

# LOOKING LIKE

WOMEN'S motorcycle clothing is almost a contradiction in terms. I've talked to other ladies, read their letters, and they all say the same: why, with the increasing number of female motorcyclists do many bike clothing manufacturers ignore our needs.

Most manufacturers will say women can always buy the smallest man's size. OK, but not many women look like "small men" and who wants to look like a sack of spuds anyway. Most of the problems seem to be that clothing is made too big even for an average-sized girl.

As with anything, it is a matter of choice and opinion as to what you want to wear but I have managed to kit myself out fairly well over the last four years. Even so, I'm not entirely satisfied with what I have and also what is on the market.

## HELMETS

No matter who you are, you must have a helmet. Until I spoke to some other women, I must admit I didn't think this would be a problem area. Unfortunately, even with the smallest of full-face helmets, many girls still find them too large.

When I wrote to one company asking why they didn't make their full face helmets in smaller sizes, I received the reply: "We manufacture small sizes in our jet style helmets, which we find are normally suitable for the person and/or lady who require a smaller size than normal."

Not a very satisfactory reply. I wouldn't like to have to wear an open face helmet *all* the time, but I can appreciate the economics of trying to please the most common head sizes. I wear a Griffin Clubman which I have found to be excellent. Quite a few other women I've seen seem to wear this make. I have also tried the Owen and Bell Star, both of which fitted me OK.

If it's full face you want and really cannot find one small enough to fit, then it might be worth your while

## Motorcycling gear specially made for women has traditionally been in short supply — Rosemary Swindells describes what's suitable for feminines

contacting either Bell Helmets or Owen Helmets who both offer a made-to-measure service.

As for open face, there is no problem. There are plenty of small sizes to be found. I have a Centurion for off-road riding and my friend wears a Kiwi.

## LEATHER JACKETS

About the easiest item of clothing to buy is a leather jacket as most manufacturers nowadays cater for women's sizes. I bought the Lewis Leathers women's jacket as at that time it was either Lewis's or Lewis's in Sheffield! I have found it an excellent fit and has saved my skin a scratching on a couple of occasions.

Prices vary and start from around £40. My advice would be to shop around and find what suits you best. But, beware, in some cases the "ladies" label sometimes means a jacket of inferior leather thickness from its "male" counterpart. If you want good protection, go for the best thickness you can get. My friend Ann has a Manx Leathers jacket which in my opinion is one of the best jackets I've seen.

## LEATHER JEANS

These are not so easy. When I asked in our local bike clothing shop for jeans they said they didn't bother stocking women's sizes as the garments were usually of an inferior quality to those made for men.

Here again it is a matter of choice — do you want a good fit in thin

leather or a passable fit in good leather that will give protection. I went for Lewis Leathers as I was impressed by the quality of the leather. I must admit they were a less than perfect fit being a man's size, but after the initial stretch I took them back to the shop and for around £10 had them altered to fit. Total price of leathers plus alterations was £70, although that was 18 months ago.

## GLOVES

Don't look at the size inside the glove before you try them on as they tend to be rather haphazardly sized.

I have tried Lewis Leathers gloves, Kangol gloves and Power Grips. All these three I have found to be a good fit. Power Grips cater for women's sizes and say they are planning to increase their range for women as they realise there is a gap in the market.

Power Grips sent me a pair of women's large size Polar Mitts (nylon mitts with an acrylic fur lining) and I was most impressed. They were a perfect fit and kept my hands warm and dry. A good glove for anyone who finds the conventional wax cotton mitt over normal gloves too cumbersome.

The Lewis's glove was a man's small size and the Kangol a man's large size. Should you have really small hands then try your local off-road shop and look at the schoolboy off-road gear.

## BOOTS

You can have any motorcycle boot you like — as long as you wear a

size 6 or over. As most women wear smaller sizes this is where the trouble begins!

Some examples of women's boots now on the market are:

### Frank Thomas Boots

Suzu — a leather boot with smooth sole in sizes 3-8..... £25

Alice — as above but with fur lining ..... £27

### Belstaff

Lined/unlined, sizes 4-7..... £45/42

I have a pair of ladies Lewis Leathers Commando boots. Although they cater for the small sizes, when I tried the 5 I found the leg far too tight, so had to take a 6 to get the leg width. They are not the most stylish of boots but I have ruined many pairs of women's cowboy boots kicking up a bike and I'm quite sure my Commandos will still be going strong when I'm 60.

For summer riding I now have a pair of men's strong cowboy boots as I personally had had enough of searching for women's boots that (a) didn't cost the earth, and (b) would stand up to the punishment of biking.

Very few manufacturers cater for small size so it will mean shopping around until you can find something suitable. If you don't mind looking unfeminine it's worth a trip down to your local "off road" shop and looking at the schoolboy scrambling gear. Boy's boots usually come in sizes 12-5, with the added advantage of being cheaper than adult's boot because no VAT is charged on them.

Derriboots do their standard boot in small sizes and many riders swear by them for keeping their feet dry. Unfortunately though, when they brought out their MCB boot they started fthe sizes at a 6.

