

# Gateway Norton Owners News #66

**Here are the minutes of the February 20, 2019 meeting at the Corner Bar:**

Minutes from G.N.O.A. Winter meeting February 20, 2019.

Minutes taken by Tom Mitchell and written by Steve Hurst

Meeting was called to order by Prez. Scott Dowler at 6:50pm.

1. Welcome all and thanks for coming.
2. Call for reading of last minutes. Motion was made to dismiss reading of last minutes because they were published in the last newsletter and should have been read already. Motion was seconded and passed.
3. Club Status; Membership stands at 49 members with 25 paid up to date and 24 in arrears.
4. Old Business;
  - A. Steve reported that the Club still has T-shirts for sale @ \$15.00ea. and bandanas @\$6.00 and coasters for \$1.00 discount, tonight's special!
5. New Business;
  - A. Welcome new members, none were present but new member Brett Ransom was mentioned and noted that he is a safety instructor and has already submitted several newsletter articles. Way to go Brett!! Keep em coming.
  - B. Web Page; thanks to John McClure for his help in keeping our web site up and running.
  - C. Mention of nominations for Secretary and Treasury positions will be held at Spring Meeting.
6. Newsletter; Thanks to Dale for his effort in putting out last year's newsletters. Dale said he is currently taking articles for the next newsletter and will accept pictures and all Norton related subjects. If you have any and can put it in a word document he would like that best.
7. Treasury Report; Treasurer Steve said nothing has changed since the last report because no dues were received and no bills were paid. He said he will furnish Dale with an updated report for the next newsletter.
8. Events and Activities;
  - A. Steve announced his dates for the upcoming Adopted Mile Trash Pick-ups. All will be held on Sundays and start at 10:00am. April 28, June 09, August 18, October 20. He thanked everyone who showed up last year and hopes everyone can participate in 1 or more this year. As before, he will furnish the safety vest and bags, with refreshments after. Bring your own picker upper device and show up and make a difference in our world.
  - B. There was a New Year's gathering at Monty's on January 1. Those who showed were treated to Steve's famous deer chili, a bonfire and a fun day.
  - C. Springfield Mile Races, Memorial Day. Meet at Tony's Ranch House on Il.67 North of Alton for breakfast. Back roads to Springfield to race track. Fastest mile in the country.

John Wuebbeling said he wants to host a fall ride this year. Also was mentioned a group of members wants to go to Mid-Ohio this year. Some expressed their desire to go to Barber again for vintage days.

Steve said the date for the All British Car and Bike Show is Saturday Sept. 21. He wants some competition this year so the gauntlet has been thrown.

Vintage Bike Night at the Schlafly's Bottle works will be held on the first Monday of the month starting in April. This is a fun time with many members showing up. Try to make as many as you can.

The national Norton Rally will be held in Brooklyn MI. this year June 24-28. Many members are expected to attend. If you have never been you should go. I saw over 300 Nortons at the last one I attended in 2017! Good Time!!!

Next up was the discussion of the spring G.N.O.A. meeting. Scott D. is the host this year with Sunday May 19 as the date and 11:00am the time and 2368 hwy F the place. He said to bring your (wives ??) as his will be there. Also if you have a dirt bike bring it as well as he has trails to ride on. Trials bikes welcome too. There will be food and drink. Leave the kids at home! More events will be talked about and plans for rides discussed, you don't want to miss this as it is the Clubs biggest meeting of the year!

Motion for adjournment was made at 7:30 and seconded and accepted.

Members in attendance were Mike French, Steve Hurst, Jeff Hurst, Kris Tucker, Dennis Spencer, Bob Yancey, Dale Knaus, John Wuebbeling, Tom Mitchell, Bill Rueckert, George Croissant, John Murray, Dan Coogan and Scott Dowler.

50/50 drawing was won by Doc Coogan, congrats!

