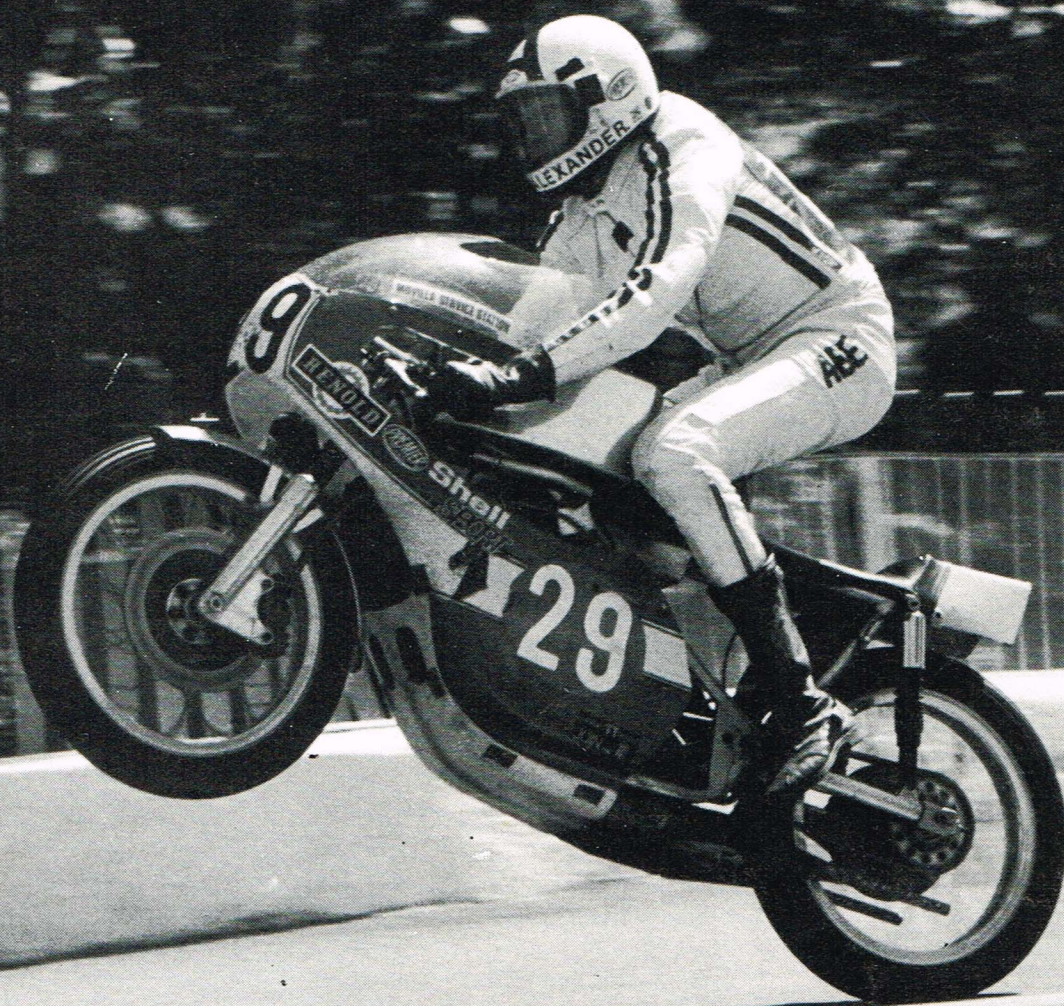


Motorcycle Sport

JULY 1975

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 7

PRICE: 20p



Isle of Man Races ★ Four Kawasakis Tested

A Motorcyclist At War ★ Rough Riding

One Track

Motorcycle Sport

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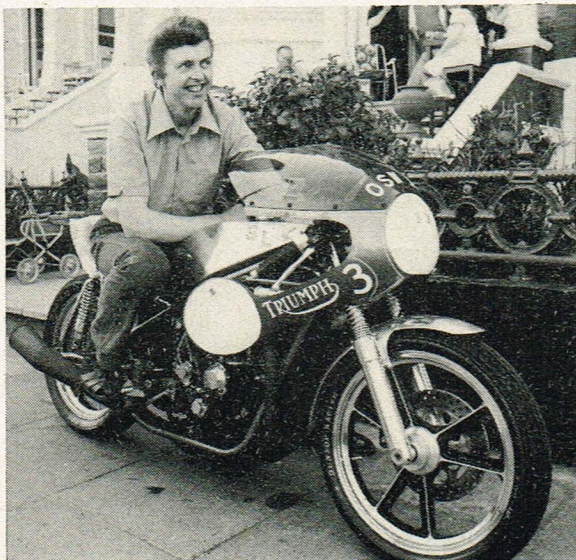
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FRONT-COVER PICTURE shows Abe Alexander mono wheeling on his Yamsel at Ballaugh Bridge in the Isle of Man Junior TT



Latest SL 750-3 photographed in Douglas. Changes, as they say, too numerous to mention . . .

TT silver replicas

JACK AHEARN is what we call an "old school" racer. He has the sort of love-hate relationship with the TT course that brings him back to it again and again. So when he says enough is enough naturally we wonder why. The answer, quite simply, is that there is no longer any incentive. The drive that brought him back year after year on the "silver replica" trail has gone. It's not a matter of old age, for Ahearn will never suffer from that, nor is he suddenly obsessed with the thought that the circuit is dangerous, nor is he worried unduly about the cost of riding in the TT. No, as we said, it's just that the incentive has gone. Destroyed, in political parlance, at a stroke by the ACU whose sole preoccupation should be with preserving the races. The ACU have altered the formula for the winning of silvers. Gone are the days of 11 tenths of the winner's time, and all such complicated formulae; now it is 10 per cent of the starters for "silvers" and a further 10 per cent for "bronzes"—and "Well, hard luck!" if you are fool enough to tackle 10 laps of the Production Race, in which the first three in each class collect a silver and the next three a bronze. Mind you, if you work it out that is the best bet of the lot for although the race is 10 laps, six riders in each class get a silver and bronze because of the paired riders arrangement. As we have now mentioned the Production TT, it seems only fair that we should apologise for being prophets of doom about it; but you will look for that apology in vain for, despite the pseudo excitement generated by the commentators during the race, for which incidentally we give them full marks, the 500s were never in with a hope. Ten laps of the TT course is not the occasion for blanket handicapping of classes in the hope of producing exciting racing for the spectators.

