



1944

THE NORMANDY MOTORCYCLE CLUB



2019

75th

**ANNIVERSARY 2019
STILL GOING STRONG**



1952

The following is a brief history of the:

Normandy Motor Cycle Club

Starting with the formation in 1944 written by Mr Norman Curtis and passed down over the years,

With additional bits and pieces taken from the website which was added by Tony Warsop when the Club website was started in 2006.

And hopefully bought up to the present time by myself.

I Hope you enjoy reading it,

Richard Thomas

The following is a copy of "The formation of the Normandy Motor Cycle Club" which was first published in the Con-Rod Newsletter during 1950. This original copy was handed down by Mr Norman Curtis to Reg Spicer, during his years as Secretary, Reg then passed it on to me when I took over as Club Secretary, It makes very interesting reading and I am sure will be enjoyed by all whether existing or new members, Young or Old. Many things mentioned still apply today.

Read On and Enjoy.
Richard Thomas Hon-Sec.

THE NORMNADY MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

PART ONE

I wonder how many members know the history of the N.M.C.C.?

It might be of interest to follow the work of the Dispatch Riders of E. Coy: Home Guard. before the club was formed by them.

As an ex-member of E Coy D, R's I will try to cover the activities of the D.R's from start to finish.

The activities of the D.R's section was formed soon after the evacuation of Dunkirk. It's duties was to keep contact open between the other Home Guard Sections in this district, in the event of other means of communication breaking down.

Paddy Johnstone of T.T. fame was our sergeant and **Tom Crowdy** our Corporal. We used our own machines for the job, being paid 2 ¼ a mile for the upkeep of them. As we often used to cover 200 miles a month on duty runs we had a useful sum of money to draw each month. As you will read later part of this money was put by to start a motor cycle club at the end of the war.

For the first few months our duties consisted of small arms training and delivering of messages in the area covered by us.

I'm afraid we were not popular with other H.G. units in the district as we often had to check up on the number of men on duty at the various posts in the area.

The D.R. on duty each night was expected to bed down where he could find bed for a few hours. As some posts were more comfortable than others we all had our own favourite stopping places. Often we had to lay on the floor and shiver like hell as there was no bed or blankets for us.

Ever tried to sleep in a block house on a concrete floor??

Very nice I don't think.

However we did have our lighter moments;

One night I was asked to keep a look out for an elderly couple, who were in the habit of taking a very early morning stroll. At 4:30am I spotted them walking towards me, the man a few paces in front of his wife. I stopped them and asked to see their identity cards. The woman let out a stream of abuse, mainly directed at the husband; she said she had to follow him to work in the morning as he might meet another woman. According to her he was a “don-juan” where women were concerned.

The man turned out to be a cowman on a local farm and inquiries at the farm proved to be of a jealous nature, so followed him to work at this unearthly hour.
How they laughed when I reported that incident!

In September 1940 the bombing of Camden Docks started, Corporal Tom covered a few miles that night calling out the home guard sections and all the D.R's. We were on duty all that night and next day, and covered many miles delivering messages, sometimes only being given a MAP REFERENCE of the place we were to go to, you ex-signal dispatch riders may smile a little at this, but we were raw in the art of map reading, and trying to find H.G. Sections in the black-out was no joke. However the weekend passed without incident worth recording. We were complimented by higher authority, which meant E. Coy D.R's were firmly established.

We were taking part in every exercise organised between the Army and the H.Q. and we were given lessons in map reading and signal work which was very interesting.

Next I will tell you how we took part in a search for lights.....

PART TWO

I will continue the history of the club with an account of a night exercise on Ash Ranges and districts. The military authorities had received reports that lights were to be seen on Ash Common in the black-out hours. They must have thought that E. Coy's D.R's would enjoy!!! A night out, so we were ordered to scout around the district all one night, and see what we could find out.

Our sergeant, **Paddy Johnstone** had a farm on the edge of Ash Common, so we made that our headquarters for the night. It was obvious that quietness was essential on a task like this, so we left our machines at the farm and walked over the common in two parties.

I've never known a night to be so dark, slit trenches and barbed wire to be so plentiful.

