



Northumbria Branch Even more rambling July 2023 mid-season Newsletter

Membership! Lots of it!!

This Northumbria scribe (and a close friend of the venemous Bede, and nearly as old), now has a list of 69 members to whom this bullshit/pearl of wisdom should be sent. Amazing!! For those who are new to the branch, he has been doing this kind of thing for over 20 years, and so far nobody has managed to stop him. And written contributions from members are hugely welcome, especially in the winter months, when there are few events upon which to report (grammar!). You will also find most of the back issues on the branch web site (now little used). Go www.nortonownersclub.org. Click on "branches", and then choose "newsletters".

Well, as for this particular issue, your scribe starts writing this while sitting on board the good ship "Obsession B", on a rainy day. Getting ashore involves waterproof clothes and a wet rubber dinghy, so, why not get scribing instead?

(When on the boat I talk about old bikes, and while I am at old bike events, I talk about boats. By this means I can bore the maximum number of people).



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It was sad to leave the rally in Aberfoyle one day earlier to come the boat, just because of the terrible forecast, and with some pity on the good pillion-wife; (could I inflict a 3 hour drenching ride, plus a wet paddle out in a rubber dinghy, loaded with soggy baggage?) Because the more you go to these rallies the more friends you make, and it is wonderful to meet up again – parting early is such sweet sorrow. This year, the Northumbria group may well have been the biggest contingent. And, after a really HOT ride North, nobody was in that much of a hurry to organise more big long HOT rides out the next day, and, although many went off on DIY outings, conversation, the bar, and putting the world to rights was the main priority. And what can be better?

2 faithful followers/trusting fools followed the scribe down a long lost valley, on an increasingly disintegrating winding one-cart-wide road, but which was so lost that half the world seemed to have found it and kept appearing coming the other way on blind bends. But we did find Rob Roy's grave. (How did a cattle-thief become so romantic and famous?)

Simon the Sec (supported by the patient Judy, **and** he volunteers for everything) was visible amongst the august and mighty of the Big Norton Owners Club in the Sky, as an organiser of this successful event. - And your scribe and his lady spent an evening with the powers that were (2 ex-chairmen of the Big Norton Owners Club in the Sky (BNOCITS) plus Kev Feltoe, ex-organiser of many BNOCITS events) and one power that still is, the boss of matters technical, once again putting the world to rights, though we had to concede that, no matter how much vino we had drunk, we may not have succeeded. But for those who went to the rally, we will all have our memories.

One big BUT: (This is Rant number one) after well over 10 years of deafening bands, where everyone retreats to the far end of the field so they can hear each other speak, why do we continue to have them? Northumbria again got praise for what was laid on in the 2013 rally at Morpeth, where Davie Clark's brother-in-law's group put on a proper entertainment, which everyone enjoyed. (The group came again to the Melrose rally).

There is no news yet of the international rally this year (when we internationally put the world to right), because the rally has not yet happened. And your scribe is not going (retirement too hectic, not enough time to spare). We will be represented by racing Richard and Jen and, I think one or two others. More news later.

Which leads to:

Rant number two – and warning ----- FASHION!!!

Once upon a time Daimler-Benz produced, along with its colour chart of available car colours, ratings for the visibility of the various colours. White came out near the top. When we bought our last car but one (a Skoda), we wanted white for safety. It was not available. We went for red. (Also quite visible). Fashion dictated that nobody would want white. When we got our next car, fashion was dictating that everyone wanted white, and there were white cars everywhere.

Now fashion dictates that grey is THE COLOUR. Everything in your house now has to be grey. (How gloomy can a winter day be?). While researching the routes for the Clive memorial run, I was pulling out of a car park, late in the day in rain. I watched in the mirror for the cars which were coming round the bend from behind me with lights on. Eventually the lights stopped coming and I started to pull out, and suffered a near miss from a car I had not seen - no lights, painted grey, the same colour as the road, the sky, the trees and everything. I am now noticing how many grey cars there are around the place - perfectly camouflaged. SO: watch out for unlit grey cars, and, if fashion has dictated that you have a grey car, or has forced you to have one, please drive with lights on in everything except glaring sunlight.

