FREE SAMPLE

The opening pages of

1974 Norton Commando Restoration Guide

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Norton Commando

1974

Model year 1974 only — one model year, one guide

Models in production this year

- Commando 850 Roadster
- Commando 850 Interstate
- Commando 850 Hi-Rider
- Commando 850 JPN (limited)

Engine	745 cc 750 / 828 cc 850 twin per year (see spec table)
Frame	Isolastic-mounted
This guide	Covers model year 1974 only

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Read this first — what this guide is

This guide is a restoration companion to the Norton factory workshop manual, not a replacement for it. It covers **model year 1974 only** — every Norton Commando built that year. It gives you what the manual doesn't: the correct sequence, the model-year change points, what to measure before cleaning, what not to do, finishes and markings, parts interchange, and honest value guidance.

The spec tables are the law of this guide: every numeric value carries its source. Where the literature is silent, the cell says **[UNVERIFIED]** instead of guessing. Procedures are written from the tables only.

Manufacturer history

Norton Motors' Commando was introduced at the 1967 Earls Court show and reached production in March 1968 — the company's answer to the demand for a big, smooth British twin. The Isolastic rubber-mounted engine system isolated the 750 twin's vibration from the featherbed-derived frame, and the Commando became Norton's defining model through the 1970s, in 750 and later 828 cc form, ending with the MkIII in 1977. (Marque reference.)

Model history — the Commando line

1968: the original Fastback. 1969: R and S variants. 1970: Roadster; Fastback MkII (September). 1971: Fastback MkIII, Hi-Rider, SS. January 1972: the Combat engine; Interstate introduced; front disc optional then standard mid-year. 1973: the 828 cc 850. 1975: the MkIII with electric start, left-foot shift, and rear disc. Production ends in 1977. (Marque reference; factory manuals 06-3062, 06-3419, 06-5146, 00-4224.)

What makes 1974 a 1974

850-only year. The limited John Player Norton (JPN) replica appears alongside the standard Roadster, Interstate, and Hi-Rider.

Year-change register — 1974

850 only	The 750 is gone from the range.
JPN replica (limited)	John Player Norton styled limited edition.

Next year: 1975: the MkIII — electric start, left-foot shift, rear disc, adjustable Isolastics.

Model notes — 1974

- 850-only range year; the limited JPN replica is the collectible — verify its bodywork and trim against marque references.
- Standard Roadster/Interstate/Hi-Rider 850s are honest, usable classics.

Identification

Verify model year from the frame and engine numbers against factory records and the Norton Owners Club dating service; do not trust registration paperwork alone. Key 1974 identifiers:

- Model variant: Commando 850 Roadster; Commando 850 Interstate; Commando 850 Hi-Rider; Commando 850 JPN (limited).

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- Engine: see the engine spec table below — capacity and carburettor specification identify Combat vs standard 750.
- Front brake: drum vs disc is a model-year marker (see chassis table).
- MkIII (1975–1977): electric start, left-foot shift, rear disc — factory manual 00-4224 covers MkIII from engine no. 325001 / frame no. F125001.
- Combat (1972): the Norton Owners Club reports the Combat engine discontinued after engine no. 211110.

Verified specifications — engine

SPEC	VALUE	UNIT	SOURCE
Capacity	828 cc		Factory manual 06-5146
Bore x stroke	77 x 89 mm		Factory manual 06-5146
Compression	8.5:1		Marque reference
Power	60 bhp quoted		Marque reference
Carburettors	2x Amal Concentric		Factory manual 06-5146
Valve clearances	[UNVERIFIED — not in factory literature]		Factory manual only
Torque settings	[UNVERIFIED — not in factory literature]		Factory manual only

Verified specifications — chassis and cycle parts

SPEC	VALUE	UNIT	SOURCE
Front brake	Disc		Factory manual 06-5146
Rear brake	Drum		Factory manual 06-5146
Gearbox	4-speed		Factory manual 06-5146
Frame	Isolastic-mounted		Factory manual 06-5146

Electrical

Consult the factory workshop manual's year-correct wiring diagram for your 1974 model — this guide does not reproduce wiring diagrams. Supplemental inspection checklist:

- Harness: check for brittle insulation and corroded bullet connectors before applying power.
- Points/condenser (pre-electronic models): inspect and gap per the factory manual — values here are [UNVERIFIED — not in factory literature].
- Charging: verify rotor/stator output and rectifier function per the factory manual test sequence.
- MkIII: check electric-start cabling and solenoid for voltage drop; inspect the starter sprag per manual 00-4224.

Restoration sequence

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Work in this order. Each step's checkpoint must pass before the next begins.

