

The paddock starter's little engine labours, smoke rising from where its roller presses on the Vincent's rear tyre. Suddenly, the whirring is interrupted by an explosive POM! as the motor responds. Whirr-POM!-whirr-whirr-whirr POM!, whirr-whirr-whirr POM-POM-POM-POM-POM! I have never heard a Gatling gun in action, but I am sure this is how it would sound thanks to the Vincent's sharp, deafening reports fired at a steady mechanical rhythm.

Spectators crushing up to the collection area fence look on with dropped jaws, as though the din has temporarily prevented normal thought processes. I manage a quick thought — wish I'd remembered earplugs — then finding relative peace inside my helmet.

Nigel Blackburn, the owner of this beautiful yet intimidating 1150cc Egli

Vincent replica, nurses the throttle and gives the fuel system a final visual check. He nods a signal for me to take the twistgrip and climb aboard.

I recall what Nigel had said before talk became impossible: "Try not to let the engine stop, because you probably won't be able to start it on your own."

Stalling would indeed be disastrous. Not only would I be stranded without a kickstart or motor trolley, but my track stint would be drastically shortened, if not missed altogether.

We're at the Coupes Moto Legende at Monthéry, in France, and Nigel has generously allowed me to try his lairy classic racer during a circuit session for Fifties and Sixties sports and racing machines. I am relieved to find that the thunderous V-twin engine churns over reliably at low rpm, but I still juggle the clutch warily in the scramble for the exit, especially as the minimal

steering lock forces me to stop and back up for a three-point turn.

Relieved to let the clutch fully home I lock on to where other machines are heading off. Hefty slugs of power propel me forward and I am immediately aware that, for all its cubic capacity, this machine is light and responsive to handle. Tucking in behind the screen I spot a row of cones that show where the track goes sharply to the right. Time to sit up again, quickly!

Dropping down a gear and weighing up streaks of cement dust on oil spills near the apex, I choose a wide, steady line through the bend called Deux Ponts (Two Bridges). Pouring the power back on, I wish I had taken a tighter line because the track disappears round to the left through the sweeping Farm Bend. But it's not too late to describe a nice smooth arc through here, getting back behind ►

Just how dynamic can a motorcycle get? Pure drama on wheels this Taylor Egli Vincent looks fabulous. Avon fairing is as used on Velocette Thruxton

◁ the Avon screen and building revs for an upward change. A short straight blurs by, then we dip towards Le Faye, where the track plunges downhill in the shade of trees to turn sharply right on itself.

Braking done, I trundle round in a low gear and get back on the throttle to hammer along a longer, tree-lined straight. Superbly tractable, the engine seems to build momentum like a giant water-wheel and I soon need to knock off speed to join a string of riders preparing to negotiate the North Chicane. Here the 'country' part of the circuit rejoins Montlhéry's famous banked oval, to follow it around half its length to the start and finish area.

Already impressed by fine handling, I have no worries about peeling hard right then flopping over to follow the left horseshoe, discovering that this chassis has surprisingly quick steering. Doing my best to maintain corner speed I haul hard out of the chicane to get a decent run up onto the steep banking. It's less daunting than I feared and while not exactly brushing the top wall, I get myself comfortably settled near the upper of two white guidelines.

The Twenties-built bowl's surface is liberally patched and banded with repairs. I expected a rough time, but the ride is surprisingly free from jolts and jars. No sooner do I get acclimatised to the banking and revel in how the Vincent pounds effortlessly, then the next coned chicane is upon us.

Foolishly deciding to change down on the precipitous drop to the chicane's apex, I have a fright as the rear end squirms beneath me. But all is under



control again as we hammer leftwards for another rising-throttle assault on the concrete cliff. This time there's a longer banked stretch to get going on, but I blow it by failing to make a clean upward gearchange.

Another chicane leads onto the start-finish section and I wring the grip to attempt absolute maximum on the run down to Deux Ponts. I recall being told that this motor doesn't peak until 6200rpm — 500rpm higher than a stock Black Shadow, and so I stop worrying about my gearchanging problem and hang on in for revs.

The rest of my track time flies by, but I have time to reflect that the handling and braking are so sound that I've barely given them a thought. I'm not particularly aware of top-heaviness that the Egli Vincent layout is sometimes criticised for, and the drum brakes need only the gentlest dab for reassuring results. Frustratingly, I miss

Our test took place in May at Montlhéry's banked circuit where hundreds of Vincents turned out to mark the 50th anniversary of record breaking by Vincents at the French venue in 1952

Mick Duckworth settles in to tackle Montlhéry's combination of infield twists and banked outer sections

some more gear changes and begin to be aware of a high-rpm misfire, which Nigel had done his best to eliminate when readying the bike. Having opted to create an extreme machine, Nigel knows it will take time before all the quirks are ironed out.

