RIDERS

. . . magazine of the KAMG

ISSUE 242 • May 2026 • Registered Charity No. 1060837

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May

Sun 3rd	Training and social ride to Roedean, Brighton

June

Sun 7th	Headcorn Classic car meet. Social ride.
Sat 13th	Machine Control Day
Thurs 18th	Fish and chip run
Sat 20th	IDCAM
Thurs 25th	Group night
Sun 28th	Training and social ride to Kearsnsey Abbey

July

Sun 12th	Machine Control Day
Thurs 16th	Fish and chip run
Sun 19th	Museum of Power training social ride
Thurs 30th	Group Night Annual Barbecue

August

Sun 2nd	Training and social ride to Horam
Sat & Sun 8/9th	Peterborough Weekend
Thurs 13	Fish and chip run
Sun 23rd	Machine Control Day
Thurs 27th	Group night
Sun 30th	Training and social ride Waterside Café Arundel

This list is correct at time of going to press. Check all KAMG dates on Tracker to ensure that there are no changes. Details of contacts for IDCAM, Machine Control Days and Ride-outs are on pages 30 and 31.

Nick Farley, Editor

The views and opinions expressed in this magazine are solely the views and opinions of the people who write the articles, and those views and opinions should never be taken as, nor be presumed to be, the official view of, nor views supported by, either IAM RoadSmart or the KAMG.

Every article that appears in this magazine has been written expressly for this magazine and has not appeared in any other print or electronic medium before, and none of the material in this magazine may be reprinted elsewhere without the express permission of the KAMG.

Everything is done to ensure the correctness and accuracy of the editorial content of the magazine, but neither the editor nor the KAMG accepts liability for information errors, omissions or typesetting errors.

Riders is the place for every single member, or associate member, of KAMG to say what he/she thinks about anything and everything connected with riding and driving and the KAMG. Every article submitted will be published (provided it is legal) and no opinions or views will be changed or cut out. The magazine is apolitical, but criticism or praise of politicians of any political colour is welcome if the criticism, or praise, is about the politician's actions or views on road safety, roads or some other aspect of transport.

Please submit articles for publication, or letters to the editor, to the email address of the editor (see page 30). Please send pictures for publication as separate file attachments to an email if possible, rather than embedding them in the email content, and ensure that the pictures are of the highest resolution possible. Please do not send information or pictures via Facebook.

MAGAZINE DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY JOHN GARDINER

EDITORIAL

The road to the top

It is undeniable that the last couple of decades have seen some extreme and unprecedented political changes, and wherever you happen to position yourself on the political spectrum you will find some of those changes difficult to accept. But while all the extreme political to-ing fro-ing has been going on, there has been one gigantic and monumentally important aspect of our lives that has been completely and utterly ignored by the politicians, and that is transport, and particularly our road system.

What happens on and to the roads should have nothing to do with politics in the party-political sense. There has up until now been no political mileage in the roads. No politician was going to further his career by championing the cause of roads. However, the roads are a crucial, absolutely fundamental, and economically vital utility. They are a priceless asset, and as such they need to be maintained by the government, and 'governments' inevitably have a political colour, but that colour should in no way affect how the roads are treated. Which is, until recently, exactly how they have been treated – each of the parties that has found itself in power has completely and equally ignored the roads. The roads have been treated with disdain. In fact, roads have been a bit of a nuisance if truth be known. You see, if you're a politician there's not much you can do with them. They are just *there*. You can't really change them. You can perhaps add a couple of miles here and there, but that's all. The bloody inanimate things are just *there* staring at you. What you can do, however, is ignore them, and let them just go on simply being there. That's what governments have done for decades. As a government you have a nominal Secretary of State for Transport, but it's the sort of job you give to the parliamentary equivalent of the village idiot, and we have had some real Oscar winners in the department in the past: some of you will remember perhaps the greatest of them all, Ernest Marples in the 1960s, who, when he wasn't awarding big road contracts to his own company, was best known for wearing women's clothes. I haven't the faintest idea who the present Minister is, but you can be sure that he/she would be playing for Tranmere Rovers reserves if he/she were a footballer, not mounting a challenge to any PM.

But here's the rub, and I know that you know this – the roads haven't just been sitting there quietly for fifty years happily looking after themselves; no, the little buggers have been getting old and ill and sick, and becoming a nuisance; some are dying, some are close to forgetting where they are going, which should mean that there is now some political mileage in them, even if actual mileage is a bit risky. Roads are where someone could really make his/her political name today. Forget all this party-political rubbish, I'd vote for anyone who campaigned solely on restoring our roads, because at the moment it's not much fun riding a motorbike in this country, and it used to be, and I'm missing it.

Epilogue

This is my last *Riders* as editor after ten years and 40 editions. Thank you if you've been reading them. I hope you have enjoyed them. Giles Green takes over as the new editor for the next issue, and I wish him and the magazine well. Despite all the modern electronic instant communication, I think that a tangible, printed magazine continues to be an absolutely vital part of KAMG. Please support it.

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Well it's great to see that the weather has finally arrived, and great to see so many pictures of you all out and about on two wheels. Keep those pictures coming.

Behind the scenes we have been working hard to improve the group: group Treasurer Nigel Clibbens is making great headway with the IAM about our changes [to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation], and he is attending HQ with Joe Mair for a meeting with the IAM CEO about what is needed to finalise the plans.

Nicola [Walker] is settling in to her new role as Chief Observer and she is working hard to make some changes to our group ride-outs. We are looking for members to organise different ride-outs and Nic is putting some bits together to give guidance to run leaders in order to comply with IAM rules and our own 'best practice' suggestions to help these events run smoothly without incident. After all, there is nothing better than a safe, smooth and systematic group-led ride to keep our skills up. Please contact Nic if you would like to arrange something. Louise [Thompson] has just taken on the role as group night coordinator and it was great to see an excellent speaker at the last group night. It was a busy evening. Thank you, Louise. And for the August issue the magazine will have a new editor, Giles Green, who will be wanting your articles, big or small, for that issue. Aryan Khanna, our young riders ambassador, has encouraged three new young riders to join up with KAMG and he is hoping to increase recruitment in the next few months. Yet, despite all the good things that are happening, it has been sad to see so many motorcycle deaths reported on Facebook and in various media channels in the Kent area since Christmas. Please keep safe on our roads, keep your skill levels high, and remember, if you feel that you need any assessment or a critique of your riding, our sterling observer team are always happy to take you out for a check ride to tidy anything up. On a happier note and by the time you read this, Colin and I will have been to Buckingham Palace on behalf of the IAM. We are very excited and will report back to you all about the day.

Tina Underwood

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TEST PASSES

Since the last edition

George Crozer receiving his Advanced Rider qualification from his observer Steve Riches. An amazing achievement with his wife Jane taking part on all his rides, including his test, see page 20

Alex Hampshire receiving his Advanced Rider qualification from his observer John Gardiner, see page 8

Paul Smith receiving his Advanced Rider qualification from his observer Julian Hanrahan

