

Northumbria Branch March 2021 sort of newsletter.

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can there be news? - but - -)**

We had the weird Annual General Meeting

Well, Simon has emailed the minutes. So I will not reproduce the lot here -

BUT: Firstly re- the newsletter, it is now email only. On the other hand we are going to have a year without subscriptions to mark the lack of club activities, and, don't worry, the treasurer has lots of DOSH.

(2 members without email will be providing stamps for posting – one already has).

And, as for the programme, there are very few dates at the moment –

For ourselves,

the camp site at Wooler has been booked for the 9-11 July (Usual arrangement including barbecue)

The much delayed Kamtrek Treasure hunt/random walk (which your scribe is in charge of), is set for Sun 3rd Oct (though if Kamtrekkers are happy with changing to the Saturday, he might go for that as he might be asked to play a church organ to the faithful on the Sunday)

The Christmas party is booked at the Melton Constable for the 16th of December.

Scribe is also wondering if the Scots will eventually plan a camp in the Borders in September.

There are 3 main club events of note, plus the Zoom AGM. –

- Hotel rally/event in Aberfoyle, 19-20 Jun, if it happens. Reports are that it is fully booked but other reports say more space may be made available – or it may not happen --- ! Distillery visits planned. Some of our members have booked.
- “International Rally” (actually Euro rally because Australia is a bit far) in Sweden 12-16 Aug. It is actually at the southern tip of Sweden close to the bridge from Denmark, or a high speed ferry from Sassnitz on the German Baltic coast, which arrives near to the site. The coast around Sassnitz looks like it is worth exploring, and the 1-way fare for 2 plus bike is 67 euros, for a very fast 2 ½ hours. Much further than the Isle of Man crossing. Maybe the IOM boats could learn something. Your scribe has also booked the ferry from Newcastle on the basis that you only have to pay a deposit, you can carry it forward, and have until Jun 30th to pay the full. This gets past a mad rush if the “all clear” is given. Routes can include Hanseatic cities, dead Vikings, Copenhagen etc. If it actually happens. But if you have severe cabin fever during the lock-downs, what a way of breaking free!
- There is a Norton Day at Napton-on-the- Hill, Warks, b&b’s, camping etc. 17 July

A little more on rides –

Once FREE we can “ad-hoc” rides. Simon (Parry) is researching Northumbrian castles, with the idea of visiting some of the less known ones. There is also the possibility of a venture into Cumbria and/or Galloway to see if more Norton Owners can be discovered.

Zoom Meetings – Simon plans to keep them going - - -

We got ANOTHER new member:

John Rennick, AND HE HAS A DOMMI! Scribe rides a Dommi!! Welcome!!

Words from Simon Parry, the branch philosopher – “Zen and the art of kick-starting”

Kick start or Electric start?

I remember getting my first bike with an electric start. It was exciting. It was a revelation. But at the same time, I experienced a sense of loss. There is something very special about the practice of starting a bike with a kick starter. The electric starter may be more convenient, particularly if your knees or hips are getting bad, but I feel that it somehow removes one of the most important aspects of riding.

For one thing, the kick starter represents a much more physical engagement with the bike. Riding is essentially a physical and sensory experience, and this experience starts with the rider firing the engine into life. There is something emasculating about just pushing an electric starter button. It is much more invigorating to start your ride by swinging on the starter pedal, particularly if you are starting a high compression, large capacity single. The bike fires into life through your physical effort and through your skill. The noise, the vibration, the smell as the engine fires into life at your bidding. It is part of a ritual that encapsulates the experience of motorcycling.

Secondly, kick starting requires a much more intimate relationship with the bike: judging the right amount of advance, the right amount of throttle, and being able to nudge the engine to the optimal position to start the swing on the kick start. There are fine nuances to this art that only come with practice and experience: Does the bike need a hard kick, or a smooth swing? Do you need to free up the clutch with a couple of ‘dummy’ kicks first? Tickle the carbs, or, if there is a choke, how much do you apply? Which works best, a fast short kick, or a long slow one?

