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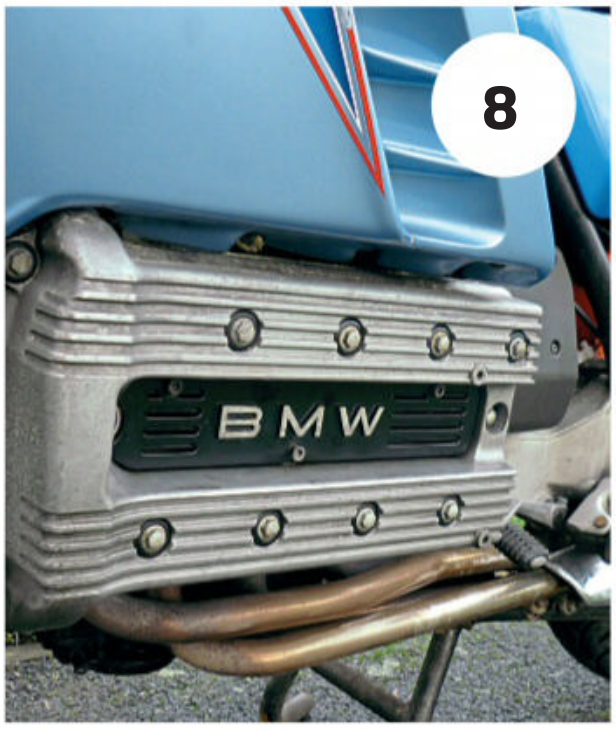
1974 DUCATI 750 SS 'GREEN FRAME' ♦ MV AGUSTA 350CC 3-CYL GP BY MV MECCANICA VERGHERA ♦ 1958 MOTO GUZZI FALCONE



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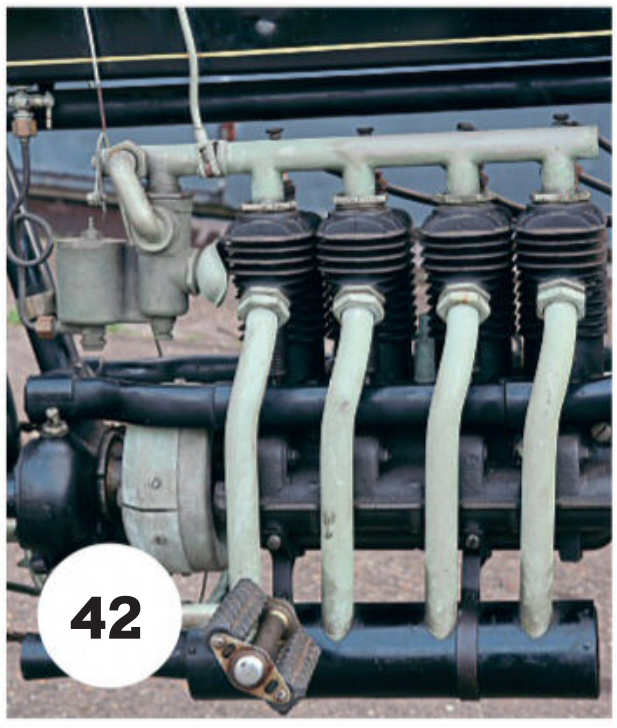
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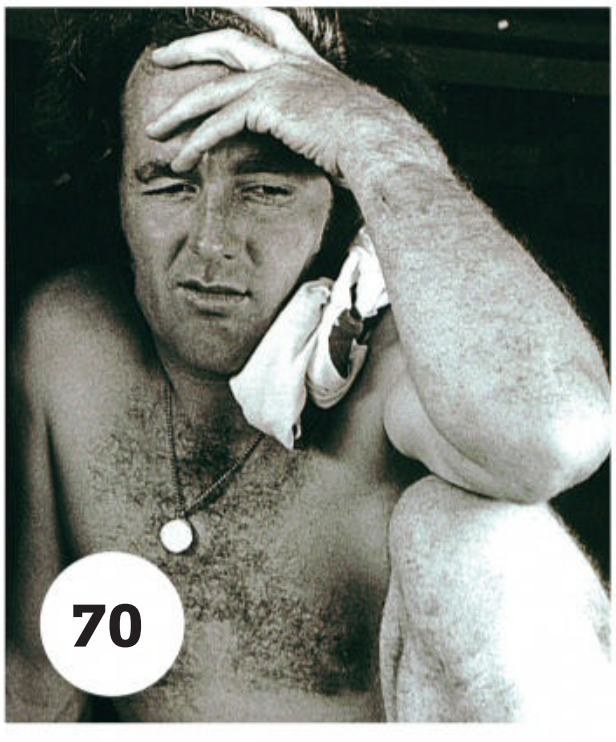
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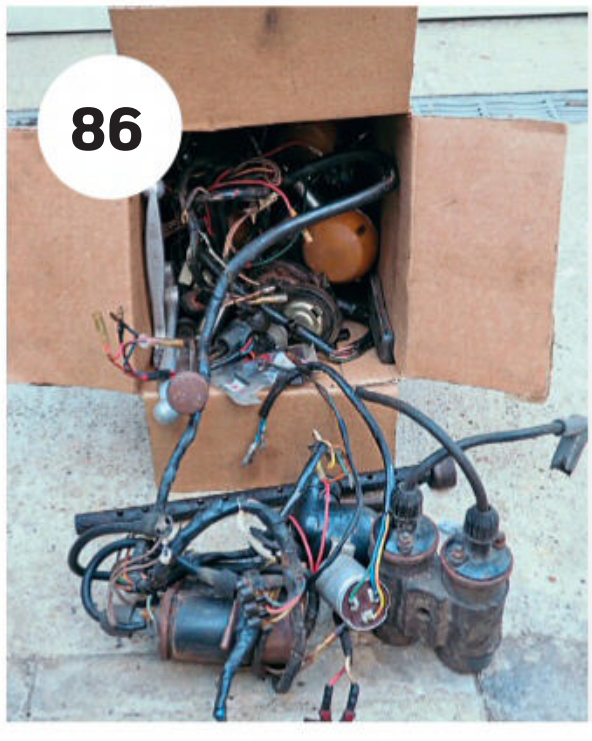
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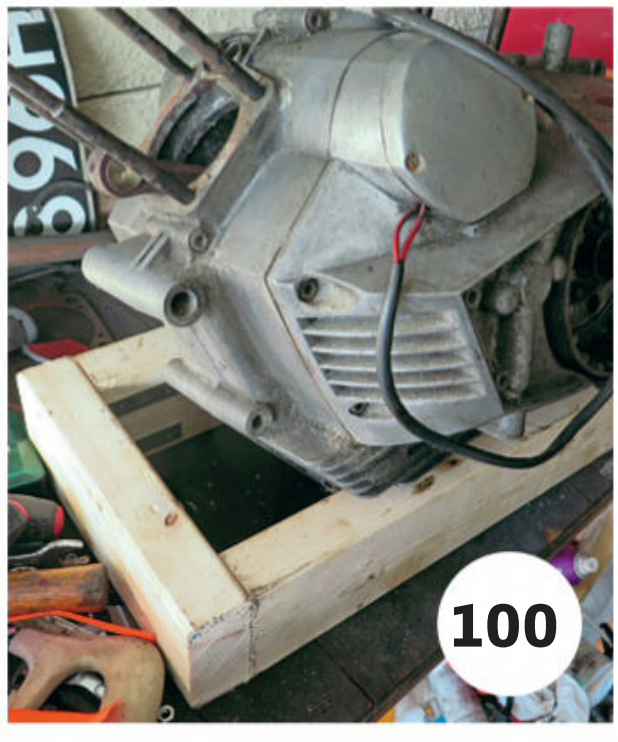
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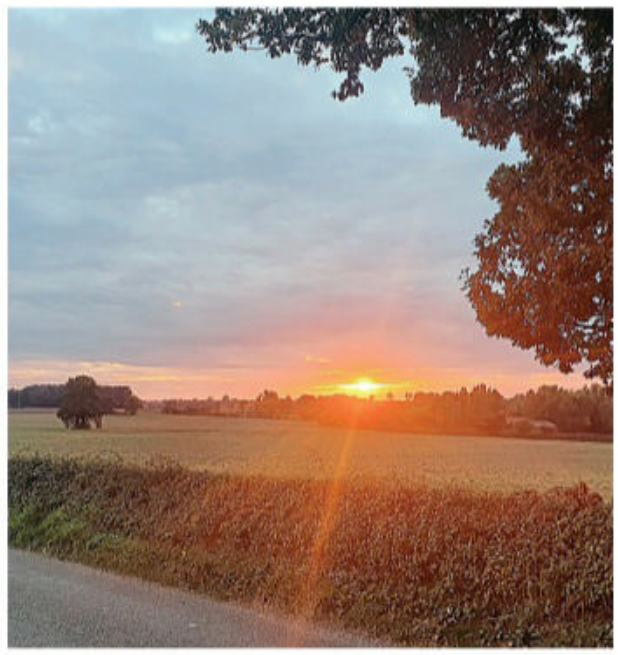
Greetings... and a farewell to Paul Smart

It is with oily fingernails, a cat on my lap and a heavy heart that we say hello and welcome to you all this month. Clocks may have turned back, even in Norfolk, but we're still catching sunset rides where we can. Maria and I enjoyed meeting folk at the National Motorcycle Museum open weekend, as well as madam finding she fits a TZ perfectly! Then Butch, Maria's dad, joined us to try the classic range of Triumphs and see the difference of the models – a great autumnal day's riding. Oli is in mourning as the Langport Bike Night has finished for the year, while Neville acquired a true barn find Suzuki 250 which our great friend, Superwelder Steve, has always loved, so a barter was had. Two goats, a Fordson Major gearbox and some Custard creams is a fair price, I'd say.

My ratty BMW R100RT is all the better now it's had a service. I'm ashamed to say that it took the fuel economy of a presidential Boeing, the absence of any idle and the handling of a parliamentary enquiry to 'make time' for a service. The gearbox oil looked like dessert dressing, the plugs had been fashioned from coal and the forks needed oil, but it was a therapeutic day. I managed a few niggles, like getting the horns to work (why are BMW horns so loud?) and sorted the bodywork. It runs sweetly now – and even idles after some tinkering!

In our world, folks passing is sadly not an unusual occurrence. Age and illness are formidable, but to hear Paul Smart being gathered to God was one that hit. Working in this world, I have been lucky enough to meet this man and his lovely lady, Maggie, several times. He must have met hundreds of journos or photographers, all aching to 'have a piece' of his fame to better their cause; yet he always – always – wore a cheery smile, asked how you were, had a joke, and took the mickey. I once chased him at Silverstone at some Ducati knees-up trackday – he was on a Diavel, not a track bike yet, with the body position and determination of a young racer... I didn't know it was him! By the end, the bike looked like he'd attacked it with a grinder. I went over to have a laugh, and Paul took his helmet off and was still smiling. I met him again at the Prescott Bike Festival; my daughter Izzy and I had come down in a wonderful Triking three-wheeler to take passengers up for an experience. He asked Izzy if her dad could take him up "and scare me". And at the Sachsenring Classic, he saw me while being monologued by another Brit and said in jest: "Come and rescue me!"



I didn't know Paul well at all, but somehow he made me feel I did, made me feel accepted, his friend, as he did with so many. He will be remembered as the man who helped Ducati, who married Barry Sheene's sister, but I will remember him as someone who loved biking as much as I do, and someone who was always smiling. Thank you, Paul.

Enjoy,

Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com

Flying Free...

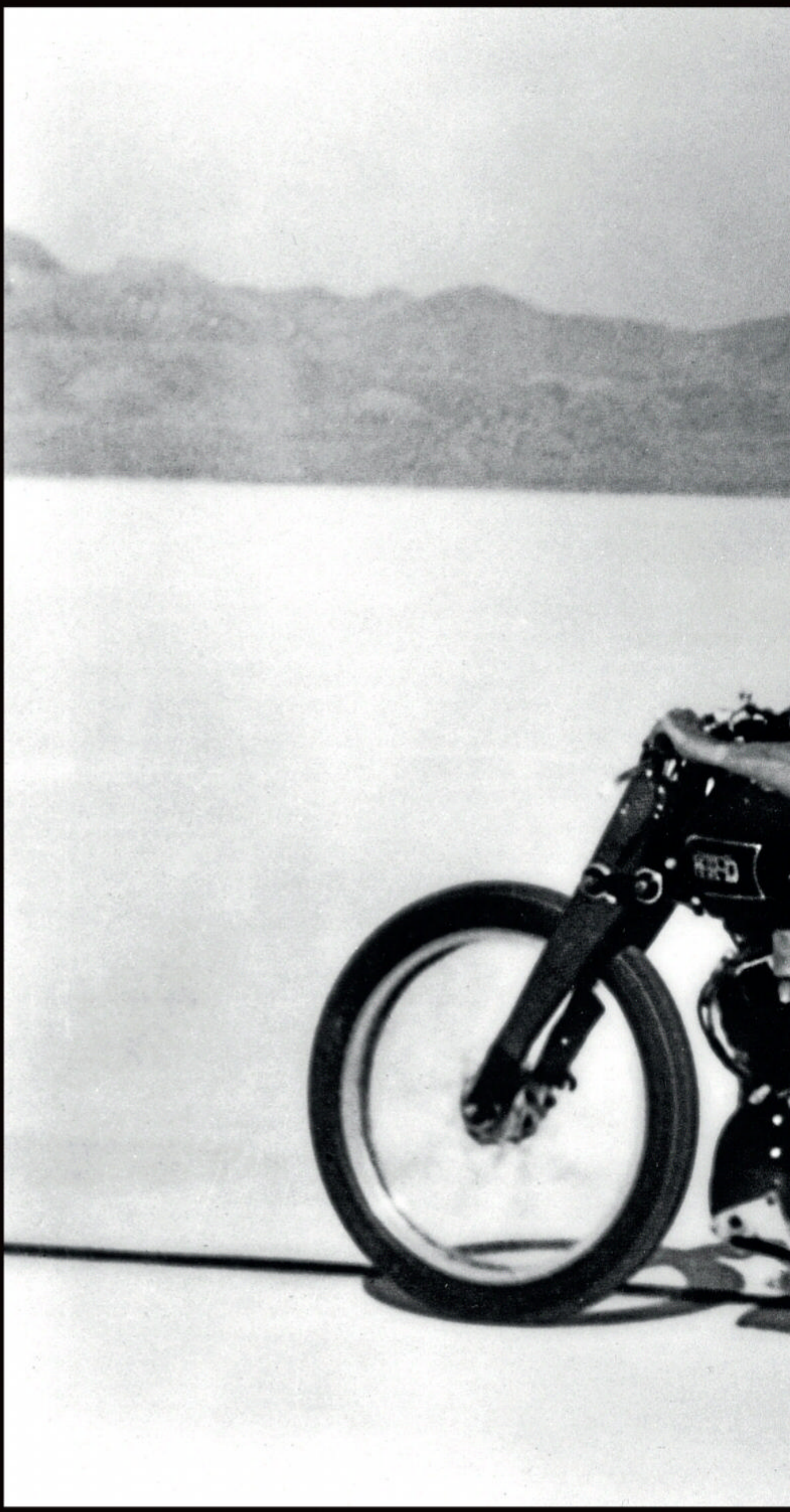
In 1948, a photographer in a chasing car took one of the most – if not the most – famous photograph of a motorcycle, ever. And as we have a Vincent story following, what better excuse to print it?

The rider, Rollie Free, had spent most of his time racing Indians on longer races and Triumphs in oval racing until John Edgar loaned him his Vincent V-twin (it is thought it was a Lightning, or was perhaps a prototype) for a run on the Bonneville salt flats. He found that the somewhat common practice of stripping down to just his undies found him more than 2mph. Early on September 13, 1948, Free managed 150.313mph in his pants.

Looking at this photograph in 2021 brings many items of discussion. Though based in Utah in the war as an aircraft engineer, the world was only just out of the Second World War, with the horrors still fresh to everyone. Losing a little skin seems less cringeworthy with that in your mind, doesn't it? It was banned soon after, when a rider crashed, finding out the abrasiveness of salt bed.

With the battle for sales between Indian and Harley, this small English company taking the limelight must have stung. The Vincent was also an early, if not the earliest, bike to be seen with a swingarm and rear suspension, and could have been a real boon to Vincent in the USA. It also had sponsorship – note the Mobil oil logo on the tank?

Free was a superb engineer and engine tuner. He continued to race cars and bikes, and worked with bikes his whole life. But do you think he had insurance for this run? Do you think he completed a risk assessment? The world is a better place in many respects today, and we must thank the likes of Rollie Free, Vincent and John Edgar for their small part. Enjoy the photo. CBG



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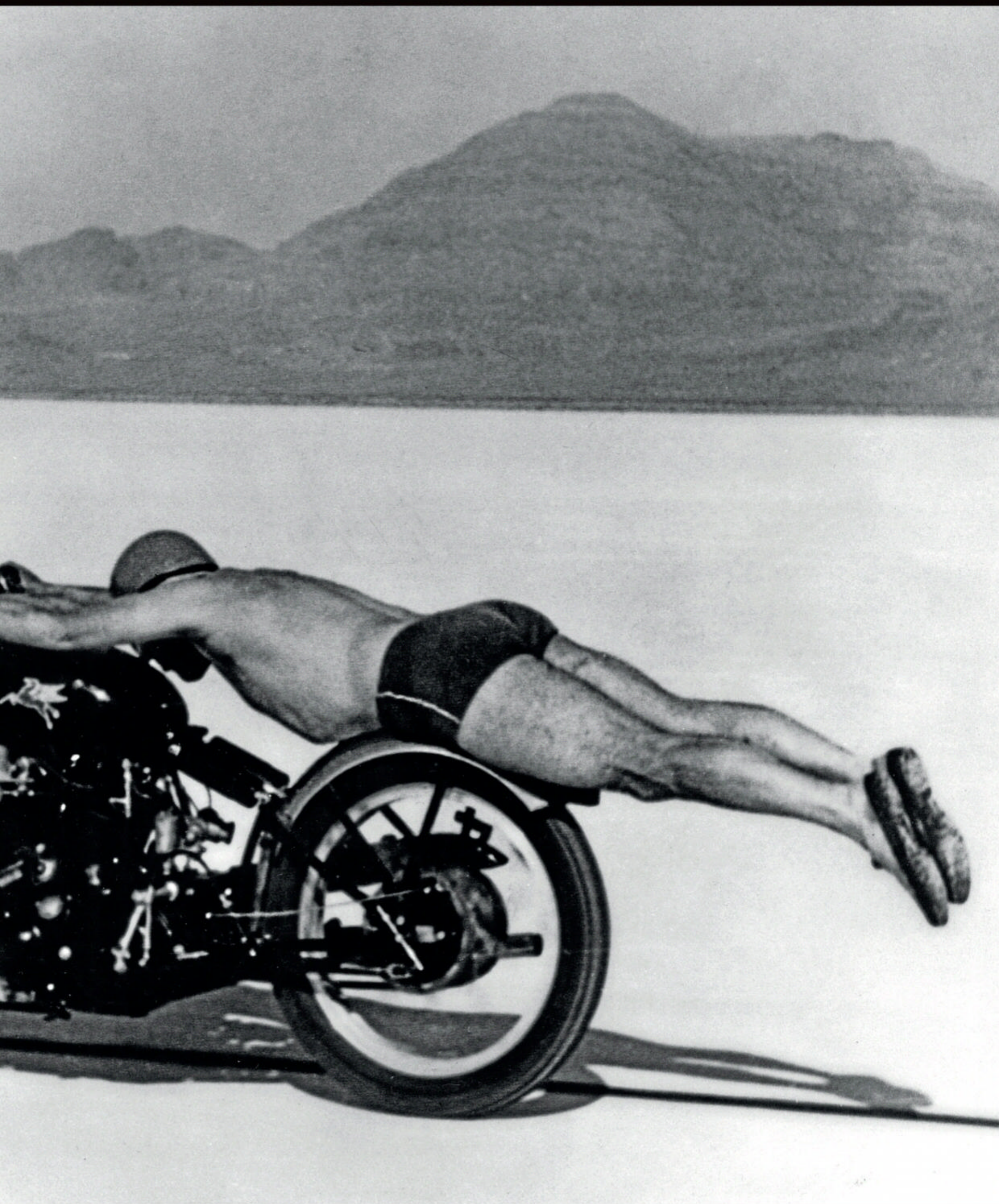

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Rapide

Unrivalled Retirement Ride

Mystery surrounds this Vincent – a puzzle of time and distance brought together by Tim Pearcey, who rebuilt his steed with senior years in mind....

Words and photography by Grant Ford

"I HAVE ENJOYED A PRIVILEGED LIFE, HAVING SPENT 95% of my motorcycle riding aboard a Vincent. Daily transport for years, my first was purchased in about 1970, a Black Shadow C from 1954, reg number UPJ 745. It cost £200, funded by my little sideline of buying and selling on the odd Lambretta," my host explained. Tim was the Tesco store manager in Weymouth at the time, and his Vincent was often parked nearby; one day a customer came in to offer him another. With a young family, money was tight so he declined, but the customer proved to be persistent and became a regular visitor. Each time the offer was politely refused. The last thing Tim wanted was a "basket case", but when the price point dropped to just £50 it seemed rude not to... and a 1955 Series D Shadow was thus acquired. "A few years later a rare 1955 Black Prince (SXA919) came my way – really just boxes of bits and, to be honest, we saved that bike," said Tim. But after carrying out a total rebuild, the first road test confirmed to Tim that a fully enclosed Vincent just didn't appeal. A brief flirtation with a 1948 Series B Rapide meant the workshop contained a full house of Vincent's finest, but when property ownership became the number one priority, the collection found new custodians in a short space of time.

While the bikes were moved on, years of parts collecting and boxes of additional spares from the Prince purchase remained – and many are retained to this day. But at one point in time, 'some' of his current Series C Rapide was to turn up in the most unexpected place.

Annual vacation in Greece. It was 1988 and a confused conversation with a neighbour about a V-twin engine owned by a local was resolved courtesy of Tim's T-shirt. "For some reason we got our wires crossed over a V-twin that we had discussed previously," he said. "I thought we were talking Harley-Davidson but no – it was pointed out this engine carried the same badge as my T-shirt." The owner was eager to fund his daughter's Greek wedding and wanted to sell. Tim was due to fly home within two days, so things moved quickly. The engine was complete and attached to the upper frame member, front

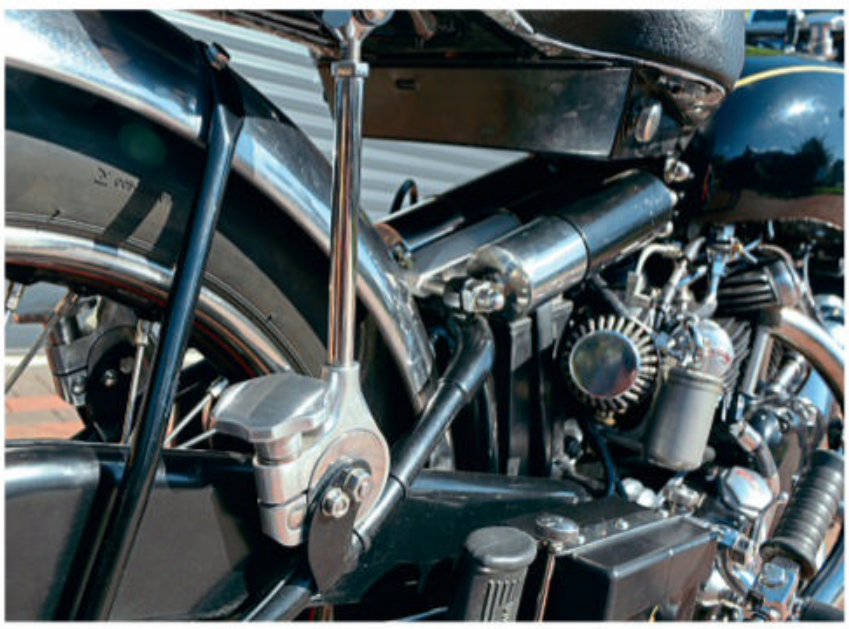
end including damaged forks, and had been buried under rubbish for decades... it was Vincent. The old guy suggested it had been used for ice racing in Scandinavia prior to ending up with him. Tim's main concern was making up a crate, getting it transported to the airport, and organising shipping. Several months later, the crate arrived at his front door, cleared by customs and ready for a new life.

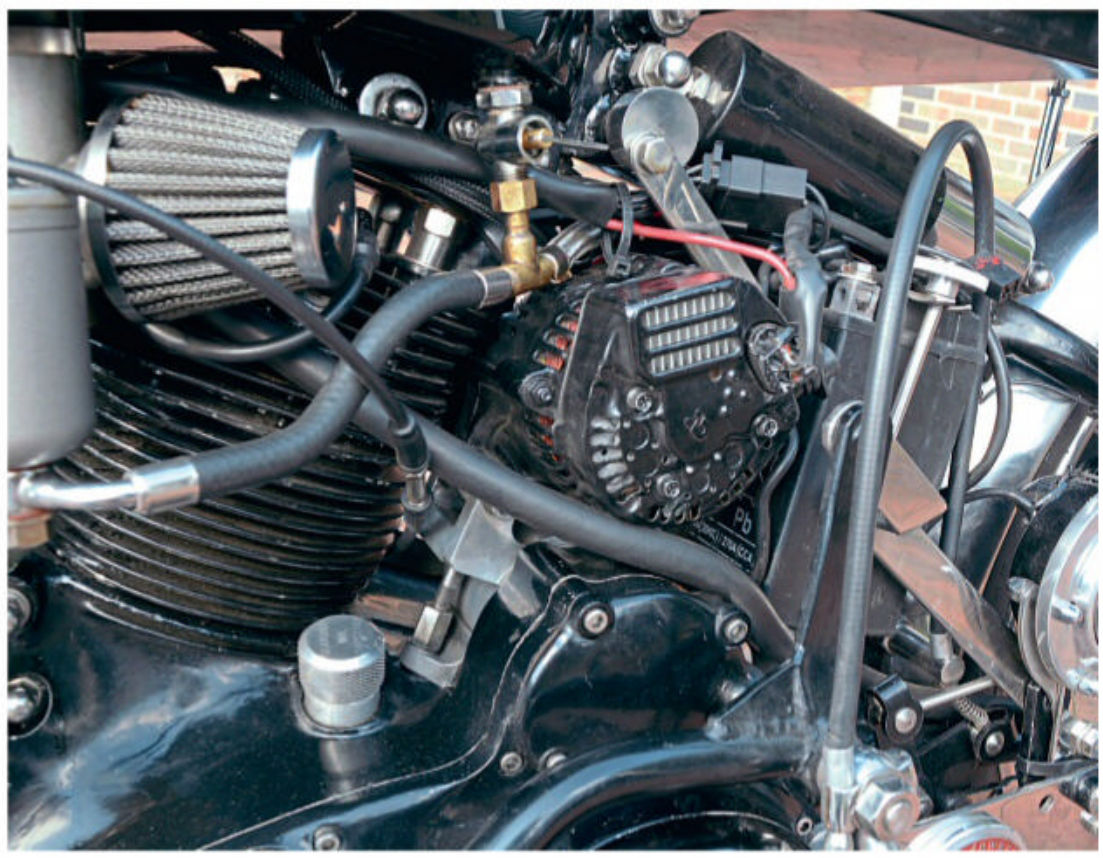
I had to ask – how did my host think his engine ended up on a Mediterranean island minus the rest of the bike? "Well, these things happened a lot, especially in the 1960s and 1970s with NorVin and Egli-Vincents, a specialist frame mated to the Vincent motor often for racing but also for those looking to fit modern suspension, disc brakes, etc." Tim went on to explain that the Vincent Owners Club has all the records; as the factory coded most parts with an identification number, this could be dated and cross-referenced with the original chassis details. Sharing the markings on his engine within club circles resulted in several phone calls, including one with Dick Sherwin, who runs the Vincent Club for the Sussex area. The details were confirmed before concluding that Dick had the complete back end and registration number (buff logbook) for Tim's front end and engine; the numbers matched and the Rapide could be complete again after decades and thousands of miles apart. The Vincent Owners Club also mated the chassis and engine numbers with company records, stating: 'Works hack bike, Stevenage registration and later sold with no information to whom.' It was registered on October 20, 1950 and the phrase 'Works hack bike' throws up more questions than answers. Vincents were notoriously expensive machines in their day and every sale counted for a company that never enjoyed huge profits, so it would seem unlikely a Rapide model was used as a 'hack'. A new Ford Anglia was slightly cheaper than a Black Shadow in 1950, or, if the company wanted to keep everything in-house, its own 500cc Comet would have been more suitable for everyday chores. In a conversation with Tim, the late, great John Surtess (one-time Vincent apprentice and test rider) pointed out that stock bikes were modified for testing new components, and his may well have been a test bed, then sold on; this part of its life will remain a mystery. Another conundrum was pointed out by Vincent Owners Club officials when inspecting the engine from Tim's Rapide – the casting of the word 'Vincent'. They were surprised to note it spells 'Vincentt' with two Ts; a very rare sand casting error most likely, but a worthy, unique talking point.

Top right: The pair of side stands lift the Rapide, allowing for the front wheel to be released using the 'Tommy bar' and without any tools

Above right: Girdraulic forks with modern steering damper discreetly positioned, the big Vincent was not immune to the odd 'tankslapper'

Below: Tim upgraded to a Black Shadow clock with a rev counter in the 1980s





Above left: Vincent's cantilever design with two springs and a damper and friction control to the seat base, all machined in stainless

Left: NOS oil lines with return switch fitted prevents sumping and is wired through the ignition to eliminate starting without oil flow

Top right: Tucked away, the small high-performance alternator which charges both 12-volt batteries

Above right: An original Miller headlight adapted to carry an ignition light and switch, as used on the early Minis

Below: A line drawing of a Series B Rapide engine

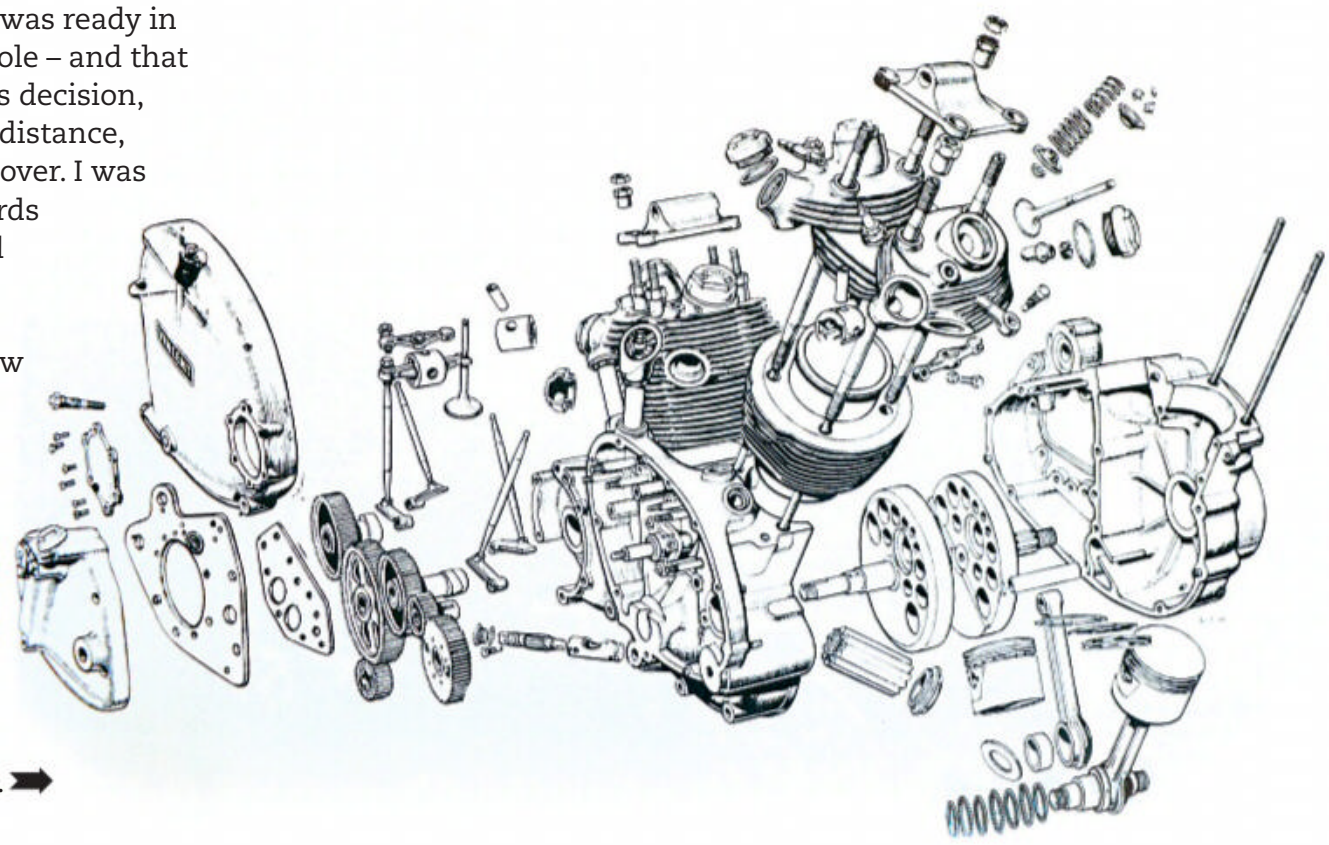
Back home, Tim was keen to assemble everything required to rebuild his Rapide, and he decided it would be to Black Lightning (the racing Black Shadow) spec. He had a set of hubs but one of the Girdraulic fork legs was broken. Contact with Chas Guy at Conway Motors (Vincent dealers since 1934) came up trumps. The firm had a used one, the side Tim needed, that had been propping open the parts department door for donkey's years! A matched pair of TT carbs were next; the type fitted to the Lightning model were obtained before the engine rebuild began in earnest.

Engine cases were machined, pistons obtained, and the 'Greek' motor was rebuilt to Lightning spec; wheels constructed with most other aspects of this Rapide prepared for assembly. The bike was ready in component form but didn't become whole – and that is how it stayed for almost 30 years. This decision, especially with completion in touching distance, surprised me. Tim explained: "Life took over. I was looking to retire early and worked towards that end. In one way, leaving the rebuild allowed me to rethink the whole idea."

Tim pondered with one eye to the future, and a question loomed large: How long could he ride a race-spec Vincent, let alone kick the mighty V-twin into life? He now wanted the Rapide to enjoy for many years, and the racing set-up would surely bring the electric shopping cart nearer, rather than keep it at bay. The decision was made. Once the rebuild commenced to return to Rapide touring spec, bring on board modern modifications and make a bike fit for a 21st century senior. ➡

The Vincent Rapide Series C

ENGINE: 998cc (60.9 cu in) V-twin OHV **BORE & STROKE:** 84 x 90mm **POWER:** 45bhp @ 5700rpm Compression **RATIO:** 6.5:1 **TOP SPEED:** 110mph **CARBS:** Amal **TRANSMISSION:** Four-speed **FRAME:** Tubular steel **BRAKES:** Front twin drum **BRAKES:** Rear single drum **IGNITION:** Magneto **SUSPENSION:** Front Girdraulic forks **SUSPENSION:** Rear Sprung frame **WEIGHT:** 455lb



To Zimmer Frame and Beyond....

Here, Tim explains what, how and why the bike has been improved for today and into retirement.

"Well, none of us are getting any younger and my knees aren't too clever. So, over the past four years, putting the Rapide back on the road, we looked forward a decade and considered what my requirements would be then," Tim explained as we visually toured his pride and joy – starting with the wheels.

Q: I noted the front tyre is 20in, with the rear 19-in. The Avons you have fitted offer a very period tread pattern; were these easily obtained?

A: I managed to get this set from a vintage tyre outlet at Beaulieu that makes them in batches, so I snapped these up.

Q: With the wheels, did you have to start from scratch and use the hubs you had collected over the years?

A: There were some damaged alloy rims in Greece. The old boy thought they were used for racing on the ice and certainly not salvageable. There were also some studded tyres, but we left it all behind. The hubs were already in my stores, so a full stainless set-up was attached and it was worth the extra investment.

A Conway Motors advert taken from *The Motor Cycle* magazine in February 1952

Q: Your Girdraulic forks are an interesting part of the story.

A: Yes, I had the right-hand leg but the left side had sheared off in an accident. Spares were hard to come by in the late 1980s and everything went through Conway Motors. I regularly spoke to Chas Guy, a lovely man who was tragically killed at the Goodwood Festival of Speed in 1993 during practice on his Vincent. He offered the one that had been keeping the parts door from closing for years, and it was an exact match.

Q: Headlight and clocks look new to me. How did you get hold of those?

A: The headlight is a genuine Miller example I managed to find. But the Vincent Club runs its own excellent spares company and these are available. Originally it would have had one three-inch clock, but I like the larger clock from the Black Shadow. They cost a small fortune if you can find one; luckily, this came into my hands many years ago. The rev counter came from Conway Motors with the fork leg back in the 1980s.

Q: I notice you have made extensive use of stainless steel rather than chrome?

A: True – for longevity, it makes sense. Some small parts like the choke lever and headlight rim are chrome-plated, but the majority of components, mudguards, exhaust and handlebars are stainless.

Q: Where did the tanks come from?

A: I swopped a Sunbeam S8 Dynamo for that tank with a gentleman in Dorset around 1969.

Q: The steering damper must be new?

A: Yes, designed and made by a club member in Sussex. Folk have found that screwing down the original friction damper doesn't necessarily avoid getting a 'tankslapper' and after being thrown off himself, the chap decided to produce a hydraulic damper that fits in well with the rest of the bike. It comes in kit form and works well.

