

# *Riders' Chronicles*



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**Sept / Oct 2008**

**The Newsletter of Northumbria  
Advanced Motorcyclists**



## Slow Riding Event 19<sup>th</sup> June



## Chairman's ramblings

The month of June ended with a mix of highs and lows and the start of July brought even worse news.

The high came when NAM was awarded a Group Achievement Award at the first Annual Motorcycle Conference at Warwick University on the 28<sup>th</sup> June. (See Web-Site for pic. ([www.nam-online.org](http://www.nam-online.org)))

However, this was quickly overshadowed by the news of the sudden death of Member Frank Allan on 29<sup>th</sup> June and the even more tragic news of the death of Tom Cooper in an incident on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

Frank was the oldest member of NAM to have passed the advanced test and Tom, a long standing and experienced motorcyclist, was a very active Senior Observer, having contributed a lot towards preparing Associates for their tests. (See Obituary on Page 25 by Kevin Wellden)



They were both given a rather splendid send off by the Geordie Chapter, who traditionally provide a procession of Harley Members and their bikes as a tribute. On both occasions well in excess of 60 motorcycles followed the cortege, making it quite a spectacular sight and a fitting send off for two dedicated bikers.

Both will be sadly missed.

Getting back to the Motorcycle Conference, some changes were announced regarding the advanced test. No longer will Groups have dedicated Examiners and tests will be allocated to the nearest Examiner, depending on the associate's post code.

It would appear that this could well cause many problems for some NAM Associates, due to the vast geographical area we cover and a lack of Examiners north of the Tyne.

For example, an Associate living in Berwick could well be allocated an Examiner in Melrose, which immediately poses the problem of being on unfamiliar roads and possibly facing a long ride before even facing the test.

Whilst our existing Examiner starts the tests from Washington Services, the nearest Examiner is believed to live south of Durham and may well expect Associates to travel down to meet him, adding additional time and miles to your journey before the test.

There is still an option to have a preference for a particular test area by completing the preference box in the bottom right hand corner of the pre-paid test application form.

Your Senior Observer will give you guidance on this matter at the end of your pre-test, so please remember to bring the I.A.M documentation with you on that occasion.

Should anyone be interested in the WW1 Battlefields Tour in 2009, please get in touch with Louise Bennett for further details and to book your place.

Stay safe and enjoy your biking.

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

J Tomlinson	Greg Ramsay	Mark Dennett
R C F Smith	A Cochrane	D Steeman
B Garbott		

## CONGRATULATIONS ON PASSING THE IAM TEST – Well Done

Richard Aaron Stubbs	Observed by	Dave Thornton
Raymond Nutbeam	“	Pete Davies
Robert Atwell	“	Alan Richardson
Jerry Baker	“	Simon Lupton
Babak Assadian	“	Geoff Spencer
Terry Murphy	“	Dave Crampton
Pam Dolan	“	Richard Penna
Gary Mason	“	Simon Hadden
John Tomlinson	“	Dave Crampton
Patrick Jarvis	“	Malcolm Lonsdale

## 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

## Have Van Will Travel

That well known hirer of Harleys, NAM Member, John Johnston has just become the owner of a Long Wheelbase, High Top van (big enough for two Harleys).

He has very kindly said that if anyone has problems with their bike that requires recovery within about 3 hours of Newcastle, he will gladly help if he can.

A charge will need to be made to cover fuel etc though.

John's phone number is (Home) 01661.824713 - Mobile: 07713.

## Committee

Honorary Group President: **Jack Lormor**

Chairman: **Ray Charlton**

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

*Treasurer:* **Louise Bennett**

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

*Membership Secretary:* **Carole Kibble**

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

*Ride out Co-ordinator:* **Ron Patrick**

*Merchandising:* **Louise Bennett**

*Newsletter Editor:* **Ray Charlton**

### ***Team Leaders***

*Northumberland:* **Nick Maddison**

*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)

## Ride-Outs 2008

When	Who	What & Where
21 September	Allan Thompson	Rideout to Lakes
19 October	Ray Charlton	Seaside & Heather (East Coast & Scottish Borders)

**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.**





## The Wrong Way Round

By Neil Hamilton

Ewan and Charlie have treated us to The Long Way Round and The Long Way Down and recently Ray Charlton guided us to Pitlochry, The Long Way Round. My return from Pitlochry following many of the pre-M90 old roads led me to recall my first motorcycle tour of Scotland back in 1970 on a BSA D7 Bantam (two stroke, 175cc, 10bhp).

### A Cunning Plan

In preparation I borrowed an old army two man tent (no groundsheet, wooden poles pegs, and mallet), a Primus stove (paraffin of course) and pressed into service a couple of my Mother's kitchen pans.

An old army pack frame rucksack was filled up with the cooking equipment, full zipped sleeping bag (thermal insulation value roughly equivalent to two sheets of damp newspaper), a set of spare clothes, knife, fork n spoon (plundered from Mum's kitchen) and the trusty wooden mallet.

Tent and said rucksack were duly tied in to the pillion seat providing the sort of stability normally exhibited by the Royal Corps of Signals motorcycle display team riding the "pyramid". Rider wear was the trusty Barbour jacket, jeans, dispatch rider gloves (army surplus store), stout boots and a pair of oilskin over-trousers (more on these later).



Trip finance was managed via the trusty Post Office Savings book, which enabled cash to be obtained from any rural post office (remember those?). Toolkit was a spark plug spanner and a camping knife that provided knife, screwdriver, tin opener (more on this later) and a pointed implement believed to be for extracting Boy Scouts from horses hooves.

