



THE

SOURCE 09/2021

Dear Andover Norton Customer,

August was a busy month, though I am frankly at a loss to explain why. I thought everybody was going on holidays and was prepared for urgent requests for that one vital part to be sent to the holiday cottage, perhaps, but most certainly not for the big orders we saw.

We still struggle with suppliers only gradually getting back to normal. Many parts that were ordered in time simply don't seem to arrive on time now. Camshafts come to mind, now sourced from a new manufacturer after the old one completely failing our quality control with a variety of faults we had never seen before. The other headache are our noise-reduced silencers that sell really well now that the Norton world realizes how good they are. Unfortunately, no new stock is expected until October!

Our MD Karl rang one supplier of a vital part and offered to pay with the order if that sped things up. He was told that made no difference. They are flat out and simply cannot fill the order earlier than they told us!

Phil's Retirement

After Phil's memories in last month's "Source" I take the opportunity to give my view of his career in Andover Norton ("ANIL").

Firstly, I never planned to employ Phil. When I bought ANIL, Dave Bennett of BSA Regal said "And you will get Phil!" My reply was "Who is Phil?". I am not sure I ever had anything to do with Phil in the BSA/Regal days. Phil at that time was responsible for MZ, not Norton, and the people I dealt with were Nick Hopkins and occasionally Bob Reynolds, then ANIL's buyer.

My suspicion was that Dave wanted to get rid of pension commitments, hence landed me with Phil. But since it was one of the conditions to buy ANIL to take the personnel on I grudgingly accepted it.

Very quickly I revised my view of Phil as dead weight. In discussions following my acquisition of the company he showed intelligence and a fundamental business sense. Nick knew every Norton part by first

name and was a parts man through and through, but I think it is fair to say commercial thinking and strategy were not his forte.

When I bought ANIL I saw it as a sleeping beauty waiting to be kissed back to life. This was more of an uphill struggle than I had anticipated. My main support in this was Phil, who got systematic, methodical thinking into what I saw as haphazard, sometimes chaotic parts procurement of a very limited range of parts.



Above: Phil with the "Employee of the Month" trophy he won by our staff's anonymous vote.

The logical thing to do following Nick's retirement was then to promote Phil to MD. I think it is fair to say that ANIL has had a turbo built in since.

Phil has gifts I often envy. He was the boss but also, when needed, a social worker helping staff members with their personal problems. Phil is straightforward and completely honest, and all the staff could and did trust him.

By "completely honest" I include "about himself". When the company grew from the three people we started with on Day 1 to now over a dozen employees, Phil said, unprompted by me and initially denied by me, too, that the company had grown to a size that needed a new MD able to cope with its size. Given his retirement was only a couple of years away he was yet again right in taking the necessary steps to find a successor, and a very good one we found in Karl too.

Another aspect of Phil's honesty was the esteem our trade customers hold him in. I remember having a meal with the Rabers, father and son, in San Jose in 2010 and Bob Rabers stating to my amazement he preferred to talk to Phil. Given Phil knew but a little about Norton parts

I asked why that was so. Bob said "Because I get factual, precise, honest answers from him."

In retrospect I am grateful for having been landed with Phil on Day 1 of owning ANIL and having him on the team ever since. I will miss our conversations on company as well as many other matters. I thank Phil for the magnificent job he did for ANIL, often well beyond his duties as an employee, if necessary at night or over a weekend. Phil thought of the company as his baby and did everything necessary and more for it, thinking like a company owner. I wish Phil a long, healthy and enjoyable retirement and am glad to know we can call on him for special tasks if they arise, for which I am again grateful.

It was more than fourteen years together in harness. I'll miss him.

