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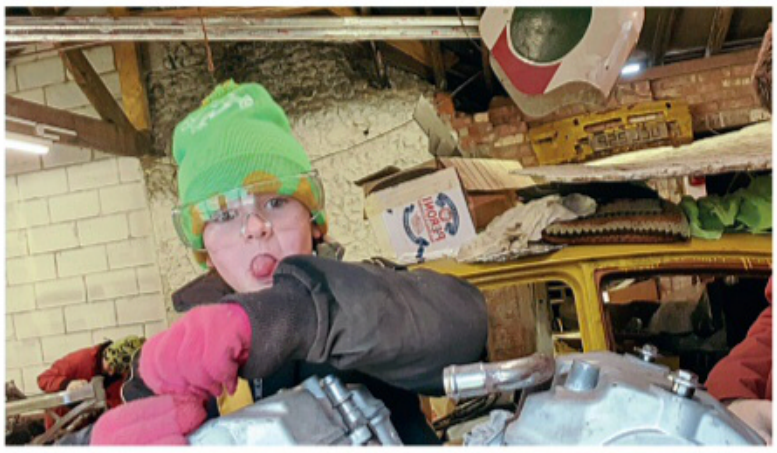


Making the most of lockdown before it's gone!

Well, hello all our oily-finger-nailed friends! Hope the shed heater is on, the postie has bought you some parts and that horrible world outside seems a long way away. Hopefully soon it'll all feel like a bad dream.

There's been little lockdown blues here at *Classic Bike Guide* towers (Maria was an early instigator of 'elevenses', a most welcome addition to the schedule as we're both working from home), we're just using it as an excuse for an unheard-of amount of workshop time, along with a new game – how many layers can you get under your boilersuit and still be able to move (our shed roof looks like an observatory so no point heating it)?

Maria's new project, a little-known Eighties Honda called a Bros, is getting much attention, with the alloy frame being rubbed down thoroughly to get through the thick lacquer Honda used. The engine has been stripped of its top end and looks in remarkably good order inside, so we'll pop in some new rings, give those bores a hone, blast and clean the heads and pop back together for now.

Elsewhere, the BMW is coming on. Just trying to get it started has been a mountain to climb with carbs completely gummed up. One kind reader, Martin Brown, has sent in a photo of one of his late father's bikes, with exactly the same paint scheme! It's a gorgeous, later RS model, but it all adds interest to the background story. In fact, there's never been a bike in the magazine that has attracted so many emails as the BMW. Even the club, which I've joined, has been in touch about the excellent specialist tool hire they offer for members – what a great idea.

Talking of clubs, look out for one that suits you. Bike clubs have had to evolve, but I belong to the local Norton club, BRIMBO, a local club (Norfolk and Suffolk), the BMW club of GB, the VMCC and I get the magazine from the Cossack owners' club, Horizontal view and the Bantam club – thank you. These clubs have brought me good friends, nice rides, knowledge, spares and tool hire – so they're most useful and the standard of club mag is great, too. They especially help in the winter, when you're riding out less. Like life, if you get involved in club politics you'll be in danger of spoiling the good points, so I ignore it. Let us know which clubs you enjoy and we'll try to feature them.

Back in the shed and the Norton hasn't had as much love, I'm sorry to say. Neville found a spare head nut so I could finally get the engine in, and the rest is slowly making progress. And he's still up to something, building something… Damn this lockdown – I can't go and have a peek! Effie wanted to make something for mummy, so we ended up learning to weld – at seven. She picked up the basics quickly!

Right, I've got to start looking into how to test the dynamo I rebuilt. It was the first one for me and I don't fully understand them yet, but that's half the fun. These things would have had to be serviced by the owner when they were newer, so why can't we do it now – what can possibly go wrong?

Oh, and happy 100th, Moto Guzzi!

Have a great month, and be good

Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com

HUBERT AURIOL 1958-2021

The man and the race that made the G/S

Paris-Dakar ace Hubert Auriol has died of heart disease at the age of 68. The Frenchman, often referred to as 'The African' died in January. He was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and over a long career not only helped to raise the profile of the rally, but in doing so, cemented the reputation of the BMW GS model.

Auriol, already an accomplished enduro and motocross racer, competed in the first Paris-Dakar rally in 1979, a 5900 mile race on mainly dirt roads and once into the Sahara sand dunes. That inaugural race was won by Cyril Neveu on a Yamaha XT500, while Auriol didn't manage to finish.

But the seed was sown and in 1980, Auriol teamed up with BMW France on their newly developed R80G/S, albeit heavily modified for the race. Back then, BMW Motorrad was tiny compared to what it has become and the Paris-Dakar was not only a proven test of reliability, but quickly becoming a huge PR boost throughout the world for manufacturers – perfect for pushing their new road/off-road bike.

Auriol didn't finish, but his French team-mate, Morellet came fifth, showing the bike had what it takes.

1981 was to prove this, and saw the team-mates on BMWs again. But this time Hubert Auriol was the winner, with Morellet coming in fourth and BMW had a near-perfect rally, with even a privateer, Bernard Neimer on a much more standard BMW R80G/S coming in seventh.

1982 is a year Auriol and BMW would want to forget, with evolutionary changes and bad luck causing mechanicals, but Hubert would storm to victory again in 1983 with the enlarged 980cc G/S.

The Paris-Dakar is well known for taking all it can from a rider, but Hubert kept coming back.

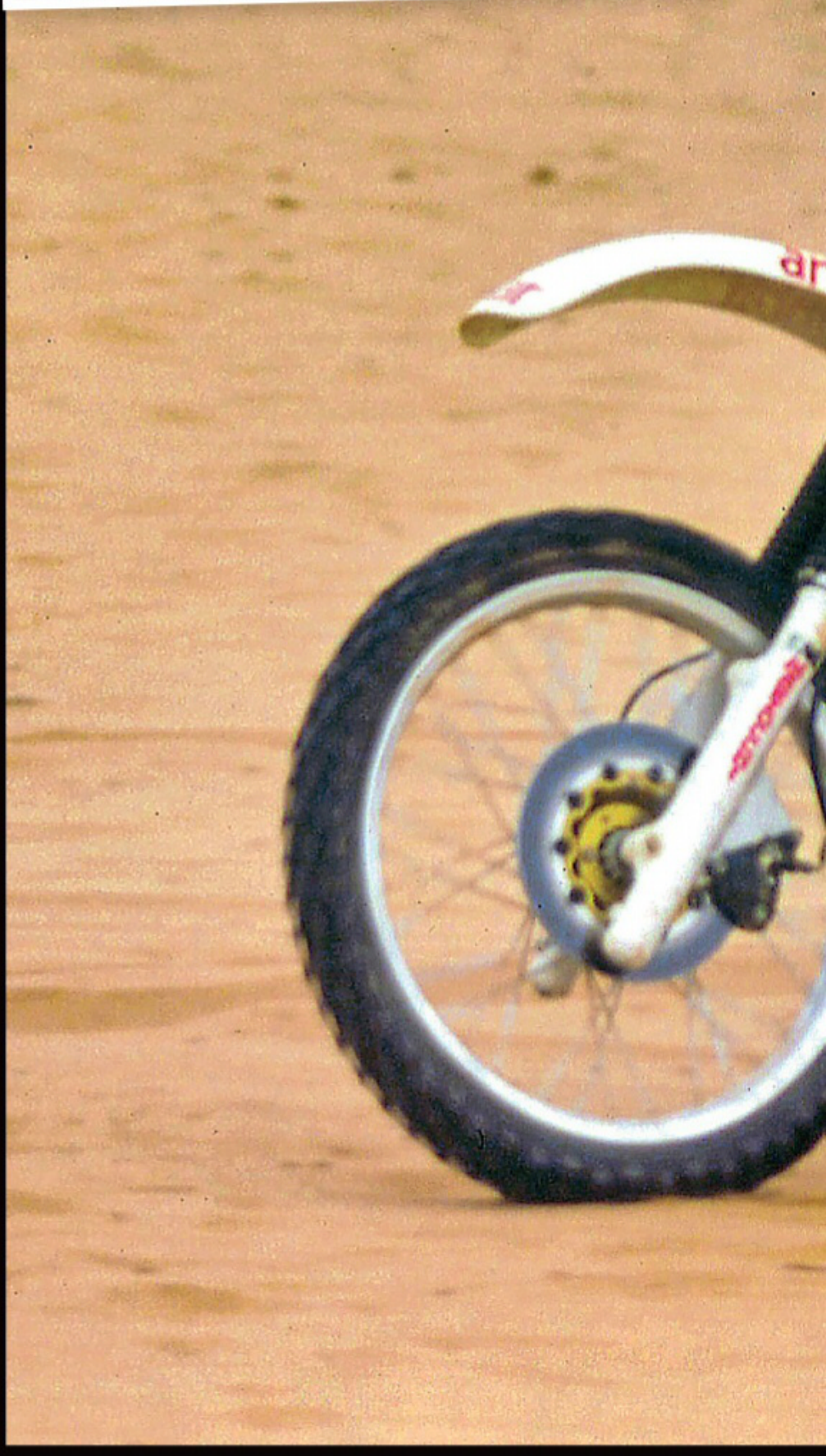
'The African' had the might of BMW behind him again in 1984, with a new team-mate, Gaston Rahier, and 'Penthouse' sponsorship. Rahier beat Auriol to give BMW first and second.

After this, Auriol joined Cagiva and in 1987 Hubert almost delivered for the Italians, leading every stage except on the last-but-one he crashed heavily and broke both his ankles. Despite this, the big Frenchman carried on in horrendous pain to come second to Neveu and at the finish provided a famous piece of Paris-Dakar TV footage. This rock-hard, heroic rider who'd just ridden with terrible injuries, emotionally and physically drained, could be seen crying, still seated on his bike that he couldn't get off, knowing he'd just been pipped to victory.

Auriol moved to cars following that accident and won for Mitsubishi in 1992, making him the first to win the rally on both two-wheels and four. From 1995 Hubert changed role from competitor to director of the rally, but bikes stayed close to him. He created the Malle Moto class, where riders have no external help and even have to fix their bikes themselves.

BMW took a risk with the parts-bin R80G/S in 1980. But Hubert Auriol and his team-mates helped to show the world it was a superb, reliable machine. And more than 40 years later, the GS is still the best-selling large capacity bike in the UK.

The Paris-Dakar (now The Dakar) has continued to evolve over the years, with much help from Hubert Auriol. I'm sure BMW is grateful of the success 'The African' helped them achieve with the GS, and we are truly grateful to this desert rally hero for those enduring images of him pounding the Saharan sand dunes on his trusty BMW G/S. I'm sure you'll all join us in extending our sympathies to his family in this sad year. CBG



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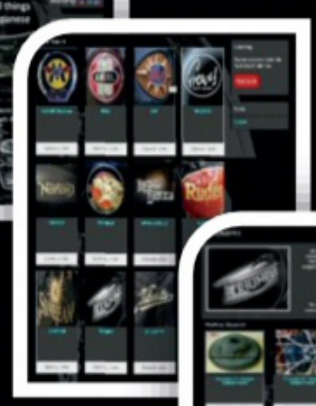

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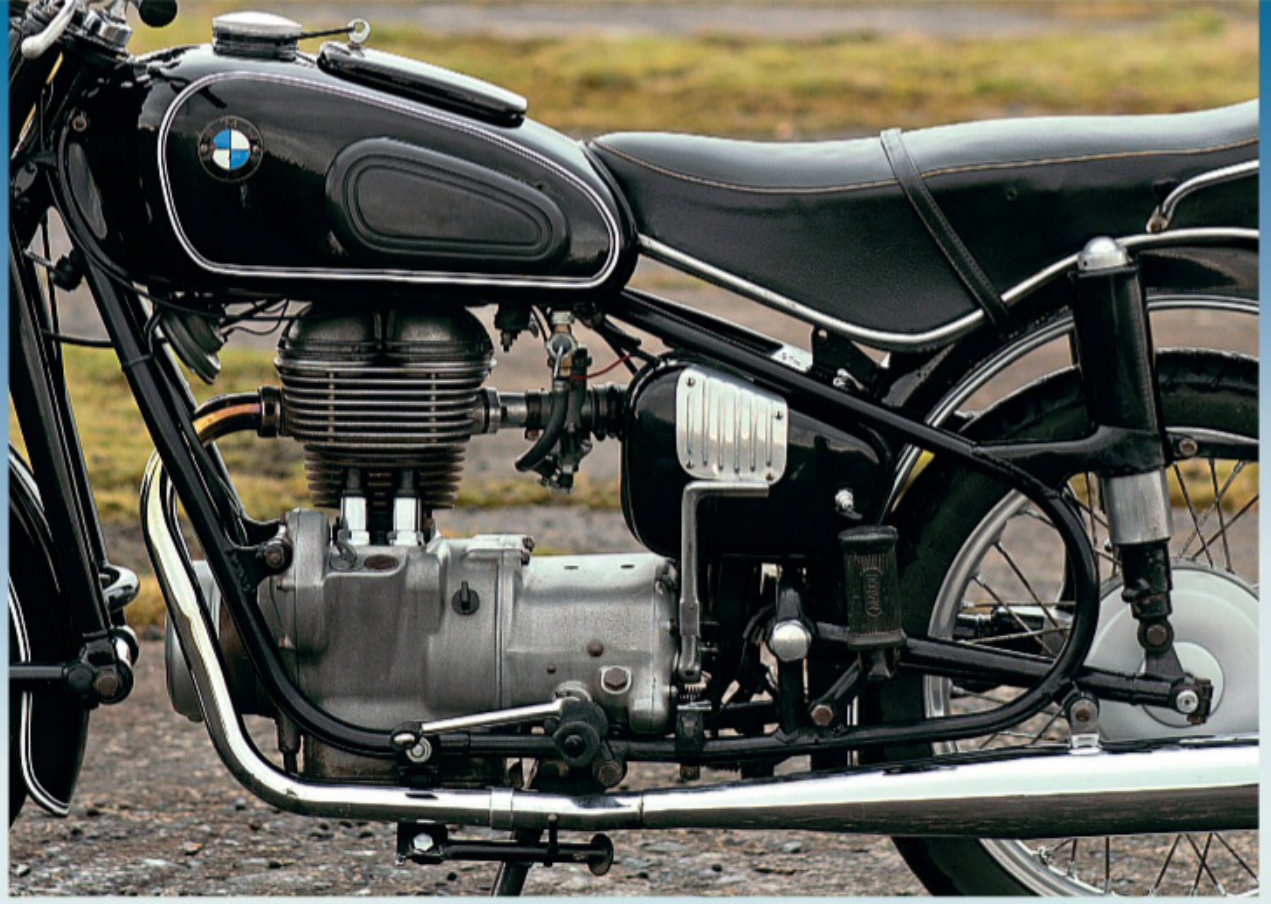
BMW R26

The famous airhead boxer twin-cylinder engine has become synonymous with the BMW brand, so it may come as some surprise to find out that some of the manufacturer's best-selling models were actually singles. In fact between 1948-1969, 62% of BMW motorcycles produced were singles, with the R25/3 remaining as BMW's best-selling motorcycle, right up until the F650's introduction in the Nineties.

WORDS BY OWEN HOWELL **PHOTOGRAPHY** MOTOSTUDIO.NET



A LOWER COST ALTERNATIVE TO THE PREMIUM twins, the R20-R27s were hugely popular in Germany, yet never really picked up the same following here in the UK, and nowadays the 1960 R26, featured here, is a rare sight on UK roads.

On first inspection it's very difficult to understand why; it is simply a beautiful motorcycle. Every component's shape and position on the motorcycle seems to have been carefully considered. The crankcase and gearbox are one smooth unit, with no surplus artefacts to distract. BMW's distinctly shaped cylinder now sits on top of the crankcase, with fins tapering up to the smooth rounded rocker cover.

It's so tidily put together you'd be forgiven for

Above: The R26 shows how BMW did things their own way. Earles forks, sideways kick-start, shaft drive, flowing lines.

Below: Performance is fun rather than fast, but handling is sure-footed.

thinking they must have missed out some vital piece, but it's all there, just laid out in a manner we're not accustomed to. No doubt helping the clean layout is the shaft drive, which allows the entire drive sequence, right from the crank to the bevel box, to run in one straight line down the middle. Finally it has been finished in the classic BMW black with white pinstripes, featured on so many of the bikes of the time.

BMW's historic build quality is also present. Despite the R26's 60-year life, which included 38,000 kilometres on the road as well as sitting in boxes in the back of a shed, most of the metal work is in perfect condition. The only rust is on spokes or bolts, understandable as this bike isn't just for show, it's still used as regular transport for all kinds of journeys, from a trip to the shops to longer tours.

Richard, the bike's owner, has kindly lent me this bike for the day. After a recent spin on its bigger brother, the twin-cylinder 500cc R69, I'm keen to see how it fares. The R26 shares a great deal of the same architecture and it wouldn't be far-fetched to call this the same bike with the engine rotated 90 degrees and a cylinder missing!

To get the R26 started there's no choke, just a 'tickler' on the carb to prime with some petrol. The transversally mounted kick-start means you stand next to the bike while operating and requires little effort to spin the engine to the sound of whizzing ratchet gears. Despite limited experience of the bike, it's quietly purring away after a couple of kicks from cold and I'm ready to ride away. Swinging a leg over, its relation to the R69 is instantly noticeable, and it feels big and long for a 250. Twists of the throttle result in the revs lazily rising and falling, and as the single plate clutch engages with little progression I'm jerked into motion with a dollop of torque.

Aside from the somewhat binary clutch, the R26 is an easy bike to ride around town. With surprising braking force from the drum brakes, sufficient torque, and the gear lever on the left, it's a bike even those not accustomed to classics could easily ride. The exhaust note is gentle yet satisfying, and with its comfy riding position its a relaxing place to be.

"It's so tidily put together you'd be forgiven for thinking they must have missed out some vital piece, but it's all there, just laid out in a manner we're not accustomed to"

“With surprising braking force from the drum brakes, sufficient torque, and the gear lever on the left, it’s a bike even those not accustomed to classics could easily ride”

As I leave town and head onto a big A-road hill, the bike's main shortfall becomes apparent. With only 15hp on tap the bike can only just register 60kph and I've got the throttle fully open. When the following oil tanker decides it's time to overtake I know I'm really struggling!

As the hill flattens out speed begins to pick up and the R26 soon settles to a steady gallop at around 50mph. Anything more requires working the engine a little too hard for my liking. We're not moving fast, but it's a pleasant experience, the long wheelbase combined with swingarm and shocks (an improvement on the plunger frame of the previous model) providing a smooth ride over the bumps. Pembrokeshire roads can be pretty hilly, and I become accustomed to the fact that I'll be losing a little speed up the hills, and enjoy the thrill of a bit more speed when descending the other side.

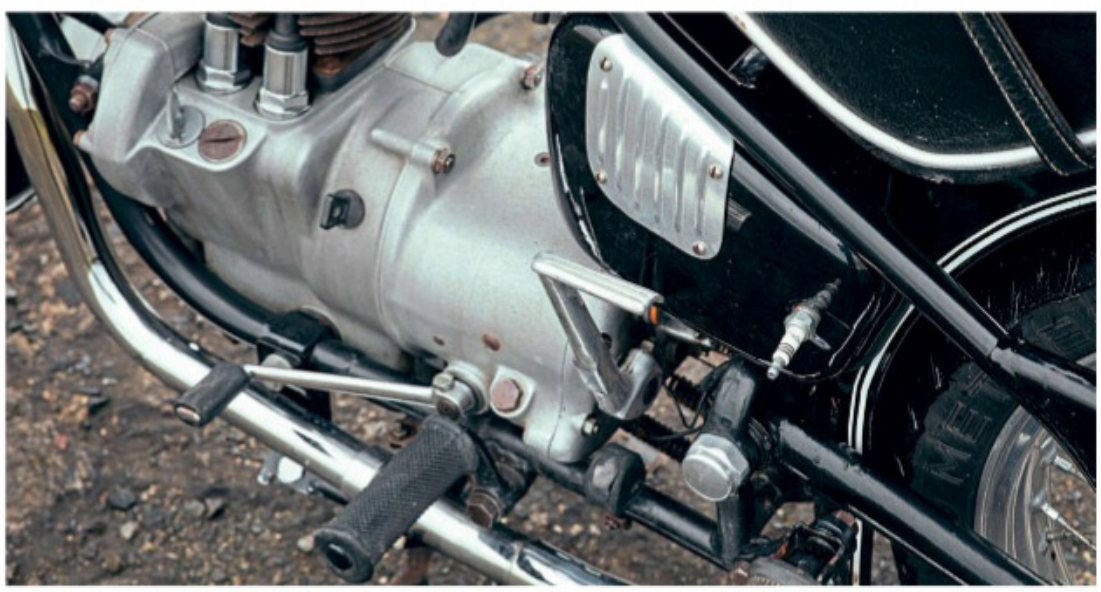
Leaving the main road and joining slower, windier roads, the R26 is in a happier place. The Earles forks provide positive handling and the study frame holds up well mid-corner. While the R26 can hustle its way though the bends to keep you moving at a decent pace, it's a sedate experience, and perhaps lacks the theatre of other 250s of the time.

The exhaust note is muted as you ride along, and certainly doesn't have the soul-stirring sound of a British single. Instead, it's a relaxing background noise, allowing you to focus on the pleasure of gliding through the countryside. Whereas some motorcycles excite and thrill, this bike does something different. Its civilised nature delivers a ride which doesn't fatigue, and I find myself not really wanting to stop riding. I'm glued to the saddle. When I come round a corner to find a train of horse riders the brakes prove to be strong enough for quick deceleration, with a pleasing absence of dive from the Earles front end. As I pass by, the gentle purr of the bike gives me the confidence I'm not going to startle the horses, and the friendly waves from the riders show their appreciation.

Above: It's an easy ride, a friendly ride

Left: It doesn't even scare the wildlife!

Below: That top end looks remarkably like an Enfield one, don't you think?



As they often are this time of year (winter), the Pembrokeshire roads are greasy with a combination of farm muck and damp conditions, so speeds are low to avoid the underpowered single being worked that hard. Cruising along at slower speeds, viewing the scenery is really where the bike excels. The quiet exhaust note and comfy saddle feel as though I could quite happily be sat here all day, and with the famous reliability of these old workhorses I feel confident that my enjoyment won't be interrupted by an untimely breakdown.

Maybe my confidence is unfounded, as after a brief stop for photos I find the bike unwilling to pull off without cutting out. It's only then I remember I took the key strap off to take photos. This isn't a standard part, it's just a piece of elastic wrapped around the headlight which Richard uses to stop the key from wiggling out of place – and it's a little worn these days. With the key reseated and the strap firmly in place, we're back on the move.

When I rode the R69 I felt its character and comfort would suit long distance riding, and I could imagine it to be a capable long distance tourer. The R26 is also something which I could spend all day on, but would consider a route through the back lanes, creating a different adventure altogether.

Like many when I ride classic bikes I like to think what sort of people would have ridden the bike I'm on. Costing £207, nearly twice as much as a Honda C72 250 Dream, the R26 was definitely in the high price bracket for a 250, but justifiably so as it shared the same quality and finish as the R69s. It would've attracted those that could afford and who appreciated good build quality but weren't too fussed on high-performance.

As a practical, everyday piece of transport the R26 would have excelled in taking its owner to a reasonably well-paid job in the week, and provide an opportunity to escape to leisure activities on the

Above: Ralf Stubbs, Richard's father, toured on the R26 regularly, often two-up

Five minutes with Richard, custodian of this BMW R26

What's the history of this bike?
My dad bought this bike from Osnabrück in Germany in 1990. My brother-in-law got it to Zeebrugge and I was tasked with getting it home to St David's in Pembrokeshire. We managed the 700-mile journey in one sunny summer's day, and there wasn't a single mishap, it just buzzed along. Admittedly it was pretty slow and vibey, the needle never got much over 100kph and I had very sore arse by the time I reached Pembrokeshire in the evening!

Throughout the Nineties my dad used it regularly and did tours around Ireland, with mum on the back, but eventually it got laid up in a damp shed and deteriorated until I got my hands on it. It would still start and run but the paintwork was pretty rough with surface rust almost everywhere. The aluminium was all still immaculate though.

What did you do to restore the bike?
When it came to restoring, at the time I didn't want to spend a lot of money on it, I just wanted to get it looking all right and get it going again. So I just stripped it down and got everything that was black powder coated, with the bodywork and panels getting painted and lacquered. Mechanically I just did a top end rebuild, replaced the piston rings, did a little honing by hand, ground the valves and put it back together. The original downpipe and silencer were completely gone so I replaced them. All the original levers were left on it, aside from the gear lever, which my dad bent when he crashed.

What's the best bit of the bike?
Well it was my dad's, which is everything. Jason, my son, even rode it to dad's funeral. But aside from that the suspension has to be the smoothest of any bike I've ever ridden, especially on the lanes around here. It's really low maintenance with its shaft drive, mega simple to service and I never seem to need to adjust the points. It doesn't take a lot of effort to start, my dad used to say you only need to lean on the kick-start to get it going.

Has it ever let you down?
Despite being generally quite dependable it does seem to go wrong when I take it on rallies. The first time it cooked an ignition coil and the second time the charging system started failing, causing it to run very badly. I abandoned the rally and headed straight for home, rolling down all the hills and then kick-starting it again to get it to go back up them. I kick-started that bike 100 times that day. Eventually I could only get it going by bump starting. I have no idea how but it did get me home, so technically it's only left me stranded once.

Does the spark plug sticking out of the side panel serve a purpose?
No, unfortunately I lost the original catch that was there and it just so happens a 16mm sparkplug is just the right thread.

What do you use it for?
Shopping! I just throw over some big panniers and pick up the family shopping. I occasionally use it for touring but otherwise I just enjoy riding it round the lanes and exploring Pembrokeshire, it's the perfect bike for it. You can do five miles down the back roads and it's just as much fun as going blasting down the main roads on a big bike.

What are your plans for the bike in the future?
I definitely want to take it to Ireland and follow in the footsteps of my mum and dad. I might treat it to a new piston one day, you can get a more modern, lighter piston for it which makes it less vibey and gives a bit more performance. Aside from that I'll just keep using it regularly and keep it as a great reminder of dad.

weekend. If they were a family person, then sidecar mounting was available and often fitted.

The R27 followed, and with it came a little extra horsepower at 18hp, which was pretty handy for a 250 single at the time. But at that point, with cars becoming cheaper and more prevalent, motorcycling was seen more as a leisure activity. The desire for an expensive, beautifully finished, but ultimately low performance motorcycle dwindled, and production of BMW's last ever shaft driven single ceased in 1966. CBG

Next month

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

Norton 600 Dominator

– found in a shed and restored to be ridden

Also: Velocette LE – before its time or never had a time? || Real world rides – Honda 350 twins – the best value classic at the moment? || New retro: Ducati's latest Scrambler || Malcolm Uphill's 100mph lap || How to paint, part 2

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Above: Phil Vincent stands outside the dishevelled Vincent HRD works, Stevenage, watching editor of The Motor Cycle, 'Torrens', test the first Series B Rapide. 'Torrens' was the name Arthur Bourne wrote under (it is Latin for Bourne, or small river), and many people, including a fresh-faced Phil Vincent, would ask of his opinion of all things motorcycling. This golden era must have been an incredible time to be in such an industry, with bikes more prevalent than cars, and Bourne and Vincent became good friends. If you are interested, have a look for Behind the Scenes in the Vintage Years, Torrens's memoir.

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NORTON RETURNS CLOSE TO MIDLANDS ROOTS

NORTON MOTORCYCLES HAS a new home... and has returned very close to its roots.

The company has moved to a new headquarters in Solihull, less than 10 miles from the 122-year-old motorcycle brand's original home in Bradford Street, Birmingham. The change follows a multi-million pound investment by its Indian parent company, TVS Motor Company. (The Norton Motorcycle Co Ltd was acquired by TVS in April 2020.)

