

# *Flat, L or V, what's it to be?*

Each to their own is an oft' heard conclusion to a conversation where parties will never agree. It wouldn't do for us all to be the same is another similar and it's that diversity of human nature, which makes some enthusiasts lean toward certain types of motorcycle. Nigel C spent some time with three very different twins.

01



02







03

Words by Nigel C Photographs by Peter Baumber

**F**or a single cylinder enthusiast, the complexities of twins, let alone triples, fours and heaven forbid, sixes is beyond my comprehension but I like to think I'm open to persuasion, especially when the persuaders are as infectiously passionate as Dick Booth, Jeff Moody and Richard Maw. They've all fairly cosmopolitan tastes when it comes to classics, but they have their favourites and having seen them around at various events, it seemed a good idea to get them together one hot Sunday June afternoon.



01

**NAME:** Dick Booth

**BASE:** Belton, South Yorkshire

**OCCUPATION:** Retired civil servant

**BIKE:** 1981 850cc Mk 2 Moto Guzzi Le Mans

**Right:** The Le Mans has an instantly recognisable style.



#### THE WORK

Dick follows a regular format with a restoration and his first step was to totally strip the bike, powder coat the frame and source a new wiring loom. "I was surprised how expensive Guzzi parts had become and some bits are difficult to find in this country. This was easily the most expensive restoration I've ever done. The front discs were 2mm under minimum thickness and a new pair cost £192 plus VAT each!" he says. A new rear disc was also required, along with calipers, seal kits etc.

"Oddly, it was the screen that caused the most grief. I bought the bits from TLM, in Holland, via the owners' club, but the holes didn't line up with the fairing and I had to fill the holes in the fairing and re-drill them to match the screen," says Dick.

Engine-wise the bottom end, pistons and Nickasil coated bores were fine, so with a new set of rings fitted, they were reassembled. "Ninety quid for a set of rings. Ridiculous!" says Dick with disdain.

Dick skimmed the heads and replaced the valve guides, springs and valves – both exhaust valves

were badly burned – and the clutch was 'just a bit too worn to refit', so he opted for the beefier version from the 1000cc models.

"One of the engine mounting bolts had seized as it passed through the gearbox end plate and I damaged the plate trying to get the thing out, so had it welded up," he added.

The gearbox was taken care of by BMW specialist Steve Scriminger, in Sleaford, who replaced the output bearing and shimmed it up as necessary.

Dick patiently cleaned all the cases by hand. "I once bought a bike that had been blasted and not cleaned out adequately with the inevitable, expensive results. So I steer clear of blasting on engine bits."

The universal join in the transmission shaft was a bit sloppy, so it made sense to replace it.

Likewise a new exhaust system was purchased, the two header pipes, the centre H section and two silencers, all genuine Guzzi parts but

02

**NAME:** Richard Maw

**BASE:** Base: Belton, South Yorkshire.

**OCCUPATION:** Retired steel worker

**BIKE:** 1983 800cc BMW R80ST

The R80GS was arguably the world's first 'adventure tourer' and it found a market waiting to tackle deserts and woodlands. It also performed well on the road, so BMW made a 'civilian' version, the ST and it sold like a maggot sandwich. Less than 6000 were manufactured and the model was largely ignored and has since been practically forgotten. This is a shame because it's one of the best Beemers out there.

The ST was purchased in 1984 and run up until the mid-1990s, when it was stripped, rebuilt and restored with a view to touring America. The trip was cancelled and it returned to everyday duty. A gentleman by the name of Nick Dulke – a GS enthusiast – took a shine to it and asked to be given first refusal. A decade later the call came

and Nick bought it, keeping it in pride of place in his kitchen! Richard spotted it and as it was 'too nice to use off-road' suggested that it would be better off with him. Last July, Nick agreed and Richard bought it.

