

Australia's Best
Selling Bike
Magazine

JULY, 1981

\$1.75*
NZ \$2.00*

two wheels

Full Test Of
The V Bomber
Yamaha Hits The Target!

BATHURST

What Really
Happened?
What Of The
Future?

XV
750

**ENDURO
COMPARO**
Yamaha IT175
Suzuki PE175

YAMAHA



DAYTONA SPEED WEEK
1981

We Test The Gilera cbA Moped
Off To The Centre Rally!

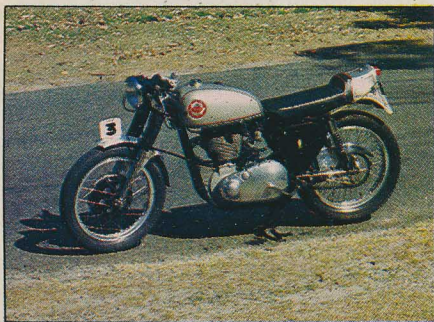
CONTENTS



Relax, it cost only \$25,000...



Bathurst: The good, the bad, the ugly...



BSA Gold Star - pity it died.

Managing Editor: Mac Douglas
Editor: Peter Thoeming
Editorial Assistant: Julia Cullen
Art Director: Ros Levy
Contributing writers:
 Brian Woodward, Kel Wearne,
 Lester Morris
Racing: Don Cox
Road Tests: Col Miller,
 Dave Bourne
Natl Advtg Chief: John Miller
Photographer: Graham Monro

TESTS

- GILERA cbA MOPED** — C'mon feets, do yo' stuff 26
- YAMAHA XV750** — The V Bomber, right on target..... 34
- CLASSIC TEST** — BSA GOLD STAR — The bread-and-butter bike, with just a dash of spice 50
- DIRT COMPARO** — SUZUKI PE175/YAMAHA IT175 — it's easy to see they're good, but which is better?..... 57

RACING

- DAYTONA SPEED WEEK** — All the action, from the track to the Chopper Show 42
- BATHURST: A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS** — Lots of pilgrims, not much progress..... 72

FEATURES

- BATHURST ON THE BOX** — Moans from a Squareeye ... 11
- BLOOD ON THE MOUNTAIN** — What went wrong at Bathurst, and why 78

TOURING

- AN AFTERNOON IN TURKEY** — Thrills and spills on the sunny Mediterranean 32
- 12,000 KM TO NOWHERE** — The Newcastle boys go to the Centre Rally, with interesting results. Part 1 ... 65

DEPARTMENTS

- | | | | |
|----------------------|----|--------------------------|----|
| Wrap On..... | 5 | It's All Happening | 16 |
| Vibes | 8 | The Gizmo File..... | 24 |
| Seat Of Power..... | 12 | Maynard..... | 90 |
| The Bear Garden..... | 15 | | |