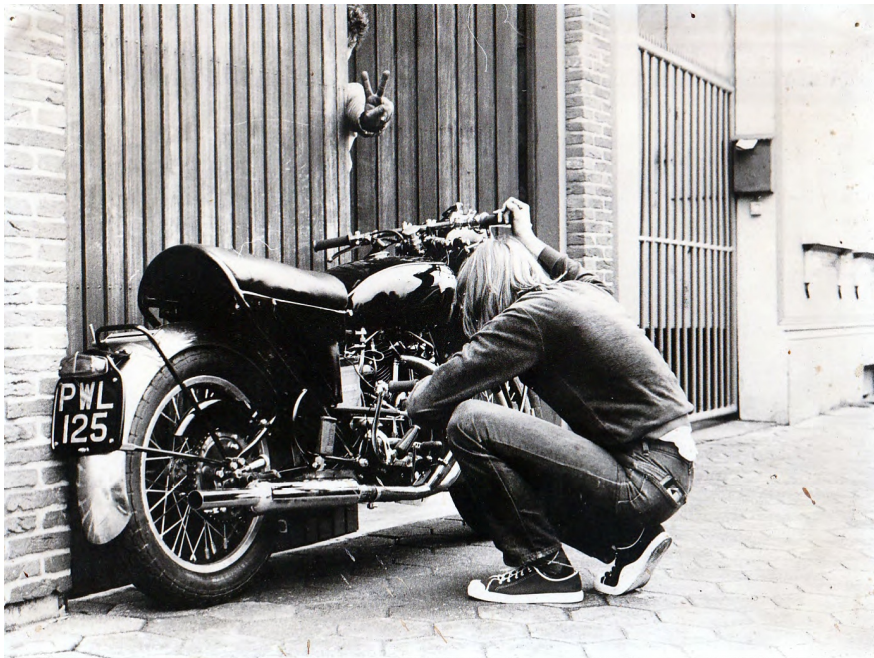
Joe Seifert

Jets & Needles

Probably a bit of a stupid title but I try to catch your attention. Technical but of importance to all those running carburetors, especially Amal ones.

My radical introduction in the importance of needle jets and jet needles came in 1980. I lived in Southampton, in a university Hall of Residence, and spent most of my one-year scholarship riding bikes and, during the breaks, shipping a vanload to Hamburg to sell. The sales gave me the money to satisfy a long-term ambition to buy a Vincent twin. We all make mistakes, sometimes....

The Vincent seemed a bit hefty in fuel consumption so, filling it up in Southampton, I rode up to Happy Hamrax in Ladbroke Grove, London, and purchased a set of needles and needle jets for the 276 carbs fitted. At the curb in front of the Hamrax emporium I fitted the jets and needles, fuelled up at the next petrol station, and rode back to Southampton. I refuelled again and imagine my surprise finding the trip back had consumed just over half the fuel of the trip up to London.



Joe & Vincent outside his first shop, a disused lorry garage, ca.1981

My customers seem totally focused on main jet sizes and love to discuss them, not realizing their main jets are probably rarely important. In most traffic conditions bar overtaking and REALLY motoring (never mind the speed cameras!) the main jet, basically the biggest hole in the carb letting fuel into the engine, is not fully at work. Up to roughly 4.500rpm, depending on needle position, the needle and needle jet meter the fuel input, and that means at least 90% of the time out on public roads.

Two recent experiences drew my attention to these components. Firstly, at Panoniaring the 1960 Manx wasn't completely happy in mid-range, so we experimented with the needle position. That needle has been in the bike since before I bought it. We found the position changed all by itself and looking at the grooves for the needle clip the cause became instantly clear:



Top: Old needle. Bottom: New needle out of the bag.

The old needle was totally worn out so the clip easily jumped from one groove to the next. One thing I did notice was that the new needle is longer:

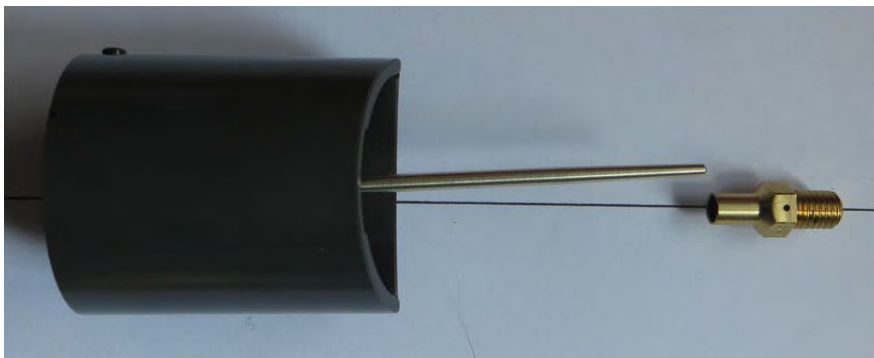


The diameters of old and new needle in the different heights were identical, so I decided provided the longer needle did not conflict with a part in the carb I could use it. The needle is never completely out of the needle jet, which acts as a guide to the needle, so if the needle is longer it cannot restrict the previous maximum of fuel coming through if the gauge of the needle in the sections in use is not thicker.