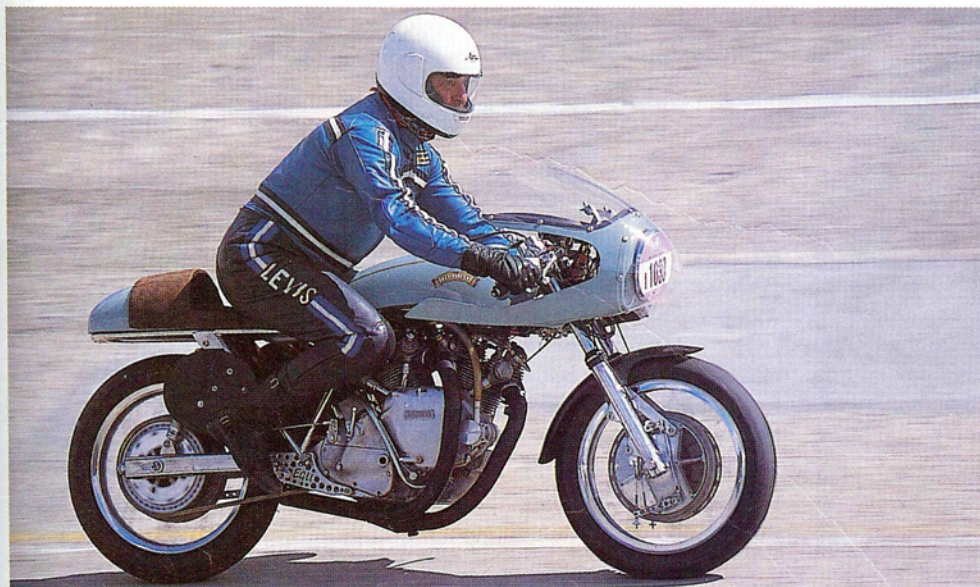
A native of New Zealand now based in the sunny south of France, Nigel (42) has a dream job — he skips private yachts. When on dry land he takes to two wheels but has little interest in modern machinery.

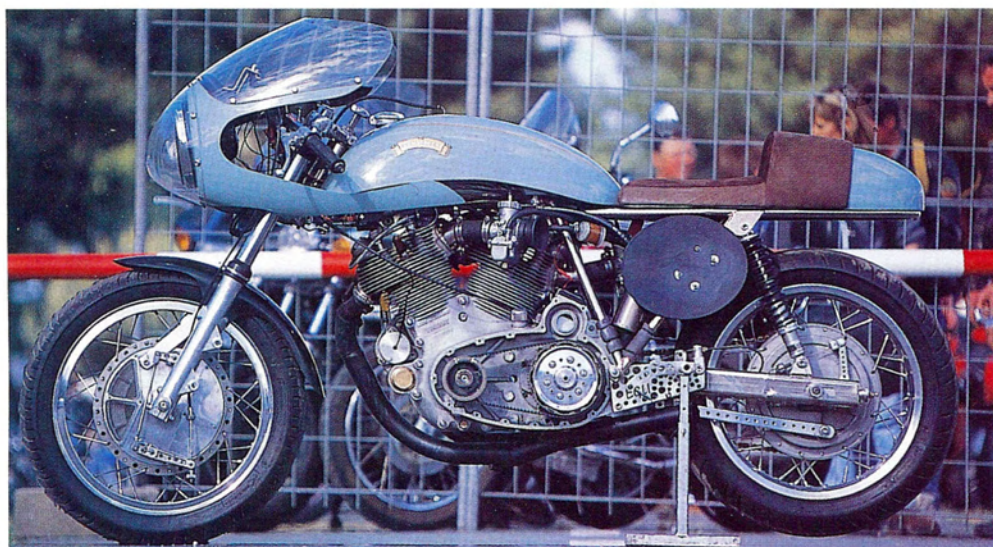
"My father owned BSAs and I used to race a Triton, which I still have," he says. "I got my first Vincent, a 1948 Rapide, seven years ago and have never found anything else to compare with that engine — it is so flexible."

Taking his passion further, Nigel decided to assemble a seriously high-performing racer for hillclimbs and blasts on French back roads where street legality is not at issue.

The cycle parts are such a close copy of the Egli Vincent that it could pass for a genuine example. The oil-bearing spine frame was made in the UK by CTG (Cyril Malem, see *CB* June 2000). It mates to a Marzocchi telescopic front fork and a box-section rear swinging arm that is controlled by Maxton units. The excellent front brake is a Yamaha double-sided twin-leader, while the rear is a Laverda drum frequently used on Egli chassis, both drums being set up by Classic Brake Services. Wheels have 18in alloy rims shod with Avon tyres.

