



Dear Andover Norton Customer,

We have had our most hectic month in the financial year, March lies behind us and we thank you yet again for your custom and support.

## **New Products**

### **Proddy Racer Spoke & Nipple Set**

Since one of my customer currently rebuilds a genuine Norton Proddy Racer. He needed a set of spokes for the Norvil front wheel and whilst we were at it we had a few more sets done. In case you need one in original spec, i.e. swaged plated spokes, here they are:

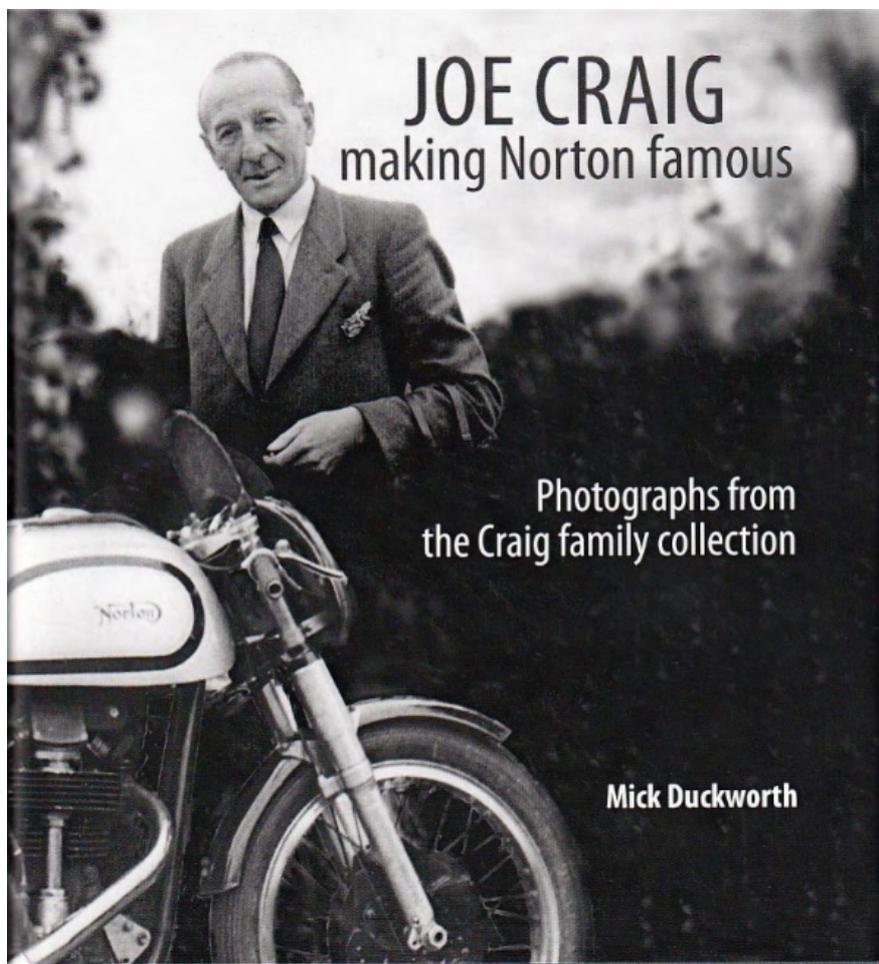


*13.1952 spoke & Nipple Set, Norvil Proddy Racer*

[Shop](#)

### **Mick Duckworth's Joe Craig Book**

Another new item, probably of more general interest, is Mick Duckworth's new book "JOE CRAIG making Norton famous". I read my copy as soon as it came. It was announced as a picture book. Mick Duckworth found the Craig family's collection of pictures from Joe Craig's active era with Norton and the majority of the pictures have never before been published.



Calling it a picture book is not fair, however, since Mick wrote texts explaining the pictures and their background, and the combination of his knowledgeable texts with these pictures make it a most interesting and enjoyable book.

Even if you think this is not really your era in the Norton history the Norton Race Department formed an integral and important part of the Norton history and reputation. Whilst Joe Craig's praise is predictably sung, other characters whose input in the Norton success was equally important are also covered. The usual suspects like the McCandless brothers, who gave Norton the "featherbed" chassis, as well as one character in particular who tends to be "forgotten" by many Norton historians, engine guru Leo Kuzmicki.

