

JOURNAL



Summer 2020



EDITORIAL

Not quite the start to the year we were expecting.. The world has literally been turned on its head and very sadly many have lost their lives because of it; a sobering thought and worth remembering before we get too relaxed or disregard the restrictions currently in place. The news is full of what's happening and I don't want give it any more space in the JOURNAL; preferring to fill it with something more positive to distract us all in these times. Suffice to say, please stay safe and let's consider others and our own actions which could put anyone else at risk.

My intention was that everything in this issue would be included, which has allowed me to fill the maximum 36 pages - this keeps us just within the postal band; any more adds a few hundred pounds to the cost of posting out JOURNAL copies. A report of the VMSC Extravaganza, originally planned for April 5th, would have featured but fingers crossed will follow later in the year; its newly scheduled date now September 20th. I owe a large debt of thanks to Mr Andy Gillard - VVC member and creator/ editor of the splendid ScooterNova independent scooter magazine. Andy has helped me out by sharing with us an edited version of his article in ScooterNova Issue 18, celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Vespa T5 (PX125E). It's a great read with some excellent images - thanks Andy, you're a gent! I recently shared with Andy the Ape article from JOURNAL No.81; a larger rewritten version published in ScooterNova Issue 17. I can wholeheartedly recommend ScooterNova to anyone into classic scooters; full of in-depth articles and interesting content - perfect reading material for all the extra time we now have. Elsewhere, the much coveted Vespa SS180 gets a healthy showing with not one but two articles - many thanks to members David Sheppard and Darren Bradbury. Going back

further in time, we have a Douglas Rod Model all the way from Sydney, Australia. Friends and regular contributors, Warren and Hayley Jopson, tell of their latest travels along with another friend, Niall McCart - VVC member and owner of Retrospective Scooters. Leading on nicely to the front cover; I photographed the gorgeous metallic blue Cinquanta Speciale, or 50 Special, at Retrospective in the summer of last year. In mid-March I just managed to sneak in and get my Motovespa GT160 in for a once over at Retrospective, before things became difficult. Expertly serviced by club member Steve 'Smiler' Besemer and the owner of the Vespa for sale further inside; the model being highly appropriate for this issue. Lastly, I'm sorry to say we say goodbye to two of our long standing members in this issue, with words from Peter Guppy and Leslie Smith.

Thank you to all of you who have helped me with this issue ;)

Please email your contributions for the JOURNAL or News Page of the VVC website to me at vespamore@hotmail.co.uk

When you do get to ride again, ride safe! Ciao - Paul Hart (VVC Editor).

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BY APPOINTMENT TO HIS MAJESTY
HIS MAJESTY THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH
MANUFACTURERS OF VESPA SCOOTERS

Your Ref. Our Ref.
SERV/RJS/IJB/6993

30th September, 1965

Mr. D.I. Sheppard,
Ingleton House,
4, Rectory Grove,
Clapham,
London S.W.4.

Dear Sir,

We acknowledge your letter of the 24th inst. together with the cylinder barrel and piston removed from your Vespa 180 c.c. S.S. Model.

We are most sorry to learn of the trouble you have experienced with these parts but, quite frankly, we cannot understand why piston seizure should occur after some 3,750 miles, providing the machine was not being over driven and the correct fuel mixture was in the petrol tank.

However, we are pleased to tell you that, in this instance, we are accepting the claim and have instructed our Spares Department to send you replacements free of charge.

Enclosed herewith is the Log Book which you sent to us for record purposes.

Yours faithfully,
for DOUGLAS (SALES & SERVICES) LTD.

R.J. Stone
Assistant to Service Manager.

DIVISION OF THE WESTINGHOUSE BRAKE AND SIGNAL COMPANY LIMITED



Dear Members

Well what a strange old time we're going through.

Up to about 4 weeks ago I had been busy collecting money & entries for two of our 2020 events. What a turnabout, now we are well into the process of refunding, dealing with Cherbourg initially to then be followed by cog badge orders and Wakefield monies. Both events have now been postponed to take place in 2021. Cherbourg rearranged for 2nd thru 6th September & Wakefield dates not yet rescheduled. The Torbay event has been reset for 11th thru 14th September 2020 but obviously subject to virus restrictions at that time.

Since the AGM it has been a particularly busy period for Bob & Joan Toohey. They could not have envisaged when they volunteered to take on the treasury function just what they were getting into. Filing the VVC 2019 financial statement was a high priority and so the committee endorsed their recommendation to get the assistance of a firm of Chartered Accountants. Now our Companies House records are up to date for 2019 and we are moving forward into 2020 using Xero as our new Accounting

System. Xero is a modern, functional, popular accounting package. With Xero even the process of refunding money back to members has been made simpler than it might have been. Hats off to you Bob & Joan, the work you are doing warrants special mention.

For a small club the VVC now has a good range of products on offer through the online shop. Richard Vickery has been busy, regularly adding to the range of clothing options, memorabilia, badges & stickers available. Why not take a look! While you're online don't forget to check out our website, FB page and Instagram. All there for VVC members, current & future.

Well done our committee!

Last issue I made a frivolous remark about pot holes. Not so funny now, we are all together in one very big one. Lets hope we all climb out, ready to read the next Journal!

Regards — Roger

New password for members library area on website GS160



SEPT 11 — 14 / 2020

Torbay, Devon
Moor to Sea Rally

Organisers Luke & Sheila
Kitto.

RESCHEDULED DATES TO
BE ADVISED / 2021

Wakefield, Yorkshire

Organiser Chris Wainwright.

SEPT 2 — 6 / 2021

Cherbourg, France

Organisers Bob Box &
Roger Smith.



THE VESPA PX125E T5 - CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF LEARNER LEGAL PERFORMANCE

For those who first started riding Vespas in the 1980s, I've some shocking news for you: the Vespa PX125E T5, was launched 35 years ago in March 1985.