Maps in any shape or form were conspicuously absent as this was very much a "seat of the pants" expedition plus, there were not that many roads in Scotland anyway.

### The Wobbly Road

Duly loaded, the trust steed lurched forth on what was to be two week, 1500 mile epic to rival going round the World on a 1200GS. Having negotiated Newcastle (no Western bypass then) the next major hurdle was Carter Bar, no mean feat for a heavy laden Bantam, then onward to Edinburgh and an evening of respite at the Little France campsite.

Never did get to the bottom of this: everyone spoke English, never saw any onion sellers and I paid in pounds (albeit Scottish ones).

On the road again and after crossing the Forth Road Bridge it was onto the old roads via Kinross and Milnathort to the pretty winding road through Glenfarg.

The minor roads are preferable to the boring motorway but I was constrained by provisional licence to avoid motorways anyway. Little inconvenience because in 1970, the M90 was the only motorway in Scotland. Fish and chip lunch in Perth (Scotland had yet to treat us to the culinary delight of the battered, deep fried Mars bar) and up the A9 to Dunkeld and thence to Kenmore at the foot of Loch Tay.

Base camp set up, the joy of unfettered riding minus a pillion load slightly less cumbersome than a small elephant was sheer bliss. Petrol prices have always been higher in Scotland and filling

up cost an extortionate 7 bob a gallon (£0.35) plus the cost of the “shots” of two-stroke oil but provided fuel for exploration to Killin, Crieff and surrounding roads.

### **Bantam Waddles North**

Loaded up and on the road again for a short journey North and West via Kinloch Rannoch where a brief stop at the Co-op for supplies was in order.

Fray Bentos steak & kidney pudding and potatoes loaded up along with a tank full of petrol and some paraffin from the garage on the Loch Rannoch South Road, the heavy laden steed lurched off again.



The South road made the single track “main” North Road look like a veritable motorway as it wound its way past Rannoch School and on to the head of the loch at Bridge of Gaur. Rannoch School was founded in 1959 (closed in 2002) by three former Gordonstoun schoolmasters and was claimed to have the most beautiful location of any educational institution in Britain.

West of Bridge of Gaur on the road to Rannoch Station lay a wide expanse of lush grass on the North side of the road backing onto a small wood.

This area had long been used as a “wild camp” by campers and caravaners alike and was the resting place for this weary traveller for the night. Camp set up, steak and kidney pud cooked in the pan with the potatoes, dinner at last. Then tragedy struck!

### **Attack from the Argentines**

Due to a miscalculation in ergonomics, whilst the can opener on the camping knife was sufficient to piece the can prior to heating and preventing an explosion that would have propelled steak, kidney and suet pastry over the majority of Perthshire, it would not remove the lid due to the large diameter of the tin.

Oh dear (or something similar but best not put into print) said I. A few minutes thought stimulated by the smell of hot gravy emanating from the punctured can which seemed almost to gloat in triumph produced a master plan.

The screwdriver blade was opened and driven chisel like by the trusty wooden mallet, cut away the lid with the can held firmly between my feet. Triumphant, the meal was sublime as was the sleep of the victor over the South American foe.

### **The Wrong Trousers Gromit**

Morning brought with it the regular Scottish delight, rain. Time to pack up the tent, load up and off North via Inverness to a campsite (real one with hot showers and a netty with a door to keep out the beasties that bite your bum) in Beaulieu.

Remember the afore-mentioned oilskin over-trousers? They were pressed into service and on the long ride up the old A9 (all narrow single carriageway then) they proved to be most waterproof indeed.

So good that when the rain ran down the back of my neck and my back, it settled in the bum section until it overflowed down the backs of my legs and into my boots.



We have a lot to thank Hein Gericke for these days!

With tent up, dry clothes and the prospect of a warm (ish) bed brightened the heart and a short ride down to Inverness for an evening at a friends house was in order.

Good food (under a roof), good Scottish company although sadly no Scottish sprit as such things are incompatible with safe motorcycling, it was off back to my bed which was waiting for me in Beaulieu. Fate however had other plans so don't miss the next gripping instalment: **Blazing Saddles**.

- o0o -

## 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.

## Some More EVENTS For your diary 2008

Sunday, 7th September 2008

Bikes at Belsay,  
Belsay Hall, Northumberland.  
[www.sunderland classicvehicles.org.uk/Calendar.htm](http://www.sunderlandclassicvehicles.org.uk/Calendar.htm)

### Club Events 2008

September		
9 <sup>th</sup>	Club Night	Wheatsheaf, 7.30 pm
21 <sup>st</sup>	Group Ride Out	Seaton Burn, 10.00 am
October		
14 <sup>th</sup>	Club Night	Wheatsheaf, 7.30 pm
19 <sup>th</sup>	Group Ride Out	Seaton Burn, 10.00 am

NAM is not Cliquey!  
From Angela Newsome

I am writing in connection with the newsletter May/June 2008.

In the Chairman's Rambling's section, he talks about a new associate's remark over the group being cliquey

I really feel if I must comment on this. First I am sorry for this person not being happy but from my experience mine is completely the opposite.

I joined last year, had my initial ride out with Clive Taylor who I had met at the Morpeth Cornering clinic and he was the reason I joined.

He was so friendly and being a woman in, what I then considered a 'mans' world, he made me feel at ease.

He was the same on my assessment ride and at a couple of meetings I have attended ( I work Tues nights) and he has allocated me to a trainer, Helen, who has the patience of a saint. (I find the whole bike thing hard).

