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# Contents...




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# From the editor...

I keep having this recurring dream in which I get a phone call and I start speaking like Patrick McGoohan:

*"Who are you?"* I say.
*"I was Number Four",* comes the reply.
*"Who is Number One?"*
*"You are Number Five".*
*"I am not a number, I am an editor!"*

Then I wake up and remember I have a new job to do as the fifth incumbent of this virtual chair, so after copious amounts of coffee and multiple all-nighters, you're about to read the result. In the surreal world of the Digest, where there is no office and its staff are on different continents, the Digest itself has become an untraceable entity that doesn't originate from a single location and appears whenever it wants to, like a '70s prog rock supergroup that has a name but has a revolving door of members that show up and write something whenever they feel like it. The Digest is bigger than all of us and nobody owns it (except maybe DG who has the only 100%-complete back catalogue of issues in existence on the planet under armed guard somewhere in West London. Even I don't know where it is).

I'm therefore pleased to tell you that, in spite of an eleven-month hiatus, what you will find in this issue you're just about to read is most of the previous and recurring cast of regulars that answered the smoke signal, plus a few new contributors who didn't need to be asked twice. That's one of the common threads that runs through this issue and in fact all its predecessors: that there are loads of us out there who want to communicate our passion for motorcycles and their ability to influence our lives in a very positive way through travel, human interaction, competition and any number of other methods. The only requirement that your ride asks of you in return is that you take ownership and responsibility for the experience.

In this new issue we've also taken a slightly different approach to advertising (you'll see what I mean), and I've put together a series of Images of the Month on the themes of change and progress; because whether you like it or not, the industry and the culture has to acknowledge the inevitable: petrol's going to run out or become too expensive to drill out. When even Harley Davidson agrees by going against their own monolithic tradition and building an electric bike, you know the tide has turned.

Does that sound like negativity? It shouldn't. I was at the Motorcycle Live show at the NEC last month and I sensed a lot of optimism. The amount of new tech and innovation on display was at its highest for years. Do you want a helmet that can see behind you and project the image on your visor? Check. Do you want a bike that doesn't need a sidestand because it can't fall over when you get off it? Check.

Motorcycles are going to be around for a very long time. Just as the culture and the industry is embarking on a new era, so is The Rider's Digest.

We're back.

**Stuart Jewkes**

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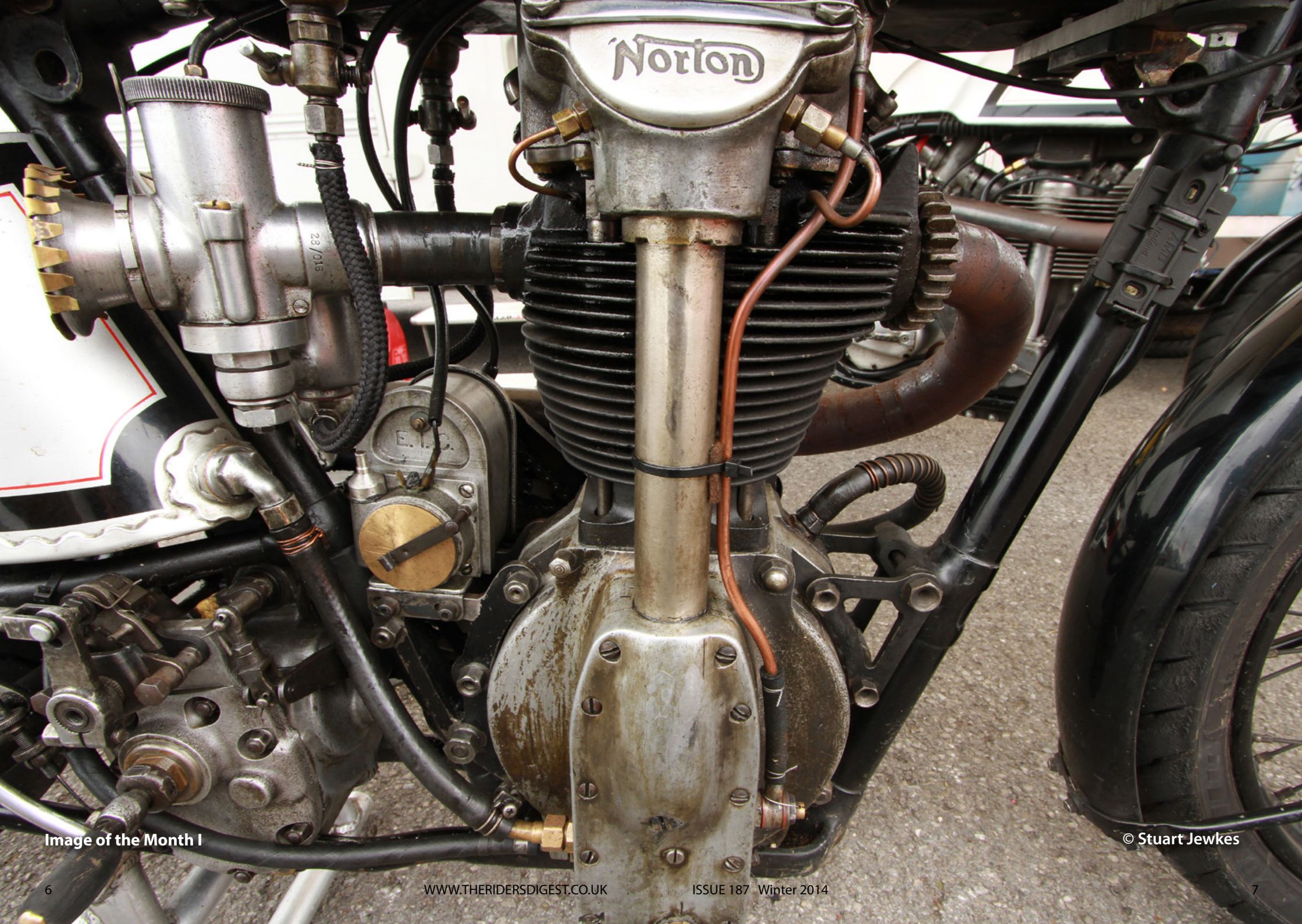


**Image of the Month I**

© Stuart Jewkes

# THE RUSSIAN REVELATION

Words: Martin Haskell
Pics: Paul Blezard/Martin Haskell

**The Facebook message said something like 'are you going to The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride?' I replied that I didn't have a suitable machine to ride. Proper Cinderella stuff this.**

'Well borrow something!' I was told. After explaining that I didn't know anyone with anything suitable for the event, which is intended for 'Café Racers, Bobbers, Classics, Flat Trackers, Scramblers and quirky, undefinable two-wheeled machines.

Andy Tribble, writer of the original message, then told me that I could ride his Ural. In case you're wondering, a 'Ural' is a Russian-made heavy sidecar motorcycle, developed in 1940 from the BMW R71 combination and originally made in factories based in Moscow, Leningrad (now known as Saint Petersburg) and Kharkov, before moving production to Irbit, and Gorkiy, (later re-named Nizhny Novgorod) when the Nazis approached.

A similar model is the Soviet (now Ukrainian) Dnepr motorcycle. Both Ural and Dnepr motorcycles are sometimes known by the generic name "Cossack motorcycles," which is usually the easiest answer to give when people ask if it's a BMW…

It almost sounds like I know what I'm talking about (thank heavens for Wikipedia…)!

Meanwhile, where was I? Oh yes. With no further excuses available, after establishing that Andy's bike was a solo (no sidecar), I registered on the official 'Distinguished Gentleman's Ride' website and informed Andy that he was on. The problem was that the Ural was 150 miles away in a workshop in Leicestershire, still awaiting repair, with just three weeks to go until the ride.

Andy was completely honest about the bike, telling me that there was every possibility that it might not even make it to the start of the ride, let alone the finish, but as I had decided that if I was taking part in the ride, I thought I might as well make the most of it and bring in some cash for the cause.

It was too late to back out now.

The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride was created in 2012, when Australian Mark Hawwa

- founder of the 'Sydney Café Racers' Facebook group - was inspired by seeing a photograph of actor Jon Hamm as Mad Men's Don Draper, riding a vintage Matchless in a sharp suit. Hawwa decided that a similarly themed ride through Perth would go a long way towards fostering a more positive image of men riding motorcycles.

Mark's vision was quick to catch on. Such is the power of social media that more than 2,500 motorcyclists in 64 cities worldwide donned their best whistles, waxed their moustaches and some even smoked pipes and cigars as they took to the city streets on their suitably retro motorcycles. The success of the event led to the organisers using the surrounding publicity to raise funds for a worthy cause, namely the Prostate Cancer Foundation.

The following year the numbers increased, with over 11,000 smartly attired riders and pillions slowly parading through 145 cities around the world, raising in excess of $277,000 towards prostate cancer research.

In London the ride has been spearheaded by Anthony 'Dutch' van Someren, founder of the hugely popular and highly successful web-based Bike Shed Motorcycle Club (BSMC), whose exhibitions have seen stylish faces in stylish places, where customised bikes seemingly born for the DGR are put on show to the general public attracting admiring glances and gasps of disbelief in equal measure.

With numbers of attendees for the 2014 ride fluctuating between those who registered for the ride at the official site, those who responded to the London ride Facebook page invite and those who actually turned up, it was difficult to get an accurate number for those who attended, but it was thought that more than 700 motorcycles of all shapes, sizes and ages participated, many of them with pillions.

But with thoughts of my own forthcoming participation, obtaining sponsorship, and the apparently unpredictable nature of the Ural I decided to make it clear to my would-be sponsors that due to age, frailty and unreliability I might not even get to the starting point for the ride.

I was of course referring to the bike, and while one or two of those issues probably apply to me I like to think of myself as reliable, whether I made it or not people would still get prostate cancer. This seemed to have the desired effect; at the time of writing my total

raised by generous friends and colleagues is well in excess of £200.

With just days to go before the ride, and the bike still being fettered by a 'Uralogist' in the Midlands, owner Andy gave me a run down on the DNA and character of his bike:

*"It is in fact a 'shop built custom' of the type that the BSMC are so fond. We started with an illustration and then modified the bike until it looked like that. I bought it second-hand but with only about 800 miles on the clock. Mind you 'on the clock' is a relative term, as the original clock fell apart at about 1500 miles.*

*"However back in 1992 the look was boring, so I decided to customise it. The custom design actually started with a T shirt. Literally. I bought the T shirt, and then said to Chris Smith who owned the Ural shop, 'can you make me a bike that looks like this.' So we used the T shirt as a guide. Still got the T shirt, in fact several.*

*"They (Ural) were trying to get it to look a bit modern, so with the help of a stack of New Old Spares, mudguards, wheels etc., we turned it back to the look of about 1965; but those old style wheels are famous for going out of true, so I had to get them sorted by a specialist shop.*

*"We gave it a re-spray but that's looking a bit tired now. We then threw away half the electrics especially the Russian electronic ignition - I'm amazed they can make anything that works in space.*

*"To my annoyance the mechanic has taken off my Citroen 2CV double ended coil and fitted something Japanese, half the size but I liked the car thing. The rear bevel drive is from a Dnepr not Ural, the exposed UJ on the Ural is sexier but the hardening fails on the splines.*

*"It's on its 2nd set of rubber tractor seats, the first ones rotted away within 8 years, they use a rubber formulation that's unstable in sunlight (and marks your clothes, so don't wear white).*

*"In 2000 they finally got round to fitting electric starters so in 2002 I had one fitted, this meant changing the gearbox and clutch. Unfortunately the first-generation starters (like mine) were inadequate, later ones were better, I'm advised to kick it from cold and only use the leccy start if I stall in traffic.* [In fact the electric start worked faultlessly, cold or hot!]

*"By the way if the charging system fails there's no warning light. There should be but someone fitted a non-standard regulator (that may have been changed mind you). People say that Harley owners buy so many accessories that no two are identical, same applies to Urals except Ural owners keep taking off the original parts and changing them for something better made."*

Once I informed Andy that I had raised sponsorship for the ride he contacted the repair shop to try and ensure the Ural would be ready in time, collecting it just a couple of days before.

Fortunately his ride back to Tooting from Lutterworth was relatively uneventful, and on a bright and warm Sunday morning in late September I encountered the machine for the first time.

Having carefully chosen my outfit for the day I opted for a more conventional full face lid and leather jacket as I left home just after seven to ride the 30-odd miles to Andy's place in Tooting. Once there I ditched the lid and jacket, instead wearing an open face helmet, blazer and chinos, complete with a check shirt, silk cravat and light tan dealer boots. Not the usual gear I would choose to wear on a bike, but the call was to 'dress dapper' so I thought I'd better at least try to comply.

As the riders in Andy's 'band of brothers (and one sister)' assembled he gave me a useful insight into how to get the best out of the Ural. First impressions were good. I'd had no idea what to expect, but the bike looked tidy, if a little unconventional. Shiny chrome wheel rims set off the bright but fading red paint a treat. From the engine layout the Ural's BMW lineage was clear, although some of the details such as the air filter housing and inlet manifolds looked unfamiliar. The side panels were a shade of maroon and there seemed to be a lot of cables and wires about.

The two-into-one exhaust fed into a large silencer on the right side, and the 'tractor seats' Andy had described looked misleadingly comfortable. I was shown the cold start devices, little pins on the carbs that needed to

be pulled up and given a quarter turn, the all-important petrol tap, and the correct throttle position to afford the greatest chance of the engine starting.

To mine and Andy's surprise, the bike started on the button, and after a minute or two the cold start devices were dispensed with. But Andy warned me that it was my responsibility to keep the engine running, as it was unlikely to tick over. I was then given the run through on the Honda 90 style rocker gear change lever: 'Don't try to hook your toe under the lever, just give the back of it a stomp to change down, and it will need to be quite a stomp'.

I was also given advice regarding the brakes: 'don't use them, they work, sort of, but I tend to use the engine to slow down' and the overall performance – and how it was inadvisable to try anything ambitious, like overtaking anything faster than a milk float or a tractor.

As it turned out, the brakes did indeed work, but it felt like one of the drums was oval, and that the shoes might possibly be made of wood. Andy's general advice was a little disconcerting: 'don't try anything'. Don't try to overtake, don't try to slip through gaps, and don't try to corner fast. Anything that might be considered 'trying', just don't!'

The final piece of advice was to try to find a kerbstone on which to lean the prop stand (which was sticking out like a Tiller Girl's leg) as it was a little fragile, and had a tendency to lean the parked bike over at an alarming but stable angle.

While all this was going on, fellow TRD contributor Paul 'Blez' Blezard arrived on his high mileage Honda Silver Wing, like my R1100S another bike deemed unsuitable for the DGR, but the ever generous Andy had a solution for that.

'I'll take my MZ, Martin is on the Ural, Julia (Andy's friend) is on her Kawasaki so you might as well take the Eco.'

For the uninitiated, the 'Eco' is Andy's 1987 Peraves Ecomobile, a Swiss built cross between the cockpit of a glider and a BMW K100. Believe

me, if you've seen it you will remember it.

I'd followed Andy in the Eco to Hastings on the May Day Run earlier in the year. It is a real head-turner. I could have had a naked woman on the back of my bike, nobody would have noticed. Except me.

The party was completed by Andy's teenage son Henry, who was riding pillion on the MZ. Julia was a little nervous about riding through London, having been previously knocked off her bike from behind on a roundabout and unsure of where we were going, so we were looking out for her, and if I'm honest it gave me something to concentrate on instead of fretting about keeping the Ural going.

As we set off across Tooting Bec the Ural took a little getting used to, but compared with Blez wobbling from side to side at low speed in


the Eco and Julia trying not to get left behind that soon paled into insignificance.

The Eco has a pair of wheels similar to what you might see on the landing gear of a light aircraft that flip down for low speed stability, and then flick up again once the rider/driver gathers sufficient momentum to balance on the K100 running gear. It's quite a sight to see.

The Ural took quite a stomp to get into gear but fortunately first had quite a good range, taking the white-faced speedo (suitably adorned with a red star in the centre) up to around 15-20 mph, I waited until we were making good progress before venturing towards second gear, which actually went in quite easily and without too much persuasion from my size 10s.

Moving up the box was quite a revelation, the engine engaged with the clutch and had the effect of a slingshot, propelling the bike forward like some very minor kind of warp speed. This new found velocity was quite short lived however, and I soon found myself decelerating as we approached one of many sets of traffic lights as we headed towards the city.

Interestingly neutral was quite easy to find, with an unexpectedly generously sized bright green light on the headlamp nacelle.

Another of the warning lights was for the indicators, which also worked well, although finding the position between left and right took a little concentration, leading to me first indicating left, then right and left again before settling somewhere in the middle.

The mirrors looked like they may have been designed by a committee, and stood to


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attention on the high rise bars. They would have been perfect for a newly promoted Polkovnik to admire his shiny gold shoulder boards, but offered precious little in the way of rearward vision. Not that it mattered, as the open face lid I was wearing made checking over my shoulder very easy.

In what seemed like no time at all we were at Borough Market, meeting place for the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride, and despite the fact that Blez had disappeared into the distance in the Eco, in true tortoise-and-hare style we arrived just before him.

After parking the bikes in a nearby street we attempted to squeeze between the hundreds of assembled bikes, which proved impossible, so instead took to the perimeter to find our way to get some coffee and a bacon roll.

Nearly all of those present had entered into the spirit of 'dressing dapper' – everywhere you looked there were chaps in tweeds, sharp suits, plus fours, ladies in fur jackets and slacks, others in jodhpurs and tweed, but all looking a million dollars. I lost count of the numbers of handlebar moustaches, some of them were even real.

Eventually, and a little late due to the numbers involved, Dutch, looking resplendent in a very smart RAF uniform, gave his address and asked those with noisier bikes to respect the worshippers in the nearby Southwark Cathedral. After a rousing speech (along the lines of 'you're dressed like a gentleman, act like one. If you see someone standing at a zebra crossing, stop and doff your cap to them'.) He then gave the command for those present to 'start their engines' (note: as far as I'm aware a 'full set' – i.e. beard and moustache – is only allowed in the Royal Navy, not the RAF…).

On Dutch's command, that little corner of London was filled with the roar of engines, twins, triples, fours, two strokes, V-twins, flat twins, parallel twins - you name it - many of them wearing bandaged straight through exhaust pipes, as the assembled throng fed its way through Tooley Street towards Tower Bridge.

Dutch's request about respecting those paying their respects to the almighty in the house of god seemed to have fallen on deaf ears, probably because many of the bikes were so loud it was painful.

Andy chatted to a Triumph rider in a very




smart suit, accompanied by his very attractive partner wearing a skirt and heels. It then emerged that she would be riding side saddle on the pillion, and indeed they took off in that very fashion. We looked on in awe, (well, I have to admit I was also admiring her shapely pins) her courage and style were enviable, but the consensus was that we feared for her safety. 'A brave lady' commented Andy's young son Henry.

As the convoy left Borough Market it was quite a sight, and it felt good to be a part of it, with crowds of onlookers lining the route and cheering us on as we rode through a sea of smartphones. (I still haven't seen myself on any video clips though…)

However, my feelings of goodwill to my fellow men (and women) and euphoria were short lived when a guy in a van pulled alongside me on Tower Bridge and started sounding his hooter and shouting at me.

Wondering what I'd done to rattle his cage, I soon twigged that he was shouting in a strong Eastern European accent: 'YOU DROP YOUR PHONE!' Waving thanks to him for his act of kindness, I eventually managed to fight my way through the assembled masses to execute a U-turn, as I headed back over the bridge, as a wag helpfully called out 'you're going the wrong way old boy!'

Doing another U-turn I skirted the pavement along the bridge and then spotted the component parts of my old Nokia, which had slipped out of my trouser pocket as I perched on the low saddle of the Ural.

Leaning the bike on its dodgy side stand, I walked over to the bits of my phone, as a bystander asked what the ride was all about, and then told me that a couple of dozen bikes and a bus had run over my handset.

Gathering the bits together and shoving

them into a more secure pocket, I was just thinking that I would at least be able to salvage the SIM card (with all my contacts) when I noticed that the Ural was obediently ticking over. Like a trusty mule in a Clint Eastwood film, we seemed to be bonding. Or something like that.

Feeding/feeling the flat twin into first gear, I set off to try and catch up with the others. Heeding Andy's advice I decided not to 'try anything' but thanks to a series of deft manoeuvres and umpteen sets of lights I found myself once again looking at the rear number plate of Julia's Kawasaki Z450LTD as we approached Chelsea Bridge on The Embankment. I could also see steam escaping from underneath its water-cooled engine. Pulling up, a quick check revealed that the coolant was escaping from the overflow pipe from the fan-less radiator. After a brief discussion with some helpful fellow riders who also stopped, it seemed the Kwacker had a propensity for overheating in traffic, stalling, and being reluctant to start again. With no kickstart fitted this could become a problem. After discussing the merits of the cooling capabilities of the sparse amounts of air blowing through the radiator fins on this warm Sunday, we decided that it would be safe to carry on. Andy and Henry, who'd done a U-turn then arrived and agreed with our prognosis.

At this point things became a little confusing. Concerned that having turned the Ural off it might not start, I was again pleasantly surprised when it immediately fired up, and after crunching into first with the Scammell gearbox (well, that's what it reminded me of…) we moved off, only to see several snappily dressed riders doing U-turns at the north end of Chelsea Bridge.

Despite thinking that we should be going further along the Embankment before crossing the river, I nevertheless decided that we would catch up with the pack by cutting across the Thames at Chelsea Bridge and joined the throng once again at Queen's Circus, heading along the South Bank.

But before long the overheating Kawasaki had decided to stop again, and was reluctant to start. First Andy, then Blez arrived, and between us we managed to bump start the unwilling twin and get Julia going again. And again the Ural started on the button.

I was beginning to think this apparently fearsome machine had hidden depths, and character. A lot of character.

By this stage my hands were beginning to ache. Being a 'Southern softy' I had become spoiled by my own bike's light throttle, servo-assisted brakes and hydraulic clutch, and the Ural's 'manly' levers and constant need to blip the throttle were taking their toll. Bless.

It was also hot. In leathers it would have been unbearable. But even in a blazer and open necked shirt I was sweltering. There is of course the old argument about wearing 'All The Gear, All The Time' (ATGATT) but surely if you overheat and dehydrate you're more likely to stack it? And we were riding more slowly than most of the lycra-clad cyclists. Maybe that's an argument for another day.

The neutral light on the Ural then decided it had been behaving itself too well and started to come on when the bike was in gear, but it wasn't the end of the world, neutral wasn't hard to find, light or no light.

It was decided that I would lead our little pack this time, with Andy bringing up the rear on the MZ. It was a little while before I noticed that I couldn't see the Z450's distinctive long forks on the small portion of road that was visible in the Ural's mirrors, so after waiting


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at the side of the road for a minute or two on Stamford Street I did a U-turn and headed back along the empty side of the road.

With no stop-start traffic and clear tarmac in front of me the little 650 was a revelation. It seemed almost spritely as we made good progress back towards the Imax.

I decided at this point that the Ural's gearbox reminded me of an old Massey Ferguson tractor I used to drive, the gear change was actually quite manageable if you gave it time, and while the brakes needed written notice, what Andy had told me about using the engine to slow down made perfect sense.

The bike's agricultural nature would have made perfect sense on the mixed road surfaces of the Eastern Bloc, one day on pot holed tarmac (like much of the UK) and the next in ruts and mud, anything more fragile wouldn't have lasted the course.

My daydream of how it must have been on the Soviet highways was short lived however, and I spotted Julia and Andy heading towards Borough Market again, and after another quick U-turn and some nifty moves between the traffic I was back with them.

As we approached the junction with Stoney Street a fellow Uralist pulled alongside on a much newer machine and we had a brief conversation about exhaust pipes and kick starters (the joys of an open face lid!) before moving off towards Bedale Street, where we parked up and went in search of cold drinks and chip butties.

Watching the various bikes return and join the throng was a great opportunity to enjoy the spectacle, many of the bikes were pretty special, the riders' garb completed the picture. There was more of an opportunity to have a better look at some of them - there was more space for one thing.

There were quite a few brand new bikes from Bavaria, Tiruvottiyur, Milwaukee and Hinckley dotted among the old Beemer twins, countless old British bikes, 'rice burners', Italian exotica and even a few scooters, including a journeyman Vespa that looked like it just might have been round the world.

Returning to the Ural I noticed that the right side of the rear wheel was wearing a coating of oil. I mentioned it to Andy, but he didn't seem overly concerned, telling me that he'd checked the oil with a dipstick that morning and 'there was… some'!

At last the time came to head back to Tooting, and I started to feel sorry that my time with the Ural would soon be over. But as we pulled out of Redcross Way on to Southwark Street I noticed that the flat twin was starting to feel decidedly lumpy. It was only firing on one cylinder. Had I been too confident in the bike's reliability?

It was then that I remembered that I had turned the petrol tap off when we'd parked, just like we used to in the old days. I reached down and twisted the tap, and as the fuel made its way through to the twin carbs I felt the bike surge forward in the manner to which I'd become accustomed.

Much of what Andy had told me about the bike's unreliability must have been based on previous experience, and having owned the bike for more than 20 years he would know, but much of it seemed to be unfounded.

