





# Norton Notice

1924 Kentucky St.  
Redwood City, Ca. 94061  
(415) 369-0597 eves.

published monthly by the NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BRANCH of the NORTON OWNERS CLUB, its sole purpose is to inform and entertain members regarding all aspects of the NORTON motorcycle, including history, technical advice, and preservation. NORTON NOTICE is not for sale, but is provided as a benefit to members of this Branch.

## OFFICERS AND STAFF

### PRESIDENT

Harvey Loucks  
7583 Lockford Ct.  
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(408) 255-7356  
(BEFORE 9:00 PM)

### VICE PRESIDENT

Maya Petersen

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Art Sirota  
(415) 747-0740

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Tom Horton  
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### NORTON NOTICE STAFF

Michael Heth  
Harvey Loucks  
Phil Verzola  
Bob Marshall  
Taking applications

## ADVERTISEMENTS

Current and prospective members may place ads for Norton-related material wanted or for sale in TRADING POST. Send all necessary information to NORTON NOTICE. There is no charge for ads in TRADING POST.

### COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING RATES

	1 Issue	3 Issues	6 Issues
1/4 page	\$5.00	\$13.00	\$25.00
1/2 page	\$9.00	\$25.00	\$45.00

Ads may be designed by the Staff if so desired.

NORTON NOTICE IS A REFLECTION OF ITS READERSHIP AND EVERYONE IS URGED TO SUBMIT ANY ARTICLE, TECHNICAL TIP JOKE, PHOTOGRAPH, ORIGINAL OR OTHERWISE SO THAT OTHER NORTON ENTHUSIASTS CAN ENJOY IT. FOR BRANCH MEMBERS WHO CANNOT OTHERWISE ATTEND RIDES AND MEETINGS, NORTON NOTICES AFFORDS THEM AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE EXPERIENCES WITH THE ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP AND BRING US ALL CLOSER TOGETHER.

DEADLINE FOR ITEMS IS THE 20TH OF EACH MONTH.



## MEMBERSHIPS

Membership is available in three categories.

**FULL MEMBERSHIP** gives membership in the NORTON OWNERS CLUB with its benefits and privileges such as bi-monthly issues of ROADHOLDER MAGAZINE sent directly from England keeping members abreast of Norton owners activities from around the World, the SPARES PROGRAM that allows one to buy Norton parts directly from England at an attractive, low cost, and full voting privileges at all NOC and Branch meetings.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP** is established for any Norton owner wishing to be associated with the Northern California Branch and are welcomed at all meetings, rides and other functions. Members are urged to become FULL MEMBERS as they become familiar with NOC advantages and benefits.

**SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP** is established for Norton enthusiasts who have not yet bought their Norton to become familiar with NOC and Branch functions and to assist them in finding a Norton suited to their needs. Although Social Members do not have Branch voting privileges, they are welcome with their ideas at all Branch functions.

NORTON NOTICE is provided to all three membership categories and the publication is open to all for articles and ads they wish to submit.

**FULL MEMBERSHIP:** \$25.00/yr.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP:** \$10.00/yr.

**SOCIAL MEMBERSHIP:** \$10.00/yr.

ALL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE PAYABLE TO THE BRANCH TREASURER. RENEWAL DUES ARE PAYABLE AT THE END OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S MEMBERSHIP YEAR, THAT MONTH BEING DESIGNATED BY THE LAST NUMBER OF THE MEMBERSHIP NUMBER LOCATED ON THE MAILING LABEL OF NORTON NOTICE. Example:

999/6

denotes member number 999 with dues expiring in JUNE.

BRANCH MEETINGS ARE HELD EACH SECOND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH; LOCATIONS ARE ANNOUNCED IN THE NORTON NOTICE CALENDAR.

BRANCH RIDES ARE HELD THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE MEETING, TIME AND LOCATION ALSO ANNOUNCED IN NORTON NOTICE CALENDAR. IN THE EVENT OF RAIN, THE RIDE IS POSTPONED UNTIL THE NEXT SUNDAY. IF IT RAINS THAT SUNDAY, THE RIDE IS CANCELLED FOR THAT MONTH.

OCCASIONALLY, MEETINGS AND RIDES ARE SCHEDULED FOR DAYS OTHER THAN THE SECOND THURSDAY AND FOLLOWING SUNDAY. BE SURE TO CHECK THE CALENDAR FOR ANY CHANGES.



## MAY MEETING

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING HELD ON MAY 14, 1981  
AT EDINBURGH CASTLE, SAN FRANCISCO

Art Sirota

Harvey Loucks called the meeting to order at 8:30 with 27 members present. The overnight trip to Morrow Bay was discussed in detail as was the subject of the low condition of the Branch Treasury. Suggestions were solicited from the membership to remedy the situation. Possible solutions, like raising the membership fee, will be discussed at the next meeting.

Tom Horton gave his state of the Treasury speech. We owe \$140 to Ducey's Lodge for the rally, \$31 to NOC England, and \$110 to Gene Austin for money he has laid out of his own pocket for Norton paraphernalia to sell to the Branch members to bolster our treasury which contains \$85.73.

Chris Richardson, our member from Wales on holiday in California, was introduced in person! He is our first member in the U.K. and this was his first opportunity to attend one of our meetings. Chris is from the town of Cardiff.

Steve Coburn made an announcement about the Vintage Motorcycle Rally in Irvine on May 27.