Above: Tim's first Vincent, the Black Shadow he picked up for £200, assisted by fellow enthusiast Peter Phillip

Above right: The NSU range supplied by Vincent; it sold so well that NSU took over distribution itself

Q: Engine-wise, obviously it must have required some attention once it came back from Greece?

A: Certainly – it was in a terrible state. One quite common job would be replacing the cylinder 'muffs' or barrels. They were cast in a way that makes them porous, so I doubt there is an original set of muffs left. We also found the rear cylinder head was porous, leaking via the inlet track, and without the access to get a welding torch in to fix it, I managed to get a new one via Conway Motors.

Q: The engine internals after years of abuse and then neglect must have demanded a full rebuild?

A: Totally worn out, and we threw the kitchen sink at it! New mainshaft, bearings, sleeves, pistons, etc., all to race spec with 9:1 compression ratio with TT Carbs and tuned/flowed heads. But this was all done in the late 1980s; we never completed the bike, but the engine was ready to go. It then sat for a couple more decades but by 2017 I realised the touring was what appealed in the future and we set about reversing what we had done without the motor ever having run.

Q: K&N filters?

A: Yes, because originally it would have had just open bell mouths, and my concern is debris getting inside.

Q: I notice you have two batteries. Is this part of your modifying for the future?

A: Absolutely. The original battery fitted behind the engine would have been smaller, so now we have a pair of larger batteries which together ensure there is always enough 'juice' to power the starter motor fitted underneath. We found one battery would offer two or three starting opportunities, but should it fail to fire or she stalls up the road, there is no way I want to be trying to kick-start this engine, or even more importantly, in 10 years' time, hence two batteries wired together.

Q: Charging must have also been improved?

A: Again, a discreetly located modern alternator. It supplies ample power for decent lighting, heated grips and the starter.

Q: So where did you locate the starter switch?

A: By modifying the headlight shell, we fitted a starter Mini ignition switch and she fires up at the turn of a key.

Q: Amal carbs – they can't be cheap?

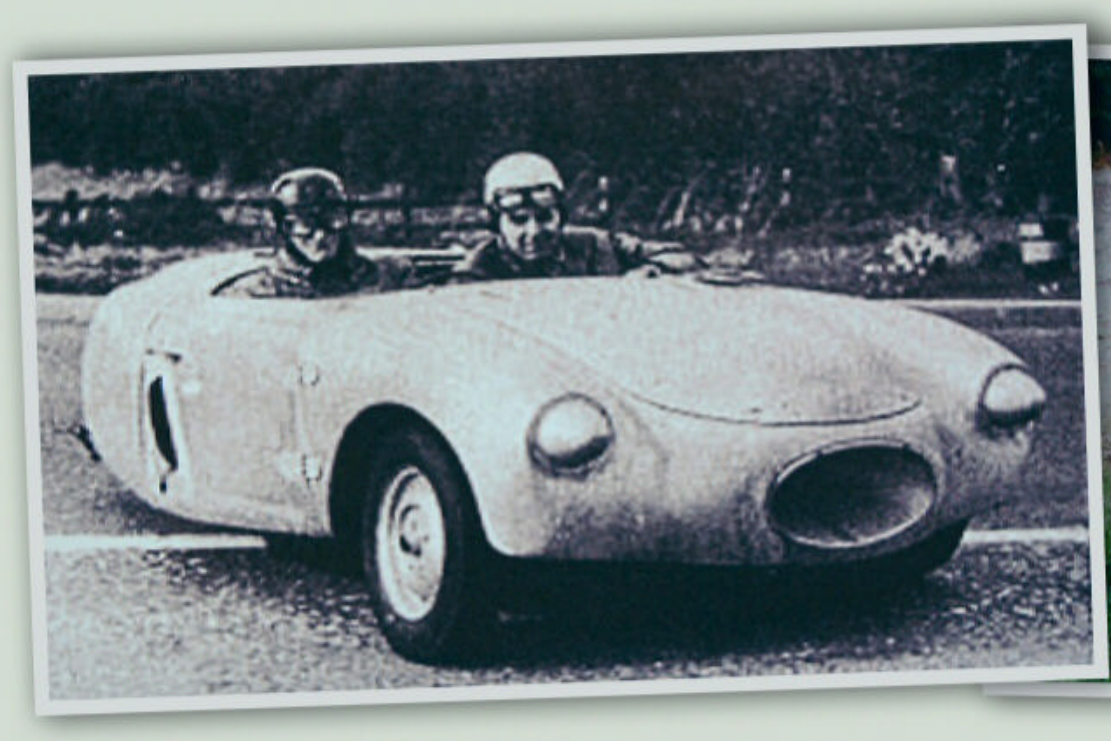
A: Correct – brand new replicas at £500 apiece. I have the TT carbs but they were not suitable for our touring set-up.

Q: And the rear shocks?

A: They are machined stainless steel, instead of normally plated and rusting. I modified the damper from a modern Koni, giving it some age. Each

Below left: Vincent's three-wheeler Polyphemus failed to sell – overpriced and unwanted

Below right: The beautifully restored 1955 Prince that Tim bought in boxes, rebuilt, and then decided that an enclosed Vincent wasn't for him



suspension set-up front and rear consists of two springs and one damper; it has all been rebuilt. To stiffen up the rear end, ideal when carrying passengers, a friction damper attaches from the seat base to the swingarm. This would have been standard kit but like the other suspension parts, I remade them in stainless. Where would I be without my lathe?

Q: You obviously enjoy machining all the stainless parts. Are you self-taught?

A: Largely, yes. I went on a course back in the 1970s but when my father asked what I desired for my 21st birthday, a nice Myford lathe was the answer and it has been with me ever since.

Q: Was the Myford put into action when it came to fitting the starter motor?

A: In this case, no; the starter comes as a kit. A new engine plate is supplied that allows for a cog beneath the kick-start quadrant and the motor itself sits discreetly underneath the engine... works perfectly, and the only drawback is that the engine has to be out of the frame to make it fit.

Q: What does the small tap do? That is certainly not original.

A: A very recent and very clever little gizmo, it actually stops wet sumping (oil draining back into the sump from the oil tank). The only concern is starting the engine without turning the tap on could destroy the engine, but the tap contains a small switch which wires into the ignition and if the tap is in the wrong position, the engine will turn over but won't start. I was lucky – among my parts was plenty of NOS braided hose, and with stainless fittings it blends in quite well.

Q: I assume the Series D stand makes the bike much easier to lift?

A: Very much so. This bike features two side stands,

Above: George Brown blasts away from the start line at the Brighton Speed Trials (appeared in the Classic Motor Cycles book of 1982)

one either side up front, which can be used separately or as a pair to raise the front, allowing easy removal of the front wheel. The original rear stand is awkward to unclip and position on your own, but the Series D roll-on stand just requires a pull of the lever and the bike sits securely in seconds – another feature that will benefit me in years to come.

Q: When we first discussed putting the Rapide story on paper, I asked if you had any idea how many man hours have gone into this bike?

A: This bike has consumed a lot of investment and man hours... the financial side we best not think about, but the labour must be at least 1500 hours. And it has been well worth it!

Q: You relied quite heavily on the Vincent Owners Club. How does the club fund these new modifications and the spares supply?

A: Around 1975 the VOC issued a shares option to members. Regrettably, I had just blown the budget on the £50 series D Black Shadow basket case in Weymouth. The shares were to raise cash for the spares company to purchase the rights of the Vincent name; I believe it was unsuccessful. The cash did, however, provide additional working capital to develop more stock in the company.

Q: No doubt the Vincent brand has had a big impact on your life. Could you share some of your best and worst memories, plus did you ever feel tempted to transfer allegiances to another manufacturer?

A: My first introduction to Vincent Motorcycles came at school when I had to select a book from the library. I picked The Vincent by Paul Richardson. I was 15 years old and probably only picked it to be rebellious with the teacher. I was fascinated by the sheer complexity of the bike and, in particular, the unique workings of the Girdraulic forks. I had never seen a Vincent before I was 16, when I glimpsed one in my hometown of Dorchester. Eventually, I tracked down the owner, Peter Phillip; I knocked on his door and this became the start of a long-lasting friendship. Peter became my mentor on all things Vincent. He guided me on my first purchase of a 1954 Black Shadow, UPJ 745, which was bought for £200. We undertook a lot

of work on the bike while in daily use; four years after we met, he was best man at my wedding. I experienced all manner of 1950s and 1960s classics, and none of them came close to the Vincent... not just in riding, but working on them. They were just not in the same league mechanically. It was as though Vincents were designed and built with no budgetary constraints – they just exude innovative design and quality materials. Speaking of my life with Vincents, I suppose I have been very fortunate in many aspects. Firstly, I have been blessed with a very understanding wife who has always supported the constant presence of a Vincent in the family. Secondly, I felt very lucky that I have been the custodian of several twins in my lifetime that I have rebuilt and passed on to new owners to appreciate. Finally, it has been a privilege to be able to ride what I genuinely believe to be the finest British postwar historic motorcycle ever built. CBG

"Conway Motors (Vincent dealers since 1934) came up trumps. The firm had a used one, the side Tim needed, that had been propping open the parts department door for donkey's years!"

Below left: A Conway Motors banner

Below right: About 3000 Miller-engined Fireflys were assembled to bolster Vincent's bank balance

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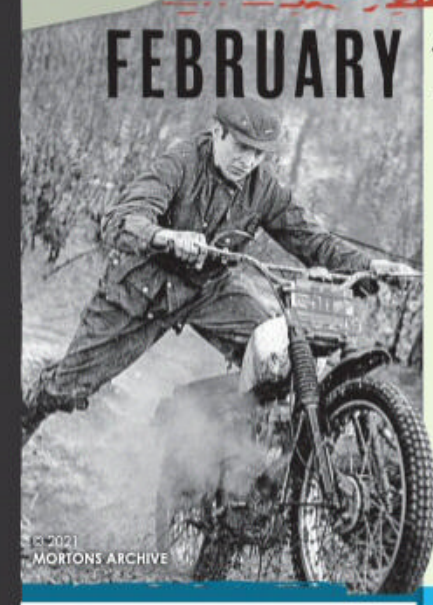

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Who's who ||

EDITOR || Matt Hull
editor@classicbikeguide.com

PUBLISHER || Tim Hartley
thartley@mortons.co.uk

ART EDITOR || Kelvin Clements

SENIOR DESIGNER || Michael Baumber

PRODUCTION EDITOR || Lucy Wood

GROUP ADVERTISING MANAGER || Sue Keily

DIVISIONAL ADVERTISING MANAGER || Tom Lee

ADVERTISING ||
Kieron Deekens 01507 529413
kdeekens@mortons.co.uk

ARCHIVE ENQUIRIES || Jane Skayman
01507 529423 jskayman@mortons.co.uk

SALES AND DISTRIBUTION MANAGER || Carl Smith

MARKETING MANAGER || Charlotte Park

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR || Dan Savage

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR || Nigel Hole

EDITORIAL ADDRESS ||
Mortons Media Group, Media Centre, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR

WEBSITE ||
www.classicbikeguide.com

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Email: help@classicmagazines.co.uk
Web: www.classicmagazines.co.uk

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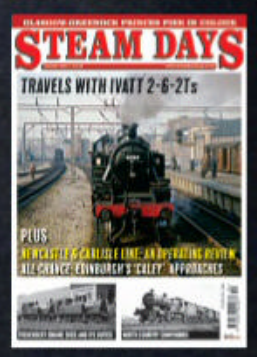

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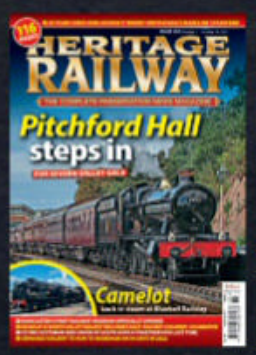

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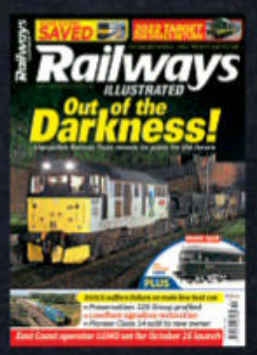

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KEN SPRAYSON
1927-2021

Frame wizard and welding guru Ken Sprayson, who transformed the handling of many of the great British motorcycles, has passed away at the age of 94.

Ken joined Reynolds Tube Company in 1948 and kept working there for three decades. He worked on frame design for Norton, Royal Enfield, BSA and Triumph, his first ground-breaking work being the refinement of the McCandless brother's Featherbed frame for Norton.

He saved the Norton Commando from oblivion when he was asked to find out why the headstocks on early models were fracturing. This was threatening the bike's future until he redesigned the brackets and mountings. He made one-off racing frames for British racers, including a frame for Phil Read with Tom Arter in a short-lived partnership with Weslake, and he worked with John Surtees and Jeff Smith.

He built chassis for foreign bikes, too, when he went to Italy with Geoff Duke in the 1950s. He had already built a frame for the Duke Reynolds Velocette KTT when Geoff had signed for Gilera and found the Italian bike didn't handle, and Ken built a Featherbed-style frame for the DOHC four. He also built a frame for Arthur Wheeler's Moto Guzzi 350 racer in the late 1950s. He made a special frame for Mike Hailwood's 500 Honda in 1968 and another for Dave Simmonds' 1971 Kawasaki triple 500 cc Grand Prix race machine.

Ken ran a welding service at the Isle of Man TT from the 1950s into the 1990s. He was huge part of the TT Paddock and well respected by TT competitors, in demand for welding broken tanks, frames and exhausts free of charge for all competitors if they needed it.

After retirement, Ken continued to attend the TT Races, supporting the TT Riders' Association. He also wrote a memoir, by hand, called The Frame Man.

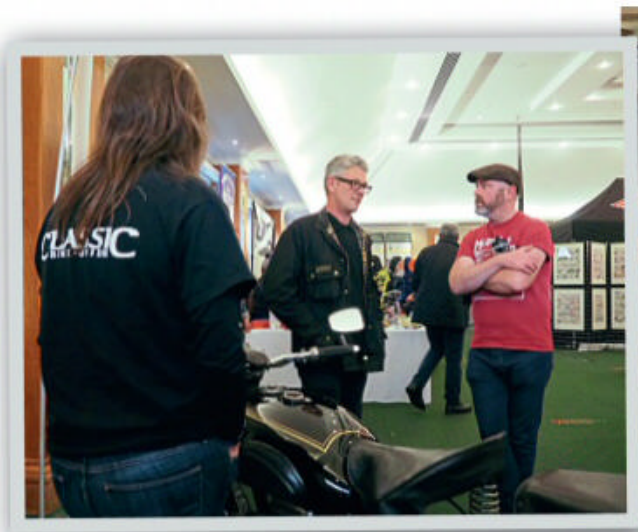
Away from motorcycling, he built the frame for Richard Noble's record-breaking land-speed record car Thrust 2, which topped 650mph in the Nevada desert in 1983. He made the two 75ft flagpoles that adorn the top of the Shell Building on London's South Bank and the steel cages used by engineers to work on cables between electricity pylons, among other creations.

We extend our sympathies to Ken's family on the passing of a great hero of British motorcycling.

MUSEUM LIVES AGAIN

Thousands of bike enthusiasts braved the wind and drizzle to attend the two-day Museum Live event at the National Motorcycle Museum.

The visitors took advantage of the opportunity to see the museum's unrivalled collection of British classics free of charge, browse dozens of trade stands including Norton and Triumph motorcycles, and experience the thrill of full throttle start-ups of classic racers. The biggest attractions were the standing-room-only Stars On Stage events featuring Henry Cole, Allen Millyard, Guy 'Skid' Willison, John McGuinness and Peter Hickman, all hosted by Steve Plater. New Norton CEO, Dr Robert Hentschel, did the honours of choosing the winning ticket for the NMM summer raffle for a new Norton 961, donated by Norton. The raffle raised tens of thousands of pounds for the NMM, which was hit by Covid-19 closures and the subsequent denial of Government support. Due to the overwhelming success of the weekend, the NMM has announced that next year's Museum Live will be another weekend spectacular, on Saturday, October 29 and Sunday, October 30, 2022.



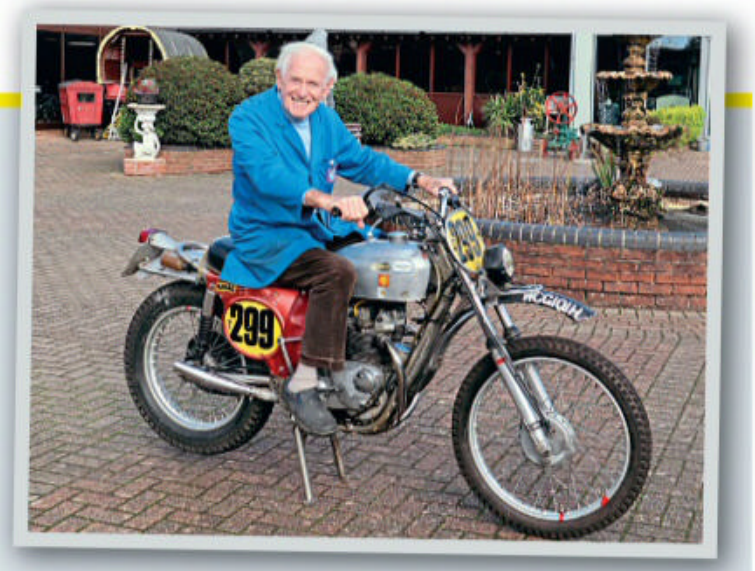
BY HIMALAYAN TO THE POLE

Royal Enfield is to take on an ambitious attempt to ride two of its Himalayan off-roaders to the geographic South Pole, from the Ross Ice Shelf via the Leverett Glacier. To be conducted in close partnership with Arctic Trucks, the attempt, billed 90° South, will use modified bikes with functional upgrades for navigating snow and ice. The Himalayan was evaluated at the Langjokull glacier in Iceland, with an intention to mirror the conditions in Antarctica.

The main drive sprocket has been changed to a 13-tooth unit. There is a tubeless wheel with studded tyres that allows the tyres to run at very low pressures and to increase floatation on soft snow, while also providing adequate traction on hard ice. The team has introduced a stronger alternator using rare earth magnets, creating more current and allowing the team to run heated gear off the battery.

The motorcycles will be ridden on a compacted snow track from the Ross Ice Shelf to the South Pole to reduce motorcycle drag and limit emissions to an absolute minimum.

Royal Enfield is consciously ensuring no footprint is left behind except wheel tracks that will quickly be lost to snow drift. In line with this, the team will ensure all waste, including human, is brought back for appropriate disposal.



SAMMY'S ISDT COLLECTION EXPANDS

Owner Allen Davey has donated the 1970 Cheney Triumph ISDT Bike – Ken Heanes' last Six Day bike – to the Sammy Miller Museum Trust. Constructed by Eric Cheney as number one of a batch of bikes for the British team in the 1970 ISDT in Spain, it has a stripped production line 490cc engine, over bored to 504cc. Balanced and rebuilt by Ken Heanes, this was the last machine on which he contested a Six Days Trial and earned him gold medals in both Spain and the Isle of Man. The Cheney Triumph joins five other ISDT bikes in the collection, which will become part of an ISDT section in the museum. Sammy has already tested the Cheney Triumph and is pleased to report that it performs well and rides beautifully. Sammy rode for the 1966 trophy team on a 505 Triumph in Villingsberg, Sweden. He won gold in the ISDT, to join his other eight gold medals.

ALL-NEW, ALL-BRITISH ROTARY SUPERBIKE DEVELOPS 220BHP

Crighton Motorcycles and Rotron Power Ltd have unveiled their ultra-exclusive CR700W Rotary at the NMM Open Weekend.

Just 25 of the unique CR700 machines will be hand-built by Brian Crighton. They will be made entirely in the UK and are priced from £85,000 plus VAT. Designed as a track bike, a road-going version will be available on request.

Delivering 220hp at 10,500rpm from its fuel-injected twin-rotor 690cc engine, the CR700 houses one of the most powerful – relative to cubic capacity – normally aspirated engines ever created. It has the same output per litre as a Ferrari Formula One car or GP racer.

Visitors to the NMM were treated to a start-up of the new rotary, revelling in its spine-tingling howl of an exhaust note. There is a chassis and monoshock swingarm fabricated from 7000 series aluminium alloy and based on the racing chassis of the 1990s. There are Dymag carbon fibre wheels, while Brembo provide the stopping power. Customers can choose between Öhlins or Bitubo suspension.

Brian Crighton is the designer who kept the Norton rotary dream alive in the 1980s and 1990s, developing the hugely powerful racing engines from a wrecked police Norton in his spare time while working for Norton. The racing rotaries he created wiped the floor with rivals on the track, with Steve Spray and Trevor Nation on board.

For the past 12 years, Crighton has been working behind closed doors with Gilo Cardozo, founder and owner of Gilo Industries Ltd, and lead engineer Shamoon Qurashi, together with the team at Rotron Power to develop the next-generation 700cc twin-rotor rotary engine.

Brian said: "In so many ways the CR700W is the culmination of my career's achievements. Developed with my excellent lead engineer, it encapsulates the absolute best of my engineering wisdom.

"I believe the result is the ultimate track and racing motorcycle."

Test rider and former British Superstock 600 champion Mason Law added: "The raw speed of the motorcycle was mind-blowing. I felt like I was propelling down the runway of an aircraft carrier in an F-35 jet."

Visit www.crightonmotorcycles.com for more on the CR700.

Products

RST Sabre leather trousers

Butch was looking for a pair of leather trousers that didn't shout too loudly, but that he could also wear with a variety of jackets and on different types of bike. These new-for -2021 Sabre trousers from RST looked good value at £199, and he says they feel like they've already bedded in from the first ride.

The cowhide gives the abrasion resistance, yet there's no awkward movement as there is plenty of stretch panels around the crotch and down the back of the leg... so although they look like they are a race suit (and would be fine on track as they have a zip that goes all round the waist to connect to an RST jacket), they have all movements you need to get on and off the bike, walk around, and crouch if you need.

I didn't expect a lot for under £200, but I'm proved wrong. They are tested to CE standards and have achieved AAA rating, the highest, and come with knee and hip armour. Knee I would expect but hip armour too is most unusual – your Italian brands don't. They also come with knee sliders! If you don't need them, they are attached with Velcro so will easily come off. The leather panels are large, as stitching is often a weak area and they have a general feeling of quality. They are vented in areas but thin thermals could fit underneath thanks to the stretch panels. Should you not conform to the 'standard' size, you can have long or short leg with your chosen waist size, so as always it is best to try them on at a dealer.

All sounds quite glowing, but Butch loves them and has tried them on several bikes... and I've tested more leathers than I care to remember and can't fault them. Great leathers, great price.

Butch and Matt

- **rst-moto.com**
- **£199**

Motul M4 Hands Clean

This is essential for me. My workshop has no running water and I am forever popping in when I should be at the computer in my office, which happens to be next door. And, well, you know, you end up doing little bits here and there. And everything is dirty, so your keyboard gets dirty, and you can't read the letters, and any paperwork looks like it's from a police file.

Hands Clean is a toothpaste-looking paste you rub on and as you rub your hands together it seems to dry and turns to bits. But in that time, it's cleaned your hands. It may take a couple of attempts for really dirty mitts, but it does the job. Shame it doesn't clean my keyboard...

- **motul.com**
- **£7.50**

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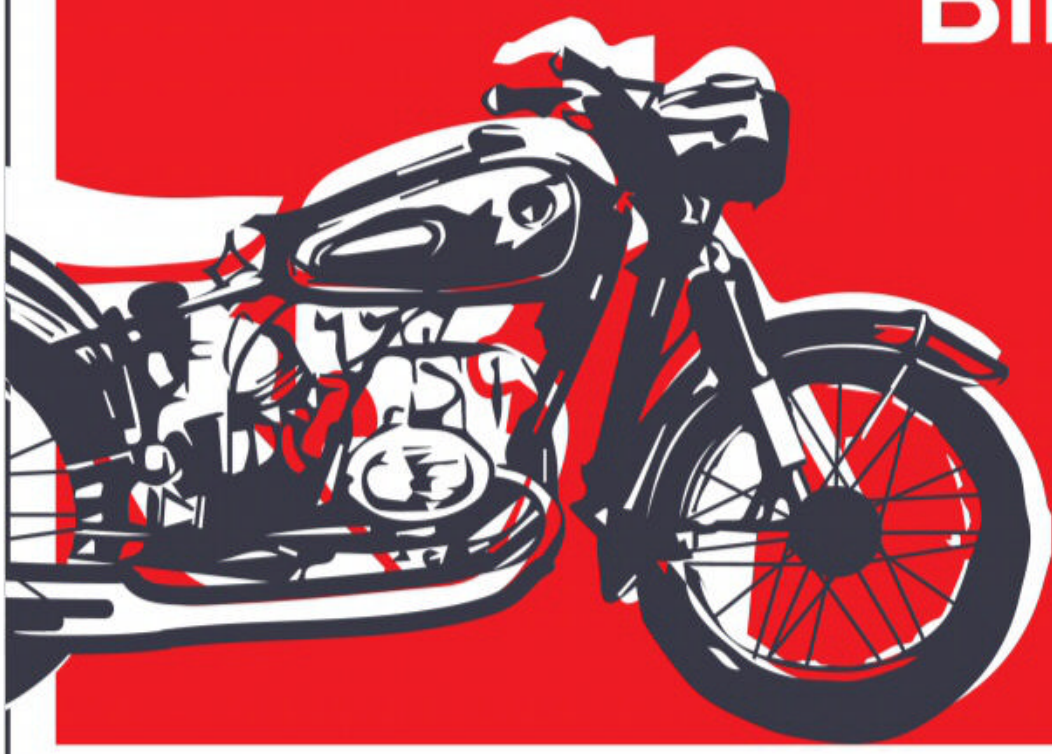

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This month's star letter wins...

The writer of this month's Star Letter wins a Gear Gremlin Classic Neon Bike Covert worth £59.99. A bright, waterproof and washable bike cover, it has elastic hems for a secure fit and side cut-outs so you can lock it with a chain. Find out more at thekeycollection.co.uk

More rusty nuts advice

Loved this latest issue... and am minded to call it Sheen on Acid.

Me on my 90 and three mates on Honda SS50s travelled to hear Barry in a show in Ireland in the late 1960s when he was starting to rampage.

Then the article re: rust removal piqued my interest. Having run a manufacturing plant for years, we have helped hundreds of people restore their rusty iron. First, wire brush as much as possible from your item. Then, bring it to any Electro Plater.

Tell them to zinc plate the item, then immediately strip it of the zinc. This effectively removes rust. If you want, then have them Zinc plate it or just oil it for protection. We followed this process for many years and hundreds of bikes, cars and especially tractors now shine out.

Paul Kelly
Cork, Ireland

STAR LETTER

Thanks, Paul, for that really useful info for those who want it to look more original, and really glad you enjoyed Barry – Matt

A unique bike tricky to value

Love your mag, always topical and interesting. The diversity of bikes you feature is fascinating, as is the depth of knowledge from the various forums and articles you include. Good reading.

I'm interested in the asking price of some of the bikes in the for sale columns; moreover, the scarcity of the two-stroke motocross bikes – 125, 250 and the 500s in the For Sale listings.

I've got a 2001 CR500R last model, bought it new, never clicked into gear, unridden; it's a new bike. Dry stored all of its life. Zero hours. Recently had all of the oils changed, including the coolant, brake fluid and engine oil, with a view to keeping it in storage.

I'm not selling it but wonder if I should. I'd be interested in what you think it is worth. I have all the books, bubble-wrapped, including the Honda ballpoint pen that I signed the sales agreement with.

Mark

Wow, that is tricky question. Firstly, we don't have that many motocross bikes sent in. And pricing a bike that's never been used is a case of what it's worth to a collector. It's not a classic, yet, but it's not the latest version, so I'm not sure who would want it. I would enjoy it as art to look at for another 20 years and then it should be worth a lot more – Matt

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Magnificent Meteor

I bought a Meteor Cruiser from GV Bikes in Taunton and love it. Phil Carter is right: it is not a quick bike, but it is no slug.

The weight brings a feel of solidity, the handling is secure and steady and it is unruffled by the wind of trucks passing in the opposite direction. The brakes are more than adequate.

Cruising A and B roads at 55mph is fun: I would never knock those who want to go faster, but fun has many forms. My first proper ride was the 75 mile ride home and I got off smiling, with no creaks.

Interestingly, in the same issue of CBG there was an article about the BSA B31, which weighs a little more than the Meteor, has about the same power and the same top speed, and the B31 seems universally loved.

Oli enjoyed the Meteor, and I'm delighted with my purchase. Choice is a fine thing.
Paul Rose, Devon.

It's great to get debate going, so thanks, Paul and really pleased to hear you're enjoying the Meteor! Matt

Eye-catching feature

Way back in 1962/3 I owned a BSA C10L, my second bike crammed in between a Francis Barnet and a new Honda 50SS. I have not seen anything in various magazines about a C10L... until now!

Your feature on Jack Hough caught my attention and when I read it, low and behold his creation was based on a C10L.

It must have been the colour of the tank that caught my eye; my memory of mine was that it was a BSA green.

I learned how to take the head off and re-seat the valves; a side valve engine was easier for a novice to work on... must have done it right as it took me from north Surrey to South Devon on holiday.

Clever man, Jack – long may he be able to wield a spanner (he's only a year older than me). I've given up two wheels due to the dreaded arthritis in my hands.

Thanks for a good read every month.
Ian Martin

Thanks, Ian, and Surrey to Devon on a C10L – you were made of stern stuff, sir! – Matt

SZR fan speaks

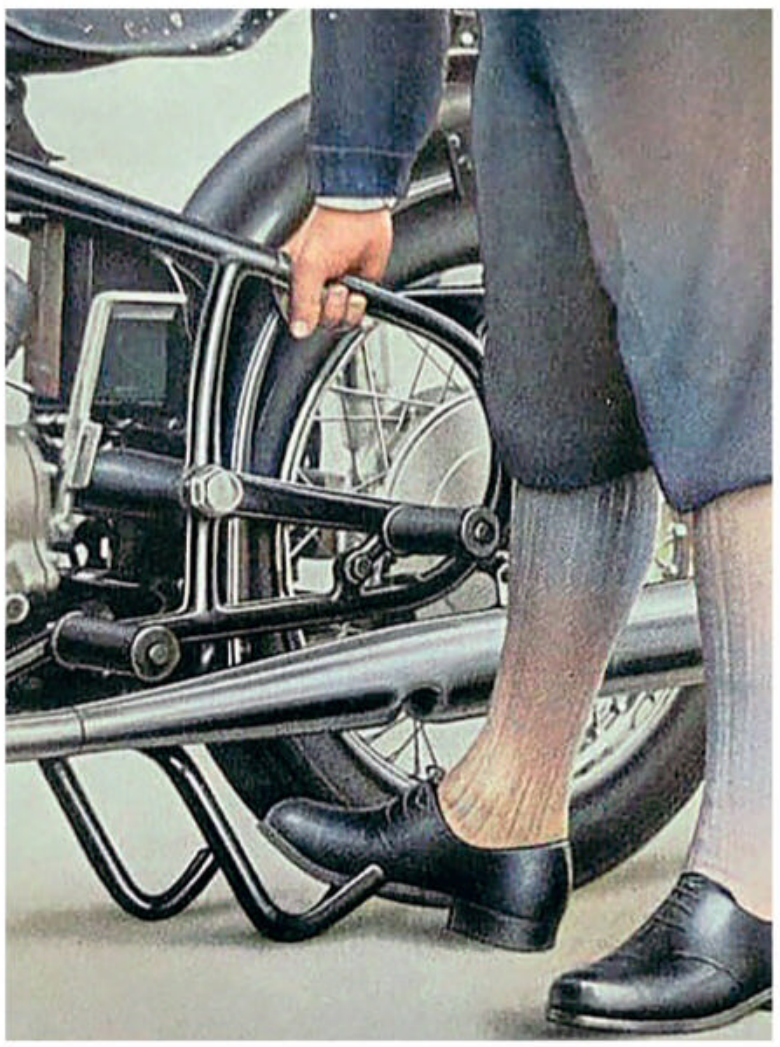
Ugly SZR, I don't think so. Fast and great handling, definitely.
Mark Minter

Looks always bring out personal opinion – the last bastion of the free world! Love the paint scheme on yours, though, and enjoy the handling. I was a TRX850 fan at the time, but couldn't afford one. I'm off to finish my Bros – Matt

The time a BMW R60 stood me up

In Charlie's impression of the BMW R60, she complains about the difficulty of getting the bike onto its main stand. I also struggled with the same issue on my R50US for years until someone recently posted the attached picture on our local BMW owner's group. Initially it doesn't seem to make much sense, as one is inclined to think that the 'tang' on the stand is what should be used. But once tried, as per the picture, the job is certainly much easier.
Keith Kendall, South Africa

That's a great illustration which should help some, though their back is still bent. I fear it was simply a lack of understanding from designers of other sizes of people! When teaching motorcycling I found that most people used their arms to 'lift' more than feet to push down, and tried to lift the bike back, instead of lifting the bike up, letting the pivoting motion do the work. Enjoy your riding under those South African skies, you lucky man! – Matt



Fancy a day out?

And we are into the dark evenings and occasionally crisp, occasionally damp days. This is the time for chilly weekend rides and dealing with slippery leaves and ice on the daily commute. "There's no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate dress," we think, grinning bitterly through clenched teeth. But there are still gatherings of friends and club nights and committee meetings in the back rooms of country pubs, the odd jumble, the odd ride out, and a show or two. Life could be worse. It was noticeable while compiling this month's diary how many January events have dropped off the calendar in the past two years, so do support the ones that are still there, and let us know about yours.

NOVEMBER 2021

- **28 Mud Pluggers Day Ace Café:** Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. Visit london.acecafe.com

DECEMBER 2021

- **3 JANUARY EDITION OF *THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE* OUT TODAY**
- **4 *OLD BIKE MART* COMES THROUGH LETTERBOXES AND INBOXES TODAY**
- **4 Rufforth Autojumble:** The autojumble takes place every first Saturday of the month, all year round. Rufforth Park, Yorks YO23 3QH. Visit www.rufforthautojumble.com
- **4 London Classic Off Road & Racing Show & Jumble:** The legendary Kempton Park racecourse usually echoes to the thunder of hooves, but every few months it's thundering motorcycles that are the focus in the leafy suburbs of west London. This December, the hall below the main stand is home to the London Classic Off Road and Racing Show. The show will host some unique club stands and incredible private entries, celebrating some of the finest motorcycles from a bygone era. Prizes will be awarded during the day including Best In Show, and Ace Cafe London will be offering a prize for Best Flat Tracker. Sitting alongside is a friendly motorcycle jumble where the traders cross hundreds of miles to be there. The jumble is particularly well-served for those looking for a rideable classic or a well-sorted project to get their hands dirty on, and is a very useful venue for enthusiasts having clear-outs. One of the best places for those in the metropolis to bag their bits. Kempton Park, Middlesex TW16 5AQ. Visit www.kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk
- **4-12 Motorcycle Live returns for 2021:** Four halls of The NEC will be bursting with manufacturers, new products, opportunities to ride, and stacks of entertainment. More than 50 motorcycle manufacturers, hundreds of exhibitors, and thousands of visitors are expected. And if all the shiny newness starts to leave you bedazzled, you can always check out the National Motorcycle Museum stand. National Exhibition Centre, North Ave, Marston Green, Birmingham B40 1NT. Visit www.motorcyclelive.co.uk
- **6 Bike Day and Ace Café Club Day Christmas Meet:** Ace Café , Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. Visit london.acecafe.com
- **6 DECEMBER EDITION OF *REAL CLASSIC* OUT TODAY**
- **12 Paws 'n' Claws pet food run and bike day:** Ace Cafe Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. Visit london.acecafe.com
- **15 JANUARY EDITION OF *CLASSIC MOTORCYLE MECHANICS* IN SHOPS TODAY**
- **16 JANUARY/FEBRUARY EDITION OF *CLASSIC RACER* OUT NOW**
- **18 Giant Auto and Bike Jumble:** Scorton, North Yorkshire Events Centre DL10 6EJ
- **19 'Normous Newark Autojumble:** The star venue seen on several of Henry Coles's TV offerings, this is a great day out for any car or motorcycle enthusiast, offering a vast array of parts, restoration services and related products. Newark and Notts Showground, Newark NG24 2NY. Visit www.newarkautojumble.co.uk
- **19 Christmas Toy Run, Carol Service and Bike Day:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. Visit london.acecafe.com
- **26 Cold Turkey Meet:** Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Road, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD. Visit london.acecafe.com
- **27 Wells Classic Motorcycle Club:** Annual Day After Boxing Day run. Visit www.wellsclassicmotorcycleclub.weebly.com for details.
- **29 *CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE* JANUARY EDITION ON SALE NOW**

JANUARY 2022

- **1 New Year's Day Gathering:** Bank Holiday meeting of all kinds of historic vehicles, plus a short run out organised by VMCC Somerset section, 10am at Huntworth Cattle Market, A38 near Bridgwater TA6 6LQ.
- **2 Taverners VMCC Sporting Trial:** Earl Shilton 9.30am-4pm. For details, visit www.thetaverners.co.uk
- **9 Mid-Kents Autojumble:** 10am-3pm. Adults, £3; children under-16 free. Refreshments available throughout the day. Lockmeadow Market Hall, Baker Road, Maidstone, Kent ME16 8LW.
- **22 Kempton Park Motorcycle Jumble:** The perfect place to rummage through the many spare parts needed for your restoration project, or to simply keep your bike running. At least 250 stalls for regular traders and bike enthusiasts looking to make some space in their garage. There is also a motorcycle mart where you can sell your complete bike. Open 8am-3pm at Kempton Park, Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East, Sunbury On Thames, Middx TW16 5AQ.
- **30 'Normous Newark Autojumble:** Newark Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 2NY.

