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of Northern California

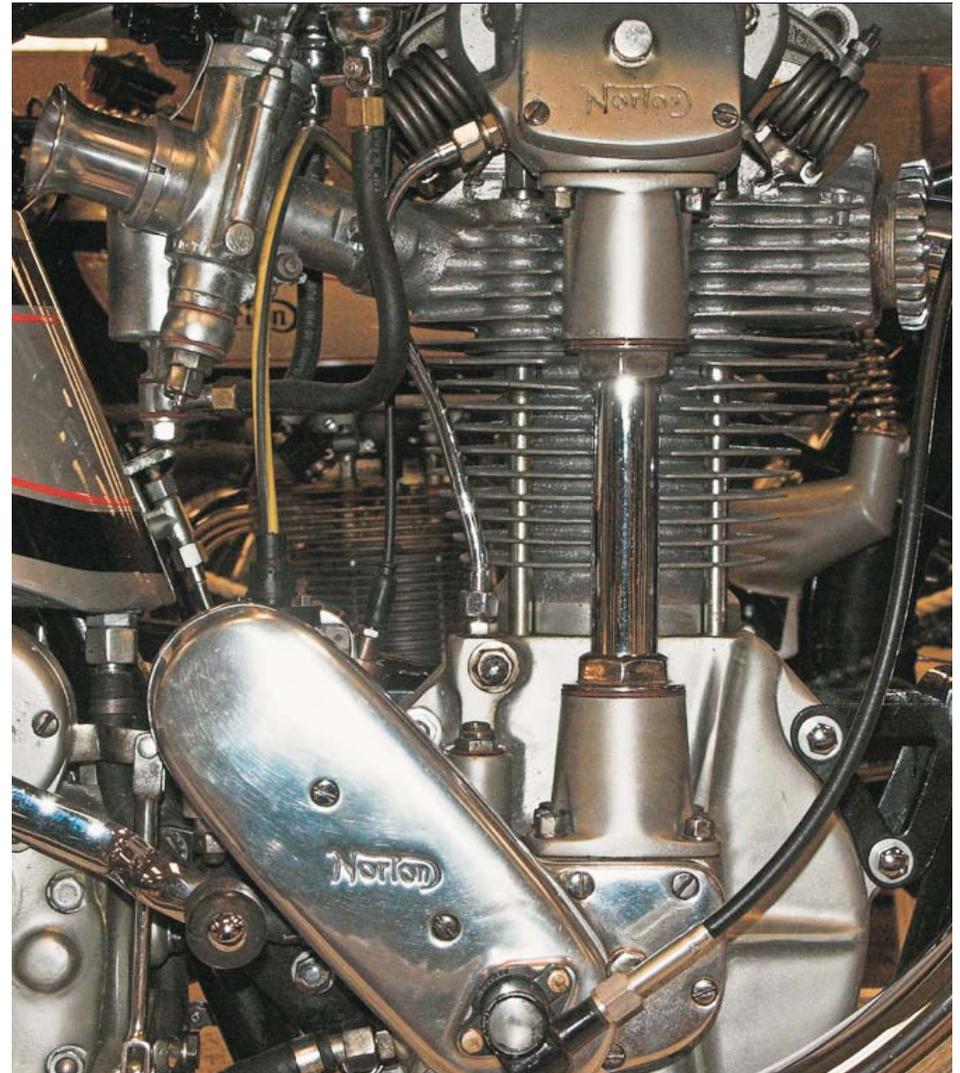
Norton
INTERNATIONAL OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Norton Notice

No. 335

February 2006

The Newsletter of the Northern California Norton Owner's Club





THE NORTON NOTICE

is published by the Northern California Norton Owners Club. Its purpose is to inform and entertain the club members. The Norton Notice is a reflection of the readership who are encouraged to submit any article, technical tip, photograph (original or otherwise) as long as it is in good taste so that other Norton enthusiasts will enjoy it. The deadline for items to be submitted for publication is the 18th of the month preceding the issue. The Norton Notice prefers contributions submitted electronically. Articles and photos can be sent in almost any format generally common to most computers. Please send submissions or comments to LorinGuy@yahoo.com.

MEMBERSHIP

in the Northern California Norton Owners Club is available for \$20 per year and open to all Norton motorcycle enthusiasts. Membership dues are payable to the Club Treasurer (see right). Renewal dues are payable at the end of the individual's membership year, which is designated by the last digit on the mailing label of your Notice, or on your membership card. All changes of address, membership or dues questions should be directed to the Club Treasurer.

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The object of the Northern California Norton Owners Club is to promote, encourage and develop motorcycle activities. The Club's members are owners or enthusiasts of Norton motorcycles and often submit for publication in the Norton Notice technical tips. These tips are reviewed for technical content and are believed to be both correct and workable, but no guarantee is made or implied that these tips or articles will work for your particular application. The Club or membership assumes no liability or responsibility for any issues or problems that may arise, or omissions or deletions in connection with the technical information. The Norton Notice articles or other materials contained express the authors' view only and are not necessarily the official policy of the Northern California Norton Owners Club. The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject, edit or alter all editorial and advertising material submitted. The Editor serves at the discretion of the Club's Board of Directors. Materials may be published both in print and/or electronically on the NCNOC web site at nortonclub.com. ©2006 The Northern California Norton Owners Club. Not to be reprinted without permission.

