

## The Northumbria Branch March '20 Monster Newsletter, Including a special demand for money!!!!:::

Since our treasurer has given away most of our money to charities (see later), he is desperately in need of this year's subscriptions. In fact he has a special place in Hell (to borrow a term) for anyone who does not pay him £5.00 by the end of March. And he has an enormous pitch-fork.

You can pay him cash, if you see him in time, (thus avoiding the pitch-fork) or you can send him a cheque made to Norton Owners' Club Northumbria, at his residence at 5 Barrassford Close, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 8XT. If you want to do an electronic transfer by computer, e-mail him for details. [a\\_m\\_millar@hotmail.com](mailto:a_m_millar@hotmail.com)

### The Annual General Meeting (strategically avoided by your scribe)

1: Your scribe is stuck with the job. There seem to be complicated plans afoot about how the newsletter is to be distributed in future but your scribe will learn more about this later. **AND!!! MEMBERS WERE ASKED FOR SAGE AND SUITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER!!**

2: I am told that we received a bonus from the Big Norton Club in the Sky of £400. We gave £150 each to our favourite charities (GNAA and BloodBikes). There is £100 left in the kitty.

### **And here's the programme:**

- a. **Kamtrek – 26th April.** Your scribe is responsible for this. **PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR SCRIBE!** Cancelled twice in Autumn due to deluges, the next deluge is programmed for the 26<sup>th</sup> of April. Info was already sent out last year, but will be sent out again by e-mail.
- b. **Clive Taylor Run – 10th May.** Morning plus pub meal.. Details to follow by e-mail. (What if you have not got e-mail?)
- c. **International Rally 2020 Portugal – 21st to 25th May.** Big Norton Club in the Sky event. Bob is going with Ginetta and Richard with Jen (he has to do SOMETHING since he's been grounded for racing). If your scribe's planned Canada trip gets stopped by the bananavirus, maybe he'll go too, if the bananavirus stops that as well. ANYONE ELSE??
- d. **Tay Valley NOC Ardnamurchan Camping Weekend – 5th to 7th June.** Worth the trip.. Contact Tay Valley Sec David Templeton: [smokeyjoe750@gmail.com](mailto:smokeyjoe750@gmail.com)
- e. **Branch camping weekend, Wooler 12th to 14th June. Free BBQ.** If you cannot do the weekend, come for the day. Contact Tay Valley Sec
- f. **Jimmie Guthrie Memorial Run – 21st June.** For information.
- g. **Tay Valley NOC Camping Weekend at Applecross – 7th to 9th August.** For info. Very far but spectacular. Ask Tay Valley sec (see above) for info if going.
- h. **Headless Drummer Rally - Herstmonceux Castle – 2nd to 6th July.** Big Club in the Sky

Event.

- i. **Aln valley Motorcycle Show – 26th July.** At the railway. They are building up their motorcycle events and loved it when LOTS of Nortons turned up after last year's rally. Don't disappoint them! Tony tells me they will have half the length of the line to Almouth complete this summer.
- j. **The Bellingham Show – 29th August.** For information.
- k. **The Glendale Show – 31st August.** For information. (where's that???) Glen = dale (???)
- l. **Tay Valley Yetholm camping weekend – 4th to 6th September.** Sojourn with the Scots at the Yetholm cam site. Space is limited. Contact the site 01573 4203461. There are amazing rides starting from here. Excellent pub nosh. Could help to contact Tay Valley sec to ensure a meal.
- m. **Kamtrek?** Since the 2019 Kamtrek got pushed into 2020, should there be a 2020 Kamtrek?? Normally end of Sept.
- n. **Northumbria NOC Christmas Dinner - 17th December, Melton Constable this time.**

## **And NOW!! – WOW!! a sage and suitable contribution!!!**

### **Thoughts on carrying luggage. By Simon Parry. (Should it be the social anthropology of bikers' luggage?)**

As a motorcycle tour guide, I spend about 8 months of the year on the road. I am therefore acutely aware of the challenges of packing for a motorcycle trip. However, I admit that I'm getting soft in my old age. When I'm guiding tours across the USA we have a support van to carry all the luggage and we stay in hotels. This means that I'm not faced with the problem of stashing tent, sleeping bag, air bed and stove on my bike along with the usual spare clothing, waterproofs, tools and spares. I travel with a normal suitcase which goes in the van, and all I need to pack on the bike is my waterproofs, my sun cream and my camera.