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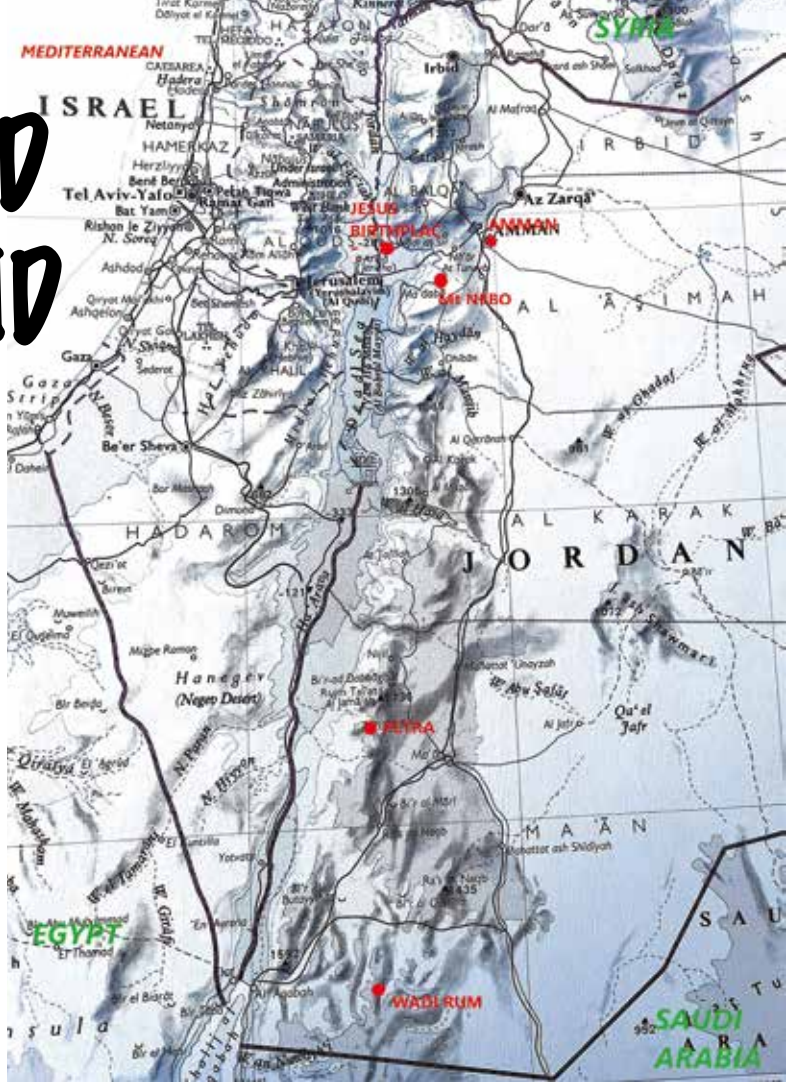
SAND, SALT AND SACRED GROUND

That was Jordan on two wheels for Alex Hampshire



I'll be honest: I wasn't entirely sure what I was doing when I swung a leg over the BMW F800 GS at my guide's home in Amman, the capital of Jordan. I ride a Triumph Speed Triple in the UK, a bike that communicates through aggression. A bike that's planted and sharp through every corner. The F800 was taller, top-heavy, its weight sitting high, wanting to tip into bends, and as I climbed out of Amman into the switchbacks on my first day in Jordan, I was fighting it. The wet, icy and unforgiving British roads had got me used to not trusting my tyres. Out here in the Jordanian sun, I was still riding like I was about to hit black ice. Yet, before long I was leaning. Not knee-dragging, mind you. But definitely leaning. And as it was Ramadan, the roads, mercifully, were nearly empty.

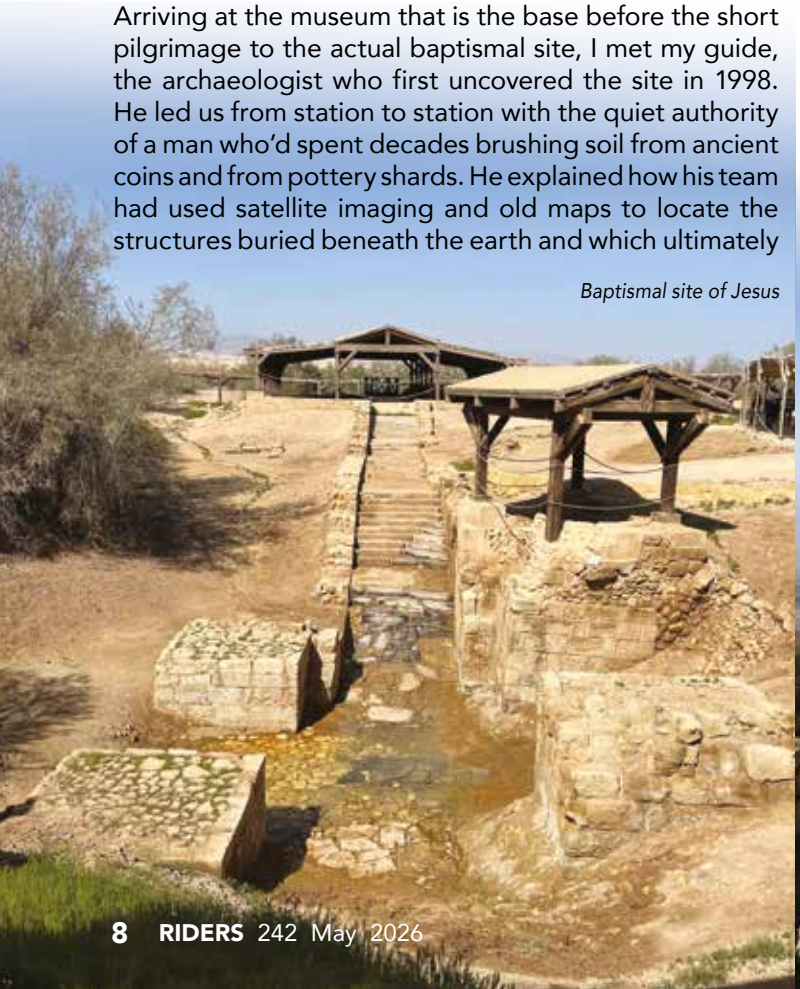
Below Sea Level

The first day's ride from Amman to the baptismal site of Jesus, drops to 400 metres *below* sea level. You feel that drop in your ears before you see it in the landscape: the air thickening, the descent unrelenting, the switchbacks stacking up one after another. It was the kind of riding that demands full attention, and it suited me fine. Less time to think about how unfamiliar the bike felt.

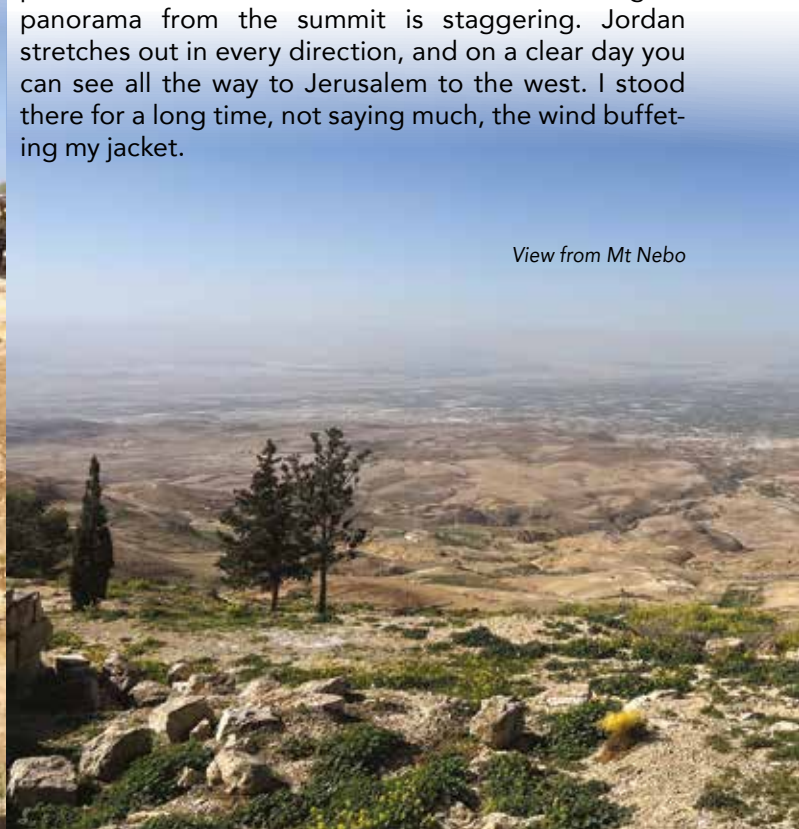
Arriving at the museum that is the base before the short pilgrimage to the actual baptismal site, I met my guide, the archaeologist who first uncovered the site in 1998. He led us from station to station with the quiet authority of a man who'd spent decades brushing soil from ancient coins and from pottery shards. He explained how his team had used satellite imaging and old maps to locate the structures buried beneath the earth and which ultimately revealed a place that had been lost for centuries. Walking where John the Baptist is believed to have stood, and where pilgrims have come for over two thousand years, I felt a sense of peace that I hadn't experienced in a while. The BMW waited patiently in the car park, looking absurdly modern against the ancient reeds.

From there, the road climbed back up to Mount Nebo, where, according to scripture, Moses was shown the promised land before his death. The 360-degree panorama from the summit is staggering. Jordan stretches out in every direction, and on a clear day you can see all the way to Jerusalem to the west. I stood there for a long time, not saying much, the wind buffeting my jacket.