Would you like your event, bike night or gathering to appear in these listings?
Email us at obmfreeads@mortons.co.uk

Classic Bike Guide Winter Classic is on!

A NEWARK START FOR 2022

WE'RE BACK, SO COME AND SAY HELLO!

The 2022 *Classic Bike Guide* Winter Classic is taking place at Newark Showground on January 8-9. It's the time when we get to brush off the remaining mince pie crumbs, put away the Baileys and get back to the not-so-serious but enormously satisfying business of seeing who has turned their lumps of superannuated scrap into real running metal, getting lost in the warmth, and exploring the hundreds of stunning classic machines on display.

With a good mix of traders, dealers and autojumble plots, the Winter Classic is the perfect place to grab a box or bagful of parts and spares, as well as finding that inspiration needed to finish your restoration... it won't be long before we are all set for a summer of riding. Perhaps you might pick up a new project, and Newark, interestingly, seems to attract a decent crop of affordable and unusual runners to choose from.

The monthly 'Normous Newark Autojumbles are always popular, but the Winter Classic is more of a show, and the autojumble at the *Classic Bike Guide* Winter Classic has stalls and stands throughout the site, with sellers inside the main hall, outside and in the additional halls, too.

Hundreds of traders pitch up at the show with a vast range of autojumble and new spares, parts, and garage equipment – just in case that bike lift wasn't under your tree again this year, despite the hints. The only issue for visitors is which way to go as you walk through the gates... right to the main hall, or left for the outdoor jumble, more indoor space, or keep going, to be lured by the crackle of an over-revving Vespa in Scooter World.

Guest of honour this year is one of our road racing heroes, Phillip McCallen. One of the most gifted road racers of the modern age – 11 times a winner at Isle of Man TT, multiple winner at the North West 200 and the Ulster GP, winner of the Macau Grand Prix and British Supersport. At the peak of his power, 'Supermac' collected first-place trophies at almost all road race meetings. In 1992 at the North West 200, McCallen had five race wins from six starts. At the 1996 Ulster GP, he took five wins in one day. Perhaps his crowning glory was winning four races out five at the Isle of Man TT – a record which stood unbroken for 14 years. He'll have some great stories to tell.

Not being prejudiced against people who like their wheels small, we always take the opportunity to visit Scooter World, which buzzes with energy and life. They always have great music in their hall and, of course, there's plenty of time to check out the show entries across the site. With many of us stuck in our sheds for the two years since the last show, we're looking forward to seeing what people have come up with.

And Maria, Oli and Matt will be there too, playing with something or taking something apart for your entertainment while inventing new swear words, so come and say hello!

The venue is Newark Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 2NY.

Advance tickets with fast-track entry cost £10 from **www.newarkclassicbikeshow.com**

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WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE AUTOJUMBLE CALENDAR?

'NORMOUS NEWARK AUTOJUMBLE

NEWARK SHOWGROUND, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, NG24 2NY

• 21 NOV 2021
• 19 DEC 2021
• 30 JAN 2022

• STANDARD ADMISSION (FROM 10AM) - £7
• 15 YEARS & UNDER FREE
• EARLY BIRD ADMISSION (FROM 8AM) - £10

newarkautojumble.co.uk

KPA

KEMPTON PARK AUTOJUMBLE

KEMPTON PARK, MIDDLESEX, TW16 5AQ

• 4 DEC 2021 (LONDON CLASSIC OFF ROAD & RACING SHOW)
• 22 JAN 2022

• STANDARD ADMISSION (FROM 9.30AM) - £7
• 15 YEARS & UNDER FREE
• EARLY BIRD ADMISSION (FROM 8.00AM) - £10

kemptonautojumble.co.uk

Did you know?

What did we learn at the Stafford show? Oli had a mission to learn what he could from the variety of clubs in attendance

Words by Oli Hulme **Photos by** Gary Chapman

CLASSIC BIKE SHOWS CAN BE MANY things to many people... the chance to spend money, whether it's on a Manx Norton or a bag of stainless washers, the chance to meet friends, bid at an auction, or gaze longingly at some inch-perfect restoration or astonishing special. The Stafford Show had all of this in spades – not least a remarkable six-cylinder Suzuki Katana which had crowds around it for the entire weekend. But if there's one thing that keeps shows fresh and gives you a reason to come back year after year it is the myriad owners' clubs and the effort they all put in. Big or small, it's the clubs that make it – there's always someone to talk to, and always someone to help, too. At this year's Stafford Show we decided to find out something we didn't know about brands that don't get the attention they deserve. And so armed with a notepad and spidery scribbling skills, we set out to ask the big question: Can you tell us something we don't know about your bike?

Morini Riders' Club

Tell us a few things most people don't know about Moto Morini?

Butch Almond said: "They're still going, and Honda still pay Morini a licensing fee for aspects of Morini designs that Honda still use on bikes today.

"The latest Seimezzo 650 twin weighs the same as the 2004 Corsaro 1200 V-twin. That 1200 uses the same Heron Head concept as the 1970s 350 V-twin, with a flat cylinder head and the combustion chamber inside the piston. This should not be surprising given that they were both designed by Franco Lambertini – the 350 in 1969, and the 1200 in 2004.

"The very short stroke engine used in the 1200 has the same bore and stroke as the Triumph Rocket 3, and the cylinder and crankcase on the 1200 are a single casting. To fit the pistons, you remove a plate in the

barrel. It's got a cassette gearbox and the seats are made by the same company that makes them for Triumph.

"And finally, The Morini Riders' Club has its own 350 which can be used by members."

The Cossack Owners' Club

Tell us some things people don't know about Cossacks?

Kevin Richards has a cracker! "There are no Cossack motorcycles in Russia. The name was chosen by SATRA, the Soviet American Trading Association, which was based in Surrey, after a deal was struck with Soviet agency Auto Export to export Soviet motorcycles to the UK and give the bikes the same branding. All the bikes were made in different factories throughout the Soviet Union, with each one building a different model: Urals at IMZ in Irbit; Dnepr in Kiev; Minsk in Minsk; and Voskhod in Kovrov. Some of the factories also made guns, and IZH in Izhevsk made Planeta motorcycles and AK47 assault rifles.

"The first Planeta Sport motorcycles had a lot of Japanese parts on them as a result of a deal with Honda or Yamaha, nobody is quite sure. They had Honda switchgear, Mikuni carbs and Stanley electrics. The story goes that the Japanese wanted to break into third-world markets that were supplied with things by the Soviets. The Mk2 Planeta Sport had no Japanese stuff on it and was sturdier and more reliable.

"The Dnepr factory in Kiev is maybe the only motorcycle company stolen and destroyed by organised crime. The factory was in the heart of the city of Kiev. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Kiev's council wanted to keep the factory open even though production had dropped, so allowed it to operate without paying business taxes. After a few years, the city council was taken over by the Ukrainian Mafia, and they used their muscle to remove the tax break, forcing Dnepr out of business. Mafia partners then bought the factory for next to nothing, flattened it, built a huge housing estate on the site and made millions.

"Ural, meanwhile, is now owned by American investors."

The Moto Guzzi Owners' Club

Can you tell us something we don't about Moto Guzzi motorcycles?

Peter Ramsbottom said: "At 100 years old, Moto Guzzi is the oldest motorcycle company in the world that is still in continuous production at the same factory.

"It's pronounced Gut-si, not Guzz-ee as a lot of British people do, or Goo-zee, which is common in the USA.

"Most owners can't have one Moto Guzzi and will end up with several. The Moto Guzzi isn't just a motorcycle; it's the soul of Italian motorcycle manufacturing.

"They are exceptionally resilient and the only handmade but mass-produced motorcycle you can still buy. No Moto Guzzi will leave the factory for sale before an individual series of bench and road tests to make sure it is ready for a customer.

"Moto Guzzi won more trophies on the track than any other company in the world until the mid-1950s. Moto Guzzi had lightweight 250cc and 350cc bikes, and won five consecutive 350cc world championships between 1953 and 1957. It withdrew from racing after the 1957 season because of the cost and a drop in sales.

"As an aside, by the time of its withdrawal from Grand Prix racing, Moto Guzzi had won 3329 official races, eight world championships, six Constructor's Championships and 11 Isle of Man TT victories."

The Suzuki Kettle Club

What might surprise people about Suzuki Kettles (GT750)?

Dave Hewittson said: "Despite being a two-stroke triple, the GT750 has no powerband and redlines at 7000rpm. You can go 1000 miles on a tank of two-stroke oil, which holds about 1.8 litres, and early slide carb models can get 55mpg. It's very much more of a tourer than a sports bike, and a very usable classic. There are so many about that unless you have

documented proof, photos and receipts of any claimed work, take anything anyone tells you with big pinch of salt.

"Despite what everyone says, the crank oil seals aren't the weak spot in the engine, and as long as the 2000-mile service intervals are kept to, a GT750 will outlast its owner. You just need to keep an eye on the oil level and the gearbox oil, and give it a regular check over. Use modern fuel, coolant, and tyres, too. I've covered 500 miles in a day on mine and its more comfortable than most modern bikes, while the engine is so simple.

"The engine was developed from a design by Suzuki for a Toyota Sports car, and the TR750 racer was developed from the GT750. It reached 190mph on the Daytona banking.

"Most GT750 owners start collecting bits as they come across them and tend to end up building another one from what they have."

Laverda Owners' Club

Tell us some things we didn't know about Laverdas?

Ted Aves said: "Not all Laverdas are Orange, and not all Laverdas are Jotas!"

"Laverda cut its teeth racing in the 1950s and 1960s. Its singles were the best you could buy, and at one race, the Milano Taranto, Laverdas took the first 10 places – which isn't bad for a combine harvester manufacturer.

"Because Laverda only came to prominence outside Italy in the late 1960s, most people don't realise it built 35,000 100cc road bikes before and that would wipe the floor with the opposition; with better reliability, frames, and engines.

"Even though the Jota, when it first appeared, at £2600 was much more expensive than its closest rival, Kawasaki's Z1R, the Jota's reputation as the fastest road bike you could buy had a lot to do with sales in the late 1970s.

"When Laverda's 750 SF arrived in 1972 it quickly became one of the most popular European bikes in Germany, where there are still a lot of them. The drive to the orange colour didn't come from Italy at all. The Dutch importer had painted a 750 SFC orange in 1973, and because of the association of the colour orange with the Dutch, it quickly became the most requested colour in that country. When the Laverda factory realised the success of this colour in one of its most important marketplaces, they started making orange bikes for everybody."

CBG

Your guide to...

The Blown Vee

Honda CX650 Turbo

Words and photography by Dave Manning
With special thanks to Mike Bilton, the owner and custodian of this wonderful machine.

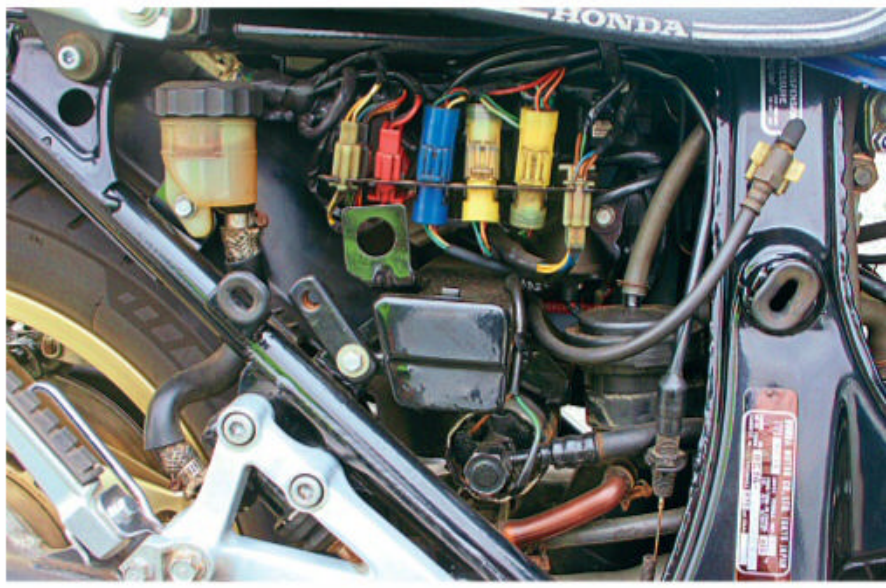
Honda is a company that, somehow, seems to have a reputation for bikes that are a little staid, built for comfort and practicality rather than being an adventurous company that is prepared to push the boundaries of what is deemed 'normal' in the world of motorcycling...

No doubt, part of this reputation is thanks to the "You meet the nicest people on a Honda" marketing campaign of the 1970s, and that it has produced some very capable – albeit a little dull – bikes throughout its history since leading light Soichiro Honda built his first Dream and Cub models in the early 1950s.

Yet we mustn't forget that the manufacturing might of Honda has also seen some of the most radical machinery to ever reach production. The sideways thinking behind the petite engineering masterpieces that were the multi-cylinder race bikes of the 1960s, the oval-pistoned NR500 Grand Prix four-stroke or the NR750 road bike that followed it, or the unique thinking behind the Active Radical two-stroke off-road machines of the late 1990s – all have shown that Honda is a company that isn't just going to follow a well-trodden path.

SHARK
HONDA
TURBO
CX TURBO
HONDA
TURBO

CBG Your guide to...



Above: Mike's CX shows the gold wheels and forks of the UK model; the US version had black.

And Honda's innovation didn't just appear for the race bikes, as several production machines came straight out of left field. While the CBX1000 used the six-cylinder race bikes as inspiration, 1978's CX500 and its water-cooled 500cc transverse V-twin was a clean-sheet inspiration. Although some have stated that Moto Guzzi's V50 brought about the idea, the truth is that the 80-degree vee twin, with its shaft drive and pushrod-operated valves (four per head), took as much inspiration from car design as it did bike, with the cylinders cast into the crankcases and the single camshaft driven by a Hy-Vo (High Capacity, High Velocity) chain. The engine was fitted as a stressed member, with the cylinder heads being twisted around so as to turn the carburettors inboard and create more room for the rider's knees, with Comstar wheels allowing tubeless tyres and twin front discs providing ample stopping power (Stateside, braking wasn't seen as being as important as in Europe and only a single disc was fitted to bikes sold in America).

However, the press didn't really like the look of the bike, and the term 'plastic maggot' was soon as universal as the use of the CX as despatch riders' steed. Despite many early issues, with cam chain tensioner problems and the wrong crank bearings fitted to early models, the Maggot still gained a reputation as a reliable (and extremely comfortable, as my backside would testify, if it could talk – Matt) mile-muncher – even more so when the later Custom, Silver Wing and 650cc variants were released.

"The 80-degree vee twin, with its shaft drive and pushrod-operated valves (four per head), took as much inspiration from car design as it did bike, with the cylinders cast into the crankcases and the single camshaft driven by a Hy-Vo (High Capacity, High Velocity) chain."

TIME TO BLOW

But as the years passed, come the early 1980s, motorcycles were becoming faster and more capable and the Big Four Japanese factories had, seemingly, set their eyes on forced induction as being the future for high performance.

While Yamaha, Kawasaki and Suzuki all used their mid-range inline fours as the basis for the turbocharged bolides, Honda once again steered a different path, choosing the CX as an unlikely candidate to receive both fuel injection and turbocharged induction for release in 1982. The turbo wasn't fitted straight to the standard CX powerplant, however, as it was fitted with the larger crankshaft bearings used in the new CX650 launched in the same year as the turbocharged 500cc variant, while lower compression pistons were fitted to compensate for the increased dynamic compression ratio afforded by the forced induction.

KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

Mike Bilton is an ex-Honda technician who started working for Ray Hamblin straight from school in the summer of 1975, going to Honda UK in Chiswick for some motorcycle training courses and working there until early 1993, when he moved to driving a lorry after passing the test in December 1992. While at Hamblin's back in the 1970s, Mike just so happened to have bought one of the first CX500s in the UK. While he enjoyed the bike, like many folk his life on two wheels was curtailed with family etc. coming in the way. But, of course, like so many others, the biking bug had hit hard and he was keen to get another bike as soon as he had opportunity. That original CX had given him so much pleasure that he was keen for some more water-cooled V-twin Honda fun! His return to the fold wasn't with the conventional carburetted model, but with the sportier, forced induction fun provided by the 650 turbo.

This was partly thanks to the fact that he wanted another CX, but also wanted one that was a little out of his reach when they were first released. Following common sense by joining the UK Honda Turbo Association (it's been said before – joining an owners' club is the easiest way to find out about any faults or issues with the bike of your dreams, but also of getting insider info as to what bikes are actually available!) at the NEC Classic Show in November 2011.

By July the following year, the association had found Mike a 650 turbo! However, it had been stood for 12 years and had a few problems, like the brakes and suspension didn't work, the engine had a ticking and an oil leak, and the frame needed some welding... in short, the perfect project for someone who'd spent plenty of time fettling, servicing and fixing Hondas in the past.

Rather than just fixing it so it was running properly, he decided to totally strip and then rebuild it, albeit within a strict budget and not to a standard that he wouldn't want to ride it in the changeable climatic conditions of the UK.

Having an immaculate, pristine example of an appreciating classic is all well and good, but if you never want to ride it for fear of it getting dirty or damaged, then all you've got is an expensive piece of garage art; as the UK Honda Turbo Association sticker on the fairing claims: "Ride them – don't hide them". Mike wanted to ride his bike. Be like Mike.

Above: The media of the day rated the Turbo 650, but the adverts showed the price that would be paid for that performance.

REFURB TO RIDE

Naturally, the refurbishment didn't happen overnight; it was mainly trying to find the time between Mike's other hobbies and his daily work lorry driving, although finding people to do the different things when needed also took some time. A grand total of about six years went by before it was finally finished.

While there were thousands of examples of the CX500 produced by Honda, the Turbo wasn't released in anywhere near similar numbers (as an aside, adverts of the time showed new CX650 Turbos for sale at £2999 "while stocks last", while a normally-aspirated and bikini-faired CX650 Eurosport was £1765). And while there are certain parts that are used in both models, there's also a large and significant number of differences, particularly regarding the sort of parts that may get damaged in an accident, no matter how small.

For example, the bodywork is very different in the Turbo model and some of the fairing panels can take time to locate if they need to be replaced; repair is often the best solution. Given that the induction system is ducted behind the fairing, various components have had to be relocated elsewhere, and the 650 had received a raft of improvements over the turbocharged 500, including larger valves, increased compression ratio (up to 7.8:1 from 7.2:1), a larger turbocharger compressor wheel that increased the

power to 100bhp while running lower boost (at 16.4psi rather than the half-litre bike's 17.4psi).

While the rolling gear retained the Comstar wheels, Pro-Link rear suspension and TRAC-assisted front forks of the smaller model, the 650 did gain some adjustment on the suspension and the overall weight was reduced by 4kg, albeit still remaining at a reasonably hefty 235kg all-in.

Like any fan of a particular model, Mike has retained all the paperwork, not only from his own personal build with all the receipts from parts he's bought during the refurbishment – he's also got loads of original Honda brochures and the like, which are perfect fodder for those who want to ensure that their own bike appears as factory fresh as possible.

Maintenance on the CX is surprisingly easy. Even the clutch is easily accessible, being unusually located at the front of the engine, rather than is the case with other transverse V-twins that have the clutch situated at the rear between the crank and the transmission, in a style reminiscent of rear-wheel drive cars, which, in the case of a two-wheeler, will invariably necessitate engine removal if the clutch needs attention.

Above and below left: The blue on the fairing dictates that this bike is a 650 model, while the mirrored 'Obrut' on the fairing shows that it is not an American bike, for that has the conventional script.

Clearly, the rack at the rear isn't standard fitment, although it is further proof that Mike uses his CX regularly. In fact, as per the majority of the UK Honda Turbo Association members, Mike rides it as much as possible, although his time is not only taken up with maintaining the Honda alongside the usual day-to-day frippery of everyday life but also with his other passion – croquet, which has something of a large following in the UK, similar to crown green bowls. You learn something interesting and new every day.

Following Mike on the CX, it's clear that it's rather spritelier than you may expect for a 650cc V-twin nigh on four decades old. A *Motor Cycle Weekly* review said the blown Honda is "a joy in a hurry, but at a cost" and made the statement that turbocharging can aid in meeting stringent emissions regulations – considered a modern problem and not one that manufacturers considered 38 years ago! The weekly title also had a Suzuki XN85 on test and stated that the CX "comes out on top by a clear margin". While the decision by Honda on which bike in its range to turbocharge is a contentious one, it seems to have been successful.

Aside from the people that Mike would like to thank – David Silver for parts; John Hamblin for parts and use of special tools; Colin and Dan at Scunthorpe Powder Coating; Barkley Hydraulics at Doncaster for re-chroming the fork tubes; Allen Signs at Lincoln and Sticky Fingers at Nuneaton for the stickers; T Bland's of Gainsborough for crankcase welding; and Zircotec at Abingdon for the exhaust coating – he also points out "I've done about 5000 miles since the rebuild and it's gone past 40,000 miles on the clocks. The only thing I'd like to do is find a better way of carrying my croquet mallet!" CBG

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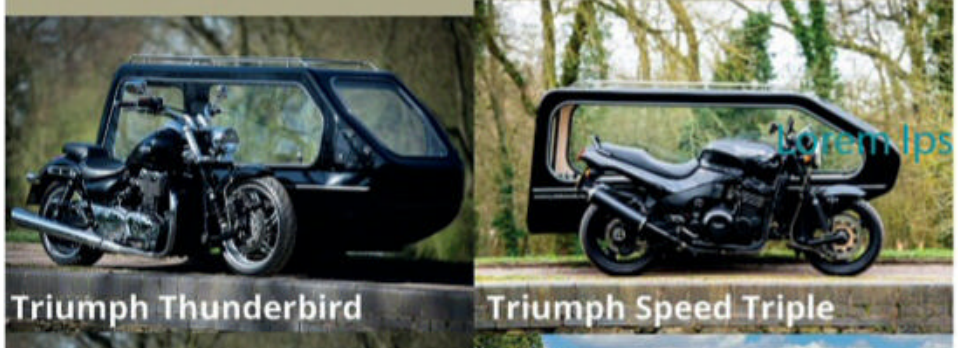

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Tantalised by a turbo? What about these?

The turbo bikes of the late 1970s to early 1980s were expensive – in some cases, terrifying – and didn't sell in big numbers. When they fell out of favour with buyers, spares became very hard to find. Some were simply left to decay and are massively expensive to restore as a consequence. But if you have an impeller-fed itch, here are four of the few... and one that might have been.

Words by Oli **Photography** Mortons Archive

Kawasaki Z1R-TC

What on earth were they thinking? You simply cannot imagine a manufacturer selling a bike like the Z1R-TC today. Simply taking a Turbo-Pak kit and bolting it on to the Z1R was an outrageous bit of Californian madness. Kawasaki had a stock of unsold and slightly dated Z1Rs which were being overshadowed in the power stakes. Bunging on the turbo added 40bhp to the Kawasaki, taking it to 130bhp. A total of 220 were built, and buyers had to sign a waiver that released Kawasaki from complicated things like warranty claims. Kawasaki also recommended that the new owner welded up the crank and fitted a tougher clutch and stronger valve springs. The first turbo came in the original silver Z1R trim, but later models were given a more striking look. With no fuel injection and no rev limiter, there was a complete lack of any engine controls. Miss a gear and your engine could explode in a dramatic fashion. There was horrendous turbo lag, mediocre brakes, and a frame that wasn't up to the job. But you definitely had the most ridiculous bike in the neighbourhood. They don't come up for sale very often; one sold in the USA for $16,100 in 2019.

Suzuki XN85

The XN85 was a sports turbo in a Katana-esque body kit with a lot of innovative stuff on top of the smartly added turbo. The capacity was 673cc, and the 85 in the name came from its claimed power output in bhp. An early-release 1983 model, it was the first bike with a 16-inch front wheel, clip-ons, rear sets, and a single shock rear end – the first appearance of the Suzuki Full Floater system. The turbo had been tuned properly and the boost arrived at 5000rpm. If you saw one in the mirror, you would read 'Turbo' emblazoned on the front, where Suzuki had fixed it in mirror image. Handling was apparently excellent, but Suzuki managed to kill the XN85 with its own GS750ES, which produced 10 fewer bhp but was 5mph faster. Despite being as rare as hen's teeth, they can be found at surprisingly low prices, starting at about £4000 to £5000.

Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo

Kawasaki started work on the GPz750 in 1981 by sticking a turbo on the Z650. Then it took the stock GPz750 – already a pokey performer – and stuck a turbo on that. It wasn't a massive piece of kit, just a small Hitachi turbo mounted at the bottom of the front of the engine. But it was powerful enough to make the GPz750 turbo faster than Kawasaki's flagship, the brutal and unwieldy GPz1100. As a result, you got 1100cc performance in a much lighter frame, even though the 750 wasn't a lightweight. It had a second-generation fuel injection system, which was much more controlled than the carbs on the terrifying Z1R-TC. Clearly part of the GPz family, the turbo had similar bodywork to its naturally aspirated siblings, but also had fairing lowers covering the engine, presumably to hide the turbo pipework. Described as "explosively fast" and "aggressive" by the pundits of the day, the GPz only lasted a few years on its pedestal before being overhauled by the faster and more sophisticated GPz900R. GPz Turbos sold in reasonable numbers and there are a few for sale today in the UK, priced between £7999 and £16,000.

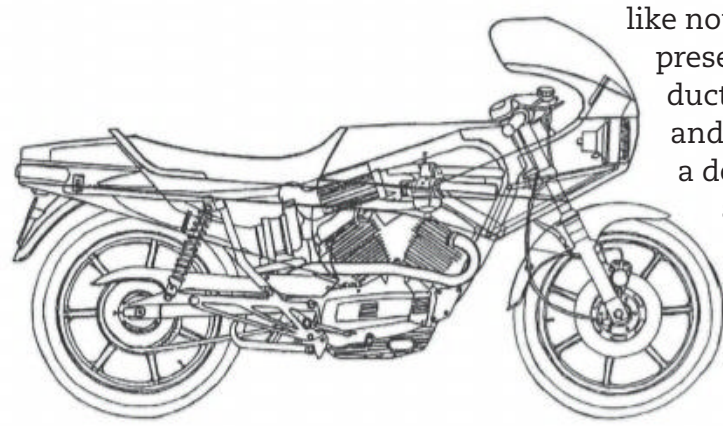
Yamaha XJ650 Turbo

The XJ650 Turbo arrived in 1982 and used the motor from the XJ650, which had a shaft drive to the rear wheel. Compared to the GPz and the XN85, it was more sports tourer like the CX650 Turbo, with a sizable wedge-shaped fairing. It was much more restrained than other turbos, too. Where the GPz had fuel injection, the XJ had a bank of four Mikuni 30mm carbs. The XJ650 Turbo might also have suffered a little from the power-sapping shaft. Although the XJ was smooth and refined at lower revs, it took off dramatically at 6500rpm when the turbo kicked in. The wedge of fairing made the sudden burst of acceleration a lot easier to deal with and stopped the rider's arms from being torn out of their sockets. Yamaha's turbo was considered easier to live with than the Kawasaki, capable of being a sensible touring motorcycle until the turbo span and then becoming a hairy superbike, which returned to being a tourer when the revs dropped. Sean Connery's James Bond rode one in Never Say Never Again. XJ650 Turbos come to the market occasionally, and there is one for sale in the UK currently for £6980.

Morini 500 Turbo

European manufacturers – that had been at the forefront of supercharger development before the Second World War – didn't go for the turbo, much... there was a notable and highly unusual one, however. In the late 1970s, Moto Morini spent some years developing a turbo-charged 125cc single prototype which eventually led to the creation of a 500 Turbo.

Morini didn't think like other manufacturers. Where others built big motorcycles to get more power, Morini took a careful look at engine development and decided that just making bigger engines wasn't the only way forward – it crunched the numbers and decided that building bigger bikes was a dead end. With the Japanese developing turbo units small enough to fit on a motorcycle, Morini took one and attached it to a 500cc Maestro V-twin. It used a single carb, an intercooler – and looked like nothing Morini had ever presented before. There were ducts to cool the rear cylinder, and the turbo was fitted with a device so it didn't operate at low revs. It's never been clear if anybody rode the 500 Turbo who wasn't employed by Morini, which is a terrible shame.



FN 1908
‘The car on two wheels’

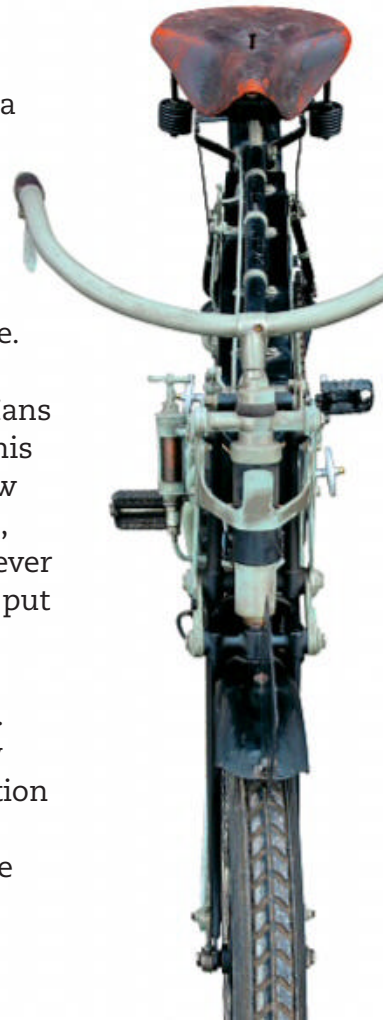
A 112-year-old motorcycle and never been ridden. ‘Showroom new’. How unique do you want it?

Text and photography by Onno ‘Berserk’ Wieringa – www.madnessphotography.nl
With many thanks to Hans Devos of H-D Classic – www.hd-classic.be – hans.devos@telenet.be

Hans Devos, of HD-Classic vintage bike dealers, was amazed at this cellar find: a 1908 FN 413cc inline four-cylinder. The motorcycle was ‘found’ in new condition, literally with zero kilometres on the odometer. For years the bike stood in the basement of a former FN employee.

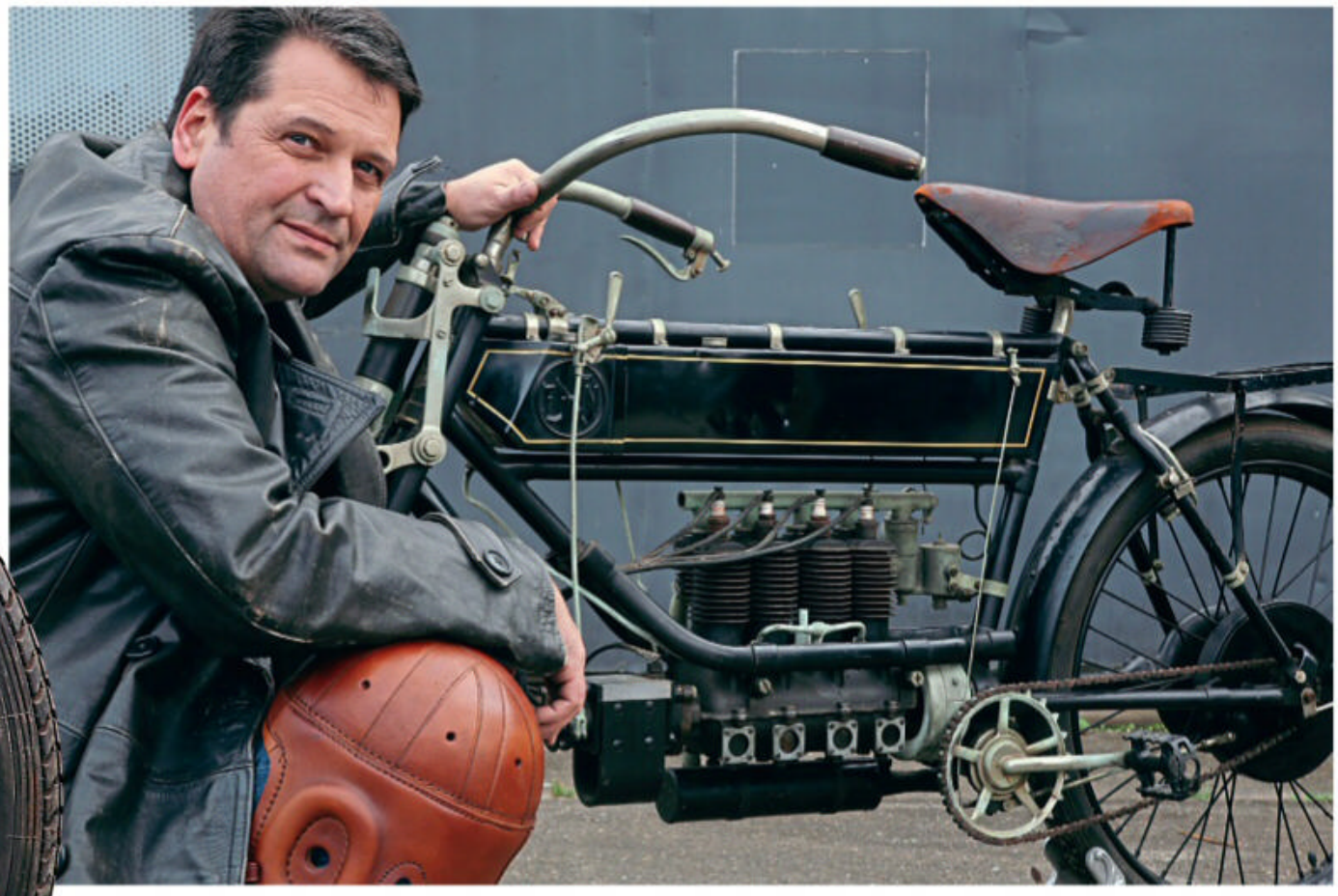
“Well, just when you thought you’d seen everything before, look at this!” Hans begins his exceptional story, pointing his finger at the motorcycle: “A factory-new FN four-cylinder from 1908. Never sold, never driven, never restored; in fact, never did somebody put gasoline in it, never put oil in it ... this is what an FN from 1908 looked like on delivery.

“This is a true time capsule from FN. It belonged to the FN factory (that now makes firearms – bikes ceased production in the 1960s) and was in the museum of FN. It was then given to an employee in the 1980s and has never been used or cleaned and, until now, only stored.”



Hans still gets chills when he talks about the purchase. “A story that could have ended very badly because of my doubts,” he now knows. “I got a call from someone who had an FN for sale. It was brand new... he kept telling me things that were just too good to be true and, to be honest, I held back a bit. Recently I had no fewer than four FNs for sale for a long time and only recently got rid of them. I was then able to sell two bikes each to two different buyers in the same week... also extraordinary!

“Anyway, I actually wanted to stop buying FN motorcycles for a while, but the good man kept calling and emailing. After his fifth email, I thought I should have a look. I went to his place in the evening and walked into the basement and – the hairs on my neck stood straight and I had goosebumps!”



"I know these motorcycles. But no matter how much I would like to ride this one... already, after 20km you come to the realisation that you have an 'old new' engine, but that you will never get it back like it was, in this truly new condition. It will never be really new again!"

He sighs deeply before continuing. "A four-cylinder, and indeed new, an FN model M70 350cc! I did not believe my eyes. The man said he had received the motorcycle in 1986 as compensation for his work at FN, where he worked in the 'Innovation' or 'New Developments' department, which is now called R&D."

However, the man turned out to have absolutely nothing to do with motorcycles. He was a car enthusiast, which is why he did not ride the motorcycle.

"The director of FN had personally given permission to give the motorcycle that was in the FN museum, which was next to his office, to him," says Hans. "The man had worked on special assignments and was involved in technical developments such as the Wankel engine, which, as far as we know, never came into production at or via FN. A lot of production and patents were sold to other parties and manufacturers in those years."

Hans gently pushes the FN out. "It's the first time this motorcycle sees the sunlight.

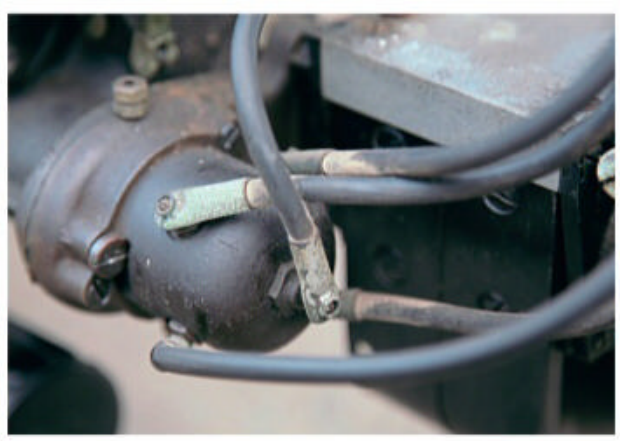
"The original tyres from 1908 are still in very good condition because they have never seen the sun.