Kuzmicki came into the development team the moment that Joe Craig, with no academic background unlike Kuzmicki, wasn't able to further develop the DOHC Norton Manx engine in his established, methodical step-by-step development he loved to call "plain common sense". Kuzmicki, a Polish professor who had fled to England in WW2, had the scientific background Craig lacked and gave the Norton engines the boost they needed to be competitive for another decade when "plain common sense" was no longer enough.

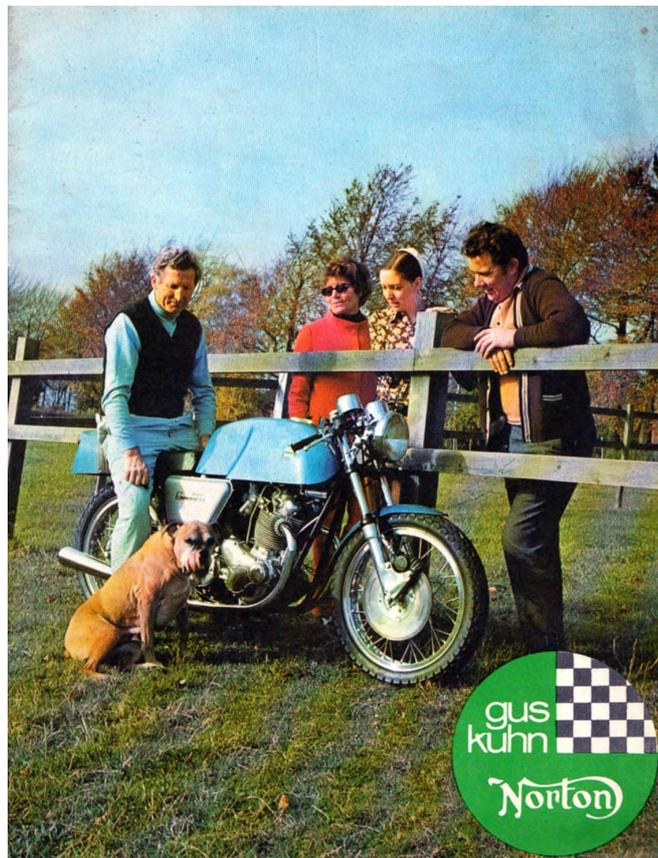
The Craig statement I found the most amusing in the book was his scathing comment on nostalgic attachment to old motorcycles which is what formed my whole professional life and which Andover Norton sees as its *raison d'être*: **"I should like to make some attempt to break away from the present fashionable practice, which is becoming almost a vice, of rhapsodizing over ancient, so-called masterpieces."** I apologise to Joe Craig for having wasted my life, money, and endless working hours with this rhapsodizing, but I rue not a minute of it and will continue, as will our customers!

## The Mick Hemmings Archive

Talking of “rhapsodizing”, every parcel I currently get from Andover with Norton and Triumph parts supplies for my German shop contains one or two of the archive boxes the late Mick Hemmings filled, and I often rue I have other things to do and very little time to enjoy their content.

This month’s theme is the box “Tickle, Gus Kuhn, Dow, Kennedy, Degens etc” that contains a good number of 1960s accessory offerings from well- and lesser-known manufacturers of Norton and Triumph accessories. Some of them I hadn’t heard of (“Chuck Customized Components”, “Alloy Racing Equipment”, “Churchgate Mouldings”), others I knew of but hadn’t seen catalogues and pricelists before. The one that rang the loudest bell was the “Marchant & Durward Ltd” catalogue. They were the origin of those “MD” products I remembered from the “Unity Equipe” catalogues and that were also, I seem to dimly remember, sold by Wassell in the 1970s/early 1980s.

These products were part of my learning curve with my first Norton Commando that I tried to “improve” with the products, then sourced from Unity, be it with the full-dural pushrods that survived very few miles until I found tappet clearance rapidly increasing and threw them in the bin, or the highly risky dural top collars for valve springs, not to mention dural tappet nuts and (no, I never tried those thank God!) Dural rocker ball ends. We found in the 1970s most of these products were fragile and thus useless and imagine my surprise when a few years ago I looked at the web pages of the now-defunct Unity Equipe and thought I was in a time-warp: Exactly these products were still being offered, decades later!



