

◆ 1000cc MOTO GUZZI PRODUCTION RACER

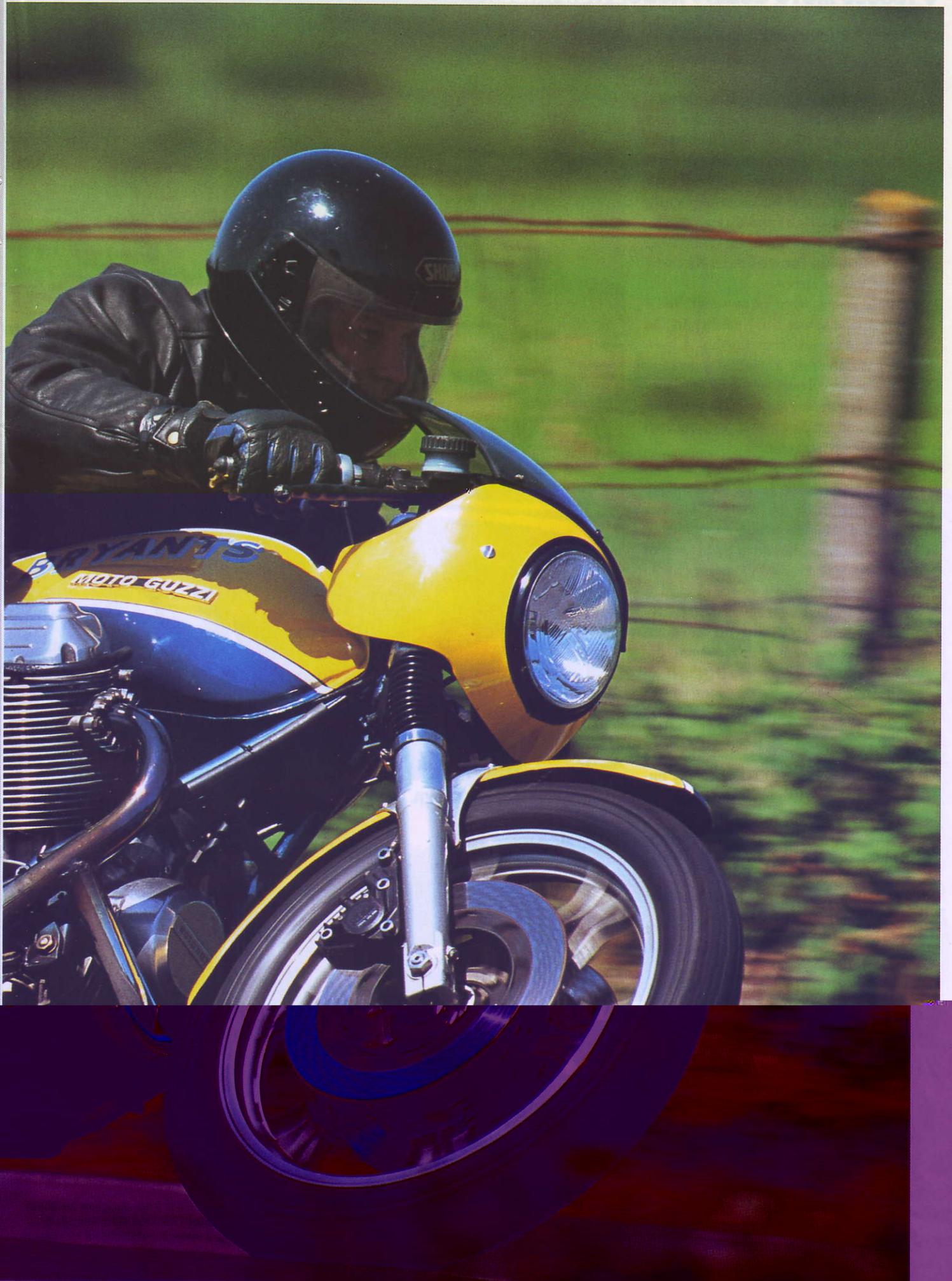


GAS GUZZLING GUZZI

*Riding and surviving
Moto Guzzi's factory built
production racer, capable
of more than 150mph*
Sean Hawker



PHOTOGRAPHY: KENNY P.