After launching the Vespa in 1946, Piaggio used various factory prepared scooters to prove the worth of their product in a world dominated by motorcycles. In the early 1950s they produced just a limited run of their sporting scooter, the 125cc Sei Giorni (Six Day) Racer, which was available for dealers to buy for use in local, competitive events around Italy which also helped promote the Vespa brand. Piaggio's next step was to produce a sporting scooter for the masses and make it available in the showroom for anyone who wanted to buy it, and thus the Vespa Gran Sport 150 was launched in 1955. Thirty years later the final chapter of the sports Vespa legacy

arrived by way of the Vespa T5. A 'sports' Vespa, by the way, is a high performance model that sits alongside a regular one within the range. For example, the 8hp 4-speed GS150 aside a regular, 5.4hp 3-speed Vespa 150. Or 6hp, 4-speed Vespa 90SS aside the standard 3.6hp, 3-speed V90. But not a Vespa GTS aside a GTS Super Sport where the only difference is a couple of stickers and red suspension spring...

And so in the 1980s Piaggio decided to develop a model from their popular 'New Line' P-range which was the T5. The name bestowed upon this new model was thanks to the five transfer ports in the nicasil-lined aluminium cylinder ('5 Travasi' in Italian), produced by Gilardoni in Italy for Piaggio. Together with a piston featuring thin 1mm chromed-rings this formed the sporting top end of the engine. At the time the Vespa P-range

consisted of 125, 150 and 200cc scooters, all with cast iron barrels and pistons with heavier, thicker rings. The PX125's barrel had just three ports with a 57mm stroke crank and breathed through a 20mm carburettor. Not only was the T5's top end a departure from previous production Vespa engines but it featured a new crankshaft with a shorter 52mm stroke, a lighter flywheel and larger engine mounts from the PX200 were also fitted. Completing the performance spec was a Dellorto SI24/24G carburettor with a larger air filter than the SI24E that was on a PX200. There was even some sound-proofing fitted as standard within the engine side panel, to absorb the higher revving engine's noise.

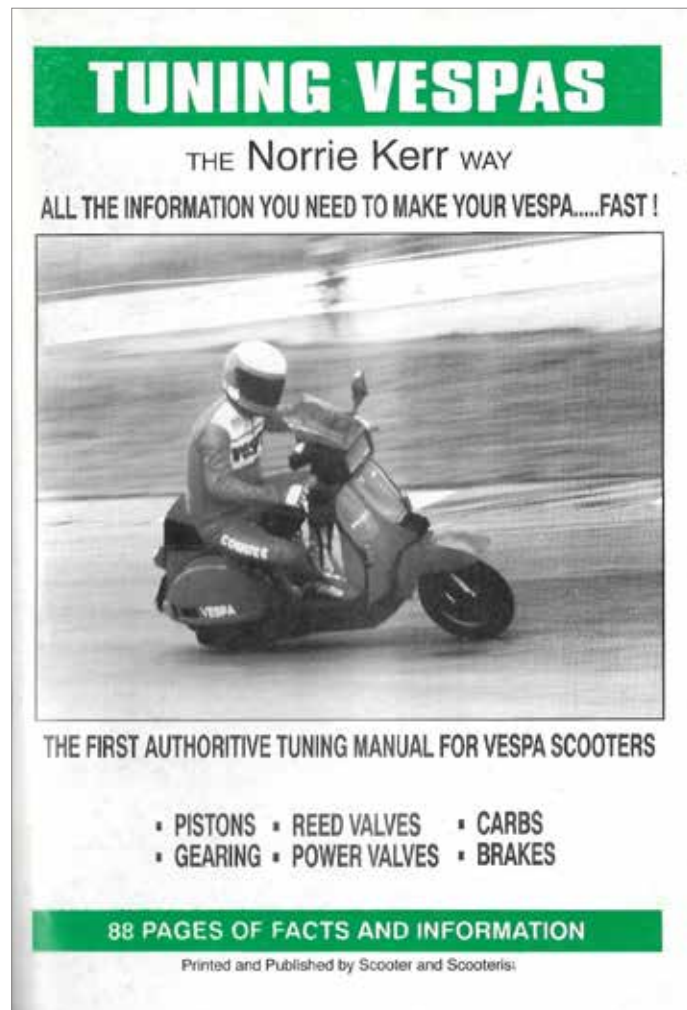
Finally, an expansion exhaust pipe was developed especially for the T5 and made to look like a standard exhaust, albeit attached with two nuts onto studs, rather than a simple clamp around the barrel stub. The T5's unique exhaust not only helped boost performance but gave the scooter a wonderful and unique sound amongst other Vespas. In fact so good was the design, that this is the exhaust the aftermarket manufacturer Sito looked to as inspiration for their range of aftermarket Sito Plus exhausts, for large frame Vespas. The Vespa T5 made its maximum power at 6700rpm as opposed to around 5700-6000rpm



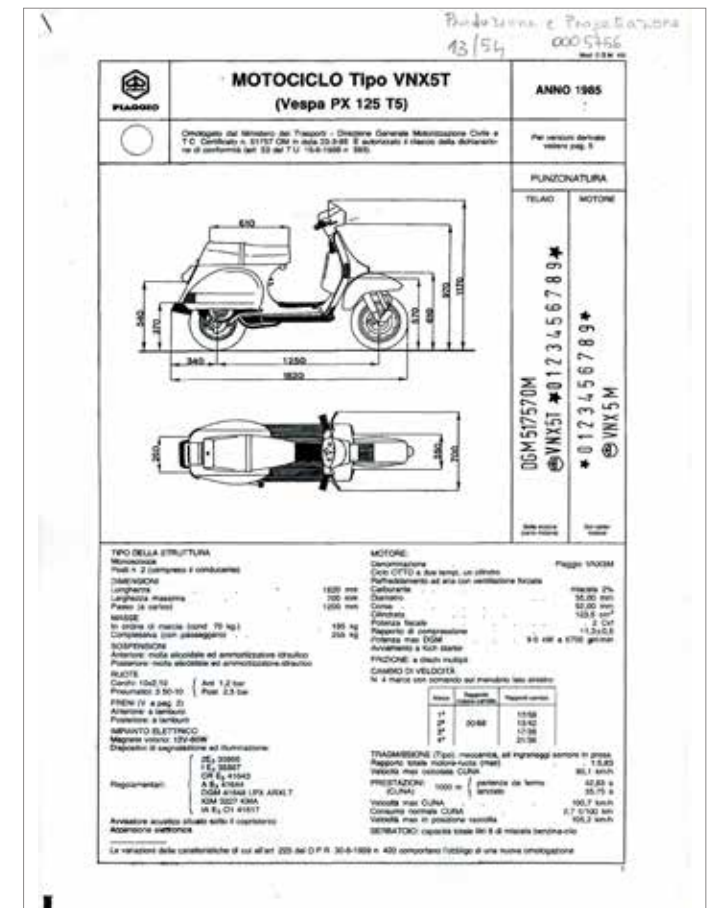
of the PX125, PX150 and PX200 models. These had quoted power outputs of 8hp, 8.8hp and 12hp respectively around 1985, whereas the 125cc T5 has 11-12hp, depending on what literature you read. Piaggio quoted anything from 62 to 67mph (108kmh – 67mph in Italy) as a top speed for the T5.

