



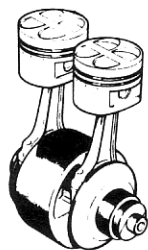
Norton Notice



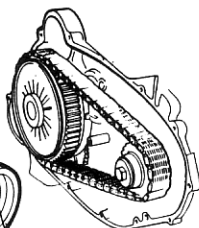
The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 10

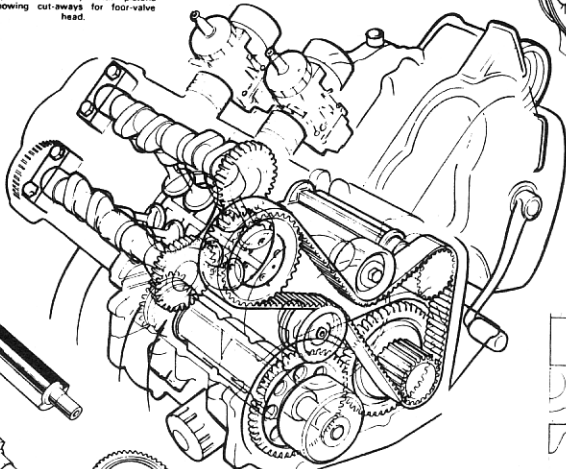
NOVEMBER 1980



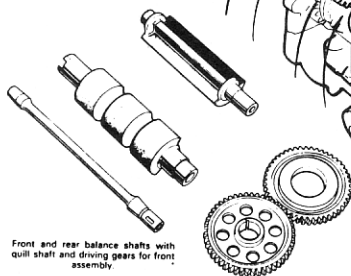
Flywheel assembly with pistons showing cut-aways for four-valve head.



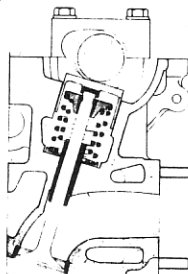
Primary drive, which runs anti-clockwise, driven from the right hand side of the front balance shaft. The clutch drum has a gear at the back which drives the oil pump.



Outline diagram showing positions of main components, including belt and gear drives.



Front and rear balance shafts with quill shaft and driving gears for front assembly.



Cross-section of exhaust port and valve/tappet arrangement.

Particularly notable among the many unusual features of the twin-cylinder Cosworth engine, designed to power the Norton Challenge model, are the Lancheater balance shafts, quill-shaft transmission shock-absorber to the inverted-tooth primary chain and belt drive for the double overhead camshafts operating eight valves.





THE EXHAUST NOTE



Published monthly by the Northern California Branch, Norton Owners Club

Well--

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NORTON NOTICE STAFF

- Michael Heth
- Meda Rago
- Bob Marshall
- Brian Halton

It looks like the storm is over, and, hopefully, it won't come back. My assertions about 50 active members seems to have been pretty close as only 73 out of 225 members responded to the ballot from last month's issue. To clear the air about the lateness of the mailing which was only 2 days later than the target date; to keep it short I'll say that the NOTICE was delayed by 2 days off the bat because George our printer was tied up and 1 day was spent trying to mail the NOTICE with a member's bulk permit which didn't work out. I spent a total of 4½ hours alone trying to mail the NOTICE. As for the irresponsible allegations that I purposely delayed the mailing, I'll let you decide if you think I'm that type of person.

This seems about as good a time as any to go over what's involved in putting out the NOTICE. Let's work backwards: You get it on, say, the 7th of the month. That means I mailed it about 2 days before, although people in No. Calif. in regular cities (i.e., not rural areas) can often get it the next day as I go to the trouble to take it down to Rincon Annex, the main branch of the Sloth Office in SF. Approximately 5 hours are spent by 2 people, or, as in the case last month, 2½ hours by 5 people, collating the individual pages into the NOTICE, stuffing the envelopes, stamping the return addresses, putting on address labels, putting on the stamps (with spit), sealing the flaps (more spit), and putting in any memos or membership cards from T. Horton. At least 3 days before that, and often 4, the originals had to be taken to George. At least 1 day before that I had to lay it out and paste it up. And any number of days before that I had to take the original copy to Meda who does all our typing for us. (You can look at last month's NOTICE for some examples of what it would look like without her.) The timing with Meda is variable because she does this out of the kindness of her heart. Sometimes she has other things already planned.

