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George Wallis: The Visionary Who Birthed the Arie 3



Battle of the Bugs



The BSA A7 Star Twin and Gordon Johnston, 1976



British Road Racer Dave Chadick Lines Up for South African 500cc Showdown



Ed Wright: The Apprentice Who Drew the Lines at BSA



Time Capsule on Two Wheels: Alex Taylor and the 1950 BSA D1 Bantam



Peter Hall and the 1940 BSA M20: A Territorial's Machine and a Veteran's Memory





- **Editor's Welcome September 2025**
- *The Classic Shift*

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the September edition of **LHR Motorcycle Magazine**, a very special issue that marks both a nostalgic celebration and an exciting new beginning.

This month, we bring you our very first **Classic Bike Edition** — a tribute to the timeless machines that have paved the way for generations of motorcyclists. From iconic British legends to vintage Japanese engineering marvels, we're revving deep into the rich heritage of two-wheeled design. These bikes don't just ride — they tell stories. Stories of freedom, rebellion, endurance, and craftsmanship that continues to inspire riders and collectors around the world. Whether you're a long-time classic enthusiast or just discovering the allure of retro rides, this edition was made for you.

As we celebrate the classics, we also look ahead. After years of serving the motorcycle community under the **LHR** name, the time has come for us to evolve. **This will be the final edition of LHR Motorcycle Magazine in its current form.** Starting in **October**, we will shift gears in two important ways:

First, **LHR Motorcycle Magazine will transition into a monthly Newsletter format**, continuing to deliver curated updates, news bites, and community features straight to your inbox. Think of it as your quick pit stop each month to catch up on everything that matters in the riding world.

Second — and here's the big news — the heart and soul of the magazine will live on under a bold new identity: **Torque SA**. This new brand represents our renewed commitment to producing high-quality, rider-focused content for the South African biking community and beyond. **Torque SA** will be available in both **digital and print formats**, and will expand our coverage to include in-depth features, gear reviews, industry news, and of course, continued love for all things two-wheeled — classic and contemporary.

We want to take a moment to thank **you**, our loyal readers, contributors, photographers, sponsors, and the broader LHR community. Your passion, feedback, and unwavering support have kept our engines running — and we're taking all of that with us into this new era.

So, take your time with this edition. Smell the old leather, hear the kickstart clunk in your mind, and ride through the stories of machines that never go out of style.

Then get ready — because Torque SA is coming, and the road ahead is wide open.

Ride safe. Ride proud.

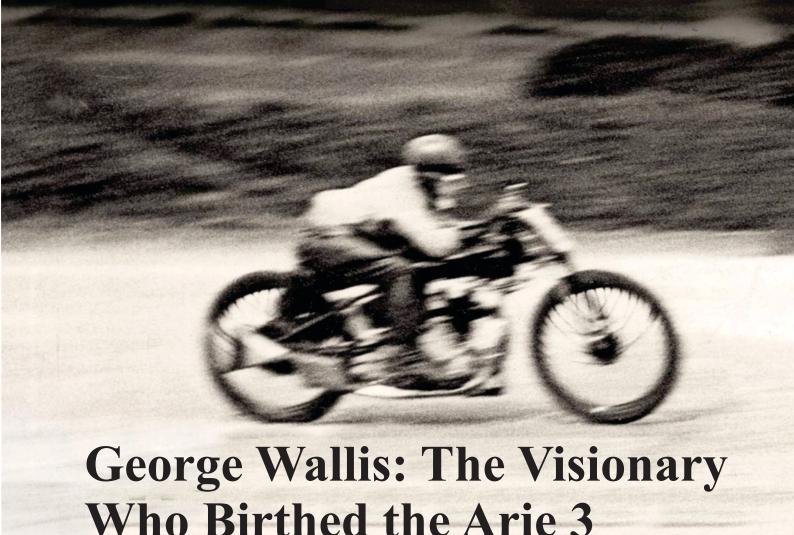
See you on the next page.

Warm regards,

Ian van der Merwe

Editor-in-Chief

LHR Motorcycle Magazine / Torque SA



In the golden age of British motorcycling, a handful of engineers and dreamers dared to imagine beyond convention. Among them was **George Wallis**, a man whose inventive spirit and refusal to accept the limitations of two wheels gave birth to one of the most intriguing creations in motorcycle history—the **Arie 3**.

Wallis was not content with ordinary engineering. A skilled designer with a flair for innovation, he envisioned a machine that could bridge the gap between the comfort and stability of a car and the agility of a motorcycle. The answer came in the form of a three-wheeled design unlike anything seen before. What would later be known as the **Arie 3** had its origins in his experiments with alternative layouts that challenged the rigid rules of motorcycle engineering.

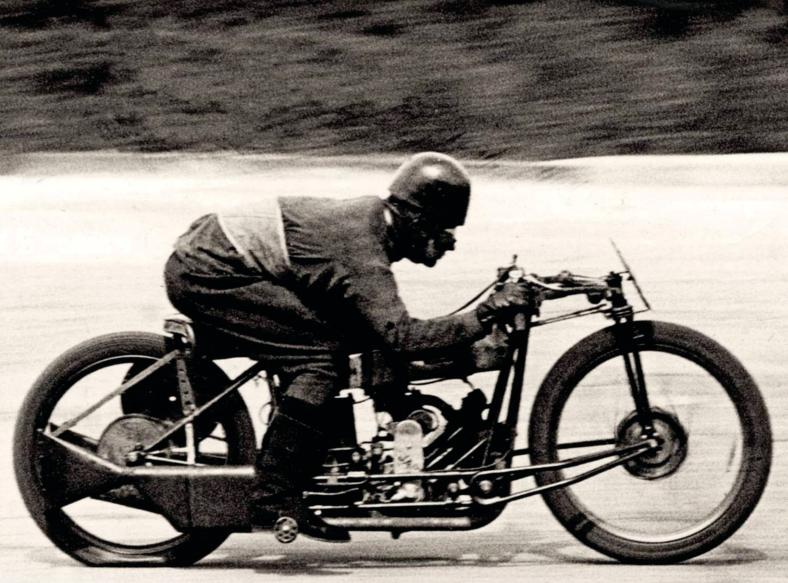
The story of Wallis and the Arie 3 begins against the backdrop of **Brooklands**, the iconic banked circuit in Surrey. On **July 24, 1926**, during the Brooklands 200-Mile Race, motorcycles from various classes roared across the tarmac. For Wallis, the event was more than just a race—it was a proving ground. He saw the way traditional two-wheel machines strained under the demands of high speed and endurance. He also saw an

opportunity to create something different: a motorcycle that was faster, safer, and more versatile.

The **Arie 3 prototype** emerged from this vision. With two wheels at the front and one at the back, its design combined the stability of a small car with the narrow profile of a motorcycle. Unlike traditional sidecars, which often upset the balance of machines and demanded a unique skillset, Wallis's three-wheeler was intuitive. Riders could corner with greater confidence, brake more effectively, and feel secure even at higher speeds.

When it debuted, the Arie 3 fascinated onlookers and riders alike. Its unusual stance set it apart immediately, and while purists debated whether it belonged to the world of motorcycles or microcars, Wallis was less concerned with labels. To him, it was a breakthrough—a machine that solved problems of balance, safety, and accessibility.