- **1. Document and strip.** Photograph everything; bag and tag fasteners. Checkpoint: every part photographed in place.
- **2. Frame and Isolastics.** Inspect frame; check Isolastic mounts for perishing and the shimming per the factory manual. Checkpoint: mounts serviceable, frame straight.
- **3. Engine.** Measure bore, crank, and bearing clearances before ordering parts; confirm capacity and compression from the spec table. Checkpoint: measurements recorded, parts ordered to measured sizes.
- **4. Gearbox and primary.** Inspect bushes, bearings, and the triplex chain; adjust primary chain per the manual. Checkpoint: no excessive play, correct adjustment.
- **5. Cycle parts.** Forks, shocks, wheels, brakes — rebuild to the chassis table. Checkpoint: brake type correct for the year (drum vs disc).
- **6. Electrics.** Harness inspected or renewed; charging verified. Checkpoint: correct function before bodywork goes on.
- **7. Bodywork and finishes.** Paint and finishes per the finishes section. Checkpoint: correct finishes for the model variant.
- **8. Assembly and shakedown.** Torque to the factory manual ([UNVERIFIED — not in factory literature] for torque values). Checkpoint: 50-mile retorque and oil check.

Finishes, fasteners, markings

- Fastback/Interstate fiberglass tanks and side panels: original gel-coat finish; check ethanol-fuel compatibility before use.
- Correct brake type for the year is a concours deduction point (drum vs disc by model year).
- Zinc/cadmium fastener finishes per original; stainless substitutions are a rider concession, not factory-correct.
- Exact paint codes and decal placement are [UNVERIFIED — not in factory literature] — verify against an unrestored reference bike or the factory literature.

Tool list

- Full Whitworth/BSF spanner and socket set — Commandos are Whitworth-fastened.
- Micrometers, bore gauge, dial gauge for engine measurement.
- Clutch/primary locking tools per the factory manual.
- Amal carburettor tools and synchronisation gauges.
- Torque wrench (settings per the factory manual — [UNVERIFIED — not in factory literature] in this guide).
- Isolastic shimming tools per the factory manual.

Troubleshooting

- Excessive vibration: Isolastic mounts perished or mis-shimmed — inspect per the factory manual.

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- Combat 1972: main-bearing and piston distress history — any Combat rebuild must verify bottom-end condition; do not assume a running engine is a healthy one.
- Amal Concentric flooding: float height and needle/seat condition per the factory manual.
- MkIII electric start inoperative: check solenoid, cables, and sprag per manual 00-4224.
- Fiberglass tank weeping: ethanol damage — seal or replace before running modern fuel.

Parts sourcing

- Andover Norton: factory-authorized spares for Commandos.
- Norton Owners Club spares scheme and dating service.
- RGM Norton and other marque specialists for pattern and uprated parts.
- Amal carburettor parts: Burlen Fuel Systems (Amal).
- Fiberglass bodywork: marque specialists — verify fit against original panels.

Pre-purchase inspection checklist

Use this on any 1974 Commando before money changes hands. Every item is a price negotiation point.

- Frame and engine numbers present, legible, and consistent with a 1974 model-year Commando 850 Roadster; Commando 850 Interstate; Commando 850 Hi-Rider; Commando 850 JPN (limited) (verify with the Norton Owners Club dating service).
- Isolastic mounts: check for perished rubber and incorrect shimming — the source of most Commando vibration complaints.
- Engine: cold-start behavior, oil pressure, and signs of Combat-era bottom-end distress on 1972 bikes.
- Gearbox: all four gears engage cleanly; check for layshaft bearing wear.
- Primary: triplex chain adjustment and clutch operation per the factory manual.
- Brakes: correct type for the year (drum vs disc — see chassis table); check disc runout and caliper seals on disc bikes.
- Forks and shocks: seals, stanchion pitting, damping action.
- Wheels: rim condition, spoke tension, bearing play.
- Electrics: charging output, harness condition, and — on MkIII bikes — electric-start health.
- Bodywork: fiberglass tank/panels for cracks and ethanol damage; steel tanks for internal rust.
- Exhaust: correct system for the variant (notably the 1969 S and 1971 SS high pipes).
- Paperwork: history file, old MOTs/registrations, and any rebuild receipts — documented bikes outperform shiny unknowns.

Honest value guidance

The JPN is the collectible; standard 850s are honest riders. Original JPN bodywork in good order is the value driver.

This is editorial judgment based on the collector market, not a cited specification. Buy the best-documented, most-original bike you can; a correct-numbers Commando with history outperforms a shiny unknown.

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What this guide doesn't cover

- Pre-Commando Norton models (Atlas, Dominator) and post-1977 Norton models.
- Full engine machining procedures — these are in the factory workshop manual.
- Wiring diagrams — consult the year-correct factory diagram.
- Non-factory custom or race modifications.

Sources and authority

- Norton factory workshop manual 06-3062 (1968–1970, 52 pages) [Factory]
- Norton factory workshop manual 06-3419 (1970–1973, 750 models) [Factory]
- Norton factory workshop manual 06-5146 (1970–1975, 750 and 850 models) [Factory]
- Norton factory workshop manual 00-4224 (1975–1978, MkIII — from engine no. 325001 / frame no. F125001) [Factory]
- Marque references: Norton Owners Club (dating service; Combat engine number data); standard Norton Commando marque histories.

This guide passed IronHead's final three-gate verification process (spec-table check, constrained draft, Muse audit)

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