

The Branch Sec wills it, and it is not for us to reason why, and so, after an absence of about 2 months, there appears ===

----- wait for it ----- --- --

VIRUSCAST 9 Ninth Issue

Why??? - well –

After 2 months of club nights at the Melton Constable, we can no longer meet. The club has to prove it is still alive, so here are some verbal/written utterances of members – to prove they are still alive.

So, what's happening/not happening ---

Rides out and club nights

Stop press: today's news just hit us. Future rides out? We are about to be told how "locked down" N.E. England is going to be - However Club nights are definitely "out", and, so far, the August ride out apparently ended in Simon's garage, to escape the rain, and, I am, told, the August club night was also blighted by rain.

However we did have a (last?) ride out last night – 17th Sept – Simon reports:

"It was a first (for a very long time!) – an all British bike turn out! Five Nortons and a classic Triumph. The next goal is getting an all Norton turn out!"

Six branch members ventured out on a dry but cold night. The intended route was Seaton Burn to the Dyke Neuk via Heddon, Matfen, Ingoe and Wallington. Unfortunately, the leader (who had not practiced the route), made a wrong turn at Ingoe and we were headed for Belsay instead of Wallington! Quick thinking and the route was modified on the hoof and we rode via Bolam, Scots Gap and Hartburn, before arriving at the intended destination! The ride was just over 40 miles and for a few us, long enough due to the cold weather. Socially distanced refreshment was available at the Dyke Neuk and was appreciated. Was that the last evening ride out of the year?" - and here are some of us -



Zoom meetings

We can still meet and rant our favourite rants on Zoom, and Simon restarted his Zoom meetings on Thursday 17th Sept. Watch for incoming emails about zoom meetings –

AND Viruscasts can continue as long as you, gentle readers, send in some nice articles – fettling – nostalgia – info on suppliers – favourite routes – shows – whatever you love, it is there to share with us.

So - - - - -

And - here is the second thrilling episode of Sean's report on his 42 years of teething troubles with his Commando. Here are Sean's struggles to break the law.

Last time we left Sean having moved back to N.E England in 1987, and, he thought, maybe his Commando was "Sorted" – but - read on ---

I do a few years with this spec. and the bike is reasonably reliable. Fettling is of course always required, slipping clutch, (bike wet-sumps - bike is started - pumps some oil past primary seal - contaminates clutch - dismantle, douse plates in petrol and repeat), electrical issues, etc.etc. Oh and it still hasn't broken a ton. So I decide to address the performance issue by taking it to a Norton tuner of some note : Fred Barlow. A nice chap who knew his stuff and had a disarming manner when it came to encouraging you to get your



wallet out - The engine was stripped, vapour blasted, carefully and properly reassembled to close tolerances, crank balanced, a 4S cam added, Head gasflowed and polished. Barrel fin damage repaired and re-stoved. Boyer Branson unit retuned to factory to check and confirm the advance curve.

Looked great - but was it any quicker....well not really. This had me beat, breathed on by experts, new carburettors, ignition system components checked/replaced, proper air filters added etc.etc Main jets sizes had been played around with (see attached evidence)- but not a lot of improvement was forthcoming from any combination of changes.

Changing the gearbox oil at some point gave me the added thrill of suddenly "Striking Gold" - the remnants of the sleeve gear bearings apparently. So it was time to discover exactly what lay beneath that

Araldite patch on the outer shell. Wellas the next image of the welded up and dressed gearbox shell illustrates....a large hole. Another legacy of NAE and its first "8,000 miles". All bearings were replaced

along with main and layshafts, oh and a gear or two for good measure. So gearbox restored to full health or at least functional, latter years saw me replacing the shell after it became clear that the bearings were spinning in the original shell from what I assumed to be damaged caused by whatever catastrophe befell it pre-me.



