WE'RE ALL HERE BECAUSE WE'RE NOT ALL THERE

Norton Colorado Newsletter

www.nortoncolorado.org

August/September 2024

We have had our first week of No Rain this year! Managed to get out every day trying to wear out the bikes, thought you might like this photo, taken at the top of Glenquaich on Sunday, Fiona on the Mk3 and me on the non electric start 850. Gino Rondelli

Upcoming Events

2024 Calendar See Page 12

September 8, 2024, Sunday, Old Bike Ride.
September 15, 2024 (Sunday), English Motoring Conclave.
October 6, 2024 (Sunday), Plains Ride, hosted by Scott and Julie Robinson.

Look for club emails or check the website for more details about these gatherings.

Mount Evans/Blue Sky Ride and Brunch

Hosted by Dave Sheesley and Matt and Mariah Norman

Another fun Norton Club event. We had a whole lot of motorcycles of various makes and models for this beautiful ride. Once we got to Dave's place we were treated to a wonderful spread of food served us to us by Mariah and Friends. If you've been to this event before it was as good as ever. If not, you should plan on joining us next year. Thanks to everyone who helped set this up and all of you who attended. I sure had a great day.

So, Big Mike says to me, "Why do I always have a plate of food in front of me in all the newsletter pictures?" You can fill in the answer,

And after a nice ride and a good meal, a well deserved nap.

A nice collection, and variety, of motorcycles made the ride.

Riding Ohio by Scott Robinson

While I've ridden through Ohio many times, I never really thought of it as a motorcycling destination. Well, much to my delight there's plenty of good riding in the southeastern part of the state. While riding around the country visiting family I decided to detour through parts of Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. As with other parts of the Appalachian Mountains there are plenty of crooked roads to be found.

Ohio State Road 555 is referred to as the "Triple Nickle". It is accessed by going south through Zanesville, which is on I-70. It quickly becomes a challenge, probably better suited to a Norton than my Road King. There are steep ups and downs coupled with sharp rights and lefts. Going over a hill there is no clue which way the road will go next. Most of it is well paved and the scenery, when I dared to take my eyes off of the road, was excellent. After that came SR 676 which was more of the same. I finished the day off in the historic town of Marietta, on the Ohio River. It's interesting to note that from I-70 to Marietta direct is a 1 hour ride. The scenic fun route took over 3 hours.

The next day I rode SR 26 north through Wayne National Forest to Hannibal, OH. From there I took another local favorite, SR 536 and looped back to the river. More challenging and beautiful roads. I then headed north along the river to Moundsville where I crossed into W. Virginia. The crooked roads continued through southern Pennsylvania. After a bit I headed north and back to I-70.

My little detour turned out to be quite the treat. If you are ever in the area, I highly suggest spending a day or two checking it out, I will. There are many more interesting looking roads in southeastern Ohio.

I recently had an interesting conversation with Matt Norman about Sodium Ion batteries being the next breakthrough in Motorcycle batteries. Matt is the owner of Euro Moto Electrics https://www.euromotoelectrics.com and he said he is getting a prototype of this new battery so he can check it out. Here's a couple of links if you want to do some research.

What Are Sodium-Ion Batteries, and Could They Replace Lithium? (howtogeek.com)