This is true of the new Dunlop Weatherstar, a similar boot to the Derriboot but with a fleecy lining. I



# A Ladies

have noticed that they also do a cowboy style Weatherstar boot in sizes 3-8, price £14.99.

Most of the rubber biking boots sell for around £12-£20.

When I've asked about smaller boots for those of us with small feet I've usually been met with the answer "Wear plenty of thick socks to fill them out". For a start I don't really want to look like some sort of Minnie Mouse and, secondly, have you tried wearing loads of socks in summer? It's no joke.



The 'Suzy' boot, made specially for ladies by Frank Thomas boots. It sells for £29.50. The fur-lined 'Alice' cost £31.50. Both styles of ladies touring boot are produced in sizes 3 to 8.

## WATERPROOFS

The real bone of contention amongst most women. I've yet to meet a woman satisfied with her waterproofs. I know I feel like a clown in mine. If you're small the manufacturers automatically think you've got a 20 inch inside leg, 50 inch hips and a 10 inch collar size.

I have a Belstaff jacket that I picked up cheap at a show in the unlikely size of 31½ inch chest. It's about the best fit I've ever had from

anything waterproof. It also has the added advantage that even after 2 years' use it is still 100 per cent waterproof, which is more than can be said for a lot of others. A recent survey within WIMA (Women's International Motorcycle Association) came to the conclusion that when it says guaranteed waterproof for one year that is exactly what it means, so don't expect more.

Belstaff leggings also come in small waist and leg length sizes. If you don't mind something bulky then I think wax cotton is a good buy. Belstaff have a range of women's sizes in motorcycle clothing both in wax cotton and nylon.

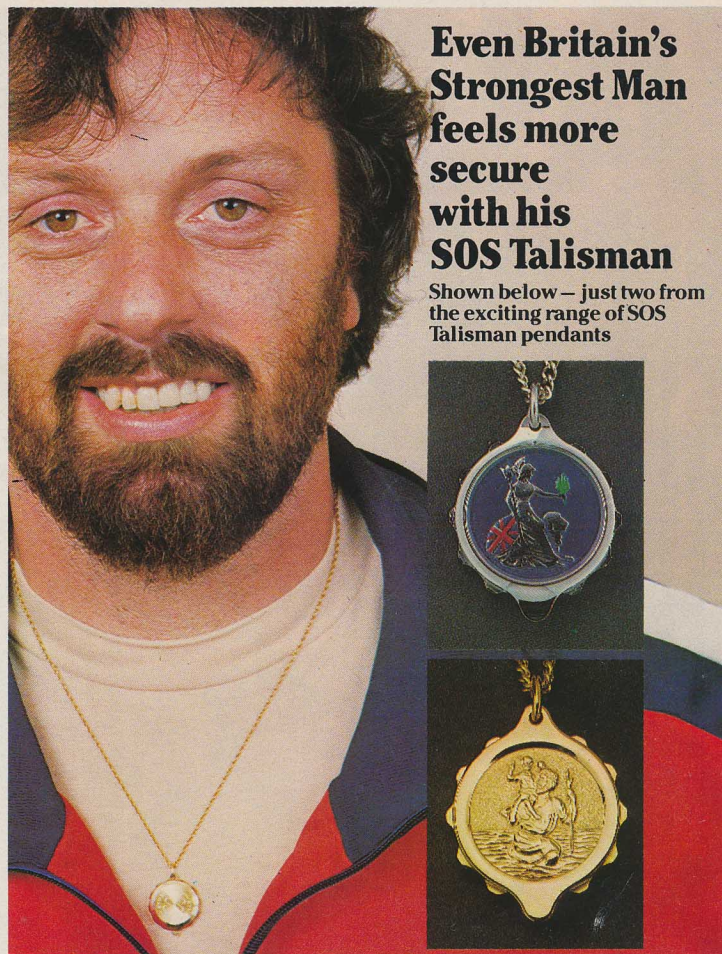
Another company I've come across is Pillion, a London based company which offer a two-piece lined nylon suit for around £57. When I wrote to them I was informed that they also do a made-to-measure service at a cost of £85 for the two piece. They were very helpful and said that if enough women were interested they would go to the trouble of designing their waterproofs specifically for women.

The Motomod suits seem to go some way to be both stylish and functional, but at a price.

On the whole, manufacturers are beginning to wake up to the fact that there are more and more women motorcyclists who want good gear. If you have trouble finding something to fit then it is always worth writing to the manufacturers saying that you think their range is deficient for women, you never know, they might just do something about it.

## USEFUL ADDRESSES:

Pillion, 120 Morning Lane, Hackney, London E9.  
 Belstaff International Ltd., Caroline Street, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST3 1DD.  
 Frank Thomas Boots, 2 Harborough Road, Rushden, Northants.  
 D. Lewis Ltd., 120-122 Gt. Portland Street, London W1A 2DL.  
 Power Grips, Stuart Madeley Ltd., Marsh Street, Walsall WS2 9LF.



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