Jerrt Henry, Spares Officer, announced that he knows someone who is willing to sell Club members Amsoil or Neo synthetic oil and related products for jobber prices. Twenty four quarts for \$88.60. Also, the electronic ignitions from Gander and Gray should be arriving shortly.

Art Sirota introduced a game called "Know You Norton and Win a Beautiful Poster of a Manx Norton Suitable for Framing". All members joined in playing and after much suspense and fun, Jan Barton was declared the winner.

## PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS

I hate to sound repetitious, but we had a hell of a good time on the overnighter down South last month. About fifteen of us gathered at Brooks and after "kicking tires" with Ed and admiring the old machines he has on display, we rode on down to lunch at the River Inn in Big Sur. The weather was perfect, four wheel-er traffic light, and the Nortons were running good (as usual). Our campground looked like an ad out of *Sunset Magazine*, and after dinner in Morro Bay, we enjoyed a few beers, roasted marshmallows around the fire, and participated in some lively intellectual discussions.

Thanks to Jerry Reynolds, we enjoyed some beautiful desolate twisty back roads the next day and eventually ended up in McEllister after a stop at the Pinnacles Park for a little R&R under a big oak tree. It was one of the best ways I can imagine for wiping out a weekend.

Chris Richardson, one of our branch members from Cardiff, Wales, was visiting N. California and joined us for the ride. A very pleasant fellow and a genuine Norton nut, Chris certainly added to the enjoyment of the ride.

On another topic, we are rapidly going broke! This is somewhat cyclical and has come about this time due to the increased costs of printing and mailing the Norton Notice primarily, but also due to printing some posters and buying some paraphernalia. The Notice currently costs about \$10.70 per year to publish and mail per member. With dues at \$10 per year, you can see the problem. Actually, we may not have to raise the dues if we can collect from the folks who advertise in the Notice (most of whom are overdue) and if we can cut printing costs, and if we can break even or make a few bucks on the beer bust and Rally. This or the next issue of the Notice may be printed at the midnight Xerox to help out. Anyone who wants to pay their dues a little ahead of time will not be turned away, and might even get ahead of a raise in dues. Any other ideas on how to raise a few bucks would be gratefully appreciated. We'll talk about this some more at the next meeting in Mountain View at Chez Yvonne.

The events of the next four months will certainly be the most ambitious and fun on our calendar for this year. On May 14 (Sunday) we will have our annual Beer Bust at Memorial Park on Pescadero Road near La Honda, then on July 10, 11, & 12, we'll have the big Rally at Bass Lake. Our August event will be a ride honoring all pre-Commando Nortons, and it looks like there will be at least a dozen of the old Nortons there including several singles. Then in September the ride will be an over-nighter up North somewhere, probably in the Sierras. So mark your calendars now and get set for a summer's worth of hot Norton action!

Keep 'em upright!

Harvey

## JUNE MEETING CHANGE

Another group got ahead of us and reserved the stuffy little room at the Winery in Palo Alto, so our meeting on Thursday, June 11 will be at a nice little French restaurant in Mountain View, the Chez Yvonne. It's located at the intersection of El Monte and El Camino Real and the address is 1854 El Camino Real West, Mountain View. Chez Yvonne has a separate banquet room for us (seats 70) with our own bar and bartender. The catch is that we have to drink up at least \$175.00 worth of beer, wine, liquor, and etc. or the club treasure has to make up the difference. This means we need a big turnout of thirsty folks from the South Peninsula area like we had at the Winery two months ago.

(continued next page)



## The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch

It should be a good meeting. We're going to discuss how to go about digging up some bucks, maybe raise the dues, and have a technical presentation by that technocrat of much renown Gene Austin. Gene is going to talk about how to improve your head. He just had some performance work done on one of his at Mick Hemmings in England and will compare it with a stocker. Bring a thirsty friend and enjoy the show!

## T-SHIRTS? WHAT T-SHIRTS?

For those few who ordered T-Shirts and were wondering about them, here's the poop.

Since only 14 shirts were ordered and it was hardly worth going through all the hassle of ordering such a small quantity, ordering deadline has been extended through the BEER BUST. Anyone wanting shirts, just fill out your order blank and get them to me by the 14 of June. Additional forms will be available at the BEER BUST, so come and get 'em!

*Bob*

## BRANCH EVENTS

DATE	TIME	PLACE	EVENT
6/11	7:30	CHEZ YVONNE 1854 El Camino Mountain View	Meeting
6/14	NOON	San Mateo Mem. Park, Pescadero Road (see insert)	whooppee!
7/9		Edinburgh Castle San Francisco	Meeting
7/10, 11, 12		Bass Lake	Norton Rally
8/13		The Winery	Meeting
8/16		Alices Restnt.	Pre-Com- mando rd.

### HAS ANYONE SEEN MICHAEL HETH, LATELY?

Actually, Michael and Sitta have begun a project so ambitious that Homer would be proud! They have left with their touring-equipped 1975 MK III on a trip across the United States and Canada stopping in most of the nations' scenic areas and, if all goes well, they will be sending in reports "THROUGH THE WINDSCREEN" along with photographs of their adventure.

Meanwhile, he has turned over the NORTON NOTICE to the remaining staff members listed on page 2 and with a little luck, the NOTICE will go on with little or no difficulty and the Staff and membership with Michael and Sitta the best of luck in their trip.