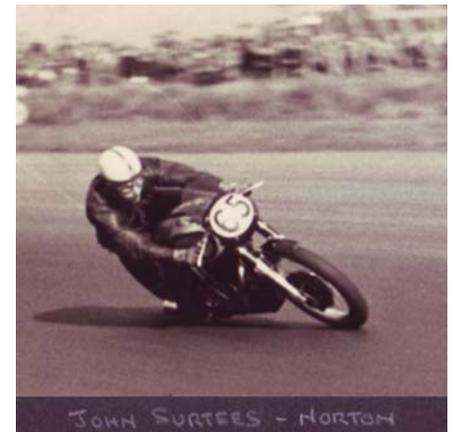
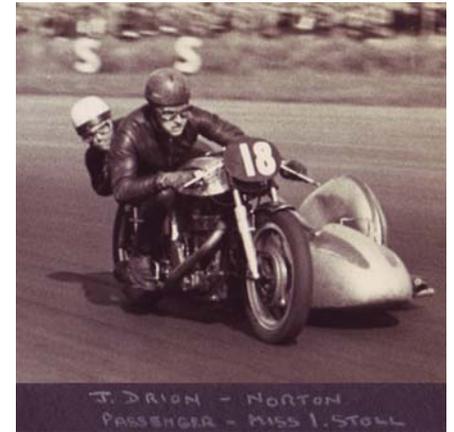
Outrageous, as it might seem, I'm told worth every penny, rumor that it was Jay Leno's agent circulated but was unfounded. The 1896 Marks was a treat to see, very rare machine. The record for a BSA Gold Star was I believe approached at \$30,000.00 the bidding was fast and heated. BMW brought good money this year like the early bikes R27's and R25/2 some very nice R69 and R90 models as well.

Racers were again big this year with the BSA Gold Star DBD34 and a 1949 Gilera San Remo, Honda CR350 and Laverda 750sf. Special Drag bikes from the Stan Dishong collection, "The Hog" and the undefeated 1937 Indian Scout, and a TZ750 Twin engine dragster, understandably one of the more outrageous bikes at the auction. A number of small Ducati and Parilla represented a good crop of Italian bikes. Six Vincent and three Velocette and a Zenith JAP round out the end of the alphabet.

Some of the cooler bikes, maybe not the high dollar but certainly interesting were the Japanese bikes; some say these will never be top dollar classics but from the clatter around these bikes I'd have to believe that investment in some of these would pay off in the years to come. Bikes like the beautiful H2 Kawasaki 750 triple, and the already collectable "sandcast" 750 Honda, but some unlikely choices such as the Honda 500-4 and 550-4 a 350-4 and early Yamaha Xs650 and DT125 street/trail, the Big Bear Scrambler and the ever-present Honda "Dream". A new comer to the auction was the collectable Honda 50cc racer; this 2004 limited edition bike was of big interest on the floor. One of the surprise deals were the two Honda 750 Britain, these rarely seen in the US bikes sold for a mire \$3200.00 and \$3500.00 dollars, disappointing, but a bargain for the bidder.

For those of you with an eye on American Iron, Harleys to beat the band. This year two Captain America bikes, now how often do you see two (or need to?) but one was on display with the rarely seen "Billy Bike", a truckload of movie memorabilia and offered as a set, sold for \$114,000.00. The Glides and Sportsters were down from past years but still the older bikes, some from the teen years that were not board racers brought active bidding.

Overall a worthwhile trip, fun and informative, it's Vegas baby, fun is its middle name. It was great to see all the NCNOC and BSA club members too. I say it every year "this is the best motorcycle show in the world, if you're looking to buy or not". The big dollars come to Vegas, I over heard one club guy saying, "You sell at Vegas not buy" that said this year I believe there were some good bargains on rare and clean bikes.



Las Vegas 2007 —Lorin Guy

Vegas 2007 is now one for the record books. The excitement still lingering as I venture home, my van and trailer full of classic British and Italian iron. The weather this year was the hot (or not so hot) topic, as it actually snowed on the strip, temps in the 30's dipping into the 20's at night. Amazing how cold the desert can get at night.

The motorcycle auction was held at the (newly re-named) South Point Hotel and Casino at the south end of the "Strip". Its large convention center was perfect for the event with a considerable loading ramp and door, easy access and ample parking. The Mid-America staff was helpful as always and this year was easier than in the past to get in and out. The hall was filled with all the usual suspects, collectors and museum representatives, bike enthusiasts and club guys.

The bikes were again spectacular, with over 500 choice pieces and every make and model represented. Over 100 Triumph, and 50 Harley these two makes dominated the hall. 18 Norton made the show this year. This number is about double last years showing and the quality was much better. The expected top models like the 1948 Manx, the 1936 International and model 88 were everything you'd expect fully restored and looking spectacular. The lacking has always been in the ranks of the Commando. 2007 saw this come closer to where it should be with at least two clean riders, and a very clean but highly modified 1975 model. The pricing is what amazed me, last year a Norton was hard pressed to reach six grand an this year that number easily doubled. Incredible, as it might seem the 11-14 thousand dollar Norton Commando is now here.

The 1973 MkIIa was in nice shape and boasted only 1300 miles from new, a rare bird indeed, if not for the miles but certainly for the very limited side cover latch, limited to 200 models. Alternately the 1974 MkIIa in the red white and blue livery was cleaner but looked well ridden. The star Norton was a 1967 P11 racer; this well build bike was ridden and won 4 major AHRMA races in 2005, I was honored to carry this bike home for a local club member and collector. It's always such a treat to see close-up the ES2, 30's International models as well as a very clean model 18.

