

XS1100 Yamaha Combination



I have always been mad about motorbikes right from the age of twelve when I got nicked on one. Well, that was until I had an accident some years ago and I just accepted that as a wheelchair user my biking days were over. That was until I attended a mobility show at Castle Donnington. At the show I came across the NABD stand, and the people were so friendly and positive that soon they made me realise that, despite my disabilities I could probably ride a combo or trike, with the help of a Klicktronic gear changer, wheelchair carrier, and hand brake, and other alterations to suit my disability.

I went away feeling really excited about the thought of being able to ride a bike again. At first my wife Chris was horrified. She told me that I had enough problems without adding to them, but she could see that just the thought of biking again had lifted my spirits ten fold. I looked at a few trikes but they were well outside my finances, so I concentrated on finding an affordable motorcycle combination. I went over to Romford Essex to see a bloke called Del. Del boy had a twenty three year old Yamaha XS 1100 outfit that was really in quite a bad way, and

painted with silver household paint.

The overall width of this outfit was just over six feet eight inches (too bloody wide for my liking!). Despite being a heap of garbage, it was just about affordable and anyway I quite liked the number plate. Well I bought it, and with a length of sash cord to change gear, I attempted to ride it back home to Kent. I hadn't ridden a combination before, and I hadn't gone all that far, when it suddenly veered over to the right straight into the path of an oncoming car! Well I thought 'sod this for a game of soldiers', and to make matters worse, my wife was following me and saw what happened. I managed to ride the bike back to Del boys and he was good enough to offer to ride it over to Bromley for me, all be it at 10-15 mph, and yes he was having problems riding it too. What were my needs and priorities with regards to my outfit? I needed: a Klicktronic gear change system to change gear, higher handle bars that were further back so that I could sit fairly upright, forward mounted foot pegs to allow me to straighten my legs a little on long runs and some sort of backrest. The bike also had to be as

safe and reliable as possible. I also decided that the outfit needed to be a lot narrower if I was to be able to get through seven-foot width limits, and avoid taking chunks from parked cars. At home, I gave it a good looking over and found out why the outfit steered so badly. The bearings in the front leading fork's swinging arm were rusted and completely broken up. The front and rear shock absorbers were shagged and the rear springs bottomed out. Also, the brakes were bloody useless, and on top of all this the sidecar wheel was bent and the rear tyre was absolute crap. This prompted me to get really stuck in and give the outfit a complete rebuild and service etc.

I narrowed the sidecar chassis by some nine inches and overhauled the front forks. I fitted new Hagon front and rear gas shocks with suitable springs, replaced all the wheel bearings and freed off and serviced the rear brake callipers. I also fitted new disc pads and drilled holes in the front and rear brake disks to help clear surface water away. The bikes electrics were a bloody nightmare, and I had to spend a lot of time rewiring and sorting them out including fitting a new fuse box



radio, clock, voltmeter, & extra lamps. The rest of the rebuild was down to a bit of customising and a re-spray with spray cans, prior to fitting the brilliant Klicktronic system that NABD had been good enough to supply to me via a grant (thank you NABD). I also sorted out the handlebars by using lengthened Honda items, and fitted a backrest and some forward foot pegs.

How many hours did it all take? ...Don't ask! How much was the total cost? ...Again don't ask - well, my wife might be reading this!

Well the first time I took the outfit on the road was for it's MOT test and it was bloody wonderful. I don't think anyone could have wiped the smile from my face, Oh to be back on a bike again. Mind you the outfit is a totally different kettle of fish compared to a solo bike, and it takes a lot of getting used to, but I've now done about 1500 miles and riding the "Lady in red" gets a little easier all the time.

Was it worth it? Yes it was worth every single penny, and every single minute I spent doing it. Also it helped me to regain my drive and motivation at a time when I was spending too much time feeling sorry for myself and down in the dumps. The NABD lads at the motorbility show probably didn't realise just how much their encouragement lifted and really motivated me.

Since getting the outfit on the road I have attended several of the NABD Kent area get togethers, and Gary and the crew are so friendly and helpful. The "Lady in red" also took me all the



way up to NABBED 11 at York, plus a further 250 miles touring Yorkshire. I did have a problem on the way to York when an ignition coil packed up (Thank the Lord for mobile phones - yes, I am a Christian) but once a new coil was fitted I was on my way.

Unfortunately whilst on my way back from buying the coil with the AA man, my new back rest was stolen from my bike, damn and blast!

I really enjoyed the York event, I can't remember the last time I had such a great time and made so many new friends. I really don't understand why more people from 'down south' don't make the effort to attend the rally at York, as it was a truly brilliant affair. Despite some pratt on the gate demanding a deal or reduced ticket rate, I thought it was excellent value for money. After all these events are all about raising funds to help people like you and me aren't they?

Yes, joining NABD has opened new horizons for me, and it could do the same for you, so don't just sit there on your arse - come and join us!

Paul Crudge

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your help, and for putting the fun back into my life. I am looking forward to doing the BMF Garden of England show with Gary Tompkins (Kent Rep) in June, and I hope to see you all at Cornbury Park in September.