



NORTHUMBRIA ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

Escape to Colditz



2012 Summer and Autumn
Newsletter



NAM is affiliated with the
Institute of Advanced Motorists

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The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of Northumbria Advanced Motorcyclists or the Institute of Advanced Motorists and should not be interpreted as such.

Did you know NAM has a Costco card?

Costco is a membership warehouse club, where members can buy quality goods and services at low prices. They also sell and fit standard car tyres as and winter tyres. Contact David Henderson, Assistant Treasurer for more information.



NAM is supported by
Northumbria Fire & Rescue Service
And
Northumbria Police



A word from the Editor



Welcome, to the third newsletter of 2012. I am Barry Bullas the editor and I would like to particularly welcome anyone reading our newsletter for the first time.

Inside this edition alongside the usual sections we have great articles and reviews contributed by fellow NAM members. We are also very fortunate to have a great piece on last years Le Mans 24 hour moto by Matt Kelly the Publisher of Mirror Group Digital who kindly gave me permission to include it in the newsletter. Hopefully you will find his insight into the unique world of 24 hour motorcycle racing as interesting as I did.

Sunday 21st October was the last monthly club run of the season. 34 riders rode to Hawick (organised by John Magee), almost beating the record 36 bikes who went to St Abbs with Roland Macleod in March. Look out for photos and a write up in the next edition.

If you have a story, idea or feedback please get in touch. Email any contributions to NamEditor@hotmail.co.uk or speak to me at the monthly meeting.

Chairman's remarks

As we approach the last club ride out of the season this coming Sunday (John Magee is taking us up to Hawick and the Scottish Borders) preparations are under way for NAM's 10th AGM in November.

The notice and invitation for this special meeting will be dropping through letter boxes any day now.

Ten years is quite a milestone for any small club or voluntary organisation and NAM as the most northerly IAM affiliated motorcycling training group in England will be celebrating this anniversary by inviting past members of the Committee and Training Group who took the lead in establishing Northumbria Advanced Motorcyclists and laying down the foundations for a consistently high level of training by the group's Observers and Senior Observers.

Other special guests will include Ian Bell from Yamaha at Bedlington and Tom Killeen from the i2i Motorcycle Academy who will be undertaking some further

training for our Observers in the New Year. I know that several members of the club have already attended Tom's 'machine control' and 'off-road skills' courses run in North Yorkshire.

In addition to our special guests we will be making a presentation to our IAM Examiner Stuart Fawcett who has been associated with NAM since the beginning and must have carried out more than 300 motorcycle tests over the past ten years. I always remind Associates to remember everything that Stuart tells them during their feedback at the end of the test.

We are very fortunate in having Fred Walmsley the leading Manx

Norton and Matchless tuner and his son Matthew from Triumph North East as our guest speakers

Michael Sutherland



For Sale



Enamel IAM badges £5



IAM helmet stickers £2



NAM sew on badge £1



NAM Keyring £1

Following requests from NAM members we now have a number of new items in stock. These can be purchased at the monthly meetings. The most requested item by far has been the enamel IAM badges which are available for £5. We also have a number of NAM branded items which are also available.



NAM now has its own facebook page. It is a great place for sharing pictures of rideouts, details of upcoming events and attracting new members. It can be viewed by anyone, even if you don't have a facebook account, though it only takes a minute to set an account up if you do want one. If you currently have a facebook account please go to the NAM page and click the like button.

www.facebook.com/NorthumbriaAdvancedMotorcyclists

Filtering



This is best described as when a rider uses the benefits of a motorcycle's size and agility to make progress past other road users in queues of stationary or slow moving traffic. It is one of the perks of being on a motorcycle that you can pass in this manner. It is perfectly legal and when carried out properly can be quite safe, but as with all things there are considerations to be made before commencing on a filtering manoeuvre.

Filtering is effectively an overtake and if you think of it in this way there are a lot of the principles of overtaking that apply to filtering. The main benefit is that you can make progress when others cannot and that also becomes the main problem. Because the car drivers that you are passing become irritated at the fact that they are stuck in a queue and some will become quite obstructive and aggressive

towards you. Some do not think that it is a legal manoeuvre hence their aggression. The secret is to be completely safe. Do not put yourself or anyone else at risk and be considerate and courteous. It is sometimes better to miss the chance of filtering rather than put yourself in a confrontational situation. Having completed the filtering manoeuvre be courteous and acknowledge other road users that you have passed. If you do it right, the next time the person you overtake is confronted with someone filtering they are much less likely to give them a hard time.

If the traffic is stationary and

"If you decide initially not to filter leave your self sufficient gap behind the vehicle in front so you can filter if the situation changes."

no gaps are left you could consider stopping alongside the front offside of vehicle two or further back in the hope that the driver will let you in but don't force your way back into the gap when the traffic moves off. You will have to be prepared to wait for someone to let you in but you do not want to be in this position if it means you are on the wrong side of the road especially in the face of oncoming traffic.

By observing the type of vehicle and/or the driver you could stop alongside a vehicle that will be slower to move off for example a bus or HGV. You may think that certain types of driver may give you precedence but try not to stereotype or prejudge what will happen. If you are in any doubt stop further back or do not filter.

As with overtaking, the golden rule is that you should always have somewhere to go. Try and identify a gap that you can pull into before you filter. You may find that as you are filtering other gaps may appear or your identified gap disappears, so be prepared to alter your riding plan accordingly.

When you are filtering on a multi lane road there is nothing wrong with beginning your filter or overtake in one lane and completing it in another

adjacent lane. Be careful as you do so to ensure that you are still in the appropriate lane for your intended direction of travel.

When filtering consider the width of your machine relative to the available gap and make sure you give yourself a wider margin if you have a pillion in case you wobble a bit. Tell your pillion what you intend to do so that it does not come as a surprise.

If you can improve your conspicuity by positioning or by using dipped beam headlights or riding lights then do so.

If you decide initially not to filter leave your self sufficient gap behind the vehicle in front so you can filter if the situation changes.

"When filtering consider the width of your machine relative to the available gap and make sure you give yourself a wider margin"

Main Points to Note

1) Only filter past stationary or slow moving vehicles. Some advanced trainers try to put a maximum speed on filtering, for example 30 mph, but you really have to use your own discretion and I would say that once the traffic starts to move at a speed appropriate to the circumstances at that time then you should slot back into the line of traffic. Sometimes even 10 to 15 mph can be sufficient to get back into the traffic flow.

2) Normally you should only filter to the offside of a line of vehicles except, where overtaking on the left is permitted by the highway code. This would mean to the offside only of a line of vehicles on a single carriageway, between lanes one and two on a dual carriageway and between lanes one and two or two and three and to the offside of lane three on a three lane road.

3) Do not filter where you would commit an offence, i.e. Along with the hard shoulder of a motorway which is contrary to the advice given above anyway. Contrary to "keep left" signs or "no overtaking" signs or if it means crossing a solid white line in the centre of the road.

4) In the case of filtering past



traffic on the approach to a roundabout, a junction or where you have to give way at traffic lights, do not go to the front of the queue. If you do it will put you in competition with the vehicle alongside you when you set off, as you both compete for the same space. In the case of temporary traffic lights you may find that you end up past the lights and cannot therefore see when they change. More importantly you may narrow the gap for oncoming vehicles to get safely past. Slot into, or wait alongside the gap behind vehicle one of further back if appropriate.

5) You should always be able to stop within the distance you can see to be clear. I would suggest that when filtering the furthest point you can see to be clear is the front of the vehicle that you are currently overtaking. Be prepared to stop at that point and check that it is safe to continue, particularly if the vehicle you are overtaking has stopped in the proximity of a junction.