Spit and polish can't hurt, as was evident in the gaggle of 1959 Triumph Bonneville that came before the gavel. Three selling for 20,000.00 dollars were all restored and polished to the nines, the fourth was just as mechanically sound but not as much spit and elbow grease, sold for a mere \$11,500.00 a bargain for sure as we'll most likely see that bike back in 2008 with some heavy detail work done.

Some of the highlights were the 1941 Crocker Big Tank V twin selling for 214,000.00 American dollars.

**MINUTES OF MEETING 1/18/07**

Harry's Haufbrau, San Jose

Meeting was called to order at 8:00pm by Club Vice-President, Dave Crader.

Other officers present: Lorin Guy, Editor; and Mike Sullivan, Secretary; as well as Tom Dabel, Rides Coordinator; and Liz Sain, Quartermaster.

A total of 17 members were on hand with 4 bikes ridden (brrr), 3 Nortons and one Harley-Davidson

The submitted minutes from the 11/9/06 meeting as presented in the Notice issue 333 were approved.

Congratulations were given to Lorin Guy and Fred Fortune for their continuing efforts on the publication of the Notice

It was mentioned that there was an Executive Officers decision that Ray Pallett was to keep track of the Ride points this year and that all ride leaders are to forward the sign up sheets ASAP after a ride. In that same vein, it was mentioned that is there were to be any changes in ride schedules, times, places, etc. that they were to be gotten to Ian and Lorin as soon as possible.

Lorin Guy discussed the plans for the upcoming Clubman's Show on 3/31. There was an original thought to invite Peter Williams to the show as he was the last man to win a T.T. on a Norton. It was reported that this was not economically feasible and that thought has been abandoned. A call was made for anyone who knows of a Norton race bike that could be brought to the show to please contact Lorin.

There will be an auction of Classic Motorcycles to be held at the Laguna Seca Raceway over June 8-9. This will not be held in conjunction with any race. Contact Lorin for more info.

Lorin reported on the auction at Las Vegas. He reported that nice Commandos fetched some pretty high prices ranging from \$11.4k to 14.5k.

Dave Crader stated that this is the 36th year of the NCNOC. The Club actually started in 1971 as a branch of the NOC in England. There are currently 15 members of the NCNOC who are also members of the NOC.



It was reported that the INOA is doing an update on the Tech Digest and volunteers are needed to edit certain sections. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Alan Goldwater.

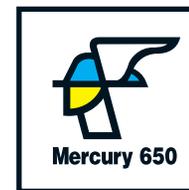
Mention was made about the discontinuation of the Avon Super Venom tires. The replacement tire Road Rider AM26 is now on the market. The Super Venom tires are still available until stocks run out.

Liz Sain mentioned that there are plenty of club t-shirts available as we have about \$1,000.00 worth in inventory.

Meeting was closed at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

—Mike Sullivan, Secretary



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Editor's Notes —Lorin Guy

The year has started off good and with a couple rides under our belts we are off and running into 2007. I want to thank all those who sent in articles and pix, it helps the quality greatly and the idea that this is a club newsletter not my own rant rag.

Clubman Show and Swap:

We are only a few months away from the 20th annual BSA Clubman Show & Swap and we really need everyone's help with the Norton race bike display. If you own or know of someone with Norton racers, please contact me with their information so I can invite them to participate. This is a fantastic opportunity to have a really significant event and with everyone pulling it can be great. But we need your help.

Prince of Wales Pub:

The eviction of the Prince of Wales Pub in San Mateo coincided with the closing decision by the pub owners and was announced in late December, the new building owners (these are the same ones who would not allow us to use the upstairs room for meetings anymore) said they are renovating the old building and plan to open a new bar, called "the Swinging Door".

The POW had been a neighborhood establishment of almost 50 years, the cave like dark atmosphere, greasy food, smelly carpet and overly loud bands will now be just a memory.

With celebrity clients like Bing Crosby and Ronald Reagan, Folk legends the Kingston Trio, the English pub atmosphere of the Prince of Wales Pub was the place to meet, have ale and fish and chips dinners in days gone past. In recent years the pub's Chili Jalapeno Burger gained fame with a local newspaper write up and a mention in Rolling Stone as the hottest burger in the world. But it wasn't until the Norton club started meeting there that the pub gained some new notoriety and clientele. It is with some sadness, maybe more for the passing of traditional establishments in lieu of new concept bars and restaurants that we observe this closing. Time marches on and I guess with the age of the owner/cook Charlie, it was inevitable, and maybe better to offer the blame or excuse for the closing on someone else. But we will always remember and with more fondness as time moves on the atmosphere and fun, the clientele and great ale.



On the Web:

The Norton Notice section of the website is almost complete, there are a few issues we are short. If any of you long time members have a collection and would consent to loan some of these to us it would be greatly appreciated.

- We are missing:
- 1985: July
 - 1989: April through December
 - 1990: January through November
 - 1991: February, March, April, and May
 - 1992: February and March
 - 1993: January, May, and September
 - 1994: July and August

If you can help with any of these please contact me by e-mail or phone.