I strongly recommend NAM to everyone, especially new lady riders, for not just the skills you acquire but the friendly relaxed manner in which you operate.

From a very happy associate member

## Members Comments

What a cracking weekend! (Pitlochry) says, John Magee.

Well this was the first weekend away with NAM for Maureen and me and we decided to travel up on the Thursday and have the extra night. (Or, as Ray would say, "Riding a Harley you would need to travel a day earlier) Cheeky git!

We caught a few short showers on way up but in the main it was a great trip. The hotel was good and we know next time to get in early for the double bedroom!

On the Friday we decided to ride out to the Spittal of Glenshee pass through to Braemar, where we had a spot of lunch. A couple of people who were walking to the same cafe asked if the Harley was ours and we then proceeded to find out he had lived in South Shields fifty years earlier. (Can't go any where without meeting a Geordie!)



We then rode on to Balmoral and Ballater and over Tomintoul Pass through to Granttown-on-Spey and down into Aviemore, with plenty of tea stops on the way, and back to Pitlochry just in time to see most of the NAM group had arrived.

We decided not to go with the main group on Saturday as weather looked better towards Inverness but when we fueled up at Dalwhinnie we decided to go towards Fort William etc and then arranged to meet up with a friend who was on the west side and then travelled to Oban where we then saw the large group just outside Oban.

It was like a double take when some of you recognised us, **(Probably amazed to see your bike so far away from base!! – Ed.)** it was a good trip but a long one.

On Sunday we went to Crieff and this was where we had the worst weather of the weekend, however, Monday was glorious to travel back, almost too hot??

Maureen said she really enjoyed the company, good crack. great banter about pink slippers/oranges and pink nightie! The lads concerned will know who we are talking about but great fun by all we are really looking forward to the next weekend away possibly Wales??

- oOo -

Ray

I managed to pass the Advanced Test on 20th June, and would like to express my thanks to all those, including yourself, who helped me achieve that goal, and especially Simon Lupton, my observer, for teaching me so much. When I think that I commuted between Hexham and Newcastle throughout last winter in a state of such total ignorance, it's frightening!

When I did my CBT on 20th April 2007 it was the first time I had ever sat astride a motorbike, so it took me just fourteen months to the day from total novice to Advanced Motorcyclist. I don't suppose that's a record, though. Plus I know I still have a lot to learn. Anyway, I'm looking forward to further participation in the club as a Member, but with a bigger bike!

Once again, thanks to all.

Jerry Baker

## NAM slow riding event 2

By Ray Charlton

Sixteen Members and Associates turned out on 19<sup>th</sup> June at Heighley Gate Garden Centre, kindly arranged by Nick Maddison.

The venue was just about perfect with a wide area of recently laid tarmac providing an ideal surface to carry out the necessary exercises.



Organised and run by Alan Richardson and Clive Taylor, who laid out challenging courses to demonstrate slow riding skills ranging from straight line riding, to tight turns and even a slalom layout.

It soon became apparent that it was perhaps not quite as easy as it looked, but those participating soon got the hang of it and were putting in commendable performances, without any mishaps at all during the evening.

The event was concluded with a mini competition to determine who the slowest rider was over a set course having a tight (ish) right hand turn in it, with a prize of a T shirt emblazoned "NAM Slowest Rider" for the winner.

It was eventually won by new Associate Terry Murphy with a magnificent time of 28.41 seconds, pipping Nick Maddison into second place with a time of 25.54 seconds with Jim Rolt taking third place with 21.81 seconds.

The remaining times varying from 17.90 seconds to 10.94 seconds.

An extremely commendable effort was made by recent new Member, Babak Assadian, who tackled the tricky course with a lot of confidence on the very bulky Triumph Rocket 3. Everyone present was holding their breath as he negotiated the tight turns on a bike not ideally suited to this purpose.

I would like to express the appreciation of the Group to Alan Richardson and Clive Taylor for organising a superb event and to Nick Maddison and Heighley Gate Garden Centre for providing the venue.



Following the constructive comments afterwards I feel sure this will now become a regular event on the calendar.



## Slow Riding – The winner's perspective

by Terry Murphy

I knew from when I first saw the announcement of the slow riding event it was something that I really did need to attend.

Dave Crampton had commented on my first observation ride with him how, for example, I was incorrectly using my front brake to come to a stop.

As with everything else not only did he explain what I needed to do but also exactly why.

I tried over the following months to following his instructions and saw the benefits.

However, as the event drew closer I found myself split between looking forward to it and dreading it as I had visions of me being unable to do some of the manoeuvres.

When I arrived I was surprised at the range of bikes varying from, what I thought would be ideal bikes, to those which I thought weren't capable of going slow.

I was sure everyone was looking at me being the new boy (well, a new middle aged man) when it was announced that normally at least one person drops their bike!

I'm sure another article will describe most of the manoeuvres on the night.

I know that each manoeuvre throughout the evening got more and more difficult.

I was very impressed with everyone being able to handle their bikes no matter what type or size. However, the one that really impressed me was the Triumph Rocket III.

I thought that if it was possible for someone to ride a bike that size on the slow riding event then there could be no excuse for me.

Eventually, we reached the final manoeuvre of the event. I thought I would get it over and done with, so I jumped in for an early attempt.

At the end I thought I'd done okay but I was so busy talking to another rider about his bike, (as some people will have noticed, I take the opportunity to ask people at every chance I get to talk about their bikes, their choice of tyres, clothing, intercom, etc.) that I never noticed how other people were doing.

