

When the Clockwork Orange burst into Flying Scotsman impressions it had to be renamed . . .

## STEAMING MANGO

*Further folklore from the FF fringe*

I FIRST met the Mango in the flesh (rather, the fibreglass) at one of the reunions of my old university motorcycle club. Typically, I'd come in a car and was now on a pillion. At college we all swore that once we were pulling down a decent salary, and after we'd put off our bar bills, we would buy the largest, most irresponsible machines we could find, in order to come back and impress the kids. What a joke. As usual, most of the hot bikes there were being supported on grants, and the rusty commuter models, all sad and shook up at being taken out of town, belonged to people with secretaries and company cars.

But this year one of us broke the mould. After years of MZedding he'd acquired a Gold Wing Phasar. We followed the orange thing down the road between Cambridge and Newmarket, riding through a cloud of white smoke on the way to an all-night caff.

I know that Wing engines often produce that smoke - it's the same stuff that comes out of Daimlers and Rolls Royces at the traffic lights. It means burning money. In this case there was a lot more of it, and every now and then the pilot would pull into a layby, lift off the centre section of the fibreglass, and tinker with the works underneath.

A few months later I was standing in the



*Letting off steam. A cautious Andy Tribble unscrews the Mango's radiator cap. Below: Mango in flight in a suburban setting.*

*Note that the backrest extends forward from the "boot" when the bike is used solo.*

*Small picture presents conclusive proof, in the opinion of fervent FF propagandist P.N.B. — who's in the back seat — that the Mango stretches to "ample" room for two . . .*



## STEAMING MANGO

kitchen at a party, and the owner 'Andy Rabagliatti' was letting on that he had to sell it because he was off to the states to pick up a large salary. I'd been softened up earlier that evening by a large meal, pints of port, and an after-dinner speech by P.N.B. on the theme of FFs And The Way Forward.

I'd come in a car again. My pride couldn't take any more. Life lacked meaning. So I bought the thing.

At this point you're probably thinking I must be a looney to buy a bike that I'd only seen once, and then smoking. But be honest. Only a handful of people ever buy a motorcycle in a rational state of mind. Only the sort who write to *MCS* with details of their tyre wear over the last 50,000 miles. It depends what you want out of your motor-cycling.

In the short term, I go for "grin factor". When riding an FF you grin a lot. In the long term, I want to have adventures and meet strange people. For this too, I recommend an FF.

The next stage was to visit Andy Rabagliatti. By profession he designs microchips. He showed me the radical wiring loom he'd built, set up on the bench at home.

It sported a central processing unit no bigger than a small topbox, connected by tiny wires to smaller control units placed around the machine. Electronic pulses sent down the little wires instructed the local control boxes to hand out 12v power to the components in their area, from one main supply cable. The state of play was monitored several times a second. If one little plug fell out the whole system packed in.

I thanked him politely and said I was sorry it wasn't fitted.

For the next stage, we went to Malcolm Newell's, where the frame was being reassembled around a recently rebuilt engine, with a new tank. Visiting Malcolm increases the sense of unreality - it's like being in one of those science fiction TV series set in the near future after a nuclear disaster. You're heading towards a cottage in the middle of a field - from all around all you can see is the chimney and a wisp of smoke. As you get closer you suddenly come across the remains of bright coloured futuristic vehicles half hidden in sheds. The mist swirls around a bit more. You're in the presence of The Prophet. He pulls off tarpaulins, shows you strange drawings. We discuss mystic questions like why so many Formula 1 teams are British while British Industry collapses. Money changes hands. We leave in the dark.

Weeks went by. For complicated bartering reasons involving time and fibreglass, the finishing-off job was passed over to John Bruce, the FF-building aerospace engineer. So the final handing over took place in Bristol. It turned into the FF party mentioned in *MCS* October '85 (the picture crops up in the November issue!).