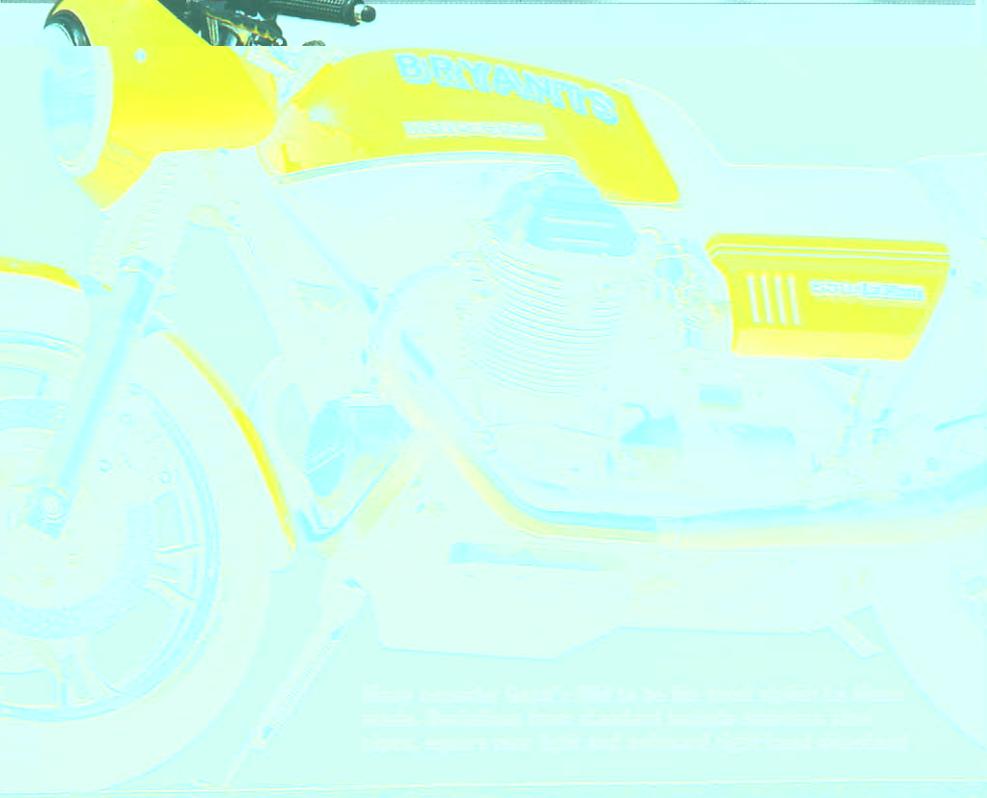
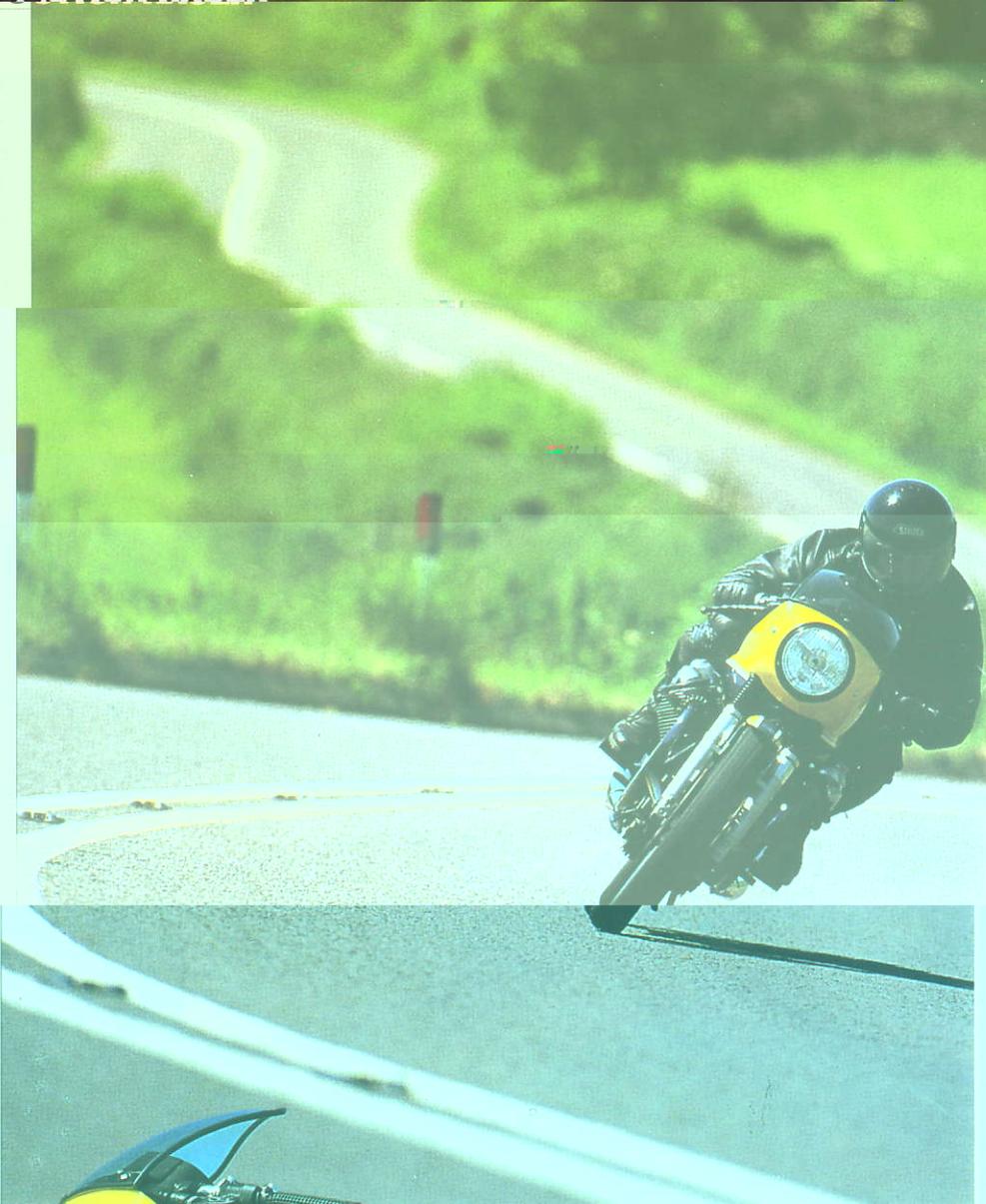
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A CLEAR stretch of dual carriageway opened up and I glanced over my shoulder furtively, a quick licence saver. Guilty as hell, I opened the Guzzi's quarter turn throttle to see if the claims were true. The needle swung round well into three figures, the bike magnetically sucked towards a rapidly approaching horizon. This is one fast machine, even allowing for a hopelessly optimistic Veglia speedo.

