



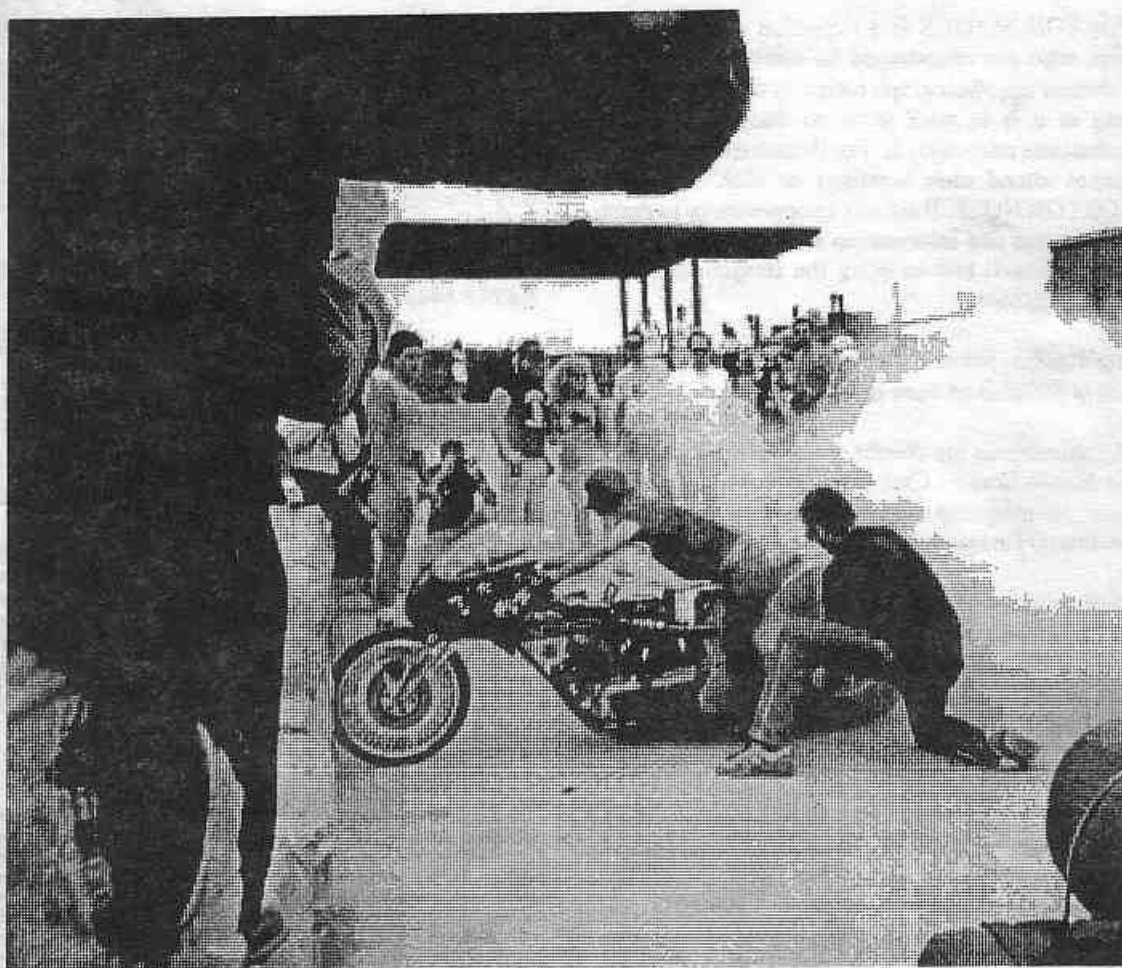
# Norton Notice



The Newsletter of the Norton Owners Club

No. 149

Sep. 1990



**T. C. Lights Up the Hog Slayer at 1990 Rally**

(Photo by Alan Goldwater)



## Norton Notice

is published by the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club. Its purpose is to inform and entertain members regarding all aspects of the Norton motorcycle, including history, technical advice, and preservation of the marque.

