



THE

RIDER'S DIGEST®

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From the editor...

Further on in the magazine, you'll see **Martin Newman (our original Boy Biker who went on to write the 'Pup Fiction' column – and a young man I've known for his entire life) questioning the adage that 'you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone'; but before you even get to his twenty-something take on motorcycling life, I'd like to kick off with a maxim that's a lot more immutable than Ms Mitchell's jaundiced cab: NEVER SAY NEVER.**

When I had a vasectomy shortly after my son Joe was born (twenty years ago), I declared that a girl and three boys had been enough for my dad and it was plenty for me too; that I wanted to be young enough to be able to enjoy my kids and I definitely didn't want to find myself sterilising bottles and changing nappies again in my fifties!

Who'd have guessed then that I'd have met my wonderful wife when I was fifty-five and inherited a wonderful three and a half year old stepson as part of the package? (Luckily he's a lovely bright lad and was way beyond bottles and baby wipes long before I met him!)

In October 2014, shortly before my sixtieth birthday, I wrote "...it would be better for the future of **The Rider's Digest**... if I was to hand on control to somebody a mite younger because although I know everything there is to know about bikes after riding one for all these years – obviously! – there's nothing like a three year old's wonder-struck reaction to a star-filled sky, or a stoned Fresher's awe when confronted by a lava lamp, to remind an old timer just how amazing life can be – and of course exactly the

same goes for bikes only more so."

And I 100% meant it; I was as happy handing over the reins of the magazine – which had been a significant part of my life ever since the turn of the century – as I had been when I 'entrusted' my daughter (who'd been an even bigger part of my life for even longer) to her husband when they married a few months earlier. I had no more reservations about Stuart's intentions toward the Digest than I had about Tom's feelings about my Sam and I am glad to be able to say that both of them have treated my precious treasures with nothing but love, care and respect.

Consequently it came as something of a surprise to find myself back in the editor's chair after Stuart informed me that he had decided to move on. Fortunately he did a great job of getting TRD back up and running and it was in such good shape after the five issues he put out that I was able to just hop back into the saddle and bosh out this issue without so much as an oil change, a new set of plugs, or even any need to charge the battery.

So I would like to thank him for his good Stuartship of the magazine over the last eighteen months and for offering to lay out the next few issues while I sort out alternative arrangements – and of course to wish him all the very best for whatever he chooses to do in the future.

But where does that leave my declared intention of injecting a little youth into the Digest? Well to paraphrase Groucho Marx, a magazine's outlook is as old as the contributors it features. So I have made an effort to find

some young riders in an attempt to answer all the merchants of gloom who've been telling us for years that motorcycling as a way of life is an old man's thing and like so many of us old men, it's on its last legs.

Well just to prove them wonderfully, delightfully wrong about it being all about old codgers, I've not only included the aforementioned young Master Newman, who's yet to hit his thirties, and our current – soon to graduate – Boy Biker, Smify, who's barely into his twenties, I've also added 21 year old Saskia and – roll of the drums – 16, very shortly to be 17 year old, Harriet, as our first ever Girl Biker, thus demonstrating that biking isn't just a bloke thing.

This magazine has a well-deserved reputation for featuring female writers and photographers. We published Jacqui Furneaux's first travel story over multiple issues in 2009 and a number of features by Harriet Ridley – putting her on the cover on two occasions (and the Ducati she raced so successfully on yet another).

The Rider's Digest has always aimed for a lightness of editorial touch and far from attempting to impose the kind of 'house style' that professional journalists expect as a matter of course from the big mainstream publications, we have always encouraged writers to express themselves using their own voice – including colloquialisms, accent and anything else that will allow them to deliver a personal angle on the subject.

It was this approach that not only allowed but actively encouraged a serious pro like Harriet Ridley to come back from a Guzzi launch in Rome with a brilliantly evocative piece about growing up in the Eternal City, rather than the usual 288mm floating discs and extra 1.5bhp bollocks she'd have been obliged to bang out

for Mortons or Bauer Media.

Lois Fast-Lane was already an established contributor before I produced my first effort in issue 30. Her creator is a scientist by trade (although she was a courier when she used that nom de plume and a riding instructor later when she wrote 'Trainer's Tips') so her columns were often a mix of motorcycling not-so-common-sense and rock solid science – and they were always very engaging and entertaining.

It is with great pleasure then that for the first of a series of repeats, I include a prime example of the sort of articles she did so very well. It's very much the kind of thing that polite society doesn't like to talk about, let alone the delicate world of male motorcyclists, so it seemed perfect for an issue that is blatantly aiming to appeal to some of the growing number of female riders out there, while providing the male mainstream with the kind of food for thought that they are unlikely to find anywhere else on the Internet, let alone on the bikes n cars shelf in WHSmith!

Be sure to let us know what you think of issue 192 and please share it with anyone who you believe would benefit from broadening their understanding of biking in the second decade of the 21st century.

Dave Gurman

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Catch Dave between 9 and 11pm (BST) on www.bikerfm.co.uk

Riders' Lives



Name: Ming Nagel

What was your first motorcycling experience?

My first significant motorcycling experience was really when I was preparing to take my CBT a year and a half ago at age 41. A friend's 13-year-old daughter had started riding trail bikes, so she lent me her KTM 85 Big Wheel for practice in our horses' field. It took me about half an hour to kick-start it, put it into gear, and move forward without stalling. When I finally did get some momentum, my hand slipped on the throttle and I parted company with the bike quite spectacularly. By the end of the

training episode I was sweating bullets and streaked with horse manure and wondering what I'd gotten myself into.

What is your current bike?

It shocks me to admit to this indulgence, but I have two motorcycles now: a 2013 Triumph Bonneville SE, and a 2015 Triumph Tiger 800 xRX Low Version.

What bike would you most like to ride/own?

I fell in love with my second-hand Bonneville when my partner and I went into a local dealership to buy him some gloves. I hadn't even seriously considered learning how to ride at that point, but by the time we came

back out I was calculating finance payments and planning my Direct Access. My Bonneville has such character that I don't have any great aspirations regarding other bikes.

What was your hairiest moment on a bike?

Just after passing my CBT when I picked up my Yamaha YBR 125. As I left the dealers I had to make a very tight left turn onto a narrow road out of a side alleyway. Not being very confident or experienced, I ended up on the wrong side of the road. Luckily traffic was moving slowly and I managed to wobble back into the correct lane without falling off or crashing into the brick wall opposite (both seemed likely possibilities).

What was your most memorable ride?

Apart from my first big road trip to the Pyrenees with my partner last year, it was carrying my friend Su about 30 miles as my first ever pillion – I was pretty nervous, especially when stopping and negotiating roundabouts, but I managed to keep us upright until 50 yards from home, when I turned into our unpaved drive, spun the rear tyre in the mud, and promptly fell over. We couldn't get up for laughing so hard.

What would be the ideal soundtrack to the above?

Pyrenees: anything that we or DG play on BIKERfm (with a bit of after-sales exhaust in the background). Pillion: Dance of the Cuckoos (Laurel and Hardy theme).

What do you think is the best thing about motorcycling?

Sharing it with my partner, and the fact that it's more like a sport than I thought.

What do you think is the worst thing about motorcycling?

The reality of your vulnerability and the constant reminders, psychological and corporeal, of mortality. There isn't anyone I've met who doesn't have a story of someone who has died on a motorcycle.

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

Greener motorcycling that alleviates the guilt but maintains the spirit of riding; and mandatory virtual motorcycle training for car drivers.

How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who was memorable. In what way is up to the individual.



© Nigel Shuttleworth

THE BOY BIKER

"GOING FROM BROKEN TO STRENGTH"

Since the last issue I have been busy breaking bikes. A year or so ago I had a similar run of bad luck (I like to think of them as resilience test periods), which led me down a dark path mentally. I almost didn't get out from under the duvet one Monday for fear of the bogeyman lurking in my to-do list. A year on and in a different head space, although not much has changed in my immediate surroundings, I have flipped the situation on its head and come away with good vibrations rattling up through my arse.

It starts with the Gas-Gas Enduro 2 stroke I have been enjoying slowly wrecking at weekends. One Sunday at an Action Trax event (a great day out – but more on them next issue) I sat waiting for a few riders in front of me to tackle a section, which was made up of raised dirt and logs acting as a narrow bridge across a 'small puddle'. It was thin and I am wobbly, so chances are I would end up in the drink anyway. What the hell, I wound the little 200 up until it hit the zingy wonders of the power band, dropped the clutch and hit the 'pond' with all the youthful gung-ho bravado I could manage. I got to the middle of the 'lagoon' and just as I was starting to smile at how clever I had been to bypass the bottleneck of the bridge the front wheel hit a log that was submerged in the murky water

As I wrung the neck off the Gasser the back wheel simply dug further into the stinking



clay until only the handlebars and top of the petrol tank were poking out. Cue laughter from the other riders as they leaned bikes up and offered assistance from the bank. One of the marshals threw me a strap (which I now realise is an essential piece of carry kit for off-roading). I ducked under water and tied it around the rear rim as low down as the quicksand would allow. On the count of three my new bezzie mates heaved from the bank and I levered from the submerged footpegs. In a moment as satisfying as a first coffee of the day dump, the bike arose from the depths and was dragged unceremoniously up the bank. Cheers again to all involved that afternoon!

After draining the exhaust and giving it a few kicks with the plug and ever-so-clever drain bolt in the bottom of the crank chamber removed it went! To everyone's surprise the little Spanish stallion fired into life with all the crisp-packet sharpness it had started the day with. I was chuffed, finished the event, washed the bike, and left it for a fortnight. I didn't think to touch it with tools as it had fired up and I assumed it would've "dried out" having run for another few hours.



Flexible cam chain and bent valve

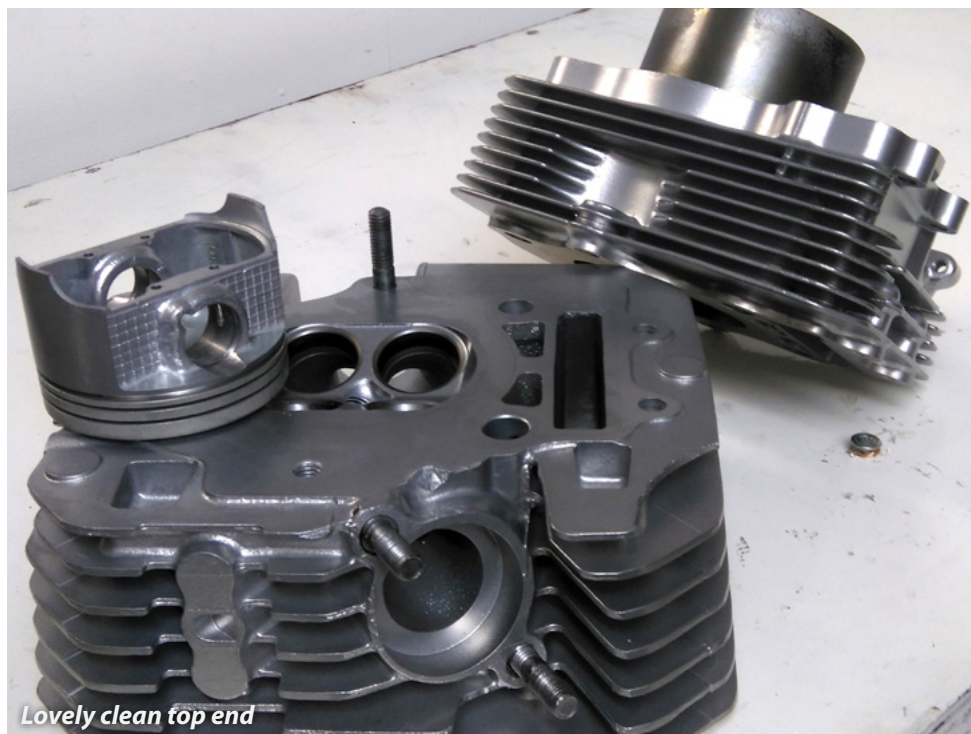
Working with the Young Lewisham Project gives me the chance to teach young people how to ride off road motorbikes as part of a program designed to get them into education, training or employment. We were due a riding trip and one young lad had really worked hard that term, in return I promised him the first go of my Gas-Gas on the upcoming trip. Two laps in after warming it up and he comes to a halt at the crest of a jump. I made my way over on one of the DT125s and asked him what was up, why had he stopped. "The bike just died, and now the kick-start won't go down, I haven't seized it have I?" One rip down later the top end is in



Worn rocker

totally fine nick, no damage to Nikasil or piston face. Bottom end totally muddy, rusty and crank bearings seized to buggery!

I could take my time with this, bearings and seals are well worth doing on a two smoker and having a bike for sheer shifts and giggles had been a privilege. While the engine was out I would powder coat the frame, clean up the cases and polish a few other bits n bobs, (the perks of being Mr I Cleenz Macheenz). Rebuilt engine and a pile of shiny chassis bearings later and I almost had the bugger done and back in use... Almost.



My trusty DR250 is my daily commuter so it gets much more mechanical sympathy than the enduro machine, I keep it squeaky clean and legit, change oils and filters regularly, lube everything copiously and generally treat it better than most women in my life (old-dear aside) but it has had a cam chainy rattle for a month or so.

The noise was diagnosed as not needing immediate action and after checking that the auto-adjuster wasn't seized I was happy to squeeze another oil change out of the bike while assembling a pile of expensive and shiny new parts. I'd put a new cam chain, guides and cam sprocket on, lap the valves in, replacing stem seals and all gaskets while in there, well why not? These little bikes got Austin Vince and the rest of the Mondo Enduro team around the world and back (a great read and watch if you

haven't already), so why not spend a few bob slowly renewing it.

One Monday morning – I am really good at Monday mornings – I fired the bike up and let it warm as I tucked, zipped and Velcroed. "Oh that chain does sound bad today." The bike didn't even make it onto tarmac, as soon as I engaged first and disengaged the clutch there was an awful crunch. On trying to restart it the tell-tale misfiring of an engine with timing up the wall rang out across Sarf' East London. I realised that any further attempt to start it would ruin things, I have seen a valve buried half an inch deep in the crown of a piston because of timing that's off.

Already being wrapped up like a posho in Val de Saures, rather than de robe and jump on the pedal bike I opted for using the 50s side valve Ural and sidecar; a thoroughly



reliable engine but a rolling chassis that really demands inspection and lubrication before a ride, especially having sat for a few weeks.

I spent that Monday kicking myself for not having pulled the DR off the road sooner and carrying out the planned engineering works. You arse, you have ruined that lovely little engine and given yourself much more work and expense, you dick. I finished up at the workshop and three wheeled on over to the youth project for an evening group.

The Ural started like a dream and I was just reflecting on how lucky I am to have such an extensive stable to call upon, a family and friends steeped in bike knowledge and the joy of working while still living at home, which leaves me enough disposable dough to keep myself moving. Since I was sixteen I hadn't been more than a few weeks without a bike

and thanks to the trusty Ural I wouldn't need to do without this time either...

What is it they say about pride coming before a fall? As I turned the outfit onto the main road there was a TING of springs and I came graunching to a halt; one of the rear shocks had broken clean through where the damper rod joined the bottom mount knuckle, the other side couldn't handle the weight and the rear mudguard ground out on the tire. Not. Going. Anywhere.

