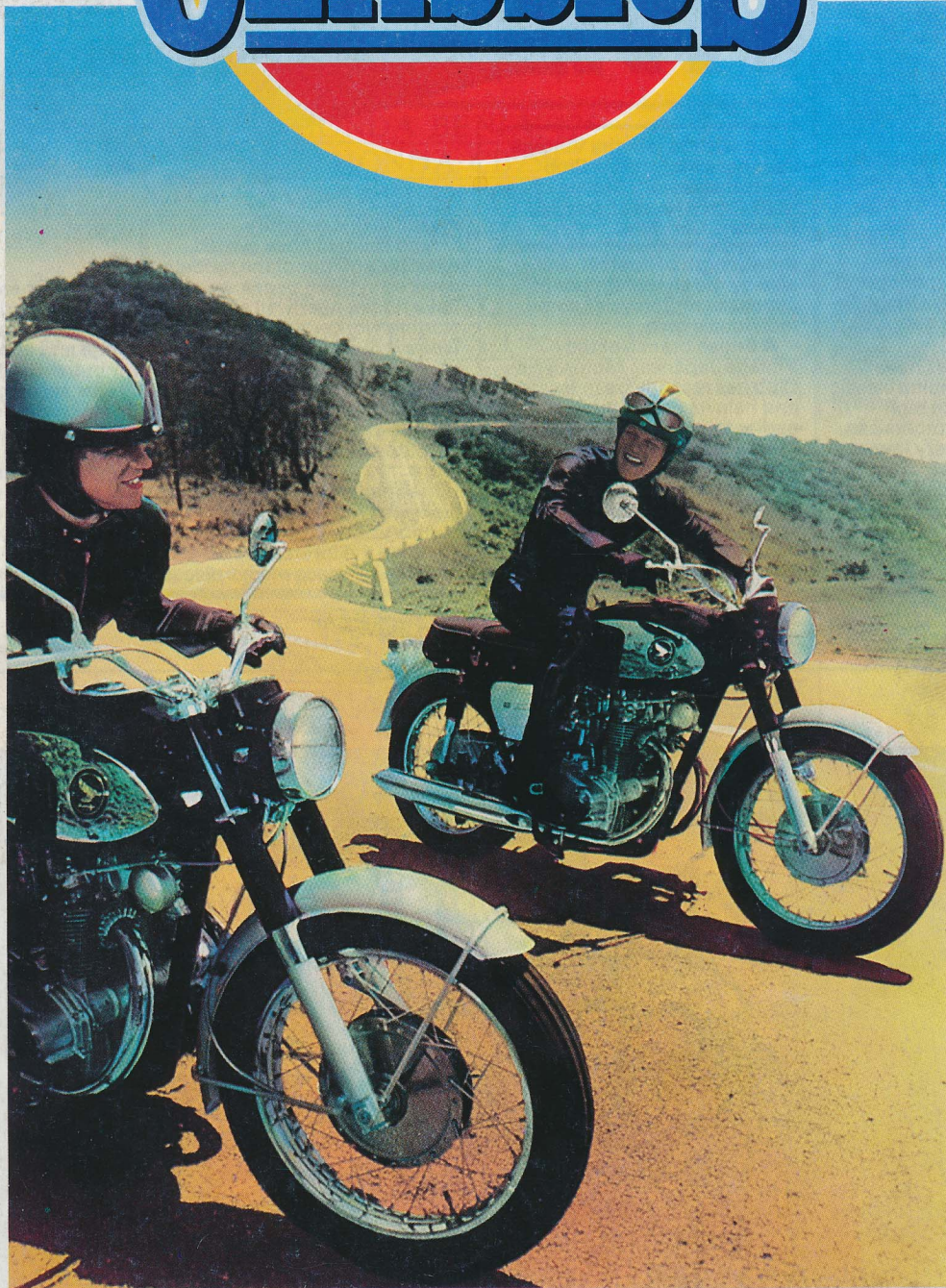


JAPANESE CLASSICS



20 Golden Greats
from the Land of
the Rising Sun
1960-'72

JAPANESE CLASSICS

CONTENTS

Editor:
Brian Crichton.

Designed by:
Creative Publishing Services,
Peterborough 253203.

Publisher:
Bob Berry.

