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MORTONS
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AT BACK STREET HEROES -
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On my recent trip to the far, far north of these septic... sorry, sorry, sceptred isles, I noticed two things that I thought were worth mentioning. I'll come to the other one in a moment, but first...

A few issues back, I was noting the lack of night-time insects committing seppuku on headlights and visors, or buzzing around any left-on light at night.

Well, following on from that, I noticed that, during the day, the number of small, winged things that go 'splat' on you has dropped too... unless you go to the Highlands of Scotland. There they're still out in force, believe you me – on our recent mad rush from Thurso back to Inverness (as detailed on pages 70-72 this issue) both mine and Tony's visors were thick with smeared goo, and some of the impacts were enough to make your head twitch back, they really were.

Now, granted, most of these were those big, evil, bitey bastards that our northern Celtic brethren call 'cleggs' (wasn't he that bloke on 'Last of the Summer Wine'? I never had him down as a bastard... it's always the quiet ones you have to watch for), and as such I have no sympathy for them – yes, I know they must have an ecological niche, but it is, in my opinion, to fly around having no fathers and chomping on people so ... sorry, where was I? Oh yes, granted most of them were horseflies, but not all of them, and it does seem a little sad that creatures that are nowadays so rare are getting turned to gloom on the heads and headlights of motorcyclists, but I console myself by thinking that, for every one that does squish on a biker's bright bits, far, far more get turned to paste on cars than are ever going to do on bikes... we're the lesser of two evils, if you like.

The argument is, I s'pose, a little like the one that I use when people bemoan the fact that it's not law to wear protective clothing, except helmets, on bikes. I always say that it's that person's choice to wear what they like, no matter how foolish their choices may be, and people invariably counter with the fact that these eejits cost the NHS money and resources that could be better used on other people, and that's true – it could indeed. However, by the very nature of the fact that there aren't that many of us to start with (something like a million, tops, out of a population of 66-plus million – 1.52% apparently), and far, far more people get admitted to hospital each weekend with alcohol-based injuries (in 2016/17, the last year it was calculated, more than 337,000 people were taken in with alcohol-related injuries!), what our foolishness costs the NHS is far, far outweighed by theirs, y'know?



EDITORIAL

...Umm, I've kind o' forgotten where I was going with this, but there are still a lot of bugs in Scotland, okay?

The other thing I noticed on my trip was that, once you cross the border into the land of men in skirts who are cruel to octopuses (octopi? Who knows?), everyone on a bike waves at everyone else – not just nods or lifts a coolly nonchalant finger, but actually

waves, with their whole hand an' everything!

Now, maybe I'm old-fashioned, but I like that – it takes me back to the good ol' days of the '80s and '90s (the best years to be a biker in my humble opinion – I wasn't really around in the '60s or '70s to judge if they were better, but...) when being a biker was something kind o' tribal, something to be proud of, us against the rest of the world kind o' thing. I realise that nothing stays the same, everything moves on, and the world, even the biking world, is a very different place to how it was 20-plus years ago, but sometimes not for the better, y'know?

The majority of people on bikes nowadays don't wave, or even nod in a lot of cases, and I don't know whether this is a case of a hardening of people's attitudes because of what's happened in the wider world over the years, or because there're a whole host of people who've come into biking who don't have that same connection to it, that same sense of community, as I'd like to think that we have. Whatever the reason is, I still nod and wave at folk when I'm out on the bike, but I also say to myself many, many times when they don't nod or wave back "well, f**k you, you miserable c*nt" too, so perhaps I'm not quite as laid-back as I used to be either?

Finally, I'd just like to say thanks to everyone who expressed concern for my well-being when I was taken ill at The Trip Out back in September with food poisoning or an allergic reaction to something. Most of them didn't know me from Adam (although I was considerably better-dressed than him), and I suspect quite a few thought my affliction was alcohol-related, but people kept coming over to check on me through the long, long day (for me anyway) that was Saturday, and see if I needed anything.

Kind o' reaffirms your faith in bikers, doesn't it? See you next issue!

NIK

STUFF

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TRIUMPH BOBBER BUILD-OFF CHALLENGE WINNER

Laguna Ashford Triumph, with their entry, The Drag Racer, have been announced as the winners of the inaugural Triumph Bobber Build-Off Challenge.

The competition attracted entries from 13 Triumph dealerships around the UK, who used a combination of off-the-shelf parts and hand-crafted engineering skills to design and personalise their beautiful Bonneville Bobbers. The Ashford team put a Thruxton track racer fairing to their bike which gave them the idea of a drag bike theme, and also gives it a very X-75 Hurricane look from the 1970s too.

Details of the 13 finalists can be found on the Triumph website at www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk with access to images and the background of each build.



HERALD MAVERICK PRICE DROP!

If you're looking for a cool 125cc bike, then you might be interested to know that the Herald Motor Company has dropped the price of its Maverick 125 to £2,499 (plus OTR costs) from £2,650 (plus OTR). It's available in seven different colours, and is off-road inspired with an aggressive retro-styled look. It's available to purchase via Herald's network of authorised dealers, and comes with two years' RAC breakdown cover included.

To find your nearest dealer visit www.heraldmotorcompany.com

WIN A SPORTSTER!

The End MC Hampshire are raffling off their brother Pete's 1200 Sportster to raise money to give to the Oak Haven Hospice in Lymington who helped Pete right up to the end, and tickets are on sale from their Facebook page (The End MC Fundraiser) or Attitude Customs or Southampton Harley-Davidson.



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Gogairy do hand-painted leather (or vegan-friendly faux leather) jackets, or denim or camouflage-print jackets, and have a catalogue of ready-to-wear jackets in a variety of colours with themes including superheroes, comic books, floral, metallica and cartoon, or if you have a particular design in mind you can have it bespoke made for you.

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THE EXPLETIVES

The Expletives are a very entertaining punk and new wave band looking to play more biker gigs. They've played more than 280 shows, including the Tiger MCC's Soggy Moggy rally (twice), the Rat & Survival, and many more.

They perform songs by The Jam, The Specials, The Sex Pistols, The Undertones, Blondie, Madness, The Vapors, Sham 69, The Buzzcocks, The Clash, Elvis Costello, The Ruts, Stiff Little Fingers, Dr Feelgood, The Ramones, Iggy Pop, The Stranglers, Ian Dury, The Hives, Motorhead, The Skids, The Members and Tenpole Tudor among others.

Check out their Facebook page (The Expletives Band) for videos, reviews etc.



Custom Heroes

So this is the last issue before this year's Motorcycle Live! at the NEC in Birmingham, and so this is our last chance to tell you what's happening on the Custom Heroes stand that we have there – Custom Heroes, the BSH stand, I don't know if you know, is regarded by the organisers as being the third biggest draw of the show!

We've told you about the artisans who will be demonstrating their skills on the stand over the eight days, and now we can reveal who's going to be doing what and when. On the Saturday and Sunday of the first weekend, there'll be Steve Slight of Joeby's Airbrush Art demonstrating his prowess with an airbrush; on Monday and Tuesday it'll be Lawrence Belcher of XIII Pinstriping & Traditional Signpainting working his pinstriping magic; on the Wednesday and the

Thursday it's Tony Reynolds, AKA Tony the Engraver, sculpting exquisite designs on metal; and on the final days – Friday, Saturday and Sunday – it'll be expert

leatherworker Claudio Nosari.

As well as all these wonderful craftsmen, we'll be having the five winners of the 2019 BSH Custom Champs, and a whole host of the best custom bikes from up and down the land too. Every year we try to have bikes that represent the whole of the UK custom scene, from one end of the spectrum to the other, and this year is no exception – they're all corkers! 🏆

Motorcycle Live! is being held at the NEC in Birmingham from 16-24th November, and you can get more info and tickets from their website at www.motorcyclelive.co.uk



CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE

Yes, it's that time again. Whilst we've become accustomed to Christmas carols being played in shops and on the radio since before the clocks went back, the run up to Christmas can nonetheless be an extremely stressful time. In particular, in finding ideal gifts for your nearest and dearest, and the feeling of impending doom at receiving dozens of pairs of socks, outrageous aftershaves that smell quite unlike anything else you've ever experienced and enough chocolate and salty snacks to give your doctor heart palpitations. So, we've made your life a hell of a lot easier with our exclusive Christmas Gift Guide! Check out some of these must-haves for classic bikers and leave the magazine open on these pages for all your loved ones to see...

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LETTERS

NEED TO AGREE, OR EVEN DISAGREE, WITH SOMETHING YOU'VE SEEN IN THE MAG? HEARD A BLOODY AWFUL JOKE YOU THINK WE SHOULD GROAN AT? EMAIL NIK@BACKSTREETHEROES.COM OR SEND IT SNAILMAIL TO THE ADDRESS IN THE FRONT (SOMEWHERE) OF THE MAG!

DEAR BSH,

Interesting point Nik raises in the October 2019 issue about the lack of flattened moths on bike and clothing after evening rides these days.

Unfortunately there's a noticeable lack of bugs during the daytime as well, at least around here. Not that long ago it was advisable to clear the usual zillions of bugs from bike and gear after the ride or they'd be much more resistant to wiping off the next day, but not any more – only the odd bee or two. I think this is probably yet another thing that we're doing to our world that's "important in the grand scheme of things", and that we should be worried about, but only interested anoraks seem to care, and our

leaders seem only to be interested in fighting among themselves and scoring points off each other.

It probably won't affect my future too much though as the Grim Reaper regularly appears at the bottom of my bed, looking at his watch. He can sod off for a bit longer though!

Anyway, on a brighter note, what a stonking issue – a great read, keep it up.

Regards.

OLD JOHN,
Portland, Dorset
(still riding an SV650S at 76)

Good on yer, John, keep the bony ol' bastard waiting as long as you can! N.

DEAR BSH,

Just back from The Trip Out, which is now one of my happy places. I even made an arse of myself when I was one of the guys and girls invited on stage by Dollar Bill to shake maracas. I was thinking, though, of the history of Debach airfield, where it's held, and all the Americans who flew from there, and without whom we would most likely now be under the Nazis... I mean the real ones – nowadays anyone who voices anything deemed politically incorrect risks being called 'a nazi'.

Check out the museum on site for the story of the bomber guys and, yes, have a fantastic weekend, but also you should also bear in mind their sacrifice, as should the many 'intellectuals' who make derogatory quips about the US. Most of us bikers know the score, but some lefty teachers and others just run down our friends.

Cheers!

CLIVE UNERMAN

It wasn't just the Americans, Clive, the RAF and a whole host of Europeans (Polish, Danish, and the like) who fought for us all also flew from East Anglian air-bases, and a great many of them didn't make it back too. We should remember all their sacrifices. N.

STAR
LETTER

FAT MAGGOT



The best letter each issue will now receive a free T-shirt from those lovely people, Laura and Mark, at **Fat Maggot T-Shirts** (www.fatmaggot.com) – get all your rally shirts etc. from them, they're triffle!

DEAR BSH,

I have a Reliant trike. In 2018 I duly paid my £70 yearly road tax, as I have done since it was built. Two months later I got a cheque for the full amount back from the DVLA, and a new log book – yep, it's now classed as a historic vehicle.

So now I, this year, still get a reminder, and still have to go on the tax site at the DVLA, put the reg' number in, amount owed (zero), and get a receipt stating that to show that you've registered it (probably for the ANPR boys).

This is where it got confusing as it doesn't need an MoT either, but I struggled to find out how or where I was supposed to log on and do the same as the tax. I found the V12 form for this, and filled it in, but it says that when you go to the Post Office to tax your vehicle as historic the first time, take the form with you? Hang on a min, the DVLA



refunded my tax and issued a new log book without me asking for it, and the Post Office didn't know what to do with the form. I rang the DVLA and, yes, they'd already done it for me when it was changed over... mind you, this was after I'd listened to "Press no 1, please listen to 5 options..." and so on and on for five plus minutes AND it'd cost me £10 on a landline!

Anyway, I've printed it out, and made a note of who I spoke to, and it all goes with me when I'm out on my trike! There's a pic hereabouts of it – it has an Indian front mudguard,

and the rack is a Land Rover item and carries all the camping gear.

Keep up the good work with the mag!

Regards

NANCE

'Historic' is a bit grey, isn't it? It's only s'posed to apply to largely unmodified vehicles, but when I had me crash in Feb', me MoT'd run out the day before, and I was expecting a bollocking from the Old Bill, but nothing happened. Eventually, after a visit from two very (very!) nice police ladies, who also said nothing about it, I looked at the Future Bike's reg doc', saw it now said 'historic' (must've changed when I did a change of address or summat), so I rang the DVLA and was told that, although it's seriously modded, it doesn't need an MoT now. Me, though, I'm a bit paranoid about such things, and so I still get it MoT'd as it only costs £30, and that way nobody (insurance companies, Old Bill) can say 'ah, but...'. N.



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AS I'M SURE YOU KNOW, BIKING AS A CULTURE IS GETTING OLDER; AS REPORTED LAST MONTH, THE AVERAGE AGE OF A BSH READER IS NOW 57, AND EVERYWHERE YOU GO WHERE THERE ARE BIKERS IT'S PLAIN THAT WE, AS A SUB-CULTURE, ARE PREDOMINANTLY WRINKLIES. NOT ALL OF US THOUGH, I'M GLAD TO REPORT...

