

bike

DECEMBER 1978 50p



**Speeding
in Scotland,
England,
France,
Italy
and America**

**XS1100 vs CBX1000
Giant Test**

bike

No. 69 DECEMBER '78

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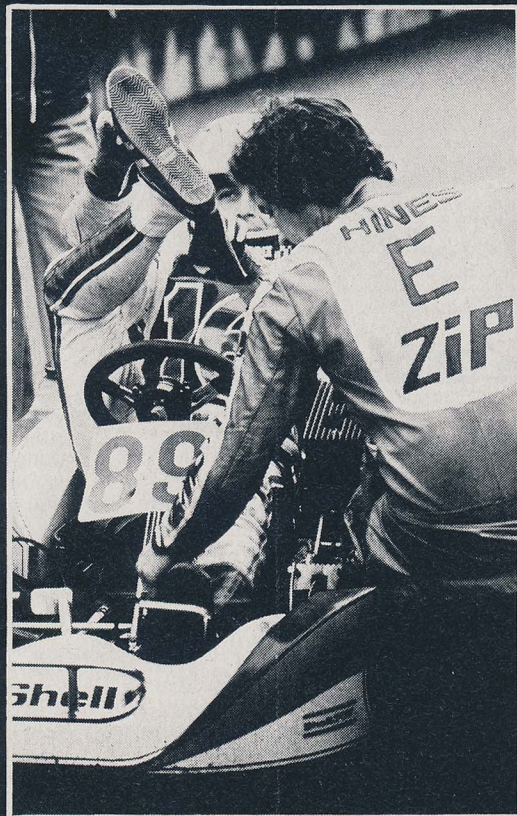
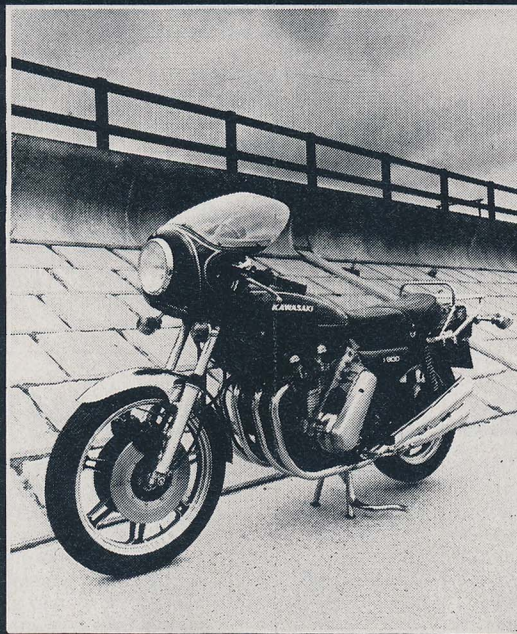