HONDA BENLY 125 ...	4
HONDA CB750 ...	9
KAWASAKI SAMURAI 250 ...	12
KAWASAKI H1 500 ...	16
HONDA CB450 ...	21
SUZUKI STINGER 125 ...	25
YAMAHA XS-1 650 ...	27
SUZUKI GT750 ...	30
HONDA CB72 250 ...	34
YAMAHA YR350 ...	38
KAWASAKI Z1 900 ...	41
SUZUKI SUPER SIX 250 ...	44
HONDA CB500 ...	48
SUZUKI GT380 ...	51
YAMAHA TX500 ...	53
HONDA SUPER CUB 50 ...	55
SUZUKI COBRA 500 ...	58
HONDA XL250 ...	61
BRIDGESTONE GTR350 ...	66
YAMAHA YDS250 ...	69

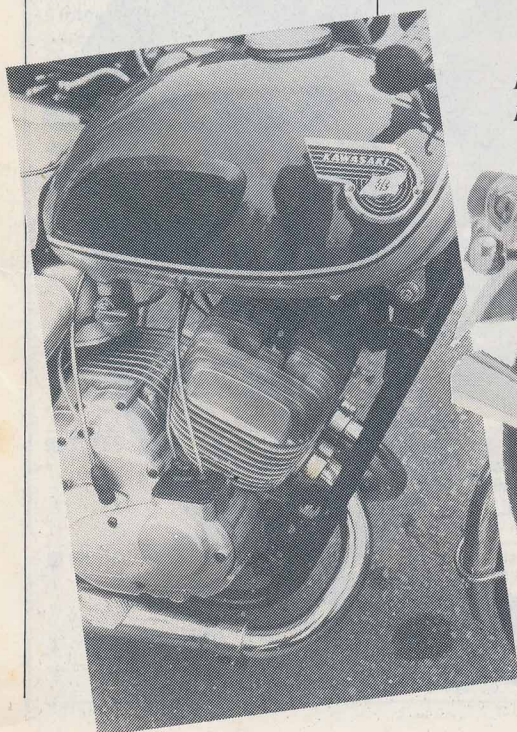
Japanese Classics is a Motor Cycle News magazine published by EMAP National Publications, Bushfield House, Orton Centre, Peterborough PE2 0UW. Telephone 0733/237111.

Typesetting, colour and mono origination by East Midland Litho Printers, Woodston, Peterborough.

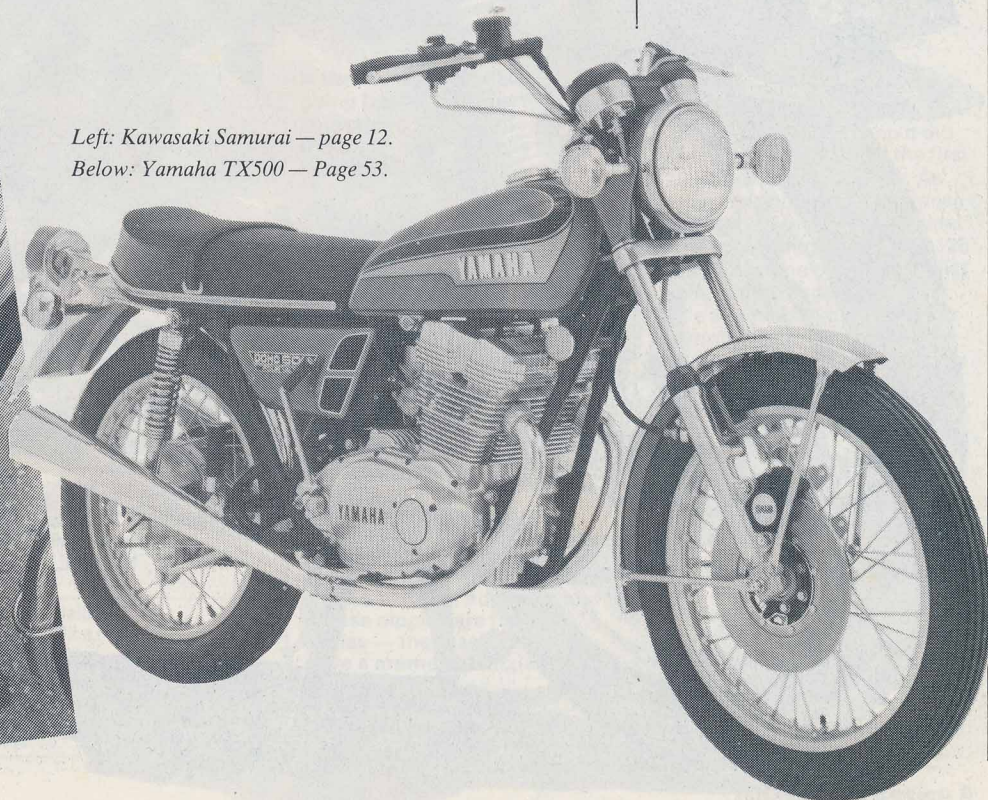
Printed by Alabaster Passmore and Sons, Tovil, Maidstone, Kent.

