

1959 REG 250cc Racer

John Surtees rode the record-breaking REG racer back in the 1950s. Originally built as a private project, now it's back in working order...

The story of this DOHC racing twin started just after the Second World War when racer/engineer Bob Geeson took up the challenge of building a British bike to win the Lightweight TT. Together with toolmaker Gordon Allen, Geeson created the Allen-REG in which first took to the track in 1949. Their early machine was based around a 250cc parallel twin engine that Allen had been working on, combined with frame and cycle parts from Geeson's previous Rudge/REG project.

The 54mm x 54mm motor was of all alloy construction with gear-driven double overhead cams, roller big ends and a three-bearing crankshaft. Its first season didn't go so well (three outings and three DNFs with seized big ends), but Bob Geeson soldiered on with the project. The bottom end was given a complete overhaul so that a one-piece crank now ran on lipped roller bearings at either end with a plain centre bearing. Oil flowed through the hollow crankshaft with feeds to both big ends. The conrods were changed and the valve gear refined, so that the camshaft was driven by six spur gears, each supported on both sides by ball bearings. All this lived inside magnesium crank and timing cases.



Racer

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The REG was raced, fettled and developed during the 1950 and subsequent seasons and finally finished 10th in the 1953 Lightweight TT – ridden by its creator at an average speed of 71.74mph. Thereafter some of the most famous names in British motorcycle racing campaigned the REG around the UK, starting with John Surtees. Surtees claimed the REG's first victory at the end of season race at Brands Hatch, taking the 250 race and setting new lap and race records for the class.

In the following year Surtees went on to win another 15 races and captured yet more records. At the end of the season Bob Geeson set about building two more complete bikes which were then ridden into the early 1960s by a variety of famous names – among them John Hartle and Derek Minter, who scored a number of victories at the turning point of the decade. Geeson tried all manner of tuning mods to get the best from his bike, including coil ignition, then back to magneto, then a twin-plug ignition and so on, sometimes campaigning just one bike and occasionally running both for a complete season.

The REG was effectively a home-made special but, as Mick Walker comments; 'Bob Geeson's twin was the premier home-spun racer of the post-war era.'

After its time in active service had passed, this REG twin lived for a long while in the Geeson Museum and then transferred to the Sammy Miller Museum in Hampshire where it has been painstakingly restored. The bike has been fettled to its 1959 (or thereabouts) specification. It took a while for Sammy's technicians to get the bike completely right – they had to wait for bespoke conrods to be built, for instance – but finally the REG is finished



Racer - Engine detail

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Unlike some Museum machines, the REG is in full working order and is expected to be seen at classic parades with Sammy Miller at the helm during 2009. 'It's as attractive to look at (and hear!) as it will be exhilarating to ride' says the man himself.

So keep your eyes peeled for this unique machine appearing during the summer months, or pop along to the Miller Museum where it takes pride of place in the Racing Section.

The Sammy Miller Museum

- Bashley Manor, New Milton, Hampshire
- Opens 10am to 4.30pm - (Weekends only Dec to Feb)
- Tel 01425 616644