

The Roper Steam Bike

A new replica of Roper's last bike has been created in Huesca, Spain by Guillermo Ximeno with Manuel Parra and the team at Cometa Restauraciones.

Guillermo first started work two and a half years ago, and Cometa was able to display the bike for the first time this week at the [ClassicAutoMadrid 2015](#).



Manuel was kind enough to send over several photos and a description of the bike. Guillermo began with many original 1896 parts, including a Columbia Pope bicycle frame, seat, fork, handlebar and hubs. The team also sourced a period pressure gage, taps, valves, etc. so that the bike seems very authentic. Many parts were blacksmith and locksmith fabricated and also cast via the Galicia foundries.

The photos above show just how well the replica mirrors the original bike. Which is a point that we sometimes overlook. It is much more difficult to make an accurate replica of a machine, or a perfect restoration, than to build a one of a kind custom. Being correct or incorrect is very cut and dried with

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these bikes as the original must be replicated exactly or the photos will show obvious deviations. We should applaud the best efforts that result in such perfect reproductions.

The burner box would be filled with coal, but coke or charcoal will also work. The boiler cannot be seen, but is above, hidden inside the wood. And the plated water tank is atop that.

The rear wheel is the crankshaft for the motor. The crank can be seen on the right end of the rear axle, with the connecting rods and valve timing rod linking to the motor. Materials are obviously brass, with some iron, steel and wood. Aluminum would have been useful, but wasn't commonly available back then.

On the center left is a regulator to control the steam into the motor (it looks a lot like a steam whistle). The operating cable can be seen going upwards, eventually connecting to a lever on the right handlebar and the device operates much like a carb on an internal combustion motor.

Between the two knobs is a sight glass to show the water level. A simple footpeg is on the lower right.

The extension on the front forks was built when Roper found that the bike sat too low, and would high-center on rough terrain. The replica has the same extensions, rather than simply starting with revised frame/fork geometry.

Here is a photo of the the real 1896 Roper, taken a few years ago with Chip Perry and Coburn Bensen. Note the the exhaust pipe is set in the low position here. It can be moved up or down to affect how the exhaust gasses flow.



A NOTE FROM ALAN BATKIN

Sharon and I recently sold our Sydney home of 51 years and now are permanently living in south-east Queensland. We have met many wonderful VMCC members and thought a note to say goodbye as we will not have many opportunities to partake in future club activities.

We both grew up in Leichhardt attending different schools. When I was a third year apprentice plumber fortune really fell my way having the Leichhardt Girls High School next to the plumbing technical college and I met a special young lady at her school friend's house party. By seventeen years of age I had developed a steady interest in motorcycles, especially after becoming a regular at the Sydney Showground Speedway.

Sharon's father had a Rudge when he was young and Sharon's sister's husband had owned Norton's and finally owned a BMW R69. He always said they are the bike to own. "say no more"

The house rule back then was to have Sharon home by 10pm, when the speedway season started we stretched that rule with no opposition from home. My dad insisted that no motorcycles until I was 21, thinking that the interest would dwain. I did buy a Honda one week before my 21st. My dad enjoyed many motorcycling days with me, twice I pillioned him to the Bathurst Easter Motorcycle races to be a trackside marshal with me.