So, it was a bit of a shock when I decided to attend the NOC rally in Morpeth last summer and to enter fully into the spirit of the event by camping. My 961 Commando has a rear seat hump, no rack and no pannier supports, which makes carrying any luggage quite a challenge. Let alone a tent and sleeping bag. In the end I managed with a rucksack, which was awkward and uncomfortable. By then, I did have only 8 miles to ride!

The experience made me reflect on the issue of carrying luggage, especially on a bike not set up for such. It is always with great interest that I observe the luggage carrying habits of my fellow bikers, particularly when they go on holiday. There is a fascinating sociological study waiting to happen here.

For starters, what people strap to their bikes when they venture forth tells us a great deal about their hopes and fears for the journey. I once travelled round Spain with two friends. One of them took five rolls of toilet paper with him. One roll I can understand (as can anyone who has experienced toilets on continental campsites. *(Much better these days - sec)*). Two rolls perhaps yes, if you are prone to stomach bugs when travelling abroad. But five! I couldn't use that much toilet paper in two weeks if I tried. What's more, did he think that there are no shops in Spain?

I have to admit that I prefer to travel light. My attitude to packing is that provided you have money, anything else you need can be bought. But on the subject of money, that same friend also took £600 in traveller's cheques purely to cover any on-the-spot speeding fines he might incur. The irony is that he was the slowest rider I have ever toured with.

The other interesting aspect of luggage carrying is how people manage to strap everything on. On another occasion I travelled to the south of France with a friend who swore you could fasten anything and everything to your bike with just one bungee strap. To be fair to him, I followed his bike for 1,500 miles that holiday and he never lost a thing. His bike did look rather like Steptoe's cart though.

Something which always makes me laugh is the sports bike rider wearing a full rucksack. Worse still, when you see the poor girlfriend desperately perched on the (non-existent) pillion seat wearing

the huge rucksack as they pass you at 110mph. Last summer I was taking some American riders round the Scottish NC500 and we were filling up at a petrol station where a young sports bike rider pulled in. His poor girlfriend was precariously balanced on the rear of the bike with her knees round her ears. On her back was the biggest rucksack I've ever seen. She struggled off the bike and I commented that she must be quite uncomfortable. She gave me a look which confirmed this. I asked if she always rode like that. "This is the first time I've been on his bike", she said. "And it will be the last". She wriggled out of the rucksack and disappeared inside to find the toilet. I suggested to her bashful looking young boyfriend that perhaps a change of luggage carrying arrangements might be in order if he hoped to continue the relationship beyond the end of this trip.

Whenever I'm at a rally I love to wander round the campsites to admire the bikes and I cannot help but notice the wonderful variety of luggage carrying arrangements. Some riders go for the fancy luggage set with matching hard cases and top box. Some prefer soft luggage. The range of home-made set ups is also impressive, ranging from self-built racks to aluminium side boxes. I used to attend rallies with a friend who welded himself a rack that was 4 feet wide and 3 feet deep to carry his tent and other camping gear. God only knows what putting all that weight behind the rear wheel did to the handling, but when unloaded his bike looked like it was pulling some sort of agricultural implement.

Then there is the bin-bag brigade. Why waste money on luggage when a humble black bag does the trick? My personal favourite is a try and fit everything into a simple hold-all on the pillion seat. It makes an excellent back rest to lean into. Just don't pack the cooking stove where it will stick into your kidneys.

Simon Parry (Sorry I missed your talk at the AGM - scribe)

### **And: A visit to Chateau Don**

Chateau Don is an interesting place. Hygiene? Well, you are supposed to wash you hands after a pee, but if the wash basin is stuffed full of motorcycle wiring harnesses and parts, you emerge toxic (think Bananavirus).