The **visionary aspect** of Wallis's creation lies not only in its design but in its timing. During the interwar period, the world was hungry for affordable, practical transport. Motorcycles provided freedom, but they were not always suitable for everyone. Wallis foresaw a future

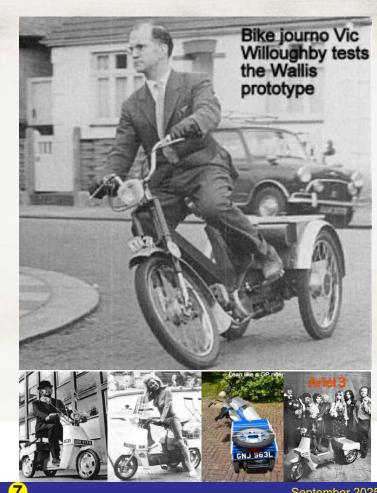


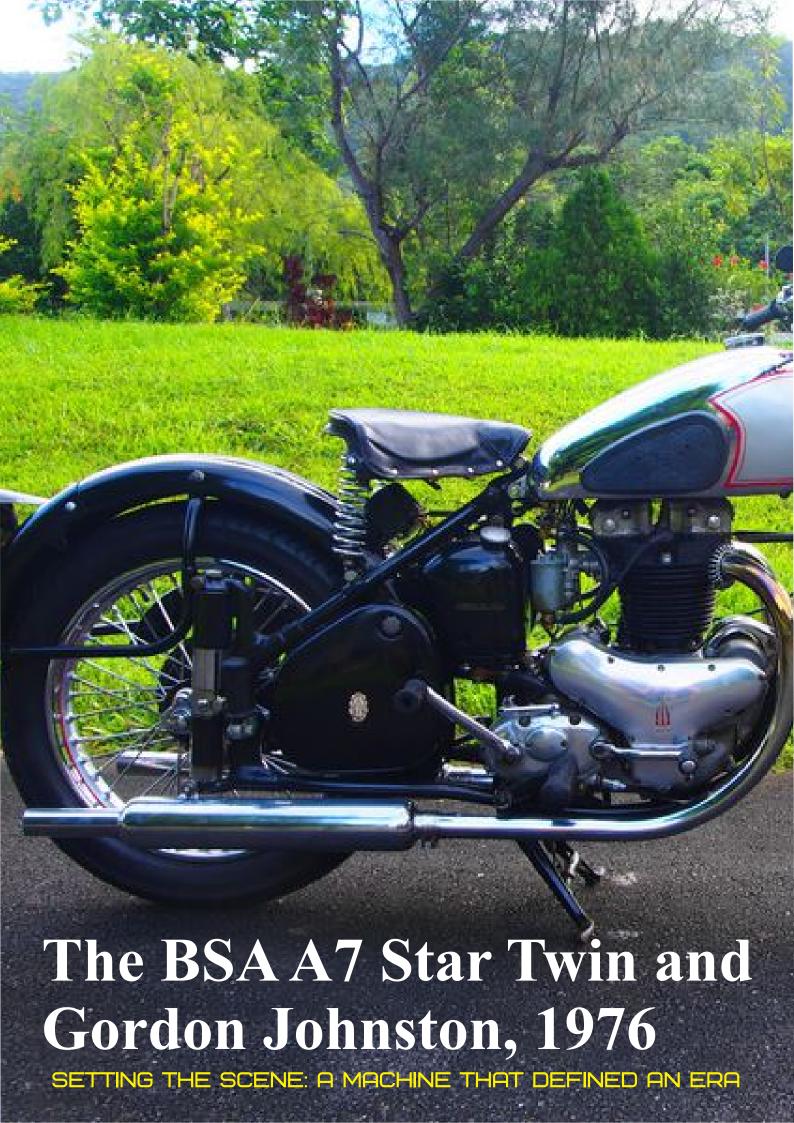
George Wallis on his 344cc JAP-powered motorcycle

where motorcycles could be made safer and more appealing to a wider audience, including those hesitant about the risks of two wheels. In many ways, the Arie 3 anticipated later developments in three-wheeled transport, from commuter vehicles to modern-day trikes.

Though the Arie 3 never achieved mass production, its influence lingers in the imagination of motorcycle history. George Wallis demonstrated that innovation often comes from those willing to ask *what if?* His work showed that motorcycling need not be bound by tradition—it could evolve, adapt, and inspire.

Today, George Wallis stands as a reminder that the spirit of invention is as important as speed or power in shaping motorcycling's legacy. The Arie 3 may not have conquered the market, but it cemented Wallis's place as a true visionary—one who dared to reimagine what a motorcycle could be.







By the mid-1970s, the British motorcycle industry was a shadow of its former glory. Triumph, Norton, BSA—the great names that had once dominated the roads and racetracks of the world — were struggling against the tide of powerful, refined, and reliable Japanese imports. Yet for riders and enthusiasts who remembered the golden age of British motorcycling, classics like the **BSAA7 Star Twin** remained more than just machines. They were icons of a proud era when Britain set the pace.

In 1976, amidst the turmoil of a changing industry, rider and enthusiast **Gordon Johnston** helped keep that legacy alive by showcasing the enduring appeal of the BSA A7 Star Twin. His connection with the model offers a lens through which to appreciate both the machine's importance and the spirit of riders who refused to let British engineering be forgotten.

The BSA A7 Star Twin: Birth of a Legend

Postwar Innovation

The BSA A7 was launched in 1946 as the company's first parallel twin. Designed during the war years by Val Page and Herbert Perkins, the A7 was intended to rival Triumph's Speed Twin — the motorcycle that had set the new standard for smooth, powerful road bikes.

With a 495cc overhead-valve parallel-twin engine, the A7 offered brisk performance for its day. But it was the **Star Twin**, introduced in 1948, that truly caught the public's imagination. Featuring twin Amal carburetors and sportier tuning, the Star Twin was faster, livelier, and instantly appealing to riders who wanted both everyday usability and genuine excitement.

Why the Star Twin Mattered

The A7 Star Twin carried BSA's reputation through the postwar years. It was reliable, relatively affordable, and possessed a unique character. Its smooth twin-cylinder engine contrasted with the thumping singles that still dominated British roads. For many, the Star Twin symbolized a new modernity — a motorcycle that promised adventure, speed, and freedom in a country recovering from wartime austerity.

The Road to 1976

Changing Tides

By the 1960s, the BSAA7 had evolved into the A50 and A65 series, but the core DNA of the Star Twin lived on. However, competition was fierce. Honda's CB750, Kawasaki's Z1, and Suzuki's two-stroke rockets redefined performance and reliability. BSA, once the world's largest motorcycle manufacturer, faltered badly. Production ceased in the early 1970s, and the Birmingham Small Arms Company, with its century of engineering heritage, was consigned to history.



Gordon Johnston and the BSAA7 Star Twin

A Rider in 1976

In the mid-1970s, Gordon Johnston had developed a reputation as a passionate rider who valued British motorcycles not just for nostalgia but for their mechanical soul. While many riders were trading in their old BSAs and Triumphs for gleaming Japanese machines with electric starters and five-speed gearboxes, Johnston doubled down on the classics.