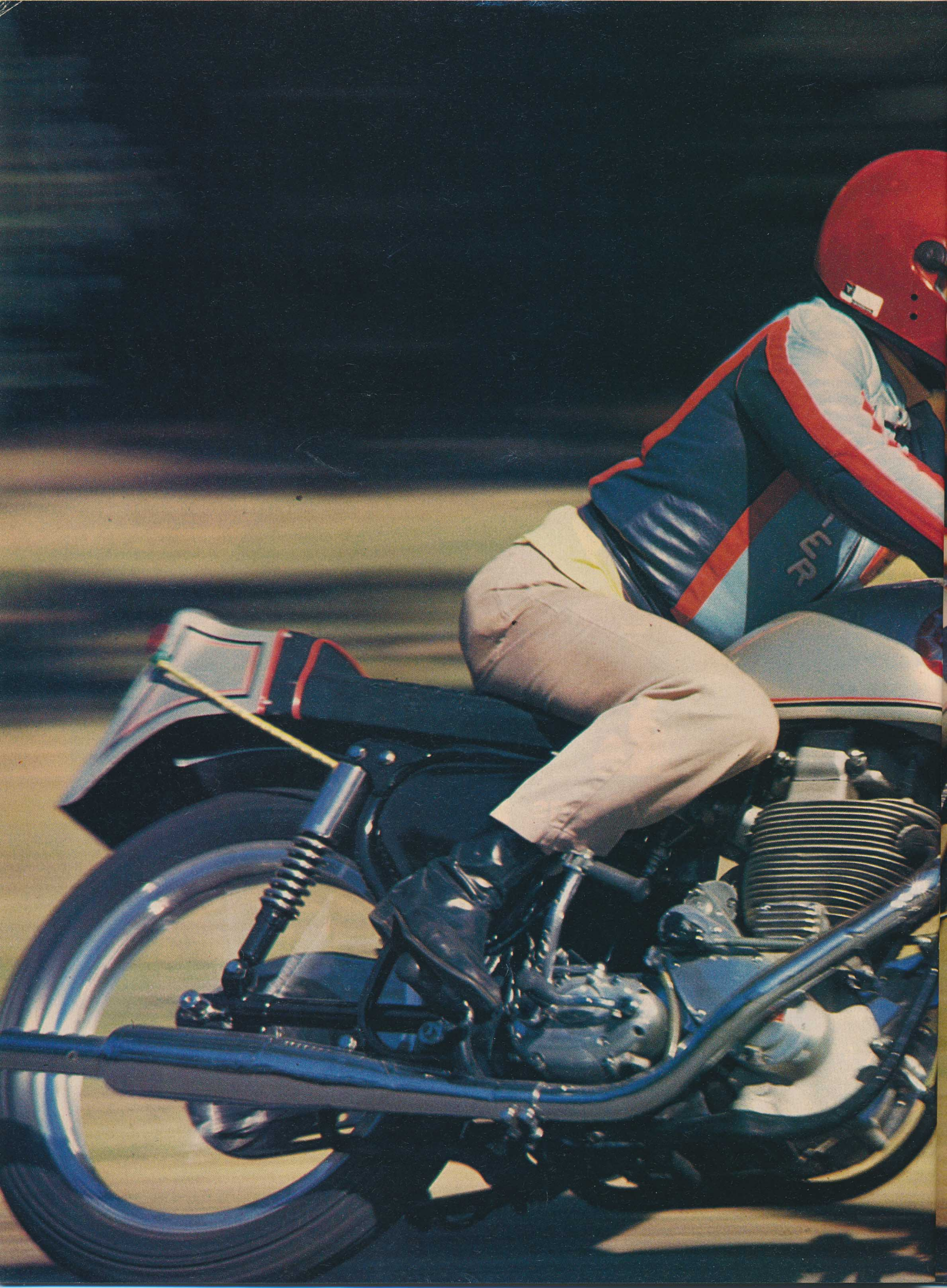
Freelance contributors are welcomed by this magazine and submissions should be addressed to The Editor, TWO WHEELS, 142 Clarence Street, Sydney 2000. Submissions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return. The publisher accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or transparencies.

Annual subscription rate to addresses in Australia \$21.00. Other countries \$A24.00

Back copies: Gr Floor, 154 Clarence St, Sydney. Photostat service inquiries to Julia Cullen, 5th Floor. **Advertising:** National Advertising Manager, John Miller, 142 Clarence St, Sydney 2000. Phone 29-3761, 29-5606. **Melbourne:** 150 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, 3000. Phone 662-1222. **Adelaide:** THE ADMEDIA GROUP PTY LTD, 24 Kensington Road, Rose Park, 5067. Phone 332-8144. **Brisbane:** GEOFF HORNE AGENCIES, P.O. Box 247, Kenmore, 4069. Phone 202-6229. **Perth:** CLIFF THOMAS, ADREP Advertising Representatives, 62 Wickham St, East Perth, 6000. Phone 325-6395. **New Zealand:** RON COOK, Sun Alliance House, 42-44 Shortland St, Auckland, GPO Box 486. Phone 30311. **London:** PETER HOLLOWAY, Ludgate House, 107 Fleet St, London EC4A2AL. **Japan:** Bancho Media Services, 15 Sanyeiicho, Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo 160. Phone (03) 359-8866. Telex BMSINC J25472.

Printed in New Zealand by Comprint. Published by Murray Publishers Pty Ltd, 142 Clarence St, Sydney 2000. *Recommended Price.

DISTRIBUTORS: GORDON & GOTCH (A/SIA) LTD, MELBOURNE. MURRAY PUBLISHERS PTY LTD, SYDNEY.





