



THE

RIDER'S DIGEST

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**Issue 166
May 2012**



HALF BOOK HALF MAGAZINE 100% ITALIAN MOTORCYCLES

GIRL ON A BLOODY FAST MOTORCYCLE
MYTHS & LEGENDS: THE REAL COMEBACK
KID MISSING: LINK ORIGINS: BEING JOEY
BENELLI 500/4: HIRE/UP THE BEAN/HL-OAM
GENIUS: GREN FOUND: EXPRESS NIGHT
RACE OF THE YEAR: 1971 MV&MAGNI: MO
FAN CLUB: IN THE END



Finally something you'll want to read: (besides the Rider's Digest - obviously) Benzina is a quarterly magazine showcasing classic Italian bikes in a high quality format. The 21 x 24 cm landscape layout shows motorcycles the way they're meant to be seen. In fact Benzina is more like a book than a traditional magazine - heavyweight paperstock, 88 ad free pages and nothing that won't be as relevant in a couple of years time as it is today, often with ground breaking stories and always with a love for the planet's finest motorcycles. For more information and to buy visit teambenzina.co.uk



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MOTORCYCLES

From the editor...

If this is the first time you've seen TRD, hello and welcome! If you're interested in motorcycles there's a very good chance you'll find something you enjoy in this issue; and assuming you do, check out the previous two because they are both available free via the Archive page of the web site.

Given that there are only two issues in that archive, a new reader would be forgiven for thinking we are a recent addition to the world of motorcycle mags and that we chose to start with issue 164 because of a slightly warped sense of humour; but TRD has actually, as the maths suggests, been around since 1997.

Originally it was a print magazine delivered free to London's thousands of couriers and was entirely financed by despatch industry recruitment adverts. For a while during the 'Loads a money!' boom of the mid to late eighties, good riders could earn the sort of money that would allow them, if they were so inclined, to buy the newest slickest piece of machinery on the market; but by the time TRD arrived on the scene a decade later, the courier business had become an infinitely leaner meaner world. As a result the articles that provided the light relief between despatch company ads offering ever decreasing rates of pay, rarely even bothered to name check the latest designer kit or cutting

edge bikes, concentrating instead on Derry boots and grey imports like the Honda Bros.

Which is not to suggest that TRD's world was devoid of colour, far from it, but its readers were all-year-round, high-mileage riders who weren't impressed by flash, frippery and glitz. They spent enough time riding in crap weather that the last thing they needed was someone pissing down their backs and telling them it was raining. A courier might well consider buying an £800 riding suit if the reliable word on the street is that they will get a good few years decent weather protection from it; but a serious long-termer is highly unlikely to splash that kind of cash for a piece of kit whose main justification for its price tag, is the manufacturers' logo. When you ride a bike for 50+ hours a week, it isn't a lifestyle, it's a way of life!

It's no surprise then that couriers who consider themselves lucky to clear much above minimum wage these days, tend to be more aware of the inalienable truths of motorcycling life; like the fact that just about everything is made in a single factory somewhere in the far east, where the parts are bunged in plastic bags and labelled as Ying Yang specials for a tenner, Suzuki's Original Equipment for £120, Triumph's for £165, Harley's for £298 and MV's for whatever they damn-well feel like charging you! But

then you already knew that... Didn't you?

I'm not suggesting that we're in the business of revealing secrets, you're unlikely to read anything in the Digest that you weren't aware of beforehand; it's just that where the big glossy magazines strive to sell the airbrushed, highly-stylised, aspirational world the big manufacturers want you to buy; we are content to give away the wonderful world of motorcycling in all its warts and all glory.

The Brough Superior is undeniably a rare and beautiful thing, and a genuine work of automotive art - which is why we have featured it in this issue - but at the same time we never lose track of the fact that you could buy a wrecker for literally a thousandth of the price that will leave you with a million dollar smile after a short spirited ride.

If you like our style you might consider clicking on the donation button; and if you've got a product or service that you'd like intelligent motorcyclists to know about, you might want to consider advertising in our pages.

Dave Gurman



Catch Dave every Thursday between 6 and 8pm (GMT) on www.bikerfm.co.uk

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In The Saddle...

Dear TRD,

Being new to TRD I've no idea who 'Anarchy 2012' may be, but I'm not surprised he/she hides behind a pseudonym. Having tapped-out some 1,431 words for what looks like a proper road-test of the new Honda NC700X (issue 165), one has to read 1,235 of them before 'A'12' admits that he/she never even bothered to sling a leg over the thing! Despite this, the bike still gets a right old slagging for all sorts of opinionated and, in some cases, near-paranoid reasons.

I shan't dissect the article sentence-by-sentence, but having ridden an NC700X precisely 321.2 miles in late January (65.9mpg average) I will say that any pre-conceived notions I may have held prior to riding it were soon dispelled. I'll concede that you don't have to ride an NC to deduce that

it's not very fast, sexy or exciting (much like most BMWs were for decades, then...), but the Honda is a much cleverer and more sophisticated machine than I'd anticipated. And is it such a crime to have a bit of handy storage space right there in front of you, even if some full-face helmets are indeed a 'tight squeeze'? And... neither Honda nor any other manufacturer is trying to "force their vision of motorcycles for the masses" on you or anyone else A'12, they're simply offering alternatives to suit different needs and tastes.

A'12 is correct in noting that some 'noted experts' - well, one anyway - who attended the NC's press launch claimed that others 'just don't get it', but at least those others had gone to the trouble of riding it.

Keep up the good work!

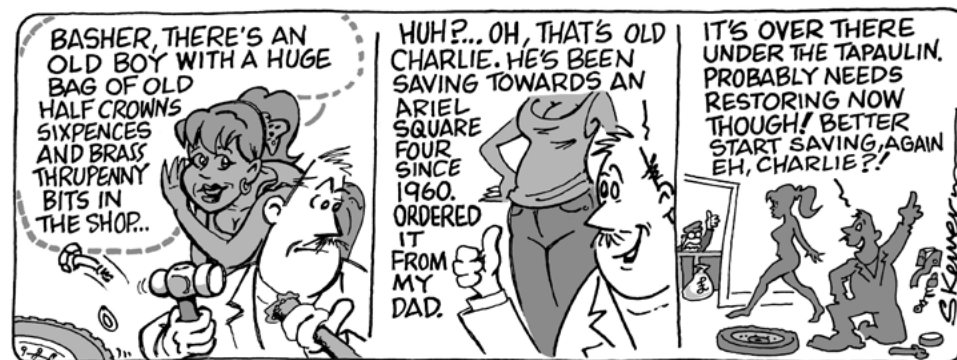
Tom Stewart

(also an ex air-cooled RD owner)

Dear Peter,

Your review of the Honda NC700X seemed to be more of an autobiography of the writer than information about the motorcycle/scooter. I know the author didn't care much for the dealership, has some attitude problems with people less aggressive than himself (sounds like an ideal candidate for a Harley and a Village People outfit), once rode an Yamaha RD250 and fancied himself to "be like Kenny," and I know all sorts of stuff about this person's likes and dislikes in everything from personalities to furniture, but about all I learned about the NX700X was what I figured out for myself by standing next to one at the International Motorcycle Show last winter. Nice

MEANWHILE BACK AT THE WORKSHOP..



pictures, though. As one of my favorite SF characters, Louis Wu, once said, "Louis Wu, I found your challenge verbose. When challenging a Kzin, a simple scream of rage will suffice. You scream and you leap." Too many words, too little information. As someone who occasionally writes a bike review, what I learned from this article is that no one gives a flying crap about the reviewer. We want to learn something useful about the motorcycle.

Thomas Day
Minnesota Motorcycle
Monthly Magazine
www.mnmotorcycle.com

Dear Dave,

Firstly I'm glad to see Riders Digest back - makes a change to the standard biker mag drivel. Do you have a mailing list alert system so that I know when a new issue is published?

I have to say I loved your story about your journey across London! This is exactly why I love bikes/scoots, and it really captured the fun and freedom of biking. Sod the miserable killjoys!

Talking of which - judging by Mr Anarchy's article 'Duller than a Deauville' on his non ride of the Honda 700X, he must be a real miserable git. Sorry, but I found the whole article a bit pointless. I'm not

interested in his prejudices or what he thinks a bike looks like. I want to know what its like to ride. Also as a Maxi-scooter owner and enthusiast, I do object to being told that I don't have any passion for riding! If he is so up his own a*** to bother riding a bike, I think he should stick to whatever his day job is - hopefully not as a bike journalist!

Regards

Tim Bounds

Funnily enough Anarchy is a journalist and he's actually very passionate about bikes. In fact he was really looking forward to riding the Honda - he had high hopes for it. He wrote to me back in December saying, "I'm looking at doing a test for the Honda NC700x. Seems an ideal bike for couriers and those that want an all rounder." It's just that once he got there, for all the reasons he gave, it left him cold. He's all grown up and he was on his own time so it was his prerogative to ride away - it's not like anyone was paying him to test it.

It was interesting however, to note just how much annoyance - if not downright anger - was directed at Anarchy for having the temerity to respond to a set of circumstances the way he did, rather than me for deciding not only to publish his ruminations but also to

consciously present them in a manner that would suggest to the innocent reader that it was a sensible bona fide road test. I had been fully prepared to put my hands up and point to the release date, passing the whole thing off as an April Fools joke; but as it turned out, nobody saw fit to blame me.

Thomas Day's email was addressed to assistant editor Peter Martin and his reply pretty much sums up my thinking:

"We liked the subversive nature of a piece that wasn't afraid to express a highly personal opinion of a bike. TRD was created decades ago as a light-hearted antidote to the usual bike test crap that all the other mags put out. You know the kind, where the editor is jetted off (first class) to a (first class) hotel somewhere sunny and warm to eat (first class) food and then regurgitate all the meaningless PR guff that the bike company supplies in the press pack... Any test is subjective at the best of times; if I say the brakes have a 'nice progressive feel' you might find them a bit grabby... 140hp may be 'a bit underpowered' to you and far too much for me - who knows?"

And that's the point; is the reader any better off being told by us? We thought that they could make up their own minds from the pics and the specifications.

"That said, Peter has spoken to Honda and booked an NC700X for a proper test ride so providing he can be persuaded to actually throw a leg over it, you can look forward to his - very personal - opinion of its capabilities next month.

Lastly (phew!), I'd point out that I ride a 650 Burgman myself and if you read last month's editorial it will be obvious that I don't subscribe to Anarchy's opinion of maxi scooter owners any more than Tim does. Then again I wouldn't dream of permitting my personal opinion to get in the way of allowing somebody else to express theirs within these pages - Ed

Dear Dave,

I have discovered that is what an iPad is for; reading the new improved RD in bed or on the throne while her indoors is watching that Sunday night drama crap on TV. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the new RD. Well done and good luck with it; it must take a lot of work.

I was getting more than a little cheesed off with the style of the old one; it definitely fell into the "glossy" mould more and more, whereas your style is much more readable and the articles are more interesting and unusual.

Jon

Llanymddyfri

Dear Dave,

The mag is really brilliant...

Only wish I could hold it in my hand and read it on't throne. Here is a loony bungee story. In my third week at a proper courier company I bungeed a padded envelope from W1 on't back of my ER5 with my one spare stretchy. I was halfway down Marylebone Road when, PING! And said envelope bounced off the back of the Kwak and down the busy road behind me.

I was lucky... lorries didn't run over it, for I was thankfully in Boris's bus lane. I leaped off and grabbed the split bag. A laptop burst forth

There was a stationary shop in Marlybone High St that sold exactly the same padded envelope, so with the help of some tape and scissors, twenty minutes later I delivered the package to an address in SW6.

Three further weeks have passed and all is well.

Although the first three hours had me sweating a bit... waiting for that call... "Five oh two, five oh two, five oh two!"

You know that this confession is totally true. Strong laptop or padded envelope I don't know... I did pray a bit too!

I totally agree you can't have too many bungees; in fact I bought a tube full in

Lidl for a fiver t'other day. Better remain anonymous for this.

Apple 502

London

Dear Dave,

Your Digest looks interesting I've read it on the Internet.

How can I get monthly editions?

Thanks

Phil Read MBE

The following letter was written to Lyn Funnell by the President of L.A.M.A. Cuba after he saw her article in last month's TRD.

Hello Lyn,

Of course I remember you when with meet each other that sunny day May 3th 2011 at Morro Cabaña Fortress, it was great to meet you and to talk to you for a while.

The article is really good, and for sure it will help us and will let people all over the world to know about us. You now what? Many people, reporters, photographers, writers come to Cuba, talk and talk and they promise to do this or that to finally do nothing... BUT YOU DID IT, thank you very much on my behalf and in the name of all the Cuban motorcyclists thank you.

Dave called me and it was really good to talk to him, he wanted the pictures in the original size but for me it's impossible because of our internet speed, I have to

apologize for that. Anyway we are in contact, thank you very much.

Adolfo R. Prieto Rosell
Presidente Nacional
L.A.M.A. – Cuba

Dear Dave,

Alan Taylor kindly forwarded a copy of the Digest to me so I could read your article on the Treble Express – very impressive.

Alan is a close neighbour and friend of mine and also shares the passion of owning a Jaguar XJS – sorry but I'm not a bike man although the sound and sight of a Harley does do some strange things to me...

I also wish that the classic car community showed the same kind of kindred spirit and compassion that the biker community shows, it really is a credit to you all. For my sins, I am the Editor of the XJS Club Midlands magazine, which is distributed monthly to Club members and notables in the Jaguar and Museum world. Having the connection, I would really love to feature your article in a future edition of our Club

magazine (possibly May) as I think it would be of great interest to our members. Obviously, any credits and acknowledgements would be correctly given to your magazine and yourself.

Kind Regards

Martin Gliddon
Media Manager
XJS Club Midlands
www.xjsclub.org

Thanks for your kind words Martin. We would be happy for you to reproduce the article to let your four-wheeled compadres know what a friendly compassionate bunch we motorcyclists really are – Ed

Hi Dave,

TRD165 was excellent as usual. It had some very good comments on the Guzzi Club forum too.

I totally agree with RS250 Squib, my comment was tongue in cheek. Though it does look like the standard calming down at 30ish is taking place. No harm in that, it is taking place with me.

Oldlongdog's article was superb. The piece about being with the Artillery and the real purpose of the

Common Market was spot on and brought back memories of married soldiers discussing how they had taught their families to survive NBC conditions.

Also that the cock-ups that come out of Europe are normally our idiots fault. They are not really interested in us except in getting us to vote for the scum. George Galloway's Respect Party is needed. Can I give a recommendation to Tanya Batteries. Bought a battery off them last October. It failed last Thursday before Easter. The AA man gave me a chitty saying the battery was cream crackered.

I phoned Tanya midday on the Tuesday after Easter and they accepted the AA's word over the phone and a replacement battery was on my desk 10:00 next day.

Excellent service and of course my wheels are now rounder and the bike achieves warp factor speed easily.

www.tayna.co.uk

Look forward to many more copies.

Ride safe,

Ian Dunmore,

An ancient Guzzisti.

Name: Plonk



What was your first motorcycling experience?

Approx 10 years old on a neighbours Frances Barnett on the wasteland near my parents' home. I later bought it off him and used it until I got my first road bike a BSA C15 250 at the age of 15 years.

What is your current bike?

Regular daily use bike is a chopped Harley 1340 Evo. Also have a chopped 1948 Harley 45 that I've owned for 44 years and a Harley Dyna 1340 also chopped. All self built with help from friends and family, two of them from scratch in the living room.

What bike would you most like to ride/own?

Mine

What was your hairiest moment on a bike?

After 52 years of riding I've had many hairy moments and a few accidents. One that springs to mind was on the Evo going round a sharp left hand bend on a country

lane near home. I bounced my front wheel off of the front wheel of an oncoming ranged rover.

What was your most memorable ride?

I've had thousands of memorable rides over the years. The first that springs to mind was a run back in the late 60's. Our club had met up with some other clubs, there were about 60-70 bikes and we were riding around the lanes in Berkshire. As it got late and dark I was riding up front with the Pres and looking back, and as far as I could see there was a snake of headlights. In the early hours we pulled into a field where we partied with a nice big bonfire.

What would be the ideal soundtrack to the above?

Easy Rider sound track is ideal. If I were to compile one it would probably consist of Sabbath, Zeppelin, Floyd, Rush, Marillion, Bonamassa, Deep Purple, Within Temptation and of course my bruv Trog and his band.

What do you think is the best thing about motorcycling?

The whole life style and the way it has evolved. It's all I've ever known and all I've ever done. I'm proud of the way lots of patch clubs now get on well together – with some

exceptions of course. Its better now than like it was in the 60's and 70's where all we did was fight each other.

What do you think is the worst thing about motorcycling?

The worst is the way the knob headed bureaucrats follow Brussels etc and will not let us just get on with our lives, making it harder and harder to enjoy riding as free as possible. Also our English climate is not very favourable to an old git like me. I don't enjoy getting wet and cold much and pulling down my tent in ice has lost its attraction.

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

Get the system to back off, we're not such a big problem and more environmentally friendly than most other transport. Help the kids get on the road and stop making it so hard for them.

How would you like to be remembered?

I found out last April how I will be remembered when I died and was revived. I'm most proud of my family and friends. Big love to them all with huge thanks. Long live the true biker lifestyle, ride as free as possible and enjoy what I have had for the last 62 years!



Six and the City



Thursday

Following on from last month, Stinky had broken down, posh couple had been helpful and Hornet Boy had received the call for assistance;

I had broken down about a mile from home so HB wasn't too long in coming to my rescue, with a look of resigned exasperation on his face.

"It's not my fault! It just stopped!"

"Yeah, yeah, likely story! What have you done – or rather what haven't you done?"

What ya trying to say? That I don't look after my bikes? How very dare you.

I really have no idea why it stopped, it just did; but I can believe it's down to lack of maintenance and/or lack of understanding about 2-strokes. I get it back home (well HB does) and call out the AA – they've actually been pretty good with my bikes and I pay them enough, so they can deal with it.

"Oh no, I can't do anything with that", says the man, after he's charged the battery and managed to get it going a couple of times just for it to splutter to a stop as soon as the throttle was dropped.