6) As soon as the traffic begins to move freely again slot back into of traffic.

Watch out for

Vehicles turning left or right at junctions.

Vehicles changing lanes.

Vehicles doing U-turns to avoid the traffic delay.

Other motorcyclists behind you who may also be filtering.

Doors opening as drivers or passengers alight.

Drivers pulling in front of you purely to prevent your progress.

Arms and heads emerging from open windows, litter, particularly cigarette ends.

Vehicles emerging from junctions left and right or vehicles waiting in central reservations waiting to turn. Be particularly careful at junctions or crossovers were vehicles on your left or right may have stopped to allow vehicles to

emerge from junctions or central reservations.

Oncoming traffic that may not be aware of your presence. If possible try not to be alongside the vehicle that you are overtaking when the oncoming vehicle passes you (commonly known as the meat in the sandwich). You can relax this rule a little if the oncoming vehicle is aware of your presence, is also travelling at low speeds and there is sufficient safety margin. You should not cause the oncoming vehicle to alter course or speed.

Finally

Be courteous and acknowledge the drivers of vehicles that you are overtaking, particularly those that give you precedence or ease your passage.

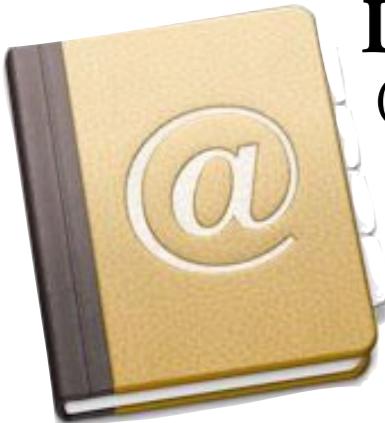
If in doubt - do not filter

**Stuart Fawcett
IAM Examiner**

Do we have your correct info?

(Home address, email address and contact number)

If not you could be missing out on important communications. Contact Membership Secretary Paddy Jarvis by email: jarvis_p1@sky.com phone: 01670 523736 or speak to him at the next monthly meeting.



ANNUAL MOTORCYCLE CONFERENCE REPORT 2012

Mick Goodwin and Michael Sutherland attended the IAM's annual motorcycle conference held at Warwick University on October 7th together with more than 150 representatives from the national network of 91 advanced motorcycle training groups in the UK. This is the fifth successive year that NAM has attended.

The opening address as usual was from the IAM's President Mr Alistair Cheyne OBE who emphasised that the IAM's voice on road safety is continuing to grow and that advanced driving and riding is for everyone.

Chief Executive, Simon Best spoke about the current research and campaigns that the IAM are involved with including safer crash barrier design for motorcyclists, national bus lane access for motorcycles, the serious effect of drivers' updating Facebook while on the move and supporting a trial of the 80 mph limit.

With difficult economic conditions most Councils have seen a 15% reduction in road safety budgets which has corresponded with a rise in road deaths and serious injuries for the first time in 18

years. Motorcycle deaths were up 8-9% during 2011 and drivers were up by 3% during this same period despite a national fall in the quantity of petrol and diesel being bought by riders and car drivers.

The causes of this unfortunate rise include the state of our roads, the reduction in Police traffic patrols and the rise in popularity of small motorcycles and scooters for commuting especially in London and other large cities. In time these statistics will be refined and we should have a clearer idea about road accidents in Northumberland and the Tyne & Wear areas.

What does seem to be clear is the importance of keeping road safety initiatives in the consciousness of all road users.

At Northumbria Advanced Motorcycles we have our part to play in encouraging riders to take up the opportunity of an assessment ride then hopefully the advanced riding training programme.

Research continues to show that the main cause of motorcycle accidents are rider error and in particular riders failing to predict hazards until it is too late. Conversely advanced rider training shows lasting improvements in

attentiveness and improved planning and anticipation of hazards together with more enjoyment of motorcycling.

Generally speaking riders are more responsible for accidents on minor and rural roads while other drivers are a main contributory factor for accidents involving bikes in towns and built up areas, which is probably what we would expect to see.

The overall pass rate for the Skills for Life advanced bike test is 85% and by my calculations NAM is doing slightly better than that. The main reasons for examiners failing candidates are not following the system followed by less than optimal cornering then incorrect positioning.

Lack of observation is the main reason for those Associates who fail due to committing a traffic offence on their advanced test.

The last workshop that we attended was presented by Bridgestone Tyre's Development Manager who had scores of facts and figures about bike tyres at his finger tips. It was interesting to learn that the derivation of the name Bridgestone is from the translation of the founder's name Shojino Ibashi into

English which means 'Stone Bridge'.

Bridgestone was formed in 1931 and is the largest tyre manufacturer in the world. All their bike tyres come from one factory in Japan.

During the Question and Answer session we learned the GP bike tyres weigh three times the weight of road tires and are almost solid in

structure so that they can hold up to 200 BHP and temperatures of 150c. I was very surprised to hear that tyre pressures on GP bikes are typically 7-8 psi in the front and just 5 psi in the rear!

The final discussion was about whether to follow individual bike manufacturer's recommendations for OE fit tyres and tyre pressures. Tyre

manufacturers are allowed up to a 4% variation in tyres rated at a nominal size meaning that the 180mm rear tyre on your bike could vary from just 172.8mm to 187.2mm an overall difference of 14.4mm which is why I will always be replacing by bike tyres with original fitments as a matter of course.

Michael Sutherland

Rideouts & Events

When	Who	What
9th October	Everyone welcome	Guest speaker at the monthly meeting will be Malcolm Ainsley who will be demonstrating how to prepare your bike for winter with All Year Biker
13th November	Everyone welcome	NAM's AGM. Fred and Matt Walmsley giving a talk on preparing classic racers for Goodwood and the TT.
11th December Christmas buffet	Everyone welcome	Guest speaker at the monthly meeting will be Watch Manager Callum McDougal, from Northumbria Fire and Rescue Service. There will also be a Christmas buffet at a cost of £5 per person. Friends and partners are all welcome.



Have you paid your subs?

NAM relies on your subs to function but some members are yet to pay. Standing order (SO) is the quickest and easiest way to pay. Please ensure your SO has your name or NAM number as a reference and is for £15. SO are still being sent at the old amount, if

you currently have an SO please check your amount.

Contact Membership Secretary Paddy Jarvis by email: jarvis_p1@sky.com
phone: 01670 523736 or speak to him at the next monthly meeting.

Escape to Colditz - Part 1

Taking the very convenient overnight DFDS ferry from North Shields Corporation Quay to the Amsterdam port of Ijmuiden it is approximately 440 miles due east to the former east German city of Leipzig in Saxony. The small town of Colditz which became famous during the Second World War as a high security prison for British and Allied escapees is 25 miles further to the south east.

We now have sufficient experience of travelling in Germany and Austria to know that the best way to find a 'gasthoff' (guest house) overnight accommodation on the way to your destination is to pull off from an autobahn or main road towards a village or small town and head towards the church spire that will be in the centre. There you will be guaranteed to find a family run gasthoff for 25-30 Euros per night for B&B often with a restaurant too for an evening meal. Produce and



freshly baked bread is usually local and we have even come across restaurant waitresses in traditional dress. Far better value and always a nicer setting than motorway service stations and motels.

In the morning another good recommendation to keep down costs is to become a 'Gregg's outlet' discreetly making your own cheese or ham bun from the breakfast table to stow away in your top box for lunch. With some fruit and a bottle of water you can then picnic at scenic spots along the way rather than again be bound by busy and more costly motorway services.