The premises will be home to design, engineering, purchasing, sales, marketing, and support teams as well as the production team that is resuming manufacture of motorcycles.

Some of the specialist tooling and equipment previously used by Norton has been moved to Solihull, but the site is benefiting from substantial new investment. 50 new jobs have been created with more to follow.

Norton will resume production of the Commando Classic model at the Solihull site first, building a limited number to supply customers who had ordered and paid a deposit on these bikes. Production of the V4SS will commence soon.

Sudarshan Venu, joint managing director of TVS, said: "The opening of the new headquarters represents a significant step forward for Norton. This state-of-the-art facility will create the foundations for a sustainable long-term future. The new bikes will meet the world class standards our customers expect."

Work under way at Norton's new factory

BANBURY RUN AND COTSWOLD SHOW OFF

THE BANBURY RUN, the VMCC's premier event, will not take place this year. After deciding that arranging the event at its traditional scale was impossible, the club looked at many alternatives such as a simpler, smaller event or holding it later in the year, but it was felt that any of the options would have diluted the spirit of the event. The Banbury Run will now return in 2022.

Also cancelled is the 46th annual Gloucestershire Vintage & Country Extravaganza which was due to be held on August 6-8. The show normally takes at least 10 months to plan. One of the biggest Steam, Vintage and Countryside events in the UK it attracts over 20,000 visitors. It is staged on part of a live military base at South Cerney Airfield which is currently closed.

The show already costs £200k to stage and relies heavily on a good gate/public support. Organisers say the event would have incurred additional costs in order to comply with the pandemic regulations.

CLASSIC STAFFORD SHOW MOVES TO SUMMER DATE

THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIC MotorCycle Show at Stafford, usually held in April, has now been moved to a new date in July.

The show will continue to be held at Stafford Country Showground and will now take place on the weekend of the July 3-4. This will allow the organisers to deliver an even safer event that will be fully Covid-compliant and meet all government regulations regarding social distancing.

All ticket bookings will be rolled over, and new tickets will be sent out in May for this event. However, if you are unable to attend a full refund is available.

Any trade booking will be automatically moved to the new date, but again if you would prefer, please get in touch with organisers at Mortons Media for a full refund. Any clubs or private entries which have already booked will be automatically moved to the new date, but again, get in touch if you are unable to attend. For ticket enquiries contact Customer Services on 01507 529529 or email customerservices@mortons.co.uk Lines are open Monday-Friday, 8.30am-5pm.

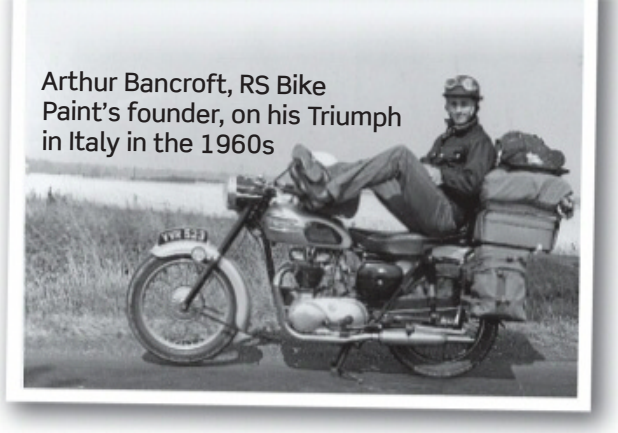
POTHOLES WORSE THAN DRINK DRIVING, SAYS IAM

POTHOLES ARE PERCEIVED by motorists to be a more significant concern than texting and drink driving, according to the findings of a new report from the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM).

IAM RoadSmart's annual Safety Culture Report, which tracks drivers' changing attitudes to key road safety issues over time, discovered that three in four motorists now perceive potholes to be a bigger issue for road users than they were three years ago. This was followed by driver distraction such as texting or talking on a mobile phone and traffic congestion.

After surveying more than 2000 motorists, they discovered around 90% of drivers have been affected by potholes over the last year.

It is estimated there are 42,675 miles of UK roads classed as being in poor structural condition. Poor or defective road surfaces, one of the major causes of motorcycle accidents, were a contributory factor in more than 500 reported bike crashes last year.



Arthur Bancroft, RS Bike Paint's founder, on his Triumph in Italy in the 1960s

PICK OUT YOUR PAINT

RS BIKE PAINT, which provides paint in original colours for thousands of classic and modern motorcycles, has launched a spanking new website – www.rsbikepaint.co.uk

With a few clicks of a mouse, you can find what shade of paint your bike should have and order it either as liquid paint for spraying or in an aerosol. The website has a completely new look and feel, making it easier for visitors to select the paints they need and order accordingly.

Managing director Phil Allen said: "The new website is the beginning of a new era for us. Our original online shop was launched more than 10 years ago and while it has served us well, it's time for a refresh. As a small family business, we are grateful to our customers for continuing to support us through these difficult economic times."

RS Bike Paint is the official after sales supplier to Kawasaki Motors Europe and Triumph Motorcycles Worldwide and has a database of over 160 motorcycle manufacturers and 45,000 paint records. In addition to main body colours, it also list colours for frames, wheels and engines.

RS will create your perfect shade

DAVIDA GEARS UP

FACTORY ORDERS FOR new Davida crash helmets, the bone-dome of choice for many a classic rider, are being taken for the new season.

Davida's offices have been closed but the company has been busy working in the background during the Covid pandemic, looking towards the future.

David Fiddaman, Davida's founder, said: "We are starting to rebuild our range with the 90 Speedster and the 93 Speedster V3 helmets which, if ordered now, will be available in the spring."

Pre-orders of the 90 Speedster and 93 Speedster V3 helmets can now be taken through the company website davida-helmets.com. Payments will be taken manually when an order is completed and ready for dispatch.

Davida is coming roaring back

TRIPLE NMM SUPPORT FROM TRIUMPH

Support the NMM and this could be yours

TRIUMPH HAS BACKED the National Motorcycle Museum's reopening appeal by donating a new Trident 660 to the reopening fund raffle.

Triumph's chief commercial officer Paul Stroud said: "We look forward to welcoming the winner at a Triumph dealership of their choice in the UK to collect their prize and encourage the many fans of the National Motorcycle Museum and British motorcycling to show their support in buying a ticket and contributing to the survival of this incredible UK venue."

NMM director James Hewing said: "We are absolutely delighted to have such a significant prize for our re-opening fund raffle. Offering a brand-new Triumph Trident 660 will really help towards raising the funds that will allow us to re-open seven days a week. We have a long-standing relationship with Triumph which has once again shown us its support at a time when it really matters."

For a chance to win the Trident visit www.national motorcycle museum.co.uk/appeal-raffle where you can purchase your raffle tickets directly online from the National Motorcycle Museum.

SUPPORT SAMMY'S SHOP

ALTHOUGH THE SAMMY Miller Motorcycle Museum is closed due to current lockdown restrictions (except for the workshop), the museum's Viv Brackett has been in touch to remind *CBG* readers that the new Museum Shop is live and ready to take orders on the museum's website.

"We have plenty of great gift ideas for everyone and you can purchase gift vouchers and admission tickets to the museum through the shop. They make great presents for whatever the occasion and can be personalised and signed by Sammy," says Viv. To access the shop visit the website at www.sammymiller.co.uk

From there you will be able to view the full range of the museum's merchandise and more. When lockdown is over more items will be added on a regular basis. If you cannot see what you want, send the team an email and you will be contacted within a couple of days.

NEW RIDERS CLUB FROM ROYAL ENFIELD

WE DON'T KNOW about you, but not being able to meet with other riders, no matter what they ride, might not have been the end of the world... but it has compounded the privations of the past year.

It comes as something of a welcome surprise, therefore, to see a manufacturer launch its own 'riders club' to encourage owners to meet up.

The Royal Enfield Riders Club of Europe is for all current and future Royal Enfield riders. There is, of course, already a very successful and long-established RE Owners' Club, and there are several riders' clubs in India. Not many manufacturers have official factory sponsored clubs, with the possible exception of Harley-Davidson.

Members of the European Royal Enfield Riders Club will be granted VIP access to shows and events – when they are finally allowed. Additionally, club members will get a first look at new models. Membership is free for the first year and if you already own an Enfield, you can sign up through the RE website now and get a free gift. Each individual official branch of The Riders' Club will organise exclusive members' events including local rides and community meet-ups. There will be a focus on Riding with a Cause charity and community efforts to raise awareness and support for core charity partnerships across Europe.

The club will support Royal Enfield's annual One Ride day of local charity ride outs which has been held each April for the last 10 years (except last year, for obvious reasons). Teams of fluorescent bibbed marshals blocking traffic on ride outs and a requirement not to wave at riders not on Royal Enfields have not been mentioned.

The Royal Enfield Riders' Club of Europe is expected to launch on April 1.

Parts Sp

Triumph Twin Power

Performance parts for the air cooled Triumph twins 2001-2016

TTP EFI or Carb Stage 1 Kit

The EFI or Carb Stage 1 Torque Induction Kit includes everything required to tune your bike to your chosen exhaust system. This kit gives excellent mid-range torque and very good top end power. Choice of custom EFI tunes or jetting kits for many exhaust systems.

TTP EFI or Carb Stage 2 Kit

The Stage 2 kit is built around our high-quality aluminium airbox removal kit (ARK) and includes everything required to tune your bike to your chosen exhaust system. It has a place for all the ancillaries, easy access fuse box and can accommodate the largest available DNA pod filters for excellent power. Choice of custom EFI tunes or jetting kits for many exhaust systems.

TTP Fire Starter Performance Igniter Unit

The Fire Starter is "Plug & Play", no programming and no need to figure out which maps to use as the correct maps for your bike are installed. Our dyno developed ignition advance curves give you more power & torque, don't suffer from hot or cold start problems and greatly reduce deceleration popping.

904s Sports Big Bore Kit

There are very few modifications you can perform on an engine that will improve power and torque right through the rev range, but TTP's 904s big bore kit is one of those modifications. In use the extra top end horsepower is excellent, but the revelation is the extra torque throughout the rev range which gives great acceleration. 12:1 CR, tight quench & anti-friction coated pistons.

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While there are a number of companies that seem to specialise in every aspect of our two wheeled world, we have to remember that there are also a large number of companies that specialise in some very specific areas. Not only are these companies likely to have an expansive knowledge of their chosen subject, they're also far more likely to stock the seemingly rare and unobtainable parts that can't be found at the more generic dealers and suppliers

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

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MADE IN BRITAIN

Kärcher K5 Power Control pressure washer

I've used Kärcher pressure washers on tractors and equipment before, but never a motorbike – and especially an old bike. This Kärcher is new, so what better excuse for a little off-roading?

One filthy BSA later and it was time to see what all the fuss is about. The K5, just one of the many in the range, is powerful at a max of 20 bar, though after hearing horror stories of lifting paint and steam in the electrics, I started off at less.

After getting the mud off, parts were still dirty with grease and oil, so I sprayed on an R and G degreaser and left for a few minutes while I plugged the washer into the mains and the outside tap. This model has a simple on and off switch with two lances, one variable and one for max power. I opted for the first.

For a muddy bike, the washer is a revelation. One clean bike with no untouchable areas and no bloodied hands! I was extra careful around the mag-dyno, headlight and bearings but the greasy hubs and areas around the spoke nipples have never been so clean.

After the B31 I used it on my car, which was just dirty from road grit. That needed a sponge to lift the grime, but the washer made light work of rinsing, the wheels and wheel arches. Next the moss on the walls, the kids...

The Kärcher range is available with models that use a phone app to help you adjust the pressure. Not sure it sounds any more than a gimmick, as I found the K5 a very well-built, versatile piece of kit that is second nature to use. I fear a phone app would actually make it more complicated.

Slightly annoyingly, you have to screw the thing together with badly printed instructions – I don't expect to have to build a pressure washer that cost £330.

That aside, the K5 has proved to be an effective tool for many jobs, like cleaning engine cases and, unlike the old farm one, the hose, lance and mains lead have somewhere to tidy themselves so it doesn't take up too much room. You don't need it unless off-roading is your thing, but once you've got used to it, you use it more and more. You must show extreme caution with pressure washers around paint, electrics and bearings, as the power will dry them out in no time. But they are useful and this Kärcher looks well made.

Matt

- **kaercher.co.uk**
- **£330**

Blakeney knife by Ashley Watson

This is sheer beauty, and the true essence of being prepared as a gentleman in the world. I have carried a British Army knife (my grandfather's) since I was in the Scouts and am used to having a blade on me.

Now Ashley Watson has made his take on the old favourite, using knife maker Joseph Rodgers.

They have taken the old army knife and made it smaller, as well as lighter – therefore you're more likely to have it on you. The body is then made from brass, while the blade is 60mm Sheffield steel. Large enough to be useful, it is also compliant with the law, so legal to carry.

This would make an excellent present, or one of those items you always have at your disposal; your wallet, your phone and your Blakeney knife.

- **Ashleywatson.co.uk**
- **£55**

Arai Quantic helmet

1994. Traction control wasn't a thing, airbags were people you tried to avoid, and I saved up for my first Arai helmet – a pink Harada replica Quantum I used as an instructor every day. I loved it and it still lives on my office wall more than 25 years later.

Twenty-seven years on, the Quantic, my old helmet's natural successor, comes out. It's designed for those who cover a lot of miles, so has new venting and a flash new spoiler on the back. It also has a wider visor, and a stupidly-fiddly changing system should you want to change to a tinted visor. Otherwise, it looks remarkably similar for your £500.

We haven't tried this new Quantic yet, so I will hold back on judgement. But in my 27-year career I have tried more than 100 different helmets and keep coming back to Arai. They're well-built, fit me perfectly, are sublimely comfortable and have, so far, protected me. They are also irritatingly expensive and refuse to make a flip-up model, rarely worry about the acoustic damage their design makes, and look dreadfully old-fashioned, but I like them because they work. Hope this one is just as good.

Matt

- **whyarai.co.uk**
- **£499 plain colours**

Sena 3S Plus boom or universal

Now this could be something you're looking for. Intercoms – fit them in your helmet and you can either chat to a pillion or fellow rider with a similar system, or use it to take calls and listen to music while riding.

But they're all getting rather confusing in their pursuit to have the latest gadgets, and are also getting bigger, stuck on the side of your helmet. They've also been getting ridiculously expensive.

The new Sena 3S is simplicity itself. Fitting to your helmet is easy and once fitted, hardly noticeable. Still just two buttons to perform all the functions, but there are less functions and it's easy to get used to. It also comes with a boom, so works well with an open-face or flip-up helmet and easy to swap from one to the other, should you need.

Because it doesn't subscribe to the 'mine has more stuff than yours' battle, it's cheaper. The Sena 3S is £99 per headset. That's more like it.

- **sena.com/store-locator**
- **£99 each**

Letters

Thank you from us all, Peter

What a lovely remembrance piece on the great Peter Williams by Alan Cathcart in February's *Classic Bike Guide*.

As Alan highlighted, Peter was both a brilliant rider and brilliant innovative engineer. I was always interested to read about his exciting contributions in either field – and to combine both – amazing. And to keep contributing after his life-changing injuries – even more encouragement for the rest of us.

Just one quibble – for Alan to describe Wagon Wheels merely as 'a popular biscuit snack of the day' doesn't do justice to an ongoing treat I am munching even as I write. Thanks all at *CBG*.

Peter Beresford

Jota memories

After reading your article on the Laverda Jota, it brought back memories of my own Jota. It was a Jota 80, with small fairing and glass fibre front mudguard (above).

During my test ride I was pushing quite hard as I approached a sharp bend, with a pub on the left-hand side. There were people in the beer garden, who all looked as I dropped the bike down three gears, and opened her up out of the turn. I rode on for a few miles then turned around and headed back. The people at the pub must have heard me coming, because as I approached they were standing up, and as I passed they cheered. I knew then that with the vibration noise and excitement I had to have that bike.

I owned the bike for about seven years, during which time I completely stripped it, painted the frame and rebuilt the moto, the only problem I had was sinking valve seats, which was sorted out by Phil Todd.

I remember being very impressed by the finish on the inside of the engine, beautiful. I rode the bike as much as possible, including a trip to the Dutch TT, I was a member of the Laverda Owners' Club for many years, and attended rallies. On one such rally a journalist approached me and asked if he could ride my bike as he was doing a feature, on Laverdas. I agreed. On his return he said ,mate this is the best Jota I have ever ridden, I was very pleased. I have regretted selling that bike to this day.

Derek Boon

Suzuki T500 proddie racer

Great magazine and one of the things that have kept me sane over the last few months. Your star letter in the November edition had a photo of a Crooks T500 Suzuki Production racer and I also have a similar bike.

Back in the early 1970s, *Motor Cycle Mechanics* raced a T500 for a season of Production races including the IOM and my bike is a replica of the bike they used. I think the mechanic was called Randy Hall, with a range of riders, one being Martin Ashworth. Would it be possible to do a feature on 1970s Production racing at some point?
Chris Williams

We'll do some digging and see what we can find, Chris

CB900F camchain advice to quell a myth

STAR LETTER

Despite last month claiming early bikes were two valves per cylinder in the text and in the specs, this is wrong. All CB900s had four-valve heads from the start.

You also mention the value of getting opinions from people who have lived with a bike for at least a year. I've got two, both bought brand new; an FA from 1980 and an FD from 1983. I can dispose of the camchain myth that still persists.

My FA did 91,000 miles in less than four years commuting into London and being ridden round Europe, including being bogged down on a beach in St Tropez and snowed in at a helicopter skiing station near the Susten Pass in Switzerland: all on the original camchains and tensioners. In that time just a headlamp bulb and a speedo cable broke.

At 91,000 I burnt an exhaust valve. On a 900 the head can't be removed without taking the engine out. So as it was out I looked inside. Crank unworn, camshafts unworn, cylinders still showed the honing marks. Because it was out I put in new shells and main bearings, together with a new primary chain, gearbox bearings and new valves. It had an easier life when I stopped commuting, and has now reached 115,000 miles.

The FD I ran in for three weeks and rode to Athens and round Greece and later round Spain and Portugal. One horn went out of tune. This one ran to almost 60,000 miles on the same camchains and tensioners and again I suffered a burnt exhaust valve. That had new valves, camchains and tensioners but the bottom end (based on my previous experience) was left untouched, and has carried on past 100,000 miles.

Many owners who religiously adjust the big obvious camchain adjuster above the exhaust headers (this just tensions the short camchain between the camshafts) don't realise the two insignificant looking domed nuts behind the cylinders and hidden under the carbs are the adjusters for the long camchain that runs from the crank to the exhaust camshaft, hence it runs loose, breaks and the myth was born.
Mike Maflin

Many thanks, Mike, hope this is useful to others – Matt

THIS MONTH'S STAR LETTER WINS

The writer of this month's Star Letter wins Weise Tundra jeans worth £169.99. A-rated riding jeans built for day-long comfort, using stretch denim reinforced with an Aramid Fibre lining and CE approved knee armour. Find out more at www.weiseclothing.com

New

RETRO

Caption 1

Happy centenary, Moto Guzzi!

The famous Italian brand is 100 years old this March, so we look at the planned celebrations and how to get into Moto Guzzi ownership. Be warned though; once leered in, those V-twins will have your heart forever...

WORDS BY OLI HULME PHOTOGRAPHY BY MOTO GUZZI

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES are something of a cash cow for motorcycle manufacturers, especially those heavily invested in the retro business.

They are frequently marked by taking an existing model, often one that is approaching the end of its shelf life. Give it a fresh paint scheme, possibly a numbered brass plaque or a certificate, and mark the price up a little. Take a bow the struggling Meriden Triumph in 1977 for coming up with the idea and creating the Silver Jubilee Bonneville.

Not many manufacturers would revamp most of their range with new engines, frames and technology to go with the new paint schemes and additional fripperies. Moto Guzzi, who really do have something to celebrate, have done just this. They have marked a century of their existence with a flurry of new models and a special event later this year. It also may, or may not, have something to do with new Euro emission laws working against the old engines…

Moto Guzzi began making motorcycles in March 1921 at their Mandello del Lario factory on the shores of Lake Como, Italy, and have been doing so ever since. The factory may be a shadow of its former self, but it still has those magic red gates, the remnants of the test track and the incredible wind tunnel, the first of its sort in Europe and a major force in maintaining those Grand Prix wins.

Their current range already has a heritage that runs back to the 1960s. At the end of the decade, Moto Guzzi presented the 90° transverse V-twin engine with shaft drive that was to become the backbone of the business. The Benelli-based, badge-engineered bikes of the 1970s are long gone, but the V-twin soldiers on. Even the Berlin police use them.

The original V-twin powerplant was used as the basis for models such as the first Guzzi V7, the V7 Sport and Special, the California, 850cc Le Mans and the Spada. The V-twin was also produced in smaller capacity V35 and V50 variants.

Despite legend, it was not developed from a military tractor. There have been several incarnations and refinements of the engine since the 1960s, but the basic platform and the ever-familiar Guzzi bark and "Guzzi shake" on start-up have been retained. It was only recently that the casting shape in the cases for the distributor drive disappeared!

To mark the centenary Moto Guzzi will produce a limited edition series of their models in Centennial Livery, which will be available on V7, V9 and V85 TT models throughout 2021. Only a handful will be sold in UK dealerships.

Alongside these special editions are new 850cc, 65bhp, V7s and new versions of the V9 Bobber and the V9 Roamer. There's also an updated V85TT off-roader, billed as the only retro enduro machine you can buy.

The V9 Roamer is a traditional custom, full of unique details and flashy finishes. The V9 Bobber is stripped back and has a matt finish, with wide tyres and a minimalistic look. Both the V9s have an 850cc, 65bhp engine derived from the unit that equips the V85 TT, with a frame that has been strengthened in the headstock area to increase stability and riding precision. The foot pegs are mounted on rubber pads to reduce vibration, there is ABS, and the adjustable MGCT traction control system, which can be manually disabled, also comes standard.

Moto Guzzi celebrates this birthday with the GMG - Giornate Mondiali Moto Guzzi, scheduled to be held in Mandello del Lario from September 9 to 12.

The GMG was last held in 2011 and tens of thousands of enthusiasts are expected to flock from all over the world for the event, made possible by the collaboration between Moto Guzzi, Motoraduno Internazionale Committee and the municipality of Mandello del Lario.

In the final year for the Bicilindra as a works bike, Fergus Anderson won the 1951 Swiss GP

WHICH TWIN IS FOR YOU?

Retros are big business, and the biggest business of the lot is being done by Royal Enfield and their Interceptor, which shares a market sector with the Moto Guzzi V7 and the various Triumph twins.

Sales of the Royal Enfield are massive in comparison to those of the V7. It's estimated that 2000 Interceptors were sold in the UK in 2020, while Moto Guzzi has sold 500 V7iii models in Britain since 2017.

The Guzzi is a lot more expensive than a RE, but you can pick up a good low mileage V7 750 for the same, or less than, a new Interceptor. Which then, should you go for? A new RE or a used low miles V7 for around the same price? We asked Jeremy at Dorset-based Moto Guzzi and Royal Enfield dealers Moto Corsa. They have a two-year-old V7 Stone for sale for £5,799, about the same as a new Interceptor.

Jeremy said: "The Guzzi is the better all-round bike. Designed by Italians and built by Italians, in Italy, it shouts out what it is. But it's hard to compare the two, because of so many factors.

"The RE comes with a three-year factory warranty, while on a second-hand Guzzi it will have run out. The Interceptor is our top-selling bike by a long way, and I sell more Interceptors than all the Guzzis put together. The Interceptor is great value for money. It doesn't quite have the finish of the Guzzi, or the equipment; the Guzzi has traction control, for example. But it does have twin clocks, which the V7 Stone doesn't. The Enfield ticks all the boxes. It has wire wheels, which people like, and it's got great brakes, good handling and a very uncomfortable seat."

"On the Guzzi some worry about the lack of a centre stand, but it's got a shaft drive, so it doesn't really need one. They don't like the single clock, but there's a rev counter in there anyway.

"The Interceptor is for those on a fixed budget while Guzzi is more for the purist who wants to spend their money on something a little special."

One thing the cost-conscious buyer should consider is service intervals. Long term servicing costs are very different.

The Moto Guzzi has a first service at 900 miles, and then the service interval is a every 6,000 miles. The Interceptor has a first service at 300 miles and then every 3,000 or 12 months. It costs the same per hour to service a Guzzi or an Enfield.

Jeremy says the Interceptor is holding its value well. Recently a second-hand top spec Interceptor which sold for £6,200 new was brought back and sold for £5,500.

Anyone expecting to pick up one of the last of the V7 750s new for a knock-down price is likely to be disappointed. Moto Guzzi dealers made it clear to the factory that the V7 was too expensive last year, and prices were cut to £7,000. As a result, pretty much every dealership has sold out of 750 V7s and they are waiting for the 850 to arrive. This might mean a few used ones will appear as owners decide to upgrade, however. Jeremy said his phone was ringing off the hook with enquiries about the 850.

The new 850 V7 will be sold for between £8,000 and £8,600, competing with the £5,800 Interceptor and the £8,100 Triumph Street Twin.

V85TT is a great bike, very useable and still looks classy compared to rivals

The incredible Moto Guzzi wind tunnel - though the V9 should be parked the other side of the prop...

"I wouldn't swop my V7 racer for anything," says Wally, while Fozzie's verdict was: "They are for the discerning gentleman or lady. They reward a bit of care and attention."

THE RIDERS' VIEW

There is no better way of finding out what a bike is like than by asking someone who owns one, so we contacted members of the Moto Guzzi V7 UK Facebook group.

Sam Barltrop listed a few common faults, including a weeping rear drive seal, poor clutch cable routing causing melting and issues with the clutch throw out, bearing while Dave Simmons said that the V7ii seems to eat batteries quite readily, and rear wheel removal is "a bit of a pig". He also warned of a snatchy throttle when cold, which can be sorted with a DIY remap.

Jane Hatton Robinson said: "Beware of never wanting to get off it!! Be prepared to talk about it at every destination you go to, and people wanting to sit on it! "

Wally Warburton warned of a fragile choke control, the lambda sensor mount cracking, and rec/reg failures - all trivial but fairly common. He added: "I wouldn't swop my V7 racer for anything."

Fozzie Forsdike's verdict was: "They are for the discerning gentleman or lady. They reward a bit of care and attention."

William Symington reports that his V7ii has needed its left cylinder head nipping up a couple of times with a slight oil weep. In 10,000 miles, the only other faults were the oil warning lamp once coming on for no obvious reason, never to recur, and a weeping front brake reservoir, solved with using the MkI cover.

Rodney Horton said that taking the head covers off to check the plugs and valve clearances requires a 7.5mm hex and a star torx screw bit.

Simon Bisson said: "Guzzis welcome you with a shake when you start up. No other bike has the soul a Guzzi does.

"I bought my first V7 as the result of a 2012 MCN retro road test against the Bonnie and a W800 Kwacker. It was no contest. I now also own a Bonnie and it's a competent bike, but the Guzzi is something else."

Chris Uka Layley's verdict: "Fantastic bike, way better than the sum of its parts. I bought a V7ii Stornello in late 2016 and have now covered around 11000 miles, including a two-week tour of Italy when my wife was riding it. It hasn't missed a beat and has never let us down.

"It once 'sweated' a faint mist of oil onto the left cylinder fins but I cleaned it off and it hasn't happened again. I will never sell this bike. It is number 127 of only a thousand ever made. When we returned from Italy, I sold my two Hondas and bought a Guzzi V85TT because the V7 impressed me so much.

