



Newsletter

August 2019

Don't bother with the tools...

... just bring matches.

The plan was to spend the week before the Rampart Rally in Morpeth in a rented house in Northumberland, close to Hadrian's wall and to spend the days walking and looking at ruins. The Friday morning to leave was a bit damp, but as we headed South it brightened up, and by the time we were stuck in a 20 minute jam and detour at Dumbarton, the sun had come out and it was getting hot. I was really quite impressed with how well the Commando handled it - the panniers and camping gear made it tricky to filter, but it coped with the heat and stop/start trickling without a murmur.

Once clear of the central belt we could start to enjoy the ride through Lockerbie and Langholm on the narrow Borders roads. I did make a navigational blunder and turn in the wrong direction to Newcastleton. It made a good excuse to stop for cake and coffee while checking the map though. Back on the right route to pick up the road above Haltwhistle which runs straight as an arrow past Twice Brewed and Housesteads to our turnoff for Haydon Bridge.

As planned, over the next few days we went out walking and visited Roman and industrial ruins. There is a huge network of footpaths, rights of way and bridle ways all through some beautiful countryside. The weather stayed good, very hot with only a few thundery showers. I did have a day out on the Commando and headed out for a blunder about the North Pennines and had a great ride with little traffic and lots to see. I'm sure when the mines and ironworks were in full swing it would have been much less scenic, but the only place I really



encountered much more than the odd car or cycle was in Stanhope.

Toward the end of the week, the night before we headed for Morpeth, I jumped on the Commando to nip the mile into town for ice-cream. On the way back, after only 1/4 mile it died without warning - not so much as a cough or splutter. One second pulling like a train uphill then off like a switch had been flicked. I checked the usual things (petrol tap, ignition key, fuse) couldn't see anything amiss and after a few minutes it started and idled as if nothing had happened. I drove off, but after a few hundred yards it died again. This time, bearing in mind the rucksack full of ice-cream, I left it where it stopped and walked back to the farm. When I went back for it later and spent some time checking, I could see there were no sparks. Pulling the ignition switch wires to check for tightness, one came off in my hand, so a bit of kludgery using the wires from the voltmeter ensued.

Sparks returned and it was ridden the rest of the way home but it didn't feel like I had really found the problem. I couldn't shake the feeling that the time it had been sitting and with me messing about had allowed something to cool down. When I checked initially the Pazon self test of touching the pickup wires together hadn't produced a spark. Previous experience of bikes stopping when hot has turned out to be the coil, in this case a single double output type. A call to Gino who was coming to the Rally on Friday mobilised the Norton rescue group and, between him and Alex, they gathered together coils, brackets, nuts, bolts, wire, connectors and even a brand new Pazon kit! I also enquired of the owner of the farm cottage we were renting if I could abandon the bike in his barn if it needed recovered so we had a backup plan, but I still intended to set off for Morpeth on Friday morning.

That went well for all of ten miles, to just outside Hexam when a repeat of the previous night ensued. It dropped dead, after a few minutes it restarted only to die again after an even shorter time. At this point I was on quite a busy road in Acomb, so pushed it into a bus garage to ask if I could work on it or even abandon it there. The owners could not have been more helpful (the owner, his wife and staff were all motorcyclists) and despite having only just met them, he gave me the key to their yard so we could carry on and come back later or even on Saturday morning. Luckily all the camping kit was in one bag, so I left my gear in the Krausers attached to the Norton, jumped on Anns Scrambler with the camping bag between us and rode off.

When the Norton rescue group arrived, we headed back on the Scrambler - the plan was to fit the new coils, it would immediately spring into life and we would ride back in triumph. It almost worked - it did start up with the new coils, but only ran to the gate of the yard where it died again from a lack of sparks. At that point it had been a long day, we hadn't eaten and the thought of swapping out the Pazon and heading back in the dark didn't appeal, so we returned

Commandoless but in time to get something to eat and enjoy the rally hospitality.

Saturday morning arrived wet and gloomy, but Alan Clarke had kindly offered to go over to Acomb and pick up the bike with his car and trailer. With it back at the site and under the shelter of the Rugby Club verandah, we set to. With Gino and Tonys help, the fault was diagnosed as the Pazon box, swapped for the one from the kit Alex brought and, SUCCESS. Running on two and for more than a hundred yards!

A huge thanks to everyone that donated their time, parts, effort and advice. Without that help the old thing would have returned home on its shield (again!) and that would have certainly taken the shine off an otherwise splendid holiday.

With a little trepidation we set off home on Sunday morning, but the old thing never missed a beat. I've since refitted the coils and tidied up the wiring and its still going strong. The Pazon was still under warranty (these kits have a 7.5 year warranty) so I've sent it back to New Zealand for testing. If the module is blown due to external faults, I need to look at my wiring, if its good, I need to have a look for the real fault and if its faulty and replaced, then I've got a spare.

Thanks also to all at the Northumbria Branch for a great rally.

EVENTS

Anyone attending the Borders Camping Weekend in September should contact the site direct to book camping. I've made a booking for dinner at the Plough on Saturday at 19:00 for a dozen people. It helps the kitchen if we pre-order, so when I get a copy of the menu I'll send it out.

September

September 06th - 08th
Borders camping Weekend
Kirkfield Caravan Site
Town Yetholm