GOLD STAR BSA

Back in the real world after his recent flirtation with a Brough Superior (TW Feb.), ace vintage tester LESTER MORRIS comes to grips with a more common bike from the halcyon days . . . but it's still far from ordinary!

Probably no motorcycle ever typified the 500cc British Thumper as well as the Gold Star BSA, the machine which swept all before it in Clubman-style road races all over the world and which remains as successful in this type of racing as that other great Pomme Single, the Manx Norton, did in International road-racing.

It could be argued indeed, and with some logic, that the Gold Star BSA was to the enthusiast of 20 years and more ago what the TZ350 and RG500 Suzuki are today. In fact it was so successful — it once filled the first 32 places in a Clubman's event on the Isle-of-Man — that the once-revered Clubman's series was scrapped in England because it became a one-horse race. Not even the mighty Velocette or International Norton could hope to command as much respect in this type of racing.

In its day, the Goldie could be purchased as a straight road-going motorcycle, as an out-and-out racer, in Scrambles (read Motocross) trim or even as a Trials iron. The racing kit could be purchased as a whole unit or in bits and pieces, and the roads echoed with many a staid old 'Iron' B33

BSA which was fitted with all the Goldie Go-Fast gear.

I once had a 1953 cast-iron plunger-frame 500 Beeza single in road trim which had all the Goldie bits in it, and it cracked a very respectable 93 mph (155 km/h) through the electronic trap at Schofields airstrip in 1958!

A versatile bike

In a word, to this day there has probably never been a motorcycle which was quite as *versatile* as the Gold Star BSA; certainly none today can claim to be able to carry out such varied functions while remaining basically unaltered.

The Gold Star held sway, in its final form, from 1953 (I know it first appeared before the war with alloy head and barrel and sporting the Gold Star it was awarded at Brooklands, so don't write in) until around 1966. No-one seems too certain of the year of its demise. It was literally without peer through most of this period. It almost certainly sparked off the Venom Velocette, the VHA all-alloy Ariel Red

"It could be argued . . . that the Gold Star BSA was to the enthusiast of 20 years and more ago what the TZ350 and RG500 . . . are today."

ley, whose garage fairly shrieks with motorcycles which would send most Vintagents green with envy.

Eddie Dow was one of the great Goldie riders of the era, and it is inevitable that many of the machines in vogue at that time became outfitted with some of his distinctive gear, from hump-backed seats to alloy fork bridges (read triple clamps) and from rear-set footrests to clip-on handlebars. He also specialised in twin-leading shoe front brake plates, with which the Brenchley BSA is fitted.

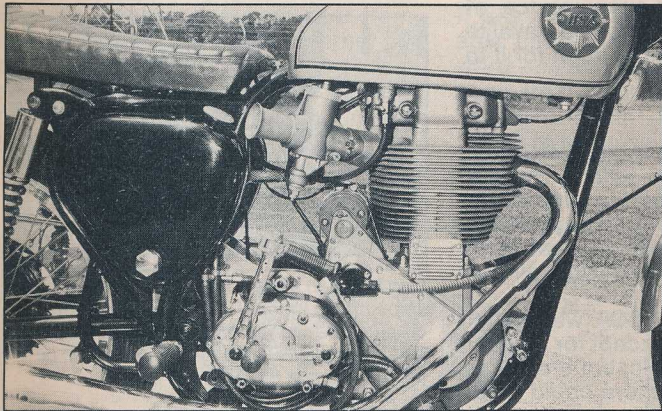
Happily, the bike still flies the stock Gold Star colour scheme of silver-frosted tank (but without chromed panels) and a black finish to the duplex-downtube full-cradle frame, with chrome plated sports guards — the

comparatively high without fear of going pop. But the engine had a couple of little tricks one had to be aware of.

Pistons were usually about 8.5:1 compression ratio — a lot of the racing was done on pump petrol, though higher comp pistons were available for alcohol fuels — and they had the disconcerting habit of occasionally cracking across the top from one gudgeon pin hole to the other. All it needed was to keep an eye on the piston and replace it when the crack was about halfway across, thereby averting a major blow-up. I had one go on me once, and it made a hell of a mess.

