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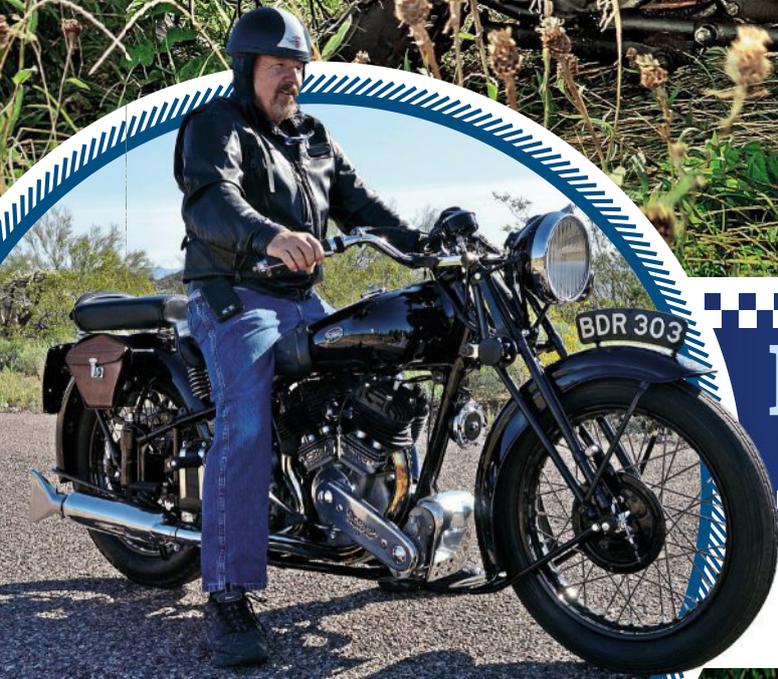


CLASSIC

BIKE • GUIDE

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LAVERDA 750 SF // GUZZI NUOVO FALCONE //

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Solidly single-minded

Made for the military, becoming a cult classic

WORDS & PHOTOS BY MARION THIRSK

MOTO GUZZI CREATED its first four-stroke horizontal single in 1920, launching the production Normale the next year. Guzzi developed its singles in a variety of road, race and military incarnations until the first Falcone 500 arrived in 1950. Sportier and lighter than its Astore 500 stablemate, the Falcone benefited from Guzzi's racing heritage and was equipped with components previously found on Guzzi's race machines. Significantly cheaper than the Dondolino racer, the 23bhp Falcone had the potential, with modification, to achieve similar performance.

From 1953, the Falcone became available as the 18.9bhp Turismo, which replaced the Astore, and the 23bhp Sport. Around 7500 Falcons were produced from 1950 through to 1963, many for police use.

When Moto Guzzi went into receivership the Italian government stepped in and eventually, with state backing, the Nuovo Turismo emerged in 1967.

The NT was created specifically for the police and military and used the Sport engine and Turismo carburettor. It ran 6.5:1 compression, output just over 19bhp and was produced until 1968.

■ **Below:** The Nuovo Falcone is quirky and not without charm, and its external flywheel is certainly eye-catching

■ **1:** The mighty flat single with its mighty flywheel can be started by the equally mighty motor atop the gearbox

■ **2:** Fairing deflects the worst of the weather but can be a hindrance in high winds

■ **3:** Robust metric speedo can provide an illusion of great speed



The following year, again due to police and military demand, the Nuovo Falcone was introduced. Around 15,000 were produced over the next seven years, about twice as many as the original Falcone.

The engine remained largely the same, retaining the same oversquare 88 by 82mm bore and stroke as Guzzi's original 1920 single, but with a modernised four-speed gearbox and wet sump. Electrics were upgraded to 12V and coil ignition.

The NF sported a new, steel double-cradle frame with rear shock absorbers rather than the cantilevered friction dampers of the original Falcone. Significantly heavier than its predecessor, it was slightly slower, with a top speed around 75mph.





In 1972 the Nuovo Falcone was offered to the general public as the Civile. A slightly increased compression ratio of 7:1 raised the claimed top speed to 87mph although few ever exceeded 80 without a long downhill run. A beige version, the Sahara, arrived in 1974. Some military machines were stockpiled, complete or in bits which meant that low mileage examples could still be bought until about 2005 when stocks were finally depleted.

Jake bought our feature bike, a 1972 NF, 15 years ago. It was imported as an unused bike but, although the engine and transmission appeared to be brand new, it had obviously been built up from bits. The fork shrouds were rusty under the paint, the sprocket carrier had a big gouge out of it where the chain had clearly come off, and the wheel rims had obviously been chromed over existing rust. They've since been rebuilt with Italian stainless steel rims.

Jake's bike was made for the Italian military but the fairing is from the Yugoslavian national army military traffic police, hence the blue lights and remains of the JNA logo. The steel panniers are Yugoslavian, too (the Italian ones are more square).

The panniers and fairing were recovered from a friend's Serbian import which was converted into a lightweight bobber where they were surplus to requirements. Originally Jake's machine would have sported a rather distinctive double-decker silencer, which was huge and heavy. Nuovo Falcons like to breathe and won't run well if the silencer is too restrictive, so Jake added a touch of Americana to his bike with a Harley Sportster pipe (subtly modified with a square point chisel) and a Harley footrest rubber over the kickstart.