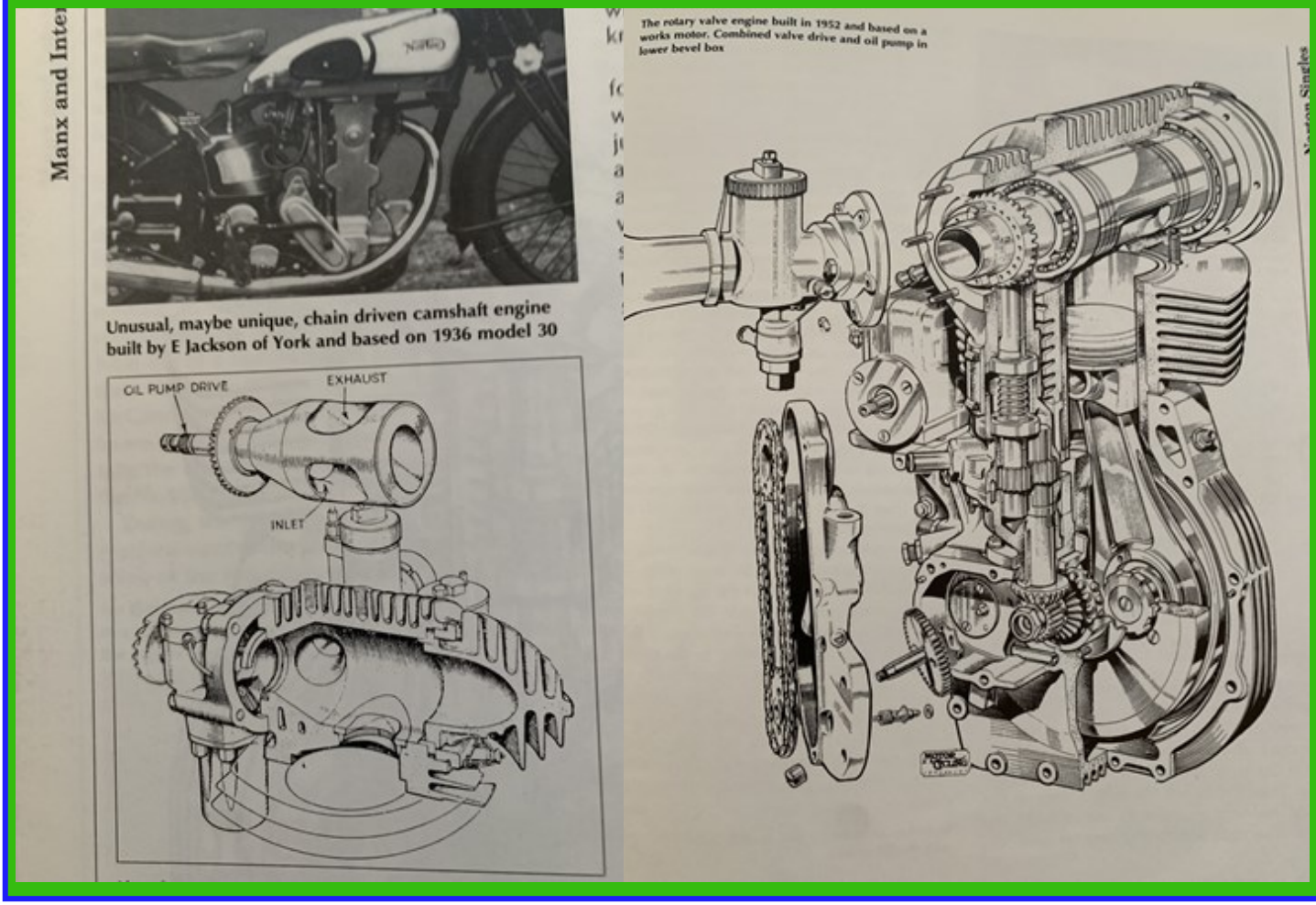
How sodium could change the game for batteries | MIT Technology Review

From Michael Homs. This video should be watched by anyone who feels motorcycle parts cost too much. It would also be a good mandatory film for any high school students who feel the consequences of not getting a good education, or good skills (the trades), doesn't matter!

I worked in a factory very similar to the one in this film back in San Antonio in 1966 and '67, The floors were not quite as dirty but we didn't have OSHA and there was no such thing as safety gloves, glasses, or aprons for spot welding. I spot welded window air conditioner housings, and like these guys, as fast as I could, all day long. I made 50$ a week after taxes.

Amazing Manufacturing process of Motorcycle Fuel Tank With minimal tools (youtube.com)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpxVRyBCvmU



Jamie and Michelle Jones Open Garage

Due to a forest fire the Jones' yearly Wimpy Campout had to be post-poned. After the fires were put out they invited us up for an open garage party instead. It was a beautiful day so a ride to Conifer was a pleasure. Jamie and Michelle are excellent hosts. The food was great as was the company and the conversation. Thanks guys, it was a fun afternoon.

Some of Jamie's toys. Couldn't decide which view I like better so here's both angles.