Page admin "Merv Jampot" said: "You really need to be prepared for the obsession that follows purchase of a V7. This is caused by the knowledge you are riding a proper, Italian motorcycle." CBG

Moto Guzzi V7 Anniversary colours look great in the flesh

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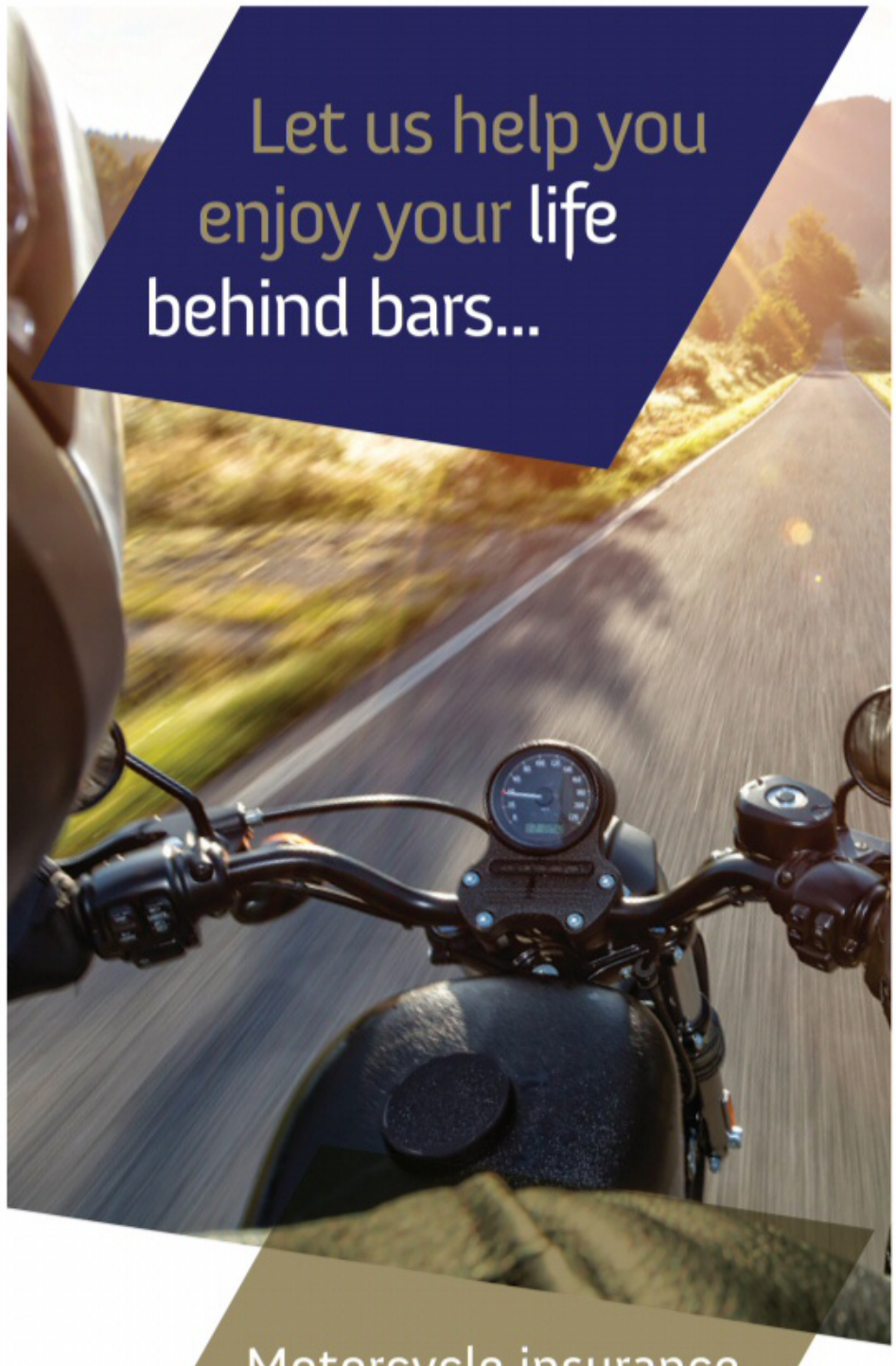

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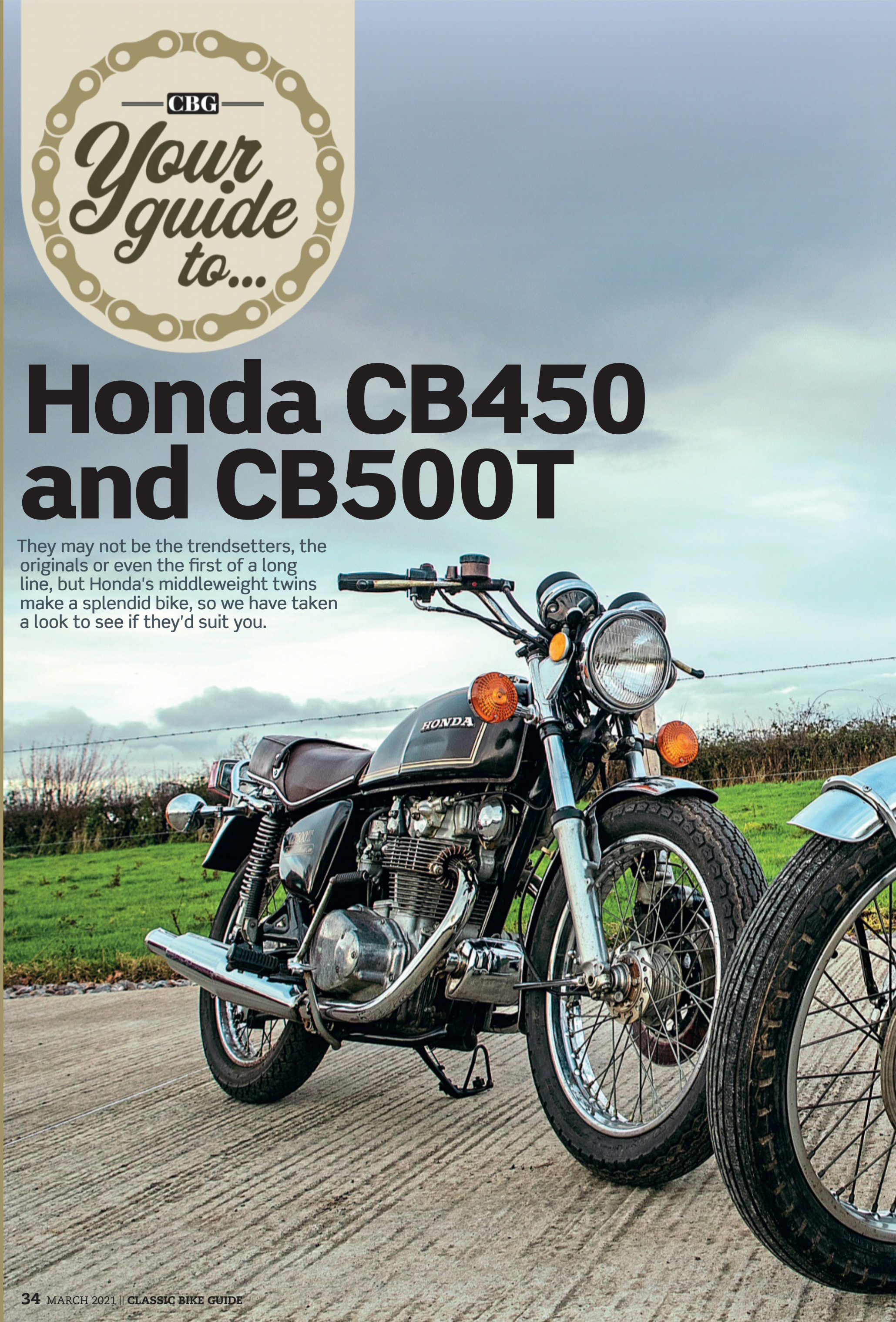
Your guide to...

Honda CB450 and CB500T

They may not be the trendsetters, the originals or even the first of a long line, but Honda's middleweight twins make a splendid bike, so we have taken a look to see if they'd suit you.



WORDS BY OLI HULME **PHOTOS BY** GARY CHAPMAN

In 1965, Honda introduced to the world a ground-breaking motorcycle. Their biggest road machine to date, it was a world away from anything the then dominant British motorcycle industry had on offer. The CB450 Black Bomber was a twin, like its British rivals. But that was as close as the similarities went.

It had two overhead camshafts, rather than none in the case of BSA, Triumph et al. It had an electric starter. It didn't vibrate your fillings out. It was fast. It didn't leak oil in vast quantities. Rather than using a balancer shaft, Honda had stopped it vibrating at speed by using a 180-degree crank, supported on four huge main bearings. The engine had an extremely short stroke. At lower revs, the engine did produce a buzz, but once you were past 4000rpm it started to smooth out.

Honda packed the CB450 with modernity, the engine featuring about six feet of cam chain, double overhead camshafts, a wet sump, a horizontally split crankcase, and something exotic called 'torsion bar' valve operation.

Developing 43hp at 8500rpm, the engine could go further than that, too, with a 12,000rpm redline. To cope with all this mechanical movement, each valve used a torsion bar rather than a coil spring. This was a length of steel bar that twisted at right angles to the valve, each one operating through its own rocker. With the mechanism opening and closing the valves, rather than relying on a spring to close them, meant there was no chance of valve bounce at the top end of the rev range. The rockers sat on eccentric shafts with valve clearances adjusted through a screw, and locknut arrangement on the outside of the cylinder head. At the bottom end it had gear primary drive to a multi-plate clutch and four gears.

So far, so sophisticated. The fact it didn't handle worth a damn meant nothing to those dazzled by all the technology and engineering. This poor handling was down to curious steering geometry, extra hard Japanese tyres, and very bouncy shocks and front forks. The frame combined tubes and welded stampings and like many a Japanese bike of the period, there simply wasn't enough bracing stopping the frame from flexing on a bike as heavy as a Bonneville.

It looked very 60s Honda. That is, it had big-chromed panels on the tank and seamed silencers. Those silencers, like a lot of Honda offerings, tended to rot out quickly, and once holed they were usually chucked away and replaced with reverse-cone megaphones or Dunstall Decibel 'silencers', if you had a few more quid. Those using the cheaper option would find they hit performance, as straight-through megaphones would severely affect the jetting on the Keihin CV carbs and attract unwanted attention from grumpy neighbours and over-keen guardians of law and order. The biggest problem for Honda, though, was that a CB450 cost more than a 650 BSA or Triumph twin, while its biggest selling point was that it was as fast as, well, a 650 BSA or Triumph twin.

In 1969 the 450 gained an extra two horses, a wider spread of power, a five-speed gearbox and a slight trimming of the body work so it looked like a big CD175. In 1970 it got another new look. The drum front brake was dropped and instead a whole new front end came from the CB750, featuring Honda's terrible stainless steel disc brake and floating caliper.

By this time, the CB450 had vanished from UK showrooms for a few years, presumably because Honda had decided, correctly, that the Europeans would want to buy their shiny new CB500-4 rather than a 450 twin. In 1975, though, it reappeared here, revamped as the CB500T. This increased capacity was achieved not by boring out the cylinders but by increasing the stroke. The addition of this extra 50cc by this method meant that the engine was more vibratory and far less reliable than the older bikes. As

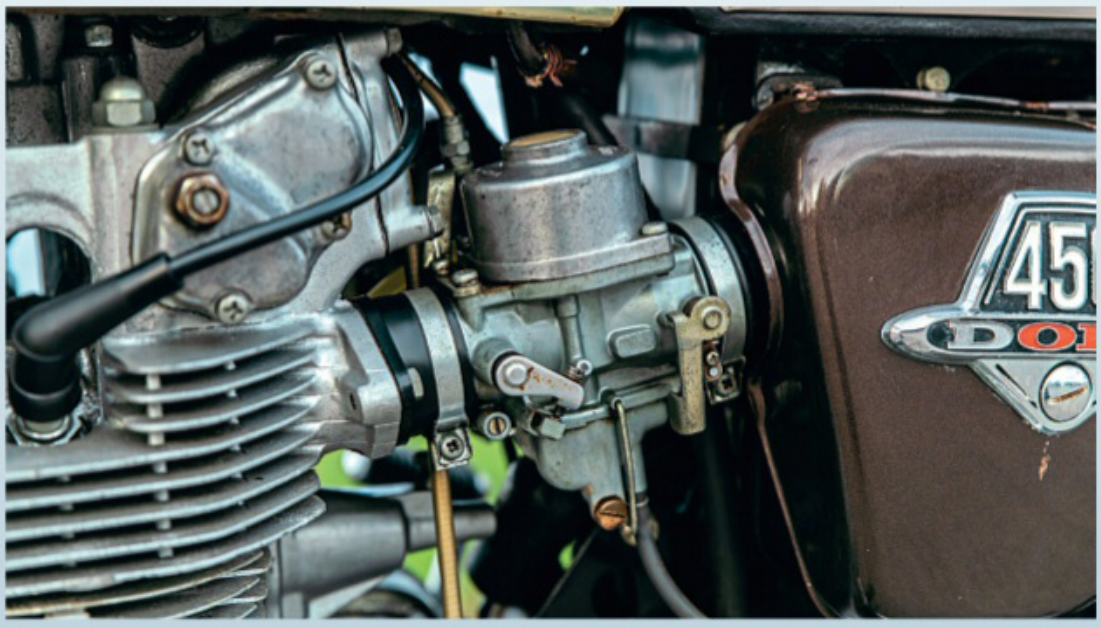
the engine was fractionally taller, the space in the frame needed to be fractionally taller too, which was done by steepening the angle of a pressed steel brace under the tank, designed to stiffen the steering head.

This mucked about with the already curious steering. The slightly taller engine meant that the twin carbs were in line with the cylinder head, rather than having the slightly downdraft arrangement of the 450. The lights, clocks and idiot lights came out the Honda stores. You could buy a CB500T in a range of 1970s colours. That is, brown or orange, with stick on pinstripes. The first models came with a brown seat, too, for reasons lost to antiquity.

The CB500T's exhaust system was even more prone to rot than the one fitted to the 450. As well as being seamed and ugly, with curious trumpet ends, they rusted as quickly as those on the 450, both inside and out. It had a huge collector box in front of the engine, perfectly positioned for exposure to road muck. As with the 450, attacking the downpipes with a hacksaw and bolting on a set of Dunstall Decibels made for a prettier profile, and a much nicer noise.

The CB500T wasn't a big seller for Honda in the UK and the complex nature of the engine design made it expensive to build, even though by 1975 the original development costs must have been long settled. It didn't really fit any customer demand at the time, either. Fans of the big twin could pick up a Yamaha XS500 for a few pounds less or a Triumph 750 for not a lot more, and everyone else wanted triples or fours. It was a staid and sensible mount, when sensible wasn't on the average motorcyclist's agenda.

The CB500T, descended from Honda's first big bike, finally shuffled off quietly into retirement in 1978, and Honda moved into a very different territory with the CX500.



TWO TWINS ON THE ROAD

I WAS ABOUT to be reunited with an old acquaintance. I'd bought a 1976 CB500T in 1981, a few weeks after I'd passed my bike test. Forty years on, Somerset Classics had two of Honda's twins to try. There was an early 1970s CB450K twin, and a CB500T from 1977.

First up, the CB450K. First impressions were that it fitted. The footrests were in the right place, the gear and brake pedals were perfectly positioned, and the handlebars were at the right height. The tank, a truncated version of the CB750 offering, was possibly a little wide. Slightly disturbing was the movement of the bars in their rubber mountings, which felt a little too wobbly for comfort. Turn the key in the ignition mounted below the tank. Flip the choke lever on the side of each carb, which control butterflies in the carb inlet, give it a couple of prods on the kickstart – gets the engine started without fuss. It vibrated, a little, and the rumble from twin Dunstalls was loud enough to drown out the off-beat firing pulses. It slipped into gear like every Honda I've ever ridden, with no fuss or drama, and nothing more than a click.

WHAT IS IT?
Honda's first big bike

GOOD POINTS?
Well-built and easy to live with

BAD POINTS?
The handling is suspect and it's possibly a little over complicated

COST?
Basket case/project: £500-£1,000 runner)
Oily rag runner: £1,500-£3,500
Museum quality: £5,000-£6,000

"It had two overhead camshafts, rather than none in the case of BSA, Triumph et al. It had an electric starter. It didn't vibrate your fillings out. It was fast. It didn't leak oil in vast quantities."

SPECIFICATION (1970 CB450K)

ENGINE: DOHC parallel twin **DISPLACEMENT:** 444cc **BORE X STROKE:** 70x57.8mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9:1 **POWER:** 45 BHP **FUEL SYSTEM:** Twin Keihin Seiki CV **CLUTCH:** seven plate **GEARBOX:** 5-speed **LUBRICATION:** Wet sump **FRAME:** Single downtube cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** twin oil damped shocks **WHEELBASE:** 54ins (1371mm) **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5.5 ins (140mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31ins (787mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 415lb(188kg) **FUEL CAPACITY:** 3 gallons (13.6litres) **TYRES:** 3.25x19 front and 3.50x18 rear **BRAKES:** 11 inch (280mm) single disc front, rear 7 inch (177mm) drum **ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:** 12volt **TOP SPEED:** 103mph.

The clutch was set a little higher than for my taste, and it leapt forward, as much as any hefty old twin can leap. At very low speeds the bars still felt a little wobbly, but past 20mph the movement vanished. From take-off the vibes increased, and then almost entirely vanished the harder it was revved. The solid feel transferred nicely to the handling at moderate speeds.

Like most of the bikes in the Somerset Classics showroom, the CB450 had been given a once-over but nothing too excessive. Again, like most bikes in the shop, the tyres were old and, as most of them have low miles, it came with original equipment, including the bouncy old original shock absorbers, which really need replacing with something like a set of Hagons. Nothing too flash, though, as with centre stand and footrests limiting the angle of lean, you'll touch tarmac long before the shocks run out of damping.

Being physically large – its heavier than a British 750 twin – makes it seem ideal for putting on a lot of miles in relative comfort, if a little slowly. Past 60 and things start to become hard work in the handling department, which is down to the weight. The engine pulls well in lower gears at higher revs – 9,000 rpm is, I'm told, when everything starts to happen. You have to turn the choke off soon, or the engine will quickly over fuel and badly misfire. As I found out, it'll take a good deal of spirited throttle work to clear it.

Equipment is decent for an early 1970s machine, with little cheese paring; Honda might not have fitted anti vibration mounts to the engine, but they did pack the battery compartment with vibration deadening soft foam rubber.

Back at the shop, it was time to try the CB500T. On release, the 500T was considered to stylistically be more 'European' than the 450 by the pundits, by which they meant British. Apart from the instrument binnacle, idiot light console and centrally mounted ignition switch, the equipment was near identical to the 450.

Like the 450, on the 500T the electric start, which was the major selling point in the bike's original Black Bomber guise, could not be used. Like the 450, the switch had been blanked off. Why? That wasn't clear. It could have been something as simple as the brim of the 'top hat' starter button breaking and falling off – a fault with Japanese starter buttons of the period.

In any case it was just as easy to kick over as the 450. This is remarkable given that the gearing of the starter is such that it would take three full kicks to give the crank a full rotation. The fact you could still start it easily was testament to the quality of the design.

The bars were taller, though, and had the same

A BRUSH WITH THE LAW, SEPTEMBER 1981

ONE AUTUMN EVENING I had been out for a ride on the Honda when I was pulled over by a motorcycle policeman on a Norton Commando, as I'd been doing rather more than 30mph in a 30mph zone.

The conversation with the guardian of Law and Order went as follows:

Officer: "Do you know how fast you were going, sonny?"

Me: "A bit over the limit?"

Officer: "Why were you going 'a bit over the limit?' In a hurry to get somewhere, were we?"

Me: "Well, the thing is, my lights don't work properly, cos my generator isn't working, so I was trying to get home before it got dark."

There was a pause. The copper stopped preparing to fill out the HORT1 form requiring me to present my documents.

He sighed: "Well, you'd better bugger off home before it does, then..."

"The CB500T wasn't a big seller for Honda in the UK and the complex nature of the engine design made it expensive to build, even though by 1975 the original development costs must have been long settled. It didn't really fit any customer demand at the time, either"

wobbly rubber mounts. The extra height meant the speed at which the wobbles smoothed out was marginally higher. Although the seat height on both bikes is the same, the 500 seemed to slope towards the tank, causing the rider to slide forwards under heavy braking. Overall, it wasn't quite as comfy as the 450.

While the handling isn't exactly in the Norton class, unlike a lot of 70s Hondas, the engine didn't overpower the frame, and the 500 would go where it was pointed with a bit of heaving about. It vibrated a little more than the 450 but didn't seem any faster.

All these years on, one wonders why Honda bothered with the extra 50cc. Could you choose between two near-identical motorcycles? Well, the CB500T has marginally better equipment, and a little more presence. The 450 fits the rider better, runs more smoothly and isn't trying to be something its not. Meanwhile, the 500 was in similar condition and original spec to the 450, and both survived several decades in mid-west garages without too many blemishes, apart from one of the worst jobs of arc-welding you'll ever see on the 500Ts exhaust.

The 500 had been in use recently, having been licenced in the USA in 2019 and only had 4,000 miles on the clock. The 500 was also a third cheaper than the 450 and being similar to a UK model would be easier to source bits for. On the whole though, if money was no object, I'd have gone for the 450 simply because it feels like more of a useful motorcycle.

CBG Your guide to...

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The Vintage Japanese Motorcycle Club
www.vjmc.com

LIVING WITH A FIVE-YEAR-OLD CB500T, BY OLI

THE CB500T I bought in early 1981 was my introduction to 'big' bike ownership, and had mostly been bought because I couldn't find another dealer who would give me a part exchange for my CB200.

I liked the chunky look of the thing, bedecked as it was in chocolate brown paint, a light brown seat and a top-box the size of a starter home. I soon found it handled like a greased pig at speed, even though, compared to GS550s and XS500s, it lacked a little oomph.

I had the CB500T for three weeks when disaster struck. The starter motor clutch – essentially three metal slugs in a metal ring which were held in place with what looked like left over Biro springs – fell apart. The various bits of the clutch whirled around inside the generator housing, destroying the stator and the drive sprocket.

I took it back to the dealer, who looked at me blankly when I said I'd paid a not inconsiderable £595 for it and I really felt they had some responsibility to fix it. They suggested it had been ridden hard. I responded that I felt starter motor clutches were unlikely to be affected by hard riding. I pointed out I had started it perhaps 40 times since I'd bought it, and suggested these things should last a bit longer than that. They said things about how expensive Honda parts were and how difficult they were to get for machines now out of production. I said things about trading standards and the Sale of Goods Act.

They reluctantly gave me a very tired Honda trail bike to use while they tried to source the parts. After being in their workshop for six weeks they still had not been able to get a new generator from Japan. The mechanic managed to bodge the old stator so it worked a little bit – just enough to keep the ignition circuit running, but not quite enough to charge the battery under load – which meant I couldn't really use the lights.

They gave me a spare battery and a charger told me to run it as a total loss system.

It took four months before I was told a new stator had arrived. A starter clutch was apparently unobtainable. I told them to fit the generator and said I'd wait for a clutch for now. As I picked up the bike, the old-school mechanic, out of earshot of his boss, admitted that the generator he'd fitted was second-hand, and there was no point in waiting for a starter clutch because they couldn't get one.

It was an inauspicious start to two years of ownership of a motorcycle that wasn't really built for over-enthusiastic 20-year-olds. I lived with the kickstarter and hauled the CB around for a while. I fitted a screen, got stuck in blizzards on Dartmoor, patched the holes in the silencers with gun-gum, went on weekend rallies, and learned to maintain it, after a fashion, though nothing really went wrong with it and I never so much as cleaned the points.

I commuted on it every day in all weathers, and all that stuff. Eventually a brief period of unemployment saw it parked up next to the shed, where it stayed for six months, rusting quietly. In the end I ungratefully part-ex'd it for CB250RS, which I should have bought in the first place. CBG

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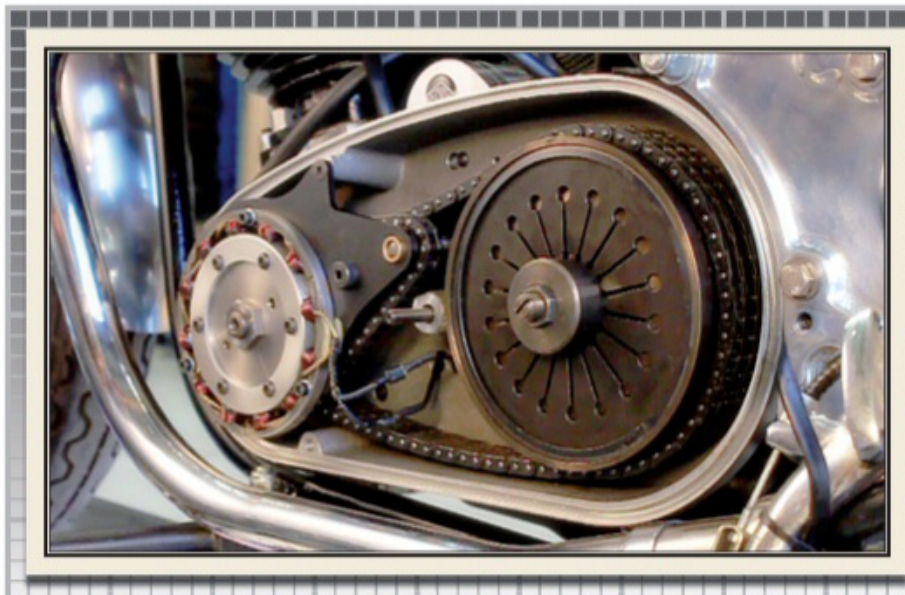

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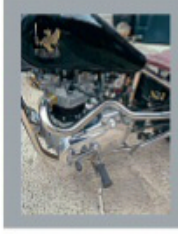

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CBG Buying guide

Yamaha YR1 Road Test

We ride the great, great, grandfather of the RD350

WORDS BY: STEVE SUPERCOOPER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: GARY 'HUNKY' CHAPMAN

IF BEAUTY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER THEN there's at least four of us within the Yamaha classic world who probably ought to have gone to Specsavers. Why? Oh that's simple; we've all owned and ridden 'AKX 225E' over the last 12 or so years. It's a Yamaha 350, a YR1 to be more precise. It's also what some might uncharitably call 'cosmetically challenged', yet, looks aside, it is arguably one of the most important motorcycles ever made by Yamaha. A little while ago in *CBG* we rode Martin Kemp's YM-1 305 twin and he graciously also let us ride his YR1, giving *CBG* the opportunity to make a direct comparison, so here goes.

CBG Buying guide

By the mid-1960s Yamaha was painfully aware that its total reliance upon two-stroke twins running vertically split crankcases was costing the company money. Until the YR1, every twin the tuning fork brand had sold owed pretty much everything to the German Adler MB250 Yamaha had shamelessly plagiarised. Technically, the set up was perfectly sound as it mounted the crank, lay and main shafts between solid fixed centres in beefy, one piece, housings. The cases were line-bored from one side to the other, providing essentially perfectly set centres for these three key components. And equally important, each and every bearing (ball or roller) sat within a carefully designed register that was guaranteed to fully support it.

When Yamaha copied the Adler layout they did so fully knowing that the postwar twin had been designed from first principals; the layout was effectively as bulletproof as a stroker twin could be. This had been ably demonstrated on racetracks around the world where Yamaha had taken numerous podiums.

However, despite the benefits both practical and theoretical, the layout had one serious fault – it was damn expensive to build. Both the crank assembly and gear train all had to be laid, pushed and pulled into one half of the engine before the other crankcase could be introduced to the opposite ends of the various shafts and then pulled in place; oh and all the gear selector mechanisms had to be lined up as well.