His BSA A7 Star Twin, carefully maintained and lovingly ridden, became both a personal statement and a public reminder of what British engineering once represented. In 1976, Johnston was often seen at local rallies, club runs, and events where the Star Twin drew crowds of admirers. At a time when the motorcycle press was lamenting the collapse of BSA, Johnston's presence with his A7 symbolized a defiance of the narrative that British bikes were obsolete.

Riding the Star Twin in the Seventies

By 1976, the Star Twin was nearly three decades old. On paper, it was outclassed: 26 horsepower, a four-speed gearbox, and a top speed of around 85 mph paled in comparison to the 100-plus mph superbikes from Japan. But Johnston's perspective — shared by many





- Above: Not pristine but certainly in good usable order.
- 1: Braking received praise in contemporary tests; these days a rider needs to think more and earlier about stopping but the BSA sis is as good if not better than most of the era.
- 2: Gordon Johnston poses with the machine he first set eyes on in 1976.



many enthusiasts — was that the Star Twin offered something the newer machines lacked: character.

The rumbling exhaust note, the tactile feel of the Amal carbs being coaxed into life, the mechanical honesty of the parallel twin — these qualities spoke to a generation that valued motorcycles as living, breathing machines rather than appliances. Johnston's dedication to riding his Star Twin rather than leaving it to collect dust in a shed ensured that its spirit remained alive and visible to others.

Technical and Cultural Appreciation

The Mechanical Heart

The 495cc engine of the Star Twin was straightforward but effective. With twin carburetors, higher compression, and sportier cam timing than the standard A7, it was capable of surprisingly lively performance. Riders of the day valued its smoothness compared to singles and its rugged reliability when properly

maintained.

By 1976, parts supply was becoming a challenge, but clubs and small suppliers kept the machines running. Johnston himself was known for sourcing spares creatively, rebuilding components, and keeping his BSA on the road long after the company itself had vanished.

The Cultural Heart

Culturally, the BSA A7 Star Twin represented more than just horsepower figures. It was tied to memories of postwar freedom, of the café racer culture that emerged in the 1950s, and of Britain's global reputation for motorcycle excellence. For Johnston and others like him, riding a Star Twin in 1976 was not just about transport; it was about carrying forward a tradition, a way of riding that connected past to present.

The Enthusiast Movement of the 1970s

Clubs and Communities

Hold on, I've seen this bike before...

Yes, it is possible you've seen this BSA in The Classic MotorCycle before, at least if you're a longtime reader. Gordon's son Paul was at one time a staff writer on the magazine and like all good classic journalists, he needed something appropriate to ride. Enter the BSA. There is something reassuring about a journalist hoping to ride your classic, turns up on their own. So, it is entirely possible you've seen the bike in the magazine before.



The mid-1970s saw the beginnings of the classic motorcycle movement. Clubs dedicated to BSA, Triumph, and Norton sprang up across the UK, creating networks of riders determined to preserve machines that manufacturers themselves had abandoned. Gordon Johnston was part of this community, contributing not only as a rider but also as a voice reminding others of the value of British motorcycles.

Classic Races and Rallies

Events in the 1970s often featured vintage categories where machines like the A7 Star Twin could still line up. Johnston's appearances helped cement the idea that these motorcycles were not relics but living machines capable of performance and enjoyment decades after their creation.

Legacy For BSA

The A7 Star Twin remains one of BSA's most

Above: The front end is in better condition now than in the immediate aftermath of the Volvo incident. significant models, a motorcycle that helped establish the company's postwar identity. Without it, the later A10s, Rockets, and Super Rockets might never have existed.

For Johnston

For Gordon Johnston, 1976 was a year that highlighted his role as a custodian of BSA's legacy. While the world moved on to modernity, he kept the flame alive, riding and celebrating a machine that deserved to be remembered. His dedication ensured that the Star Twin was not forgotten, inspiring later restorers and collectors.

For Motorcycling

The presence of enthusiasts like Johnston in the 1970s created the foundation for today's vibrant classic motorcycle culture. The rallies, shows, and thriving communities that celebrate machines like the A7 exist because



"blending machine history, context, and narrative"



riders of his era chose not to let them fade away.

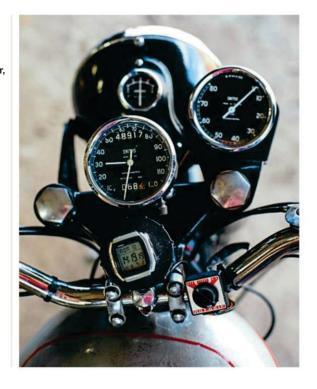
Conclusion: The Man, the Machine, the Moment

The story of the **BSA A7 Star Twin** and **Gordon Johnston in 1976** is not one of racing victories or record-breaking feats. It is, instead, a story of preservation, passion, and identity. At a time when the British motorcycle industry was collapsing, Johnston's Star Twin was a rolling reminder of what had once been — and of what still could be celebrated.

The Star Twin was born in the optimism of postwar Britain. By 1976, it had become a symbol of resistance against obsolescence. And Gordon Johnston, by continuing to ride and cherish it, ensured that the machine's song was not silenced. Today, whenever a BSAA7 Star Twin is fired up at a classic rally, its distinctive note carries echoes of both its postwar glory and the dedication of riders like Johnston who kept it alive during darker times.

Above: Treat the motorcycle as it should be treated.

Right: The sporting job got a rev-counter, the regular rider aspect has heated grips too





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the Lines at BSA



Left: Ed Wright today after a lifetime's involvement with BSA.

Above: What Ed rides now, a B44 Victor Special, re-imported from California where it had been desert-raced. Ed worked on the redesign of its engine and gearbox the handsome 441cc square-barrel unit single.

improvements to the prototype. Few would be adopted.

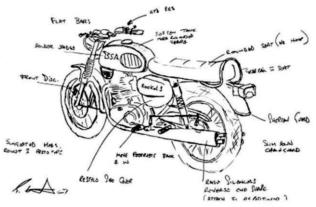
Introduction: The Unsung Designer

When people talk about the golden years of the British motorcycle industry, they tend to celebrate the racers, the executives, and the models that made headlines. Names like the Gold Star, the Rocket Goldie, and the Lightning come easily to mind. But behind those machines were men whose pencils and patience turned ideas into steel. One such figure was Ed Wright, who joined BSA at Small Right: Ed Wright's Heath in 1957 as a design apprentice sketch of suggested and quietly shaped motorcycles until 1969, when he left as the British industry itself began to falter.

> His was not the story of a headlinegrabbing innovator. Instead, Wright embodied the steady, practical design ethos that kept BSA's motorcycles ridable, serviceable, and distinctly British.

1957: Entering the Cathedral of **Industry**

Ed arrived at BSA's gates in Small Heath as a teenager with a knack for neat drawings and a hunger to learn. Apprenticeships at the time were demanding rotations: months spent in the toolroom, the inspection department, the



experimental shop, and the drawing office.

The drawing office was where Ed first found his footing. Parallel-motion boards, rolls of tracing paper, and the faint smell of ammonia from the dyeline printer became his environment. His early work involved redrawing existing components—brackets, levers, stays—giving him an understanding that motorcycles are never just "machines" but collections of thousands of interdependent details.

Learning the Grammar of Motorcycles

As a designer apprentice, Ed's education went beyond geometry and tolerances.



