

VIRUSCAST 12 Twelfth(And Final?) Issue

The FINAL Viruscast?? - well, we hope so, --- because -----

What is a Viruscast?

A Viruscast is something to fill the boring hours of lockdown for your scribe, contributors and anyone bored enough to read it. Lots of viruscasts have been produced because there has been lots of boredom.

What is a newsletter?

A Newsletter is NEWS about events and things actually HAPPENING! Newsletters come out in mid-season, end of season, and around the AGM. LOTS more newsletters to come!

SO – we have NEWS of a happening – the Dr Clive Taylor memorial run – but that is NEWS and it will be covered in the July newsletter. (In fact I have been sent wads of pics of this event, and Simon has written a PHD thesis on it – and with more events to happen, there is going to be lots of news.)

Therefore: This Viruscast is a “Dump” of all non-news material collected before we actually had news!
Here goes --

Brian’s bike - I have been sent this picture: (These lovely creations make the scribe’s Dommi look right tatty)



And here is a learned treatise on lithium batteries by our honest and scrupulous treasurer:

Product Review – NOCO GENIUS 5 Battery Charger & Maintainer (Halfords £70)

Rating 5/5 **(BUT WHATEVER YOU DO DON'T BUY ONE WITHOUT GETTING MORE INFO FROM ALAN AS I BELIEVE IT IS CURRENTLY RATED 0/5)**

My Norton Commando 961 has a constant current drain from the battery due to an aftermarket theft tracking device, though I have read these bikes as standard drain their batteries. I fitted a new Yuasa battery when I got the bike but the battery is a real faff to get at, living under a difficult to remove the fuel tank. I discovered the bike had permanent charging leads with the correct connection for my Oximiser 900. This works great, but you must remember to plug it in occasionally ... you know where this is going...! I thought the battery became so dead it was irrecoverable so decided to try one of the latest lithium batteries from Shido. This arrived and was astonishingly light compared to a lead acid battery but I'd managed to nurse the Yuasa back to life (being too lazy to whip the tank off) so the Shido sat on the shelf for a few years.

Roll the clock forward to now and the Norton's been fine on a maintenance charger full time. My Triumph 955i also suffers from a constant battery drain from an alarm and that suffered from not being plugged in while we were away in lockdown in Scotland (don't ask). Another Yuasa lead acid battery ... killed, dead, forever flat. Back in England and planning a trip when we were allowed out to camp, I turned to the Shido which having sat on shelf for three years spun the Triumph into life with great gusto. Impressive given it had never been charged in years! This time I did plug it into my Oximiser 900 and there it sat for a month in the new lock down. I went to start the bike and nothing, not a jot, not a grump, flat refusal. Hmm, puzzling ??? I then discovered that lithium batteries at standard lead acid charging voltages are in fact, flat. They need a much higher charging voltage and a specialised charger. After some searching and wallet pains, I decided to purchase a NOCO GENIUS 5 charger from Halfords, on special offer, plus a work discount so I was getting it just under £50 (£70 now). I've a collection of chargers including CTEK and this is easily the best I have tried. It has a repair function which recovered the Triumph's battery from deep discharge, which the CTEK failed to do. It also does 6V, 12V and lithium, with charging and maintenance modes. When I charged the Shido with this, the battery was back into lively action again. If I were to advise between CTEK, Oxford and NOCO, the latter is well ahead in my experience. It's better constructed, stronger cables, good croc clips and has better functionality. I would not advise using a lithium battery on an older Norton unless you know the charging voltage will be sufficient. They are great for modern vehicles but do factor in the old charger you have will be useless, you must use a lithium charger. Long live lead acid for the old Commando. (*Update please, Alan?*)

And more, about Peter Williams -

Here is the link to that 1973 BBC Documentary on Peter Williams and a Privateer racing Nortons at the TT.

Quality is a bit naff to begin with, but improves - although don't expect HD. Worth a watch - Dave Coxford's description of who he might be following around the course are now a little unbelievable but such were the 1970's - and that is an Aston Martin he gets out of...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-SOXVVdIZ4>

As I mentioned I bought Peter William's book - Designed to Race - not cheap @ £45 from Andover - but an informative read. He was a very talented Engineer and rider and you appreciate how much of a struggle it was to make something so beyond it design limits in terms of engine and transmission ultimately successful. His opinions on the Norton Challenge replacement for the Commando illustrate just how flawed we seemed to be in the 1970's.