As the event drew to a close I decided I was going to wait for the presentation and was asked not to leave (no doubt to say I had the fastest i.e. the worst time), however, much to my disbelief I was named as the slowest. I still believe this was a joke on me or a mistake.

But I do have the t-shirt to prove that I'm the slowest rider (but I'm just not sure when to wear it yet).



## Yesteryear and Today

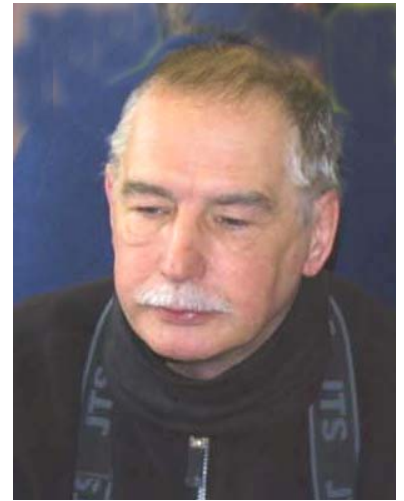
By John Daniels

It was 1964. I was sixteen and totally fed up with commuting three hours a day, six days a week to and from work using two buses and a ferry each way.

One night I noticed in the local press an advert for a Honda 50 Sports motorcycle. That was it. I whinged on for weeks until I finally wore my mother down and she agreed I could buy the bike. If I remember correctly, it cost around £55.

The day I went to pick it up was one of the best days of my life. I arrived at the shop after work and there it was: a gleaming new blue Honda 50 Sports.

A quick instructional session with the salesman and I soon found out that the left hand lever could be used to stop the bike dead or stand the bike on its back wheel depending on how quickly you let it out. However, after about fifteen minutes and two or three rides up the back lane I soon found out that careful use of the clutch and throttle resulted in a smooth take off.



I had a very nervous ride home praying that I wouldn't need to stop at any roundabouts or junctions. I did get safely home (eventually!) more by good luck than anything else.

Oh how it's all changed and rightly so. As we all know there's a lot more tuition and practise goes on before anyone is let loose on the roads on a motor bike these days. Although in the 60's there was no where near the volume of traffic and the associated speeds that we experience to day and those who did drive seemed to be a lot more patient.

A few months later it was test time. Which at that time meant facing an examiner, usually dressed in a tweed sports jacket, or long trench coat, who very officiously said to me, "Right lad I want you to ride around this circuit (naming the streets) until I indicate to you to stop." The circuit was virtually a square with only right turns.

After about four or five circuits, just my luck I got a puncture and ended up leaving the bike and running around the test circuit looking for the examiner, who I found hiding in a doorway!

"Sorry," I said "I've got a puncture." "Take me to the bike," he demanded. I led him to the bike like a little school boy. He then said, "I'll ask you a few questions on the Highway Code," which I duly answered.

Finally he said, "That's it, you've done enough to pass. Shame about the puncture," gave me a pink pass form and strutted off.

It didn't seem so at the time, but didn't we have it easy in those days?

The test is much more demanding these days and rightly so. With 600cc 100bhp machines capable of speeds in excess of 150mph the training needs to be geared to prepare riders for these high powered machines. **(Although I think you will find that training school bikes are restricted to 33 b.h.p – Ed)** My old 1962, 650cc Matchless CSR had 58bhp and a speed of just over 110 mph.

So, I've been riding motor bikes for over 40 years, more on than off and mostly commuting to work. I have seen how the roads, the volume of traffic and the general skills of the riders have

changed and whilst most motorcyclists have good riding skills you still get the odd idiot, but I think in my opinion legislation has had the biggest impact on both safety and motorcycling enjoyment, and I don't necessarily think that high levels of safety mean low levels of enjoyment.

It is also worth mentioning the high profile the police and organisations such as the IAM place on motorcycle road safety with awareness campaigns and very often free training; this was unheard of in the 60's.

I have recently passed my advanced test and it was interesting to note that during my initial observed runs how many bad habits I'd picked up over the years. However, due to the advice from my observers

I feel that my riding is much smoother now and my observation and information gathering skills have really improved. As they say you're never too old to learn. I wish I'd done it years ago!

- oOo -

## 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.



## Tips for new riders

By Ray Charlton

One of the pleasures of motorcycling is the ability to enjoy the performance of your machine, sustain reasonable speeds but always within a good safety margin.

We must ask, ***“What is a safe speed and how do we determine what it should be?”***



The answer to this question is quite complex and is determined by many factors beginning with the capabilities of the rider and the motorcycle he/she rides. Other important factors include the prevailing road, traffic and weather conditions at that time.

It is a well documented fact that speed has a major impact on safety and that lower speed limits result in fewer accidents. Riders who ride fast regardless of the circumstances have an accident risk three to five times greater than riders who do not.

Let us look closer at this statement. At greater speeds the risks obviously increase as you approach hazards faster, with less time to react and the impact damage is far greater. Remember the simple rule, ***Bikes don't bleed, it is the rider who does.***

A well publicised campaign in recent years has preached that a child hit by a motor vehicle at 20 mph may be injured but will probably live: A child hit at 40 mph will probably die.

Risks increase with speed, but whatever your speed, if inappropriate for the circumstances, becomes dangerous. This can best be illustrated by saying riding at 30 mph in a 30 mph zone can be dangerous if the circumstances and conditions are inappropriate.