Baptismal site of Jesus



View from Mt Nebo



From Mount Nebo the descent to the Dead Sea was the best riding of the day. Long, swooping switchbacks with the water appearing through gaps in the rock. First a sliver of silver, then a long glittering expanse of water. The Dead Sea catches the sunlight due to its extraordinary salt content refracting the light in sheets. I had to force myself to watch the road.

We arrived at the hotel in the early evening. I dropped my kit, walked straight down to the shore, covered myself with that famous mud and floated, effortlessly. I had to remind myself, while floating peacefully, that a war was going on in Palestine just a few kilometres ahead of me.

Looking west over The Dead Sea to a war zone

The Long Road to Petra

The next day's ride south from the Dead Sea to the city near Petra was long and not especially dramatic by the standards of what surrounded it. A transition day. But transition days on a motorcycle through a country observing Ramadan have a particular quality: there's a hush over everything, the roads are quiet, the towns are quite still in the afternoon heat. I was grateful for the space to find my rhythm with the bike. By the time we pulled in I was beginning to feel what the F800 was actually offering: stability and comfort with just enough power. My Speed Triple provides endless torque through the rev range but it morphs into a bucking rodeo ride when the road surface deteriorates. The F800 was different. Not worse.

I spent the afternoon by the pool listening to the call to prayer echo off the surrounding hills. There are worse ways to prepare for an early start for a ride to Wadi Rum on the next day.

Petra to Wadi Rum

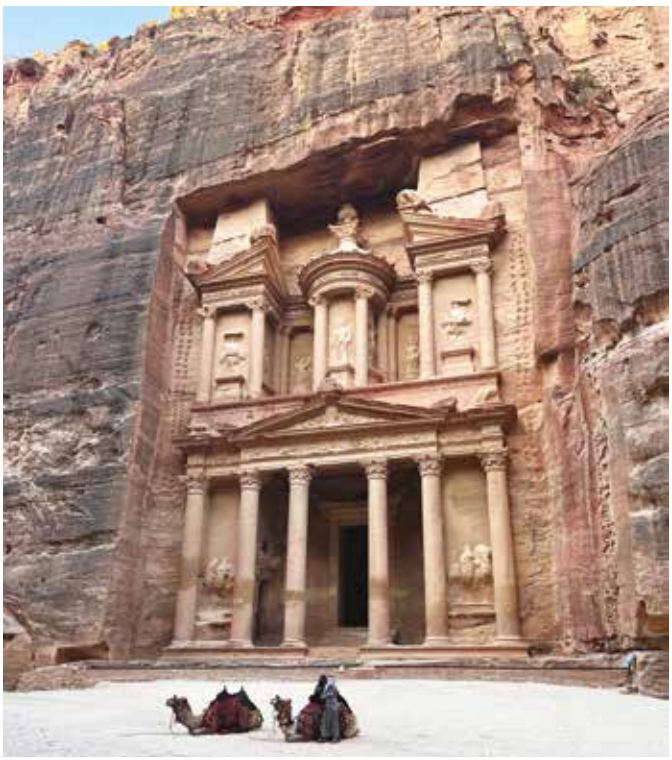
The alarm went before sunrise.

I'm glad it did. Petra in the early morning light, before the tour groups arrive, is a different place entirely. I hired a Bedouin guide to take me through the Siq which is the long, winding canyon that serves as the ancient city's entrance. Its walls towering and narrowing overhead until, suddenly, they open. And there is the Treasury, carved directly into the rose-red rock, catching the first light of the day. Photographs do not prepare you for the scale of it, nor for the strange silence of being one of very few people standing in front of something two thousand years old.

The city behind the Treasury is vast. You need at least a full day there, two if you want to do it justice. I only had a couple of hours. It was my one real regret of the trip.

The Siq entrance to Petra

The Treasury at Petra



The road to Wadi Rum is where the landscape shifts from ancient to elemental. The red desert rises up around you and the scale of it, the enormous sandstone formations, the silence, the sheer improbability of it all, is disorientating in the best possible way. Films have been shot here precisely because it looks like nowhere else on earth: *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Martian* and *Dune*. Standing in the desert, you understand why.

Arriving at the Bedouin camp, I discovered the first limitation of the F800 GS, albeit the limitation of any bike without the correct tyres. Sand. The bike that was so confident on tarmac, on gravel and on the mountain switchbacks, wanted to go its own way entirely when ridden on sand. My first experience of sand riding felt like trying to steer on ice, but I made it to the camp with my dignity roughly intact.

That evening belonged to the Bedouin. A 4x4 tour of the desert in the open back of a modified Mitsubishi pickup, driven by a young Bedouin with extraordinary skill and a relaxed attitude to the presence of his passengers sitting in the back in the open without a seatbelt in sight. He took us to viewing points that were worth the alarm of every near-miss on the journey. Back at camp, the evening meal was already waiting: meat and

Wadi Rum

vegetables that had been slow-cooking all day under hot coals buried deep in the sand, were dug up as we arrived. The fire came later, and the sheesha [pipe], and eventually just silence and the Milky Way spread out overhead with a clarity I've never seen from anywhere in Britain. No light pollution. No noise. Just stars.

The Road Home

It was nearly 400 kilometres back to Amman, but fortunately my guide knew a route that avoided the highways entirely. It was an old road through the mountains that I suspect most tourists never see. Remote villages. No cars. Road surfaces that ranged from smooth to cratered, though as long as I followed my guide's line I avoided the worst of it. The rear tyre breaks loose on a sudden sharp left and my guide's eyes go wide. I catch it as his face creased into what looked like a grin. He shakes his head, gives a thumbs up, and guns his engine. I follow, heart hammering, back on to the ancient mountain road snaking through the Jordanian highlands. No other cars. No barriers. Just us, the rock, and three hundred kilometres still to go.

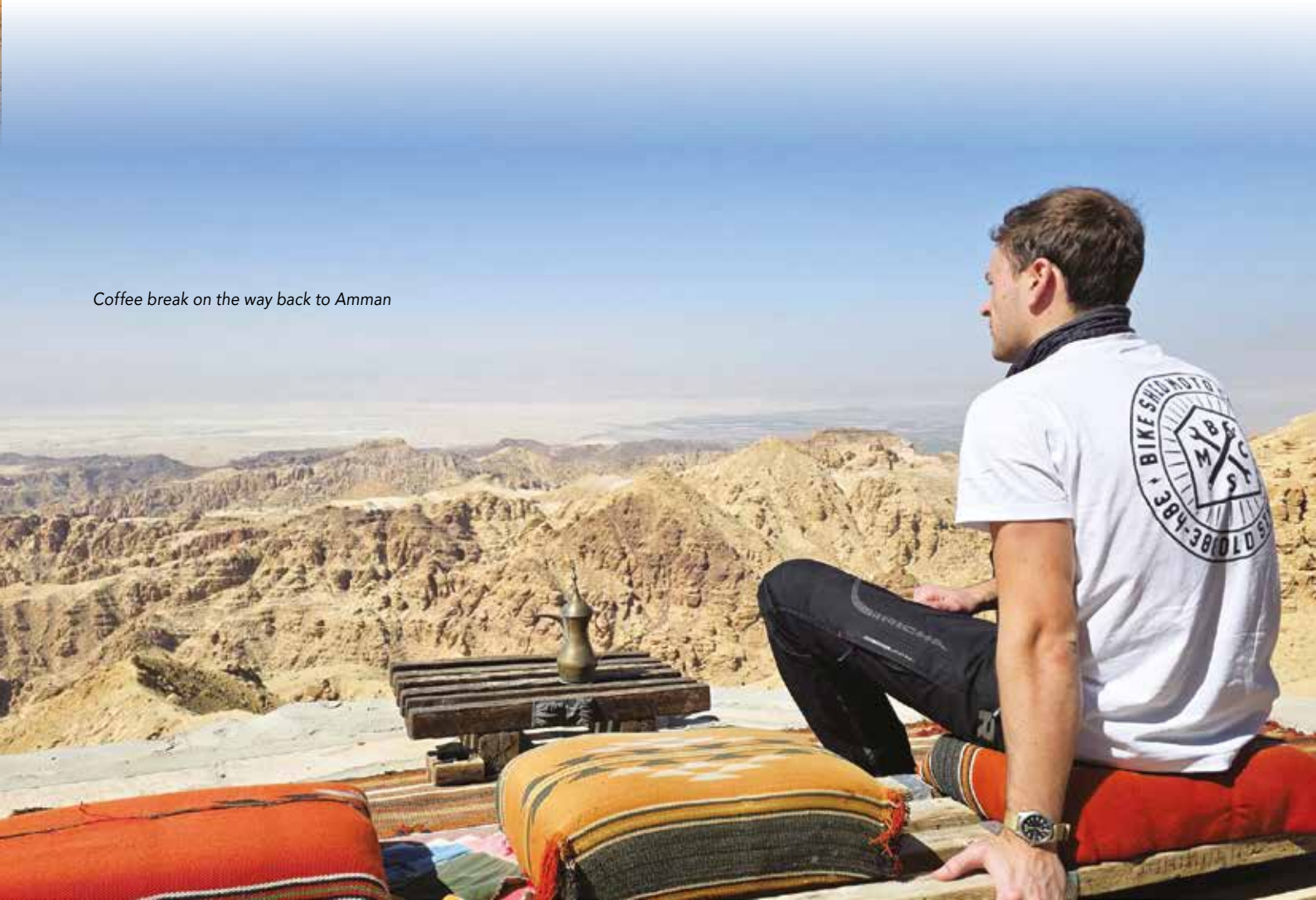
Once, cresting a hill at speed, I assumed a *right*-hand bend and was met with a sharp *left*. Hard on the brakes, the F800 doing exactly what it was built to do, absorbing the panic, finding grip, keeping us both upright. My guide looked back with an expression I recognised from the near-miss before. Wide eyes, then a thumbs up.