My Yokes are threatened with release next week...so in a few weeks it should be in one piece. Maybe I'll dig out the Red one before this...I've been rather distracted by a 4 wheel indulgence I bought last year.....but no mention of this over the airwaves...its a hanging offence.

And even more philosophy from Simon Parry, Doctor of Philosophy, the branch philosopher:

Reflections on Classic Bike Ownership

Like most readers of this esteemed journal, I own both classic and modern bikes. I'm sure therefore that you will recognise what I have to say: Owning a classic bike is a fundamentally different experience to owning a modern bike. This short article is my philosophical musing as to how and why that is the case.

The whole relationship with the bike is different. Somehow it is a deeper, more meaningful and ultimately, more rewarding experience. Let us not forget though, that it is also more demanding, often frustrating, and can be more expensive.

At a fundamental level, the very concept of 'ownership' is different. If you own a bike that is 50 or more years old, ownership is actually more like custodianship: you are simply the current custodian of this bike – preserving and looking after it for the next generation. You care for the bike safe in the knowledge that when you are gone, or just too old to kick it over, someone else will pick up that baton and continue the work.

At a more practical level, ownership of a classic bike is simply more engaging. And for those of us who chose this path, that engagement translates to a greater pleasure of ownership. In order to run a classic bike, you need a certain level of mechanical knowledge, and an even greater level of mechanical empathy. This is not the case with low maintenance modern bikes that you can just jump on and press the starter button. I have several friends who ride modern bikes. They change their bike every two or three years, simply because the warranty is about to expire. Because they always keep their bike within warranty, they always get it serviced at a dealer. Many of them don't even know where the battery is located on the bike. They have never changed a spark plug and don't know what oil their bike runs on.

In contrast, most classic bike owners I know have had their bike in bits several times. They know, and have handled, every component within the engine. As one of my friends recently said: 'I don't feel I know a bike until I have bled over it'.

This deeper relationship with the bike comes from two things. Firstly, a longer period of ownership. Classic and vintage bike owners tend to keep their bikes for much longer than modern bike owners. One obvious reason for this is that the bike has been in existence for longer and therefore a longer period of ownership is possible. But there is more to it than that. Owners develop a deeper bond with the bike, such that they find it difficult to part with it. Each bike is an individual with a personality, such that one bike is not easily replaced by another of the same make and model, as is the case with modern bikes.

Also, the longer you own a bike, the better you come to know it, and the more likely you are to have had to pull it apart for some reason or other. This deepens the bond with the bike. And therein lies the second aspect of classic bike ownership: owners tend to be more hands-on. Working on the bike, either maintenance, repair or restoration, is an integral part of the ownership experience. It is the aspect from which many gain the greatest pleasure. When you have lovingly restored a bike from a box of bits, that bike becomes uniquely yours, in a way that a brand new bike off a showroom floor is not.

