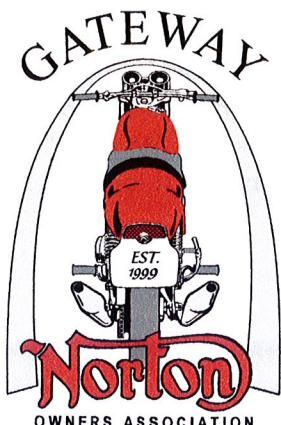


Gateway Norton Owners News #49



**"To Promote the
Use and Pride of
Norton Motorcycle Ownership"**
Compiled by Marty and Peggy Dupree
November 2011



KING'S COLUMN What-izzit?

To date, many people have asked, "What do you do?" (You know, how people are at party functions, when they just want to be conversive.) Well. . . I have been a mechanic for 40+ some odd years and have worked on motorcycles all my life. Automotive for the first 30, and motorbikes for the last 10. I have just managed/paid bills with a truly frustrating mental, physical, dirty and challenging occupation. Here's the scenario:

Question one: **What do you do?** I am a mechanic, cars and motorcycles 30 years, motorcycles mainly lately. **You ride a Harley?** No, I have a Norton . . .

Question two: **Is that an American bike?** I have never heard of them. No, it's British.

Question three: **Is it a Triumph? BSA?** They leak oil - do you have stock in an oil company? Yes, I have some Exxon/Mobil interests.

Question four: **Are Norton's famous? Did they ever win any races?** No, and yes. Very famous to older motorcyclists. They won many T.T. races in the UK on the Isle of Man.

Question five: **What is it (see title of article for translation) you like about Nortons? Why them?** They have some intangible thing about them, they are pretty light, have the "isolastic ride," they handle well, powerful, they have a spirit inside, easy to work on, they have a sound that is "pea-shooter-perfection." You don't have to go to Doc's Harley-Davidson for parts, they do not do anything quicker than us old guys can do ourselves, parts are cheaper than for an old Yama or Suzi, you do not need a tattoo to ride, Bikers say "I haven't seen one of those in a while, I used to have one of those . . . I broke my leg trying to start it in 1978," they start almost always (especially if you have been a mechanic for 40 years), when GNOA riders get together, they will always have something to talk about, you can make T-shirts about them and your affiliation, you can be part of the GNOA and pay dues to your king, you can come over to my house and lie, tell me your Commandwoes, and have a "grog."

There are so many things you can do with a Norton: let it sit and wet/sump (a little longer and let the fuel go bad, too), spray the berms with parts falling off (if you can get it started), buy some Taiwanese parts that don't fit, clean the Amals a few more times to realize . . . *hey, these are junk! they wore out in 1978!* (the new ones are not any better), still junk . . . they have wonderful Lucas electrics. (Lucas never made vacuum cleaners because it would be the only thing they ever made that didn't suck.) Or you can get your bike in decent shape and go out and "Spank Ann Margret," feel it's spirit, listen to the pea-shooters as you ride alongside another Norton (ever hear this?), and let it do things at about the same speed as you do.

For sale: 2004 Triumph Thruxton, black w/bw checkered stripe and factory fly screen; D&D exhaust with megaphones; carbs rejettied with K&N air filters; handlebar risers; steering damper; Pirelli tires; 8700 miles; more.

Also...

1973 Husqvarna CR400, 2006 AHRMA #1 MX.

Also...

197? BSA B-50 MX.

Also...

2004 Yamaha WR450R.

Also...

Husqvarna frame with motor and transmission, some spares. Contact Ernie Trakas 314-608-8350.

TREASURERS REPORT

As reported by Steve Hurst, GNOA Treasurer

April 30, 2011 thru October 12, 2011

Money in treasury on 4/30/11	\$54.00
Coaster sales on 4/30/11	8.00
Dues collected on 4/30/11	85.00
Shirt sales on 4/30/11	210.00
50/50 drawing (won by Marty D and donated back to the Club	46.00
Additional shirts sold to date	53.00
Additional dues collected to date	<u>52.00</u>
TOTAL	\$508.00
Expenses paid 4/30/11 to date	0.00
TOTAL money in Treasury to date	\$508.00

Shirts left to sell: 12 (3 mediums, 3 large, 5 x-large, 1 xxx-large)

2011 INOA EMPIRE RALLY AT NEW YORK STATE

Bob Yancey

I had a wonderful time looking at all the nice Nortons and hearing them run. Every day there was a group ride to somewhere. People from all across the US had driven to New York. There were also people from Great Britain, France, Holland, Australia, Canada and New Zealand that I met personally. I met some new people and talked to a few that I already knew. There were 429 people in attendance with nearly 300 Nortons! There were also a number of BSAs and Triumphs, both old and new

The rally location was excellent. It had a huge cement pond and a nice clear cold water

creek running through it. Many of the campers were dodging the 98° temperature by jumping in one or the other. We had two evening meals provided that were very nice, and there was a daily \$5 breakfast buffet that was unbeatable. The people who sponsored the rally did a helluva job. It was evident that much thought and effort had been done. The roads were very nice, but not as good as the Ozarks. Next year it's in Vermont. That sounds good to me. [See Bob's pictures sprinkled throughout this newsletter.]

NORTON COMMANDO REBUILD 2011

Dale Knaus

As most of you know, my pride and joy is a pretty stock 1975 Norton Commando Roadster that I purchased from past member Bill Henderson in 2001. It's been a very enjoyable and reliable motorcycle, (except for that little problem with the transmission layshaft bearing several years ago.)