I usually come late to technology and this was the first time that I have used a 'sat nav' on the bike abroad and what a difference it made especially while negotiating busy motorway intersections like those which orbit Schiphol

airport as you first make your way through Holland. Don't get me wrong, I love maps and we took a full set of the red Michelin touring maps with us to plan the route but a sat nav takes a great deal of pressure off the rider enabling you to concentrate more on your riding and enjoying the scenery. They are also very useful to locate gasthoffs, petrol and points of interest in less populated areas. I wouldn't go abroad again without the Garmin which is connected simply to the GS's electrics under the steering yolk.

Originally the plan was to stay at hostel accommodation actually in the old guards quarters in Colditz castle itself but this was fully booked well in advance by a summer school for classical musicians. Instead we had booked two nights with Ralph Gurney at his B&B on the edge of the town centre.



Colditz courtyard

This proved ideal with secure garage parking for the bikes and just a ten minute walk to the castle entrance. I had been told that Ralph was rather eccentric and true to form he had run the Union Jack up the flag pole for our arrival and gave us several tips on how to get the most of our visit to the castle. On the evening of arrival it was very interesting to hear a different perspective about the benefits of the former East German state compared to living in the reunified Germany. Full employment, stable prices and cheap holiday travel to Bulgarian resorts were put up as counter arguments to living in a democratic, free and more prosperous economy. As Ralph put it "There have been some winners but more losers in the old East. Yes there is more money being spent on Health but we need it as more people are having heart attacks due to the stress of trying to earn a living." Ralph was also very keen to understand and appreciate the British sense of

humour; one of his favourites after he stumbled outside the dining room was "Did you enjoy your trip? No, I forgot to take my sandwiches!" He was really taken with that one.

Now to Colditz Castle which was originally built as a hunting and hospitality lodge for German nobility but has been a hospital, and an institution for adults with learning disabilities before becoming Oflag IV-C the most famous prisoner of war camp for officers during the second world war. Oflag is just a German abbreviation for officers' camp. Ralph had advised us to go on the

extended tour but to be sure to ask to be taken up to the roof top attics where the famous glider was secretly built but was never actually used for an escape attempt. This isn't on the guided tour at present but may well be incorporated as a special exhibition in the future. Steffi, our tour guide, was very good and pestered the controller until he gave up the keys to this part of the castle. Well worth the 5Euro tip.

While we first waiting for our guide for the tour in English we were 'ordered' to "line up against the wall" which was a bit disconcerting when you have watched as many war films as I have!

Steffi explained that Channel 4 had filmed a documentary about the Colditz glider earlier in the summer and sure enough the programme was on television at the end of August just after we returned home from holiday. You can see how the replica glider was built and actually flew if you

Colditz during WW2



Gasthof Hochalmspitze

go onto Google or U tube. It's amazing!

This was hugely enjoyed by the men when it was read out to them on parade.

The German guards had assumed that being built on hard rock that trying to escape by tunnelling would be impossible but as recently as 1995 another of the tunnels being excavated by French POWs was discovered making some 32 tunnel escape attempts in total.

The first British army officer to escape to neutral Switzerland was Captain, later Major Pat Reid nearly two years after being sent to Colditz. Pat Reid and fellow officer Flight Lieutenant Howard Wardle hid in a storage cellar until after dark then crawled out of a narrow air shaft and escaped disguised as Flemish workmen. 'Aunty Ginny' and 'Aunty Mary' sent a picture postcard back to the British Commanding Officer to say how much they were enjoying their Swiss vacation!

the Inn tonight for a few beers. Perhaps a gesture of the hand would have been all that was needed!

One officer pole vaulted right over the inner barbed wire and outer wall in the exercise park in one go while another officer scaled the barbed wire, taunted the guard into shooting, then climbed over the wall while the guard reloaded his rifle!

A Canadian officer who was an Olympic gymnast before the war went over a wall and tumbled down to the ground from great height jumping and grabbing hold of bars on the outer windows of the castle.

Would be escapers were of course put in solitary confinement for a month as punishment but not before their photograph had been taken for the 'rogues gallery' to help train new guards into possible ways of escaping. At one point there was one German guard for every prisoner of war so high was the security.

Coming back to the glider in the roof, Officer POWs had access to education facilities and more constructive leisure activities under the Geneva Convention. In the prison library was a book on 'how to build a glider' with detailed plans on wing and fuselage construction. Gingham curtains were used to cover

Morning coffee overlooking The Julian Alps



the wings with a porridge mix being used as 'dope' to cure the fabric. While the glider was being built secretly behind a false wall the prisoners scattered fresh dust on the floor each night so that it looked as though no one had been in the attic.

An evening visit to the railway station in the town where the prisoners were escorted up to the castle completed our visit.

Next day we headed due south for 460 miles towards the south eastern corner of the Austrian Alps called Carinthia and the Maltatal National Park which would be in reach of our goal, the Nockamstrasse Pass on the Austrian Slovenian border. We broke our journey at another gasthoff with Jack and Anne finding this one in record time just two minutes off the main road. This gasthoff was in the family farm house in a small community called

Pfaffenhofen, hence the new expression in our group "Stop Pfaffenhofen about". We left the bikes and took a taxi into the nearby town where we enjoyed a wonderful Italian meal outside on the upstairs veranda overlooking the town. It was so good that Jack and Anne made a special diversion on their way home just to sample their hospitality again.

Day five saw us arriving at our main holiday destination the village of Malta (no not the Med!) in the national park. Gasthoff HochalmstraBe is run as a bikers' hotel by John and Ros from the Midlands who we first met at the NEC bike show three years ago.

They cater very well for bikers with covered parking, access to workshop tools with spare oil and bike cleaning etc. John will download customised routes for you onto your own sat nav and there is always

the opportunity to join other visitors on one of their ride outs. One of the other guests was Kanou who had ridden his red GS (the same as mine) from his home in Nigeria. Kanou told us that there were probably less than 1,000 big bikes in all of Nigeria which has a population of more than 180m. There are no official importers of large capacity bikes such as BMWs in the country so he had to arrange his own import from BMW in Park lane, London.

He had bought four bikes in this way but had to have an intermediary in London to pass on the money for the purchases. Getting spare parts was even more difficult so he ordered a supply at the time as buying the bike. Coming through Morocco the temperature was up to 48C and the only way he could keep going was by stopping at a filling station every 50 Km to completely hose down his clothing, inside and out. Incidentally once on the move the air-cooled boxer engine ran at one temperature indicator bar below maximum and did not overheat. Also from absolute empty on the petrol computer the standard GS will run for another 38 Km (24 miles) before finally conking out; worth knowing as I have had mine up to 18!

In Part 2; return home via the Italian Dolomites, the Swiss Alps, The Rhine and the Mosel.

Michael Sutherland

Loneliness of the long-distance biker

Le Mans 24 Hour Moto 2011

by Matt Kelly

Every year 100,000 people travel to the Le Mans circuit in France to watch the world's greatest 24-hour motorbike Endurance race.

2.20am. Sunday, September 25, 2011. Le Mans, France.

At the back of the Honda TT Legends pit garage are two television monitors, mounted side by side, high on the breezeblock wall.

On one monitor a fixed camera position shows the blackness of the Bugatti start-finish straight, then the sudden burning blurry glow of motorcycle headlights, as though pushing fireballs six inches in front of their nose. The bikes barrel along the straight, 180mph, then sweep right; an elegant tracer bullet of white.

Not a soul in the garage looks at this monitor. It is the other screen that holds us rapt.

On this screen are numbers. Twenty lines of small yellow and green numbers, coming and going. Time raced, time remaining, team position, team names, team numbers, sector times, lap times, number of laps, time in pits.

