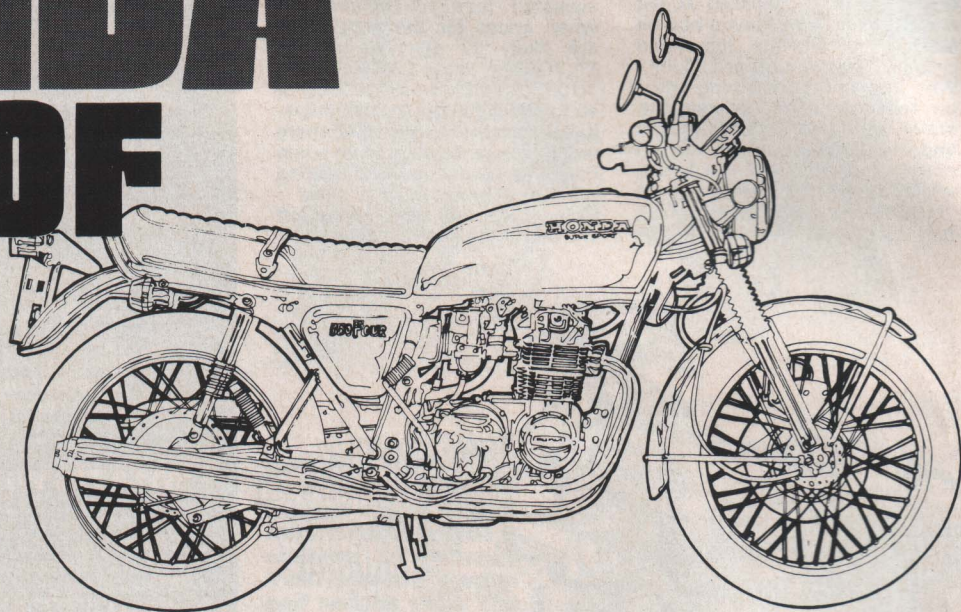


HONDA CB550F



At eight o'clock on a sunny but windy August morning, Charles Deane, Steve Hackett and Roger Holyoake had the CB550F warming up at the Mira track, at Lindley, ready to start on NMM's latest marathon. We'd been impressed, in the course of the 5,000-odd miles covered up to that point, by the Honda's high-speed cruising ability, and we wanted to show just how good this aspect of the bike could be. Nipping up and down a motorway wouldn't do: we wanted to see if it was possible to keep up an average speed of over 70 mph for a 12-hour run. That's why we chose Mira, and its '140 mph-plus' banked 2.8-mile outer circuit. Our test team's target was to cover 300 laps if they could — or at least to get within spitting distance of it.

The joker in the pack was obviously going to be fuel consumption. Running in standard form, and with our riders adopting only a crouched position rather than prone, we had an idea that refuelling stops were going to be needed at rather frequent intervals, so we decided to run from reserve to reserve to ensure that no time was lost through under-estimating the bike's thirst and having to push in. In practice, that meant a quick pull in for refuelling virtually every hour, since we soon found that our sustained high speeds were drinking fuel at the rate of one gallon every 27 miles! Then there was the question of tyre wear. Though our original rear cover looked to be in good enough condition to cover the distance we'd set, in practice the Mira banking ground the tread away in double-quick time, and after two hours' high-speed running — during which 155 miles had been covered — we had to call the Honda in for a tyre change. Luckily, Dunlop were able to make a snappy substitution for us, and we motored away happily

enough on a brand-new TT 100 in place of the Bridgestone set-up previously employed.

Would you believe that we had rain? In the summer of '76? Steve Hackett was the man in luck: his first run coincided with a real downpour, and he confessed to taking the banking a little gingerly once he had seen the water streaming down it. But the CB550F sat tight on the curves, so he took it faster and faster, getting both himself and the Honda well soaked in the process.

Riding the banking for the first time is a strange experience. The trick is to set the entry speed right, and then snap the throttle open to keep you high up the banking. In theory, you can do 140 mph hands off — though we must admit nobody tried it. But Roger experimented with just the opposite technique — cranking the bike to almost frightening angles low down the banking to maintain the speed. All things are relative — he was taking the curves at around 90 mph anyway! — but Charles and Steve explained the technique to him after the first session and thereafter he kept up the speed with a mite less drama. Generally, we were able to hold about 95 mph on the curves, and clock over 110 mph on the down-wind straight. Having established that, the team settled down to hold speeds more in keeping with the target. No point in blowing the innards out!

