

# WIN A COMPRESSOR

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Britain's biggest seller

# Classic Bike

L A V E R D A

# JOTA

On the B4214

An Italian legend,  
back on the British  
road where  
it was made



**"I'm restoring fifty 400/Fours"**

Honda production line re-locates to Suffolk

**3000 miles on a Wombat**

125cc trail bike across America

EXCLUSIVE STORY AND PICTURES

## THE ORIGINAL TRITONS

The first time a Triumph twin met a Norton Featherbed



UK £3.90 USA \$9.99

FEBRUARY 2012

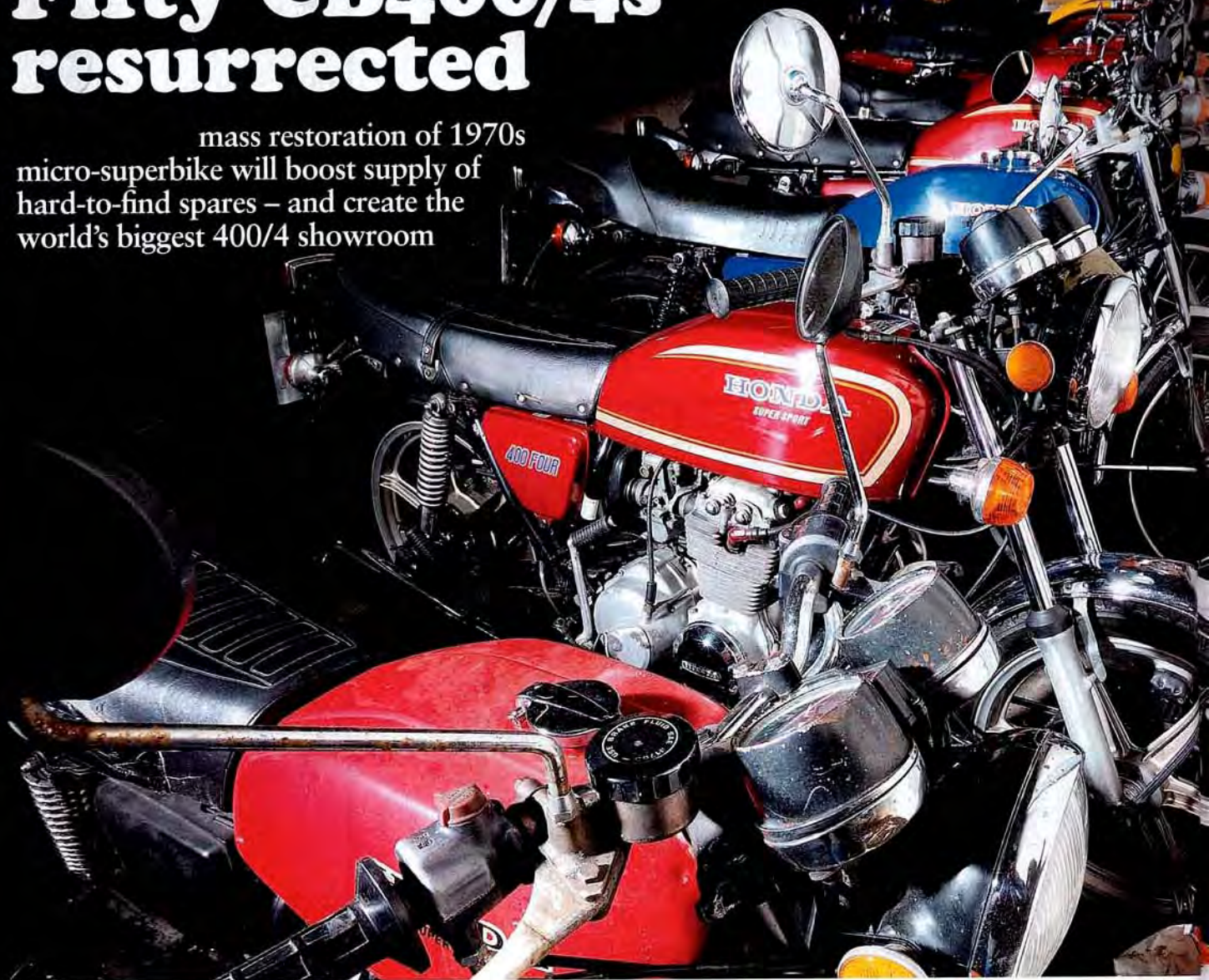
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# Fifty CB400/4s resurrected

mass restoration of 1970s  
micro-superbike will boost supply of  
hard-to-find spares – and create the  
world's biggest 400/4 showroom





➤ How's this for a project? Restoring the same bike – 50 times.