## Brooks Cyclery

TRIUMPH  
NORTON  
BSA

NEW AND USED PARTS  
TELEPHONE 295-4341  
(408)

MOTO-GUZZI  
DUCATI

ED BROOKS  
OWNER

1615 ALMADEN ROAD  
SAN JOSE, CA 95125

BROOKS CYCLERY HAS BEEN A NORTON DEALER EVER SINCE 1948 AND IS STILL SERVING THE BAY AREA WITH A COMPLETE STOCK OF NEW NORTON PARTS, TOOLS AND ACCESSORIES FOR YOUR NORTON.

- \* ED BROOKS - OWNER - 31 YEARS
- \* BOB RABER - PARTS - 20 YEARS
- \* 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.



## TAUBER'S LEATHERS

CUSTOM RIDING APPAREL  
FOR THE MOTORCYCLIST

126 SUTTER

SAN FRANCISCO

392-1462





# NOTES FROM THE FIELD

( from Brian Cunningham's renewal application )

I advocate a large club membership of strictly Norton owners.

I want to be a Full Member of the Northern California Branch without being forced to contribute to the ROADHOLDER Magazine, but I don't have any option. This forces me to be an Associate Member.

Compared to some of the other motorcycle magazines I receive, specifically BMWMOA and USNOA, I consider the ROADHOLDER Magazine to be inferior in content and completely unreliable as to the number of promised publications per year and timeliness of scheduled publications - certainly not worth the money demanded.

I propose that a full membership be offered to serious, long term club members who participate in club rides, etc, and help make the club an active club without being forced to contribute to the parent organization that provides obscure benefits at a ridiculous increase in full membership cost.

Sincerely,

Brian

Thank you for your comments, Brian.

First, one has to keep in mind, the Northern California Branch is just that, a Branch of the Norton Owners Club and we are not a Club within ourselves. This does not mean, however that we are restricted in our efforts to recruit members

About three years ago, when the Branch had about 45 members, these same feelings you have were present then - there were members who wanted to have a strong, active Nortons-only group, but were not satisfied with the benefits that England offered with the ROADHOLDER, Spares Program, dealer discounts (all in England), etc.

The seeds for a change were planted at a meeting at Tim Coburn's house where about 10 members were discussing how to better organize in order to make the Branch a better group. It was suggested that we drop all but the minimum six full members required for a branch and the remainder of the members would pay a token amount to cover costs of mailing meeting notices, club activities, etc. This seemed a bit extreme, but it would have indeed been effective.

If alternate memberships were to be offered, there needed to be benefits from this Branch to be attractive to prospective members. This was the reasoning behind NORTON NOTICE when it began - to keep Branch members from this area up to date on meeting locations, rides, special events such as the Beer Bust, parts and bikes for sale, photographs of members Nortons, etc. In general, NORTON NOTICE was to be a timely publication that would tie the whole Norton population of northern California together.

Branch membership as you see it was proposed and voted on by full membership and passed by a wide margin and, in retrospect, it has made this group what it is today - from 45 members to well over 200 in a little over three years. Your "Associate" membership is a full membership as far as the Branch is concerned and you receive all the benefits as the any member, but you are not "forced" to contribute to England.

The Northern California Branch today is the largest of the Norton Owners Club branches covering an active membership area larger than the city of London (and it's big). Branch activities are moved around the Bay Area to allow all members to participate and this Branch is a very active group (check the "Branch Events" section). And, NORTON NOTICE is the only monthly Norton publication distributed internationally. (Now just watch, someone is going to write in and prove me wrong again!)

In defense of the Norton Owners Club in England, bi-monthly ROADHOLDER magazines are delivered on a regular basis (there are six a year) and it delivers a view of Norton special in its own right. It's true, ROADHOLDER is not for everyone and the lag time in events is certainly large, but they are a dedicated group actively seeking to reproduce parts for older Nortons and keep in stock necessary parts for the current Commandos.

This Branch has received criticism in the past for our "revolutionary" methods of recruiting members, but it has turned out to be a very positive factor for England - hardly a month goes by without a former Associate" member changing his status to "Full" membership and it looks like the trend will continue.