A few years solid service followed in the 1990's but no great miles as the arrival of a Triumph 900 triple dealt with my need for speed and the last few years of my pre-children life. I remained fixated on its lack of top end and when it apparently started smoking on the L/H cylinder which still bore some of the signs of the original 1978 damage despite a +20 rebore I decided I needed to rule this out and rebore to +40.

So another strip-down, re-assembly and running in procedure - and of course it made no difference what so ever to the performance. What did happen though was a new and persistent oil leak from the barrels which seemed to emanate from the central area between the bores. Perceived wisdom concluded that over the years this area had corroded sufficiently to the point where there was so little material left that the rebore had rendered the bores porous. Yet another mechanical disaster. So off to RGM for the barrels to be re-sleeved with new liners, and back it came not quite as above as the fin fell off a few weeks after re-assembly.



The re-dressing of the liners to barrel gasket face involves some removal of material. If you look the piston heights protruding out of the bores you might conclude a little bit too much enthusiasm was used in this process - but it was also responsible for dressing off the weld on the original fin repair and hence its departure. I also had a small amount of material removed from the squish band area in the head and ran it with 2 head gaskets (compression plates under the barrels would have been a better idea!) to ensure adequate clearance. I measured this the best I could but didn't really possess the facilities or experience to do a proper job. It ran like this for a few more years but it didn't see a lot of service as more modern 2 wheeled distractions took its place. In 2002 it was obvious that there was a significant lack of compression on 1 cylinder so regrettably once again it was engine apart and more time I could ill afford to spend. Removing the head was sufficient to make a grown man weep.

Obvious evidence of impact of Inlet valve on one piston. Significant and very deep damage to one bore caused by gudgeon pin and circlip working loose within the piston and hitting the bore wall.



I blamed the GPM pistons as ensuring the circlip was fully home on assembly seemed to be far less precise than the Hepolite items they replaced. I rang Roger at RGM to discuss and he very calmly asked me which way round I'd assembled the circlips - Sharp side out? At which point I think I started beating my head against the wall and uttering the word "Moron" quite a lot.

Yes, a complete own goal...I'd just about had it with the bike and this time it was completely my fault.

So after I'd drunk a few remember the good "an expert" who would and finally deliver the levels this 65 Bhp bike So the engine was sent off to a far flung England.

I then spent the winter and chassis and at some excited when a wooden



beers, and tried to times - I decided to find both do the job properly blueprinted performance was supposed to deliver. pulled out of the frame and corner of Southern

sorting out the aesthetics point early 2004 I got very crate arrived.

(What horrors hid in the crate?? – don't miss the next thrilling episode)

And here's further fettling of Bob's Triton - - -

Alloy Barrel Repair

As many of you know I have been battling for years to try to make my Triton less oily. The problem seemed to be that there were several oil leaks each masking another. The bike is lovely to ride but the oiliness is an embarrassment!

During the lock-down I started by sorting out the electric start on my Commando. Once I got that sorted out I turned to my Triton to spend some time trying to sort out the leaks.

I hope no one is offended but of course like any Triton, mine has a Triumph engine, a 1955 5T bottom end fitted with an alloy barrel from a T100.

It seemed to me that a lot of oil was accumulating around the bottom of the exhaust pushrod tube and blowing through to the rear of the cylinder block. After much investigation by cleaning the engine with Gunk and then riding until the first indications of a leak appeared, it seemed that most of the oil was coming up around some of the cylinder base studs. I decided that I'd remove the head and barrels and investigate. Once I took the cylinder head off I had a surprise

As you can see the steel insert into the alloy barrel had pulled up and distorted the head gasket. However further investigation revealed that it was much worse. There was quite a serious crack in the cylinder liner. You can see it in the next photos.



I'm sure if a piece had broken off the liner it would have had catastrophic consequences. As it was there was merely a little scuffing on the piston above the top ring.