WORDS: NIK

PICS: JIMMY COLLEY,

SINNERS CO



**“UNRIDEABLE
THAT, MATE,
FAR TOO
LOW...”**



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Carter Harris, of Attitude Cycles, the custom bike builders he runs with his dad, the legendary Simon Harris, is one of, it seems, a very few younger guys who are seriously into custom bikes – as he said himself last issue, with who his dad is, how could he not be? He built his first chop at the age of 15, before he even had a licence, and has been, pretty much, building them ever since; each getting better and better, more and more clever, as he refines his own personal style.

This, his latest bike, is number seven. Unlike his dad, who's a hardtail man through and through, he favours softails for his personal bikes, although he had done hardtails in the past (Dave Rogers' *BSH* Champs-winning bike last year was one of his hardtails), and has built a few now that have this low-slung, race-bred style that, to quote the late great Edward Turner, look like they're doing 100mph stood still. They all bear the legend '38' (his initials in number form), and they all have one, other, thing in common – they all were/are ridden as though there's no tomorrow.

For this bike, he wanted to outdo all his previous builds, and also run air suspension so that, when parked, the bike sits right down on the floor (as you'll see if you look closely at the pics, there's no side-stand on the bike). He started by buying the air-ride suspension from a guy who, quite randomly, walked up and asked if he was interested in it while his last bike was on display on the *BSH* Custom Xtreme stand at Motorcycle Live at the NEC last year. Once he'd bought that, for a bargain price I might add, the seed for this, the new bike, was sown.

He quickly found a 2005 Softail Deluxe from one of Attitude's customers who'd bought it from the Texas floods, and then balked a little as everything was full of water, meaning everything needed rebuilding. That didn't deter Carter though, as through the massive parts stock at the shop he'd have access to all the parts he'd need, and so he took it on. He knew it was going to be a bike in his signature race-style, but this time with a few subtle differences – the frame's geometry'd stay the same because he knew that worked, but it was going to be lower, leaner, and way sexier than any standard Softail'd ever be.

ENGINE: 2005 H-D Softail Deluxe, gold-plated rocker covers, custom brass push-rod sleeves/casted brass collars by Ryan McQuiston, S&S Super E carb with Kustom Tech brass throttle accessories, Speed Dealer short brass velocity stack, Altmann P3 ignition, one-off stainless pie-cut exhaust system, brass braided Twisted Choppers oil lines

FRAME: Modified 2005 H-D Softail, square top tube removed/replaced with round tube, rear frame/fender rails removed/replaced with 30mm tube, Speed Dealer brass foot-pegs, Widowmakers Boneyard forward controls

FRONT END: Avon Cobra 23" tyre, custom 23" wheel with gold-plated (24 carat) spokes/wavy disc, Pro Street billet caliper, 4" under SJP forks, Fat Bubba 6-degree rake yokes, Goodridge brake lines, 24-carat gold-plated clip-ons, Kustom Tech black/brass hydraulic levers, Speed Dealer brass grips

REAR END: Custom 24-carat gold-plated mudguard struts, narrowed/widened/stretched/shortened swingarm, Legend air suspension shocks, 18x5.5" custom wheel with 24-carat gold-plated spokes, DNA sprocket brake, Avon Cobra tyre

BODYWORK: Modified Doss Bob Fester tank, one-off seat trimmed by Glenn Moger, modified West Coast Choppers rear 'guard, modified stock oil tank, custom side-mount 'plate

ELECTRICS: One-off loom by Steve Holloway, aftermarket headlight/tail-light

PAINT: Gloss black with 24-carat gold flakes by Ross Cooper at MDH Bodyshop, trademark '38' by Pete Green

POWDERCOATING: Frame/forks/rims/engine parts by Trestan Finishers

ENGINEERING: All custom work by owner

THANKS TO: "Steve Holloway for electrics; Ross at MDH for the paint; Pete Green for sign writing; Rob at RM Gold Plating; Glenn Moger for the seat; Trestans for powder-coating; my dad for any advice needed; & Dan for help with exhausts..."



the forward controls. The tank's a modified Doss Bob Fester one that originally had a rib running down its centre, but he removed that for a smoother look, and the seat's a one-off seat trimmed, as with most Attitude bikes, by Glenn Moger. The rear 'guard is a modified West Coast Choppers one, and the oil tank is stock, but made to hold the electrics too.

When it came to the back end, Carter reckons he must've cut up ten Softail swingarms to get the geometry correct to allow the bike to sit on the ground, but finally managed to get it to work. He says: "I don't know how many times I've had to explain to people how it works when they say 'that's unrideable' when seeing it sat on the floor..." Hmm, I can imagine. The new 'guard rails've been 24-carat gold-plated, and nestled between the arms of the 'arm is a 18x5.5" wheel with, again, 24-carat gold-plated spokes, and another Avon Cobra tyre, and the rear braking arrangement is a DNA sprocket brake that keeps everything on one side and tidies it all up nicely. Oh, and stops the bike when he

puts his foot on the brake too, o'course.

Everything else was done by folk who do stuff as a matter of course for Attitude – the wiring by Steve Holloway; the paint, gloss black with 24-carat gold flakes, by Ross Cooper at MDH Bodyshop; the powdercoating on the frame, forks, rims and engine parts by Trestan Finishers. Oh, and Carter's trademark '38' was done by his good friend Pete Green.

He started the build in early December last year and, by working day and night, he had it ready just in time for the heavy rains of February... doh! He says he's very happy with how it turned out, but he'll probably, as he usually does, end up selling it, and then regretting it again. Mind you, that just gives him an excuse to build a better one, doesn't it, as he already has plans. At the moment, though, he's just enjoying "riding it like a nutcase" (everyone else's words)... 

As with all Attitude bikes, be they for themselves or for customers, every single component of the bike got a serious looking at. It's probably just as easy to start at the front and work backwards. The front wheel, therefore, is a custom 23-inch item with an Avon Cobra tyre, that's had its rim powdercoated (can I be childish and say 'that sounds painful'?), and its spokes plated in genuine 24-carat gold (Carter likes his bling as you'll soon become aware). The caliper is a Pro Street billet one, and the forks are SJP items, four inch under for that slammed look, held in Fat Bubba yokes with six degrees of rake built into them. The 'bars are clip-ons, again gold-plated, and the controls are Kustom Tech's beautifully classy black and brass 'uns and, unusually for an Attitude bike, this one does have a front brake lever. Finally, those lovely brass grips are from Speed Dealer Customs (www.speeddealercustoms.com).

Moving back, the 2005 Softail frame's had its square top tube removed and replaced with round tube, and the rear frame and mudguard rails removed and replaced with 30mm tube to take the new seat (more on that in a mo') and rear 'guard. Speed Dealer Customs, again, supplied the brass foot-pegs, and the wonderfully named Widowmakers Boneyard (www.widowmakersboneyard.com)



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THAT I WOULDN'T BE
ABLE TO LIVE WITH
MYSELF IF I DIDN'T
AT LEAST TRY AND
BUY IT. IF EVER I
WAS GOING TO SEE
MY DREAM BIKE
(HARDTAIL FRAME,
S&S SHOVELHEAD
ENGINE), THIS
WAS IT!

BEST CHOPPER

WORDS: JOHN WARD

PICS: GARRY STUART





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The sale was due to end the next day, and the bike was being sold by Billy Wroes at Namco American

Motor Co in Farnborough for a guy from London, so I bunked off work, and sheepishly phoned my other half from Reading railway station: "You'll never guess where I am..."

"You're going to look at a what?"

"A chopper, baby"... I've waited so long to say that!

A train and a taxi later, I arrived at Namco just at the moment Billy roared up on the chopper, pulling up on the pavement a couple of feet away. My intoxication grew even more (like when you do magic mushrooms... allegedly) – this incredible creation was sat there making the mother of all noises, the front end bouncing and vibrating on the tyre, and I knew then that a visit to the bank was inevitable.

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I introduced myself, Billy calmed the beast on the key, and we went inside his '50s diner-style shop. From memory it was about 3pm and the sale ended at five. Billy asked how I intended to proceed, and I boldly asked him if I could get on the shop's computer, pointing behind the counter, and I'd start bidding. He was very accommodating, and I sat on the large vintage leather Harley tractor seat he had attached to a chrome stool, opened eBay, found the listing, took a big gulp and, very nervously, placed a bid.

I was quickly outbid, so gulped again and upped the ante. It all went quiet for a bit, tea was provided, and the guys in the shop were friendly and curious. I fidgeted around the workshop, talking to the mechanic about the early pick-up he was up to his elbows in, then I could take no more. I quickly worked out what my limit was, and increased my bid. With a very few minutes to go, another bidder appeared and I sat there in a stunned silence – was I going to fold after all this effort? Miss out by the smallest of margins? In a moment of crystal clarity I lined up my excuses for when I got home (and the inevitable conversation with the bank manager), and entered my final ("but darling") bid. The other bidder dropped out, and after not breathing for a good ten seconds, I won the auction. I now owned the coolest chopper in Europe! The guys in the shop congratulated me, and I just stood there grinning – now no crystal clarity whatsoever (f**k those mushrooms), just incredible excitement... and, well, fear too, to be honest. It was a beautiful sunny day, as I remember, and I had that "I just bought my dream motorcycle" feeling all the way home.



That was five years ago, and I had, then, yet to learn the harsh reality of custom motorcycling. The bike's called 'Testa Dura' (Italian for 'hard-headed'... and, yes, my missus has been known to call me this in times of exasperation), and I learned very quickly that spending a lot of money doesn't guarantee success. The bike ran and rode and did everything okay, but it also fought me every step of the way too. After three or more years of frustration and difficulty, we moved to Devon, and I met the guys from B&H Motorcycles in St Austell and, in the early summer of 2018, Bos rebuilt the top end for me, and I finally had a good summer of riding, and did quite a few miles on the chop.

It was while discussing things with them that I realised that to get the bike looking as my imagination was demanding'd only happen if someone who knew exactly what they were doing took it on, so they booked it in for work over the winter. Anyone, you see, can buy expensive parts, but to make something into a rideable, reliable custom motorcycle takes knowledge and experience. They stripped the Shovel down, made loads of little, but significant, changes, and then rebuilt it again with the new paint scheme (black, the colour all motorcycles are born, gold and red) I knew it had to have. Once done, one of my first runs on it was to BMAD, where BSH was holding a round of its championship, and the rest, as they say, is history! 🏆

ENGINE: S&S 93" Shovelhead, S&S Super E carb, S&S teardrop air-filter, BDL 3" belt primary, Ultima 6-speed gearbox, one-off custom 2 into 1 by Bos at B&H Motorcycles

FRAME: One-off hardtail by Phil Piper at Choppershack in 2008, Exile Cycles forwards, JayBrake controls

FRONT END: Avon Cobra 130 tyre, unknown wheel, JayBrake disc/caliper/master-cylinder, H-D FXSTC forks (shaved), RSD fork brace, Mid West Customs yokes, Biltwell Tracker 'bars/Kung Fu grips, custom light/horn button

REAR END: One-off mudguard support/re-welded bottom brackets by B&H Motorcycles, unknown wheel, JayBrake disc/caliper, custom torque arm/tab by B&H Motorcycles, Avon Cobra 180 tyre

BODYWORK: Modified 2.3-gallon King Sportster tank by B&H Motorcycles, Alex Leather Craft (Germany) extra long seat with TC Bros twin air bags, reworked rear mudguard/one-off combined oil tank/battery box/electrics box/one-off 'plate mount by B&H Motorcycles

ELECTRICS: One-off loom by B&H Motorcycles, custom headlight/tail-light

PAINT: Black/gold/red by H at B&H Motorcycles

POLISHING: B&H Motorcycles

ENGINEERING: B&H Motorcycles

THANKS TO: "Billy at Namco American Motor Co (01252 515750 or www.namcoamerican.com); & H, Bos & Terry at B&H Motorcycles (01726 824256 or www.bnh-motorcycles.co.uk)..."

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FRIENDS FOR
OVER 30 YEARS,
AND GIVEN THAT
WE SHARE VERY
SIMILAR TASTES
IN MOTORCYCLES
AND BOTH
BUILD BIKES, IT
WAS ALMOST
INEVITABLE THAT,
AT SOME POINT,
WE'D EMBARK
ON A JOINT
PROJECT.

BEST CUSTOM

WORDS: **DAVE BRENTLEY**

PICS: **GARRY STUART**

WE

did – a Triumph... but not this Triumph; no, a Hinckley Bonneville that got finished and ridden, and picked up a couple of trophies, then went to a new owner. Ambition achieved? Not quite – you see, part of that bike's design was to use a BSA oil tank that'd been hanging up in Puss' shed for as long as I'd known him, but we just couldn't make it look right, no matter what we did. Several months after the Bonnie went, I came across the remains of a 5TA Triumph at an autojumble, and instantly saw a use for that tank. Money changed hands, and we had a new project – a lot of what was there was beyond saving, but the engine turned over, and it had a V5.



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We pulled together an Evo Sportster front end, and fitted a Suzuki TS250 front hub laced with stainless spokes on to a powdercoated rim. We did the same at the rear with a conical hub laced to a Harley 16-inch rim, and dug around the shed to find a peanut tank and a Bonnie rear guard, then started work on a single downtube frame which, of course, had to be a hardtail. Although it's a custom frame, I wanted to give the impression that it could be factory, so CDS 2 seamless tubes were sleeved, one inside the other, at the joints to resemble castings and the geometry was kept to somewhere near stock. These mock castings are somewhat of a trademark for me, as is the use of stainless which was used for engine mounts, brackets and control rods etc.

