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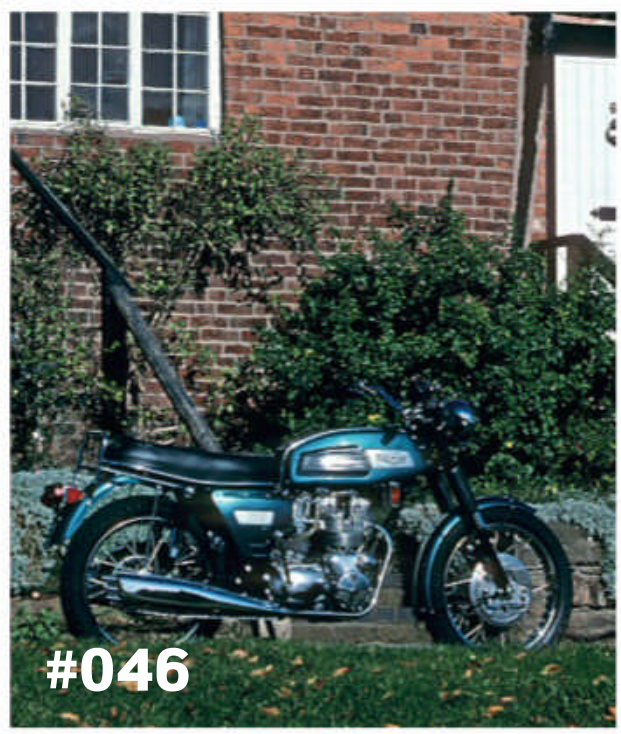

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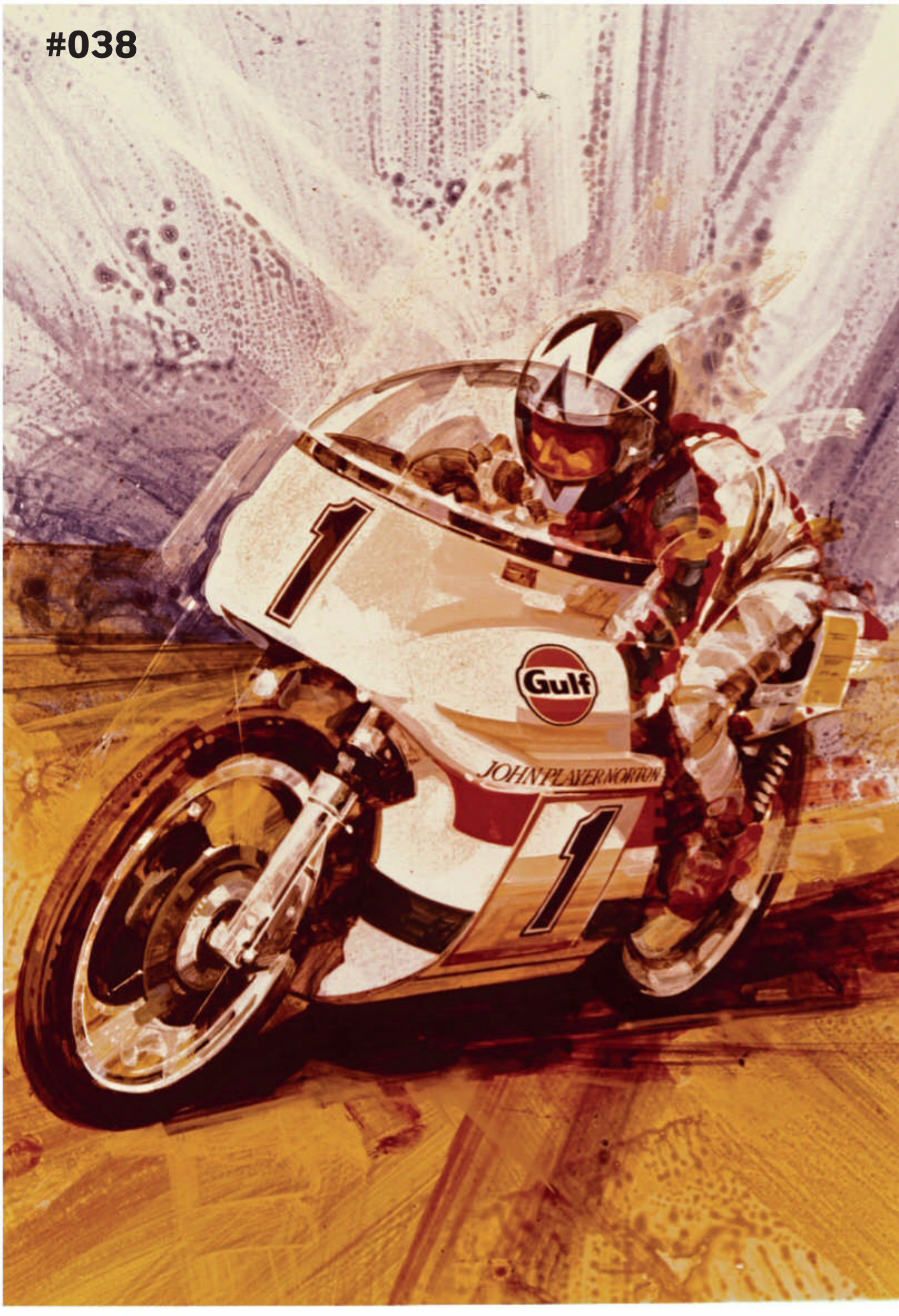

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Greetings oh lovers of old motorcycles!

Welcome to our little sanctum where we promise no mention of pandemics or politics!

We begin with some sad news and the passing of Peter Williams. That rare blend of great rider and open-minded, pioneering engineer, bikes were Peter's way of exercising his brilliant mind. His bikes like the Monocoque Norton or his faithful Arter Matchless G50 were, for their time, engineering leaps ahead of the competition, despite their old-school Brit engines. Magnesium wheels on a bike? Sheet metal frames? 'You know how good your ideas are by the resistance you encounter from the great swathes, afraid of change' my nanny would say – especially true of Peter.

It was truly sad to hear of his passing in December and I am grateful I had a chance to see him at the Bristol show a few years back, smiling away, despite not being in the best of health. I hope our look at Pee-Jay's life and a rare test of the Monocoque JPN Norton does him justice.

We have also just heard of Hubert Auriol passing away. This Frenchman, born in Ethiopia, was not only the first rider to win the Paris Dakar rally, but won on a bike twice, both times on a BMW, before winning a third time in the 1992 Paris-Cape Town rally in a car. The off-road equivalent to John Surtees then helped run the rally for years after. To both Peter and Hubert's families, *Classic Bike Guide* would like to extend our sympathies and those of our readers and let them know how much these men brought to biking for us.

Back at *CBG* towers, we've slowed up on the bike front to enjoy a little Christmas joy (and cake, and drink, and meat, and, well…), but things are slowly moving again. Until not one, but two tawny owls got stuck in the same chimney! What incredibly stunning creatures, so rarely can we see them up close. Though I feel Harry Potter and chums have over-estimated their intelligence! Still, both survived and were set free – again, a wonderful sight.

The BMW I'd promised not to touch is looking somewhat – naked, in the effort of seeing if there's any issues before I park it. Effie has been helping, but the carbs are as solid as an undercooked carrot, and rust, with that lovely blue powder of corrosion, is around every electrical terminal, so not looking promising. Maria, after playing Mother Theresa to the owls, has been helping Effie and I to restore the original tool kit, as I've never had an original set. Little things!

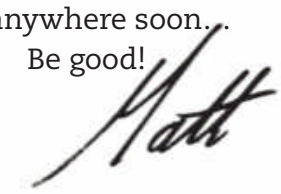
The Norton is coming together, slowly, until I get stuck with imperial threads. But I have to say, what an incredibly ridiculous system! Norton did make beautiful nuts and bolts though; and look so good compared to metric.

It's been too cold to paint, so the Sunbeam is looking like an ageing dog dragging its bum with the rear wheel and mudguard off, though I've found rubbing down by hand instead of air tools keeps you most warm! I've also made a welding trolley to help keep the workshop tidy – damn those New Year's resolutions.

I feel somewhat silly writing about old bikes when the world seems to be doing its best impression of a lemming at the moment. Then I think about how we would be dealing with said world without our bikes. No playing in the shed fixing, maintaining or adjusting. No thoughts of which shows to attend, or where to go once allowed. They may 'just' be old bikes to some, but they can be a symbol of looking forward to better times.

Right – enough of that – I've a wheel to measure before I chop all the old spokes out, followed by a visitation to that bottle of Talisker Scotch as I'm not riding anywhere soon…

Be good!



Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com

Trials and tribulations, Cardiff - Leicester - Cardiff Trial 1928

This wonderful image shows a rather bleak picture of the 1928 Cardiff – Leicester – Cardiff trial. It was published in *The Motorcycle* and shows E W Spencer leading W R Latchem, both on 348cc Douglas motorcycles, with their inline, parallel-twin engines.

Bushcombe Hill where this photo was taken, is on the western side of the Cotswolds and the riders would have been on their way towards Leicester, so were barely one quarter of the way through this hefty trial. I am liking the face shield of Mr Spencer – not only did it improve his vision, but he could go into a shop with that on! CBG

WORDS: MATT IMAGE: MORTONS ARCHIVE

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CBG

Your guide to...

Douglas T35

The Douglas T35 may have endured a hard life when new, with frame issues and less than great sales, but Oli finds out how good they really are to ride now.

WORDS BY OLI HULME PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY CHAPMAN

The story of how, in 1946, Triumph turned a Lancaster bomber generator engine into a Manx GP winning racer is often told, and the Triumph Grand Prix is justly famous.

There was, however, another manufacturer that raided their wartime stores for a motor. And, unlike the Triumph, which was essentially a prewar twin with a lightweight alloy barrel and head, the Douglas "Mark" series not only had a new engine, but a radical new frame and suspension system too. Douglas had mostly built inline flat twins prewar, with the exception of a shaft-drive transverse flat twin, named the Endeavour and a more conventional lightweight two-stroke.

During the war they stopped making motorcycles despite having built 25,000 for the military during the First World War, and made other things for the war effort between 1939-45.

Towards the end of the war, they took a 350cc powerplant that had been produced to power a portable generator and put it in a frame with a patented torsion bar suspension system. This bike, the T35, was the UK's first all-new production motorcycle postwar, launched in July 1945.

THE T35: TORSION BARS AND SWINGING LINKS

The suspension at the rear was provided by a pair of torsion bars, hidden inside the straight tubes of the engine cradle. At the rear of the frame tube there was a lever that linked to the swing arm fork to provide the springing, with the lever mounted on splines so the rider could adjust it to suit the load.

CBG Your guide to...

"Douglas lost money on every 80 Plus and 90 Plus model they sold"

Up front at first glance the forks are telescopic, until it is realised there do not appear to be any sliders. On the prototypes torsion bars ran up the length of the fork legs, with a system of linkages allowing two short arms at the bottom to move up and down, providing as much as 3½ inches of travel. Work to create a sidevalve military machine had benefits for the civilian Douglas machines.

The design for the War Department had to fulfil a requirement for six inches of travel on the front forks, resulting in the creation of the Radiadraulic fork. This had a swinging link controlled by what would today be called a progressive fork spring, concealed in the fork tubes and hydraulically damped. Thanks to a series of linkages and internal pistons, this meant the thinner coils of the spring absorbed minor shocks, while the thicker coils coped with anything serious. The result was a fork that provided six inches of travel, and a design superior to almost anything else on the market. The Radiadraulic fork was used on the T35 production models.

Douglas tried several methods of attaching the front mudguard. Early models had the mudguard attached to the forks with a lot of clearance to allow the front wheel to move, while later models employed a complex and occasionally fragile arrangement of brackets which were attached to the front wheel spindle so the mudguard could move with the wheel. Magazine testers reported regular failures of the brackets.

WHAT IS IT?
The first modern postwar British Motorcycle

GOOD POINTS?
A surprisingly sprightly performer with great handling

BAD POINTS?
Early frames were fragile. Spares and specialists hard to find

COST?
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£2500-£3000
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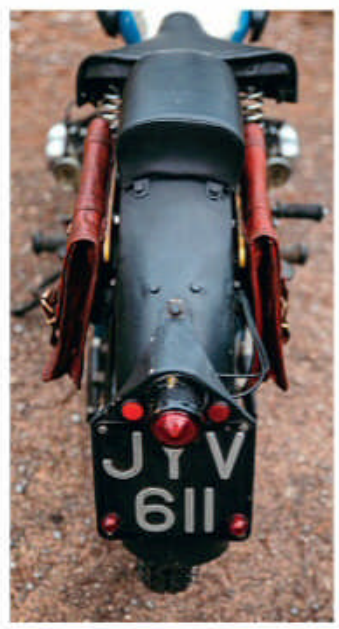
£7000-£9,000



THE DOUGLAS FLAT TWIN

The engine was a transverse 348cc ohv flat twin, of unit construction with the clutch behind the crankcase, leading to a four-speed gearbox and chain drive.

With its origins in a wartime generator, the Douglas engine had to be a reliable unit. There were twin Amal mk4 carbs. A Lucas Magdyno was placed on top of the engine, driven by gears from the built-up crankshaft and two camshafts mounted under the crank operated the valves.

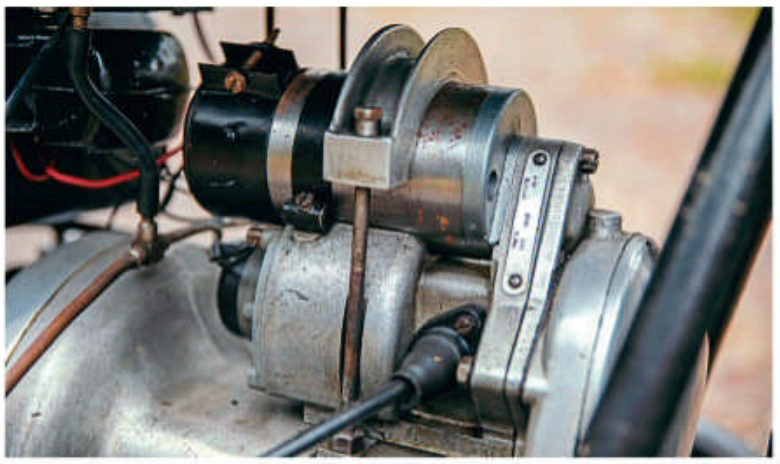
The engine pumped oil through a force feed to the crank, and the half a gallon of lubricant used was allowed to feed back to the sump by gravity. The clutch was a single plate car type and could be adjusted through a hole in the inspection cover. Unlike other transverse flat twins, the 350 engine was started by a kick-start that swung backwards, rather than sideways, mounted on the right with the gearshift which controlled the four gears. While most designers would have used the transverse design to use a shaft, Douglas turned it sideways through a bevel drive to a chain, allowing the use of the torsion bar rear suspension.

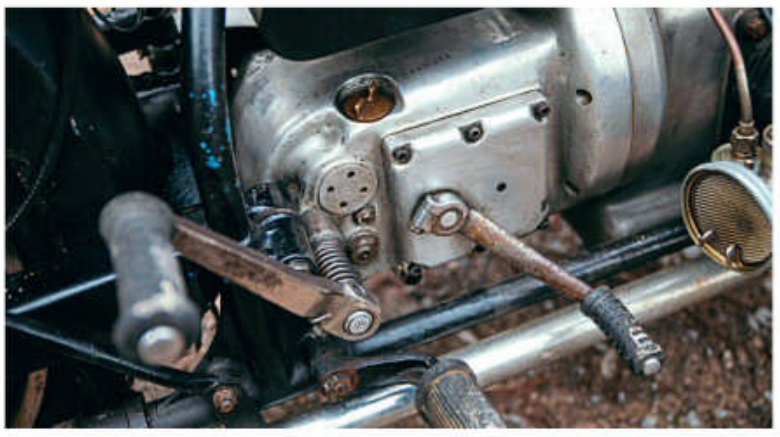
NEW MODELS AND THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

A bike dubbed the Sports Model and another called the MkIII tourer (there was never a MkII) arrived in 1948 with new cylinder head and higher compression pistons. The following year a MkIV range was introduced which included these two models and a De Luxe tourer, and the 80 Plus and 90 Plus sporters. The 80 Plus produced 25bhp and the 90 Plus produced 28bhp. The 90 Plus could be ordered as a racing mount without lights but with a range of optional performance extras including higher compression pistons, close ratio gears and a nine-inch front brake.

The engines would be bench tested on a factory dynamometer to find out if they were powerful enough to be classified as 90 Plus units. If not, they were used on the 80 Plus. Douglas lost money on every 80 Plus and 90 Plus model they sold. In 1949 they also started at first importing Vespa scooters and then in 1952 began building them under licence, a decision that ultimately allowed Douglas to survive into the 1980s.

A MkV, which replaced the De Luxe and the Sports Model was announced in late 1950. The company had only just avoided going under in 1949, but as well





as motorcycles they built generators, single cylinder engines used in lawnmowers, industrial trucks and electric vans among other products which helped keep them afloat.

The MkV was originally supplied in Douglas' signature polychromatic blue, but in 1952 it arrived in a shade of green, markedly like the Vespa scooters they were making. In 1955 the increasingly cash-strapped motorcycle manufacturing division replaced all their models with a rather handsome 350, the Dragonfly. This used an updated version of the original flat twin but dropped the Radiadraulic fork and torsion bar rear suspension.

A new frame made by Reynolds replaced the original, fracture-prone one. This used a conventional swinging fork at the rear with two shock absorbers, while at the front there were Earles-Reynolds leading link forks which were far superior to most of the basic telescopic forks on offer. Despite the quality of the new running gear and fulsome praise from the critics, Douglas struggled to sell the Dragonfly. Just over 1500 were made by 1957. Production of the Dragonfly ended in March 1957, with the unsold stock sold off to Pride and Clarke, who carved £40 off the asking price, selling them off at £159-19s, and that was it for Douglas motorcycles; though Vespa production continued in Kingswood until 1962.

ON THE ROAD

The little Douglas makes a delicious noise through its two straight-through exhausts, their only concession to silencing being the flattened ends of the pipe extensions. The noise is far from anti-social, more a low, slightly off-beat, blarting sound. We form a small convoy as Perry pilots the Douglas a dozen or so miles to a suitable location for some photographs.

Early expectations that the T35 would have trouble keeping up with the more modern traffic are unfounded. Every time I looked in the mirror, there's the Douglas, barrelling along, Perry grinning like a lunatic under his pudding basin helmet.

Then I get the chance to try the T35. After a little control lever juggling and a decent swing on the starter the Douglas's bark echoes through the trees. With two small pistons at relatively low compression and with the bike nicely warmed up after its spirited blast over the Mendips, starting's not a big deal, even though the starter needs to spin the engine at 90 degrees to the crankshaft throw. It ticks over surprisingly well, though keeping an ear out for the exhaust note changing at idle is useful in warning of the need to blip the throttle to keep things ticking over nicely for those unused to the arcane practices of manual advance retard mechanisms. Doing your helmet up before starting it is advised.

The gearbox is positive, and a little unsophisticated. Leave a fraction of a second gap when gear changing to avoid unpleasant noises as the gears mesh. For a bike from the 1940s, the riding position is quite a sporty one, with the footrests a little further back than you might expect, partly because of the length of the engine. The two risers holding the handlebars give a riding position that makes things feel almost – modern.

The handling is superb. That's the only word for it. With a low centre of gravity and those brilliant Radiadraulic forks and the torsion bar rear springing, overly thick white lines or potholes you could lose a sheep in can be coped with or easily avoided. The low C of G also makes the Douglas easy to shift about from a standstill. It's easy to forget that the T35 is just a 350, because it definitely doesn't ride like one.

It accelerates smartly, and once into third will turn an impressive pair of heels. It will cruise at 60 and is happiest at speed, feeling far more like a 500 than a 350. The brakes are excellent, which is only to be expected given Douglas also made them for heavy industrial equipment and trucks – they knew their brakes. With a sprung rear end and a sprung saddle, the ride could have been bouncy as the one force acted against the other, but it was a comfy ride and vibration was negligible.

Perry's bike has benefited from a series of upgrades during its life and is, despite the charming patina, properly refined. The brown saddle bag suits it well, and if you study the pictures, you'll see something that I will definitely be borrowing for my own bikes. Those curls of black plastic being used to hold cables and wires out of harms way? They're sections of redundant telephone cable and are a brilliant touch.

At some point the short exhaust pipe and "Woffle" box exhaust has been replaced with a long pipe straight through system. Perry has the original exhaust system and centrestand, so may replace this at some point, but he adds: "I quite like her the way she is." Perry's biggest problem has been enjoying the ride so much he forgets to top the tank up. About 100-120 miles on a tank works well for a leisurely ride around the countryside. "She's definitely a riding bike and not a show bike; she gets ridden regularly. She will quite happily nip along at a constant 60mph. She will go faster, but I wouldn't want to stress her as she's more than 70 years old and not made for racing."

PERRY'S T35 - A HISTORY LESSON

Perry Osborne's Douglas has had a colourful existence, including spending a lost decade in the hands of the most renowned of Douglas tuners.

Officially it's a T35, but the twin went through several incarnations before it arrived at its current home, just a few miles from the old Douglas factory.

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: OHV transverse flat twin **DISPLACEMENT:** 348cc **BORE X STROKE:** 60.8mm x 60mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 6.7:1 **POWER:** 20 BHP **FUEL SYSTEM:** Twin Amal Mk4 carburettors **CLUTCH:** single plate flywheel type **GEARBOX:** four-speed **LUBRICATION:** Car type sump with vane oil pump **FRAME:** Twin downtube cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Radiadraulic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Torsion bar controlled pivoting fork **WHEELBASE:** 56.5ins (1435mm) **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5.2in (132mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 29in (736mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 360lb (163kg) **FUEL CAPACITY:** 3⅜ gallons (13.5litres) **TYRES:** 3.35x19 front and rear **BRAKES:** seven inch single sided drums front and rear **ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:** 6V Lucas Magdyno **TOP SPEED:** 72mph.

Records show it was dispatched to the London dealer Eddie Withers of South Norwood on August 31, 1948. The registration number was issued in October 1948. At the time, as well as being a highly respected Douglas tuner and dealer, Eddie Withers ran the Douglas trials competition shop.

Perry's machine started life as an early MkI model, but these were plagued by frame breakages until changes were made to the rear sub frame design, which cured some of the issues. The frames regularly fractured on the down tubes below the head stock and at the bottom on either side of the front lug which holds the front of the torsion bar. The tubes would also break either side of the bottom lug which holds the rider's footrest. Perry says: "This was a big problem and Douglas had to replace many frames under warranty. This has led to many of these early machines having had frame changes. Some of the frames were dealt with at the factory and some new frames were sent to dealers to undertake the changes and stamping of the new frames accordingly. Some were stamped with the same number as the broken one and some are known to have not been stamped at all."

Len Boydell, registrar for the London Douglas Motor Cycle Club, looked through the factory records to get to the bottom of the bike's history. Len wrote: "This motorcycle has had at least two or possibly three

"Those curls of black plastic being used to hold cables and wires out of harms way? They're sections of redundant telephone cable and are a brilliant touch."

RUNNING IN THE FAMILY

PERRY SAYS: “MY earliest memories of motorcycles are when as a young boy, four or five years old, my grandfather James Reginald Williams would occasionally pick me up from primary school and ride the short distance home with me sat on the tank.

“In years to come he moved into our house and lived on the ground floor whilst we lived above. I spent hours with my grandfather whilst he told stories about far-off travels to Africa, The Russian convoys, Ceylon and the Far East. These were a source of great wonder to me and during those hours he used to tinker with motorbikes, stripping them down and rebuilding them in his front room as he didn’t have a workshop!

“I would roll him cigarettes and he would reward me with a tot of Navy rum before telling me not to tell my mother – a good start for a pre-teenager.

“My mother would be driven to despair by my grandfather’s use of the house as a workshop; he didn’t see the potential disastrous consequences of stripping out a fuel tank whilst smoking a cigarette and saw no reason why mother would be so upset when she came home and found a bike being dismantled on the dining room table and parts being washed in the kitchen sink.”

Living in the St George and Kingswood areas of Bristol, Perry’s grandfather started an apprenticeship at Douglas Motorcycle Works in Kingswood shortly after his 14th birthday in 1924.

“We do not actually know a great deal about his time there, but I do recall stories of him riding in trials competitions for Douglas around Westerleigh and for their moto-football team, which was apparently quite popular at the time.”

“In 1934 he joined the Royal Navy, as Douglas was struggling during the harsh economic climate of the 1930s. At the outbreak of the Second World War he was posted to HMS Beagle where he remained until the end of the war, rising to the rank of chief engine room artificer and being decorated with the Distinguished Service Medal and mentioned twice in dispatches for reasons that he never spoke about. To this day we are unclear of the precise details. He finally left the Royal Navy in 1956, returning to Bristol.”

replacement frames in its life, and rather than being a ‘bitza’ in the true sense of the word has just evolved and miraculously survived against all the odds that have been thrown at it, and now carries the patina of survival. All the parts of the machine are of genuine Douglas manufacture and from the 1948/9 period. The engine has the later heads and barrels as well as some interesting timing marks on the clutch flywheel. I have never seen these before.”

The new heads mean that the bike is missing the rocker covers with the Douglas logo cast into them, as on the original T35.

The bike now uses a Mark IV frame and swing arm which was dispatched to Barton Motors of Bath on August 7, 1949. This frame replaced the old one at some point during the mid-1950s to early 60s.

The bike has a MkI tank, headlamp, footbrake pedal and an early cast centrestand. From the MkIII there are front forks and a mudguard. The rear sub frame is from a MkIII Sports Model and was a common fitment on machines which have had a replacement frame.

Following its initial dispatch to Eddie Withers in 1948 the motorcycle was unsold until April 15, 1959 when a lawnmower repair man called Walter Richard Smith snapped it up. During this lost decade some modifications appear to have been made, probably by Eddie Withers, including the addition of a chain-oiler pipe taking oil mist from the crankcase oil filler cap direct to the chain.

The motorcycle was then sold to Michael Alan Weller, a TV repair man from Beckenham in Kent, on November 19, 1965. It was purchased by his wife Judith as a birthday present for the princely sum of £5. The bike was put into storage at some point and lost its registration, the bike was then reregistered by

Mr Weller with its original number in September 1995, and then sold in 2000, when the bike was again taken out of storage and sold as a non-runner.

The Douglas was then purchased by Mr V Williams, from Brentwood, who seems to have recommissioned the motorcycle and carried out service and repairs to the gearbox and mag-dyno before selling the bike in November 2014 for £3000 to Graham Pritchard, from Basildon.

Mr Pritchard rewound the armature, replaced the brake linings, rebored the cylinders and stripped and rebuilt the crankshaft and fitted oversize pistons, and Perry bought it in 2019.

Perry said: "I purchased the Dougie after being informed of it by my uncle who saw it advertised on eBay. It seemed a genuine bike of interesting history, in far from showroom condition, but obviously loved and ridden often, just what I was after. I travelled up to Essex to see it, made an offer to Mr Pritchard and purchased it for £2800, which was probably a little bit too much for its overall condition, but I absolutely loved its character and it appeared to run well.

"Since I have owned the Dougie, I have done very little to her apart from routine servicing. There's been full and regular replacement of oils and a new battery, I've replaced a few missing nuts and bolts and replaced the wide sprung pillion seat with a loaf type pad to the rear mudguard. I have had a bit of oil loss from the front Radiadraulic forks, so I replaced the fibre washers and seals and since doing this it has dramatically improved, if not quite cured it. There were simple little things like replacement inner tubes for peace of mind more than anything, along with an MoT just to get her checked over by a professional."

OWNERS' CLUB:
London Douglas Motor Cycle Club
douglasmcc.co.uk/

An initial run through the electrics identified a few fragile elements of wiring. New plugs and repairs to HT leads were completed and the bike was returned to the original positive earth system from the negative earth way the battery was wired in. The Magdyno was only putting out about 4v, so this was rebuilt. The wiring generally, and some of the switch/connectors are very fragile, so intention is to complete a full rewire in due course.

"Most people I meet have not even heard of Douglas Motorcycles, and many people's initial reaction is 'ooh, is that an old BMW?' She actually rides really well once you get used to her… she's my first proper old bike and I wasn't sure what to expect when I got her, but now that I have I absolutely love her, and if I had more room in the garage then I would definitely look to get another one. My dream would be a nice EW350 from the early 1930's." CBG

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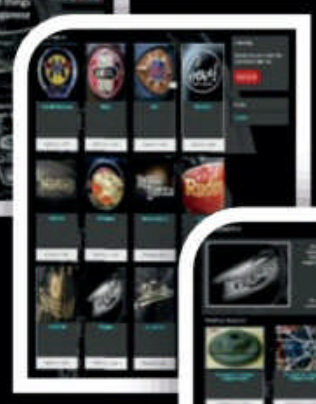

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For your visual and literal delights, *Classic Bike Guide* brings you:

BMW R26

A single-cylinder BMW

Also: Big-bore! We look at those larger four-stroke Japanese twins || Yamaha YR1 – Honda was backing four-strokes, Yamaha two-strokes. We try Yamaha's offering || Vincent Comet – Do they live up to the Vincent hype? || How to spray paint at home – and get great results || And much more!

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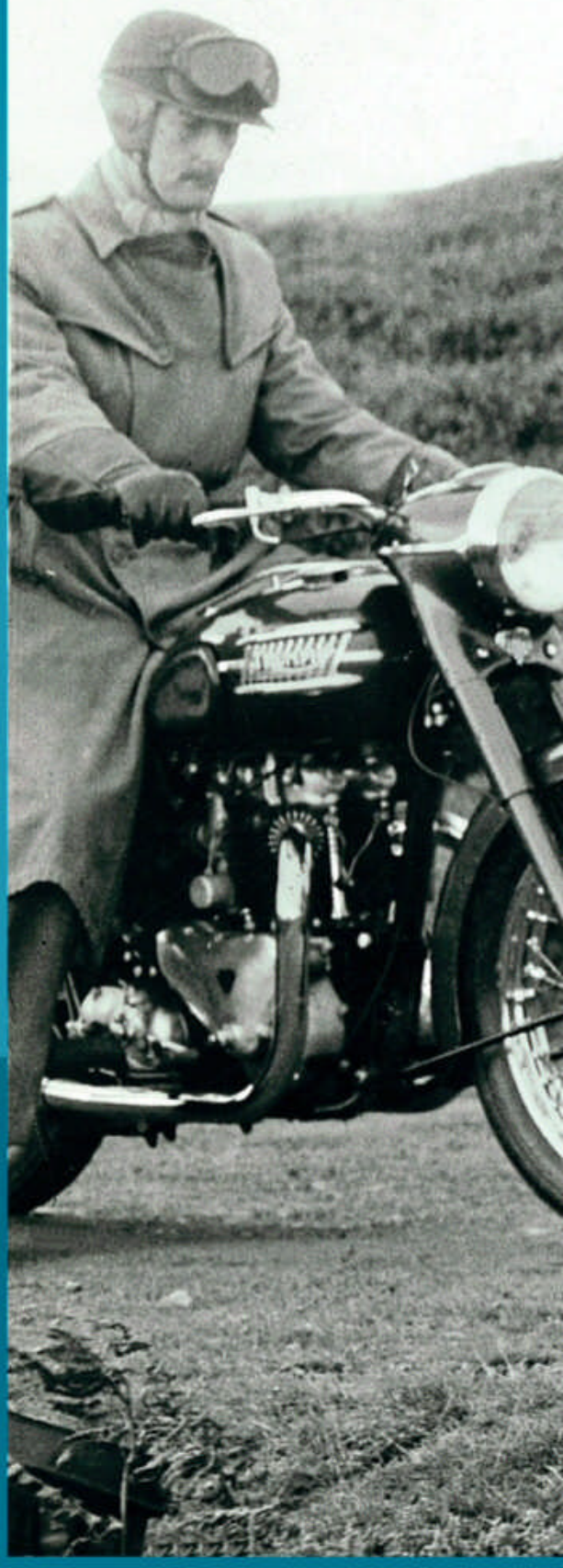

Above: Edward Turner out testing a Triumph Speed Twin, with his new furry gloves

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NEW GUZZI GETS POWER BOOST

MOTO GUZZI HAVE launched a new version of the popular V7 twin retro with a beefed-up 850cc engine. The new V7 arrives more than 50 years after the launch of the first transverse V-twin unit bearing the name.