OK, I didn't push the handling, which was just as well given the oil on the back wheel, but for my brief tenure the bike had been 100% reliable, and while not exactly spritely, for an old 650 pushrod engine propelling a heavy frame designed to lug a chunky sidecar along with 3 burly comrades it had certainly made good progress.

Free from the constraints of stop-start traffic, the ride back to Andy's place had been a moderately swift affair, and I felt 'at one' with the bike. Which is a testament to Mick at MPC Motorbikes in Lutterworth, for whatever he'd done to the Ural had worked, and worked well.

It almost felt like a slightly awkward blind date, with someone you're not particularly attracted to. Anticipation, trepidation, a sense of foreboding and warnings from the guardian about 'not trying anything' along with thoughts that it might be all over before it even started.

I'd never seen the bike before that morning,

and there had been a lot of expectation. I'd dressed well, and we went off to London for the day. A certain fondness had developed between us. And now we were heading back to the house afterwards. How would we part? Would things ever be the same again?

I carefully positioned the Ural exactly as I'd found it, reversed in, side stand propped onto a lump of wood. And turned it, and the petrol tap, off.

I was invited in for tea, and we all talked about the day; Julia's relief and delight at a relatively incident-free day. Andy's 'well set up' Kanuni-MZ 250 ran faultlessly, and Blez gave us an account of how he'd struggled at times with the Ecomobile in the busy London traffic.

This is of course a long and highly streamlined machine that comes into its own on motorways and autobahns, one thing it is not designed for is heavy traffic. But we all survived to tell the tale.

And so, swapping once again to my full face lid and leather jacket I packed my 'country squire' outfit into my top box and put the keys in my BMW's ignition.

The thing about riding other bikes so you can write about them, is that they're usually brand new, quick, fine handling and extremely desirable. And then you have to get back on your own old bike and ride home. And it's usually pretty horrible by comparison.

But after my brief flirtation with a 'mature' bike that shares its DNA with my relatively youthful 11 year old R1100S, it was a revelation to get back in the saddle.

There was never a question about it firing up as I hit the starter button. The light clutch lever was effortless, and the BMW gearbox snicked easily into first (you can't always say that…). The 'complicated' indicator controls were easy to use, and the bike went like a rocket, with momentum tempered by the superb brakes. And it felt light and lithe, despite being almost twice the capacity.

The R1100S isn't short of character. It's quick - by comparison - easy to ride, handles and stops well, and looks pretty good too. In my opinion.

But I did find myself missing something about the Ural. It wasn't a foregone conclusion. You had to put a bit of effort into riding it properly, and the effort was rewarded by seemingly taming a machine that in some circles has a fearsome reputation.

But like so many aspects of motorcycling, once you get past the initial image and stereotypes, there's the sense of revelation; quite often you find yourself dealing with a pussycat.

**Martin Haskell**

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**uralmotorbikes.info**


**Image of the Month II**

© Stuart Jewkes

# THE BOY BIKER

## TESTING... TESTING...

**Let us kick off with a nod to Stuart for getting back in contact, for asking me to put an article together, and for having a go at organising what I think is one of the best two wheel reads out there.**

To look at back issues of the Digest, and through the online archive, it's amazing to think anyone really wanted to hear the musings of a young snot tearing around on a bodged up 80's GS125! I enjoyed riding (and writing!) in a way which required very little effort or consciousness and didn't care what anyone thought because hey, I've got L-plates.

That's all changed in the brief intermission between updates. I have passed my practical riding test.

The first attempt was over before it began. The hazard avoidance-bum swerve (still in the car park) is passed strictly on speed, not on ability to dip the bike like a Japanese Gymkhana wannabe… First strike I was too fast, then, overly cautious, second strike too slow.

I will be quoted as using the excuses, "Well who does 30 in that 30" (Purley way A23 Croydon) and "There was plenty of room to filter at that point!" for the other failings, although the test reports read more like a coppers list of misdemeanours and mischief. Laid bare in a debrief of shame, ears half muffled to it having heard the all-important words "I'm sorry to say you've failed."

On the fourth go, I had some sound advice from a different instructor and a non-driving, but test passing expert mate along the lines of, "Ride like you are giving your gran a lift or like the coppers are following you" but what really stuck was that I needed to ride like I was trying to pass a bloody test! Not like I was trying to lose the guy behind me with hi-viz helmet and ultra-practical Honda who was watching my every move!!

I had assumed the examiner would want to see a display of confident and capable riding, progressive and forward planning, with learned technique and judgement.

Obviously (to other people) they don't! Let's not assume I am saying they don't want to pass riders, they do. They just want to go home at night thinking that because someone has displayed vigilant, restricted, even intimidated riding for 40 minutes that they will go on to stay an alive biker. Passing people is a big responsibility and on reflection, I would not have comfortably passed myself, opening up a world of passengers, bigger bikes and motorway riding with the displays I had given.

In the end, wallet considerably lighter, I got the balance of looking like I knew what I was doing and not actually doing too much of it just right. Not one minor error on the fourth go and finally, after four years, I took off the L plates that had been so constantly reattached that doing such required a two hour disassembly session. Think lock wire, rivets, self-tappers, tape, glue…

My riding became overnight a badge of honour, an outward symbol to the world of what kind of person sat between that helmet and bike. I saw how stupid head-down arse-up in traffic looked, realised that balancing with both feet on the pegs for as long as possible at lights shouldn't be the main occupation, that pulling away lifting the front wheel is a waste and that squeezing through gaps the size of a pub toilet window doesn't impress a soul. Really my riding ought to be a display of intelligence, good character and thoughtfulness, not a bolshie idiotic race, on the chicken strips and acting exactly as I was, a kid with a chip on my shoulder.

With no L's to hide behind and a bike which didn't blend in with takeaway delivery 90's and hairdryer 50-85 cc scooters anymore, a sense of becoming a biker proper dawned and I no longer had a c'est la vie view on the roads and my surroundings. I saw that I now represent the wider community of road users and that it is my duty to project a positive image, to go forth nobly and respectfully in my quest for biking bliss.

Now, I green lane with 50-somethings called Clive, sit behind lorries for long stretches in the wet and pull into gaps waving past other bikers clearly on a mission for speed. I have come to relish control and precision in the right places and the clarity that comes from holding back for a second to fully assess what is going on. I have become an adult.

I hope this change doesn't disappoint because everyone would prefer boyish tales of derring do and arse-ish behaviour. I intend to still give an opinion on riding from wee young eyes, to open up debate and to share insights and anecdotes that will hopefully relate to everyone out there on two wheels (or three, but that's another story). Although it's practical and economical and functional and our lives are on the line, we ride because we love it and it brings us pleasure. I hope to remind everyone that the most important bit of riding equipment is a smile.

# THE HONDA COLLECTION


Words: Mark Beese
Pics: Melanie Beese


**Back in April I was in Tokyo for 10 days on a business trip with my wife Melanie. During our stay I was aware of my proximity to the Honda Collection museum, so I was of the mindset that having been a biker for over 25 years, having done a bit of racing and having owned a number of Hondas over time, it would have been an insult to the trip if I didn't take the time to visit this special place.**

The Honda Collection is at Honda's own Twin Ring Motegi circuit, which is around 70 miles north-east of Tokyo. Getting to the circuit involved leaving our hotel in Tokyo at 7am and proceeding to use five separate trains for the next six-and-a-half hours just to get to the small town of Motegi that shares its name with the circuit.

Hint: if you really want to see what Japan is like outside of the urban sprawl, get on the train. The Tokyo public transport system is amazing and the Japanese people go out of their way to try out their English on you. One of the trains out of Tokyo was similar to the one in The Hunger Games that takes the competitors to their trials, with beautifully finished, polished aluminium panels and streamlined tractor units. The interior wasn't anywhere near as elaborate but the train and the way it passed through Tokyo's suburban districts was very reminiscent of that film. Cosseted on the first class carriage - so we were able to sit forward and not the usual sideways - was a privilege on the carriage out of Tokyo Central, and facing forwards gave us a nice respite from not being constantly stared at by the impeccably dressed, suit-wearing, black satchel-carrying passengers of all ages and genders.

The last stage of the journey was on the Moka Line to Motegi where we had the whole train to ourselves. When we eventually got off the train at Motegi it really looked like we were entering a ghost town as there wasn't a single person in sight. As we walked along the pristine concrete pavement, we looked in each shop and wooden house we passed. Where was everybody? The further we walked the more eerie it became.

We got to a corner building at the end of the street. There was no clue to what the building could be but there were at least some signs of life inside! We both entered and there were two Japanese women sat down at desks just behind a low-level counter. Even inside there were zero clues about the purpose of this building. Was it a post office? A council office? Lawyers? No idea!! A very small Japanese woman said hello.

I said, "Arigato, Twin Ring Motegi? Honda Collectionionee?", and made "brrrrm-brrrrm" noises and twisted my wrist like I'm revving a



motorbike. The wife laughed out loud and the quiet occupants looked at each other as if to say *WTF?*

Then a reasonably tall Japanese gent spoke to one of the women. I tried to ask for a taxi in my best Japanese English, but reverted to making gestures like I'm driving a car and pretending I'm a taxi driver. It worked! The conversation got to the designation of the building… *a bank you say*? If that was the case then the tall Japanese bloke was the bank manager! He joined in the conversation in typical Japanese style using a translator app on his iPhone. Then we even got given some balloons on sticks followed by lots of bowing and nodding. The whole thing was totally surreal.

We said our goodbyes to the only occupants of the town and made our way in the back of another pristine clean black taxi to the Motegi circuit at 2.45pm - seven hours after we set off.

So finally and after all that Monty Python-style farce we got to the museum, straight to the front door and into the building, pronto. Because of the time taken to get here from Tokyo, we only had 2 hours and 45 minutes to look around!! It's free entry, with lots of *hello* and *arigato*. A small group of Japanese schoolchildren were there, staring at us if we've just landed by spaceship outside.

A reality check hit me. I was in the Honda Collection museum with my wife, in the absolute middle of nowhere, and these kids have probably never seen a westerner in the flesh before let alone a blonde girl and a 6-foot 3-inch giant whose legs are as tall as half of them there. Every single child said *arigato* at some point to Melanie and I and we hadn't even got to the first floor of the museum yet.

When we did get to the bikes, all effort spent on getting here was justified. The motorcycle exotica in this place is unbelievable. We saw Mike Hailwood's winning Honda 350s and 500s; and Rossi, Biaggi, Doohan, Roberts, Kato, Edwards and Barros's factory race bikes in all guises. Endurance racers, TT racers and Suzuka 8 Hours winners, all demonstrating the company's evolution from the original post-war Hondas to the cutting-edge technology of today.

*continued on page 52*



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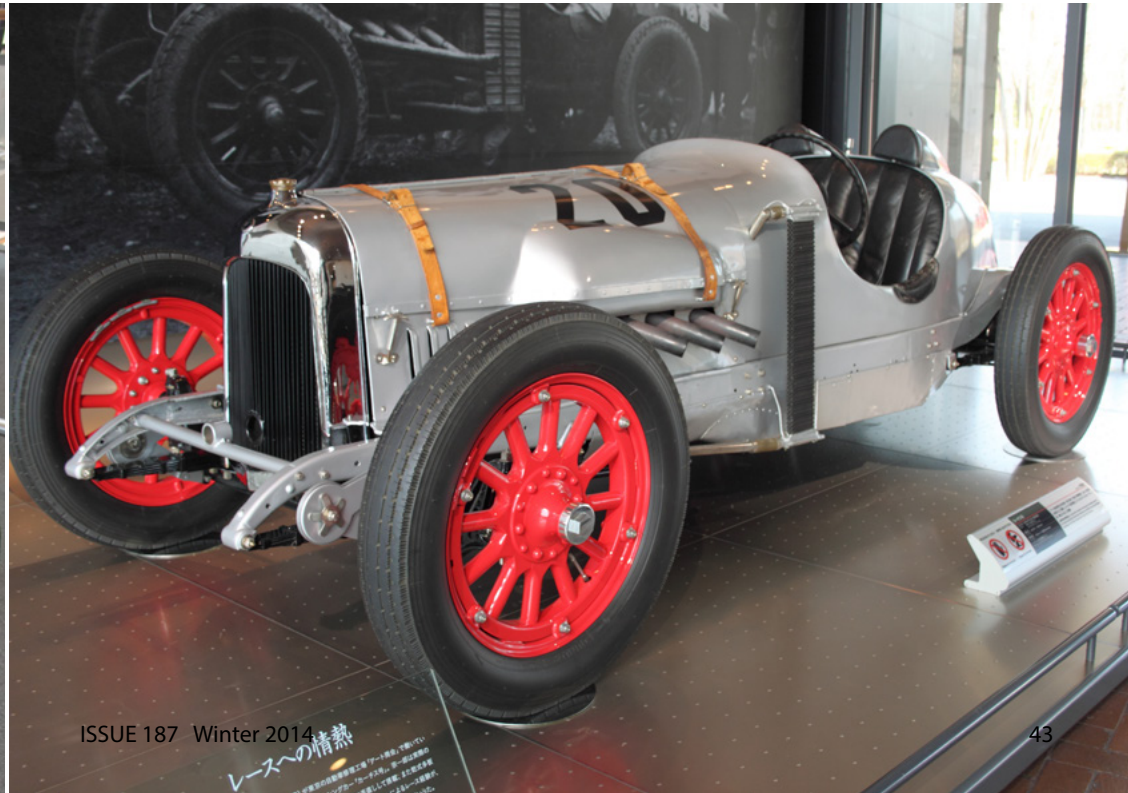
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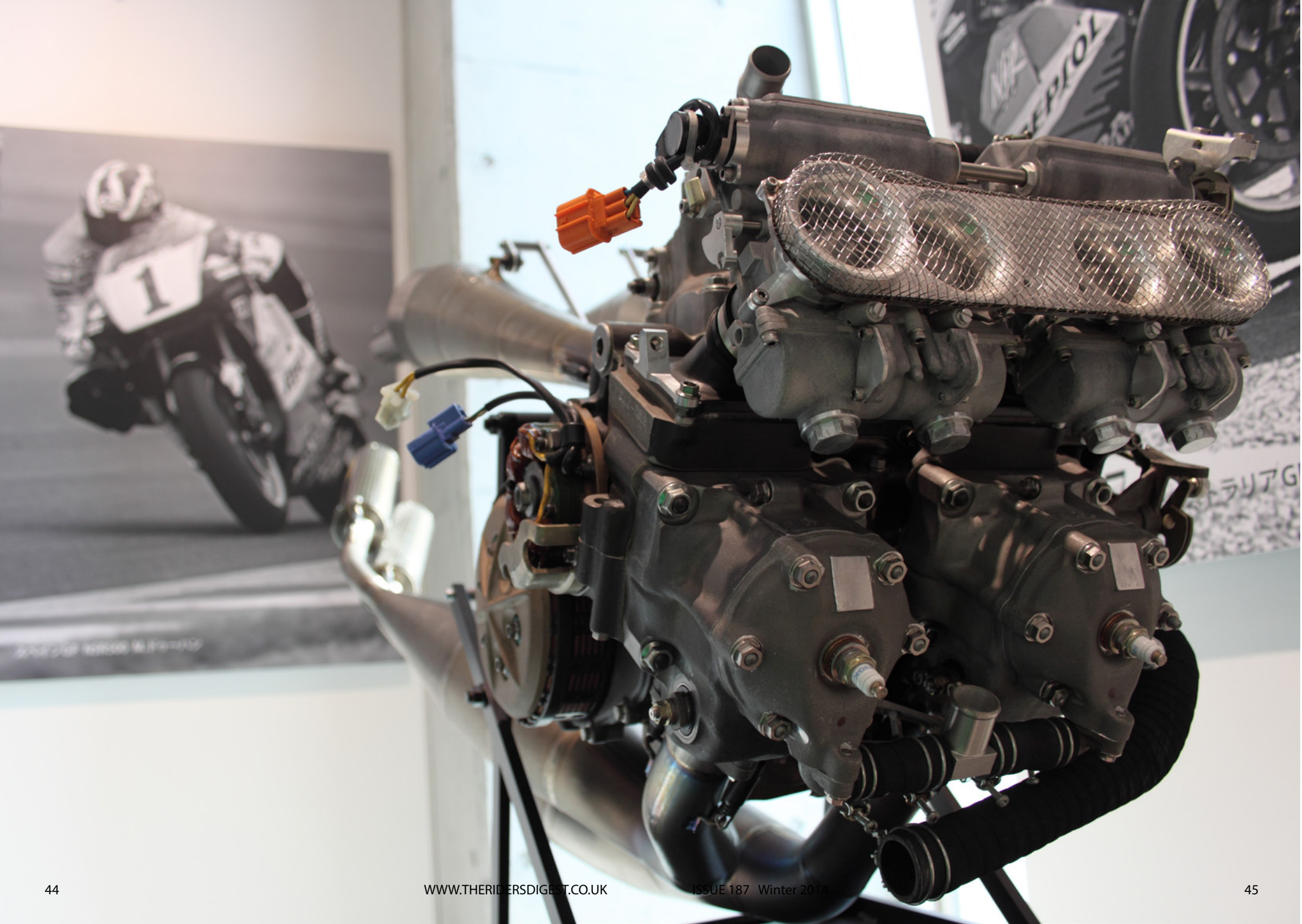


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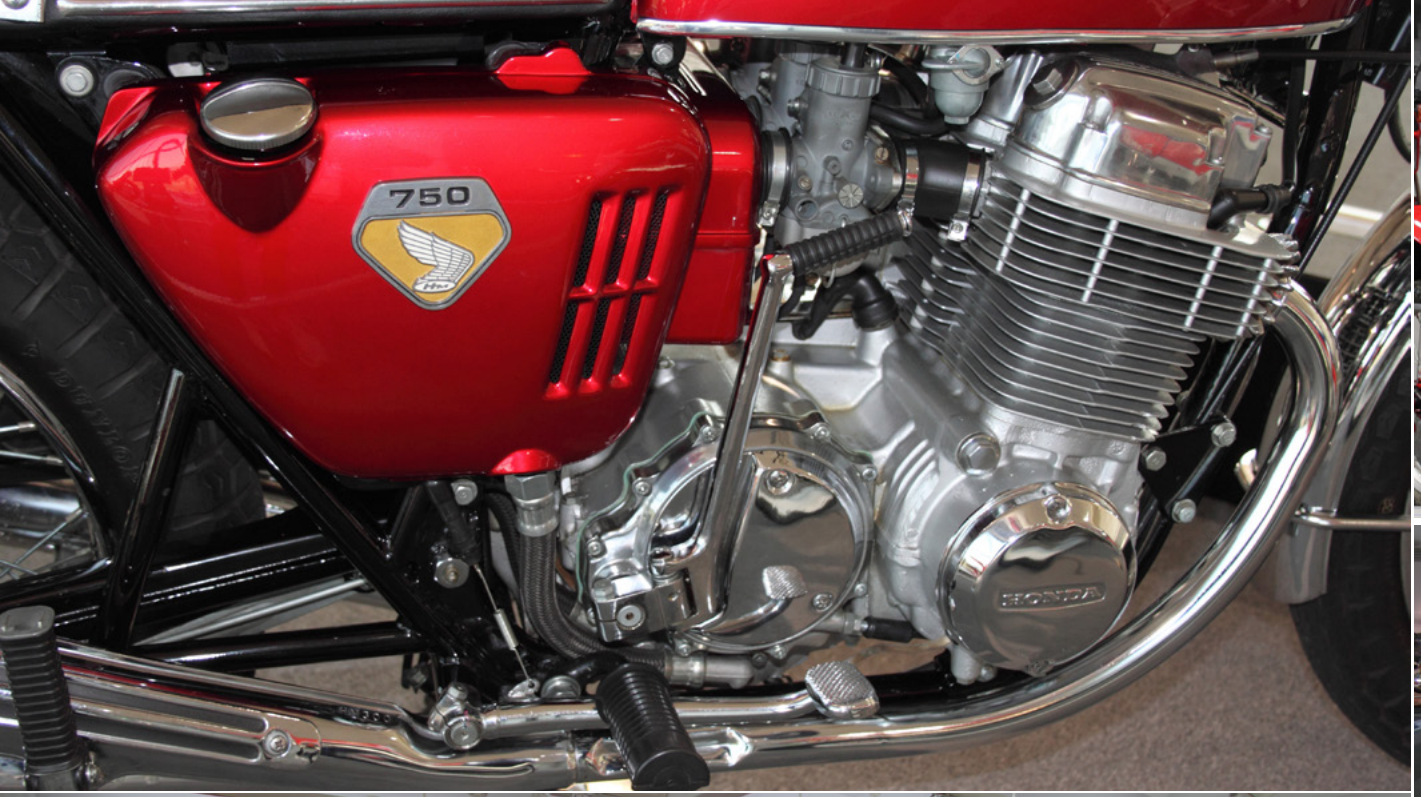
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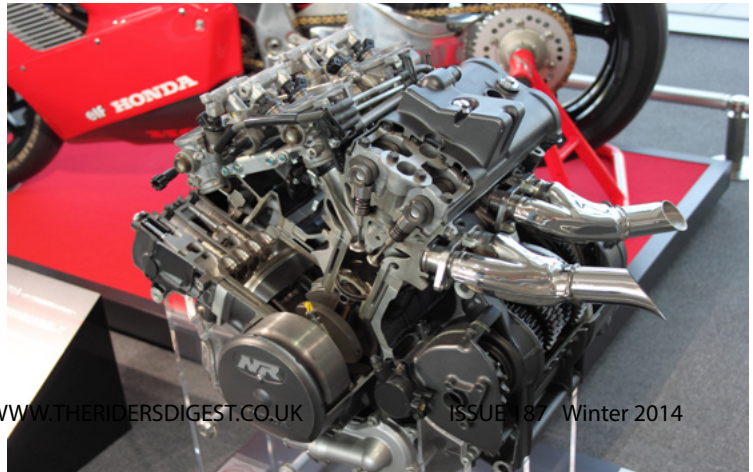
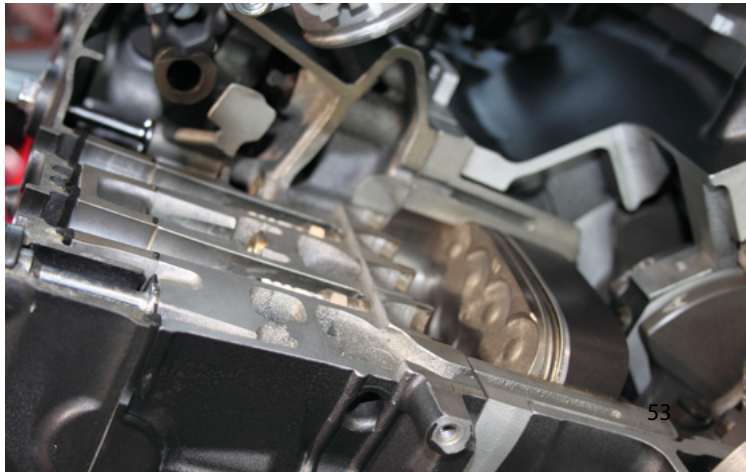
The collection is like nothing I've ever seen before. The quality of the motorcycles is unbelievable. There are 50-year-old bikes with zero miles on the clocks. Honda even pays its respects to other manufacturers by having their representative bikes on display: Suzuki, Kawasaki, Bridgestone and Yamaha were all present and correct in one form or other.

Each floor has a theme, with each dedicated to road bikes, racing bikes, road cars, racing cars; and there's even a section dedicated to utilitarian machinery such as generators and water pumps. I saw Senna's world championship winning F1 McLaren and John Surtees's old-school F1 Hondas where the exhausts alone were like works of art. More standouts included Honda's first attempt to emulate Italian-style scooter design; the 125cc RC142 that was the first bike Honda took to the TT in 1959 (along with the first Japanese rider to compete there too); and I was particularly impressed by the NR750 prototype with the frame number RC41-2000001. Loris Capirossi rode this lightweight version of the NR (lightened even to the extent of removing one front brake disc) to a series of speed records in 1992. Considering it was nearly 25-years-old, its magnesium wheels, full carbon bodywork, titanium-everywhere and V8-emulating engine were all as groundbreaking then as they would be now. This prototype race bike was amazing. I'm still drooooooooooling….