If there were any unlawful persons on the ranges that night they would have been warned of our approach by the strong language and curses various D.R's ejaculated, as they fell in a slit trench or walked into some barbed wire. My own vocabulary increased by quite a few words that night.

Around about midnight Corporal **Tom Crowdy** decided to dash home and persuade his wife Elizabeth to rustle up some coffee for his browned off and somewhat bad tempered patrol. When he was within a quarter of a mile of his home a Nazi airman decided he did not like the locality where Tom lived and dropped a Molotov Bread Basket and showered the area with incendiary bombs. The blast pushed Tom off his bike, but luckily he was not hurt. The devil was not in need of a new stoker that night. Tom remounted his bike and rode through the burning incendiaries to his house which was surrounded by them. When our Corporal came back to us minus the coffee, we forgot our troubles in the excitement.

Just before dawn we patrolled the common again but saw nothing, we went home disgusted with people who had us out all night on a wild goose chase.

About two years after the D.R's section was formed, we were joined by two well known competition riders, **Jack Botting** and **Ted Wilmott**. We all profited by the demonstrations they gave us in the art of rough riding and machine control.

Our riders entered in trials that were organised by the Army, and in one trial we came out top of the list by gaining more points than the other Home Guard Riders that were entered. After this we were asked to organise a training trial, and to demonstrate how various hazards were best dealt with. Our own Paddy Johnstone showed how a motor cycle could be ridden through a stream, with the exhaust and magneto completely under water. Jack and Ted showed how to descend a steep hill with the model under perfect control, also throttle control when tackling niggly sections etc.

A reporter from 'THE MOTOR CYCLE' wrote that yours truly descended a hill at speed and managed to stay on the machine, it was by more luck than judgement as I went down that hill in neutral, caused by not having a positive foot change gearbox!!

Everything went off according to plan and we were complimented on the way the event was run. Yes, the military were getting interested in the trials as it was training for their riders:

We at E Coy said about time they did.

After this we had more map reading exercises, it was remarkable how the map references used to lead us to the 'Red Road' area of Bagshot Heath, or the Tunnel Hill District...

In part 3, I will tell you about more amusing incidents we had in the course of our duties.

PART THREE

Last Month I promised to tell you of a few amusing incidents we had in the course of our D.R. Duties. Although they seemed to be funny to us when they happened, perhaps you will not see the funny side. I can assure you they were not all amusing to us D.R's when they actually happened.

One weekend six of us were detailed to go to Camberley to act as Scouts, as the Camberley H.Q. Were to be attacked at dawn on the Sunday. i.e. 07:00am

We presented ourselves at 6:00am to the officer in charge, who promptly demanded to know if we had seen any activity on our way there 'NO' we replied it was all quiet and peaceful. The next moment another officer appeared in his pyjamas, poked his head around the corner and shouted 'are the B*****s here yet?. I refrained from asking if he was referring to us or the "enemy."

After a short while I was sent out to see if anything was doing, with orders, to get the pyjama clad officer 20 cigarettes. Well you all know how scarce cigarettes were, even more so on a Sunday morning. I scoured the town and villages, and at long last I managed to get 10 of a little known make and 5 WOODBINES. I hared back then and gave them to the Officer who looked at them and said 'bloody hell – CAMEL DUNG'.

When he offered me one I must admit they tasted VERY rough.

One place we often had to call at was the home of a pepperary little colonel. I think he hated motor cycles, for we had to leave our machines some distance from the house.

He expected us to spring to attention when he opened the door himself, but when a slip of a girl opened the door, you felt a bit of a fool saluting her. He used to say 'stand to attention when you are spoken to by an officer, Gad sir if you lot were in the regulars'.

I often used to imagine him saying 'Gad sir when I was in Dooma' etc etc. I expect it was the curry that made him so fiery.

As part of our training in signal work we had fix up a telephone between Normandy and Ash Vale. This took us about five weeks to do, as we could only do it one evening a week, and Sunday mornings. We got it up on poles and branches and felt proud of our work but never did use it. Perhaps it was just as well, we would have been disappointed if it hadn't worked.

