

CLASSIC DRIVER



Rickman Métisse: Mongrel on a diet

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Brothers Derek and Don Rickman rose to fame in British motorbike racing circles during the 50s, and later applied their knowledge to custom-built motorcycles. One highlight was the 'Métisse', which saw a variety of engines used in a bespoke, lightweight frame.

From their racing experience, the brothers recognised that heavy stock frames were often the biggest hindrance in the quest for better performance. They began crafting their own bespoke frames with a two-goal focus: losing weight and increasing rigidity. Using engines from a variety of manufacturers (including Matchless, BSA and Triumph, as seen in this example), these early creations were humorously dubbed 'Métisse': French slang for 'Mongrel'.



Word spread over time, and the brothers' company began selling the nickel-plated frames and associated parts as kits, ready to accept a wide variety of engines. One of many innovations was getting rid of the oil tank; the oil was instead held within the frame itself, in a similar manner to some of the 'liquid-in-chassis' sports-racing prototypes of the 1970s. One devotee of this principle – and the Métisse as a whole – was Steve McQueen, who owned one with a 650cc Triumph engine installed. “The oil circulates through the tubes of the frame, which keeps it cool. That's especially important when you're racing or driving under hard conditions. It helps to avoid breakdowns and should make piston seizures quite rare,” he once remarked.



The example shown here was found in the Classic Driver Marketplace, being offered by English dealer Godin Banks. The 1965-built frame has a freshly rebuilt 500cc Triumph engine mounted within it.

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Further information on the Métisse Triumph can be found in the [original advert](#)

Text: J. Philip Rathgen

Photos: Godin Banks

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