NORTON NOTICE is a reflection of the readership, who are encouraged to submit any article, technical tip, photograph (original or otherwise) as long as it is in good taste, so that other Norton enthusiasts may enjoy it. For Branch members who cannot attend club meetings or club rides, the NORTON NOTICE affords an opportunity to share experiences and information with the membership of the Branch and to bring the Branch members closer together.

The deadline for items to be submitted for publication is the 25th of each month.

Membership in the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club is available for \$15.00 per year. Membership dues are payable to the Branch Secretary/Treasurer.

Renewal dues are payable at the end of the individual's membership year, that month being designated by the last number of the individual's membership number as listed on the mailing label of the NORTON NOTICE and the membership card. For example, 745/2 denoted member 745 with dues expiring on the 1st of February.

All changes of address should go to the Branch Secretary/Treasurer, not the NOTICE editor.

The Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club is affiliated with both the Norton Owners Club of England and the International Norton Owners Association. Interested persons can join these two organizations per the terms described on the Branch membership application form.

## CLUB OFFICERS

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## NORTON OWNERS CLUB

**IMPORTANT (Please take note of the following fine print):**  
The object of the Northern California Branch of the Norton Owners Club is to promote, encourage and develop motorcycling activities. The Club's members are owners of Norton motorcycles and they often submit for publication in the NORTON NOTICE technical tips pertaining to motorcycles of the Norton marque. Technical tips so published have been reviewed for technical content and are believed to be both acceptable and workable, but no guarantee is made or implied that they will work correctly, nor is any liability assumed by either the Norton Owners Club or the members for any problems resulting from use of these technical tips. The club also assumes no responsibility for the acts or omissions of its members in connection with Club activities. NORTON NOTICE articles or other materials express the authors' views only and not necessarily the official policy of the Norton owners Club or its Northern California Branch. The editor reserves the right to accept, reject or alter all editorial and advertising material submitted for publication. Advertising published does not imply endorsement of products, goods or services. Now you know.

# Upcoming Events 9785102

## Club Rides

Sept. 16 (Sun.) Old-Timer's Ride  
Leave from Alice's at 10 am.

Oct. 14 (Sun.) Pumpkin Ride (tentative)

Nov. 3 (Sat.) Northbay All-British Ride  
(Members only) w/ Ariel, BSA,  
& Enfield Owners

Dec. 16 (Sun.) Mt. Hamilton

## Tech Tip on Tanks

There are two very good brands of fuel tank sealant on the market. One is made by LubriTech and the other by Kreem. However, a mix-up can occur which results in the sealant not adhering properly to the inside of the tank.

Both brands have a process to prepare the inside of the tank prior to actually applying the sealant. In both cases, the preparation process involves a two-step treatment. In both cases, the preparation treatment steps are called solution "A" and solution "B". However, be advised that LubriTech's solution "A" and "B" will not work with Kreem, and that Kreem's solutions "A" and "B" will not work with LubriTech tank sealant.

—I. Pushtit Holme, B.R.G.

## Meeting Schedule

The club meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month, at 7:30 PM. The location rotates between Peninsula, South Bay, East Bay and S.F.

Sept. 13 -- South Bay  
**Harry's Hofbrau**, El Camino near Castro Street, Mountain View

Oct. 11 -- East Bay **NEW LOCATION**  
**Bison Brewing**, 2598 Telegraph Ave.,  
(intersection with Parker), Berkeley (415)  
841-7734

Nov. 8 -- San Francisco  
**Lake Merced Boathouse**. Off Skyline Blvd. Great food, nice room with big-screen cycle racing videos.

Dec. 13 -- Peninsula  
**The Prince of Wales Pub** on 25th Ave in San Mateo offers a wide selection of beers and a private meeting room with dart boards!