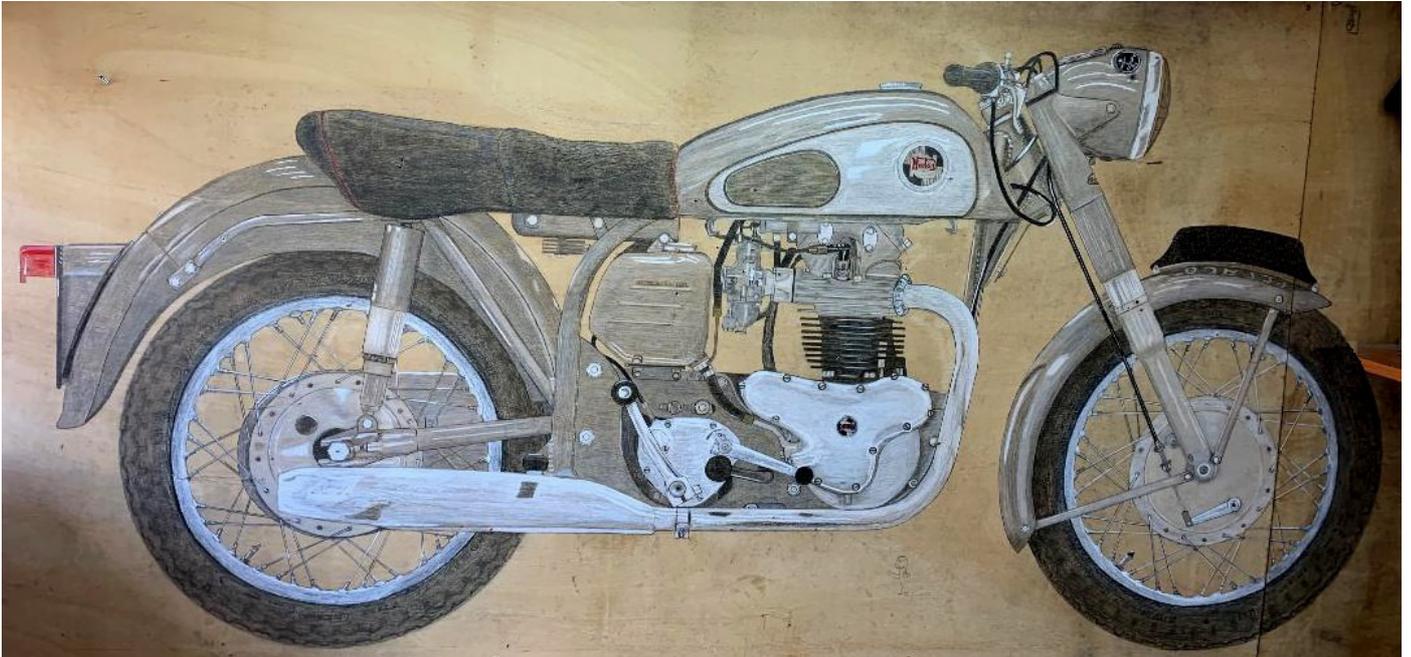
New members! MORE!! Our territory is expanding. Now some from Cumbria! (Are we going to get a massed ride from Geordieland into Cumbria?)

Welcome – *John Renwick, .Mike Shovlin, .Colin Steer, Eddie. Stephenson., Dave Taylor, .Paul Batey, .Kym Bradshaw, .Martin Chadwick, .Miles Hodgson, .John Jackson, .Brian Magan, .and Martin Dykes.*

A work of art by Dave (whose surname could be confused with the type of bike) – and – a picture he created ALL BY HIMSELF!

(Dave, I have removed the registration number and encoded your name for security reasons)

The picture appears to be BIG!



You see, Norton owners are artists and even have SOULS!

And, finally at great length:

Simon was looking at a slim-line Dommi 88 just like mine and asked for some pointers. So I sent him a couple. He did not get the bike, but he did say I might write down all the points re. my own dommi that may be relevant. So, almost a full specification, with opinions:

And this gets big. You probably do not want to read this lot. A similar treatise could be written about any of the club machines. But, if you just look at the sheer size of it, it becomes clear you can never really know enough about the classic motorcycle you are buying. So, do you buy it anyhow? Here goes –

My Dommi slimline 88 and if looking at one to buy.

The bike is very shiny? -a good sign - or a sign of never used, and therefore maybe not bug-free?
Looking at a very shiny bike that is for sale, one way of checking if it has actually been used might be to check the colour of the exhaust pipes close to the head.

And, starting at the front:

Front wheel – originally SLS brake - I fitted twin leader. (Mind you the SLS brakes can be quite good).
Managed to squeal the front tyre on a dry road the other day and you cannot need much more than that - except of course with heavy load like 2-up with luggage. Doubt I could squeal a tyre with that lot on board.

Roadrider tyres

Heavy duty rim tape inside – if you cannot buy tapes made of thick rubber you can make them from old inner tube. Thin ones can fret through and then fret through the inner tube, if you do enough miles.

Fork springs – 2nd set since I got the bike, not “progressive”

Head bearings now conical, not balls.

SAE 20 Damping oil, Fuchs.

Electrics generally –

Headlamp switch is the type used on the coil ignition Dommis of the time – combines ignition and lights switch. I cannot remember the Lucas number. Reports say these are rubbish, but in fact they are easy to dismantle and restore.

