



N.O.C. Northumbria Branch Newsletter, Bumper XMAS edition, December 2010 .

(being the "Tappity John newsletter", by Tappity John, Northumbria Scribe and friend of the Venemous Bede)

Here's to what may have been a vintage year! Certainly putting this lot together has left your scribe gasping. – Hope you have the energy to read it all! AND this is the condensed version (a bit like "Reader's Disgust") - And it is by no means everything that happened, in what was only the SECOND half of the 2010 season.

But first; BE AWARE!! - The Pre-Christmas Norton-Moot at the "Shoes":

Because the Thursday before Christmas is so close to Christmas Eve (Who's she?), we have elected to make Thursday the 16th the last meeting of 2010, same time, same place.

Now for the History of the second half of 2010:

First - the International Rally, Colombres, Northern Spain.

We've got some hard riders in Northumbria. Elsewhere in these august pages, our revered chairman reports two minor "tootles" – one up to Orkney, the other to Cornwall. Alan's exploits with a progressively failing Commando at Braemar are to be commended, and Simon, having been unable to get out of work early, made it non-stop to the Portsmouth for the ferry for Santander, in just 6 hours.

A lot has appeared in "Roadholder" about the rally, so let's not waste too many words here. Just to say that these "Internationals" have a special atmosphere of their own, and it is wonderful to meet again with Nortoneers who you got to know on previous occasions. Like Richard the crazy Belgian, who came about as close to killing himself at the Austrian rally as anyone would ever want, the Grossbichlers from Austria, Gilesbert from Macon in France, who we had first found by an Irish roadside (and who unfortunately left his wine back home), and many others.

None of us fell off (and quite a few others did, on the hairpins, we heard later. **Northumbria!!!!** Kings of Hairpins!!), and Simon shot back home after the rally, doing Portsmouth-Newcastle in pouring rain without waterproofs. Mrs Simon and Mrs Tappity prudently did the UK bit by train.

Your new secretary and the tappity Dommi plus riders stayed on a few days and toured. We cannot recommend the area too highly.

ANDD!! - - about that picture, surreptitiously inserted by Simon into the last newsletter, which suggests we were lost: It is a foul slander. We were not lost. We were merely navigating.

Camping Weekends: - well, it all happened too! As organised by Dave, (Hon Sec Retd.).

Ugthorpe Hall: This was the first time your scribe has made it to this site. For those who do not know it, it is definitely very OK. Plenty of space, good ground, location super, pleasant family atmosphere, and friendly pub on site. The menu at the pub is modest, but the food hearty and the prices lower than I have seen in years. Sadly, your scribe had to leave early to sort out the series of punctures that had been troubling him, prior to the Spanish trip.

Coniston: Dave says this went fine, and had support this year, in spite of some “usual suspects” being in Spain, though he has provided no further details.

Middleton-in-Teesdale: Weather: pretty poor. But a good turn-out including out-of area Norton-owners represented by Barry from Yorkshire branch, and Paul, our regular out-of-area member from Sheffield. Your scribe has now learned that the Sheffield equivalent of “Why Aye” is “Naa-Dere-Den”. This should serve him in good stead when a diplomatic misunderstanding may arise in that city.

People did more or less their own thing – trip to an auto-jumble, a trip to see some industrial archaeology and Raby Castle (closed, so the Bowes museum was substituted), or just relaxing on site.

It appears that the camping patch at this site is to be given over to more caravans, but the site owners say they can find another spot where we can pitch for next year.

I.O.M: (Brief note from Clive2)

Hello John

The Northumbria branch of the NOC hosted the Manx reunion on 31st August at the Shore Hotel, Old Laxey. Four branch members were present. During the afternoon about 50 Nortons arrived. The weather was excellent and the pub landlord put on a barbeque. The general consensus was that it was a good "do" and up to previous Northumbria branch standards.

Tayside Branch's weekend/Gathering/Rally at Braemar.

On this trip we witnessed some REAL engineering! Alan's Commando, on which he has lavished “Go Faster” components, lost one cylinder after about 100 miles of riding North. The cause turned out to be a “Go Faster” light-weight tappet (which means a hollow tappet), which had broken off. The top of the tappet, along with the locking nut had broken away. The threaded lower half still remained in the rocker but had screwed itself back until the valve did not open. We found the broken off nut resting alongside the valve spring. The broken off threaded piece was nowhere to be seen (and has still not been found). But Alan showed his worth as an engineer and, having re-adjusted the tappet clearance, by twiddling the remaining broken stub with his fingers, he fixed it so it could not unscrew, by means of a cable tie, tightened just below the rocker arm. And thus he rode 100 miles home.