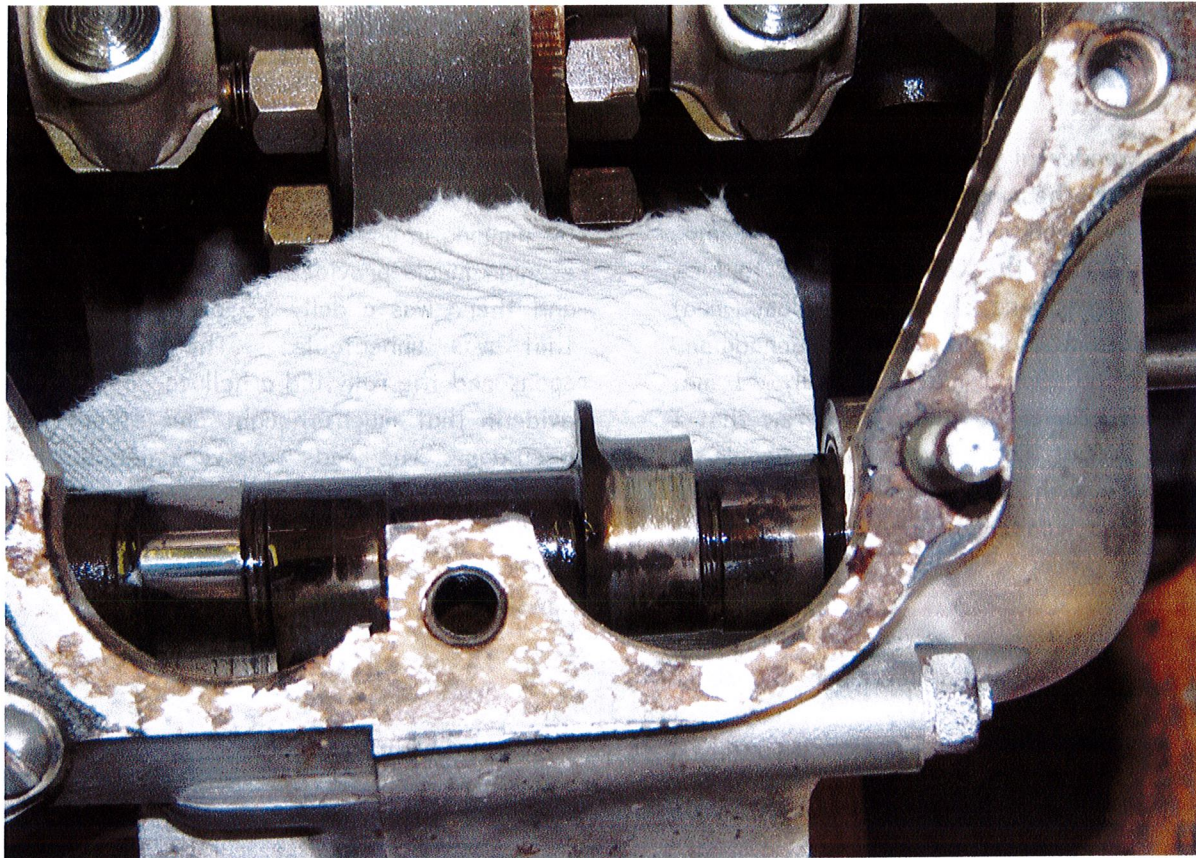
Well, the Mark III had been getting a little tired lately, it seemed down on power and running a little rough, and not starting on the first kick like it used to. I regularly take it to Columbia Missouri, a 200 mile round trip, and in that mileage it goes from the full mark on the oil dipstick to the add mark, about $\frac{1}{2}$ quart. Some of it is leaking, some burning. I had been thinking of tearing it down for a rebuild, but being currently between jobs I figured sure as soon as I got it spread all over the garage someone would want to employ me, probably out of state, and I'd be moving the proverbial basket case.

Well, on July 9, I took the 850 up the river road to Hannibal, and rode around a while.

Coming home, the odometer hit 35,000 miles. Cool, me thinks. Just 17 miles later, the speedometer drive gearbox on the rear axle puked it's guts out, and the speedo quit working. HmMMM. A bad omen, maybe?

I gassed up in New London, and hit highway 61 to come home. I decided to get on it for a change, usually I don't ride the bike very hard, and I discovered it ran out of steam at about 5,000 RPM! She would hardly climb above that limit in any gear. During a long, long distance phone call to King Mike French, I learned the low power was one symptom of a flat cam. HmMMM. A lot of research on the subject, and it seems a lot of Mk III cams were flat at 12,000 miles. My bike had more than twice that mileage. HmMMM again. Well, putting it all together, it seemed like a good time to consider the rebuild.

As luck would have it, the following Friday I got a rejection notice from the Kansas based company I had interviewed with, and Saturday I started teardown on the old Norton.



That little remnant of a cam lobe is still the original cam profile, giving some idea of how much was worn off. The cam tappets were pretty worn too, as you can imagine.

Surprisingly, the bike had not been bored. In fact, other than the cam and tappets, and the rings on the right cylinder worn out, it was in pretty good shape! It showed no signs of ever having been apart before.

I'm going to reassemble with a new cam and followers, and new piston rings. It also

needed new intake valve seals and we put new exhaust valves in. The cylinders got honed and the original pistons are cleaned up for reuse.

After staring at all the parts, I decided to paint the engine before reassembly, and that's the phase I'm in now. Next month I hope to report on progress, if there is any. By the way, I got a job offer (and accepted) the day after I split the cases, so work is progressing slowly.

-Dale

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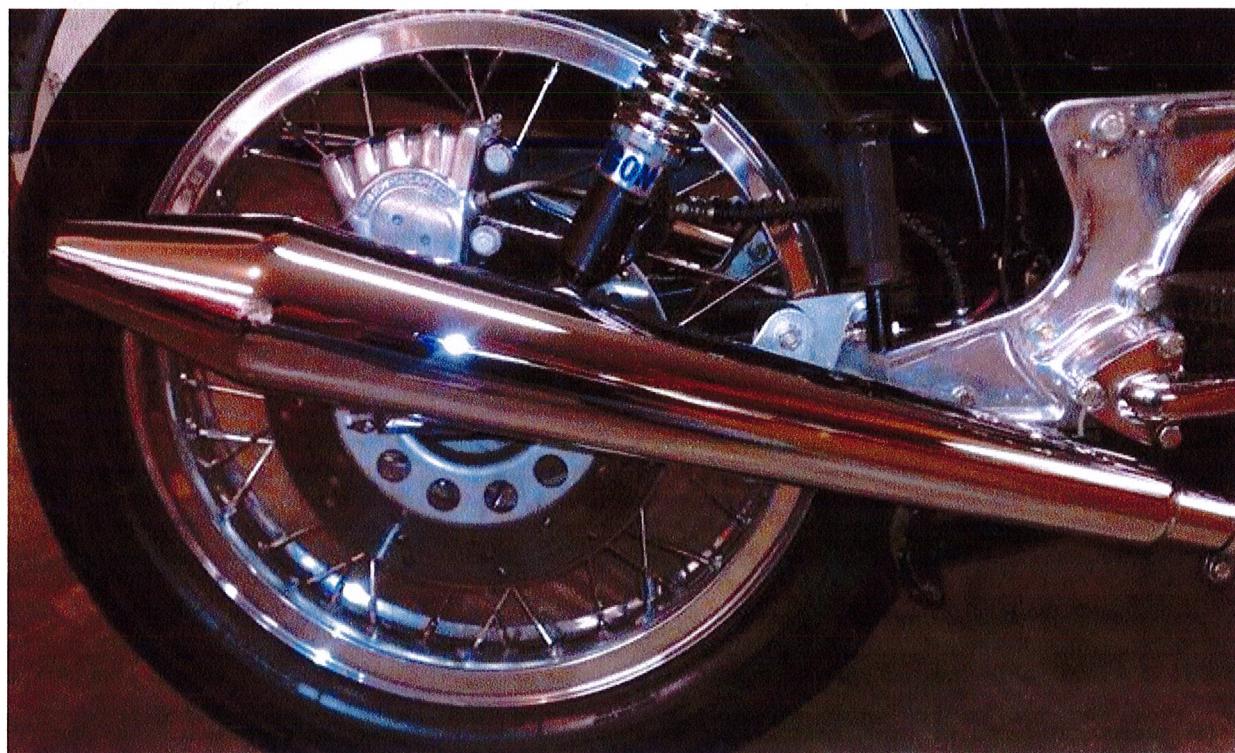
Dues are \$5 per year running July thru June. They are non-prorated to keep bookkeeping simple. Make check payable to "Steve Hurst" or send cash to Steve at: 966 Weybridge Ct. W. St. Charles, MO 63304.

