



JAWA Motorcyclist



It's 1976

I am a young apprentice earning my first regular money. I save and borrow from my Dad to purchase my first motorbike a Cz 250. In those recession times the dealer supplied the bike, a year road tax, insurance and a helmet. After brief instruction where everything was, plus an owners manual for a Cz175 (never got one for the 250), I drove home with my dad following behind as tail gunner. I thought the reason the bike kept cutting out was because I had never driven before. Within a week and after reading the 175 manual I realized the problem and had replaced the spark plugs, HT lead, plug caps and fuse holder. The other early problem which the dealer also failed to sort out was the bike suddenly deciding to rev, throttle sticking. A new throttle cable sorted that. The 250 kept me company for 2 years in which time it covered around 18,000 miles. I kept no log and have no actual photos of the bike. It was a great bike for a learner. Not very powerful, but had steady torque and ample lock for town driving. The breaks were very soft, but with the speed that the bike was capable of were within reason. The 6 volt battery and 75watt dynamo were a challenge in the winter. Turning the lights to parking at traffic lights was normal procedure and you would not dream of leaving an indicator on. The bike itself felt substantial and held the road well after the first tyre change. On long runs she settled at 60MPH or 100k. At that speed she was silent, smooth and would purr all day. If you tried to go faster you just increased fuel consumption without going any faster. I can not remember the fuel consumption or tank range but I did notice when I traded her in that the 350 Jawa was more economical. That is because the 250 engine had to work harder to keep up. The engine loved to be driven hard, it always felt the better of a good blast. To work or service the bike was easy. Setting the timing was the most technical, but it also felt most rewarding. You developed a feel for the timing plates and became very proficient at the job. The secondary chain being so well protected was a big labour saver. However the original chain did start breaking rollers very early. But the replacement chain was trouble free. When I traded her in the main bearings were going, I later found that rusty bearings were the lot of all the Jawa's sold in Ireland at that time.

It was my first bike and I remember her fondly. The short comings were part of its charm because you worked to get the best out of her. The bike also gave me the confidence to do my own maintenance, because it was basic. At the same time I always felt a trust in the engine that it would get me there and home, even if something was wrong. I also liked the European look of the bike. It was different followed its own style and did not try to be more then it was.

2010

I am an old fart. My good wife thinks I am having a mid life crisis because I am trading in my trusty ER500 for a Jawa 250. "Why can't you go for Porch 911 and a mistress, like everyone else"? **Recession that's why?** I must admit the drop in power did have me wondering about my sanity on the odd occasion. The first surprise was that an owner's manual in English was not to be had. Got one translated to find that it held no information anyway. The second surprise was that Jawa no longer give a practical toolkit. God be with the days you got a hand pump, tyre levers, something to fit every part of the bike. Then I find that there is no side stand available for the bike. This would not be such a problem if the main stand was placed near the centre of gravity but it is not. Ok so I am a whimp at 15 stone and 6 foot but it makes the bike unsuitable for a lot of people. Why did I get the bike so, well I have enjoyed my Jawa's in the past. The smaller engine is more comfortable around town. It is lighter and better in traffic. Thankfully the lights are great. The brakes do exactly what they are supposed to do. The bike is tall and has a short wheel base so it is very nimble in town or on back roads. The engine is not fast but has torque it pulls like a train so you do not have to race around the 5 speed box to get up hills or slow down for villages. It gives 30k to a litre, which saves looking at the price of petrol at the pumps so often. It was not long before I changed the fuse holder. The original one was puny. I wish I had changed the tyres earlier. I have gone for Avon and slightly larger front and rear. I miss the protected secondary chain of the earlier Jawa's. But have notice that the smaller engine does not put as much pressure on a chain. The Bike is not really suitable for motorways. She is happiest just under 100k but does have a top speed of 120k. Not being a 2 stroke means that the engine likes to be driven not trashed, so it makes sense to choose routes that suit what the bike is capable of when going on a spin. It like when the speed is varied as opposed to constant.

The engine is very easy to work on. Lots of room to see what you are at. I have a trust in the engine and feel that it is a solid piece of kit that is not under any pressure so should last well. The front suspension is soft. But heavy oil in the damping has made a great difference. So far I have 5000k on the bike and the only problem has been a loose mirror and the dust caps on the exhausts coming undone. The mirror was just my bad maintenance never checking it after a very bumpy 6 hour drive. The dust caps on the exhaust are just cemented into place. Anyone who has tried to repair a holed exhaust knows that cement only lasts a while in those conditions so I think this is a problem I will be returning to. The engine is smooth but not as smooth as the Cz250 was when it is being cruised.

Do I think the Jawa 250 Travel is a replacement for the Cz250. Yes I do. Ok it is not as European looking but it has the Jawa look. The engine performance is similar. The major obstacles on the Cz250 have been addressed and a few new ones invented. I admit I miss the ding ding sound of the 2 stroke twin, but the engine is quiet and economic.