*Cover of the 1970/71 Gus Kuhn Catalogue I include since it is pure spirit of the era!.*

Vincent Davey on the bike, Mrs Marian Davey, Valerie Davey, Foreman John Leggit. And the dog. Valerie Davey writes: *"The dog is the old Boxer called Kimbo. There is a story about her. Someone rang dad at work and asked if he was interested in a boxer bitch. He misheard, and thought he said "a box of bits". So he asked the guy to bring it round. By coincidence, my grandparents and I, aged about six, were passing and Gus (Valerie's Grandfather) wanted to make a visit. I saw the puppy and of course "Daddy I want it." With doting grandparents to back me up, he didn't stand a chance. So we took the puppy home."*

## **Our Bikes**

### **Joe's infamous C652**

Still work in progress but gradually getting there. The new ignition box I had purchased didn't work, nor did a secondhand one I bought through e-bay. The seller then explained to me there were at least three variants used in the BMW F650 of that era and you need the correct one.

Since I gave my last new engines to PAMI as payment for Michels tuning the race engine for me, I knew he must be sitting on boxes since he uses his own. And, yes, he still had one for me and that now works. The petrol tank and side panels came and, naturally, when I tried to fit the side panels the distance between the mounting points welded to the frame were slightly too close together...Time for another "adjustment". The terminals for the radiators came at last but so did a very nice letter from one of our customers who not only sent a catalogue of "Vehicle Wiring Products" with a tab on the correct page but also a nice letter. Thank you, Clive!

### **Joe's 1952 Earls Court first-ever Featherbed Inter**

What a nice change to work on that bike! On one hand a letdown in that I had to take the primary off to put the side stand mounting brackets on.



*Above: Tools to take the primary off. The two on the right are leftovers*

*of my pre-war Inter racing days, perhaps something we should laser-cut and weld for sale.*

I had feared I might not get the inner mounting bracket between frame rail and gearbox cradle plate. I was relieved to see the frame rails run apart enough to bring the mounting bracket in from the rear without loosening any mounting points of the engine/gearbox mountings.



*Side stand in situ. Tape with rubber buffer behind it since this was the first-ever featherbed production bike and no reinforcements had yet been found necessary to take the impact of the centre stand stops.*

Another problem I had planned to solve was the leaking of the kickstart shaft. I saw in the parts list it should have a felt seal I could not remember having fitted when I rebuilt that gearbox some years ago. When taking the gearbox apart I found a white plastic ring where the felt should sit, no doubt fitted by a previous owner and not noticed nor questioned by me at the time. This owner also cut a couple of grooves into the shaft to fit o-rings on it, again to stop leaks.



*Kickstart shaft with felt seal fitted, plastic "seal" bottom right.*

First I looked for a suitable felt seal and ended fitting [06.7614](#), which is a little bit too wide by my reasoning was that whatever is too much will flake off in use and the shreds (if any) won't damage the gears and gather in the gearbox sump. Then for a suitable o-ring.

This coming week should see the primary and the gearbox back together again, in time for the wheels to be re-fitted after the hubs were now re-sprayed in the correct metallic grey. Previously they were coated in a similar grey but it just wasn't right! Which meant taking the rims and spokes off, then lacing the rims back on. The current

plan is to use the bike for this year's "Old Boys Tour" since my friends now all own Norton singles alongside their twins and want to do a sedate tour on single.

I will report on my progress.

### **Joe's F1Sport**

Since weather changed back from spring temperatures to winter my motivation was low after flushing the engine with the "wonderflusher". This thing allows water plus the addition of compressed air and at least in handling this makes a first-class impression. You get the feeling whatever was in the way must now have disappeared.



*Above: The miraculous Wonderflusher. Air can be metered with the red pistol grip, water with the black lever above the water hose. Here applied to the radiator, but I also flushed through the thermostat end on the left side of the engine after removing the thermostat, through the small hole on the water pump mounting flat underneath the "wonderflusher", and though the big hole that takes the knee fitted to the front of the waterpump.*

After flushing the system I connected everything up again and put the radiator cleaning liquid into the water, let the engine heat the system and radiator up and let it cool down again, then drained the mixture. Next is to fill the system with water and anti-freeze and ride the bike but as said the weather is not promising and the roads were salted again.

