



Dear Andover Norton Customer,

A busy month lies behind us, busy not only in the shop(s), but also with various motorcycle experiences.

The Mk1/Mk2/Mk3 Commando Electric Start

From the comments we had on the last “Source” the one about the “Mk1 Electric Start” stood out. Tony Dent informed Bob Rowley that the starter Bob demonstrated was by no means the first attempt at an electric starter for a Commando:

“I was working in the experimental department. Yes the one I was on was the early fastback as you say the drive was through the T/S via a sprag clutch this would have been about mid to late 68 and the one I demo`d to Dennis Poore worked ok but was named the electric leg. I remember sitting on it with my leg/foot on the K/S and pressing the button and the K/S at the same time. It wasn't really very good but it did work ok at the time. The timing cover was a standard one (no bulge) so the original internals were quite thin and also too much strain on the intermediate gear pivot shaft but of course, this was the very early one.”

Bob Rowley only joined Norton after Tony Dent had left and recalls about what we now know was the “Mk2” version of the disastrous starter:

“With regards to the electric start driven through the timing gears, we knew that the failure was due to the advance/retard sometimes causing kickback. We rigged the bike up with fixed retarded ignition to carry out the static test but even without kickback premature wear was revealed. That's when we refined the Mk3 ES driven through the drive end crankshaft, via the sprag but with a preset spring slipping clutch device that disengaged the drive back to the starter gear train in the event of a kickback. By this time we had become NVT.”

Grab the Flag Races, Rijeka

First was our part-taking in the “Grab the Flag” race event in Rijeka/Croatia, our favourite race track, and Ralf, Fast Fraanzi and I rode our Nortons.



Joe about to go out on the TX, Ralf just in with #240, Fast Fraanzi advising.

Main task for me was to test the rebuilt (yet again!) TX750 Shortstroke. As Norman White and others involved at the time will confirm, the short-stroke engine was never seriously and fully developed, nor raced in earnest. About this last claim exist differing opinions, I know, but Peter Williams claimed to never have raced a short-stroke, and I cannot find conclusive proof this ever happened.

As we found only now the short-stroke is a mixture of 750 and 850 parts, and it doesn't help Rudi Kolano, when first building my engine, abandoned the short-stroke head and replaced it with a "squish" 750 one. It now seems that not only 750 crankcases were used, but also the studs and bolts for the head in the cylinder barrel are to 750 spec.

Hence the new 850 barrel we had planned to use last winter fitted neither crankcase nor head, and what we really want is an 850 barrel with 750 spec bolt/stud holes. So we were stuck with the old barrel that was sleeved at some point in time. That I wasn't aware of.

Last season's Rijeka disaster of the bike suddenly starting to smoke and loosing power was now put down to the sleeves warping, most likely caused by having been rebored for the $+.020$ " pistons. This leads to the sleeves getting too thin and liable to warping. We now put new sleeves in together with a new set of our forged Omega pistons ([06.3838/F](#)).

After a few laps I gradually put more load on the engine, and from training to training got more used to the TX. Even though the fairing is abominable, it traps your fingers, the handlebars and levers allow

virtually but one position so one can still use some of the steering radius, and the clutch lever needs to be mounted on the clip-on end on the inside of the forks(!), after a couple of laps the whole ride becomes so enjoyable I forgot all about the idiotic handlebars/fairing arrangement.



Starting to enjoy the TX, forgetting all about its rarity...

Even though I always rode with 100% margin for caution in the end I was but 8 seconds per lap slower than on my trusted old "Family Racer" Commando. The TX revs freely to 7.000rpm and feels like it has more to come above that. I abstained because I wanted the engine to survive plus we had a bit of an overheating problem. Not sure if that was real or imagined, the digital thermometer indicated ridiculous temperatures but we were told these were far from accurate.

That said, with the PW4 camshaft (designed by the late Peter for us about 4 years ago), the Omega pistons and the TLC that went into that engine I'd say the engine has at least the performance of our "Family Racer" that has shown the bhp figure of the best 1970s works engines.

The races I rode on the trusty old racer, the first finishing 2 places behind Fast Fraaanzi due to fact we are both not competitive with a Commando in a field of Japanese Fours and semi-modern Ducatis anymore, and a diminishing minority. Fraaanzi is much faster than I am, but with both of us at the end of the field this doesn't show in the placings anymore!



Only training, but fun nonetheless on the good old trusty steed of 25-odd seasons!

The second race we both did not finish, I got a misfire on the second lap, and Fraanzi's exhaust fell apart in his last lap. Time to look after my 30-year-old wiring I guess!

