

Well, here we still are – we can ride Nortons, fix Nortons, drool over Nortons, but we are not allowed to speak to each other except through phones and computer screens – we are now a “Virtual” club – and the Viruscasts have to keep coming (Simon says), so here’s another

VIRUSCAST 10 Tenth Issue

Paint – and -----

To start with, your scribe would like to promote Simon’s “Zoom” club nights – every 2 weeks for 30 minutes. Not only do you get to see some friendly faces, but useful information is exchanged, like:

You may not have been copied with an e-mail from Bob to Simon which says –

“I went to Ashington Autospares this morning. They managed to colour match my tank and I bought an aerosol can and a bottle of touch up paint (both of which they made up while I waited) for £21.25.

I’m pretty sure they’ll have what you are looking for. They were very helpful.

They are at 146 Station Road, Ashington NE63 8HE Phone 01670 (Bob seems to have left out the rest)”

This info came up in the Zoom club night – about a place where you can get paint in any colour or matched to your requirements, and if you are titivating or restoring, this is USEFUL INFORMATION (especially as the very glossy Japlacs I used to mix to get my colours have disappeared along with most solvent-borne paints). Bring your questions/issues to ZOOM.

Also from the Simon info-spreader – Donnington Nortons

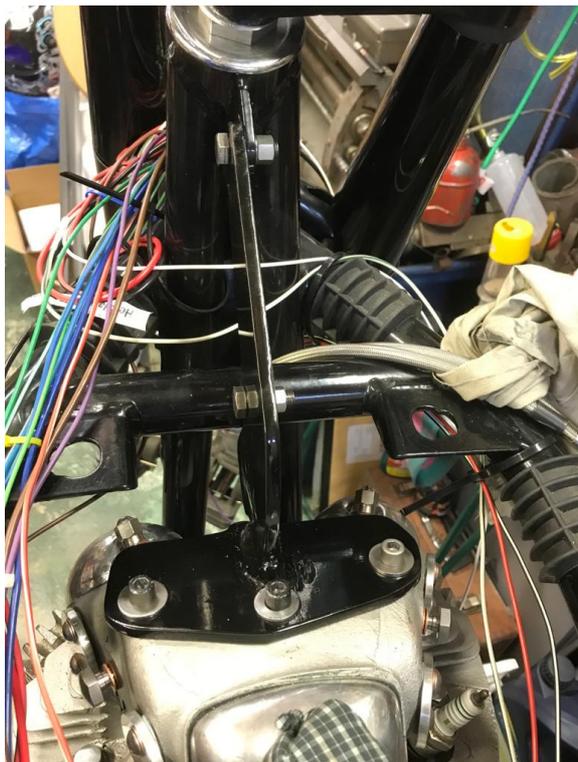
Simon got sent brochures on all their models, plus info that Atlas production will start in the second half of 2021 – production being moved to a new building. – The leaflet is a multi-page thing: too much to reproduce here but you should have received an e-mail from Simon which includes it.

An update from Don –

Don must be deeply grateful that his Commandator project keeps throwing up so many “glitches”, so that there is not way he can get bored during covid.

One such issue was the head-steady. With a Dommi frame and a forward leaning engine, the standard Dommi head-steady does not fit. Somehow Don had aquired an Aluminium head steady, stored in the bowels of his shed – but that did not fit either. He thought he could modify it and weld it – resulting in all

sorts of aluminium froth and debris. So he has fabricated a new steel one, proudly displayed in these pictures. A massive construction, of a design last seen on the Titanic.



(Don says you are not allowed to criticise his welding)

An eclectic shed



When we were free to socialise in appropriate numbers and appropriate places, your august chairman, and the scribe, complete with our ladies, went to visit Ian and Joyce Crooks – long time NOC Northumbria members, and escaped Geordies who live just over the border.

Ian's latest acquisition is the LE Velocette, the renowned "Noddy-bike". I have a slight issue with noddy-bikes, since, when I was young and spotty, I got "done" by a noddy-bobby on one of these. "Baby-face", the town policeman was riding up a small lane in the countryside that went nowhere other than to a farm gate. He found me letting a friend called Maurice try out my 150cc pop-pop 2-stoke, on the Queen's utterly insignificant piece of "highway" near the farm gate, and, of course Maurice had no license or insurance. Anyhow we were fined as if we had been trying this stunt on the M1. It was the biggest catch baby-face had all year.

The Electra in the background was all ready to be fired up and make its first outing. (any news, Ian??)
And the Russian Ural combination appears to be Ian and Joyce's favourite means of transport.

