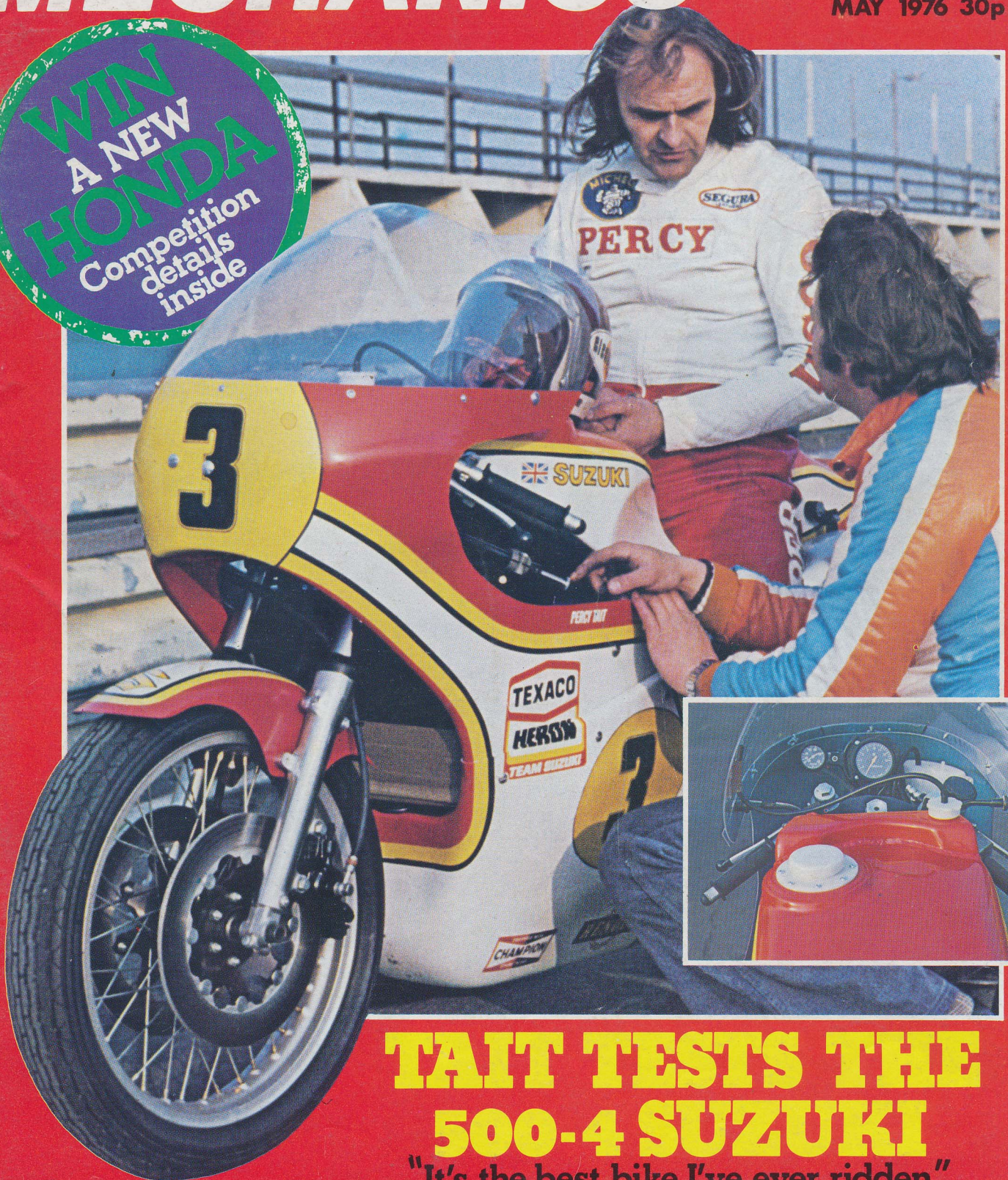


MOTOR CYCLE MECHANICS

Road Tests
KAWASAKI KH250 & BMW R60/6
DAYTONA '76
Alex George's inside story
HONDA 125 ENGINE REBUILD

