

# *Riders' Chronicles*



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**Jan / Feb 2009**

**The Newsletter of Northumbria  
Advanced Motorcyclists**

## Honda Racing – Factory Visit





## Chairman's ramblings



Here we are again at the start of another New Year and during the cold short days of winter we should be using this time to check over and clean our bikes as the new season will soon be upon us.

We have a few changes to the Committee that took place at the AGM in November, with the departure of three of its members, starting with Louise Bennett standing down as Treasurer. Louise has been on the Committee in varying roles for five years and feels she has done her bit for NAM and wants to spend time on some of her many other interests.

Next saw the departure of Ron Patrick as Ride-out Co-ordinator, standing down for very similar reasons to Louise and finally Nick Maddison, Northumberland Team Leader, who is facing major changes in his job and feels he cannot justify the post not having the time to dedicate as he would like.

May I thank all three for their contributions in helping to make NAM the successful group it is.

I welcome back onto the Committee, Simon Hadden as Treasurer, Dave Thornton as Northumberland Team Leader and Jack Stewart as Ride-out Co-ordinator. I feel each of them have a lot to offer NAM and I hope they find their new roles challenging and rewarding.

Climbing onto my soapbox once again, now that the dark nights are back, have you noticed the number of cars running around with their headlamps completely out of alignment? It seems that no-one seems to care about basic adjustments and as a result cannot possibly be getting the best out their lights at the expense of blinding other motorists.

On a similar theme and at the risk of being accused of being sexist, (which I most certainly am not!) it appears that young woman are fast picking up the title of 'boy racer' from the boys.

Over the years this label has been placed on young men who drive a particular car. At one stage it was the VW Golf followed quickly by the Peugeot small hatchback and in latter years the Vauxhall Corsa.

It now seems that many young women are coming into the frame in larger engined hatchbacks and driving in extremely aggressive styles, with little display of courtesy or any thought for other road users.

I am sick and tired of having such drivers either climbing into my boot by driving far too close or cutting me up as they dive into any available space without any concern for anyone.

It seems they are immune from using a mobile phone whilst driving and rear view mirrors are for checking their makeup.

They seem to have little regard for speed limits and have never heard of 'giving way' to others.

Ironically I find this rather strange as in my experience lady motorcyclists do not behave in this manner and tend to show a good example by riding correctly and courteously.

Perhaps It is me getting less tolerable as I get older.

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

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## CONGRATULATIONS ON PASSING THE IAM TEST - Well Done

Derek Twamley
Behrad Assadian
Ben Macfarlane

## NAM MERCHANDISE

**Contact : Louise Bennett for all items of merchandise  
(On sale at all monthly meetings )**

Equipment Badges	Self adhesive – attach to fairing	£1.50
Woolly Hats	With NAM Emblem	£10.00
Caps	With NAM Emblem	£10.00
T Shirts	With NAM Emblem	£10.00
Polo Shirt (Black or White)	With NAM Emblem	£10.00
Sweatshirt	With NAM Emblem	£20.00
Fleeces	With NAM Emblem	£25.00
Tank Pads	With NAM Emblem	£10.00
Key Fobs	With NAM Emblem	£1.00
Sew-on cloth badge	With NAM Emblem	£3.00
Lanyard	With NAM Emblem	£3.00



## Committee

Honorary Group President: **Jack Lormor**

Chairman: **Ray Charlton**

*Vice Chairman:* **Clive Taylor**      *Secretary:* **Michael Sutherland**

*Treasurer:* **Simon Hadden**

*Training Group:* **Clive Taylor, Alan Richardson, Geoff Spencer**

*Membership Secretary:* **Carole Kibble**

*Website Co-ordinator:* **Glenn Knowles**

*Ride out Co-ordinator:* **Jack Stewart**

*Merchandising:* **Louise Bennett**

*Newsletter Editor:* **Ray Charlton**

### ***Team Leaders***

*Northumberland:* **Dave Thornton**

*Tyne & Wear* **Alan Richardson**

### **Website**

**[www.nam-online.org](http://www.nam-online.org)**

**Telephone: 07951 035038**

## Durham Advanced Motorcyclists

Durham Advanced Motorcyclists meetings are on the last Tuesday of the month at the Bowburn Hall

### **The NAM Email group can be found at:**

<http://www.groups.google.com/group/nam-bikes>

Join it there!

By joining the NAM email group, you'll receive club news as it happens.

You can also send emails to the group, which are automatically forwarded to all the members of the email group – handy for getting technical help in a hurry!

If you have any problems, send an email to:

[Hadden101@btinternet.com](mailto:Hadden101@btinternet.com)

or

[raycharlton@sky.com](mailto:raycharlton@sky.com)

**All Ride-Outs meet 10.00am prompt at the Travel Lodge Car Park, Seaton Burn.  
Other dates will be published as they come in, but don't forget, most Sundays many Members meet at 10.00am at Seaton Burn for their own impromptu runs.**

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The plastic licence card that you have has along with an issue date but also an expiry date too. If you look at line 4a this gives you the issue date.

Line 4b gives you the expiry date.

If you are unfortunate enough to be stopped by the Police and your card licence has expired you could be fined!!

The cost to renewal is £17.50 plus I assume the cost of a recent passport type photo.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### **IAM SUBS INCREASE**

The decision of the IAM to increase their subs by so much, which, from what was said at our AGM, is because they have, at worst, mismanaged the Institute's funds and, at best, made errors of judgment. In a normal economic cycle this would cause some concern, but the fact that it comes at the start of a recession is a bitter pill.

Frankly, I feel no particular loyalty to the IAM, as it is purely NAM that has any relevance to me.

My training and assessment has been purely by NAM and my test was by our local examiner.  
**(Employed by the IAM! – Ed)**

I believe everything I paid for was at the local level and do not actually see any benefit from the head office, other than administratively that they take their £17.50 every year and in return produce a distinctly average corporate magazine and a few admittedly reasonable e-mailed newsletters once in a while.

Personally, I wouldn't miss them.

So to be asked to pay an extra £10.50 for no discernable return is simply not acceptable. The additional and annoying fact that the IAM have not publicised the fact we can all vote for or against the resolution, smacks of underhanded behaviour to try and sneak the increase through unopposed.