Uber for one, home later than planned. I thought back to the Boy Biker of a year ago. Overwhelmed and upset by these kind of setbacks, and drowned by tasks that I had built up to be much harder than they were in reality. This time around I can see that all these problems were self-caused and are all part of the trials and tribulations of motorcycling/adult life in general. People have got through much worse than a few broken bikes. In the light of day I had a simple two stroke rebuild with lovely clean new bits to do. A cam chain and top end which needed doing anyway (no awful damage, bent chain and snapped chain guide) and a case of refund on the next-to-new set of modern shocks. I should've stuck with soviet iron.

Whingeing and whining down the pub, frittering away precious Wemoto tokens wouldn't help. I rolled up my sleeves, wrote out a list and started at the top.

Watch this space as by next issue I fully intend to attach pictures of all three steeds up and running, the bicycle and oyster card annexed, only seeing use on beer tours and charity rides. Cheers for the read and remember that cyclists are humans too!

The Boy Biker



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THE GIRL BIKER

"HELLO!"

I'm Harriet. I'm a sixteen (almost seventeen) year old and I'm currently doing AS levels at high school. I'm not new to the motorcycle scene; I made my first appearance trackside back in 1999 (age 2 weeks!) and I've been racing myself since the age of 12, making my debut on an Aprilia RS125, then a couple of years later moving on to my current bike, a Kawazaki ZXR400 – 'though as of last year I do seem to have stolen my Mum's Yamaha R6!

Being a girl and racing has never been an issue for me; no one's ever given me any extra space on track. Although it does seem to get on some peoples nerves when they realise that they've been beaten by a teenage girl wearing Hello Kitty leathers with HARRIET in pink on the back. However, road riding is a relatively new thing for me. When I reached sixteen last April, I turned up to my CBT full of confidence and swagger on my brother's old Piaggio NRG50. Needless to say, it broke down!

The last year has taught me a lot about basic mechanics and standing helplessly at the sides of roads (which would appear to be an essential part of the initiation because all of three of our Boy Bikers made remarkably similar observations – Ed). Of course, I've had to face the sexist remarks of many guys while riding my little 50 around the place, normally at petrol stations when I pull up and look over to the group of riders on sports bikes wearing shiny leathers. I remember paying for my



petrol once and one man said to me, "Is Daddy keeping that nice and shiny for you?"

As I turn 17 next month, me and Mum decided to go on a bike hunt. But what 125 do we get? Despite being female I've never been vertically challenged (at a smidgen under 5' 9", I'm normally the tallest girl in a group) so when looking for bikes I have always favoured taller rides. Having raced for a few years now I know the pain of staying hunched over a sports bike for prolonged periods of time. With this in mind, the checklist we started with was a nice sit up bike with a decent seat height and not Italian (sorry Ducati lovers!).

The Yamaha MT-125 looked nice. It was quite low down and I felt like I could hold a nice relaxed position on it. What put me off was the amount of extraneous plastic. The indicators seemed to stick out more than the handlebars did. The exhaust didn't have much protection and it seemed like if I dropped it I would cause a lot of damage to the bodywork.

So our attention turned to a Yamaha WR-125X, a nice enduro bike, which was the perfect height for my lanky legs. The exhaust was hidden away and the plastic bits were tiny. The



brakes had a nice feel and it had no screen; that should make me slow down at least!

We did briefly consider a KTM Duke 125 as it is the prettiest of the three, but having seen another learner on the road wobbling around on one, I decided against it.

So that's me decided - the Yammy WR-125X it is. Can't wait to ride it!

Watch this space for a full update in the next edition.

The Girl Biker



A View from the Group W Bench



I have bought a couple of Baglux tank bag bases from Motolegends as they seem to be the cheapest option and have a good customer satisfaction attitude.

They therefore send me their catalogue every month. Now Motolegends make no secret of the fact that they concentrate on style and fashion, two things which have never interested me, mainly because I have had important things to worry about (like saving you lot from the Soviet Hordes during the Cold War, though as das Mutti and the EU have invited the barbarian hordes into Western Europe I was obviously wasting my time*) or didn't have the dosh.

Six months ago I was idly reading their latest when I came upon Rokker Revolution Jeans.

Kevlar equivalent lined, made from Schoeler/Dynatec and denim material thus water and wind proof and capable of keeping you warm in the cold and cool in the warm.

Looks good and then I saw the price, £349.00. What? 'Ow much? £40.00 Oxford Kevlar jeans and a cheap £10.00 over trousers can do that and leave me with £300.00 for Rallies.

Over Christmas I thought about this as I am saving about £500.00 a month and it is basically losing value just sitting in a bank so I sent for a pair. First impressions, that is a bloody big box they come in. Open the packing and they are in a poncey slatted wood box that is of no use

to anyone afterwards. Actually poncey is the wrong word, butch would be better. I expect to pay for packaging even if I don't like it but on consideration the box probably cost no more than a fancy cardboard box and will be of cheap renewable wood.

Oh well, I might as well try them on. They look like jeans and that is that. They weigh about as much as my Tesco £3.00 jeans and less than half of what my Oxford jeans weigh. They are Hi Tech material riding trousers masquerading as jeans. So I fitted the armour and took them for a ride.

These are the third pair of armoured jeans I have owned. The first – Shoshoni in 1995 – I took the knee armour out at the earliest opportunity as it was causing the denim behind my knees to cut into my skin. The second – Oxford £40.00 cheapies – I took out the knee armour as it was uncomfortable when walking. With these I am going to continue with the knee armour in for a while and then make a decision. The armour would probably be better placed if I had ordered Jeans 2" shorter in the leg but I like my ankles covered when riding.

So anyway having decided to keep them I turned them inside out as per the instructions and washed them, whilst having a read through the very kindly included catalogue. I notice that the ladies versions come in a fake leather or canvas holdall. Now I am not into fake leather or canvas but at least it would make a gift for someone you don't like but



have to give a present to anyway, though as I don't talk to my family I am now pleasantly unencumbered by such dross.

They say you can iron them and it improves their water repellant properties. Since I stopped protecting the Free World I have picked up an iron less than five times and that is not going to change any time soon.

So do I like them? Yes.

In real terms they cost me less than a week's wages, my first Levi's 501s cost me five weeks wages and we all remember what they

felt like when riding in the wet. And I have just Googled Levi's 501s. I could earn enough to pay for them today in half a day. Things have changed.

Are they value for money? Well I haven't crash tested them yet and don't intend too but they are going to be as good as anything else for the same price out there.

The major advantage for me is when camping I don't have a pair of leather jeans taking up space in my tent and under normal circumstances they cut down on my luggage.

They certainly haven't turned me from an unhip poverant (courtesy of Chris Brookmire) as that is not possible but I may even look a little smarter in them.

Finally about Motolegends, they claim to be able to match any advertised price and certainly Google brought up some at £329.00 so I should have haggled but couldn't be bothered.

If it was £49.00 to £29.00 then yes but a saving of about 5% didn't really interest me. Unhip definitely but possibly not a poverant even if I am on well below the National average wage.

I guess it's an attitude thing.

Ride Safe,
Ian Dunmore
An ancient Guzzista



*I am not racist in any form, I even have friends who ride Harley Davidson's, but I am a culturalist.

And even if I was wasting my time the Asbach, Herforder Pils and bratwurst mit pommers made up for it. I am going to miss Germany.

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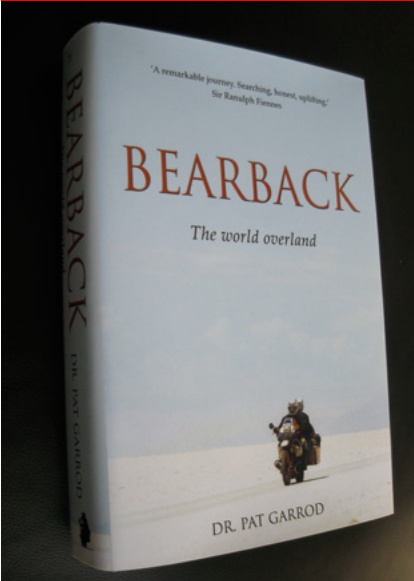

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February Made Me Shiver...



Thousands of bikers braved sub-zero wind chill factors and black ice to attend the MCN London Motorcycle Show. It was held in February at the ExCel exhibition centre, which is nestled neatly between City Airport and the River Thames in London's fashionable Docklands.

My SV650S riding son Ben and I rode into town via the Woolwich Ferry, which has become something of a tradition, along with a phone snap of the bikes parked on the wooden deck surrounded by trucks.

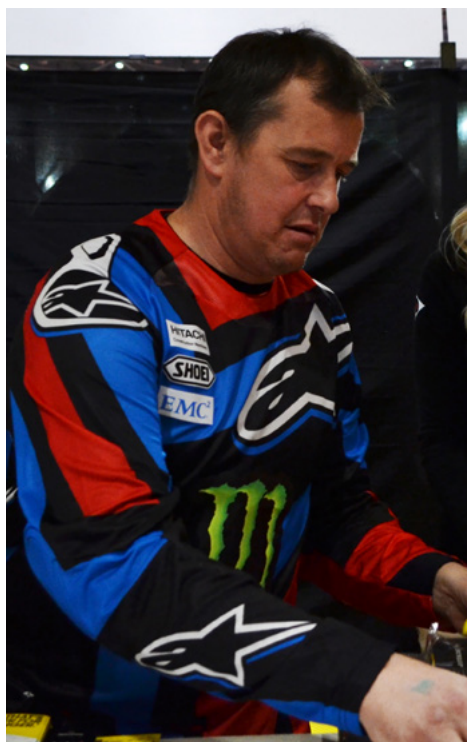
As with previous years motorcycle parking was free, although the previously heated hall used for lining up hundreds of visitors' bikes seemed to be bloody freezing this year. But that could well be my imagination; last year was more wet and miserable than cold, which perhaps explains it.

I became a little confused by the Riders for Health helmet/leathers park, which was advertised on the official show website as being £1 per item, but two helmets and two jackets came to £6. Still, it's all for a good cause...

Once inside the ExCel there was also the usual confusion caused by the fact that that the London Bike Show was once again on at the same time at the same venue, but that one was for fans of pedals and Lycra.

Inside the Motorcycle Show proper, visitors were immediately confronted by sprawling stands from three of the 'big four' Japanese manufacturers, with Honda taking a position a little further into the exhibition.

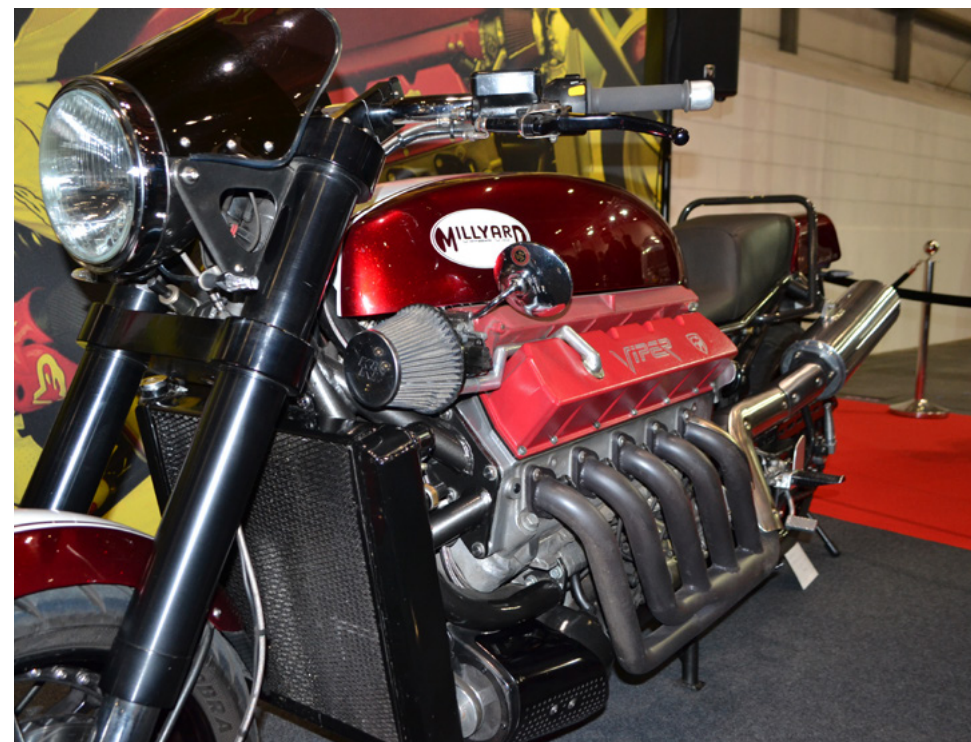
There were various celebrities present on the day, including former Top Gear types James May and Richard Hammond; 'King of the Jungle' and erstwhile World Superbike Champion Carl Fogarty; TV Presenter Henry Cole; accident prone round the world rider Charley Boorman



(who broke his leg in Portugal a few days later); and TT legend John McGuinness – although I only bumped into the last two.

One of the first things to catch our attention was Suzuki's new version of their popular SV650, which has only materialised sans fairing so far. It has something of the Monster about it, which I suppose is inevitable, but the retro round headlamp with a small cowl above it and the small bellypan finished the package off quite nicely. It looks like a proper motorbike.

Wandering over to the Ace Cafe catering area to get a warming coffee, we took a seat near the Custom and Classic Stage, contrastingly adorned with a brace of Allen Millyard's incredible creations, a V twin 100cc version of Honda's puny sixteen year special SS50, and a huge bike fitted with a Dodge Viper engine.



Yep, you read that right. A V10, 500bhp Chrysler 8.3 litre engine from a Viper, which is claimed to be capable of propelling this bespoke machine to 200mph. It has apparently lapped the Isle of Man TT circuit, probably quite quickly. The forks feature a single ventilated disc brake fitted with a calliper front and rear, an ingenious weight saving solution for when your bike has been built around a huge lump of American muscle.

You may remember from previous shows the 'Flying Millyard' – a huge 5 litre V twin board racer that utilised two cylinders sliced from a Pratt and Whitney 1340 radial aeroplane engine. All in a day's work for Mr Millyard it would seem.

In the nearby custom section of the show the exhibits as always ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous, with Jules Ansell's impressive

5.7 litre small block Chevy powered chop, 'The Stinger' looking as though the riding position would force the rider's legs apart at an angle reminiscent of Kenny Everett's 'Verity Treacle' character.

Appropriately this bike was finished 'in the best possible taste', with customised double springer DNA Girder forks, a peanut tank bearing a close resemblance to a wasp's abdomen and lashings of chrome completed the picture. It worried me where the sting would be positioned.

No less impressive was Jim Ord's CX650 powered hard tail chop. A more conventional bike engine, but unconventionally mounted either sideways or longways – depending on your point of view – and cleverly converted to chain drive.

However, the engine was almost secondary

once you'd managed to take your eyes off the massively wide 'roller – like' front tyre, mounted on a pair of Triumph TT600 rear wheels, they were a great match for the bike's rear wheel, which was made from two Honda Blackbird wheels.

So it was still very much a motorcycle, but actually had four wheels.

This guy clearly likes to do things the hard way; the leading link forks were made from aluminium scaffold tubes while the eye catching skull motif paintwork looked to be the result of a technique known as 'hydro dipping'.

One of the most striking machines in the custom section, sitting as it was amidst turbocharged V Maxes and highly polished Harleys was Larry Houghton's 'Road Runner'.

