

VIBRATIONS!



The “Poppy Bike” – see story inside.

November 2014



Triumph Owners M.C.C.

Northants Branch

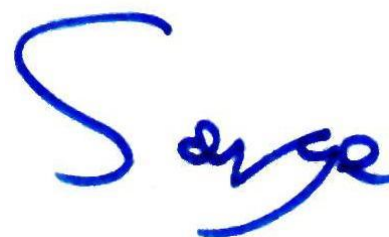


Scribblings

The last few issues of the branch newsletter have contained more than just the details of where we meet and the events list for the coming months. We have managed to fill additional pages with reports and photos of recent events, and other items of interest.

That is the case with this issue and hopefully we can continue in that vein for some time to come. That being the case we have resurrected the "Vibrations" name that was in use for the newsletter between 1983 and 2010.

Now that that decision has been taken this is an appeal to the branch members for things to put in it so can you provide a few words that would be of interest to the rest of the branch? The obvious things are reports of motorcycle related activities but doesn't have to be that specific – for instance one of our members in years gone by used to provide a report on the serious and not so serious developments in the world of science. Photographs, cartoons, puzzles, and so on are equally welcome.



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New Members

The branch membership continues to increase. Would you please extend a welcome to these people who have joined since the last newsletter was published:

Brian Cameron of Corby

Martin Rose of Uppingham

Paul Ellingham of Higham Ferrers

Geoff Toyer of Northampton

Kelvin Hart of Northampton

Chris Tuthill of Wellingborough

Peter Ingram of Badby

Karen Wharfe of Higham Ferrers

We look forward to seeing you all out one of our branch events.

All Change at the Crown

Graham and Pam, our hosts at The Crown (and at The George in Wilby before then) are retiring and the Branch wishes them all the best for the future.

Hopefully, we will be introduced to the new tenants at the pub on the 5th November club night.

Surface Dressing


Surface dressing is a cheap way of maintaining roads; unfortunately it also presents a hazard to motorcycle riders with loose chippings ready to catch you out for weeks afterwards. There is a petition open on the government website to have this banned, but it needs 100,000 signatures to be debated in parliament.

If this is an issue that concerns you take a look at the petition and add your name to it:

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/67408>

Northants Branch Events List

Non-club members are welcome at all events unless specifically marked otherwise. Listen out for details at club nights, or check with committee members beforehand in case of short-notice alterations/cancellations. Except where indicated, club nights start at 8pm.

Events		
Wed 5th Nov	Club Night at The Crown.	
Sun 9th Nov	Remembrance Day Ride to Duxford Museum. The East Northants Classic Club may be doing a run to Duxford. Talk to Phil Short or keep an eye on the club's website: www.eastnorthantsclassicmcc.co.uk	
Wed 19th Nov	Club Night at The Crown. Old photos presentation – bring along you old motorcycling snaps.	
22nd – 30th Nov	Motorcycle Live at the National Exhibition Centre. What goodies will Triumph unveil this year? Tickets now on sale: www.motorcyclelive.co.uk	
Tue 2nd Dec	East Northants Classic Club's "Stuff the Turkey" meal. Contact Phil Short for details.	
Wed 3rd Dec	Club Night at The Crown. Darts knockout competition	
Wed 17th Dec	Club Night at The Crown. As this is the last meeting of the year we hope to be laying on Sandwiches and a bit of hot food.	
Fri 26th Dec	<p>Wild & Woolly Scramble at The Arm Farm, Blisworth. Provisional times: Practice 10am; Race at 11am. www.nmcc.co.uk</p> <p>The farm sits on really sticky boulder-clay so don't wear anything that can't cope with mud.</p> <p>Typical Wild & Woolly racing conditions:</p>	
Wed 7th Jan	Club Night at The Crown. Also committee meeting	
Wed 21st Jan	Club Night Bowling & Supper – details to be confirmed	
Wed 4th Feb	Club Night at The Crown. Quiz Night with questions by Sarge	
Wed 18th Feb	Club Night at The Crown. Ladies' Night	

In 2015 we intend to have a presence at the following events: Rushden Cavalcade, Lamport Hall Country festival, Daventry Bike Day, Jack's Hill Café Ton-Up Day, East Carlton Transport Gala, Brackley Festival of Motorcycling, Sywell Pistons & Props.