From personal experience, I had two T5s in the 80s and 90s, a Mk1 and Mk2, plus T5 engines fitted into other scooters later on. I own my third T5 now, a 1986 model Mk1 sold from new by my then local dealer, AJ Sutton in Ealing, west London, and which I've had since the 1990s (many T5 owners refer to the one with the digital rev counter as a Mk1, the Mk2 having a dial). As any other T5 owners will know, in the right conditions the top speed of a T5 could be pretty impressive. Those conditions were generally on a flat with the wind behind you – they had power but not so much torque, and hills and headwinds were not the T5's friend. Cosmetically the T5 was enhanced when compared to the P-range as well, with some bold new styling features that could only have been drawn in the 1980s. At the front it had a new one-piece mudguard that not only looks smoother but of course also dealt with that the age-old problem of rust creeping into the seam of a Vespa mudguard. The new plastic horn/cast suggested speed and performance too, as did the short sporty looking screen mounted above the large, rectangular headlight. The





colour has become synonymous with the T5 over the years, although plenty of options followed. In other markets, alternative versions were offered to different budgets with four versions produced by Piaggio in Italy. The base model had self-mix petrol with either kick starter only or Elestart (with a kick starter too). Next was autolube engine version with kick starter that we had in the UK, and finally the top of the range featured an autolube engine with both kick and electric starter. The 'square tail' T5 continued in production with virtually no changes apart from upgrading the rev counter from a digital display to analogue dial (aka Mk1 and Mk2), until the early 1990s when sales were obviously not meeting Piaggio's expectations and they decided to reduce production costs. With the British market still demanding the engine, a version named the Vespa T5 Classic was produced. This took what some considered the best parts of the T5; engine and black trim pieces, and added them to a Vespa PX frame. As the 1990s drew to a close 400 Vespa T5 Millenniums were produced, the only production Vespa to have both a T5 engine



plastic headset surrounding it was at best an 80s design classic, and at worst a bulky cover for what was basically a bare set of handlebars beneath it. Unbeknown at the time, that system of basic handle bars with plastic housing was to form the future for Piaggio, next seen on the Cosa and today on many of the modern automatic scooters they produce. Unfortunately at the same time, the traditional pinch-bolt clamp found on cast metal headsets was replaced with a locking ring system that relied on small notches to locate on to the fork stem and the rings to be fully tightened using a special tool to prevent the headset from coming loose. It remains to this day universally unpopular with T5 owners... Along with a large, easy to read speedometer display that contained a rev counter for the first time on a production Vespa too, the new headset also accommodated a bigger headlight with a brighter bulb and aftermarket Halogen options. And while the new 'modern' headset wasn't a popular design among many scooterists, the other reason for initial disgust from Vespa fans was the T5's revised

rear end. This amounts to what is basically PX body parts with a square section welded on top of them, hence the nickname 'Square Tail'. The 1980s had a lot to answer for... But T5 had its fantastic engine that allowed learner riders in the UK and 16 year olds in Italy to exceed 60mph with ease on a road-legal Vespa scooter. Suddenly all was forgiven and people even started to notice that the designers at Piaggio had used black trim to complement the square edges of the T5, with standard parts like damper and fork cover, cowlings and control levers finished this way, along with parts unique to the model such as rubber floor mats, under frame spoiler, 'drinks' tray on top of the toolbox, and a plastic engine cover with extra sound proofing. Add a larger seat to match the frame extension with new rear light and you're just about done; they simply flew out of the showrooms!

The first T5s to arrive in the UK featured an autolube (oil-injection) engine with kick-starter, and all came in Racing Red. For many this



and a hydraulic disc brake at the front, before the model was finally laid to rest. During the early days, the T5 was also produced under licence in Spain by MotoVespa. The model was almost identical, including the special T5 engine, aside from MotoVespa badging and decals on the seat and a 'Sport' badge on the side panel and drinks tray on early models. MotoVespa also produced a 200cc scooter using the T5 body, called the TX200. Unfortunately for speed-hungry scooterists, this was actually a standard PX200 engine and not a big bore version of the T5. Piaggio also produced a similar machine badged as the GS200 for the German, Belgium, Danish and Japanese markets as well. Outside of Europe, Piaggio's then official licensee in India, LML, PT Danmotors in Indonesia and PGO in Taiwan all produced a T5-type scooter under licence, but they all featured the cast iron barrelled PX 150cc engines preferred by the Asian markets for their reliability and economy.

Today the Vespa T5 is still a much-loved scooter by those who own one, and lamented by those who let theirs go. As a standard machine it is still

exciting to ride, the high revving engine making it a naughty pleasure that is easy to enjoy and yet as with all Vespas, if looked after, provide some reliable miles. And for those who aren't sure if the 35 year-old Vespa T5 is worthy of space on the pages of the VVC journal, when I started riding scooters in the 1980s any machines 35 years prior to that would have been Italian because Douglas hadn't even started manufacturing them at that time... Now there is food for thought.