Yamaha had perfected all these production line techniques and more over a decade but the process of building the serried ranks of YDs, YMs etc took time which ate into profits. Many of Honda's earlier twins had utilised horizontally split engine cases without issue and Suzuki had shown that the technique also worked just as well with two-strokes following the launch of their seminal T50, aka The Super Six. It was a wakeup call for Yamaha who quickly saw that whatever theoretical disadvantages the horizontally split cases might imply, production times were dramatically reduced. Better still if the various bearings were held captive in the upper and lower cases via machined grooves and C-shaped retaining rings, then the new layout was almost as strong as the one it replaced.

Yamaha was acutely aware that they needed a full-size 350 to replace the ageing YM series so that was a given. What wasn't certain at the project's inception was the manner of the fuel/air induction. Yamaha, just like Suzuki and Kawasaki, had run many of its GP machines using disc valve technology acquired via Ernst Degner, erstwhile MZ rider/development engineer. The benefits of the asymmetric port timing offered by the set up were well known and Yamaha built several prototype 350s with disc valves.

However, the general consensus was that the design added unnecessary width to the engine and, crucially, increased both production costs and labour time. That the resultant YR1 350 was correct out of the crate is not up for debate. The engine would go on to power both the YR2 and YR3 along with supplying the basic structure for the hugely successful TR race bikes.

Now grasp that the same DNA was still being used in machines such as the R1-Z more than 30 years later – yes, Yamaha made the correct call. The YR1 went on to be Yamaha's most successful twin to date when it was launched in 1968 and according to contemporary Cycle World tests it was also their fastest 350 until the RD350B in 1975.

Let's have a quick look around the bike. It's a quirky design and if you care to refer back to the YM-1 there's a lot that's similar, such as the enclosed suspension and the tacho/speedo unit combination

in the headlamp pressing. Chrome tank panels with rubber knee pads are still in vogue and once again the exhaust system runs those Yamaha signature slash cut pipes; nothing new as you might say.

Where it all gets a bit weird is at seat/tank/panel interface where even Yamaha's greatest exponents would have to say the design team had something of an off day. Just where the seat needs to be at its deepest (under the rider) it actually becomes thinner and this is because both the side panels eat into the space available. They also eat into the lower corners of the tank as well, the back face of which curiously angles slightly in an MZ kind of way. Nothing else in the Yamaha range was ever styled quite like this and it was a look that was dropped circa 1969/70 with the last of the YR3s.

Chassis-wise the 350 still takes some of its leads from the older YDS/YM machines but there are some not-so-obvious changes as well. Those who have studied the YR1's tubing and know these things, have commented on just how much closer this iteration of a Japanese frame is to some of the British frames that had just preceded it; not exactly Norton Featherbed yet not that far away from it either.

Have a good look at the angled left-hand seat support tube which has fittings for a left-foot rear brake; there's similar provision on the outer right-hand engine case for a British type, right-hand gear lever. Yamaha was attempting to give the YR1 a truly global appeal.

"When Yamaha copied the Adler layout they did so fully knowing that the postwar twin had been designed from first principals; the layout was effectively as bulletproof as a stroker twin could be. This had been ably demonstrated on racetracks around the world where Yamaha had taken numerous podiums"

YAMAHA TWIN TIME LINES 250S

1957-59 YD1/2
First Yamaha twins, vertically slit crankcases, single carb, 54x54mm bore/stroke

1959 YDS1
Sports twin, two carbs, 56x50mm bore/stroke

1962 YDS2
Revised YS1 with 4 more bhp

1961 YD3
Continuation of YD, single carb, twin, general purpose, flexible motorcycle

1964 YDS3
Massively upgraded sports twin, first Yamaha to make serious impression in UK, later models with Autolube

1968 YSD5
Restyled with more power and fitted with electric start.

1965 YDS6
Last vertically split twin, no electric starter

1970 DX PRO
JDM only model, YDS7 with disc front brake

1970/2 YDS7
Totally new design, horizontally split crankcases, 54x54mm bore/stroke, forerunner of the RD250

1973/5 RD250
Revised YDS7 with disc brake and reed valve induction, all round tanks

1976/9 RD250
Restyled with famous coffin tank

1980/2 RD250LC
All new, with monoshock rear, liquid-cooled, designed for Euro market, sold as a TZ250 for the road

1988 TZR250
Essentially a 250 version of the RD350YPVS

1988 TDR250
Off-road style, steel frame, braced bars

1991 R1-Z
Naked TZR250 type motor in trellis style frame

YAMAHA TWIN TIME LINES 305, 350 & 400S

1965-67 YM1
Overbored YDS taken out to 305ccs

1968-70 YR1/2/3
All new, 350cc design with horizontally split crankcases

1970 RXPRO
JDM only model, YDS7 with disc front brake

1970/2 YR5
Totally new design, horizontally split crankcases, 64x54mm bore/stroke, forerunner of the RD350

1973/5 RD350
Revised YR5 with disc brake and reed valve induction, all round tanks

1976/9 RD400
Restyled with famous coffin tank, engine stroked to 64x62mm bore/stroke

1980/2RD350 LC
All new, with monoshock rear, liquid cooled, 64x54 bore/stroke, designed for Euro market, sold as a TZ350 for the road

1983-85 RD350YPVS
Power valves added to new engine, also sold as RZ350

NB ~ Yamaha also produced street scrambler versions of various 250, 305 & 350 models 1967-1969 sold as C variants i.e. YDS6C, YM2C, YR2C etc.

However, going back to our in-house fiscal issues, it's very apparent that Yamaha called time on most of the running gear as it's either the same as, or an analogue of what had gone before it. Money was still tight so if something could be used again it was; yet, thankfully, there was sufficient budget left to redesign the switchgear for the handlebars making it a little easier to use than its forbearers.

If money had been saved elsewhere it had been lavished upon the all-new engine. Finally this was a Yamaha twin with its clutch on the gearbox layshaft rather than on the end of the crank, hence the output drive now exited on the left.

The iron barrels of the YD/YM were axed in favour of alloy units with iron liners cast integrally, along with better designed transfer ports. Also the cooling arrangements of the YR's barrels and heads was much more scientifically researched with strategic gaps to prevent fin ringing and angled head castings to remove as much heat as possible. Yamaha's GP experiences had taught them much about cylinder head temperatures, pre-ignition and detonation. Ignition remained as before with points and coils; there was nothing fundamentally wrong there so why change it?

Unlike the previous YM-1, firing up the YR1 is

Beyond the YR-1

The Grand Prix 350 as the YR1 was billed stateside proved to be an instant success vindicating Yamaha's change of tack. Looking to capitalise on the machine's success, the firm swiftly introduced the technology they'd pioneered on the race track via a five port motor instead of the original three. A small batch of the last YR1s ran this set up before it became standard on the 1968 model. This, the YR2, had been gently restyled losing the bulky fuel tank of the original model with pearl white tank panels in place of the chrome items. Other than this the YR2 was little different but, as was the fashion of the day a street scrambler version, the YR2C, was offered, but only to the North American market. 1969 was the last year of the model and also the first year a Yamaha over 250cc was available in the UK. The slash cut exhausts were replaced by tulip ended units and in Europe the lower third of the tank was painted gloss black along with the side panels. Probably nothing more than an exercise to shift existing stock a small batch of street scrambler YR2Cs was sold stateside almost as a run-out model. For 1970 Yamaha were about to throw down the gauntlet to all and sundry; the hugely capable YR5 was waiting in the wings and owners of 500s and even 750s were about to get a very rude wakeup call!

essentially second nature simply because everything is where you'd expect it to be – think any Yamaha RD, LC, YPVS and you'd remarkably close. Once running it's very apparent that this engine layout is much quieter than the outgoing one and, blissfully, the air box has been dynamically retuned so that it doesn't deafen you.

Snick into gear and the difference between the YM and YR is dramatically obvious with the full-size 350 feeling so utterly modern by comparison. In fact the basic riding characteristics of the YR1 here wouldn't change significantly until Yamaha dropped the RD400 in favour of the LC range. Whereas the YD/YM bikes required a particular style to get the best out of them, the YR is all about intuitive riding. It doesn't flop into bends, nor need to be wrestled out of them, it will happily lean to the limit of the tyres and then straighten up ready for the next bend or straight. With the clutch no longer on the end of the crank, gear changes are so much crisper and, in fact, the entire gear train is just so much easier to use. As confidence increases the speeds go up and I'm once again reminded of just how competent the bike is.

Without doubt the YR1 is heavier than the later RDs but it's running a reassuring form of mass that keeps it on track and under control. The chassis is arguably stiffer than some of Yamaha's later analogues and feeds back to the rider what's going on in a manner that belies its age. In fact I'd venture its handling is probably up there with its peer group and probably even better.

The suspension is still very much of its time and essentially similar to that of our YM-1 reference point, yet the bike feels more poised, simply because the frame is another generation on. By 1967 the Japanese were beginning to grasp some rudimentary elements of chassis geometry even if they were still struggling with concepts such as spring weight, compression and rebound. Whereas the YM-1 had to be subtly worked through bends the YR1 seems to follow them intuitively; it's simply an easier machine to ride thanks to the frame.

Even if the all-new motor still only runs three port technology, it's unquestionably a good 'un. There's torque aplenty even if most of it is produced close to the red line. Those additional 45 cubic centimetres the YR has over the YM have bestowed an extra seven bhp and

it shows; the 350 feels less frenetic and more refined. It's still a two-stroke so needs to be revved to get the most out of it yet, there's a marked degree of flexibility to the motor that wasn't so obvious with the YM.

As per many bikes of the period top (fifth) is essentially an overdrive but the four other ratios are more than good enough for virtually every situation. If you round a bend that unexpectedly presents a hill just tap down the gear pedal and open the throttle; the motor will sing its heart out if you so desire. And if you simply fancy ambling along then the motor is equally happy to oblige.

Yamaha's YR1 is an intriguing machine. In terms of aesthetics, brakes and suspension it was firmly anchored in the past yet, conversely, its engine and frame were cutting edge in their day. Yamaha would run two more iterations of this bike (along with street scrambler versions) before totally reinventing the 350 stroker twin with the seminal YR5; which would go on to give us the giant-killing RD350s and 400s. As peak revs and power increased, the bikes would take on a sharper, more aggressive edge, which would become their signature mark. And for many that has always been the allure of Yamaha's feisty twins.

The YR1 offers a softer, less assertive ride, yet it's still unquestionably involving to ride and fast enough for many classic fans. If you fancy a reliable, older, pre-70s Japanese stroker then the YR1 is certainly worth considering and who knows, its strange styling might even grow on you! CBG

The owner's tale ~ Martin Kemp

The YR1 engine has a far more modern feel to it than my YM1; a lovely gearbox and a more willing engine. There is a noticeable power band from 5000rpm, and the bike feels strong from 4000rpm. Like the YM1, there is still a large gap between 4th and 5th gears, which seems to be the case on all Yamahas of this era. The induction roar of the YM1 has gone, a new airbox has almost silenced the induction noise. However the looks can't be described as its strong point. The petrol tank is just plain ugly from certain angles. Yamaha must have realised their mistake with the styling, as after a year the YR2 was introduced, with a restyled petrol tank and seat. Also, the indicator switch (on the right side, next to the throttle) takes some getting used to. The clutch is heavier than the YM1, despite not being mounted on the end of the crankshaft. If I had to pick a favourite, I would go for the YM1 as it has so much character and it really is the best of all of the early generation Yamahas. That said, my heart says the YM1 but my head would say the YR1. Decisions, decisions!

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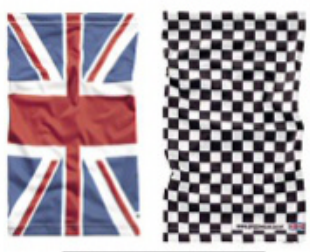
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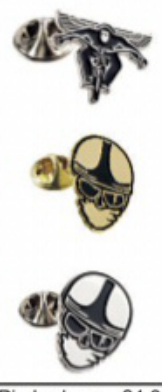
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The Comet Conundrum

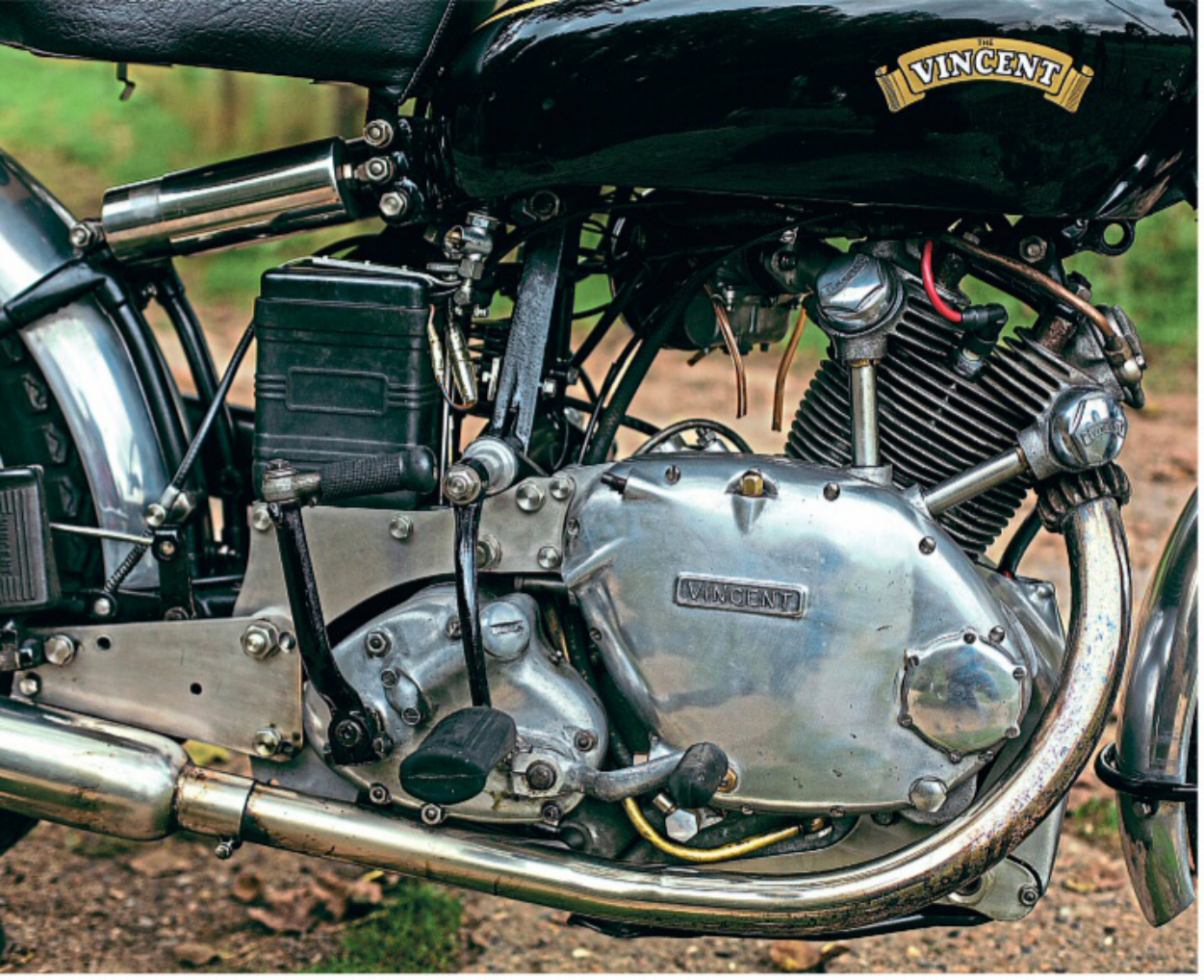
WORDS BY MARTIN HUGHES-GAMES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORTONS ARCHIVE

The name Vincent is held in high regard, mainly because of those thundering V-twins. But what were the singles like? Martin Hughes-Games finds out

'FOR SALE – Vincent 500 Comet – £28' says the Comerford's advertisement on the back of my October 1963 'Motorcycle Sport'. Just above the Vincent, amongst an intriguing list of second-hand bikes, is a BSA D7 for, wait for it – £55 – yes, back then, in this month's advertisement, a Bantam would cost you twice the price of a Vincent single. Feeling flush? How about a Francis-Barnett 150cc for £79? Now obviously prices were a lot less in 1963 (average annual salary in the UK was around £800) but here's a fascinating comparison; in the same advertisement there are two second-hand BSA 500 Gold Stars, one for £198 and the other a whopping £258, making the BSA singles one of the most desirable and expensive bikes on the market. Yet the Vincent single, just 28 pounds. Viewed through our 21st century sensibilities, when good Vincent Comets command upwards of £20,000, this was surely an astonishing difference.

Vincent twins have always been highly regarded right from 1936 when a youthful Philip Vincent – he was just 28 at the time – stunned the motorcycling world with his mighty series A Rapide V-twin. But the first engine the company produced themselves, two years before the twin, was a single. The bought-in power units they had used from the start of motorcycle production in 1928 had given a lot of trouble. A frustrated Philip Vincent is reported to have exclaimed "we never wanted to see another JAP engine as long as we lived and decided we should design and manufacture our own."

VINCENT
VINCENT



Compare the engine with a similar 500cc single from BSA or Norton

Carburation was from Black Shadow

Comet had Girdraulic and Meteor had Brampton forks

His own engine arrived in 1934 – a 500cc single, which powered the Meteor and the higher specification Comet from 1935. Over the next two decades, production of the singles and twins proceeded side by side with the different model B and model C ranges. Throughout this time the singles shared much of the twin's thoughtful design and engineering excellence. For instance, next time you are standing next to a Vincent, single or twin, have a look at the back wheel – you can adjust the drive chain without having to bother your tool roll (kept in a neat drawer under the seat) – the integral tommy bar will allow you to loosen the rear wheel spindle and two alloy knobs can then be gently screwed in or out to adjust the tension. Beautiful.

There's no doubt Vincent motorcycles are wonderfully concinnated. Sorry? Concinnated? This was a word used by Royce Creasey during his road test in Bike magazine of both a 1949 spec Vincent Rapide and a 1950 'C' range Comet back in 1980 – I thought I was quite a literary sort of bloke but I had to look it up – frankly I'd never heard the word 'concinnated' before. It means to 'arrange or blend together skilfully, to put together in a harmonious, precisely appropriate, or elegant manner' many would say an absolutely perfect description of a Vincent motorcycle. Well, perhaps a Vincent twin. The singles engender more mixed reactions. Towards the end of his 1980 road test, Royce Creasey exclaims 'although the bike seems quite fast it lacks the balance of the better 500s from other manufacturers' and then, shock horror, he says: 'I have to say I found the Comet a considerable disappointment'.

"A frustrated Philip Vincent is reported to have exclaimed 'we never wanted to see another JAP engine as long as we lived and decided we should design and manufacture our own'."

Road tests of Vincent singles are confusing. 30 years before Royce Creasey's damming report, a road test in *The Motorcycle* of 1950 described the Comet as a 'High performance single with magnificent road-holding, steering and brakes'

Then, much more recently in *The Classic Motorcycle* of June 2020, Andy Westlake becomes quite gushing as he 'rides through the sun-dappled lanes of West Wiltshire with the healthy note of the silencer singing out behind me, and safe in the knowledge that, if required, the superb brakes were more than a match for bringing the 413lb (187kg) machine to a rapid halt, it was a joy to be riding what some – myself included – consider to be the best 500cc single ever produced by a British motorcycle company'. What on earth are we to make of this? The best single ever produced by a British Motorcycle company or 'unbalanced' and a 'considerable disappointment'? Is Vincent's 500 single actually any good?

Thanks to the good offices of my friend Tom, I am about to find out.

In a way I was responsible for Tom's purchase of the Comet. Tom had bought an R100GS BMW from me and when he subsequently sold it he found himself with £3000 burning a hole in his pocket.

Above: A Comet Series C, with polished Girdraulic forks, a popular period modification.

Below: From left, a Grey Flash racer, the less common Meteor and a Vincent HRD Comet

Had he always wanted a Vincent Comet? "No, no," says Tom, "I wasn't looking for a Vincent at all – but a chap in my village told me about one in pieces in a shed and suggested I should come and have a look. For some reason I did. It really was in pieces, but large lumps at least. It was missing various parts; silencer, headlight, electrics, no speedo and the seat was a mass of rust covered in a bit of cloth, but I could see it was obviously sound and largely original. It actually seemed an exciting option and it had the added attraction that, with luck, it might go up in value, rather than down," he was right about that – Tom paid the £3000 for the large lumps.

The lumps had once been a 1951 series C Vincent Comet, that had led a lazy, indolent and uneventful life, moving from shed to shed. History does not recount what happened between 1951 and 1965, but in 1965 a keen motorcyclist was told of an old bike in a shed on an allotment (by the father of a friend). In the shed was the Vincent. How did it get there? We cannot know. A deal was struck and the

"It means to 'arrange or blend together skilfully, to put together in a harmonious, precisely appropriate, or elegant manner' many would say an absolutely perfect description of a Vincent motorcycle. Well, perhaps a Vincent twin"

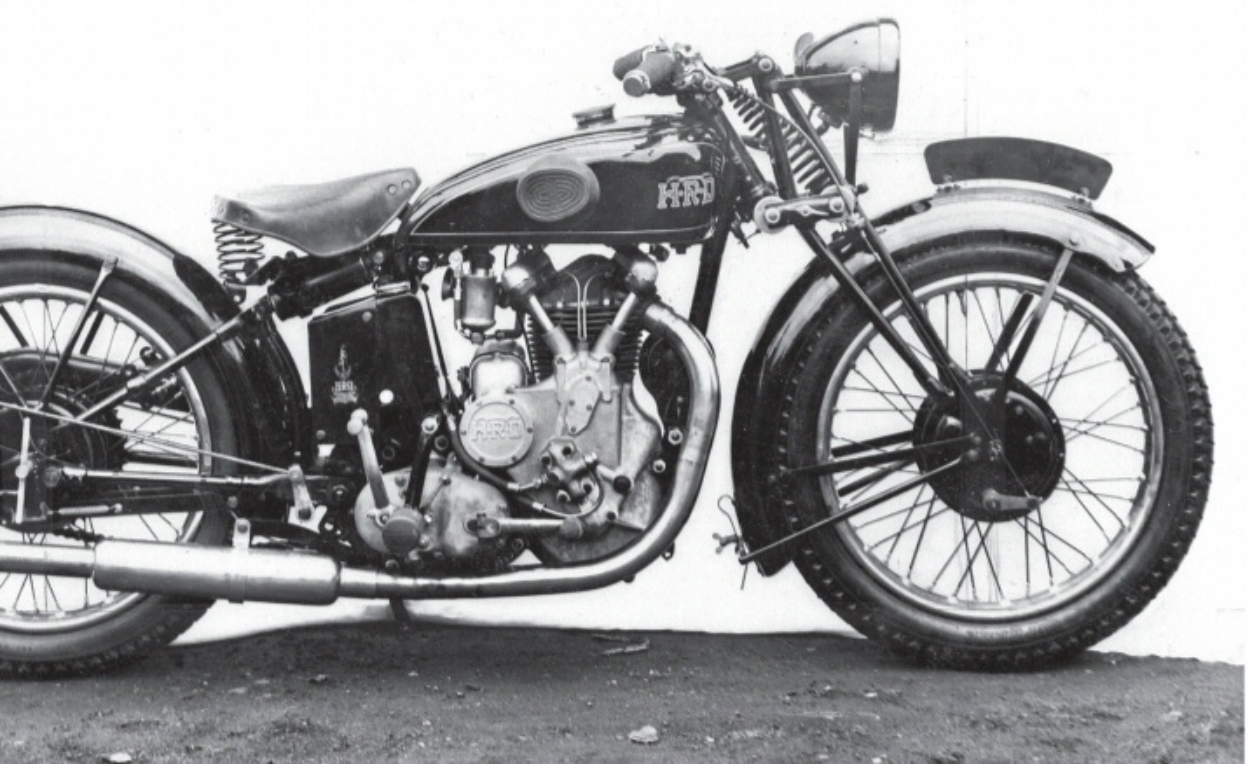
Above: You feel like you are sat on a Comet, not in.

bits were then moved to another shed belonging to the new owner's father. Where nothing happened. In 1967 the new owner went to Canada and after a year his dad became fed up with the old bike bits in the shed and sold them on again. The bits then passed through a further four owners who bought them full of excitement and then, did nothing. Still nothing happened. And then, finally, in 2001, along came Tom, just as Vincent Comets were starting to change from old junk to something much, much more desirable. Tom's timing was perfect.

The funny thing is I'm not at all surprised by this story. I well remember, back in the late 1970s when my passion for motorcycles was at fever pitch, we all dismissed the Vincent singles as beneath contempt – the twins were fantastic but the singles, rubbish. Such is the arrogance and ignorance of youth.

So Tom now had a Vincent. What to do? Call Bob Dunn that's what. Bob Dunn is a legend amongst Vincent cognoscenti. He is a legend for his superb skill working on Vincent engines and also a legend for his inability to do anything in any sort of projected time frame. Bob Dunn is a stranger to any suggestion of deadlines. Here is a selection of comments from the Vincent owners' website.

Below: 1935 Vincent HRD Comet



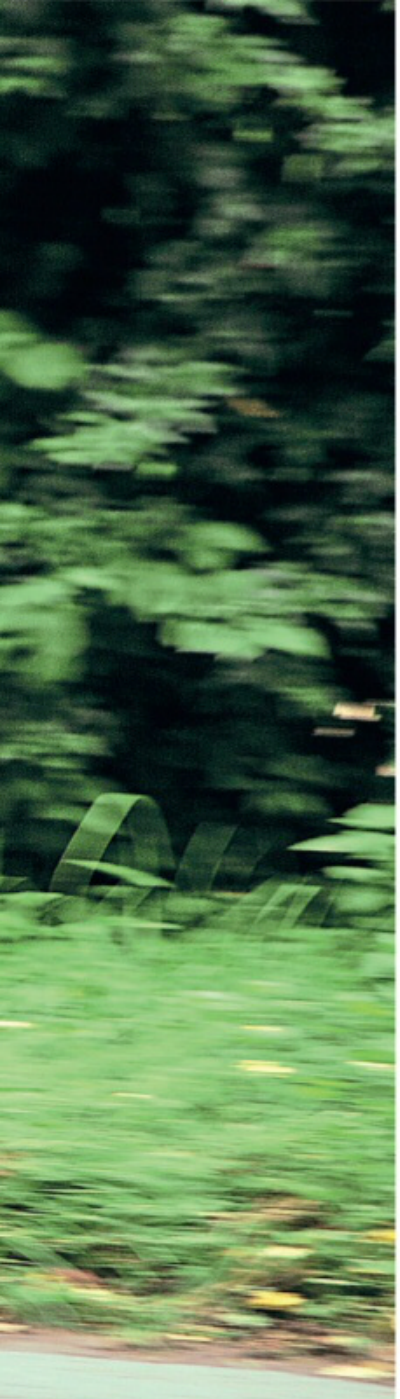
"I was at Bob's some 15 or so years ago and passed a remark about the length of time some jobs seem to take. He told me with, I think, some pride, pointing to a Comet engine looking very finished and sitting by the door, 'the owner is coming to get that tomorrow, I've had it for 39 years!' "

"I will always hold the utmost highest respect for Bob and his abilities, but he still drives me to distraction over finishing what he agreed (again and again and again!!!) to take on many (many) years ago."

Bob Dunn was both interested in, and expert at, making Vincent engines deliver more power but – crucially – not losing any of their reliability in the process. "I was aware the Vincent singles were a bit low on power and I wanted something that could keep up with the traffic a bit." This way Tom could keep the Comet's originality but make it go considerably better. This was probably a very good plan because back in a 1980 road test, Royce Creasy had said of the Comet: 'The bike is spoiled by its meagre power delivery, until fairly high engine revs are reached throttle movement merely results in more noise being generated as the engine attempts to speed up the flywheels'.