Every Saturday for over a year saw a little more progress – sometimes Puss'd do a little work in my absence, sometimes I'd turn up with machined parts ready to bolt on, and without any real effort we had a rolling, bare metal, build-up. Then personal circumstances changed, and work came to a dead stop. The bike came to me, and sat untouched for months – my heart wasn't in it. We got offers on it, but didn't really want to sell, and so it stayed put, in limbo.

I've known Davey 'Dirty Arse Davey' Baron for many years, and've been close friends with him for most of that time. He was in my shed, getting a bit of machining done, when his gaze fell on

the by now rusting project. He said it needed to be finished, and offered to take it on. I was keen, but didn't know how Puss would feel about it. After a very quick and easy conversation at the 2018 Farmyard Party, the deal was done, and it was now a three-way project.

To say Davey did the finishing is a gross understatement of his role; well known for his ability with old Triumph engines, he performed a total engine rebuild, sorting out 60 years of amateur mechanical abuse, and spent hundreds of hours detailing the bike in a way that makes his bikes the multi-show winners that they are. He made a few changes along the way; commissioned the beautiful carved leather seat from Steve Davidson at Hart Leathercraft, made new 'bars, changed the tail-light, and made the whole feel of the bike more 1970s – a look completed by the period paintwork.

The paintwork is a story in itself, and despite the amazing finish wasn't the work of a professional paint shop. We'd originally asked Tommy, who'd painted both Davey's Evo and my Shovel to a very high standard, but then we received an offer we couldn't refuse from mutual friend and tattoo artist, Roger Lavis at Anarchy Art. He'd seen photos of the bare metal build-up, and wanted to be involved in the paint. As a frequent visitor to Roger's shop, I was very familiar with his incredible artistic talents on both skin and steel, so knew he was the man for the job.

Any potential awkwardness with Tommy was overcome when he explained he hadn't really time to do the artwork anyway, but he did do all the prep work which Roger hadn't the facility to do. The result speaks for itself, so thanks to both of you.

Post-paint it was a straightforward build; the wiring was done by myself, Davey and Puss made the dual stainless exhausts, and the bike fired up second kick – another testament to Davey's engine building skills.

First outing was to the 2019 Farmyard Party where we were delighted to pick up Best Custom in the BSH Custom Champs, exactly one year after our agreement to finish the bike between the three of us. 🏆

ENGINE: 1959 Triumph STA, completely rebuilt by Dirty Davey, new seats/parts as required, pancake air-filters, Wassel Vape electronic ignition, one-off exhausts by Puss & Davey

FRAME: One-off single downtube CDS 2 seamless hardtail by owner & Puss, modified autojumble foot-rests/controls

FRONT END: Avon tyre, Suzuki TS 250 wheel/hub/drum brake (rebuilt with stainless spokes/powdercoated rim), shortened (2")/delugged Evo Sportster forks/yokes, unknown stainless 'bars with one-off integral risers, H-D Ironhead ignition switch

REAR END: One-off mudguard struts, 16" Harley wheel (stainless spokes/powdercoated rim), Triumph conical hub drilled to look Manx, one-off torque arm, Avon SM tyre

BODYWORK: 'Peanut' petrol tank with one-off cap, one-off carved leather seat by Hart Leathercraft, modified BSA oil tank, one-off handmade battery box, modified Triumph Bonneville rear mudguard

ELECTRICS: One-off loom by owner, Bates headlight, middle finger rear light

PAINT: Multi-layered flakes/gold leaf by Roger Lavis at Anarchy Art (01740 652418), prep by Tommy

POWDERCOATING: Frame/rims

POLISHING: Davey

ENGINEERING: All brackets/brake rod/sissy-bar/points cover etc. by owner/Puss/Davey, filler cap by Mel Lamb

THANKS TO: "Mel Lamb for filler cap; Roger Lavis & Tommy for paint; Kev Pickering for welding; & Steve Davidson at Hart Leathercraft (07719 578274 or Facebook) for the seat..."



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IN MOST OF THE CLASSES IN THIS YEAR'S BSH CUSTOM CHAMPS I, AS I WASN'T ONE OF THE JUDGES, HADN'T A CLUE AS TO WHICH WAY THE VOTING'D GO AS THERE WERE JUST SO MANY VERY COOL BIKES IN IT THIS YEAR. WELL, EXCEPT IN THE PAINT CLASS, THAT IS, BECAUSE, FROM THE MOMENT I LAID EYES ON ONE OF THE BIKES BACK IN MAY, I PRETTY MUCH KNEW IT WAS GOING TO WIN.





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hat bike was Chris Sims' 'The Black Pearl' – the Pirates of the Caribbean-themed Twin Cam chopper built back in 2005(ish) by Jamie Millerchip of Classic & Custom, and painted by the equally

legendary Ty Lawler of Pageant Paintwork. It was one of the six bikes in the very first UK Biker Build-Off TV series, and it won against some very stiff competition from some of this country's top builders, Phil Piper and Vic Jefford among them.

Due to a fire in our archive at some point in the 2000s, these days we don't have a lot of the issues from around that period, and so I can't really give you a rehash of the article on the bike, but the spec sheet hereabouts'll give you the basics of the build. What I can tell you is that the bike's crowning glory, and that which means you're seeing it here in *BSH* some 14(ish) years after it was built, is the absolutely amazing Pirates of the Caribbean paint done by one of the best custom painters in the land, if not the world, Mr Ty Lawler of Pageant Paintwork in Norfolk. For anyone who's not heard of him, Ty set up Pageant back in 1986 with the aim of producing unrivalled custom paintwork, and ever since his work's graced the covers, centrespreads and pages of countless magazines, *BSH* among them, and Ty's worked with some of the biggest names in both the custom bike and car worlds, his work crowning some of the coolest and, at the same time, in-yer-face builds ever. 'Pearl',

in its heyday, understandably won silverware all over Europe, and was a large part of the inspiration behind the style of bikes that Charlie, and Logie, at No Nonsense Choppers in Dumfries in Scotland became famous for. Charlie, you see, plays a part in our story... I'll let Chris tell you about it:

"Back in 2018 I was looking to build my own pirate-themed bike to be a part of my business, The Jolly Roger. It's a life-size 3D model company that I set up in 1994, which specialises in life-size 3D models of people, animals, landmarks, etc., etc. I'd purchased a donor bike to start the project, and it was sitting on the ramp when my friend, and top bike builder, Richard Marsh from Plymouth Harley-Davidson, called in. When I explained what I wanted to do, he said he could remember a bike he'd seen in a previous issue of *BSH*. The next day he was back with an issue from November 2005, and there was 'Pearl'. I fell in love straightaway! I read the article, and at the very end was Charlie from No Nonsense's number so I thought I'd give him a call to see if he'd discuss the build, give me a few pointers. After a great chat he said he thought that 'Pearl' might be back in the UK and, more importantly, for sale too. I couldn't believe my ears!

"It'd been in Australia for a few years, but had come back and, once Charlie'd



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ENGINE: H-D 1450 Big Twin, stripped, mirror-polished, Arlen Ness rocker boxes, Mikuno carb, hydraulic clutch, Kenny Boyce Monster open primary, H-D Road King gearbox, Altmann electronic ignition, one-off exhausts

FRAME: One-off by Classic & Custom/No Nonsense Choppers, one-off swingarm anchors, one-off lower frame cannons, Pegasus (US) forward controls

FRONT END: One-off billet split-rim 'anchor' wheel, Arlen Ness discs/6-pot calipers, 14" over USD forks from the US, one-off yokes/pirate cutlass handlebars by Cademuir Toolmaking Ltd, Technoplus master-cylinders/levers, one-off sword-handle grips

REAR END: One-off stainless 'rigging', one-off billet split-rim 'anchor' wheel, Performance Machine disc/underslung 4-pot caliper, one-off rear belt pulley, 250/18 Avon tyre

BODYWORK: One-off alloy petrol tank by The Tank Shop (01387 740259 or www.thetankshop.com) with sunken digital speedo, one-off tooled leather seat with ship's compass motif by Outback Motorcycle Saddles, one-off rear 'guard, one-off battery/electrics box, additional chains to swingarm/rigging, one-off 'crow's nest' side-mount 'plate to resemble sails

ELECTRICS: One-off loom, aftermarket bullet headlight, one-off tail-light | Paint: Pirates of the Caribbean theme by Ty Lawyer of Pageant Paintwork (07778 502473 or www.pageantpaintwork.com)

POLISHING/PLATING: Classic & Custom

ENGINEERING: Bike built & most engineering by Classic & Custom

THANKS TO: "Charlie at No Nonsense Choppers; & everyone involved in this special build..."



tracked down the owner's number, and a bit of haggling, 'The Black Pearl' was setting sail again from Scotland to berth in sunny Devon, where it resides within the premises of The Jolly Roger – very apt, don't you think?

"It lives, these days, in an area with Jack Sparrow and a selection of other life-sized pirates and props, so is well at home here. Garaged with her these days are three custom bikes built by B&H Motorcycles in Cornwall (one of them, 'Iron Maiden', has won many a trophy too), two customised Rocket IIIs, an Indian, two further Harleys and a sweet AMF SX scrambler from 1976! There's also one of Richard's builds here – 'Black Ice', the very spiky chop that was built from The Trike Shop's 'The Dealer'. I'm very proud of my collection, and ride them as often as I can, and I also open the doors to fellow bikers to come and enjoy with a coffee at weekends.

"I'm adding to 'Pearl' as we speak – originally the alloy cannons in the frame looked, to me, a bit like fire hoses so I'm having phosphor-bronze cannons made to replace them, and I'm adding more rigging to the frame, along with some CNC-cut stainless steel 'climbing pirates' that'll attach to the rigging so that they look as if they're climbing up the bike. 'The Black Pearl' has found its natural home here at The Jolly Roger, and it's not going anywhere soon!"



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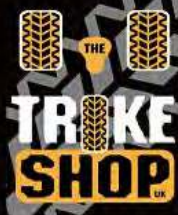
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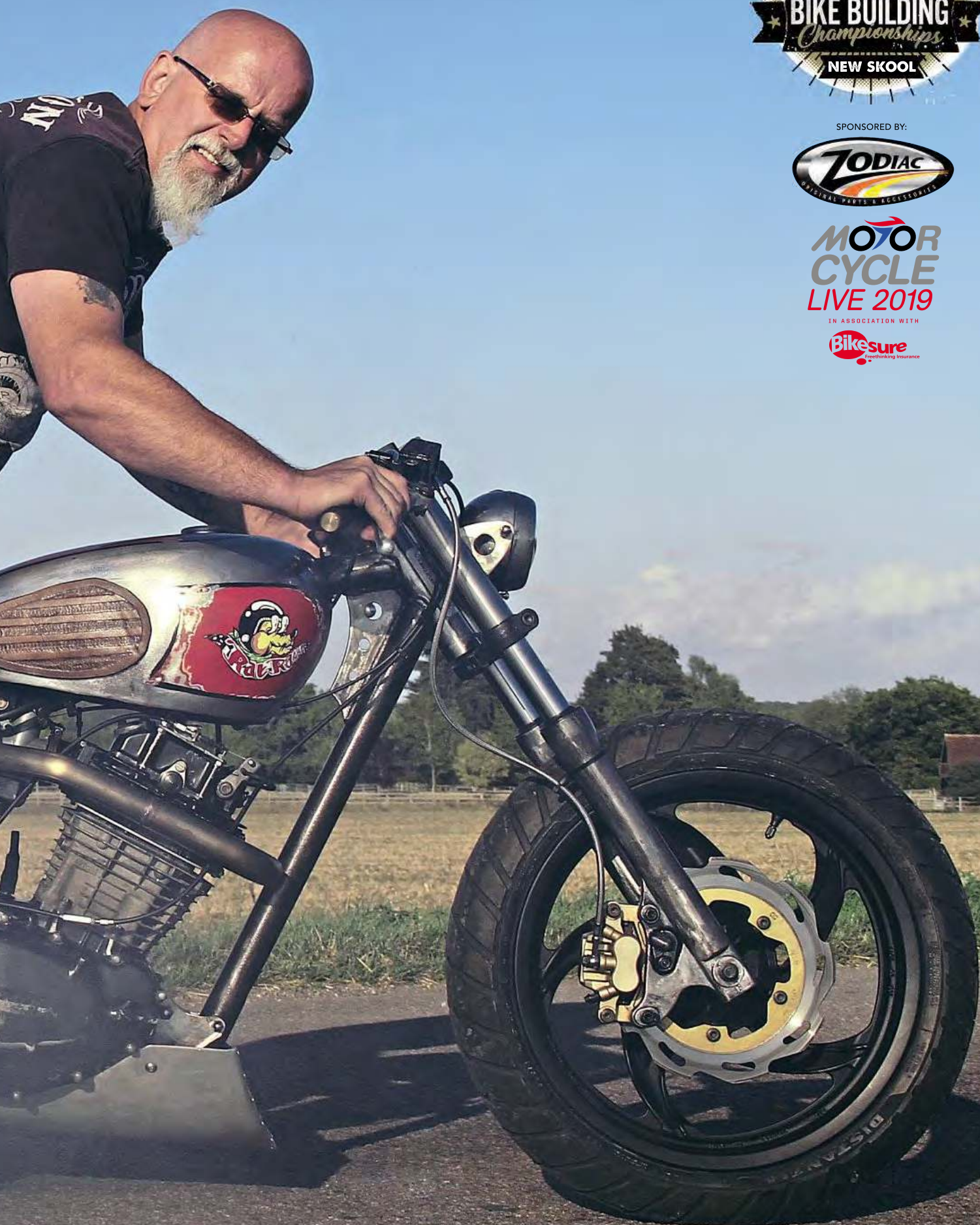
THERE IS, AS I'M SURE YOU KNOW, NOTHING MORE EMBARRASSING THAN YOUR BIKE POINT-BLANKLY REFUSING TO START WHEN IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO RIDE IT UP TO COLLECT A TROPHY IN A CUSTOM SHOW. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AT THE NCC LONDON'S DIAMOND DAY THIS YEAR...