Andy Gillard — ScooterNova Magazine

(A longer, more in depth article celebrating the Vespa T5 can be found in edition 18 of ScooterNova magazine, which was published for March/April 2020)

www.scooternova.com

T5 Spec

Frame prefix: VNX5T
 Engine: Single cylinder 2-stroke
 Cylinder: 123.4cc
 Bore x stroke: 55x52mm
 Carburettor: Dellorto SI24/24G
 Ignition: 12v electronic
 Gearbox: 4-speed, handlebar twist grip
 Dimensions LxW: 1820x700mm
 Seat height: 770mm
 Wheelbase:1235mm
 Brakes: 150mm drum front and rear
 Tyres: 3.50x10
 Weight: 112kg (Elestart 121kg)
 —
 Piaggio production: 36,060
 Piaggio Elestart production: 5,012



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MOSTRA SCAMBIO 5E EDITIE
LOCATIE: C-MINE GENK / 08-03-2020

VVC members Hayley and Warren Jopson made the short trip to Belgium, returning for the fifth edition of the Mostra Scambio event, having visited in previous years.

“It was that time again where we crossed the water to see our Belgian friends. Sunday 8th March we took part in yet again another extremely well organised event at C-Mine by Mario and his team, who pulled out all the stops and even had

a Burlesque dancer ..! Numbers weren't down as we expected due to some virus going around; in fact we think the numbers were greater than before. There was no shortage of good quality second hand or new parts being sold by familiar faces. Another great event, we look forward to the next one”.

Words — Hayley Jopson.

Following photos by Hayley and Warren Jopson.



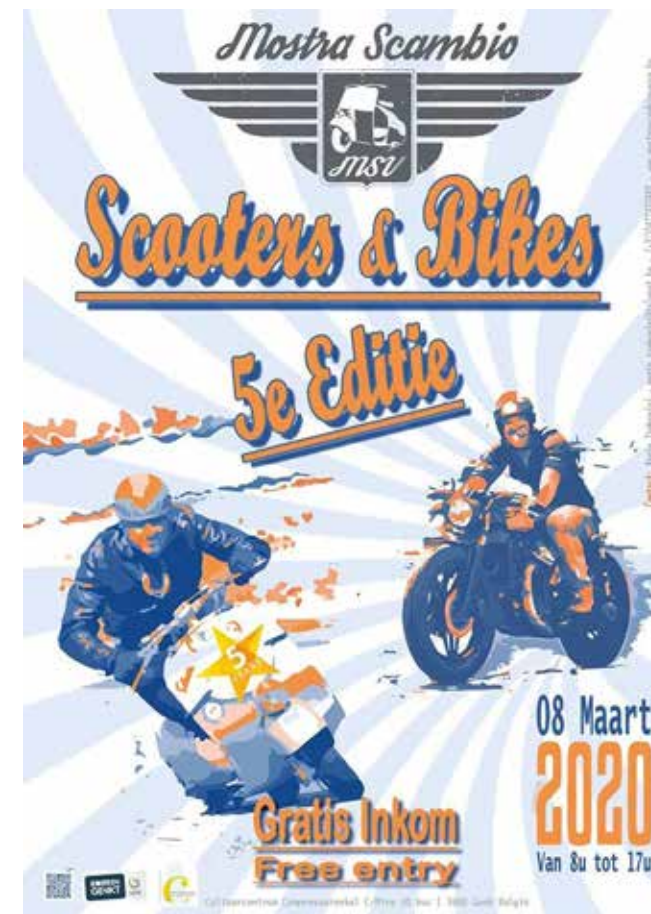
Another VVC member, Niall McCart of Retrospective Scooters, was invited by the event organizers who were keen for him to show off Retrospective's electric conversions for classic scooters – there being a lot of interest in Europe; quite possibly due to many European cities' strict directives in banning 2-strokes. Niall has had a trade stand at many a UK event but this was his first time at Mostra Scambio.

“It was a nice show; good bikes, good parts and fair prices, lots of bikes for sale, nice bikes and projects, lots of older bikes, in fact overall better quality throughout; it would have been a good place for anyone to buy a decent, real genuine classic. The venue was amazing; all inside an old

coal mine pit head factory style place, but with all the old machinery and tiles and wrought iron stairs and lovely old features about the place and all different rooms and floors. All together well organized, excellent food and beer; just about as perfect an event you could want it to be. People from Belgium, Holland, Germany, Italy, France - none from the UK.”

Following photos by Niall McCart.

Many thanks to Hayley, Warren and Niall for sharing their experiences and photos on this great looking event. Keep it under your collective hats though.. looks like one of those perfect little gatherings best kept under the radar!



FAREWELLS



Chuck Swonnell

Three things I remember about Chuck...

- Chuck Nav..
- Chuck Up..
- It's all up here..

Let me explain...

Chuck Nav.. he was able to travel anywhere in the UK without the use of a sat nav, just his memory of road numbers.

Chuck Up.. the super meals he cooked on the campsites and in the caravans at the VVC events.

It's all up here.. When asked to remember or advise on items he would point to side of his head and say "...its all up here."

One more.. Turn on your hearing aid..!

Chuck was to me a great friend and I will miss him.. RIP the Legend.

Peter Guppy



David B Smith

David joined the Vespa Club of Britain in the late fifties and was a member at the Harrow branch; he soon shone in the Regularity Trials that were popular right through the next decade. He also got involved in the organisation of events and was a prominent member of the committee of the club throughout the period up to the current century. In 1964 a Veteran Vespa Branch was formed for some of the early models from the early fifties and David rode in the first Veteran Vespa run from Epsom to Brighton, which became an annual event. David was also the first Treasurer of the Veteran Vespa Club.

In 1965 a Federation of British Scooter Clubs was formed to support all scooterists and he became a prominent member and was Chairman for several years.

Leslie R Smith
Former President of the Vespa Club of Britain

Copy of eulogy presented by Leslie Smith at David's funeral.

VVC CLUB SHOP



We now have a good selection of VVC branded goods available from our online shop. Just use the links on the VVC Club website or the VVC Facebook page.

New shop products for this quarter include ceramic mugs, coasters, key rings (in 3 colours) and embroidered VVC and Douglas badges. These are all in stock.... go on, treat yourself..!

Garment Supply

Thank you for all the clothing orders you've placed since Bee Branded took over garment production in December. I hope you're all enjoying your purchases.

Unfortunately due to the Covid-19 outbreak clothing orders are currently on hold. I will get an email out to you all as soon as production resumes.

