



Mothballing

Putting the Wing away for the winter? Trevor White has some sound advice to ensure it doesn't suffer during its lay-up

Because of our alpine climate, most riders lay up their m/cs during winter – at least for a couple of months. If the roads aren't icy for weeks on end, then there is plenty of salt ready to eat up the metal. (Washing it down after a ride gets complicated when the supply to all outside water taps is closed off to protect against the sub-zero temperatures. Every Autumn our Swiss dealer circulates a flyer listing the Ten Commandments for doing this correctly, though hard winters aren't the only reason for laying up a m/c. If anyone is not fully informed about what to do, here is a translation of what we do it here – and why. It is not a paint-by-numbers guide to how things are done. Procedures are detailed in the Owner's Handbook, workshop manuals or manuals from Haynes or Clymer. If anyone does not have these or has not read them, then perhaps interest in the health of the m/c is low. Therefore, it may be ill-advised to carry out this work oneself – because it needs an interest to develop the few skills required. In any case, no responsibility can or will be accepted for following all, some or none of these guidelines.

1. Make any necessary repairs and/or replacements before mothballing: There is time to get the spare parts – and the m/c will then be immediately ready in Spring.

2. Coolant Level: This should be checked and, if necessary, topped up. The mixture should be 50/50 antifreeze/water. If more than 12'500 km (8000 miles) have been ridden since the last change of coolant, renew it according to the manual.

(Remarks: To prevent the build-up of deposits some people, particularly those in hard-water areas, use distilled water as a diluent – or, almost as good and much cheaper, melted ice from the refrigerator. It is about time to clean up the freezer as well!)

3. Oil and Oil Filter: Change these according to the manual when more than 500 km (300 miles) have been ridden since the last change. Oil should be drained from a warm engine. (A 5-mile run is enough for that. Avoid burns from the hot engine or warm oil.) After re-filling with the correct amount of m/c oil, allow the engine to run for a few seconds – to circulate the fresh oil but not dirty it anew. Again, the m/c will be immediately ready for Spring.

(Remarks: Oil accumulates corrosive breakdown products during use. Left standing, these can attack the internals. Also, standing allows ultra-fine residues to settle – to form sludges in the sump and/or filter to reduce efficiency. By the way, old oil does not belong down the drain. Collect it and dispose of it at a proper place.)

4. Spark Plugs: Remove, renew or clean up and set gaps. Pour a spoonful or two of fresh engine oil into each pot. With the 'Kill' switch OFF and with the plugs earthed, turn the engine over a couple of times with the starter alone. Screw the plugs back in.

(Remarks: This helps protect the cylinders, pistons and rings against corrosion. When the engine is started again in Spring it will smoke for a few minutes until this oil is burned off. But Gold Wings do this anyway!)



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5. Fuel and Fuel Tank: Close the fuel tap. Drain each carburettor float-chamber completely, remembering to re-tighten the drain plugs. Fill the tank to the brim, add a corrosion inhibitor and close the filler-cap properly.

(Remarks: Bitter experience suggests that the fuel line from the tap to the carburettors should also be disconnected – in case the tap leaks. The carburettors are drained because the fuel in them gradually evaporates and the residues become like glue or varnish. This blocks jets and galleys and can, in extreme circumstances, destroy the carburettors! (Tell me about it!) The tank is filled to the brim to prevent tank corrosion. Fuel (and air) contains traces of moisture. With a head-space of air (oxygen), rusting can occur on exposed tank walls. The corrosion inhibitor, available from most automobile or m/c factors, supports this protection by binding the moisture.)

6. Remove Battery: Clean and check acid level where necessary. Store in a cool but not frosty place, out of the sun. Charge once a month if using a conventional charger suitable for m/c batteries, otherwise connect permanently to an automatic charger and periodically check the acid levels.

7. Cleaning: The m/c should be cleaned and completely dried from top to bottom. Bodywork should be waxed and metal parts sprayed/rubbed with protective oil or something like WD-40. Levers, cable-inners, instrument drive cables, foot-rest hinges, etc. (in other words, every movable part) should be cleaned and/or lubricated.

(Remarks: Dirt can not only harden over time but it also contains corrosive and abrasive materials. Leaving it standing can cause permanent 'scarring'.)

8. Tyres: These should be checked for any damage then inflated a little over the prescribed pressures. The m/c should be placed on its main-stand where it is to be stored. With a jack or blocks, the weight should be relieved off the rear wheel.

9. Storage: The m/c should be covered with a dust sheet. This should not be made of plastic or other coated materials because these can collect damaging condensation underneath. (An old cotton bedsheet will do.) The storage place should be shady, dry and cool. (Heated garages can accelerate rusting.) The storage should not be near electrical motors (freezers, pond pumps, etc) which increase ozone levels. These and prolonged direct sunlight can harden rubber and synthetics. Once the m/c has been mothballed it should be left undisturbed until re-activation. A single start can ruin all the preparation and the mothballing must be started again from the beginning.

10. Back on the Road: Clean off the oily exterior, re-install the charged battery, check tyre pressures, controls and lights. Turn on the fuel. Turn over the engine a few times with the 'Kill' switch off – to fill the carbs and to circulate the oil. Start the engine and, taking it easy for the first few miles to check that everything is still O.K., ride off into a beautiful Spring day!

P.S. After the Ten Commandments, perhaps one should remember that biblically there is one sin which can't be forgiven. The bible doesn't say what, but we know what it is in respect



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to laying up a m/c. It is sometimes said that a m/c should be protected during a lay-up only by running it every couple of weeks. Nothing could be worse or more harmful! Starting a cold engine causes more damage in the first few minutes than a long tour. Oil is cold and has drained down from all lubricated surfaces. The wear is excessive. Also, the strain on the battery of turning a winter-cold engine and pumping that thick oil – without extensive running to re-charge it – will only promote battery failure and an increase the profits for Mr. Yuasa. Next, fuel mixtures are rich and combustion below full operating temperature is at its most inefficient. Inefficient combustion produces aggressive and acidic side-products that are most damaging to the engine, particularly when they are taken up by the oil. The engine needs prolonged running under load to clear these out of the system. Finally, any combustion produces water vapour. Unless the engine is run at full working temperature for a considerable time, this can condense out and promote rust and rot. It is the perfect way of destroying an exhaust system – where most of it condenses. Running the engine periodically? No!, no! and still NO!