Wiring under switch mummified in self-amalgamating tape to avoid breaking off due to vibration.

Ammeter is 0-12, not what is normally fit to 6 volt systems. Stiffer spring and less prone to flap itself to pieces. Also not the type carrying the Lucas logo – where there is not enough damping in the needle so it flaps itself to death. I use tacky looking “made in England” pattern ammeters from Norvil. Yes, they can sell things that are useful! The springs are stiffer on these ammeters

Headlamp – “lucas reflector” bought in box 1998. (Polished inside recently using a cloth and “Mr Sheen”.) Halogen bulb 35 watt giving a remarkably good light now I have one that focusses properly.

I have stayed on 6 v. People convert to 12 volt in the mistaken belief that you will get a better light. But it is getting more watts that will give a better light, and the alternator output is the same watts, whether set up for 6v or 12 v. 12 gives a wider choice of devices you can attach to the system, and will result in less losses where there are connections that are less than perfect.

I fit blinking turn signals (LED)

Bulbs – LED throughout except headlamp.

2 bicycle “button” type rear lights attached to the rear carrier for extra rear light at night. Rechargeable. Can also be set to “flash” – could be useful if stopping for an accident or breakdown.

The bike Simon looked at had magneto ignition, not coil/distributor. The literature says mags were fitted to the SS models. Would have been interesting to know if there were any other SS features.

My ignition is via coil and the original distributor, as original. This works fine if the cam is a good one – symmetrical and not worn. I have 1.5 degrees max difference in the timing of the cylinders. The original springs for the “auto-advance” are not obtainable. Commando ones work, but are the wrong length. Stretching to an outer length of 11.5-11.6 mm works. Pattern distributor caps may be crap. There are moulded ridges inside. I had one where these were too big and the rotor arm hit them. I also had one where the holes were too big where you plug in the HT leads and they fell out.

Capacitor: old Honda one fit in Canada in 2006, but I carry a spare bought from NOC which seems to work. Capacitor wired externally between coil and earth.

Coil – German make is good. I have had one labelled Wassell that did not work.

Regulator/rectifier: 6 v solid state from Goff. These can pack up. I carry a spare.

Battery: I use two 6 v batteries from RS components (uk.rs-online.com). They are thin and are taped together side by side. Stock no 777-0382. At 7 amp hours each that gives you 14. Wire in parallel for 6 v or in series for 12. Packed around with foam from an old camper mat, they fit well in the box.

Stop light switch is the original type – rear brake only.

Horn is the original.

I also have 2 wires from the battery taken to a marine socket on the outside of the battery box. Combine it with the marine plug and you can connect a battery charger, or a reading light for camping.

There is no fuse but a marine 15 amp circuit breaker, concealed. This also serves as an isolator switch.

I also have wired, parallel to the headlamp/ignition switch, two micro-switches, concealed. These can be used as alternative switches in case of main switch failure.

There is a cycle type speedo fixed to the handlebar, as spare and reading km for continental use.

End of electrical devices.

Levers and cables –

Ball-ended levers.

Clutch and front brake cables are heavy duty, nylon lined. This is for less friction, but also for less stretch in the case of the front brake. A spare clutch cable is threaded in place in case of a cable breakage.

Twist grip with friction. I like to be able to back up the flashing turn signals with hand signals without the engine stopping.

Fuel

Fuel tank. All tank sealers removed – having been proven to my satisfaction to contaminate the fuel with dissolved glue, which caused catastrophes.

In-line pleated type fuel filter to catch fine stuff but also gooey stuff.

Fuel tap without reserve. I had trouble with the “reserve” types.

Carburettor is as spec for the “99”, not the “88” but works fine. No air filter.

Tufnol washers between cylinder head and manifold, and, again, between manifold and carburettor. This kept the carburettor cooler. Previously, with tufnol washer only in one position, sudden slowing after fast riding was giving erratic running due to vapour.

Oil

cartridge filter fitted, screwed to the front end of the rear mudguard below the tool tray, and not low down in the mud as is normal.

I use 20-50 (Halfords).

Rocker oil feed is taken off the return as originally fitted and is fine.

No anti-drain valve for oil

Magnetic drain plug in sump.