The BSA 500 single engine was slightly undersquare, with bore x stroke measurements of 85 x 88 mm, for an actual capacity of 499 cm³, and it would rev freely to a handy 7500 rpm — or even higher if you were game to risk the Big Bang — though its peak power of 38BHP was generated at 7000.

It would send a properly-gear'd Goldie along at about 115 mph in top gear, which is still very respectable for a 500 single. There aren't many new

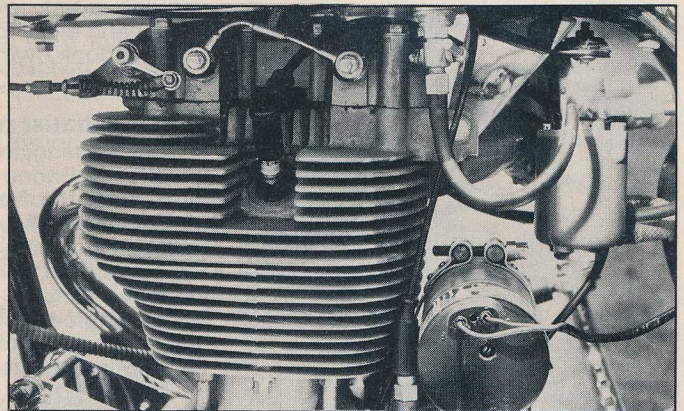


The heavily-finned alloy barrel has a cast-in tunnel for the ohv pushrods, while that GP racing carb is a no-nonsense AMAL, with ramtube, no air filter and no provision made for the engine to run at idle speed. Note the separate four-speed gearbox, Lucas magdyno (directly under the carburettor) and large oil tank. Note also the rearsset footrest, reversed gear lever and folding kickstarter.

Hunter, the Grey Flash Vincent 500 single and the very rare race-kitted Royal Enfield Bullet — not to mention the International Norton, which was more a contemporary than a copy — but none could live with the machine on race tracks in Clubman guise and none were as popular as a road-burning single.

There are several of the models running about in Australia (though I can't help wondering what became of the machines raced by the late Ron Toombs and his great friend and arch-rival Keo Madden; machines on which they made their respective names) but few as neat as the subject of this test.

Outfitted with some non-standard bits by the Taylor-Dow organization in England, the machine is a 1956 model owned by arch-enthusiast Col Brench-



The left side of the engine, showing the exhaust valve-lifter and oil feed to the ohv rocker gear. To allow for the steeply-angled GP carb, a rubber-mounted remote floatbowl is used.

colour as generally identified with Gold Star models as Mean Green with Kawasaki road racers.

The heavily-finned alloy cylinder barrel has the push-rod tunnel cast in, with long, rigid duralumin rods to control the overhead valve gear. Rockers are carried on eccentric spindles, which allows for very quick valve clearance adjustments; it can be carried out with the engine running!

Valves are very short, with one of the most popular series of coil valve springs ever fitted to control their movement. At one time, just about every decent Holden-engined midget car at the Showground Speedway was fitted with these multi-rate springs, and they found their way into most of the road-racing motorcycles as well. Obviously, there were few two-stroke racing engines around when BSA was King.

High revver

The short valves, with their very large head area, combined with the multi-rate springs, alloy spring collars and lipped valve collets to provide great reliability and an engine which could rev

ones to compare these figures with — in fact, Yamaha makes it just one, though Honda's threatened new four-valve 500 single roadster must be looming on the horizon.

Ignition on the Gold Star is supplied by the almost-universal Lucas Magdyno unit. These were made in their tens of thousands for over 30 years, the magneto driven by gears from the top of a short timing case, while the generator was mounted piggy-back upon it and driven by a fibre gear from the magneto itself.

Tune on the Twistgrip

The carburettor fitted to most of the high-speed tourers, and of course to the Clubman variant, was a no-nonsense racing AMAL Grand Prix of 1½" (38 mm) bore, fitted with a long ram-tube and no air filter. This type of carburettor is fitted to the Brenchley BSA, typically fussy at low engine

speeds and making no concessions at idling speeds. There is an air correction jet for slow speeds (purely to assist in accelerating out of slow corners) but no throttle stop is fitted and one has to play a tune on the twistgrip to keep the engine running at traffic lights.