Sometimes we went out to Bisley Ranges to do a spot of target shooting, but it was the same game of wasted time: three or four hours went by, then five rounds to fire. It was the same with throwing hand grenades, three or four hours, then throw one.

I remember one Saturday night we were out on an exercise and as it was very warm we decided to sleep outside the tent. We woke up covered in insect bites!

I was doing my two hours guard duty and the gnats were biting like hell, so I lit a cigarette, how was I to know the duty officer could not sleep as well that night.

He was quite nasty about soldiers who smoked while on duty. When I explained that I was not a soldier he became quite friendly and had a smoke while we talked.

Yes, some of those officers were human after all.

We had to have contact with the Military Police at Mytchett Camp and I found them a grand lot of lads, they could certainly ride bikes over Bagshot Heath.

It was very interesting to see the work that was done at the Searchlight Station. The hostile planes were spotted on a huge map from the moment they crossed the coastline, when they reached the area round here the searchlights went up. The lads that manned the lights were often disappointed that when they caught hostile plane, it was not fired on by the A.A. guns.

The Normandy Searchlight Station was a grand place for the D.R's to spend the night. We got supper, a bed, and tea in the morning. The warning bells woke us when a hostile plane was in the vicinity: if old jerry was busy we didn't get much sleep.

In the next part I will finish this story with an account of the first year or two of the NORMANDY MOTOR CYCLE CLUB.

PART FOUR

Several months before the Home Guard was stood down, we of E. Coy D. R's decided to form a motor cycle club. With that object in mind, we all subscribed a portion of our mileage money each month to start the club off.

We held our first meeting in October 1944, when we decided to apply to the A.C.U. for affiliation. However we could not do much of course as there was no petrol for pleasure motoring. We had several inquiries from several riders about our proposed club and quite a number promised us their support.

Our sergeant Paddy Johnstone repaired some gentleman's motor cycle, who was so pleased with it he gave 2 pounds to help the club.

The club gave instructions on engines to the Youth of Normandy, but after a while this fell through owing to lack of interest.

When the petrol was restored we decided to hold a scramble on W.D. ground at Normandy.

There was such a lot to be done in a short time that I'm afraid we made a few mistakes on the day, but we all learn the hard way. The meeting was most successful and earned the full praise of the motor cycle press. Mr Cambs of Normandy worked very hard to help with the meeting, we were all indebted to him for the loan of his ropes, stakes, and flags. Although Mr Cambs is still a member of the club it is a pity we see so little of him now.

The W.D. land at Normandy was ideal for a scramble course, but unfortunately we were barred from using the course again, the local landed gentry complained of the noise, it spoilt their afternoon lunch siesta. Poor dears, they were pleased enough when the H.G. were patrolling the roads at night guarding their property, but to make a noise within half a mile of their houses in peacetime was enough to bring their wrath on our heads.

In the first year our membership increased from 12 to 56. Mr Burgess was elected to Secretary of the club, a position he held for 3 years. He was an enthusiastic worker for the club, during his term of office the membership of the club grew to 160 or more.

There are quite a few of the older members who were very sorry when Ces Burgess had to resign his position owing to his work taking up so much of his time.

The club also had a ladies committee who organised social evening's etc. The moneys from these socials was a great help to the club, the ladies gave the refreshments free and worked hard to make the evenings a success.

The club was presented with two Silver cups: one the Pascall Cup, presented by Mr Pascall the motor cycle agent at Guildford to be completed for at a trial for club members only. The Govey Cup presented by Mr Govey of Normandy, Mr Govey has helped the club a great deal with his loud speaker relay service at scrambles and socials etc. There is also a Crowdy Cup presented by Tom Crowdy to be used at the closed to club scramble, not forgetting the nice cup presented by Mr Burgess for the best attendance at club meetings and club runs.

The club has been unfortunate in not having a club room of its own. This has caused a lot of difference of opinion as to whether we should hold our meetings on licensed premises or not. At the time of writing this we hire a room at the Dolphin Hotel, Guildford for our club room.

I Think the Normandy M.C.C. can claim a good record for organising scrambles, the credit for this is shared by all those members who work to make it a success.