The power of P.N.B.'s salesmanship was such that, of those present at the Cambridge University bike club dinner in March, three were by August sitting on FFs outside John Bruce's garage. I was one; another was Tudor Thomas who had bought the CX500

*When riding an FF you grin a lot (I go for the "grin factor".) And if you want to meet strange people, and have adventures, I recommend an FF...*

White Elefant from Jack Difazio, he and the third was Bob Melsom. He now owned the mighty Cibié Z1300M the ultimate motorway bike: single laid-backseat, full fairing and tail, six-gallon tank, top speed more than double the limit...it's for sale now, too. We decided that my machine needed a name: as it's rather big, very, very orange, and we had some hope about reliability, we decided on The Clockwork Orange.

The plan was to ride the Orange back to London. Someone had filled the tank with petrol, which led to the first embarrassment: it leaked. The tank is shaped roughly like a coffin on its end, and sits in front of the engine (incidentally making it impossible to get at the oil filter). Fortunately the leak was in a seam high up, so after a pint or two had been lost it stopped coming out.

It leaked water too, so we stuck a plastic bottle in the boot. You have to understand that this is not like buying a new bike. The battery wasn't too good so we started it with jump leads. Tickover was possible with a little adjustment, but the primary chain made unpleasant noises. A Honda specialist has since told me that the noise doesn't mean it's worn, it means the carbs are out of balance.

John Bruce went through the long list of modifications he'd made; rewiring, shake-proof washers where parts had been known to fall off, welded-on frame reinforcements, relocating engine mounts, fabricating carb breather systems and the new inlet tract - not to mention freeing up an engine that had been rebuilt, then left out in the rain.

He'd had to make a new inlet manifold: the Phasar seats its driver on top of the Gold Wing crankcase, where the carbs normally go. His breathing set-up is about Mk. IV - as far as I'm aware, no earlier version has worked properly. Stubby inlets above the pots are bridged by a T-shaped tube, with the tail bent round. The carb is in the BMW position, the inlet tract stays nice and warm and each pot gets about the same dose of gas. The only problem is that the mixture goes through *three* right-angled bends.

Mk V will probably be fuel injection. The only thing silly about that is the price.

The bike showed off its various party tricks. For instance, the engine kill switch works a windscreen wiper that wobbles across the glass screen in front of your helmet. Press the headlamp flasher and a squirt of water hits the screen.

But my favourite trick is the electronic instrument panel. A lot of specials have trouble finding a speedo drive. John's brilliant solution is to glue a small magnet to the rear wheel. A sensor on the swinging arm

clocks it going past, and sends a signal down a single wire to the instrument up front. Makes gearing and cables seem clumsy. The rev-counter is even cleverer; it just plugs into the main wiring loom and counts the pulses as the points open and shut. Apart from the mileometer, there are no moving parts; you get two little rows of fairy lights instead. It may be the only device of its kind in the country. That's why it's mounted in a battered tin box. It's also quite fun watching the rev-counter jump when you press the horn; after dark, it looks very pretty but you can't see the numbers next to the speedo lights. I'll have to sort that one out.

P.N.B. was there, of course, on this historic FF occasion, and I'd agreed under the influence of his peculiar charm to let him out on a test ride. So the next hour was spent sitting in the bay window of the house, looking both ways down the street, while the rest of the crew told me about his various crashes, in detail.

Finally he emerged through the drizzle, sitting at a funny angle in the saddle. We clattered downstairs to find out why. Apparently, the throttle cable had broken. Then the thing had stalled. He'd had to bumpstart it while pulling on the loose end of the wire, then ride back onehanded. Which at least proves that it doesn't wobble, and that the age of heroes is not yet over.

Down in the garage we found some spare bits of cable and warmed up the soldering iron. We'd agree that P.N.B. and I should take it in turns to ride down the motorway back to London, followed by my saintly girlfriend in the car with jump leads, petrol, water - all the usual stuff that every motorcyclist should have behind him.

Before P.N.B.'s test ride, the thing had gone about eight miles since a total engine rebuild. As we worked, he mentioned that he'd got it up to around 75 before a misfire set in. For some reason, the cable-fixing tools fell from our lifeless fingers.

And that's why we went back to London in a car, nervously watching as my new FF slid from side to side (it only fell over twice) in the back of Malcolm Newell's pickup truck.

From there, it stood in the street until I made a new throttle cable and mountings, out of bicycle parts and brass sheet. The chokes that used to be worked by wire loops are now connected to bicycle gear levers, and the throttle return springs wrap round nylon pulleys designed for the washing line.

