

1927 Velocette and 20 years to make it live again, Part I. by Brad Martin

1927 saw many changes in the motorcycling industry, with the main one being the introduction of the saddle tank, replacing the flat tank design that had been an industry standard for many, many years. The saddle tank design mimicked a 'speedier' look that many of the leading manufacturers were starting to include into their line-up. Also, many of the bikes on the market were a carry-over of their veteran brothers and sisters, so engine tuning and better mechanical designs started to emerge, in keeping with more speed and general reliability.

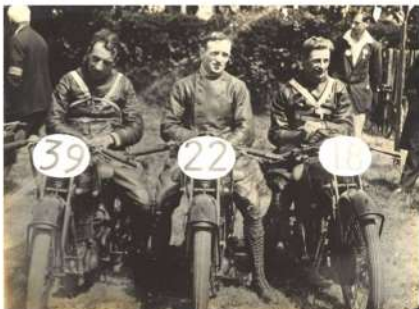
The Veloce OHC 350cc machines were first introduced to the Velocette range in 1925 and are officially known as the model K – the K series Roadsters. Up until 1925 and immediately after the cessation of the Great War, Velocette had been producing smaller capacity 2-stroke bikes* – these bikes sold well, but the industry was changing, and there was lots of competition for sales from other manufacturers - Velocette needed to keep up if they themselves, were going to continue to sell bikes and grow the small family run Birmingham UK business.



1925 Catalogue cover

Fortunately for Veloce, these OHC machines did very well both on and off the track, and most notably during the vintage era, winning the Junior TT at the IOM in 1926, 1928 and 1929.

The 4-valve Rudge then ruled in the 1930 season.



1928 IOM TT: Bennett 1st (#22), Willis 2nd (#39), Frith 5th (#18)

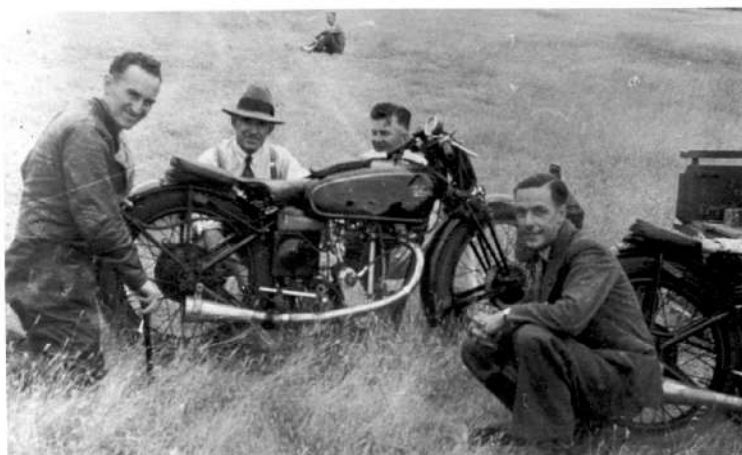
My 1927 machine had spent all her days in Western Australia, being invoiced to West Cycles Perth (by Schofield Goodman, the Veloce shipping agents) on 29th November 1927. Then in 2005, I purchased her remains from an advert in the For Sale section of Velocette Owners Club of Australia (VOCA) club magazine *Fishtail Downunder*.

* Velocette also produced a 4 stroke machine for 2 years only, just prior to the start of WW1



The 1927 KSS, roughly pieced together in 2005 to see what I'd purchased

The guy that had my 1927 model K wreck was the very well-known Velo man and Velo racer, Don Chesson. Thankfully, Don managed to save some of the great Velo's that made their way to our Australian shores including the incredible 'Dog Kennel' OHC 350cc, the 350cc DOHC Works bike and the 500 SOHC Works bike – with the last two being ridden by the legendary Stanley Woods during his time here in the mid-30's.

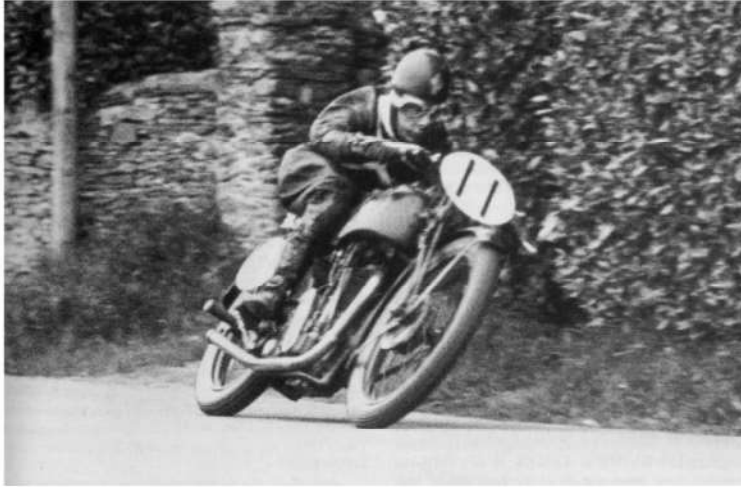


Stanley Woods with his Works 500 OHC in 'the paddock' at Bathurst 1936. The 350 is just out of view on the right

These three Velo's are Works machines and one-offs (and not KTT's). Again, thankfully, these bikes still remain in Australia and I'm lucky enough to get to see, smell and touch them occasionally (in a good friend's private collection).

Don Chesson also saved many other bikes from the scrappers/wreckers and raced these and other bikes himself in the 1950's and afterwards with lots of success, particularly in WA. He was legendary himself in the earlier days of the VOCA and club racing.

If my memory serves me correctly, I think, sadly, that Don passed away in 2016, and with him so much motorcycling knowledge, expertise and history has been lost forever, yet his efforts in saving special bikes certainly continues strongly, and to this day.



Les Archer at Speed , and one of my favourite photos of all time, engine #: MTT5001 .

Some of the Works bikes (and mainly in the 1930's) were designated with an engine prefix MTT (meaning 500cc OHC racer). An excellent example of an MTT does exist in the VMCC membership - this is the same type of bike that is shown in the above photo of Les Archer.



And here's Ernie Thomas, Works 350 DOHC, IOM 1936

The better-known Velocette racing bikes are referred to as the KTT – all 350cc OHC's. This KTT designation was used on the racers that were sold to the public, so any KTT racer was available 'over the counter', so to speak and they were almost identical to the Works 350's. This marketing approach was way ahead of other manufacturers, and it put Velocette at the leading edge of competition victories world-wide.