In conclusion I must mention Mr & Mrs Chic Webber who make such great efforts to help the club, when we held our meetings at the drill hall they always had a smile and a word for everyone and it was a great loss to the club when we moved our club nights from the drill hall.

There are about 150 members in the club now, some I am sorry to say we never see, but that is the same in any club. We are not a rich club by any means, but what it lacks in cash it makes up for by enthusiastic and helpful membership.

Remember, it is **your** club **now**. We Ex D.R's of 'E' Coy are proud to have formed the club and prouder still of its record. I will give you the names of the D.R's of 'E' Coy, perhaps it will interest you.

Paddy Johnstone
Tom Crowdy
Norman Curtis
Fred Lewis

Ted Wilmott
Bob Compton
Sid Lucas
Vic Defargo

Eric Crouch
George Whapshott
Jack Botting
Alf Burbridge

I Hope this story has been interesting to you all. I have certainly enjoyed writing it.

I would like to see some more articles in our Con-Rod by various members. Our Editor will make it into interesting reading if you will let them have an article to print.

I am grateful to Mrs Margaret Addington for the encouragement she has given me in writing this story.

NORMAN CURTIS

THE END

The following few pages are taken from the club website which Tony Warsop put together which takes us up to 2012

The Normandy Motorcycle Club was formed by locally based Dispatch Riders of E.Coy: Home Guard in 1944.

Several months before the Home Guard was stood down, the riders of E.Coy DR's decided to form a motorcycle club, and with that object in mind, they all subscribed a portion of their mileage money that they were paid each month to start off the club.

The first meeting was held in October 1944, when it was decided to apply to the Auto Cycle Union for affiliation.

When petrol was restored for pleasure motoring, the club held a scramble on W.D. land in Normandy and according to press reports of the day, it was a great success.

In the first year of the club, the membership increased from 12 to 56, in which Ces Burgess was elected secretary and within three years, the membership increased to 160 members.

Since those early years the club has organised many Enduros, Scrambles, Trials and many social events and met at various venues in the local area, from the Dolphin Hotel & the Drill Hall in Guildford in those early years.

During the sixties & seventies, they met in the scout hut in Normandy, a hall in Wanborough, a social club in Bedford Road Guildford, a farm building near Fairlands, the Duke of Normandy public house, Normandy Village hall and from 2012 Canada House Bisley.





The founder members of the club were as follows: Paddy Johnstone, Tom Crowdy, Norman Curtis, George Whapshott, Ted Willmott, Bob Compton, Sid Lucas, Vic Defargo, Eric Crouch, Fred Lewis, Jack Botting and Alf Burbridge.

Pictured left to right: Ted Willmott, George Tapp, CW (Paddy) Johnston, Tom Crowdy, Sid Lucas, Norman Curtis, unknown, Fred Lewis, unknown, unknown and Bob Compton.



During the late 1960's, members of the Normandy Motor Cycle Club put on a display of motor cycle riding at the annual Normandy Village Festival. Pictured are members of the team that took part in the display in 1969:

Pictured standing left to right: Reg Spicer, unknown, Jimmy Lyons, Ian McCullan, Malcolm Bowyer, Richard Thomas, Barry Oliver, Brian Fowler, Graham Hill, Ray Thomas, Bob Palmer, Derek Webb, unknown, John Woolgar, Martin M Travers and Mark Hancock.
Front row: Roy Smithers, Tony Warsop (Commentator) and Terry Byard.



Normandy members showing their riding a motorcycle. Two men demonstrated by and Ray Thomas.



Five men on a motorcycle from left to right, Richard Thomas, John Woolgar (standing), Barry Oliver (at the controls) and Graham Hill, leaning forward Smithers.

Moving on from where Tony took us to we stayed at Canada House on Bisley Ranges until it changed hands in 2014, we then moved into the Bisley Pavillion for a couple of years until it closed at the end of 2016. We then moved off the N.R.A. to the Hen & Chickens, Public House, in Bisley for a short while before going to the Merrist Wood Golf Club for a few months until that became unavailable. We then went to the British Legion Hut in Normandy, but again this wasn't suitable so onto the Old Ford Public House in Farnborough for 12 months, until we heard about our current 'home' back on the N.R.A. Ranges, with the Surrey R.A. letting us share their clubroom for our meetings so hopefully it will last for a while. So it seems as though we have gone full circle if you remember the D.Rs. spent quite a bit of time at the Bisley Ranges practising their rifle skills.

