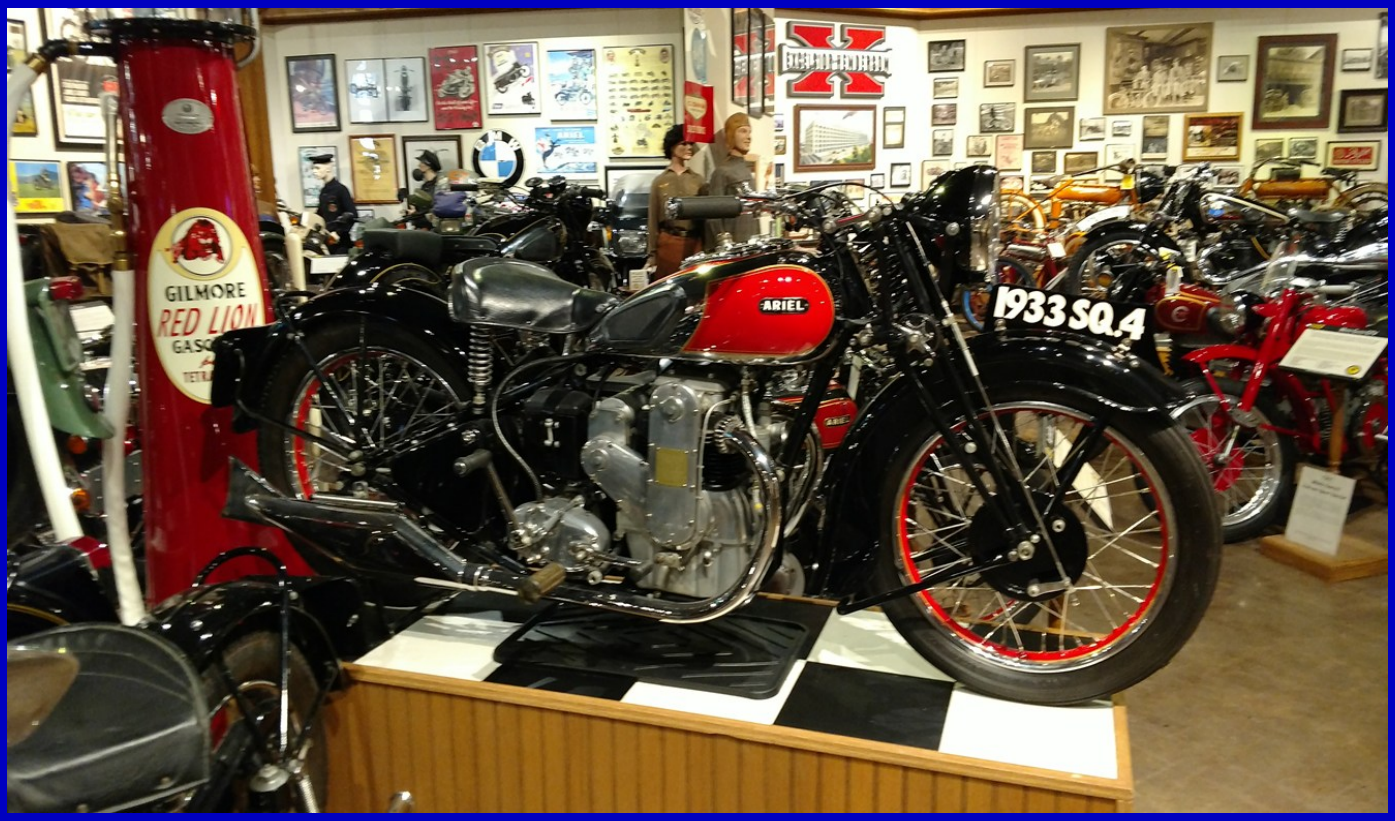
WE'RE ALL HERE BECAUSE WE'RE NOT ALL THERE

Norton Colorado Newsletter

www.nortoncolorado.org

April 2026



Upcoming Events

2026 Calendar See Page 11 (NEW)

April 12, 2026 (Sunday), Group Ride, TBA

May 17, 2026 (Sunday), AMCA Swap Meet, 955 Decatur St., Unit M

Time to volunteer for hosting an event for this year. Interested? Contact Eric.

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

Jesse Carraway's Open Garage and BBQ

Jesse is a long-time member of Norton Colorado but does not get out to very many of our events. He has been involved in the British bike scene around Denver for a long time and he's well known to some of the older club members. Jesse operates what I would call a semi-commercial motorcycle repair shop, specializing in Nortons. Besides being a gracious and charming fellow he is one of the last competent Norton mechanics to whom you might (if he approves the cut of your jib) be able to take your Norton for repair, maintenance or restoration. He also has a very extensive collection of used Norton parts and project bikes.

Visiting Jesse's open garage with the Norton Club was a nice way to spend a Saturday. It would be easy to spend a day or so just looking at his collection of pieces and parts. Jesse is also very knowledgeable about Nortons. I always learn something new during our conversations. Thanks to Jesse for hosting and everyone who showed up. Always nice to see you all.

