The BMW Club

Vintage & Classic News

Issue 11/2003

Exclusive - Bruce Main-Smith writes in the



1961 --- Bruce Main-Smith of *Motor Cycling* (left) with Charlie Locke of MLG Ltd and 1939 Senior TT BMW

The above photograph, taken in 1961, shows Bruce Main-Smith of Motor Cycling Magazine (left) and Charlie Lock of MLG Ltd with the 1939 Senior TT BMW. Many members will remember Bruce when he was road tester for the weekly motorcycle magazines. He makes some observations on page 3.

Well, it's that time of the year when the Vintage and Classic Register takes a break from events and I wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Let's hope 2004 will be as rewarding as this last year. Talking of the time of the year, Wendy and I celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary recently and it's also forty years since we first owned a BMW, an R60. Our plan was to go to the Register Office on the bike but it snowed hard and we 'chickened' out. Those were the days when the bikes were used to and fro from work every day, and in all weathers (weddings being the exception that time). Apart from normal maintenance I can only recollect having to replace a dip switch, you know the horrible chrome one that shorts out eventually and falls to pieces, a set of dynamo brushes, and one broken ring.

Vintage & Classic Diary

24th/25th APRIL 2004 - Classic Motor Cycle Show -Stafford Show Ground (MACHINES WANTED FOR DISPLAY. W.H.Y?)

MAY 2004 - BMF Show, East of England Showground Peterborough (Date to be advised)

17th - 21st JUNE The 3rd Vintage & Classic Rally at Llwyngwair Manor Holiday Park, Newport, Nr. Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, South Wales.

JULY 2004 - V.M.C.C Founders Day Rally, Stanford Hall, Nr. Lutterworth, Leics. (Date to be advised)

19TH SEPTEMBER 'Stinkwell' Classic Show, Beaumanor Hall, Woodhouse, Leicestershire.

SEPTEMBER 2004 The Welsh Equivalent of the Boreen. Watch The Journal for details.

A One Day Gathering in Oxford, (Date to be advised.)

You will notice the new layout of the Newsletter, it is a matter of trial and error on my part to get the clarity correct with the A5 format. Please let me know your opinions.
In the last Newsletter the competition asked for the identification of the rider of a Triumph. Well, the photo turned out poorly but a few people had a stab at the answer. Every one thought it was Percy Tait, an obvious conclusion, but I'm afraid I was more devious. If I mention Formula 1 and the controversial character (and that's being kind to him as far as I'm concerned) who threatened the Silverstone circuit with loss of the British G.P. you'll probably guess it was Bernie Ecclestone. He's pictured riding at Brands Hatch in 1951.

I had a large number of Club magazines from the 60's and 70's passed over to me recently by Robert Freeman. Robert, who has owned an R50S from new, has many a memory of those days when riding a BMW marked us down as either very wealthy or very stupid, especially as two Triumph Bonnevilles could be bought for the same money as an R69S! I'm going to include a few 'memories' in future n/letters starting with Robert's. Incidentally, Robert has compiled a list of members and their machines from the old days and it makes interesting reading.

This idea of a data base of machines currently owned by Register members has been raised before but there is an issue to be considered before embarking on the task. One point that has been mentioned is that of security and that the address of individuals being on file. I can't see a problem myself as all information is covered by the data protection act and at the moment every member is listed on the National Club database anyway. The fact that a machines history and whereabouts could be tracked within the Club is a positive aspect and we would be able to determine the numbers of different models still in existence. Let me know what you think.

Now, I've had a generous offer from Register member Dave Higgins who would like to put something back into the Club, especially the Register. Dave has offered to do any type of repair work (providing there is a reasonable chance of success) and machining one off, or small batchwork. Dave's details are shown below but please do not abuse the offer. **Register members only and no part time or full time traders please.**