In order to help the bike "keep up with the traffic" Tom and Bob hatched a plan. The engine would be over-bored to around 550cc and a 9.0:1 Omega piston would be fitted. Bob would port and gas flow the head. An Ian Hamilton 105 Mk2 cam would be fitted. All of this should result in the engine making a healthy 35bhp or so rather than the slightly limp 28bhp of the standard motor. "Torquey with a nice spread of power," was the aim.

One wonderful day in 2008 Tom got a call to tell him the Comet engine was ready. "Had you been able to get on with the cycle parts meanwhile Tom?" I asked. "Hundreds of times over," he said wistfully.



Above right: Where is the frame down tube?

Right: six on a Comet? A rally, somewhere,1965

Everything was ready for the engine to be fitted. Things then happened quite quickly. “After all this, were you happy with the bike Tom?” “Absolutely delighted – I had to do a bit of fiddling with the carburation, getting the jetting right and so on – Bob had recommended a Mikuni but I could not bring myself to put a Japanese carburettor on the Vincent so it’s got a Mk2 Amal, which now works very well.”

So who is right? ‘Disappointed’ Royce Creasy or ‘Best ever single’ Andy Westlake?

I asked Tom if he would mind me taking the Comet for a ride and initially he seemed very keen, enthusiastic even. But as the days passed and he needed to ‘adjust the clutch’, ‘fit a new battery’ ‘take it for a test ride’, ‘rather busy at work at present’ I realised he was less keen, not really wanting to let the thing go out!

I pressed my case and eventually on a rather cold autumnal day popped over to his house. Even now I could feel a slight tension, Tom sat astride the bike, comfy on the Feridax seat, not really wanting to relinquish his position. We chatted, there were increasingly long pauses in the conversation and still Tom sat, as if glued. Finally, after a particularly long pause there was nothing else for it but to let me take up the position on the (pleasantly warm) seat.

“It won’t tick over,” said Tom, “I keep it that way to ensure maximum engine braking. Now you have to kick it correctly.” Tom began a slightly plonking lecture: “No no – you’re doing it wrong, that’s quite the wrong sort of kick; you need to jump up and with a long powerful…..” Mercifully it started before Tom could lecture me any further. “Shall I follow you?” asked Tom, above the healthy exhaust note. “That’s fine Tom,” I said, changed up into first and with a crisp bark, set off before he changed his mind.

“Apparently careful maintenance is essential to ensure the effectiveness of the forks but in the case of Tom’s Comet, the ride is superlative. It’s wonderfully confidence-inspiring and a delight to power around A and B road curves”

First impressions are very interesting. You are perched quite high up on the Comet, ‘on’ rather than ‘in’. The handlebars are slightly downturned which I found put me in quite a sporting position, but I was very comfortable right away.

At the end of the road I slowed to turn right and the first curiosity of the Vincent frame made itself apparent; the Girdraulic forks feel strangely ponderous at walking pace, reluctant to turn, which is somewhat distracting until you get used to it. However, as soon as speed increases, the reluctance to turn sensation disappears and is replaced by a most wonderful tautness. Some years ago Tom had lent me this same Comet on the Isle of Man and although I now needed to remind myself how the bike felt for this test, my overriding memory from the Isle of Man ride was of a delightfully ‘tight’ togetherness. This resulted in superb handling, nothing sloppy, wayward, everything working in a harmonious whole. Very impressive. Very enjoyable.

The frame and cycle parts of the Comet are identical to those of the big V-twins and the two Phils, (Vincent and Irving) really worked hard on the bike’s handling. Frame flexing was obviated by removing the frame, the headstock attaches to a boxy oil tank (under the fuel tank) which then attaches directly to the cylinder head. At the rear is the famous cantilever which has two suspension units under the seat. The Girdraulic front end tries to combine the rigidity of girder forks with ride of telescopics. Apparently careful maintenance is essential to

ensure the effectiveness of the forks but in the case of Tom's Comet, the ride is superlative. It's wonderfully confidence-inspiring and a delight to power around A and B road curves. From the point of view of the handling I am with Andy Westlake, this is a brilliant bike.

How about the engine? Has all Bob Dunn's work paid off? Handsomely I would say. At the moment I have an extremely original 350cc Norton Model 50. I love it dearly but it's painfully, agonisingly, slow, to the point when I'm thinking of committing heresy and taking out the totally original, matching numbers motor and fitting at least a 500cc ES2 motor, preferably pepped up. I did this once before with a Norton single and instead of feeling, as you accelerated, every ounce of the bike's considerable weight with the 350 engine, the 500 allowed the weight to largely disappear, resulting in a much more enjoyable ride. I have never ridden an original Comet so cannot comment on how the 27bhp would feel; I suspect I might lean towards Royce Creasey's 'disappointment'.

However the 35bhp Dunn engine is tremendous fun. It pulls heartily from low revs and then hits a lovely mid-range with ample torque to pull the bike effortlessly up hills and provide all the power needed for spirited progress and exciting cornering. I am amazed by how smooth the engine is – compared to say the Enfield bullet I ride around on. I asked Tom if it was dynamically balanced, but no – it's as it came back from Bob. As I get older I find I'm more sensitive to vibration, getting tingly fingers, but none of that occurred with this Comet.

At the top of the rev range the bike takes on a different character again, the revs build very quickly, the exhaust barks and you find yourself cracking along at a sporting pace. Towards the end of my ride I found the clutch starting to slip a little so backed off, but running the Comet up and down the rev range, with this slightly tuned engine was an experience to be savoured. The comet has a conventional multiplate clutch as opposed to the servo device to be found on the twins.

Flaws? It's very difficult to generalise in a meaningful way about an old motorcycle marque having ridden just one of its products, because after all these years the performance of any older machine will depend on the way the bike has been maintained over the years. I found gear changes to be fine going up the box but slightly more difficult going down, the down changes needed to be considered and revs matched accurately to roadspeed. Upchanges could be done in a spirited manner if pressing on.

Above: Martin ponders over Tom's newly restored Comet

Below: It's always great to see a bike like this ridden

The brakes come in for praise in both Royce Creasey's test 'Naturally the brakes and handling are very good' and Westlake 'the superb brakes … bring the machine to a rapid halt'. Not for me they didn't! The front brake, an interesting double-sided affair with complex balance arm worked okay but was in no way "very good" even allowing for the bike's age. The back brake (also double-sided) was largely ineffective for me – but then the pedal was in the wrong position requiring me to lift my whole foot off the footrest. Doubtless with adjustment and fettling the brakes could be made to work much better.

All in all I'm tending towards Andy Westlake's assessment, 'The best 500cc single ever produced by a British motorcycle company' may be a bit of a stretcher but I could only share his joy whilst riding the Comet. It was perhaps unfortunate that Royce Creasy rode the Comet directly after a thundering Vincent twin; it was bound to feel gutless wasn't it? Despite the wait, I think Tom's decision to up the Comet's power was absolutely the correct one, it has ensured he has a classic bike that is a delicious combination of sprightly engine and thoroughbred handling. A most impressive machine. CBG

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Real world rides

What you need to know about buying a:

BSA STARFIRE

You want to buy a classic motorcycle. What's your criteria? A brand, or a type or a particular model? Or perhaps it's something more vague. Perhaps the most important thing is the cost. Say your bank account has around £3000 in it, just begging to be spent on a motorcycle. Can you buy a genuine British classic for £3000? What will it cost to run? What might hit your pocket?

WORDS BY OLI **PHOTOGRAPHY** MORTONS ARCHIVE

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT ONE OF THE MORE BASIC British motorcycles, one of the few stylish four-strokes that fit our £3000 criteria, the BSA 250cc Starfire unit single.

The Starfire was initially called the C25 Barracuda. This had a good frame and a big-fin engine producing a claimed 25bhp. This, it was claimed, revved to 9000rpm with a 10:1 compression ratio and was fitted with a 'super sports' camshaft. Doing so regularly was a recipe for metallurgical meltdown. There was a smart glass-fibre petrol tank, big, sculpted glass-fibre side panels and a humped seat.

SPECIFICATION (1969 MODEL)

ENGINE: Dry sump 249cc Single ohv **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 10:1 **BORE AND STROKE:** 67 x 70 **POWER:** 25bhp@8000rpm **CARB:** 28mm Amal Concentric **PRIMARY DRIVE:** Chain/wet multiplate clutch, four-speed gearbox **IGNITION:** 12v coil and points **WHEELS/TYRES:** Front 3.25x18; Rear 3.50x18 **BRAKES:** Front 7in full width 2LS; Rear 7in half width **QD FUEL TANK:** 3.25gallon/14.75litre Steel **OIL CAPACITY:** 4 pint/2.3 litre **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31in / 787mm Length 82in / 2083mm **WHEELBASE:** 52in / 1321mm **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 7in / 180mm **DRY WEIGHT:** 302lb / 137kg.

The front forks were BSA's own items and similar to those fitted to the company's A series twins, combined with a single sided drum brake. There was a big chrome Lucas headlight and an optimistic 120mph Smiths speedometer, Girling shocks with exposed springs at the back, a QD rear wheel, and six- and then 12v electrics. The problem was that BSA didn't realise how hard a teenager could hammer a motorcycle, especially one that was supposed to be sporty. Many young rockers did, often with disastrous results. The hard riding, mixed with minimal servicing, meant the engine suffered, with the result that some C25 bottom ends would fail dramatically under the strain.

The Barracuda name lasted just a year before BSA realised that Plymouth in the USA had the rights to the name and the renamed and revamped B25 Starfire hit British dealerships.

The front brake went full width in 1968 and the high compression piston was retained, while BSA decided to drop the valve lifter that had made the C25 easier to start. The tank was changed to steel when the government banned glass-fibre petrol tanks. The 1969/70 Starfire was as good as it got for the 250, with modifications to the engine breathing to help with oil retention at high revs.

What to look out for?

ELECTRICS

The positive earth electrical system is pretty basic in both 6v and 12 volt forms and does its job as well as any Lucas set up. Popping in LED bulbs (£26 headlight, £14 tail) is worth considering as they demand less current from the dynamo and some discrete indicators wouldn't go amiss. Just for safety's sake (£42 complete) upgrade the 6v to 12v if you need to. New looms are available (£67.20).

You could replace Lucas points set-up with an electronic system (£100-170) if you use the bike a lot. However, if this goes wrong, it's going to be pricey to repair, unlike fitting a new set of points and a condenser. It's going to need to be 12 volt and the battery may need to be in tip-top condition to start it. If this is a bike that's going to be idle for long periods, the battery might go flat, so this is something to consider. The Pazon systems work well at low voltages. The advantage of points is that you can see if they are functioning simply by opening them up and seeing if there's a spark, rather than faffing about with black boxes and multimeters. Switchgear is primitive, instruments are Smiths, and although replica speedos are available, they are hard to find in the right ratios and with the 120mph limit. If you find an original one, snap it up. It'll cost £100-150 and be prepared to fight with Triumph 500 and BSA twin owners to get them.

FUELLING

The Starfire had an Amal Concentric carb. Some came with chokes and some didn't, but they don't really need them, as flooding on the tickler will do it. If you have a fuelling problem, you might as well bin the old carb and buy new. A replacement Amal will cost about £140, and the remarkably similar Wassell is £100, which isn't a great deal more than buying jets and gaskets and floats and will save you hours of frustrating fiddling about with needle heights and jet sizes.

LUBRICATION

What oil? The original manual lists both 20w-50 multigrades and SAE50 monogrades for the engine, EP90 gearbox oil, and SAE20 for the primary chaincase and forks. Some people use ATF instead of SAE20. The most important thing to do is change engine oil regularly and keep the in-tank filter clean. An external canister filter won't do any harm, but there isn't a lot of space to fit one. A finned sump plate is worth it for easy oil changes, but you will need longer studs to hold it on, and the studs are different threads at each end.

BODYWORK, BRAKES AND WHEELS

If you have the glass-fibre tank it's largely useless with modern petrol. You'll find it makes a great ornament – replace with a steel one if you are not a stickler for originality. Pattern side panels and seats are available.

Mudguards are trickier to find, and some of the brackets to fit them are almost unobtainable. Rear wheel is QD, so QD it and clean and grease the splines. The front wheel also comes off quickly. Tyres are 18-inch, expect to pay £100 for a budget pair, £150 for a well-known brand and you might as well buy new tubes and rim tape at the same time. Getting the right chainguard can be an issue. The best brakes are on the last Starfires, a splendid full width TLS brake also seen on bigger BSA and Triumph twins. Earlier models had a full width SLS brake and the first Barracuda a half-width brake that just wasn't up to the job.

ENGINE

The engine is a basic two-valve pushrod single. With an all-alloy barrel, head and undamped fins it's incredibly noisy and sounds as if it's going to explode at any minute – and you can't do anything about this. BSA used an eccentric adjustment for the rockers. On the one hand this makes setting them easy. On the other, accurate adjustment is nigh on impossible. That high-compression piston can make it hard to start, especially on the models without a decompressor. Solutions include fitting a lower compression Fleetstar piston, if you can find one, or a compression reducing plate between barrel and crankcase.

Engine and frame numbers should match if that bothers you. Non-matching numbers usually just mean the engine has been replaced but will knock £100s off the price. The bottom end on a thrashed one will have suffered. Half a century on though, if the bike still runs and sounds rattly rather than thumpy, you're probably going to be alright and there are many bearing upgrades available. The gearbox is trouble-free, largely, but the clutch can be problematic and lockwiring the nuts in is a good idea. Deep pockets will secure a belt primary drive conversion.

RUBBER, NUTS AND BOLTS

Decaying rubber bits like grommets, gaiters, sleeves, instrument cups etc, do cause issues. Not all rubber is the same, and a lot of cheap stuff isn't vulcanised and will fall apart. The Starfire is not hard to work on, but you'll need to deal with a frustrating mixture of threads, nuts and bolts. You'll need a selection of spanners. The threads are a mixture of Whitworth, UNC and UNF on the engine, BSC and AF on the frame and on some of the cycle parts, and BA on the electrics and controls. And there are a few anti-clockwise fasteners to deal with on the footrests. Look out for stripped threads here.

EXHAUST

The exhaust is a push to fit in the head, with a single bracket going to the front engine mount and another two-bolt bracket for the silencer. The cigar-shaped silencer is, if anything, too quiet and the exhaust note is drowned out by the noise from the top end. Later models had the megaphone silencer from the 650 twins and sound nicer. Or, if you have sympathetic neighbours, take the original off, stick it somewhere nice and dry and bolt on a cheap reverse cone megaphone.

COST:

You can pick a rough one up from £1500-1800, or a good one from £2500. Dealers have started to push the price up to around £4000 for a spotless example but that might be pushing it a bit. Do an oil change for £30, spend £100-150 on tyres if they are old, and around £90 a year for fully comp insurance. And £30 each for the three Rupert Ratio Unit Singles Manuals, the Starfire owner's bible. Most mechanical parts are easy to find, and some were used across the BSA/Triumph range. So much so that a rattly engine on a complete and original bike is going to be easier to deal with than a perfect runner with bits missing.

OWNERS' CLUB

BSA Owners' Club
www.bsaowners club.co.uk

SPECIALISTS

BSA Unit Singles in the USA has a huge database of information and spares including adverts and free to download parts lists and service and workshop manuals www.bsaunitsingles.com

UK SPECIALISTS

In the UK if Draganfly doesn't have what you need on its excellent website www.draganfly.co.uk then Burton Bike Bits www.burtonbikebits.net almost certainly will. Or vice-versa! Classicmotorcycle spares.com is very handy too. For electrical parts like LED bulbs and electronic ignition, try Paul Goff at www.norbsa02.freeuk.com.

On today's roads, a Starfire is huge amounts of fun. They turn heads on the high street and anyone parking up a Starfire will quickly find themselves approached by ladies and gentlemen of a certain age wanting to talk about it.

Starfires are perfect for nipping down to the shops, to the pub or blatting along deserted B-roads to a bike night. You can jump on a Starfire and after giving the beast a couple of healthy prods it will burst theatrically into life. The use of across-the-range BSA cycle parts makes them solid performers and makes keeping one going a breeze, as there are multiple parts suppliers. They don't even vibrate that much.

Despite their slightly unjust reputation for fragility, a late 1960s Starfire will have you grinning from ear-to-ear. It is a great, affordable introduction to classic British motorcycles and is just the thing to have sitting in the garage for when you feel like being a teenage hooligan again. Just be prepared to fight your way through admiring crowds to get to it when it's parked up. CBG

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU GET FOR £3000 (OR THEREABOUTS?)

Looking for something more traditional for your £3k budget? Try a more classically styled 1960s BSA B40 unit single and you'll get a really good 350 for that sort of money. Less stressed than the Starfire, and a good deal shinier, the B40 would be easier to live with. Pay a premium for an ex-MoD one, for some reason.

Dedicated searching will pick you up a small, if tired, Triumph 350 twin for around £3000. Especially if it's a 3TA that's lost its bodywork, and if it doesn't have matching numbers or a transferable number plate.

Slightly easier to find than a Triumph for less than £3000 will be a tatty AMC pre-unit 350 single. An AJS model 16 or a Matchless G3 £2500-£2800 should get you one that needs a little work. A better condition AMC Lightweight 350 or even a 500 can be had for around the top of your budget.

Excuse us if we go a little off-piste with this one. The 1994-96 Triumph Speed Triple is definitely British, and at 25 years old most clubs and the insurance companies consider it a classic. The first collectable Hinckley model, it had the solid build quality Triumph needed, along with some hairy-chested style. The Speed Triple is tall and chunky. Avoid anything with a lot of engine noise as that's going to be tough and expensive to fix. A high-performance British mile muncher with push button starting, classy styling and that name on the tank for around £3000? That's a heck of a lot of motorcycle for the money. Priced from £2000 for a tired one to £4000 for a minter, buy one now while you still can.

And if you are looking for modern-ish equipment, good spares availability and classic styling, there are plenty of smart Royal Enfield 500 Efi models out there for this price. With new bikes at £4000, a low-milage ride-it-away Enfield 500 will be easy to find for £3k.

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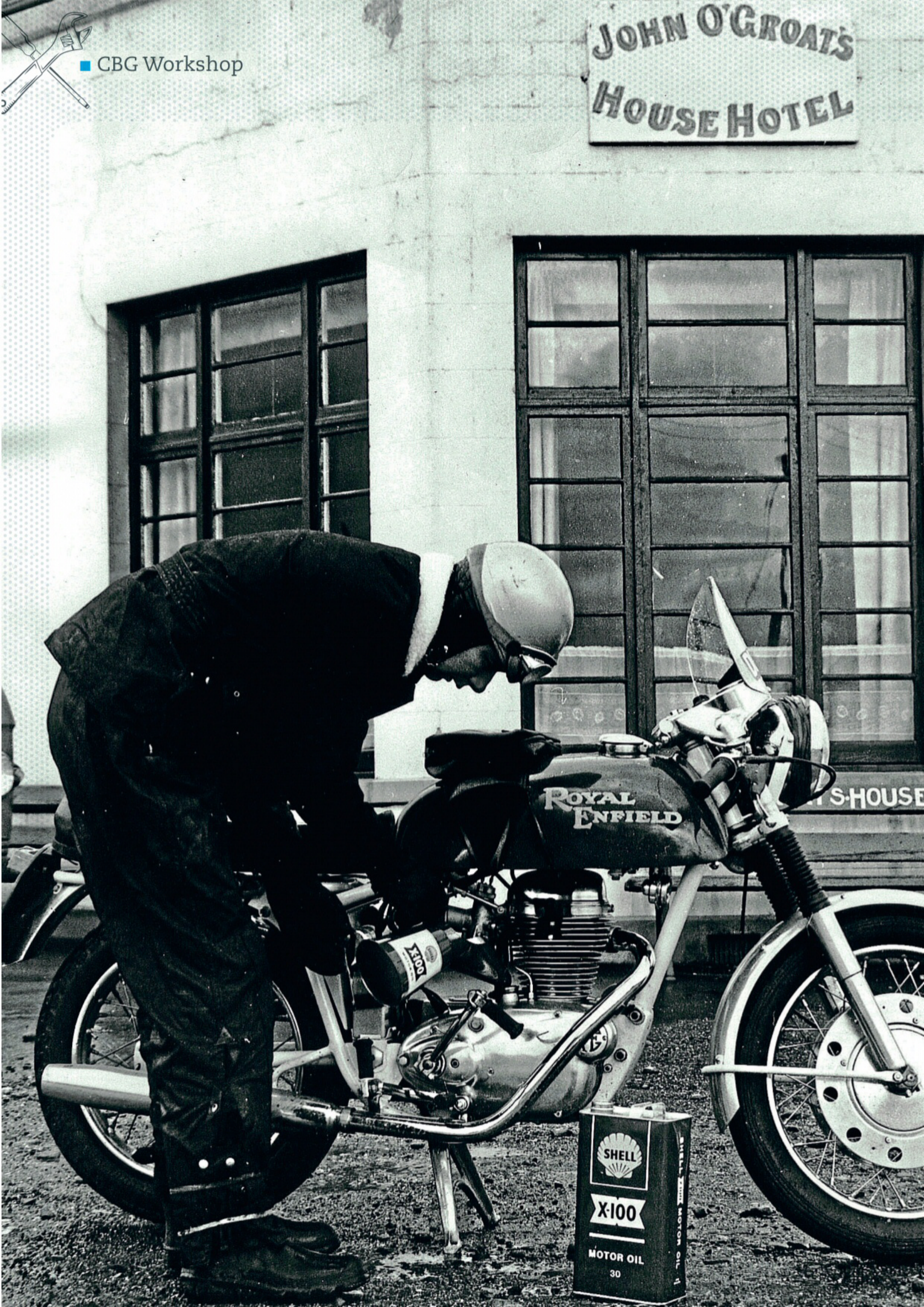
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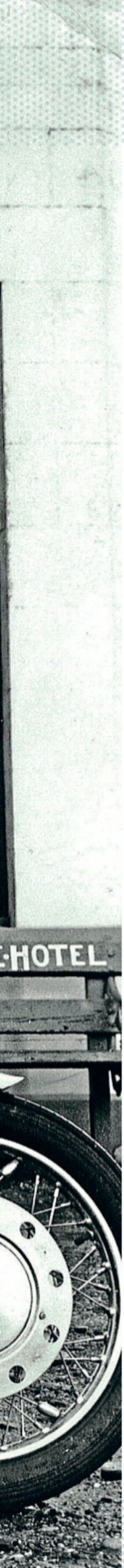


Oil you wanna know

Oil. Matching the latest in oil technology with machines from years past can seem daunting. One day you'll get told to use the latest and greatest oil from a certain company; the next someone'll tell you to use cheap supermarket oil and change it every fortnight. So, *Classic Bike Guide* tries to help you find out just what is best for you and your bike. Who do you believe?

WORDS BY SLIPPERY STEVE COOPER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MULTIGRADE/MORTONS ARCHIVE

ALTHOUGH SOME ENTHUSIASTS HAVE preferences and favourites, the reality is that it's actually rather hard to buy a 'bad' oil for any classic motorcycle. Almost without exception any motor oil on sale today will be substantially and significantly better than anything from when your machine was new. Technology has moved on massively and the old adage – oil is oil – simply doesn't stand up. While any oil is better than no oil, running any engine on the wrong type, grade or viscosity will inevitably cause damage – pure and simple. If anyone was in any doubts try (er, don't – Matt) running a big, lusty, British twin on sewing machine oil or a high-revving Japanese stroker on gear oil! An appropriate and suitable oil isn't an arbitrary choice, it's a considered one.

Bar stool experts and keyboard warriors are often in favour of using the oil as originally specified by the manufacturers on the grounds those that designed and built the bikes know best. At face value such logic is inarguable: or is it? Doubtless BSA would have relished the chance to run modern, high lubricity oils in their Daytona racers. A modern day Manx Norton will always benefit from modern technology whether it's using castor oil or mineral oil. Those oh-so potent Japanese two-stroke race bikes of the mid-1960s had an evil reputation for seizing in an instant; one of Suzuki's GP 250s was nicknamed The Whispering Death! Modern two-stroke oil totally outclasses the stuff even GP teams could access back in the day. Simply put, old oil isn't necessarily good oil.

WHAT DOES OIL DO?

Engine oil has to lubricate metal-on-metal surfaces in a moving engine, being thin enough to get to the smallest places, as fast as possible, yet being hardy-enough to not break down and withstand intense heat. In fact another of its main jobs is to help in cooling the engine. It takes any dirt and debris it finds on its journeys with it and leaves it at the filter and could it last long-enough to be economically efficient, as well as dealing with the different temperatures the seasons bring? Oil has to be many things historically and now has even more to do.

WHAT DO ALL THE NUMBERS MEAN?

Four-stroke oils are classified by viscosities among other things – viscosity being another word for how thin or thick a fluid is. With all four-stroke oils the larger the number the thicker the oil – simple and logical? A 50 weight oil is thicker than a 40 weight which is in turn thicker than a 30 weight, etc. This simplistic system holds true for monograde oil i.e. oils that don't have a viscosity modifier included within their formulation.

For the purposes of comparison and measurement motor oils are assessed and quoted in units called centistokes. The viscosity of an oil governs just how easily it can be pumped around the engine to all the vital components, how easily it will pass through the filter, and how quickly it returns to the oil tank or sump. Lower viscosity oils move around quicker from cold but can dangerously thin as work heat in the engine increases. Thicker oils will offer better protection from a cold start up but may, in the wrong circumstances, offer too much resistance, making starting difficult or impossible; they will also thin with work heat.

With monograde oils the viscosity is largely governed by the size of the molecules within the oil – the larger the molecules are and the more that are present the thicker the oil etc. With multigrade oils such as 10w-30 or 20w 50 the molecules have a lesser influence as clever chemistries known as the viscosity modifiers control the oil's rheology or how it flows.

Did you know?

With multigrade oils, if you see a number followed by a 'w', it stands for 'winter' and is an indication of how thick it is at colder temperatures. This will affect how hard a bike could be to kick over, or the protection it gives before the engine is warm.

MONOGRADES

These are oils of one weight. The higher the number, the thicker the oil. Historically monogrades were split into summer and winter grades with 5, 10, 15 and 20 weight oil being used exclusively in winter and 30, 40 and 50 weights being used as summer oils, or for countries with hotter climates. Given that most us are now rather unlikely to be running classic Midlands' twins through British winters, it's arguably not viable or worthwhile buying the thinner, winter oils.

Any non-Japanese, four-stroke motor was almost certainly specified to run on monograde oil and probably either 40 or 50 weight oil – but why? For the simple reason that manufacturers were fairly sure their products would be used hard and in anger and a thick oil would unquestionably remain in place on critical, wear prone, surfaces better than a thin 30 weight. It would also thin with heat to something like the correct working viscosity. Simply put, high viscosity monogrades were the best option at the time. Therefore the use of either 40 or 50 weight monograde oils was/is a calculated compromise. They may very well be overly thick at start up but will offer the best cling and lubricating properties at operating temperatures.

MULTIGRADES

As the science of oil was better understood there was a drive to develop an oil that would be able to cope with both seasonal changes, different parts of the world and higher performances. By the late 1950s manufacturers were able to incorporate a new, novel, additive that was generically referred to as a viscosity modifier or viscosity enhancer. These materials are essentially helixes or springs that remain tightly wound at lower temperatures and then proportionately open or unwind as the temperature increases.

This rather clever piece of physical chemistry means the oil's viscosity can be better controlled, which in turn means better protection for the engine. Therefore, on a standard test rig within a laboratory environment, a 20w-50 oil will have the viscosity of a monograde 20 oil at lower temperatures but will then mimic that of a 50 monograde at elevated temperatures effectively giving the best of both worlds. As the knowledge base grew during the late 1960s a lower viscosity multigrade, 10w-40, became available which facilitated the use of use of tightened manufacturing tolerances, thereby reducing both mechanical wear and noise. Advances in engine manufacturing technology have led oil companies to develop 0w-50 and even 0w-60 grades. Much of this is due to the tightening up on exhaust emissions as it is to do with lubrication.