Charles went poaching! On his first session, a bevy of partridges took off straight across the track — and one of them was just a bit unlucky. It hit the low-flying Honda slap on the brake calliper — and Charles did an hour's high-speed stint with some very dead game dangling from the forks. We never did find out what became of it afterwards...

Two of our riders reported ear and neck trouble after an hour's continuous high-speed riding —

the slipstream gave them quite a battering — but the CB550F stood up to its unmerciful caning very well indeed. Towards the end of the session the motor began to go off song — the plugs were possibly getting a bit tired — and the chain failed to stand the pace. It had needed adjustment after each session, and several tight spots developed as it stretched.

By 8.30 pm — with 11¾ hours riding completed — the setting sun was making it almost impossible for our team to gauge an accurate line round the banking. By that time, 298 laps had been ridden, and we felt that

there was no point in pressing on to complete a purely academic figure at the risk of a spill.

We had established that the machine would hold an overall average of over 70 mph for nearly half a day, non-stop apart from fuel halts and the tyre change. The actual figures were 835 miles covered in 11¾ hours, giving an average speed of 71.05 mph — equivalent to riding from London to Barcelona in under 12 hours!

We thought it was a pretty convincing result...



handling and ride

● Compared with the other Honda 'fours', the CB550F's handling is exemplary. It is as nimble as the smaller CB400F, and far handier on swervy than the 750 or the 'Gold Wing'. Which makes it a good contender in the handling stakes, but not a faultless one.

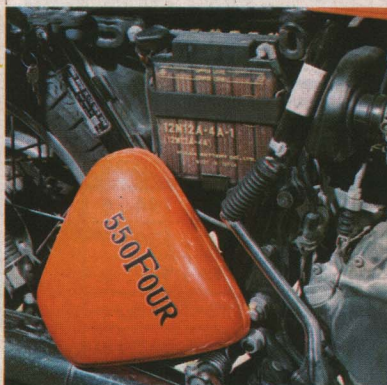
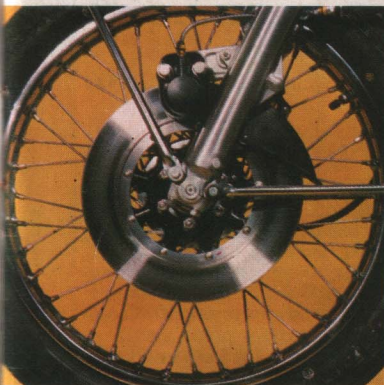
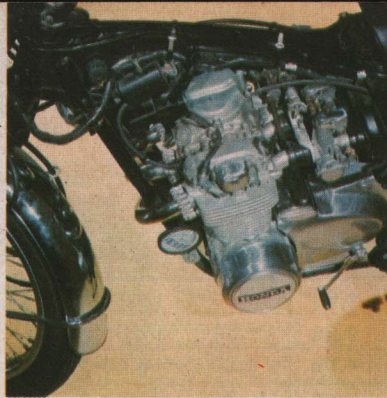
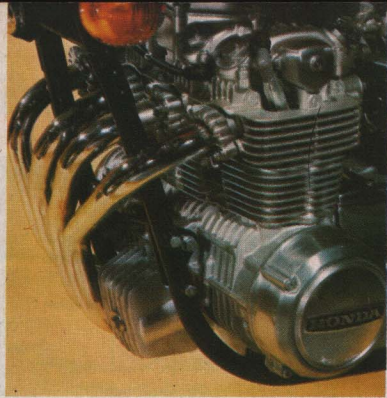
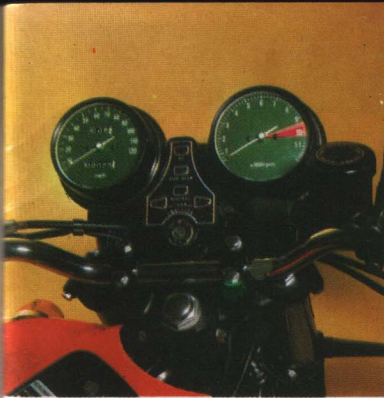
Japanese machines generally seem to suffer from mediocre damping characteristics on the rear units. On smooth roads they are fine at any speed, but get them moving smartly on the poorer surfaces common on secondary roads in Britain — or, come to that, in most of Europe and Australia — and the damping finds the job of keeping the wheel in contact with the ground a bit beyond it. We discovered this on the CB550F. Washboard surfaces would set the rear wheel pattering, and though the condition never became anything more than a nuisance the rider was inhibited by knowing that it was there.