If you would like to display your Triumph at one or more of these please contact Phil Barton (some of them are classic orientated so we could do with more volunteers with pre-1990 bikes).

About The Branch

Branch HQ:

The Crown, Senwick Road, Wellingborough, NN8 1NJ. The pub is on the south-east side of Wellingborough, a 5 minute ride from the A45 and the southern section of the A509. It's only a few hundred yards away from Pure Triumph, so if you know where the dealer's showroom is our HQ will be easy to find.

Meetings take place on the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays of each month, starting at 8pm.

Branch Website:

Our website can be found at: www.northantstomcc.org.uk. Most pages are public but there is one small section that is restricted to branch members only, accessed via the password that is advised separately.

We are always looking for new articles and photos to add to it. If you have anything suitable please e-mail the webmaster: webmaster@northantstomcc.org.uk

Pure Triumph:

Our local Triumph dealer is based at The Embankment, Wellingborough, NN8 1LD. The company's website can be found at www.puretriumph.co.uk.

On production of a current Triumph Owners membership card, Pure Triumph at Wellingborough will give a 10% discount on the following items: Clothing, Oxford Products, Helmets, Oil products, Labour on Servicing.

Links:

Triumph Owners MCC national website: www.tomcc.org

The club also has a page on Facebook; search for "Triumph Owners' Motor Cycle Club"

British Motorcyclists Federation: www.bmf.co.uk

Triumph Motorcycles: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

Jack's Hill Café: jackshillcafe.co.uk

*At The Cowper's Oak in
Weston Underwood back
in the Summer*



The Poppy Bike

If you visit Emberton in Buckinghamshire you'll find Sooty's Customs, where Sooty Reynolds and his team will be happy to build the bike of your dreams: chop, bobber, café racer, streetfighter, trike.



Following the Remembrance Sunday service in Newport Pagnell last year Sooty suggested that perhaps he should be building a 'Poppy bike' as a commemoration. He'd been considering building a '70s-style chopper for some time and Karolinka at the Custom Shop just happened to have a chopped 1961 6T Thunderbird lurking, neglected, at the back of her garage. As this was a genuine 1970s chopper, with a rigid hardtail welded on and extended frame rails, the basic style he had in mind was

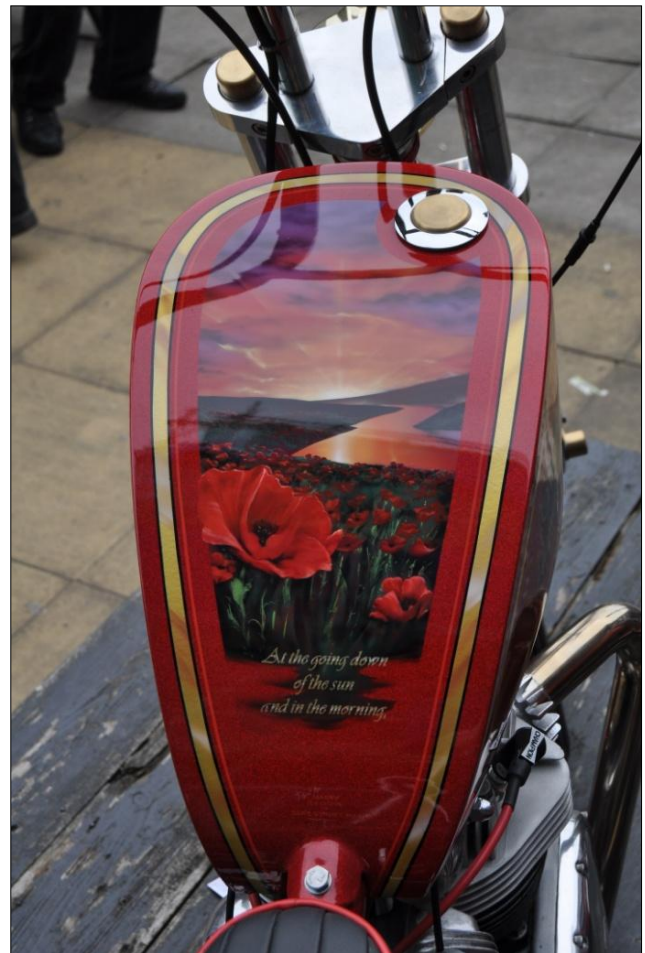
already there. An initial thought of fitting a Sportster tank was rejected in favour of a home-made square-sided version. This was Sooty's first attempt at building a tank from scratch but it worked out okay.

