



Northumbria Branch Newsletter July 2012 - mid-season edition!

Well, to get you in the mood for 2012 – a memory of Otterburn - - -



Time passes. The bike? – The boat? – The Camera? – all classic! Your scribe? getting a bit classic too. Three score and ten years, now passed, and my 43rd newsletter. Sometimes it feels a bit of a burden. But then, I can always look back over the 42 previous issues, and re-live so many unique experiences. As some bard said, if we cannot stop the clock, we can at least make him run.

And strange things are happening to "Classic" values. A new plastic skiff with big outboard was seen recently for sale at a price greatly exceeding the current value of the above "classic" boat – the latter, suitably skippered, being capable of safely crossing the Atlantic. Lack of microwaves, below-deck climate control, 'fridges, en-suite loos, his-and-her jacuzzi's being the probable reason. Meanwhile the value of old bikes keeps climbing. I recently asked Carole Nash to increase my "sum insured" by 50%, which they did without question. And what about £14500 for a "modern classic", like the Donnington 961 Commando (Starter's model)? Which leads up to:

Thoughts on the recent trip to the Norton factory at Donnington. (thanks, Brian)

Perhaps the plan is to create the 2-wheeled version of the Morgan. Hand-built, limited production, lots of "cachet", and built without compromise. You wait for delivery, and you pay a high price.

We all came back with questions rattling in our heads. (Or was it our tappets!). The machines, it seems, are being built without regard to the cost of either the quality of work done in-house, or the quality of bought-in-components. Maybe the motorcycle must make a "lifestyle" statement. And there is no doubt that, in a world of million pound bonuses, and where companies could not consider relocation to British cities outside London because, "Where could the wife go shopping?", then if the machine is "right" and if it is **wanted**, there are many who regard £14500 as pocket money. Even more traditional motorcyclists might pay – the top of the range Harleys are not exactly cheap either. The 961 looks like it could have a high **want** factor.

Sales appeared to be at about half break-even. The small factory is working well below capacity and they can sell all they can make. They cannot sell in the USA, Canada, Australia, or Japan. They blame intentional

bureaucratic obstruction, (those famous “non-tariff” barriers). But the machine has met the appropriate EU regulations, and can be sold across Europe (here, at least, the “single market” appears to be working). And that should be plenty of business. They say they are short on finance. The much trumpeted government funding amounts to an export credit loan. Sell abroad and you can borrow the money, which, over time you have to pay back.

To your scribe, the machines do at least tick the box as being definitely “Norton”. The appearance is right, and, in spite of the funny timing, it makes a very “Norton Twin” noise, including the familiar rattles from an air-cooled engine. No pillion. Nowhere to carry luggage, but maybe their kind of buyer does not care. The most miles any “961” has done so far is around 15000. It’s not for those who cross Europe to sit in a muddy field drinking real ale. But, still, there were a lot of questions in our heads.

Anyhow to prove they DO have orders, here is a boxed delivery about to go to Italy:



Machined without compromise:



And:

The Norton Sound:



Well, What’s next this year? – here goes -

9th Sept. Clive Taylor memorial ride, departing from the “Shoes” 9.30, returning to the “Shoes” for a Sunday lunch at 1 pm.. (Please let your sec. know in advance if you plan to stay for the meal so we can book). Sorry – no meal subsidy from the branch this year.

I have decided to repeat last year’s route. Reasons: It is beautiful. Clive loved Heather and I do not know where else to get so much good heather and get back to the “shoes” by 1 p.m. – and – I am too lazy to plan another.

22-24 Sept Joint camp with Edinburgh and Tayside Branch , Salutation Inn camp site, on A 698 between Berwick and Coldstream.*.

The site is just on the Berwick side of where the B6470 crosses the A698.

NB Also a couple of rooms available in the pub and also a static caravan with 3 rooms. To book one of these contact the Inn 01289 382291 or e-mail: phil.thewindsorcastleinn@hotmail.co.uk. If booking make sure to name the pub – they run two. If coming, please tell your sec.

30th Sept (Sunday): Kamtrek Due to laws, rules, bureaucracy, this will be run as a “Scatter event”, which looks a bit like a treasure hunt with changes. Basically you only do 75% of the clues, and you can do them in random order – no set route. The start looks like being at the Angel of the North. Lunch: Middleton-in

Teesdale. Most distant clue if you want to include it – Alston. We have run “Kamtreks” that went South of the Tyne before, though they started North of it. So I hope members who live North of the river will not be too scared of being beaten up by infuriated Mackems if they cross it. Full briefing will be sent later.

Christmas “Bash” provis Thurs 20th Dec – we’ll do it again. A great success but we decided not to subsidise the buffet this year. Again, need to keep a good cash balance to give a “float” over the time of the rally. It was only £5.00 per person, so we hope this does not put you off. We’ll try to arrange the furniture differently.

Also worthy of note:

27-29 July Dave Wardle will be organizing a camp at Coniston. Branch members invited. However pre-reservation imperative. Those wishing to go contact Dave, for details about how to reserve. Tel. 01670 820424

1st w-e in August: generally the “Red Row” gathering of bikes, by Druridge bay. Tyne Valley Classic Bike club usually do their show/gathering at Stamfordham on the Sunday

20-21 Oct – Brunton Steam rally. Members usually attend.

