

## The history of a legend. MV Agusta turns 70

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**On 19 January 1945** in **Verghera di Samarate**, in the “Machinery Department” of Agusta, in Viale Adriatico No. 14, the limited company “M.V. Meccanica Verghera” was founded, to build engines in general and motorcycles.

This was the official beginning of an industrial business that was carried out inside the Agusta aeronautical factories, that began at the end of 1942, on an idea of **Domenico Agusta**.

In 1940, Agusta was involved in the Second World War on the Libyan front, together with other Italian companies, for the **servicing of, and assistance to the Italian Air Force airplanes** operating in that area.

**At the beginning of 1943**, on the feeling that, at the end of the war, the Italian aeronautical industry would unfortunately be heavily penalised, **Agusta returned to Cascina Costa and began developing an idea**: to attempt to restructure its industrial business temporarily, in order to maintain the wealth of professional skills of the workforce and the efficiency of the company, **by producing a robust and economic motorcycle**.

They began designing and constructing a **2-speed, 98 cc, 2-stroke engine**; this work was suddenly interrupted by the events of 8 September of the same year, with **the occupation of the Agusta factory**, by German military forces.

Fortunately, everything that had been done **was hidden**, which meant that, at the end of 1944, construction of the prototype could continue, and road tests could begin. **On 24 December 1945**, the first example of the “MV 98 Vespa” motorcycle was presented to the press, in Milan. Manufacturing the components of the motorcycle, engine and cycle parts, presented no major problems, as the company had all of the material necessary to make and finish the parts, but finding the commercial parts, such as the ignition block and tyres, delayed the delivery of the motorcycles. **Delivery finally began in the spring of 1946**.

In the same period, like Agusta, other aeronautical and specialised companies undertook the same course, with varying success.

In Cascina Costa, the first MV model **was followed immediately by others, with the intention of satisfying the various demands of the market as much as possible**. This resulted in significant commercial success that was so great that, throughout the 1950s, about 175,000 engines for mopeds, motorcycles, scooters and delivery tricars were made. This enabled Agusta to modernise the machinery and spread throughout the area around Gallarate, thanks to the increase in the workforce, with resulting significant social benefits.

**The first victory**, on 6 October 1946, in the first races taken part in, **was decisive for the knowledge** and spread of MV motorcycles, a brand that was hitherto almost unknown; indeed, the races provided the best advertising, with the immediate emotional effect on any potential buyer, but also, more specifically, for riders, established or not, who were in

continuous search of a winning motorcycle. In the list of results of motorcycle races that took place in Italy from October 1946 to the end of 1948, the small MV 98 **is mentioned 85 times in reliability and speed trials**, in which, in the vast majority of cases, riders used privately developed engines.

Following these results, the idea grew, in Agusta, of **taking part in the 1949 World Championship races**, in the 125 cc category, with the riders **Bertoni, Cavacciuti, Mattucci and Ubbiali**. At the end of the Championship, Carlo Ubbiali was 3rd; the World Champion was **Nello Pagani, on a 4-stroke Mondial. The MV was acknowledged to be “the world’s fastest 2-stroke”**, after it had kept up with all of the other competitors. This marked the MV brand’s entry into the history of world motorcycling, which was **confirmed in 1952**, with the title of Brand World Champion in the 125 cc class, with **Cecil Sandford** riding the MV “125 cc twin shaft”.

In addition to the great commercial success in the 1950s, successes in Italy and abroad of MV motorcycles gave international prominence to the Agusta name, which, **in 1952, returned fully to the aeronautical business, with Agusta-Bell helicopters**, the original and primary objective of the Agusta family.

In the 1950s, the motorcycle brand obtained **no fewer than 19 World Brand Speed Championships, 26 Italian Speed Championships, 6 Milan-Taranto Gran Fondo** races of 1400 km, uninterrupted, **8 Gold medals in the International 6-day Reliability Trials, 6 Italian Reliability Championships**, and **11 foreign Speed Championships**. If we consider the result of such commitment and inventiveness, which were intensified by the skill and courage of the racers, and add this to the demands of making motorcycles and, at the same time, the start of the licensed production of the Agusta-Bell helicopters, we get an idea of the huge amount of work produced in a period of Italian history that was marked by the changes in political, social and economic conditions that resulted from the outcome of the war.

**With the death** of its founder **Domenico Agusta**, and the new company structure, in 1977, “Meccanica Verghera Agusta” stopped production and participating in competitions, after **over 3028 victories, 37 Brand World Championships, 27 Grand Prixes and 38 Rider Championships**, with the riders Sandford, Ubbiali, Provini, Surtees, Hocking, Hailwood, Agostini and Read.

The group Lavoratori Seniores Agusta and the Management of the Agusta Museum, the witnesses and custodians of a story that has lasted over one hundred years, from its beginning to the current AgustaWestland, invite you to visit the

**Agusta Museum**, which is open to the public on Tuesday and Wednesday, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, from 9.30 a.m. to 12 p.m., and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Tel. 0331 220545, email: [info@museoagusta.it](mailto:info@museoagusta.it).

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