Two versions of the new V7 are available, the V7 Stone, which Moto Guzzi describe as "minimalistic" and the V7 Special, with "classic" lines.

The new bike gets a modified version of the 850cc engine introduced on the V85 TT adventure bike. Responding to criticism from owners that the V7 750 engine lacked top end pep, it has 25% more maximum power, going from the previous 52hp at 6200rpm to the current 65hp at 6800rpm. Maximum torque has also increased significantly.

The larger engine features fatter exhaust pipes in a new layout. There is a larger final drive and the wider rear wheel, as well as a more robust pair of Kayaba shock absorbers and there is more bracing around the headstock area to help the V7 cope with the extra power.

Each model gets new equipment, with the Stone getting a digital display, while the Classic has conventional twin clocks. Both models will get adjustable traction control. The V7 will also be available in a reduced-power version, in line with A2 driver's licence restrictions. Prices have yet to be released, but in the meantime the old 750cc version is on offer at some dealerships with discounts of more than £1000.

The new 850 V7 classic

NMM SEEKS TO TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

A TRIO OF TRIUMPHS is being raffled by The National Motorcycle Museum as it fights to ensure it can reopen in 2021. The museum team thanked everyone who has given to their first Covid-19 raffle. The funds raised are being used directly for the purpose of reopening the museum for a limited number of days once Government restrictions allow.

Craig Lee with his 'new' Norton Commando

The top prize in the first raffle, a 'new old stock' Norton Commando, was won by Craig Lee. A 1948 Ariel NG 350cc was won by Phil Sherratt and a 1959 BSA B31 by Stewart Bramham.

While the funds raised so far in the appeal will allow the museum to reopen in a limited way, as of late December 2020 they had still only raised 33% of the original £500k reopening target.

To help fill the coffers, the museum has launched a 'Museum Triumph Over Adversity Recovery Appeal Raffle'. The raffle prizes include a new Triumph Trident 660 donated by the Hinckley factory.

"Along with everyone that has contributed by purchasing a raffle ticket or given to our appeal fund in the past year, Triumph Motorcycles have been a huge support to us at this difficult time," said a museum spokesman.

As well as the new Trident, there is also a low mileage one-owner 1978 T160 Trident 750, and a 1956 Triumph T100. The prize draw for the Triumph Over Adversity appeal raffle will take place on Friday June 25, at The National Motorcycle Museum.

Tickets cost £6 each and will be distributed during Feb/March 2021 via subscription copies of *Classic Bike Guide*. Tickets may also be purchased online by visiting www.thenmm.co.uk

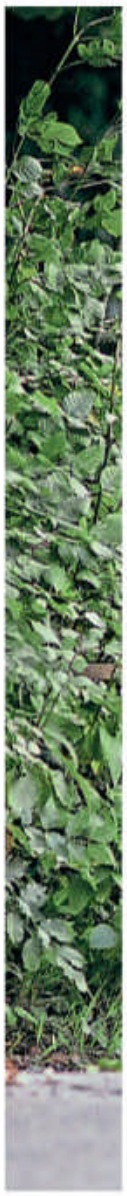
UP FOR THE KOP

WHILE MOTORCYCLISTS' DIARIES might currently be a little short of events, a few organisers are going ahead with scheduling dates later in the year.

The Kop Hill Climb Organising Committee has announced a change of dates for their 2021 festival weekend, the 110th anniversary year of the first-ever climb in 1910. The event will now be held on September 25/26 and not September 18/19 as originally scheduled and advised. The move has been occasioned by the announcement that the Goodwood Revival will be held on September 18/19.

Many entrants and spectators enjoy attending both events, so this revision will make that possible. The hill is located 15 minutes from the M40 Junctions 4 or 6, off the A4010 mid-way between High Wycombe and Aylesbury. Visit www.kophillclimb.org.uk to book advance tickets.

Also scheduled for the summer is the Prescott Bike Festival, taking place on June 26/27 while London's world-famous Ace Café is offering takeaway food only during the current lockdown, and creating a diary of future gatherings. There is a full list of events planned for every Sunday throughout 2021 to start once restrictions are lifted.



AN HONOUR FOR 'McPINT'

LEGENDARY MOTORCYCLE RACER John McGuinness has been awarded an MBE for his services to racing in the New Year's Honours List for 2021.

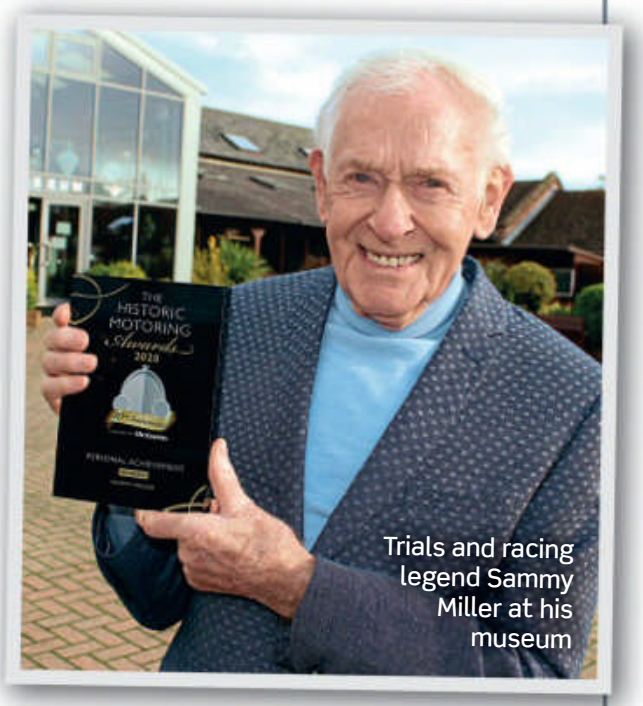
McGuinness, 48, is most famous for his 23 Isle of Man TT victories in a career that spanned three decades. His first TT win came in the Lightweight class in 1999. Eight years later, John McGuinness became the first man to lap the TT course at over 130mph and he continued his winning ways and domination with his most recent Senior TT win in 2015.

Unfortunately, a serious accident while practising for the North West 200 Superbike event in 2017 almost cut short his racing career, but his triumphant return to racing a year later was enthusiastically welcomed by fans.

He is also a regular and popular guest at classic motorcycle shows. John McGuinness now joins other distinguished bikers including Mike Hailwood, Joey Dunlop, Barry Sheene, Jonathan Rea and John Surtees whose contributions to motorcycle racing have also been recognised with an MBE.

SAMMY MILLER'S HIGH OCTANE AWARD

SAMMY MILLER AND the Sammy Miller Motorcycle Museum were shortlisted in two separate categories in the 2020 Historic Motoring Awards: personal achievement and museum/collection of the year.



Trials and racing legend Sammy Miller at his museum

The awards were organised by Octane magazine. The ceremony started with presentations from Derek Bell, Jay Leno and the editor of Octane, James Elliott.

The evening was hosted by Amanda Stretton, racing driver and presenter. The 22 judges included Derek Bell MBE and Jay Leno amongst journalists, magazine contributors and notable people who are connected in some way to motoring. Sammy won the personal achievement award against nominees Daniel Geoghegan of Bicester Motion, Peter Mullin of The Mullin Museum, Mark Perkins of Historics and Phil McGovern of Caffeine & Motion.

Joining the museum in the Museum/Collection of the Year were The Petersen Museum in Los Angeles – winners of this category, Hagerty, The Brooklands Museum, The Mercedes-Benz Museum and Auto & Technik Museum Sinsheim.

GREEN CARD NEEDED IN EUROPE

PLANNING ON TAKING your classic abroad? There are new insurance documents needed if you are travelling in the EU.

Every rider taking their bike abroad now has to carry what is termed a Green Card, a document that guarantees they have the minimum motor insurance cover legally required for driving in the countries they are visiting.

This will be a physical document that will detail the rider and the vehicle covered and the countries to which motor vehicle cover is extended whilst within the EU. A digital version is not accepted. You must now take this document along with your Certificate of Motor Insurance when travelling with your bike outside of the UK.

Most classic insurance policies cover foreign use, and providers will provide a Green Card free of charge, with some now sending the card automatically with renewal documents.

If you do not have one you are advised to apply well in advance. Bikes used in Europe will also need a GB sticker from now on.

The future isn't black and white

THE DVLA HAS made a change to the law regarding those eligible to display a black and silver or black and white numberplate. From now on, bikes built from January 1, 1980 have to use a reflective plate. The change will affect all bikes built after this date, even if they are classed as Historic. Black and silver numberplates were commonly used on motorcycles until 1973 when the reflective numberplate was introduced as a standard fitment. Black and silver numberplates are popular among some owners of classic-styled post-1980 machines and custom builders. The DVLA will be introducing a new British Standard for numberplates from September 2021.

Letters

Thanks for the inspiration

STAR LETTER

I've recently read your December edition of *Classic Bike Guide*. I've only been reading your magazine for around six months, my father had a subscription and would pass copies on to me after he had read them. I've thoroughly enjoyed reading them too.

I was really taken by, and incredibly jealous of, the 'New to classics' article. It was a lovely article to read the thoughts and feelings, anticipation and apprehension. And the scary realisation that the controls all feel on the wrong side! As a child I avidly watched my father buy old classics, a Triumph T120 and an Ariel Leader, both of these bikes were fully stripped down and rebuilt. The Triumph when finished also had an Aero Steamliner fairing fitted to it, just as my dad had his in the early Sixties. To hear how he used to ride his bikes and what he would wear on his bike in comparison to now is completely different. These rebuilds must have taken place in the Eighties.

So to read this article was fabulous, due to always being around classic cars and bikes. I have always wanted the opportunity to learn how to restore and ride a classic bike. As I read through the magazine my wish list is ever changing.

My present bike seems rather naughty to declare after discussing classic bikes. It's a 2014 BMW R1200GS, with lowered suspension.

I'm looking forward to more inspiring articles

Kaz Parkin

Many thanks Kaz, it would be great to see more new riders enjoying old bikes. We hope to see you on one soon! Maria

Don't catch Nostalgia 13!

Whilst we are all still coming to terms with almost a year of dealing with the deadly Covid-19 coronavirus, I would just like to point out that there have been other similar pandemics around the world.

One particularly virulent strain, named the Nostalgia 13 virus has been in our midst for many years, and it affects men and some woman of a certain age. It starts off by affecting your memory and skill sets, it also renders you completely useless when negotiating to buy an older motorcycle, you simply cannot compute the real value of the purchase which is fogged by memories from the 1960s, 70s and sometimes in rare cases the 80s! I have contracted this virus numerous times despite taking all precautions to stop reading articles in this magazine, one particular unsettling side effect that I like to call the 'Alan Millyard' strain turns you into an expert who performs mechanical miracles with your hands!

Unfortunately the virus affects the information sent from your brain and ends up coming out of the back of your trousers in a vapour form. Sadly there is no known cure for the Nostalgia 13 virus, it is also highly infectious passed at motorcycle meets and shows, the signs are however, easy to spot; a daft grin, mumbling on about what bike they used to own, wearing a tight fitting tatty leather jacket and regularly displaying an empty wallet! It can also affect wives and partners who can display unpleasant finger wagging and in severe cases high-pitched bad language.

Stay safe fellow sufferers! We can beat this, or better still, learn to live with it!

Mark Pendlebury

Mark, many thanks for your warning of such a dangerous threat to us all. Though I fear most readers have already suffered... Matt

BMWs – can't beat them

Congratulations Matt on your latest acquisition. You'll not regret it. I have owned five boxer BMWs over the years, two from new. My last was a project that was running and I bought it to 'ride and improve.'

I had seen a Facebook post by a gentleman who'd acquired it in similar circumstances to you. I fired off an email to him to ask what his plan was. He said he'd no intention of completing a full restoration but would do the minimum required to get it going and pass the MoT. He'd let me know when he was satisfied with the bike and perhaps we could do a deal.

We did, and I said I'd ride up on pillion with a pal and ride the Beemer back home together. Er, how far north are you? 'Aberdeen' he replied! Undaunted, Mike and I set off on a 600-mile journey, did the deal and turned round (after a night's kip) and rode the 600 miles home through some epic rain around Carlisle. An unseen, untested bike might seem a bit risky but having owned four Boxer twins before I wasn't afraid. Our journey completed without drama and two weeks later we headed up to Liverpool for the ferry to attend the Classic TT.

The bike is a 1977 R75/7 and although the 'ride and improve' became more thorough and costly than I'd originally intended, I kept the bike three years and completed 9000 trouble-free miles. I sold it in 2018 and I'd certainly buy another If something like yours turned up. They are positively excellent for the long haul trips as you will find out I'm sure. You have a truly useable classic I promise you.
Victor Garman.

Many thanks, Victor, for your best wishes and of your great story of the R75. High miles, long trips and reliability seem to be the basis of most BMW ownerships! Matt

Craven equipment article brought back memories

I enjoyed your recent article on Craven equipment, it brought back memories of when I worked at a glass fibre boat-building shop. Ah, the smell of epoxy cooking off, and sight of glass fibres everywhere.

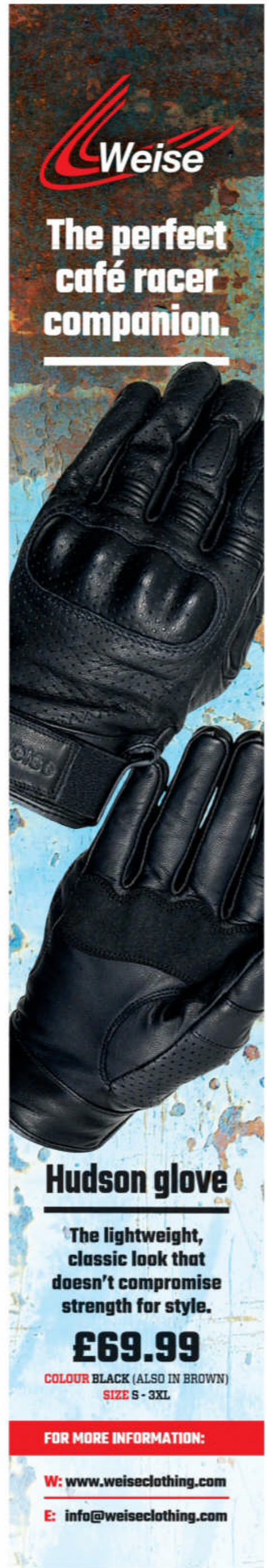
Here's a funny story: If you ever are in a glass fibre shop again, pop in to look at the loo. Ours had cooked-off epoxy and glass fibres all over it! No one wanted to touch it to clean it. You had to stand a bit back to pee in it!

Also, nice touch at the end of the article when an ad showed Craven panniers on a Royal Enfield twin. It's a good example of how the stuff fits.
Richard Kubik
Victoria, Canada

Thanks Richard, we'll watch out if using the loo in a glassfibre workshop again... Itchy! Matt

THIS MONTH'S STAR LETTER WINS

The writer of this month's Star Letter wins a Weise Michigan Jacket worth £169.99. Subtle, classy retro design cues mark the Michigan out from the crowd. Quilted shoulder stitching and upper-arm stripes round off a high-quality textile outer shell. Find out more at thekeycollection.co.uk



Products

Laser multitool

This could be really useful for us. Instead of tools only to be used when camping in a wood surrounded by bears, it has tools we could find useful. The pliers are sturdy and the cutter section actually cuts wires, there's a driver socket where you can put a flathead, a Phillips crosshead and a random Allen key head and Torx (no doubt you could tailor these to your bike), a good quality knife blade (which needs a sharpen), rope cutter (which I used for unsheathing wire) and a very good rechargeable torch. And in case there really is bears to escape from, there is obviously a saw(?).

It feels really good quality and seems to be priced in between cheap crap that breaks and expensive tools where you're paying for the brand name. It's reassuringly heavy, so the knife and torch comes apart from the pliers, so you can light what you're trying to do and is perfectly legal to carry as a gentleman's pocket knife on its own. The cheap pouch it comes with is rubbish so I made one from leather, but otherwise a very good buy to pop under the seat.

Matt

- **£57.91**
- **www.lasertools.co.uk**

Oxford Holwell 1.0 women's wax jacket

Everyone is making a wax bike jacket these days, but this one stands out. It is cut for the shape of a lady and has the length of a sports, or paddock jacket. This means it looks great off the bike and is complementary to a lady's shape.

It is more comfortable on bikes than a longer jacket, but lacks a little midriff protection at the back if things get cold, leaving several inches of whatever is underneath showing. I would prefer a longer back, so this is one to try on before buying.

I found the neck is also too tight when done up, especially as I never ride without a Buff, so I removed the neck belt and now it's just right.

If it fits you, then you'll be pleased Oxford have upped their game as far as quality is concerned in my opinion.

The Holwell feels well made, with nice materials and CE-approved armour where you expect it – apart from, as always, the back – where you need it most. The liner is removable and toasty-warm, and the wax cotton is backed up by a waterproof, breathable membrane. Overall, a good jacket if it fits you.

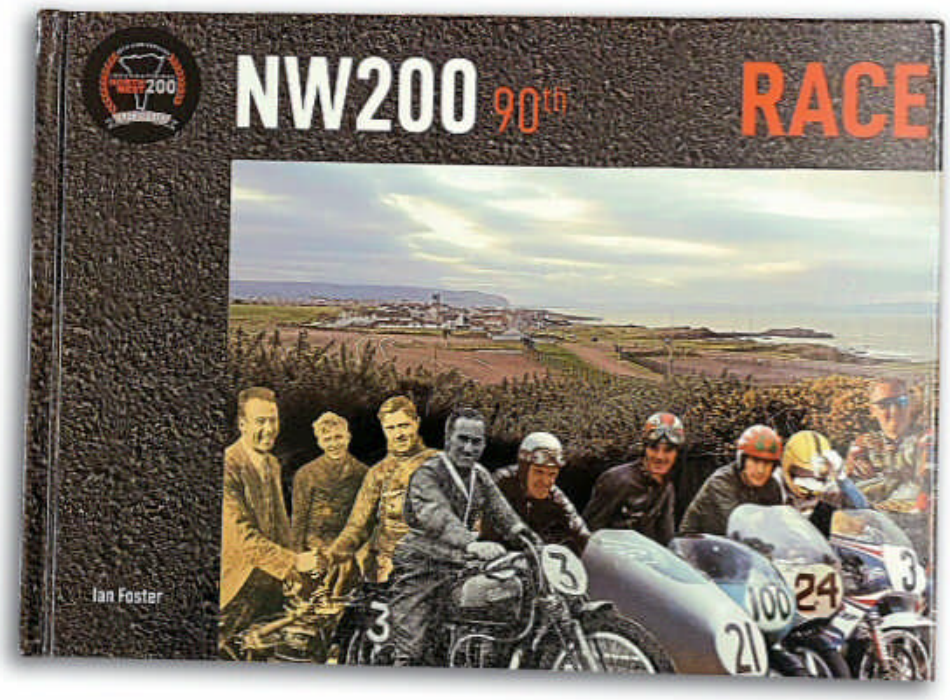
Maria

- **£199**
- **oxfordproducts.com**

NW200 90th road and race book

Hardbound, 486 full-colour pages, A4 landscape size, 2450 photographs. This book covers the 90-year history of the North West 200 road race, held in Northern Ireland since 1929. And it is a monster. The detail, the photographs, only a few of which I've seen before, are incredible. And it's split into two – most covers the racing, but a portion of the book looks at the area, its history and some of its characters over the time.

It is so large that you have to sit down and get comfortable to read it properly, and you cannot take it all in! It is one for any road race fans,those who have enjoyed the roads of that area



and for £36, could be the written bargain of the year. I've had it for a month now and still haven't got halfway – so perfect for lockdown.

To get one you have to visit the Facebook page, or there are some local businesses in Northern Ireland that stock it. It feels like author, Ian Foster, has put his life into this. And all the proceeds go to the charities the NW200 support.

Matt

- **£36**
- **ISBN 978-988-74511-2-9**
- **Facebook, search "NW200 90th ROAD & RACE"**

Muc-Off premium brush pack

I hate washing bikes, so anything that makes it easier and stops my precious hands from getting cut to shreds is a winner. More than 20 quid for some brushes is a bit steep I thought, until I used them – they do exactly what you want, have the right strength bristles and even help on chain lube-covered spoked wheels. Hell!

Rinse them out once you've used them, don't let them melt on the hot exhaust (I did) and you'll get your money's worth.

Matt

- **£22.04**
- **muc-off.com**

Gripskinz handlebar grips

Many of our old and not so old bikes vibrate. Some do that, some are slowly dying beneath us. So the idea of isolating these vibes from our hands is a good one, especially longer journeys.

Remember old foam grips? Well these are not the foam ones we used in the 1980s and 90s. Some thought has gone into these. They're a very dense-yet-soft, rubber-like material; so they don't hold water, making your hands cold. Secondly, they don't replace your existing grips – they fit over them. This takes a bit of brake cleaner/hairspray/hot water (choose your favourite) to squeeze them over, but means they will also fit over heated grips if you're on a modern bike.

It does make your grips wider in diameter, which could be better for many, but also some may find their hands tire. But reduce vibes they do and I tried them with some heated grips and they work well on them too. The chap that designed and sells these, Ben, has worked hard to get them made in the UK, and confidently puts a five-year guarantee on them. So if you feel the vibes, for twelve quid I thoroughly recommend them.

Matt

- **£11.99**
- **Amazon.co.uk gripskinz grips**

New

RETRO

Royal Enfield Meteor

WORDS BY OLI HULME

Like buses, you wait ages for a new Royal Enfield, then two come along in quick succession. After the 650s, we present to you, the Meteor 350.

WHEN ROYAL ENFIELD LAUNCHED THEIR 650 twins in 2018, it followed years of rumour and speculation. The end of 2020 saw a lower key, but potentially more significant launch of their latest model in world markets, the 350 Meteor. For Enfield in India the 350 segment is much more important than the 650 with smaller models outselling the 650 by a considerable margin.

The European unveiling of the Meteor came a few months after the model's launch in India, and unlike previous Enfields, the Meteor you can buy in the UK will be the same as the Meteor available in India and elsewhere. It will, ultimately, replace the 350 in India, and in Europe will replace the 500 EFE engined models. And the new 350 is a modern, if straightforward motorcycle, offered at an irresistibly low price.

STYLE

The only old thing about the Meteor is the name, inheriting it from a classic Royal Enfield motorcycle of the 1950s. Launched at the end of 1952, the Meteor twin was a burly bruiser of a motorcycle.

The new Royal Enfield Meteor 350 is, according to RE, an "easy-cruiser" with a distinctly American look. There are many who might think it follows the lines of bikes built by a certain Milwaukee manufacturer, or that 1980s phenomenon, the factory 'custom' that all the Japanese factories were churning out alongside their regular models, often with de-tuned engines.

ENGINE

At the heart of the bike is the all-new 349cc air and oil-cooled single-cylinder engine. This design doesn't need a vulnerable radiator or oil cooler, as a series of oilways and galleries inside the engine provide extra cooling and quieten down the mechanical noise. The engine features casings very similar to those on the 650.

The Meteor isn't about top end, with a top speed in the mid-80s. Instead, the effort has been made to provide the low-down grunt of a cruiser. It generates a modest 20bhp which isn't overly powerful, but it also produces 20lbs ft of torque at 4000 rpm. Despite being just a 350 single the Meteor's engine was designed with a balancer to smooth out vibrations and as with pretty much every modern motorcycle the Meteor has electronic fuel injection. The development team say that the 350 engine was specifically designed for the capacity and will not be the start of a new range of bigger versions. The design is such that expanding it to 500cc in its current form is not an option.

FRAME

As well as a new engine it has a brand-new frame, a twin downtube spine frame arrangement with a low seat height, a redesigned front section and at the rear, a triangulated arrangement of frame tubes that echoes past machines but offers new steering geometry.

Managing Director of RE parent company Eicher Motors, Siddhartha Lal, said: "The Meteor 350 is a supremely refined, easy and accessible cruiser. It is a charming combination of classic cruiser styling with modern capability. We wanted to build a motorcycle that could ensure a great cruising experience for new, as well as experienced riders. The Meteor 350 is just perfect for that. It is easy, very comfortable with excellent ergonomics, and absolutely enjoyable for everyday cruising, while being great within the city as well."

There are 41mm forks with 130mm of travel and twin shock absorbers with six-step adjustable preload at the rear. The foot pegs are forward mounted to suit the factory custom style, with a heel and toe gearshift.

EQUIPMENT

While the look of the Meteor is decidedly retro, there are a few firsts, the most striking being a factory fitted turn-by-turn Tripper Sat Nav system linked to Google Maps. This is a modern addition rarely seen on smaller motorcycles and even on much more expensive super-tourers from the likes of BMW and Honda. Somebody at RE has clearly been out and about in cities and seen the number of bikes with car sat navs and mobile phones precariously strapped to handlebars. Unlike a conventional sat nav, with maps and a forest of complicated buttons and touch screen controls, you preprogramme a journey and the Meteor device just gives you a warning when you need to turn, all linked to a mobile phone app. It looks like a smart little set-up and you won't need to worry about some nefarious passer-by stealing your device from your handlebars as you wait at traffic lights, and there is a USB charge socket for your mobile phone, too.

PRICE

The question everybody wants answering is of course, 'how much?'. The answer is a very reasonable £3749 for the basic Fireball model with a three-year warranty and roadside assistance. The Stellar will cost £3829, while the top of the range Supernova, which comes with a passenger backrest and a small windscreen, will cost £3909.

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE: Electric start OHC Single cylinder, four-stroke, Air-Oil cooled **DISPLACEMENT:** 349cc **BORE X STROKE:** 72mmx85.8mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9.5:1 **POWER:** 20.2 BHP @ 6100rpm **TORQUE:** 20ftlbs @ 4000rpm **FUEL SYSTEM:** Electronic Fuel Injection **CLUTCH:** Wet, multi-plate **GEARBOX:** five-speed constant mesh **LUBRICATION:** Wet sump **FRAME:** Twin Downtube Spine **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic, 41mm forks, 130mm travel **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin shock absorbers with six-step adjustable preload **WHEELBASE:** 1400mm **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 170mm **LENGTH:** 2140mm **WIDTH:** 845mm (without mirrors) **HEIGHT:** 1140mm **SEAT HEIGHT:** 765mm **KERB WEIGHT:** 191kg **FUEL CAPACITY:** 15 litres **TYRES:** Front 100/90 - 19 Rear 140/70 – 17 **BRAKES:** ABS Dual Channel Front 300mm disc with twin piston floating caliper Rear 270 mm disc, single piston floating caliper **ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:** 12 volt **COLOURS:** Fireball Yellow, Fireball Red, Stellar Black, Stellar Red, Stellar Blue, Supernova Brown, Supernova Blue

New
RETRO

A new and rather smart instrument cluster combines an old-style analogue speedometer with a real needle which moves around the outside of the dial, while a central LCD display provides such modernity as a gear indicator, fuel gauge, clock and tripmeter. The Meteor 350 has LED front running light and tail-light combined with a halogen headlamp. The style of some of the kit will be familiar to Royal Enfield 650 owners, including the uncluttered handlebar controls and switchgear. Heritage has made its way into the switchgear's design with miniature versions of old-school rotary power and lighting switches once common on 1950s motorcycles.

All Meteor 350 variants are fitted with alloy wheels and tubeless tyres as standard. At present there is no spoked wheel alternative. At the front there is a 19-inch wheel which is rather larger than current fashion dictates, with a 17-inch wheel at the rear. RE worked with Indian tyre manufacturers to come up with a suitable tyre design which is unique to the Meteor, but Metzeler Roadtecs have been approved for use in Europe once the originals wear out. There are disc brakes at both ends and dual channel ABS.

DRIVE TRAIN

The gearbox has four 'riding around' gears while the fifth gear is an overdrive for highway cruising. There's a seven-plate clutch, and as long as RE are using the same principles as they did with the excellent gearbox on their 650, this will make for easy gear changes in built-up traffic. Product designer Mark Wells said: "We wanted a bike that's easy to ride whether it's in Chennai, Shoreditch or Barcelona, with a low seat height and great, easy handling. We wanted big bike charm, with small bike versatility".

FINISH

The Royal Enfield Meteor 350 will be available in three editions, the Fireball, the Stellar and the Supernova. The Meteor 350 Fireball, available in vibrant red or yellow single colour fuel tanks and matching wheel rim lining, features blacked-out cycle parts and engine, which is finished with machined fins. The Stellar, with red, blue or matt black tanks and matching body components, comes with chrome handlebars and exhaust plus a comfy backrest for the pillion. The top-of-the-line Supernova, finished in dual-tone blue or brown with matching body parts, is detailed with machined wheels, a choice of premium seats and a windscreen.. CBG

What we think

For years, Royal Enfield was that make 'from India' that made slow, old single-cylinder plodders. They suited more than the marketing morons could see though – they were a bike for DIYers, cheap winter transport or a classic with electric start and less chance of problems. And with the likes of Hitchcocks, you could always get go-faster, or look-better parts, so many saw them as a cheap canvas.

Since 2019 the 650s have been one of the best-selling bikes in the UK, giving the company a new lease of life. And aside from the front suspension being terrible and the seat height being too high, it's the price that's made it a success, just like Yamaha discovered a few years back with their MT range. Triumph, Kawasaki and Moto Guzzi sales have all suffered heavily thanks to the £5500 Interceptor – it gives the look and feel many people want, at a price that means less compromise in life. To add perspective, an official accessory Akrapovic system for a Panigale V4 is £6000 fitted.

And to be blunt, I don't think it matters too much what the new Meteor is like; at less than £4000 on the road, it'll be the answer to so many people's buying decisions. Second-hand buyers can have a brand-new bike, new riders, second bikes and those who like the idea of a cruiser but not at Harley money will at least have a look. Older riders can have an old-style bike with a low seat height, warranty and electric start. And if it is a great bike, then even better!

Royal Enfield need to look after their dealers – there cannot be much profit in a sub-£4k bike, so if they want customers to get great service, the shops need paying for that. Economies of scale will help Royal Enfield themselves and their world market will undoubtedly see the Meteor as a top success.

My hope is that the Royal Enfield Meteor does what the likes of the MCIA and the motorcycle press should be doing instead of patting each other on the back while rattling on about 200bhp sports bikes and £20,000 adventure bikes – encouraging more into the world of two-wheels with a friendly, accessible bike. Good one, Royal Enfield.