Visions of the god-awful Gas Gas with the cracked alternator came back to haunt me.

"Do you reckon it's the plug?" I ask hopefully

"I have no idea and I'm not even going to try as it's buried deep in the bike somewhere. It will need to be recovered – I'll place a call for it now"

Now? Really? At 7.30pm when all the garages are closed?

"Oh yes – good point. Well, I'll log it so you can call them up and they'll pick it up when you need it doing."

That's more like it. Two days later, it's loaded up and carted off to Russell Motors. In the afternoon I get a text from Hornet Boy, informing me that the bike is a write-off and there's nothing they can do. Instantly, I'm on the phone to Mike at Russell Motors demanding to know why. His gloomy voice and diagnosis almost has me in tears as I can't believe my little stink-wheel has had it. Then I pick up on a voice in the background that I recognise – it's HB chatting away.

"You bastard! You rotten git! There's nothing wrong with that bike!" I accuse him. Silence, then "Nah, you're right. It's fine, but we had you going then didn't we? Anyway, it was just the plug – it was fouled – don't you know anything about 2-strokes?"

Tuesday

At work and I'm talking to a building contractor (who

rides a Mille) and we get on to the subject of car valeting and the problems of the waste water from them. We digress on to bike valeting and the various different chemicals that we use to clean our bikes. Being a bit of a half-arsed tree hugger (try to do my bit for the environment – recycling etc) I mention that I use biodegradable bike cleaning stuff.

"Ah – Muc-off? I use that on the Mille," he tells me (I have no idea if it is biodegradable). "No, I use Bilt & Hamber – great stuff"

"What about your wheels – I can never get them done as well as I want – and I don't want to take the brake caliper off to do it properly."

Warming to my subject, I extol the virtues of different types of brushes, the power of Wonder Wheels (possibly not environmentally friendly and maybe slightly acidic, but gets a great clean) and some other little bits that I like to use.

He stopped working and looked at me;

"How come you know so much about this? It's not like you ever clean your bikes."

Now that is fighting talk and you sir, can just feck right off!

Ask me to sacrifice a new-born puppy by all means, but you **NEVER** pass judgment on my bike-keeping!



BIKES MONTHLY MEETS

SUNDAY DAYTIME

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REGULAR CLUB MEETS

- 1st Sun** Vmax Club Meet
Last Sun Valkyrie Riders Cruiser Club Meet
1st Mon London Bikers 'Newbie' Meet (from 6pm)

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- 1st Mon** German Night + BMF + WIMA + Auto Scoots
2nd Wed Brit Bike Night with Triumph + Royal Enfield OC
1st Thur Mod n' Mini (Classic Scooters)
2nd Thur Italian Night
3rd Thur Super Moto + XJR OC + N.A.B.D. + Scooters + MAG
Last Thur Harley Night
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As with many of the best things in life, I came to own a Cagiva Raptor through no great effort on my part; it seemed to choose me.

Regrettably, I am something of a born-again-biker having spent my best motorcycling years (and what little fortune I possessed) scuba-diving. Like most late 70s teenagers, I pored lasciviously over motorcycle mags and 'borrowed' other people's bikes with varying degrees of legality and insurance. I was certain that before long

I'd be the proud owner of a Laverda Jota. At college I even owned a brand new, licenced and insured Honda C90; it was all going to plan. However, a lorry reduced it and me to a twisted heap on Camberwell New Road, and unfortunately my student grant wouldn't stretch to beer, curry and getting the bike fixed. One has to have priorities.

I received a modicum of wry sympathy and elastoplast from a quirky girl I was friends with on the same course as me. And she was the reason I didn't buy another bike for two



decades; I didn't need to because her dad was the legendary P&M Panther Owner, Sid Wilkinson. When I was eventually considered presentable enough to 'meet the parents' he took me into his suburban garage in Marlow, which from the outside seemed unlikely to hold fourteen old bikes. Four of them were sidecar outfits, and there were enough frames, wheels and engines hanging from the walls and ceiling to build at least five more priceless classics.

Unlike many women, Darling Sweetpants has never objected to me having a bike but back then we could only afford one vehicle, and she hates being cold and wet. On top of that, weekend trips always seemed to involve more luggage and carrier-bags (and things 'that-mustn't-be-folded') than would fit even



on a 'giant trailer'. So instead we had a series of lamentable old bangers (VW Beetle – doors fell off; Triumph Toledo – skidded into a ditch at Beckhampton roundabout, to the strains of the Floyd), which at least kept us dry if not mobile.

Meanwhile I learned to change gear on motorcycles with levers that were on the side of the tank, through the tank or even under it. Mastery was gained of yet more levers for advance-and-retard, air, throttle, half-compression and exhaust-valve lifters; twist-grips had not been invented yet. The sound of thudding slopers was as intoxicating as the smell of old leather saddles, 4-star petrol and hot Castrol. I rode round the ring at shows and rallies, and on the road as a passenger in flimsy sidecars that had first seen action in WWI, or even earlier as Edwardian dog-baskets. I spent all my other weekends dressed up in rubber and jumping into the sea from a perfectly serviceable boat. It was the best of lives.

It couldn't last, though; despite my indolence, procrastination and the booming hollowness of my bank account, the pressure to get a bike had reached bursting point. On doctor's orders I had to suspend diving activities for a while and was so frustrated by the ever-increasing traffic that the 'duh moment' had finally arrived. But what to buy...? I didn't fancy L-plates and a 125cc, so I needed to take the full test as well. This I duly did - and that's a topic for full-blown article in its own right.

I wanted something that I could use for real travelling, for getting past the endless queues of vacuous, bimbling numpties too timorous to overtake a horsebox travelling at 40mph on a country road. I wanted to do more than keep up with the traffic; I wanted a Laverda Jota.





I knew a lot more about what I didn't want than what I did. I'd learnt on a 500cc twin of a dullness and anonymity ideally suited to its task. It had the wherewithal to reach 70mph (required for the bike test), albeit reluctantly like an old riding-school horse. It had anti-lock brakes but not the clever electronic ones, just the sort too weak to lock-up the front wheel however hard you panicked. It was quite possibly a Suzuki but I never bothered to look. I wanted something exotic and Italian... like a Laverda Jota.

However, I was well aware of the fate of many a born-again-biker. I didn't want to find myself smeared all over the front of a transit van, as the statistics suggested I would do within three months. I needed something sensible as well as flash and exotic. And while I had the brain engaged I thought something easy to service, with cheap and abundant parts might be a good idea. In a moment of inexplicable prejudice I decided

that four cylinders were too many; far too complicated and the bike would sound like a sewing machine. If three cylinders were good enough for a Laverda Jota then I would certainly not have more!

This was ridiculous; I knew hardly anything about modern bikes and I certainly couldn't afford a new one, so I'd just have to get on the web for a look-see. There were sports bikes aplenty but I'm too lanky to curl up on one of those. And lots of Harleys but I don't need any ploughing done. What about a BMW1200GS? No thanks, I've already got a Landrover. I just want something that looks like a proper motorbike, with a decent headlight and handlebars that keep my bum below my chin. Ah-ha, what's this Cagiva Raptor thing...?

A 650cc twin, round headlight and upright riding position, a spiritual successor to my brother's 1972 Triumph Tiger (a smaller capacity Bonnie with a single carb).

Exotic Italian frame, forks and brakes; styling by the same bloke who did the Ducati Monster and a nice reliable V-twin from the Suzuki SV650 – looking good! 2002 model and only £1,500... why so cheap? Because it's a Category C write-off... Damn. Oh well, faint heart never kissed a pig; it doesn't look too bad and I'll probably bin it a couple of times myself while I'm learning the ropes. No point spoiling a perfectly good Laverda Jota. The nice man from wesellcrashedbikes.com said he'd deliver it for free as I hadn't haggled. I decide to live with the scratched tank as it's a robust plastic job, so it won't rust or dent. However, a trip to the local Cagiva dealer leaves me ashen-faced with the quoted cost of a new can, brake reservoir, indicator lens, rubberised footpeg and levers. I discover that Cagiva are part of MV Augusta (it says so on the frame) and that they are in the process of being bought by Harley Davidson, of all people! I order the reservoir, footpeg and levers but they never arrive, not even when I



remember to cancel the order two years later. I'll live with the dented silencer, for now.

Resourcefulness is the progeny of need and I soon discovered that most of the small bits on a Raptor come from more commonly available bikes. Levers can be had anywhere for naff-all money and a generic brake reservoir was acquired, furtled and fitted for even less. New Renthal bars in matching anodised grey cost about £25. Likewise a





pair of original indicators from Wemoto cost less than a large doner kebab, and I pinched the pillion footpeg for duty at the front. One more task: take off the rear brake pedal, warm it gently with a blowtorch and wallop it straight again with a rubber mallet. Job done - off we go!

So what's it like, you ask? Well, given my lack of experience with anything less than eighty years old it seemed absolutely bloody marvellous! Within ten minutes of getting a new MoT I was up on the A46 from Stroud to Badminton seeing what ton-up biking felt like (just kidding, officer... no, really... I didn't, honest)! And that is the point; objectively this bike will go past 99.9% of the cars you'll ever meet on the roads, and any it won't will have cost a prince's ransom. For all practical purposes, lorries, vans and tractors (or anything driven by someone wearing a hat) are simply nonexistent.

Going round them is no more tiresome than going round corners.

The carburetted SV650 engine (later versions are injected) pulls easily from low revs right up to the limiter, and there's a nice wedge of power at the top end. This means you can choose how you want to ride it. You can chunter along country lanes, short-shifting and admiring the view or wring its neck at every change. The gearing seems perfectly set up to deliver everything the engine has to offer. Trickle through town is also a pleasure because the bike is light, narrow and easy to steer with 'proper' handlebars. Being a V-Twin it has plenty of engine braking, so it's possible to lurch about if you're cack-handed with the throttle - but that's your fault, not the bike's.

Handling was more problematic as it tended to fall suddenly into corners and

made me a little wary. Then I noticed the rear tyre was squarer than a Harris Tweed jacket with leather elbow patches. With new tyres it handles better than I can handle it; choose where you want to be and that's where it goes. Brakes are stupendous, far stronger than they need to be on a bike this light. They must not be grabbed or you'll be off - I know, they had me twice before I learned to treat them like those on an old Citroen (get on them early but lightly). However, my last 'emergency' produced a perfectly controlled stoppie, so they can be tamed, even by someone like me.

The tank holds 17 litres and the warning light comes on at around 175 miles leaving about 2.5 litres, so you do the maths. The fan

comes on after a short while at the lights but the bike has never overheated. Later injected models come with an oil cooler so I guess that's an option for a future upgrade. The seat is comfortable enough between fuel stops and I never get a backache despite being 6'4". It's also quite low so those less lofty can reach the ground with ease.

Bad points are; no clock, unforgivable on a bike with a digital speedo; no grab rail, if it has pillion pegs it needs a grab rail - simples; headlight no good for riding at night; mirrors, nice view of my arms; windblast, above 70mph is tiring for a tall bloke. Interestingly, all those issues apart from the clock have been addressed on later models and on mine I've sorted all bar the mirrors (I move my arms) and grab rail.



I put a small Givi screen on for the windblast, a decent headlight from a Suzuki Bandit (same as on the newer Raptors) and can now tell the time courtesy of modifying a strange watch-based Christmas present with a drill, a tap washer and a hand-fabricated bracket.

The beauty of bikes is you can take the basic offering and change the things you don't like; it's expected and everybody does it. Ironically, customising your car makes you a bit of a 'saddo'... Anyway, my Raptor came with a carbon hugger and matching bellypan, which gives it a 'certain look' but more importantly keeps some of the muck off it. I've also changed the brake reservoirs for anodised versions from Rizoma Racing; partly because they won't break if I fall off again but mainly because they're gorgeous.

Ebay has been a constant source of cheap used parts which means the bike now has unmolested cans both sides, a front wheel without scratches and there is a growing pile of spare levers, ignition modules, footpegs and other Raptornalia waiting in the garage for whatever fate has to throw at us in the future. There is also much good advice, swapping of parts and general biking bonhomie to be had on a web-forum called the Raptor Chapter.

You'll notice by now I haven't told you what the top speed and HP figures are and I'm not going to. If you're about to Google them it shows you've missed the point. All you need to know is that this bike is good enough to use every day, to put a smile on your face and get you home in the rain. It'll carry your shopping and your sleeping bag, or your best girl on the back. It'll out-handle most things, starts easily and won't cost a fortune to buy or run; it's everything you need from a motorbike.

But it's probably not everything you desire. Conventional wisdom says this is a

'middle weight', a 'starter bike' and most patronising of all, 'one for the ladies'. Conventional wisdom says I should be 'sniffy' about the engine being from another more 'common' machine. It also says I should want to 'upgrade' to a 'proper' motorcycle, to something with more power and at least 1000cc. Conventional wisdom is an oxymoron.

In extravagant moments I find myself fancying a Morini Corsaro or a KTM Superduke, both being pumped-up versions of what I already have. But are they really better bikes? They are certainly more expensive and more powerful, and they accelerate faster and reach higher top speeds. But these are quantitative assessments not qualitative ones. Our society runs on the myth that bigger is better, that more is more. We assert that quality is improved by quantity. Well, I've put that theory to the test.

Given that I like just about everything about my Cagiva Raptor 650, one would suppose that the version with the legendary Suzuki TL1000 engine would be so much better. The nice people at DMA Racing in Brinkworth gave me the chance to find out. And surprise, surprise... it definitely is faster. In fact I often found I was going 10mph faster than I expected to be. And herein lies the problem; the world we bike in is constrained not only by the law but also by a need for self-preservation. This means having to travel at speeds well below that which the TL1000 engine will deliver in a bike as light and nimble as a Raptor.

Using the top two gears is more or less superfluous on anything but motorways. Opportunistic bursts of acceleration are impeded by an irritating pause either to change down or as the magnificent beast fills its lungs prior to propelling you into the next county at the speed of light. The alternative is to leave it in 3rd or 4th gear all the time, in which case it



rides like an angry bull. These attributes are fun at times but ultimately a bit tiresome. In lazy mode it's half asleep but when roused, both your licence and your life are in peril. It is simply far more powerful than it needs to be.

The 650 is a joy by comparison. Ever alert, it will pounce like a cat the instant a gap in the traffic appears; it is perfectly set up for the roads we ride on. It rewards the rider whatever their mood. When I took the 1000cc Raptor back to DMA Racing I told them that I preferred the 650 version. They weren't surprised as the previous owner had traded it in for a 650. Says it all, really

Lightness and agility are virtues in their own right. By a serendipitous fluke the Laverda Jota and the Cagiva Raptor 650 have exactly the same power to weight ratio, so in some ways I have got what I always wanted. However the Jota's extra

power is absorbed by its extra weight, which makes it something of a lumbering titan. They don't make them any more but there are plenty of equivalent machines available today. And they sell in huge numbers because we are addicted to excess, we equate quality with size and price. We are no longer able to judge whether something is fit for purpose, perhaps because we no longer know what the purpose of a bike is. We are unable to determine how much is enough.

I'll need to replace my Raptor 650 eventually but whatever I get will have to have the same qualitative virtues and real world rideability. The new MV Augusta 675 triple looks interesting...

Oldlongdog

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The Boy Biker



It is, perhaps, one of the worst feelings in the world, like someone has taken your guts in the palm of their hand and keeps twisting and wrenching. Your vision goes all funny and all background noise fades away until all you can hear is your heart racing.

This is a feeling that, at some point, most motorcyclists will probably feel because it is what happens when you return to your parking space and find nothing there.

Let me start at the beginning. It was the end of the day when I went to my bag for my bike keys. That's when I got the mini version of the above, the racing heart and that feeling in the pit of my stomach. After repeatedly checking my bag and pockets and scouring every square inch of my college buildings for a couple of hours, I drew the conclusion that the keys had been lost, and scrounged a lift home from Jack, planning to return the next day with the spare keys — problem solved.

You know where I'm going with this. I got off the bus to college turned the corner helmet in hand, and there it was... gone! Everything stood still. The first thing I remember doing is opening my mouth and emitting a rather strong expletive. Then the hand reached inside and began

tugging. Then came that initial panic and the barrage of 's' words, before my head began thumping and the tears started flow. They were angry tears that were soon smothered by all my mates coming over to tell me not to worry. So I took a few deep breaths and called the police. They wasted half an hour asking me irrelevant questions when they could've been out looking for my pride and joy; then the CCTV turned up nothing, so it was time to call the troops. It didn't take long to have an army of spotters out doing their thing. Despite being repeatedly told it would turn up sooner or later, I still knew that there was a chance I would never see it again or if I did that it would be in an irreparable state.

It was a horrible thought, that someone from my own college, who knew me, stole my keys and came back in the night to steal my bike. I only have third party, so I had lost the cost of the bike, but I also felt a massive sense of loss of community. When I rode my bike I felt part of something much bigger — going to bike meets and writing for a magazine — suddenly I felt I'd lost it all. I thought it was all over, my transport, my fun, and my career.

It was my 18th birthday a couple of days later and I got a load of cash, which

I knew would have to go towards another bike. Then I got another present. "Hello is that Mr Newman?" "Yes" "Kent Police here we have seen your bike in Woolwich and were wondering if you could go and have a look." We jump on dad's bike and scream down to the back end of an ominous looking council estate in Woolwich — and there it was, on a footpath, just sitting there. It wasn't locked and some local lads told us that it had been there a while, so I'm quite lucky that it hadn't been re-stolen.

I felt a huge wave of relief wash over me. I couldn't quite believe I had my bike back with so little damage: a little crack; a bent lever; and some mud. Easily fixed and I was back on the road happy as ever!

Unfortunately the same can't be said for my mate Jack. He had a nasty accident the other day and has written his bandit off. Get well soon mate.

Lastly massive thanks to everyone who went out looking for me and helped me through a difficult time.

Martin Newman

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NUTS & BOLTS

Last month I was discussing that most important of all workshop tools, the old grey matter. I was advocating the use of a chair and a cup of tea as a practical way to solve mechanical problems, sitting down, looking at the problem and thinking it through can often be the best way forward.