PRODUCT REPORT

Chad Stretz

Last month I finally got tired of re-welding my rattling, junky pea-shooter mufflers, so I started shopping for another pair. I have always liked the look of the seamless pea-shooters as they really do add to the lines of the Commando, but the only ones I had seen were from Viking, or Colorado Norton Works. While both places sell very nice mufflers (I believe in stainless steel), they are crazy expensive. I've already spent something like \$4,000,000 restoring this bike so I had to look elsewhere. While shopping on eBay for bikes I don't need, I found a place called "Commando Specialties." They have several items listed on eBay and all of them lead back to a flashy cool website loaded with all kinds of things I don't need, AND seamless pea-shooter mufflers! They looked really nice in the picture, and they were only \$149 including shipping. Thinking they must be Chinese junk, I hopped on a couple Norton forums to see if

I could gather any opinions, pro or con. No one had anything bad to say about the company. In fact, several folks had nothing but compliments. No one had written anything about the quality of the mufflers either, so I had to go on what Commando Specialties were saying. They were up-front about them being Asian. Taiwanese to be specific. They said they had recently made some changes in the manufacturing process and they were very pleased with the results. Well, so was I. First of all, they were padded well in the box so the Union Package Smashers couldn't destroy them during shipment, and when I pulled them out of the box, they looked great! The chrome is very nice, they taper down nice and narrow so that my kickstart clears it nicely, and they sound great. I'll have to wait to see how long they last, but for \$149 bucks I think they're alright.

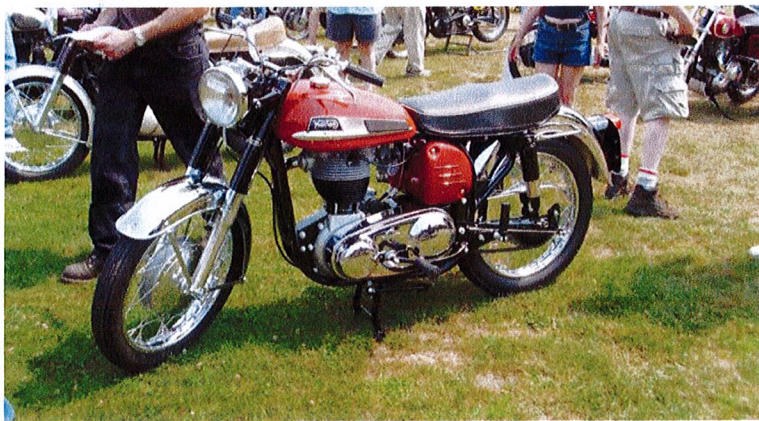


BRAKE BLEEDING TIP

Chad Stretz

Bleeding the front brakes on a Norton (or any motorcycle for that matter) can be a real pain due to the difference in height between the master cylinder and the bleed nipple on the caliper. Air naturally wants to travel upward, so forcing fluid down to remove air out of the nipple by pumping the lever can take forever. There are several products available to get around this, but I found a solution by using stuff I already had around the house - a Shop Vac and a jar of pickles - here's how it works:

Cut two holes in the lid, one just large enough to fit the business end of a Shop Vac, and another small one for vinyl tubing. It helps to use a little duct tape torn in small strips to seal both the tubing and the Shop Vac nozzle to the lid. Attach the vinyl tubing to the bleed nipple and put the lid back on the jar. (I would highly suggest removing the pickles from the jar first as brake fluid can make them extra zesty, but you do what you want!) Open the bleed nipple, turn on the Shop Vac, and watch the fun. Make sure you keep an eye on the master cylinder to keep it full of fluid as I sucked mine dry before I realized what was happening. Once the fluid is coming out into the jar, close the bleed nipple and turn off the Shop Vac. If you want to be extra sure you got all the air out, you can finish up by giving the lever a couple of pumps and opening the bleeder as you would normally, but I found it wasn't necessary. Hope this helps.



Early to mid-60s ES2 in bright red. Bob Yancey photo.

KING MIKE'S DAY

Bill Rueckert

How did he do that? The perfect day, just right time, great Club participation. The gathering of GNOA enthusiasts/riders started about 10:30am at the King's castle, Sunday, October 16. This was a perfect October fall colors day. There were a dozen bikes at departure time, plus my T110. The Triumph decided to not start, which was unexpected, after a flawless start at home and ride to Mike's house. I even rode-tested

it on Saturday. Riders were underway and I was still trying to coax the beast to life. Thanks to John Wuebbeling and Tom Mitchell for helping me bump-start it down the slight grade on Mike's street. We rode hard and fast on the route, but when we passed my house on Upper Bottom Road, I peeled off and took it to the "barn." I hope I didn't delay John and Tom too long as they made their way to Greens Bottom Road and beyond.



left to right: Tom Mitchell, Bill Grimes, Ernie Trakas, King Mike, Bob Yancey, Steve Hurst, John Wuebbeling, Jeff Hurst and George Croissant lurking in the distance. Photo by Bill Rueckert.