For reasonably quick motoring it helps, of course, to set the adjustable spring units up to the highest or next-to-highest setting. It gives better control and virtually eliminates grounding the stand on the left or the pipes on the right, unless you are really scratching. But — it cannot alter the damping characteristics; and it's those that are at the root of the trouble.

Not that the weakness is a serious one. Nine riders out of ten will be perfectly happy with the CB550F's agility, and it is undeniably the Honda which comes closest to the European ideal of balance and hair-line steering. Using European spring units, it would probably satisfy the odd man out, too...

As standard, the CB550F still has to be among the top six so far as handling is concerned. The balance, compared with the quite pleasant CB500F which was its predecessor, is excellent. It can be cranked from lock to lock and blasted through corners with complete equanimity — provided, of course, that the surface is reasonably good — and there's no question of it tiring the rider.

No complaints about the ride, either. Front and rear suspension systems harmonise well, and very little in the way of road shocks gets past them. We'd class this as a good machine for the fast long-distance rider — and his passenger.



NEW
Motorcycling
Monthly

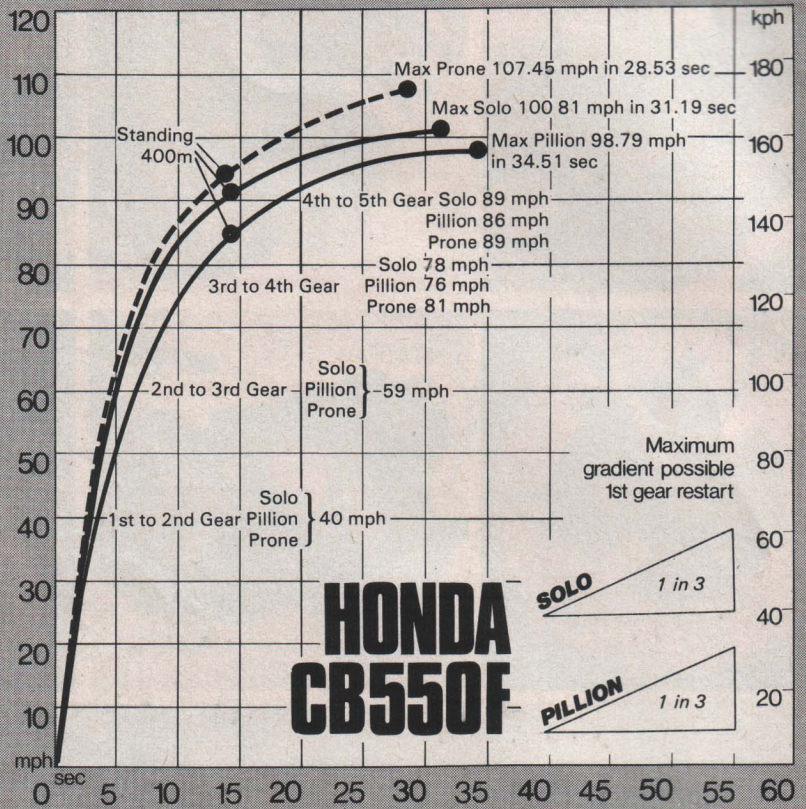
**10,000
KM
TEST**



NMM TEST CARD

SPEED RANGES / GEAR SPEEDS

gear		mph		sec	kph	
		min	max	min-max	min	max
1	solo	5.10	39.86	4.60	8.20	64.15
	pillion	5.20	39.06	4.99	8.34	62.86
	prone	5.10	40.47	4.55	8.20	65.13
2	solo	8.00	59.27	7.76	12.87	95.39
	pillion	8.74	59.41	8.29	14.07	95.61
	prone	8.00	60.11	7.70	12.87	96.74
3	solo	9.70	78.50	12.11	15.61	126.33
	pillion	11.20	76.76	16.38	18.02	123.53
	prone	9.70	81.02	11.77	15.61	130.39
4	solo	11.74	89.96	24.50	18.90	144.78
	pillion	14.18	86.70	32.51	22.82	139.53
	prone	11.74	91.44	23.20	18.90	147.16
5	solo	17.00	100.81	36.87	27.36	162.24
	pillion	17.50	98.79	39.68	28.16	158.99
	prone	17.00	107.45	32.95	27.36	172.92
6	solo					
	pillion					
	prone					