Please drop me an email at shopvvc@hotmail.com if you have any questions or queries.

DOUGLAS VESPA CUTAWAY ENGINE

Last year I photographed this Vespa wideframe cutaway engine, once displayed in the classroom area of the Douglas Kingswood training centre in Bristol.

Its purpose was to show trainee mechanics and technicians the inner workings and design of the Vespa engine. Originally it would have had a small motor drive attached, slowly operating the engine and allowing onlookers to see its inner workings and moving components. Douglas ran an education programme for new dealers; many of which sold motorcycles before taking on the

Douglas Vespa in their showrooms to broaden their customer base.

I'm told these display engines are very few and far between these days; wishful thinking but I reckon this would look absolutely great on my sideboard at home!

Words and 35mm film photos by Paul Hart.





1953 DOUGLAS VESPA ROD 125

I've always had a passion for rebuilding vintage Vespas so when I came across this Douglas with all matching numbers and almost complete, I knew I had to have it. So I purchased this rare Vespa Rod Douglas (hand painted blue) for \$2000AUD on Gumtree from Western Australia and had it shipped to me in Sydney. This is where our father and son restoration project started.

My father is a retired Fiat motor mechanic and as a child, growing up in Italy, remembers riding these classics around the streets of Rome. My father is someone in my life who I admire and who has taught me a lot. As a child my brother and I would spend most of our time in the garage fixing up cars and bikes and helping our dad.

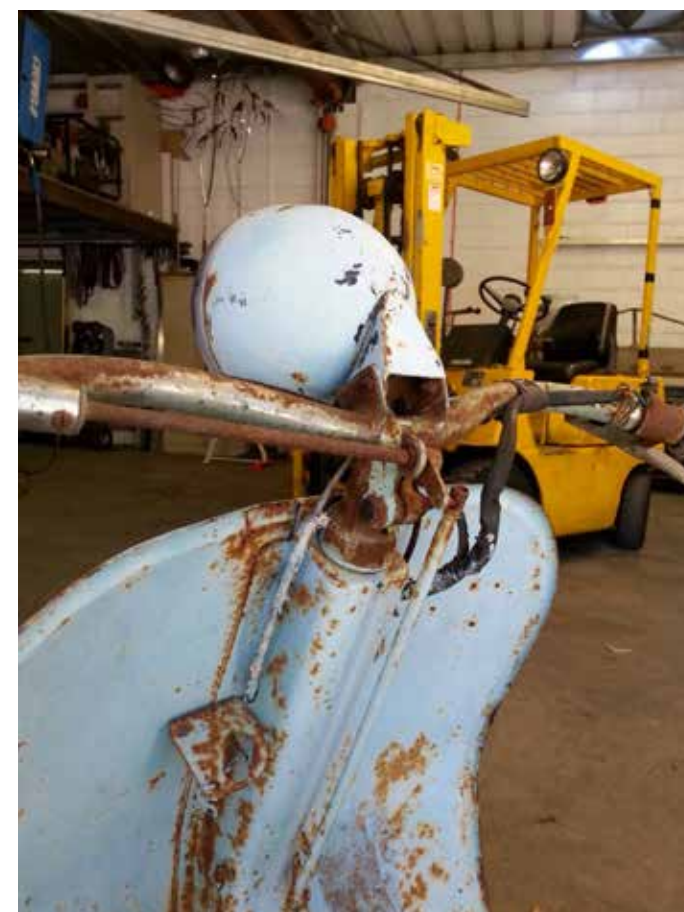
As soon as the Douglas arrived we wasted no time and started to dismantle the Vespa to get it ready for bead blasting, panel and spray painting. We then started to rebuild the engine while the Vespa was getting painted. I made a list of the parts we required and sent it to my brother, who lives in Rome Italy, and joined the Veteran

Vespa Club who helped me source the parts (Marcellinus Blanks and John Keddie) and gave me advice and information on this rare Douglas model. The light on the handle bars was fitted to meet the Australian regulations and only a few were released.. I didn't know this; lucky boys from the club told me as I was confused and thought I'd bought a fake.. and was going to throw away the handle bar light and remount it back to the front shield, as there is still the hole for it.

Once the Vespa returned from the panel shop we started to assemble it back together with all the new parts, electricals and engine. This project took close to a year to complete in my father's garage as our weekend hobby and bonding time, with plenty of my mother's classic Italian meals to keep us going.

I have recently purchased my next restoration project, a Vespa Ape A 125 Calessino 1948. It's a pretty rare classic that I can't wait to get back on the road.

— Luca Bartolomei (Sydney Australia)





FOR SALE & WANTED

To advertise, email your photos (1MB minimum) and text to: vespamore@hotmail.co.uk

Vespa Parts



VVC member, Leslie Smith, has asked me to inform club members that he has a good stock of classic Vespa spares for sale...

“Over the years I have bought any new old stock, dealers had of Douglas and Piaggio Vespa parts, I have a good range from Rod to SS 180 and a few

parts of small frame and Rally. The pictures are a small part of them.”

If anything takes your fancy or you would like to enquire what parts Leslie has, please email him directly at smith.leslie@btinternet.com

Vespa T5 PX125E



1992 MK1 Vespa T5 in great overall condition. Well maintained by owner and Retrospective Scooters mechanic, Steve Besemer. Bodywork good, engine sounds and pulls very well - its a T5..! Preferred sale to VVC members.

£1850 ONO, view in London E17.
Contact: Steve Besemer - 07940 258202 (by text message please) - busy spannering!



REMEMBERING MY VESPA SS180 — DAVID SHEPPARD

Active club members and supporters, David and Sue Sheppard, can often be seen together attending VVC rallies and events. I'd heard from another member that David had some old period photos of his early scootering days from the 1960s and was naturally keen to see them. The mainly black and white shots show David on his first scooter, a Douglas Clubman, given to him in 1963 – more to follow on this in a later JOURNAL issue. The other photos showed the 'Vespa Holy Grail' for many scooter riders at the time, the much coveted Super Sport, or SS180, which debuted in 1964. The following year in 1965, young David was very fortunate to acquire a brand new showroom example from Elite Motors in Tooting, South East London - a decision that would go on to change his life and set it on an altogether different road...