We stopped several times along the way. Roadside coffee took some getting used to; it was, thick, cardamom-spiced Jordanian coffee served in small cups, a sugar or two didn't go amiss. Long conversations with my guide about the country, the roads, the history layered into every kilometre of this ancient place. These were the moments I hadn't planned for, but thoroughly enjoyed.

Back in Amman, I handed back the F800. It had earned my respect across four days and every kind of surface this country could offer – switchbacks, desert sand, cratered mountain passes, and one ill-judged overtake. It's a different kind of motorcycle from what I ride at home, built for a different kind of riding. Jordan demanded exactly what it offered.

My guide and I exchanged numbers. We'll be back in touch. I've already started looking at what a longer loop through the country might look like, with more time in Petra and another night under the Wadi Rum stars.

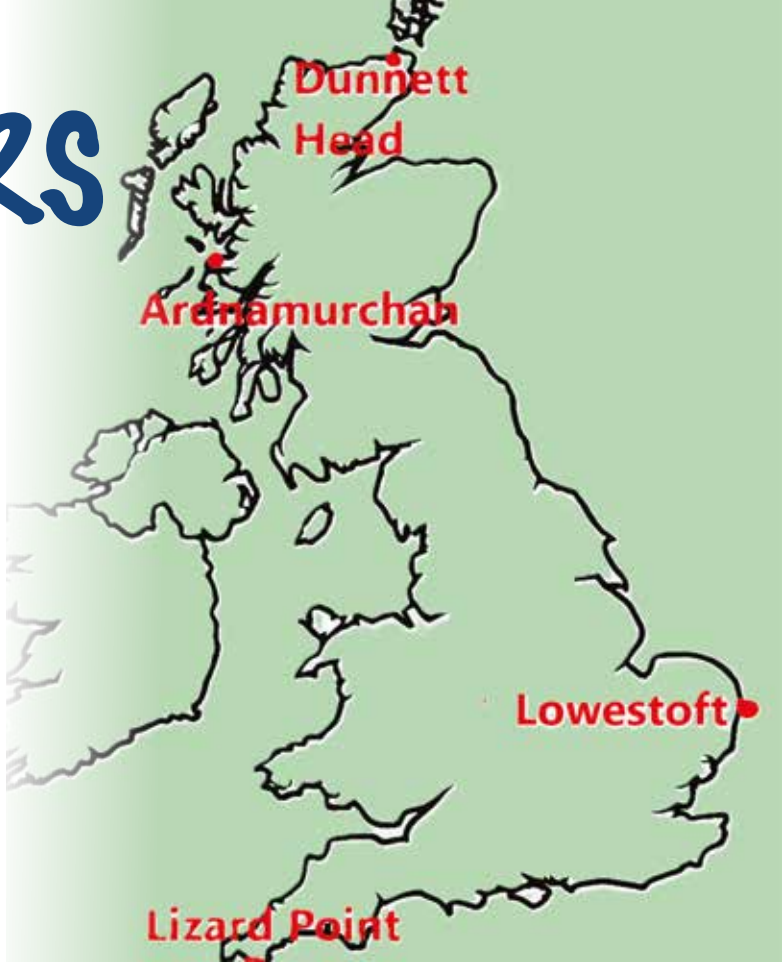
Jordan will do that to you.



Coffee break on the way back to Amman

FOUR CORNERS ON A BUDGET BIKE

Martin Brown and Co Plan a Long Ride



In 2018, if you can remember that far back, you will recall a trio of crazy people deciding to ride from Land's End to John O'Groats on second-hand pizza delivery bikes, *aka* Honda Innova 125s, which had to be bought for no more than £500. What could possibly go wrong? Well, Steve Riches' Innova went wrong and didn't quite make it, but it was an epic adventure, which was a lot of fun and created some fantastic memories while raising a decent chunk of money for some deserving charities.

So why am I dragging you, dear readers, back down memory lane now? The answer is that we have decided to repeat the madness with a bigger and better idea – the 'Four Corners' trip. For this new fund-raising adventure, we are off to the mainland's furthest points North, South, East and West: those four points are Dunnett Head in the north, Lizard Point in the south, Lowestoft in the east and Ardnamurchan in the west. Starting in Dartford we will head to the Lizard first. Then it is up the west coast to Ardnamurchan Lighthouse. Next, we will go around the North Coast 500 to Dunnett Head followed by the last leg down the east side of the country to finish at Ness Point near Lowestoft. We'll be camping and riding around 3000 miles in 12 days on 'budget bikes'; what could possibly go wrong?

As well as going much further than on the Pizza Run there is an added complication in that (at the time of writing) we will not have a support van this time, which means that all the camping gear, tools and everything else will have to be on the bikes with us. And the 'budget bikes' for this expedition must be bought for a maximum of £1000. They can be any type of bike and there is no capacity limit; anything goes, except the budget, that's fixed. The other adventurous types joining me on this trip are (so far) Steve Riches, riding a Honda Forza 300 scooter, Chris Brooker on a BMW K1200, John Leigh aboard a Suzuki Burgman 400, Ian Broughton on a Triumph ST955i and Matt Barnes who has yet to declare his mount.

For my transport I spent £850 on a Suzuki GS500 twin of 2003 vintage. It runs; it has passed a recent MOT but . . . it has issues. Issues that need sorting before such a demanding trip. Luckily, we are not going until September. However, the rules mean that apart from service consumables I only have £150 left to spend.

So, what are the issues? Well, no luggage system is a big one, and we are certainly going to have 'luggage'.

So, I need to sort out a rack, a top box and maybe panniers too, because we are going to be fully loaded.

I ordered a second-hand rack off eBay which seems fine. A large top box from our Chinese friends at Ali Express also fits the bill well. I already have a large waterproof bag which should be OK for the camping stuff, but I'm unsure whether I will also need panniers. I will gauge that better when I have an idea of what I will actually be carrying.

The next big issue on the bike is the rear shock. It looks, in fact, it actually is, knackered. It will not do for such a trip. I took it off, gave it a clean and found that not only was the shock dead but the bearings in the linkage were all rusted solid. It seems that a common upgrade is to use a shock from an R6 Yamaha WITH the bushes. This is important as the bush that connects the Suzuki pivot to the shock is a different internal diameter. Off to eBay I went again and found a nice looking R6 shock with the mounting pivot for £60 all in.

The R6 shock takes the bigger bolt but is coincidentally exactly the right size to fit in the Suzuki pivot. Got that! Anyway, if you need to buy the bolt and the bush, they are around £40 new from CSMNL [suppliers of parts that you can't get anywhere else] so it's well worth trying to get them included with the shock if you can.

A Suzuki of 2003 vintage

Some rusty parts . . .

