

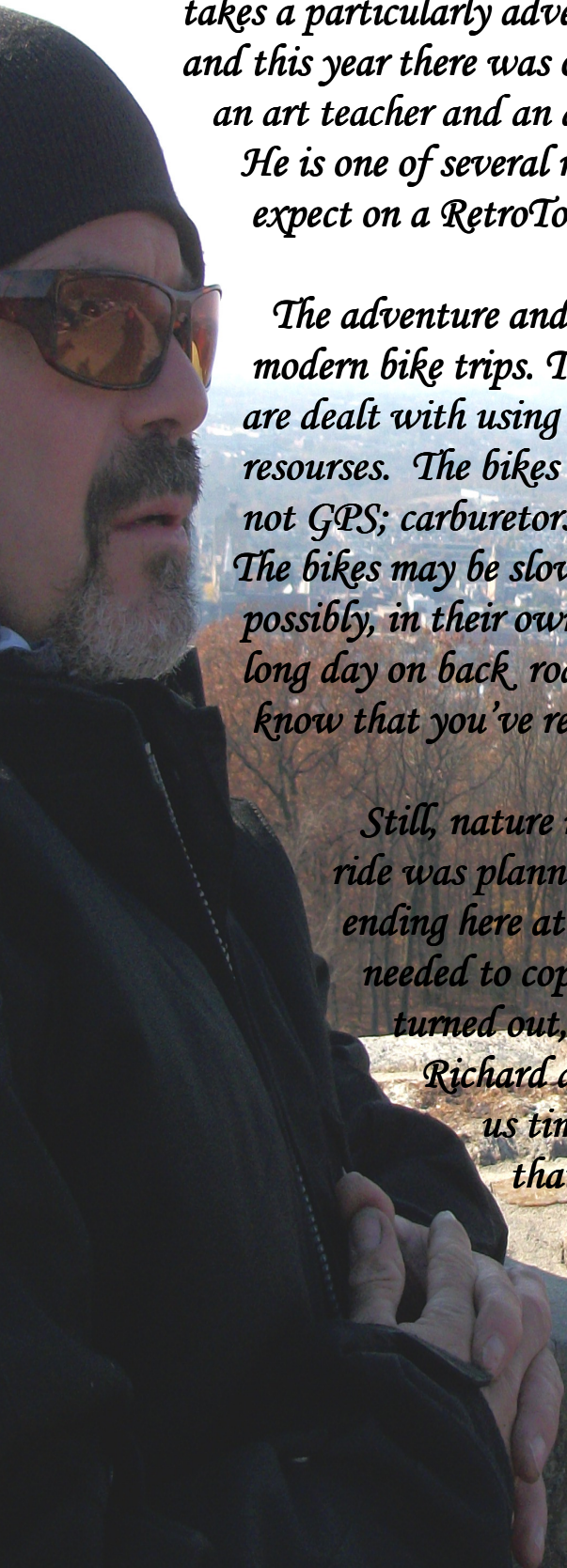
BRITISH BIKE BONANZA: NOVEMBER 9 & 10, 2013

*Riding out of the mid-Atlantic in November, one might experience any sort of weather. Cool mornings are the norm; snow is not impossible. It takes a particularly adventurous sort to book a tour this late in the season and this year there was only one: Richard from Long Island. Richard is an art teacher and an artist as well as an avid hard core motorcyclist. He is one of several regular repeat customers; he knows just what to expect on a RetroTour and like so many of us, has come to love it.*

*The adventure and camaraderie of a RetroTour is different from modern bike trips. There is no chase vehicle: if problems arise they are dealt with using the wits of the participants and on hand resources. The bikes and the trips are done the old way: paper maps, not GPS; carburetors, not fuel injection; drum brakes, not ABS. The bikes may be slower but they are no less thrilling and quite possibly, in their own way, even more satisfying. When you've done a long day on back roads on one of these big twins from the 1970's, you know that you've really accomplished something!*