In the Don workshop is a Commandator/Dominando under construction. No detail can be less than perfect. No big hammers here! Don swears he'll have it on the road this season (equals 30<sup>th</sup> September??). The engine is Mark 3 Commando (allowing a starter motor for ancient knees. Personally I promote 500 twins: you can kick them over with your big toe).

The project has gone on so long he has lost lots of the bits. Like: Headlamp – still lost. Rear mudguard rails – found after he had bought replacements. Rear axle lost - found after he bought a replacement. Rear number plate assembly?? – you guessed it --

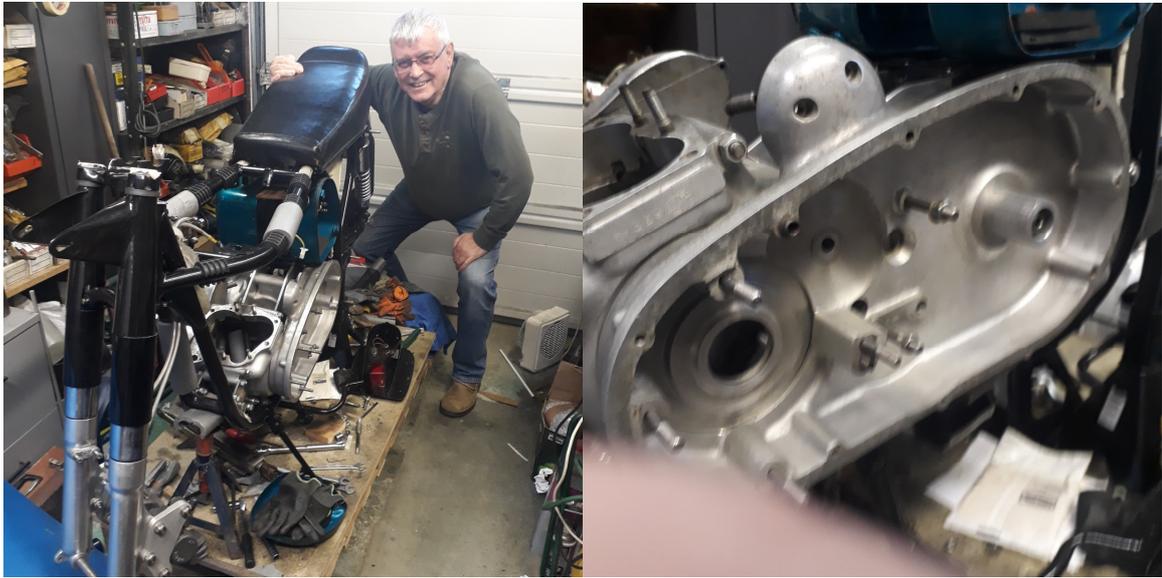
Perfection? Tubular spacers in the rear suspension hangers have to be machined from solid stainless (I would have lopped off a piece of pipe). And so on. No sign of a big hammer anywhere.

Carburettor: does not trust Amals. Bought a new Mikuni from Oz for £100 less than UK suppliers.

Electrics will be embellished with relays anywhere the current is high(ish). Handlebar switches will be taken from something modern (can't remember which). Will rig the gear lever so it is where God intended it to be – on the right. But endless battles with footrests – and engine plates. Don seems to have a shed full of "not-fitting" engine plates including from a (revered?) Norton supplier. Because of the way the Mark 3 fits a seal in the inner chaincase for the gearbox main shaft, gearbox alignment has to be spot on, vertically and horizontally. With much lecturing from Don, Gordon Scott made up some plates for him. The rear hub and brake seems to be an amalgam of Norton and Triumph. The Dommi swinging arm is narrower than the Commando. Some very exotic mods have been made to the hub, so exotic it made my head spin. Anyhow he'll get his rear disc.

Still to come are wheel-building, and much polishing and chroming of bits. And the wiring. And some paint.