BEST NEW SKOOL

WORDS: **TONY GROOM**

PICS: **NIK**





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I'd got the day before it, the Friday, off work to finish it for the show and, as it was completely in bits as I'd only just got the parts back from the painter, I rebuilt the whole thing, and wired it, and got finished up at 10pm that night. The next morning I put petrol in the tank, primed it, and she started third kick with no broken ankle (I'll come to that in a moment) so, happy with it, I loaded it in the van and set off to the Ace Cafe – now I don't like taking a bike to a show in a van, but this one was only just finished, had no MoT, and wasn't proven in any way, so needs must, y'know? I parked a fair way away, unloaded it, and rode the last half mile or so without any issues; indeed, it surprised me how well it went. I parked it up in the Ace's car park, and went off to find a few familiar faces. After a few cuppas, and looking at the bikes, I saw that I'd been given an award in the *BSH* Custom Champs – I was chuffed to say the least!

When we were called to collect our prizes, though, my brain farted, and I forgot to turn the kill-switch to 'on', and kicked it and kicked it and kicked it, merrily flooding the engine, and then had to scoot the bike down through the amused crowd using just me legs... embarrassing or wot? Of course, a little later, I worked out what I'd done, drained the excess fuel away, and it fired up straight away, but the moment had passed. I wasn't too worried anyway as this bike, from conception to the first outing, took me just seven weekends and a week's holiday to put together, and cost just £530.





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ENGINE: Honda XL500, one-off bell-mouth, one-off high-level stainless exhausts by owner/String

FRAME: One-off by owner, 37-degree rake, one-off rear-sets by owner with Sym Wolf controls

FRONT END: 120/70/17 Avon Distanzia tyre, Sym Wolf wheel/disc/caliper/forks (de-lugged)/yokes (de-lugged)/master-cylinder/controls, braided stainless brake lines, one-off 7/8th tube by owner, cloth loom tape grips

REAR END: Sym Wolf swingarm (modified)/shock/wheel/disc/caliper (custom linkage)/torque arm, alloy rear sprocket, 140/80/17 Avon Distanzia

BODYWORK: Modified Royal Enfield Model G petrol tank, re-covered (hand-tooled leather/Mexican blanket) eBay seat by Bish, all electrics tucked into seat support, hand-beaten alloy belly-pan with old Costa Rican number-plate riveted into front, one-off side-mount by owner

ELECTRICS: Six-wire minimal loom by owner, vintage Raydot spot-lamp headlight, modified King of the Road side-light as tail-light

PAINT: 'Rat Racer' logo/pin-striping/paint distressing hand-painted by Turk, frame clear-coated by owner

ENGINEERING: Owner

THANKS TO: "String at Raw Steel Choppers for welding exhausts/tubes into swingarm; Turk for painting the tank; & Bish for re-covering the seat..."

It all started when I was offered a nearly new Sym Wolf (a sporty-looking Taiwanese 125) with a knackered engine at a very reasonable price. I went and collected it, as I knew it'd be a good donor for all the steering and suspension parts of a lightweight project bike – all I needed now was an engine and a frame. Very soon I got talking with an old mate, Mick, who had an XL500 motor under his bench – the only problem with it was its historical liking for breaking people's ankles (two that we knew of). He said if I was brave enough to take it on, it was mine for a very acceptable cost, and it came with the carb and all the electrics too. I couldn't turn it down, could I?

So turning my hand to the old-skool way of doing frame design (no CAD suite here), I drew up ideas for a frame on paper. The rake was decided on, the ground clearance too, and I set up my frame jig with the new headstock I'd made, set the engine in position, and produced the front loop. I then put it up on my Bridgeport mill to bore the swingarm pivot, and holes for the engine mounting bosses. Then it was back on the jig for aligning, welding the swingarm pivot in place, mounting the engine, fabbing up the seat sub-frame, and mounting the tank. After dropping the tank and seat to the appropriate mates for paint and seat-covering, I took liberties with the offer that String (Raw Steel Choppers – we're old mates) made to use his TiG welding skills to modify the swinging arm by cross-drilling and welding in tubes to strengthen it, and also just 'cos I wanted to.

Next I burnished and clear-coated all the modified/

fabricated parts while waiting for the tank and seat to return. The deadline was originally going to be the NCC Suffolk show at Rougham, but that was cancelled so I was left with no option but to up the game and get it to Diamond Day instead. The tank, a modified Royal Enfield Model G tank, was superbly painted and distressed by my good mate Turk with the 'Rat Racer' (the bike's name) logo over the original chrome and patina, and the seat, a cheapie off eBay, was re-covered in leather, and with a Mexican blanket inlay, by another good friend, Bish, who also hand-tooled the 'Rat Racer' logo into the seat hump for good measure.

After the Ace, I thought I'd have a look and see what'd caused the engine's fearsome reputation and, once the head was off, spotted the problem immediately. At some point in its history the engine'd been tuned to within an inch of its life, and whoever had done the head hadn't allowed for heat expansion – as soon as it got hot, the valves'd come into contact with the piston so, effectively, you were trying to kick-over a solid lump. That was swiftly dealt with, and it runs (and starts) beautifully now – even Nik managed to get it going first kick when he had a quick go, so it must be easy! 🍀



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WORDS: NIK

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Ever since I met him back in the '90s, in the heyday of the late lamented *Streetfighters* magazine, he's always had at least one super-clean, super-tough 'fighter in his stable, and each one of them you'd've absolutely killed to own. Even his 1000cc Gold Wing, which might not sound very 'fightery, was an absolute beast – he'd stripped all the extraneous crap off it, lightened it, tuned it and tweaked it, and with its flat-four motor it sounded (and went!) like a Porsche. I rode it briefly back in the day and, despite my initial scepticism, was utterly blown away by it.

Similarly a few years later, he built a one-off Harris-style (but to a far higher standard) bike that was just automotive pornography. On the day myself and Mr Manning photographed it for *Streetfighters*, after he'd pulled monstrous wheelies up and down the road on it, he asked me to do rolling burnouts on it for Dave's camera, and I can honestly say I don't think I've been so scared of dropping a bike in me life as I was that day. I could do them easy enough, but I generally did so on my lighter and far less powerful (and far less valuable!) supermoto, and so on the first couple I was



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quite gentle with the throttle as... well, wouldn't you be? "Stop pussyng about," he said, "and bury it!" so, suitably chastised, I did just that, and the pics were great! (There's one on my own personal Facebook page if you can be bothered to look.) Still one of the most worrying experiences of my life though – can you imagine dropping such a machine?!

Over the last few years he's been refining his personal pinnacles of perfection; his procession of ever-better GSX-R-engined 1970s Z900s, a hybrid style that he's become quite well known for (I think he's done about five now, the last a 225 horsepower blow-through turbo variant), and having kind o' reached the point where he can't really go any further with them, decided that it may (only 'may', mind) be time to knock building new bikes on the head, quit while he was (light-years) ahead if you like. He did want to do one more build, though, 'one last big one' as he says; big frame, big wheels, big brakes, big engine, big turbo, but still usable – the best he could build. And this, ladies and gentlemen, is that bike.

Now, due to an ongoing dispute with the builder of the frame, I can't tell you much about it other than it's a copy of one of the much-missed Spondon Engineering's big tube alloy perimeter frames (the frames that most streetfighter builders dreamt one day of owning), and it's created to take a Suzuki Bandit 1200 motor, suitably tweaked naturally, and a one-off two-inch over single-sided swingarm that's attached, at one end, to a bowel-emptyingly expensive Ohlins shock and, at the other, an eight-inch wide 17-inch Ducati Diavel Carbon (that's the model name, not what it's made of) wheel and brake ensemble with a 240-section tyre. Equally unobtainium Ohlins forks and brakes sit up front, cradling another Ducati wheel, the tank's a one-off alloy item designed for the frame, and the seat and tailpiece are reupholstered/reshaped 1100 Zephyr items that mean that should Frannie, his other half, ever become suicidal enough she could get on the back of it...

The reason I say 'suicidal enough' is because this thing makes in excess of 300bhp (a good stock Bandit is around 115-120), possibly 320 plus – it's recently had



ENGINE: Suzuki Bandit 1200, 1216cc Hayabusa Gen 2. Pistons, spacer plate, heavy-duty studs, Suzuki GSX-R 1100 (34mm) carbs, one-off plenum chamber, heavy-duty crankcase studs, Fast By Me lock-up clutch, MTC spacer cover plate, Dyna mini coils, one-off exhaust by Fast By Me, Garratt Gen 2 GTX30 turbo & ancillaries by Fast By Me, Setrab 19-row oil cooler/lines

FRAME: New Spondon-type Big Tube alloy frame/subframe, 24-degree rake, one-off rear-sets with Aprilia footpegs, Triumph Speed Triple rear 'pegs

FRONT END: Pirelli Diablo Rosso 120/70 2R 17 tyre, Ducati Diavel Carbon wheel, Brembo 330mm (Serie Oro) disc, Brembo M4 Monobloc calipers, Ohlins FGRT USD forks, one-off billet yokes, braided stainless brake lines, Renthal Fatbars/grips, Ducati Diavel Brembo master-cylinders, Kawasaki Z1 switchgear, LCD race dash with built-in turbo boost in one-off waterjet-cut case

REAR END: One-off 2" over single-sided swingarm, Ducati Diavel Carbon hub/8" wheel, Ohlins TTX shock, Brembo disc/caliper/master-cylinder, 525 X-ring chain, Pirelli Diablo Rosso 240/45 2R17 tyre

BODYWORK: Kawasaki ZX10 front mudguard, one-off alloy petrol tank, modified Kawasaki Zephyr 1100 seat (by Trimmania)/tailpiece, one-off under-tray, one-off battery box

ELECTRICS: One-off loom by Dan the engineer, Moto Gadget M unit, Bates-style twin headlights on one-off brackets, LED oval tail-light, aftermarket indicators on one-off mounts

PAINT: Candy blue into black by Triple C Paintwork

POLISHING/PLATING: Pete the Polisher

ENGINEERING: All parts made for bike, all lettering removed, by Dan the engineer, Dave Dunlop, Andy Robinson Race Cars

THANKS TO: "Frannie for everything really, including putting up with builds; Dave Dunlop at Fast By Me Turbo Systems (www.fastbyme.co.uk); Dan the engineer; Andy Robinson Race Cars (01256 880589 or www.robinson-race-cars.co); Pete the Polisher; Triple C Paintwork (0118 957 4577 or www.triplecpaintwork.co.uk), & Eric at Trimmania (0118 932 4200 or www.trimmania.com) for the seat..."

some tweaks to the purpose-built Fast By Me Turbo Systems turbo, and hasn't been dyno'd again yet, but it was around 300 before the tweaks. Amazingly, that colossal level of power comes from a pretty much standard Bandit motor (stock head, stock cams, stock crank, stock gearbox); yes, there's a set of Generation 2 Hayabusa pistons that give 1216cc, a base spacer between the crankcases and the barrels to lower the compression ratio, and a set of heavy-duty crankcase and barrel studs and nuts to try and hold it all together, along with a purpose-built FBM lock-up clutch and, of course, the Garratt GTX30 turbo, but there's still quite a lot of it that's as Mr Suzuki intended – a real testament to the strength of the Bandit motor, don't you agree?

And, according to its owner, even though it makes a fairly stratospheric level of power for a road bike, it actually rides like a normal bike... until you whack the throttle, and it 'boosts' – then it pulls your feckin' arms out!