WHY..?

My existing Vespa was a 125cc Clubman. Although it was a lovely bike it was not really the ideal bike for attending the various ride-outs with the Crystal Palace Vespa Club. Most other members of the club rode GS160s so my 125 Clubman was by far the slowest bike in the club. It was also not very powerful with a pillion....! After a little while, I wanted a Vespa SS180. I can't recall my thinking around that time, but I must have seen an advert for the launch of the SS180. It looked so good that I planned to purchase one. I also needed a reliable bike to commute to work in the Aldwych. Previous to commuting on my Vespa, I used the Underground trains from Clapham Common to the Embankment or the Aldwych. Obviously, I did not have the money, so I approached my Dad for a loan. Initially he refused, but a colleague working with my Dad, who was a Probation Officer, somehow managed to convince my Dad that it was a good idea.. and think of the tube fares I would be saving...! After a lot of persuasion, Dad lent me

the £199.00 to order my brand new SS180 from Elite Motors in Garratt Lane in Tooting, SE London. I still remember that fantastic feeling when collecting my first brand new red Vespa. Compared to my old Clubman it was such a cool, fast, reliable machine.

COMMUTING TO WORK...!

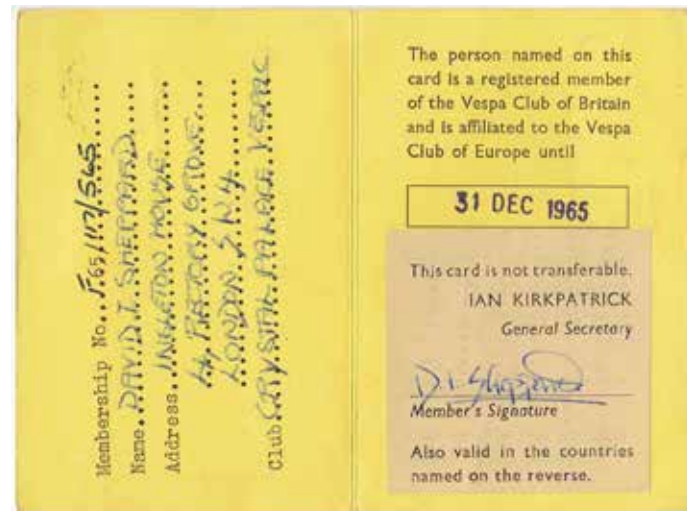
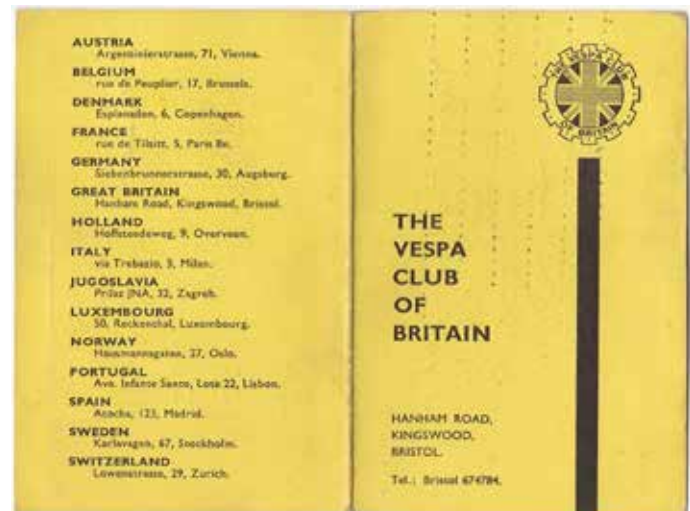
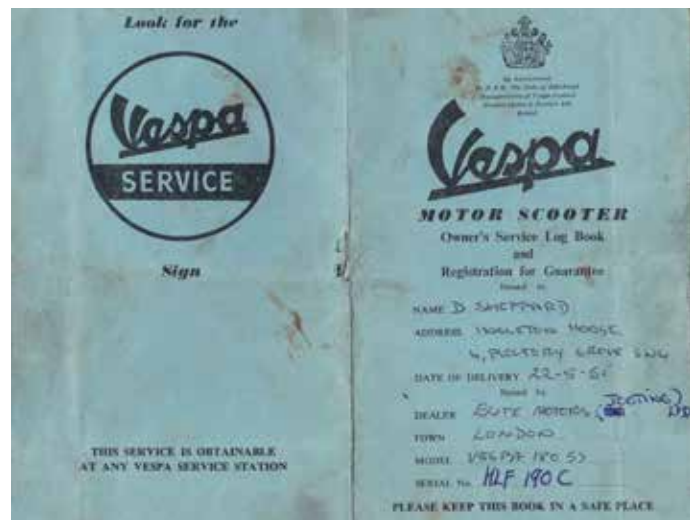
For several years I used my SS180 for my daily commute (in ALL weathers..!) to London. My first job was in The Aldwych working for a firm of Patents and Trade Mark Agents. My Vespa SS180 was used for my journey from Clapham Common to the Aldwych. It was only a 5 mile trip each way.. through South London, Vauxhall and over Waterloo Bridge. I used to park the bike next to St. Clement Danes' Church in the Strand. I recall installing a cut-out switch under the side panel as a precaution. Always kept the Vespa under cover whilst it was parked in London.. fortunately I escaped any problems..! I rode through all weathers, rain sleet or snow. I wore my Belstaff Trialmaster Jacket together with the Belstaff over trousers. The wax jacket and trousers were ok.. but after they got wet, they were stiff and very greasy/dirty. During this time I always wore a crash helmet although they were not yet compulsory. Being the mid 1960s, traffic was not that hectic.. The only

incident I had was in Walworth Road, when a lady walked out in front of me between two cars and I fell over. No real damage to me or the Vespa.. luckily I had crash bars on the bike

CRYSTAL PALACE VESPA CLUB & VCB....