Trivia Question: What do Amals get before leaving the factory? Test-tickles.

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A SOLO LATE FALL RIDE MANY YEARS AGO...

Bill Rueckert

Ever happen to you? It's late October, and you're cleaning and adjusting your Brit bike on a weekend morning. Before you realize the time, it started getting quite warm outside, so you remove your long sleeve work shirt to do some remaining touch up stuff. By now, it's early afternoon and the overwhelming itch to ride just has to be scratched. So off you go. No destination in mind, t-shirt blowing in the wind, no helmet required. Life is good! Think I'll go and see an old friend, who has not seen my bike, only a 30 minute ride. Mission accomplished, visiting and some brew welcomed. Where has the time gone? It's

after 6pm, a chill is in the air. No problem, YOU THINK, I can take it. WRONG! About 5 minutes out you are freezing and it's getting dark. Lucas, don't fail me, but it won't keep me from freezing, nothing could now. What to do? Just keep on going. I think I had frostbite, but I was young at the time. Weren't we all.

A note from Bill to the editor: This was about 1962, the T-110 was three years old. Some things you never forget.



And here is Bill's 1959 T-110. Just think, he has celebrated his Golden Anniversary plus 2 years of ownership of this bike! A true long term love affair. Good on ya, Bill!

Picture taken at King Mike's fall ride.

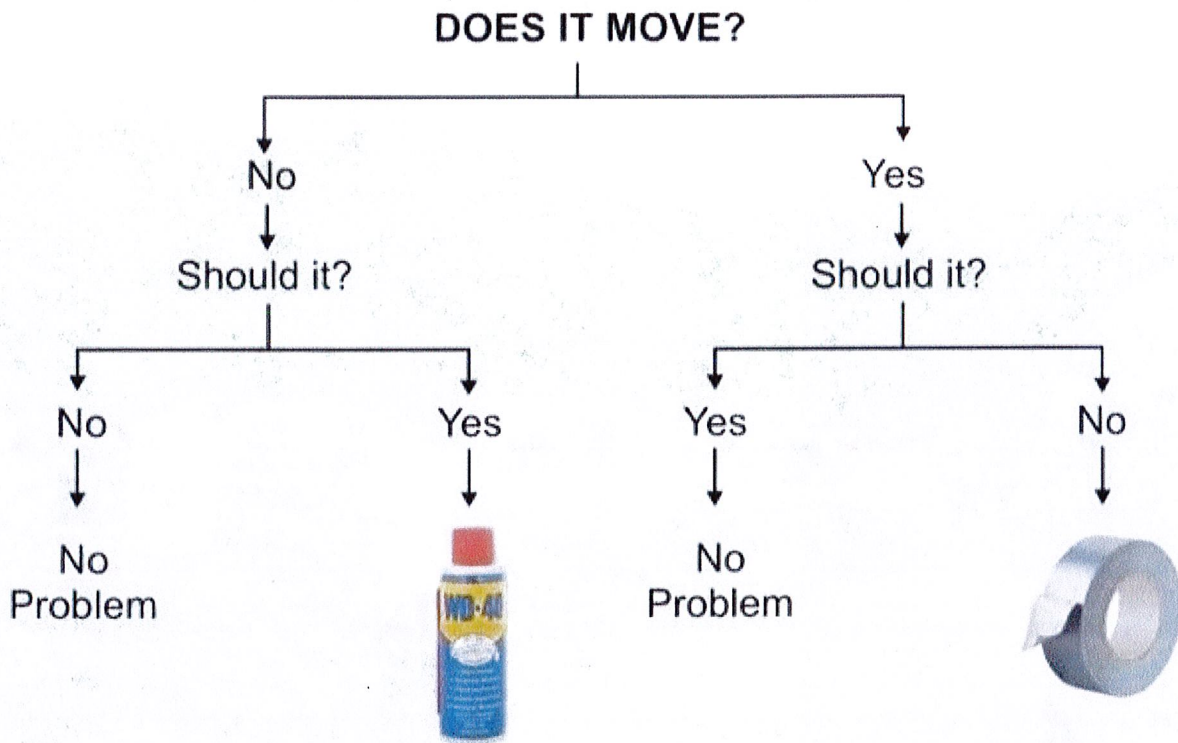
CLUB CAMPOUT

Bill Grimes

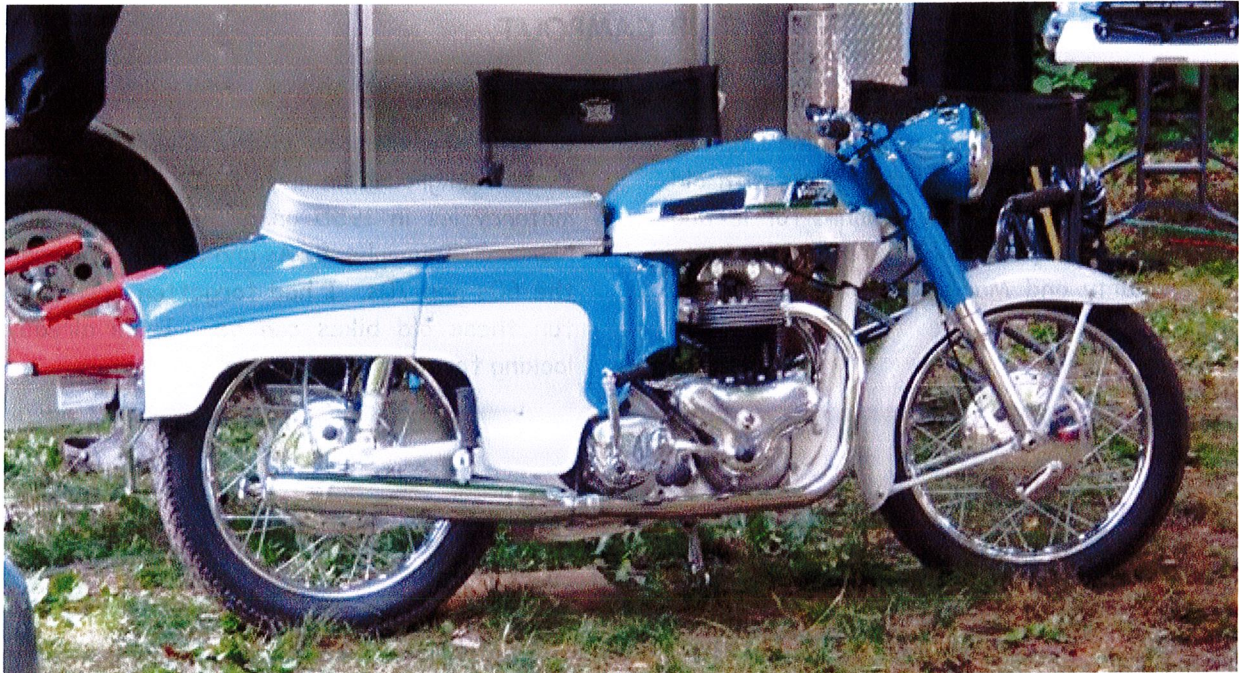
Just wanted to say what a great time I had at the annual campout, a group of guys with old Brit bikes in their blood. Thanks for letting an old Triumph (and rider) attend. Thanks to Mike, Marty and Mark for the planning and the great food.