Sooty didn't want an aggressive war theme so he and Andy Stroud from Hairy Designs spent many hours finalising a design based around sunset and poppies as a tribute to the fallen. In keeping with the overall 70s style of the bike this would be done over a metal flake base.

The Thunderbird motor was stripped and rebuilt by Sooty with high-comp pistons and twin Amal carbs. The exhaust pipes were also made up in house. Cables and the wiring loom also came from the Sooty's Customs team. The existing Kawasaki front end was thrown away and replaced with aluminium slab yokes, Honda XL250 forks, hub and a 21" rim. The 16" rear wheel has a matching aluminium rim.

In total, 74 parts were made up from scratch including: handlebars, wheel spindle covers, fork dust covers, footpegs, fork top covers, rear brake master cylinder reservoir, etc. The sissy bar and side stand incorporate poppy shapes to fit the theme of the bike. In addition a number of existing parts were tweaked or modified to fit.

When the bike was completed earlier this year an invite was received to enter it in the Salon de Moto custom show at Pecquencourt in France. On the way home from the weekend, Sooty, Karolinka, Greg the driver and 'Poppy' stopped at one of the war cemeteries in Ypres. Sooty's grandfather was injured at 'Wipers' during the First World War, a piece of shrapnel embedding itself near his heart, where it stayed until the 1960s when it finally took its toll.



The Poppy Bike

As anyone who has visited the war cemeteries in France, Belgium or Holland will know, they're incredibly moving places, so this was a particularly special moment for Sooty.



The idea now is that Karolinka will ride the Triumph on the Armistice Day Parade in Newport Pagnell on November 11th this year, to commemorate and remember all those who died so that we can have the freedom we enjoy today.

Pure Triumph Special

Pure Triumph have built a special edition Daytona 1050R, as shown on the right.

If you want to see it in the metal pay a visit to the Wellingborough showroom.

And if you want your own have a chat with Kevin Lington as they can be built to order.



A Tale of a Tiger

10.30am on Saturday 6th July: I'm on a bike for the first time in five years and I'm just about to head out onto the main road from a commercial unit just outside Royston. I've hired a Tiger 800 from Open Road Rentals for a week and this example is fitted with a number of extras: panniers, handguards, engine bars, headlight protector, centre stand, heated grips, foglights and high level mudguard. It's a 2012 model with 14,000 miles on the clock.

It's a bike that I've never ridden before, on roads that I'm not familiar with and it's raining – probably not the best introduction to it! The last bike I had was a Sprint ST 1050 and it wasn't a machine that I felt totally comfortable with. Even after 2000 miles I still couldn't work out how I was supposed to ride it and wondered whether my riding skills had gone to pot, so to say that I was a little bit nervous this time is an understatement.

The weather forecast suggests that heading west rather than east is the best option so, gingerly, off through Royston, Letchworth and Hitchin. I take a wrong turning in Luton and end up travelling through the town centre twice before I find the right road to Dunstable. As it is still raining and quite cold I'm glad of the heated grips. Beyond Dunstable I pick up some minor roads to cut across to Aylesbury, which gives me chance to get more used to the bike without having to worry about the traffic around me. Between Aylesbury and Bicester the rain stops and the roads start to dry out, then by the time I reach Witney the sun is out and it feels more like summer. I pull over to check the map for the next part of the route and the lining in one of my gloves chooses that moment to disintegrate. Luckily I'd spied a bike shop about half a mile back so a new pair are quickly purchased.

I continue west on the A40 until it meets the Fosse Way then I head north on that. The Fosse Way is one of my favourite roads, but only as long as it's not blocked up with coaches and caravans. It isn't that bad today so I can let the bike loose. With the dry roads and now being on familiar territory I'm beginning to relax and I find myself getting more and more used to the bike. As long as the weather doesn't throw too much at me I believe that I'm going to enjoy this week. On through Moreton-in-Marsh, Chipping Norton, Banbury and Daventry, then home to Northampton. That's 175 miles and enough for day one I think.