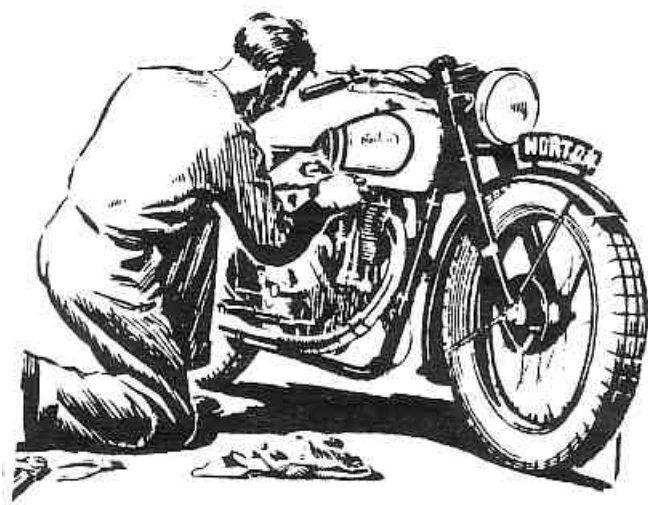
## Special Events

Don't forget the "1st Annual End of Summer Norton Owners Club Barbecue," Saturday, Sept. 15, 2-6 pm.

North Bay All-British ride and Party (aka The 50th Annual Don Dan meier Birthday Party). Leaves Baker's Square Restaurant, 1700 Novato Bl, Novato, at 10, 11/3. See center spread for map and details.

## Alan's Wrench

### Tech Tips and Gossip from the President



Those of you who attended last month's meeting at the Prince of Wales will remember that I arrived a bit late. On the way up from Santa Cruz I suddenly found myself riding a 414 cc Commando single. I pulled over and let the motor cool down a bit, then pulled the plugs. I could see the right exhaust valve sticking open but it didn't seem to be hitting the piston so I rode on to the meeting and then to Louis' house in Palo Alto, where we confirmed the diagnosis.

The bike eventually made it home in my truck and quickly had its head pulled. I found the valve stuck and visibly bent. Since I've never exceeded 6000 rpm on this bike I suspected the sticking to be the real culprit, which eventually caused the bend as the intake and exhaust valves collided. But why did it stick, after running reliably all summer? I called on Ken Armann to help me solve this mystery.

On disassembly we found that some previous owner of my MKIII had replaced one exhaust guide with a silicon-aluminum bronze racing part. Perhaps finding the guide loose in the head, they used a spot of weld to retain it rather than reaming the hole and using an oversize guide. This kind of treatment might warp the guide just enough to cause hot spots and eventual seizure of the valve.

Further disassembly found the other valve guides to be the stock iron type. The left exhaust valve was also tight in the hole and all the valves showed a heavy carbon deposit around the stems and guides. The rocker shafts weren't terribly worn and the bike had shown no sign of excess oil consumption or rich mixture. Where was the carbon coming from? We tried and discarded theory after theory, and eventually passed it off to age and hard miles.

I went ahead and rebuilt the head with Bob Raber's finest bronze guides and black stainless valves. While waiting for the machine work to be done I did some careful reading of the trusty NOC Commando Service Notes (\$5 from Stan Beneveds). The section on valves and guides didn't tell me anything new or surprising. I finally found a note in the MKIII addendum, as follows.

*"Exhaust valves:* It's not unknown for these to get bent... This can also be caused by keeping oil up to maximum level - the

oil is then sucked through the air filters and cokes valve stems up causing exhaust valves especially to stick in the guides."

This explanation seems a good candidate, as the bike had the original black box air filter when I got it. I replaced it with a K+N and then I had pushed the overflow/breather hose from the tank into a hole in the new filter. While I don't usually fill my oil tank all the way, it seems likely that the previous owner(s) did so. I have since removed and rerouted the vent hose along the rear fender to below the license plate where it can do no harm. If you're still running a MKIII with the original air box and vent arrangement, I'd strongly recommend that you not fill your oil tank much above the add mark, as this kind of failure can be disastrous if the valve hits the piston (luckily mine didn't).