Norton Manx DOHC Engine – The Backbone of British Racing Heritage

The Norton Manx DOHC engine is one of the most iconic racing motorcycle engines in history, representing the peak of British single-cylinder engineering during the mid-20th century. Originally developed as a single overhead cam (SOHC) design in 1927 by Walter Moore, the Manx engine evolved continuously through decades of competition before reaching its most famous and dominant form with the introduction of double overhead camshafts (DOHC) in 1949. This evolution transformed the Manx into a benchmark 500cc racing engine, especially when combined with Norton's legendary Featherbed frame, creating a package that defined handling and performance for an entire generation.

The 1949 DOHC "Double Knocker" Manx marked a turning point. With twin camshafts driven by a vertical shaft and bevel gears, the engine achieved far more precise valve timing and higher safe engine speeds than its SOHC predecessor. This upgrade allowed Norton to remain competitive against increasingly sophisticated European rivals. In 1953, further refinement arrived with the short-stroke version, featuring nearly square bore and stroke dimensions of 86 mm x 85.6 mm, enabling higher revs, improved breathing, and increased peak power—crucial advantages in Grand Prix racing.

The Manx was produced primarily in 350cc (M40) and 500cc (M30) variants, both air-cooled, four-stroke, single-cylinder engines with DOHC valvetrains and twin valves. While absolute horsepower figures were modest by modern standards, the Manx delivered strong, usable power and exceptional reliability for its era. These qualities made it a favorite not only of factory riders but also of privateers, who continued racing Manx Nortons successfully long after Norton withdrew official factory support.

A critical part of the Manx legend is its partnership with the Featherbed frame, introduced in 1950. The rigid, well-balanced frame complemented the engine perfectly, giving riders unmatched confidence in corners. Together, the DOHC Manx engine and Featherbed chassis became synonymous with superb handling and race-winning consistency, dominating national and international 500cc racing throughout the 1950s.

Legacy and Modern Interpretations

The influence of the Norton Manx extends far beyond its original racing era. Today, original Manx engines are among the most sought-after classic racing powerplants in the world, prized for their engineering purity, mechanical beauty, and historical significance. They continue to compete in classic racing and inspire countless retromod and continuation builds.

The Manx spirit has also been reimagined in modern form. Contemporary Norton projects—such as the Manx-inspired V4 road machines—translate the philosophy of the original into the present day. These modern interpretations feature liquid-cooled, DOHC V4 engines producing around 200+ horsepower, demonstrating how the Manx name has evolved from a dominant single-cylinder racer into a symbol of high-performance British engineering across generations.

In every form, the Norton Manx DOHC engine remains a cornerstone of motorcycle racing history—an enduring symbol of innovation, balance, and timeless mechanical excellence.

Norton NEVERWOZZERS

PART THE FIRST

Pre-production prototypes offer unique insights into what went on in the old British bike industry. Many were broken up and their unique components consigned to the scrap heap. It's hard enough to rebuild working replicas… but what if you actually want to ride them? Paul Henshaw fettles two of the bikes which Norton never made…

Photos by Paul Henshaw, Anthony Curzon, Richard Negus, RC RChive

I was in the old shed, rummaging through some bits and pieces, when the cordless phone I had taken in there with me for a change, rang. I answered it to a chap asking me if I worked on Norton unit 650 twins. 'A crank call,' I thought, and humoured him by saying I was aware Norton had experimented with the idea of a large unit-construction twin but, apart from a couple of prototypes, none were ever made.

'Yes, the prototypes. I have the two of them,' came the reply.

I suddenly realised this was no crank call and that this could be an opportunity not to be missed. I also realised the gravity behind such an opportunity should I muck up: I could end up being well-known for all the wrong reasons if it went pear-shaped. From experience I know the drama, the struggle and (eventually) the successful result of a near-impossible project – and the very welcome high that comes at the end. A similar experience led me to start Performance Classics in the first place. It's been a while since I've experienced any comparable career pinnacles. Oh, go on then, let's take a look at these Nortons. What could possibly go wrong?

I recall reading about these engines many years ago and RC has featured them in the past. I always get the same thoughts about prototypes like this that 'never were'. Someone once rode a machine powered by one of these engines. Someone knew how they ran and performed, heard the sounds they made while running, which the rest of us can only now imagine. Someone finally decided; 'Actually, we're not going ahead with the project. Scrap it.'

And so, nobody outside of a very select few ever got the chance to find out what might have been, whether these bikes could have been just the machine for them, or not. Large capacity pre-unit Norton twins continued to be produced for many years after the plug was pulled on the Unified Twin project. What a shame. Or was it? Read on...

The big day arrived, as did the prototype Nortons. Neither of the two engines are now housed in their original rolling chassis. I believe that one was a factory testbed engine, while the other was mounted in a Model 7 rolling chassis for road testing. In their current forms, the more complete engine (which had been the road-testing unit and was rescued from a skip by a Bob Collier, apparently) lives in a silver slimline featherbed frame. The other engine, which needed a crank, camshaft, rockers and the fabrication of many other vital components, is now housed in an attractive, metallic red N15CS rolling chassis.

