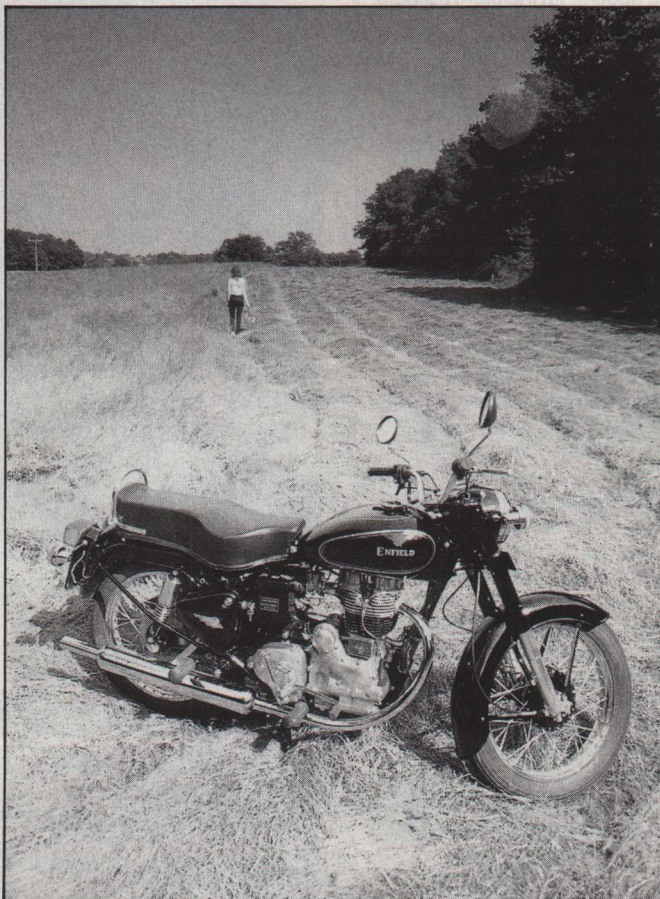


# TIME TRAVELLER

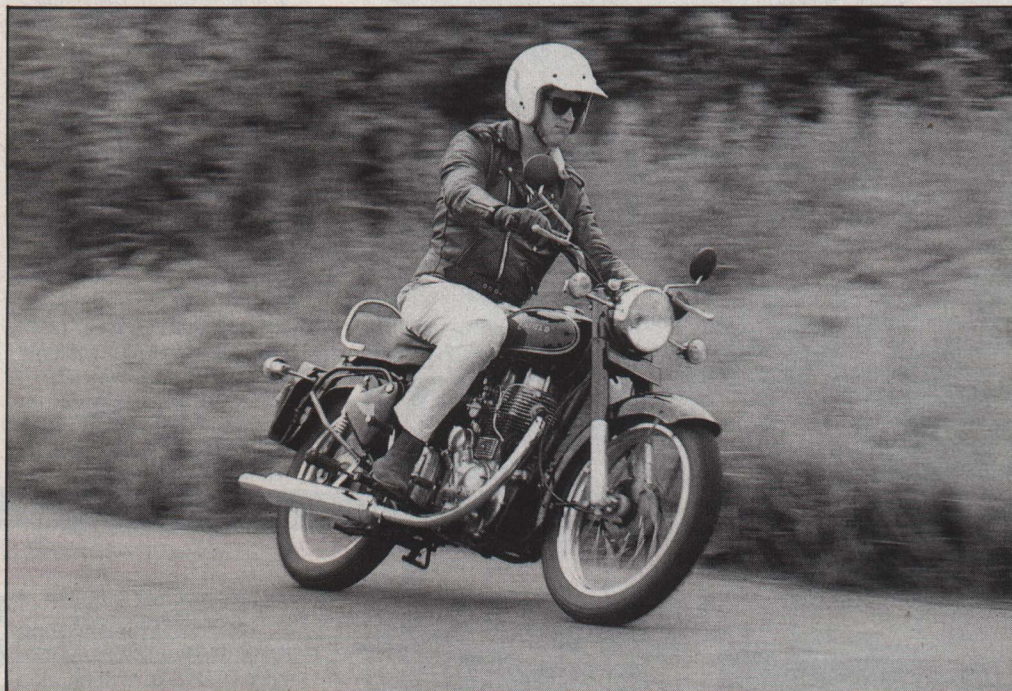
## ENFIELD INDIA BULLET

The Enfield Bullet is the motorcycling anachronism *par excellence*. Originally launched in 1947 by the Redditch-based Royal Enfield company, the long-stroke 346cc OHV single has been manufactured more or less continuously since then, although the factories responsible for this have been located in such diverse locations as a series of caves in the Malvern hills and, more recently, the suburbs of Madras, India. However the durability of the machine owes more to Enfield's decision to license the Bullet design to the Indians back in the '50s than it does to any inherent strengths, for no-way would such an old fashioned engine have lasted this long were it not for Third-World patronage – especially that of the Indian Army who bought (and still buy) thousands of them.

Apart from plastic-clad rearview mirrors and indicators, the Bullet looks pretty much as it did 20 or 30 years ago – classic lines appended by endearing Enfield quirks like the hefty headlamp nacelle with its twin running lights and a separate,



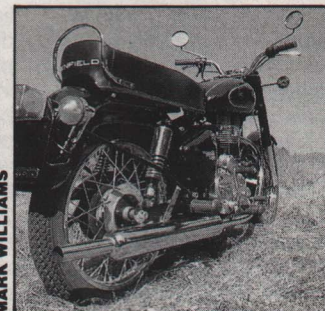
It could almost have been taken 30 years ago – but for the girl's jeans!



