



# Newsletter

June 2015

## Scotia Challenge Update and Naughty Norton

An adventure with John Hyman

Ian Bell and I have been getting on with the Scotia Challenge.

Earlier this year we had a wonderful unseasonably warm day in West Lothian. This was followed a few weeks later by a very different cool day up in Deeside where we bumped in to Kate Skillen who was heading up to Turriff on her CB500 to see her Mum. Mind you, the run over The Cairn O Mount coming home was a welcome blast.

This year's Scotia Challenge has quite a few checkpoints up at the top of Scotland and this would need A PLAN. After much deliberation, Googling, and head scratching Ian and I had a possible CUNNING PLAN. Involving a long weekend with two nights away.

So, the Commando was checked over, fluids all topped up and new front brake master cylinder fitted. The old one had developed a leak and annoyingly messed the tank and fairing even more.

Dates were decided upon and B&B's booked.

Far too early on a bright Saturday morning I met up with Ian. Only to hit a wee problem which delayed us. So belatedly we headed up the A9 (yawn) and North picking off several checkpoints en route. By Inverness it was clouding over but everything was going OK. Then in Dornoch later in the afternoon just pottering along, my Commando suddenly cut out. I coasted to the halt and began to investigate. Ian returned wondering what was going on. We checked all the obvious things. Sparks, petrol etc. and also attracted an inquisitive but less than helpful local teenager.

Then it started drizzling.

Drat.

After a bit of fiddling it restarted so we put it all back together and set off. Me with fingers crossed. But thankfully it didn't miss a beat and we eventually arrived at the B&B in Golspie.

Very low on fuel on a Saturday night not sure if there was a petrol station open Sunday am.

Gulp.

So we had a drizzly, dreich evening. Fish and chips, a beer and a wee walk before turning in.

We'd been assured there was a petrol station in Brora. Thankfully correct. So off Northwards and diverted through a wet but deserted Glen Loth. A scary road.

Then variable weather up to the top of Scotland. Sun, rain and a constant Westerly wind.

But progress was steady until Wick. Leaving the town the Commando died again unexpectedly. Except for the drizzle that is, and we began investigating. It was obvious we had sparks because switching on the ignition produced an enormous bang down the exhaust pipe which startled and deafened us. But then afterwards it started and we threw the bike back together and headed off Southwards dodging traffic on the non average speed camera section of the northerly A9. It was still windy but mostly dry by now.

Ian had a wee issue leaving Inverness, affecting his usually ultra-reliable wee Honda. This is elaborated in a separate article in this month's Banter.

Tired and thirsty we finally rolled up at the B&B in Findhorn.

Both of us did a bit of bike checking then had a walk off to the busy pub (The Wimberly) for an excellent meal and couple of beers.

The last day was a complicated route through Aberdeenshire before heading Home. Almost immediately we/I took the not correct road. But the roads were good and scenery stunning. Just a pity that it was raining on and off. By lunchtime in Keith it was very cool and tipping down. Pie and chips and a cuppa helped bolster our spirits.

In Turriff I had another wee incident after parking up in the town centre. A petrol pipe had come adrift and petrol was gushing all over the place. Off with the fuel taps and get the tywraps out to fix it ! A lady in a bike jacket appeared and offered assistance and even a garage if needed. Google "Team Past It" and read up about her and her late husband. You meet the nicest of people sometimes after a breakdown?

With all our checkpoints visited we went down to Banchory where the sun broke through ready for heading over the Cairn yet again for a great run and then Home.

Except we stopped in Fettercairn to phone our respective Homes and let wives know when we'd be home.

I toggled up and tried to start the bike.

Nothing.

So Ian and I went in to checking over the handlebar Kill Switch (number 1 suspect by now) with no effect.

I kicked it over. It just didn't sound right, something was different.

I looked under the tank and discovered a gap of about 1/2" between the carburettor and its stub.

On stopping the bike I realised I'd inadvertently not let the engine fully stop before releasing the kill switch and caused a backfire which had popped the carb off. On thinking about it I had heard a wee cough, but dismissed it.

Out once more with the tools and slid it back in to place, which had it running again.

The last half hour or so back to Dundee down the dual carriageway was a drag, but I was

pleased to finally be Home. Slightly later than expected and advised.

The bike and I were both pretty filthy.

745 miles in three days. About 500 ml of SAE 40 used to top up the oil tank. An alarming amount of rubber "lost" off the rear Avon Road Rider too.