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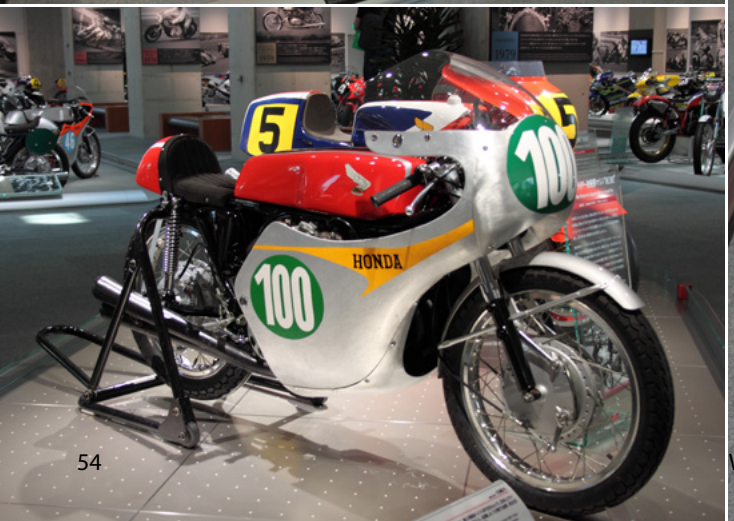
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Honda spares no expense whatsoever in the maintenance of the museum, which is remarkable considering admission is free and it is open all-year-round regardless of who visits and who doesn't. There's even a library in there. When we visited we were literally the only people there for around three hours apart from the staff - the small school party left after about an hour. There is so much to look at as the museum and the Motegi circuit is spread across a vast area. With around 45 minutes left until the museum was due to close I was desperate to see as much of the venue as possible, so I frog-marched a by now bored and agitated Melanie over to the go-kart track, with its again no-expense-spared racing apparel including every size available of brand-new Arai RX7 helmets and Sparco racing suits. I got two sessions in - 15 laps with a best time of 48.2 seconds - but that was it: closing time! Game over!

To sum up then, a trip to the Honda Collection has to be on every biker's bucket list. There is nothing really like it anywhere else in the world. If you're a Honda lover like me, or a fan of the TT or racing history in general, then there is no acceptable excuse not to go. Get booking those flights!

**Mark Beese**

honda.co.jp/collection-hall/

twinring.jp/

# A View from the Group W Bench

**A doctor may write in and correct me but as far as I know the ears, nose and feet continue to grow until you die. Well at least if given the chance. Certainly my size 10 Altbergs have become tight over the last year so have been replaced with a pair of Hi Hogs in 11 wide for £192.39. Excellent value in my opinion and break in very quickly. I wish these boots had been available when I wore green. So that'll be new boots and panties for me over the year.**

I have heard several complaints from rallyists that they don't trust Altberg because their sizes are small. I have seen this on an army site too, in all cases that is the only criticism. My take is that they are lined and insoled which probably takes them down a half size, order with that taken in account; or ride up to Richmond and have your feet measured. The later is by far the best method as most people's feet are different sizes. Also despite the fact that they are no longer offering the complete renovation service, which I have used in the past with no complaints, they will still resole your boots and the end result is almost as good.

However that consideration aside they are excellent, and no, I have no connection with Altberg apart from they are at present stopping my feet from fraying.

Christmas and New Year are weird times for me as I sensibly stopped talking to my family fifteen years ago. In a previous job I used to work Christmas, New Year and Easter and have five extra days off in the summer. Last year instead a friend and fellow Lil'Breva fan Gary Glossop got some plumbing done and then I cleaned out the garage and flat. My MkIII lemon hasn't been seriously moved since I got the Breva five years ago and the front wheel bearings and head races were obviously shot which made it a pain to move. Ah well, I just got on with it. Next day I looked at the front tyre and put some air in it, the Lemon now moves freely. But at least there is now room for two more bikes in the garage so it is time to start looking. I fancy a second hand Bellagio, they are not much on paper but the owners I have talked to reckon they are the bee's bendy bits and these include some seriously fast riders. Oh and the flat looks nicer for having seen a Hoover (Electrolux actually) and some soap and water. Hot showers again as well, the luxury.

So on last New Year's Eve I am out on the bike for the first time in a week. It really felt weird at first as I normally ride every day and my muscles felt like they had atrophied. It took a good twenty miles for me to get back into the swing, something I have never noticed before. The aging process again I suspect. Then two days later I rode to work as though there had been no lay off, so DOBS (Decrepit Old Bastard Syndrome) has not yet set in. Held back by motorcycling.

There was an interview on Radio 5 with Bas Lansdorp, the Dutch founder of Mars One, which is a serious and financed plan with some heavy backers to start opening up a human colony on Mars commencing in 2025, with four people going every two years with no possibility of returning. The interviewer was openly aghast at the idea and called the plan a death sentence for the participants. Bas Lansdorp countered by saying that we are all under a death sentence. The next adverse comment was that Mars would become the last place the colonists would ever see, Bas Lansdorp rebuffed that Earth is the last place the rest of us would ever see. The interview did set out plainly the real difference between those who live their lives and those who merely watch (or commentate as in this case).The interviewer was definitely someone who failed Frank Zappa's parachute test.

I wonder how many of the volunteers are motorcyclists rather than car drivers, although I assume most would be primarily scientists as well. It is certainly something that would have grabbed my interest forty-five years ago. I also assume that I am a little too ancient by now. So someone else will have to write 'A View from Mars, Motorcycling in a New Perspective'. I have had in the past some doubts as to whether we have the moral right to go to another planet considering the mess we are making of our own but there are no natives to kill with our diseases etc. on Mars and the sins of a few should not hold back the many.

It is curious though that in the same month that a bad '50's SF story, Scientology, becomes an official religion in the UK, I discover a good modern SF story looks to become reality in the foreseeable future. The glass is definitely still half full.

Ride Safe,

**Ian Dunmore**

An ancient Guzzisti.


**Image of the Month III**

© Stuart Jewkes

# The Northward Route

Words and Pics: Ricardo Rodrigues


**The pages of just about every motorcycle magazine are covered in articles about the newest, the best or the most-hyped 'adventure bike'. I'm not going into this topic because I've only tried three or four of the alternatives and I don't really like most of them!**

However I have two conflicting passions, I love to travel by bike and hate purely practical, bland and uninspiring machines. I've found myself travelling with semi-practical but truly fascinating bikes like my KTM 990 Super Duke and my dearly-missed Kawasaki ZZR1400. This is where the 'adventure' bikes come into play, they do have one thing going for them: comfort, specifically pillion comfort. So when it came to replacing the ZZR, I had to find something exciting, powerful, light (-ish) and with a proper-sized front wheel for road riding - cue the Ducati Multistrada 1200S and my full conversion to European-made bikes (the fact that both are from somewhere near the Alps, is probably not a coincidence).

That's how I ended up with what is a much-flawed adventure bike, but the perfect 'superbike' for the potholed roads of the real world. I'll get to the flaws soon enough, but first let me introduce you to my first trip on the big Ducati.

Being based in The Netherlands for the first time and with most of the obvious biking destinations already under our belts, the choice for this year's trip was a country most of us tend to forget, or to cross in a dash for the most northerly point of mainland Europe: Norway, here we go!

Depending on your nationality or background, Norway is the country of codfish (the delicious *Bacalhau* for those of us of Portuguese origin), sardines, or more accurately, oil! Lots and lots of the black stuff that makes Norway one of the richest countries (GDP per-capita) in the world.

If you like travelling however, the raw natural beauty of Norway is so much more impressive. It's the land of the Fjords: the massive glacial valleys where ocean meets the sharp cliff faces of mountains with snow-covered peaks.

The premises for planning our trip where that it would take place from 23rd August to 6th September 2014 (two weeks); be as low-cost as possible but without camping (no space for camping gear, and Cátia – my GF/the pillion - is not a fan of sleeping outdoors), and if possible rooms with private WC; there would not be too many 300km-plus days so that we could actually enjoy the ride and scenery instead of racing to the next checkpoint; and Catia wanted to visit some friends in Oslo, and also go to Stockholm.

This set of constraints dictated that there wasn't enough time to go to Nordkapp (and no real point in doing it really, other than to be able to say I've been there!), so I focused our route on trying to make the most out of the Fjords. The official Western Norway tourist

board site "Fjord Norway" was priceless for the planning. All the information you can ask for, in a simple and well organized manner. (Got to love the Scandinavians!)

The hotel bookings were all dealt with online beforehand as I like to know how much I am going to spend and it helps me plan each leg of the journey. If you plan on doing the same, here is a top tip: pay a little extra for the "free cancellation" rooms, as this allows you to adjust your route on the go if something doesn't go according to plan.

Also in trying to keep the budget in control we packed our 50L roll-up bag with food supplies and a camping stove for picnics on the road. Food prices in Norway are so high that if we opted for eating in restaurants we would've easily doubled the whole budget.

Come Friday 22nd August, we left after work with the bike loaded with both side panniers, a Kriega US20 tank bag and the 50L roll-up bag and began a dreadfully wet five-hour ride on crowded Dutch motorways all the way to Bremen in Germany (320km). After a nice beer and a kebab, it was time to get some rest and try to dry out our gear. My trusty boots (Dainese Pannier) had at this point let me down and started leaking badly.

Saturday was the proper start of the trip, a full day's ride from Bremen across the entire length of Denmark to catch the evening ferry from Hirtshals to Stavanger.

And what a day it was! 661km under almost constant rain - at times so intense the motorway looked more like a river. It was a mid-August weekend and with it came the never-ending traffic jams of people carriers and laden-to-the-roof German estates - good thing the Ducati is narrow enough to filter between traffic and noisy enough that cars know we're coming (the fuelling at low speed however isn't perfect for this kind of riding…).

Anyway, after a long day in the saddle with a quite few stops for fuel and €4 espresso we made it to the ferry with time to spare. Funny enough, ending up parked behind a ZZR1400 just like the one I used to own, a nice opportunity to play spot the differences.

The ferry: what can I say about the ferry? Well being that this article is for a non-continental magazine, chances are you've already been on a ferry crossing. I'm not a fan of them (bit claustrophobic and boring really) but what I really don't like is strapping the bikes down. I've shipped my bikes by truck a few times and crossed from Santander to Portsmouth and there is usually always someone to help you with the bloody straps. I genuinely hate ratchet straps, they get all tangled and never seem to be properly set-up when you first pick them up, forcing you to take the damn thing apart and make 10 attempts before you actually get the thing to ratchet properly (or maybe that's just me…).

Well the Norwegian/Danish staff were as helpful as a wooden log and apart from a few holes on the floor and a couple of half tangled straps there wasn't anything to help us secure the bike. This resulted in much swearing and almost an hour spent trying to get the damn thing properly fastened. At this point you may be mocking my strap handling skills, but I must mention I wasn't alone in my struggles. A German couple on a new R1200GS and a K1600GT as well as a few other guys were also having difficulties!

Sunday started with the two of us scrambling to get all the luggage from the cabin and on to the bike before the 7am docking time. I don't usually wake up on the wrong side of the bed, but I do need my cup of coffee (the proper stuff: short and strong espresso, none of those buckets of dark brown water everyone outside of Portugal and Italy insist in calling coffee!) before jumping into any kind of activity. So you can imagine my mood leaving the boat at 7am, with no coffee, soaking wet boots, sweating under my gear

from all the running around and being greeted by a dark grey sky and pouring rain! I've just arrived in Norway and I already hate it!

(A short note just to ask you one thing: am I the only one who struggles with feeling comfortable on the bike after disembarking from a long ferry trip? It just takes me a while to regain full control of my balance… It's not a serious problem but it takes me a while until I'm entirely comfortable on the bike again...).

You can probably guess there aren't a lot of places open in a small city like Stavanger on a Sunday at 7:30am, so after a vain attempt at finding an open caffeine dealer we decided to try our luck and head to our hotel for the night and see if we could check in... "early"!

From the moment we arrived at the Himmel & Hav , it marked the change in the mood of the trip. The staff were absolutely wonderful and not only allowed us to check in and have a shower at 8am but even offered us some much-needed coffee and breakfast! If you're ever near Stavanger, stop by, it's a wonderful little hotel with direct access to the beach.

I had planned to ride to Lysebotn and back but in this weather there wasn't really a point in doing it, so we opted for a cruise in the Lysefjord that you can take from Stavanger harbour - costs €50 per person and takes about 2.5 hours. Upon returning from the cruise even the weather co-operated and the sun came out! What do you do when it's August, you are at a beach hotel and the sun is out? Go for a dive of course! A very short one I must confess, 12ºC air temp isn't quite what I'm used to in August!

Monday brought with it the sunshine that would accompany us for the rest of the trip, a wonderful day's riding that introduced us to the beauty of Norway and its wildlife (and by wildlife I mean two girls showering naked in a waterfall by the side of the road!).

Heading North from Stavanger we took the ferry to Tau before catching the E13 to Sand and then the E520 to Roldal. The roads are great and the scenery is absolutely beautiful.




One minute you're at sea level at the bottom of the fjord with the ocean at your side, the next you're 1000m above it in a mountain plateau with freshwater lakes and snow-covered peaks. It's day two in Norway and I've fallen in love!

Tunnels, tunnels and more tunnels! That was the main focus of our Tuesday. In Norway you have short tunnels, long tunnels, spiral-shaped tunnels and even roundabouts inside tunnels! Just take your pick. There was a lot more than just tunnels today, but the fact I made a mistake and rode a 7.7km tunnel twice, while it was being resurfaced and the air filled with dust, did make them memorable.

Second day heading North in the Fjords and the impressions of the previous day are even stronger. It is gorgeous! It's as if God mixed the West Scottish Highlands with the Alps! As for the Ducati, well, after a couple of days of not really feeling comfortable with the bike on the twistier roads, today I can finally say she is starting to please me! First it was a matter of misaligned luggage unbalancing the bike, then low pressure on the front tyre. The rest was really just me adjusting to riding a trail bike (even if it is a bloody quick and road-focused one) fully laden with luggage and pillion, after a few years on a much lower bike with a very different riding position and steering feel. There are however three pretty obvious qualities this bike possesses which are a lot better than the ZZR1400 I had before: comfort, holding a line mid-corner trough bumpy and pothole filled road surfaces, and lifting the front wheel in the air in 3rd gear!

But, back to the route: starting in the outskirts of Roldal we headed north on the E13 under a timid sunshine with the heated grips put to good use. We made a short stop for a photo opportunity at Latefossen Waterfalls, then set off again as the deep valley was still in the shade and there wasn't enough light for good photography.

A few kilometres later and there we were, coming out of the valley and at the side of the Hardangerfjord with the sun shining on a completely still water surface turned into a near perfect mirror. Granted everything is REALLY expensive in Norway, but at least you get to see the amazing landscape twice!

A small detour to the E7 took us through a steep climb up a mountain face, and inside a set of impressive spiral shaped tunnels all the way to the tourist view point of Voringfossen Waterfalls. At 183m tall they are seriously impressive but still only the 83rd highest waterfall in Norway!

At this point I have another one of my top tips: don't stop at this bus-filled tourist stop and instead keep going for about 2km until you see the signs saying "Fossli Hotel", take a left and go through the bumpy narrow road that gives access to the hotel's parking lot. There is a toll booth with a guy sitting half asleep in the sun, but a "Hey we're bikers! We don't take up parking space", and you don't have to pay. From the hotel parking lot you have a short foot path that leads to the edge of the cliff for an amazing view of the falls; definitely worth it!

As you usually do, I had a plan for where to go next and that was the Sima Hydroelectric Dam, a supposedly impressive dam, but - I missed the correct turn twice and then got distracted with ice cream so we decided to carry on and head to Ulvik for another well deserved stop in the sun.

There we were enjoying the sun, laying on a pontoon facing the fjord when I noticed a curious Norwegian wearing the most dreadful green shirt (I have a problem with one specific shade of very light green...his shirt was that exact colour) admiring the Ducati. We engaged in the usual chatter: where are you from? The Netherlands but we're Portuguese, etc. As usual it turns out the guy was incredibly nice, lived in Bergen and had gotten out of work early to go for a scenic car ride.

"I have an electric car!" he said proudly.

"Really? Which one?" I asked with my mind on the hundreds of Tesla Model S that seem to crowd the Norwegian roads.

"A Nissan Leaf!" he said.

"Er, that's nice…" We chatted for a little longer while he recommended that we take the longer and more scenic route to Bergen. It was after we set off that I found myself thinking: what a stupid thing of me to feel disappointed when he said his car was a Leaf. Ok it's not exactly an exciting vehicle but the fact was, the guy was clearly there with same purpose as me, to simply drive for the pleasure of it. This led me to a second consideration: it's 160km from Bergen to Ulvik and the Leaf's range is somewhere from 160-200km which means the guy was waiting (for how long?!) to have the battery charged so that he could return home! Hmmm, electric cars are great for riding around town but they still have a long way to go if you want to do this kind of thing! Or maybe in 30 years' time these guys will be like today's old school bikers who tell the tales of their heroic rides on those "wonderful" unreliable pieces of (...cough cough) 2-stroke engineering.

I'm getting a bit sidetracked again - the rest of the day we spent heading to Bergen, first on the winding and twisty road climbing out of Ulvik and then, due to another navigation error, on the mostly boring and busy (for Norwegian standards) E16.

Remember how this trip started with copious amounts of rain? Well, Bergen is the rainiest city in Europe with upwards of 200 days of rain per year, but it greeted us with amazing sunshine and clear skies, both on the Tuesday afternoon and the next morning. Lucky us!

For the 6th day of the trip the plan was to head west on the E16 to Voss, but because I had already ridden that road the previous day, we opted to leave via the E7 to Eide, before turning back to Voss on the E13, a longer route but an option that proved to be brilliant. The E7

is beautiful, good fun to ride and gave us one of the most amazing lunch stops of the trip: a picnic area by a bay with crystal clear water. Stunning!

After Voss and a section of road works that left us and the bike covered in mud, we stopped at the Tvindfossen Waterfalls for some photos and a session of tap dancing in a creek to try and clean our boots. We then rode to Gudvanger to see the Naerofjord , which at 250 metres wide and 10 metres deep in places, is the narrowest and shallowest navigable fjord in the world.

It was already past 5:30pm when we arrived at Gudvanger and the plan was to ride to Flam and try to get to the FV243 mountain pass early (-ish). However after a very enthusiastic recommendation of the Naerofjord Ferry Cruise by a gentleman at the Gudvanger souvenir shop we decided to take the two-hour long ferry that would leave us directly in Flam. At 440 NOK it's a lot more expensive than regular ferries (usually 75 or 80 NOK for bike, rider and pillion) but it's more of a scenic cruise than regular transport, and it was worth it - two hours relaxing and enjoying the views.

Arriving at Flam you have the option of riding the Laerdal Tunnel, the longest road tunnel in the world. One thing I can tell you after riding through hundreds of kilometres of tunnels, including the Mont Blanc, is that it is… very boring!! Nothing to see for miles and limited speed all the way. So top tip, whenever there is a big tunnel there is usually an awesome mountain pass that goes over it - the bigger the tunnel, the better the pass!

Laerdal is no exception and the FV243 is one of the most stunning roads I have ever had the pleasure of riding! You start by winding your way up the side of the mountain with the Naerofjord at your side, stop at the Stegastein Viewpoint for a breath of fresh air before continuing uphill until you reach the amazing plateau on top of the mountain: void of vegetation and filled with massive sphere-shaped rocks and small lakes of molten snow. After this awe inspiring ride over the plateau, the downhill stretch is properly twisty and bumpy. MASSIVE fun on the Multistrada, bringing out the amazing capabilities of the Ohlins suspension: firm enough to allow for a committed ride but absorbing every bump in a way that enables the bike to hold a line perfectly while keeping the pillion's back in one piece. This road truly made me fall in love with the Multi's handling. I have several years of riding hyperbikes (1100XX, K1200S, ZZR1400) and it took me some time to get used to the more upright 'trail' position of the MT1200S but I can tell you that on this road (actually on this whole trip) there absolutely wasn't any other bike I'd rather be riding.

Day 7 arrived with us riding from Laerdal to Stordal the long way, heading north to Stryn before turning East to the FV15 and its awesome corners, and testing the MTS's ground clearance before turning to the Old Strynfjell Road with its amazing sights, bumpy corners and a long final unpaved stretch. This road is made for big trailies (yes, even for one that is basically a superbike in disguise)! In terms of pure cornering fun the bit of the FV15 before turning to the Old Strynfjell Road was the best

of whole the trip and it almost made me go back and ride it again!

The plan was then to catch the ferry across the Geirangerfjord to Helesylth, and to climb the mountain via the FV60 to Stranda before crossing the fjord again heading to Stordal, but yet another slight guidance malfunction led me to the more direct route via the FV63. I can't therefore tell you how good the FV60 is, but I can tell you I don't think I missed much, considering the awesome views and fun corners on the FV63.

For all the great things this day had for us, my favourite has got to be the awesome picnic table we secured for our lunch. Standing on a small floating dock to the side of the road on top of a turquoise coloured lake. WIN! To finish the day on a high we had our own cabin at Stordal camping with the Ducati parked right in our porch. Not too bad for budget accommodation!

Come Friday and it's Trollstigen day! A relatively short ride, covering from Stordal to Alesund. We arrived at the Trollstigen from the south so were actually on the top of the mountain looking down at the famous switchbacks. Because I usually prefer uphill corners to downhill (unless I'm on my mountain bike) there was only one solution: to go down, then up and then back down to continue our route. I did have to explain my 'tornante' [hairpin] hating pillion I wasn't going up and down that road for my own pleasure but for science! And only to be able to properly write to you about it after!

Like many other "Bucket List" roads this one was relatively crowded, the buses and caravans making it hard to get a rhythm going and I actually ended up having the most fun on my first downhill run.

Now, I am going to confess that I'm not a big fan of Stelvio-style roads like this. Yes, hairpin corners can be good fun, but the problem with famous roads is they are always busier than

others nearby and the 180º turns are just too tight and narrow to actually get any rhythm going on anything other than a Supermoto. The fact is I had a lot more fun on the roads that led to Trollstigen. Just nearby you can find brilliant sections of roads alternating hairpins with larger radius corners, less traffic and better visibility allowing you to ride harder without the imminent danger of a head-on collision with a bus stuck in the middle of corner doing a 3-point turn.

Do I still recommend heading to Trollstigen? Sure! Just not for the 11 hairpins, but for the amazing views and the great roads on the way there, especially if you are coming from the south.

The surprise of the day was reserved for the afternoon, when we arrived early at our hotel, the Glede po Reis B&B, and the owners (a very nice British couple) suggested a ride to a nearby sandy beach.

What a great suggestion it was! Accessing the beach through a dirt road next to a farm, you end up directly on the sand. I spent the first half-hour taking pictures and attempting to relax on the beach with cinematic style images of massive powerslides on the sand going through the back of my mind. I just couldn't resist the urge to try the Multi on sand!

First of all, the Multi is not a bike that crashes well: too many fiddly, pretty plastic bits. And I don't even have any crash guards yet, so the prospect of dropping my brand new bike 3000km from home was not something I took lightly but the opportunity was just too good to resist! Off with the side panniers, traction control in Enduro mode and there I went for an experimental run on the hard-packed sand; decided it was enough and parked it!

It didn't last long though... I just had to go for a second try on looser sand and with bit more speed!

Caution was obviously the main concern

and my offroad skills are limited to a push-bike, still there was fun to be had and I was actually really surprised with the amount of traction the Michelin PR4s had on the more hard-packed sand and how easy and agile the big Ducati was. I just wish I had a beach like this near home to try it again after installing some crash protection!

The last day on the fjords arrived far too early but it did come with another "Bucket List" road: the famous Atlantic Road, and the most amazing place I've ever stayed in: the Sveggvika Hotel in Averoy.

You probably know as much of the Atlantic Road as I did, and that is the photos of the amazing bridges that seem to jump over the ocean from island to island. Well, that's basically it! Two funky-looking bridges and a couple of good photo opportunities. The road itself has little interest as a biking road, but does provide

fantastic scenic views, especially on the last stretch, closer to Kristiansund.

The highlight of the day was once again reserved for the afternoon. We arrived at Averoy and the GPS ordered me to turn left onto an unpaved road and continue for 2 kms. Great! Another chance to try the enduro mode, and to explain to the pillion that I didn't choose the hotels based on whether or not they included dirt access roads! The view was breathtaking - dramatic looking purple clouds over a stripe of orange sky and an ocean of still water and scattered islands.

After quickly unloading the bike we stood on the deck and marvelled at the scenery trying to absorb each and every colour change until the sun went down. I just wish I could translate in words the feeling of utter happiness and calm this place imprinted on me. After days of picnicking and low cost meals we ordered a grilled steak and a beer and started a plan to move to Norway and buy a place like this. Dreaming is free and this is one dream I shall keep; who knows, maybe one day!

From Kristiansund to Oslo we had a looong Sunday, 560km on what is one of the busiest roads in Norway with speed limits between 50 and 80km/h, a total of 7h46 minutes of riding plus the much-needed stops along the way. Not a particularly good day, the riding was tiring and boring and we reached the point at which we left the fjords and started heading back to civilization.

One day in Oslo was more than enough for us. Staying at a friend's house was wonderful but the city itself is relatively uneventful and filled with potholes. We enjoyed Vigelands Park and the Holmenkollen but for some reason had higher expectations of the Norwegian capital.

Come another long day on the saddle and a new country: 565km to Stockholm on the flowing Swedish roads where everybody seems to be going 10 or 20km/h above the 100km/h speed limit. A very welcome pace


after the extremely low and highly enforced speed limits of Norway.

Unlike Oslo, Stockholm was a very good surprise, and with sunny skies and warm weather it is hands down one of the most beautiful cities I've ever been to. Beautiful architecture, feel-good atmosphere and lots of things to see and do. With limited time we opted to walk around town and visit the Vasa Museum where an almost intact 17th century ship is on display. One of a kind and definitely worth the visit!

With our trip already well into its return leg, we left Stockholm on Thursday heading to an overnight stop in the coastal city of Helsingborg (also worth a quick stop if you're in the area) before catching the morning ferry to Denmark.

