

# **NORTHUMBRIA ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS. (N.A.M.)**

**AFFILIATED TO THE INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS  
(I.A.M.)**



Waiting for the pre-ride debrief on one of our monthly ride outs



WINTER 2011

# THE NORTHUMBRIA ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS ARE SUPPORTED BY:-

NORTHUMBRIA POLICE



*Total Policing*

NORTHUMBERLAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE



For more information on how to join us and become a better and safer rider come along to our monthly meeting held every 2<sup>nd</sup> TUESDAY of the month at the WHEATSHEAF HOTEL on the B6918 near NEWCASTLE AIRPORT. 07.00 pm for 07.30 pm

OR

Contact our Membership Secretary,

Patrick Jarvis 01670 523736 or Email [Jarvis\\_p1@sky.com](mailto:Jarvis_p1@sky.com)

OR

VISIT OUR WEBSITE; [www.nam-online.org](http://www.nam-online.org) to see what N.A.M. has to offer.

## Chairman's Notes



As I sit typing this out in mid January, with the rain battering the windows driven by a lively wind and already growing dark because of a laden sky, I've seen signs of spring. Determined bulbs are pushing through the soil in the borders and this is an early herald of the approaching spring. That's when our fun starts.

Once again your committee have plans to tempt you out, with new ideas and venues for the monthly ride outs, weekends away and for the more adventurous, trips abroad. I would encourage all of those new members who haven't as yet joined in these activities, to take a chance and join us. A good way to get into the swing of things is to join our merry band that will support The Blue Lamp Foundation charity and partake in their fund raising venture.

We also seek to tempt you in. We know there are good members who find it difficult to attend our meetings because of work or family commitments, but I would encourage them to make the effort once a month and join us. We've been lucky to have a number of excellent speakers at our meetings and if you get into the habit of coming along, you will have an opportunity to make some good friends.

Not forgetting our primary function, to gain new members and bring them to the required standard of riding to pass the IAM test, we need to find new ways to find them. We have in the past relied on The Cornering Clinics to provide a steady flow of new recruits, but the future of this series of events is uncertain. Fortunately we have a keen Marketing and Recruitment team that are considering other possibilities and I will be asking other members to join them in their task.

Yes, winters not so bad because the next step is spring and for us, another exciting year stretches forth.

*Ron.*

---

## Teaching C.B.T.



A little over a year ago I started as a down trained instructor with Newcastle Rider Training a local motorcycle school. At that time I had little real appreciation of just how difficult a job it can be, or just how much there is to learn having only a naive fancy of becoming an instructor.

Learning the script of what instruction is required is only the start of the journey; the hard part comes with student interaction, and learning just what makes the student tick. Early morning nerves of course play a large part in the proceedings, it is vital to attempt to put the student at ease, something that is not at all an easy task. One woman informed me that she developed a wind problem when she got nervous, and believe me she was not joking. It takes time for the student to settle down, not only are they among strangers and anxious about riding for the first time but are also weary of doing so in front of others.

Cont....

**N**erves have a funny effect on some people; one gentleman attempted to put his helmet on back to front and yet another almost wet himself and ran to the loo every five minutes. Shaky hands are quite a common manifestation of nerves along with the nervous chatter so putting the student at ease often has to be done quickly; I find that a well-timed stall during a demonstration often works. It is a job where you absolutely have to leave your troubles behind you, the last thing a student needs is an instructor with an attitude problem and they look for a warm smile and a reassuring manner.

**T**he mechanics of riding can be difficult for some students to understand, some just fail to get the clutch at all whilst others just plain panic. The first time out on the yard can be forgiven; after all we all have to start somewhere. One particular gentleman however really struggled even with the simple task of pulling smoothly away using the clutch and resolutely refused to try an automatic scooter. I was approaching the end of my ability to smile after two hours and asked him what he did for a living; you could have picked me up off the floor when he told me he was a commercial airline pilot. One young eighteen-year-old lad was affectionately called by his mother, "her little wobbly guy", he struggled turning right but was fine going left. After struggling quite badly on a scooter I asked him to ride around the yard on a pedal cycle and lo and behold he could still not turn right. After seeking advice he was advised to get his ears checked by a doctor, he did return at a later date and completed the day successfully.

One woman berated me quite seriously. She had come to a stop and fallen over, bruising her ego more than herself. When asked why she did not put a foot down replied, "Because you didn't tell me to". Lesson learned by the instructor!

**O**ccasionally of course there comes along a student who manages to dumbfound you and on one occasion I was found guilty of judging a book by its cover. A young tattooed gentleman with a shaven head and speech impediment came along for a CBT and straight away told me he could neither read nor write. He was totally illiterate but learned by example, show him once and he did it, explain it and he was lost. I'll remember that lad in future because he was naturally gifted on a bike and passed his test first time. I have yet to see anyone master a figure of eight as quickly as he did, must have been down to his instructor!

**P**ersonally I think CBT for all its faults is a good thing, it gives the learner a safe place to learn the rudiments of bike control and ends the day with an instructional ride.

There is one aspect of the day that does worry me however, and that is the Highway Code component. I can count on one hand the number of people who have even bothered to read it before coming along and consequently get numerous questions incorrect. If I could influence UK road policy I would get the government to make it compulsory for the theory test to be taken before CBT, or even as a part of the license application procedure, at least then they would have some little idea of what to expect.