This bike – sitting on a pair of skinny 26" carbon rims – was an ultra-lightweight yellow carbon composite frame and forks powered by a turbocharged nitrous injected Lifan 140cc engine, putting out a... um, 'massive' 23 hp.

It's all about power to weight though, and this bike – quite possibly the narrowest at the show – looked like you could pick it up with one hand, which was just as well, as braking was provided by a pair of mountain bike discs.

A few feet away stood Piet Smit's stunning glass tanked JAP 500 board tracker. This bike was exquisite, every detail was beautiful, from the deep blue paintwork to the 26" white tyres and the sculpted Buell style rim mounted disc brakes.

I realise that by waxing lyrical over a small handful of bikes I'm doing a disservice to the many other beautiful creations on show, but I can't go into raptures about all of them, so the best way is to feast your eyes on the photographs.

The Joey Dunlop tribute was excellent, with the chance to get up close to Joey's



bikes, dozens of his trophies, various leathers, helmets and many personal items seen in public for the first time.

The centre piece of the show was as always the track, this year known as the 'Slide' show, with short track speedway style racing featuring BSB stars John Reynolds, Neil Hodgson, Niall Mackenzie, Chris Walker and Tommy Hill, all headed up by the aforementioned John McGuinness.

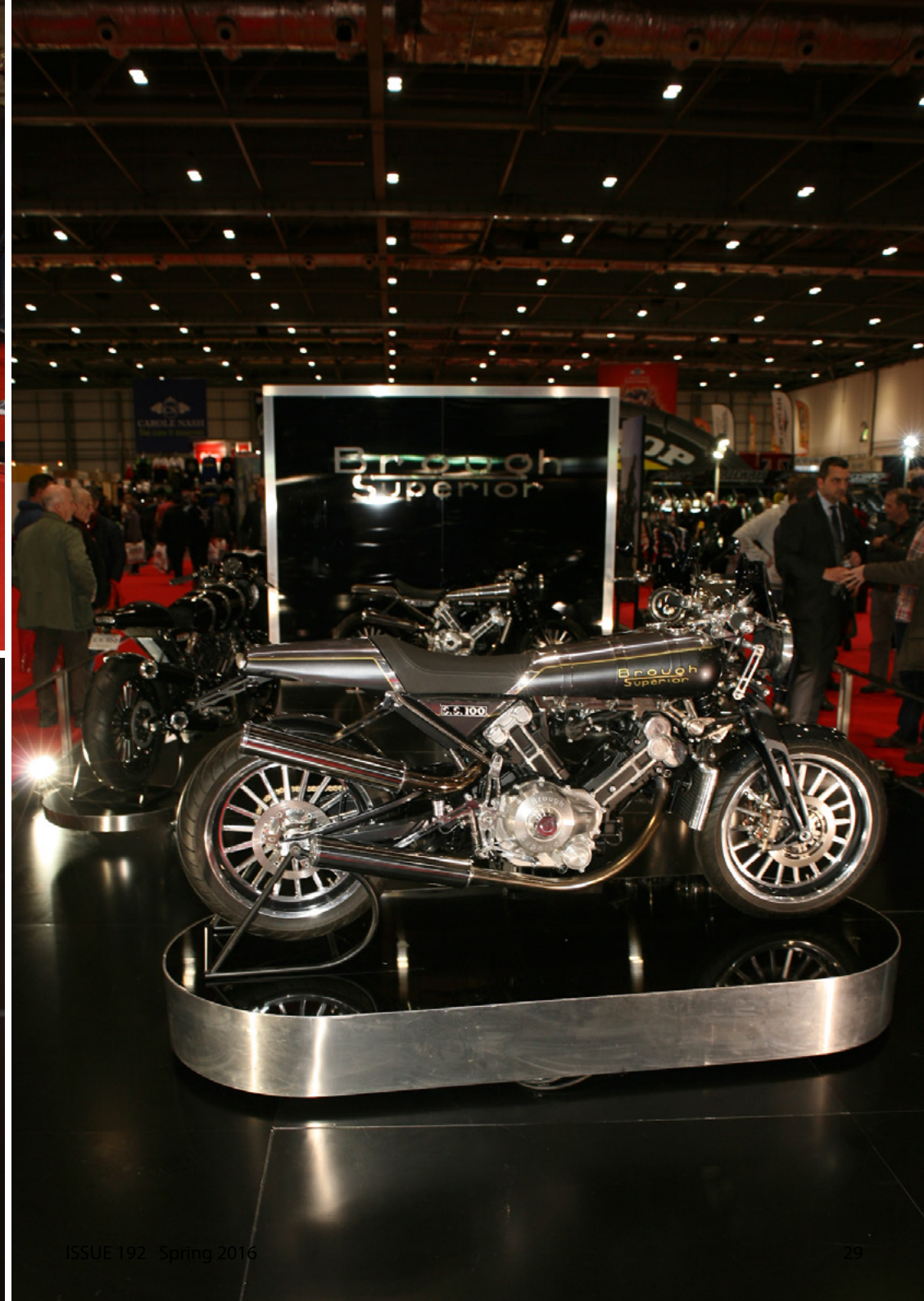
There were so many outstanding motorcycles at the show it was a job to know where to look first.

The Brough Superior stand was our next port of call, and for me possibly the highlight of the show with several examples of their magnificent new SS100 machines in all three available finishes – 'Traditional', 'Racing Full Black' and 'Titanium' – that were all drawing admiring glances from the assembled crowds.

Looking into the 'nuts and bolts' aspects of these elegant machines, there is a great deal of innovation and engineering finery in evidence; from the quadruple carbon front discs to the titanium plate frame and suspension triangles.

The design is innovative while still managing to look classic. I don't have a clue how much one of these machines would be to buy, and it's probably vulgar to even ask, but I suspect it comes down to John Pierpont Morgan's old adage that if you have to ask how much it costs, you can't afford it.

(continued on page 30)



A few feet away, it was also good to see another legendary name at the show – Bimota. The Ducati engine Tesi RC features its famous hub centre steering, which looks extremely complicated to a simpleton like me, but I would love to ride it to see what difference the funny front end (that's the technical term) makes, and whether the bike justifies its £29,450 price tag (it somehow doesn't seem vulgar to mention that about the Bimota).

We then popped across to the Indian/Victory stand and said hello to one of the guys who'd prepared the Indian Chief Vintage that I'd borrowed for the Distinguished Gentleman's Ride back in September, and there was indeed a similar model on the stand, wearing even more chrome and tan leather tassels that the one I'd ridden – which I would have believed impossible.

Other models on the stand included a Scout finished in a stars & stripes, 'Wall of Death' theme, which provided a stark contrast to Dorset based Moore Speed Racing's customised Scout, which was finished in a bold yellow and white tank design which went perfectly with the matt black frame and engine.

Perusing Indian's clothing collection, Ben spotted a rather tidy looking tan leather jacket, also called 'Benjamin', but decided against buying one when he noticed the £439.99 price tag! I was looking at a more modest T-shirt, but with prices starting at £29.99 I also decided to take a rain check...

The next thing that caught my eye was a collection of tyre segments with the tread patterns picked out in a variety of bright colours. Tire Penz UK were selling the rubberized ink pens – sorry, 'penz' – for £16 a throw, in colours including 'cobalt blue', 'poppin' pink' and 'blazing orange' with each pen good for doing a pair of average tyres and





several touch ins.

We featured a photo on The Rider's Digest Facebook page and it provoked mixed reactions. But whatever you think of the finished effect, colouring in your Pilot Road 4s would certainly guarantee that other road users had seen you, which can't be a bad thing.

Which leads on nicely to a couple of other products being sold on the stand, including reflective pens for sidewall use, and flexible reflective tape for use wherever you see fit.

We then moved on to CCM's stand, where I was absolutely delighted to see the very clever use of a front sprocket in line with the swing arm pivot on their rather tasty looking GP 450 adventure bikes. This is something that I believe should have been a standard feature on chain driven bikes since the year dot. If you don't see what's so significant about this feature your homework is to do some research into chain tension and wear.

Just around the corner we stumbled upon global adventurer Sjaak Lucassen's Dutch registered Yamaha R1, complete with luggage, knobbles that would do Shoreditch proud and a rear sprocket the size of an LP (ask your dad).

Sjaak's bike was on the edge of the Adventure Stage, where Austin Vince was being interviewed – dressed as always in an immaculate (green this time) jump suit with contrasting go-faster stripes.

Dylan Samarawickrama's BMW R1150GS 'Bruce' was also present, and featured one or two unusual modifications, such as computer fans fitted to the oil cooler, and a propeller.

OK, the propeller wasn't actually fitted to the bike at the show, but then 'Bruce' wasn't converted into a boat with the aid of ten 45 gallon drums. Which it/he once was. To find out more, you'd need to read Dylan's book, *"When the Road Ends"*.







Another remarkable bike on the edge of the stage was Barry milkman Gareth Jones' 1951 Harley-Davidson, on which he'd spent six months travelling around South Africa.

Leaving the Adventure Stage we caught up with friends for a spot of lunch outside the main hall and I was pleased to see we were in good company in having brought it with us rather than pay the extortionate prices demanded by the caterers inside. £3 Meal Deal anyone?

With my BLT, plain crisps and a bottle of pop having satisfied my various nutritional requirements, we headed for the Ducati stand, where (apart from the beautiful Panigale range) the main focus seemed to be on a sort of big shed housing the new XDiavel range.

These appeared to be a slightly revised but no less chunky version of the still available Diavel, which kind of sits on the cusp of being

a cruiser and a naked roadster, but in quite a good way. I tried one for size and liked the 'feet first' riding position.

Round the back, next to the very yellow Ducati Scrambler Café (I heard someone say that the coffee they were selling was likely to be over priced and unreliable) were a selection of Ducati Scramblers, in various guises and colours.

Call me an old cynic, but these bikes looked a bit big and heavy for 'scrambling' – which is what Murray Walker used to commentate on in the 60s, from what we now call motocross tracks. Between you and me it just might be a styling exercise, with most of the slightly knobbly-tyred bikes likely to see as much mud as the average Chelsea Range Rover.

Triumph were making the most of the show to launch what had enigmatically been



described (in the lead up to the show) as 'a brand new large capacity adventure bike from a major manufacturer'. It was such a big thing that the bike was 'launched' twice daily for all three days of the show.

The bike in question was the brand new Tiger Sport 1050, which according to Triumph features "grippier footpegs, redesigned mirrors, hand guards and heated grips as standard." The new bike also has an adjustable tinted screen (alterable on the go with one hand) complete with 'screen aero diffusers' to deflect turbulence from the rider.

Other features include the slip assist clutch from the new Thruxton and Bonneville models, and a multi-mode ECU. The bike will be available from April in silver with red bits and matt black with neon yellow bits.

Yamaha's stand featured the new

'transformer' – like MT10, which was basically an R1 with its kit off, and their new A2 licence friendly fully faired R3, with a 321cc parallel twin at its heart, which looked like a pretty cool little bike.

Amongst the bikes on Honda's stand was the new Africa Twin, which came in two versions; the usual manual transmission and a new dual clutch automatic model with switchable drive modes and up-and-down buttons.

Interestingly, many of those trying the bike for size seemed oblivious to this and needed to be told (by my son) that the clutch lever was actually a lockable parking brake.

The next question was why an adventure bike would need a parking brake, but I suppose the main reason was that you couldn't pop it into gear when crossing the Zambezi on a

rickety old ferry. Because there isn't a gear lever.

I would be interested in riding one of these (Honda, if you're listening...) if only to see if there was a tendency to grab a handful of parking brake every time you wanted to change gear.

We then wandered among the amassed collections of bikes due to be auctioned during the show, many of which I found extremely desirable but they were way out of my price bracket.

I realise that I've made a bit of a point about how much everything costs at the show, but for many people February is when the Christmas credit card bills are hitting home and a lot of bank accounts are probably feeling a little tender too.

But while some may have been getting an ear bashing from their loved ones about spending limits, thoughts of blocking out unwelcome noise led me to visit the stand of Mercury Hearing, a family business of healthcare professionals with many years' experience of peoples' lug 'oles.

I'm always torn between wearing disposable ear plugs (my AGV Skyline is a pretty noisy lid...) and sticking my shaped Apple earbuds in to hear the sat nav or occasionally music – although they can get a bit painful after a while inside a helmet.

I'd always fancied a set of moulded in-ear headphones, so the guys filled my ears with green gunge and took impressions. By the time the Summer issue of TRD comes out I should have taken delivery and covered quite a few miles with my custom fitted Mercury earpieces, so look out for a review in 'Bitz'.

The last stand we visited was BMW, but apart from a few tweaks and different colour schemes there didn't really seem to be anything new and exciting. Well not to me, anyway.





With that we repaired to Costa for a quick coffee, while I pondered the London Motorcycle Show.

Among my ponderances: Was it better than Earls Court? Yes, for us, as we live to the south east of the capital – and much better than schlepping all the way to the NEC.

Where were Harley-Davidson? I'm sure they were there last year. Maybe they didn't have anything new to show (didn't stop BMW...) or perhaps the stories from the Wall Street Journal about falling sales due to increased competition from rivals such as Indian are biting – but I would have thought that the bike show would be the perfect opportunity to reverse that trend.

The next thing I pondered, as we sat there absorbing the warmth from the coffee before going out to the icebox known as the bike park, was why hold the show in February?

I've been to this show by car before (when buying crash helmets) and the parking charges are on a par with renting a property in the capital for the same amount of time.

It's a bike show so of course we come by bike and get free parking. And you don't have to queue up at the Woolwich Ferry – first on, first off.

But it's February, and it was absolutely freezing.

In the absence of any further pondering and with the coffee all gone, we left ExCel and headed for the ferry. Except that it was closed due to high water levels on the Thames, so we had to divert to the Blackwall Tunnel and spent the next hour or so slowly filtering through Friday rush hour traffic – on the day of a tube strike!

If we'd been in a car it would have taken two or more hours to get home, so that's another reason to go by Bike.

But why February? What's wrong with July?

Martin Haskell



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SPEAKING SPANNER



It's about 1:30pm in the searing heat of Southern France. I'm aged 11 at an off-road motorbiking camp in the arse end of nowhere surrounded by dozens of teenage French boys and dirt bikes. In the middle of our semi-circle is a French man talking in French about bits and bobs and technicalities, which to me is the equivalent of someone trying to explain how to assemble IKEA flat pack furniture in Russian. After what seems like 219 Plutonian years of mechanical gibberish, he turns to me and asks me to demonstrate. Needless to say, I haven't understood a thing he says and I release the clutch and rev so fast that the tiny little Yamaha PW 80cc flies straight into the nearest tree. When his furious little face scowls back over at me, I hausse my epaules (shrug my shoulders) and tell him quite assertively "I don't speak spanner".

My main source of biking inspiration has naturally been my family; my Dad has been a biker my entire life. In fact, some of my earliest memories are of my brother and I sitting at the dinner table as children listening out for the rumble of his Kawasaki ZZR 1100, which would signal his return from work, followed by the smell of engine oil when the door burst open. There were significant gaps in my knowledge however, for instance, I could not understand why he had spent at least two months trying to repair the 'carbonara' on his DRZ 400, or indeed what sort of role this particular component had to play on the bike itself (turns out it was called a carburettor).

