliper, was fitted on pretty much all of Kawasaki's 500cc plus bikes from 1971 to the end of the decade, and had a poor reputation. Yet while it might have struggled with hauling a Z1000 up, or been a bit harsh for a 500 triple, on the 750 it was just about right. Handling? I can't claim to have tried to scrape any pegs, and the US-market high bars (those on UK-market bikes were lower) didn't encourage any serious bend swinging, but the 750 went where it was pointed, and swept round corners with aplomb.

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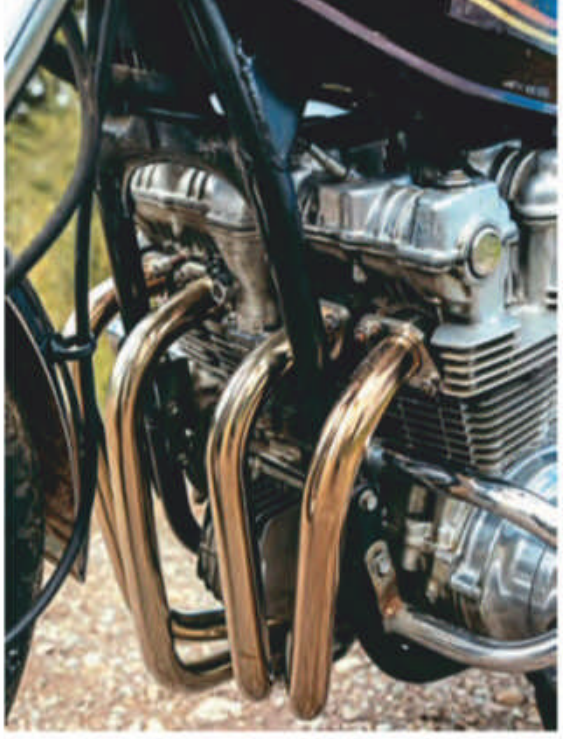
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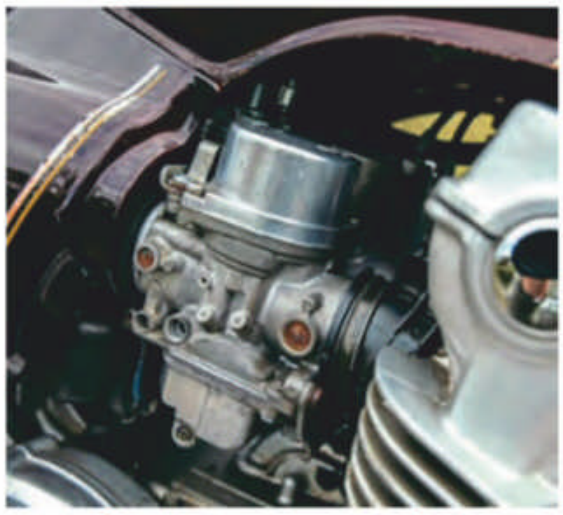
The equipment was excellent and the quality of the engineering was outstanding. It was torquey, more than powerful enough and the power delivery all kinds of good things. The balancer shafts turned any great thumping vibes into nothing more than a low buzz. Reports from 1970 suggest that if you try to push the 750 hard, this buzz becomes more marked, even up to the point that at 100mph the experience was close to unbearable. On modern, increasingly crowded roads bestrewn with distracted motorists swathed in air-conditioned comfort and distracted by sat nav systems, and with ever present speed cameras and deteriorating surfaces, achieving 100mph seems a moot point, and attempting such heroics on a skinny-tyred Z750 seems tantamount to abuse and might be life-endangering.

Now largely forgotten by most, this Z750 turned out to be an example of an excellent and well-built motorcycle and well worth considering. Increasing numbers of long dormant Z750s are emerging from the shadows. This rather charming machine was on sale for £3,495 and for that money, it was a bargain.

SPECIFICATION: Z750 TWIN

ENGINE: 745cc, air-cooled, four-valve, dohc, parallel twin **POWER:** 55bhp @ 7000rpm **GEARBOX:** five-speed **FINAL DRIVE:** Chain **FRAME:** Steel-tubed double cradle **SUSPENSION:** Front telescopic forks, Rear oil damped shocks **BRAKES:** Front single 250mm disc with single piston caliper; Rear 230mm disc with single piston caliper **TYRES:** Front: 3.35 x 19; Rear: 4.00 x 18 **SEAT HEIGHT:** 800mm **WHEELBASE:** 1450mm **DRY WEIGHT:** 230kg **FUEL CAPACITY:** 14.5 litres **TOP SPEED:** 115MPH







HONDA CB750K

WHEN HONDA LAUNCHED the DOHC CB750Z, it had big shoes to fill. Honda's SOHC CB750 four had sparked the company's transformation into the world's biggest motorcycle manufacturer. Even in the late 1970's it remained highly respected, though it was, with a dry sump engine and single camshaft, a little long in the tooth.

Honda were now fighting new battles, primarily with Suzuki's very sporty GS750, launched in 1976 which had stolen the 750 sports bike crown from the old CB750, and with Yamaha, whose more touring orientated XS750 had a shaft drive. Which way should Honda go?

In the UK the first DOHC Honda 750 was slightly staid. Usually sold in dull paint schemes, it came with Comstar wheels, twin front discs, a rear drum, four exhaust pipes and a tail light borrowed from the CX500 v-twin. The lack of imagination used on the styling makes you wonder if Honda were frightened that overdoing the modernisation of their big four might upset their customers.

Neither one thing nor the other, the 750K struggled a little in the marketplace, and once it was joined by the much smarter and sportier "Eurostyle" CB750F and CB900F it was completely eclipsed and quietly vanished from British showrooms.

In the USA the 750K had a lower spec but at the same time lasted longer on the dealer's floors. The US 750K came with spoked wheels, and a single disc at the front and the drum at the back. The four exhaust pipes were still in use, and a stepped seat and high bars suited American riders far more than they would have in Europe. It was sold in the US alongside the CB750F which had a slightly stiffer frame with thicker tubes.

Interestingly, the biggest seller in the US was a custom version, the CB750C. The Honda's big selling point, which marked it apart from its rivals was all in the cylinder head. Honda had dug into their technical bags of tricks and created a four valve per cylinder head. This was a revolutionary move, and it took several years for the competition to catch up. Honda designed the frame to allow the removal of the cam covers without difficulty so you could reset the valve clearances. There are two Hy-vo camchains. One drives the exhaust cam from the crank, and the second, shorter chain drives the inlet cam from the exhaust cam and the arrangement made adjustment easier and more precise. The cams run directly in journals machined into the alloy cylinder head. This was regular Honda practice and was fine as long as



regular oil changes took place and levels were kept an eye on. If not, you could expect trouble.

The primary chain was a big Hy-vo item, and connected to the drive train through a rubber cush drive, developed from that used on the SOHC 550 fours. Again, with regular oil changes this was a decent enough arrangement. Neglect it, and the results could be catastrophic. Apart from oil changes, general servicing was limited to checking the valve clearances every 4000 miles, adjusting the chain and changing the 12mm plugs.

Alongside the Kawasaki, Somerset Classic Motorcycles had a US-spec CB750K. It was that somewhat dowdy shade of brown, with the single disc and spoked wheels which looked a little strange when mated with that DOHC engine. For 1979, that engine was ultra-modern. With canted forward cylinders, some very precisely machined hard edges and those twin camshafts, it was a world away from even the GS750, a design just three years older. The rest of the bike was a curious mixture of old and new.

The original exhaust had gone the way of all things, and Somerset Classics had fitted a new Delkevic four into one. At the back, as it was a US model, the CX500 tail light was now an older style unit mounted on a bracket. There was a shiny, stepped seat. Other equipment was very modern. While most manufacturers would fit a conventional speedo/rev counter/idiot light combination, the Honda had what amounted to a dashboard. One might describe it as BMW like, but the Honda set-up was way more sophisticated than that.



SPECIFICATION: HONDA CB750K

ENGINE: 748cc, air-cooled, 16-valve, dohc, inline four **POWER:** 62bhp @ 9500rpm **GEARBOX:** five-speed **FINAL DRIVE:** Chain **FRAME:** Steel-tubed double cradle **SUSPENSION:** Front telescopic air forks, twin oil-damped shocks damping **BRAKES:** Front single 296mm disc with piston caliper; Rear 190mm drum **TYRES:** Front: 3.50 x 19; Rear: 4.50 x 17 **SEAT HEIGHT:** 797mm **WHEELBASE:** 1520mm **DRY WEIGHT:** 253kg/559lb **FUEL CAPACITY:** 15 litres **TOP SPEED:** 121mph

OWNERS' CLUB

Honda Owners' Club
www.hoc.org.uk

SPECIALISTS

David Silver
www.davidsilverspares.co.uk

There might have only been one brake at the front but that brake, using one piston caliper from the mighty six-cylinder CBX1000, had a performance streets ahead of the old style one fitted to the Z750. Curiously you can't retro fit a second disc as Honda omitted lugs on the right hand fork leg. The indicators were huge and the switchgear too, was of a new purposeful style. It wouldn't look out of place on a new bike today. The air forks, as used on the CBX1000 were a bit skinny by modern standards at 35mm, and the rear shocks were old-tech, oil damped Showas.

Okay, so what was it like on the road? First of all, I had an experience that might have been familiar to anyone who took a bike for a service at Pride and Clark back in the 1960s, when staff would polish the saddle so the rider slipped about under acceleration and thought their bike was suddenly faster. The shiny seat cover on the Honda had me sliding around all over the place. Pictures of a 750K from 1983 show that the shiny, polished, seat was factory spec and Cycle World complained about the slipperiness of the seat at the time, so it wasn't caused by decades of wear.

Like almost every Honda, the gearshift was slick, and the Honda took off. Handling was neutral rather than positive. Steady as a rock in straight lines and unremarkable but more than adequate on the bends. The Delkevic system wasn't exactly quiet, and with a ripping sound the CB750K shot forward. And then things got a bit strange. With four cylinders and two cams, you could barely feel anything from the engine. The bike quickly reached a rev limit, so I changed



up again. And then the same thing happened. You changed up and you got faster, with almost no feeling at all. And again, change up, go faster, no feel from the engine; just a smooth passage forwards. It didn't matter what the revs were or what gear you were in. It felt the same throughout the rev range. Most curious. The only indication that you were going faster was the wind in your face and needle on the speedometer, and that wasn't much help. The 750 came from that strange period in history when the American government, in its infinite wisdom, decided that the best way to save the environment was to impose a blanket 55mph speed limit, and to enforce it they limited speedometers to 80mph.

It's a wide machine, the 750K, with the alternator exposed on the left-hand end of the crankshaft and the ignition module on the other end. The fear that even a low-speed get off would wipe out these components led many riders, as in the case with this example, to fit protective crash bars to cover the casings. The wideness of the engine did leave plenty of room for the substantial rubber mounted 30mm Keihin CV carbs, which aided the breathing. Honda had retired the use of steel tubing with chunky alloy castings for footrest hangers. There were a few bits that had deteriorated cosmetically over the years a little, but these were easily replaced items like the Showa shocks, but the original Honda engine lacquer had survived well.



MASSIVE THANKS
go to Somerset Classic Motorcycles for the loan of the two 750s. Visit somersetclassicmotorcycles.co.uk.

The early 1980s were an exciting time for motorcycling. Back when the CB750K was launched it must have startled Suzuki and Kawasaki. Suzuki quickly went on a styling binge that produced their own four valve per cylinder Katana range and GSX models, while Kawasaki dropped their twin, scaled up the z650 to a 750 and the two valve per cylinder air-cooled GPz range soon arrived to compete. And just as they thought they had the measure of the DOHC CB fours, Honda dropped them and brought out their V-four VF750.

The CB750K lasted just a few years in the UK, and a little longer in the US, where their Custom and Nighthawk variants lasted longest of all. For the classic buyer with a penchant for the unusual the 750K, marked up at more than £1000 cheaper than the Z750, was certainly keenly priced.



THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE...

If you had to choose between them, then the buyer would need to consider that both these forgotten 750s have their virtues and vices. I suspect that the Honda would be much easier to live with than the Kawasaki and you could cover considerable distances on a big comfy four that cost less than the price of a used 125cc single, especially with a bit of baffling of the exhaust. Spares for the Kawasaki are available thanks to the cross platform use on other models, while David Silver Spares have a comprehensive stock list for the CB750K. The head says Honda. There is as always, however, the heart. The Kawasaki has that indefinable but vital thing for a classic motorcycle. Character. Maybe it's just my predilection for big parallel twins, but had I the garage space, the Z750 would have joined its Yamaha and Triumph siblings. Riding it just made me feel good. CBG

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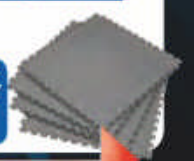
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Triumph 6T Thunderbird

WORDS BY OLI HULME **PHOTOGRAPHS BY** GARY CHAPMAN

THE WALLED ONE

IT HAD BEEN A GOOD DAY. A COUPLE OF CHUNKY Seventies Japanese classics, and a fine Italian superbike had been ridden. Next, Gary the photographer and I had a rendezvous with John, to capture his 1953 Triumph 6T Thunderbird. It sat there waiting for us, resplendent in glossy black. Where should we take it? "We could go up the hill?" said John, "I know a good spot. Would you like to ride it there? I'll take my 500 twin." This was an opportunity not to be missed. A tickle of the carb, a swing on the kick-start and the 650 pre-unit engine burbled into life.


"Would you like to ride it there? I'll take my 500 twin." This was an opportunity not to be missed. A tickle of the carb, a swing on the kick-start and the 650 pre-unit engine burbled into life."

Above: Not bad for a bike found behind a wall

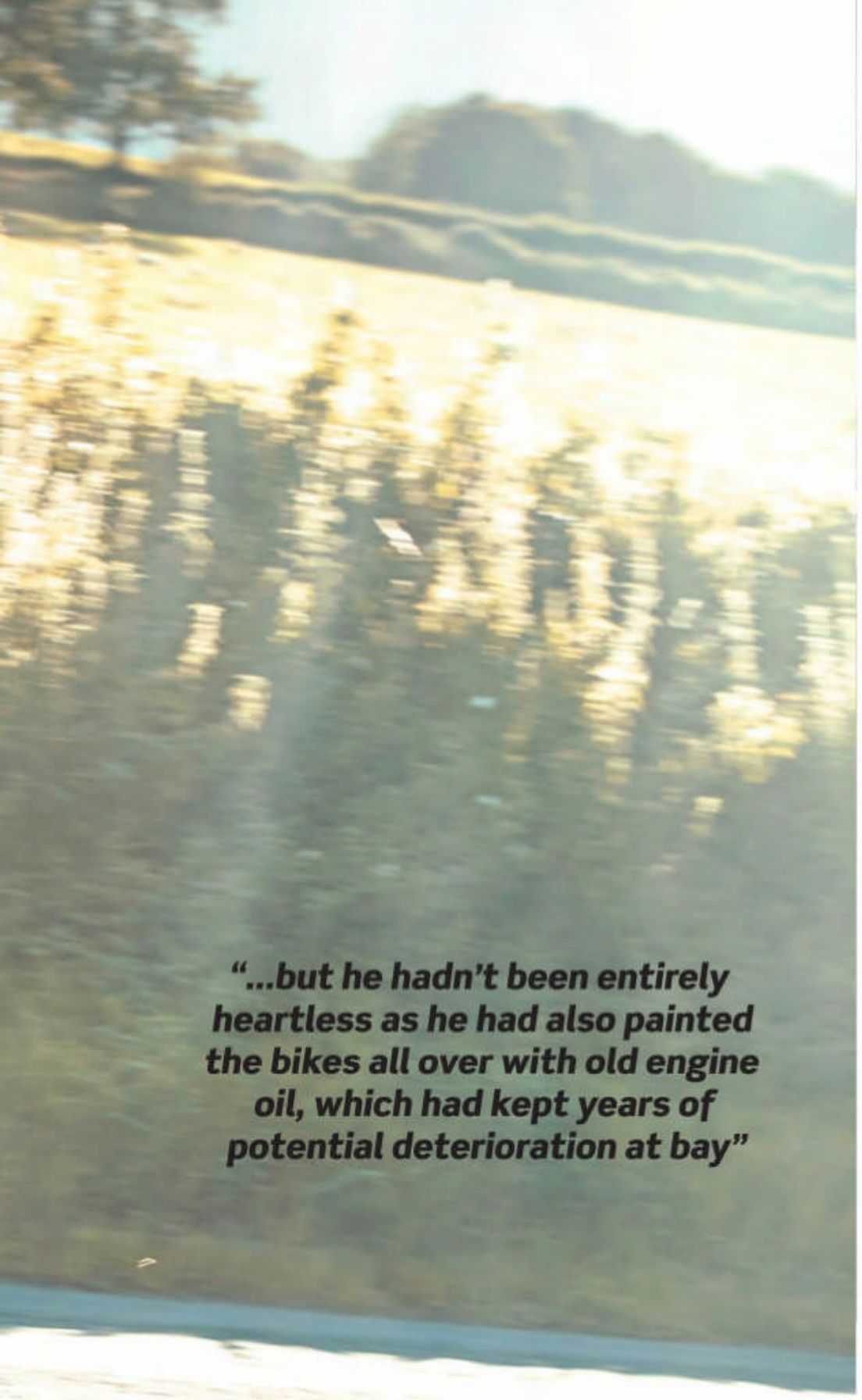
Below: Unit engine came in 1961, bikini in '63, before T'bird was dropped at end of 1966

John set off, riding his other Triumph, a custom which was equipped with minimal front suspension and a rigid rear end. I followed on the Thunderbird, sprung hub and ancient telescopic forks soaking up the bumps on the country lanes. My goodness, this really was one of the loveliest motorcycles I'd ever had the pleasure to sling a leg over. Smooth as silk, with a clean and positive gearshift, and clutch as light as a feather. John had described the bike as being: "Like riding Monkey's Magic Carpet," and he wasn't wrong. He swung his 500 onto a steep and bumpy farm track, and belted up the ruts and mud and gravel like he was riding a competition moto crosser.