Here are the current prices for the parts I used:

bronze guides exh.	\$5.96 ea
bronze guides int.	6.05 ea
valves ss black	19.46 ea
"flame-ring" head gasket	10.80
intake oil seals	1.00

Total for all parts was \$125.50, and machine work, etc. about another \$70, so figure about \$200 for a valve job, removing and replacing the head myself. Not too bad really, and the bike runs much better now, starts on the first poke (button or foot lever) and idles smoothly.

In the course of this repair I came across what may be the solution to another

Norton Mystery. Legend has it that all Commandos pull to the left, and at one time the factory attributed this to the right-forkleg position of the disk brake, although the logic of this has always escaped me. The MKIII brake was moved to the left fork leg, allegedly to fix the problem, but mine pulls left every bit as much as my '72 combat.

Getting back to my theory, while reinstalling the newly rebuilt head, I took a close look at the head steady, which is a sheetmetal affair common to all 850s. I noticed that the outer two bolts of the three which attach to the head are not quite symmetrically located. The holes in the head steady are offset about 1/2 inch to the left of the frame centerline, *yet the holes in the head are centered!* When I realised what this meant my jaw almost hit the floor in amazement. The Command engine is not centered in the frame! This seems to be true of all Commandos and can be confirmed simply by comparing the relative positions of the coils to the exhaust rocker covers.

The 1/2 inch offset is clearly visible on every Commando I checked which still had dual coils. Add to this the extra weight of the heavy clutch and primary case and you get a bike which doesn't quite balance on its wheels. Perhaps if the wheels were offset an equal amount relative to the frame the straight-line balance could be correct, but this would play havoc with the handling.

I can think of no good reason for this offset, which was clearly designed into the bike and didn't just happen by

(continued on page 6)

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## Battling the Bad Boyer Bullets

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by Marick Payton

For those of us who would rather spend our Norton-tinkering-time on things more interesting and challenging than setting points, the Boyer Electronic Ignition is a great mod. With but a single, irritating, though minor flaw, these units are highly reliable, assure that your Norton is always perfectly timed, and let you spend a little more of your precious time riding.

The flaw is in the bullet connectors from the magnetic trigger to the coil leads, housed in the timing cover. The wires routinely break from vibration at their connection to the bullets. These seem particularly vulnerable because the insulation on these wires is very stiff and the wire inside is very flexible. Since the bullets are only crimped to the wire and not also to the insulation, all the vibration is focused on that sixteenth of an inch of bare wire as it goes into the bullet.

There are a variety of fixes. Some folks change the connectors to a type that provide for crimping onto the insulated part of the wire as well as the bare wire itself. Others have used shrink wrap tubing across the bullet connector and extending half an inch or so on either side to provide stability. Or, you can simply do as I did when mine broke on a recent ride: wrap tape around the lead wires until they are as

thick as the bullet itself, then wrap some more tape over the whole thing. Just be assured that, if you don't do something of the sort when you install your Boyer, you will have the opportunity to do so later on the road.

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### Wrench cont.

accident. They may have had trouble lining up the engine and clutch sprockets and with the gearbox position fixed by the rear chain, took the easy way out for the prototype. But to not fix this in nine years of production is inexcusable and entirely believable. Nobody cared enough to get it right and in fact no-one seems to have noticed until now. Any comments?

The following key 1991 Rally Committee positions are still open:

- \*Food & concessions mgr
- \*Field events coordinator
- \*Rides coordinator
- \*Awards and prizes coordinator
- \*Memorabilia mgr (pins etc.)
- \*Road rescue manager

Please let me know if you'd like to get involved in planning the 1991 INOA High Sierra Rally in one of these ways. See you at Harry's Hoffbrau, or maybe at Art's Barbecue, or .....