It's probably an annoyance for other road-users, because the BSA exhaust system is very definitely sports/racer. The long, tapered muffler gives the game away on close scrutiny, for the first 30 cm or so tapers into a perfect racing megaphone, a welded seam at this point allowing for a pretend baffle to be fitted ahead of the long barrel which leads to the tuned tail-pipe. It looks like nothing so much as an early four-stroke equivalent of the later two-stroke pong-boxes and is every bit as effective.

With the oomph of a big-bore 500 single's exhaust, it is a mite noisier, helped by a 50 mm drainpipe masquerading as an exhaust header.

The seating position on the Gold Star is perhaps ideal for Clubman racing, but is less than ideal for thrashing



You don't see this sort of thing every day! Conked out at the roadside, hoping against hope that the fault lies with a dud spark plug, but...

about on open roads, with its very low clip-on handlebars and tucked-in rear-set footrests. The right footrest folds up to allow the folding kickstarter to be used, while the short-throw gearlever has been reversed to bring it into line with the new footrest position.

Starting a punchy Gold Star BSA was never an easy job, with its high compression and fiddly racing carburettor. It usually took about 4 or 5 kicks after recalling the rigid starting procedure and mentally summoning all one's resources.

The Brenchley BSA was no different, though it *seemed* a bit easier to boot

"To this day, there has probably never been a motorcycle which was quite as versatile as the Gold Star BSA."

into life. The fuel level in the carby is raised by 'tickling' the float till petrol runs out everywhere, then the manual ignition setting is set at about $\frac{2}{3}$ full advance with the valve lifter used to ease the piston to precisely the correct position.

Of course there are no little windows or bleeper alarms to tell you where this position is; one is supposed to *know*, for in keeping with much of the riding one endured — sorry, *enjoyed!* — 20 years ago it was a combination of seat-of-the-pants and instinct, with more than a pinch of expertise thrown in.

If you kick it half-heartedly, or with the ignition advanced too far, it returns the compliment by kicking back like a mule and sometimes spitting out a tongue of flame from the carby bell-mouth to attack your vitals. It needs a genuine effort, with every ounce of weight and every inch of pedal travel to turn the donk over fast enough for it to catch alight.

Harsh exhaust note

Once running, the engine idles a little lumpily, and none too reliably, requiring a gentle throttle hand to keep it running. The exhaust note, though music to the ears of many an enthusiast, is on the high side of fruity. One might almost say it is harsh.

The single-cylinder BSA was never known for its clutch, except for the fact that it was pretty terrible, but there was an adaptor which owners could fit to the gearbox mainshaft which then accepted the far better Triumph clutch assembly. The test model clutch seemed better than my remembrance of the Old Thumper; perhaps it has had the Triumph modification — Col was not sure.

Rear-set footrests meant that the original gearlever was reversed on its spindle, which was certainly better than the linkage and remote gear-lever which some other racing kits fitted — and which was standard on Honda CB72 Hawks among other machines — for it meant crisp, reliable gear changes with no false neutrals. The four-speed gearbox was available with the standard wide ratios, or could be specified with medium-close or close-ratio gearing, the latter intended mostly for out-and-out racing.

The test model was fitted with the medium-close ratios, certainly the best compromise for high-speed roadwork, though it makes for a tall first gear and a lot of clutch slip to get underway from rest. Fortunately the clutch is up to the job — it *must* be the Triumph one!

The engine spins on roller main and big-end bearings, with the comparatively narrow crankcases allowing

great rigidity and strength, but the Gold Star still exhibits its fair share of trad 'British Single' vibration. It buzzes through the short clip-on handlebars and sends your ears a-popping, and it sets your feet skipping over the rear-sets as though they were covered in oil. Haven't felt that particular gem since I last rode the Old Cast-Iron 'Goldie' all those years ago!

Pure racing ride

Riding position is pure racer, with a lot of weight on wrists and reproductive organs; not the most comfortable ride, though the BSA telescopic forks and the swing-arm with Girling shocks on the rear make for top-class handling. Though you could feel it at work, the suspension system ironed out bumps and potholes very well, the long slow-travel front forks occasionally out of step with the firmer, more choppy rear-end.