ACCELERATION OVER STANDING 1/4 MILE / 400m

		ft	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	1000	1100	1200	1/4 mile
		m	31	61	91	122	152	183	213	243	274	305	335	366	400
solo	sec	2.85	4.26	5.35	6.26	7.55	8.38	9.39	10.19	10.95	11.90	12.41	13.22	13.98	
	mph	40.57	53.41	61.08	66.66	72.80	75.61	79.48	82.00	83.95	86.70	88.59	90.35	91.65	
pillion	sec	3.00	4.76	5.90	7.01	8.31	9.23	10.04	10.79	11.74	12.81	13.69	14.53	14.92	
	mph	37.81	49.06	56.33	62.18	68.40	71.61	74.53	77.30	79.72	82.00	83.33	84.76	86.60	
prone	sec	2.78	4.29	5.32	6.27	7.48	8.23	9.09	10.00	10.81	11.70	12.45	13.03	13.75	
	mph	41.32	54.08	62.05	67.26	73.91	77.11	80.06	84.00	86.24	88.89	91.09	92.45	94.55	

ACCELERATION FROM REST

mph	solo	pillion	prone
0-20	1.40	1.80	1.40
0-30	2.20	2.50	2.16
0-40	2.60	3.45	2.55
0-50	3.90	4.75	3.70
0-60	5.40	6.60	4.90
0-70	7.00	8.65	6.50
0-80	9.40	12.00	8.70
0-90	13.20	18.10	12.00
0-100	29.14		18.40
0-110			
0-120			
0-max			

MPG steady speed

mph	solo
30	65
40	54
50	45
60	36
70	31

mph	pillion
30	61
40	54
50	45
60	36
70	31

MPG overall

48

MPH 1000rpm in top

12.4

OIL/MPP overall

266

RESPONSE IN THE GEARS/SECONDS

gear	mph	seconds					
		10-30	20-40	30-50	40-60	50-70	60-80
1	solo	2.27	2.41				
	pillion	2.82	2.94				
	prone	2.34	2.64				
2	solo	2.70	3.43	2.71			
	pillion	3.37	3.55	3.53			
	prone	3.45	3.22	3.07			
3	solo	4.73	3.00	4.14	3.77	4.55	
	pillion	5.92	4.79	4.96	4.30	5.11	
	prone	5.34	3.88	3.84	5.33	4.25	5.27
4	solo		4.63	4.73	5.08	5.71	6.14
	pillion		6.17	6.52	6.23	6.58	6.95
	prone		4.47	4.55	4.31	4.81	6.00
5	solo		5.49	5.24	6.64	7.20	7.08
	pillion		7.74	6.90	6.40	8.72	7.94
	prone		5.18	5.23	4.96	6.92	6.98
6	solo						
	pillion						
	prone						

BRAKES (BOTH)

mph	solo		pillion	
	ft	m	ft	m
10	4'	1.22	6'6"	1.98
20	12'	3.66	14'	4.27
30	26'6"	8.08	42'	12.8
40	54'6"	16.61	65'	19.81
50	95'6"	29.11	102'	31.01
60	118'	36.0	160'6"	48.92
70	175'6"	53.5	200'6"	61.11

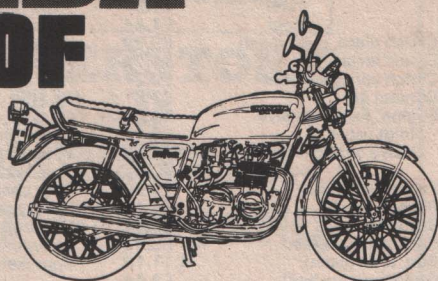
SPEEDO

ind	true
20	19.5
30	28.3
40	37.6
50	46.4
60	54.5
70	63.9

Milometer +3%



HONDA CB550F



Performance

If the once time-honoured sport of the open-road burn-up was still in fashion — which, of course, it isn't — the CB550F would be a favourite choice of weapon! One would rate it as a rapier — a finely-tuned and well-balanced piece of equipment capable of holding its own with the more bludgeon-like opposition. You could say that the Honda's 550cc is worth about 750cc of anybody else's, and we wouldn't necessarily be arguing.