Well, Don's previous 77 project is thing of beauty, now sold to Ian Loram. Ian put it on show at Stafford and IT DID NOT HAVE DON'S NAME ON IT!!! Don much put out. How would Rembrandt have felt??? There's more but I have no more space if I want to fit my own rants into this newsletter



*Note precision placement of hub for gearbox Shaft seal in the boss*

**My turn to rant : Major Rant number one begins:: A tale of headlamps and bulbs.**

**Well**, this may be even more boring than usual, but if you are involved with “British pre-focus”, it may be of interest. The bike was bought in the winter of 1996-7, including a delightfully corroded headlamp reflector. Hooray!! I found a replacement (made in India. The light all came out sideways in a lovely halo – none went forwards)

**Then** I found a real Lucas reflector at a motorcycle shop in Blundellsands. Hooray again ! The light went forwards!! But the old weak tungsten bulbs kept popping! And then I found 35W/35W 6v halogen. Hooray again! In fact, eventually, two (Different designs and one more focussed than the other) from a bloke who Google can not longer find. The better bulb was so focussed that it sent a concentrated beam like a searchlight for miles down the middle (and only the middle) of the road. And nowhere else. Going round corners was Russian roulette. The alternator was also having a bit of trouble keeping up, with turn signals and all.

**But then:** LED turn signals from Paul Goff and a LED rear light. Straight lines were great!! Zoom!!!! But I was getting blinder - The reflector had started to oxidise. New reflector bought from Paul Goff. Found to be made from mill-finish steel (kind of shiny “orange peel”). Actually an advantage – it dispersed the searchlight beam a bit. But then I found I could actually clean up the older Lucas reflector – shoved a rag soaked in “Mr Sheen” inside and jiggled it round with a stick. Repeated process with polishing cloth. Result: perfect! I’ve got two good ones now! But kept Lucas reflector in the cupboard.

**I got more LED minded** and bought a 6v LED headlamp bulb, (not from Paul Goff). The “dip” was fine, and, on “head”, stayed on, but an extra “head” element lit up and shone up in the air at 45 degrees. Back to halogen.

**After 10 years and maybe 60,000 miles** with the headlamp always on, the trusty bulb popped in the Lake District last Autumn. No problem, I had the slightly less focussed one as a spare. Good enough to get home in the dark – and bring back a load of Cumberland Sausage.

**Paul Goff has replacements.** Paul also says he now has better LED’s that do point in the right direction, but, if your alternator/dynamo can keep up, halogen is still a better light. I bought two, one for spare. Now I had always good service from Paul. But, going to the January club night, the new bulb I bought was doing a great job of lighting up the road signs by the road, but not much use for looking forwards. (Wow!! Just like 1997 again!! Indians rule OK!)

**What’s up??** I compared the Goff bulb with the old “not quite perfect bulb”. The elements on the latter were about 3-4 mm less forward than the ones in the Goff bulb. OK, move the bulb! Spacer made: 2 fibre washers (wrapped in Lizzie’s kitchen foil to get a good earth). Boo! I can no longer fit the connector at the back. So I file the “Contact blobs” on the back of the bulb flat. It fit. Now focussed when shone on the wall. Also in the back lane (though street lights do not help). Filed the spare bulb’s blobs flat too. And, to make this permanent and I made a brass flange from a plumbing fitting into a 3 mm spacer. And out on the road.

**“Dip” is great, but, surprise!** “head” puts a big smile of light down on the road, and SOME goes up the middle (still not enough to properly illuminate cat’s eyes) and quite a lot into the bushes.

**Search the internet** and find a bulb that looks a bit like one I had once before. (It also looks like the bulb on Paul’s web site – but not what he sent me). From classicbikeshop.co.uk.. Buy and fit (without spacer). And road test. Not quite a concentrated beam, more of a “star-burst” but it is all in and on the road. The “dip” has a clean cut-off at the top. “Head” is OK to hold a steady 60 on the Military Road at night (though cars can still dazzle). It also seems brighter. It even lights up the cats eyes!

**Buy 2 more for spares** – you never know when they will become unavailable. But, on arrival, they look different. They also do not stick quite so far into the reflector. Focus??

