

THREE-WHEEL SPECIAL SIDECARS ARE BACK!

This is the coolest thing you can do on two (three) wheels... no, really!

By Andy Davidson
MCN STAFF WRITER

Mention sidecars in conversation and most eyes immediately glaze over. Sidecars are the preserve of old boys, are impractical and boring – or so they say. Last week I would have agreed but after spending just two days with an outfit I'm now saving up to buy my own... Here's why you should too.

For the last 50 years three-wheelers have been dismissed as uncool, but it wasn't always that way. In 1951 less than 10% of British households owned cars while no fewer than 150,000 outfits whizzed along our roads. But as cars became more affordable sidecar sales rolled off a cliff, deemed obsolete and out of tune with a modernising society. Well, we reckon it's time for a comeback because sidecars had lots going for them 65 years ago and still do today. They are cool, rugged, supremely

practical – and take far more skill to operate than you might imagine. But once you've got the knack of it they transform into incredibly capable and versatile machines. You can take your family touring around Europe, tear up the countryside with one wheel in the air, have the best time of your life with your mates, race on and off-road, become a dirt track warrior and even go on a global adventure with a trusty outfit. Isn't it time you considered one? *Continued over*

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JAMES ARCHIBALD

NON-BELIEVER

Three-wheeling converts

‘This is the craziest thing you can do on any amount of wheels.’ *By Andy Davidson*

I don’t wanna die!

This right-hander came out of nowhere. The bars are at full right-lock and we’re veering over the white lines into the wrong lane. The sidecar starts to gravitate, my passenger throws his upper body half out of the car in a desperate attempt to stop it lifting off. It doesn’t work. We’re now in the wrong lane.

Ten seconds ago we were cruising along gorgeous twisty roads through the Austrian hills. It was peaceful, with only the sound of birds and the put-put from our 750cc Ural outfit in the air. But unless I can conjure up a miracle or, even less likely, some skill, it’s about to become a site of carnage.

Being in the wrong lane is no longer our primary concern. The outfit won’t turn at all and we’re now heading for the cliff edge. My 10 minutes of sidecar training go out the window and my motorcycle instincts kick in. I grab a fistful of brake, but that only yanks the bars further left and straightens us up for take-off. I glance at my passenger as if to apologise for what’s about to happen. I can just make out his eyes through the thick fog of fear steaming up his Perspex goggles.

We all scream expletives, shocking my delayed brain into realising this isn’t working and forcing it to make the psychological break from solo to sidecar. I unwillingly get on the gas. My senses scream, convinced that throttling on will accelerate us off the cliff and deep into the forest below. My soul cringes as the unit snaps right and the rear wheel tickles the edge, pushing rocks into the pit below like a 10p arcade machine. We shoot back to our side of the road, embarrassed, out of our depth, our faces white and hands shaking. No one says a word.

How it all began...

I always thought sidecars were for gentlemanly folk from the 1950s, and Wallace and Gromit. Nobody told me a sidecar would provide the most exhilarating ride of my life.

At the Ural headquarters in Austria we met the MD, Hari Schwaighofer, and a fleet of rugged Soviet-era outfits. After a quick introduction to driving, my passenger, Adam, loaded our gear and jumped in. James, our photographer, got in Hari’s outfit and we all set off. I was expecting a gentle ride on a rickety old machine from a bygone era, the next two days would slap that stupid idea completely out of my mind. Hari, an ex-sidecar motocrosser, started us off with straight lining on a dual carriageway. He seamlessly flitted between traffic while my stubborn old mule snapped to the right every time I accelerated, my left arm continuously working to bring it back in line. If I braked or rolled off she’d flick to the left. I was all over the place. I could feel Adam looking at me like I’ve never even touched a motorcycle before. The

WHERE WE WENT

We flew to Salzburg, Austria, and drove an hour to Linz. The surrounding hills are covered in castle ruins and dirt tracks. It’s sidecar mecca!