Our Ralf rode his "500 Domiracer" with no major incidents and ended both races somewhere in mid-field. His rev-counter gave up so I declined his offer to test-ride his bike, as much as I'd have loved to do it. But I did not fancy over-revving an engine I don't know and then returning the disaster to its proud owner!

Across Germany from the Alps to the Baltic Sea and back!

Just having returned from Rijeka Fast Fraanzi and I agreed to tour Germany with Guenter to visit our friend, my ex-partner in Stuedemann GmbH, at the time BMW, Norton and Triumph dealer until I left with the Norton and Triumph side to set up Norton Motors GmbH as a joint venture with Norton Motors Ltd in Shenstone on 1st January, 1989.

Unfortunately Guenter's Commando cylinder head played up yet again so he rode his Thaiumph whilst we rode our Commandos.



Short break on the way.... Fraaaanzi & Guenter discuss the route. And on we went.

Since we come from the Munich area each way is about 500 miles which we split into two days to enjoy the rides. The way is good fun with twisty up-and-down B-roads until one leaves the Harz mountains and gets to the north-German plains. Boring rides along straight roads, unexciting landscapes with villages some of which look as if the reunification of Germany happened only last night.

It got more interesting as we approached the Elbe river and Rudi's abode, a farmhouse he undertakes a never-ending restoration of due to his size, is not far north of the river near the city of Ratzeburg. The same night he had invited old friends, some of which I have known for forty-odd years. We had a very good supper and discussed the ride planned the next day.



Rudi's barn. The size of a farmhouse has its benefits!



Ralf with his road Dommi, Joerg behind his much-modified T140, Rudi behind his Commando, Matten on a 1960s Triumph, Guenter on his Thaiumph.

The next day we toured the region, again with friends of long standing, now including Ralf and Joerg Winkelmann, Germany's Triumph guru, on his private everyday T140. After a good ride with a little coffee break we retired to Rudi's farmhouse, enjoyed another great meal, and steeled ourselves for the ride back. Which was again very enjoyable bar the plains, and the only tool I used was this:



The only tool I used in over 1100 miles to fasten my rear-view mirror that came loose.

The others never used a tool and the fact we rode this mileage without any incident bar my mirror, underlined my claim that "If you tell me to go to South Africa on my Commando tomorrow morning I have no qualms to do it." My son Tim doubted my claim then but may now have second thoughts.



Pannier sizes: Fast Fraanzi prefers the 40 litre variant [06.7273](#), I am quite content with 30 litres per pannier [06.7272](#). In retrospect even Fraanzi admitted the 40 litre ones, holding lots of tools just in case, were superfluous for this trip. But not when he goes touring with his wife!

The Iceni Norton

Following the last “Source” we had several reactions, one of which came from Nick Parravani who actually built that bike. He advised (correctly!) that the frame was not a copy of a Gus Kuhn racebike but at best of the 1970 Dunstall Norton. He sent a picture of the unity BSA, later raced by John Cronshaw, that he says stems from 1970.



This is what was later known as the “Unity BSA”. 1970? Or 1971?

Nick claims this was 3 years earlier than the Iceni which would make it 1970. However, he further said his frame design owed its main features to the “Koenig”-engine racebike of Kim Newcombe. That dates from 1971, which would make the BSA-engine racer two, not three years older than the Iceni. And indeed, looking at the Koenig which I must admit I never before studied in detail I saw what Nick meant:



Just to illustrate the point: The 1971 Koenig racer had the main features of the Icení's frame but again came later than the 1970 Dunstall racer below. And quite frankly the Dunstall is nearer the Icení than the Koenig:



And this is the current state of the Icení rebuild/reconstruction by Rainer Zumach.

Simon's Bit

FOR SALE: 1973 Norton Commando 850

£7,495



Needs light restoration and recommission to make into a great rider bike.

Engine 300478

Frame 309794

USA Import Private Sale

Contact: Karl Smith

Karl.smith@andover-norton.co.uk



Tales from the Workshop.

September has seen some very interesting Commandos finished at Norton Motors and collected by some very happy customers.



Repairs have been from complete engine rebuilds to Tri Spark conversions fitting ignition unit, coil and regulator. What a brilliant conversion giving a reliable upgrade to starting, running and charging all in one tidy package.



Another bike we like to see in the workshop is the good old Triumph twin, the one above having some service work and upgrade to Tri Spark system as well.

On the bench at present, we have a selection of rotary bikes for a change 😊, just finished a very special Commander which was the customers brothers' bike so a precious family item which we got back better than he ever remembered it running. It was a real pleasure to help with such a special bike and hopefully we will see it on its travels in the future.

