

Adler MB200/250 Two-Stroke

Phil Speakman has unusual tastes in motorcycles, and finding parts for them isn't easy. His search for spares finally led him into the eagle's eyrie...

The Ardennes in late January is no place for a motorcycle. Piled up snow from the verge encroaches onto the carriageway, poised to envelop the unwary rider who runs slightly wide. The hairpins on the climb eastwards out of Wiltz wait patiently for the UK rider, a rider who'll be naively expecting prior warning from chevrons on bends such as these. All day the temperature hasn't risen above freezing under a pale blue crystal clear Luxembourg sky, and condensation keeps the road permanently damp and treacherous.



It's a bloody good job I'm warm and cosy in my car, trying to catch the last surviving weak transmissions of BBC Radio 5 for the Friday afternoon film review. Eventually I give up and retune to Radio 4 LW, ready for the PM programme and news of the forthcoming Iraqi elections. In the boot the occasional clink of glass bottles thrills me with the future pleasures of a couple of hundred quid's worth of the finest Belgian Trappist and Flanders beers that money can buy, but at a quarter of the usual UK price. I cleared the shelf of 'Rochefort 10'; my personal favourite, but I'm afraid there were only two boxes of '3 Monts' to be had. Despite this, I'm confident that no beer festival in the UK has half the selection of bottled beers that my motor has to offer, and as a CAMRA member, I've been to a few in my time.

As night starts to fall, I decide to stop the night in the Hotel Victor Hugo, Vianden just 32km from my intended destination of Bitburg; which sits beyond the border in Germany. A fine assorted plate of Ardennes cured hams with salad and French fries gets expensed to my room number, as do the beers; to be paid by credit card the following morning. Not one precious note can be wasted as I need all the cash I can muster. The bank machines will only give me Euros 270 every 24 hours and I missed out on a Wednesday withdrawal due to the insular (read medieval if you prefer, you'll get no argument from me) policy of the Belgian banks, who only appear to accept their own cards and Visa signs are conspicuous by their absence.

I'm tired and head up to bed early as the noise level in the hotel bar increases due to the Friday night influx. Here sentences seem to start in French and end in German and the final straw for my sense of irony is a bar full of German speaking youths

singing loudly to '3 Lions On Our Shirt', I kid you not !

I'm awoken the following morning at 8.15am by a phone call from Michael Liebig, who is just about to leave Cologne in order to meet up with me later that morning. He has helped me so much over the last 12 months, via email and the occasional phone call that I feel I know him already. I'm looking forward to finally being able to meet him in the flesh. Before breakfast, I top up my wallet again from the local ATM and hope that I have sufficient Euros to fulfill my aspirations, because where I'm going cash is the only currency accepted. I'm on my way by 9.30am and I find it warmly reassuring that an English man; working in France, driving a Czech car is



happily heading through Luxembourg and into Germany, in order to trade. It beats the hell out of lobbing bombs at each other as far as I'm concerned. Our intended rendezvous is a residential street in a suburb of Bitburg that neither of us has ever been to before. Well at least that's straight forward then?

I steer the Octavia through the town centre and road signs point me out past a US Army base towards my destination. I stop and show an elderly gentleman the address and he points down the street and says 'Richt' followed by 'Links' and I couldn't be more pleased if he had said 'Auspuff' or 'Gummimuffe'. My knowledge of German is limited to ordering beers and reading motorcycle

parts manuals, usually illustrated with helpful exploded diagrams. Thankfully the words 'right' and 'left' do appear regularly in the parts books. As I look for the correct house number a gentleman in his 60s wearing a bib and brace spots my GB number plate and raises his arm in a gesture of welcome. It appears that I have found Rolf Bungert.

Rolf invites me into his beautiful bungalow overlooking white snow covered fields and wonderful strong coffee is served up by Mrs Bungert. I was informed that Rolf spoke little English, yet I would kill to be able to speak that little German.

We get along fine until a phone call signals the arrival of Michael Liebig, in the centre of town. We jump into Rolf's van and head off in search of Michael who tags on behind us in his Honda and then we proceed out of town towards what Michael later describes as 'Eldorado', otherwise known as Rolf's workshop.

