

RIDERS

... magazine of the KAMG



ISSUE 206 May 2017 • Registered Charity No. 1060837



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See page 16.

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Above: The saga continues on page 22.

Left: Easter Egg Runs (see page 27).

Front cover: Kent's Most Advanced Motorcyclists (see page 8). Picture by Barry Welch.

Magazine design and layout by John Gardiner.



Nick Farley, Editor

When sending articles for publishing in this magazine, please send images (with captions) as separate JPEG files.

Images should be in colour in as high a resolution as possible, preferably the original size in which they were captured. Please do not place images inside Word documents as this will significantly reduce the quality of the images.

Views contained within this publication are not necessarily views of the Editor, the KAMG or the IAM.

The Editor claims no liability for correctness of information, printing or typesetting errors.

The Editor cannot guarantee sunshine on club runs.

PS. Don't forget to drop me a line about your adventures. You just might inspire others to follow in your tyre tracks.

EDITORIAL

Easter Eggs and Other Donations

Easter has just passed and this year there were two 'Easter Egg' runs. One was the usual trip to Parkwood Hall School in Swanley which teaches children of all ages who have special educational needs. (<http://parkwoodhall.co.uk/>). We took Easter Eggs and other chocolate but I suspect that many of the kids look forward to the pillion rides around the grounds as much as they do to the chocolate. It's not just the kids either, I noticed that several of the mums were quite eager for a pillion ride too.

This year for the first time we also made a really enjoyable and rewarding trip to the Demelza Hospice at Sittingbourne arranged by Charlie Mackie. Demelza looks after children of all ages who have life threatening illnesses, and importantly Demelza offers support to their families too. We couldn't take chocolate here because many of the children are not allowed to eat it, but we did present a cheque for £512, although unfortunately that is only a drop in the £11 million annual funding ocean which is necessary to maintain the hospice and its extensive network of in-home support work. If you are nearby then a visit to their open day on September 24th would be very worthwhile. <https://www.demelza.org.uk/>

At the April Club Night there was a talk given by SERV (Service by Emergency Rider Volunteers) the rapid response service which transports not only blood but biological samples, medical items, vaccines, X rays, breast milk and even the occasional teddy bear needed by a young patient, to and from the hospitals and hospices of Kent, patient addresses and the Air Ambulance. And it's all free of charge to the NHS. Last year's KAMG Winter Chiller partygoers raised £206 for SERV which is entirely self-financed; even when using the bikes which are in SERV livery the riders have to pay for their petrol. <http://www.serv.org.uk/site/>

The KAMG AGM

The AGM took place at the March Club Night. The official business was brief with the entire committee including its key officers – Ian Burchell as Chairman, Paul Jessop as Treasurer and Jim Pullum as Secretary – being re-elected for another year. The grotesque gallery of committee members appears at the back of the magazine as usual and a summary of the financial report for the last year is on page 28. There's nothing more I can add to that. The barely noticeable AGM was over in the blink of an eye and was followed by an excellent talk given by the Kent, Sussex and Surrey Air Ambulance bods. They now operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and have two helicopters operating from two bases. But isn't it sad that such a major and essential part of the emergency services, like SERV as well, should need to be funded by voluntary donations? <https://www.kssairambulance.org.uk/>

Road Rage

It's not prose of a sort likely to win literary awards but I do hope that you will read Road Rage III on page 22. We may get pothole help from IAM RoadSmart.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE

- Sun 4th IDCAM Contact Tim Johansen at idcam@kamg.org.uk
- Sat 10th Trainee Observer Workshop – 8 Associates needed. Contact Tony Young dco@kamg.org.uk
- Mon 12th Committee Meeting.
- Tues 13th Kent Fire Rescue Service rider skills day. 12 Observers needed. Contact Tony Young dco@kamg.org.uk
- Thurs 15th Fish and chip run to Whitstable. Contact Charlie Mackie charlin@talktalk.net
- Sun 18th Observer only ride. **Organiser required.** Contact committee member.
- Sat 24th IDCAM Contact Tim Johansen idcam@kamg.org.net
- Sat 24th Machine Control Day Contact Mick West MCD@kamg.org.uk
- Thurs 29th Club Night. Triumph and Honda demo.

All dates are subject to change at short notice so before attending any activity please check dates, times and location on Tracker for up to date information.

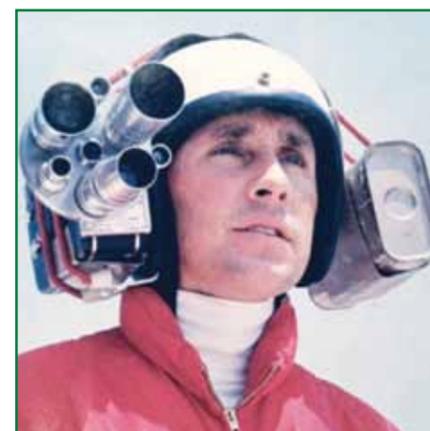
JULY

- Sun 2nd Social/Training ride
- Wed 5th Fish and chip run to Battle. Contact Tim Johansen johansen.tim@googlemail.com
- Thurs 6th Observer meeting
- Mon 10th Committee Meeting
- Thurs 27th Club Night. BBQ
- Sat 29th Machine Control Day Contact Mick West MCD@kamg.org.uk
- Sun 30th Social/Training ride

AUGUST

- Wed 2nd KFRS
- Thurs 3rd Fish and chip run to Sandgate. Contact Charlie Mackie charlin@talktalk.net
- Sat 5th IDCAM Contact Tim Johansen idcam@kamg.org.net
- Mon 14th Committee meeting
- Tues 22nd KFRS
- Sun 27th IDCAM Contact Tim Johansen idcam@kamg.org.net
- Thurs 31st Club Night. Triumph and Honda demo.

When going on a Club Run, Fish and Chip run or any club jaunt come to that, please take a camera with you and share some of your pictures with us. You can easily email them to editor@kamg.org.uk including some captions or perhaps a few words to share your experiences with other members of the club. Supporting the magazine is always greatly appreciated.



DON'T FORGET YOUR CAMERA



WE MEET AT 8PM ON THE LAST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH AT THE KENTAGON, BRANDS HATCH, DA3 8NG

HOT MEAL SERVED AT 6.30PM. £8.50. BOOK ON TRACKER.



WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

TEST PASSES

Since the last edition

A warm welcome to the Group's new members and existing ones

Rider Training

The biking season is well and truly upon us now. As soon as the sun shows, motorcycles appear on the roads at weekends. The KAMG calendar has got into top gear with IDCAMs, MCDs, club runs, training rides, social events and the like all in full swing with many, many club members taking part in some capacity or other. We have also been offering free assessment rides through the IAM website and their publicity machinery. Surprisingly, to date, with the offer already running for the past four weeks, only 20 riders have signed up, and that's from the whole of the Kent Sussex area!

This got me thinking and wondering why rider (and driver) training seems to stop once the test is passed. Is it because we think that the minimum of a test pass is all that we need to survive on our roads? Is it because we are loath to let others know that we have limitations and a lack of knowledge? Is it because we think we know it all and no one else can tell us anything useful? The truth is that in the motorcycling world many, many riders that I take out on assessment rides would benefit greatly from some further training – just ask any of our observer corps and I am sure that they would agree with me.

Commonly, riders do not look far enough along the road in front of them. They do not position their bikes for good effect and they are often reluctant to move away from hazards. They also ride in too high a gear for flexibility and control. Some of this comes from poor (or old) training methods, some from lapsing into bad habits and some from lack of good experience: how many times do I hear "My mate told me this"? My favourite recently was "My mate said I should swerve along the road when I leave home because it warms my tyres up for maximum grip when I get going"! A lot of the errors I see can be corrected and improved upon very easily and very quickly – it's all about reducing the risks of crashing our bikes, which I can remember as being a very painful experience.

Have you ever tried to suggest to a friend that they should consider motorcycle training? It's a bit like lighting the blue touch paper – stand back and wait for the explosion to happen. It has been said that the two ways to really upset anyone is to criticise either their sexual prowess or their driving skills. Perhaps that's the real reason why riders are so unwilling to offer their riding up for critique.