*Bob Marshall*



## PALO ALTO YAMAHA

YAMAHA • TRIUMPH • NORTON

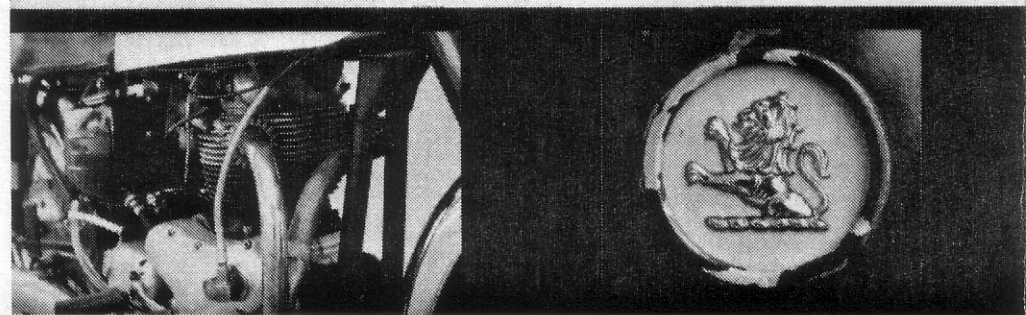
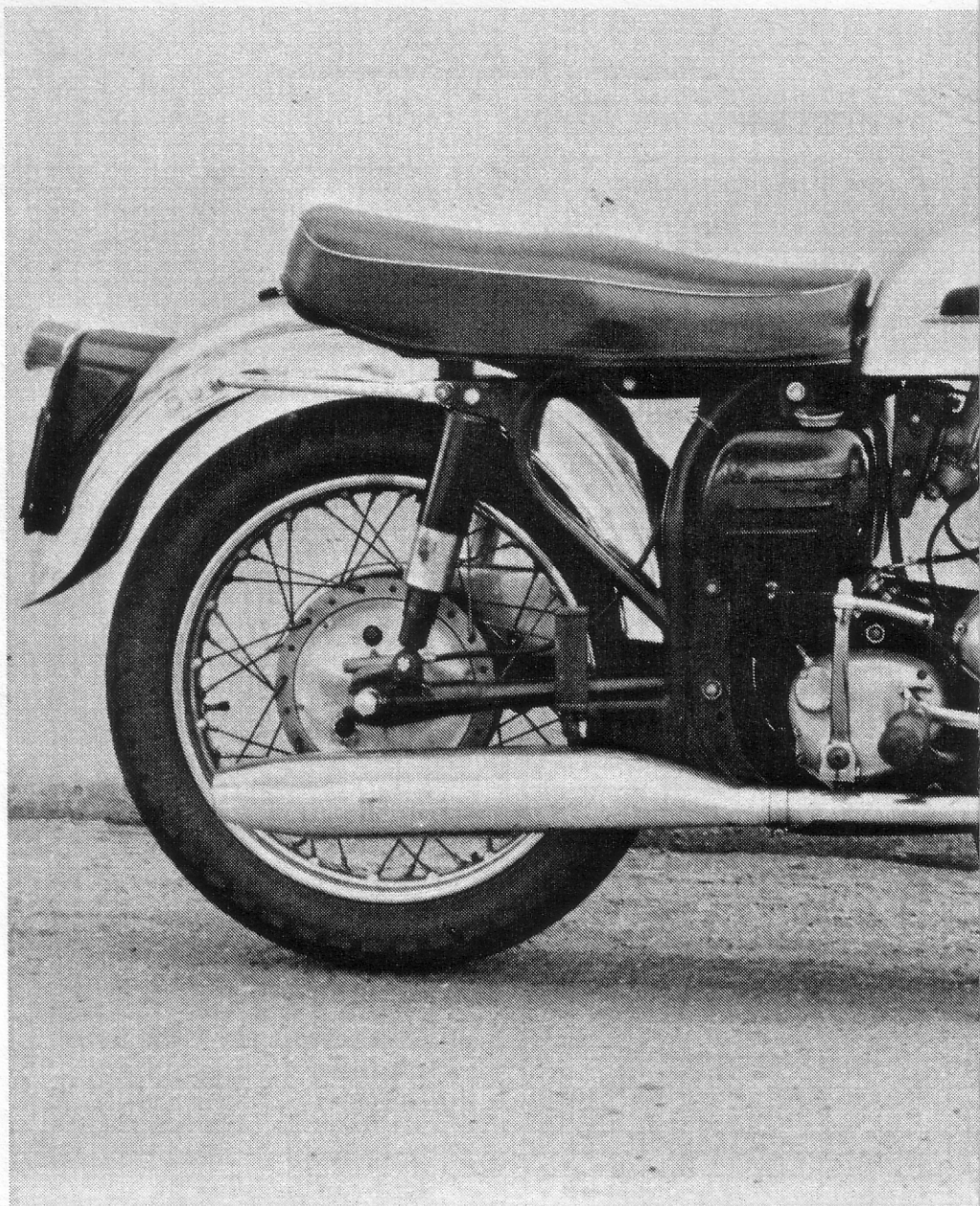
SALES • SERVICE • PARTS

