

Northumbria Branch

THE CHRISTMAS COVID NEWSLETTER

Dec. 2020

(What's the difference between a Viruscast and a Newsletter?)

Simples: a Viruscast is email only. But 4 times a year there has always been a newsletter. And almost half our members did not opt for newsletters by email. So this NEWSLETTER is posted to those members. Your scribe has no idea if they ever see the Viruscasts, seeing Viruscasts only go by e-mail. Anyhow 2020 has had 11 viruscasts and they all go on the website – its www.nortonownersclub.org.uk. Click on “branches”, then on “Northumbria” and then “newsletters”. Enuff –

So: What's happened to Christmas??

We cannot have a Xmas Bash at the pub. So there is going to be a ZOOM Xmas bash, like Simon does every 2 weeks but with booze and, if you want, food. (yours). It will be on Thursday the 17th at 8 p.m. Norton owners are encouraged to bring wives,/spouses,/partners/co-habitees or whatever Norton Owners have these days. There will be a prize for the most outlandish Xmas jumper! And every cloud has a silver lining – if we went to the pub we would face drink-driving rules. This way you can get totally sozzled! Meeting I.D. is 795 2896 6747. Password: 6r2Ebk. If you do not know how to do Zoom, just ring one of the numbers at the end of this newsletter for advice. But, please, not at the last moment!

Shock Horror! Don Richards has been accused of being a NICE MAN!!!

HOW??? Well, a friend of a friend, who we had hardly met, who has a son with a bike to which he had done something drastic around the final drive sprocket (which I did not understand), was in need of a MIG welder – not that he did not have one of his own but it was in Scotland and he was in danger of being NABBED by Nicola (a terrible fate) if he went to fetch it. So your scribe got a call – would anyone lend one? Well, I know Don admitted to having done a crappy welding job with SOMETHING, and had to get the work done elsewhere, so I called to ask, “Where is Elsewhere”. To which Don replied he actually **had** a MIG welder and was happy to lend it to a total stranger. Which he did. Then the phone rang. I was informed by friend-of-friend that Don was a NICE MAN!! (Curses! Found out!!) Not only that but it turns out that son-of-friend-of-friend lives in the same street as Don's lady-friend Janice. So now they are all very best friends – oh – and son-of-friend-of-friend even gave Don his welder back.

And, while we are at it – Here’s 2 of many pics Don has sent showing progress of his project – amazing transfers and the most exotic plumbing -



And another “Very Nice Man” - the Norton CEO interview:

John Russell, the new head of Donnington Nortons also seems to be a very nice man. You can see his interview on the following very complicated link: https://www.bennetts.co.uk/bikesocial/news-and-views/news/2020/november/norton-ceo-interview?fbclid=IwAR35-Ta6zG71KZjgVnzt7Q1sK95YvJtnJuTPH9_xVeC_exqUJL4mclCOM8. or just Google “Norton CEO John Russell Interview”.;

Don’t buy girder forks from India:

Phone call from John Park. He’s creating a rigid-back-end and girder forks ES2. (*Why???*). And he bought girder forks from India – which turned out to be totally homicidal. So far he has been fighting to get his not inconsiderable payment back – but without success.

Local services directory: Simon sent a local services directory.

Thinks: “Should this go on the web site?”. But do members look at it? The site DOES get looked at by people looking for our branch, but that’s about it. And if it does go on the web site it needs to be kept up to date. I know how to put it on – but then --- ?? Where else can it go? Question for the committee.

To keep yourselves amused during this lock-down period

Simon Hadden, aided by Clive, has been putting interviews with various old bike owners onto YouTube. It even includes Clive’s big Norton Banger with side-car. Google “Simon Hadden Motorcycle YouTube”

We got a New Covid member called Peter! During Lock-down!

A particular person called Peter

Decided that life would be sweeter

If he paid up his sub,

And joined in our club.

Now it’s Newsletters with bullshit for Peter.