Copyright, EMAP National Publications.

emap.
NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS LTD



*Left: Kawasaki Samurai — page 12.
Below: Yamaha TX500 — Page 53.*



HONDA CB92 125

MINIATURE MASTERPIECE

I have been looking at the latest bikes and they still haven't improved over the Benly. They were fantastic machines.

Ted Watkins, owner.

THE 1983 change in law for learner motor cyclists has placed new emphasis on the 125cc class, the current solo learner limit.

Now the most important class apart from 50cc machinery in the eyes of the manufacturers, it is being filled with sophisticated and superbly styled machinery.

But look back a quarter of a century at the Honda CB92 125 Benly and remind yourself of the technical prowess of this proud lightweight twin.

It is so impressive the bike would surely become a top seller once again if it were reproduced and re-stocked in dealers' showrooms.

Trouble is it would be too powerful for the 12bhp limit which goes with the new learner law. Honda would have to stifle its performance for learner use!

The Benly Super Sport's performance came from a high revving sohc four-stroke twin cylinder power unit with single 20mm carburettor and four speed gearbox. It was rated at 15bhp at 10,500rpm.

Highly individualistic racer-type styling included

backbone pressed steel frame, flyscreen, short leading link front suspension, large 2.8 gal fuel tank and enormous twin leading shoe front brake.

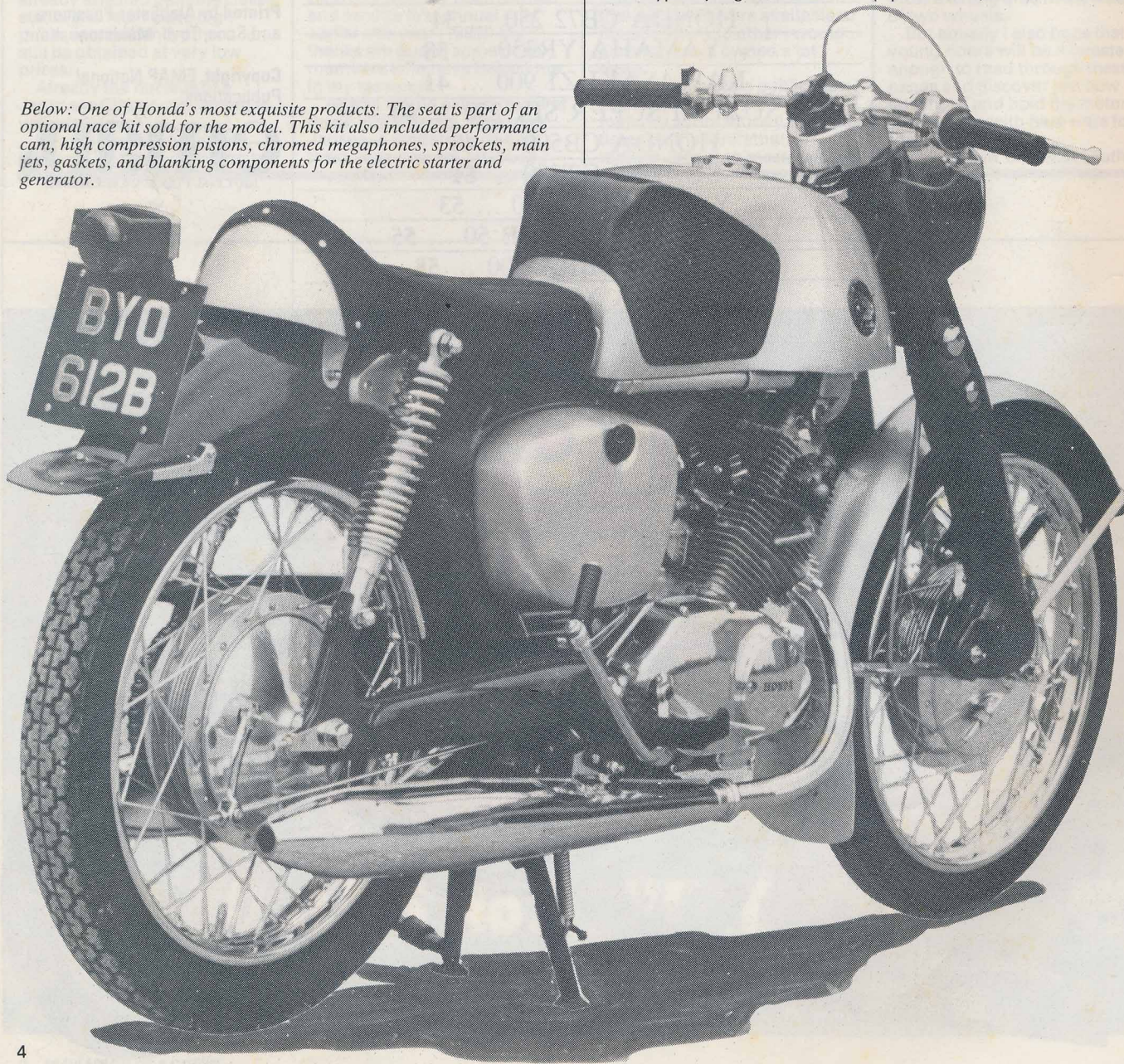
It looked and sounded fabulous. It revved with the crispness of a two-stroke and its performance was astounding for its size.