The Dr Clive Taylor memorial run.

Was it because of the excellent leadership provided by your scribe, or just because the weather had been so crap up to this point that it was the first time most people got out? ----- because the turnout was a record.

This year's new route chosen was based on false pretences. This is because the first time we did one of these runs, it was early September, and the moors were a glory of heather bloom. So the idea for May was

to concentrate on the Tyne valleys where there should be bluebells. But as Simon had booked us into a pub in Longframlington, because it was convenient for the original route, a major change of direction was needed after doing the Tyne Valley bit. And, while scouting the route, the scribe did not see A SINGLE BLUEBELL. (George Young claims to have seen one during the actual run). But the weather smiled, and the route was praised by at least some of the followers. AND we stopped and drank the now traditional toast to Dr Clive Taylor, AND (because he had just had a funny hat put on his head), King Charlie. (Whatever your views about monarchy, the poor sod is stuck with the job). Finished at the Granby at Longframlington (where the scribe's pilliam wife was so impressed we have been back twice since). We were also joined by Frances, who had been Dr. Clive's lady-friend. Sadly your scribe had to leave early to get back to a church near Corbridge where he deafens the faithful on a church organ which he is not qualified to play.

Which leads to:

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Rant number three: O.S.maps

O.S maps should categorise the smallest category of roads as either roads that are safe or roads which will try to kill you. This is because, while scouting the route I found myself descending what amounted to 2 narrow bands of near-tarmac, separated by a ridge of squidgy grass, all covered in muddy slime and descending steeply into what looked like a hippopotamus wallow. Attempting to stop, I was as near to being thrown as has happened since I got the Norton in 1997. To have crashed in the middle of nowhere with a recent replacement hip operation would not have been funny. After managing to turn round I stumbled over the lovely lost road, in perfect condition, and with super views, which was marked the same way on the map, and which took the memorial ride up from the village of Birtley. (Not to be confused with Birtley). Here endeth the final rant.

Wooler and pee bottles.

Wooler also had record attendance. AND it did not rain. (A first?). Derek the official ride-fuehrer led us to the Honey Farm and St Abbs, and following this a visit to the new Distillery and Gefrin museum at Wooler. (A tour of all the sites connected with the kings of Northumbria could be on the agenda). Much barbecuing took place. Particular thanks to Judy.

And, what about the pee bottles? Well, on the Sunday morning a few of the campers were proudly displaying the impressive amount of pee with which they had filled their bottles over night. So next time, how about everyone presenting their pee bottles to the branch sec. so he can choose the winner? (Lady members may not compete for biological reasons).

Evening rides

Your scribe has managed to miss every one. However he did receive a report from the Branch Sec that the last one had no Nortons at all – The sec actually seemed a bit proud of this –Anyhow, rides are being organised. Watch the emails.

Continuing: A personal note and thanks and tribute to Mike Barry and to Raymond

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The kindness of strangers - On the last leg of the 250 mile ride back from the boat, just after Longtown, the bike died, totally dead, on a straight stretch of A road. A van stopped. The man said he knew nothing about bikes but there was a fellow nearby with a motorbike museum, He would go and talk to him. Very soon 2 vans appeared, the second being Mike Barry of the motorbike museum. We managed to heave the Dommi into Mike's van and spent hours and hours at the museum trying to get the bike to work (Tea and biscuits from Mrs Mike). Eventually we got the bike running. We let it run a while. Stopped it and re-started first kick. So we loaded up and kicked – and kicked – and kicked – and nothing. Since we were able to flood the carb and had lots of sparks at the plugs, and since after all the flooding and kicking the plugs were bone dry, Mike thought there could be an obstruction in the carburettor (though as I have an in-line filter what might obstruct it?) Anyhow as it was well past 9 p.m. we decided to call Carole Nash, who after quite a merry-go round, (but they DID get us home), a man arrived in a flat bad truck that would have taken the Flying Scotsman, and we got home at 1 a.m.. My wife still speaks to me.