Chris Grimmett:

You may not have received news of the death of Chris Grimmett, which Simon e-mailed. If you have not attended rallies of the Big Norton Club in the Sky (BNCITS) across Europe, or AGM's of the BNCITS, you may not have known Chris. But for decades he has been a stalwart organiser of the BNCITS in many rôles, including setting up rallies in various places and countries - and being a "digimaster" to boot. It seems that one day when out jogging he just fell over, and that was that. Whether you knew Chris personally or not, we all owe him a debt of gratitude. It is sad that members cannot go and honour him at his funeral. We all get older, and I am sure nobody really noticed Chris was getting older, like all of us do. But he was a good chunk younger than your scribe - and this is too soon to go.

And here's the fifth and last thrilling episode of Sean's 42 years of teething troubles with his Commando, this time explaining what he did after he failed to get to the Italian rally. (Earlier episodes are in the Viruscasts)

Wet Sumping/Clutch slip

My bike spends too much time doing nothing and that's part of the problem. But as that isn't going change I therefore still needed a solution. We will have all seen the numerous solutions in Roadholder concerning Wet-Sumping: Taps, Taps with electrical switches, Taps with hooks around kickstarts, anti-drain valves etc., and it's a matter of personal choice as to whether any of these work for you or you just put up with the problem or God preserve us use your bike regularly.

I have an anti-drain valve bought a few years ago but bottled out of fitting it - I simply don't trust suction on the feed side of the pump and any failure is a guaranteed mechanical catastrophe - and if you'd had my experience/luck with Nortons over the last 40 years you'd feel much the same. Taps fall into much the same class.

I picked up on the Nortech Anti-Wet sumping conversion offered by AMR Tuscon on the USA Access Norton pages. This involves firstly installing a check valve (ball bearing and spring) in the timing case on the pressure side of the pump. The case is machined to accept an O ring seal in place of the normal conical item. The oil pump is dismantled: recesses for O ring seals machined for the gear shafts to prevent oil flowing down into the scavenge side of the pump.



Lastly you can opt to have the discharge point of the pressure relief valve moved back to direct into the sump which apparently is another potential leak point. Picture below shows blocking off the original oil route.

And the result of all this? A total solution in terms of Wet Sumping - the bike spent November to March laid up and oil tank remained absolutely full to the brim.

So finally THE CLUTCH - well, curing the Wet Sumping leaves the ATF uncontaminated and

removes one of the causes for this but there was another. I read an excellent technical article RH 363 "Clutch Observations" concerning dry/wet clutch operation and the extensive history of slipping clutch issues with Commandos. One key phrase in this article was that the clutch plate diaphragm should be slightly concave when correctly assembled. Mine was definitely flat which if you look at





the nicely illustrated curve in the article tells you that you lose an awful lot of clamping force for only small differences in clutch stack height. Now as my solution to a slipping clutch apart from ATF, pushrod seal etc. had been new phosphor bronze plates at some point in its 42 year history (relatively late on I think) - so I didn't need to check the stack height because they were new! Well it would appear when I did check the stack height that something was very much amiss I had approximately 3mm too much of it - so I checked the individual plate thicknesses and I believe that somehow I've ended up with 5 of RGM's 4 plate metal friction plates (early 750 setup) rather than the 5 plate setup required for mine. God knows how, pre-internet clicking error, more likely human to human communication error, but installing the correct items instantly made the clutch somewhat harder to disengage and extremely definite in terms of power transmission. End of problem I'd say.....

So where did we end up



Well frankly pretty perfect... : *(The flowers even match!! – ed)* - only taken 42 years to get there. This bike will now potter along farm tracks in Northumberland at 20 mph without complaint and then hustle back along A roads at 80mph+ . The handling is very precise, progressive suspension and excellent brakes provide the confidence to make the most of what it has to offer and of course I love the look of it, as I always have.