However, sometimes it's difficult to do this, especially when you've put a load of time pressures on yourself. I'm particularly guilty of this myself and having the self control to actually not rush into the job, can be almost impossible at times.

Many of you that have read my words before will know that I'm a sidecar specialist; very recently I was working on a subframe design for a Kawasaki Z1000. Like most modern bikes, they don't really have much in the way of a frame; the manufacturers just bolt everything onto the engine and hope for the best. Ok, that might be a slight simplification, but if you're expecting to find anything even remotely frame like, you'll need to be looking at a cruiser or some of the smaller bikes these days.

So, I need a four point mounting system, 2 high up, 2 low down, all as far apart as possible. There's nothing at the bottom near the front of the engine, no frame at all. Nothing at the bottom near the back, no frame, just a big air gap. Equally, there's nothing for the top rear mount. The top front has some chunky looking framework, but it's covered by the indicator fairing.

I'm under pressure to sort this lot out, so after working out the top mounts quite easily, I dive into the difficult lower rear area, where all is airy space and start trying to conjure up a sky hook to hang the sidecar off. I spend a solid afternoon chopping and grinding away at strips of steel and tube before finally completing this part of the subframe and almost immediately realising two things: 1. It was bloody ugly. 2. It wasn't actually going to be that good.

I put the kettle on, sat down and had a good look at the offending area. Within half an hour, a really neat and simple engineering solution presented itself to me. I just needed one very small piece of steel strip, bolted in the right place, and I had

that awkward mounting done. Almost invisible, easy to make, good and strong. I had it finished 10 minutes later.

So what's the moral of the story? I guess it's that old favourite, more haste, less speed. Had I just sat down and thought about it initially, I wouldn't have wasted 5 hours and a load of materials. Even if the solution had taken me all afternoon to discover, I'd have had a far more pleasant and restful time!

Something else that people say a lot is this "If it looks right, it usually is right", certainly in terms of any kind of engineering, this is true. What I really like to try to achieve is a method of working backwards from something that looks right in my head, to the nuts and bolts of achieving that solution.

Next time you are stuck with tricky mechanical problem, try to visualise what it will look like when it's fixed. With a bit of luck, your brain will fill in the gaps.

Happy spannering!

Rod Young

TWO WHEELS TO THE END OF THE WORLD



YUKON YELLOWHEAD HIGHWAY YELLOWSTONE PARK

We wake up in Deadhorse and the weather has changed for the better, it is a cold but clear day. After eating our fill from the breakfast buffet and carrying enough pre-wrapped food to go with us, we ride back the way we came. Retracing our steps is so much easier, the small lift in temperature really helps and we enjoy a much more gentle two days back to Fairbanks. Once back in our B'h'B we get to relax properly for the first time in a week.

While walking around the city centre we meet a local motorcyclist on his Triumph Tiger. We get talking and tell him where we've been and what we plan to do, and he insists that we

stay with him and his young family rather than spend money on the guesthouse. For the next three days we hang out with the Bolz family and enjoy the most wonderful hospitality. Michael is an artist and he airbrushes a picture of the Americas onto the lid of one of Maeve's panniers, providing her with a bottle of red paint and a toothpick so that she can map the route we travel as we go along. We had new tyres fitted in the local Harley dealership, ate well and slept even better. Along with his wife Danielle and their two sons Conor and Liam, they make us feel so welcome that when we leave a few days later I feel homesick, not for Dublin, but for Fairbanks. And have done ever since.



As we made our way back down the Alaskan Highway something had changed. We had survived the Haul Road and my diesel error, Maeve had dropped her bike in an uncharacteristic lapse of concentration near Livengood and the radiator on my bike had been holed and repaired. Six weeks ago we had been in Toronto awaiting delivery of our new bikes and now we had covered more mileage than the average leisure rider does in a year. Our pace had changed as well. Rather than having to be somewhere by a certain time or day it became obvious that we didn't need to keep a hard schedule. We decided where we wanted to go and we headed in that direction. The only appointments we would now keep were ones for service work, so we pointed our bikes towards Vancouver some 3,350km away. On the afternoon of the third rain-soaked day in a row we decided to stop off at the Rancheria Motel and diner, still on the Alaska Highway. We rode off the unpaved gravel and

into the churned mud of the hard shoulder. After parking the bikes we went inside for much needed coffee and some advice on the road ahead. We were now in Yukon province (think of North America married to West Clare) and we meet two armed Fisheries and Game officers. They are out visiting the restaurants and diners on the highway to inform their owners that it's illegal to buy fish that is not sold by a licensed vendor.

Picture the scene; one cop is explaining the law to the owner who is nodding vigorously and telling the cop that that's the way he always does things and he'd never buy fish from a hunter, blah, blah, blah...Meanwhile, we're chatting over coffee with the waitress about northern Canada and where's good to stay and eat, when two hunters walk in, take a seat right behind us and start unloading their catch onto the table. The waitress then collects it and carries it off into the kitchen. Everyone





pauses as the hunters realise who the cops are, the cops realise that the owner is bullshitting them, the poor waitress realises that she has dropped everyone in it, and the cops realise that they've caught everyone red-handed. Then something very Irish happens; the first cop drains his coffee and thanks the owner for his time and with a series of nods to and from everyone concerned they leave and head on to their next port of call. 'If you don't acknowledge it, it never happened!'

Other road users were critical to us in this part of the world. None more than the truck drivers who carry supplies up and down the highway in all weathers. They know every inch of the place as well as where to stay and eat, what the weather is going to do and where the cops lie in wait for speeders. One of them recommended we head south on the 'Cassiar Highway' in British Columbia. It

has hills that make driving a heavy rig on it next to impossible, so we would have it more or less to ourselves. He told us that he'd seen so much wildlife on this road that he called it 'The Cassiar Safari'. We would find it at Junction 36 of the Alaskan Highway, a quiet truck stop and the location of Sally's Café. If all we'd ever got from riding thousands of kilometres on these cold, badly surfaced roads was breakfast in Sally's Café, then the trip would have been more than worth it. We left after a full breakfast and were rewarded with a roller-coaster ride through the wilderness.

The road stretches 725km south to the Yellowhead Highway and across to Stewart, Canada's most northerly access to the Pacific Ocean. It was originally built to serve the gold, jade, copper and asbestos mines in Cassiar and Telegraph Creek. All the mines are now shut down and the town of Cassiar is abandoned.





The first thing we notice is how different the road is from the Alaska Highway. After just one kilometre it drops sharply downhill and to the left, in the first of what is to be a refreshing series of corners and changes in elevation. The 'Cassiar' continues to treat us to some of the best motorcycling roads we've been on so far. We pass Boya Lake where the mineral rich waters turns it a deep turquoise, a colour that somehow seems to make the water seem denser. The traffic is also refreshingly light with only a few RVs for company and none of the 18-wheelers we've been passing on the Alaskan Highway. We are travelling through the land of the First Nations Iskut tribe and their place names are mixed in with those of the early settlers such as Dease Lake. Places named by the miners and prospectors tend to be very literal – Mud Lake, for instance. Riding on we come to Jade City, which boasts a population of 12. On one side of the road

there is a large jewellery store and mining museum, with lots of jade rocks and old mining equipment. We enjoy the free coffee and have a look round, leaving with a local map and warnings of terrible road conditions ahead. While the weather is beautiful today we've been told the previous few days' rain and the snowmelt are causing the roads to flood, and entire towns could be blocked off. A few miles later we do indeed come to a flooded section of road but it's shallow enough for us to ride through.

Shortly afterwards we hit our first section of gravel which has just been freshly graded and soaked with our old friend calcium chloride. There then follows 10km of deep, slippery mud, which our newly fitted tyres don't seem to make much of an impact on. However, we make it to the end and are rewarded with a fast section of road into the town of Dease



Lake, where we stop for lunch. Either side of the road the terrain rolls away to deep, clear lakes and fast flowing rivers, some of which are almost level with our tyres.

We leave town on sealed tarmac, which turns back to gravel again pretty soon. The road alternates between hard-pressed mud (which is as good as blacktop) to deep gravel with berms at the sides. Just as we start to get the hang of it the road drops away to the left with wet, heavy shale across the entire highway. We come out of the corner straight on to a metal-decked bridge – not a lot of fun on a fully loaded GS with wet, muddy knobbles! The mighty Stikine river, swollen with snowmelt and rain is just a few feet below the deck of the bridge. We are amazed by the power of the river and stop for a few minutes to take photos before crossing the bridge and climbing the hill on the far side.

The ascent was steep and led us up the appropriately named 'Gnat Hill' – the biting insects in this part of the world are ferocious. The road climbed and switched back several times, giving us an elevated view of the river and the bridge we had just crossed. Along the road we came upon some horses, some of which had cowbells tied around their necks. Shortly afterward the gravel ended and we were in a long valley called 40 Mile Flats. Shaded on either side by mature evergreen trees it

reminded me of the mountain roads back home. We passed Tatogga Lake and travelled on to the campsite in Kinaskan National Park. The Park is on the bank of a long lake of the same name and the well maintained campsite is run by a couple from Bavaria. We park up the bikes and cook a small meal on our fire before watching the sun going down over the lake. There is a palpable sense of isolation here. The Cassiar road is one of the best kept secrets in Canada.

The following morning we break camp and after a few kilometres come across a number of big helicopters and propeller planes parked on a dirt landing-strip alongside the road at Bob Quinn Lake. There's no standing on ceremony here; the passengers from one of the planes are unloading their own luggage while the pilot smokes a cigarette.

As we sped along the winding banks of the Bell Irving River I noticed something way ahead on the road. Slowing down I realized it was an adult black bear and he or she didn't seem too concerned about getting out of the way. Not knowing what to do we simply kept slowing down and were relieved when the bear finally decided to wander off in the other direction. We follow the road up into the Skeena Mountains and on either side of us there are several dormant volcanoes. We are now quite high up and we can see the snow line several





hundred feet above us. We ride on, eventually dropping down to a settlement called Bell 2 for breakfast and fuel, before heading on to Meziadin Junction.

Here the road continues south to where we really should be heading but we are tempted by the road west, which runs 65km to the towns of Stewart and Hyder. It's a dead-end road so we'll have to come back the same way to continue our journey, but something in me has changed. I used to need to surround myself with people but now I want to avoid contact wherever possible. I'm so much happier out here in the wilderness, riding with Maeve at our own pace and knowing that most of the people we will meet have a similar mindset to us.

It doesn't take long before our diversion rewards us with yet more breathtaking scenery. Snow capped mountains loom either side of the road, scarred to the bedrock by numerous

landslides. At the far end of the valley the Bear Glacier is a mass of blue-white ice sloping down into the lake through what's left of the trees. We can see where the ice breaks off and falls into the water. While it's not exactly action packed, there is a sense of colossal forces at work. It stores huge amounts of fresh water and without glaciers like these our species would be in a lot of trouble. We feel privileged to be here to see nature 'doing her thing' in such a big way.

A bit further on I notice another bear up ahead on the side of the road. Being better prepared this time I stop to take some pictures. We're delighted to see she has not one, but two cubs with her. Careful not to get between 'mum' and her babies I take as many pictures as I can before getting cocky and insisting that Maeve gets in the picture with them. Fifteen minutes later we ride into the town of Stewart, located at the top of the Portland canal. The town was once

important for shipping out the ore that had been mined in the north of the province. Now the main industry seemed to be tourism and logging. The town looks like it's run by a heritage committee as all the buildings have been preserved as they were in the early 20th century gold rush. We pitched our tent at the Rainey Creek Campground and headed off for a bit of exploring.

Whilst Stewart is a typical of many well maintained and picture perfect towns in BC, Hyder is the complete opposite. Both are on the same inlet either side of the US/Canadian border and, having ridden along to the end of the paved road, we drop down into what was once a boomtown, rich with prospectors and another port for the mining industry. All around are damaged and dilapidated buildings – it's pretty much a ghost town and the only

'industry' left is tourism. It boasts the highest recorded annual snowfall anywhere in the world, an incredible 40 feet. It's also the only town in southern Alaska accessible by road, albeit through Canada.

We ask about somewhere to eat and are directed to an old US school bus that has been converted into a fish and chip van by a woman from Oregon. The halibut is freshly landed that afternoon and we get talking to a couple from Stewart who have come over just for the eat here. They tell us the following story:

'Some years ago, a guy camping on one of the streets in Hyder was attacked and killed by a bear. Once a bear has attacked or been fed, it then associates humans with food and will attack again, so it has to be destroyed. Rather than call the authorities (there are no police or





parks services in the town) the locals decided to leave his body in the tent and use him as bait. A few days later the bear returned to feed and was shot by one of the townspeople, who then reported the incident as a fresh bear attack. The full story only came to light when the authorities flew in and did an autopsy on the animal and found the guy's hand in its stomach.

We leave 'The Schoolbus' none too sure of what we'd just heard and head over to the Glacier Bar (the town's watering hole) for a coffee. However, after listening to a couple of the locals talking about their guns and their time in the military, I begin to believe the bear tale might well be true. Watching them drive off in their vast SUVs (after more than 'a few' beers) we're relieved to be heading back to the safety of Stewart for the evening. It's been a long day and the stories about flood damage and blocked roads suggest we'll probably have

our work cut out for us tomorrow. Sure enough several roads are closed. Landslides and avalanches caused by the melting snow have taken several lives in the last few days so we ride on the higher, summer-only roads through the forests and mountains. The isolation is splendid. The iPods' go flat and the battery on the camera dies. We eat food cooked over a naked flame and camp in the backwoods. When we finally ride into Whistler it seems way too populated for us; it's all a bit 'Starbucks and Oakley shades' to be taken seriously. From here we take the Sky to Sea Highway into Vancouver and get our bikes serviced by the good people at Pacific Yamaha.

After a few days of city life we're happy to get back out to the country and we head west towards Alberta. The plan is to cross the border into Montana but on the way there we get to spend several days in the town of Nelson, BC. The place is the perfect antidote





to the big city with small cafes and Mom and Pop stores. We ride trails from one highway to the next and before long find ourselves on the border. We'd spent the guts of six of the eight weeks we'd been on the road in Canada, crossing from one side to the other, meeting many people on the way, enjoying scenery that is described universally in Canadian as 'awesome' and visiting quirky places. Canada is a place everyone should experience, especially the further north you go. There's a resilience to the people there, a friendliness that goes beyond common courtesy, but also a sense of knowledge. They are aware just how much their country has to offer and they are rightly proud of it.

We crossed the border into Montana with little or no delay. The first town we got to bore the wonderful name of 'Eureka'. We stopped at a gas station where we met the guy that Billy Bob Thornton must have modelled his character on in the movie U turn. This brown-toothed, 'life support system for sweat-stained clothing' scrutinised me and demanded to know why I "ain't ridin' no chewmercun motorsikcle?"

After the sophistication of rural Canada this was something of a shock, so before we got a starring role in Deliverance 2 we finished refuelling and quickly headed south to spend a few days in Missoula with some old friends of Maeve.

Missoula is a University town and a 'garden city', with a rich history of inter-tribal warfare. The High School is named after the valley where these battles were fought – it's called 'Hellgate High'. The nearby mountains had some of the best pass roads we'd ridden including one called Going to the Sun Road. Next stop Wyoming and the legendary Yellowstone Park.

The park is stuffed full of wildlife; bears, moose, foxes, deer, bison, wolves, eagles – you get the whole lot. It takes a full day to ride around it on a motorcycle and according to geologists it is actually the crater of the worlds biggest volcano. This seems to make some sense as the place is jam-packed with hot springs, geysers, and weird sandstone stacks that look like they come from the moon. We, of course, have opted to camp here, having

done so in other national parks in Montana, Alaska and Canada, and we expect things to be a certain way – remote, backwoodsy and cooking on our own fire. So we are a little bit dismayed to find a fully serviced campsite suffocating with Winnebagos, each one the size of a 55-seater coach. A disturbing number of them are towing a seemingly obligatory GL1800 trike, which for some reason is always gold.

Yellowstone runs its own police force and as the teeming hoards ride around the park's figure-of-eight road on their trikes and pick up trucks, they get tickets for breaking the strict 40mph speed limit. And as it's only a single lane road, when somebody is pulled over (or they stop to gawp at a rock from the comfort of their giant truck) the tail-backs are horrific.

During a visit to the restaurant and general store I got talking to Will, a botany student

working as a cashier on his summer break. One of the perks of his job is access to the rest of the park and all its curious plants. He asks me what I think of Yellowstone. "It's a wonderful place", I reply, "a pity about the humans though." He laughs. "They're not humans, they're Tourons," he says. "Half tourist, half moron. If they ever got out of their trucks, nature might touch them – and then we'd have a problem."





Later Maeve and I head out for a spin on the bikes. It's not long before we get stuck behind a bunch of cars whilst someone takes a picture of an eagle. We pick our way past, probably illegally, and grateful none of the park rangers are around. It's rare to meet a pedestrian and the one we do meet is rare indeed. He's got close-cropped hair, combat shorts, a crumpled T-shirt and hiking boots – and he's carrying a full size crucifix. I decide to stop and say hello.

As we shake hands I introduce myself and explain that we're from Dublin and riding our bikes from Alaska to Ushuaia. I tell him that he's the first person I've ever seen walking through a park carrying a full size wooden cross. He introduces himself as Bob. He is a reformed cocaine dealer and addict, and used to be an all round nasty piece of work. After several failed attempts at rehabilitation he found God and decided to make himself the crucifix, and start walking and preaching.

And walk he did. In the previous six years he's covered 1,000 miles a year, reaching parts of nearly every state in the US as well as some of Canada and Mexico. Periodically the foot of his cross would wear down from being dragged along the road and he would present himself at general stores in small towns where he would have a piece of wood cut to fill the space that had worn away.