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## Minutes of August Meeting

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President Alan Goldwater called the meeting to order at 9 pm at the Prince of Wales pub in San Mateo. (He arrived late because of mechanical problems.)

Alan gave a brief report on the national rally in Wisconsin: no trees, lots of rain, the rotary broke, and a lot of people attended. He noted that many people from the eastern parts of the country aren't able to maintain their Nortons as well as Californians can. Enthusiasm is said to be high for the '91 Rally that we're sponsoring. He also visited the BMW rally in South Dakota enroute to the San Juan Islands of Washington.

Alan announced a "President's Ride" to Tahoe on Sept. 7-8, since our schedule otherwise had no overnighter. The idea is to check out the two potential sites for next year's rally. A leader is called for, since Alan is going up Thursday. Details of this and other rides are elsewhere in the *Notice*.

The 1st Annual Art Sirota Birthday Barbecue (Sept. 15, 2-6 pm) was also mentioned. Combining it with the Old Timers' Ride (Sept. 16) was discussed but the consensus was to leave them as two discrete events.

Also discussed was the idea of the *Notice* publishing combined ride calendars, so that members could be aware of other clubs' events (e.g., the BSA Owners Club). It was emphasized that the rides would *not* be double-billed. That is,

the Norton club ride would remain the Norton Club ride, even though other Brit bike owners might attend. Same for BSA OC or any other club. Publisher will have to follow up on this, barring objection from other clubs.

Stan gave a report on T-shirt preparation. We're having trouble getting British Racing Green shirts, so we are going with black for now; but we'll get BRG for the next lot.

In preparation for the National Rally (1991), a Rally Committee will have to be formed. Posting of the committee is planned to begin at the September Club meeting, so a good turnout there is important. There will be plenty of work to go around, and it will be gratifying stuff. Possible memorabilia vendors were discussed.

Art Sirota announced that the frame of the raffle Norton has been painted and is back at Andy Belcher's house. Art also distributed "Norton Collectibles" brochures.

Harry gave a Treasurer's report. Club pins are being manufactured; should be ready about end of September.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25. Attendance was about 20.

—John Covell, Secretary

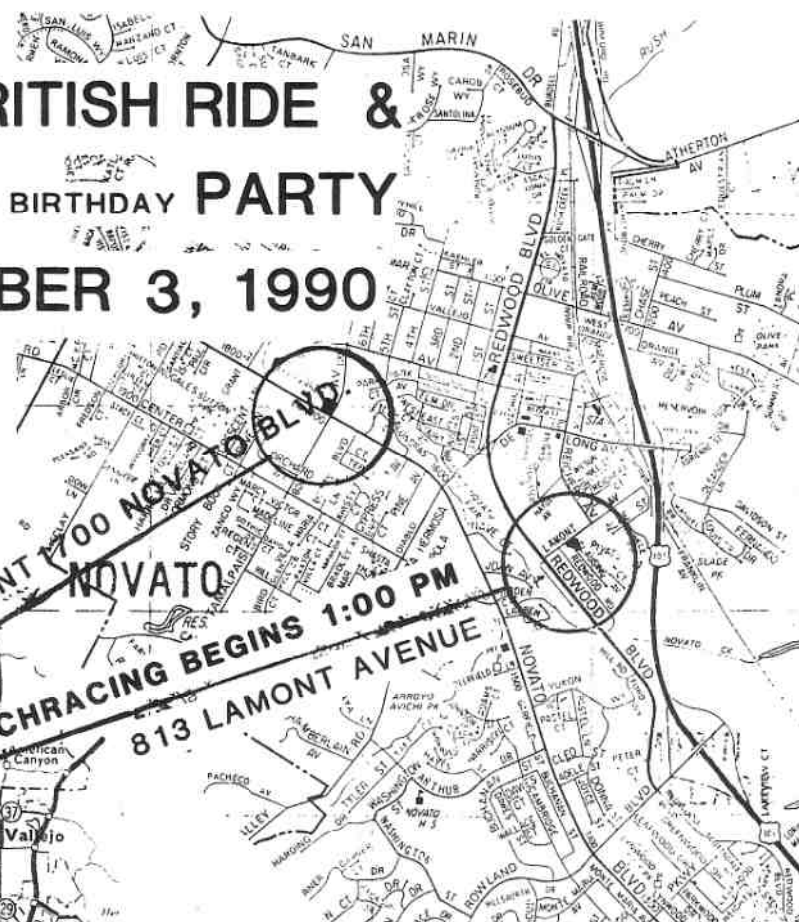
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# NORTH BAY ALL-BRITISH RIDE &