A little while after collecting my SS180, I joined the Vespa Club of Britain (see photos of my membership card from 1965). I recall asking about local Vespa Clubs; my nearest club was the Crystal Palace Vespa Club, who used to meet in a church hall at Red Post Hill in Dulwich/Herne Hill. Before I signed up with the Crystal Palace Club, I recall Bob Toohey visiting my house on his GS160 to introduce himself and the local club. Bob Toohey is now an active member of the VVC and I managed to persuade him to take up scootering again after a long break. The local club was led by George Bradley; a well known figure at that time. I felt so delighted and indeed proud to ride the SS180 to club meetings. Being a new model, I was the first member to have a SS180. It was bright red, smooth, reliable, comfortable and powerful. I spent many happy times going to Crystal Palace Club nights. These comprised of drinking tea, organising Sunday ride-outs and playing table tennis..! Such simple pleasures....! My original Belstaff





Trialmaster jacket that I used all that time ago... still has the sewn on Crystal Palace Club badge on the arm..!! Apart from various rallies I attended, we used to meet up on Sundays at the top of Crystal Palace and ride to various places on the coast, Eynsford and to many villages in Kent and Sussex. Brighton, of course, was always a good place to end up. En route, we would also stop off at numerous transport cafes along the way; the Wimpy Bar in Camberwell was a favourite.. The club used to organise an annual London Trial starting at the Albert Hall and finishing (I think..) at The Lyons Corner House in London. I do recall going on overnight rallies and various hill climbs, in particular, a large rally held on Purley Way Playing Fields opposite Croydon Airport in SE London. I also attended a large National Rally in Nottingham in 1965; I still have the cog badge and banner. I have the original photo of me going through a ford on my SS180.. I think this was during the Nottingham Rally... Although I can't recall the exact details, I got involved in a gymkhana jousting event... I think I was on the back of Bob Toohey's Vespa..! I did a camping tour of South Wales on my SS180 with my brother, who was on his motorcycle; we started the tour from my parents' house in Bristol.

SS 180... PROBLEMS

My bike suffered from a number of seizures which resulted in complaints to Douglas (Sales and Ser-

vice) in Bristol. After a lot of correspondence, Douglas finally agreed to replace the barrel and piston with new components. I seemed to have rejected their offer to have a reconditioned one..! I still have all the correspondence.. (See page 2 of JOURNAL and the initial letter David received in reply - note the very nice Douglas headed paper). As my parents had a house in Bristol at that time, I remember walking (7 miles..!) all the way from Clifton to Kingswood to collect the new barrel and piston from the Douglas factory.

DATING SUE ON MY SS180...

Whilst attending Crystal Palace Club nights and about a year after picking up (May 1965) my SS180, I started going out with Sue in April 1966.. Sue was attending the Crystal Palace Vespa Club and had previously been going out with another couple of guys in the club...!! Not sure if it was my good looks or personality... or, indeed, my fantastic brand new reliable, smooth, comfortable SS180.. but we started 'courting'... (very old fashioned term nowadays..). We got engaged and even had an official 'engagement party'.... that's what you did in those days..!! I was living in Clapham at the Boys Home run by my Dad and Mum. It was a very large residence, approx 35 boys and several House Fathers. I was very fortunate as the home had all the facilities one could ask for.. snooker tables, two full size table tennis tables, basketball pitch, plenty of grounds and spare rooms



and garages. It even had a large TV room, which was an old Chapel. Obviously being young I used all the facilities that were available.. not too much time for 'courting'... as such... Sue lived in Herne Hill, which was only 3 miles away.. so in between playing snooker, table tennis and basketball etc, I used to pick her up on the SS180 a couple of times a week to go to club meetings and ride-outs. Sue was a great pillion passenger and hardly ever complained... although we have been through some horrendous weather and cold...! As time went by, I rented a flat in the same road as Sue in Herne Hill. The Vespa came with me to my new 'independence'.. I can't remember selling the Vespa... but sadly did so. The Vespa was swapped for a Triumph Tiger 100 SS 500cc motorcycle.. (poor man's Bonneville)... what was I think-

ing..!? Shortly after that I got a lovely Austin Seven Mini.. We got married on 19th September 1970; so we are celebrating our 50th Wedding Anniversary this year..!!

MEANT TO BE...

My SS180 was my favourite Vespa and being my first NEW vehicle it was a memorable experience. Had it not been for this bike, my life would have been so very, very different. After all this time I still recall that great feeling of excitement and independence on the road, by simply twisting the throttle and going.... I still hanker for an SS180... but have no spare space.. at the moment....!!

Words and photos - David Sheppard.



