

Riders' Chronicles



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Xmas Dinner

If..... !

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Rider's Tips

Peter's Tale

Buddhist's

Going Dutch

I.O.M 2006



Dec 06 - Jan 07

**The Newsletter of Northumbria
Advanced Motorcyclists**

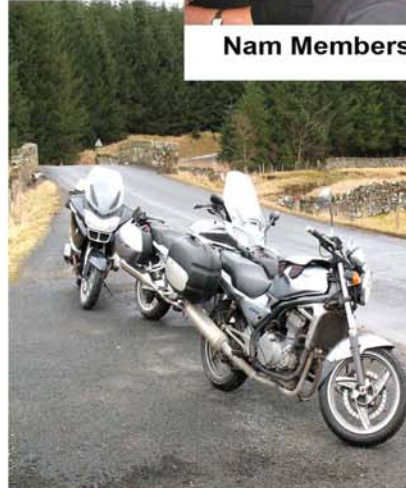
Events from 2006



Observers Ride Out - St Mary's Loch



Nam Members at April Monthly Meeting



Keilder March 2006



A rainy day in Pitlochry



Wales Tour 2006

Chairman's Ramblings

If you had asked me a year ago where I would be today, the last thing on my mind was being Chairman of the group.

However, we never know what lies ahead and circumstances frequently change as do our own intentions in life.

May I take this opportunity to thank those of you who encouraged and supported to stand as Chairman, and subsequently gave me your votes. I will endeavour to live up to your expectations.

I would also like to place on record my appreciation to Wayne Monk who had to stand down as Chairman mid year and for Dave Lucas who very ably took up the reins until the AGM and Debbie Polworth for her time as Membership Secretary plus Martin Hutchby. (Advertising and Liaison)



I am fortunate in taking up office being surrounded by an enthusiastic, caring and committed committee, now strengthened even further with the addition of Simon Lupton as Vice Chairman, Richard Salisbury as Membership Secretary, Glenn Knowles as Website Co-ordinator and Alan Richardson as Team Leader Tyneside.

Remembering that we are fundamentally and primarily a Training Group with a Social Side, I would like to see greater involvement of the Membership to encourage and maintain growth of an active group promoting safer riding at every opportunity.

Unfortunately my first task is an announcement that immediately following the Annual General Meeting, Dave Lucas and Helen Gardner resigned from the Committee with immediate effect.

This has created an immediate vacancy on the Training Team and Clive Taylor has agreed to step into the breach. Clive is a well qualified, professional Advanced Instructor and will be able to offer a lot to the Group.

There remains a vacancy for the position of Promotions and Events and anyone interested in the position should contact either the Secretary or Chairman.

This sudden change has meant the need for immediate action regarding the organisation of the Christmas Dinner and your Committee will be taking whatever action is necessary to ensure its smooth and successful planning.

I will be introducing some new initiatives soon to improve group activities to increase interest and involvement by you all.

I am very much aware that it is **YOUR GROUP** and would hope that as a biker of long standing, I have a taste for what bikers want, however, this may not be the case and I would welcome any approach, ideas or suggestions from any of you that could be of interest to others.

Meanwhile, ride safe and enjoy the facilities of NAM.

Ray

COVER PICTURES AND CONTENTS

Front Page: A winters scene from days gone by, a situation highly unlikely to be seen today.

Inside this issue - another collection of articles from first time contributors. Keep them coming as without them I cannot function as editor.

Ray Charlton
Editor

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

S. Green Jonathon Mellors M.Wilson D.Glennie G.Wray

N.Ellis S.Watson P.Watson M.Wigham K.Joran

E.Bilverston P.Forster D.Robertson

CONGRATULATIONS

Charlie (N) Ellis Susan Hardy Clifford Suddes
Obs: Ray Charlton Obs: Dave Walton Obs: Jim Knowlton

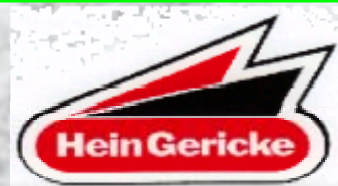
James Cordin
Obs: Kenny McDonald

On passing the I.A.M Advanced Test - Well done

Please let me know when you have passed to appear on this page



IAN BELL (MOTORCYCLES) LTD
62 Rothesay Terrace
Bedlington
Northumberland
NE22 5PT
Tel: 01670 822311



Blandford Sq. Newcastle
(Bottom end of Westgate Rd)
0191 2612097
www.hein-gericke.co.uk

The New 2006 seasons range for top
to toe quality rider's gear is now in.
Just pop in to collect the new
catalogue but you'll not be able to
resist spending more time in store
to find out more!

Committee

Honorary Group President: Jack Lormor

Chairman: Ray Charlton

Vice Chairman: **Simon Lupton**

Secretary: **Simon Hadden**

Treasurer: **Jim Stephenson**

Training Officer: **Kevin Wellden**

Training Group: **Simon Lupton, Vacant at present**

Membership Secretary: **Richard Salisbury**

Promotion & Events: **Vacant**

Website Co-ordinator: **Glenn Knowles**

Rideout Co-ordinator: **Ron Patrick**

Merchandising: **Louise Bennett**

Newsletter Editor: **Ray Charlton**

Team Leaders

Northumberland: **Malcolm Lonsdale**

Tyneside: **Alan Richardson**

Newcastle & West: **Gary Law**

Website

www.nam-online.org

Telephone: 07956 618965

Durham Advanced Motorcyclists

Durham Advanced Motorcyclists meetings are on the last Tuesday of the month at The THINFORD INN, starting at 7.30pm.

The Thinford inn is located on the junction of the A167 and A688.

- 000 -

The NAM Email group can be found at:

<http://www.smartgroups.com/group/group.cfm?gid=3372386>

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:

simon.hadden@longfram35.freemove.co.uk

or

raycharlton@tesco.net

Christmas Raffle 2006

Tickets for this years Christmas Raffle will be available soon the proceeds going to our dedicated charity, the Great North Air Ambulance.