One year he decided to go to the bike meeting at Sturgess, California to spread the good word. It had been a long few weeks and the cross was worn down to almost a point. When he asked some of the bad-ass Harley riders for directions to the nearest hardware store they got talking and went with him. In addition to some plywood, they also purchased a large rubber wheel (the type you'd see on a delivery trolley) and fitted it to the base of the cross. He hasn't needed to repair it since. He explains that because of the wheel he is

now known as 'The Holy Roller'. I find myself comparing notes with him on the Alaskan Highway and asking advice on which roads to take in Mexico. He was a nice enough guy and seemed to really enjoy what he was doing. I could feel my cynicism melting away. To be honest I don't know if the wheel was cheating, but he certainly put the fun into fundamentalist.

I explained that I had to go and then he did something I really wasn't expecting. He put his hand on my shoulder and said a prayer for me. He asked his god to bless me and keep me safe on the road and he did it with an undeniable sincerity that left me feeling privileged. As I rode away I couldn't help but think that I'd stopped to mock this guy but while I didn't share his faith I certainly respected it. I learned something new that day.

Paul Browne



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Since I turned 50 and started calling myself a "geezer," I've suspected there will come a time when I will stop feeling like "me" and begin to feel like an old guy.

Humans are not great at noticing gradual change. We don't miss our vanishing freedoms until they're long gone. We don't notice that our kids are beginning to look at us as if we are not-quite-geniuses until they turn into teenagers and make it perfectly clear that we are barely-qualified-idiots in their eyes. Some of us don't notice that we are no longer athletic until we 'suddenly' are barely able to walk around the neighborhood. I might be worse

than most when it comes to perceiving change in my surroundings – or myself. I once rode to work through a tornado-decimated hometown and didn't notice anything out of the ordinary. When someone pointed out the fact that I'd been forced to ride around a house that had been planted in my lane on the main street, I was completely dumbfounded. *(In my defense, why should I have noticed a stationary building on the road? The house was never a threat to my safety, unlike the lethal and unpredictable traffic in that west Texas town.)*

Up to a couple of years ago, I was pretty active and moderately athletic for an



overweight, lazy 60-year-old. I could still play a reasonable tennis and racquetball game, shoot baskets with my grandson, put in a 20-mile day on a bicycle, and get around a single-track trail fairly quickly. I taught approximately 20 motorcycle safety classes a summer. By your standards, I was probably a typical American slug, but by my degraded measure I felt pretty much like me.

How does that happen? What change occurs that turns a motorcyclist into an old guy who tells dumb stories about 'back in the day' when he could straddle a bike? A friend, **Chris Luhman**, suggested that the aging process might be a lot like a failing clutch cable. Those simple and generally reliable cables fail in a couple of ways that seem like an accurate metaphor for late life. I've had a few clutch cables go instantly and it's usually a surprise,

but not a disaster. Starting and stopping gets complicated, but everything between is minimally inconvenienced. The stretched and frayed cables are another issue.

When I was a young man, my injuries all occurred fast. I was up and riding and, bam! I was on my ass and broken. When I was really young, healing happened fast, too. When I was 28, I broke all of the toes on my left foot in a high-side crash. Two months later, I was racing. Now, I sprain something, or break it or get it surgically replaced, and six months later I'm still rehabilitating myself. If I'm lucky, the moment I go from-me-to-old will be like my young injuries. I'll be doing something I love with people I care about and, pop! A fatal stroke or heart attack takes me out so fast I don't have time for any part of my life to flash before my eyes. "I want to die like my grandpa



did, in his sleep. Not screaming in terror and going down in flames like the passengers in his car." A snapped end-of-life-cable seems like a reasonable way to go.

The kind of cable failure that seems to be more common, however, is the stretching and fraying process. The cable strands stretch and break, one at a time, causing more stress to the remaining support, which slowly weakens and becomes less predictable from the additional load. The friction zone becomes vague and clutch operation feels less reliable. The general contact with the power train changes as the clutch does its job less effectively, less precisely. Sometimes the cable failure is because there was a flaw in the basic design: a poor cable-end solder connection, a too-sharp turn in the cable that results in excessive stress in a small area, or poor materials that aren't up to the required job.

My left hip failed in exactly that manner. The hip is a fairly simple ball and socket arrangement, not that different from a car's ball joint but not nearly as competently executed. My femur's head was more like an egg. The pelvis socket was oval and poorly formed. My existence discredits the whole 'intelligent design' theory. At the least, whoever is responsible for my body was one seriously untalented manufacturing engineer. This fact explains (after 63 years of 'use and abuse') why I have never been fast, quick, or nimble on my feet. You can't change direction quickly if you have to turn in discreet increments like a 1960's B-movie robot. Last year, it became obvious that my left hip had pushed out all the shock-absorbing and lubricating cartilage and the bone-on-bone contact was grinding out solid material like a dull drill bit. After a year of avoidance, I decided to give in to a hip replacement. The next three months of convalescence, physical therapy, disability, and pain were pretty close to one of those clutch cable failure moments. At five months, I'm getting around pretty well, but I am not back to full function. I may never be.

'Recovery' is always a relative term. My father never recovered from his WWII experience. When he put away his Navy





uniform he was done with all forms of adventure and he tried to live a calm, predictable life from that point on. After finishing his college degree he took a teaching job and held that exact same job, in the same town, for the next 44 years. He was a fairly active, athletic man until a series of cardiac and cancer incidents put him on oxygen and a walker in his early 70's. Once again, he did not recover any of his previous self. He lived another 20 years but from the outside he was clearly not the same man he had been.

In many ways, I've failed to live up to the standards my father set, but physically I'd like to do better. When I was going through my physical therapy routine this morning, I identified one big difference between my father and me: I can't imagine him doing 50 deep-knee squats, more than 100 leg extensions and lifts, and a half-hour of

calisthenics before breakfast every morning. He was done with that sort of exercise when he left the Navy. Pioneering fitness expert Jack LaLanne was from my father's generation, but LaLanne's peers considered him a freak, not a role model. Most of our peers consider us freaks for riding motorcycles when we could be sitting in a comfortable rolling living room, but more of us are concerned with our physical fitness than were our parents' generation. That may keep the clutch cables lubed longer and it might even prevent some breakage.

'Fitness' has a different meaning when you pass 50. At 60, it means 'clinging desperately to what I have.' If I skip a day, I backslide about three. If I skip a week, I'm all the way back to disabled. As best I can tell, my appearance bears no reflection of the work I've been doing over the last year. I feel stronger but I'm no prettier, and the only six-pack I possess comes



in bottles. Whatever comes of my exercise routine, it's only apparent to me and my limited capabilities.

After replacing my worn out left hip and putting in an hour or more a day on the therapy routine for four months, I'm back on the 250, commuting to work every day, and putting in some recreational miles on and off road. I'm not ready for primetime but I could probably do a long trip without incident, and I think I'm ready for the safety-training season. Of course, the human body is a lot more complicated than a clutch cable or an entire motorcycle transmission for that matter. I have no guarantee that fixing my new hip will give me another 12,000 miles or even another weekend. So, I'm just going to have to pretend that I can plan on those miles and that weekend, and carry on as best I can. As Jimi said, "I'm gonna wave my freak flag high

... I'm the one that's gonna have to die, when it's time for me to die. So let me live my life the way I want to." I prefer to live as much of my life as possible on two wheels.

Thomas Day

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Riding to Paris has always been a massive dream of mine. Last summer I rode the St Tropez HOG Rally from Brighton over 4 days so the distance isn't daunting.

Paris is probably my favourite city in the world and the short 300 mile ride from Brighton to Paris seems like the perfect way to get there. Plus I have always wanted to ride around the L'arc du Triomphe on my Harley-Davidson 48 and park up under the Eiffel Tower for a coffee with a group of friends. I also wanted to show people that you can do a trip like this on a budget and that travelling by bike is the best way to do it.

Back in February, I remembered the 4-day weekend over Easter was coming up and I thought this would be the perfect time for my long weekend in Paris.

We found a 'cheap as chips' hostel for £30 a night each, including a secure garage 10 minutes south of Champs Elysee by Metro. We booked Le Shuttle early, which cost us around £50 each. A 2 night stay in Paris so far costing us £110 each! I figured petrol would be another £100 or so there and back and that just left food and drink. The Thursday evening before Good Friday we packed our bags and went to the pub to plan our route down (which to be honest didn't get that far). We decided we would sort it out when we got to the tunnel.

On Good Friday we woke up bright and early around 6am to get on the road to Folkstone. It was a beautiful morning and the five of us, myself on my H-D 48, Hattie on her H-D 883 Iron, Tom on his H-D XR1200, Sam on his Kawasaki Z1000 and Graham on his Kawasaki ZX10 set off on the A27 towards Folkstone. It was absolutely freezing but the sun was shining and we were all happy! The ride was absolutely beautiful; we stayed on the A27 to Pevensey where it becomes the A259 and largely follows the coast all the way to Folkestone. Every time I looked in my wing mirror and saw my 4 friends riding behind me in convoy, I instantly had a massive grin on my face!

We were running very late by the time we got to Folkstone and we had missed our train. We were then all allocated to separate trains as we went through the gate. We pulled up to get some food and a coffee at Le Shuttle's food hall and spoke to the information desk who told us to let the marshals at the gates know we were together and we should be able to get on the same train.

We rode to the queue of the next available train and the marshal let us all through together. Bikers are really taken care of when using the tunnel, we were given priority over other traffic and were all kept together.





hard without her hands on the throttle and then cut out. We got the bikes on the train and decided to take a look at her bike on the way over. At first we thought it was the stand (which cuts the engine out if it's still in gear) was stuck. This didn't seem to be the case. We relaxed as we were not able to start the bike until we got off at Calais so were not able to test it anyway.

While we were riding up to the train I heard an unhealthy bike sound. Hattie was riding next to me and every time she pulled the clutch in it made a high pitched buzzing. I didn't think anything of it and thought it was just because the bike was hot or something. Tom also heard it and looked a bit worried. We stopped to be let on the back of the train and Hattie's bike wasn't happy. She had it in neutral and the engine started revving really

We tried to start the bike at Calais to get it off the train. It started once, revved incredibly high and then cut off again. We took all our bikes off and pulled up on the platform. The train pulled away and all of a sudden we realised we were the only people on the platform at Calais Shuttle. It was like a ghost town! We felt stranded. We couldn't get Hattie's bike to start, didn't have any jump leads and didn't know what to do. A security car pulled up and we were getting iron stares from the men inside. I



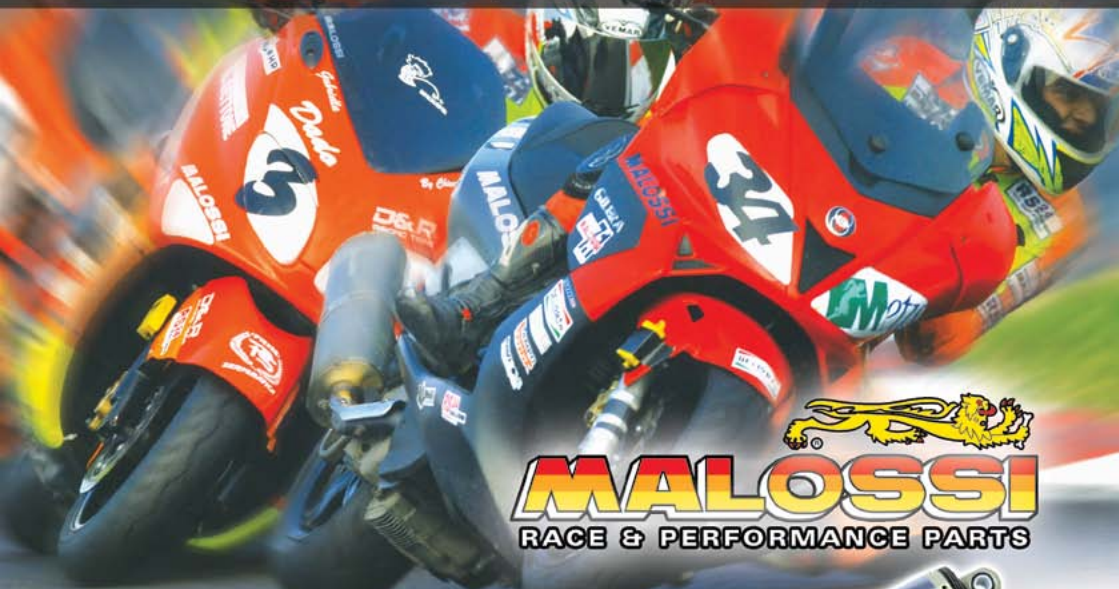
called the nearest Harley Davidson dealership, which was around the corner but they were closed because it was Good Friday. I called my AA cover but unfortunately this didn't cover Europe and we would only be able to get a tow to a garage, which would cost €250 to get to there and then more to fix the bike.

was either pay a small fortune to get Hattie's bike fixed or turn around. It was already about 5pm and we had a good 3 to 4 hours ride to Paris and we still had no idea where we were going. Bikers stick together, we weren't going to go if we couldn't all go and we had to

The boys tried to fix the bike for hours. We managed to get the attention of a pick up van and an American chap stopped to see if we needed help. He had a small toolbox which meant we could do some more investigating but without a computer to hook up to the bike we were pretty stuck. We managed to jump start the bike but as soon as we let go of the throttle the engine died. The moment came when we realised that all we could do



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make sure Hattie got home safe. Hattie is very independent but at 5ft nothing it wasn't very easy for her to push the bike around.

We managed to get on a train going home thanks to the helpful staff at Calais. Although we were all extremely disappointed we knew we had made the right decision. The fact that bikers stick together and all help each other out is one of the main things I love about riding. Whenever you see a fellow biker pulled over on the side of the road you pull over to see if you can help. It's like an unwritten code. We couldn't have gone on without Hattie and quite frankly it would have been wrong.

We got off the train at Folkstone where Hattie was picked up by a recovery van and taken home. Me and the boys had an awesome ride back to Brighton as the sun was going down. We got home and had a night out in Brighton, Paris style; we went to a French restaurant and had a really good time. Hattie was able to get her bike fixed the next day at Shaw Speed and Custom Harley-Davidson at

Holmes Hill and the team there said they had never seen a problem like it. The starter switch had gone and this had drained the battery. There would have been no way we would have been able to fix it on our own. In the end we went for some good rides that weekend and I really fell in love with riding around Sussex again.

The moral of this story is that we would never leave a biker behind. Paris will always be there and we will still make it this year. But in the meantime, Hattie, as a new biker, has learnt that she will never be left stranded on her bike and I believe that I will never be either.

Polly Taylor

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STREET TRIPLE STREET TRIPLE STREET TRIPLE



LONG RANGE MIDDLEWEIGHT

"You can't ride to Edinburgh for lunch", I was told. When I responded that yes, I could and indeed had ridden to Edinburgh for lunch that very weekend on a BMW Megamoto my protagonist got a bit flustered.

Apparently he didn't mean that it was impossible, but that I shouldn't be riding to Edinburgh or any other far-flung places for any kind of victuals as it was both selfish and bad for the environment. Far be it for me to point out that all of his, and indeed most of all motorcycle journeys made these days, are purely for pleasure. And very far be it for me to further point out that I could have jumped on a jet to Prague for lunch, for far less than the cost of the fuel the BMW used, thereby virtually



ensuring that the polar ice caps resemble a Fox's Glacier Mint in less time than it takes to say "carbon footprint" (but I'm not quite so sure that the 'Digest would have picked up the tab for that one).



So I rode a Triumph Street Triple to Land's End for lunch in an heroic bid to save the planet. How did I manage that then, I hear you ask? Well, it was easy, I had a Cornish pasty at about 1.10pm! Oh, the planet saving part? Well it's obvious really, the little Trumpet only has a 675cc engine against the Beemer's 1200. I can hear those polar bears breathing an audible sigh of relief (which is quite appropriate, since the Street Triple was pure white – which is not entirely my cup of herbal tea – and it did attract an awful lot of attention. Fortunately, not from large white cars with lights on top). Another reason I was given for not riding to Edinburgh for lunch was that it was far too cold at this time

of year and on a naked bike I'd surely die of exposure within seconds. Nonsense of course, it was even deeper into the winter by the time the Triumph arrived, equally well equipped as it wasn't, with acres of plastic fairing. I've never

understood why more people don't ride all year round and why so many of those that do insist upon covering up a perfectly handsome motorcycle with what amounts to little more than Tupperware?

Back to the plan, it's early 'o clock and I'm gassed up and ready to go. There isn't actually a plan of course, I'm just going to ride to Land's End, have lunch then see what the rest of the day brings. I head out of London and find myself naturally drawn to my favourite roads in Dorset where the little Triumph and I worked out a few little problems. First off, where have they hidden the other 400cc? Surely this must

be a litre motor? There is no way on Earth that amount of lusty, torquey exuberance can be contained within the confines of three tiny cylinders. Mind you, even the engineering geniuses at Triumph can miss a trick from time to time. They could have saved a fortune in cost and a load of weight by ditching the gearbox. Completely unnecessary. Whack it in top and off you go. So, where are we? Devon. Nice, this is a great road, what happens if I do this? Wow! All these flashy blue lights come on around the rev counter. OK Triumph, I take it back. So that's what the gearbox is for, it's a sort of foot operated switch for the on board light show. You have to hand it to them, British engineering genius.

I'm really having fun now, so in order to extend the fun into tomorrow I'll need a place to stay, the Street Triple doesn't accommodate a tent, although I did once manage to pack one







key by a member of the Land's End staff. He told me that someone had handed in a key about 10 minutes ago with a Triumph key fob. I immediately assumed that it must be mine as there were no other bikes (or indeed cars) in the car park. When I asked if I could have it back, he asked me what colour my bike was. I told him it was white and he confirmed that this was, indeed, the colour of the bike that the key had been found next to. He then carried on with his duties. I asked if I might have the key now, to which he retorted that no, I couldn't, as he'd given it to some other bloke a few minutes earlier.

I ran outside in a blind panic, fully expecting to see the Triple vanishing into the distance, only to find it exactly where I left it, locked. I put my hand in my pocket and found the key there, where it had been all the while. I resisted the urge to go back inside and find out if I'd been the subject of some weird Cornish

along with a weekends luggage on its bigger brother, the Speed Triple, but then again, you've not seen my new tent. I call Bryan, the best bike valet in the world, not because the Triumph is filthy, but because he lives in Goldsithney, near Penzance in Cornwall and I've not seen him for ages due to his choice of location. The evening entertainment sorted, I cross the moors and hit the end of the known world at about 1pm.