Unfortunately, the steering is heavy at low speeds with the clip-ons fitted and full lock traps the thumbs between grip and petrol tank. I recalled that this



Finally, when all else fails, it's necessary to strip half the magneto in the fond hope that a cure can be found. In this case, the magneto had coughed its last and the bike had to be taken back in a trailer.

type of bar, when fitted to a machine with a bulbous petrol tank, was usually referred to as a 'thumb squasher' and it soon became apparent that the Beeza was a T.S. of the highest order.

A few seconds' work with a spanner could overcome the problem, but the bars are then at an odd angle. It's only noticeable at slow speeds, anyway.

High speed on the open road is real sports-racer territory, and the Gold Star revels in this sort of activity, returning excellent average speeds point-to-point.

Breasting the rise after storming the Kurrajong climb in light mid-week traffic was great, but sweeping through the open corners atop the ridges and plunging down the other side into Lithgow was pure magic.

I've ridden that road many times on the way to Bathurst, and I've travelled it on many a road-test machine, but never enjoyed it quite so much. The nigh-perfect high-speed handling, combined with the fast-changing medium-close gearbox and the very potent twin-leading shoe front brake made the "chore" of testing the old war-horse a memorable experience.

The bike comes on strong with a

reasonable fistful of throttle, the engine revs climbing till the cam and exhaust are in sync from about 3500 rpm onwards. Power delivery is smooth, though it does become more apparent that here is a true sports iron when into the heady area above 4500 on the twitchy Smiths tacho.

The Brenchley Beeza was not equipped with a speedo, though twin speedo/tacho instruments were standard, the tacho of the chronometric type and typically a step or two behind engine revs. The engine is punchy enough to allow top gear to be pulled almost everywhere once on the open road — particularly if no traffic is about and you can screw the wick up a bit — but a swift change-back to overtake brings a kick in the tail from the high stepped seat and a fresh load of power is instantly forthcoming.

Fast, light gearbox

The gearbox is one of the fastest in my experience, and (even by modern standards) extremely light in feel. Truly BSA, it will crunch into first gear from rest, but all other changes, whether up or down, can be accomplished as fast as hand and foot can move. You cannot feel the gears engaging and in fact the only 'pressure' felt is the action of

"Pistons . . . had the disconcerting habit of occasionally cracking across the top from one gudgeon pin hole to the other."

the gearlever return springs, but there are no false neutrals and, once engaged, a gear is there to stay.

Deep, 'Punchy Single' vibration, though not unpleasant, is noticeable at the footrests up to about 3500 from anything above a fast idle. The higher frequency vibrations come through petrol tank and handlebars when the engine is running higher in the scale. Typical of the sports nature of the old war horse, the Goldie prefers to be pulling hard on long climbs, and a swift change down allows a feeling of honest grunt-power one very seldom experiences today.

Of course it will pull happily enough in top gear, but a series of fast, open corners taken uphill are pure joy when under power at higher engine speeds. It was ever thus, and it is this indefinable character — I'm sure that's the word — which sets the British Thumper apart from latter-day imitators like the SR500 Yamaha.

This is not to say that modern motor-

cycles have no character of their own, nor would I dare say that modern machines are not superior overall but there remains a *feel* which is at once quite different and yet totally acceptable — though it certainly smatters of things long-gone and mostly forgotten.

With the use of plenty of clutch and a good handful of throttle, the Gold Star BSA will jump away very well from rest.

You stay in first gear for a spell, then second and third come up fairly quickly and you save top gear for the long, fast bits. In the meantime, sporty little two-stroke twins rattle through about five gears and are left noisily behind.

I might say it came as quite a surprise to find that the big BSA left a couple of late Japanese twins rasping along in its wake on initial acceleration — that is a surprise! — and the bike could not be overtaken through twisty, medium-to-high speed corners. But mid-range acceleration, once underway, seemed to be the province of the later Japanese machines and a couple of kids with whom I enjoyed a brief blast over Kurrajong seemed suitably impressed.

I caught them again on the ridges up the top and it was nip-and-tuck almost right through to Mt Victoria. In this sort of going, though I would frankly have



TRIUMPH (Trident)

BSA

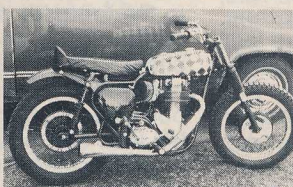

Norton

English parts specialist.
Complete workshop facilities.
We buy & sell Vintage bikes & Parts.

