

Yorkshire Branch Ride Outs in 2017

The Yorkshire branch of the NOC has just completed its 10th year of having a monthly ride out programme that runs between April and September of each year (6 runs per year are scheduled). Below are some thoughts and reflections on this year's ride outs.

At each branch monthly meeting we have an average of about 20 people attending, members are very diverse in what they want from being a branch member and many don't attend the ride out's on a regular basis, some members seem to just like to attend meetings once a month to chat to likeminded souls, some have bikes they ride year around regardless of the weather, some have a stable of bikes both classic and modern that they ride when they can and others just have other commitments that make it difficult for them to join our scheduled ride outs on weekends. All members get something out of being a part of a very active branch and we end up with a good mix of people from a range of backgrounds and differing age groups.

Our branch meeting place in West Yorkshire means that we have no shortage of ride out destinations being ideally placed for runs into the Yorkshire Dales, Derbyshire's Peak District, Cumbria's Lake District, Lancashire's Forest of Bowland and Yorkshires coastal resorts.

Readers will no doubt understand the pleasure riding a motorcycle can bring (frustration in equal measure when something's not quite right!) but one of the benefits of riding a classic bike is that you can often use the machines performance to the full on modern roads, very few people can even approach those limits on a modern bike on public roads, but on a classic you'll have a much better chance of retaining your driving license.

Reliability has been pretty good on ride outs over the 10-years considering the age range of the bikes, the most serious incident occurred during a 2009 run into the Peak District when our former chairman's Dominator 99 ejected a con rod out through the crankcases and in the process snapped the camshaft into 2 pieces, we have needed the odd breakdown recovery vehicle over the years but generally everybody gets home under their own steam with just the occasional running adjustment being required. All runs to date have covered between 90 and 220 miles in the day so we have racked up a few miles over the years. We don't insist that people attending the ride outs come on a Norton, obviously this is always the preferred mode of transport, there's no problem just as long as they can maintain a decent pace. To ensure we don't lose anybody on route we employ the 'drop off' system whereby the rider behind the leader stops to mark the junction until the tail rider has passed by.

A brief summary of this year's ride out follows;

Saturday 15th April – Dales Ride Out. This very well attended first ride out of the season set off from the meeting point close to Skipton and headed north to Malham passing the

Cove on the narrow roads, from there it dropped down towards Settle and stopped at Ribbleshead for photos. A lunch break was taken in Hawes then the group returned via Aysgarth, Kettlewell, Grassington and back to Skipton where the group split to go their own ways home. This ride out route was used when the branch held the 2012 International Rally and hopefully will bring back fond memories to those that attended as it was about the only time it didn't rain! 13 bikes attended the run and 130 miles were covered in the day.

Saturday 13th May – Peak District Ride Out. Hence forth to be known as the 'drop off ride out'. 10 bikes set off from the meeting point in Mirfield within the first 20 miles we had three 'drop off' events, first a headlight dropped out of its mounting, then climbing Holme Moss a footrest dropped off a bike and at the same time the rear brake master cylinder cap dropped off another bike! Running repairs fixed all the problems with minimal delay. The run went passed Huddersfield, over Holme Moss and onto Glossop with a bit of light rain on the higher ground, Snake Pass was negotiated and the first stop was at the Ladybower reservoir, from Ladybower the group went down to Castleton for a lunch break. After lunch a big scenic loop around the north of Castleton led us back to Hope but unfortunately a Commando clutch cable snapped, fortunately another rider had a spare cable so after a little delay the group then made its way back across the Strines Moor back towards Huddersfield. 103 miles were covered on this second ride out of the year.

Saturday 17th June - Scarborough Ride Out. Eleven bikes met at Tadcaster, the run went to the north of York across country through Helmsley and turned off the main route at Thornton-le-Dale to take in the Dalby Forest drive. The first stop was at the Dalby Forest visitors centre café for refreshments, welcome shade was found as the sun was blazing down all day. Unfortunately our 'tail man' who we use to ensure we don't lose people on the drop off system got lost and missed the first stop! From the forest the group rode into Scarborough and passed along the sea front on the way to the lunch stop at Oliver's Mount, fortunately our 'tail man' was there waiting for us. A few laps of Oliver's Mount were enjoyed before and after the lunch break. The group then rode back over the Wolds and had another stop in the shady wooded area of the Flimber Café, from there people made their way home. 192 miles were covered in the day without any machine issues interrupting the ride.

The ride out planned for July was cancelled due to heavy rain falling on the morning of the ride.

Saturday 12th August – The route took in scenic moors, railways and reservoirs in West York's, Lancashire and North York's, 6 bikes met in Mirfield and rode over to Hollingworth Lake near Rochdale, over the top of the Pennines we passed through light rain and could see a wonderful rainbow in the valley below, a photo was taken with the group (8 people in total) with the Lake in the background. From Hollingworth the group rode down to Hebden Bridge via Cragg Vale (a bumpy road that punished your kidneys!), then rode over the moors to Oxenhope for a lunch break at the Keighley & Worth Valley

Railway station. Lunch was taken on the platform and an added bonus was the arrival of a steam train. When setting off from the station the group was joined by a stranger on a T100 Hinckley Bonneville who asked if he could tag along for the rest of the ride. The group then rode over to Skipton again over the moors passing close to Colne, then onto Fewston reservoir by Otley before splitting up and making their respective ways home. The day was fine with only light rain on top of the Pennines, 110 miles were covered on the ride out.

Saturday 23rd September – Forest of Bowland and Arnside. The ride set off from the Skipton area, from there we headed to Slaidburn where we had a first refreshment stop. The group then headed off towards Arnside over Great How, however close to the summit a Commando cut out due to what was believed to have been a Mikuni carb problem which couldn't be resolved at the road side (and the middle of nowhere!), the rider was eventually recovered by breakdown recovery truck, at the same stop a T160 Trident had also stated to intermittently cut out so they headed home. Just before Arnside a third problem arose when a rear tyre punctured! Fortunately after recently touring France / Belgium on his Commando he was able to replace the inner tube at the side of the road as he still was loaded up with lots of 'just in case' spares on the bike. After lunch at Arnside the group split up due to it being quite late in the day to make their return journeys home.

The ride out was blessed with good dry weather for the entire route, a wide variety of Norton's were present (2 Electra's, a Model 7, 2 Model 50's and 4 Commando's), 12 bikes attended the ride and we had a guy on a modern T100 Triumph Scrambler who hadn't been riding long tag along for the last part of the ride, he was a Lancastrian but we overlooked that on this occasion (only joking for those that might take offence from the 'tuther side' of the Pennines). 163 miles were covered in the day.

So to summarise, when a group of Norton's are together it tends to promote the NOC in general, being group events we tend to cover much greater mileages than we would riding out on our own. When a group of classic bikes stop it invariably results in people coming over to look at the bikes and we always have lots of conversation with interested parties who like to see the bikes being ridden and experience the sound, sight and smell rather than seeing static exhibits. Our members get out and about riding in the fresh air and hopefully this adds to the value of their club membership. Anybody is welcome to join our ride outs, details of the events are always listed on our branch website so if you want to join us just turn up before the designated start time and you'll be made most welcome.

Ride Safe.

Andy Lodge