Above: odd sculpture along the route of the Moto Mele
Below: January meet at Harry's Haufbrau



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Alan s Wrench —*Alan Goldwater***Don Goforth and The Case Of The Twice-Cracked Primary**

As most of you know, I've been wrenching on British motorcycles for a long time (40 years, to be exact!). I've seen and heard a lot in that time, but the following brief tale has taught me yet again that the more I think I know, the more there is to learn.

Don Goforth is a good mechanic and a precision machinist by trade. He's also an enthusiastic and determined competitor for the Norton cup, which he won twice in this century. So it takes a serious problem to keep him off the road. Last summer he showed up late for a club event, after a very mysterious incident. His primary case had split around the mounting bolt and spilled its oil onto the rear of the bike.

The bike was still running, but after we looked it over, further damage was suspected. The outer primary appeared to have been hit hard from the inside, maybe by the clutch hub or chain, so Don called for the rescue truck and headed home, missing the ride. But when he pulled off the remains of the primary cover, the chain and clutch looked fine, with nothing broken or loose.

This 'incident' was good for some solid bench racing, and we tried to figure out the cause at the next meeting, with lots of ideas but nothing convincing. Don was stumped and so were the rest of us. So he found a spare cover and put the dang thing back together. On a test ride, everything worked fine... until the next Club ride.

On the way up to Alice's, Don heard a mild 'whump' sound and looked down to see the new cover cracked and pushed out from the primary, again. We're taught that good science must be repeatable, and in this case Don was now sure he had missed a clue. He cleaned off the oil and rode the bike home. Later, with the primary cover removed, he started the bike to take a closer look. Thanks to a poorly-lit garage, he was able to spot something, a clue that led to understanding the problem. Can you guess what he saw?

What Don saw in the dim light was an occasional spark from near the alternator stator. On close inspection with the motor stopped, he saw that the alternator lead was routed close enough to the chain that with the motor running, the chain flapped around enough to occasionally touch the wires. Once it cut through the insulation, the chain would briefly ground out the alternator, causing a spark. Because the contact was so short (so to speak), it didn't burn out the stator coil.

What does this have to do with the twice-cracked primary? Well, imagine the primary chain whipping around through a puddle of oil at high speed, and flinging it off in every direction. The result could well be a mist of microscopic oil droplets, suspended in air. Or in other

words, and air-fuel bomb, just waiting for a spark to set it off. The resulting force would easily be enough to do the damage we saw on Don's bike. Knowing the cause, the real surprise is that it didn't blow the cover clean off, or split the inner cover as well.

So Don repaired and rerouted the wire, and welded up the crack in the second cover, enough so it holds oil. He's back on the Norton road, having shown us the power of fire in a new way. One final note, Don has sold his machine shop and will be retiring to Washington state soon. So don't miss a last chance to thank him for this lesson, and for his company at Club meetings and on the road in past years.

Bon Voyage Don and Pat. I hope you'll keep in touch.

Northern California Norton Owners Club Events Calendar

- Feb 8 **Club Meeting**
Harry's in Foster City
8pm as usual.
- Feb. 11 **Three Option ride**
Los Gatos Bakers Sq. 9:30 Am This ride does give you three options but Sportster Diana will pick a route from a hat and we'll do that one. See your website for all the details
- Feb 25 **Adopt a highway**
Later start this time around 11:am meet at Alice's at Highway 84 and 35
- March 8 **Club Meeting**
Straw Hat Pizza,
San Leandro 14680 Washington ave.
San Leandro, 8pm start time.
- March 11 **East Bay Ride**
starts at the Florence in Niles
See website for details
- March 31 **Clubman Show!!**
Wow! This is the big one
Be there or be square.
- April 1 **Morning after Ride**
No foolin...

**My Last Presidents Message** —*Lorin Guy*

2006 is over and my time as President of this club has come to an end, my two years at the helm has been exhausting yet fun and really enlightening. I've become more aware of how much work the board and core member group does to insure we all have safe and fun events. We've made some great strides during these last few years as a club. Our recognition though out the world has increased and our presence within INOA and NOC are now more than ever recognized. I could spend the next few paragraphs telling you about wonderful things we've accomplished during my Presidency but most of you already know and most of you were there when it all happened. I'll spend my next few paragraphs telling you all the thing I wanted to do and for what ever reason they did not happen or we just ran out of time.

First and foremost I wanted to raise dues, it's important to the club to have more cash coming in, our costs have gone up (and what hasn't) over the last 10 years and our dues stay the same. Really it's only \$8.00 more a year and if you look at your benefits of membership it's a small price to pay.

Next was to complete our world class website. This is an ongoing project and work will continue, I will continue to make it a priority of mine, but as for the direction of the club board, hard to say. But if you feel the web site is important tell the board at the club meetings. We did however make huge strides and for a club website we have one of the best in the world (so much so others try to copy it now). From an idea on a midnight drive to Vegas to a reality, most of the accolades have to go to Ian Reddy.

The club gift fund, this is a way for members who have pasted to leave their bike to the club as a donation. The club would restore and sell the bike with proceeds going to benefit the club. This also includes a consultant/appraisal service on bikes of member who have pasted as a service to the family, if the family wants to sell the bike and it was not willed to NCNOC, selected members would consult on value and best places to sell the bike to achieve best prices for the family.

Next was a new rule that Board members cannot accumulate points for the Norton Cup. I believe that board members are expected to show up to events and for them to amass points for the cup seems unfair. Points should be to encourage the general members to show up more often.