I was informed that the slimline needed a full engine strip and rebuild, thanks to the oil disappearing very rapidly from the oil tank into the engine, then escaping from the crankcase joint and leaving a terrible mess underneath in next to no time. The N15 sounded like it should be easier to deal with, so I figured I would try that one first and ease myself into the unknown as gently as possible.

INTO THE N15

The N15-type bike would only run on one cylinder; the electronic rev counter read very low; there was some primary chaincase noise which 'couldn't be fixed' and a set of mushroom-headed tappet adjusters were supplied to be fitted.

Noise: ah, yes. Much of my time spent on this machine was devoted to tracking down and trying to eliminate noises.

It wasn't too hard to get this engine running on two cylinders. The N15 is fitted with two carbs and one had a blocked pilot jet, which was the main culprit for the ➤

The big red twin is the story this time; next month finds Paul sorting out this, the silver machine

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Norton's prototype unit twin: neat and compact, and with the camshaft behind the cylinders, unlike their earlier engines

The timing side, showing the Pazon ignition system and a little Norton ancestry in the rocker box layout

poor running. Running on two cylinders, the engine sounded very crisp, so I took it for a short test ride. We hadn't gone very far when I opened up the motor, just a little, to overtake a van. What a terrible racket! I thought the engine was going to explode from the worst pinking I had ever heard. I got out of the van's way and pulled over, turned round and gently rode home where I could investigate.

These investigations continued throughout the project. I satisfied myself that basics like the timing and carburettor settings were suitable (what is 'correct' after all?) but the noises had me just about tearing my hair out. Repeatedly I thought I had found the culprit – but no. Possible causes were the horn vibrating against the fuel tank; a broken ignition coil bracket allowing the coils to jangle about; loose seat bolts; loose headlamp unit; sidestand vibrating against the frame; suspect instruments rattling inside; suspect front forks (which were fully stripped, checked and rebuilt); suspect front wheel bearings (new ones made no difference). The list went on: no stone was left unturned. I even removed the handlebars and gave them a good shaking in case anything was rattling inside them!

The drive chain had been brushing against the tunnel where it entered the gearbox sprocket area of the power unit, and the chain itself was 2mm wider than the Renolds item fitted to my own Trident. A Renolds chain was duly purchased and fitted, but… the noise persisted. You could be going along quite nicely, then all of a sudden it would sound like someone was on the pillion, playing castanets very loudly. Most off putting. The noise sounded like it was coming from more or less anywhere, which led to many perfectly innocent items being suspected. Every time I did something and thought 'That's got to be it', a test ride, often aborted, would show the problem persisted and back to the workshop we would go.

The amount of time going into this was mounting up – one ride was cut very short by the clutch cable breaking – but there was no way the N15 could be enjoyed as it was. The positioning and entry angle of the clutch cable into the engine casing was far from ideal, and might have been a candidate for modification if production had gone ahead. It was very awkward to remove, fit and adjust, with the adjuster threaded into a small detachable housing on the top of the engine / gearbox casing. Putting the adjuster part way along the cable, or at the handlebar would have been a much better location.

The N15-type twin was rather low geared and quite vibratory. I rode over 300 miles on it. One time I had just left the A40 after pressing on a bit to be rewarded with the engine suddenly becoming much louder, accompanied by a loud clanging to my left,

Cylinder head with the rocker box removed

The rocker box from the underside. The carbs are close together while the exhausts are widely splayed, aiming for a straight path for the combustion gases

Behind the inner primary case; no room for a larger gearbox sprocket

Gearbox sprocket nut has a left hand thread

beneath me. I looked down in horror as the exhaust downpipe bounced and jangled merrily on the road. The push-in exhaust assembly had overcome two nuts fixing it to the cylinder head to make a bid for freedom. Alarmingly, with the centrestand supporting the pipe and silencer further back, it had slid forwards and looked like it might head for the front wheel!

Thankfully, it flipped to the left and I managed to stop safely. I had no means of carrying a relatively undamaged hot pipe and silencer home, so, with my gloves most definitely still on, I picked up the assembly and hid it in the hedge so I could come back later, armed with some bungees. I continued the ride homewards on the Norton rather more noisily than before, but we made it back without any further drama.

Nyloc nuts were employed and done up very tightly when the exhaust was refitted. The downpipe spent a brief spell in the hydraulic pipe bender, to tweak it a little, to make a better and deeper fit into the cylinder head. Hopefully that would put paid to that little gremlin!

A couple more short rides involving a steep downhill stretch in the lanes meant I could test a theory regarding the noises. First, I rode round to the top of the hill where I stopped the engine and free-wheeled down. The noise was clearly evident, usually when bumps and holes in the road were encountered. Now I knew for certain it was not engine or primary drive related, although some of the gearbox internals would still be turning. I went round again, this time disconnecting the rear chain before free-wheeling down the hill again. The noises were gone! So it definitely wasn't the engir and it was very unlikely to be the gearbox, either. This brought some much-needed peace of mind!