Oh...and the top speed...well frankly I'm past caring, 90mph on this bike is like 120mph on modern stuff and perhaps its not just the Bike that has matured a little over the years.

Some technical notes from the scribe's hideously disorganised and filthy workshop.

1. Big hammer method for fitting a tyre: (This has got to be useful to Clive, the tube-wrecker)

The most useful item in the Scribe's travelling toolkit is his "micro-adjuster" (= 7 lb. Lump hammer). This has many uses, like maintaining discipline on camp sites, debating the merits of Harleys with Harley riders, scrunching recalcitrant tent pegs to twisted masses, bashing screw driver handles to try to "shock" seized screws, etc. When refitting a tyre, having liberally smeared with soap anywhere on the rim that is going to contact the tyre, once one side of the tyre has been forced over the rim, you are faced with having to fight to hold the whole thing apart while trying to insert the inner tube valve in the hole in the rim, from the inside. This can cause excruciating agony to the fingers. And twisted tubes.

Method: Tyre lever under the side you just got onto the rim, alongside the valve hole. Heave it right back and over until the end is up against the spokes. Invert the wheel keeping the lever in position so that it is

now held in place under the wheel. (Extra weight, e.g. the wife, can be added to keep it in position). Now approach the upper side of the wheel. Heave the edge of the tyre upwards until you can insert the square hammer head in the gap between tyre and rim., just to one side of the valve hole. Fold the inner tube double at the point where the valve is, so the valve is at the fold. You can easily insert the valve. Tuck the unfolded side of the tube under the tyre far as you can go. Then remove hammer, fold the folded side back, pump in a small amount of air and keep tucking in the tube. You can, if you wish, keep sliding the hammer head round to keep a gap open as you go, with the lever at the back. CAREFULLY lever on the other side of the tyre. Inflate to 40 psi and bounce the wheel up and down to get the thing to slide in place and centre. Check beads centred. Let out air to the desired pressure. Kiss big hammer. Watch and pray.

2. Clutch spiders and a wobbly Dommi clutch.

(Well, if Sean can write about his engineering issues, surely I can). Issue: clutch wobbles and also acts eccentrically (like some people I know), thus creating very uneven primary chain tension. And – well – the clutch spider:

Norton's clutch spiders had splines inside with a small step. This step abutted the end of the gearbox shaft, and you tightened down onto it. But, the step wore. Result: losing chain alignment. Buy new "spider" from Norvil. This is different. No "Step" in the splines, but at the head of the splines a "boss" or "fat washer", maybe shrink fit, at the top of the splined section.. You tighten down on that. AND the original "spider" was a tight fit on the shaft. The new one was a slightly wobbly fit – result: any tugging back and forth is going to be twisting the "fat washer", and, after some miles it came loose and the clutch went walkies on the shaft. Norvil sent a replacement, but I put back the original Norton one. And wear continued. Eventually it started to grind against the end of the sleeve gear. Next – "spider" reconstructed by Richard. But (now in 2020), due to uneven tension etc, on the tubular **outer** end of the "spider", the disc shaped piece that fits closely over the outer end of the spider has worn a groove, most of which is on one side due to the "eccentricity", leaving only about 0.5 mm of metal. Thinks: danger of breakage, and so I fit the "replacement" Novil spider and prayed. OK so far this year, for maybe 1500 miles or so.

Covid lock-down, and let's get to the bottom of this. Measuring things: shaft is not bent. Put spider on shaft and rotate and outer end of spider is running true. Establish that there is a 25 thou gap between the inner end of the "spider" and one side of the hole in the back plate. 25 thou to one side is enough to effect chain tension. Back plate worn? Ask RGM about dia. of hole in back plate and they measure – thanks - it is the same as mine. So, re-assemble. Carefully, with an old feeler gauge blade around the inside of the hole in the back plate to try to ensure the spider is central. It is, and there's no gap between the other end of the "Spider" and the hole in the outer disc. So that end must be centred. **Both** ends must be centred! The clutch has GOT to run true. Install the clutch. Result – it still wobbles!! (WHY, WHEN EVERYTHING IS TRUE???), but it is no longer eccentric. Chain tension reasonably constant. Hope it stays that way. Ring RGM about their "spiders" – are they different to Norvil's? Turns out they supply Norvil!! Buy spare RGM spider at great expense to have reserve on long trips (international rally next year?). Look up records. The issue with the old disintegrating spider was in 2002!! How can it be so long ago??? Time flies when you get old.