**Road test shows** first bulb from classicbikeshop has a better focussed “head” beam, but a patchier pattern on the road on “dip”. The second delivery gives a good pattern on “dip”. “Head” is quite scattered but there is a bright spot in the middle that goes down the middle of the road. Also for some reason it seems a bit brighter. So install this one.

**Phone Paul,** really to say I think he needs to know that some of the bulbs he sells are faulty. He says there are all manner of “British pre-focus” reflectors around giving different light patterns. Told him about my 2 kosher reflectors. Does not want the bulbs back No surprise: (I modified them, but the point I was trying to make was, maybe he should not be selling this type of bulb). Offered to give me a free bulb of different design, but when I let on I had already found replacements, (though I could always use spares), he said he “would not give me a bulb to keep on the shelf”. Yes, did not want the bulbs back – “modified, so could not resell them”.

**From web sites,** Paul shows bulbs like the first good one from Classicbikespares. So does RGM. As do Classicbikespares (6 and 12 v). But you may end up getting something different! And I am about to start a bulb museum. Bulb, anyone??

**Morals**

You can clean up reflectors with “Mr. Sheen”

The quality of bits you get for old bikes is all over the place, and what you got once you may not find again. (but we know that)

If buying a LED headlamp bulb, be sure you get the right one. But be aware that going all LED means your alternator/dynamo needs to “dump” the majority of the power it produces.

A super-shiny reflector REALLY matters – probably more important than watts.  
 Are reflectors really so variable that you have to match the bulb to the reflector?

**Some pictures:**

Goff bulb with spacer.



This one worked



Focus issue? LED (“Head” shone on the tree tops)



Two the same? First delivery LHS



## **Next rant: The (Death?) of Donnington Nortons**

We must all be interested in this, and Sean has sent me a link to a magazine article, which is seriously scathing. It could almost be considered defamatory, or libellous. But, as you are likely to be interested, I am risking giving it to you anyhow with the following genuine qualifications – but first the link. It is <https://www.superbike.co.uk/article/norton-was-it-a-fraud-from-the-start>

**The qualifications:** In this country a man is supposed to be innocent until proved guilty – at least that was true before the press got involved.

The article in question looks like being one of a series of interviews. Subsequent interviews may say something different.

Had Norton succeeded, we would all have been cheering. Meanwhile the press is making much of the investing of people's pensions in Norton.

Investing people's pension funds into a company that fails is nothing new. A bad thing?? Maxwell did it – and ended up falling or jumping overboard off his boat. Other people lost LOTS.

On which subject, a story: I was once a partner in a very young small company. It became legal to invest half the pension fund back in the firm. One of the partners had a cousin in a big finance company who came and offered to set up such a scheme for us. They must have been doing a lot of it. (Difficult situation when the cousin had enthused the partner about the scheme). We did not do it. Risk your job AND half your pension in the same small company??? --- BUT. I sold out in 1988. The company was tiny. And then, combined with a USA partner firm of the same size and age, sales grew at around 13% per year. By 2018 that multiplies sales 30 times, and the firm is global. The incredible power of compound interest (and with me out of it)! The company sold out last year for \$250,000,000. For the buyer that was small change!! Question: should we actually have invested the pension money in the company?? (Actually I think not – but hindsight is wonderful). So things can be more complex than the media say. And putting pension money into the firm could be widespread.

According to the media Stuart Garner is blaming the tax people and Brexit. But I remember Stuart a while back sounding pretty anti-EU. Was he struggling with EU standards? - well, he got there, which at least means his bikes were “homologated” for 27 countries. But, if a buyer for the firm has to be found, it may first want to know the terms of trade for the 27 countries. We aren't there yet -- - and – what is the future of petrol-engined bikes anyhow??

But, of course the biggest issue is the old question: Inside a bankrupt company, is there hiding a profitable one??

Meanwhile, you can look at Sean's link, but lets keep the jury out. (I remember the fall-out from my “bodging” article). And - *I could babble on endlessly on this – but - Enough -----*

***If you have read this far you are superhuman***

*Officers - - -*

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