As you learn how to start it, you get to know your bike. You find that every bike has its own particular quirks, and so, with hard earned experience and not a small amount of frustration, you learn how to coax your bike into life. This is one of the key components of what we call ‘character’ in a bike. If a bike is particularly finicky to start, or if it needs a very specific technique, then we regard it as having more character. This leads to a special relationship with the bike. You learn the

bike's needs, its likes and its dislikes, and in return it rewards you by starting for you, but not for strangers. Pressing that electric button is just not the same.

There is also an undeniable romance to starting a bike by kicking it over. More so, now that all modern bikes have electric starters. It evokes a lost age, during which motorcycles held a very different role in our lives; it evokes memories of youthful adventures and carefree times with good friends. The very sound of a kicked engine catching and firing into life is so different to the sound of an engine starting off a whirring electric motor. It is a sound that is just so much more, well, satisfying.

Fuels of the future; what happens to our Nortons when all is electric - ??

Your scribe has always been a little sceptical about battery-powered vehicles. If the additional demand for electricity cannot be met by renewables, that means burning more hydrocarbons and/or the risk of a second Chernobyl or Fukushima. And the batteries? Who controls the supply of Lithium, or other rare metals? What to do with the dead batteries? True, battery technology is advancing as is renewable power generation, but there is a long way to go. What batteries do is to get exhausts out of urban areas (maybe shot into the sky from power stations – with transmission losses).

2 developments of interest:

Most interesting to the likes of us, Porsche and Siemens are said to start producing a synthetic fuel next year. 130,000 litres in 2022 and 55 million litres by 2024 and 550 million by 2026. Essentially the process reverses combustion. Our fuel is a hydrocarbon. Burn it and it changes to carbon dioxide and water vapour and energy comes out. Reverse it (taking carbon dioxide from the air), and put energy IN, and the process makes a liquid fuel in a can. The plant will be in the South of Chile, where it is WINDY. The quantities are a drop in a bucket compared to world fuel production. The info I have seen seems to say that (a) it may be used for racing cars, or (b) it may be more widely used to propel internal combustion engined vehicles and hybrids until they have all worn out or been scrapped, while accepting that everything else will go electric. But, to your scribe, it could be a game changer. We can use all our existing technology and infrastructure, including for old Nortons.

The second is Hydrates – basically a sludge that can take up or release Hydrogen. Here, I am afraid, no internal combustion engines – it means fuel cells. But if the hydrogen is created renewably, you make a sludge that could be sold at petrol stations in cans that you exchange when they “run out”. No tanks needed for hydrogen gas. It is being talked about as a way of propelling small vehicles that cannot carry heavy tanks of hugely pressurised hydrogen – like motorcycles or scooters.

There is a lot going on, with endless possibilities. Maybe we will not all have to wear hair shirts.

Now a major treatise on Windsceen-ology: Making windscreens for Avon fairings: (If you find this staggeringly boring, send me something less boring)

Well, the screen on the fairing I had managed to buy from an advert in Old Bike Mart was developing cracks. So: - ---Off comes the old screen! Extend its height with some stiff art paper held in place with 2-sided sticky tape. Buy lots of polyester resin and glasscloth from a boat place. (cost £40. They sold me more than I needed). Lay “cling-film” over the inside of the screen, and “lay-up” a mould thick enough to be reasonably rigid. (discovery – the mould pulls away from the cling film ok, but fumes penetrated the film, making the old screen go like an LNER loo window – remember them? Now I’m committed.)

Make a template with art card, drawing a half-shape based on the old screen with a bit of extra height, cut it and fold it over, to mark out a symmetrical shape. Buy some acrylic from a stockist.

Cost £10, enough for two screens. Then mark out the shape on the flat sheet, using the template, and leaving the protective film in place, cut it out carefully with a pad-saw blade.

Now things get technical:

You know if you heat acrylic, before it melts, it suddenly goes all limp. And the protective film over the acrylic has not yet melted, so you can leave it on.

My life's partner goes away to visit her sister.

NOW!! I borrow her hair dryer, and blow lots of hot air on the acrylic. It fails to go limp. I borrow her second hair dryer, and, like a singing cowboy, fire both guns. Still no success.

