

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## 1929 Norton Other

Stafford , 23 April

- Lot sold  
USD 22 118 - 26 541  
GBP 20 000 - 24 000 (listed)  
**Year of manufacture** 1929
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Motorcycle type** Street
- **Colour** Other
- 

### Description

1929 Norton 490cc Model 18  
Registration no. MT 3501  
Frame no. 28070

Ex-Pat Driscoll

Three owners from new

Documented history

Arguably one of the most interesting 'Flat Tank' Nortons to come on the market for many years

From their historic victory in the first Isle of Man TT race of 1907, Norton motorcycles have been associated with success on racing circuits around the world. The early sidevalve machines held many world records at Brooklands, and when the overhead-valve Model 18 arrived in 1922, Norton had an even faster motorcycle. The Model 18 won the Senior TT (in 1924 and 1926) and numerous Continental races, and in 1926 became the first 500cc machine to average over 100 miles in one hour, with Albert 'Bert' Denly riding.

The fabulous Norton offered here is an ex-Pat Driscoll machine. Pat Driscoll's Brooklands career started in 1920 on a Norton 16H sidevalve; with the addition of 'hot' cams, a bit of work on the inlet port, a 'lumpy' Ricardo piston and running on 'dope' fuel, he managed an incredible 97 mph! He achieved further reasonable results at the famous Surrey circuit and other local speed events, including hill climbs, and caught the attention of Norton's team manager, Daniel O'Donovan, who signed him up in 1924. With Denly, Staniland, O'Donovan himself and now Driscoll, Norton had the 'fast men' of the day on their books. As well as being a fine rider, Driscoll was quick to learn the secrets of tuning the OHV engines.

In 1931, Malcolm Seymour Smith purchased 'MT 3501' for £7 from the Cheltenham Police 'Stolen Property Sale', borrowing the money from Jack Bartlett, who was later to become a Rolls-Royce agent. 'MT 3501' had been stolen from Brooklands and in a letter to M S Smith of June 4th 1940, Pat Driscoll wrote:

'Dear Sir,

Your letter has just reached me after a short tour. Your Norton is one I built up out of parts to upset the Rudge agent in my district in 1929. The frame was a new one of 1926 TT type fitted for rear footrests and

rigid saddle. The forks were Webb, but I had to take these off to put on a machine which was wanted in a hurry at Brooklands and a pair of old type but new Druids were fitted. The engine is one which Spring, Denly and myself broke the 24 hour record at Monthlery. Well it averaged 68 mph on petrol and was stopped due to water in the mag for over two hours, but for this the average would have been well over 80. The max lap speed on petrol was 94 mph. The engine was built by me, not at the works.

I hope the bike gives you as much pleasure as it gave me. As a road bike it could beat anything.

Yours truly

Pat Driscoll'

The Norton was ridden regularly by Malcolm and his brother Nigel for 50 years and in 1979 Driscoll once again wrote to them (letter on file). Marque specialist and Bonhams' Motorcycle Consultant, George Cohen, advises us:

'I first came across this motorcycle in the late 1980s when I met Nigel Seymour Smith at a Banbury Run. He was impressed with my 'Flat Tank' Norton and after commenting on how well it sounded and ran he asked me to visit and to tune his similar machine. I duly did this a few weeks later and tested the result; it was very, very fast. A few years later Nigel gave his old Norton to his friend, Tom Davis, in exchange for all the work Tom had carried out on his old racing Bentley. Subsequently I got to know Tom and I featured this fine motorcycle in my book "Flat Tank Norton" (pages 216 and 217), a copy of which is included in the history file.

'Note the position of the rear-set footrest mounting lugs and the extra lugs for the fixed saddle at the rear of the frame. The footrests have plates on the outside to prevent the rider's feet from sliding off. This feature was frequently seen on racing Nortons until the 1950s. Denly was the first to use them and for a jolly good reason; for World Record attempts there was a minimum weight limit and he was the size of a jockey, less than 8 stone in his leathers! For record attempts he had to have lead soles on his boots and the side plates assisted him on his epic rides of speed and endurance.'

In 1987 Tom Davis took 'MT 3501' to the Brooklands Reunion meeting where an elderly Albert Denly was photographed looking fondly at it. The Norton has been unused on the road for around ten years, but the motor has been regularly started with the aid of a paddock starter. Some light re-commissioning will be required by the fortunate new owner, who will no doubt have one of the fastest Vintage machines in the world.

Bonhams 1793

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<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/23600/?department=MOT-CYC>

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