Because it was built to tight tolerances many owners used to ride with a finger over the clutch lever "just in case".

The precaution, born mainly from riding seizure-prone two-stroke lightweights of European manufacture, was not necessary. The Benly was built to perform with a reliable enthusiasm for the job.

Bill Ivy lapped Brands at over 75mph using a standard Benly power unit, and to back its track

Below: One of Honda's most exquisite products. The seat is part of an optional race kit sold for the model. This kit also included performance cam, high compression pistons, chromed megaphones, sprockets, main jets, gaskets, and blanking components for the electric starter and generator.





Motor Cycle News tester Gerard Periam puts the 125SS Honda through its paces back in 1962. Much of the inspiration for the Benly was drawn from German NSU Rennmax racing twins.

SPECIFICATION IN 1962

■ PRICE:	£214 2s. 2d.
■ ENGINE:	Twin cylinder, ohc four-stroke. Maximum output: 15bhp at 10,500rpm. Capacity: 124cc. Bore and stroke: 44mm x 41mm. Compression ratio: 10 to 1. Ignition: HT coil and battery. Generator: AC rotary magnet type 6V. Clutch: multiplate running in oil bath. Gears: 4-speed positive stop. Overall gear ratios: top 8.98 to 1, 3rd 11.12 to 1, 2nd 15.76 to 1, bottom 26.83 to 1. Oil filter: centrifugal type.
■ TYRES:	2.50 x 18 front, 2.75 x 18 rear. Brakes: internal expanding. Front wheel suspension: short leading link. Rear wheel suspension: pivoted fork. Fuel tank capacity: 2.8 gallons.
■ FRAME:	Pressed steel, electrically welded, back bone type. Weight: 220lbs. Equipment: Dual seat, rear view mirror, electric starter and kick-starter. Comprehensive tool kit. Tyre inflator. Racing conversion kits are available at £42. 18s. 3d.

image racing conversion kits from Honda were made available.

Reporting on this sensational newcomer in the October 31 1962 issue of *Motor Cycle News* tester Gerard Periam wrote:

"Life's not quite the same. A champagne-like exhilaration is missing, for my little Honda Benly Super Sport has gone back to Hondis Ltd, the concessionaires who provided it for road test by MCN.

"It's surprising how some machines arouse a feeling of affection even on very short acquaintance and the Benly Super Sport is one of them.

"We lost quite a bit of riding time whenever we stopped, for keen types would come up and go over the bike with the thoroughness of a vet examining a racehorse on which he is going to risk his shirt.

"They also asked a lot of questions which we weren't always able to answer and some of them were quite prepared to do a roadside strip and rebuild in order to find out.

"Coming in for universal admiration was that beautiful two-leading shoe front brake assembly, and as the well illustrated and helpful handbook puts it 'the brake of the Super Sport is so designed that it works on the front wheel with a remarkable force'.