Above: Ed keeping his hand in on one of the final unit singles the BSA B50. He learned to think in metal: how a misplaced radius could create a stress riser that cracked after a few thousand miles, or how a cable route could wear through its own sheath if drawn carelessly.

Weekly stints in the experimental shop reinforced the lesson that mistakes on paper turned into problems in the workshop. Veteran fitters were blunt: "Draw it so it works in the world, not just on paper."

From these years, Ed developed habits that stayed with him—careful section drawings, uncluttered views, and a belief that empathy with mechanics and riders mattered as much as mathematical accuracy.

The Rise of the Unit Twins

The late 1950s and early 1960s brought the challenge of unit construction, where engine and gearbox were housed in a single casing. Triumph had moved in that direction, and BSA followed. Ed contributed to sub-assemblies of these new unit 500 and 650cc twins. His responsibilities weren't glamorous—oilway drillings, camplate detents, tab washers—but they were essential.

What made him stand out was his eye for "join lines," the way panels, covers, and seams met and caught the light. Small Heath's senior designers increasingly trusted him with finishing touches: the placement of a badge, the curve of a tank scallop, or the sweep of a side cover. These subtle decisions shaped a motorcycle's character far more than most riders realized.

The American Market Effect

By the mid-1960s, BSA's survival depended heavily on exports to the United States. American riders wanted long-range tanks, wide handlebars, deep chrome, and exhaust notes with presence. Ed's work often revolved around adapting British sensibilities to American demands.

He worked on tank variants, muffler





affle designs, and small frame changes aimed at keeping bikes stable on long, straight highways. On one project, he spent weeks with engineers chasing a resonance that made a fairing buzz at 50 mph. The fix—a subtle change in a hidden bracket—would never be advertised, but it transformed the rider's experience.

For Ed, these moments reinforced a truth: good design is invisible when it works.

Becoming More Than an Apprentice

By the mid-1960s, Ed had matured into a full-fledged designer, though he still carried the humility of an apprentice. He mentored newcomers, teaching them to start every drawing from the centreline and to always consider how a mechanic would get a spanner onto a bolt.

He also learned the politics of British industry—budget cuts, management reshuffles, and the looming threat of Japanese competition. But he never let frustration diminish his care for the work. A motorcycle, he believed, deserved honesty, even in an era of corporate uncertainty affle designs, and small frame changes aimed at

Top: The New Hudson autocycle, on which Ed Wright first worked.

Above: Photograph of the prototype BSA Rocket 3, as styled by Ogle. keeping bikes stable on long, straight highways. On one project, he spent weeks with engineers chasing a resonance that made a fairing buzz at 50 mph. The fix—a subtle change in a hidden bracket—would never be advertised, but it transformed the rider's experience.

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Craft, Pride, and Quiet Achievements

Asked later what he was proud of, Ed rarely mentioned entire models. Instead, he remembered smaller triumphs:

- A tank badge that sat perfectly on a tricky seam.
- A seat pan whose press tool was doubted but ended up resisting rust better than expected.
 - A bracket that eliminated a vibration no rider would ever know had existed.

These were "mercies," as he called them—small decisions that spared riders inconvenience or discomfort. For him, design was not about grand gestures but about cumulative care.

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Above: Ed with his massive checking drawing of the redesigned works scrambles B44 engine he worked on with Ernie Webster.

Below: Ed's notebook detailing his first projects in the Small Heath drawing office when he started there in April 1957. umility of an apprentice. He mentored newcomers, teaching them to start every drawing from the centreline and to always consider how a mechanic would get a spanner onto a bolt.

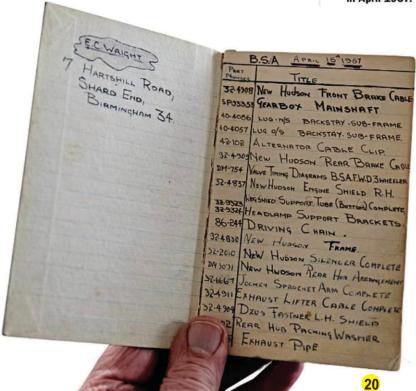
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The late 1960s were tough years at BSA. Budgets shrank, projects overlapped, and quality control wavered. Ed found himself doing more fixes than fresh designs, as aging tools and stretched teams struggled to keep pace with Japanese innovations like Honda's CB750.

He kept teaching apprentices, emphasizing kindness in design: chamfers that saved mechanics' knuckles, cable routes that didn't saw through themselves, brackets stiff enough to silence a rattle. But he also saw the limits of what could be done inside a struggling system.

In 1969, when BSA offered voluntary severance packages, Ed accepted. At just over 30, he retired from the factory but not from his craft.

Life After BSA

Leaving BSA didn't mean leaving design. Ed freelanced quietly for smaller workshops and taught part-time at a technical college. He maintained his own 500cc twin with monk-like discipline, experimenting with tweaks that made

Top: Sales brochure.

Above: BSA's
scooter was not a
success and the
money that was

lost contributed to

BSA's downfall.

the bike smoother, more reliable, or simply easier to live with.

He never turned bitter about the decline of British motorcycling. Instead, he admired Japanese precision and Italian flair while continuing to respect the quiet virtues of British engineering. His drawer of tank badges—from BSA, Triumph, Honda, Ducati, BMW—symbolized his belief that good design transcends nationality.

LHR Motorcycle Magazine 21 September 2025

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At the moment, the LHR Motorcycle Magazine's work is funded by just 2.4% of our regular readers. If you're in the other 97.6%, appreciate our work and believe that good journalism is important to protecting democracy in an age of misinformation, please consider joining the readers in South Africa supporting the LHR Motorcycle Magazine today.

We value whatever you can spare, but supporting on a monthly basis makes the most impact, enabling greater investment in our most crucial, fearless journalism. As our thanks to you, we can offer you some great benefits. We've made it very quick to set up, so we hope you'll consider it. Thank you.











Motorcycles have always been more than just transport. For some, they are machines of freedom; for others, they are tools of war, steeped in duty and service. The **BSA M20**, with its long-stroke thump and cast-iron ruggedness, belongs to the latter category. Conceived as a military side-valve in the late 1930s, it became one of the most enduring motorcycles of the Second World War, pressed into service across deserts, mountains, and European roads.

For **Peter Hall**, a member of the **Territorial Army in the late 1970s**, the M20 was not simply a relic of war. It was a tangible link between his own military experience and the generations that had ridden into history before him. His story intertwines with the M20's, illustrating how machines can bridge decades of service, memory, and identity.

The Machine: The 1940 BSA M20 Origins of the M20

When the War Office began seeking reliable motorcycles in the late 1930s, BSA put forward a 500cc single-cylinder, sidevalve machine known as the M20. Though

some critics dismissed it as outdated compared to overhead-valve designs, its virtues became obvious: it was simple, robust, easy to maintain, and almost unbreakable in the field.

The 1940 production models were stripped of civilian frills. Finished in khaki drab or matt olive paint, they had pannier racks, blackout lighting, and heavy-duty mudguards. Power came from a 496cc single that produced around 13 horsepower at 4,200 rpm, good for a steady 50 mph on a straight road. More importantly, the machine could take abuse. It tolerated bad fuel, rough maintenance, and the hard knocks of military life.