Matt

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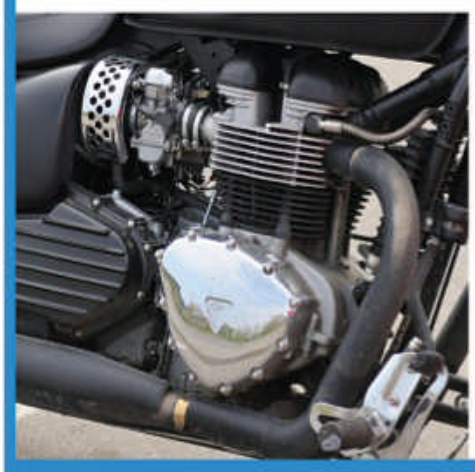

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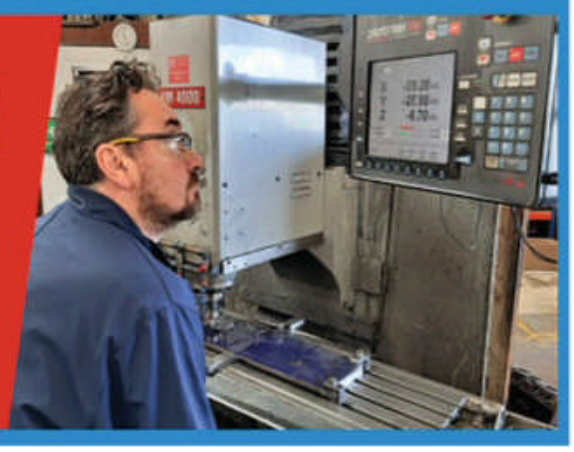

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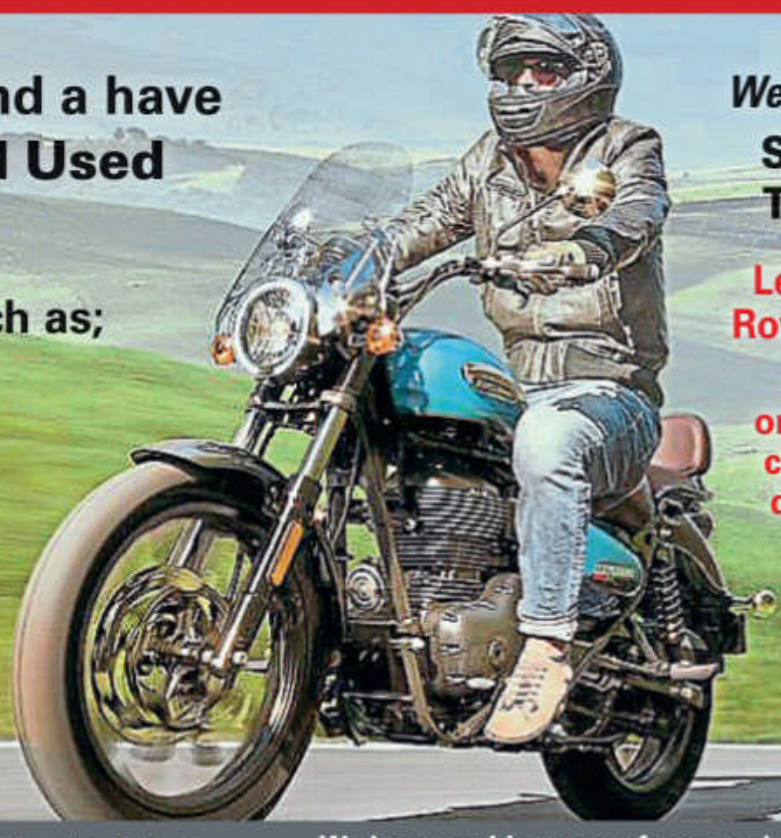

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Peter Williams

Rider / engineer supreme

In December 2020, we lost one of motorcycling's most pioneering engineers and a damn fine racer; Peter Williams. Alan Cathcart looks at Peter's career through the eyes of a friend.

WORDS BY ALAN CATHCART
PHOTOGRAPHY AC ARCHIVE

Britain's Peter Williams, widely acclaimed as the finest GP racer / engineer of modern times, passed away quietly in his sleep just before Christmas, after a long illness. 'Pee Jay', as he was known after his initials PJW, was 81 years old. Peter will be revered for his unique combined talents as an innovative designer and a top level road racer, as well as a gregarious, affable individual who made friends easily.

Yet at various times in his career, whether out of patriotism, loyalty or misfortune, Williams turned down the chance to race for the works Suzuki GP team, forfeited a season-long GP ride with the Honda factory and declined an offer to work as a designer for Yamaha. Instead, save for a 250cc race at Daytona in 1967 on a works Kawasaki which lasted just one lap and a couple of MZ rides – in one of which he scored the East German factory's final GP race victory, in the 1971 350cc Ulster GP, which was also his own solitary World Championship race win – Williams raced only British bikes during his entire 11-year racing career, which ended in August 1974 with his tragic Oulton Park accident on the spaceframe F750 John Player Norton.

Born in 1939, the week before the outbreak of the Second World war, Peter was the son of Jack Williams, creator of the Matchless G50 who, during his time as chief engineer for AMC/Associated Motor Cycles, also supervised development of AJS's world title-winning Porcupine 500cc twin and Junior TT-winning 350cc 7R single. After training as a draughtsman, Peter initially worked in the Ford car factory's drawing office at Dagenham, while starting to race motorcycles quite late in life, aged 24. His father had always discouraged him from doing so and instead pushed him to be an engineer. "I didn't start racing until my friend Michael Tooze left university in 1963, got himself a racing bike, and I thought if he could do it, so can I," recalled Peter.

"Since he bought a 500 Manx Norton, I got a 350 Manx so we'd be in different classes, and could help each other. I came fourth in my first race at Snetterton, but he won his, so we came home happy. But he never won another race, and I did…."

1964 saw Peter Williams learning the ropes of the racing game on his 350 Manx and a 500cc BSA special built by Tony Wood, another friend. Williams was then still working at Dagenham, with Henry Ford unwittingly sponsoring his racing career via unofficial time off. "People think I went to university, but I never did," said Peter. "I was offered a scholarship to Woolwich Polytechnic, but I turned it down because I had to go racing." During 1965 Williams gradually worked his way up the finishing order in hard-fought British short-circuit racing, while after a DNF on the Norton on his Isle of Man debut in the 1964 Manx GP, he finished third in the 65 Lightweight on a 250cc Greeves Silverstone two-stroke single. This resulted in an offer from Bert Greeves to join the small Essex manufacturer as design draughtsman, on the same money as his Ford job, but with the time to go racing officially set aside. This led to the water-cooled Greeves 250cc works road racer he helped develop, then rode to victory first time out at the 1966 Brands Hatch Whit Monday National – the first of many racebikes Williams helped create, then won races on himself.

JOHN PLAYER NORTON
10
Norton
BELL

But by then Peter had stepped up to the top level of British GP riders, after Tom Arter asked him to succeed Canadian Mike Duff – now riding for the factory Yamaha GP team – in racing his bikes in 1966, including the Reynolds-framed AJS 350 built by John Surtees with a 7R engine he'd obtained from Peter's father, on which Duff had finished third in the 1964 350cc world championship. Williams rode the Arter AJS to a debut victory in pouring rain at the final Mallory Park National of 1965, then again in the dry the following weekend at Brands Hatch. This led to an eight-year partnership between the Kent tuner rarely seen without his trilby hat and a pipe parked in the corner of his mouth, and his bespectacled rider whose studious appearance was the antithesis of a stereotype superstar racer.

"The 500cc Arter G50 had a similar Reynolds frame to the Surtees 7R, and I immediately got on with that, too." said Peter. "I'm ashamed to say I really didn't care for the standard Matchless G50 frame which my father had developed – I much preferred the Reynolds-framed bikes. So I spent 1966 getting to know them and all their little foibles, but gradually I was getting faster and faster on them, and after winning the NW200 and finishing sixth in the Senior TT, I wound up second in the 500cc Italian GP at Monza. That was my first 500cc rostrum, although I'd already finished second to Agostini in the Junior TT on the Surtees 7R, my first of seven second places in the Isle of Man. So for 1967 Tom and I decided to give it all we'd got in going for GP glory, even if we were up against Mike [Hailwood] on the Honda four and Giacomo [Agostini] on the MV three with our humble British single. So that year the German GP at Hockenheim was the first round and Mike packed up, Giacomo won, and I was second – the fastest loser, you know, gallant single-cylinder privateer, all that nonsense. So then it was the TT, but this time Giacomo packed up and Mike won it – but I was best of the rest again, and now I was leading the 500cc world championship!"

The next race was at Assen, where Hailwood and Agostini came first and second, but Peter Williams was third, so still led the world championship on the Arter G50 after three rounds. But at the Belgian GP next weekend he slid off at La Source, and then had a very big crash in the rain at the Sachsenring on the 350cc Arter 7R, severely injuring an ankle. Though Peter eventually recovered from that and wound up fourth in the 1967 500cc world championship, he didn't race again that year, but used his recuperation time to firstly design some disc brakes mounted on repurposed wire wheels, and then a set of modern-

Clockwise from top:

October 1965, Mallory. Peter splashes to victory first time out on the Surtees 7R

1973 Senior TT, Findlay, Arter and Williams

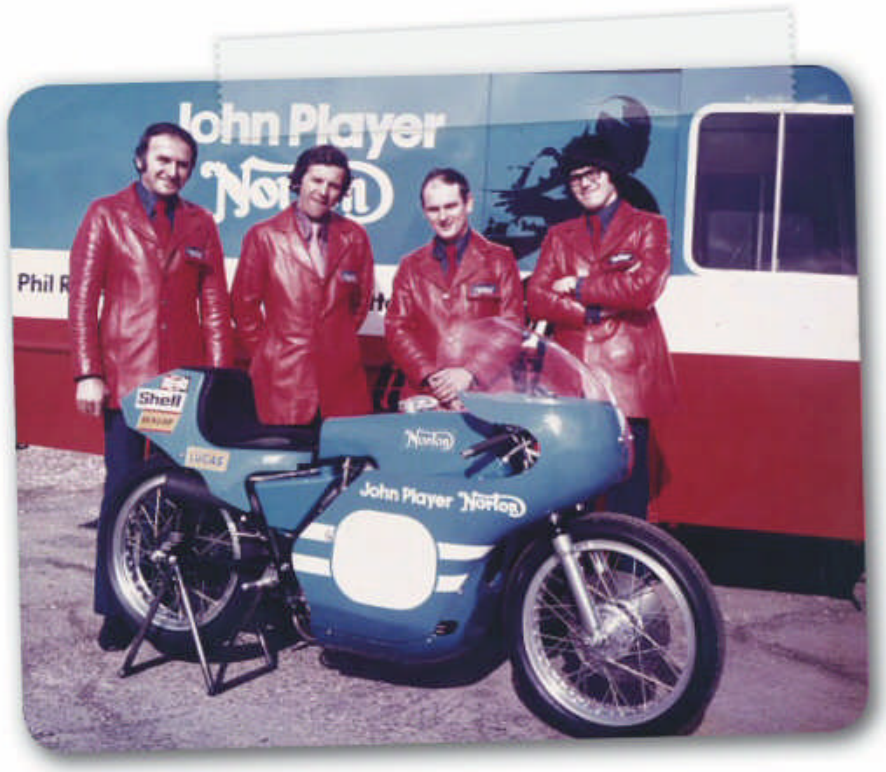
Peter at the workshop

1971 and Williams is on the 750 prototype at Cadwell

"But this was a blessing in disguise, for it obliged Arter and Williams to complete the assembly of a brand-new bike with a lighter, slimmer frame made from narrower-gauge tubing by F1 chassis constructor Grand Prix Metalcraft"

type cast magnesium wheels. Williams was always at the forefront of new technology, and besides disc brakes, tubeless race tyres, six-spoke cast wheels and wind tunnel developed bodywork, also pioneered the use of a full-face helmet, all now commonplace features in motorcycling today.

Despite Peter's injuries, his friend and rival Mike Hailwood had arranged for him to race for Honda in 1968 as his teammate; but instead the Japanese factory withdrew from racing, leaving Williams to resume racing Tom Arter's slower but sweet-handling AJS and Matchless singles, after rejecting a rival offer from Read-Weslake to race their new all-British 500GP twin. Very short of cash after spending all his savings while off work due to his injuries, he joined the Norton Villiers Drawing Office at the former AMC Plumstead factory – AMC had collapsed in 1966, and the remains acquired by industrialist Dennis Poore's Manganese Bronze concern. Suffering from chronic asthma worsened by the squalid conditions in which he was living on very little money, Peter Williams' racing career almost stalled, despite finishing seventh on a standard Matchless G50 in the Daytona 200 sponsored by a wealthy American fan, then third in the season opening German 500GP at Hockenheim – though stamina was a serious issue because of his asthma. Fourth at Assen and fifth at Brno gave him sixth place in the world championship standings, but a late-season win at Cadwell Park was his only 1968 victory on the Reynolds-framed Arter G50, which he'd now equipped with a front disc brake and pannier fuel tanks to lower the frontal aspect of the bike, thus improving top speed.



JPN unveiling – Frank Perris, Phil Read, Tony Rutter and Peter

But Tom Arter stayed loyal to him, and after receiving experimental asthma treatment at London's Brompton Hospital which proved transformative but caused him to miss the entire 1969 TT, Williams effectively recommenced his career where he'd left off before his 67 crash, by leading the first two laps of the Dutch TT at Assen exactly one week after being discharged from hospital! Agostini inevitably caught and passed him on the fleet MV-3, but second place was a fine comeback ride for the now revitalised Pee Jay.

Sadly, though, Williams didn't have a bike to capitalise on that, because the week after his Assen comeback the Arter G50 he rode there was totalled in a high-speed crash at Spa by Jack Findlay, to whom it had been lent for the Belgian GP. But this was a blessing in disguise, for it obliged Arter and Williams to complete the assembly of a brand-new bike with a lighter, slimmer frame made from narrower-gauge tubing by F1 chassis constructor Grand Prix Metalcraft.

Fitted with cast magnesium wheels, disc brakes front and rear, and ultra-narrow bodywork with slots in the fairing for the ends of the closely-spaced handlebars to rotate – all to reduce frontal area – the new Arter Matchless Mk.3 swiftly christened 'Wagon Wheels' after a popular biscuit snack of the day, was truly the first motorcycle of the modern era, albeit powered by a neo-vintage air-cooled single-cylinder motor, with a Schafleitner six-speed gearbox and chain primary drive. It was the kind of mechanical oxymoron that Peter Williams was fated to grapple with throughout his career.

But this coincided with Peter's job with Norton being moved to Andover as part of Poore's corporate reorganisation – and that now included racing. "It was late in 1969, and they wanted me to race the production Norton Commando next year, as well as work in the drawing office," said Peter. "So I said – I'll come to Andover as long as you agree that you'll definitely go racing, and that I can have a small workshop there at Norton for my Arter bikes. So we went to Andover, and actually set up shop at the Thruxton Circuit."

"Sadly, though, he ran out of petrol while leading the massed-start 1970 Production TT in the Isle of Man, spluttering home second yet again after being passed mere yards from the finish line by Malcolm Uphill's victorious Triumph triple"

Top: Williams and Wagonwheels in 2009 – his trusty Arter Matchless G50

Below: 1966, Whit Monday at Brands Hatch. Peter Williams wins first time out on the water-cooled Orpin Greeves Silverstone, leading Peter Inchley's Yamaha TD1

With Norton, Peter Williams duly forged a new career as a successful big-bike rider, winning the 1970 Thruxton 500-miler with Charlie Sanby on the new 750 Commando, as well as many short circuit Production races on a gaudily-painted bike which became known as the 'Yellow Peril', and formed the basis of the 1971 customer Norvil Production Racer. Sadly, though, he ran out of petrol while leading the massed-start 1970 Production TT in the Isle of Man, spluttering home second yet again after being passed mere yards from the finish line by Malcolm Uphill's victorious Triumph triple.

Forsaking the 500GP series thanks to his new job with Norton, Williams completed Wagon Wheels in the Norton race workshop at Andover. After a season-long battle with Seeley G50-mounted Alan Barnett, Peter won the 1970 British 500cc Championship on it at the final round at Snetterton, as well as finishing second one more time to Agostini in the Senior TT, and fifth in the Ulster GP.

Establishing a rapport of sorts with Norton Villiers boss Dennis Poore, in 1971 Peter built a one-off Formula 750 Norton racer which convinced Poore of the potential of racing as a promotional instrument for the Norton marque. That led to the formation of the John Player Norton team, and to the creation in turn of first the 1972 pannier-tank F750 racer, then a year later the JPN Monocoque – each designed by Williams, as well as ridden by him to much of the deserved success the distinctive-looking, finely-engineered bikes enjoyed in their trademark livery. In winning the 1973 Isle of Man F750 TT on the JPN Monocoque, Peter Williams demonstrated for ever the worth of his unique combination of talents at the drawing board and on the race track, expressed at the controls of a truly avantgarde motorcycle that allowed him to achieve the high standards he set himself both as rider, and as engineer.

But for 1974 Williams, then aged 34, was forced to terminate development of the iconic – and successful – JPN Monocoque, which for reasons which Peter attributed to in-house jealousy, was replaced by a bulkier, slower but more accessible spaceframe design. It was on one of these that he crashed at Oulton Park in August 1974, when its one-piece fuel tank/seat unit became detached, and Peter was thrown from the bike at high speed, suffering career-ending injuries which resulted in him losing the use of his left arm.

In life after racing, Peter Williams joined Cosworth, working on various projects for the race engine manufacturer he'd already collaborated with at Norton in developing the next-generation Cosworth-designed fuel-injected liquid-cooled Challenge F750 racer. These including a prototype desmo cylinder head for its three-litre DFV V8 Formula 1 engine, and a Supermono racebike, neither of which sadly reached fruition. He was also involved with a similarly abortive project for Lotus Cars, the development of a V-twin Superbike with carbon fibre monocoque frame.

In 2015, alongside working as a consultant for major auto industry players, Williams launched an exact Replica of his F750 TT-winning JPN Monocoque racer for sale, built to original spec via CAD measurements obtained by digitally scanning the original mild-steel prototype bike in the National Motorcycle Museum. But just four were built, costing £65,000 each, before he was sadly taken ill and the project foundered, so that his projected Honda Fireblade-powered carbon monocoque road bike that the JPN Replica project had been intended to raise capital for, remained unbuilt. Peter passed away on December 20, 2020 leaving his wife Pam and six children, four of them from two previous marriages.

Peter Williams was a motorcycle visionary who's often been compared to the late John Britten, in his ability to apply rational thought to moving the goalposts of two-wheeled design, and win races with the result. But Peter's overall talents outstripped those of the Kiwi designer, for Pee Jay had the confidence and capable riding skills needed to personally take the innovative products of his fertile mind to the limits of their potential, and in doing so to win races against much more powerful opposition. Peter Williams encompassed a unique blend of capabilities that is as rare today, as it was back then. CBG

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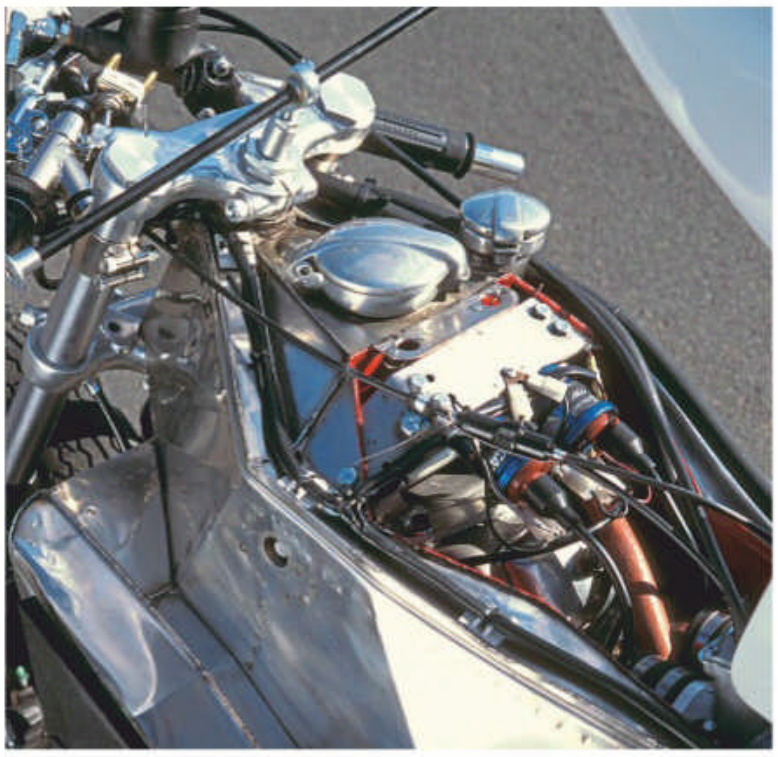
JOHN PLAYER NORTON MONOCOQUE

Thinking outside the box

In our admiration of the late Peter Williams, we look at the bike he's remembered mostly for; the bike that did the most, with the least, 50 years ago.

FIVE DECADES AGO NORTONS JPN TINY THRUXTON-based race shop not only established the prototype of the modern fully-sponsored road racing team, it also created a race-winning bike that was the most sophisticated and avantgarde motorcycle in its chassis design that the world had yet seen. Even by today's standard's the JPN Monocoque would be a true leading edge design, yet in echoing Britain's newly-established early-1970s Formula 1 supremacy via firms like Lotus, Cooper, Brabham, BRM and Lola, the Norton was a two-wheeled anachronism thanks to its semi-archaic air-cooled pushrod-twin motor, housed in this mould-breaking frame. Although just three such motorcycles were ever built (plus a fourth prototype chassis), all of which competed for just a single race season in 1973, its unlikely success against much more powerful Japanese two-stroke opposition, has granted the JPN Monocoque legendary status as one of the benchmark racers of the modem era.



The two fillers for the oil and fuel tanks, on each side of the engine

They'd never seen anything like it. Doesn't the engine look dated?

One which also represents the creative masterpiece of the rider/engineer who conceived, developed and rode it to racetrack success, culminating in victory in the 1973 F750 Isle of Man TT – the late Peter Williams, aka PJW. The JPN story had begun in 1971 when Williams, a Norton factory R&D engineer who combined his day job with Grand Prix racing at the top level on the Arter Matchless G50, was given a budget by Norton Villiers chairman Dennis Poore to build a one-off open-class racer using the firm's 750cc Commando motor. That bike's promising results convinced Poore that, despite the Iong-stroke OHV engine, it'd be worthwhile going racing in the new Formula 750 class, where Norton's BSA/Triumph rivals were already tasting victory.

So the small Norton Villiers raceshop at Thruxton circuit was given over entirely to the creation of the new bikes, with reigning 250GP world champion Phil Read recruited to ride alongside Williams, and ex-Suzuki factory GP rider Frank Perris signed up as team manager. As the final ingredient in this cocktail of talents, former car racer Poore managed to exploit some of his contacts in the motor racing world to attract Imperial Tobacco, the company which had brought cigarette sponsorship to Formula 1 with Gold Leaf Team Lotus four years earlier, to sponsor the Norton race effort via their John Player brand, as the first example anywhere in the world of a bike team fully supported by an outside sponsor – let alone a tobacco one.

JPN BORN

The John Player Norton/JPN team had been born – a fact advertised in race paddocks by the team's sumptuous 100mph transporter, based on an American Dodge V8 van, which also doubled as a mobile workshop.

Decked out in blue and white John Player livery, the 1972 JPN 750 twins looked smaller than many 500cc singles, thanks to the lessons learned in the MIRA wind tunnel by Peter Williams, who besides being a team rider and development engineer, also designed the bikes. By fitting pannier fuel tanks that partially enveloped the engine, carefully shaped to seat the rider low down and completely filling the otherwise 'dead' space between fairing and engine, a very low frontal area was achieved which allowed Read to qualify the new JPN at 155.17mph on its Daytona racing debut, en route to fourth place in the 200-miler after briefly leading at one stage during fuel stops. It was a very satisfactory debut, but the rest of the 1972 season proved less so, the main problem being a recurring transmission failure that forced Williams into retirement when lying second in the F750 Isle of Man TT.

But intensive development yielded some good wins in the second half of the season, especially in shorter races where the gearbox problem wasn't so acute: Williams won the Hutchinson 100 at Brands Hatch, then new team member Mick Grant led a JPN 1-2-3 procession to victory on Scarborough's mini-TT course, while Read wrapped up the year with a win in October's Race of the South, also at Brands. For a debut year, 1972 had been reasonably successful – but Peter Williams already had firm ideas how results could be improved in 1973, by building the monocoque bike chassis he'd dreamed of, with both fuel and oil tanks (for the dry-sump motor) incorporated in the stainless steel chassis.

"I had four parameters for designing the Monocoque," said Peter. "Three of these had been the rationale for the 1972 pannier-tanked bike – a small frontal area, hence aerodynamic efficiency, and for easier handling a low centre of gravity, and a reduced polar moment by placing the c of g in the right place, close to the centre of mass."

These factors nowadays form the basis of all GP race design, but 50 years ago Williams and the JPN team were forging a lonely path as the first.

"The 1972 bike was a stopgap measure to get us out on track," admitted Peter, "so while it incorporated

Above: Magnesium wheels, aerodynamic bodywork and the first time a major sponsor had been seen on a bike

Below: Peter Williams and Dennis Poore with Mellano trophy 1973, Brands Hatch and the Hutchinson 100

some of these ideas, it was full of compromises, and the engine was positioned too far forward for ideal handling – it was easy to make the back wheel step out under power, even with only 74bhp available from what was essentially just a tuned Commando motor. 1973 was our chance to do it right, to build a really small bike which wrapped the rider around the engine, then filled in the gaps with a chassis containing the fuel and oil. This also led to the fourth parameter, which the 1972 bike had hardly addressed: stiffness. Within the restrictions of the Isolastic rubber engine mountings we had to include for commercial reasons, which cut down on vibration, we created a pretty stiff structure in the Monocoque chassis, and that's one reason it handled so well."

AIRFLOW SYSTEM

The Monocoque project had begun even before the end of the previous season, with chassis-builders Robin Clist and John McLaren starting work on the first mild-steel prototype in October 1972. Unlike the Ossa and Offenstadt GP monocoques which just preceded it, or the 125 Minarelli/Garelli and KR500 Kawasaki that came later, whose voluminous spines containing the fuel had the engine slung beneath them, the Norton featured two double-skinned frame sections running back alongside the engine, thus not only creating a stiff, low-slung link between steering head and swingarm pivot, but also acting as internal ducting for the sophisticated airflow system.

This saw air force-fed through the letter-box slot in the nose of the fairing, then separated by a horizontal metal plate, so that the lower supply cooled the engine, while the upper supply flowed over the top of the cylinder heads to the carbs, then to the oil cooler originally mounted under the seat (later moved to the front of the bike), and out via the grille in the rear of the tail section.

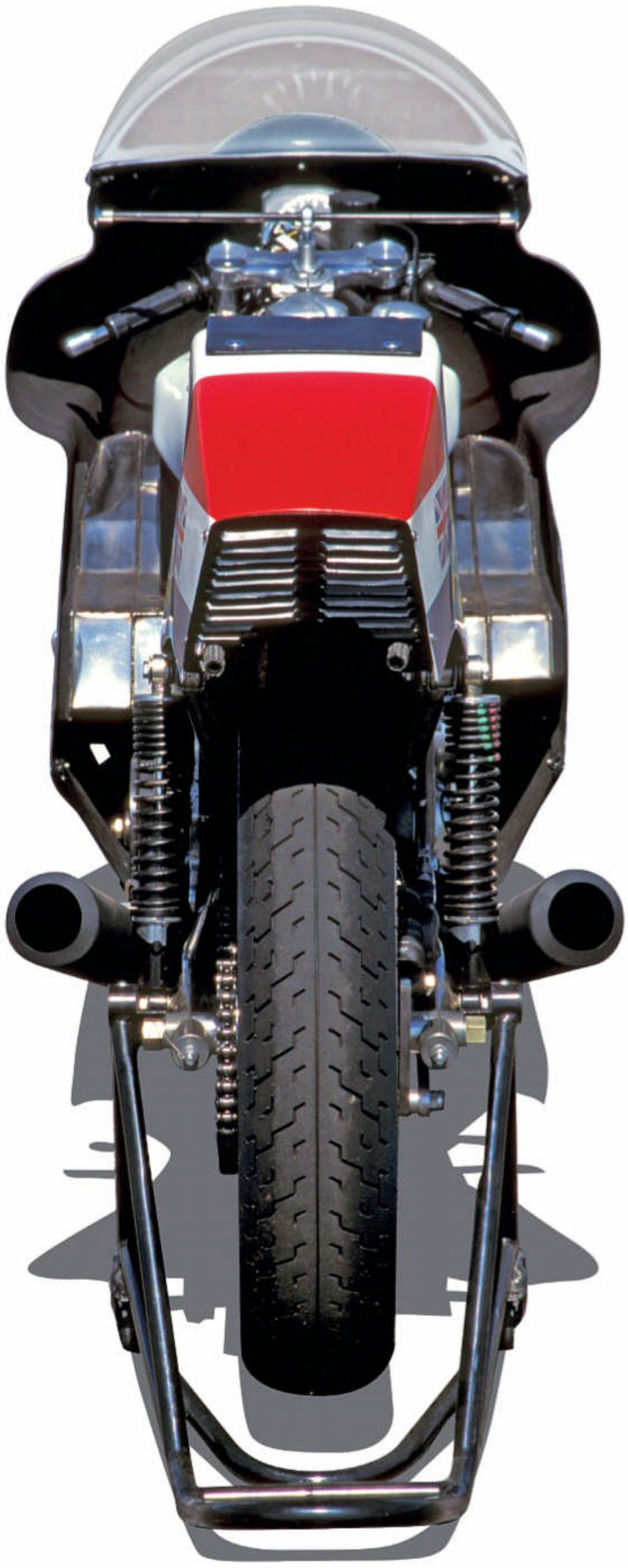
Below: Pee-Jay after his 1973 Production F750 TT win

In a foretaste of today, the one-piece engine shroud and chassis combined to form a primitive airbox – maybe a reason for the underpowered bike's surprising top speed: Williams was clocked at 152mph at Silverstone, and pulled 158mph running downhill to Hillberry in the Isle of Man on a bike whose engine produced just 76bhp at 7,200rpm at the crankshaft (around 67bhp at the wheel, said Peter).

Wheelbase was the same as the '72 bike at a Manx Norton-esque 56in/1422mm, with twin Koni dampers fitted with Girling springs mounted on the conventional swingarm that pivoted on the engine mounts. The fork set at a 27° rake was new, though, a cocktail of AJS motocross stanchions and triple-clamps delivering 98mm of trail, mated to the JPN team's own leading-axle cast magnesium sliders.

Williams had also moved the engine rearwards in the wheelbase by one inch/25mm compared to the '72 bike to improve traction, while the overall height of the new bike at the steering head was 2½in/64mm lower than its pannier-tank predecessor. This was partly thanks to the use of specially-made five-spoke 18-inch magalloy wheels, whose use was already familiar to PJW race fans thanks to his exploits on the Arter Matchless. Smaller 10in/254mm cast iron front brake discs were used to reduce unsprung weight, with a smaller rear – rather than the 11.25in/285mm front discs/rear drum brake cocktail and 19-inch wheels of the year before.

"A miscalculation by the JPN team left Peter coasting to a halt one lap from the flag with a dry fuel tank – a bitter disappointment in what was arguably both bike and rider's finest race."



The incredibly low build of the JPN Monocoque bears comparison with the mid-1950s Moto Guzzis designed by Ing.Giulio Carcano, and Peter Williams was proud to admit that he knelt at the same altar of reduced frontal area and lower drag as a means of obviating the disadvantages of a modest power output.

"We were able to reduce the drag coefficient to a truly impressive 0.39Cx in the MIRA wind tunnel," he said, "and one of the crucial factors in attaining this was smoothing the airflow over the rider's back when lying prone on the tank. I designed a fairing with fully-enclosed handlebars and a screen that, while a whopping five inches [127mm] lower than on the '72 bike, was just the correct height in relation to the rider's shoulders when flat on the tank, so that the airflow ran over the screen and down along his back – our leathers contained no lettering on the back which might disturb this. The seat design, or rear fairing, was just as important in smoothing the airflow. I was very proud of that drag figure!"