I followed some information sent to me by owner Anthony, and recalibrated the rev counter to tell the truth rather than showing 66% of what was really going on. This was verified by a hand-held

The stuff of dreams, at the base of the Devil's Staircase

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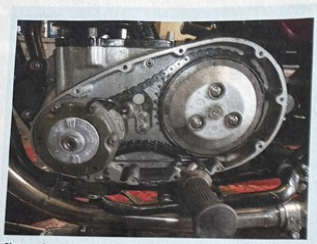


Sloppy primary chain was fixed by fitting a larger engine sprocket, reducing but not curing the irritating noises when riding the bike

On one run, the entire left exhaust assembly made a bid for freedom and had to be retrieved later!

mechanical tachometer, driven by the end of the Pazon rotor on the end of the camshaft (any readings being doubled, of course). From this, I was able to work out that the rev counter was not faulty as suspected, but just set to the wrong programme. It worked fine afterwards.

With a working rev counter and reduced concern over the noises, I was going to check that gearing, but first the speedo packed up, which nipped that idea in the bud until a new drive gearbox was obtained and fitted. As suspected, the gearing was very low, with 70mph requiring 5000rpm. 5k was about as high as I revved it on the road and was pretty vibratory. Remember this is the engine which needed a bespoke crankshaft. It is apparently a very strong item, which runs in very large main bearings. The conrods are also specially made and pretty strong, I gather, but I was left wondering if the balance factor could have been more suitable. That said, I have no idea if this short-stroke motor might be as smooth as silk on the other side of 6000rpm. I wasn't going to try to find out!

Onto the next job: oil which was apparently escaping from the primary side, noise from the primary side, the overall gearing was low and there was this rather harsh vibration around 5000rpm. Some proper engine work at last!

Going into the primary case revealed nothing too unfamiliar. It also revealed a very slack, single-row primary chain which had been clattering against the inner case. The Triumph-type tensioner blade was fully adjusted and bowed like a banana. I initially fitted a small spacer over the adjuster rod, to grab a little more adjustment. I wasn't very comfortable with this fix, knowing that the tensioner rods can fail in normal use without being asked to take even more strain than usual.

I overcame this problem by obtaining an engine sprocket with one more tooth. That raised the gearing and took the excessive

MORE FROM PAUL

You'll find more from Paul online about these and rather more regular classic bikes he's worked on recently: search for 'Paul Henshaw' on YouTube. If you'd like to employ Paul's expertise on your next project you can find him at Performance Classics on Facebook, or 07909 740160

The camshaft tunnel leaked, so Paul employed a coin to seal it. Thanks, your majesty!

Front wheel bearings were replaced in the quest to stop the noises

Front forks weren't to blame for the noises, either!

slack from the primary chain, which allowed the tensioner to be slackened right off – and that spacer I'd added was removed again. Much better.

I also wanted to move the gearbox sprocket over to the left, to keep the rear chain away from the gearbox area of the engine casing. I removed the whole primary drive and inner case to get access. A suitable washer of just the right diameter and about 2mm thick was fitted behind the gearbox sprocket. This wasn't ideal for the front-to-rear sprockets' chain run, but would help cut down some of the noise. There was no room to fit a larger gearbox sprocket, for anyone wondering why I didn't do that to raise the gearing.

While the inner primary case was out of the way, it was easy to see one source of the leaking oil. Lubricant was coming from an open-ended camshaft bush which had been relying on a small paper gasket (signed and dated by one R Negus!), to keep the oil in. With a little help from Her Majesty our ➤

Drive chain run and angle were the source of much disturbing noise…

TECHNICAL SPECS

Anthony the owner provided the specifications for both of the Unified Twin engines

Type:	Air cooled ohv parallel twin
Capacity:	646.33cc
Bore & Stroke:	77.5mm x 66.5mm
Compression:	8.5:1
Cylinder head:	Bolts are 3/8" x 26tpi torqued to 30ft/lbs. There are eight bolts and two long nuts between the fins in the barrel, as seen on conventional Norton twin engines. Ten fasteners attach the separate rocker box to the cylinder head; the torque for these is 15 ft/lbs. The rocker arms themselves were fabricated from a block of EN24T by Malcolm Saggers.
Valves:	The same size as the Norton Atlas for both inlet and exhaust
Carburetion:	The featherbed engine uses a single Amal 389 1.1/8 inch; the N15CS engine employs two Amal 930mm Concentrics
Camshaft:	The featherbed engine uses a Navigator cam profile, while the N15CS engine has a shaft from a 650SS. Valve clearances are set to suit those shafts. Shafts in both engines are driven by chain
Inlet manifolds:	Handmade by Malcolm Saggers for the featherbed machine, and handmade by Richard Negus for the N15CS
Drive chains:	The featherbed uses a duplex primary chain; the N15CS a ½-inch simplex chain. Rear chains are both Renolds 5/8 x 3/8-inch
Ignition:	Battery and coil with Pazon electronic ignition
Crankshafts:	The featherbed engine has the original Norton Bracebridge Street crankshaft, and the N15CS one has one made by Nourish. This shaft is made from EN40 steel, and is a one piece design
Main Bearings:	The featherbed engine runs an NSK209 roller bearing on the timing side; the drive side is a ball bearing. N15CS version has 45mm NJ209E lipped roller bearings on both sides. The drive side outer was shimmed to give an end float of 0.010in.
Conrods:	The featherbed engine has the original Bracebridge Street rods; the N15CS version has the two supplied by Nourish, made by Thunder Engineering to a supplied pattern. Torque for the bolts is set to 45ft/lbs
Pistons:	Those in the Featherbed engine are the original Hepolite items; the N15CS engine uses a pair of BHB pistons that were found at a Kempton Park autojumble. The piston rings are the same as +0.020 850 Commando rings
Oil Pump:	Standard oil pump with an extended oil pump shaft to drive the gears
Cam followers:	Standard Norton items
Pushrods:	Specially made for both engines
Gaskets:	Specially made to suit the castings. The original cylinder head gasket is a copper / asbestos item, those in use are solid copper. Head gasket thickness is 0.75mm
Clutch:	Standard five plate 650SS and Atlas type on the N15CS version. The Featherbed version uses a special duplex clutch basket, but with standard steel and fibre plates
Gearbox:	Standard Norton/AMC internals, but the mainshaft is 3/8-inch longer for the clutch drive
Crankcases:	All the engine castings are stamped 'PD' (Project Design) with a casting number. The timing cover original housed the contact breakers, but now has electronic ignition inside. This cover also has an inspection cover to fill the gearbox with oil, and also a gearbox level plug
Performance:	Around 115mph, but 120mph was obtained at MIRA with Fred Swift riding the bike. That engine was housed in a Norton Model 77 chassis. Power was 44bhp at 7000rpm; 48bhp was also achieved, but the engine was overheating. These figures were quoted by Doug Hele