These are just a few of the things I was holding on tap and never got around to. I'm sure the new administration will take us in a completely different direction and that's ok. I did my terms and put in my time. No sour grapes no spilt milk. The club will survive and so will I.

So the New Year begins and I hope to see some of you on the road.

My Polar Bear Ride —*Diana Pettijohn*

Having removed 48oz of surplus oil from the sump the day before, the P11 started on the first kick. She was running perfect and I rode over to Ken's shop without any problems. We topped off our tire pressures and headed for Alice's. The P11 felt great as we started up 9 at a spirited pace, Ken and his Mercury staying right behind me. I glanced over my left shoulder as we turned onto 35 and thought I saw a few members of Bay Area Sportsters, but I was having too much fun to stop and see. The air was cool and very clear as we continued to maintain a brisk pace, only slowing for a moment now and then to take in the incredible views. Still as we came down the hill toward 84 I realized this was the fastest I'd ridden these roads on a British bike in 25 years. It was a ton of fun, though we never actually got to the ton.

As we pulled into the parking lot at 10:35 there were already a lot of Norton's present. Ken and I said hello to the NCNOC members there then went across the street and had Breakfast with BAS. Ken and I had among others sitting at our table two BASers that had been at the 76 station in Saratoga and they "Saw (me) fly by heading up the hill". After eating and share tales the BAS members headed back to checkout the Nortons. Some of the comments I heard were:

The bikes looks great, everyone looks like they were having fun and the conversations were informative and entertaining too.

I remember tires that thin, but looking at them now it's hard to imagine pushing them in the corners.

I can see where owners can get anal about these bikes Ken and I finally decided to leave and as the old saying goes "And that's when it all went horribly wrong".

possible tech article continued next issue.

Quite a few hard-core Bay Area Sportster members were at Alices checking out the Nortons on the Polar Bear Ride



Polar Bear Ride 2007

What a glorious day for a ride, the weather was fantastic. Brisk morning air, clear skies and sunshine for miles. The first ride of 2007 got off to a terrific start this Sunday morning January 21st, the parking lot at Alice's at highways 84 and 35 in Skyland was a buzz with NCNOC members and their cool bikes.

The morning saw about 30 members collected at the spot, chatting and drinking coffee. "Sportster Diana" gave members of the Harley Sportster group a quick course in Norton Motorcycling. Some of the South Bay "Ratz" (Triumph group) were on hand to ride and check out the amassed collection of vintage machines. Alice's regulars were taking picture and chatting up the beautiful day.

About 18 NCNOC members took off on the ride, along the route Harry Buntings Commando had a front brake issue, it was quickly diagnosed and members kicked in to fix it, back on the road some took highway 280 and some of us tried back roads. The jaunt to the "Prince of Wales Pub" to celebrate their untimely closing was cut short, to our dismay they closed a day early, we missed it. So as a good rides leader who is always ready for the unforeseen, Tom Dable re-directed the troop to Mimi's restaurant in Foster City.

Now this portion of the un-lead ride lost a few along the way, some made some wrong turns, and some just gave up, but of the 18 or so that actually rode about 10 made the restaurant. We had a great lunch sitting outside in the nicely shaded patio, the manager was very gracious and was very interested in our group and made sure we had what we needed to be comfortable and he offered a special muffin "ToGo" treat for us upon leaving.

It was a wonderful start to a full riding season, Thanks to Don Goforth for driving chase and getting my Triumph home safely.

We'll be looking forward to seeing more of you at the next ride, south bay Three Option ride February 11. See the website for full details.



Your Norton Doesn't Need To Wet Sump

—George Tuttle

Wet sumping is an issue many riders have found with their classic Nortons. Before I was aware of the extent of my Commando's wet sumping problem it would cough and run rough for about 30 seconds or more after it was started if it hadn't run in a couple of days. After that it was fine for the remainder of the day. Now, if it hasn't wet sumped or if I drain the sump before starting, it starts right up and idles smoothly.

Here are four simple steps that can be followed to eliminate or minimize wet sumping. When all are used together, the problem should be solved, meaning more time can be spent riding your bike rather than emptying the sump and refilling the oil tank.

1—According to The Norvil Motorcycle Company you should use the correct Monograde oil (SAE 50 in summer and SAE 40 in winter). However, not everyone agrees that monograde oils are the way to go. Nick Hopkins at Andover Norton International writes, "We have had some interesting results with different oils. There are those who swear by the old-fashioned mono-grade oils but quite why I have never really understood and our tests confirm that these oils don't work very well, at least in a Commando engine. A great deal of frothing occurs and when this happens the oil pressure drops quite dramatically because the pump is passing so much air. We got the best readings using a regular 10-40 motorcycle oil which contains anti-froth additives amongst others." Fred Eaton, our friend and owner of Old Britts told me he uses 20W-50 Kendall GT-1 in all his commandos.

2—You need to leave your pistons on compression after shutting the engine down for the day. To do this, slowly press down on your kickstart about an inch or so until it reaches the top of the effective swing. This has the effect of raising your pistons and the big end journals to the top of the barrel so oil has further to go before it can drain out.