ALL PARTS TRADING CO. PTY. LTD

99-105 Regent Street
Chippendale N.S.W. 2008
698 1900 & 699 1242

HARLEYS, UNUSUAL RACERS, GOLD STAR

650 Gold Star
XR750 Harley-Davidson

1960ish BSA "Gold Star" Monster. Used for sidecar racing. Looks identical to top bike. Incredibly bored and stroked to a full 650cc. Tremendously powerful! New top end, tyres, chains, fork bushes, etc.\$A2000

1970 Harley-Davidson XR750 T.T. Racer. (American T.T. not I.O.M. style.) Has rear suspension, OHV engine, triple disc brakes. Mufflers, lights and kick-starter added. Now a street legal monster. 70+HP in 155 kg package. Makes the most beautiful noise imaginable, too. Only 200 ever made in this "iron" model. Special history makes this "A one-of-a-kind"\$A5550

1960 Harley-Davidson KR750 Flat Tracker. Awesome power in a 750 flathead. See "Classic Bike" Spring '79. Restored as raced. Could be made street legal or for vintage races\$A3825

1948 Indian Chief 1200cc. Ground up restoration. Excellent condition, just finished. As beautiful as can be found. Full Skirted Fenders\$A6000

1969 BSA Rocket III. Near original condition. Stock, good running condition, 16,000 km.\$A2200

1975 Sportster XLH. Mild Chop, extra chrome, runs great\$A2965

1977 H.D. FLH. Excellent stock condition, many extras\$A4000

1959 Ariel "Cyclone" 650 Twin. Very rare "American Export" model, stock with stock chrome fender, hi-comp. pistons, hot cams, etc. 33,500 km.\$A1915

CRATING AND FREIGHT TO SYDNEY ADD APPROX. \$A800
Overnight air freight approximately double.

WALNECK'S

VINTAGE MOTORCYCLE SALES INC

7923 Janes Avenue, Woodridge, Illinois 60517
Phone (312) 985 2715

(When calling we are 15 hours behind Australian time)

TECH SPECS — GOLD STAR B.S.A.

Make: BSA

Model: DB34 Gold Star.

Year of manufacture: 1956

Type: All-alloy overhead valve air-cooled single-cylinder four-stroke. Valves controlled by duralumin pushrods, from cams at base of cylinder to rockers carried on eccentric spindles. Bolted-up crankshaft, with caged roller big-end, ball and roller main bearings.

Bore x stroke: 85 x 88 mm

Capacity: 499 cm³

Claimed power @ rpm: 38BHP @ 7000 rpm

Comp ratio: 8.00:1

Carburation: 38 mm AMAL GP racing carburettor

Ignition: Lucas Magdyno — incorporating 6V generator

Transmission: Single-row primary chain in alloy semi-oil bath chain-case to separate four-speed gearbox; chain adjustment by external adjuster moving gearbox through slotted mounting plates. Final drive by chain.

Gear ratios (overall): 1st, 8.71:1; 2nd, 5.99:1; 3rd, 4.96:1; 4th, 4.52:1. Right foot change, one up, three down pattern.

Frame: Welded tubular steel, with duplex downtubes and full engine cradle

Suspension: Front, BSA-pattern telescopic forks with coil springs and two-way hydraulic damping. Rear, swing-arm, with combined

Girling spring/damper units with three-way adjustments.

Wheels, brakes: Front, Dunlop alloy rim laced to hub containing Taylor-Dow twin-leading shoe brake plate operating in BSA 200 mm drum brake. Rear, alloy rim laced to standard BSA hub containing 155 mm single-leader drum brake.

Dimensions: Wheelbase — 1350 mm; Ground clearance — 125 mm; Seat height — 760 mm; Weight — 174 kg; Tank capacity — 19 Litres.

Performance: (from original road test, June 1955) Top speed — 185 km/h; St. ¼-13 sec; Braking (from 50 km/h) — 8.8 m; Fuel consumption (overall) — 31 km/l. Machine loaned by Col Brenchley.

thought otherwise, the Goldie gave as good as it got and in fact enjoyed a slight edge in handling.