So what of 1976? We think that Ahearn is right when he says that the reduction of a rider's chances of gaining a silver will kill the enthusiasm of the bulk of the entry. Replicas are priceless; and those won in the past still have a certain pride of place, we are sure, amongst the trophies of two well-known gentlemen who have virtually talked themselves out of racing over the Mountain course ever again. The ACU should be thinking in terms of a *third* type of replica, say gun metal, as a memento for those who do not qualify for either a silver or bronze. We offer that idea as a serious suggestion. The replica could go to those riders who lapped at a certain speed or above, either during practice or racing but failed to complete race distance. In short, the aim should be to foster enthusiasm — not destroy it.

That the enthusiasm is there among the spectators is surely not open to doubt, though the number that now camp out must give the boarding house owners apoplexy. The number of Continentals braving two ferry crossings seems to be increasing, though they are not as obvious now, as our own bike riders also furnish themselves with smart leather riding gear. We have long thought that a Manx Rally would help to swell the numbers going to the Island in TT week, and a flag for such an event would surely be a better memento of the trip than a *Motor Cycle* sticker declaring "tank pumped out". But were the 1975 visitors mostly on their first trip to the Island? At times we felt that must be, for wherever we went the road seemed to be covered with that tell-tale yellow paint the police use when marking out an accent scene, and the tell-tale graunch marks on the Ramsey/Douglas coast seemed more numerous than ever before.

But what of the racing? Well the 10-lap Production affair was saved by the weather and the ability of the commentators to get us excited by whether or not Slippery Sam, with Dave Croxford/Alex George, aboard would catch the poor little 250 Yamaha ridden by Chas Mortimer/Billy Guthrie that had the lap and six minutes head start. The Trident won, to faint strains of Land of Hope and past Glory, which grew a little louder when it was learned that the fastest lap in the 500 class had gone to Phil Gurner on a BSA. Three days later Gurner was to lose his life in the Senior race at Milntown cottage where Pete McKInley also died during practice week. Both were experienced men on the mountain course and competent racers . . . again we were made to realise just what an uncompromising circuit the TT course is.

The first three laps of the Production Race were enlivened by the superb riding of Helmut Dahne, not quite the stylist that Walter Zeller was but then Zeller did not have cling tyres. That Dahne's "scratching" should lead to a damaged rocker box cover and total oil loss was scant reward for his effort. We do not think the big BMW would have won, even if it had not seized, for the winning Trident duo of Croxford and George would have taken some stopping, especially in view of the way that George was riding, which was summed up completely with his record lap.

RACE REPORTS ON PAGE 275

Price Increase

The price of *Motorcycle Sport* becomes 25p with effect from the next issue, for August. Ever-increasing material costs and significant rises in printer and service staff wages, backdated several months, have made this necessary. We thank readers for their support in the past, hope that it may continue—and remind them that *Motorcycle Sport*, at its new price, remains the least expensive magazine of its type on the bookstalls.

Kawasaki's potent 250-3 S1 C

BEFORE the superbike generation, two-fifties enjoyed the limelight as quick, reliable, adequate. Then came the oil crisis. Overnight, big bikes fell out of favour and world markets shuddered as petrol prices rose and boffins predicted definite supplies from a well thought bottomless. Uncompromising pressures forced the pendulum back, car sales dwindled and economy became the password.

The effect of recent events has been to extend the appeal of light, powered two-wheelers as many people, compelled to retrench, struggle to keep mobile somehow. The trade has watched the emphasis move from big-capacity machines to smaller types, and dealers report a boom for cheap and simple mopeds, which are selling as rarely before.

The enthusiast, however, holds out. Hemmed in by speed limits on all sides and strangled financially, but still wanting some performance, a slice of excitement. What to buy? Anyone who wonders may find the answer soon becomes obvious: the two-fifty is back.

If all this reads like a copywriter's blurb, our apologies, but we have been riding a perfect excuse, the Kawasaki S1 C. It is not a faultless motorcycle but if our senses do not mislead, it is a stimulating and very enjoyable one. That may not be surprising because it was sired by the Mach III and shares some of its deceptive qualities.

It is deceptive for a two-fifty on several counts, first in appearance. Viewed from any angle, it is bigger and more imposing than most other two-fifties and dwarfs some. Everything about it is expensive and done on the grand scale, whether one regards the size of the binnacles or the width of the rear tyre; and for its capacity class, it looks plenty. The impression grows on longer acquaintance. Whether wheeling it about the garage or using it, the rider is made aware that it is substantial, and on a weighbridge the S1 C, with a full complement of tools, mirrors and petrol and oil tanks full, clocked 387 lb.

Closer examination shows why. The headstem of the duplex tube cradle frame is lavishly gusseted, there is plenty of meat in the swinging arm, and there is invariably three of everything! The exhaust system is well tucked up, but there can be no disguising the amount of metal in it. The theme is continued in the strong front fork and mudguard. Battery and under-seat oil-tank hide behind push-on covers and these with many other similar touches of refinement, contribute bulk.

Controls and switchgear, in keeping with Japan's reputation for excellent electrics, appear made to last and the S1 C would generally seem to be, from our time with it, a sound proposition. The hint of caution is because we did not have it for quite as long as we would have wished.