France

If you are riding in France this year you might like to check the internet for some of the rules relating to motorcycles; rules about helmet stickers, reflective jackets, in-ear speakers, breathalysers and so on. Also be aware that the new speed cameras on the motorways in France do not have warning signs before their locations. They are contained in short grey poles and you cannot find them on your sat-nav

mapping. If you are considering riding into Paris, Lyon or Grenoble you will need a sticker to comply with Crit'Air emissions requirements. A lovely country to ride around, but lots of rules and regulations so make sure that you do your research.

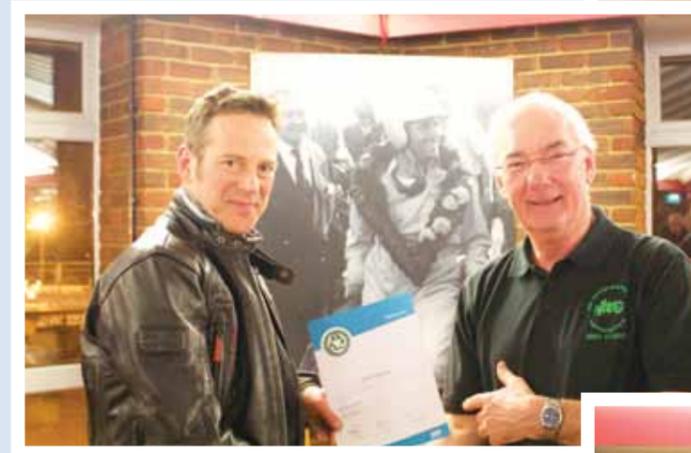
Crit'Air: <https://www.certificat-air.gouv.fr/en/demande>
Ian Burchell



Congratulations to Alex Horner receiving Local Observer Qualification from Tony Young



Mark Roxburgh receiving Advanced Rider qualification from Tim Johansen



Nick Tunstill receiving Advanced Rider qualification from Mike Stapley



Tina Underwood receives Local Observer Qualification from Tim Johansen

KENT'S MOST ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS?



A FAIRY TALE ABOUT SINGING, AND THE QUEEN'S PEARLS, AND A GILERA SATURNO.

All self-respecting boys in the 1950s dreamed of owning a shiny BSA Gold Star, ignoring the impossibility of our feeble young teenage legs ever being able to kick-start the wretched things let alone having the finger-sapping strength needed to slip that heavy clutch in first gear in traffic at anything under 30mph. Meanwhile, in Italy, at the same time, little Italian boys were dreaming of riding a Gilera Saturno, the stylish Italian answer to a Gold Star. The Saturno was always, to me, much more attractive than a Gold Star just because this 500cc Italian rocket came from the same factory that begat the fabulous Gilera Fours on which Geoff Duke almost did the first 100mph lap of the TT course in 1955 and on which Bob McIntyre actually did do the first ton lap in 1957. That name, Gilera, just sounds fast. I had heard of the Saturno back then and seen pictures but I never actually saw one in the flesh despite practically living at Brands Hatch in my formative years in the mid-fifties when it was all Manx Nortons. Then, just two years ago, whilst wandering round the sheep, cows and tractors at the Kent County Show, I finally tripped over a real, live, racing Gilera Saturno and, moreover, one fitted with a racing sidecar. Wow!

At last I'd bagged a Saturno, and sitting on this mythical beast was a lady, a lady who – how can I put this decently? – a lady who was obviously older than the bike, and this particular bike was born in 1950. As you would expect, I patronisingly asked her, in that you-won't-know-anything-about-this-dear-but-you-can-steer-me-to-a-man-who-does sort of tone, if she



An Italian Gold Star - the Etheridge 1950 Gilera Saturno.

knew who the bike belonged to. I learnt very quickly that not only did it belong to her and her husband, but they still raced it and had just returned from hurtling round Monza, no less, at the celebrations which marked the centenary of Gilera production. Another big Wow!

When I say that they still raced it the emphasis is decidedly and accurately on the "they", because husband was the driver and this genteel lady was the sidecar passenger and, as you all know, being a racing sidecar passenger is not for the fainthearted or the non-nimble, and it's certainly not for anyone old enough to have been born in the War. It turned out that these two, Dennis and Christine Etheridge, lived in Maidstone and we swapped addresses so that we could meet and I could find out more about this amazing trio – Mr and Mrs Etheridge and their racing Saturno sidecar. There then follows a two year break in which I lost their address and contact details before I finally caught

up with them recently at their home to find out more about them and their bikes. What a tale. Read on.

Dennis, now 77, started on his road biking career when he was 16 which was the legal age for riding bikes of any size in those balmy days of no brakes and (fortunately) virtually no traffic. His first road bike was his father's ex-army, girder-forked Ariel and this same machine, suitably modified, was also used for trials and for sidecar grasstrack racing, and for sidecar scrambles too. Using one bike for a variety of sporting activities and for road riding as well, was common then. Dennis was obviously a pretty good rider and he won more money from sidecar grasstracking than he earned as an apprentice fitter and turner at Chatham Dockyard. This need to race his motorbike I understand, but why with a sidecar? The answer is simple: it was because he wanted to go racing with his best mate and by having a sidecar they could both be involved. Their Chatham

Dockyard training gave them the skills to use and, I suspect, the access to the equipment needed, to build a sidecar or sidecars, and that's how it all began. It's been virtually all sidecars ever since. It wasn't just in grasstrack racing that Dennis shone either: if there was a sidecar involved Dennis could win. In the 1960s he won the sidecar class of the Langmaid Trial and The Colyer Cup and in 1966 he was the South Eastern Centre sidecar scrambles Champion. ('Scrambles' is what we Brits called motocross back then, and it was on BBC telly every Saturday afternoon in the winter, with Murray Walker commentating. Motocross was what the effete Europeans did.)

Christine is a later convert to actual participation in motorcycle racing than Dennis; she didn't even start until she was 42. Up until that time she had been mother hen to the travelling Etheridges as they chased around Europe racing sidecars. Then Dennis lost his regular passenger and needed to put the word out that he was looking for a new one. Christine said that having already spent her life being motorhome maid and chief cook and bottle-washer for Dennis, their children and Dennis's passengers she didn't want to start all over again looking after a new passenger who might also have a family with him. "I'll be your new passenger," she said to Dennis. So they went up to Detling airfield for "a bit of practice" and that was it. That was over thirty years ago and she's been his passenger ever since as they have raced all over England and Europe and even in New Zealand a couple of times. In the coming season they will again be racing and demonstrating around Europe.

But it's not just the racing, it's the driving to and from the circuits too. The mileage they cover is prodigious. In their (slightly) younger days they and their family would drive literally non-stop from their home to circuits all across Europe. They had to drive non-stop in order to fit the racing into a weekend and be back for work

the next week. The van had a large auxiliary fuel tank fitted and they changed drivers on the move so that they simply didn't stop for any reason from the moment they left the ferry to their arrival at the circuit, wherever it was. By this time their sons were also racing and sharing the driving duties. Son, Christopher, was himself ten times British Sidecarcross Champion and he competed all over Europe too. He has since retired but his son, Jack, is now the third generation of the mighty Etheridge sidecar racing dynasty. But although sidecars have filled most of the Etheridge life Dennis has raced solos too. He has raced the Gilera solo and only a couple of years ago, 2014, he came second on borrowed 1938 MAC Velocette in the Belgian TT at Gedinne, and the year after he came second in a different class at Gedinne on a Tiger Cub.

This is a family steeped in motorcycles and motorcycle competition of one kind or another. Wherever you go in the Etheridge household there are reminders of a motorcycle life that goes back well over 60 years: look, over there, that's a picture of Dennis getting airborne at a Canada Heights scramble in Swanley in 1966 when he was South Eastern sidecar scrambles champion; just here is the commemorative plate that was given to them at the Gilera knees-up in Monza in 2015, and there's the cheque they received when they



Dennis in 1966 when he was SE Centre champion



went to the TT in 1996. There are pictures and trophies everywhere you look and in the hall, there is even a full size motorbike, an immaculate 1927 New Imperial. And as this is the Etheridge house the New Imperial is occasionally taken from the hall and hitched to a sidecar, of course, and is used for demonstration runs with both Dennis and Christine dressed up in the





appropriate vintage garb. In the garden there is a wooden chalet which you might think would be a pleasant place to sit in the sun and take an evening sherbert, but think again – open the door and it is full of motorbikes and sidecars and trophies and posters and other memorabilia. There's tons of stuff and every bit of it stimulates a question that could lead to a full length feature story on its own. For example, there is a poster on the wall dated 1988 on which are scrawled the words "First Win!" and also, cryptically, "Two crashes?" I didn't discover more than that, because Dennis and Christine had already moved on to something else. They interrupt each other and correct each other in their enthusiasm to tell the story.