I took the barrel to Richard to discuss the options. He thought I might have overtightened the head bolt and pulled the stud up. I was certain I'd only tightened it to 18 ft lbs as specified in Triumph's instruction manual no 17. However the same figure applies to engines with a cast iron barrel and it was possible that it should be less with an alloy barrel with steel insets although I've never found any other figure quoted. Another possibility was that the torque figure quoted were for assembly dry whilst I know that I'd had problems with leaks from the rocker box down the head bolt in question, so it may have been over tightened even at 18 ft lbs.

Richard suggested in the first instance I looked around for a replacement barrel. This was a bit difficult under lock-down and all I managed to find was an apparently new barrel, with no liners or tappet blocks being sold on ebay. It had started off at £25 but by the time I saw it, it was up to £175 and the auction had a few days to run. I didn't bid for it but was interested to see how much it sold for. The answer was £330. Since it would have needed new liners, reboring and new pistons as well as new tappet blocks, it would have been quite expensive to go down that route.

Richard was concerned that although he could work out how to repair the insert which had pulled out, there were 7 others which might do the same! After all, the cylinder block is over 60 years old. He spent some time trying to unscrew the others but none of them moved at all. Richard removed the insert which had failed and made a new insert after tapping a new thread in the alloy barrel at $\frac{5}{8}$ UNF to replace the

7/16 x 20tpi original. The thread inside the insert remained as standard so I didn't have to change any cylinder head bolts.

As you can see from this photo the final job is quite tidy. The new insert is only slightly bigger than the others which are original, but no one will see that when the cylinder head is fitted.

According to the manual, the maximum oversize for alloy barrels is +20 thou. Mine was +40 thou and has been since I bought the bike in 1978. There was no way I was going to fit one new liner in the left cylinder and bore it out to +40 to match the right. In any event it seemed that the right cylinder had been burning quite a bit of oil – certainly more than the left one.

So in the end Richard fitted two new liners and bored it out to standard and supplied me with 2 new pistons and left me to reassemble the engine.



So far as the oil leak is concerned, I found when trying out the barrel before reassembly without a gasket, that it wasn't sitting down snugly onto the crankcase mouth. It was actually rocking in way of the two dowelled studs. I spent a good hour gently filing the two stud holes on the base flange until it actually sat down properly without any movement.

Well, I completed reassembly in early July. The bike started readily after the rebuild. Since then I've covered 788 miles. The bike is running really well. The first thing I noticed was that there was certainly more torque than I remembered. The smoky exhaust has gone. The major oil leak has been eliminated. I'm just left with a couple of very minor leaks which leave the odd drip under the bike...but then it is a Triumph engine!

All in all I'm very satisfied with the end result and would certainly recommend that if you've awkward problems like this looking for a solution you give Richard a call on 01670 513588. He may well be able to help you. - Bob

Some personal reminiscences, not really about Nortons, but I thought I'd share: -

The good ship obsession B. (The Dommi puts in an appearance)

The Dommi was called into service as soon after the lock-down in Scotland ended, so I could get back to the boat at Ardfarn. Much work. The yard had been given the job of (they said) a gentle blast to remove accumulated and flaking anti-fouling paint below the waterline. They did. And they blasted off 6 coats of epoxy I had built up to protect the hull – and blasted through the gel coat in places. It needed 6 coats of new epoxy paint to protect the 47-year-old GRP. The epoxy paint alone cost £500. With the boat out of the water I could sleep on board, but the loo was the hedge, or one sit-down cubicle open from 9 to 5 only in the yard loo – you had to plan well ahead. No place for a lady.