A three-cylinder two-stroke can be expected to be potent and rapid, and this one

was. Agile off the mark, the S1 C leapt up to 70 m.p.h. which it held happily, but a flaw showed on shutting down after a 30-mile motorway run at high speed. The plug in the middle pot whiskered and this surprised us because the Japanese reckon to have long since mastered the two-stroke engine. That and a dud rear light were the only troubles during the test.

Other points noted were that the plugs fitted were Champion L77J, which may account for the bother, and there were three Champion "spares" in a container near the toolkit. When extracting the plug from the middle cylinder, it was all but impossible, using the Kawasaki box spanner provided, to avoid scratching the underside of the petrol tank.

The 15-piece toolkit included several



Slim-line forks, narrow tank, wide crankcase. . . .

multi-purpose items and looked well made and reliable. Tools were provided for removing both wheels and adjusting the drive chain and altering footrest positions by means of serrations, a welcome touch these days when too many manufacturers have a like-it-or-lump-it outlook.

The writer is very much a two-stroke enthusiast but nevertheless was unable to

feel completely at ease with the power and suspension characteristics. With a lightning response from the throttle, progress in towns became a series of stop-start surges and another distraction was a transmission "whistle", piercing at 45 m.p.h.

Riding position is big. In the modern fashion, all footrests can be flipped up, but this inherent lack of rigidity magnifies the effect of high-frequency vibration approaching maximum speeds in the gears and black-mails the pilot into using less performance. Driving mirrors, mounted at least thirteen inches from the handlebar clamps, were next to useless.

When starting from cold, throttle setting was critical and the handlebar-mounted choke lever had to be closed fully. Re-starting with a hot engine was instant, one kick sufficing.

We blame the Americans for presenting riders in this country with a *fait accompli* in handlebars. Why must the British market suffer the taste of US buyers? The bars on the test machine resembled stag's antlers and were an aching thirty inches wide. With apologies to the suppliers, we substituted a lower and flatter pattern seven inches narrower and were then able to concentrate on assessing the bike's qualities.

Kawasaki must know all about the tingling from this power unit at high revs. and try to reduce the nuisance by using four widely-spaced engine bolts. Peering at the bike from all sides, we also noted that they have run an overflow pipe from the oil tank to, hopefully, feed the chain, but from our observations little, if anything, came through. Since the rear is pretty much boxed in anyway, why don't they fit full chain enclosure?

Great strides have been made in technology in the space age yet still motorcycle makers persist, one might say wilfully, in turning a blind eye to improvements they could so easily make. If the buying public united in a concerted effort . . . but riders never will and manufacturers know they can go on getting away with glaring omissions.