This caused your scribe and chairman to arrive so late at Braemar that all the eateries were closed. There is nothing more miserable than a starved motorcyclist. However the chippy was in the process of cleaning up after closing. Recognising our plight, the jovial staff let us in and provided microwaved macaroni cheese, a hideous microwaved pie **and** free shots of vodka! Nectar of the gods! This being the first time your scribe has been given free vodka by a chippy! Must be the result of taking Russian lessons. Na Zdarovya! (На здаровя!)

At the lunch stop during the scenic Saturday ride out, there was a Nortatious “Putta-Pootle” noise, and Alan re-appeared, having fit a “go-slower” tappet back at home and ridden the 230 miles to Braemar after breakfast.

A great gathering. And, somehow, the Tay valley branch have “Pull”. Nortoneers had come from as far as Surrey. How do they do it? Our Northumbrian representation was Joyce and Ian Crooks, Bob, Alan, and your scribe.

(Searching for bits of tappet)



Evening rides out.

These continued unabated, at the insistence of our new secretary. The final two rides, early Aug and early Sept went well. New Hon Sec reports: *The August ride out was on wednesday the 4th. The weather was good and a group of 3 Nortons went to the Wellington pub at Riding Mill where a good meal was had. (Sean Molloy, Bob & Ginetta and myself).* The September ride-out was run by your scribe, because our hyper-active secretary said your scribe had no choice in the matter. It took in Warkworth, Guizance, and over to the Fords Road, closely missing Brinkburn, (Phew!) with a final stop at Stannington, 6 bikes attending. You can do rides out this late in the year if the pub stop is close to people's homes, so there are easy roads for the final trip back after dark. No antelopes!

That makes it FIVE evening rides out this year, which must be something of a record.

Show/Meet/Gathering of the Tyne Valley Classic Bike Club at Stamfordham.

At the AGM we said we would put up a stand here, and since your scribe was not available, his thanks to Simon and Clive2 for taking on the job. This is now the third year this event has been held at this really perfect venue. It has had all the potential to become a successor to the old Corbridge shows, or a smaller Heskett-Newmarket. However apart from NOC and the Tyne valley club themselves, there were no other "Marque" clubs showing. Admittedly there was an Enfield stand the first year at Stamfordham. The organisers have played it fairly cool, wanting publicity by word of mouth only. **Perhaps** this is to avoid things getting out of hand and upsetting the villagers, while at the same time saying "Marque clubs" like ours are welcome. Your scribe does not know for sure. Also few of our members turned up. However Clive2 seemed pretty happy. He said that of our members, too many had "clashes" with the date, and Robin Watson of the Tyne Valley Club said he would try to get other "marque" clubs to show next time.

The village still looks pretty supportive, with the pub providing meals plus the Womens' Institute's tea and cake stand.

So - no doubt this event will come up at the AGM. Please note that we ARE being encouraged by the Big Norton Club in the sky, to EXHIBIT and promote NORTON.

Kamtrek!!!

Once again we got away with running this event late in the season with good weather and dry roads. Clive Mark 1's theme was the disused railway stations of Northumbria. We rode along roads so minor you needed a magnifying glass to see them, following disused railway lines with amazingly pretty disused stations. Oh, - and one disused viaduct at Kielder. You actually got penalised if you used "A" class roads. Earlier on, Clive had sounded a bit worried about the turn-out, but in fact the event was well supported (though with more members of the Amazingly Advanced Motorcyclists of Northumbria than Nortoneers). We did pick up an extra Nortoneer- Ian Crooks at the Falstone Café, who had been out for a trip from his home across the frontier, on top of his Model 7, the "Unstoppable Norton", though he claims the brakes are now a BIT better.

The event was won by Michael and Geraldine Sutherland, who are Amazingly Advanced Motorcyclists, though not of the break-away group.

Here's Clive Taylor Mark One, briefing the troops:



Here's the "Unstoppable", now recovered from its troubles with a wall that fell down in last winter's snow.



Finally –thanks to Clive 1 for organising a grand day out.