THE 50th ANNUAL DON DANMEIER BIRTHDAY PARTY

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1990

**NO RACING  
NO TROPHIES  
NO RIDE PINS  
and  
NO CHARGE FOR FOOD & DRINK**



**RIDE DEPARTS 10:00 AM  
BAKER'S SQUARE RESTAURANT  
PARTY/BENCH RACING BEGINS 1:00 PM  
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*Pacific*



*Bay*

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*Ocean*

IF ACCOMPANYING A MEMBER

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BSA  
Norton**

**ROYAL ENFIELD**



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## Ride(s) Report: August Was a 2-fer

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Locke and the Delta, August 27: What a ride! Fifteen bikes and sixteen riders were treated to one of those special California days where the air is clear and the temperature is perfect. We left Emeryville at 9:30, after breakfast at Denny's, and headed up Highway 80 to Suisun City, where we met another Norton rider and his friend on a Ducati. I know some riders didn't like the freeway miles but sometimes those are just a fact of life and, if approached with the right attitude, they can be just as much fun as back road riding and the scenery can be just as pleasant.

After meeting we continued along Highway 12 to the Western Railroad Museum where we saw the largest Norton ever built. It was a Model 2-8-2 Side Valve Tripple Expansion Steam Driven Sports. I bet Art doesn't have one of those stashed away in his back shed! After the photo session we headed west and stopped in Rio Vista for a visit to Fosters Bighorn Bar. This place has the most incredible collection of hunting trophies this side of the British Museum. Mr. Foster spent most of his life between 1920 and 1954 behind the sights of his Holland and Holland and appears to be the quintessential Hemmingwayesque character that novels are based on. If you haven't been there, it is well worth the trip.

After Rio Vista and a few wrong turns, we headed up river on Highway 160 to Walnut Grove and to our destination,

Locke. Locke is a nice old place and we all ate lunch at "Al the Wops" place. Good foods and good prices. I think that this ride should be one of our annual events with some changes in the route for those who don't like the freeway miles. It was fun and I enjoyed it. And, thanks to Mike Burnam for the use of his "spare" Commando.

P.S. The only mishap was a flat tire on Patrick McDowell's front wheel. Not fun, especially when you have your wife on the back. They finally got home safe and patched but Patrick, for some reason, had dirty fingers. By the way, Patrick, *get a helmet.*

—Lynne Miller

### Ride for a Friend

Maya Lai hosted a special club ride on the 8th of this month to give an out-of-town friend a chance for some of that great California riding with fellow Nortonists. The friend, Jeff Davidson of Chicago, had just completed a beautiful restoration of a Mk III. I believe he had every stainless piece that has ever been made for a Norton on this bike. Plus, of course, all oil and brake lines were braided stainless. Beautiful. Those of you who have admired Phil Radford's special have seen a sample of Jeff's work as he is the one who originally put this bike together, subsequently selling it to Phil, who added his own touches.

Back to the ride: seven of us left Bob's Big Boy in SJ for a leisurely romp

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through the Santa Clara wine country. We took what, to me, was a new route south to Morgan Hill. This was San Felipe Rd, on the East side of 101. My thanks to David Lai for the suggestion. This is a wonderful little road!