Copenhagen was the last stop of our trip, and thanks to the priceless help of a friend that I hadn't seen in 15 years, it was a day well spent that included cycling, boat touring, a military vehicle exhibition, a live concert and even a rollercoaster ride! Top day in top company!

The last day of the trip arrived far too quickly, but duty calls and with work restarting on Monday we decided to try and make it all the way from Copenhagen to Amsterdam on Saturday so that we could rest on Sunday. We succeeded and arrived home in the evening after 794km of sunny autobahns and wet Dutch motorways.

The first trip on the Multistrada was over and we are in love with Norway and the Ducati. Compared to other touring or trail bikes the Ducati has many flaws: the fuelling is not very good below 3000rpm and it hunts the revs at constant throttle; the gearbox is a bit clunky and finding 1st gear when riding around town isn't easy; it is a bit stiff compared to the GS or the Triumph Tiger 800; the combination of the Triumph Tiger 800; the combination of the factors above and the gearing make the Multi a pain to use around town in rush hour traffic. Then again, that's not what she is meant for! Also, the side panniers are not very big or sturdy (they are waterproof though), it's not the easiest to clean when it gets muddy, and it has all those electronics but no cruise control.

But then you look at that single-sided swingarm, the trellis frame and hear the sound of the Testastretta when you rev it to 10,000rpm and you forget all those little niggles. It has a lot of things I love that made me buy it over the alternatives, for example a proper 17-inch front wheel for road riding that's still perfectly adequate for any kind of dirt track/fire road; the 150hp Testastretta engine that makes it an utterly fun and exciting bike to ride (only the new KTM Adventure comes close); and the fact that it is a proper road bike with the capacity to handle bumps and kerbs and the odd dirt road.

Also, it's light and agile, and the ride-by-wire throttle has the best feel of any I've tried. Not too light, not too heavy, it feels just like an old-fashioned mechanical throttle. Then there is the very bling and very effective Ohlins electronic suspension combined with the best looking dash on the market, which is an important feature when riding in the Netherlands as it's the only thing you look at all day long!

In the end though, it's a Ducati. It feels like something special, not just like another bike, a tool or a home appliance.

**Ricardo Rodrigues**

Ed's note: the title, "The Northward Route", comes from a translation of the Old Norse word "*norveg*", believed to be the origin of "Norway".

Check out Ricardo's blog for more photos and a preview of a video of the trip:

multipleroaddisorder.wordpress.com


## The numbers!

Total distance: 3,208 miles

Total ferry crossings: 11

Highest speed: 122 mph

Luggage capacity: 128 litres

Total fuel used: 320 litres (70.4 gal)

Avg consumption: 45.6 mpg

# Control Freaks Rule, OK?

**How's your locus of control today? Its not, despite the way it sounds, a plague of evil flying insects on a mission to rule the world. It is, however, the reason you are still on the planet – probably – so it's worth getting familiar with.**

The term just means 'where you feel the control centre of your life is' and your options are either inside or out. In short, when it comes down to the way your life pans out, in the short or the long term, who's pulling the strings? Are you your own puppet master? Or are you perpetually at the mercy of events around you?

There's plenty of research out there that says that if you believe you have some control over what happens to you then you are less likely to top yourself, less likely to be involved in a crash and able to take five times as much pain as someone who doesn't. Clearly then, this locus of control thing is a powerful tool.

You can have an internal or an external LoC; fairly obviously if yours is internal then you are probably the positive kind of human being who takes responsibility for his day to day life. This isn't to say you won't experience what the psychologists call 'negative life events' – and what the rest of us just call 'life'. You'll just deal with it more successfully. If you have an external LoC then it's always everyone/everything else's fault. This rather puts you at the mercy of a highly paradoxical and unfair world so it's unlikely you'll maintain a healthy perspective on things.

I heard a great example of this on the radio the other day. It was a programme about obese people and their failure or success in losing weight. Interestingly, the ones that had lost weight tended to say things like: "I have lost this weight through eating less and exercising more", while those that hadn't lost weight said things like: "The pills I was on made me hungry and it was raining every time I was going to do some exercise." In the first case, our dieter takes the credit for his achievement, while in the second, the blame is placed anywhere but at the feet of the individual concerned.

You can find examples of this locus of control in action in all aspects of life, but a great place to apply it practically is on the bike. The good news here is that even if you are the kind of person who tends to leave things in the hands of someone else/fate/a deity, you can still get yourself an internal LoC for the road environment.

This is actually pretty damn exciting. Most features of personality seep into everything you do... for example, a generally angry person is more likely to be an angry biker. It's something I've always enjoyed about bikes – the way they uncover the individual in every one of us. You might try and hide your anti-social tendencies in the work environment or your innate hostility at home, but out on the bike in the honesty of the moment, your true self-will always become manifest.

Locus of Control is different. It doesn't really matter who you are or what you are like, out on the road you can change your more general belief system and refine it to the specific situation.

Naturally, I think this should be addressed from the first time you go near a road. What's the point of trying to teach someone the Highway Code when they feel that fundamentally their safety lies in the hands of everyone else out there? A biker I spoke to recently suggested that it's unlikely that someone with an external locus of control would ever start to learn to ride a bike in the first place. I disagree; I think there are lots of riders out there, and new ones coming through all the time, who remain convinced that their continued presence on the planet is down to sheer good luck, and that their untimely departure from the place would be someone else's fault. The sense of satisfaction for someone like this, at the end of a blistering ride, is a genuine high. Feeling as though the Gods were with you personally today has got to be a good feeling.

Motorcycling is a great way to experience the sensation of control. You get it in bucket-loads when you filter or when you use the ability of the machine under you to execute a brisk overtake. If you commute to work you get to exercise all this healthy control before you even reach your desk. How empowering is that? How different from having had to run all the way from the tube-station because the train was late? Isn't this what you tell all your non-biking friends as you extol the virtues of this wondrous means of transport?

For some people, this application of control will reaffirm what they already believe to be true of the world. For others, the LoC they achieve on the bike will be a precious break from the slow attrition of a helpless life. Perhaps most exciting of all, motorcycling can be a tool which allows the practitioner to achieve something they previously couldn't – like a lever allows a mechanic to lift much greater weight than he could on his own. By experiencing a sense of control over your immediate future in one clearly defined area like biking, it might be possible to learn how to be more self-effective in other important areas like work and home. Which, lets face it, tend to occupy far larger chunks of our life than riding a bike does.

The traditional image of bikers is of the hardened anti-establishment hero who needs no help at all with his enormously internal LoC because he's already decided that he prefers his way of doing things. These days the reality is that members of the establishment are taking to two wheels in droves. This isn't just because biking has got trendy and gone all 'lifestyle'. It's because biking offers a troubled psyche the kind of health benefits that might justify its inclusion in the NHS budget. If we got more people onto bikes the positive outcomes are immeasurable. Not only would we see a generally improved attitude to road use, we'd also get rid of the 'sorry I didn't see you' scenario which accounts for two-thirds of bike crashes. OK, so some bikers would still kill themselves by falling off – there is obviously an unhealthy end to the LoC spectrum occupied by those who feel they can control not only their own life choices, but gravity, traction and many of the laws of physics too. I'm also going to guess that most of the 'great' dictators have taken a good idea a step or seven too far, but even so, rediscovering our personal sense of being able to affect our lives might just be the saving of the species – in this society at least.

This is my secret mission while I beaver away in the library these days... I always knew that biking was essentially the answer to life and most of its attendant questions. Now all I've got to do is convince someone in charge.

**'Lois Fast-Lane'**

*Reprinted from The Rider's Digest #147 (April 2010)*


# Blood Runner

**The first Blood Bike group in Britain was established in 1969 and has roots going back over half a century, so I think it's fair to say that the concept of a rapid-response motorcycle-based charity, operated and run by unpaid volunteers is now firmly established.**

As a concept, and as an ongoing operation, it holds an impressive track record; more than one of the current UK blood bike groups can proudly demonstrate in excess of three decades of continual service to the NHS and the wider community.

Ever wonder exactly what we do? Well, during 2013, the 25 Blood Bike groups under the umbrella of the National Blood Bike Association despatched over 1,400 advanced qualified volunteer riders who responded to around 35,000 requests for rapid transport from 262 hospitals across the UK. Between us, we carried everything from whole blood (red cells), platelets, plasma, serum, and surgical instruments to patient's notes, X-rays, human donor milk and MRI scans. Some of these requests were classified as urgent (Priority 2), while a large number were classed as 'emergency' (Priority 1), a term applied to life-threatening scenarios.

Given the professionalism and commitment that are the hallmarks of the UK's blood bike groups, you probably assume that we all enjoy the same privileges when it comes to those emergency calls where what we're carrying represents the difference between life and death for someone. After all, viewed from afar, the exemptions to the road traffic act and other legislation applying to police, ambulance and fire service drivers and riders doesn't vary. A police motorcyclist responding to an incident on blues and twos in London enjoys the same privileges as his colleagues in Lincoln, Lisburn and Leith. The same applies to ambulance drivers, fire service personnel, members of the Special Forces, bomb disposal officers and a host of others driving 'emergency vehicles', all of whom are mentioned in, and afforded certain protections under the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 2006.

If you're a blood biker however, the approach is rather less organised and coherent. In fact, bar just one or two regions fortunate enough to have far-sighted and progressive senior police officers, the use of sirens is prohibited altogether for some groups. A minority of forces adopt a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy, while some others even ban the use of blue lights and/or sirens outright. I've even heard of blood bikers in one region being threatened with arrest by officers of their local force if they are seen using blues and/or twos when on duty.

Cleveland police granted the White Knights Blood Bike group which operates in the area covered by the force a dispensation to use sirens, but stopped short of allowing its riders to pass through red traffic lights. The force even announced the news on its website in a lengthy press release when it was granted in 2011, and whilst the dispensation is a step in the right direction, it means that in practice, riders on an emergency call are forced to switch off their lights and sirens as they approach a red light and wait for it to turn green before continuing. To me, that's a fudge that helps no one. It's also likely to confuse other motorists, many of whom already display an alarming lack of awareness of what to do when they see

an emergency vehicle on a shout.

The legislation governing the use of blue lights and sirens here in Northern Ireland is different to the rest of the UK, and, we're fortunate to fall under the aegis of CRS, a lowland search and rescue organisation which supports the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). As an integral part of that body, we have the support and full backing of the PSNI, which has included us in training sessions run by the force traffic and driver training unit, and furnished all of us with written guidelines on emergency response riding and driving.

Being permitted to use blue lights and audible warning equipment, thus treating red traffic signals as a 'Stop' or 'Give Way' sign, and exceeding speed limits, is a privilege only to be used in cases of genuine emergency, but two sentences dictate all and are permanently seared into the consciousness: safety must *never* be compromised, and you have to be able to justify your actions if requested.

It's not just blood bikers who are swimming in muddy waters when it comes to the use of blue lights and sirens, though. In 2010, an ambulance driver delivering an organ for transplant was faced with the loss of his licence and his job after he was booked for speeding. Paul Bex, from Cambridgeshire, was delivering a liver from Addenbrookes Hospital in Cambridge to the North East when he was caught speeding by two cameras on the A1 in Lincolnshire. Although the CPS announced initially that it would not be proceeding with a prosecution 'as it was not in the public interest to do so', the police maintained that the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 gives a definition of an ambulance that would preclude organ transport and therefore they were within rights to prosecute. Further, they contended that there is case law – Lord-Castle v DPP 2009 ([2009] EWHC 87 (Admin)) – "which reaffirms the definition of an ambulance, and would


indicate that there may be further offences that have been committed in this case regarding the use of blue lights and sirens in relations to the existing regulations."

The police are right in their interpretation of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, but The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 includes in its definition of 'emergency vehicles' in Part 1: ***"a vehicle primarily used for the purposes of conveying any human tissue for transplanting or similar purposes."***

In the event, no action was taken against Paul Bex, but another ambulance driver wasn't so lucky. Andy Thomson was on a blue-light emergency run, taking a child's liver for a transplant operation in Leeds when he was clocked at 84mph on the A1 in Scotland. He expected his fine to be waived when Lifeline, his employer, disputed it and asked police for a Section 87 exemption for the offence – a piece of legislation that the NHS Scottish Ambulance Service uses to avoid fees. But the company was told private ambulances don't fall under Lothian and Borders Police's definition of an emergency vehicle. Andy, of Blyth, Northumberland, was found guilty of driving over the national speed limit and given a £60 fine and three penalty points on his licence.

In another case in March 2014, the High Court in London upheld a charge of illegal use of 'blues-and-twos' against two volunteer paramedics from a Jewish emergency medical service 'with regret'. District Judge Richardson, sitting at Bury Magistrates Court, had earlier refused to convict Michael Issler and Mordechai Bamberger for using blues and two when they had been working for Salford's *Hatzolah*, an emergency medical service for the area's Jewish community.

The initial prosecution was brought after Issler and Bamberger attended an accident involving a car and a motorcycle on the outskirts of Bury on October 14, 2012. Wearing

high-visibility uniforms, they identified themselves to police as Hatzolah Fast Response personnel and were allowed to offer medical assistance in advance of an NHS ambulance arriving at 8.25pm. But officers told the two men they would be reported for using the blues-and-twos on their vehicles.

Hatzolah originated in the U.S. more than 40 years ago with the overriding objective of preserving life, and has since spread to the UK. Its aim is to provide emergency first-aid cover in defined areas, in this case Salford and parts of Bury, primarily (but not exclusively) for the Jewish community. Their average response time to accidents is 'under two minutes', compared with seven to 10 minutes for NHS ambulances, and their vehicles carry medical equipment, including defibrillators, oxygen, and neck braces, as well as dressings, medications and some drugs. Judge Richardson acquitted both men of the blues-and-twos charge on the grounds that their vehicles were being 'used for ambulance purposes'. But the High Court judges ruled that he had got the law wrong and agreed 'with regret' that the appeal must be allowed. Mr Justice Jay said road traffic legislation and the relevant regulations did not currently provide an exemption for 'first responder' voluntary organisations like Hatzolah to escape the restrictions on the use of blues-and-twos.

Lady Justice Rafferty emphasised the 'importance or potential importance' of the case and her own 'reluctance to allow this appeal'. Agreeing with Mr Justice Jay's ruling, she said, '…I am saddened that medically trained citizens seeking only to do good, part of a scrupulously professional organisation with high standards and conspicuously shunning gratuitous publicity, find themselves effectively constrained in their efforts.'

Reading all this, you may be surprised to learn that there is no authority (police, government or otherwise) that issues


permission to use blue lights on your vehicle; any driver or rider can drive using blue lights without needing any higher qualification than a driving licence, although most services insist that their drivers undergo some form of advanced driver training. You must just follow the law.

The relevant legislation is explicit about when blue lights can be used: whilst at the scene of an emergency, or responding to an emergency; to let people know you are there, or to let people know that there is a hazard on the road. Perhaps obviously, they can also be used whilst training, too.

The legislation is also explicit about what you can and can't do, and states that while using blue lights, drivers are exempt from a number of motoring regulations, including treating red traffic lights as a 'Give Way' sign, passing to the wrong side of a keep left bollard, driving on a motorway hard shoulder (even against the direction of traffic) and disobeying the speed limit (in England, Scotland and Wales, that currently applies to police, fire and ambulance services only)

What the law isn't clear about is exactly which agencies can use them; the law relating to blue light and siren use concerns 'emergency vehicles', which it defines as any vehicle used for police purposes (but not necessarily a police vehicle, e.g. search and rescue); for fire brigade purposes (but not necessarily a fire brigade vehicle); as an ambulance for moving sick, injured or disabled people, plus a whole litany of other agencies and authorities including HM Coast Guard, the National Blood Transfusion Service, and, believe it or not, HMRC. Clear? No, it's not to me, either.

The simple fact is, there's no one law in effect; several laws, which crossover, contradict or confuse issues, all come to bear. It's a blunt sword, messy (as legislation often is), and whilst

the police and CPS are responsible for enforcing the law and prosecuting transgressions, it's for the lawyers and courts to argue over specific meanings and interpretations.

This is hardly a new problem. The issue was raised with a parliamentary select committee as far back as 2004 by the Ambulance Service Association (ASA), which represents the 35 NHS Ambulance Services across the UK. Ambulance services are expected to provide an initial response to a minimum of 75% of life-threatening calls within eight minutes and to achieve this, they introduced a number of innovations including paramedics on motorbikes or bicycles, in rapid response vehicles (usually saloon cars or MPVs), and non-ambulance staff responding in their own vehicles as first responders. None of these vehicles meet the term "ambulance" as defined by Regulation 3 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 though, nor as defined in Schedule 2 of the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994.

Those pieces of legislations however contradict The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989 definition of an 'emergency vehicle' in Part I (a) which simply states: ***"a motor vehicle of any of the following descriptions: a vehicle used for fire brigade, ambulance or police purposes; an ambulance, being a vehicle (other than an invalid carriage) which is constructed or adapted for the purposes of conveying sick, injured or disabled persons and which is used for such purposes."***

In many cases, police services are taking a pragmatic view of things and accepting they are "ambulances" in the spirit of the legislation but at least one ambulance service has been advised by its local police service that it considers the letter of the 1986 Regulations and the 1994 Act should be applied, although it has never actually carried out this threat.

The current mishmash of rules on the use of blues and twos by blood bikers across the UK helps nobody, and presents a clear and present danger in certain circumstances to patients waiting at one end for urgent blood products or medical attention. Blue lights and sirens aren't a panacea for all ills, and they aren't a licence to break the speed limit. What they buy us is that most precious of commodities, *time*.

Consider a run across a busy city centre at rush hour. In London, almost every biker will filter to the front of the traffic line and I imagine the same happens at most UK cities. In that regard at least, everyone is on a level playing field. It is red traffic signals that really slow you down though - some of them hold you for well over two minutes. Let's assume a blood biker on an urgent shout is caught at just ten red lights on a cross-city run – and that's being conservative. If he's not allowed to treat red traffic signals as a 'Give Way' sign, he's looking at a potential delay to his emergency journey of over 20 minutes, compared to a blood biker operating in a region where they are permitted to proceed with caution through them. Time, in these circumstances, equates to life or death.

Clearly there needs to be an extensive look at the law pertaining to the use of blues and twos to bring it up to date because as it stands, the law appears to be applied inconsistently. The differing treatment of blood bikers across the UK is one thing, but it's the selective application of a law that hasn't yet caught up with the zeitgeist that really rankles. I'm not aware of a single prosecution brought against an NHS first responder using blues and twos while riding a motorcycle or pushbike, or driving a saloon car or MPV, despite their actions being a clear breach of the existing legislation. Contrast that with the inconsistent treatment, the threat and the actual prosecution of a number of private ambulance drivers who have broken speed limits, or used blues and twos, whilst responding to emergency calls – in the case of the Paul Bex and Andy Thomson, whilst working under direct contract to the NHS, and acting on the orders of NHS staff. Organ runs, and blood or other products deemed to be urgently required by the hospital, all have a human life depending on their arrival within a tight window of time.

Things might be changing, however. A piece in last week's Guardian reports that during the last year, a government consultation has considered the prospect of allowing blood bikers the wider exemptions enjoyed by our professional counterparts in the ambulance and police services – subject to the appropriate training. The Department for Transport has said in a statement that it's aware of the problem, and that the regulations will be fixed accordingly next year. Its track record on this isn't brilliant, so we'll have to wait and see but at least there's hope.

In the meantime, the greatest power the police possess is that of discretion. If forces are prepared to ignore breaches of the law by NHS first responders, then surely that discretion should also be extended to every driver or rider operating under the aegis of the NHS where a qualified health professional has dictated a run as urgent and requiring the use of blue lights.

As it stands, the law on this, as in so many other areas, is an ass.

**Antony Loveless**

**black-rat.net**

## Being Stupid Is Not The Same As Having An Adventure

*"An adventure is only an inconvenience, rightly considered."* G. K. Chesterton

*"Adventures are what you have when you screw up."* Virgil Flowers (John Sanford, Shock Wave)

**On the way through Montana a couple of years ago, I found myself at a service station surrounded by a dozen Harleys and a slightly larger number of middle-aged folks all duded up in biker pirate costumes.**

One of the women asked if I was hot in my gear and my usual reply is, "Not as long as I'm moving." It was a hot day, closer to 100F than 90F. The pack was finished riding and steadily getting drunk. The bump in the road where we'd met had an air conditioned bar and a small motel and, by early afternoon, the bikers had enough of riding for the day. I still had a few hundred miles left to cover before looking for a campsite. They were pretty satisfied with and proud of their 100 mile day "accomplishment." I'd been averaging around 750 miles a day for the past twenty days.

Nosing eastward into the nearly abandoned two-lane, I couldn't help reflect on the fact that there wasn't a stitch of motorcycle gear among that group; no helmets, no armored or weatherproof riding gear, no decent boots or full-fingered gloves, no helmets. Just patches of Village People leather and yards of road-rash waiting to happen in a place where there won't be any emergency assistance in less than an hour. My wife's comment on this behavior is, "Being stupid is not the same thing as having an adventure."

The line between an adventure and a pointless risk that may be so fine that it is only recognizable from an external perspective. My father was convinced that everything I have done in my life was filled with pointless risk; from leaving my first "secure" job to whatever adventures I have had; and all actions between. Everything is relative and most of my Midwestern relatives would argue that adventures of any sort are excessive risks. I come from a long line of farmers and, supposedly, English sea captains and sailors who drowned at sea. I lean more toward my waterlogged relatives than the salt-of-the-earth crowd. However, I suspect that the sailing bunch didn't just jump into a leaky boat and charge into hurricanes. That would be stupid.

An adventurer heading into uncharted territory takes reasonable precautions based on what can happen. Sun Tzu wrote, "If you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies or yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle." Riding a motorcycle is a lot like going to battle. The universe is not on your side. The "enemies" are the road, the laws of physics, other highway users, fate and chance, and every varmint with working legs and an inclination to wander on to the highway. No one is looking for you and nothing is looking out for you. It's war out there and you better come prepared.

A life without adventure is good enough for most humans. A few of us are at the other end of the spectrum and are disappointed with

a single day that isn't filled with adrenaline-generating risk. I'm somewhere between the two. Someone clever said, "Live passionately, even if it kills you, because something is going to kill you anyway." I'm good with that philosophy, but there is no sense in looking to get killed. I suspect that none of us accurately appreciate the risk we're taking every time we mount up and head into traffic on our two-wheeled vehicles. I've broken bones, shredded tendons and muscles, and been so busted up that I was out of work for a couple of weeks. I've subjected myself to a hip-replacement, which was the most painful thing yet. I am still incapable of imagining how much a serious injury is going to hurt before it happens. When I'm feeling good, I'm feeling invulnerable: although, the older I get the less often I am able to actually say I "feel good." Getting old is all about tolerating pain, slowly recovering from injuries, and anticipating the next bout of pain. Taking on lots of risk without any comprehension of the consequences is not being a "risk taker." That's just being stupid. If you have a pretty good idea of your odds of success or failure and you choose to accept those odds; that's the definition of an adventure.

A recent safety promotion used the slogan, "If loud pipes save lives, imagine what learning to ride that thing could do." That's the first step in motorcycling self-awareness. Training and exercising riding skills goes a long way toward learning about the boundaries of control and performance. By "performance," I don't mean 0-100 mph gibberish, I mean braking, turning, knowing your bike's suspension capabilities, traction, and being ready for imperfect surface handling characteristics. Regularly practicing basic and advanced skills is the best way to learn about yourself and your motorcycle.

On a motorcycle, "knowing your enemies" involves understanding momentum, velocity, acceleration (and deceleration), mass, stress, friction, shear and tear and abrasion strength, elasticity, and some basic biology. Once you have a slight grip on those concepts, all of the anti-helmet and anti-AGAT arguments appear as unobservant and half-baked as neoclassical economics. When you know that enemy, you will equip yourself accordingly. Putting on a bandana and a pair of leather chaps and heading into heavy traffic is not an adventure. Ignorance and stupidity are the same character in this situation.

Knowing your enemies means being ready for what the enemy can do. Cagers can do any damn thing you can imagine. Rarely, they are homicidal. Usually, they are incompetent, distracted, and unpredictable. Either way, you have to pay attention to where they are looking, what they are doing, and you have to be constantly mapping out your escape routes. Every foot of the road you travel has to be part of your survival strategy. In my opinion, you are having an adventure when you plan your route and make a backup plan and pull it off as cleanly as possible. If you think a "start seeing motorcycles" sticker and a noisy exhaust is going to get you anywhere, you are just being stupid. If you realize that only your skills and your gear are between you and a wheelchair, broken bones and mostly ineffective pain medication, and a lot of rehab time, you are on an adventure.

**Thomas Day**

[geezerwithagrudge.blogspot.com](geezerwithagrudge.blogspot.com)

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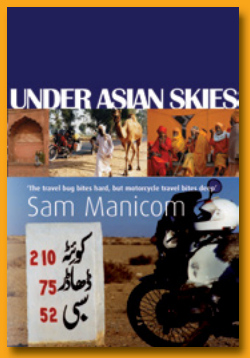


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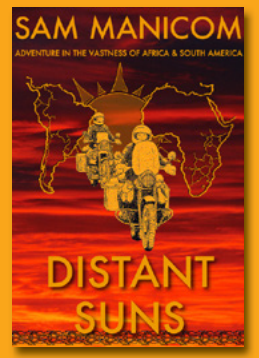


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# Bloody Weather!

