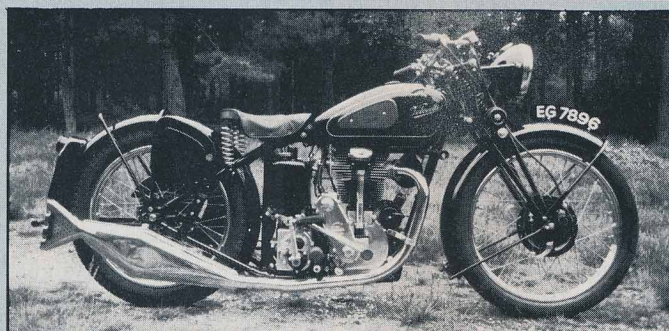


Golden Oldies

It was in 1925 that the first overhead-camshaft Velocette was introduced, the Model K and from this all the ohc Velos were derived right until their demise in the early 1950s. In fact many of the features of the original bike survived until the end. So good was the new Velocette that the following year in 1926 it won the TT with over ten minutes to spare! The racing version, known as the KTT, was immensely successful and when it became the first production motorcycle to have positive-stop foot gear change it was almost unstoppable. Naturally manufacturers of this era raced bikes with a view to selling something for road use and Velocette were soon offering the KSS, which is the bike we are featuring.

It was in 1936 that the Mk 2 KSS was introduced, not really all that different from its predecessor except that the design had been tidied up and many of the lessons of the past decade incorporated. The overhead-camshaft operation was far more complex than the simple chain or belt drive used today and involved a single drive shaft running up

Velocette's Hall Green factory is no more, but their products live on in the hands of devoted owners like Dave Hill, whose 1948 KSS is a classic example of the single-cylinder overhead camshaft Velo. Words by Bruce Preston. Photography by Brian Griffin.



the side of the cylinder barrel with bevel gears at each end and two Odham couplings. The strength of the engine lay in its narrow crankcase enabling a short and rigid crankshaft to be used with taper-roller main bearings and a roller big end. The narrowness also meant that the Velocette had inboard primary drive with the final drive on the outside. This had the added bonus of making it very easy to change the final-drive gearbox sprocket — a parti-

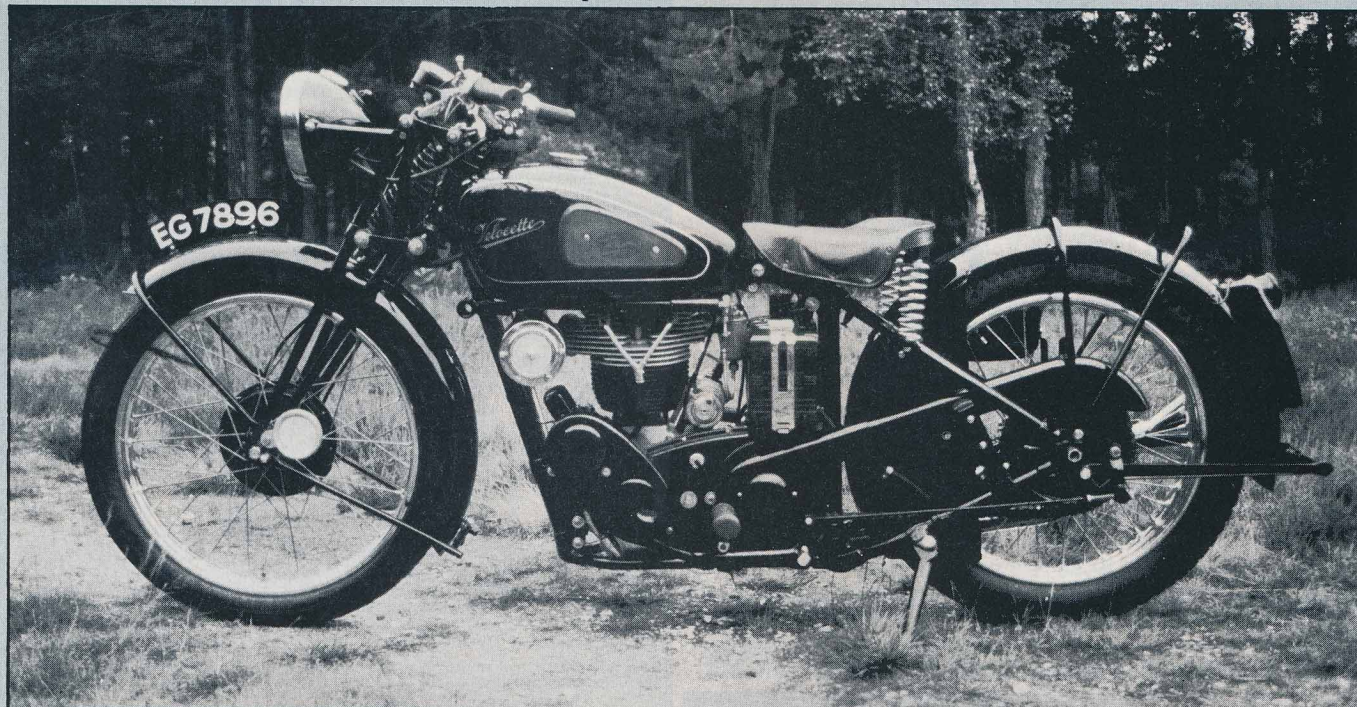
cularly useful feature on the racing version. But it also added to the problems of clutch design and adjustment — which is all part of Velocette lore.