Prizes this year include:-

A Track Day at Croft

A Day with Porsche

British Super Bikes Day

And many other quality prizes



Please make a great effort to sell as many tickets as you can.

JAGUAR (CASTLE BROMWICH) 20th JULY 2006

by Martin Wilson

Our group of just six N.A.M. Members met at Washington Services South at 7.00 a.m. on Thursday 20th July. The weather forecast had not been kind to us, after weeks of warm dry days the weather update was for scattered showers through the Northeast and the Midlands!

Those taking part were:

Jack Lormer.
Jim Stephenson.
Bernard Wisniewski.
Sean Mulloy.
Ron Patrick.
Martin Williams.

Two of our group were to meet up with us at Woodall services South, after taking a detour into Yorkshire for the Altberg Boot facility.

At 7.00 am a mere four Riders departed from Washington services, on our journey south. Within minutes of departure the promised showers had started, luckily they didn't develop into anything more than brief showers. Progress was swift led by our ride organiser Ron Patrick astride a Suzuki 750 DR kindly loaned to him, after the theft of his Honda VFR.

The group arrived at Woodall Services just before 9.00 am. Whilst we took refreshment, our fellow riders for the remainder of our journey Jack and Bernard arrived. After refuelling, we were ready for the second leg of our journey to Tamworth Services. Upon arrival we took the opportunity to take an early lunch break in anticipation of our tour round the Jaguar Plant.

Our arrival at Jaguar cars visitor centre was punctuated with a degree of uncertainty over the correct route into Castle Bromwich. As a result one of our group arrived a little late! Once in the Visitor Centre, we were allocated to our Tour guide. Mr. Tom Forrester. Tom made us all welcome to the plant and informed us that he had recently retired after Forty years service, having started work with Jaguar in 1966.

S - TYPE:

We were taken by mini bus to the production plant, where we were informed that the building had once belonged to Vickers and had been used in production of Spitfire Aircraft during the War.

The S - Type vehicles are fabricated with steel body panels, as a result the production area is subject to sparks from the welding equipment. We were shown the start of the body shell assembly, including fitting of the bonnets. Of which there are two types, those fitted to European models with round badges, and those for the American market fitted with the traditional Jaguar device.

XK – TYPE:

This production area was a contrast to the earlier plant in that the facility for this model was considerably brighter in appearance, due in part to the fact that models in this range are produced from Aluminium extrusions and sections. The obvious benefits to this method of construction are:

1. 40% reduction in weight of finished vehicle.
2. Use of Aluminium allows joints using high-tech adhesives to be used, in turn this is a more environmentally friendly production process!

Whilst we were moving around the production area's, we were warned not to touch the adhesives, as they themselves could be harmful, yet another environmental issue!

Eventually the completed body shells disappeared from view into the paint facility, which we were not allowed entry into, for health and safety reasons.

Upon their return the body shells were shod in their finished colours, from here, they would be matched to their level of trim and customer selected options, engines, wheels and any other extras chosen by their new owners in all parts of the globe.

Tom indicated that the day after our visit to the factory. Friday 21st July would be the last day of production before the factory's summer closedown. When production of the XK-Type models resumes, production will be stepped up to a three shift system, in order to increase production output for this popular new model.

The last section to be visited within the production area was the wet test area. Every finished vehicle is subjected to the worst weather conditions, in order to assure that each and every vehicle is as water tight as possible. Immediately after this section we were shown a section of staff whose job was to ensure that any minor leaks, highlighted by the wet test area, were dealt with. They were also responsible for ensuring that the fits and gaps between doors bonnets and wings were consistent. Reassuring to know that some manufacturers still value these production ideals!

With our tour complete, we were returned to the Jaguar cars visitor centre, where we thanked Mr. Forrester for his time taken, to show us around the factory on such a hot afternoon. A number of questions were put forward, and duly answered by Mr. Forrester, including the obvious; do you have a factory shop? The answer was, that as all models particularly in the XK-Type range have been sold before they ever start manufacture. There is no reason to discount prices!

NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM

The morning of Friday 21st July started with a short journey to the National Motorcycle Museum, close to the N.E.C. in Birmingham.

The museum appears to have been completed its re-build since the Disastrous fire, believed to have been started by a discarded cigarette end.

We were able to look through over a century of motorcycle production from 1902 up to the present day.

Whilst a number of our group were pre-occupied with a selection of H.R.D. and VINCENT machines. The words "I used to have one of those, swapped it for a Ford Consul back in the 1960's" was heard uttered by Jack.

Possibly not one of the best decisions in hindsight! Just as a reminder of Jack's decision back in the 1960's please see the photograph showing both a VINCENT and an H.R.D. both in pristine condition.

A number of machines had recently been returned from restoration; including the racing Norton's in the second photograph.



After a leisurely lunch in the museums restaurant facility, we made our plans for our return journey. Basically a return via the same route used for the journey down to the midlands. After a short refuelling stop at Tamworth Services, we made a start on our return journey. Within a few miles we found that the level of traffic began to make filtering necessary in order to make progress. So the following 20 plus miles became a master-class on filtering, led by Ron Patrick.

A further stop at Woodall services allowed for Rider refreshments.

Resuming our Journey a further Petrol stop was made at Sheffield's Woolley Edge Services. Allowing us to arrive back on Tyneside mid-evening.

Thanks are due to Sean Mulloy for the photographs used in the article!



HRD – forerunner of the legendary Vincent

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.

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**. 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.

-o0o -

Christmas Dinner 2006

16th December – Wheatsheaf Hotel - Tickets £15.00 each

This events will be first come first served, further details on the website and at December monthly meeting



IF EVERYTHING IN LIFE WAS FAIR.....