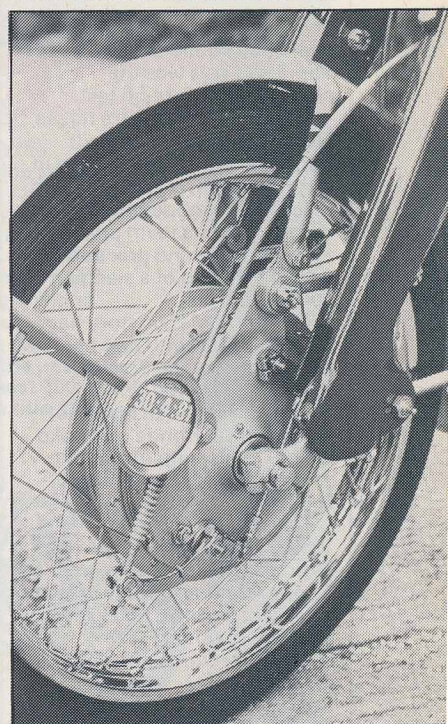
"I'll say it does. Emerging from a narrow side street into a shopping thoroughfare my path was crossed by a lady driving a two-seat perambulator. I used that front brake as I would have done the average front brake on any other 125cc machine and stoppage was instantmost. In fact more than that.

"What I am trying to convey is that I did not actually start going backwards, but I got something like the effect that Dan Dare gets when he fires retro-rockets."

Tester Periam's understandably enthusiastic report went on to say things like

— "one of the safest motorcycles I or anyone else could ever wish to ride — to get the best the engine must be revved — it is very difficult to fault the Honda at all — I have a feeling that having got used to the luxury of a starter motor, kick-starting in the normal way is going to seem very old-fashioned — hooter is a single wind tone with a high pitched note that puts every other standard fitting hooter to shame — finger adjusters and grease nipples are fitted to cables — the machine never gave a moment's anxiety."

Speed testing provided the following figures for that report: 0-30mph in 4.9sec,



Front 18in wheel houses massive twin leading shoe brake. Note generous supply of grease nipples for all moving components.

0-50mph in 10.8sec, maximum speed 78mph, petrol consumption 84mpg, touring consumption 89mpg. Price when tested was £214.2s.2d.

In addition to the Super Sport Honda offered a touring 125, the C92 Benly rated at 11.5bhp at 9500rpm and advertised at £186.13s.4d in 1962.

The 125s were being built at the Hamamatsu works where one or the other model was coming off the assembly line every 40 seconds.

By 1963 Honda had replaced the Benly with the CB125 Super Sports with telescopic forks, tube frame, shrouded rear suspension units and chrome sidepanelled tank.

Though rated at 15bhp it did not have the panache of the first 125 Honda seen in Britain. As with most collectable Japanese motorcycles the original model is the most sought after, the 125 Benly SS is one of the strongest cases in this respect.

It's a fair bet that the Benly is currently the most popular of the machines being restored by the ever growing band of classic Japanese dilettantes.

Racing

While some of the machines featured in this special publication gave birth to racing versions, the Honda 125 Benly SS went hand in hand with Honda's racing efforts.

Soichiro Honda himself had attended the 1954 Isle of Man TT races to find out what the world's oldest classic road race was all about.

Five years later in 1959 a team of Honda riders were entered.

HONDA CB92 125

Though Honda machinery had been raced quite extensively on home soil, this was the marque's first foreign test.

The 125 Hondas were not as fast as their European built opponents but they finished in sixth, seventh, eighth and 11th places and scooped the manufacturer's team prize.

This solid grand prix debut was the stirring of a sleeping speed giant.

The Honda 125cc story had begun in 1953 with the introduction of the first Benly model. In 1957 the Honda Technical Research Institute was set up in Honda's Shirako factory to develop machines such as the 125 Super Sport version.