Normally I'd have been nervous taking something with trials tyres and six inches of suspension travel up such an incline, let alone a 1950s 650 twin, but still, I followed. The beautiful, forgiving, Thunderbird took the track with no effort at all. Despite the tiny amount of travel offered by the rear sprung hub the rear end soaked up the bumps easily. It was a truly astonishing experience and a tribute to John's skills as bike builder, and to Edward Turner's masterpiece. By the time we made it to the top, I was in love with this adorable Triumph. There wasn't an angle the Thunderbird didn't look good at.

The 650 had been meticulously put together over a period of 18 months. It had been acquired following a phone call from a friend in the north west Devon town of Braunton. John began the tale: "He called me up and told me he'd been working on an old workshop and spotted that the building was longer on the outside than it was on the inside." A false wall had been built at the back of the building. "He'd knocked a hole in the wall and shone a torch inside. It was full of old, rusty motorbikes."





"...but he hadn't been entirely heartless as he had also painted the bikes all over with old engine oil, which had kept years of potential deterioration at bay"

WHAT IS IT?
The original sporting Triumph 650 twin

GOOD POINTS?
The ride and feel are excellent, the engine is a cracker and it looks like a million dollars

BAD POINTS?
Not a lot. The brakes aren't exactly earth-stopping

COST?
Basket case: £4-5000
Oily rag runner: £7-8000
Concours: £12,000

It seemed the workshop had been used by a motor trader in the early Sixties. Motorcycling had fallen out of favour with many, thanks to the advent of the small, cheap family car, like the Mini and the Ford Popular. Stuck in deepest Devon with a lot of old, unpopular and unsaleable motorcycles, the owner had simply stuffed the bikes in the back of the workshop, walled them up and forgot about them. "They had been there for nearly 60 years. I was offered the chance to buy the Thunderbird and jumped at it."

It's fair to say that he was taking on quite a task. "Water had poured through the roof and everything was covered in rust. There were brambles growing through a hole in the front mudguard."

After dragging the 650 out and bringing it home, John set to work. Despite the 60 years in the darkness and damp, the only bit of bodywork that needed to be replaced was that front mudguard. That motor trader might have walled the bikes up, but he hadn't been entirely heartless as he had also painted the bikes all over with old engine oil, which had kept years of potential deterioration at bay. Almost everything was recoverable, with the aid of a lot of expertly applied filler and primer, and the whole bike was repainted in a friend's spray shop in a fetching shade of Audi black.

"I'd done some work for him and he offered to do it



Wind-cheating nacelle



Period seat cover!



SU replaced with Amal 276



as a favour, as he had a lot of paint left over after Audi had discontinued it. I did warn him it was a big job but he insisted. I stripped it all and took it round. It really was a big job."

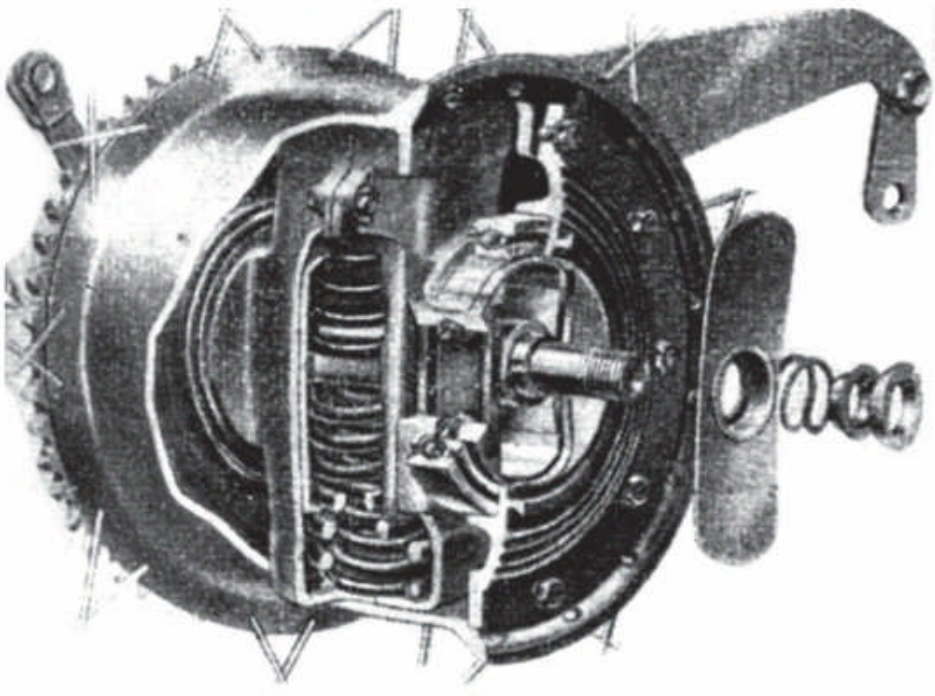
The Thunderbird had covered a fair distance in its first seven or so years on the road. The seized but restorable Smiths Triumph Revelator speedometer, with a guide inscribed on the face showing what the revs should be in each gear, showed 37,000 miles.

Ace Classics, the South London pre-unit specialists, provided a lot of the parts. Babbitt white metal plain bearings were used on the bottom end which was reground to just ten thou from standard. +0.40 pistons were fitted along with new valves, springs and guides. John used new Champion plugs the same grade as the 60-year-old ones he took out. It originally came with the SU carb first fitted in 1953.

"I cleaned it up, but couldn't get it to idle so I put an Amal 276 on. Now it goes like the clappers." The third gear was broken, so that was replaced and the gearbox is now faultless. The original Triumph friction plates were replaced with new ones using modern materials. That splendid aftermarket tartan plastic seat cover – sprung hub Thunderbird seats were prone to splitting – is marked 'Dowty Coventry'. "It's a great period accessory and it's part of the bike as it was found. Why would I change it?"

Above: John says: "It's like riding Monkey's magic carpet."

Below: Love or loathe, the infamous sprung rear hub



Tony Cooper rebuilt the Dynamo and a new loom was bought from Ace Classics, linked to a V2A regulator using a Lucas MCR2 mounting kit. The system still uses positive earth and Paul Goff's LED bulbs. There's an aftermarket horn.

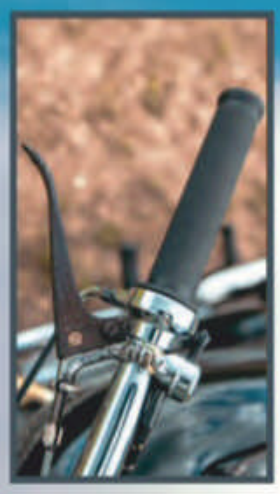
Other parts came from Monty's Classics and Feked, while John rebuilt the wheels himself and had them trued at a local bicycle shop. The four bands of chrome on the tank should have red inserts, but had become black at some point. "I liked them like that, so I left it."

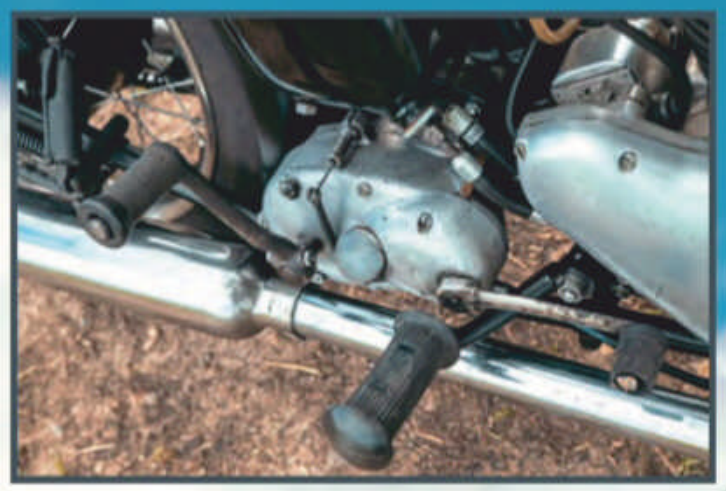
Back on the bikes, it was time for what could be an even more tricky ride, this time down the steep track this time, without the benefit of gravity to hold me back. And once again the T'bird didn't put a wheel wrong. That sprung hub – usually referred to in motorcycle writing circles as "the notorious sprung hub" – did sterling work. John had already explained that he could never understand why people complained about them, or took sharp intakes of breath at the idea of taking one apart. "I did it myself in the rebuild. It wasn't a problem."

The front wheel went where it was supposed to go too, and we were soon on steadier ground, and burbling down leafy lanes in search of a suitable spot for pictures of 1953's finest in motion, while Gary struggled down the track laden with equipment.

A suitable spot was located, and John took to the saddle. The Thunderbird, well, thundered back and forth, completely in its element on a deserted back







road dappled in the early evening sun. It had been a good day.

American inspiration brought life to Triumph's 650 twin. Their 500s had been a hit, but they were starting to run out of steam a little by the late 1940s and the clamour from across the Atlantic was for more cubes. It wasn't just a desire to be simply bigger than the rest that had prompted the wish for a 650, which would still be smaller than rival Indian and Harley-Davidson V-Twins. With longer distance to cover on highways that British riders could only dream of, often in hot and dusty conditions, the extra cubes would help a Thunderbird's rider cruise all day, and put on a spirited burst of speed when needed.

The first two Thunderbirds weren't even the property of the factory. One day, at the end of 1948 publicity manager Ivor Davies and sales rep Neal Shilton were asked to hand their personal 500cc Speed Twins over to the experimental department for some mysterious modifications. When they got their machines back they were vastly more powerful, and they discovered that new 650cc engines had been fitted. With bored barrels and a stroked crank, the Thunderbird was born. To add to the air of secrecy the new engine was stamped with 5T serial numbers. Other riders were astonished that what appeared to be a sprung-hub equipped Speed Twin could top 100mph with relative ease.

Edward Turner christened the new 650 the 6T Thunderbird, inspired by visiting a Thunderbird Motel while visiting South Carolina. Native American culture was huge in the late 1940s, and cowboy films, comics and early TV shows often played up the mythology of the Thunderbird, a supernatural being of power and strength. What better name for Triumph's first postwar big twin?

The 6T had its own logo, a dart-like emblem which featured on ties, badges and later the machines themselves.

In mid-1949, Triumph sent a team riding four new Thunderbirds to the French test track at Montlhery, for a spectacular product launch. Test and ISDT riders Alex Scobie, Len Bayliss, Allan Jeffries and Jim Alves were sent out onto the track in snow white overalls. ➧

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Above: Details abound; this bike has a story to tell

Below: It is certainly a great-looking bike



THUNDERBIRD DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

1950:
Launched in Slate Blue

1951:
The Thunderbird got a beefed up crank and con rods and a slightly bigger carburettor and a more attractive colour scheme

1953:
An SU carb was fitted to improve fuel consumption

1954:
The Thunderbird got an alternator and was joined in Triumph's range by the sportier T110, losing its place at the top of Triumph's performance tree

1955:
This year, like all Triumph twins, the Thunderbird got a new, heavier swing arm frame, with the sprung hub vanishing into history. There were engine modifications too, with a bigger main bearing and shell big ends

1956:
A full width front brake hub arrived, the four bar tank trim was replaced by the "grille" or "mouth organ" style badge and the carb reverted to an Amal.

1957:
Like all Triumphs the Thunderbird gained a "World Motorcycle Record Holder" badge

1958:
Following the move to enclosures on several Triumph models, the Thunderbird got a deeply valanced front mudguard and the new slickshift gearbox and another new crankshaft followed

1960:
A new frame arrived to replace the somewhat flexible older offering. The Thunderbird's transformation into a respectable tourer meant it got the "Bathtub" enclosure at the rear and even deeper front mudguards

1961:
The pre-unit engine was replaced by the new unit-construction power plant featuring an alloy head and Slickshift gearbox and there was a new 8in brake

1962:
Cheeseparing saw the removal of the slickshift and the fitting of a cheaper siamesed exhausts

1963:
The Bathtub was trimmed and partial rear enclosure replaced it as the experiment with enclosure faded away

1964:
The electrical system got an upgrade to 12v

1965:
The Thunderbird was fitted with excellent new forks and a new rear brake

1966:
The rear fairing was removed and replaced by side panels, there was a new tank badge and there was a move to 18in wheels for the last Thunderbird of the 1960s

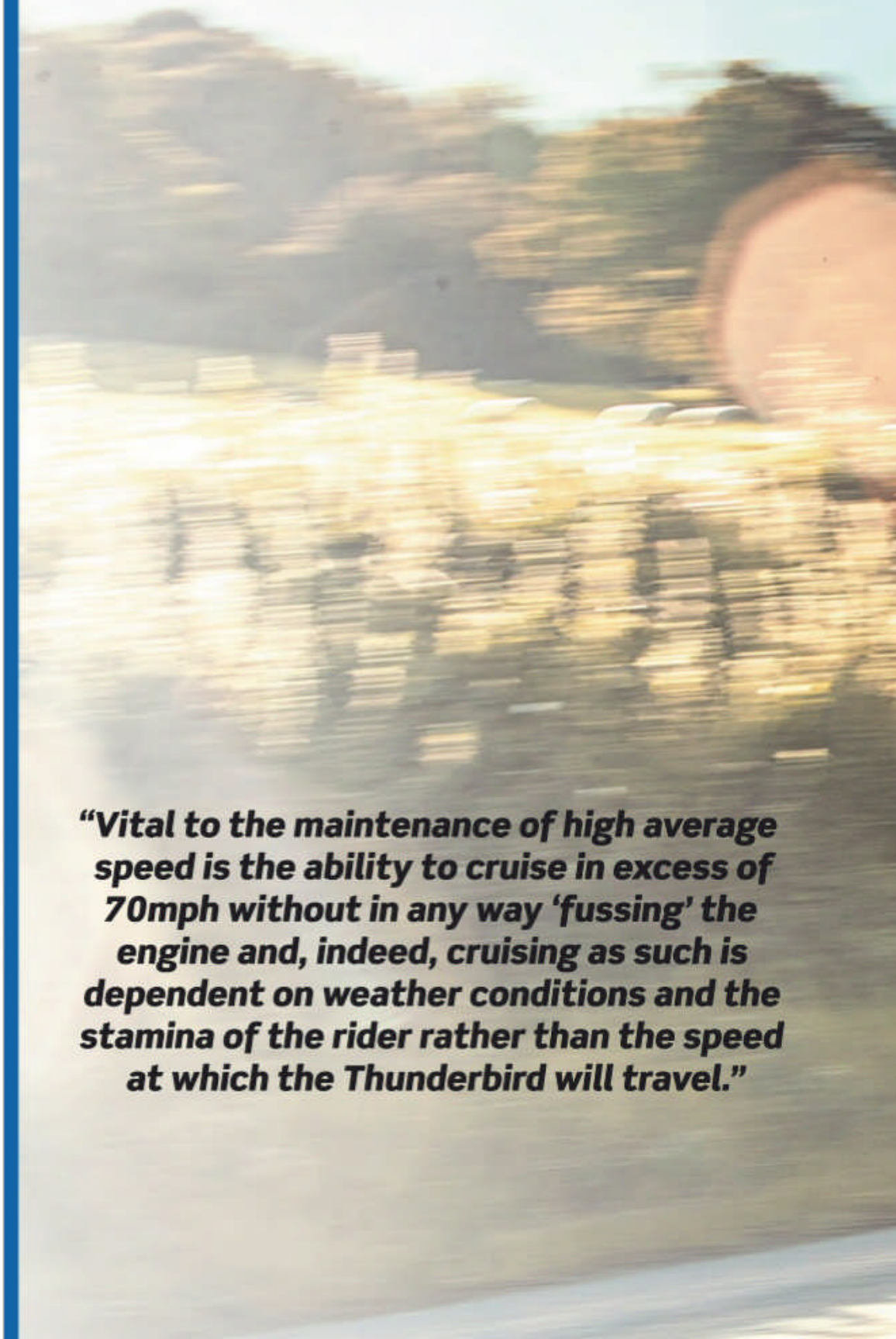
1981:
The name was revived for the TR65 Thunderbird, a budget version of the 750 Tiger, with a shorter stroke version of the TR7/T140 engine. Despite, or perhaps because of the use of fewer components and the use of simpler, cheaper items like a drum rear brake, the TR65 was an excellent motorcycle. It is a great buy if you can find one and they are jealously guarded by their owners

The bikes were ridden nonstop for 500 miles, and three of them managed to average a speed of more than 90mph. Jim Alves on the fourth, which fractured a petrol tank, still managed numbers in the high 80s but this wasn't mentioned in the subsequent publicity. With the Thunderbird being little more than a Speed Twin with a big engine a revised gearbox and an extra clutch plate, Triumph had 2500 motorcycles ready to go to the showrooms.

Unfortunately, the slate blue paint job wasn't liked in the US and a smaller carburettor restricted performance on these 1950 production year models, a decision that was swiftly reversed for the 1951 season. It did of course have the added bonus of making sure the new owners of what was effectively a Mk2 Thunderbird got a faster, better, prettier bike.