Conclusion – carb spotless inside, all airways and jets clean. Changing the coil did the job. It seems the coil must have had an intermittent fault. I had a spare capacitor with me on the trip which we had tried but to no effect, and I had not brought a spare coil. Mike was talking about robbing a coil from one of his museum bikes, but at that time of night – we had had enough even if he may not have .

A club ride visited Mike's museum a while before Covid. It is quite a sight. He does charge for visits. He is at the village of Scaleby Hill (the museum is shown on Google maps) , tel 01228 675117 and there is also a mobile number but with a terrible signal. The phone number is not secret as it is on the side of the building. But – what a gent!!! (Best to book before going)

Sunday 2nd bike on ferry to Holland.. With Lizzie. Watch this space ---



(The bike museum)

Watch this space??

Well, if you have time for it, OK, for this is a personal record. Maybe there is something to learn?
But: - the kindness of strangers unbounded.

Prior to the Netherlands trip, 20 mile test ride and AOK. Load up and go to ferry. Mighty misfiring, getting worse. Stagger to ferry check in. Get checked in but no chance of boarding unless bike works. Find place on the side: 45 mins to latest boarding. Various tests. Eventually replace capacitor with spare from NOC parts/spares scheme. VROOOM! HOORAY!! Board boat with minutes to spare.

Next morning motorway towards Alkmaar. Misfiring – getting worse. Getting impossible. Pop and bang into rest area with café. Prime suspect : NOC capacitor. Much consultation on mobile with Bob re testing capacitors. Can only establish that both capacitors are totally different. Also there is no conductivity through original (from Honda shop) while NOC spares capacitor shows total conductivity on multimeter. Telcon to Richard: conductivity is all wrong, and he gives me some figures to check coils. Meanwhile Liz in conversation with interested passer-by. He is called Raymond and has a van containing one bike and spare space for a second. Load bike into Ramond's van, and head for disused farm which he and lady-friend are leasing and where lady-friend of lady-friend is keeping horses. Raymond has a shed full of bikes, all unusual. Told there is a Brit running an BritBike workshop nearby in Castricum but he is shut Mondays. So they put our bike in their shed and book us into a local hotel.. Lizzie says we have to take them out for an evening meal, so we take out and feed Raymond and both his ladies. Great evening. Turns out Raymond is the RIGHT KIND OF MAN. Motorcycles, and has had dealerships. And boats: He has had a sailing boat and also a small boatyard. Seems he, the ladies and some friends are jointly creating a small paradise in Eastern Netherlands where property is cheaper, and where they will move spoon. As it is on the IJssel – more boats are possible. Here we are at dinner;



Next morning prompt Raymond appears having, alone, loaded our bike into his van. Off we go to Jim Motoren tel 0031 651 288435, a number worth noting. Not far from IJmuiden ferry. Jim has a substantial and very professional Britbike workshop. Jim is an escaped Brit, in NL many years and fluent, but insists he has not gone native. Replaced NOC capacitor (says it was heat damaged due to soldering of the electrical contact). Also ran up engine at increasing RPM so check charge rate/over-voltage at battery. Says AOK. "Overcharging quickly destroys coils". Also says modern solid state rectifier/regulators can be very unreliable.

Test ride – out 30 mins including some short blasts to 65 in suburban area AOK. From this point forward first kick starting.

Off we go to Harlingen. After a bit misfiring starts. Particularly slow running and stop-start at traffic lights. Seem to be able to hold 60-65 but scared of consequences of slowing down. Make it to Harlingen, when, for next day a huge storm is forecast. Trains, buses, schools etc all closed. Holed up for the day. Next day pop and bang to Frankener (18th century DIY planetarium in man's living room ceiling – still works), and then pop and bang to the Ameland ferry.