**T**he finale to the day is the two-hour ride on the road with an instructor and again nerves can play a major part in the final element. The students have normally settled their nerves by this time but find they can return with a vengeance

when it comes to venturing out for the first time. I normally settle them down with a trip around a business park first, followed by the set exercises; U-turn, emergency stop, and the hill start. From an instructors point of view it is a time of intense concentration. Constant 360 degree observation is critical especially when you are responsible for the safety of others, coupled with trying to keep yourself safe and watching out for any aspect of their riding that requires correction. Even experienced car drivers can be surprised at this point when they realise just how vulnerable they feel on a bike. Feedback from students would indicate that attending a CBT does improve their driving, they are more alert for bikes especially and other road users in general.

I would say that for more than ninety percent of students end the day with a beaming smile on their face. For the others it can be heartbreaking to see the disappointment but at the end of the day safety is the overriding factor. I could not in good conscience sign a certificate for someone who is just not safe to be on the road alone.

## THE RIDE TO THE “WALL”



This event which has taken place now for the past three years was on the Saturday, 2nd October 2010. I decided to take part after hearing lots of good reports from other riders (Mostly within the Geordie Chapter). If you go on line ([www.rtw.org](http://www.rtw.org)) you will see reports from previous year's events about the National Memorial Arboretum. It is in honour of all the Service Men and Women who have lost have lost their lives since the end of the Second World War. This includes all the armed services, police etc. It is a very moving experience to take part in the R.T.T.W.

I decided to go sown on the Friday prior to the Saturday event. I was booked into a Travel Lodge in Nuneaton for my overnight stay but the journey down was an quite an experience with very high winds and torrential rain but despite the weather I made good time and arrived at my accommodation at about 02.00pm.

Saturday morning saw a big change in the weather as it was dry, bright but cold!! I set off for the meeting point which was Drayton Manor Theme Park near Tamworth arriving there 09.30'ish. I was greeted by the site of at least 1000 motorcycles but by 11.00am that number increased dramatically to an incredible 8000 (Guessimate) all makes, ages and sizes. Groups of approximately 300 motorcycles are assembled and are marshalled throughout the journey assisted by the Police. Wherever we rode the route was lined with the public which made the ride very emotional. Once we arrived at the Arboretum the marshals set about getting all the motorcycles parked in an orderly fashion. The site covers a large area and is beautifully laid out. There was a selection of food and drink stalls including a large onsite restaurant so plenty of choice to pick from. A service was held followed by an army and bag pipe band playing prior to accessing the Wall. Again this was all a very moving experience and one that I would like to repeat in 2011 on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October. All donations go towards the upkeep of the Wall and the grounds.

I left for home at 03.30pm'ish and arrived home at about 06.30pm having had a very enjoyable weekend.

*John Magee.*

For more information about the National Memorial Arboretum go to [www.rtw.org](http://www.rtw.org)

---

## PLANNED RIDE OUTS FOR 2011

The ride outs take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month.

20<sup>th</sup> MARCH.....Michael Sutherland.....SHILDON, RICHMOND AND BOWES.

17<sup>th</sup> APRIL.....David Henderson.....VISIT TO EDEN CAMP YORKSHIRE.

15<sup>th</sup> MAY.....Billy Davidson.....T.B.C.

19<sup>th</sup> JUNE.....Jim Fidler.....T.B.C.

17<sup>th</sup> JULY.....Paddy Jarvis.....T.B.C.

21<sup>st</sup> AUGUST.....Paul Connell.....T.B.C.

18<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER.....T.B.Filled.....T.B.C.

16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER.....Dr. Clive Taylor.....T.B.C.

## A Tuscan adventure-suitably attired: from the pillion's perspective.



Michael said "You have to remember this is not so much a holiday as an adventure".

I suppose holidays have certain expectations; comfort, relaxation and obviously, a destination so on that basis I think he was covering his back! We didn't have a plan in mind except to see the medieval hilltop towns in Tuscany and so we booked a one way ticket on the DFDS ferry sailing to Ijmuiden, Netherland. (That caused my Head teacher some consternation but I did reassure her that I was intending to come back!)

Last year Mike had been to Spain in June on the motorbike with the lads and found the heat was very uncomfortable when wearing his leathers and biking jacket so he was keen to find a more light -weight suit. After some research on the internet he bought a Weiss jacket and trousers which had removable thermal and waterproof linings and so were very light and breathable. He

bought cheap water proof waking over trousers and jacket in a sale to don in inclement weather and a pair of very light motor cross gloves without gauntlet cuffs. He also decided to wear an open face helmet. Unfortunately Weiss didn't make anything comparable for women so I settled for a 'Safari' fabric suit from Hein Gericke that had lots of zips to give additional ventilation. I of course also removed the thermal linings but as the suit was made from a waterproof material it was going to be warmer to wear than Mike's suit. We tried hard to travel very light and attempted to pack using a 'one on, one off' principle – I think Mike was better than me; he didn't even take a jumper. Thus, suitably attired, we sailed from North Shields on July 23<sup>rd</sup> on the 5 o'clock ferry and woke up the next morning in Holland.