#### G.N.O.A. Treasury Report, March 8, 2019

By Treasurer Steve Hurst

##### Credits

\$709.00-----Cash on hand carried over from 5-21-2018

\$ 50.00-----Dues collected at meeting 2-20-2019

\$ 19.00-----Money in from 50/50 drawing (won by Doc Coogan)

\$ 1.00-----Sale of 1 coaster at meeting

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\$779.00

##### Debits

\$ 10.00-----Money spent on water and ice for trash pick-up.

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\$769.00-----Total Cash on Hand 3-8-2019

#### Articles:

BSA Rescue

By Kris Loewe

An unseasonably warm February 3, 2019 saw me perched on my 1966 BSA A65T (Thunderbolt) shaking it out for its first test ride beyond my driveway.

It was rescued in June 2017 from a well-meaning Harley broker who'd seen it at a yard sale and thought he'd make millions. Perhaps he was watching too much American Pickers and over-valued this poor-neglected motorbike.

What is good about cable shows like Pickers and Wheeler Dealers is they are able to depict negotiating prices in a positive way. Though their scenarios are staged in preproduction, dickering does not have to be a ruthless smackdown. These shows demystify the process a bit and there is now more of a universal language when pursuing vintage or used bikes. Always create a win-win and let the cash talk. A good friend and fellow enthusiast who lives in the middle of the Texas Panhandle once told me, "The worst they can say is no." I've amended this to sometimes the worst they can say is, "yes".

Did I really need another project? Of course not. I was then unemployed, in the middle of a home remodel and the end of a Norton MK3 refurb. But when I have the opportunity to buy a running, mostly complete and titled dry-framed classic Brit at a reasonable price, I leap first and look later. The bikes are simply not as numerous as they were and I'm a sucker for preserving them. I enjoy them for a bit, learn what I can from them and then move them on. Sometimes I actually break even.

Oddly, the machine I enjoyed for thirty miles that warm February day was built by a conglomerate that made firearms. With stacked rifles in the BSA logo, its very existence is born from the same industry that helped me seal the deal. I traded a very nice pre-1973 Belgian Browning over/under shot gun and a cheap Marlin rifle for it. It was my way of deflecting the ridiculous asking price. He had been stuck with this "bitsa" turd blossom that needed a lot of work and valued the guns more at that point in time: Win-win. The investment in my guns was a fraction of his asking price, so I now had financial room to improve the bike.

By the term "Bitsa", it is made up of bits of several motorcycles. It is titled as a 1968 model sold for \$800 used in 1973 at Donelson Cycles (then at 3328 Woodson Road). The included registration records showed it changed hands privately a year later for \$100. I would say something dramatic and expensive happened to reduce its value. However, it was street worthy through 1980 according to the inspection slips from G&T Service, 1430 South Lindbergh, Sunset Hills, MO. The last recorded odometer reading was 6161 miles and the 1979 Missouri safety inspection sticker remains on the left fork ear.

Decoding the frame number reveals a 1966 A65T....T for Thunderbolt. The Thunderbolt from that year should have a single Monobloc Amal carburetor, a speedometer only, no warning lights on the headlight shell, and painted fiberglass side covers with the flying style BSA badges. What I really have is a bottom end from a 1966 A65L (Lightning), a single Concentric Amal carburetor, later parts from a 1968 ½ and later A65 including the fuel tank, front brake hub/wheel assembly, finned valve cover, primary cover (with timing pointer cover), chrome rear fender stay and chrome swing arm. Missing were the seat rail, chain guard, stock exhaust, stock handlebars, and a headlight shell exclusive of warning lights.

Bonus parts included ape-hanger handlebars, JC Whitney trumpet mufflers and aftermarket chromed steel side covers free of badging. I kept the latter and chucked the former. I consider the later Triumph front hub an improvement over the original BSA hub and I really don't care that the tinwork is from a later bike. It all fits and works. Finally it had a Chrome horn off an early 1970s CB750 Honda dangling from a rat's nest of wire and black tape. This last bit I would accept as "period correct". Have you priced Lucas horns lately?

