

## Spanish Motorcycles

Recently I was chatting with Graham Goodwin and the topic of Spanish motorcycle manufacturers arose. We quickly rolled off the well-known Bultaco, Montessa, Ossa and Sanglass, but then stalled. There were obviously others, though neither of us knew the origins of motorcycle production in Spain and agreed this was a significant gap in our knowledge. A quick internet search uncovered dozens of makes from A. Badia to Volta and almost every letter in between. Most of the motorcycles could be classified as lightweights built in the 1950's and 1960's, but the number of manufacturers from our primary interest period of pre-1947 is fairly limited and there are very few from the veteran era. So, I thought it might be worth sharing a few which I found of interest and mostly those that had photographs to illustrate the motorcycles, starting with the earliest Spanish production motorcycle, the Villalbi. As the information available is in Spanish, I have used Google for the main translation and then edited slightly, where deemed necessary. I hope you enjoy the series over the next few editions of the Drip Feed.

Rick Nabkey

### Villalbi



Miquel Villalbí (en el centro), realizaba frecuentes excursiones, llegando incluso hasta Francia



**Motor monocilíndrico de 430.5 cc distribuci3n ioe. 4.5 CV (1903)**

Miquel Villalbí was a bicycle and motorcycle mechanic, based at Passeig de Colom 27, Barcelona. He produced a prototype motorcycle in 1903, which was the first to be manufactured in Spain. After subjecting the prototype to various tests with positive results, he manufactured five more units. It was the first Spanish motorcycle, manufactured in Catalonia in 1904. Each was sold at the price of 1,200 ptas.

At the time of building his motorcycle, Villalbí had to function completely alone, since at that time the auxiliary industry in Spain was simply non-existent. The carburetor and the frame, electrical installation and even the covers for the wheels had to be manufactured by hand.

The 3.5 HP single-cylinder, automatic intake valve, air-cooled engine had a displacement of 430.05 cc. Ignition was via battery and coil, with variable advance. The carburetor had separate petrol and air controls, without a start-up device or automatic mixture adjustment. Transmission was by fixed pulley, direct belt drive. A diamond-type frame was fitted with elastic front suspension of the oscillating type and a combined flat petrol and oil tank located high and narrow, so as not to hinder pedaling for start-up and for assistance on hills. Beaded edge rims were fitted with 650 x 50 tyres.

The controls were distributed between the fuel tank and the handlebars. On the tank there were three levers to regulate the spark advance, the petrol and the air. On the handlebar was the decompressor and a contact system, which worked by turning the



left

Una de la 5 unidades Villalbí, expuesta en el Museo de la Moto Barcelona

handlebar grip, very similar to the current throttle control, but in reverse.

Due to the difficulties in manufacturing and the deficiencies in the material supplied by suppliers, Villalbí, who was a perfectionist, decided in 1905 to cease production and to devote himself to the distribution of motorcycles of foreign brands.

One of the motorcycles, kept by Rossend, son of Miquel Villalbí († March 1952) was ceded to the mNACTEC - Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia, Terrasa, Barcelona, and another to the Museo Moto Bassella, Alt Urgell, Lleida, Catalonia.

Reference: <https://www.otw.es/ottw/portfolio-item.php?idmoto=7327>

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