**Co-existing with the weather is a bit like living with a woman – when its good it can make you feel great, but when it takes a turn for the worse it can make your life fekkin' miserable. This applies especially to bikers – it's difficult to describe to non-riders just how much pleasure there is to be had from two wheeled travel on a hot sunny day. Its much easier to describe, and for non-bikers to understand, the misery of riding in freezing, wet, or foggy conditions, not to mention the increased risk to life and limb. It's not quite so easy to explain why do we do it?**

These thoughts were going through my head a few days ago as an icy wind was slicing through my leathers and thermals, and somehow finding its way into a gap between my helmet and jacket. The first day of December in South West France can be every bit as cold as the North of Scotland, I've already seen snow, and I'm having to scrape the ice off my car windscreen before I can get to the pub at night. It was a sustained minus fifteen to minus twenty in February a couple of years ago, when *mains* water was freezing deep underground. The car would have made more sense – I was going to a charity event, where you are expected to buy second hand books, Christmas cards, and possibly interesting presents for your loved ones. I had carefully prepared for any purchases by wrapping a bungee strap round the miniscule rack on the rear of my winter bike, but I hadn't prepared for the delicious looking big chunks of chocolate cake, which wouldn't have survived the journey home being squidged by the bungy. The bike was also a bit low on fuel, and I was passing a petrol station on the route, but I couldn't be bothered with all the palaver involved in filling up when fully wrapped against the wintry weather. Anyway, that's what reserve taps are for. So why take the bike? A number of people asked me that very question at the charity event. The truth was that I had missed my riding fix for a few days due to waiting on new brake parts coming from the UK. They had arrived that day, were quickly fitted, and I just had to get back out on two wheels. Explaining that I needed to bed in the new disc pads did little to dispel the strange looks I got from my questioners – they couldn't understand why I had left a perfectly good car at home (with a full tank of diesel) in preference to getting dressed up like Michelin Man, taking the bike, and risking running out of fuel.

Throughout that year I'd been reading the UK rally reports in all the magazines, and the majority had described the heavy rain, deep mud, and generally miserable conditions which had plagued the British rally scene that year. Although numbers have generally been down on previous years, this could as easily be put down to the financial climate as the inclement weather. Those hardy souls who do attend have had to put up with a lot to support the events, and this says a lot for the strength of spirit of the UK rally visitor. I wonder how the numbers at Sturgis or Daytona would be affected if these events were held in similar conditions? Would the average American custom enthusiast be happy to accept that ultimate misery of wriggling around in a small tent trying to pull on a pair of soaking wet, brick hard, mud encrusted leathers, ready for the long ride home in monsoon conditions? Not just once, but at most of the events they attend. I don't think so.

I've been lucky recently in that of the events I've attended here in France, only one was rained out, and that was after the first two days having really good weather. I did abandon ship on the Saturday night, but that was only because a very large river was about to burst its banks ten feet from my tent. A very real chance of being swept away by the torrent gave me the incentive to demolish the tent in record time and scarper. The cleaning and drying process took a good couple of days, but the event was of such quality I reckoned it was worth it. Later in the year, I was disorganised enough to take my summer tent (1.5kg) to another event, when freezing conditions during the night made sleep impossible, but that was my stupidity.

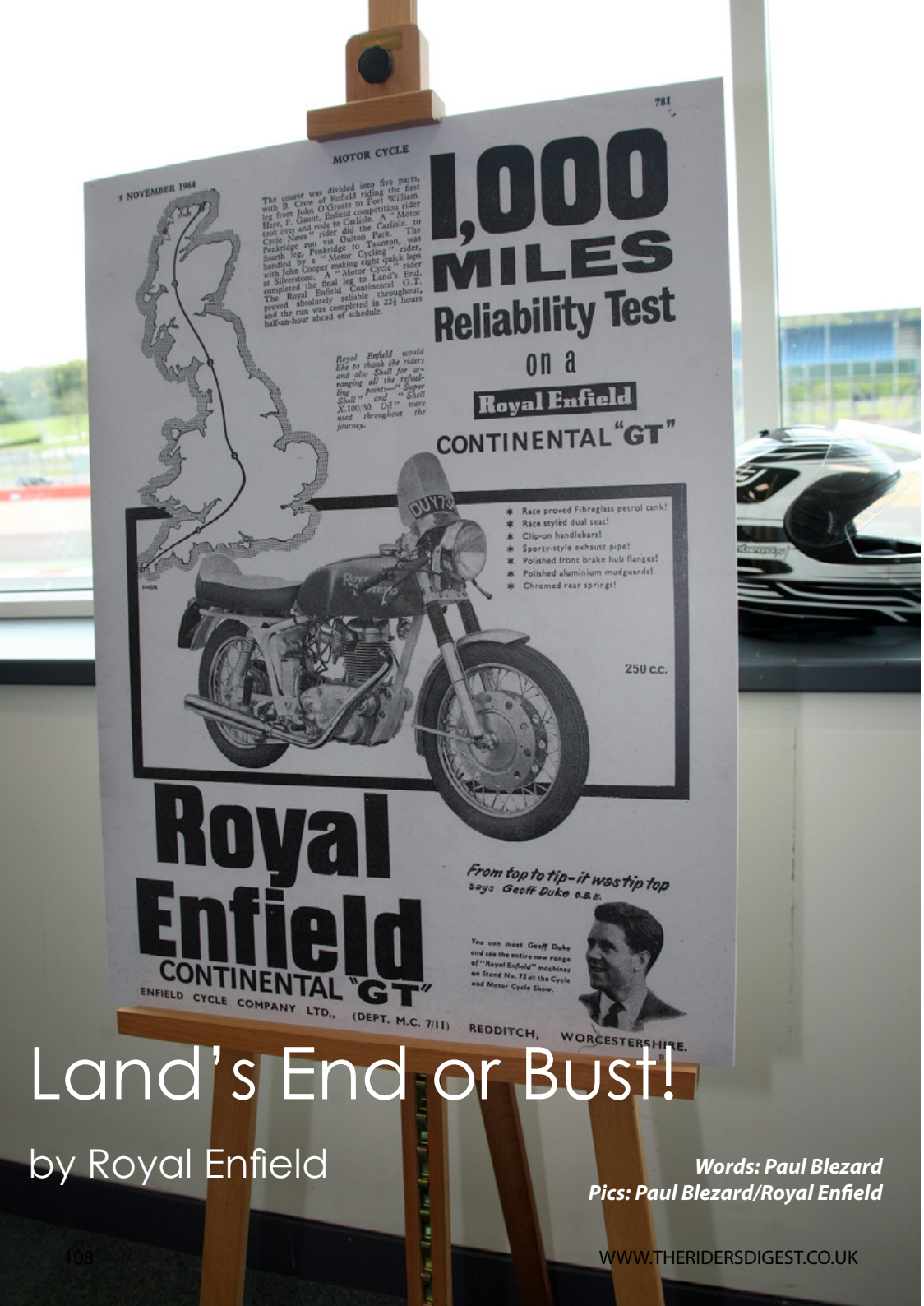
So, how do I explain to my non-biking friends why we put up with everything the weather throws at us, in the name of pleasure? As Billy Connolly famously said "*there is no such thing as bad weather, only improper clothing*", or something along these lines anyway, but how on earth can you dress properly for a weekend of rain, wind, cold and mud? I could tell them of the wonders of modern textiles, like Goretex linings and thermals, but I'm sure that they would consider that to be insufficient compensation for what they see as all the negative aspects.

I was a good boy last night and wrote out my Christmas cards, so decided to do a card run today, a job I usually put off until the last minute. It was minus five degrees in the morning, so I waited until early afternoon when the temperature nearly made it up to zero, bungied the cards to the rack of my bike, and zapped round doing the deliveries. There was still frost on the back lanes, and any puddles on the tracks I used were frozen solid, but I still got the job done much quicker than I could have done with the car, partly because some people are less likely to invite me in when I'm fully weatherproofed and wearing my lid, and partly because I can post the cards in the French letter boxes without getting off the bike. Again, some people asked why I was mad enough to take the bike out in such conditions when I've got a perfectly good car – my response was that I was simply enjoying myself. A job which I normally regard as a tedious chore was turned into a challenging, but fun afternoon out on two wheels, and this made my think how I could reply to my non-biking friends who question my sanity.

So now, when my choice of two wheeled transport on occasions where four would make more sense is questioned, I think I have a suitable response. Biking is an addiction, one which provides immense pleasure to those of us who take it seriously. Like any addiction there are downsides, prices to be paid for the highs that biking gives, but to the true addicts, the highs more than compensate for the lows provided by inclement weather and increased risks on the roads. A slightly modified response is required in relation to attending muddy rallies – we bike addicts like the company of other similarly afflicted souls, and we like the whole atmosphere that surrounds a good rally, so we are willing to put up with whatever obstacles the weather gods want to throw in our path, just to get another fix.

Merry Christmas, Ho Ho Ho.

**Wizzard**




# Land's End or Bust!

## by Royal Enfield

*Words: Paul Blezard*
*Pics: Paul Blezard/Royal Enfield*



***Blez recounts a memorable ride to the end of English earth on an Indian-built bike with a proud British history, inspired by an intrepid journey half a century earlier.***

**When I was a nipper, Royal Enfields were still made here in Blighty and their Constellation 700 was one of the mightiest steeds on the road. British learner riders were first restricted to 250cc machines in 1961 but could ride one at 16. A decade later the minimum age was raised to 17 and I was caught out by the 'sixteener law' as it was called, which restricted 16 year olds to mopeds. However, there were no speed or power restrictions, it just had to be 50cc and have pedals. This explains why the only brand new vehicle I've ever bought was a 60mph Garelli Rekord supermoped because in 1972 there weren't any second hand ones! By the time I turned 17 and was looking to transfer my L-plates to a rip-snorting 250, Royal Enfield's quarter litre, single-cylinder Continental GT was still a desirable learner bike, despite the advent of fire-breathing 250 twins from the Far East. It looked good, had a respectable 21bhp and five gears, (when most British bikes only had four) and had a reputation for lively performance. That reputation was firmly founded on a remarkable feat of speed and endurance shortly before the bike went on sale in 1965.**

The event was christened 'The Top to Tip' and entailed the riding of a sole and long-suffering Continental 250 GT from John O'Groats to Land's End, with detours to both Oulton Park and Silverstone race circuits along the way. Some of the best known riders and bike journos of the day took part and thanks to superb organisation and some heroic riding they managed to cover the total distance of more than a thousand miles in well under 24 hours.

Last May I was invited to take part in a 50th anniversary re-enactment of the Top to Tip ride using the modern re-creation of the GT, the new 535cc model which was launched at the Ace Café in the autumn of 2013. Prior to this my only experience of Royal Enfields was a brief spin on an Indian-built 350 about a dozen years ago in the suburbs of West London, so I jumped at the chance to have a decent cross-country ride on the sporty-looking new machine which was designed in the UK but is of course built in India.

### Top to Tip, mob-handed

The 2014 'Top to Tip' was a multi-bike affair, with five teams of relay riders scheduled to take five bikes along as much of the 1964 route as practically possible, with minimal use of motorways. The 'JOGLE' (John O'Groats to Land's End) trip was divided into six legs, with rider changes at Fort William, Carlisle, Penkridge (Staffs), Silverstone and Shepton Mallet (in Somerset). I was offered the option of doing two legs and given the choice of a long trip back to London from Somerset on a Sunday night, or a longer ride on the bike and a civilised summer evening at the Land's End Hotel, I chose the latter. But as Rabbie Burns so perspicaciously noted, 'the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley'.

I arrived at Silverstone at midday as planned, in plenty of time for some meeting and greeting and a bite to eat before the scheduled 1.15 departure. The most enjoyable 'meet' was with the legendary John 'Mooneyes' Cooper, one of the best British riders of the sixties and early seventies. I well remember reading about his victory over the usually unbeatable pairing of the current world champion Giacomo Agostini on his 500 MV in the 1971 Race of the year at Mallory Park on a BSA 750 triple. The simple headline was 'Coop beats Ago!'

Back in 1964 John did seven laps of Silverstone on the 'Top to Tip' 250 GT, the fastest of which was at an average speed of 73mph. Fifty years on, and now a sprightly 76, Coop was due to do just two laps on the new 535 GT during the lunchtime break at the race meeting taking place that day. There was not one but two of the original 250s on display alongside new 535s and you can see from the photos how the new machine has been styled


OXFORD
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JOHN O'GROATS
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JOHN O'GROATS
EDINBURGH 273m
ORKNEY 8m SHETLAND 152m

to look like the original little 'un.

It was also great to meet Roger Boss, now in his 80s, who had masterminded the whole Top to Tip event in 1964. He told me that former world champion Geoff Duke had been all primed and ready to ride the little 250 around Oulton Park, early in the day, before Coop rode it at Silverstone, but when they got to Oulton the track was covered in ice and leaves! It was sensibly decided to just take still photos rather than risk injury to either the former world champion or the one and only machine!

Friend of TRD (and like myself and Mr Gurman), a former Mercury Despatch rider, Neil 'Woffy' Waugh was also recruited to do the Silverstone to Shepton Mallet leg and we were each kitted out with Royal Enfield riding jackets and an open face helmet. So it was a bit strange then to be asked to sign a disclaimer in which we promised to wear nothing but a full face helmet! Ironically, I almost never wear an open face, but since it seemed appropriate for the occasion, I crossed out that line in the 'blood sheet' before I signed it!

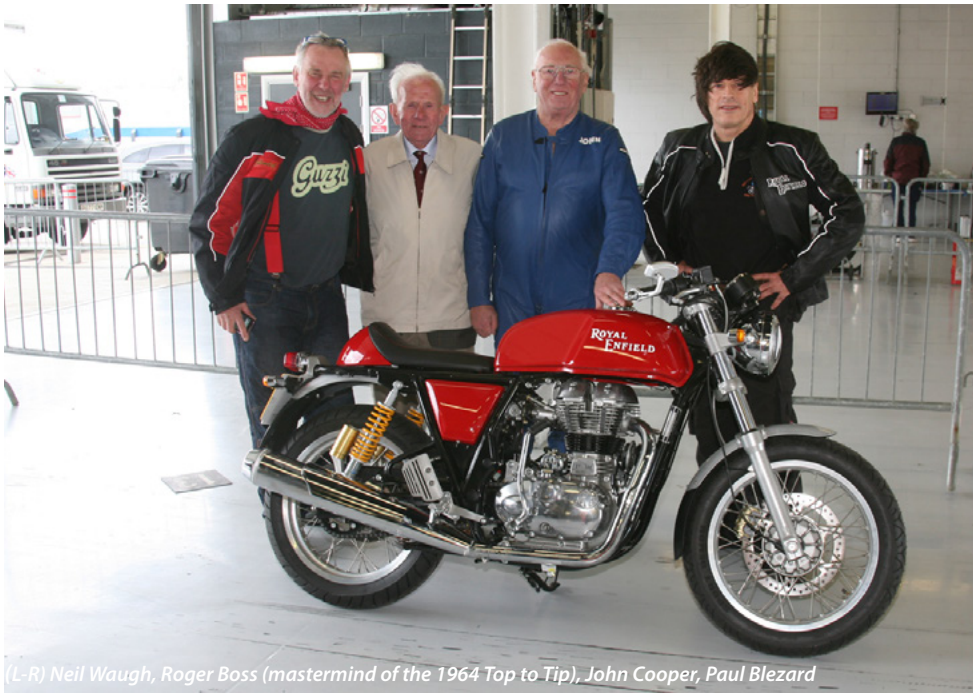
**Hurry up and wait...**

John Cooper did his two laps on the 535 GT, complete with his trademark 'Mooneyes' stickers on both helmet and headlight and posed for photos on the old and new machines. Riders came in having completed the leg from Penkridge and others set off for Shepton Mallet, but when I enquired about 'my' machine I kept being told that it would be ready 'in a little while', so Woffy and I had to abandon our plan to ride together and he set off without me. I eventually discovered that one of the bikes being ridden down from John O'Groats had broken down and had to be rescued by the back-up truck. The decision was taken to give me the 535 that John Cooper had just ridden around Silverstone, but it wasn't equipped with the GPS unit which had been specially fitted to the five 'JOGLE' bikes complete with programmed route map.

When the back-up truck finally turned up with the stricken beast it was pointed out that the 'Mooneyes' bike didn't have either the bracket or the specially added wiring necessary to run the GPS from the crippled bike. (Although the new Enfield comes with new-fangled modernities such as disc brakes, electric start and fuel injection it doesn't have the luxury of a power socket to run electric accessories). The 'Mooneyes' bike also lacked the heated grips which had been specially added to the JOGLE machines, which was a shame. Fortunately I'd wisely brought a tank bag, complete with transparent map-holder on top, so I said "Just give me the GPS and I'll stick it in the top of the tank bag and run it off its battery until it runs out". I also asked for a paper route map which I'd assumed they must have printed out in case of a GPS malfunction, but no, the organisers had put all their faith in modern technology. Big mistake! I just had to scrawl down a few road numbers and place names between Silverstone and Shepton Mallet and hope for the best. By the time I set off it was nearly 4pm, after the time I was originally scheduled to arrive at Shepton, 118 miles away!

**Good handling and brakes**

The official GPS packed up before I even got out of the circuit, so I stopped at the first petrol station to buy a map book! This would have been handy even for the GPS users because the southern side of the A43 dual carriageway had been shut completely for major roadworks and that hadn't been programmed into their GPS, causing a fair amount of confusion for some. The official diversion would have taken me miles out of my way via Banbury, so the first thing I did was work out a cross-country route to Aynho which got me back on track to follow the B4031 to the A361 and Chipping Norton. I quickly discovered that the GT 535 is blessed with good handling thanks to the Harris-designed chassis and also has excellent brakes and I really enjoyed thrashing along those twisty A and B roads. However both the speedo and rev counter 'clocks' went haywire when it started to rain, their needles bouncing back and forth from zero to maximum and back. By the time the route joined the ancient



*(L-R) Neil Waugh, Roger Boss (mastermind of the 1964 Top to Tip), John Cooper, Paul Blezard*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Race Control
Officials Only

Fosse Way at Stow-on-the Wold they'd packed up completely! I was very glad that I'd brought along my ancient but indestructible Garmin XL12 GPS which can run all day on a set of four AA batteries. That meant that I at least had a speedometer and a compass!

I stopped to put on my oversuit and of course it immediately stopped raining but I decided to keep it on. That was one of the best decisions of the day, because on the faster going of the old Roman Road I was soon being really battered by the headwind from the South West and wishing I had a flyscreen like the one fitted as standard to the original 250 (but fitted to only one of the old 250s displayed at Silverstone). Riding through Cirencester brought back distant memories of once doing the Corinium Enduro on a Harley-Davidson MT350 army bike, and thoroughly enjoying the experience. The signposting was terrible though and I did a couple of laps of one roundabout before I got back on the Fosse Way, which changes its designation from A429 to A433 on the outskirts of the town. I stopped briefly at Tetbury to take a couple of snaps of the bike in front of the 17th-century market hall which I first used for a photo a couple of years ago when riding the brand new BMW 650GT maxiscoot, which is at the other end of the motorcycling spectrum from the Royal Enfield and has more than twice the power. Yet in 1964, the Royal Enfield 250 GT would have had about twice the power of any standard scooter then available!

There was a massive tailback of traffic coming out of the Badminton Horse trials for about three miles to the M4 but I trickled past the long line of near-stationary 'jam jars' and horse boxes without losing too much time. Bath can be pretty confusing, so I was glad to be familiar with it but I stopped near Radstock to make sure I was still on the right road for Shepton Mallet. I've since realised that the Royal Enfield JOGLE route actually ran right on or parallel to the Fosse Way Roman Road all the way from Stowe-on-the-Wold to Exeter!

**Shepton Mallet Mishtakes and 5 become 6**

As I approached a junction outside Shepton Mallet I caught sight of my first fellow Enfield rider since leaving Silverstone, and was surprised to see that he was waiting in a filter to turn right into the town centre because one key instruction I remembered was 'Don't go into Shepton Mallet itself – the handover is at a petrol station eight miles further down the A37'. The light was green for me to go straight on as he waited at red for the right turn and I thought "Shall I stop and make sure he sees me and realises his mistake?" I thought, "Nah, he's bound to see me, and then if I turn round and go back, he'll be coming towards me and think he was right in the first place and we'll just waste a load more time and we're hours behind schedule already." I should have stopped and fetched him. Twenty minutes after I arrived he still hadn't turned up and the organisers had to send out a search party. They found him at Shepton Mallet police station at the end of his tether, poor bloke. He hadn't noticed me chuff past him while he waited at the red light and had no idea that the change over point was not in the town... My punishment was the realisation that on the last few miles to Shepton Mallet my brand new map book had gone AWOL out of my tank bag without me noticing...

After refuelling both the bike and myself I did a quick interview with the official video crew and swapped the Enfield open face helmet for my normal flip-front. I was introduced to Rob Graham who had been waiting for hours to take over from the forlorn rider I'd passed in Shepton. We finally set off from Shepton Mallet long after we were already scheduled to be at Land's End! The camera crew came with us in their 4x4 and we did a couple of overtakes on the A37 and a few more on the A303 dual carriageway, a few seconds of which did actually get used in the neat four minute video of the whole event, (unlike my pearls of wisdom!) including one clip which shows me apparently riding the bike before I got on it at Silverstone!


**Ideal for keeping your licence**

It was on the A303 that I discovered just how little power the new Royal Enfield GT actually has, despite being billed as 'the lightest, fastest and most powerful Royal Enfield in production'.

Although it felt as if I was doing about 90mph in the howling gale, the GPS told me that the bike was only doing 70-75mph and even in a racing crouch could barely crack a genuine 80mph on the flat. The fastest 'mine' managed, downhill with the wind behind it, was 83mph. I suppose you could consider that a plus point if you're on eleven points and worried about losing your licence.....

To be fair, Enfield only claim 29bhp from the fuel-injected 535cc single, but I was still expecting that to be enough to propel man and machine to 85-90mph, based on the fact that my first, carburetted Suzuki Burgman 400 single achieved a GPS-checked 92mph (100mph on the speedo) with a claimed 32bhp which was only 23bhp at the rear wheel when tested on the PDQ dyno. It would be interesting to put the Enfield on the same dyno – I suspect it wouldn't show much more than 20bhp at the rear wheel – which would be less than the factory claimed at the crank for the original 250 fifty years ago! I seriously doubt whether John Cooper, even in his prime, (or Marc Marquez, for that matter!) would have been able to make a 2014 535 GT lap Silverstone any faster than the 73mph average that John Cooper achieved on the much lighter 250 in 1964.

Yet 'my' 535 was a tad faster than Rob's – I had to keep backing off on the A303 in order for him to maintain station. The simple truth is that the Royal Enfield 535 GT has about the same 70-75mph cruising speed as the Honda Foresight 250 scooter that I rode down to the late, great John Deacon's Honda-backed trail riding school in Cornwall in 1998. I well remember an enjoyable two lane section of the A303, just past Northay, from that journey and one of the highlights of this entire Enfield adventure was having that twisty climb to myself once again, having just achieved a timely overtake on the short section of dual carriageway before it starts.

I was quite impressed with the way the Enfield chugged up the long climb on the A38 after Exeter before heading off across the north side of Bodmin Moor on the A30. I was also relieved that the vibration from the big thumper was not nearly as bad as I'd feared and perfectly tolerable, even over hundreds of miles. I made it to the last fuel stop near Launceston as night was falling just after 9pm, about five minutes ahead of Rob and the camera crew, but I'd used ten litres of 'juice' to Rob's nine. It was getting distinctly chilly by now, especially without benefit of the heated grips, so I pulled the unlined overtrousers from my tankbag and put them on over the one-piece oversuit – another good decision! The Royal Enfield didn't feel so slow in the dark, even on the dual carriageway. The headlight was not bad at all but I wouldn't have wanted to go any faster on the two lane sections of the A30 than the 535 was comfortably capable of.