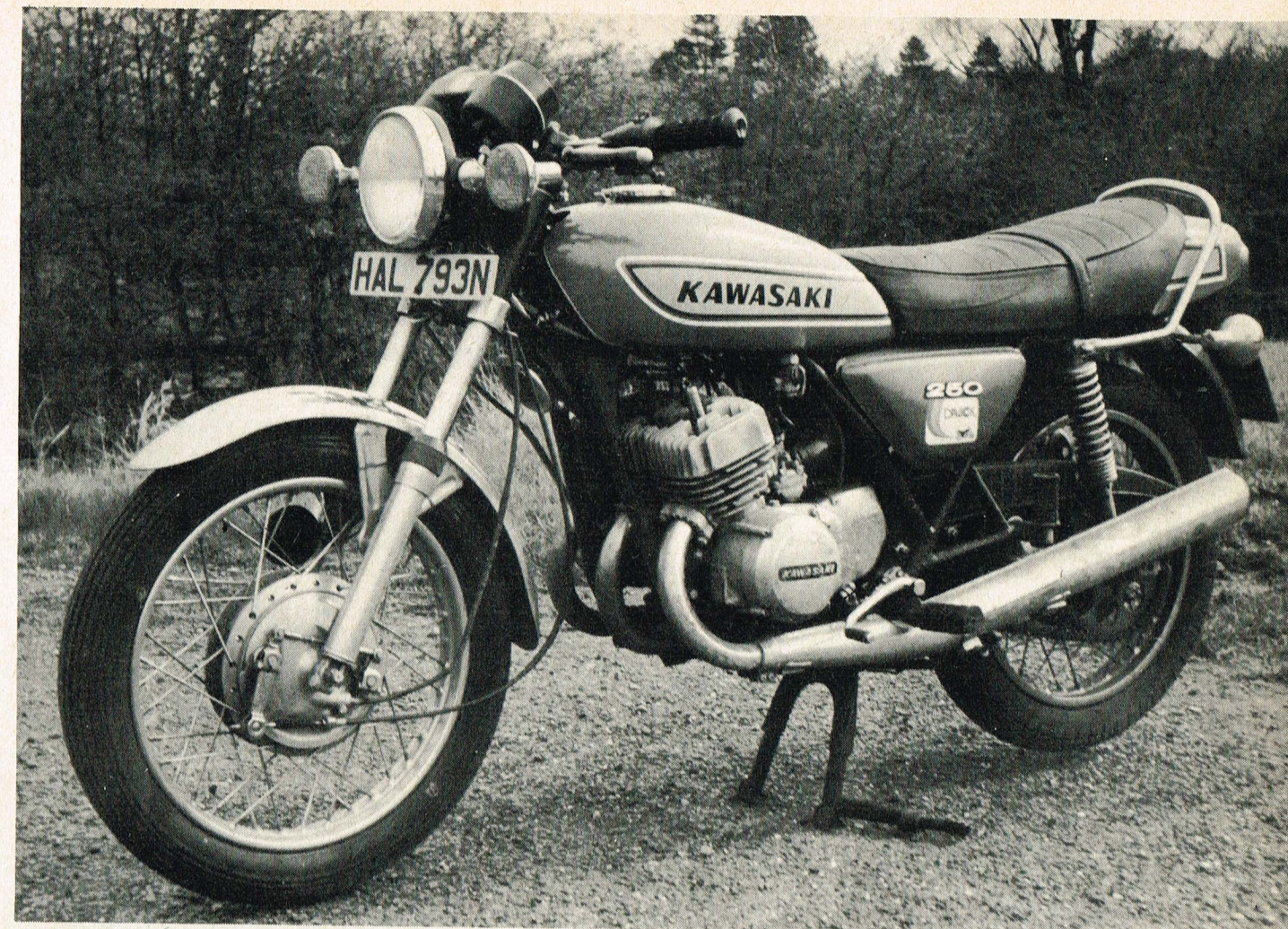
* * *

Experience of the 250's big brothers led us to think its roadholding, handling and steering might be doubtful, but what a surprise they produced. With no danger of anything touching down in zestful cornering, it was re-assuring in all three respects. Lineholding never wavered, even in sharp S-bends, and hard suspension gave good warning of tyre grip. Only the merest suggestion of heaviness in the steering in traffic cut the marks awarded here to nine out of ten. Otherwise, we had no complaints. On thoroughly wet and greasy roads, the Yokohama "nylons" behaved very well.

The feel of the engine was deceptive. Several times during our first few days with the Kawasaki, we found ourselves trying for a gear beyond fifth because the motor seemed too "busy" in top (7.31 to 1). Gearbox/clutch operation was superb.

Forewarned, we found too that acceleration was astonishing while the unit was cold, and it was only slightly less remarkable when thoroughly warm. The 250 power curve, modified since the early versions, is not so sudden now but it still demands attention as the rev-counter needle nears

6,000, for if kept wound on the power comes in strongly without hesitation.



6,000, for if kept wound on the power comes in strongly without hesitation.

Anyone under 11 stone would probably prefer a front fork of softer action, though it suited us admirably and contributed to the firm roadholding. In contrast, the rear spring units were so unobtrusive as to excite little comment, the highest praise. They achieved the ideal compromise between the too-harsh and too-supple.

Most of the performance could be used after dark, thanks to excellent lights. The headlight main beam carried a long way, the only grumble being that we had to set the brake lamp switch permanently on when the back light failed. The intensity of the headlamp was appreciated on the blackest of nights.

With so many flick-type controls to use . . . turn indicators, horn, headlight flasher, choke control, lights High and Low . . . it was pleasant to find everything worked efficiently. Even with thick gloves, the rider could be sure, from the feel of the switchgear, there would be no embarrassing overshooting. And the horn note gave clear and unmistakable warning to other road users.

A deep-rooted distrust of side-stands prompted full use of the centre stand and we were glad of the chrome grab handle behind the seat when hauling the portly Kawasaki up on to it.

Night riding was blessed with easily-read dials—reflected glare was virtually non-

The Kawasaki 3 is bigger, more imposing than many 250s

existent and the worst weather, soaking everything, still left thumb-operated switches manageable. In these conditions, the bright lights of the turn indicators were much appreciated. Neutral, with a green facia light for confirmation, was always found with no fuss.

Kawasaki have toned down the styling treatment at the rear of their machines and we found the tail section acceptable, even attractive, after being initially in two minds about it. The current penchant for putting less important items—oil filler, battery, tools, etcetera under a lockable seat—lent a clean-cut line to the machine when viewed in profile.

Few other nations of motorcycle engineers approach the Japanese for careful attention to detail. The S1 C had the now-customary cable guides and loops, plus brake lining wear indicators, tiny tabs on the rubber shrouds on the carburetors, two helmet hooks, adjustable brake pedal and gear lever—and drain holes to stop the rubber binnacles from getting waterlogged. It was apparent that the left and right foot pedal positions were inter-changeable. The tachometer drive cable had a metal sleeve for a good third of its length, to keep it off hot engine castings/cylinder fins.

The exhaust noise level, at tick-over and

town speeds was deceiving—to the rider. We thought it quite enough but bystanders said it was reasonable, inoffensive. Incidentally, the idling speed on a closed throttle was a steady 1,600 r.p.m., perhaps faster than necessary.

General running and 30-limit work demonstrated that this 250 is a very sweet-running machine, notwithstanding our comments elsewhere on the rather jerky power delivery in stop-go-stop situations . . . and particularly in this respect, first gear was well-chosen being neither too high nor too low. Top gear flexibility was first-class.

Nothing fell off nor shook loose and at the conclusion of the test, a film of dust and some mud clogged beneath the engine were the only signs that it had worked hard and faithfully. Oil stains occurred about the final drive sprocket, where lubricant had flung against the housing and dribbled onto the main stand and smeared one side of the rear fork, rim and number plate.

As the gearing selected kept the needles of speedometer and tachometer in step as they moved round their respective dials, we think Kawasaki are optimistic in claiming top speed as 90 m.p.h. . . . because 8,500 revs on one clock produced 85 m.p.h. on the other, and the redline occurs at 8½. Allowing for speedo error, and keeping to this gearing, it therefore seems reasonable to suppose the 250 wouldn't do much over 84 true—but we plead guilty to the obvious

KAWASAKI 250-3

charge because we had no opportunity to find out just what max. is.

The gear ratios felt appropriate for the engine with one exception . . . top (fifth) seemed just a shade too low during motorway runs; maybe another tooth on the f.d. sprocket would have been better, but then it would have made first less than ideal. The clutch, on further reflection, would benefit from a mite more "feel", for at times, it seemed to be very much a case of either in or out.

One realises just how thoughtful the thorough people at Kawasaki have been on filling the petrol tank to the brim: the snap-action cap (on this machine, not lockable) did not leak a drop and the tank itself was flexibly insulated, setting on rubber, from all vibrations.