We headed south past Utrecht on the motorways making for Cochem (Dave Thornton's recommendation) on the Mosel. This was our only pre-booked destination. All roads down to the river are very steep but give wonderful views of grape vines and distant castles and we found our 'biker friendly' guest house just outside our first medieval town. The town itself was just ten minutes walk away and we had great views of the Castle which was built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. We decided to explore the town and find somewhere to eat. Sadly we did not choose wisely and had the worst pizza ever and, having moved on somewhere else for coffee, we were brought a frankly undrinkable cappuccino made with squirty sweetened cream. Well, you can't get it right every time but to compensate the breakfast next morning was excellent. We should have just eaten at the hotel. After breakfast we rode up the Mosel alongside the vines in neat rows and marvelled at the size of the barges, fully laden with a bike and even a car on deck. Eventually we made for the motorway and intended to make it into Austria by that evening. We were doing quite well but as we travelled further south the sky darkened ominously and before we really had time to look for a stopping place to put on waterproofs, it poured down. The rain was so heavy and the spray so copious that visibility was really limited-not a safe proposition on a German autobahn. Fortunately everything slowed but the road seemed to be under inches of water and we were both worried about aquaplaning. This was not the sort of riding to be doing when you are tired at the end of a long day so we pulled off and, at the first road sign, picked the nearest town, Birkheim 1km, and pulled up outside the bakers-a good source of local knowledge. My limited German managed to ascertain that there was a gasthoff up the road and we booked in. Not pre booking has its advantages in that you can change plans accordingly and sometimes you discover a real gem and this was one. There was an old inn, a delicatessen and a converted barn with new rooms on-suite, power shower, flat screen satellite TV and we ate a wonderful local meal in the inn that night with the locals which made up for the pizza the night before. The staff wore traditional dress. Breakfast the next morning was set out beautifully with choices of fresh fruit, cereals, cheese, ham, fabulous bread rolls, preserves and lashings of strong coffee, hurray!

We rode through the foothills of the Alps and down the Fernpass into Austria, taking care to steer clear of the motorways so not to buy a vignette as this was to be a fleeting trip into Austria, down to Imst and then south to the road to the Timmelsjoch pass and Italy. The temperature was about 26C and quite comfortable but as we climbed it dropped steadily to 5C as we came over the summit. The views were marvellous and the traffic very light. As we descended the 'U' bends or 'curves' into Italy we stopped at a small inn for mushroom omelettes and lots of coffees to warm us up-we hadn't expected to feel cold on this trip! The view back up the pass showed the road zigzagging up the side of the mountain and we sat in the sunshine and took it all in. Then through the picturesque agricultural plain and down the Italian motorway to Bologna and turned off for Riva del Garda. This was the only night when we struggled to find accommodation, I think because we wanted only one night and the hotels wanted a longer booking, but eventually as we came into Riva itself we got a room with a balcony which meant that the washing dried quickly!

The road down the far side of Lake Garda featured in the Bond film 'Quantum of Solace' with Daniel Craig. A stunt driver accidentally swerved into the Lake, escaping injury but writing off a £134,000 Aston Martin DBS...whoops! We were much more sedate on this bendy road and the views were wonderful through the arches but not many opportunities for photo stops. Down towards the southern end of the lake the traffic increased and it was hot in the stationary traffic so we were quite pleased to get on to faster roads towards Verona. This road had a good view of the isthmus and Sirmioni where the Roman poet Catullus reputedly had a villa. I translated some of his 'racy' love poetry for "A level" Latin.

Our route to Tuscany used the motorway in order to make faster progress and we finally left it south of Florence and travelled south on one of the worst stretches of roads that we came across all trip, namely the dual carriageway to Siena. The GS is very comfy but even its springs could not disguise the ruts and bumps. Monteriggioni is a small fortified hill town just outside of Siena and we made for it hoping to find some accommodation but it was too small and finally we booked into a Best Western hotel incongruously placed on the outskirts of a business park. We stayed three nights which enabled us to explore San Gimignano with empty panniers and stow away the biking suits and boots etc. We tried to get a bus to Monteriggioni but no luck, nor was there a taxi as we planned a bike-free day. Eventually Catherine the receptionist offered us the keys of her car-how kind is that? - and we spent several hours walking the walls, drinking coffee and a lazy lunch. There was a very good museum which explained the medieval sieges and warfare and the pilgrim roads. Before setting off the pilgrim had to make his will-not very optimistic of returning! We returned the car with some Euros for petrol. Ron talks about meeting 'random acts of kindness' while on bike tours and that was certainly one. Later that evening we rode up to Volterra along a fabulous road that climbed steeply then dipped into valleys. Volterra was a magical place with street theatre and the usual bike parking right in the best place and the crowd of evening promenaders stopping to look at all the machinery. We moved on to Asiano and spent two nights in a small family run hotel, not much English but we got by with our stock phrases and guess work. It also had a swimming pool which we had to ourselves. From here we explored Pienza which was remodelled by Pope Pius II as a model town. It is also famous for its cheeses and we could smell them from afar! Trequanda was very small and the only bar had penne ragout on the menu....the only thing on the menu...so we had it and it was fabulous!

Tuscany was beautiful, everything we had hoped for and deserves further exploration but we knew we had to turn north so the following day we made for the motorway to Pisa and the Italian Riviera. It rained -the heaviest rain we have ridden in-as the lightning forked and sizzled around the wind turbines away to our right. Scary stuff.

*Geraldine Sutherland*

To be continued.....



## **SELF PROFILING TEST**

1. You are in the countryside, walking down a path. Describe the path. Up, down, rocky, pebbly, muddy, straight, wandering.

Answer;

2. You are coming up to some trees either side of the path. Describe the trees. Tall, short, dense, sparse.

Answer;

3. Do the trees meet overhead? See daylight through the branches?

Answer

4. Do they go on forever or do they change?

Answer;

5. You come to some water. Describe the water. Still, running, shallow, deep, clear, cloudy cold, cool, warm, hot?

Answer

6. How do you cross it?

Answer;

7. You meet a medium sized bear - about a metre tall - doesn't seem immediately threatening although you think it's seen you. What do you do?

Answer;

8. Walking further on, you come to a great, high smooth faced wall. It's about 7 metres high – about 23 feet – it seems to go on forever in both directions. You really, really want to see what's on the other side of the wall. What do you do about it?