The route was then down Uvas Dam Road to Highway 152, the Gilroy-Watsonville Road through the half-dozen or so small mostly-Italian family wineries in the area. Once pass the wineries heading West, we climbed up through Mt. Madonna park and down the back side (this time avoiding the gravelly Redwood Retreat Road route I usually lead folks on).

As we ended our descent on Hazel Dell and rounded the corner onto Brown's Valley Road I fell victim to the dreaded Boyer Broken Bullet Connector Failure.

Actually, if you are familiar with the symptoms of this disease it's one of Nortoning's more minor break-downs as it is easily fixed on the road. Fortunately, several of us did, though my attention was temporarily misdirected by the fact that my Combat apparently spit out its key at about the same time. Anyway, with a little help from my friends, I was quickly back on the road.

With the prospect of barbecue waiting for us back at Maya's, we sped on to Freedom and the Coast Highway, then up to Santa Cruz and back home on Highway 17.

The last minute rush was worth it. We had a sumptuous BBQ with some of Maya's family and friends. Wonderful way to end a day of back-roading on our Nortons.

—Marick Payton

1st Annual End of Summer

## Norton Barbecue

Saturday, September 15, 1990

2 pm to 6 pm

- √--If it rains, this event is cancelled and will be postponed until next year.
- √--All participants must be paid-up members of the NOC, no exceptions.
- √--All participants must arrive on a Norton

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(Directions: look it up on a map!)**

## A Fix for Old Batteries

---

K. L. Martin, B.Sc. (Hons), London

Very few lead-acid batteries are replaced because they stop working; in almost every case the battery is replaced because it doesn't work *well enough* any more. What is not generally realized is that something can be done at this stage which may well prolong the useful life of the battery, quite often by many years, and that the same treatment carried out earlier in the battery's life may well have stopped the symptoms from occurring in the first place.

The reason for a battery failing to work properly any more is due to the chemical processes which take place within each cell when the battery is not fully charged. Even the slightest of discharged conditions allows both plates to react slowly with the sulfuric acid electrolyte to form lead ions. It is these lead ions which cause problems, they combine with sulfate ions in sulfuric acid to form highly insoluble lead sulfate. When this coats the plates of the battery, it fails to deliver enough power to be of use. The battery may well be thoroughly serviceable in every other way. Only the "sulfating" stops the battery delivering enough power to be of use.

The sulfating can effectively be removed, or prevented, by adding to each cell a chemical called tetrasodium ethylenediaminetetraacetate (often abbreviated to tetrasodium EDTA). This

chemical forms co-ordination compounds with many metal ions, including the lead ions formed in the discharge cycle of a battery. The compound formed by lead ions and the EDTA ion is not particularly stable in the acid medium of a battery, but when it breaks down again any lead sulfate regenerated tends to drop to the bottom of the cell where it lays harmlessly since it doesn't conduct electricity. Any regenerated EDTA ions are free to continue their work.

As can be seen from the above, treating a battery with tetrasodium EDTA is likely to be most effective when the battery, for one reason or another, spends periods when it is not fully charged, and so contains too many lead ions. This is likely to occur if the motorcycle is used for just short trips, is infrequently used, or has at any time suffered from an inefficient charging system. Treating with the chemical can also help keep an original battery in use, and can help in bringing back into use a stored battery. It is also a once-only treatment, lasting the life of the renovated battery.

To treat a battery with tetrasodium EDTA you simply take a level tablespoon full of the powder, divide it up and add to each cell. This assumes an average sized motorcycle battery, but the exact amount is in no way critical. What you should then do is agitate the battery frequently for a few days (normal use will do), and then

*(continued on page 13)*

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## A Historical Note from TW

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by Thackery Washer, N.O.S.

As I was looking for some notes in my roll top desk I found the following article stuck on the back of a five pound note, which is now worth ten dollars. (If you were about to order something from England, you might keep that in mind.) Anyway, here is the article. I hope you enjoy it.