Fifteen yards away, between

How the race starts



the dark ravine of grandstands, the Number 77 Honda TT Legends bike howls through the darkness. On board Cameron Donald, a likeable Australian road racer with a Tony Curtis haircut and cheesy grin, has just put in a 1min 42sec lap.

No-one sees him or the bike. Inside the garage, the team - the ones who aren't cat-napping between rider changes - watch the monitor. Watch the numbers.

Out there is the race. The hurtling passage of man and metal for the duration of precisely one rotation of Planet Earth. But in here is the monitor. In here, the monitor is everything. The monitor is truth.

We have been racing solid for 11 hours and 20 minutes. There are another 12 hours and 40 minutes to go. The world turns. The lap counter ticks over. Welcome to Le Mans.

The LeMans 24hour Moto race is one of those handful of motorcycle events that transcend mere competition. The classic events that stand apart on the calendar. That blend the drama and danger and festival with a sense of history that permeates the air, like the smell of racing gasoline.

Born relatively recently, in 1977, when its elder sibling, the 24hour classic endurance Bol D'or left the Le Mans Bugatti circuit, the Le Mans

24 Hours Moto is a race everyone wants to win.

No, wait – correct that. A race everyone wants to finish. Because unlike all other forms of superbike racing, bringing home these technically complex and temperamental machines after completing around 800 laps is achievement in itself. Few can win this race, but finishing is a triumph in itself. And a challenge that falls to the men (and women) on the team.

1pm – 2 hours to race start.
Bright sunshine and short shadows on the pitlane.

Jules Boland, chief mechanic, moves around the chosen race machine like a man with a bad case of OCD, checking, rechecking. Rechecking the checks he just checked. And then checking them again.

He is, is in his own words, “quietly sh***ing myself”.

“I wonder why I do it. I’d love to get myself a 9-5 job and sit up there in those stands and watch it all but then again I wouldn’t want to miss this.”

This race is mechanically notable. The Honda Fireblade 1000cc machine is equipped with an ABS system. The first time ABS has ever been used at World Championship level. This might help riders in the wet, or under emergency braking, but it certainly isn’t helping Jules’ central nervous system.

“The ABS is another complication. It’s an incredible step forward. But it’s more stuff to go wrong and that’s a worry. I’m like this every race. I’ll settle down at some point, but right now I’m very worried. I feel like throwing up.”

Cameron Donald has been chosen to start the race.

His team mates, John McGuinness (who, with 17 Isle of Man TT wins, the second most successful TT rider in history, is the only man who truly qualifies for the description Legend) and Keith Amor, are up front in the garage leaning on the bikes, relaxed, while the Aussie rider gets a last minute massage in the team truck behind the garage.

Is there any sense of needle not to be starting? I ask McGuinness, who is – despite having slightly slower lap times than Cameron – unquestionably the senior figure in the team. He shrugs.

Although he’s only 39 years old to Cameron’s 34, he seems an entire lifetime older. He possesses an innate awareness of his surroundings. He is completely in sync with the strange environment of a racetrack.

The way he’ll move a spectator out of the way a moment

before a bike passes. The way he picks up a wheel stand and hands it to an engineer before the engineer knows he needs it.

This awareness sometimes manifests itself as a slow, deliberate calm. When all around are wired and buzzing, McGuinness stands apart; the man who’s seen it all before.

“I started at Suzuka,” he says, referring to the classic Japanese 8-hour endurance race. “I’m not sure how they decide these things.” It might be a team. But it’s a team of successful racers. Competitiveness is their defining characteristic.

We’re staring ahead of us, across the pitlane and the track into the grandstand facing the garage. A large white St George’s flag is tied to the rails, the words John McGuinness printed across it. McGuinness is well beyond having to prove himself.

His thick-as-thieves pal Keith Amor - a tough, compact, package of heart and nerve and sinew – also appears relaxed. He knows he’s not in the frame to start.

His lap times have been significantly slower than John and Cam’s. Between one and two seconds. But it’s his efforts in testing exclusively on the ABS bike – as opposed to the standard machine the team has been running in previous

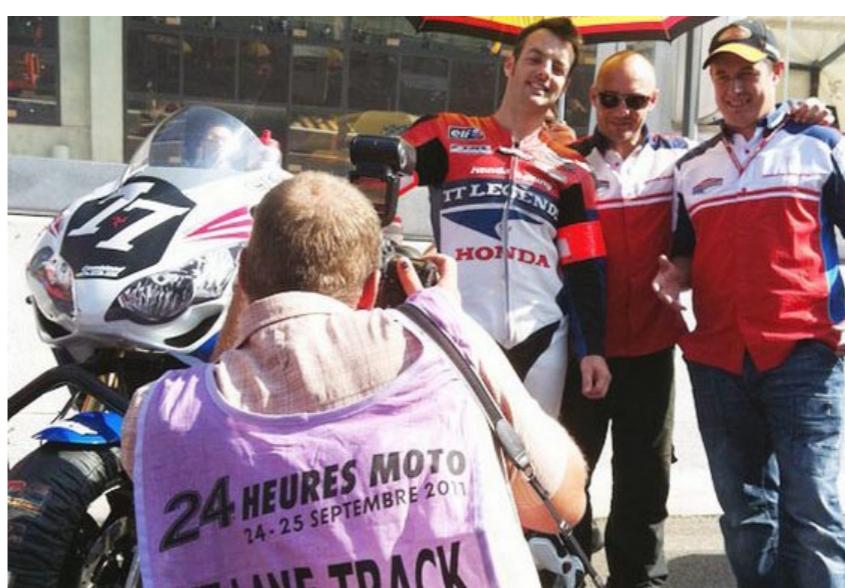
rounds – that has given the engineers and team managers the confidence to make this world-first ABS start.

It’s a contribution the man ultimately responsible for the success of this championship, Robert Watherston, Honda’s boss of motorcycle sport in Europe, holds dear.

“Keith put in a lot of work on the ABS bike. Without that there’s a very good chance we wouldn’t be starting with it today which would have been very disappointing. It’s this kind of top-level feedback from riders that help us develop and refine and get the product right. At a business level, that’s incredibly important.”

At a business level. And it is a business.

Those flag-waving 100,000 fans out there may see the riders as individuals, superstars, men in charge of their own destiny. But it’s a fallacy.



This is a business and the riders are employees just as the mechanics are, as the catering team are, as are the folk back home who organise the logistics, the transport, the tickets, the passes ... the thousand different things that need to be done to get a lorry load of riders and bikes into a pit lane in the middle of France an hour before the greatest endurance race in the world begins.

Yes, the riders are employees. They do what they’re told. Quite often.

Russell Benney – the endurance race expert drafted in by Honda especially for this, their first year assault on the endurance World Championship – has given Cameron his instructions for this, the first hour-long stint.

“We’re starting in tenth place on the grid and it’s important to stay there. It’s a long race, so there’s no panic.”

Cameron has other ideas.