Answer;

9. Do you just look to see what's on the other side of the wall or do you crack on?

Answer;

10. You see a house. Describe the house. Is it close or far are from you?

Answer

11. Can you see anyone through the windows?

Answer;

PRINT THE PAGE OFF WRITE DOWN YOUR ANSWERS AND THEN CHECK YOUR PROFILE AGAINST THE INTERPRETATION OF THEM THAT IS LISTED ON A PAGE ???

# **A Motorcycling Diary 2010**

**South America by motorbike**

**5,500 miles**

**Through**

**Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Chile**

**By**

**Michael and April Goodwin**



## Introduction

I suppose it all started in 2008 in Garmish at the BMW Motorrad days' meeting. If you don't already know, this is BMW motorcycles annual European party where BMW enthusiasts from all over Europe gather to ogle and stare at everything on two wheels bearing a roundel. (They also stare at some other things on two wheels).

April and I had ridden down through Germany, Switzerland and Austria and into the German Alps. We had been this way before and had decided sometime ago to return and visit the meeting which is in the most fantastic setting. Surrounded by the Alps and watched over by Germany's tallest mountain the Zugspitze.

As well as the bikes, many displays and sellers tents are on site and it was amongst these that we met Kevin and Julia Sanders. They have a couple of world records under their belt. They hold the record for the fastest circumnavigation of the world 2 up and also the fastest Transamerica's journey 2 up. They now own and run "Globebusters" and arrange motorcycle expeditions to many parts of the world.

In hindsight going into the Globebusters tent was the first mistake. They are both great people, very amiable, completely without edge but also very enthusiastic about adventure motorcycling and dangerously persuasive. Two minutes after talking with Julia we knew we would be doing an expedition somewhere. Three minutes later we knew it was to South America and the High Andes. The adventure was to take us through Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Chile in the wheel tracks of a journey undertaken by Che Guevara and recorded in the bestselling book "The Motorcycle Diaries".

A few weeks later we were signed up for the 2010 expedition and the preparations began.

## Preparations

At first we seemed to have a long time to prepare, after all it was just under two years from putting our names down to the start date in April 2010. It's a cliché but how quickly time flies.

Globebusters are really good in helping participants prepare. They provide a handbook that includes a timetable for everything that needs to be completed and by when. There is a long list: International Driving Licence, International Travel Insurance, Bike insurance, Bike checks, Copy documents, etc etc.

In July 2009 we attended a participants briefing at Globebusters base in Wales. Kevin and Julia were there to answer any questions we had and it was also our first chance to meet with our fellow travellers. The meeting was invaluable and gave a real sense of the enormity of what we were going to do.

The real preparation started in the New Year. Many things had to wait until nearer the date of departure because they were time critical e.g. the insurance for the bike could only be applied for and issued a few weeks prior to leaving. There are only a couple of Insurance companies in the world who offer this type of cover. One is in the USA and the other is in Holland. Thank goodness for the internet and e mail, thank goodness for scanners and attachments, otherwise it would have taken forever. The bike preparation was so important. There is no bike recovery in South America, no convenient BMW dealer for spare parts. If anything major broke chances are that it would stay broke. New tyres were needed and a full service and a thorough check of nuts bolts and mountings. We had been warned that the bikes would be taking a lot of punishment. At the time we didn't appreciate just what that meant. The bike was going to be shipped to Buenos Aires

and therefore had to be delivered to the shipping agents, James Cargo in early March. Leaving it with them was a little worrying and more than a little strange to think the next time I was to see it would be on another continent 12,000 miles away. We decided to keep an electronic diary for the journey. The original can be found at <http://mick-g.travellerspoint.com/> the following are extracts from the diary.

## **Waiting for the Dust to Settle**

After spending nearly two years preparing and waiting for this trip we found ourselves waiting to see if our flights to Buenos Aires on the 18<sup>th</sup> April had been postponed because of the volcanic dust clouds all flights in the UK were grounded. A volcano with a unpronounceable name had erupted in Iceland spewing dust into the air to around 18,000 feet, making it dangerous for aircraft to fly. After a tense wait the flights were finally cancelled so plan B was put into operation.

## **On Our Way**

The journey was long and we owe friends and family a great big thank you. In the end we had no option but to take the decision to go from Madrid. Our flight from Heathrow was cancelled at 3.00pm on Saturday and within 20 minutes we had booked the flight with Iberia from Madrid, the ferry from Portsmouth to St Malo and a hire car one way to Madrid. A friend Allan Taylor said we could take his car to Milton Keynes and he would drive it back. Once there our sister in law Caroline Stephenson said she would take us to Portsmouth. Setting off from home at 8.30am we eventually arrived in Portsmouth at 6.30 pm well in time for the overnight ferry. We had been contacted by David Roberts a fellow rider and we arranged to meet him at Portsmouth to share the car to Madrid. After a couple of pints, steak and chips and a good nights' sleep we arrived in St Malo at 8.30 on Monday in time to pick up the hire car. We were fortunate that the channel was like a mill pond overnight. Then it was the long drive through France to the centre of Spain arriving in Madrid Airport after a trouble free journey at 2.30 am on Tuesday. Although Madrid airport is enormous it only has about two seats and both of those were taken. This meant passing the 7 hours until check in with a very uncomfortable sleep in an overloaded Astra hire car. Still we'd got there without a single hitch. The last part of the journey went equally smoothly consisting of a 12 hour flight to Buenos Aires where we arrived at 8.15pm BA time.

I have no idea how long we were travelling neither of us can be bothered to add it up, but it seemed like forever! However, we arrived safe and sound if very knackered.