By the end of the Second World War, more than 125,000 M20s had been built, making it one of the most numerous Allied motorcycles. They served as dispatch bikes, convoy escorts, training machines, and even reconnaissance tools in campaigns from Dunkirk to Burma.

The Rider's Experience

The M20 was not a glamorous machine. It was heavy, underpowered compared to ci

- 1: Remote-float, bottom-fed Amal one inch 276 carb had no air cleaner in 1940. No M21-type long spacer between carb and inlet port contributed to difficult hot starting.
- 2: Short prop stand and long tubular pillion footrests, which, like crosshatched rider's pegs, featured no rubber, though rubber knee-pads were still in place.
- 3: Lucas 525 rear light wouldn't have been original equipment, and is much larger than that originally fitted.

Right: Val Page-designed 13bhp, all-iron engine, with valve adjustment easily accessible behind rectangular plate.











"I like the fact that it's slightly quirky and not correct."

ivilian sports bikes, and its girder forks were primitive by modern standards. But in war, glamour mattered little. What mattered was whether a rider could drop it in mud, pick it up, and ride again. Riders described it as "faithful," "honest," and "bulletproof."

By 1940, the M20 was already gaining a reputation as a machine that brought men home — whether limping back from a frontline message run or hauling a sidecar full of kit along a dusty road.

The Man: Peter Hall

Early Life and Territorial Army Service

Peter Hall was born in the late 1950s, the son of a Midlands engineer. Like many young men of his generation, he was drawn to the Territorial Army (TA), Britain's volunteer reserve force. The TA of the 1970s was a blend of tradition and modernity: it retained much of the discipline and camaraderie of wartime units but trained with newer equipment in an era of Cold War uncertainty.

By the time Peter joined in the mid- to late 1970s, Britain had shifted from the imperial responsibilities of earlier decades to a focus on NATO commitments. Yet the TA's purpose remained the same: to provide trained soldiers ready to support the regular army. For Peter, the TA was a way to serve, to test himself, and to connect with a military heritage he deeply admired.

Discovery of the M20

Peter's interest in military history and machinery led him to the **BSA M20**. By the 1970s, thousands of ex-army motorcycles had filtered into civilian hands. Many were restored by enthusiasts or used as cheap transport by students and young mechanics. For Peter, though, the M20 was more than a curiosity.

During his Territorial service, he came across one stored in the sheds of a veteran's motorcycle club. The sight of the khakipainted frame, the wide handlebars, and the army panniers struck a chord. Here was a machine his predecessors — dispatch riders, territorial couriers, wartime reservists — had relied upon in the darkest hours of the 20th century. He saw in it both the grit of 1940 and the continuity of military service.

1: Three – not four – position light-switch, dip-switch/horn button, ball-end levers, and fat grips not canvas ones, all fitted on or after the BSA's 'de-mob' in 1953.

2: Slightly upswept silencer was adopted for military M20s. This Goldiestyle replacement is less tubular than original.

3: Owner Peter Hall is at one with his M20, a great motorcycle for country lanes.

Left: This M20's forks still featured Bakelite knob for fork friction damper, removed on WM20 until fork gave trouble in desert war.



Peter's late-1970s TA service was, in many ways, worlds apart from the experiences of 1940. His training took place in peacetime Britain, with NATO exercises and the looming spectre of the Cold War rather than the immediacy of invasion. Yet, the M20 provided a bridge. It reminded him that the Territorial tradition was one of continuity—the same reserve spirit that had sent men to the Somme in 1916, to France in 1940, and to Germany in the decades after.

The motorcycle was not just a curiosity; it was a physical embodiment of that continuity. Every clang of its engine and jolt of its forks spoke of lives lived in service.

The BSA M20 in Postwar Britain

Surplus and Survival

After the war, thousands of M20s were sold off as army surplus. For years, they were cheap transport for civilians, especially in austerity-stricken Britain. By the 1950s and '60s, many had been worn out, scrapped, or relegated to sheds. But a dedicated band of enthusiasts preserved them, appreciating their simplicity and reliability.

By the time Peter encountered the M20 in the late '70s, it was already a collector's machine. Restorers had begun to return them to wartime specification,

Above: M20's five-inch ground clearance was okay on tracks, not so good genuinely off-road complete with panniers, blackout lights, and khaki paint. Riding one in that era was both a statement of nostalgia and a nod to the durability of wartime engineering.

Cultural Symbolism

The M20 also carried symbolic weight. In classic motorcycle clubs, it represented a machine that had "done its bit." Veterans often paused by them at rallies, sharing stories of service, convoys, or dispatch runs. Younger riders like Peter listened, aware that the thumping single beneath them was not just a motorcycle but a survivor of history.

Peter Hall's M20 Journey

The Restoration Project

After encountering the M20 through his TA connections, Peter eventually acquired a 1940-spec example from a retired dispatch rider. It was not pristine: the frame carried dents, the tank was rusted, and the carburetor needed rebuilding. But to Peter, it was perfect — a chance to preserve and ride a piece of history.

Over months of work in his garage, guided by manuals, club advice, and plenty of trial and error, he restored the machine. The result was





: There were 126,000 M20s supplied during the Second World War.

2: M20 side-valve has been resprayed in NATO Green, not original 'Number three Gas-Proof Camouflage'. 'Butterfly' fuel and oil caps were to military spec.

Below: Its 1953 'demob' saw blackout mask removed. Front numberplate now carries military contract number. previously painted on the tank.

not a museum queen but a running motorcycle, faithful to its military origins. The restoration became a second apprenticeship, teaching him the patience of old mechanics: setting tappets by feel, cleaning magneto points, aligning chains with a string.

Riding the Past

When Peter first rode his M20 down a quiet country lane, he described it as "riding alongside ghosts." The thump of the engine, the smell of warm oil, the heavy feel of the girder forks all conjured images of convoy roads, blackout nights, and long-forgotten fields.

His TA comrades were amused by his fascination with an old warhorse, but many understood. In the 1970s, British reservists trained for modern conflicts, but Peter's motorcycle reminded them all that their tradition was rooted in the endurance of ordinary men with ordinary tools.

The Broader Significance

Machines as Memory

Peter Hall's story illustrates how machines carry memory. The 1940 BSA M20 is not just a motorcycle; it is a vessel of history. For veterans, it evokes service; for enthusiasts, it evokes engineering; for reservists like Peter, it evokes continuity.

Every restored M20 on the road today is a moving memorial. It tells of the dispatch riders who risked everything, of the mechanics who kept them running under canvas tents, and of the generations who followed in their footsteps.

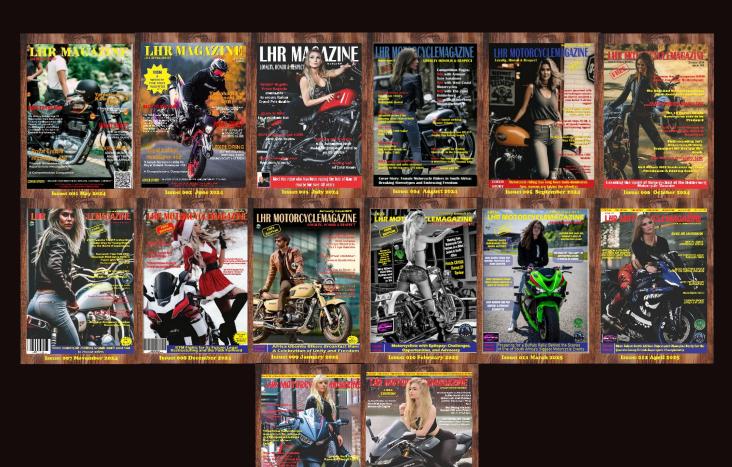
The Territorial Spirit

The Territorial Army, both in 1940 and in the 1970s, embodied a particular kind of service — ordinary men endurance without fanfare.



