

Control Cables

If there's one area which causes more problems and confusion than any other it is the perceived minefield of control cables. While what I am going to say here may sound unnecessary to experienced restorers and mechanics, it needs to be said because shipments and returns of "wrong" cables makes a lot of money for Canada Post. Over the last almost 30 years we have developed and revised the cable section in the Walridge catalogue (you can download a copy from our website). Most people find this easier to follow when selecting cables than using a parts book.

There are so many bikes out there which have wrong cables fitted or have had components changed by previous owners, necessitating the use of "incorrect" cables.

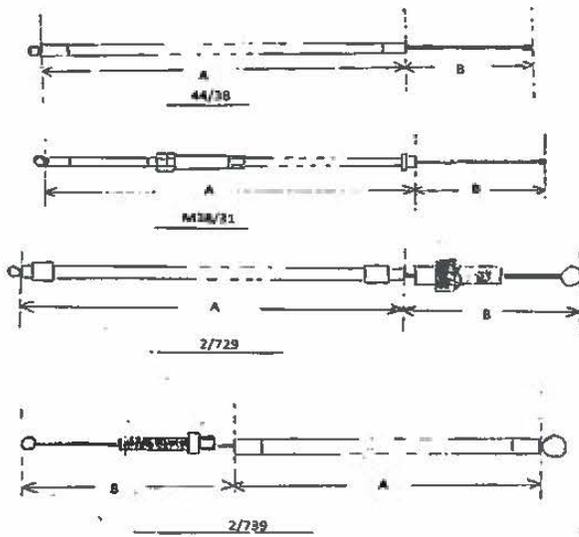
The critical thing about cables working properly is understanding free length. That is the relative difference between the length of the outer cover and that of the inner wire. It doesn't matter whether the bike has ape hangers or clip-ons, the free length of the cable will always be exactly the same for any particular bike. Cable lengths are usually specified in parts books and catalogues by the length of the outer covers, not the inner wire.

We frequently get complaints from customers. Say they want a BSA A65 clutch cable but the one listed in our catalogue is too long or too short. They order one for a Norton which appears to be the right length and then complain that it doesn't fit. Firstly the free length will for sure be wrong and the end fittings will be completely different.

We cross reference original manufacturers' part numbers to Clarke's numbers. For longer than standard cables it was Clarke's practice to add a slash at the end followed by a number indicating the number of extra inches. For example a 1970 Bonnie with UK low bars would use clutch cable 2/797 with an outer cover length of 46". The same bike fitted with higher USA bars would use cable 2/797/6 with an outer cover length of 52". Clarke's made the original cables for Norton and Triumph, BSA made their own. The regular cables we carry are made by Doherty who took over the Clarke's cable making business and they are made to the original drawings.

Carb cables cause a lot of confusion. Some bikes have adjusters in the tops for chokes and/or throttle cables. For some, especially where the top of the carb is close to the bottom of the tank or frame, the cable fits right into the top of the carb with a short "top hat" ferrule and the free length is adjusted by a mid adjuster in the cable itself. Clarke's part numbers are all pre-fixed with "M" for these cables. Generally most Triumphs and some BSA's used mid adjuster cables. Norton's pretty well all had adjusters in the tops of the carbs. Regarding adjusters, concentric carbs all had lock nuts on them but not monoblocs. New monoblocs are sometimes supplied with lock nuts and it will usually be necessary to remove these for original specification cables to work properly. 1968-71 twin carb A65 models cause some confusion and I've never quite figured it out. If we sell 40/30D or 40/30D/6 cables (3 9/16" free length as per original drawings) half the customers will be happy and half will complain that their slides won't close completely. It seems that two completely different twin pull twistgrips were used so we also carry cables 40/30DL and 40/30D/6L with 4 1/16" free length.

Brake and clutch levers had adjusters in them for pretty well all 1963 onwards Triumphs and BSA's and for all Norton Commando's. Other Nortons and all Matchless machines did not use adjusters in their levers. This causes a problem for people who have fitted the Commando twin leading shoe front brake to Atlas, G/N15 and other AMC models which originally had the regular 8" Norton single leading shoe brake. Andover Norton have now made available suitable cables for this application, 24987/2LS for UK bars and 25038/2LS for USA bars (33 3/8" and 37 7/8" outer cover respectively). Proper cable lubrication is obviously important and investment in a hydraulic cable oiler saves a lot of time. Another matter to look at is how the top nipples fit into clutch and brake levers. They should be lubricated and must turn as the levers are operated. If the nipples are too tight there, the cables will flex and it won't be long before they break.



Some sample cable specifications. All cables are for bikes with UK, low bars.

In all cases while the length of the outer cover (A) will vary according to the handlebars fitted to the machine the free length (B) must always be the same.

44/38 A = 39", B = 4 7/8". This is a choke (air) cable for a 1966/7 Triumph TR6 with UK (low) bars. No adjuster in the cable because a cable adjuster was fitted to the top of the 389 Monobloc carb.

M38/31 A = 34", B = 3 7/8". Throttle cable for a 1967 BSA Royal Star with 626 Concentric Mk1 carb. Mid adjuster in the cable. "Top hat" ferrule on end of cable to sit right into 1/4" hole in top of carb.

2/729 A = 55", B = 3 3/16". Clutch cable for A50/65 BSA up to 1969. Cable enters timing cover horizontally from the rear. Cable adjuster (to fit into handlebar lever) in an integral part of the cable assembly.

2/739 A = 47", B = 6 1/4". Clutch cable for A50/65 1970 onwards. Cable enters timing cover from the top. Fitted adjuster at lower end and will also use a slide in cam type adjuster in the handlebar lever.

grease this nipple and make sure
it pivots when cable is operated