## **Buenos Aires**

Three things you should know about Buenos Aires:

1. Buenos Aires is huge. 17 million people live there
2. It's noisy and very busy (all the time)
3. It's known as the Paris of South America (it isn't because Paris is in Europe and is more attractive)

For me one story typifies the great people of Buenos Aires. Because we were going to be travelling through Bolivia, Peru and Chile our guides suggested that we change some of our dollars into small amounts of these currencies to get us through border controls until we could change larger amounts. This seemed sensible so we began looking for a bank

that could do this for us, leading to an interesting 6 hours working out the Argentine Banking system. (With very little Spanish) Eventually we found the Banco Piano which exchanged dollars for all those currencies.(not many of the banks do this for some reason). After waiting in a queue (Argentines do queues like us i.e. they love them). We found that we had to book in at the reception first and wait to be directed to a queue. This we did and then spent an hour changing the currency helped by one of the most patient bank clerks I've ever come across. All the time we were being dealt with (and there were five of us) an Argentine woman stood in the queue behind us and patiently waited, despite us gesturing to her to come to the front!! That's professional queue waiting of the highest standard!!

Buenos Aires is a great city as far as cities go but as I said it's enormous. Greater BA stretches for 70 miles! So with limited time we decided to take a tour bus and were really glad we did. It took three hours and covered some of the numerous parks and squares and then to the Boca area where the famous Boca Juniors stadium is. (Famous if you follow football as it was Maradonnas' home ground ---Maradonna not Madonna). The tour was probably the only safe way to see this part because the area around the stadium is really run and down and dangerous. The area immediately around the stadium is a tourist area and patrolled by Police but you are advised to stay within that part and not stray.

In the same area is the Tango district with its colourful houses and Tango cafes. This is a bit of a tourist trap but is still worth seeing. Cafes and restaurants are everywhere as you would expect. Meat eating seems to be a national pastime. A group of us went to a locals' cafe where we became the entertainment for the night. Eight of us ordered a mountain of meat, chips, salad, beer and wine which came to 50 pesos each (about £8 each). The only problem was when the chef brought out the raw meat for us to choose. I just hope he washed his hands. The night before, as a group we went to another Steak House. This was like the Chinese and Indian Buffets where for a set fee (£10) you can eat as much as you like and each person gets a free bottle of wine!!

The purpose of going to Buenos Aires was of course to collect our bike to start the trip North through Argentina, to Bolivia, Peru, Chile and then East through Argentina again to finish in BA in five weeks time.

First though we had to get the bikes. This is a little more complicated than it might sound. First a "Notary" came to the Hotel and examined all the participants driving documents and took two full copies of passports and the vehicle registration document. Statements were signed and fingerprints taken, smiles exchanged and handshakes made. He then left with his two assistants never to be seen again.

Next step was on the following day we all went down to the Customs house and sat around for three hours. The man who opens up was an hour late for work but no one seems to bat an eyelid. Eventually someone comes and takes all our passports away and we wait some more. Then passports are returned in dribs and drabs and in no particular order. After a wait of three hours all we received was a stamp in our passports.

Day three sees us go to the Warehouse to collect our bikes. Here we wait for another three hours until we are shown inside and taken to the bikes buried under a mountain of bubble wrap. Numbers are checked, papers are signed and at last we have our bikes and the bonus is they are all in one piece and all of this was done in record time!!! (Apparently)

Each evening and morning we had a briefing about routes and what to expect.

Everything comes to he who waits (No it doesn't all you get is a stamp)

All the waiting was worth it just for the ride from the warehouse to the hotel. The sight and sound of 8 or 9 bikes riding through the city centre turned everyone's head. They are not used to seeing that type of thing. (I know what you're thinking but don't tell me you don't get the urge to show off once in a while!!)

What follows are excerpts from the diary we kept on the journey. These were kept electronically at <http://mick-g.travellerspoint.com/>

## The Journey Starts

*North through Argentina (Long straight roads and lots of miles)*

### **Day One. Saturday, 24 April 2010**

Leaving BA passing through slums where the rubbish sifters live. Every night people, in fact whole families sift through the rubbish left out by the shops restaurants and hotels. As we passed by the shanty towns we could see mountains of bags that had been collected and moved there for some reason unknown to us or perhaps for resale.

Heading out of BA takes a lot of time. The suburbs stretch for some 70 miles and even on the motorway of Ruta 9 this took an hour. The riding was quite boring as we had 300 plus miles to cover and all on motorways.

Our first experience of Argentine driving conditions and the first time we all rode together. The drivers seem to have a death wish in the cities but as we got further out the experience seemed less dangerous or perhaps we just adapted to the new rules. The Highway Code became a distant memory.

First stop was Santa Fe. The holiday Inn stands in the middle of town like a great towering monument to another world. All the buildings around it are dilapidated but in the centre of town is a pedestrian precinct which is modern and well cared for.

### **Day Two. Sunday 25 April 2010**

Riding in a group of ten was a bit hectic yesterday so we decided to leave early in a smaller group and take our time as today was going to be a very big ride of 425 miles to Rio Hondo and a lakeside Hotel. This proved a good decision. Four bikes, a steady pace and quite a few stops made for a really good days riding. The reward was a great hotel with outside swimming pool and views across the lake. A great evening with a free meal and wine.

Flat as flat can be. Rode through marsh lands with thousands of birds on endlessly straight roads

### **Day Three. Monday 26 April 2010**

Today we started heading into the Andes proper. Some more flat riding then our first sight of mountains. Gradually through the day the mountains got bigger and we climbed steadily up to 2387 meters where we stopped in a small town to get ready for the border crossing into Bolivia to dirt roads and poverty.