Those claims were extravagant, and I needed to discover their validity in the interests of science, your worship. A massive 155mph from a pushrod operated, two valve per cylinder vee twin? Pub companions are already stroking their chins in disbelief and nodding in that "yes, and then you woke up" sort of manner.

But this isn't just any Guzzi. It's a Mk1 Le Mans, one of the fastest bikes money could buy back in 1977. Still not impressed? The bike is also an ex-factory production racer, imported by Bryants of Biggleswade and raced by the late Charlie Sanby. It was Charlie who was clocked at 155mph on the Island between Cregny-Baa and Brandish during the 1978 TT. Sanby finished 12th after damaging the Guzzi's big ends and posted a 104mph lap on the tricky Mountain circuit. Not bad for a machine in standard road trim down to lights, starter motor and horn.

The machine was also raced in the 1978 Avon tyres production series. Sanby finished a creditable fifth in the championship

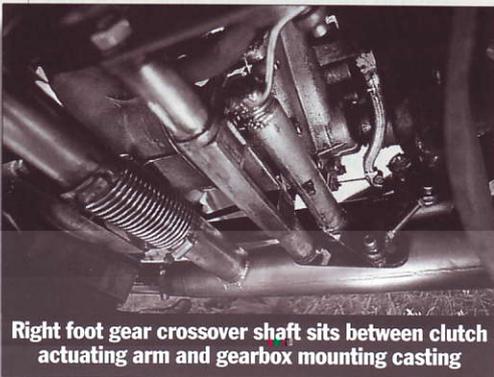


Being a Guzzi, the 1000cc Production Rager is a fast machine. Production series standard includes stainless steel, chrome engine case, light and instrument light, road mirrors.

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straighten the old ones?' I asked. He said he'd made a spare set of modified Norton Commando forks for racing, reckoning that Guzzi forks were alright on the road but useless for racing," explains Roger.

Charlie had ground 0.10in from the



Right foot gear crossover shaft sits between clutch actuating arm and gearbox mounting casting

diameter and added 0.40in of hard chrome, then ground the legs back to Guzzi size. Because the wall thickness is greater than the Guzzi leg, the forks will not accept the same amount of oil. The adapted units are full with 75-80cc of oil instead of the 120cc listed in the Guzzi workshop manual.

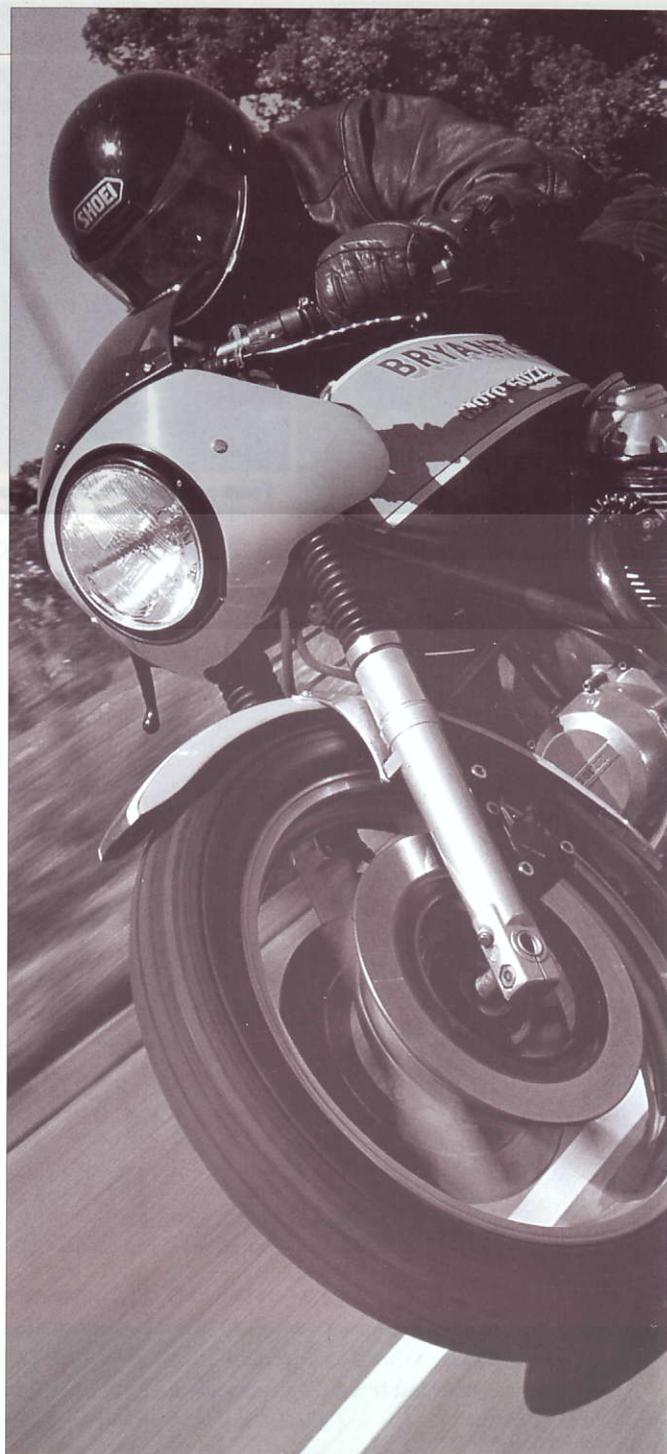
Another clue to the Guzzi's former life is its right-foot gear change, available from new as a kit. Charlie was used to racing British machines and he wasn't going to change late on in his career. A neat crossover shaft does the job and works well with no trace of slop through the linkages.