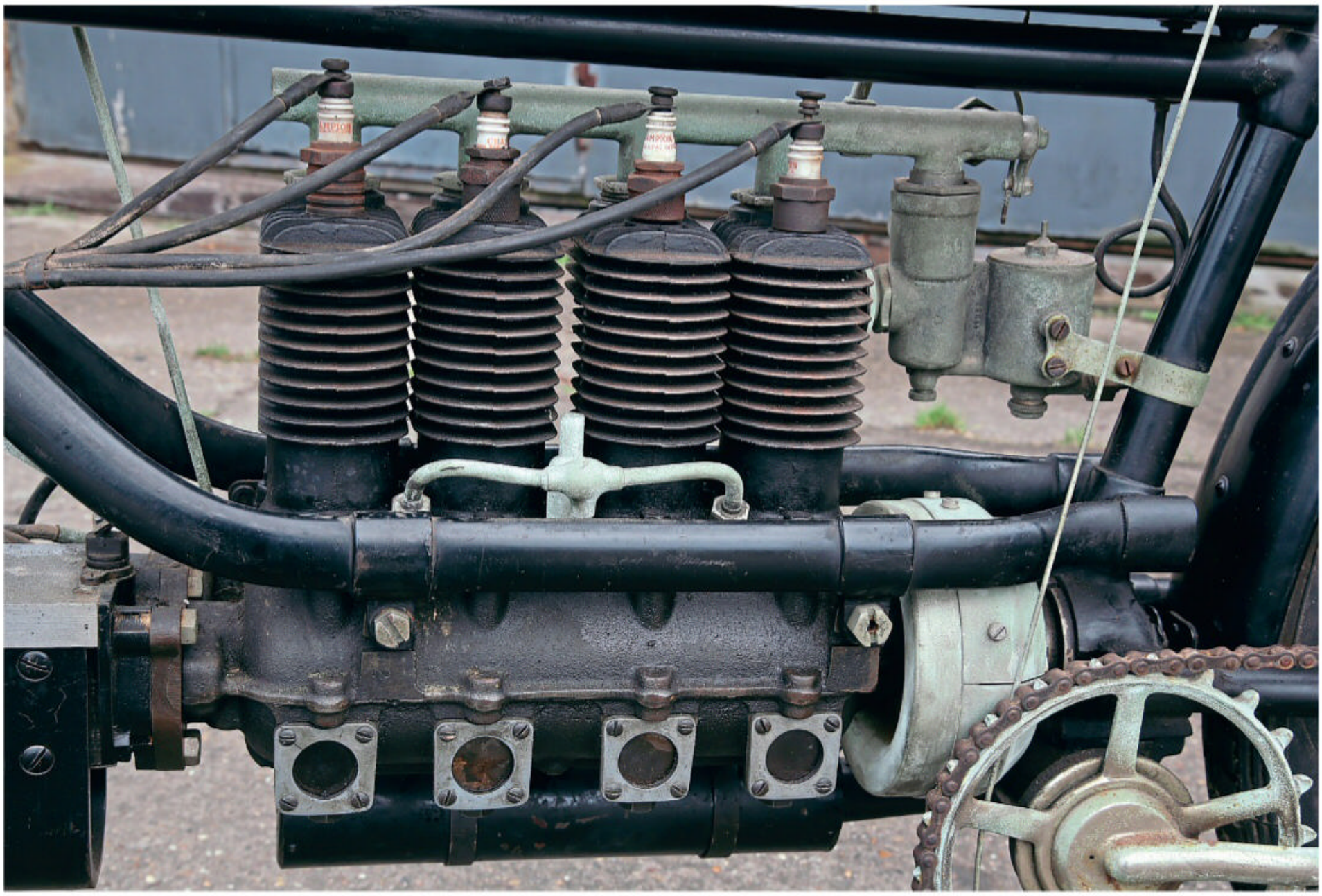
"A Belgian motorcycle built near Herstal, Liège, if it dates from before the First World War, must have Englebert tyres, straight from the factory in Liège, as on this FN.

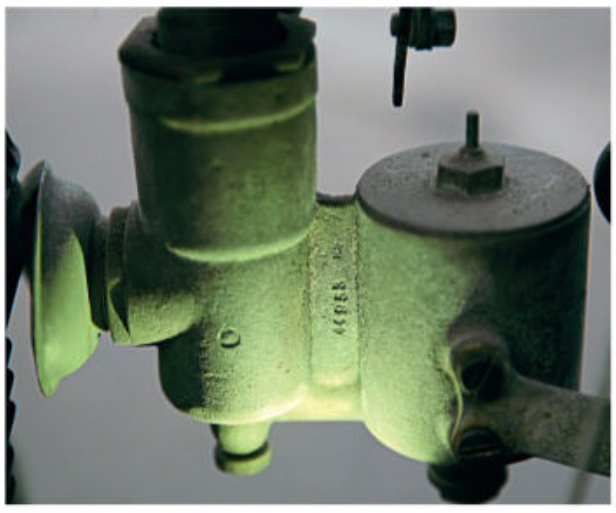
"The Englebert factory was close to the port in Antwerp, because that's where the rubber and latex from Africa arrived. Most of the Belgian motorcycle industry was located around Liège, so Englebert had a second factory in Liège just to supply the motorcycle factories. That is why these are the original tyres with the Englebert – Liége markings.

"The nickel has become completely dull with age but is still in very good condition. I'm definitely not going to clean the FN and I certainly won't start this bike... because it's only brand new once!"

The Belgian La Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre (FN for short) initially began as a manufacturer ➡







of ammunition, and started producing motorcycles in 1900.

It is mainly the beautiful four-cylinder that FN probably still appeals to everyone's imaginations. The four-cylinder appeared in 1904 and was first exhibited to the general public at the Paris Cycle Show in 1905.

The engine was designed by Paul Kelecom, making it the first serviceable four-cylinder motorcycle. The inline engine hardly vibrated, was wonderfully smooth and therefore very different from the rougher, often vibrating single-cylinders and V-twins.

The engine eventually proved to be so successful that it remained in production for nearly 20 years. The engine capacity was increased from 362cc to 413cc in 1906 and to 498cc in about 1910. The engine was first available with one speed. In 1908 the factory introduced its own two-speed transmission with plate clutch, in 1914 with three gears, and then the engine was further increased to 748cc. With a speed of 64 km per hour, the FN was the fastest production motorcycle in the world during 1911 and 1912.

The shaft drive, supported by ball bearings, ran through the right part of the frame to the rear wheel. Not only was the shaft drive ahead of its time; the air-cooled engine was also very modern, with an atmospheric intake and mechanical exhaust valves, i.e., an overhead valve. In about 1914, mechanical valves were used for both the inlet and outlet. It had a Bosch ignition and the crankshaft had no fewer than five bearings; the connecting rods were lubricated from the crankcase. The only disadvantage was that the rear cylinders sometimes got overheated, and the rider had to lubricate the engine regularly with a hand pump during his ride.

"It is only store-new once, you cannot do anything about it. I don't like museum motorcycles. A motorcycle has to run – but this is an exception. This one is not allowed be ridden, it must be preserved. Every detail, every screw and bolt... there has never been a wrench on it!"

The four-cylinder's history in Europe and USA

Four cylinders were made in the early 1920s by manufacturers such as ACE, India, Excelsior, Henderson, Pierce and Cleveland in the USA, as well as in Europe by Nimbus in Denmark, Ariel and Matchless in the UK, and the first manufacturer, FN in Belgium. And those first four-cylinders from FN were even produced with shaft drive! Although there were four-cylinder engines before the FN already, none resembled the four-cylinder inline engine of the smooth and usable FN.

Its sublime design, like any good design, was copied, and so the American Pierce Four used the same inline engine with shaft drive. The story goes that Pierce-Arrow's Percy Pierce took home a 1908 FN Four from Europe, disassembled it and then scrutinised all the parts and design. It is therefore unsurprising and even abundantly clear to see that the 'four' engines as seen in brands like Indian, Henderson and Cleveland are inspired by the FN Four.

Other stories in circulation would have us believe that William G Henderson was the man who designed the American four-cylinder at the beginning of the last century; also clearly a copy or at least 'inspired' by the FN inline four-cylinder. Running into financial difficulties, he sold his design and name to Schwinn/Excelsior in 1917 but William, who stayed in the company, soon got into disagreements with the designers. They made 'his' bike too heavy and wouldn't work on the performance, and since Henderson's concept was based on the motto 'performance allied with lightness', he decided after a short time to leave the firm.

In 1919 he acquired financial backing and started his own company the following year, called Ace, as he could no longer use the Henderson name. The 1229cc Ace engine has a three-bearing crankshaft and overhead valve, and inlet valves mounted directly above the side valve exhaust valves. With a power output of 35 horsepower, it can reach about 75mph (120kph). Ace held the top speed record at 129mph (about 210!), and when Cannonball Baker rode his historic seven-day trip on an Ace – 3332 miles (5340km) from Los Angeles to New York – in September 1922, orders poured in.

Unfortunately, as the accounts department discovered, the motorcycle's manufacturing cost turned out to be higher than the figure they were sold for, and financial troubles forced the factory to close in late 1924.

The four-cylinder story doesn't end here. When Indian bought Ace and renamed the Ace as Indian Four, showing it to the public in 1927, it looked as though production would continue. However, Indian production came to an end when the Second World War began for the US in 1941. Very few Ace or other four-cylinders were eventually produced; these days, astronomical prices are paid for antique motorcycles like these four-cylinders and each year the value seems to rise faster than a land-speed record machine can ride...

The Second World War ended motorcycle production in the US, the last being the four-cylinder Indian. After the war, the four-cylinder concept was forgotten and mainly big V-twins were built. In Europe, MV Augusta and Gilera, both Italian manufacturers, introduced four-cylinder street bikes for the common man after their first racing successes in about 1966.

This MV Augusta 600GT had a DOHC four-cylinder inline engine and delivered 50hp, but unlike all other beautiful Italian designs, this model was reviled and nobody seemed to like it, with the result that only about 120 were made.

But in the years after the Second World War, a huge motorcycle industry emerged in the Land of the Rising Sun, becoming one of the first to produce four-cylinders in large numbers. And the rest, as we know, is history.

Timeline Englebert

1867: March 27
Henri Joseph Leopold Englebert is born in Bourg. Leopold (Belgium) born; he is the later founder of the Firma Englebert & Co.

1898: December 10
Henri Englebert establishes H Englebert & Co at Apothekersdijk – Leiden (the Netherlands) and becomes general representative for the Netherlands and the Colonies for FN chainless bicycles and automobiles from Herstal near Liège (Belgium). The first order is recorded on December 11 (one gentlemen's and one ladies' bicycles), followed by 100 bicycles for Dutch Indies.

1900: March 9-18
Third RI exhibition in Amsterdam (the Netherlands); Englebert is at booth 37 with chainless bicycles from f210 and upwards. In this year the RI adds 'Auto' to its name and becomes RAI.

1900: April
Englebert moves to The Hague. His address was François Valentijnstraat, 88 C / D, and imports FN, Germain and De Dion-Bouton.

1905:
RAI exhibition; Englebert will be at the RAI with bicycles for the last time.

1906
Englebert moves to Bezuidenhoutseweg 71 – The Hagueand opens the first automotive showroom in the Netherlands. The FN bicycle activities are discontinued and will switch to motorised transport with FN (cars and motorcycles), De Dion Bouton, and the car brands Rochet-Schneider, Germain and Renault.

Timeline courtesy of Frank van Oortmerssen

The first models had no clutch and the machine had a direct drive, and you started it by pedalling, just like on a bicycle, until the engine started. A kickstarter was installed around 1913. The rear wheel had both a coaster brake and a rim brake, and the wheels had a diameter of 26in.

The FN Four made history right away – the FN four-cylinder took third place in the 1908 Isle of Man TT, the first four-cylinder to compete in the event. In 1908, an FN Four won the gold medal in a Motor Cycling Club Endurance race on the 1400km (870 miles) London-Edinburgh-London route.

This FN model proved it was supreme on the street as well as on the racetrack! CBG

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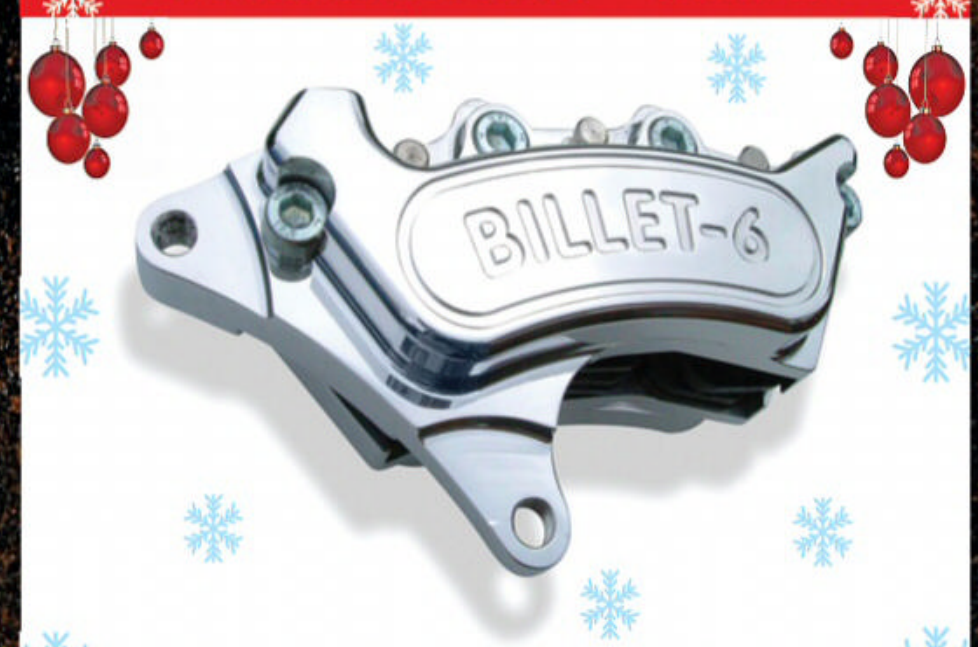

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Your guide to...

Moto Guzzi V7 850s

Words by Oli Hulme
Photos by Gary Chapman

Moto Guzzi in the 1970s came in all shapes and sizes. This month we look at an 850GT and an 850T...

NO TINSEL TRUCK - THE MOTO GUZZI ELDORADO

The Moto Guzzi Eldorado feels and looks like it was sculpted rather than assembled, as though created by some mechanical Michelangelo working in aluminium and steel.

The Eldorado is a big motorcycle. While an 850 today is almost considered a middleweight, back when the Eldorado was launched it was one of the biggest motorcycles you could buy.

Designed to take Harley-Davidson head on, the Eldorado manages to combine its hugeness with some rorty performance. The lack of shiny gee-gaws and add-on bits led David Whittingham, who owns this 1974 Eldorado, to say: "It's not a tinsel truck. It's a tractor. In the US it was called the Eldorado, but in Europe it was the 850GT."

The bike was brought from America into the UK by an importer in Verwood, Hampshire, where David found it in reasonable condition.

"It needed tidying up," he said, "so I stripped it, put a new clutch in, and replaced the crankshaft oil seals.

"I tend to take my bikes to bits at first, anyway. It looked as though it had been jet-washed, as although it was clean on the outside, the hidden parts inside were covered in black muck."

David's Eldorado has a five-speed police specification gearbox fitted. David said: "The first loop frame models had a four-speed box, but the US police specified a five-speed box. They wanted a bike that was more reliable than their Harley-Davidsons."

The starter ring gear was worn out and needed changing, which David spotted as soon as he pulled the starter motor off. The ring gear from an 850T was fitted instead, Eldorado bits being hard to find.

"I think the silencers were brand new Lafranconi items, and it had higher police spec handlebars. It came without pillion pegs, so I had to find some of those.

"I cleaned everything and hand-painted the frame; you can't really tell and it's very hard wearing. The bike came with a Guzzi screen, which is not an original Eldorado item.

"It's a little bit agricultural and getting the gear change right is a bit of an art. You need to put downward pressure on the heel part of the gearshift lever just before pulling in the clutch to change up smoothly."

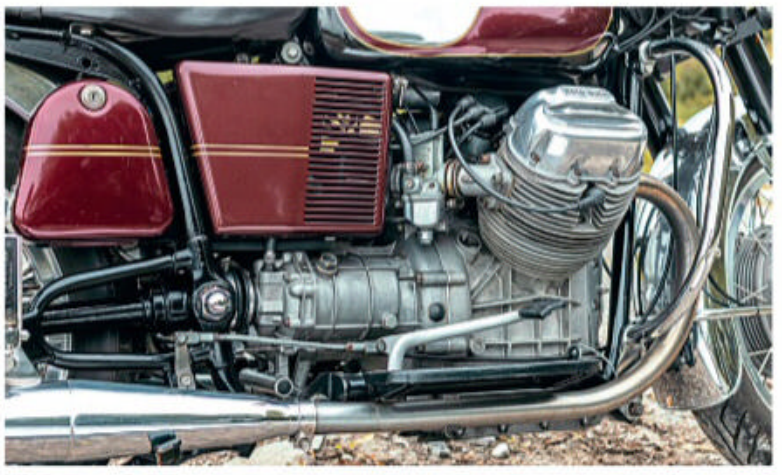
Riding it is bit demanding. There is also a mighty four leading shoe front drum brake which can be a challenge, especially to set up. The brakes are good in the dry, but in the rain the front wheel will lock up easily.

"There's a lot of weight to haul around, and the riding position is very sit-up-and-beg, which makes it quite comfortable," David explained. "The running boards are fantastic on a long run, as you can move your feet around and not get stiff joints.

"Putting it on the centre stand is a bit of an art, too. What you have to do is push the centre stand down, put your right foot on it with all your weight, grab hold of the 'bars and the rear grab rail, and lift upwards rather than pull it backwards. If you do that, it will go on easily. This bike came without grab rails, so I found some and fitted them just to make it easier get it on the stand."

Bits that were not changed include the indicators and the original sealed beam headlight, which David has kept partly because the glass is thicker than the UK replacement and partly because the beam pattern is perfectly good. "I don't ride at night much anyway," he added.

The shock absorbers are the originals, which David describes with cheerful understatement as "a bit hard sometimes". The handling is "quite nice – I've never grounded the footboards, even though I've had it over quite a

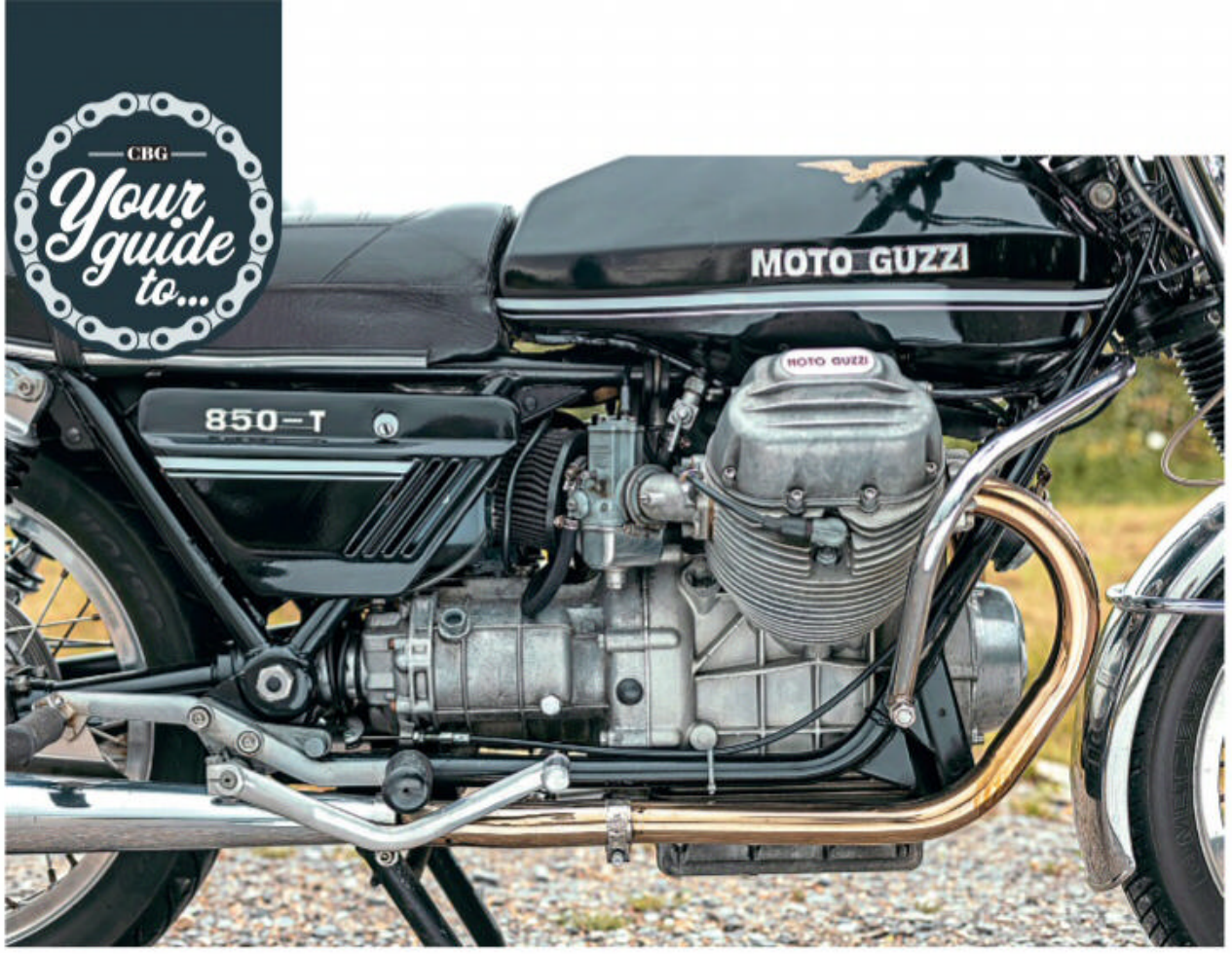


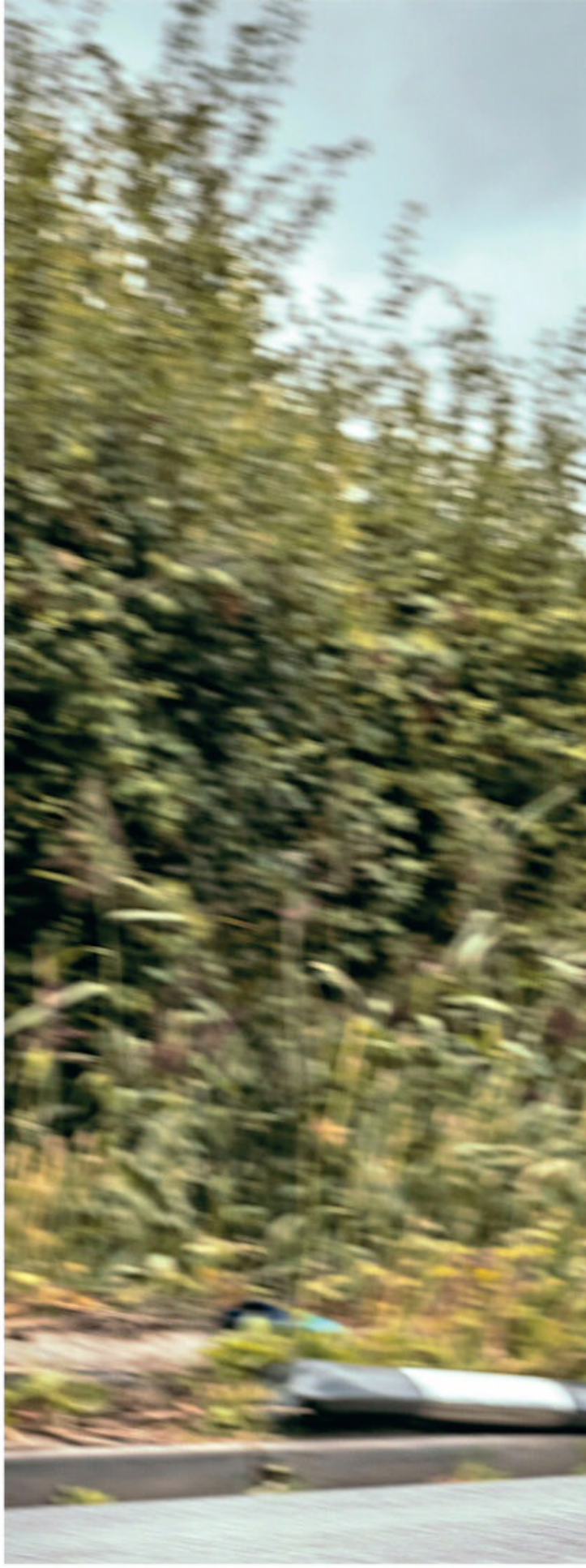
way." This is despite the Eldorado's engine sitting very low in the frame, with a two-inch gap between the top of the engine and the petrol tank.

The dynamo mounting strap, which holds the unit on at the front, had been repaired, but David was concerned about its rigidity, so he built an extra mounting at the rear, mounted on the frame using a Mini valve spring so it was held in place but could still move about.

The missing, rather crude aluminium cover was replaced by one David made out of a plastic bucket. New sleeves were fabricated to improve the gearshift and brake mounts: "They were flopping around all over the place."

"It's a little bit agricultural and getting the gear change right is a bit of an art. You need to put downward pressure on the heel part of the gearshift lever just before pulling in the clutch to change up smoothly."





"I fitted a new caliper for a T4. The only real difference was that the new one has a bigger bleed nipple. The old one had two 6mm nipples on there and both had broken off."

It comes with a delicious alloy casting to hold the speedometer and the idiot lights, though Moto Guzzi decided not to mark these to let the rider know what they meant when they flashed.

The best thing about the Eldorado, for David, is the sound: "With those Lafranconi exhausts, when you go into tunnel or on a narrow road between houses, it sounds phenomenal.

"I love the fact that it's so unusual. It's built like a tank. Almost everything on it seems oversized."

Once Guzzis are in your blood, having more than one is common. David also has a 1980 Spada and a MkIII Le mans. While he doesn't have a favourite, he said: "All I can say is the Eldorado is the one I won't get rid of."

A T FROM THE MID-WEST

Paul Young's 850T is another US import. Unlike the Eldorado, this is a sharp-suited sports tourer rather than a big old cruiser.

"I got it from DK in Stoke on Trent, and it originally came from Minnesota," he said. "It was tatty and tired but there was no rust on it anywhere. It didn't take me too long to get it running and roadworthy – the biggest problem was getting the lights to work properly, thanks to loose connections in the wiring.

"The carbs had been drained, so that was good. I stripped everything off, gave it all a clean and did the tappets, then rebuilt the master cylinder and fitted a new caliper for a T4. The only real difference was that the new one has a bigger bleed nipple. The old one had two 6mm nipples on there and both had broken off."

These early T models did not have the linked brakes fitted to later bikes, just a single Brembo disc at the front and 2ls drum at the back: "It will lock the back wheel at 30mph."

Paul gave the paint a refresh – a job that took three goes and longer than expected. He also changed the shocks and the fork oil and fitted some aftermarket air filters to "let more air in".

He said: "It handles like a dream. It's amazing for a bike that's 45 years old –a basic sort of bike, but they got it just right. The balance is so good. This thing goes round corners like it's on a rail."

The 850T's build quality is as impressive as that on the Eldorado. It still has the unblemished stainless steel mudguards and the Borrani alloy rims that came as standard. Like the Eldorado, it has the US spec side stand. American Guzzis used a modified design of side stand vastly superior to that used on European models. On the insistence of the US police force, the stand is mounted in a bracket welded to the front left downtube. When the stand is extended, it slides into a locking mechanism on the mounting, stopping it from flipping up unexpectedly – a common problem with Euro Guzzis.

There are stainless steel exhaust pipes, turned a lovely shade of bronze to complement those alloy rims: "I used to prefer cast wheels, as spokes were hard to clean. Now I must have spoked wheels."

The 850T is the latest in a string of Moto Guzzi vees. "I bought an 850T in 1980 from a bloke who had wrecked it," said Paul. "I took that one apart and changed the clutch. The plates come off a Hillman Imp and the points are off a Fiat.

"What's good about it? The sound is fantastic and the performance is fabulous. It's a thrill to ride. It'll easily do a ton on permitted roads, but its sheer effortless acceleration is what gives me a kick. I

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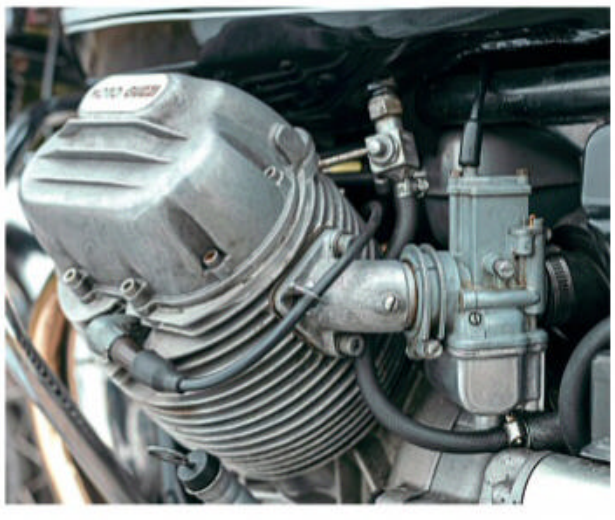
also have an 850T3 that has the linked braking system, but it's not as quick. It feels better quality than later Guzzis I've ridden, probably because it was built before the mid-1970s recession hit. The engine is so smooth. I used to ride sports bikes until I got neck ache. Now I just enjoy the thrill of riding the Guzzi – there's something rather special about it. You can just get on it and ride it anywhere. I'm over the moon with it."

THE ROAD TO ELDORADO

The origins of the V-twin engine used in the Eldorado, the earlier Ambassador, the 850 T, the T3, the Le Mans and so many other big Guzzi vees are shrouded in mystery and misinformation. One legend is that it first appeared in 1960 as the powerplant for a tricycle half-track for the Italian Army. There are also suggestions that the V7 engine was based on a 500cc 90-degree V-twin motor designed for Fiat.

Neither of these are entirely accurate. While this engine was also a 90-degree V-twin, the designers of the V7/ Ambassador engine, Guilio Carcano and Umberto Todero, told writer Greg Field in his book, Moto Guzzi Big Twins, that the V7 engine, apart from being a 90-degree V-twin, had nothing in common with the half-track motor or the Fiat unit. It's like suggesting an early 1960s pre-unit Triumph Bonneville is the same as a 2015 Bonneville because they're both twins.

Carcano did not design the half-track engine but helped develop it. Todero did design the Fiat engine. Both pointed out that the V7 engine differs from the earlier creations in head design and structure, the distribution of sparks, engine displacement, lubrication, fuel systems, and engine crankcases. Carcano points out that the half-track engine had a forced cooling system and completely different cylinders, heads, and engine casings. This, however, doesn't stop some Guzzi owners referring to their twins as 'tractors', with tongues firmly in cheeks.



SPECIFICATION (1974 ELDORADO)

ENGINE: OHV twin **DISPLACEMENT:** 844cc **BORE X STROKE:** 83x78mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 9.5:1 **POWER:** 68 BHP **FUEL SYSTEM:** Twin 30mm Dell Orto **CLUTCH:** Dry twin plate plate **GEARBOX:** Five-speed **LUBRICATION:** Wet sump **FRAME:** Twin downtube cradle loop **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Telescopic forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Twin oil-damped shocks **WHEELBASE:** 57.9in (1470mm) **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31in (787mm) **DRY WEIGHT:** 518lb (235kg) **FUEL CAPACITY:** 5.5 gallons (25 litres) **TYRES:** 4.00x18 front and rear **BRAKES:** 9in 4ls drum, rear 7in (177mm) drum **ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:** 12v **TOP SPEED:** 121mph

CBG Your guide to...

THE ENGINE THAT SAVED MOTO GUZZI

The original Carcano-Todoro V-twin for the V7 was designed in the early 1960s as an air-cooled, longitudinal crankshaft, transverse cylinder, pushrod 700cc V-twin producing 45bhp. It was built in 1965 to win a competition sponsored by the Italian government for a new police and military bike. This was very important for Moto Guzzi, as a decent government contract would, it was believed, ensure financial stability. One proviso was that the engine had to be good for at least 100,000 kilometres without needing major repairs. The sturdy shaft-driven V-twin won, but Moto Guzzi still went into financial receivership in 1967, being essentially nationalised while production continued. That same year, the engine was used in the in the first 700cc V7.

The American police force, including the influential LAPD, were finally getting fed up with their unreliable and slow Harley-Davidsons and were casting around for an alternative. They liked the V7 but felt it wasn't quite powerful enough, so it was punched out to 754cc. After another sales pitch, it was adopted by several police forces, which did its reputation in the US no harm at all. The use of Moto Guzzis in the movie Magnum Force didn't hurt either, even if the bike David Soul rides into the ocean and to his death mysteriously changes from a Guzzi to a Triumph 500 mid-jump!

The big engine was carried low in the tubular, double-cradle frame, with fattish (for the period) 18 x 4.00 tyres. The camshaft was between the vee, making the pushrods as short as possible. Two-and-a-half litres of oil went into the wet sump, with an excellent lubrication system sending it wherever necessary. At the front of the engine a belt was used to drive a 300-watt Marelli generator that sat between the cylinders. As part of the drive to longevity and practicality, a few Fiat parts were used. The starter motor came from a Fiat 1100. The battery had to be powerful to turn over the Ambassador's mighty vee, so they used one from Fiat's 850T van, and dropped the kick-start. This was an unusual move, as even the Japanese and BMW hadn't been confident enough to ditch the kick-start just yet. A clutch with two friction and two plain plates carried the power from the longitudinal crankshaft to the four-speed gearbox, and then via shaft to the rear wheel.

Moto Guzzi took pre-delivery model preparation more seriously that some other manufacturers we could mention. Once built, the Guzzi would be bench run for five hours and then taken for a 40-mile test ride. The tank would be drained, battery removed and handlebars unbolted, the bike crated up and shipped as it was. All the importer had to do was jemmy open the packing crate, fit a new battery, slosh some fuel in, bolt on the 'bars – and the bike was good to go. The new owner could then slide a leg across the saddle, turn on the fuel and ignition, give it a little choke and push the starter button. Then, with everything in the engine department rocking away, they would pull in the clutch, engage first gear, gently release the lever and go... the horizon beckoning.

For 1969 the engine was bored out to 757cc, and for the American market the V7 became the Ambassador. New cylinder heads were used, with a higher compression ratio, which helped up the horsepower to 60bhp.

In June of 1969, a much-modified Ambassador manged to reach 145mph on the Monza racetrack. The Ambassador was a big hit in the US, but American buyers had an insatiable desire for cubes, and more power. The 850 Eldorado supplanted the Ambassador. Meanwhile, in Italy, Lino Tonti, who had joined Moto Guzzi in 1967, had come up with the sportier and more compact Tonti Frame, replacing the mighty full loop of models from the earlier V7 to the Eldorado. Along with his V7 Sport, Tonti's efforts resulted in a feast of motorcycling gems from the Le Mans to the California and the automatic V1000 convert, and the square block range from the V50 onwards. CBG

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CBG

Your guide to...

BMW K100

This was one of the last stories Rob Davies, a regular *CBG* contributor, wrote for us before illness took him. Right to the end, he was trying to convince himself of bikes he didn't think he would like. Hope you enjoy – Matt

Words: The late Rob Davies
Photography: Robin Horton, Ales Tomis and BSK Speedworks

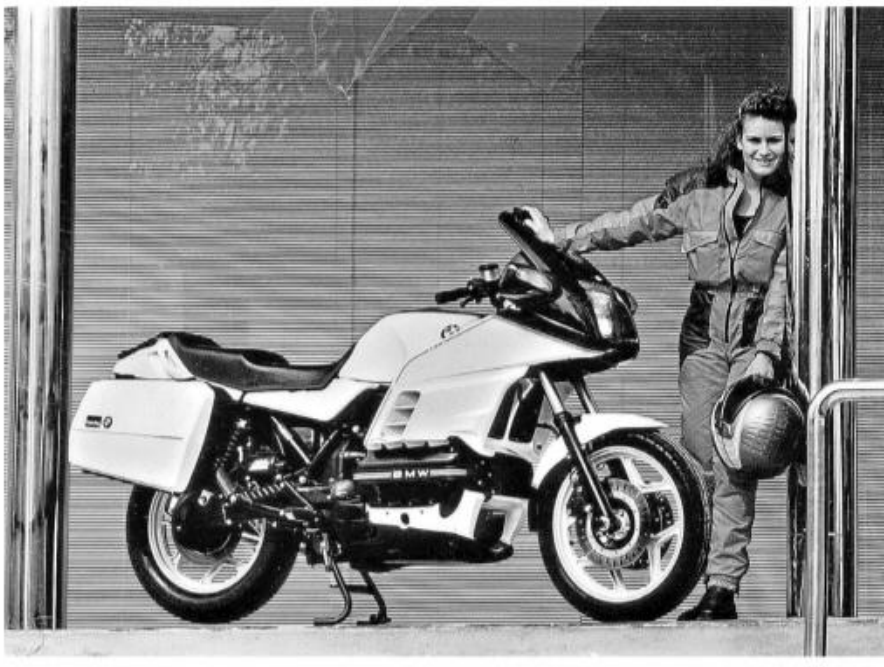
Remember the story of the ugly duckling? Well, somethings get better with age... I hope. When I was a teenager in the 1970s, I don't remember seeing a BMW – not a sniff. My mates rode BSAs or Triumphs, or one of the more exotic offerings pouring in from the Land of the Rising Sun. I have no doubt that there must have been a few BMWs knocking about, but we were working class lads and couldn't afford a BMW, so it didn't come across our radar.