“Chains and things” From Bob Tym, (a result of my attempted tract on chain wear? – ed.)

Earlier this summer Ginetta and I decided to make a trip to Orkney and back on my Commando. Apart from a serious downpour between Pitlochry and Tain, the weather was fine and we were able to see Orkney and the North of Scotland at its very best.

One thing which did surprise me was the way that my nearly new chain stretched quite considerably during the trip, a total of 1097 miles. I'd renewed the chain a couple of weeks beforehand. I'd bought the new chain at Hunters, where they tried to persuade me that for an 850 I needed a heavy duty "O" ring chain, at vast expense, and that I should not be using a spring link. Bearing in mind that Reynolds 5/8" x 3/8" chain was fine when the bike was made (and that the heavy duty chain would probably wear away the inner primary chaincase). I opted for a bog standard "530" chain. I think the make was TVH.

During August we took the Commando for a two week holiday in Cornwall, again the weather was mostly fine although we had a bit of a drenching between Ilfracombe and Padstow on the rather grandly named "Atlantic Highway" and a fair bit of rain on the way back between Hereford and Oswestry. With a total of about 1540 miles the two trips were roughly comparable.

Before setting off for Cornwall, I'd replaced my rear chain again, but this time, I spoke to "The Chain Man" (Andy) who advertises in the Old Bike Mart and deals only in motorcycle chain. He has a website at www.the-chain-man.co.uk or you can call him on 01299 403688.

He was surprisingly helpful. He explained that the problem with chain today was the introduction of a DIN standard. Unfortunately it covered all sorts of chain, including stuff used on industrial machinery and didn't set a particularly high standard. Commercial pressures being what they are, it had the effect of bringing most chain down to the lowest common denominator. He told me he's had a long involvement in Reynold and was even a Reynold shareholder, but he could not recommend the use of Reynold chain unless it was stamped "Reynold England". The other stuff could be made anywhere.

He recommended for me the use of Jwis Chain. He said the Jwis people were not the easiest to deal with but their quality was good. I ordered a new chain from him. Surprisingly, he didn't want payment up front. He simply sent the chain straight to me after our phone call and told me that if it was fine I could send him a cheque, and if it was not I should send the chain back. If I kept the chain and didn't send a cheque, he'd send his missus round to collect the money (perhaps not much of a threat since he's in Bewdley). The chain duly arrived and when I fitted it I had the impression that it sat more precisely on the sprocket than the TVH chain had done when new.

As they say, "the proof of the pudding.....". Well, apart from making sure the Scottolier was kept topped up, no more attention has been required. I set the chain up and tensioned it when new and I've had no need to adjust it at all since! Of course there's difference in price. The chain from Hunters was about £20. The Jwis chain from Andy was about £36 plus the carriage cost, but clearly you get what you pay for.

On our way down we rode from Minehead to Ilfracombe over Exmoor (Lorna Doone country apparently). After passing Porlock (a picture postcard tourist destination) we saw a sign recommending that caravans take the toll road, after which we found ourselves on an incredibly steep and winding road. Half way up I realised this was the famous Porlock Hill used by journalists in the 1920s and 30s to test the hill climbing ability of motorcycles and sidecars. I can see why now. If you are down that way it's worth giving it a try. A couple less teeth on the gearbox sprocket would have made those tight corners a bit easier with a full laden bike!

Bob

Strange appearances at the "Shoes" (Pics by my mobile phone, hence quality)



Stuart, of the World-famous Saxon Forge of Bedlington, has appeared twice recently at the Shoes. Once with a rather pretty lightweight. The marriage of forks and motor was not quite what God intended, but he needed the original forks

(or was it frame?) for something else. Following that he re-appeared with a slimline frame. Slimline frame production appears to be all the rage just now.

Stop Press:

Famous Norton Racing Rider takes a dive at East Fortune. Does he need a big rear view mirror? - Or does he need trainer wheels? Whatever the cause, Richard managed to become separated from his bike at East Fortune, while trying to shake off a persistent BSA, on a bend. Which is a pity, actually, since the BSA rider had already fallen off a short way back! (thinks: was it a bit like those horses at the Grand National, that go on without a rider?) His bike also ended up in two halves – forks cleanly removed from the front. Richard thinks he lost the back end on the bend, I have since spoken to someone who was there who thinks the yokes came apart before Richard fell off. Anyhow, we trust that Richard gets out of the concrete soon and is back being as crazy as ever!