Times being more sedate than they were, one has to concentrate less upon the 550's road-burning potential and more on its sheer utility as an all-purpose bike. And utile — in the very best sense — it really is. For all practical purposes, this is a top-gear machine. You can engage fifth, under normal road conditions, at just under 25 mph, though we did have it pulling from considerably slower speeds on the track. Acceleration then is restrained up to 45 mph, when the power starts to flow in. By 60 mph the speedo needle is nipping round the dial, and after that the sky's the limit to upwards of the 'ton'. For main-road work you don't really need to drop a gear to accelerate past most of the traffic, but cogging down to third will bring in the revs in a way that sets the tach needle scurrying towards the 9,200 rpm blood-line.

All the performance is usable, too. There's a very short period of low-frequency vibration in top at around 4,500 rpm, and a slight high-frequency vibration noticeable through the seat and the bars at 6,000 rpm. That apart, the unit is smooth right through its range — and vibration never reaches the 'electric shock' proportions usual on the earlier Japanese 'screamers'. Add a snappy gearchange — which can be clutchless, if you're feeling lazy, without any graunching noises — and a restrained level of both exhaust and mechanical noise and you have performance that is really on tap all the time you're on the road.

LMK 232P

For our Honda CB550F we paid a second visit to Read Bros. Cycles (Leyton) Ltd., 814 High Road, London E10, from whom we had bought a test machine some months before. No ulterior motive: it was simply a case of snatching one of the very first of the new machines to hit the market. As usual, the purchase was made anonymously, and the machine was collected on March 11, 1976.

We have become accustomed to expect that a Honda will give no mechanical trouble, so this particular test was scheduled for a much earlier issue. However, with 4,700 miles on the clock by late May, a patch of oil on a tricky corner resulted in a tumble which cost over £300 to put right. The machine actually hit the road at little more than walking pace, but the instant dilapidations included the smashing of both the speedometer and the rev counter; a dented front mudguard; demolished headlamp and indicators; scratched fork sliders; buckled front

wheel; damaged generator; distorted oil filter housing; smashed nearside mirror; bent gear pedal; and broken clutch lever. Lesson No. 1 — fit crash bars to machines with vulnerable light alloy castings such as those on the Honda 'fours'...

Repairs were undertaken by Tippets Motors, of Surbiton, but it was nearly eight weeks before the machine was back on the road, and one spare part — the instrument-mounting bracket — had still not been delivered. Tippets made a reasonable job of straightening out the original instead.

Our high-speed Mira Marathon, which took the mileage close to the 6,000-mark, soon removed the remains of the tyre treads, and by the end of it a new drive chain was also required — as it had been on the 'bought from stock' CB400F that we tested in February, after about the same usage. Given the price of chain nowadays, allowance for that item alone adds a penny to the cost of every two miles riding!

Delivery faults

After an initial 50-mile 'shake-down' ride, the CB550F was checked over on the evening of its collection and the following faults were noted:

1. The lower front mudguard stay had not been fitted.
2. The speedometer cable had not been led through the guide on the mudguard.
3. The offside mirror was loose.
4. There were abrasion marks on the side of the rev. counter.
5. On the right-hand side, protective grease had stained the engine castings and pipes.
6. There was slight corrosion of the light alloy on the clutch housing joint.
7. Fragments of clear adhesive tape had been left on the handlebars.
8. The clutch lever was badly set.

9. The clutch adjuster at the handlebar end was loose.
10. The rear chain had no play.
11. The front tyre was over-inflated by 2 psi.
12. Protective tinted plastic film had been left on the mirrors.
13. The oil sump was overfilled.
14. At the twist-grip, the locknuts on the push-pull throttle cables were loose.
15. There was excessive back-lash in the throttle linkage.

Subsequent faults

1. After 1,467 miles the speedometer cable snapped.
2. From approximately 2,000 miles onwards we experienced an occasional shriek as the clutch took up from a standstill.
3. At 5,600 miles the rear chain was worn out.

