



Amazing mum at the cutting edge of motorcycle design

The Dobbs of Onewhero are not your average Kiwi family. Sure, there is a mum and dad, two young daughters, two pet dogs, plus a couple of motorbikes in the garage. There the resemblance ends. Paul (Dobsy) Dobbs is well known for his classic motorcycle racing career, but he is just one half of an amazing couple, whose family life revolves around motorbikes.

Bridget Dobbs jokes that her first “baby” wasn’t eldest daughter Eadlin – it was a cylinder head she was racing to finish before her daughter’s birth. Bridget designed the component from scratch as part of her job as design engineer at the Triumph Motorcycle factory in England. Her design skills see her in demand as an international consultant as she and Dobsy balance family and working life between the northern and southern motorbike racing seasons.

Engineering was a late career choice for Bridget who, like many other teenagers, couldn’t initially decide on a career pathway. Growing up in Portsmouth, she wanted to be a vet, but decided to go for engineering while temping in the office of an engineering company. Her direction may also have been influenced by her parents.

“Dad is a precision engineer with his own machine shop and I have a very practical mum, who can fix the car or the vacuum cleaner. When I was temping I worked alongside engineers. It made up my mind to take a mechanical engineering degree at

the University of Sheffield. I thought of an aeronautical degree, but decided on basic mechanical, because I could always specialise later. I was a mature student at 21, and while some of the other students weren’t always sure, or focused on what they were doing, I was! I did odd jobs in the workshop of a diesel company during university vacations – dyno work, pulling things apart, stripping down engines. That’s what led me into engine design.”

Choosing a job as a graduate entailed a lot of travel around Britain to interviews and in-between, Bridget fitted in a three month stint teaching English as a volunteer in Romania. “It was early ’94, shortly after the revolution, and a real eye opener. I didn’t know the Third World started on my doorstep. It’s a beautiful country and the people warm and hospitable but life was harsh.”

Bridget’s first graduate job was for Perkins in Shrewsbury, in a factory that had been Rolls Royce Diesels. “They manufactured