I loved riding pillion as a kid, and I can even recall texting on the back as a young teenager (evidently not helping the stereotype). However, my brother took to biking in a far more natural and organic way; I distinctly remember him taking a harsh tumble at that



French bike camp and effortlessly getting up out of the hot dust like a phoenix rising from the ashes. In contrast, when going over that same bend I looked more like a constipated pigeon.

The second source of biking inspiration was through family friends and ultimate adventure bikers, Austin Vince (rode around the world, twice) and Lois Pryce (rode the Americas and African continents solo). I'd encountered them at various points intermittently throughout my childhood, where they'd wandered in with bright faces full of adventures and stories and left a biscuit crumb trail of curiosity and wanderlust in their wake.

Before I knew it I was 17 and Austin was standing in my kitchen wearing his trademark boiler suit and large grin, offering me the chance to work at their new film festival (for those who don't know, which included myself



at the time, the Adventure Travel Film Festival – ATFF – is essentially a quirky over-grown garden party packed with utterly phenomenal and totally off-beat and cult travel videos from riders and the like). After his offer, I grabbed a friend who'd impressed him with her eccentric (if a bit scarily too in-depth) knowledge of London underground trivia and we started out as volunteers at the festival.

Most of the other volunteers were adventure biking veterans with months or even years spent travelling on the road. We'd be sitting down to eat in the canteen and someone would casually tell us about their biking trip around the mountains of Patagonia, or how they'd built their own custom bikes and shipped them out to Rajasthan for three months or so of exotic touring. At the time we were just teenagers at school in southeast London with little motorbiking or indeed much

life experience to speak of. We felt as if we'd fallen down the rabbit hole and were instantly enthralled by their engaging stories about dirt bikes, fun on the road and remote places, all of which was so far away from our relatively dull classroom lives. It didn't help in the slightest that the films were all incredibly inspiring, extraordinarily entertaining and unbelievably cool. My friend had never even touched a bike at that point and I'll never forget the look on her face when Ed March gave her a go on his Honda C90, which he had ridden all the way back to the UK from Malaysia.

Every year I came back to the festival, the same story-tellers and various bikers had been asking me when I was due to get my license and I'd smile sheepishly and say 'uh sometime' or something to that effect. I'd had few brief encounters since the French bike camp, notably on my brother's seventeenth birthday



when the three of us, including my Dad, had gone on an off-road techniques course at a biking academy. I'd managed to stop on a left-sloping hill on a KTM, which was quite frankly far too big for me, and had tried to put my right foot down on the floor and ended up somewhat perpendicular to where I'd been aiming for. However, after I'd expressed interest in learning properly my Dad's face lit up and he immediately booked me onto a CBT course in central London. I was excited, but constantly haunted by the image of that little Yamaha PeeWee lodged quite firmly halfway up an alpine tree.

I remember turning up to my CBT assessment day bright eyed and bushy tailed as the youngest, most inexperienced biker there. And, I suppose fairly unsurprisingly, the only female. To get to know my classmates better, I asked a young man with hair resembling a

yak's tail who was sitting next to me where he'd learnt to ride, he smirked, 'joy riding'. My attempt to meet some friendly like-minded bikers ended pretty abruptly and I decided I would probably leave the idle chatter and small talk for another day. We then met the instructor, a rather avuncular man in his fifties who seemed inoffensive enough as he puffed away on his roll ups.

The training in the concrete pen went shakily at best, I wasn't particularly quick to grasp any of the (pretty basic) manoeuvres and then before I knew it we were out on the road. As a fairly typical teenage Londoner I had never even driven a car, I was probably about as road aware as a passing hedgehog on the A4. My instructor started off relatively patient, calling me by my name and giving helpful advice. However, within an hour he'd stopped using my name and had taken to calling me



'woman'. Or rather, an entire colourful array of expletives, followed by 'woman'. By the end of the day, I'd been called every conceivable epithet under the sun; but, he passed me and I left clutching my certificate with both hands, absolutely quaking with adrenaline. After that experience, I didn't touch a bike again for two years until recently when my CBT ran out and I had to retake it.

After passing the second CBT (with an instructor who didn't sound like Frankie Boyle after he'd missed a connecting flight) my Dad helped me choose a little black Suzuki VanVan 125cc as my first ever bike. We went to pick it up outside London and rode back together. I couldn't even explain how excited I was to be riding on the road with my Dad, side by side. I'd be beaming over at him and he'd be yelling back at me to turn my indicators off.

My brother and I have recently passed our theory tests and now that I've had a lot more experience riding around London, we've been

discussing planning trips as a family that we'd been talking about for years now becoming realistic prospects. We've hatched a plan to compete as a family team in Austin and Lois's off-road rally in the Pyrenees this summer – the Pyreknees Up – but that's contingent on my brother and I passing our bike tests (gulp). We're also looking into motorbiking for several weeks in Southeast Asia, a trip of a lifetime that is slowly becoming more and more tangible.

My motorbiking experience has been a steep learning curve for someone as awkward and clumsy as myself, with little practical capability. However, I'm pretty determined to follow in the same steps as Austin, Lois and all the other incredible and influential bikers I've met and hopefully, one day, I'll be riding a dirt road myself, somewhere far away with less danger of sending the bike flying and absolutely fluent in spanner.

Saskia Ashton





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Gambling on the Future

Have you had a look at how much interest your savings are making nowadays? Shockingly low, isn't it? If you are brave enough you could just make a bit more on the Stock Market, but the markets have been jittery for a while and with some potentially high risk events looming (Chinese market implosion and Brexit, to name just two), I wouldn't like to make any predictions. So, where do you put your cash nowadays for medium to long-term investment? How about classic bikes? That way you could enjoy your investment at the same time?

A good few years back a group of fellow bikers and I were having a few beers and discussing that very subject – what might become a classic ten or twenty years into the future. It would have been easy to predict rare and expensive bits of two-wheeled rolling art such as the Mike Hailwood Replica Ducati, or a Hesketh, so we put a ceiling on the purchase price of £1,000, which was still a reasonable amount of money then (it still is come to think of it!). Affordable enough to buy and tuck away as an investment (unlikely), or for careful summer use keeping the miles down and the value up.

I cannot recall all the predicted classics (I'll use alcohol as my excuse for amnesia) but there were some seemingly totally off the wall suggestions which caused some mirth and derisory comments around the table, such as BSA Bantams, 80s BMW Boxer twins, and the couriers special, the Honda CX 500.

Nowadays Bantams (probably your first bike if you are of a certain age, the FS1E of its day) are starting to fetch good prices if they are in reasonable nick; air cooled BMWs are climbing fast (especially the rarer ones such as the early GS trailies; and even the CX500



has moved on from cheap winter hack status and is fetching surprising prices (especially the turbo version). I'm particularly glad about the CX as I have a two owner, low mileage model tucked away in my cellar in boxes at the moment, awaiting a spare month or three when I can rebuild it. Considering the slow pace of progress with that bike, it will be worth a fortune by the time it's finished. Or, maybe not. Who knows?

The issue of "investment bikes" arose again recently during a discussion about a new law which commenced in January 2016 in France. From now on, the profits that are realised on the sale of a classic vehicle, over a certain threshold, will be taxable. There will be a sliding scale depending on how long the vehicle has been kept. I can see why it has been introduced as there have been some well publicised instances of people buying some rare classic cheaply and selling it later for a highly inflated price. If you have the contacts, the investment capital and the knowledge, you can make a very good living doing this. Of course the effect of this new law will be to drive many deals underground, with the stated price being "adjusted" to ensure the profit is just below the threshold.

OK, what are the criteria for buying an investment bike? As ever, buy a bike in the best condition you can afford – it's a false economy to buy a basket case with the intention of doing a full renovation, as inevitably it will cost more than the end result will be worth in the majority of cases (but not always). Look for originality, as that's what the next buyer will want. Things like original exhausts for early Japs are VERY expensive, if you don't believe me try getting an original exhaust for something like a Kawasaki Z1, it will bring tears to your eyes – and your bank manager's!



Look for a bike that didn't sell in great numbers when it was new, so there are not many around. There may have been a very good reason for them not selling, like the VF750 Honda, so avoid these like the plague, but the low sales volume of a model may just have been down to a silly name, quirky design or bad marketing.

So what bikes should we be looking at now that have a good chance of increasing in value in say, ten years time? Brit bikes have already shot up in price, and the chances of finding a £1,000 one owner, low mileage, Gold Star are similar to winning the big one on the lottery, so I'm going to discount the majority of Brits. A few years ago I found a latish Bonneville in a barn, covered in the proverbial chicken stuff, and needing, at the very least, full cosmetic restoration. The owner had paid €3,000 (£2,000 at that time), then stored it for a good few years

in the barn. I could have had it for €1,800, but thought it needed too much money spent, so turned it down. Now I wish I hadn't!

The classic big Jap bikes are already way out of the reach of the bargain hunter – who would have thought the Suzuki X7, Honda Benly, CB450 Black Bomber and 500/4 would ever have reached their current values, not to mention Yamaha's RD400 and LCs. My tip here is to drop down in engine capacity, and consider the Honda CB250, Yamaha TZR 250, Suzuki RGV250, Suzuki GT250 or something a bit newer and faster, like the 1994 Urban Tiger Fireblade. Around £3,500 should get you a good one of these, and I would reckon their value will rocket within a few years. Looking for a tourer for your collection – how about the Yamaha GTS1000, which was just too different to sell in any numbers?

For my first investment tip, try the early

trailies (Yamaha DT175, Honda XL125, etc), or even early trials models. These can still be found tucked away in barns, in surprisingly good condition, for not a lot of money.

As I mentioned earlier, the air-cooled twins from the Bavarian Motor Works have started to rise, more so here in France than in the UK. Conversely, the flat fours (K series) bikes are one of the best bargains on the market just now – £1,000 will still buy a usable bike that just needs some care and attention. Capable of huge mileages if looked after, with tons of cheap spares on the Net, along with a wide choice of bikes for sale; but will they become collectable? Probably not for a very long time, the exception being the K1. Not everyone's taste, but a good bike, cheap to run and reasonably quick. I think prices have bottomed and now bounced up again – be prepared to pay €5,000 (£4,000) for a nice clean one, and I have seen very low mileage collector's pieces for between €14,000 and €17,000 (£11,200 and £13,600). Way over the top, and possibly just some speculators trying to test the market. For

my next 'investment bike' tip, I suggest looking at the BMW K100RS (16valve) – the K1 engine, good riding position, and available much more cheaply than its more glamorous sibling. Use it, lightly restore it, keep the mileage down, and this one will make money in a few years time.

Fancy a bit of Italian? Ducati's ST2 looks like a bargain now – keep it for a few years, have some fun, and then make some money. The MV Agusta F4 is a long term favourite of mine but prices are a bit high now for an investment bike, so my third tip is to search out an early 750cc MV Agusta Brutale. Prices vary from €3,500 (£2,900) for a well used example to €6,000 euros (£5,000) for an immaculate version, with minimal mileage and covered in MV Corse goodies. The early versions are a bit thin on the ground, but they are built to a very high standard.

Earlier I mentioned considering bikes that didn't sell well, due to quirky styling, and the Aprilia 6.5 is a perfect example of this. Definitely weird, and possibly a future collectable. For those brave souls willing to





accept a challenge and don't want to break the bank, they could do a lot worse than a CZ, Jawa, DNPR, or MZ – my tip here is to pick up an MZ Scorpion Traveller, which uses a Yamaha engine for reliability and is sufficiently rare to make it a potential winner in the future. I've had a couple of CZs in the past and they were bulletproof, although I did recently decline the offer of a free Jawa 350 with the caveat that I had to restore it rather than breaking it. I felt it would cost more to restore it than it would eventually be worth, so gave it a wide berth!

Does Harley Davidson have anything to offer the potential investor? This is a difficult one, as Harleys tend to last a long time and the models don't change much over the years. A late Ironhead Sportster (mid 80s), with the electric start to save your leg from serious damage, is a possible, but it may be too late to get a bargain. Around six years ago I missed out on a cracker due to bad re-registration advice, which would now have been worth twice the asking price. As always, only buy a standard bike if you want to maximise investment potential.

OK, now I will let you into my number one tip for a future investment purchase. Buy French. Yes, really. I regularly see classic French made bikes for sale for derisory sums – often totally original, running, and sometimes still in use. There is a big choice of names to choose from: Motobecane, Terrot, Gnome et Rhone, Magnet Debon, Dollar, Peugeot, Monet-Goyon, Rene-Gilet and many, many more. Parts are still easily obtainable for most makes, and there are some very attractive bikes out there. Last year I bought a totally original (down to tool kit and pump) 1947 Magnat Debon, for the price of a restaurant meal for four. It was a runner and just needed the tank and carb cleaning and a pair of tyres to make it a usable classic. An English dealer snapped my arm off at double the purchase price within hours of it being advertised.

If you want to see what is on offer in the way of French bikes Leboncoin is their favourite website.

Wizzard



Riders' Venues

Ryka's, Box Hill

It's amazing to think that there must be at least few of you reading this, who've known The Rider's Digest ever since its early days when you picked your copy up from the riders' room of the courier company you worked at.

Unless that is you worked for one of the shitty little firms who refused to take the mag because they didn't want their riders to discover that there were companies out there offering guaranteed minimums that were a couple of hundred quid more than they could hope to earn in a good week at *Dodgy Despatch*, in which case you will probably have picked it up at a variety of locations that were popular with couriers – Chaz Bikes, FWR, Essential Rubber, the Smithfield Cafe...

However, after a while it became obvious that the Digest was being read by many people who had nothing whatsoever to do with its target demographic; motorcyclists who'd picked up their first free copy while they were getting their bikes serviced or their tyres changed and had become hooked on the real world articles that were so conspicuously absent in the mainstream motorcycling media.

So we upped the circulation and started dropping a box off at a few rider venues in and around London such as the Ace Cafe, High Beech Tea Hut, Chelsea Bridge on Friday night (which is sorely missed) and Rykas. And the boxes always emptied with every new issue – in the summer months they'd often all be gone by the end of the first sunny weekend.

In 2008 we expanded our reach still further until it included popular rider haunts across England and Wales from Whiteways Cafe in West Sussex, to The Ponderosa in Denbighshire and Squires Bikers Cafe in North Yorkshire – and by the end of that year we were circulating 32,000 copies a month.

That same year we started a series of pictorials featuring the various cafes that distributed the magazine and more importantly the spectacular array of bikes that assembled in their car parks. These features proved to be terrifically popular with the readers who would ring their mates to tell them that their pride and joy had made it into the pages of their favourite freebie bike mag.

Anyroadup, we've decided that it's about time that we had another look around these classic bikers' watering holes. Because although many of them have barely changed since their heyday in the Fifties and Sixties, the assembled bikes continue to mix the latest greatest things on two wheels, with old and 'modern' classics and the occasional spectacularly ratty examples that illustrate what a broad church motorcycling is.

Thanks to Darius – Dariusvimages – for this great set of snaps taken at Rykas on the first sunny weekend of 2016.





















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BACK TO BIKING





If what they say is 'you don't know what you got 'til it's gone', then what they say is not quite accurate. I believe we need to rephrase it to say 'you don't know what you got 'til you're just about to get it back again'.

I live in Athens, Greece, and some years ago my old man made the long journey across Europe – crossing each border with no problems, may I add – to bring my Kawasaki ZZR 600 to me (I believe the trip was chronicled in the hallowed pages of *The Rider's Digest*). For a long while it was beautiful, running around town, with trips up and down the country, sunshine gently burning my irresponsibly bare arms. Hey, I was young and reckless.