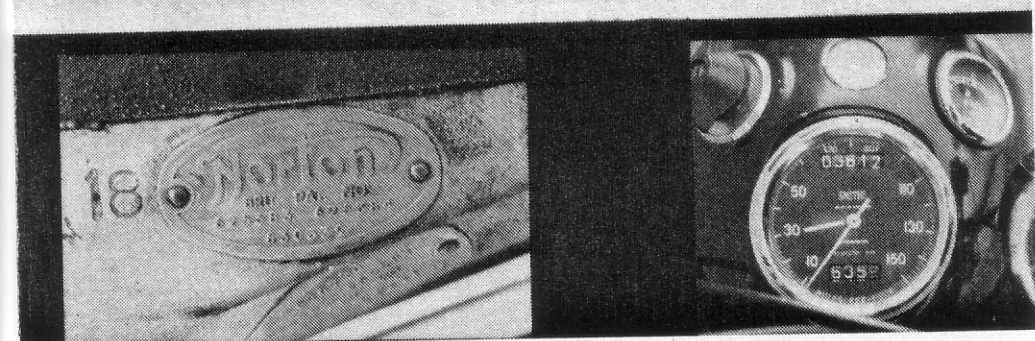
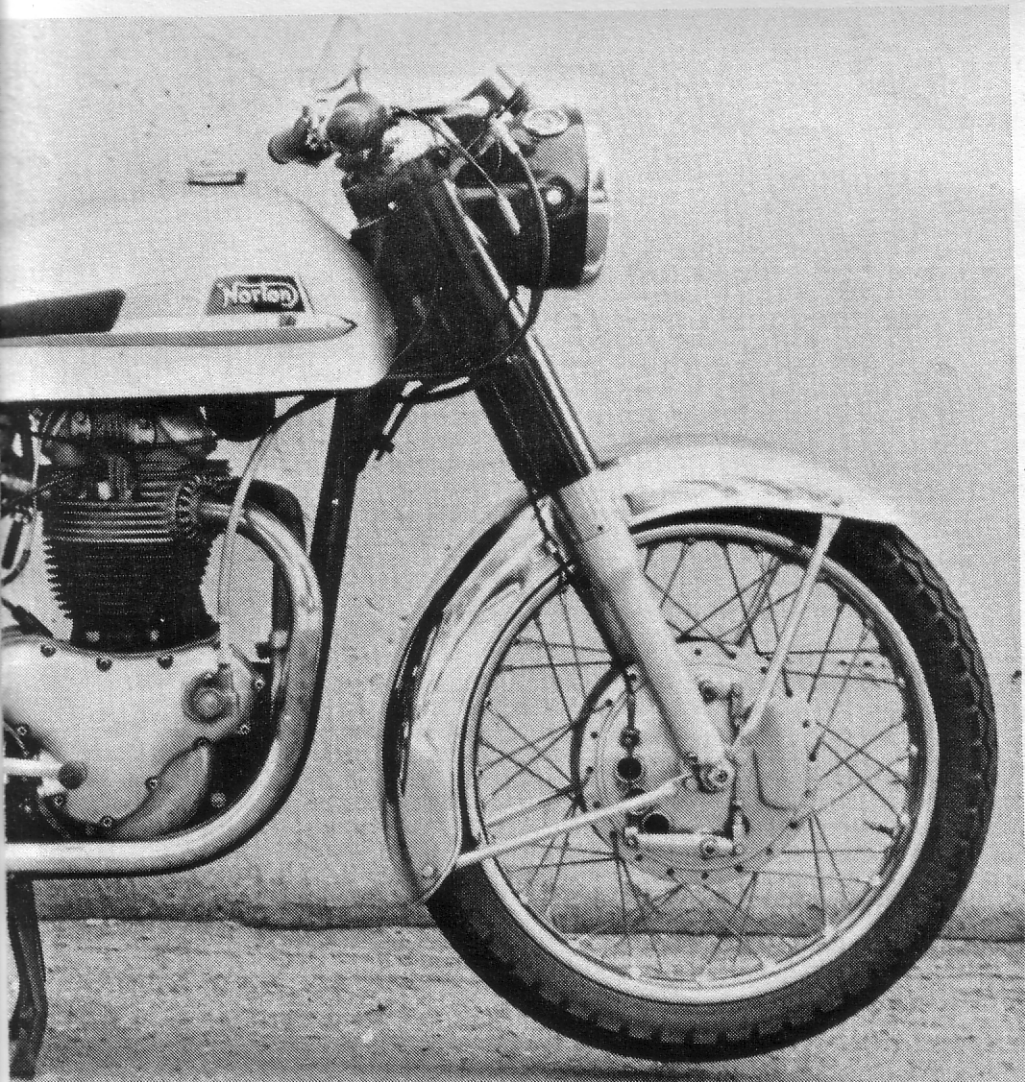
3960 EL CAMINO  
PALO ALTO, CA. 94306  
415 493-3414

**Norton** PARTS AND SERVICE

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

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.

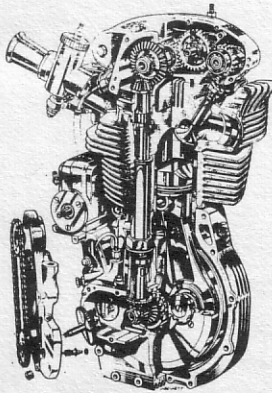








**The Newsletter of The Northern California Branch**



**TRADING POST**

FREE:

One new valve adjusting screw and jam nut for the BSA 650. Gene Austin, (415) 573-9559 3:00 to 8:00 p.m.

FOR SALE:

Almost complete Dominator 650 engine in three large pieces (head, barrels, & bottom end) plus extra head. All or part, very reasonable - not like some of the ads in this rag!

'71-'74 Commando rear wheel, complete. \$40.

Double leading shoe front brake and wheel. \$30.

Single leading shoe front brake and hub. \$15.

New pair of pattern mufflers for a '53-'56 Dominator 88 or 77 (peardrop shape). \$120. Ridiculous price? Try finding a set of 'em! Gene Austin, (415) 573-9559 from 3:00 to 8:00 P.M.

Parting out wrecked 73 750; call Rich Brand after 6:00 415-325-7521

For sale: Rearsets for Atlas and one set of Tomaselli control levers. Best offer. Must sell by June 11. Call Dan Nord 415-648-7876

FOR SALE: RARE 1969 Commando "S", original owner, original condition, metallic blue, 37,000 miles (less than 5,000 from the case up). Make offer.

FOR SALE: 1971 Commando Roadster, Dunstall cafe tank, clip-ons, etc. much new, \$1500 or best offer.

FOR SALE: '75 Interstate tank (silver), excellent condition with seat to fit any model Commando, \$225.

FOR SALE: Luggage Racks; one Interstate, one Roadster, \$20 ea

Many other miscellaneous parts.

Call Mark Gribble (415) 573-1699

WANTED: Frame for Norton 88 twin contact Ron's Cycle Sales 215 Lancaster Street Leominster, Ma. 01453

**MORE STUFF AND JUNK FOR SALE SALE!**

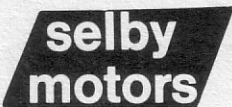
- Alloy racing oil tank for Commando \$40
- Michelin M45's 19 in. front, 18 in. rear \$45 40
- Brand new Britax crash bars. frt & rear \$40
- Tracy Body for Norton (integral tank, seat, and fender) 35
- Brand new speedos and tach \$50 40
- Pl1 oil tank and cover, excellent! \$25
- Disc Brake set up, complete \$225
- Original John Player Norton Exhaust pipes (Black Chrome) 200
- Atlas oil tank \$60 50
- Atlas battery cover \$25 20
- \$15

Call Harvey between 6 and 9pm (415) 255-7356 I can bring this stuff to the next meeting.