After I'd bought a new GW battery (50 quid to you, guv) and a new starter relay (20 quid) I discovered that the starting problem was down to gummed-up brushes on the starter motor (3 quid); but the frame fouled the starter motor so I had to move the engine to get it out (one weekend).

Carburation wasn't perfect; it was easiest to reach tickover by waiting for a stall, then punching the starter button. A definite lull in low-speed response meant that once or twice I fell inwards on a corner and had to stick a boot out quick.

The ride needed sorting out, too. A complicated bit of fouling around the front hub meant that at full bump the steering

locked up. The solution was to weld two skids to the front of the frame that caught the front swinging arm, with a clang, before the steering fouled. It's also a safety measure; the front is held up by air shocks, and everybody knows someone who's had them collapse. At least with the skids you're still steering. But front-end travel was about two inches. I've had the fouling bits machined down, now.

Still, once going it steamed along. Literally. The Orange carries its radiator above the front wheel, under the "dashboard". This means that once the engine warms up, the rider sits in a stream of hot air. The air heats the handlebars, too. Like all good ideas, it makes the previous set-up seem stupid; I can't see why anyone should freeze on a cold night, perched on top

*Past and present the owners of the Steaming Mango. Adjusting camera is the former FF-er, Andy Rabagliatti, with Andy Tribble looking suitably grave in the "saddle" of his new acquisition. Below — a view of the garden of the prophet, Malcolm Newell, with another Gold Wing Phasar in the foreground. (At least five were built.) Behind, a beached Banana, and behind that, an AA-Quasar body*



of a liquid-cooled bike, while all that heat goes to waste down below.

There were two problems. Most of the heat was in the middle, leading to a warm chest and cold elbows. I think I've solved that with a few more holes in the fibreglass. The other was that we didn't read the small print in the manual. The Wing takes 50 per cent glycol. As it was leaking a bit, we used straight water, failing to take into account the fact that it runs at about 110, at which point...

Hence the steaming. Once caught in traffic, it did Flying Scotsman impressions through a vent pipe low on one side. So the name changed. It wasn't the Clockwork Orange any more: it was the Steaming Mango.

The expensive new battery held so much power that when the charging system failed

the bike ran on for weeks. Of course, there's no warning light. Back to bump-starting in London traffic. I used to be a despatch rider, and oddly enough I met a few old friends that way: they kept offering to help.

The honeymoon came to an end in charing Cross Road on the way to work. By this time I knew about the charging fault. I was stuck between road works and the back of a bus. The hot inlet tracts werestarting to burn theseams off;my jeans. Steam rose all round me. I must have looked as if I'd just landed a space ship and the retro-rockets were still on fire. As I couldn't afford to stall, I was dragging the clutch and holding the front brake as a way of achieving tickover. Tourists were pointing their cameras at me.

Suddenly the clutch started to drag even

OK, and they gave me a great vegetarian lunch at Christmas - I know they're a little embarrassed about the fact that it hasn't seen the street for 10 months. Also they've let me off paying a vast amount as a token of their embarrassment and they don't want to make a habit of it.

I'd meant to book it in for the charging fault. On the way there, the clutch burnt out. Then I got a call from the repair shop: I only had compression on three cylinders. No wonder it was hard to balance the carbs.

There's a good reason why people don't generally race Gold Wings. To reach one piston, you have to take the entire engine completely apart. This accounts for a lot of the time since it went to be fixed. Fortunately it came apart quite easily, since most of it

more by itself, and the back of the bus got closer. If you remeber, the kill switch works the windscreen wiper. Who needs it anyway...However, without a foot or hand free I'd have to go for the ignition key with my teeth. I thought of asking a pedestrian for help but it would probably have taken too long to explain.

Then a gap opened up in the traffic. I took my hand off the brake, the bike rolled forwards, but it gave me enough time to turn the thing off.

Outside my office at lunchtime I knew I wasn't going anywhere. The bike had no clutch and five neutrals. It was time to call in The Professionals.