BIKE FACTS

URAL SPORTSMAN £11,245

Engine	745cc, four-stroke, fuel injected, 2v boxer-twin, OHV, air-cooled, 4-gears and reverse, shaft drive
Power	40bhp @ 5400rpm
Torque	36ftlbs @ 3400rpm
Suspension	Sachs leading link front forks, twin shocks rear, single shock on sidecar
Brakes	(f) 295mm Brembo caliper, (r) 256mm HB caliper, (sidecar) 245mm Brembo caliper
Seat height	785mm
Weight	332kg (dry)
Tank	19 litres
MPG	40 (claimed)

THANKS TO Hari Schwaighofer at UralMotorcycles. Visit www.ural.cc for more info. To buy a Ural in the UK visit www.watsonian-squire.com

Russian didn’t care what I wanted; she had a mind of her own. Hari got bored after 10 minutes and veered up a dirt track into the hills. So, armed with 20 minutes of practice, I found myself chasing a nutcase through a forest on a machine that hated my guts. But with three wheels, it’s all about surviving each bend as the mad bitch tries to spit us off.

Getting to grips

Mile after mile of stunning roads should have given me time to get used to driving, but it wasn’t enough. My brain rejected the outfit’s counter-intuitive handling. It’s nothing like riding a bike, or driving a car. When you accelerate the unit goes in the direction of the sidecar, and as our model is on the right (we can only get them on the left in the UK), the unit pulls right, which means you need to be prepared to steer left to counter it. If you accelerate too fast round a right turn the sidecar wheel wants to lift. Going left, the rear wheel feels like it’s floating if you go too quick, and the whole thing can end up flipping.

Simple tasks like changing gear make the outfit shake and feel unstable.



Lost in a sidecar? You don’t need a TomTom, you need an AndyAdam...



Round One

Hari helped us find a spot to camp for the night. I held a brave face while we unloaded the humongous 83-litre boot. Hari bid farewell and left me with a warning: “If you thought it was hard with a passenger, wait until tomorrow when you have a pillion too.” As he drove off, my brave face dissolved and my shoulders collapsed from pain. I have a new-found respect for sidecar riders and wouldn’t want to arm wrestle any of them. As Hari’s parting words settled in my brain, a potent concoction of apprehension, adrenaline and pure exhilaration moved in with them.

Falling in love

The next morning, everything began to feel more natural. My achy arms were forced me to rely on the throttle for turning right, and lefts were tackled by throttling off and applying the brakes. I wish I had practised it sooner. Burying it into lefts had James yelping: “The rear’s coming up, we’re going to flip!” and had us all hanging off like racers.



At least if it sinks you can use the sidecar as a lifeboat

But by the end of the day mortal fear was replaced with non-stop giggling, pure exhilaration and camaraderie. As the mighty Ural flew over ruts and ravines and waded through rivers, it dawned on me how good an overlanding machine this is. Weeks later, the sensation still writhes inside me. I sporadically laugh, wince and nearly cry thinking about it. None of us wanted it to end, and not once did any of us want to be on a bike. The sidecar isn’t a solo endeavour like a motorcycle; it’s about having an adventure with your mates... and not crashing. And once you’ve got the latter nailed, it’s the best fun you can have on any amount of wheels, ever.

Continued over



Driveshaft takes power from the bike’s rear wheel to the sidecar’s wheel



‘I was chasing a nutcase through a forest on a machine that hated my guts’

SEE THE VIDEO

www.motorcyclenews.com
See Andy, James and Adam’s Austrian adventure unfold as they battle a Ural into submission



With 83 litres of luggage space, you could’ve packed a bigger tent, lads

YOUR TURN

Fancy a go? Here's what you need to know

Get clued-up on everything three wheeled as our expert **Neil Murray** talks you through riding and buying your own outfit

In theory, it couldn't be easier. It's a motorcycle, it's got a third wheel so you can't fall off. No need to re-learn all the controls. It's slower than a solo, so you can't get into trouble. Yeah, right.