The two trips to Italy they have made at the invitation of the Gilera family are clearly the highlights of recent years and the enthusiasm of the local Italians in the Gilera factory town of Arcore and the warmth of the reception they receive there has obviously made a deep impression on them. On the last visit it poured with rain during the

Monza run, but to the delight and amazement of the Italians Dennis and Christine still rode round the circuit. "There was no point in going all that way and not riding," said Dennis.

The beautiful Gilera, however, is not the only string to the Etheridge bow: the Gilera is their 'Vintage' ride (Vintage is the pre-1958 class), but they also have a Norton Commando powered kneeler in the 'Classic' class (for pre-1972 machinery) and it is this bike which to my mind looks the more difficult ride: you ride on the seat of the Gilera, but with the kneeler... well you obviously kneel and that means knees are crucial to the operation. And speaking of knees – two or three years ago the couple had a crash at Oulton Park on the last lap of a race when they hit the oil of a chap in front. They were both thrown off with Christine somersaulting through the air before landing on her knees, while poor old Dennis broke both wrists, although this rather obvious fact seemed to escape the notice of the local medics! Despite the landing Christine appeared to be OK and

she had to drive the van and trailer back home to Kent. As a result of the accident, and after seeing several doctors, it was thought that Christine needed an operation on her knees. She was frightened to do this because she knew it would limit her movement and racing sidecar passengers need a couple of goodish knees. They spend most of their time on them, after all. She had kept her sidecarring activity secret from the doctors but eventually had to admit to one of them what she did and he said that she was right – no knee operation. The knees are OK now.

Despite all this amazing Gilera sidecar stuff the icing on the hamburger is this: Christine, when she's not dangling over the edge of a speeding sidecar, has been threader of the Queen's pearls. Yes, that's right, she regularly re-threaded the Queen's pearls. Now admit it, you thought that anyone could string pearls didn't you? It's just a question of poking a bit of fuse wire through the holes one after the other, surely? Oh no. Oh definitely NO. It's a highly skilled job and not to be trusted to the untrained. I know that this is a bit of a non-biking diversion but bear with me, it's a diversion worth taking. How on earth did Christine come to be stringing the fab pearls that adorned the regal neck?

Well, it happened like this, and this story gets ever more bizarre: Christine is a good singer and, indeed, has been classically trained, but her singing career started quite by chance at the Lewisham Hippodrome when she was six years old (the very time when the Etheridge Saturno was coincidentally being born in Italy) and she volunteered to go on the stage to sing with Tommy Trinder (if you haven't heard of him he was a sort of 1940s/50s equivalent of Michael McIntyre). She was subsequently trained by a man who had played the piano regularly with Queen Victoria, no less, and eventually she went on to study at the Blackheath Conservatoire of Music and Arts, where other notable alumni have included Jools Holland,

Kate Bush, the classical composer Harold Farjeon, and the conductor and arranger, Sidney Torch. But, sadly, she was told by an agent in the early 1960s that as she didn't sound like Lulu or Cilla Black she could forget singing as a career. What to do? Well, as she always liked fiddling about with watches and clocks she wrote to Garrards, the Royal jewellers, to see if they would take her on and train her as a watchmaker. They wouldn't. They said that they would spend seven years training her and then she would get married and have babies and leave. However, they said that she could go to work in the pearl room, and this she did. So, this lady that we now see hanging out of a racing sidecar eventually became stringer of pearls to the Queen and is a classically trained singer to boot. Do you suppose Her Maj knows that the fingers which once made sure that her pearls hung 'just so' were the same fingers which today are clinging to a racing sidecar as it hurtles round Europe at the weekends?

Sadly, at about the time I was talking to them they were just deciding to sell

the Norton kneeler, (it must be the knees) but they will continue to race the Gilera and it is clear that this is a very special bike that they will never be parted from. Their attachment to it and deep affection for it are palpable, and who can wonder at that. It is a beautiful machine. It is one of those bikes that simply looks right, and bikes that 'look right' have that effect on people. This Gilera is part of the Etheridge family. I obviously still look at it with the eyes of a 15 year old and seeing that magic name on the tank brings back fantastic memories of the sounds of the legendary fully streamlined Gilera fours which filled my teen years. It's clear that in the care of the Etheridges the Saturno could, and probably will go on for ever, but what about Dennis and Christine themselves? Are the racing Etheridges close to retiring? Apparently not and another season of racing and demonstrations and parades is planned covering Europe and England. They will be racing in Belgium and elsewhere in Europe and they will be on parade at Brands Hatch too. They will be at The Kent County Show in July and will be on the New Imperial at Chatham



Dennis riding a rigid Ariel in a trial recently

Dockyard on the 16th and 17th of Sept. In the meantime Dennis will be going up to Canada Heights every Monday, as he has done for years, to help maintain that wonderful and historic trials and scrambles venue, and Christine will continue to thread pearls and to give talks on the Queen's pearls, and no doubt she'll continue to drive Dennis home when he carelessly breaks his wrists. The Saturno just waits to be ridden...

NF

*The Belgian TT is held at Gedinne



Monza Dry and Monza wet



FOR THE RIDE

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GO WEST YOUNG MAN

In which Andy Harbour, prompted by a trip to France, actually goes to Ireland!

Three years ago we took a leap of faith and signed up for a day trip to France organised by Ian Burchell. It was the first trip out of our comfort zone and we, my wife Angie and I, loved it. The travel bug bit, but where should we go next? After many discussions we decided that Ireland was to be our first trip as we had often joked that we would visit Angie's brother in Dublin on the bike. Fast forward to 2016 and Angie spent many evenings organising the trip using Tesco vouchers for the ferry, and red-letter-day coupons and buyagift vouchers for two of the hotels. The trip came together, and she even managed to lose two and half stone in the process!

Saturday the 8th October was the big day and I had asked Angie to pack light. My Pan European does have some storage space but not enough for her idea of "light" apparently, and she managed to sneak hair-straighteners into her box. And so, replete with hair-straighteners, at half past one on the 8th, we set off.

Most people we had spoken to about our forthcoming trip commented on the weather, specifically mentioning the rain in Ireland, but we only got as far as the M25 before we ran into the rain. English rain. Lots of it. First stop Clacket services to don waterproofs. Then, later, stopping at Warwick services to remove waterproofs, a dear old lady stopped and spoke to us. She was a regular pillion on her husband's ZZR 1100, she said. Bikes are such a great way to meet people and open conversations. I just hope I'm still riding when I get to her age. We left Warwick travelling on several motorways – M40, M42, M6 and M56, if you are interested – before we reached our first stop for the night at the Village Hotel in Ewloe Chester, arriving all very bright and KAMG high-viz right in the middle of a wedding party.

Next morning there was no rain and no wedding as we set off along the A55 through North Wales amid beautiful scenery, and it wasn't long before we arrived at Holyhead where, waiting for the ferry, we were joined by lots of other bikes including, coincidentally, a Kawasaki ZZR 1100, this one with a sidecar and a trailer. Then just two hours later we were in Dublin. After a cursory security check by the garda,

"What nationality?"

"English."

"On you go," and we were in Ireland!

After a toll fee of €3 it was up the motorway to Angie's brother's house in Donabate. Donabate is a small coastal

town about 12 miles north east of Dublin where, after the family thing, we headed to our overnight stop, the Waterside House Hotel. How relaxing it was with the bedroom window facing the Irish Sea so that we could hear the water lapping the shore all night. However, earlier in the day there had been a water main burst which resulted in the whole of Donabate having no water and meant a cold shower for us that night as the water had not had time to heat up after the repairs. Monday morning and we left the hotel under heavy clouds, but still none of the expected rain. The ride up to Belfast was straightforward and we headed for the Titanic Museum, which is well worth a visit if you are ever in this city. By now the skies had cleared and the temperature was rising and so, after the museum, we decided to visit the famous Crown Bar. This magnificent Victorian building is the oldest pub in Belfast and was damaged by bomb blasts several times in the course of Northern Ireland's turbulent history, but it is now fully restored and is owned by the National Trust. After The Crown, it was only a short distance to the Falls Road to look at the striking murals painted during the infamous 'Troubles'.