Anthony Curzon

late Queen, a small file, and a hammer, I was able to make a 10p coin enter the open and slightly overhung end of the camshaft bush, thus closing it off firmly. When I refitted the inner primary case, I put silicone sealant over the coin, so it was compressed and trapped in place to hopefully prevent any future oil loss. Sorry, Your Majesty.

With everything back together again we'd achieved a decent primary chain tension, less clatter from the rear chain, less oil leakage (hopefully) and raised gearing. The gearing went up from 19t to 20t on the engine sprocket, a Dominator item. I hoped for a much improved and quieter ride.

I upped the preload on the rear shocks to their hardest settings to reduce swinging arm movement, and therefore clatter, from the top run of the rear chain as it struck the top of the alloy tunnel to the gearbox sprocket. Ideally, the engine, or at least the gearbox mainshaft, could have done with being almost an inch higher in the frame than it actually was, as the bottom run of the chain could also strike the frame tube beneath it. I wasn't going to mess with moving the engine in the frame to try to improve the rather poor geometry between the gearbox sprocket, swinging arm pivot and rear wheel spindle, however!

Time for another ride. I aimed for Llyn Brianne dam, another very scenic, local location. The plan was to ride up to the dam and, depending on how that went, possibly turn around and go home, making it thirty miles. If all went well we could go round one side of the dam, down the Devil's Staircase to Llanwrtyd Wells and back to Llandovery, then four miles of A40 to make it a fifty mile trip. I checked the fuel, oil, tyre pressures, etc. All were good, the 2.2-gallon fuel tank appeared to be about three-quarters full. I brimmed the tank with petrol, just in case. That would turn out to be a good decision…

As soon as I set off, the higher gearing made itself evident and was a welcome improvement, with plenty of torque and power available. As I'd hoped, the gearing change shoved the 5000rpm vibratory patch out of harm's way. Reasonable cruising speeds were more comfortable and relaxed at lower engine speeds.

The ride to the dam went well. I was aboard the only bike of its kind in the whole world. The sun was still shining. I carried on to take the fifty mile option. All went well and the experience was very much like riding a BSA A65, not surprisingly. This made me wonder if AMC dropped a proverbial by not pursuing their unit construction design. The A65 was very popular, after all!

Stopping to change a camera battery, I was approached by an onlooker. Anthony had warned me about all sorts of people who 'had one of those years ago'. This guy, however, informed me he had owned a Commando, while his wife enquired if that was the one he rode into a wall. On with the ride, then...

There are some long, straight stretches along the Sugarloaf, and I opened up the engine a little. It seemed that 5000rpm would now have us knocking on the door of 80mph (if I had tried, Officer). Then the dreaded road closure signs started to make themselves

The only machine of its kind in the world; blue skies, stunning views, the stuff of dreams. Does it get any better than this?

felt. The A483 to Llandovery was completely closed and a detour over the Epynt range to Llywell would be necessary. I'd never ridden right over the top on this route before. The views were incredible! A 'Welsh TT' was held up here for a few years in the 1950s, one John Surtees having taken part. Here was I on the only Norton of its kind, thundering along quite nicely, under sunny blue skies with fantastic scenery ahead.

By the time we returned home we had covered about seventy miles. The whole ride was like a dream come true and will honestly be one of my most fondly-remembered ones. Many of my questions about these engines had been answered. I now know what might have been – and actually could have been – if these models had been put into production.

I don't know what sort of frame and rolling chassis the engines may have ended up with, but I gained an insight into how these engines run, sound and perform. Apparently there's scope to enlarge this motor to around 900cc, I'm told, so there would have been a fair bit of development potential built in.