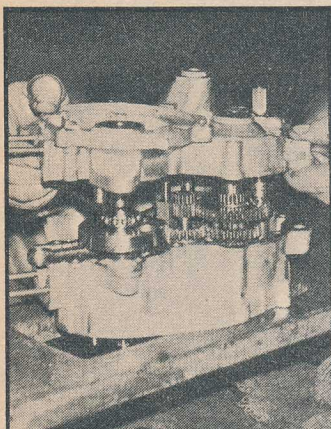
MAY 1976 30p

**WIN
A NEW
HONDA**
Competition
details
inside

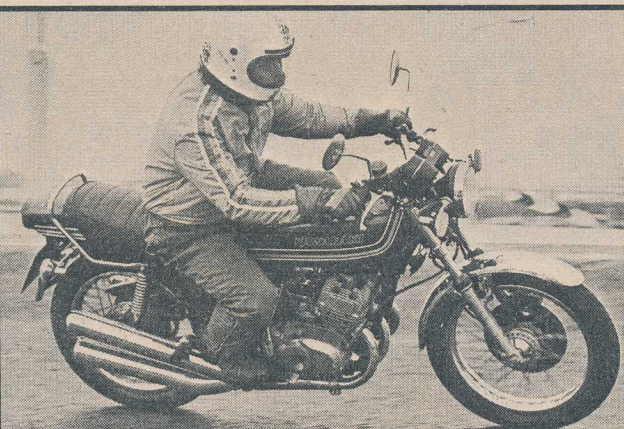


**TAIT TESTS THE
500-4 SUZUKI**

"It's the best bike I've ever ridden"



Puch engine rebuild. Page 74.



Kawasaki 250 test. Page 70.



Euro-Touring. Page 82.

4000-MILE BLOOP	Long term commuter test on a B120 Suzuki	17
TAIT TEST	Percy reckons the Suzuki 500 GP replica is "an armchair racer."	22
SIMPLE SERVICE	How to service the full range of Honda 125s	24
DUTCH FOCUS	New bikes at the Amsterdam Show	31
RIDE TO SURVIVE	Million-mile Dave Minton versus the rest of the world — safely.	32
SIXTEENER SPECIAL	Non-smoking Gitane; Burnley's Bantam boy; Riding test failures	38
C15 REBUILT	Low budget bike rebuild	45
TESTERS' CHOICE	How four professionals rate current motorcycles	50
FIELDHOUSE 125	John Hartley investigates enough bhp for a lightweight championship	53
DAYTONA DIARY	Colour pictures and a rider's report from Alex George	58
SUZUKI 250 TEST		64
BMW R60/6 TEST		67
KAWASAKI 250 TEST		70
ENGINE REBUILD	How to rebuild the Puch 50 engine	74
EURO-TOURING	Part two: camping, camping equipment and touring in the UK	82
TYRED AND TRUE	How to change a tyre and balance a wheel	90
LETTERS	9	TECH TERMS 41
TRICKS OF THE TRADE	55	SERVICE SCENE 95

EMAP National Publications Ltd., Editorial and Advertising office, Aqua House, London Road, Peterborough PE2 8AQ.
Telephone: 0733 63100

Editor: Colin Mayo

Deputy editor: John Robinson Features editor: Bob Goddard Designer: Katherine Leloup Photographer: Rod Sloane
Advertisement manager: Peter Crew

Northern Advertising office: 44 Station Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire. Telephone: 061-486 0246

Circulation: Park House, Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TS. Telephone: 0733 63100

Promotions: 21 Church Walk, Peterborough PE1 2TS. Telephone: 0733 63100

Annual Subscription rate: £5.20 (or the equivalent in local currency in the case of overseas subscriptions)

Remittances should be made payable to Motor Cycle Mechanics and should be sent to MCM Subscription

Department, Park House, 117 Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TS

© 1976 EMAP National Publications Ltd

While every care is taken in compiling the contents of the magazine, the proprietors assume no responsibility for any effects arising therefrom.

ABC certified sale July-December 1975; 102,452

WIN A HONDA
LATEST CB125S
TOP TEN COMPETITION
DETAILS — PAGE 15

COMMUTA BLOOP

LIKE millions of city workers, 33-year-old data processing manager, Bob Green, goes to work by train. Like the rest of his fellow travellers he has been paying increasingly dearly for the convenience, sometimes inconvenience, of British Rail's services.