The finishing touches were applied by Pete the Polisher (can you guess what he did?), and Triple C Paintwork in Reading who laid down the deep and shiny candy blue-into-black paint, and the result is one of the best put-together performance motorcycles in the land. This year's BSH Custom Heroes stand at Motorcycle Live at the NEC will probably be its last outing until the spring, due to its inherent shininess, but don't get the idea that this bike is some one-trick show pony – no, Mr Tarnier rides his bikes, and rides them hard... as you'll find out next summer if you're down Dorset way and you see it at a set of lights, trust me. 🍷



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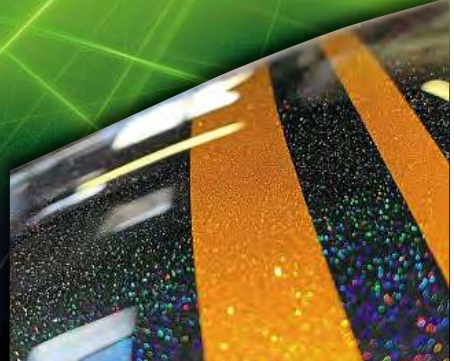
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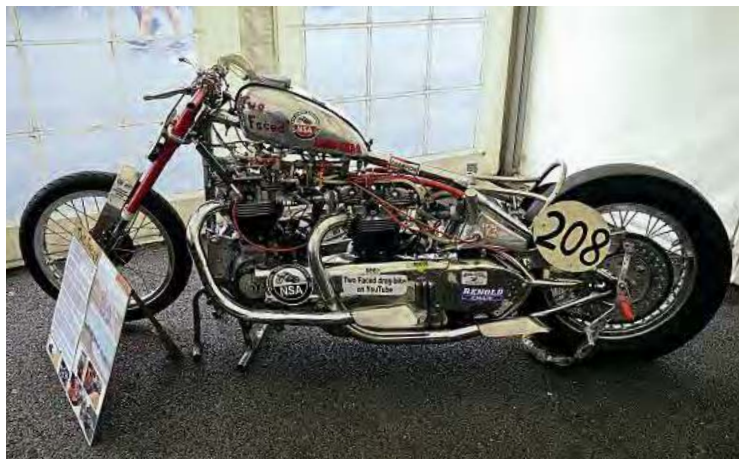
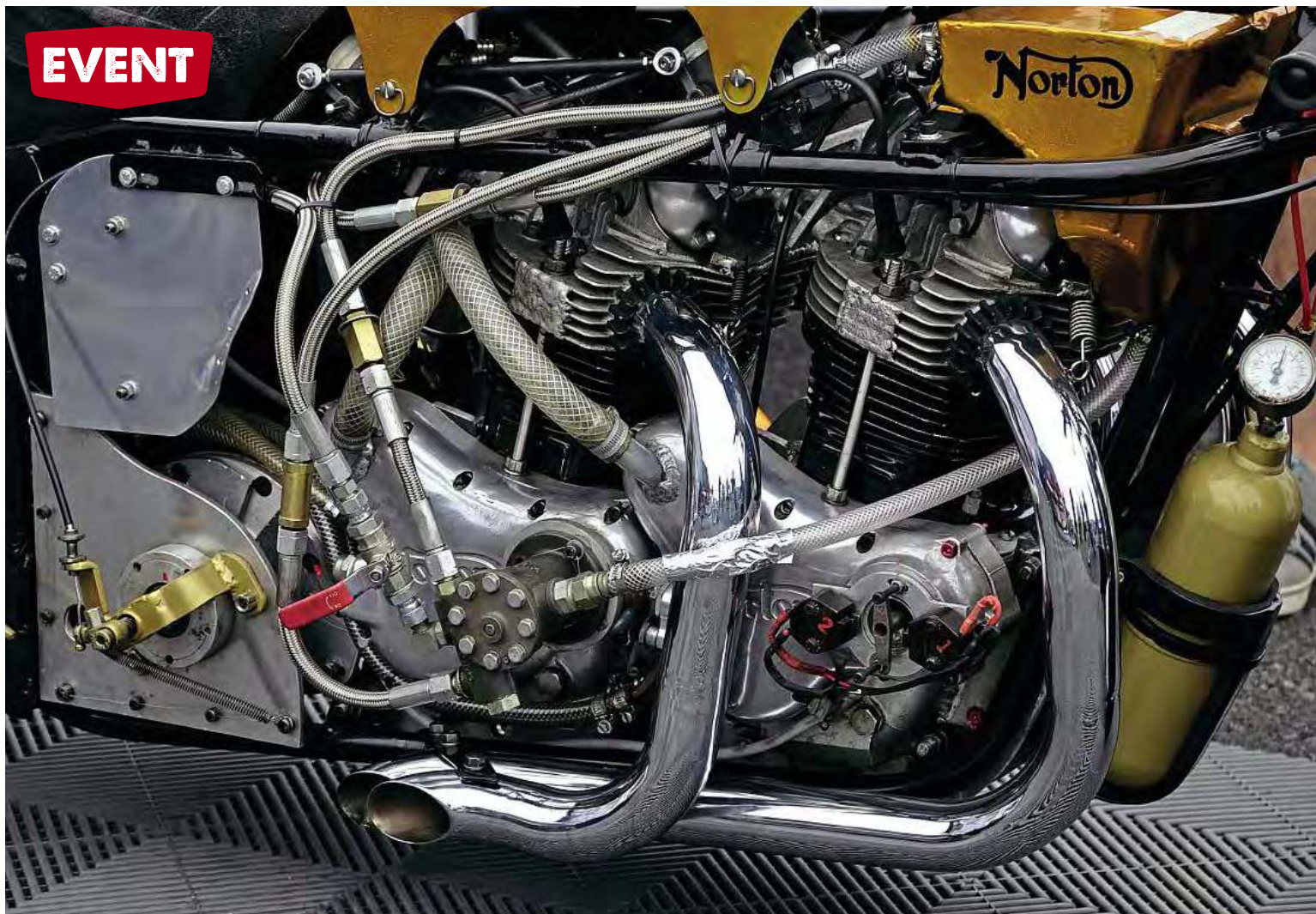
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WORDS & PICS: ALICE,

AF PHOTOGRAPHY







EVENT



AT

this year's event, the ninth, the drag racing and hot rods were joined by a new attraction – a vintage hub, with a vintage fair, and a 'best dressed' competition, and there was an improved beer festival as well as live music on stage and much, much more too. Drivers and riders alike, teams and fans, were in period dress, and there was period décor throughout the venue. The standard and variety of vehicles was nothing short of exceptional no matter where you looked in the pits, in the show, in the paddock or on the campsites.

Despite being aimed more at the car crowd than the bike fraternity, there were dozens of bikes booked in to race – 28 in the NSA (National Sprint Association) classes, and 17 in Nostalgia Pro Stock Bike. As I'm sure you know, the NSA's been around a while now, since the late '50s/early

'60s, and they race many weird and wonderful creations, and race them hard. The bikes were mainly Triumphs (blown, twin-engined, nitrous-injected, you name it), but there were also Weslakes, a couple of Vincents, the Booth Matchless, a fore-and-aft Douglas (ask yer dad... or yer grandad), and even a strange contraption using an air-cooled VW engine. On display there were some of the most famous names of yesteryear; the twin-engined Two-Faced Triumph, Brian Chapman's 'Mighty Mouse' Vincent Comet (the first 500 to ever do an eight-second pass!) and his 225bhp 'Super Mouse' 1000 Vincent too (8.25 over the quarter!), and John Hobbs' 'Olympus' Triumph, and his incredible twin-engined Weslake 'The Hobbit' (which was running seven-second passes in the 1970s!).

The Nostalgia Pro Stock Bikes were mostly four-cylinder Suzukis, as they always were, with a few two-stroke Kawasakis and some turbo Zeds too,

and this scene grows with every passing year with people coming from as far afield as Germany, Sweden and even Italy to race.

Inevitably, no matter how cool the bikes all are, there's only ever one winner... or in this case, two (two classes, remember) – the legendary Tim Blakemore won in the NSA, defeating Justin Newell, and in Nostalgia Pro Stock Bike the equally legendary Len Paget claimed the win over Claire Rule.

Following that was the usual burnout competition, the Cackle Fest display of old and recreated drag cars, and a huge fire burnout by Dave Nelson. On Sunday there was the Autoglym Show & Shine organised by the National Street Rod Association, and Best in Show went to Garry Higgins' flame-paint 1929 Ford Model A pick-up.

All in all, a great weekend – details of the 2020 event (10-12th July) can be found at www.santapod.co.uk

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EVENT

ROCK & BIKE FEST

THIS YEAR'S ROCK & BIKE FEST, THE 15TH, WAS BOTH A SCORCHER AND ANOTHER SELL-OUT, WITH A RECORD 2,400 IN THROUGH THE GATE ON THURSDAY NIGHT ALONE!

WORDS & PICS: FD

With 42 bands over four stages, it's outstanding value for money, and the quality of them is way up there – headliners this year were Dr Feelgood, Floyd In The Flesh, AC/DC UK, The Quireboys, Kingdom of Madness, Toyah (who absolutely rocked the place), and Tom Jovi (a guy who does a set of both Bon Jovi covers and Tom Jones covers... yes, I thought that was going to be a strange combination too, but he was brilliant!).

The tattoo competition was well attended, and the tales of how and why they got their



chosen entries for the 'Worst Tattoo' had the crowds roaring with laughter, and in addition to the funnies there were, of course, some quite impressive examples of the art.

The bike show, like the event, has something for everyone; bikes, trikes or scooters, it's all here. There were 16 bike show trophies, and tattoo and fancy dress competitions, both with prizes, so it was already an entertainment-packed Saturday afternoon, and they still managed to fit in Ginger George's charity head-shave as

well! George's been a volunteer at RABF for many years, and his broad Scots accent, wild mop of ginger curls, and equally wayward beard are well known and easily spotted, but this year all that was to change because he put himself up for the Brave The Shave challenge – straight after the bike show presentations, he hopped up on the back of a trailer while event organiser Ben wielded the clippers. Marshals went round with a bucket for last-minute donations, and George raised an impressive £1,360 (and 25 Canadian cents) for the PICU and

Children's Leukaemia wards at Nottingham Hospital.

The bike show winners were (because we know you love to see your names in print); Worst Rat – Ben Johnson; Best Jap – Dave Allerston; Best Classic – Benny Bollans; Best British – Radders; Best Female – Cheryl Johnson; Furthest Travelled – Cecil Breadon and his wife (with 2,200 miles so far, this was their last stop on a three-week tour); Best Resurrected – Michael Heald; Best Adapted – Wayne Watson; Best Paint – Gordon Keeton; Best Engineering – Cranny; Best American – Mick Rooke; Best Sportsbike – Mick Wilko; Best Chop – Tom Battersbee; Best Trike – Stephen Luke; Best Streetfighter – Pat Allen; and Best In Show – Nick Porter.

Strangely, as there were dozens of people in terrific costumes later in the day, enjoying the music, and dancing the night away, the actual fancy dress competition had only eight entrants, which was a shame. Get your costumes entered next year, okay? If you're going to make that much effort you should be rewarded for it!

So if you're thinking that this is right up your street, earlybird tickets for next year's RABF (9-11th July) are on sale now – go to www.rockandbikefest.co.uk or send a cheque or postal order (does anyone still use those?) for £35 to RABF, PO Box 9969, Nottingham NG10 9DQ. 🍀



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TRIUMPH DAY

WORDS & PICS: NIK

IT

has a long and distinguished history; it was a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospital providing medical treatment during the First World War, but was damaged in a fire and demolished in 1930. A new building was erected,

and in 1955 it was bought by the Tower Cafe Group, and the cafe as it stands today was opened. Since then, it's been a long-established stop-off point for motorcyclists, and has been used by a number of well-known TV programmes including Top Gear, Scrapheap Challenge and, oddly, Songs of Praise.

Although they hold many events, for bikes, classic cars, trikes and sidecars too, each year their big one



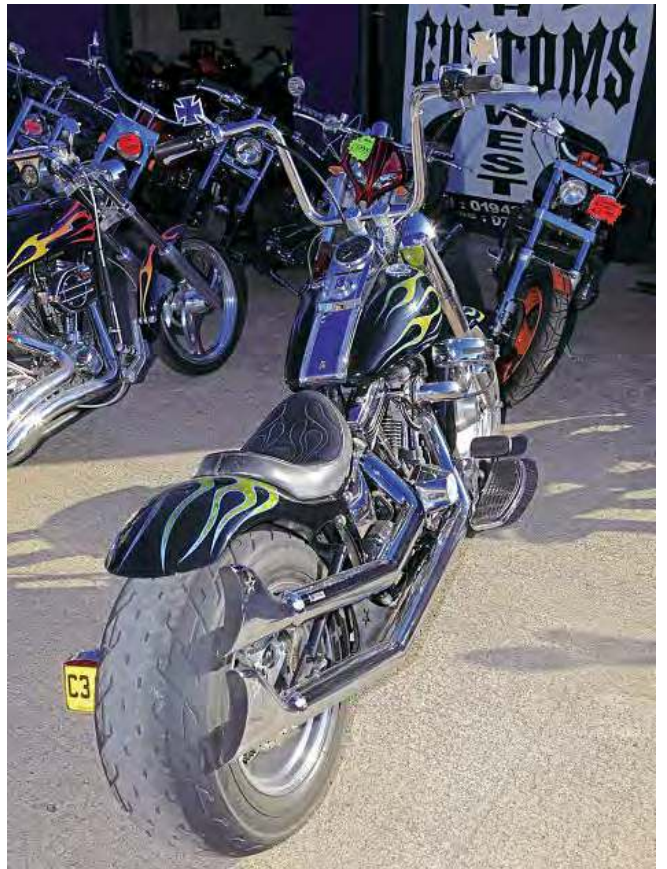
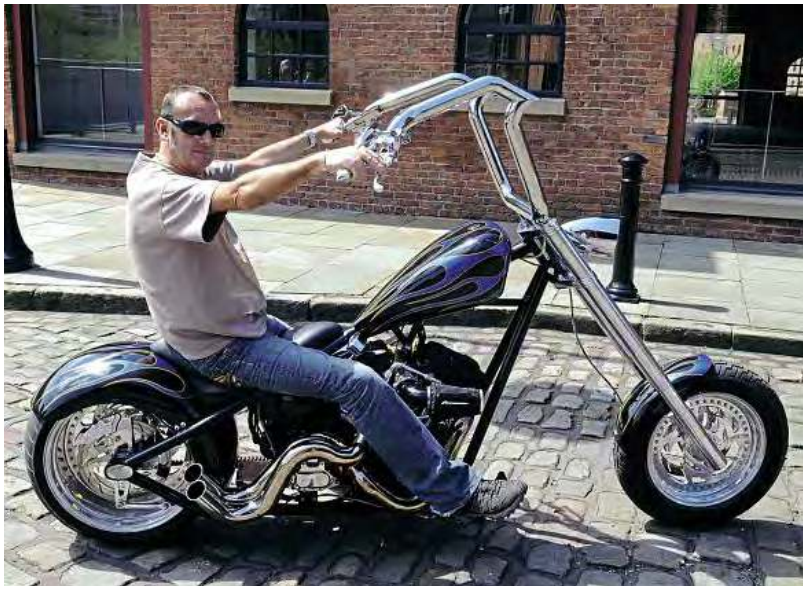
is Ton-Up Day (on 28th June next year) which is a celebration of the cafe racer culture. They also had, back in July, a Triumph Day too.