The Club has continued to successfully run off road events through the years but unfortunately hasn't run a Scramble since the seventies with the ever increasing loss of M.O.D. Land, it got harder and harder, we still run several Trials a year including Club events, T.V.T.C. Combine events, Centre events and since 2015 we have run a British Championship Sidecar Trial with some very good comments and coverage in the Motor Cycle Press.

We still run two Enduro event's a year, with the Warsop Trophy Hare & Hounds event in June we have with the kind permission of the Land owner run this on private land at a Farm in Binsted since 2017 for which we are very grateful, due to the loss of more M.O.D. Land.

In October we still have our G.P. Engineering time card Enduro on Forest Enterprise land at Yateley Heath where we have been holding this event since the Ninety's and since 2014 it has included a Round of the British Classic Championship's, so hey TWO British Championship events a year for the Normandy MCC.

Since 2011 the club has held a Charity Event in conjunction with its Camping weekend in August it all started with helping to raise funds for a young Girl to try and get to the U.S.A. for an operation to hopefully enable her to walk, over the weekend we collected over £1,200 with an auction and Bar B Q.

In 2014 we held an Off Road weekend on M.O.D. Land for the club's 70th Anniversary year, which we had a trial on the Saturday and an Adult H&H Enduro on the Sunday Morning followed by a Youth one after lunch.

Since we started in 2011 we have collected well over £12,000 for different Charities including, Shine, Surrey Air Ambulance, Help for Heroes, The British Heart Foundation, Sense and other local Cancer Charities.



Two photo's from the first Charity weekend in 2011, with the young Girl and her Brother on the sidecar. Along with some of the riders with ages ranging from 10 to 70+.



Waiting for the off at the 2014 Charity H&H. With the 70th Anniversary Shirt to the fore.



Ready and Waiting at the time control



2012 And a little bit more razzmatazz with balloons and bunting from Shine



The Club although not having a Ladies Social Committee as said about in the early day's still have an active Social Calendar of Events with the Camping Weekends, a Midweek Summer Bar B Que normally held at the clubroom for all members and family. During the Summer Months we have club nights at the Surrey RA on the forth Thursday evening of the month. In March each year we have the club's A.G.M. and Presentation of Club Trophies to the winners of the various Trials and Enduro Classes for the previous year's competitions.



Awards Awaiting Presentation.

Then in November we have our end of Season Meal normally a 3 course meal with wine, which hopefully is enjoyed by everyone with usually around the 40-50 mark of members and partners attending. The club normally subsidise the majority of the events as a thank you to the members for their support and help during the year, again this being held at the Surrey RA Clubroom which has an excellent resident Chef and a very well stocked Bar so at the moment things are looking good. Years gone by we used to have Inter Club Competitions with other local Club's we are at the moment thinking of trying to reintroduce this to get a bit of club socialising going again.

In 2001 the Normandy MCC ventured into having a club stand at Beaulieu in the Motor Cycle World Show after being pestered by Mr Frank Levy to attend the club done this until 2004 when we won the Trophy for 2nd Best Club stand. Unfortunately this didn't run again as H&S took hold and it all got a bit involved. But we had some good times here over the few years we attended there.



Beaulieu 2001



2nd Best Club Stand Beaulieu 2004

Also from 2000 the club had a stand at the Southern Classic Show at Kempton Park again having some good times through the years also in 2004 the club Won the 2nd Best Club Stand, a good year for the club two 2nd Best Awards in its 60th Anniversary Year a good effort by the members. Then in 2012 the Southern Classic Off-Road Show returned to Kempton so we then had a stand at this and whew hey we came away with 3rd Club Stand.



We carried on having a club stand here until 2014 when we only went and won The Best Club stand, a great effort by all concerned.



2014 Best Club Stand

Well I think that about brings us all up to the present time and I can only hope that the Club continues to strive from strength to strength.

And I Hope you all enjoyed reading this.

Richard