If they believed it was fair and reasonable they would have posted out proxy votes to each and every Member.

New Members are the lifeblood of the organisation, but I, for one, frankly could not recommend anyone to join an organisation which cannot manage its own finances.

Remember "The Skills For Life" change, where the costs for joining the IAM/NAM and paying for your test became front loaded at £90+? This put a lot of people off.

For anyone who says you get a discount on your insurance for passing your test, is talking cobblers, as I already had the maximum discount and sufficient security for the bike, so no more discount was available. (and it's Carole Nash before you ask).

We have a successful thriving club, but the IAM's actions are in danger of jeopardising the whole thing. If they need to impose increases, why not stagger them over a few years to make them more palatable?

Can and should we oppose the increase as an entire Branch?

One final and I hope chilling point; The IAM needs to realise it is not the only game in town and the higher standards of RoSPA is only a click away at £54 for your test and £20 annual membership fees (which includes a re-test every three years).

**Tony Forster**

***IF YOU HAVE ANY VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT OR ANY OTHER SUBJECT, WHY DON'T YOU WRITE IN AND AIR YOUR THOUGHTS, - ED***

## THE DROP-OFF SYSTEM:

- **YOUR** riding is **YOUR** responsibility.
- The purpose of the ride is an enjoyable and safe ride out, **not a race**.

At the front of every NAM Ride-out there is a **Leader** who will be identified at the pre-ride briefing.

He is permanently at the front of group and is identified by either a hi-viz H belt or hi-viz jacket.

At the rear of every ride-out there is a **Back Marker** who will also be identified at the pre-ride brief and will also wear either a hi-viz H belt or jacket and will remain at rear of group at all times.

**At no time will any rider overtake the Leader or drop behind the Back Marker.**

Each time the ride reaches a junction or round-a-bout, the rider at No 2 position, behind the **Leader**, will stop and mark the junction for the rest of the group – **BE AWARE OF AVOIDING STOPPING ON CLEARWAYS, YELLOW LINES OR ANYWHERE POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS OR ILLEGAL.**

When the **Back Marker** arrives, that rider will then re-join the group ahead of the **Back Marker**.

At the next junction or round-a-bout, the next rider in No. 2 position behind the **Leader** will drop off and mark that junction, rejoining the group in front of the **Back Marker**.

**This procedure will be repeated at each new junction.**

**OVERTAKING** is permitted between the **Back Marker** and **Leader**, but **ONLY IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO**. Ask yourself whether an overtake is necessary and remember it could be off putting to first time rider

When overtaking other vehicles, take care not to merely follow bike in front.

If traffic conditions slow progress, do not worry as the drop-off system works and ensures that no-one is left behind.

Riding in a group presents additional hazards, so ride to the system, and remember, **Safety first**.

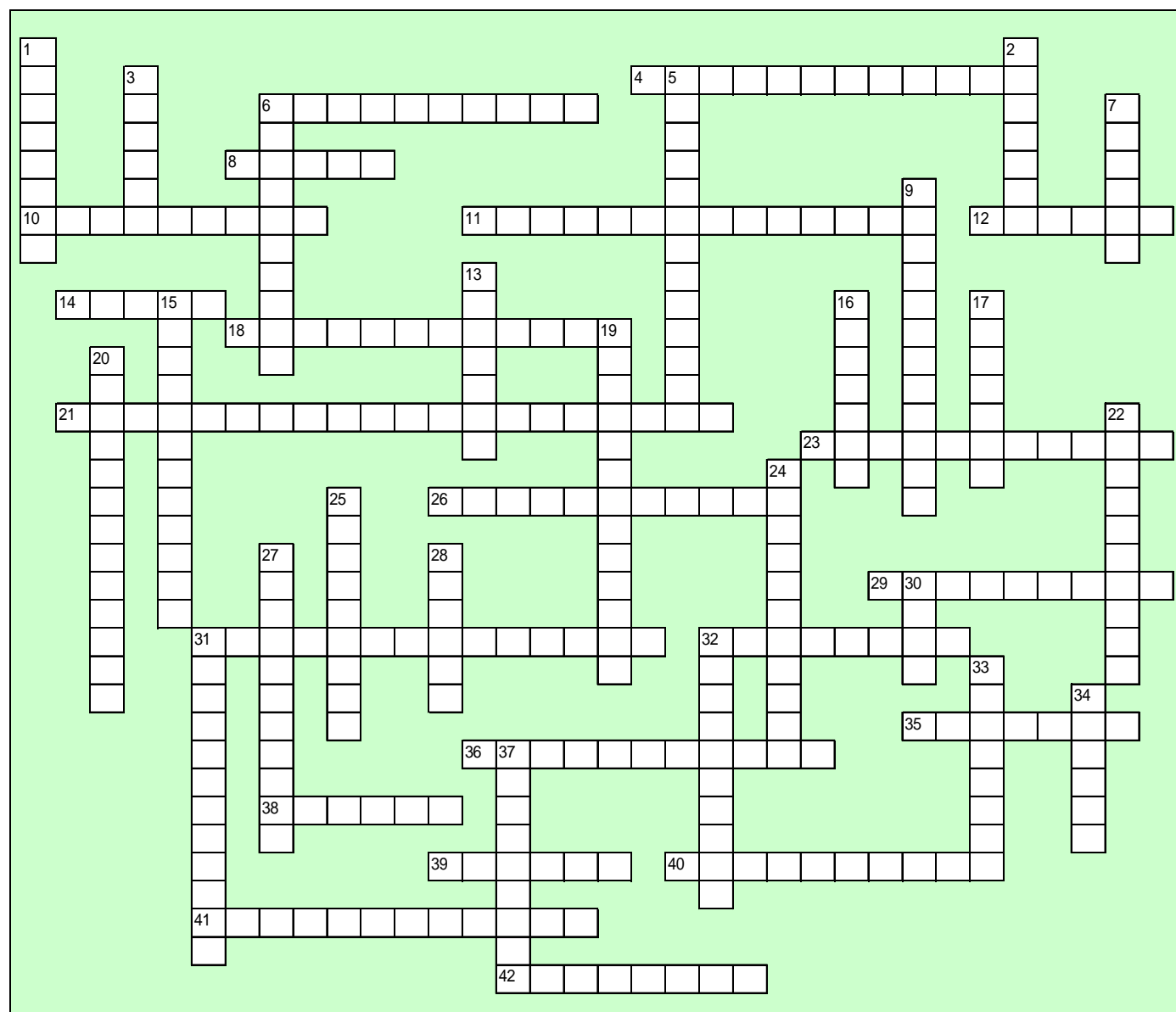
Riders who are not part of the group are a significant hazard. Stay safe.





