

# VESPA COG BADGES

by Ashley Lenton



Metal cog badges were historically produced each year to commemorate the annual rally. However, in recent years a cog badge has been produced for each rally. These have cost around £25-£28 and have until recently still been produced by LNP. Due to rising costs and quality issues the final LNP Zylo badge was produced in May 2012 for the Ashfields VVC event. The club now sources its cog badges from abroad, these sell for around £20. Available cog badges can normally be obtained at events or ordered and paid for through the club shop

There is also some regalia stock and cog badges which is sold by the Club. See the SHOP section of the web site or the latest edition of the club Journal.

British Vespa cog badges are probably the most desirable items of Vespa memorabilia, and possibly of scootering memorabilia in general - there being no real Lambretta equivalent. Other countries did (and still do) produce Vespa badges. These were sometimes cog shaped, but could be in just about any size or material. The Vespa Club of Britain (VCB) (and its Veteran Vespa Club (VVC) offshoot) alone have produced badges of a consistent size and overall design and in the same material from the 'fifties to the present day.

When you get together a collection of cog badges you have in front of you a condensed visual history of the VCB/VVC. Every rally badge has memories attached to it, be it people, places, breakdowns or the weather. When I look at my VVC Cheltenham 1991 badge I swear I can still feel the rain. Even during scootering's darkest days - the seventies - the VVC faithfully produced a rally badge every year, even though with less than thirty members it could barely afford to do so. And we should be glad that it did, because once continuity is lost it can never be regained.

Cog badges are made to commemorate rallies or events held by the VCB or VVC, or as signs of membership of an individual branch of the VCB. The first rally badge seems to have been the one made for Woburn in 1956 (see photo). This was smaller than the type we are used to and lacked the familiar section at the bottom. Incidentally this badge seems to have been the inspiration for the latest VCB club badge. Several early individual branch badges (e.g. Bristol VC) were made in this size.

For the 1956 Goodwood Endurance Trial the definitive badge shape emerged. For the next ten years or so the VCB produced a badge for every annual national rally, and many other rallies as well. Shown here are badges from 1958 (a personal favourite) and 1961. From the late sixties till the present day the VCB production of badges has been a bit spasmodic, but fortunately since 1964 we have had the VVC producing at least one - and often two - badges every year.

The majority of VVC rally badges have adhered closely to a common format as typified by the 1975 examples but there have been exceptions such as the 1997. The VCB has occasionally used the larger size of its national club badge for special events. An example is the badge produced for the fiftieth anniversary of Vespa rally at Billing in 1996.

Rally badges are fairly well documented, but the same cannot be said of individual club badges. Earlier on I mentioned the consistency of shape and material of these cog badges, but of course there have been a few exceptions. Cog badges are expensive to make, and the need to cut costs has resulted in the occasional rally or club badge being made in plastic such as the Westminster VC badge. There were also a few badges made in alloy, but a real oddity is the badge made by Bromley VC for the 1965 International Rally. Instead of the usual engraved steel this one appears to have been die-cast. This has predictably led to poor definition around the edges of the "cog". I can't believe that this process would have cut costs at all, so maybe this was just a mistake.

I'm not going to make the mistake of trying to produce a price guide for these badges. However, since the current price of a new rally badge is £20, it is reasonable to take this as a "benchmark" for those produced in the eighties and nineties. It also seems reasonable to assume that those produced in the fifties and sixties are worth a premium on top of this.

The question of rarity is quite an interesting one. The usual situation of "the older the rarer" is reversed where rally badges are concerned. The National Rallies of the late fifties and early sixties were large affairs, so consequently hundreds of badges were made to commemorate them. Compare these with seventies or early eighties VVC rallies for which only thirty or so badges might have been produced.

The rarity of club badges also varies a lot. A large and long-lived club such as Thames Valley would have produced many badges, while a small barely remembered club might have had as few as ten made.

Trying to collect all the cog badges is a somewhat frustrating exercise since nobody knows exactly how many there are, and anyway most owners would have to be surgically removed from their badges. I just appreciate the ones I have and treat it as a bonus when another turns up. Mind you, if anyone wants to sell a 1966 National Rally badge.....

It would not be possible to show all the badges on this site. There is however a very good list with pictures of all LNP made VCB badges on the web site for Brighton Vespa Club.

P.S. The VVC holds pdf copies of many VVC cog badges produced in recent years.