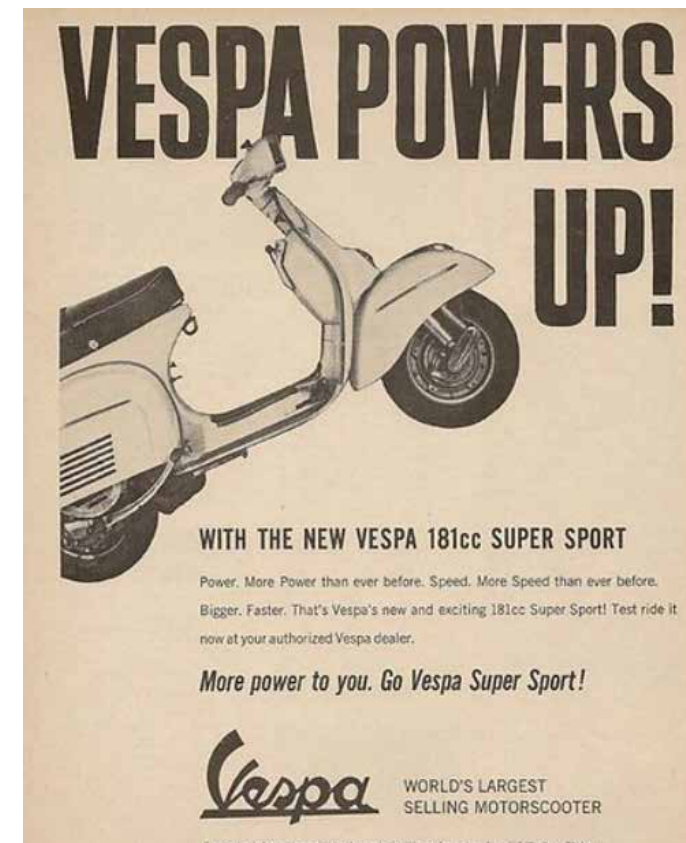


THE VESPA SS180 IN DETAIL

VSC1T 1001 – VSCIT 36700 = 35700 Units

Introduced in Italy in October 1964 (but not on sale in the UK till May 1965), the SS180 was the replacement for the GS160. The GS in both 150 and 160 forms had achieved iconic status, and being aware of this Piaggio determined that the new model would keep the GS name. The change of mind came very late in the day, too late in fact to prevent the spare parts book describing it as the "GS Super sports 180". The SS180 (as the name was abbreviated to) was essentially an amalgam of the existing GL and GS160 models. From the former came the front half of the frame, headset, rear light and saddle. The latter donated the rear half of the frame, complete engine and transmission unit, and the front suspension. The only really new parts specific to this model were the panels, toolbox and mudguard. Of course there were detail differences in the engine. Apart from being bored out to 180cc, the small end was now a bearing instead of a bush and the flywheel had five retaining bolts instead of three. To everybody's relief the ignition was not now dependant on the battery. The SS180 was available in red or white, and later on in blue as well. This in itself was something of a departure by Piaggio who had not previously offered more than a single colour on the home market. Models such as the VB1 and the VBA were

made in alternative colours, but for export only. The only significant changes came in October 1967 when the horn casting was altered to accommodate the new type Piaggio badge. At the same time there were a couple of minor alterations to the inner frame pressings. When compared to the preceding GS160 there was rather more standardization of parts (e.g. leg shield pressings and seat) and a certain reduction in quality (less metal in the frame, thinner floor trim rails etc). Continued refinement of the mechanical details, on the other hand, led to a scooter that was better to ride and even more reliable. These twin characteristics of continued cost-cutting in the frames but ever improving mechanics were, in fact, part of a trend that had started with the GS160 and continued via the Rally 180 and 200 right up to the P range. The production figures were considerably less than for the GS 160, but this is more a reflection of declining market conditions than any particular deficiency in the scooter. So how should we view the SS180 now? The styling changes were rather forced upon Piaggio who had to respond to the squared-off edges on the Lambretta Slim styles which corresponded to trends in industrial design generally, and which were perceived to look more modern than the classic curves of the GS. Consequently the SS styling always looks like the compromise it is – the upward curve of the frame under the



seat being in conflict with the squared off panels and headset. The SS rapidly found favour with the Mods, but on their demise it rather descended into obscurity. With the dawn of the Mod revival in 1979, the SS was perceived as being less desirable than a GS160 and values were correspondingly lower. This situation remained unchanged until around five years ago, but now the SS has caught up again as it has been recognised as the good scooter it is, and one with a legitimate Mod history to boot.

Words by Ashley Lenton (from Ashley's Vespa in Detail series).

David Sheppard's account of his SS180 days and excellent photos presented an opportunity to reprint Ashley's entry from his Vespa in Detail series and to show off this very well kept original example, that I photographed in December last year. Belonging to VVC collector Darren Bradbury, it was registered from new in July 1966, by Hines of Bilston Ltd. Bilston is a market town in the West Midlands, part of Wolverhampton. The first owner was Ronald James Morgan, buying it that same month from Hines. Summer 1966.. heady days indeed they must have been - riding around on a brand spanking bright red Vespa SS180, the same red as worn by the England football team about to lift the world cup at the end of that very month! Darren purchased this SS from Jason White in late 2015. Jason bought it from Roger Coleman in 1996/97, who in turn had acquired it a year earlier from previous owner, Malcolm Smith. Following the paper trail, Malcolm was the second owner, buying the scooter from Ronald Morgan

in 1989/90, after coming across it in a small ad in the Bike Mart section of MCN (Motorcycle News), in November 1989 – pre internet, when you had to trawl the classifieds! The advert read: VESPA 180SS, 1966, genuine and original, one owner, offers. Oh to come across that now..!! The SS came with a few documents, including its original log book and user manual - note R Morgan written on front cover. Back in the early '90s when good original Italian scooters were abundant, many imports were restored at the first sign of peeling paint! Malcolm had the good sense not to restore this lovely Douglas SS, which had survived years of British weather; thankfully he had an appreciation of patina and originality and thereby saved this one. Returning to Jason White, who had bought the SS for his then girlfriend Wendy Lakin, in the 90's he went into the classic scooter business with Dez Askill, setting themselves up as 'Classically Italian'. In time they amicably parted with Dez going on to establish 'Gran Sport' in Birmingham and these days plies his trade under the banner of 'Disco Dez Scooters' in Dunley, Worcestershire. Bringing the story full circle back to 2015, Darren bought the SS from Jason, via former partner Dez.

I've photographed a few original SS180s but it was a treat to see this very straight Super Sport 180, complete with its documents.

Thanks very much to Darren Bradbury and Dez Askill, who was in conversation with Darren for this piece.

Words and 35mm film photos by Paul Hart.





Page 6 (continued on Page 5).

WARNING.—THE PERSON IN WHOSE NAME A VEHICLE IS REGISTERED MAY OR MAY NOT BE THE LEGAL OWNER OF THE VEHICLE. PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS ARE WARNED, THEREFORE, THAT THIS REGISTRATION BOOK IS NOT PROOF OF LEGAL OWNERSHIP.

Name and Address of the Person registered with the Council whose Date Stamp is affixed hereto, as the Person keeping the vehicle, the particulars of which are given on page 8.

Full Name: HINES OF BILSTON LTD
(IN BLOCK CAPITALS)
Address: 29 High St
Bilston

Official Signature: Dawda

1st CHANGE. (SEE NOTES 10-14 ON PAGE 2)

Full Name: RONALD JAMES MORGAN
(IN BLOCK CAPITALS)
Address: PRINCESS ANNE RD
BRADLEY BILSTON

Official Signature: R. J. Morgan

Stamp: JUL 1966

JET WHITTLE



Photo supplied by Peter Burley.

VVC's first Chairman, Jet Whittle, on his Vespa 90 negotiating a Rough Ride around 1966. Jet was an Area Representative for Douglas of Bristol and in 2015, became the tenth member of the Veteran Vespa Club to enter the Hall of Fame.