# Crossword (answers on page 20)

By Alan Thompson



## Across

- 4 Snack at the Summit (8)(4)
- 6 Italian Valve Control
- 8 Green Assassin
- 10 Muddy Triumph
- 11 Italian Twister (7)(7)
- 12 Suzi's Touring Twin (1)(5)
- 14 Dry Rubber
- 18 TT Legend (4)(8)
- 21 New York Customisers (6)(6)(8)
- 23 McQueen Flick (2)(3)(6)
- 26 Fairground Attraction (4)(2)(5)
- 29 Roman Emperor (3)(6)
- 31 Slapper Suppressant (8)(6)
- 32 Arachnid Exhaust
- 35 Aerodynamic Shroud
- 36 Oriental Rubber
- 38 Nightriders Venue

## Down

- 39 Melandri Nemesis
- 40 Pocket Ron (4)(6)
- 41 Samurai of Slide (8)(4)
- 42 Hinkley Café
- 1 Suzuki's Falcon
- 2 Yamaha's Old Testament
- 3 Oriental Endurance
- 5 Chilly Italian Machine (7)(6)
- 6 Linked to Transmit (5)(5)
- 7 Dominating 50's Classic
- 9 Chupa Chups Rookie (5)(7)
- 13 Classic Trailbike
- 15 Texas Tornado (5)(7)
- 16 Van Gogh's Shadow
- 17 Classic Spanish Scrambler
- 19 Rideout Rules (4)(3)(6)
- 20 Doctor's Assistant (6)(7)
- 22 Examination Service
- 24 Fast Food Outing (4)(4)(3)
- 25 Power Cycle (3)(6)
- 27 Bug-Eyed Streetfighter (5)(6)
- 28 Rubber Embrace
- 30 The Bard's Rubber
- 31 British GP Hero (5)(7)
- 32 Effortless Lubrication
- 33 Suspension Limb
- 34 Native U.S. Bike
- 37 Riding Reference

## HRC UK Trip

By Sean Mulloy

Having endured yet another very damp British summer, I was rather hoping that our autumn trip to Honda Racing in Lincolnshire might be blessed with some form of at least temporary “Indian Summer”. Such optimism was promptly restrained by the prior evening’s weather simulation displaying with almost crushing certainty, wave after wave of rain storms covering what appeared to be the vast majority of our route. A resounding soaking seemed inevitable, but far worse than this; the bike was going to get extremely dirty!



The day dawned just as grey as predicted, but with the rain holding off cautious optimism crept in as we waited at Washington services for the main group to emerge from the gloom. Lead by the group’s ride-out supreme, and motorcycle maintenance expert, Ron Patrick, all proceeded to plan, with steady progress all the way to Ferrybridge services.

Still no significant rain, and lulled into a false sense of security, waterproof gloves were placed over the outside of the waterproof suit. Never missing an opportunity, the climate responded

immediately by starting to rain, and on turning off the motorway then decided to “hammer down” for the remaining 40 miles.

Impermeable membranes in gloves are very effective at keeping the water out, but seemingly equally effective at keeping it in if your cerebrally challenged enough to put the insides of your gloves on an exposed waterproof surface. Gloves quietly filled with rain and mental notes not to be so dim in future, were made.

Our destination achieved, we (or at least some of us) dried out over lunch, before being treat to an introduction to the vagaries of Lough’s one way system courtesy of our “Dear Leader”. After testing the flexibility of the Drop Off system to the limit and found it wanting, we eventually regrouped at the Honda Racing UK HQ.

The Honda team have been based in Lough since the early 90’s, spearheading Honda’s World Superbike challenges in the early days to its latter involvement in the British Superbike series. Its reception area lays testament to this being crammed full of historic and very valuable racing motorcycles covering this period. We wandered amongst such exotica such as John Kocinski’s 1997 WSB winning RC45, Colin Edwards RC51 (VTR 1000) 2000 WSB title holder, Ryuichi Kiyonari’s BSB winning 2007 CBR1000 Fireblade , John McGuinness’s 130mph TT lap record holding Fireblade etc.etc.

Being in the presence of such hardware seemed to instantly induce grins on the faces of our group, as clearly many of us went down the “if only...” train of thought.

We were welcomed by Chris ..... of Honda UK who lead and talked us through the facilities and the teams organization.

The team competes in 3 main forums, British Superbike, Supersport (600cc) and Superstock (1000cc), as well as occasional Road Racing events TT, NW200 etc. Standard donor bikes are delivered from Japan at the beginning of each year and then undergo various degrees of modification according to regulations of each category. A few vital statistics for the Fireblade illustrate the point at hand:

	Road Bike	Superstock	BSB
Weight: Kg	199	175	164
Power: HP	174	179	>200

Machine weights are minimums for the class, in an effort to prevent too much money being ploughed in to making special components from “un-obtainium”. Despite this, and as Chris illustrated on this years BSB machines, various components were bespoke made in-house. In fact the team has a state of the art CAD/CAM facility with two very expensive vertical machining centres that enable them to design and make improved components where the rules allow.

Rear suspension linkages machined from solid aircraft grade billet were passed around, and agreed by all as “things of beauty”. The engine and workshop facilities were totally spotless and highly organised, nothing left out on work surfaces and a complete contrast to my garage! Not a freezer bag or oily rag in sight.

Meticulous preparation and continual refinement are the orders of the day all in pursuit of fractions of a second that make the difference between winning and losing.

Looking over Leon Halsam’s BSB CBR1000 this process was evident from telemetry sensors, automatic gearshift aids, state of the art Braking and Fork systems etc. Apparently the front forks alone on this bike will set you back a cool £12K!



The team also has its own dynamometer testing facilities, and we were treated to some engine being murdered as we looked around the massive mobile workshops used for each race meeting. With 3 dedicated Tractor and Trailer units to support the teams and their corporate sponsors, you begin to appreciate just how much money this enterprise got through. Ignoring the facilities setup costs, each BSB season requires £1.2 million, where as the WSB campaigns were up to £6m per season. Winning is a serious business!