The goal for this bike was to refurb it into a decent rider with an honest, sweaty look. This is not a bike worth (to me) restoring to concourse quality. So I had fun locating missing bits like an original exhaust and chrome plated chain guard that were dull and battery acid stained. John Mosir had a seat rail hanging on a nail that was perfectly rust pitted. The only new chrome on the bike is a decent set of handle bars bought from Walridge when I was at Barber Vintage in October 2017. I sent the speedo to

Nisonger directing them to repair, NOT restore the instrument to retain its patina and to not roll the odometer back from its indicated 6263 miles. I did buy new tires and tubes.....the teats on them are the only giveaway that it hasn't been in a shed for thirty years.

Whoever reassembled the bike in its past lives didn't do himself any favors by miswiring the ammeter. A positive ground bike flows from negative to positive, so it was blown. I replaced it and cleaned up the rest of the charging system. The front end was a mess of rust and ill swapped parts from a 1969 or 1970 Triumph. There is not a tapered stem bearing kit for a BSA, so I sourced new ball bearings and cups to rebuild the stem. Then the project sat for a year.

In that year I returned to work, finished refurbishment of our house, dealt with elder health issues, managed an impossible (at times) personnel issue which was the source of 70-80 hour work weeks all summer 2018, coached high school trap shooters, graduated both boys from high school, took on another high school aged friend of theirs who found himself suddenly homeless, moved all three boys into their respective colleges, spent a week out of the country and somewhere in all of that kept up the yard and the houses. I lived to tell about it and returned to the wintery chill of my shop and forced myself to get my projects restarted in 2019. It took me a whole day to remember what I had and had not touched on the BSA.....but then I got on a good roll and after three good days and/or nights of wrenching I had a running Beeza.

It was a glorious Sunday. The roads were slick with sweating pavement and salt residue. I had a great ride on my first BSA twin and found it to be a very happy motor. While not as sexy as the Triumphs and the Norton I've had, this bike just begged to be ridden. My normal five mile test loop turned into thirty. The post-ride inspection revealed I was lucky to get home. I'd lost half a pint of oil through the timing cover seal and the points were so wet with oil I marveled at my luck of them not fouling. Oil had puked down the right muffler onto the rear wheel. All the oil exited through the tiny hole at the bottom of the outer timing cover apparently designed to be there for this purpose....what thoughtful engineering! The left side revealed an all- too-familiar sprocket seal and primary seal leak.

I swear Carl Donelson walked a mile between the counter and the rearmost parts shelves later that week as I bugged him three days in a row while cobbling the timing and primary sides together. I'd discovered more bitsa items like a later primary chain tensioner and a cracked clutch hub nut. Revealed were a new clutch and a stretched primary chain. While I was in there it got a new front sprocket and I transplanted a healthier looking stator off my basket case '68 T-120 Triumph project. I also discovered the little ball bearing was missing from the right side of the clutch push rod. This explained earlier difficulty adjusting the clutch. The bonehead who assembled the bottom end substituted goo for real gaskets so I cleaned up that mess and installed proper gaskets. Most of the oil should now stay inside rather than rustproof the outside.

Carl can rest easy for now. The BSA is reassembled, retimed and ready for its next shakedown ride. If I get another warm day, I'll see what falls off or leaks next on my Johnny Cash Special...it's a 66, 67, 68 69.....

On another note, I've always been one of the younger riders in EMU or GNOA. As I approach 50 riding a 53 year old motor, the following quote gave me pause: Paul d'Orleans who writes for Classic Bike Guide states, "The average age of a motorcyclist (USA) is 48, a figure eight years older than in 2001. If that trend continues, only dead people will be on bikes in 2040. Vintage motorcycle owner is now a double-edged term as it now applies to both rider and mount."

I guess I should buy more motorcycles manufactured before I was born. They help me feel younger. Maybe another Beeza!



Almost done.





The below article is from Bret Ransom:

A Visit to Colorado Norton Works shops:

Rolling up CO 491 after having spent the night tent camping off of my Super Tenere at Canyon DeChelly. I was headed for the headwaters of the Rio Grande, a little town called Creede, Colorado, but something inexplicable happened to the steering of my bike. Almost against my will, the bike edged to the left as I approached CO 160. The bike refused to take the exit and headed on through Cortez as my head craned, trying to keep sight of the original route. An invisible hand applied pressure to the left handgrip and once again my original route plans were thwarted as I exited northbound on state highway 145 toward Delores. I was now well off the route to my next campsite but perhaps well on the way to an interesting afternoon.