Modifications to the engine were less dramatic, in view of the non-arrival of the promised short-stroke OHV motor, which only appeared in 1974 – all four JPN bikes had the 73 x 89 mm long-stroke Commando motor, rather than the later 77 x 80mm version. For 1973, this featured higher compression 10.5:1 Omega pistons, aluminium conrods fitted to a slightly lighter one-piece crank, revised porting to the cylinder head, steel pushrods operated by a 3S camshaft, and 33mm Amal Concentric carbs instead of the 32mm ones used the year before. Power was up to 76bhp at the crank, but the biggest improvement came in resolving the transmission problems that had plagued thus far – partly because of the extra power and Norton triplex chain primary was not designed to cope with the speeds involved.

PROBLEMS RESOLVED

For 1973, this was redesigned to include a third bearing inside the chaincase to eliminate the problem of shaft deflection, as well as dished gearbox sprockets which placed the primary loads directly on the bearing itself, rather than the shaft. The gearbox was also made to run 25% faster by fitting a larger engine sprocket and smaller clutch, so that less torque on unit loads was taken up on the gear teeth themselves, which also had a redesigned profile. Finally, after experiments with a gearbox-located shock absorber the previous season, this was relocated onto the crankshaft, and a dry clutch incorporated into the redesigned primary, resulting in a narrower, stiffer casing. These improvements completely resolved the problems, and Peter said they never again suffered another gearbox failure.

Williams tested the prototype at Thruxton in 1972, suggesting several mods which were incorporated in the three racebikes then built using lighter, thinner stainless steel for the double-skinned construction, which weighed 37lb/16.8kg in finished form. This at first might seem heavy, until you realise it included separate compartments for the maximum 24-litre fuel supply then permitted under FIM F750 rules, as well as the six-pint/3.8lt oil tank for the dry-sump engine, located in the rear section of the frame. In this way, Williams was able to incorporate the same fuel load as in the 1972 bikes, yet reduce the centre of gravity and frontal aspect still further, in a bike 20lb/9kg lighter than the old one, at 350lb/159kg dry.

"I'd proved on my old Arter G50 what an incredible difference it makes having your fuel mounted low down," he said. "It reduces the effort needed to change

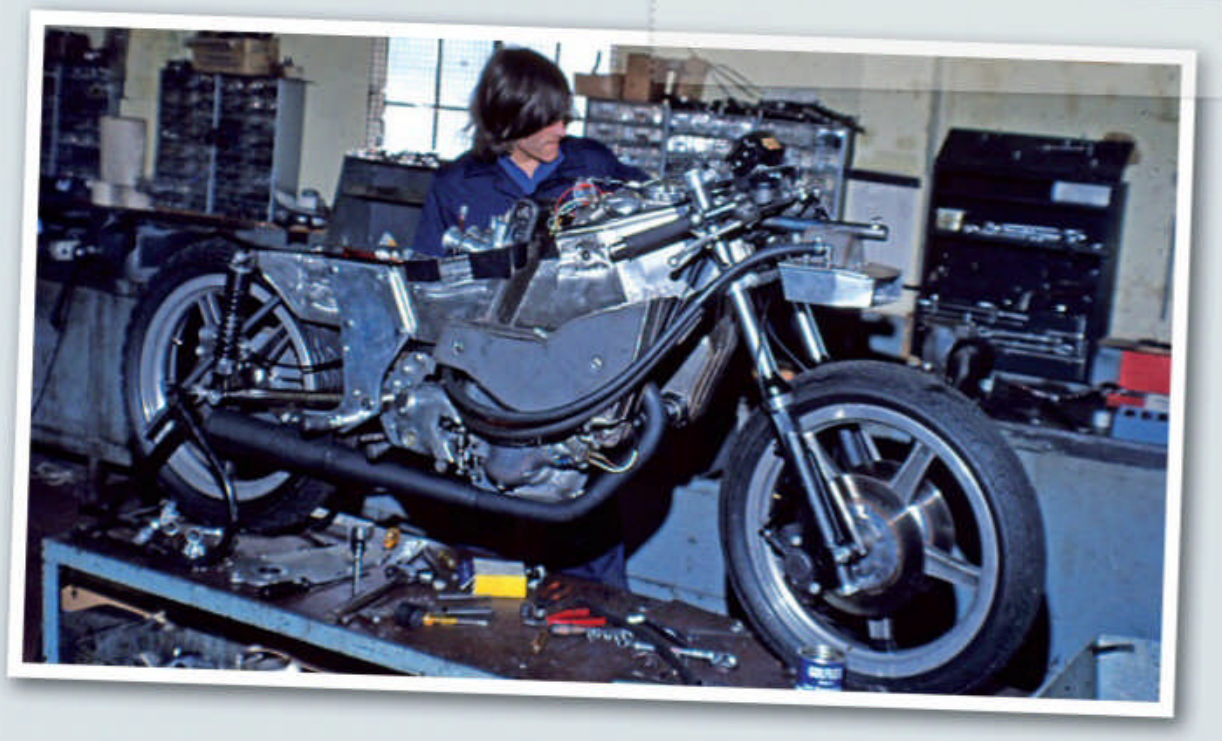
direction, lessens general instability round fast, bumpy turns, and enables you to flick the bike to and fro, as well as decreases the pitch of the bike by reducing the polar moment. People often won't believe me when I say I could go into a corner on the Monocoque, crank it over, get both front and rear wheels sliding, then put the power on and keep it in a controlled two-wheel drift round any corner faster than Druids at Brands. It was a really wonderful little bike."

Anyone who was at Silverstone in August 1973 to watch the British round of the F750 world series that year will vividly recall seeing Peter Williams demonstrate the truth of that claim, as he grabbed an improbable lead on such a fast circuit against all the factory two-stroke triples, including the Suzukis of Sheene and Smart, and Yvon DuHamel's Kawasaki, visibly attacking top-gear turns like Abbey and Woodcote in masterful two-wheel drifts aboard the underpowered Norton, as he pulled away to score what seemed set to be a fairytale victory. Cruelly, after he'd equalled Jarno Saarinen's outright circuit lap record, a miscalculation by the JPN team left Peter coasting to a halt one lap from the flag with a dry fuel tank – a bitter disappointment in what was arguably both bike and rider's finest race.

HIGHEST SCORER

Yet, even before that the machines had already brought both team and sponsor the success they'd been looking for, in the hands of its designer and his team-mate, Dave Croxford. After a disappointing Daytona debut caused by fuel vaporisation problems (traced to hot air directed on to the swingarm-operated fuel pump, cured by fitting an electric one), Williams won three of the six races at the Easter Transatlantic Match Races, ending up highest overall scorer with four fastest laps to his credit against all the Japanese two-strokes, and the four-man Harley-Davidson factory team's XR750-TT V-twins.

After further short-circuit success at Cadwell Park, punctuated by an unfortunate crash in the Imola 200 that put a slight crease in the monocoque without affecting its geometry, he went to the Isle of Man and finally earned the TT victory he'd so long deserved. Holding off the challenge of Jack Findlay's works Suzuki two-stroke, as well as the more powerful BSA/Triumph triples, Williams and the JPN Monocoque took victory in the F750 TT at a record speed of 105.47mph, setting a new lap record at 107.27mph to become the second fastest man ever round the TT Course – all using a production-based pushrod twin motor, with team-mate Mick Grant finishing second. The success was captured forever by a BBC documentary team for the 50-minute movie Race of the Power Bikes [viewable on YouTube at youtube.com/watch?v=a-SOXVVdIZ4#].



Above: The tiny JPN workshop at Thruxton circiut

Below: Press shot February 1973. Look how much lower the Monocoque is compared to the Pannier tank model from 1972

Why then was this avantgarde motorcycle of proven race-winning potential discarded after just a single season of competition, in which it had covered itself with glory? The answer lies in internal politics of the team, a fact Williams was painfully aware of, which resulted in the Monocoque being retired, in favour of a more traditional spaceframe design that, while it may have been 30lb/13.6kg lighter, was much taller, less aerodynamic, and despite being fitted with the more powerful new short-stroke motor, also slower – neither rider could match the times of the Monocoque.

Until recently, only two of the four John Player Norton monocoque chassis built in 1973 still existed as complete bikes – one racer in America, the other mild steel prototype in the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham. Improbably, the other two chassis raced that season had both ended up doing duty as house furniture: Peter Williams' TT-winning frame had been turned into a standard lamp and presented to him as a memento by the JPN team, who'd also converted the chassis Dave Croxford had totalled at the Silverstone F750 round in his famous Woodcote corner pile-up, into a coffee table, inscribed with the dictum "Five weeks to make, five seconds to destroy!" That's what they call recycling.

But thanks to the diligence and expertise of P&M's Richard Peckett – ironically, today's leading specialist in classic race preparation of the Nortons' rival BSA/Triumph triples! – both pieces of JPN house furniture are back on their wheels again.

The Williams TT-winner belongs to the owner of the

largest collection of John Player Nortons in the world today, Spanish enthusiast Joaquin Folch, a Norton rider since his college days in Barcelona. After a five-year rebuild, the result was completed in time for Folch to ride it in the 1993 Isle of Man TT Historic parade, marking the 20th anniversary of Williams' F750 TT victory with the same bike.

I was later able to ride the Williams JPN Monocoque at both a damp Snetterton and a sunny Mallory Park, two very different types of circuit which showed up the JPN's all-round nature well. It also let me experience one of the most unusual riding positions in modern-day motorcycling: nothing else is like the Monocoque to sit in, except another JPN – or the Arter Matchless which pioneered it! The bike is very low and slim – improbably so for a 750 – but relatively long, so you must somehow squeeze into a very snug, semi forward-reclining stance that has the seat quite far back and your arms reaching forward to the short, stubby handlebars. These position your hands very close together, next to the steering head and partially obscured from view by the all-enveloping fairing – don't even think about waving to the fans till after you've won the race, because you'd never get your hands back inside the fairing again if you did! Push-starts are an absolute no-no: you need to be sitting aboard the bike with someone to push you.

Above left: Race of the Year, 1973

Above right: 1974 Silverstone GP and Williams is riding the Spaceframe

Below: John McLaren, Frank Perris and Williams during construction

SIT TIGHT

Compared to the Monocoque, Joaquin's later 1974 JPN spaceframe I rode alongside him in the TT Parade not only felt shorter and more agile, it also had a less recumbent riding stance which was easier to adapt to – though part of my problem is that the Monocoque was precisely tailored to suit a rider of PJW's stature, so for anyone taller like myself, it's always going to be a tight squeeze. Anyway, in the pre-slick tyre days of the early Seventies, hanging off was not the Approved Method, so you're supposed to sit tight in the seat, moulding yourself to the ultra low-slung bike. The screen came too far back for me to get my head behind it easily, but by ducking it inside down the Snetterton back straight, I saw an immediate 300rpm gain in engine speed on the Kröber rev-counter. It works!

The Monocoque steers beautifully in big, sweeping corners like Coram or Riches at Snetterton, holding exactly the line you set it thanks to a relatively long 1420mm wheelbase and kicked-out 27° head angle. But there's some power understeer because of this, so when you get hard on the throttle exiting a turn: it won't hold a tight line, and pulling the Norton on line requires some effort, making you glad that the light, precise steering lets you counter this readily.

Turn-in is good: the Norton goes exactly where you point it entering a bend, although the all-enveloping bodywork does take some getting used to. Peter Williams had a distinctive riding style in which he used wide, sweeping lines in turns rather than squaring them off, a technique honed by years of GP racing on underpowered 500cc singles against Italian multis, where the vital thing was to maintain corner speed. The JPN's geometry is geared to that objective, so while not quite as nimble as you first expect it to be, being so small and low, it IS superbly stable round big turns, and within the limitations of the twin-shock rear end, copes well with any bumps you meet cranked over on the angle, like at Gerards at Mallory.

The forks are more responsive and work pretty well, but by modern standards the twin Konis have minimal travel, though on a smooth short circuit of today, that's not so much a problem. I know, however, from riding

Top: Sir Alan is one of the lucky few to try the Monocoque – here, at Donington

Above: Peter and Norton at Daytona 200, 1973

the later JPN fitted with the same suspension in the Isle of Man, that this package gives a 'lively' ride over bumps!. By the standards of 50 years ago, though, the JPN must have made a great Isle of Man or Silverstone bike, relying on the low c of g to make it both stable and reasonably quick-steering, with you parked in the seat rather than hanging off the bike.

But the big surprise was the engine, improbably smooth and punchy, yet always eager to rev. I've ridden many Norton twins down the years, both road and race, but I never sampled one as well-balanced as either of the JPN engines Richard Peckett built up for the Folch bikes. It was enticing to hold the throttle wide open in top gear with the engine booming away beneath you, and no sign of the vibromassage most other twin-cylinder BritBike racer I ever rode always insisted on inflicting.

TURBINE-LIKE POWER

The Norton's distinctive Isolastic engine mounts surely play a part in this, but it's hard to credit that this pushrod twin has no power-sapping balance shafts, and on the contrary has two big pistons rising and falling together. The turbine-like power delivery starts in earnest at 4000rpm once the twin exhaust megaphones stop hiccuping and the engine smooths out, builds strongly to peak power at 7400rpm, and holds it till almost 8000 – but only for a last lap dash.

"I never revved the bike higher than 7600rpm or much lower than 5000," said Peter Williams, and after sampling his bike, I understand why. It picks up revs very fast, the engine seemingly with less inertia than other big twins of the era that I've ridden, and suddenly it's time to change up on the right-foot, rod-linkage gear lever.

The five-speed Quaife cluster has well-chosen ratios and the change action is sweet and clean, though rather slow – and you must use the clutch all the time to shift smoothly. There's just 500rpm between fourth and top gear – ideal for big circuits like Silverstone or the TT – with around twice that between the other ratios – remember what Williams said about a narrow usable power band. Changing up at just over 7000rpm gives impressive acceleration: this may only be a humble air-cooled pushrod twin, but once wound up it motored past modern 600 Supersports down the Snetterton back straight, thanks to the masses of strong, usable midrange power. Nice!

However, where the 600s will get you back every time is on the brakes, because even by the standards of half a century ago, the JPN's downsized 10-inch Norvil discs are a disappointment.

But in every other way, this motorcycle's a credit to the man who conceived and rode it, and the team which constructed it – a significant marker in the evolution of two-wheeled chassis design that is arguably the forerunner of the twin-spar Deltabox frames we see on current road and race bikes today, with the added benefit of carrying fuel in the spars.

As a longtime admirer of the JPN Monocoque, and with the added privilege of now having ridden it, I'm left with a sense of regret and frustration, as well as satisfaction – the latter because it performs as well as it does, the former because its development was cut short so cruelly. And frustration? If ever a chassis cried out for a more powerful, more sophisticated, more modern engine, it's this one – now, as well as back then.

Can you imagine what a great bike a modern JPN Monocoque would be, with a fuel-injected V-twin engine, leading edge suspension and brakes, and the same wind-cheating build, perhaps with more rational if equally distinctive bodywork? Welcome to the bike that did the most, with the least, 50 years ago. CBG

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY
ROLAND BROWN

Triumph Trident

The world waited

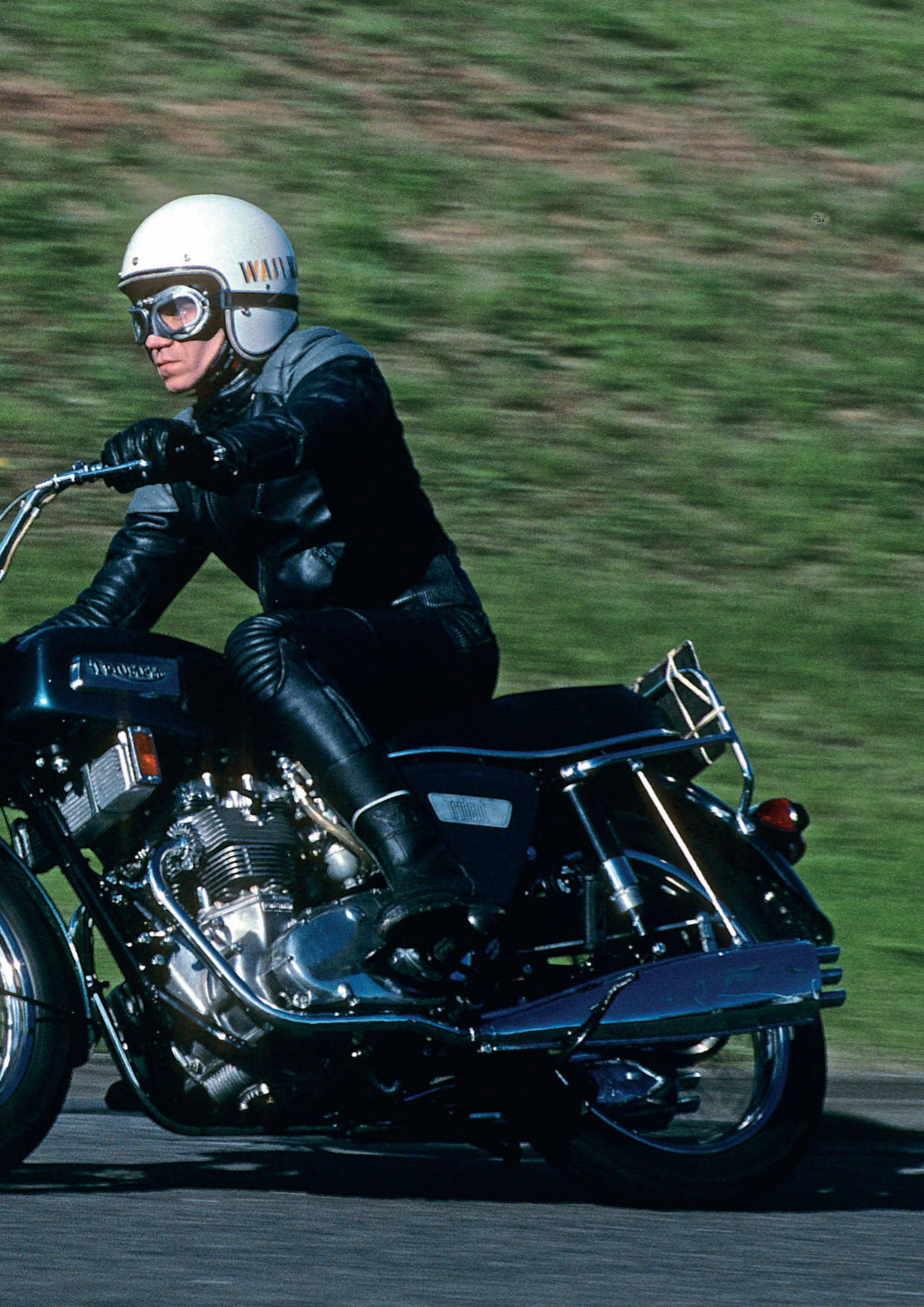
Few of us fail to admire the triple bark of a triple-cylinder Trident these days. But back in '69, it was too old, too expensive and that pesky Honda CB750 was just too good...

THE STARTING RITUAL FOR A TRIDENT IS SIMPLE if you're used to old Brit bikes. Turn on the ignition, open the petrol tap, prime the outer two carbs by pressing the tickler buttons until petrol floods out each side, ease the motor to compression – and kick. If you're lucky the motor bursts into life first time, with a gorgeously rich three-cylinder burble through the Trident's distinctive ray-gun pipes.

You may need to give quite a few kicks, perhaps because one of the Triumph's three sets of ignition points is slightly out of adjustment again, but the motor almost always fires in the end. Then, holding the curiously wide, low handlebars with their fat, squashy grips, you select first gear with a deliberate prod of your right foot, and set off to enjoy the considerable power and poise of the original British triple, inspiration of the modern three-cylinder Triumphs.

A well set-up early T150 Trident is a very pleasant machine to ride. And these days, when much of the attraction of a bike like this is that it is old and different to sophisticated modern machines, that traditional way of starting the pushrod engine generally adds to the fun. But the time-honoured ritual, familiar as it was to most motorcyclists when the T150 arrived in 1969, reveals much about the Triumph's personality – and its problems – even before the bike has turned a wheel.

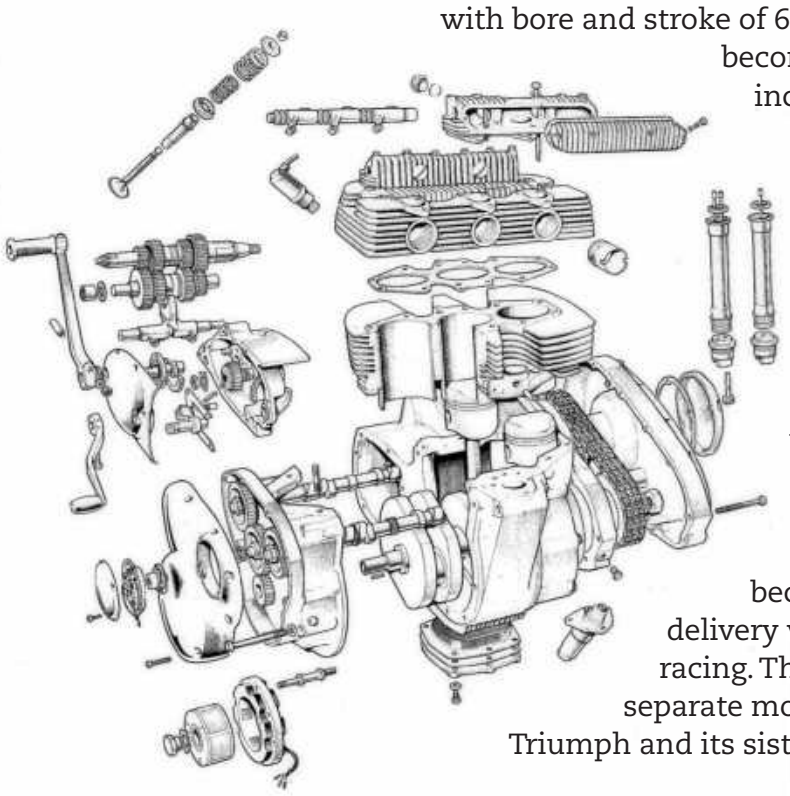
Honda's CB750, which like the T150 was released in late 1968 for the 1969 season, was slightly slower, less stable and had neither the Triumph's tuneful exhaust note nor its worldwide brand-loyalty. What the Honda did have – besides an extra cylinder and overhead camshaft engine layout – was an electric starter, a disc front brake and a general level of refinement that meant it started effortlessly and could be relied on to run reliably for thousands of miles. The CB750 sold in huge numbers, remained in production for years and is now revered as the world's first superbike. The Trident made nothing like the same impact.



"The 740cc triple, with bore and stroke of 67x70mm, was intended to become part of a modular range, including a 247cc single and a 493cc twin, similar in concept to that with which John Bloor launched his modern Triumph in 1991."

Above: Raygun exhausts divided opinion – dislike or hate...

Below: Does the triple look familiar to another Triumph engine?



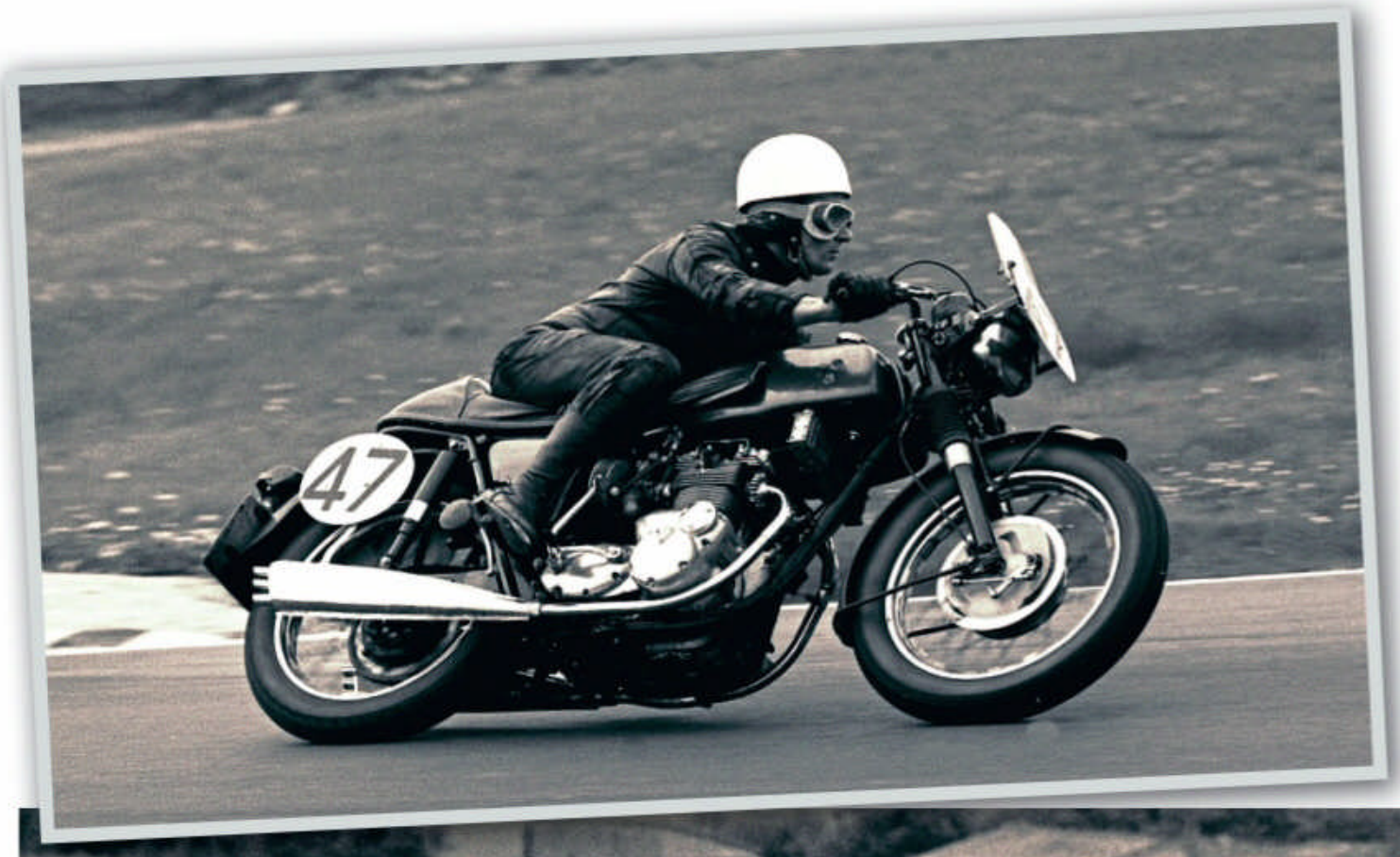
Perhaps the key difference between the two was that the CB750 was a bike for the Seventies, while the T150 had its roots firmly in the previous decade. Indeed, the triple should have been released much earlier, for Triumph began its development as early as 1965, and a road-going prototype was demonstrated to the police at the end of that year. (The 740cc triple, with bore and stroke of 67 x 70mm, was intended to become part of a modular range, including a 247cc single and a 493cc twin, similar in concept to that with which John Bloor launched his modern Triumph in 1991.)

But the project was delayed, largely due to opposition from the US importer, whose market was Triumph's biggest in the Sixties. The Americans first opposed the triple's creation altogether, partly because its weight and power delivery were unsuited to dirt-track racing. They then insisted that two separate models should be produced by Triumph and its sister firm BSA, whose similar Rocket Three eventually featured an angled engine block and other differences. Finally they demanded numerous expensive styling alterations that put back production still further.

It all meant that by the time the Trident was finally ready, three vital years later, so was the more glamorous Honda – which made things worse by being priced considerably cheaper than the British bike. By 1971, for example, the T150 cost nearly $1800 in the States, while the CB750 sold for less than $1500. On home territory the triple cost almost 50 per cent more than a Bonneville, which dissuaded many Triumph riders from trading up from the twin, even if the new bike did also have 50 per cent more cylinders.

The Trident's slab-sided styling was out of place in Triumph's range and unpopular at the time, too. But half a century later, familiarity makes the angular lines seem less harsh; some people might even describe the old triple as handsome. Along with the equally unusual aquamarine paint – the original model's only colour – the styling helps give the 1969 Trident a very distinct Sixties flavour.

The bike's numerous other period features add to its character, too, even if they were regarded as simply rather dated in 1969. Apart from the hands-on-knees riding position (later models had a choice of "American" raised or "British" flat bars), there's the



ignition key on the right of the headlight, the rubber knee-pads and a rather nasty vinyl strip running down the top of the tank, and the strangely shaped grab-rail with its thin supports running down to the silencers, each with three tiny tail-pipes at the back.

The Trident's chassis was heavily based on that of Triumph's twins, including the frame which was a strengthened version of their steel, single-downtube unit. Gaitered forks, borrowed directly from the twins, were given stiffer springs to cope with the 213kg T150's extra weight. Wheels were 19-inch at both ends, the front holding a 200mm, twin-leading-shoe drum brake also sourced from Triumph's 650 twins.

From the fairly tall seat the view is of the black-faced Smiths speedo and tacho with a smaller ammeter set between. The wide handlebars, right-foot gearchange and the smoothness of the three-cylinder engine all make an instant impression, and so does the soulful exhaust note that no modern Triumph could possibly match, at least legally. Swirling out of those strangely shaped silencers – which were good for performance but regarded as ugly by many riders in the Sixties – the sound turns from a low burble to a tuneful three-cylinder rasp as the revs rise.

That sound is left behind by a surge of acceleration that is enough to remind you that the first Trident was very quick by the standards of its day. Peak power was a claimed 58bhp at 7250rpm. The T150's 125mph top speed and standing quarter-mile time of just under 14 seconds were a match for any bike on the roads in 1969. So too was the smooth power delivery that allowed sustained cruising at 80mph or higher, and made the Trident a much better long-distance bike than contemporary twins.