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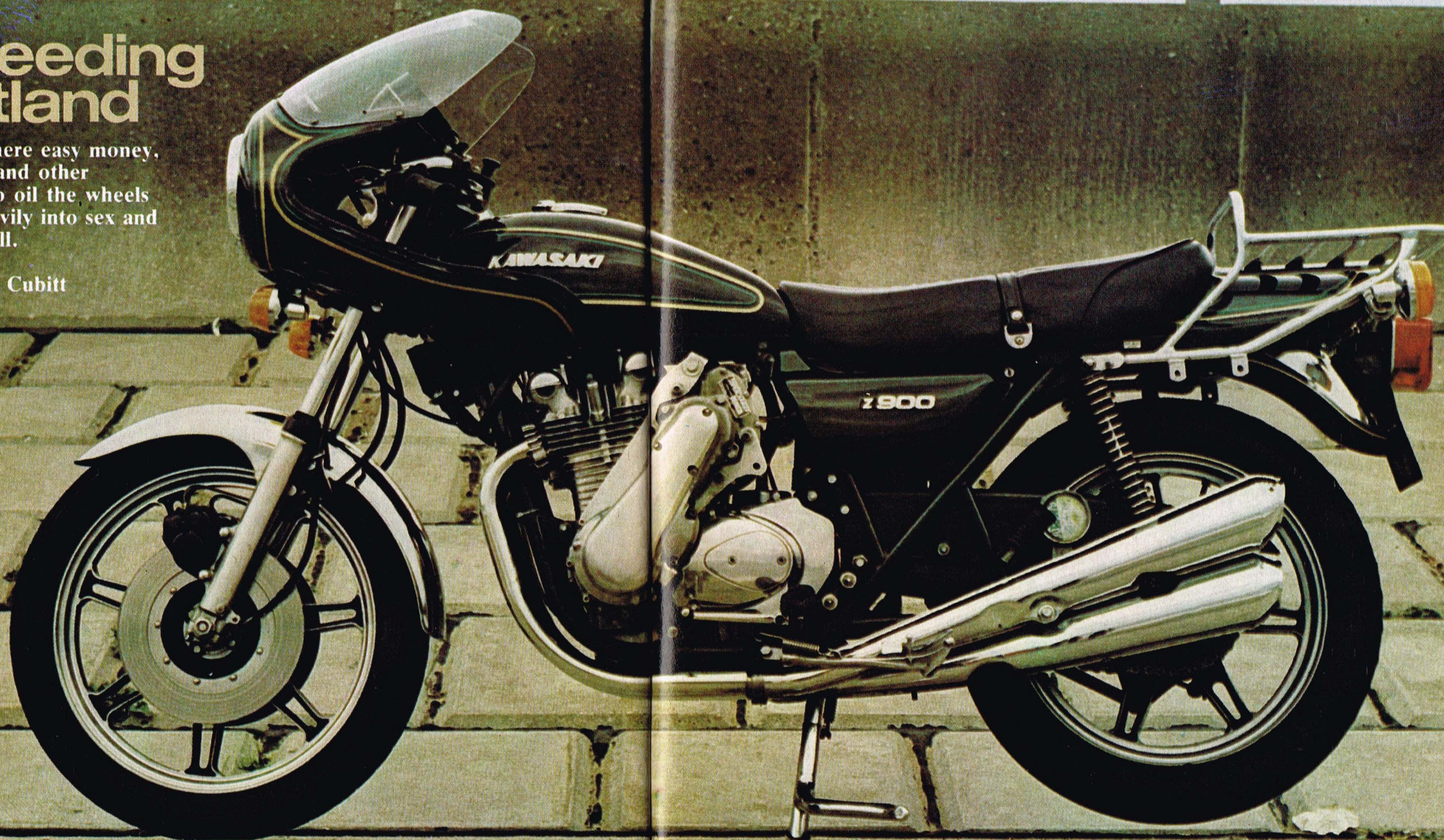
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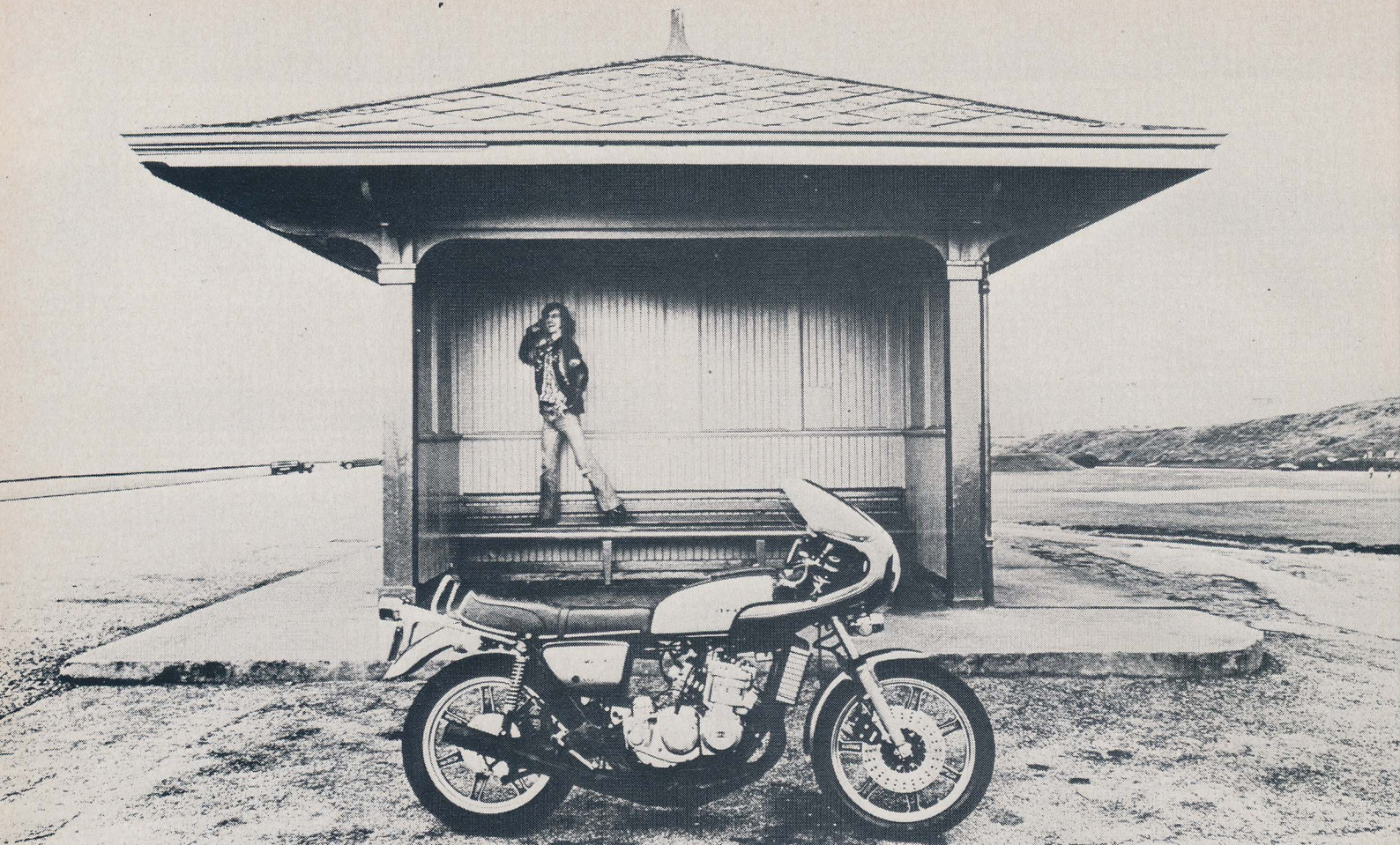
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Speeding In Scotland