Material of any sort for the Club newsletter is best handled through the mail. Please address correspondence to:

NORTON NOTICE
c/o Michael Heth
87 Ord St., Apt. 3
San Francisco, CA 94114

BRANCH MEETINGS

Generally held the second Thursday of each month at a location announced in the NOTICE. Every effort will be made to convene meetings between 7:30 and 8:00 in order to conduct the business at hand. This will allow members who have come a long way to get home at a decent hour.

BRANCH RIDES

Rides are generally held the Sunday following a meeting at a location announced in the NOTICE. Rides depart promptly (usually 10:00 am). Conscientious members will be fully gassed; no stops made for about an hour. In the event of rain the ride is postponed 1 week. Occasionally, the ride day/days vary. Check the NOTICE Calendar each month to be sure.



So---what does this all mean? Well, if you count backwards, for you to get the NOTICE on the 7th, the original copy would have to be with me around the 25th of the preceding month to be safe. So, now you know.

Recent remarks on my part resulted in a nice-sized avalanche of input from Bob Marshall and Harvey Loucks. Now--it's your turn.

For everyone's information I normally plan the NOTICE to get to the No. Calif. members just a few days before the meeting as a little extra reminder that the meeting is that week. The schedule for events is always the same, and the calendar almost always has 2 months' worth of listing, so this seems the best schedule. As I've only had 1 comment that it should be earlier, I assume it's OK with most of you. If it's not, drop me a note.

Later Gator,

MM

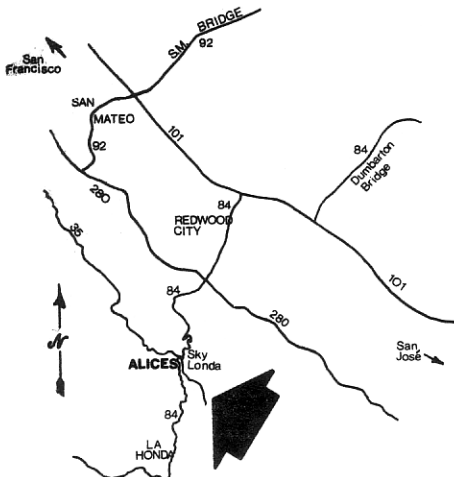
BRANCH EVENTS

DATE	TIME	PLACE	EVENT
11-13-80	7:30 PM	London Hse 630 Ramona St Palo Alto	Branch Meeting
11-16-80	10:00 AM	Alice's Rstrnt La Honda	Branch Ride
12/12/80	7:30 P.M.	EDINBURGH CASTLE	CHRISTMAS PARTY
12/14	10:00	Sausalito Ferry Lndng	Branch Ride

NOVEMBER RIDE: SOUTHERN PENINSULA SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16
If you like riding all paved, twisty Norton roads through the beautiful Southern Peninsula mountains with very little four-wheel traffic and a brunch with all you can eat in the way of pastries, omelettes, pancakes, etc., then you will not miss the November ride. We will meet at Alice's Restaurant at the intersection of Hghwys 84 and 35 at around 9:30, or earlier if you want breakfast. We will leave promptly at 10:15. Maps will be given out at Alice's, but to whet your appetite, the route is as follows: We will head down Hwy 94 towards the Coast to Stage Road (at San Gregorio) where we will turn south and follow Stage to Pescadero. Here we will turn up the mountain on Pescadero Road (a left) until we intersect Alpine Road (a right) which will take us back to Skyline Blvd (Hwy 35). After going south on Skyline for about 6 miles, we'll turn right at Hwy 9 toward Boulder Creek where we'll have brunch at old Boulder House Restaurant on the main drag near the fire station. The quality and quantity of the food as well as the atmosphere all add up to one of the best breakfast/lunch deals on the Peninsula. I know it's hard, but try to arrive hungry!

After brunch we'll either head up Bear Creek Road to Skyline then back north to Alice's or north to Jamison Creek Road, then Empire Grade, then Ice Cream Grade, then Pine Flat, then Bonny Doon, then the Coast Hwy to 84 and back to Alice's -- depending on what the weather's like at the Coast. Call Steve at (415)854-4364 if it looks like rain. If it is raining, the ride will be held the following Sunday, as is our usual winter policy. On mileages: the first leg of the ride from Alice's to Boulder House is 64 miles. The Bear Creek route back is 40 miles, and the Coast alternative is 73 miles. Back at Alice's we can have a brew and "kick tires" (thanks, Jerry) before folks head home.