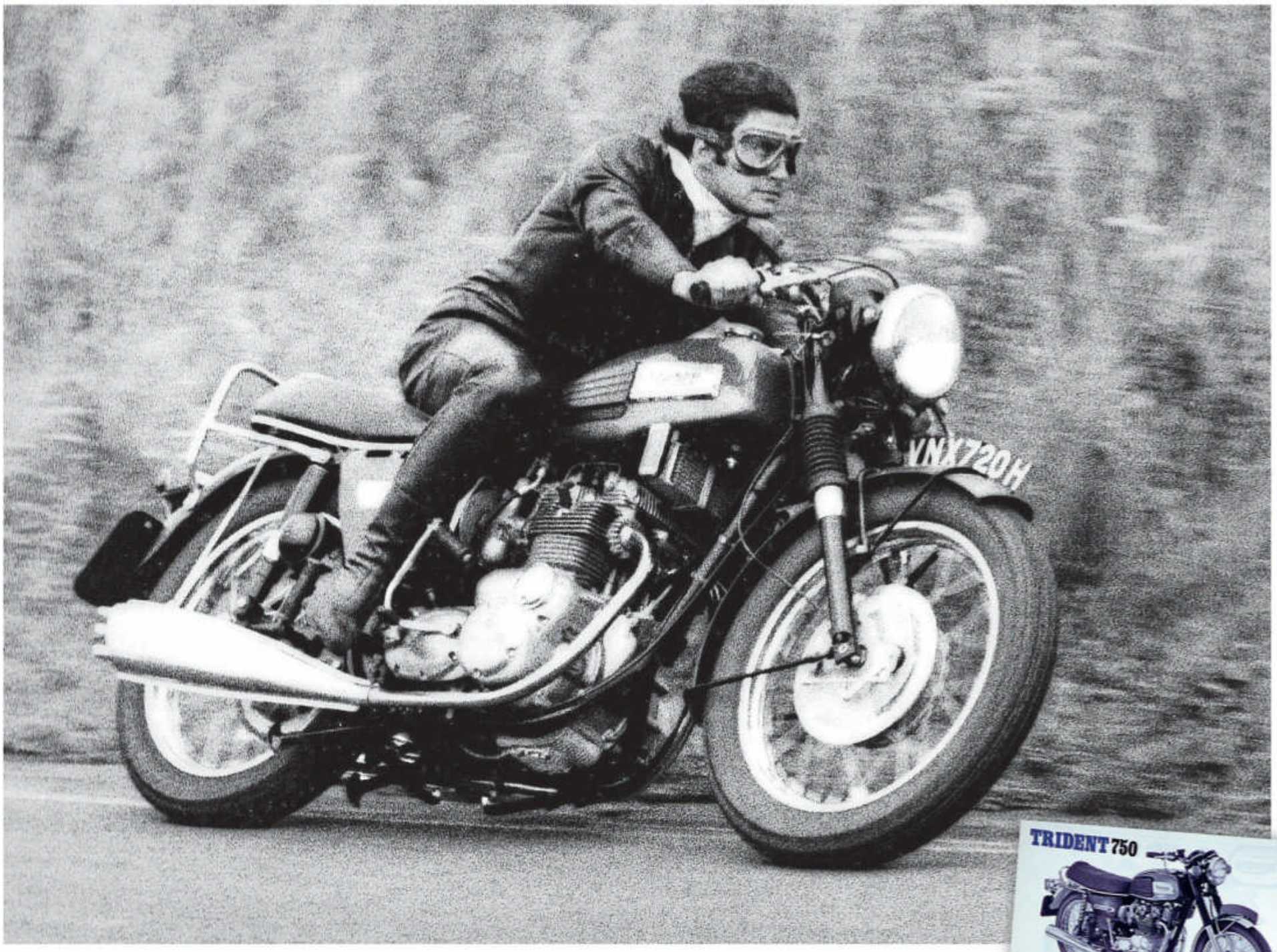
Not that I could make full use of the performance

Top: Rex Avery in the same race as below, but minus the factory fairing!

Above: 1971, Percy Tait and Martin Carney on their triples, Thruxton 500

Left: Ray Pickerell in 1972 in the 750 Production TT. He won, with Peter Williams 2nd on a Norton

"Exploring some twisty country roads suggested that the Trident's reputation for good handling was well deserved, although, as with most old bikes, its chassis felt much more dated than its engine"



Top: Agostini trying the Trident

of this immaculate Trident. The bike was not yet fully run-in after an engine rebuild, and I was warned to keep below the normal 8000rpm maximum. That meant that some of the Trident's exhilarating acceleration could not be used, for the triple was always a bike that thrived on revs, and responded well to being ridden aggressively – both in terms of its engine and chassis performance. Triumph took until the T150V model of 1973 to fit a five-speed gearbox, but it would have been a big improvement from the beginning. The motor felt pretty flat as I spent much of the time cruising at about 4000rpm, and really came alive on the few occasions that I opened it up to around 7000rpm.

Performance that enabled the Trident to top the ton in third gear was a revelation in 1969, when it could show those fancy silencers to just about any vehicle on the road. This bike transmitted a little secondary vibration through the seat at around 5000rpm, but had nothing like the high-speed harshness of a British twin. The upright riding position and forward-set footrests would have been this bike's main failing for sustained high-speed riding.

Exploring some twisty country roads suggested that the Trident's reputation for good handling was well deserved although, as with most old bikes, its chassis felt much more dated than its engine. Firm suspension and a strong frame combined to give a taut, wobble-free ride to my self-imposed limit of around 90mph, and the wide bars meant the steering didn't feel particularly heavy despite 29 degrees of rake. Some high-speed instability was mentioned in contemporary road tests, especially on bumpy bends, but the Triumph generally held its line very well.

Roadholding was pretty good, too, thanks to the pair of 4.10 by 19-inch Dunlop TT100s that were named after Malcolm Uphill's 100mph Isle of Man Production TT lap in 1969. (The very first T150s wore a narrower front tyre.) Ground clearance was improved by this bike's lack of a sidestand, but the centrestand still scraped early by modern standards. At low and medium speeds the Trident's drum brakes gave a reasonable amount of bite, although they were always rated barely adequate for pulling up the big triple repeatedly from the high speeds that its performance encouraged.

Triumph did make attempts to uprate the Trident over the years, although the Meriden firm's troubled finances ensured that many modifications were merely cosmetic. The front brake was changed to a conical drum in 1971 (when new forks were also fitted) and to a single disc two years later. Styling changes included an unpopular smaller petrol tank

TRIUMPH T150 TRIDENT (1969)

ENGINE TYPE: Air-cooled pushrod six-valve triple **DISPLACEMENT:**740cc **BORE X STROKE:** 67x70mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9:1 **CARBURATION:** 3 x 27mm Amal Concentrics **CLAIMED POWER:** 58bhp @ 7250rpm **TRANSMISSION:** four-speed **ELECTRICS:** 12V battery; 36/36W headlamp **FRAME:** Tubular steel **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic, no adjustment **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin shock absorbers, adjustable preload **FRONT BRAKE:** 200mm tls drum **REAR BRAKE:** 178mm sls drum **FRONT TYRE:** 4.10 x 19in (Dunlop TT100) **REAR TYRE:** 4.10 x 19in (TT100) **WHEELBASE:** 1473mm **SEAT HEIGHT:** 813mm **FUEL CAPACITY:** 19 litres **WEIGHT:** 213kg dry

that combined with the Trident's traditional thirst to reduce range to below 100 miles. Numerous engine modifications included several partially successful attempts to cure the triple's even more traditional oil leaks.

The Trident wasn't fitted with an electric starter until the restyled and much-changed T160 model, and some changes before that were of dubious benefit. The 1973-model's revised carburation and silencers, introduced due to tightening emission laws, resulted in 10mph being lost from the triple's top speed – one of the reasons that the early model is rated most highly by many collectors. Equally seriously, the Trident never really recovered from its early reputation for unreliability – much of which was caused by poor assembly rather than basic flaws in the design.

Those problems and its high price meant that the Trident never had a hope of emulating the success of the CB750, or of matching the Honda's lasting reputation. But half a century later its legend still burns bright – and besides, such issues are of little concern to the owner of a well-restored triple like this. The original bike's worst problems can be cured by careful rebuilding, so who cares now that even in its heyday the T150 was expensive and flawed? At its best the first Trident was fast, stable and exciting to ride. That's as true now as it ever was. CBG

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Peter Williams
1939 - 2020

Much has been said about this rare man, who could wear both top-class racer and brilliant designer hats. We see him here, riding a unique bike that he helped design, with wheels he pioneered and a braking system he helped develop. Rest in peace, Peter, and thank you for inspiring several generations of racers and designers in both bike and car worlds. CBG

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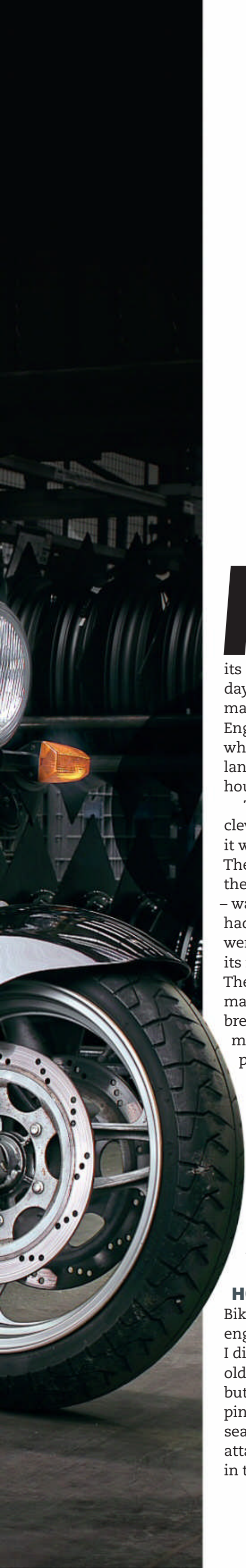
Triumph Trident 1991-1998

Triumph's second Trident spearheaded the new incarnation of the famous British marque. Is it any good now? I'll skip to the answer – yes. It could be the deal of the decade.

WORDS BY MATT **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** MORTONS ARCHIVE



More than a decade of terrible, out-of-touch upper management, self-defeating unions and tired product ranges lead to Triumph's demise. But in 1983, as the shutters clattered down, its saviour came in a most unexpected guise. To this day, little is known about the reason successful, self-made businessman, John Bloor bought the Triumph Engineering name and rights from the receivers, when he was surely just looking at buying the factory land to do what he was best known for – building houses. But I for one, am truly glad.

The model range was first seen in 1991 and was cleverly thought out. The names sounded familiar, but it was not the continuation some thought would come. The Trophy was for touring, the Daytona for sports and the naked Trident – all with a choice of engine sizes – was a large range for a new manufacturer. Triumph had been clever. The frames, running gear and design were all similar, with smaller differences to tailor to its role, like gearing, front fairings and handlebars. The engines were very similar, using the same bore, many similar internals and modern, but not ground-breaking engines. The new Triumph had studied the market, their rivals and invested into a long-term plan, not a pipe dream.

One of the first bikes was the Trident, which came in both 750cc and 900cc, triple cylinder form. The naked variant of the range may have had fewer headlines than the 1000cc inline four, faired bikes, but it was the closest to the Meriden (and Harris) bikes, with paint jobs of historic colours and pinstripes to arouse those old memories. Back in the early Nineties I was an ex-dispatch rider-turned motorcycle instructor and was extremely lucky to have a 900 for a while.

HOW DO I REMEMBER THE TRIDENT?

Bike mags and MCN kept whining on about the engine being three-quarters of a Kawasaki engine, but I didn't give a toss. It felt quality. Yes, I was used to older, high mileage hacks (BMW bricks and boxers), but the British Racing Green with cream infill and gold pinstripe, the thick powder-coating and sumptuous seat gave a feel I wasn't used to. I fitted a clear screen attached to the 'bars, which came off at weekends or in the summer, so I must have felt proud to bother.

It went like a tree stump-pulling dragster. Young, naïve and in the job of my dreams, I couldn't resist that torque. Looking back, the gearbox was good as long as your changes weren't too quick, and a friend (hi Pete!) told me to make sure the battery was in good condition to save the sprag clutch on the starter mechanism. Other than that, pour in petrol and ride – Bloor had apparently been insistent they wouldn't suffer the poor reliability of the old models and they didn't.

That sound, oh that sound. I couldn't afford slip on cans, but it sounded wonderous, unique. At any speed. Especially in the days when no one wore ear plugs. At the time Triumph was running the Speed Triple challenge as a support race to Superbikes, and they looked like my bike with clip ons – I couldn't afford those either, but I could see how good I looked and how fantastic I sounded…

Hindsight and internet bores tell us all they were heavy; with that huge spine frame curving over that tall engine and Bloor's quality mandate ensuring nothing would break, allied to economies of scale, meant they surely were. But it was only when that huge tank was brimmed and using the centrestand that I noticed. In truth at that age I hardly noticed 10psi missing from the front tyre, but I still turned the concentric chain adjuster upside down to quicken the steering – 'cause that's what the racers did.

Bad points? I hated the wheels, they did look like Kawasaki cast offs. The chain was crap and lasted just 6000 miles, so I fitted a DID X-ring, a Scottoiler, only adjusting it a few times in the next 38,000 miles. Services I think were 6000 miles, so crept up with irritating regularity; so I did them myself. I dropped it after forgetting the disc lock was still on, which bent a clutch lever and the front pads were replaced at some point – I don't remember. Oh and the fork seals went, but that was down to botched wheelies. I blame the torque. After that I moved on and got a Trophy 900.

Should you buy one? Absolutely.

44,000 miles in just over one year of riding, in all weathers, work and play, with no issues. You can get parts easily, you can modify it to suit your taste and it will eat long distances for elevenses. And they may not stand out like something Italian, but they still look great, they are an important part of British motorcycle history and are in all senses a classic.

But the best part? You can buy one for less than one thousand pounds. Thank you, Mr Bloor. CBG

New

RETRO

Triumph Trident

The Trident is back again – but in a quite different form.

WORDS BY ADAM CHILD 'CHAD'
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KINGDOM CREATIVE/TRIUMPH

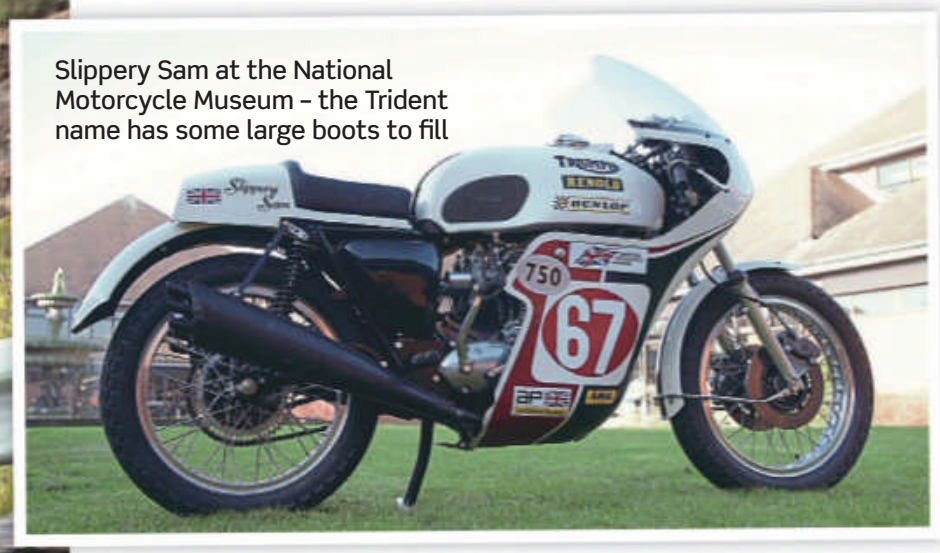
THE NAME TRIDENT WILL FLICKER TWO memories, depending on your age. Either 'Slippery Sam' which took five consecutive Isle of Man Production TT wins from 1971-75, or the muscular 750/900cc Trident that was launched in 1990. One was a dominant production race bike, the other a heavyweight brute. They both use a triple-cylinder engine, as does the all-new Trident for 2021, but that's where similarities end. The new 2021 Trident is powered by a 660cc triple and aimed at experienced and new riders alike, unlike its predecessors.

THE ENGINE.

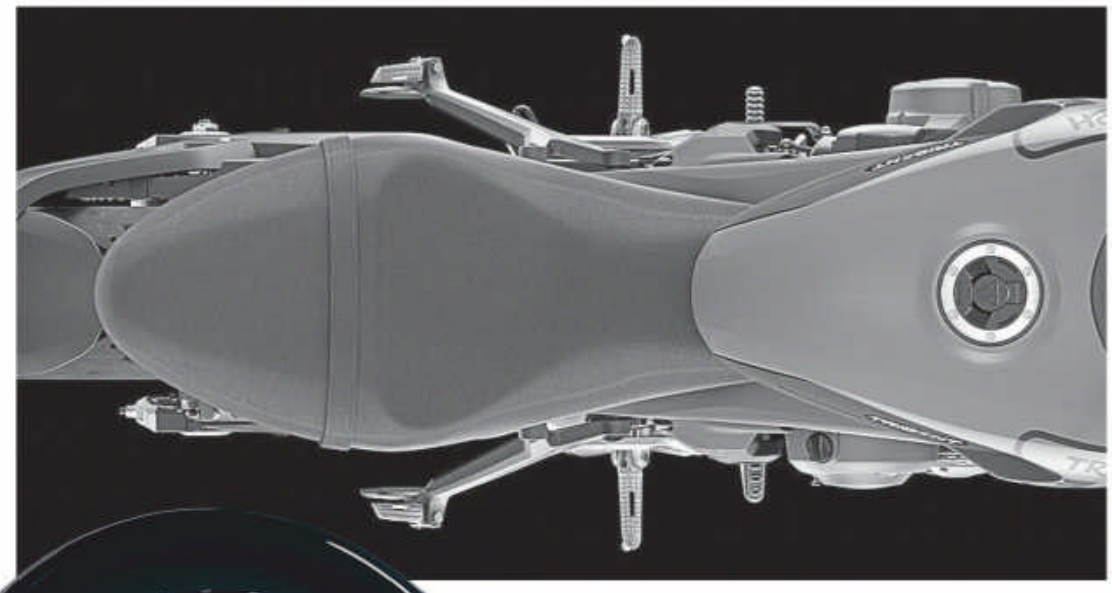
The capacity of the triple engine is 660cc, therefore some may assume it's an electronically de-tuned Street Triple S, but that's not so. It is based on the older 660 unit and is furnished with 67 new components.

This obviously means a serious redesign: new crank, clutch and gearbox with different ratios. Compared with the Street Triple S, first, second, third and fourth gears are shorter, fifth and sixth taller. As you'd expect the cams are redesigned to give more low and midrange torque. Peak power is 80bhp at 10,250rpm, with peak torque 47lb-ft at 6250rpm. That's more power than the

TRIDENT
TRIUMPH



Slippery Sam at the National Motorcycle Museum – the Trident name has some large boots to fill



Above: Height should suit most

Above left: Minimal clock shows all you need

Left: Euro 5 laws mean exhaust is, um, large!

Yamaha MT-07 and Kawasaki Z650, and more torque than the Honda CB650R. Interestingly 80bhp is around the same power as the Slippery Sam race bike which dominated the production TT in the early 70s, yet is now considered 'friendly'. It can be made more friendly in A2 configuration for those under 21 (done electronically and via a restricted throttle). This can be added and removed by any Triumph dealer and isn't an added extra when purchasing the bike new.

The stock exhaust system sounds excellent for a standard bike. I'm unsure how Triumph has managed it, but despite being Euro-5 compliant and could be classed as an 'entry-level' bike in a relatively mild state of tune, it sounds fantastic. At low revs there is a nice burble, and then a slight change around 3000rpm that is more charismatic – and unmistakably a Triumph Triple – before it cries into the rev-range's upper reaches. It's so good, Triumph doesn't offer an aftermarket item in its accessories catalogue.

Power is soft on the first 10-15% of the throttle, almost like there's a slight lag if it had a throttle cable as opposed to fly-by-wire I'd want to adjust it. But this softness is ideal for new and inexperienced riders. After the initial turn of the throttle, it is more direct but still smoother than Barry Sheene's chat-up lines.

80bhp makes the Trident's performance strong for this class. The triple layout is the best of both worlds, having the torque of a twin with the free-revving exhilaration of an inline-four. With 90% of peak torque on tap from 3600rpm, it drives positively from low down. You can make quick and easy progress without performing the River Dance on the gear selector. But, if you should want to have fun, go down a gear or two on the smooth gearbox and the Trident will deliver – even to experienced hands.

Sorry, but I did hit the soft rev limiter on a few occasions, whilst getting a little too carried away. But, to be fair, most of my two days of test riding was at altitude around the main volcano in Tenerife, which drained power and didn't do the new Trident justice. The point is that this 'entry-level' bike is far from being boring or worthy. I covered more than 160 miles on day one and didn't want to give it back come the evening.

AND IT HANDLES

Quoted wet weight is 189kg, just about on-par with the twin-cylinder machines in this field, which in theory should be lighter, and the Trident is considerably lighter than Honda's 208kg CB650R.

Interestingly it's 23kg lighter than the Trident 900 from the 90s. The weight isn't intimidating for small and inexperienced riders, while the 805mm (soft) seat is low and narrows towards the fuel tank. I'm 5ft 6in tall and was flat-footed on both sides. There is a nice balance at low speeds, Trident shouldn't be overpowering for any riders, despite its masculine

image and macho name.

Showa suspension rules the springs at each end; there's no adjustment on the inverted front and only pre-load on the rear. Again, Triumph has done a notable job: it hasn't thrown budget, softly sprung and underdamped suspension at the Trident. The suspension is forgiving, ground clearance is impressive, it's easy to get along with and takes on 90% of road surfaces with ease – it's even happy bouncing over speed humps and it holds a confident, smooth line. The natural riding position allows you to control and throw the bike around with relative ease, quality Michelin Road 5 tyres performing reassuringly in the cold and damp we encountered on the test

The forks lack a little control under heavy braking but, overall, when comparing its sporty ability to the competition, the Trident's handling is hard to fault. Yes, the Showa suspension lacks adjustability but 99% of riders won't feel the need to twiddle anything, and there is all-important rear spring preload adjustment for when you are adding a pillion or luggage. Luggage is available in the accessories catalogue. Arguably, trick multi-adjustable suspension will only confuse new or inexperienced riders – which is where the bike is aimed at.

Experienced riders opting for the Trident will soon learn that while one-finger braking is fine in normal riding, extreme situations demand more than one finger on the lever. The stoppers are on par with the competition, possibly stronger than some, but will seem underwhelming for those moving down from more expensive brake set-ups. This isn't a slow bike, and the stoppers are just about sufficient.

JUST OVER £7K IS TEMPTING

The Thai-built Trident is a completely new bike for 2020, and even at a standstill oozes quality. At face value, £7195 looks good.

Yamaha has a new MT-07 just around the corner; I'd estimate an on-the-road figure below the £7k mark. Kawasaki has also updated its Z650 for 2021 – the new model hasn't been launched yet, but its price will be £6849. Honda, arguably the Trident's closest competition with the inline four-cylinder CB650R, is again updated for 2021 and currently priced £7199.

Although the Triumph's £7195 showroom price may be slightly higher than the Japanese competition (our test bike a little more heated grips and paint job), the cost of ownership should be lower. The first major service is at 10,000 miles, which represents a significantly wider interval than the mentioned bikes, while workshop hours are also reduced, meaning it takes less time to service and maintain, thus saving owners money.

Below: It may not have the most expensive suspension, but Chad maintains it does the job admirably

"The Trident is a completely new bike for 2020, and even at a standstill oozes quality. At face value, £7195 looks good"

TECH SPEC

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New
RETRO

THE TECH ISN'T TOO CONFUSING.....

There are two rider modes, Road and Rain and easily accessible via the new switchgear and full-colour dash. Each mode changes the power characteristics via the fly-by-wire throttle as well as traction control. In Rain mode the rider aids are set higher. As mentioned, both traction control (TC) and ABS are conventional and not lean-sensitive. In theory, the TC is switchable from Road to Rain, which can be done while riding, but you can't switch off or turn on the TC on the move. For example, if you switch off the TC, it is off in both Road and Rain modes, therefore if you deactivate the TC and ride into a rain shower you have to pull over and reactivate the TC. A small gripe, but worth mentioning.

When active, the TC is smooth and not too intrusive. In the Road mode, it holds the power back when it senses wheelspin, while the re-intervention of the power after a slide is equally smooth – impressive for an entry level bike. I felt the system working on several occasions, holding back the power, perfect for inexperienced and experienced riders alike. It is not aggressive, doesn't cut ignition slamming your valuables against the fuel tank.

Above: Paint schemes are an option

Below left: Wait for the aftermarket seagulls to offer an alternative rear

Below right: It's all to hand

VERDICT

There are some nice touches like the cutaway fuel tank and neat TFT clocks with Bluetooth connectivity. I personally like the looks and image, which are slightly more mature than the competition, and not as aggressive. It's very British and instantly recognisable as a Triumph.

The engine is soft low down, then delivers enough road performance to have pleasure on the road, even for experienced hands, and it is backed up by a lovely Triple soundtrack that gives it soul and character, again class leading. The handling is excellent, its low weight unintimidating while the brakes are just about up for the job. Well thought out simple, easy to use electronic rider aids give it an extra tick above the competition.

Even after two days of riding the Trident was still making me smile; it really is hard to fault when you compare to the competition and consider its low price. Triumph has entered a extremely competitive market, so the Trident needed to hit the mark – and it does. But I'm still unsure why they have called it a Trident? The 'Instagram' generation won't know what an original Trident was, and you'd never describe the 90s Trident as 'entry level' or 'user friendly'. CBG

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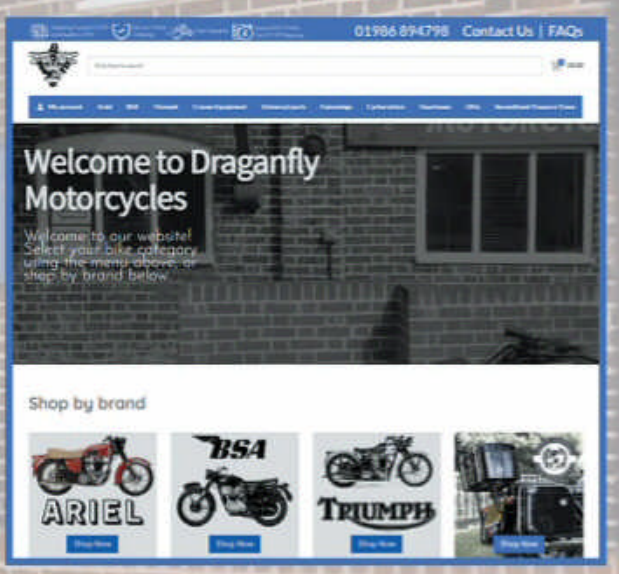

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HONDA CB900F 1979-83

Restoration & Buying Guide

Before Rob Davies sadly passed away, he was following this restoration. Often overlooked, Rob saw the qualities of Honda's CB900F

BY ROB DAVIES. **PICS BY** ROB; GARTH BRIDGES AND LEE CHAMBERS

LEE CHAMBERS AND GARTH BROOKES started this restoration only a few months before the big lockdown, and were lucky to get it completed half way through April, just as the UK was hitting the worst cases of Coronavirus. They worked quickly and efficiently, but were lucky to get it completed. In the end, Garth was only short of a couple of brackets for the indicators, but I believe he will have to wait till the breakers reopen to do the final touches.

I started by sitting at my computer and doing the essential research for the Honda CB900F, so later I will be able to give you a genuine detailed rider's report from back in 1981. However, one has to be cautious –indeed very cautious – because the internet can be, and is, a two edged sword. It's great for obtaining speedy information, but is that information correct? The Bible proverb holds true – we have to be able to sort the chaff from the wheat, to distinguish truth from make believe, fact from fiction.

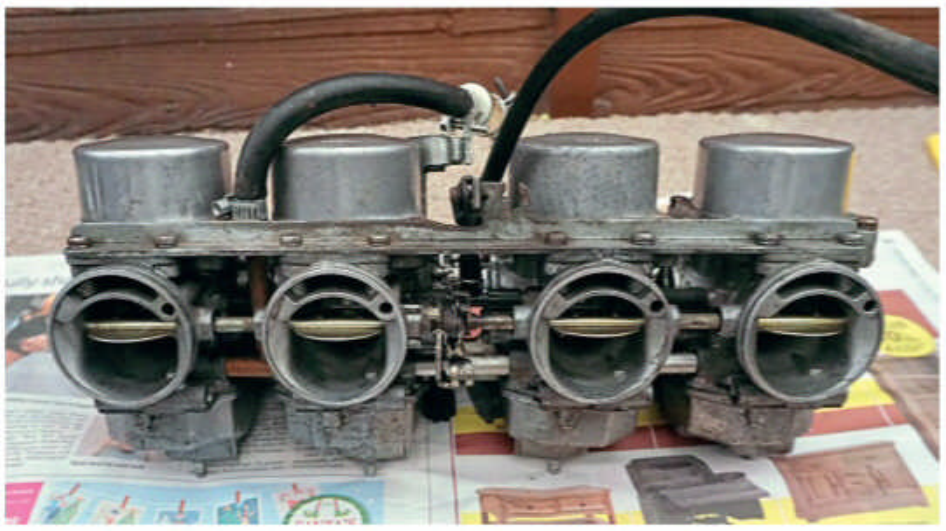
During my internet trawling I discovered two or three fairly recent write-ups on the 900F, so duly printed them out and read them carefully through. And that's often the problem with internet information, because different sources can and do differ widely in their essential assessment of a machine. At which point, I freely admit and wonder about the value of some motorcycle journalism: A writer/rider is given two or three days to thrash a particular model around, and then to provide a fulsome report – or not. I mean, how much can you learn in such a short time? The best report is surely from someone who has lived with a bike for at least 12 months; got to know it, its good and bad points, and what it's like to maintain.

Looking closely, the side panels don't look too bad -BUT if you want an 'as new' finish -without scuff marks, general fading and bubbling to the decals, then it has to be a re paint?

If you can buy a 40 year old bike in this condition, then don't even think about it -hand over the money promptly

Use whatever etch primer you like - but this one comes recommended

This is the two pack paint that Lee uses for painting engines -only the silver version; this green is for another job. Once painted, it gets baked in the oven -around 120 deg C



The CB 900F carbs; obviously they need a clean -inside and out; and if you were thinking they look just like the CBX carbs, you're entirely correct

One writer said of the 900F that the handling was poor and that cam chains came regularly whizzing out of the top of the engine, while a second writer praised the handling, and remarked how well the engine was put together. So, ultimately you and I will have to take in all the info, talk to REAL owner-operators, watch all the YouTube videos and then make up our own mind.

I hope therefore that this article, plus the original report, will help you do justice to what is truly a fabulous Japanese classic that can only be improved with a bit of modern savvy. As you may have thus gathered, this month I am focusing on the restoration of an early Honda CB900F.

It has been skilfully handled by my old pal Lee Chambers, who is what I can only describe as a serial restorer. His main area of expertise is painting other guys' bikes, but alongside that, he manages to fit in the occasional restoration project. Lee's goal is not to get a bike finished as speedily as possible; no, Lee takes his time, uses years of knowledge gained from other builds, and is methodical and meticulous in his methods.

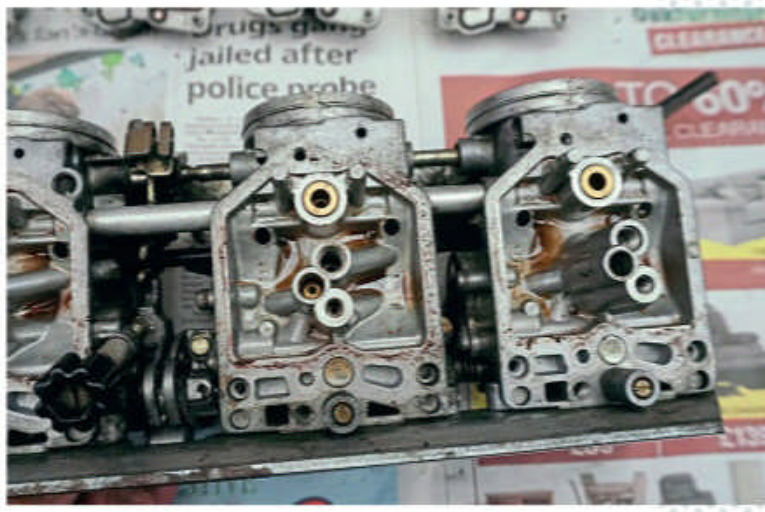
Garth Bridges is the chap who purchased Lee's Suzuki in late 2019, then happened to mention he would really love to add an early CB900 to his collection, because he had always fancied one.

So, the search for a reasonable example to bring back to 'as new' condition was on; and you have to remember that we are now looking for a bike that may be four decades old. Are there any good ones out there? Read on...

The first one we came across, on the internet (where else?) actually looked okay... in the photographs. However, on closer scrutiny – in other words, a visit – the bike turned out to be a bit of a hound, so one can never truly rely on pictures alone. The asking price was much higher than the bike was worth; but the real deal killer was when the engine was started up (recall my 'hound' comment earlier). So for two very good reasons; the bike was A overpriced, and B had a rough sounding engine, this was enough to send our chaps sadly back to the car.