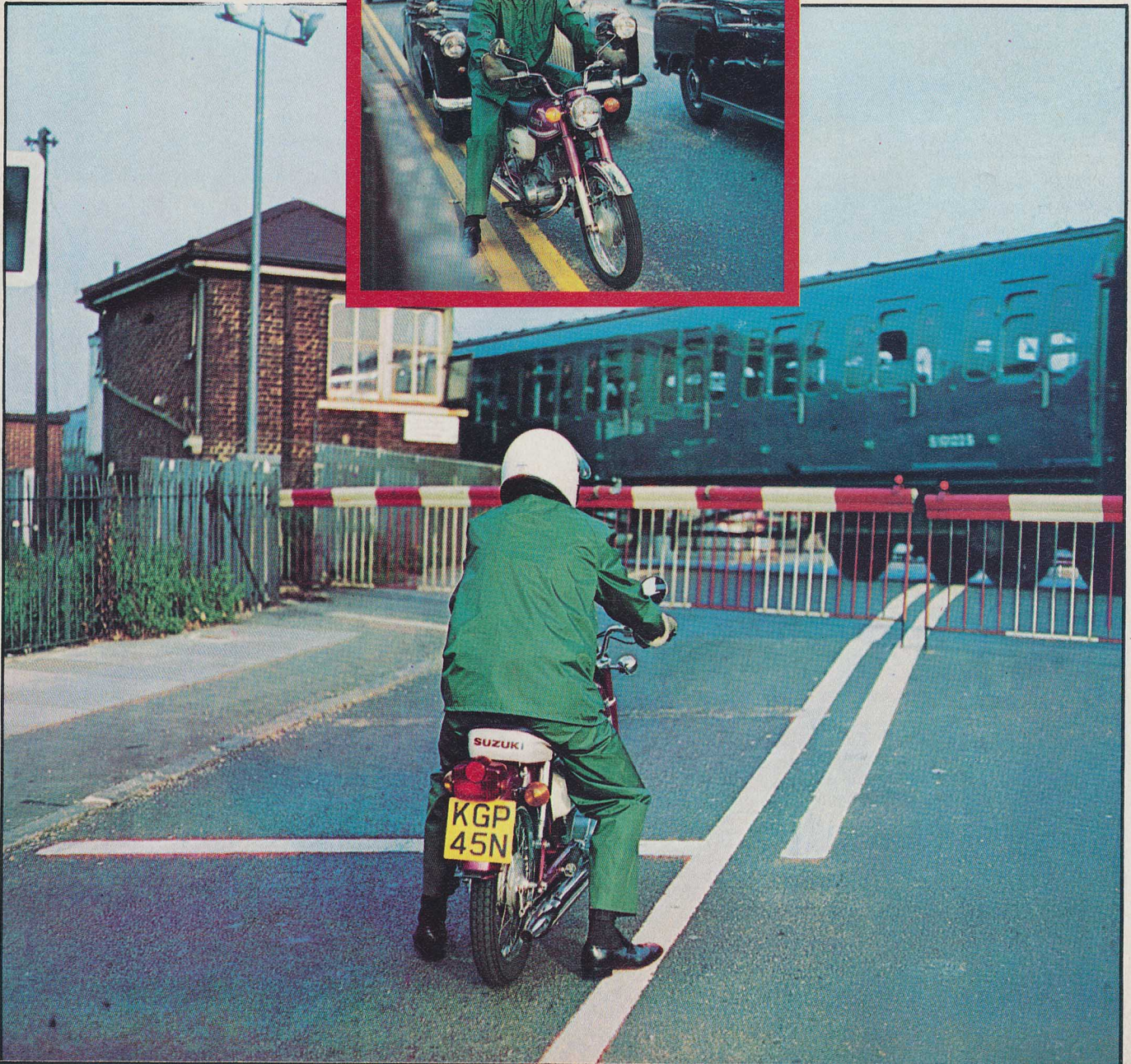
By July last year he'd had enough of astronomical rail fare rises and decided that the 42 mile round trip from Ashford, Surrey, to his office in London's West End would not only be a lot cheaper by bike but quicker too.