Miles per gallon

A subdued throttle hand, keeping revs below 6,000, and using no more than moderate acceleration, helped to return 56-57 m.p.g. Spirited riding halved the figure! The comprehensive engine lubrication system never gave less than 190 miles to the pint—not bad, bearing in mind it protects a very buzzy motor.

Braking disappointed. The 21s front brake was hard pressed when asked to stop the bike suddenly and quickly from high speed; but it was a comfort to know that, unlike some discs, it would work very well in rain. The rear brake, controlled by a heavy cable, was good and in part compensated for the other's deficiencies.

On the whole, the Kawasaki S1 C is an attractive proposition. Good economy can be achieved, given a patient throttle hand, but then who would buy such a package if not for the scintillating engine performance? Its weight and power graphs are likely to make it costlier to keep in tyres, brake linings and chains, than some other rivals. But we don't doubt that it will be welcomed by many, particularly the sporting motorcyclist who wants something different, with a dash of fire. We liked it a lot.

To Mike Volans, managing director of Davick Motique, go our thanks for the loan of the bike. Apart from a dry and squeaky rear chain, the S1C was supplied well set-up and special thanks are due to Davick mechanic Gary Ecclestone, who took some trouble to synchronize, perfectly, the action of the carburettors, after the settling-in period.

V.W.

Kawasaki 250 S1 C specifications:*

Three-cylinder two-stroke, bore and stroke 45 x 52.3 mm. Compression ratio 7.5:1. Maximum claimed horsepower: 28 at 7,000 r.p.m.

Carburettors: Mikuni VM22SC, with air cleaner.

Engine lubrication: Superlube oil injection pump.

Starting: kick. **Ignition:** battery and coil. **Timing:** 23 degrees BTDC. **Spark plugs:** NGK B-7HCS.

Gearbox: built-in unit with engine, constant-mesh/five speed. Primary reduction ratio: 60/27. Final: 48/14. Overall top gear ratio: 7.31. Internal gearbox reductions: 1st, 2.86; 2nd, 1.79; 3rd, 1.35; 4th, 1.12; 5th, 0.96. **Clutch:** multiple disc, wet plate type running in oil. **Transmission oil:** SAE 10W30 or 10W40; capacity of gearbox: 1.16 US quart. **Final drive:** by heavy-duty chain.

Price: including delivery charge, number plates, road tax and VAT, £619.

Electrical equipment: Kokusan AR2101 generator, 5.3A, 12V minimum output at 1,500 r.p.m. **Headlamp:** sealed beam 12V 32/25W. **Tail/brake lamps:** 12V 5/21W. **Speedometer, tachometer, neutral lamps:** all 12V 3W. **High beam indicator lamp:** 12V 1.5W. **Turn signal lamps (four):** 12V 21W. **City lamp:** 12V 4W.

Frame: double cradle tubular type construction.

Suspension: Kawasaki telescopic front fork, stroke 4.3 inches. **Rear:** swinging arm controlled by hydraulically-damped spring units, stroke 2.8 inches. **Front fork oil capacity (each leg):** 210 c.c. SAE 10W.

Wheels: fitted with 3.00 x 18 PR front ribbed tyre and 3.25 x 18 4 PR rear studded tyre. **Brakes:** both 7.1in internal diameter x 1.2in wide, front 21s, rear 1 leading/1 trailing shoe.

Dimensions: overall length 80.9in. Width: 29.9in. Height: 40.7in. Wheelbase 54.1in. Ground clearance: 5.9in.

Capacities: petrol tank: 3.7 US gallons. Superlube oil tank: 1.16 US quarts (use two-stroke oil only, such as Shell 2T etc.).

Dry Weight: 339 lbs. (see text). **Performance (vide manufacturer's master manual):**

Max. speed: 90 m.p.h. (144 k.p.h.). **Fuel consumption:** 83 miles per US gallon at steady 25 m.p.h. **Climbing ability:** 40 degree gradients.

Braking: from 30 m.p.h., 39 feet. Minimum turning circle: 82.5in. Standing start quarter mile: 15.3 secs.

*Data quoted verbatim from the official Kawasaki workshop manual (incidentally, an excellent "book"), available by post from Davick Motique, Service Department, Northfield Avenue, Sawley, Long Eaton, Notts., at £2.25 post paid.

And then we went on to test more Kawasakis . . .

OVER THE PAST few months we have been using a variety of smaller Kawasakis. A mere 35 c.c. covers the three; the differences in character are much greater.

Kawasaki 90 MC1

Is it a bike? Is it a toy? Is it meant for serious cross-country riding? Even Kawasaki themselves do not really know how to describe the bike, the term "Fun Bike" being an everything and nothing phrase. At any rate, it was a far more practical motorcycle than its looks suggested.

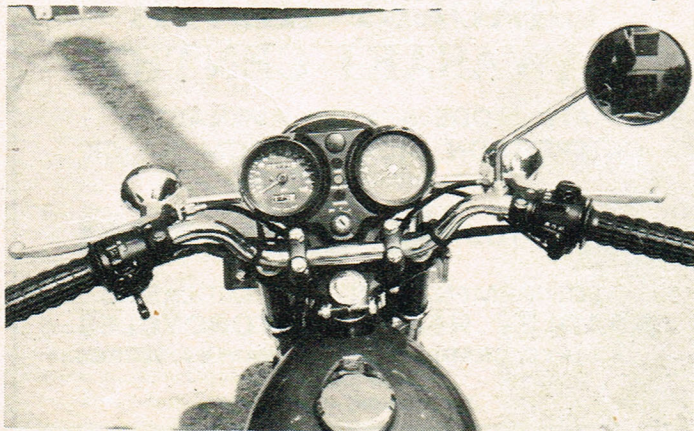
In concept it is a dual-purpose bike. It has an upswept, and far too noisy, exhaust system, upswept, braced handlebars, single, but ample seat and what passes for semi-sporting tyres. By Nitto, they were not deep enough to be any assistance on the rough but on the road they tended to drift even in the dry and they were the one unpleasant part of the machine. The sump is protected by a plate but the 6.3in. ground clearance suggests that the bike is not really intended to be used on anything but the mildest going. Particularly neat are the rubber covers on the clutch, front-brake levers and the flexible plastic mudguards which should survive tangles with trees and bushes.