AWESOME NORTON!

Sometimes dreams are expensive. Well, usually they are. Whether your particular dream has two legs and the right parts to go with them, a hull and an outboard motor, four wheels and fuel injection, or two wheels and carbs… dreams will cost you.

Motorcycles are my lifelong passion, well at least since age 8, and following a 30-year career in the US Navy, they seem to multiply like rabbits in my shop. I have built or repaired dozens and currently have around 30, of 13 different makes. Since the 1960s and my exposure to the Norton girls, I lusted after a Commando (and of course a Norton girl), finally purchasing a 1974 model about ten years ago.

As I planned to keep the bike forever, I lavished many dollars on an Alton starter, large 13" front brake, NYC breather kit, repainted frame, adjustable Isolastics, on and on and on. However, and this is the truly expensive part, I became a fan over the last 20 years of Matt Rambo's Norton work at Colorado Norton Works, in Delores Colorado.

Matt is the Svengali of Nortons and builds truly magical machines, using his famous billet parts and implementing every improvement known to man. Three years ago, I spec'd out the machine I wanted, sold 8 or 9 other bikes, and sent Matt a fat cheque to build my dream Norton. This is the first time I ever paid anyone else to build me a bike and the result is a true piece of motorcycle artwork! Occasionally someone will ask how much the build cost and I simply say I used to have three sons, now I only have two…

Due to Covid complications affecting everything from the supply of Brembo brakes and Keihin carbs, as well as taking down key players in the modification of cylinder heads and key billet parts, the build took three years. I flew to Colorado in July to meet the builder and the bike and test ride it in the Colorado mountains. Matt is truly a magician and you can see the result. This is bike #144 which can now be seen on Matt's web page (coloradonortonworks.com) in the Gallery section.

The one downside to the machine is having to allot at least an extra 30 minutes anytime I visit a motorcycle shop or event to deal with the throng of admirers. People ask 'What year is your Norton?' and I am not quite sure how to respond. I usually say 'It is a 1973 but has had a little work…' kind of like those expensive two legged dreams with all the right parts.

Thanks for your efforts on the magazine. I am a faithful subscriber and always look forward to reading the articles written in your humorous British style.

Kevin Lemire, member

Goodness! What a superb machine. Thanks for sharing it with us, Kevin. I am envious…
Frank W

Motorcycle Stuff on the web:

Check out the club websites new photo galleries:
https://nortoncolorado.org/galleries/

Here's the link to the discussions page on the website:
https://nortoncolorado.org/discussions/

Amazing 1965 BSA 650 Thunderbolt - Let's Take It for a Ride - Wahoo! - YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNRrPAwiDro

1 More State Allowing Motorcycles to 'Filter' Through Traffic, but Not Split Lanes
https://www.motorbiscuit.com/state-allowing-motorcycles-filter-traffic-lanes/

For the Moto Morini fans
Moto Morini Kent 2024 | Flickr

Norton Commando VR880 Sprint Special for sale on BaT Auctions - sold for $25,000
https://bringatrailer.com/listing/norton-vr880-sprint-special/

"Trisolastic - Fantastic" Norton Commando 900… 1975/76 Work's Prototype. Fitted with a Triumph Trident 3 cylinder engine,stretched to 900cc, into a Commando frame. It never saw the light of day, passing to private hands in 1978.. Photographed in 2012 by Julian K at Birmingham NEC.

Jesse Carraway mentioned that he recently acquired most of the used parts, and possibly a number of new ones, from Matt Rambow at Colorado Norton Works. Matt is no longer building complete bikes so he doesn't need that inventory. Jesse had previously purchased the inventory of the club's Parts Depot when we lost our storage site and he already had a large inventory of his own parts, so at this point I think it is safe to say Jesse has the largest inventory of Norton parts in Colorado. He is glad to help out fellow club members who are in need:

Jesse Carraway
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jesse@fastmail.fm

Too old to ROCK n ROLL

PART FOUR

Photos by Alan Smith

Alan Smith's first restoration of a British classic twin continues. How hard can it possibly be to fit Commando-style mudguards to a mid-Sixties Dominator?