Aberdeen is a city where easy money, big bad motorcycles and other stimulants combine to oil the wheels of some nice folk heavily into sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll.
Story Peter Watson
Photography Duncan Cubitt





I forget precisely what we are supposed to be spending Britain's North Sea billions on these days. There was, you may recall, a Great Debate on this very subject a little while ago. Doubtless some solution to this imaginary problem will emerge from the government in time for the last few drops to be collected in a litre can and presented to the British Museum. Meanwhile one or two people in Scotland have worked out what they want to do with their particular slice of the oil bonanza. They plan to spend it on very, very fast motorcycles. And since they already possess some quite indecently quick machinery I suspect that *Bike's* visits to Aberdeen and the story of some simple Scots folk which began in October '77 has some paper to cover before it's finished.

Keith Gray's Suzuki water-pumper does about fifteen miles to the gallon. Occasionally he can squeeze 20mpg out of this particular GT750, which pleases him immensely. After all, when he first got it together in its present form he had trouble making it from one gas station to the next. Five miles to the gallon is a little excessive, even for a two-stroke.

'What d'you actually do?' I asked him. 'What's your job?'

'Who, me?'

'Yeah.'

'Ummm, well . . . I'm retired. I work on the oilfield . . . but I haven't done anything for about a year. I'm going back now, I'm skint. I'm a materials man, like a glorified storeman . . . done a bit of radio operatin', medic, crane operatin' — I used to do a bit o' that. It's all right, it's very guid money. That's the only reason I do it.'