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Battle of bugs

When the Second World War ended in 1945, Europe lay in ruins. Bombed cities, rationing, fuel shortages, and shattered economies defined daily life. Against this backdrop, motorcycling wasn't about racing dominance or heavyweight supremacy. For the majority of people, the challenge was far more practical: how to get to work, how to carry shopping, and how to do it cheaply.



In Britain, Italy, France, and beyond, the immediate post-war years saw a boom not in glamorous superbikes, but in **utilitarian**, **lightweight**, **and affordable machines**. Two designs encapsulate this era perfectly: the Italian **Garelli Mosquito** and the British **Vincent Firefly**. Both represented a philosophy of motorcycling that was less about horsepower and more about thrift, utility, and ingenuity.

The World in 1945: A Need for Mobility

The late 1940s were defined by scarcity. Petrol was rationed in Britain until 1950, steel was expensive,

and wages were modest. Cars were a luxury, often reserved for the wealthy. Public transport was crowded, unreliable, and in many rural areas, non-existent.

A cheap way to convert a **pedal cycle into a motorised commuter** was the ideal solution. Out of this need arose the **cyclemotor**, small engines designed to bolt onto bicycles. They offered just enough power to flatten hills, reduce sweat, and cover modest distances faster than pedal power alone. They were lightweight, affordable, and adaptable.







1: Electrical component suppliers Millers were actually responsible for the 45cc engine.

2: Width was crucial with the Firefly, as it needed to fit in a cycle frame.

Below: When two bugs go to war... Phil Turner on the Mosquito, Gordon Hallett on the Firefly

The Garelli Mosquito: Italy's Ingenious Insect

Origins

In Italy, engineer **Adalberto Garelli** had been experimenting with small two-stroke engines since before the war. In 1946, his company released the **Garelli Mosquito (Mosquito 38.5)**, a tiny 38.5cc two-stroke engine designed to mount over the rear wheel of a bicycle.

Design

The Mosquito was a marvel of simplicity:

- **38.5cc displacement**, later upgraded to 48cc.
- Claimed 1 horsepower at 4,500 rpm.
- Mounted on the rear triangle of a bicycle frame, driving the tyre with a roller.
- Top speed: about 20–25 mph depending on rider weight and terrain.
- Fuel consumption: approximately 200 miles per gallon crucial in an era of scarcity.

Success

The Mosquito became a phenomenon. Licensed





ermany, it turned ordinary bicycles into cheap motorcycles overnight. For Italian workers commuting into Milan, Turin, or Rome, it was a godsend.

It also represented freedom. In a society where few could afford a Vespa or Lambretta scooter, the Mosquito provided mobility at a fraction of the price. Within a few years, over a million units had been produced.

The Vincent Firefly: Britain's Answer

The Vincent Name

If Garelli represented Italian pragmatism, the **Vincent Firefly** was Britain's utilitarian masterpiece. At first glance, it seemed surprising. Vincent, after all, was known for the **Rapide** and the mighty **Black Shadow** — the fastest motorcycles in the world in the late 1940s. Why would such a prestigious company bother with a cyclemotor?

The answer was necessity. Britain was broke. Export markets were hungry for high-end Vincents, but at home, ordinary riders needed cheap transport. A lightweight cyclemotor could capture that market.

Design

Launched in 1953, the Firefly was a **45cc two-stroke engine** developed in partnership with

Above: Satellite factories in Naples, Spain, France, Argentina and even behind the Iron Curtain in Hungary made Mosquito versions under licence.

Miller. Like the Mosquito, it was designed to bolt onto a standard bicycle, mounted above the rear wheel and driving it via a roller.

Specs included:

- 45cc displacement, 0.8 bhp output.
- Roller-drive to the rear tyre.
 - Top speed of about 25 mph.
- Claimed fuel economy of 200 mpg.
 - Weight: around 25 lbs, meaning it didn't add much bulk to a bicycle.

Practicality and Use

The Firefly was marketed as "a motor for everyman." Commuters could afford it, students used it to get to college, and pensioners found it a reliable way to travel short distances without breaking their budget.

While it never achieved the global success of the Mosquito, it represented a moment when even the most prestigious names in motorcycling bent to the realities of post-war economics.

he Cyclemotor Boom

Culture of Thrift

Between 1946 and the early 1950s, cyclemotors of all makes and sizes dominated Europe. Villiers in Britain, VéloSoleX in France, Sachs in Germany,





Above: This wasn't perhaps what Vincent owners were expecting when a new model was being rumoured...

- 1: Phil Turner (left) and owner Gordon Hallett discuss 1950s autocycles.
- 2: Again, with the Mosquito, width was of the essence...
- 3: Drive system is pretty simple, relying on friction.





and Garelli in Italy all produced similar units. For a short period, they were **the most common motorcycles on the roads.**

People accepted their limitations because they represented something greater: **independence.** For a young worker, a cyclemotor meant not waiting for the bus, not trudging miles in the rain, and not relying on anyone else.

Accessibility

Unlike heavier motorcycles, cyclemotors didn't require a special licence in many countries. They were often sold in department stores and fitted by local cycle shops. Their affordability meant they put motorized transport into the hands of people who might never otherwise afford it.

From Cyclemotors to Scooters and Lightweights

By the mid-1950s, however, the market began to change. Economic recovery meant people had more disposable income. Scooters like the **Vespa** and **Lambretta** offered better weather protection and style. Lightweight motorcycles from BSA, NSU, and Honda offered more performance without breaking the bank.

The cyclemotor, once king of austerity transport, began to fade. Yet for a brief window, it had defined a generation. The Garelli Mosquito and Vincent Firefly were pioneers of that moment.

Comparing the Mosquito and Firefly hilosophy

- The **Mosquito** was born immediately after the war, Italian in flair, global in reach, and hugely successful in sheer numbers.
- The **Firefly** arrived later, as Britain's cyclemotor craze was already peaking, and its impact was smaller—but it carried the Vincent name, tying the most glamorous brand in Britain to the humblest form of motorcycling.

Performance

Neither machine was fast, but both were reliable within their limits. Riders learned to help with the pedals when climbing hills, to travel light, and to enjoy steady, economical journeys.

Legacy

The Mosquito left a larger global footprint, licensed worldwide and sold in vast quantities. The Firefly, meanwhile, is today a fascinating collector's item: a Vincent, yes, but one that sits at the opposite end of the performance spectrum from the Black Shadow.



The Garelli
Mosquito and
Vincent Firefly
answered that
call. They were
cheap, simple,
and
economical,
embodying the
ingenuity of
their makers
and the
resilience of
their riders.

For the Mosquito, success was measured in millions of units sold, buzzing across Europe's battered streets.

The Collector's View Today

In the world of vintage motorcycles, the Mosquito and Firefly occupy a special niche. They are often overshadowed by larger, more glamorous machines — Vincents, Nortons, Ducatis — but to collectors, they represent an authentic slice of social history.