After big grins and handshakes all round, Rolf opens up the security door and we head out of the warming sun, into an icy cold but well lit large workshop and storage area. On the left wall I can hardly believe my eyes as more than 30 Adler twin two-stroke engines calmly return my shocked glare with unblinking exhaust ports.

If Claude Nomonet wants to look into the origins of his Ariel Leader motor, then he should look no further as this is the original and best. Likewise, Yamaha two-stroke twins right through to the 1980s owe this unit a vote of thanks.

Opposite, fifteen or so Adler duplex MB 200 and 250 frames sit waiting patiently to be reused, some still with plungers still in situ, others with swinging arms denoting their later status as Sprinter or Favourite models. Leading link dual oil hydraulically damped front forks lie on shelves alongside the earlier clock spring inspired units fitted to the earlier M250. Boxes of individual components sit discreetly in plastic boxes, often in numbers of 50 or more, including tinware! Some are original parts that I had until now considered almost impossible to find, and which I have been steadily having re-chromed and/or repaired by skilled tradesmen, others are modern high quality reproductions.

The situation reminds me of a story that Fred Haefele tells in his book 'Rebuilding the Indian' about a barn that seems to 'float' throughout the US states (according to the storyteller), stacked full of all the old impossible to find Indian parts that any restorer could ever wish for. It's always owned by a bearded old man who takes the young restorer to it, usually in response to a roadside breakdown and invariably in foul weather. The old biker supplies the missing part to get the young rider back on

the road. Yet come the dawn, the barn can never be found for a second time.

So here I am in my very own Adler Brigadoon but I've got a pocket full of cash and Rolf is selling...Bloody Hell!



Rolf it seems spent an awful lot of time, effort and money over twenty five years ago, travelling throughout Europe in order to buy up all the old Adler (German word for eagle) stock that he could. These Frankfurt-built machines that enjoyed a brief post war flight (the factory stopped motorcycle production in 1956 after being bought out by Grundig) are now much loved and valued by their owners and are slightly rarer than unicorns in the UK.

I once took my cosmetically tatty but freshly MoT'd MB200 model to a classic bike event shortly after I bought it, parked it up at the end of a row of BSAs, Nortons and Triumphs, got off and walked away. In no time at all there was a crowd around it, probably out of curiosity for an unknown marque, yet for those who were aware of the manufacturer's history; it was probably the first example they had ever had the chance to examine in the flesh.

I'd emailed Michael with my parts wish list earlier in the week (he faxed it through to Rolf), getting all the part numbers from Rolf's catalogue that Michael had emailed to me, what seems like an age ago. The plan is to concentrate on the engine, with a full gasket set, seal and bearing kit for the engine (yes I could probably get suitable bearings cheaper in the UK, but I'm no expert on them and this is far too convenient. Personally I'd rather work the overtime and just buy the correct stuff first time around), and any other wearing parts (such as the kickstart dog and spring), in readiness for the strip down and complete overhaul by the local specialist engineer who has taken on my engine.