New Forge House

That night we stayed at Newforge House in Magheralin, a small village just south west of Belfast, and this was undoubtedly the 'red-letter-day' stay of the whole trip. Newforge House was lovely and felt a bit like Downton Abbey. We were welcomed with a coffee and homemade shortbread and were told that John, the owner, and a chef, was cooking that night. The food was heavenly and locally sourced. Our room had a roll-top bath with, yes, hot water, and luxurious toiletries from The White Company.

The next day, day four, it was cloudy, but still no rain as we retraced our steps and headed back into Belfast and then on to Larne, to pick up the Causeway Coastal Route. This

Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge



The Giants Causeway. These are not sham rocks, they're real and they're 60 million years old!

road, known as "one of the world's great road journeys," is 195 miles long and it is breathtaking, starting in Belfast and finishing in Londonderry.* Even Angie didn't moan much as the lean angle matched the smiles on our faces. The views are fantastic. You simply must not miss this if you are over there. We made our way round the coast stopping at the rope bridge which connects the mainland with the island of Carrick-a-Rede. This amazing bridge is definitely not for the faint-hearted, but for we fearless bikers it was no problem. We then continued on to the Giant's Causeway. How could we not stop at this famous spot? The regular basalt stones that look man made, were actually formed by volcanic eruptions an unbelievable 60 million years ago. And from there it was just a short trip to our stop for the night at The Inn On The Coast in Portrush.

Next morning the sun was shining as we headed inland a little way to Bushmills to visit the famous whiskey distillery. Alas we had to forfeit the tasting at the end but did get a T shirt, it doesn't taste much like whiskey though. From Bushmills we travelled along the coast road to our next destination, Londonderry, or, as the road signs say, Derry. All the signs had the London part painted out. Our ride to Londonderry took us over the starting grid of the NW200 at a more sedate pace and after parking the bike in the town, we headed for sight-seeing starting at the Peace Bridge, then on to the Walled City, followed by the Free Derry wall and the Bloody Sunday monument.



Titanic Museum



Bushmills Distillery



Peace Bridge Londonderry

We left the city and dialled in a curvy route for our next overnight stay in Fivemiletown. The views of the Sperrin Mountains on our way were stunning, but the roads were at times a little bit challenging; some were just dirt tracks. Our route took us through Omagh past a large glass monument in memory of the 29 people who lost their lives in the IRA car bomb there in 1998. The Valley Hotel was our last hotel stay of the trip and was the only place that offered a secure place to put the bike. We couldn't find out if the town was dodgy or they were just being nice. It was a shame that the room they selected for us was over the kitchen extractors and our window latch was broken.

With the last day of hotel-staying finished, we packed up and headed back to southern Ireland again. The sky looked a bit angry and we thought, "Oh well we've had a good run." We were only five minutes into the journey when we could see in the distance that the road was blocked with lots of cows, and while we were stopped waiting for the road to clear Angie was taking photos when four cows turned to face us, and then started to take a few steps toward us. "S***! I hope they don't charge," and thank God they didn't. The farmer soon had order restored and we were on our way back to Dublin via the Wicklow mountains following the road up into the clouds and eventually when the cloud broke there were countless

*For details of The Causeway Coastal Route go to:

www.ireland.com/en-gb/itineraries/northern-ireland/ccr-itinerary/?gclid=CKH3yt3iktICFe287QodCY0Kng&gclid=aw.ds

stops to take in the views, and the sheep. However, it was a little chilly and eventually we decided to make our way back down and return to Donabate via Dublin. We spent our last night in Ireland with Angie's brother and left for the port before dawn. We'd just got on to the motorway when the heavens opened. Was Dublin crying because we were leaving? No it was just reminding us how lucky we had been with the weather during the week. A €10 TOLL FEE, robbing b-----, and we were back in the port where a larger than life Irishman by the name of Pat (of course) steered us to our parking bay.... eventually. That man could sure talk. Getting on to the ferry was a bit daunting with the metal ramp and lots of rain, but two hours later we were back in Wales riding through Snowdonia, and stopping at Betws-y-Coed for a coffee, cake and leg stretch. Then it was the A5 – and the spotting of a bird of prey sitting on a lamp post – followed by the M54, M6, M1 until finally the M25 became the M2 and we returned home 1260 miles after having left it.

The big question is: will we do it again? Hell yes. Angie is already looking at Cork and the southern half of Ireland, this time crossing from Pembroke to Rosslare, although we might change the way we get there – not so many motorways next time.

TOUR DE FRANCE AND A BIT OF SPAIN

In which Les Smith gets a Yellow Jersey and rides in Triumph round the Triomphe

We all know about great motorcycle adventures across the globe, and we've all seen numerous pictures of the lucky buggers who take-off leaving the stressful world behind them, with their super-sized, mile-eating bikes loaded up with enough kit to survive the apocalypse. Free spirits all of them, in their designer, adventure gear, charging across some spectacular Bolivian landscape. And I'm sure we've all read with envy and admiration about the lad on the postie bike who rode from Australia to the UK. (A nice lad, by the way; met him at the NEC this year.) Well, I haven't the wherewithal to do one of those huge world-busting trips, not yet anyway. I'm just a normal biker. Perhaps I lack the drive to chuck everyday life on to the back burner and simply take off, who knows? I am, however, insanely jealous of those who travel the world and I do daydream about doing my own mega-trip from time to time, but, like most people, I just steal the odd trip when I can, and this was to be one of those trips. So, the 1st of September last year saw me picking up my new Tiger 800 XCx from Laguna Motorcycles. The trip had been planned for some time but the new bike was a bit of a last minute thing and I had left it a bit late to prep it before setting off – just three days to be precise. Running-in was a one day affair, Thursday, amounting to a 520 mile return trip to the New Forest and beyond. Which meant that the first service could be completed the next day, Friday.

With the first service at Laguna all sorted, including the fitting of a very nice 'Akropovic' pipe, some grippy, rally foot-pegs and Triumph's own heated grips, it was getting there. I then fitted the bark-busters and a top box from my previous bike. On Saturday I cracked on with fitting some more bits of kit from the old bike: I like to be stood upright on the pegs when riding off-road and nearly all standard bars on bikes are too low for me so I fitted my Rox risers, and I also sorted my SW-MOTECH tank bag system. This makes stuff like snacks, water and camera, easily accessible when on the go.

Next morning, Sunday, at the crack of dawn, I was ready for the off. My aim was to have my own little Tour de France (TDF); visiting famous TDF landmarks with a few days trail-riding in the Spanish Pyrenees thrown in for good measure.

The new bike just added to the anticipation of the journey ahead. But why a Triumph Tiger 800 XCx? It is a departure from my norm as I've been a bit of a KTM fan for the last ten years, having had a 990 Adventure followed by the superfast 1190 Adventure R. The Triumph Tiger 800 XCx is, then, a bit of a change, but before orange fans scoff read on.

The 800 triple engine and gearbox are just brilliant; a real surprise, and a nice surprise, to be honest. I'd ridden the Tiger 800 on the road a few times before getting my own and I'd liked it, but these had been short jaunts and although I had a good idea of what it would be like you never quite know till you've spent a few hours or days in the saddle. With the 800 triple motor being so smooth and the gearbox so slick I can say it is just a pleasure to ride and, indeed, it proved to be super smooth during every hour of the trip. It was plenty quick enough as well as being comfortable and reliable too. I know it was new so it should have been reliable, but to cover 2870 miles in 10 days straight from the crate without even the slightest hitch is not a bad advertisement for any machine.