Well, there must be worse reasons for getting stuck on a festering old jack-up rig. Like twelve grand a year could convince me that it could be a

Speeding In Scotland



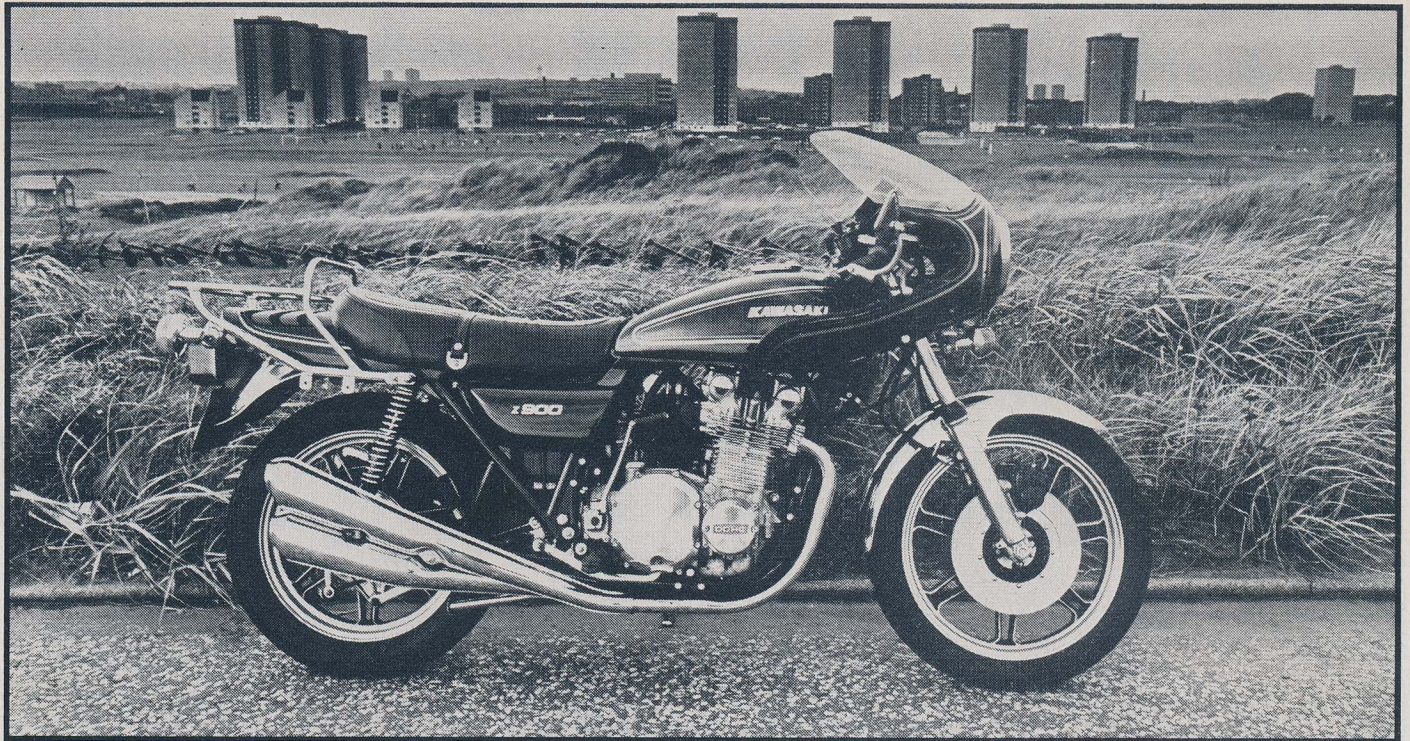
very good idea. But while Keith was abroad last time, he left his kettle in the capable hands of a mate. He crashed it, of course.

Not that it was his fault. It was the usual story: blind car driver turns right, smack goes Suzuki. But so overcome by the harangue delivered by Keith's bruised buddy was our four-wheeled friend that he almost begged him to take 400 green ones to make it better. With the crash and the cash — as with *Bike's* infamous Project GT750 — came a plan.

Keith despatched his '76 GT750A motor to Messrs Barton, well known as constructors of much naughtiness based on Suzuki two strokes. In return for 400 notes they tuned the 750 to 'GP' spec which Keith reckons is about halfway between full race and clubman's. In addition to the barrels, pistons and associated wickedness, Barton turned the gearbox into a close ratio cluster by lowering fifth and moving first and second closer together. In the process Keith lost his kickstart and the shaft is blanked off.