Now you don't have to be endowed with the most brilliant brain in the world to work out the fact that commuter motorcycling is

HOW DOES TWO-WHEEL COMMUTING REALLY COMPARE WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORT? A BIKE BEGINNER FINDS OUT ON A SUZUKI B120

cheap and quick, but for a guy who has never ridden a motorcycle in his life and could only just about spot the difference between a Puch Maxi and an F750 Suzuki racer, the decision to ride 210 miles a week through some of the most concentrated four wheel traffic in the world is a big one. While economy and journey time are important to the commuter, so too are little things like the choice of bike, learning to ride it safely, getting insurance and staying warm and dry.

So, to cut a long story to ribbons we said to Bob, you give us a blow-by-blow account of 4,000 miles of commuter motorcycling and in return we'll sweet talk ➔



Suzuki into letting you loan one of their B120 commuter Bloops, a bike we consider to be one of the best lightweight runabouts on the market. Suzuki, one of the few companies yet to realise the value of making road test bikes easily and quickly available to the press, said yes and Bob Green's 4.015 miles commuter run had begun.

It arrived on a trailer, 213lb and £219 worth of Suzuki. Greenie's Bloop, as the B120 came to be referred to at MCM's offices, was finished in a nice shade of salmon pink and was fitted, I was delighted to see, not only with nice big flashing indicators, but twin mirrors as well. Looking back, with the knowledge of just how useful those mirrors and indicators were in London's traffic, it seems remarkable that I, a complete motorcycling novice, could actually spot and appreciate something on a motorcycle worthy of appreciation. I mean, talk to a motorcyclist and he's full of chat about double overhead camshafts, disc valves and balance shafts, but I'd be willing to bet that many who ride through heavy traffic every day would secretly be glad to go back to a single cylinder side valver if it came to the choice between a sophisticated engine or flashing indicators and decent rear view mirrors!

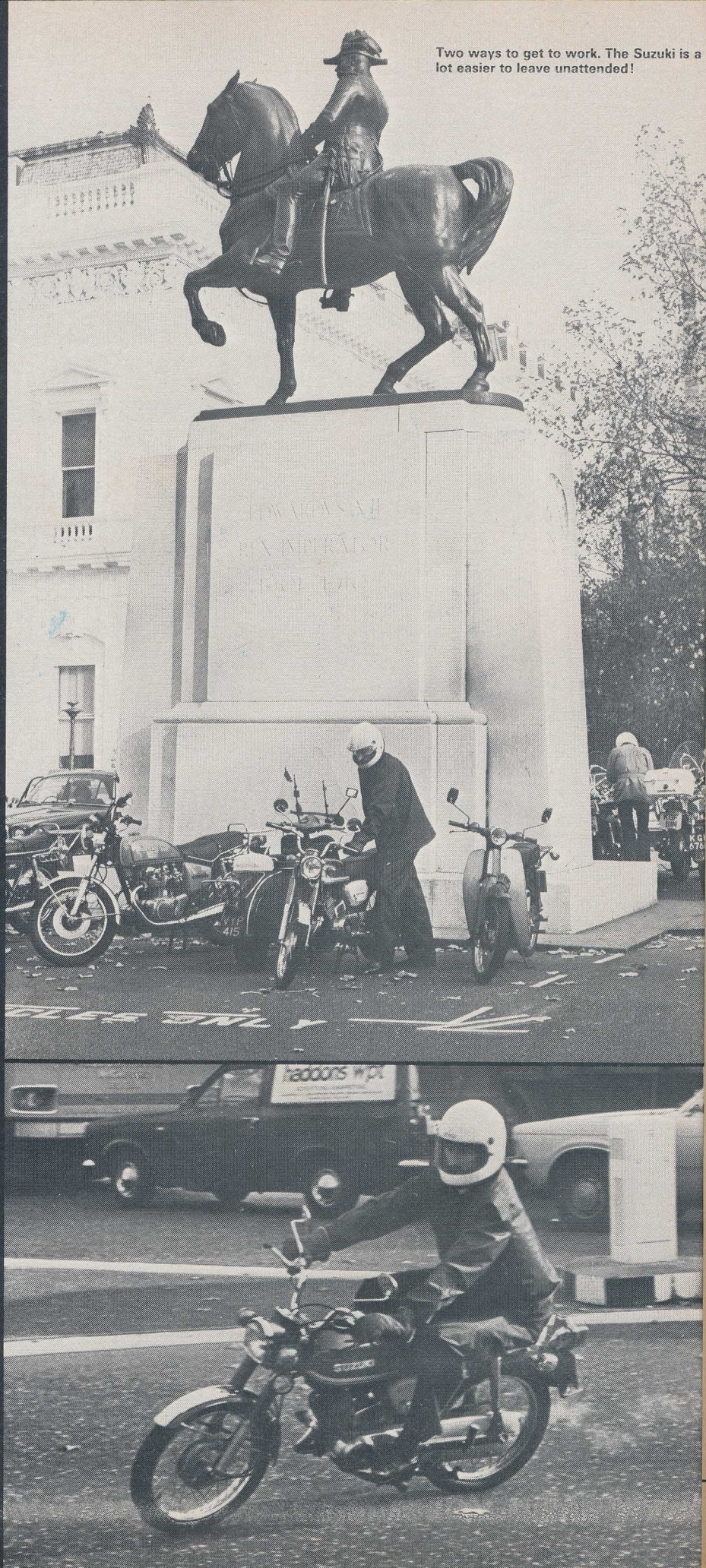
Anyway, enough of this provocation, let's get back to 4.015 miles on KPG45N. I started out with all the right intentions and one was to get proper riding instruction. I dropped that idea when I discovered the nearest training course to me was, would you believe, at Wimbledon speedway stadium. It wasn't so much the idea of practicing emergency stops on loose shale that put me off, just the drag of a 30 mile round trip on a Sunday morning back into the general direction of central London!