It's a much more low-key event than its bigger brother; no music, no fuss, no palaver, just a chance for those who like Triumphs, both old and new, to roll up, have a brekkie or a butty (their bacon and black pudding butty is up there among the best), and talk Triumph to their hearts' content.

Meself and a couple of mates rolled up after a traitorous breakfast down the road at the Super Sausage, and spent a very pleasant couple of hours drinking tea and checking out the assembled Meriden and Hinckley offerings. I was particularly taken by the new Bobber made to look suitably old by Pure Triumph,

the two custom Rocket IIIs (one black and evil, the other made to look older and more classic), the two knobbly-tyred scramblers (note the small 's' – they were Meriden scramblers, not Hinckley Scramblers), and the 'Great Escape'-inspired NATO green 'un too. There was also a rather cool unrestored and oily Indian from way back when, a very tidy Eighties-style Honda Four, and a Sporty with a leaf-spring front end and a 'uge brass headlamp, among others.

As I said, we hung around for a couple of hours and then, unable to drink any more tea (I know, I know, shocking eh?), I headed off home to ride the Higham Ferraers to St Neots road – a belting way to end a very pleasant day. 🏍️



A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE AND BREATHE CUSTOM BIKES



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GARY McCAFFREY NORTHWEST CUSTOMS

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

I'm Gary McCaffrey, the proprietor of Northwest Customs, based in Golborne in Warrington. I'm a used bike dealer specialising in all aspects of custom bikes of all kinds; choppers, lowriders, bobbers, streetfighters, cafe racers, trikes and more.

TELL ME ABOUT NORTHWEST CUSTOMS. WHERE DID THE NAME COME FROM? WHEN WAS IT SET UP?

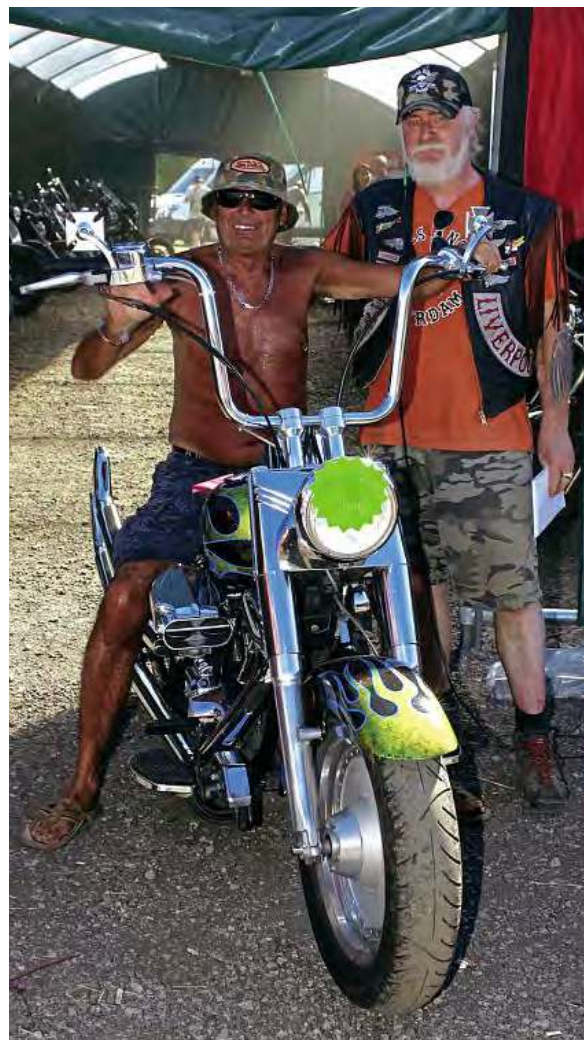
WHO WORKS THERE?

I adopted the name Northwest Customs in 1995. I'd previously been dealing in custom bikes prior to that, from right back in 1987, under various trading names, but got the idea of Northwest Customs from a friend of mine who was trading under that name. He was known to many in the chopper world as Mick Fish, and built a fair few top-class customs including the famous Norton chopper with two front ends (two sets of forks, two wheels etc.). He, sadly, passed away, and I took on the

name as a tribute to him. I'm the sole person at Northwest Customs, but often receive help from friends.

AT WHAT AGE DID YOU GET INTO BIKING? AND THEN CUSTOM BIKING? AND WHY?

I had a keen interest in bikes from a very young age; as a child I had a set of Hot Wheels Rumlbers Choppers which went down the Hot Wheels track just like the cars. I had more or less the full set of these... wish I still had them now as they're very collectable!



THE BIZ

I had a Raleigh Chopper pushbike when I was 14, which I sold to buy an NSU Quickly moped which I used as a field bike, and I had numerous small-capacity field bikes after that too. When I was 15 I bought a brand new, pre-registered Yamaha FS1E DX before the new restricted moped law came into force at that time; raising the money was really difficult as I was still at school, and my dad hid the bike so I wouldn't ride it until I was 16!

At 17 I was earning my own money, and bought a Yamaha XS250, which was the first bike I started to customise, and on which I passed my motorcycle test. Then I moved on to bigger bikes; the first one being a Triumph Bonneville T140D US Special – I preferred British bikes to Japanese at the time, and subsequently acquired a 750 Norton Commando, a pre-unit Triumph T110, and a BSA A10, to name a few.

I'd always had an interest in custom bikes due to their individuality and character, and started modifying my own bikes pretty much from the off, fitting ape-hangers and short turn-out mufflers to my XS250.

WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR INSPIRATION? WHO ARE YOUR HEROES? (BIKING OR OTHERWISE)

I was influenced in my style of bikes through Peter Fonda's bike, 'Captain America' in Easy Rider. I loved that bike, and it's still up there with my favourites – my own bike, to this day, has apes and fishtail exhausts, influenced by it. Evel Knievel was also a great hero of mine, but I can't say I have ever attempted his jumps.

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE BIKE YOU'VE BUILT? AND WHY?

My favourite bike was a 1340 Evo chopper I built using a Zodiac North Sea Chopper rigid frame. Through being in the trade for so many years, I was able to source some really nice parts, and also had some great contacts to help me with the fabrication of this bike. The most unique aspect of the bike was the

handlebars – two-inch diameter apes that were 50 inches wide! It was a totally outrageous look which turned a lot of heads but, unfortunately, through age and years of riding hardtails my back's deteriorated, and so I had to sell it.

WHERE DO YOU SEE CUSTOM BIKE BUILDING/ CUSTOM BIKES GOING IN THE FUTURE?

The custom bike scene appears to have gone full circle as the modern trend seems to have gone back to the 1960/70s – bikes with long forks, unraked frames and skinny wheels. I see a lot of them. The cafe racer scene seems to have made a big revival too, and in the grand scheme of things the custom scene seems to be getting more and more popular with more shows springing up, and even major manufacturers producing bobbers and cafe racers to supply the demand. Long may it continue! 🏍️

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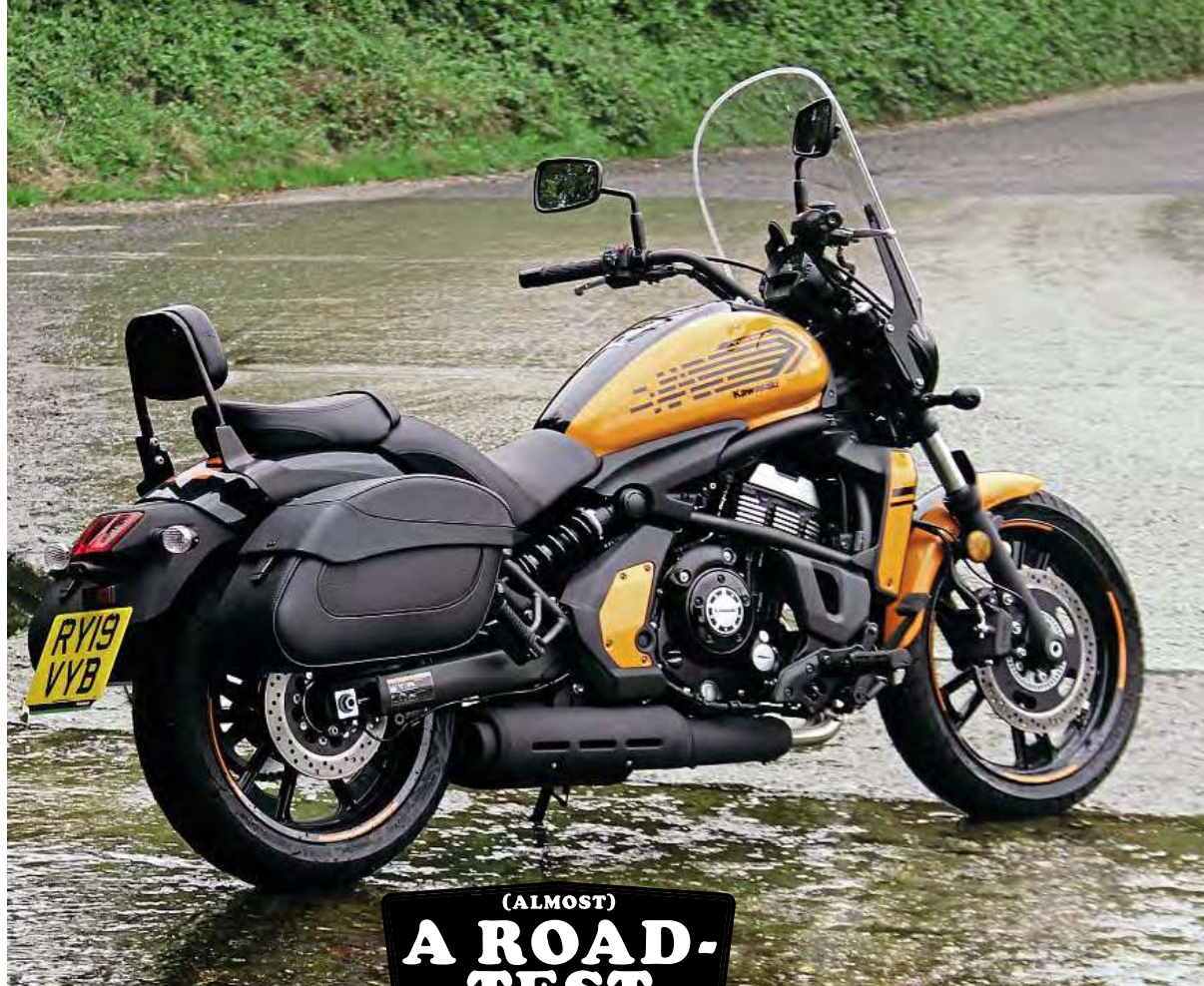


WORDS: NIK

PICS: NIK & DAVE MANNING



IT'S BEEN A VERY LONG TIME SINCE I'VE RIDDEN A CRUISER, A JAPANESE CRUISER – YEARS IN FACT. I THINK THE LAST ONE WAS A YAMAHA V-STAR XVS1300A.



(ALMOST)
**A ROAD-
TEST**

KAWASAKI VULCAN S

Since then, despite the popularity of custom-styled factory bikes from the likes of Harley-Davidson, Indian, Triumph and Ducati, the Big Four (Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki, Yamaha) seem to have moved away from the cruiser genre. Yamaha still have the XV950R (my good lady rode one all the way to Croatia and back last year, but that's their only one; Suzuki don't actually have one; Honda don't have one either; and Kawasaki have just this one – the Vulcan S. It's a shame really, given how popular the likes of the Suzuki Intruder, the Yamaha Virago, the Kawasaki VN and the Honda Shadow have traditionally been, but that's the way of the world, isn't it? Nothing stays the same...

The Kawasaki Vulcan S is a bike that really does have a Dr Jekyll/Mr Hyde personality.

Its engine, the same water-cooled 649cc parallel-twin engine found in the ER6 range of street bikes and the Versys 650 adventure bike, makes a claimed 61hp at 7,500rpm and 46.5ft-lb of torque at 6,600rpm, and it's here that the split personality lies. Having trickled through heavy traffic from Kawasaki's Buckinghamshire headquarters, the first time I got to give it any real throttle was on the M40 back towards London. It accelerated smartly up the slip-road on to the motorway, and then happily

kept up with the traffic, took the long sweeping left on to the M25 at the same speed as it'd been cruising with nary a twitch, and then easily kept pace with the legions of lead-footed lemmings all the way round to the A13 where I turned off to go and see Paul and Luke at Pointy Hat Wizard Fabs.