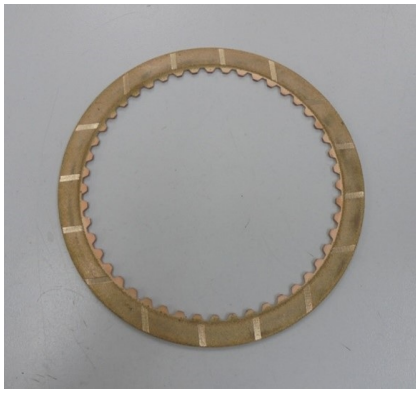


We have just completed an engine health check on an air-cooled Interpol special and that that has passed with flying colours and is now having a major service and carb/o-ring service.



On the rotary front some of you may have seen more rotary items coming back into stock including this month some high-quality air-cooled and water-cooled exhausts and Commander clutch perch and levers which have yet to be sorted.

More exciting is the new clutch plates we have had produced these should really improve clutch action and will be online for order very soon as well.



An interesting F1 just arrived for recommissioning and body change which has some great signatures on it can you identify any?





If you need any work on your motorcycle, please call for a chat but at present we are very busy so make sure you book early to get booked in.

It's good to be so busy that is for sure, and we really enjoy seeing so many happy customers!

Happy and safe riding Paul and the Workshop Team.



Stafford Mechanics Show

The Andover Norton Team will once again have a stand at the Classic



We will be on Stand M25 in the Main Hall with some of our bikes and we look forward to seeing you there.

New Products

We have had a range of new products in pipeline over the last few months and we are delighted to share a number of them with you today!

All items you see below are available on our webshop now!



**Clutch Plate (Sintered)
High Torque**

Use with plain plate [06.7248](#)

[Shop](#)



**Plain steel clutch plate
COMMANDO 750/850
(3mm thick)**

*Replaces one 2mm thick plate to
achieve a lighter clutch lever
action*

[Shop](#)



**Front S/Steel Mudguard
Assy (4 Holes)**

*S/Steel bridge With Stainless
Slotted Dome Head & Nyloc Nuts*



**Front S/Steel Mudguard
Assy (2 Holes)**

*S/Steel Bridge With Stainless
Slotted Head Dome screws &
Nyloc Nuts*

Shop



Exhaust manifold set for Norton Commander (Rotary):

Includes Manifold, gaskets and fixing bolts

Shop

Shop



Manifold set for Norton Classic & Interpol (Rotary)

Includes Manifold, gaskets and fixing bolts

Shop



Oil Tank Mounting Kit 1968 Fastback

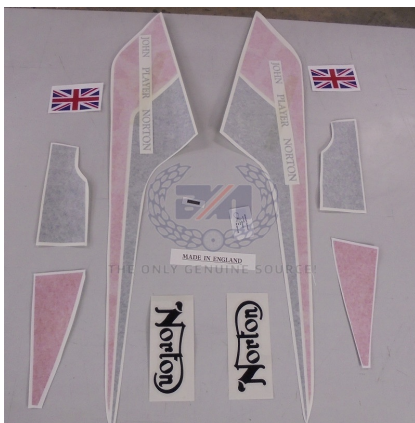
Shop



Tri Spark kit: Electronic Ignition

Kit includes Regulator/Rectifier c/w capacitor and two 6v ignition coils

Shop



One Piece Crankshafts

750 Balanced

JPN Decal Complete set

Shop

750/850
Unbalanced

850 Balanced



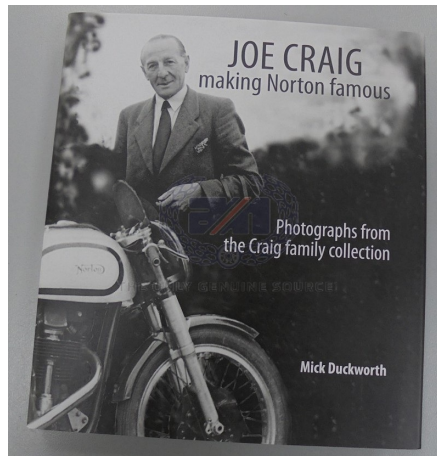
**CLUTCH PLATE PLAIN
(Rotary)**

Shop



**CLUTCH PLATE FRICTION
(Rotary)**

Shop



Joe Craig making Norton famous by Mick Duckworth

Shop

Back in Stock

We have also had a restocks of a number of high demand items as well, as Simon details in our video below.

BACK IN STOCK THIS WEEK



Chainguard

Front Drum Brake Stiffening Kit

Oil Pump Assembly

99 Link Rear Chain

Mushroom Valve Adjuster

Steel Roadster Tank Mounting Kit

S-Type Complete Exhaust System



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Unit 6 Wooler Park, North Way, SP10 5AZ, Andover

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