"Isn't it small!" was the reaction of almost everyone who saw it. Indeed with an overall length of only 68in it is small. Fourteen-inch rear wheel and 16in front give the bike an ultra-low look. Even a medium-sized rider would view the prospect of riding it with some apprehension for the feeling is that one would look like an elephant on a peanut. Perhaps one does, but from the riding seat there is no feeling of being on a small bike. The eye level is not noticeably lower than on other bikes, there is enough knee room, but only just, the riding position is reasonably comfortable, although I found that initially the tops of my legs ached from the unaccustomed angle. In whole it felt just like most other commuter bikes of a like capacity. Where it was better was in its performance. Top speed was 55 m.p.h. and it would cruise at only slightly less for miles, surprising drivers of family cars.

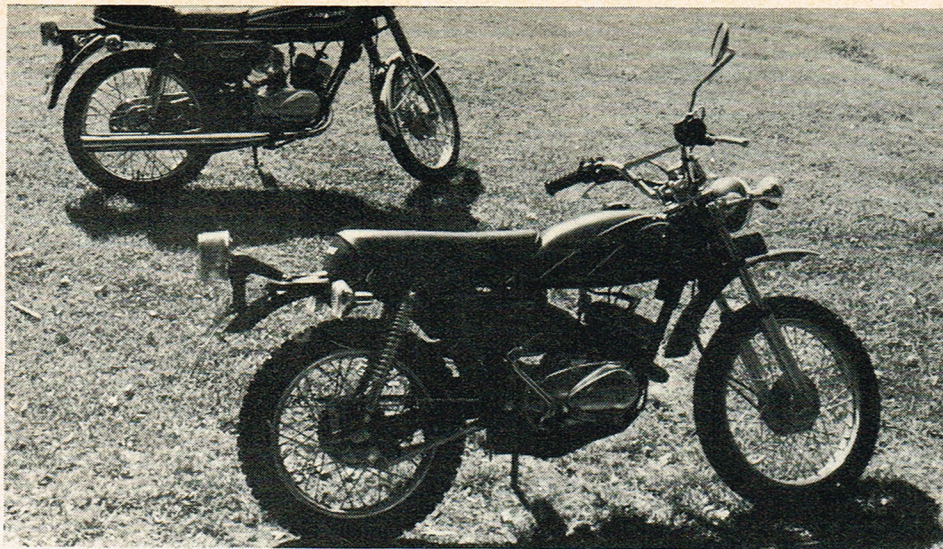
One aspect of the gearbox that I was less enthusiastic about was its neutral-below-bottom arrangement. I'm a great one for keeping going until I run out of gears and after a sequence of rapid downward changes it was easy to finish in neutral instead of bottom. On the other hand, my wife, whose own bike has the same system, swears by it and at gearboxes with difficult-to-find neutrals between first and second. Obviously it is a matter of taste.

Performance was really quite remarkable and a bout of determined accelerating would have the front wheel aviating. A relatively high performance lightweight also needs good brakes and the MC1 has these. Although only having 4in drums, they really stop the bike, strangely without showing up the skittishness of the rear tyre too much.

The bike was a curious mixture of the elaborate and the ordinary. The light switches were very good plastic units that were precise and easy to use yet the ignition key holder was mounted on a bracket alongside the speedometer, a feature that it shares



Control layout of the 250 Kawasaki is impeccable, as regards switches, warning lights, and so on



The 90 . . . an endearing machine, but a little expensive

with the 100. Another thing it shares with the 100 is the absence of a helmet lock. I can't remember the last time I tried a Japanese bike that did not have one of these essential items. How often do you see people using them, though, and how many helmets are ideal for such use anyway? Only a side stand is fitted, which is no drawback except that the machine leans over at an acute angle. The oil level sight is merely a hole cut in the plastic cover exposing the tank, and yet the fuel tank filler cap is a really well made unit that weighs twice as much as most.

The rubber-covered footrests are folding, spring-loaded, and the rear brake is all metal, serrated-edge . . . showing again that inability to be quite sure of the direction the bike is taking. The horn is very good, the lights more than adequate and the fuel consumption, at 110 m.p.g., is what it should be for a 90. The seat is secured by two clips and could be removed to reveal the toolkit retained in the

seat by rubber bands, the handbook in its own little space, and the battery top. It is a robust, substantial seat.

The engine was mechanically quieter than the 100 and had no noticeable vibration spot. It was also oil tight. Starting was very easy except for a tendency for the kickstarter to turn in if attacked too vigorously, catching the unwary kicker a sharp whack on the shins.

The Kawasaki 90 is basically an efficient, well made unit. Although we would not choose regularly to do journeys of 30 or 40 miles on it, it coped well enough and was great fun to ride. The small size did not worry us at all. On the rough it is not really a serious trail machine. Use it to explore rolling hills and overgrown cart tracks and it will take you to some interesting places, try to traverse the Ridgeway in a day and you might curse it. In essence, I really found the red and black Kawasaki MC1 an endearing machine but its price of £279 makes perhaps one of the other two bikes in this feature a more practical buy.

