

Kevin Thompson Talks About the 850ss / Monza

A brief history of events with Agusta Concessionaires GB operations circa late 1970s. The Bate family owners of Haymil motors Slough were the original importers of Saab cars to the UK and after Saab set up its own import operations the Bate's struck a deal with Agusta to import there motorcycles into the UK.

The company Agusta Concessionaires GB was set up and run by Peter Bate and other's from there car retail operations in Farnham Common (near Slough). On a visit there I realised they were all car people and could not ride a motorcycle, no one there even had a licence to do so. Peter offered me a job there and then as I was a motorcycle mechanic with a licence. In the first week we drove down to the factory in Italy where I was updated with some factory training on these motorcycles. From there on I made visits every 2 months to liaise with the factory and either pick up bikes and or spares. We imported a total of 99 4 cylinder America model machines into the UK in the late 1970s. Some were spoked wheels, Scarab brakes, 789cc engine but with standard American market exhaust. (of note we did sell one of these models to Bill Lomas who was kind enough to give me a signed photo of himself on a 500cc Moto Guzzi V8 in the 1956 German GP, he seemed to think it never ever ran on 8 cylinders.) The spoked wheel model America sold for 3187 pounds.

The more popular 789cc epm mag wheel model sold for 3600 pounds. At 4200 pounds was the 832 Monza. Early ones were assembled at the factory using extra parts from a kit that was coming via the race shop. The kit comprised of new single barrels, pistons, 27mm dellortos, spring loaded inlet manifolds, Magneti Marelli twin point distributor, exhaust cam replaced with another inlet cam, open chrome exhaust with as used on the older 750s, extra machining of the top crankcase was required to fit the larger cylinder barrel liners. Cylinder head inlet ports opened up.

After more factory training later bikes were converted by myself with the engineering work completed by a company in Slough. Later conversion kits came direct from Arturo Magni using 2 x twin cylinders painted black. Our test bike/press bike SRX833S was used and abused by all and sundry and never ever broke down. It would sometimes come back with blue clutch plate's, bits hanging off and with the tester reporting "Well we got 144mph on the radar but run out of track". We had on permanent loan one on these models to Phil Read, he was another one in the blue clutch plate business, so the message is never slip the clutch with 1000s of rpm and make sure clutch rod adjustment screw is set up when engine is hot. The clutch is the very same as is used in the 350 twin and really not man enough for the job.

The 861cc model sold for 4990 pounds. This was another kit supplied by Arturo Magni same as per 832 but with 30mm pumper dellortos, upswept exhaust system, new rev counter, twin block cylinder barrels. All of this model sold by us were assembled by us in UK.

About 12 350s twins were imported into UK and sold for 1200 pounds.

Either 2 or 3 125s singles were imported and sold for 800 something pounds (sold one to Mick Walker who is the author of many motorcycle books)

Once MV Agusta announced that production of motorcycles had ceased Agusta Concessionaires GB was unfortunately wound up with all the spares and records sold to Station Garage Taplow who were previously part of the dealer network.

In the 1980s the MV Agusta owners club GB purchased the remaining stock of spares from the factory and have control of these to date.