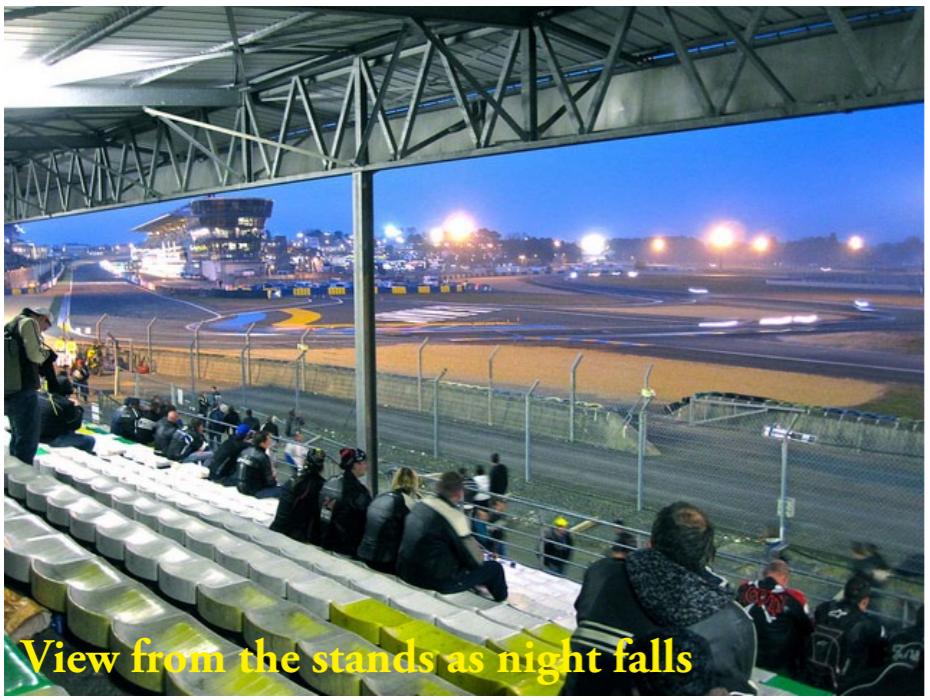
“Obviously the most important thing is for me not to crash the bike in the first stint. To bring the bike home. I haven’t told them this, but my best form of defence is attack. I’ll be thinking about my favourite Rage Against the Machine quote: ‘If you settle for nothing now, you’ll settle for nothing later.’”

“I’m going to go out and ride it hard. There’s a lot of risk in being too tentative.

“You certainly don’t want to get caught up in the riff-raff back there. Some of these French guys are crazy. There seems to be more honour in going full-out and crashing than in finishing.”

The riff-raff he refers to are the weaker teams among the 57 entrants. As a full factory team, the Honda TT Legend are among the cream of the teams. But many entries are amateurs with little or no support. Just very quick, very passionate men with no chance of a podium, but every chance of an unforgettable 24 hours.

Where Honda have three world class road racers, a team of more than 20 mechanics and a full non-stop catering team, these teams at the other end of the scale will have their uncle Francois and his mechanic mate who drove in from Toulouse the night before last, plus a basket full



View from the stands as night falls

of baguettes and cheese and a case of Orangina. They will have remortgaged the house to pay for the entry fee, a new set of race fairings and the £2000 of fuel they'll burn.

Their presence on the track is what makes the Le Mans 24 hour special. It lends this historic, elite event a real air of sporting romance.

Without them, Le Mans would be just another leg in the World Endurance Championship, like the race at Albacete, where fewer than 1000 people came to watch. But they mean danger too. Teams like Honda, massively superior, will lap as much as 10 seconds faster than some of these boys, and from about the 10th lap onwards will have to run through these unpredictable mobile chicanes. In racing lingo, it's called traffic.

2.58pm, Saturday. Two minutes to Race Start.

We watch from high in the stands, directly above the small figure standing, poised electric, in the 10th white circle spray-painted on the grass at the side of the track. Across the other side of the track is the machine, held upright by an engineer. The clock hand moves with undue slowness.

A French voice, barely decipherable over the tannoy, is telling the riders there are two minutes to go before they have to sprint across the track, climb onto the machine, start it and tear off as fast as they can to meet the first corner.

It's clear Cameron cannot understand French. The other drivers are doing their best to appear relaxed as they stand within the boundary of their little circles, spaced out every five or six feet the length of

the start-finish straight.

Cameron is hot to go. Tensed like a middle-distance athlete about to sprint from the start line. Except he's wearing a full set of racing leathers, a helmet, boots, gloves, back-protector and it's approaching 75 degrees. He fully maintains this state of agitated readiness for the next 120 seconds.

The clock ticks.

The commentator's voice rises in pitch. The crowd rise to their feet. And then ...total, complete, stillness and silence as though sheer weight of expectation has overwhelmed the moment..... and then CHARGE! The racers sprint to the bikes, awkward strides in stiff leathers, and a moment later are out of sight. It begins.

3.50pm, Saturday. The first changeover.

After 50 minutes racing, the monitor tells a good story. The team has gone from 10th position to fourth. An entire round of the British Superbike series will last around 30 minutes. Cameron has ridden practically two BSB races back-to-back, as hard as he could possibly ride and there are still more than 23 hours to go.

The size of the fuel tank on a superbike limits the length of each rider's stint to around an hour.

Each rider must stay in his leathers for half an hour after the end of his stint in case he is required in an emergency. In preparation for their next stint, they must be awake and ready for at least half an hour before the team expects the bike to return.

The mathematics is brutal on human physiology.

At best, a rider will have around one hour to get some sleep in between stints. That's if he has the knack of falling asleep on demand. If, perchance, the adrenaline charging through the system after racing a 185bhp superbike flat out lingers in the system, any meaningful sleep will be impossible.

For now, with the race less than an hour old, the dread of what 4am will feel like is pushed to the back of the mind.

In the furthest, most private corner of the garage, behind a black curtain, Cameron Donald is eating a banana. Beside him is a pram containing the sleeping form of John McGuinness's new baby daughter Maisie.

Maisie's older brother Ewan is glued to his Nintendo. He has next to zero interest in bike racing and the fact that dad has just set off on the world famous Le Mans circuit is a non-event.

Cameron's hair is wet with sweat. A cold towel round his neck cools him down as he absorbs both banana and the last 50 minutes. In his eyes, he's still doing laps.

He seems concerned about the bike. There's a consistent and worrying pulsing from the front brake in one corner only.

"It feels like the front wheel's going to let go in the corner. It's not good," he says. "And as the tyres wear down, the bike's drifting wildly. One time my feet were off the pegs and everything."

He makes the gesture common among bike racers when describing a loss of traction under heavy braking. The flat palm out front, the elbow behind weaving around in the air.

What seems smooth and controlled on the TV screens feels epic and wild to the man on the seat. Television, unlike the photograph, lies all the time.

Russell Benney computes the information Cameron has just given him and wonders what to do with it. He stares at the monitor, the sector times McGuinness is doing out there, can they maintain fourth place?

"When I was starting out," he tells me, eyes fixed to the monitor, watching the McGuinness sector times.

"Someone told me the ultimate truth in racing: Money equals speed. So how fast do you want to go?"

I ask him are Honda spending enough money to win. Ahead of them of the track are the big successful teams from Suzuki, BMW, Yamaha and last year's winners, the Kawasaki team.

"Not this year. But this is our first year. In my experience, success always comes at the end of a three-year cycle. Invest, learn .. then succeed.

"It's ridiculous to expect us to win in the first year. These riders have never done anything like this before. It's a particular skill. It needs to be learned.

"Next year and the year after. That's when we will expect to improve."

6.35pm, Saturday. Dusk.

Almost four hours into the race and Falkirk road-racing star Keith Amor is still waiting to ride. The team has put its two quickest men, Donald and McGuinness on back-to-back stints. Both are physically exhausted.

Cameron Donald has crashed out in the truck, and John McGuinness is putting in laps of 1 minute 43seconds. They're holding fifth place comfortably.

Amor is standing in the pit lane trying to decide whether to use a tinted or a clear visor. During his stint, night will fall. The concern is a clear visor leaves him vulnerable to being blinded by the low-sun early in the stint.

A tinted visor will leave him blind towards the end of the stint. Then a stroke of luck. Clouds cover the sun. A clear visor is the choice. He laughs.

"Good! I like it when I don't have to make decisions."