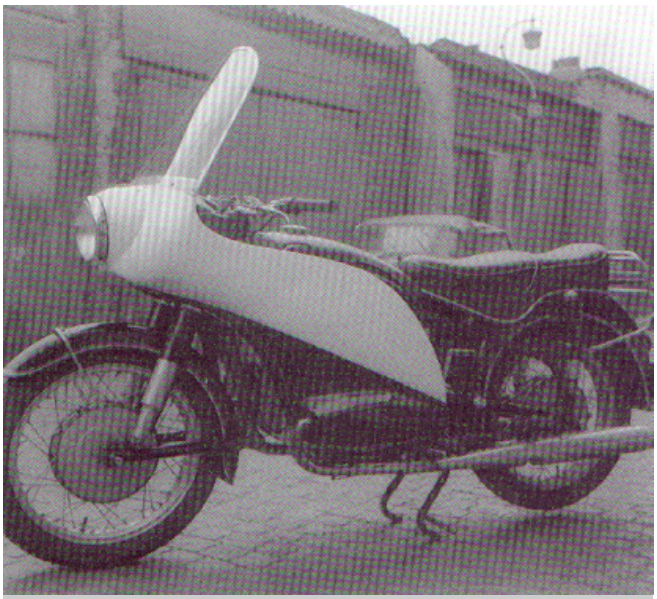
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The 'Peel' Fairing
See page 6

BRUCE MAIN-SMITH SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ON BMW's IN THE 60'S


Bruce Main-Smith of *Motor Cycling* on 1961 BMW R69S World's 24hour record breaker en route to a MIRA roadtest

Bruce Main-Smith writes....I have very little archives material left as so much was destroyed before and after 'Motor Cycling' publication ceased in 1967, an event that left me redundant.

Bee-Ems of the 50's and 60's laboured against high prices. Nowadays a high price is almost a cachet and helps sales! The 250 also had a problem in that the 250 'Learner Law' brought a rash of new British 250's and many of them tuned-up ones at that. Japan was also emerging and offering quality, manners, no oil leaks, silence, smoothness (all BMW features) and of course electric starters.

The 250 had an uphill sales fight, aggravated by the British dislike of side acting kick-starters and a suspicion (unwarranted) of the supposed cause of Les Graham's Bray Hill T.T. death, rumoured to be due to Earles Fork failure; a mighty slur on Ernie Earles fine product which was and is quite okay. Les was killed on Friday's Senior Race because, though he passed the medical on Thursday, his hand was too badly injured to keep control of his Italian 'fire engine' down Bray. Suspected failure of the Earles fork pivot on the MV was totally untrue. But the stigma stuck.

Geoff Duke, a privateer on an Earles-fork BMW in the Dutch T.T., told me in the paddock it handled perfectly well. His difficulty in the Dutch was a front brake spragging full on when gently applied.

So the 250 sold about 6 per year in the U.K. When Jock West became BMW sales director at Lancing (and who more polarised towards BMW motorcycles than Jock!) I was taken out to lunch and managed to sweet talk him into a 250 for test. But BMW did not need the publicity for more sales: it was impossible to sell more in the above climate.

To an extent the same thing applied to the R50, R60 and the R69S and press bikes were VERY hard to come by. An R69S with Earles forks is a very fine machine. Odd braking though as the steering head rises instead of, as on tele forks, dipping.

The Isetta bubble car had much the same problem as the bikes, it was the same era. The second-hand price of the emergent BMC Mini of course killed bubble cars as it did the sidecar. The Lambretta-made Trojan, a 200cc version of the 175cc Heinkel, built in Ireland, was excellent. I had a 191cc Sachs Messerschmitt myself, it was great fun. Back to the Isetta and where did it fit in? Too dear! It could be driven on a motorcycle licence and unlike the Reliant did not need the Variation of Weight Act to provide a legislative loophole for the 8cwt and reverse-gear problem.

The Isetta handled. They do not turn turtle. It braked. It went very well indeed and was economical. The side hinged front door was a beaut and the example I show even features a rolled-back sunshine roof. I have frequently wondered if it might not be a city-car vehicle for modern congested times?

When I was given a freehand by the proprietors of 'Motor Cycling' to take whatever I liked it was already almost too late.