Land's End doesn't get very busy in the depths of winter, so I had my run of the place, including the slightly oddly placed 'famous' sign, which is actually on private property. Apparently some old chap charges you £15 to take a photo if you happen to be over the line. Behind the line, which is about two metres from the sign, you can snap away all day for free. Decidedly odd. Further confusion ensued when I was asked if I'd lost my bike



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initiation wind up, or if the lad had been driven insane by excessive pasty eating. Instead I headed to Penzance where I played happily with the fishing boats, chased the helicopter and avoided speaking to any locals for a few hours. But it was no good, during this time I received a call from a London based friend asking, that since I was in Cornwall, could I pick up a spiders web and a few other witchy things from a slightly odd shop in Mevagissey.

I met Bryan on his glorious old NS400R and we headed back to his for a night of the best hospitality imaginable, thanks Lauren and Bryan for a great night!

Awoken by the unmistakable music made by a 2 stroke triple, which was Bryan leaving for work, I left early and headed to Mevagissey which is a tiny Cornish fishing port with an even tinier car park on the harbour. This was

controlled by a tiny old man who looked at the space around him, which was totally devoid of cars and any sign of life other than 1.5 scale genetically mutated seagulls, scratched his head and said that he didn't know where I would be able to park as it was so busy that day. I squeezed in next to some fresh air and a rusty old chain. A few hours later, having liberated the aforementioned articles from the shop ("if a bloke comes in on a bike, give them to him") and amused myself by watching seagulls terrorise people, I set off home, happy in the knowledge that the next five hours would be pure biking joy.

If you excuse the practicality issues (there is no provision for luggage and pillows need not apply), which you should if you've chosen this bike, there is nothing I can find fault with, the fit and finish is superb, not just for a bike in this price bracket, but for any bike. Although it's a small bike, it's all day comfortable, not once did I feel like stopping due to fatigue or pain and considering the enthusiastic riding, I'm not about to complain about the fuel consumption either. So it appears that the genius British engineers have made a small bike comfortable, a small engine better than a larger engine and a budget bike that (white paint job aside) looks a million dollars. Jolly good show.

If you've read any of my previous bike tests, you'll know that I'm not big on the technical niceties of exactly how many kittens will be saved on your local high street when you do an emergency stop, or how much smoke will pour from the rear tyre as you apply the throttle, nor how many cakes you need to eat to produce enough energy to countersteer the bike around a fifty nine degree left hander if the camber of the road is neutral. However, my editor believes that some of you want to know these things, so I'll just add that unless your current bike was last ridden by Casey Stoner, you will be entirely

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ecstatic with all the provided engine and chassis parts. This bike stops, turns and goes immaculately and requires just enough rider input to keep you engaged but not exhausted. Triumph have addressed two of the issues that decided the fate of my Speed Triple (which was replaced by a Ducati Multistrada over two years ago): the seat no longer tries to eat into the tank; and the truly dreadfully spongy brakes have been revolutionized. It's good to see a factory respond to genuine consumer complaints because I know I wasn't the only one who had these problems. Sadly, they have failed to address the third and most important issue, it still encourages hooliganism and the frightening of sheep so I shall not be buying one (it's four cakes, by the way, two and a half if they have cherries on the top. Next month I'll be providing a useful cake comparison chart for you to cut out and keep).

the same comical lack of practicality, (but you can get a tent and a weekends luggage on it, trust me), it's got massive performance, it's a sight cheaper, and if all that isn't enough, stunt ace Kevin Carmichael has had both and he agrees with me.

If anyone still has concern for my impact upon the environment, never fear, there is a small tree growing from the saddle of my old Russian bike and following a recent trip to Wales, my other Russian bike has enough organic matter secreted about it's steelwork to start a small, but hopefully 100% organic, lentil farm, which will offset any damage or offence caused during the pursuit of this article...

Rod Young

www.triumph.co.uk

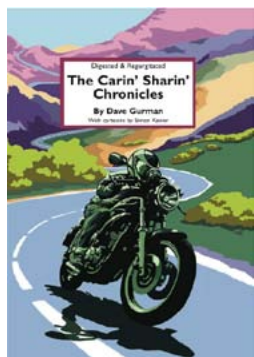
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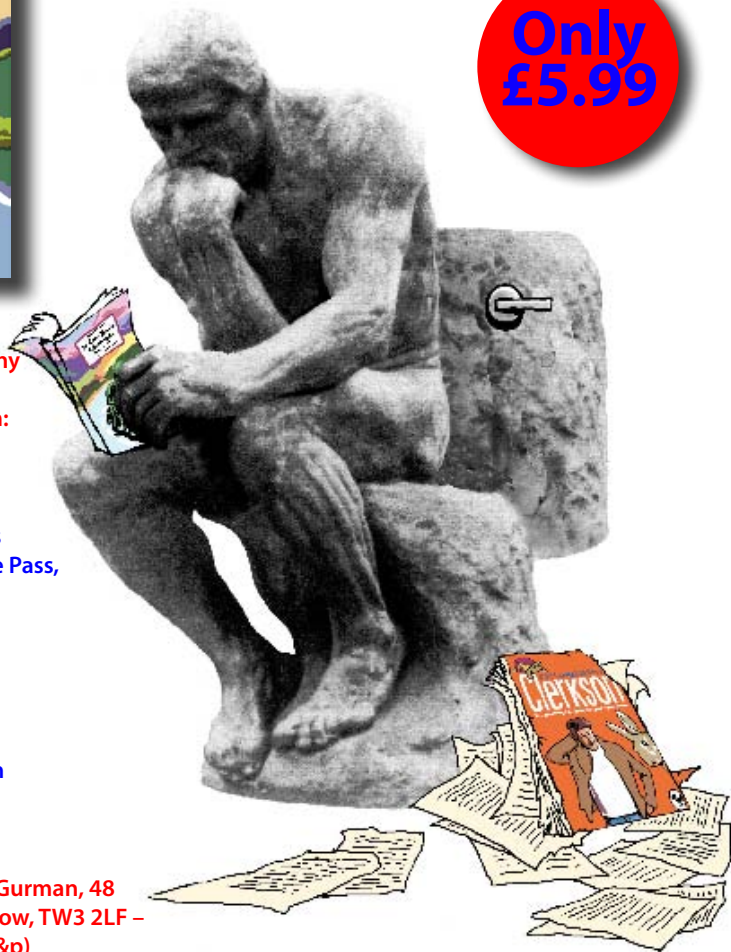
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BANGKOK BIKER

Life has a charming if initially alarming way of showing you the right way to go if you let it. With no inkling of how I was later to be well and truly smitten by motorcycle travel, I decided to sling my hook from life in the UK and see what other things were on offer in the world.

Starting in Bangkok, I spent four months carrying my few possessions on my back round Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, returning to Bangkok before going south to Malaysia. Although I was a bit older than most other backpackers the travelling life had made me somewhat bold and able to do things I wouldn't previously have had the nerve to even attempt.

It had been quite tough-going in those countries and I needed a bit of relaxation and quiet, which even in the crazily busy city of Bangkok was readily available in the peaceful wats (temples). Serene monks pass on a little calm by giving meditation lessons to curious visitors with an hour or two to spare in between sightseeing at the Grand Palace or gawking at strippers and ladyboys.

I was on my way to such a wat when my attention was diverted by a very striking motorbike. I had my own motorbike at home (a Suzuki GS 500E) and I was rather missing it. Mine was a boring black but this eye-magnet was customised in bright red with gorgeous yellow Thai dragons. It was unusual to see such a thing in South-East Asia as most motorbikes were only 125cc and it stood out because of it's size as much as for its colour. Sitting astride it, unashamedly posing, was a weirdly dressed man who appeared to be delighted at my interest.



He was Thai and spoke no English. I was English and spoke no Thai, other than the greeting 'Sabaidee' and 'Cap koon kah' for 'thank you'. He motioned for me to hop behind him on the pillion seat. So with no thought about whether this was a sensible thing to do considering I neither knew this man, his riding ability or intentions, I did as he indicated and climbed on behind him wearing a tee-shirt with loose cotton trousers and no helmet.

Oh how I did giggle on the back as we whizzed around the sights of Central Bangkok and then to the stadium where there was a meeting of Harley Davidson owners, and a vast array of similarly customised bikes. There must have been a hundred or more. I took a photo of him and then he took me back to the wat I had been looking for when we'd met no more than an hour earlier.

He wanted to wait for me but I suggested as kindly as I could in sign language that I might be quite a long time and that he should go. I shook his hand and went inside the wat. I met the head monk who, in impeccable English told me that I must trust my inner instincts and not be afraid to follow where I would be led. After the experience I'd just had, I think I could have told him a thing or two about that!

Jacqui Furneaux

MANX MILESTONES



A NAKED woman, bovine madness and near arrests – the ingredients for the making of next year's TT calendar are unconventional, to say the least. Who needs Pirelli professionals when you've got a budget blonde from Rochdale and a handful of Manx farm animals?

CERTAIN moments in life prompt you to question whether you're awake or whether you've been slipped a hallucinogenic drug. And standing in a field stark-naked, with a huge 'K' painted on my front and umpteen cows trying to lick my arse, was one of those occasions. If LSD advocate Prof Timothy Leary were to have appeared in a Carry on Film, this would be it. Here, in a field on the Isle of Man's spectacular TT course, a rather surreal vision of what a TT calendar should be was slowly – and strangely – starting to take shape, however bonkers it seemed.

But the bold, oddball approach to a 'sexy' calendar is entirely fitting. What could be more bold and bonkers than riding a two-wheeled rocket around 37 and three quarter miles of regular road and its accompanying fixtures – lampposts, curbstones, dry stone walls and houses?

Yet the TT's not just about danger and maximum velocity thrills. Its history spans 105 years – in fact, the inaugural TT took place before the Titanic was even ordered. Throughout those hundred plus years the TT has witnessed huge leaps in technological development and hundreds of spectacular events at each of its sections. It was these TT tales that caught my interest.

The idea to create an arty / slightly comedic TT calendar struck me on the journey back from TT 2010. Being a total anorak, I'd



recorded the sound of an AJS warming up (a wonderful 'growl') before the classic lap on my dictaphone, which I then listened to on my return journey. On the same dictaphone there was also a recording of a very funny TT press conference - the combination of the humour, the visceral thrill of a classic engine and the post TT blues, got me thinking....

Within a week I'd decided to create a TT calendar – one that did justice to the quirky history of the Isle of Man TT races by

interpreting it in an artistic manner. I researched dozens of unusual tales from the race's 105-year history and used each tale as inspiration for the images, which I sketched out as I was researching. There are enough shots for each of the 37 and three quarter miles of the course – so this calendar is part one, if you like.

"Why the cows?" you may be thinking. Well, John Surtees hit a cow at Glen Helen during practice in 1958. Every image and every prop – including John McGuinness' leathers,







Guy Martin's signboard and Phil Read's leathers – are relevant to telling a TT tale.

The calendar also nods to my own heritage – both my dad and granddad were TT racers (though dad more than granddad) – an obsession with TT history and an interest in images. All the props are genuine, kindly lent to me by Guy Martin, John McGuinness (in whose leathers I was almost arrested), Ian Lougher, my father, a farmer (who lent me the goose) and an eccentric Manxman. Even the jerry can in the Brandywell image has a history – it belongs to veteran TT racer Vin Duckett.

With the exception of Brandish Corner, which was foolishly shot at rush hour, all the pictures were taken at around 4am over a four-week period throughout the TT and Manx Grand Prix. My alarm would go off at 3am – I'd get ready, grab Peter (photographer) and Shaz (assistant), we'd load the van and go to whichever sections we'd planned. But there

were always set-backs, including the weather, very keen speed walkers and on one day the photographer even forgot the camera. It was all very Carry On.

I'd get back after doing the pictures, shower, and then head to the Start to cover the TT as a journalist for the Yorkshire Post. By the end of race week I was a total zombie and I still have flashbacks of almost being run over with no clothes on at Creg Ny Baa.

The photographer – who transformed my crude sketches and poorly articulated ideas into great shots – is Aljazeera's Africa reporter and a former BBC foreign correspondent; more at home in a war zone than legging it round the TT course with a woman with a penchant for extreme nudity. Making the calendar was hilarious – I've never giggled as much in my life. I hope you have a giggle too!

Rachel Clegg



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THREE SUPERIORS



On Sunday, 12 December 2010, I headed uptown to Phillips du Pury on Park Avenue in New York to see

the 1925 Brough Superior SS100 Alpine Grand Sport Prototype the auction house had on view. Once owned and raced by George Brough himself, the SS100 had had a pre-auction estimate of \$600,000 to \$700,000US.



Part of Phillips' Design Masters sale, the motorcycle was being offered alongside lots of works created by Le Corbusier, Carlo Bugatti, Piero Fornasetti, George Nakashima, and Charlotte Perriand, among many others. A large and beautiful early Shoji Hamada jar whose provenance includes British potter Bernard Leach had an estimate of \$20,000 to \$30,000.

That industrial design in general and motorcycle design in particular can be taken seriously aesthetically is nothing new. That partly informed the conceit of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's flashy, controversial, and ultimately shallow 1998 show 'The Art of the Motorcycle'. The exhibition may have claimed to explore ideas of freedom, romance, and mobility; but what it did do was make it fashionable for the rich, upmarket rider to come out of the closet as a motorcyclist. It also launched the Guggenheim Motorcycle Club, led by Thomas Kerns, the exhibition

curator, and includes such members as Lauren Hutton, Laurence Fishburne, and the late Dennis Hopper.

The novelty at Phillips, as a short article in that weekend's *New York Times* pointed out, was that the Brough was not a lot in a traditional motorcycle auction at Bonham's, say, or Mid-America. "The black motorcycle sits in a show window on Park Avenue in Manhattan, sharing shopping attention with an auction of jewelry," wrote Phil Patton, the reporter. Patton went on to obliquely quote the Brough's owner, Michael FitzSimons as having said "that the sale of a motorcycle among standout furniture and other products of design could be a landmark, increasing appreciation of motorcycles". Could have fooled me. The article appeared in the Automobile section, not in the Arts section as is usual with *The Times'* auction coverage.



Getting to the showroom to see the Brough proved to be half the fun. I had to cross through a Sikh demonstration against genocide in general and the 1984 Sikh genocide in India in particular. The Sikh group was trying to get Indian minister Kamal Nath, whom some believe is responsible for the massacre, tried in the U.S. courts. Curiously, the Brough Superior I was about to see was once also owned by Prince R. Chagla of India.

Whether it was in spite of *The Times'* piece or because of the Sikh rally, I was just about the only person there. The Brough was in an alcove by itself. What few other visitors who were at Phillips didn't even give the Brough a glance, let alone wander in for a closer view.

Not a problem for me. I was happy to be alone with the SS100. I had been reading about the Brough and its legend for years; had seen many, many excellent photographs; but had

never seen a real one. It was presented as a museum quality object in space. Touching it was possible, but clearly not encouraged. For the record, the Brough was both longer and narrower than I thought it would be, but the rest was close enough to what I had expected.

After about fifteen minutes of drooling, I decided I really should look at the other lots on display, although even the Hamada pot was out of my budget for that week. The sale was filled with other than iconic works by mostly iconic designers, but even minor works by major artists are not without interest.

What became increasingly apparent as I looked at lot after lot was how misplaced Brough was here. He was not an artist or a designer in the same sense as René Herbst or Dirk Van Erp was; Brough was much more a stylist. Furthermore, a motorcycle isn't just an object in space: it's a moving object in space.





My musings were interrupted when one of the staff offered espresso and biscotti, both excellent. Odd pairing with the Brough though, but did make sense for the rest of the sale. Then again, what would make a good pairing with an SS100? A cup of tea and a digestive?

After taking a second long look at the SS100, I decided to buy the auction catalogue. To my surprise I wasn't charged for it. Generally speaking, free catalogues are only given to known bidders and I wasn't even dressed to be mistaken for one. I was dressed to look at a motorcycle: jeans and a leather jacket.

Looking back, that alone should have been an inkling. The Brough failed to sell at auction. While the call-in bid was approximately \$450,000, it fell short of the reserve. Insiders later speculated that the reserve was \$600,000 (the bottom end of the estimated sale price), but that remains unconfirmed. On the other

hand, \$450,000 is consistent with what another Brough Superior went for at auction in the UK a few months later.

Some 85 or more years after the prototype Alpine Grand Sport was first built and a year or so after its spectacular failure at Phillips, its successor, the SS101, set a record at Bonneville Flats (see Linda Wilsmore's article last month). It's the sort of ironic anecdote of which legends are made. And the Brough has always been as much about the legend as performance. Broughs have the glamour.

For the more than twenty year span between the world wars, George Brough produced rugged racing machines for daring young aristocrats as well as more serious (and well off) enthusiasts. Dubbed the "Rolls-Royce of Motorcycles" by H.D. Teague of *The Motor Cycle*, Broughs were more bespoke than customized.

It was unusual (if not unheard of) for any two motorcycles to have the exact same configuration, since each was built to the needs and specifications of the owner.

Each motorcycle was effectively built twice in the Nottingham factory. First the parts were fitted together. Then the motorcycle was taken apart and the components were plated or painted as needed (or specified). Finally the motorcycle was reassembled.

Furthermore, each one was tested for its specific performance. The SS100 meant that it was tested to go for 100 mph or better; the SS80, 80 mph or better. The results were certified by George Brough himself. Of course, Brough Superiors set more than 50 world records for the flying mile or kilometer between 1920 and 1940, with and without sidecars.

More than 3,000 Broughs were manufactured between 1919 and 1940,

of which approximately one third survive. Between 1924 and 1940, more than 380 SS100s were produced. Most Brough Superiors were for the UK market, but some were exported.

Thanks to the enthusiasm of the Meyer Brothers, Austria was Brough's largest foreign market. Brough himself was not ungrateful. He was well-connected and when he heard that Austria might be 'annexed' by Nazi Germany, he sent word to the Meyers, who were Jewish. They escaped and re-established themselves in London.