- There would be absolutely no calories or artery-clogging fat in a traditional British fried breakfast.
- Your luggage wouldn't be last off the airport carousel.
- The person in front of you in the self service queue wouldn't take the last piece of chocolate fudge cake, (***Saddo please note!***)
- The trade in price for your bike was greater than you believed it to be.
- You'd be able to think of something clever to say in reply to an insult before the person walked away, not after.
- Selfish rats would never, ever be good-looking, witty or wealthy.
- Your body would stay as young as your mind believes it is.
- Politicians would stick to the things they said in their manifestos.
- Your fitness regime would not be sabotaged by gym and swimming pool changing rooms that smelled of other people and gave you verrucas.
- You wouldn't run out of Sellotape halfway through packing up a parcel that needed to be in the post in exactly four minutes' time.
- Bike tyres would last for 35,000 miles and never puncture in the first week of their life.
- You never got cold or wet when out on your bike and only rained during the night.
- Films would start on television at 7pm so you could watch a whole one before you fell asleep on the sofa.
- There would be nothing you had to aspire to – or to ever complain about.
- Insurance premiums went down every year
- The time and effort you put into your life would be balanced by the praise and reward you got back.
- A tan wouldn't be bad for your skin.
- Your riding kit would never leak no matter what the weather was like.
- Wives and partners would encourage you to go out on your bike.

MISTAKES WE HAVE ALL MADE(Continued from last newsletter)

by Tony Forster

Following on from the last issues story, when we got back from France, the bike got put away for the winter and only used infrequently. By this stage (the early 80's) I was playing in a band and bikes went onto the back burner, although I acquired a Yamaha TY175 from an ad in the Chronicle for £125.

The guy selling it wanted about £250, from memory, but our bass player Dave, who had a TY125 pointed out allsorts of imaginary problems with the bike and eventually the poor guy crumbled. Trials bikes are so much fun and illegal riding on wasteland wasn't a problem then, as the Not in 'My Back Yard Brigade' and "it'll affect the value of our house, darling."

Daily Mail readers, hadn't yet held sway over the Politicians. That and the fact that we only rode on genuine wasteland away from housing estates meant no-one was bothered.



Eventually, the Superdream was sold and the TY followed when my mate Tony suggested respraying the frame and tank. (See picture) We reassembled the bike and couldn't get the bloody thing to go again, ever. It eventually sold as a non runner, just like most project bikes. I then stepped into the less fun but more practical world of the car. Daf (which no-one remembers, I hope), Mini, Triumph Dolomite, Volvo 144 (Eeek!) Chrysler 2 litre coupe (this brings a collective "Oh the shame of it").

I was without bike for about fifteen years, unless you count a bodged YB100 Yamaha commuter for a year or so ("Oh the shame of it" again).

I finally cracked as I approached my forties and bought an M reg 1995 BMW R850R from Morpeth motorcycles (a "sad bastards bike" as Mr Lupton referred to it...pub expert that he is with his DR750 cutting edge tool, snigger).

Good bike, great for pillions, punchy engine, naff, crunchy gearbox. It vibrated like an

alcoholic without a drink, but could whistle up to the ton and beyond with no problems and the only real downside was the weight of the thing, being about 250 kilos wet, which made it a right laugh to push around on a slope.

A couple or three years later a mate of Simon's, Dave, had a 1995 VFR 750 and fancied the BM so we did a straight swap for about a year and we agreed to swap back if we got bored.

I got bored the day I tried to pull away in second on an uphill junction with my nearest and dearest, Marcia, on the back...stall, fall, crunch! Dave phoned that evening asking if I wanted to swap back.

I pointed out the "minor cosmetic damage", bent brake levers (hand and foot), cracked indicator lens, scuffed mirror and fairing and damaged pride.

I don't think I could ever persuade Marcia to get back on the Honda after that, although I did point out to her that her leg had stopped it from being damaged further, my injuries took months to heal..... Note to self; Digital Gear Indicators are a great idea, especially if you can't count.

Dave was fine about it and it turned out he wanted to trade the bike in and was going to get a better deal on the Honda than the BM.

The VFR was a great bike, but first time out on it I nearly binned it, because it had no engine braking, unlike the BM and the brakes were dreadful (although they were much improved immediately after with braided hoses and new underpants).

Why Honda went to VTEC and chain driven cams is beyond me. The 750 had a nice power step at 7,000rpm without all that gizmology. It didn't have any torque low down, but the engine was a jewel, the carbs fuelled beautifully and the only way they could really improve it was by hiking the capacity.

Still, Mr Honda, must have technological advances to wow the punters. How about making bikes sound better, with a more bassy exhaust note instead of transmission whine? Decibels just measure noise, not the quality of the noise and everyone loves the sound that Harley's make, don't they?

Finally, I traded the BM in at Ian Bells for a Y reg Fazer 1000 with a few accessories on it. Nice, powerful, fast bike, gearbox can be crunchy, particularly into first (bit like the Honda in that regard) although, bizarrely, sometimes it's virtually silent. Again I fitted braided hoses, which gives a hard feel at the handle (ooer missus).

Fairing directs air and rain onto your hands, great in high summer, crap at any other time, when you want to wear gloves that don't feel like you're wearing a polar bear on your hands (pardon?).

Currently I'm experimenting with handlebar muffs (an idea from Simon Woods). Screen is a raised, flip up jobbie that came with the bike and not too sure about it as you get buffeting and wind noise. Crouching down is just noisy and looks naff. Why the hell bike and screen manufacturers can't come up with something that looks good and works well by now is beyond me.

While I'm ranting, even with Scottoilers, chains are a pain, give me shaft drive any day. Fazers lights are brilliant and clear the traffic on my fifteen mile commute into Newcastle, when I'm not in my 13 year old Nissan Micra, which is just as economical, cheaper to insure (TPF&T) but lousy at filtering. In the summer the engine of the Fazer chucks out loads of heat, frying your legs at the lights.

Eventually, I got round to passing my Advanced test (in August 2005) after Simon Lupton first persuaded me to start about two and a half years prior (it's hard to argue with a man who has his foot on your neck), but still feel like a beginner as regards my skills, although it has made me a better and much safer rider (and driver..... I think).

Observers course next? Maybe.....