Sunday starts with a blast up the A5 to Hinckley. Ignoring the urge to take a photo of the Tiger outside the Triumph factory I plot a circuitous route to Loughborough, then on through Melton Mowbray to Bourne in Lincolnshire. The route back takes in Stamford and Oakham, but instead of taking the direct route I head east via some country lanes to pick up the B6047. This is another of my favourite roads, leading to Market Harborough and back home to Northampton.

Monday – well you read about that in the September newsletter, being my Northampton to Northampton “Long Way Round” journey.

A Tale of a Tiger

Tuesday dawns and I'm off to north-east England, however the weather forecast is a bit grim. The original idea was to get on the A1 at Stamford but it looks as if I would hit the worst of the rain on that route. Plan B involves the M1 and M6; still wet as far as Stafford but not as bad as on the east side of the country. I leave the motorway at Tebay, shortly after being buzzed by a low-flying RAF fighter. Through Langdale to Kirkby Stephen then up and over the Pennines. Stopping briefly to look back I can see that the weather is closing in where I was so I'm glad that I didn't leave home any later, and over to the east the clouds look a lot darker so taking the M6 rather than the A1 was definitely the better choice. Luckily I'm heading north-east on this road and the sky looks a lot better. While I'm taking all this in half a dozen Police riders pass in the opposite direction.

Into Teesdale and a change of direction to the north-west, to High Force. This is a rather impressive waterfall on the River Tees that I've been wanting to visit for a long time. Well worth it I'm sure you will agree...



Still heading north-west across the moors to Alston, passing through which involves a steep downhill section on a cobbled road – for which I am grateful that it's not wet. I then turn back to the north-east to Hexham and then into Newcastle to finally get the A1. Now you might think that Newcastle is a long way, but Berwick-upon-Tweed is another 65 miles further on and I'm a bit behind schedule.

363 miles after setting off I roll up at a B&B in Tweedmouth called the Old Vicarage – which is just what it says it is. The car park can't be seen from the road so the bike shouldn't attract any unwanted attention, but it needs to be treated with caution as it's gravel rather than tarmac. I'm here for three nights and it ranks as one of the best I've ever stayed in. Recommended if you are ever visiting this part of the country. Tweedmouth is on the south side of the River Tweed and from the B&B it's just a 20 minute stroll across the bridge into the centre of Berwick-upon-Tweed.



Berwick's an interesting place. It's changed hands between the English and the Scots several times and was a garrison town under martial law for many years.

The old town walls are still in situ and there are several other places of interest. It's also blessed with a number of good places to eat and drink.

After a hearty breakfast on Wednesday I'm off on the road again. The bike hire company offered me a SatNav but I turned it down as the out of the way routes I have planned would be just about impossible to program into it.

I ride south from Tweedmouth for a few miles then head off into the Northumberland National Park on a series of ever smaller roads. One interesting road sign leads me off my planned route, and along that road another sign pointing to "Black Middens Bastle" raises my curiosity. I follow a very narrow road for a few miles to a small car park that contains two other bikes, one of which is another Tiger 800. A walk of a few hundred yards across the field brings me to the Bastle, which turns out to be a fortified farmhouse built to protect the farmer and his family from the Reivers. The other two bikers are here, turns out that they have come over from Carlisle for the day.

A Tale of a Tiger



My next stop is Kielder Water, the largest artificial lake in Britain by volume (Rutland Water has a larger surface area). As well as ensuring water supplies for this part of the country it also feeds a hydro-electric power station. Backtracking for 15 miles or so I re-join the planned route to pick up the A68. The first time I travelled along this road I was a passenger in a coach and vowed to return on a bike. I did return five years ago but got caught in one of the worst storms I've ever encountered: hail, lightning all around and roads turning into rivers. Today it's dry and sunny so I can enjoy the ride and the scenery. The Scottish border is reached at Carter Bar and it's a good place to stop for lunch.

I carry on north about 20 miles into Scotland to Earlston then head east towards the coast at a small port called Eyemouth. There's a seal in the harbour here and it's obviously a regular visitor as it gets fed fish from some of the returning boats. Even with my earlier diversions there's still time to take in one more speculative ride, so onto the A1 south to England and eight miles beyond Berwick turn left onto an unnumbered road. It's a speculative ride as what's at the end of the road will depend on the state of the tide: the place known as Lindisfarne or Holy Island. I'm in luck as the tide is out and it will be over three hours before it returns – which means that the causeway road over to the island is open.