As we have climbed and travelled further north we have noticed two things above all else. The poverty has increased and the weather has got warmer. Now in Tilcara both are very in your face. To get to our accommodation we have travelled through dirt streets and experienced the warmest day so far of 25 degrees. The hotel is fantastic though and I have experienced my first exotic food of lama steaks which taste a lot like pork.

Some of the roads and scenery have been spectacular. The roads twist and turn climbing steadily through mountains that look like they've been fashioned from cardboard and then stippled with cactus.

Massive dry river beds indicate the amount of melt water that must come down in floods.

A great day but we are all very tired. It's quite full on and we don't seem to get much time to rest. We are looking forward to a rest day after tomorrow.

## Into Bolivia

*And a Day of Firsts*

### Day Four Tuesday 27 April 2010

Bolivia rose into the air in front of us. Riding through Argentina we had been gradually gaining height until just before the border with Bolivia it became very noticeable. There was a shortness of breath that came with the smallest physical effort. The mountains were becoming more serious. They stretched for miles on either side of the road, unpopulated and vast. The roads were empty and the people poorer. Miles from anywhere we passed women sat at the side of the road waiting. We didn't know what they were waiting for but there was no sign of any habitation where they had come from and where they were going remains a mystery.

Today consisted of a day of firsts. It was our first border crossing, first time riding over the tropic of Capricorn, first time above 3,000 metres first sight of Lamas, first ride on sand, first ride on rough gravel roads, our first fall and first ride at night. Leaving Tilcara we had a 125 mile ride on Ruta 9 to the border town of Iquita. First of the firsts though is the



crossing of the tropic of Capricorn and the chance for a photo shot. As always now we have fallen into a group of four bikes. Hedley and Selena on "Billy" a GS 1100, Neil the odd one out from the rest of the group as he is the only person not on a BMW. Instead he's chosen to fly the flag for Britain and travel on a Triumph Tiger. Then there is Denis who is on a GS 1200 and of course us. We have become the slow riding group as we are more interested in seeing the sights and taking photographs. The pay off for this is that we leave earlier than the rest and let them catch us up and pass us. By the time they do this we are usually on our fourth photo stop. So it was that we paused for the photo on the *Tropic of Capricorn* and everyone else missed it!

Next of our firsts was the riding on sand. This was an unintended adventure caused by a demonstration blocking the road on the outskirts of Iquitos resulting in a detour of about one mile on sand and then another mile on gravel road. April thankfully travelled in the back up van which allowed me to complete it without falling off although a couple of cars coming in the opposite direction had near misses from a number of us as we passed them. The drivers didn't bat an eyelid! Two of the couples came off in the sand which is hardly surprising and was an ill omen for us just a few miles down the road.

The next first was the border crossing into Bolivia involving lots of queuing and waiting. The process goes like this. First we export our bikes. This involves looking at V5 forms and stamps we had collected in our passports when the bikes entered Argentina. Then we did some form handing over. We had collected a form when the bikes entered the country which we now had to exchange for a form as they left. After the bike had been sorted we had to get ourselves out of Argentina. This meant going to another window at the back of the building where we handed over our V5 registration document, our passport and went through the whole process again.

Eventually everyone was out of Argentina, but now we had to travel 50 metres down the road to get into Bolivia. Needless to say the whole process started again. First we entered. We showed our passports to a very bored Police Officer who gave us a green form to fill in (the usual things such as name occupation etc etc. Then we gave that form to someone behind another window who then gave us another form which we took to another man in another office who demanded 10 Bolivian for no good reason and let us into the country with our bike. WE WERE IN!

First time in Bolivia. Straight to a café to celebrate. What a contrast from Argentina. The bikes, as always attracted a massive amount of attention. The place itself was buzzing with people. Then we headed out of the town towards Tilcara, our overnight stay in Bolivia and where we were to spend our much needed rest day tomorrow.

First though we needed to negotiate 40 to 50 miles of gravel road. Heading out of the town we were soon stopped by a Police Road block where we had to pay 5 Bolivianos (about three pence) for the privilege of passing a piece of rope strung across the road. Then we entered the supposed gravel section. Unfortunately for us the Bolivians are in the process of building a paved version of Ruta 14 to Potosi. They were very busy with this and many sections of the road have been completed. The problem for us was they didn't want anyone driving on it. Consequently we were diverted onto a very rough sand and gravel road where we promptly hit some deep sand and fell off. The only advantage of this was that falling onto sand is very painless and we both came away unscathed. Unfortunately for the bike one of the panniers took the full brunt of the fall and was badly knocked out of shape.

After some help with getting the bike back up by Alan the van man in the support vehicle it was decided that discretion is the better part of valour and all the pillion passengers got in the van to ride what was going to be a very demanding section.

The next forty miles was some of the most demanding riding I've ever done. I'm not an off roader and have usually preferred the comfort of solid asphalt. The road threaded between partially paved sections of a few hundred metres, long sections of rough gravel, and small bits of sand that connected the two. Standing on the footrests was the only way to keep any stability which after a few miles for a confirmed tarmac person like me became very tiring.

The forty miles were also the best riding I've ever done. Three of us decided to keep together. Neil who is an experienced trials rider had to take it steady on his Tiger which didn't have off road tyres on and Hedley and I who wanted to play it safe. Others in the larger group who were very quick and experienced flew away at 50 or 60 miles an hour while we kept it down to 30 to 40 miles.

Interestingly we also had some river crossings to make and some interesting rides around Lorries, buses and cars all of which kicked up enormous quantities of dust. This meant riding through an impenetrable cloud when you passed



anything or anything came in the opposite direction or indeed when you were overtaken which usually involved some large truck. All of this riding took place at over 3000 metres which makes you very breathless and can mean suffering from altitude sickness. The bonus was the brilliant scenery that looked like something out of a western movie. Cactus trees and red rocks.