It was a Jawa 350 combo and I was pretty sure it was going to be a doddle, because nothing serious could happen at 45mph. Ha! Within 10 minutes, I nearly clobbered a pedestrian when I let the sidecar wheel bump up the kerb. I didn't know grannies could be so agile: she hopped, gazelle-like, in the air and I missed her.

Sidecar outfits are about the only road vehicles that are asymmetric: they behave in completely different ways according to whether you're turning left or right, and whether you're accelerating or decelerating. With a left-hand mounted chair, if you accelerate, the outfit swings left.

If you brake, it swings right. The one thing you absolutely do not do if you go into a left-hander too fast is brake. Guess what I did?

The bars snapped straight, the sidecar went up in the air, and I headed straight for the flank of a London bus. You know how crashes happen in slo-mo? I had time to see every head on the impact side of the bus swivel, and every jaw drop. Thankfully, the outfit stopped a foot away from the bus and the sidecar wheel crashed back to earth.

Right-handers, though, are a hoot. Yank the bars onto full lock as you slow down, and you almost pivot on the spot.

Everyone who has ever owned an outfit has crashed. Once you get over that, though, you'll love them. It will just take a little time and patience in learning to ride one and figuring out which one to buy, so here's what you need to know...



Ural MD Schwaighofer gives MCN's Andy a driving lesson. It went in one ear and out the other



Going left-field
Accelerate too hard around a left-hander and the bike's rear wheel is in danger of taking off. The sidecar wheel travels further so throttling off helps the sidecar to swing round.

Three become two
Accelerate round a right-hander and the sidecar's wheel will lift. The motorcycle has further to travel than the sidecar so you'll need to apply gas for a right (if the sidecar was on the left side, this would happen when going round a left-hander).

Off the brake
Applying front brake through a right hander will cause the handlebars to snap to the left

Follow that car
Apply gas and the outfit goes in the direction of the sidecar.

Beefed-up front
The front wheel is loaded under hard turns, the leading link fork is rigid enough to stop excessive compression.



Fancy an outfit of your own? Best bag a pro-built one

BUY YOUR OWN

You have a choice of buying a ready-built one from a manufacturer or pro-builder such as Watsonian-Squire, or building one yourself. The last choice is fraught with difficulty and really isn't a good idea. Manufacturer-built combos include Ural/Dnepr (slobbering old BMW-style flat twins), Enfield India, Jawa and MZ, both of which mainly used the lightweight Velorex chair. Classic Lambretta scooter outfits are hugely sought-after and expensive.

Ideally, you want alloy wheels (spoked wheels can fail unless built with heavy-duty spokes), or car wheels (to lower the gearing and fit car tyres) and leading link forks are signs that the owner is a sidecar nut (most are). Decent combos are expensive. Budget at least £1500, and be aware that you're likely to need a big bike if you want to cruise at more than 65mph. BMWs are popular, so too are Moto Guzzis.

When looking at a prospective purchase, pay more attention to the chassis than the engine. The sideways stresses wear out things like swingarm bushes and wheel bearings faster than on a solo. Also check the chair's electrics – there's often some inventive bodgery there.

LICENCE & LEGAL

The licensing is the same as for solos. You can't take your test on an outfit unless you have certain specified disabilities. You don't have to wear a helmet in the chair, but a pillion must wear one. There's no minimum age for a chair passenger and no need for a seat belt, but if one is fitted it must meet all the legal requirements. Right-hand outfits are only legal if registered before Sept 1, 1981.

TRAINING

DIY, really. Find a large empty area and practise accelerating, braking and doing figure-of-eights until you understand how the outfit behaves.