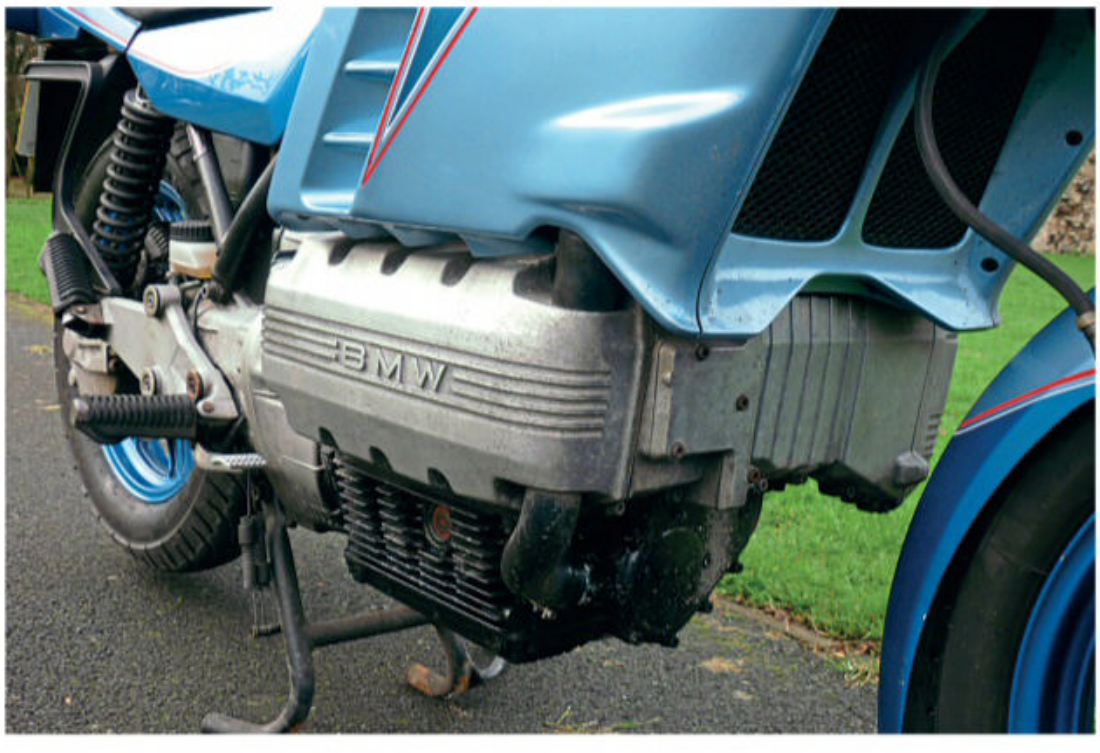
Fast-forward 50 years and the world has changed dramatically. Take styling, for instance. There were generally three styles of bike back in the 1970s. There was your straight-out-of-the-showroom standard bike, the hybrid or mongrel mix (that included Tritons etc.), and finally the occasional badly done chopper with extended forks and upswept pipes. These fab creations arose from the fallout of the 1969 movie Easy Rider, yet not a single whiff of a two-wheeled Teutonic master machine. Nowadays there are a plethora of bike styles, because customising motorcycles has truly come of age and the well-engineered – some may say ugly duckling – BMW air head and its successor, the K100 and K75, have slotted right in.

The model I wish to pay specific attention to is the K100 and its smaller sibling, the K75, unkindly nicknamed The Flying Brick. Fortunately, a very good pal of mine has a mint 1984 K100RS model, so I asked him nicely if he would allow me to take it out for a detailed evaluation. At the very same time, I would l look around for examples of how this Germanic beast has been transformed from a seemingly lacklustre mile-muncher into a piece of two-wheeled art.

What exactly was going on in the mind of BMW designers and engineers during the late 1970s, a time of intense competition from Japan? Certainly, they were well aware that their old, tried and tested, horizontally-opposed, air-cooled, boxer engine was coming to the end of its sell-by date. They'd squeezed all they could from the ancient design, and then there was more stringent emission regulations and all that jazz.

Honda had stormed ahead in the big bike game with the beautifully engineered flat four Gold Wing of 1974, and was very soon about to surpass that with, for what was at the time, the incredible six-cylinder CBX (1978). With rivals and the old-fashioned image of the boxer R models, the pressure was on the guys at BMW and they had to seriously put their thinking caps on. Josef Fritzenwenger came up with the seemingly off-the-wall idea of shoving a car- ➡





style four-cylinder engine into a motorcycle, but not across the frame like the Japanese. He and his pals built a prototype by placing a Peugeot 104 engine longitudinally into a bike frame, and so the concept gathered momentum. This design gave the guys two advantages over the across-frame arrangement. One was that the low slung engine would lower the C of G, and secondly, it would continue the German preference for shaft drive, by keeping a straight drive line to the rear wheel. You see, there is German genius and there is Japanese genius; they both arrive at the same destination – producing a great bike – via different means. Then, BMW designed its own sweet, durable engine and binned the Peugeot lump.

It was fuel injected, it was water-cooled like the cars and it had two valves per cylinder (later ones had four), while the double overhead camshafts were to be adjusted by the now widely used shim and bucket method. After five years of development, including 10,000 hours of dyno time and 400,000 kilometres of test riding, the K100 became a production reality for the European market in 1982/3, with the three-cylinder K75 range launched a year later. You could have the naked K100, K100RS with sporting pretentions, K100RT for full-on touring and work (emergency services) duties and later the LT, an even more fully dressed tourer. And in 1990 we saw the K1 – but that's another story.

It was a smooth, sophisticated, ultra-reliable machine. It didn't have the bling or pizzazz of rocket ships from Japan because it didn't ape their style. It was German; understated, yet displaying top-notch build quality and the company did things their way, for the next nine years. 'IT'S UNDOUBTEDLY THE WORLD'S EASIEST ENGINE TO WORK ON. ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE YEARS BEFORE YOU FIND OUT,' read one advert.

TOP LEFT: This two-tone blue colour scheme is unusual and rather snazzy with the red pin stripes; shame about the red battery – oh well. Panniers need to be stuck on if you're off touring

ABOVE LEFT: A belly pan may well have kept this part of the engine a tad cleaner

Above right: RT version had the perfect touring fairing and more upright position

The bike used a variation of the Bosch LE-jetronic system which utilises a black box computer under the seat, that by means of various sensors keeps a close eye and thus control on engine temperature, engine revs, throttle position, and the temperature and pressure inside the intake tract. The whole fuel system is kept nicely energised by a Bosch-built fuel pump hidden inside the 5.8 gallon aluminium tank. Bosch also supplied the electronic ignition as a true compliment to the injection system.

What is the performance like? The K100RS is not a bike designed for the track but it's no slouch. The motor produces its 100bhp smoothly from low revs straight through to the red line at 8650rpm – not that most riders are likely to push it that hard. But if they did, a clever little device automatically retards the ignition to protect the engine – neat.

After being left out of the limelight for some decades, The Flying Brick Beemer has truly come of age and is now being appreciated and even sought after (prices are still low but climbing) by those in the know... add to that the fact that a growing generation of customizers have binned the functional yet not-so-pretty fairings, seen the raw ugliness beneath and transformed it into some really great custom bikes.

And I found out that the bike is quite nice to ride once you have got used to its quirks and differently styled switch gear. The clutch can feel heavy – especially if, like me, you are used to a nice easy-squeezy hydraulic type. The revs pick up slowly but once spinning past 2000rpm, that motor provides a delicious linear torque curve that just seems to pull and pull – and... you get the picture.

LOOKING AT BUYING?

So, if you are looking for a classic tourer that wants to go willingly right around the world, or you want to go completely ape and convert it into a work of modern two-wheeled art, or simply to go to and from work on, then at current prices, the K100 has a lot going for it. It should start easily, run smoothly and not overheat, and, on the road, change gear cleanly and consistently. Expect a bit of smoke on start-up, especially if it hasn't done much during the last 12 months, and go through all the electrical items. Actually, the neutral light didn't work on my test bike. I can live with that, but if you think of buying one of the later ABS models, make sure that this device is working, because if it isn't, you can spend a lot of money simply putting that right. A project can be bought for less than a grand, while clean examples were going for between £1500 and £2000; a later, mint K between £4-5000.

If the rear drive splines haven't been greased for some years/miles, then they will require checking. Check the rear drive for play, then pop the bike onto the centre stand (check this for rot at the same time) and grab the wheel top and bottom and then at the sides and see if there is any click in the play. If there is, then the rear drive may very well need rebuilding – another expensive job. Under the front of the engine – impossible to see with the belly pan fixed – is a weep hole under the oil/water pump. If there is oil or coolant leaking from this, the pump will need rebuilding. There is a similar hole at the back where the transmission mates up. If oil is dripping from here, then there is the more serious issue that the interior seals have gone. If oil has got onto the otherwise dry clutch, it's strip-down time.

BMW has always used long, soft-ish suspension on its motorcycles and although the K100rs has a tad less travel than the Boxer models, it is still rather plush and takes any bumps in its stride. I found the seat extremely comfortable – well, it is designed as a touring machine. I must add that the K exhibits less of the up-and-down thrusting of the rear end that can be noticed on other shaft-driven bikes, and this is mainly due to the slightly shorter suspension travel. The later Paralever swingarms are more refined. The forks offer no external adjustment, but the single rear shock has a typical ramp-type collar that allows the spring pre-load to be set at one of three positions. At its lowest setting, the rear end is soft, as you would expect, and compresses and moves around too much for hard cornering – not that I'm going to be doing much of that, I'm way too mature, ha. At its highest setting, the shock is well suited to carrying your pillion plus a few days' worth of luggage.

The K's fairing is a Marmite angular job that is probably never going to win any beauty contest but it does work (I usually ride naked – the bike, silly), but one interesting trick that BM employed to help keep things calm behind the windshield is the use of an adjustable airfoil right at the top of the screen. The foil creates a venturi effect that directs the flow so that the air that does hit the rider's helmet is relatively free of disturbance.

TOP: The K100 is certainly a lump to work on, and it sure looks like it should go into a car chassis and not a bike frame. In this pic we can clearly see the chain drive to the DOHC, fitted with K/sprint-race cams

ABOVE: Never actually been a great fan of painted wheels, but the Brembo front brakes are very good

ABOVE RIGHT: Yes, it's 1980s styling but sleek, nonetheless

"The K's fairing is a Marmite angular job that is probably never going to win any beauty contest but it does work (I usually ride naked – the bike, silly)."

HOW DO THEY RIDE?

I arranged to take Tony Cooper's 1984 model – a rare two-tone blue with red pin stripes – out in winter. After a period of rest but with a revitalised battery, the engine started well, gave a bit of smoke for a few seconds, and then settled into a good throaty tickover just under 1000rpm. I was given the quick tour of the controls and switchgear, turned on the dip headlight and made sure my scarf was snug. The switchgear on a BMW is nothing like a Japanese machine and I was finding the indicator controls particularly difficult. The switches are under the grips and out of sight on each side of the 'bars, so you have to feel for them with your left or right thumb. Then you have to cancel, by pressing upward on a red button with the right thumb. Sounds easy, right? It isn't, and it took a bit of getting used to.

On the positive side, the clutch was smooth and easy; I have never used a smoother gearbox in my life. Most gears change with a bit of a click or clonk... not the K; you simply move the lever and they slide into place – really. The seat was very comfy; firm, but the sort of firm that your bum can stand all day if required. The Brembo front disc was pretty good at hauling up all that metal, but the rear disc left a lot to be desired. Having said that, the later bikes were fitted with much improved braking and ABS.

Now I know for a fact that my inside leg is 31in (a useful thing to know, believe it or not) and when filtering through traffic, and stopping at lights, I could not put my feet flat on the ground. If you have short legs, and I won't be rude, then you will possibly have trouble with the K and they are not light machines.

"I was now much more confident with the BM, knowing that it had the power through the gears to take me rapidly into the fast lane."

After some miles for photos, I was now used to all the controls, including the difficult turn switches, and was enjoying the bike. The power was not arm-pulling or even what I would term exciting acceleration, but the sort that grew strongly from 2000 revs onward. Filtering through heavy traffic was easy because the 'bars are so narrow, and even though they are almost as low as clip-ons on the RS, the riding position is forward-leaning but relaxed.

Finally, I got to the motorway island, sped up the slip road and overtook the cars on the inside track. I was now much more confident with the BM, knowing that it had the power through the gears to take me rapidly into the fast lane, though I did occasionally go for a sixth gear... that isn't there. Most traffic was content to stay within the speed limit, but I fully intended to spend at least a minute or two finding out what the BM could happily cruise at before dropping back to lawful speeds. I can confidently say that this bike can comfortably cruise at the ton – and no doubt all day, if you wanted it to. The downside is that even though fully faired, there is quite a lot of buffeting at high speeds. This may be down to the fact that the fairing doesn't really extend to shoulder width and will definitely alter with different-sized riders and their chosen jackets/helmets. The RS has an adjustable screen but, in truth, does little.

Handling at fast and slow speeds was good on all types of road, and the suspension was good, too. My only gripe with the K100 is that the early 83/84 models have a fair bit of vibration from the engine into the footpegs – not the seat or grips. It comes in at about 2500rpm and stays until 3500 or thereabouts before smoothing out, whether you are accelerating or decelerating. However, as I mentioned earlier, the later models have rubber-mounted engines and four valves per cylinder, making it a different beast altogether.

Above: Yes, that's me on the move – 40mph, bang on

I did some 10 or 12 miles on the M5 – I know, it's not a lot but it was bloody cold and I wanted a hot drink. Altogether, I was out of doors for most of that day, and riding the K for nearly three hours, plenty enough time for a bright but wintry January day. There's not many bikes you would want to do that on more than a BMW K series, yet the earliest are around 35 years old. But they are a classic, reliable, and will take luggage, and take accessories like heated grips – and there is a great spares supply out there. Another bonus is the average K series has been owned by more mature owners who are likely to have looked after them and had their machines serviced.

Prices for a K100 or K75 are at rock bottom, with MoT'd bikes for less than £1000. If you like using your classic, then there are few better ways than an RT or an RS. Or enjoy the naked bike. Or embrace the custom scene, as so many have. It's been unloved for years; maybe now it is time to give the K100 and K75 some love. CBG

Many thanks to Tony Cooper for the loan of his lovely K100RS.

Below: And the race version... tasty, eh? I rather fancy a go on that

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Triumph produces nine variations of its Bonneville. Many, including us, were slightly confused as to which one was for who, so we tried them all! This is what we found...

Words by Maria, Butch and Matt **Lovely photos by** the talented and handsome Gary Chapman

It all started with a fun, slightly sarcastic dig at the marketing manager of Triumph about another launch of another updated bike. "You've so many Bonnevilles. Who are they for? I've looked at the website but that just confuses me more," I brutishly mocked. "You'll have to come and try them if you don't know," came the reply. Damn. I never was good at arguments.

To get a fair assessment, I rallied the troops. Maria would bring the younger element and those who like a bike to look good and go well. Butch, Maria's dad, would bring a lifetime of experience that includes the original T120; currently rides a new Honda CB500R, and myself, who doesn't really know anything else.

Take them out for a ride, get some photographs, get some idea of who they would be for, and then repeat until we've tried all nine. Yes, nine. These are our findings – they are our opinions, based on three different riders, as to which model would best suit which riders.

Street Twin

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It's not often that the cheapest of the range is a 900cc bike, but the Street Twin is just that – and calling it the cheapest is doing it a disservice. If you're looking for a modern classic bike that keeps up with your friends, is comfortable, doesn't need fiddling with after every ride like an old one, that you can accessorise to make your own and doesn't threaten to topple over at every junction, it's the sale of the century.

To help get a lower seat height and, I think, a lower centre of gravity – though no one could confirm this – the suspension is lower, slowing down the steering. It's not slow, but it is more stable. The seat also doesn't suffer like some with too-little padding; we didn't cover enough miles for a numb-bum test but it easily felt sumptuous enough for a tankful before stopping.

Details stand out on the Street Twin, possibly because of the lack of bling compared to the more expensive T100. No rev counter, which Maria didn't like, but I preferred the simplistic look – and the engine tells you when to change up. The brushed exhausts look great and the wheels, while cast, are hardly noticeable in the dark grey.

Suspension felt great, as did the brakes, the side stand was easy to find, and this was one of the most popular bikes of the day. On the way home, Maria was online looking for a second-hand one…

Who would it suit? Everyone, bar those seeking the ultimate speed experience.

Bonneville T100

- **From £9300**
- **Used from about £7000**

Don't get confused if looking for a used T100, as the name has been used for nearly 20 years now. We are looking at the new-for-2021 water-cooled model, which has had some tweaks. It's been cleaned up yet further for this year, with secondary air feeds and better catalytic converters, and had its performance pepped up to compensate.

The 900 'High Torque' engine gives around 65bhp while being slightly lighter than the previous model, with a lighter crankshaft (making it spin up slightly quicker), a thinner clutch cover and even a magnesium rocker cover. Power is seamless – an oft-overused word, but you can generally be in any one of three gears at any speed. Gears are smooth and, well, completely unnoticeable… the best way a gearbox should be. You get more bling than the Street Twin, with spoked wheels, different, larger exhausts, twin clocks and better rear shocks, and the seat is changed, too. But most will be transfixed by the two-tone tank, which, with its rubber knee pads, looks terrific.

That lighter engine doesn't make this bike light, though. It is 8kg lighter than the larger T120 but the seat height is the same; have a go first, and try the Street Twin at the same time.

Who would it suit? Those who want the perfect look, and don't need the extra power from the 1200cc models.

New
RETRO
SPECIAL

Street Scrambler

■ **New £9500** ■ **Used from about £6500**

This is not a scrambler – let's get that out first. But there are enough little traits that mean those tempting, easy trails in summer could be explored. For example, the tyres, while not motocross style, do have a decent grip. The front wheel is 19in and suspension has got 120mm travel, just enough for mild lanes, and the three-way rider modes have an off-road setting that allows traction and ABS to be off – so you can pull skids! While the Street Scrambler apes that off-road look as is popular with customizers, it's a road bike... a city bike, even. And for that, it's good. It also has the same seat height as the T100, despite the off-road pretensions. Those 'bars are higher and the footrests are forward to give you a more upright position. And you seem to be able to hear it better, those distinctive exhausts being higher. Long journeys are not its forte, however, as the upright position means you feel like you're holding on too much. The road bikes have you canted forward more. Details are lovely, with brushed aluminium everywhere and quality for all to see.

Who would it suit? Someone who wants to look a little different, city riders, and those who don't use throw-over panniers

Bonneville T120

■ **New from £11,000** ■ **Used from about £7000**

This is the hub of the 1200cc range. The larger engine has about 80bhp and is tweaked, like its smaller sibling, to pass emissions laws. It is 7kg lighter than last year's bike, though still weighs 236kg. Despite that, Maria and Butch liked it, flowing around the oft-damp Leicestershire B roads. "It inspires confidence, the throttle is smooth, the clutch light, and my body position is just right," said Maria. "I just feel on edge when I come to a stop – it doesn't hide its weight at slow speed." Butch said the power wasn't so noticeable until we were on faster roads, and even then only when we wanted to accelerate in the taller gears, or to overtake. The T120 will also make a good long-distance bike thanks to the larger engine, and is better for two-up journeys. It costs more than the 900cc bikes, but with alloy wheels and more details mean you have to look at what you're getting.

Who would it suit? A rider wanting the pinnacle of a modern classic.

Thruxton RS

■ **New from £13,250** ■ **Used from about £12,000**

For the Thruxton, read about the Speed Triple but raise power by even more (105bhp), the footrests for more clearance, and fit clip-on handlebars to drop the body out of the wind and to put more weight over the front end. The Thruxton has the best of everything and it feels it when you ride. Butch and I liked it – it makes you feel like you're riding something special.

You can spend as much time looking at the Thruxton RS as riding it – details abound. We took it out on autumnal roads and got it filthy but it didn't matter; the engine still responded smoothly, the powerful brakes were easy to read, and I couldn't find out, but felt that the clip-on handlebars were higher than earlier models – it certainly felt comfortable, which a café racer shouldn't! A personal opinion, but Butch and Maria preferred the Speed Twin, possibly for ease, possibly for comfort, while I preferred the Thruxton RS for the blend of road bike and sports bike with stunning looks.

Who would this suit? The sports rider for the road; the one who likes the best.

Scrambler 1200

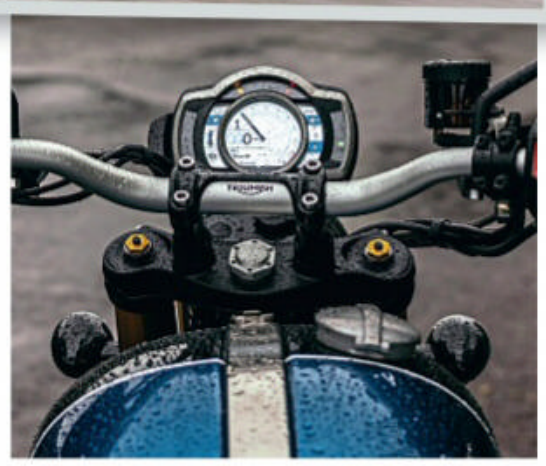
- **From £12,000**
- **Used from about £8750**

This bike is a real paradox. It looks the nuts, it really does – even James Bond rode one. And there's two versions: the XC and the taller, better suspended XE. The XE is for those who grew up in a grow bag, or those who must have the most expensive – it's so tall I've seen too many fall over at bike meets, and even outside the shop. The XC is fine. It has proper off-road skills – long travel suspension, 21in front wheel, tailored electronics and even a sump guard – but unless you fit proper knobblies you're stuffed in the mud, as it still weighs 230kg and that's too much to risk. It's still lighter and looks a lot better than a BMW R1250GS, mind.

The engine is great, 90bhp and will do anything. But long journeys are a pain as the body position is too upright, so you end up hanging on. Yet it is a weapon in the city and on B roads, with superb visibility and wide 'bars to flip left to right. Brakes and suspension are top-notch, while the electronics blow your mind, including cruise control.

Butch didn't like the height, even at 5ft 11in. Maria didn't even try, and I'd had one for a year so was used to it. A great bike, looks fabulous; just make sure it's what you want.

Who would it suit? Those confident with tall bikes, who like seeing what's down that byway…



Speed Twin

- **New £11,000**
- **Used from about £8700**

This is a real hybrid! It's the Bonneville for those who want the speed of the faster Thruxton and the handling of a sportsbike, but without having to tuck yourself up into a ball to ride it. The more powerful 1200cc engine from the Thruxton makes just under 100bhp, the wheels carry wider, more sports-oriented tyres and it's even gone on a diet, weighing 20kg less than the T120, to give the upside down forks and adjustable shocks an easier time. There's modern brakes, oh, and the exhaust sounds great…

The Speed Twin may look cute but it's a modern sportsbike. The engine pulls, the body position just right for both tanking along and riding sedately. It's like a vicar who has a McLaren tucked in the garage – surprising all around. Ask a bit too much and it looks after you. Want to overtake when following modern bikes? No problem. And did I say it sounds great?

The electronics work well with the Speed Twin, with three rider modes. But despite the engine being in a higher state of tune, its still smooth, like the other, more sedate models. The only issue I had was gears matching revs. Sometimes you feel like you're in too high a gear, so you change down and it becomes all snatchy, like it's too low a gear. I only notice it on the higher-tuned models, not on the T120 or the 900 bikes. Otherwise, it's my personal favourite for riding.

Who would it suit? The sensible rider who still has a little fight in them…

New
RETRO
SPECIAL

Speedmaster and Bobber

- **New from £12,100**
- **Used from about £9000**

We tried these both together as they feel very similar to ride, cost the same, and only differ in style. The Adventurer is best described as a cruiser: you've got your feet out front, with your hands back on wide, swept-back 'bars, your bum is low and you're laying back. It suits the engine well and once you've stopped trying to find the footrests (they're in front of you), it's a nice place to be.

Didn't get to try the ground clearance as the roads were too damp, but it felt fine. For a cruiser that isn't a Harley, it's a nice option worth trying.

The Bobber is a brave model. Both Adventurer and Bobber imitate a rigid frame, though the clever swingarm hides the rear shock well, without it hanging underneath the bike in all the dirt. The fat wheels and tyres don't give too slow a turn-in, and the main difference is the Bobber has wide but standard style handlebars and the footrests are where you'd expect them! I like the Bobber more than the Speedmaster personally, as did Butch and Maria, but it must be said that none of us are cruiser folk.

Who would it suit? Those who like to ride, with style; the Bobber on your own and the Speedmaster with a friend.

WHAT THEY ALL HAVE IN COMMON

All Bonnevilles are expensive when compared to rival modern-styled naked bikes, but look at how well they keep their price. A classically-styled rival to consider is Royal Enfield, with its Interceptor 650. Quality is not as good as Triumph, but at just over £6000 on the road, meaning a Triumph will cost you at least £2400 more; it's a head or heart decision only you can answer. Others are Kawasaki's W800 and new W650RS, Moto Guzzi's V7 and V11 and Ducati Scrambler at a push, all of which are similar prices, weights and power, and offer a similar experience. The Thruxtons live in another world, both price and performance-wise, but it's a bike that, if you want it, little else will do.

What we thought

Alright, I was wrong – there is a reason behind all the bikes in the range. The 900cc bikes, the Street Twin, T100 and Street Scrambler are so easy and forgiving to ride, and there's a smile on your face all of the time. As well as being cheaper, they are lower and significantly lighter thanks to a lighter engine and smaller chassis, boosting confidence. Though Maria was happy riding the larger bikes like the T120, she felt much more comfortable on the 900s, with a firmer foot and less to hold. Butch is taller but felt the same; enough performance, good looks, but more relaxing to ride thanks to less weight. I too preferred the 900cc bikes – they make more sense. The 1200s offer more but cost more. Do you need it? You have to be sure you know what you want to justify, but if you do – especially the sporty models – I doubt you regret it.

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Quality is Not Expensive it is Priceless

1971 at Daytona, during qualifying with the Triumph

The smart money a Paul Smart tribute

Last month we lost one of the most versatile racers – who also happened to be one of the nicest. Alan Cathcart looks back at Paul Smart's life

Words by Alan Cathcart **Photography by** Mortons Archive and AC Archives

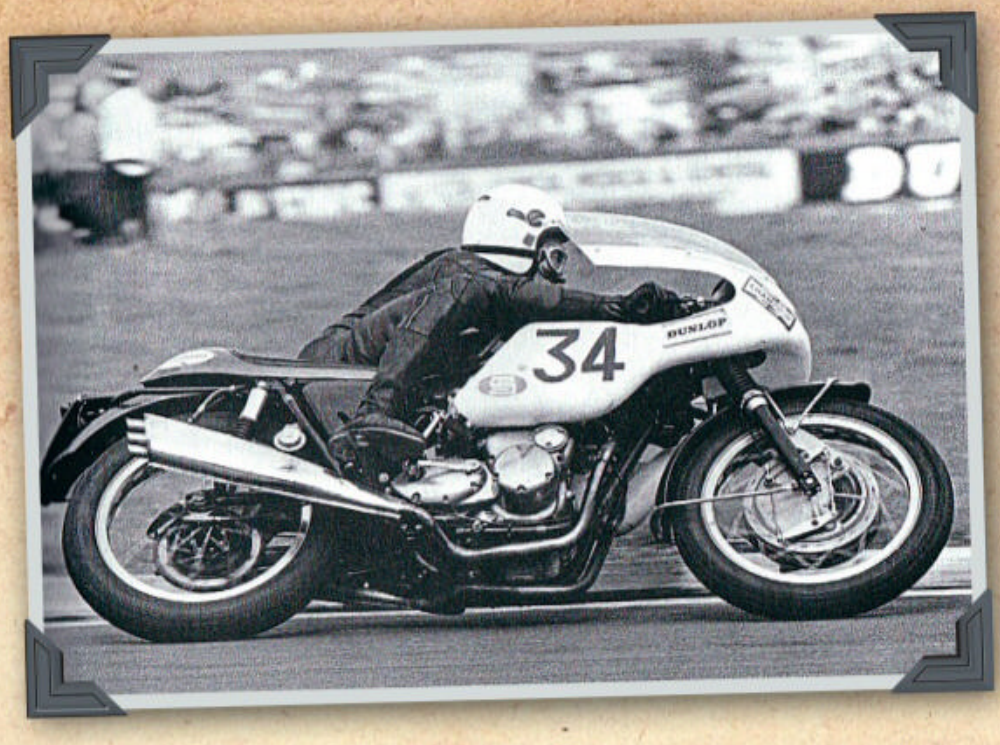
PAUL SMART, ONE OF THE MOST versatile and gifted road racers of his generation, passed away on October 27 aged 78 in a road accident aboard his Ducati motorcycle.

A shrewd and grounded but warm-hearted individual who was living proof of the fallacy that 'nice guys don't win races', Smartie had the crucial ability to look back with wry amusement on a rollercoaster 12-year racing career that had some lows as well as its fair share of highs – but perhaps with the exception of his Imola 200 win, never quite achieving the world recognition he deserved. Paul never won an Isle of Man TT, nor did he emulate his brother-in-law, Barry Sheene, by winning any GP races or world titles. Instead, he had numerous race victories elsewhere to his name, invariably achieved according to his dictum that you should "enter the corner with the minimum of drama and exit with the maximum of dispatch".

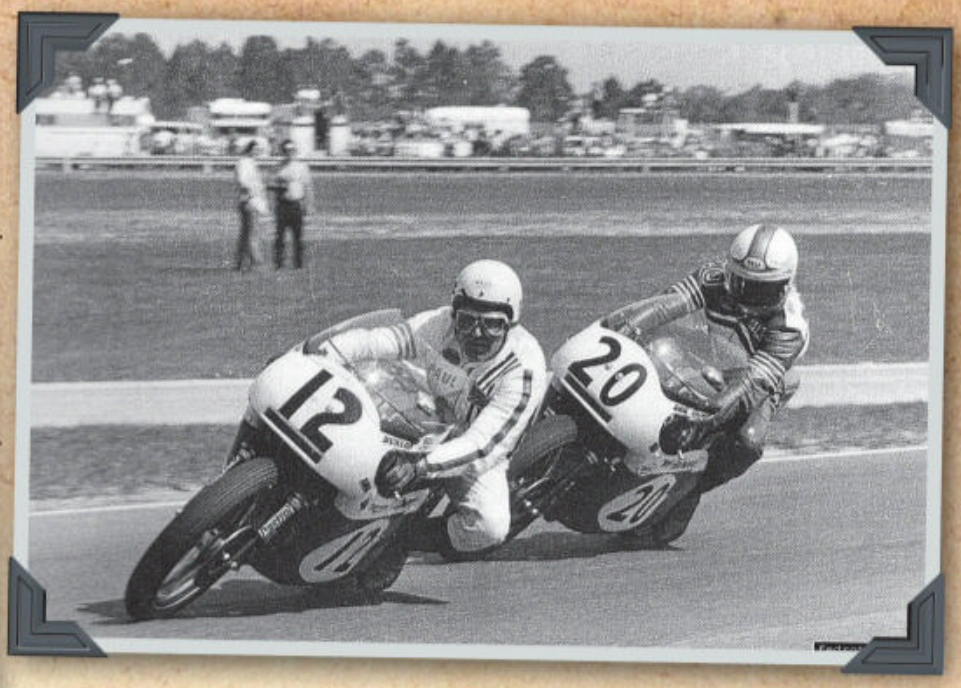
Paul was born on April 23, 1943, in Eynsford, a Kent village just two miles from Brands Hatch. He started racing in 1965 as a typical product of the café racer crowd, his riding skills honed by hanging out at Johnson's Café on the A20 near Brands – the breeding ground for these fearless scratchers.

This explained Paul's trademark modern hanging-off riding style. "I was handicapped back in my café racing days by being a keen BSA owner," he said, "whereas my mates at Johnson's and my dad's Enterprise Café near Maidstone had Triumphs.

"The only way to keep up with them on a less potent Shooting Star was to scratch like mad, which meant everything grounded. So I used to try to keep it all as upright as possible by hanging off, and that stayed with me when I started racing."



1969, on a factory-prepped proddy T150 with enormous 250mm Fontana brake!



1971, Smart leads Hailwood, Triumph 3 leads BSA 3

That came in 1965 after Paul attended the Charles Mortimer Race School at Brands Hatch. Charles took him under his wing, providing him with one of the race school's Greeves Silverstones, and he won the 250cc class at the Stars of Tomorrow meeting at Mallory Park. Following this, Mortimer entered him in the Manx GP in September that year on the Greeves, though Paul DNF'd with machine troubles.

Charles sponsored Smart during 1967, sharing the school's 250 Greeves Silverstones as well as a Bultaco 125 and an Aermacchi 350 with son Chas, and employed him as an instructor at the race school. Paul's TT course knowledge, acquired the previous year on the Greeves, put him in good stead in that year's first ever 750cc Production TT, in which he finished second to GP star John Hartle, repeating that on a Norton the next year. In 1970 he looked set for victory and third time lucky, this time on a Triumph, leading the race before a front wheel punctured.

His Ducati debut for Vic Camp in 1968 was less successful: "Vic had bought two desmo single racers from the factory, but by the time they arrived in England they were basically worn out and needed an awful lot done to them. We had constant reliability problems, particularly with the 250, and although the 350 was better, it was all a bit of a let-down."

Still, Smart won the 250cc class of the gruelling 1969 Montjuic 24 Horas in Barcelona on a Camp-entered Ducati streetbike, riding with Reg Everett.

For 1969 short circuit events, Paul raced a 750 Norton, a 500 Seeley G50 and a 250 Yamaha, and it was on the Mk.2-framed Seeley that he made his breakthrough at international level, finishing second to Giacomo Agostini's MV 500 Triple at Brands GP circuit – his first big 500cc result, defeating all the elite. By then, Paul was also riding for the Triumph factory, having struck up a good relationship with the company's technical guru, Doug Hele.

For 1970 he was provided with two works bikes, a Rob North-framed Triumph 3 for open class events, and a works-developed 750 Trident for production races.

"I got on very well with Doug," said Paul. "Percy Tait was the works tester but for some reason he didn't like racing the production bike, so Doug asked me to be the development rider for the 750 Triple instead. It was amazingly good, right from the start, and they quickly put the engine in the Rob North race frame, which I raced for the first time at Crystal Palace and broke the lap record. It was a great motor that I loved riding – but Doug had designed it himself in his spare time, then had a heck of a time getting the Triumph board of directors to okay it in between their four-course meals and rounds of golf.

"They reckoned they were still selling lots of 650 twins, so what was the point of investing in a new 750 triple? If Doug Hele had had the support from management that Taglioni got at Ducati, the British industry would never have gone under the way it did."

Snetterton was a favourite test track for both Triumph and Paul because the mile-long Norwich Straight allowed top-speed testing with every kind of corner in the rest of the circuit. "The Lotus factory was just up the road from there, and when their Formula One team was testing there we'd quite often go out together," recalled Paul.

Febuary 1971 and Paul is in talks with Doug Hele

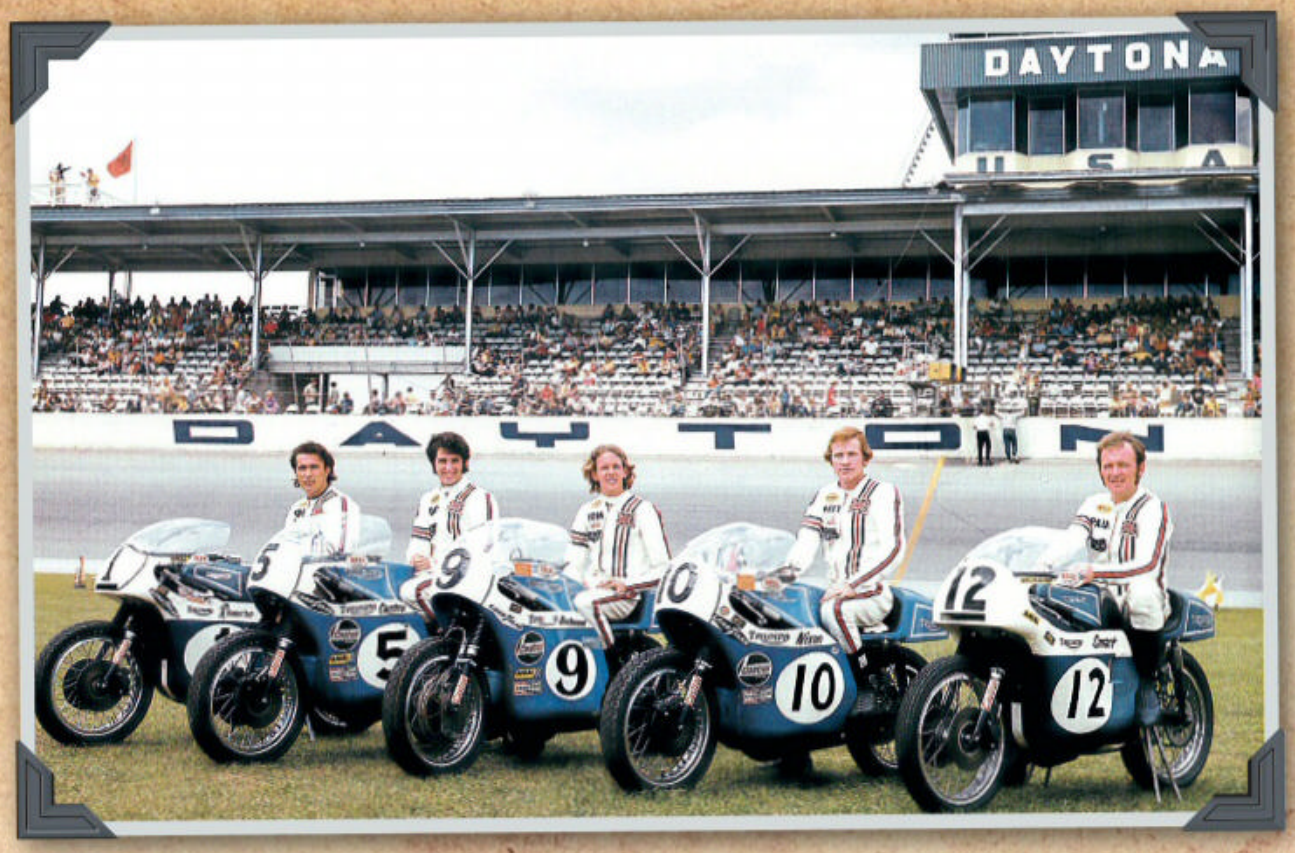
"We'd just have a word with Colin Chapman and out we'd go, looking out for each other. It was a bit frightening because of the speed differential in bends, but the only time we had a problem was when their test driver, John Miles, hit the bank ahead of me and tipped upside down.

