



VIRUSCAST 8 Eighth Issue

(Complete with complimentary rant)

Being the Northumbria Nortons Bananavirus Newsletter,

First – A dilemma: What should Simon do??

(Simon sent in this dilemma this morning - --)

Mk III Commando – A project! After thinking it was ready to go (and then destroying the electric start idler), I thought okay, I'll just start it with a kick.....



Not so easy however as the kick start fouled the silencer after fitting a new exhaust.....



And this is as we are now, after being told by the exhaust supplier that the Z-plates are not fitted correctly. More to follow. (the electric start saga is a separate episode!)

Scribe adds: Readers can choose between 5 possible choices as to what action Simon should take. Send your votes to Simon –

- 1: Actually believe that the Z-plates are not fitted correctly, and remove them and see if there is any way of re-fitting them differently.*
- 2: Try to buy a kick-starter that sticks out further sideways.*
- 3: Borrow the scribe's "micro-adjuster" (= big hammer), and apply it to the silencer.*
- 4: Put the spindle end of the kick-start in a vise and apply the "micro-adjuster" to the pedal end.*
- 5: Put away the bike and play with something else.*

And now, in the nick of time, David Metcalf has sent this superb piece of prose:

Our Family Norton

I have been into bikes since acquiring my first trial bike at age of 13 and since then, have gone through the usual range of 2 stroke/ 4 stroke / sports / touring etc but always fairly modern bikes.

I never really had an interest in "old" bikes as I generally viewed them as slow, unreliable and high maintenance (in hindsight a very accurate description) and so through the years I was content with Japanese and occasionally Italian bikes to fulfil my biking needs.

My father in law had always been into bikes and had mentioned on several occasions that he had a Norton tucked away in his shed. He wasn't exactly sure what model it was but he had used it for a number of years then after acquiring a replacement, put it in his shed where it had stood for 30 years.

The shed itself was at the bottom of the garden, not particular waterproof and full of all sorts of equipment and tools so it was impossible to even see the bike let alone realise the model.

I did mention to him over the years on a number of occasions that if he ever wanted to get rid of it, I would take it off his hands but he didn't bite. He always said that when he retired, he wanted to restore it with his best friend and then enjoy it together. They had always had bikes together since very young so restoring this bike would be a good project for their retirement.

Unfortunately this did not happen as his friend passed away quite suddenly and the bike remained in the shed. I think the shock of losing his best friend had resulted in possibly losing interest in restoring the bike and so it remained for a few more years hidden in the corners of the shed.

Then one day he phoned me and asked me if I wanted the Norton. There has been an attempted break-in to the shed and he was concerned the burglars had seen the bike and would return for it. Needless to say I did not have to be asked twice and so I quickly organised a trailer and went to his house to pick up the bike. After much pushing and pulling we managed to get the bike out of the confines of the shed and there it stood in all its glory.

The bike was actually a Norton 650SS with matching numbers and most importantly complete. After 30



years in a damp shed the engine was seized, everything was rusted and rotten but it didn't matter to me, I knew that I wanted to restore it. I must point out that this was not my first restoration project. I had previously acquired an old BMW R75/5 which I had intended to also restore but had lost interest and sold it.

I think my Father in law thought that I would also lose interest in the Norton as this was a much bigger project but I suppose at least the bike would be safer in my garage then in his shed, even if it remained there for another 30 years.

I loaded the bike into the trailer and took it to its new home, my garage. After unloading it I stood back and thought: "what now?". The bike was a complete basket case, everything need doing. I hadn't even considered the cost or the time involved but even so I knew that I was going to do it.

Having no previous experience of restoring bikes I started to strip it down, carefully taking loads of photographs and labelling everything so I knew where it was for when I started to put it back together.

I was also starting to build a big extension at my home so I knew that this project was going to take some time. In fact it probably took 2 years to complete. In all this time I didn't tell anybody about the progress of the bike. My father in law never asked me how I was getting on and I never brought it up in conversation. I think he thought that the bike was still languishing in the corner of the garage, never to see daylight again.

After a lot of work and expense I finally got the bike back together and running although that in itself is another story.