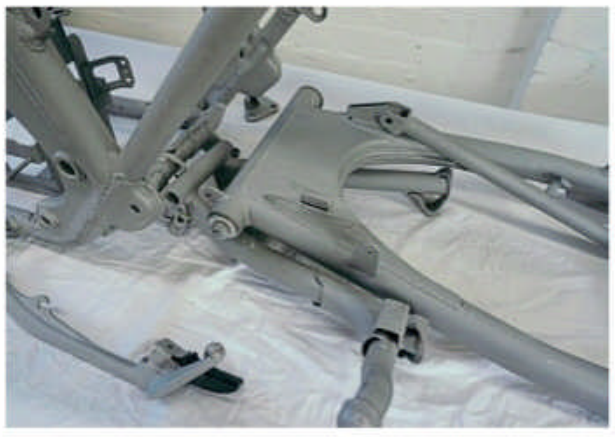
But cheer up, all was not lost!

Not long after, whilst combing eBay, we found a rather nice looking example in Fleetwood, 100 miles away. A quick exchange of information with the owner revealed what was potentially a very nice buy; and with experience, you get a feel for essential truths from just a small chat. So Garth and Lee drove up from the Midlands, instantly realised the potential of this particular bike, and made a wise decision.



The gunge that collects in carbs where fuel rarely passes through

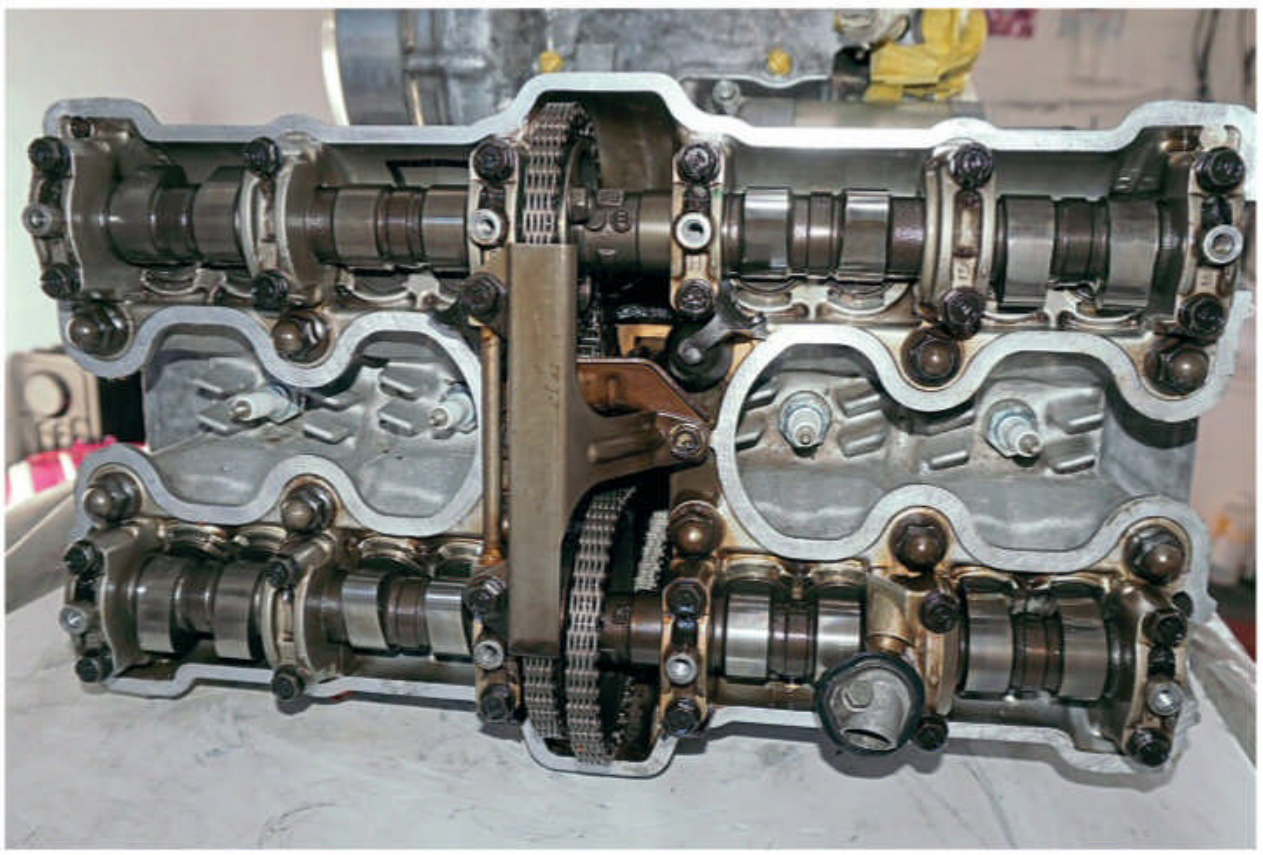
It is a 1980, 900cc inline four, having two valves per cylinder (later ones had four) in its original candy glory red; the very same colour as used on its bigger brother of similar vintage the six-cylinder CBX – with which it shares several features. And it had just 28,000 miles; that's an average of 700



Frame parts soda blasted and primed

Frame and parts with final two coats of two pack gloss black

Engine now pulled out; dirty. Typical Honda layout; filter at the front; with small looking crank area, topped with humongous cylinders and head



Did I mention several timing chains? Nevertheless it is all looking good. Notice the four cams per cylinder

miles per year; no wonder the carbs were gunged-up.

The engine started easily and ran smoothly, the paintwork was in good nick and original and even the 40-year-old seat looked like it had just come out of the showroom... what was there not to like?

The owner candidly admitted he had bought the bike, hardly used it because he already had several machines (does that ring a bell with anyone?) so decided to sell it. As soon as the engine stopped, there was a short haggle period, and Garth handed over £2900 for what was essentially a very sound Honda. After money and documents had changed hands, Garth and Lee very wisely grabbed the bike and ran before the owner could change his mind.

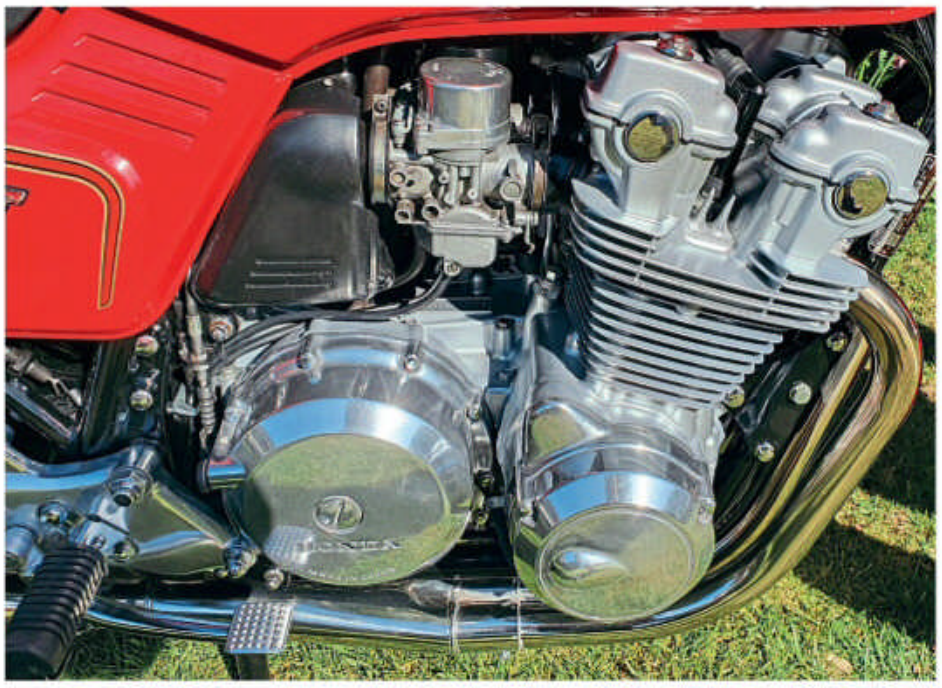
Once back safely in the Midlands, the strip down began in earnest. Our dynamic duo unloaded the bike and quickly decided on a course of action. All of the paintwork was going to be done, including the frame – no powder coating for this job; while the engine needed only a good clean and a repaint with etch primer followed by quality silver two-pack coating.

The fuel tank was discovered to be full of rust and silt, but was otherwise sound, so this was the first task. Lee likes to use 'SLOSH' in old fuel tanks simply because it works. It comes with its own special cleaning fluid; so as soon as the tank had been sloshed around to ensure total cleanliness, the single pack treatment was applied. The clue is in the name. The next consideration was the paintwork, and as Shakespeare succinctly put it; there was the rub. As mentioned earlier, the 900 was finished in glorious red, but Garth already had two red bikes, so he contemplated the black CB scheme, because he rather liked it; what would he choose?

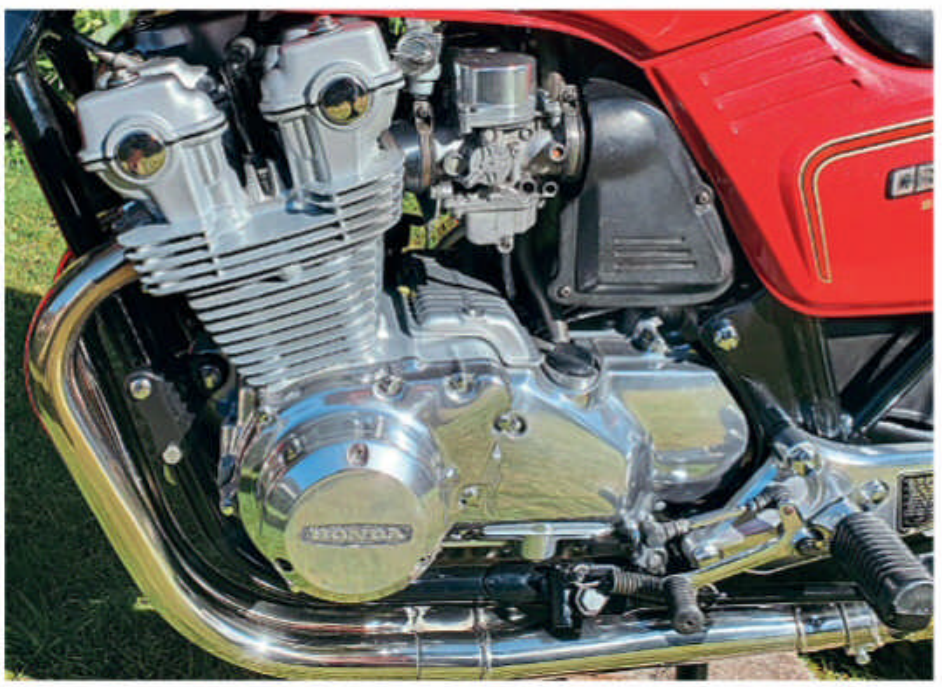
So, while Lee cracked on with paint prep (see pics for actual paint used), Garth started to clean all the ancillary stuff like footrests, levers, fasteners and clocks. The problem often with old clock faces is colour fading, caused by years of sunlight. So, casting caution to the wind, Garth bravely stripped the clocks with their faded red numerals, and cleaned out all the dust. Yes it's amazing how it gets in there. New faces can be purchased online, and there is a guy on the net that sells 3D printed needles; but Garth wasn't entirely convinced of their quality, so the old ones were simply removed and cleaned.

Brake calipers definitely needed sorting, so a repair kit was purchased from David Silver and stripped. Restoring calipers to good condition isn't rocket science, but they do need to be cleaned thoroughly before the new rubber seals are replaced. Once the old seals are flicked out with something sharp, you will probably find that the grooves – in an aluminium casting – will be filled with ally gunge (technical term). So, make yourself a small suitable scraping tool – I used a bent spoke from a pushbike that I had sharpened to a chisel edge. This went nicely into each groove, and removed all the crud, along with generous squirts of WD40. But, you can use any solvent or cleaner, just make sure it's all thoroughly cleaned off before reassembly. Chromed caliper pistons of this age often have black marks on them; I found that a good clean with something like Solvol Autosol, or similar, makes them shine like new.

The wiring loom was cleaned with solvent and a soft brush, and it's amazing how much muck comes off, making the cables look like new. All connecting plugs were also pulled apart for cleaning, and there are several electrical contact cleaners available that wash away all the dirt and dust and leave no residue.



A thorough clean, etch primer and two pack paint have brought the engine back to ‘as new’



This engine design, with its twin cam, was the basis of many Honda engines for some years

Refurbished clocks with their distinctive red numerals and needles have come up well

A LITTLE ABOUT HONDA’S CB900

There can be no doubt the Honda CB900, whether it is the F, or custom version with shaft drive, is a true Japanese classic.

It was a real evolutionary step forward from the groundbreaking CB750, having greater cubic capacity and a distinctively stylish twin cam layout that makes it unmistakeably ‘Honda’ in its DNA. Yes, one may criticise the double chain arrangement that drives the cams, because there were a few disasters caused by the lateral chain; but hard riding and poor maintenance is a recipe for the ruin of any engine.

A sensible owner, who one day discovers an overly noisy cam chain, will do something about it. As for this engine, with 28,000 miles on the clock, I can say with assurance that it runs as sweet as a Swiss watch. Compared to the brutish power of more modern sport engines, 90bhp doesn’t sound that impressive, but with the carbs in sync, it is tuned for a modestly impressive mid-range acceleration from 4000rpm, right through to the red line a shade under 9500rpm. And yes, this engine will happily take you up to 130mph; but think – it’s a naked bike for goodness’ sake, so who in their right mind will want to do that for more than two seconds?

The body styling is typical 1980s vintage, where the lines of the fuel tank, side panels and tail section, flow from one to the other, giving the impression that it’s going fast even when parked up. On a purely personal note, the only feature I’m not keen on is the naff riveted Comstar wheels that were fitted (sadly) to several other Hondas that included the CBX. Nevertheless, a bit of customising can soon put that right; and talking of custom versions, take a peek at the one produced by 2WheelsMiklos 10 years ago (p68) – neat eh? Sadly Miklos Salamon, a great customiser, passed away in 2017. The all-steel tubular frame is stiff, and again, a great improvement on its

SPECIFICATION: CB 900 SPEC

ENGINE: Air-cooled four-cylinder in-line four-stroke dohc; two valves per cylinder – four after 1981. **BORE AND STROKE;** 64.5mm x 69mm. Four Keihin carburettors; compression ration 9-1. Claimed maximum power 95bhp @ 9000 revs. Electronic ignition and electric start. **BRAKES** Twin hydraulic 233mm discs – front; single 253mm rear – all twin piston callipers. **SUSPENSION** Telescopic front forks with adjustable air pressure; Twin oil damped rear shocks with remote reservoir; adjustable damping, rebound and compression. **DIMENSIONS** Overall length 2230mm; width 795; Wheelbase 1515mm; ground clearance 145mm; dry weight 242kg (532lb)

Forty years old, but 80s styling still has its allure.

predecessor, while the general handling can be improved by the fitting of better shocks to the rear. At 233kg, the 900 is a big bike with a lengthy wheelbase but it carries its weight well, while the rider sits comfortably on a plush seat in a gentle forward lean. The standard bars end just where your arms and hands naturally want them to be, providing a confident feel as you swing the bike along those winding A roads.

But what did a report from 'the day' (1981) make of the 900F? And I must point out this test model is one year later than our restoration bike, and the engine has now been rubber mounted, and given four valves per cylinder amongst other smaller changes. So, try and imagine you're back in 1981, with the Phil Collins record playing in the background – In The Air Tonight?

"All sorts of criticisms are levelled at Jap across the frame fours. 'Boring', claim some, 'bland', say others. Well, if the Honda CB900 is 'boring and bland', then I'm a boring and bland person. After two weeks and 2000 miles with the big Honda, I had to fight back the tears when it was time for it to go – well you know what I mean. The anti-dive fitted to the front forks for 1982, proved its worth, and its presence could easily be felt under heavy braking – and it's four way adjustable.

Starting was a first time – every time affair, while the bike is happy to cruise at the ton-plus for hours on end, and there are no stability problems until the rear tyre becomes worn. At the other end of the scale, the brakes are superb. Twin discs up front, single disc at the rear; and my God they don't half stop the big H in its tracks, wet or dry. The transmission is very good indeed, and clutchless changes are easily executed. The Honda isn't only a nice bike to ride though. The quality of fittings such as footrests, handlebars and mirrors is high.

There is so much to adjust on the Honda (we are going back 40 years so be gentle). In addition to the anti-dive, the rear suspension featured remote gas reservoir shocks; can be adjusted for pre load (five-way) damping (three-way rebound, and compression two-way) while the front forks are air adjustable. I don't have a calculator handy to work out the permutations that offers. The CB900 certainly has a lot of competition in the market place, and it's worth pointing out Kawasaki's shaft driven GT750 is cheaper than the Honda, offers similar performance, yet falls into a lower insurance category. Nevertheless the Honda adds up to a very desirable package, and will offer a lot of pleasure to anyone who buys one."

I finished this article in the midst of the virus outbreak, when no one knew what the next few months held. And, I wonder how many chaps started a project and didn't manage to finish – for obvious reasons. Still we stay hopeful, and plan ahead. As for the Honda CB900F. My advice is: When normality returns, if it returns, take a good look at this bike in its full restorative paintwork, and ask yourself, can I really do without one? CBG

Of course you can always take a CB900 and customise it. This one was built by 2WheelsMiklos some years ago. Sadly Miklos Salamon, a true customiser, died in 2007; his bikes remain a tribute to his talents. This bike features Triumph's Trophy forks and wheels, Harris clip ons; Norvil nose cone; Marving 4-2 exhausts and Z1 tail piece. Tasty?

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FLORIDA FANCY

Tony Adams decided his next project would be to turn a less-than-pretty, unloved Moto Guzzi Florida into a lightweight, prettier bike that would still be a lot of fun

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY STUART URQUHART

I FEEL PRIVILEGED TO COUNT CUSTOM BUILDER AND restorer Tony Adams as a good friend. He's an interesting chap and I've been fortunate to pen features about several of his Guzzi and Indian projects in the past – most recently his amazing resurrection of a fabulous Indian Junior Scout (*CBG* January), an extremely rare machine that was sympathetically restored from a collection of disassociated parts. I concluded that story with a promise to report back on whatever creation Tony might come up with next – and here it is – a lovely Guzzi Bobber special that cocks its yellow hat to tradition.

Tony would openly admit to being a member of the Guzzi appreciation society, but he's also quick to rebuke the Italian factory for creating 'some horrendous looking models that tick the downright ugly box'! The bright yellow special pictured across these pages was once an early Nineties Moto Guzzi Florida 650, in perfect running order and much in daily use. However Tony was not a fan of its American styling when he spotted it for sale in the Guzzi club magazine.

Although it was being offered at a very tempting price, all that Tony could see was an ugly duckling crying out for some much-needed beauty therapy. So Tony bought it and had it couriered home to his 'clinic' in Angus. When the vendor saw what Tony had done to his P&J just several months later, he was both stunned and astonished with the end result... but I'm getting ahead of myself.

So without further delay, it's over to Tony...:

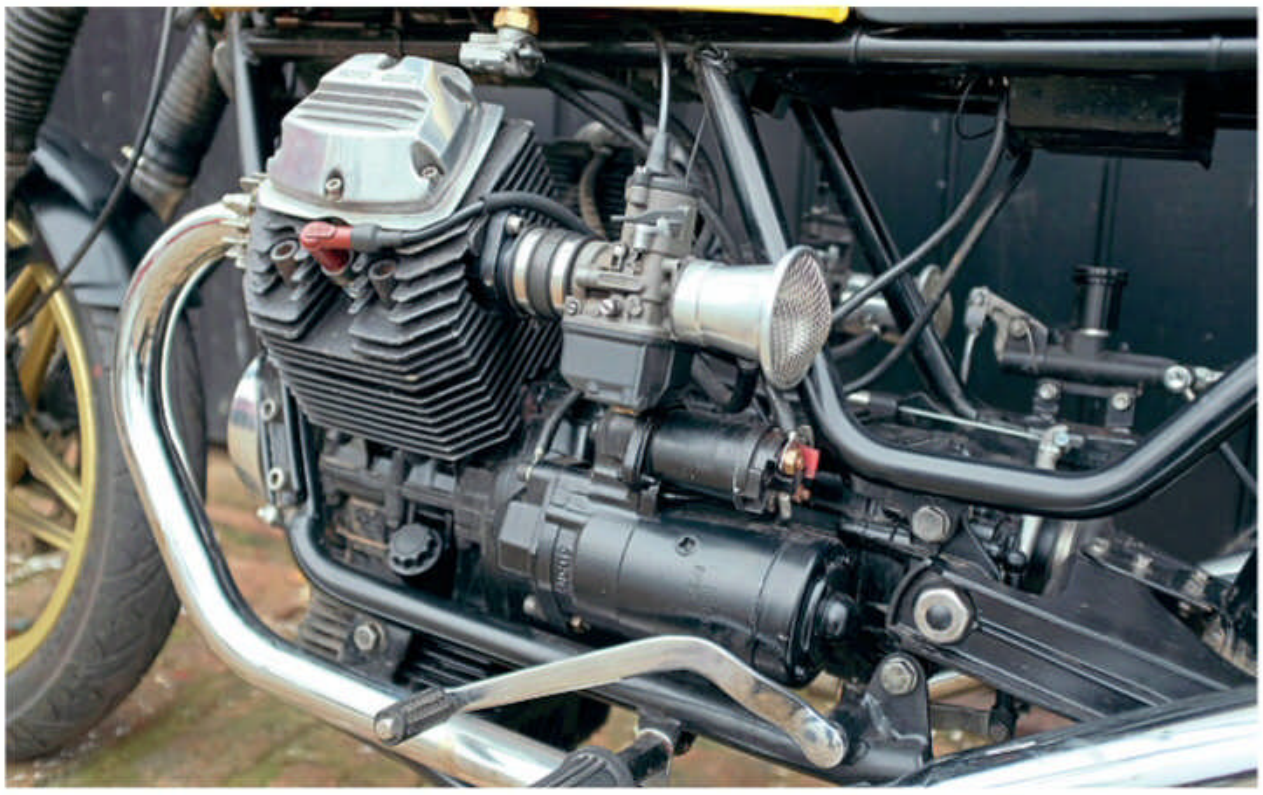
"The Moto Guzzi Florida is not a pretty bike. In fact, some might label it as being downright ugly. Produced during the mid-Eighties when Guzzi's marketing chaps reckoned that the American market would adore them (maybe they did?), we Brits turned up our noses when the new models appeared in Guzzi dealer's showrooms. The similarly styled Nevada 750 also received a predictable snubbing by UK buyers, and both Guzzi models would later become attractive as donors for cafe racer projects or in the creation of back street custom specials. So when this one appeared for sale in 'Gambalunga' I knew I'd found myself another custom project.

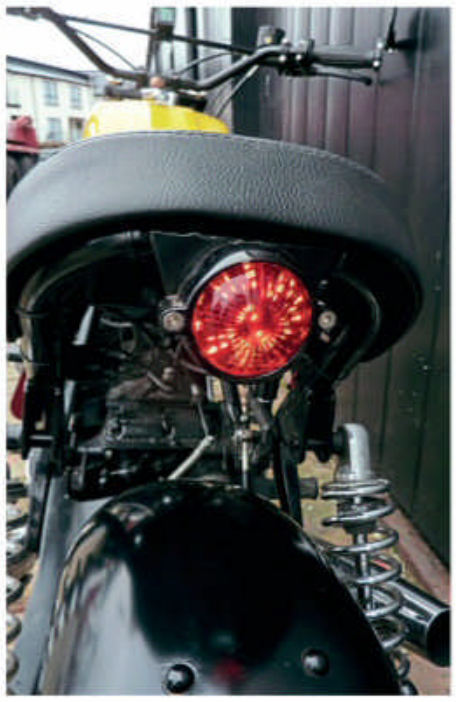
"Customising this 'ugly duckling' started when the fat Florida petrol tank and blobby side panels were removed along with its generously proportioned seat – all were destined to be flogged on eBay. Next job was to de-clutter the electrics and remove superfluous brackets and lugs from the frame.

"I always have a design concept uppermost in my mind. But before I finalise my ideas, the first task is to strip the motorcycle of its unnecessary paraphernalia – namely the standard lighting, horns, indicators, relays and surplus wiring – until all that remains is a basic charging and ignition circuit. Then I sketch up my own wiring diagram to include any custom lights, LED bulbs and switches that I intend to use.

"As I'm a great fan of modern electrickery, I prefer to use a powerful and lightweight lithium battery than a conventional battery in any of my builds. Next I strip the frame of all its unnecessary lugs and grind off the centre stand and battery tray – typically I replace these with a bespoke side stand and a simplified battery box.

"He's also quick to rebuke the Italian factory for creating 'some horrendous looking models that tick the downright ugly box'!"





"At this stage I usually involve local friend and classic car buff Andrew Goodfellow, and together we fabricate any required brackets or weld up modified frame lugs to support custom cycle parts such as seat, mudguards and lighting. Cutting, modifying and welding up a new subframe is often a requirement at this pivotal stage, and Andrew's knowledge and skill in classic car bodywork fabrication is a godsend. In return for Andrew's help I offer my engineering skills for his own four wheel projects – we always help each other out, but I know I get the better deal!"

FRAME AND BIKE ALTERATIONS

After the lads de-lugged the frame Tony and Andrew set about creating a new subframe to support a new seat, rear shocks and a custom fender earmarked for the project.

New curved downtubes were then bent and welded in place by Andrew and the suspension mountings re-positioned by Tony to introduce more 'custom rake' to the back shocks. The foot peg mountings were lowered and a new set of silencer brackets were fabricated, before both were welded into place. The rear fender was fitted directly onto the swinging arm by attaching it to the newly positioned suspension mounts.

To meet Tony's exacting desire for a uniform 12mm clearance between the rear fender and back tyre an old chain was cunningly wrapped around the tyre to form a makeshift template – this assisted the lads to accurately bolt the fender into position. A bespoke seat tray was then fashioned out of sheet metal and shaped to fit neatly within the new subframe.

The Guzzi's five spoke alloy wheels were delivered to Tayside Powder Coating to be grit-blasted before being coated in gold. The frame and seat base were also prepared by TPC before being finished in semi-gloss black. The seat base was then upholstered by car specialist James Watt of Perth: "A predictably slow service," grinned Tony, "... because the proprietor knows very well that I don't use my bike during a Scottish winter!

Above: Attention to detail is what makes this 'Guzzi stand out

Below: Arbroath harbour

"As the bike began to take shape I decided the front was riding too high, so I made the bold decision to shorten the front forks. I mounted my angle grinder to my trusty Myford 7 lathe and trimmed 50mm off the fork stanchions and the internal springs. Unfortunately, this modification resulted in the spring ends being off-square. So I had the idea of machining up a pair of helical seating pads to square up each spring's cut end. Another idea that worked extremely well was cutting made-to-measure stainless tubes that slipped seamlessly over the outside of the upper fork tubes – this served to make the forks appear much beefier and more in keeping with the stubby look of the front end. I was quite chuffed with the end result," beamed Tony.

Tony had sourced a Honda 400/4 petrol tank on eBay for his project. Although it appeared to be clean and rust-free inside, while it was being sanded back for painting, Tony discovered a leak. Never one to be defeated, he managed to seal the tank by using soft solder. As a belt-and-braces exercise, he then chemically sealed the inside with POR 15. The repaired tank was later primed and professionally painted by Bob Falkner of Arbroath; but not before Tony had a set of home-designed 'Moto Guzzi' decals

"I also made up a simple horn and dip switch by utilising a pair of LED torch switches – I then wired them to a miniature relay box and sited the completed assembly beside the battery box."

made up and sealed beneath its lacquer coat – a unique and personal touch.

ELECTRICAL TWEAKS & UPGRADES

"Once I was happy with the frame alterations I turned my attention to the electrics," said Tony.

"All original instruments, warning lights and the Guzzi's unreliable plugs and harness sockets were consigned to the bin. A lightweight lithium battery was fitted inside its own compartment box, which I mounted below the seat. I also made up a simple horn and dip switch by utilising a pair of LED torch switches – I then wired them to a miniature relay box and sited the completed assembly beside the battery box. All the aforementioned modifications were designed to reduce unsightly electrical cables around the handlebars. I also fitted a battery powered digital speedometer, which receives a signal from a 'magnet and sensor' located at the front wheel hub. A light switch was fitted into the outer shell of a Bates custom headlamp.

"I found some nice Chinese brake and clutch lever assemblies on eBay, plus a pair of Enduro-style handlebars which I mounted to a set of machined DIY riser blocks. Unfortunately, I discovered there was insufficient stroke on the clutch lever assembly to fully operate the clutch, so I had to fabricate a new handlebar lever assembly from four pieces of brass and carefully silver solder the lot together – it took me ages, and ended up being one of the most complicated jobs of the rebuild!"

ENGINE AND CHASSIS MODS

Tony removed the Guzzi linked braking system in favour of a more conventional set-up. He also fitted stainless steel brake hoses and a Rizoma brake (fluid) reservoir directly to the rear master cylinder. The Brembo brake callipers, twin discs and original pads were found to be perfectly serviceable and were reused.

Tony chose to bin the original air box and filter that nestled between the engine's cylinders and instead he machined up straight inlet adaptors to take a new set of Mikuni carburettors. Attractive, matching inlet trumpets and wire mesh filters were added to complement the new carbs.

"Unfortunately my inlet changes upset the mixture settings and I ended up spending a long time experimenting with different size main jets and needle heights in order to get the perfect mixture to produce a happy sounding engine. The process was further hampered by an ignition switch which I discovered had a loose contact rivet – until sorted, this frustrating little fault caused a period of intermittent and erratic running.

"To assist me with balancing the carburettors I bought a pair of vacuum gauges on eBay – cheap and Chinese of course – but the instruments made carb balancing a doddle! I also fitted flip-up choke controls to avoid cluttering up the handlebars with more unnecessary Bowden cables."

Tony readily admits that he invested considerable time in setting up a suitable exhaust system for

the bike. The original Guzzi's exhaust pipes had their balance pipes removed before the lads added angled extension tubes. Tony then fitted a pair of cocktail shaker silencers, but the resulting exhaust note turned out to be much too loud. So he spent a long weekend making up perforated baffles to fit neatly inside the silencers – all for little gain. Even the addition of a solid steel baffle plate and wads of exhaust wool failed to dampen the raucous exhaust note! Eventually a friend offered Tony a pair of stubby after market silencers, which turned out to be more pleasant than the booming cocktail shakers.

RIDE AND PERFORMANCE

As per Tony's intention, the finished bike starts easily, whether hot or cold. When cold, a flick of the manual chokes has the engine bursting to life, and just five warming minutes later, the Guzzi purrs away with a steady and satisfying beat. The carbs are so sensitive that the engine will stutter should you be too eager to set off; or two-stroke if both manual chokes require backing off. The exhaust note is ridiculously sexy when you blip the throttle, and emits a delicious and familiar V-twin bark when out on the road.

Tony achieved an impressive weight saving of nearly 8lb (i.e. not far short of a pillion passenger!) and his Guzzi Bobber Special offers light and flickable handling in comparison with the cumbersome Florida of old. However, according to Tony there was one unexpected downside in shedding so much weight: the rear suspension has become hard and inflexible, resulting in the bike hopping and banging over excessive road bumps... and much as with any prewar rigid, potholes feel like exploding bombs at moderate speeds!

"So the next instalment of this ongoing project is to fit new Hagons. I'm hopeful that reduced spring rates will give my back and knees an easier time on longer outings. The bespoke seat is also rather hard on my nether regions," laughed Tony. "Conversely, the

chopped front forks work particularly well in soaking up the worst bumps, with the fat Pirelli Sport Demon tyres contributing well to the Guzzi's predictable handling.

