

# Motorcycle Sport

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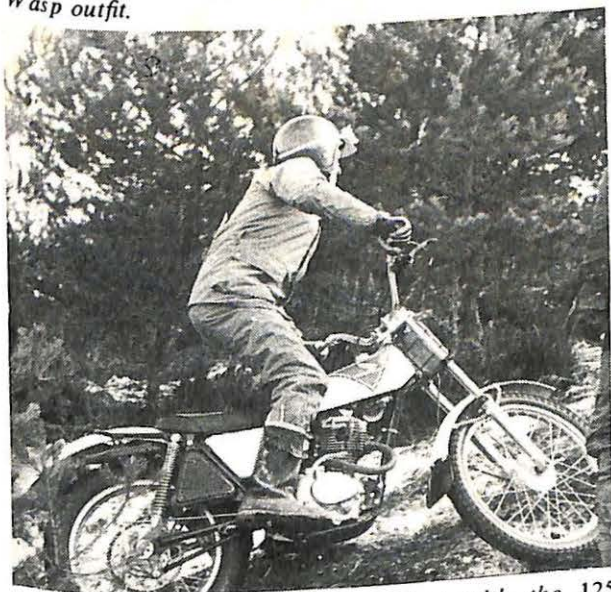
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FRONT COVER PICTURE shows leading sidecar moto-cross contender Nick Thompson with his Norton Wasp outfit.



Sammy Miller has done great things with the 125 Honda as a trials machine, though the model has proved basically less amenable to development than the Spanish two-strokes. "Four-stroke" events are gaining in popularity these days . . . see our centre pages

## Access and mobility

FOR MANY YEARS arguments about motorcycles have, at the official level, been concentrated on accidents. This has led to near-violent arguments with official mileage figures, and to a great deal of heartburn over youth driver training schemes. It is understandable that this should have happened: accidents are visible, easily recorded . . . and have high human impact. As a result, the authorities set up accident records, publish them, and are in turn pressed by the public to reduce the numbers and the severity of accidents. Money is spent on accident-reduction measures, and if these measures are successful in terms of number and severity of accidents, this is seen to be full justification for the efforts expended.

Although lip service has occasionally been paid to the economic costs of accidents, only rarely does this factor make a critical difference to the decisions made. It is also worth remarking that the full economic appraisal of death and injury on the roads leads quickly to the conclusion that the net social "worth" of the old and the very young is negative—so an artificial "severance" value is added to reflect the reality that people *do* actually care about the lives of these people.

It is hardly surprising, in this miasma of economic fuzziness, that the actual worth of the mobility offered to ordinary people by the motorcycle is completely ignored. The best that the massive TRRL machine has been able to do in this direction (after nearly 10 years of minimal activity punctuated by the odd impractical full-flow Maxaret experiment on anti-lock brakes) has been to devote some effort to the engineering side of motorcycles in the last four years, with sporadic and inadequate forays into statistical summaries. The best recent forecasts that the TRRL could come up with for total motorcycle mileage was virtually a straight horizontal line—and this at a time when the sales had risen by 40 per cent per year or so for quite some years, and the rate was accelerating to the present even higher rate in some categories.

It is notable that in all the furore over fuel savings, not one official datum included the moped or the motorcycle—the 200 m.p.g. potential, with £100 first cost was totally ignored in the debate on trains v. buses v. cars v. car pooling. This was due not only to sheer ignorance, but to three other factors which could be easily corrected:

1. Failure to place a value on mobility to the less well off, to set against accident costs.
2. The "accident valuation" system which seems to be the sole official view of motorcycling.
3. Lack of any one area of the DoE actually to have a policy for motorcycles which would cover accident risks, mobility, parking provision, fuel preference, training and the whole slice of life serviced so well by powered two-wheelers.

Ironically, most of these factors have been recognized for that limited, constrained, and specialized mode of transport—the bicycle; and the TRRL Division specifically named "Access and Mobility" has paid due attention to the bicycle.

Can not the rest of us at least be paid similar attention, on exactly the same grounds?

Should not the DoE at least set itself the trivial task of forming a policy and getting the necessary supporting work done to justify, sustain, and further the movement, energy, access, and safety factors for which they have national responsibility?

## A long time dying

THE BRITISH motorcycle industry is a long time dying. A few weeks back a restyled Norton Commando with Italian-made mag. wheels, forks and discs, and a (British) carburation system claimed to give 30 per cent better fuel consumption was shipped from the "British Norton Partnership" at NVT's old Wolverhampton factory to Daytona, USA, to help gauge American interest, if any, in British motorbikes. The BNP, hoping to buy the Wolverhampton factory with cash supplied by Mr. Ronald Titcombe and friends, is naturally anxious to get orders . . . the more so following the confusion, and eventual disappointment, over a hoped-for £7m order from the Berliner Corporation of America. And over in Meriden we hear of the "Moto Meriden" line of 125 c.c. Moto Guzzi models to be supplied from Italy in CKD-form. The Bonneville, however face-lifted, must have a short life now. An Italian connection could mean life to the Co-operative.