Being a new member in the Club, here is a short background on myself: I started riding motorcycles in 1955 on a Simplex. I rode Nortons, Triumphs, BSAs and Harleys through the 60s and 70s. I had forgotten how much fun these old bikes can be. I am already looking forward to next time.

Engineering Flowchart



A Norton riding chap was being fitted for a riding jacket and the tailor asked him, "How would you like a belt in the back?" To which he replied, "How would you like a boot up the bum?"



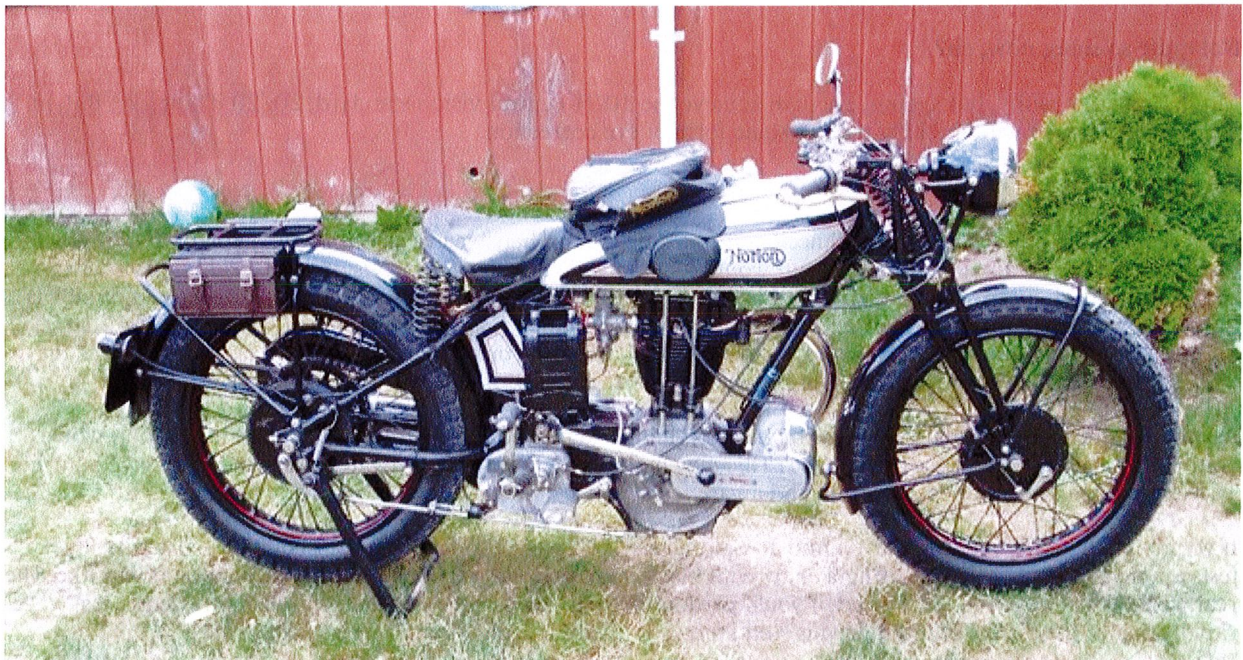
Dominator Deluxe in blue and ivory. Very nice! Bob Yancey photo.



Seven upswept "peashooters" and one saggy "poop-shooter." Bob Yancey photo.



The bike show at the INOA Rally. Bob Yancey photo.



1929 M18 at the INOA Rally. Bob Yancey photo.

I want to apologize again for shorting the Club one newsletter this year, but hopefully this double issue will keep me in your good graces. Thanks to everyone who submitted something for this issue and please keep them coming. We had a lot of events this past year that didn't get covered in depth. This newsletter is only as good as YOU make it! Have a happy Thanksgiving! Hope to see you guys before the winter meeting that's usually held in February. *Marty*

The following is reprinted from the RealClassic.co.uk website with permission from the author, Paul Miles. I have removed some pictures (mostly of optical equipment and eyeglass products) to save paper. If you wish to read the articles with pictures go to: <http://www.realclassic.co.uk/insiderinfo.html>. marty

Eyes Right: Expert Advice

All roads users need clear vision to drive or ride safely. Motorcyclists have to cope with visors and goggles, and classic riders frequently suffer from deteriorating vision, too. Paul Miles, RC's resident professional eye expert, guides us through the available options - starting with getting the most from your eye test...

By popular (well several, OK a few) demand here's a review of problems and possible solutions that the visually-challenged rider might encounter. Like a lot of classic motorcyclists, you might be somewhat older than, say, forty. Over 50% of the adult population in the UK have a significant visual defect and it's more prevalent as you age, so it's almost certain that you're not seeing quite as well as you did when you were younger.

When giving eye tests for my day job, I often hear the refrain; 'I see perfectly well and pass the driving test standard without even a need to put on my glasses' or some suchlike. Well, bully for you. The DSA eyesight test equates to approximately 66% vision, a standard only required in one eye and with no peripheral visual checks (SMIDSY, anyone?)[translation-Sorry Mate I Didn't See You-marty]. This would equate to your BSA twin only running on one cylinder and that with broken piston rings, but it'll still do 31mph, thus exceeding the speed limit -- golly.

Not quite so smug now, eh?

Most folk with healthy, but ageing, eyes can achieve the 100% central vision standard, 20/20 if you like. But, in order to do this you will probably require some form of eye correction.