My father in law still had no idea that the bike was completed and so it was decided that I would surprise him by riding it up to his house the following Sunday. We arranged for the family to be there to witness the grand unveiling. As far as my Father in law was concerned, we were all going for Sunday lunch.

The big day duly arrived and the plan was put into action. At a prearranged time I came down his drive with the bike running fairly sweetly. The whole event was captured on video by the family. His reaction when he first saw the bike was brilliant and when he realised that it was his bike he actually burst into tears I think this was due to the fact that he intended to restore it with his mate but this never happened but he could now see the bike in all its glory.



All in all a successful and expense worthwhile just to see his reaction !

unveiling, it definitely made all the time

(If you were not used to "Britbikes", David, what were your impressions once you rode it?)

Ride out?

On Thursday Simon was talking about another ride out – was it to be Tuesday next? Anyhow, watch out for e-mails.

Things that went wrong on the road - or maybe a confessional – concluded, bringing things up to date – at least until the next disaster.

This one is going to be the longest so far – given the scale of the disasters.

All these events may, or may not be connected. – start with the history of the tank. Back to 1998. Slight fuel leak. Inside looks rusty. Usual thing – rattle round with nuts and bolts inside. Clatter-clatter! Petseal from RGM – which looked very much like polyester with catalyst. The polyester catalyst is usually a peroxide – reacts with steel and thereby stops being a peroxide, and stops working as a catalyst. Which is why you should not stir Plastic Padding with metal instruments. I knew this. Tank is entirely steel. Makers must know best. Trust them! so I used it. Stuff would not set until after a week in the airing cupboard. After a while it started to come off. Nuts and bolts again. Clatter-clatter! God knows if I removed much. Slooshed a marine grade epoxy resin inside to bury everything. This worked for 15 years and then started to come off. (Modern fuels?). I got a stripper from Richard, which took off huge amounts of epoxy, (but later it turned out that not all was removed). Then a new, red coloured sealer, German make. Tank now contained the following: remains of original polyester, remains of epoxy, and the red stuff from the Fatherland. Oh, and sometimes petrol. That is where the tank got to when the following saga begins.

Event One, 2016, returning from club run to the Carlisle aviation museum, plugging up Greenhead bank, Lizzie on the back, holed piston. Proceeded very slowly with smoke trail to Chollerford. NOC Northumbria members following behind suffered major smoke inhalation, and I am still expecting a writ. Chollerford, and no hope of getting up the hill opposite (A69 would have been lethal). Very kind Jeff Driffield went to town and brought a trailer to get us back. Examining: - one piston holed, and one with a dished top. Bores OK. Replaced pistons with Ausie make pistons. At the same time changed carburettor slide from 3.5 to 3 and raised needle one notch to try for richer, cooler running. Coincidentally rusted down-pipes replaced and less bluing with the new ones – so it must have worked. .

But much smoke from start, and oil consumption terrible with new pistons. Took apart. Pistons scored like they had seized. Bores OK except for couple of deep scratches. To Pete Lovell who said there HAD been a seize. Rebored and from +60 now to “Dommi 99 bore” and pistons (Gandini). No smoke. About 400 miles since rebore , going to East Fortune with Sean, we were a bit late to see the amazing spectacle of Richard racing and maybe even falling off – can’t miss this – so - accelerating on the last bit of A1 and the engine suddenly seizes. Cooled off and all seemed OK.

Off to Portsmouth for boat to Spain. Bad running on A1 – resolved in car park by clearing out pilot jet with fine wire. (No visible dirt in float chamber, or visible obstruction in the jet). Leaving M25 to join A3, and found fuel pouring out of the top of the carburettor. All taken apart and no cause found. Leaving ferry at Bilbao, ragged running. Once again cleared pilot jet with fine wire. On long climb from Bilbao onto the Spanish plateau, engine suddenly seizes. Stop on hard shoulder and allow to cool. All seems OK, but next day have to clear the pilot jet again. Rest of trip OK, but with rattles – Andalucia and back. However back home, bores and pistons seriously scraped. And a gudgeon pin gone walkies inside of which a broken circlip, and the end of the pin had deeply scored the bore.

Here's a nicely chewed piston:



Back to Pete Lovell. Bores sleeved and back to standard 500cc pistons (Gandini).