ANDDD!! Meet up with Yorkshire branch somewhere in the Pennines, Sunday 12th August???

We have been invited to ride down to meet the Yorkshire branch somewhere in the mid-Pennines. I sent out an e-mail a while back. 9 people said they were interested but it was too early to know if they were free that day. Right now Yorkshire’s programme says they are going to the Peak District. But Andrew Lodge says, no problem. If we’d like to meet up, they can easily change their plans. But I need to contact him early in the August.

I NEED TO KNOW:

Who would like to go? Can you confirm?

Who will lead and liaise with Andrew, as,(I’m sorry), I’m away and cannot lead this one.

THE REPORTS!

National rally 2013, 2-5 Aug, Morpeth Rugby Club.

Plans progressing. Not enough space here to tell all about it.

The year so far:

Main Club AGM: Don and Brenda Richards, completely unasked, Zoomed down to the Motorcycle Museum, and represented Northumbria! Don heard that the main club is soon coming up with some super-gazebos free! Don said WE WANT ONE! Following this I e-mailed the main club. The reply was that we were “in the frame” for when the “super-gazebos” become available. And am now told the gazebos have all been given out – elsewhere. Tim Harrison has asked me to e-mail him an appeal. (Done)

Evening Rides out:

Three to date – May (remote lanes ending up at the “Rat” at Anick). Beautiful, COLD view from Heavenfield church off the Military Road, with Heavenly Nortoneers - Taken with mobile phone – not so good -



June, and only Mick and Davie. Rode out to a friend’s and enjoyed the evening. **July** – via various lanes to the pub at Boulmer Haven. Variety of scary forecasts, but actually OK. **Next ride-out** Wed 1st Aug. 6.30 start at “The “Shoes”. Please tell me if you are coming. I’ll miss the next club night.

Bellingham camping weekend: This idea did not seem popular. Just your scribe and Davie Clark, who had to leave early due to work. But the Enfield owners on site were very welcoming, and your scribe had a gorgeous ride over the borders. Well, I'm going again, though it may well not be our members' choice.

Wooler: The now traditional rain. The waterproofing applied to the Gazebo was getting overwhelmed. But on the Saturday, enough brightness for a ride into the borders – Scott's view – and, then DISASTER! The Café in Kelso no longer sells GIANT TEA-CAKES. In fact they seemed unaware they ever had sold giant tea-cakes!!! It is worth ever going to Scotland again, without giant tea-cakes??

But, on a sunny evening, a giant BBQ – 14 attended, members, friends, and Davie from Edinburgh, and Dave (again) from Hull on an ES2.

International Rally: Less Northumbrians than originally planned – weather forecasts were terrifying. In fact a lovely Saturday and a dry(ish) Sunday ride home over various the Pennine dales. About 200 attended – a real success.

Otterburn: A great turn-out for Northumbria. Mud or no mud, we put on a good show. We also found a route round the back of the stands by the swamp at the entrance. This safely led to a DRY PATCH. We Took possession of it! This dodge attracted more Nortons, and then other motorcycles coming in found us and decided this was the place to be. An enjoyable day. Those who came want to do it again.

T140 Shop. OK, John does Triumphs, not Nortons. But some bits are common to both species, and he is handy, he's local and he's friendly. However times are hard and he has left his address near Crosslings on the Coast Road, and is operating from home – setting up to eventually sell on the internet. In the meanwhile for anything you may need you can phone him on 07503257317.

Postage and stamps:

Before the postage rates rocketed we bought a stockpile of stamps and can carry on sending newsletters and notices by mail a little longer. After that? - we could go over to e-mail for everything. There are problems with this – e-mails get lost, turned to spam, people have incompatible software, and, and, and. I also think people may prefer an old fashioned envelope dropping through the door. But – with rising costs – e-mail? What do you think?

The following (heavily condensed) is from Tim Dickinson – recently joined member who lives in Sheffield but works weekdays on Tyneside:

Had a busy couple of months with trying to kick off a classic bike business – we are doing all bespoke restorations as well as buying a few bikes and doing them up.

We have also just acquired two 1930-40's 16H's girders and an early 40's ES2 which we will be restoring. We also have a few CB750K's (and a couple of K0's) plus a 400/4. To go with the pretty Italian stuff we have a Gilera Saturno which will be ready in a month or two but that's not going to be less than 15K.

If you know anyone interested in buying or have bikes or bits to sell we will always be interested –

I'm also happy to hear from the more engineering inclined amongst the group who want to earn a few quid doing some fab work / turning / painting etc that we might need – we are almost aiming at a "Classic bike Co-op"

Cheers

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Finally:Northumbria has an honorary member.

I have high-handedly, unilaterally, without consulting anybody, and with no regard to consitutionality, appointed Frances Bates, who was Dr. Clives's partner, as the one and only Honorary Member of the Northumbria Branch of the Norton owners' Club. I will defy anyone nit-picker who wants to oppose this. And it looks like Frances will be joining us for the meal after the Clive Taylor Memorial run. Please be there to welcome our new Honorary Member!

Chairman and website doer: Bob Tym. 01670 517949. robert.tym@gmail.com

Money scrounger: Simon Murray. simon@bar Moor.com. Address for subs still 25 Green Close, Stannington, Northumberland NE61 6PE

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