Go and buy a heat gun (£20). No success. Try heat gun and a hair dryer in the other hand. No better.

Sit and think. And –

Stand four bricks on end, on kitchen the worktops, at the corners of the gas stove. Put stiff pieces of wood across at the back and front. Place two oven trays side by side across the planks, over the top of the stove, and the third on the floor.

The worry is that the oven trays will heat up faster than the acrylic, which as you have guessed, I plan to toast. That would end up with a windscreen with an interesting “branded” pattern all over it.

So now all four gas burners are lit, and the acrylic is laid across the oven trays, and I start to toast it. Every minute, I remove one tray, and replace it with the one on the floor, and I turn over the acrylic, to toast the other side. I keep on like this, cooling off the trays on the kitchen floor in rotation. Eventually, after a surprising amount of toasting, the acrylic begins to slowly sag if you lift it up at the middle. Keep heating until it starts to sag quite quickly. Then, wearing my life's partner's oven gloves, I grab the acrylic and lay it over the top of the glass fibre mould, pressing down all over and hanging on until it cools enough to go hard. Pull off the protective film.

File and round off the cut edge, then sand it with ever finer wet and dry paper, and eventually polish it with T-cut, until the edge is glass-clear. (Any trace of a “notch” can act as a crack-starter).

Lo! A screen! And I am now equipped to go into the replacement Avon screen business!

(remove all evidence from the kitchen)

That was home made screen number one – but I had used 4 mm acrylic (the original was 3mm). This must vibrate differently, as, after some time, including cross-Canada, cracks started to appear. So the process was repeated with 3 mm acrylic.

Due to uneven heating, the curvature was not optically perfect – flat spots. So after hearing that Sean has a factory with a special oven for heating acrylic evenly, I got to borrow his factory and make 2 more screens, one for me and one for a nice man called Russell (whose name I can never remember). I sent it to him in Chester and he sent me a big bottle of Laphroaig!.

Meanwhile the screen plot thickens. Campbell, our Aberdonian Honorary member, is fitting an Avon fairing to a Dommi 88, and needed a screen, so I sent him my old one with the flat spots. And **it did not fit**. So, now a mystery. The Avonaire fairing of the late 50's and early 60's was a standard moulding with various brackets according to the bike frame – at least I think so. There

follows a picture of a friend called Sam on my original Dommi in 1966, with a fairing just like mine. (Sam, who I attempted to get killed on the road, the sea and in the mountains). So what is Campbell's fairing? – maybe we might see at Wooler ??. And – after having sent me a bottle of grade A whisky, did Russell's screen actually fit?

Drilling the holes in the screen for the bolts across the bottom is a tense business! Acrylic has a way of splintering and cracking when you drill it. A hand drill is safest. And make the holes a good deal bigger than the bolts that go through them leaving room for movement to avoid cracks spreading from the fastenings. Make rubber washers to go under the metal washers where it is bolted on.

Finally mount the thing and peel back the protective film! WOW! It makes the rest of the bike look really old and tatty!

Here's the Mould, or former:



And here's the screen with the flat bits:



See next page - - ----

Here's Sam,, on the original Dommi,



Here's the successor Dommi, on a Kamtrek.
(Same fairing??? But redesigned screen)



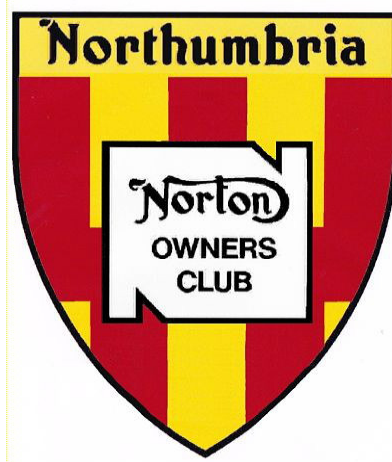
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Money scrounger: Alan Millar. Tel 01670 853223 mob 07734402110 better text than e-mail, though e-mail is
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Scribe : John Powell. Tel 0191 281 8116. . Mobile:07802 257800. jnoandlizpowell@yahoo.co.uk



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