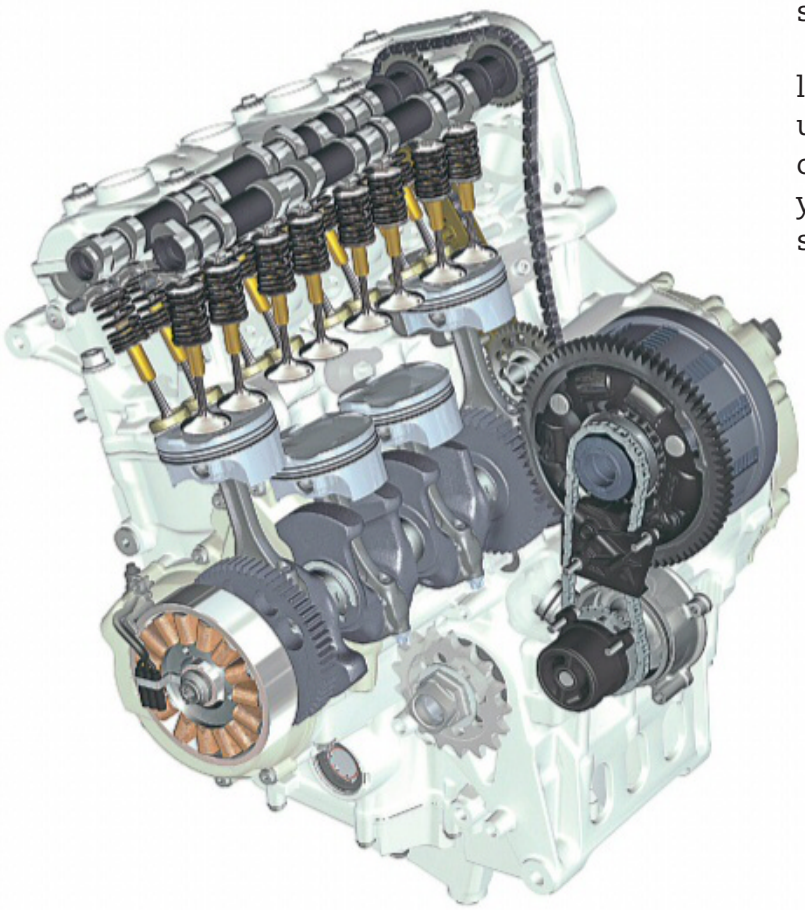
"On a standard test rig within a laboratory environment, a 20w-50 oil will have the viscosity of a monograde 20 oil at lower temperatures but will then mimic that of a 50 monograde at elevated temperatures"

CASTOR OIL

Everyone loves the smell of castor oil when used in an old bike; its slightly acrid yet charismatic odour is something of a rite of passage for classic motorsport fans.

Back to the earliest days and to the internal combustion engine, basic, mineral, crude oil sourced, lubricants carried very little in terms of additives and were prone to chemically breaking down if worked too hard. Castor oil and its derivatives offered much better film strength, good heat/wear properties and a remarkable ability to resist carbonisation etc. However, with the advent of multigrades, anti-wear additives, film strength modifiers and the like, the benefits of castor oil were largely negated.

Although still being produced today, castor oil is substantially more prone to leaving unwanted deposits in engines and its breakdown products are known to be extremely corrosive towards many metals used in engines. Oxidized and acidic materials can make serious inroads into critical components. Sourced from the castor oil bean the feedstock can vary in quality and availability, it's more expensive and modern oils are generally as good or better for the vast majority of applications.



ADDITIVES

Without exception, any current motor oil will contain additives – this is what makes them both reliable and long lasting. As well as the viscosity modifiers used in multigrades there are antioxidants to combat thermal degradation of the oil, corrosion inhibiters to prevent chemical attack of bearings, cases, etc., anti-wear agents that do the obvious, antifoam agents to prevent oil cavitation or frothing, along with detergents or emulsifiers that lock up any water molecules safely.

There's an awful lot of scaremongering regarding detergents in oil, but the chances are if you've been running a bike lately your oil already has them in it – they've been around since the 1930s! Most of the issues bandied around are anecdotal and go back decades when old bike engines run on simple and unsophisticated monogrades were swapped over to diesel motor oils. It used to be 'the done thing' to swap to overtly detergent-containing oils at one point and the then period diesel lubricants proffered were arguably better than some of the bike oils of the period. The problem was that the then detergent-heavy diesel oils could lift off old, decayed, oil deposits and variously cause oil gallery blockages, piston rings gumming and release the contents of sludge traps, filter screen and the like.

Nowadays the likelihood would appear to be much less. There's nothing wrong with oils that are flagged up as having high(er) detergent contents and many older air-cooled engines actually benefit from them. If you're doing a full rebuild (and clean) then it's a very sensible way to go.

TRANSMISSION OILS

Whether your ride is British, Continental or Oriental there are better options for primary drives than the archaic alternatives of the Sixties and Seventies. The cheapest ATF or Automatic Transmission Fluid used to be a standard default for pre-unit British iron inside the primary drive case, simply because it was better than light monogrades of the period.

Today, motorcycle specific, clutch friendly, 10w-30 or decent quality ATF seems to get the thumbs-up from owners. Or you could splash out on a belt drive conversion which requires no lubrication at all!

Japanese two-strokes used to be specified as using 10w-30 oil but once again that was all that was generally available and it probably carried minimal additives to upset the bikes' wet clutches. Science has moved on a lot and we can now enjoy what's referred to as 'light gear oils' that are specifically designed for that one application. Paradoxically these oils are classified by a different viscosity standard so don't panic when your light gear oil is specified as 70w-80 – it has the same 'runnyness' as old 10w-30 but contains additives that protect both the gear teeth and the transmissions bearings. Japanese four-strokes tend to run unit motors where the engine and transmission use the same lubricant. Although that might sound wrong – history has shown the set-up works just fine and as long as a bike specific oil is used all will be well. Use a car oil and just listen to those clutch plates struggle for grip!

Did you know?

ATF was used in forks for years simply because fork oil didn't exist!

TWO-STROKE OIL

Arguably nowhere has better demonstrated the improvements of oil technology than within the two-stroke arena. Machines that would once demand 16:1 petrol oil ratios can now be run at significantly lower oil contents – 25:1 is often still too oily! It's not uncommon for bikes previously run on 32:1 to be swapped over to 50:1: modern two-stroke oil is simply that much better. The added bonus here is that by reducing the oil content, the petrol-to-air ratio becomes richer which is always a good thing to have with a two-stroke.

Split into three types: mineral, semi-synthetic and fully synthetic, all are viable in everything but the most highly or race-tuned missiles. For any period stroker that's not an out-and-out sports machine, a motorcycle specific semi-synthetic oil will protect and lubricate far in advance of any oil two decades ago. Zero plug fouling, minimal carbon build-up and cleaner exhausts are all there for the taking and there's not really a substantial price penalty between a decent branded mineral two-stroke oil and a semi-synthetic. Fully synthetic oils offer ultimate two-stroke protection for multi cylinder engines and especially water-cooled ones.

There are a couple of high-end stroker lubricants that combine semi-synthetic chemistries together with modified castor oils, but the manufacturers go to some lengths to point out such oils are intended for track use alone. An interesting if annoying facet of

Brooklands, 1923. Headlam poses on his 349cc oil-cooled Bradshaw-engined Dot. These machines had total-loss oil systems and oil was still in its infancy

many modern two-stroke oils is the overall apparent reduction in viscosity.

Although not necessarily a bad thing in terms of flowing through the pump, some can also get past check valves on long term storage. Taken to extremes there are well documented cases of engines suffering hydraulic locks and bent con rods as a consequence – Kawasaki triples seem to be disproportionately affected. Two-stroke oil isn't expensive, it's priceless which is why it's vital to use a proven brand. Even if a 16:1 commuter from the 1950s will run on generic lawnmower oil that's not a justified reason to use it. It only takes one cold seizure, some seized rings or a smudged piston to demonstrate penny pinching on two-stroke oil is very definitely a false economy.

SUSPENSION OILS

No one wants to be putting up with floppy forks or dodgy damping but that's pretty much what most of used to accept when our choice of fork oils was limited to summer weight monogrades, ATF (Automatic Transmission Fluid) or basic 10w-30. Today there's a raft of suspension fluids available and it genuinely pays to give them a look-see. It's possible to improve telescopic forks' action by experimenting with different weight or viscosity oils; anything from 2.5 weight up to 30 weight is readily available.

To get the best results it's worth stripping the forks down and cleaning out the internals which will ensure the forks are contamination free. An added benefit is that unlike the oils of yesteryear modern fork oils are seal friendly by design. One final word on the subject while we are here – should you be working on an original Japanese bike that's never been touched beware the of the old fork oil. Many Japanese suspensions right up to and beyond the mid-1970s were filled with fish oil… and its olfactory properties certainly don't improve with keeping!

GEARBOX OILS

Separate gearboxes and transmission bevel drives come with their own specific requirements. They are normally specified and labelled as EP or Extreme Pressure lubricants; this is a reference to the high point-to-point loading gear oils seen between the cog's teeth. Additives such as molybdenum bisulphide and/or organosulfur compounds combat wear and improve lubrication. Some modern gearbox oils may not be suitable for earlier gearboxes that utilise phosphor bronze bushes and can, in certain circumstances, actually attack this bearing material – if in doubt ask your supplier or the manufacturer as to suitability.

Above: MotoGP is a superb R+D lab for oil manufacture

GRADES AND CLASSIFICATIONS

Four-stroke bike oils are generally tagged with codes and/or specifications. The most obvious are (MO) – Mineral Oils, (SS) – Semi Synthetic and (FS) – Fully Synthetic. Then there will be API (American Petroleum Institute) and JASO (Japanese Automotive Standards Organization) classifications. API classifications start with an S followed by the letter A through to the current P standard. You'd automatically assume that the higher the second letter the better the oil right? Not necessarily. Many older, yet still viable and currently on-sale, motor oils contain an organo-zinc complex (zinc dialkyl dithio phosphate) which is intended to offer component protection should the oil break down.

This and similar chemistries are often a genuine safety net for older engines but these materials were removed from more modern oils to prevent the zinc component damaging catalytic converters. In reality any appropriate, bike-specific, oil bookended by SF to SH should be suitable for classic four-strokes, but it'd do no harm to research a little deeper for your own machine. Applicable JASO grades are MA and MB. MA is for wet clutch engines and MB is for two-wheelers with automatic transmissions.

For two-strokes it's a little simpler and although API classifications exist, most enthusiasts go by the JASO listings. There are four grades, JASO FA to FD. FA is the original JASO two-stroke standard, FB offers increased lubricity, detergency plus reduced exhaust smoke and exhaust system blocking, FC offers far higher detergency, reduced exhaust smoke and exhaust system blocking and FD offers higher detergent levels. As a very rough rule of thumb FB grades are largely mineral based, FC semi-synthetic and FD fully synthetic; however, numerous high end semi-synthetic two-stroke oils are actually FD compliant.

Excluding racing and/or seriously tuned engines a good FB will be fine in most premix applications and 1970s strokers, with FC or in FD in the tuned screamers of the 1980s or 90s.

WHAT CHEMISTRY IS BEST IN MY BIKE?

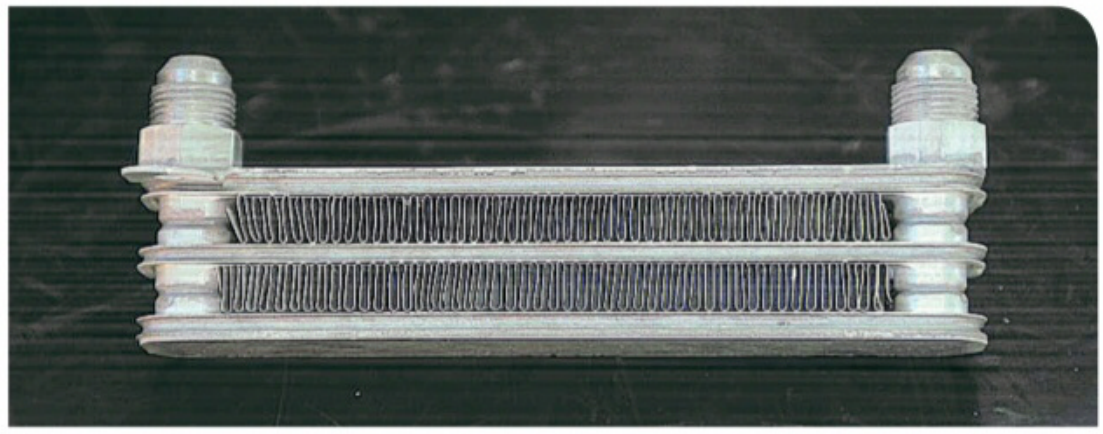
For a very large chunk of *CBG* eligible engines a good quality mineral oil will be fine. Pouring high-end, fully synthetic 10w-60 into a big, air-cooled, parallel twin is probably a waste. With their looser manufacturing tolerances these engines can actually eject the thinner oil out of the exhausts. Semi synthetics are arguably viable for freshly built motors but only if the various ring gaps, valve stem clearances and the like have been reduced to take the new, higher spec, oil into account.

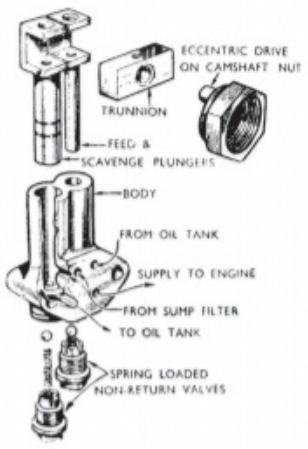
The highest specification oil is not always the best one to use. Kawasaki have been known in the past to tell dealers to run some new four-stroke engines in on lower grade, mineral, oils in order to get the rings and bores properly bedded in. It's only after the first service and oil change that such motors are then filled with the 'proper stuff'! And strokers aren't immune either – who would have thought a quality semi-synthetic two stroke oil was too slippery? There's a pair of barrels on the bench here right now that have been seriously glazed and need re-honing because the oil was simply too oily!

MINERAL/SEMI-SYNTHETIC/FULLY SYNTHETIC

Almost without exception all motor oils are derived from crude oil; the original and current base line is mineral oil. This means it's been produced from the basic feedstocks along with various additives but not chemically modified. Synthetic oils are manufactured using chemically modified petroleum components rather than just using the base crude oils utilised in mineral oils.

Typically, synthetic oils will contain some or all of the following: non-polar polymers, esters, polyglycols and occasionally heavily modified mineral oils. The benefits of using fully synthetic oils are longer operating life, stability, resistance to thermal degradation and oxidation. Semi-synthetic oils are simply blends of mineral and fully synthetic oils but the proportion of the two varies from company to company.





Top: Oil coolers help keep temperatures within tolerance

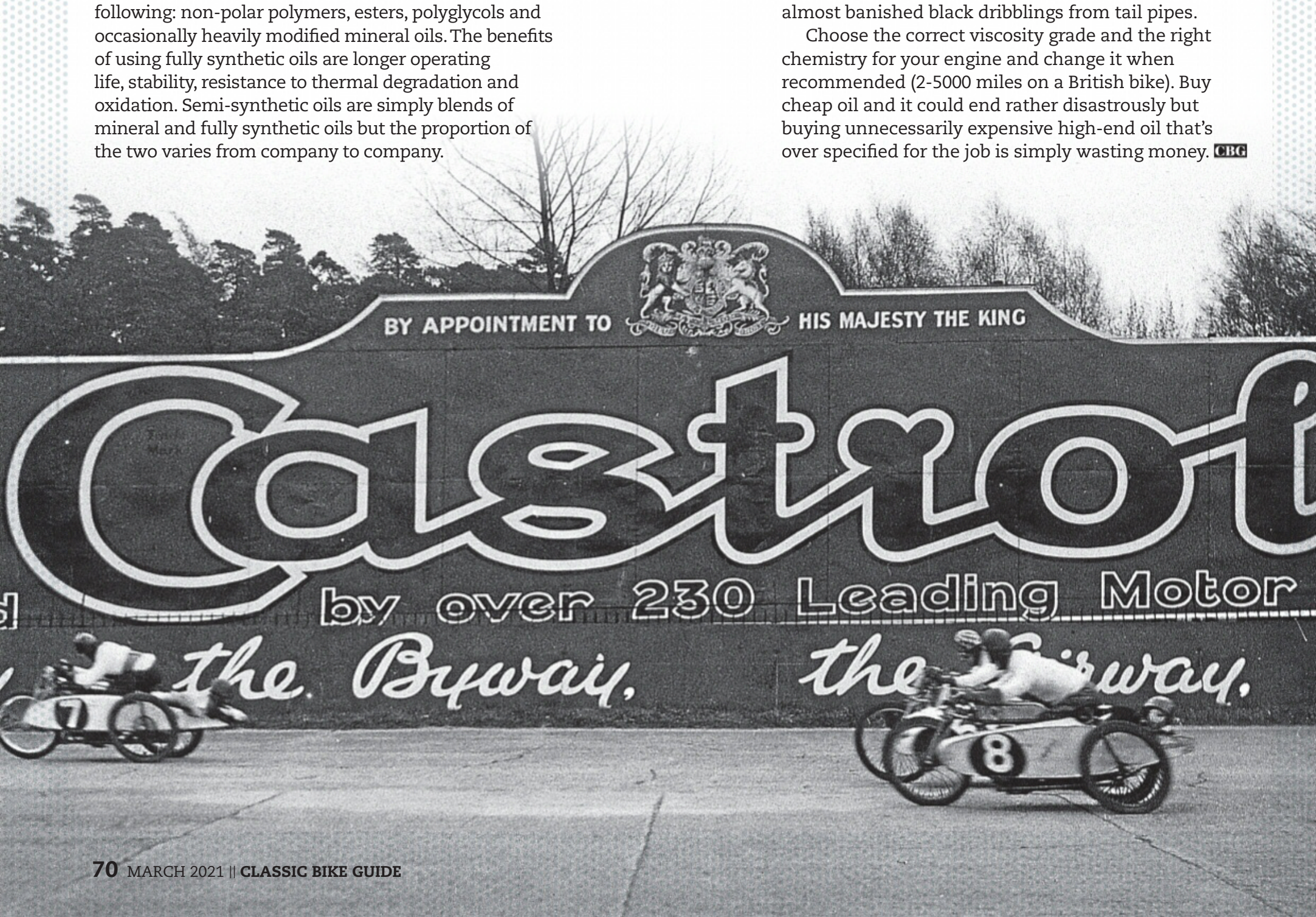
Above: An oil pump similar to Triumph or Aerial types are reliable and last well

CONCLUSION

The reality to classic motorcycle lubrication is that any oil you buy now will be infinitely better than the oils made and specified when your engine or gearbox were first designed. Stick with an appropriate motorcycle specific product and you are genuinely unlikely to go far wrong.

Swapping between grades/viscosities from summer to winter is probably unnecessary unless you are riding under extreme conditions; most enthusiasts tend to stick with just the one. That said, there's no reason not to evaluate other brands of the same grade or range. *CBG*'s long term Yamaha XS650 underwent a profound change for the better swapping over to a different make of 20w-50; clutch action and gear selection were both massively improved. Similarly the use of semi-synthetic two-stroke oils in all of the author's stinkwheels has totally negated spark plug cleaning, massively reduced exhaust smoke and almost banished black dribblings from tail pipes.

Choose the correct viscosity grade and the right chemistry for your engine and change it when recommended (2-5000 miles on a British bike). Buy cheap oil and it could end rather disastrously but buying unnecessarily expensive high-end oil that's over specified for the job is simply wasting money. CBG



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How to paint spray at home

Part one

We look at what it takes to paint your bike at home – and is it for you? Part one, preparation

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT

Money, time, patience. It takes all three and more to learn how to paint bikes successfully at home. But if it does work out for you, not only could you save time and money, you will also be able to look back at your bike every time you ride it and think: 'I painted that'. And you never tire of that.

Bodywork, like many other parts of restoring a bike, takes patience. The more you practice, the more you learn. This takes time and money, so the first question is: should I even start? If you're restoring one bike and the painting is limited to a tank and two side panels, then no. It is cheaper to get a professional to do it, you will be happier and you can help matters by rubbing down and prepping the surface. For others, like those who become serial restorers, or enjoy cars, or tractors as well, and you have the space, it could be worth it, so let's have a look at what it involves.

PREPARATION - DULL AND LABORIOUS, MAYBE - BUT UTTERLY NECESSARY

Find a local bodyshop supplier – it may be cheaper, they have everything you need (and more – stick with what you need, not what you want – this is just a hobby) and they even deliver. And you know it's all designed for painting. Plastic and metal need prepping first. All parts need to be clean, so if you're posh a parts washer will be useful (from around £150), or I use a

Trial and error, using several parts to make sure it would be useful

Being mild steel, it was just a case of MIG welding together

converted stainless steel sink from a skip, some diesel and paraffin and old paint brushes (more on that next month). Warning – you'll stink, no matter what you wear… Once everything is clean, metal needs to have any trace of rust removed or you'll be doing all this again soon. If the rust is bad, you may need it sand or bead blasted. You can have this done professionally, but make a list of parts you give to the blaster as it's easy to lose parts. You may also want some alloy parts blasted – these tend to be better vapour or bead blasted, whereas steel parts are best sand or bead blasted. Soda blasting is great for more delicate parts, so speak to your blaster.

If you want to do it yourself for more control, a medium-size cabinet and shot-blasting gun will cost around £200, which can be used outside the cabinet if you have parts too large. But it will need a good-size compressor (around £300) to power it, an industrial vacuum to help reduce the dust inside (or you can't see what you're blasting) and a mask, which you need anyway for painting 2K paint. Blasting makes a lot of dust – which could cause silicosis and lung problems – be careful. I have a separate small shed for it with an extractor to a filter box.

Above: It looks hideous, but will take awkward parts like mudguards, drums, plates and even oil tanks

Paint stripper seems no good for anything these days, so flapper discs on grinders is the next best way for cleaning metal. For something less vicious, we now use the Norton Blaze discs (£10 each) that just seem to take the paint off, leaving the metal.

Da Daaa! Solid and easy to modify

Freshly blasted

Fiddly to rub down

Flapper wheels work well

Panel wipe is the last job before painting

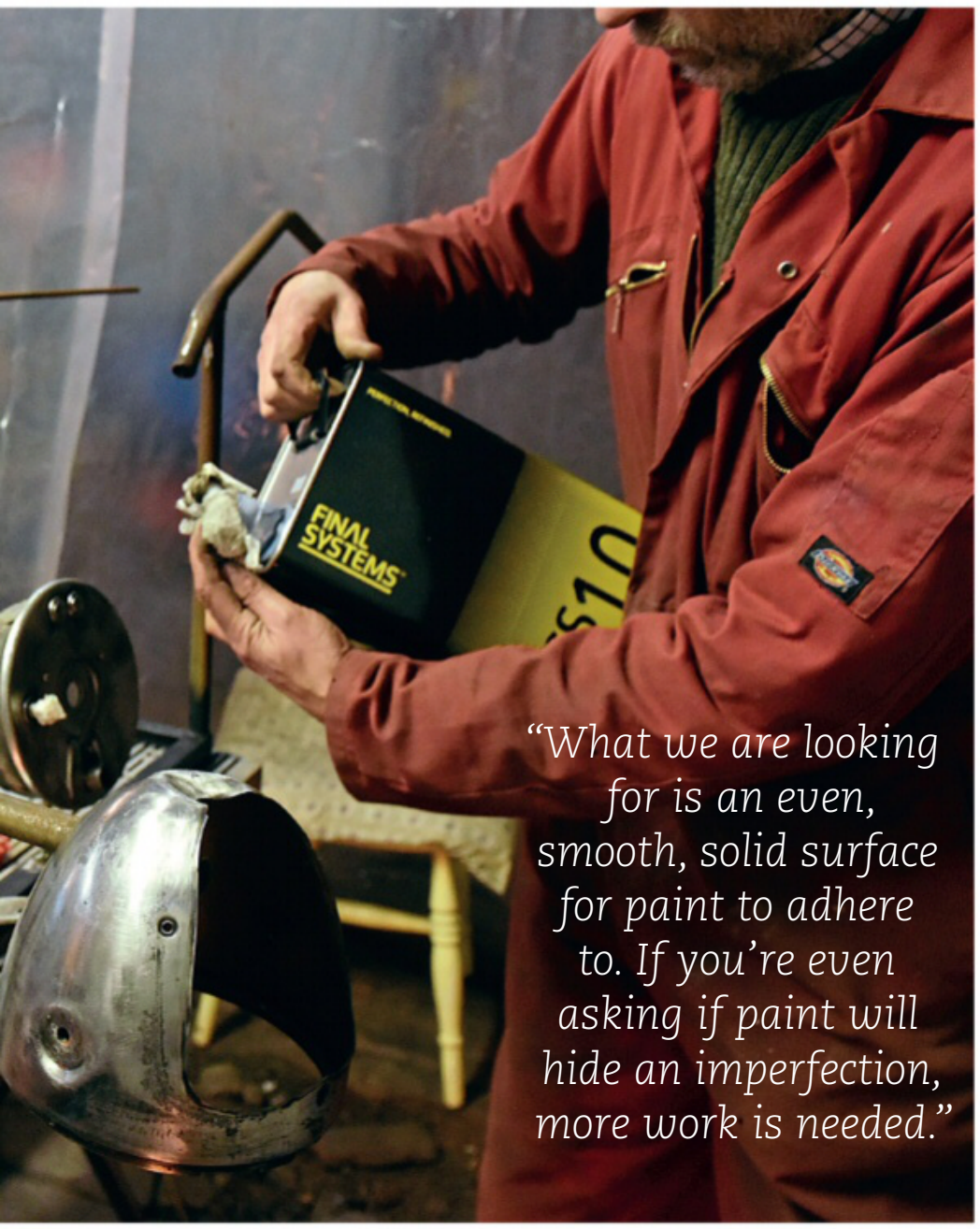
Left: remove all you can, like switches

Below: rubbing blocks are really good for getting a flat, or uniform finish

If you're just trying to flatten an old paint surface, there is no need to go right down to bare metal, despite what the concours brigade say. An orbital air sander costs around £50, with a box of 100, 150 grit discs (that just attach with Velcro) costing £16. That does most of the work (though it does get everything around you dusty so wear that mask), with corners and edges done by hand; you can then start on the wet and dry paper, used wet. For plastic, you're limited to wet and dry paper anyway, anything motorised risks melting or wrecking the plastic. Start with the lower grades like 80 or 120 and work down to 400 grit, then finish off with Scotchbrite pads. With flatter surfaces, use a rubbing block or even a filler applicator really helps keep your rubbing down even. And don't be tight on your wet and dry!

Work on frames, mudguard stays and engine plates is best done by hand and don't underestimate how much time it will take. If you rush it, you'll end up not doing it properly, so a comfy chair, an old cushion to rest parts on your lap and some music improves working no end!

There is no shame in using filler – providing it is sparing. If you have got rid of any rust, a skim of filler will get rid of any pock marks or small dents which can then be rubbed down. Same with plastics, any imperfections can be erased with a little filler. If you want more time to work it in before it goes off, put a little less hardener in to give more time. Good quality filler lasts at least a year and £20 will get you plenty and a few spare applicators, too. What



"What we are looking for is an even, smooth, solid surface for paint to adhere to. If you're even asking if paint will hide an imperfection, more work is needed."

we are looking for is an even, smooth, solid surface for paint to adhere to. If you're even asking if paint will hide an imperfection, more work is needed.

Finally while we are looking at costs of prep, you need a can of panel wipe and some paper roll. This makes sure there are no contaminants left on the piece you're prepping – there is nothing worse than all that hard work, only to see your paint start to peel.