SPECIFICATION (1950)

ENGINE: 649cc air-cooled four-stroke twin **BORE/STROKE:** 71mm x 82mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 7:1 **CARB:** Amal 276 **TRANSMISSION:** four-speed gearbox **FRAME:** Cradle frame **SUSPENSION:** Hydraulic telescopic front forks, Sprung Hub rear, **BRAKES:** 7in (17.8cm) front and 8in (20cm) rear drums **WHEELS/TYRES:** 3.25x19 front and 3.50x19 rear **ELECTRICS:** 6V dynamo, auto-advance magneto ignition, 6in (15cm) headlamp. **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31½in (80cm) **WHEELBASE:** 55in (140cms) **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 6in (15cm) **WEIGHT:** 385lb (175kg)



"Vital to the maintenance of high average speed is the ability to cruise in excess of 70mph without in any way 'fussing' the engine and, indeed, cruising as such is dependent on weather conditions and the stamina of the rider rather than the speed at which the Thunderbird will travel."

There were various changes and improvements over the next few years. An SU carburettor was fitted on the 1952 models and stayed in use until the late 1950s, and during a period when petrol supply was still limited, a test showed that a carefully ridden Thunderbird with the SU carburettor could achieve 158mpg. But it wasn't about economy, really.

In 1954 Jack Dale stripped down to his swimming trunks in an attempt to make his Triumph Thunderbird even more aerodynamic at the Bonneville Salt Flats, breaking a land speed record and creating one of the most famous images in motorcycling history. The following year Johnny Allen strapped himself in to 15ft-long streamliner featuring a Thunderbird engine head and hurtled across the salt flats at 193mph. The following year he did it again, this time topping 214mph, a record that stood for six years.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID:

The Motor Cycle (The Blue 'Un) first tested the Thunderbird in October 1950. It is fair to say that in the days of the resolutely uncritical review, they clearly liked it. "Enthralling" was the word *The Motor Cycle* used to describe the Thunderbird.

"So fast is the Thunderbird that during the test the maximum speed at which the machine could be cruised without apparent engine fatigue was never determined...The cruising speed of the model was limited only by the physical strength of the rider. The Thunderbird rustles along in the most effortless manner imaginable. Above 70mph there was vibration; high-frequency vibration which became



Right: HRH Prince Bertil on the first Thunderbird in Sweden, December 13, 1949

Below: Aboard a Triumph Thunderbird in the glorious sun – is there anywhere better to be?



less and less noticeable as the test progressed. Towards the end it was so slight that it was all but imperceptible if waders and gloves were worn.

Handling on average-good road surfaces was exemplary at all speeds. The Triumph could be heeled over round turns at 100mph with the utmost facility. The Thunderbird then is a high-speed touring machine par excellence with all the outstanding quality of production and finish which have made Triumph famous over the years."

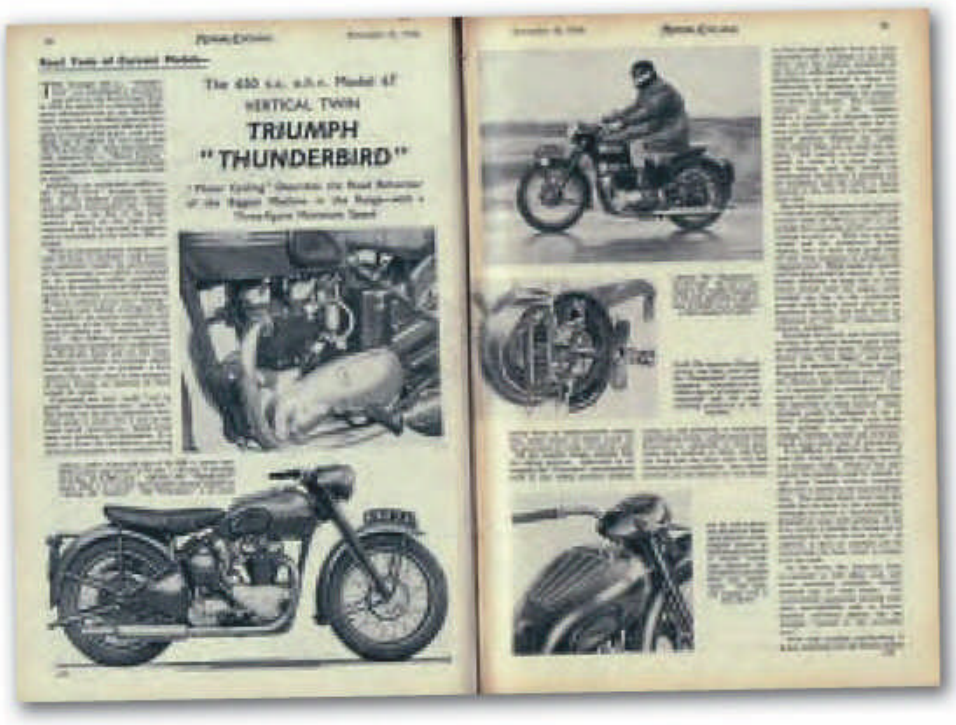
The daredevils at 'The Green 'Un', *Motor Cycling*, in their test in November 1950 were only marginally less fulsome in their praise:

"Vital to the maintenance of high average speed is the ability to cruise in excess of 70mph without in any way 'fussing' the engine and, indeed, cruising as such is dependent on weather conditions and the stamina of the rider rather than the speed at which the Thunderbird will travel. No difficulty was experienced in keeping the speedometer needle above the 80mph mark and on one road, frequently travelled, the average speeds were high enough to produce a firm resolve that, other than in the company of close friends, no mention of them would be made. It is difficult to describe the sense of ease felt when cracking along narrow and bumpy roads.



Above: "So when do I change gear?"

Below: "A three-figure speed", *Motorcycling* quoted



"From a fast left-hander the machine could be picked up and then banked without conscious effort from a swerve in the opposite direction. The spring wheel must take full credit for its share in the proceedings; although its travel is, theoretically, not designed to cope with potholes of the 4in variety, it knocks the bump out of anything less than the 6in crater. In addition, it does an excellent job by maintaining the back wheel in contact with the road."

The only issues they could find were an overfilled oil tank spreading lubricant over the rear tyre and an issue with a "deranged" voltage-control unit, adding: "Small criticisms, these, and ones never likely to perturb the average owner. Small enough, certainly, when the overall efficiency, practicability and appearance of the Thunderbird are arrayed on the credit side of the ledger."

THE WILD ONE

Back in 1954 Triumph were unimpressed when the then bad-boy of film, Marlon Brando, rode a 1950 Thunderbird in Thunder Blue in the legendary movie The Wild One – a film considered so dangerous and morally corrupting that it was banned in the UK till 1967.

It mattered not that Brando was pictured on a Matchless twin in the competition or that the real bad-boy in the movie was played by Lee Marvin, who Brando inexplicably managed to beat up, and who rode a Harley-Davidson Hydraglide. The image of the leather jacketed Brando, slouched on his Triumph, peaked cap at an angle and stolen trophy tied to the tank was one aped by thousands of young rockers.

Triumph were deeply upset that their Thunderbird was tarred with this naughty reputation, though it seems likely it did sales a boost rather than deterring buyers. As the movie was shot in monochrome it appeared that Brando's Triumph was black, rather than blue, and his blue jeans and Marvin's striped jersey appeared black as well. CBG

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Don't leave it 'til they're gone

L. A. Whitmore, Matt's local engineers, closed the doors for the last time this month. But why are the old engineers going to be missed?

WORDS BY JOHN, NEVILLE AND THE CHAPS AT WHITMORE ENGINEERS **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** MATT



EVERYTHING CHANGES; OF THIS I AM AWARE. However, this month, L. A. Whitmore and Co engineers, in deepest Norfolk, closed its doors after 70 years of business. Current owner since the 1980s John Eggleton, had spent two years trying to sell the business as a going concern, but wasn't successful. So the equipment – so often the saviour of an old vehicle and worked by seasoned engineers who knew their intricacies intimately, some of which will be older than your cherished classic bike – is to suffer the ignominy of being auctioned off to magpies, looking for a bargain.

Based in Briston village, Lenny Whitmore started in between 1949 and 1950, maintaining bicycles, thanks to the neighbouring village of Melton Constable being a large railway junction and railway works. This quickly led to rebuilding engines for cars such as Austin Sevens, and bikes, as well as agricultural equipment from the surrounding farms.

If you wanted bores honed, a crankshaft ground, cylinder heads skimmed, guides pressed in or broken studs removed, Whitmore would help. And crucially, they would also know the different tolerances needed depending on the age of the vehicle, and offer to rebuild as well.

But much of this was due to bikes and cars of the past having to be rebuilt as they didn't last as long as modern vehicles do. Surely it's better that engines are more reliable now? The guys at Whitmore don't agree:



TOP TIPS

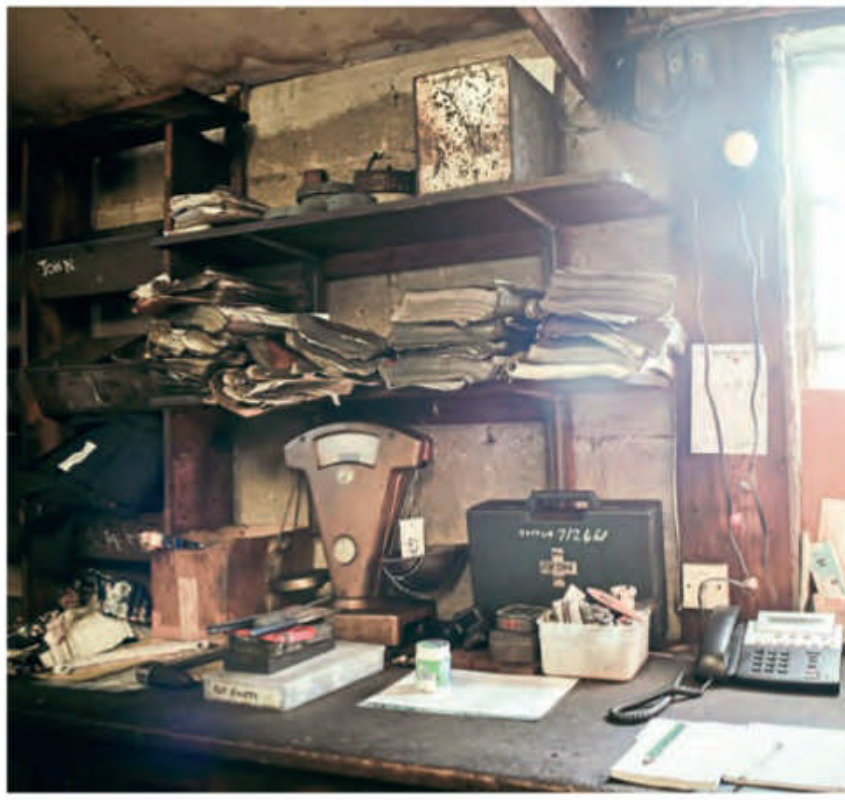
In no particular order, we asked the guys to pass on some handy titbits to the next generation:

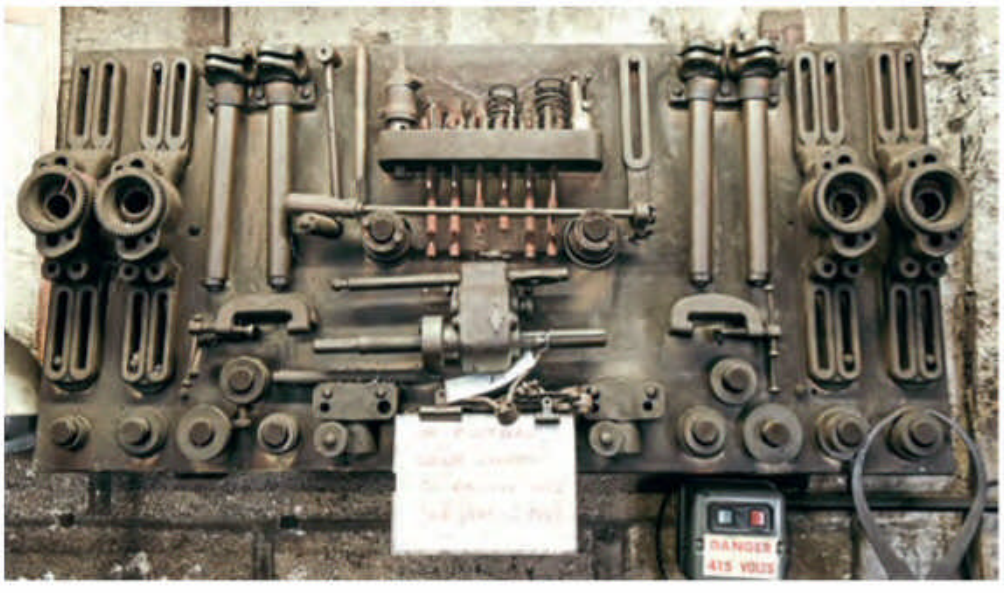
- Old stuff is better than new stuff – 90 per cent of new engines are designed to be throwaway
- Take pictures and notes when you're stripping an engine, use bags and boxes and label it all
- Old stuff is more enjoyable to work on.
- JB pistons from Australia are more reliable than new/old stock
- Enjoy it – we have.

"Older engines needed rebuilding, but they could carry on for years and years – look at all the classic bikes and cars still around. Modern engines go for longer, but can't be rebuilt so are just thrown away. That's got to be bad for the long term, hasn't it?"

So what will the average bike enthusiast miss when these established engineers disappear? The machines they use may be older and often hand-operated rather than computer, but the engineer is watching the progress and will have more sympathy to older parts. Plus experience helps when the materials are older – welding, grinding and tolerances are all different compared to modern engines and parts. John adds: "Some of the equipment is old; the little crank grinder was second-hand when Lenny bought it, so pre-1940s. But they are still accurate and it's a lovely machine to use."

But the main change will be simple availability of services. Put bluntly, there is very little money to be made in engineering services, especially compared







“Modern engines go for longer, but can’t be rebuilt so are just thrown away. That’s got to be bad for the long term, hasn’t it?”

with the cost of the machinery needed. Whitmore used lathes and equipment that was old, but perfectly serviceable. To start a new business would require hundreds of thousands of pounds, which of course needs to be recouped. And doing the odd job for an old engine doesn’t cut it. And you’re less likely to speak to someone who worked on older engines, so while highly skilled, modern engineers won’t know those little secrets about the older jobs.

This isn’t a story just for those of us in Norfolk. If you still have an established engineering company in your area, use them while you can. Talk to them, learn from them. There are new engineers coming through but the days of a small, personal company who will happily press in a couple of valve guides, or skim that old head you just bought from an autojumble, are rapidly disappearing – it just isn’t worth their while.

So what is John going to miss? “I’m going to miss the people, the customers, and running the world down – that’s what we all like doing, isn’t it?” he says with a smile and a laugh.

Good luck, enjoy and thank you for all your help. CBG



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Satisfaction

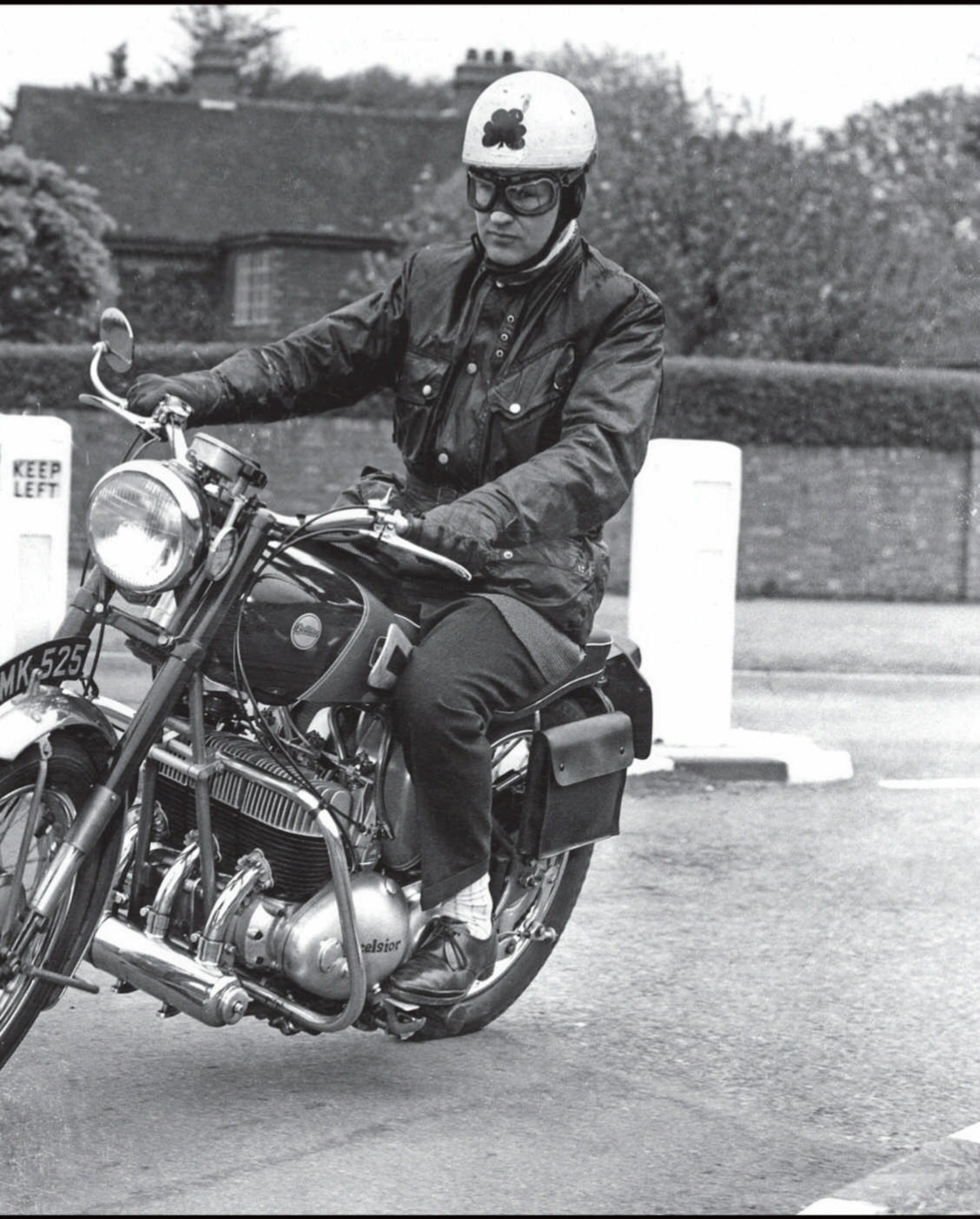
In 1963, David Blanchard, an enterprising engineer, took a 492cc, three-cylinder two-stroke Excelsior engine from a Berkeley car and shoehorned it into a 10-year-old EMC frame to create this special. The technical writer from Bexhill couldn't get the off-set chain to run correctly without the engine being too far to the right, so added a separate Burman gearbox, connected to the built-in box, which was kept in first.