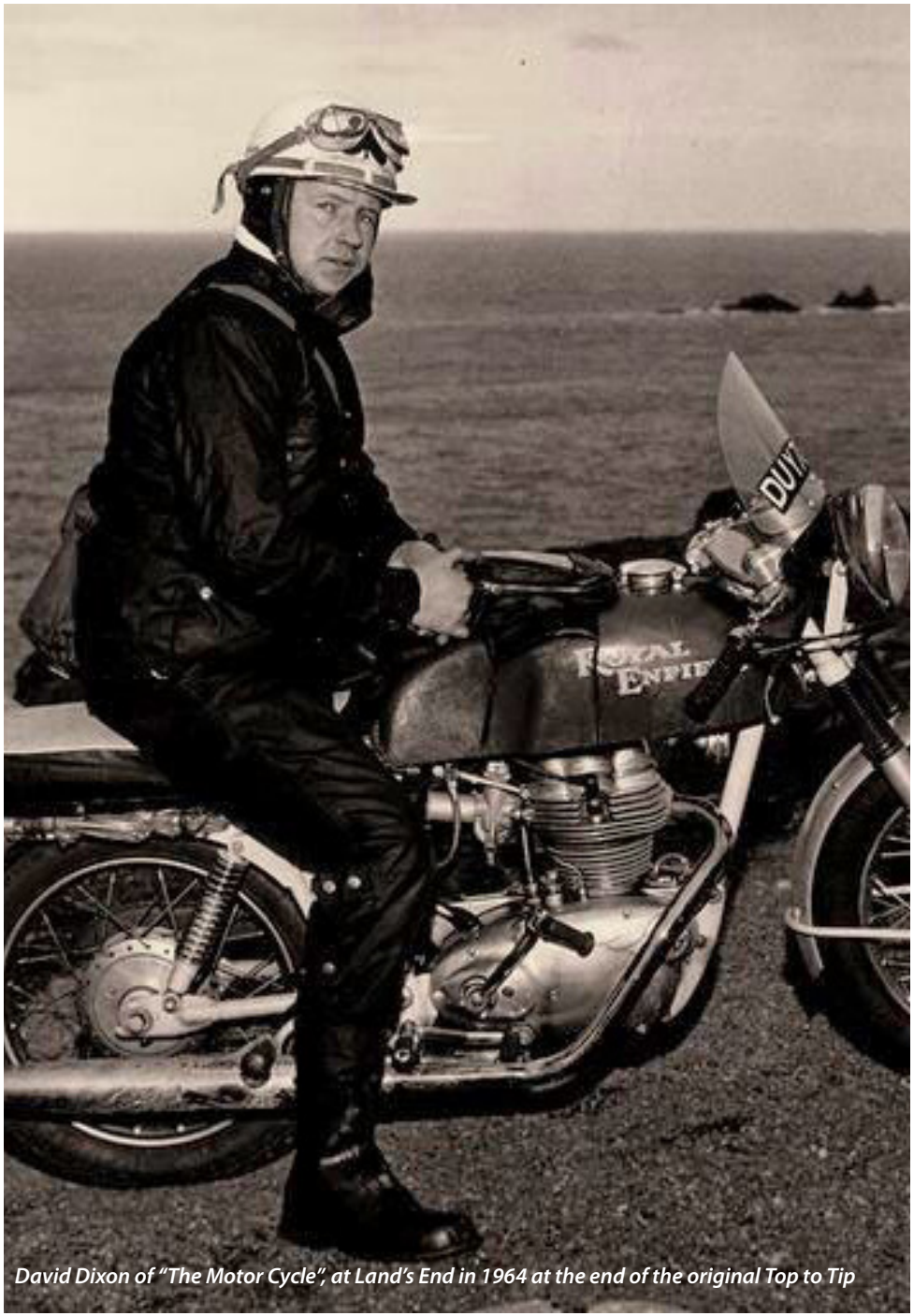
**Fun on the twisties**

The last ten twisty miles of the A30 from Penzance to Land's End were actually the most enjoyable of the whole last leg. There was virtually no other traffic in either direction and the 535 GT was great fun to ride on it, even in the dark. Unfortunately that section was less enjoyable for Siddhartha Lal, the head honcho of Royal Enfield, since his 535 broke down about five miles from the finish and it was still parked forlornly at the side of the road when we came past several hours later. And he was only riding his GT from a Hotel in Devon to Land's End! I never did find out what caused it to conk out.

After riding 179 miles from Shepton Mallet Rob and I finally made it to the Land's End Hotel just after 11pm, where the other three Top to Tip machines and their riders were waiting for us. My Canon EOS tells me that we actually took the last group photo by the famous signpost at 23.16. To his credit, staunch Royal Enfield enthusiast Tom Bray got on the first bike to arrive at Shepton Mallet and made it to Land's End just before 7pm, enabling 'his' bike to complete the 952 miles in under 21 hours, beating the original 1964 time of 22 hours and 20 minutes, albeit on much better roads with many more daylight hours and a slightly shorter route. It was appropriate that Tom was first to arrive since he'd bid £250 in an auction on behalf of the Riders for Health charity just to ride that leg. The bike itself, with precisely 1,797 miles on the clock, was also donated by Royal Enfield to Riders for Health and auctioned on their ebay site on December 2nd, raising £3,500 for RfH, whose health workers in Africa really do use motorcycles to save lives.

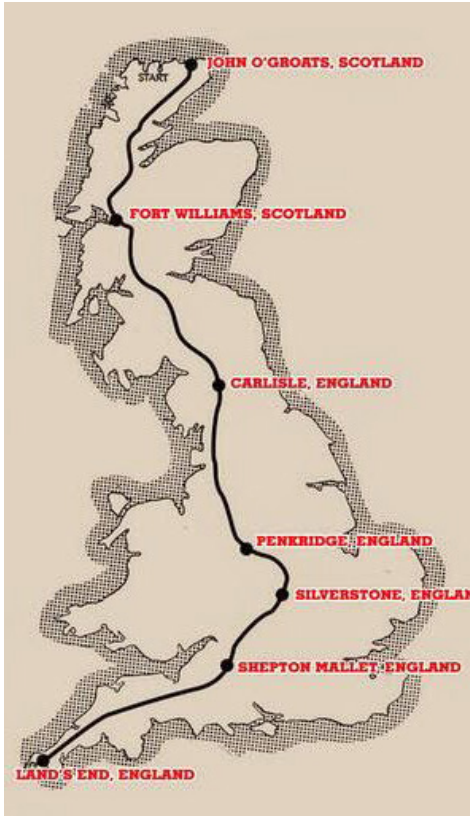
It was great to meet up with Exeter-based friend of TRD Sam Manicom who rode the last leg from Shepton with Sandy Caulfield, one of two female riders who took part, the other being Sarah Bradley (who can also be seen on her own 1939 Harley in Martin Haskell's DGR article elsewhere in this issue). Regular readers will be familiar with Sam's ads in TRD for the four excellent books he's written about his eight year ride around the world on his trusty BMW R80GS, most of which was done with his partner Birgit riding her own BMW 650 (I should declare an interest in admitting that I edited the last two books, but I'm not on commission!). Ms Caulfield gave me an illuminating lecture on the importance of Twitter for us freelancers, although I have still not succumbed to its siren call.

*Tom Bray, first rider to arrive at Land's End during the 2014 Top to Tip*



*David Dixon of "The Motor Cycle", at Land's End in 1964 at the end of the original Top to Tip*

*(L-R) Rob Graham, Paul Blezard, Dan Cartwright, Sandy Caulfield, Tom Bray, Sam Manicom*




Dan Cartwright of Motorbiketimes.com was the only other rider who got to Land's End before dark and he told me that his clocks had gone haywire too. At least both our steeds kept going, unlike the CEO's! I had been looking forward to meeting Mr Lal but he'd left Land's End by the time we got there. While I was able to relax with a drink and a long hot bath my riding partner Rob had to dash home to Somerset in order to be home in time to go to work at the crack of dawn on Monday morning, poor bloke.

The morning dawned bright and sunny and was much more conducive to taking photos than it had been the night before, apart from the strong wind which ruined my coiffure. Overall it had been a thoroughly enjoyable adventure; it was just a shame about the hold-up at Silverstone which made for such a late arrival in Land's End, at least for me and Rob. As you can imagine it took a considerable amount of organisation and expense to arrange for all those bikes and riders to be in the right place at the right time in five different locations across the country, complete with back up, plus all the display bikes and 1964 memorabilia on show at Silverstone. So thanks to all concerned. But my greatest admiration remains for the guys who rode that original 250 from John O'Groats to Land's End in 22 hours in 1964 – all organised and co-ordinated by Roger Boss without benefit of GPS or mobile phones! The 2014 organisers did manage a bit of magic though, since the official photos show five riders setting off from John O'Groats and six arriving at Land's End, despite two machines breaking down en route!

The Top to Tip run had been timed to coincide with the opening of Royal Enfield's first dedicated store in the UK a few days later, where I was able to find out more about the original event and finally meet the CEO of the company, along with the Brits who designed the GT, but that story will have to wait for the next issue of TRD...

**Paul Blezard**

[Four minute video of the 2014 Top to Tip]

[More photos on the Royal Enfield website here:]

[Riders for Health]

*(L-R) Tom Bray, Enfield CEO Siddhartha Lal, Dan Cartwright*

# A RIDERS' LIVES SPECIAL: 'HAIRY BIKER' DAVE MYERS

Interview: Martin Haskell

**Since they burst onto our TV screens almost 10 years ago, The Hairy Bikers have ridden a variety of machines into our living rooms, prepared some very tasty looking meals in beautiful locations and then ridden off into the sunset.**

But the one thing they never seem to feature or talk about is the bikes, so when I got the chance to have a chat on the phone with Dave Myers, I thought it would be a great opportunity to ask him a few questions about a life on two wheels.

So loosely using the ten questions from TRD's 'Rider's Lives' as a basis I set about finding out what makes Dave tick.

**TRD: Why don't we see more of the bikes on the various Hairy Bikers series?**

Dave Myers: "It's an odd one really, I'm an avid biker, but it's a really hard thing to translate to a populist audience. We're motorcycling in some of the most wonderful places in the world, but if you hold a shot [of a bike] for more than 15 seconds - which may take two or three hours to traverse – you've lost the audience. There's no communication between myself and Si [King - the other Hairy Biker]. We've tried all sorts of ways of making it work with intercoms and stuff, but it's just never natural.

And even though it's a programme about bikes, it always seems to get cut out. That's a part of life really, we always say to the BBC there's three million people with motorbike licences in the UK, but they say there's an awful lot more people who are cyclists but we're not doing a programme about that either!"

**A perfectly reasonable explanation then. I explained to Dave that The Rider's Digest is read almost entirely by people who are interested in motorcycles, to which he enthusiastically replied "now's our chance!" Next I asked Dave what his first motorcycling experience was:**

"My father used to go to work on a BSA Bantam, when I was about two, three years old I used to toddle down to the bottom of the back street, he'd be there coming home from work, and he'd let me sit on the tank holding on to the handlebars and pretending to ride the motorbike up the back street, so in actual fact that was the first motorbike. The first bike I had myself was when I was a student, I bought a Cossack Ural Mars Mk III, with a sidecar.

"The idea of that was I'd go straight to a 650 with a provisional licence, and I could take passengers so my mate could go in the sidecar. It was mad in those days, you could ride an unlimited capacity bike if it had a sidecar, you couldn't take a passenger on the pillion, but you could take one in the sidecar, and they didn't need to wear a crash helmet."



**And they were harder to ride too.**

"Well the Cossack was harder to ride, it was an absolute pig of a thing. I was at Goldsmiths (College of Art, South East London), so I had this flat in Asylum Road, Peckham, and the dealer was in Dalberg Road, Brixton. The bike was just left there (at the flat) with the keys. I had my provisional licence, and we literally just fired it up and rode it round and round Peckham, and the second day we rode it to Brighton, we had mates who were at college there. It got us there and back, which was a minor miracle really. That was about the only trip I accomplished on it without the RAC. I think I was the reason that the premiums went up!

"People tend to think with Si and I that it's a manufactured thing, but we've just always had bikes. With me, it came through my father. My dad was of the generation where when you got your first driving licence you simply applied for it, there was no test. He said that he never thought that he'd ever afford a car; a lot of working men were the same. They aspired to own a three wheeler, because you could drive it on a motorbike licence.

"After the Bantam, he got a Norton Dominator, but he didn't have it for long, it kicked back and did his Achilles tendon. It was a catastrophe really, for him as a motorcyclist and us as a family, because we ended up having to sell the bike while he was off work on the sick; once he'd done his Achilles tendon he couldn't kick the bike over, so he got one of the very first electric start Puch scooters - a Puch Alpine it was - which now are quite collectable.

"I remember my dad got busted because my feet wouldn't touch the running boards at the side, which apparently is illegal. He had these 'L' shape brackets made up so my feet would go in these little stirrups on the back of the scooter. We used to go all over the place, so I haven't had a time when I haven't had a bike."

**Deviating from the Riders' Lives questions again, I asked Dave how they chose the bikes he and Si rode in the various 'Hairy Bikers' series:**

"They're all hired, we have to not show favouritism to a particular manufacturer because it's the BBC, which gives us the freedom to ride different makes. It sounds a bit 'old gitty' but as time goes on the first priority is for a good set of panniers and heated grips, and then beyond that we're not too fussed really! We're very lucky, we get the chance to ride anything."

**I noted that initially they seemed to ride the ubiquitous BMW GS:**

"Yes, we had a lot of the BMWs; BMW were really good to us, in the early days they were the only ones who would facilitate any kind of help anywhere in the world, and they were also able to supply bikes. So say if we were filming in Namibia, they had a dealer in Windhoek; they would rent us a press bike.

"The exception was Argentina, that was

a really difficult place, what with import tax, and we ended up on two ten year old Honda Transalps, which were incredible fun, both off road and on the highway. They were great bikes; it's funny, but when you get a relationship with a motorcycle - unless it bites you – you do end up falling in love with it a bit you know?

"We've had everything, from a 125 Minsk in Vietnam, Enfields in India; we had Ducatis, Yamahas, Moto Guzzis, and then when we did the Food Tour of Britain - fifteen thousand miles one winter - that was the Rocket Threes, and that was like that because it was a tour of Britain and it was the flagship British bike really at the time.

"There's always a kind of logic to how we picked a bike, when we did the 'Bakeation' series in Europe we rode KTMs; we were going through Austria and I love the KTM, it's the only bike I've bought after a series, I loved it, I've still got it."

**I mentioned that Bakeation was being repeated at the moment.**

"It's quite nice, we get more repeats than a bad pork pie!"

**I asked Dave if he and Si King actually ride the bikes between locations, being a bit of an anorak I noticed that on the Bakeation series they would set off from one country wearing open face lids and arrive in the next one wearing different gear and full face helmets…**

"What we do is we always take a full face and an open face, a lot of the time for the camera it's better to wear an open face. We're sensible bikers of a certain age, if we're doing a motorway run we'll put a full face on, or if the weather's howling with rain I'll wear a full face, generally we take two, and it's the same with kit.

"In a hot country – we had problems with the BBC in Asia - I'd always wear a helmet and gloves, but I wanted to wear jeans. They wanted us to wear full safety kit, it was 39 degrees and 100% humidity, it was quite hard work really, but we always take a range of gear, which is why we always want a bike with panniers.

"Obviously we have a camera van with us, we can put helmets in there, but things to do with the bike - day to day things - we always take a rucksack with our notebooks, and books with our recipes in the top box, and then we've got light boots and heavy boots, a roll of spanners and tie-downs. We like to be self-sufficient for that.

"If it starts to rain, we just pull over and put an over suit on, it's as simple as that. That's why it chops and changes really."

**So you don't ride out of shot, put the bikes in a van and jump in a limo then? [laughing]**

"Oh god no, no, but sometimes actually, when we were doing the 'Mums Know Best' series, we would have one episode with three mothers from three different places, but they'd be in the same area, so we'd pick the bikes up in that area, and then we'd go home or do something else and the bikes would go on to the next area. But really, for the trips as you see them in the programmes we'd be riding the bikes.

"Bakeation. That was the most amazing motorcycle journey, we rode seven thousand miles that summer, from Kristiansand in Norway all the way to Spain via Romania, Hungary (not forgetting The Netherlands, Germany, Slovakia, Austria, Italy and France among others) and the bikes were transported once, because we didn't have time to ride them. That was from Romania to Austria, the rest of the time we did all the miles ourselves. With the overseas ones we like to pack the bikes and go.

"The next trip we do will be to the Baltic, and the nice thing about that is that we'll start off in Newcastle on the ferry, go to Amsterdam and start the series in Poland, then Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, St Petersburg, Moscow, then through Finland, Sweden and Denmark. There's a great bike ride there.

And the great thing about that one, is that it's achievable from your front door. I'll go over to Kingy the night before, and we'll get the bikes on the ferry, have a few pints and then in the morning you're in Amsterdam. Moscow's not that far, that's what I love about it, once you get your head around it. It's like, you know, you set off from England, with gentle riding you'd be in the Sahara in three days."

**What is your current bike?**

"I used to have six or seven, I've whittled down to four. I've just bought one this week actually, so I'm on four at the minute.

"I've just bought a GTR1400 Kawasaki, I tried one a while ago, a press bike somebody had, and I did enjoy it, they described it as a cross between a spaceship and a sofa. I'm going to do some touring with my wife this summer, she's missed out on the bike; we've been away every summer. This year Si's been on the sick so we've got a bit more time *[Ed's note: Si King is currently recovering from a brain aneurysm],* so I just thought with the GTR1400 it would be perfect for the pair of us. We'll do some touring in France and Switzerland, then down to Italy I've got the KTM 990 Adventure, which I've got nicely set up with Akrapovics, spot lamps and crash bars. I took that to the TT this year, its good fun.

"I've got a custom bike that Hawg Haven made in Norwich, it's like a street-fighter version of a Brough Superior, which even four years on from being registered it's still a work in progress.

"I've got a Moto Guzzi California Vintage, that's a 2005, I bought it brand new. I did quite a lot of my courting on that, my wife was on the back; she's Romanian my wife, so we'd kind of meet up in Milan on the Guzzi, so we call that one 'Gina Lollobridgida'. We can't get rid of Gina, it's one of those sentimental bikes.

"I had two sports bikes, which I got rid of, I simply wasn't using them enough. I had a Hayabusa which I bought two years ago, and I sold it last year, and I worked out that I'd done 300 miles on it in a year, which is criminal really.

"And before the diet – we did the 'Hairy Dieters' series where we both lost weight; we'd got massive – I'd bought an MV Agusta F4."

**I commented "beautiful bikes"…**

"It was beautiful, but not when you're eighteen and a half stone it wasn't, (laughing) you kind of sit on the front, you're like a croissant on the F4!

"I might be alright now I've lost a bit of weight, it was the most beautiful bike, it had titanium exhausts, and it was nicely set up. It was the winter, and I kept it in the kitchen, and a friend came to dinner, and looked at it longingly, so after dinner I fired it up and blew all the leaves off the house plant!"

**What bike would you most like to ride/own?**

**"**I'd like a Vincent Black Shadow, I've seen them, I've looked at them; I had the chance of one once when I didn't have any money. It's a proper piece of motorcycling history, and I love the fact that it was the fastest motorcycle in the world. It was also a motorcycle that a bloke could go backwards and forwards to work on. I'd love one of those to have and to keep, but I think I've missed the boat now because they're so expensive."

**What was your hairiest moment on a bike?**

"Well, there's one that we managed to keep out of the papers really, it was the 2006 TT, on 'Mad Sunday'. I had a Benelli Tornado, which I loved and I'd just run in, it had done 1,700 miles, and I came off. I wasn't on the course. I'd been round a couple of times having a fine old time; there was a lot of idiots there, and I'm too old, I should have known better.

"I'd been to Peel for a couple of kipper baps and a pot of tea, and on the way back to the course I was in the middle of the road, and so was a scaffold truck. I'd come round Devil's


Elbow and I hit him. I wrote the bike off, and apparently I wrote the scaffold truck off. It was 50/50, it wasn't all my fault; it was just one of those things really.

"I got a helicopter ride to Noble's Hospital and there were seventeen of us in orthopaedics that day. It was quite an extraordinary and eccentric place to be. The first question was 'what was your bike?' There were people there in plaster, every bed had shredded leathers underneath and a crash helmet on the side. It was like a field hospital of idiots! I broke my wrist and my shoulder. I learned my lesson really, it was an accident, but actually, had I been more aware it was avoidable.

"Si and I over the years have learned to ride so defensively. No matter how fabulous it feels you've still got to be aware, you've still got to give that extra 20% caution. There's no point in going to the white line in the middle of the road because there might be someone else on it, and that somebody else might not be as agile as you."

**What was your most memorable ride?**

"There have been two that stick in my mind really, one was in Argentina. We left Buenos Aires and we rode through the desert down to Patagonia, it was a wonderful place to ride.

"Buenos Aires is brilliant, with the wide roads, the people are cool, but you get out of the city and you see the farms where the Gauchos are. The roadside food stops are brilliant; the seafood, the steaks and the people, and that was one of the ones where Si and I had a long distance to cover, about seven or eight hundred miles, and we just arranged to meet the crew in two days' time. They filmed us going out into the Patagonian Desert, and when you've filmed one bit you've filmed the rest.

"They've actually got countdown markers, like 'bend coming up in three miles' you get so absorbed into a straight line. We were on these Honda Transalps, and they were gorgeous little bikes. We had a top box on with a jerry can of fuel in, and that was about a prepped as we were. It was absolutely glorious, just stopping for coffees, or a steak; that was magic.

"And I think going to the Sahara, the road from Marrakesh to Merzouga, you know, the Paris-Dakar rally, one of the stages there; literally where the rolling sand dunes start. When you get on top of the Atlas Mountains you're in the snow on the road from Marrakesh, but then on the other side of the mountains the road to the Sahara; through Ouarzazate. Again, it's glorious.

"You've got to watch out for livestock on the road, but the roads are alright; you can see for absolute miles. But there is something about riding from England and letting that front wheel get stuck in the sand in the Sahara. There's quite a lot of bikers do that. In Merzouga there's one big hotel, it's rather lovely, with a swimming pool, and there's always some bikes that have made that pilgrimage. I think it was Ted Simon that started us all off really."

**What would be your ideal soundtrack to the above?**

"At the minute, Aerosmith. I went to see them at the O2 World in Berlin on 9th June so I've got a bit of Steve Tyler going on in my head. A bit of AC/DC; rock and roll – I love my rock and roll. Some riders wear a Walkman under their helmet but I can't do that. I sing to myself though!"

**What do you think is the best thing about motorcycling?**

"There's a bit of the 'cowboy and his horse' thing about the motorbike. It's when you get somewhere and you feel you've arrived; there is a sense of freedom. There's a feeling of camaraderie, and there's a relationship with your vehicle that you don't have with a car. I like my cars as well, and I've got a nice car, but it's not the same as a bike.

"The funny thing is, I've had some epic trips with Si, around Europe, and then last year in

Japan and all over, and I've toured with my wife in a car. And it's interesting, she wasn't a biker born and bred, but she wants to go away on a bike, which I think is great.

"She said she's got time in her head to think and relax; she smells everything, and it's like when you stop in Italy and you have an ice cream. You're hot, and you've got your jacket undone with the arms tied round your waist. You're sweating cobs with the ice cream, and the bike's ticking away. You're aware of the landscape and the scenery, and you feel good because you're physically riding it. I feel I'm a much better motorcyclist than a car driver, because you ride the bike, that's how you get a relationship with it, you get to know it. It's the whole package really."

**What do you think is the worst thing about motorcycling?**

"Well the weather, for one thing. As you get older there's no getting away from it. Si and I have done so much of this, where we've finished filming and we've had to get the bikes somewhere, and we've just had to ride them for two or three hours in freezing rain in the night. You get home and get into the shower and when the hot water hits your feet, your feet ache.

"The worst fear is car drivers that are unaware. The only accident that Si has ever had, and funnily enough of all the places around the world it was when he was on his way to film in Newcastle, literally in his home town. There was a lady in a Renault Clio who knocked him off his bike. She was still in her pyjamas, she'd just dropped somebody off at work and was half asleep. He said it was just that feeling that it was inevitable, and not being able to do anything.

"If you're careless on a bike, you hurt yourself, and you can kind of sharpen yourself up. But in a car you're unaware potentially of the damage that can be done really."

**Name an improvement you'd like to see for the next generation?**

"I don't know really, there's that many restrictions for motorcyclists. I've just come back from the TT, and the motorcycling scene and the people, it seems like it always was - with the enthusiasm and the camaraderie. Motorcyclists now are certainly playing the game as far as drinking and driving are concerned, so that's a huge improvement, people are not riding their bikes drunk.

"I'd like to see more motorcycles on the road really. I think it would solve a lot of problems. It's amazing actually, the cycling lobby seems to have such a big voice now in London with Boris Johnson. I've never been an active member of the lobbyist motorcycling groups, like MAG, I think there's definitely a place for them to preserve our hobby and pastime, and as two fifths of the world realise, it is a useful form of transport."

**How would you like to be remembered?**

"Oh, just as a bloke that had a go really. I've been lucky enough to do the dreams, and sometimes the nicest thing about our programmes - you look at our shows, and it's like going away with your best mate. It takes you out of yourself and you learn a bit, and if people remember that about me I'll be well happy really.

"Some of the time we pinch ourselves. In the early days we were filming in Mexico, and it was like Mexico's Grand Canyon. The crew wanted a sweeping shot of us, so they got on the radio and said 'we'll be about twenty minutes setting up, it's a long panning shot', and we were standing there on top of this canyon, on this gorgeous road, and the eagles were soaring beneath us. I'm with my best mate, and you have a smoke - I don't smoke, Si was smoking then - and a bar of chocolate, and it's quiet for twenty minutes. It was like 'my god, it's the best job in the world!' Sometimes we can't quite believe it. And we do look skywards

and say 'thank you very much!"

**With the 'Riders' Lives' questions done and dusted (and then some…) I asked Dave what was next for the Hairy Bikers.**

"The Baltic. We like the big road trips; the viewers do too. There's a place for that, and a place for the studio cookery stuff - which I must admit we enjoy - if we get one of those in the winter, thank you very much!