3—MKIII Commandos have a build in anti-wet sumping valve in their timing covers. This prevents the seeping of oil down onto the bottom of the crankcases. On Dominators & Commandos (pre 131257) you can have an anti-drain valve fitted inside the timing cover. (AFTER the oil pump) if you send it to The Norvil Motorcycle Company, (reference their workshop service number WB12). Their cost is 90 pounds. On Commandos with engine number 131257 and onward, Norvil has a new timing cover which can be fitted to solve the problem (part number 066161A). This is NOT the type of anti-drain valve which is fitted by some people into the oil feed line above the crankcases. Anti-

drain valves fitted into oil feeds, can cause oil starvation to the big ends for a brief time when starting the bike. If you use an on/off tap instead and forget to turn it on, you will destroy your engine in short order.

4—If the above three steps have failed to solve your problem, you probably have a faulty oil pump. Oil can flow backwards through the oil pump from the feed side to the scavenge side of the pump if it is in need of attention. Most oil pumps can be repaired and restored quite simply. An additional step is to have O-rings fitted to your oil pump shafts to stop oil draining from the feed to the scavenge side.

If you are unaware if you have a wet sumping problem I highly encourage you to monitor the oil level in your Norton's oil tank immediately after shutting it down and before starting it up. If after a few days of sitting there is a significant difference then drain your sump and measure what comes out. You might be surprised or as in my case SHOCKED! Anything over a half a quart is due to wet sumping and can cause problems. With my Commando, 1.5 inches on the dipstick equals 1 quart of oil.

Ride safe, George Tuttle (Used by permission)

How to use your Norton Starter

—Terry Morrison

In the course of re-building my starter to a four-brush, sealed bearing unit, I came across this item in the manual for the Mark 3 bike and thought it might be a helpful hint in the Notice. Under Electrical, Section J26, the manual says: "On cold-starting it is recommended that the initial load is reduced by always freeing the clutch with the kick-starter pedal and starting in neutral gear with the clutch disengaged."

The Norton folks don't want the starter to turn over cold transmission oil which could also be hard on the sprag gear too. On my machine I now plan to do the following: With the bike in "neutral", and the key "off", depress the clutch and with the right hand reach down and free the kick-starter pedal. Then with the key "on", hit the electric starter. Now you can go like a striped-ass-ape over the rolling country side all day long!



My Norton 500T 1950 —Ray Pallett

Norton's model 500T was available from 1949 to 1954 and approximately 875 were made.

The 500T is a competition bike designed for trials. It has a 500cc ES2 engine with an alloy barrel (the ES2 of the period had an iron barrel) The frame is rigid and is a modification of the pre WW2 and wartime 16H frame. The gearbox is the Norton "Doll's Head" also of 1930s vintage design.

The 500T had limited success in trials competition. The rigid frame was being superseded in competitor machines like the Matchless, Royal Enfield and Ariel with plunger and swinging arm rear suspensions giving them a great advantage. Never the less the 500T is a great bike for the peninsular hills. Low weight and gearing and huge torque make it a really fun ride albeit a not very quick one.

The 500T being a competition bike has magneto ignition and no other generator. To comply with California regulation this bike is fitted with a total loss circuit for the rear light and brake light.

The Unapproachable

**Bumps Bangs and Broken Bikes**

—Ray Palette

Riding back from this years Boxing Day vintage bike meet at the Plough in Plumpton it occurred to me that a record of the previous years high (and low) points might be worth the effort - especially as Lorin is short of padding for the Notice.

The Boxing Day ride used to be to the Royal Oak in Fulking until it changed hands and the new landlord proved to be a decided bikerphobe. The venue changed to the Plough at Plumpton about three years ago but the first year we got the wrong plough and we were surprised that there were only three or four bikes. At least we were not the only ones to get the wrong one. The good thing about the new venue is that it is about twice the distance to Plumpton as it was to Fulking so the ride is better - provided the temperatures are above zero C. Last year was touch and go as it was a bit frosty, especially on the North side of the South Downs where the sun tends not to shine too often in December due to the road being in the shadow of the hills and the sun being very low in the sky.

Last year the ride was memorable for two reasons. The first was the number of fine machines that were in the car park, a lovely pre war HRD alongside a Manx of similar vintage sticks in my mind. The other memory is less pleasant as one of the exhaust pipes was falling off by the time I got there. The bolts holding the silencer on had gone AWOL on the journey. Fortunately, I managed to beg a cable tie that held everything together well enough to get me home. I bought bolts in OSH when I got back to Mountain View and put everything back together on my next trip home in May.

It seems incredible that a year has passed since that day but I guess I can remember enough events from the intervening period to make it likely that a year really has passed. The first club ride of the New Year was nearly my last when having watched George narrowly miss a car on Stage Road I took a hedge ticket for an excursion onto the grass on the same bend. I was luckier than I would be later in the day and managed to get it back on the little bit of grass before the bank went vertical. The ride afterwards was wonderful and I felt my Commando was in the best form that it has achieved since I rebuilt it 6 years ago.

Later in the day after I got home from the ride I decided that there was enough daylight left to celebrate my birthday by taking my Bonneville for a putter up Page Mill. Upwards was great and I turned around about half way up. I was bimbbling along mind in neutral looking over the trees at the view across the bay as I approached

one of the tighter switchbacks. Too late, I looked back to the road to find I was in a stretch of slime at the side of the road. As the thought developed that this was a bit iffy the front wheel washed out and I was face down on the road a bit short of breath winded by the fall. I managed to pick myself up and as luck would have it, the bike had landed in a pile of dead leaves and soft earth. Apart from a few fine scratches and a head light shell full of said dead leaves and soft earth everything was OK and I was able to ride the rest of the way home. I can seriously recommend a pair of knee protectors. I was wearing mine and the scoring on the plastic would have made for a very painful week if it had been my skin!