"I'm very happy with the relaxed, V-twin performance. I wouldn't describe her as sporty, but neither is she a plodder. There is a deep well of low-end torque waiting to be explored, and the 650cc engine gallops vigorously up to 80mph. Like most classic rides however, we are both happiest at around 50-60mph, where the ride could be described as 'uplifting'. The Guzzi five-speed box is a delight, but the clutch action is a tad heavy and I'm sure improvement is just a weekend's fettle. In the not-too-distant future I may also invest in a better-suited and quieter exhaust system, then I'll consider removing the previous system's redundant silencer brackets.

"To my eyes the finished Guzzi is a great improvement over the original Florida and it is an absolute thrill and a real joy to ride. A Guzzi friend once remarked: 'If Moto Guzzi made a daring motorcycle similar to mine, then they might have a runaway model on their hands' – a very kind comment which made the whole project worthwhile," concluded a proud Tony.

I would wholeheartedly agree with Tony's assessment about his finished Guzzi's eye-catching looks. The Bobber concept might not appeal to everyone, but its radical and minimalist styling is a real head turner. It is precisely what one-off customs should be about – plenty show and lots of go! Tony's latest creation is bursting with attitude... right down to its hybrid 400/4 petrol tank and rebel-lowrider front end.

And as if proof were needed as to this project's merit, Tony's Guzzi has netted several awards – including Most Unusual Bike at the 2019 Arbroath Classic Show, for which Tony was presented with a box of Arbroath smokies – now that's an acknowledgement of good taste! CBG

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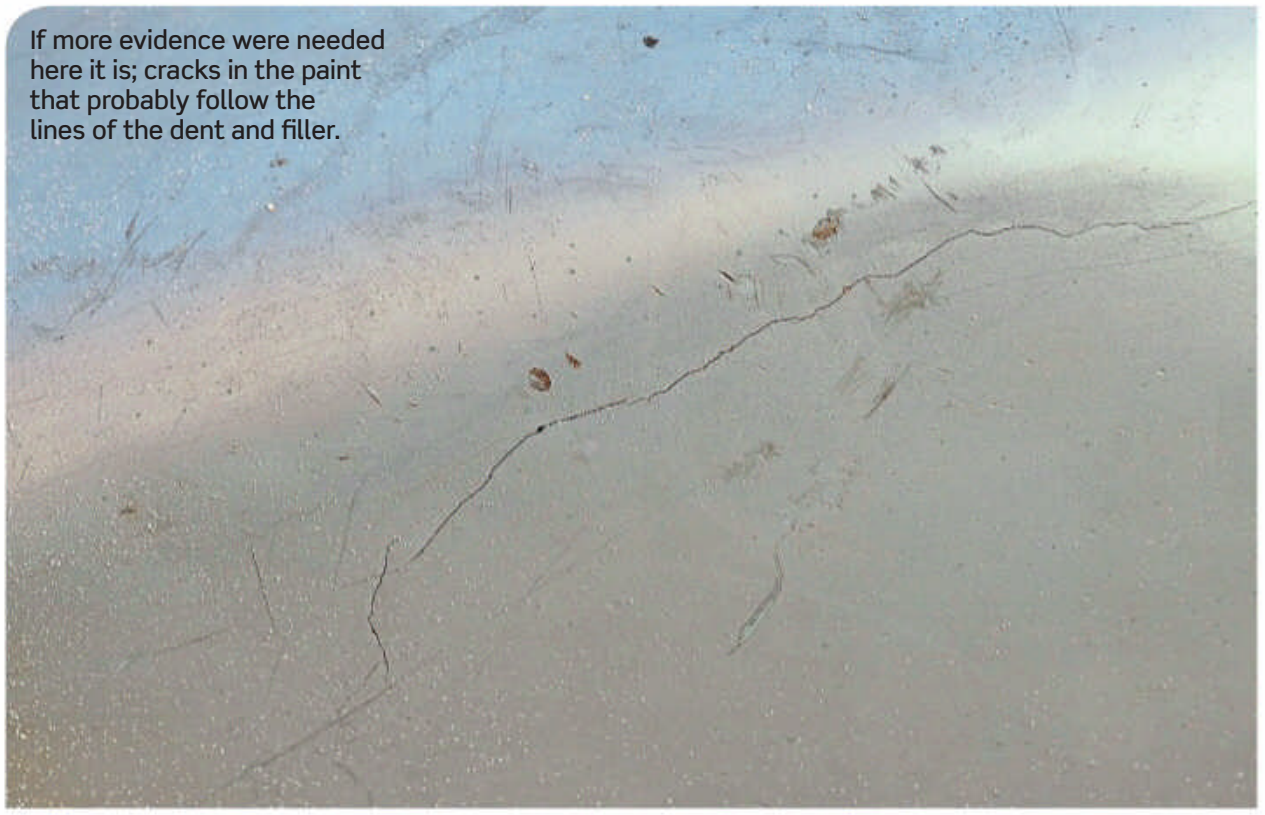


If more evidence were needed here it is; cracks in the paint that probably follow the lines of the dent and filler.

Pulling out dents

We're lifting dents from tanks using a left field technique

BY STEVE COOPER

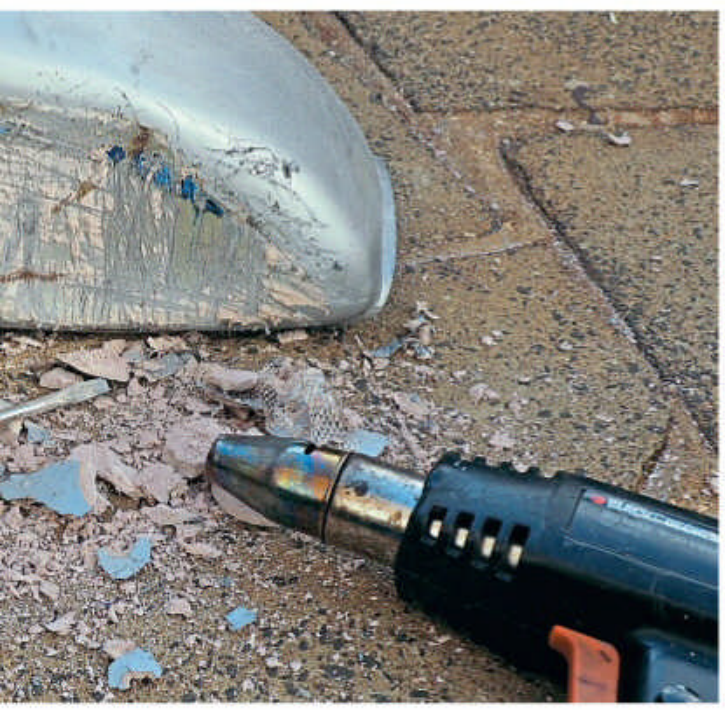
Acquiring new abilities can be something of a buzz for us classics fans. It doesn't matter what fresh competences you've mastered; each one will become a vital tool in our skillset.

Eventually, if you have an inventive or curious mind, you find yourself actively pondering upon tasks that previously you'd have farmed out and paid for. There's only a few of us who can paint bike parts really well. Most can master a rattle can to sort out a frame tube etc. but when it comes the really serious/pretty stuff many tend to pass the job on to an expert, and rightly so.

However, you can save yourself a huge amount of unnecessary expense by preparing the items to be painted by simply cleaning them up – unless they are to be used as patterns for pin striping, colour matching etc. If you're removing paint you might also uncover some unexpected repairs that need attention. Sorting out such issues yourself can generally reduce the costs of the paint job.

In camera we have a Suzuki trail bike tank that's typical of an autojumble find. It's had a naff coat or two of silver paint but it doesn't look too bad… or does it? A swift 'go-over' with a magnet reveals significant patches of filler on both sides. A good dig with some sharp and pointy tools reveals two layers of filler supported by two layers of aluminium mesh – the bodger's art personified then! With viable, used tanks now easily making three figures, arguably each and every one is worth saving... so that's the plan here hopefully.

What follows is a DIY approach to dent removal that will get most tanks back to somewhere near viable. We're not going to be cutting holes out underneath or resorting to expert panel beating and subsequent re-welding. Instead we'll be using body solder and slide hammer. The end product may still need a discrete skim of filler but it should be infinitely better as our starting point.

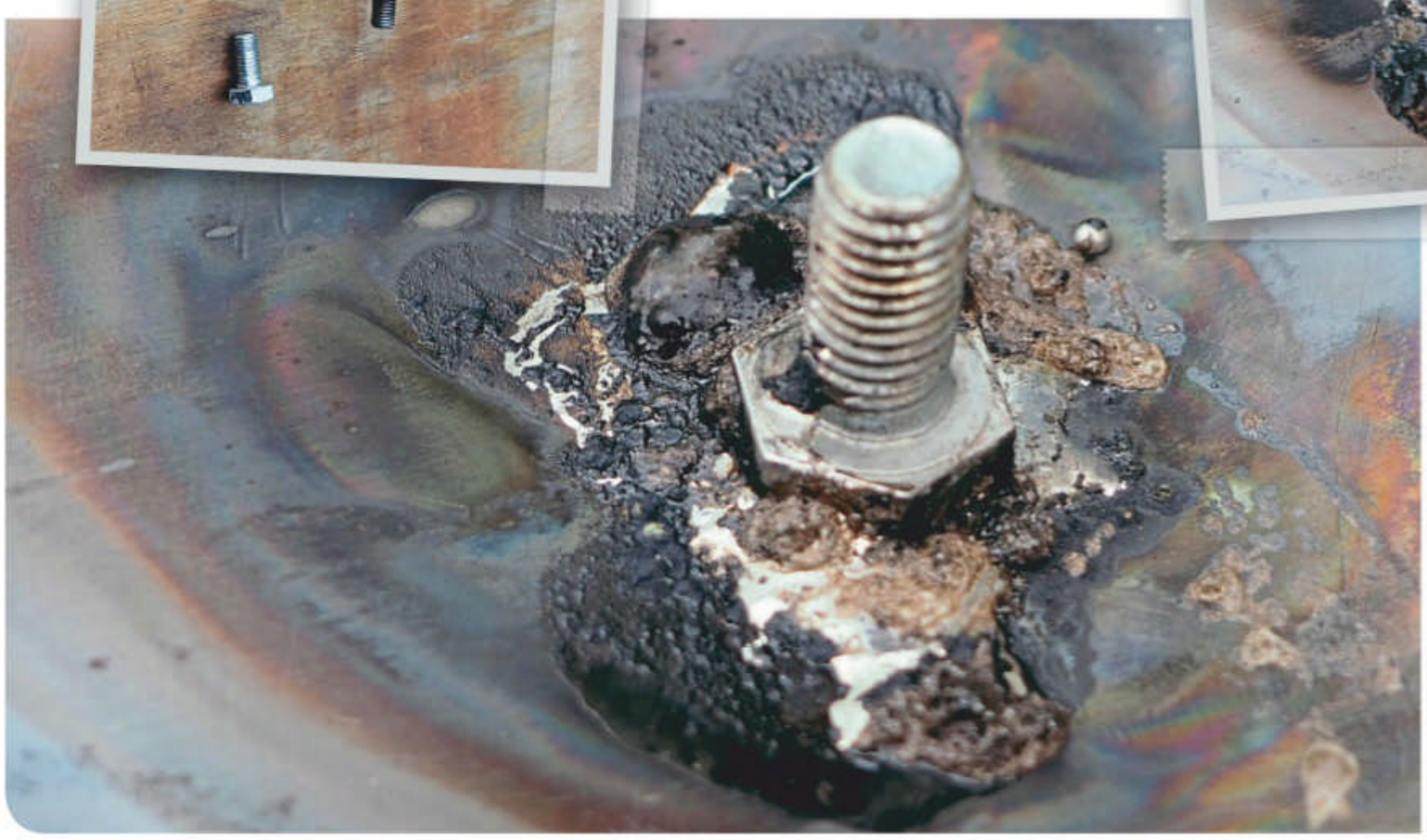


Left: Both sides have been filled so they both need cleaning off. Gentle use of a hot air gun helps to lift off the filler

Above: All the paint in the dented areas needs to be evicted or we'll be struggling at the next stage

Below: I'm using an old slide hammer as a 'puller' allied to a bolt that'll be soldered to the tank. The alloy cylinder in the middle is a piece of scrap that's been tapped and threaded to join the puller and bolt

Also required is a flux such as Baker's Fluid or Fluxite, some coarse sand paper or emery cloth and a brush which needs to have natural bristles not plastic ones



Above: Using a DIY gas torch, flux and a careful dab of body solder has the head of the puller nut tinned. One of the dents is similarly tinned making sure the selected site remains level until the solder has cooled and solidified

Left: The bolt is now heated or 'sweated' onto the pre-tinned area such that it settles into the solder

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It's imperative that the solder is allowed to cool naturally. If it's still hot to the touch or force-cooled with water the joint will fail when put to work.

The threaded adapter and then the slide hammer are screwed into place ready for some noisy, yet controlled, action. It's important to understand that all forces applied to the bolt are at right angles; overt sideways movement will compromise the joint.

By holding the tank with one hand the slide hammer is repeatedly raised swiftly. When it reaches the the end of the rod the resultant force incrementally pulls the dented steel panel upwards and outwards. And yes, I know I look like a demented gnome!

Inevitably you'll need to hammer or pull from different areas which means re-siting the bolt from time to time. The aim is to move the metal gradually and from various areas as dictated by the deformed steel

Where there's a deep crease or a thin, narrow dent you may need an alternative puller. Here a piece of studding has been welded to another bolt ready for tinning

Above: Repeated use of the flux and gas torch can lead to carbon build up. Gentle abrasion with sand paper or emery should restore the surface to clean steel

Right: Soldered and held in place whilst cooling with a pair of pliers, the thin creases can now be pulled out

From here the tank can either be fettled some more or be tidied up ready for painting. As an added bonus, because the process has utilised body solder the remaining small dents can be easily filled via lead puddling as previously covered in *CBG*. Alternately a small skim of filler where required can be applied safe in the knowledge that it will only be that – a skimming not multiple layers. CBG

Above and below: The left side has come out remarkably well and better than you might hope for. Over on the right there's still some room for improvement but it's not far off. Overall the tank is looking much better.

Prepping tanks for paint

No one wants a freshly painted tank to leak but unfortunately it seems to be happening all too often. Most fuel tanks were never designed to be repainted so they are, by design, as thin as the manufacturer could get away with. When you could buy paint stripper that actually worked it was often the DIY option, but nowadays most available strippers seem unable to penetrate bike paint. There's been a big move towards blast cleaning tanks, and without question it gets the job done. However, unless the job is done with some empathy for the surface aggressive blasting can seriously erode the base steel. All painters like a surface that allows the primer coat to bond to the steel so some champion a truly roughed surface. Unfortunately if your tank is already delicate through corrosion or previous resprays there's a real chance that it may be dangerously thinned, weakened or even pin holed. There's a vast array of blast media out there and many will do the job without removing vast swathes of steel. Before handing your tank over discuss how it will be prepared and if your chosen painter says: "I just give it to my mate and he sorts it!"... perhaps you might want to reconsider your options. Techniques such as genuine soda blasting are infinitely kinder to old steel panels than the likes of steel grit, aluminium oxide or the like.

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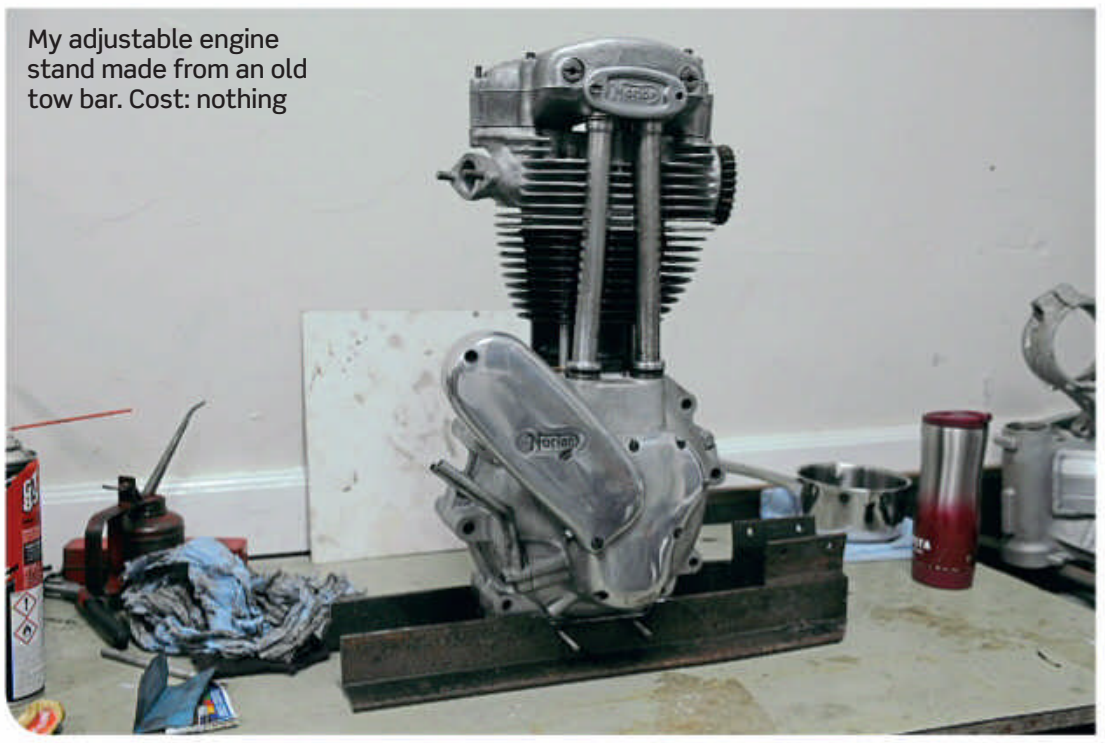
Part 2021

Project Norton

Small steps are starting to make progress on the ES2



My adjustable engine stand made from an old tow bar. Cost: nothing

With a shiny new toy in the workshop in the guise of my BMW R100S, as well as a new workshop, the Norton again found itself forgotten. Although I realise I am very lucky in having plenty of room, moving workshop was much, much more work than I'd anticipated and also led to reworking the other shed. Now I have a clean workshop to build and strip the bikes and engines, with all the welding, grinding, spraying and blasting in the dirty shed.

But with the cylinder head fresh from having the rocker box stud locations fixed, I looked at getting the engine together – primarily so that things wouldn't get lost! But engines don't like balancing on a bench and in my new pursuit of being more professional, I discounted the idea of wedging bits of wood under the crankcase and found an old tow bar. A few measurements, some drilling and grinding later,

I used thin, M5 threaded bar so other engines could easily fit. Torque up a head with ease now!

It's all a little snug in there, but possible.

followed by swearing, more drilling and more grinding, I had an ES2 engine stand! It works perfectly and while a little long, that engine isn't going anywhere. It meant I can torque things up properly, especially as the rocker cover won't come off if the engine is in the old-style frame. Hutch lent me a timing disc which helped me to check the cam timing I'd guesstimated, which I was happy with, so that could all be put together. Once tightened, I then had a hit of paranoia, so ordered the fibre washer that seals the side casing to the oil pump. I also made sure the brass bullet-shaped, sprung jet that gets said oil through to the crank, was nicely in place.

With the head gasket in place, I could balance the pushrod tubes and pushrods, while making sure the oilways from engine case to barrel, and barrel to head were in line. Washers in place, I could then bring the head down with the sleeved nuts. I'd ordered a new one as the bike only came with three, but it was an inch too long and a few thou too wide – though the thread was correct. So it was over to the lathe and I took a skim off the outer sleeve and cut off the excess.

It is made from stainless steel, so looks good, but is a lot harder than mild steel to machine and I'm not exactly skilled in this – more I've picked it up while watching over Hutch and Neville's shoulders. Still, I managed and while not pretty, it did the job, with nothing flying off and no tools breaking. I did leave the chuck key in once, but after spending 10 minutes looking around for the flying projectile, I promised never to do that again…

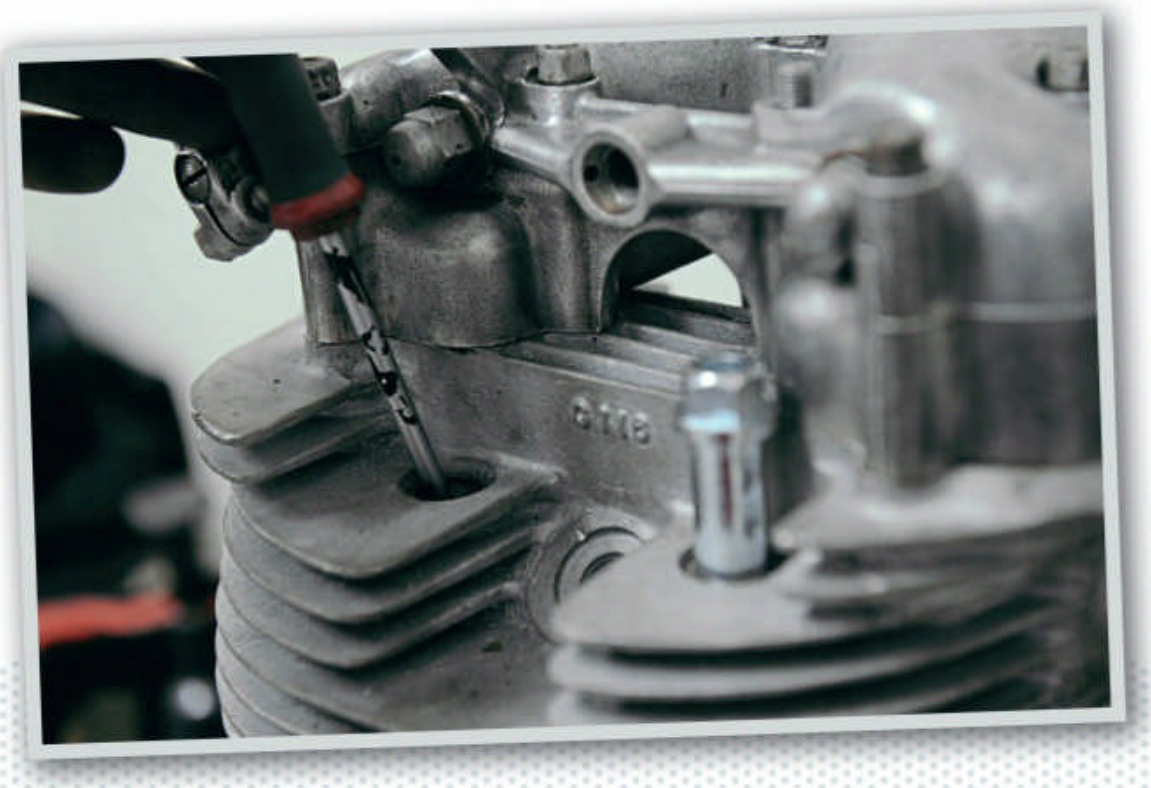
Unfortunately, despite my machining the thread doesn't go in far enough, so I needed the new, shorter nut tapped – with an imperial thread I don't have. So a thread gauge and imperial tap set has been ordered, but Hutch has said he can do it if I pop it in the post, or throw it over his hedge if passing (we're in lockdown as I write this so I won't be passing!).

While the head was on (tight, but not torqued down), I thought it prudent to check that the pushrods would adjust alright. With the engine never being together and a bit of meat taken from the head face, they may have been too tight, but while a fiddly job, it felt really good to be at that adjusting settings stage. I was happy to get an accurate clearance, too. Wow, something that doesn't need replacing!

Above left: Adjusting the valve clearances with the pushrods to make sure there is still enough meat on the head

Above right: Two ¼in Whitworth spanners needed for valve clearance adjustment

Below: Using a screwdriver to try and straighten one of the head studs. It didn't work!



In the verniers is an original sleeved head nut, next to it is a new part, which I may have ordered incorrectly, or may just be wrong.

It is too long, but also too wide, so needs cutting and dressing

Nut was cut down and dressed in the lathe – being stainless steel it was quite tough. Now needs tapping

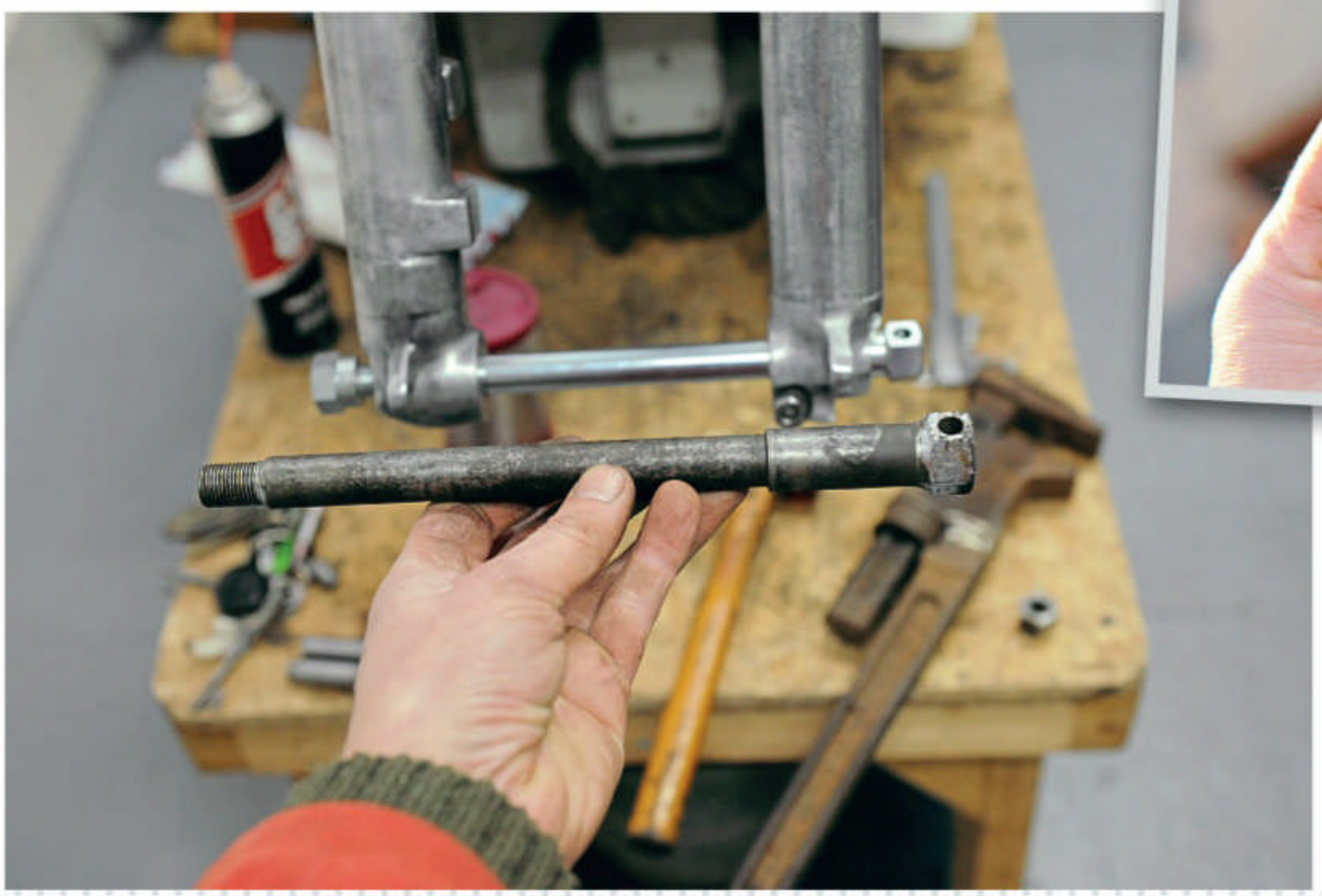
Above: Forks in awaiting chrome slider cover when I can afford them. Grease used in between painted surfaces, nacelle in place and steering damper, too

Next was to go through the box of nuts and bolts to see exactly what was left. This would hopefully make my job easier in locating what I needed. Even though it would have to come out again to torque the head and rocker box down, I decided to put the engine in with the newly painted plates. I found most of the fixtures for that and know which ones I need to find. When a nut and bolt (or headless stud with nuts each end) is needed that I haven't found, I'm using metric for now, I tried using stainless steel metric washers with the original nuts and bolts and they just look rubbish – the hole is too large so it sits wonky and is wider than the original would have been, other option is to use a smaller one but you have to drill out the hole, which feels pedantic. Oh what to do!

I now have enough nuts and bolts for the engine and gearbox plates, the front suspension and mudguard, the oil tank and fuel tank, which leaves the tool/ electrics box and rear mudguard and stays. There's a couple of specialised nuts like the gearbox adjusting nut which has a fine pitch that I'll have to buy from specialists, but I can't afford to spend £2-3 on every nut or bolt I need, so I'm going to make a shopping list of sizes and buy bulk. Then any restorations coming up should prove easier.

Next up was the front end. The forks got a rubbing down of 400 grit wet and dry, followed by a good mopping with some alloy soap. They're not perfect, but it's not a show bike and I'd like it to look honest, so a few marks are fine. The chrome sliders are missing, but at around £60 for two, they'll have to wait as well. Don't get me wrong, I truly appreciate the specialists that support and make their living from Norton owners, and I appreciate how much time and money it costs getting these parts made, especially the singles, for which there are a lot less than there are twins. I simply cannot afford new parts all the time.

Neville bought a front wheel spindle that he no longer needs, so he gave it to me for some parts I got him for a doll's head gearbox. I wasn't worried, until I checked mine, which was bent! While it is hardened steel, I may try to turn it into another part – so I'll keep it safe. The headlamp brackets and headlamp shell look good after painting, though the clock surround is more pitted than I hoped, so that'll be rubbed down and a thin skim of filler used to rid the



Left: Closest is original front axle which was bent – behind is shiny new one – thanks Neville!

Above: Metric washers look too big and ugly

Cleaning up the front brake cam; after this it was polished to give as little friction as possible

part of pockmarks. After all, it's the bit you look at the most when riding. Elsewhere up front, the steering damper is fitted and the handlebars are straightened, with the clamps cleaned up, tapped and ready to go on.

The tank just sits under my painting table, waiting for something else that needs primer, while at the back the two-piece mudguard is waiting for me to get the holes drilled; but I want the bike on its wheels before then.

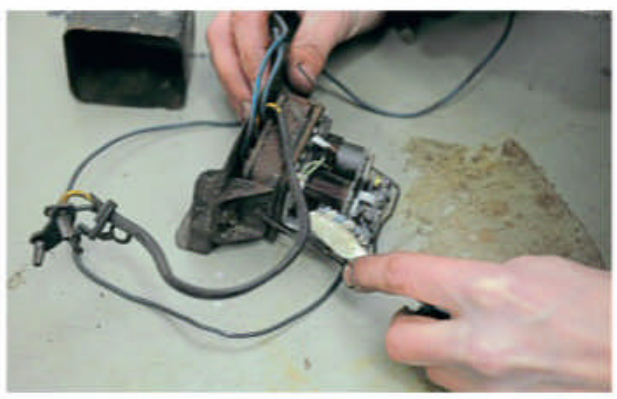
I've ordered some Avon Speed Master and SM tyres, which would have been what the ES2 left the factory with. They are out of stock, but I've got new rim tape and tubes waiting patiently. So I thought I'd better check the wheels. A quick look at the Norton spares book for the era and I had to have a sit down. How many parts?? Compared to more modern bikes, which have two bearings and a spacer, there are washers, bearings, more washers, fibre washers, spacers and that doesn't include parts for the speedo drive. I found most parts including new bearings (one side is single row bearing, the other is a twin-row bearing), but the fibre washers need replacing and two of the washers are a little mangled, though the outer, screw-in cap should be repairable with a little TIG weld. More parts on the bloody list.