So what do I need to buy, Doctor Paul?

Before you spend any money, you will need an up to date comprehensive eye examination. Explain to the optometrist that you are a motorcyclist and would like to have the best possible vision whilst riding in order to maximise your chances of staying alive, not just if you really need them in order to continue driving. If, which is likely, you end up with a small (or larger) prescription for distance vision, ask if you can go outside in the street and see if it makes a difference. If it does, by even a small amount, consider getting some glasses made up as they will help, especially when riding at night or when you're tired.

Ask to have the results of your visual field check explained so that you more fully understand how much worse your sight is 'out of the corner of your eye'. This may make you more visually aware and might even save your life. There's no 'sixth sense' only good vision and awareness.

If you're really lucky, you might even find an optometrist who will be able to test your contrast sensitivity. Eye tests are invariably carried out using a chart with black letters on a white background -- absolutes, if you like. The real world is somewhat more blurred, if you'll pardon the pun. As we age, our contrast sensitivity decreases rapidly, hence the dislike of night driving and increased awareness of glare. It's a real problem.

A CS test shows you how your vision deteriorates in less than perfectly lit conditions; to reiterate, reading the bottom line on the chart does not mean you have perfect vision, it just means that you can read the bottom line on the chart in perfect conditions. The picture of two charts resting against a piece of topical furniture show a 'normal' chart on the left, with a CS chart alongside. Notice how the letters fade on the latter, allowing us to calculate your sensitivity losses. If your optician doesn't have one, ask them why not or go elsewhere.



Eyes Right: Expert Advice - Part 2

All roads users need clear vision to drive or ride safely. Motorcyclists have to cope with visors and goggles, and classic riders frequently suffer from deteriorating vision, too. Paul Miles, RC's resident professional eye expert, continues his explanation and delves into ordering spectacles... ..

Darn it, I do need glasses, now do I get to spend my money, Doctor Paul?

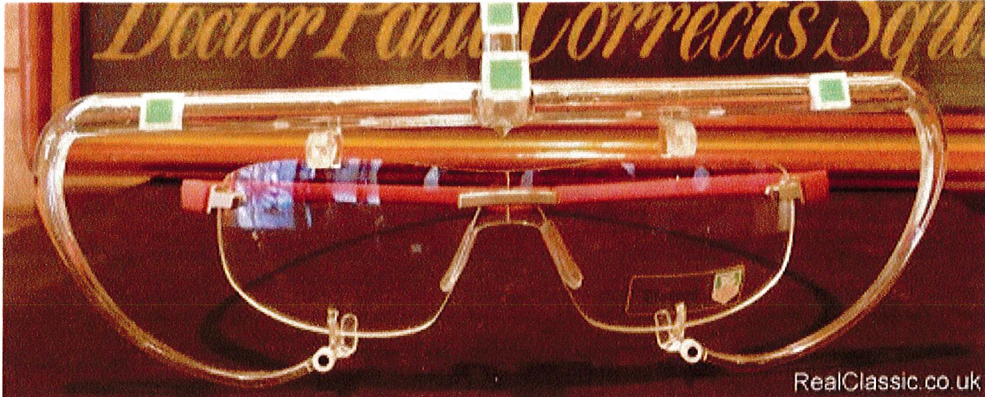
So, the optometrist has demonstrated that you are able to see better with glasses than without and being sensible, you've decided to get something to improve your riding enjoyment. So, when you go to try on frames take your helmet with you. Most frames fit under a helmet, but not all and it's important to find some that slide in unobtrusively and sit comfortably. Frames with thinner sides will generally offer a slightly less restrictive view than the more traditional heavy plastic Eric Morecambe type, although they offer fewer comedy opportunities, it must be said.



Most frames you will be shown are a variation on a theme, with the front of the frame either flat, or very slightly curved towards your eyes. This is OK for general use and, in fact, the image quality can deteriorate so quickly as you move your vision away from the centre of the lens it renders a lot of extremely large frames obsolete. This is actually an important issue. Rather like a long lens on a camera, if the middle is in focus, the edges will be slightly blurred. This is optics, I blame Newton, Joe Lucas is blameless this time.

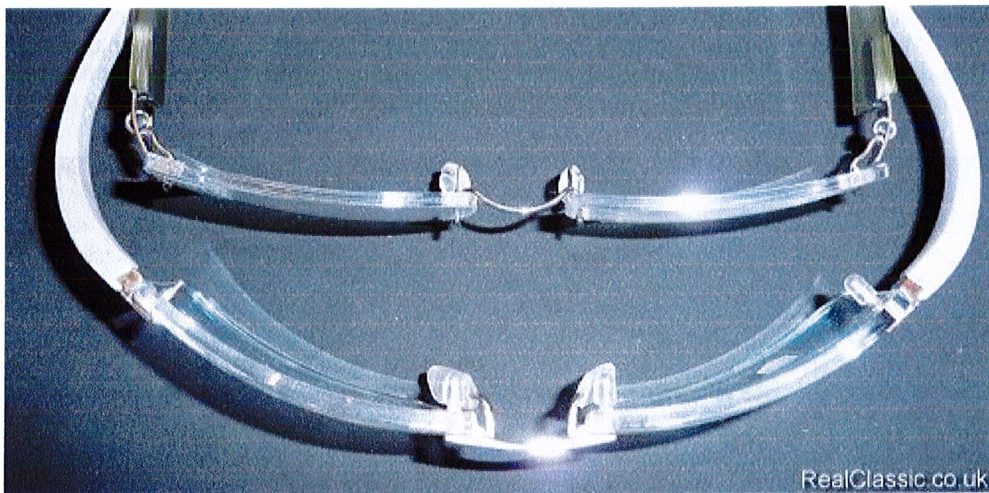
It is demonstrable, however, that higher quality lenses have less peripheral distortion and wider fields of view than budget types, you really do 'get what you pay for'. Taking that concept to its logical extreme, it's even possible now to have totally bespoke lenses which offer a field of view 30% larger than even the best of the standard designs.

Using a fantastic bit of kit called the Visioffice you are electronically assessed wearing your chosen frame and hundreds of measurements are taken every second to determine if you are a head turner or an eye mover, and in what proportions, as of course, we are actually a little of each. The lenses are then ground individually with up to 1,200 changes of curvature per square millimetre (a budget lens has two over the whole surface, one on the front and one on the back).



The effect is astonishing. It's almost like seeing the world in 3D again. Not cheap, but highly recommended.

