



### **THE VESPA 50R IN DETAIL**

Actually, not as much detail as would have been wished for, for reasons that will become apparent. Introduced in 1969, the 50R eventually replaced both the 50N and 50L, though the latter machines appear to have been produced in parallel for a while. Trim wise the 50R was effectively a 50N with the addition of legshield trim and a mudguard crest, but the important change was that of separate finned hubs to take the nine inch wheels. This meant that only the Vespa 90 retained the old four-stud disc wheel, a feature that right dated back to the 1945 prototype.

It is surprisingly difficult to get accurate information about this Vespa, and this is perhaps best illustrated by its feature in the Technica series. There is no proper photograph (possibly because nobody had been bothered to restore a 50R), just a small catalogue illustration. The cursory text proclaims that there were no changes at all until the model ceased production in 1983, yet the specification sheet overleaf lists a change to a four speed gearbox along the way. The total production is given as an impressive 238,761, but figures quoted elsewhere go up to a simply astounding 868,780!

At least all the Vespa books are agreed that the model in question is a Vespa R. It's just unfortunate that Piaggio's marketing were not informed – they were sending out catalogues featuring a “50N” right until 1983. There is no mention of four speeds in the 1981 version shown here.

This slapdash approach to accuracy actually tells us plenty. Basically nobody is interested in the 50R. Authors tracing the history of the Vespa always give a reasonable amount of space to the original 50 on account of its technical significance, but a kind of fatigue sets in when it comes to later variations. You can bet these people know how many gears a GS has. Yet even if you take the lowest quoted production figure, the 50R played a major role in keeping Piaggio afloat in the seventies. Thousands of holidaymakers in the Mediterranean hired 50Rs in the seventies and eighties even if they didn't know exactly which Vespa model it was.

We don't know the exact specification of this Vespa, and we have no idea how many were made. We can't even be 100% sure of the model designation. But the 50R (if that is what it is) thoroughly deserves its place in Vespa history.