



# FALLING TO BITS NICELY

The big stripdown of our Honda 400 Four project starts in earnest. And Rick's happy with how it's coming apart. Well, most of it...

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**L**ast month, I gambled that the decay evident on our CB400F café racer project was only skin deep. Now it's my chance to find out, as I subject the bike to a full stripdown.

Removing the tank is the first blast from the past – it reveals inline HT-lead connectors and bits of inner tube cable-tied around the coils. Ah yes, 400 Fours were prone to throwing water up underneath the tank onto the ignition coils... which faced forward. Reversing them helped, but left the HT leads too short and, bonded into the coil, you could only lengthen them by using a connector. Abbreviated mudguards – like the universal plastic front one on this bike – made this situation worse, as well as removing any pretence of bracing the forks.

But my other concerns gradually dissolve before my eyes. Engine bolts slide free as happily as a genie from a bottle, nuts roll passively off the exhaust studs – even the pipe collets, generally corroded into dust, are still plated and reusable. And the notorious front brake swinging caliper, famed for galvanically welding its alloy bracket to the steel pivot? Pussycat – off in minutes. Proof that grease on assembly top-trumps release-oil on dismantling.

Forks out, wheels off and the engine comes out fairly easily once I figure out I need to remove the sump. Suddenly the bike is portable and can be up-ended to access any difficult bits. After removing the spindle, the Dresda swingarm comes out easily, but the taper roller bearings will need replacing. Seems the wrong choice of bearing; I've seen taper wheel bearings still perfect after 80 years, but they're intended to revolve, lubricated, tucked neatly inside the hub and adjustable for correct endfloat. These reciprocate in the short arc of wheel movement, in the front line for road water and dirt (with no grease nipples to enable flushing it out) and can only be adjusted by squeezing the frame cradle via the pivot bolt.

Aftermarket taper rollers are fitted to the steering head, too, but damp has got in, leaving tiger-stripes of corrosion. The forks themselves come apart easily enough, but the stanchions have suffered from standing. Pitting on the surface of a chrome stanchion is bad news; it creates a moonscape of razor edges that make short work of new seals. As the tubes are in otherwise good condition, I decide to send them to AM Philpot for replating. I give the ARE cast alloy wheels to Dave at Redditch Shotblasting (01527 529659). They seem to just need bearings, tyres and a smarten up.

As it happens, Ferret, King of Electricrickery calls round for a cuppa as I strip the bike

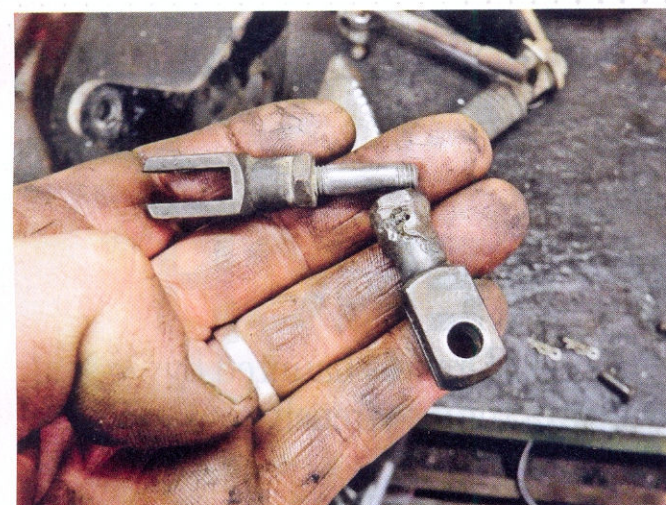


and, to make up for leaving a pool of oil on my drive with his disreputable old bike, volunteers his help with the even more disreputable wiring when the time comes. It's a relief; commercially-made harnesses are available, but Ferret's looms incorporate improvements in the design and he's more familiar with the mysterious components living under the seat than I.

The plastic coating on

the frame has survived surprisingly well. This ancestor of today's powdercoating was commonly used on garden furniture. I briefly consider leaving the frame as it is, but the plastic is a duller finish than paint and although it looks okay now, it will look terrible once the rest of the bike is painted. Hope somebody knows how to remove it...