He then found the three Amal carbs too heavy on the throttle, so manufactured a system where the carbs all operated together with just one spring to work against. The Dowty forks stayed, but a better front brake was fitted and at the rear a Clamill sprung hub designed by AT Clark in 1950 to improve rigid frames was fitted.

Motor Cycle's road tester, David Dixon tried the creation and claimed: " The two-stroke multi is out on its own for smoothness. Acceleration was brisk up to 50ish and was accompanied by a delightful burble from the exhaust. In theory, it is capable of 85mph." I don't think there can be much more satisfaction than riding a bike you have built yourself. CBG



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BRITISH BIKE BUILDERS



The Valespeed '28

WORDS BY OLI HULME
PHOTOS BY GARY CHAPMAN

We seek out those brave souls who have decided to take on the modern world with hand-made, British motorcycles, years after the industry was said to be finished

PEOPLE STRIVING LATE INTO THE NIGHT IN out-of-the way workshops were the origins of the British motorcycle industry. Oil-stained and grimy, bending this, turning that and welding the other, their hands built legends and imaginative one-offs. And for some, these efforts have never stopped.

Custom builders in particular have often been the holders of the welding torch of innovation, but usually they don't get further than spectacular one-offs. They certainly don't tend to materialise as short-run bespoke production machines.

Ben Hall, toiling away in his Worcestershire workshop has managed to turn a one-off custom special, produced to a tighter-than-tight deadline, into a reality you can buy.

"Currently he is converting a Honda Firestorm engine into the powerplant for a supercharged 500 single with Hossack front end and he put together an aggressive Harley-Davidson Lowrider from 'Things I had in the workshop' during lockdown"



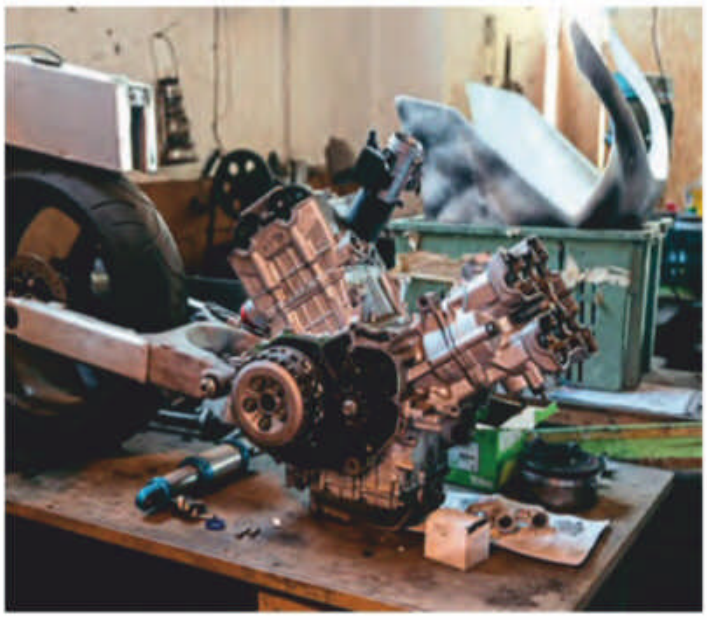
Ben's company, Valespeed Motorcycles, has built world record breaking sprinters and finely detailed customs. Currently he is converting a Honda Firestorm engine into the powerplant for a supercharged 500 single with Hossack front end and he put together an aggressive Harley-Davidson Lowrider from "things I had in the workshop" during lockdown. And he sells a budget kit bike, to build your own tiny off-road gem. He is always creating something. He says: "I love a bike most of all when it's in my head."

One bike that started out in his head and which became that rapid custom build, is now commercially available as a brand-new, hand-built, bespoke, board track tribute created to your specifications.

Currently powered by a tiny 150cc Honda clone engine from Lifan, the Valespeed '28 is about to be offered in a much bigger format.

Ben, who broke a land speed record at Pendine on a bike built around that most prosaic of motorcycles, a Yamaha XJ600, was inspired to build his pocket creation originally when he heard that another great British institution was likely to come to an end. He heard that the site of the nearby Bulldog Bash was earmarked for property development. This the end of the line for the long running custom show, and with less than a month to build a show-stopping design, Ben got to work. Rather than build something in the

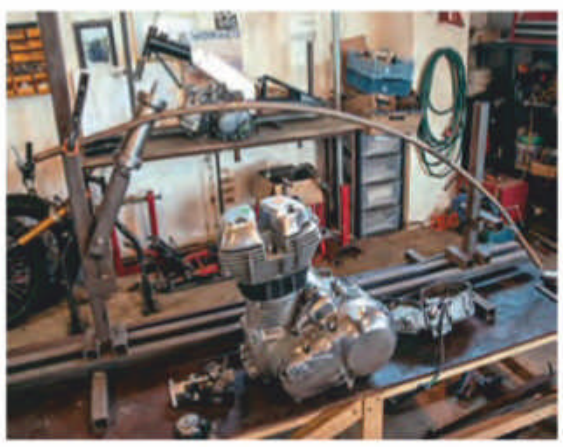












classic custom form, Ben scouted round his workshop and found a 270cc two-stroke engine from a Spanish Gas Gas trail bike, and decided to build a tribute to 1920s board trackers, bending the tubes to create a rigid frame on a home-brewed jig. "I decided to go for a board track look, but also added elements from the old Corgi minibike," says Ben.

It took 28 days in the workshop to create the custom, including the application of a fish scale paint job created by the use of a pair of fishnet tights, the purchase of which Ben says raised eyebrows in his local supermarket. Finishing touches to the bike included the use of the champagne cork as a petrol tank filler cap, which was used after hearing tales of road racers using them for the purpose in the 1920s.

On the day of completion, after a final late night in the shed, the bike was dubbed '28 Days Later' and taken to the site of the Bulldog Bash. Forty-eight hours later it was ridden onto the main stage in a cloud of blue smoke to pick up the trophy for best European custom. There you might have expected the story to end, but as it turned out, Ben was inundated with offers from admirers wanting to buy his miniature gem. He quickly realised there might be a market for the unusual design and began putting the pieces together to do a limited production run. The Valespeed '28 was the result, and you can buy one for your very own.

Ben uses a variation on the original 28 Days Later jig to build the frame from scratch. The first step is to machine the headstock, clamping it in the jig along with the rear axle plates. Then, using a roller he bends the tubes and then tacks them in place on the jig. A metal plate that matches the engine mounting points helps form the frame to the right shape and the down tubes, seat post and laser cut headstock gussets are all added. Then the final welding together of everything in a precise order to retain the shape is performed. It is an old-fashioned process, that's helped by the use of modern materials and equipment and considerable skill. Ben says: "If it's fabricated or machined, we've done it."

It looks incredibly sparse and delicate, but the use of the expertly gusseted twin backbone frame and under-slung fuel tank makes the Valespeed '28 as solid as a rock.

The front forks are a Valespeed original design. Although they look like old-fashioned girder forks with tubular blades, the actual damper and connection assemblies are from Ben's imagination. The design was used not least because it helps to get the Valespeed '28 through the all-important MSVA approval while registering the bike. The forks have rebound damping which is not usually seen on an old-style girder fork and they are fully adjustable for rake and trail to suit the rider through a selection of links and joints.

Above left: The frame can accommodate a variety of engines







The '28 has been fitted with a Prescott sidecar, which fits the bike perfectly

The size of the petrol tank is variable too, made to be expanded to suit the buyer's requirements within its tubular cradle. Ben said: "I make the fuel tank from two halves and then weld them together so that I can vary the capacity depending on what people want."

And the plot is propelled by that 150cc Lifan/Honda engine with a Mikuni carb and a hand-made exhaust system. On the original custom stopping wasn't much of a concern, and used an old Triumph front drum and a left over drum from an unremarkable Italian lightweight at the back. On the production model it's got a smart new twin-leading shoe front brake and another large drum at the rear, while the immaculate wiring system was built from scratch by Ben's dad, Pete.

THE WATSONIAN CONNECTION

Once you have created your very own hand-built production motorcycle, what do you do? Well, why not fit a sidecar to it?

This is a lot easier to do if, like Ben, you also happen to work at Watsonian, building sidecars, and this gave him the option of fitting a lightweight sidecar to the tiny Valespeed '28.

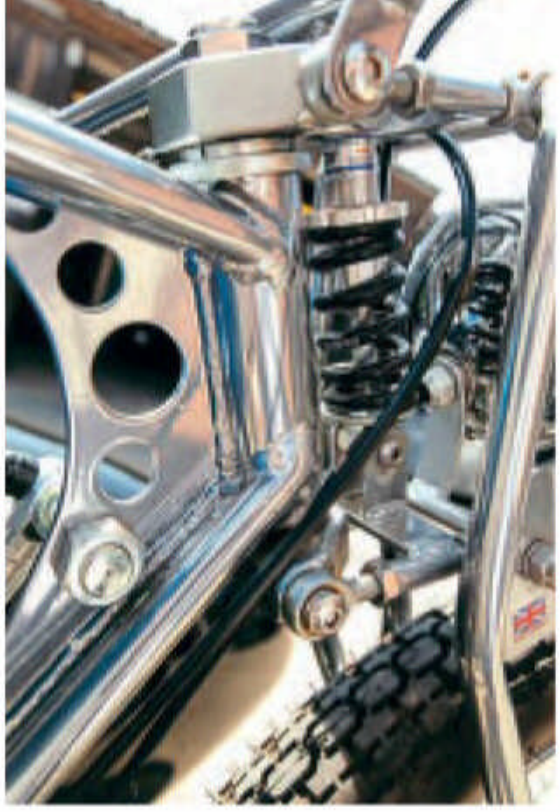
The completed Valespeed '28 wasn't actually at the Valespeed premises. Ben had to take us to Watsonian HQ to see it, so he led, and we followed. What did he lead on? Some ultra-powerful sporting creation from the Valespeed workshop? Nope, he was mounted on a grubby old Honda CX500. We had a spirited dash through one of the prettier, yet pleasantly deserted, parts of the Cotswolds to Watsonian's HQ, situated on a former Polish Second World War refugee camp.

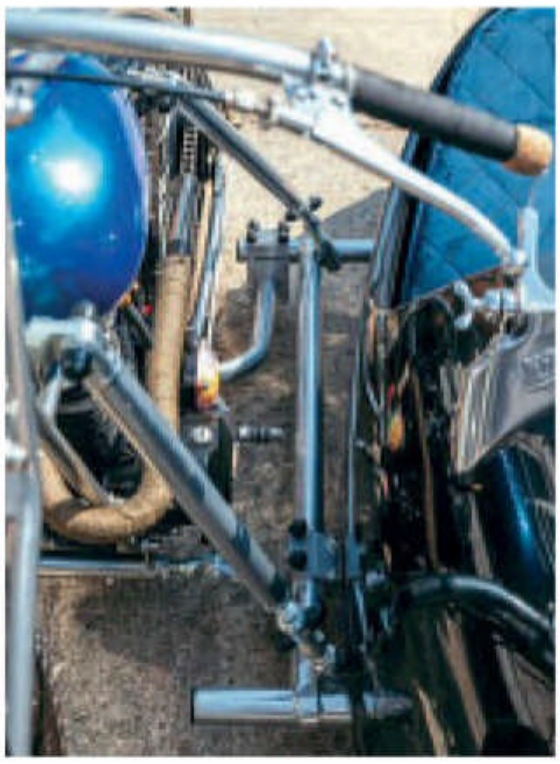
Ben used one of Watsonian's Prescott sidecars as a base for the combo. Back in 1946, the original Prescott sidecar bodies were built using a batch of RAF Mosquito bomber reserve fuel tanks, which Watsonian bought from the Air Ministry.

Renamed after the famous Cotswold hill-climb track nearby, the current Prescott sidecar is produced from glass fibre, using a mould taken from one of the original plywood bodyshells.

A fold-down screen is mounted on a cast aluminium bar in front of the cockpit and the seat tilts forward to provide access to storage space behind. It is a delightful small chair designed for lower capacity bikes and scooters. Like a lot of Watsonian's products, the Prescott is popular with people who have furry friends.

"We sell a lot of sidecars to people with dogs," says Ben. The Prescott is usually sold with suspension, but is converted to a rigid set-up using a frame fashioned by Ben from 1½in tube. This is to suit the Valespeed '28's rigid frame and the whole combination is remarkably light. The black safety guard shielding the trailing arms of passengers hides two tiny warning lights hidden behind magnifying lenses. The finish on the frame of the bike and on the sidecar looks like chrome at first glance, but is in fact chrome powder coated at Worcester Powder Coating, in nearby Pershore.









"Ben used one of Watsonian's Prescott sidecars as a base for the combo. Back in 1946, the original Prescott sidecar bodies were built using a batch of RAF Mosquito bomber reserve fuel tanks, which Watsonian bought from the Air Ministry."



Humble workshop maybe, but it seems anything is possible at Valespeed

Ben tries to use local companies and friends to handle any of the bits that he doesn't do. The plush seats on the bike and side car were covered by Sally of Simply Chairs and the sparkly blue paint was applied by Neil Tarrant at Tazart Design, both in Evesham. The result is a tiny, shiny, watch-like gem, sitting in the Watsonian showroom alongside bigger, more traditional sidecar outfits.

Interest in the Valespeed '28 has been international. "We're building them in Britain, but we've had many more enquiries from the USA than the UK. People seem to want them as inner-city 'bar hoppers'. We have had requests for big batches, but that sort of thing isn't what I'm looking for. I'd rather build them in small numbers." There have also been enquires from the Far East.

Engine supply is an issue too, as finding a suitable powerplant that a manufacturer is prepared to provide off the shelf can be hard, but Ben has a plan for a much bigger version of the Valespeed '28 with the soon to be discontinued Royal Enfield 500cc unit engine. The design is showing a lot of promise and Ben has arranged a supply of suitable numbers of the single cylinder engine to start a production run.

A 150cc Valespeed '28 will cost you £5995, a 150cc combination is £10,000 and an Enfield single powered solo motorcycle will also cost £10,000, which isn't bad for a hand-built motorcycle.

Why create the Valespeed '28, and who is going to buy it? Ben said: "You can get bikes that go fast, but I think a lot of people actually like to move slowly, so more people can see it." For Ben, though, the motivation is more personal satisfaction than just attracting the passing attention of others. "Myself, I like a bike that you turn and take a last look at in the shed, before you turn the light off." CBG

Visit www.valespeedmotorcycles.co.uk to contact Ben; and www.watsonian-squire.com for more on the Prescott and other British-built sidecars





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CLASSIC BIKE · GUIDE

Christmas Gift Guide

Yes, it's that time again. Whilst we've become accustomed to Christmas carols being played in shops and on the radio since before the clocks went back, the run up to Christmas can nonetheless be an extremely stressful time. In particular, in finding ideal gifts for your nearest and dearest, and the feeling of impending doom at receiving dozens of pairs of socks, outrageous aftershaves that smell quite unlike anything else you've ever experienced and enough chocolate and salty snacks to give your doctor heart palpitations. So, we've made your life a hell of a lot easier with our exclusive Christmas Gift Guide! Check out some of these must-haves for classic bikers and leave the magazine open on these pages for all your loved ones to see...