Kawasaki 100 G7T

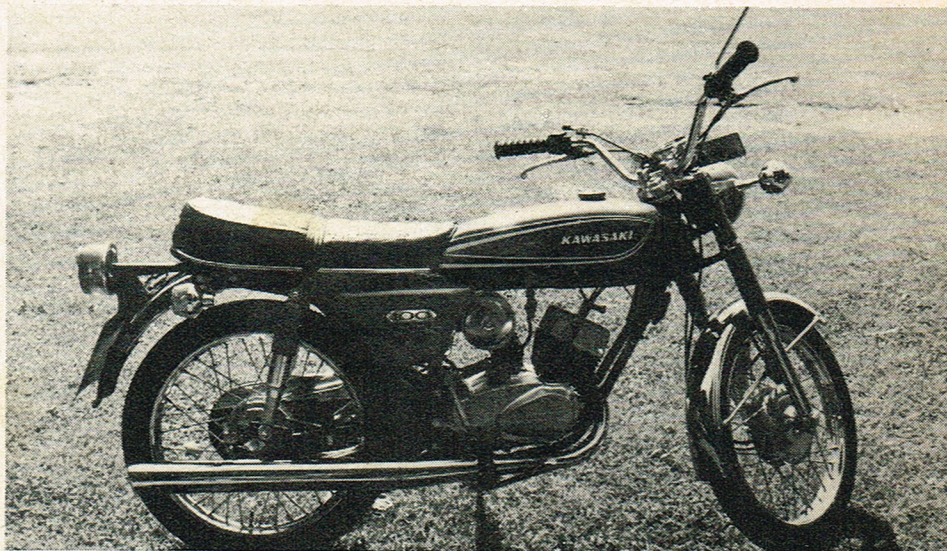
There is no mistaking the role of this newcomer to these shores. It is a commuting bike that can also be used for longer trips. In conception it is very similar to bikes offered by all the big four Japanese manufacturers. Count the number of 100s and 125s in parking bays. The Kawasaki 100 comes equipped exactly as a commuter should with totally enclosed rear chain and rear suspension units, dual seat that has ample room for two, all the usual Japanese extras such as flashing indicators, which could have been brighter, stop light front and rear, mirror, steering lock and, unusually, a very good horn indeed. Missing, as we have said, is a helmet lock.

The engine was most responsive and the machine needed little persuasion to reach an indicated 65 m.p.h. with another 5 m.p.h. coming if given time. More important was that it could do it while without cooking a plug. Although less noisy than the 90 the bike was, perhaps, just a little noisier than others in its class with the long silencer emitting a deep burble that belied its engine capacity. It was smooth enough, too, having no obvious vibration spot and the mirrors remained unblurred all the way up the range. Like its smaller brother it remained commendably oil tight although even the presence of anti-ring ribbers in the fins was unable to prevent a fair degree of piston noise. A little too much really, and we began to wonder if the motor, which was barely run in, had not tightened up at some time. Oil consumption was barely measurable.

The gearbox was identical, as far as ratios went,

with the 90's and had the same neutral-below-bottom arrangement, with the same reservations applying. It was equally smooth and the ratios were about right for the bike except that bottom was, perhaps, a shade too high.

The frame is of double-cradle type, very neat and *Ideal commuter bike. The Kawasaki manages over 100 m.p.g.*



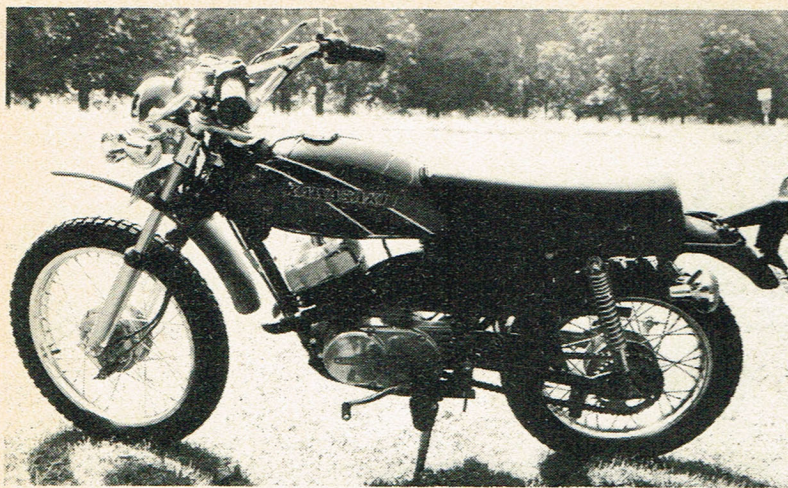
rigid. Tyres on this bike were of a different make, Yokohama, and gave us no anxiety. The 18in wheels doubtless helped here. The Showa rear-suspension units were adjustable on the Kawasaki—not all that common on a bike of this capacity. Why shouldn't the commuter be able to get his bike suspension right as well? Handling was at least as good as any we have tried in this class. The brakes were just as efficient as those on the 90, which was very efficient. It is surprising how many poor brakes there are around on bikes in this class. My wife's YB100 Yamaha, for example, has really poor brakes that seem to have been getting worse. She had not realised quite how bad they were until she tried the Kawasaki.

Riding position and comfort provided were just about right for this kind of machine, wishy bars giving a sit up and beg riding position and the seat, while not as well padded as on the smaller machine, was just about adequate, and the footrests were not too badly positioned but for my taste could have been just a shade farther back. They were a curious conical shape, a neat idea that gives the maximum foot area without intruding on the tight space at the engine end.

The essence of a machine of this nature is that it is cheap and simple. This one is cheap to run, oil consumption being around 400 miles per pint and petrol a respectable 104 m.p.g. Most acceptable, bearing in mind that much of the riding was with the speedometer needle in the 50s and 60s. Yes, the G7T was well capable of such performance and it lifts it comfortably out of the commuter class into that of the more ambitious realms of short-distance touring, for journeys of 100 miles, even more, are practicable.