In simplistic terms the following rule applies at all times: ***Ride so that you are able to stop safely on your own side of the road in the distance you can see clear.***

This rule requires you to take into account all of the circumstances you are facing to allow you to make a decision as to what is a safe maximum speed to ride at with the option to adjust your speed should circumstances change. These circumstances include the capabilities of both rider and machine, prevailing road, traffic and weather conditions as factors to be considered.

As a new rider you may be lacking in both confidence and experience, a situation that is rectified over time through initially putting into practise all of the skills you have been taught, coupled with getting many miles under your belt riding in varying situations.

As your experience increases your level of confidence will also increase, but this does not necessarily make you a safer rider. You become safe by developing appropriate attitudes, recognising your own limitations and vulnerability and being able to accurately and consistently evaluate risks as they arise.

Different motorcycles have different handling characteristics, so when you ride an unfamiliar machine allow yourself plenty of time to get used to its controls and handling features before attempting to ride fast. Always allow an extra safety margin until you are confident about how the bike will respond.



Certain machines can be prone to wobble and weave and can vary from machine to machine, although most modern motorcycles are quite stable due to many factors such as steering geometry, suspension and tyres.

However, it is wise to know that wobbles can still occur and fall into two categories, medium speed wobble and high speed wobble. Medium wobble usually occurs at speeds around 35 mph, whereas high speed wobbles occur at much higher speeds.

In both cases the steering head and handlebars start to wobble. High speed wobble is much more pronounced causing total loss of control.

Controlling medium speed wobbles is quite often as simple as taking a firmer grip on the handlebars and altering road speed to take it out of the unstable range. It can be induced quite often by riding on the edge of tar banding or even painted white lines and can give you quite a shock when first experienced.

High speed wobble is very difficult to control and often develops into what is known as a 'tank slapper' where the handlebars slam from lock to lock resulting in most cases as an unrecoverable situation and a likely accident. The basic rule is avoid getting into this situation where possible on the basis of ***'avoidance or prevention is preferable to attempted recovery.'***

Weave occurs when the back wheel starts to oscillate from side to side and can occur at high speed on straight roads or whilst cornering.

High speed straight road weave tends to increase with speed so you cannot accelerate through it.

To regain control, lean forward to move your weight forward and gently throttle back to reduce speed.

Cornering weave is more hazardous as it can surprise an unsuspecting rider, but stability can be restored again by shifting your weight forward. It is more dangerous than straight road weave as it is occurring whilst the machine is already destabilised by cornering forces.

Loading up the machine with luggage reduces the speed at which both types of weave occur, so it is important to know your own machine so that you can anticipate the speeds, conditions and loadings which are likely to give rise to these types of instability.

Your vision is a very important factor in determining speed as it is imperative that your observation is fine tuned to read the hazards you face and formulate an immediate action plan to cope with them.

Underestimating speed is a major problem for riders, on a naked motorcycle you are more aware of engine, road and wind noise and the wind resistance on your chest and helmet.

With modern day machines fitted with super efficient fairings that have been developed in wind tunnels, you are quite often immune to these factors making it difficult to judge speed other than through using a speedometer. These situations lull you into a false sense of security and quite often you find yourself travelling at speeds way outside of your own comfort zone.

Quite often if you have been travelling at consistently higher speeds on motorways distances can be misjudged when leaving on slip roads.

Other factors such as riding on wide roads will seem to be much slower than on narrow country roads, so be aware of this and ride accordingly.

Every rider has their own speed limit: this is the highest speed at which they feel comfortable in any given situation and should never be set at the top level of that rider's capabilities. It is essential that a rider knows his own limitations and leaves a safety margin to keep him safe.

There are several key points to remember:

- Ride at a speed which is safe and which you are confident and competent.
- Be familiar with the controls and handling characteristics of your machine and learn to use the controls smoothly.
- High speed riding requires maximum attentiveness and if you are unable to achieve this high level because of fatigue, medication or other problems, then do not ride.
- Always ride so that you can stop within the distance you can see to be clear, by day or by night.
- If you double your speed quadruple your braking distance.
- Practise and master the skills developed in ***Motorcycle Roadcraft*** which are designed to maximise safety.
- Be aware of the onset of fatigue and take the appropriate action by having frequent breaks.
- No emergency is so great that it justifies an accident. It is far better to arrive late than not at all.

Always know your own limitations and ride within them and remember that at 30 mph a minor error may be corrected but at 70 mph the same error could be disastrous.

Speed is always relevant to the extent of the road you can see to be clear, coupled with the ability to stop within this distance and local knowledge, if wrongly used, can be hazardous because it can tempt you to ride faster than it is safe along familiar roads.

You should know the braking characteristics of your bike and be able to relate these to the road you are travelling on and bear in mind that riding in the wet needs greater distances to stop coupled with much smoother actions than in the dry.

Riding at speed may entail frequent overtaking, which in itself demands careful preparation and planning with regards to observation, positioning and good judgement of speed and distance.

Riding safely at speed depends above all else on adapting your speed to the circumstances.

The faster you go the less time you have to react and the more disastrous the possible consequences.

Stay safe and enjoy your biking.

## Crash by Crisp Packet

by Kristian Grundy

Why do an advanced riding course? I can not remember exactly when I decided to seek extra instruction, but I painfully remember binning my Honda VFR 800 'at speed' two weeks before a riding holiday to the Nurburgring and low siding my Suzuki GSXR 600 a couple of years later.

The first crash in Essex resulted in my head leaving a big dent in the other vehicle's door, an ambulance ride and a painfully ruptured shoulder for the next few months, the bike was completely mashed and a visit to the Nurburgring still remains a dream.