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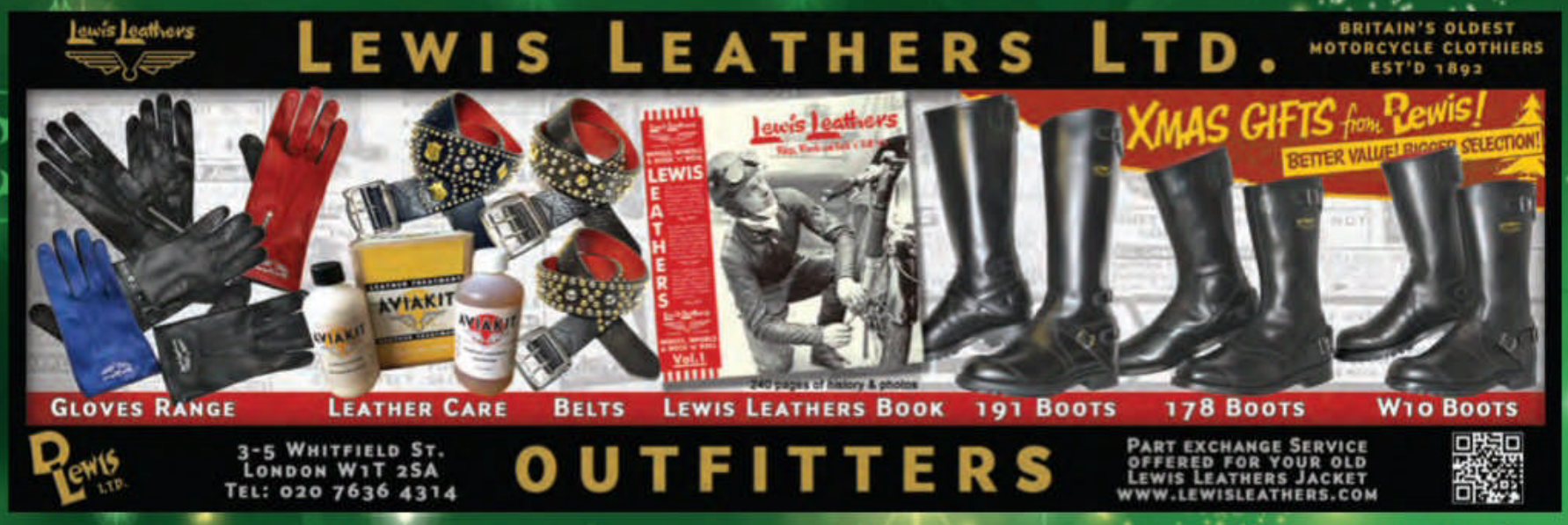


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New Meteor panniers look stunning in two-tone

Stacking boxes

We take a look at how Craven panniers are made, by hand, in Suffolk

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT

CLASSIC BIKES MAY BE WONDERFUL THINGS indeed, this we know; but great methods for carrying 'stuff', they are not. Nowadays you may park up next to an adventure bike at a bike meet, mocking the lorry container-style panniers and top box fitted; but the owner of said continent-crossing machine can at least store their helmet and bring home some essential supplies.

So panniers are useful, but won't they ruin the look of a classic? And where could you find a fitting kit for a bike from the 1950s? Well now…

Craven Equipment was started by Ken Craven, who was a journalist reporting for *The Motor Cycle* in the Thirties and Forties, and who also loved to travel throughout Europe in that time. He was a reporter in the Spanish civil war in Spain where he got shot, travelled through the Balkans in 1949 where his motorbike had to be carried through a flood and journeyed to Czechoslovakia in 1950 where he was stranded as the cost of petrol had shot up.

Later, Ken, and his wife Mollie, would regularly travel and apart from ex-Army panniers, there seemed nothing else was available. So after the war, Ken started making some, first from fibreboard and later from glass fibre. Craven Equipment panniers would soon be seen on many bikes, helping riders carry stuff like never before.

After Ken retired, Craven had a couple more owners, until Draganfly Motorcycles bought it. With the Ariel, BSA and Triumph spares business going great guns, it was some time before they worked out how best to work it, but it's now thoroughly established. So, being nosey, *Classic Bike Guide* went to have a look to see how panniers are made – there's a lot more to them than carrying sandwiches, apparently.



Different straps for finishing different Craven boxes



Which mudguard Sir?

Graham makes sure the resin is well applied in all the corners so there are no pin holes





Left: Graham lays up a lid with chopped strand matting

Above inset: This gets trimmed smooth

Above: Two Meteor lids curing. Note how smooth the inside is - it's a special coating



Split moulds



The small mould for the Meteor badge

MADE BY HAND?

Craven panniers tick all the current marketing boxes – they're made by hand and made in the UK. In fact, Suffolk, no less. Draganfly live in an old maltings and had to make room for the manufacture in the workshop, which has grown over the years as they make more parts for more bikes. Partly thanks to more parts being needed and partly due to the quality of parts being more controllable if they're made by themselves. They're now making anything from centrestands for Bantams (two different versions) to pressing Triumph drum brake plates in-house with the 100-ton press.

So what is involved? Chris Channell showed me how Graham makes all the boxes. Graham learned his technique making car bodies for rather fast drag racing VW cars for himself, so knows a little bit about this peculiar material. As well as Craven panniers, they are also making battery boxes, mudguards and many other parts from glass fibre.

DESIGN

It all starts with a design, which Ken Craven had done many years ago for most of the existing models. But while these are popular, Chris and the team have recently come up with a brand-new design to suit all the modern classically-inspired bikes, like the Royal

"The workshop has grown over the years as they make more parts for more bikes. Partly thanks to more parts being needed and partly due to the quality of parts being more controllable if they're made by themselves"



Testing, testing

Oil pumps may be straightforward, but if they go wrong, it spells disaster. So the team at Draganfly have made a test rig for them, comprising of some Dexion racking, an old engine casing and an electric drill, and run each pump before it goes out to a customer. So if you order a new Ariel oil pump, be happy it's been tested and don't complain if the packaging is a little oily...





An original Craven box typically seen on a Vincent



And here's the modern version

Enfield Interceptor. Making a new design that works with old styles, yet fits modern bikes with indicators and gives as much storage as possible, is no easy job. It takes a lot of work and includes making a number of prototypes, as well as working out the frame that will hold the panniers on safely.

BUCK

Once the design is finalised, it is turned into a 'buck', which is an exact replica of the box or lid, but from a stronger material. It's then painted and checked for any imperfections, as this is how the part will turn out. Modern bucks would be CNC machined from aluminium, but wood, or even foam covered with bodyfiller – whatever it takes to make the shape you need – are used.

MOULD

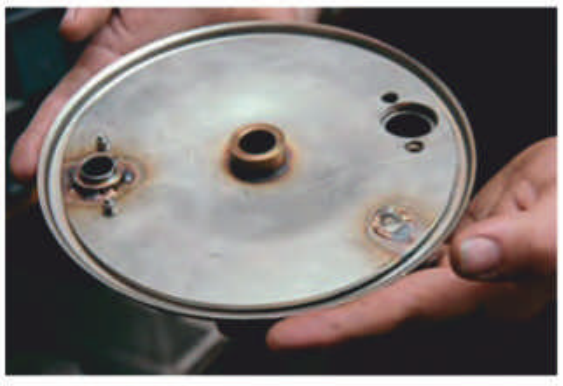
Once you have a buck, you then need to make a mould. The buck is usually spray painted to have a smooth surface, then sanded to have a smoother finish and finally it's then polished with a release polish. Glass fibre resin is sticky stuff, so the release polish or agent helps the mould to come away from the buck once it's hardened, or cured.

To make the mould, you need an understanding of the process. For example, some shapes will not come out of the mould once hardened, purely because of their shape, so they need to have a two-piece mould made, which involves making wooden or metal flanges that bolt together. It makes it possible, or just easier and safer to remove the part once cured.

Luckily with most boxes they can be one-piece; however you can see that mudguards are usually two-piece moulds.

The polished buck is coated in resin with a brush, then once this is dry to the point of being tacky, chopped-strand glass fibre matting is laid onto the resin, carefully so that it is pressed into all the holes, corners and ridges. Then more resin and more glass fibre matting, until the mould is thick enough – typically around 10mm thick – that once cured, it is rigid and won't move.

It also needs to stay in good condition as it should be making many hundreds of boxes. Once dry, the buck can be removed and stored.



Ariel brake plate



A Snowdon being trimmed. Look at how smooth the final layer is



Laser cut badge





Above: Ready for someone's travels

Right: Graham making a lid. He learned his skill making drag racers!

THE FINAL PART

Making the part is like making the mould, except the other way round. Once highly polished, you can apply the resin, though this is where the hand-made element comes into play – Graham can add the choice of the customer so it matches their bike.

It takes a lot of time and metallic even has to be sprayed in the mould, with nearly all colours available from their RAL code. They can even match two-tone bikes – like the black and red Interceptor, though this really does take some time and includes masking up, hand-painting and spraying. But the result is something you just couldn't get from a large company.

Because it is the resin that's coloured and not paint on top, it doesn't scratch as easily. Glass fibre and black resin are then added, until the parts are the right thickness, giving a black finish inside, with the final layer a softer material to prevent glass fibre, which can be sharp, catching a finger, or clothes. It's all then left to cure. A set of panniers and lids will take around four hours for Graham to lay up.

Once cured, the parts are then removed from the moulds, then trimmed. There is a possibility for further adjustment, for example a customer enquired about a set on his Triumph as he has a gate to fit through. So the pannier bodies were trimmed slightly more than usual to allow a couple of inches clearance. Once Graham is happy, they get polished to bring the finish up nicely.

The latches, seals, hinges and locks are all then fitted, again by hand, to make sure fit and finish are as the customer would want. But even the hinges have had thought – to either look like the originals, or to incorporate a stop so the lid doesn't open too far and damage the box. The new Meteor panniers have a badge and raised section which was 3D printed to make the buck and the badge laser cut – to look old!

"They can even match two-tone bikes - like the black and red Interceptor, though this really does take some time and includes masking up, hand-painting and spraying. But the result is something you just couldn't get from a large company."

SOMETHING TO HANG IT ON

Panniers need to hang, or rest, on racks. But these are all different and there are so many different bikes out there. The team have managed to beg and borrow a large amount of bikes to look at safe mounting points for carriers and have come up with a couple of mounting rack designs, with a variety of different shaped arms to reach mounting points.

They're happy that they could get panniers to fit most models. All the arms are laser cut locally and welded in the workshop.

I loved watching Graham make someone's new panniers. I loved hearing the passion that those involved have about the products they make. From laying up the glass fibre, to designing the latches – it may not be art, but it certainly is skill. Chris showed me some original Craven panniers that they have as reference and the differences are hard to see, until you look closely when you see the new items are made more substantially and should last longer. And they're made in Suffolk, by hand. CBG



Left: Need a Bantam centrestand?



Above: Carrier is beautifully laser cut

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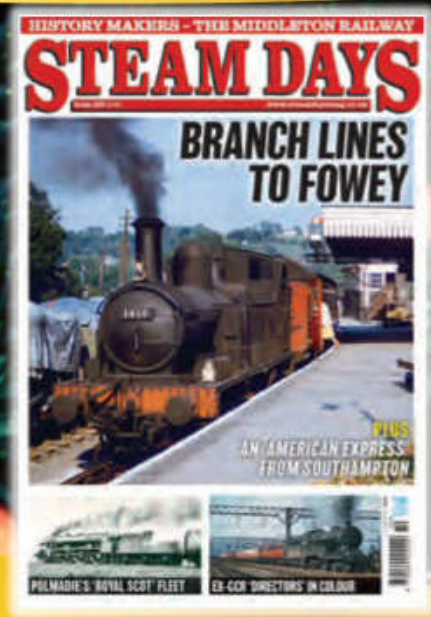
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British Bonnie build-off!

Which Triumph will, erm, triumph in the great Triumph Bonneville build-off?

WORDS BY MATT AND TRIUMPH **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** TRIUMPH



TRIUMPH UK HELD THE BONNEVILLE BUILD-OFF Challenge for the second time this year – the idea being that Triumph dealerships compete to build the best custom bike, based on the current Bonneville range. The trusty public are then asked to vote for the winner.

Dealers had to pick any model from the current Bonneville range as their base, then let their creative juices flow. Disappointingly, just nine Triumph dealerships across the UK took the challenge; I suppose the rest were busy selling bikes and dealing with a pandemic... Of the nine, some seemed to sprinkle a few glitzy trinkets from the accessory catalogue, whereas others stripped, ripped and welded to bring something truly original.

Four judges decide the winner: George Clarke, architect from the telly who loves classics and owns a Triumph himself will give the design award; Olympic cyclist, Victoria Pendleton will hand out the inspiration award; Jody Millhouse of Thornton Hundred bike builders will judge the paint and custom award, while Triumph's general manager, Devron Boulton, will award the best bike for the retail choice.

Devron Boulton, Triumph UK & Ireland General Manager said: "Everyone on this judging panel brings their own unique expertise and we all share a love for the Bonneville range. The diversity and quality of the custom builds this year really showcases the boundless possibilities we have to personalise this classic bike, using our huge range of genuine Triumph accessories."

By the time you read this, the winners should be decided, so check Triumph's website to see who won. Let's have a look at how the nine entrants summed their machines up...



FOWLERS

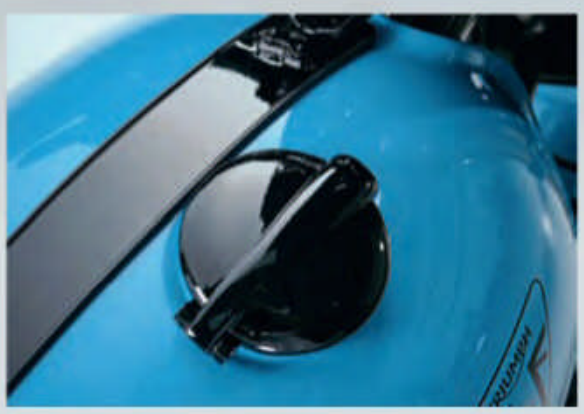
BIKE NAME: VE DAY COMMEMORATIVE BIKE

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE day in 2020, the team at Fowler's Motorcycles used British Army heritage as the inspiration for their build. Seamlessly combining a modern bike with a heritage feel, they used girder forks, canvas bags and big bars to pay homage to a past time. Army issue green was the clear colour choice for this beautifully crafted bike. The team also fully blacked out the engine and exhaust and added bullet hero bar ends. The addition of commemorative badges on the cases and clocks, with genuine Second World War accessories completed this glorious tribute to a time gone by. Tony Crocker and Sam Upton are Fowler's master technicians behind this creation.

BEVAN TRIUMPH

THRUXTON BB

Bevan's Build-off base was the already classy Thruxton R. The team's desire was to combine a set of comfort-enhancing handlebars, offering a lighter feel when riding and delivering a bold visual design. Adding to the visuals, Bevans chose a bright Miami Blue colour for the tank, contrasted against a gloss black tank strap, Monza cap and logo. While Charlie, Bevan's dealer principal, looked after the design element, Edy in the workshop was tasked with making Charlie's vision a reality. A number of significant modifications included a CNC-machined top yoke, a new 2-into-1 exhaust system, miniature indicators, stop tail-light, custom short front fender, custom tail tidy and Motone ribbed engine casings. The result is a beautiful custom bike that is a joy to ride.





DESTINATION TRIUMPH

CRUSHED ICE

The team at Destination 'wanted to build a Bonneville with attitude that would get noticed in a crowd.' They opted for a simple but stunning monochrome colour scheme using a full complement of Triumph original accessories. Collaborating with the team at Image Design Custom for the paint work, Destination chose matt black for the engine, wheels, and accessories, sharply contrasted with matt white detailing on the tank and seat. The addition of a hand-crafted Zard high level exhaust is the finishing touch on this build. The workshop team at Destination were led by the ideas of Danny Kinally, dealer principal.



EDINBURGH TRIUMPH



SPEED RACER

Edinburgh Triumph began their build with the ambition to evoke the spirit of Triumph's iconic race bikes of the 1970s. Using a Speed Twin 1200, the design is mostly black with classic early Hinckley-inspired blue and white highlights, reminiscent of the paintwork made famous on the Daytona 1200. A custom-fitted original Daytona fairing has been incorporated, with all other aspects stripped down as much as possible. A custom-made seat has been fitted to highlight the rear of the bike, while a minimalist 2-1 exhaust brings out the full Triumph sound. Finally, the team added a custom-fit machined clip on the handlebars to deliver an authentic full race bike feel. The team at Edinburgh Triumph used the combined skills and ideas of Mike, service manager; Alan, head technician; and Robert from the sales team. The Speed Racer is a stunning Speed Twin 1200 styled as an iconic race bike with the heart of original Hinckley.



A1 MOTO

SPITFIRE

Reigning Triumph Dealer of The Year, A1 Moto wanted to showcase their in-house custom capabilities. Inspired by the styling of Flat Track machines, they chose wide bars, loud exhausts, big tyres and a stripped-down look. This would deliver a clean, minimalistic style with a wow factor that was totally unique – just what the Bonneville build-off is all about.

A complete strip down of the bike took place first, followed by white powder coating for the frame, forks, yokes and swinging arm. The team added wide flat track handlebars and a bespoke exhaust. The black, white and grey custom paintwork was chosen for its clean and simple appearance on this stunning machine. The team at A1 included Scott MacLachlan, after sales manager; Jack Roebuck, workshop manager; Thomas Goodyear, Richard Suddaby and Roman Ellis, motorcycle technicians; and Kris Walker, parts and accessories.



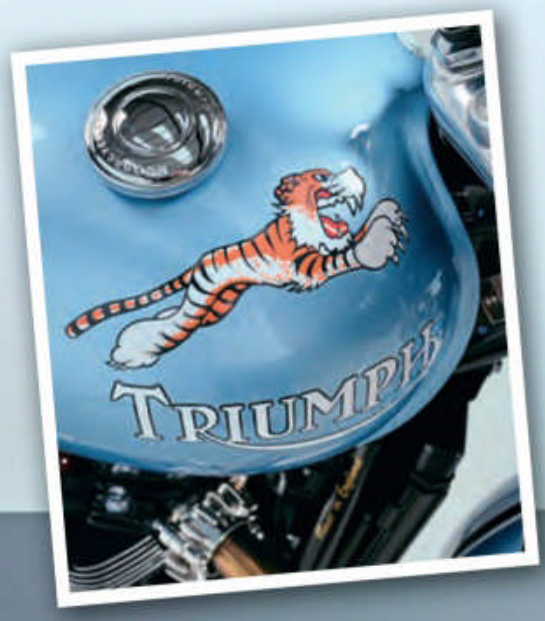


TRIUMPH NORTH LONDON

TNL SCRAMBLER

The team at Triumph North London wanted to maximise the potential of urban city riding and modern lifestyle with their design, so opted for the Mk.2 Scrambler 900. The 1970s retro paint scheme for the tank gives a nod to the old school styling they admire. Capitalising on the fact that all modern classics bikes in the Triumph range have more than 100 Triumph accessories available, they used some of the most popular accessories to add extra functionality and a special character to the bike. To further enhance this stunning machine the team added a short screen, front footrests, machined gear pegs, machined headlight bezel, black intake covers, Rizoma Spy-R mirrors, Rizoma Pro Guard adaptors, matt black drag bars and a high level silencer. The workshop, parts and sales team at Triumph North London worked together side by side to create this bike with support from Surrey Customs who created the beautiful design and paintwork.