My trip actually started on Sunday morning with a wet ride to the ferry and a crossing from Portsmouth to Caen. A lovely five hours of snoozing and relaxing on a mini-cruise started the day off really well. Once landed in France the

sun came out and I was really up for a 300 mile stint of northern French roads before tea-time. Don't forget though, that the bike had still only done about 650 miles at this stage and I needed to treat it gently. I had planned to camp throughout the trip in order to keep the cost down but this plan didn't last long. In fact, it only survived until I got to the first stop where a room was available in the hostel. Room or tent pitching? No contest really. After a few beers with a bunch of lads from Ireland, who were off to Portugal, I certainly didn't struggle to nod off. Sunday had gone like clockwork and Monday looked to be ready for the taking too. The weather was beautiful, I had a full tank of gas – and, yes, I was wearing sunglasses – and I hit it. Part of my plan was to meet up with mates in the Spanish Pyrenees for a little trail riding on days three and four and my 350 mile route would take me from Bussière-



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This was a place of torture where a group of men was massacred and burned by the Nazis.

Poitevine, south east of Poitiers, to just outside Tresp in the Spanish Pyrenees, without a single motorway or major road planned. My only deviation was to visit the WW2 heritage centre at Oradour-sur-Glane. <http://www.oradour.info/>

I'd heard stories about this tragic village where, in 1944, the Nazis killed 642 men, women and children. Today it is just as they left it and although not exactly a 'jolly' place to visit, I felt I couldn't pass by without paying my respects. It was a truly thought provoking visit. I left soberly pondering how man following even the most extreme ideology, could do this to other men. It beggars belief, and yet similar acts are still occurring.



Grub by the roadside...

After leaving Oradour I was on my way south, and the N21 seemed to be my Garmin's best mate. As a result I spent a few sun-soaked hours on this road during the afternoon. Like I said, not a motorway or dual carriageway in sight. My lunch stop was a lovely quiet rest area by the roadside in the middle of some beautiful sunny countryside and grub was courtesy of a small boulangerie and a fruit stall in a village whose name I don't recall. It was near Bergerac if I remember. Underway again it was more of the same all the way to Spain, a few towns broke the journey but that didn't spoil the ride, I was loving the biker-friendly atmosphere that seems to be everywhere in France, I even had my photo taken by those nice automatic cameras, but I've not seen the picture yet, thankfully. Arriving at the border with Spain much later than I had planned, I knew I was going to be pitching the tent in the dark when I arrived, but I didn't

mind. Once in the Pyrenees proper I hit the N260 for the last hour of riding, and this compensated for the dark tent pitch. Even in the dark this road was a real hoot to ride, bend after bend after bend; mind you, not having cats' eyes certainly kept my bend assessment skills working hard. It had been a great day's ride and although late, tired and desperate for a beer, I was buzzing, and the Tiger was doing bloody well too, although I was a bit apprehensive about taking it off-road next day without any practice.

I needn't have worried. It worked really well. The WP suspension is really very good, it's not as adjustable as similar looking components on KTM models, but even though the suspension is perhaps a lower spec version, Triumph's techno people have got it set up nicely for this bike. It worked well at a steady moderate pace on the open flowing trails and the shock was supple enough to allow the bike to flow over a variety of different terrain. Faster progress would need some adjustments to stiffen it up a little though, and I felt I couldn't really push as hard as the other riders on their 690s. However, they had arrived in the Pyrenees by van, and the 690 is a different kind of bike. Nobody would want to do three to four hundred road miles in a day on a standard KTM 690 Enduro R; it would not end comfortably.

Right, so here I am with a bike that is only five days old, it's a new day, new country, no off-road practice and I'm in the Pyrenees with six other riders: three on 690 KTMs, one on a KTM 450 EXC, one on a Gas Gas EC-250 and an ex-pat on a mid-nineteen-eighties Honda XLR 600. No pressure then. The morning's ride went really well and the trails were great. The beauty about trails in the northern Pyrenees area is that most of them are completely open to all traffic and are actually used as roads. UK Rights Of Way Officers please take note. The trails were mainly gravel mountain tracks although one was a little rocky and uneven, and we happened across the odd cattle grid too. The variation in surface all made for a good off-road introduction for me and the Tiger, but by the afternoon the heat had become tremendous, 38°C in the shade, and I was absolutely trailed out. After tapas and a cold drink I took off on my own along the N260 for a bit of a blat. Did I mention how good this road is? The roads have habit of surprising too.... you never know who you might meet, and lo and behold, just off

the N260, after having turned towards Andorra, I spotted a very fetching set of red overalls coming in the opposite direction riding a Honda CRF 250, we waved and nodded at each other as is the way in these parts – cheers Austin. But Andorra's famed shopping area, when I got there, was a big disappointment: it was busy, noisy and expensive. All this talk of bargain bike kit. Phwa! Decent kit is cheaper in the UK, trust me.

Like I said, most of the roads are pretty good in this part of the world and the route back to the camp site was a gem – the N260 again. If you want to perfect your bend assessment and acceleration sense these Pyrenean roads are just the place. The Tiger XCx is not "rip ya arms out" super-fast by any means, but on these tight twisty roads it was plenty fast enough, the triple engine together with tuned pipe were singing such a sweet song together it made for a great riding experience. Back at camp the others were already there and talking about the next day's trails. I was looking forward to them. Morning broke with another sunny, 35 degree day, and after a basic breakfast we were "off-road" on a new trail that none of us had ridden before and it turned out to be a surprise. During the previous evening's dinner, the team leader had spotted it on the map. It was a cracker and it was where I found the limitations of the Tiger's rider modes, especially the traction control. To be fair I hadn't played with the options much so had to learn as best I could on the job. The problem was that the track was strewn with loose boulders, some of which were microwave oven size and the Tiger and I were in danger of taking a lie-down at any moment as I struggled with the off-road mode setting and its desire to cut the



The Pyrenees...

engine. I had fitted the rally foot pegs and bar-risers for a little more control and when I stood on the pegs, which helped, the bike steered very well, but I reached a point on one climb when I came to a stop and it was hell trying to get any traction or forward momentum. With the traction control off it was a little better, but a combination of a lack of grip (Heidenau K60s if your curious,) and a desire not to bend my new bike, meant that I ducked the rest of the climb. A few hairy moments on the rocks, which were flying everywhere, mainly from the rear wheels of the 690 KTMs, and I turned the Tiger around and gingerly rode back down over the microwaves to the start of the trail, and rode off to meet the guys at the other end.

One other thing that bothered me during this little jaunt was the Tiger's bash plate. As a protective bit of kit it's just not robust enough for my liking, partly because of the way the engine and the frame hold onto each other but also

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the way the bash plate bolts on to the engine's sump plate. I must admit I was concerned that a severe whack in the wrong place could take out the sump-plate mounting bolts, which I reckon would probably be the end of my trip. The bash plate doesn't actually cover the oil filter either, the filter sits on the front face of the engine and is completely exposed to rocks and debris. For serious off-road stuff on a Tiger 800 I would look for a more substantial bash plate. The gear and rear brake levers could also do with folding end sections so that they have the ability to fold-up on impact making them less likely to snap off on contact with rocks or the ground. However, I did fit a brake snake. I had fitted aluminium bark-busters to the handlebars to

were the café speciality; huge lumps of meat cooked on a griddle just outside the back door of the kitchen, so tender, some of the best beef I had ever tried, just gorgeous. Other than the thick fog at the top of the pass the visit was a real success. Refuelled I set off back down the mountain as the fog got worse initially but it only lasted for the first few miles of the descent and then it was sun and great riding roads all the way to Carcassonne.

I had a lovely stay in Carcassonne with friends and I now have proper man-cave envy. BIG thanks to Steve and Cathy for the hospitality. Real stars who made me feel very welcome. I guiltily left early the next day, after a traditional croissant brekkie, and pressed on towards the Verdon and Ardèche Gorge area. I skirted north around Montpellier and picked my way across southern France on 'D' roads. The D130 at Navacelles was a real treat as was a good chunk of the D999 heading towards the Ardèche gorges at Vallon-Pont-d'Arc. Arrived late ... again. Pitched tent in the dark, by headlight ... again, but got a good night's sleep. Next day a decent breakfast got me off to an early start and another cracking day's ride along the D290, the Route des Gorges de l'Ardèche. A scenic, fast and super twisty road, the only problem was stopping every few miles for a photo or two, and hats off to the young couple I met riding bicycles who were on tour making for Mont Ventoux. My destination was Lake Annecy, and I had a lovely route planned on mainly 'D' roads and I was really looking forward to a coffee on top of Alpe d'Huez too. A few diversions due to a closed road introduced me to some fantastic bonus scenery, the plan had been to cross into the Alps along the D531, but a closure due to rock falls put me on a wonderful climb on the single track D292 where I saw some terrific bits of France that I wouldn't have seen otherwise. There really is something satisfying when riding mountain roads on a motorcycle on your own: pace, route and time... all your own, I just love it. So eventually I made it to the famous Alpe d'Huez and had a lovely coffee stop. At the cycle shop next to the café I bought a t shirt too, a 2014 Yellow Tour

de France replica. 2014 was the year the Tour started in Yorkshire. The shirt has the Yorkshire rose on the front of it and so, as a Yorkshireman, I couldn't resist. And guess what? After the multiple hairpin dream roads of Alpe d'Huez and the Col de la Madeleine I was late getting to Lake Annecy and pitched in the dark again. There's a bit of a pattern here I think.