WANTED: Seat and Front Fender for '64 Atlas Charles McHose 5312 W. 138th Pl. Hawthorne, Ca. 90250

FOR SALE: 1975 MK III, 2400 original miles., Red/White/Blue Roadster, shop manual, Halogen Lamp, Nylon cover, \$1800.  
Shoe ZG Helmet, Kryptonite lock, \$150  
Dick Rogers, (415) 548-5658 or 848-4100  
Keep Trying!

FOR SALE: 1974 Commando Roadster, "cherry" with only 7000 original miles. Call Brian Coyne at (415) 365-4530

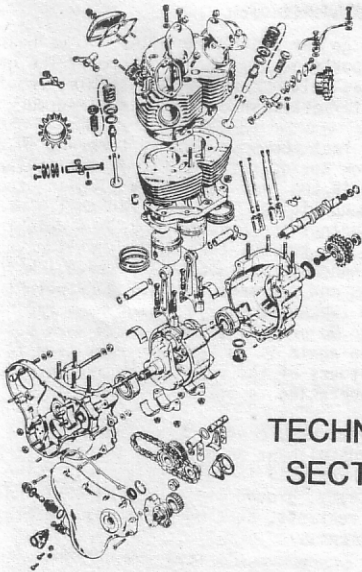


- motorcycle sales
- self service
- accessory dept.
- complete service dept.
- machine shop
- insurance
- notary service

JACK MORRIS, Branch member and Norton enthusiast is the man to see at SELBY'S. Jack's been riding and working on Nortons for years and knows the ins and outs of keeping the beast healthy.

SELBY MOTORS has a complete line of motorcycling accessories and is a BMW, Triumph, Suzuki dealer whose service department will take the time to get your machine running and keep it that way.

They have LUCAS RITA in stock and their British stock changes weekly, it seems, so check with Jack to see what has just come in.



## TECHNICAL SECTION

For all you Norton owners who always wondered if you could remove and replace the cylinder and head as one unit, the answer is yes.

I had to replace a lifter, but didn't want to mess with the head; this procedure saves time, a head gasket, and fun with pushrods.

Removal is the easy part: First remove all external attachments to the head, carbs, ignition coils and brackets, head steady, tach drive cable, etc. Install the center head steady allen bolt loosely in the head. Put a rubber band or bands from this bolt to the adjusting bolt end of each rocker arm. This retains tension on the pushrods so they won't drop out of place.

Place the pistons at the bottom dead center position and put the machine in gear. This should hold the pistons in place while lifting the cylinder/head assembly. Remove all cylinder bolt base nuts and remove the unit lifting it up and forward. Once the rings start to clear the cylinder, DO NOT let the cylinder drop downwards - the rings bend very little.

Reinstallation has one catch; it takes two people (thanks Gene Austin). Place the pistons at bottom dead center with machine in neutral and pistons just starting up if you were to hit the kick starter. Oil the pistons and cylinder thoroughly and position rings and install ring compressors. Have one person hold the cylinder over the pistons while the other starts the pistons into the bore. It will be necessary to use the kick starter to raise the pistons so you can keep the cylinder high to make room to guide the pistons with your hands. Once the pistons are all the way up, you should be able to remove the compressors from the rods. Lower unit onto the case and reassemble as usual.

If anyone has any questions, I will be glad to answer them.

Mark Gribble  
(415) 573-1699

### Performance Improvement Series Part I, Handling Improvement, Continued.

This is the second of a series that deals successively (mistakenly typed "successfully" last month) with handling improvement, rider improvement, reliability improvement, and finally power improvement. Don't take the suggestions as God's own truth about Nortons, but as Harvey Loucks' personal opinions based on about fifteen years worth of riding, reading on, and BSing about Nortons.

Anyhow, last month we all read about how important tire choice and pressure are, as well as wheel alignment, trueness, and balance. This month we'll continue on with a look at how to set up some of the other suspension components. However, before I forget it, I would like to add a few more comments to last month's topics.

Some guys have laced up 18 inch rims to the rear of Commandos. These seem to work pretty good with no obvious adverse effects on handling. I have several bikes with 18 inch rears and can't tell the difference between these and 19s as long as a large 18 inch tire is used. In fact, most guys who race Nortons put 18s on the rear and often on the front as well. They do this to take advantage of the fat, sticky tires they can get in that size and not in 19s. A really good all around combination seems to be the Continental K112 4.00H18 rear and RB2 3.25H19 front. For really fast work though, stick (a pun) with the Dunlop K81 4.25/4.85H18 rear and 4.10X19 K81 front. With these large crosssection rear 18 inchers, the rolling radius is the same as with the 19 inch tires. In addition, you get more load carrying capacity with the 18 inchers. Now on to new and exiting topics

Starting up front with steering improvement, keep your stock front fender. The little cafe' jobs are cute, but the stock fender is very sturdy and acts as a fork brace. If you can hold your front tire between your legs, grab the bars, and twist the front end more than a couple of degrees back and forth (the bike, not you), it's too loose. The front forks have to be parallel and solid to work right. You can check fork tube parallelism on Commandos by putting a truly flat plate up against the fork tubes. I use a piece of aluminum mill stock that is about 5 inches by 8 inches by 3/4 inch thick, but any flat plate will do. This plate should lie flat on the fork tubes with no rocking motion. If not, loosen the tube clamps and twist the forks as before until they are parallel. Now with the bottom clamps loose, tighten the snarf out of the top nuts, then do the same with the lower triple clamp bolts. Also, the axle nut and the axle pinch bolt must be tight. But don't tighten the axle pinch bolt until you've bounced up and down on the front end a few times with the brake on to center up the fork leg slider on the axle. This is important for fork wear and operation.