The carbs are a thirsty-looking trio of Amal Concentric MkIIs which came complete with no throttle cables. And just to check if Keith was awake they'd fitted the one with the choke control on it in the centre. Slightly fazed by this attempt to test his sanity our hero cast around for a suitable cable set-up, also opting to retain the stock oil injection system — which therefore required a linkage — as well as mixing two-stroke lube in the fuel tank at a ratio of 50:1. A Kawasaki KH500 was eventually persuaded to yield up the requisite lengths of wire, with the fires lit by a reliable Lucas Rita electronic ignition system.

Having got this far, there was no turning back. Recognising that the worst part — actually I think the whole thing is pretty nasty — of the GT750 frame is its swinging arm and the sloppy-



when-new bushes, Keith opted for a Dresda box-section rear fork with tapered roller bearings and a pair of Konis to keep it in line. The riding position, with the rear sets way back and that neat Rickman fairing and ace bars up front, is rather radical.

Altogether less successful than Barton's work is the Piper three-into-one exhaust system, an odd-looking addition when you consider that Keith has a set of pipes from Barton to go with the motor. A considerable amount of disgust was expressed at the system's lack of performance.

'It's leakin' and it's chokin' it, top end,' said Keith. 'You get to a hundred and ten and it just tails off . . . the good thing about the Piper, and about the only good thing, is that it's unscrapable. If you're scrapin' it, you're off the bike.'

Even so, it goes like a dingbat and Keith is pleased with the handling. 'Two up I think the handlin' is great for a Jap bike . . . it's hell of a light at the front end with the power on.' Not that stopping presents any problems with the patent Project GT750 mod-trailing calipers. 'I thought I'll just try it because I smashed the front end up and bought new forks, so I thought "what the hell"'. The guy who wrote that piece did point out that getting the brake pipes to line up was a hell of a hassle, but I got it sorted out: no great problem . . .'

Keith's bike looks mean. It's a bit of an ugly, loud-mouthed, sonofabitch really. The dribbling pipes contrast with the drilled discs and Campbray wheels, giving it a distinctly evil, 'used' look. You wouldn't cruise up and sneer for fear that he really had got the goods to back up that loudmouth exhaust. And he has, of course, But Dave Sleigh, a couple of years older than Keith at 25, has a slightly more restrained setup. From one side it just looks like a fairly cute and clean '76 Z900: Campbray wheels, ace bars and a Rickman fairing sprayed to match the rest of the bike, Dresda swing arm, Girlings, carrier, but still the original paintwork, exhaust system. Pretty dull, really . . .

Until you go round the other side. Then you stop, stare and think. Remember Ian Kirk's 1132cc Kawasaki motor from *Oil City Slickers* in

Speeding In Scotland

Top: Dave Sleigh's highly deceptive 'Z900' street sleeper from the come on side. It looks so amazingly harmless from here but once you wind it up . . .