Pete's theory is "wet seize", brought on by tank sealers. The idea is that dissolved goo or snotty gobbets (a technical term only understood by engineers) cause pilot jet blockage, and also brief sticking of the fuel float needle, the latter leading to a sudden flood of neat petrol onto the cylinder walls, removing the oil. Nothing on the internet re. wet seize except on diesels, where faulty injectors pushing a "splatter" of fuel into the cylinder can do the same thing.

Nobody seemed to believe the "wet seize" theory. However treating it as if it was true –

Tank inside blasted out by Gordon Scott (he reported residue of maybe all 3 sealers), and holes brazed.

Pleated filter fitted into the fuel line - Scrounged off Bob. . (Pleats give very high surface area compared to mesh, thus low fluid velocity through the actual fabric, better to catch any "snotty gobbets").

Replaced modern plastic float with an old brass one – no danger of dissolving or softening. Fitted new jets. Changed fuel float needle.

All I can say is, no trouble since. Pete Lovell says that he has seen valves stick open due to tank sealer in the fuel, and even pistons stick. Whether any or all three historic sealers is to blame, (and this is combined with changes over time to the fuel we buy) I cannot say. But the moral, to me, is DON'T USE SEALERS. Get your tank fixed/blast cleaned/welded/brazed.

And apart from many self-induced cock-ups in the work-shop, (called maintenance), some repaired by Richard, this Viruscast brings all the on-the-road disasters up to date. Watch this space for the next one. That last lot was expensive. (Rebore, then sleeving, and 3 pairs of pistons). And I was beginning to lose faith.

Virus- rant: I must be an expert on pandemics. (And death). (If you want to stop me ranting – please fire me! Retirement has its advantages). Anyhow, this does have a little bit to do with Nortons as everyone's lives have been affected, including Norton Club members.

Covid kills mostly old buggers like me. So, is there truth in the Trumpian inference that they all would have died anyhow, and all this safeguarding is a Communist plot by the U.S. Democrat party?

Well, with our population and average life expectancy, you can work out roughly how many people die every year **without** a coronavirus. From early figures from the first major European outbreak (did you see the Italians all singing on the telly? – and can they sing!!!), you could at the time get a very rough idea of the survival rate of people who catch it., and the percent of the population that seemed to be getting infected. Apply those figures to the UK population, and you can work out (at least I think you can): -

- If you let the virus run through the population to get “herd immunity” you would get somewhere round 500,000 to a million deaths. Somehow, later than me, our esteemed government worked this out **all by themselves**, and did the “lock-down”.

- within, say a 12 month period, there will be a number of old buggers like me who would have died anyhow, with or without the virus. So how many coronavirus deaths are consistent with the death rate being no worse than before? (Mr Trump would probably say all of them). I cannot remember how I did the sums, but I think I came up with a figure like very roughly 200 virus deaths a day could be consistent with no increase above the normal overall death rate. I.E. – no “excess deaths”. (200 could be a bit high now, with current data).

Since then our esteemed government and the experts, **all by themselves again**, have come up with the concept of “excess deaths”. To me, and maybe even more significantly for all of us, the news the other day said we were now at the point where we **did** have coronavirus deaths but over the past weeks there had been no “excess deaths” – i.e. total UK deaths were no more than normal.

Where’s my rant?? There has to be one!!! My rant says that if, as a non-expert, but with a mind trained in problem solving through years of analysing what is wrong with my Norton, why does the esteemed government arrive at the same conclusions months later than I, or anyone like me, (who can fix a Norton) can??

So maybe we are the point where, in terms of the death rate, we can take comfort in our life expectancies being back to normal. But of course, the bad news is that the virus is still active, and an outbreak could reverse the situation. So – maybe my rant changes nothing. But I do think a milestone has been passed.

If you think this is a load of b*****ks, remember that I was short of viruscast material before I got David’s article, and I had already written the rant, and I now do not want to waste it.

Bye-bye for now -

I am off to work on the good ship “Obsession B” as Nicola will now let me on board in Scotland.(If it stops raining up there.) So maybe this is the last viruscast – and I may be reverting to normal newsletters from here on. And why not have a “virus-rant” in the last viruscast??

Hope you all avoid outbreaks. And do not screw up the statistics by falling off your bike.

Scribe



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