Roger worked for

Those silencers contain a 3in sleeve tack welded inside that can be removed to reveal a series of holes in the baffles. Roger says the bike goes a lot faster with the free flow exhaust, but the noise increases a thousandfold.

Charlie's Guzzi was sold by Hamilton to Velocette enthusiast Allen Wilson. "It was a liability in the end. Every time I rode the bike I did over 100mph," recalls Roger. That included being stopped for speeding at an average of 129mph. Wilson didn't own it long before selling the Guzzi to Verralls, a bike dealership then based in Tooting Bec, South London.

Present owner Graham Reed bought the PR Guzzi from Verralls in 1987. The 47 year old electrical maintenance worker from Somerset and his brother-in-law Rob Mitchell stripped the Guzzi to check it over. Comparing parts with standard bits, they discovered Hamilton's 1000cc barrels. Reed fitted a new dry-plate clutch using a Fiat 124 car unit and the oil pump was rebuilt using stainless steel parts.



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Mr. Hamilton
88, Chamberlayne Lane,
Hemel Hempstead, Herts. Date Feb. 10th 1979

TO THE SALE OF:
One used Moto-Guzzi Production Racer, 1000cc, as described in Notes. Cash price, no warranty, at the special price of 1750.00

Roger Hamilton's 1979 Guzzi invoice from the now defunct Bryants of Biggleswade

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Performance

THUMBING the starter button was hit or miss, because the small, weight saving battery struggles to turn over the high

compression engine. Use too much throttle and it'll never fire because oversize 40mm Dell'Orto carbs soon flood the combustion chamber.

But get it right and you're on a winner. Blip the throttle at a standstill and the spinning flywheel flips the bike to the right. Even on the move the bike lurches to the right every time you twist the grip — necessary to keep the engine running because there's no tickover.

Comfort isn't a priority. Leg room is nil, the seat's too narrow and no good for a pillion, but I find the clip-on position spot on.