The KSS, being a road bike, had lights of sorts; electrical power, but not very much being provided by the Miller six-volt dynamo. Ignition was by BTH magneto. The brakes were modest seven-inch drums enough to stop a bike weighing only 340lbs reasonably well. There was no rear suspension, you

just went up and down with the bumps and the Webb front girder forks, handled well when in good condition but their contribution to comfort was marginal. It goes without saying that the KSS had the famous fishtail silencer (although the original Model K did not) and it came with such luxuries as an adjustable saddle and side and rear stands, the latter being a protrusion at the rear with a similar, but less positive system serving to lift the front wheel clear of the ground if it were needed. The fuel tank held 3½ gallons of petrol and the dry sump oil tank half a gallon . . .

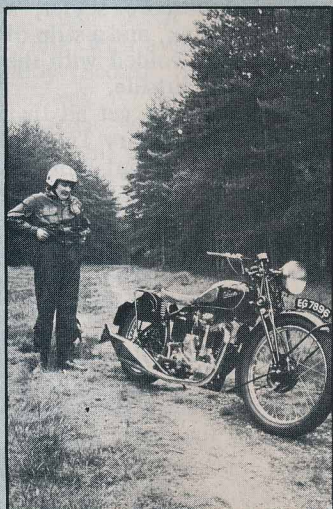
DAVE KING'S KSS

Dave is no newcomer to older motorcycles and owns a BSA Gold Star, a Douglas and two KSS Velos. One was made in 1938 and belonged to a friend who unfortunately died and the second was made ten years later. There was little obvious difference between the models except that when Dave collected the '48 it was a very tatty pile of bits and his friend loaned him the '38 KSS to show him how it should look and where



all the bits went. He nearly gave up on the spot.

It took two years of spare time graft to turn those bits into what it is today an almost factory fresh machine. Finished in the traditional black and gold it oozes class and is almost too good to ride. The rebuild was, in fact, fairly straightforward, says Dave, with no real snags. Fortunately all the parts were there and it seems that the bike had been used for racing, so the engine had done relatively few miles. It was stripped and thoroughly cleaned but the original crankshaft, big-end and mains were retained for there was no wear to speak of. The hard job was getting decent chrome plating done and this involved many visits to the platers. Helpful friends made parts when they were not obtainable, for example the exhaust retaining nut was badly butchered and a new one had to be made.



The seat is, in a sense, non-standard in that it was found by a friend in a BSA store — it seems the lowly M20 Beeza shared the same seat cover. Everything else looks just as it did the day in 1948 that the KSS was wheeled out of Velocettes' Hall Green factory. Not for the first time I sat in a workshop and felt the hairs rise on my neck as I gazed at the KSS with a mixture of desire and envy. It is, for me, one of the best looking and most desirable motorcycles of that era and to meet someone who has two is just too much. It sold for £146.10.0d when offered to the public in 1947, a lot of money for the time. By then its days were numbered though and it barely lasted into the fifties with the Dowty Oleomatic air forks fitted for the last few years. Yes, it really was, and is, some motorcycle.