I’m sure for many the thought of spending your working days in such a seemingly glamorous occupation is appealing, but the reality for most of the personnel in the racing scene is one of insecurity. Despite their obvious expertise, all staff were employed on strictly 12 month terms and never strictly knew what next season had in store for them.

Back amongst the Racing exotica in reception Chris talked us through the history of the machines. Picking over John McGuinness’s TT lap record holder, we were curious about a little lever on the left bar: A thumb operated rear brake lever apparently, “John likes to use that to get the front wheel back on the ground!” We added that one to the bank of advanced riding techniques.

Curious as to what happens to the majority of the Racing Bikes after the season, we were rather surprised to hear that they were often built back up with road legal parts and disposed of through the local Honda dealer network. This caught everybody's attention and once again there were a few wistful grins amongst the group. You can bet there will be a few internet searches on Honda dealers in the vicinity of Lough, " CBR1000RR, available November, unmarked bodywork, one careful owner .....".



Hearty thanks exchanged and goodbyes said, we departed once again into the gloom on what our Leader described as the "scenic route" north. Half an hour in, and heading towards the Humber Bridge crossing, things suddenly got a little too scenic and ended with the rear of our party staring across open fields at a T junction. Not a sign of our Leader or the advance party.

Clive Taylor was found in the possession of a map and quickly forced into a position of responsibility, whilst I successfully avoided any by taking up the rear! Back in safe hands we were efficiently guided back on track to the

maelstrom that was the Humber Estuary. Having never seen the new bridge, and was quite looking forward to the experience. However the reality was a howling gale that required us to ride at 20 degrees to the vertical and compensate quickly every time we passed one of the bridges main supports.

This gave little opportunity to appreciate the marvels of civil engineering or the view. Anyway, 500 yards from the toll booths and just over the other side to civilisation who should we see again but our Leader and his cohorts parked up and obviously racked with guilt.

Whilst forward observation may be the benchmark of many a NAM member, in this case clearly rear observation wasn't. They were off again before we cleared the toll barriers, never to be seen again!

We even saw some early evening sunshine as we made our way through the Yorkshire Wolds before clear skies made for a dry but cold run back to the North East.

I put the Ducati's initial apparent slight stutter 20 miles from home down to cold wet hands and a helping of imagination, but the second occurrence as I peeled off from the main group left no doubts as to a protest vote. It was put back, dirty, into the garage past the spot now left unoccupied for two and a half months by its Italian stable mate (currently off providing a much needed cash injection into the local economy).

With this background who could blame me for Googling "Honda dealerships Lough"?

Our thanks to all at Honda UK for their courtesy and openness, and to Ron Patrick and all those that organised a well planned and enjoyable day.

For anyone wishing to respond to Ron's broad hints concerning Christmas and Satellite Navigation Systems please bear in mind that the latest generation of GPS systems offer tracking options, the rest of the group might find this useful!



## Planned trip for 2009

I am organising a 1st World War battlefield tour with a professional guide.

The plan is to leave here on Friday evening, 11th September **2009**, and go from North Shields by DFDS Seaways to Amsterdam and then travel to the Somme for 3 nights and then to Flanders for 3 nights.

The price will be around £450 per person .

This includes: the return ferry journey with a motorcycle, 6 nights bed and breakfast, entry fees to the areas where they are charged, and a guide who will be with us for the 6 days that we are visiting the battlefields.

The price is based on 2 people sharing a twin room, ensuite, at the B&B's and 4 people sharing a cabin on the ferry.

We return on the 19th September, arriving back in North Shields on the morning of Sunday 20th September.

If anyone is interested please contact Louise Bennett on 07951 035038, or email me.



**How do you find the compression stroke again?  
Dr Clive Taylor being catapulted skywards when his Norton kicked back.**



## Tips for new riders

By Ray Charlton

How many times have you concluded a lengthy ride-out to find that perhaps your neck and shoulders are aching and on many occasions even your back can be giving you trouble.



On dozens of occasions I have heard riders declare that they are buying a new bike because the old one is not comfortable.

What many riders do not realise is that it has nothing to do with the bike and quite often it is due to the rider being too tense, not relaxed and at ease, making their general riding looks uncomfortable and indecisive.

If this applies to you then this article may be of great help to you as if you are new to riding it is natural that you may be tense or even nervous, resulting in jerkiness and lack of smoothness throughout your ride.

Next time you are out, take a look at other riders and in particular the way they sit on the bike compared to the way you do it.

There are many factors that can reflect in your riding and the most common one is riding with arms straight out and gripping the bars far too tightly.

This has a direct effect on your neck and shoulders as each time you hit a bump, the impact is transmitted through your hands, wrists and arms and directly into your shoulders and neck.

Try riding with a slight bend in your elbow but allowing your forearms to remain horizontal, hold the bars in a firm but lighter grip and allow your wrists to flex with each bump.

This allows your wrists, elbows and shoulder joints to be more articulated, absorbing the energy of the bumps and reducing the impact on your neck and shoulders.

The lighter grip of the bars also allows the bike to make small self correcting movements around the headstock and also makes it much easier for the rider to make steering inputs. More importantly, when he is not holding on for dear life he is less tense and a much happier rider.

Next look at how your feet are placed on the foot pegs. Most riders ride with the centre of their feet, or instep on the pegs

Try switching to riding with the balls of your feet on the pegs which will allow you to change the way you sit in the saddle, gives your back a better angle, gives you a better feeling for the bike and puts the legs in a better position to grip the tank.

By carrying out these simple changes it will allow you to relax your back, making you lean forward more, yet does not place additional weight on the handlebars.

On the down side you have to move your feet more for gear changes and braking, but as this is a mere 2 -3% of your riding, it is worth doing as the rest of the time you are riding you will have improved feel and stability.

Another small change worth trying is lower your head slightly and at the same time lifting the chin a fraction.

This sounds like a contradiction in terms, but getting it right gives the benefits of getting you out of the wind, placing your head and view on the centreline of the bike and allowing you to look well down the road ahead.

Mastering these simple techniques can have a dramatic effect on improving your riding. You should now be more relaxed, comfortable, stable and in control of your bike.