Bruce Main-Smith of *Motor Cycling* with wife Margaret and 1962 aircooled 295cc singlecylinder BMW Isetta Plus on roadtest

IN THE WORKSHOP - No 1

with 'The Amateur Mechanic'

First came the 1975 R75/6 stuck in third gear. Easy to diagnose the problem I hear you say and of course you are right. Simply a broken gear selector spring which, unlike the four speed /5 or Earles box locks the gearbox in the gear in use when the spring went. No easy get you home fix on this one but fortunately in this case it failed on the way into the garage. Unfortunately, of course, the gearbox has to be stripped to replace the broken spring, however, unlike the four-speed version, it is not necessary to strip everything out to do this. Someone at BMW put some thought into this one and made the selection mechanism a separate entity; removable by releasing the two Allen headed bolts on the front of the unit. First, of course, you have to remove the gearbox but this is a really simple job on post 69 models and is achieved by removing the two swinging arm securing pins, pulling the arm itself clear of the holes in the frame and then replacing the pins in front of the arm to prevent it from returning to its correct position. There's no need to even remove the rear wheel or suspension units. By doing this you will now have sufficient clearance to remove the box. I know it can be a bit of a fiddle to get it out but with patience it can be done!

Once out it is the removal of the output flange that will cause the first problem. That assumes you have managed to undo the output flange nut, which, if it's never been off before, may cause some problems. Here the factory tool is a tremendous help in removing the flange. In the past I have managed to remove them by improvised means (but not without a struggle), these days I have the "proper" tools and the job is relatively easy. Removal of the gearbox back is also easy provided you heat up the case sufficiently to release the bearings from the rear cover. Once inside the selector mechanism can be removed, the spring replaced and the whole thing reassembled. In theory the shimming of the shafts shouldn't have altered but experience tells me that the factory usually shimmed these gearboxes on the loose side and, as I have the necessary plate to check their work, I always do. Anyway this all went together easily in a couple of hours, (as the box had done some 40000 miles we also changed the bearings on this one) and a satisfied owner (I think!) went home to refit the rebuilt box.

I had an R80 ST here recently. I know it might be a bit to modern for a classic at the moment but the saga of this one may serve as a cautionary tale. The owner had been undertaking a bit of a tidying up exercise on its paintwork and trying to clean all the aluminium at the same time. At the end of this exercise he rang to say it had passed an MOT but seemed to be running a bit rough and could I tune the carbs for him? When he came over he was complaining that one carburettor had a problem and wouldn't close down properly. Now normally I would have suspected a sticking cable or a split diaphragm but on this one there was slack in the cable and the return spring seemed incapable of closing the throttle butterfly. Having removed the carburettor to investigate further it the cause of the problem became obvious as the tissue paper inserted to stop dirt entering the intake had worked its way through and was sitting under the butterfly holding it open! Apparently the amount of paper recovered was way down on the amount originally inserted so we must assume the engine had burnt the rest and sent it out of the exhaust pipe! The owner claimed a "senior moment" but we did check the other side just in case! Fortunately no damage was done.

The next problem involved one of my own machines and could, so easily, have caused a major engine failure. I recently built a 1953 R51/3 engine for a future project and decided that I would run it in, using one of my other 51/3's as the test bed. All went well for the first 500 miles or so when it seemed to be running OK except for an annoying rattle from the offside cylinder that I put down to a tappet adjustment. Anyway it would be due for its first oil change at 500 miles and so would wait until then. The oil was duly drained and when the engine had cooled down the nearside tappets were checked and found to be spot on. On the offside exhaust valve the feeler gauge went under the rocker but then jammed before exiting the other side. At first it wasn't obvious what was happening but on closer

inspection the reason became apparent. The valve collets had moved up the valve stem and were now sitting above the top of the valve! Why? Well over the years I thought I had seen most of the collet configurations that BMW has used over the past 60 years but the ones on this engine were new to me.

The collets are designed either to grip the valve tightly or allow it to rotate within the collet. The ones that grip the valve and prevent it rotating are those without any grooves and are found in BMW's as either a long or short type depending on the length of the recess in the valve stem. The long ones measure 8mm and the short ones 6.5mm. Now we are mainly running unleaded fuels it is probably preferable to use non-rotating valves if possible, as this should help reduce valve seat wear. Rotating valves use a grooved collet with corresponding grooved valve stem and can be found in one, two or three groove types. These were used in later engines but of course over the years many valves have been changed and early engines may have been updated to rotating types.