In addition to motorcycles, Brough Superior also manufactured sidecars and motorcars. The later sidecars had an auxiliary fuel tank that could feed petrol into the motorcycle's tank with a pressurized hand pump. Between 85 and 100 motorcars were produced between 1935 and 1939, of which perhaps two dozen survive. For all intents and purposes, Brough Superior was an early casualty of





brand that prided itself on quality and speed – e.g., 124 mph at Brooklands in 1939 – is in some ways best known for a fatal crash at a moderate 60 mph.

Lawrence was already well-known as a rider during World War I, with a series of motorcycles all named Boanerges, or Son of Thunder, from the New Testament. He picked up his first Brough Superior in 1922 and was smitten. A Mk I, Lawrence dubbed it George I and began a lively correspondence with Brough himself.

Brough was no slouch when it came to soliciting celebrity endorsements and managed to prevail on Lawrence. One result was an advertisement describing “Two Superiors” – that is, Lawrence and the Brough. Richard Knowles adapted the tag line for his book, ***Two Superiors: the motor-cycling friendship of George Brough and T.E. Lawrence***, which is more about Lawrence and his interest in motorcycling than in just his Brough Superiors. Miller, incidentally, doesn't think the two men were particularly close.

George IV was Lawrence's first SS100. He would order four more after that. He was waiting for George VIII to be delivered when he was killed in May 1935. The attending neurosurgeon, Hugh Cairns, went on to make the cause of Lawrence's death, (head injuries), a special study. Noting the unnecessary deaths of dispatch riders in circumstances similar to



World War II. Called into the war effort, Brough effectively ceased civilian production of motorcycles, assembling only a few from bits and parts lying about. The company continued as an engineering firm after the war, though it did not resume production of the motorcycles. However manufacturing parts continued through to the end of the sixties.

After Brough's death in 1970 and his wife's a decade later, the name and intellectual property passed into other hands and was eventually purchased by another firm, Carmac, which intended to bring the Brough Superior back into limited production. A handful were built.

Peter Miller's ***Brough Superior: the complete story***, published in 2010, is highly recommended to anyone who wants, well, the complete story. Readable and incredibly well-researched, it's the most exhaustive book on Brough and the Brough Superior to date. Miller's assessment of Brough as a rider, a salesman, a designer, and a manufacturer alone is worth reading, whether or not one agrees with the conclusions.

Of course, when discussing the Brough Superior there is the slight matter of one of its most famous owners, the five foot two T. E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia (or Florence of Belgravia, according to Steve Wilson in ***Down the road***). It is ironic that a

Lawrence's, Cairns eventually published *Head injuries in motor-cyclists, the importance of the crash helmet* in 1941. That same year, helmets became mandatory for British soldiers while on duty.

Lawrence's motorcycle didn't sustain any catastrophic damage. Once repaired, it was sold and sold again, eventually winding up on display in the Imperial War Museum in London. As for George VIII, Brough claimed in 1937 that he had kept it for his own use in remembrance of his friend. He actually sold it to Robin Miller in 1935.

Of course, Lawrence isn't the only famous name to be associated with the Brough Superior. Jay Leno, the American television personality, who has several, also let the Brough Superior Team (Team Brough) use his garage in Burbank to prepare for the successful attempt to break the AMA 1350-A-VG speed record. And Von Dutch's 1931 SS80, whose provenance includes the actor Steve McQueen, was offered at auction in 2011.

A very different auction was indirectly behind the SS101's success at Bonneville. It was for Brough Superior's brand and intellectual property and was handled through Bonham's. The auction house approached Mark Upham at Half Moon Bay during a Legend of the Motorcycle Concours d'elegance in 2008. According to Upham, he was the only known 'old Brougher' at Half Moon.

Upham placed a sealed bid. He had been fascinated by the Brough Superior since 1977. He was also uniquely qualified. His other company, British Only Austria, specializes in parts for older, vintage, and antique motorcycles. Upham's original idea was to make Brough Superior parts outside the Brough Club, although he did promise to build

one bike for speed and take it to Bonneville. The sale took eleven months to complete; Bonneville, three years.

That Upham is based in Austria, the country that bought so many Brough Superiors so many years ago, seems to be one of those odd coincidences. When the motorcycle market dropped in 1996, Upham, who had owned and operated three companies in the UK selling British, Italian, and Japanese motorcycles, went touring to find a place to operate a business, if he couldn't sell in England.

Austria was his solution, or salvation. He met his wife there and now operates Brough Superior Motorcycles Ltd. out of a 700 year old former farmhouse. As for building entire motorcycles – as opposed to just manufacturing some 16,500 different British motorcycle parts – Upham claims it was happenstance. “We were approached to build one and we continued”.

While Upham declines to provide the actual number his company builds a year or has built so far, he does confirm there was a waiting list, but they're catching up. “We're a secretive bunch,” he explains.

Published reports indicated that a handful is produced each year for people who enjoy Brough Superiors, each replica going for \$250,000 or more a piece. Each motorcycle is effectively a custom built one-off, handmade to higher standards than were possible when the first Brough Superiors rolled out of Nottingham.

Jared Zaugg, Upham's Business Development Consultant in the United States, puckishly suggested in an article in *Motorcycle Classics* that advances in metallurgy and manufacturing make the new Broughs superior to the old ones.



If so, Upham's line could then well make a 'third superior' to go alongside Lawrence and the original motorcycles. FitzSimons, incidentally, is Upham's East Coast Sales and Business Development Consultant in the US.

In addition, there is a range of Brough Superior branded merchandise, including not only the usual tee shirts, but also watches, jackets, and riding suits. Many of those are handed over to specialists. For example, someone who wants a Brough Superior riding suit would go to Lewis Leathers to have it made to order.

"You have to give the customers what they want," Upham explained. "And look after them the way they want to be looked after." For the moment, Upham has no plans to expand his business any further. "To do the Brough Superior is a lifetime achievement.

Ever challenging," he said, adding ruefully, "And it takes up a lot of time and money."

As for the Brough Superior at Phillips, there was a happy ending. The auction and its publicity generated enough interest that the SS100 found a new owner through a private sale for what FitzSimons gently described as more than what he would have received through Phillips.

Jonathan Boorstein



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Blez Has Big Fun

...on a gaggle of GSs





didn't take much persuading to accept an invitation to ride the latest machines in BMW's 2012 GS range because I've been a 'Gelände/Strasse' fan for decades.

Auriol and Gaston Rahier had used to win the famous African rally, twice each, from 1981 to 1985.

Since then I have ridden pretty much every variant of this icon of our times both on and off-road, in competition and just for fun. I have owned an R100GS, an R1150GS and an HP2, which I turned into a kind of lightweight 1200 tourer following a life of abuse at BMW's off-road centre in Wales. I've also had a lot of experience on the smaller 650 Funduro and a brief dalliance with a KTM 640.

Anyway, suffice it to say that all this experience of the GS range made me curious to try the latest versions of the breed. There were six different bikes to be sampled – five 'special editions' of existing models and the new Sertão 650 single.

After thrashing my trusty Tmax superscoot from London to Swansea I jumped straight onto the cheapest bike in the collection, the



£5,295 G650GS single, and rode it the twenty-odd miles up into the Black Mountains for the tarmac photo session. With only 48bhp, it has no more power than the Funduro of nearly twenty years ago, but it somehow felt lighter and more nimble, and I thoroughly enjoyed chucking it through the twisties on the A4069. A quick check of the spec reveals it's actually 5 kilos heavier than the original single, thanks to having ABS but despite the tank being reduced from 17 to 14lt; all I can say is that it carries its weight very well. The range shouldn't be any shorter either, since BMW is claiming it will do 63mpg at a constant 75mph.

After a few passes for the photographer, I swapped to the other end of the scale and threw a leg over the R1200GS Rallye. It was my first experience of the revitalised 'oilhead' twin, which now boasts double overhead cams that not only make the engine slightly narrower than before but also boost power to 110bhp – 5bhp more than its SOHC predecessor and 10bhp up on the original 2004 R1200GS. I could feel the extra 'pep' as I blasted it up the road but my attempts at lifting the front wheel were foiled by the anti-spin technology, which is another innovation since I last rode one of these machines. (You can turn it off, along with the ABS, if you want to).

The real fun started when we headed off into the hills for a lap of some of the most

entertaining roads that mid-Wales and the Brecon Beacons have to offer. I reverted to the 650 initially, and thoroughly enjoyed chasing the 'pack' of fellow journos who had set off shortly before me. The little single could be pushed right over in the hairpins with the brakes still on and the ABS just starting to come in on both wheels, yet still be fired out of the corners with very respectable acceleration.

At Llangadog we re-grouped and I took the opportunity to switch back to the R1200GS Rallye, and on the next faster and more flowing section of the A4069, it was in its element. When we reached Llandovery I held back to give myself a clear run at one of my favourite sections of the A40, as it's part of the Cambrian and Red Kite rallies, which I've been doing since 1994. The big twin didn't disappoint me and I'd caught up with the 'pack' by the time our run leader pulled into the lay-by at Llywel after an exhilarating thrash through the tree-lined bends of the Myddfai hills. I just wish my HP2 had that smoother and more powerful engine! All that torque power doesn't come cheap though: the basic R1200GS costs £10,595 and the Rallye version will set you back £12,145 - gulp.

At this point I swapped to the Sertão 650 single, which is the newest machine in the GS range. It's more off-road oriented than





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the G650GS, with spoked wheels, a 21 rather than 19 inch front hoop and more suspension travel. It's very similar to the old 650 Dakar and would probably still have that moniker if ASO, the organisers of the famous rally, weren't so protective of the name. Ironically the Rally hasn't actually been held anywhere near Dakar, or indeed in Africa, since it was moved to South America in 2009. Apparently sertão means 'backwoods' or 'bush' in Portuguese, and the Brazilian Rally do Sertão is the same sort of event as the Dakar itself.

Anyway, the better suspended, lightweight single was a good machine to be on as our run leader took us off the A40 onto the 'white' roads south of Trecastle, which were very narrow and much strewn with gravel and other slippery substances. I'd already noticed that he was maximising his sight lines by using the whole

width of the road in the way that advanced police riders are taught to do, and he continued to do so as I followed directly behind him for the first time. I've happily followed some very good riders at very high speeds riding this way on country roads from Scotland to Bavaria, but I don't feel entirely comfortable doing so when I'm on my own. I can never quite convince myself that the increase in forward vision from riding on the wrong side of the road will be sufficient to give me enough time to get myself back onto my side of the road if I meet a loon like myself coming the other way.

I also worry about 'freaking out' less gung-ho drivers, who might be tempted to instinctively swerve onto the wrong side of the road (for them), just as I move over to the same piece of tarmac. It was no great surprise to discover, over dinner that evening, that our



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BY SAM MANICOM

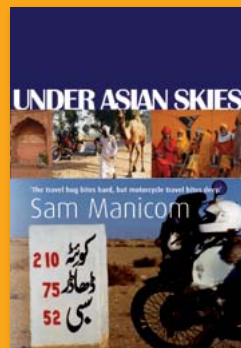


'A captivating book for all, this is the story of an enlightening, yet daunting journey across fourteen African countries by motorcycle.' **Aerostich**

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

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

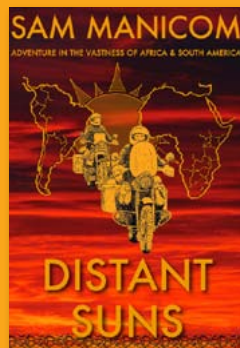


'Sam has the skills of the story teller and this book easily transports you into three years of journey across Asia. He manages to bring the sounds, scents and heat of Asia to life without wordy overkill.' **Horizons Unlimited**

'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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run leader was indeed an advanced police rider. He said the key to the technique is never to go faster than a speed at which you can stop in the distance you can see ahead, which makes sense.

On the faster A470 the Sertão felt more 'busy' than the G650GS I'd ridden earlier, but that's probably because I'd ridden the 1200 in between – I can't believe the gearing is any different. It's less cramped than the more road-oriented version and has a taller screen too, and would definitely suit those with long legs better than the 'standard' machine. However, at £6,735, it's nearly £1500 more than the basic version.

After a handful of miles we stopped for another bike swap and then turned onto the more challenging A4059 to Hirwaun. For this section, and all the way back to base, I rode the confusingly mis-named F650GS, which is actually an 800! It uses a milder version of the parallel twin fitted to the F800GS in exactly the same frame, but with less suspension travel, alloy wheels and a single front disc on a 17in rim. It has 'only' 71bhp, compared to the 85bhp of its higher-spec'ed (and higher seated) 'brother' but that still felt like plenty more poke after the 48bhp single!

I felt immediately at home on the user-friendly twin, which has a creamy smooth

power delivery and excellent handling – it actually reminded me of a Ducati – and didn't feel under-braked either, despite the single front disc. I reminded myself that this 'cooking' version of the 800 twin actually has a smidge more power than the old R100RS of the 1970s which, at the time, was one of the fastest, most powerful and most desirable motorcycles that money could buy. I can guarantee that this 'poor man's 800' will use a lot less petrol than the carburetted air-cooled BMW twins of old too. You'd have been lucky to get much more than 35mpg out of them, whereas I have a friend who gets a carefully calculated 65mpg from his F650GS while touring Europe with Honda Varadildos that guzzle 'gas' at about the same rate as an old boxer 1000. The F650GS is also 8kg lighter and over two inches lower than the flashier F800GS, and there's a kit to lower it even further for those who are short of leg. The relatively low centre of gravity makes it feel a lot lighter than its 199kgs (wet) and for £6,9250 on the road, it's actually a lot of bike for the money.

If you're as confused as I was by BMW's perverse nomenclature, the G650s are the 650 singles, whereas the F650GS is the one that's really an 800 twin, but there also used to be a single called the F650GS, which back in 2000 was the fuel-injected single-cylinder





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successor to the original F650 Funduro. I hope that's clear?!

For the last fifteen miles back to the hotel in Swansea I hopped onto an F800GS and was immediately seduced by the extra poke of its 85bhp engine, although the higher placement of its weight does make it noticeably less 'chuckable' into a roundabout and it is more of a stretch, both to swing a leg over and to reach the ground once you're on board. I'm also amazed by how loud the standard exhaust is, too – I don't know how BMW got it through the EU's noise regs – you would swear it had a rorty aftermarket pipe fitted. The F800GS costs £7,995 on the road.

At the evening presentation we were given a brief run-down of the history of the GS 'brand' and shown some great archive footage of the trail-blazing big twins, which competed with great success in both the International Six Days Trial and the Paris-Dakar rally. Talking of the 'World's Toughest Rally', one of our hosts was multiple Dakar finisher and thoroughly likeable Aussie Si Pavey, whom I've known since he ran a motorcycle project for bad boys in South East London in the mid-90s. He set up BMW GB's off-road centre in partnership with the late, great John Deacon, and then took sole charge, with the help of wife Linley, when John tragically lost his life in Syria while competing in the Masters Rally in 2001.

BMW GB's marketing manager, Tony Jakeman, reminded us that the R1200GS has been the number one selling big bike in the UK for a couple of years now (if you count the standard 1200 and Adventure versions as one) and that its genuine ability to keep going when the tarmac runs out is a key part of the GS 'DNA'. Si Pavey added that with any of the GS range "People feel they can have a go at all kinds of on and off road events" and

my own experience certainly bears that out. Si, of course, taught Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman the rudiments of off-road riding before they went 'The Long Way Round' the world on a pair of R1150GS Adventures back in 2002, and then took Charley's skills to a higher level in preparation for his ill-fated attempt on the Dakar in 2006 – which Si himself finished.

The 2012 GS Trophy

We were also told about the 2012 edition of the GS Trophy, a two-yearly event that pits teams of amateur BMW GS owners from a dozen different countries in a competition combining both riding skills and teamwork. The British team was victorious in 2010 in South Africa and the competition to select members of this year's British team will take place this month at the BMF Show in Peterborough (May 18th-20th), with the last twenty riders short-listed



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doing their final shoot-out in the main arena on the Sunday. The three people chosen will get an all-expenses paid trip to South America to compete with similar BMW owners from all over the world on F800GSs kitted out with loads of Touratech extras. If you own a GS and you fancy your chances, the competition costs £150 to enter.

The following day we had our own version of the off-road challenge at the 4,000 acre Walters Arena off-road motorsport complex. The idea was to give us journos a short 'taster' version of the off road courses which are now offered at three levels, from beginner to would-be Dakar hero (there's also an enduro course on lightweight Husqvarnas and another to teach spanning skills to Adventure bike riders).

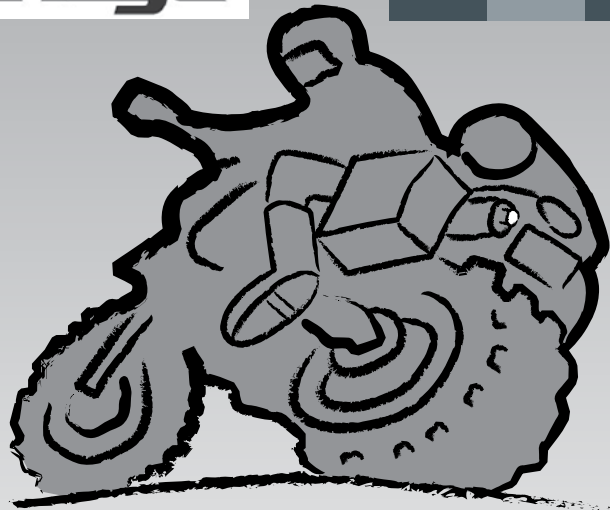
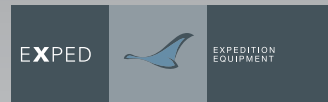
The off-road complex is a few miles from the Ystradgynlais base, and once we'd ridden up there our first lesson was the simple but essential one of picking up a fallen machine.

Our instructor was Norfolk farmer Kevin Hammand, who was also a member of the winning GS Trophy team in 2010. I'd chosen an R1200GS as my first steed of the day and was immediately reminded of how the big Beemer's sticking-out 'pots' make it much easier to pick up than most machines weighing a quarter of a tonne.