Your riding should become smoother, increasing your pace and improving your safety margin, yet still remain well inside your own comfort zone.

To summarise on the points to consider:

- **Feet** – use the balls of your feet on the pegs.
- **Knees** - positioned so that you can grip the tank if you need to during braking or cornering. Moves the weight from your arms to your legs improving control and stability.
- **Seat Position** – as a rule 3 – 4” between your crotch and the tank. In conjunction with the balls of your feet on the pegs, tips you slightly forward and putting your upper body into a better angle.
- **Back** - Relaxed, leaning slightly forward and being able to move from side to side if necessary. Keeps you out of the wind blast more, preventing you getting tired and making you more confident on the bike.
- **Arms & Hands** – Firm but light grip of the bars, relax and allow arm joints to articulate, giving you more feel and finer control.
- **Head** – Dipped slightly with the chin up allowing observation all the way to the horizon.
- **Body** – Lower down allowing you to be much more relaxed and comfortable
- **Throttle** – Lighter grip allowing much finer control and enjoyment of your bike

Try these techniques and see if they improve your riding.

Not all of them may suit your riding style, so don't be afraid to mix and match your positions to see which one is best for yourself.

Practise them on your own and see if it is of help to you before putting them into practise on a ride-out of Observed Run.

Remember that a relaxed and comfortable rider is always going to be much smoother and safer than a rider who is never relaxed.

This allows you to make better use of your distant observation and allow you to plan and execute your actions earlier, avoiding last minute and quite often disastrous panic manoeuvres

## The Wrong Way Round *Part 3*

By Neil Hamilton

### The Kinlochbervie Fire Brigade

Morning brought with it a dull but fine day and henceforth, the roads led south. The single track A838 picking its way over bleak moor-land and around peat bogs silently waiting to devour the unwary traveller.

Reaching Rhiconich, our route took us along a minor road hugging the shores of Loch Inchard and past the bustling fishing port of Kinlochbervie to the campsite at Oldshoremore. Camp established, it was time to enjoy the short but rough route to Sandwood Bay.



Facing northwest into the North Atlantic, it is claimed to be the most magnificent beach in the UK. Save for the climate, I would argue that it rivals the famous Byron Bay (holiday home of Paul Hogan and Mel Gibson) on the Pacific coast of Australia.

Sadly, return to camp was accompanied by black clouds from the west; the North Atlantic was baring its teeth.

Supper was consumed before the inevitable onslaught of wind and rain that saw the little tent clinging to the hillside like a fly hanging on to Richard Hammond's windscreen.



My elevated location kept me out of the water; my companion however opened his tent-flap to a flotilla of pots and pans. He commented that during the night it felt as if the local fire brigade were constantly hosing his tent with occasional pauses when they would, in unison, hurl buckets of water.

### Smoke on the water

In the calm after the storm, the winding roads through Scourie, and Unapool led to a lay-by stop for Mars bars (plain as Scotland had yet to discover the dubious delights of the battered, deep-fried Mars bar) in preparation for the seven mile round trip on foot to the Eas a Chual Aluinn (the great waterfall of Coul) which at 650 feet, is the highest waterfall in Britain.

Today it had much water!!

Sore feet back on the footrests it was onward again via Lochinver and the winding shores of Enard Bay to the campsite at Achiltibuie. Overlooking to the south west the wonderfully named Summer Isles (fictitious home of Lord Summerisle in the 70s horror film, *The Wicker Man*) comprising Tanera Mor, Tanera Beag and a couple of dozen smaller islands, Achiltibuie also boasts a smokehouse producing the most amazing smoked venison sausages.

With tents pitched, smoked venison sausages were sacrificed over the trusty primus stove and the succulent smell had mouths watering on the campsite as it drifted west past campers and onward to tempt the taste-buds of the distant islanders.



A fine day, seven mile walk and more good food led to a sound nights sleep. No sign of a Wicker Man although Willow MacGregor (Brit Ekland) would have been a welcome addition to the tent!

### **Fire in the sky**

Misty morning, dew lying on the grassy sand dunes, on the road again. Brief stop for breakfast in Ullapool and on past the seaweed strewn shores of Loch Broom towards Achnasheen and the south fork (no oil here!) towards

Glen Carron.

Lunch stop in Kyle of Lochalsh and a pause to watch the ferry off to Skye (replaced by a bridge in 1995) and savour a fine but dull afternoon.

In the saddle again for a few miles onto the little, dead-end road along the north side of Loch Long to seek out another wild-camp site.

Duly found, tents were erected overlooking the loch and firewood combed from the tidal shoreline. With campfire ablaze I contemplated the stillness of the evening and the eternal mystery of why it is when any group of blokes are let loose in the wild the have to make a fire.

As the evening cooled, my companion was compelled by nature to make a six mile round trip to partake of facilities in the local village. Wild "dumping" was not his thing.



On his return, pointing out that he had been able to see the campfire for the last two miles, he made some comment about a native American saying "white man make fire big enough for ten men". Guilty as charged. My eldest son Mark has been suitably trained to continue this proud tradition.

### **The long way down**

Sic transit gloria mundi (thus passes the glory of the world, NOT my sister Gloria went out in a white van last Monday and threw up).

Work, the cure of the drinking class was looming at me like a spectre through my highland wilderness. Today it was time for home and a journey of a little over 300 miles.

My companion of the past few days went his own way just after Loch Clunie as he headed for Loch Ness and I continued south towards Fort William. Bikes went free over the Ballachulish ferry (no bridge yet) and a short run along the side of Loch Leven to Glencoe. The only massacre here today was mine over two scotch pies from the village butchers shop.

The Rannoch Moor road was much as it is today, just a little narrower although the road leading to it through Glencoe was much more interesting before the "improvements".



Crianlarich and Glen Dochart led on to a lunch stop in Lochearnhead with a feast of haggis and clapsot.

Onward through Callander, Wallace country of Stirling and Bannockburn and on to the capital, Edinburgh.

The little fish and chip shop in Pathhead on the main A68 is still there today serving food just as good (perhaps with the exception of the battered deep-fried mars bar).

Under three hours remaining for the little bantam as dusk was approaching, time to get as close as possible to street-lighting before vision was dependant on the candle like headlight (oh how I love the lights on my RT).