Two hours earlier, I was cruising through monument valley with plenty of time to think, readjust my plans, and ponder. The scale of the landscape is vast and the scenery changes at a leisurely pace, allowing you to soak it all in while running along a nearly deserted, bumpy layer of asphalt through the red desert sand. The weather was magnificent and my brain was on a do-loop of self assessment, route assessment, America appreciation, with the occasional math subroutine of time to destination, average speed and estimated fuel mileage. I don't listen to music while I ride, preferring the sounds of the wind and engine, and the freedom to tune in on the pulse of my inner psychic monologue.

This particular monologue somehow drifted to the motorcycle that I wasn't riding. The one that was sitting in my garage, under cover, waiting its chance. The one that was sitting on twelve year old tires, preserved under a layer of monograde 50 motor oil. The one that might or might not start, and once started, might or might not stop. The one that needed work but required respect for its heritage while carrying out that work. The Norton Commando 850, crafted in Wolverhampton and ending up in my garage forty five years later. I was slowly recommissioning this bike after purchasing it earlier in the summer. The work was on hold physically but my mind was turning over what needed to be done, how long it would take, and in what order I would do it. While researching some Norton suppliers on the internet, I stumbled upon some pictures of Norton Commandos re-engineered by Matt Rambow of Colorado Norton Works (CNW). These machines are the most artfully wrought, vintage motorcycle recreations ever to have graced my computer monitor. These images came flooding back in my mind as I neared the town of Cortez.

I remembered that the CNW shops were in the town of Delores and I noticed a sign for Delores at the junction for highway 160 to Durango. This is where the bike seemed to develop steering trouble. Whisking along to Delores, I started to wonder if I could even find Matt's shop. I am the last man in America who doesn't have a smart phone and I wasn't sure how big a town Delores even was. My plan was to just ride down the main drag, keeping my head on a swivel trying to spot a place that looked like a motorcycle shop. Delores is a real old west town located on the banks of the Delores River and is just one of many little towns along the San Juan skyway which is a ride well worth taking when

you find yourself out that way. In less than a mile I found myself on the far side of town with no motorcycle shop in sight. I turned down one of the three side streets that runs parallel with the river and made the trek back through town again. No luck. Sensing I was on a fool's errand I decided to change tactics. Swinging around I headed to a bar that I spotted on my first pass through town. There were a couple of Harleys parked in front of it so surely local bikers would know where the CNW shop was located. I walked in carrying a full faced helmet and gloves while wearing an armored jacket and pants and big clunky motorcycle boots. The bar matron was keeping busy with a good-sized crowd of hard drinking "bikers". There were more pickup trucks than bikes in the parking lot, but it seemed that all of the patrons were decked out in Harley shirts and jeans, most of them sporting the obligatory middle-aged gray ponytail and facial hair. You know those old west movies where the "stranger in town" walks through the batwing doors of the town saloon and the piano player stops, conversation is halted and all eyes turn to regard the new guy with cool suspicion? I could have walked in wearing a space suit and garnered less attention. Instead of cool suspicion, smiles broke out and I had never felt more welcome in a place. I went to the bartender and asked her and the guy that was perched on a stool chatting her up if they had ever heard of CNW. Nobody in that little bar had ever heard of CNW. "Surely you have seen vintage Nortons ridden through town being tested" I protested. "Nope, never seen one" seemed to be the standard reply. I persevered "They would be hard to miss. They are flawless recreations of the most beautiful of classic motorcycles. Matt makes them reliable so that their owners can enjoy them without having to wrench on them every ten minutes, and they are built right here in this town. You give him your old bike and thirty five thousand dollars and what you get back is truly spectacular." One guy mentioned that if I gave him 35 large he would build me up a "pretty damned nice bagger". However, judging his sobriety level this early in the day left me wondering how good of a job he would do. Since none of these guys had direct knowledge of CNW, a couple of smart phones came out. A few moments later I was getting directions. Thanking the guys, I headed out, flipped a hard left and headed back out the way I came. Coming to the top of the hill outside of town I made a left and headed down a long gravel road. After a few miles I saw the CNW logo on a trailer parked adjacent to a small compound of clean looking buildings and a nice house. Metal posts, pounded into the ground, supported a span of hardware wire stretched across the driveway. Two overly friendly dogs ran out to greet me barking and wagging like their lives depended on it. Classic rock blared from a long, low-set building to my right. At once I wondered what the hell I was doing there. I didn't call ahead, haven't emailed this guy. Now I am way out in the country at a place I haven't been invited to. Standing on my side of the wire fence and patting the dogs I decided to leave. Giving the dogs a final pat, I turned to my bike just as Matt came out from his shop. I apologized for my "unforgivable rudeness in just turning up unannounced" but this didn't seem to trouble Matt at all. I told him where I was from and asked him if I could see his shop, promising not to stay long or inconvenience him any more than I already had.