**Left:** The call of the wild! The RT is an ideal tool for exploring.







## THE RIDE

Across the Guzzi, the first impression is one of comfort with a plush seat and ergonomically perfect controls. It's also slim, low and light. Electric start of course and the Guzzi rocks gently from side to side on blipping the throttle. The clutch action is delightfully light and a reasonably firm press down on the pedal engages bottom gear with a barely audible clunk. Out on the road, the riding position is ideal for my 5ft 9in, though initially my knees stick outside the fairing. Only when I notice the inner section of the fairing has integral pads onto which one's knees are supposed to rest, do I slide slightly further back in the saddle to find the manufacturer's recommended position, which is actually comfortable.

The engine characteristics are best described as 'long legged', there's no arm wrenching acceleration, just smooth torque and a most satisfactory forward momentum with the big, lazy pushrod engine loping along at 80mph, with just 4500 revs showing on the clock, though I did let them fall before changing down, to avoid winding up the shaft driven rear wheel! The low centre of gravity makes cornering feel planted and secure – tyres are Avon's excellent Roadriders – and Guzzi's special linked brakes, rear and one front, work in perfect harmony to pull us up straight and true. An excellent start... next!

sourced independently, then shipped to Camcoat (following impressive work on The Blue Mover Thunderbird) for a superb, heat proof finish. Unfortunately, on assembly, the H section was out of line both horizontally and vertically. "We tried everything to get it to fit together and finished up heating it and using a fork stanchion, I prised it into shape. Fortunately the coating has a bit of flex in it and it only hairlined around a weld and it's out of sight, but it's a lesson learned, fit it together before finishing!" says Dick.

The Guzzi's fork legs were showing signs of fine pitting, so were replaced along with new seals, bushes etc.

All nuts and bolts were replaced with stainless steel. "I buy a big bagful from Screwfix, turn off the letters on the heads and then form a chamfer around the hex," he says. The rubbers on the bike were replaced. Dick says: "There are so many different rubbers on it, there's about 10 on the seat alone."

As bought, the lights didn't work, so Dick removed the speedo and tacho and went through the various switches and the printed circuits. Nothing appeared untoward and with a gentle but thorough clean up, the system magically returned to life.

Dick was at pains to point out the paintwork, in particular what appeared to be the various transfers on the bike. "Look again," he said, "They're not transfers, they've been painted on." Indeed a closer look revealed incredibly precise miniature lettering and shadowing. A credit to a very skilled painter (Paint Supremacy – see details on page 50) and befitting such a meticulously prepared machine.

**Right:** Plenty to keep an eye on in the Guzzi cockpit..



## MOTO GUZZI LE MANS

**Engine:** Air-cooled, ohv, transverse V-twin. Dimensions 83 x 78mm = 844cc. Power approx 80bhp at 7500rpm. Torque approx 75Nm at 6000rpm. CR 10:1

**Carburation:** Two 36mm Dell'Orto VHB

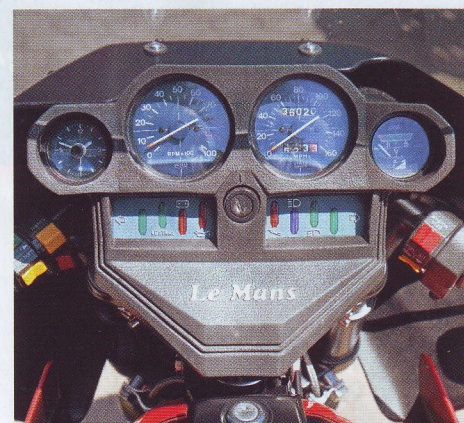
**Transmission:** Five-speed unit gearbox with shaft drive

**Chassis:** Tubular steel semi cradle and swinging arm. 35mm telescopic forks with 320mm rear shocks

**Brakes:** Front twin 310mm Brembo discs. Single 240mm rear disc both with twin pot calipers. Linked one front and rear disc on foot brake

**Tyres:** Avon Roadriders 100-90 x 18 front, 110-90 x 18 rear

**Weight (wet):** 495lb (Morris 20/50)



## THE WORK

"It was in need of recommissioning, you know a deep service, oils, tyres etc but it was okay. Then over winter I took off the heads and barrels, ground in the valves, cleaned the cases by hand, had the rear subframe and the back shock powder coated and the barrels vapour blasted, at Les Wylde, Sherburn," says Richard.