Next the stainless, Commando-type mudguards needed fitting. The pre-drilled front went on easily with one set of stays, carrying a mudflap. Fitting the rear guard required a useable seat, as the mudguard is attached to a bracket on the seat with a Dsuz fastener. Doris the Dominator came to me with a pattern seat with a base that required welding. I'd been looking for replacement seats for some time. Leightons didn't have any suitable seat pans available but did quote to reupholster my seat and refurbish the base.

There were none in stock anywhere and no prospect of finding one anytime soon. I was at the point of packing the old base to send to Leightons when I advertised through the Nortons Owners' Club. An email arrived from a fellow NOC member who had a couple of saddles for sale. This was during pandemic times, so a socially-distanced viewing was carried out in his garage. I was also able to admire and check a few build details on his very nice and original-looking Dominator. Both of the saddles were obviously used but in fair condition; one of them needs some attention to its fitting loops, for instance. I decided to buy both – for quite a bit less than the cost of a refurb of my own seat. By early 2023 I saw that the Norvil were advertising new seats at £365 plus VAT and carriage – considerably higher than the prices listed for out-of-stock items when I searched the year before. Good old supply and demand!

Seats obtained, the fitting of the undrilled Commando mudguard could commence. Some work was required to ensure sufficient clearance above the rear wheel, but not so much that Doris's refurbished rear end looked as ungainly as when she arrived. I used a plastic cream pot on the rear tyre to support the guard, giving a gap similar to that on my Bonnie and to pictures of other Nortons. Then a total of 16 holes had to be carefully positioned, taped, punched and drilled in the loose mudguard to accommodate fixings, Dzus fastener and screws, side mountings (via home-made stainless brackets to the frame), rear light and number plate mountings plus wiring to the light and indicators. This required a little juggling using my workmate and some old towels to prevent scratches.

The mudguard also required some flattening at the front to cure a dent and to enable the vertical, straight frame bracket to attach properly. A mudflap – modified to clear the chain – would protect the swinging arm area and oil filter from muck thrown forward by the rear wheel.

Now the engine was in and the bicycle build completed, my thoughts turned to

1964 Dominator 88 showing the standard mudguards

The mudguards fitted when the bike was bought

Positioning the rear mudguard

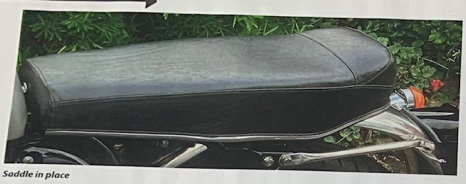
Earthing the indicators

wiring and ignition. There wasn't a standard wiring diagram for my bespoke set-up which involved negative earth, electronic ignition with a modern, double-ended coil, indicators, an ignition key and earth wires from every component rather than grounding through the frame. So I designed my own, positioning the regulator and ignition components in and under the tool tray. It took some time and three iterations to achieve a full wiring schematic, labelling the appropriate wire colours and showing all the connectors.

I designed the wiring in three zones to enable easy removal of major components for future maintenance. The schematic enabled me to determine the positions and quantities of all the single, double, triple and quadruple bullet connectors required. Because of these zones and earthing there is more wiring and many more connectors than usual on a bike of this age, but with quality connectors and crimped bullets along with the correct wire colours, it all works as it should.

A wiring starter kit was obtained from AO Services. This provides the materials for a basic set-up and gives a useful wire colour key and guidance for the beginner. It was good to get started although my design was going to be more complex. I started with rewiring all the lamps and switches that were to be re-used, as corrosion and age had taken their toll on contacts and wires. The earth ➤

Front and rear indicators, ready to flash at times of need



Saddle in place

Primary cover nut

tag in the rear light had corroded away so it was drilled out and a small nut and bolt inserted to carry the earth terminal. I cut a new lens gasket out of inner tube as the original was missing, and I also cut a gasket to sit between the lamp and its bracket to reduce vibration and water ingress.

This Dominator came with a spring-loaded pull-on rear brake light switch, with the terminals and wiring facing upwards to catch the rain. I took it apart to clean the innards and reversed its orientation to push-off, as in the original Norton set-up. The terminals now face down and are therefore slightly less exposed.

