


CLASSIC DRIVER



1968 Greeves

Stafford , 23. April

Lot sold	USD 5 230 - 7 845 GBP 4 000 - 6 000 (listed)	Zustand	Gebraucht
Baujahr	1968	Standort	
		Motorradtyp	Straßenmaschine
		Farbe	Sonstige

Beschreibung

Formerly the property of 'Bert' Greeves, MBE

1968 Greeves 380cc Challenger/Watsonian Motorcycle Combination

Registration no. BVX 45G

Frame no. 36MXC 156

Unique and historic factory-built special

Owned by company founder Bert Greeves

Known and continuous history from new

Recently cosmetically refurbished

Based at Thundersley in Essex, the small Greeves concern built a reputation for sporting success out of all proportion to its available resources. The company's unorthodox trademarks of a cast beam 'downtube' and rubber-in-torsion leading-link fork proved adaptable to almost all forms of motorcycle from humble commuter to clubman's road-racer, but it was the firm's off-road products that really put it on the map.

A keen motorcyclist in pre-war days, Oscar Bertrum 'Bert' Greeves had set up Invacar Ltd in 1946 in partnership with his disabled cousin, Derry Preston-Cobb, to build the eponymous three-wheeled invalid carriage. Bert conceived the first Greeves motorcycle around 1950. Ostensibly, the aim was to test a proposed rubber-in-torsion suspension system for the Invacar, but Bert and Derry must also have been mindful of the advantages of having more than one product to rely on, and other customers besides the Ministry of Health! Motor Cycle magazine broke the story of the Greeves' motorcycle's existence in May 1951 and the rest, as they say, is history.

As an established engine builder, Greeves was able to survive while many rivals disappeared, along with the supply of Villiers engines, in the late 1960s. From then on the Southend-based company concentrated on its successful off-road competition models. The first all-Greeves model was the Challenger scrambler introduced in 1964. Built in 246cc and (later) 362cc capacities, the Challenger engine was carried in typically-Greeves cycle parts consisting of a cast alloy beam frame and leading-link forks, the latter of the 'banana' type from 1965, while Ceriani telescopic forks became an option.

The Challenger-type engines continued in the successor Griffon model, first used by the works riders in mid-1968, which abandoned the traditional cast down-tube in favour of a conventional tubular fabrication. The open class motor was bored out to 380cc and an all-Greeves gearbox and clutch adopted, replacing the oft-criticised Albion transmission. A couple of years later, the final Griffon development was announced: the 380QUB. Developed by two-stroke wizard, Dr Gordon Blair of Belfast University, the heavily revised motor reverted to a single exhaust port and featured Motoplatt transistorised ignition. A maximum output of 44bhp at 6,500rpm was claimed. Sadly, it was a case of 'too little too late'. Outclassed and beaten on price by the oriental opposition, Greeves ceased motorcycle manufacture towards the end of 1972.

Originally registered to Invacar Ltd (like all Greeves 'works' motorcycles) this Challenger/Watsonian combination belonged to Bert Greeves himself and subsequently was registered in his own name. There being no 'off the shelf' sidecar chassis suitable for a Greeves competition motorcycle, the Challenger was despatched to Watsonian to have one specially made, and the completed combination was first registered 'BVX 45G' on 20th September 1968. One of its first public outings was to the Isle of Man TT in June 1969. Bert liked 'upgrades', so when the more powerful 380QUB engine became available he had one fitted, and that unit remains in the bike to this day. The twin-leading-shoe front brake is another of Bert's improvements.

Bert left his entire collection of motorcycles to marque authority (and ex-Chairman of the Greeves Riders' Association) Andrew King, who thus became the combination's owner after Bert's death in 1993. Registered in Andrew King's name in September 1999, it was purchased from him by the late Igor Ashwell in July 2005. Bert Greeves was the last person to ride the machine for any distance, and probably not at all for the last 10 years of his life, though Andrew King has reported that it is light, rides and handles superbly, and goes very well.

When Bonhams sold Igor Ashwell's motorcycle collection at Stafford in April 2009, the Challenger combination (Lot 297) was bought by Thundersley-born Alan Elderton, former Chairman of the MV Agusta Owners' Club. Alan promptly despatched the machine for refurbishment by a group of Essex-based marque specialists, which involved repainting the frame, sidecar chassis and assorted other cycle parts (details on file). Since then it has been used only once: for static display at Cadwell Park's 80th Anniversary Meeting in August 2014. When Alan Elderton died, he left the Greeves to the current vendor, a close friend and prominent classic racer/entrant.

A unique piece of Greeves history, Bert's Challenger combination is offered with its original green logbook, (copy) old V5 and current V5C registration documents, and a quantity of period photographs.

Bonhams 1793

Bonhams

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