

ride > honda cb175 k6



# THE TINY TWIN

In the 60s Soichiro Honda proved without question, that the Japanese could build reliable, economical and cheap motorcycles, but winning over the hearts, minds and pounds of the fickle British buyers in the next decade demanded something more.

Although the superbike had well and truly arrived in the showrooms and the psyche of the British motorcycling public, parsimony was still the name of the game, and small capacity machines continued to be the mainstay of the market.

Honda realised a straightforward revamp of the CB's somewhat pedestrian predecessor; the CD, wouldn't be exciting enough to tempt the superbike-hungry public, but those same buyers weren't prepared to fork out superbike purchase prices or running costs. For this reason, Soichiro and his team decided a revamp was in order and set about taking the basic ingredients of the CD soup and spicing them up a bit. Out went the basic specification and bulbous looks, in came sporty chrome mudguards, exposed and adjustable rear shocks, uprated forks, twin leading-shoe front brake, 12v electrics and on the earlier models a friction steering damper. The new model also got a fully exposed chain and the combined clock/headlamp assembly was ditched in favour of a separate, more modern set-up.

Along with the new sporty image, came the engine credentials to back it up. Although the new model used the same air-cooled, four-stroke, twin-cylinder, sohc unit as the CD, the addition of a five-speed gearbox and twin 20mm carbs increased power output to a claimed 22bhp and top speed to 80mph – only five quicker than the CD on paper, but on the road it felt much livelier. This



Though somewhat overshadowed by their 400, 550 and 750cc brethren, Honda's smaller CBs are just as much fun as their larger stablemates. Phil Turner leaps aboard a 175 K6 and is pleasantly surprised by the whole affair.

increase in performance didn't come at the expense of reliability or economy either, 75mpg was more than achievable and the new, high-revving unit – redline was set at 10,500rpm – was as tough and durable as its older relative.

To make an engine so rev happy, yet reliable and durable at the same time, was testament to the ingenuity of Soichiro's engineers. Similar in design and shape to the 250cc version of the CB, it uses roller bearings for the main, supporting a 360-degree crank, rollers are also used on the big ends and the cam is chain driven. Add to this a bore and stroke of 52mm and 41mm respectively and it's easy to see why

the motor spins so willingly and lasts so well.

This combination of style, performance, economy and reliability seemed to be just the ticket and the CB sold as well, if not better than the CD, so much so that if you cut your biking teeth in the 70s, chances are you owned one of these or knew someone who did.

As we all know, it's for this reason that many classic Japs are now the subject of restoration, by those who can remember riding such machines in their heyday. Rather curiously, Eric Buckley, the owner of this particular bike, never owned a CB until later life, his reasons for reviving this tiny twin were a lot more down to earth;

## HOW IT RIDES

To say I was pleasantly surprised by the CB's performance is an understatement. Admittedly, I approached the little twin with the feeling that it was no more than a CD in sporty clothes, I couldn't have been more wrong; Sochiro and his team did a great job of making sure the CB lived up to its sporting image.

The first thing you notice about the CB is its exhaust note; the silencer does a good job of keeping things nice and sedate at idle, but once the revs start to climb the twin cylinders emit a pure big bike rumble and when the needle points towards the peak power point of 10,000rpm, the combination of induction and exhaust noise manifest themselves as a blood-curdling howl.

It's the engine that really makes the CB; pottering around town traffic is a pleasure, smooth, responsive and very easy to handle, but wind open the throttle and it's a different animal. There's no surge, no lag from the twin carbs, it's just one long curve of usable power.

Keep the revs low and it will crawl from a standstill at walking pace, rev it hard and it takes off at an alarming pace. As with most small capacity machines, the CB needs those revs to keep things moving, but the willingness of the twin to spin up to and

beyond redline, plus the slick operation of the five-speed box make it a pure pleasure.

Cruising speed is around the 65-70mph mark, (top speed, for those who are interested is a shade over 80) quite something for a machine of this size, but it holds it with relative ease until a hill is encountered – back down those gears and get the revs climbing!

Suspension and handling goes a long way to help keep that momentum going too. Admittedly we were on brand-new springs, but nothing other than flat out cornering fazed the machine or rider. Go a little too hot into a corner and the bike does pitch a little, but nothing a little common sense wouldn't cure, and indeed nothing the tyres and brakes couldn't cope with either.

Stopping power from the twin leading shoe front is more than adequate to haul the 294lb machine and 10 stone rider to a swift halt and the rear is just as effective, although dab too hard in the wet and things start getting interesting!

On paper the CB is nothing to write home about, but it is, without doubt, one of the most versatile and fun motorcycles I've had the pleasure of riding. It will potter round town with as much ease as it will scream up a country back lane. A truly remarkable machine.

"I saw one advertised in one of the magazines, and they wanted a thousand pounds for it. I thought hang on a minute, I've got a bike that's just as good as that, well not quite, but it certainly could be. So that's what spurred me on."

It's the first restoration Eric has undertaken, and to be fair he'd have struggled to find a better machine as a starting point. The CB's twin cylinder unit is often commented on as being one of Honda's best engine designs ever and despite the performance modifications, it inherited the simplicity and rugged nature of its low-revving CD counterpart.