If I ever suffer a heart attack and need delicate open-heart surgery, I can only hope that the operating room is as clean, well lit, and organized as Matt's shop/factory. A row of large windows looking out at the San Juan Mountains lined the long end of the shop. Low set cabinets and workbenches set just below the windows afforded perhaps the best place on earth to assemble Norton



parts. Matt turned down the music and showed me around. Perched on lifts were a half dozen Nortons in various stages of construction. Varying in color and equipment all of them were individuals but they were all sporting the same upgrades to reliability and performance. Switch gear, instrumentation and harnesses, LED lighting, isloastics, brakes, leak free engines and gearboxes, seating, ignition and fuel delivery all upgraded to modern standards. All of the machines on lifts were equipped with CNW electric starters. In another room, free from dust and debris, the engines are built up to exacting standards. It was Norton heaven and could have stayed forever. Keeping my promise to not stay long, I thanked Matt profusely for his time and for what he was doing and headed back out to my Yamaha.

As I look back on my trip to CNW from the comfort of my own garage, I am reminded of a trip I took with my brother about twenty years ago to Atlanta. It was the gathering and convention of the Lotus Owner's Group. Ben and I took an old 1973 Lotus Europa Twin Cam from St Louis. How he folded his 6 foot 4 frame into a Europa for a nine hour ride is a mystery for the ages but I digress. When we got to the convention there were perhaps 150 Lotus automobiles but essentially two kinds of owners. There were the owners that were marque enthusiasts who perhaps did their own oil changes but mostly enjoyed driving and washing their new Esprit Turbos. Nice guys, some of them good drivers but not much knowledge about what goes on under the hood. In contrast there were the less, well-heeled enthusiasts driving old Elans, Europas and Sevens who did their own maintenance. They knew how to sync SU carbs and had held the crankshafts of their cars in their own hands. Some were butchers, some were skilled craftsmen, most fell in between the two extremes. The cars revealed the truth about their abilities in stunning clarity. This is perhaps the long way around to the realization that I will never possess the craftsmanship, skill or knowledge that CNW can bring to bear on a project. If I had all the time and money in the world, I still couldn't do for myself what Matt and the CNW team are doing in the foothills of the San Juan Mountains. I do not have the money to elevate my Commando to the exalted status of a CNW machine but I am grateful for those who do choose to spend their money this way. Matt's bikes serve as benchmarks, a glimpse as to what is possible, and a beacon for the rest of us to mechanically aspire to. Much like a high school trumpeter trying to nail down a Wynton Marsalis jazz lick we will probably never get there but there is value and enjoyment in trying.

**Subject: Small NotRun**

- [https://advrider.com/new-norton-atlas-to-appear-at-nec-motorcycle-live/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=member-digest&utm\\_content=11\\_14\\_2018](https://advrider.com/new-norton-atlas-to-appear-at-nec-motorcycle-live/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=member-digest&utm_content=11_14_2018)

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