Furthermore, it's possible to have some spectacles made with very curved lenses that more closely follow the contour of your head. These designs, when fitted with appropriate lenses, increase your effective field of view, enabling you to see more. A good-ish analogy is a keyhole in a door, the closer you get to it, the more you see on the other side. You are somewhat limited in prescription for these, though, so ask your friendly optometrist about their suitability for you. The leading lights in this field are Tag Heuer, who have developed a range of driving spectacles for racing use, practical and cool!



Rimless frames are also very popular as they allow you to have a significantly larger lens area but still fit you correctly. Lens materials will either be glass or plastic. In reality, plastic is the only sensible option as they are virtually unbreakable (useful if the lens is struck by a stone) and much lighter in weight. It is possible to toughen glass lenses sufficiently, but they become even thicker and heavier than normal, so are only really suited to indoor use, such as the workshop.

Talking of plastic lenses, the stuff that springs to mind is Polycarbonate. It's used in visors, after all. Polycarbonate is just one of dozens of resins used to make spectacle lenses and is the only one that's 100% unbreakable. All of the others are pretty much as tough, though, and will cleave into large chunks if subjected to a massive wallop, unlike glass which splinters.

Plastics do have their downsides, the main issue being scratching. Most superior quality lenses are supplied with an anti-scratch coating, a type of baked on varnish. The very best coating we've ever used is the Crizal Forte Scotchguard from Essilor, which has a written unconditional guarantee against scratching for two years.

You should also specify an anti-reflection coating on your lenses. AR coats minimise the internal reflections in your lenses, increasing the transparency of the lens -the highly coloured reflections that make lead crystal vases so pretty are terrible news for corrective spectacle lenses. An uncoated lens only allows about 94% of the light to pass through it, while a fully coated lens will let more than 99.2% reach the eye and as a crisper image to boot. Cheap AR coatings are soft, though, and a pain to keep clean. The top of the range lenses will be anti-scratch, anti-reflection coated, hydrophobic (water runs off them without sticking or smearing) and oleophobic (an oily-repellent surface rendering them easy to clean, most useful for RealClassicists) all supplied as a package.

Again, boringly, you get what you pay for. Ask for a demonstration, if they can't show you such a lens, go elsewhere.

Eyes Right: Expert Advice - Part 3

All roads users need clear vision to drive or ride safely. Classic riders frequently suffer from deteriorating vision, too. Paul Miles, RC's resident professional eye expert, continues his explanation and considers lenses, goggles and visors...

My eyes are terrible, so won't I need three pairs of spectacles, Doctor Paul?

Some folk are just lucky and will only need spectacles for long distance ie. Riding. Others will be less blessed and require reading glasses as well. Rumour has it that the sun might shine occasionally, so you might need glasses to help you out there, too. Pretty much anything we've discussed can be made with darkened or 'smoked' lenses, but there is a catch. Once you've arrived at your destination you'll need to swap to a clear pair, or hope it remains sunny all day as you stay outside and be home by dusk.

An alternative are those clever lenses that go dark automatically. Called photochromatics and variously 'phonographics' / radioactives / rapideolites / transvestolites' by would-be purchasers, the current market leader is Transitions. Now up to their sixth generation, hence Transitions VI, these lenses are effectively clear at night (with a residual tint of less than 5%) and darken to nearly 90% in full sunlight.

They are simply brilliant and render conventional sunglasses almost obsolete, especially to the rider who travels light (ho ho). Other brands are available, but work far less well in our experience. 'But what about when you go in a tunnel?' is the oft-uttered question we hear. Well, there aren't that many tunnels in the UK and you're no worse off in Transitions than you would be in sunglasses. They also work well inside a visor, so you won't need a tinted one, unless you like to look mysterious. In a car they darken to 50% tint, the windscreen absorbs the rest of the U/V.

If you need dual purpose lenses, for distance and reading, then you can have either bifocals or progressives. Bifocals have two sections, a pellet in the lower lens area for reading things, if you like. These were invented by Benjamin Franklin, of kite flying fame, way back in the day when most riders only had one horsepower to control: they belong in a museum now, too. The sudden judder as your eye passes from one zone to the other can be as unsettling as it is dangerous whilst riding. Not recommended

Progressives, or varifocals as your Optician's granddad would have called them, have a blended lens that moves seamlessly from distance, through intermediate and finally to reading at the bottom of the lens. Early designs were a little crude and I still hear yarns from people that know someone whose next door neighbour had a pair and didn't succeed with them. The best progressive lenses these days are a guaranteed fit and come in a range of concepts; for riding I'd usually advise a pair with a strong distance bias and a small amount of reading. There is a photo that shows the usable viewing area of three different designs, the frosted bits are the distorted areas (or unwanted astigmatisms and you might be able to see the shortcomings of the basic designs.

If you don't get on with your new progressives it's because you've a) been poorly advised as to the most suitable design for you, or b) been badly fitted by your optician. In the olden days we used to measure you with a ruler which we waved around a bit, or with a felt tip pen with which we blobbed a mark on the dummy lens in the frame. A modern, competent optician will now be using a fully electronic measuring system, such as the Visioffice

I mentioned earlier. If they're not, go elsewhere. I use a pair of progressive lenses, the Varilux Physio 360 degree, fitted with the hi-def design aforementioned and can use them in the workshop, on the computer and when riding, with no difficulties at all. If I can, then so can you.



What about those Biggles goggles?

If you really have to. A few manufacturers make goggles that are prescription ready. They usually have an inner rim, just behind the main glass (and yes, often it's still GLASS). This inner rim can be fitted with distance lenses, always polycarbonate, just to give you a chance of not being blinded by splinters if you fall off. What you end up with though, is four reflecting surfaces, none of them coated or high tech, between you and the outside world. It's better to wear a decent pair of spectacles, honestly it is.

Some of the best thought-out designs come from the Italian manufacturer, Nannini and have polycarbonate lenses. It wouldn't be reasonable to expect your optician to stock them, though. In our practice we're very proactive and yet still only sell about three pairs a year -- most opticians wouldn't expect to sell any. I would suggest that you buy them online and then take them to your optician to be glazed with your personal prescription. Davida and Halcyon both stock the Nannini range and they are available to view online



So, Doctor Smartypants, I suppose you know all about visors, too?