On stripping the heads, Richard discovered one exhaust valve was stainless steel but not the other. Both are now stainless. Various parts of the engine were painted black, such as the front engine case, but these were all taken back to bare alloy.

The wheels had already been rebuilt with stainless spokes and a nice touch is the painting of the rim centres in matching grey, with a red coach line, akin to Norton of the 1940s and 50s.







*"it flip-flopped through the tight village corners so well, I turned round and did them again!"*

03

**NAME:** Jeff Moody  
**BASE:** Cherry Willingham, Lincoln  
**OCCUPATION:** Machinist  
**BIKE:** 1980 Ducati Darmah SS

***"It let rip, punching through the air in seven league boots."***

There's a strong classic contingent around mid-Lincolnshire and Jeff had known about the Ducati belonging to fellow enthusiast Dave Dawson, who lives in a neighbouring village, for a good while. As fate often decrees, certain events fall together and in 2006, as Jeff had recently sold a Laverda Jota, so Dave needed an influx of cash to fund house alterations – a deal was quickly struck and the Ducati changed hands.

"It was on the road but needed recommissioning, it wasn't charging etc. Dave had started work on it but hadn't finished when domestic matters took precedence," said Jeff.

#### THE WORK

As many restorers will know, one job leads to another and eventually Jeff was well on the road to returning the Ducati to standard specification. A reconditioned alternator was fitted but that failed within six months, so Jeff took the original to WC Windings who refurbished it and it's worked perfectly ever since. A new battery and solid state regulator/rectifier were also fitted.

With the bike looking a million dollars, Jeff joined the Mid Lincs VMCC on its Boxing Day Run in 2008. A good run was enjoyed but Jeff pulled up too quickly at a junction and the front wheel slid on the loose surface and he went down, scratching the bodywork and the silencer on the right side.

At the Manx GP the following September, the Ducati wouldn't tick over, a look at the engine was due. The bottom end was sound but the desmodromic valve operation needed shimming and with the heads off Jeff made and fitted new valve guides and refurbished the heads. DTS in Ossett, Yorks, undertook the shim work as well as supplying new, original piggy-back Marzocchi rear shocks and airboxes.

While the bike was apart, Paint Supremacy gave the bodywork a new coat of paint, a new screen was fitted, the seat was re-covered by local upholsterer Bruce Moore, the handlebars were replated and new exhausts and Keihan silencers were purchased.

The Marzocchi forks had the wrong top yoke, so a correct replacement was sourced along with a fast action, twin pull twist-grip. Jeff made the bevel drive tubes in stainless steel and DTS also uprated the clutch with alloy plates.





The gearbox shares a fixing bolt with the airbox and it was discovered that gearbox oil was seeping around the threads and into the airbox, playing havoc with the carburation. This was sealed and the carbs rebuilt.

The original rev counter had stopped working, so Richard ordered a replacement from James Sherlock, Devon, but it was aesthetically worse than the one it replaced, so Richard set about trying to fix the original, safe in the knowledge that if he broke it, at least he had a working replacement. As it happened, a little bit of solder on part of the printed circuit was all that was required to have it back to full working order.



## 1984 BMW R80RT

**Engine:** Air-cooled, ohv four-stroke, horizontally opposed twin. Dimensions 84.8 x 70.6mm = 797.5cc. Power 50bhp at 6500rpm, Torque 57Nm at 5000rpm. CR 8.2:1. Bosch electronic ignition

**Carburation:** Two Bing constant depression carburettors

**Transmission:** Five gears with single dry plate clutch with lever action diaphragm spring. Shaft drive with crown wheel and pinion

**Chassis:** Tubular steel twin loop cradle with bolt on rear subframe. Monolever swinging arm with hydraulic monoshock. BMW telescopic front forks