"But The Baltic's the next, and then we've got ideas beyond that. We've got a title; we're thinking about Australia - we've come up with such a good title; we'll do 'The Hairies Down Under' (laughing) I mean, that's just begging to be made isn't it really?"

**To close, I talked to Dave about Si and asked how he was doing during his recovery from the brain aneurysm:** "Yes, he's fine, he'd had a bit of a setback, but we're blokes, we just get on with it really, he just needs a bit more time, but he'll be right. It's one of those things. We're lucky enough now - I'm doing a few bits and bobs on my own, but we can postpone the series until next spring, and give him a chance to get really fit. That seems to be the sensible way to do it."

**I asked Dave to give Si our best wishes and thanked him for talking to The Rider's Digest.**

**Martin Haskell**

# Souvenirs from India


Words: Jacqui Furneaux

**Of course I would have loved to have had my Enfield with me but it wasn't that sort of trip to India this time. It was a 'proper' holiday with my daughter who had said she wanted to go to Jodhpur in Rajasthan. So Jodhpur it was, and motorcycling would not be a feature of it although we both agreed that if there was a possibility of hiring one, we would. Abby, who has a motorcycle licence too, had visited me before whilst I'd been in India and like me, wanted more of it.**

I couldn't help being drawn to the few Enfields I saw whilst we were walking about, far fewer than when I'd been in India for so long between 2000- 2002. Now Japanese and Chinese motorcycles outnumbered them but the Enfields I did see were in immaculate condition, obviously loved and valued by their owners. In Jodhpur, whilst we were choosing which spices to buy, amid the market mayhem, I heard the unmistakable sound of an Enfield which drew up alongside us. Shining despite the dust, it rested and tinkled as the hot metal cooled and, ignoring the spices, I couldn't resist having a good look and a chat with its owner who invited me to ride it there and then! Such is the generosity of strangers. Reluctantly, I had to refuse as I was wearing flimsy sandals and tourist clothes, not the usual sturdy boots, jeans, fingerless gloves and long-sleeved tee shirt I'd always worn in India on my own Enfield.

A look through the guidebook revealed an unexpected delight. Not far away from Jodhpur was:

***Diary entry 8.1.2013.***

Today was Enfield Shrine Day- an easy excursion to Om Banna Shrine from Jodhpur



bus-stand. We hopped on a bus going to Pali and our arrival at the shrine, near Chotila village, was announced by the bus conductor. It was a much bigger spectacle than I'd imagined, recalling roadside shrines in Catholic countries but people were queuing to pay homage .

In 1988 a 28 year-old man from the village had crashed into a tree whilst riding his 350cc Enfield Bullet and died instantly. People said they saw the spirit of the man after his death and he is now revered as a god because miraculously, (and miracles are very popular in India) when the Enfield was taken to police headquarters, it 'made its own way' back to the scene of the accident. Despite being chained up and drained of fuel it happened TWICE! Now it is a deity in its own right, enshrined in a glass case behind the tree where it crashed, with garlands of marigolds all over it. We stayed for a couple of hours observing the spectacle of droves of people arriving to see the Enfield. Two musicians competed loudly with each other with Indian keyboard/bellows instruments, one man and one woman both looking devout whilst an attendant accepted 10, 20 and 50 rupee notes and placed a vermillion powder bindi spot on the forehead of devotees. I received one as well. Incense sticks burned and people shuffled round silently in single file touching the shrine, barefoot and obviously moved. There were many dozens of people there plus sellers of cold drinks and little boys selling stickers.

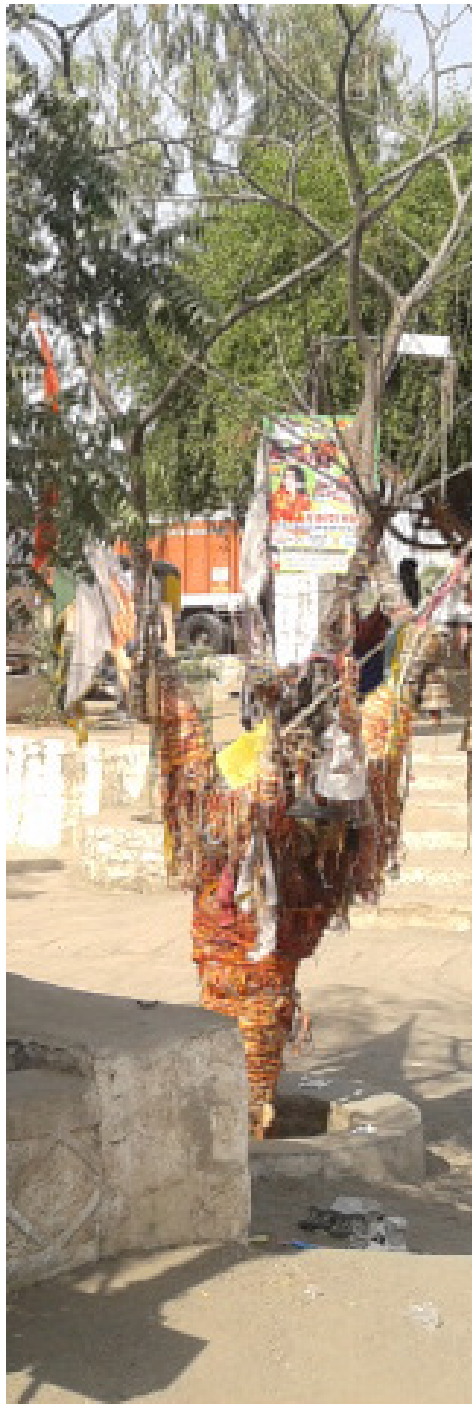
On the other side of the road was a dhaba, India's rural equivalent of a motorway service station, but without fuel pumps at this location. In addition to the restaurant and snack-shop and there were many stalls next to each other selling identical memorabilia of the deceased. Om Banna pictures, stickers, clocks,

posters and key-rings. I ate a lentil curry lunch there. Abby's appetite was a little 'off' that day and she had a safe canned soft drink! We talked with the waiters. They explained in very good English that Om Banna was a popular man, the son of local landowners, almost of princely status and very generous to the villagers. He had been drinking on the night of the crash and would I please like to buy a sticker?

The tree he rode into is now decorated with sparkly coloured ribbons and rope. It is necessary to honk your horn as you pass the shrine as doing so may prevent an accident. With all the buses and cars pulling in and people wandering into the road as they disembarked from buses and cars which were drawing up and parking in some disarray, we wondered if it might be more likely to cause one. It was a really interesting experience to go there and couldn't leave without buying an Om Banna sticker as a souvenir.

Another day's outing, a tourist trip in a jeep, (which I'd had to help push to get started!), to an 'ethnic village' was a poignant journey for me. It took us on quiet, out in the country roads, just the sort of roads that years before, Hendrikus and I had tootled along in no hurry to get anywhere in particular. I realised how very lucky I'd been to have that experience with all the time in the world just being on our Enfields. "Mustn't be greedy!" I said to myself. I'd had the best part of seven years wandering around the world by motorbike before riding back to the UK with my constant mechanical companion. That's what I call a souvenir and now I have an Om Banna sticker, too!

**Jacqui Furneaux**



# MOTOLIT & CULTURE

by Jonathan Boorstein

## Stocking Stuffers

**Odd literary pickings this year for what the three wise dispatch riders might leave under the tree or stuff into a stocking. Needless to say, the bulk are coffee table books.**

Coffee table books are of course all about beautiful pictures, usually lush photographic images, but are often neither well-written nor well-researched. When such books are geared to more specialized audiences – motorcyclists are but one example – the research is better, but the writing is not as good. Sadly too many don't exactly respect the literacy of their readers.

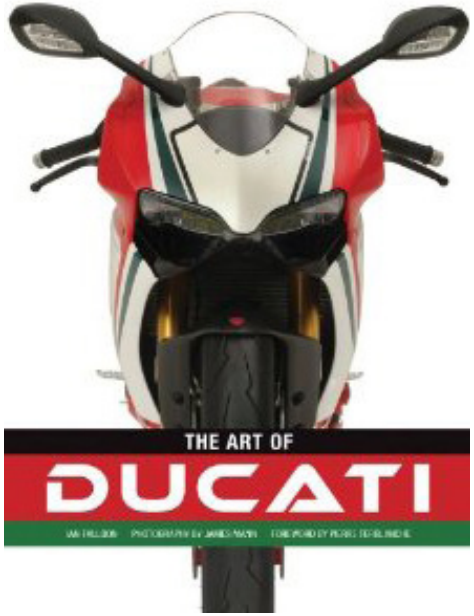
***The Art of Ducati*** (2014) is a rare exception. The photography, which is what most people buy when they buy coffee table books, is excellent. The images are by James Mann, supplemented by a selection of archival photographs, advertisements, and promotional material.

Mann, who has been photographing vehicles of one sort or another for some twenty years, notes at the end of the book, "Shooting motorcycles in the studio involves a lot of careful lighting to make it look as though you haven't really done much at all" (p.238).

The result is photographs that throw every detail into sharp focus. The pictures favor clarity and detail over mood or atmosphere. Every Ducati included in the book looks as if it's ready for its close up at a Concours d'Elegance.

The words are by Ian Falloon, one of motojournalism's more respected and knowledgeable writers. Falloon has been writing about Ducati for forty years and is considered an expert on the marque. He makes up in depth of knowledge what he lacks in distance.

The book is divided into five parts – Singles, Belts Banish Bevels, Superiority Through Technology, and so on – and highlights 26 motorcycles. The history section starts with the company's founding in Bologna in 1885 as an electronics firm. It was quite successful and by the 1930s was the second largest in Italy. Falloon does




the usual mad dash through Ducati's activities during World War II that motorcycle companies from Axis countries get so that nothing unpleasant need be said.

To be fair, Ducati doesn't enter the world of motorcycling until after the war so in this case the first half of the company's one hundred and thirty year history would be of anecdotal interest only. And it is Italy, which has seen more than its fair share of would-be empires come and go than any other place in the known universe.

Ducati as everyone thinks of it today began in 1946 basically to try to keep the company going. The Cicciolo – a cheap 48 cc engine attached to a bicycle – did the trick. While Falloon tends to gloss over the pure business side of Ducati's history – he skips past a few key names and investors – he does take the reader from that humble single cylinder to the most recent high-performance vehicle.

Falloon covers the important points of each motorcycle he includes: what is the same, what is different; what is usual, what is unique. The mix includes production models, limited editions, and prototypes. In addition to the specs, he discusses the development of each machine in terms of racing and of the market – which usually means the American market. Berliner was particularly influential in that respect.

Parenthetically, there is probably a serious book to be written about the impact such influential distributors had on motorcycle design and development for both good and – more often – bad. That is an observation not a homework assignment for Falloon who probably has his own list of books he'd like to write.

Back to *The Art of Ducati*: Fallon is not shy about pointing out defects or other peculiarities. "Typically Italian features," he writes about the 175 Sport, "included a weak six-volt electrical system and marginal lighting" (p.19).

Each profile ends in an evaluation of the motorcycle as a whole. Typical summations might be: "As a racing bike with lights and a horn, the 750 SS was a perfect example of form following function, the successful aesthetics not the result of stylists, but of subconscious evolution" (p.83); or "Scramblers were stock roadsters Mark 3s with dual purpose styling, thus making them among the first motorcycles to emphasize form over function. They were highly successful, particularly in the United States and Italy, and have continued to enjoy cult status in Italy" (p.40).

He also covers the important designs and their key creations – Fabio Taglioni and the 98cc Gran Sport, or Marianna – as well as the impact of Leopoldo Tartarini of nearby Italjet (who also created motorcycles for the ubiquitous Floyd Clymer).

Falloon is careful of his facts, but doesn't let that get in the way of a good story. "In 1976, when Ducati's management finally realized that the parallel twins were a commercial disaster, legend has it that Ing. Fabio Taglioni smiled, reached into his bottom drawer, and presented full technical drawings for a 500cc V-twin engine" (p.110).

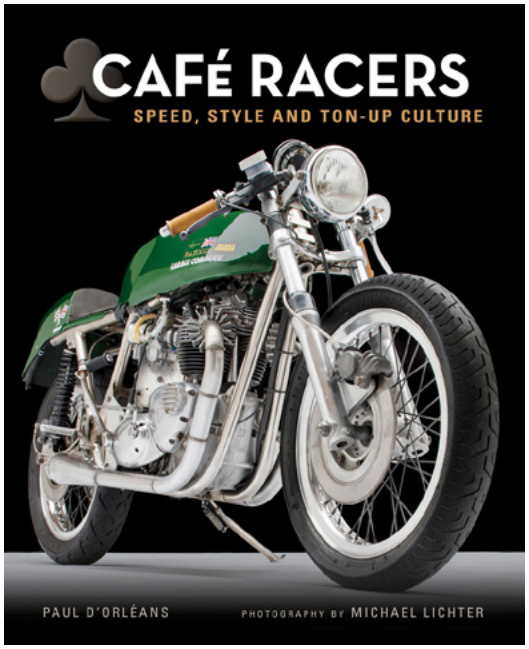
The foreword is by former Ducati design director Pierre Terblanche, who turns out to be quite the wily charmer. Unlike too many forewords, Terblanche remembers to introduce the book and its writer from the opening line: "I first met Ian Falloon… " (p.6). That doesn't stop him from noting later on that "The 'art' aspect of any motorcycle is informed by its design"; adding "There's art in the modern approach, but it is not artisanal"; before asking mischievously which is better and closing with "Let the reader decide" (p.7)

*The Art of Ducati* is of course ideal for the Ducatisti, who would probably want it regardless of whether it's good, bad, or indifferent. Because of its overall quality however it would also be a good addition to the bookshelf of those interested in the history of Italian motorcycles in general. Regular readers of my reviews may or may not be aware my day job is art and design critic. Ducati has crossover appeal for anyone intrigued by post-war high-end Italian design. Had the imprint been Rizzoli instead of Motorbooks that would go without saying. In addition to the regular book, there is a hand-numbered limited edition available as well, which includes a poster presentation box.

Terblanche's playful comments about the artisanal over the app coincidentally turns up in other books as well. In ***Café Racers: Speed, Style and Ton-Up Culture*** (2014), Paul d'Orléans observes about factory built café racers that some "are retro and some are techno" (p.11), but adds later that the modern sportsbike is not a café racer "because it has no soul" (p.141). "Real motorcyclists" he claims prefer metal to plastic and like the look of machinery as well.

Reviewing a book by d'Orléans raises questions of conflicts of interest since we are connected on Facebook, although we have never met nor even had an extended conversation. What makes entering that grey area worthwhile is that *Café Racers* is a rarity in motorcycle literature, or motolit: an exhibition catalogue. The best known example is from the Guggenheim Museum's Art of the Motorcycle exhibition in 1998.

This exhibition, called "Ton Up! – Speed, Style and Café Racer Culture", was held at Sturgis, South Dakota, during Bike Week 2013. That's not as counter-intuitive as it sounds. Sturgis is one of the more than half dozen sacred or pilgrimage sites for motorcyclists in North America. It is also the largest. Since 2001 Michael Lichter, a noted photographer of custom bikes, has curated an annual Motorcycle as Art exhibition there. Last




year, he invited d'Orléans to co-curate a show celebrating the past 50 years of café racer culture. D'Orléans is well known in café racer revival circles here in the US, but better known internationally for his blog The Vintagent.

It was apparently quite an exhibition. In addition to close to three dozen vintage and custom café racers, including some that were built for the show, there were images from the Ace Cafe collection, vintage Rocker jackets from Lewis Leathers' archives, and a display of custom painted helmets, among other supporting exhibits.

A year later the exhibition catalogue turns up. The text is by d'Orléans while the photography is primarily by Lichter, supplemented by a mix of archival pictures and d'Orléans's wet plate images (which will probably turn up in a coffee table book of their own at some point in the future). Typically each of the 33 motorcycles profiled gets a six-page photo-spread, with a box highlighting four to seven key specs. The text explains a bit about the background of the original motorcycle and the ideas behind the customization, if any.

There's a 1962 BSA DBD 34, Gold Star Clubman that's described as an "immaculate motorcycle" and a 1965 Dunstall Dominator Norton Atlas. More than competing with those two is a Godet-Egli-Vincent and a custom Steve Carpenter-built 1969 Honda CB750 KO dubbed "The Tenacious Ton".

A slick art deco bike started out as a 65 BSA A65, but took a dramatic turn into the ray gun gothic end of steampunk. It has the too-cute name of Beezerker, but cute names abound. Elsewhere there is the "Ed Norton" a reference to a character in the classic American sit-com, *The Honeymooners*. And Arlen Ness's café racer custom is called, of course, the NessCafe (supposedly his personal favorite).

I would have liked to have seen Willie G. Davidson's XLCR next to the two Harleys

customized in homage to Harley-Davidson's first, and last, factory café racer. From the photographs it's difficult to tell which is better: the XR Café or The American Café.

D'Orléans's three-part history of café racers provides breaks in the pages of images as well as his decidedly personal take on the subject. His theory is that the café racers were part of a longer "tradition of motorcycles built for speed and a rider bent on achieving it" (p.11), which he traces back past the Promenade Percys of the 1930s to the 1860s and the development of the steam velocipede. He gives Sylvester Roper, an American, the credit for the invention and the French for creating what we now call the motorcycle industry.

Roper was also the first victim of that tradition, dying from the effort to achieve a record. "Put a sprocket-edged halo on the man", d'Orléans writes in his exuberant rock-and-roll style, adding, "he was the first to get it about motorcycles" (p.15). Such overlanders as Geoff Hill, Lois Pryce, Graham Field, Sam Manicom, and even Ted Simon might beg to differ.

By the Great War "ur" café racers were already being produced. D'Orléans cites Norton's 1916 Brooklands Road Special (BRS) as an example. By the 1950s the basic checklist of what makes a café racer had been set: low handle bars; rear set foot pegs; and an abbreviated seat – all the better to keep the rider tucked in out of the wind. He goes on to hit the obvious marks – Dunstall, the Rickman Brothers, and even the Ace, though without the notorious and with the aigu. But what can one expect from a man with a surname like d'Orléans?

In the last section, he gets around to discussing the café racer revival of which he is a part. The venerable *Classic Bike* magazines "were first worn out by my eyes, then my fingers; they became my bible and my pornography", he writes. "Within a few weeks, I'd added Ace bars, found a jet helmet and goggles, and was transformed into a café racer" (pp.145-146).

He wasn't alone. "An underground café racer scene emerged in London, Paris, Madison, and San Francisco as young enthusiasts of racy vintage bikes formed clubs" (p.142). In addition to such clubs as the Triton of Paris and Vintage Rockers of San Francisco, there was and is London's Mean Fuckers Motorcycle Club. David Lancaster provides a brief history, which, curiously, is not listed in the Table of Contents.

The Mean Fuckers probably deserves a book of its own considering its membership over the years. In addition to some members who went on to establish such boutique motorcycle magazines as *DICE* and *Sideburn,* there were such builders as Jake Turner and Nick Walker; musicians as Chrissie Hynde, David Vanian, and Paul Simonon; and writers as Johnny Stuart (see Eagle on the Back).

D'Orléans excludes squids from the tradition, for although they like speed, they like "plastic motorcycles" (p.141).

The history is lively and engaging, though I could have done without the caffeinated word play. Italian café racers are referred to as "Espresso racers" (p.80) and one custom shop calls itself The Motor Coffee Company. That he managed to resist calling German contributions kaffe klatsch racers is a relief.

Mark Mederski of the National Motorcycle Museum provides a brief foreword to the catalogue and lent two motorcycles to the exhibition, a 1962 Norton Manx and a 1970 Velocette Thurxton. The foreword is listed in the Table of Contents.

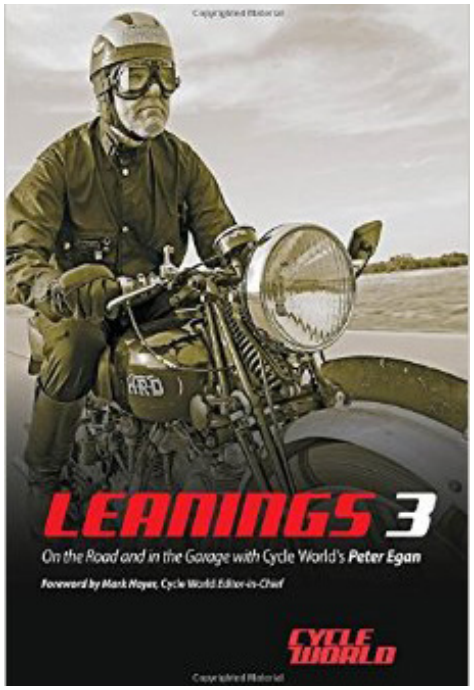
I rather wish *Café Racers* had been available when I wrote about café racers and racing a couple of years ago (The Ace Cafe, Café Racers, and Racing Aces). It would have shone in that context. It certainly does in isolation. Obviously it's a good addition to anyone interested in cafe racers, past or present. People who like customs might also enjoy the book.

Peter Egan is a near legendary figure in American transportation journalism, a field he dominated for more than three decades mostly through his columns and articles in *Cycle World* and *Road and Track*. He has won both the Ken Purdy and Dean Batchelor awards. *The New York Times* deigned to acknowledge Egan as one of the country's "standout writers" in automotive journalism.

His monthly column in *Cycle World* was a must-read for those interested in café racers and vintage motorcycles. He has even become a verb. To Egan is to buy back a motorcycle one once owned and restored.

He is also responsible for directly or indirectly inspiring a few generations of motojournalists to enter the field, including one lowly book reviewer. In any other field in the world, all that would mean a Festschrift in the future. In this field, we get ***Leanings 3*** (2014), the third, and probably last, compilation of his columns for *Cycle World* because Egan semi-retired last year.

The column was not as much about motorcycles or motorcycling per se – although it sometimes was – as much as it was about living the motorcycling life, mostly with the vintage bikes of the retro rocketeer, but with modern bikes as well. Egan is, in his own estimation, the Will Rogers of motorcycling: he never met a motorcycle he didn't like (p.84).




Amusing and insightful by turns, the columns also featured a recurring cast of characters, rather like a sit-com. There is the long-suffering Barbara, his wife; The Slimey Crud Motorcycle Gang (along with the annual Café Racer Run); and a round up of a baker's dozen or more of the usual suspects, of whom Mike Mosiman, Rob Himmelman, and Pat Donnelly seem to be the most likely. Chris Beebe is less frequently mentioned in *Leanings 3*, but may be the most important in the arc of Egan's life.

He covers some of the usual topics one expects in a regular column – riding solo, the need for proper protection, and the "fine art" of riding at one's own level even when riding with others – as well as some of the sorts of speculations that are more usual for the post-run round – bikes that are keepers, the appeal of the scrambler, and my favorite, what motorcycles the Beatniks would have ridden if the Beatniks rode motorcycles. That Egan and friends are a bit clueless about

the Beats only adds to the fun of what is in the end a great selection of bikes to ride.

Other columns deal with older and vintage bikes. Egan, no snob about marques, is keen on getting another XLCR. Several columns across a three-year period are devoted to his finding, buying, and restoring a 1964 Bridgestone 50, the first motorcycle he owned. Later on, a 1961 Velocette Venom enters the picture. He compares the Velocette to the Morgan motorcar: both held on to older styling long after everyone else moved on to newer designs. (My old fencing teacher had a Morgan: I must say it never occurred to me to buy a Velocette to accompany him on his rounds.)

Egan even notes motolit sometimes in passing – he claims that Robert Pirsig turned the motorcycle tour into a religion – sometimes as the topic of an entire column – "On the Trail of the Mighty One" takes a quick look at Che Guevara's motorcycling touring, saying, "In fact, he could have written a whole second book on an earlier trip he took in 1950, riding his bicycle – with a Ducati Cucciolo engine mounted on it – on a 2,400-mile tour of northern Argentina" (p.17). Great quote. Wish I knew about it when I was writing "Che Sera Sera". What Falloon might think of that factoid is anyone's guess. He certainly didn't include it in *The Art of Ducati*.

The photographs accompanying the columns are muddy, uncaptioned, and did not appear when the columns were first published in *Cycle World*. Captions and crisper images would have made the photography a nice added value.

Clement Salvadori has been writing his column, "Road Tales", for *Rider* for about as long as Egan has been writing "Leanings" for *Cycle World*. However, Salvadori's new book, ***No Thru Road: Confessions of a Traveling Man*** (2014), is an odd sort of travel-memoir, with the places he has visited arranged alphabetically rather than chronologically.