The next few months were uneventful if memory serves with only a fantastic weekend riding with Frank Forster sticking in the grey matter. We had two roads blocked by rivers in spate but the roads in the hinterland of Morro bay provided their usual fine entertainment.

At the end of May, I had to come over to the UK for my godson's wedding. I took the opportunity to get a few rides in on the Dommi'. One of these was to get the old girl an MOT certificate for another year. The number of classic bike sensitive testing stations is diminished these days so I took her to a place in Partridge Green that a mate recommended to me, as my normal place could not fit me in while I was in the UK. As you might guess from the name, Partridge Green is a country village. It lies about 12 miles from my UK home and makes a pleasant destination on a summer's day. The old girl passed but only just, as the tester thought the head bearings felt a bit notchy. (He should try riding my TRST but that is another story).

After the test, I had to go to a plumber's merchant in Worthing to get a part to fix the bathroom radiator. I had a great blast along the country lanes on my newly MOT'd bike. As I got to the store, I noticed difficulty in changing gear and stalled as I pulled into the car park. At first, I thought it was just me being clumsy so went in to make my purchase not thinking too much about it. When I came back to the bike, I found I could move the gear lever at all. I did not think I was in first gear so figured that at a pinch I could bump start the old girl since she was nice and warm after our ride. I pushed her across the car park and just as I got to the kerb, she fired up. Running is not one of my greater talents these days and I just managed to grab the clutch before she dragged me down the road. It turned out that she was stuck in second gear so I gently road home the five miles or so. I was due to fly out in a day or so and do not like leaving a bike in bits for too long. I left her for a repair the next

time I would be home. Circumstances like a garage needing a new roof conspired to make that Christmas Eve. You will find out what was wrong later on in this missive.

Moving on to July and the San Juan Bautista ride. I had planned to lead whoever wanted to take a scenic route from Los Gatos down Eureka Canyon and other byways. Another AMC gearbox had other ideas. I set off nice and early on my Commando taking a gentle start up San Antonio to Los Altos. At the last traffic light before Foothill, I again found I could not change gear. This time the lever would move but not the gears. I had no option but to turn around and go home for the Tiger.

I thought I was in luck as San Antonio is a slight down grade from Los Altos to El Camino that would let me freewheel home. Wrong again! It goes down hill but not enough to let gravity overcome the accumulated drag on the Commando. So clutch in and push. At least being slightly downhill the effort required was light enough to not be heart threatening. The distance turned out to be two and a half miles and proved to be a good workout in the morning sun. Once I had caught my breath, I set off to San Juan and got there before everyone left.

Exploratory surgery showed that the hairclip spring that controls the pawl had fatigued and broken. Ken Armann had a slightly used one in stock and I fitted it and had the Commando back on the road in a couple of days. I think that as far as springs are concerned — if they are not broken or have lost their rate - used ones are as good to use as a new one.

Ken was waiting for me for over an hour at Baker's Square and must have set off for the meeting only minutes before I eventually got there. He had a good ride until he got to 101 where he turned North instead of South. Once he realized his error, he decided to call it a day and head home only for his Mercury to run out of gas a few miles up the road. Cosmic Ken's luck stuck with him as he ran out and parked a few yards from an AAA truck tending to a car. A \$13 gallon of gas got him going again within minutes and he made it home unscathed.

August saw the Dardanelles weekend upon us. I rode up on the Tiger and this time the misfortunes went to others. On a magnificent ride over Monitor and Ebbet's pass, Ian Reddy's clutch basket detached from the gearbox main shaft. It happens now and then when the nut holding the basket to the shaft runs loose. In Ian's case, it was because the locking tab washer did not have any tabs. Try as we may we could not get the basket back on the shaft. Just as we were moving the bike further off the road so that it would be safe while we fetched a truck a long came Don Goforth and his Mrs in their truck. We loaded up and Ian took his life in his hands by riding

pillion on the Tiger with me. We had a fine ride back to camp even arriving in time for Dinner. Further, ahead of us Dave Crader was also having problems with a broken chain and had to avail himself of the services of Don and his Mrs., when they came through.

September was a month I decided to take a long weekend in the Sierras riding in Kings Canyon. All was well until the last night when looking for a campsite on the Mineral King road I missed the turn and in the darkness took a dirt road that lead back to the entrance. I could not see a big rut and my front wheel went into it and down I went at virtually zero mph. The Tiger takes a lot of picking up, on a good day, late at night after a hard day of riding makes it even harder. Off loading it just as my riding partner turned up meant I got going painlessly. The bears I saw in my head light beam crossing the road in front of me a mile or so earlier must have had a good laugh.

October was an eventful month. Most memorable was a ride down the Blue Ridge Parkway. I had to work in Chicago for a week so booked a return flight via Raleigh Durham where I rented a Harley Fat Boy for the weekend. I rode with a friend of mine on the back across North Carolina to the Virginia border and picked up the parkway there. Although I had not planned it, I was lucky enough to be riding while the bulk of the trees still had their fall colours. It was magnificent and the 45mph speed limit was a welcome reason for soaking up the views.