(continued next page)



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Check out your steering head bearings. After many miles, or through overtightening, they tend to get nothed in the straight ahead position. Somehow get your front end off the ground and turn it back and forth slowly. If you feel a roughness or a detent in the straight forward position, you need new steering bearings. Instructions on changing these can be found in most workshop manuals, as can instructions on how to fix or replace most of the other stuff I talk about. While we're on the subject of manuals, I think the best one is the Clymer because it's complete, easy to use, written in American, and edited by Brian Slark. The Haynes is disorganized, has poor pictures, and is written in the foreign language of English. Finally, the good old original Norton workshop manual confuses with too much unnecessary detail and it's too expensive.

Forks also tend to forget about greasing their wheel bearings. Repack and clean these little guys every 10 or 15k so they won't run dry and wear out or seize up. Seize up is not good for handling.

Another area for improvement in the front end is the fork oil and fork seals. The best fluid for your forks is actually a good grade of shock oil in either a 20 or 25 weight. Shock oil doesn't change viscosity as much as standard fork oil with variation in operating temperature. Fat guys and fast guys should use 25W (mix equal parts of 20W and 30W) and everybody else should use 20W. 30W is too stiff and doesn't allow the front wheel to follow the undulations in the road as well and gives an overly harsh ride. The problem with the lighter stuff is that it doesn't provide enough damping and the wheel tends to bounce as well as bottom out and top out the front suspension. The spring rate on the fork springs seems to be about right and can only be improved by going to a dual rate spring which keeps the front end from "diving" as much in hard braking.

Fork seals effect handling adversely by increasing the friction between the fork tubes and slider. This transmits the shock from small bumps into the frame. The teflon type seals commonly available (Ken Ross for about \$13 a pair) really take care of this problem and give a noticeably smoother ride. In addition they come with a lifetime no-leak guarantee.

Now for the shocking truth! The oil in your original equipment Girdlings turns to water after about five thousand miles, less if you ride hard. The shocks are probably still good, but since they are not rebuildable, you're stuck. A new pair of good shocks does wonders for handling. You can brake harder into a corner and accelerate harder out of a corner without the rear end misbehaving. My favorites are the standard Konis which have adjustable damping, are rebuildable, and are heavy duty construction. The oil breaks down in these too after about 8k miles, but you just dial up the damp-

ing and go for another 8k miles. I've heard good reports on the S&Ws and some of the gas shocks as well. Any good adjustable, rebuildable aftermarket shock would probably work well.

Another fact about your stock Commando is that the shock spring rate (how stiff the spring is) of 126# is too high for solo riding and too low for two up riding. For solo riding 110 or 112 pound springs are best for a medium weight rider. For two up, 150# springs will give much better handling and ground clearance. With clip-ons and rearsets, more of your weight is forward (where it should be for fast riding) and even 90 or 100# springs would work best. The idea again is to help the rear tire follow the contours of the road better and keep the shock operating in its best position.

Enough for this month! Stay tuned for the final installment on handling improvement next month which will include isolastics, swing arm, head steady, ground clearance, control adjustments, rearsets, seating position, and braking improvements.

Keep 'em upright!

Harvey

## THE ISLAND

BY STEVE COBURN

Now that June is here, I can't help thinking back to where I was and what I was doing at this time last year -- the Isle of Man TT!

What an adventure! I'd dreamed about going for quite a long time, and last year, the dream came true. You might have heard TT nuts call "The Island" the "Mecca of motorcycling", and like me, scoffed. Well, for what it's worth, I can honestly say I don't scoff any more.

First, a bit of history. The famous Tourist Trophy motorcycle races were founded in the Isle of Man as a result of legislation being made by Tynwald (the I.O.M. Parliament and oldest continuous government in the world) in 1904 to give powers to close roads so the Royal Automobile Club could provide facilities for the Gordon Bennett International car trials. Subsequently, the Act was amended to allow road closure for motorcycle racing. This took place in 1907 under the auspices of the Auto-Cycle Club.

The first motorcycle races were held over 10 laps of the "Short Course", an 18 mile circuit starting and finishing at St. Johns, passing through Ballacraigne, Kirk Michael and Peel. St. Johns, incidentally, is the site of the annual N.O.C. reunion where all these photos were taken.

In the first year, the events were for single and twin cylinder machines, the former being won by C.R. Collier (Matchless) at 38.22 mph and the race for larger machines being won by H. Reinfowler (Norton) at 36.22 mph.

In 1911, the races were moved to the "4 inch" or "Mountain" course over poorly surfaced, grated roads on the high sections. The first

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"Junior TT" over 4 laps was won by P.J. Evans (Humber twin) at 41.45 mph and the "Senior" was an American win with Indian machines finishing 1, 2, 3, and the winner, O.C. Godfrey, clocked at 47.63 mph.

missed very few pubs in our daily jaunts and there was always plenty of locally brewed Okell's Ale to keep us well-lubricated. Unlike the rest of the U.K., the pubs on the Isle of Man do not close in the afternoon, an added attraction which did not go unnoticed by the assembled multitude. Rain or shine, race day or practice, the pubs all did a booming business from late morning 'til almost midnight.