The non-functional horn was carefully de-rusted, dismantled, checked, cleaned and re-assembled… but it still refused to sound so a reasonably priced modern replacement was sourced.

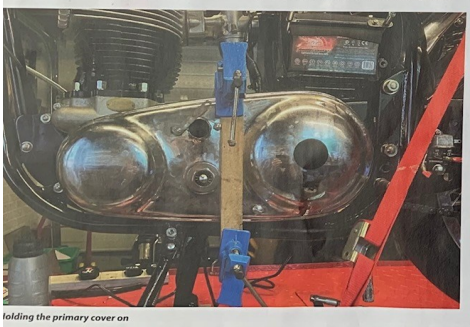
The aged and decrepit headlamp bulb holder was replaced by an inexpensive replacement from RGM. The SA88 switch was treated to some contact cleaner and a new connector plug and the appropriate terminals were wired for the pilot and headlamp.

The horn and dip switch appeared to be functional and was cleaned and rewired. I had an interesting time introducing earth leads into the new 'genuine' Lucas indicators, as the sheathing was a bit snug for two wires. A thin metal wire pull-through was used and a decent result achieved with the help of some talcum powder to ease the cable through. Speedo and tacho bulb holders had grooves filed into their bases and earth wires soldered on.

Then all the components were secured in their allotted spaces. The ignition unit and double coil with its heatsink live under the tool tray, benefitting from cooling airflow. In the tool tray reside the Boyer Powerbox and indicator relay. All the wiring is protected by sheathing with grommets when passing through metal components to prevent chafing. The wiring for the rear lamp and indicators runs in sheathing secured with P-clips inside the mudguard for neatness. Many a happy hour was spent measuring lengths of wire, running them through the appropriate sheathing, terminating them at either end, and systematically connecting them up to their allotted component.

Adding indicators, indicator switch and multiple earth wires meant that the bundle of wires entering the headlamp was much larger than before and it was quite a job to ease them, the speedo cable and the speedo trip reset toggle through the two inch headlamp grommet. After a bit of a struggle, all items were in place and reasonably tidy and the headlamp unit still fitted into the shell. My right hand got rather sore from use of the bullet crimping tool, but I thoroughly enjoyed my first attempt at motorcycle wiring.

The AGM battery was a little bigger than original but still fitted into the battery box. The U-bolt and securing bar had to be extended and the holes in the rear of the battery box eased a little. With all wiring except the ignition components in place, a low rated fuse was put in the holder and the battery connected. The lights illuminated, the indicators flashed, and the replacement horn worked – very loudly! To say I was pleased understates it somewhat.



Holding the primary cover on

That drain plug oil weep

Positioning the footrests

However, something was amiss as moving from dip to main beam caused the fuse to blow. I checked the switch, and all appeared correct, so it was re-cleaned and replaced. When tested, the fuse blew again, so the switch was removed, and a temporary switch rigged up to check the wiring. This worked as it should, so the original (60-year-old?) switch was at fault. A pattern replacement was sourced and fitted and normal functioning was restored.

I'd also begun attaching the instrument and control cables. Speedo and tacho cables were fairly straightforward, apart from the struggle at the headlamp-mounted speedo end. As I was using non-original levers with adjusters, standard Dominator cables for clutch and front brake would not fit. The simple answer for the clutch was a Commando cable, while the front brake was a bespoke cable from JJ Cables. It appeared that I was a little generous when specifying the measurements for the front brake inner cable, as about half the available adjustment was taken up from new. I had measured what I thought was required for the new levers using the old cable for reference. Maybe the old cable was well stretched?

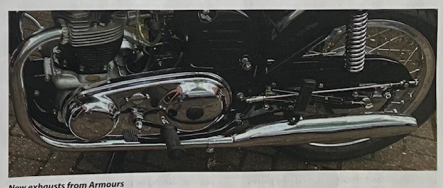
When adjusting and testing the clutch there was more movement of the mainshaft than lift. I slackened off the spring nuts to clear the studs by a couple of threads and a more normal clutch action was restored. Were these original studs? Had they been shortened? Was this a Dominator clutch? While more normal and with minimal mainshaft movement, the clutch action was very heavy and this with 7/8" fulcrum levers. Not wishing to stress the new mainshaft bearing, I ordered some new clutch springs in two strengths from RGM in preparation for some more testing.