The Harley having never ridden one before very pleasantly surprised me. Given the behemoth size of the engine (96cu in) it was surprisingly breathless — needing its neck wringing to get it moving. It had a huge screen, which I hated, as I had to look through it and found it quite dangerous in freeway spray. Other than these two minor demerits, it felt a lot like a Norton in the grunt it laid out. Try one - Harley dealerships have a great rental scheme that makes exploring your wonderful country by bike easy when you only have a short weekend to do it in.

The All British in November has me working during October to ensure that I have bikes for my mate Chris and me to ride. A week out in Chicago put the pressure on.

I really wanted to ride my 500T and spent quite a bit of time preparing it to be road legal in California. I built a rear light/number plate holder powered by a small 12-volt battery hidden in a rubber battery box. I got it registered and took it up Page Mill Road for a shake down. I discovered two things that made it impossible for me to ride it on the All British. The clutch slipped - I thought it felt a bit odd at the lever before I set off. I later discovered that at least one spring is either broken

or collapsed. You are probably aware that the 500T was a trials bike. As a result, the gearing is very low so that the poor engine was flat out at 40mph. New larger sprockets are a must.

I called off my shake down ride at Moody and turned for home. Two miles later it turned into a shake off ride as my carefully prepared electrical system detached itself from the bike. I felt something against my leg that had not been there moments before and looked down just as the battery box took flight. It hit the road and disintegrated in a shower of shards of black rubber. I stopped and was able to pick up practically all of the bits. The battery itself was well battered but fortunately intact. Several nights in the garage with a couple of tubes of JB weld have the electrics back together and an extra strap fabricated. The clutch and sprocket changes will happen in the New Year so that perhaps I can ride it on the Morning after ride in March.

Chris is a dyed in the wool Triumph rider so I try to keep the Bonneville in fettle for his visits. I got it out of storage to take home for a check over. It was unusually hard to start with symptoms of a low battery. Eventually it ran after a fashion but died at the gas station and would not start again. I got to push another bike home! After charging, it seemed to be OK so I moved on to working on the three Hondas I have thanks to Tom Dable

I try to ride each of my bikes at least once a month. The turn of the TR5T came around but try as a might I could not get it to start on the kick. It really needs some engine work probably rings or perhaps guides and sometimes is a little truculent. I found a way to get it started by getting someone to tow me behind the truck. I had Ann tow me behind her Harley when I forgot to switch the ignition off at the Ducati day. A bit of an extreme way to start maybe - but it works!

November proved to be a month to forget. It started with the Bonneville giving out at Alpine Lake on the All British Ride. The battery had gone flat again and Chris only just made it that far. Fetching the truck and picking him up meant no food and a complete miss of the after ride event. Testing the alternator showed that it was only producing 6 volts AC. Another job for the New Year joins the line. The real disaster in November came about on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. For several years, I had looked out of my office window at Mount Diablo but had never been up it. The day was fine so I decided it was time to remedy the omission. I had a wonderful ride around the San Pablo Lake to Walnut Creek and up the mountain.

After savoring the views, I set of down taking it nice and easy because it was steep and the traffic had picked up while we were at the summit. I rounded a bend to

see a Chevy pickup coming straight for me on my side of the road. The outcome you can imagine and my beloved Tiger is to be totaled. I could not ride for a couple of weeks as I banged up my chest big time. After that, I was desperate for a ride and took the TR5T up to Alice's on a beautiful rainy Sunday morning.

We are now into December and during the next week; I registered two of the Hondas and spent the next weekend trying them out what fun! An 18-hour journey into the cold and the fog brings us to today and this years Boxing Day ride. I spent the Saturday before Christmas (the day after I landed in the UK) sorting out the gearbox on the Dommi. The problem was down to the gear lever return spring having disengaged from the lug on the reverse of the pall. I had guessed that one or both of the springs had broken as had happened with the Commando so had ordered replacements and gaskets from Norvil to be here when I arrived. It looked to me as if the return spring (the fat one) had been improperly fitted at some time in the past. (I have had the bike for 10 years but not used it much being in foreign parts for most of the time). The arms of the spring did not sit in the groove at all well and must have just worn over time to the point where they would no longer stay engaged. A little adjustment with a hammer seems to have reshaped the spring so that the arms engage more cleanly. While I was in there I fitted a Timken oil ring that Ken had put me on to the kick-start shaft. It seems to have done the trick and cured the leak that has probably been there since the building of the bike in 1960.

I prepared for today's ride by watching the Duke DVD of the TT of the year of my birth (1948) — cool stuff I can really recommend. Riding in the UK at this time of the year is always going to be cold the only question is how cold and will it be icy. Today was relatively mild and the roads quite safe. It was staggeringly grey all day and barely daylight for most of it. The roads are always damp this time of year when it is not freezing even when there is no rain. Taking it steady and keeping, it smooth is a prerequisite for longevity. Four of us met at 11.00 and rode to the Plough at Plumpton where around sixty other stalwarts had turned up. Strangely there were only three Nortons including my old girl, a café'8e race and a 16H or Big 4 not sure which. There was lovely old Cotton and two TWN (German Triumph) a marquee I have never seen before in the flesh - lots of Ariels, BSAs and Triumphs.

That is it for 2006. Let us hope 2007 is pain free and full of wonderful rides. Keep the rubber side down and have a Happy New Year.