- A restored Garelli Mosquito at a rally draws older Italians who recall their youth and younger enthusiasts fascinated by its elegance and simplicity.
- A Vincent Firefly today is rare and quirky, treasured not for its performance but for its contrast: the smallest Vincent, standing in the shadow of the world's fastest motorcycles.

Prices for these machines remain accessible compared to heavyweight classics, but their charm lies not in investment value—it lies in their ability to tell a story about a time when motorcycles were essential tools of survival.

Conclusion: When Less Meant More

After the Second World War, the world did not want superbikes. It wanted mobility. The **Garelli Mosquito** and **Vincent Firefly** answered that call.

British Road Racer Dave Chadick Lines Up for South African 500cc Showdown

n a bright South African summer morning, **Britain's Dave Chadick** looked composed and ready as he prepared for the **500cc scratch race** at the **Transvaal Clubs Grand Central Circuit** meeting. Held on **February 2, 1957**, this race brought together some of the country's finest local talent alongside seasoned international riders, all converging on the main road connecting **Pretoria and Johannesburg**.

Chadick, astride his **Norton**, exuded a quiet confidence as he made last-minute checks on the machine. The Norton, renowned for its reliability and competitive speed in the scratch class, had long been a favourite of British road racers. With polished lines and its signature thunderous exhaust note, the bike embodied the engineering excellence of post-war Britain, a fitting tool for Chadick as he prepared to challenge South African competition.

Spectators lined the roadside and clambered onto nearby embankments, their enthusiasm palpable. The Transvaal Clubs circuit, a long and fast stretch of tarmac interspersed with sweeping curves, required a delicate balance of daring overtakes and machine management. For riders, a single misjudged corner could spell disaster, making Chadick's calm demeanor all the more notable. He adjusted his leathers, checked the throttle, and took a moment to survey the field — a sea of local talent hungry to make their mark against an experienced international competitor.

The 500cc scratch race, a highlight of the meeting, was always a test of both rider and machine. Scratch races were particularly demanding, as competitors of varying skill and experience raced together, creating dynamic and unpredictable conditions. Chadick's experience on Norton machines in Britain's domestic circuits had honed his sense of timing, line choice, and throttle control — skills that would be critical on the South African course.

As the starting flag prepared to drop, there was a sense of anticipation in the air. Chadick's relaxed posture belied the focus behind his eyes, a quiet readiness cultivated through years of road racing. The combination of his British road-racing pedigree and the Norton's engineering promised an exciting contest against South Africa's homegrown riders.

When the flag eventually fell, engines roared and the dust kicked up along the main road. Fans witnessed not only a test of speed and endurance but also a meeting of racing cultures — the precision and tradition of British racing intersecting with the energy and ambition of South African competition. Dave Chadick, calm and methodical on his Norton, was at the centre of it all, ready to leave his mark on the Transvaal Clubs Grand Central Circuit and remind spectators why British riders and their machines had earned an international reputation for excellence.





Something to CIOW about

This highly patinated and original 1950 D1 Bantam brings back all its keeper's yesterdays – and those of many others too.

lex Taylor has a gift for finding unusually original classic two-wheelers. The retired Oxfordshire garage owner then makes them good mechanically but leaves them gloriously patinated, their finishes telling the stories of long road lives.

This was recognised by the 2018 Most Original award at Stafford show for his Royal Enfield Model G (see *TCM*, December 2017), and several of his other machines have appeared in these pages. But with the 1950 D1 Bantam featured here, it's personal. For as with many riders of a certain age, a 125cc Bantam, from that year, had been among his first motorbikes, and the one he really cut his riding teeth on.





Some motorcycles carry history in their steel. Others carry memory in their patina, their scratches, their worn grips. The 1950 BSA D1 Bantam, recently unearthed and preserved by collector Alex Taylor, is one of those rare machines that does both. Highly original and remarkably complete, this Bantam does more than run; it resurrects an era, reminding riders and enthusiasts alike of the small joys of post-war motorcycling.

Alex Taylor has built a reputation among classic motorcycle collectors for finding machines that are not only rare but **unusually original**. In the case of the D1 Bantam, he has achieved a feat many collectors dream of: discovering a bike that is both untouched and evocative, retaining the charm and character of the early 1950s.

The Post-War Motorcycle Landscape

After the Second World War, motorcycling in Britain was about accessibility as much as adventure. Petrol rationing had ended, but

"Ten days
after I
bought
my first
Bantam, a
gearbox
selector
fell out
and went
through
the bottom
of the
crankcase."

financial constraints remained. The country's economy was recovering, and affordable transportation was essential. Enter the **BSA Bantam**.

Launched in 1948 as the **D1 model**, the Bantam was designed to be **lightweight**, **simple**, **and affordable**, providing an entry point for new riders and a practical solution for commuting. Its roots were humble — the Bantam was inspired by the German **DKW RT 125**, a machine that had proven itself as reliable, inexpensive, and easy to maintain. BSA had acquired rights to produce their version, and the D1 quickly became a staple of British roads.

With a **125cc two-stroke single-cylinder engine** producing around 4 horsepower, the D1 Bantam could reach speeds of roughly 45 mph. Not fast by any stretch, but sufficient for navigating post-war streets, country lanes, and short commuter distances. It was a machine designed to be practical, reliable, and approachable — qualities that made it beloved by a generation of riders.

Alex Taylor: The Finder of Forgotten Machines

Alex Taylor has long been recognized in collector circles for his **uncanny ability to locate unusually original classic two-wheelers**. While some collectors are drawn to restored motorcycles with gleaming chrome and pristine paintwork, Alex is fascinated by authenticity — bikes that tell a story through their wear and history.

"The thing about original bikes," Alex says, "is that they carry not just the engineering, but the human side of motorcycling — the sweat, the repairs, the personal touches. A restored machine can be perfect, but it doesn't have that soul."

His discovery of the 1950 D1 Bantam exemplifies this ethos. Found tucked away in a shed, largely untouched for decades, the Bantam retains nearly all its **factory components**, **paint**, **and even the original registration plate**. The original mudguards show small dents from decades of riding, the kickstart shows wear from countless morning starts, and the grips are worn smooth—each imperfection a testament to its decades on British roads.

The 1950 D1 Bantam: A Closer Look

This Bantam is remarkable for its **highly paginated originality**. From the factory-finished frame numbers to the untouched engine casings, it

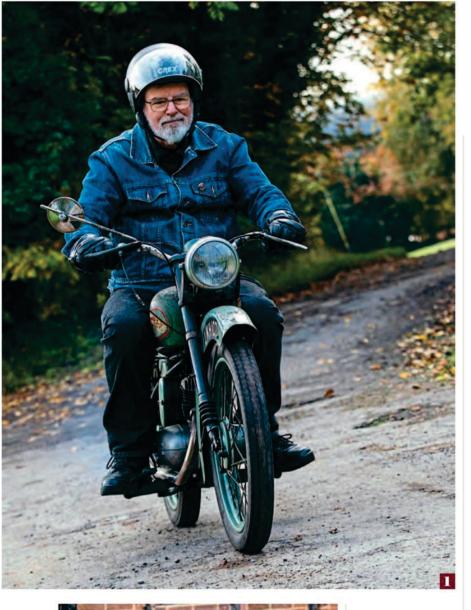
1: Though clearly not the original finish, the D1 sports a lovely patina.

