

Glenn's
HD WL45
& The

Never Ending Story



Glenn's WL45 trike was built in the '70s, smashed up and rebuilt in the '80s, has had more owners than a potty in a typhoid epidemic and now it's up for grabs. Again. Blimey.



SPEC

MAKE & MODEL: 1942 Harley Davidson, WL45.

FRAME: Standard Harley front loop, one-off rear by Norman Wilding in 1" pipe. Trike used to have a 4" goosenecked, raked 10" over springers. New headstock and forks shortened by Kooter Browns.

ENGINE: Standard 1942 sidevalve.

FORKS: Original HD springers, used to be 10" over stock, shortened by Kooter Browns.

BRAKES: Front: Harley Davidson. Rear: Morris 1000.

WHEELS: Front: Harley Davidson hub with Tiger Cub rim. Rear: Slot mags 8.5"x145s.

TANK: Original Harley Fatbobs.

SEAT: Solo sprung.

MUDGUARDS: Fibreglass Fatbobs.

BAR: Big wide pullbacks.

EXHAUST: 2-1 with Sportster silencer.

OIL TANK: One-off by Harley Pete.

LIGHTS: Front: CCI Bates. Rear: Nitelight.

PAINT: Powder-coated black.

WIRING: 6V system by previous owner.

OTHER BITS: Cut and modified diff to take CBS00 rear sprocket and chain drive. Builtaco trials bike chain tensioner. Rear axle bearings replaced with sealed units. Mini handbrake.

THANKS TO: Peter Hewitt, Alan Birch and Mum for lending me the money.



A trike

with history, this 'un, and no, it's not a Servicar. Confused? The story starts in the late '70s, a time when trikes were an extremely rare sight, most of the ones around being VW-powered kits, and the concept of mating a bike engine with a car axle was still fairly uncharted territory. Enter one Norman Wilding, Nutty Norm to his mates, who, after building some pretty cool custom cars, decided to combine his love of cars and bikes, and build himself a trike. A bit like that crap advert on the telly, I suppose. A Servicar would've been ideal, but the phrase 'hen's teeth' and 'billions of pounds' applied, and so he started looking into the

bike engine/car rear axle theory, and even built a dog rough BSA A65 prototype trike to work out his theories, and to test Police reaction. By all accounts, it wasn't exactly beautiful, and did get a lot of Police attention, resulting - bizarrely - in Norm getting a finger wagging for 'not using seat bolt mounts as fitted by the manufacturer'. Yeah, right. But, the important thing was that the trike worked, and therefore it was time for the real thing...

He got hold of a WL45 lump, a frame and a set of original springers, which he extended by 10". The back of the frame was cut off and attached to an Austin A35 rear axle (narrowed by 9") by a new rear subframe made from inch gas pipe. The ring gear



inside the diff was replaced with a Honda CB500 rear sprocket, and the chain was kept taut by a Bulltaco chain tensioner. Norm was only too aware of the the perils of running an open diff, and so wisely replaced the bearings with sealed units, and regularly greased the spider gears.

The trike was finished in metallic brown with tan seats with a lot of chrome plating on the engine and forks, but was very tastefully done - especially nice for a '70s custom. It won Norm Best Trike at Belle Vue, and Best Trike and Best Engineering at the '79 Kent Custom Bike Show.

Then there's a gap in the tale; the trike was sold on, and gradually became more and more decrepit, as it was passed from owner to owner in the backs of vans, tea chests, and carrier bags. Then it was nailed together again by some bike shop, who quickly sold it to a guy who wrote it off on a sharp bend on the way home immediately after buying it, or so the legend goes. Whatever, it came to pass that the Harley was dumped in a dusty lock-up and forgotten about...

That was until a guy called Harley Pete heard about the remains, and decided to let the sidevalve see the light of day again. He bought the trike in the late '80s and straightened it back out, having the engine completely rebuilt with new pistons, bushes, seals and bearings by renowned 45 specialist Iain Cotterill. Pete had the fibreglass Fatbob rear 'guards made up, and sourced a Fatbob tank to match. The trike was finished in gloss black with red detailing, and - wait for it - was put up for sale. Again.

It disappeared again, during which time Kooter Browns were called upon to weld on a new headstock with near standard rake, and to shorten the springers back to something like stock length. Then, a couple of years ago, Glenn, the current owner, spotted the trike in the local Auto Trader. 'I liked it straight away,' he told me, 'I wanted a Harley, and I'd always fancied a trike for carting the family around.' The asking price of two-and-a-half grand seemed about right, so Glenn went to have a butcher's. 'I loved it as soon as I rode it,' he said, 'I was a little worried about availability of spare parts and the

reliability of the engine, but I wanted something different, so I bought it.'

Basically the trike sits just as Glenn bought it. He's spent his time cleaning and servicing it, although he has thought about fitting more seating for his wife and child, and a 12 volt conversion wouldn't go amiss either. Glenn just rides the trike locally, although he did blast over the hills to the



Rock & Blues in '94, where the trike went down really well with all who saw it. Which is something that happens a lot with the old Harley; wherever Glenn parks it up, everyone from kids to old men love it.

On the road the Harley's happy sitting at about 60mph, and it's pretty stable around corners, thanks to the extra leverage afforded by those huge pull-backs. It's been pretty reliable for Glenn, although it can be a bit moody to start if it hasn't ran for a few days. There have been a few moments though; the left-hand axle coupling let go, it'd simply corroded through old age, and left Glenn a bit stuck. Fortunately Alan Birch, one of Glenn's mates, rescued him with his van. Oh, and the engine rattled its way loose on the way back from the Rock & Blues. Apart from that it's been dead good.

When I rode out to take the photos, there was Glenn on the sidevalve, his brother on his 1340 Evo and his girlfriend on her SR500, and me on Auntie Social. After the shots were done we bike-swapped,

which was ace, and meant that I finally got to ride this trike - a trike whose picture has been on my wall (and is now glued to my sofa - don't ask) since I first bought Street Machine magazine back in 1979, so I would've been eight years old.

So what's it like to ride? Well, once I'd got it'd fired up (there's definitely a knack), it was a case of foot clutch pedal depressed, hand gear change moved gingerly into first, revs up, clutch fed in and... nothing! Right, it's not in gear, how embarrassing. Clutch lever depressed, and it goes into first with a solid clunk - that's better. Revs up, clutch in and we're away! The first thing you notice is that from a standing start it shakes its head pretty alarmingly, and you think it's going to steer itself of the road as you take your hand off the bars to select second. It doesn't though, and as your speed builds up, it gets more and more stable. Nothing that couldn't be sorted with a bit of damping up front. The second thing you notice is the cacophony of mechanical noise from the old engine, the chain and the rear axle. The sprung seat makes it feel as though it's got two flat back tyres, so that takes some getting used to as well. However, it handles okay, pulls well, and once you've got the thing up to cruising speed, with the old sidevalve chugging away like a good 'un, it's magic. Full of, erm, olde worlde charm an' that. Brill.

So good in fact that if I had two-and-a-half grand burning a hole in my pocket, I'd have it off Glenn without a second thought about the practicalities of owning such an old trike. Yes, that's right, it's for sale again, and ready to start another chapter in this seemingly never ending story.

Gill Mark

AWOL

If you are seriously interested in giving this piece of history a good home, ring Glenn on 01298 71407 and make him an offer of about £2500.