Back to that 2.2 gallon fuel tank. I very nearly didn't top it up before setting off, but I turned out to be very glad that I did. After seventy miles there was no more than two pints of fuel sloshing around by the time we got home. We'd done no better than 40mpg on that twisty, hilly run. Without brimming the tank, I would've been pushing it home!

After this, I thought I had a pretty sound picture of what these engines might be like: quite torquey, powerful and vibratory. Not too different to the production bikes of the time which carried the Norton name in the 650 class, as it happens. But then, to muddy the waters, there was another Unified Twin to try, and it turned out to be quite different to the first… RC

THE END OF PART ONE!

Next month Paul tells us about the silver featherbed twin while Anthony Curzon discusses the development history

REMEMBERING LES EMERY

Many RC readers will have known Les Emery of Norvil Motorcycles, previously Fair Spares, who died in January. Les really was a larger-than-life character and his accumulated knowledge and experience of Nortons was very deep. Not long before Christmas I dropped into Norvil on my Dominator 99 to be welcomed with the usual cup of tea. Les and his wonderful wife Sue always seemed to be there. Les and I had the usual natter about things, mostly Norton.

Les ran a successful business for many years. Over decades of dealing with the vast range of parts that go together to make a Norton motorbike, he was able to quote part numbers effortlessly. He wasn't just a spare parts specialist; he built these bikes, fixed and restored them. He also developed them and improved them, right up to the very last. A Les Emery Norvil Commando is an excellent motorcycle and presents the bike in its most faultless form.

Les was always determined to ensure that even the most obscure parts were available. Things like pistons for Navigators. The special bits that enable you to tickle the carburettor. We talked about how a Navigator could be improved by fitting an Electra barrel and pistons. Les was also passionate about railways and his other occupation was supporting Cannock Chase Railway and driving locomotives.

I first really got to know Les after Fair Spares moved to Cannock, around forty years ago. I owned a 650SS and a Jubilee, so was visiting Fair Spares more often, always interested in what was going on. My connections continued with my ownership of a Norton Commando Mk2A and later a Mk3. That led to my biggest project with Les, the complete restoration of the Mk3 in 1990/91. Rather than spend my money on a new bike, I asked Les to do a nut and bolt restoration. He did. A full rebuild, all bearings, even the fork stanchions were replaced. It came back as a gleaming, brand-new motorcycle. The workmanship and attention to detail couldn't be faulted. He even fitted a prototype of one of his enlarged front discs. It certainly stopped the bike!

When I recently adopted a Dominator 99, this gave me the opportunity to re-engage with Les on a new project. Just like the old days. Even after long periods of not visiting Norvil, it was the same old welcome as soon as I walked through the door: cup of tea, rattling away about things Norton – just as though there hadn't been a day in between since the last time. As always, Les couldn't do enough to help sort out a problem. He would always go the extra mile.

For instance, my 1962 99 Deluxe had been fitted with an earlier cylinder barrel. Although the barrel and the pistons were perfectly sound, it didn't look right because the fins are shallower than on the later engines. The chances of finding a correct barrel in good condition were slim. But Les had the answer – he commissioned the manufacture of brand new originals!

If what you needed was no longer available, Les had the knowledge and the contacts to get it made. He helped me get the 99 back on the road, looking as it was meant to… with the addition of an SS timing cover and chronometric rev counter. Good on you Les – again!

How can you replace someone like Les Emery? You can't, because he was one of a very small band of real, dyed-in-the wool, learned-it-the-hard-way British bike specialists who made it possible for us to continue safely riding the precious heirlooms that we still enjoy today. He shared his passion and we are grateful. What's more, he looked forward and tried to improve things.

About two years ago he took me into the workshop and showed me the prototype installation of a new electric starter on a Commando Roadster. Well-designed and robust, it is now on sale and would certainly be my choice for a new electric boot on a pre-Mk3 model.

So time moves on. We can't change that. But Les's legacy remains and we won't forget. He and Sue were always a team and right now, our thoughts are with her and the family. We can only wish all the very best to them and the team at Norvil as they look into the future. Les's light will certainly be shining down on them.

Colin Leighfield, member

Thanks for this, Colin. Not many people know just how totally supportive Les and Sue were in this magazine's early days, and Rowena and I remember many, many long evenings involving too much food and loads of laughter whenever we met up over the Stafford Show weekends. And Les built my favourite-ever Commando. Always helpful, always packed with tall tales from inside the old bike industry, too. None repeatable! All our best wishes go to the family.
Frank W

The best of 850 class.. Norton Commando 850

The 1973–1975 Norton Commando 850 is widely celebrated as the pinnacle of the iconic British parallel-twin era, representing the final, most refined evolution of a machine that boasted superior handling and tremendous mid-range torque. While the earlier 750cc "Combat" engines were notorious for reliability issues, the 850 (actually 829cc) introduced in 1973 brought much-needed durability through-bolted cylinders, stronger engine castings, and "superblend" main bearings, making it a "stump-puller" of a touring bike, especially in its comfortable Interstate variant. The defining characteristic of the Commando 850, and indeed the entire range, is the ingenious "Isolastic" system—a revolutionary rubber-mounted cradle holding the engine, gearbox, and swingarm that isolates the rider from intense vibration at speed, providing a "smooth as silk" ride. Though sometimes outmatched in top-end speed by Japanese multi-cylinder rivals, the 850 Commando—particularly the 1975 Mark III with its added electric start, rear disc brake, and left-side gear shift—offered a unique, visceral, and soul-stirring riding experience, balancing brute force with exceptional, "flickable" handling that made it a "gentleman's sports machine" of the 1970s.