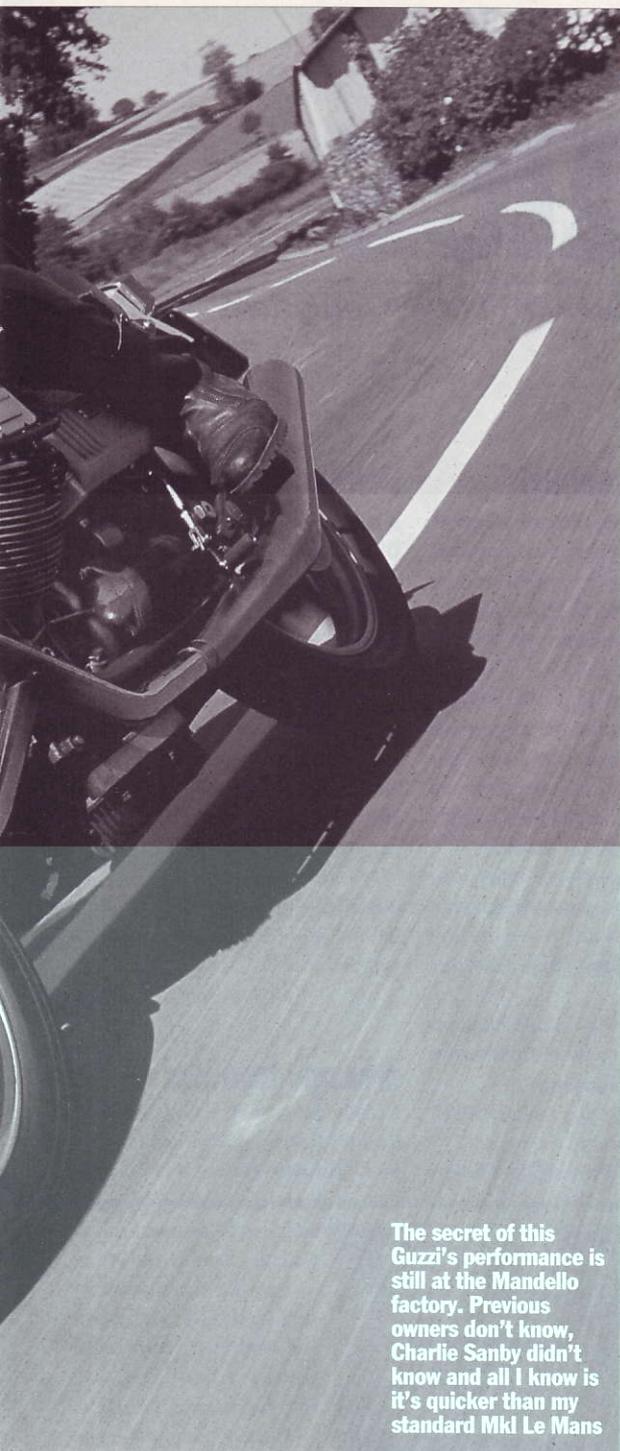
Gear changing requires patience. The five speed close ratio Guzzi box fitted is an improvement over a standard Mk1 unit, but is still some way off the effortless shift-

ing of many British and Japanese boxes.

With a 59in wheelbase and close to 500lb kerb weight, the Guzzi is far from agile. But at least it's stable at high speed. Long sweeping corners are lapped up, but if the long sweeper turns sharp on you, grab a load of Brembo disc.

Guzzi cast iron disc brakes are normally linked with the front left disc and the rear operated by the foot pedal, while the front right disc is worked by the handlebar lever. Many owners swear by this safe set-up and it's certainly difficult to lock the rear wheel. But racers need separate control of the front and back end, so the linking has been dismantled on Charlie's bike.

Other mods carried out by Sanby include disconnecting the accelerator pumps on



The secret of this Guzzi's performance is still at the Mandello factory. Previous owners don't know, Charlie Sanby didn't know and all I know is it's quicker than my standard Mkl Le Mans

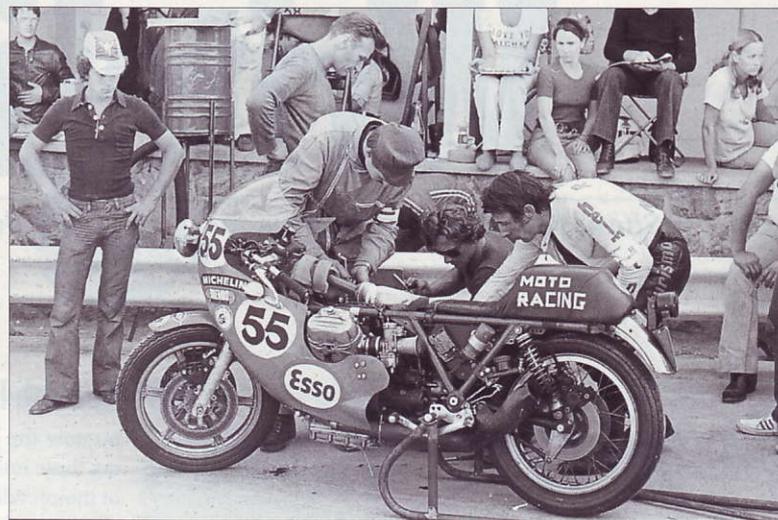
the carbs, dismantling the friction damper and adding a Smiths rev counter in place of the inaccurate Veglia instrument.