**Brakes:** 260mm single front disc with Brembo twin pot caliper. 200mm s/s drum rear

**Wheels:** Spoked alloy rims with Avon Roadrider tyres 100-90 x 19 front, 120-90 x 18 rear

**Weight (wet):** 436lb

**Wheelbase:** 1446mm (57in)

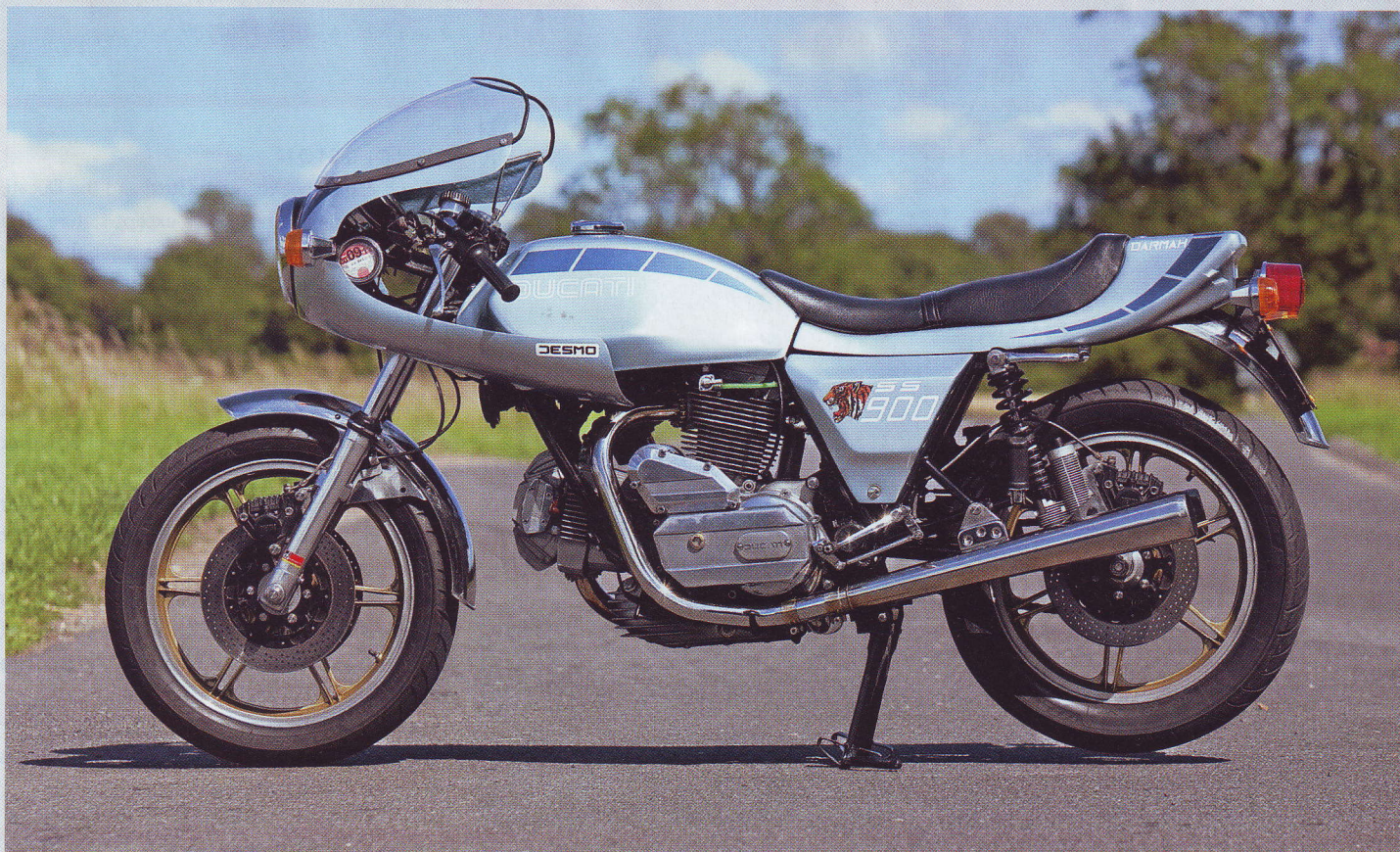


## THE RIDE

Having just climbed off the Guzzi, the Beemer felt high but the 'traditional' riding position was very relaxed. On a press of the button, the bike rocked sideways as the flat twin struck up and, like the Guzzi, a blip of the throttle resulted in the familiar torque reaction.