The Triumph is just a great travel bike, I can say without reservation it was just the job for this type of trip. The Tiger's 90 plus BHP is not massive by today's standards but, to be honest, it's enough. I had been revving her harder in the Alps due to the gradients, or it might have been due to the bike being loaded with luggage, but it was run in now and I was probably just starting to enjoy the free-revving motor and the silky smooth gearbox more. The Tiger reminds me of its sibling, the 675, it's like a sports bike in the sense that it's placid and docile while taking in the sights, then it comes alive with revs when ridden hard. I think we have become complacent about engine power anyway; when some sports bikes deliver 200 horses or more, we lose sight of the fact that, in reality, 90 to 100bhp is fine for a tourer. The Tiger 800 is just 'revvy-triple' fun on the twisty hairpin-strewn alpine roads, and with its improved electronics and fly-by-wire throttle the bike is also very easy to use. I did detect a slight disconnect between throttle action and engine response now and again, but it's so good overall, and so controllable, progress was effortless. The 800 lump might have been a little overwhelmed in this mountain pass environment if I'd been two up with full luggage, I don't know; certainly with rider only, plus a bag and a tent, the XCx works great as an adventure style travel bike.

Next day from Annecy I made good time. Good weather, empty French country roads and smooth comfy Tiger meant fast progress along some beautiful riding roads. I was soon in the Morvan National Park area, on the D10, and I stopped for lunch in Vincelles where I was treated to a superb omelette. I knew I was going to be really early at the next camp site – seven days in and finally on time, early even. As with all plans, having 'no plan' is the best plan so I took advantage of the spare time and set the Garmin for Paris. Why not? A run round Paris was not on the list but the weather was nice and the bike was singing and I was only an hour or so from the centre of Paris so it had to be done really. I'd not ridden a motorcycle around Paris since I escorted a cycle race from there to London in 2004 and I really fancied a blat round the Arc de Triomphe on a Triumph. Cutting a long story short, I made for Paris and landed there at rush hour, and I loved it. I stopped for the obligatory photo on the Champs, "Another British (Tour) Triumph on the Champs- Elysees" and a pavement café coffee went down well too. A Tour de France has to end there, right?

Trips like this are just the best tonic for life and have become a great biking adventure treat over the last few years for me. I've really enjoyed a number of trips like this and I would thoroughly recommend it to any biker, and if



The D48 near Rogues en route from The Pyrenees to The Alps

you want to know, yes the Tiger was a great companion. A lot of bikes are good for this sort of trip, you don't need an adventure style ride, any bike can do it, but on this trip the Tiger 800 XCx was superb for what I wanted. Trail ride enhancements and tinkering aside I can only sing the praises of this cracking adventure bike. If you have a yearning for a French tour or an even a longer Europe-wide jaunt just get the crossing booked and do it. It could be just a weekend around Northern France or Belgium. Whatever you are thinking of doing, get on with it. Memories are better than dreams.

Top-Tip: get to the camp sites before dark.



Two famous passes on the 'Route des Cols'.

protect the levers in the event of a spill too, as the standard Triumph things are no more than efficient wind deflectors.

The afternoon's trails I knew would also be very rocky, so instead I took myself off to look for a small fort at the top of a mountain pass. On my way I met some very angry farm dogs, which was nice, and I met them again on the way back too. A little run back to camp via the Coll de Nargó finished the day off very well. I had not planned anything in detail for the next day so once back at the site I decided that although I could have stayed for more trails I would leave in the morning and make for the 'Route des Cols' (http://www.lespyrenees.net/route_des_cols) and the Tour de France climbs in the Pyrenees. It had been a great two days with the boys in the hills and I had had a good ride or two, but the big Pyrenean passes, and Carcassonne, the Ardèche, Provence and the French Alps were calling. I decided that the Col d'Aspin and the Col du Tourmalet were my achievable targets for the day; I'd just ride these two climbs, have a bit of lunch and then head for Carcassonne to stay the night with friends. The weather in Spain was still thirty in the shade, but as I emerged from a tunnel over the border in France it was bloody raining. I rode the two climbs at a steady pace and had lunch on top of the Tourmalet consisting of a huge pot of beef stew and, in addition, the chef brought out some steak for me to sample. These steaks



Off the beaten track in the Pyrenees



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TO HAVE AN MT10 OR NOT, THAT IS THE QUESTION



It's not quite Shakespeare, but to Paul Aspinall it was the only question, and the answer was never in doubt.

When the Yamaha MT 10 hit our shores in 2016, a media frenzy ensued with just about every magazine and social platform giving it a review, and they were all very positive reviews at that. This bike topped the charts in 2016. So where does it sit in 2017?

What is the MT 10? In effect it's a naked detuned R1 with the cross-plane crank. It's an alternative to a full blown sports bike. It's a new super naked powerhouse with the promise of having a heart-pumping grin factored into every turn of its wheels. These bikes are known as beasts on the highway and owners are naming their bikes after mystical action heroes.

After my first test ride back in 2016 I thought it was a great bike. It had an upright, slightly leaning forward look. It had lots of power and it was, I thought, a sweet looking bike, but the looks make it very much a Marmite bike: you will love or hate the look. After a short ride, I said that it was a great bike, but I simply dismissed it as 'a one night stand'. However, my next outing with it was a Fire Bike day at Brands, and very quickly I started to critique it with more confidence and equally quickly the bike started to show me its own unique characteristics: its rideability, comfort, agility and its performance. The mirrors were not my favourite things, but that's mainly due to the width of my shoulders. I fill the mirrors with my arms. And the lock to lock is small too, but you get accustomed to this. Minor moans. The point is that every time I

got on the bike it made me smile, and I continually wanted to ride it. Was this the start of a love affair?

Fast forward to 2017 and the top of the range, updated, MT10 SP was coming to A2 Motorcycles, in Gravesend, and when they took delivery they quickly prepped it to get it on the road so that I could get some miles on the clock and get the tyres scrubbed in prior to the bike going on their demo fleet. First impressions were good: the cool looking colours of the bike with its metallic black tank, pops and sparkles in the sunlight and complements the blue flashing and the surrounding silver trim. The rear swing arm adds to that polished look too. The dash display bursts into life and the coloured screen is easy on the eye. The SP has electronic semi-active Öhlins suspension which constantly measures the damping and rebound, and makes micro adjustments continually throughout the ride, and the quick shifter is another great feature that raises this bike to a whole new level.

In my opinion this bike is the next best thing to an R1M, but if you are anything like me you won't fit on the R1M. The MT10 fits me very well, however, and I like the sitting up position, added to which the MT 10 has a better power delivery for the road than the R1M. I also like the aggressive look of the MT10, but as always it will come down to personal preference.

The engine growl from the cross-plane crank R1M engine has been re-tuned to meet the demands of daily road life. There is a liquid smooth gear

change and the power delivery gives this bike the biggest grin factor you could ever experience. Now that the MT10 has a quick shifter as standard for 2017 and a touring version with luggage, hand guards, screen and a Tom Tom satnav mount, will it make a tourer? You will face pretty frequent fill-ups as its estimated range is only 100 to 120 miles, but if you are a sports bike rider this is typically the norm.

The question is: do you go for the SP model at £13,300, the standard MT 10 at £10,700 or the touring version for around £11,660?