Above: the needle never totally leaves the needle jet which thus is the guide for it.

Talking of the needle jet acting as “guide” to the jet needle brings me to the main reason why it pays to, after considerable mileages, change both components. The needle is not clearly located sidewise in the slide. In fact the needle can and does go to and fro in use, and thus not only eventually becomes thinner but, using the needle jet as guide, also widens the needle jet.



Above: Just to demonstrate how much the needle can go sideways without the jet as guide. Which demonstrates how it drums against the insides of the jet in use, thus widening that calibrated hole whilst becoming thinner itself. On very worn needles you can feel ridges when sliding along it with a fingernail.

I rode together with a friend last weekend and we changed bikes. He was interested to see how my short-stroke rides compared to his standard Commando. Following him I smelt HC, i.e. unburnt fuel. Which reminded me the bike had now done 22,000 miles on these carbs and new needle jets and needles are now called for.

This tallied with my memories of a ride I took with my son Tim and his (standard) Commando over the Alps some years ago with our fuel consumptions near-identical at about 3.5 litres per 100km. No way could I do that now with my carbs in their current state. Time for a few bits that will pay for themselves in a few tankfills not to mention they will be beneficial for the environment.

That marvellous early Commando Headsteady

As you know the Commando was thrown together in a matter of weeks. So it is probably not surprising some early components were not all that clever in design.

One particular letdown was the early head steady structure, basically a wavy piece of sheet metal that was bound to develop cracks and break. The later headsteady did away with all these problems being inherently rigid by virtue of its box-section design. Those ignorant of simple engineering practice and unable to understand structural rigidity still think that early headsteady was a good idea and manufacture replicas made from armoured tank gauge metal, weighing several times the weight of the box section structure.

Making things from stainless is another fashion in the classic world, frequently using unsuitable materials. The headsteady a customer showed Ashley is an example of all the above:



The reason why the customer noticed something wasn't right was that he wondered what the noise was! Lack of stability whilst cornering must also be easy to notice since the headsteady stabilizes the rear wheel vertically in relation to the frame.

In this particular case a bad design, executed even worse, was combined with a totally unsuitable material which was bound to lead to terminal fracture.

Ashley's Bit

My Bike

It is still running well, just needing a clutch cable change and the valve clearances checking. Next thing will be both the tyres as the front is worn due to the road camber and the rear has another 1000 miles life, the bike may also get a clean as it has been collecting some dirt lately due to dodgy weather forecasters.

In General

Here at AN we often get asked about parts needed for a fork, gearbox rebuild and engine rebuild where the owner has not stripped the item apart. As much as we like to help, prediction of what parts are needed is a challenge and we often get some who order parts then return them when they are not needed or order what they think they need hoping to get the bike back on the road as quickly as possible and then find that they need to order even more parts. The best way is to either have a complete and ready to insert set of forks, gearbox or engine but this is expensive and prohibitive for most owners, next best method is have a pencil and pad ready, strip the item and then write down items that need replacing as you go, with current shipping timescales you will not need to wait too long and in the meantime you can clean the other good parts ready for assembly. This is the most cost effective and best way to proceed, and for some quicker than buying the parts then finding that you need another gear, bush etc.

Vernier isolastics

Twice in as many months I have had calls from owners who have had these fitted the wrong way around, one bike was a purchase where the previous owner had installed them incorrectly and the other was someone "who noticed they were around the wrong way" removed and fitted them wrong way around, there was a big sigh when he realised what he had done. As you sit on the bike the vernier collar on the front mounting is on the right hand side and the rear mounting has its vernier collar on the left hand, this applies to all conversion kits.

Simon's Bit

My Norton Commando and E10 fuel

"Put E10 fuel in without looking. The old girl definitely does not like it"

"Ran like a stuffed pig. Coughing and spluttering like a 60 a day smoker"

"You are looking for trouble running that E10 sxxx"

"Do not use E10 on a Norton engine".