This counts as one of the strangest roads I have ever travelled. The first stretch is through a salt marsh the to causeway proper, beyond which you are effectively riding on a stretch of tarmac over a beach with mussel beds either side before you reach solid ground on the island itself. I park the bike up on the outskirts of the town and spend an hour or so exploring before returning across the causeway and back to the B&B.

The island really needs a longer stay, especially if you want to pay a visit to the rather impressive castle.



A Tale of a Tiger

On Thursday I head out of Berwick following the course of the River Tweed upstream until I get to the Union Chain Bridge. This was opened in 1820 and it was the first vehicle suspension bridge in Britain. The river here is the England/Scotland border and the name of the bridge celebrates the centenary of the Union between the two countries, when it was seen by both as being a benefit – the irony was striking as my visit was during the campaigning for the Scottish referendum!

Over the course of the next hour I must have crossed the border ten times on the various minor roads that litter this area before heading south through the Northumberland National Park and onto the coast at Alnmouth for lunch. The afternoon is spent exploring various coastal towns and villages, and diverting down any roads that look interesting. The last call is Bamburgh Castle, which sits on a large basalt outcrop – from close up you get the impression that it must have been impregnable. It's so imposing on the landscape that any invaders would have been disheartened before they got near it; but appearances can be deceptive and the castle did fall during the War of the Roses.

Friday dawns and it's my last full day with the bike so I have to return to Northampton. Onto the A1 once more. Past Newcastle. Past Durham. I split from the A1 at Darlington and head off towards Middlesbrough and from there to Whitby. Why Whitby you may ask? Well, I have a friend who runs a shop in the town and it's her birthday today so I thought that it would be a nice surprise to pop in with a card. It would have been a nice surprise except that she's taken the day off, so the card is left with her boyfriend instead.

Not a totally pointless diversion however as it gives me chance to ride a brilliant road across the North Yorks Moors that I have only previously done in a car. Back onto the A1 at York. A decision has to be made at Doncaster, do I stay on the A1 or head over to the M1. There are warnings of a 15 mile stretch of roadworks on the M1 so the Great North Road wins out. There's some congestion on the approach to Newark so a bit of lane splitting is called for (must remember how wide the panniers are), but apart from that the traffic is running smoothly. I pick up the A43 at Stamford for the last leg home. On Saturday morning I return the Tiger to Royston, where another customer is waiting to pick up a Street Triple – he's off to Germany for a fortnight.

So, what about the bike? Basically I loved it. It looks like an adventure bike but it's really just a very good road bike.

The handling was neutral and it was easy to build up confidence in it on a variety of roads. Comments on some of the forums suggest that owners are not very impressed with the original equipment tyre (Pirellis?) but this one had Michelin Pilot Road Trails fitted and they give a lot of feedback. The suspension was fine apart from one occasion. I was on a stretch of road on the route from Alnmouth to Bamburgh where the surface dressing had worn away in strips about 18" wide. The rear suspension just couldn't cope with the succession of closely spaced bumps. No doubt it just needed the damping adjusting but after half a mile or so of having my kidneys battered I turned off and found an alternative route.

Like all Triumph triples the engine is brilliant, with a smooth spread of power throughout the rev range. Top gear overtakes at 60mph were easy without the need to change down. I was getting 50-55 miles to the gallon, which gives at least 200 miles between fill-ups.

As I'm not very tall I had the saddle on its lower setting, which drops the seat height by an inch. Just wish it had a bit more padding as you feel it after 90 minutes or so, but at least you can move around on it a bit. The heated handgrips had two heat settings and were most welcome on the couple of days I got caught in the rain. Didn't need to use the foglights; the headlight seem okay but then again I did very little night time riding. The bike had ABS but I was never in a position to need it.

Like many bikes the front mudguard is far too short and throws a lot of water onto the engine so I'd fit an extender. The only other criticism is the high-level silencer. The right-hand pannier is shaped to clear it, reducing the capacity by about a third compared to the left-hand one. As this model has no real off-road pretensions why not just fit a lower silencer and allow a larger pannier to be fitted?

Open Road Rentals have 25 bikes for hire: BMW, Ducati, Honda and, of course, Triumph. Of the latter chose from Tiger 800s, Tiger Explorers, Bonneville, Street Triple, Speed Triple and Trophy.

www.openroadrentals.co.uk