When the new springs arrived, I installed the lighter clutch springs and tightened the spring nuts to level with the cups rather than the studs in the first instance. Clutch action was much improved and I hoped there would not be a clutch slip issue with the lighter springs installed.

Next up was ignition. The Pazon's installation and set-up seemed reasonably straightforward. Since the timing pinion marks were correctly set before the head went on, I was confident that static timing on the Pazon would be OK, at least to start with. The thin wires from the ignition unit to the trigger were routed as far away from other electrical items as practical. Sheathing was cut to a length that took the sheathing a little way into the magneto replacement body, to be secured with the wires on the ignition stator using a small cable tie.

With a degree disc on the crank secured with a spare alternator rotor nut, the recommended 31 degrees BTDC at full advance was set. The engine was turned over again and the settings checked and rechecked until I was happy the static setting was likely to be accurate. Spark plugs were inserted in the HT leads and rested on the head. With ignition on, the engine was turned over in the dark and sparks were observed at both plugs. I was a little disappointed by how small the sparks looked but was reassured by my experienced friend Alistair that this was normal with electronic ignition.

With wiring done and ignition set, the timing cover and outer primary chaincase could be attached. New seals had been fitted to the timing cover and oil pump, sealant was applied to crankcase and cover faces and ➤



New exhausts from Armours

All done bar the tank

the gasket and cover fitted and tightened up. A new snug-fitting primary chaincase sealing band was fitted; correct way round, on a bead of sealant applied to the outer rim of the inner chaincase, and the sealant was allowed to cure overnight.

The nicely re-chromed outer cover was greased around the inner rim with red rubber grease and placed over the sealing band. I found it impossible to hold the cover evenly while applying enough pressure to push against the sealing band and allow the footrest tube threads to emerge for the rubber seal, washer and nut to be fitted. A strip of wood was placed vertically against the centre of the chaincase, held by sash clamps to the inner chaincase at the top and the lower frame rail at the bottom. The sash clamps were carefully tightened until the threads on the footrest tube cleared the central hole and the rubber and metal washers could be fitted and the nut screwed home. The manual states that two threads should be showing. However, mindful that the case is easily distorted if overtightened, I used a thinner than standard metal washer and tightened the nut enough to just clear the teeth on the footrest tube.

The footrest rod was inserted into the channel created through the engine plates by footrest tubes and spacer tube and the footrests placed on each end. The footrests had to be held in position by straps hanging from the frame on both sides while the timing side plain nut and drive side dome nut were attached and tightened. What a performance!

130ml of ATF was added to the primary chaincase to check for leaks. No oil appeared from between the sealing band and outer chaincase, but a steady weep emerged from below the level plug. This was due to a crack in the cover around the threaded level plug bush. The footrests and cover were removed, the cover thoroughly cleaned and the crack sealed using JB Weld. After giving a couple of days for the repair to completely cure, the chaincase was reinstalled and the leak had gone. Back on with the footrests…

With the timing cover fitted, I could now prime the oil pump, oil filter and associated pipework prior to filling the oil tank. Using my oil can, the oil filter and pipework were back-filled via the return pipe to the oil tank until oil appeared at the end of the return pipe at the engine end. Oil was pumped down the feed pipe to prime the feed end of the pump. The oil tank was filled and the engine turned over on the kickstart (plugs out) until oil was seen returning to the oil tank.

I spotted a gearbox oil leak from round the kickstart shaft. I took advice from the NOC forum and cured it by removing the outer cover, cleaning it thoroughly and re-installing the X-ring seal with additional sealant.

A new exhaust system came from Armours and unwrapping the components revealed some very shiny chrome. It all fitted quite well but required some adjustment to one of the header flanges on my bench grinder for it to pass the delicate alloy threads in the exhaust port. The new stainless rose nuts were tightened using the special tool.