Then of course the brutal reality of life in a failing economy came and put a stop to such luxuries as freedom, a home and fuel (those four cylinders can be very hungry mouths to feed when you start revving the engine). We

decided it was time to try our luck elsewhere and headed to London where legend had it that money was to be made and everything was hunky dory.

If anyone has ever travelled to Southern Europe you may have noticed that there are a hell of a lot of half built buildings. Now this can either be because the money ran dry so nobody finished the building, or because nobody finished building and then the money ran dry. Well luckily for me there is one such structure right next door to my girlfriend's house in her sleepy little *xorío* (that's village, to me and you). Turns out these abandoned projects make great parking spots, and as we had the keys to the front door for this particular place, in went the ZZR and I tucked her away safely under blankets and a tarpauling. Before doing so, however I took the precaution of disconnecting the battery and draining the

carburettors (I have previously documented my troubles in this area and my disappointing lack of the requisite mechanical ability).

And there she was left while we fled back to the land of milk and tea. There we stayed whilst I punted out BMW spares to very fussy owners via the internet and my other half flogged pints of cheap beer to city workers trying to forget their day toiling on the bottom rung of the ladder.

Eventually we found ourselves in the blessed position of having enough money in the bank to run away again and no real responsibilities to hold us back. Latin America beckoned and as anyone who has visited that great swathe of land to the West will contest, it is a natural heaven. If, after all, some great deity does exist, he (she, or it) was surely giving a nudge to two wheeled transport when he (she, or it) sculpted the Americas. Endless tarmac, rugged volcanoes and astoundingly indescribable landscapes lace the entire continent. We spent six months criss crossing our way north from Patagonia to Mexico and not once did I so much as throw my leg over a motorcycle, but every twisted mountain track that we inched down on a bus made me dream of one day heading back to ride every inch again.

So since leaving my steed I had started up a company solely based on selling motorcycle parts then used the funds to travel to riding paradise without so much as revving an engine or hitting a kill switch. And so it was with a mixture of confusion and melancholy that I was struck with an overwhelming desire to be back on the road. But not just the cruising-in-the-sun free riding, free spirited vision of being back on the road, no, I wanted the wet, cold, mornings, the close calls, the anxiety when the tank is low and you aren't sure where the next

petrol station is. That slight squint of affection that crosses my face when I'm simply looking at my bike and contemplating navigating the morning traffic. Not to mention reducing my travel time from over an hour to no more than twenty minutes!

Something had to be done. But it's never that easy, is it? Had I drained the carburettors like a good boy? Yes. Had I disconnected the battery like a good boy? Yes. Had I drained the fuel tank like a good boy? No. Inevitably I reconnected the battery, turned the key and the bike coughed and gargled, chuffed out great plumes of smoke from those, usually purring, twin silencers and made a sort of asthmatic wheeze for a few moments before giving up and cutting out all together. Darn. Despite my disappointing lack of mechanical knowledge, I do like unscrewing things and taking them apart so I set about removing what I could and tracking down any blockages in the system.

As it turns out, petrol these days and particularly in this part of the world, ain't what it used to be and that usually cherished combustible had gone to work on the inside of my tank, turning into a rust bucket. Upon draining the petrol out it glowed auburn. I don't know much, but I know that petrol shouldn't be orange. In firing up my machine I had dragged about half a ton of flaked fuel tank and orange sludge in to my carbs and the tank itself had become nowt more than a bloody heavy percussion instrument (because the sediment inside made a rather soothing swoosh when shaking the petrol tank around).

Some extensive internet research offered me a few options for cleaning out the tank, which ranged from the uncomfortable to the downright dangerous. My favourite method was electrolytic rust removal, which basically





involved a rod of metal hooked up to a battery that was lowered in to a tank filled with water and washing soda. Then seemingly some secondary school science works its magic and apparently all the rust sticks to your metal rod... or something.

The most questionable method was to fill the tank with water and pour in a small bucket full of sand. No. No matter how many times you tell me it's fine, I was not going to be comfortable pouring sand into my petrol tank. In my experience though, the most effective way to solve any kind of mechanical problem (and almost any problem, in fact) is to get someone else to do it. In years gone by this was my dad's job; he got me in to this motorbiking mess and so he would invariably get me out of it too. However, with him being at the other



end of the continent, this would be no such occasion.

So the tank travelled back to Athens with me and I waved some euros at someone in a motorcycle service station and voilà, problem solved. Amazing. I'm quite a dab hand at getting those carburettors in and out now so they were cleaned up (incidentally, by my dad, to whom I was making a planned visit anyway, honestly, I didn't fly to London just to have him clean them...) and in they went. Petrol tank bolted back on, a drop of fresh petrol and that smell of exhaust fumes was as intoxicating as anything else toxic I may have experienced – and every bit as satisfying.

What a glorious privilege it is to be able to ride a motorcycle just for the pleasure of it. Even sitting at a set of traffic lights with an engine

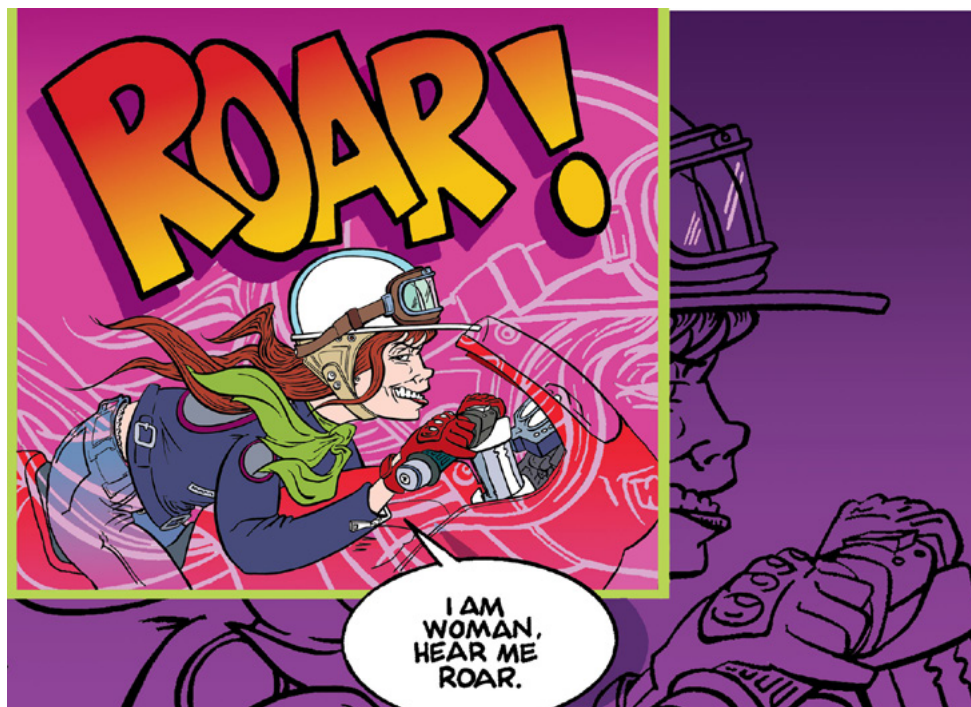


idling at just the right revs, responding to the slightest roll of the throttle, knowing that at your behest you can feel that clunk of the gear lever and glide off wherever the bloody hell you want to. It doesn't even matter if you are making your way to work, for those minutes that you are on the bike you could be heading anywhere.

And in these austere times, whether it's Athens or London, you have to find

your pleasure where you can because it is relentlessly beaten out of you in pursuit of bill payments, rent and a fiver for a pint. My pleasure has most certainly been found in a 20 year old Japanese beauty.

Martin Newman



MENSTRUAL CYCLES ~ MOTORCYCLES

As a bird of childbearing age, the monthly merry-go-round of rising and falling hormones is a familiar one. Menstruation – just one week of the cycle – has got to be one of society's last standing taboos.

In many parts of the world, being on the rag is second only to being spawn of the devil. Here in the West, we might have 'Argh, bodyform' adverts on the TV but we are still pretty coy when it comes to relaxed open discussion about the ups and downs of the healthy female reproductive system.

Men have come up with some inventive code phrases to facilitate understanding, for example, 'having the painters in', 'Granny's staying over', 'the wife has broke down' (not in the nervous sense)... but still, I think, us girls are reluctant to bring the issue out into the open, perhaps because we don't want to give the guys any more reasons for not letting us do stuff.

Throughout the 28-day cycle female chemistry goes through some pretty radical changes. To know this, and not expect some fairly major reactions is a bit naïve, but women have been doing this forever. In our struggle for equality and freedom we have denied the impact of our natural cycle on our abilities and perceptions, and vigorously shouted down anyone who wanted to talk about it.

Obviously, if I thought for a minute that my hormones were a handicap I wouldn't be writing this. To acknowledge its influence isn't giving in to it; it's working with it, rather than against it.

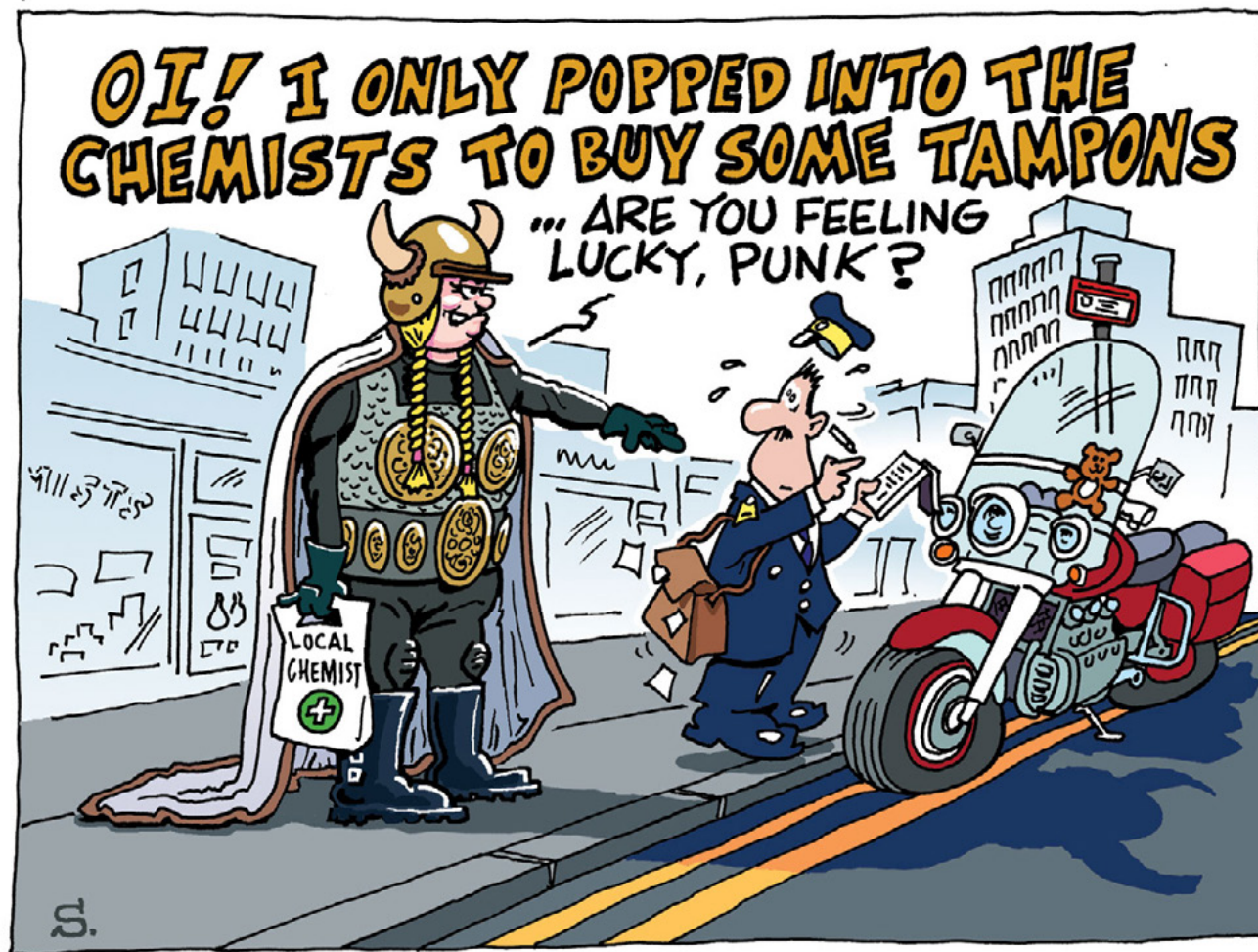
Research into the whole area has been as affected by cultural taboos as the rest of us. It is only relatively recently that scientists starting investigating the physiological effects of the various hormones involved, rather than

just writing off female subjects as useless for experiments because we are too unreliable and moody. A great deal of the most recent research has been done in the sports sector where performance predictability is so important.

A common symptom of PMT is clumsiness and lack of coordination. Lots of women experience this to varying degrees and it's nothing if not frustrating. 24 days a month I have absolutely no problem at all going through a door; for 4 days a month however, it's mission impossible, as I consistently misjudge where I am in relation to the doors' space. Last summer I did 5000 miles on a motorbike and gained not one cut or bruise as a result. During this month long trip I also got PMT and nearly put my self in hospital getting out of bed in a youth hostel – alright it was the top bunk, but it wasn't that difficult and there was no reason at all to smack my head on the opposite wall.

The reason we get accident-prone at this particular time of the month is thanks to a hormone called Relaxin. You'd think, with a name like that, Relaxin would be the hormone of choice, but think again.

Our physical coordination relies a lot on something called Proprioception, which is a posh word for knowing where you are in space. We know its working when we reach for a mug of coffee and just the right bit of our fingers curls round the handle, or when we take the stairs and get to the top without tripping. The key to good proprioception is your brain being absolutely up to date with where our fingers and toes are. Usually, our fingers and toes are in the same place from day to day, but for us girls this changes at certain times of the month when Relaxin is working on our ligaments. Ligaments connect your bones and normally aren't stretchy at all, but Relaxin changes all



that. Relaxin is dead useful when you are trying to squeeze a bowling ball out of your ass, or have a baby perhaps, because it loosens all the ligaments in the pelvis and makes everything a bit roomier. When you're not having a baby though, all it really does is make your limbs a little longer and your joints a little bit looser, so your brain suddenly has no idea where your appendages end anymore. This means coordinating your body, or just a limb of it

through space becomes a much more hit and miss affair.

Female athletes are dramatically more at risk from over-stretching injuries in this part of the cycle.

High levels of Oestrogen, which happily occurs at just the same time your body turns into a rag-doll, tends to slow down your reaction times. So you can see quite clearly that you're going to put the glass down on thin air,

and not the table top as you'd planned, but you can't react quick enough to do anything about it.

One of the earliest studies, done by Whitehead in 1934 found that female pilots were more likely to crash when in this phase. In 1964, Dalton found that more than half the women admitted to hospital after accidents were in the same gremlin-ridden phase of their cycle.

If you happen to earn your living sitting at a computer doing data-entry then this is probably not a big issue, but when your days work is based on fast accurate judgement of speed and distance, like being a courier, then going out on circuit with bad PMT is like trying to do the job wearing glasses prescribed for a wall-eyed fish. For all female despatch riders this is the situation for a few days every month. Not that we'd ever tell you guys and let you think you had some kind of advantage.