The basics continued with a quick lesson in feet and body positioning while standing up on the pegs, but then we moved on to some more entertaining exercises. First we practised braking hard in a straight line on a loose surface, then with flicking the bike sideways on the back brake (the ABS is disabled on all the off road school bikes). Things got even more interesting when we had to ride along slowly, on a steady throttle deliberately locking the front wheel and without touching the clutch lever. Apparently this can really freak out some novices but it's not actually as intimidating as you might imagine, and leaves a satisfying skid mark

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which can be an unbroken line in the dirt 50 yards long if you do it right.

We moved out of the central area with some follow-my-leader trail riding to a hill where we practised our newly-honed skills by riding down the loose slope both with and without using the brakes, and also stopping and re-starting half way down. Apparently this is another exercise, which some dirt novices find profoundly disturbing, and some really struggle with it, even if they've been riding big road bikes for years. I guess, having been riding bikes of all sizes off road for thirty years now, such things have become second nature to me. What freaks me out is the idea of attempting a double jump 30 feet in the air on a modern motocross course or, heaven forbid, a somersault! After a bit of 'puddle jumping' for the photographers it was time for lunch in the nearby community centre café, which is within sight of Sarn Helen, an ancient and famous Roman Road.

For me, the real fun came after lunch when we split into 'novice' and 'expert' groups and fellow-journo, expert trials rider and experienced instructor Jon Pearson led the 'expert' group on a merry dance all over the site. Since Jon was riding an R1200GS Adventure, the Sertão that I started the afternoon on seemed like cheating, so I swapped it for an F800GS. We followed JP as he rode the huge

Beemer up and down steep climbs, along the top of earthen bunds and through the woods. When we did some photos on one of the steepest climbs I took the opportunity to swap the 800 for another R1200GS Adventure. It felt good to be following JP through the woods on an equally monstrous machine until, using a combination of superior skill and site knowledge, he snookered me at a steep, slow and tricky turn on soft, mossy ground, with a really nasty camber. I came at it from the wrong angle, lost my momentum and ground to a halt in an ungainly sideways slide.

I just about managed to get going again, with some difficulty but then JP led us to what can only be described as a trials section up a steep and very rough gully about a quarter of a mile long. I was willing to give it a go on the 1200 until our fearless leader pointed out that I was riding Si Pavey's personal machine and that it might be wiser to swap back to the F800GS. It's just as well I did, because even on



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the lighter machine, the gully stretched my mediocre trials riding skills to the limit. I had to stop when the rider in front halted, and needed assistance to get going again, and then ignominiously toppled over when I tried to put my foot down on thin air. So I finally got my come-uppance. JP then proceeded to ride his R1200GSA up the 'section' unassisted, thereby putting me firmly in my place as a "has-been who never was"! Touché and chapeau, monsieur, as the French say.

There was just time for a final photo session of skid turns and powerslides before heading back to base. All in all, it had been a thoroughly enjoyable day and a half, which had served very well to demonstrate the breadth and versatility of the GS range. There's a bike there for all sizes and both sexes and many tastes and pockets. There's also a huge range of accessories to add both 'bling' and practicality to all these models, from SatNavs and panniers to LED indicators and heated grips. There are also gadgets agogo available from Touratech, whose UK HQ just happens to be right opposite the BMW Rider Training and Off Road Skills centres in the same Ystradgynlais trading estate. Furthermore, Touratech UK is run by former Pavey pupil, Dakar finisher and co-founder of the annual Dawn to Dusk off road challenge Nick Plumb who's been well known to various Digest stalwarts since he was a Sarf London tearaway. Turns out he's a fellow fan of electric bicycles too, but that's another story! Jeez, it's a small world!

Paul Blezard

Many thanks to all at World of BMW for a great couple of days. For more information about BMW road and off-road training courses visit www.worldofbmw.com and for more information on the whole GS range, go to www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk



Dad and Son Do Dakar in 2013

By the time you read this, it will have been officially announced that Si Pavey is going back to South America next January for his ninth crack at the Dakar rally, but this time he'll be accompanied by his son Llewellyn, both of them riding Husqvarna 449s. (Husqvarna is of course owned by BMW now and Si pointed out that his new rally machine will have more power and about half the weight of the 650 on which he completed the 'Race to Dakar' as the sole finisher in Charley Boorman's three man team in 2006). Now well into his forties, Pavey admitted that son Llew rides faster than him, "but not necessarily better!" And in case you were wondering, Mrs Pavey rides bikes on and off road too. Linley has her own specially lowered HP2 1200 on which she completed a Globbusters tour in America.

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*must be accompanied by paying adult. (includes camping)

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... WHO HAS TO BE CARRIED TO THE PODIUM.

AS MANDY LEAVES...

COOL YA HEELS, LITTLE MISS CUTIE, BETCHA THOUGHT YA COULD GET AWAY WITH IT!

PHEW, THAT WAS GREAT FUN, AND I'VE STILL GOT HALF A TANK OF FUEL!

GROG... A... A... A...

I BEG YOUR PARDON... GET AWAY WITH WHAT?

1. RACING WITHOUT CREDENTIALS.
2. DANGEROUS RIDING.
3. ASSAULTING A RACER
4. FRAUDULENT CLAIM OF 3RD PLACE IN THAT RACE.
5. BREAKING A WHOLE RANGE OF OTHER AUTO CYCLE UNION RACING REGULATIONS...

OK, MISSY, DO WHAT I WANT AND I WON'T REPORT YOU.

DO I HAVE ANY CHOICE?

NO.

SO WHAT DO YOU WANT? IT'S A **SEX THING RIGHT?** THEY'RE ALL THE SAME... DIRTY OLD... B**

HEAVENS, NO! BUT I THANK YOU FOR THE KIND THOUGHT, MISSY...

REALLY?

WOW! THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN TURNED DOWN FLAT!

SO, WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

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THE SHAMROCKS

Beale Street in Memphis must be the most Fun Place in the whole world.

and plays live Stax music, I spotted a group of men in the road wearing waistcoats with SHAMROCKS on the back, and clutching pints of beer. They all waved to us and invited us to have a drink. It was obvious that they were bikers.

If you went to a Metallica concert, followed by a fillet steak and sex with George Clooney (insert your own Fantasy Name here) it would still be like tea and stale cake with your great aunt compared to a night in Beale Street! If there's no Beale Street in Heaven, I ain't going! I was recently on a trip along the Mississippi from Memphis to Natchez. After an absolutely scrumptious meal in BB King's 'Itta Bena' we all ambled along Beale Street, surrounded by music everywhere. Outside The Rum Boogie Café, which is lined with Stax memorabilia

Being a curious female journalist, I stopped to ask them who they were and what they were doing there. But the noise and alcohol levels were too high to have a sensible conversation, so I took a few wobbly photos and promised to make contact when I got home to England. We walked along the road, and there in a side street were their bikes, all neatly lined up in a row. I took another wobbly photo and couldn't



Mother



North Country



Black Irish



Rebel Irish



Wicked Irish



Ferian



Fighting Irish



Lucky 7



Southern 8



Golden Isles



Dead Rabbits



Lone Star





help wondering how the Shamrocks were going to get their bikes home at the end of the evening!

This is their description from their site: 'Originally founded in Vermont as a club for Federal Law Enforcement Officers, the Shamrocks MC is now a motorcycle club with membership containing and open to all male, US law enforcement officers without regard to level of government.

The Shamrocks MC is a non-profit organization designed to promote brotherhood between all members of our nation's law enforcement community. The Shamrocks MC is also committed to the service and support of organizations that assist with law enforcement, veteran, and select charity issues, as well as supporting the efforts of other allied clubs. We are bonded by history and united by principles.



We support several different charity causes which include, but are not limited to, Law Enforcement, Veteran's Affairs, Children, Animals, and Medical Research and Treatment. In addition to self-initiated cause support, the Shamrocks MC is very active in supporting other clubs with their charity efforts.

Originally, the membership of the Shamrocks MC was comprised solely of Federal Law Enforcement Officers. As time went by we felt the need to recognize our professional bond with all levels of government law enforcement. Today the Shamrocks MC welcomes all US Law Enforcement Officers, not just Federal, into its ranks.

No matter what background our members possess one can rest assured that if you see a big white Shamrock on their back, you are looking at one of this country's finest professionals. While not a club requirement,



most of our members claim and are proud of their Irish heritage.'

The Shamrocks have Chapters nationwide, from Texas to Canada with great names, including; Mother. North Country. Black Irish. Rebel Irish. Wicked Irish. Fenian. Fighting Irish. Lucky 7. Southern 8. Golden Isles. Dead Rabbits. Lone Star.

They all have different variations of the Shamrock logo. Their waistcoats are called vests. The patches on the top and bottom on the back of the vests are called Rockers. The bottom Rocker represents the State, e.g. New York or Mississippi, that the Chapter is chartered out of. The Shamrock in the middle is the Club's symbol.

All the Shamrocks have nicknames, or Road Names as they're called, like Rocket, Skip,

Hillbilly, etc. New Members may have their Road Names chosen for them, and if anyone misbehaves they can be renamed! Generally they already have nicknames from their job. All the Shamrocks call each other by their Road Names.

The Shamrocks MC is a 100% Law Enforcement only M/C. - Local police, State Troopers, and US Federal Agents. You MUST be an active or retired Cop to join the SRMC. Even with a Law Enforcement background, new Members aren't automatically accepted. The Shamrocks are highly selective. They have to 'prospect' around the Club for a while before being Patched in to the Brotherhood.

When I spoke to the Shamrocks in Beale Street, they all claimed Irish heritage. It seemed more important to them than their Law Enforcement past! About 90%, of the



Shamrocks come from Irish heritage. It is not a club requirement though. The SRMC holds a National Rally (or meeting) once a year. All Chapters attend and Club business is discussed, issues are ironed out, and lots of BEER! It was held in Memphis last year, which is where I met them.

Chapters have meetings once a month that are called "Church", wherein local Chapter business is discussed. Drinks, food, and good times take place after Church is over. No women are allowed to be "Patch Holders" (members). But they do attend some events. The SRMC prides itself in its charity work. Chapters from across the US participate, sponsor, and assist in many charity events. Charity work is an integral part of their Clubs.

Tiocfaidh ar La is written at the bottom of their websites. It's an Irish Republican



saying meaning "Our Day will Come". This is in reference to the Northern Ireland issue. Most of the Shamrocks have Irish heritage, some members with family in Ireland, and Irish sovereignty is a touchy subject. I asked if they would welcome any British bikers who were on holiday there. Their reply was; "The SRMC always looks to make new friends, even Englishmen! HAHAAHAAH! So if any folks from across the Pond come over we would hoist a Guinness with them!"

The Shamrocks. Motto is; 'Under English law you are innocent till proven IRISH. Tiocfaidh ar la. (I pointed out to Rocket that nowadays 'Under English law you are innocent till proven ENGLISH!')

Many thanks to Rocket, the National Vice President, for answering all my questions.

Lyn Funnell

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BOOK REVIEW:

Spies and Samurai

by Jonathan Boorstein

Critics and reviewers get asked a lot of questions. The range goes from the absurd – do you actually read the books or see the movies you review (yes) – to the ridiculous – how can you pan that show or restaurant and put all those people out of work (how can you present inferior product at inflated prices and con all that hard-earned money out of your customers?).

Somewhere near, if not at, the bottom of the list, is, how do you pick the books or movies or plays or restaurants you review? It's the result of a series of sliding scales: new books over older books; better known writers over less famous ones; and topical interests over niche interests. It's not just "the kindness of strangers" that leaves many a debut novel unreviewed nor the meanness of the mainstream that leaves many a motorcycle book unnoticed.

Of course there are exceptions: selections that defy logic and statistical norms. This month is one of those exceptions.

The selections grew out of a thread on Facebook

among a handful of Friends of The Riders' Digest. There was a documentary playing on British radio about Ernest Degner's defection from East Germany with a suitcase full of motorcycle engineering secrets just as the Berlin Wall (and crisis) was boiling over. Though I wasn't listening to the programme – I don't live in the UK – I could take

"He applied the German V1 and V2 rocket technology to the two-stroke."

part in the thread because I had read *Stealing Speed*, Mat Oxley's very good book about the Degner affair.

After the show and thread were over, there was a brief chat with *The Riders' Digest's* overworked and overwhelmed editor, and Oxley's book was selected for review despite its not being recent (it was published in 2009); its being a niche interest even within the motorcycling community (motorcycle history in general and racing history in particular); and Oxley himself not being exactly a household name (even if that household



includes a motorcycle). It is therefore only appropriate that riding pillion this month is a book and author even more arcane and obscure: Jeffrey W. Alexander's *Japan's Motorcycle Wars: An Industry History*. Just as well. As an Isle of Man TT winner and lap record leader, Oxley knows a thing or two about riding motorcycles, something that's not as certain with the very scholarly Alexander.

The basic story of Degner's defection in the summer of 1961 has been known for more than 20 years. It has been outlined in a number of motorcycle histories and encyclopedias as well as detailed in many articles in classic motorcycle magazines. Oxley credits Jan Leek's *MZ: The Racers* (1991) as his source for first learning about the tale.

The summary sounds like the logline of a classic sixties spy movie: Degner, the newly

anointed star racer of East Germany's MZ factory, steals the engineering secrets that Walter Kaaden used to make a two-stroke one of the most powerful motorcycles to date. Right after Paul Petry, a friend, smuggles Degner's wife and children past the checkpoints of the recently built Berlin Wall, Degner defects, selling Kaaden's technology to Suzuki. Within a year, the Japanese manufacturers were dominating the racing tracks, turning Degner and Suzuki into world champions and contributing to Japan's ultimate dominance of the global motorcycle market.

Although *Stealing Speed* follows the rise and fall of the more colorful Degner, Kaaden is Oxley's real hero. Dubbing Kaaden the "father of the modern two-stroke", Oxley details the five year period in which Kaaden revolutionized the technology. Supercharging had been prohibited in sanctioned races. Kaaden's innovations turned the two-stroke into the little engine that could.

He applied the German V1 and V2 rocket technology he worked on under Werner von Braun during World War II to the two-stroke. Kaaden developed an expansion chamber which was combined with his adaptations of earlier designs for a boost port

and a rotary valve to produce a two-stroke that had twice the horsepower of a four-stroke without supercharging. He may have been the first to realize that a two-stroke is a resonant device, rather like a pipe organ. Resonance and harmonics, not valves, would produce more power.

Kaaden added rotary valve induction to the expansion chamber system. The rotary valve was a bit of pre-war technology Kaaden learned about from Daniel Zimmerman, a motorcycling friend. The boost port

"Baggy leathers, oversized Biggles steampunk goggles and pudding bowl helmets"

Kaaden found through library research. It had been used by Zundapp in the thirties. The extra transfer port fed cooler oil and gas to the overheated and under oiled pistons. "German motorcycle mechanics as well as rocket science was years ahead of everyone else," Oxley notes dryly.

Kaaden's two-stroke did well from its first entries in world competition in the mid-fifties. By 1959, both Kaaden and MZ had earned the respect and attention of the other racers and motorcycle companies.

But the success was colored, if not overshadowed, by two factors: the Cold War and international motorcycle racing itself. MZ reaches the pinnacle of its success at what many (including Oxley and me) consider the height of the Cold War: the two year period marked by the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and more significant in terms of how this industrial espionage drama plays out, the Berlin Wall. Oxley is clearly of the 'Commie Menace' school but he keeps things clean: what he presents here is documented, or can be. More important, it provides the context, the reasons why the stakes were so high for so many of the players.

More nuanced, detailed, and more than a bit autobiographical is Oxley's review of the dark side of motorcycle racing at that time. Bad roads, insensitive race organizers, and primitive machines and protective gear made the sport dangerous, marked by death or career-ending injuries. Oxley cites the TT, a circuit he knows all too well, as having claimed 227 lives in its first 100 years.

Circuits were not well maintained surfaces, but rather paved roads in cities or between cities. Protection was comprised of baggy leathers, oversized Biggles steampunk goggles and

pudding-bowl, battle-basin helmets with padded Leia Organa ear muffs. Race organizers treated the racers as performing circus animals, though at least the Italians and Japanese treated theirs as pampered pets.

Why did the racers take risks under those conditions? Were they mercenary adrenaline junkies willing to die for glory? Oxley suggests not. It's not a death wish. The kick comes from cheating death, going all out to the edge, but coming back to tell the tale. A quote from Degner's son, Olaf, is all the more chilling: "They risked everything...for nothing".

Oxley doesn't explore what was going on in Japan at the time. He leaves it that the Big Four manufacturers were upstarts who needed a technological boost such as Kaaden's two-stroke to get noticed and thereby sell motorcycles. The hungriest was Suzuki, which at that point was last and least of the four. Its president, Suzuki Shunzo, was particularly keen to get MZ's secret technology. The company's fixer, Jimmy Matsumiya, was given the assignment.

Kaaden may have been approached first but turned the offer down. Degner was much more interested. He wanted the fame, fortune and freedom the West could

give him, and the East could not. By 1962 Degner and Suzuki made history and won championships. Shortly after that a sad but not surprising accident (considering the conditions under which the riders raced) ended Degner's career and he began a long decline, dying alone in 1983 at 51.

Kaaden took Degner's defection personally but it also ended MZ's hopes for a world championship. He went on to see other defections from his team and more of his innovations stolen, as well

"This is motorcycle porn at its best"

as the end of East Germany. He died in 1996, well after *MZ: The Racers* revealed to the world his contribution to motorcycle technology.

The story practically tells itself. But is the book any good? For that, let's take a look at another German: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He observed that there are three questions in criticism (and reviewing): What is the artist (or writer) trying to do? Did he (or she) succeed? And was it worth doing?

Oxley is attempting three things in *Stealing Speed*. The first is to tell the full story; the second to set up a sort of contrasting lives of Degner and Kaaden; and the third is a defense and apology for

the two-stroke. He succeeds magnificently with the first. This is motorcycle porn at its best. Everything goes into the motor with a straightforward narrative drive that never loses momentum or track of the story. It's a fast read that reads fast. Oxley gets the maximum amount of tension and suspense in the racing sequences, whether around a circuit or through military checkpoints. You won't put it down until you finish reading it, and won't stop talking about it (at least until your mates decide the only way to shut you up is to toss you out of a twelfth-storey window).

