

Sealed Bearings

One area that most British bikes could use some help is with bearings. When I say “bearings” I’m not talking about an engine rebuild, I’m talking about bringing the other bearings on the bike up to modern standards.

Take for instance the wheel bearings. Good tight wheel bearings are essential to accurate handling and good fuel mileage. The British insisted on using “open” type wheel bearings to cut rolling resistance. However this left the bearings open to rapid wear from road grit brought in by wind and water. As a consequence, Brit bike wheel bearings hardly ever last longer than 5 years.

The solution is to install “double sealed bearings”. All modern ball bearings are available in 3 states: open, shielded and sealed, and the shields and seals are available on 1 or 2 sides. Asking for bearings sealed on both sides doesn’t raise the price of the replacement bearings more than 1 or 2%, but it does make a tremendous difference to a vintage bike owner. The most obvious is that the bearing will be protected from the effects of wear producing dirt, so your investment will be protected and last a long time. Secondly, the bearings come pre-packed with excellent grades of grease and will not require any messy wheel bearing grease work. And last of all, and most important to vintage bike owners, the grease stays inside the bearing and is not splashed all over your beautiful vintage bike. This alone could save hours of cleanup time.

If your bike was made before 1965, then there’s a good chance that the bearings are measured in inches. Yes, sealed inch-sized bearings can be harder to find, but the results will be worth you time and effort. After the mid-60’s, most manufacturers converted to metric bearings and these are very easy to find.

Hope this helps!

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