Suffolk-based Honda parts shop David Silver Spares is halfway through a groundbreaking project to restore around 50 CB400/4s. And all it had to do to get the bikes was email customers offering to buy. "It's certainly got people interested. We've got bikes that are horrible, nice and everything in between," reports owner David Silver. "Most were unused, cluttering up people's garages. We're hoping to have the majority of them sorted and on show by April."

The question is, why? "I'm trying to see if it's feasible," David insists. "Plus, it's an interesting project. We've got the resources and, at this time of the year, we've got the time as well." But the painstaking work, which has kept three to four staff busy all winter, is also a giant experiment to help identify which parts are stopping home restorers from finishing their bikes. "The 400/4 is one of our top bikes for parts sold, but many projects stall because you can't get spares. When you get the same thing over and over again, it helps us see which parts need remanufacturing."

The shop has started passing on the benefits to customers. Previously unobtainable pattern chrome rear mudguards are back on sale, and the workshop has discovered how to fit them to single cam 550s and 750s as well.

Another former problem area is the front brake. "Of 500 caliper bodies we got remanufactured at the end of last year, 150 have already sold. We're also speeding ahead with getting brake hoses, banjo bolts, pistons and seals. Previously a hose alone was about £70. Our replica will be £15-£19."

The buzz around 400/4 circles has also revealed a cottage industry of owners who are manufacturing simple rare parts such as the horseshoe camchain tensioner, the cam cover clutch cable clip, the rear brake

pedal and the top breather hose. "We're going to start selling them too. Eventually we'll be able to supply virtually everything you'd expect to need for a 400/4."

David hopes that the sheer volume of work will counteract the normally crippling cost of refurbishing knackered components. "I've sent a truckload of stuff for chroming. If you turn up with one old exhaust they're generally not interested, because it'll pollute their acid bath. But when it's several pieces it makes more sense. The exhausts in particular are pretty dirty; some are rusty, others are painted. But although we sell good patterns you can't buy the originals any more. There's only one way to see how practical it is to resurrect stuff that's got

## **"It's to identify which parts are stopping restorers from finishing their bikes"**

muck all over it, and that's by trying." Seat recovering is another area where David hopes the batch size will reduce prices.

The buying process, which has sourced bikes from as far away as Northern Ireland, has also turned up a stack of spares. "Often they're parts that were discarded for new – for example, chain guards or wheels. We're sending them to be rechromed too."

David hopes the completed bikes will be a tourist attraction – at least for a while. There's already a healthy list of potential buyers ready to spend. By most home restoration standards, if even one of the bikes costs less to restore than the sale price, it'll be a miracle.

*Fancy selling your 400/4 or part thereof? They're still buying. Ring David Silver Spares on 01728 833020, [www.davidsilverspares.co.uk](http://www.davidsilverspares.co.uk)*



## **Hailwood Hondas at Race Retro**

➤ The Race Retro Event at Stoneleigh Park, Coventry on 24-26 February is celebrating 30 years of the Honda Racing Corporation by bringing to together a selection of classic Honda racers, many of which pre-date the formation of HRC.

The organisers claim to have secured a 1966/'67 500cc RC181 four of the type used by Mike Hailwood and also an RC173 four of the type used by Hailwood to win the 350 World Championship in 1966.

There will also be a replica RC174 297cc six cylinder machine of the type used by Hailwood in 1967. It is hoped that the bikes will be started in the Race Retro 'Fire up' paddock.

There will also be at least ten of the RC163 inspired specials that use modern Honda four-cylinder engines. Take your earplugs.

Special guests at the event include Honda Racing manager Neil Tuxworth and MotoGP commentator and former racer Steve Parrish.

Advance tickets are £20, or £25 on the gate. 0871 230 7157 [www.raceretro.com](http://www.raceretro.com)