The Federation of Sidecar Clubs offers a training scheme run by Len Tempest. Watsonian-Squire offers free lessons if you buy from them. Chris Squire of W-S emphasises it's not a full training course: just the basics so you've got a decent chance of getting home in one piece.

TOP TIPS

BY BEN MATTHEWS, Watsonian-Squire Ltd Director

- You need to drive it as if it's a car, allowing plenty of space for the sidecar next to you.
- Corner-entry speed is the key to confident driving – they behave differently on left and right bends so you need to start off slowly.
- The main danger is taking a corner too fast, and then easing the throttle which pulls the outfit in the other direction
- You'd be amazed at how swiftly a skilled sidecar pilot can take a corner. Just remember to steer, not lean!

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ADVENTURE

'It changed my life'

Sidecars broadened the horizons of these hardcore adventure riders

Ever fancied a biking adventure with your family? Mihai Barbu shows us how it's done with a 17,000-mile, four-month, odyssey. Mihai, his four-year-old son Vladimir and girlfriend Oana covered 41 countries on a Ural outfit. Here's his story...

"I'm a passionate motorcyclist. I've been adventure riding for years, including countless trips through Europe and 16,000 miles on my BMW F650GS Dakar from Romania to Mongolia and back. I was a two-wheel thoroughbred and

never imagined that one day I'd buy a sidecar. But that all changed when my son, Vladimir, was born. My girlfriend and I needed another seat and I didn't want a car, leaving me with no choice but to look at sidecar outfits. So I bought a Ural Ranger for him, it's his bike really. And what an amazing, life-changing choice it turned out to be.

"We planned a summer 'warm-up ride' with no real plans once he turned four years old. I thought we'd be home in two weeks. I told Vladimir we'd see reindeer and camels and then head

home. But that two weeks turned into four months and 17,000 miles - and not once did he ask when we were going home, and I mean never, not once. I like to think that with the sidecar, a tent and his parents, he was home. I fell in love with the Ural too because it keeps my family together and gives us the opportunity to do amazing trips like this. I get guys coming up to me now, who followed my blog, saying, thanks a lot, now I can't go on weekend rides with my mates because my wife read your story and wants to come with me!"



With his outfit, girlfriend Oana and son Vladimir, Mihai Barbu's adventures continue

'The Ural keeps my family together and lets us do amazing trips like this'



Mihai Barbu
Romania, Age 36,
Freelance photographer

41
Countries

17,400
Miles

4
Months exploring

Barbu has added 41 flags to his Ural's panniers



The Barbu clan even made it over to stunning Doonagore castle in Ireland



With your nearest and dearest, a tent and a Ural outfit, the whole world is Barbu's home



Having a family doesn't have to mean the end of the road for adventure touring. An outfit will set you free

Three wheeling in the US of A

Adventure riders Austin Vince and Lois Pryce take three wheels across America. *By Lois Pryce*, adventure rider and author

"Now this is where reverse gear really comes in handy!" declared Austin as we skidded to an emergency stop with the front wheel hanging over the edge of a precipice. We were on a remote trail somewhere in the Utah desert, it was 43°C and we had half a bottle of water and a packet of Oreos between us. Anyone would think we were new to this motorcycle travel business. As Austin throttled backwards in a cloud of dust, I clung on to the sidecar, hoping that it would be my turn to drive soon, perchance in a more ladylike fashion.

It was just another day of our 6000-mile ride across America in a Ural sidecar outfit and today we were discovering the vagaries of driving one of these beasts off-road, an experience akin to a wrestling match. But the mighty Ural, being made of sterner stuff than its riders soaked with every rock, bump and pothole with ease. "This is the ultimate couples' overland machine!" Austin announced as we narrowly missed a tree.

Rumbling from coast-to-coast on America's two-lane highways, dirt roads, and desert trails in one of these outfits seemed like the most fun you could have on three wheels. We rode



along the crest of the Appalachians into Tennessee and North Carolina. Our route took us through the barren plains of the Mid-West until we spied the jagged horizon of the Rockies. We spent our nights camping in the woods and under the vast desert sky, mingling with bears and coyotes who seemed happy to share their wilderness with us.