The G7T was almost viceless but there was one daft area that drove us potty. It needed no fewer than three keys to make it function. One for the ignition, one for the steering lock and a third for the lockable tank cap, the latter being non-essential. Just to make life more interesting the ignition key would operate the steering lock but the steering lock key would not work the ignition. And the whole lot rattled on the key ring when riding along. Agreed that they did not have to be kept all together but it made life easier.

Finished in black with a blue tank and chrome mudguard at the front, chrome and plastic at the rear, the 100 did everything that we would expect the current breed of potent ultra-lightweights to do. It was also rather fun to ride and, £289, the potential commuter could reckon to recoup his outlay within a couple of years if he had a medium-distance commuting journey to make.



Left: Sunlight and grass for the 100 G7T
Below: A different scene for the KS 125 trail
Kawasaki



Kawasaki KS 125A

This is the one for me! Not all that much more expensive than the other two, it was an interesting, if slightly demanding, trail bike and an even better road machine. We have to go back a couple of months to remember the time that we had the KS125. It was about the middle of March and coincided with one of the few snowy spells of the winter. Naturally the day we chose to go on a tour of our favourite Surrey Hills green lanes was the worst day and we set out with a light covering of snow on the ground.

Londoners are not very well placed when it comes to trail riding. It means a trip of 30 miles to start. This is why we often choose the Surrey Hills. They abound with tracks and, in Coldharbour Lane, there is one of the longest and most difficult tracks in these parts. That was to be our ultimate destination. Before, though, we detoured on to a number of familiar tracks – fairly easy and not too delaying was our previous assessment. We were in for a shock! The ravages of winter had reduced most of them to a quagmire and it became clear after a couple of hours' frantic legwork that not only were we not going to reach Coldharbour but that the little Kawasaki was designed for firmer going.

Cresting the top of one of the many hills, we stopped for breath. There was ice inches thick on some of the puddles, snow was still lying in the shaded areas and our breath froze as we expelled it... yet we were sweating from top to toe. We had started off well by landing in a big heap on the first lane we tried, the addition of a pillion passenger being an unfair burden on bike and control. From then on it was a case of Shanks's pony for one of us when the going became difficult. Which was often. We walked quite a way that day.

The KS125's real problem was that its real power was not available until the tachometer needle passed 5,000 r.p.m. Combined with a high bottom gear this meant that we had two options. Go fast enough to keep it pulling and make regular acquaintance with the goeey mud or go at *our* speed and be forced into inelegant but safe legwork. We chose the latter. On hard going the bike was good. It handled well, was responsive and would bounce along with ease, if a little noisily. It was too noisy by far for a trail bike, for in my view these machines should be quieter than normal road bikes.

That day on the rough taught us a great deal about the little Kawasaki. We both arrived home covered in mud, exhausted. What did we learn? That the clutch is almost indestructible. One

particular lane was so deep in mud that we left the bike standing to take some pictures. To keep going meant that the clutch was sorely tried but it never lost its adjustment or slipped. The engine, too, was sweetness itself, always starting first kick, never complaining. In such going the primary kickstarter was particularly appreciated... often we couldn't even see the gearchange lever to locate neutral. The bike took two without protest on the easy stuff. Handling was not in the category of the best Spanish trail bikes but was predictable and we managed to rescue ourselves from most situations. It was comfortable, light and, giving 82 m.p.g., as economical as we would have expected in such conditions. On the rough, then, it is a passable bike, able to cope with almost anything given time and liable to be even better given a set of real trials tyres. Those fitted, by Nitto, were barely adequate.

Funny thing, where we really appreciated the Kawasaki was on the road. It made, as trail bikes often do, an outstanding commuter, its comfortable riding position, tight control and snappy acceleration giving it an edge over similar road machines. We could not really see the need for a six-speed box, especially given the choice of gears. It would have made more sense to offer the first three gears much lower, with a greater jump to the higher ones. In fact, fifth and sixth were so close as to be of marginal benefit. As a matter of interest the engine speed at 30 m.p.h. in each gear is as follows. First: 8,000; second, 7,000; third, 4,800; fourth, 4,000; fifth, 3,200; sixth, 3,000. In effect the gears came in three pairs, on paper not looking too bad, in practice needing a lower bottom pair at least. A larger rear sprocket would not be a disaster for the bike did not respond too readily below 50 in top and had a maximum speed of 65/70 m.p.h., which is more than enough. It would make it noisier at any given speed of course, which might not be acceptable on the rough. Which highlights the dilemma of the designer. Whatever path he chooses to tread there are pitfalls.

Excellent electrics

Electrics were excellent. The lighting was direct but so arranged that the tail light stayed on if the engine stopped. The headlight was good, as was the tail light. The horn was not too good and managed to become tangled with the choke when it was used. The choke, in fact, was awkward, a handlebar lever that had to be held on as long as it was needed. The one on the 100 was much better. The frame was single down-tube cradle with the front forks having 4in travel and the rear swinging arm units being adjustable. It made for good road handling and adequate cross-country handling. One point about the tyres we liked was the security bolt in the rear.

Finished in black and gold, the Kawasaki had the sort of sporting good looks that I find very attractive. They, at least, will be more than happy with a machine such as the Kawasaki for it is fast, fairly economical, has good brakes, doesn't vibrate too much, is comfortable for one and will accept two without too much of a squeeze. It starts easily, ticks over without fuss and only raises eyebrows when the rider is over-exuberant with the throttle. On the rough it gets by without real difficulty but we would really rather see more low-down torque. It has flexible plastic on most of the parts that are liable to get damaged in such conditions but we did manage to bend one of the indicators. Presumably serious trail riders will discard such things anyway. If they also lower the gearing, fit decent trials tyres and, perhaps, think about detuning the engine just a little, they could well have one of the most attractive trail bikes around. If they leave it as it is they will have an excellent road bike and still have an enjoyable trail bike. It depends what you want.