

Owner Garry Laurence gets to grips
with the T120's 32mm Amal
Concentrics



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DEDICATED TO DETAIL

Don't call the special Garry Laurence has built a Triton. He associates the name with the second-rate. Hundreds of hours in the workshop have made his marriage of Norton Wideline frame and T120 Bonneville motor an engineering masterpiece

A perfectionist with strong opinions, Garry Laurence believes that far too many classic specials look like nothing more than a collection of mismatched parts.

"The aim of my Triumph-Norton was to create something that would pass for a complete manufactured product," explains Garry, who clearly succeeded. His cafe racer hybrid – Garry rarely uses the word Triton – has a tidy, harmonious look that few home-brewed specials achieve.

"The devil is in the detail," he says. "If you get the small details right, then the rest follows. I wanted something with symmetry, and clean, well-balanced lines. Specials are a matter of personal taste, but looking around at Triumph-Nortons, I've seen a lot with very questionable build quality. If their owners are happy with them, that's

fine. But for me, 99 per cent is not good enough, because it means the job is not 100 per cent.

"A lot of my bike may not look terribly special, but it took me five hours just to decide where to put the rear number plate, and some one-off parts were tried, rejected and made again before I was happy with them. I spent as much time thinking about the project as actually working on it, often when I was running," says marathon runner Garry, who is 49 and lives in Dartford, Kent.

He also acknowledges input from his wife Jan, who has trained in craft and design technology.

A former habitué of Johnsons, the famous bikers' cafe near Brands Hatch on the A20, he takes his styling cues from machines he recalls from his youth. One particular bike stands out in his memory: a Manx Triton built ►

1958 NORTON-TRIUMPH

◁by Alf Goodwin, with whom Garry is still in touch.

Apart from a complete lack of trailing cables and wires, one of the most noticeable things about the machine completed last spring is the absence of many typical Triton features.

"I don't like sweptback pipes with Goldie silencers, and I can't stand those untidy headlamp brackets that everyone seems to fit," he says.

Normal Triumph downpipes and silencers are fitted to the mid-Sixties'



Garry fires up his special masterpiece

650cc Bonneville engine. And much time was spent mating clip-on handlebars with the Norton Roadholder fork's pressed-steel headlamp brackets.

The near-flat bars are placed immediately below the Manx-style alloy top yoke, with metal cut away from the Norton brackets to accommodate them. For neatness, the clutch and front brake control cables run through drillings in the sheet metal brackets.

Untidy speedometer and rev counter cable runs are avoided and alloy covers tidy up the bases of the Norton Commando instruments. Their dial faces have computer generated black-on-white graphics with red needles, the ammeter needle coloured to match.

Taking approximately a year to complete, the Laurence Triton is an extensive rebuild of a hybrid originally registered in 1976. Garry, a police officer with extensive automotive engineering training, acquired the donor bike when a colleague offered him a Triton he had lying idle.

Having spent some years restoring cars as a hobby and eventually owning an award-winning Jaguar XK150 that was correct down to the last spring-washer, Garry returned to two wheels. His last bike – sold when he and his wife started a family – had been a Triton with a Weslake eight-valve conversion, so the idea of building another Triumph-Norton and using his expertise to make one "just as it should be" but purely for fun riding was appealing.

"The bike I bought was a complete mess. It had a disc front brake and a red-painted frame," says Garry with undisguised distaste. Tossing much of it into the bin, he kept the basic cycle parts and T120 engine as the basis for his shot at perfection.

Every bearing and seal in the power unit was changed. The castings were glass bead-blasted and afterwards washed a dozen times in paint thinners then heated in an oven to release any embedded beads. No attempt was made to boost the T120 engine's performance, apart from careful 'blueprinting' of the stock internals.

"Tuning makes them unreliable. I was looking for a usable, oil-tight bike," says Garry

Believed to be of 1958 vintage, the Wideline Featherbed frame does not carry normal Norton coding. But as a stolen vehicles specialist Garry is satisfied that there is nothing suspect about it. He bought engine plates to suit, re-shaping them according to his philosophy.

"The Triumph engine is so obviously curvaceous and yet the plates came with dead straight top edges," muses Garry. Further patient work with hand tools removed the disc brake's caliper mount and the mudguard stay lugs from the fork sliders, achieving a clean Manx look. The mudguards are in alloy, enamelled black.