Roadholding is, er, responsive but the handling is easy and predictable

bolt-on rear subframe for the seat and deeply valenced rear fender. Another aesthetic delight is the engine that pushes this time-warp victim along at a comfortable cruising speed of 60-65mph. Its tall, meandering nearside engine casing embraces a gear driven cam for each of the valve push-rods, a screw-valve pump which draws oil from the tank below the crankcase (it's not strictly a wet-sump design), plus another gear drive for the distributor.

The non-unit, four speed gearbox boasts two levers, the rear one providing instant access to neutral from any gear except first – a nifty, heel-operated accoutrement in view of the (currently) unconventional one up, three down shift pattern



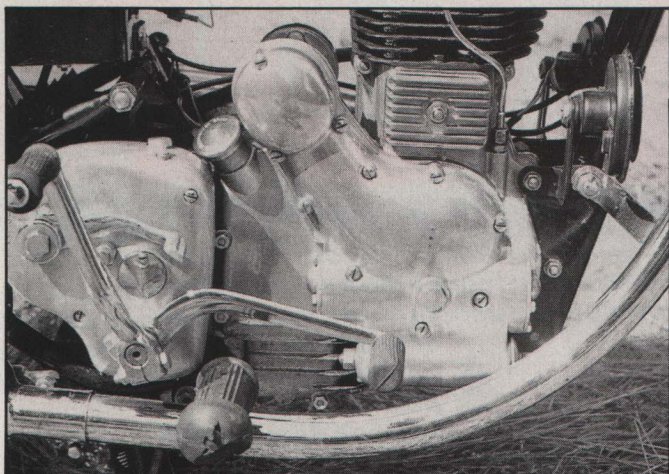
MARK WILLIAMS

Rear brake is better than the front, silencer large but effective

and the difficulty of selecting neutral while stationary. Although later Redditch Bullets had cranked kickstarts, the item found on the Indian version is fixed and can get in the way of gearchanging manoeuvres, but does the job it was designed for with ease. The ignition procedure involves opening the bar mounted decompression lever to boot the engine over a couple of times (heavy flywheels are a bonus here), turning on the awkwardly mounted ignition switch, closing the decompressor, and then applying a purposeful bootful.

The coke lever on the Indian-built Mikuni carb needs applying only when really cold, and the engine soon settles to a slow and even tickover. Throttle and clutch action are both pretty smooth and the engine responds eagerly to their demands, although the gearbox on our test bike was a bit

'In terms of nouveau classic street credibility, the Bullet has it all over the recently launched Matchless G80'



Engine looks oddly impressive, gearbox is impressively odd

sluggish and its ratios are rather too closely spaced to take full advantage of the Bullet's broad powerband (no further details on this, as tachos weren't *de rigueur* in the '40s!)

For this reason the engine sounds uncomfortably busy when you get beyond 65-75mph, the alleged top whack – and hitherto absent vibration suddenly makes itself irritatingly apparent. The smoothness of the engine, plus its rock-solid crank assembly (roller bearing mains in white metal bottom end), suggest that the Bullet's major mechanicals are going to last many tens of thousands of miles, and Enfield India claim that improved machining procedures and quality control largely obviate the leakages that helped scupper Slater Brothers' effort to re-establish the marque.

With an absence of rebound damping in the front forks and stiffish but efficient Indian-made ITS rear shocks, the Bullet's ride can most kindly be described as responsive, but the generously padded seat somewhat compensates for this. Handling, though, is surprisingly good – a consequence of light, neutral steering and a decently low C-of-G combined with fairly steep, leading axle front-end geometry. Ancient tread patterns on the Indian tyres and 5.5in ground clearance don't encourage Wayne Gardner cornering techniques, however!

The new 12-volt electrics, improved finish and larger, 8ldB silencer further improve the bike's reliability and reputation, but in one major area the machine remains seriously flawed, namely its braking. A 6.5in single-leading-shoe anchor is perfectly adequate for the rear wheel, but the same tiny drum also sits upfront, and the manufacturer's claim that increasing the length of the brake arm has dramatically improved stopping power only

made me wonder whether a pair of brown trousers were supplied free with those 1977 Enfields! Engine braking, maximum forward planning and heavy application of the rear brake are all essential if forward progress is to be confidently terminated, but Bavanar, the importers, say that the braking department will be significantly improved by 1988. I certainly hope so.

Whether or not much else needs doing to the Bullet is purely a matter of taste – and remember the Bullet is not aimed at your average modern motorcyclist. Nonetheless I personally feel that the screw-head bolts holding the engine casings together should be replaced by hexagonals (at the very least), and the seat, while plenty comfortable for the rider, narrows unduly for the pillion. Fitting locks on the twin tool boxes would foil anyone who wished to tamper with the ignition switch housed in the off-side one (and prevent scuffing from the tacky knurled knob). Finally I would tidy up the wiring, which looks a mess and augurs badly for wet-weather reliability.

However in terms of nouveau classic street credibility, the Enfield India Bullet has it all over the recently launched Matchless G80 and Jap pretenders like the SRX600 and XRB500 – machines which lack in charisma what they charge dearly for in technical refinement. So you've just got to pay your money and take your choice... and £1499 isn't an awful lot of money/**Mark Williams**

#### ENFIELD INDIA 350 BULLET

Price	£1499
Bore x Stroke	70 x 90mm
Capacity	346cc
Power	18hp @ 5625rpm
Weight	363lb (165kg)

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