For the kudos I would have the SP, but would I really put the electronic suspension to full use? I doubt it. Touring model? Well, not really, I have an FJR for that, so it will be the blue standard MT10 for me and I'll make it my own by adding options over time.

So, I do have to make a little confession, what started as a 'one night stand' turned in to reality when the very good lady in my life gave me the green light and we now have a new family member – "The Mighty Titan". A new soul mate? Well let's just wait and see, but I feel like the king of the castle riding it, it's simply an awesome bike which will bring a grin to my face every time I lift my leg over it.



ROAD RAGE III

The KCC actually fills one pothole and then denies liability, but IAM RoadSmart gives us hope...

Since writing the piece in the last Riders magazine entitled "Road Rage II", about the potholes in Kent's roads, I have discovered that more riders than you might think have potholing tales to tell: for example, my recent RoSPA examiner has buckled a wheel in a Kent pothole and so has KAMG Chairman, Ian Burchell, and, ironically, only a couple of days after we had sent the last magazine to press I too crunched into a crater just outside Rolvenden. This crunch was so violent that one hand came off the bars, both mirrors swung round and my topbox actually broke loose and crashed on to the road! I have subsequently found that my front wheel was buckled in the incident too. The top box was a proper BMW box designed to fit the bike; it was empty and therefore not overloaded, and it has been touring all over Europe and the UK, often well loaded, and it's never before shown any sign of becoming dislodged.

Fortunately, no one was following me otherwise a relatively minor incident could have become a serious accident; if a bike had been following, it could easily have been a fatal accident. And it was all caused by an old – I emphasise 'old' – unrepaired pothole. A pothole which had already been reported yonks before. Of course I phoned the KCC and within a day the pothole was repaired, but here's the towering bloody stupidity of the way in which they work: they sent blokes out to repair "my" pothole and completely ignored another one a few feet away. Another one which, incidentally, is also on their reported list! What a stupid misuse and waste of their already pathetically small roads budget. I made a claim for my top box against the KCC who after seven weeks sent a reply which, in effect, said, "get stuffed." The position is, it seems, that the Highways Act 1980 pretty well allows the KCC to let its roads deteriorate into a dangerous state without being considered in any way negligent provided that they, the KCC, can show that the road has been inspected recently and deemed to be OK for a bit. I wonder what would have happened if there had been a fatal accident as a result of my top box being shaken adrift?

In the hope that the IAM might act as our voice (see Feb Riders Editorial) in drawing attention to the dangerous state

of the roads, by acting as the influential nucleus around which we tiny insignificant beings could cluster and get our voices heard, I wrote to Sarah Sillars, the IAM's Chief Executive, and I enclosed a copy of the relevant edition of *Riders*, (copy of the letter on facing page) and I had a response from Neil Greig, the IAM's Director of Policy and Research. We had a telephone conversation and he agreed with my point, I think, that no one is speaking up for the roads and, indeed, that the IAM could perhaps become involved. I'm keeping my fingers crossed about this, but Neil Greig did acknowledge the possibility of "... a campaign based on calling for (video) footage from our many active members." On its website the IAM highlights the fact that it has influence with the Government, which is what we want, and that it also "gives evidence to various governmental bodies". The IAM even has a published policy entitled "Safer Road Design for Motorcycles" in which these words appear: "...the will is not yet there to ensure that the special risks that bikers face are designed out of our road system." I hope that the IAM does decide to back up its own words with some noise and some publicity otherwise they will remain just nice, but unheard, words. Ever the optimist, my impression is, however, that by writing and sending the *Riders* magazine articles we have created some acknowledgement that something needs to be done. The state of the roads is something which does affect us, as motorcyclists, more than any other road users and we do have a legitimate claim for some representation on this pretty serious matter.

If no one tries to do something about our deteriorating third world roads we shall continue to hear things like the following story from someone I was talking to over coffee in Coopers the other day: this poor chap had hit an East Sussex pothole which had actually thrown him from his bike; he'd broken his arm and a couple of ribs and damaged his bike to the tune of £2000. Now think about that and consider this – the next time you might not just be *hearing* about such an incident second-hand; next time you might be experiencing it first-hand. *You* could be the next incident, and having all the 'Masters' qualifications in the world won't save you.

NF

REMEMBER Report potholes and other road 'faults' to www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem

Sarah Sillars
CEO IAM RoadSmart
1 Albany Place
Hyde Way
Welwyn Garden City
AL7 3BT

March 31st 2017

Dear Ms Sillars,
I am writing to you and enclosing the latest copy of our club magazine, *Riders*, because, as you will see from my Editorial on page four, I am rather critical of IAM Roadsmart.

It has for a long time puzzled me why the IAM as an organisation dedicated to safety on the roads, should ignore the roads themselves and the people who are responsible for maintaining them. The point that I make in my editorial is that as individuals or even as members of a club we have no access to those in government, local or national, who are responsible for the deplorable and dangerous condition of our roads, and therefore we have no ability to influence them. We need the IAM to be our mouthpiece, yet, at the moment, there is no sign that it is likely to fulfil that function.

On page 12 of the magazine is the report of an interview I had with the Senior Highways Manager at Kent County Council and depressing reading it makes. There can be no doubt that our roads are going to deteriorate further and one of the reasons that this will certainly happen is because there is no one challenging the 'road maintainers', wherever and whoever they are, to do anything about stopping it. It is in my view a role which IAM RoadSmart could and should fill.

As motorcyclists we are particularly vulnerable to the poor condition of the roads and I think you would be surprised at the number of motorcyclists who have experienced near accidents, actual accidents and/or damage to their bikes as a result of hitting a pothole or some other unrepaired road hazard. No amount of training is going to change that. The road surface is out of our control. The condition of our roads is being ignored. IAM Roadsmart could begin to change that. I hope that you will.

Yours sincerely
Nicholas Farley

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KAMG'S INAUGURAL GRAND EAST ANGLIAN GOURMET TOUR

OR PERHAPS IT WAS A TRAINING WEEKEND!

Rosemary Bishop helps you decide.

Six observers and ten trainees met at Mickey's Diner on a bright sunny morning in March to take part in the inaugural KAMG Training Weekend. This was not just aimed at associates, it was for anyone in the club who wanted to benefit from the advice and support of our Observer Corps.

The weekend started with a briefing from Chief Observer, Colin Underwood, and from Steve Riches, on what to expect and how the weekend would be organised. There was also a mandatory Health and Safety briefing, and Matt Barnes was designated Health and Safety person for the weekend. He was also available in case of breakdowns and for other support needs. Tina Underwood was available as back-up support via phone from home in case of any other issues.

Having provided details of where our ICE cards were located, Matt took us

through our POWDER checks. After each observer had been assigned two trainees we set off on our first leg to Deli-mores Café in deepest Essex – well Ongar to be exact. The first leg was roughly 52 miles through mainly country roads with just a short stint on the M25. Each observer followed one trainee while the other trainee rode behind the observer as 'third man'. Being third man and following the observer and the other trainee provided nearly as much useful information and tips as being observed oneself. It also gave everyone an opportunity to put into practice things learnt on their own observed sessions. We topped up on coffee/tea/water and some cakes before heading off on the second leg of 32 miles to Sturmer Nurseries for lunch. For this leg the trainees swapped round so that the second trainee was observed whilst the first one put feedback into practice as third man. The weather was glorious and the morning was definitely a very pleasant country ride out.

After lunch we swapped Observers and set off on a 31 mile ride to Peacocks Tearoom in Ely, following the same format as the morning. As the day was so lovely we gave the tearooms a miss and sat by the river with an ice-cream chatting about the various observations and information we had received so far. Everyone appeared to be enjoying themselves and spirits were high. Our last leg of the day was 32 miles to the Premier Inn in Hampton near Peterborough where we were staying. The riding throughout the day was varied and great fun, the weather was fantastic and everyone involved, observers and trainees alike, were good company, and I think I can safely say that we all learnt something.

The evening was a pleasant catch-up over a beer or two before we sat down to dinner. There were 16 people, most ordering three courses so there was some delay especially as some people wouldn't stop talking long enough to put in their order (mentioning no names, John Lemon). Perhaps it would be a good idea to pre-order for such a large group in future. It was Dave Murphy's birthday so after stuffing ourselves at dinner we also had chocolate cake. We retired to bed pleasantly tired and fully fed.