DECEMBER RIDE: MARIN COUNTY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14
Meet at the Sausalito Ferry Landing at 9:30, for we will leave promptly at 10:00. We'll head north towards the Bodega Bay area and in a round-about way cover approximately 120 miles in getting back to the City. Look for full details in the December issue of the NOTICE. Harvey Louck





The Prez's Page

Hello again Norton fans! I am sorry to say that once again the first part of my page will sound like the minutes of a meeting, for the simple reason that we still need a "meeting secretary" to take notes at those exciting Northern California Branch meetings and file a report each month for the Norton Notice. I really do not want to do it again so if you'd like to do something for the Club and feel that you can handle this important job, please volunteer!

The October meeting in Palo Alto attracted a large number of members as well as some special guests (Norton "dealers" Ed Brooks and Larry Randall) who were invited by me to give us their views on the proposed NOC Spares Program in our Branch. When we got around to discussing the proposal, the two invited guests gave us their honest, and, in my opinion, valuable input on this subject. The overall discussion of the Spares Program idea was one of the highlights of the evening, to say the least. Look for a final vote on the issue elsewhere in this Norton Notice. I heard it might be close.

There was relatively little discussion of the membership issue, as it looked quite clear that the vast majority of those who voted were in favor of open membership. It also seemed clear that most members want a monthly Norton Notice, election of officers every January, and a Branch-owned set of Norton shop tools for loaning out to any member in need. Final voting on these will also be found elsewhere in this issue.

One issue that did result in quite a lot of heated discussion was the lateness of last month's Notice. Since the enclosed ballots had to be returned to Secretary/Treasurer Tom Horton no later than October 9th, and since members didn't get them until the 4th at the earliest, it was felt that we should extend the deadline. One particularly upset member was Jim Salmon of Lexington Kentucky, who got his Notice on the 7th and went to the trouble and expense (\$20!) of sending his ballot back by Federal Express in order to be sure his vote would be here in time. Clearly, a mistake had been made, and in the hope of correcting an already messy situation it was decided that all the out-of-state members should get a letter to the effect that their ballots would still be counted even if late, and that the deadline for returning the ballots should have a 2-week extension. Although I was not responsible for the lateness of the last NN, I do want to apologize as President of the Branch to Jim Salmon and any other members who felt that they were getting a bum deal. I am fairly sure that it was unintentional, and hope that the letter sent out after the meeting by Harvey Loucks was a satisfactory explanation of what had happened. I would also like to ask that you not lose faith in the Branch; we really are trying!

While on the subject of Branch meetings, I'd like to announce that Maya Peterson is trying to get a Christmas party organized for the one in December, and would like some help. Those who've been to either of the past two know how good they were, and will no doubt be there in force this year. Once again the plan is to do it at the Edinburgh Castle in San Francisco, where we are welcome to bring in any goodies we might want to consume other than alcoholic beverages. All beer and booze, etc. must come from the bar, but otherwise we're free to do pretty much whatever we want. Those of you who have never been to one of the Club's Christmas bashes, or who have never been to the Edinburgh Castle, are strongly encouraged to plan to be there for this event. As in the past, we will probably have the party on a Friday evening, rather than the customary meeting night, but if you would prefer that it not be on Friday please feel free to let me know. If you want to come, I hope you will contact Maya when she makes her announcement in the next NN, and see what you can bring for the party.

The Club's October ride participants experienced some difficulty for various reasons--many of them the fault of no-one. I'd like to suggest, however, some tips for the benefit of any of the members who might want to organize a future Club ride. Please scout all of the roads previous to the ride day, and do not plan an itinerary involving dirt roads. We ride Nortons rather than Bultacos, and most of us would usually not choose dirt roads if they can be avoided. It is also a requirement of the ride leader that he know the ride route and not miss any turns along the way (to the extent possible). It's much harder to turn 10 or 15 riders around than to just turn your own bike around. Also, in the future, we should try to communicate clearly whether we want the Club to wait or not when one of us a) breaks down or 2) goes back to help someone else who has broken down.

If possible, try to confirm that the lunch destination will be open on the day and time of our anticipated arrival. Perhaps the ride leader can warn restaurant management of the descent of a hungry horde.

One more nicety is to check out gas stations along the way. Although a conscientious rider will gas up before the departure rendezvous, our machines vary in capacity and mileage efficiency.

I gather that the November meeting is going to be at the London House in Palo Alto (630 Ramona) on the 13th, and I look forward to seeing many of you there. A special give-away or raffle of the Bob Holliday book THE UNAPPROACHABLE NORTON is planned, so don't miss this meeting!