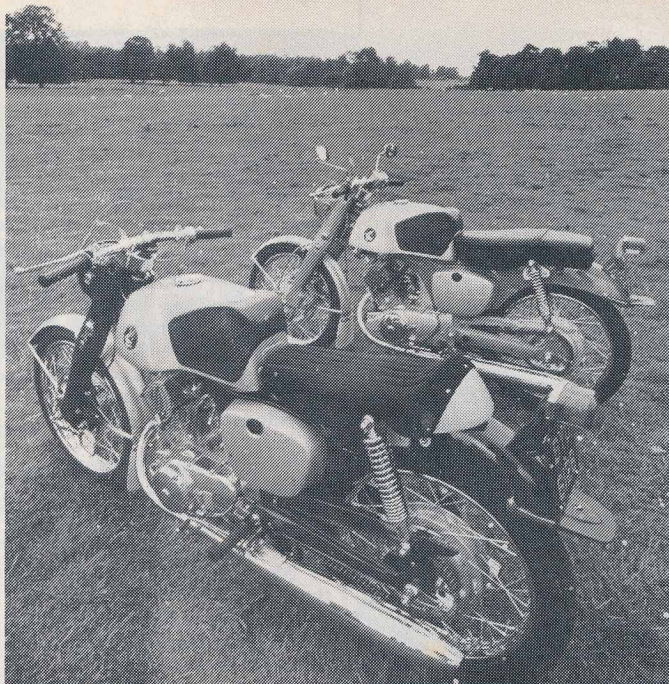
The 125SS was first made in 1959. The machines were used as practice bikes for that year's TT efforts, which is estimated to have cost Honda £10,000 at the time, emphasising their commitment to racing and research.

In 1960 Honda returned to the TT with 125cc racers employing telescopic forks. They also brought their fabulous 250-4, developed from their 125 technology.

In the 125cc TT Hondas took sixth to tenth places, while the new 250 was fourth.

The following year Honda was sensationally unbeatable.

They filled the top five places in both 125 and 250cc TTs using four valve machines. Mike



Racing seat and standard dual seat versions of the Benly. The dual seat example has standard rear view mirrors and is fitted with the optional handlebar mounted rev counter driven from the overhead cam.

Hailwood won the 125 race.

In the world 125cc championship that year Honda won eight of the 11 rounds in their first attempt at the series, also filling third, fourth, fifth, sixth, ninth, tenth and 15th places.

This domination stunned the motor cycle world. In Britain the public, resistant to machinery made outside Europe, began to think twice. This crushing proof of Honda excellence speeded

up slow moving sales. Owners who had invested in the expensive 125 could puff out their chests with pride as Honda scored victory after victory at national and international level.

Honda trebled their exports in 1962 thanks to racing success. They won three world road race titles including the 125 again that year. As a result exports in 1963 were seven times the 1961 figure.

It was in 1963 that production

of the Honda 125 Benly SS was halted. Enough were imported into Britain to keep sales of new bikes going until 1966.

First imports to Britain were in 1961. The first examples of the model can be recognised by their seamless silencers, ace bars, plastic threaded fuel cap, aluminium front guard, sidepanels and battery box, and engine breather at the rear of the crankcase.

Later models have straight bars, ball-end levers, painted steel guard and panels, silencers with seams and cam box vent. All models had silver tanks, front guard and sidepanels. Frame and fork paint options were either royal blue or red.

The fastest 125 of its day, and still fast even by today's standards, its most common problem stemmed from a rather inadequate sump capacity of two pints.

The power unit, tilted at 60-deg, used to burn a little oil. If the owner did not monitor it carefully starvation would occur and the left big-end would be an early casualty.

Featuring six volt points ignition and 360-deg crank, the oil-tight Benly was fine if the owner looked after it.

Designed to run on low octane fuel, and push out real power once over 6,000rpm, it was an exquisitely engineered jewel of a motor cycle well ahead of its time. □

AN OWNER'S THOUGHTS

BENLY 125 SS owner Ted Watkins (46) from Winchester, Hants rode such a model as a young man.

He looked for two years before discovering the example he has recently lovingly restored above.

This one in blue is also shown in colour on these pages. Location was at Stanford Hall, Leics.

The racing seat was the hardest part to find. It cost him £70 from Canada. The handpump under the tank, and the tank badges were among other items he found tricky to locate.

Rebuilding the machine he bought from an Essex blacksmith cost him £800 and countless hours. "It's definitely worth it," he said. "There's a lot of self-satisfaction in building it and it's already been valued by the secretary of the Vintage Japanese Motor Cycle Club at £1200.

"These models were 20 years ahead of their time. They had power jet carbs, rubber bush front suspension, and they did 81mph at 10,500rpm. Even the latest RD125LC Yamaha only does 79mph.

"I have been looking at the latest bikes and they still haven't improved over the Benly. They were fantastic machines," added the heating engineer who also has a Reynolds framed version among his bike collection.