Norton Nomad

Norton Nomad - Wikipedia

Apparently, as the weather turns to spring some young men's thoughts turn to Sheep??

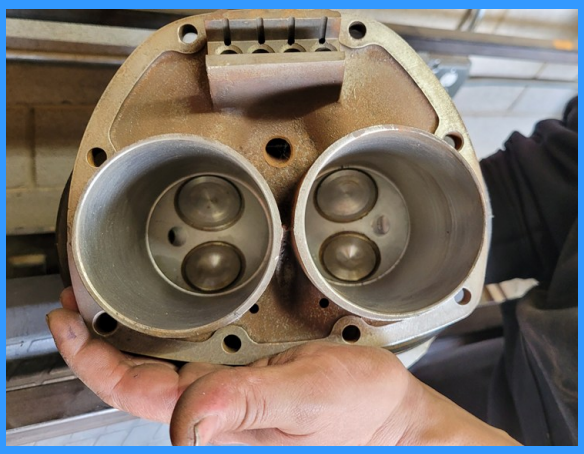
Ah yes, Wyoming, (you can fill in any state you want) where men are men and the sheep run scared.

Anyone want a BSA motor?

Curtis at Thunderbird Motorcycles has a BSA motor in a box he would like to get rid of. It looks like it's already been machined and looks in good shape. (see pictures attached) There are gaskets and other parts in the box. He doesn't know what it's worth so make him an offer. Tell him Scott Robinson sent you.

Thunderbirds is on the north side of 44th east of Kipling.

Call Curtis at 303 - 463 - 9399.



1973 Commando For Sale

*Tires are 3 yrs old, but probably have 50 miles on them, at most. Fuel system gone through by Kurt Ottoway- 3yrs ago. (Carbs, new fuel lines) (Has not been ridden since) my Dad did a frame off resto- probably 5-6 years ago- it was barely ridden after. Hasn't been started in 3 years... clean title in hand.

Conact Arnie Beckman for more information: arniebeckmanp11@gmail.com>

This is the card of Bryan Flanigan, used to work at Vintage Twins. Started his own shop about 6 months ago. I've used him for vapor blasting, good guy. Also works on older Jap bikes. Harder and harder these days to find someone to work on classic stuff, spread the word to the club and bring him your business!

https://trophyclassiccycles.com/

King Browne

Motorcycle Stuff on the web:

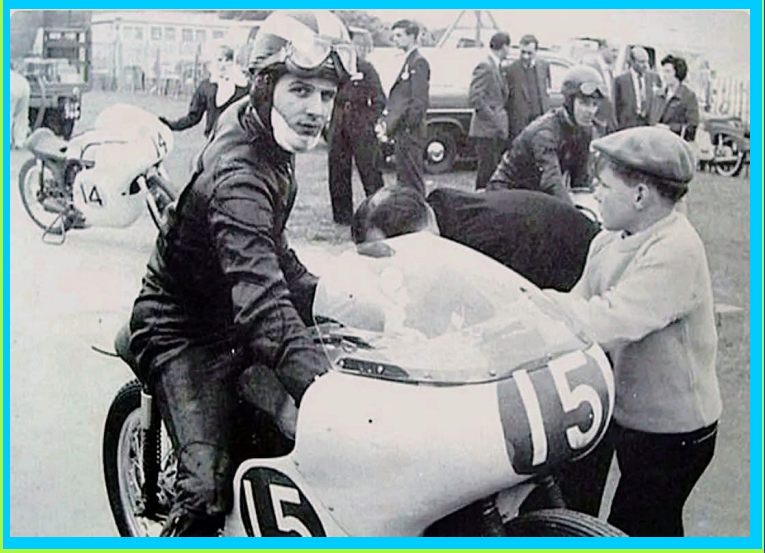
Check out the club websites new photo galleries:
https://nortoncolorado.org/galleries/

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

Norton club t-shirts and sweatshirts available to purchase
https://classictees.us/classictees/norton-colorado-club/

Dennis and Eric celebrating Debby Johnson's 69th birthday at a local saloon with Corpse Reviver cock-tails.

1961 - 350cc Junior Isle of Man TT - #15 Phil Read on his Norton after a practice session. A young lad near his father as he, (his dad), gives the Norton a quick check . . . Phil went on to win the race . . . the young lad went on to win the 1976 & 1977 500cc World Motorcycle Championship.



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
(303) 980-6641
jesse@fastmail.fm

Norton Colorado 2026 Event Schedule

Here is the first draft of the club's **2026** event schedule. I've taken the liberty (based on past performance) of listing you as a host for an event. Please have a look and let me know if you are still willing to host an event, or if the date needs to be changed. Also, if you would like to host an event of some sort, please contact Eric.