The clutch was featherlight but the archetypal clunk reminded me this was a BMW as bottom gear was engaged. Richard said: "It's a revvy engine and low geared, so it'll not go ever so fast." Like the GS on which it's based, the rear end took a gentle squat as I moved off, repeating its little dance on each upward change. Onto the open road and the Beemer surprised with both the ease in which it drove and its nimbleness, indeed it flip-flopped through the tight village corners so well, I turned round and did them again!

Revvy it was, and while it's a shorter stroke than the Guzzi, I reckon this is down to the gearing and at 80mph, the tachometer was reading 5500rpm. As expected, the single disc up front was more than enough to haul up the plot and the rear drum could squeal the rear tyre if required. A very comfortable and underrated machine.







## THE RIDE

Compared to the other two machines, the Ducati looked long and rangy, but once in the saddle it was anything but. The footrests were high but not overly so, likewise they were not as far back as expected, indeed I would have preferred them perhaps another two or three inches aft. The tank appeared long but I think it's the combined length of the seat unit, which gave the deceiving appearance, because again it wasn't. The bars were an easy reach, even for a shorty like me, but I did wonder how Jeff managed, for he's a bigger bloke than me!

Again a simple press of the button had the big L twin bursting into raucous, rumbling life. The Keihan megaphones giving it completely different, more aggressive sound than its two playmates. It's loud too but no more than any modern Termignoni fitted Duke, especially on a gentle throttle through the 30 zones. Once out on the road though, it dropped all pretence and let rip, punching through the air in seven league boots, like a dog freed from its lead, it just wanted to run.

In fact, performance-wise, it was very similar to the Guzzi, but sounded faster! At the comparison 80mph the Duke was spinning at 5000rpm, smack in between the others.

While not as light as the Beemer, if a sweeping line was chosen the Duke held it rock steady, the torque of the engine pulling through, down shifting only for the tighter, slower corners. Brakes were spot-on and the ride quality firm but comfortable, in true café racer cum race replica fashion. A perfect mount for letting off steam!



## DUCATI DARMAH 900SS

- Engine:** Air-cooled, four-stroke, 90° L-twin.  
Dimensions 86 x 74.4mm = 864cc.  
Bevel driven sohc with desmodromic valve operation.  
CR 9.5:1.  
Power 65bhp at 7000rpm
- Carburation:** Two 40mm Dell'Orto
- Transmission:** Five-speed with multiplate wet clutch with helical gear primary and chain final drive
- Chassis:** Tubular steel duplex part cradle with engine as stressed member.  
38mm Marzocchi forks and twin 330mm piggy back Marzocchi rear shock absorbers
- Wheels:** Spoked alloy rims with Avon Roadriders 100-90 x 18 front, 120-90 x 18 rear
- Brakes:** Twin 280mm Brembos front, single rear with twin pot calipers
- Wheelbase:** 1550mm
- Length overall:** 2260mm
- Weight (wet):** 533lb

## Thanks

C J Powder Coating, Grimsby – 01472 211222

Motomecca, Wimbourne – 01202 823453

Scriminger Engine Developments, Sleaford, 01529 300434.

Camcoat – 01925 445003

James Sherlock, Devon – 01769 574350

West Country Windings – 01752 560906

DTS in Ossett, Yorks – 01924 860210

Paint Supremacy – 07814941252

Bruce Moore – 01673 857289



## CONCLUSION

Difficult choice between the Guzzi and the Ducati, as they are similar in all ways except stature. The former is an intense, brooding character, the latter is a noisy show off but both behave the same behind closed doors! The Guzzi is lazy and laid-back, the Ducati loud and forceful they are very different characters but deliver essentially the same. Big lads will love the Ducati, us shorties would prefer the Guzzi, but both will arrive at exactly the same time.

The BMW is the odd one out, in that it does what it does in typically humourless Teutonic fashion. It goes about its business with quiet efficiency, it's nimble, nippy and comfortable, and while it lacks the style of the Italians, the ST is a prime example of a future classic. If you fancy a flat twin, you'd not be disappointed if you found one of these.

Me? I'd like the Guzzi for its size, the Ducati for its sound and the BMW for its agility... now where's that fence, I need to sit down.