



THE RALLY 200 IN DETAIL

VSE1

VSE 1T 001001 – VSE1T 0042275

Total 41,275 Units

The Rally 200 has a secure place in scootering affections. Its 1972 introduction may have come too late for it to have any original Mod associations (at least in southern England), but its place in the sun came in the 'eighties when the combination of 200ccs, electronic ignition and sixties (ish) looks proved irresistible to many. The Rally 200 retains a loyal following to this day.

The Rally 200 followed on from the preceding Rally 180 and the main change was indeed a 200cc engine together with electronic ignition. New style badging was also introduced with this model, and this was quickly applied throughout the range. Curiously, to begin with the ignition switch was replaced with a cutout switch – although the former was reinstated fairly quickly. “Sidewinder Stripes” (which had been infiltrating automotive fashion since their first appearance on the 1964 Le Mans Ford GT 40) reached Pontadera at last. There weren't too many changes along the way, the most significant occurring in the last year of production when a change from FEMSA to Ducati electronic ignition necessitated alterations to the crankshaft and flywheel. There was quite a range of colours including red, dark blue, yellow, white and silver. Finally, an autolube system (previously briefly seen on the Super and Sprint) made a re-appearance as an optional extra.

Some people wonder why the Rally 200 appears to rust more quickly than earlier than earlier Vespas. The reasons are to do with the era in which it was produced and the pressures under which its maker operated.

Like any other manufacturer, Piaggio was under pressure from the cost-inflation that afflicted European industry from the late sixties onwards. Reducing costs was essential in order to ensure survival. One way to tackle this was to substitute plastic for metal. The design of the Lambretta made this a practical proposition, and the GP was made with plastic toolbox, rear light housing and horn casting grill. More items would surely have been made of plastic if Lambretta had continued production. The monocoque construction of the Vespa, in contrast, tended to limit this practice to items such as the spare wheel cover introduced for the preceding Rally 180. The latter had already dispensed with as much bright work as was practicable. Savings by component sharing with smaller models (e.g. front mudguard) had also been introduced with the Rally 180.

The only way of reducing costs further, then, was by reducing the amount of metal in the frame. A good way of demonstrating this is to count the number of supporting struts under the floor. The GS150 has five, the GS160 four, the SS180 and Rally 180 three, and the Rally 200 only two. Needless to say great emphasis was placed on the “weight saving” of each new model!

So how should the Rally 200 be viewed? On the credit side it is a delight to drive, having both a high top speed (reputedly higher than the subsequent P200) and a good torque range. Electronic ignition and 2% mixture give it an edge over the GS and SS, and the basic styling is still quite attractive. On the other hand, that self same styling has been corrupted with tacky side-stripes, bits of matt black and a general lack of bright work. The Rally appears to rust more quickly than earlier models simply because it has less metal to start with.

At the end of the day you can't criticise Piaggio for operating as a business. They are still with us while others, who paid less attention to such matters, have long since departed. The dynamics of the Rally are excellent, and if the frames struggle to reach twenty-five years without a bit of attention –well then so does the bodywork of any car from the same period. It can be fairly said that overall that the Rally 200 was a good scooter produced in difficult times. We should be pleased that Piaggio persevered with scooters at a time when all around had thrown in the towel. Where would we have been without them?