Newcastle was a welcome sight, I could see again. Street-lights and familiar roads were all that lay between there, home and a warm bed.

### Summary

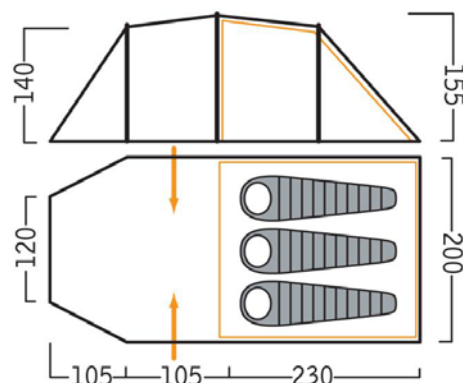
Petrol	6 pounds 8 shillings (£6.40)
Oil	5 shillings (£0.25)
Food	10 pounds
Scotland	Priceless

### Tent for sale

Vango Omega 350, 3 man tunnel tent. Never used, brand new, 2008 model.

Quick erect, built in groundsheet, glass fibre poles. Waterproof stuff bag. Ideal for motorcycle use.

**Bargain at £80.00.** Contact the Editor for further details.





## Sounds like the Engine

By Simon Hadden

Years ago, my school class was subjected to music appreciation lessons - a brave, but doomed attempt to turn us into culture vultures.

To my ears, the “music” sounded more like noise – I just couldn’t perceive anything pleasant in much of the subject matter. Every few minutes, though, I would detect a distant tune, coming not from the record player, but from the main road outside. To my mind, some of the engine noises sounded rather more interesting.



It's been like that as long as I can remember. Most petrol engines, diesel engines and steam engines play tunes that I can appreciate. Indeed, it's rather more than that. Given the right setting, the engine can be the mechanical diva at the heart of an opera.

Take your seat beyond Coquetdale, by the Grasslees Burn, on a still, summer morning, before breakfast time. The haunting call of a curlew drifts down from the moorland. Lower down the valley something stirs. At first the song grows and dies, lost in the woods beside the road. Suddenly it becomes more distinct and immediately dies down as the rider slows for the sharp turn by the bridge.

The old single crosses the burn and attacks the climb at Hepplewoodside. The engine note rises to a crescendo, sighs as the rider eases into the next gear, and gradually rises to a crescendo again. Then the bike wheezes past at all of 35mph, crests the hill and is gone. The recital has lasted all of two minutes but makes a lasting mark.

Now I must admit that I find a 1250 horsepower Sulzer diesel just as pleasing as a howling 50 horsepower Kawasaki. But it's not the volume that's the attraction, it's the beat and rhythm.

A 100 year old, triple-expansion engine is quite enchanting, as it propels a steamer across Loch Katrine. Though it's almost silent, such a powerplant has a steady, reliable beat - to watch it can be hypnotic. Invariably backed by hissing steam, water lapping, the ripple of conversation amongst the passengers and punctuated at intervals by the engine room telegraph, each performance is different but provides the same effect. It's re-assuring, intriguing, informative.

The same goes for any engine. As well as providing entertainment, the engine note can inform. Changes in the sound can provide early warning of trouble. It's sometimes easier to detect changes in the noise than to know what they might signify. This takes time, while you get to know the machine.

Quite the most common noise is the whine from a drive chain that needs oil. If you let the chain get dry (and it's easy to do this in the winter when the bike leaves home in the dark and returns in the dark) then the whine is a reminder that something is amiss. In fact once you've heard it, it sounds like a scream for help, which it probably is.

For those who normally ride with earplugs, it can be unnerving to leave them out. The bike often seems to make all sorts of strange noises. Most of these don't actually come from the engine, of course. Tyre noise, brake squeal and bodywork rattles are all useful to know about though – then you can do something to stop them.

But other noise do come from the power plant and can be telling. I once spent a few weeks wondering what caused the clicking noise emanating from the ER-5's engine. It was quite

pronounced at tick-over and it turned out to be caused by a loose spark plug. The plug was very loose but was not easy to see. It's buried in a deep recess in the top of the engine, and covered by the petrol tank. I guess the ticking noise was the sound of the plug firing or arcing.

This same bike has no temperature gauge, only a warning lamp. Only in midsummer does the engine become hot enough to need the fan. With long periods of inaction, the fan has a tendency to seize up. Consequently, on warm days, I'm always listening for the fan to start.

I do this now on any bike – not a bad habit but possibly somewhat paranoid – it's all to do with the engine, see.

But to end where we began, the best noises come from engines, in good health, under load. They needn't be running at full bore, just doing what they're designed to do, taking the effort out of moving from A to B.



If you get the chance, find a suitable spot, by an appropriate highway. It may be a fast road such as that by Hartside or a sleepy byway in the Durham Dales. Alternatively it could be above the hairpin bends in Sulby Glen on the Isle of Man or even at a Trials event. Just sit there and enjoy the engine tunes borne on the wind.

## Answers to Crossword on page 9

<u>Across</u>			<u>Down</u>		
4	Hartside Café	39	Ducati	1	Hayabusa
6	Desmodeccci	40	Leon Haslam	2	Genesis
8	Ninja	41	Noriyuki Haga	3	Suzuka
10	Scrambler	42	Thruxton	5	Aprilia Shiver
11	Benelli Tornado			6	Drive Chain
12	V Strom			7	Norton
14	Slick			9	Jorge Lorenzo
18	Mike Hailwood			13	Bultaco
21	Orange County Choppers			15	Colin Edwards
23	On Any Sunday			16	Vincent
26	Wall of Death			17	Montesa
29	Max Biaggi			19	Drop Off System
31	Steering Damper			20	Jeremy Burgess
32	Scorpion			22	Washington
35	Fairing			24	Chip Shop Run
36	Bridgestone			25	Two Stroke
38	Losail			27	Speed Triple
				28	Hugger
				30	Avon
				31	Scott Redding
				32	Scottoiler
				33	Swingarm
				34	Indian
				37	Roadcraft

# The Charlie and Ewan Effect

By Tony Forster

There has been loads of stuff in the Motorcycling press and on the web about Ewan and Charlie, most of it negative, after their last corporate mission from the UK to South Africa, but are we getting the whole picture?