The Neanderthals, almost to a man, rode British single-cylinder motorcycles, which were as heavy, but not as fast, as anvils. Their clutches were as tender as a two-minute egg; their lights wistful memories, and they leaked in phase with the moon. Each machine roosted at night over it's very own inverted garbage can lid. It was impossible to have one stolen for they could only be started by their owners who, somehow, mastered the chord progressions of the array of spark retard levers, chokes, switches and compression releases that made their handlebars look like clarinets.

At idle, they vibrated so ferociously that the machine appeared blurred; they could multiple-orgasm women well past menopause and, when propped on the sidestand, would quickly scour a hole in anything softer than concrete until they toppled slowly, and with a great deal of British dignity.

One memorable BSA owner always carried a .32 revolver. He'd park his idling

bike in front of some trees, then walk away, glancing back occasionally at the angle of lean. When this reached the point of no return, he'd startle onlookers by drawing the .32 and firing at the bike until it toppled over. Usually, the BSA would jump into gear and kick it's rear wheel until a final shot was fired to end it's suffering. The performance would sometimes draw a polite smattering of applause as, without questions, it's good policy to humor gentlemen with guns in their hands. Especially if they're reloading.

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### Battery Fix (cont.)

give it a thorough charge to build up on the cleaned plate areas. On the assumption that sulfating has been affecting the performance of your battery, an increased performance will be noted from here on.

Over the past yew years, many thousands of European and American car enthusiasts have used tetrasodium EDTA with great success on their batteries. You may wish to do the same on your motorcycle batteries by purchasing some of the chemical. If you have problems and cannot find any tetrasodium EDTA in your locality, I can provide you with enough to treat two motorcycle batteries for a \$5.00 check or bill, which includes quick dispatch by air mail. My address is: K. L. Martin, 19 Brookmead, Meppershall, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5SA, England.

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## Classifieds

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FOR SALE: 1975 Mk III 850 parts. One complete bike, disassembled, 2 partial bikes, all low mileage. Includes 3 engines, 3 trans, 1 frame, 1 pink slip, 2 tanks (1 roadster, 1 racing), 5 wheels, 3 forks with brakes, 2-1/2 primaries. \$2,500 takes all. Call Steve (415) 652-2549, evenings. /9

Artist collector seeks metal trophy top ornaments of classic European motorcycles and riders, belt buckles, small metal die cast toys, etc. Please send description or photos. Will pay \$.50-\$5.00 plus postage. Doug Ratliff, 2105 Crane Ct., Sacramento, CA 95925, (916) 362-3807.

/8

Any of you Rockers out there? I need help with research material for my Masters Degree in art. If you are so inclined, please send pictures and any writings or descriptions of the Rockers' way of life and their bikes. (P.S. Phil Radford, I expect at least a few lines or photos from you on true English Rockin'!! (Please). Thanks. Doug Ratliff, 2105 Crane Ct., Sacramento, CA 95925, (916) 362-3807.

/8

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## Letters

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### JUST WAITING FOR A FRIEND

My Commando is sick. I miss riding it. It is being looked after by Dr. Phil. I took its heart out and delivered it in a box carefully wrapped in yesterday's news. Perhaps tomorrow's news will be better. The frame is sitting mournfully in my garage waiting for the day when its superblended, top-ended, well attended heart is back in place.

In the meantime, I am just waiting for a friend!

—Lynne Miller

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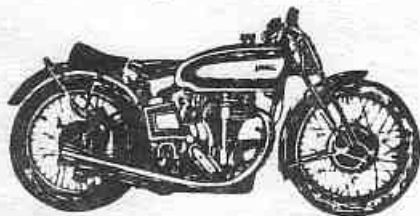
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Munroe has three mechanics who are familiar with Nortons and have been for a number of years. We can replace exhaust ports with the head on the bike and don't know of anyone else who can. The job looks like original factory. Call for a quote on shop prices. We also have a good Norton parts supply.



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