February 7, 2026 (Saturday), 6:30pm,
March 28, 2026 (Saturday) Shop visit to Jesse Carraway's, Lakewood
April 12, 2026 (Sunday), Group Ride, TBA
May 17, 2026 (Sunday), AMCA Swap Meet, 955 Decatur St., Unit M
May 17, 2026 (Sunday) Distinguished Gentleman's Ride
June 7, 2026 (Sunday), Big Tent BBQ host ed by Eric Bergman & Susan Saarinen.
June 13, 2026 (Saturday), 8am to 2pm, Colorado Vintage Motorcycle Show, Erie United Methodist Church.
June 18-21, 2026 (Thursday-Sunday), Four Corners Rendezvous hosted by Steve Harris and Charley Gremmels.
June 20-21, 2026 (Saturday-Sunday), Riverside Ride, hosted by Mike Powell
June 22-26, 2026 (Monday-Friday), INOA Rally, Buena Vista, Virginia.
July 12, 2026 (Sunday), Mt. Evans Ride and Brunch hosted by David Sheesley & Matt Norman.
July 19, 2026 (Sunday), BMAC Picnic hosted by Frank & Joanne Puckett.
August 8, 2026 (Saturday), BBQ and open garage hosted Jamie & Michelle Jones.
August 16, 2026 (Sunday) Open Garage/Tech Day, TBA
September 13, 2026, Sunday, Old Bike Ride.
September 20, 2026 (Sunday), English Motoring Conclave.
October 11, 2026 (Sunday), Plains Ride, hosted by Scott and Julie Robinson.
October 25, 2026 (Sunday), Open Garage, hosted by Jonathan Chaikin and Tamara.
November 8, 2026 (Saturday) Open Garage/ Tech Day TBA
December 6, 2026 (Sunday), Pub meeting.
January 1, 2026 (Friday), Clancy's Irish Pub.
January 17, 2026 (Sunday), Pub meeting.
February 6, 2027 (Saturday) Winter Banquet.

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.

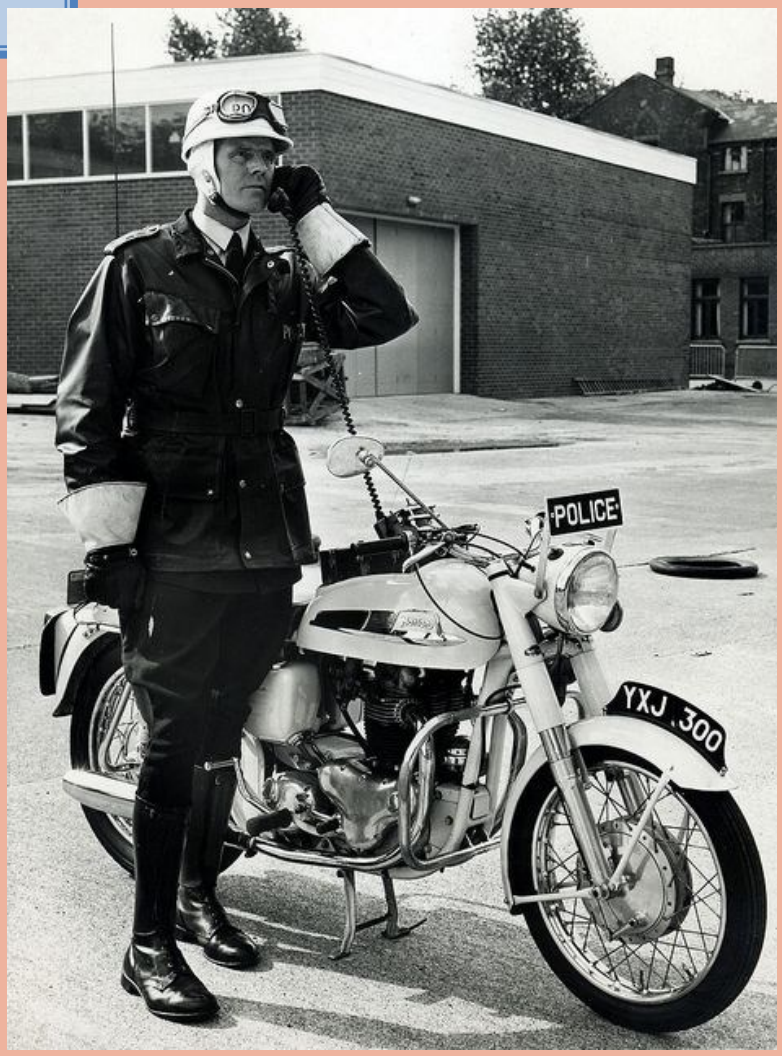
The official club membership list is posted on the club website. Please let Eric know if there is an error.

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/



Current Occupants

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Secretary
Eric Bergman (720)400-7835 **NEW #**
secretary@nortoncolorado.org

Treasurer
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Credits: Thanks to Eric Bergman and Julian Kowalewski 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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