So I learnt to ride like most everybody else, by sticking L plates on and kangerooning self and bike round the block until I'd more or less got the hang of it. After an hour and several stallings I felt I could steer, change gear and reach 30mph with reasonable proficiency, though a great deal of conscious effort was involved in remembering which hand held what and which way which foot moved to change down.

The next day, not feeling nearly as confident as I hoped I looked, I was on the road for London. I managed to negotiate the level crossing 200 yards from home and make the first garage for petrol. Then trouble, I stalled ten times getting it out of the garage. In fact, stalling was the story all the way on that nightmare first trip. I began to feel the bike was uncontrollable; I would forget to cancel indicators; I would jam the machine between gears or believe I had made a good change only to hear a screaming pot between my legs followed by a heft clunk as I re-tried the change without counting to three.

I decided right from day one that when traffic stopped I would be right up there at the front of the queue with the other guys on bikes. The move turned out to be a disaster. I would arrive proudly at the front of a line of cars only to stall just as everything started moving. London traffic belting round both sides of you at 40mph sure helps in developing kick start technique! In some of the one-way systems in London my co-ordination of indicators, steering, gear

Two ways to get to work. The Suzuki is a lot easier to leave unattended!



changing, braking and mirror work was not really good enough. It was only my wobbling appearance that warned bus drivers what standard I had reached. Taxi drivers seemed to be unusually understanding, mainly, I suppose, because many of them had gained their knowledge of London on similar bikes.

Eventually, experience taught me that the most difficult drivers to anticipate are women. I still have a swollen right knee as a souvenir from a young lady who swerved to the right before driving as indicated to the left, causing me to swerve and clout a road sign.

As time went by there were two annoying features about the Suzuki that I began to realise were not my fault. The first was the neutral gear indicator would not always come on when it should, the second was the bike would jam in gear after an emergency stop and I would be forced to stall the motor before I could get into neutral.

After a couple of weeks I began to appreciate the fresh air and was riding to work in just suit, helmet and gloves. It is important for me to look respectable in the office and this was always possible on the Suzuki, particularly with the rocker type gear change which enabled me to wear ordinary shoes and not damage them on the gearchange lever.

I decided that I should kit myself out for bad weather and did the rounds of the local motorcycle shops trying on Belstaff, Barbour and other assorted gear, all of which I thought were too expensive for my type of motorcycling. So it was off to Japan once again, via the Railway lost property shop in Haymarket, W1, for a rubberised nylon over-suit costing a tenner.

The Suzuki proved to be really good in heavy traffic. It was faster than most family cars away from traffic lights and onward up to about 40mph. Its lively performance meant it never became an obstruction and I was not forced to ride in the kerb, as seems to be the case with many mopeds.

