

Rare Welbike Restored For Military Museum

David Baker says, "I'd never restored anything before Evan Fagen of the Fagen Fighters WWII Museum in Granite Falls, Minn., asked if I wanted to work on a rusty little motorcycle that the museum had received from a fellow in Baton Rouge, La. Even though the bike had missing parts, I said, 'Sure, why not?'"

Over the next 14 mo, Baker restored the rare British WWII Excelsior Villiers Welbike to its original "new" condition. He worked at least a few hours each week, including time spent online searching for background information and manuals.

"Not many people, including myself and others at the museum, had ever heard of a Welbike," Baker says. "I learned that about 6,600 of them were built in England in 1943, and only about 100 are known to exist now, most of them in England."

History shows that the Welbikes were a valuable contribution to the success of allied forces in WWII. Weighing just 75 lbs and powered by a tiny 98cc engine, the bikes were painted a drab brown and carefully packed in sturdy shipping boxes. Those boxes were loaded aboard transport aircraft with paratroopers and dropped behind enemy lines with green parachutes.

Soldiers could quickly assemble a Welbike

in under 30 seconds, adjusting the handlebars and securing them with spring-loaded pins. The seat was raised, and the footrests were folded down. The gas tank was primed with a tiny pump similar to that on a Coleman lantern, and the engine fired up quickly.

Welbikes were used by Royal Marines and commando forces during the Normandy and Anzio landings and other operations, including scouting enemy positions, gathering intelligence, conducting hit-and-run raids, and covertly transporting agents.

Designed for quick, practical use, the tiny Welbike earned its name because it was a variation on a bicycle and was produced in Welwyn, England. The bike had 10-in. rubber tires but no suspension, mudguards or lights, and only a rear brake. The 98cc two-stroke Villiers engine was paired with a single-speed gearbox. It had a top speed of about 30 mph and enough gas in its tiny tank to travel about 65 to 85 miles.

Baker says that when he started working on the museum's bike, he couldn't believe how small it was, barely reaching his knees. It was rusty and painted a single color. As he removed paint and rust, he discovered that the carburetor and intake were copper, and the flywheel was brass.

"I polished those up and got the engine



Baker poses with the WWII Welbike he restored for the Fagen Fighters WWII Museum in Granite Falls, Minn.

loose, but it wouldn't run. I found a condenser in the U.K., put the original spark plugs in, and the engine backfired but wouldn't keep running."

After he rebuilt the frame, he had it sand-blasted and painted, then added the original military number. He cleaned the carburetor, redid the bearings, and even installed original leather on the handle grips.

Baker says, "The serial number on the frame is original, which I verified through an online search."

Fagen says the Welbike is a very small yet



Welbike was a rusted wreck when he started, and now it resembles a new model that would've been packed in a wooden box and air-dropped with a paratrooper behind enemy lines.

significant addition to their museum, which showcases WWII aviation history through a large collection of airworthy aircraft and fully operational ground vehicles. With the Welbike completed, Baker is now working on a U.S.-made Simplex Servi-Cycle built in 1945.

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Golley built a scale-model semi-tractor using his grandmother's Singer sewing machine and added a realistic metal tanker crafted from a chrome exhaust pipe.



Mini Semi-Tanker Looks Real

Barry Golley's imagination runs wild when it comes to building unusual toy vehicles. After completing a clever semi-tractor from a Singer sewing machine that once belonged

to his grandmother, Golley says, "I needed to have it pull something exotic and useful."

His creation turned out to be a scale-model stainless-steel tanker that would typically haul

vegetable oils or corn sweeteners. Golley, however, crafted the realistic, chromed tanker to carry liquid confidence from his imaginary company, "BG Moonshiners."

"It can't haul anything," Golley says. "But everyone thinks I've got my own portable tanker dispensing 100-proof moonshine. It's quite the attention-getter when I take it to shows."

Golley built the tanker body from a large piece of chrome exhaust pipe from a real semi-tractor. It's nearly 3 ft long and has chrome end caps. The frame and undercarriage are aluminum and stainless steel, configured to resemble parts on a real tanker. It couples to his Singer semi-tractor like a real trailer and rides on wheels from an old push lawn mower. The rim spokes are painted to match those on the Singer tractor.

"To make it even more authentic, I added mud flaps with Singer identification, made a personalized 'Booz Crooz' license plate, and

added a large graphic 'Moonshine' decal to the back of the tank," Golley says.

Aluminum fenders on the tanker also match those on the Singer semi-tractor. All the fasteners are chromed for a professional look.

Rounding out his build is a signature "Body by Golley" decal and a custom side graphic on the tanker that displays the pseudo-company name "BG Moonshiners."

Golley says building the tractor and trailer "wasn't work at all, really a fun project that turned out great and provides plenty of smiles and good conversation."

His tractor/trailer creation is one of several items Golley has made using a Singer sewing machine frame as a foundational element (Vol. 50, No. 3).

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Fair board provided the buses, and the kids from the four county school districts decorated and named them.

Schools Compete In Bus Demolition Derby

When Dave McCormick heard about the school-bus demolition derby in Athens County, Ohio, he knew Guernsey County needed one, too.

"I've been involved in demolition derbies for 50 years with my brother and son, and

it gets in your blood," says McCormick. "Athens County had started doing a bus derby as a friendly rivalry and fundraiser. I knew we needed to borrow the idea."

Because he and his son serve on the county fair board, it made sense to incorporate

the bus demolition event into the existing combine derby. The fair board provided the buses, and the kids from the four county school districts decorated and named them.

"The big challenge was finding the buses," says McCormick. "We found them online at www.guvdeals.com for \$2,500 each."

Each school district was asked to provide a driver. McCormick admits some were initially skeptical of the idea, but once it was explained, they got into the event.

"Some picked the driver through a lottery of district drivers or selected a favorite," says McCormick. "One district had their superintendent drive. He was a bit nervous beforehand."

The buses were prepped by removing all glass, including lights, and any other hazards. Seats were left in place; the rear door and all batteries were secured.

"We left the hoods on, as when they get cracked open, engine parts flew. We knew the crowd would go wild," says McCormick. "Drivers had to wear helmets, and seat belts had to be engaged. Multi-point harnesses were an option."

Instructions for the drivers are simple.

"Hitting the driver's side is a big no-no," he says. "We advise using the back ends of the buses at first, but then all bets are off."

With 2025 being the first year, McCormick and the fair board were unsure what to expect.

They were more than pleased.

"It was a barn burner," he recalls. "Kids and parents packed the place. They were all cheering on their favorite driver. It was just a lot of fun, and seeing the kids have so much fun made the work worth it."

When the event was over, the parts were gathered up, and the buses have now been taken to a local salvage yard.

"They only take one at a time due to limited space," says McCormick. "Salvage pays us a little something, but it's not a money-making project."

For 2026, the fair board has brought the event back, bigger than ever. This year, there'll be five buses because the county vocational school is included.

"The rivalry between schools is even stronger," says McCormick. "I was nervous with the money we had tied up the first year, but it's turned into a real crowd-pleaser."

FARM SHOW readers interested in setting up their own school bus derby can visit the Guernsey County Fair website for more details, including a set of rules for drivers.

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