Well yes, I do. Visors should be clear and clean, change them at least once a year as the myriad of small scratches significantly impairs your vision; remember how clear it all seems when you first wear a new helmet. The pinlock/Fogclear double glazing inserts are very good, but not recommended for night riding due to increased glare, and you should NEVER ride with a dark visor after dusk. The recommended maximum tint is 15% and the darkest legal visor has a tint of 50%.

Iridium (the shiny metallic) visors are generally a mirror coating added to an already darkened visor. These often have a tint in excess of 95% (making them a category 4 tint-suitable for high mountain use only) and are illegal for daytime riding, let alone at night!

Clean your visor regularly, clean your specs even more often, treat them like a camera lens. Don't use washing up liquid or Swarfega as these damage the coatings. Buy a small bottle of suitable lens cleaner and some of the single use tissue wipes for when you're out riding. Remove dead flies by laying wet kitchen paper on the visor for an hour then simply wiping off and clean it properly afterwards

Eyes Right: Expert Advice - Part 4

All roads users need clear vision to drive or ride safely. Motorcyclists have to cope with visors and goggles, and classic riders frequently suffer from deteriorating vision, too. Paul Miles, RC's resident professional eye expert, finishes by looking at contact lenses and going under the knife...

I don't want to look like that bloke from 'The Ipcress File'. Give me other options, Doctor Paul!

OK, you have two alternatives to spectacles: contact lenses and corrective surgery.

Contact lenses are a great choice for riding as they don't steam up or break and your vision stays clear when it rains. It's also better than when you take your helmet off and have forgotten that you still have your specs on (don't worry, everyone's done it at least once). Because lenses are less precise than spectacles in that they float on a thin layer of tears in a slightly variable way, they are better suited to a slightly higher prescription, say over about 1 diopetre. In other words, if you are pretty much dependant on your glasses, you could consider lenses as an option.

The vast majority of prescriptions can be satisfied using single-use, daily disposable soft lenses. These are fabulously comfortable lenses that require no cleaning or fuff and can be used on demand without the need to build up a tolerance. Each of my bikes has a pair taped under the saddle, just in case I break my specs. There is a lot of choice out there and if you try lenses you should expect them to be perfectly comfortable for at least eight hours or so and your vision should be comparable to your glasses. If that's not the case, try some other types, or find a different optician.

Some of the high street chains have a fairly limited range to choose from, for obvious reasons of profitability. A good independent practitioner will be able to access lenses from dozens of manufacturers and you should be able to find something to suit. There's no compromise or adaptation, just wear and go! Contact lenses are really too complex a story for this article and need an in-depth one of their own, so I'll stop there for now. Try them, you might be surprised.

Laser surgery is another technique that has become shrouded in myth and half truths. In essence, the eye is cut and then burnt with a laser, which induces scarring that bends the light, instead of relying on lenses to do that for you. In order to be considered as a candidate you need to have enough prescription to make it worthwhile, 3 dioptries is a reasonable guideline as is good general health. If successful, you can expect to be largely glasses free for distance for a few years (three to five is usual); there is usually a small bit of prescription left over requiring specs for say, night driving and your sight will regress noticeably over time.

Risks are much higher than, say, wearing contact lenses, however, and nearly all patients I've seen have significantly reduced contrast sensitivity leading to night driving issues as well as dry eyes. (RH of this parish can confirm that the early form of laser surgery, conducted some 20 years ago, lasted extremely well for 15 years but did indeed make her already poor night vision dangerously wonky).

I would advise at least three separate consultations at different clinics prior to committing to an irreversible surgical procedure. Be very cautious. Having said all that, patients that have undergone the procedure are often real zealots, usually despite not seeing as well as they did prior to surgery, I guess it just depends on how much you hate wearing glasses or lenses.

Wind it up, already, I need to get out there!

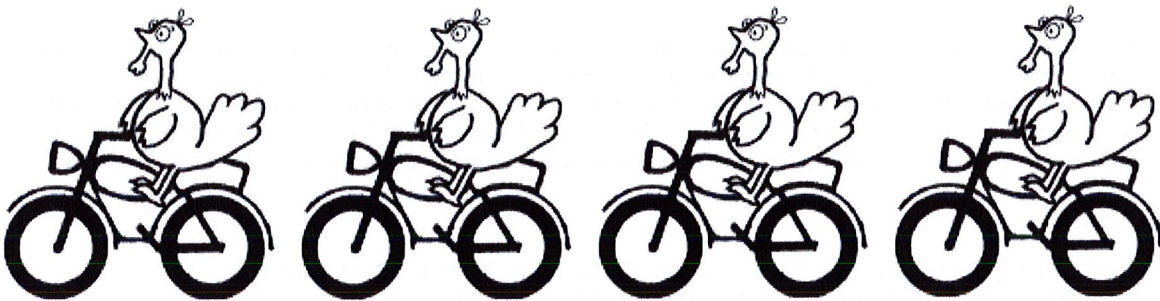
Understand your vision, get it explained to you by the optometrist and ask questions.

If you have even a small prescription for distance, try it out in the street with the trial frame on to see if you notice a difference, every little helps and it might save your life.

Find a suitable frame and fit the most appropriate lenses for your riding. Remember, these are for riding and you may need something else for everyday use. Buy the very best lenses you can afford and ask for the written guarantees with regards to scratching, etc -- cheaper lenses may well be coated and look very similar, but the performance differences are colossal. Always clean them properly and remember to buy a new visor when you take your P&J [translation- Pride and Joy-marty] for its MOT each year.

Many opticians will do a free trial of contact lenses, have a go and see if they work for you.

Go back regularly and ask if there's anything better than your current setup. Technology doubles every three years in optics, so make sure that you, and your optician, are up to date.



Turkeys on a Club ride!

Overheard at a classic motorcycle club meeting. . . .

"My arms have gotten so weak I can hardly lift this cup of coffee," said one.

"Yes, I know," said another. "My cataracts are so bad I can't even see my coffee."

"I couldn't even mark an X at election time, my hands are so crippled," volunteered a third.

"What? Speak up! What? I can't hear you!"

"I can't turn my head because of arthritis in my neck," said a fourth, to which several nodded weakly in agreement.

"My blood pressure pills make me so dizzy!" exclaimed another.

"I forget where I am and where I'm going," said another.

"I guess that's the price we pay for getting old," winced an old man as he slowly shook his head. The others nodded in agreement.

"Well, count your blessings," said one old rider cheerfully . . . "thank God we can all still ride."