. . . Some shiny parts

The work involved is relatively straightforward: tank off, airbox off, bit of wood under the rear wheel to stop it dropping, take out the bolts, remove shock, fit new one. Easy, right? Wrong! Pesky thing had clearly not been serviced since it was made. Mostly the bolts came out without too much swearing, except one. It would not budge. Heat – fail; penetrating oil and heat – fail; and so on. In the end out came the Dremel and I cut the nut off. Done! But the more I looked at the pivot the more 'issues' appeared. All the bearings were completely rusted. That meant that when they were supposed to be 'pivoting' in an oily sort of way, the seized bearings were just rubbing away at the bushes, so they were shot as well. Off to CSMNL and 'Simply Bearings' again.

After a lot of effort, I got the old bearings out and decided to bling up the pivot while it was on the bench. A good clean up and a coat of red Hammerite did the trick (there's more red paint later). A rivet counter's note here – the Yamaha pivot has bearing seals to protect the vulnerable bearings; the Suzuki doesn't. The upshot

. . . some red parts

is that if (as here) maintenance is not thorough, the grease gets washed out, grit etc goes in. Result, seized bearings.

A couple of easy fixes were next. There was no nearside mirror and a second-hand one was ordered off evilBay for a tenner. I also have a broken twistgrip that has got very sharp edges. eBay again, and another £10 gone.

On the servicing front I decided that the brakes would need a service. Good job I checked. Again, I was confronted with seized bolts and pad springs making the calipers almost beyond repair, but not quite. After a lot of swearing I got the rear caliper off at the cost of having to destroy a mounting bolt. A good clean up then showed that the pistons were pretty good and new seals, pins and pads would have them back up and running again. I also decided to primp them up a bit with some bright red Hammerite too. The front caliper was not quite so bad and it was also treated to a thorough clean, new seals and a coat of red paint.

When all those jobs were done, I discovered another problem: thanks to our "friend" Mr S Khan, my bike was not ULEZ compliant. As I live in the zone this means that potentially I will have to pay £12.50 every time I leave my house to go anywhere. However, it is possible to get one's bike checked and passed as 'compliant'. So, off I went to Deptford. Bike passed no problem. This privilege cost me £175. The cost benefit means that 14 trips to my parents on the baby GS will get my money back. Being ULEZ compliant should also add value if and when I decide to sell the little chap.

Now all I need to do is to take it out for a proper test ride. Watch this space. *

Martin on the pizza ride somewhere in Scotland six years ago.

** "Watch this space" is phrase much used in the past by Martin and if you have been watching his spaces waiting for the final episodes of his Daktari and the Little Zed stories, I have sad news: Little Zed was sold before Martin had the chance to try its off-roadery and write about it; and Daktari is wounded and is lying in a workshop somewhere awaiting some surgery . . . so, continue watching this space but with crossed fingers. Ed.*

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THE FOUR CORNERS CHARITIES

Be under no illusion – this camping trip on old motorbikes round the edges of Britain is a schoolboy lark; it may be a baroque, middle-aged, schoolboy lark, but it is a schoolboy lark nonetheless. However, *it is a* ***charitable*** *schoolboy lark* and three very different local charities will benefit from the 'selfless endeavours' of these old schoolboys, because we – that's us, you and me – *we* shall be sponsoring them on their "long daring ride of endurance and enormous suffering." (. . . it says here.)

The three charities are Foal Farm, Spadework and Mission Care. Details of how to sponsor these middle-aged children, and thus benefit these local charities, will appear in the August edition of *Riders* when more details are known. In the meantime, just relax and contemplate the reward that we sponsors will earn for our generous support. We shall be able to read the highly amusing stories that the schoolboys will doubtless tell us in the November issue of *Riders*. As Martin Brown is so fond of saying, usually with a blatant lack of sincerity, "Watch this space."

NF

Foal Farm

Foal Farm rescues and re-homes neglected animals around Kent and has been doing it for more than 60 years. Their mission is to take in as many animals as they can properly care for, restore them to health and happiness and where possible find them new homes or, if they can't find homes, to provide a permanent sanctuary for them on the 26 acres of Foal Farm itself, which at the moment is home to dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, horses, donkeys, cows, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, ducks and some geese.

https://www.foalfarm.org.uk/

spadework

Spadework

Spadework is a charity that helps people with various learning and other difficulties or disabilities to lead more independent lives, to feel less isolated and to live happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives. Spadework provides care, support and meaningful opportunities for adults, for people experiencing problems with their mental health and for those living with dementia. The charity is based on a large site near West Malling (ME19 5NA) where there is an abundance of good food and a zillion plants, everything that the inner biker and the outer gardener need.

https://spadework.org.uk/

MISSIONCARE
CALLED TO SERVE

Mission Care

Mission Care is a charity started more than 100 years ago and today it is home to 230 residents, some of whom are disabled, some of whom suffer from dementia and some of whom are simply old and frail. All are in need of nursing and care and community contact and activities shared with others. Mission Care aims to provide not only the care and nursing but also the stimulation that makes for as full and as interesting a life as possible for all of its residents.

https://missioncare.org.uk/

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YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD

Says George Crozer

George's father on his Ariel Red Hunter in solo guise.

Like many of us in the 'vintage' bracket of the motorcycling community, my journey began long before I could reach the footpegs. My earliest memories are framed by my view from inside the sidecar attached to my father's Ariel Red Hunter, which was the primary vehicle for our family's adventures. When I finally grew tall enough, I graduated to the pillion seat of that same Hunter or, occasionally, to the back of my mother's Dayton Albatros scooter. Back then, these two two-wheelers weren't just hobbies, they were our family's only means of travel.

The mid-sixties brought a shift in gears when Mum learned to drive and acquired a 'sit-up-and-beg' Ford Popular, and in a wonderful reversal of roles, *she* became the instructor, teaching both Dad and me how to handle four wheels. However, my heart remained firmly with two wheels. I passed my motorcycle test just four weeks after my 16th birthday, and from that moment on Dad and I were inseparable on the road. We spent every possible moment camping and rough-sleeping across the country, bound by the shared freedom of the ride.

Throughout those miles, Dad always harboured a quiet dream to own a big twin, and on his weekly visits to St. Bartholomew's Hospital in Rochester, he would always pause to press his nose against the glass of nearby Grays Motorcycles in Chatham, admiring the machines within. Sadly, after a brave six-month battle with cancer, we lost him at the age of 52, shortly after my 21st birthday. By then, I had already met Jane — the love of my life and my lifelong partner in adventure. We began our journey together on a 250cc two-stroke Fanny B. We had lots of fun on it but with the arrival of our family and business commitments our biking days were put on hold.

Our passion was reactivated 20 years later when we bought our first Harley Davidson, but we soon gravitated to the more adventurous KTM and BMWs on which we discovered the beauties of Europe, clocking up tens of thousands of miles and enjoying every one of them.

Our introduction to Kent Advanced Motorcycle Group began when we met up with Tim Kift, who had recently joined and whose enthusiasm for the group was infectious. After attending the 2024 Christmas meeting, we were so impressed by the scale and friendliness of the organisation that I signed up the next day after ascertaining that we would be able to train and test as rider and pillion. After all, I only ever ride solo for the annual MOT! If we were to become 'Advanced', we would do it as a team.

Mother and grandmother on the Dayton Albatros.

Our Introductory Day Course to Advanced Motorcycling (IDCAM) was on the bright and crispy morning of the 15th February 2025 at Rochester fire station. Not seeing any motorcycles neatly parked outside was odd. We

thought we were in the wrong place. So, we rode around the site and then stopped to check. We were in the right place although by now we were late, but we learnt our very first lesson: the 'Five-Degree-Rule'; avoid riding in temperatures below 5°C unless absolutely necessary.

On 3rd March we met our assigned observer, Steve Riches, which was thoroughly enjoyable and very informative experience. Steve has an uncanny way of making you think about the way to ride safely, and I didn't realise how much I had to learn: getting seven 'requires development 3'scores on our first progress chart. During the next five months we had a further seven observed rides with Steve and one with Colin Billings, all of which were extremely instructive and prepared us for our pre-test observed ride.

On the 27th August last year, we arranged to meet our pre-test observer, Joe Mair, at Nell's Café on the A2 at Gravesend. We arrived a little early and went inside to order our coffee to wait for Joe. Two men came into the cafe and said "Has anyone got a white BMW? it's being stolen!". The thieves audaciously waved to us as they rode off with us watching stunned from the car park. The two men kindly offered to give chase and I went with them in their van. When Joe arrived minutes later and the situation was explained to him, he went out to scout around too. Unfortunately, it was obviously a professional hit and the bike had disappeared.