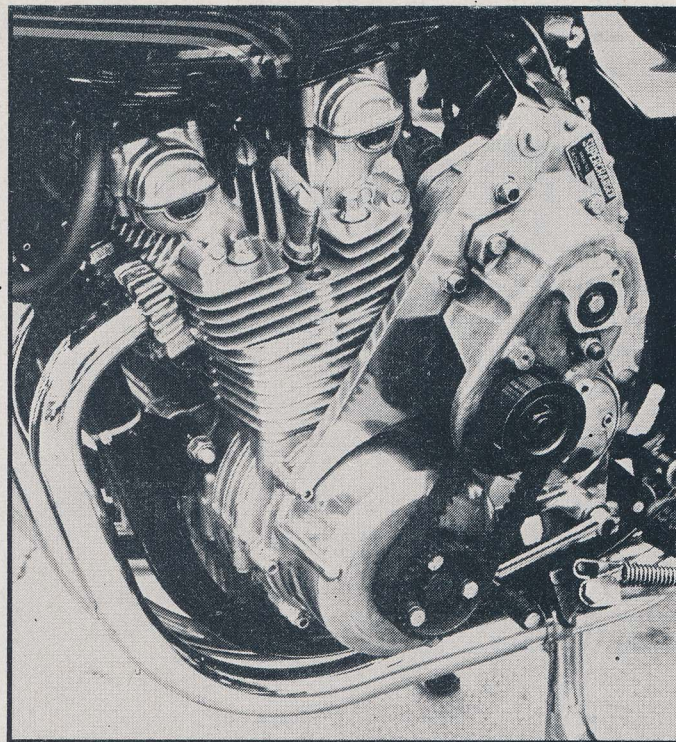
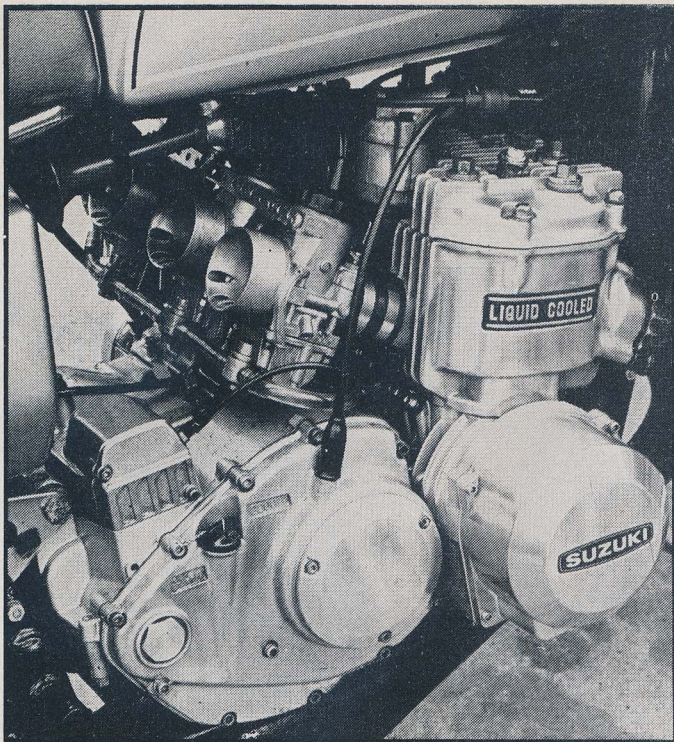


Above: after a thrash alongside the Dee, Bike hack Watson talks to Ian Kirk (centre) and Dave Sleigh (right). The ride and roads were so good, he nearly didn't come back. The only handling improvement would be an hydraulic steering damper, but the rest of the bike feels superb.

October last year? Remember how it was also fitted with an American Drouin supercharger matched up with an American Turbo-Pak manifold, ATP-modified 38mm Bendix carb and a Holley electric fuel pump? And how it really needed that Harris Performance frame to tame its incredible acceleration? Well, this is it, only this time it's in a standard frame apart from the Dresda swing arm and rather tired Girlings.

In fact it was Dave's bike we'd really come to see. For one thing I was fascinated to find out just how well — or otherwise — the stock chassis coped with that much power. And I was also eager to discuss with Ian, the British Drouin importer, what Tom Drouin had up his sleeve for '79. Originally it had looked as if the man was going to come up with a more conventional Roots-type positive displacement supercharger for '78, but Drouin abandoned that prototype and is instead working on another production supercharger of the simpler centrifugal type, but this time taking the drive not off the crankshaft via toothed belt, but off the back of the clutch by gear. More importantly, these new kits should feature a maximum boost pressure of 12psi for street use with a massive 55mm injector, or 24psi for the drags with a gargantuan 70mm injector. Naturally, Ian plans to try the latter kit in a road bike . . .

These new supercharger kits should cost between £600 and £700 and if Ian's setup is anything to go by, they're worth every penny. This particular unit has covered over 7,000 miles and shows no sign of losing its edge if my arms are any judge. The Drouin system employs a turbine unit in a turbocharger complete with a vaned impeller in magnesium which is capable of revving up to 56,000rpm. This runs on sealed bearings as does the rest of the deal which is mechanically driven from the left hand end of the crank. From this location a toothed belt and pulleys take the power to a countershaft and flat belt which runs directly round the impeller spindle. To get more or less boost you tighten or slacken this final belt. The current unit will show 10psi on the gauge hidden inside Dave's Rickman fairing, and that's plenty for the road.