Servicing

● True enough, with a 'four' there's a multiplicity of everything. Four plugs. Two contact breakers. Eight tappets. A cam chain. A rear chain. A brake rod, and a clutch. Then there's the oil and the filter to change — the oil at intervals of only 1,500 miles, which makes it an expensive proposition, if not exactly a chore.

Happily, the servicing is an easy enough operation in itself — though apt to be a costly one if you employ somebody to do it for you.

The contact-breakers could hardly be more accessible: they are concealed under a cover on the right-hand side of the engine, and are driven straight from the crankshaft. Remove the cover and there are your points, in an ideal position for easy access. Timing marks are built in, just to make the job simpler still, and it's dead easy to rig up a timing lamp or a strobe.

Tensioning the camshaft drive chain, too, is easy. Its adjuster is mounted right at the front of the block and nothing more complicated than loosening and retightening a bolt is involved.

Tappets, though, can be tricky. Obviously, you have to remove the tank, and then there are eight caps to unscrew; the plugs to take out; and the contact-breaker cover to detach so that the TDC mark can be seen. The actual adjustment on each rocker is quite conventional, but getting a feeler into position is a bit of a hassle, involving bending the blade round. This *can* cause a thin feeler to snap and fall into the works...

Oil filter changing presents no problem unless the centre bolt holding the filter casing locks in its light alloy threads. It then becomes distressingly easy to round the bolt head. Replacements are far from cheap — the hollow bolt contains a vent mechanism — so it is essential to use only the correct size of socket spanner here. The open-ender from the tool kit is *not* suitable.

Chain adjustment, again, is conventional — surely Honda could do better than those rather crude drawbolts? — but with a riveted-up chain adequate lubrication is difficult to achieve. Perhaps that explains our machine's high chain mortality rate. It is almost impossible to clean the chain adequately and then lubricate it fully while it is still fitted to the bike; and to take it off involves punching out rivets and then remaking it afterwards. Or, of course, a spring link could be fitted; but dealers then advise changing the spring clip every thousand miles.

Tyres

Our CB550F was fitted with the standard Bridgestone tyres — which, incidentally, gave us no handling problems — and tread depth measurements at both front and rear were taken after 50 miles. At 5,200 miles the rear tyre was judged to

have become illegal and it was removed. Its life having thus been established, second measurements were taken at this point. The front tyre remained servicable, and the depth of its tread was measured again at 6,256 miles, when it was discarded.

Front tyre

Measurement at valve: tread depth in mm.

Left			Centre	Right		
Outer	Inner ²	Inner ¹		Inner ¹	Inner ²	Outer
3.5	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.5
Measurement after 6,256 miles						
3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	3.0
Measurement opposite valve						
3.5	4.0	4.0	3.5	4.0	4.0	3.5
Measurement after 6,256 miles						
3.0	4.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.5	3.0

Rear tyre

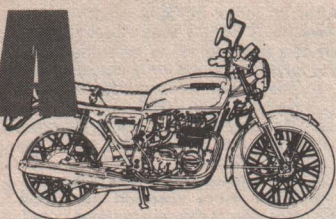
Measurement at valve: tread depth in mm.

Left			Centre	Right	
Outer	Inner			Inner	Outer
5.5	6.5		7.0	6.5	5.5
Measurement after 5,200 miles					
3.0	1.0		0	1.0	3.0
Measurement opposite valve					
5.5	6.5		6.5	6.5	5.0
Measurement after 5,200 miles					
2.0	2.0		0	1.0	2.0

From this, we established a front tyre life of 6,256 miles, and a maximum of 5,200 miles for the rear cover.



HONDA CB550F



Tools

● Checked on delivery, the standard Honda tool kit was rated as well up to the better-than-average standard which Honda themselves set in this field. Adequate in scope and acceptable in quality, it contained screwdrivers and spanners capable of dealing with all normal maintenance apart from removal of the oil filter. No feeler gauges, though.

We were not so happy with the method of stowage adopted on the 550. The tool roll now lives in a

plastic-lidded housing set in the rear of the dual seat pan. The lid is retained by a pair of studs and wing nuts — a fiddly means of access.

And, since the days when the medium-sized 'fours' were first introduced the Owner's Handbook has become a very cheap-and-nasty affair — multi-lingual, but uninformative.