This ordeal naturally hit the 'pause' button on our progress. We spent the following three months sourcing a replacement machine and taking a well-earned break touring the stunning roads of Corsica. On 10th February we picked up the threads with Steve Riches who then arranged another pre-test ride with Colin Billings. Our training culminated in a high-intensity KAMG weekend in Peterborough, featuring two intensive observed rides on the Saturday with Ian Broughton and fellow veteran Roger Lancaster both of whom gave me invaluable tips.

Finally, the moment of truth arrived. Following the obligatory group photo with 30+ other participants outside the Premier Inn Peterborough, we met our examiner, the charming Trevor Shearsmith. The assessment began with a rigorous probe into the Highway Code and the 'System of Motorcycle Control', followed by a thorough check of the BMW. Then came the moment every Associate dreads: a slow-riding demonstration in front of an audience of Observers and Full Members, but thankfully

we managed to keep the rubber side down without any embarrassing moments.

The test proper took place on a glorious, sunny, crisp morning thankfully well above the 5°C limit. The route wound through stunning countryside and picturesque villages southwest of Peterborough; a route so lovely we've already vowed to return and ride it again. It felt like no time at all before we were pulling into a garden centre for the verdict. Trevor's debrief was as calm and professional as any observed ride, and then the words we'd been waiting for: we passed! We must say a big thank you to Steve for making the training a very rewarding and pleasurable experience, and also for introducing us to new coffee stops.

Reflecting on the journey from that childhood sidecar to becoming an IAM-qualified rider, the biggest takeaway for us both is the truth of that old adage "You're never too old". You're never too old to learn new skills or to set new goals. You're never too old to meet new people or to challenge yourself. We are both eager to continue developing our safe and progressive riding skills. Motorcycling has given Jane and me a lifetime of shared enjoyment and experiences. If there is one thing we'd say to our fellow riders, it is this: invite your partners to share the adventures. The training KAMG promotes doesn't just make you a better rider; it isn't just a fulfilling experience; it makes every mile you share together safer and more rewarding.

YAMAHA

TRACER 7 GT IS IT ANY GOOD?

Roger Lancaster finds out

While my grandchildren were working, playing football or flying to Thailand, and my wife and daughter were at the tattooist (don't ask . . .), I thought I would write about my recent experience riding one of Yamaha's revised mid-range models.

At the beginning of March, I received a notification from the RAC that my motorbike was due for an MOT on 7th April. That would be its first one, and without that heads-up I could now be riding without one! A call to A2 Motorcycles at Gravesend got me an appointment for an MOT and a 12k service for the actual due date. Although I'd only done 11k at the time, it was likely I'd be pretty much spot-on, mileage-wise, on the day. As it happens, I was 52 miles short; not that I'm a pedant or obsessive. I booked a courtesy bike, which I know from experience could be anything from a low powered scooter to a Yamaha MT-10 (I once rode the former as a loan bike on a day that I conducted a pre-test check ride, much to the amusement of the Observer and his Associate, who were both on GSs).

On this occasion I was asked to use the Yamaha Tracer 7 GT. It was the 2025/26 updated version with KYB front forks; improved rear suspension; ride-by-wire throttle; slightly longer swing arm and a taller, adjustable screen. Not my sort of bike, I thought, as I'm not a fan of the Tracer 9 and its various derivatives. Although I have to say, I rode the MT-09 SP at the last service, and my goodness, what a hoot. Dave Masters of A2 Motorcycles wanted me to give him some feedback as he suspected it was a much improved version of what many thought was a budget bike.

I set off towards the A2 dual carriageway to access Betsham and a few gnarly roads through to Eynsford. It's a 30 limit for a mile or so from the garage, so that was my time to get used to the Tracer 7 GT. I stopped after about half a mile to turn off the heated grips – blimey, they were heating up my hands like I was a Sunday roast. Of course, turning them off isn't a matter of flicking a switch, like we used to do; no, now there's a menu to scroll through and various buttons and toggles to faff around with, but I managed to take myself off the boil eventually.

It was quite obvious the machine had a lot of mid-range torque. The first 90-degree bend in the 30 limit was tackled in third gear, and it worked a treat; it's so flexible. I discovered first gear wasn't entirely necessary and fourth was a delight to use in conjunction with third, once in the twisties.

My other early test of handling, on bikes that I've borrowed from A2 Motorcycles, is negotiating the first two roundabouts to get on to the A2, London bound. The Tracer 7 GT was a delight to turn into both roundabouts. Wow, I thought, this feels like a good package. It was comfortable too, although I had to lower the screen to stop me getting buffeted at higher speeds, but the whole thing performed well once in the countryside around Four Elms and Edenbridge. I was impressed. Overtakes were fairly easy to do although the rider 'only' has 72.4bhp on tap. Third and fourth gear did the work for me really well, and once you got into the power band, somewhere around 6500 rpm, you were off at great pace. Further impressed.

The Tracer 7 GT is a versatile machine, supplied with panniers and a centre stand. To pay several thousand pounds more for the Tracer 9 GT may not be worth it, in my opinion, such is the versatility and pleasure the 7 offers. There's a lot of competition out there, as manufacturers realise there's more and more riders buying mid-range bikes because of the cost of running higher spec machines, or because age has caught up with them and there's a need to downsize. It seems Yamaha have sufficiently upped their game with the Tracer 7 and GT to produce a winner.

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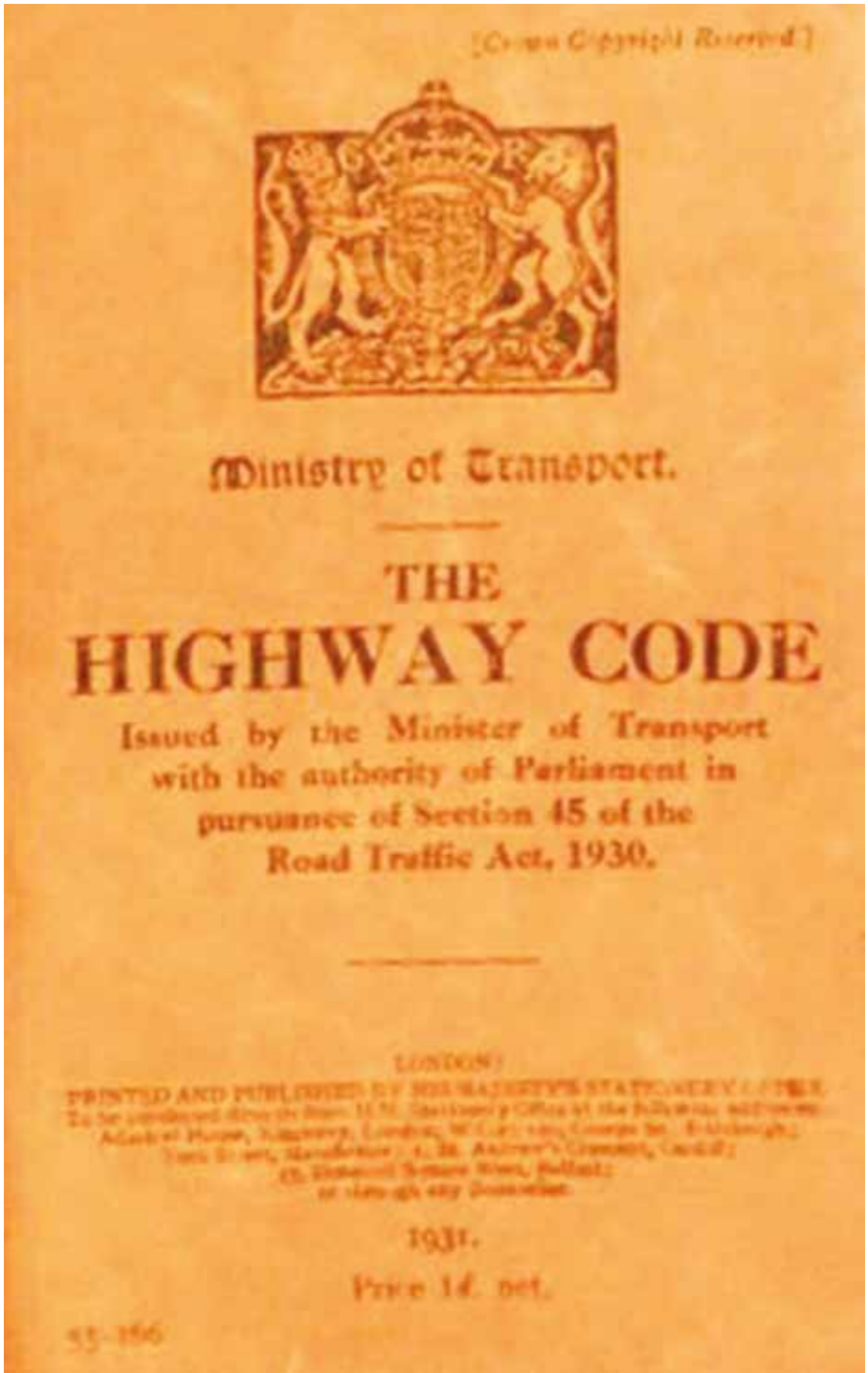
'A CODE OF GOOD MANNERS TO BE OBSERVED BY ALL COURTEOUS AND CONSIDERATE PERSONS'