The story starts getting a bit anonymous here, because although I'm extremely grateful to the chaps who are now working on my bike - I think they're really politically sound,

wasn't done up too tight in the first place. And how a "reconditioned" engine can have worn out its mains, big ends and camshafts in such a short time, just by pattering around town, beats me.

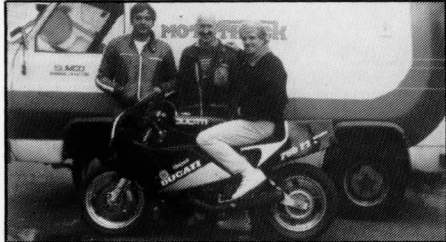
It's rumoured that you can't get oversized bearing shells for the Wing; Honda would prefer you to buy a new crank for the price of a moped. The rumour's not true - car parts fit. However, I had to get Honda clutch plates, and by judging by the price, they're definitely lined with gold.

We're almost up to the present day. A series of motorcycling festivals have gone by, all of which the Mango has politely declined to attend. I'm still riding a rusty 250.

I mentioned that the repairers are politically sound. This leads to my last hitch. The wiring loom on the Mango is a bit of a palimpsest (good word that). After leaving

## Happy Mr Bulto

A NOTE from Steve Wynne, of Sports Motorcycles... "I received a phone call on a Thursday morning from a Snr. Bulto in Spain (son of the Bultaco factory family). He had bought a Ducati Montjuich bike race-tuned by a well known Italian company. He had been entering in endurance races but the bike proved to be unreliable and too slow. He wanted to know if he could bring the bike to me in Bollingotn for a service and



Snr Bulto on the Ducati, Steve Wynne (middle) and mechanic

tune up. I agreed, at a labour charge of £300, and he immediately set off on what turned out to be a 3,000-mile round trip costing nearly £1,000 in tolls, fuel, ferry and accommodation.

"Mr Bulto arrived with his mechanic at midnight on a Friday and I set about stripping and tuning the bike. Expecting to undertake just a careful assembly and setting-up job, I was a little surprised to find the head and the piston wrecked. We worked through Saturday and Sunday building and tuning the engine from scratch, modifying the frame and fabricating a new exhaust system. Mr Bulto and his mechanic set off back to Spain on the Monday morning to get back in time for the 24-hour endurance race at Montjuich Park in Barcelona the following weekend.

"The bike apparently ran faultlessly for the fifth 24 hours and Bulto was delighted with final place. They were less than a second per lap slower than the winning works big-engine Ducati, ridden by Grau, and got up to second spot at one time, only losing out on slow wheel changes because of standard roadgoing chassis.

"Bulto believes that, in a race chassis, the Ducati engine is still a force to be reckoned with, especially for three amateur riders and with race preparation costing only £300!"

## New Registrations

NEW vehicle registration in October 1986 were 173,000, less than half a per cent below October 1985. Over the 12 months to October, new registrations were two per cent higher than in the 12 months to October 1985.

New Registrations of motorcycles were 8,300, 27 per cent below October 1985. There was a 28 per cent decrease for bikes of 50cc or under and a 27 per cent decrease for those over 50cc. Over the 12 months to October new registrations of all motorcycles were 14 per cent lower than in the corresponding period to October 1985.

On a seasonally adjusted basis new registrations totalled 23,600 during August to October, 14 per cent below the level in the previous three months.

## National Rally

CO-ORGANISERS of the National Rally - the ACU, the BMF and the CSMA - will be running this year's event on July 4 and 5. For those unfamiliar with the National Rally, it is an event for *all* riders of road-going bikes, scooters and three-wheelers; they don't have to belong to a club or hold a competition licence.

The rally involves all the competitors choosing their own route to visit as many controls (checkpoints) as possible riding either 250 miles in 13 hours for a bronze award; 400 miles in 16 hours for a silver award or 500 miles in 20 hours for a gold. Those riders who also manage to visit the maximum number of controls will receive a special gold award.

The first riders will start from their chosen starting control at 2 pm on the afternoon of Saturday July 4, and the event will finish at the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham at 10 am on Sunday, July 5. Riders will start arriving at the Museum from about 8 am.