"I saw it starting to flame up, so dumped the old bike and ran over to drag the driver out – he was slightly singed but okay."

For 1971 Paul was added to the transatlantic team on one of the new Lowboy Rob North-framed bikes, partly as a reward for winning the Bol d'Or 24-Hours the previous September, riding with Tom Dickie on a 750 Trident. Paul clinched pole position on his Daytona debut with a new lap record at 105.80mph – and then, after a brief battle with Hailwood, pulled away from the now BSA-mounted Dick Mann to establish a clear lead.

"I got huge amounts of lap money for leading at the end of each lap, and it all ➡

"The only way to keep up with them on a less potent Shooting Star was to scratch like mad, which meant everything grounded. So I used to try to keep it all as upright as possible by hanging off, and that stayed with me when I started racing!"



The 1971 Daytona 200 Triumph team

Pat Mahoney, Colin Seeley and Paul in 1972

Fabio Taglioni and Paul after the Imola 200 in 1972

totted up extremely well!" Paul said. "I was earning more in one race than in a whole year in Britain – the dollar equivalent of £1600 – and it seemed nothing could go wrong. I was almost singing 'We're In The Money' to myself! Then, 10 laps from the end, it went onto two cylinders. I glanced behind me and there was smoke everywhere. It had burnt a piston. I came in and they tried to fix it, but no luck. It was heartbreaking coming so close – but the lap money was a major consolation!"

Paul and his teammate Ray Pickrell dominated British Formula 750 racing that year in the UK, but at the end of the season it was all over as the bankrupt BSA/Triumph company bit the dust. But Paul's horizons were much wider, and he'd already moved up to GP racing 250/350 Yamahas to a succession of podium GP finishes in Germany, Finland, Sweden, East Germany and Ulster in 1970/71. The two-stroke era was by now well and truly born, and Paul was one of the first top riders to figure that out – faults and all.

"The 750 two-strokes were absolute animals to ride," he said, "but you learned to live with that and reach a sort-of understanding, because they were so bloody fast! The handling was appalling and the reliability was dire – everything was on the ragged edge. The worst problem was that they were too fast for the tyres we had available then; you'd be doing 170mph on one of the speed bowls like Talladega or Daytona, and suddenly you'd get this tremendous vibration. Next thing... bang! The rear tyre's exploded. You dreaded your next race."

That 1971 Daytona 200 ride opened Smart's eyes to US racing, so with no Triumph ride for 1972, Paul signed with Team Hansen to race the works-backed Kawasaki H2R two-stroke triples in America, jet-setting across the Atlantic to race in Europe on non-conflicting dates.

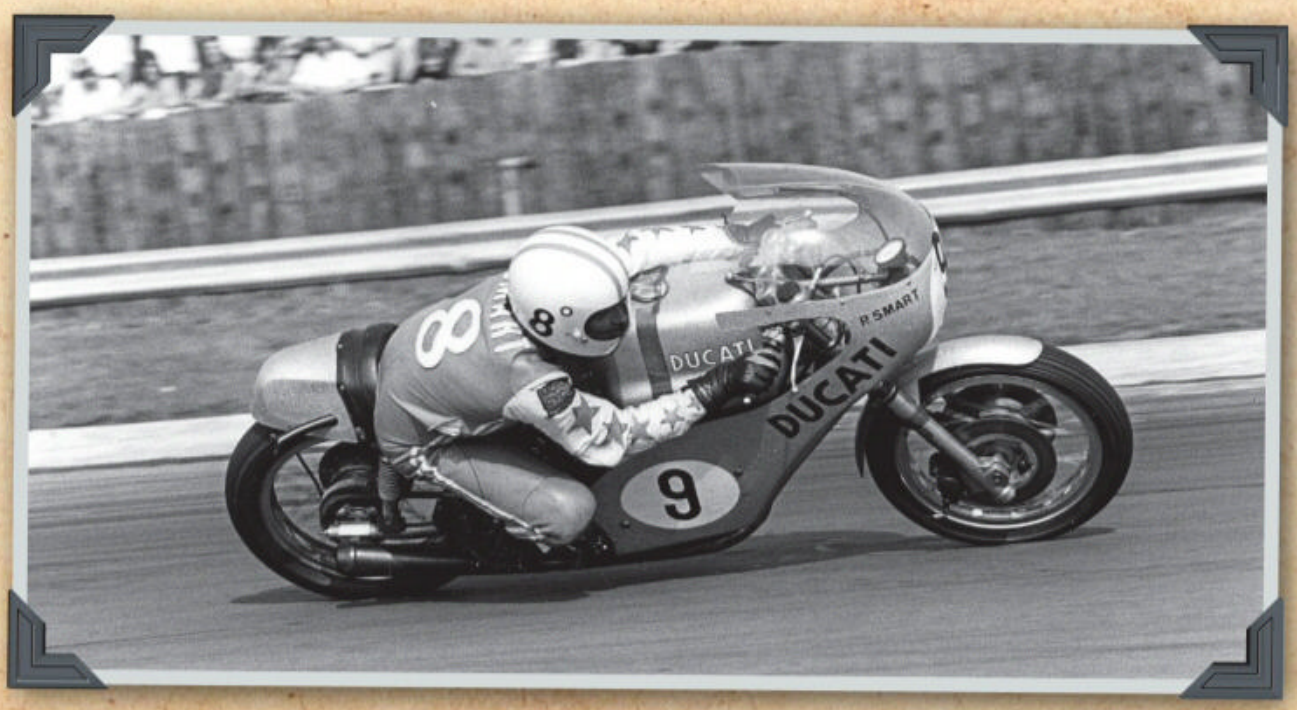
That's how he came to be available for the Ducati ride – though, in fact, it wasn't Smart whom Ducati boss Fredmano Spairani first approached to make the racing debut of the Bologna factory's new 90° V-twin desmo in the April 1972 Imola 200.

Jarno Saarinen and Barry Sheene both turned down riding what they saw as a lumbering, uncompetitive, long-wheelbase V-twin four-stroke against the best two-strokes Japan could offer. It was left to Maggie, Paul's wife and Barry's sister (the two married in 1971 after an unusual courtship, when Maggie drove Paul home to Kent from Assen in her Mini after he'd crashed in the Dutch TT and got concussion) to accept the ride on her husband's behalf.

"Paul was racing the Kawasaki at Road Atlanta when Ducati called me in California, where we were living," she said. "They needed an answer but in those days, before mobile phones, there was no way I could get hold of Paul, so I made the decision and accepted for him. It was only the week before the Imola race, but I knew he wasn't doing anything and, at £500 plus air fares, the money seemed good.

"When he called later that night after the Atlanta race, he went mad. 'I'm not riding that bloody old thing,' he said – but then we had a 'family discussion' over the phone and he changed his mind." Rumour has it that Maggie wanted a new kitchen.

Flying from Atlanta (where he finished second on the Kawasaki 750 Triple) to Milan via New York and London, Smartie arrived in Italy after a marathon 23-hour plane journey to be hustled straight from the airport to the nearby Modena



It wasn't just Imola; in 1972 Paul used the Ducati at Brands for the Hutchinson 100

Imola before the start – Paul fancied Ducati's chances

Smart (no.16) leads Bruno Spaggliari, his team-mate

aeroautodromo. Ducati wanted him to test the bike he was set to race at Imola. What he found awaiting him there amazed him: "There was this flashy new bus with plate glass sides in which all the race bikes were transported around so people could see them, and there wasn't just one bike for me – they'd built 10 of them... two each for all four riders, plus two spares!

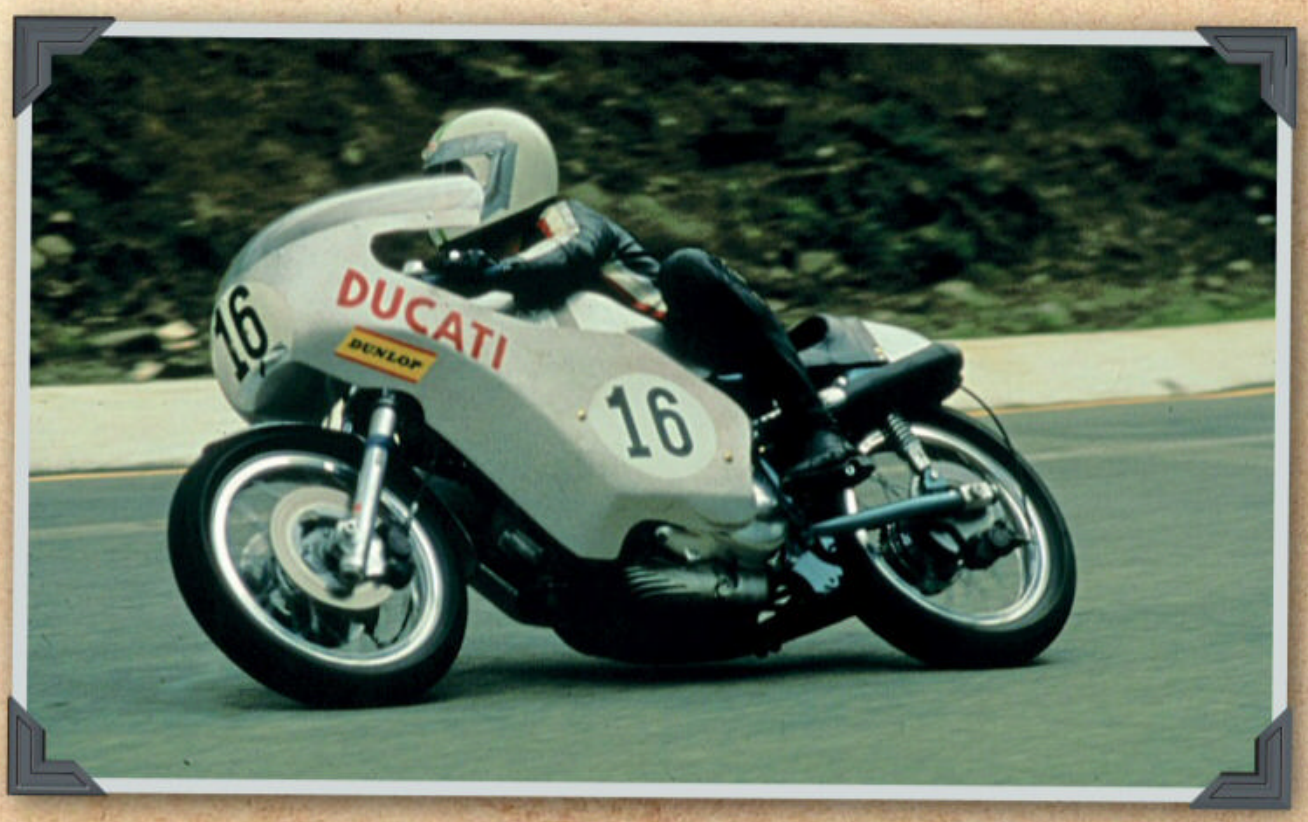
"That's when I realised this was a very serious venture by a company determined to win. Suddenly I felt much better about coming all this way!"

But that feeling barely survived the initial laps at Modena, for Smart was less impressed with the Ducatis at close hand. "They were fitted with skinny little TT100 Dunlop production tyres and huge steering dampers they didn't need, because with a 60-inch wheelbase they wouldn't go round corners anyway," he said. "They felt pretty awful to ride, even after I'd persuaded Ducati to fit some racing tyres. There seemed to be some confusion as to what Formula 750 was all about. Ducati seemed to think it was a glorified modified production race with tuned engines and street tyres, hence the street frame on the racers, complete with lugs for the centre stand! I knew from racing in the US that this was Grand Prix racing with big motors and that no half-measures would suffice. The Ducati seemed so slow – there was loads of torque, but with the 90-˚ V layout, it seemed to be firing every other lamp post."

Appearances can be deceptive: "After 10 laps at Modena, I came past the pits and the mechanics were hugging each other like I'd just won a race. When I stopped, I found I'd broken Ago's outright lap record set on the 500GP MV. The Ducati was such a totally deceptive bike. It was faster than my works Kawasaki."

Brimming with confidence, the team went to Imola and duly won the first ever Daytona of Europe run on the fast, sweeping GP race circuit which, in its pre-chicane days, suited Smart's taste for big tracks that rewarded fine judgement, blended with bravery. Against a star-studded field that included works entries from nine different manufacturers, the V-twin Ducatis were in a class of their own, with Smart and teammate Bruno Spaggiari qualifying in the first two places on the grid, ahead of Giacomo Agostini on a factory MV Agusta. "Ago was riding a shaft-driven works MV," said Paul, "and he was taking it very seriously, just as he always did – especially as it must have been the first time in ages he wasn't on pole for a race in Italy. Anyway, the start was absolutely typical for there – as soon as Ago started, then they dropped the flag for the rest of us! That meant he led off the line, and in fact hung on in front for the first five laps – but starting the fifth I kept it nailed open at Tamburello and just swept effortlessly past him. It was a great demonstration of the Ducati's handling ability, and after that it was obvious that either Bruno or I would win."

So it happened, and Paul crossed the line four seconds ahead of Spaggiari to record his greatest victory – and on his 29th birthday, too, as well as marking a milestone in the mythology of the Ducati marque. "It was a really satisfying win, but I must admit I didn't think at the time it would be as significant as it's now become in terms of Ducati's place in history. I should have had a clue that night, though, when they took the glass-sided transporter ➡



Paul's hanging-off style was revolutionary

When your brother-in-law is Barry Sheene... Suzuki TR750 XR11 with stars for wins, in 1974

Barry's TR750 was factory, while Paul's was a privately-run bike, in 1976

with me and Bruno on the roof and our bikes inside for a tour through Bologna city centre.

"You'd have thought it was the Pope, there were so many fanatical supporters celebrating Ducati's victory! It certainly put Ducati on the map in terms of big bikes, as well as setting the firm on the path to World Superbike dominance."

Was the Imola 200 win Paul's greatest day in racing? "Yes, I guess it was. I scored more prize money at Ontario winning the 250-miler there later that year for Kawasaki, but Imola was more satisfying in a way, because I hadn't gone there expecting to win.

"I led most of the race, so with the lap money I cleaned up about £5000 that day [actually Lire 7,080,000 – AC], which was a helluva lot of money back then, but they'd had 70,000 spectators, so they could afford it! I got paid in readies, too – lots of those big, old, tablecloth-sized Italian banknotes with loads of zeros, all stuffed into my helmet bag! We'd agreed the night before the race that all four Ducati riders would pool our winnings and so we did – but Spairani had also said, 'Whichever one of you wins the race will keep his bike, of course!' and he was as good as his word, which is why I still own it today."

Paul raced the Ducati a couple more times that year, most notably defeating Phil Read's John Player Norton to win the Hutchinson 100 at Brands Hatch with an engine rebuilt courtesy of the local vicar!

But the Hansen Kawasaki day job got a lot easier after he persuaded team owner Bob Hansen to let him and teammate Gary Nixon use Seeley frames on their tyre-spinning, flexi-framed factory racers – even if they had to buy them themselves!

This allowed Smart to win the season-ending Ontario 250-miler in California, the world's richest race, which earned him £12,500 in prize money and contingencies back then – the equivalent of £150,000 today.

But the prickly Hansen had resented being shoehorned – as he saw it – into adopting the Seeley frames (even if lap times dropped considerably), so Paul wasn't hired for 1973. Instead, he joined brother-in-law Barry Sheene at Suzuki, where he spent the next couple of years helping refine the TR750 XR11 Triple from evil handling to a dependable F750 title-winning package, taking two more AMA wins in the process, as well as many race victories in Britain. He also helped Bazza refine the handling of the prototype RG500 square-four Suzuki – rather successfully, as it turned out!

However, in 1974 Paul suffered his most serious crash, breaking both legs at Mallory Park while battling with Barry. After another broken leg in 1975, he retired.

In life after racing, Paul and Maggie had three successful motorcycle shops and Paul got his off-shore sailing skipper's licence. In 2006 Ducati produced a Pierre Terblanche-designed limited edition, the Paul Smart 1000LE, with looks inspired by the 750SS. In 1974, 401 examples had been made as a street-legal replica of Paul's Imola 200 winner.

Paul Smart's passing is made ever more poignant by the fact that he'd just been given the all-clear after a lengthy battle with cancer and was looking forward to being able to spend more time riding his bikes. He's survived by Maggie, his son Scott and daughter Paula. To all of them we extend our deep sympathy for their loss. CBG

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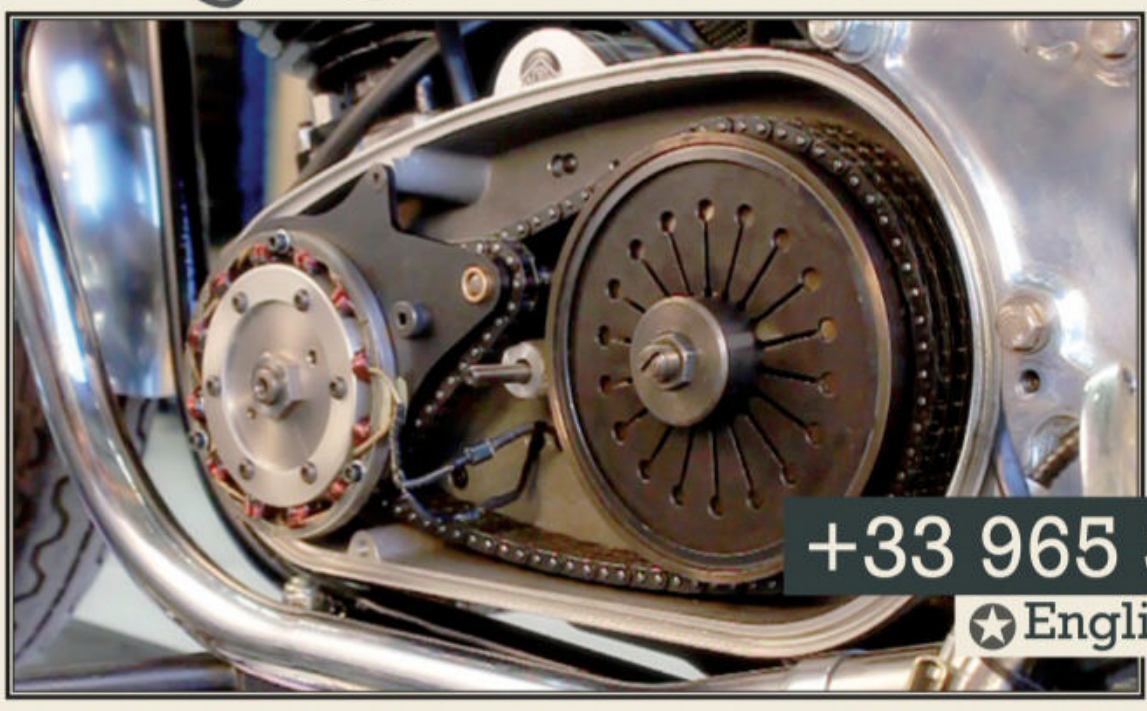

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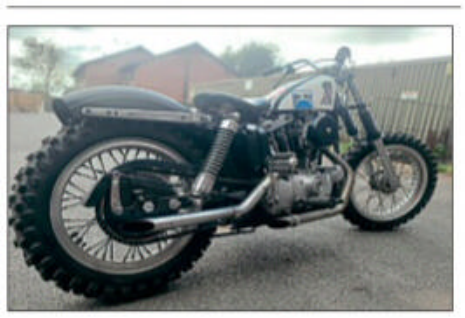

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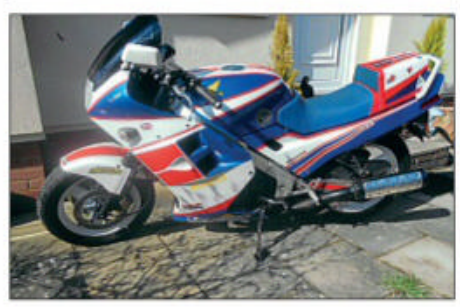

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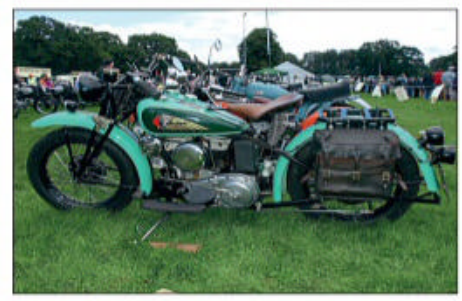

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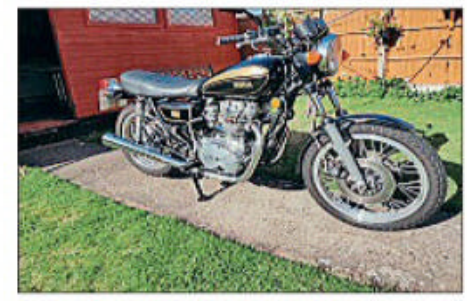
YAMAHA TT500 1978, 6400kms from new, just started its second set of tyres, starts second kick every time, small dent in the tank, all original, £6700 Tel. 07716 726601 Derbyshire



YAMAHA XS650 1977, D model, vgc, has some age related marks, rebuilt 5 years ago, had new stainless spokes all round, engine rebore with new pistons and rings, £3500 ono Tel. 07956 119918 Lincs

YAMAHA XVS Dragstar, 1998, classic cruiser, MoT till July 2022, lovely bike good condition for its age, 23,608 miles, £2600 Tel. 01974 272641 Dyfed

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BSA WM20 1943, with a VP Viper sidecar, in very good original condition, V5c, can deliver £9995. Tel. 07798 866071. Middx. Email. dthomas409@hotmail.com

BULTACO MATADOR 1971, rare bike, mint condition, like new, large history file, part exchange welcome, done well in competition, pictures on request, can deliver at cost, good investment, £5500. Tel. 07443 642408. West Yorkshire.

HARLEY- DAVIDSON FLSTF Fatboy 1340cc evo, 1997 with only 1800 miles, absolutely stunning near showroom condition MoT but on Sorn, red as manufactured not altered or molested still has part labels on the mudguards, collectors bike or use, images can be sent to genuine buyers £10,500. Tel. 07825 376982. Derbyshire.

HONDA VF1000FII Bol-Dor, 1986, project needs finishing too many new parts to name, resprayed with new decals phone for full details, need space, rare to find one in this condition, everything there. Tel. 01655 331721. Ayrshire.

NORTON DOMINATOR 99 1960, vgc, matching numbers, Thorspark ignition, 12V, Akront, alloy rims external oil filter restored tank, £5500 ono. Tel. 07512 090121. Bucks.

ROYAL ENFIELD 350 1926, s/v, good running order, £9500 ovno. Tel. 07775 907190. Kent.

YAMAHA FZ750 registered 1989, one owner from new, 15,000 miles, faults: fairing tatty but complete has been repaired, no battery light pitting on forks, clutch master cylinder leaking, rear brake not working, front calipers resealed, wheels are plastic coated, petrol tank was drained when put in garage, paint work is in fair condition with no dents or cracks apart from the fairing, it has not been in use since 1991 put in garage and left, am open to offers but will not let it go for silly money I have a price in mind and will not let it go for less, it will need to be taken away in van or on trailer. Tel. 02083 910357. Surrey.

YAMAHA XS650 1978, has had a complete service, new battery, cam chain, swinging arm, uprated everything, works as it should all bills available, £4950. Tel. 07900 912455. Gloucestershire.

Parts For Sale

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BSA BANTAM GPO s/arm models, B175 rear carrier with pannier frames, look nos but black, also red legshields, good condition, fibreglass Motoplas, GPO, £300 and £130. Tel. 07396 270365. Sussex.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON 45 front forks, could be of WLA or WLC needs some springs or nuts on top and a bit of paint, sound condition, £1250 or exchange Watsonian GP700 sidecar the wider one, why? Harley 45 tool box original, £250. Front stand, £100. Tel. 02085 341761; 07438 362467. London.

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LEGSHIELDS BSA C15, maroon, new old stock, no brackets, any offers. Tel. 07703 698995. North Wales.

NORTON COMMANDO 1969/70 front forks and tls front wheel wanted, preferably must include top/bottom steering yokes, front wheel spindle and all associated fasteners and fixings. Tel. 01305 826670. Dorset.

SUZUKI GSXR1100 WP 1149cc, Big Bore, barrels, bare head, pistons, new head gasket, clutch basket, Joy cams and various bits, any offers, pick up only. Tel. 07703 698995. Colwyn Bay.

TRIUMPH T140 Bonneville tacho RPM x 1000 4:1 Smiths RSM-3003/134, good condition, £70. Amal chopped mono bloc 376/233, complete good condition, £40. Triumph 4 gal tank rack, good chrome, £25. Tri-Nort? rear brake rod new stainless 21 1/4 x 5" TH threads 5", £15 genuine parts. Tel. 07982 330867.

TRIUMPH T140 COMPLETE ENGINE in good order, phone for more details and price. Tel. 07398 764409. Middlesex.

TRIUMPH T140 EXPORT PETROL TANK with matching side panels in original Triumph colours with rear seat in good condition, Triumph T120R 4 gallon export petrol tank with badges in good condition phone for more details. Tel. 07398 764409. Middlesex.

TRIUMPH TR5T ADVENTURER/ TROPHY TRAIL 1972, in storage last 5+ years, in need of lots of tlc, complete bike, engine was running, kickstart needs sorting, spares including good wheels; good steel tank; exhaust ok plus spare exhaust box etc, has V5, £2500 as a reasonable price. Triumph T25, 1971, in storage as above, was running, steel tank model, has V5, BSA B25 scrambles engine in good light B25 OIF frame, spare badly lightened frame, no V5, £2000 the pair, various wheels, ally rims etc. Tel. Steve 07905 010763. Kent.

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WANTED MOTORBIKE sidecar wheel what have you got? a friend has a sidecar frame with no wheel, which I am thinking of buying it if I can find a wheel, you may have one in your garage, spoke wheel I think? Tel. 07448 733603.

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YAMAHA XS650, SR500 TR1, F2 X750 or early virago wanted, I have owned all previously and would like another, anywhere in UK will consider project. Tel. 07984 950257. Derbyshire.

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MANUAL: BMW 2 cylinder Haynes Workshop Manual, as new, £8, plus £3 p&p. Tel. Richard 01366 728030.

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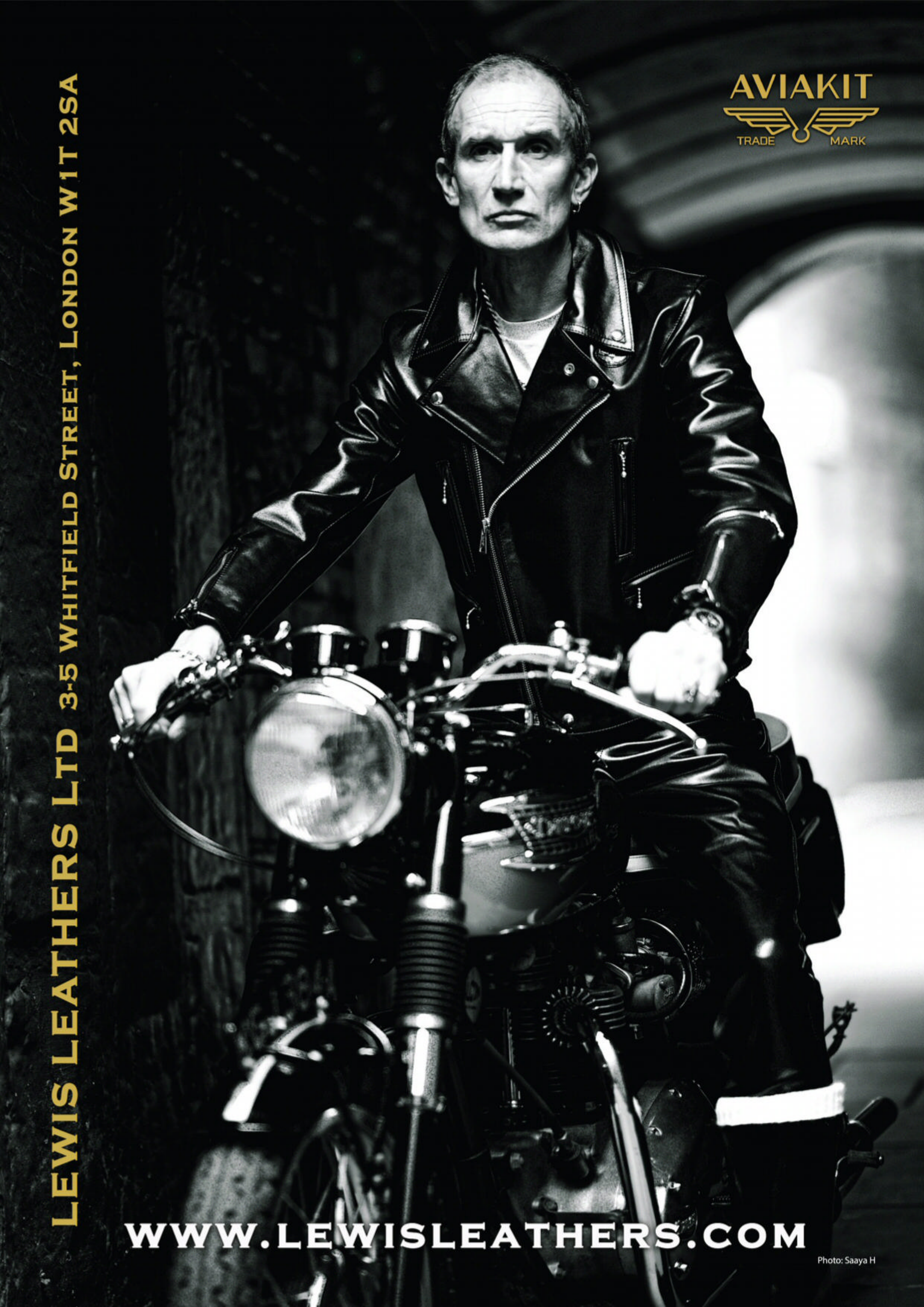
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WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO ON OUR PROJECTS...

Steve's Yamaha AS1 Part six

Despite delays, the Yamaha AS1 rebirth is still making progress.

WORDS & IMAGES BY STEVE COOPER

I'D PICKED OUT ALL THE BEST BITS FROM the mass of previously flagged-up AS1 ephemera, got the foot of the side stand reinforced, a new nut welded to the footrest mount, and then threw everything in the back of the car. Flushed with enthusiasm now the grimiest part of the project was over, it was time to get cracking with the refurbishing… or so I'd hoped. "If you'd dropped it off last week, we could have turned it around in a couple of days," said Mark, the powder coater. He's a good chap, is Mark, and like many in the trade he's as busy as hell. He carefully blast-cleans all the smaller stuff himself but uses the services of another chap on the same farm-based industrial site for the frames, and this guy had gone on holiday for a fortnight. This

Selection of cylinder heads

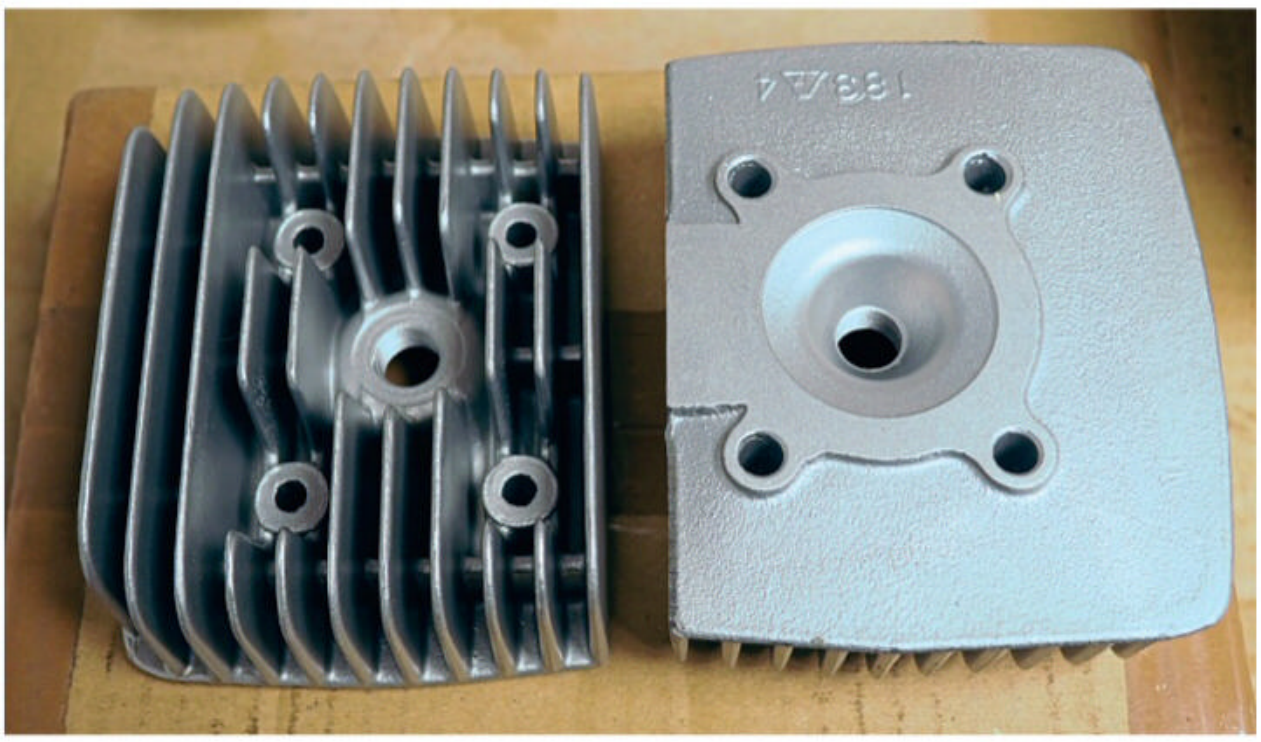
Broken fins

Seized plug

might have been annoying if I was in a rush but, to be honest, the bike's been a wreck for decades, so another two weeks wouldn't make much difference, really. And, without question, I have more than enough to be getting on with!

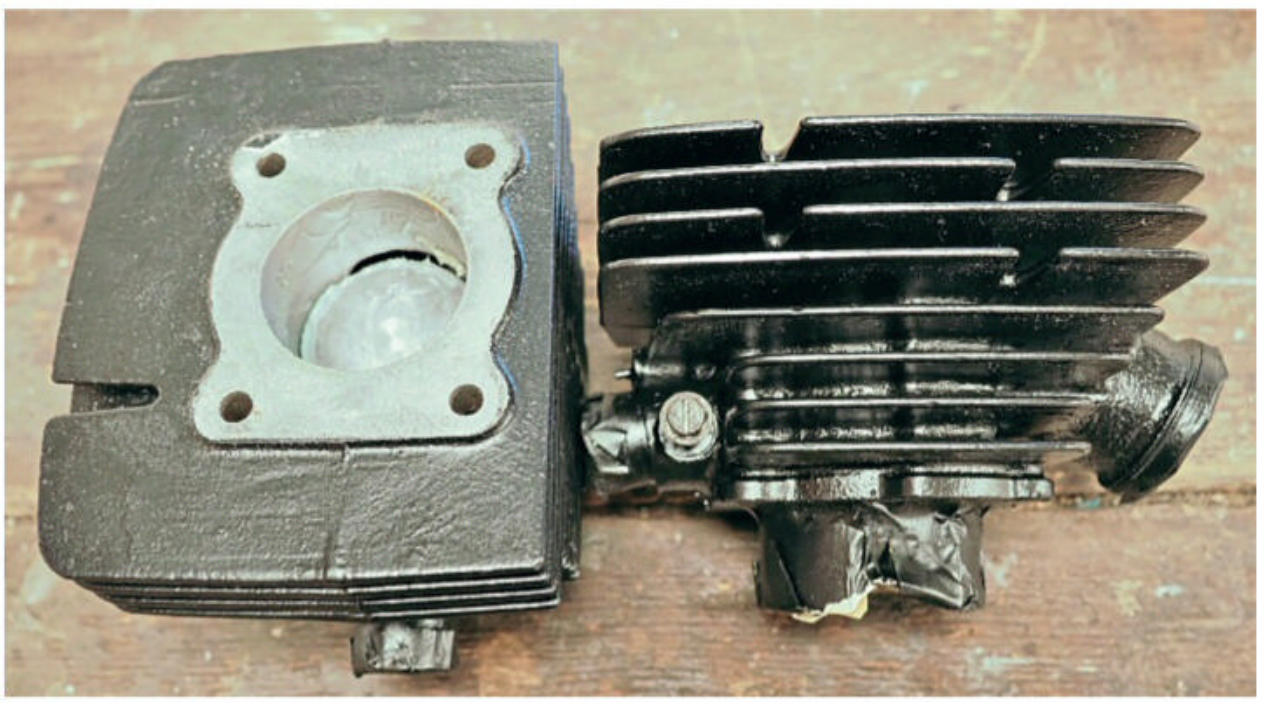
Back in the shed, the serried array of Yamaha AS1 cylinder heads were carefully inspected. AS1s had a reputation of being 'piston nibblers' back in the day, which led to innumerable blow-ups. Capable of frankly insane speeds for a late-1960s 125, most were mercilessly thrashed to death with little thought or consideration. With ignition timing being critical, it didn't take much for it to subtly change. Either heel wear at the cam end or cheapo pattern points could see a 43mm alloy piston swiftly mimicking a grenade. Add in the almost inevitable piston ring damage and many an AS1 head was peppered with an unholy mash of high silicon alloy and cast iron. Amazingly, none of my heads was thus afflicted – but there was damage elsewhere. One had serious destruction to three fins, while the other had a dangerously seized spark plug very firmly embedded. Taking the easy option, the best remaining pair were spirited off to the local engineering firm for vapour blasting, who did a cracking job. With the iron barrels previously sorted out years ago in an atypical fit of enthusiasm, that should be the top end sorted… possibly.