The Ural had become a firm friend during our ride and its old-fashioned analogue charm had attracted everyone we met along the way, proving that it's not just a reliable steed that will take you anywhere in comfort and style, but that it'll make you many friends in the process. What more could you want from your motorcycle?



Lois piloted the Ural through stunning backdrops like Monument Valley

AUSTIN VINCE AND LOIS PRYCE

The first London to Cape Town ride was in a sidecar!

"Motorcycling is a tool with which you can accomplish something meaningful in your life. It is an art"

Theresa Wallach

While stay-at-home wives were told to prepare dinner for their husbands - Theresa Wallach and Florence Blenkiron were battling through the formidable Sahara Desert and pushing on to South Africa in 1935. They became the first motorcyclists to cross the Sahara and the first to make the journey from London to Cape Town. The remarkable women set precedence; they were following in no one's footsteps, without proper maps, backup and nobody to turn to for help. Just two women and one Panther Redwing motorcycle with a Watsonian sidecar and trailer. They faced sand storms, dangerous animals, treacher-



Trailblazers Wallach and Blenkiron

ous off-road tracks, total engine failures (which they had to rebuild themselves), faced nomads and the French Foreign Legion with perseverance.

Continued over

RACING

‘It’s a wild ride!’

After racing motorcycles for over 20 years, British Superbike star Chris Walker has added an extra wheel to his career. *By Stuart Barker*

Chris Walker spent 20 years racing British Superbikes, World Superbikes, World Supersport and 500 GPs and became one of Britain’s most popular riders. In 2016 he switched to three wheels to race in the British Sidecar Championship on a Santander Salt Kawasaki-powered outfit. We asked him how sidecars stack up against superbikes.

What were your first impressions of riding a sidecar?

I didn’t expect it to feel as fast – it feels like a missile because you’re so close to the ground and you’ve got so much more grip. The 0–60mph time is probably the same as a superbike. I was surprised at how race-like a sidecar feels too – they’re very squat, very taut, and the tiniest movement of the steering really has a huge effect.

What was the biggest difference that you had to master?

The huge unknown to me was having a passenger on the side and how important their job is. The outfit either steers or doesn’t steer, and stops or doesn’t stop, depending on how good your passenger is. The job they do is way more involved than I’d ever realised – passengers affect your lap times to an incredible extent. That really blew my mind, so you have to make friends with these guys super-quick because they determine how fast you can go!

How aggressive are sidecar riders compared to superbike riders?

That really took me by surprise too. You have to plan overtakes on a superbike with a certain finesse otherwise you end up touching bars, touching bikes, and you can both end up crashing. On a sidecar, you have to make a gap as opposed to waiting for gap. It’s not quite stock car racing but it’s not far off! The limits are far above what you can get away with on a solo – you can



Walker’s first sidecar race

“It was in the New Year’s Day Scramble in 1986 at Ripley. My dad, a friend and I built a sidecar for my motocross bike, for a bit of fun, with my mate passengering for me. He did one lap in it, absolutely bricked it and refused to get back into it, so my dad, who was still pissed from New Year’s Eve, said ‘f*** it, I’ll do it!’ My dad isn’t with us anymore so he won’t be sat on the side of it. But I’m sure he’s looking down laughing at me!”

spin it, you can slide it, and you’re not gonna tuck the front, so they’re a lot more brutal in the way they overtake and the way they put a lap together.

How difficult is it to get off the start line on a sidecar?

It’s a balance. If you dump the clutch you just get wheelspin so it’s finding the balance between spin and drive without stalling or bogging it down. The passenger can also help by weighting the rear of the outfit to reduce spin.

Can you brake much later in a sidecar?