WORDSEARCH

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AVON
JAMES ELLISON
BRNO
WORLD SUPERBIKES
FIREBLADE
HARTSIDE CAFÉ
ROADCRAFT
BLACK SHADOW

SUZUKA
BUELL
JAMES TOSELAND
CARL FOGARTY
THE DOCTOR
TIGER
ARAI
IVAN MAUGER

DAINESE
LAGUNA SECA
TEN KATE
PETRONAS
KENTUCKY KID
TRIPLE
COLIN EDWARDS
COUNTERSTEER



Tips for New Riders – Motorway Riding

by Ray Charlton

Motorways are definitely not at the top of motorcyclist's popularity lists, but, like them or not, they are there and it is inevitable that sooner or later you will need to use them.



Whilst new skills and techniques are not required to ride on motorways as in many ways they are just an extension of a dual-carriageway, but, that aside do present extra hazards due to the speed and volume of the traffic on them.

Whilst the maximum permitted speed limit of 70 mph is the same as a dual-carriageway the main hazards such as, lay-bys, crossroads and junctions that have direct access, most without slip roads, are not present and whilst removing some of the potential danger, do have the tendency to increase average speeds considerably.

The other main difference is the presence of a hard shoulder to be used in emergency situations.

You need to prepare yourself mentally to join a motorway as having been riding on normal non-motorway roads you may not be ready for the changes you are about to face, particularly if you intend to travel considerable distances on them

This particularly applies to recently qualified riders, who by virtue of the law at present, have never been allowed on a motorway, which in my view is a serious exclusion from the basic motorcycle riding test as administered by the Driving Standards Agency, but would need a change of test rules to allow learners onto them, albeit under strict supervision.

When joining a motorway, you should be very much aware of the following:-

- The speed and volume of the traffic
- The level of concentration and attention needed
- The limited opportunities to stop for rest and refuelling options
- The dangers of stopping on the hard shoulder
- The legal limitations on certain vehicles using the motorway.

Each of these features can have an effect on your safety as higher speeds mean that hazardous situations develop quickly and that you can travel further before you can react.

Stopping distances can be greatly extended and collisions often cause death, serious injury and damage as drivers fail to react to danger quick enough often resulting in multi-vehicle accidents.

The greater volume of traffic, coupled with higher speeds, increases the demands on your concentration and attention as well as your decision making ability. Quite often having more vehicles around you under these circumstances increase the number of hazards and make the opportunities for manoeuvre much more restricted.

Some basic rules to follow are:-

1. Maintain a high level of concentration, often difficult in monotonous situations.
2. Plan adequate rest breaks to fight fatigue
3. Make sure you are not feeling unwell
4. Remember the risks of collision when stopping on hard shoulders
5. Safety implications apply to the rider, the motorcycle and traffic, road and surface conditions.

Looking at some of these headings we need to understand that the high speeds of motorway traffic cause dangerous situations to develop very rapidly.

There is a need to gain experience to cope with your own speed and the speed of other vehicles. As you cannot gain this 'experience' instantly, there is a need to be cautious during the learning curve to develop the skills to be able to accurately assess the implications of high speeds and its effect on stopping distances.

Fatigue is a condition that can be brought on by endless and monotonous mile after mile of featureless and boring surroundings, lulling you into a false sense of security and dulling your levels of concentration, exposing you to serious danger.



Typical Multi-vehicle Motorway Accident

Avoid using motorways (or any other roads for that matter) if you are feeling unwell, taking medication that may impair your judgement. Even simple cold cures carry advice not to take them if you intend to drive. (or ride) Be also aware that mental distress can impair your judgement. This may include such things as a trivial argument with the wife before setting out, so be warned.

Plan your route and be aware of your fuel range as running out of fuel on a motorway can be a very expensive exercise. Avoid trying to read maps affixed to your tank whilst moving. Identify your intended rest points and exits before setting out.

Ensure your bike is roadworthy and carry out the **POWDER** checks before commencing your journey. (Petrol, Oil, Water, Damage, Electric, Rubber.(Tyres))

Check for traffic reports of road works, delays and weather that can affect the length of your journey and make allowances, particularly if you have a deadline such as a ferry to catch.

Remember the following golden rules:

- Look ahead and behind right up to the road horizons, extend your vision to scan mid-range, foreground, peripheral and rear.
- Use your mirrors frequently; you should know at all times what is happening behind you.
- Be aware of your own blind spots as well as those of other drivers.
- Regularly monitor your instruments and listen to the sound of your engine and tyre noise on the road.
- Be especially alert at intersections, traffic situations can change very quickly.
- At 70mph you are travelling at over 100 feet per second. (31 metres) so allow much more time to react.
- Remember the two and four second rules and greatly extend this rule in poor weather conditions or heavy traffic conditions.
- Avoid coarse manoeuvres at speed.
- Give other drivers time to see and react to your signals.
- Consider using your headlight as a warning as often a horn is ineffective due to wind and engine noise at speed.
- Only use lanes on your right to overtake and return to lane one when manoeuvre is completed and its safe to do so. Avoid staying out in the outer lanes unless volume of traffic dictates it.
- Remember that HGV's are restricted (legally) to 56 mph and cannot use lane three whereas light goods vehicles, under 7.5 tonnes gross weight can legally use the outer lanes, so be aware that such vehicles may unexpectedly move into the outer lanes.

Finally, remember when leaving a motorway it may be difficult to get used to the slower speeds needed, so focus your mind to face these changes.