He is a cheerful, tough character. But he must be feeling an acute pressure. The team are depending on him to maintain fifth place.

At 7.10pm, John McGuinness comes in from his second stint and Amor takes over. McGuinness looks shattered.

"Did you see that crash right in front of me?"

Nobody had. He waits a moment then lets out a loud "Whoo!"

It's the first time anyone has emoted anything positive since the race began.

"How was it?" I ask lamely, hoping to pick up on the surge of exhilaration, but it's gone. The balloon has deflated.

"OK," he says flatly. Then retreats into his thoughts.

8pm, Saturday. Darkness.

Outside the headlights are on. Keith is lapping 1min44s, 1min45s. He's the slowest man in the team but it's his first stint and the light has gone.

He comes in after an hour, disappointment personified.

"I felt like I was losing the front in the same corner for the first four or five laps. I thought f***, I'm going to bin it. I was just too nervy. No confidence. I want to go faster, but it's not there.

"It's a confidence thing. The change in light doesn't bother me at all. I prefer it when it's dark."

As strange as it sounds, for

"Most of us like to think that we're pretty good, but you just can't under estimate what these guys are doing."

some riders, night time is no disadvantage. The track is marginally lit in some places, but for the most part the headlights of the bikes provide the only illumination.

Tony Rutter, father of BSB rider Michael and an endurance racing specialist, actually used to go faster at night. "I can't see the oil marks on the track," he'd explain.

This first stint has taken much of the bounce out of Amor. The conversation is less free-flowing. He's less loose. He wants to stare up at the monitor and focus on the lap times. Try to let the doubts wash out before his next stint in two hours time.

In contrast, Robert Watherston, the Honda Europe bike racing boss,

is upbeat about the team's prospects.

"Look, we're not racing the top three, the Suzuki endurance racing team, Kawasaki or BMW. We need to get through the night and then apply some pressure. Who knows. But at this stage, we're definitely in with a sniff of a podium."

The day it seems is for racing. The night is for surviving.

As the fans drift away from the stands to the Status Quo concert and the campfires that burn throughout the night, filling the air with smoke, the pitlane becomes still, punctuated by the rattling cacophony of bike engines fighting against the 60kph restricter settings they use when coming in and out for rider changes.

Movement is minimal. The mechanics that had prowled the garages purposefully now crouch against walls and conserve their energy.

Exhilaration has evaporated. Only the monitor holds the fascination. We gaze upwards at the screen. Time raced; seven hours. Time remaining; seventeen hours. It seems impossible, a bad joke. But it's a fact. The monitor tells no lies. We're in it for the long haul.

Midnight.

From the now-empty stand, the bikes streaming along the start-finish straight seem like toys on a child's game. The race has ceased to exist. It is monotonous, predictable, bad-viewing.

And then out of the blue, at the end of the straight one bike leaves it late on the brakes and veers towards the front wheel of the bike he just passed. He misses by nothing.

The rider behind him stands the bike up and somehow manages to wrestle it round the corner. Me, watching alone in a stand that six hours ago had been standing room only, I let out a gasp. Suddenly this race is about as unmonotonous, unpredictable, un-toylike as is possible.

The night is about survival.

1am, Sunday. Cold, the circuit submerged in campfire smoke.

Keith Amor is not a man given to flights of fancy. So when he tells you of the out

What looks like mist is actually smoke from the nearby campfires



of body experience he went through at the 24 hour Bol D'or endurance race earlier this year, you take it at face value.

"It was 4am. I was at a really low ebb. Suddenly I found myself on the straight and it was so quiet. So dark. There were no lights anyway. All night I'd been following bike lights and suddenly there was nothing. There was just this thick smoke from all the campfire drifting across the track, across the beam of my headlight. It was all so strange. I thought to myself: F***ing hell. Am I dead?

"Then I came through the smoke and the lights were back all around me and I thought 'No! I'm not dead. I'm not dead at all.'"

This isn't just a race against the clock. Not even a race against the other men around you.

This is a race against yourself.

The smoke out on the circuit is really bad now. The riders come in from their stint with red, streaming eyes.

Keith is back out, but his lap times are poor. Fearful of surrendering their hold on fifth place, Russell calls him in early and puts Cameron back out. Cameron is definitely less sharp than before. Groggy. But he wakes up soon enough and is quickly posting quick 1.41 laps.

Watching the monitor, Keith looks upset with himself. He's been working terrifically hard. Steam rises from his head and the vein running across his forehead bulges. He desperately needs some rest, but his chances are slim. He seems consumed with the reality that he just cannot match his two team mates.

6.45am, Sunday.

John McGuinness: "I'm properly tired now. Really deep tired. My bones are hurting. It's difficult out there. It's getting a bit ragged. We had the safety car out for a while and the ABS brakes on the bike cooled down. They need to be hot to work properly. So for four or five laps after the safety car came in I was ..." he searches for the right word.... "shite."

The mood in the garage is low. The team is under threat from a resurgent BMW bike and a couple of smaller teams who are performing ahead of expectation. Everyone is waiting for daylight to change the mood.

And also, perhaps, the race order.

Mike, one of the fuel engineers with a dry thoughtful take on life, says: "We might just lose a few when the sun comes up. It tends to get a bit of dew on the tarmac. Gets a bit slippy."

Cameron looks across at him, visibly cheered by the idea.

Ten feet away in the pit, mechanics are slumped in chairs or on old mattresses, trying to get some sleep. The Japanese brake engineer has fallen asleep literally while inputting data into his laptop.

It feels like the night will be endless. That the clock will never move round to daytime.

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That somehow we're all trapped here in this garage, caught in a perpetual cycle of pointless motion. That we'll spend the rest of our lives staring up at this monitor, waiting for the lap time to tick over once more, waiting .. waiting .. waiting ...

Me, I blame it on the coffee.

8.20am, Sunday. Strong, beautiful hot sunlight breaking in the west.

The sun changes everything.

Cameron Donald is flying. Up on the monitor we see a lap of 1min 40 sec flash up. The first since the very first stint 17 hours ago. The race itself is shaping up to be a classic. Honda are still lying fifth. The two top teams, Suzuki and Kawasaki, after racing an entire afternoon, night and morning, are separated by less than nine seconds.

It's going to be a hot sunny day. Everyone's mood is transformed. It feels like it'll soon all be over.

There are more than nine hours to go.

9.45am, Sunday. The heat is on.

Keith is again dropped from the running order. Race manager Russell Benney and team manager Neil Tuxworth discuss the options, but in the end it is The Monitor which

makes the final call.

Russell Benney explains the maths.

"The BMW in seventh place is lapping quicker than we are and will catch us. We cannot stop that from happening. The guys ahead of us we cannot catch. There's one team I'm concerned about and it's the Yamaha Folch team.

"I'm putting John and Cam back to back to put a buffer between us and give the team enough space either to recover from a cock-up or to put our slower man out there against their quickest man and still keep the place."

His science is irrefutable. The logic of a man who has seen every permutation of endurance racing in a career spanning decades. And then it is thrown completely out of kilter by the glorious unpredictability of racing.

The BMW threatening the Honda team is suddenly losing time. Russell spots the anomaly on the monitor. There's a problem.

Suddenly, for once, attention switches from the monitor to the TV feed as the cameras follow the BMW bike coming into the pits. Our mechanics watch their mechanics at work, diagnosing the issue from the 12-inch screen.

"Clutch cable" says Jules.

"Their clutch cable's gone." Schadenfreude fills the air. Well, it is BMW after all.

2.36pm, Sunday. The final stint.

The whiteboard sitting above the fuel pump in the garage tells the story.