On the way back, though, I wasn't in any hurry, and this is where the other part came



(ALMOST)
**A ROAD-
TEST**

KAWASAKI VULCAN S

in; the engine has a very definite hesitation, almost a flat spot, at about 5-5,500k on a leisurely throttle that, once you suss it, is an indication of where it's best to change up (yes, I know the torque figures says 6.6k, but that, to me, is where the engine felt happiest). At first I was a little frustrated at having to change up at such low revs on a not particularly grunty engine, but it soon became apparent that, for day-to-day riding, the best thing to do was rev it like this through to top, and then use the engine's torque to haul you along in the highest gear – do that, and the Vulcan's a lovely thing to ride on everything from twisty Essex B-roads through faster A-roads, and some of the shorter dual carriageways.

It did, I will admit, take a little while for me to get my head around this. Most cruisers, in my experience, have been a little asthmatic, and I'd kind o' mentally prepared myself for the Vulcan to be too but, ridden in the manner above, it isn't – in fact it's a very nice engine. The fuelling's smooth (apart from that flatter bit, but it'll pull through easily), and unlike a lot of other cruisers it doesn't feel like it's about to go expensively terminal at higher motorway speeds – always a Good Thing.

The handling's impressive too; yes, the bike's long and hugs the ground, but you don't have the same ground clearance issues (and understeer!) as others. It feels a lot like a Ducati Diavel in that respect – the riding position is laid-back, yes, but you can still ride it quite sportingly through the twisties without wondering whether you'll be chowing down on hospital catering later. The wide 'bars suit both amble-along cruising and giving it the berries, the suspension is relatively soft, and the front end is plush and lets you waft along, not really feeling the bumps. The front anchors do lack a little 'feel', but they haul the bike's 225kg (fuelled) weight to a halt surprisingly quickly. As with all cruisers, the back 'un is often the more useful though, and this one's



lovely – progressive, controllable, and easy to use at low speeds to stop you from having to continuously put your feet down all the time.

Our bike came with optional magnet-locking panniers and a Harleysque windscreen, which were good, but took a little away from the Vulcan's power-cruiser looks, and almost turned it into something it's not – they made it look a little slow, a little ponderous, and it's really not. If I was going to have one, I'd avoid them like the plague, and let the bike's design shine through, y'know?

As with all modern bikes there're a host of other options too ('bars, foot-pegs, racks, bags, screens, gel seats etc.), and the 650 motor can be easily made A2 licence-compliant. The dimensions are such that it's accessible to novices and the smaller-framed (the seat's quite narrow and just over 27 inches off t'deck), but it's also equally suitable for those of us with longer legs 'n' arms too. The tank holds 14 litres of fuel, giving a useful range...especially if you don't nail it down motorways.

Given that I've never really been a big fan of cruisers, and having been previously underwhelmed by a lot of them, I wasn't expecting too much from the Vulcan S at all, but I was pleasantly surprised by just how good it was. Mind you, it is a Kawasaki, isn't it, and they do kind o' know what they're doing, so ... 



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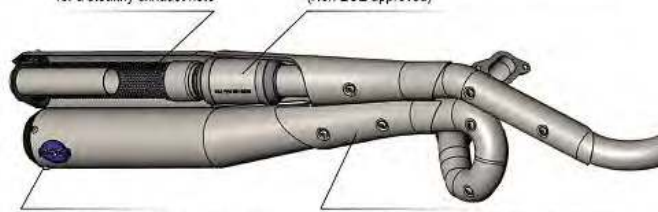
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PART
FIVE

LAST ISSUE I TOLD YOU OF THE FIRST PART OF MY TRIP ABOARD THE NIKEN TO THE ORKNEY ISLANDS OFF THE NORTH COAST OF SCOTLAND BACK IN AUGUST; THIS MONTH I ACTUALLY GET THERE!

The following day myself, Tony (Triumph Bonnie 1200), and Simon (BMR R1150GS) made our way from Thurso to Scrabster to get the Northlink ferry across to Stromness – a crossing which has a reputation for being rougher than a bear's ar... ahem, bottom, but was, on both our trips, there and back, wonderfully calm and, pretty much, as still as the sea can ever be. As we approached the



The Italian Chapel – amazing place, well worth a visit

islands, the famous Old Man of Hoy, at 449 feet the tallest rock stack in the British Isles, could be seen for miles, and the seabird colonies on the red sandstone cliffs around it laced each ledge with white, and were the stuff of TV nature documentaries – well worth braving the bracing air on deck to take a longer look.

Stromness, where the ferry lands, is a beautiful, unspoilt (if you ignore the docks area) village with a narrow cobbled high street that's an absolute pleasure to ride slowly along... well, it was on the Niken and the Bee-Em, think it was a bit rough on the Bonnie's harder suspension, but I didn't hear Tony complain. From there we followed a few other rallygoers out to the site of the Twits Twats Trots rally (which there'll be an article on fairly soon) to set up camp for the weekend and, yes, drink far too much... as usual. Yes, we did pop up to Kirkwall that evening, on blissfully empty and very smooth ('cos they're empty) roads that were just Niken heaven before we hit the booze, but the main riding was to the next day.

That morning we set off to see some of the sights of the Orkneys, of which there are many. Back to Kirkwall again to gas up, then out to the south of the town to head to the famous Italian Chapel – two Second World War Nissen huts transformed into a beautiful chapel by Domenico Chiocchetti and his colleagues, Italian prisoners of war captured in North Africa and transported to the island of Lambholm. Among them was Domenico, an artist, who carried in his pocket a small prayer card, given to him by his mother, on



Must've been
all that gruel
the monks ate...



Now that's what I came to
Orkney to see... well, that and
standing stones obviously...



...like these at the
Ring of Brodgar...

which was the image of the Madonna and Child by Nicolo Barabino. He used that as the basis for his painting above the altar in the chapel, along with other paintings too, and now, 70 years after its completion, the chapel is one of Orkney's major tourist attractions with more than 100,000 visitors every year. Now, as anyone who knows me'll know, I don't do religion, but it really is worth visiting – the art is sublime, and even though you're inside two poky Nissen huts, it feels like something much older and much grander.

And to get to the chapel you have to cross another Orkadian landmark; the Churchill Barriers. In October 1939 a German submarine entered Scapa Flow, where British

battleships were anchored, and sank one, the *Royal Oak*, with the loss of 834 lives. Winston Churchill, at that time First Sea Lord, visited Orkney, and the decision was taken to construct barriers to close off four of the entrances to Scapa Flow to make the base for the home fleet more secure. A shortage of manpower to construct them coincided with the capture of thousands of Italian soldiers fighting in North Africa, so a decision was taken to transport more than 1,000 of them to the Orkneys to build them. These days roads run across the Barriers, and you can still see, from some of them, wrecks of ships lying poignantly in the bays.

As I mentioned above, these roads are just about biking heaven – they're fast, smooth, well-surfaced, and full of twisty, but flowing, bends, and the Niken was just bliss on them. The scenery that surrounds them, as is often the case in Scotland, is more on the bleak side than the picturesque, so you don't really mind ear'oling through it, and with no other real traffic to contend with, I had to really concentrate not to clear off and leave Tony and Simon behind.





...or these, the Standing
Stones of Stenness

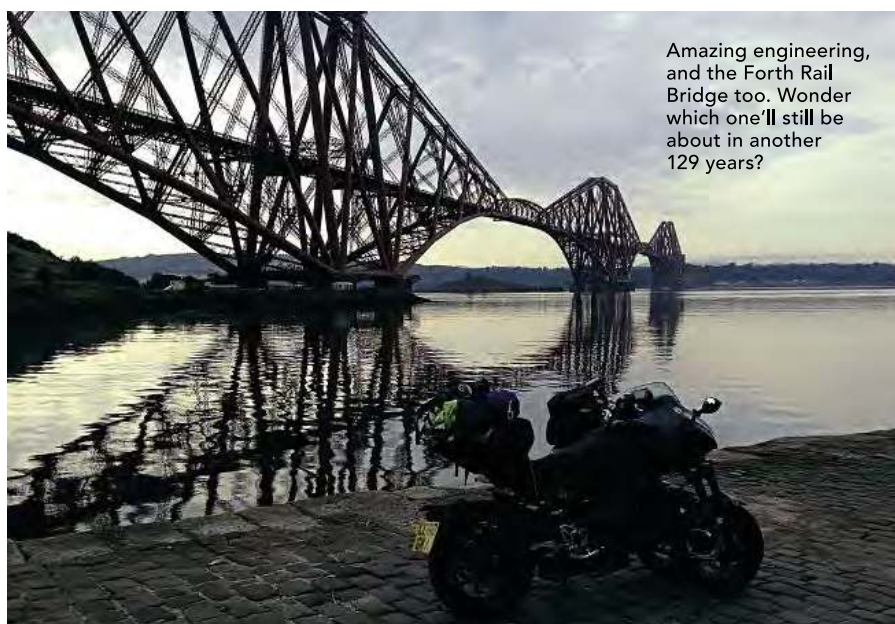
Then, all too soon, it was time to hop back on the ferry and head back to the mainland. Simon was heading over to the west coast to see relations, and Tony and I were heading back south, so we said our goodbyes at Thurso, and then me and 'im set off for Inverness and all parts downwards. A very short time later (I won't say how short for fear of incriminating us), we pulled up at the petrol station in Inverness, both of us grinning from ear to ear after a last, very fast, ride across the Highlands. From there it was back down the average speed camera-infested A9, and so I just set the Niken's cruise control (never been a fan of it before, but as there are so many average speed roads these days it takes out any fear of getting nicked for a lapse in concentration), and rode nearly all the way to Perth using just me left hand on the 'bars. 🍷

Next issue: THE NIKEN
RIDDEN AS MOST
PEOPLE NEVER WILL!

That evening, just as the sun was starting to set (and the midgies, the wee bastards, starting to appear), we rode to see what I'd really come all this way to see; the Ring of Brodgar. They're reckoned to be one of the finest known, truly circular, late Neolithic/early Bronze Age stone rings, and they're assumed to've been erected between 2500 and 2000 BC, but because the interior's never been fully excavated, or scientifically dated, their actual age is uncertain. Unlike a lot of Orkney landmarks, there's no entry fee, and although the stones themselves're roped off, you still get a feeling of age, of indifference, of mystery from them... sorry, was my inner hippy showing again?

Not quite as impressive in sheer scale, but much larger in themselves, the massive nearby Stones of Stenness are worth a look too, and as someone'd rather carelessly left the gate open (ahem) we took the opportunity to ride right up to them for a photo. Just across the way, grey seals'd hauled out on a beach, and were casually watching us, completely unperturbed, but the midgies were gathering in clouds so we beat a hasty retreat.

The next day was, pretty much, more of the same; fuelling up in Kirkwall, and heading off to, ostensibly, explore the Orkneys, but in reality to just revel in the fast, smooth and empty roads that we so lack down 'ere in the south-east of England. Orkney, in the summer, really is motorcycling heaven, it really is.



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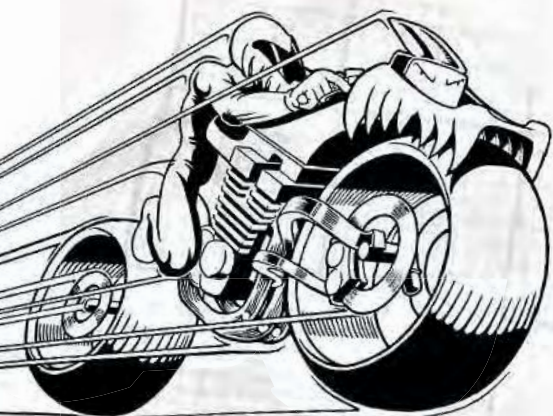
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ACCORDING TO THE INTERNET MEME, 'A MOTORCYCLE IS A BICYCLE WITH A PANDEMONIUM ATTACHMENT, AND IS DESIGNED FOR THE ESPECIAL USE OF MECHANICAL GENIUSES, DAREDEVILS AND LUNATICS', ACCORDING TO, APPARENTLY, GEORGE FITCH OF THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION IN 1916 – QUITE A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF THIS BIKE, I THINK.



All the parts from Earl's that we're going to use



The 'pandemonium attachment' is the supercharger, the 'mechanical geniuses' are Paul and Luke at Pointy Hat Wizard

Fabs, the chaps who are building it, and the 'daredevils and lunatics'? Hmm, no, can't think who that might be... although I'll let you know the first time I ride it.

Someone asked me recently why this project's taken so long as, after

all, this is the 13th episode of the build (I think, might've lost count a little)? Well, there're two reasons really; firstly, Paul and Luke do have to earn a living while they're building it for me (it's not a freebie, don't get me wrong, but there is a deal, and so they need to do other work too – I've lost count of how many bikes, trikes, buggies and trucks've come and gone from their place during its construction) and, secondly, because it's a bloody complicated build – no

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The Setrab oil cooler



Pic showing the different size feeds – top is oil cooler, middle is head feed, bottom is brake pipes



AN fittings and how they go together



New head oil-feed pipe, and old one for comparison

one's really tried to build a steering system like this one before, and it's taken a while to get right after a lot of trial and error, and no one's tried to use a suspension arrangement like this either, and that's still throwing up problems as we speak. The fact that the wheels are so massive's also caused a few headaches too, meaning that just about everything about them has needed to've been made, and the machining and work needed to get the supercharger on properly's taken

some time too. For me it's not much of a worry as I started collecting parts for this bike back in about 1997, and it took me until 2014 to find someone who could actually build it, so a year or so in the actual building's neither here nor there in my mind, y'know?