Equipment

A STANDARD Mkl Guzzi Le Mans uses 36mm Dell'Orto carbs and 10.2:1 compression pistons to give a claimed output of 80bhp at 7300rpm. Actual bhp measured from the crankshaft is 71bhp.

Motor Cycle tested one of the red beauties when they were launched in 1976 and squeezed out 126mph, with a 14 second standing quarter. Fuel consumption worked out at just under 40mpg, but the big Vee was thirsty for oil to the tune of 375 miles per pint.

Light alloy barrels have chrome plated



Guzzis like this one at the 1974 Liege 24-hr event make ideal endurance racers

bores for long life. The crankshaft is supported by two plain main bearings and big ends are also plain. Wet sump lubrication employs a gear driven oil pump while the clutch is a two-plate dry car type and final drive is by shaft.

Early lemons, as owners affectionately call them, are mainly red with a strange day-glo orange stripe down the middle of the handlebar fairing. Options include metallic grey and blue or, from 1977, white.

The MkII came out in 1978 with oblong headlamp, three piece fairing and instrument panel with clock and voltmeter. Calipers moved to the rear of the fork legs and the friction steering damper was replaced by a hydraulically operated unit. Performance stayed much the same.

The later model also shared dodgy switchgear, shoddy frame paint and a seat that fell apart as soon as it was out of the showroom. It retained the Mkl's style — but only just. Post MkII models improved in certain aspects, but can't hold a candle to the sensual curves of the Mkl.

Conclusion

STABLE handling, monster performance and classic looks are an attractive package. But images of this long, low, shaft driven bike with time consuming gear change being manhandled round Ramsey hairpin brought me down to earth. There's no doubt about it, Charlie Sanby was a hero for lapping this Mkl Le Mans at 104mph.

Like the man with the razor company, I

liked the Guz so much I tried to buy it. But unlike him I didn't have the necessary funds. Now I just look on the bright side — at least I still have my driving licence 

Specifications

1977 MOTO GUZZI LE MANS MKI

(Test bike figures in bold italic where different)

ENGINE

Type	ohv transverse 90° V-twin
Bore x stroke	83mm x 78mm (90 x 78)
Capacity	844cc (992cc)
Compression ratio	10.2:1 (11:1)
Carburation	2 x 36mm Dell'Orto PHF with accelerator pumps (40mm, no pumps)
Output	71bhp (85bhp est)
Electrical	12v, 32Ah battery, 280w alternator, twin coils

TRANSMISSION

Clutch	two plate dry
Gearbox	five speed

CYCLE PARTS

Frame	duplex cradle with removable tubes
Suspension	(front): Guzzi telescopic (Norton modified) (rear): swinging arm
Tyres	(front): 3.25 x 18in Metzeler (Avon Roadrunner) (rear): 4.10 x 18in Avon Roadrunner
Brakes	(front): 2 x 11 1/2in disc (rear): 9 1/2in disc

Wheelbase 59 1/2in (1490mm)

Seat Height	29 1/2in (749mm)
Ground Clearance	7 1/2in (190mm)
Kerb weight	485lb (220kg)
Fuel capacity	5 gallons (22.73 litres)
Oil capacity	5 pints (2.84 litres)

PERFORMANCE

Top speed	126mph (150mph est)
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