Normally the grooves are equally spaced within the collets but although the valves fitted to my engine were of the short groove (non rotating) type close inspection revealed a slight ridge on the bottom of each collet that prevented correct seating in the valve recess. The valves spring retainer and collets were correctly in place when installed but subsequently moved in use. I doubt that they would have come out completely because the ridge had located itself up against the recess in the valve stem; it was, however, a bit too close for comfort!

Still on the subject of cylinder heads I had some R5 ones in recently requiring 4 new valve guides. I always used to change my own valve guides at one time and made tooling to do this under a hydraulic press. It was never the easiest job to undertake as the slightest inaccuracy in guide alignment nearly always meant re-cutting the valve seats. These days I don't believe it's worth the effort. The modern method of renewal is to re-sleeve the existing guide and, providing the old one is a tight fit in the cylinder head, this technique seems to me to offer so many advantages in all respects.

Next to receive treatment was the gearbox from a 1950 R51/2, almost identical in every respect to the pre-war R51 unit. This was a nice simple job of a strip and rebuild, taking the opportunity to remove the old felt seals and replace them with some modern neoprene ones which tend to be more oil tight. This is a task that I've undertaken a few times on earlier gearboxes and I always try to fit seals that are a common size and therefore readily available, rather than a one off made to fit in the place of an existing felt. This can, of course, result in a bit more work as the housings may need machining to take the ideal seal but in the long run I believe it is worth it. Remember we are only temporary custodians of these machines and that someone will be trying to maintain them long after we've all gone!

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STINKWHEEL SHOW - CLASS WINNER ANDREW DAVIS WITH HIS 1931 R2

‘LOOKING BACK’

WITH ROBERT-THE JOLLY JESTER-FREEMAN

I noted your request in a Journal for details on Peel Fairings. I had one fitted from new on my R5OS, (409 JPX: Eng/Frame: 565613) by Ron Perkins who was in the Shepherds Bush area of London in 1963.
You may recall I offered my bike for sale last year and had a number of enquiries and visits from prospective buyers. But in the mean time I had ridden it again and 'fallen in love with it again' and my circumstances had changed, so I withdrew it from sale. BMW Mobile Tradition told me the R50S was built on the 23rd Nov 1962 and I bought it from AFN Ltd, Isleworth on the 26th March 1963. So it had a 40th birthday this year.
I kept the fairing on all the time the bike was on the road, even when I had a sidecar fitted. In those days, 1963 – 73, I was an active member of the London Section and my wife and I often went on Club runs all over England. A couple of times we went to the Isle of Man as well. With the sidecar we won the National Rally 3 years running; in those days it was 600 miles. We finished in Stoke on Trent and then Cheltenham. The fairing is now behind my shed. I now enjoy the machine as it is and only go out on fine days. My fairing was in black with a Peel Logo and the number 612 on it. I cannot imagine this was the 612th to be made, maybe the 12th, or 2nd!! In all the time I was active in the club I cannot recall seeing another! It worked well keeping off the elements, and had two storage pockets incorporated, sufficient to hold a thermos flask and lunch etc. It did throw up the noise but that helped to monitor the engine. Plug removal was no problem, but the timing cover was.

The Pros and Cons of fitting the Peel Fairing: The fairing is in two parts, a central rectangle that bolts to the frame down tubes and the actual moulding that bolts onto the rectangle. This central part had a large hole incorporated but it made it difficult to remove the timing chest cover. I also felt it restricted air flow so after a while did away with it and made brackets to bolt the moulded unit directly to home made brackets fixed to the down tubes of the frame. This unit fitted around the cylinder heads and was fixed by a link to the central unit below. But it did wobble up and down. I cured this by a bracket to the exhaust pipes either side. I also made brackets that ran from the engine mounting in front of the air filter to the fairing either side, just aft of the storage units. This made it secure. In all only 8 bolts needed to be undone to remove the unit, couple of minutes job. The head lamp was a problem, the fixing as supplied was useless, so 1 bought a Lucas adapter unit that gave 3 way