By the time we got to Tupiza it was dark and although there is no planned riding in the dark it was inevitable because of the road conditions. Neil, Hedley and I rode into Tupiza trying to find the hotel and promptly got split up.

Hedley managed to find it at the first attempt while Neil and I were left roaming a strange town until eventually stumbling over it. The experience is not recommended when you are in a strange town after a long ride in the dark when the locals have no traffic sense..

Random Thoughts; A brilliant day

Bolivia proved to be an overwhelming experience. The “firsts” seemed to continue throughout our weeks stay in the country. We road hundreds of miles of dirt road interspersed with some of the best surfaced asphalt roads you could wish to ride. Continue.....

## Rest day in Tupiza

**Day Five. Wednesday 28th April 2010 24 °C**

This indoor market is hidden away through a small entrance in a blue painted wall. In there you can buy just about everything. To us it was a real surprise because everything we had read or been told suggested that finding toiletries, clothes etc would be hard in Bolivia. The market was divided into narrow passage ways each specialising in different goods. So one aisle contained electrical goods another women's clothing and another contained food etc.

Tupiza was our first encounter with the traditional dress of Bolivia. Many older women still wear the mulitple dresses and bowler hats. They don't appreciate having their photos taken though unless you buy something from them.

## High into the Andes

**Day Six and Seven Thursday 29th April 2010 to Friday 30 April 2010 4 °C**

Tupiza to Potosi



This was another day of hard riding conditions. It started with fifty miles of dirt road which turned out to be in worse conditions than the ride from the border. We had taken the precaution of getting a four wheel drive to take our pillion passengers, April, Selana and Chris the first fifty miles and it turned out to be a good decision.

The sand was worse than we had encountered before especially one tricky uphill section of hair pin bends. Added to this were a couple of river crossings and two 100 metre sections of mud.

After fifty miles though there was a complete contrast. April got back on the bike and we had fifty miles of near perfect concrete roads that snaked through the Andes. The only problem was the builders thought it would be fun to miss out sections and leave it as dirt. To increase the fun they usually did that on bends or going through villages possibly in an effort to amuse the locals.

We then returned to dirt and gravel for another 30 miles which with two on the bike proved a bit interesting in parts.

The final section to Potosi was on the most perfect tarmac road you could wish to ride. Rising all the time we eventually reached a height of around 4,300 metres which was breathtaking in more than one way. Potosi itself is at 4,000 to 4,200 metres and as such is the highest city in the world. Even climbing stairs was an immense effort. Thankfully this ride was followed by another rest day to get acclimatised to the altitude. Potosi itself is famous for its silver mines and some of the group took advantage of a tour around it. However health safety has not been heard of and the system employed seems to be a throwback to out 18th century mining methods where whole families are involved.

In fact as payment for the visit the people who went had to buy the miners some 98 % alcohol which they mix with coca leaves to stave off hunger and tiredness, some fuses and some dynamite! It must be one of the few places in the world where you can go to a market and buy dynamite.

## From the highest city in the world to the highest capital

### Day Eight Saturday 1st May 2010 ☀ 27 °C

The journey from Potosi to La Paz was over three hundred miles at high altitude. Although relatively easy compared with the previous days' dirt roads it is physically hard riding at altitudes of 3,800 to 4,000 metres. The bike suffers as well, the petrol is poor quality and the thin air takes away much of the power the bike normally has at sea level.

Before getting to La Paz you have to ride through a crazy place called El Alto. Traffic comes at you from all directions and we were advised to ride in a group because it's not safe to go through there on your own. Two minutes of riding through there showed why. Tyres were burning at the side of the road; people looked at you as if you were going to be their next victim. In fact it was a bit like Benwell on a good day. (That's a select neighbourhood of Newcastle for people that don't know)

Arriving at La Paz though is one of those things that we will never forget. After passing through a Police check point there is a viewing point where the whole of La Paz is laid out below you. The city is situated in a bowl surrounded by high mountains so it must be one of the few cities in the world where you can see the whole of it from one point.

### Day Nine Sunday 2 May 2010

#### La Paz

We had a rest day to spend in La Paz and really we could have spent a week exploring it. A group of us decided to take a tour of the city to make the most of the time. We were very lucky because we arrived at the Government Square just in time to catch the changing of the guard which takes place every Sunday. It was spectacular and everyone watching it seemed to pay a lot of respect to the proceedings. When the national Anthem was played young people were standing to attention and everyone including ourselves were told in no uncertain terms by the Police to take our hats off. Perhaps that's what happens in a place that's had so many revolutions'. I 'm not sure how the President gets life insurance but it must be very expensive.

Another little interesting snippet that came out of our trip is that the poor people are confined to the outskirts of the city because of the height differences. The outskirts are up to 1,000 metres higher and therefore colder. Consequently those who can afford it live towards the centre which is lower down and much warmer. On our trip around the city this was very obvious as further south we came across gated communities set in green parks. La Paz has got to be one of those cities to visit if you get the chance.

### La Paz to Copacabana *The best day so far* Day Ten 3 May 2010 25 °C

*Photo; detour leaving La Paz. Michal and Sylvia are on the bike r.h.s. facing.*

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE SPRING EDITION

OF THE N.A.M. NEWSLETTER.....