Here is where Russell Benney writes in marker pen the next event in the life of a 24-hour endurance race garage. The name on the board for the final stint is Keith's.

But with Cameron Donald running consistent quick laps of 1min 42 or 43 sec,

and the Yamaha team just one lap away, it's not a time for sentimentality. This is a business. The riders do their job.

Keith is in his leathers. But Benney has decided. The man to ride the last stint will be Cameron.

Keith, sitting next to John in the rear of the garage, is watching Benney and instantly knows the score. He tells John. John shrugs in sympathy. Keith looks to the ground.

It must be disappointing personally. But equally, he's part of a team. To risk giving up fifth place to spare his feelings would be absurd. Feelings are not in the equation.

The pit garage is crowded full

of people all eating pasta and meat sauce and Keith Amor looks like the loneliest man in Le Mans.

He's a professional. He can break it down, think it through and come back strong. But today has not been his day.

Later, he tells me: "It's just a confidence thing. The front end felt like a liability to me all day. In my last stint I went off the track four times. Once that happens, you're never going to be at the top of your game."

Cameron, learning the news that he will ride the last session, after John McGuinness, instantly recovers all the energy that has gradually sapped from his being over the past 23 hours.

"I'm pumped. Of course I want to ride it home."

3am: Bringing the bike back home .

The end is, of course, an anti-climax.

We stand on the pit wall, clambering high up the fence only to be ordered down by the single most supercilious prat in France who just happened to be marshalling that stretch of the pitlane.

A thousand people or more are up on this fence, but this bozo is tugging at the trousers

of Karen as she tries to watch her man heroically finish the race.

What are the chances of that, we wonder? Running into the world's biggest jobsworth at that precise moment? Ah well. We can be bigger than that.

"What a prick," says McGuinness, yet again managing to capture a moment in very few words.

But then Cameron wheelies up the finish lane. past the team and brings the machine through the pitlane and into the park fermee where it will be checked by scrutineers. Honda TT Legends finish fifth.

The 2011 Le Mans 24 hour endurance race is over.

The winners, the SRC Kawasaki team, manage 834 laps of the circuit.

Honda TT Legends completed 819.

Finally, the monitor is still. The numbers fixed in time

This was written by Matt Kelly who kindly gave permission to use it in the NAM newsletter. The original piece was published on 03/09/2011 at www.mirror.co.uk/sport/formula-1/le-mans-24-hour-moto-273757

You can follow Matt Kelly on twitter @MK1969

Equipment reviews

Tucano Urbano Termoscud (scooter apron)

www.urbanrider.co.uk/brands/tucano-urbano.html

I use my Honda SH300 for my daily commute and am expected to arrive dressed smartly. I noticed in France that many scooters and some motorcycles are fitted with a form of apron that protects the rider's legs from the elements. So I did a little research and I found that Tucano Urbano made an apron for my model scooter. I sent off my order and was very pleased with what I received.

The Tucano Urbano apron I purchased is designed specifically for the Honda SH300 and uses existing fairing fittings to attach it to the bike. On my bike, for example, there are two screws at the top of the fairing. The apron came with two, replacement screws to enable it to be attached. It also has a number of straps that keep it permanently in place. A nice touch, I thought, was the provision of two transparent, adhesive paint protectors. These can be placed on the bike where the straps might rub against the bodywork.

The apron is made of a strong, waterproof fabric and has a fleece lining, so I have warm, dry legs and feet all year round. It also features a large zipped inner pocket (sufficient for an A4 envelope), a pull out rainproof seat cover (to keep



rain off the seat whilst parked), straps for tying the apron out of the way on hot days (for some reason I have not had cause to use these) and an inflatable chamber, built into each side, that prevents any flapping in the wind.

In very heavy rain I use the neck strap to keep the chest part of the apron in place. This strap includes a simple, but effective, safety device that opens in the event of an accident and should prevent it from pulling the rider's head off.

At the point of writing this, the apron has been in daily use for 14 months. It is very tough and truly effective: On one of the many occasions when I have been out in a thunderstorm, I'd stupidly worn non-waterproof textile trousers (I should have

known better, it was still only July, after all!) the only trace of water on my trousers, when I eventually found shelter, was run-off from the sculpted back of the seat.

The only sign of wear that I have noticed is the velcro closure, that seals the seat cover pocket, appears to be thinning out a little.

I understand that very few NAM members ride scooters, but there are similar aprons produced for motorcycles; I've seen BMWs with them in Paris. Anyone who commutes throughout the year, or plans to do a long tour during the rainy season, could benefit from one of these.

Martin Trainor

Equipment reviews

LIDL Tank Bag

Riding a Deauville, with its integral panniers and a cavernous Givy top box, I rarely need extra storage space. However, I was planning a ride to through Central Europe so I thought about getting a tank bag. Just at that time (March/Feb) Lidl had a Crivit (own brand) bag on sale. The item looked presentable and tough had good specifications. These included detachable magnetic base, three side compartments, waterproof cover and could be converted to a ruck sac; just what I needed and all for just £19.99; bargain.

After spending almost five months on my garage shelf, the tank bag was packed and sitting on my tank and heading for the Ferry.

By the time I reached Colditz (day3) one of the zip pullers on the main compartment had parted company with the bag. I could still use the zip, but it was a little fiddly to operate, impossible with gloves on. I could see that there was a design fault; the pullers have open links where they attach to the zip. With use, and hot weather, this opening could expand. Mine did and the result was a lost puller.

When I arrived in Krakow, I camped a few miles out of the city and used public transport and the rucksack mode came into use. To convert it all I needed to do was extract the two shoulder straps from a kangaroo type pouch at the base of the bag. It was quite comfortable and easy to use. After a long day walking the streets of Krakow I went to fold the straps back into place in their pouch and found that the seam on the lining was all frayed and coming away from the main bag. Luckily, this did not affect the functioning of the bag and I was still able to use it.

On return to the UK I took it back to Lidl who gave me a refund. Happily their refund policy is gold plated.

This may have been a one off poor example of Crivit tank bags, I hope it is. However, I don't think I will buy another one.

I now have a Hein Gerrick bag. It looks far better made, but has fewer specifications. I'm hoping that the build quality and greater simplicity will make it last, as I doubt that the guarantee will, as HG are now in receivership.



Marks out of 10

Appearance	5
Specifications	8
Comfort*	7
Ease of use	8
Build quality	2

*when used as a rucksack

Martin Trainor

Do you have an item you would like to review?
Send it to

NamEditor@Hotmail.co.uk

Equipment reviews

BMW Motorrad Neck Brace System

www.bmw-motorrad.com

Whilst browsing through the BMW Rider equipment catalogue, which as you will know, contains everything a rider could ever need, with a BMW logo and an extortionate price tag, I spotted something I hadn't seen anywhere else. The Motorrad Neck Brace system.

Launched in 2007, the advert claimed it to be the biggest step forward for rider safety equipment since the introduction of body-armour, the back protector and full-face helmets. It was apparently developed in

conjunction with South African physician Dr Chris Leatt and his team of accident researchers, biomechanics and an accident surgeon to greatly reduce the risk of serious neck injury for riders in the event of a crash. I wondered why I hadn't seen other riders wearing them before ?, but I had noticed

that all of the Formula 1 race car drivers now wore something similar. Thinking that F1 teams wouldn't use them without good reason, I decided to get one.

It felt strange the first time I wore it, and a bit awkward to put on and off, but like most

unintelligible and trudged off.