These are recent comments from Norton twin social media. Here is my own experience of using the new petrol:

On 25th August I filled my own 1973 Commando 750 with its first tank of E10 fuel from my local supermarket. Before then the bike had been running perfectly fine – smooth, torquey with a reliable tick-over. I run twin Amal 32mm Premiers with 230 jet, Champion N7Y spark plugs, Pazon Surefire ignition and a 21-tooth gearbox sprocket. Over the next four weeks, I filled up another nine times. By mid-September I had covered 1,000 miles on the 10% ethanol petrol. (My daily commute to Andover is 85 miles per day).

During that time, the bike hasn't shown any sign of running differently than before – it's still smooth, torquey with a steady tick-over. Not a single noticeable misfire. Thankfully, I've not suffered the riding problems others have. Perhaps it's too early to predict the worst?



**FOR SALE: NORTON COMMANDO 750 MK1 1971
FRAME /ENGINE 141975**

This was previously advertised in January 2021 but then withdrawn. It is now on offer for sale.

I purchased this Commando in January 2016. The seller had bought it

from the first owner's widow in 1989 intending to restore it, but with many other bikes very little work was done and it remained a 'future project' for 26 years until its sale to me. The Commando was last used in the mid 1980's. I have more information on the bike's history if it of interest to the new owner, as well as photos of the bike when I purchased it in 2016.



My objective was to return the bike back to good working order without unnecessarily replacing original components and also to retain the interesting patina acquired over 45 years. The bikes petrol tank and side covers are still in their original metallic blue paint. The frame and swinging arm are in their factory black paint.

Many key components are the originals: front exhaust pipes, chrome mudguards, mudguard stays, headlamp and rim, headlamp halo and brackets, clutch & brake lever assemblies, air lever, Wipac horn/dip switch, rear light unit and fairing, amber & red reflectors, chainguard and air filter box, Dunlop front & rear wheel rims and side stand assembly. The chrome is in good condition. It still has both front and rear registration number plates.

Some new parts have been fitted, all from Andover Norton. (This is not an inclusive list): handlebars, tyres, inner tubes, pistons & rings (standard size), big end shells (standard size), valve springs, fork stanchions, fork top bolts, fork bushes and seals, gearbox bearings, swinging arm spindle and bushes, rear drive chain, front and rear isolastics, 30mm Amal Premier twin carburettors, clutch friction plates, front brake shoes and cable.



There are some upgrades: magnetic sump drain plug, Pazon Surefire ignition, Podtronics regulator/rectifier, later type centre stand fitted to the gearbox cradle (the original type centre stand fitted to the frame is hard to use and does not lift the wheel off the ground), external oil filter kit, gearbox layshaft roller bearing, chrome plated brass exhaust lockrings, which are less likely to loosen.

At first I replaced the 19 tooth gearbox sprocket with a 21 tooth one but reverted back to a 19 one as I prefer it for riding country roads. The Roadster Mk1 has a central oil tank with a battery placed behind it, across the frame. The side covers and petrol tank are original and made of GRP (fibre glass). I have lined the petrol tank with Caswell clear two part sealant to protect it from ethanol fuel. I have used this before and it is completely reliable.

The first Roadster model was identical to the 'S' type, apart from the exhaust system. For the last few years I have run the bike with an 'S' type exhaust system (again from Andover Norton). Two exhaust systems are included in the purchase price (i.e. Roadster & 'S' type). The side cover decals currently fitted are 'S' type but Roadster ones will be included.





This Commando has been completely stripped down to its individual parts, assessed, all worn parts replaced and then re-assembled to ensure it is reliable in everyday use. I have many photos of the bike's rebuild. There are no signs of abuse, damage or broken fins to the engine or gearbox. The bike rides well. The clutch is quite light and the gears all engage cleanly. When purchased by myself the mileage was 25,283. I have since ridden over 5,000 miles enjoyable miles on it. The bike is located in North Wiltshire, England. Please ask any questions. More photos are available. Viewers are welcome.

Price: £7,950 (firm)

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Andover Norton Calendar

Our 2022 Calendar will be available soon!

Thank you to everyone who submitted their entries into our competition. There were plenty of great photos and the voting was very close between the winners, who we will be contacting shortly!

The Calendars are currently in production and will be available for purchase in the near future, keep an eye on our Web Shop for the announcement under the part number: *13.1789/2022*



Andover Norton International Ltd.
2022 Calendar



**That's all we have time for this
month's "Source"
Until next time!**



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