Yeah, you can brake much harder and much later than on a superbike – I’d

say between 25 and 50 metres later, depending on the corner and the length of the preceding straight. You can also get off the brakes earlier so you’re not trail-braking all the way to the apex. You’re back on the power well before the apex so mid-corner, a sidecar is faster than a superbike.

What about corner exit?

You’ve got the weight of two people and the outfit to haul so corner exit is slower. The drive from 50mph to 150mph is where we really lose out.

What’s the difference in lap times between a superbike and sidecar?

I know that at Brands Hatch Indy the solos will be doing low 45s while the sidecar crews will be doing 48s, so it’s closer than you might think.

Is it actually more fun to race a sidecar?

It’s definitely more of a wild ride! For me, riding a solo is the norm but nothing about riding a sidecar feels normal yet – spinning it, sliding it, having your passenger slap you on the back when you’ve had a moment. There’s a lot of fun to be had in a sidecar, for sure.

Have you ever had a go in the chair?

I went round Mallory park with Mick Boddice once and absolutely crapped myself. Sidecar passengers should all be knighted – they’re a special breed!

Are you a sidecar convert now?

Absolutely. I’m looking at getting a Royal Enfield outfit for the road. I need to start taking my daughter to school in one because she feels like she’s missing out! But I don’t call my racing outfit a sidecar – I call it the time machine because, in changing from superbikes to sidecars, I’ve gone from being the oldest on the grid to one of the youngest on the grid, so I reckon I’ve got another 20-year career ahead of me!

Continued over



Roads racing

The first Sidecar TT was staged in 1923 and was won by Freddie Dixon. But with only 14 outfits entered, the concept was abandoned until 1954 when there was far more interest (and entries) in the class.

Going global

The first Sidecar World Championship was held in 1949 and was won by Britain’s Eric Oliver on a Manx Norton outfit with Denis Jenkinson in the chair. Oliver went on to win four world titles.

TT legend

Dave Molyneux is the most successful sidecar racer in TT history with 17 wins to his name. He also holds the current outright lap record of 116.785mph and is still competing today.

Brit hits

The UK is the most successful nation at sidecar racing. Since the World Championship began in 1949, Brits have won 28 titles. Next closest is Germany with 22. The most successful racer of all time, Steve Webster, is also British.



A good passenger is vital to a fast lap, Walker’s made pals with team-mate Ash Hawes



Walker’s got plenty of experience with Kawasaki machinery but not so much of the three-wheeled type

HOW NOT TO PASSENGER A SIDECAR

By Simon Patterson
MotoGP Reporter



When world champion Tim Reeves convinced me to jump on the back of his championship-winning Formula One outfit for a few laps of Mallory Park, I knew it wouldn’t be as easy as it looked. But I didn’t realise just how hard it would be either.

I received a crash course from Tim’s passenger, Greg Cluze where he helped me find the most comfortable position to wedge myself into on the tiny passenger tray. It was pretty obvious I wouldn’t be doing much moving around. And that became my downfall. Despite strict instructions from Tim to reach over and tap him on the back if I needed to stop, I very quickly

‘I knew it wouldn’t be easy, but I didn’t realise how hard it would be either!’

discovered that when holding on to the back of a 1000cc engine, letting go becomes rather difficult.

What resulted was perhaps the most anticipated crash in history... Exiting Gerrards on the fourth lap, I felt my hand start to lose the ability to hold on. Launching off the back at 90mph, I was lucky to walk away unhurt. If anyone ever tells you that being a sidecar passenger is easy – they’re lying.



Simon chooses the fastest bit of Mallory to make his dramatic exit

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HISTORY

Great Britain's forgotten love

The UK was once a nation of sidecar nutters, we go back to the beginning to find out what changed. *By Brian Crichton*

Sixty years ago we were mad for outfits with over 150,000 of them on British roads. And despite their drastic decline, they've stuck with us for over 100 years.