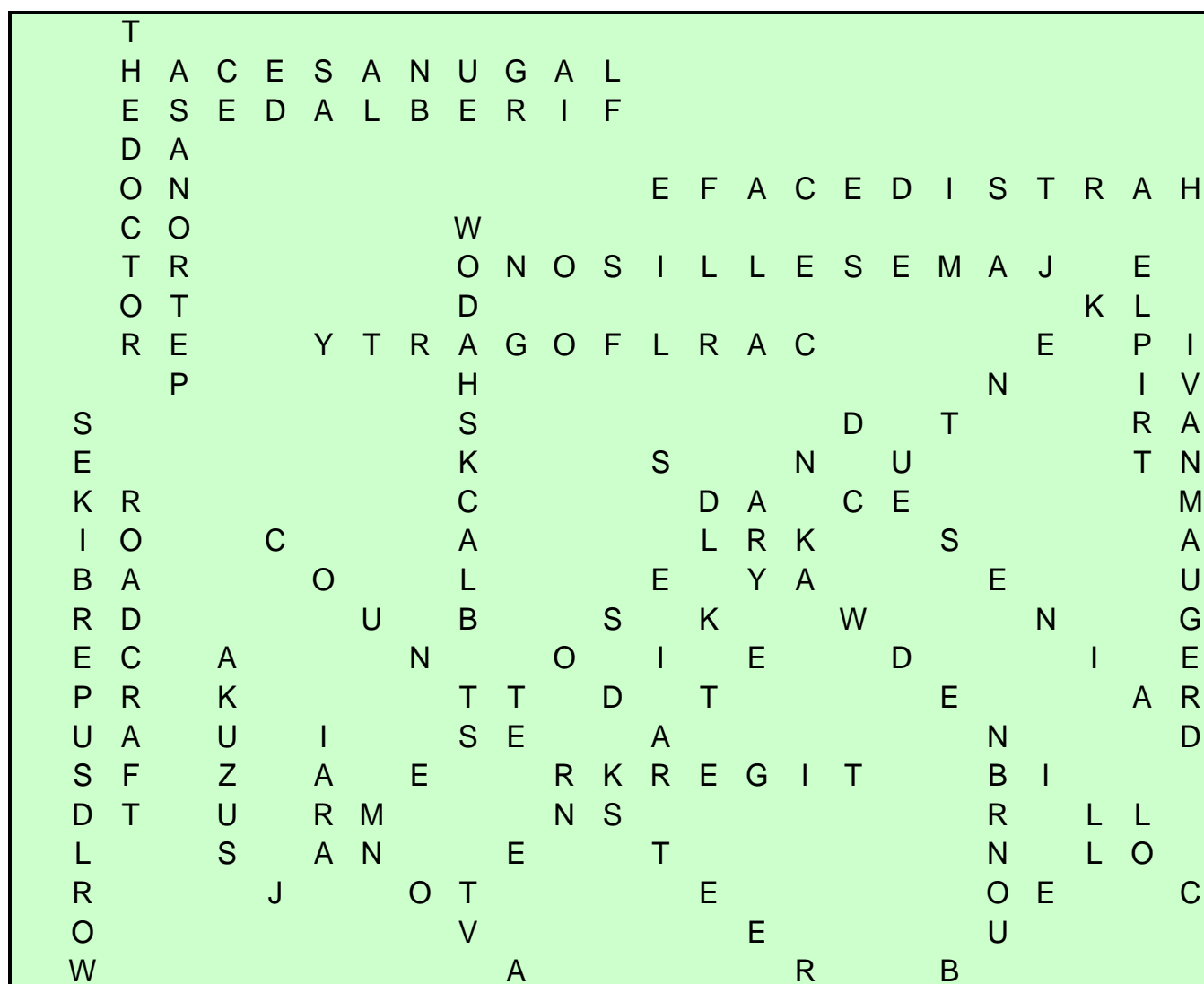
The other setback is, long journey's on motorways do nothing for modern bike tyres and tend to flatten off the tread in the centre and also the added hazard of heavy rain as often water builds up quite quickly on the road surface in such conditions.

The choice is yours, but I avoid them like the plague whenever I can.

Happy riding. Ray



Solution to Word Search on Page 14



NAM MERCHANDISE

Contact : Louise Bennett for all items of merchandise

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Tank Pads	With NAM Emblem	£10.00
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What Are You Going To Do When I Die?

by Peter Morgan

That was the question my wife asked me in April 2001. Not an unreasonable question when one takes into account the fact that she has survived her cancer for three years and we were becoming hopeful of a long survival. We had spent some time preparing for death – now we had to spend some time preparing for life!

My answer was “I was thinking of learning to ride a bike (as in motor bike). I had thought about riding as a youth, but in a moment of profound sanity had realised that if I wanted to survive for any length of time I should stay away from motor bikes – the mixture of youth, impetuosity, and invincibility would have made me an easy target for the Grim Reaper! Now, however, maturity had given me a more balanced view of life!!!!

Jean's face lit up at the mention of bikes – “Great”, she said, “get the bike and I'll come on the back with you!. What I did not know was that in her youth Jean had ridden – it was only falling ice, falling off and being pregnant that had stopped her from continuing.

Finding a good riding school was not difficult so in May 2001 I started. A whole day to do the CBT, then the written test, three, three hour lessons on a CB500 (Big Bike) for direct access and a test. Having passed the test I now needed a bike. A friend recommended Durham Bikes at Esh Winning and I spent some time sitting on shiny metal before whittling down my choice to two. The final test was for Jean to test the pillion position – she chose and the deal was done. I enjoyed the process and to cut a long story short I went from never having ridden a bike to owning a Yamaha 900 Diversion in five weeks.

My first ride was horrendous. I collected the bike one Saturday morning – as Jean drove out of the car park at Durham Bikes it started to rain gently. By the time I had been shown around the bike gently had gone away and it was just rain. Onward and upwards – on the bike, find the bite point and away SLOWLY out of the car park and turn LEFT (plenty of time to do right turns later). One hundred yards up the road, and stop. Rain now coming down in stai-rods, visor so misted that I can not see the front of the bike and my heart pumping away like a jackhammer. Of course I had not ridden a bike for two weeks, the last time was on my test and I am realising that the CB500 is not a big bike – this is big bike. Nevertheless, calm down, go through the process, remember the sequence take it steady. To the junction (with the visor partly open, face getting wet) turn right. There, that wasn't too bad, ride in a straight line. So far so good, but now I'm lost – no idea where I am – still I can't be far from a road sign, only hope that I can see it when it arrives. There's another one, didn't recognise any of those places, certainly none of them are called Sunderland so push on DO NOT TURN ANY CORNERS! Arrive at T junction, decision has to be made – turn right to Durham, left to Chester le Street.