TRIUMPH OXFORD

BIKE NAME: REGGIE'S CAFÉ RACER

This design was inspired by 'Reg', late father of Andy Valentine, dealer principal. The Triumph café racer was always his weapon of choice. Since his retirement, Reg had helped Andy fulfil his dream to create and grow Premier Bikes and later Triumph Oxford. Very much loved by the whole team, Reg has a café named after him in his memory, and now a beautiful Triumph custom bike with matching helmet. This stunning custom is based on the original Tiger 100 production racer from the 1950s. A racing style 2-into-1 exhaust system was added, along with hand-made clip on handlebars, a café racer seat and TT 100 Dunlop race tyres. The team utilised the full range of Triumph accessories to further enhance its café racer credentials. The team at Triumph Oxford was made up of Andy Valentine, dealer principal; Scott Carson, head Triumph technician, and Keith Salt.





TRIUMPH WEST LONDON

SPEED TWIN JLC

Triumph West London (Jack Lilley Ashford) has always been at the heart of the custom scene, offering bespoke builds under the guise of J L Customs. The Jack Pack accessory kit for the Bonneville range has always been a firm customer favourite, so for this competition they chose to base their design on this and take the bespoke feel to the next level. This vision demanded a stand-out colour and a premium feel, so they opted for Volcanic Orange, with Black Stripes and a vintage Triumph logo. The addition of a YSS Rear Suspension, Pirelli MT60 tyres and Thruxton TFC indicators completed the look. The Jack Pack Tracker was designed by Tom Daniels and built by Davide, who gave themselves an extra challenge by building it live on Facebook and in the showroom!



NORFOLK TRIUMPH

FLAT BONNIE

Lings Motor Group, owners of Norfolk Triumph, has a well-established association with the off-road sector in Norfolk and across the UK. Connor Bunkle, who took a major role in the design and the build, also races motocross at a high level. So, it is no wonder that the off-road passion and their love for the classic Triumph Flat Tracker machines became the inspiration for Norfolk Triumph's Bonneville T100 custom design. The aim was to make the T100 more minimalistic in appearance to give the fundamentals of the motorcycle a grander stance. It features custom made 19in wheels, a single seat conversion, a custom exhaust, extended gold front fork tubes and custom solid brake disc. The colour scheme is a nod to the classic Triumph 1970s gold with added green fleck, to look like a traditional flat tracker. The design was led by Jamie Curtis, dealer principal; with the build completed as a team supported by Gareth Jones, Connor Bunkle, Ben Dixon, Ian Bye. Ultimately, the Flat Bonnie is an ultra-cool classic bike with an imposing look that stands out from the crowd. CBG





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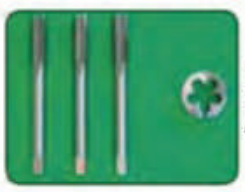
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Barry was suffering from muscle pains and arthritis of the hip and knees and could no longer ride his bike. He could only walk very short distances and was having weekly physiotherapy sessions to help his mobility.

A few weeks ago they read about Bioflow magnetic therapy wristbands and decided to try them. They were both thrilled with the 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.

If you would like information about Bioflow magnetic therapy products please contact Jenny Ryan, 0114 2307844 / 07817671259
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The route to Norton pleasure is a straight one – but Matt is still taking the longer, scenic route.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT, WITH HELP FROM HUTCH AND NEVILLE

With the bottom end bolted up, it has been two months since I looked at the Norton engine – oh I have excuses. So now back to it – but it takes me some time to get back into the swing. It's like spending one day a month driving a different car, or going from a PC to a Mac computer – it just takes a little time to think the way of an old bike designer. But, by first coffee, I was transported back, armed with an old book Nev has just lent me, The Vintage Motorcyclist's Workshop, by Radco. I've just looked it up and even second-hand it's expensive but worth it.

With the barrel on, I found new pushrod tube rubbers, but the tubes themselves looked dreadful, with rust coming through the chrome. I can't keep spending, so after checking for splits at the ends I rubbed them down on the wire wheel, then with 240-grit wet and dry paper. Lastly, I used the mop to polish them but then cleaned it all off with brake cleaner and sprayed them with 'wheel lacquer', which should keep them from tarnishing too quickly. And shiny new ones wouldn't fit with the old engine cases, which has taken its fair few knocks.



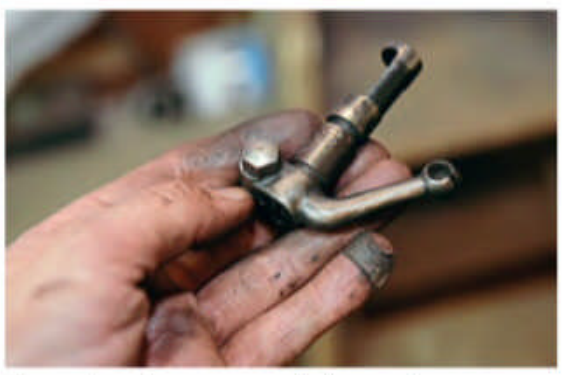
Gentle persuasion is all that's needed to get the rocker shaft fitted



Holding shims, spring washer and rocker arm while you insert shaft takes three hands



Head gasket was 1mm (0.03in) too small to fit around the barrel – too big for a Model 50 but too small for an ES2?



Cleaned-up decompressor looks good so lacquered it to keep it that way



Spring washer missing a shim



Wet and dry helps to finish damage from years of the decompressor



Tired of rubbing down pushrod tubes

ROCKER BOX

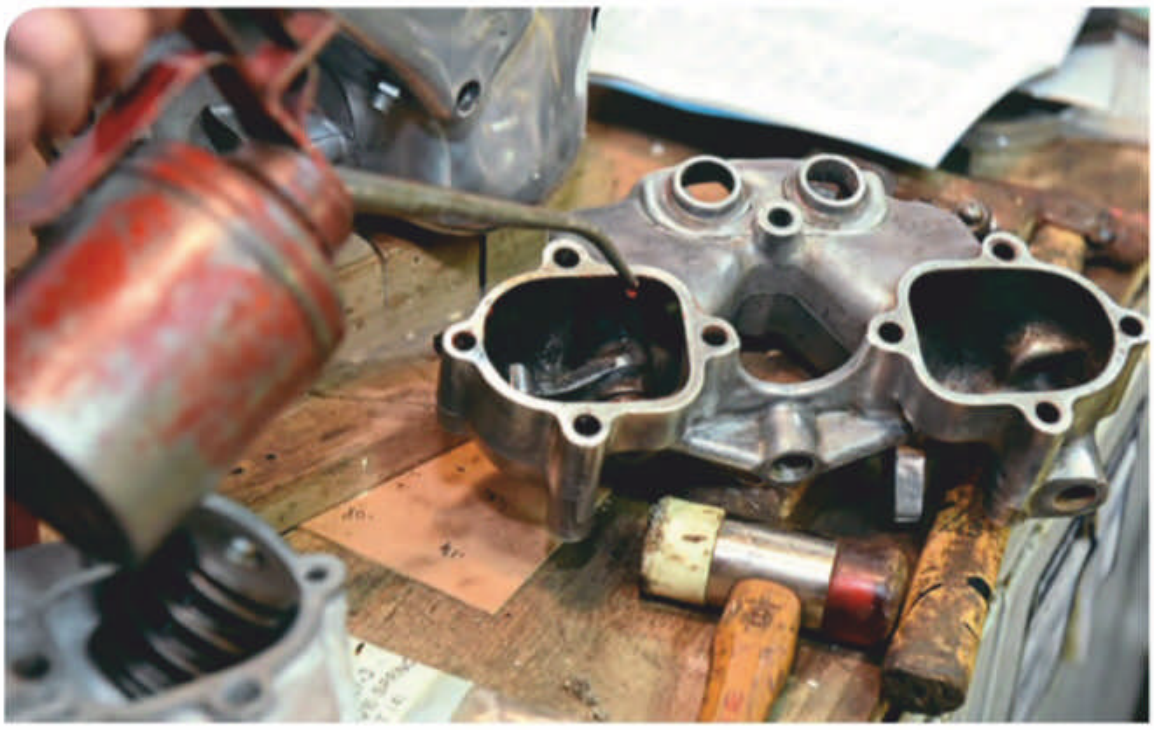
While they were drying, it was time to rebuild the rocker box. As Hutch and I had taken this apart, all the parts were in a bag, so easy to locate. I should have had it blasted, but instead did it the hard way with a wire wheel. Firstly I cleaned up the mating surfaces with some wet and dry on a plate of thick glass (it's flat) as they had a lot of dried red jointing compound on. But I also remembered not to take much off, or you'll end up having no valve clearance!

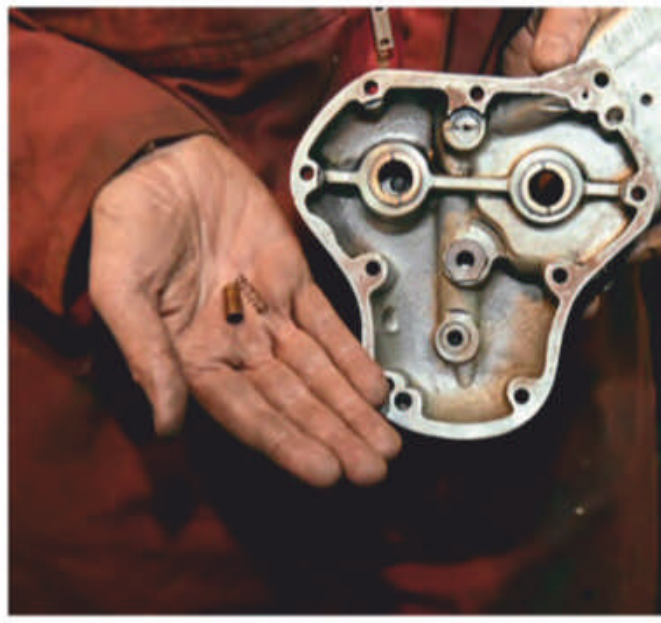
The rocker arms had worn through the old hard chrome by the valve, so James at BDK had built them up with Stellite. Fine, but I now needed to reprofile them, which sounds most accurate until I got my largest file out! Copying a car rocker I had as reference, I gradually used finer files and then went to wet and dry, finally polishing them with the mop. By the end I was pleased.

My positiveness ended abruptly when I attempted to fit them to the rocker box. Firstly, the exhaust rocker arm had a groove cut into it by a badly adjusted decompressor, so I filed that down and polished it so that should be easier to operate. The rocker arm fits onto a shaft, with a crush washer on ➧



Pushrods were manky and took a wire wheel to clean up





Found the oil jet and spring – so important and yet so tiny on the illustrations in the period manuals

Above: plenty of oil should prevent damage on initial start-up

one end and a spring washer, with a shim either side (to avoid the spring washer cutting into the box or the arm). When the old books say 'this may take some time', you know it won't be easy. Strangely, I found it most easy to fit it all together, which in itself means I'm constantly thinking 'what have I forgotten', but also both sides had just one shim. I couldn't find any in my 'spares' box so I fitted the shim on the side of the aluminium box, as the arm is steel, and will get some as and when. The shaft needed a soft mallet to press home once the oilways had been blown out and everything liberally oiled.

The head gasket went on – well, it should have, but was too small so had to file that down, too. I made sure the oilway holes weren't obstructed, as the gasket can move around a fair bit. The pushrods were covered in some old sticky gunk and rust, so those came in for some wire wheel/wet and dry/polishing activity – it's a shame to cover them up now.

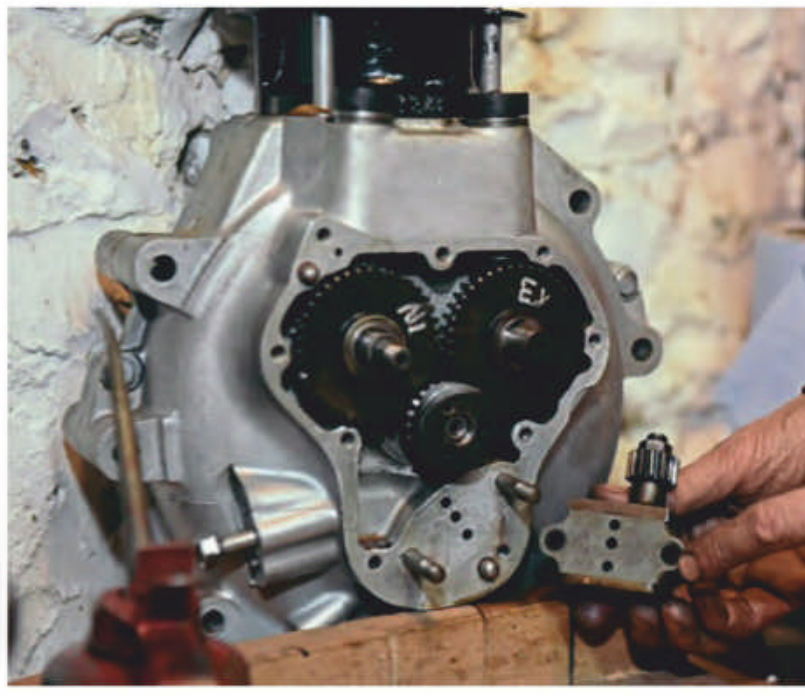
CAM TIMING

So far, so good. I managed to find all the cheese head screws for the timing cover and following the oil-path diagram (I learned the importance of these once) I noticed the crankshaft is fed by a spring and jet, which again, I found. The worm gear for the oil pump fitted nicely with its left-hand thread and the oil pump feels fine so I popped some oil in and spun it round. There is a fibre washer that seals it to the timing cover which is on there, but I will buy a new one as it is bound to be hard.

Now to get the cam gears correct. The cam gears have a hole punch in them, while the pinion gear that is on the end of the crankshaft and drives the cam gears in time has three woodruff key slots, so that you can get the timing pretty exact. Except I'm not sure where that is. I think, from reading, that the cam punch holes line up with the pinion punch marks – except mine has none. It's not tricky and I've been looking into cam timing and overlap, but I would like to understand how to set it correctly before I start adjusting it. So that will have to wait.



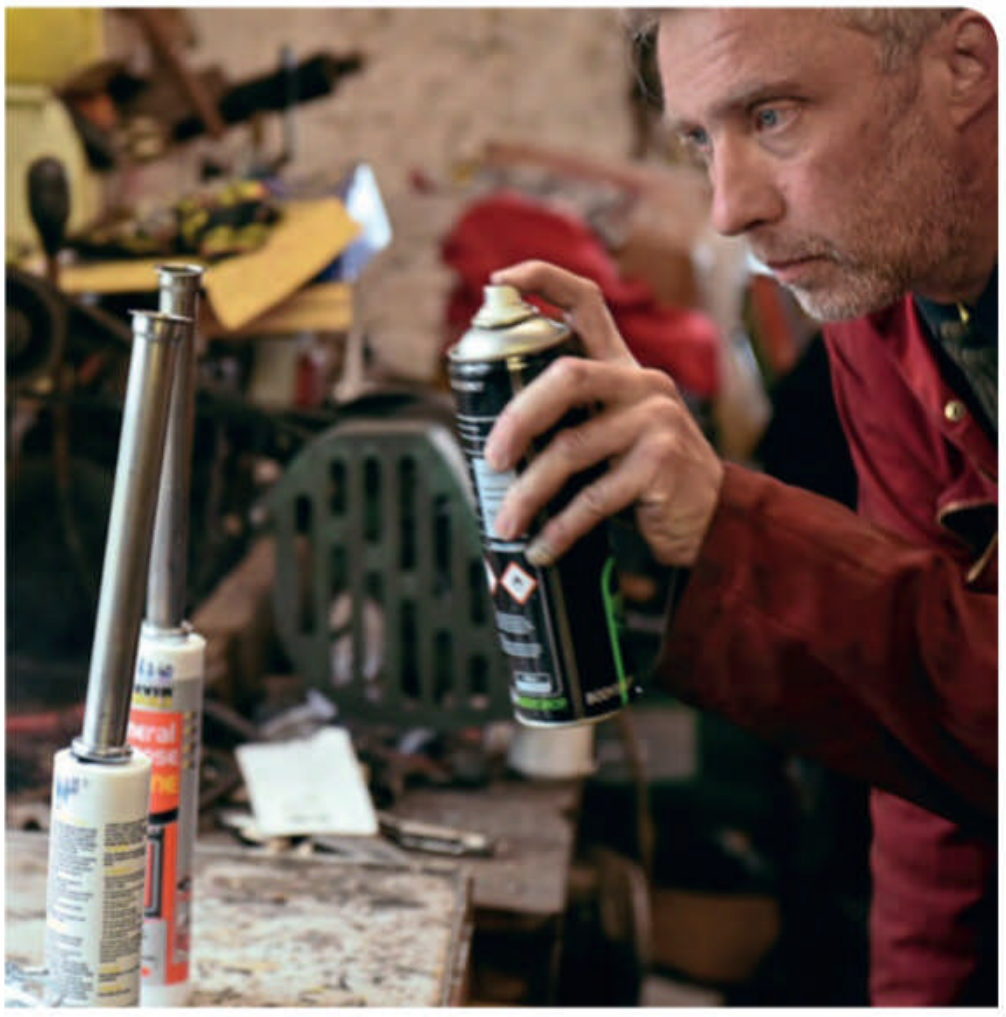
Rocker box cleaning the hard way, as I forgot to get it blasted



Fit after worm gear – it's so much easier! Timing proving tricky though



Cleaning inside – couldn't believe how much swarf and gunge was in there



Lacquering tubes should keep them looking good

STILL LEARNING

After not being able to fit up the timing cover, I wanted to press ahead with the – er – head. Except I'd forgotten that one of the rocker box studs had pulled its helicoil out. And on further investigation, the other threads looked poor. So it was over to Hutch's who has a wonderful collection of taps and dies.