Finally, if you can, remove it. So badges, ignition, dials, switches all need to come off so you can get the best finish and the best protection for the panel. If you really can't, and you'll need it anyway, get yourself a bulk pack of quality masking tape.

JUGGLING ACT

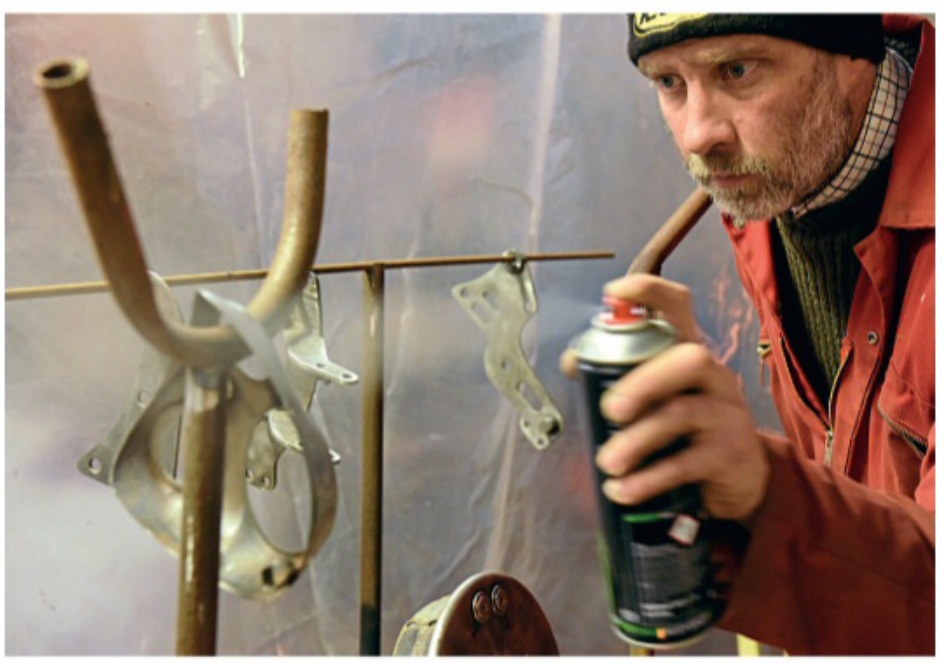
Before we look at painting, we need to look at how to hold it all securely. You need a way to hold all the different shape parts, in a way that you can get paint nice and evenly all round, while holding parts steady against the pressure of the paint shooting out of the spray gun. Some use welding wire which is nice and thin so doesn't hide anything and can be hung from somewhere. But it also lets the part swing around, possibly touching something else or at least not giving you control. So I took a load of parts from a bike that needs paint, raided the scrap metal bin for parts that I could shape to hold the likes of plates, mudguards and even tanks, then welded it all to an old wardrobe base. This sits nicely on a workmate bench and I can toss it up on the rafters when not in use.

Some costs to consider. Not all are essential. For others, beg, borrow, barter or steal. Ask around to see what your friends have. I made my parts washer and the parts stand from the skip. My blast cabinet was a Christmas present and I blast parts for a friend who helps me out with jobs. Life's tapestry and all that.

Parts washer and fluid	£200
Compressor	£300
Air hose	£15
Connectors	£25
Blasting cabinet	£200
Glass bead	£35
Vacuum	£100
Wet and dry paper, Norton Blaze discs, sanding discs	£50
Orbital sander	£50
Mask	£15
Filler	£20
Panel wipe and roll	£20
Masking tape x6	£8

Scotchbrite pads are a great final finish

Paint-removing discs don't touch the metal below



Next month: we may actually get to paint something!

MURDER TENT

Paint travels through the air to your panel and is quite sticky. So any particles it encounters on its short journey it picks up. This fact, added to that enormous amount of dust and crap you've created rubbing everything down, could add up to a paint job that looks terrible. My solution is to make a clean area, with some plastic from a pair of mattresses. These stop rubbish from coming down from the roof and act as curtains, too. This can then either be used to keep rubbing down dust in, or out, depending on what you're doing. A broom sorts most, but the vacuum does the best job. Finally if spraying, I water down the floor with a watering can, to keep any dust down. Also watch what you wear – no need for any scary white space suits, but the less fluffy your jumper or cleaner your overalls, the better. CBG

Next month – painting – we promise!

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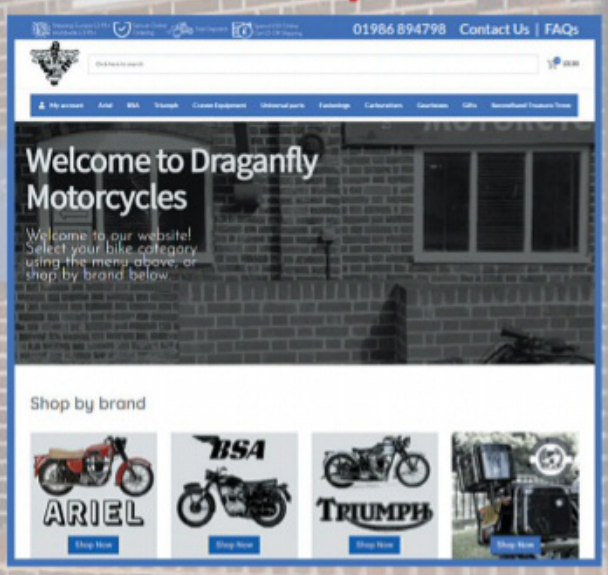

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ADVERTORIAL

BRIAN'S BAD BACK BETTER WITH BIOFLOW

60 year old Brian Peters of Kent had been suffering from arthritis in his back and knees for a number of years. Despite taking painkillers, he was finding his work in heavy engineering increasingly difficult and painful and was unable to enjoy his hobby of riding and restoring vintage bikes.

A friend advised him to try a Bioflow Magnetic therapy wristband as it had really helped him so Brian bought a Bioflow Elite from distributor, Jenny Ryan.

He says, 'I was really pleased with the service. I received the Elite the day after I ordered it and now I've stopped taking painkillers. My back and knees are much better and I no longer get any pain from an old operation scar. My wife is also delighted as she says I'm much better tempered! Several of my friends have commented on how much better I look and now they are also buying Bioflows from Jenny.'

For further information contact:
Jenny Ryan 0114 2307844/ 07817671259
16 Den Bank Crescent, Sheffield S10 5PD
www.magneticpower4u.net
jennyryan@magneticpower4u.com

MR NEWTON DELIGHTED BY PAIN RELIEF!

After a lifetime of hard work in the water works, Mr Newton of Blackburn was suffering from prolapsed discs and he was taking a lot of painkillers. Having read an article in Old Bike Mart about Bioflow magnetic therapy wristbands he bought an Elite from independent distributor, Jenny Ryan.

He was thrilled by the improvement in his back but he also found an unexpected bonus. As a long-term smoker he suffered from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease which caused difficulty in breathing and lack of energy. 2 bypass operations had involved taking veins from his leg to use in his chest. This had left him with a badly swollen and painful leg, which had to be tightly bandaged, and frequently suffered from cramp.

Since wearing his Bioflow Elite wristband he finds breathing much easier, he has more energy and the swelling in his leg has gone down so he is able just to wear a support stocking to control it and he no longer gets cramp.

He says 'I am thrilled with what Bioflow has done for me and I'm telling everyone about it. I'm happy for my story to be used in Old Bike Mart so that other readers can benefit. Jenny provided an excellent service and I'm recommending her to my friends.'

Contact: Jenny Ryan
0114 2307844 / 07817671259
16 Den Bank Crescent, Sheffield S10 5PD
jennyryan@magneticpower4u.com
www.magneticpower4u.net

Part 2

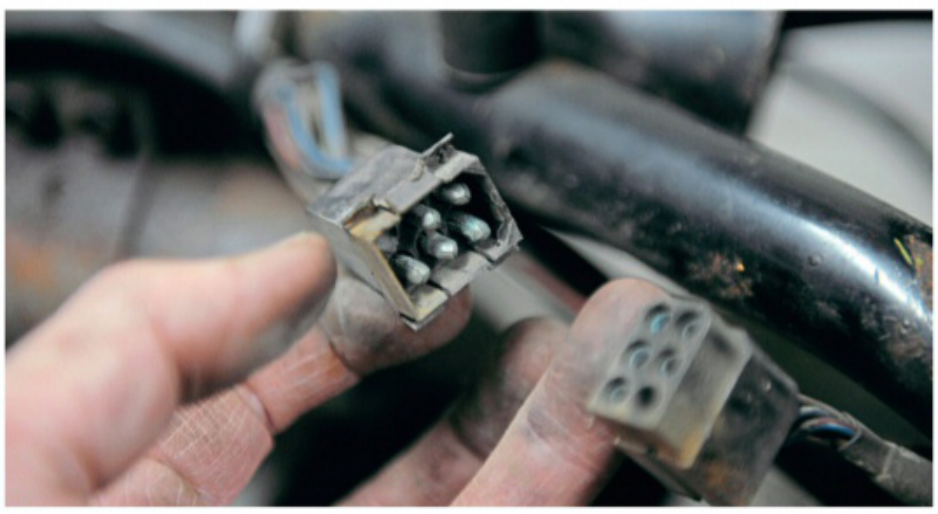
BMW R100 project

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY MATT, VAN DRIVING BY MARIA

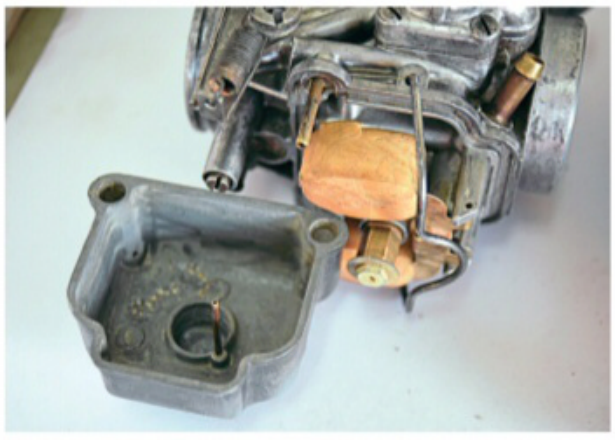
Matt gets a little caught up in his new project – you were only supposed to see if it would run!

Many thanks to Martin Brown, who sent in this photo of his father's splendid BMW R100RS – in the same colours!

Taking reference photos for cable routing at rebuild time



Should these contacts be green? Poor electrics meant no starting



After hours cleaning, this is the result

Gaffa tape holds a Bing carb well!

1950s Norton versus 1970s BMW – 20 years difference, yet totally different to work on

All those best-laid plans. The idea was simple; the BMW had been bought because it came up, not because I wanted one there and then. Maria has two bikes to finish, while I have the BSA to sort, two Hondas and I really, really must finish the Norton. So the job was to see if it'll run and if not, what issues and try to make some kind of list of what is needed. Be patient, finish the other bikes and then you can play on the BMW.

FRONT WHEEL AND FREEING BRAKES

Getting the bike on the stand had highlighted a sticky front wheel, not what you want on a bike that needs pushing power. 'Pop that out and loosen the pads' was my thought. It was so lovely working on a bike where nothing is rounded off and no bolt has the incorrect nut; but that doesn't mean there's no corrosion. The wheel can be taken out before the calipers, so out with the axle pinch bolts, off with the axle nut, use a softy mallet to remove the axle – and nothing. The axle was seized in one of the wheel bearings. I tried brute force, but the bearing just came out with the axle, so I clamped the bearing and used a larger hammer, with an old nut on the axle so not to ruin the original. Finally, after too much banging, the axle and wheel were free. The wheel needs the hub blasting and painting, followed by new stainless spokes, but I'll take some measurements of the offset and some photos of the pattern before I chop them out to replace them.

Rather a lot of money spent on servicing the two carbs, but should be good for years now

I haven't had a BMW with the early ATE calipers before. Until around 1981, these single-piston calipers held on a concentric, cam-like pivot (to allow the pads to line up with the discs) were the best way to stop you – and they were little worse than anything else of the time. However no one told the master cylinder design team, who created this hotch-potch of cable-to-master cylinder-to-hydraulic fluid pipe-to-flexis system, and then mounted under the tank so it collected a load of crap and couldn't be easily worked on. Allied to a rather heavy bike that is oh too happy at high cruising speeds, and you have the makings of a system you need to have in top condition.

The best way to pop pistons out of calipers is to use the brake fluid force – providing you don't mind a little mess, and wear goggles. Brake fluid is horrible stuff and you don't want it on, or in you. But, and it's a big but, the master cylinder was seized solid, so that was a no-no. The calipers had to come off on their own, then left for the brake fluid to drip out and finally use the compressor to blow them out. One worked perfectly, while the other didn't!

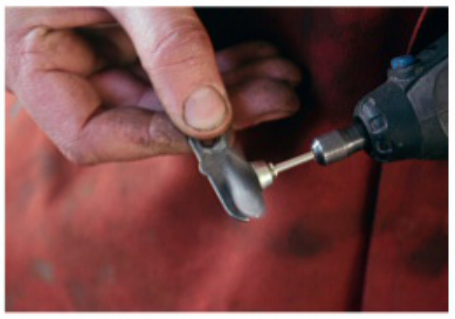
Good news is the obedient caliper piston is in good order, so that saves a good amount of money and I'll just order a seal kit. If the other one is knackered, I'll have to order a piston. As far as the rigid steel hoses are concerned some look all right, but I may just make them all from copper and know they are new. The caliper pivots are in good order, I've ordered some pads and I've taken the master cylinder off (it is mounted to the frame with a giant Jubilee clip – very un-German) and the cable is in good order – so I've also ordered a seal kit.

ATE CALIPERS

There are two sizes of caliper: 40mm and later, 38mm. 40mm (diameter of the piston)calipers have '40' stamped on them – 38mm have nothing stamped on the body.

Effie has the clean carb, mine is to be done. Home schooling, Norfolk-style. Left carb much worse as immersed in petrol for longer

Truing screw heads



Dremmel and wire brush work well

Manual has several carb designs, but not mine

Scotchbrite works well too

Below: Mudguard bolt was stubborn in the extreme. Only soaking in paraffin and boiling water loosened its grip

The rubber hoses will be replaced by stainless braided ones to reduce the flex and improve feel. Being twice the price I wouldn't normally, but this is a keeper and I want to use it. The calipers will hopefully clean up, as they have a kind of anodising on them which I can't see how to get redone. The first year of R100RS had blue calipers, but you'd have to resort to painting and I would rather it stay original. The majority of brake improvements I hope are to come from weight reduction over time.

EXKLUSIV SPORT

As our example is a little different with this mysterious paint scheme (a kind reader, Martin Brown has sent a photo of his father's later RS in the same colours – so can anyone else help find the origins? We're currently thinking a dealership, like Allan Jefferies), I'm taking a little inspiration from a limited run model. There was a special edition a couple of years later in 1980, called the 'Exklusiv Sport'. It was silver with blue stripes. Some say it was the blue from the Bavarian flag, others say it was the colours from the Lufthansa airlines for an anniversary and yet more say it was the Lambert and Butler colours from the Daytona racers. Being a realist and that 1980 was the year BMW North America was being set up and that sales were slow as the Deutchmark was so strong compared to Stirling or the Dollar, my guess is the 30 heading to the USA was a little help to shift the otherwise extremely expensive air-cooled twins for the outgoing importers, Butler and Smith, with maybe the same help coming to the UK and Europe.

Either way, the 75 examples worldwide (unconfirmed) had a nice paint job, with polished fork legs, head covers and final drive. Now I like the idea of polishing the forks and final drive, as the RS had black forks anyway and a polished, lacquered final drive should make it easier to keep clean. And I've always liked the older-style rocker covers, so if I haven't spent all my money, they're being fitted, so there. And it's my bike.

PAINT AND BODYWORK

I enjoy painting, but mainly because all the bikes I own need painting. This one needs to have its history kept, so I'd like to maintain the paintjob. But it's bubbling, which it can do over time, or if it wasn't prepared carefully. I'm as yet, undecided. I could touch up the black areas, which are worst. I could leave it and just restore the mechanicals, or leave the paint until the end. Either way, it's staying as it is to look

VAPOUR BLASTING? ULTRASONIC CLEANERS?

I used both methods on carbs before but this time I used brute force inside and a Dremmel-mounted wire brush for the outside. Why? Because I couldn't get to any friends with ultrasonic cleaners thanks to lockdown and I didn't trust blasting with a carb made from Mazak or monkey metal. It probably does work as it did a lovely job of my Amal, in which case it won't take forever to do them again; but I may try with an old, broken one first. As it is, the Dremmel wire brushes did a fine job and the diaphragm cover was rubbed down with wet and dry, followed by the polishing mop.

Butterfly axle completely gummed up and O ring dead

Axle wouldn't come out without the wheel bearings!

That's why it's stuck – cleaned up eventually

These will be stainless and copperslipped on rebuild!

One piston came out with compressor, one didn't

Master cylinder removed for inspection

at, so I've taken the bodywork off to store it safely as it does stick out. The front mudguard was especially stubborn to remove, while the top fairing was just awkward. The seat surround is metal, so that will need some anti-corrosion, but the metal seat base has been replaced with a new seat with plastic bottom, which stops rust and saves weight. One of the side panels is missing so I'll be on the look out.

TANK

Looked okay, then looked underneath. Bugger. Then took a scraper to underneath and found it wasn't so bad afterall. Hurrah. Then looked inside to see the standard BMW finish. Hurrah. Then saw it wasn't complete. Bugger. And my friendly tank sealer man, Ian from Tank Care Products (07834 415921) says the BMW sealer is a whatsit to remove. Oh – not sure what to do yet. What I do know is 27-year-old fuel smells baaaaad.

EAT YOUR CARBS

To get the engine to fire up, you need a fuel system – and this one was shot. Both carburettors were seized completely – and taking the float bowls off revealed dark reddish/ brown everywhere. Nothing for it but a complete strip.

Benefit of twin carbs is you have a reference, if you do them one at a time

Petrol taps still work, despite 25 years of immersion

Tank may be history

Bad earth you say? No idea why no spark..

And that's just one load! Petrol deposits

Axle getting a clean up and polish

Float bowl getting attacked – wire brush worked well

I serviced a pair of Bing CV carbs last year, albeit 34mm models from my 1980s RT; but they are very similar so I won't bore you with it. Needless to say, it was all fairly straightforward except for the immense amount of stale petrol in these ones – that's what leaving a bike full of fuel does after 27 years. I had some help from Effie and we used a variety of methods to undo the stubborn, glued parts like the main butterfly, and the choke system. Even stripped as far as it could be and soaked over several days, the jets and all in the float bowl needed brake cleaner, Gunk and thinners applied by a mix of brushes, Scotchbrite pads and Dremmel with a wire brush attachment to rid them of stale, baked-on petrol.

Once happy, we replaced the O rings, diaphragm and jets with new ones and put back together. I'm happy with the result; though the floats may not survive and it only take s a little dirt to make one poorly carb – so let's hope we did it.

IGNITION

Despite the freed front wheel, despite the nicely cleaned carbs and the bodywork removed, the ignition wiring looked terrible. I could have replaced earths, cleaned up contacts and tried to get a spark, but it was too much. So the oil was drained with a magnet, to find no metal floating around at all, and the tank will get cleaned and possibly sealed as soon as possible.

TOOL KIT

Sounds nerdy I know, but I'm really excited to have a bike with the original tools and pump. But they're rusty, so Effie and I have been seeing how easy it is to make them like new. Hopefully more on that, soon.

For now, though, the R100S is being parked up for a month or so to allow the bikes on the list before it to have their jobs done. With that done, they can be moved out, allowing us more room and total concentration on the airhead. Here's hoping! CBG

TRUING BOLT AND SCREW HEADS

One area I was insistent on, especially as the whole world can see the carbs on a BMW, was truing bolts and screw heads. They work fine, but someone has at some point been ham-fisted and rounded them off. So I popped them in a vice and used a ball-pein hammer and punch to straighten them. Looks good, gives you a nice feeling, your bike is still original and it's free!

Left: An original toolkit needs someone to make them sparkle!

Right: It'll look brand new - hopefully

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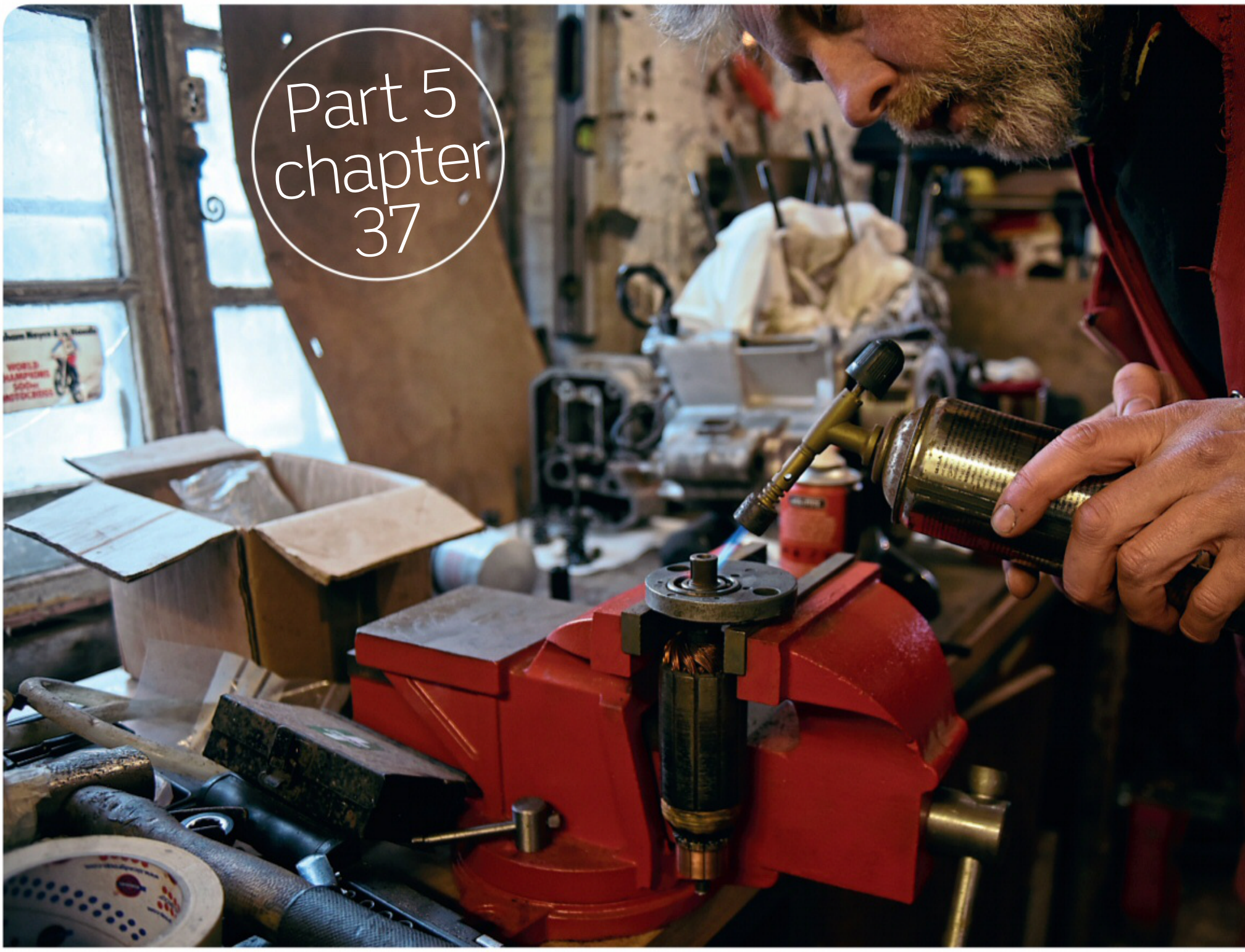


Project Norton

Dynamo! If only Matt's charging system had as much energy as the name suggests.

Armature, case, one bolt and new bearings and bushes

IN MY BOX OF BITS I LOOSELY CALL AN ES2 THERE IS one labelled 'lectric'. In there is a magneto, the regulator in its tin box that sends shivers down the spine of any non-electrically minded biker, and the dynamo, which looks like it has been mauled by a lion. I don't know that much about electrics, but I fear it shouldn't have its guts hanging out like an extra in Jaws. So, as my 'The vintage motorcyclists' workshop' book by Radco (Frank Farrinton) says the dynamo is the easiest part of the system, let's start with that.

Before we go any further this is in no way a 'how to' guide. This was me learning about the Norton charging system the way I've learned most things in life: by buggering around and playing with what I have at my disposal. Use this as a guide at your peril…

Removing the commutator-end bearing

Casing should look good with a coat of black

HOW IT WORKS – AS I UNDERSTAND

I'll leave the explanation of how the dynamo works as we are featuring that in the next couple of months. But in its basic form, the engine spins the dynamo, which using electromagnetism creates DC current. This is then used to power the lights and any remaining power helps charge the battery.

Inside the dynamo is a shaft that has an armature, a large winding of wire, and a commutator, a brass coil made of smaller, insulated sections. The armature spins round, passing a field coil that is attached inside the heavy metal casing, while the casing itself acts as another field coil. This causes AC current to build, which is then passed through the commutator coil to brushes, which converts the AC into DC current. It's not essential to know exactly how it works (I hope), just what everything should be doing and how to help it be as efficient as possible.

The Lucas E3 LM dynamo my ES2 is fitted with was one of the common models fitted to British bikes and rated at 60 watts when it was new, whereas the older E3 units could only push out 35 watts – when it was new. Even my later system is close to useless if you think a headlight bulb is 35 watts, a rear light 18/8 watts (brake/ rear) so just turning your lights on is using most of your power – and that's if you're constantly at cruising speed. So any help to the charging system is gratefully received!

WHAT HAVE WE GOT?

Many books give good advice on how to test a dynamo in situ, which would point us in the right direction. But ours is off the bike in bits, so we just need to get it together as best we can, so we can try to test it. I put aside the regulator control box as it looks complete, if in need of a damn good clean. The armature shaft was spun by hand and both bearings sounded dry and noisy – luckily replacements are only a few pounds – so I ordered two, and also bought a couple of brushes. The two bearings were not a push over to come off – the small one on the commutator side has a spring clip holding it on and then I used gentle force – but the outer race cracked off, so the inner race had to be pulled off.

The larger, drive-side bearing had to be heated up with a plumber's torch, not too hot, but enough for a slight expansion where it slipped nicely off the shaft with a gentle persuasion. Once off, the heat allowed the bearing to pop out of the outer carrier easily.

Now I could get to the armature and commutator. Starting with the armature because it looks like the main and most important part, none of the books I have suggested anything other than a quick clean. So as I was mounting the shaft in the lathe it seemed a shame not to check it for straightness. I ran some wet and dry paper lightly over the surface. The way I see it, more than 60 years of dust from the brushes and commutator had to go somewhere, so shining up the armature face cannot do any harm. Following that I used brake cleaner and a toothbrush to clean the plates and winding ends.

Next was the commutator. Some will be worn through constant contact against the brushes, leaving an indented commutator. If this is the case, there's nothing for it but to turn the commutator surface down in the lathe. Thankfully, this one was nice and straight, so again wet and dry paper of gradually finer grit was used to leave it with a nice finish.

This, and wear over the years, added to a build-up of dirt and dust, will have led to the insulating mica

New drive-side bearing and end cap

Not sure if using wet and dry was the best thing to use...

Cleaning up the shaft after being hammered!

in between the commutator segments to become full up and flush with the copper. This can lead to the segments shorting, so they need clearing. To do this, get a hacksaw blade but squeeze the throw of the teeth until it is the same as the mica gap in between the segments. Then, carefully, use it to clear out a narrow gap below the copper, around .015in to 0.020in. If you've measured the gap with the hacksaw blade correctly, the edge of the copper should be nice and sharp, with no mica left at the top. This took a little time, but only really as I've never done it before and kept checking what I was doing.