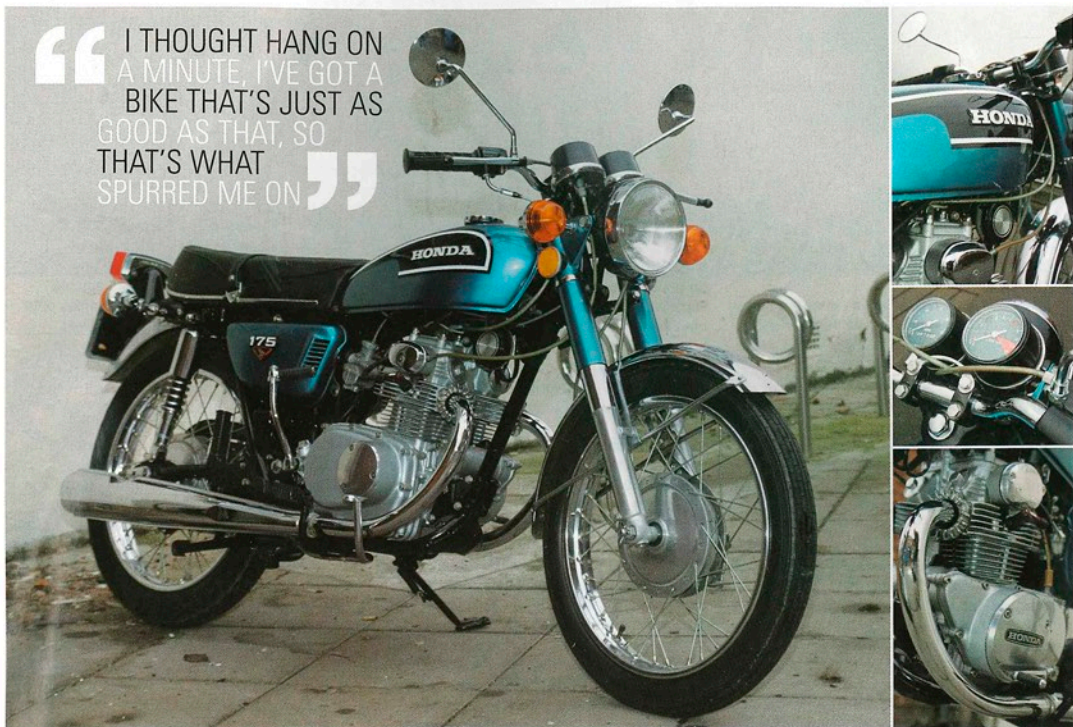
The bike you see before you started out as two machines, Eric acquired both in the late 80s, and, after they had sat in the shed for a while, he set about making two into one. Letting discretion be the better part of valour, he decided it would be better to leave certain bits of the build to the professionals and bundled the engine off to The Restoration Company in Leeds for the full treatment – TRC can blast and polish an engine without stripping it. The frame, swing arm and other sundries also went to the powder coaters, and, while all this was going on, Eric turned his attention to the wheels; "The original front rim was a bit manky so I thought, right I'll have that rebuilt. It's a genuine Honda rim, Honda spokes, with stainless steel bits and pieces, the genuine article. You look at the front one, which is almost brand-new, then you look at the back one and it looks horrible, so you've got to get that one done. Once you start, you've just got to continue. There's no going back once you've started."

Luckily for Eric, most of the spares required for the build were and indeed still are readily available. But, it wasn't all plain sailing and he encountered a bit of difficulty sourcing original items. "The rear shock absorbers were a struggle, because they're the original Honda parts for the bike, but it was just a matter of being patient. I was on holiday down in Suffolk and happened to be near David Silver Spares. I dashed in and asked. I couldn't believe my luck, he just happened to have a pair in."

The exhaust pipes were a bit more of a problem. I got some brand-new ones, but when I took them out of the box the head pipes were a bit thinner than they should have been and the top where it goes into the cylinder head was actually oval. It was bad manufacture and they wouldn't fit." Eric sourced a set of K4 items, almost identical aside from removable baffles, which the K6



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parts didn't have, but for the sake of originality he plans to match a pair of K6 silencers with the heads at a later date. "I've got a re-chromed set of head pipes and you can take them apart, with great difficulty I hasten to add. Whether I can do that myself or whether I'll have to get somebody else to do it, is another matter!"

The rest of the build passed without major incident, once the larger parts were in place and the tank, and side panels had received a shiny new paint job at Rapid Paint Supplies in Thirsk, it was just the fiddly little details to sort out. The whole process took around two years from start to finish. Eric said: "The last big bit, the wheels, were done in about 1992, and by 93 it was basically as you see it now, with just one or two minor bits and pieces left to do."

He admits the original brief of selling the finished CB isn't really an option now, and as we all know the outlay seldom matches the value of any restored machine. Eric explained: "I don't know what it cost to restore, I haven't the faintest idea and I don't want to know either, you can never get your money back. You're paying for the pleasure of doing it and the pleasure of owning it, and if someone else gets pleasure out of it as well it's a bonus."

#### specification

engine	Air-cooled, SOHC, four-stroke twin
capacity	174cc
bore and stroke	52mm x 41mm
power	22bhp at 10,000rpm
transmission	Five speed gearbox, direct gear primary drive
gear ratios	1st 24.32, 2nd 16.50, 3rd 12.70, 4th 10.31, 5th 8.79
electrics	12 volt
starter	Electric
front tyre	2.75x18
rear tyre	3.00x18
front brake	1.18x6.30
rear brake	1.18x5.51
front suspension	Telescopic fork
rear suspension	Swinging arm with adjustable dampers
<b>DIMENSIONS</b>	
wheelbase	57.5in
ground clearance	6in (with rider)
kerb weight	294lb
fuel capacity	3.1gal
oil capacity	3.2pt

#### contacts

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David Silver Spares

The Restoration Company