Hurting down the magnificent long straights of Deeside, blower whistling along at 5psi, I was reminded once more of the supercharger's major advantage over an exhaust-driven turbo — basement torque. 'You've got the power of a drag bike with the torque of a Harley,' says Dave Sleigh. 'It's an ideal combination for touring, actually...' As an eerie stillness seemed to fall over the Sunday morning landscape I thought about Dave's comments on the roll-on power in top. 'It's the most impressive thing about the engine,' he emphasised. 'The acceleration is incredible an' all, but the best thing is the top-gear pulling power. You hardly ever have to change down...'

But I'd been more than a little sceptical about Dave's handling claims. 'The handling is just purrfect. One hundred and thirty miles an hour and it's dead straight,' he claimed, even though he admitted that most people in the Island this year wanted to know why he'd stuck to the stock chassis. 'Well, most of 'em were pretty amazed. Most of 'em were surprised that anyone would be daft enough to put this into a standard frame...'

Saturday night I thought I'd cracked the secret of Dave's success. He turned up for the party carrying a bottle of Tequila and a bottle of Grenadine and by sunrise was well lit up. I could tell by then because I'd come down from the ceiling and my vision had almost returned to normal. Next morning in the hard sunshine Dave was still in one piece and I discovered that the bike really did handle.

I really can't explain it. Just like the night before, it was difficult to establish what was producing this weird effect. Suddenly Ian and I had started laughing, giggling and snickering almost uncontrollably. Tears ran unheeded down my face in the kitchen as we pondered the source of this marvellous transformation. But like the Z900's enhanced handling, it was difficult to pin down. Spinning on a strange mix of a Dunlop Red Arrow up front and a rather worn Avon Roadrunner at the rear, it stuck to the road with only a momentary flick of the bars as the front end lifted over a bump. I suspect it was

Left: Barton-tweaked GT750 features gaping, gulping Amal MkIIs, close-ratio box, blanked-off kickstart shaft and bags of howling power until three - into - one chokes it off. Note air horns under tank.

Right: 1132cc Kawasaki drives blower via toothed belt off crankshaft pulley. Flat belt and counter-shaft can be seen inside. No positive oil feed is required as all the bearings are sealed type.



Above: my baby! Ian Kirk's latest motor will demonstrate just how good both RC Engineering and Drouin parts can be in combination. He's absolutely meticulous in the workshop, but out on the road it's a different matter. If anyone can get the best out of his own work, it's Ian.

a combination of the riding position, fairing and superbly tractable motor. All the torque of an XS1100 with none of the weight. The supercharger adds a mere one and half inches to the width of the Kawasaki motor and perhaps 35lb or so in mass. Naturally Dave runs an oil cooler, but riding the bike normally fuel consumption runs at normal, 45 mpg levels.

The reason for Dave's change of heart was in the Kirk garage — Ian's building up a Rickman for Stu Mackintosh, another oil industry employee, who lives in Majorca. As I write Ian is over there having ridden it out. Also in the garage along with Ian's MT125 Honda racer which he campaigns at Knockhill and his insurance broker's ancient Villiers motor — now there's a man you have to keep happy — is a very radical piece of work. For beside his Drouin blower business, Ian also imports Russ Collins' RC Engineering parts. He'll send you a list of goodies for big Kawas and Hondas if you drop him a line at Ian Kirk Engineering, 8 Hilltop Avenue, Cults, Aberdeen (0224) 48167.

This '76 Z900 motor was Dave Sleigh's, but he would hardly recognise it. The head houses two of the bumpiest cams I've ever laid eyes on. So radical is the grind on these RC400s that you have to relieve the camboxes of large amounts of alloy just so's they can spin over. They came complete with special lightweight buckets to prevent shim-spitting at high revs, an adjustable cam sprocket and heavy-duty cam chain. The head is ported and fitted with special RC hard alloy valve guides and tougher springs. With the motor out to 1200cc Ian has fitted 7.8:1 forged blower pistons ready for that 24psi supercharger. There are super-tough chrome-moly cylinder studs to cope with that sort of boost pressure and the clutch is a nine-plate affair. This device will be fitted into last year's nickelled Harris frame, modified to take at least a six-inch cut slick at the rear. From the slow smile that spreads over Ian Kirk's face as he talks about the RC Engineering parts or the Drouin blower, you just know that he's going to enjoy this one.

As for me, well, I'm booking my ride now.