Thinking back to the previous instalment and those metalastic bushes Webbs of Lincoln were indeed able to supply – and, as they predicted, the small ones are still a stock item on the original part number. Fortunately, they also had the obsolete, larger, pivot axle types sitting in a drawer gathering dust, so the swingarm will be duly populated once the powder coating is back. In the meantime, Mrs. C's freezer is hosting all four bushes ➡



Blasted head

"Capable of frankly insane speeds for a late-1960s 125, most were mercilessly thrashed to death with little thought or consideration."



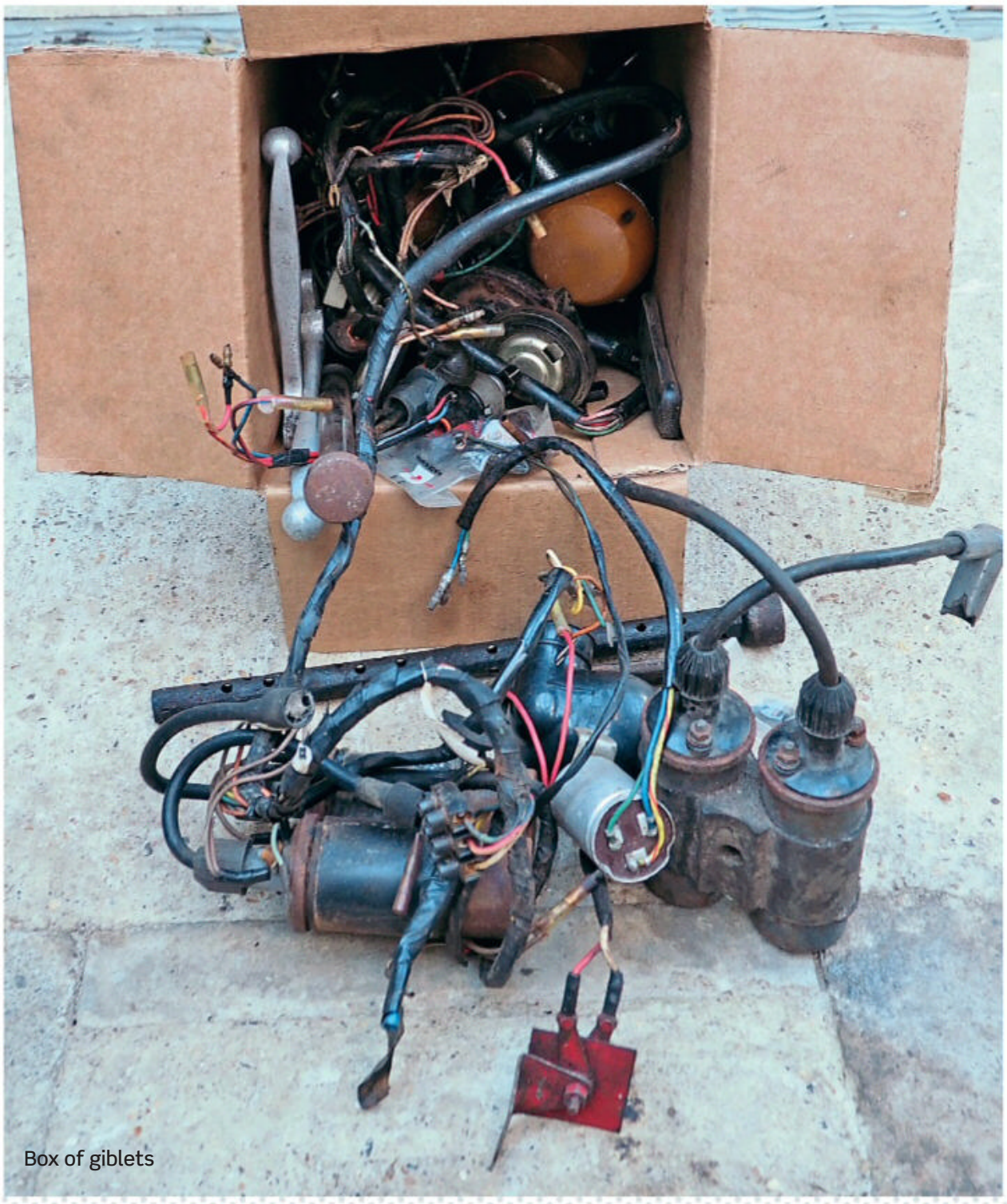
Barrels and piston

Bushes and spacer

and hopefully shrinking them down in diameter to aid fitments. Perhaps best of all, the missing front wheel bearing spacer has been replaced by a brand new one. I really do not care one iota that it's now black plastic instead of plated steel; the very fact that we can still get new parts for extremely old Japanese bikes is almost worthy of a bottle of bubbly from my perspective.

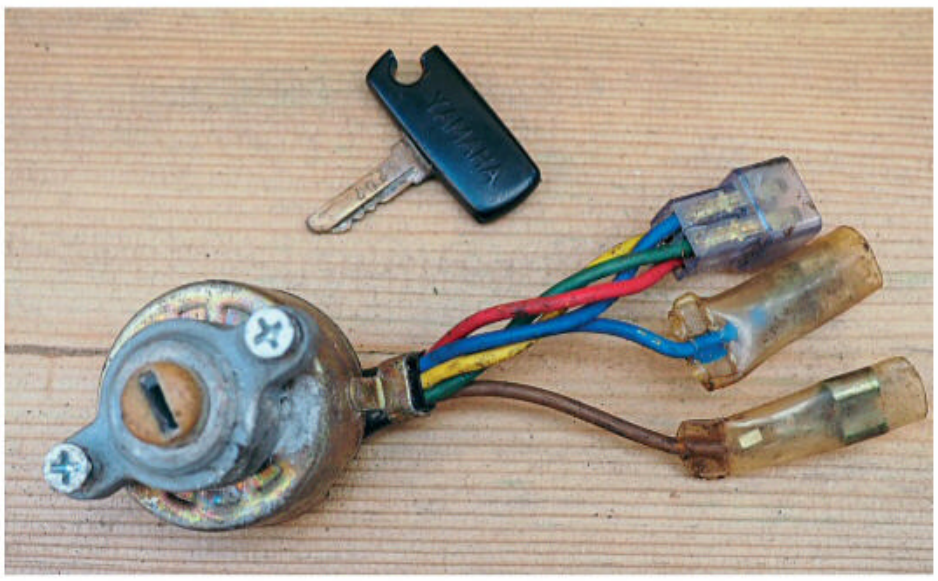
As I can't progress the rolling chassis for now, I've focused on sorting out the various other bits and bobs. I have a box of giblets to sort through, which will hopefully divvy up a decent pair of coils and possibly a working brake light switch. Yes, I could buy new or pattern stuff but if what's there cleans up okay and works, why blow unnecessary cash which can be better spent elsewhere? One thing I'm not going to be bothering with is the old loom, which had been cut at some point in its life and re-joined with a screw block connector – why would anyone do that? I've found a really useful chap based in Malaysia who sells NOS and some quality repro parts on Facebook Marketplace and he had a NOS wiring loom in stock. This is where I'd much prefer to spend my hard-earned – on components you really cannot take a chance on. A quick Dremel session on all the connectors and some anti-corrosion ACF50 spray will ensure the terminals are ready for action.

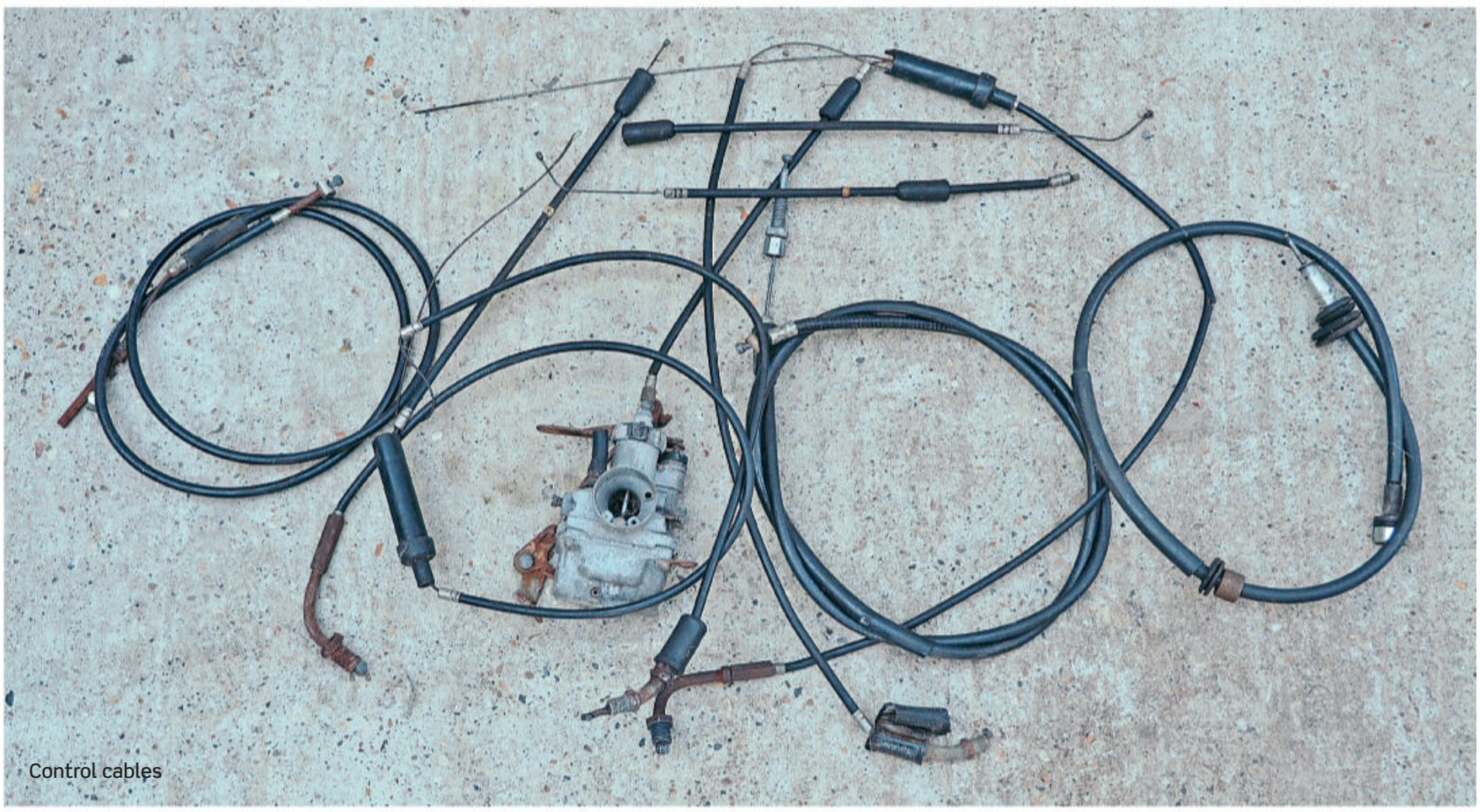
Again, in my boxes of wonderment I've found what looks to be a better-than just-okay ignition switch, complete with



Box of giblets

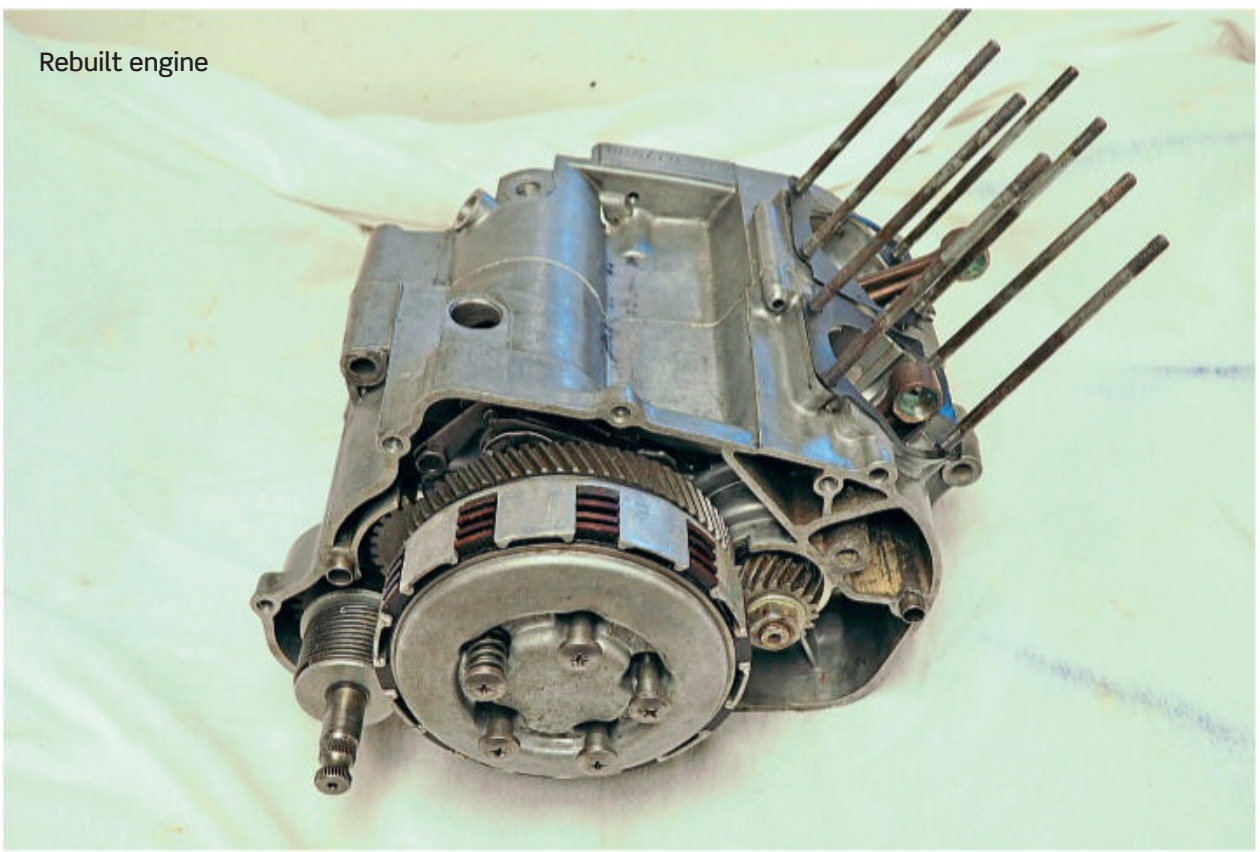
Loom ID


Ignition switch


Control cables

key. This will be put to one side for further investigation, but I'm sure it's going to be in a better state than the one that came with the bike. Even though the key has a little cosmetic damage, it works fine and replacements aren't too hard to find – which is more than can be said for Yamaha AS1 air filters! Unique to the first pair of AS models, they've been NLA (No Longer Available) for decades and if you've ever tried cleaning an old paper air filter you'll know just how fruitless such efforts can be. With no other options open to me, I'm going to look at rebuilding them – wish me luck please!

The control cables in camera are likely to be toast but they're not bin fodder… yet. The lower carbs cable might just be salvageable after a good clean and the rest will, if nothing else, make good templates from which to fabricate replacements if ➡


Rebuilt engine

"The Sherlock Holmes quote sprang to mind… 'When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth'."

I cannot find any news ones for sale. I may be a bit of a hoarder, but better that way than throw out stuff I later need to refer to.

Pulling the previously rebuilt engine off the shelf reminds me I need to check over the primary drive, nuts, washers and bearings, along with the clutch components. It's not too hard to assess and/or measure clutch components; the metal plates need to be perfectly flat and the friction plates need to be above minimum thickness. Both factory and aftermarket manuals give dimensions for the springs, but I've learned from past experience that the length of the compression springs is only half the story. When rebuilding my Yamaha YL1, I checked the springs and they were all within specification – yet the clutch still slipped in top gear. Something of a head-scratcher at the time, the Sherlock Holmes quote sprang to mind… "When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

In that particular instance, despite being the correct length, the clutch springs had lost some of their temper. No manual I've ever read details spring forces, so I shall be investing in some new clutch springs ASAP.

Did I mention the AS1 was a long-term project? Well, despite a house move, temporary storage in my old mum's garage, and a workshop build to home it and its relatives, I seem to have kept everything – and possibly more – together.

In with the engine is the drive for the oil pump, oil lines, breather pipe complete with NLA retention strap stator, two new sets of points, neutral detent cap/spring/ball and the curious nipple that operates the clutch arm. It's the little things that make me happy these days! CBG

Two-strokes, cylinder heads and modern petrol

Modern fuel really isn't targeted at strokers, and especially not when they're in their sixth decade! It tends to burn significantly faster than period two-star and is infinitely less tolerant of basic ignition systems; it's really only viable in vehicles with anti-knock sensors and variable ignition timing. Although the AS1 head does feature a squish band unlike some contemporaries, what's north of it may very well be less than ideal. There's a very real possibility that the upper section of the bell-shaped combustion chamber may impart too high a compression ratio. This is then likely to promote detonation, which would harm piston longevity. Speaking to engineers highly skilled in the black art of two-stroke tuning and maintenance, we made need to take preventative action. Thankfully I know a man who can.

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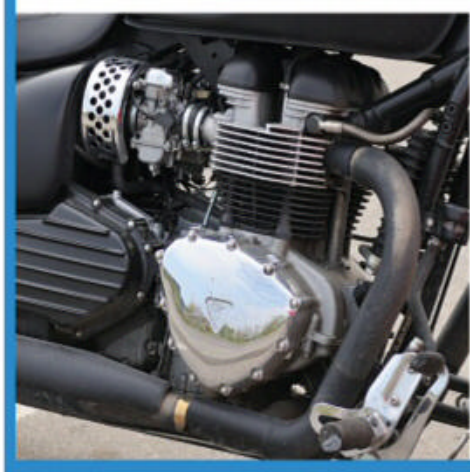

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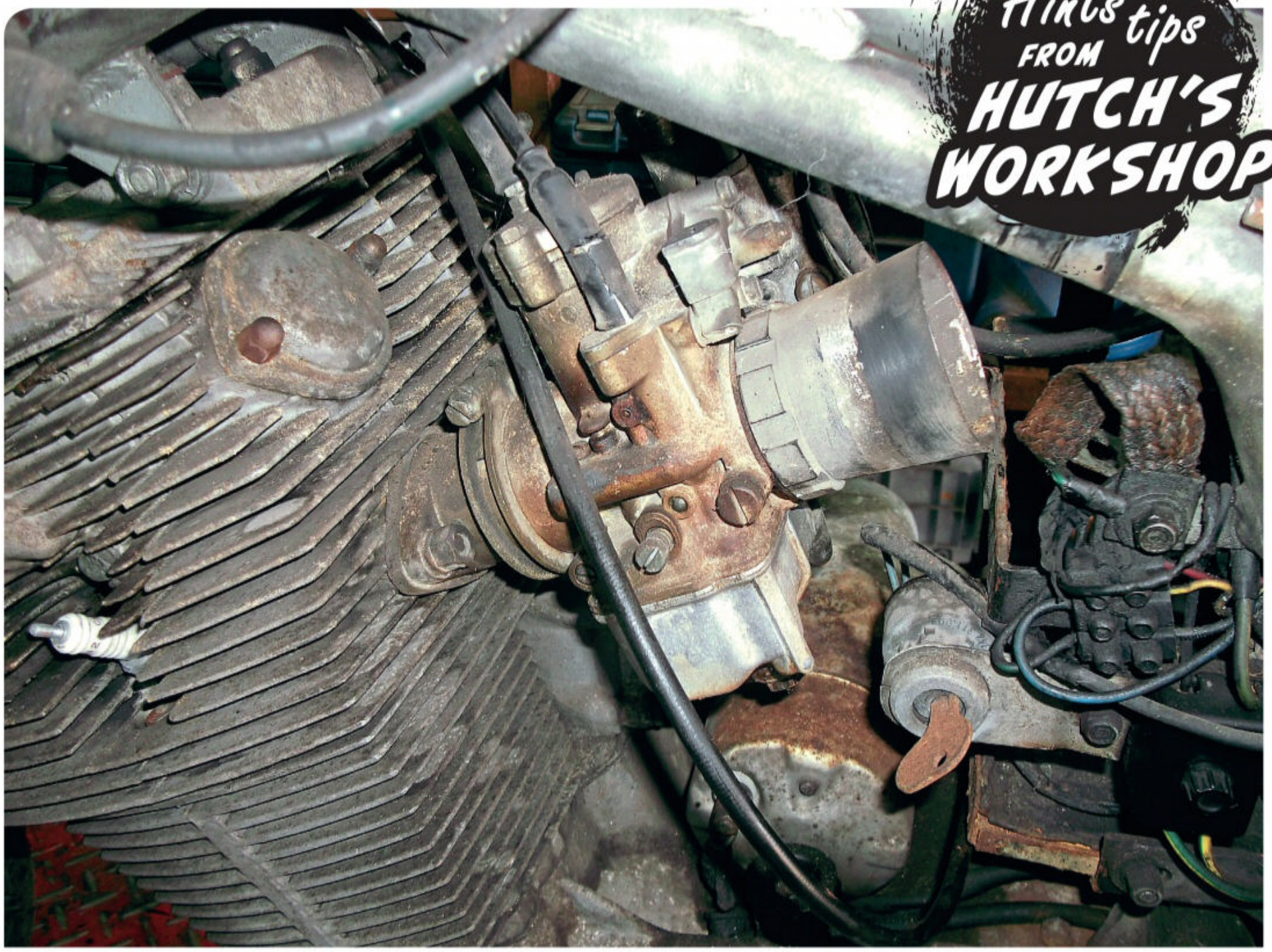


Hutch's workshop tips

Hutch finds a rare pair of carbs that may have just been sitting around inside... but still want to cause trouble

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY HUTCH AND CHELLEY

Disconnecting the cables from the throttle

ALTHOUGH I SEEM TO SPEND quite a lot of time stripping and cleaning carbs, I have diligently avoided documenting it. Anyone who spins spanners over older bikes will be conversant with stripping carbs, and while some seem to lack the understanding in how a carb works, most know that clean internals and set to factory settings is the best place to start. Setting them up to match different exhausts and air filters is a bit more of a black art and a skill only really gained from the experience of ruining a perfectly good running bike with aftermarket (but usually cheaper than standard) exhausts and pod filters, as many of us seemed to have done at some point.

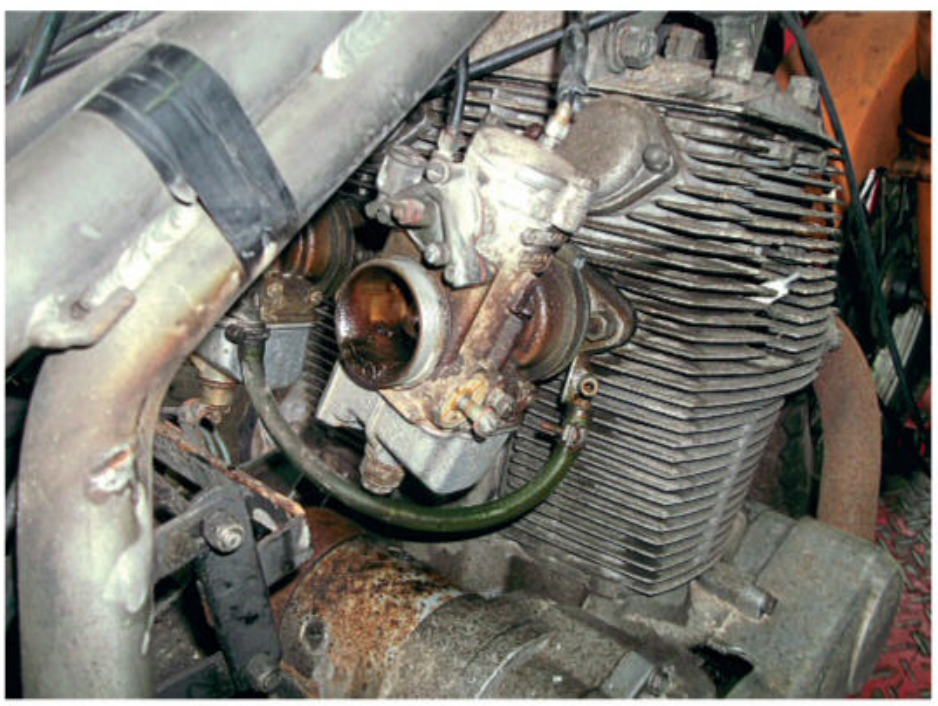
A bike arrived in the workshop recently with the request to resurrect it and get it running. Although it looked like the classic barn find and would certainly have been a nice find for anyone, it had never been lost. The bike had, however, sat dormant since the mid-1980s; so not that long ago really, ahem!

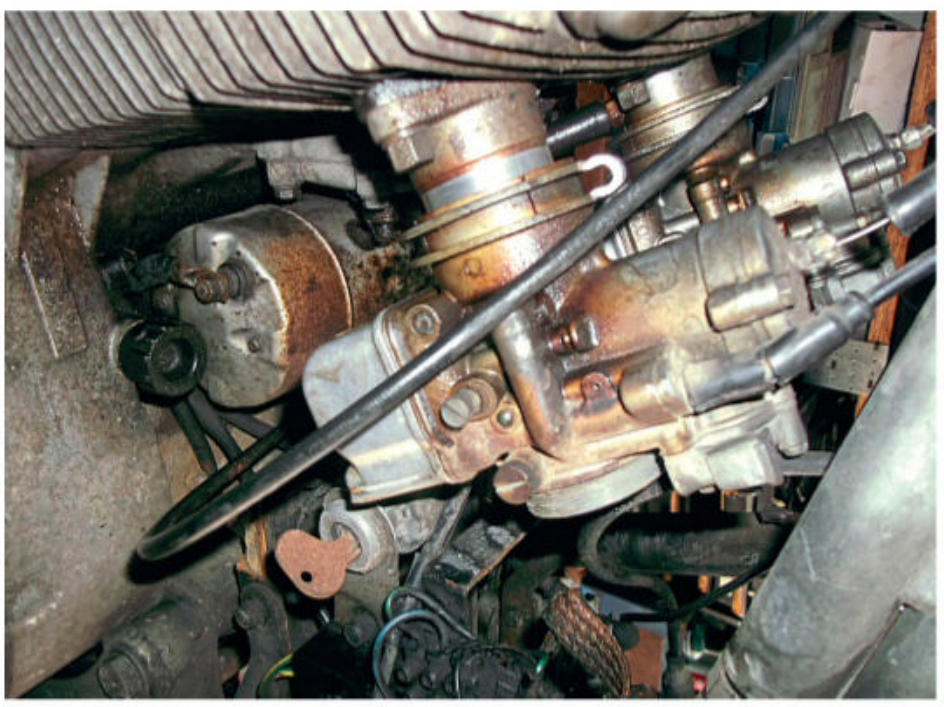
Fortunately, the engine turned over freely with compression but the carbs needed more than a quick look at, as did the ignition system. The slide in the right-hand carb was completely seized, and the left moved a little. The bell mouths were removed and both carbs given a good, thorough dosing of carb cleaner and left overnight.

Next day, the left-hand carb slide had freed a little more; not so the right-hand,

Giving the carbs a good coat of penetrant

Clamp bolts finally off


These carbs are really manky and seized!


They really fought to stay on the bike

unfortunately. Starting at the handlebars, I released the top end of the two cables from the throttle so both the carbs could be removed from the head, complete with cables. The clamp bolts were given a good spraying of penetrant and eventually loosened and removed, but the carbs were a little more than a tight fit on their stubs; they came off eventually with a lot of spray, rotate and jiggle, complete with the throttle cables.

The choke, or rather enrichment assemblies, came away from the carbs easily and were bagged up and put away. The complete and still-seized carbs were submerged in my wash tank in a mixture of petrol and diesel and left to soak for another day or two.

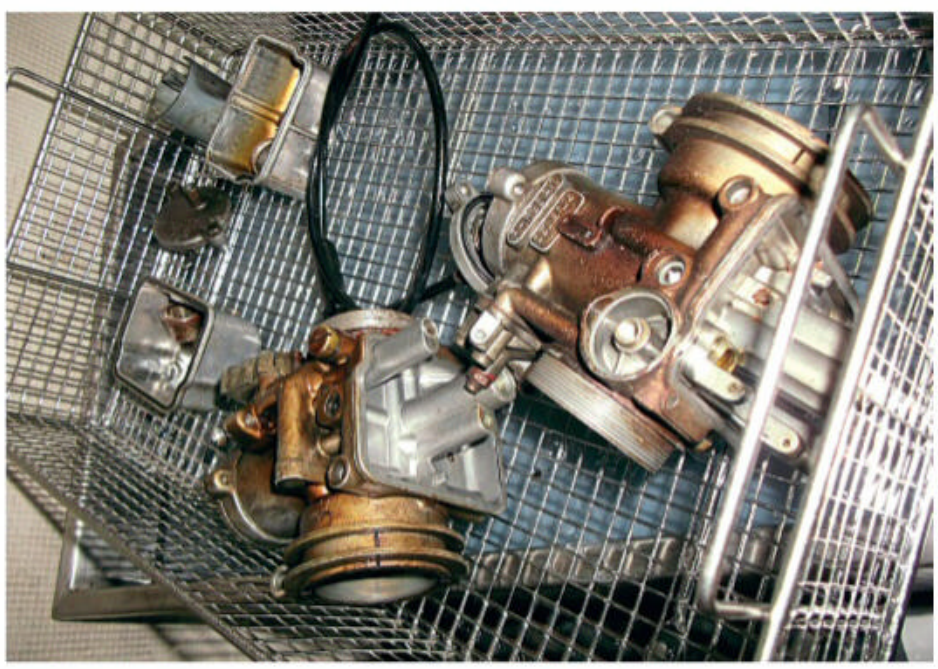
After their initial dose of carb cleaner and a lengthy soak in the wash tank, I disassembled both of the carbs as far as I could without risking breaking anything, as these Dellorto carbs were particularly expensive.

Finally they're on the bench

Next, to remove the choke assembly

Into the wash tank of petrol/diesel

Stripping as much as possible



Ultrasonic cleaner helped...

But the second go was better

The right-hand slide was still stuck in the carb, the left had come free, and some of the jets still didn't want to move.

Both partially assembled, or disassembled, carbs were put into the ultrasonic cleaner for a hot wash and buzz for an hour or so (I use the ultrasonic bit on about a 50% duty cycle). After the initial time in the ultrasonic cleaner, the right-hand slide came free, and while the carbs were still warm, they were completely disassembled of all jets, O rings, etc. and then returned to the ultrasonic tank again for another cleaning session.

After ultrasonic cleaning, the carb parts were all rinsed of with carb cleaner, and internal drillings blown through and rebuilt with new seals and gaskets. New main and pilot jets and float needle valve assemblies were also added, the old jets being so gummed up that they refused to clear.

Everything was set back to standard settings, i.e., float heights and mixture screws.

Once reassembled, the carbs had the throttle cables and choke assemblies refitted and were returned to the bike, and the throttle cables connected and balanced. It still needed the ignition system looking at, so I can't say it started straight away.

What I can say is, though, it appears that barn find dust or shed dust is more corrosive and seizes things more than road dirt – so running and riding bikes does less damage than standing them up. Where's my keys?

PQ were put into the ultrasonic cleaner for a hot wash and buzz for an hour or so; I use the ultrasonic bit on about a 50% duty cycle. CBG

Finally, some carbs to rebuild

And a few new parts

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Christmas Gift Guide

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

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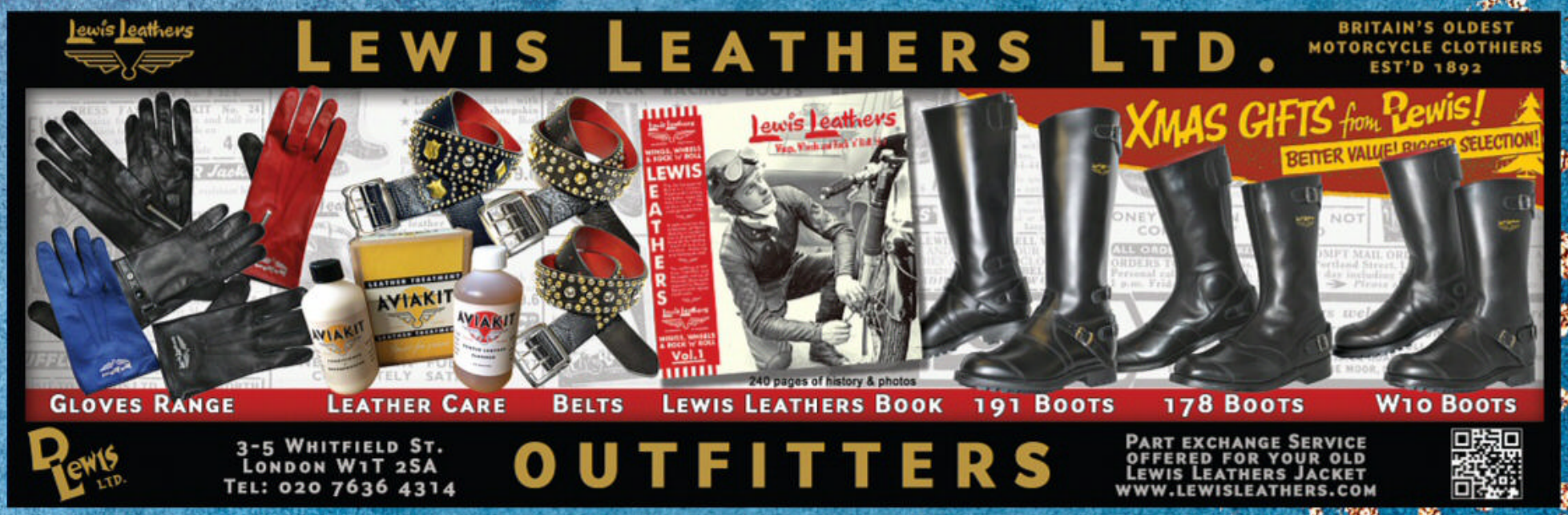
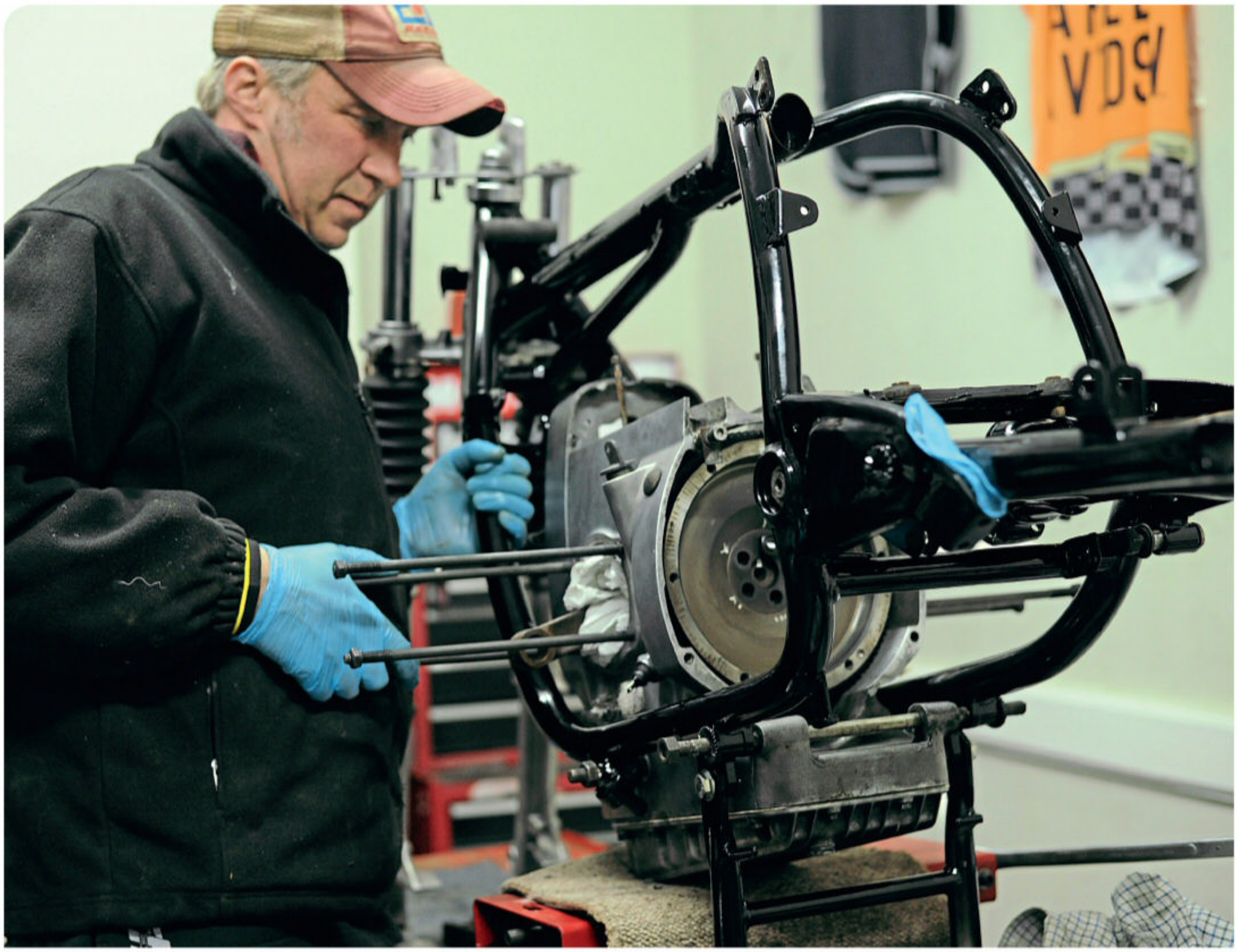




Project BMW

Matt is slowly putting the R100 back together and – whisper it – hasn't come across any issues yet...