Is it possible to come off 'by crisp packet'? The GSXR incident was a 30mph low side on the sea front in Tynemouth.



It does not, I admit sound like a major incident, but I can assure anyone, a curb between the cheeks at any speed is agony.

I clearly remember lying against the barrier feeling nauseous, very embarrassed and, one of the many people watching suggesting it may have been the crisp packet on the roundabout which caused my loss of traction.

In hindsight I should not have been trying to get my 'knee down' and the resulting bill for mending damaged plastics, rear brake lever and a badly bruised ego were more painful than the sore coccyx.

So why advanced riding? It was shortly after meeting my lovely wife that I started to reflect on how lucky I had been since

passing my test in 2001.

A few near misses here and there, a lack of skill progression and a growing sense of monotony had my confidence waning.

The impending birth of our wonderful first child sealed the deal; if I was to keep the bike I needed a fresh perspective. I joined NAM.

I would never admit to being over-confident, but I am vastly under-skilled and joining NAM has highlighted that fact.

Post-accident niggling doubts will always be there, but having gone through training and successfully sitting my advanced test, I have been exposed to a whole new dimension of motorbike riding.

Smooth and steady with good observation is far more fun and satisfying than head down, barrelling deep into a corner, braking midway and spluttering out in the wrong gear.

I still occasionally have a rush of blood. One in particular which lingers, is a rather selfish overtake of an aggressive Vectra driver I made on the return leg of the Saturday Pitlochry rideout.

Sincere apologies to the three members I sped past in my impatience, not one of my proudest moments.

Although I am happy to say Michael Sutherland, my pre-test observer and all round gentleman; as polite and patient as ever, mentioned the manoeuvre before dinner that evening.

There was as ever with my Michael no wagging finger, but his observation confirmed my cringing doubt; that dozy manoeuvres stand out a mile in an advanced riding group.

Personally, there is an exciting, dare I say 'hooligan' element to biking. The freedom and machismo it offers are addictive and that is one of the big attractions for me.

It's an antidote to the pressures of modern life, a chance to be a bit of a rebel, or so I like to believe when I start the engine.

However, joining NAM and passing the advanced test has underlined for me the need for restraint and respect.

The influence of more experienced and highly skilled riders is invaluable, not only to help strengthen my riding skills, but ultimately to help me avoid crisp packets.

- o0o -

## Funny

Two Mexicans are stuck in the desert, wandering aimlessly and close to death. They are close to just lying down and waiting for the inevitable, when all of a sudden.....

'Hey Pepe, do you smell what I smell. Ees bacon I is sure of eet.'

'Si, Luis eet smells like bacon to meeee.'

So, with renewed strength, they struggle up the next sand dune, and there, in the distance, is a tree loaded with bacon. There's raw bacon, dripping with moisture, there's fried bacon, back bacon, double smoked bacon... every imaginable kind of cured pig meat.

'Pepe, Pepe, we is saved. 'Eees a bacon tree.'

'Luis, are you sure ees not a meerage? We ees in the Desert don't forget.'

'Pepe when deed you ever hear of a meerage that smell like bacon... ees no meerage, ees a bacon tree'. And with that... Luis Races towards the tree. He gets to within 5 metres, Pepe following closely behind, when all of a sudden, a machine gun opens up, and Luis is cut down in his tracks. It is clear he is mortally wounded but, a true friend that he is, he manages to warn Pepe with his dying breath.

'Pepe... go back man, you was right ees not a bacon tree.'

'Luis Luis mi amigo... what ees it?

'Pepe... ees not a bacon tree... Ees ....Ees ....Ees ....Ees ....Ees ....Ees ....Ees .....Eees a Ham Bush.



## Off Road Riding – What an experience

by John Fagan

This can only be described as the ultimate experience in riding motorcycles.....

It all started back in December when Barry Reay and myself were discussing possible 2008 outings. One of us (don't remember who) mentioned off road riding.

After some deliberation (took about a minute) we decided to go for it before we were too old.

I had previously explored this possibility and had some relevant information from various 'off road' websites.

We decided that the BMW Off Road Riding Skills course (though the most expensive) appeared to suit our requirements best.



This is a two day course held in the Brecon Beacons in South Wales (which is the only disadvantage for people living in the North East.).

Another NAM member John Neil immediately expressed an interest so the three of us decided to enrol on the course.

Within a couple of weeks Barry had made all the arrangements – booking the course, arranging suitable accommodation and provisionally persuading the lads at the Mill BMW dealers located in Boldon to lend us some off their riding kit as they are regular off roaders.

We got some great advice from these guys including the recommendation to take a car rather than three bikes – couple of reasons for this

If one of us got incapacitated (shudder the thought) we would be stuck with having a bike down there with no-one to ride it back.

We would be too tired to ride the 350 miles home after two days off roading.

After the arrangements had been made the days and weeks flew by and we were suddenly leaving on the Thursday morning with me driving the car which was full of helmets, gloves, jackets, trousers, body armour and off road riding boots (a lot of it borrowed).

Barry elected to be navigator sitting in the front with his map. This left the back seat for John to play with his recently acquired Tom Tom (pardon the expression).

We finally arrived at our 'digs' late Thursday afternoon after first ending up in somebody's back garden – courtesy of Tom Tom which we had to rely on for the final few miles at John's insistence.

Shortly after checking in we met up with three Irish blokes who had just completed the second day of the same course. One of them had ended up in hospital after knocking himself unconscious following a spill, in fact he still sounded concussed while we were talking to him.

We also met a guy from Lancashire who gave us a minute by minute account of his two days – he'd also had a few 'offs' but was relatively unscathed.