*Still, nature must be respected, and out of that respect this ride was planned as two short one day trips beginning and ending here at home. This was done to provide the flexibility needed to cope with possible adverse weather conditions. As it turned out, the conditions were actually quite acceptable.*

*Richard arrived Friday evening and stayed over. This gave us time to choose four of the six British bikes that were prepped and ready to ride.*



Day one had us on the Norton Commando and the Rickman Royal Enfield. These two are actually similar in many ways: both 750cc kickstart only vertical twins built in the British way. Great steering, light weight and prodigious amounts of engine vibration; mostly under control in the case of the isolastic-engine-mounted Norton. We headed north at 10 AM after allowing the morning to warm a bit. It was a brilliant sunny day but quite cool, with temperatures in the 40's. We were dressed in layers and plugged in our electric vests. This last gesture may have been somewhat optimistic given the meager output of the Lucas alternators. Still, some heat is certainly better than none. It seems that nearly every modern bike has at least a small windscreen and one can forget how cool it gets on a wide open motorcycle.



We kept to the smallest back roads and with speeds mostly under 50 mph we were able to enjoy the glorious autumn scenery of the Brandywine Valley while maintaining core temperatures. A stop at a newly opened coffee shop allowed for some hot beverages.



*We admired a bumper crop of plump pumpkins and were treated to a tour of the "World's Smallest Church" by the great grandson of the original builder. Just by coincidence he also collects vintage sports cars and several fine examples were on display this day. Further on we stopped at Hopewell Furnace to study how the original colonial wood burning stoves were cast in pig iron poured from a charcoal fired forge. We meandered north a bit more and then turned west to enter Reading, PA the back way along Skyline Drive, with a stop at The Pagoda, an interesting bit of architecture, for hot tea and great views.*

*The Norton and the Rickman both loved the cool air and ran great. We switched bikes at midpoint, noting contrasts and similarities. We were quite tired after 125 miles; cool temperatures burn calories fast.*

*Lynn took care of that with some good home cooking and a blazing fire. We decided that British Bike Bonanza could very well be*

*renamed "Brutish" Bike Bonanza. They don't make them like they used to; These bikes involve your whole being: they are physically demanding unlike modern motorcycle machinery. We were tired but very happy with the day's ride. Sleep came quickly and easily.*





*Sunday was again cool and sunny: very fine for autumn riding. We entered the Way Back Machine and rode out on 2- 1970 Triumphs: the 650 Bonneville and the 500cc T100C, the most recent addition to the RetroTours fleet. Edward Turner designed the original Triumph vertical twin in 1937 and felt that 500cc was the maximum useable capacity due to the vibration inherent in the design. Of course Turner was outvoted and over the years*

*the design was stretched to 650cc and even 750cc. Switching from Saturday's 750 twins to Sunday's 650 and 500cc twins showed us right off that Turner well understood the limitations of his design from the outset. These smaller motors seemed so much more relaxed than their brutish British siblings. Gentler, kinder and only slightly slower, they provide a smoothness and economy that 750's will never know. Plus, they are so much easier to kick start! It's true: sometimes less is more. We headed south and west this time, crossing the Susquehanna River at the Connewingo Dam before angling north with a stop at Peach Bottom where sports fishermen plied the boat ramps along the reservoir. Next we made our way to the outskirts of York where we paused at The Shoe House, built in 1948 by shoe magnate Mahlon Haines.*



*Angling back towards home we stopped for a Chinese buffet with plenty of hot tea and spicy hot soups. Covering another 120 miles was less physically demanding on these bikes but the roaring fire at home felt just as good after day two. As always, there was more than just the riding; for example fish and chips, game night, bowling and pizza. You'll have to sign up for your own RetroTour to get the bigger picture.*

*The weekend truly was a British Bike Bonanza.*



*"The world's smallest church"*