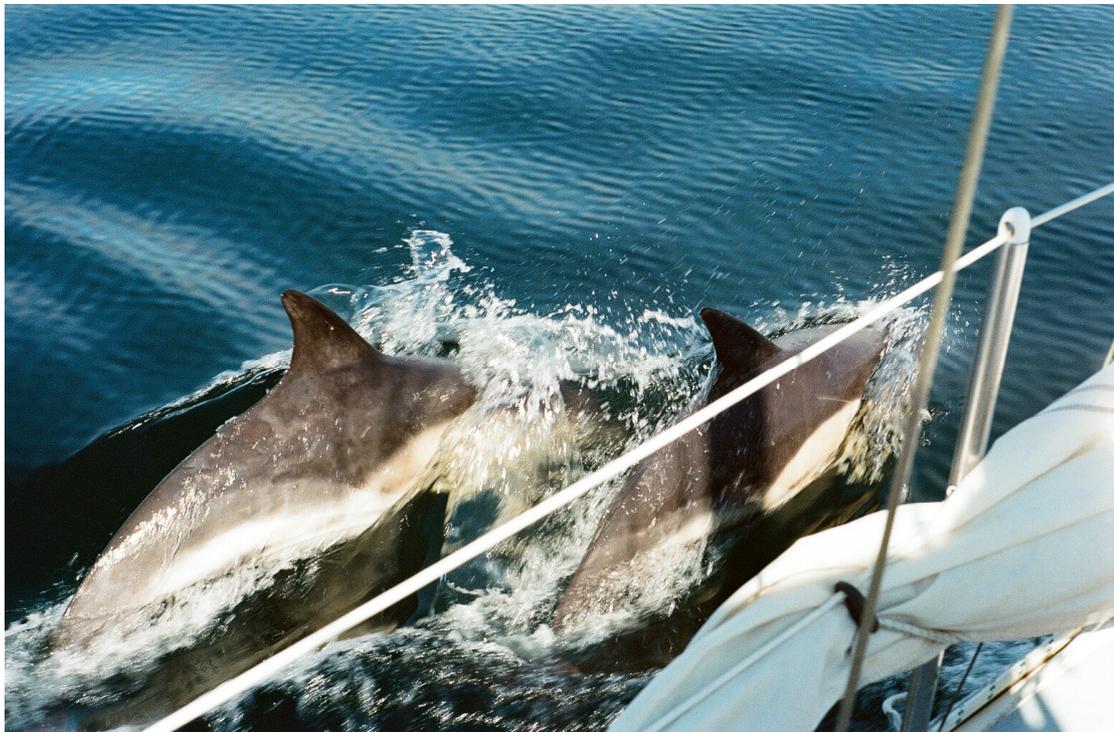
So the dommi went up, loaded, inter alia, with a big heavy drill, with wire brush and grinding disc, a belt sander, many tools and paint brushes, a small flat screen television, and a folding aluminium platform to stand on. Plus clothes, overalls, flea bag, food etc. Looked like Steptoe and Son on 2 wheels. The police must have been amazed, but did not stop me.. And 6 coats of epoxy and one of antifouling later, the boat was put in the water. And then Lizzie came up in the car. 'Cos we could now flush/pump out the loo.

2 coats of epoxy. 4 to go then one of antifouling. With Norton.



In August we got to Barra in 2 day runs (total of 95 nautical miles/110 land miles). Then slowly up the Hebrides chain, round the top of Skye, and back via Mallaig and Oban. Wind on only 2 days so the vintage 1973 10 h.p.diesel put-a-putted slowly for 350 nautical miles.

Off South Uist we were joined by about 10 Dolphins, playing round the bow for what must have been 20 minutes. Amazing! And that is what I want to share – here are 2 of them (wonderfully close).



I returned home with a vintage British Seagull (a.d. 1979) dinghy-outboard where the propeller had decided not to rotate. So another fettle

The Covid cruise – Covid rides – Covid meals with friends – Covid fettle – Covid Zoom or Covid YouTube courses and classes – we’ve managed to keep busy during the covid-time. But we’ve been lucky that, in spite of anno domini, neither of us has a “condition” that gets us locked up. And, at least so far, our

pension funds have survived. Some members may have been hit a lot harder. Unfortunately even a ride-by which might drop by a really isolated member, for a quick coffee, looks like being ruled out

We just have to keep riding and keep smiling!!!

Scribe



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