All in all they'd had a brilliant time and couldn't speak highly enough of the instruction that they had received, which helped us to disregard the apprehension which was starting to set in following the earlier comments.

After a few pints (had to take it easy) we had an early night hoping to be refreshed for the following day.



However none of us slept very well probably due to the thoughts and possible concerns of the unknown experiences which we were about to face.

Friday morning arrived and after a full Welsh breakfast off we went to conquer this off road stuff.

There were approximately 30 pupils in total and we were split into three groups which were made up based on the individual's off road experience.

As we didn't have any we elected to go into the novices group.

We had two instructors – Simon Pavey who runs the course and instructed Charlie Bo0rman and Ewan McGregor on off road riding techniques prior to their well documented trans-world adventures.

The other instructor was a snip of a lass called Tasmin and the way she could handle the 1200GS had to be seen to be believed.

Day one consisted of the following:

- Slow riding skills around cones, strategically placed on the rough terrain, and riding standing up all of the time. (bit awkward changing gear whilst standing up)
- learning the correct way to pick a bike up after a spill.
- Locking up the front and rear wheel without falling off
- Climbing around the bike whilst riding
- Basic trail riding

We were pleased we had started at the novice level as it was imperative to learn the basic skills in order to handle the more difficult tasks and trail riding that were to come.

After the first day we were knackered, having spent most of the day riding, and after a couple of pints we had another early night expecting we would sleep soundly....

It must have been the adrenalin still pumping around our bodies or relief that we were still in one

piece or our minds were still with the bike ... but the three of us still didn't sleep very well.

Up we got on Saturday morning ready to face the second and final day.

Day two consisted of the following

- Riding through mud, gravel, rocks – anything apart from tarmac
- Hill climbing. Stopping half way up a hill, getting off, turning the bike around, getting back on and riding back down the hill.
- Sounds easy but the hills were so steep the bike would elect to roll back down, even with the front wheel locked up with the brake if it wasn't for the rider's input.
- Riding down hills using engine braking only, then brakes only, then a combination of both.
- Trying other bikes – you have a choice of bikes when you book up. We elected to go for the G650 XCountry because of it's weight and because it was our first time.

However they also have the G 650 XChallenge, the F 800 GS and the R 1200GS to choose from. I tried the latter and it was like a Rolls Royce compared to the Country.

If I decide to attend the level two course in the future this is the bike I would go for.

We finished the day riding more difficult trails through mud, water, gravel and rocks and finally arrived back to base where the staff started to clean the 30 bikes with high pressure water jetting equipment in time for the next ingress of pupils the following day.



To summarise – This is an excellent course, it is expensive but it is good value for money as you are riding for the full two days.

The staff were friendly and very helpful as well as patient.

Everyone we spoke to afterwards had thoroughly enjoyed it, we met some nice people and we managed to get home safe and unscathed.

However, some individuals in the other groups weren't as lucky.

## OBITUARY - TOM COOPER

From Kevin Wellden

Like many in NAM I was shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Tom Cooper on 1 July 2008. I had known Tom since he first joined the group in 2000 as I was his observer. I was impressed with Tom as a rider and we became good friends, enjoying several rides out and social events with the group and others over the years. The circumstances of Tom's death at the age of only 46 years in a motorcycle collision with no other vehicles involved just did not seem right. I have since been told that Tom died from a coronary whilst riding his bike. Understanding the circumstances of Tom's unexpected and premature death helps, but he is still a great loss.

On behalf of the group I give my sincere condolences to Tom's loved ones, family and friends at this difficult time..

I was asked to write a few words in memory, so in honour of Tom and to celebrate his life I have compiled the following

### AN ODE TO TOM

Tom Cooper was an observer,  
He could really ride a bike,  
But if you told him how to,  
He would tell you to take a hike.

A 'U' turn and a figure of eight,  
On a Harley? You must be joking,  
But Tom could do them easy enough,  
With the music blaring and even smoking.

So when Tom died in a crash,  
We just couldn't comprehend,  
But when we got the verdict,  
A dickie heart caused his end.

Tom is now in heaven,  
A good friend sorely missed,  
And if he could say a few last words,  
It would be 'Go out and get XXXXXX!!'.

## Financial Donations

I am pleased to report that the Group has received two very welcome donations of £500.00 from Ride Respect and a further £500.00 from Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service

This was achieved by the initial tenacity of our Honorary Group President, Jack Lormor, assisted by Kevin Wellden and negotiated by yours truly and Vice Chairman, Clive Taylor.



## New Member's experiences with NAM

by Terry Murphy.

I felt that I should produce a small article about my experiences and training so far in NAM, having found it has totally changed by lifestyle. Unlike many of NAM's members I do not have a lot of history with motorbikes. I got my first bike, a Suzuki GT185 back in 1975, initially as a method of getting to work and college easily. I passed my test in 1976 and soon discovered large areas of the North East which I didn't know existed, including going to places like Croft and Oliver's Mount in Scarborough to watch the motorbike racing. The bike meant a world of freedom and adventure to me and I learned a lot in the 3 or 4 years I had it. I tried out other bikes (my mates') during those years such as Kawasaki Z400, Z650 and Z1R but never actually got around to buying a bigger bike. A car, house, married life and its constraints meant my bank balance was drained, resulting in the bike and my illustrious plans for a meatier one going out of the window.

I always found driving was never as enjoyable as riding and always hoped that one day I would return to riding bikes. However, when a friend was planning to sell his low mileage Yamaha Fazer 1000 I knew that that was my opportunity to quickly get back into biking. Well it took me 27 years but at last I am back to being a biker.