adjustment. The wiring was extended to suit but of course the head light beam now turns with the bike and not the handlebar. The fairing also offered protection to the cylinder heads if the bike was 'dropped'. It added about 4” to the overall width but the weight didn't seem to make any effect upon handling. I used to run with the rear suspension unit raised as if riding with a pillion as I preferred a firm feel to the rear end. Tyres fitted were Avon ribbed front and an Avon G.P. on the back. These tyres transformed the road holding. These tyres are no longer available but there again, I don't ride so enthusiastically as in the past. The original Metzelers were lethal in the wet.
I have in the loft photos, possibly ’65, from the BMW Club Assembly in Peel at the TT. This was a regular Club event. The meeting was held at The Witches Mill, a restaurant come museum, and run by a weird, (considered so at that time) couple that purported to be witches and warlocks. My hobby then was conjuring and it has been my profession since 1970. In the evening I presented a few magic tricks as a cabaret for the members. I shan’t forget that evening. The lady

witch, who was dressed in a skin tight body suit that enhanced every crease, introduced me. ‘Now we have a magician for you. Unfortunately… he is not one of us'

How many other R5OS machines are registered in our Club? I knew off one owned in the 60's by a London member called Les Mason, and another by the late Frank Cox of Markhouse Motorcycles. He gave me some copper head gaskets.

As to Ron Perkins, I understood he came from AFN when they gave up the concessionaire for BMW machines. He went out on his own but they put work his way, hence he fitted the Peel Fairing. He of course offered an alternative to MLG. Often London Section members would say 'I had a big spend up at Ron's last week'. The cost of spares was a bone of contention and it was felt that MLG, who more or less had the monopoly, made up the prices from day to day, far in excess of the same item in Germany, albeit allowing for the import duties etc. I know that some time after BMW in Brighton had been set up, the London Section called a meeting. The meeting was to discuss spares prices with a couple of men from the company and also BMW's policy in Britain. The room was packed out, not surprisingly. A definitive spares price list was promised for the Club. It didn't happen.

Frank Cox, who I mentioned earlier, had a shop in Walthamstow, which was a good source for spares, particularly older and pre war bikes. When I had the R5 (HMK 477) he helped a lot, but it took years, literally. He raced an R50S in the Thruxton 500 miler and always finished, but I don't know who was his co rider. The machine was more or less standard and sat in his shop. He had a bad smash at, I think, the Snetterton Circuit. He was very right wing; National Front as it was then, and advertised them with a poster in his shop. I would sit in the back of the shop for a cup of tea and cake looking at a 3D picture of Adolph Hitler on the wall, and a post card photo of Eva Braun sitting on a motorcycle. A tale was told me that a member had phoned him for a part that he needed. When he turned up to collect it, Frank Cox said he didn't have it due to the chap’s ethnic background!!

Back to MLG. My brother had an R26 with ace handlebars, and fairing. We were at Goldhawk Mews one day and Charlie Lock gave my brother a timing chain tensioner like the ones fitted to the R27! One day the frame broke on the R26. It was the left bottom tube, between the gearbox and swinging arm upright, just where the centre stand would touch and take the weight. So he had it welded up, and sold it quick.

I ran an R25/2 for some time, did many things to the engine, as set out in 'Tuning For Speed'. R50S Piston. I had to open out the small end on the connecting rod, fit bigger valves, a 1/18” Amal, lightened flywheel, a reground cam, lightened rocker arms and so on. Rev Counter off the Cam. The gearbox had to stay as it was. Fitted alloy guards and a Norton front wheel/brake as it would not stop. The engine would go to 6500 revs and it was rather nippy and quite lightweight. I sold it to a local M/C dealer for his collection and he still has it. If I can find the photos I will write up about restoring the R5, it was in a tea chest; not one item joined to another. Cost £11.50

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BMW R68 - THE ULTIMATE POST - WAR TWIN

A Road Report by 'The Amateur Mechanic'

To many a BMW enthusiast the R68 is seen as a pinnacle of Post-war design. This probably stems from the rarity value in that only 1452 examples were manufactured during its three years production run. The many period photographs featuring the high level ISDT exhaust system seem to further reinforce this view as these make the machine even more unusual. So, lets first dispel an R68 myth. Very few, in fact only a mere handful, left the factory with the high-level exhaust fitted. By far the vast majority of machines were supplied with standard R51/3 (R67) silencers fitted to low level exhaust pipes. It is really easy for an owner to verify the type of system originally supplied from the extensive factory build records.