Great fun and thanks to Ian.

Just a few more checkpoints needed to be bagged now to complete The 2015 Scotia Challenge.

Give it a try, you might just get addicted.

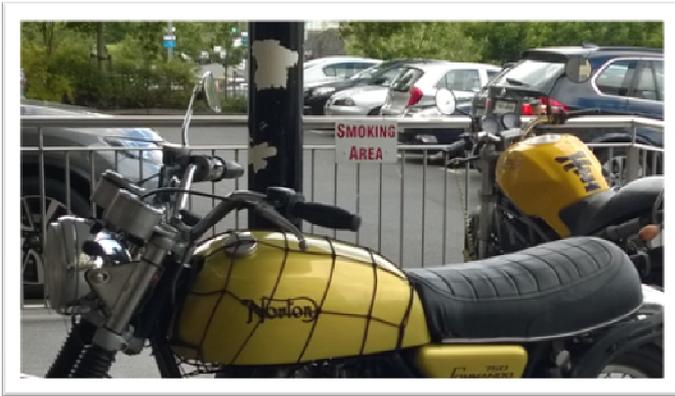
*John Hyman*

## **NOC International Rally**

Last months international Rally in Wicklow proved to be a great weekend – my thanks to the hosts, organisers and helpers.

Ann and I allowed ourselves plenty of time and set off on Wednesday afternoon to catch the evening boat from Troon. Naturally, it didn't stop raining the whole way. Some sections were just torture with heavy, slow moving traffic and so much spray that overtaking was tricky. Sitting in the supermarket café before check-in, Anns Gortex suit was so waterlogged she had a puddle under her chair gradually spreading out across the floor. Luckily we had pre-booked a hotel in Larne only yards from the terminal so didn't have much farther to go. (That's [www.currancourthotel.co.uk](http://www.currancourthotel.co.uk) - helpful and welcoming staff. A comfortable night and very convenient if you are on a late or early crossing).

Next morning was brighter and drier, so set off West and South trying to avoid the main roads with the vague notion of camping that night around Roscommon. That plan held with only a few u-turns and detours, until later in the afternoon when I finally admitted defeat and just picked up an N route into Athlone, rode straight into the centre of town and booked into the first hotel with parking space at the front door.



Note to self: Buy a map with current road numbers.

Friday was again spent on a mixture of minor roads through villages that could have graced the cover of the Peoples Friend, finishing with a glorious ride through the Wicklow Mountains National Park and into the rally site.

A civic welcome was organized for Saturday morning followed by a run out. Rally goes rode in convoy into the centre of Wicklow to the historic gaol, an early 18th century prison open for tours featuring costumed guides, there to be met with town officials. However, not everyone had understood the instructions despite them being delivered by megaphone and I was starting my third lap of the gaol at the head of a pack of Nortons before Ann punching my ribs made me stop and pull into the car park. Another couple of laps and I might have started to get dizzy. A good band and a late bar rounded of Saturday evening.

On Monday we headed North again, this time on a more direct route up the motorway. The toll road round Dublin was quiet (no charge for motorcycles) and even the M1 toll is only a couple of pounds and worth the cost just to make some time.

A great long weekend despite the weather.

### **650ss for sale**

I recently went to see a 1964 650ss a local lady has for sale. The 'bike is her late husbands and hasn't been run for some time, but it looks like a nice, clean and mostly original 'bike that may not take too much to get back on the road. I had suggested to the owner that it would be worth over £4000 and if someone was to offer her £4500, they could be getting a fair deal.

It has some nice riding upgrades like alloy rims, a twin leading shoe front brake and Concentric carbs and coil ignition.

I have taken some photographs and if you want more information, email me and I can send you a description as I see it and a link to the photos. Remember its not mine, so I can't do any kind of deal, I'm just trying to help the lady out.



### **June Events**

Jimmie Guthrie Memorial Run  
Jun 21, 2015 ☐  
The Green, Denholm, Hawick

Bob McIntyre Classic Races  
Jun 20, 2015 to Jun 21, 2015  
East Fortune Race Circuit

NOC National Rally ☐  
Jun 26, 2015 to Jun 28, 2015 ☐  
Riverside Camping, Seiont Nurseries,  
Pontrug, Caernarfon, LL55 2BB

SCMCC Summer Run ☐  
Jun 28, 2015 from 10:00 ☐  
Red House Hotel, Coupar Angus