Steve Riches tracks the evolution of road safety, The Highway Code and British motoring

'A code of good manners to be observed by all courteous and considerate persons' was the foreword of the first *Highway Code*, published in April 1931 by the then Minister of Transport, Herbert Morrison. That sentiment underlined the importance of respectful conduct on the roads, and it set the standard for the generations of road users who followed.

The Highway Code emerged from legislation designed to address the appalling death toll resulting from traffic accidents on British roads. Back in 1931, when there were only 2.3 million vehicles on the roads, over 7000 people lost their lives. Yet by 2018, when the number of vehicles had soared to 33 million, road deaths had been *reduced* to 1,770. This remarkable improvement — only a quarter of the fatalities despite fourteen times the traffic — is largely attributable to advances in vehicle safety. Car manufacturers have played a pivotal role in making vehicles safer for drivers, for passengers and for pedestrians. The car manufacturers' dedication to safety deserves recognition.

Many innovations in vehicle design have been driven by government legislation aimed at protecting everyone on the road. The arrival of the first motor car on British roads in 1894 sparked immediate concern and regulatory action. Before Benz introduced his 2-horsepower mechanical vehicle, real horse-powered carriages were the norm. Fuelled by grass, they were notorious for leaving slippery, steaming piles in their wake; an issue that persists to this day on some rural roads. Unfortunately, there are no official figures from that era for accidents involving horses, riders and members of the public, which makes direct comparisons with modern road safety statistics impossible. Nevertheless, the hazards



of the time were considerable and horses were occasionally terrified by noisy steam contraptions of various sorts. But eventually, the great petrol engine car came along, with its relative ease of operation, and steam-powered vehicles gradually faded into history, giving way to the internal combustion engine.

The Locomotive Act of 1865 — famously known as the 'Red Flag Act'— imposed strict limits on powered vehicles. Speeds were restricted to 2 mph in cities, towns and villages, and 4 mph on open roads. Each vehicle required a crew of three, with one person obliged to walk 60 yards ahead, warning the public of the approaching machine.

By 1895, cars weighing less than three tons were exempt from the 'Red Flag Act', and were able to travel at the dizzying speed of 14 mph when out of towns. This change marked the beginning of a new era for motoring, but it quickly became apparent that further regulation was needed to control the growing number of speed enthusiasts who were determined to push the limits of their vehicles.

In 1896, Mr Arnold of Kent became the first person prosecuted for speeding; a precursor to today's enforcement practices. Interestingly, in 2017, 2.3 million speeding tickets were issued, mirroring the number of cars on the road in 1931. Mr Arnold was fined five shillings for exceeding the 2 mph limit, having been 'clocked' at a staggering 8 mph.

Brighton has historically been a location where cars are not warmly embraced. In 1899, Mr Jeal was prosecuted for driving at speeds deemed inappropriate for the conditions, and he was fined £3, which was one and a half times the average professional weekly wage at that time. The police reported that he was driving at the shocking speed of 12 mph. During his court appearance, it was declared that no one ever needs to travel through Brighton faster than 4 mph, which is a sentiment perhaps still felt today, although parking problems have certainly worsened since then.

The story of British motoring is a tale of innovation, regulation, and safety improvements. From red flags to seat belts, the journey has been marked by efforts to protect all road users and to foster a culture of courtesy and responsibility in everyone. As we move forward, the legacy of *The Highway Code* continues to shape our roads, reminding us that safety and respect are paramount for every traveller.

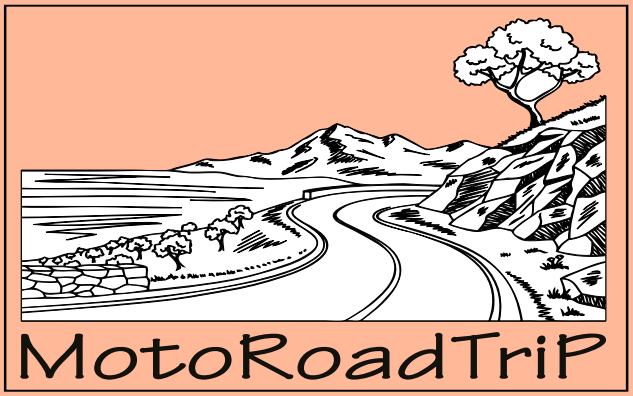
Rutland Water
May 2 – 4th (Bank Holiday)
Now full. Register your interest by email in case of cancellations, or see further running of this event in Aug

Wales
May 25th to 29th
Mid week 5 Day Tour
A medium level tour around the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia. 2 nights in each hotel, total of 1000 miles. Leaving from Paddock Wood and returning via the M25 through Essex. The scenery and stops are great.
6 Space available, £640/£660

Lakes, North Pennines and Northumberland.
June 6th to 14th - 9 Day Tour
Now full. Quiet, rugged, beautiful challenging empty roads. This is an outstanding part of the country to ride a motorcycle around. North England is such an underrated part of the world, try it and you will be back. 200 miles only on motorway (Peterborough) then across country on A and B roads.
Single £1140, Double £1190

Yorkshire Dales and Moors
June 25th to 28th
4 Day Tour
A great ride up to Yorkshire, in the middle of the country. A Day around the Dales and a day around the Moors.
6 Spaces available.
Single occupancy £440/£460

Southern Scotland
August 15th to 22nd
8 Day Tour
A medium level tour around the Southern Scotland and Northern England. If you have never been to Southern Scotland its an absolutely great 1700 mile tour of which only 200 miles on the motorway. There is an option to go into Beamish Living Museum, great sweeping roads, empty most of the time, great cafés, wonderful views, what is not to like.
1 space available.
Single £1150, Double £1200



Rutland Water
Aug 29th – 31st (Bank Holiday)
Rutland Water is a gentle 3 day tour staying in the same hotel for both nights. It's an easy but still very enjoyable tour for all levels of riders. It's the last one of the year to Rutland. It's a great tour, or a relaxed practice.
Cost for rooms £280/£300
13 spaces available.
Day 1-180 miles, Day 2-138 miles, Day 3-180 miles