The assembled NOCcer multitude at the Norton Owners Club reunion in St. Johns



An interesting 350 International set up for the road with Manx short circuit tank. Note readily accessible Norton plug wrench in boot.

The 37.75 miles long Mountain Course has since become the most famous of all road racing circuits and the numerous fine vantage points have won renown.

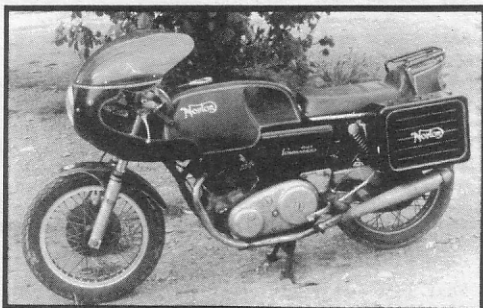
In 1922, the Lightweight TT was introduced for machines under 250 cc being first won by G.S. Davison on a Levis at 49.89 mph and in 1923, the first sidecar TT was run. The next major change came in 1955 when a 10.75 miles Clype Course was used for the Lightweight 125 cc, sidecar, and 250 cc classes, but in 1960, all TT races were returned to the Mountain Course where they run to this day.

**Enough history!**

What really impressed me was the feeling I got from the Island itself. It is difficult to pinpoint the source of that feeling, but everyone seems to get it. A large part of it, no doubt is the incredible number of machines and riders that swarm to the Island each year for the TT fortnight. It is a truly inspirational spectacle, one everyone must see to appreciate. More than mere numbers, however, it is the Isle of Man itself and the people who live there who are primarily responsible for the feeling. The Manx people, male and female, young and old, rich and poor have all grown up with motorcycling. That is to say, they do not fear motorcyclists as many people seem to do and the result is that no matter where you go on the Island, people treat you with a reasonable amount of respect. A motorcyclist does not have to endure the subtle discriminations we've come to expect from non-bikers. No matter how oily his leathers may be, he is a welcome guest to the Isle of Man.

When we weren't absorbing what the Manx pubs had to offer, we were usually out riding the TT course or exploring some of the other sights on the Island. Many little towns and villages scattered about, each with its own unique claim to fame seemed to be around every corner. There were magnificent mountain roads to ride and hidden valleys with cows and sheep grazing peacefully. The frequent roar of motorcycles on the roads didn't seem to bother the four-legged Manx residents a bit!

Although I was staying in Ramsey with an old family friend, I was easily able to explore all of the Island and watched the racing from excellent vantage points all along the TT course. I saw the famous Laxey water wheel early one

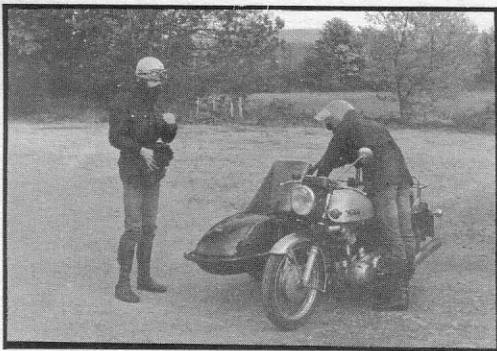


A beautiful Commando 750 set up for long distance touring - fill the tank and ride all day!

Riding around with my new friends from Nottingham, including N.O.C. member Phil Radford (who was kind enough to loan me his Interpol for the fortnight), I was able to absorb all the Island had to offer. And absorb I did! We

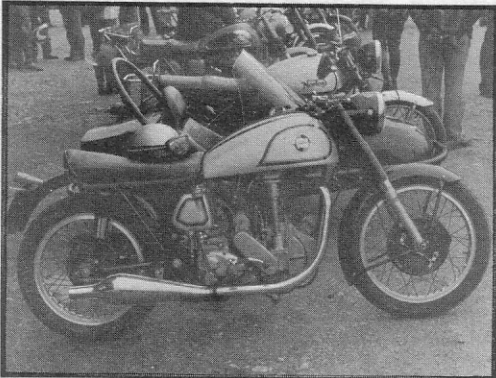
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A nice Commando 750 sidecar rig and a couple of very cold NOCcers.

morning and the beautiful little harbor and the Rushen Castle in Castletown. I rode beside the little narrow gage Isle of Man Railway one day, and spent a warm, sunny afternoon at the beach in Port Erin. I visited the lighthouse at Point of Ayre, the northern tip of the Island and spent quite a lot of time near the inner harbors of Ramwey and Douglas. These are all fine places that bring back fond memories -- with I were there!



A road-going International with a proper pudding basin helmet. 'Never found the owner of this beautiful machine.

I could go on and on about my two weeks on the Island last June, but instead, I'd like to recommend that you try to do it yourself next year. Experiencing the feeling I did on a small British Island in the Irish Sea that is perfect in every way for the total motorcycling experience, and enjoying not only the warmth of the local Manx people, but also the enthusiasm of the thousands of motorcycle nuts who actually double the Island's population for TT fortnight, will provide a motorcycling adventure you will never forget.

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What looks at first to be an Atlas, this 1962 650 SS has been brought back from the "basket" by Louis Mendelowitz and can be seen on many Branch rides and meetings. Not quite back to original condition yet, Louis has managed to save this rare machine from the spares boxes to ride and enjoy.

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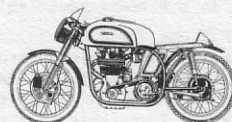
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