At the start of production, in 1952, the rolling chassis was standard R51/3 (R67) with relatively few parts changed. Some major changes were as follows;

i. Front forks with two way damping.
ii. "Sports" type front mudguard (unvalanced).
iii. Handlebars were lower "sports" type.
iv. Single front seat linked to the rear seat squab.
v. Chrome grab handle located behind the rear seat.
vi. Rear suspension plunger top covers of polished aluminium rather than painted steel.
vii Many more chromium-plated parts including the wheel rims. (still WM3 x 19) and front mudguard stays.

It was, of course, the engine that really differed from the "cooking" models. Major internal modifications resulted in an increased output from the 26BHP of the (then) current R67/2 to the claimed 35BHP at 7000rpm of the R68. This increase in power was sufficient to propel the machine at a genuine 100mph and every machine that left the factory was said to be capable of achieving this speed. So, what were the main engine changes?

Starting with an identical crankcase casting as the other models in the range BMW engineers fitted a modified crankshaft. The edges of all the webs were chamfered (presumably to cut through the air in the crankcase more efficiently) and the 130mm long "H" section con-rods were highly polished. The rear main bearing was changed to a self-aligning barrel bearing thus enabling some movement of the crankshaft at higher rpm. Compression ratio was a heady 7.5: 1, about as high as readily available fuel would allow. The pistons had stronger 20mm gudgeon pins (18mm on the other engines in the range). By fitting bigger headed valves with 8mm stems, larger 26mm carburetors and a fiercer camshaft the extra 9bhp was obtained. BMW didn't forget drivability either, and used a Norris magneto with an additional retard facility to enable the rider to "plonk" the machine in a high gear if required. The standard automatic advance unit was still fitted, the manual control simply allowing the rider to give the machine up to 10 degrees retard on the automatic advance position.

The standard gearbox fitted to the other models in the range was used with no modification to the internal ratios. Rear drive was also standard R 51/3 at 3.89: 1 (9:35).

So, how does this bike perform on the road? Well, the first thing you always notice with any plunger-framed machine is how very small, light and compact it feels. All the hand and foot controls seem in exactly the right places.
Starting is simplicity itself, turn the fuel on, tickle the carbs and press down on the kick-starter.

The combination of a relatively low compression ratio and a long kick-start arm make hand starting almost as easy as foot operation. It also impresses the British classic / vintage bike fraternity! How many other genuine 100mph machines would you try a hand-start on? Once running there is little mechanical noise at tick over as the engine settles to a steady beat. That's not to say it is as quiet as an R51/3 for example. Piston clearance on this sports engine is much greater and coupled with the higher lift cam some rustle is evident when cold. As the engine warms up and the pistons expand the mechanical noise is much the same as for any pre 69 model.

There is a lean forward to the flattish handlebars but not sufficient to put any excess weight on your wrists. The multi-spring single plate clutch is very light and takes up the drive smoothly. Unlike the later Earles models the twist grip is not progressive and lacks the really smooth action of the chain pull type. The 200mm diameter twin leading shoe front brake seems awesomely efficient at first. Of course it's stopping a (relatively) light machine and one that dives considerably under hard braking on the fairly soft front springs. It's still quite powerful and two fingers braking becomes the norm. The rear brake is also a powerful unit, the same diameter as the front, and quite capable of locking the rear wheel when applied with moderate force.

The gearbox, which is similar internally to the one used from the 1936 R5 on, changes noiselessly into first. Initial acceleration is fairly brisk on the first handful of throttle, the machine being capable of about 30 mph in bottom. The change up to second can be made silently provided the engine speed clutch is allowed sufficient time to slow down! Going through the intermediate gears gives 56mph in second and 76mph in third, but this is not really the sort of treatment to inflict on a machine that is over 50 years old. Although the positive stop foot change mechanism is an effective unit, BMW still continued to fit an auxiliary hand change lever on the right hand side of all their plunger models. This is really quite unnecessary on the R68. The lever is not designed as a neutral finder in the way that, for example, Royal Enfield provided one on their machines, but is merely an alternative way of changing gear.