The National Rally is *not* a race or rally in the traditional sense of the word, but a unique event which appeals to riders of all ages on all types of machines - entries on the 1986 event ranged from a 35 cc BSA Winged Wheel to a 1340 cc FXRT Harley-Davidson.

The 1986 event attracted a full entry of 1,000 riders/drivers. The organisers have extended the entry limit to 1100 for 1987 and early application is advised to avoid disappointment. All 1986 entrants will automatically receive a set of regulations and entry form when published in February 1987, but anyone else interested in the event should send a sae to: Chris Devenish, Secretary of the Meeting, National Rally, CSMA, 95 Queens Road, Brighton BN1 3WY.

## Cagiva - Ducati Lease Hire

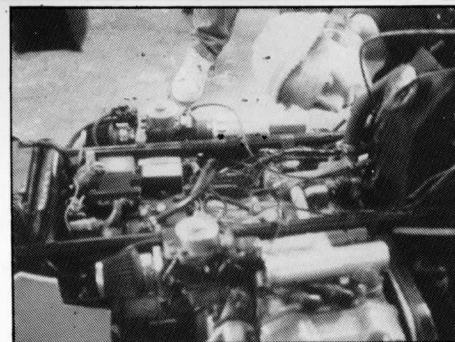
LEASING company vehicles is well known, but in the past it has been restricted to vans, lorries or cars. Moto Vecchia now offer this finance option on all new Cagiva - Ducati road bikes, to any limited company. (The scheme may prove popular with company directors able to justify a motorcycle on Company books. According to current legislation, lease payments are 100 per cent allowable against tax!)

A typical deal, say Moto Vecchia, would look something like this: Machine: Ducati 750 Paso (ready for the road inc. 12 months RFL); lease period: 3 years; initial payment: £519.55; followed by 33 monthly payments of: £173.18.

All payments are subject to VAT at the current rate, but can be reclaimed in the normal manner.

At the end of the lease period there are three options: Continue the lease on pepper-corn rental of approximately £50 per year; sell the bike and retain 95 per cent of its value; use it as deposit for another machine.

Although Moto Vecchia are primarily offering this option on Cagiva - Ducati machines, they are able to supply any make of new motorcycle on a lease hire.



John Bruce peers at the Phasar's Gold Wing engine. Petrol tank can be seen just forward of the engine

## STEAMING MANGO

*Continued from page 87*

Honda, it has been overwritten by many hands in many colours. The only man who could put it back together was the man who took it apart. Unfortunately he was the politically soundest of the lot; he'd joined the commune in its early days to get it started, but now felt that it was becoming too successful. You know how it is. So the White Plains Drifter of motorcycle mechanics was on the road again, somewhere near Glastonbury, and no-one else knew the secret of the tangled wires.

It stood in the corner of the shop, getting dusty. Others tried to sort it out, but they were all overcome by depression. Wiring can do that to people. So they'd go back to working on Harleys and Ducatis, but all the time the beast sat there. Then there was the pathetic voice of its owner on the phone. It cast a cloud over the whole workshop.

When I went round to see them again, I was the only optimist left in the place. We sat in a circle. We had mugs of tea. I outlined my master plan for getting us out of this one. Slowly the smiles returned to their faces. They were probably thinking "fools rush in..."

And that is why the great orange nose of the think is now sitting in the frontroom of my house. I show it to visitors. During the long summer evening, we sat by the fireside knitting together a new wiring loom of my own design, that will live in those vast fibreglass spaces and link everything together logically. Only a handful of wires will run away from the nose to the engine, the generator, and the tail. Everything will be clear.

And then one day we'll attach it to the chassis again: at last I'll get my money's worth out of the tax disc, and I can write:

## Part Two - Riding the Mango

"This bike should last a lifetime", said Malcolm Newell when I took a close look at his welding. It may take a lifetime to finish. But when you start from scratch, you have a lot of re-inventing to do.

Furthermore, when you chuck away the rule book you can't resist sticking in all the other bright ideas the garden shed can produce. When you use second-hand parts as well, it's no wonder reliability collapses. But unlike Royce Creasey, I don't think the Japanese will get there first. They're not mad enough.

ANDY TRIBBLE