The rear brake was not quite up to the mark, though the twinleader front anchor is a gem, and the rear wheel showed a tendency to patter a bit under heavy braking over rippled surfaces, stepping out now and again when we were trying hard. Well, not too hard, there aren't many of these machines about and to thrash them is not the Name of this particular Game.

Suspension steps out

Anyway, the fact that the bike was occasionally frisky added to the thrill of the chase rather than detracting from it, though I must say again that the feel of a 25-year old British sports-racer is very much a thing apart.

The suspension will get out of step occasionally, and not only under braking loads, with the result that there is an occasional twitchiness at the front end as well, but I could not help but notice that this was also very much in evidence on the two hard-charging Japanese machines I dived with. But the bike never failed to steer to a hair and was always totally predictable; if a bit firm in the rear.

Even with a slightly limited lock, feet-up turns could be done without effort even in tight back streets, though there was some inevitable heaviness at the steering head. The BSA was renowned for this, and it is made more obvious by the low-slung, clip-on handlebars.

Unhappily, the BSA blotted its copy-book very early in my short time with it.

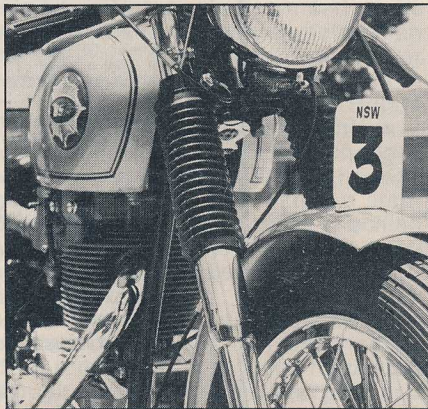
It might be fairer to say that Joseph Lucas was the culprit, because the trip wasn't more than 10 km old when the engine conked out and I was forced to sit by the side of the road for about three hours before a friendly face I

"If you kick it half-heartedly . . . it returns the compliment by kicking back like a mule and . . . spitting out a tongue of flame."

despatched returned with a trailer to remove us from the scene. I must say that for years I would have bet real money that I would never again be seen at the side of the road with a broken-down British 500 single — but there I was!

The bike had been running well in traffic when it suddenly coughed a couple of times, back-fired through the so-called muffler and coasted silently to the footpath. Well, I did everything I could do at the side of the road; checked the plug, cleaned the points, checked the timing and the gaps of both points and spark plug, tested the HT lead and removed the pick-up and brush assembly to check the magneto slip-ring.

Not a tickle! You could hold the plug lead and kick the engine as hard as you



The Eddie Dow twin-leader front brake plate fitted straight into the BSA brake drum and endowed — sorry about that! — the front end with a brake which was more than ample for the job of stopping a comparatively lightweight motorcycle.

like, and there was not a sign of a spark.

Extinct magneto

The magneto was dead as a dodo, and that was that. This was a surprise, because the Lucas mag-dyno unit which came as standard on almost every British single for over 30 years was almost totally reliable. I had one which used to pack it in at very high engine revs (the coil windings would break down when the insulation failed under extreme load), but which ran faultlessly at more reasonable 'road' speeds, but the incidence of this type of total failure was extremely rare.

But it happened, and it was no-one's fault . . . except age and Joe Lucas!

Life is full of 'if only's', but the emphasis is beginning to swing to the Big Single once again, with the SR500 Yamaha, the not-so-secret Honda four-valver and the nigh-certainty of similar singles from Suzuki and Kawasaki . . . if only BSA had survived, or at least kept the jigs, patterns and dies . . .

There can be no doubt that a 1980's version of this classic British 500 single would set a standard which would not be easy to challenge — and not only in terms of performance and handling.

The solid engine design was extremely reliable, oil leaks were all but non-existent and little more than basic, routine maintenance was ever needed. You could drop one now and again and never do more than superficial damage to footrests and handlebars, with even the deepest scars on alloy primary chaincase and timing case easily buffed away and polished till they disappeared.

The sturdy old Gold Star BSA holds up well nearly 25 years after it was built, and gives a very good account of itself in give-and-take blasting over uncertain roads.

If only it had survived!