In 1893 a person unknown made a sidecar to fit to a bicycle. The seed was sown and by 1903 as the nascent powered two-wheeler movement was gathering force, three businesses were offering sidecars. The sidecar scored over the forecar and the trailer. In the forecar the passenger felt vul-

nerable and was in the frontline for the dust and exhaust fumes from the vehicle in front. The trailer passenger suffered the same treatment, only closer up. The sidecar was also a cost-effective solution to the rider taking his wife or girlfriend out to enjoy the freedom of the open road.

The potential of the sidecar quickly became apparent for all types of duty. Just about any commercial venture could make use of one – plumbers, window cleaners, the Post Office, the RAC, even taxis.

In the 1920s the sidecar outfit enjoyed a significant price advantage over the car, but during the 1930s the price differential was narrowing. Post WWII, cars were in short supply and the sidecar was the answer for the family man who wanted to treat his loved ones to weekend trips. The 1950s was the golden era of the chair. The motor car cost three times the price of a house, and the sidecar was affordable transport for everyone.

Then came the £500 Mini in 1959, which sold for less than a year's earn-

ings. Suddenly sidecars seemed to be incredibly old hat in a world of growing affluence. Sales fell off a cliff.

Today hardly anyone uses a sidecar as a means to get to work, but there has been a minor revival thanks to the growth of the classic bike movement.

The asymmetric sidecar has kept its end up on the battlefield, in the commuter skirmish and on the touring front. It has woven itself into the social fabric of society for more than a century and the third wheel continues to turn.



Long before sidecars were raced, like this one in East Fortune in 1978, they were taking most of Britain to work



TOP SECRET



IMZ-URAL M72

During WWII, Russia needed sidecars that could match the German BMWs. So the Soviets acquired five BMW R71 outfits. They were then reverse-engineered into an exact copy of the BMW R71. The M72 was built in Moscow from 1941, but the factory relocated to Irbit, in the Ural Mountains, when German invaders threatened the capital. The plant was privatised in 1992 and still produces an outfit visually similar to the original M72.



ZUNDAPP KS750

Introduced by the German Army in 1940, the Zundapp KS750 shared 70% of its parts with the BMW R75, including hydraulic brakes, driven sidecar wheel (copied from Belgium's FN M12) and interchangeable wheels. However, its pressed steel frame, girder fork and simple drive train made it cheaper to produce and superior in the field. By 1945 the Nuremberg factory had delivered 18,695 KS750 outfits for the German Army.



BMW R75

Powered by a 26bhp 750cc flat-twin OHV engine, which drove both the rear and sidecar wheels via shaft drive with locking differential, the R75 was technically advanced. Riders could select road or off-road ratios and reverse, the front fork was telescopic and the rear drum brake was hydraulic. BMW produced 16,500 R75 outfits between 1941-44, but production was ended by an Allied bombing raid on the factory.



WATSONIAN

The world's best known sidecar marque is Watsonian. As the longest continuous maker of sidecars, Watsonian has been current since 1912. In 1911 Fred Watson was pondering how to get a machine and sidecar down the narrow 2ft 8in passageway of his Victorian terraced home without the need to remove the sidecar. Experimenting with a shoebox he designed a folding sidecar and hinged rectangular frame. It worked and friends were soon asking him to make sidecars for them.

In 1926, the year of the General Strike, many businesses would go to the wall, but Watsonian weathered this storm, mainly because of the introduction of the Kwickfit chassis that year. The Kwickfit allowed owners to switch from solo to sidecar use in a matter of minutes. Post-WWII era Watsonian took advantage of the 1950s, the golden era for sidecars. Glass fibre models were introduced and Watsonian was able to survive a drastic fall in sales in the 1960s as car prices came down.

Watsonian celebrated their centenary in 2012.



The Ascot was a sidecar saloon



In the 1920s all tradesmen had one



Eric Oliver won the firm world titles