The next morning we were given a refresher briefing and Steve and Colin checked that everyone was OK and that nothing needed "tweaking" for the second day. We once again changed observers and set off on a 42 mile ride to Woodview Farmshop



... intensive training

Café, unfortunately when we got there it was closed, but a couple of phone calls got us back on track to meet up at a local football club a little further down the road. Bacon butties were eventually enjoyed although they took an eternity to be prepared, but it was Mother's Day so they were busy. After that we headed

off again for our pre-lunch jaunt of 48 miles to Hopley's Café where we again encountered the Mother's Day food queues and so settled for just tea and cake. At this point we again swapped Observers and started our afternoon with a 40 mile route heading to the Hanging Gardens in Chelmsford where we arrived with

five minutes to spare before they were about to close, but they took pity on us, or maybe it was Steve's persuasive tone (*and appearance? Ed.*) and we refreshed ourselves with more tea. Our last leg home was 25 miles to Thurrock Services where we were to say goodbye to our compatriots.

The weekend was informative, companionable and great fun. It was well worth the cost and I cannot thank the Observers enough for giving their time and experience to help we trainees improve our riding. It was good to get to know other members of the Club that I hadn't met before, and, to reassure people, it was not scary or overly tiring. There was a great variety of roads and I would recommend anyone to do this should it be offered in the future.



training....



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The revised style IDCAM has been running for some months now. Attendees book in at 8.45am and have their documents and bikes checked over. A short classroom presentation about KAMG and Advanced Motorcycling commences at about 9.00am. An assessed ride follows with a short debrief before a coffee break. A classroom session about the System of Motorcycle Control takes us to lunch time. We also fit in a Highway Code quiz and the POWDDERSS check of a motorcycle, so it's quite a busy morning. After lunch, attendees go out for a second assessed ride with an Observer, finishing at a mutually agreed location.

If you would like to attend as an Associate contact Tim Johansen associates@kamg.org.uk Observers should confirm their willingness to help on Tracker and Tim will keep them informed as to our needs for the session.



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KENT ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS GROUP

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2016

	2016		2015	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
New membership fees	1,695		1,333	
Membership renewals	6,650		6,950	
Supporter fees	25		25	
Advertising	665		520	
Regalia and raffle ticket sales	1,974		1,160	
Gift Aid receipts	1,756		869	
BBQ, dance and club night sales	841		846	
IDCAM fees	-		-	
MCD	210		250	
Sundry income	588		579	
Interest	9		8	
		14,413		12,540
Expenses				
MCD expenses	42,869		75	
IDCAM classroom	541		453	
IDCAM observer exps	80		36	
Magazine	2,800		2,768	
Post & Stationery	1,605		2,032	
Equipment & website costs	1,369		405	
Observer training & exps	4,231		2,037	
Regalia and raffle	1,461		954	
Guest speaker costs	62		10	
BBQ	1,540		1,444	
Insurance	100		90	
Committee costs	1,208		100	
IAM Masters test fees	129		258	
Other	1,320		887	
		16,506		11,549
Surplus / (Deficit) for period		(2,093)		991
Surplus b/f		13,838		12,847
Surplus c/f		11,745		13,838

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2016

	2016		2015	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets				
Current assets				
Regalia at notional value	1,135		873	
Cash	150		100	
Bank Account	10,760		12,615	
Debtors	-		250	
	12,045		13,838	
Current liabilities				
Creditors	300		-	
	300		-	
Net current assets		11,745		13,838
Total Assets		11,745		13,838
ACCUMULATED FUND				
Balance b/f		13,838		12,847
Surplus / (deficit) of income over expenditure		(2,093)		991
Balance c/f		11,745		13,838

KAMG REGALIA

For reflective bibs both Observer and Green Badge holders, please see Regalia Manager at one of our club nights

BRANDED CLOTHING

Large range of KAMG branded clothing to order only, any colour and size.

Crew Neck T-shirts **£17**

Polo shirt **£17**

Sweatshirt **£20**

Ladies Polo Shirt **£17**

Fleeces half zip **£26**



MAINTENANCE AND ACCESSORIES

Muc-Off spray cleaner **£5.50**

WURTH Chain lube **£8**

Seal Awheel **£10**

Grip Lock **£44.95**

Approved Breathalyzer kits. **£5.50**



BOOKS

How to be a better rider **£10**

Highway Code **£2.50**

Know Your Traffic Signs **£4.99**

Road craft **£12**

IAM Sticker **£1**



MACHINE CONTROL DAY

Our machine control days are organised by Mick West. If you have not yet signed up then do it now. A MCD is the best value for money you can buy at **£10.00** (paid on the day).

0844 585 7783

mcd@kamg.org.uk

Held at: Car Park D, Ebbsfleet Station International Way Gravesend, Kent DA10 1EB

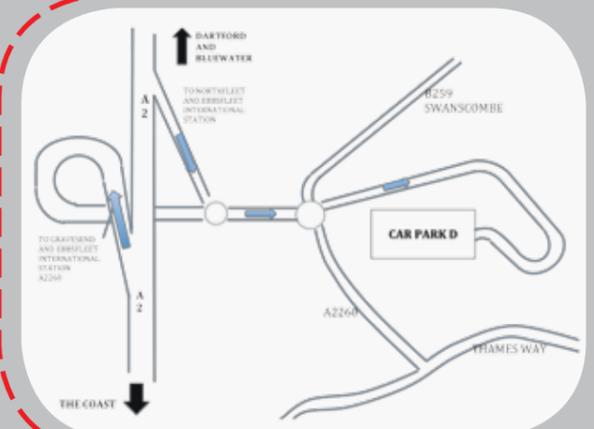
Arrival time: 08:45 for 09:00 start

Finish Time: approx 13:00 Hrs

Saturday, 24th June 2017

Saturday, 29th July 2017

Saturday, 30th September 2017



SOCIAL AND TRAINING RIDES - GUIDELINES

START from the OAKDENE Café layby with a FULL petrol tank and an EMPTY bladder!

There will be a green badge holder at the front and back of each group of 4 riders, who will depart at 2 minute intervals.

It is an opportunity to ride with others who have passed their IAM test and then socialise with club members at the finish point over a cup of tea or coffee and breakfast.

Rides start at 10.00am in December, January and February and at 09.00am for all other months

For the safety of participants, if the temperature at the start point drops below 3°C, the ride will be cancelled.

PLEASE CHECK THE KAMG WEBSITE OR TRACKER SYSTEM FOR THE ROUTES OF ALL FUTURE RIDES.

The up-to-date routes can be downloaded to your Sat Nav or printed out if you prefer. They will also be advertised in the RIDERS Extra E News published and sent out to all members monthly via Tracker.

ASSOCIATES NON GREEN BADGE HOLDERS

- Maintain highest riding standards at all times
- Read the road ahead, NOT the vehicle in front
- Always keep the rider behind in your mirrors
- Maintain your allocated position unless otherwise directed
- Ride to YOUR capabilities not the rider in front
- **YOU are responsible for your ride at all times**
- **Carry your KAMG membership and ICE cards**

GROUP LEADERS GREEN BADGE HOLDERS

- Make sure all in your group are logged with the run organiser (for insurance purposes)
- Please follow the prescribed route not your own
- Confirm destination and route to group
- Explain run guidelines
- Explain stopping procedures
- Allow a quicker group to pass if necessary
- Select a 'Tail-End Charlie'
- Consider change of associate order at a midway point
- **Adjust speed as appropriate for the group and ride to the SLOWEST rider**



Carry your ICE (In Case of Emergency) card with you, as you may be asked to produce it. When going on a group ride, the ride will terminate at the destination. If this will leave you in unfamiliar territory and you would like an accompanied ride back to the start,

please make this known to the run leader or your group leader before the ride starts. **It is a condition for all club runs that you MUST be a member of the IAM for Insurance purposes. Not a member, then you are not insured.**

CONTACT PAGE

President: **Terry Friday**
 Vice President: **Dave Murphy**
 Honorary Life Members: **Rod Collins • Kevin Chapman • Terry Friday**
John Leigh • John Lemon • Mike Knowles
Brenda Vickery • Ian Burchell • Sue Mills



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Terry Friday



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