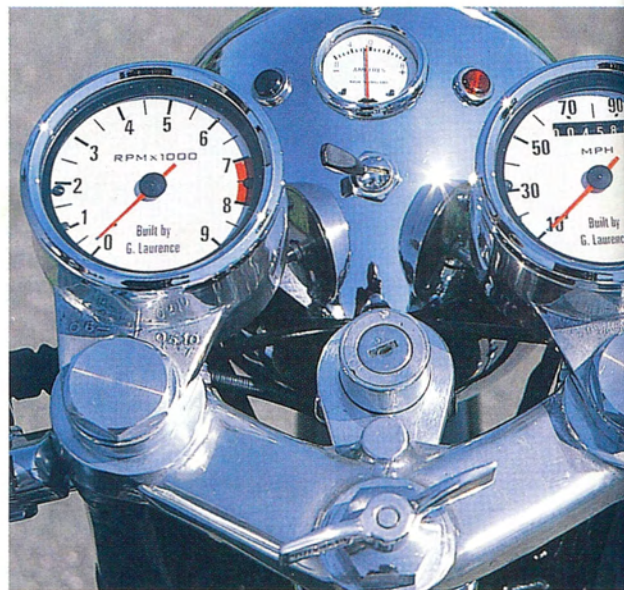
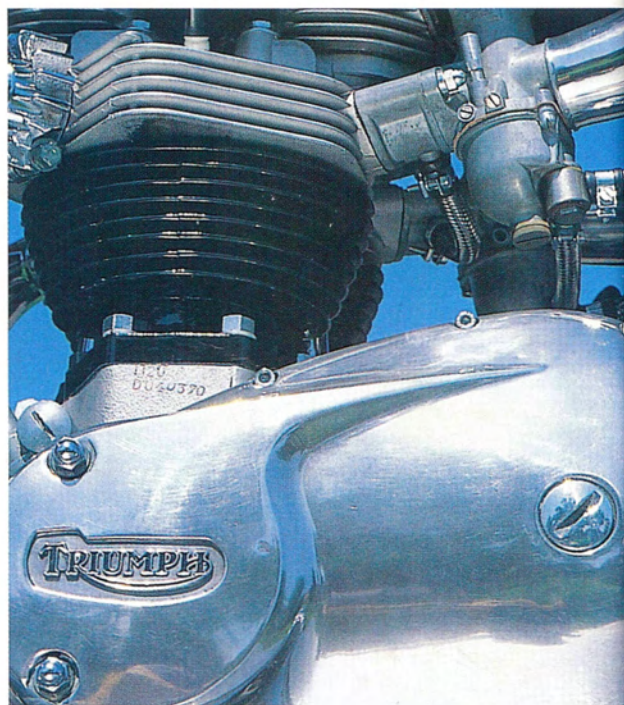
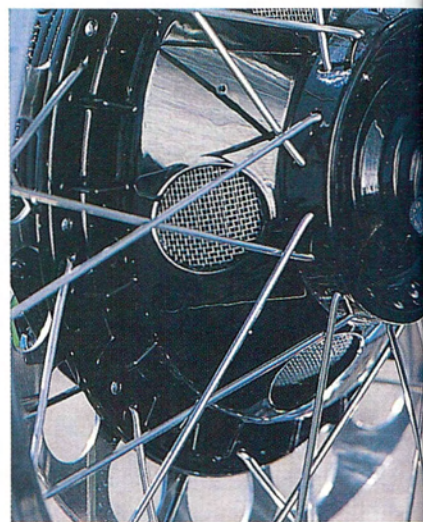
Laced up to 19in alloy rims with stainless spokes by JH Motorcycles, the wheel hubs are the Manx-inspired conical type introduced on Triumph and BSA 650s in 1971. At both front and rear, the black enamelled hubs have racer-style ventilating holes added, with stainless mesh to keep out foreign bodies.

Many hours of work have resulted in a Japanese brake light operating switch being fully concealed in the rear brake assembly, and the front hub being mated with the earlier, more efficient, Triumph-BSA twin leading ►

Right: Manx Norton inspired conical hub

Centre: Engine is blueprinted but not tuned

Bottom: Purpose-made clock faces and red customised needles





◁ shoe brake. This conversion entailed slimming down the brake shoes and revising the wheel bearings to suit the Norton push-through wheel spindle. A block of alloy TIG-welded to the right fork slider forms an anchor for the backplate.

Purely cosmetic screw-on alloy brake cooling rings were popular in the Sixties, but Garry's is a genuine racing type, firmly shrunk onto the hub so as to efficiently disperse heat.

Dismayed at what was available, Garry made up his own steering lock-stops. Buying off-the-shelf rearset footrests he modified them to his satisfaction and fashioned smart gearchange and brake pedals from half-inch Duralumin alloy plate. A Triumph T160 kickstart lever was chosen for its tidy fold-away foot pedal.