## SELF PROFILE ANSWERS.

1. This is how you see your life right now. Smooth, easy going, rough, downhill all the way or uphill and a fight. Muddy – difficult to make progress.
  2. This is how you see your life in the immediate future. Lots of light with not much to threaten it or the opposite - trees meeting overhead, blocking out much of the light.
  3. If they meet and block out the light then it's not looking so good.
  4. The longer term – either you can see issues lifting or getting worse. Optimist or pessimist by nature?
  5. This is a description of the sex life you have at the moment or you'd like.
  6. And this is what you do about it.
  7. This is how you instinctively tackle the small problems in life.
  8. This is how you tackle the big problems in life.
  9. This describes your optimism that you can tackle the big problems in life and move onto into unfamiliar territory or just look and do nothing.
  10. This is the kind of house you'd ultimately like to live in.
  11. If you can, your emotions at least give you the belief that there's life after death. If not, your emotions as well as your logic tell you there isn't.
- 

### MONTHLY MEMBERS MEETINGS FOR 2011.

ALL MEETING ARE HELD ON THE SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH.

JANUARY, 11th. FEBRUARY, 8<sup>th</sup>. MARCH, 8<sup>th</sup>. Charles Gordon, Physiotherapist.

APRIL, 12th. Alex Smith, Nurburgring. MAY, 10<sup>th</sup>. JUNE, 14th. JULY, 12<sup>th</sup>. AUGUST, 9<sup>th</sup>.

SEPTEMBER, 13<sup>th</sup>. OCTOBER, 11<sup>th</sup>. NOVEMBER, 8<sup>th</sup>. DECEMBER, 13<sup>th</sup>.

---

Not many people know this interesting fact!

In 1872 the Australians invented the condom using a sheep's bladder.

In 1873 the English somewhat refined the idea by taking the bladder out of the sheep first.

---

### HOW ABOUT THESE?

I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not sure.

A clear conscience is usually a sign of a bad memory.

You don't need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

News is where they begin with "Good evening" then proceed to tell you it isn't.

The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not take first from someone else.

## **EASYFUND RAISING SCHEME.**

WHAT IS IT? This is scheme which enables charities to raise funds from on-line purchases directly from a variety of retailers. N.A.M is a registered charity therefore we qualify.

HOW DOES IT WORK? Members or their friends who shop on-line do so via our Group Web Site which results in a percentage of every purchase being diverted to our Group Funds.

WHAT'S THE CATCH? No catch. The donation is passed from the actual retailer so there is **NO EXTRA COST TO THE PURCHASER.**

**OVER TWO THOUSAND** retailers support the scheme e.g. Amazon, John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Thomas Cook.

The percentage paid varies from retailer to retailer that is paid to N.A.M. From between 0.5% to 2.5%.

It's easy to sign up to the scheme too. Just go to our N.A.M. Web Site scroll down to the box titled EASY FUNDING click on the link that will take you to the page for signing up and just follow the instructions.

**THIS SCHEME REALLY WORKS!!!** In the past 3 weeks we have received donations totalling **£71.81** from members who signed up and have made purchases on-line.

If you have any questions or problems signing up you can contact the following members; John Fagan (John set it up) 0191 4693378. David Steedman. Louise Atkinson. Terry Murphy.

---

## **BLUE LAMP CHARITY RIDE**

This is charity ride out from Preston, Lancashire to Blyth, Northumberland on Saturday, 14th May. The charity has been established by former Police Officer David Rathband to give support to service men and service women injured in the line of duty. To take part there is an initial fee of £20 for a solo rider and £25 for rider and Pillion. There is also the opportunity to request extra sponsorship from family and friends. For more details go to our N.A.M. Web Site scroll down to the box titled Charity Ride and open the link for more information or you can go to the N.A.M. Forum if you have any questions or comments to make. If you wish to speak to anyone regarding the ride then Kevin Wellden and Ron Patrick are the contacts. It is anticipated that those wishing to go will not travel to Preston but will meet the ride on route. Where this meet will take place has yet to be finalised. Your support for this event will be greatly appreciated by your committee.

---

## **TRAINING EVENTS TO COME.**

There are two SLOW RIDING SKILLS TRAINING organised on the following dates. THURSDAY 16<sup>th</sup> JUNE @ 07.00pm followed by the second on SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> AUGUST @ 10.00am. Both events will be held at HEIGHLEY GATE GARDEN CENTRE situated on the A697 north of Morpeth. These events are brilliant in improving your skills at slow riding so make a note of the dates, get yourself there and have a lot of fun.

---

## **N.A.M. MEMBERSHIP FEES 2011.**

Your annual membership fees were due in January. For those who have forgotten to pay the £15.00 can you contact Patrick (Paddy) Jarvis (Membership Secretary) with the view to paying your dues. Ideally Paddy would appreciate it if you could ask him for a Standing Order form for you to pass onto your bank this making the payment of dues so much easier for all concerned. Paddy can be contacted on his home number 01670 523736, mobile number 07910 490 293 Email [Jarvis\\_p1@sky.com](mailto:Jarvis_p1@sky.com)

Congratultions to the following on passing their I.A.M. test.



Robert Dove



William (Preff) Hockaday



Christopher Knox

The I.A.M. and N.A.M. welcomes the following new members.



Richard Barsby



Richard Robinson



Les Gilbert. Honorary Member

---

The Editor wishes to thank the following contributors to you Winter Edition Newsletter, Ron Patrick, John Magee, Patrick Jarvis, Geraldine Sutherland, Michael and Alice Goodwin. John Fagan.

---

Motorcycle show at the N.E.C. Birmingham 2011



Dream Ducati



New B.M.W. 1600 Tourer



Me, Geoff, Jack, Robert, Christine, Mike

---

The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Northumbria Advanced Motorcyclists (NAM) or the Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists (I.A.M.) and should not be interpreted as such.