Brain Hutchinson wins againnnn!! - best Special at Brunton! Congratulations, Brian!

And Now: How about some contributions from you Norton Lovers? – Would you like to tell us about the first Norton you ever owned?

OK, we have some members who still have their first Nortons, but that still does not rule out tales about first experiences on a Norton. So how about sending us a story? Just to get the ball rolling, here is my first Norton:

It all came about because finally I had enough money to buy a starter car. The almost universal first car in the mid 1960's was the mini-van. But, as I was about to buy such a beast, I discovered that for the same price, Lo!, a 1948 Mark 6 Bentley.

Well, when you are young, what would **you** choose? – especially with a good trade-in offer on the BSA.

13 mpg was fine, as long as at least 4 people were in the car, sharing costs. And with Swan Hunter, where I worked, at my disposal, other costs could be kept down. The yard, far-sightedly, ran apprentice training schools for all the trades. But the unions, in their wisdom, decreed that the schools may make nothing that could usefully be incorporated into a ship. So getting a new exhaust system made, or a towing bracket of heroic dimensions, was fine, as long as you paid for the raw materials.

However, much of the time, there was just me in the car – and with fuel at 3/6 a gallon, how could I afford to drive it?

A friend called Don Brooks came to the rescue. He had a 500cc Norton Dommi in his garage, in London, bought to “do-up” for racing, but he had got into some other project. He said he knew nothing about the bike, but, with £50 in hand, I went to London to collect it, and rode it back to Newcastle. Inspection there established that the gear-box was full of water, and the teeth a bit pitted, but once the water was replaced with oil, all seemed well.

The bike was a revelation. It handled like a ballerina. It was full of “Zip”. It provided the two “70's” (70 mpg at 70 mph). It had a new thing called coil ignition that even Joseph Lucas could not cause to pack up. The only time the ignition failed was if I left it overnight with the ignition key still “on”. Parked in the street, of course. I never thought the bike could be stolen, and of course, it was not.

The only time I fell off was while trying to ride up the vertiginous gravel track alongside the Cairngorm ski lift in a rainstorm at midnight.

Early on I decided to check its suitability for long trips, so I rode down to Cardiff on a Saturday, to visit some young ladies of my acquaintance, and back to Newcastle on the Sunday. (About 30 miles of motorway available, then). It had been cold, and when I got back, I found I could not stand up straight. I decided I needed some weather protection, and picked up a used fairing.

It was probably a good thing that I sold the motorcycle when I went to the USA in 1967, as my riding was getting a little over-exuberant. But I cried myself to sleep for that bike for the next 30 years, until its replacement was found.

Here are the young ladies in question – and the machine. (So - Has anyone else got a “First Norton” story?)



This came from Keith Galloway: Any renowned experts on wideline Dommi's on hand to help?

Hi to all,

It's so nice to read all the goings on with everyone. as my 1959 domi is still in bits I am not sure when it will be up and running. My workshop is not quite ready for the sound of my beast shaking the new plaster from the walls.

As I have just about rebuilt the 8 rooms that were in a proper mess I am nearly ready to start and ask for help with most of the re-build as it's been locked away in a steel cupboard for 32 years wrapped in blankets so it should be very interesting to get into the back of the garage in a few weeks time. IT WILL BE LIKE XMAS FOR ME. see ya later (I mean talk) when I open up this hand cranked computer.ta. keithgallowayrory@hotmail.com

And finally, to get into the Christmas spirit. I offer you this Christmas ditty, which I composed but which Mrs Tappity vetoed, saying I could NOT put it on our Christmas cards: Sung to the tune of that ancient Medieval Ditty, "Sumer is icumin in" (if it is not familiar to you, it is on the internet). Anyhow I am confident you will have better taste than Mrs Tappity -

*Christmas is icumin in,
Loudly sing Goddam!
Groweth tum and bloweth some,
Blown up with pease and hamme!
Loudly sing Goddam!
Sheepdog lusteth after lamb,
Pony after coo,
Hark the herald angels sing!
Misgenation's just the thing!
Merry sing Goddam!
Goddam, the fun is done I trow
They'll do it all with genomes now,
Loudly sing "Goddam!"*

Merry Chrismas!!

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