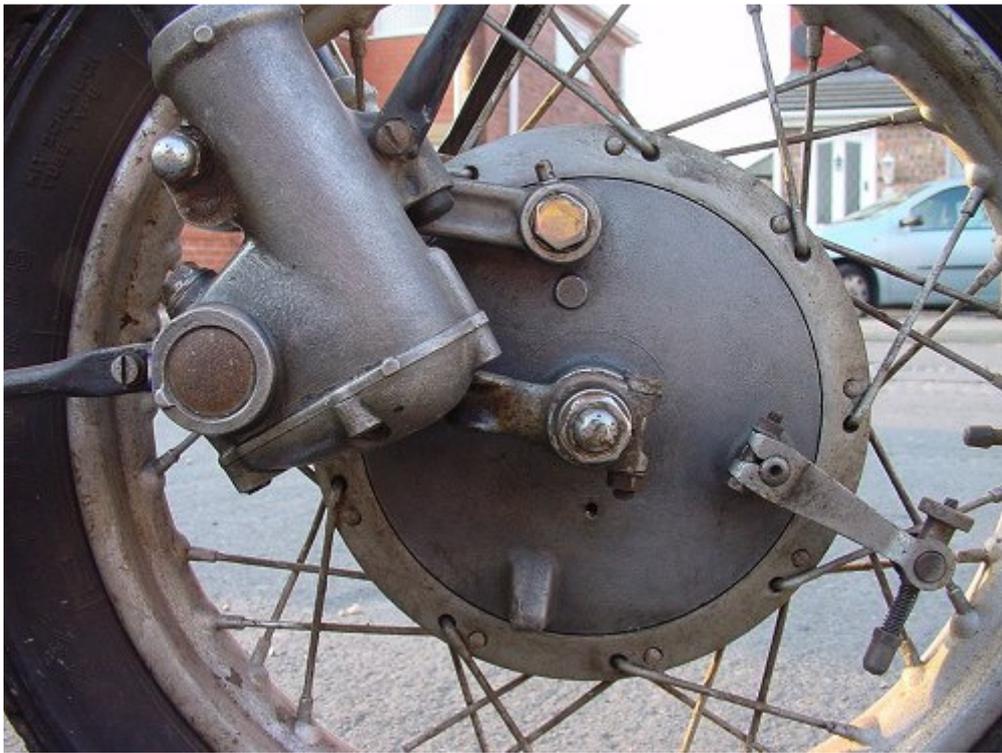


Then I will buy as much as I can afford of all the other components that are either new old stock or that Rolf has subsequently had re-manufactured from originals.

I'm not going to tell you just how much I spent, but I just about bought everything I had specified on my wish list, yet I reckon I'm still only about halfway there. I now have all the new rubber components I require for the frame and rear suspension units. The split left and right handlebars on my bike weren't worth trying to straighten and rechrome so they have been replaced. Likewise the tank badges that had suffered 50 years of abuse are no longer required and I can now replace the BMW stamped petrol cap with the correct alloy lockable Adler unit and my home made rear mudguard supports can be replaced with the correct chromed curved stays.

I knew when I bought the Adler that it wouldn't be an easy or a cheap project, but if money was the main issue I would be spending my spare time restoring property, not bikes. It's me working until daft o'clock during the week, to pay for all this and I don't have to justify it to anyone.

Once the money changes hands, the real knowledge transfer begins. Old twin cranks are brought out to show me how the crank is split in the middle using a special tool to undo the Hirth coupling. I could never visualise in my mind just how this worked, yet now it all appears so simple. Things to watch out for like crank seals and big and little end replacement are discussed, along with mods like a needle roller little end swap that allows owners to run at 50:1 instead of the factory recommendation of 25:1 two-stroke mix.



Likewise Rolf shows me how to extract the hydraulic damping units from my front forks and how the tapered shrouds that hide the inner engineered tubes are held together at the front and rear with vertical chrome strips that can be cut from a Mercedes Benz front grille. He even gave me the model number. We also discuss Adler factory recommended modifications to the rear plunger suspension units, with the addition of an extra two bump stop rubbers above the hydraulic damping unit.

I've left my digital camera in the car, yet all is not lost as Michael takes close up photographs with his far superior camera and I only have to supply the USB lead to copy them onto my laptop for later reference. By 3pm I've just about run out of questions and we all have frozen feet, so it's back to Rolf's house for more strong coffee and a selection of sandwiches during an hour chatting about bikes in general. The day ends with handshakes and finally we form an orderly procession into Luxembourg, Rolf and Michael for a fill up with cheap fuel (£25 for a tank full that usually costs £45) and me heading in the direction of Verdun ready for a week's work in Paris on Monday morning.

It's not every day that you find [your own little piece of heaven](#), yet I know that once I've saved up again I can return for the balance of the parts I require. A new wiring loom and all the control cables I need (in their correct silver/grey Adler livery, too), silencers, exhaust downpipes, a refurbished Pegasus single seat and other stuff that I probably won't realise I need until later in the year. It will all still be there waiting for me when I'm ready and unlike Fred Haefele, I know exactly how to find my way there whenever I need to.

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