On the open road the R68 is happy to cruise along at, or just above, the legal limit. In fact the quicker you go the smoother the engine seems to run. This is a unit that simply thrives on revs. Fuel consumption stays around the 50 to 55mpg mark seemingly regardless of how it's being ridden.On a good road surface the handling is excellent and the bike can really be thrown about at will. The lightweight, good brakes and fairly short wheelbase make it capable of "scratching" as well as any of its contemporaries. A single, centrally sprung rubber saddle goes a long way towards overcoming the limitations of the short travel, undamped rear suspension On well surfaced, twisty country lanes it can keep up with more modern and potentially faster machines. When the road surface deteriorates all that changes! The bike becomes a real handful. It bounces from bump to bump with no damping on the plunger rear, seems reluctant to hold a line and generally gives you a rough ride. Slowing down to a more leisurely pace is the only solution until the surface smoothes out again. Maybe roads were better in the 50's or perhaps tyre technology didn't allow for such enthusiastic riding!

When parking the R68 the rider was only provided with a hernia inducing centre stand. Accessory companies obviously saw an opportunity here and produced suitable after market side stands. Although fitted with a grab handle behind

the rear seat, this is of little use for manhandling the machine onto the stand but comes in useful when carrying a pillion. The few riders who campaigned these bikes in the ISDT also probably found a use for this handle when the going got tough!

The 90watt 6v dynamo provides sufficient power to enable the original 25/25watt headlamp bulb to be upgraded to 35/35. With this bulb fitted (and a nearly new reflector) the headlamp provides enough light to travel along safely at 55 to 60 mph on unlit roads. Unfortunately the rear lamp is totally inadequate for use at night in modern traffic conditions. Originally the machine was not fitted with a stoplight, the first stoplights appearing during the '54 model year. The replica rear lamps now supplied use two festoon bulbs, 5watt for the rear lamp (and number plate illumination) and a 10watt for the stoplight. The stop lamp glass is orange (illegal?) whilst the rear light shines through a section of the reflector that gives an illuminated area about 12mm diameter. All very unsatisfactory, but it is, as far as I know, the only correct original design lamp currently available. Two warning lamps are provided in the headlamp, the green neutral indicator located behind the speedometer and a red generator charge lamp at the front on the nearside. There is a fuse in the electrical system to protect the main feed, rated at 8amps and screwed into the front of the headlamp on the offside. The only other electrical fitment of note is the horn. Although only a 6v item it does emit a sound that is far greater in volume than many of BMW's later offerings.

So, other than the rear lamp problem, does the R68 really live up to its reputation? I believe the answer has to be a resounding "yes". Allowing for the age of the machine, the developments in performance and handling in the 50 years since this model first appeared, it is still a pleasure to ride in a spirited way……just like the manufacturer intended. Try one if you ever get the opportunity. You probably won't be disappointed.

FEEDBACK

E. Chafer of Sheffield writes…

In reply to Robin Rennisons call for guidance regarding the spraying of a pearlescent finish I sprayed a friends pannier a few weeks ago. As he needed the job doing fairly quickly and the only other source of paint was from BMW 1 got in touch with RS Motor Bike Paints Barnsley. I had to make an appointment and when 1 got there they were very professional and went through the procedure. Three coats of base coat, three to four coats of pearlescent and then three coats of lacquer. I bought base coat and pearlescent only, in aerosols, as I bad some lacquer from a previous job.

On returning home I was wondering it I had shot myself in the foot like Robin, as I have not used these paints before. Over the years I have sprayed industrial units in emulsion, furniture in melamine and various other things. In 1970 I was head colour mixer in one of Mike Hailwood's spray shops in Johannesburg. One of the last cars I sprayed was a Rambler Rebel, even so 1ike Robin, I was apprehensive with a three system finish. My fears over painting the pannier were unfounded, the paint went on beautifully the aerosols were brilliant but the only grievance was the price.

With, regard to a spray booth, I didn't use one as I don't have the facilities.

I was so pleased with the system I phoned RS Paints and told them so.