RESULTS OF THE RECENT VOTE ON POLICY ISSUES

The remarkable level of response to last month's ballot issues proves that there was and is a lot of concern about these important questions. About a third of the membership mailed in ballots with the highest response from out of state (approx. 50%). A total of 73 ballots were received as of October 27. Without further ado, here's how it all came out:

1. Out of Area Membership:
 - A. Out of area membership not accepted 5
 - B. Only renewals from out of area accepted 16
 - C. Renewals and new membership accepted but not encouraged 24
 - D. Membership from out of area accepted and encouraged 28
2. Election Timing
 - A. Elections to be held each January 71
 - B. Elections held whenever we get around to it 4
3. NORTON NOTICE Publication Timing
 - A. Publish every month 45
 - B. Publish every other month 27
4. Spares Program
 - A. Nothing over and above what we have 10
 - B. An extra spares service with no stocking or effect on our treasury 36
 - C. An extra spares service with some stocking funded by our treasury 26
5. Tool Loan out Service
 - A. Buy and loan out the special tools 55
 - B. Don't do it 16

Note that not all the votes on each issue add up to 73, since not everyone voted on every issue. You can draw your own conclusions from the results, but some comments might be in order. First of all, three issues passed heavily: the Tool Loan Out Program, the Election Timing issue, and some sort of spares scheme. We'll begin talking about how to implement these at the next few meetings.

Next are two issues that were settled with much less agreement. Although I.D. passed, it did not do so with a majority. In fact, about as many voted for either I.A. or I.B. which shows a fairly strong feeling about not having out of state members. We will certainly have to proceed with caution in our solicitation of out of area members.

Also, quite a few (38%) felt the NOTICE should be published every other month. The general feeling from the comments on the ballots was that folks would rather see a cut in the quantity if necessary in order to maintain the quality. Perhaps we could back off to an 8 page monthly rather than the current 12 pages. This might satisfy all concerned.

A note about the comments on the ballot sheets: there were many--some filled the entire backside of the ballot. It was obvious that careful thought had gone into the comments, and I'm sure Mike will publish selected ones in future issues of the NOTICE. We met our objective of settling some difficult policy issues. Hopefully, our club meetings will be a bit more mellow now as we begin to implement these decisions.

Harvey Loucks
Chairman
Ballot Committee

NEW NEWSLETTER?

Not exactly, but changes are being made for the upcoming year. For instance, a new masthead is currently being designed, a new "centerfold" Norton series featuring pre-Commando bikes is being developed and a more visually appealing publication in general is in the works.

Editorially, since all the major problems have been solved with the latest voting on vital issues, the accent will be on the positive aspects of the Branch, bikes, and people and reports on rides, meetings, and special events.

The staff is always open to ideas on new features members would like to see in print and a few well placed ideas can make the NORTON NOTICE even better in the 1981.

Bob Marshall



PALO ALTO YAMAHA

YAMAHA • TRIUMPH • NORTON

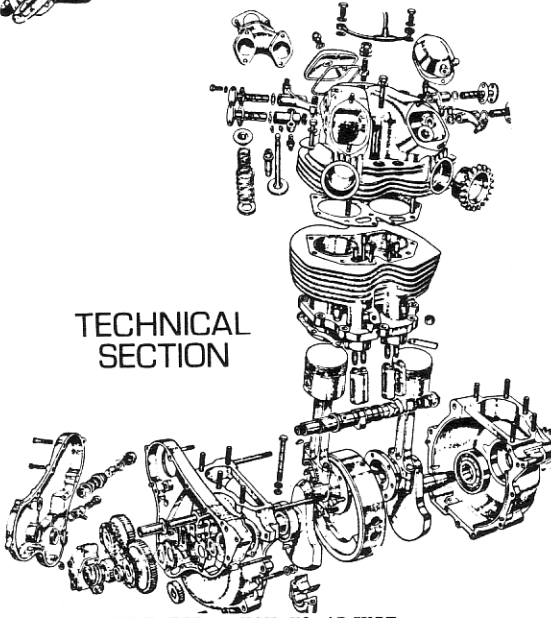
SALES • SERVICE • PARTS

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Norton PARTS AND SERVICE

GARY BROEDER: EXPERT MECHANIC
N.O.C. MEMBER

TECHNICAL SECTION



Although not emphasizing British bikes on the salesroom floor, PALO ALTO YAMAHA has one of the bay area's best British motorcycle mechanics back in the shop. Gary Broeder knows as much as anyone in the area when it comes to making NORTONS run right. With his racing experience, Gary can work wonders on your machine when it needs help. I highly recommend PALO ALTO YAMAHA the next time you need a good mechanic for the old NORTON.