First we had to work out which thread it was. After checking Zeus' book, measuring with a thread gauge and checking with another bolt, Hutch declared it a 5/16th Whitworth. Luckily he had a tap to clean out the good threads, while one is in need of a helicoil and the other seemed to have pulled out a machined plug – it wasn't a helicoil. We could weld the head, drill and tap it, but Hutch is thinking of making a brass plug instead, so I'll agree with him…

Still I have no engine in the frame, but I am still learning. Learning about old engines, old practices, and ways to improve, fix or repair old engines, and that's what this is all about. And I'd forgotten to clean and have the engine plates painted! Next month it may be back together, but I'm not promising! CBG

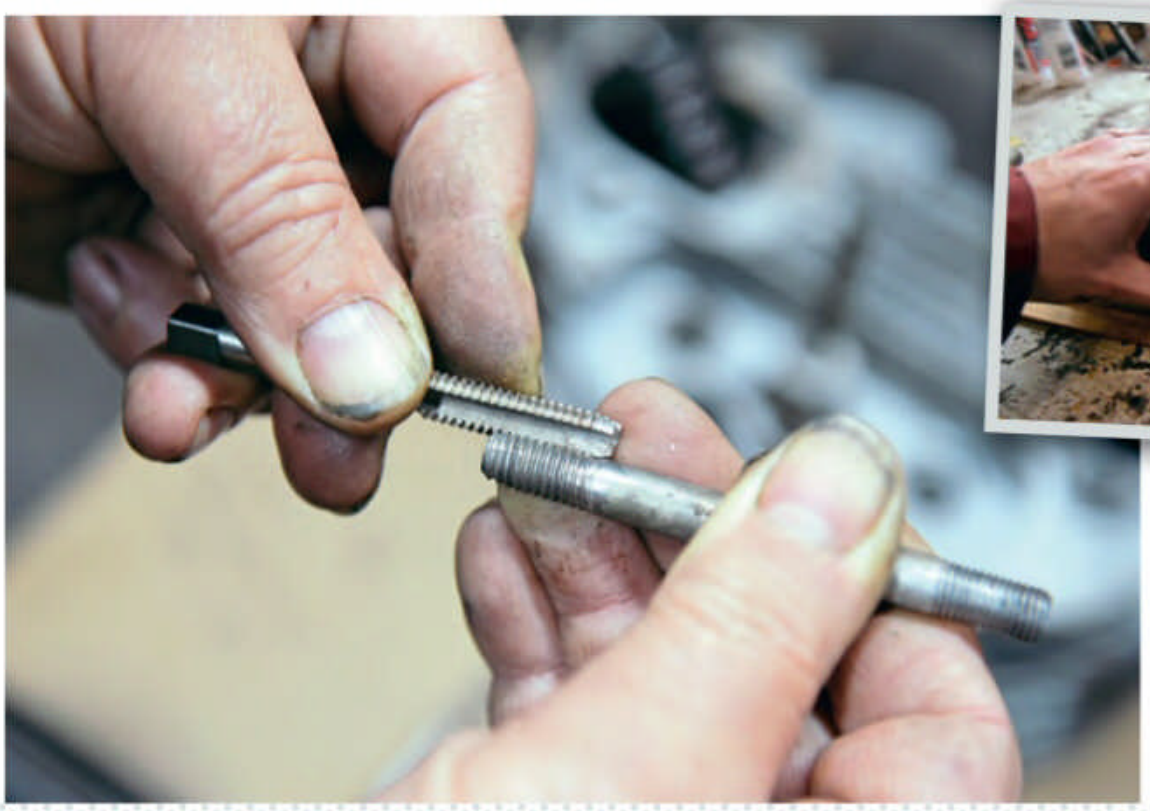


Half polished, half not



Hard to tell old and new

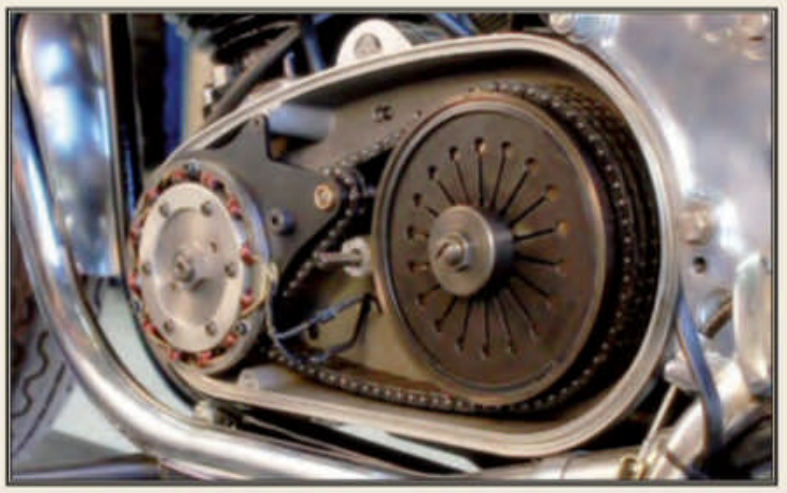






Above: Flat plate (thick glass) for rocker box face

Left: Checking thread size, what is it?



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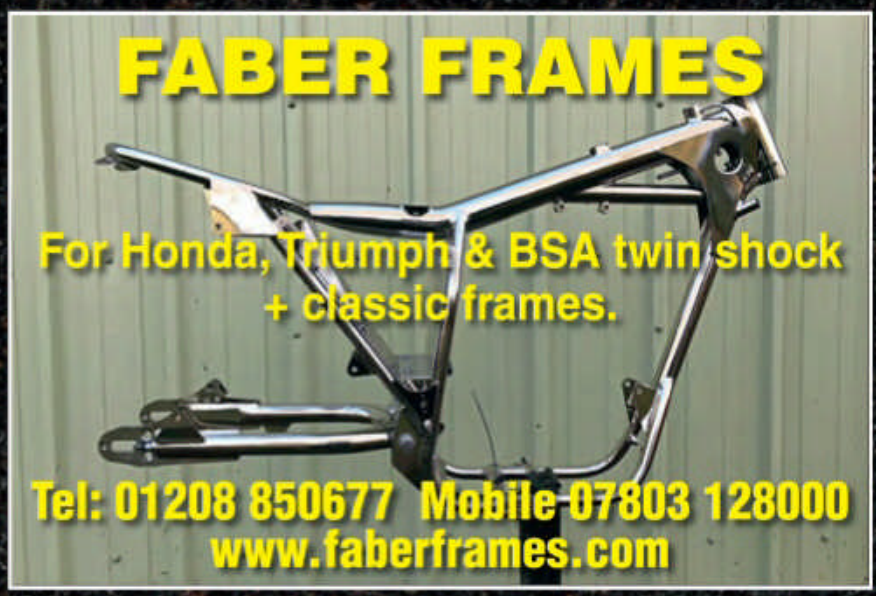
The logic is clear – if you want a haircut, you don't go to the supermarket. So, if you want a certain part for your classic motorcycle, then you approach the companies that deal in parts and expertise in those very models. And look what we have here – a number of specialists whose focus is on certain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

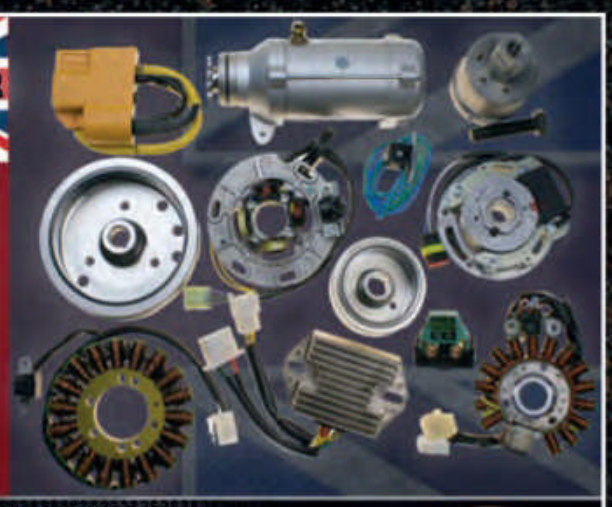
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Caliper overhaul

Hints & tips FROM HUTCH'S WORKSHOP

WORDS BY HUTCH, WITH PHOTOGRAPHY FROM CHELLEY

AFTER PARTING WITH HER LONG-term-owned Triumph TR7 a few years ago, the Mrs has been through 'a few' bikes before settling on a late 90s Ducati 600 Monster. The Ducati has proved to be a perfect bike for chasing Brit twins around, plus it's a real hoot down the back lanes, with the added bonus of an electric leg (kickstart – ed).

Apart from a bit of servicing and a very occasional wipe over it has proved mostly reliable (reliability is relative and comparable remember). But late last year the Monster's front brake seemed spongy if it had been sat for a week or two – yet it came straight back when pumped a couple of times. Further inspection revealed no loss of fluid or leaks to be seen.

For obvious reasons the Monster has been parked up a bit more than ridden this summer and as I passed it in the shed I noticed a couple of drops of oil on the floor by the nearside of the front wheel. Initially I thought it was fork oil, but a closer look and sniff revealed it was brake fluid; bugger! That explains the occasional sponginess. There are some maintenance jobs I will leave until convenient, but not brakes. Time for a caliper rebuild then.

The 600 Monster has a single four piston Brembo caliper, but the basics are the same for just about all hydraulic brake calipers.

Firstly, I stripped the caliper from the fork leg but kept the brake fluid hose connected and removed the brake pads. These were contaminated with brake fluid and only fit for the bin as a result.

Using the master cylinder I pumped out the pistons as far as I dared without 'popping' them out of the cylinder; this saves so much time later. If one is coming out more easily, try holding it so the pressure helps any piston that is sticking more.

I then undid the banjo bolt holding the brake hose to the caliper, catching the rest of the brake fluid in a drain can and discarding.

Moving the caliper onto the bench to continue stripping; in this case the brake



Take care with the bolts holding the two halves together



Piston pliers – sometimes only the right tool will do!

pistons are opposing and won't come out until the caliper halves have been split. The bolts holding a caliper with opposing pistons together can be very tight and a good fitting allen key or socket is essential to ensure no rounding off happens and the resulting butchery!

This is a good time to take the opportunity to remove the bleed nipple; these can also be seized and shear easily so care, a good fitting ring spanner (and sometimes a little heat) are needed. Luckily, this one came out easily and I blew through it with some brake cleaner to make sure it wasn't blocked.

All four pistons were removed using piston pliers so as not to mark or damage the OD of the pistons, all came out easily as most of the work had been done by pumping the pistons out while still connected to the master cylinder earlier. Once all four pistons were out the seals, two per cylinder, were removed and discarded.

The major part of all rebuilds now... clean everything; brake cleaner was used as the residue of some other solvent cleaners can make new seals swell.

The piston O/Ds (outside diameter) were measured with a digital caliper, two were dia 30mm and two were dia 34mm, fortunately I had some new seals in stock, but these can be bought either as caliper kits or individually per piston by just specifying the size.

After a general clean particular attention was paid to the seal grooves in the brake cylinders; this is the most common fault in calipers as ally oxide builds up in the back of the groove and forces the seals onto the pistons, restricting piston movement and making the brakes bind.

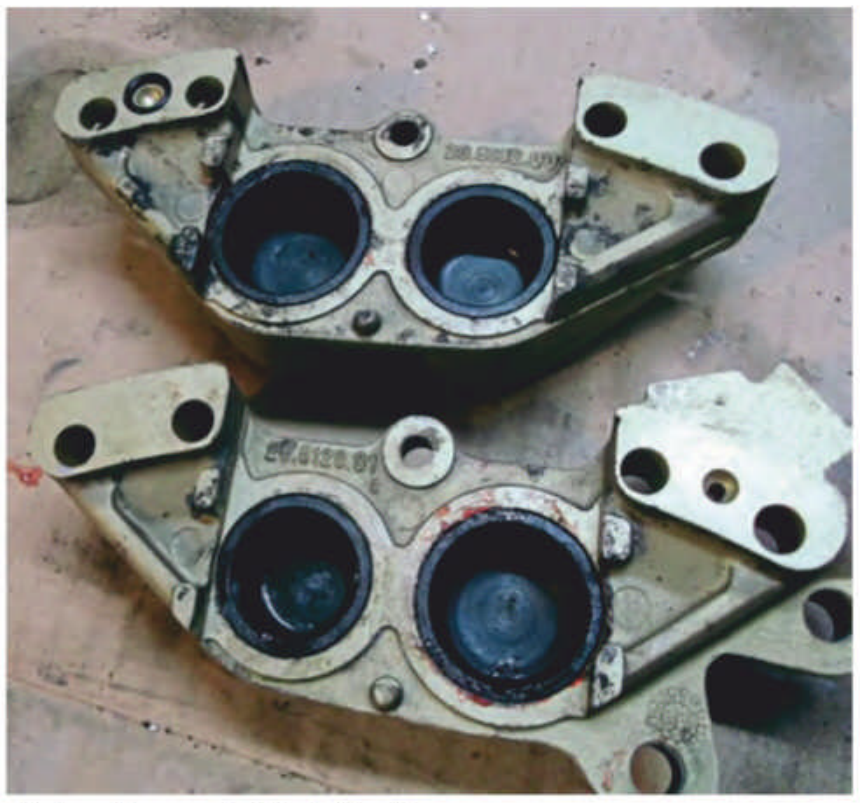
Once everything was clean new seals were fitted using a very light smear of red rubber grease on both the seals and the pistons, which should be a push fit, any more force needed usually means the seal grooves need more cleaning.

After fitting a new jointing 'o' ring, the caliper halves were re-joined and the bleed nipple refitted.

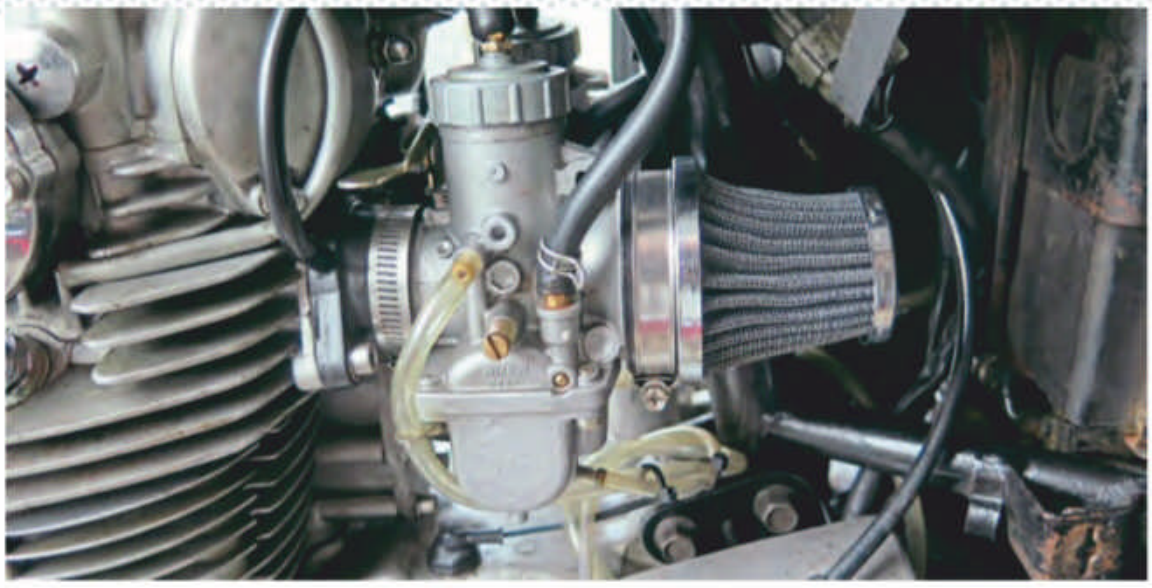
The caliper was then fitted back to the fork leg, new pads installed and the brake hose re fitted using new copper washers. The brake then just needed bleeding. But that's for another time. CBG



Get all the alloy corrosion from the seal grooves



All cleaned, new seals fitted with rubber grease



The Mikunis fitted with the cone filters



The inlet end of a Mikuni VM34 with the various ports showing

Filtering out the truth

Oli finds the solution is sometimes so close you can't see it

WORDS BY OLI HULME

IF YOU'VE GOT A POORLY-FUELLING classic, sometimes it's tempting to simply change the carbs. One common option is to use the venerable Mikuni VM range. This simple, well-designed, round-slide carb has been made for years and will fit pretty much anything built between 1945 and 1980.

When the old Mikuni BS38 carbs on my Yamaha XS650 were diagnosed as being on their last legs, I was lucky enough to come across a new set of VM34s in a kit, complete with cables, inlet rubbers and cone filters, at auction. They were less than the price of a set of jets and diaphragms for the BS38s, so I snapped them up and fitted them. They slotted in place easily, but I did have to ditch the old airbox and instead I used the cone filters that came with the kit.

The bike started straight away, ticking over nicely and accelerating well. Except it simply would not pull past 4500rpm, or about 55mph in top, when it would cough and splutter and refuse to go any faster.