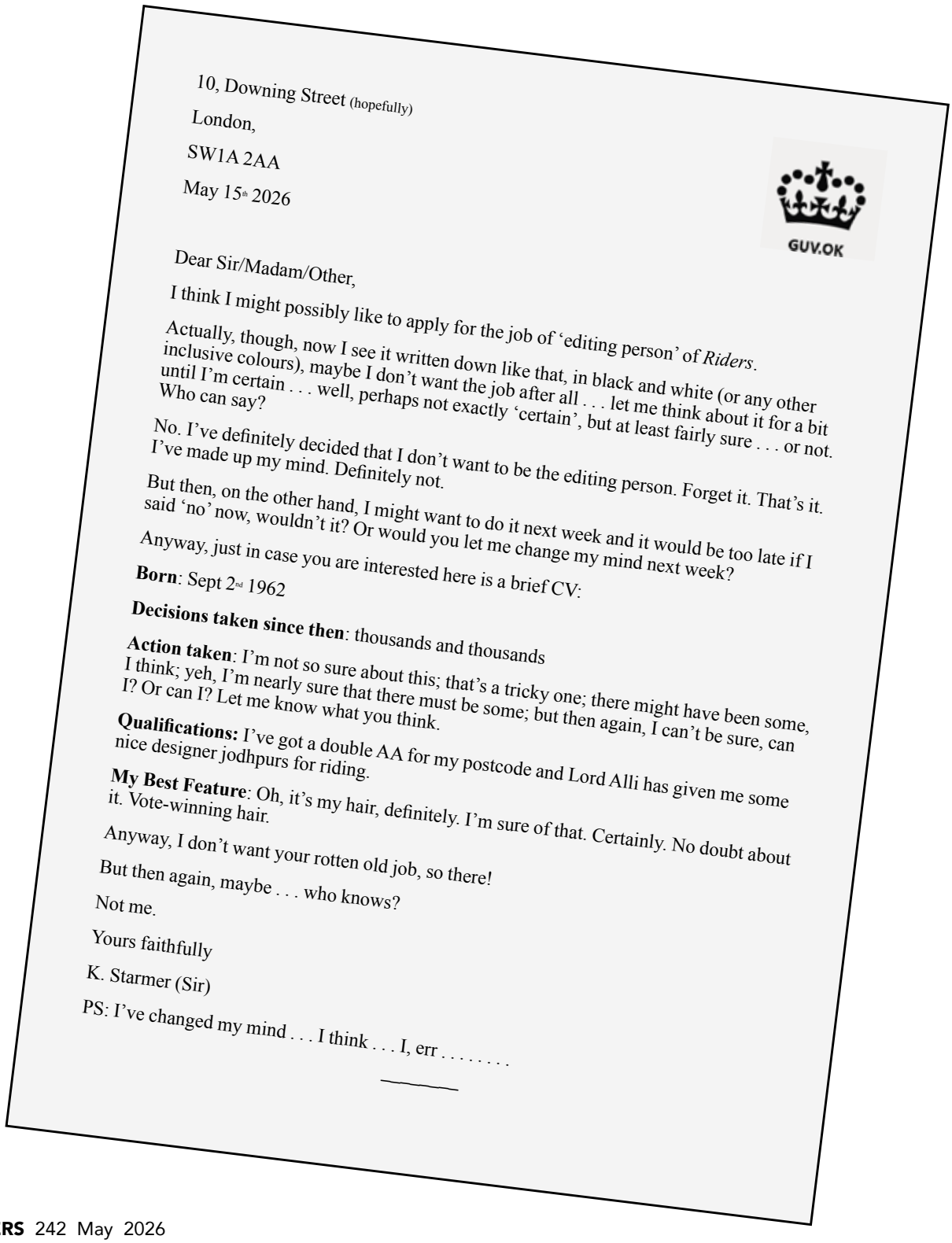
Scotland Tours to North Coast 500, Fort William (Mull and Applecross) and Oban (Skyefall and Loch Rannock) have been cancelled due to the exceptional cost of accommodation in Scotland.

I will be running other trips during the year, please see the website for further details and availability

www.motoroadtrip.co.uk 07786 592845 steveriches12@gmail.com

SOME LETTERS OF APPLICATION FOR THE JOB OF *RIDERS* EDITOR

Fortunately, we have found a new editor for the magazine. It is Giles Green. He will take over for the next issue in August, but as you might expect, when it became widely know that the editor's chair at *Riders* was to become vacant, there was a seismic move in the job market as the movers and shakers of the world rushed to make applications to fill the influential post. The usual bunch of no-hopers, ne-er-do-wells, defeated councillors and shysters mingled with the regular every-day crooks, charlatans and con-artists hoping to turn a quick buck, but there were one or two surprises, and we thought you might like to read their letters of application. We have chosen the following three from the thousands we received.



10, Downing Street (hopefully)

London,

SW1A 2AA

May 15th 2026

GUV.OK

Dear Sir/Madam/Other,

I think I might possibly like to apply for the job of 'editing person' of *Riders*.

Actually, though, now I see it written down like that, in black and white (or any other inclusive colours), maybe I don't want the job after all . . . let me think about it for a bit until I'm certain . . . well, perhaps not exactly 'certain', but at least fairly sure . . . or not. Who can say?

No. I've definitely decided that I don't want to be the editing person. Forget it. That's it. I've made up my mind. Definitely not.

But then, on the other hand, I might want to do it next week and it would be too late if I said 'no' now, wouldn't it? Or would you let me change my mind next week?

Anyway, just in case you are interested here is a brief CV:

Born: Sept 2nd 1962

Decisions taken since then: thousands and thousands

Action taken: I'm not so sure about this; that's a tricky one; there might have been some, I think; yeh, I'm nearly sure that there must be some; but then again, I can't be sure, can I? Or can I? Let me know what you think.

Qualifications: I've got a double AA for my postcode and Lord Alli has given me some nice designer jodhpurs for riding.

My Best Feature: Oh, it's my hair, definitely. I'm sure of that. Certainly. No doubt about it. Vote-winning hair.

Anyway, I don't want your rotten old job, so there!

But then again, maybe . . . who knows?

Not me.

Yours faithfully

K. Starmer (Sir)

PS: I've changed my mind . . . I think . . . I, err . . . . . .

Wood Farm
Sandringham
Norfolk
April 1st 2026

Dear Sir,

As you may know, and as a result of circumstances beyond one's control, one has a bit of time on one's hands at the moment. Therefore, when one saw that the senior position of Editor of 'Riders' was being advertised, one thought one ought to apply.

One's credentials are impeccable. One doesn't want to name-drop, but between you and one, one is very well connected. For example, one's young nephew, Prince William, even rides a Ducati, and Duc is Italian for Duke and one used to be one of those, so that's a good sign. And the magazine is apparently attached to the IAM, and, as you will know, I am the 'Great I AM', which makes it a perfect fit don't you think?

Anyway, happy to be interviewed at any time.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor (Mr)

NORTH WALES
MAY 1ST 2026

Dear Sirs

I don't want the job for myself; I'm just hoping we can have that naughty Mr Lyttleton back again.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Trellis

I'm sorry, I haven't a clue why this lady applied. [NF]

Our traditional Easter charity ride saw us return to the Scotts Project Trust in Tonbridge on the Saturday of the Easter weekend. There were eight bikes on the day, and as always, we were warmly greeted by the staff and service users at Scotts and were well catered for with plenty of cake and hot drinks.

It was a most enjoyable day, and we contributed in the form both of chocolate and cash donations. A particular thank you to Gerhard, who was not able to join the ride but who was kind enough to meet us at the start point to pass over a large bag full of Easter eggs.

Scotts are enormously grateful for our donations and, in particular, for the time that our members spend in socialising with the residents on our visits, which are always much enjoyed by all at the Trust.

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IDCAM

INTRODUCTORY DAY COURSE IN ADVANCED MOTORCYCLING

2026 Dates

- June 20th
- July 18th
- Aug 15th
- Sep 19th
- Oct 17th
- Nov 21st

Our IDCAM is held at the Kent Fire and Rescue Road Safety facility in Marconi Way, Rochester, ME1 2XQ. If you wish to attend, please register your interest via the calendar on Tracker. Attendees are asked to arrive at 08.45 for a prompt 09:00 start. The morning session consists of a presentation about IAM RoadSmart, about KAMG and the aims of the course, and how to check that both the rider and motorcycle are fit for the road. This is followed by a coffee break.

The second presentation is all about the system of motorcycle control and, if time permits, a *Highway Code* quiz. The morning session will finish at approximately 12:15.

Please note that lunch is not provided. You may bring along your lunch or, if you wish, your allocated Observer can take you to a local café.

The afternoon session consists of an observed ride with a National Observer, and includes a pre-ride briefing and post ride debrief. The finish point is at a mutually agreed location that is usually closer to home than the start. The afternoon session lasts around two and a half hours.

If you would like to attend as an Associate, please contact associates@kamg.org.uk .

MACHINE CONTROL DAY

Our machine control days are organised by David Austen. If you have not yet signed up then do it now – simply log on to Tracker and register your participation or contact email below:

mcd@kamg.org.uk

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

2026 Dates

Sat 13th June **Sun 12th July**
Sun 23rd August **Sat 12th Sept**

Non-KAMG members will be asked for a small fee of £10.00 contributing to the running costs.

Arrival time: 08:45 for 09:00 start

Finish Time: approx 13:00 Hrs

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