The choice was a simple one – I know Durham, it is close to Sunderland, I will be home in twenty minutes, it is a right turn. I am not so familiar with Chester le Street, it is further away from Sunderland, I do not know when I will be home if I go this way, it is a left turn. So I turn left(I am at traffic lights and it's on a hill). The rain is still coming down heavily and I need a rest, time to pull into a garage and get some petrol. The ride to Chester le Street is not too bad. I am on a dual carriageway but without displaying L plates the other road users (car drivers) give me no consideration at all. Why don't they realise that I am nervous, on a new bike, trying to go steady, fearing for my life?

As I enter Chester le Street I notice that every roundabout has a police car parked on it – did they know I was coming? Are they out to get me already? As I approach the centre I realise why

the police are there – today there is an international cricket match being played here, but it's raining, the match is off, so where are all the people?

They are wandering about all over the road, the traffic is heavy, the rain is heavy, visibility is poor – I am the traffic! I do manage to get home in one piece and am so pleased to put the bike in the garage.

The following few weeks see me exploring the local countryside and improving my riding skills. My usual plan is to get Jean settled down for the night (she has become seriously ill again) and then go out. My riding is improved by so much night work – there is not much opposition on the road – and I get used to handling the bike. Riding always makes me smile and I enjoy the challenge that riding presents – a high level of concentration or you fall off. It always clears my mind and I feel invigorated after a ride.

Sadly Jean lost her battle against cancer and died that November – but she did get to travel on the bike once and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

The Yamaha lasted until late November when after visiting Jean's grave at Hexham I popped into M&S in Newcastle and saw a blue ST1100 Pan European. It was love at first mount! Why wait until I was more experienced, get the experience on the right bike, who knows what is around the corner? I was a bit apprehensive about the size, the weight, whether I could handle it! I even asked the sales staff to get it out of the back yard for me – but within 50yds I knew that this was the bike for me. I have not stopped smiling yet.

When the ST1300 became available I hesitated. My first thought was that I would wait before I bought one. My second thought was why wait? Do it now. My new philosophy in life is grab it while you can – you just do not know what is coming at you.

Taking the advice of experienced bikers I realised that to stay alive you need luck, experience and training. The luck I just hope for. The experience is really miles of the road that comes with miles on the road – I did 5,000miles on the Diversion, 11,000 miles on the ST1100 and have just clocked up 17,5000 miles on the ST13000 – my basic principle being 'if you can get there on the bike, go on the bike'. As to further training I have so far done three road courses – I feel that they have made me a better safer rider – they have certainly taught me that riding is a continual learning experience.

I suppose one might say that my legacy from my late wife is the biking world, both new friends and bikes – that must be why it makes me smile so much. Have fun!

I wrote this article in May 2003 and it is as it was then. Time moves on of course and things do change. I still have the legacy and fortunately I have someone to share it with. I have done even more courses and hope that in being an observer for NAM I am able to pass the skills and information on to more riders. I still have the ST1300, although it now has 72,000 miles on the clock! I still think that miles on the road is the only way to go – my total mileage since test is now some 87,000 – not bad for five years (I am doing slightly less at present but this is restriction caused by time and wallet rather than a diminishing desire to ride). I have made even more friends and find the biking world to be the most non-discriminatory global group I have found. All you need is a bike and you have a family!

Most importantly I am still having fun and biking **STILL MAKES ME SMILE**. Hope it does you too. Take care all and happy, happy riding.

Buddhist Monastery in the Scottish Borders

Hidden away in the Scottish Borders is an unexpected delight in the form of a genuine Tibetan Buddhist Monastery, complete with authentic buildings, décor and furnishings.

Located just outside of Eskdalemuir, it is open to visitors and includes its own café, offering vegetarian dishes as is the custom of this cult.



Kagyu Samye Ling Buddhist Monastery and Tibetan Centre were established in 1967 and is the first and largest of its kind in the West. It is located in a peaceful valley on the banks of the river Esk among the scenic rolling hills of the Scottish borders. As well as a centre of Buddhist wisdom and learning, and offering the highest standards of Buddhist teachings, it is also a centre for the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism, arts, medicine and culture.

Founded by Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche and under the guidance

of Abbot and Retreat Master Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche, Kagyu Samye Ling's activity extends around the world through an international network of Dharma centres. Samye Ling represents one branch of Rokpa Trust, a non-profit umbrella organisation with branches in humanitarian, healing and spiritual areas of activity. These include a broad range of charitable and humanitarian aid projects both in the UK and around the world; the Holy Island Project, a small island off the west coast of Scotland dedicated to world peace, interfaith spirituality and ecological sustainability, that is open for the benefit of all; and Tara Rokpa, an organisation committed to the preservation and growth of traditional Tibetan medicine, as well as the development and promotion of Tara Rokpa Therapy.

Kagyu Samye Ling is open to people of all faiths and religions, and welcomes you for short visits or to come and participate in any of the diverse courses available throughout the year. From weekend Dharma courses of all levels, to all-inclusive retreats at our Purelands Retreat Centre, to drawing, painting or Tai Chi - or if you would simply like to just come and have a look around, Kagyu Samye Ling has something to offer everyone.



To reach it take the B711 from Hawick or the B709 from Langholm.(Between Hawick and Longtown on the A7)

Going Dutch

By Allan Thompson

It had started sitting around a camp fire drinking the local bottled brew with my two brothers-in-law

in late Summer, 2005. We'd just hauled our caravans and families 600 miles to Zeeland in the Netherlands and were discussing how much more enjoyable it would have been going through



Europe on the bikes. Later in the evening, the subject had turned to bike racing and my recent experiences at the British Grand Prix. We agreed that we should go to a race together in 2006. Why not link riding abroad with a race meeting I suggested and with that, the seed was sown.

