

Modern classics

The Good Life

► Ever considered chucking in the 9-5 and turning your hobby into your job? Geoff Haines has done just that



'Geoff's Classic Bikes' operates out of a row of garages and a workshop at Geoff Haines' home near Evesham

By Chris Pearson

Working from home, alongside the bikes he loves, 57-year-old Geoff gave up life in the fast lane of sales for JCB, for a sleepy village on the outskirts of Evesham. He can tinker away all day with nothing but the occasional glider tug overhead to break the silence.

"The move came about in 2007," Geoff recalls. "A house move and downsizing saw the mortgage fully paid-up, the kids had long since left home and with plenty of outbuildings for bike repairs and storage the rest just fell into place."

Bikes were a life-long passion so the decision to go it alone came fairly easily. Also, having started his working life as an agricultural engineer, fixing bikes came naturally. Two years on and the simply named 'Geoff's Classic Bikes' now buys, sells and repairs all manner of machinery, although Geoff has a speciality for three particular types: Honda's CBX, CB100R and the Benelli Sei.

Geoff's biking life began back in 1968 at 16 with a Honda S550, followed by a Yamaha YL1, a 100cc two-stroke twin he now regrets selling with prices rapidly on the up. "I did keep an eye on a mint example in a recent auction but the price went ballistic, way out of my reach." Instead he stumbled across a rough example at the end of 2008 whose restoration is now well underway.

Other bikes, too numerous to recall, followed. "Around a half dozen GT750s and several GT380s have come and gone along with many others," he says. But it hasn't all been plain sailing. In 1983 a car pulled out on him, destroying the 350LC he was riding and smashing his right leg and both wrists in the process, a crash which ended his two-wheel activities for the next eight years. Geoff was told he would never walk again without the aid of sticks. However, gritty determi-



A £3150 Honda CX500 Turbo is one of Geoff's current bikes for sale

A Suzuki GT750 caught my eye. It was in need of restoration... I was hooked again

GEOFF HAINES

nation proved that prognosis incorrect. "A local gym instructor took me under his wing," Geoff says. "And, after much one-to-one work, I was able to get around without such aids. Although it works well enough, one leg is now a good deal shorter than the other but it did leave me with a great party trick, I can now turn my right foot through 180 degrees, much to everyone's amazement."

So, in 1991, bikes came back into Geoff's life. "A Suzuki GT750 caught my eye," says Geoff. "It was in need of restoration and just the thing I needed to get stuck into. Once complete it needed testing. I loved every second of that ride and I was hooked again!"

Soon after the GT750 came Geoff's first CBX, followed quickly by a second. The better of the two was then sold on within days for a tidy profit. "I have hankered after the CBX1000 ever since 1978 when the travelling marshals used the type at that year's TT. Back then the new price was around £2400 and, for me at least, completely out of reach." Today, things are different. Geoff's owned a variety of CBXs since, including an Egli-style CBX special that he says "isn't really for sale".

But plenty are. His garages currently house a rare 1979 Honda Britain (£2500), an oddball, Dresda-framed, Yamaha 550 turbo (£2750), a prolink Honda CBX



CBXs are a particular passion. This is one of Geoff's current faves



Others include a Honda Britain and Laverda 1200

(£2450), a decent example of arguably the first production supermoto, the Gilera NordWest 600 (£1500), a temptingly priced Honda CX500 Turbo (£3150), a Laverda 'Liberator' 1200 special (£6750) and not one but two Kawasaki Z750 Turbos (£2750-3000).

And he's not just about buying and selling. Geoff is happy undertaking restorations too, as well as creating one off specials, usually based around the finer works of the two Hondas he has based his business on. "I get enquiries from all over the world and business has been very good in this respect. I am supplying spare parts and complete bikes all over Europe, with two CBXs having recently

been shipped off to Portugal.

For the immediate future Geoff plans to extend his workshops to allow a second bench to be added. "At the present time, if a long job is on the bench, then I can't get on with anything else, I also want to add more showroom space too so I can display the bikes I have for sale in a better environment."

We'd have thought he had a pretty good environment already...

Geoff's Classic Bikes, 01386-870150
www.geoffsclassiccycles.co.uk

Found a barn find? Email: phil.west@motorcyclenews.com