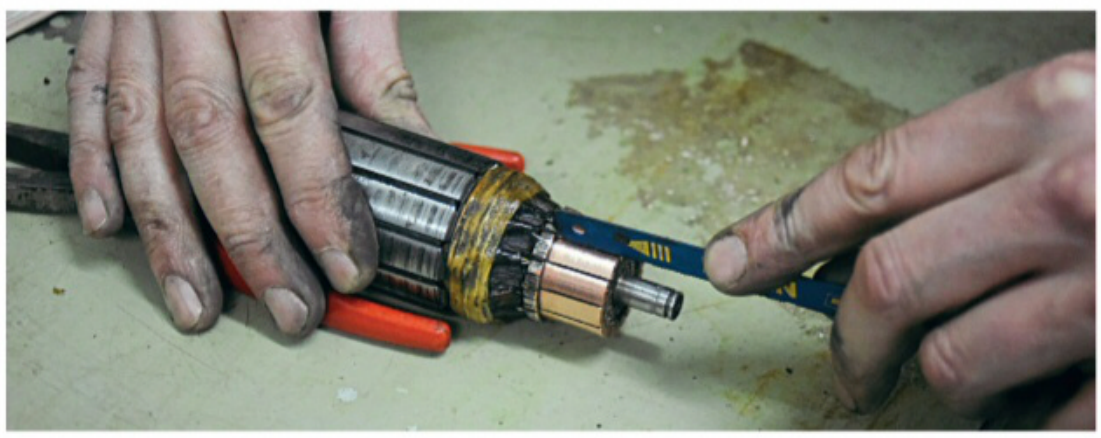
There was now a straight shaft with a clean armature and commutator. But the drive end of the shaft had been battered with a hammer at some point (not guilty your Honour – well, this time) so it didn't take much to turn it down so the driving gear, which I have, would slot back on with a new woodruff key, which I don't.

The main body of the dynamo is a heavy steel tube with the field coil (a large winding) screwed to the inside. They are very hard to get off as the large screws are punched to prevent coming loose and though you can buy new windings easily, they can be very awkward to refit – so as ours looked in good order, I cleaned it up with wet and dry, some brake cleaner and compressed air. I then cleaned up the case, ready to paint black.

The commutator end was again cleaned up, and any fixtures or contacts undone, cleaned and done up. The brushes are held to the commutator by a spring each, so I used a tiny screwdriver to pop them out without it pinging to the other side of the room and the new ones fitted. These are just the same as brushes from a car alternator or electric motor, so you may have some the right size already. I didn't, so they cost around £10. To help them be as efficient as they can, you need to bed them in. This involves wrapping the commutator in wet and dry paper, fitting the new brushes and twisting the shaft the way the engine will – this is arrowed on the case. Clean them with meths or similar once done. Then the brushes have a curved end so as much is touching the commutator as possible.

With the new bearings fitted and the casing painted, I need to replace one of the long, thin bolts that hold it all together, find a cover band and an end cap for the commutator end. Then it's time to test it – I've decided if it's all okay, to have a go at the magneto. If not, I'll take it to a specialist. I await sarcastic emails from knowledgeable folk who know better than I! CBG

New brushes have a lot more meat than old ones



Cleaning out the mica in between the segments of commutator

Cleaning mag for next month

Brush spring

Polishing the commutator

Looks clean, but have I wrecked it?

Shaping blade for cleaning mica

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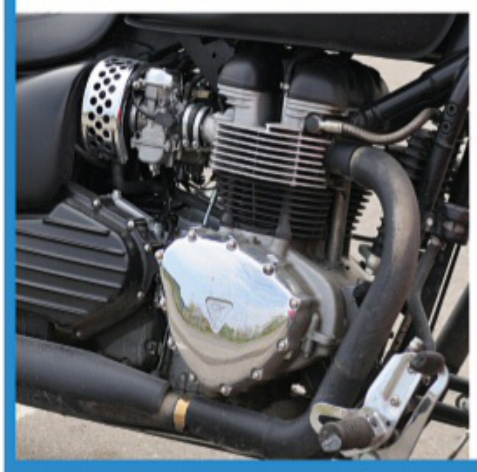

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Hints & tips FROM HUTCH'S WORKSHOP

(Solid) State rectification

Modifications need somewhere to live and old bikes don't have that many places to hide things, Hutch discovers

WORDS BY HUTCH **PHOTOGRAPHY BY** CHELLEY

Above: A lovely BSA A65, waiting for some love

Left: Trying to find space for the regulator/rectifier is tricky – there isn't any!

A very pretty A65 arrived at the workshop just before Christmas with the request to make it start and run, hopefully as well as it looked. After some discussions with the owner, it was decided that some carb fettling and the fitting of electronic ignition was in order along with a new sump filter and ally sump plate.

The new sump plate and filter set up was a nice, straight-forward affair, so once that was fitted my attention turned to the electronic ignition. I decided to also replace the traditional rectifier and Zenor diode with a solid state regulator/rectifier. I really

Above: Stripped of bodywork, the problem is apparent. And a reg/rec needs airflow

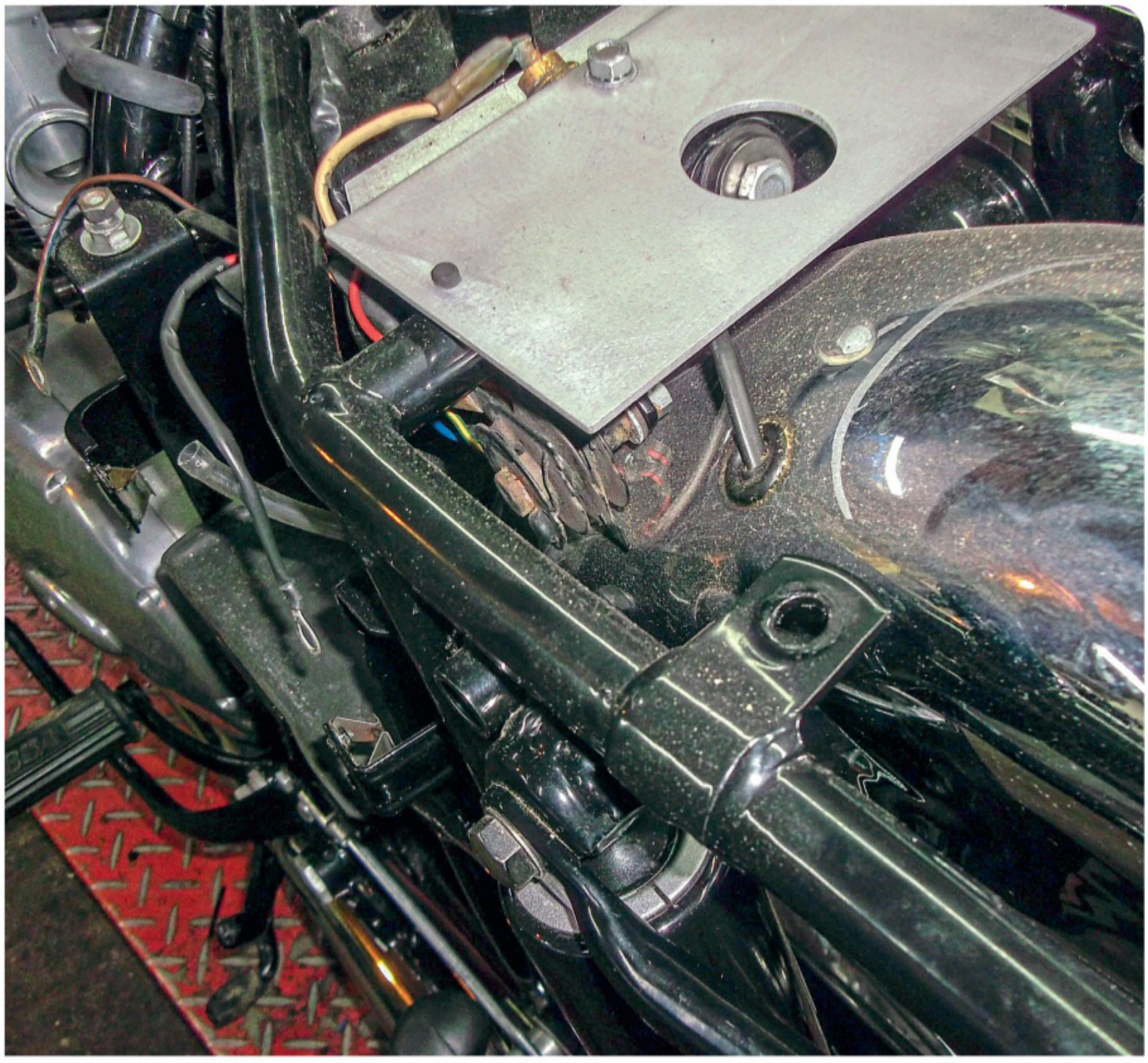
Left: Alloy plate in the making

don't like fitting electronic ignition without also fitting a reg/rec, this stems from an instrumentation engineer at work (whilst testing a handful of Zenor diodes for me) once telling me he thought this type of regulation was "too spikey" and possibly the reason for the problems I was then experiencing with my failing modern electronic ignitions. I've never fitted one without the other since that time. Solid-state reg/recs are not that expensive compared to a new Zenor and rectifier.

With the bike on the bench all the big bits – tank, seat and sidepanels – were removed to give some access and allow for some closer inspection.

A good look at the battery and its connections confirmed a positive earth, a note of which was made as I have a brain like a sieve at times; it was then disconnected and removed.

With the battery out of the way the old plate-type



"I really don't like fitting electronic ignition without also fitting a reg/rec, this stems from an instrumentation engineer at work (whilst testing a handful of Zenor diodes for me) once telling me he thought this type of regulation was "too spikey""

rectifier was located, the Zenor being pretty obvious as it was mounted on a large ally plate directly under the seat acting as a heat sink. The fact they get hot is why they're finned and often mounted under the headlight.

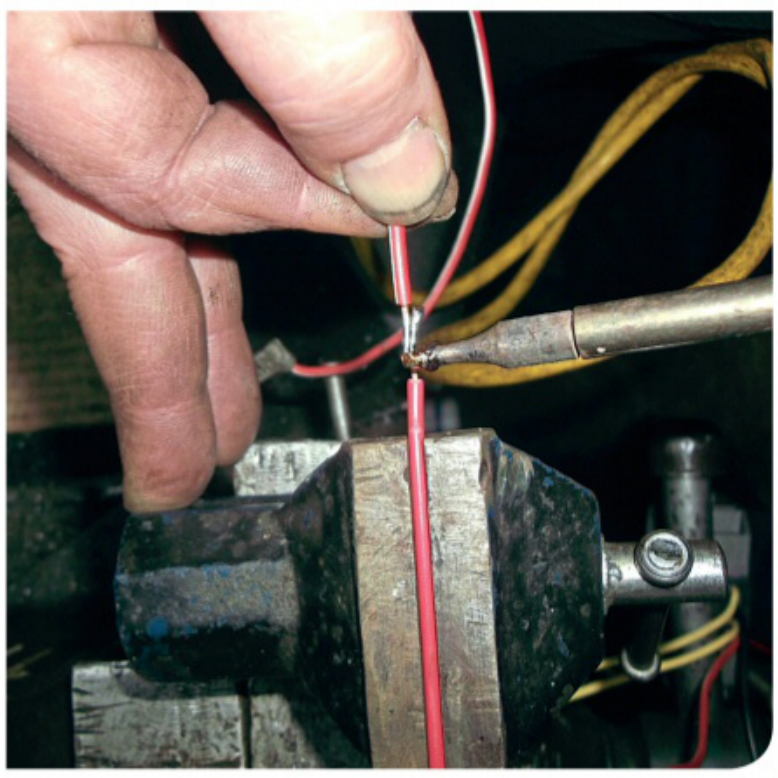
Both the Zenor diode with its large heat sink plate and the rectifier were removed, making another note that there were three more earth wires connected to the rectifier mounting that will need re-earthing.

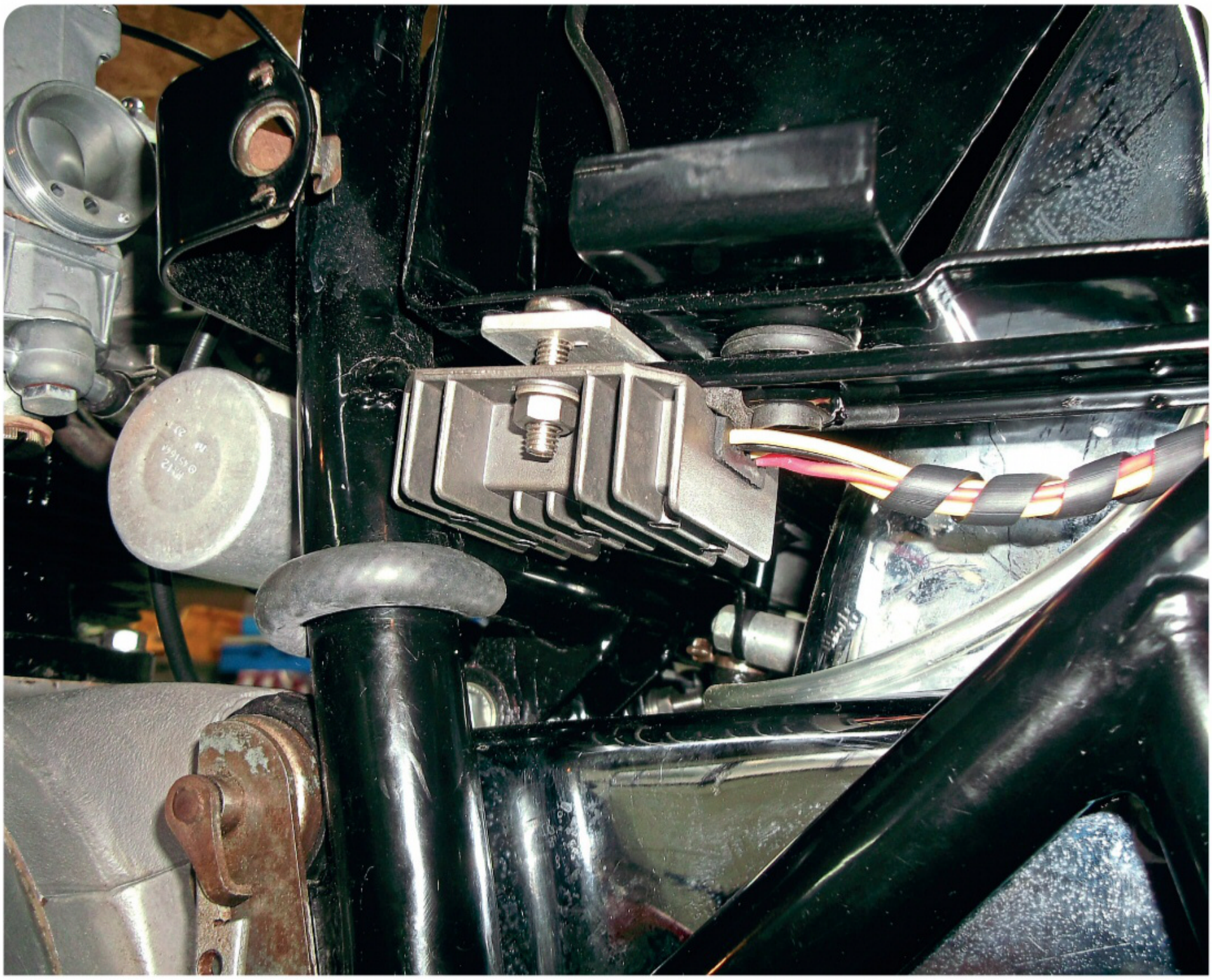
The AC input wires to the old rectifier were traced back towards the engine to find out if the alternator was a two or three wire unit – two wire/single phase in this case.

Then comes the difficult bit, particularly on unit BSA twins, where free space seems to be at a premium: where to site the new reg/rec. Consideration on location needs to keep in mind that some air/air flow around the new reg/rec unit is

Above: That should fit

Right: Taking time to solder the wires - so often a source of problems





Above: Tucked away, with airflow – perfect

Below: The Wassell unit

preferable as the heatsink needs to dissipate all the unwanted power from the alternator which runs at full chat all the time.

After much looking, trying and general fannying around, refitting and removing the seat and sidepanels a few times, I decided to locate the new reg/rec on a cross bar under the battery box using a small ally bracket I made to suit.

Whilst I was happy with the location of the reg/rec it did mean that both the DC wires (red and black) from it needed extending to reach the loom connections up under the seat. The two wires were extended with soldered joints and heatshrink sheath coverings, I like to keep connections to a minimum; I won't enter the 'which connecter is better' argument; they're all pretty good in my opinion, if done properly and for the right application.

All that was left was to wire in the new reg/rec which is very straightforward following the simple wiring diagram that came with the new unit for the four wires and three colours, keeping in mind this bike is positive earth, so the two yellows go to the AC input (alternator), red to earth and black as the charging wire either through the ammeter or straight to the battery live.

The choice of the type of connectors you use is your own and as long as the smoke doesn't leak out then they are an improvement on twisted wires insulated with tape and should be good. CBG

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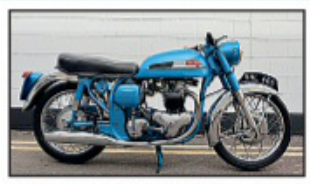

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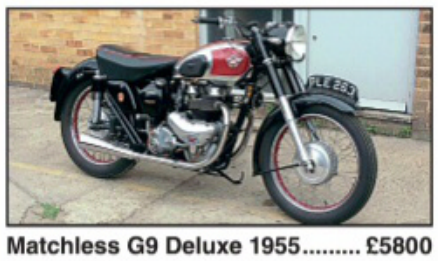
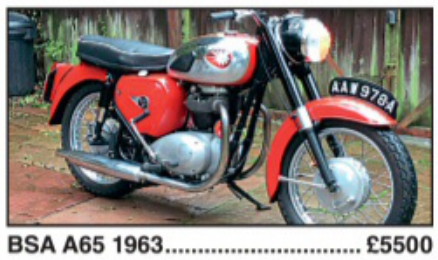


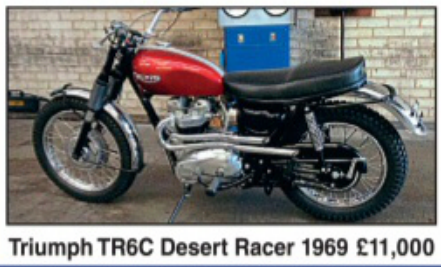
Matchless G9 Deluxe 1955..... £5800



BSA A65 1963..... £5500

1974 T150 restored £10,500

Velocette MSS 1939 superb £12,500



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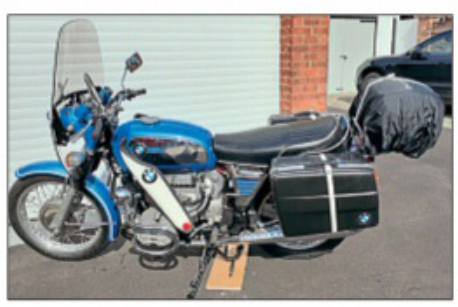

BMW R50/5 Toaster, 1972, vgc, garaged, electric & kick start, chrome panels, panniers, windshield, rare leg shields, spotlights, 16,000 miles, £5450 ono Tel. Mike 01992 571579 Essex

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BSA A65T Thunderbolt, 1970 one of the last pre OIF models, recent improvements have been new primary chain, electronic ignition, silencers, seat cover & carburettor, £4950 Tel. 01189 403081

BSA B44 Shooting Star, 1967, t&t exempt, excellent all round condition, matching numbers, full restoration, beautiful bike, £5200 Tel. 07479 470445 Email. brianjfielding1@gmail.com Leics

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DUCATI Mick Hailwood replica, 1982, kick start model, been stood number of years, needs ignition key, clutch slipping, £12,500 Tel. 01904 778374 Yorkshire

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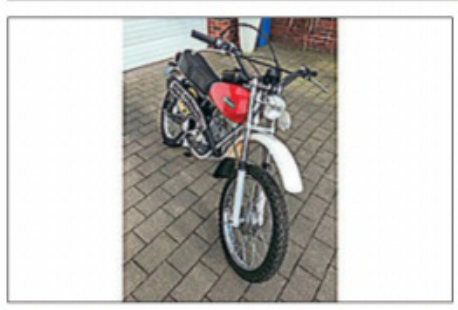

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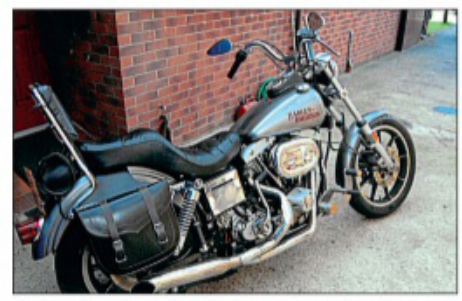

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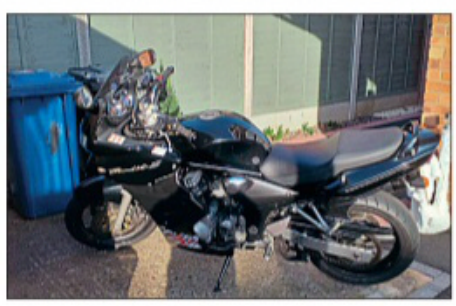

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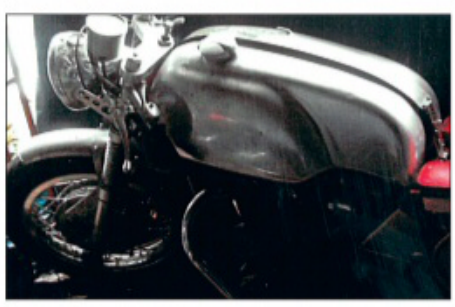

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BSA SHOOTING STAR 1956, metallic green, long term storage, non mechanically recommissioned, magneto refurbished, new battery, ideal project for further improvement, starts easily running well, V5C, £4750. Tel. 01723 372219. Yorkshire.

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HONDA CD200 lots of miles lots of provenance, £1500. Yamaha Townmate T80, 1988, 2400 miles, sweet runner, £1500 Tel. Chris 01543 253446. Staffs.

KAWASAKI KC100 W reg, no documents, new piston and rebored, needs new headlamp glass and seat cover, £5500 ono. Tel. 01953 601144. Norfolk.

MONTESA 348 MRR 1976, fully restored retirement project over 18 months, contact for more information and photos, £2800 no offers. Tel. Mark 07702 499070. Yorkshire.

MOTO GUZZI V65-650cc, 1986, MoT Sept 2021, 59,000 miles, fsh, current owner since 2008, new tyres, £3999 ono. Bike artwork for sale: prints and originals, private collection. Tel. 07925 128612. Oxfordshire.

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

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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, abandomed 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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SANGLAS 400, 500 wanted. Kawasaki 750 twin wanted or big Guzzi, non runner. Tel. 01737 833932. Surrey.

SPEEDOMETER WANTED for British Bike, Smiths chronometric speedo needed to finish project, either 80mph or 120mph, one needing repair ok, could you post? Tel. 07538 696157. Leics.

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

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WANTED CENTRE STAND for 1963 Triumph Tiger Cub T20 with 17" wheels. Tel. 02086 404436; 07725 259466. Surrey.

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

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Miscellaneous

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

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FRANK WESTWORTH

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

Buyer's regret, seller's regret? How's about seller's delight? Frank has been buying old junk again...

"Too often the reason is genuinely that the bike is a hopeless pile of unreliable scrap and the owner simply wants shot of it before he is compelled to ride it at high speed off the top of a convenient cliff."

HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU FELT YOUR SPIRITS sink when someone nearby drifts off into one of those 'That's a bike I should have kept; wish I'd never sold it; best bike ever…' drools? These can go on for hours, days, weeks, especially in the giant clubroom which is social media. I usually smile with bogus sympathy and switch off.

If it's someone I actually know well, I occasionally join in, sometimes pretending actual sympathy, at other times mischievously suggesting that they should just buy it back. This is particularly entertaining when I am the happy guy who bought their bike. If proceedings develop, as they sometimes do, it's tremendous fun to suggest, obliquely, that I've sold the bike on, probably at an unspecified but considerably higher price!

What larks, as Billy Bunter may have said.

How often have you read the words 'genuine reason for sale' in an advert and asked yourself about the apparently false reasons for sale? The genuine reason is sometimes advancing years, declining finances or health, but too often the reason is genuinely that the bike is a hopeless pile of unreliable scrap and the owner simply wants shot of it before he is compelled to ride it at high speed off the top of a convenient cliff. I should note here that any bikes I sell are for genuine reasons, usually my own personal altruism and honest desire to enrich total strangers by letting them acquire priceless treasures from me at a pathetically low price. It's like charity work. I shall go straight to heaven.

Right after seller's regret in my personal eye-rolling catalogue of conversational inanities comes the opposite: buyer's regret. Why do so many otherwise normal folk suffer seemingly endless regret when a motorcycle changes hands? I can't even blame this on the relentless rise of social media – far too many of my friends have regaled me down the years with endless dispiriting sagas of the hideous horrors upon which they have expended their pensions, family fortunes and – worse – the goodwill of their inevitably better half. Is no one ever satisfied with a bike they've bought? And if you've made a mistake by buying an immobile catastrophe for the price of a glittering prize machine, why shout about it?

I should at this point reveal that whenever I buy some aggressively mis-described valueless excuse for a motorcycle I of course lambast the vendor in print and in public. This is revenge, best eaten off the cold exhausts of the 'good runner' which refuses to run.

Over the last half-century, during which remarkably short time I appear to have bought and sold a decently lengthy list of motorcycles, several trends have become clear. First and foremost is the pithy saying concerning those who are somehow criticised for knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. This has always puzzled me, frankly, because the price is what the vendor asks and the value is what I will pay. I am never wrong. If I were wrong, then maybe I would suffer from buyer's regret. Who can tell?

And in fact I am poised, wobbling, twitching over an inevitable decision to waste an awful lot of Her Majesty's finest drinking vouchers on yet another insanely over-priced yet cheerfully under-performing motorcycle. I cannot reveal what it is, not least because by the time you read this the awful deed will have been done … or not, of course. You are encouraged to laugh at me in advance, because not only have I never seen the bike in question, but I have never seen one in the metal at all, let alone ridden one. And because of the lock-up I can't go and look at it. And I know – just know! – that if I pass up the opportunity, some other heartless soul will take advantage of the good nature and lack of knowledge of the vendor and snap it up, only to offer it in a few weeks with a new MoT, maybe a coat of shine and certainly a vastly inflated price. Which is not cricket. Unless I do it.

So maybe I should invent a new regret? Non-buyer's regret. All those bargains we miss because we are prudent and cautious and penny-wise. Maybe. Me? I am pound-foolish. I suffer from chronic buyer's glee. And I can always laugh at myself. Which is just as well… CBG

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

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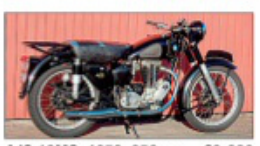

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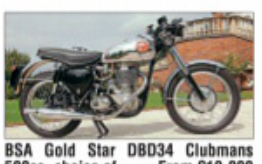

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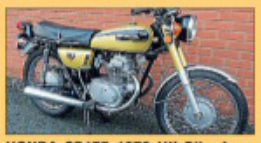

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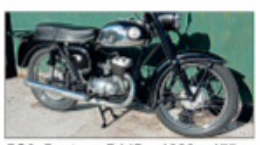

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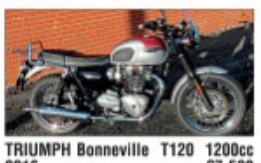

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