I was perplexed. The timing was strobe checked again and was spot-on. The advance/retard unit was checked and was working well. The spark plugs indicated it was running a little rich, so I moved the needles down, and adjusted the pilot jets and balancing, and the plugs became the correct colour. But still, it would not pull past 4,500rpm.

I appealed for help among other XS owners who suggested checking the main jets were the right ones. They had 180 jets in. Optimum setting was 185, I was assured. New jets were ordered.

185 jets were fitted. It would now pull to 5000rpm, some 3000 revs below the redline, and it would still cough and splutter and refuse to accelerate beyond that. I appealed again, and one chap asked: "What kind of filters are you running?"

"Cone filters," I responded.

"Have they got a lip inside the rubber mounting? A lot of the cheap ones do. If they have it could be restricting the airflow to the pilot and main jets and the float bowl."

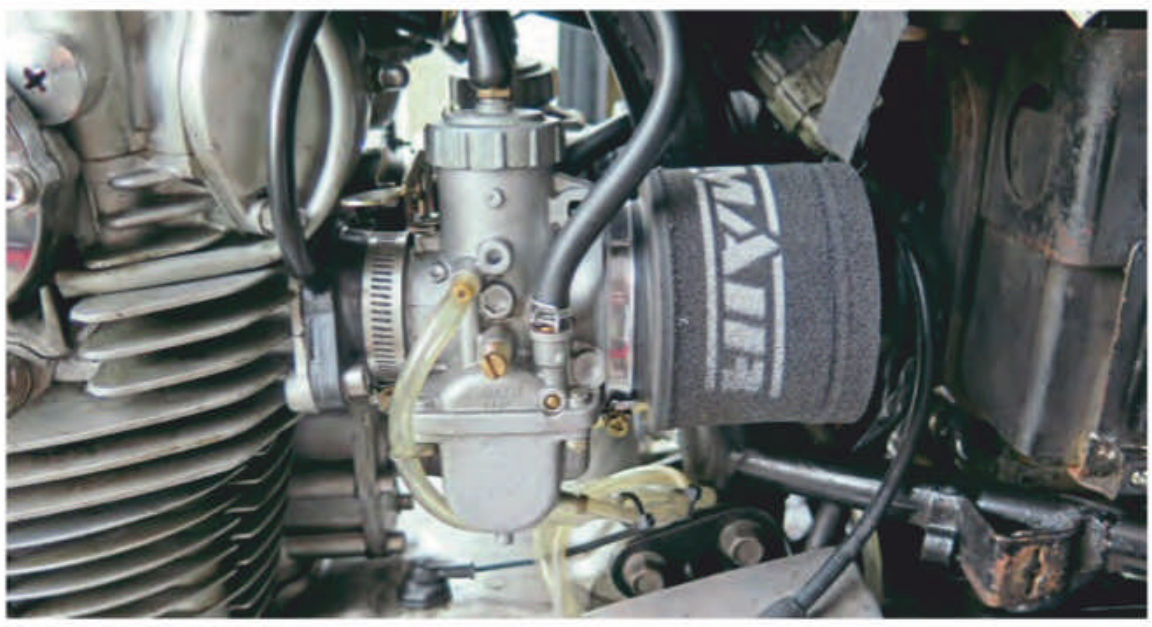
I checked, and the filters did indeed have the lip. The rubber wasn't completely blocking the ports on the carbs, but it might be restricting clean airflow. I was advised to order a pair of foam Ram-Air pod filters as these don't have a lip. Fitting them was a simple job, I just undid the old cone filters, and fitted the Ram-Air filters. I got my missing 3000rpm back, instantly. Sometimes a solution is so obvious that you can't see it. CBG



The rubber lip inside the filter was blocking airflow



The dark interior of a lipless Ram-Air filter



The Ram-Air filter fitted. And smarter, too

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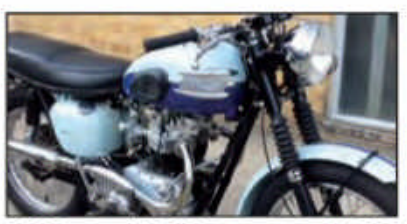
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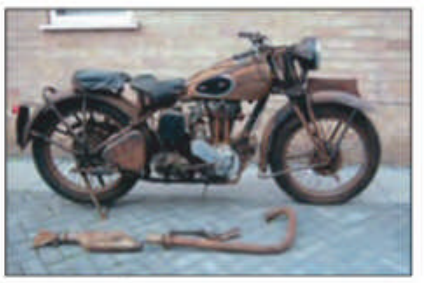
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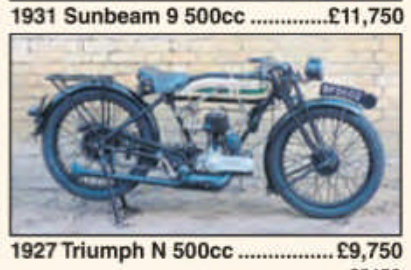
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NSU SUPERMAX 1958, 250cc, OHC, good condition, 1800 euro spent plus good paint job in 2005, low miles since, some spares, £4000 ono, consider p/x for smaller bike. Tel. 01332 793249. Derby.



SUZUKI GS400 project, rolling chassis 1982 with V5, fitted with good 550 engine & Z1000 carbs, £400 ono Tel. 07788 646345 South Yorkshire



SUZUKI GT250 1976, blue, new re-bore pistons, gaskets, air cleaner, mini indicators, battery, seat, chain tyres, tidy condition, £2750 Tel. 01427 788167 Lincs



TRIUMPH Speed Twin, 1956, good paint, chrome etc, runs very nice, no problems, £6500 ono may p/x. Also Smiths speedo, vgc, £220 Tel. 07443 642408 Yorkshire



TRIUMPH 110 1960, MoT till 2021, much money spent, 17,600 miles, stored in collection prior to my purchase, £8500 ono Tel. 01623 844702 Notts



TRIUMPH 6T 1955, matching numbers, old buff log book, V5C, SU-carb, easy starter, rides like a dream, £7250 may p/x why? Tel. 07443 642408 West Yorkshire



TRIUMPH BOBBER 2017, 1033 miles, two keys, MoT, FSH and original handbooks, as new condition, £7500 Tel. 07428 136509 Leics



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TRIUMPH T120RV Bonneville, 1972, vgc, with 5 speed gearbox & matching engine & frame numbers, new carburettors, fuel lines & taps, £6250 Tel. 07596 995052 Northants



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HONDA 400/4 F2, 1977, 32,000 miles, new pattern exhaust fitted, ready to ride £3750, will take small bike exchange, anything considered. Tel. 01905 21667; 07966 178348. Worcester.

HONDA SL125 1972, in very good original condition, only showing 7700 miles, one key that fits ignition, steering lock and helmet lock, starts first kick runs spot on, all gears clutch and brakes work as they should, main beam, dip, tail light, horn and both brake lights work, bike has had a new exhaust, seat and carb also comes with new petrol tap, chain, old carb, work shop manual and some spare decals, bike is not road registered but I have a Nova number if you want to register the bike and receipts of purchase, the bike does have some surface rust on the frame, most of the chrome is good but has a few spots here and there as bike is 48 years old, any questions call. Tel. 07974 257314.

MATCHLESS G12 650cc twin, 1959, restored 2006, still in excellent all round condition, original registration, £4250. Tel. 01424 220772. East Sussex.

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ROYAL ENFIELD 1926, 225cc, multi show winning museum quality rare motorcycle, only five know to exist, valuable number plate D.D. total cost to buy and restore, £14,000, £9000 ono. Tel. 01522 703687. Lincolnshire.

SUZUKI GT250 1976, running but needs tidying up, old log book and an old MoT, no history, will make a lovely bike, might have it on the road ie MoT before this ad is out so please call for info, £2750 ovno. Tel. Ron 01248 714036. Wales.

TRIUMPH T120C 1964, phone for details £10,000. Tel. 01933 355796. Northants.

TRIUMPH TR25W Trophy, 1969, selling as restoration project, bike is in bits please ask for pictures of all parts and work done with receipts, frame has been powder coated, complete new wheels, tyres, hubs etc, fuel tank and mudguards all resprayed, engine needs reconditioning, bike is 98% complete just missing a small exhaust section and chain guard that I am aware of, bike is located at Shifnal Shropshire, please call for more information £2700. Tel. 07814 456095.

VELOCETTE LE 1965, hundreds spent on bike for MoT 2017, little use, call for details, clean tidy bike, £1800. Tel. 01248 681466. Conwy.

YAMAHA G20 1982, rough long forks, needs work, £500. Suzuki XV800, 1980, been sat for a year, needs battery fuel, nice condition, £650. Tel. 01737 833932. Surrey.

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BLACK HAND GUARDS alloy brackets and bolts, brand new, £35. Tel. 01709 579556. South Yorkshire.

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HONDA 400/4 Motad, 4 into 1, exhaust system, includes clamps but not seals, in used condition as it was fitted to my 400/4, photos available, £200 ono plus postage, about £25 located near St Ives. Tel. 07814 866098.

HONDA C90 1972, Speedometer, £50. Centre leg shield clip, £10. Tel. 01622 676324. Kent.

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REAR WHEEL for pre unit Triumph T100 rigid (1949) wanted, no sprung hub. Germany. Email. fabrizioonori@gmail.com

ROYAL ENFIELD clipper frame with forks and swinging arm, £165. Tel. 07377 042587. Didcot.

SPARES FOR HONDA CB250 CB350K: pair of side panels, Honda CB450 (black Bomber) early Suzuki RV125 main stand, pump, rear rack, parts book & manual. Tel. 01291 423392. Wales.

SUZUKI GS250EX seat with trim (c1980) £20; Honda CB125S (c1975) nos mirror £10, blue RHS cover £20, handlebar grips £5 pair; cam sprocket £5; Yamaha YCS1 & 2 Factory Service Manual, £15. Tel. 07813 845894.

TRIUMPH 5T Speed Twin rigid nos oil tank stamped, 1946, maroon, superb, £400. Also Honda CG125 complete, rough, rusty, spares, repair, £299 contact for details. Tel. 07396 270365. Sussex.

YAMAHA X J6F rear carrier as new £50. Baglux leather type tank cover and Baglux tank bag, tank bag never been on the bike, £80. Belstaff two old style red and black jackets, £35 each. Tel. 07443 413169. Manchester.

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BMW K75 OR BOXER wanted, rideable condition, preferred, but any condition considered even a basket case, twin shock or early monoshock, Boxer ideal will travel. Tel. 07984 950257. Derbyshire.

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CLASSIC BIKE WANTED anything from a flat tanker to a 1980s Honda, good price paid by keen buyer. Tel. Jack 01704 331519. Lancs.

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CORGI ORIGINAL TYRES wanted for display only, cracked, split, distorted, discoloured why? Tel. Jon 07872 320227.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON Aermacchi 250cc, Sprint H forks wanted, if you have some forks in good useable condition or that I might be able to refurbish. Tel. Neil 07413 935748. Hants.

HONDA REBEL 250cc wanted, mechanically sound and low miles, good price available. Tel. 01751 474350. North Yorks.

KAWASAKI W650/W800 wanted, any condition, also any parts for above model. Tel. 07711 107649. Wales.

LOOKING FOR HONDA CG125 doesn't need to run, but does need to be complete, not looking for someone else's project to finish off, just a complete, early CG to put into original condition, what have you got? Tel. Tom 07701 055494. Northants.

MOTO GUZZI V50/V35 looking for a complete UK bike with V5 to restore, running if possible. Tel. Mike 07511 688088. Birmingham.

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ROYAL ENFIELD Thunderbird, 350cc, does not have to be a runner, just complete, electric start model. Tel. 01524 733604. Lancs.

SUZUKI TS250 1969/70, early points model parts wanted, complete/incomplete, non runner/runner also considered. Tel. 01305 826670. Dorset.

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YAMAHA XS650, SR500 or TR1 waned, rideable condition, preferred but any condition considered including chopper, customised or basket case will travel, other make big twin/single considered. Tel. 07984 950257. Derbyshire.

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RON JERRARD rode Syd Lawtons 1953, 350cc Manx an ex-Ivor Lloyd/Reid & Haysom 7R in 1955, Junior Manx, a Jack Difazio Gold Star, 500cc, 1956 Clubmans (2nd). Email. recycledreading@gmail.com

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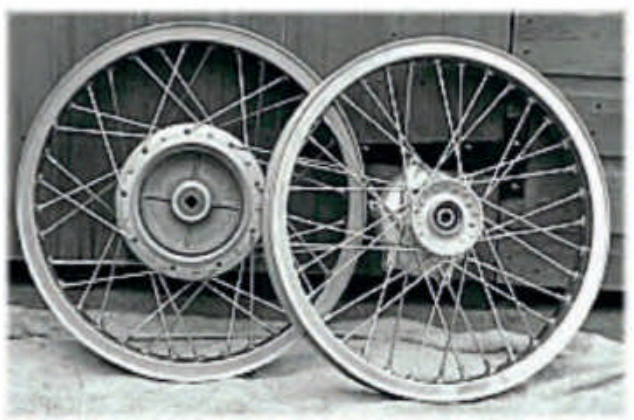


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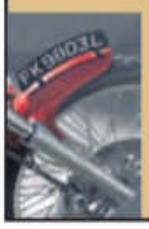
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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS
'Ride it like you stole it!' they tell Frank. Until it goes bang. Then what?

"insisted that I 'take it to its limits!' I returned it a half-hour later, running badly as a 375 single"

THERE WAS A TIME, A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY far, far away, as they say, when I would ride a loaned bike – a test victim, if you like – as fast as either it would go or until my courage ran out, screaming. They were strange days, often spent riding with fellow scribblers over roads they knew well – well, far better than I – pretending that we were in no sense racing each other. Boys will be boys, or something like that, and the idea was to actually appreciate and understand the motorcycle under the bum, to find out how fast it would go, whether it wobbled when cornering on the limits imposed by its ground clearance, whether its brakes really would pull it to a controlled stop from ton-plus, and things like that.

In fact, it was almost always a great excuse to go a little mad with someone else's motorcycle, to compete with your pals and then pen a few thousand hopefully entertaining words about the experience.

It gets very old very quickly. At least, it did for me. Mostly because while I was perfectly capable of pushing, say, a Norton Commando to its road limits, the same was never true for a Yamaha V-Max. And that was important, because for some years I worked on a modern motorcycle magazine and was expected to pronounce knowledgeably, reliably and honestly about machines with more performance than I could ever extract without serious risk of death or insanity. Which are undesirable, largely.

So as soon as the eternal ongoing penury permitted I stopped scaring myself witless aboard pretty average machinery (have you ever pushed a Suzuki 1200 Bandit anywhere near its limits on the Cat & Fiddle Pass?) and restricted my road writer stuff to older, less challenging bikes. Happily, writing almost exclusively in the classic world allowed me to do this while still feeding the taxman. All was good, then.

Mostly.

Every so often I would be taken to task by noble readers who demanded that instead of treating a loaner KTT Velocette as though it had a glass piston, limiting its speeds to, say, 125% of the legal limit, I should thrash it to its mechanical limit so that I could report things like 'The valves began to bounce at 7500rpm, which is 126mph in top gear'. I made that up, by the way. I have no idea at all when valve bounce commences on a KTT – or even a BSA Starfire, to be honest. But I can compare the two – and wouldn't that be an entertainment?

In reply, I would suggest that riding a borrowed bike as a prospective new owner would is more useful than finding a stretch of dual carriageway and wrecking the engine. If the complainant became too persistent, I would suggest that he loaned me his own P&J and I would find a convenient straight mile and find out exactly how hard it would rev before something went bang. Which it would. Because metals – like riders – rarely improve with age.

Oh! One fellow presented me with his 750 Matchless and insisted that I 'take it to its limits!' I returned it a half-hour later, running badly as a 375 single, with a primary chain which had shed all of its rollers and destroyed the alternator and clutch. And then there was the Norton 650SS aboard which I blew the head gasket, and an AJS single which broke a dynamo drive chain, which took out everything in the primary chaincase, and then there was... Which just shows that many proud owners do not ride their bikes flat out. Or even close.

This slightly derailed line of thought was inspired by a conversation with a friend, a friend whose nice original 350 Matchless had gone bang. Gentle reader, you will be as aware as I that the 350 AMC single shares its bottom end and complete transmission with its 500cc bigger banger brother, and they are as bombproof as any engine from the classic age. This one had gone bang tinkle, rather than bang clank screech, which tells us nothing. The piston had lost its head. In a neat piece of mechanical decapitation the 1960 piston had divided itself into two above the top ring groove. Previously proud owner admitted that he tended to thrash the engine merrily when it was warm. This is fun, I'm sure you do it do – as do I.

Sadly, 60 years and uncountable miles of acceleration, deceleration and hot /cold cycles had wrought destruction upon the piston. Which has long been my own concern when borrowing someone else's bike to write a story about it.

Lots and lots of folk claim that if a Triumph T120 could achieve 120mph when it was new then it should do the same now, six decades later, and that magazine authors let down their readers by failing to investigate the truth of this idea. To them I can only say, 'Lend me your bike and we'll see.' No takers recently, strangely enough... CBG

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

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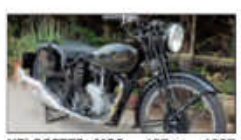

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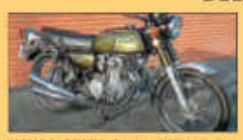

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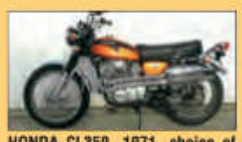

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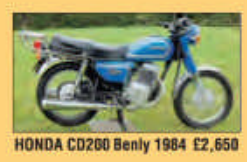

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