As we waited to disembark from the 'King of Scandinavia' at North Shields Ferry Terminal on a damp Monday morning, I was able to reflect on what had been a thoroughly enjoyable weekend.

The trek had started on the previous Thursday night as we and about 150 other bikes queued to board the 5.30pm Newcastle to Amsterdam ferry. For some reason, it had not occurred to me that a few other bikes might be popping across for the Dutch TT weekend. It was bedlam. My previous (watching from a car seat) experiences with bikes on ferries indicated you would ride on, park, a ferry employee would come over and secure your bike whilst you supervised before you strolled off to your cabin. I began to realise that tonight's experience was probably not going to be like that. I was correct!

As the handler waived for us to start boarding, dozens raced off towards the ramp. 'What's their hurry' I wondered. With hindsight, they probably realised that there would only be enough holding down straps for about three quarters of the bikes travelling and enough protection materials for about a quarter. 'Chaos' is the only word that could describe the scene as I finally pulled to a stop in the boat. Too many bikes, too many people, too much luggage and no-where near enough functional holding down straps.

With the bike strapped down as well as I could manage with the equipment available, I made for the exit. Wearing full leathers and carrying panniers, tank-bag and helmet, I negotiated the assault course which had developed. The 'Krypton Factor' sprang to mind as I tripped over yet another strap within metres of the exit not realising the real challenge was yet to come. Leaving deck 4, I new that our cabin was on deck 2 (which I later discovered is roughly adjacent to the propeller!). "Are yes sir" the little Malaysian steward explained, "you need to go to deck 7, cross to the middle of the boat, and then go down to 2". "Is there a lift" I enquired. "Are yes sir, you need to climb to level 7, walk towards the bow, cross to the reception area and get the lift down to level 2 then head back towards the stern". The 'Krypton Factor' came to mind for a second time! By the time we reached the cabin, I was a dripping wreck tottering on the edge of exhaustion. The bar was calling!

After a raucous evening in the 'Sports Bar' followed by a fairly uneventful sleep, we finally docked at Ijmuiden and made our way out onto the Dutch road network. We had already decided that rather than head south around Amsterdam and then up towards Assen,

we would head north and over what appeared to be an interesting feature called the Afsluitsdijk.

This is a 22 mile long dike built in the 1930's which separates the 'Ijsselmeer' from the North Sea. The dike carries a dual carriageway over it and was certainly an impressive construction and well worth the visit. Roughly in the middle of the dike is a building called the 'Monument'.

This provides an observation platform along with a café which offered a good selection of snacks and a vast array of information on the history of the dijk. The weather was superb and we really lost track of time sitting on the terrace overlooking the Ijsselmeer whilst drinking coffee and eating apple cake.



As a result of this lengthy halt and the endless 'cigarette breaks' demanded by my two compadres, we finally reached the Groningen Ring Road during the rush hour. This proved to be an unfortunate event as we promptly got separated and ended up heading off in different directions. 'Never mind' I thought, we'd planned for this and had arranged a meet up point. I eventually reached the agreed location, parked up and waited. And waited. And waited.....and waited. My phone was working sporadically and I was starting to get slightly concerned as I was the only one with a map. The call finally came. "We're here!" they announced. I looked around. "Where?". "Here - Nieuwe Pekela", "we decided to come straight to the village but we don't know the name of the hotel". Through gritted teeth, I announced how pleased I was that they had made it and said I'd be there in 30 minutes. "We're by the bridge" I heard just as the phone died. A short time later, I pulled into the village and shook my head in disbelief recalling their final words. I can only assume 'Nieuwe Pekela' is Dutch for 'lots of bridges'. The village stretched in both directions, for

as far as the eye could see, along the banks of a canal with a bridge roughly every 200 feet. Inevitably, I initially headed off in the wrong direction but eventually found them 'by the bridge'.



I'd found 'Bike Motel' on the internet months earlier (www.bikemotel.nl) and was pleased to find it was as described with a picturesque location, comfortable rooms, friendly hosts and excellent bike security. The owner had helped with a few hiccups during the planning stage of our trip and also turned out to be a very good host during our visit. The

'themed' hotel provided an interesting multinational collection of bike enthusiasts from Holland, England, Wales, Ireland, Denmark, Spain and even Australia and resulted in two very enjoyable evenings one of which included a barbeque.

I have visited the Netherlands on many occasions and have always found them to be a hospitable lot but all expectations were exceeded after the TT when we walked to the local pub and were provided with an endless supply of free beer by the locals in exchange for our opinions on bike racing (and football!).

Attempts to return the compliment were wholeheartedly refused by the landlord. My recollections of that night are slightly vague and only soured by the discovery that one of my brothers-in-law snores like a traction engine after too much beer. My riding earplugs proved a useful accessory that night.

We left on the Sunday morning and enjoyed the kind of ride you dream of with virtually empty well maintained roads and beautiful warm sunshine all the way back to the port.

With a few miles to go and about 90 minutes till boarding, I decided to pull over, confirm the route to the port and sample the last Dutch coffee stop. With the final stages of the route confirmed, we headed out onto the busy motorway. I pinned the throttle to get up to traffic speed on the short 'on ramp', entered a suitable gap and glanced in my mirror to check the others. Not again! - I watched them head off in another direction. 'They've gone the wrong way' I thought. I glanced at the map. 'They've gone the wrong way'. A short time later, I found myself having a 'Top Gun' moment with a 747 at Schipol. 'Damn - I've gone the wrong way'. I arrived at the port 40 minutes later much to the amusement of my travel mates each keen to give their opinion on my map reading skills. After a few moments trying to drum up a suitable excuse, I decided they were probably right.

And so it was almost over. Into the boat - into the cabin - into the bar and finally into my bunk. 'Where shall we go next year' I wondered!

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M & S MOTORCYCLES

Isle of Man Manx Grand Prix Holidays 2006

by Clive Taylor

Planning for this annual event should have been a pretty relaxed affair restricted to booking the Steam Packet Company's ferry crossing from Heysham. Over the last couple of years however the ever spiraling cost for bike & rider have had me trawling the internet for a cheap booking day. Patience paid off however and eventually I paid just under £100, probably the lowest cost for 5 or 6 years. My wife Pattie managed to halve the cost for car & driver as well so we felt we got one up on the money grabbers.