And here's the third thrilling episode of Sean's 42 years of teething troubles with his Commando



Many weeks later this emerged from the garage. It might have been 25 years in development but this version would finally live up to expectations. Well it starts, and of course you immediately check for oil returning...only it isn't! Panic ensues, engine is killed and the obvious errors with oil pipes checked, just to rule out the "idiot owner" factor. No not this time. Kicking it over after filling both the fixed feed and return

oil pipes with oil shows it going into the engine but not returning. Hard to believe since the said expert had completely rebuilt the engine including refurbishing the oil pump. So a non to chuffed phone call to the deep South followed which went along the lines "your problem you fix it" and the bike was despatched (at

my expense) with the request it was returned fully functioning. Well many, many weeks later - it returned and this time the so did the oil. Apparently a rather embarrassed expert admitted that the scavenge drilling in the crankcase had filled with debris and it had not been cleaned out. Not very impressive, but I was even less impressed when a quick test ride revealed oil leaks in the head region emanating from both exhaust ports. The exhaust valves were covered in oil. Now one would have thought that after one cock up you might want to go the extra mile and check it worked properly - apparently not. So back it goes in a transit van - Barrels are swapped - wrong type of honing (apparently) - and it returns. Fixed? Well not really, it's better but not sorted - I believe it went back again - perhaps it was all just a bad dream - but I'm beginning to think this bike is cursed. We eventually get to point where I agree to put a 1,000 miles on it and see how it goes. It sort of gets better but this really wasn't the solution to my problems I hoped it would be.

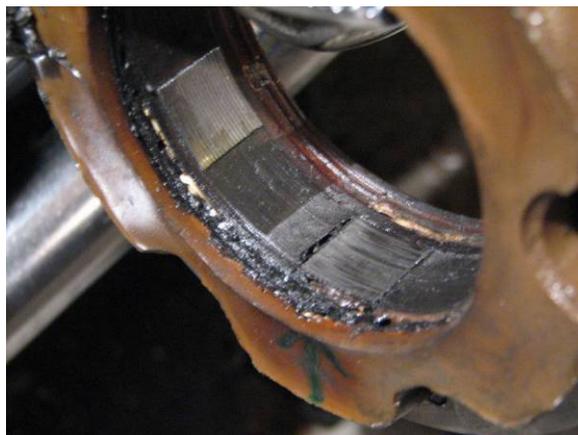


There was always a degree of oil leaking from the head it just became harder to pin it down. Oh - and was it any faster? well not really....Looked great though!

So pressing on from here and 18 month later - no real compression on one cylinder - remove head and pour petrol down ports - it flies past the valves. Take it to my local Ducati dealer for an opinion on the work done and he's not impressed - seats have not been cut correctly. Its all addressed and runs again for another season. The performance issue, whilst not really important these days, still preyed on my mind. I thought through every variable until I finally hit on the one common factor in all its manifestations, I had always used the same timing light! I'd never considered questioning its accuracy, my Dad had bought it new when we had that Renault 14...then you realise that was 25+ years ago and things have moved on. So off to local Ducati mechanic again and we use his (proper) gear -and discover the ignition is retarded by 4-5 degrees. It was a bit sharper on the ride home and the old timing light went straight in the bin.

Several years later I set the engine up to exactly 28 Deg BTDC, using a dial gauge and timing disc, and offered up the primary chain case to find another 2 Deg error in the position of timing scale. Worth checking out yourselves.

So we soldier on into the noughtys - it now rev's strongly and on a rare occasion when my wife agrees to get on the back of it I'm demonstrating this feature accelerating out of a roundabout in 2nd to 6,000 rpm when it jumps out of gear. As the tacho needle heads past 3pm on onto 4pm, I close my eyes and wait for the bang - it comes but it's more of a crack and a death rattle. We rattle to an eyrie halt just outside somewhere called "No-Place" - you'd expect tumbleweeds and Clint Eastwood to turn up next. I check the crankcase for holes and con-rods - but surprisingly it's intact! The AA gets us home and the autopsy begins with the head coming off. One of the pushrods has snapped in two (hence the rattle) but no other signs of mechanical catastrophe. That is until you go looking in the primary drive area - then you see what I believe were the consequences of crankshaft whip. I suspect at those revs to crank moved sufficiently to lose whatever Rotor/Stator gap I was running and the result was a meltdown. What it does



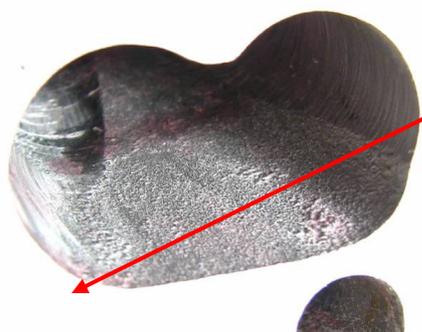
give testimony to is the fact that my "expert" did do a good job on assembling the bottom end!

So all is replaced and we are up and running again.