It is made from a mix of carbon fibre, Kevlar and fibreglass for supreme strength, and is quite comfortable to wear as a soft, impact-absorbing and 'skin-friendly' foam layer sits between the



things you soon get used to it. A mate at work who rides an R1 in a manner that puts him at far greater risk of serious injury than me, laughed and declared that it might save my neck, but I could still break every other bone in my body. Yes I replied, but if you break your neck, then the rest might not matter that much. He then muttered something

hardened outer casing and the rider. It provides protection by offering a restraining effect if the rider's head moves excessively

forwards, backwards, or to the sides. The rider is also able to retain freedom of movement needed for riding, with any risk of over-stretching of the neck, in any given direction, significantly reduced. Injuries arising from forces coming down from the helmet on to the spine are absorbed by the ridged edging that surrounds the Neck Brace.

I have now worn it on every ride for the last 9 months,



and I can honestly say that I can put it on as quick as my helmet and then almost forget it's there. You do have to work a little bit harder on your Lifesavers, turning from your hips and shoulders rather than just a quick headcheck, but a friend who has done the Police Advanced bike course tells me that this is no bad

thing anyway. I suppose it's a bit like a helmet in that it's something you wear, but hope that you'll never actually need. If wearing a helmet wasn't a legal requirement then would you still wear one ?

It may look a bit cumbersome, but if you are ever unfortunate enough

to find yourself in a serious condition that a neck brace may have prevented, then you will really really wish that you had been wearing one at the time.

Steve Carey

Easy fundraising

Easy fundraising is a simple and easy way for you to help raise money for NAM at no cost to yourself.

1. Join easyfundraising (link below) and select your cause , in this case NAM
2. Follow links on the website to over 2000 leading online retailers (Ebay, Tesco, Asda, Amazon etc) and shop as normal
3. Online purchases earn an automatic donation to NAM.

Easyfundraising has already raised £409.91 for NAM so far.

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/nam/>

Honda NC700X

First Impressions



My CBR 600 developed a rattling sound so after a bit of investigation i identified it as being a problem with the cam chain tensioner. Knowing that getting it wrong when it comes to cam chains can result in bent valves and destroyed engines i decided to play it safe and take it to Newcastle Honda who have looked after my bike before.

While the bike was in being worked on i thought it would be a good idea to try one of their demonstrator bikes. I gave them a call and booked Honda's new NC700X.

The plan was to use the bike for commuting to and from work on the day the bike was getting work done.. But the more i thought about it the more it seemed like a waste. So i arranged to take the morning

off work and only work the afternoon. This would give me a good few hours to get to know the bike.

So the day arrived and i dropped my bike off at the workshop and went up to the showroom to pick up my bike for the day. The bike was wheeled out the showroom and a POWER (Petrol, Oil, Water, Electrics and Rubber) check was carried out. Unfortunately the petrol

tank was almost empty so the sales assistant popped to the workshop and brought back some fuel. Normally it should be returned with the same amount of fuel in as when you take it out, but this obviously hadn't happened. To make up for the inconvenience the sales

assistant said not to worry about filling it up when i return it. This was a nice touch and with Honda's claimed 78.8 mpg it wasn't going to bust the



HONDA NC700X

Price £5,850

Power/torque:
47bhp @ 6,250rpm
44lb ft @ 4,750rpm

Top speed: 115mph (est)

Fuel tank/range:
3.1 gallons/210 miles

bank.

The assistant then showed me round the bike. The most stand out feature has to be the helmet storage under

where the petrol tank would normally be. It securely stores a full face helmet locked away, from the elements and prying eyes, under the fake tank. I found this really useful during the day i had it. Being able to park up and pop into a cafe or shop without carrying a helmet about was great. The petrol tank has been moved to the back of the bike and is refilled by lifting the rear seating cowl which unlocks with a key.

So after the familiarisation was over it was time to get on the road. I decided to head up to Ponteland then take the Berwick Hill Road to Seaton Burn. From there I travelled up to Blyth then down the coast to St Mary's lighthouse for a cup of tea before heading to work.

Compared to my CBR600 the riding position was much more upright and relaxed. The seating position and height allowed for a nice clear view ahead. The NC700X is a new breed of bike, because its engine is the first in a modern motorcycle to be designed to car principles.

The aim was to create a utility machine which means doing away with the need to rev the engine to access its performance and to have much better fuel efficiency than we're used to. The bike's 670cc, twin-cylinder power unit is in essence half a four-cylinder Honda Jazz car



engine.

While overtaking a car on the dual carriage way towards the airport the rev limiter kicked in suddenly and abruptly at 6,400 revs. Compared to my CBR 600 which red lines around 14,000 this seemed really restrictive. But that i suppose is the point of the NC700X. It took a bit of getting used to. A bit like changing from a petrol to a diesel car.

On the country roads the bike motored along nicely at 60. The steering was easy and natural meaning the bike cornered well. The bike accelerates well but as it approached 60 it always felt like there wasn't much left to give.

On the dual carriageways the bike was comfortable and relaxed. I could imagine doing motorway miles on it without a problem. The screen on the front is not huge but deflected enough wind to make the ride comfortable

By the time i was heading to work it was approaching lunch time and the traffic was getting busier. This gave me the opportunity to see how well it filtered. This is obviously something the bike was designed for. The natural steering allowed for accurate control at low speed. The upright riding position allows a clear view into the distance making it easier to spot potential hazards. All of this combined with the low down power of the engine made it easy to filter my way through the lunch time traffic.

Overall this is a nice bike with some good features. As a commuter and general utility bike the NC700X gets the job done. It's lack of revs and top end speed will not be for everyone but with fuel efficiency better than many scooters it's an affordable modern bike that will make many people happy.

Barry Bullas

Blood Bikes

Things have been progressing well since my last update in the Spring/Summer newsletter.

A meeting was held on Wednesday 12th September. At the meeting a committee was formed and the many of the key positions were filled including;

- Chairman
- Treasurer
- Hospital liaison
- Membership Secretary
- Training officer

We are still looking for;

- Fundraising officer
- Rota manager
- Publicity/events officer



If you can help out in any of these roles please get in touch.

The process of creating a constitution and registering as a charity has been initiated. The committee choose to name the charity **Northumbria Blood Bikes**. This is the name that will be used on all communications going forward.

The committee has been in contact with another Blood Bike group and a visit has been arranged. This will allow us to benefit from their knowledge and experience in setting up a Blood Bike group.

Want to keep updated on what is happening

Future updates will be provided using the following

Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/NorthumbriaBloodBikes/

Volunteering

If you are interested in volunteering as a rider and/or for one of the committee positions then please email membership@NorthumbriaBloodBikes.org

Volunteer riders must be advanced trained (IAM, ROSPA, Police, DSA etc) so there is a great opportunity for NAM members to get involved.

Barry Bullas

New members

NAM is pleased to welcome the following new members

- Dr Simon Parry
- Tom Ivison
- Helen Armstrong
- Helen Bradford
- William Murray
- Richard Schofield
- Steve Rawlins
- Tim Robertson
- Matthew Landells
- Thomas Parker
- Simon Ryecroft
- Natalie Teesdale

Awards

Congratulations to the following members on passing the advanced test

- Andrew Minto
- Graeme Haswell (father and son)
- Graham Firth
- Michael Wilkinson
- Michael Bartle
- Stewart Wilkinson
- Richard Henderson
- Malcolm Ainsley
- Charles Wood
- Peter Gosling
- Major Mike Briant RA
- Joe Leiserach
- Chester Nadolski

Congratulations to the following members on passing the senior observer test or refresher

- Geoff Spencer
- Mel Leech



1 Graham Firth

2 Michael Wilkinson

3 Mike Bartle

4 Geoff Spencer - Senior Observer

5 Major Michael Briant RA

6 Mel Leech - Senior Observer

7 Stewart Wilkinson