PRICE GUIDE

£3,000 to £5,500

FAULTS & FOIBLES

Standard, well-maintained machines can cover big miles with few issues. Primitive oil filter and oil pressure probs can cause poor camshaft lubrication, wear on the timing side bush, sticking inlet valve causing contact with the piston, and the inlet valve seat dropping out. Gearboxes suffer from poor shimming during manufacturing so benefit from re-shimming to correct specs. Ex-military bikes, subjected to squaddie's feet, can suffer from bent selector forks.

Recommended upgrades include an extra oil feed to the inlet valve, external oil filter, lighter valves with softer springs (the stock ones are very heavy, so the valves hammer the seats)

ALSO CONSIDER

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SPECIALISTS

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Moto Guzzi Club GB:
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Ready for the long haul: this 1972 Nuovo Falcone comes with electric start, indicators, modern switchgear, digital speedo, Scottoloiler, a lightened flywheel and lowered seat. £4250 from northleicestermotorcycles.com / 01530 263381

As these machines were produced for a military contract and needed to be reliable, the charging system dynamo and control box are by Bosch, with lighting provided by CEV. When Jake first got it, the bike would cut out periodically as the plug fouled. The original Bosch coil failed so it now uses a British Leyland Mini 12V coil. The Civile came with a Bosch Dynastart, a meatier dynamo fitted with two sets of field coils, which can be used as a starter motor by pressing the button to drive the flywheel through the fanbelt. You press the button to spin it up, then once it's churning you drop the valve lifter and it starts. The 22lb flywheel keeps it going for quite a few turns...

As Moto Guzzi exported the NF to several overseas armies, the owners' manual is conveniently in English. The recommended starting method is to pull the valve lifter in and keep on kicking until you build up lots of speed on the flywheel, then drop the valve lifter and it'll start. Jake however finds it easy to start it just like any other single, by taking it over top dead centre and kicking. It always starts first kick anyway; if not he knows he's got a problem and gets his tools out! ▶



1: Low, long and very strong, the Guzzi flat singles are quirky and entertaining, always!

2: The Airfix paints used to touch-up the petrol tank don't quite match the Italian military palette...

3: Always a practical form of transportation, this NF sports a 6" cable tray bolted to the rear carrier to accommodate camping kit

Whereas the earlier Falcone boasted numerous grease nipples the NF is somewhat lacking in this department. The swinging arm bearing is a plain bush bereft of a nipple so fitting one is recommended. Although there are springs and oil in the forks there's no hydraulic damping, so it's a bit bouncy. The rear suspension is similarly basic but the rider's comfort is taken care of by a sprung saddle. To onlookers it can look somewhat strange, as the rider bounces around out of sync with the suspension...

Municipal versions came with legshields, crash bars and a leatherette skirt over the bottom of the screen which combined to give reasonably good weather protection. Jake prefers a naked engine so removed as much as possible, just keeping the handlebar fairing. Dispensing with the cover means that the huge flywheel is clearly visible to entertain onlookers. The primary drive is by helical gear and the engine effectively runs 'backwards'.

As it was created for military use, everything on the NF is very substantial and extremely robust. The frame's tube are very strong, it's all triangulated and the centrestand is huge. The result is a heavy bike which thankfully doesn't feel it, as the weight is carried low down. Jake reckons that the 2ls front brake is very effective when set up properly. Over the years, nothing much has gone wrong with this machine which has been a relief as some items, particularly gearbox parts, are quite hard to come by; engine parts aren't so bad. You can upgrade the oil pump by fitting a modified a V7 oil pump which has a larger capacity.

With a military-g geared Nuovo Falcone everything happens very, very slowly. Changing gear from first to second, the rider must wait for the engine to slow down or otherwise it just 'crunches'. This means you've just about stopped again so a lot of owners start in second as first is so low. The Militare has a 35-tooth rear sprocket, often changed to 33 teeth to be the same as the Civile. It is possible to go down to 31 teeth by fitting a specially-made Talon sprocket, but then the bike can struggle with a head wind or going up a steep hill. Jake's discovered that the NF looks so convincingly like a 'proper classic' than when he's riding it no-one actually expects him to go very fast. Its happy cruising speed is about 55mph, when he can just relax and enjoy the ride. **CBC**



MANUFACTURED: 1969 to 1976 **ENGINE:** ohv single cylinder **BORE / STROKE:** 88mm x 82mm **CAPACITY:** 499cc **COMPRESSION:** 6.85:1 **POWER:** 32bhp @ 4,800rpm (Civilian edition) **CARBURETTOR:** Dell'Orto VHB 29A **IGNITION:** Bosch 12V coil, dynamo or Dynastart **ELECTRICS:** 12V 150W **LUBRICATION:** wet sump **CLUTCH:** multiplate wet clutch **GEARBOX:** four-speed constant mesh **PRIMARY DRIVE:** gear **FINAL DRIVE:** chain **FRONT BRAKE:** 200mm 2ls drum **REAR BRAKE:** sls drum **FRONT SUSPENSION:** telescopic fork **REAR SUSPENSION:** swinging arm, twin shock **TYRES:** 3.50 x 18 **WHEELBASE:** 1450mm **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5.9" **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31" **WEIGHT:** 214kg **TOP SPEED:** 79mph