### **Ashley's bit.**

I have now road tested the leak free and contactless neutral switch and it has not failed yet. The main concern is the automotive LED that was 'designed' for automotive use, but it seems the manufacturing company in California does not have any automotive engineers or experience of automotive charging circuits as the max voltage level of the LED is below that of most automotive charging systems. A few more miles on this and I will look into producing simple to fit kits though it was a little tricky to fit when the gearbox is in the bike, when the gearbox is being refurbished it is a doodle to fit.

There is also the possibility that kit could be provided with a relay that would only allow the bike to be started using the electric start when in neutral. This will not be a cheap fix, but would effectively be fit and

forget as there is nothing riding on the camplate button, it could also be retro fitted to the bikes using Alton starters where there is no neutral light and a risk of hitting the start button with the bike in gear.



The one piece crankshafts for 750 / 850 should be with us soon and hopefully we can display one at Stafford. I'm now checking the MK3 drawing for the manufacturer, and it has uncovered that MK3 nightmare of being the worst Norton Commando made in the 70's. We sent a sample crank and drawings to the manufacturer from which they produced a drawing for me to check but sadly it seems the drawings are not correct as they have numerous errors from simple adding up of dimensions to missed detail that is clearly on the sample crank.

Considering the original crank is made of 3 pieces and thus has 4 drawings, The process of checking is now massively harder as I have to work back from known to work dimensions from the mating parts and the barrel datum. The sample crank we have is NOS and looks like it was machined from one end and they ran out of material by the time they got to the other end, and some the dimensions on that don't match what is on the drawings.

It is not hard to see why the hammered together MK3 got bad press in the Norton world, a company in the hands of the receivers and all they wanted was money so it is no surprise that the MK3 was just offloaded and hopefully never to be seen again. The flip side being that despite it being the larger and heavier of the Commando range, once put together correctly the MK3 is a nice comfortable mile muncher.



## **Simon's Bit**

Simon is dismantling the engine of his 750 Commando. Although the bike has been running well, ten years use in all seasons has taken its toll on the painted and plated parts. A full refurbishment is being completed prior to offering the bike for sale, including all mechanicals, so the new owner acquires a solid machine.



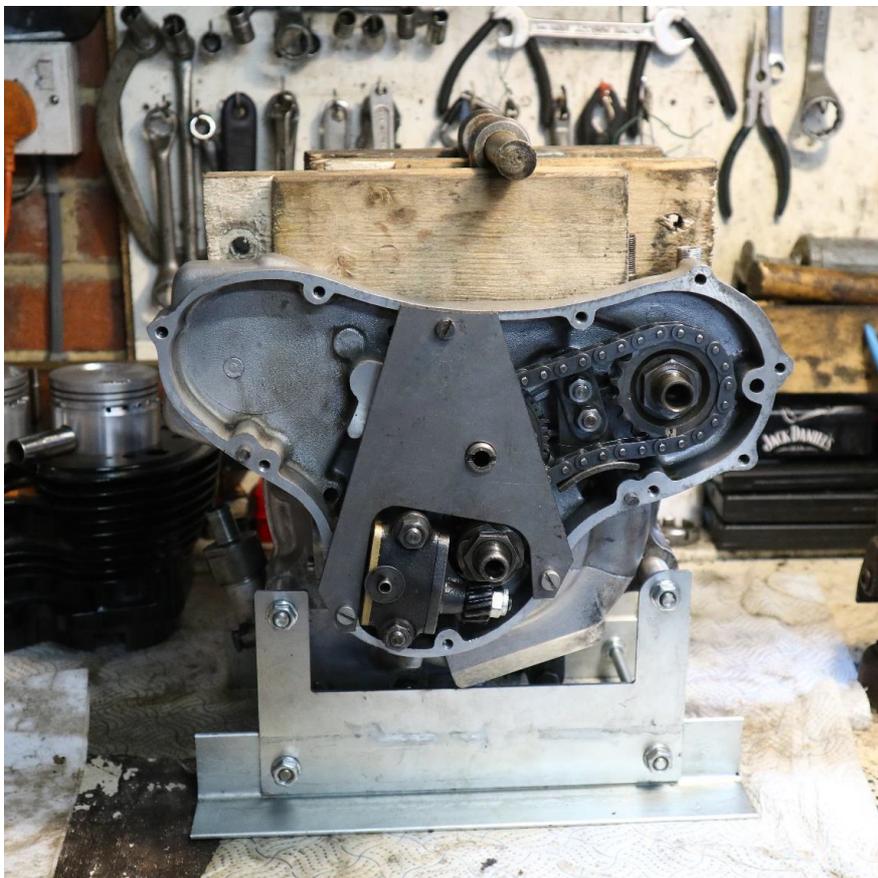
The engine stand in the photo is AN part [06.7335](#) and a useful workshop addition. To undo the crank work gear and camshaft nuts, Simon locks the engine with blocks of wood under the pistons. However, if the clutch and primary drive are still fitted, AN tool [13.1724](#) does the job without removing the cylinder barrel. The pistons were heated with a blowlamp, after removing the circlips, to release the gudgeon pins.