I fit a Scott oiler.

Engine and gearbox

more or less as standard. – but –

Original timing side cover was of the year 1960-61 - some kind of internal pressure gauge. I replaced it with the type used before and later - and fit on the commando. External difference is that the one originally fitted had one hex head fitting, not the usual 2 (with one domed). I made the change because I can temporarily attach an oil pressure gauge for workshop purposes, and also regulate pressure with shims. Les Emery said the type I had at first, and which was on the bike Simon was looking at, “Blows up engines”.. (??) Anyhow there must have been a reason that Norton reverted to the original design.

Clutch push rod cut in half, cut ends hardened by heating cherry red and quenching, and a ball bearing inserted (an old trick).

Block is on standard pistons (“Gandini” – in my view Aussie pistons may be suspect). Bores sleeved to original. The “bores” for the cam followers have also been sleeved. First stage regrind on the crank pins. Main Bearings are original type – ball and roller.

Head has a whole history of valve guides. Also one/both of the front studs have “pulled” and been replaced with studs fat at the bases, with corresponding fat whitworth tapped threads.

Worn holes for rocker shaft ends have been sleeved with new aluminium

Caps at end of rocker arms replaced with RGM types which incorporate a grub screw. This screws in against the rocker shaft end, locking it. (Expensive!). The standard arrangement, where tabs in the caps engage with slots in the rocker shaft ends, still allows for some movement if the shaft can move in the (hot) head. This can produce “fretting” wear. Strangely enough this wears the hardened steel shaft and not the aluminium head. I am on my second set of new rocker shafts. Shafts are scrolled type.

Exhaust rings are wired to stop unscrewing. Threads a bit tired but OK. Soft iron sealing rings, not copper.

Inner primary chain case modified to “Atlas” spec. Where the clutch shaft comes through, the hole has been enlarged and disc shaped plates fitted in a “sandwich”, inside and out, and the plates incorporate a felt shaft seal. I have also lined the plates with glued on fabric to try to improve the seal. After all the efforts the primary case still leaks oil but more slowly! (clear silicone sealer also used on the big rubber band).

The original clutch spider reached the point where all further restoration was impossible, even by Richard. A Les Emery spider is fit. I have had the “boss” on one of these come loose so the clutch went walkies on the shaft. I now carry a spare for long distance touring (RGM but I think it is the same).

The head is the later type with all fins horizontal and an inlet valve bigger than the exhaust valve – but not splayed ports like the SS models, and not the downdraft head.

Silencers (and I am not sure if you would get the same again) are relatively less noisy. They are also long, almost reaching the back wheel rim at the rear.

An extra bracket has been fit on the LHS pipe at the front, low down, to keep it clear of the side stand mountings.

And then, of course, there is the fairing. Big subject. Info available.

Frame:

Rear suspension hangers replaced with fabricated and brazed hangers. The originals developed cracks on the INSIDE where you do not notice. Les Emery said this was common with the slimline frames. Also some reconstruction due to corrosion damage from water INSIDE the frame, low down at the rear., Another slimline fault.

Doubling welded in place where the stops on the centre stand come up against the lower frame tubes when the stand is down. The stand can wear holes at this point.

It is reported that cracks can appear on featherbed frames on the down tubes below the head, just below the re-enforcement. I do not suffer from this.

Swinging arm pivot. I am still on the original "silentblock" bushes, which, amazingly, still work.

Rear suspension units. I have Hagon. Had to slightly "ding" the rear chain guard, because they hit it (Hagons a bit fatter at the bottom than Girlings).

I fit a side stand. I could not do without it these days. I had a Norvil side stand which snapped off. The RGM side stand looks different on the web site, though I spoke to an owner of one who said he had to do quite a lot of fiddling with his. My present stand is a reconstruction including Norvil bits, and still borderline.

I find the raised bars better than the "flats" and the "88" I had in the 1960's had raised bars.

Cant think of anything else now.

(But, of course, there are still all the maintenance questions – when serviced/replaced? – it goes on and on - - mains, big end shells, small end bushes, all the stuff at the cylinder head, all the chains, sprockets, oil pump service, gearbox innards (Various) – and it still goes on and on ----- I must stop.)

Scribe



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