As for the second, according to Oxley, "This book is about two men and their motorcycles: one who chose loyalty and lost, but died a happy man, the other who chose betrayal and won, but ended his life a broken man."

Here Oxley is less successful. Part of the problem is that it would slow down the narrative drive and Oxley doesn't let anything slow that down. Even things that initially seem extraneous turn out to be relevant by the time he finishes the book. Part of the problem is that real life isn't ever quite that neat and symmetrical. It could just as easily be argued that the contrast is between types of loyalty:

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one to himself and one to his friends and co-workers. Neither man seems to have been particularly loyal to a cause or country.

More important is that what Oxley has here is a fine nest of vipers. There isn't one person who can be described as admirable, though many do admirable things. Degner is an arrogant, self-centered thief. He didn't need Kaaden's secrets to defect. But he refuses to steal anything unless the deal includes freedom for his wife and children (from whom he is later estranged). Suzuki and Matsumiya aren't much better since they commissioned the theft, though there is something funny about the Japanese stealing industrial secrets from their former allies.

The biggest stumbling block to Oxley's conceit is his designated hero, Kaaden. Oxley claims that Kaaden was neither a Nazi nor a communist. Kaaden certainly starts out that way: he was a motorcycle nut who apprenticed at DKW while studying mechanical engineering at Chemnitz. The Nazis rise to power and Kaaden joins the Hitlerjugend, for which Oxley makes the usual disclaimers. With the war and Kaaden's undisputed genius, he gets deployed to work

with von Braun on V1 pulse jet engines.

Oxley acknowledges that he doesn't know whether Kaaden knew about the death camps, adding that Kaaden must have heard rumors. I share Oxley's skepticism, but more damning is that the rockets were built by slave labor under conditions that were regarded as appalling and inhumane at the time. Interestingly, and perhaps as damning, is that he destroyed much of what he had been working on to

***“Well-written
and well
researched,
it fills out an
important moment
in motorcycle
history”***

prevent any technical secrets from falling into enemy hands as Germany collapsed at the end of the war.

Kaaden hid what he had done in the war during his debrief with the Allied Forces. Declining an invitation to join von Braun in the US, Kaaden headed into the Russian sector to join his family and eventually wound up as a test engineer at MZ, declining offers to leave.

Here in the US, we have a legendary singer/songwriter named Tom Lehrer who specialized in novelty and

political numbers. Back in the sixties, he wrote one of his more (in)famous ditties, *Wernher von Braun*, whose “allegiance is ruled by expedience” and “Don't say he's hypocritical, say rather he's apolitical”.

Kaaden managed to be just as much a Vicar of Bray, but without changing his address, unlike Degner and von Braun. Kaaden was a good Nazi when the Nazis were in power; he was a good communist when the communists were in power; and he was undoubtedly a good capitalist when Germany was finally reunited.

What Oxley has here is a deeply flawed figure. Like Ezra Pound, Kaaden is a man of undisputed genius, whose contributions to his field are unquestionable; unlike Pound, Kaaden never received or enjoyed the recognition for those contributions he deserved in his lifetime. As a human being Kaaden comes off as unsavory as Pound or Degner.

Oxley's assertion that Kaaden's loyalty was somehow rewarded with happiness leaves a bad taste in the mouth. On the other hand, without focusing on Kaaden and how he advanced two-stroke engineering, Oxley wouldn't have set up his third point properly, which is the two-

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stroke itself. The epilogue not only brings the history of the two-stroke up to the date of publication (three years ago), but also speculates on a new two-stroke revival. The two-stroke turns out to be Oxley's passion.

Simply put, he feels the two-stroke is a better engine than the four-stroke. Direct injection technology addresses the emissions issues that helped the two-stroke's eclipse in the eighties (an eclipse supercharged by various rule changes designed to eliminate competition to the four-stroke; a direct parallel to what had happened in the fifties before Kaaden came along). Even riders not into speed can appreciate the potential advantages of the lighter, more nimble two-stroke as a street-legal vehicle. Oxley notes that KTM certainly thinks so.

Is the book worthwhile? Definitely. Well-written and well-researched, it fills out an important moment in motorcycle history. It also succeeds as a defense of the two-stroke in general. I'm sold. It wasn't as successful in terms of the intersecting character arcs of the main players but Oxley would have to be Graham Greene or John Le Carré to pull that off, and would have produced a very, very different book.

Stealing Speed pops four out of five wheelies. If there's not a two-stroke in your future, it's not for want of Oxley's efforts.

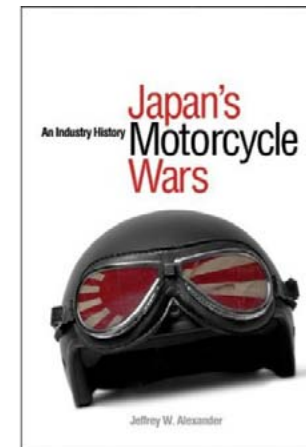
Japan's Motorcycle Wars covers the industry before, during, and after that same critical decade that *Stealing Speed* does. The book explains why Suzuki took the extreme measures it did and puts the choice in the context of the period's brutal manufacturing ecosystem of

"In other words, if you win races, you sell motorcycles."

marketplace, competition, economy, rider education, and vehicle registration. By the way, Degner does get his mention - barely two paragraphs' worth - while Kaaden gets none.

Alexander became interested in the history of motorcycle production in Japan after he stumbled across an old picture book of Japanese motorcycles built since 1945. He realized that most of the manufacturers were no longer in business. Furthermore, little information was available about how or what happened to those companies.

There had once been more than 200 manufacturers producing motorcycles and now there are four, a rate of failure greater than 98%. For



an historian, the find was pure gold: it was a huge gap in the literature waiting to be filled. His research question, as a retro rocketeer might phrase it, is what ever happened to the Japanese motorcycle industry?

Alexander has a theory about the answer, as well as why the question is important: there are lessons to be learned from Japan's experience that could be applied to Asia's contemporary emerging economies. The academic approach requires the researcher to state clearly what he or she intends to do at the beginning, repeat it at least once a chapter, and rephrase and restate it at the end. This keeps the researcher (and any peer review) on track. It's also a great cheat for the first of Goethe's dicta.

According to Alexander, the surviving Big Four shared a handful of characteristics,

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one or more of which the dozens of other companies lacked. These are: war time precision manufacturing and management experience; the resultant understanding of the importance of mass production and die-casting techniques; the swift development of a product technologically equivalent to European models; and a strong financial position – or capacity to secure development capital for rapid investment in advanced production equipment. Suzuki, incidentally, manufactured munitions during World War II.

The actual case studies of failure and success indicate a history of technical achievement as well as cognizance “of the design, production, and sales strategies needed to leap ahead of their competitors on the track and in the showroom.” In other words, if you win races, you sell motorcycles.

Alexander builds his case and his case studies by following changes in the economy and technology – manufacturing as well as motorcycles – along with changes in licensing and vehicle registration. He is fond of statistics about motorcycle fatalities. It's no surprise the introduction begins with “In China, India, and Southeast Asia today an important business war is being fought among hundreds of manufacturers of one of the world's most

ubiquitous and deadly machines: the motorcycle”. His final section recommends broader driver education and tighter vehicle registration in China, India, and the ‘Little Dragons’ of Southeast Asia.

He writes in a good academic style. He keeps sentences short; strives for clarity, even if it means redundancy; and keeps his subordinate clauses from getting too insubordinate. His selection of anecdotes

“In 1871, it became illegal to travel by road when naked, regardless of how hot the weather was”

hit a nice balance between the popular and the scholarly. In 1871, it became illegal to travel by road when naked, regardless of how hot the weather was. In 1896, the first motorcycle arrived in Japan: an 1895 Hildebrand and Wolfmuller. In the early part of the 20th century the Japanese called a motorcycle tetsuba, or iron horse. The first motorcycle race was held in 1901. In 1908, Harley-Davidson began selling motorcycles in Japan, becoming over its 25 year run something of a model of sales, support, and distribution to the postwar Big Four.

In my opinion, Alexander makes his case. To ape academic phrasing, it might be worth further study to investigate whether his criteria apply to the successes and failures of motorcycle industries in other countries in general and the UK in particular during the post-war period. As such, it doesn't just fill in a gap in the literature but expands the scope of knowledge in the field.

Given Alexander's mania for rider and driver safety, I can't in clear conscience rate him on the basis of one to five wheelies, a stunt he would most likely want outlawed. Instead I give him three cages, each with a full complement of air bags and seat belts.

Both books are available through Amazon. Neither man has a blog or a web site that I could find.

Jonathan Boorstein

BITZ THE THUNDERSPRINT

www.thundersprint.com

Thundersprint 2012 Young And Old At The World's Biggest Motorcycling Street Party

Keep the weekend of May 12th/13th free as the worlds biggest motorcycling street party is happening in the centre of Northwich, Cheshire. With over 120 race entries, and 100 cavaladers, there will be a feast for any



title in the British Superbike championship as well as competing in the MotoGP Red Bull Rookies Championship in Spain – considered to be an essential first step on the way



proud to bring the best of British motorcycle racing talent from the past, present and future to our very own GP in a car park for what will be a truly memorable moment in motorcycle sport."

Sammy Miller's Eight Cylinder Moto Guzzi Debuts at the Thundersprint.

Few people would dispute that the most exotic racing motorcycle ever built is the iconic, eight cylinder Moto Guzzi. Now, the only race worthy example of this fantastic machine will star at Thundersprint 2012.

The Guzzi Otto Cilindri was designed by the legendary Giulio Cesare Carcano for the 1955 GP season. Despite its complexity, the bike was immediately competitive with a top speed of over 170mph. The V8 engine is both tiny



to competing in Grands Prix. For 14 year old Joe Francis, the Thundersprint is very much a local event being half an hour from his home in Chester.

Thundersprint organiser, Frank Melling, said: "Kyle and Joe are the future of British World Championship racing and this is why we are so pleased to have them at the Thundersprint. We are very



classic racing fan and, like the rest of the Thundersprint, the paddock has completely free admission with no keep out or VIP signs!

Kyle Ryde and Joe Francis, two of Britain's future World Championship contenders, will be joining a whole host of current superstars on the track. Kyle is currently defending his 125 GP class

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and very light, weighing under 45kgs – just over 90lbs. However, the under-financed Moto Guzzi factory could not afford to develop it to its full potential, and it was withdrawn from racing in 1957.



"There is always one bike which has been missing from the Museum's collection," says Sammy Miller, "and that's the Guzzi V8. There's never been a more complex, or technically sophisticated, motorcycle raced and we just had to have one.

"But for me, it was no use having the bike sat on a plinth in the museum surrounded by photographs of the old GP stars. I wanted a bike which ran like the original machines so that everyone could hear

that incredible eight cylinder howl – the most soul stirring engine note in motorcycling. I can't wait to run this fabulous legend on the world's smallest GP track on May 13th. Make sure that you're there to share this historic moment."

Hailwood's Honda

As a back up, Sammy will be bringing Ronald Agoston's fabulous tribute to the Mike Hailwood RC181 Honda - the bike on which Mike beat Giacomo Agostini in the legendary 1967 Senior TT. Hearing Sam scream the Honda round the tight Thundersprint track always has the spectators shouting for more. The Thundersprint's other legend, Jim Redman,



will also be Honda mounted – this time on board Clive Brooker's CR750. Clive said: "Jim always demands that the bike is in full race trim because the Thundersprint is his only competitive event of the year. He's right on top of the job and I know what



it must have been like to be a Honda factory mechanic when Jim was winning his six world championships."

Yet another exotic Honda comes in the form of Frenchman Phillippe Hanus' CBX1300. Phil is bringing two Honda 6s to the event – a road race bike and a turbo-charged, nitro burning dragster. Frank Melling is desperately trying to persuade the crazy Frenchman not to try to launch the dragster down the start straight. "Phil's a lovely bloke and a super talented racer," Frank says, "but stopping a 200mph classic drag bike before it ends up on Marks and Spencer's roof will be a challenge for anyone. Watch this space!"

Jim Ross makes a regular appearance with his ex-works Aermacchi whilst the crowd's favourite, David Clarke, heads a large 50cc entry with his ultra rare Itom GP bike.

For more information contact Frank Melling on: 01928 740 498 or e-mail: info@thundersprint.com



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More MV Agusta F3s arrive in the UK

The first two batches of MV Agusta's 'drop dead gorgeous' F3 675cc sports machines have sold out immediately but a fresh batch is on its way UK importer MotoGB in Lancashire, which should allow all current back orders to be fulfilled.

The bike is bristling with hi-tech gizmology, such as a counter-rotating crank, advanced ECU system, Traction Control and a 'Ride-By-Wire' throttle system. MV's optional EAS (Electronically Assisted Shift) allows the

rider to change gears without using the clutch or shutting the throttle. They say it helps shave vital tenths of a second off a lap time, while also making the machine easier to use in the urban environment. We say the rider losing some weight has the same effect and is a bit cheaper... There's also a new engine map to give the F3 even smoother idling and improved performance at low to medium revs.

The 'bog standard' F3 is priced at £10,299, with an extra £300 for the EAS version. For most of us humble Digest Types that's going to leave

us forlornly licking the showroom window but if you really want to give the bank manager a coronary then there's an Oro version, which comes with gold-coloured swing-arm and frame plates, as well as Öhlins forks, TTX rear shock and Brembo Monobloc calipers. It costs £19,999.

More drooling and wishing your life away at www.mvagusta.co.uk

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Dying to Ride Memorial Run



Dying to Ride is a non profit Motorcycle Awareness Group, founded in 2010 by Teresa Mills Davenport after her husband Rob was killed while out for a ride on his motorbike. Since then she has been working hard to gain support and media coverage

to promote motorcycle awareness among drivers of other vehicles on our roads.

There is an annual Memory Ride, which this year will include the 1st Annual Memorial for Fallen Riders on the 9th June 2012. The ride will register and start at 9 Aster Place in Newcastle, and make its first stop at the Robin Hood Inn to lay a memorial stone and have a moment of silence for lost riders. They will then head south to the campground at the Squires Bar Café near Sherburn in Elmet, West Yorks, with two rest and fuel stops on the way.

When they get to there, there will be a Dying to Ride Motorcycle Awareness Presentation, and the Memorial for our Fallen Riders. Then live entertainment by the band "Night Train." Right now Squires are offering free camping for those who come on a motorcycle, with a small fee for those in other vehicles. So, after an evening of live entertainment, nobody needs to ride home.

More info at: <http://dyingtoride.org>



The Poker Run

On Sunday 20th May, Ride the Wave is holding its annual Poker Run to raise money for the RNLI. Entry costs £5 (all of which goes to the lifeboats) and it starts 11am at Newlands Corner, Guildford.

Riders then progress along a route to four more checkpoints, collecting a playing card at each stop before ending at Selsey Bill. After much head scratching the judges will declare the winning 'hand' later in the evening.

As with all good biking events, the real fun starts at 4pm at the Selsey Bill Lifeboat station where live music, dancing girls and the usual fun and games will take place, accompanied by the requisite foaming refreshment.

More info at: <http://www.ridethewave.org.uk/2.html>

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Touratech Travel Event



On 11th to 13th May, the annual pilgrimage for adventure bike riders and overland kit-fiends is taking place at Touratech's Welsh HQ in Brecon. Naturally, it involves camping, larking about in the woods on great big bikes with huge knobby tyres and a chance to compare different brands of Gore-tex underpants over a few pints of real ale (courtesy of the local Felinfoel Brewery) and a curry, burger or kebab from Xtreme Organix.

Retail therapy will be provided by Touratech themselves with some package deals at 'show prices' and a chance to poke and prod their new 'Tractive' suspension

unit for the first time in the UK. Also available for a good rummage is Cotswold Outdoor, FTR Suspension and Scala, who will be demonstrating their G9 'multi-client' intercom. Disappointingly, there's also a big Tesco right on the doorstep, which rather spoils the illusion of rugged adventure (but certainly takes the toil out of the supermarket run).

Guest speakers include such luminaries as Nick Sanders, Sam Manicom, Chris Scott, Robert Wicks and Paddy Tyson. Andreas Hulsman is over from Germany to give a tutorial on photography and the resident mechanic will be demonstrating how to plug

a tubeless tyre – and if that doesn't work then how to change the whole damn thing.

The world renowned Walters Arena (see Blez's article on page 105) will be open for testing bikes from Husqvarna and AJS, and there will be guided road and trail rides on your own bike with skill levels to suit both the timid and the hooper. There will also be a chance to talk to people from the Motorcycle Outreach charity and to various individuals seeking sponsorship for trips around the world in aid of other good causes.

More info at:
www.touratech.co.uk

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VE (UK) Britain's leading scooter parts emporium has a vast array of custom goodies to make your scoot the envy of all your mates. Headlamps, indicators, and tail lamps are easy modifications that any owner can undertake, but you can go that extra mile

with a range of body kits to create a one off machine when combined with lighting, mirrors, grips and decal sets. The range covers scooters from leading manufacturers including Aprilia, Gilera, Honda, MBK, Peugeot, Piaggio, Yamaha, and many more, as well as universal fitting parts.

LeoVince



VE (UK) is the official importer for the Leo Vince range of scooter exhausts with offerings for machines right through from 50cc up to 800cc. The SBA1 range are fully homologated to comply with EU road use regulations. They come with a removable baffle for track use (and no doubt by the occasional urban scallywag...) carry a full UK warranty and they look the mutt's nuts.

And to try to ensure nobody falls off unnecessarily the company have taken on the Schwalbe range of scooter tyres, which vary from stylish whitewall versions for classic scoots to semi-slick sports rubber and the Weatherman range. These last ones are aimed at keeping you upright in the kind of weather the typical UK based Digest Reader will experience on the way to the shops for a bottle of cider and twenty Rothmans – cold, pissing rain.

More info at:
www.ve-uk.com

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