I really enjoyed their first adventure (Long Way Round), which seemed a whole lot more relaxed and concentrated more on the actual journey and the difficulties they faced in circumnavigating the Globe. It was also twelve one hour episodes and shown, initially, on Sky.

The production values were a little more raw and you actually felt like they were more involved with the journey. Breakdowns, crashes and obstacles had to be overcome.

It also did wonders for BMW GS sales which continues to this day. Pity the KTM marketing guy who thought it couldn't be done and refused them their preferred choice of KTM 950 Adventures.....

The second version "Long Way Down" was done by or flogged to the BBC, on the strength of "Long Way Round" and was only five one hour episodes, which seemed to focus much more on getting the bikes and equipment logo-ed up and making sure the support vehicles had the right corporate branding.

There also seemed to be much more of a "fitting in with Ewan's busy filming schedule" time constraint to the whole proceeding, even including a fairly farcical section where Ewan's wife joined them on her logoed BMW F650gs to ride for a day. God only knows who had to prepare her bike for her one days (very wobbly) riding before packing it all up again ready to be freighted home.

In the end it all came across as a thinly disguised advert for all the sponsors and I didn't get any feeling that poor old Charlie enjoyed it that much.

Some of the programme's shortfalls may have been something to do with the rapid editing from one place to the next, which seems to be a fetish among the new producers of TV programmes, in that they believe we have the attention span of a gnat and won't watch a programme for more than five minutes without flipping channels, so feel they have to trim programmes down to "the exciting bits", with the result that some countries warranted no more than a fleeting mention. There was a bit of Charridee stuff in there for UNICEF, but it all seemed a bit lost in the overall mix.

Since the programme aired (and it is already being repeated) Boorman has done another journey documentary "By any means", which was overland (with boats for the wet bits) from Ireland to Australia, using as many different modes of transport as possible, although they cheated a bit and counted each and every truck or boat they were on as a different mode of transport.

At least the programme had a bit more feel of an adventure about it, with only Boorman, Russ Malkin (the producer of the earlier two adventures) and a cameraman doing the whole thing.

At least Boorman is a likeable chap and seems quite grounded. Naturally, proper explorers who have to save up for years to do the big trip, think that McGregor and Boorman are heinous freeloaders, but, hell, if someone offered it to make your dreams come true and you could flog a few books and DVD's you wouldn't knock it back would you?

## Annoying habit (Funny)

Reproduced article submitted by Louise Harris.

My ex-husband had this annoying habit of bringing greasy old carburettors and things into the house to work on. So, last weekend, when my friend called to tell me this story, my first response was, "Where did this guy live?"

Now reassured that I was never related to him by marriage, this really is too hilarious not to share with others.

The way my friend told it, this guy pushed his motorcycle from the patio into his living room, where he began to clean the engine with some rags and a bowl of petrol.

When he finished he sat on the motorcycle and decided to start it up to make sure everything was still OK.

Unfortunately, the bike started in gear (*Had to be a very old bike as this is not possible with a new one! – Ed*) and crashed through the glass patio door with him still clinging to the handlebars.

His wife had been working in the kitchen and came running out on hearing the noise, finding him crumpled on the patio, badly cut from the shards of broken glass.

She rang 999 for an ambulance and transported the guy to casualty for emergency treatment.

So far, the story is humorous, in "that is what you get for being a big enough idiot to bring your motorcycle into the house" kind of way.

But here is where I really split a gut.

Later that afternoon, after having many stitches in his wounds, his wife brought him home and put him into bed. She cleaned up the mess in the living room and dumped the bowl of petrol down the toilet.

Shortly afterwards, her husband woke up, lit a cigarette and went into the bathroom. He sat down and tossed the cigarette into the toilet, which promptly exploded because his wife had not flushed the petrol away.

The explosion blew the man through the bathroom door.

His wife, on hearing the explosion and her husband's subsequent screams, ran into the hallway to find him lying on the floor with his trousers blown away and severe burns to his buttocks and other sensitive places.

Once again she rang for an ambulance and the same two Paramedics who attended earlier turned up, rendered what immediate first aid they could and then loaded him onto a stretcher and began carrying to the waiting ambulance in the street..

One of them asked the wife how the injury had occurred. When she told them, they began laughing so hard they dropped the stretcher, and broke the guy's collar bone.

Talk about instant karma.

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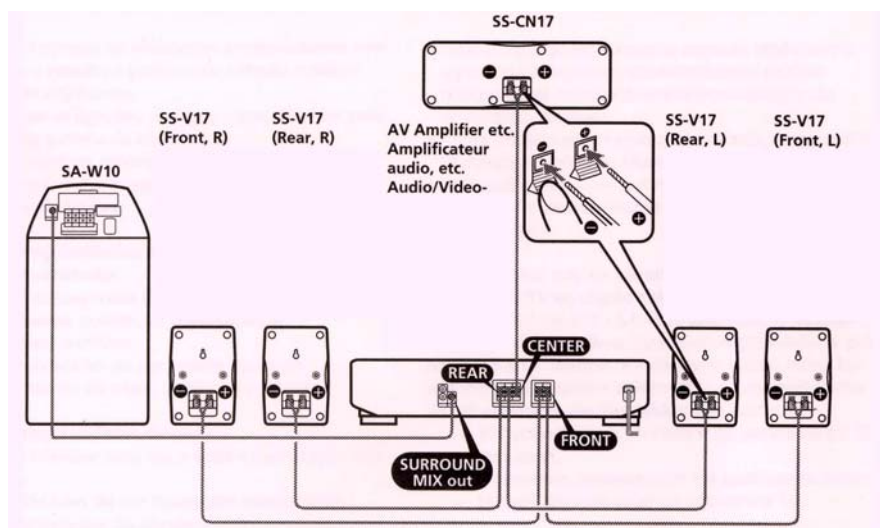
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## Do You Ride Through the Winter ?

By Clive Taylor

Some people ride all year and some people don't. So be it. No criticism of the folk who lay up their bikes in the cold weather here.

If you do have to continue to get to work or just because you like to ride in the winter here are a few ideas for keeping warm and dry that perhaps you hadn't thought of before. Especially if you are fairly new to biking or if you are an old skinflint like me.