One thing that really did switch me off about commuting on the Suzuki was its behaviour on wet roads. Simple braking became Japanese roulette — I could never predict when the bike would slide. It just happened, sometimes on a roundabout, sometimes when gently braking for traffic lights. Of all the drawbacks to commuter motorcycling this one, above all, convinced me that the train is a better long term bet. I figure that you only have to fall off once in the wrong place to make any economic saving completely worthless. My near disaster was caused by a manhole cover greasy with rain and its effect was just like hitting a patch of ice. Why the hell can't local councils cover all metal road plates with the non-slip road surface now being glued to roads at traffic lights etc?

The fastest time I ever made it home on the Suzuki was 45 minutes when the roads were clear in the late evening. Not only was it quick, it was also much more flexible as a means of travel — once in London I could use it during lunchhours or stop off on the way home to see friends.

The Suzuki has a dual seat and footrests for a passenger, but I only used this as a very occasional facility, mainly because the Suzy is small and I'm tall. Anyway, I arranged a two-up ride with an old pal, a BMW superbike owner with bags of bike experience. We both had turns at riding and playing pillion. I am 6ft and weigh 10½ stone, the passenger is 5ft 8ins tall and

admits to weighing 13 stone. With 23½ stone up the Suzuki speedo got up to 42mph without much fuss, but at some great discomfort to us.

One aid I missed was some form of head-lamp flasher to give other traffic clear warnings and the give-way signs one is used to making in a car in London's traffic.

Another criticism was that top gear



The Bloop in rail commuter territory — Waterloo station.

BLOOP STATISTICS

TEST MILEAGE:

4,015

AVERAGE MONTHLY MILEAGE:

850

SERVICE:

One only at 1,400 miles (factory advise every 2,000 miles).

SERVICE COST:

£4.10

AVERAGE MPG:

First month 90.9mpg; second month 94.7; third month 83mpg; fourth month 82.6; fifth month 72.3. Average overall mpg: 84.7mpg.

AVERAGE OIL CONSUMPTION:

420 mpp.

AVERAGE MONTHLY OIL/FUEL COSTS:

£7.60

RETAIL PRICE (inc VAT)

£250.

seemed to be rather high and in a head wind constant changing between third and top was needed to keep the engine spinning.

Minor problems were a loose rear indicator light and a battery that ran dry. This was signalled by gradually failing lights and I was very grateful of the friendly advice given to me by Wheelers of Epsom who explained, trying to do something for my ego, that it had happened a lot in the hot summer, so much so that their workshop was out of distilled water.

To compare the commuting efficiency of the Suzuki I tried the same 42 mile journey in three other ways: bicycle, car and train. This is what I found.

BICYCLE

I ride a bike for two or three hours each week simply to keep fit so I am a bit quicker than the average cyclist. My best journey time (round trip) was 95 minutes, compared to the Suzuki's 90 minutes. The problems with cycling were (1) it took me 20 minutes to rub down and dress after a rather sweaty arrival at the office (2) 210 miles a week on a bicycle is just too much (3) parking meant carrying the thing up three flights of stairs and hiding it in a stationery storeroom. Advantages were its extremely low cost and it keeps you fit.

RAIL

The cost of commuting from door to door on a monthly season was £22.50 last July (it's now £26). Time taken, including tube time from Waterloo to Piccadilly Circus, was between 45 and 50 minutes one way. However, one big plus factor in favour of these journey timings is that I live only three minutes walk from the station so, for anybody living further away from a station, a motorcycle comes even more into its own.

CAR

I only tried it twice. Time taken was 60-75 minutes one way, depending on traffic. Cost is hefty, at least two gallons of petrol for the 42 miles, plus parking. Here one has two choices, either a National Rip-off car park at a cost of between 80p-£1.20 per day or using the ever decreasing number of meters policed by ever increasing numbers of attendants.

Monthly cost of commuting by car worked out at between £60 and £70 and it only becomes a starter if you can split the cost with one or more passengers.

CONCLUSION

Despite cost, the train has a comfort worth paying for on long distance commuting, particularly in winter. The Suzuki has convenience and cost advantage on its side and is much more fun in the summer months than roasting in a railway carriage. However, the bike did not show up as well as I had expected it to on a time saving basis, taking on average the same time as the train. For the commuter living between five and 15 miles from work the Suzuki would be far and away the best all-round bet and its speed advantage should show up very clearly. The car failed miserably on cost and convenience and it is obvious the GLC's policy of forcing private cars out of London is taking effect. Unless you want to be super fit the bicycle is not the answer to a commuter's prayer.