On the way, sudden hard braking due to a lorry ahead suddenly stopping, and when then pulling away afterwards, lots and lots of popping and banging. Prime suspect now crap fuel. Did sudden braking "sloosh" everything in the tank forwards? Good day in Ameland, but tightened apparently leaking exhaust ring RHS and, having found traces of oil around edges of head gasket, managed to tighten the cylinder head fastenings a bit. Also removed pilot jet and poked through with very thin wire. Will we get home? Next day heading for Hoorn. Forecast temperatures 30c and over. Take early ferry. Erratic ride from to Harlingen. Tank almost dry., Refill with Esso E5. Off again on motorway As before erratic at low throttle openings, If "pop-bang" gets too much a blast at 65-75 seems to temporarily clear. So much for fuel theory.

Make it to Hoorn. In alley behind small hotel in old town, (but at least in the shade – it was HOT!):

- Remove RHS exhaust and refit with new sealing ring. Rewire ex. Ring as well as possible.
- Bad noises from the primary revealed a bar-tight chain hot enough to burn your fingers (but I had eased it off before the trip). Find it now has very tight and very slack positions. What is going on? Reset at tightest point which led to lots of "clacks" and "clunks" from the primary.
- On the theory that a loose valve guide can let air in and create a weak mix with popping and banging, check exhausts for oil, or oily soot. Only soot, but check all valve clearances =that could have changed if anything came loose. All OK.

- Theory that contact breaker arm is swelling in the heat and sticking. But if so why best running is at high speed at high revs? And it never happened before in over 120,000 miles of riding, in all weathers and temperatures. Anyhow baste it in oil from a screwdriver dipped into the oil tank.
- Once again remove and completely strip carburettor, including knocking out centre core. No obstructions found. (Anyhow an in-line fuel filter is fit) Blow through pilot and main jets with mouth and peer through for light. Re-assemble. First kick starting but it does sound better apart from the “clacks” from the primary.

Next day to Ijmuiden for ferry. Better: No misfiring but a lot of popping on the over-run. Small road route chosen to avoid motorway. Found 3 small roads closed with detours and end up on motorway anyhow but seem to run ok at 60-65. . Ferry home. Bike now in yard cooling. Work to do, but what's up??? WHERE IS RICHARD??? (Also exhaust seal starting to fail again)

Well, that's enough of that. This is the bike that crossed Canada and has been all over Europe many times. Yes, not totally problem-free, but nothing like this tour which totalled only about 250 miles.

The Netherlands: - How can such an apparently efficient county be populated by such relaxed people where, it appears, anything goes? In summer, towns full of pavement cafes all busy. Bicycles everywhere and beautiful children also everywhere – some perched on parents' bicycles before and behind, or babies towed in baby-trailers behind bicycles. (where are the children in this country?? - are there any??) And not a cycle helmet to be seen.. Multi-lingual and multi-friendly. Hotels expensive as they are here. Restaurants cost more (but quality is good, service friendly and only moderate tips if any. But avoid the Chinese in Harlingen unless you like dog food)). Wine: we found in the hot weather Austrian Gruener Veltiner at about 7 euros, or lower quality at 5 but OK, light and refreshing and found in supermarkets and wine shops., Beer everywhere and if you want a beer that is more robust than Heniken or Amstel, there is now a beer from Texel.

Well, that's enough. We have been only home a couple of hours, But right now the Dommi is out of action.

Events? Yes we have a few.

Coming weekend: camp at Bonchester Bridge. 14-16 July. Book directlyb with the site
<https://bonchesterbridge.co.uk/>

Sunday 23rd July: Open day at Aln Valley Railkway, Alnwick.

Camping weekend with the Scots – Yethom, 8-9 Sept. Book ahead info@kirkfieldcaravanpark.co.uk. Best to book soon.

Various rides as per Simon emails.

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