It gives, for example, no guidance on cam chain adjustment; nothing on the location of fuses. A severe deterioration in Honda's service to the customer here.

IN BRIEF

OUR STAR RATING

- ★ = Poor
- ★★ = Below average
- ★★★ = Average
- ★★★★ = Above average
- ★★★★★ = Outstanding

ENGINE ★★★★★

Without becoming hypercritical it is difficult to fault the CB550F engine. Its smooth power delivery, economy, and endearing flexibility — it will pull in top from just under 17mph — must make it a near-ideal motorcycle power unit. Mind you, it is difficult to clean — lots of nooks and crannies that ought to be tidied up — and though it uses no oil in day-to-day running it suffers from the usual 1,500-mile Honda oil-change intervals.

Bore 58.5mm x stroke 50.6mm = 544cc. Plain main- and big-end bearings. Camshaft runs direct in light alloy cylinder head. Quadruple Keihin carburetors with bar-type common linkage and push-pull cable operation. Paper-element air filter. Full-flow oil filter with renewable element. Maximum power 50 bhp at 8,500 rpm. Maximum torque 30.4lb ft at 7,500 rpm. Compression ratio 9:1. Normal fuel, 2-star.

TRANSMISSION ★★★

While Honda chains on our stock test bikes continue to suffer from such rapid wear, we shall have no option but to trim a star or so from their rating. The CB550F fell down badly here, and though the gearbox itself was accurate and smooth enough, we did experience discouraging noises from the transmission.

Overall ratios: 1st, 15.68:1; 2nd, 10.90:1; 3rd, 8.46:1; 4th, 6.90:1; 5th, 6.00:1. Morse-type chain primary drive. Multi-plate wet clutch. Roller chain second-

dary drive, with draw-bolt adjustment.

WHEELS AND BRAKES ★★★★★

Panic stops with the 'front disc/rear drum' set-up showed that this combination gives good control under heavy braking, while the front unit has a delicacy of touch which makes it ideal for setting-up the machine when cornering. But — the disc was affected by rain, and as the test progressed it showed some tendency to pull the bike off line.

10½ in swinging-calliper single disc front brake, hydraulically controlled from master cylinder on right handlebar. 7.08 in leading and trailing shoe rear brake, rod-operated from pedal. Front brake swept area, 64.72 sq in; rear brake lining area 52.56 sq in. Steel front hub; light alloy rear hub. Steel wheel rims. Bridgestone 3.25 in x 19 in ribbed front tyre. Pressure, 28 psi. Bridgestone block-tread 3.75 x 18 in rear tyre. Pressure 34 psi (solo) 26 psi (pillion).

FRAME AND FORKS ★★★★★

Apart from the usual problem of weak rear damping, this particular frame/fork combination must be the best that Honda have yet achieved. It results in good steering; considerable rider comfort; and a reserve of roadholding that allows the 'four' to be cranked over till the pipes ground — if you like it that way! Compared with its CB500F stablemate, the newer machine does not suffer from initial oversteer either. We had some wandering at low speeds until the head bearings settled down, but that was the only demerit to be found. An 'outstanding' rating is fully justified.

Welded tubular cradle-type frame with fabricated steel top member. Swinging-fork rear suspension with hydraulically-damped units adjustable to five spring rates. Suspension travel 3 in. Telescopic front forks with hydraulic damping. Fork travel 4.8 in.

ELECTRICS ★★★★★

Maybe somebody out there listens after all, for continual

road-test criticism of the paucity of the headlamps on some Japanese machines has certainly borne fruit on the last two Hondas we've tried. The CB550F's headlamp is adequate for the job, giving a quite reasonable beam as well as a fair spread. The rest of the electrics are of the accepted Oriental standard — very good indeed. Only the inaccessibly-placed dipswitch and the headlamp flasher that insists on sounding the horn let it down.

Battery: 12v 12 ah, negative earth. Twin ignition coils. Hitachi 3-phase alternator, driven from the crankshaft, giving 110 watts at 2,000 rpm. 12v 0.6kW starter motor. Headlamp, 12v 40/50W. Tail/stop lamp with mechanically-operated stop lamp switch. Parking lights. Amber indicators front and rear. Warning lights for neutral selection, indicators, high beam and oil pressure in fork bridge console. Speedometer and tachometer lamps. Sparking plugs, NGK D7-ES with metal-shrouded suppressor caps.