Simon keeps digging things up in the newsletter archives, and requests that I include them – here's:

Simon's "One from the Archives": HORRORS OF SLIMLINE FEATHERBED FRAMES (ANY OF YOU WITH ONE OF THESE, PLEASE DO TAKE NOTE)

2 Johns with 2 machines with slimline frames have run into serious trouble.

Seriously horrifying horror: Our guardian angel did a great job on our Canada trip, because this winter I found the rear suspension hangers about 2/3 cracked off. One hanger was cracked on the inside (where you do not see it), the other on the inside with **another** crack starting on the outside. Witness impressive picture:

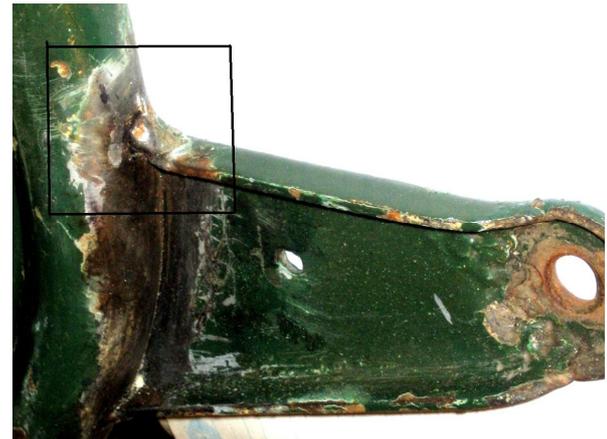


Causes? Well, it cannot be bending due to the weight of a pillion passenger plus luggage as they are supported on the outward end of the “hanger”, right on top of the rear shocker. My present theory is vibration – with the added complication that the shape of this piece will make it likely to vibrate with a twisting motion, and, in manufacture, pressing out this piece from plate must have subjected it to some quite serious torture. As Dave Wardle says: It is my fault for riding the bike. I am supposed to just take it to shows. (Meanwhile my good lady wife and trans-Canada pillion is taking this all very calmly.)

And another horror: John Turnbull found the frame tube behind the plate that supports the swinging arm, had grown a HOLE, with water – and rust - inside. The whole lower tube turned out to be rotten.

Strangely enough, about 9 years back, a hole appeared in the Tappity Dommi’s frame a little lower down, out of which black water flowed. I sent my frame to a frame fixer who boded up the area with brazing, though I think I would have preferred a new frame tube. Anyhow it has held together since. (Some redundancy here, since the area is also cross-braced with the engine/gear-box unit). John is actually setting up to make a complete new frame ALL BY HIMSELF!

Why does this happen? A publication a while back described this. The plates supporting the rear footrests and exhausts are welded on the outside only, and vibrate. Cracks appear top and bottom and corrosion gets in behind from spray, salt etc thrown up by the rear wheel. The drain holes in the lower tube are likely to get blocked by rust and grunge, and your beautifully painted tubes become a snare and delusion. The picture below shows where the weld is cracking at the top of this bracket. Here it pulled away a bit of frame tube with it, with a hidden hole at this point, to let the salty water in.



And for the year 2021?

With luck we will so stuck full of needles that we can ride our machines anywhere!

Then there is a Kamtrek, massively postponed from 2019, to catch up with. The main club is already arranging rallies – including Sweden. And other events. Plenty more to follow.

And so, here’s wishing you –

A happy if weird Christmas and a totally joyous 2021!

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