

## THE PIAGGIO BUILT 150 STANDARD 1955 – 1959

<b>VL1 - 1955</b>	<b>VL1T 1001 - VL1T 1700</b>	<b>Production 16000</b>
<b>VL2 - 1955 - 56</b>	<b>VL2T 17001 - VL2T 93101</b>	<b>Production 76101</b>
<b>VL3 - 1956 - 57</b>	<b>VL3T 93102 - VL3T 132737</b>	<b>Production 49636</b>
<b>VB1 - 1957 - 59</b>	<b>VB1T 1001 - VB1T 99700</b>	<b>Production 98700</b>

By 1955 Piaggio was producing not only the 125 cc World Model, but also the 150cc GS which was described last month. The Scooter was now more than a mere means of transport, and the market was becoming more sophisticated. Piaggio came to the conclusion that there was a type of customer who wanted a little more power than the standard 125cc model, but did not want the performance or expense of the GS. Consequently a basic 150cc model with eight inch wheels was introduced in 1955, and evolved through the VBA and VBB (featured in Journal 7) to the last 150 Super of 1977.

The early versions are all derived from the 125cc World Model. As time went on, Piaggio kept upgrading the 150 with more and more bits from the GS, in order to distance it from the 125. This explains why there are so many variations of the 150 within such a short space of time. Simultaneously, the 125 spec was reduced, meaning that by the time the VB1 came along there was a huge difference between it and the contemporary 125 model. This makes an interesting contrast to Lambretta who had only minor spec differences between their 125cc and 150cc LD variants

The different designations - e.g. VL1 were only for the purposes of ordering spare parts etc, and were not normally the name by which the model was sold. All the versions featured this month were marketed in Italy as the "Vespa 150" irrespective of whether they were a VL1 or a VB1 .

Just to confuse matters, sometimes they were exported to other countries and sold under different names. For example, Douglas imported the VL3 , and sold it as the "Continental", and the VB1 as the "Clubman".

Description of models

### **VL1**

This first version was very similar to the World Model. The main differences were an increase in the Bore and Stroke to give 150cc, and the repositioning of the headlight onto the handlebars. A proper cast alloy headset in the style of the GS was presumably considered too expensive, so a rather more modest affair surrounded just the headlight and a new square shaped speedo. The controls were still mounted on traditional chromed steel handlebars. A steering lock was provided as standard for the first time.

### **VL2**

This slightly revised version featured floorboard rubbers which extended round to the engine mounts. The first signs of taking the 150 upmarket were now evident, since the VL2 now featured a chromed horn.

### **VL3**

The VL3 was a major revision of the 150 theme, and although at first sight it can be hard to tell it apart from the VL2 in fact there are many differences. As part of the process of moving the 150 upmarket the VL3 gained the legshield pressings of the GS - these being more curved and attractive to the eye. Also from the GS came a peak for the head light and a lock for the toolbox, and the larger petrol tank. The

handlebars were slightly narrower than those of the VL2. There were alterations to the wiring to ensure a better headlight beam, and the speedo now had a light. There was also an improved saddle, and the brake drums now had small fins cast into them in order to aid cooling. The optional spare wheel was moved from its rather unsightly position at the rear, and was now on the inside of the legshields. Finally the cylinder porting was enlarged, and a revised carb incorporating a larger main jet was fitted. These last two changes improved acceleration slightly, but did not affect the top speed which remained at 50 mph. Incidentally, the Technica series incorrectly lists the VL3 as merely a frame number variation on the VL2

## **VB1**

Piaggio was still not convinced that the 150 was upmarket enough, so after a short production run the VL3 was given even more GS bits and renamed the VBI - though still sold as the "Vespa 150". Why the new version was not the "VL4" is a bit of a mystery, but then Piaggio's numbering system was not always logical !

The VB1 had the complete alloy headset of the GS (though not the separate ignition switch), which greatly helped its appearance. Because of this, it also featured the larger diameter GS headlight. Since the control cables now ran through the headset, the narrow pressing which divides the legshields in front of the riders knees had to be changed for the slightly wider GS one. The use of this headset necessitated a slightly longer steering column, and for the cable adjusters to be moved down to beside the gear selector. The engine was unchanged from the VL3. By now, the 150 featured a frame that was very similar to that of the GS, and was even starting to look like its illustrious stablemate. However it still only had 8 inch wheels and no dual seat [the dual seat fitted to the VB1 sold in Britain was not like that of the GS], and of course it did not have the highly tuned engine of the GS, nor the fourth gear.

A very attractive metallic silver-blue was the most common colour, but the VB1 was also available in pale yellow and possibly other colours.

(captions)

(1501) The VL1

(1502) VL1 front end showing painted horn and forklink cover

(15080) VL3 front end showing curved legshields, chrome horn and polished forklink cover

(15083) VB1 front end showing GS VS2-4 style headset but without ignition switch. This headset was not carried over to the VBA, but reappeared on later versions of the VNB 125cc.

(15084) VB1 headset showing the new switchgear that was carried over to the VBA.

(15083) The VL3 headset