We tend to make no allowances for our fluctuating hormones and neither does society, but this is stupid. When it's winter and we're feeling cold, we turn the central heating on. We constantly make adjustments to our changing external environment, but us girls particularly have a habit of blatantly ignoring our internal one. Perhaps women could learn a lesson from the boys here. I've never met a man with the merest sniffle who didn't make sure all allowances were made on his behalf. Our hormonal cycle isn't a sickness, but it affects us significantly – we should stop trying to soldier on regardless.

Your hormones are not a psychosomatic figment of your imagination. You change physically and measurably. As human beans we are excellent at adapting to changing circumstances but these monthly changes tend to come and go in a matter of days and there is little time to recalibrate the grey matter. Knowing this, are you still going to charge around at the same pace? And if you do are you going to be surprised if you hit something unexpectedly?

The key to using this knowledge is not about putting your bike away for a few days every month – its simply about factoring you into your riding plan, the same way you factor in the homicidal maniac in the Taxi (who I'd like

to point out, probably doesn't have hormones as an excuse). We should all be doing this on a daily basis anyway, male or female, for we are not robots. Our state of mind, health, stress levels etc are all in a constant state of flux and all these things have a profound effect on our safety when charging around on motorbikes. Women possibly have fewer accidents than men already, because we are used to dealing with and paying attention to these regular variations and accord due respect to our changing abilities as riders.

Once this phase is over, of course, and your body returns to its usual shape and length, you girls will be flying again, quicker than ever. Ed Moses was a 400m hurdler back in the 70s and he was so far ahead of the rest it was embarrassing. No one could touch him. He put his extraordinary success down to his training methods. He'd practise with a 50kg rucksack on his back. That was it. No drugs, no fancy routines, just 400m hurdles with a great big heavy rucksack. When he went into competition he left the rucksack behind and then he almost flew, running as if he were used to a planet with heavier gravity than this one. So despatching with a hormonal disadvantage is hard work, but then doing the same thing without is joyfully easy; see you in my mirrors, chaps.

It's a shot in the dark, but I'd hazard a guess that men are more concerned about why women get so flipping short-tempered and irritable at this time of the month, than they are with tiny changes in how long our arms and legs are. Blokes often complain that they suffer from PMT too and yes, possibly our partners do tend to take the brunt of our frustration, which accounts for why they usually end up skulking around for a few days trying to stay out of trouble.

Perhaps understanding the causes of all this 'inexplicable' grumpiness might make the whole thing easier to deal with. Its fairly simple: just when our pain-receptors are at their most sensitive we become a thousand times more likely to stub our toe on your great big bike boots that you left in the middle of the hall. Again. Remember that for the rest of the month we are successfully stepping round your Sidi's, and then probably picking them up and putting them tidily in the corner. However, on these few days, having already burnt our finger on the oven, smashed our favourite mug and bashed our head on the cupboard while making dinner, all the while feeling more tired than usual and still having done a normal day at work, well, then when I do stub my toe I'm going to holler long and loud. If it happens to be your boots that got in my way, then it's you I'm going to holler at. Is that really so unreasonable?

Lois Fast-Lane

The other Dave Channel



ISBN: 9780956086303

Amazon's "Humour > Automotive" category is dominated by Jezza Clarkson knockdowns. However, for a few brief but glorious hours on the first Monday of the new decade, *The Carin' Sharin' Chronicles* hit the number three slot, offering discerning readers another kind of Dave Channel altogether.

His charming turns of phrase and effortless bonhomie stand in stark contrast to so much contemporary motor-cycle journalism. Dave Gurman makes you glad that you're riding and glad that you're reading.

Austin Vince
Mondo Enduro

Dave Gurman is blindingly honest, funny, never PC... When I picked this book up, I couldn't put it down.

Sam Manicom
Into Africa/Under Asian Skies/Distant Suns

Each story will have you nodding furiously in agreement, reaching for your pen to underline sentences that speak to your soul, and laugh out loud at life's little truths that we just never thought of in that way before, until Dave spelled them out so eloquently.

The Carin' Sharin' Chronicles is extremely funny. Even from a non biker perspective, the flow of lateral philosophical thought and astute political observation mixed in with everyday life experiences, make it hugely accessible to all *****

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Or from [The Rider's Digest online shop](http://TheRider'sDigestonline.shop).



CONFESSIONS OF AN UNCERTAIN BIKER

Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been... er, rather too long since my last act of contribution to the holy order that is *The Rider's Digest*. But please don't see this as some kind of return of the Prodigal Son sort of thing because it's more like discovering that the said progeny has actually been in his bedroom all along, doing something else (quite what is strictly between me and the Holy Father but I have to admit it involves badgers!).

So the question most in need of answering in order to establish how many Hail Marys and Our Fathers will be required to cleanse my biking soul is 'have I actually done any biking in all the time I've been away?' Well, you, St Peter and all the leather-clad angels in Davida helmets and goggles will be chuffed to hear that yes I have. I did have a sort of hiatus for eighteen months where the Cagiva Raptor was laid up and the only thing keeping me from descending out of Purgatory into the flames of carnageddon was an ever-increasing number of jaunts on father-in-law's 1961 P&M Panther and Steib sidecar outfit.

I can't remember if I have described this experience previously in TRD so please bear with me if I repeat the observation that having a lot of experience handling boats has come in very useful in keeping me and the family heirloom out of the hedges and ditches of the Cotswolds, not to mention the fearsome dry-stone walls. Steering inputs are largely guesstimates and one learns to wait and see what (if any) reaction the rig makes in response to these before making any further adjustments.

Bless it, the trusty 650 sloper engine has never stopped once started but equally has nearly always failed to start again once stopped at the pub, rally or MOT station. Generally this

failure is followed by an hour or so of strenuous kicking over, fruitless plug changing and increasingly bad language. And more often than not a tow home. But it's huge fun and never fails to put a ludicrous grin on my face. People wave at us as we go by, drivers move out of our way on narrow lanes and children laugh and point, and drop their ice-creams on the ground for sharp-witted dogs to lick up.

As father-in-law Sid (*Digest* passim) got closer to ninety years old the fateful day arrived (boxing Day 2014) when riding the outfit was no longer a good idea for him. In fact it was nearly a fatal day as he pulled across the road towards a junction straight into the path of one of those big shiny German 4x4s that pass for the conveyances of 'country folk' these days. I was cowering in the sidecar making my final peace with whatever god I imagined might take in newly delivered souls that were fused to mangled vintage bodywork.

Fortunately the driver wasn't texting, watching a DVD, or adjusting the heating thermostat at home using some automotive 'app' on his iPhone UltraPro. I waved weakly as he swerved past us and he waved back. Amazing... I was filling my pants in a last-moments-of-life convulsion of terror and he was just thrilled to see an old bike being used on the road. When we got to the pub Sid was 'concerned' by what had happened but nevertheless unflapped. He told me he thought he shouldn't ride it any more and that, as a mater of fact, was that. We had a 'swifty' and headed home with me riding the Panther and him in the chair.

He told me he had never been in the Steib before, at least not on the road so this was a new experience for him. It felt odd knowing that a tectonic shift had just occurred in his relationship with the bike – and mine, and



indeed with him. He bought the outfit in 1970 and basically made it all up out of the good bits of two bikes, restoring the Steib to somewhere near its former glory. There's a picture of the little girl who was to become my lifelong partner (wife, later on) sitting in it on the grass with a pair of goggles on. Sid took his daughter Tina all over the place in it, including on holidays to France.

When we got home we discovered Sid was stuck in the narrow tube-like body of the sidecar and I had to pull him out very gently, so as not to break his ribs. It was all very awkward and undignified in the end, and he said he didn't want to get in there again. And then, almost unnoticed, one of those momentous events in a biker's life came upon us. Sid hadn't been riding his last two solo machines for well over a year as he'd been unable to hold

them up with his ever weakening legs. So he called an end to his life as a biker right there and then. That was it. He's been riding bikes of all sorts, including with sidecars, since he was fourteen years old. The end was as undramatic as finishing a cup of tea. We went inside and actually had a cup of tea!

Around that time I had another of those moments in a rider's life, a moment of self-doubt – indeed, a full-blown existential crisis! I was engaged in one of those fruitless online 'discussions' on the comment section of some regional newspaper with one of those people who expresses bullshit opinions with such confidence it never occurs to them they could be wrong. During the course of trying to find new ways of insulting my status and integrity he must have gone online and found some of my articles for the Digest before coming back



at me with, "You're not much of a biker, are you?" This took me aback considering we were discussing bovine TB and badgers at the time.

Needles to say I swatted him away with a stinging barb about leather chaps and Harley's but the comment stuck in my mind. What kind of biker am I? I'd been wondering for some time. What actually is 'a biker'? It's one of those descriptions of ourselves that we pretty much take for granted. In the same way that most people who describe themselves as Christian or Muslim (or whatever) give little thought to what it might actually mean in deep theological terms, I'd never really thought about how the term 'biker' applied to me. 'A biker'... hmm, now there's a tricky one.

On reflection I don't really fit into any of the obvious categories. I've always admired couriers as they have a job to do, they bike for

work and endure long hours in all weathers. They accumulate vast reserves of hilarious anecdote and tales of woe. They bike to live not live to bike. They get hurt but survive (mostly... I hope) to tell the tale. They ride really well on rubbish machines. They know just how to get the bike home with a piece of chewing gum, some gaffer tape and a lady's hair-clip. They are charming enough to obtain a hair-clip from a lady despite being gap-toothed, greasy-haired, dressed like tramps and being covered in road grime. But I'm not a courier.

Nor am I a one-piece, leather-clad, crotch-rocket merchant out on the weekend, loud pipes ruining lives and then back home to an over-priced continental lager and three hours going over the bike with baby-wipes and a toothbrush. And while I don't like to criticise people I can say you're unlikely to find me



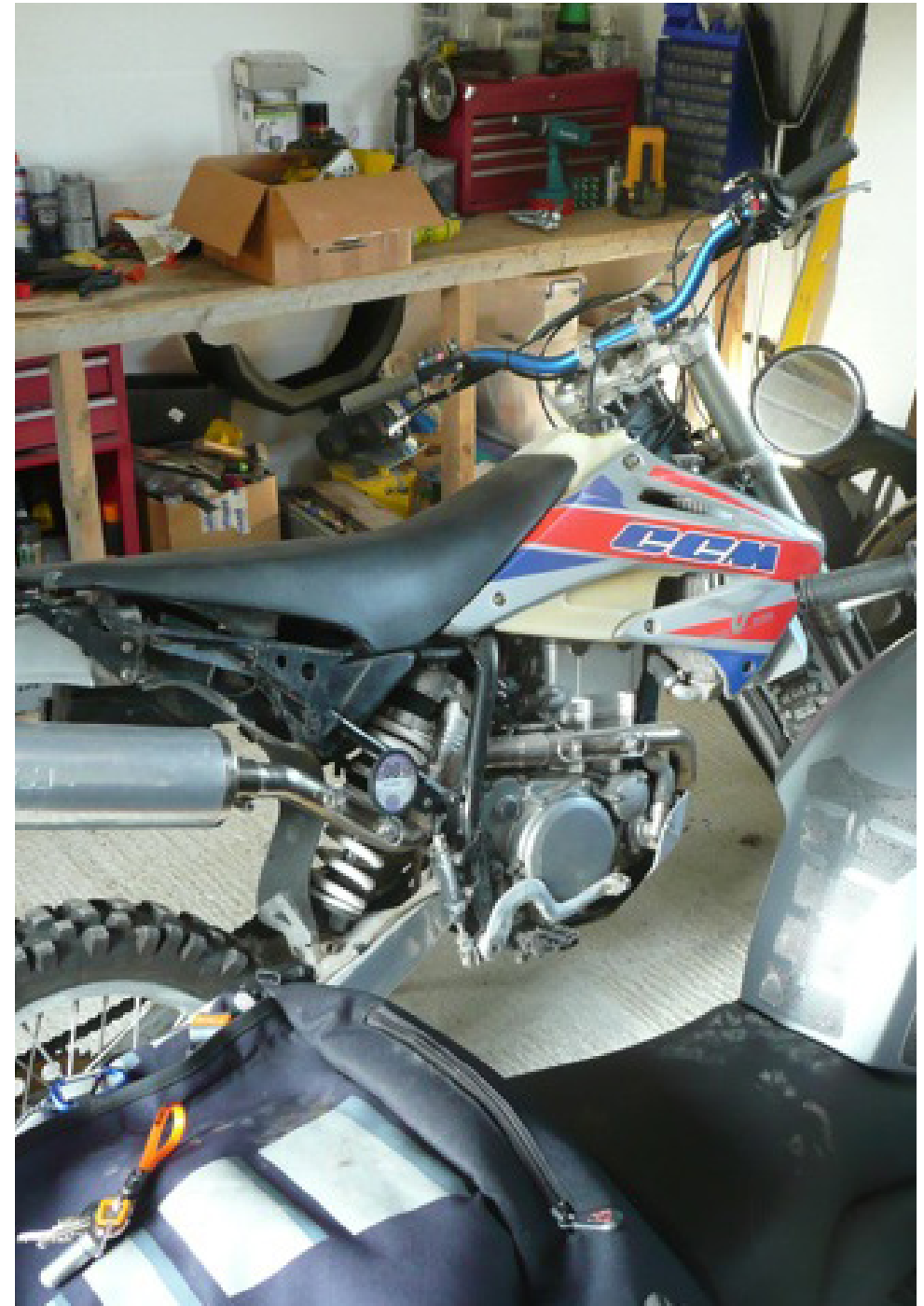
riding a hog in the customary back-patch garb, drinking Bud and playing pool at some remote bar in No Hope, Idaho surrounded by skimpily clad women in leather hotpants with snake tattoos down their spines... wait, stop a minute. That last bit... yes, I think I might just be getting that whole scene now! But I can't afford a Harley and I live in the Cotswolds, so maybe in another life.

Adventure bikers are another category I admire, particularly the Lois Pryce, Ted Simon, Jacqui Furneaux and Dan Walsh kind who are not just exploring the outside world but their own inner world, too. The extent to which I aspire to this kind of adventure can be found in my garage in the form of a CCM 404e inching very slowly towards being converted for serious travel. But... if I'm honest it's probably like the boat in Steinbeck's Canary Row whose owner never finishes the project because he

can't afford to go and is anyway a little bit afraid of fulfilling his ambition. One day, I promise...

So where does that leave me? I don't like riding 'for the hell of it', mainly because of an incident a long time back when I was young enough to want, and free enough to buy, a Citroen Visa Convertible. One sunny day I put the roof down and took it for a spin 'just for the hell of it'. Being endowed with more money than responsibilities, I'd fitted the obligatorily expensive Alpine sound system, which I was lovingly gazing at when I realised the car in front of me had stopped. The resulting damage wasn't too bad in the end but it made me realise that next time I was on a bike I didn't want to risk wiping myself out 'just for jollies'.

So when I ride I always have something specific to do, someplace I need to go to. And I ride all year round in most weathers, which is at least a nod of respect towards the couriers





and adventurers. I have lots of 'kit' for various biking eventualities, I have throw-over bags and am a bit scruffy, all things considered. I go to business meetings on the bike or to do the shopping. And, as I know you're itching to find out what happened to the Raptor I'll tell you...