It had been so long since I'd been on a bike that I was almost starting from scratch again. I considered going to a training school to do a refresher course but for a number of reasons I didn't get around to it. Over the weeks and months following I'm sure my riding did improve and my wife would also come along when I went out for weekend runs but I realised that I needed some help with my riding techniques. I found that I could ride through some corners happily and then others I was left feeling I knew that I'd done something wrong but could never work out what. I went along to events such as Bike Wise to see, among other things, what there was available for me to improve my riding skills.

The breakthrough was seeing a notice at work about the Cornering Clinics. Someone pointed me in the direction of Simon Hadden, whom I didn't realise was a member of NAM. He suggested that I go along and if I wanted, could ask for an observed ride afterwards.

I went to the event and finally began to understand how I was going wrong on positioning for corners. I met Ray Charlton who informed me of the purpose of NAM. I explained to him about my concerns of joining and riding in a group as I had only recently got back into biking again and had little recent experience, so I thought I should maybe wait until I had more miles under my belt. He immediately put my mind to rest and assured me that it was the ideal time to join.

This resulted in me taking an observed ride with Dave Henderson. Dave will no doubt have long forgotten taking me out but it is one ride I'll certainly not forget. I wasn't really sure what to expect but once he explained what we'd be doing I soon settled down to an enjoyable ride. Looking back to that day now makes me wonder why I hadn't done it earlier. Dave covered things like adjusting my mirrors (how many miles had I done with both of them in the wrong position?), when to do the safety checks, etc. We ended up at least 2 hours later in Whitley Bay for a cup of tea (it hadn't really stopped raining and hail stoning throughout the ride) ... little did I know how many more cups of tea and summaries I was to have at the end of every observed ride over the next few months.

I explained that I wanted to come along for Sunday ride-out and a Tuesday meeting to find out how the group operated, as I didn't want to join a group of wannabe racers which I'd witnessed so many times when out riding and driving.

First I went to the Tuesday night meeting which was a very interesting talk by Paul Howey about riding across America. I was made to feel very comfortable the moment I walked through the

door. I only knew one person at the meeting but at that point I had not had the opportunity to speak to him but it hadn't mattered as I felt welcomed.

The opportunity to meet the group on the Sunday ride came a week or two later with a ride-out to Yorkshire. I'd studied the 'Drop-off System' in preparation and to be honest I wasn't bothered where the ride was to but was more interested in whether my pillion wife, Janet, would find it enjoyable. I should add that we had always gone out by ourselves and this was a totally new experience for her and really hoped that she would enjoy going out with a group too.

I was very relieved when we pulled up at Seaton Burn to be welcomed by several people all of which were total strangers to both of us. By the time I returned from the briefing I found her engaged in conversation with even more people (typical woman). I was also put to immediate ease when it was explained to me by several people that I should go at the speed that I was happy with and not to feel pressurised to do otherwise as the 'drop-off system' would ensure that no-one would be lost.

We have been to nearly all the ride-outs since and have both thoroughly enjoyed each one, going on routes I didn't know existed and meeting more and more people each time. I've used the rides as a method of performing all the manoeuvres and good practices I've learned whilst preparing for the advance test and also observing how other more experienced members ride.

I wanted to become a better and safer rider, whilst joining a group of like minded enthusiasts which would give me and my wife the opportunity to be involved in a social group. And since the first outing I knew that NAM was just what I wanted and needed. I then started the process of joining and since that day I've never stopped being amazed at the speed of communications within the group. I know of companies who's communications aren't half as good!

I feel extremely lucky to have had appointed Dave Crampton as my Observer. From the first moment of meeting Dave I felt comfortable with him. I know I'm very self-critical, especially when I know or think I've done things wrong. However, Dave has simply talked me through the problem to help me identify exactly what I was doing wrong and then to explain what changes were needed to correct the problem. I personally found this ideal for my learning. I also found the method of going out with Dave every two weeks ideal as it gave me the opportunity to go out and try the techniques more in between each observed ride. I must admit that over the following months it appeared at times I was getting worse as I was spotting things I wasn't doing correctly or sometimes forgetting to do things. However, Dave reminded me that there was nothing wrong with this because I was identifying what I was doing wrong and would be correcting them the next time.

I eventually passed my advanced test probably during some of the worst rain of the year so far. I did have the option to reschedule it but I wanted to treat the test as a 'normal' ride and not wait for the ideal conditions.

When I look back just a few months to how I used to ride, I feel almost embarrassed. I don't think I ever rode dangerously and believe that I would have eventually learnt almost by accident some of the things I've learnt in just a few months. The question I ask myself is how many years would it have taken but more importantly could I have had an accident? I believe that passing the advanced test gave my riding a whole new dimension which has extended into my driving too. I'm certainly now more aware of things such as changing speed limits, road and traffic hazards but now I can enjoy the thrill of a powerful bike with perhaps a little less risk to life, limb and licence.

I realise that just because I've passed the test doesn't mean that I can stop learning and aiming to ride better and there are days that I can still sometimes pick maybe too many faults with what I do. I do like the idea of one day being able to pass on my knowledge onto others by becoming an observer or help in any other way I can but that is for the future.

## More Slow Riding event Photo's





# 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, 26th september 2008**

## 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.



**nam-online.org**  
**Telephone: 07951 035038**



**NAM is supported by:-**  
**Northumbria Police**  
**Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service**  
**Ride Respect (N.S.R.I)**



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