The only typical Honda headache I encounter is when dealing with the



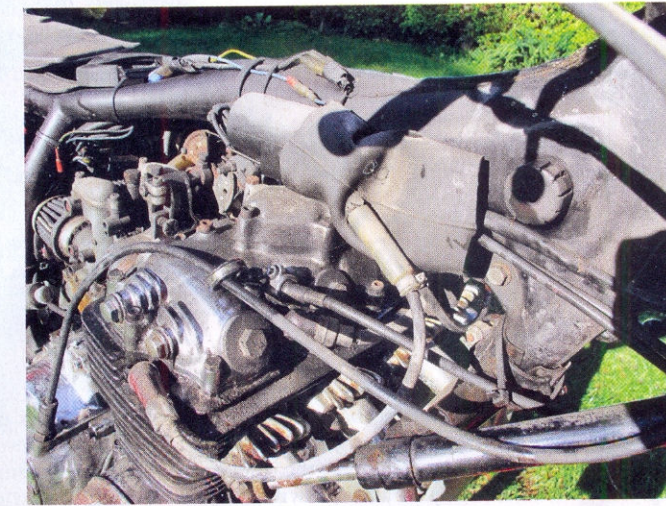
▶ Dodgy repair on gear pedal linkage should be one of the easy jobs to sort



▶ Taper roller swingarm bearings are a bit of a mess and need replacing



▶ This looks like it could be a job for Ferret, the master of electricrickery



▶ Typical period weather proofing on the coils – sections of old inner tube

centrestand – the spindle's seized, as usual. It's a flash-zinc-plated hollow spindle that's supposed to pivot inside a three-inch tube that forms part of the stand. Thin plate clamp brackets hold it to the frame and pinch bolts prevent it turning. But inevitably the spindle seizes in the stand and the weedy clamps can't grip it. The spindle then pivots in the thin brackets which have no resistance to wear and the

stand gets all wobbly. Try to drive it out with a hammer and you peen over the hollow spindle like a rivet (see below).

But otherwise, so far we seem to have got off pretty lightly. The next step will be the engine stripdown and, again, fingers are crossed. I've removed the cam cover to help with getting the engine out and there are no horrors, so perhaps our luck will hold.

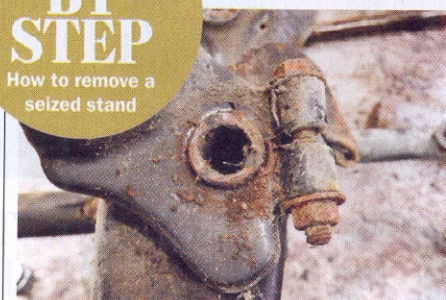
Stay tuned next month to find out... CB

**NEXT MONTH**

We take a trip to David Silver Spares with a shopping list, primed to plunder his racks of 400 Four goodies...

**STEP-BY-STEP**

How to remove a seized stand



**STEP 1 SPINDLY SEIZURE**

The spindle's supposed to be clamped by these brackets, leaving the stand to pivot on the spindle. But the stand's seized to the spindle, wearing the brackets.



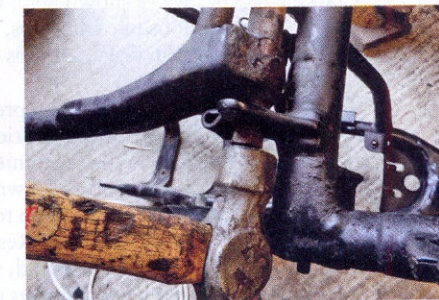
**STEP 2 GET THE DRIFT**

Try to find some sort of drift that matches the bore of the spindle. This will make it less likely to crush and collapse, essentially riveting itself in place.



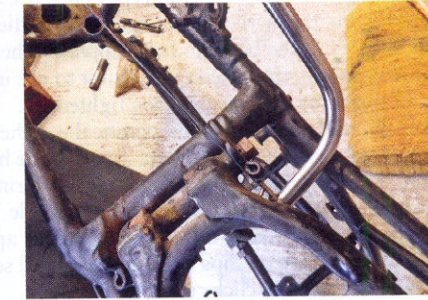
**STEP 3 THE FLAME GAME**

Penetrating oil is worth a try, but heat is essential. Unfortunately, propane is unlikely to be adequate; probably a job for a friendly local garage with oxyacetylene.



**STEP 4 HAMMERING IT HOME**

Then strike the drift with a heavy hammer. If the spindle starts peening over, you will need to grind back the damaged area flat against the frame bracket and try again.



**STEP 5 HACK ATTACK**

If all else fails, try drilling it through with a large drill bit or, at worst, hacksawing through the spindle. You'll need to rotate the blade through 90° to gain access.