The engine rebuild process will include checking and measuring all components parts to ensure they within specification and can be reused. The crankcases were last split 30,000 miles ago. Finger crossed that regular oil and filter changes have resulted in no significant wear!



With the 750 crankcases separated and the engine dismantled, Simon will be inspecting the condition of the crank main and big end bearings. He will also measure end float. The camshaft and their bearings showed no sign of wear since the engine was last apart 30,000 miles ago. It was not necessary to remove the timing side crank worm gear before parting the cases. The cylinder barrel is an Andover Norton product fitted in 2017. The standard size bores just required honing to remove glazing. The pistons were cleaned and will be refitted. New piston rings were trial fitted to check the end gaps were in the 0.009 to 0.017" range.





The crank journals, main bearings and camshaft were in good condition. New standards big end shells were fitted. Replacement con rod nuts part [06.7827](#) were torqued to 25ft/lb. The timing side crankcase was supported and the crank and rod assembly lowered into place. Engineering silicon was applied to the crankcase joint and the drive side case fitted. (Crank end float has previously been checked and found to be within specification at 0.014").

The workstand was again used to hold the engine for re-assembly of the timing side components. Prior to tightening the cam and crank work gear nuts, AN's support tool [06.7325](#) was fitted. Although no factory torque settings were originally specified, Simon tightens both to 25ft/lb.





With black and silver parts newly powder coated, Simon is re-assembling his 1972 Commando 750. One of the problems with a full refurbishment is that some functional components look out of place when refitted against sparkling new paint. Consequently, new rear suspension units ([06.2179](#)) are in place instead of the old ones, where the chrome was not 100%. The engine has been replaced with AN jig [06.7335](#) which will enable movement of the bike on its wheels. Swinging arm bushes and fork head bearings are new.

The engine isolastic mount components were replaced and the units adjusted off the bike by holding them in a vice to check and set clearances. The initial build was living room based (credit to his understanding/long suffering wife) but soon to be transferred to Simon's workshop for final assembly of wheels, forks, gearbox, and engine.

### **Open Day 2023**

Just over a month left until our very popular Open Day! We will be once again opening our stores to all customers and visitors to meet and chat with fellow riders and Andover Norton's Staff. So mark your calendars and we hope to see you there!



### **Stafford Motorcycle Show**

On the 20th and 21st of April, Andover Norton comes to the popular Stafford Bike Show. <https://www.staffordclassicbikeshows.com/april/>

Just like last year, we will bring a number of our bikes and look forward to chatting with any all visitors to the show! Our stand will be in the Main Exhibition hall marked as M28 on the visitors map.

We will also be bringing along a special guest, as the Author of the popular "Norton Commando" book, Mick Duckworth will also be joining us on our stand to chat and autograph your copy! but don't worry if you don't have one, we will be bringing plenty to purchase with us.

## **Andover Norton Calendar**

We are still looking for entries for our 2024 calendar, so for a chance to be featured, please send your high quality pictures and write up to [newsletter@andover-norton.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@andover-norton.co.uk)



**Happy Riding!**  
**The Team from Andover Norton**



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