

BSA RIDES AGAIN

Without wishing to be uncharitable, it will come as no surprise if the reaction from fans of the BSA marque to the news that the name has been revived is less than enthusiastic. Had it been applied to a machine of more arousing impact than a 50cc sixteen we might have expected more than a little celebration. But the BSA Beaver and Brigand recalls too much of the ill-fated Beagle for comfort.

Nevertheless, the news that the fledgling NVT Company are spreading their wings makes good reading. The adoption of the BSA name from the Norton Villiers Triumph Manufacturing Company's liquidators means that many other favourites such as Matchless or Francis Barnett (!) could be reborn. Expect also in the future the dropping of the parent company's NVT title to something more evocative.

The reformation of the BSA Company Ltd (at the NVT factory at Garretts Green in Birmingham) is also a pivotal move in the expansion of the British motorcycle industry for another reason.

For while Dennis Poore is chairman of the firm, sharing the boardroom table along with Bill Colquhoun is Bertie Goodman, whose family connections within the Velocette company go right back to the beginnings of motorcycling itself. His own prestigious career includes being the Velocette racing manager in the fifties and a member of the team of riders that broke the 24-hour record at 100mph on a 500cc Venom in 1961.

Bertie, who joined NVT a year ago, designed the Beaver and Brigand. They are predominantly assembled from Italian-manufactured



components including four-speed Morini two-stroke engines.

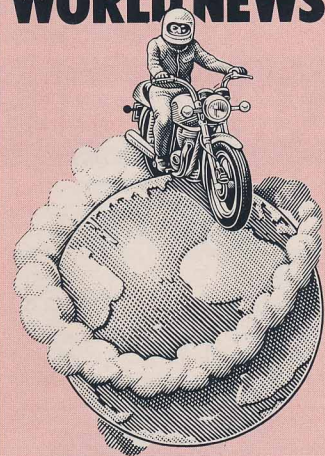
Intention is that since the machines are small (72 inches long) and light (134 lbs) and the engines are restricted by the carburettor throat diameter (improving torque), the acceleration will be better than comparable Japanese machines up to the design top speed of 30 mph. Differences in the two models are confined to the off-road Brigand's 19 inch front wheel and knobby tyres, 'high-level' exhaust and front mudguard. Otherwise they share the engine, frame and cantilever rear suspension with multi-position preload adjuster on the spring. Front Paoli fork is oil damped.

A neat feature of the fully-equipped electrical system is that the battery is an American-made rechargeable drycell type. It consists of three 2-volt 2½-amp-hour cells connected in series charged from the flywheel magneto through two plug-in diodes; they're cheap and virtually maintenance free. Prices for the BSAs are Brigand, £379; Beaver, £365.

Unheralded, but also shown at the launch of the BSA models was a new version of the Yamaha-powered NVT 125cc Rambler. Looking much more stylish with its plastic high-level front mudguard and drum brake it incorporates several improvements, not least of which is more rear wheel clearance under the rear guard and an exhaust system that doesn't spray the rear of the bike with oil. By the way, since Mitsui now only import the Yamaha DT125E, a five-speeder with electric start, the Rambler is the only way of getting a six-speed 125cc Yamaha-powered bike.



WORLD NEWS



ITALY - Latest victory in the war being waged by Japan to gain a hold in the Italian market has been won by Kawasaki. Italy drastically limits the amount of machines over 380cc imported from Japan. So Kawasaki have made a smaller version of the Z400 for Italy, the Z350I. The bike retains all the Z400's best features such as balance shafts plus cast alloy wheels but capacity is 348cc and max power, 34bhp at 8,500rpm, the same as the older Z400D.

ITALY - Latest rumour from the Moto Guzzi factory at Mandello Del Lario is that they are developing a vee-four roadster. While Laverda are still deliberating with the idea of using the configuration, De Tomaso's crowd could be planning to jump in first. Makes sense, the factory haven't offered a new design since the V50 three years ago (although they're only just arriving here) and a new and more sophisticated version of the big vees is long overdue.

ITALY - Laverda's 500cc eight-valve twin, the Alpino S, is now being offered with the improved fuel tank first seen on the Mont-

juich production racer. It features better knee recesses and a more stylish paint job, though colours remain black and gold.

JAPAN - Rumours that Kawasaki were developing a sports 400cc double-overhead-camshaft four have turned out to be true. But it's not quite so remarkable as you might imagine since it's just a smaller capacity version of the Z500 first introduced to the European press last November.

There's little chance of the new model, designated the Z400FX, appearing in Europe however, since it has been specially tailored for the Japanese market, where there is a capacity limit of 400cc for relatively inexperienced riders.

Overall dimensions of the new model are identical to the Z500 four. Differences are in the internal components, power output and gearing. And if the power curve claimed is to be believed, it should be a better performer than the Honda CB400F was.

Bore and stroke are 52x47mm for a capacity of 399cc while max power is 43bhp at 9,500 rpm. Carbs are by TK with a choke size of 21mm and dry weight is 416lbs.

By the way, the Z500 seems to have suffered setbacks in production. Chances are now that the first models will reach dealers showrooms in the UK in July.

JAPAN - Newly introduced to the Japanese market are the restyled versions of Yamaha's RD250 and RD400 twins. These feature the same styling seen on the American-version Daytona Special RD400 with a sleeker tank/side panel configuration, a silver finished engine with Suzuki-style Ram-Air scoops on the cylinder heads and re-designed lifters for the Mikuni carbs. Power outputs for the 250 and 400 are unchanged being respectively 30 bhp and 40 bhp.