Painting or powdercoating the frame and chassis parts feels to me like crossing a major line in the sand on a project. The dirty stripping down, the exploration of a new bike, how things go together and what needs fixing have hopefully been dealt with. You should now have notes, copious notes (yet never enough), photos for reference, some parts that need work and some shiny parts.

And a manual or manuals, especially for bikes of the era where torque settings are specified and not guessed. Manuals plural? For the BMW I have a Haynes, which shows me UK spec bikes and those jobs it doesn't cop out from by saying 'take to a dealer'; it is easy to understand but is otherwise very disappointing. The American Clymer manual is three times the thickness, covers everything you'll ever need, including dealer-only areas like the final drive (you have to ask why is it suggested to be only worked on by a dealer, with special tools and special training) but boy, do they go on. And on. You can't actually find what you need. So get both.

BMW frames are really tricky to stand up, so the forks and yokes were first to make it more stable. As the frame was painted, the paint rests in the threads, so I lubed and tapped them but didn't have one large enough for the swingarm pivot, so I had to use cutting oil and the pivot itself, a little at a time.

Then, once fitted, I couldn't find a socket to torque the pivot nut up, so I machined one up in the lathe to fit. Most chuffed was I when it worked!

I was busting to get the engine in, but before, I had to put the new rear crankshaft seal in. The old one prized out easily and I checked the thrust washer, which looked fine. There are two seal options; a modern one that suits regularly ridden bikes and the older one, which is happier if left. I chose the modern one in the hope of giving me an excuse to ride!

So I went a-hunting for a suitable drift and found a perfect safety valve end from a steam boiler, and covered it in a glove and tape to protect the seal.

I have no seal press, so I used a hammer, making sure it was perfectly seated all round. Great, now I can fit the flywheel and clutch – oh, the bolts are

A perfect drift for crank seal, made from a steam engine part...

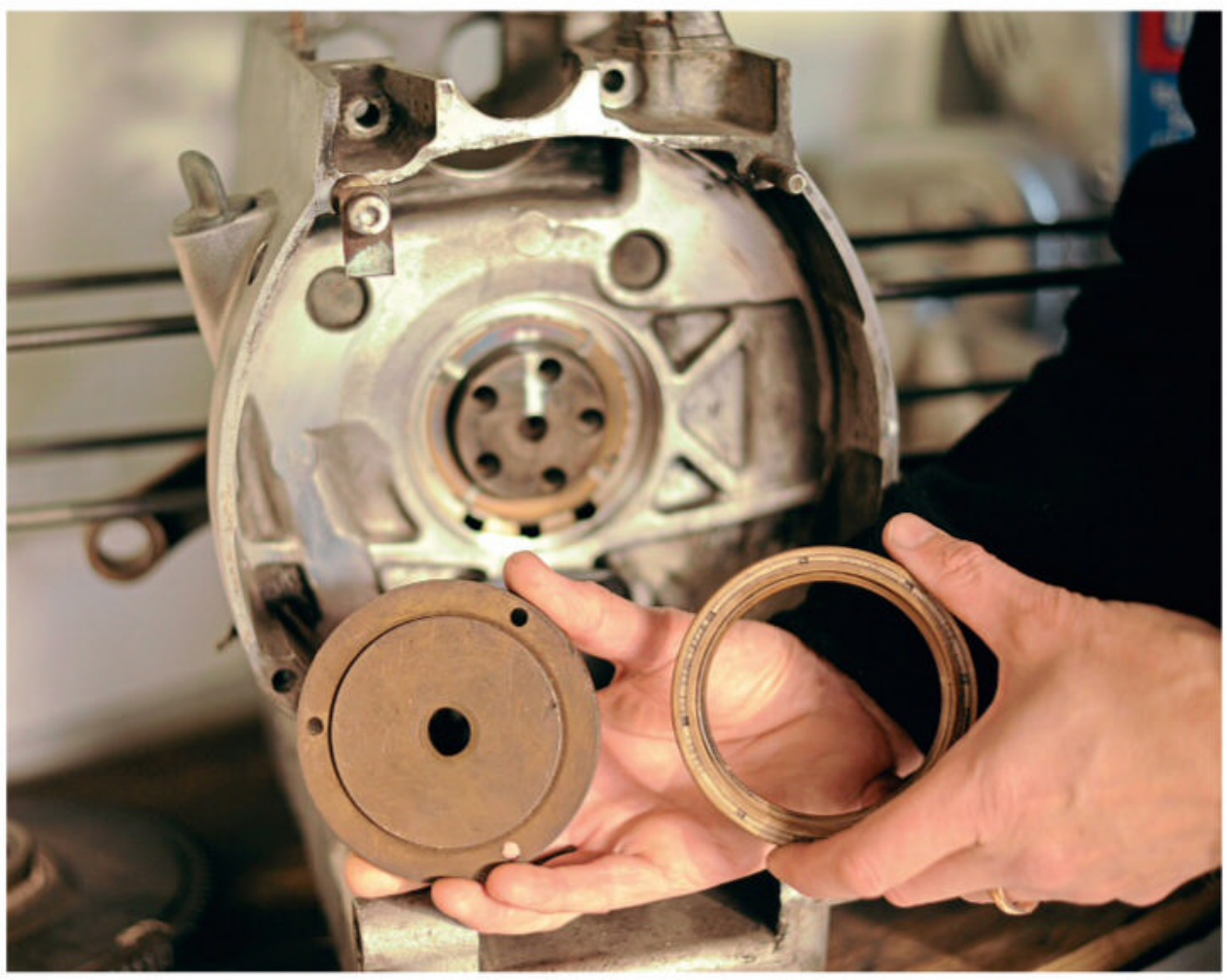
Tapping threads after the frame has been painted is immensely satisfying

Starter goes in – it's a massive thing! Fitted new brushes

First go at using vinegar to clean up original fastenings

stretch bolts and need replacing. Damn. Still, engine could go in. Cover the frame to protect the paint and wiggle and wobble and wibble again until it lines up with the mounting holes. Although someone helping would have been a massive help, BMs are easier than most – I just need to work out the spacers and stands, as I will need them soon. The engine mounting bars (with threads at each end) are a really tight fit in both engine and frame, so had to be rubbed down and greased so they would not be so stubborn to remove next time – if there is a next time.

After that, it's putting stuff on, like the starter motor. I don't remember the bolts being such a tight fit that it requires dislocating your fingers… I also popped the lovely-looking final drive onto the swingarm, including the special Castrol Molub-Alloy or T White paste (other makes are available), which helps protect the driveshaft splines. It's so nice to be surrounded by parts that are largely ready to refit. And nuts and bolts? Depending on size, it's about half-new, half-original. I'm enjoying this. CBG



BMW owners and forums love 'special tools'... but you don't always need them

Make your own basic workshop tools

Sometimes, you can make your own tools for an easier life. Here's two Oli made...

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLI

Homemade shock absorber compressors

I BOUGHT A USED PAIR OF KONI DIAL-A-Ride shock absorbers for my Morini. I spotted that the adjuster ring on one of the shocks had a crack in it, but the seller very kindly rummaged around in a box of spares and found another usable example and sent.

The problem was going to be fitting it. To get the old adjuster off and the new one on meant removing the spring, and to remove the spring I needed to compress it, so that the top collet ring could be taken off.

I needed a spring compressor to do this. A bit of research indicated that while cheap car-type compressors were available, they wouldn't fit the much smaller bike shocks. The only bike spring compressors I could find were from Sealey or Laser and cost about £50, the same as I'd actually paid for the shocks themselves. As I was unlikely to use the compressors more than a few times, it seemed a little expensive. And so I made my own – for a tenth of the price.

WHAT I NEEDED:

- One 12in (30cm) piece of 3mm thick angle iron: £3 from eBay.
- Two 9in (20cm) lengths of M6 studding: £1.50 from my local hardware store.

And two items from the boxes of stuff in the shed:

- Six M6 nuts.
- Two large heavy-duty ratchet ties.

WITH AN UNPOWERED GARAGE, I USED THE FOLLOWING TOOLS:

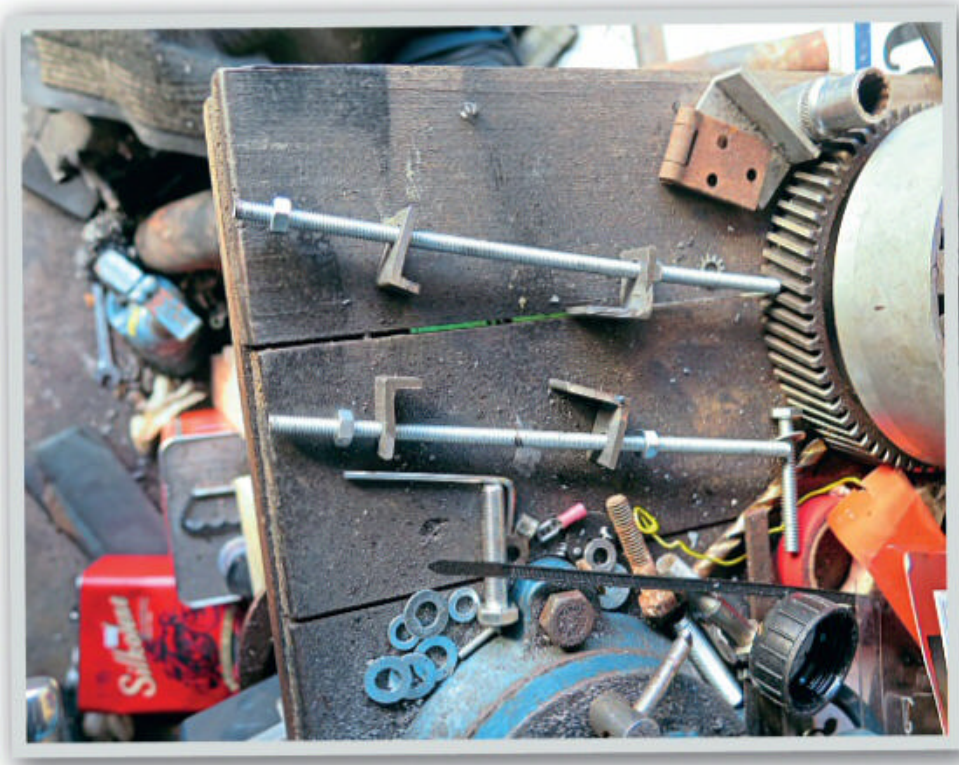
- A battery-powered angle grinder.
- A hacksaw.
- A battery-powered drill and bits.
- A 10mm spanner.
- A small file for dressing the worst of the burrs.

First, using my lack of precision engineering skills to their finest extent, I used the angle iron to make the hooks to slot into the spring. Using the angle grinder, I cut four slices from the angle iron. I could have done this with a hacksaw, and it would have been prettier, but it would have taken a while.

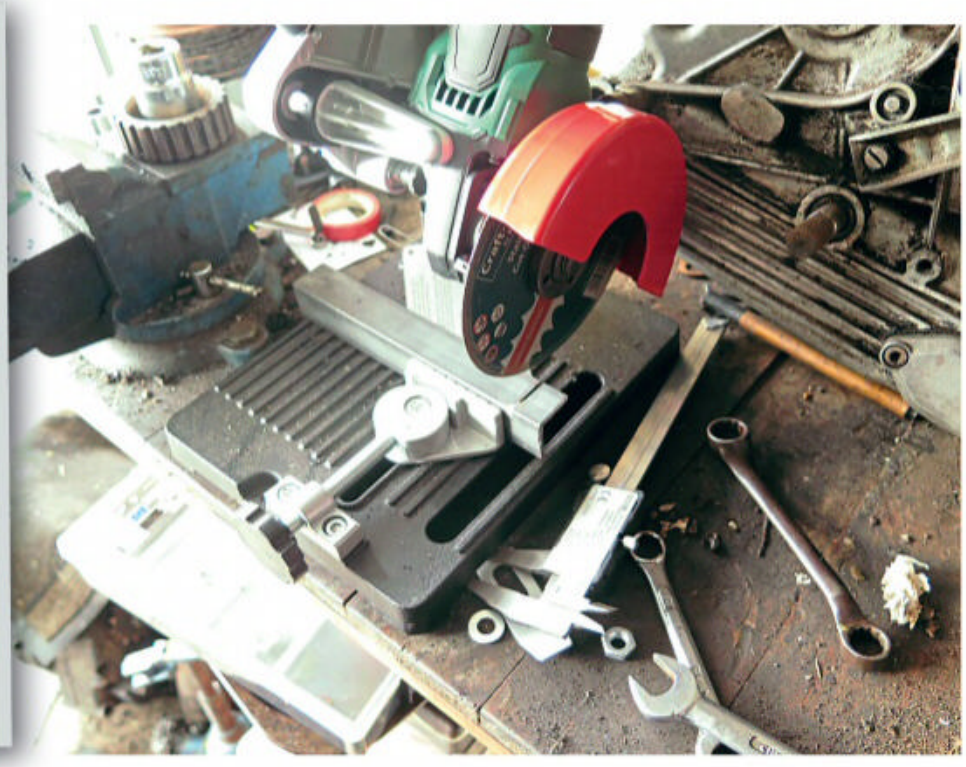
One side was 1cm, while the other was slightly narrower to get it inside the spring. On attempting to fit the hooks, it was clear that they would not fit between the damper body and the spring at the bottom, so these were trimmed on one side by half with the hacksaw.

Then I drilled a 6.5mm hole in each hook on the longer, wider section.

The offending broken rings



Look what I made!

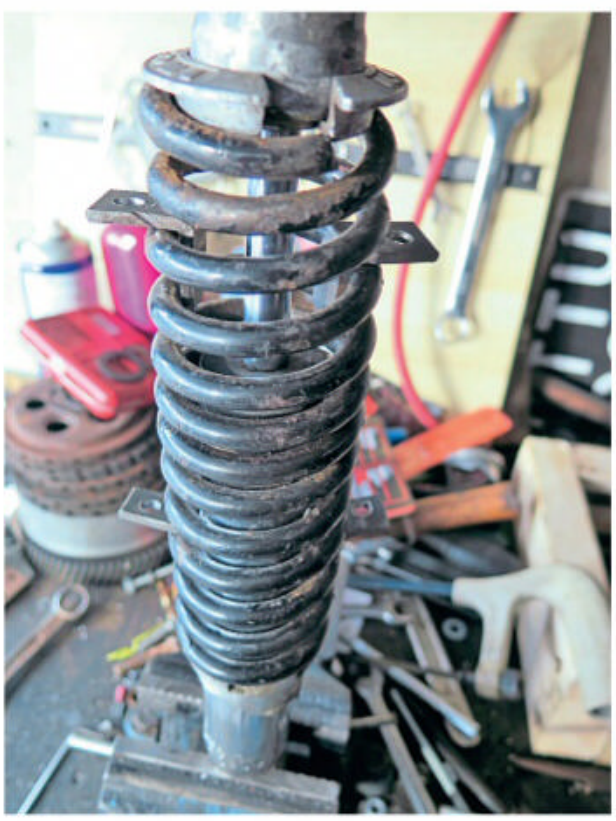


Using a grinder to cut the angle iron

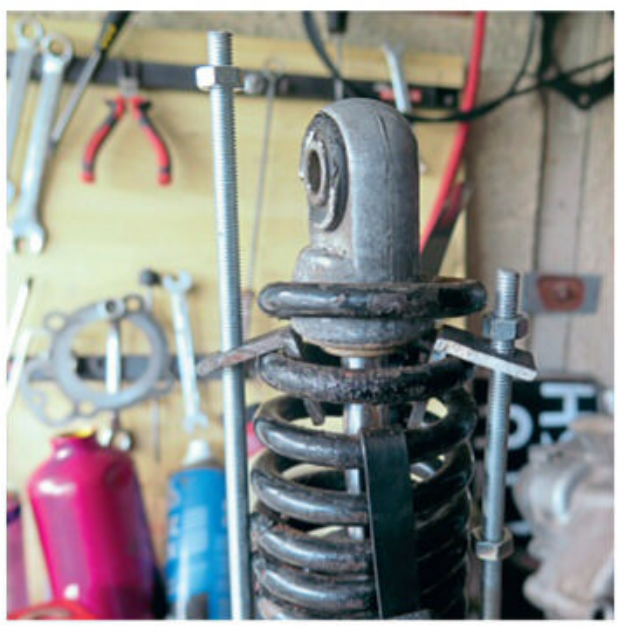
Next, drilling the holes

Safety cable ties attached

And then evenly tighten



Hooks had to be inserted first...



...Then the bar added

Look – I did a thing!

As a safety measure, in case the hooks or studding failed – and because I didn't want the spring leaping into the air and punching a hole in the roof or bouncing off my forehead, I put the two cable ties inside the spring on either side to hold the compression, if only to delay disaster if it happened.

I clamped the shock into my vice, and then found I couldn't get the hooks into the spring with the threaded bar attached, so the hooks were inserted into the spring first.

Then I span one of the M6 nuts onto each threaded bar and inserted each one through the holes in each bottom hook, and then span the other nut against the top hook. I experimented with adding an extra nut to clamp the bottom hook together on the studding, but in the end it was simply fiddly and unnecessary. The damper body did the job of holding the hook in place just fine.

Then, one turn at a time, I turned the top nuts and the spring compressed. As it did so, I tightened up the ratchet ties a click at the time.

It took some time to wind the springs down, but it was methodical rather than difficult. This went on until the top collet could be popped out and the spring was free. Well, free-ish.

I had hoped that the spring would lift out with the compressors in place, but sadly the top hooks fouled the top of the shocks, so the top nuts had to be removed and the hooks extracted first, with the ratchet ties holding the springs in compression.

And there it was, all stripped, with the ratchet ties doing a fine job of keeping the spring compressed. The adjuster was popped into place, the spring replaced, the compressors did their job again, the collet was re-fitted and all was good.

The other shock was also taken apart as the Dial-a Ride adjuster was chewed up and I hoped to replace it, but I couldn't work out how to get it out without completely dismantling the shock absorber, so that will be a task for another day. If anyone has done this and would like to tell me how it's done, please get in touch.

Doing the second shock took a quarter of the time of the first.

If I was to make them again, or I needed to compress bigger springs I'd use larger studding, just for the extra rigidity

And thanks to the miracle of Man Maths, I'm £45 better off.

Making a basic engine stand

One of the trickier issues when working on a bench is stopping the engine from moving about. Motorcycle engines are lumpy things, and wobble about a lot.

The obvious answer is to buy an engine stand. Sealey make a couple, a free standing one for large multi-cylinder engines, and a smaller bench top unit which is very smart. Both of these cost around £120. The other thing is that these stands really suit bikes with horizontally split crankcases, and the Morini mill, like British engines, is vertically split. You can clamp a horizontally split engine into the Sealey stands and take the bottom of the crankcase off. You can't do that as easily with a vertically split case.

There is also a template to build a swinging engine stand for the Morini, but requires a lot of box-section steel, the ability to cut said box-section steel accurately, and some skill with a welder. None of which I possess.

But I did need to stop the engine from wobbling about, so I made something basic out of wood instead.

For this I needed a 2.4m length of 2in x 4in studding from a builder's merchants (£9), a handful of corner brackets (£1.99), a saw, a drill and some long woodscrews.

While I'm not great with metal, wood and I have an agreement: "I don't touch it, and it doesn't split." So, my lovely wife, who can knock out a raised bed for the allotment from scrap bits of decking in a trice, was roped in on the promise that she could have any of the studding that was left over.

I measured the length of the crankcases, added a couple of cm, and she sliced off two lengths.

The I measured the width of the bottom of the cases, and she cut those off to length too.

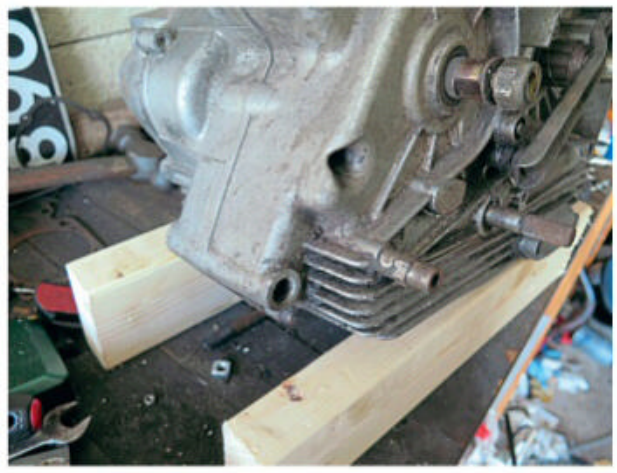
Then I screwed together the four bits of wood into a frame, using the corner brackets to hold everything in place and the woodscrews to firm it all up.

Frame made, I dropped the bottom end into the frame. It's a near perfect fit, and no longer moves about at all, the various sticky-out bits holding it in place. I can put the engine on its side too and it doesn't budge. And because it's made from softwood, there's no danger of the frame damaging the casings.

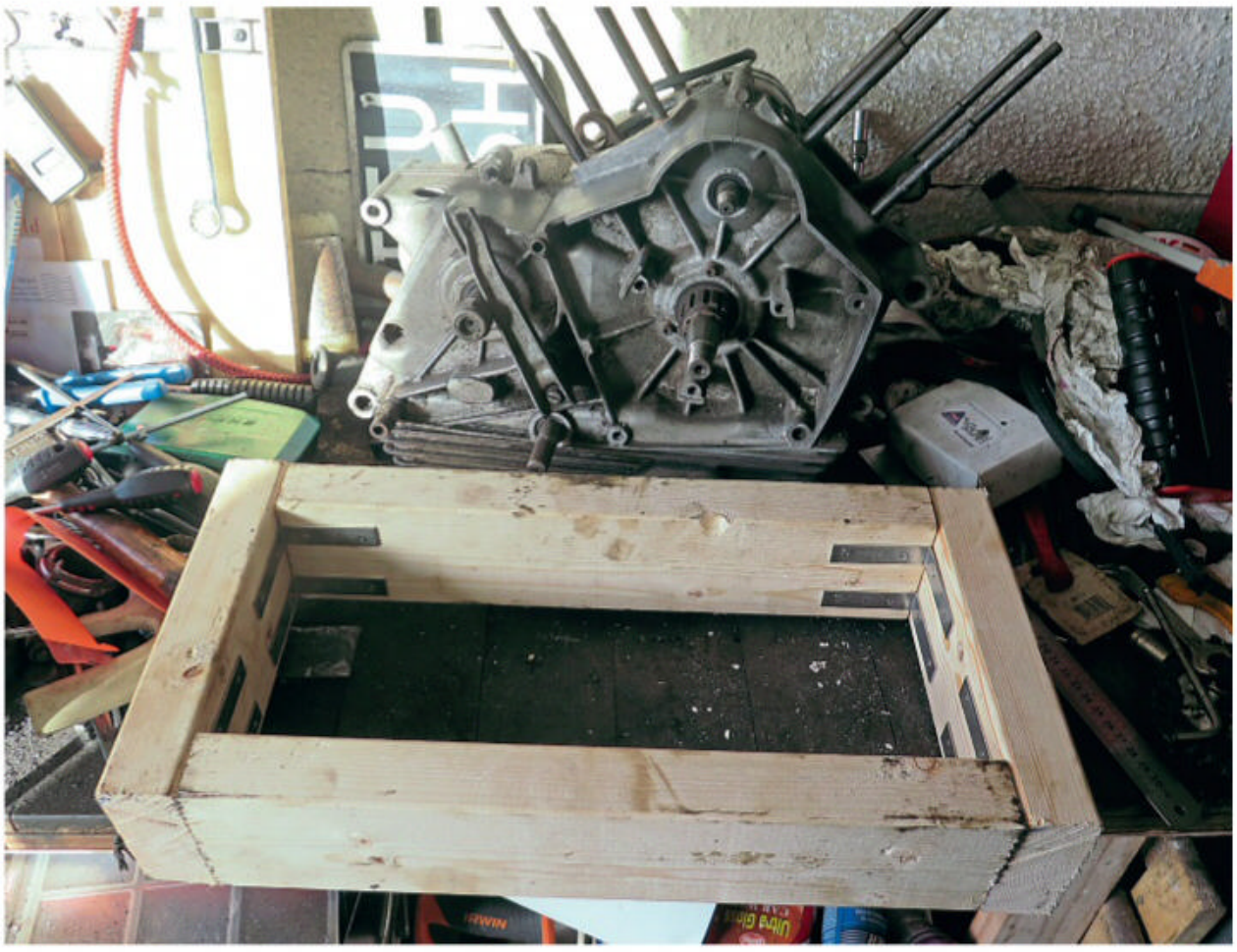
It's not as pretty as a nice metal stand, but it does work, cost around a tenner, and would be even cheaper if you are friends with a builder.

And doing the Man Maths again, I'm now £155 better off, so I can buy something shiny. CBG

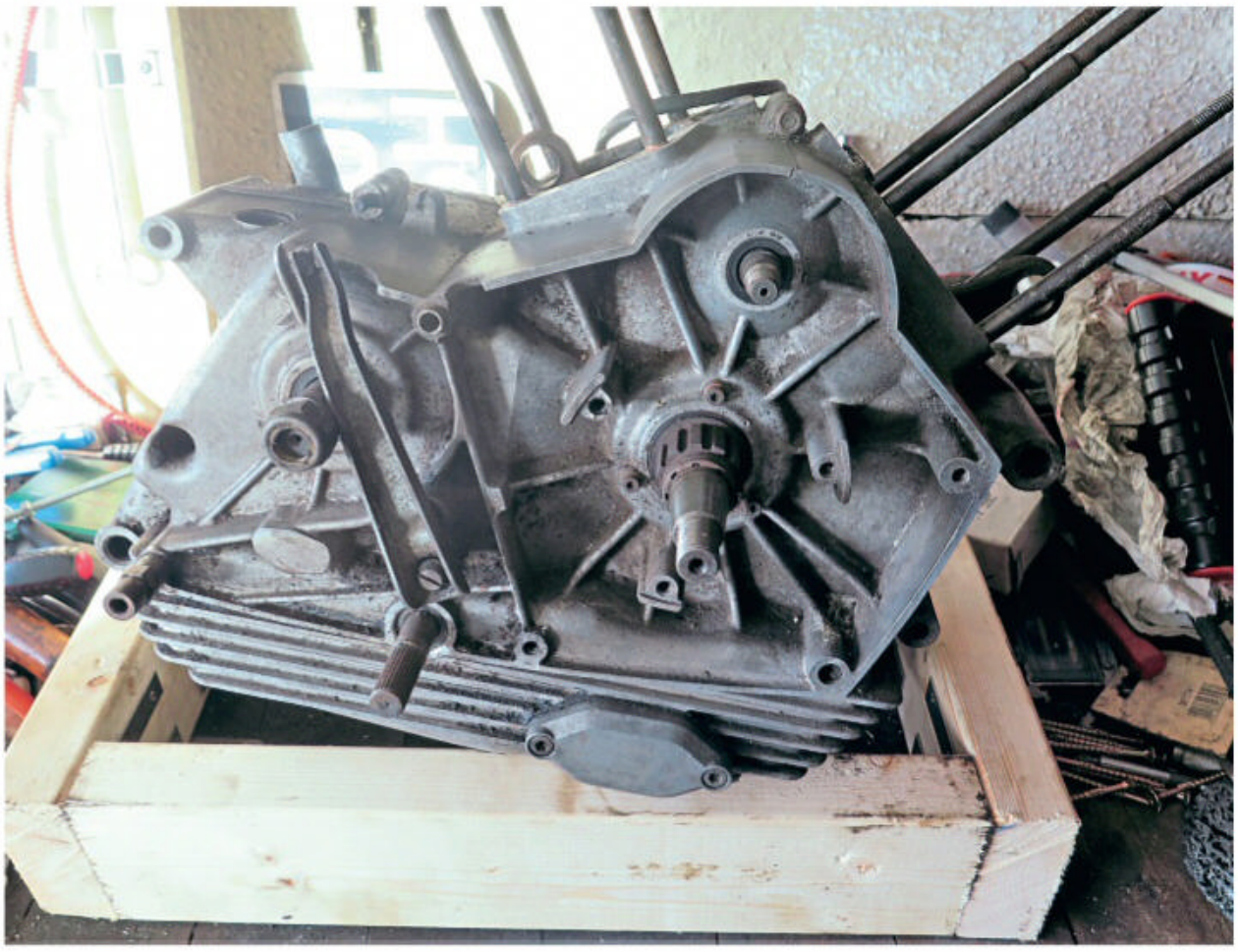
Measure twice, get lovely wife to cut...



Adding a couple of cm gives breathing space



Corner brackets are all you need



It's not pretty, but it works

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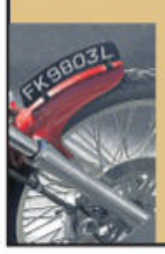

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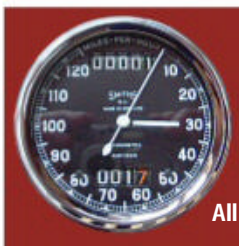

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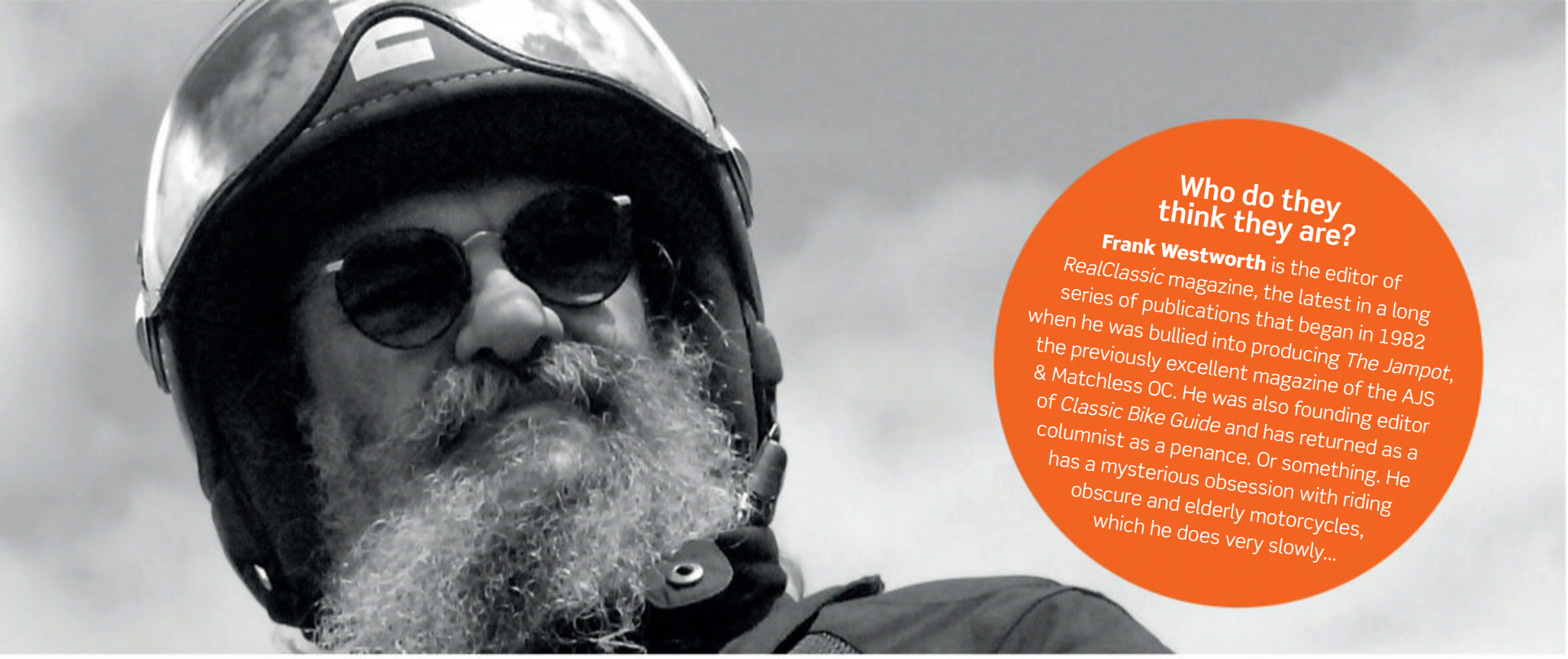

Who do they think they are?

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...

Famous Last Words

The power. The glory. How to have fun with a Coltish 10bhp...

Picture this: a large fellow on a small motorcycle, bowling down a Herefordshire lane at maybe 35mph. The machine, although a lightweight, does not look particularly small – the heavy rider does not in fact dwarf it and looks completely comfortable. Welcome to the high-performance world of the Ariel Colt.

One of this life's many entertainments is the enthusiast's view of motorcycle performance. When I admitted to a friend that my next loaner bike – the next test victim, if you like – was this diminutive Ariel, he nodded sagely and managed to look a tiny bit impressed. Which was impressive in itself, really. I was unsurprised by his politeness, but rather taken aback when he murmured that at least I should be able to keep up with the traffic on the Colt. Unlike my one and only ride on another Ariel, the even more startling Pixie, when I struggled to keep up with energetic pedestrians. Character-building stuff, riding a Pixie. Respect to those who do, and who claim to enjoy the experience.

Ariel's Colt – a handsome machine in the great Selly Oak tradition of handsome motorcycles – develops a claimed 10bhp at a claimed 5600rpm, not that you can count those revolutions, due to there being no tachometer available. Not that it matters, either, because the 198cc tower of power lets its torturer know when it's had enough of ferocious rev hooliganery long before 5600rpm has been achieved – if it's even achievable, which I doubt.

Way back when (actually in 1955), the weekly motorcycle magazine *Motor Cycling* thrashed its test Colt mercilessly – in a pudding basin, knee-length riding coat and stout brogues kind of way. I doubt that *Motor Cycling* staff ever wore leather jackets or jeans. The result of this speed-crazed thrashing was a top speed of 63mph, although whether these were speedo readings or drag strip timing lights we will never know. But we can guess. Sixty-three. Think about this.

While you're thinking, let me ruin any rose-tinted fantasy notions that a chap – even a slight, svelte chap – can keep up with modern traffic on an Ariel Colt. Being of a slightly cynical nature, I have long suspected that my many friends who regale each other with their tales of derring-do aboard sub-200cc machines from the 1950s have a few screws loose in their memory banks. I'm also pathetically polite, so just smile encouragingly, nod my head a few times and dream of better days to come while pals describe Tarmac heroism aboard 200cc Panthers and Tiger Cubs. Actually, it is almost possible to be heroic on a Tiger Cub, but the experience is not for the faint of heart. High-speed heroism, that is, not feats of epic endurance.

I'm unsure what I'd expected from the Colt, to be fair. I'd certainly expected to enjoy the ride, and indeed I did, until the end. Returning the machine to its presumably proud owner involved a few miles along a fairly busy A-road, and it was not a pleasant experience. The machine was unencumbered by many modern fripperies, including a mirror, which is rarely much of a concern. However, as the Colt and I crested a gentle hill I became convinced that Something Awful was happening down below, deep in the bowels of the powerhouse. There was a considerable roaring, and Colts, as you know, do not roar. And then there came a mighty blast. The blast came from behind, so was not the Colt's 6v tinny hooter having a moment of exuberance. Had the bike worn a mirror, I would have looked in it. But it didn't, so I turned around to look behind.

Heroism takes many forms. If I wore a cap, I would doff it now in respectful sympathy with riders of machines like the Colt. My backward glance had revealed a Volvo. I recognised it instantly because the word 'Volvo' was maybe a yard behind my head. The word was affixed to the flat front of a colossal wagon, which was also maybe a yard behind my head. The driver of this behemoth was hooting, either in admiration of the handsome Ariel Colt or in irritation at the fact that he was stuck behind a lunatic and wanted to pass him. The correct interpretation was plain to hear.

The situation did not improve when, within only a quarter-mile or so, I needed to turn right into the Colt owner's driveway. Volvo with its irascible driver was still tight behind the Colt and its hapless rider. Among those modern fripperies which the Colt lacked was, of course, a set of flashing indicators. To ruin a perfectly good song lyric, you don't know what you've not got until you need it.

Ah, the classic delight. Wobbling across the highway in front of 42 tonnes (give or take) of irate Volvo, attempting to brake, blip the throttle to change down and indicate an imminent right turn by flailing an arm around is seriously stimulating. The true heroism of riding a small old bike on modern main roads. This is character-building indeed. But my chequebook is safe… CBG

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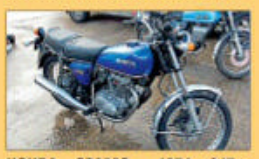

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