EQUIPMENT AND FINISH ★★★

With the inevitable proviso that unless you spend a fair amount of time with cleaning rag and polish your CB550F will not retain its pristine looks, the finish is good. Detail points — such as the provision of a slot in which to place the filler cap during refuelling, so that it won't chip the tank's paint — indicate that quite a bit of thought has gone into

making the machine practical as well as pretty.

Unfortunately, we again have to note that the mudguarding was not up to its job, the rear guard being particularly ineffective. Motorcycles in Britain are bought to be used in all types of weather, and a rider should not be expected to withstand a bombardment of liquid road dirt from front and rear. In this case, the pillion passenger's legs and feet would suffer badly too.

DIMENSIONS ★★★★★

A comfortably-sized motorcycle, this. There is plenty of room for a large rider and an average-sized passenger, and the dual seat is well contoured, with a handy grab rail just behind it. The fuel tank is easy to grip with the knees, and with flat bars and well-placed footrests an efficient riding position results. Well braced against the wind, all our testers reported that constant high speeds were not tiring, and that the handling was enhanced by the good control position.

We would have preferred a larger-capacity fuel tank, though. Shapely the current 3.5 gal. unit may be, but it gives an effective range of little more than 150 miles.

Length, 83.5 in. Wheelbase 55.3 in. Width, 32.5 in. Height, 43.9 in. Seat height, 31.7 in. Ground clearance, 6.3 in. Dry weight, 423 lb. Tank capacity, 3.5 gal. Oil sump capacity, 5.3 pints. Recommended fuel, 2-star. Recommended oil, Branded 10W 40.

SPARES LIST exc. VAT

Air filter element	£4.39	Barrel Block	£101.25
Battery	£18.53	Head Block	£123.66
Brake caliper assy.	£40.96	Rocker (each)	£2.43
Brake pedal	£8.10	Rocker shafts (each)	£0.62
Brake pads (pair)	£9.54	Exhaust pipes (set)	£35.99
Brake shoes (each)	£3.09	Flasher unit	£4.90
Carburettor assy.	£33.75	Fork leg assy.	£32.09
Clutch plate, friction (each)		Frame	£135.00
outer	£1.57	Front brake lever	£1.78
inner	£1.44	Gearchange pedal	£3.16
Clutch plate, plain (each)	£0.89	Handlebars	£5.25
Clutch lever	£1.78	Headlamp rim/light unit	£18.96
Clutch springs (each)	£0.27	H.T. coil	£8.66
Contact set	£2.57	Oil filter	£0.55
Engine: Exhaust valve	£4.01	Oil pump assy.	£27.00
Inlet valve	£2.23	Petrol tank	£45.00
Valve spring inner	£0.32	Rear suspension unit (each)	£21.60
outer	£0.45	Rear lamp	£4.40
Piston rings (set)	£3.59	Rear chain	£21.61
Pistons (each)	£4.10	Rotor assy.	£24.31
Big-ends (set)	£5.82	Silencer	£40.01
Con. rod bolts (set)	£5.82	Speedometer	£21.01
Con. rods (each)	£11.13	Sprocket, gearbox	£5.37
Gudgeon pins (set)	£3.44	rear wheel	£8.10
Crankshaft	£73.65	Starter motor	£41.63
Crankcases (pair)	£163.81	Starter assy.	£28.02
Cam chain	£5.76	Tachometer	£14.40
Camshaft	£35.44	Wheel, rim, front	£9.89
Cam chain tensioner	£8.24	rear	£8.24

GOOD BUY?

Fast. Reasonably economical. Comfortable. Smooth. Good handling. Reliable. The CB550F's virtues read like a natural catalogue for one of our rare five-star ratings — which leaves us to explain why it doesn't get it!

The reason, quite simply, is that we set out to assess a machine, in this section, purely on a value-for-money basis and the CB550F is currently listed at £925 inc. VAT. Apart from its higher performance — largely academic in a 70-restricted land — and more generous accommodation, the CB550F offers little more than its smaller brother the CB400F, which sells for nearly £200 less. In our judgement this price difference is enough to make the CB550F a slightly less attractive buy. The CB400F just shaded a five-star rating, so we must class the CB550F as: ★★★★★