TECHKNUCKLE TIP: HOW TO ADJUST YOUR REAR CHAIN AND MAKE YOUR REAR BRAKE WORK

This tip concerns a subtle but very important aspect of rear chain and brake adjustment that may improve your braking considerably. Basically, adjust your chain as usual but with about 1 inch to 1½ inch free play in the center of the lower rim with the axle loose. When you tighten the axle, the chain will tighten up about 3/8 inch so that the adjustment is in the middle of the 3/4 to 1 inch recommended slack. This is because the two piece axle sags toward the tranny when it's loose and straightens up when it's tightened.

But, the really important thing to do is to apply medium pressure to the rear brake pedal with your left foot as you tighten the left side axle nut. This centers the brake shoes on the drum so that after the axle nut is tight you can release the brake pedal and the shoes will have equal clearance between them and the drum. The brake lever free play can now be adjusted closer without dragging one of the shoes and a much more solid "feel" is achieved. Braking is improved because each shoe presses evenly on the drum with more surface area. If you do this each time you adjust your chain, braking will improve further as the shoes settle into the correct position.

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- * BILL MANKINS - SERVICE - 12 YEARS

IN ADDITION TO ALL THE OTHER GOODIES IN STOCK, BROOKS IS NOW OFFERING LOCALLY MADE MUFFLERS, HEADER PIPES AND 2 INTO 1 CONVERSIONS FOR ALL COMMANDO MODELS. THESE MUFFLERS ARE ACTUALLY BETTER THAN THE STOCK 750 TYPE AND LOOK VERY SIMILAR. CURRENT PRICE IS 20% BELOW STOCK.

MR. BROOKS HAS RECENTLY JOINED THE NORTON OWNERS CLUB, AND WELCOMES ALL MEMBERS AT HIS SHOP FOR A CUP OF COFFEE AND SOME GOOD NORTON TALK. STOP BY AND GIVE HIM SOME OF YOUR BUSINESS, OR JUST STOP BY TO TALK AND CHECK OUT THE BEAUTIFUL OLD MOTORCYCLES HE HAS ON THE SHOWROOM FLOOR. IT'S WORTH IT.



cycle sports

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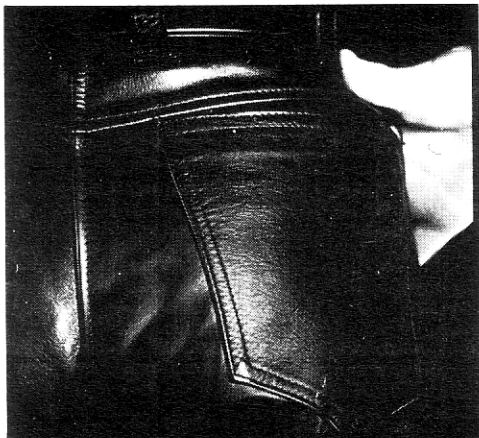
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SAN FRANCISCO

This problem comes about due to the loose tolerances on the axle hole through the stamped metal backing plate. Consequently, the whole backing plate assembly falls off to one side if not adjusted as just described. Unfortunately, this tip does not appear in the shop manuals or riders' manual. (I checked!). I burned up one rear brake assembly and set of cush-drive rubbers before I learned. Hopefully, this tip will save a few of you from suffering the same fate.

All power to the Rear Wheel!

Harvey Loucks

LEFTOVER PARTS

Stopping Norton is sometimes a problem, even with front-disc capability, but remember, the chrome on the discs is only cosmetic and by cutting off the chrome, maximum braking can be achieved. Your local auto brake shop can probably do the job for \$7 to \$9--cheap when you consider the increased stopping ability.

For those who don't know yet, SEARS is now selling DIE-HARD batteries for motorcycles with a 180 day replacement warranty and a one year pro-rated warranty. Available for 750 and 850 Commando, they are shipped dry with acid ready to fill and charge. With the 850 battery putting out a whopping 17 amps, \$32.99 is a great price. Better buy a couple before SEARS realizes they could lose their fannies on warranties on motorcycle batteries.

If anyone needs a Commando clutch cable, check out the Barnett cable #N813. It seems to be about 50% thicker in cable and casing with a Nylon liner made not to slip out. Built only for hand-to-hand combat.