The years tick on to 2011 and the persistent oil leaks from the head are trying my patience - I can't find the source. It isn't a massive amount but it is getting worse and I'm getting pissed off with Gunking the bike after every decent run. So I start using some science - amongst which was throwing chalk all over the engine. I become convinced its possible source is midway between the front cooling fins - reading up on this there is something of an

inherent weakness between the 3-4 fins - if they crack they crack here. So I find an local engineering testing facility and take more images for the prosecution:

Dye penetrant testing reveals a crack from the pushrod tunnels to the outer surface of the front of the head and the source of my leak



A really difficult repair - if you can find anybody to do it. So another new Head - all you have to do is find one! Second hand heads seemed very expensive and risky given you might find the same issues, so I put my name down for one of the next batch of Full Auto heads being re-manufactured in Australia - very expensive (£1,600+) but I hoped a bullet proof solution. So it proved - excellent in all respects and goodbye oil leaks.

So 30 years on we now have a mechanically reliable and reasonable oil tight bike, it still has rubbish brakes compared to my modern stuff and wet sumps badly, leading to frequent tedious clutch dismantling.

In the next episode read all about how Sean fails to get to the Italian rally.

Nostalgia? Are you dreamingly looking back to days when we were more free? Or maybe a long way back when the mists of time still shed a rosy glow on old memories? Are there motorcycle rides from way back, (or even more recently), when your soul was filled a rich mixture of excitement, joy, but also peace and contentment, when life just could not be any better? – and without the aid of alcohol, but on two wheels? Surely every of us has such memories, and how about sharing some of your memories, and unburden yourself of dreams of the past, to your scribe. Here's mine –

John (nearly every British male of my generation was called John) was a motorcyclist of great skill and experience. He also, like me, was a student at the (then) King's College of Durham University, now Newcastle University, studying Naval Architecture and shipbuilding. And he, like me, had also the status of "Drawing Office Apprentice" – he, at Vickers in Barrow, and I at Swan Hunters, where we worked in the University holidays, and where we were to return on graduation.

As well as being a motorcyclist, John was, and is, half French. A mutual friend told me that he actually had the title of a Count (Monsieur le Comte de Quelquechose). Well, that did not get him much except that some distant ancestor must have managed not to have his head chopped off and at least escaped with the skin on his back – and his head on too. But John could certainly ride a motorcycle.

For some time John's chosen mount had been an AMC twin, but he was now downgraded to a Lambretta scooter, complete with a young lady on the pillion, a Barrow girl.

It was high summer, with endless evenings, and, because it was exam time, lots of sun. And we had just walked out of the last of our university final exams: an amazing feeling of lightness and freedom, and with our whole futures right there in front of us. "Let's take your bike out", said John.

Well, I apologise that at that time it was not a Norton. It was a very solid 650cc BSA "Flash", with a big, soft, cruising-touring engine, that made long distance riding totally relaxing. Off we went. We took turns to sit on the front, or the back, and headed for the sunset.

Out through Throckley, and Walbottle (no big dual, then), and off along the military road, me on the front and John on the back, with ever-expanding views as we chased the lowering sun. Down to Chollerford, and winding and swooping through fields and evening trees to Bellingham, and on west toward Kielder.

There was no reservoir then. In fact there was not much of a Kielder forest. Just the empty winding road, occasional redundant railway bridges, the river, meadows, and hills growing ever closer, through the real Falstone and through Kielder village and on, over the border, and eventually to Newcastleton.

The Scots, then, had a very civilised law. If you had travelled more than 10 miles you clearly needed a drink. You qualified as a "Bona-Fide traveller" – who deserved to be served a drink at any time of day or night, and clearly we qualified. Also I had taken a shine to an extremely powerful Scottish brew, sold in small bottles, called "Wee Heavy". So we paused long enough to fill the panniers with "Wee Heavy". And off we went.

Up the narrow road along "Hermitage Water", past Hermitage castle and up and over big dreamy green hills, topping out above a long, long descent into shadow and dusk. And on – A7 to Hawick, Bonchester Bridge, Carter Bar, and, with me now on the back end, leaning back with both hands on the carrier, as John piloted the bike, rock-steady, through increasing darkness, streaked with red, and with only the steady beat of the two pipes, down through Otterburn, over moors, and eventually sliding through rich farmland into the lights of town, with all our futures before us, waiting.

I soon left the ships, but John stayed with them, becoming a Lloyds ship surveyor – oh, and he also married the Barrow lass (the one on the back of the Lambretta – Now the countess of Quelquechose?)

I loved, and still love that route. Most years I repeat it – a pilgrimage. I have even managed to manipulate some club members into coming with me.

(If you think I babble too much, send me something. Then I will not have to babble!)

Scribe



Officers - - -

Chairman: Bob Tym. 01670 517949. robert.tym@googlemail.com

Secretary: Simon Murray. 01670 785792. mob 07483 888801 . simon@bar Moor.com. E-mail will be best.

Money scrounger: Alan Millar. Tel 01670 853223 mob 07734402110 better text than e-mail, though e-mail is a_m_millar@hotmail.com

Scribe : John Powell. Tel 0191 281 8116. . Mobile:07802 257800. jnoandlizpowell@yahoo.uk