Never mind that old chestnut about being prepared with all the latest pricy winter clothing. I use the same jacket and pants whether it's summer or winter. Pretty well all bike clothing has zip out linings these days so don't worry too much. I've got some Aldi stuff and it's really pretty good and at £59.99 for a jacket and £39.99 for pants takes a bit of beating and the quality is pretty good with all the usual waterproof membrane, CE armour etc. The important thing I find is to make sure that it has at least one waterproof pocket and lots of other accessible pockets preferably with flaps, not zips. Make sure it is big enough to allow loads of thin layers underneath. The most vulnerable bit is the zip. Big & chunky is the best (like your Chairman). If you still feel the cold, get hold of one of those yellow hi-viz site jackets and stick it over the top. Just make sure it is big enough. The spin off is that everyone can see you much better as well. For a few pounds you can get a pair of Lycra cycling long johns. Much better (and less embarrassing) than granddad types and really effective.



Very thin layers can help a lot if you are caught out as the temperature plummets. If your gloves leak, stop at a garage as early as possible and grab a pair of those really thin plastic gloves supplied free for diesel users. Put them on under your gloves, they provide an instant barrier even if your gloves are sodden & make it very easy to put your soggy gloves back on & off without turning them inside out.

Similarly if your boots leak a bit just stop at the nearest supermarket and grab a couple of carrier bags and shove them on your feet before putting your boots on. The same result.

Try and arrange for your jacket sleeves to go over the top of the cuff of your gloves. Most gloves get wet by water trickling down the jacket sleeve and into the gloves via the cuff, not being forced through the surface of the gloves.

Keep your head and neck warm with a balaclava and neck tube. Pretty cheap but essential. (you too can look as daft as Sid Cork wearing one)

The point is you can stay warm in the winter without having to spend a boat load of money if you don't want to. Just remember thin barrier layers work wonders.

There is a serious safety aspect here. Believe me if you start getting cold or wet and you still have 100 miles to get home you may not make it if you don't do something to get warm. The cold reduces concentration very quickly to the point where you just don't care any more. And that could be fatal.

P.S. I have to admit that my son bought me a pair of Gerbin electrically heated socks for my birthday. Absolutely great for the winter.

# The Joys of Ducati Ownership

By Simon Lupton

Until a couple of years ago I'd only ever had Japanese bikes and a couple of Triumphs, the Italian "stallions" had always struck me as stylish yet fickle and probably a mechanical or electrical disaster waiting to happen. So how come I ended up with a Ducati?



I'm not really too sure myself, like many of us do I went wandering into M&S with no particular purpose, other than to while away a dinner hour, and came out having spent fifteen hundred quid on a new bike!

I was getting a little bored with the Hayabusa I'd had for a few years, perhaps it is too good a motorcycle, incredibly stable, handles well enough to hold it's own on trackdays and of course it has a modicum of power too.

I was beginning to find it a little uncomfortable on long trips and, if truth be told, the four cylinder motor a bit bland and character-less after a couple of V-twins and the triples.

The trade in deal offered was better than expected, I only dropped £1500 in three years and 25000 miles, so, having convinced myself Ducati must have sorted their reliability issues by now, I took the plunge.

Okay, so the ST3 isn't your sporting thoroughbred Ducati but it's still a Ducati (and it's red).

So how's it been? Pretty good really overall. Despite the bike only having 600 miles on the clock when I bought it, it had had a tumble which was obvious by the scuffs on the footpeg and exhaust, I'd spoken to the previous owner who confessed to dropping it on the garage floor so I wasn't too concerned.

Problem number one; the handling.

I've been used to bikes which you just jump on and ride without messing around with the springy bits but this was looking like it was going to be different!

The bike seemed as if it was wallowing around at the back end when things got a bit progressive or bumpy which wasn't particularly pleasant.

Ducati recommended tyre pressures are way lower than those recommended by Messrs Honda and Suzuki etc, so I pumped them up a bit, that helped so I continued to experiment until I found something I was happy with.

Things still weren't great with a pillion on so I sacrificed my knuckles and upped the pre-load on the rear shock, much better (so are the knuckles).

Still not perfect though as the centre stand regularly touches down too up and the exhausts occasionally when riding enthusiastically, not really confidence inspiring and it does prey on my mind at times, fortunately the exhausts are spring mounted so probably give a little when they touch down.

Problem no. 2; the fairings!

If there is one reason to get rid of this bike it's the fairings, or, more accurately, the refitting of them. God I hate the job, they come off no bother but putting them back on is a chore; someone in the Ducati design office should be shot.

My father in law didn't know I swore until he stood and watched me put the fairings back on one night.

Needless to say I've managed to crack both sides, had them plastic welded and cracked one again! There is no need for this carry-on Mr Ducati, especially on a touring bike – get it sorted for the next model!

Problem no.3; the brake discs. Seems to be a common problem this one.

When I got the bike, it was six months old, there was a slight pulsing through the brake lever when braking but I can only describe as a minor irritation which is why I did nothing about it, expensive mistake.

It failed its first MoT on "excessive fluctuation of braking effort" or some such bo!\*"cks, which cost me nearly £300 for a set of new, non Ducati, discs, something I should have had sorted under warranty. My fault.

That's it for problems. What about the horrendous cost of servicing you ask, not in my experience but then I do take it to a Ducati trained independent mechanic, it may be slightly more expensive than your standard Japanese machine but not enough to put me off.



It does tend to use a front tyre to a rear but as I get a comfortable 5000 miles a pair I'm not worried about that.

Good points

it is without doubt the most comfortable bike I've ever had, the seat is fantastic as standard, 400+ mile days are not a problem even two up with luggage, it does 180 miles to a tank, has excellent weather protection, decent underseat storage, a cracking all round sports tourer.

Oh, then there's the noise, keep your screaming fours, the V-twin rumble sounds awesome!



## Some more events of 2008



# Contributions Required

This is your newsletter, articles, observations, letters and pictures are always needed. Maybe you have a question on Roadcraft or a tale to tell

Please send any contributions to:

**raycharlton@sky.com**

**Deadline for contributions to next newsletter  
Friday, 30th January 2009**

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

NAM meets on the second Tuesday of every month at the Wheatsheaf Hotel on the B6918 at Woolsington, near Newcastle Airport, at 7.00pm for 7.30pm.



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