Revisiting the MotoGiro d'Italia...

41 Years Later.

by Tony Tessier, LCUSA Member #47

Back in 1961, I bought my first Lambretta, a secondhand 1957 LDB III 150cc. The first scootering boom in the UK was at its height, and I became very involved in the national scooter sport scene. By 1968, I was a team member in the LCGB entry to the Motogiro d'Italia, on a 1967 SX150 'S' type that I prepared it in Supertune livery. The Motogiro started up again in 1966 as a re-creation of the famous Italian motorcycle road race that took place between 1910 and 1957, this time as a road rally with timed stages and special tests. It wasn't an Innocenti-only event, so we had to bring our own support: The LCGB Rally Van, loaded with tools and spares, accompanied our team of 6 riders.

The team trailered our 6 bikes to the event's start near Rome, and we began the 8-day event. The weather was atrocious, with non-stop rain and snow. In the middle of day three, Ken Herlingshaw and I both got horribly lost and finished the day more than an hour late. This put us out of the competition completely, so made our way back to Milan with our bikes on the train to wait for the others to return at the end of the competition. That was one of the last international events I entered.

The following year I graduated from college, got married and traded my Lambrettas for a Mini. As the years passed, I traded cars, motorcycles and wives (though never one for the other!), but I was just an occasional pleasure rider. But, after I moved to the USA in 1992 and later discovered a surprisingly strong scooter scene in the Washington - Baltimore area, I started restoring some old bikes. To date, two are finished - a 1966 SX200 and a 1955 150D, and two are 'in progress' - a 1980 Serveta Jet200 and a 1949 125 Model B.

In 2007, my old friend Ken spotted a website for the Motogiro d'Italia, which had been revived again in 2001. We decided it would be fun to do the event again in 2008 on the 40th anniversary of our previous attempt. In the end, Ken wasn't able to take part, but I entered. Since it turned out to be very expensive to transport a bike over to Italy, I arranged to hire a Ducati Multistrada for the event as a non-competing rider. The start and finish of the Motogiro was in Rome, and the route featured some of the same towns and roads that we had visited in 1965 and 1968. Even though the event was most enjoyable, I missed not being able to compete.

After the finish, I took another week to tour around Italy a bit by car – I went to Milan, to visit Vittorio Tessera and the original Casa Lambretta. Then, I visited Rimini Lambretta Centre, run by Dean Orton and Paolo Catani. As I talked to them, I had the idea of commissioning a replica of the SX150 I used on the Giro in 1968 to ride in the 2009 event. I gave them all the photos I had of the original bike and a write up of everything I could remember doing to it. Though there were many bikes in their restoration queue, the guys worked their miracles in 12 months, having found a suitable 'donor' bike, an original 1966 SX150.

1968

So, in May 2009, I left Washington for Bologna with a Motogiro entry and my riding gear. Dean and Paolo assured me that the bike would be ready. I arrived at the hotel that would be the Motogiro start, and sure enough, I got a call from Paolo the next morning that he was on his way with the bike. And there it was! The bike was a perfect recreation of the original in every detail, beautifully finished and almost better than new.

Since there really wasn't a class for scooters in the revived Motorgiro, I ended up running in the Touring SuperSport class for bikes of 250cc made up until 1968,

2009