The brake pivot was stiff in the front drum, so out it came and some cleaning and oil has turned it into a much more accommodating part. The rear drum is new as the sprocket was knackered, but the side plate just needed a little tin-bashing to make straight before it was painted. So aside from making cables and buying a speedo cable, the brakes should be okay. Oh and I need to find out which brake and clutch levers were fitted as they're missing, along with the air and timing levers. Draganfly should be able to help with those.

I had promised the dynamo service this month and have the new brushes and bearings, but moving the workshop took its toll. Oh, and I ballsed up by trying to get the small bearing off with a hammer and now have to 'reshape' the dynamo axle… Patience, young Skywalker, patience. Now we're in our new home, progress should be more forthcoming. He says. CBG

Front axle has so many parts and these three are mashed. They might repair with a TIG weld

Bead blasted speedo drive needs cleaning out, greasing and a small spacer made



Next month: We look at the dynamo and charging system

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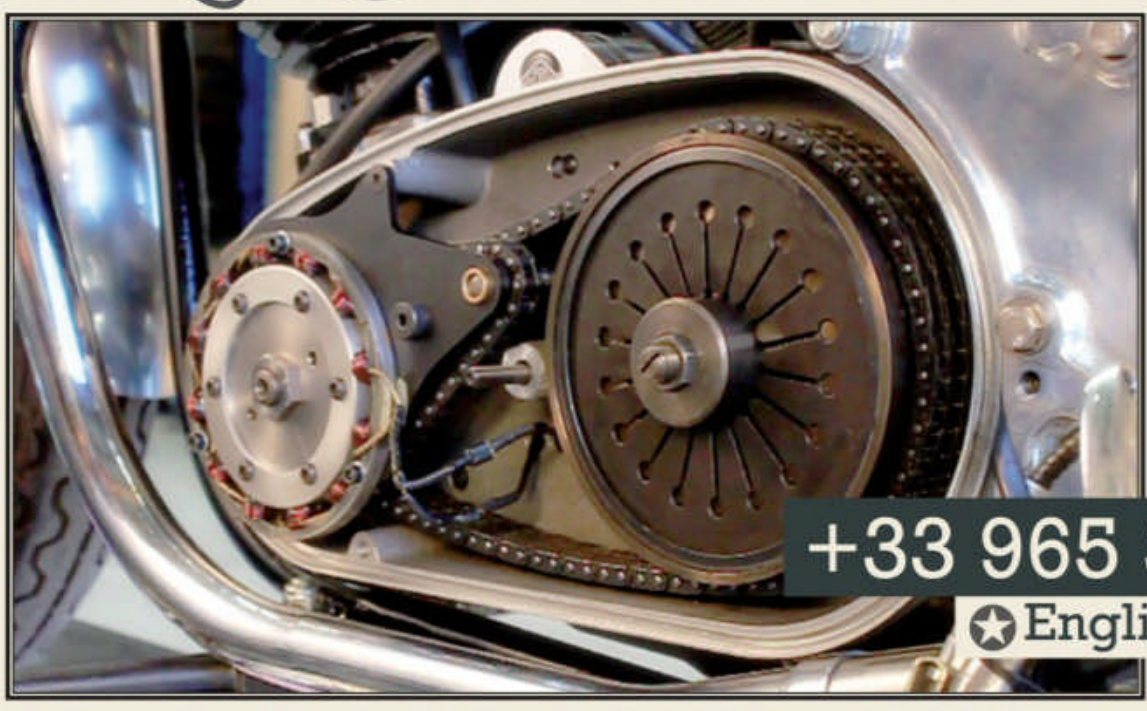

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Hints & tips FROM HUTCH'S WORKSHOP

This month, Hutch shows us that a simple job needs some considerable thought, and comes across a leaky flange

WORDS BY HUTCH, PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHELLEY

WHILST THE NEW – TO ME – ENFIELD Model G was on the bench having some new tyres and the ignition timing looked at (see last month) I thought it provident to take a look at the carb. The remote float bowl carburettor worked okay, at least the bike ran, but it was a bit leaky and all part of that 'getting to know your new toy' process.

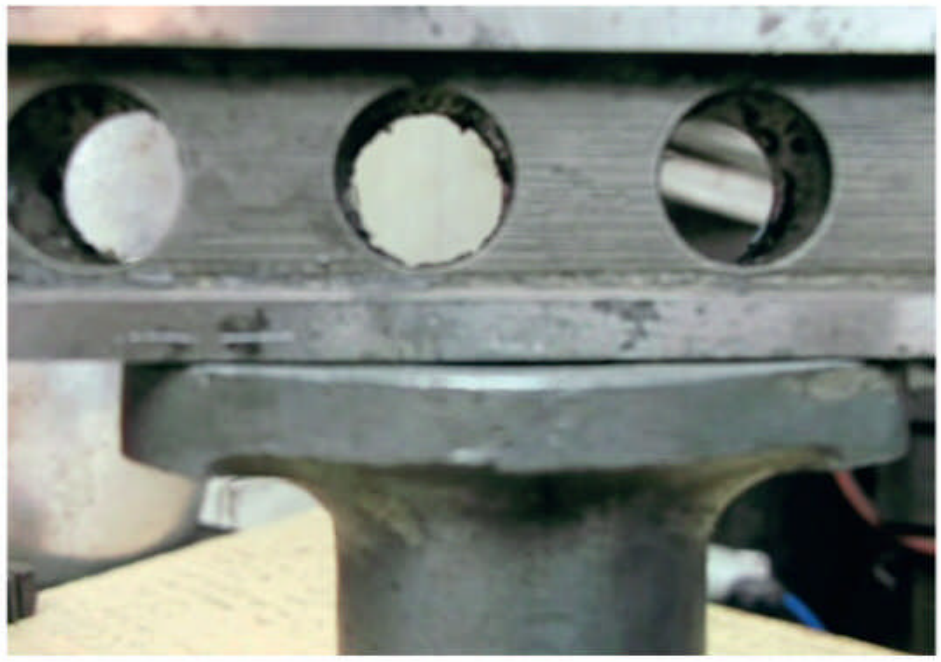
The Amal 276 flange-fitting carb was removed and stripped; how to do this is just a bit of basic fitting and reading up of the relevant documentation and I ended up with a small pile of bits and a carb body. All the component parts were cleaned, some being put through the ultrasonic cleaner (a lovely piece of kit and easily available these days).

Some visual inspection of the main carb body showed that the flange which bolts to the cylinder head was quite badly bowed. This bowing is not an unusual occurrence on carbs with flange mountings, even on newer more recently manufactured replacement carbs. I do wonder if it has something to do with the relative sizes of the 'O' rings fitted for sealing and the depth of the grooves machined for them, so much so that my personal preference is now for a gasketed joint rather than an 'O' ring.

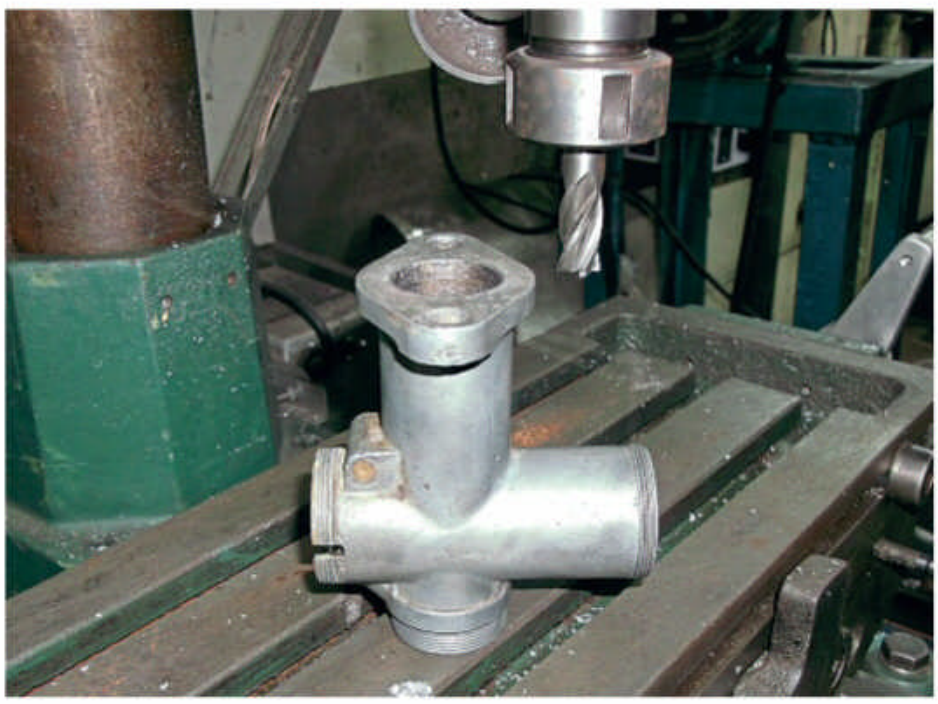
The bent / distorted flange was inspected a little closer with the aid of an engineering parallel which showed quite a gap. If the distortion / gap had been less I would have brought it back to flat with the parallel and some emery paper, however, in this case a bit more metal needed removing.

I spent quite enough time with a file as an apprentice to be able to confidently get the flange flat, but I wanted the flange face to not only be flat, but datum-ed / perpendicular to rest of the carb body; so this meant machining it.

The offending carb body – looks alright at first glance...



...but the straight edge shows the truth – the flange is warped



It needs machining, but how do you mount a carb?

A piece of scrap bar will hold the carb in the jaws

More maching is required to make the mandrel than to fix the carb!

I considered milling the flange, but to get it perpendicular to the body as I wanted it meant machining a mandrel of some sort and if I was going to do that I might as well just face the flange on the mandrel machined in the lathe. As with all machining, there are always many ways to do things and mostly it's dependant on what machines and materials you have at hand.

After rooting about and finding a piece of scrap alloy tube of slightly bigger diameter than the throat of the carb body, I put it in the lathe, faced and drilled it diameter 6.8mm and tapped it M8. The mandrel was then machined down to give a short shoulder that was a close, but not interference fit, to the air intake end of the carb body.

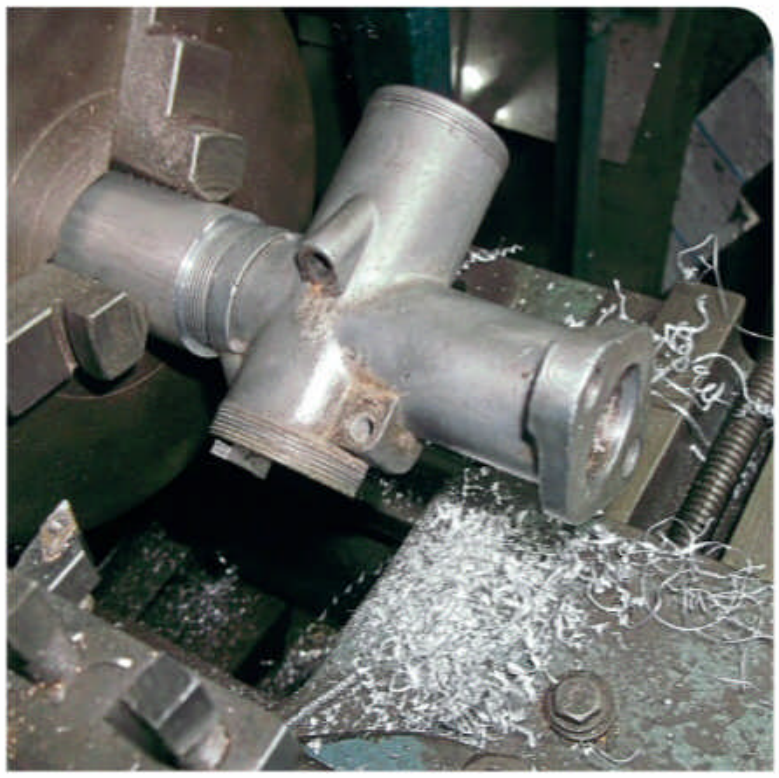
Without removing the mandrel from the three-jaw chuck, to maintain concentricity and remove the need to play about with a four-jaw chuck, I mounted the carb body on the mandrel and held it in place with another piece of scrap alloy with an M8 clearance hole drilled in the middle of it and an m8 bolt.

At this point I turned the lathe speed right down,

Left: A screw holds the carb tight inside

Right: Lathe speed is turned down

Below: Once happy all is straight, the tool can move in to face the flange



Left: All done

although alloy /Mazak (sometimes referred to as monkey metal) can be machined at speed, carb bodies can also fly given the chance and having it flying across the workshop should the mounting fail was not an experience I care for!

The cutting tool was set for facing and with a bit of heart in mouth the lathe started, I let it turn a few times – all seemed well and secure – so I faced the flange by taking small cuts so as to remove the minimum amount of metal necessary. Once the face had machined down to clean metal, and with a bit of de-burring around the three holes, I had a good flange face that has a chance of sealing; whether I can get the thing petrol tight is another story…. CBG

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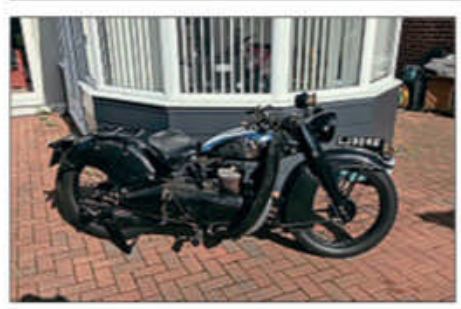

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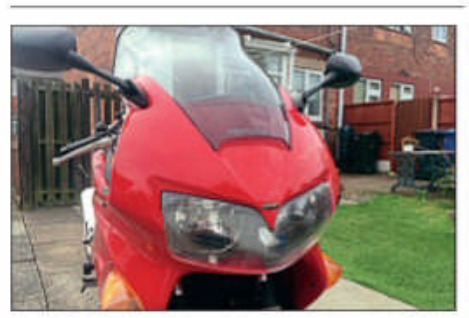

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NORTON ES2 Slimline, 1961, matching numbers, 26,300 miles, lots of history & a few spares, very good chrome & paintwork, 12V conversion, £6200 ono Tel. Tony 07891 389663

SUZUKI DR650 Flat Tracker, based on Sachs Roadster, housed in a frame designed by 'Fritz Egli' custom Titanium exhaust, LSL Bars, Red Max tank, £6995 Tel. Stuart 07775 711411

SUZUKI GSF600 Bandit, 600cc, 2000 reg, 31,000 miles, new parts, fork seals, carbs stripped, new seals and petrol tap, £2500 Tel. 07375 542295 Staffs

SUZUKI GT250 1973, restored and ready to go, too much to list here so please call for more information Tel. Jim 07598 997346 East Yorkshire

SUZUKI GT750 1976, total restoration 2012, complete engine rebuild inc crank, bearings, seals, piston, water pump, new chain, sprocket, tyres, 31,792 miles, £9500 ono Tel. 07799 785888 Cornwall

TRIUMPH Super Cub, vgc, exceptional condition, rides really nice, idles regular when warmed up, starts usually first kick, new battery with a charging lead, £3200 Tel. 07850248759 Cornwall

TRIUMPH BOBBER 1200cc, 2017, 1005 miles from new, immaculate as new condition, full MoT, two original keys, original handbook, £7500 ono Tel. 07428 136509 Leics

TRIUMPH MANX 750cc Featherbed pre-unit conical hub, alloy rims, Roadholder forks, Pazon ignition, Norvil belt drive swept backs etc, £5000 Tel. 07742 522371 Wilts

TRIUMPH T110 1958, easy starter, matching numbers, fully restored, mint condition, £7500 may p/x why? 8 stud barrels Speed Twin, £45 Tel. 07443 642408 West Yorks

TRIUMPH T140E Bonneville, 1980, t&t exempt, excellent all round condition easy starter lots of new parts, £5750 Tel. Brian 07479 470445 Email. brianjfielding1@gmail.com Leics

YAMAHA XV250 Virago, 1995, recent service, MoT Sept 2021, lots of service history 19,500 miles, runs and rides well, £1600 ono Tel. 07796 691061 Somerset

YAMAHA YD53 SPORT 1964, project for completion, lots of spares, bottom end of engine completely rebuilt, no log book, importation doc available, £800 Tel. 07522 983224 Essex

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ARIEL HUNTMASTER 1958, refurb engine, new carb, exhaust, clutch, chains, tyres, all chrome done, ready to ride, £5950. Tel. 07564 242876. Kent.

BMW K100 1983, cylinder head Rocker Box cams, no valves, £60. Reliant Rialto SE 1988, new one pair side indicators, one pair front side lamps, one right/hand rear lamp, £60 lot, + second hand spares. Tel. 01453 826499. Glos.

BMW K75RT 1992, metallic blue, 59,000 miles, vgc, front forks rebuilt by Olins, no faults, pair Krauser panniers Givi top box, new battery, MoT, history, £1875. Tel. 07799 847631. Beds.

DUCATI 900SS 1977, rebuilt, Monza tank, superb, £28,000. Tel. 07914 639514. Hertfordshire. Email. bigmacal27@gmail.com

HONDA CB750 1971, K1, red, very clean and tidy machine, runs exceptionally well, original exhausts etc, V5 in my name, £8000. Tel. Dave 07788 217810. West Midlands.

HONDA CB92 Benly, 125cc, Super Sport, 1962, matching engine and frame numbers original transferable reg number, rare historic machine in show condition, MoT and tax exempt, £8950. Tel. 01522 703687. Lincs.

MOTO MORINI Strada 350, 1975 drum brake model, NLM import, NOVA registered, complete apart from seat, requires complete restoration or use for spares, photos available, £950 ono. Tel. 01509 768629. Leics. Email. kbc_531@hotmail.co.uk

ROYAL ENFIELD Crusader Sport, 1959, nice project engine turns over, £600 of new parts, £2100. Tel. 01772 330937. Lancs.

ROYAL ENFIELD 1926, 225cc multi show winning, museum quality only five known to exist valuable number plate, total cost to buy and restore, £14,000 bargain, £8900. Tel. 01522 703687. Lincs.

TRIUMPH T21 1961, matching numbers, lovely bike, £3550. Norton Dominator 600cc, 1960 Slimline, nice bike, £4890. Tel. 07743 370641. Stoke-on-Trent.

Parts For Sale

ARIEL VG500 twinport chrome wheels with 400 x 18 Avon and 325 x 19 Avon Speedmaster tyres, £200. Dunlop Roadmaster 425 85 x 18, £40. Tel. 07742 522371. Wilts.

FOR SALE HONDA CB77 gearbox complete, £150. Carbs, £140. Clutch and alternator, £60. Top & bottom engine cases + crankshaft, £60. Four good tappet covers, £80. Frame with stand + swinging arm, call for more info. Tel. Ron 07768 98291. Perthshire.

HONDA 250N Super Dream, 1979, spares including tank, panels, forks, wheels, clocks etc £100 the lot. Tel. 07709 033122. Cheshire.

GARAGE CLEARANCE: many Honda 1972 CB550 engine spares three engines less two crankshafts, starter motors and some CB500 1972 spares, £300 ono. Also 1999 Triumph Daytona triple crankshaft and clutch. Tel. 07722 804603. Sheffield.

GENUINE CRAVEN REAR CARRIER paintwork reasonable for age; removed from A.M.C. lightweight, best offer over £20 plus postage. Tel. Pete 07831 141541. North Bucks.

GENUINE YAMAHA front right brake caliper assembly (motorcycle), 4WM 2580T 01, fits Yamaha 1999-2003 XV1600 Road Star, XVZ1300 Royal Star Venture (Plus others), brand new, boxed, never been used or fitted, £80. Tel. 02086 444998. Surrey.

HONDA CB250N/CB400N starter motor, £24 plus £3 p&p. Tel. Richard 01366 728030.

HONDA VF750 rolling chassis, frame forks, wheels, b/brake & footrests, no bodywork, £220 ono. Tel. 01524 424960; mobile 07400 520446. Lancs.

NORTON COMMANDO Roadster, fibreglass petrol tank, slight crazing to paint work, photos available, £75 ono plus postage. Triumph T100 steel tank, circa 1968, some external surface rust, small dent at rear, inside of the tank clean, photos available, £75 ono plus postage. Triumph Tiger Cub steel battery cover, £15 plus postage. Tel. 07906 541942. Glasgow.

SPARES OR PROJECT YAMAHA DT80 1980ish frame repainted red, 2nd frame needs painting with swing arm and suspension spring, 2 sets of forks, 2 sets of fork yokes, front/rear wheels, a seat, handlebars with leavers, these parts are used, new rear brake hub/anker plate with new linnings, new steering head bearings. Also included a Yamaha TS100 engine I was going to fit into one of the frames, plus a box of used parts and cables, abandoned project need space £250 the lot. Tel. 07899 995772. Sheffield.

SUZUKI 500 twin engine for spares engine number 501-178634, gear lever shaft bent front engine mounting was cut off to fit another bike, top end seems to be ok, spares only £40. Tel. 07899 995772. Sheffield.

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TRIUMPH TIGER 90 1966, 17" Dunlop WMII front wheel, chrome good for year, complete with spindle and bearing no brake plate or shoes, £40. Tel. 07954 122255. Co Durham.

TROJAN MINI-MOTOR ENGINE c/w carb, generator, exhaust & tank with tap, offers. Also 1960s Phillips ladies 3 speed bicycle, 100% complete, good working order, needs paint etc, £70. Tel. 07951 536578. Herefordshire.

Wanted

ANY BRITISH BIKE restoration project wanted, anything considered any size or condition, more of a tinkerer than a rider now so open to offers, pay accordingly, can collect, will consider older Japanese. Tel. 07538 696157. Leics.

ARIEL COLT 1955-1959, 4 stroke single, 200cc, any condition, spares or repair. Tel. 07710 616610. Lancashire.

ARIEL OR BSA PROJECT BIKE wanted, any model in any condition, but early Fieldmaster or BSA twin/single great, anywhere considered. Tel. 07956 296418. Derbyshire.

BMW AIRHEAD wanted, consider any model, condition, from early 1970's through to early 1990's. Tel. John 07836 758534. Tyne & Wear.

BRITISH STEEL front chrome mudguard and tool/battery box for 1959 Royal Enfield Constellation. Tel. 07854 272022. Hampshire.

CATALINA PETROL TANK BSA A10 Super Rocket, good price paid for good tank, no junk. Tel. 07309 546593. Cumbria.

HONDA REBEL 250cc, wanted good price paid for clean low mileage bike. Tel. 01751 474350. North Yorkshire.

HONDA RESTORATION PROJECT from 1970s/1980s wanted, any model considered, pay accordingly eg: CB125, CD175, CB250, CB450, CB550/750, XL250 etc, can collect. Tel. 07538 696157. Leics.

MOTO GUZZI V50 or V35 Imola wanted for restoration, prefer complete running bike with UK V5. Tel. Marc 07511 688088. Birmingham.

NORTON 1947, 350cc Manx number B10, 1146* XM105 supplied to Alec Bennett, Southampton Bert Morris, Totton was EOW375, last known in Kent, 1971, son trying to find dads bike. Email. recycledreading@gmail.com

NORTON DOMINATOR runner or restoration project wanted by relative to relive his youth, any model considered, but early bike preferred, pay accordingly and will travel to collect. Tel. 07538 696157. Leics.

NORTON INTERNATIONAL 1954, 500cc trying to rebuild my dads Senior Clubmans bike, need original factory dual seat, any tinware etc. Also photos of inters in 1953/1954 Senior Clubmans. Please email Alain Email. recycledreading@gmail.com

ROLLER STARTER 12V, good condition and alli tank for Bantam trials bike, good condition. Tel. John 07788 768313. Bucks.

ROYAL ENFIELD 250cc, Continental Crusader, look alike, 1961, reg number 86 TKX, last sold in Suffolk, I would be interested in possible repurchase of this machine if considered. Tel. Simon 01284 753974; 0778 3277629. Suffolk.

SIDECAR WANTED prefer sports model, but consider anything, even pre-war boat type in any condition. Tel. 07956 296418. Derby.

TRIUMPH RIGID REAR WHEEL 5T, T100, TRW, wanted. Germany. Email. fabrizioonori@gmail.com

TRIUMPH ROCKET 3 outfit Watsonian sidecar. Tel. 01613 309814. Manchester.

VILLIERS BIKE or Bantam wanted, runner or restoration project, any model Bantam considered or any Villiers powered bike like Greeves, Fanny B, James etc, pay accordingly and will travel to collect. Tel. 07538 696157. Leics.

VYD 636 GOLDSTAR 1956, 500cc, would owner please email Alain if he wishes to know of its past. Email. recycledreading@gmail.com

WANTED FOR Royal Enfield Constellation, 1959, front chromed steel mudguard with stays, no Indian versions. Tel. 07854 272022. Hampshire.

WANTED HONDA CB92 anything considered, please call. Tel. Laurence 07899 818666. Northern Ireland.

WANTED PUCH MAXI NSU Quickly, Cyclemasters, winged wheel, Honda C50, C70, C90. Tel. 07790 168224. West Midlands.

WANTED PUCH MAXI NSU Quickly, Raleigh Runabout/Wisp, Cyclemasters, auto cycles, Honda C50, 70, 90 or just parts. Tel. 07790 168224. West Mids.

WANTED SPARES for a Honda CB500, need fork stanchion quickly would like the front fairing for the 98 sport model in red if possible, exhaust if reasonable, consider most other spares. Tel. 01628 668799.

WANTED TRIUMPH rigid rear wheel (5T, T100, TRW). Email. fabrizioonori@gmail.com

WANTED YAMAHA YDS5 parts by private enthusiast, anything considered, even a complete bike, why? Tel. Richard 07769 715916. Lincs.

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Miscellaneous

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

COLCHESTER STUDENT LATHE for sale contact for details, £350. Tel. 07914 639514. Email. bigmacal27@gmail.com

COLLECTION OF MOTORCYCLE jackets, leather trousers, all items in leather, some Lewis leathers, all in good condition, all sizes, must collect about 20 items bargain at £150 like new. Tel. 07443 642408. West Yorkshire.

JOEY DUNLOP Arai Quantum/F Limited Edition, collectors helmet, very rare, brand new, boxed size large, with cover, certificate and cling film still on visor never been tried on, £850. Tel. 01522 703687. Lincs.

LEATHER JACKET new Frank Thomas, size UK 42, never worn on my bike only ever tried on at time of purchase back in July 2020 so it's in as new condition grab a bargain, £75 (ie less than half price). Tel. 02085 501598; 07747 020725. Essex.

LINKLIFE a tin of Linklife, chain lubrication grease, use only once, £7. Tel. Ron 02086 995307. London.

MAGAZINES: Classic Bike Guide from 30 years, M/C Sport 1962-92, M/C International, 1985/94, M/C enthusiast, 1981/87, M/C Mechanics, 1960-? Genuine Makers Manuals for Norton 650SS, BSA Goldie, Ariel HT5 Velocette Le Triumph twins, many, many 1000 magazines from 1948. Hand Books Pitmans Pearsons from 1948, CB400F, AJs, BSA, Norton, Ariel, many classics, must sell, buyer looks and collects. Tel. 01642 484073. Cleveland.

MAGAZINES: Classic Bike Guide 2006-2019 and Classic Bike magazine 2004-2009 + 2012-2019, free to a good home. Tel. 01214 424176. Birmingham.

MAGAZINES: Classic Bike Guide, old bike magazines, good condition, 11 in total, issues 194 (June 2007), 196 (Aug 2007), 197 (Sep 2007), 198 (Oct 2007), 199 (Nov 2007), 200 (Dec 2007), 201 (Jan 2008), 202 (Feb 2008), 203 (Mar 2008), 210 (Oct 2008) and 211 (Nov 2008), collection only SM1 3NE. Tel. 02086 44499. Surrey.

MOTOR BIKE COAT Weise Avenger jacket with detachable inner lining for summer/winter use, black, size large, (38"-40" chest), hardly used, as new condition, £65. Tel. Ron 02086 995307. London.

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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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Winter riding. A solitary pleasure? Frank hails back to a time when young men did what young men thought best – and all else laughed.

"We were young men, and that is what we did. Young women? They laughed at us. Some things never change."

IN THOSE LONG-AGO DAYS WE SO OFTEN REFER TO as the 'good old days', honest memory suggests that the only genuinely good bits were based around the fact that we were young and felt decently indestructible. My youthful friends and I rode out wheezing, clattering, dripping but rip-snorting machinery because it was easier than pedalling – usually – and because it was fun. Mostly. In winter we all – every one of us – wished we could afford a car. I have wasted a half-hour and two cups of strong black Columbian trying to remember anyone from 1969 to 1971 who wanted only to ride a motorcycle. We have of course conveniently rewritten history, as is so often the way.

And as we're being honest here, I will share with you that I did genuinely enjoy riding in winter. I grew up in Somerset, where the climes are kind, mostly, and although riding my AJS 18 to school every day was an inglorious affair and kept me soggy for hours, to the amusement of my classmates who did not mysteriously hog the radiator and steam gently until at least first break, the same manly motorcycle was a different box of frogs come the weekend.

Floods across Sedgemoor? Snow high on Exmoor? My brothers in alarms would come knocking on the door at appallingly early hours so we could band together and go to attempt the two-wheeled equivalent of conquering Everest, or something. We were young men, and that is what we did. Young women? They laughed at us. Some things never change.

This frozen lunacy continued for decades. I would commute by motorcycle to whichever den of iniquity was bold enough to employ me and then ride a motorcycle for escapist delight at the weekend, and when I could afford it I had different machines for the different tasks, so a GSX250 Suzuki for weekday work and an AJS 20 for weekend wanderings, for example. Or a CB750 K6 Honda for work and an AJS 31 for pleasure. You get the picture.

And then I started working from home and stopped commuting.

By that point, the challenging good old days were in full flight. No longer did the all-year rider need to wrestle with a rigid Belstaff Black Prince, welly boots, roadmender's yellow overtrousers and the hideous squeeze of getting leather gloves to fit inside Marigold's finest pink offerings. No. By only the mid-Eighties it was possible to avoid all-day damp and the desperate stench of sodden dog by wearing modern riding gear. Mostly. Gloves remained a challenge for rather longer, and I would typically carry at least one spare pair in the seven or eight wetter months of the year. I still do.

You will of course be unsurprised to learn that even then, when rational behaviour was surely commonplace, several of my riding companions insisted on wearing DR coats, ex-Army hobnails and great flappy gauntlets last seen in the Russian campaign of 1941 as they rode through the winter. One of them – who rode a WD M20 BSA (of course he did) – would even carry a bizarre 'bivvy' which attached to his bike to provide sufficient shelter for him to brew up atop his trusty Primus stove. This became such A Thing that he started his own Primus Stove Rally, the only entry conditions to which were a motorcycle of any kind and a Primus stove. Strange but true. By that point I was riding an MZ TS250 and was above such insanity.

A true thing indeed is that a chap meets some seriously strange – but always madly entertaining – folk while indulging in a little vile weather riding. And this remains the same to this very day, remarkably and happily. Our bikes may be more reliable – it's weeks since my Triumph T25 actually broke – and our gear may be excellently efficient, but guess what? The riding is just as challenging, just as frightening and just as rewarding.

As I write this, it seems likely that we're heading into a second spring of gloomy news and apparently endless restrictions. The hills and coasts and moors and huge empty skies are still there, and a motorcycle is one of the best ways of maintaining a social distance that I can think of. Summer's coming…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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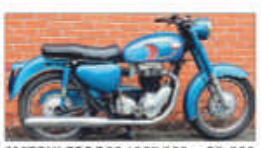

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