The replicated Egli 'banana' fuel tank is moulded in GRP. A small sprint version, it looks all the better for its flush-fitting modern filler. Matching it well are a shapely racing seat covered with non-slip suede and a sleek half-▶





Suspended on Marzocchi forks and Maxton rear units the Vincent is earmarked for further engine work including one-piece crank with split Carrillo rods. It presently can rev to 7500 and it gets used on public roads in the liberal south of France

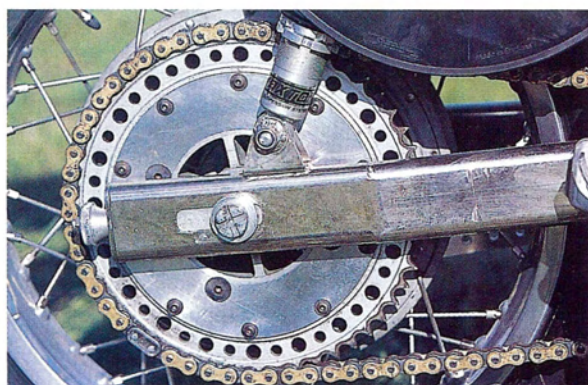
◁ fairing with perspex nose cone.

The grey paint, redolent of Vincent's 500cc Grey Flash racing single, is a mix supplied for finishing office furniture. Hence a French Vincent OC member dubbing the bike: *Le meuble d'archivage gris* (grey filing cabinet).

Liberally drilled alloy plates carry rearsets and linkage. I wish now that I'd had more familiarisation time to help execute better gear selection.

However, I had no troubles with the positioning of the Tommaselli clip-ons. Ahead of them is a Scitsu electronic rev counter. A modern hydraulic steering damper mounts transversely under the front of the fuel tank.

The really trick stuff is in the engine,



Owner Nigel Blackburn drilled the sprocket on his rocket



Instrumentation limited to Scitsu rev counter

put together with help from two UK-based Vincent engineering specialists. Development work including dyno testing was overseen by Lincolnshire-based Colin Taylor who oversaw the project, while Bob Dunn in Lancashire carried out machining operations.

Capacity of the Vincent motor was upped from 998 to 1145cc by boring-out by 6mm to 90mm, creating 'square' dimensions. Purpose-built JE pistons give a compression ration of just under 9.8 :1 and run in aluminium liners with Nikasil coated bores.

Taylor is developing an even better system with hard coating directly applied to the bores of alloy billet cylinders. High-strength steel con-rods by Carrillo are placed in usual Vincent side-by-side fashion on INA needle roller big-ends. To relieve the increased crankcase pressure created by bigger pistons on their downward strokes, breathers are added on the timing case and valve cover caps.

The cam profile was developed for enlarged Vincent engines by the late Ian Hamilton, an inveterate tuner of the Stevenage twin who worked in collaboration with Taylor. Known as the 105 because full lift occurs at 105 degrees either side of TDC, the cams were manufactured on the Isle of Wight by Gary Robinson.

Mikuni VM carburetors function extremely well on stock and tuned Vincents. On this example flexibly mounted 28mm versions are supplied with pump fuel via an in-line filter.

The outer primary drive cover is junked, exposing the belt and NEB dry clutch that take drive to the standard four-speed gearbox. Although twin-plug ignition has been tried, single plugs are currently in use, fired by a modern coil and a Kirby Rowbotham points unit mounted at the usual magneto location at the front of the

crankcase. A battery for the total-loss system stows neatly in the recess vacated by the stock dynamo, but it may be this item's small capacity that is responsible for misfires.

Enlarging the exhaust pipe from 1½in to 2in is essential when tuning Vincents for maximum power. Taylor's elegantly curved two-into-one system has relatively short front pipes to suit the cam. Dyno testing has indicated 75bhp being produced at the rear wheel, which relates credibly to a top whack of 150mph. Definitely the world's fastest filing cabinet!

■ The original Egli Vincent was built for road racing and hill climbs by Fritz Egli in Switzerland, where it won a national over-500cc championship in 1968. Similar machines and frame kits were produced commercially by Egli, and numerous copies have been and continue to be manufactured in various countries including the UK.

Since May 2000 Egli Motorradtechnik AG has granted sole approval for the genuine Egli Vincent chassis to be manufactured in France by Patrick Godet (Tel 00 33 235 759656. Fax 00 33 235 759507).

SPECIFICATION

ENGINE	
engine type	ohv four-stroke
cooling	air
configuration	V-twin
bore x stroke	90 x 90mm
capacity	1145cc
compression	9.75:1
lubrication	dry sump

CARBURATION	
manufacturer	Mikuni
size	28mm x 2

TRANSMISSION	
primary drive	toothed belt
clutch	dry multiplate
gearbox	four-speed
final drive	chain

ELECTRICS	
Total loss battery and coil ignition	

CYCLE PARTS	
CTG Egli spine frame. Brakes: front: double sided 260mm t/s Yamaha drum. Rear: 200mm s/s Laverda drum. Tyres: front 110/80 x 18in Avon AM22, rear 130/70 x 18in Avon AM23	

DIMENSIONS	
dry weight	335lb (152kg)
wheelbase	57.6in (1465mm)
fuel capacity	2 UK gal (9l)

PERFORMANCE	
top speed	150 mph (est)
power	75bhp @ rear wheel
Value	£19,000

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