This year promised to be a lively effort as a few new recruits came. Dave Anderson's marriage last year ensured that his wife Jane came with her daughter Catherine on their bikes, Jim Stephenson had decided to come by car so that his wife Linda and grandson Shaun could come. His cavernous boot managed to transport quite a lot of biker luggage for other folks as well. Simon Hadden was due to come by ER5 but the original battery finally died as he tried to fire it up for the trip to the ferry and he had to press the Pan into service. Louise came on her newly acquired 1200 Bandit. The other Clive Taylor (the Doctor, not the motorcycling God) was VFR mounted. Sarah & Simon from the Borders rolled up, Paul Cliffe from Wincobank in Sheffield was there as usual (can you believe there is a place called Wincobank). Captain Fantastic (aka Dave Wardle from the Norton Owners Club) was there with his mate Stevie, who brought his daughter Emma. John Turnbull from Sunderland and our very own Simon Lupton completed the group. He came all the way from Stannington Station on his Ducati and nothing went wrong with it. It even started after being left out in overnight rain. Surely a first! You can imagine this lot all camping at Peel campsite was a job to control. But we managed with infantile enthusiasm.

The event to be seen at this year was Pattie's cocktail party on the Sunday but in order to gain admission attendees had to wear either a bow tie or a tiara. Pattie had lugged all the required ingredients and various bottles to ensure that the event went with a bang and everyone wore the appropriate dress. Some even made their own from cardboard or tinsel.

Pattie & I had decided to make this almost a two week holiday and Jim and Linda were there even longer. This allowed us to enjoy the delights of this smashing island before most of the biking activity started. A good wheeze. I hardly rode my bike the first week being content to potter about by car with Pattie. The weather that first week was hot and sunny most of the time but as Friday drew towards evening the heavens opened as the bedraggled late arrivals landed at the camp site. Some of these folks were indeed lucky as the kindly Jim had not only transported several tents but had even erected them as well.

The weather during the second week was a bit mixed but generally ok and not cold but became increasingly windy. Flapping canvas required the installation of ear plugs at night which also doubled up to reduce the effect of the snorers amongst us. One or two people seemed to find this natural activity particularly irksome!

Simon H spent a day traveling the railway, tram and bus routes and several of us trundled to the top of Snaefell (2000 ft) on the Victorian electric tram.

There are loads of bike related events all week and plenty of Classic stuff for old farts. Not only are there 3 classic races but most of the one make clubs like Norton, Velocette, BSA, Triumph etc all had their gatherings so you could suck in loads of nostalgia if that is your thing.

One afternoon as I sat idly kicking my back wheel round, as you do there came into view a large thorn sticking out of the tyre. Shall I pull it out or not. Well I did and guess what, Hissssss !!

Everyone gathered round with loads of advice as I broke open the repair kit I carry. Never having used one before I set to and rived a big hole in the tyre with a spike thingy and shoved in this needle thing with a wedge of soft rubber covered in sticky stuff and guess what, it worked. You inflate it with a couple of sparklets soda siphon cartridges (anyone remember those?) and away you go. It stayed up fine for a couple of days without losing any pressure and then I took it to the tyre repair shop in Peel for a permanent job. I was quite pleased that it proved itself a serious get you home device.

As far as I know that was the only bike related problem all the holiday.

The Ramsey sprint takes place on the Thursday of race week. You may remember that our own Louise Bennet entered last year on her Fireblade. Well this year, to our gasps of admiration, Simon from the Borders manfully shoved his FJR Yam to the start line with panniers removed for good streamlining! This is all serious stuff yer know with proper computer timing and data logging so Simon had to mix it with all manner of bikes from BSA Bantams to proper Nitro injected stuff with those funny caster frame things on the back. The problem is that Simon is about 6ft 5" and not exactly featherweight. In fact he is about 22 stone so we were more than impressed when he stormed up the 1/8th mile strip with a terminal speed in the 90's. I suppose we should give most of the credit to the bike rather than Simon. Laugh, we nearly cried! Pattie's entering next year in her electric wheelchair so watch this space in 2007

All the race days were dry with no weather induced delays although Friday's racing was postponed for a while owing to a road accident on the course just before the roads were closed.

Simon Lupton had been some years before but interestingly (I think) as a Karting competitor racing round the streets of Peel. He never did tell us how he performed but maybe we could get him to spill the beans about these exploits during his youth.

Murray's Motorcycle Museum at the Bungalow (contrary to all we had heard) was still there and open but it was moving to a new location at Stanton after the Grand Prix so find it there next year.

Simon H was keen to sample as many tea shops as he could find but to our horror, one of our favorites (Tholton Tea Rooms in Sulby Glen) was now closed and re-opened under a new guise. Jim tried it but it got the thumbs down. The scones were not considered up to the Hadden Standard.

We did find several other tea rooms worthy of return visits and one new greasy spoon café on the seafront at Ramsey.

We had a mass evening meal out at the restaurant at Niarbyl. An idyllic setting with fabulous views over to Ireland.

The campsite was pretty full this year, in fact I can't remember it quite so busy although it did thin out as the week progressed. No problem to us happy campers though, especially those with access to the spacious and salubrious disabled facilities. No roughing it with the plebs for them.

The ferry crossing was fine both ways and provides pretty good cafeteria food.

All in all a grand time was had by everyone so I suppose we will venture across the Irish sea again next year for another dollop of camping mayhem.

More events of 2006



Clive Taylor near Rothbury



Scottish Tour 2006 - Pitlochry



Millau Bun Burner



Isle of Man 2006

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@tesco.net

**Deadline for contributions for next newsletter
Friday, 29th December 2006**

MONTHLY MEETINGS

NAM meets on the second Tuesday of every month at the Wheatsheaf Hotel on the B6918 at Woolsington at 7.30 pm.



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