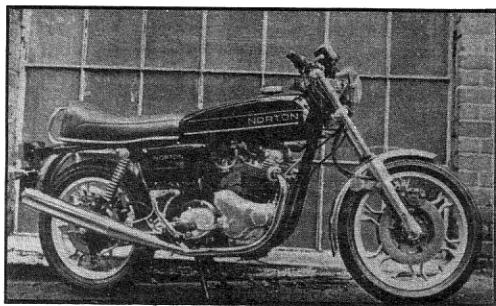
Just a note to ponder: The National Traffic Safety Administration reports that since 1976, 27 states have repealed mandatory helmet laws for motorcycles and fatalities have increased 40% while motorcycle registration has increased less than 1%.

And last (where it should be), another gem from across the Big Lake--a computerized "motorcycle". Yamaha has announced the SECA 750 that uses a "mini-computer, an integrated circuit board, a liquid crystal diode and sensors placed in seven key functional areas". Those areas are the sidestand, brake fluid level, fuel level, engine oil level, headlight, tail light and stop light. KEY functional areas?? Gotta go, not sure, but the light says my sidestand is down.

Bob



NORTON 76 CONTINUED ----



proposed US emissions regulations--the Commando Mk III already satisfies noise requirements--avoid the use of the most modern tooling at Wolverhampton which is owned by Mod Hire, an NVT group company not in liquidation, and exploit the Commando's sports bike potential with an aggressive and practical restyle.

Equipped with twin 32mm Amal Concentric carbs, the bike would never have come clean enough on emissions. Moreover, Amal was concentrating efforts on their Concentric Mk II which Favill and his development team knew just wasn't headed in the right direction. What they needed was a constant depression carburettor like the SU, widely used on Leyland cars, where manifold depression--or how hard the engine is sucking--controls how much fuel and air the engine is allowed. The rather crude Amal instrument cannot match the sort of fine metering of mixture under all throttle conditions provided by the SU.

There were a number of problems to consider, however, SU carbs are known to react badly to vibration and thus Favill's idea of employing one was frequently derided. Yet, he saw that the Commando engine is mounted in precisely the same way as a car engine--in rubber on its Isolastic mounts--and should therefore present no problems from this angle. And it doesn't, except that the considerable height of the carburettor body means that the single gusset plate directly above it has had to be split in two. But a shoehorn fit still isn't good enough because you also need to get at and regularly remove the black plastic cap screwed into the dashpot at the very top of the carb. You must do this to replenish the oil which forms the hydraulic damping medium that restricts the carb's piston rise--to which the needle is attached--under sudden acceleration to provide temporary mixture enrichment. The SU is a variable choke device, achieving this by the action of a finely tapered needle rising and falling in a single fuel jet. Thus to tune an SU you change the needle and not the jet.

Favill and SU discovered that the needle form needed for a motorcycle engine differed drastically from car requirements and that the sharp cut-off of the venturi, where it normally bolts straight up to the car's air cleaner, produced a loss of power at the top end of the rev range. Consequently, the venturi extends 3 1/2 in. into the Commando's airbox.

Other engine mods are the removal of the head's squish bands to give a full hemispherical shape as these interfere with emissions work and the substitution of hot scragged valve springs for the stock items. Hot scragged may sound like something the rotters of the Remove might have done to W. Bunter, but all it comprises is a fine tempering of the springs so that they do not, as the standard ones do, lose a whole 1/8in. in height and a good deal of their efficiency in the first 500 miles' service. There can be no doubt that the 1 3/4in. SU reduces emissions to an acceptable level or that it also cuts induction roar to a whisper. Yet, Favill and Hooper also claim that it improves fuel consumption by 40% without loss of power, the higher compression--10:1 against 8.5:1--engine producing a genuine 54 horses between 5,700 and 5,900 rpm against the Mk III's 51.5 bhp. Despite the mention of figures like 70 mpg, we were more than happy with an overall 11 mpg improvement on the Mk III we tested in May '75. We're also quite sure that less frenzied wrists could improve on that figure.

Hand in hand with the increase mileage is the logical step towards a slimmer, smaller tank than the Interstate's 5.25 gallon monster. The riding position forced upon you by the Interstate tank bears a strong resemblance to that adopted by the young ladies you may glimpse sat on stools in the windows of bars around the Place Pigalle in Paris. What it does for them is something else; we've never really rated it for ourselves. The new tank was quickly mocked up by Favill and then rapidly completed in the factory by adding large amounts of glass fibre and filler to a standard 2.5 gallon roadster tank so that this one is solid from about its halfway point. The planned size is four gallons which would give most riders a range in excess of 250 miles--more than acceptable. The only drawback with the current tank set-up-- not forgetting that this is a pure prototype--are a slight reduction in lock and difficulty in removing the tank as the coils rather crowd its mounting bolts. The ten-strong team which erected this bike in two weeks' hard slog would also have dearly loved to junk the seat and would plan to do so if the machine got into production. It's ridiculously high at 32in, doesn't meet the tank at all smoothly, and kicks up too soon at the rear, forcing the passenger to slide down on the rider.



