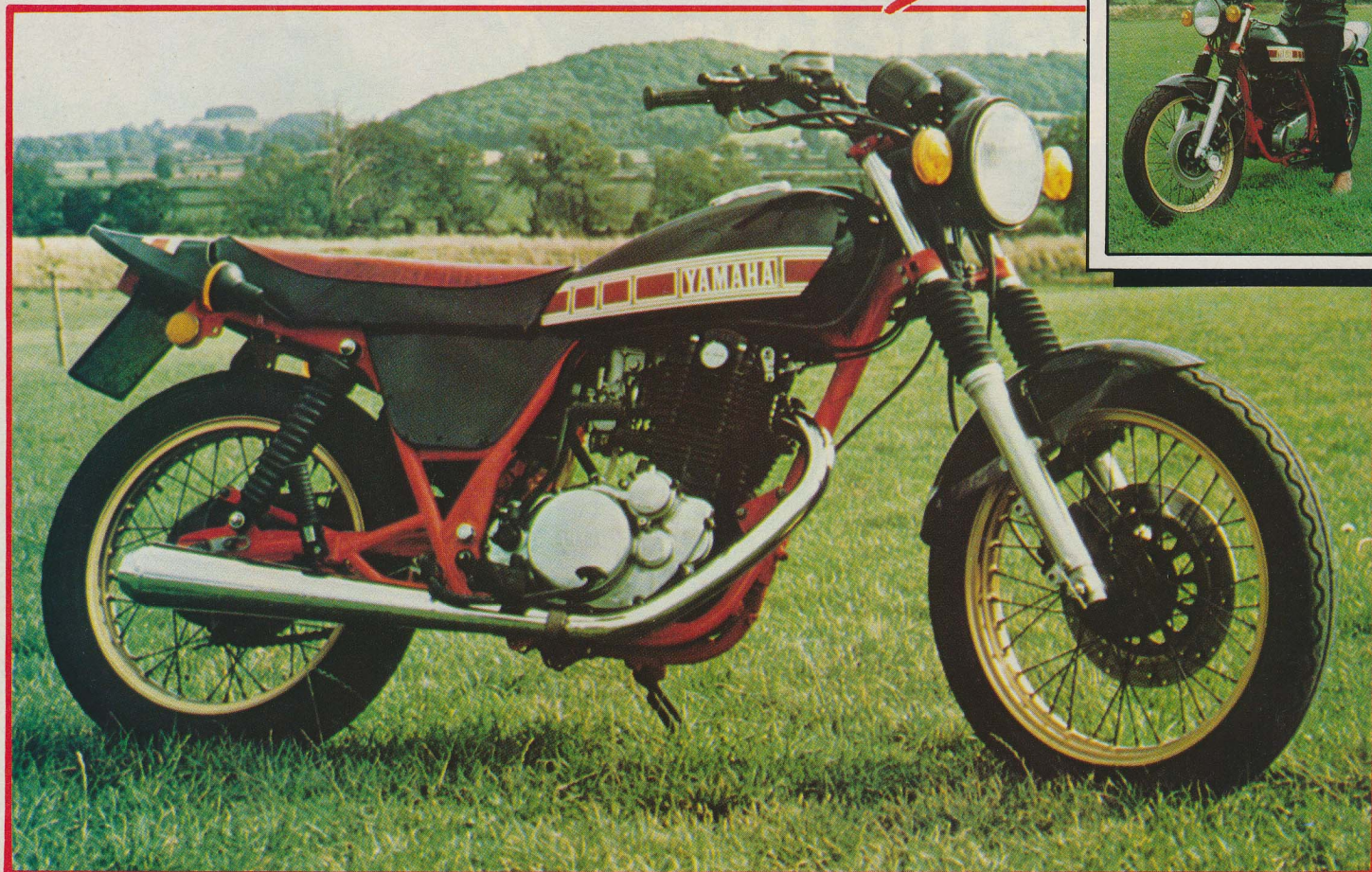
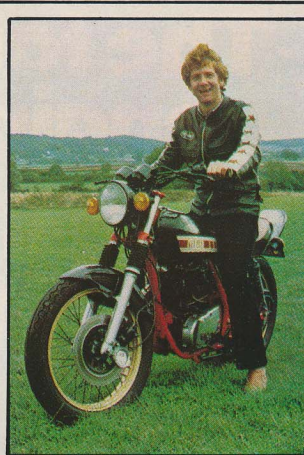


Me and my
Bike



PEPPERELL PUTS ON THE STYLE

It was a dropped valve on Rodney Pepperell's Yamaha SR500 which sparked off a bout of customising which took him some nine months to complete.

The bike was plonking up a steep Cornish hill in third gear when the valve broke. The machine was two-up but wasn't being revved particularly hard at the time — Rodney thought the cam chain had snapped.

A sneak look into the combustion chamber proved otherwise. The exhaust valve head had broken away from its stem, had forced its way through the thick crown of the piston and finished up all over the crankcase — a real mess!

When he had the engine out for stripping down, he decided he might as well remove the cycle parts and give the bike some style. One thing led to another, and before long he had renewed or spruced up virtually every part on the bike.

The frame was stove enamelled red, and the wheels were dismantled and the hubs and

spokes were stoved black and the rims gold. Rodney had wanted to have the wheels gold anodised but a flaw in the original SR wheels meant that this would have left a nasty stain in the finish. After stoving, the frame and wheels were lacquered.

The tank and ex-Z650 tailpiece were custom sprayed by a friend — Tacchi — and the seat had a facelift of red vinyl paint. The headlamp shell was stoved black and the bike was fitted with slightly narrower black handlebars, Yamaha 175 indicators, rear suspension gaiters and a 'TZ' front mudguard.

While the chassis took on a flat-tracking style, the engine wasn't exactly left sitting on the bench.

He had heard that other SR500s had suffered broken valves and someone suggested that this might be due to insufficient oil getting to the rocker box. To try to overcome this, he fitted a Protect hi-volume oil line.

Interestingly, he also heard that in Germany, SR500 engines are fitted with stronger

exhaust valves before being sold.

Rodney has had the SR's engine tuned. The cylinder was bored out 20 thou and fitted with a high-compression (11:1) piston. The original camshaft was junked for one with a slightly 'meaner' profile and an EssBee exhaust and K&N air filter fitted.

After lashing out £70 for a new 38mm Mikuni carburettor he found that the standard, slightly smaller carb, gave better results performance-wise. He waited so long for some of the engine parts on order that, in the end, he bought a secondhand engine for spares.

Thanks to Hardy Finishers of Sturminster Newton, the bike looks a good deal better than before, says Rodney, and the engine feels a lot more torquey with better top end power.

Rodney, who lives in Taunton, Somerset, now plans to start work on his next project — a Suzuki GS1000.