A normal steel chainguard is used, and an alloy guard made to cover the exposed section of the chain ahead of the swinging arm pivot. This small part was made in several different versions before Garry was content.

Shrouds for the Girling rear units were bought at the only autojumble he has ever attended.

"A lot of the stuff looked poor or worn out to me. I tend to look at things with an engineer's eye," says Garry, who spent two years finding a satisfactory replacement part for one of the antique wristwatches he collects.

"Tuning makes them unreliable. I was looking for a usable oil-tight bike"

GARRY LAURENCE, OWNER

Manx-style alloy fuel and oil tanks were supplied by a local specialist. Garry had the oil tank reworked so that the engine oil return line and the take-off for the alloy rocker box feed union could be tucked tidily away.

To keep cables and the wires of his all-soldered wiring loom tidy, Garry tethered them to the frame with Terry clips gathered from bicycle shops in his area. They were modified by grinding, and painted before use. The clutch cable is kept in line by a small holder on the right-side 32mm Concentric carburettor. Adjusters on the throttle cables from the period twin-pull ▶

Exuding understated class the Norton-Triumph features Manx-style livery and is a million miles removed from the brash image of most cafe racers



Starting point for Garry's project was a friend's donation of this 1976 registered Triton. Garry kept the engine and frame but much of the rest was binned



◁ twistgrip are held together by an HT lead tidy from a modern car.

"I hate cable ties with a passion," Garry says.

Fellow Tritoneers will know that it can be a problem keeping a large alloy tank from moving around. Kawasaki frame rubbers do the vital job of isolating the tank from vibration and a home-made alloy strap is augmented by a stop under the front top portion of the tank. For aesthetic reasons, the tax disc is also under the tank, fixed to the head steady.

Not happy with the traditional opening in the seat for access to the oil filler, Garry had a bridging piece added ahead of the Monza cap when the base

Angle of the clip-ons may not be to everyone's taste but their mounting is an exercise in patience and perfection

was covered by John Daws of Dartford. Manx style livery on the fuel tank and seat was applied by The Finishing Touch with British Leyland Silver Fern for the base colour.

To avoid the unsightliness of a battery, Garry uses a Boyer-Brandsen Powerbox with electronic ignition from the same source, and the standard alternator. The business-like ignition switch is a Yamaha type with its steering lock mechanism removed.

Garry originally sought Windtone horns as seen on Triumph's 650cc T120 in 1969, but these are now rare and expensive.

"I located a pair, but the seller said that if they weren't going on a '69 Bonnie I couldn't have them." He settled for a similar-looking Honda type.

Various parts were obtained from Rapide of Bexleyheath run by ex-AMC employee Ken Chater, and fasteners, most in stainless, came from Modern Screws in Bexley. Garry's fondness for domed nuts is very evident!

Gremlins struck the Triton on the day it was photographed. The engine misfired and cut out completely when warm, so a test ride was out of the question. Understandably vexed, especially as the bike had run perfectly until then, Garry subsequently traced the trouble to an ignition coil fault. He reports that the engine is now back to full health.

It just goes to show just how elusive perfection can be. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

engine type	ohv four stroke
cooling	air
configuration	parallel twin
bore x stroke	71mm x 82mm
capacity	646cc
compression	9:1
lubrication	dry sump

CARBURATION

manufacturer	Amal
size	2 x 32mm

TRANSMISSION

primary drive	duplex chain
clutch	multiplate
gearbox	four-speed
final drive	chain

ELECTRICS

12-volt Boyer-Brandsen Electronic ignition and Powerbox, standard alternator

CYCLE PARTS

Frame: 1958 Norton Wideline Featherbed, tubular steel, duplex cradle. Norton Roadholder forks, twin rear shocks with adjustable pre-load. Wheels front 300 x 19, rear 4.10 x 19, alloy rims. Brakes: front, 8in (203mm) tis drum, rear 7in (178mm) drum

DIMENSIONS

wheelbase	55 1/2 in (1211mm)
fuel capacity	5 gal (22.75l)

PERFORMANCE

top speed	115mph (est)
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VALUE

owner's valuation	£7500
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CONTACTS

John Daws (seat covering) 01322 224270
 JH Motorcycles
 (wheelbuilding and parts) 01923 225092
 Modern Screws (fasteners) 01322 553224
 Rapide (parts) 0208 6594045
 The Finishing Touch (paint) 01245 400918

Ignition coil breakdown ended our hopes of riding the machine but Garry, pictured here, insists that it goes as good as it looks