Changes needed to avoid Mod Hire-owned tooling at Wolverhampton enabled John Favill to change something he's wanted to alter on the Commando for years--the front forks. The venerable Roadholders have always been too stiff and underdamped. Approaching the firm which already made the Commando's stainless guards--Paioli of Bologna--they succeeded in getting a pair of forks that are not only beautifully made, superbly damped and well up to Ceriani standards but also no more expensive than the Roadholders. The only problem is an excess of rake coupled with perhaps too much tyre and the inevitable Isolastic-induced low speed steering flutter. The wheelbase is now a lengthy 60in, three inches up on the Mk III, partly due to a swinging arm that is up 1/2in, and partly due to the new steering geometry.

As far as handling is concerned the spine-tube frame is as good as ever, taut and true, with behaviour on really bumpy bends vastly improved by the Paiolis. The one hassle is the way in which the bars waggle quite violently from side to side, especially when decelerating through the 30-35 mph zone. Around town this did nothing more than mildly annoy me and doubtless amuse onlookers, but dropping into slow bends it can be offputting when it catches you unawares. Infuriatingly it doesn't always happen and seems less likely to occur if you have a passenger aboard.

Bernard Hooper, one of the originators of the Isolastic principle under Dr. Bauer, has always considered that there is still a great deal to be done with the idea. As you know, the system has the engine and the swinging arm pivot mounted in a rubber suspended subframe which isolates the rider from nearly all of the high-

frequency vibration produced by a parallel twin. The current 828cc engine produces even more torque in the basement than its 750 predecessor and therefore riders tend to drop below 2,800 rpm into the lumpy vibes region, where only dropping a ratio and hiking the revs past this threshold can restore smoothness. What Hooper has in mind is a more rigid mounting for the swinging arm which still maintains the currently high standard of rider comfort. This could, I suspect, also have the effect of reducing the steering flutter. But a pronounced waggle of the bars on decelerating is nothing new to the folk who've ridden sixties' Triumph iron, and a change of geometry at the front end would doubtless help. The Isolastic frame is a brilliant idea, yet its uniqueness is also its worst enemy. Bikers rate frame maintenance as painting and occasionally--if they can remember--checking bearings, and are naturally suspicious of a chassis that requires more attention than that.

One of the points that many bikers miss is how much a comfortable riding position affects the way you ride a bike. If it feels right you're much more likely to think that the bike handles well and push it to its limits. With flat, narrow 650SS 'Norton straights' the 76 encourages real attacks of lunacy, especially on Dunlop racing and Red Arrow rubber. To maintain this image the front master cylinder is remotely mounted below the tank in between the ignition coils, operated by cable from the lever, as the cylinder at the rear.

Those good-looking cast alloy wheels you probably recall from our Guzzi Le Mans test; they're low pressure die castings from the Italiab firm of FPS. John Favill and the small party who went to Italy to gather components were highly impressed by the X-ray testing carried out at FPS, who also cast BMW's wheels. So you can rest assured that these items are not only superbly finished but also totally safe.

Fortunately we're more than familiar with the combination of three llin cast iron discs and Brembo calipers from forays on Guzzis and Ducatis or we might have thought there was something basically wrong with the system from experience with the 76. With so little time to get the bike together, the team was unable to locate the correct soft pads for use with indirect hydraulics--or the right size in master cylinders--so that only one front disc was operative and that required fingers of steel to produce enough pressure at the lever to slow the bike from any sort of speed. None of us felt heroic enough to chance stopping after a top speed run on our test strip, which was a pretty restricted braking area. So we were unable to put the bike through our lights, but it is certainly as quick if not a little quicker than the 850 Mk III we ran through at 111 mph.

But far more important than absolute top speed is the way in which the Commando motor churns out usable, gut-wrenching torque. From the moment you drop the clutch, it's there and never seems to stop flowing, coming on really strong with an almost imperceptible surge as you near 5,000 rpm. There are none of the Amal Concentrics' occasional flat spots in mid-range with the single SU, which, once the engine is warm, delivers perfectly clean throttle response throughout the rev range.