Without connecting the two events, I noticed sometime after I'd had a new front tyre fitted that the front brakes were pulsing as I pulled up to a halt. It got steadily worse

and I was advised that one of the rotors was probably warped. I then discovered that brake discs for bikes are a lot more expensive than those for cars, particularly Brembos. As I was in one of my periodic 'economic downturns' at the time I decided to SORN the bike until I could afford to get it fixed. The opportunity arose a year later when I did a deal with Cliff (Boxer, Tetbury) my local bike bloke in exchange for my old bike trailer.

In a moment of inspirational genius, Cliff noticed that the front wheel was on backwards even though tyre was facing forwards i.e. the tyre was the wrong way round on the wheel but rotating the right way as the wheel had been put on backwards... Get it? Don't worry, it took me a while. Effectively the floating discs had swapped sides and were slowly but unevenly adjusting themselves to run true in the calipers. I didn't need new discs, we just needed to put it all on the right way round and within a hundred miles the pulsing was gone.

So that had me blatting around on the ol' Raptor again and I felt restored. I might be a slightly odd biker but I was definitely a biker. My existential crisis was over. And just to prove it my clutch cable snapped on the way home from Gloucester and I didn't panic. I wasn't going to wait for Tina to come and rescue me with the other trailer (she hates towing) and I was on a fairly straight road about five miles from home, so I reckoned the closer I could get without stalling the better. You have to remember that I'm thinking this through on the move and wasn't sure that if I stalled I would be able to restart the bike given the clutch has to be in to start it. The switch is at the engine end of the cable not the lever end.

Then it dawned on me I'd have to cross the Calcot lights where a biker friend had lost a leg a few years back when some git jumped a red and smashed her off. However, as it's a long straight road I knew I'd get plenty of time to see the colour of the lights and adjust my strategy to suit. From half a mile back they were red, which was good. I'd been doing clutchless changes for a few miles and was getting better at it, although my first attempts made even the crows wince. The lights went green at about 400 yards out – perfect. And then at 50 yards out went red again...! Arrrrrgghhh! I crunched

the gears all the way down to first, cursing into my visor like a paratrooper with a spilt beer.

Fortunately there was no one else there to watch me weaving about, desperately trying to elongate every last yard before inevitably having to stall it at the lights. And then (choirs of angels singing) they went green! No soccer crowd has ever cheered louder than me right then. The last mile was all plain sailing to the little turning into the back lane that leads to our house. If there was oncoming traffic I could divert via the ford in Cutwell and, frankly, what was a foot deep of water to me now!? I was on a massive roll.

Round the little junction me and the clutchless Cagiva went, the gods of biking miraculously clearing my path of obstructing four wheelers, farm vehicles and people on horseback. As I arrive home I discover (more heavenly choirs) that Tina has left the gate open so I turn into the drive and pull up neatly right in front of the garage. She pops her head out of the door and asks me if I want a cup of tea, blissfully unaware that anything is wrong. I smile because nothing is!

So after that I don't think I have anything to worry about with regard to being a 'biker'. In fact I reckon it thus: if you've ridden a bike and fully intend to keep riding despite an enforced layoff then that's fine, you're a biker. If like Sid you've ridden bikes for 76 years and still would be if it wasn't for your old legs giving out then you're a biker, whatever anyone says. And there it is, Father, I don't think I needed to come to confession after all and you can keep your penance for next time when I'll be talking about divorce, a new mistress and the mysterious case of Joe who came once but not the second time... Till then!

Oldlongdog



TOURING THAILAND



It was bound to happen sometime! After a good run of summers spent travelling by bike around Europe the Girlfriend finally decided she wanted a holiday on another continent. You know the drill: she decides, you abide!

After looking into a few potential options we settled on Thailand with a couple of day's detour into Cambodia. Exciting stuff... except there was no way I would be taking the Multistrada all the way there (well it could be done, but it just didn't make sense for a three week holiday).

We sat down to work out what the trip would involve:

- We have three weeks to see as much as possible of two countries
- I've been told at least a week on a beach is mandatory
- I'll be on a long holiday without my motorbike for what is basically the first time since I got a licence
- First time, for me, in a completely foreign culture (Europe is diverse, but not That different)

Using the wonderful world of the Internet we booked nine flights:

- Amsterdam - Paris - Bangkok
- Bangkok - Siem Reap (Cambodia)
- Siem Reap - Bangkok
- Bangkok - Chiang Mai
- Chiang Mai - Krabi
- Krabi - Bangkok
- Bangkok - Paris - Amsterdam

And we were ready to go – I just need to sort out the part of the trip that includes a motorbike!

On the first few days the traffic in Bangkok was so chaotic that it killed any desire to ride a bike there, self preservation kicked in and we settled for the view from the back of a tuk-tuk



while the centipede of vehicles twisted and rolled around the city.

If you've never been to Asia, even if you have seen it on video, you'll be amazed by the way traffic flows there. I come from Southern Europe where driving can be chaotic, unruly and at times downright dangerous but I had never seen anything like this.

Kudos to Thai drivers/riders for they have the best throttle/brake control/spatial awareness I have ever seen anywhere. They can fit at least one to two more lanes of traffic than the road was designed (and marked) for, they can fit vehicles through the narrowest of gaps and when necessary they can stop on a dime!

When you travel through countries with 'looser' driving standards you tend to see a few crashes and most of the vehicles bear the marks of close encounters in the form of dents



and scratches. However, despite the apparent chaos I witnessed zero accidents and the vast majority of cars were spotless, without a single scratch. Maybe they fix them, maybe I wasn't looking closely enough but the fact is there seems to be a level of spatial awareness in traffic that I have never witnessed anywhere else.

Car drivers use their mirrors and horn for purposes they're designed for and a gap in traffic is used as an opportunity to help the flow, rather than a road rage fuelled duel for the front spot. Call me stupid but I found the traffic less stressful and charged with aggression, than in a lot of places in Europe. Having said that, I know my limitations and not having super-human (aka Thai) reflexes I opted to be driven.

This also allowed me to acclimatise to the Southeast Asian way of driving and I would recommend that anyone going to that corner of the world for the first time should do the same. If you pay attention you can understand most of the unwritten rules that govern traffic around there, so maybe you can avoid putting yourself – and others – in danger by driving “the European way”.

After a first few days of walking and taking public transport I was ready to get my hands on a bike again, the only small problem stopping me was the law.

Having flown from Bangkok to Cambodia we were now in Siem Reap, a city on the outskirts of the UNESCO World Heritage Angkor temples and because of the high inflow of tourists (many of them more interested in more earthly pleasures than architecture) a place where foreigners are not allowed to rent motorbikes.

Again, the internet came to the rescue in the form of [Khmer Ways](#) a company founded in





2010 by a German and a Cambodian that does guided day tours around the area using the ubiquitous Honda Dream 125. Even though you are riding the bike yourself because you are part of an organized group with a tour guide it's not considered a rental. It's the perfect loophole and it was one of the highlights of our trip.

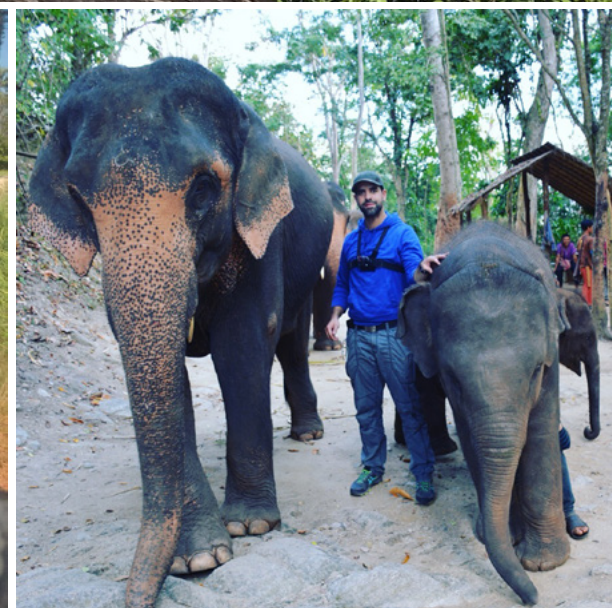
With 50% of its economy based on tourism associated with the temples, Siem Reap is not a pretty city. It has grown into an incongruent mix of massive resorts for wealthy foreigners, side by side with small houses and huts; big paved avenues and red clay streets; Range Rovers and BMWs alongside tiny 125cc bikes and Reur'moks (Cambodian style tuk-tuk).

The temples of Angkor are worth a visit but after that call the guys at Khmer Ways and get yourself on a day tour of the real Cambodia, the countryside where people work in the rice fields and everything doesn't cost a dollar.

Catia decided to be brave and ride on her own, but we were assigned two Cambodian guides because the route included some challenging off-road sections, that way, whenever she needed to she could jump on the back of my bike and one of the guides would take hers.

Leaving Siem Reap heading to Phnom Koulen Mountain the route included a mix of paved roads linking with narrower dirt tracks and running through small villages and rice fields.

The small Honda Dream 125s proved to be the perfect tool for the job with crude suspension and spoked wheels that can take a real beating, an off-road rear tyre for extra grip on the looser stuff and a centrifugal clutch, which made one handed driving child's play (perfect for narcissistic selfies!).



The 100km we covered while visiting the Reclining Buda, the waterfalls and the 1,000 Lingas was probably the slowest average speed tour I've ever done, but it's definitely in my Top 25 best rides ever. The guides were a pair of super nice guys, the scenery is amazing and the small bikes are so much fun and so easy to ride off-road! To the point that Cátia, who rarely ever rides, did it all on her own except for the road up the mountain and then she only opted out because of the traffic (it was a national holiday and many families go to the National park for a day at the waterfalls and a picnic).

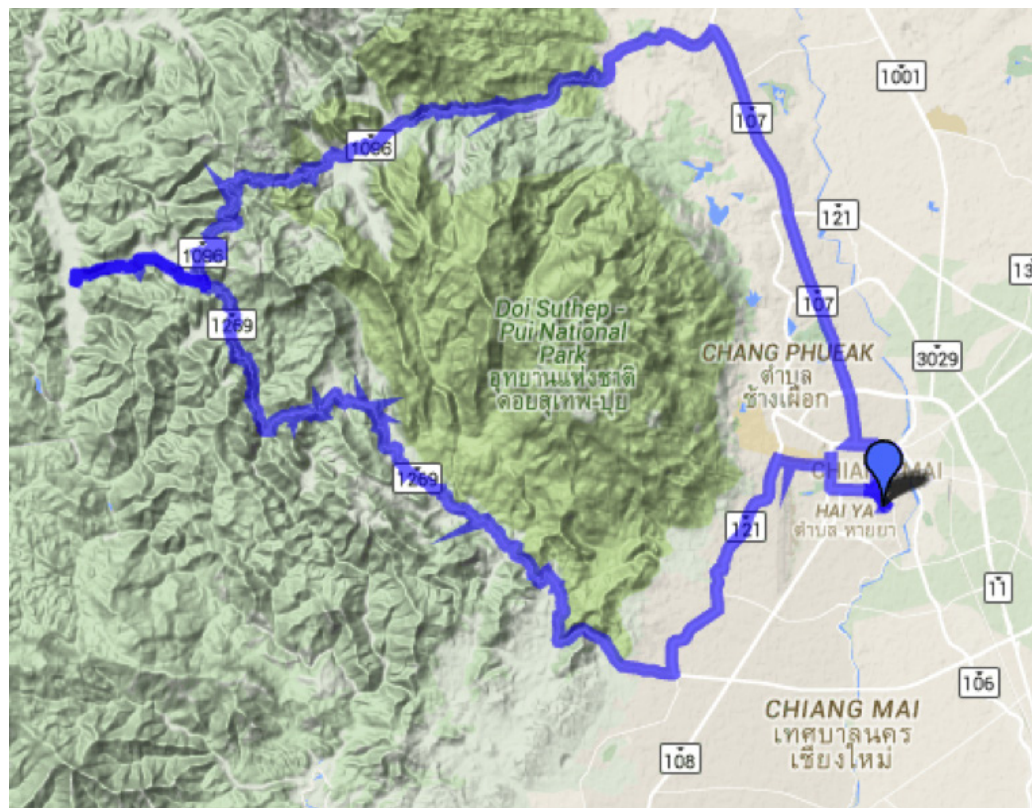
At the end of the day it was time to fly back to Thailand regretting that we didn't have more time to travel further into the Cambodian countryside.

For the second part of the trip we were based in Chiang Mai, in the North of Thailand at the gates of the area known as the Golden Triangle.

The mountainous landscape of the area makes it a prime destination for bikers and there are plenty of options to rent a motorbike in Chiang Mai but your best bet is walking to Tony's Big Bikes and asking Duncan or Jeff for one. You will not only be guaranteed top-notch service by people who understand the expectations of foreign riders, but after living and riding in the area for many years they are also founts of local knowledge.

Their fleet consists of a mix of dirt bikes, new Honda CB500Xs and NC750Xs, a couple of older ER6s & Versys and a few smaller displacement bikes, all insured, well maintained and most importantly fitted with top quality tyres. Our ER-6 was wearing a set of Pirelli Diablo Rosso and most of the Adv bikes were on Scorpion Trails.

Like Duncan and Jeff say they rent bikes for a living and guide tours because then they get





to ride for free! But don't start getting ideas, I've sent them my CV and I'm first in line when a vacancy opens!

As luck would have it they had a two day tour leaving the next day with an American couple on two CB500Xs and a Kawasaki ER-6N available, so we grabbed the keys spent the day doing the [Samoeng Loop](#): a 100km circuit that goes up and down the mountains around Chiang Mai.

The next morning we packed light and left the hotel to join Mike, Rebecca and Dave (our Australian guide) on the Little Gem Tour.

(*Top Tip: Hotel rooms are cheap so if you're just doing an overnight tour, it's worth paying for the night you won't be sleeping there because it saves carrying all your luggage on the bike and it also guarantees you'll have a room when you come back. If you're doing a longer tour, talk to the guys at Tony's Big Bikes and they'll find a way to help you store your stuff.)

Unfortunately I can't share a link for the route we followed, or I would lose any shot at my dream retirement job as a tour guide in Thailand. The Little Gem tour, unlike the popular Samoeng Loop, Mae Hong Son Loop, etc, is a well-kept local secret.

Heading to the North out of Chiang Mai, the route winds its way up and down narrow mountain roads in between lush forest and small rivers. Most of it is paved but bumpy and the Kawa's suspension was less than happy with two people on board; she waddles, dives and scrapes the underslung exhaust but keeps going. It's when we get to the first unpaved stretch that I start feeling jealous of the other guy's bikes: three CBR500Xs, all equipped with Scorpion Trail tires. The first few hundred meters of wet red clay were among the slipperiest surfaces I've ever ridden on and



I lost the front twice, luckily recovering before losing my preferred vertical orientation. A few kilometres further on we arrived at a section that was undergoing roadworks, which meant riding 50m downhill in deep sand; once again the Diablo Rossos were far from their comfort zone but they did their best to keep me and my pillion upright.

Luckily the rest of the day only involved paved roads where the ER6 felt more at home. A stop at the Wat Tham in Chiang Dao provided a fantastic lunch and the opportunity to stretch our legs before getting back on the bikes and continuing north to Fang near the Burmese border, where we stay for the night.