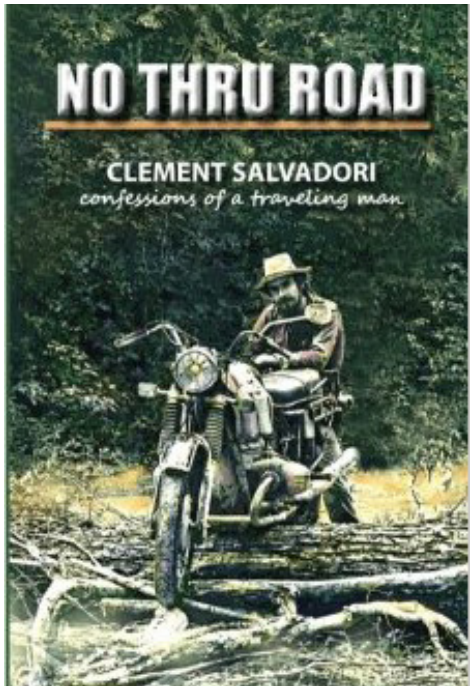
Getting the book published was apparently a trip in itself. A Salvadori book titled *No Thru Road* was announced by Whitehorse Press in 2010. It had the subtitle *The Faces of Motorcycling*. There was little other information, but I pre-ordered it through Amazon anyway. Five months later Amazon informed me it was no longer available.

Four years later, a *No Thru Road* turns up with the same cover art but a different subtitle and publisher: Trovatello Press. I don't speak Italian, but Trovatello looked funny. It looked like someone was being a bit too clever for his own good. So I looked it up. Trovatello is Italian for foundling. There is no website (at least as of October 2014), but the street address is uncomfortably close to where Salvadori lives.

There is something very wrong with the state of motorcycle book publishing when one of our most eminent writers has to self-publish.

The reader will find nothing of that in the actual book, which is a selection of more than 30 traveler's tales drawn from more than 50 years of travel, usually by two-wheels, under duress by four. In a way, Salvadori mapped the territory of the travel writer who happens to travel by motorcycle that Hill would follow a generation or so later.

Salvadori's first motorcycle trip was in 1957 when he was 17 (what were his parents thinking?) and the last in the book is two years ago. The foreword is by Salvadori's wife, Susan, which includes a solid summary of the contents: "Before (becoming a motojournalist), he had already gone 'round the world, traversed the so-called Hippie Highway from Istanbul to Kathmandu, played chess in Afghanistan, found a girl finding God in Kashmir, adventured deep




into old Africa, been rescued in the Sahara by the French Foreign Legion, been offered a slave-girl bride in Tanzania, freighted himself and bike to Australia, and had seen Vietnam several times, to name a few" (p.2).

She might have added a trip to Scandinavia that proves Salvadori never met a herring or a Viking ship he didn't like as well as a funny story about being an American counsel in Naples that easily rivals any of Paul Theroux's counsel's tales. Salvadori also found time to travel the Latin American Hippie Trail. As he comments in a somewhat different context elsewhere in the volume, "This is a book about roads, and places that roads take you" (p.75).

Those roads lead him alphabetically from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. Salvadori's idea is that will make it easier for the reader to pick and choose (critics don't have that luxury; it's a forced march from first page to last). But not all places are identified by country: some are by state or area, Alaska, say, or Bavaria. The real problem is the jumps in time that order creates. In one chapter he's 20; in the next, 58; and the one after that, 34.

The conceit also leads him to break up longer tours into specific destinations. As a result supporting characters jump in and out of the narrative with jarring results. His Hippie Highway tour – at least the parts he writes about – are divided into Nepal, Kashmir, and Afghanistan, with two to eleven chapters between each. His traveling companions, Cass and Kenny, were important once, but here they are not allowed to breathe, let alone develop. They feel like excess baggage.

In a different trip – the 20-year-old Salvadori's tour of Europe in 1960 – only gets two stops: Britain (called the British Isles here) and Pamplona, Spain. The British stop includes picking up a brand-new Triumph T120 in the Midlands and a custom jacket from Lewis Leathers before stopping by the Busy Bee. To be fair, that can stand by itself, but what happened between then and Pamplona for the Running of the Bulls is not only unknown, but also separated by chapters about later trips to Japan, Guatemala, and New Zealand, among other places. A shame really since it was apparently quite a trip and back, taken when many of the places and events were at turning points. He writes about the Running of the Bulls, "hanging on the barricade and looking down on the seething mass below me it seemed that more than half of the runners were Ivy League undergraduates. Button-down shirts and chinos definitely outnumbered the white pants and shirts and red scarves of the locals" (p.236).

The book is illustrated with poorly reproduced family snaps, supplements by some wonderful drawings by Tom Brown, whose sketches were

quite an asset to Salvadori's earlier book, *101 Road Tales* (which I've reviewed elsewhere).

It's interesting to compare or contrast Egan and Salvadori. Egan, no matter how much he talks about the existential joys of riding alone, leaves the reader with the sense that someone – from *Cycle World* or, more likely, the Slimey Crud Motorcycle Gang – is there with him. Salvadori, the gregarious, self-styled "traveling man", is much more the lone-wolf rider, alone, but not lonely, always willing to chat with any stranger he chances to meet.

Both riding writers (or is that writing riders?) know how to plan a trip to the last necessary detail. Egan outlines eight points for "Planning a Great Big Road Trip": 1: Find a Date and Protect It; 2: Skip All Yellow Zones; 3: Choose the Smallest Possible Roads; 4: Use the "Never a Dull Moment" Principle; 5: Stop for the Night at Towns in Bold Type; 6: Stay Flexible; 7: Don't Plan Too Large a Loop; and 8: Don't Blow Off the Last Day (Egan, pp.143-145).

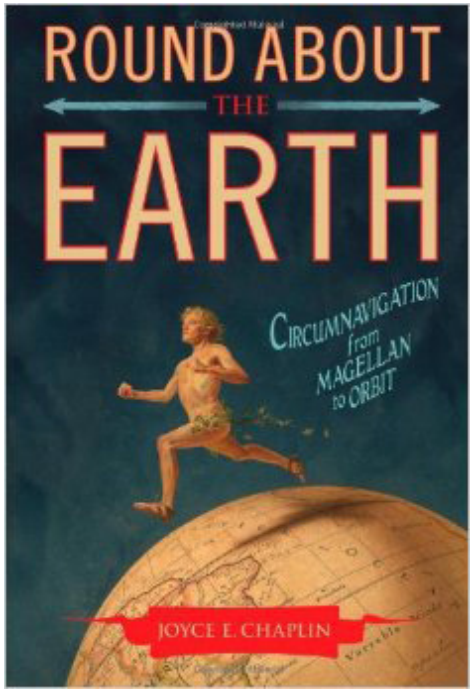
The more verbose Salvadori goes more laconic and conceptual while writing about a scouting tour of Brazil. "What is the make-up of a good motorcycle tour? A number of essential parts include: The country has to be interesting. The roads have to be fun to ride. The accommodations should be pleasing. The food must be tasty" (p.92). Alas he leaves the question as to whether a capirinha is a food group open.

Both men also write about taking Bonnevilles to the Bonneville Salt Flats to set personal speed records. In "Bonneville Fever", Egan starts with a fight that broke out in a store on Black Friday (the day after Thanksgiving and supposedly the heaviest shopping day of the Christmas season); goes on to say he's not in that bad a mood because he's working on a bike; and the bike belongs to fellow Slimey Crudian Lew Terpstra. Terpstra, then 68, wants to go to the Flats to set a speed record in two years as a way to celebrate his 70th birthday; they find a bike (in the Dark Aisle of Lost Bikes); arrange to have the motor fixed by an expert while Egan and Terpstra restore the rest of the bike; and winds up with Egan saying it will be a great way to celebrate a 70th birthday (Egan, pp.185-7). Parenthetically, Egan filed his last official "Leanings" column before he could report whether Terpstra made it to 70, let alone to Bonneville.

Despite having more than three times the pages and perhaps the word count, Salvadori provides a narrative that runs less all over the place. Salvadori wasn't helping a friend get to Bonneville, "Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah 2010" is about Salvadori setting his own personal best with the help of a friend, Chris. The first three pages alone (roughly the length of Egan's column) just cover what the Flats are and how the speed tests work. This is followed by the trip to Bonneville; registering at the hotel and the Flats; and then what happened over the rest of the day. Apparently Motel 6 was booked up by other people testing at the Flats and so was party-hearty central until everyone's self-imposed early curfew to make a pre-dawn check-in. Salvadori reports on achieving his personal best (approximately 106 mph). The wind up is the trip back (Salvadori, pp.75- 89). It's a travelogue that walks the reader through what testing at Bonneville is like.

Both books would be good choices for those interested in reading about the riding life and both would serve nicely as introductions to two of motolit's and motojournalism's better writers. Because Salvadori is a travel writer who happens to travel by motorcycle, his book might also intrigue those interested in travel writing in general as well as those who'd just like to know where riders go on their motorcycles.






Joyce E. Chaplin's ***Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit*** (2012) deals with half a millennium of round the world travel from Ferdinand Magellan to date, which she describes as the "longest tradition of a human activity done on a planetary scale" (p.xiv).

Chaplin is a professor of Early American History at Harvard University whose other books include *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (1993) and *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (2001).

*Round About the Earth* is something of a classic "gap in the literature" project. Reading an untranslated version of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873) to brush up on her French, it occurred to Chaplin that the adventure would not be possible without the building of the Suez Canal on the one hand and the development of commercial travel services on the other.

Now curious about the history and development of around the world travel, she went looking for a book on the subject. While there are a great many books about the Age of Discovery (or Exploration) or Victorian travel or space travel, there were none about the history of circumnavigation as a whole. So Chaplin wrote one.

The book is organized chronologically, covering not only some of the trips themselves, but also the social and political backgrounds of period and the voyage. She looks at the struggles each successive generation of RTW traveler faced as well as the social and technological advances that made such trips more and more possible.

Chaplin also looks at how the travelers experience the earth both physically and psychologically, an interaction she calls "geodrama" (the sort of neologism that makes me reach for my bottle of geodramamine) and seems to go beyond the mere haptic experience of travelling by ship or aeroplane, motorcar or motorcycle.

As a result, the book not only traces the passage from state or corporate sponsored exploration to private whims (or Guinness records), but also traces the different phases of circumnavigation, from conquest to control to comprehension. "We live with all three legacies of around-the-world travel: a reemerging fear that the planet could simply shrug us off; continuing confidence that we might be able to generate technologies and political alliances to dominate the planet; but doubt it is always wise to do so" (p.xxi).

Chaplin doesn't overlook motorcycle circumnavigation, though it accounts for fewer than nine of the book's 535 pages. The first two such trips are John Lennox Cook's

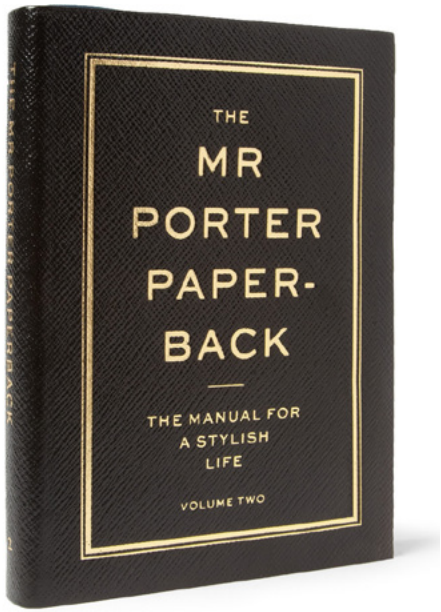
jaunt, published as *The World Before Us* (1951) and Adnam Husni Tallu's trip meant to represent the Arab world to the west through a circumnavigation by motorcycle in the aftermath of the Suez crises in 1956 (pp.381-384).

Tallu's book sounds like the more interesting of the two, but seems unavailable in the very west he sought to impress. Chaplin lists a Dzavid Dzanin as translator. Parenthetically, she would have completed the research for this book before Dr Gregory Frazier published his findings about the first around the world motorcycle trip (see Globe Girdlers Six). However, nothing in it would have upset her paradigm.

In the last section Chaplin turns to travelers searching for an understanding of the world and its peoples. As one example of this holistic or ecological approach she cites Ted Simon (pp.407-409). A few pages later she turns her attention briefly to Charley Boorman and Ewan McGregor (pp.426-427). Noting that going around the world is quite a feat and then asking, but a feat of what, Chaplin goes on to say it's no longer the doing but the how it's done. Actors seems a popular choice: it's Boorman and McGregor going around the world or to use an example she doesn't Billy Connolly doing Route 66 (by trike). In short, if you want to publish your adventures going around the world you've got to have a gimmick or at least a bold-face name.

*Round About the World* is a more serious read and would likely interest history buffs and circumnavigators interested in the larger questions and implications of around the world travel.

***The Mr Porter Paperback 2*** (2013) is a continuation of the content in the e-commerce site, mrporter.com. The site sells men's clothing and accessories to a young, upscale market.




The content goes beyond, say, how to tie a tie. "There's a never-ending series of conundrums we face as a gender – whether it's choosing an age-appropriate denim jacket, which of the world's best restaurants to dine in, or how to fight off an attack from a grizzly bear (you never know when one might strike) – but we aim to make them all a whole lot easier to handle", notes the editor-in-chief in the introduction.

He is, by the way, "Mr" Jeremy Langmead. Writers, despite pursing such a lowly profession, are listed as "Mr John Lancaster" or "Mr Simon Mills". To be fair, so are such style icons as "Mr David Bowie" and "Mr Pablo Picasso". The conceit goes way over the top. I haven't encountered such dubious use of a title since my fencing days when sometime after the fourth round of drinks I was morphed into Jonathan, Baron von Beerstein (which makes no sense from either the German or British point of view). I fenced épée, not schläger, by the way. And probably a good thing since we were all still fencing after the fourth round, putting the pissed onto the piste. As for Mr Langmead, let me tell you something, mister, all that mistering makes your sincerity suspect.

Langmead promises an appreciative essay on custom motorbikes, among other things. Actually motorcycles turn into a minor theme here, possibly intentionally. It begins with "The Magic of Motorcycles", a roundup of seven motorcycles that in Donnie Little's words "say all the right things" (p.21). It seems that when a young upmarket bloke turns up with a helmet under his arm he makes a statement, but the statement depends on the bike he rides. At that point it's motorcycles as fashion accessories. There's a Vespa, of course, and a Ducati 916, as well as the new Norton Commando and Zero Engineering's Type 5 Evo, among others.

*Mr Porter* goes on with a piece on denim jackets, here seen as an American classic that never goes out of style (p.31). As an item of clothing it's actually rooted in region and social class, but *Mr Porter* specializes in fashion, not sociology. One example provided is Robert Redford wearing a denim jacket in the film *Little Fauss and Big Halsy* (1970), reputed to be Redford's least favorite, although it enjoys a cult following among many motorcyclists. In the still used as an illustration, Redford is awkwardly but realistically sitting on a bike that's lying on its side. The costume is described as a biker-cowboy hybrid. With a cowboy hat and boots, denim jeans and jacket, it's actually just pure cowboy.

Next is the promised essay about custom motorcycles: actually an interview with Fred Jourden of Blitz Motorcycles. *Mr Porter* (in this case, Manuel Fletcher) knows nothing about motorcycles, noting only that what he learned was not to "wear a white shirt when visiting a garage" (p.191).

As befits a one-time online marketing manager, Jourden plays to his audience: "We'd rather have a little coverage in a fashion magazine, a design magazine or a women's magazine than a bike magazine," he says. "We're trying to pull the bike out of its redneck world of bad taste, to bring it to something more edgy and beautiful" (p.193).

Fair enough; and there are several points there worth pursuing. Instead, Fletcher asks what is the Blitz look. Jourden, of course, has an answer for that: "A jumper from Saint James, a T-shirt from Edwin, a pair of Edwin jeans, Red Wing boots, a vintage watch and a vintage leather jacket, or in summer an antique Belstaff jacket. And we go for Davida helmets, which have the look of the 1960s" (p.194). Right.

The last motorcycle before the end of the book is the best: the art-deco-till-you-die 1936 KJ Henderson Westfall. The art deco motorcars that make up the bulk of the section aren't bad either.

Given its size and price, *The Mr Porter Paperback 2* is an ideal stocking stuffer for that fashionista who wants something with two wheels and a motor as a fashion prop and finds a lawnmower *déclassé*.

**Jonathan Boorstein**

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# BITZ

## KEiS Dual-Power X900 Heated Gloves

Words: Dave Gurman

Come next summer, I'll have been riding for forty years and for the best part of that time a bike has been my primary or only vehicle, so year around riding has always been a simple matter of fact.

I'd be a liar if I pretended that I've ever really enjoyed riding in the winter; as far as I'm concerned anyone who claims to be filled with the joys of spring at the prospect – aside from missing the whole point of the expression – must possess the kind of masochistic streak that I can't even begin to relate to.

I don't mean to suggest that there's no fun to be had from the beginning of December right through to some time around the end of March (on a good year), there are always opportunities to have a little jolly when you're riding a bike, especially on a crisp clear day in January; but when you have to put in a twelve hour day as a courier, or to commute from the Medway to Central London and back in bitter cold and sleet, then endurance springs more readily to mind than enjoyment.

However, it is possible to ameliorate the situation if you're wearing the right kind of gear and your machine is fitted with a decent fairing and various heated bits. Back in February 2009 those nice peeps at Suzuki loaned me a Burgman for a week and I was so impressed with it I bought a second-hand '08 model a few months later. Unfortunately by the time I picked mine up it was August and I'd forgotten that earlier in the year, one of the things that had impressed me most about the big scoot, was the heated seat and handlebars so I wasn't unduly worried about their absence on my one.

Yeah, very stupid; and I've regretted it each winter since. Then at the end of October this year I received a press release about these **KEiS Dual-Power X900 heated gloves** and thought how nice it would be to have a bit of an edge when the cold weather turned up. Given that we were enjoying something of a heat wave at the time that was an incredible bit of forward thinking given my thoroughly well deserved reputation for getting lost in the moment.

It was still unseasonably warm when they arrived, but by this time I was getting carried away with my newfound penchant for forward planning, so I invested the ten minutes it required to connect the fused cable directly to my battery (KEiS supply a cigarette lighter type connection too but the position of the Burgervan's 12v outlet, inside the lockable 'glove box', made it impossible).

It was November 25th before the combination of an early start and bit of a cold snap prompted me to give the gloves a try. I rode the nine miles from home to the Charing X hospital with my left glove turned off and the right one set on high so I was able to make a direct comparison between the sharp pricking cold in the fingertips of my left hand and the pinkies at the other end of the bars that glowed smugly all the way to Hammersmith (I could've left it at that and suggested that I was conducting an empirical experiment, but the awful truth is that in spite of the instructions being straightforward and written in clear concise English, I still managed to confuse myself).

I rode over to Walthamstow to see my mum afterwards because it was her birthday and although it was warm enough that it seemed cheeky to plug the gloves in on my way home, it pissed down all the way from E17 to the south west, so it felt superbly sybaritic to be glowing gently on the lowest setting as I picked my way through the traffic and puddles en route to my place. That ride home also allowed me to establish that the gloves neither leaked nor electrocuted me in what was quite a deluge.

The rechargeable batteries and charger arrived a couple of days later, which was probably a good thing because knowing me it's difficult to imagine that I'd have bothered to wire them up to the scoot if I'd had such a simple option to hand. After that first heated trip, I'd wondered how long a ride I'd need to be setting off on before I'd go to the bother of threading wires up my sleeves (with the gloves hung off the ends I was minded of kittens mittens!), pulling the cable out from under the seat and plugging the whole lot together – I certainly wasn't likely to do so to pop down to Iceland in the High Street.


I'd decided that I probably wouldn't bother for a ten or fifteen minute ride either, although that's more than enough time for your hands to get quite uncomfortable in cold weather, so it would always be a trade off; but with the batteries, you simply zip them into the cuffs, plug them in and you're ready to go – so it seems rude not to use them whenever the temperature dictates.

Earlier this week I was looking at a round trip to Stevenage, which is about an hour around the M25 and up the A1 from here and it was definitely heated gloves weather so I was left with a decision. The batteries are rated at 2200mAH and the gloves draw a current of 1amp on the highest setting, which would suggest that they are good for a little over 2 hours. There was every chance that I would be able to make it there and back without running out of power, but considering that getting wired up hardly amounts to a major faff – it can't add more than a couple of minutes max to your preparation – it seemed silly to take a chance on getting caught out.

With the help of the Burgervan's very capable screen and fairing, my trusty Rev'It coat did its usual sterling job of keeping my core nice and warm but it felt so luxurious not to have the whole experience marred by the stinging cold digits that have turned so many otherwise pleasant winter rides into a painful schlep through purgatory.

Apparently the gloves rely on "Micro Alloy-Fibre Technology" to deliver even heat – including the backs of your hands, which is a distinct advantage over heated grips – and whatever that is it seems to do the job. When I pulled off the M4 in the early afternoon it was a little warmer and my hands were right up at the toasty end of the spectrum, but it was dead simple to give the buttons on the back of each glove a gentle touch, which turned them from red to amber and the heat down to its medium setting. Sitting in traffic less than a mile from my house, I pressed the buttons again and they indicated the green 'low' option (another touch would have cycled them back to maximum again).

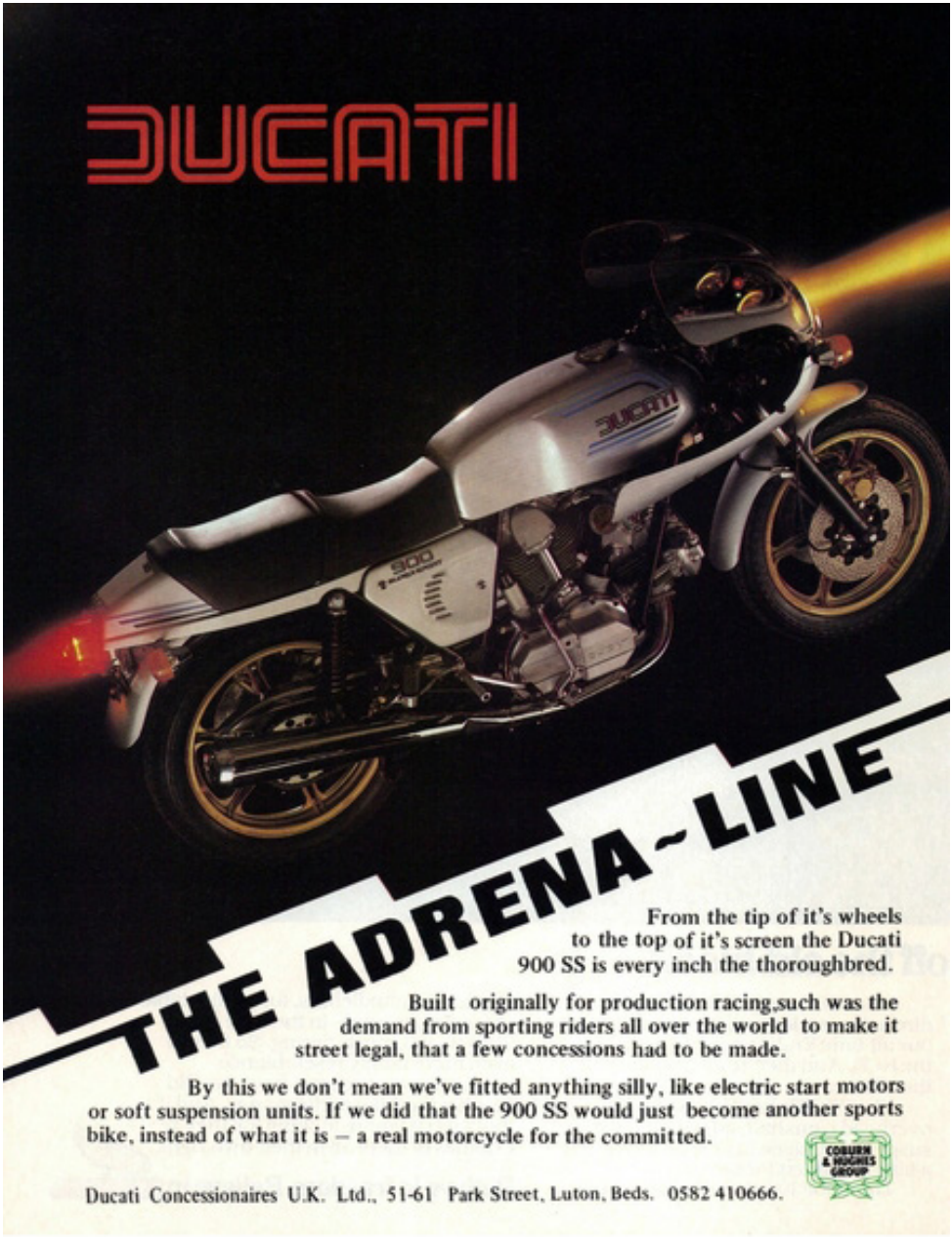


They have leather palms and textile backs and are waterproof and breathable; a Velcro strap at the wrist and an easy pull drawstring at the cuff keeps everything nice and snug and frankly if it wasn't for the warm glow you wouldn't notice that they were any different to any other winter gloves, you're certainly not conscious of any wires between your fingers and the bars when you're riding.

The KEiS Dual-Power X900s come in sizes XS to XXL and retail for £130 (complete with instructions, fuses and all necessary wiring); the optional batteries and charger will set you back another £70 but they give you a lot more flexibility including the option of using them for other purposes such as fishing and skiing.

**Dave Gurman**

For further info and details of the complete KEiS range of heated apparel, call 01256 704909 or visit:
www.keisapparel.co.uk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