CONT. NEXT PAGE

"The Unapproachable"
NORTON
LONGSTON



The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch

To a generation brought up on the comparatively gutless whirr and whizz of Japanese motorcycles, the Norton's low-speed torque and long-legged flexibility must seem a little strange. As strange and unfamiliar as the slightly ponderous gearchange and four-speed separate box, searingly bright Lucas halogen headlight, the fact that the legal limit comes up around 3,700 rpm (a little over half-way to the redline) and the pitiful attempts of the Prestolite starter motor to produce signs of life from the engine on a cold morning. To them the Norton's virtues are alien, mere fable to contrast with headlines detailing the latest convulsions of an industry apparently writhing in its death throes, and old fashioned looking bikes that leak oil. Naturally this one did, principally from the cam chain inspection cap in the timing chest.

Yet, compare the Norton 76 with the Bonneville and which bike would come out top? Which one already meets proposed US emissions regulations, comes equipped with an electric foot--albeit occasionally palsied--isolastic vibration isolation and 60 mpg fuel consumption? It's no contest, especially when you consider that one important sector of the home market--the police--still wants to buy the 850 Commando while it considers the Saint unsuitable for its needs.

So who is going to save the Commando? Certainly not Dennis Poore, upon whom some people within the Action Committee seem to have pinned false hopes. When I called him recently he made it abundantly clear in two crisp sentences that he has no wish to have anything to do with the Commando or Norton 76. But the Norton name is his, and we can expect to see more of it before long, attached to the Wankel-engined bike Shenstone continues slowly to develop towards production.

John Favill--who with Bernard Hooper has set up as a freelance engineering consultant--remains guardedly optimistic. He reckons that it would take around £100,000 and some negotiating with NVT about the supply of engines and gearboxes to keep the Commando going. "There are quite a number of people around with large amounts of money looking for projects to sink it in," he says. But elsewhere at the Wolverhampton factory as we shot some colour pix against the grimy background of our industrial past, I sensed an exhausted resignation in the people's attitudes. There is government money available if private individuals will put up a large slice of the necessary capital, even if Wolverhampton isn't backed by the sort of political muscle that put the Department of Industry's nose out of joint for Meriden recently. But time is running out for the Wolverhampton plant.

John Favill, Bernard Hooper and the men who built the Norton 76 deserve warm praise for their efforts, for they have produced a Commando that should have appeared long before now. They also deserve to succeed with a bike that could take on the regulated, desensitised, sanitised 1980s. It ought to happen, but I sense that we're watching the last act of a great British motorcycle tragedy.

Bob Marshall

T-SHIRT SALE CONTINUES

Anyone wishing to order NOC/Branch T-shirts are urged to do so soon. So far, only about a dozen shirts have been ordered.

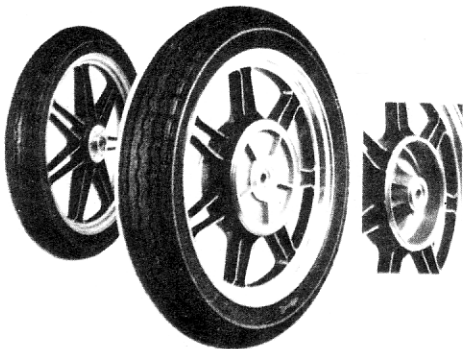
Pre-ordering is being done this time to prevent large outlays of money that usually accompanies T-shirt orders and until the Branch treasury can handle a multi-hundred \$ investment in shirts or an individual is freely willing to tie up that much money for 6 months or so, pre-ordering has to be done.

Anyone needing Order Forms, pick them up at the next meeting or ride, or contact Bob Marshall

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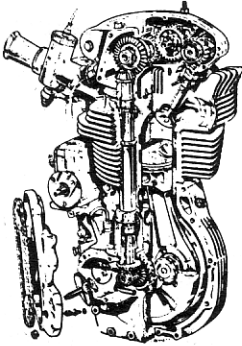
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FOR SALE: 1975 850 Commando. Electric start, Black w/ Gold Pin-stripes, Interstate Tank. Very clean. Matching fairing and side bags. \$1300. Call Dave at 322-1666 in the evenings.

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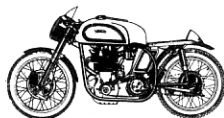
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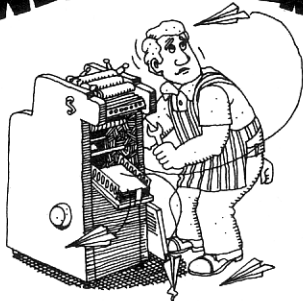
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