Doris was looking like a complete motorcycle, except for one important element: the petrol tank. This was still at Alistair's being painted after the many leaks were welded up. Much high build priming and cutting back was required to give a decent appearance to the many curved parts of the tank which catch the light. Finally it was finished in metallic silver with black vinyl transfers and clear lacquer. I'm pleased with how it turned out. RC

NEXT TIME: Gentleman, start your engine!

More old bikes online: Real-Classic.co.uk

Jack rode his Norton to the top of Beartooth Pass

Robin and Eric got the '78 Strada he bought a year ago running today. She's going to ride it in the Small Bikes Big Adventure ride in about a month, the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Bob Herman has some Norton parts to sell:

I have several Commando seats and a tailpiece that I don't need, and I'd like to offer them to club members before going to eBay or Craigslist with them I don't know what to charge but will take less from a Norton Colorado member than from an "outsider."

1 nice Mk3 seat with hinge

1 nice 750 seat

1 Fastback tailpiece - good shape except for a small crack (damaged in shipping, easily repaired)

I'm going to bring them up to Golden, they will be at Eric's house so a club member won't need to drive down here or pay a big shipping charge.

Bob Herman 719 256-4527; romomoto@gmail.com

Eric Bergman <bergman@csd.net>

Fastback tailpiece

MK3 seat

Bob Herman's Royal Enfield Bullet

(Not sure if this is for sale?)

Highrider seat base

Norton Colorado 2024 Event Schedule

February 4, 2024 (Sunday), 5pm, Winter Banquet, African Grill and Bar.

March 23, 2024 (Saturday), Rocky Mountain Motorcycle Museum, Colorado Springs.

May 19, 2024 (Sunday, 10-1), Open Garage hosted by Ric and Joy Landeira.

June 2, 2024 (Sunday), Big Tent BBQ

June 8, 2024 (Saturday), 8am to 2pm, Colorado Vintage Motorcycle Show,

June 13-16, 2024 (Thursday-Sunday), Four Corners Rendezvous hosted by Steve Harris and Charley Gremmels.

June 17-21, 2024 (Monday-Friday), INOA Rally, Woodstock, New Hampshire.

July 7, 2024 (Sunday), Mt. Evans Ride and Brunch hosted by David Sheesley.

July 21, 2024 (Sunday), BMAC Picnic hosted by Frank & Joanne Puckett.

August 3-4, 2024 (Saturday-Sunday), Wimpy Sleepover hosted by Jamie & Michelle Jones.

August 18, 2024 (Sunday), Open Garage.

September 8, 2024, Sunday, Old Bike Ride.

September 15, 2024 (Sunday), English Motoring Conclave.

October 6, 2024 (Sunday), Plains Ride, hosted by Scott and Julie Robinson.

3 hot girls and a motorcycle, what more can you ask for.

October 27, 2024 (Sunday), Open Garage, hosted by Jonathan Chaikin and Tamara Hale.

November 9, 2024 (Saturday), Fall Tech Day.

December 8, 2024 (Sunday), Pints Pub.

January 1, 2025 (Wednesday), Clancy's Irish Pub.

January 12, 2025 (Sunday), Piper Inn.

February 1, 2025 (Saturday) Winter Banquet. (Ideas for a new venue? Contact Eric)

Membership

Membership in Norton Colorado is open to anyone, regardless of whether they own a Norton, or any motorcycle whatsoever.

Dues are $25 per family unit, payable to "Norton Colorado" and sent to the Treasurer, whose contact information is listed on the last page of this newsletter.

The official club membership list is posted on the club website. Please let Eric know if there is an error.

The membership year begins with the Winter Banquet in February. New members who join after August 1 are credited with membership for the following year.

Club Events

Many events have been scheduled for the 2024 season, usually about 2 per month. Participation in these events will be counted for the President's Award. Events may be added, dropped, or re-scheduled through the year. The schedule can be found in this newsletter or check the schedule on the club website:

https://nortoncolorado.org/events/

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Credits: Thanks to Eric Bergman, Jim Colt, Michael Homs, Julian Kowalewski, Dennis Oberwetter, Gino Rondelli and David Sheesley for their contributions to this newsletter.
I also want to say thanks to others who sent me things I will use in future editions.

Norton Colorado

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