Deep in the Golden Triangle, Fang is a small village close to the Burmese Shan Territory. The area is also known for having been the location for Top Gear's bridge over the river Kok in their Burma Special (although if the internet is to be



trusted, the bridge was actually built over the river Fang, which flows into the Kok).

Dave had booked our stay in advance in the Phumanee Lahu Home Hotel, a wonderfully decorated place run by the people of the Lahu hill tribe. Not only are the rooms comfortable and the service top drawer, they also have the best ice coffee I've ever tasted. If you're ever in the neighbourhood stop by for a Phumanee Coffee, it's worth at least a 50km detour!

The next day had the bittersweet feeling of being simultaneously the second day of the tour and – having started to bond with our tour mates and to really enjoy the riding – also the last one!

Truth be told as soon as we got on the road there wasn't much time for nostalgia as the day was filled with fantastic mountain roads that were mostly well paved and honestly, grippier than I expected. Although there was a lot of

dirt, sand and debris on many of the corners, the bike felt planted and even when pushing the pace a bit, the grip was still there. It was massive fun following the leading man Dave, who knows all the corners like the back of his hand. Again, the ER6's suspension proved it wasn't really built for riding two up at a brisk pace but it was nothing a bit of back brake to minimize the front end dive and tighten the trajectory didn't fix.

We arrived back in Chiang Mai after 500km of fantastic roads, beautiful landscape and a truly fun time with new friends.

Of course you could rent a bike, grab a map and go off on your own and I'm sure you'd have a blast, but making it into a tour in a small group like we did just makes the experience that little bit more special.

We went for dinner in Chiang Mai with Mike and Rebecca before we flew to the South



of Thailand and spent the whole meal setting up a host of plans to come back and get on one of the weeklong tours that include Laos and Vietnam.

After Cambodia and Chiang Mai I was finally forced to hand over the reins of the holidays to the GF so it was time for beach, sun tanning, snorkelling and kayaking... except I managed to fit in two scooter rentals and a couple of day tours around the Krabi region. Including a climb up the Hang Nak Mountain, a visit to Klong Thom hot springs, the Emerald Pool, Cristal Lagoon. A total of 800km split between a beaten up Honda Zoomer and a brand new (and surprisingly fast) water-cooled Honda Click 125i.

So if you're looking to go on holiday somewhere your bike can't go, you could do a lot worse than Southeast Asia where people are nice, food is great, bikes are everywhere and amazing roads are never too far. Go for it, I would go back in a heartbeat!

Ricardo Rodrigues

Local government in the UK is frequently the subject of derision, criticism, and general mistrust. The popular image is of council workers leaning on brooms while public facing officers are often referred to as 'jobsworths'.

Much of this vitriol stems from the fact that most householders have to pay 'council tax' and many feel that they are not getting anything approaching value for money, resenting every hard earned penny they have to part with. And I'm one of them.

I live on a remote country lane; there are no streetlights. I've never seen a roadsweeper go past in all the years I've lived here; my kids are all grown up so they no longer go to school and the only time the local council come near is to empty the bins and clear the sporadic fly tips. Surely I qualify for a huge discount?

But it's all very reminiscent of the "What have the Romans ever done for us?" scene from the movie 'Monty Python's Life of Brian' and it's not until you start digging deeper that you start to discover where the money goes. At this point I need to hold my hand up and declare an interest; I have to admit that I have a foot in both camps – in my 'day job' I work in one of the London Borough's Parks Department (not Bexley!).

Parks is a 'non statutory' service, so when it comes to holding your cap out for a new lawn mower or some pansies you're at the back of a long queue. Ahead of you are social care, education, children's services, public health, who all get first call. Then it's the turn of housing, the people who remove dead whales from the beach, libraries, highways, waste & recycling, meals on wheels and among many others, the youth service.

Which is all very interesting, but WTF has it got to do with motorbikes? This is after all The



Rider's Digest, not The 'Grauniad'.

Well, one such youth service is Bexley Kickstart Motor Project. Launched in 2012, it was previously known as the Sidcup Motorbike project, which was part of the London Borough of Bexley's Youth Service for more than 12 years.

Situated on the edge of a football field on the outskirts of east London, the project's base was a hive of activity on the chilly January morning when I visited.

An array of dirt bikes of all shapes and sizes were parked in front of the workshop, while inside the sturdy shutter door bikes were being worked on by young project members – and I'm not just talking about gapping spark plugs and changing an air filter.

A small Honda 90 engined bike was receiving a new chain and sprockets, while across the room a Gas Gas moto crosser was stood on a workbench while a lad in his early teens stripped down the rear suspension linkage, having removed the bodywork, wheels, swing arm, forks and bars. Working with him was a girl of a similar age who has twice won awards for her skills as a mechanic.

There wasn't a smartphone in sight, which to an old fart like me is something quite magical.

Through the door in the combined engineering and training room a teenager in a boiler suit was clamping a stripped down frame into a vice; a few feet away stood a vintage Suzuki T20 racer awaiting restoration, along with an engineless AJS dirt bike.

In a corner of the room a collection of serious machinery included a shot blasting cabinet, a pillar drill, welding equipment and a hydraulic press.

The clubhouse had been decorated by members and the stud wall sectioning off part



of the room to form two spacious cupboards is also their handiwork.

One of the cupboards contained a wide range of bike spares while the one next door was full of boots, helmets and riding gear; the floor space was entirely taken up by KXD mini motocross bikes.

A shelf above the doors is full of Kickstart's National Youthbike trophies – more of which later.

In the common area of the clubhouse there's a café with jukebox, pool and table tennis tables. The walls are decorated with photos of events like classic bike shows the club have attended, as well as details of memorial garden projects they've built.

The catering is entirely managed by the members, right down to record keeping, profit and loss. The menu is regularly updated, with the available fare chosen by the customers.

The project also has a group who build and race petrol powered radio controlled cars (hence the change of name) on a purpose built track to the rear, while a dance group uses the spacious hall next door.

But it's not just the facilities that are outstanding at the Kickstart centre, the past five years have seen the members win 27 of the aforementioned National Youthbike awards, presented for various aspects of the work and projects carried out, which includes the design and construction of bikes and trikes.

Past winners include a chain driven Reliant Robin van finished in an authentic looking paint scheme inspired by Del Boy and Rodney, and a dirt bike converted into a trike (which has now become a bike again.) Individual members have collected awards for their technical skills (for example the aforementioned female mechanic)

The team are responsible for producing

their own media, including professional looking half term newsletters. They also maintain a very active Facebook page, featuring hundreds of photographs of their social events and activities (just search 'Bexley Kickstart Motor Project').

I spoke to Duty Youth Worker John Seal, who showed me around the club's facilities. John explained that as well as teaching the young people who attend how to build, service and repair motorcycles and quads to City and Guilds qualification standards, they are also taught how to ride safely - and importantly - legally.

There are no riding facilities at the club; the bikes are loaded into vans and onto trailers and taken to a number of licensed tracks dotted around London and the South East; the members also have regular camping expeditions where they are taught bushcraft and survival skills.

The scheme's aims are clearly laid out. The following is taken from the Bexley Kickstart Motor Project official [website](http://www.bexleykickstart.co.uk):

Training goals - To get young people interested in achieving variety of experiences and gaining qualifications

To enable young people to develop key skills and understanding of motor mechanics

To provide accredited pre-vocational training programmes in motorcycle maintenance and repair, personal development, numeracy and literacy skills

To provide support in the transition into further education and training

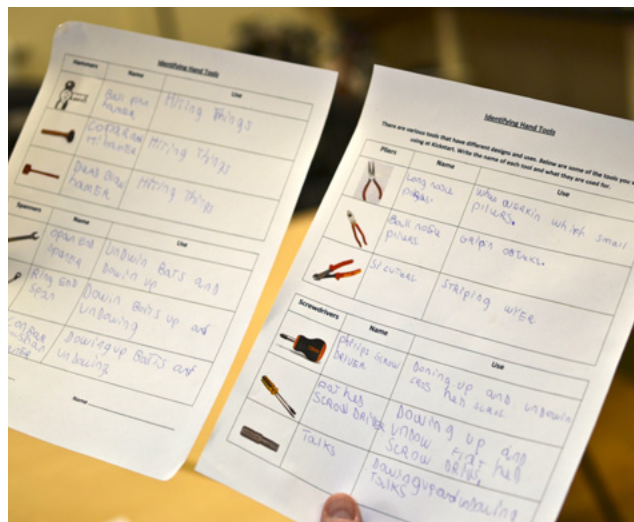
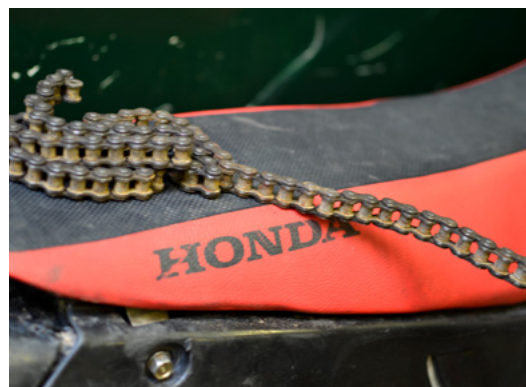
To provide advice and mentoring

Employment - To provide support in career planning, job search, placements and interview techniques

Safety - To provide education on the principles of road safety, which includes understanding the



John Seal



Dan Matellis



Adam Thornborrow



legal aspects and requirements of motorbike ownership

Obtaining and keeping your driving licence

To introduce young people to safe driving skills

To introduce young people to health and safety at work

Social Skills - To promote awareness of the consequences of motor vehicle crime and its effect on the community and individuals

To create a number of initiatives that will give scope for challenging existing attitudes towards offending

To provide an area where young people can meet, encouraging teamwork, developing self-esteem and motivation

Leisure - To provide facilities for organised and constructive leisure activities, using motorised vehicles where young people can learn and have fun in a safe environment.

This all sounds great in theory, but any doubts about whether or not these aims are actually being achieved quickly evaporate once you start talking to the members, particularly those who have been attending for a number of years.

23 year old workshop manager Dan Matellis had joined Kickstart more than ten years earlier. He told me that as a lad he'd had problems at school that resulted in him being excluded.

However, Kickstart proved to be the making of him, the scheme developed his workshop and social skills and he now shares his time between running the workshop and teaching at the very same school he was excluded from.

Another member of the team I met was volunteer Adam Thornborrow, who had also been part of the club for almost ten years. Adam told me that the skills he had learned had shaped his career path, leading to him seek



employment in mechanical engineering and he is now an apprentice with the Metropolitan Police Service, working for their marine section maintaining and repairing boats and other craft.

Among the other success stories John tells me about, 22 year old Ollie has become a qualified Land Rover mechanic, while Billy (27) works at a local garage servicing and repairing prestige cars. 23 year old Tony Letchford now has his own business as a mobile mechanic, thanks largely to his time at Kickstart.

While we are talking, a constant stream of members are politely entering the office, asking for various items from the store cupboard and quietly closing the door behind them.

One of them, a young man we'll call David enters to tell John about some blown light bulbs that need ordering, explaining what the wattage and type of fitting is. To me he seems unremarkable in the nicest possible way; just a helpful young guy joining in with the team spirit.

John explains that when David turned up at Kickstart he was almost completely withdrawn, he wouldn't talk to anyone and would sit in the corner with his hood up.

David had been referred to the scheme by CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. CAMHS are a specialist NHS service who offer assessment and treatment when children and young people have emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties.

Since joining Kickstart David has made steady but significant progress and not only no longer needs the services of CAMHS, but is now a 'Peer Leader', having become a qualified welder and mechanic along the way, helping other members find their way in life and to overcome their own difficulties.

As a lifelong motorcyclist and father of two grown up kids, I cannot overstate how good it was to see so many young people – some of whom have effectively dealt with tremendous personal issues – working together with growing confidence to achieve such great things.



But as with so many success stories there's a cloud on the horizon.

You may remember at the start of this piece I gave a very brief synopsis of how local authorities spend their money, and explained that certain statutory services (such as education and adult social care) have to be supported by law, unlike libraries, parks – and the youth service.

While nobody is likely to have seen their council tax bills reduce, few seem to grasp the fact that while their annual payments either stay the same or increase slightly, councils are having to make huge savings.

The harsh reality is that a sizeable chunk of local authority funding comes from central government, and due to austerity measures that chunk is getting steadily smaller.

The London Borough of Bexley – like most other councils – is being forced to make extensive savings, and as a result their Youth Service – more specifically the Bexley Kickstart Motor Project – has an uncertain future.

It seems absurd and desperately unfair that a scheme that achieves so much and changes the lives of the younger generation in such a positive way is under threat, but there are likely to be other sections of the community whose favourite services, as suggested, libraries, parks or sports centres are facing similar cuts – sorry – 'savings'.

What can be done to prevent this from happening?

Well obviously there are no guarantees, but there is an active 'change.org' [petition](#) that you can sign up to and if you live in the borough you can contact your local Councillor or MP to let them know your feelings; you could even write to the council's Youth Services department:

Bexley Youth Services, Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7AT.

Anything that can be done to save this organisation from having to close has to be worth the effort. Losing this scheme will extinguish a beacon of hope for hundreds of young people in South East London (many of whom will become motorcyclists and mechanics in the coming years).

So please, if you can do anything to help – even if it's just signing the petition – please do so.

There's a whole generation who aren't yet old enough to vote relying on you.

Martin Haskell

OTHER ADVENTURE TRAVEL BOOKS

BY SAM MANICOM

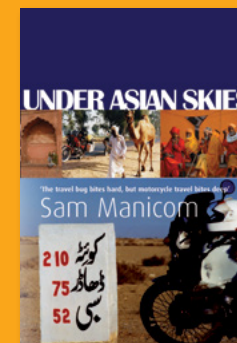


'A captivating book for all, this is the story of an enlightening, yet daunting journey across fourteen African countries by motorcycle.' **Aerostich**

'This is a great adventure and a really enjoyable read.' **Johnnie Walker - BBC Radio Two 'Drive Time'**

'In the range of Motorcycle Travel Books out there, this one pulls no punches. In the gritty bits, you can feel the grit. I liked it a lot.' **Motorcycle.co.uk**

'The word-pictures that bring a good travel book to life are all here.' **The Road**

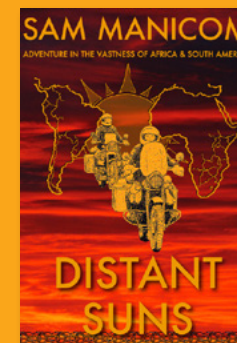


'Sam has the skills of the story teller and this book easily transports you into three years of journey across Asia. He manages to bring the sounds, scents and heat of Asia to life without wordy overkill.' **Horizons Unlimited**

'This is one helluvan adventure!' **Canyonchasers.com**

'The thing I most enjoyed about this book was the feeling that I was there with him as he went through everything.' **London Bikers.com**

'A unique and wonderful adventure.' **Ted Simon author of Jupiter's Travels**



This is a great story which reads with the ease of a novel. Distant Suns has it all: love, good guys, bad guys, beauty, danger, history, geography and last but not least-bikes! A fast, easy and thoroughly enjoyable read.' **webbikeworld**

'Distant Suns doesn't just document the journey through Southern Africa and South America, Sam also describes cultural differences, traditions and lifestyles of the various countries they cross, whilst painting a vivid picture of the terrain they cross. A truly involving and enthralling read.' **TBM - Trail Bike Magazine**



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