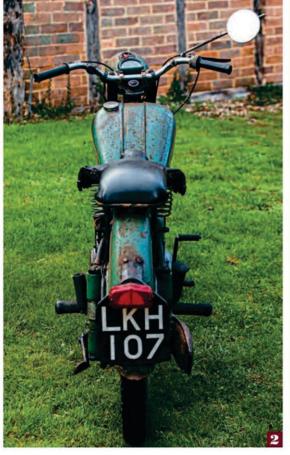
2: 'Duck-bill' silencer was part of the early D1 charm.

Right: It's easy when you know how... Alex Taylor fires up the Bantam for Steve Wilson.

LHR Motorcycle Magazine 44 September 2025







- 1: Seventy years on, and the D1 Bantam is still 'something to crow about'.
- 2: Neat and narrow rear profile. Tail-light is incorrect for 1950.
- 3: This 1950 D1 was 'De Luxe' – with Lucas generator and battery electrics, plus plungers. So it cost £20 more than the basic £80 model.
- 4: Back to the future. In 1968 a 1950 D1 had been one of 16-year-old Alex Taylor's first motorcycles.

has survived the decades without extensive restoration. Its mechanical components, from the two-stroke engine to the primary chaincase, appear as they did when it first left the factory. Even the **original carburetor and magneto** are present and functional — a rarity for machines of this age.

The paint, though dulled by time, still shows traces of the 1950 BSA livery, offering enthusiasts a genuine view of post-war British motorcycling aesthetics. Many Bantams of the era were repainted or modified, but this one preserves its **factory charm**, offering a glimpse into the world of a 1950s rider.

Riding the Past

Alex notes that machines like this Bantam are more than just static displays; they are meant to be ridden. Despite its age, the bike runs smoothly, the engine firing cleanly, the gearbox clicking crisply through its four-speed ratios. It's a reminder that motorcycles of this era were built to be **durable**, **simple**, **and fun to ride**.

Riding it, one experiences the connection between man and machine in its purest form: the weight of the bike is light, the throttle responsive, and the hum of the engine soothing rather than aggressive. There is no high-speed adrenaline rush here — instead, there is a quiet joy, the kind that comes from mastering a small, reliable machine on country roads.

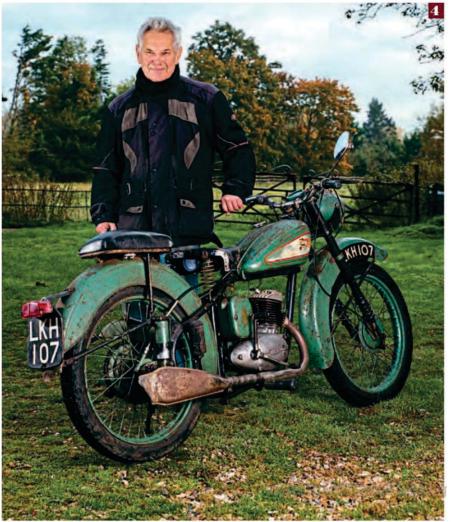
Keeping Memories Alive

For many enthusiasts, bikes like this Bantam are repositories of personal and collective memory. Riders who grew up in the 1950s remember learning to ride on similar machines, commuting to work, or running errands. The tactile experience — the kickstart, the clutch, the smell of two-stroke oil — transports them back in time.

Alex Taylor appreciates this aspect deeply. He often invites fellow riders to experience his finds firsthand, creating a bridge between generations. With the D1 Bantam, he has witnessed older riders recalling their first machines, sharing stories of early adventures, mishaps, and triumphs. For younger riders, it's a tangible history lesson — a way to experience the heritage of motorcycling without a textbook.

Preservation Versus Restoration





One of the ongoing debates among collectors is whether to **restore or preserve**. In the case of the 1950 D1 Bantam, Alex has chosen **preservation**, valuing authenticity over appearance. This approach allows the bike to retain its "soul," showing signs of wear that tell a story no polish or paint can replicate.

Preservation also means careful maintenance: keeping the engine running, ensuring safety for riding, and preventing corrosion — all without altering the original components. It's a delicate balance, but one that Alex embraces.

The Allure of Originality

What makes this Bantam particularly special is that it **brings back "yesterdays"** — not just Alex's memories, but those of countless other riders who experienced similar machines in post-war Britain. Its originality allows anyone who encounters it to imagine life in 1950: the sound of the engine echoing down narrow lanes, the feel of leather gloves on handlebars, and the hum of a two-stroke under a crisp morning sky.

Original bikes like this Bantam are



increasingly rare. Many were modified, repurposed, or scrapped over the decades. To find one so complete, so faithful to its factory design, is a gift not only to collectors but to motorcycling history itself.

Conclusion: A Gift from the Past

The 1950 BSA D1 Bantam in Alex Taylor's collection is more than just a motorcycle. It is a time capsule, a mechanical storyteller, and a tangible piece of post-war British history. Its simplicity, reliability, and charm encapsulate a period when motorcycling was about practicality, accessibility, and joy on two wheels.

Alex Taylor's dedication to **finding unusually original classic motorcycles** ensures that machines like this Bantam continue to inspire, educate, and delight. For those fortunate enough to see, touch, or ride it, the experience is a rare window into a bygone era — when a small, dependable motorbike could open up a world of freedom.

Here's a **sidebox timeline** of **BSA Bantam development**, **D1 to D3 (1948–1952)** to complement your 1,500-word article:

BSA Bantam Development Timeline: D1 to D3 (1948–1952)

1948-BSAD1 Bantam

- First production model of post-war Bantam series.
- 125cc two-stroke single-cylinder engine, producing~4bhp.
- Three-speed gearbox, kickstart only.





1: Amal 261 carburettor with 'strangler' choke/ air filter. The set-up returned over 110mpg.

- 2: From mid-1950
 the exhaust pipe
 was routed above
 the footrest.
 Using the kickstart, mounted
 concentrically with
 the gearchange, was
 a pain for big feet.
- 3: Tester Steve Wilson has owned many Bantams – but they were all later swinging-arm 175cc versions.



- Basic drum brakes front and rear; light tubular frame.
- Designed for affordability and practicality, ideal for post-war commuters.

1949 - D2 Bantam

- Minor revisions from the D1; improved carburetor for smoother running.
- Slight frame modifications for better stability.
- Added small aesthetic refinements, including painted mudguards and tank badges.

1950 – D3 Bantam (sometimes referred to as early D3/D3 Super)

- 125cc engine slightly refined, improved oiling system.
- Introduction of four-speed gearbox in some models for smoother acceleration.
- Frame updated for enhanced rigidity; minor suspension tweaks.
- Styling kept simple, maintaining focus on light weight and practicality.

1951-D3 Deluxe

- Enhanced rider comfort: sprung saddle and improved footrest positioning.
- Engine modifications for slightly better torque at low revs.
- Improved electrical system for more reliable lighting.

1952 – D3 Super or Standard D3 updates

- Final tweaks before later Bantam variants (D5 and D7) introduced.
- Focus on durability and serviceability; most components interchangeable with earlier models.
- Solidified the Bantam's reputation as a reliable, inexpensive commuter motorcycle.



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