Anyway, this issue, as promised last issue, we're looking at hosing up the bike – oil lines, fuel lines, and brake lines. Now, as you can imagine, with a build like this there's quite a lot of hosing to be done; the GSX-R engine,

for a start, is oil-cooled, and so needs an oil cooler and lines, and has an external oil feed to the head too (the supercharger, unlike a turbocharger, actually has its own internal oil tank, and so doesn't need a separate feed); the brakes, front and rear, need their fluid feeding to them; and the air suspension needs airtight lines and fittings. Thankfully, the nice people at Earl's Performance Products (www.earls.co.uk) are always interested in builds that push the boundaries, and

PROJECT

AN is a particular type of fitting used to connect flexible hoses and rigid metal tubing that carries fluid, and it's a US military-derived specification that dates back to the Second World War, and stems from a joint standard agreed upon by the Army and Navy, hence AN. They are, for all intents and purposes, two pieces – one that fits on to the

days. Earl's, though, do a very nice replacement kit for it that comes with a new crankcase take-off, a T-piece to send the oil in both directions (rather than the Y-piece on the original system), two right-angle fittings for the head end, and two new oil feeds that bolt to the head in place of the original Suzuki ones. It all goes together quite



Head oil-feed pipe lower part and new replacement parts



Oil-feed fittings on adaptors



New fittings and pipes fitted

so came on board with all the parts needed, including a new oil cooler to replace the seriously scabby one that came with the original R motor. Thanks for that, chaps – much appreciated!

Now there've been many articles about how to do oil coolers, and brake line fittings, and we're planning to do something on them in the near future, so in this issue we're going to have a look at the fitting of the external oil lines. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...

hose, and another that fits on to the hardware that you're trying to get fluid to (be it a brake caliper or an oil fitting).

On the oil-cooled Suzuki motors, there's an external oil feed from the crankcases up to the head to lubricate the cams, and it's tucked away behind the cylinders. After I don't know how many years on the road (we've no idea what year the motor is, and GSX-R1100s were made from 1986-1998), the one on this engine was more than a little scabby, and has seen better

straightforwardly, and all you really need to do is make sure that you don't run the lines so that they foul the mounting points of the carbs or, in this case, the supercharger. I know that may sound obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people make such elementary mistakes – someone I know mounted their oil cooler out in front of the yokes and then, rather than running the lines down through the yokes, ran them outside them. That meant that, as they hadn't allowed

for the 'bars to turn lock to lock when they were measuring the length of hose they'd need, the shorter hoses stopped the steering from working as it should, and the bike wouldn't turn as tightly as it was intended to. This, of course, was fine when you were out riding as, kinda obviously, you don't actually turn the 'bars much when

to run into, before they can mount it so that nothing gets in the way of anything else. Add to that the fact that they're still playing with the air valves for the suspension, and the fact that, since the frame's been reworked to get the two swingarms equidistant, the seat unit now sits a little high and so

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Crankcase adaptor for head oil-feed fitted

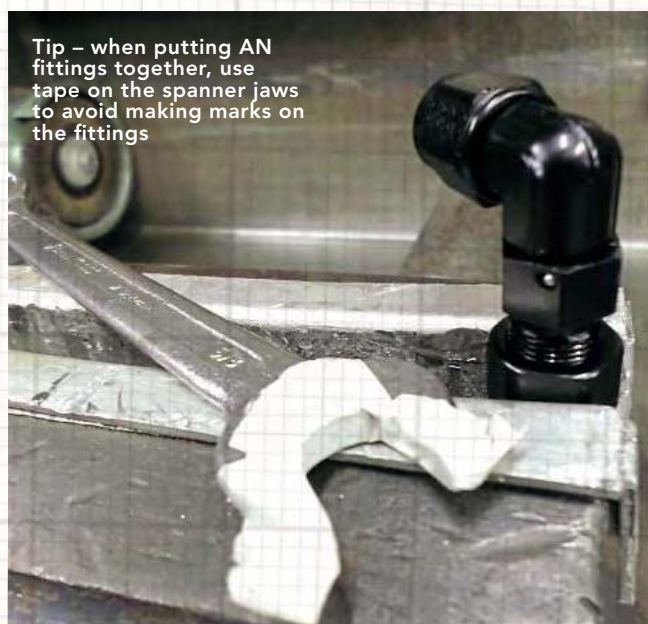


Head oil-feed pipe upper part, and new replacement bits



Cam cover adaptor for the head oil-feed

Tip – when putting AN fittings together, use tape on the spanner jaws to avoid making marks on the fittings



Checking that the new pipes don't foul the blower



you're riding, but it meant that turning it round in a pub car park or similar was much more of an 11-point-turn scenario, y'know?

Paul and Luke haven't quite decided where they're going to mount the Kat's cooler as yet (we did consider doing away with the headlight, as I never ride at night anyway, and putting the cooler in its place, but it wouldn't've looked right), as they need to make the exhaust, for which they need to make the bellypan it's going

needs to be cut off and remounted a little lower, and you can see why, as I said earlier, this build is more than a little complicated. Mind you, Custom Xtreme at Motorcycle Live at the NEC is, as you read this, only a few days away (it's still a month away as I write this... thankfully), and the Kat has an appointment on the BSH stand, so they're working round the clock to get it ready for that. How much will it've advanced? You'll have to come along to the stand and see! 🍷

Next issue: All the things I've just mentioned – oil coolers, exhaust, bellypan, air suspension, and subframe relocation!

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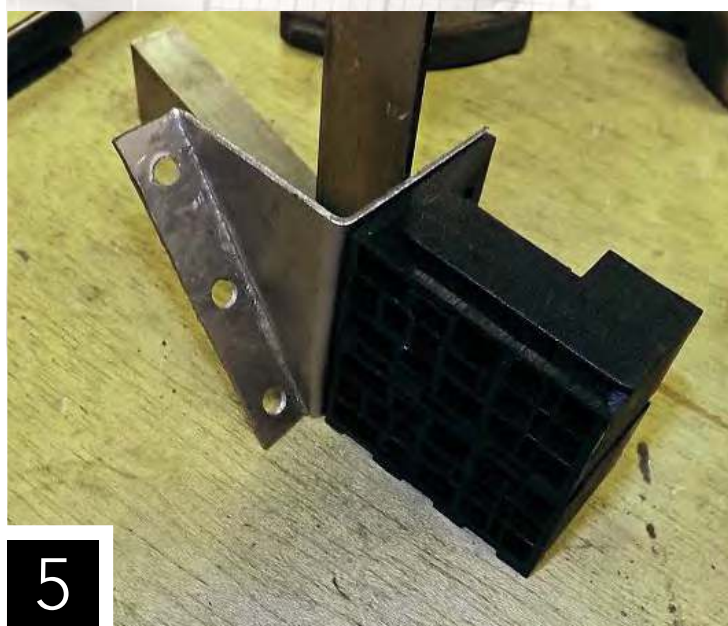
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#17 ELECTRIC, NOT ECLECTIC

LAST TIME I'D MADE A START ON THE ELECTRICS BY WORKING OUT WHAT I WAS GOING TO NEED, AND WHERE IT WAS GOING TO GO.

WORDS & PICS: MR. BRIDGES



Tordered the relay holders and relays I wanted from Vehicle Wiring Products off their website and online shop (Fig.1). If you're not comfortable with the internet, then you'll usually be able to find their details in the classified ads at the back of the magazine but, either way, looking through their website or their printed catalogue is a much better way of getting your hands on wiring materials than mooching through your local motor accessory shop and making do with what you can find. As well as the relays

and holders, they also sell automotive electrical cable by the metre in various gauges and colours, as well as 'Japanese' style uninsulated bullet connectors, spade terminals and the correct type of crimping pliers for them.

Discussion on the subject of wiring terminals and how to fit them brings out a lot of opinions as to what type of connector to use, and whether to solder them or not. Personally I think it's fair to assume that Messrs Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha and Kawasaki'll've done things in such a way as to strike the optimum balance between quality and price, so I use

uninsulated connectors and crimp them just like they do. There may be 'better' ways of doing it, but that way of doing it seems to be good for somewhere around 20 to 30 years of normal service, which strikes me as being perfectly adequate.

I didn't order any wire when I got the relay bits and bobs as I keep a roll of each of the plain colours, plus a roll of black and yellow for earths, and some lengths of heavier gauge wire for loads over 15 amps or so. If you're planning on wiring something yourself, then ordering everything you need at once will obviously save on postage.

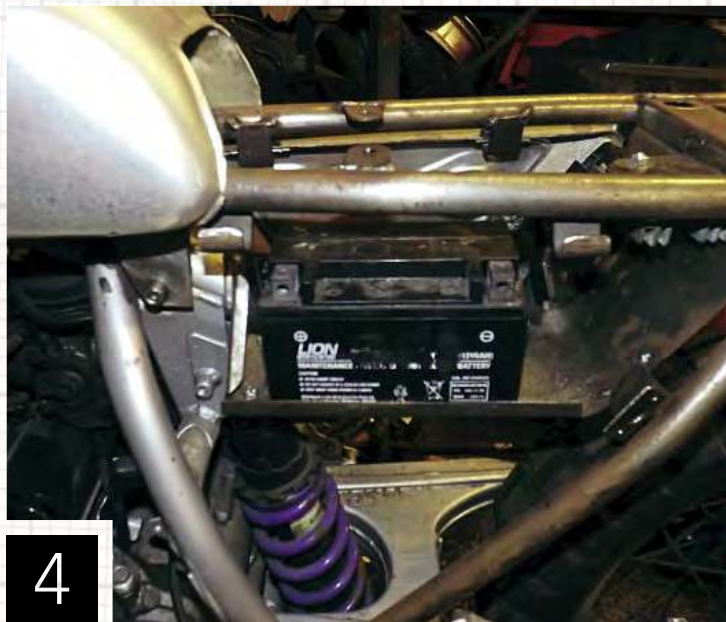
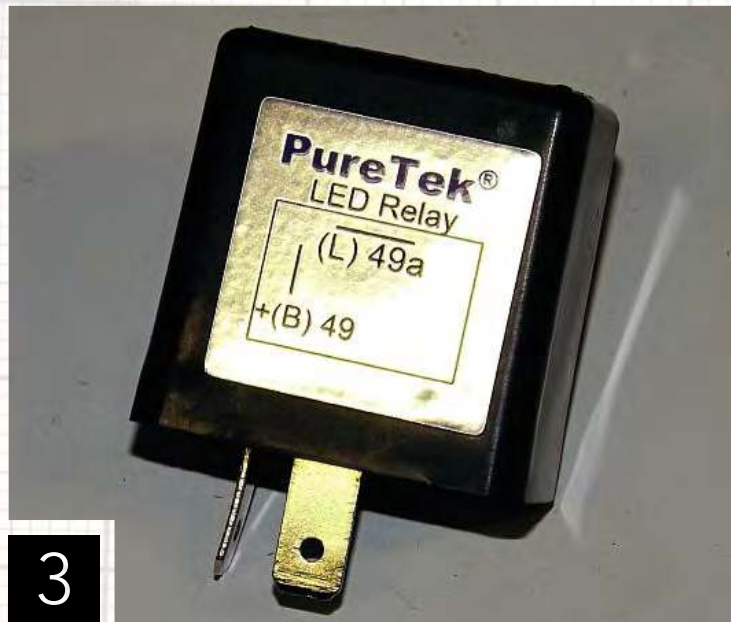
As well as the relay/fuse holders I needed a solenoid for the KLR, and that took a little more hunting for as I wanted one which incorporated the main fuse and the multi-plug that went with it. By using a multi-plug, or relay socket, I can be sure that, in the event of having to disconnect anything, the cables'll end up back on the correct terminal when it's reconnected. Solenoids are easy enough to find on the

end I bought the solenoid from one seller and the plug from another, but I got what I wanted (Fig.2).

The other thing I bought was a two-terminal flasher relay that was suitable for LED indicators, and still rated at enough watts to use with conventional bulbs (Fig.3), simply because I have no idea what I'm going to use for indicators at this point. A two-terminal flasher relay

person to come along if the wiring in the box at least looks neat, if not exactly uncluttered.

Since the battery is the largest lump, it made sense to locate that first so that it'd go in and out without hitting the brackets for the side-panel (Fig.4). Batteries are either right or left-handed, which is usually signified by an 'L' on the end of the model (i.e. YB-14 and YB-14L) which isn't blindingly



internet, but the matching multi-plug proved more of a problem, although that was mainly because I wanted one that came with the loose terminals, and not trailing wire tails, wasn't going to have to be shipped from China because I wanted it fairly quickly, and didn't cost stupid amounts of money since some of the people selling the multi-plug want more for it than the solenoid costs.

The reasoning behind wanting a multi-plug with loose terminals, rather than pre-fitted wire tails, is simply that any connection is a potential failure point so the less you have, the better it is. In the

is, by far, the easiest to wire up – one terminal is connected to a switched feed, and the other goes to the indicator switch, but I picked this one over several other options as it came with a rubber mounting sleeve.

With all of that stuff cluttering up the top of the tool trolley, I set about working out how to mount it all. I've mentioned a few times that I want to keep the battery/electrics tray uncluttered, and what I mean by that is I don't want to have the visible under-surface festooned with nuts and bolts. Equally it's far less daunting to the next

obvious until it's pointed out. The point of that is that once you've chosen a size of battery, you usually have a choice of where the positive and negative terminals will be once it's installed. I wanted the positive terminal towards the front so that the leads from the battery to the solenoid, and from there to the starter, would be as short as possible so the battery I was using to mock-up was correctly laid out, but in another application the opposite arrangement might be better.

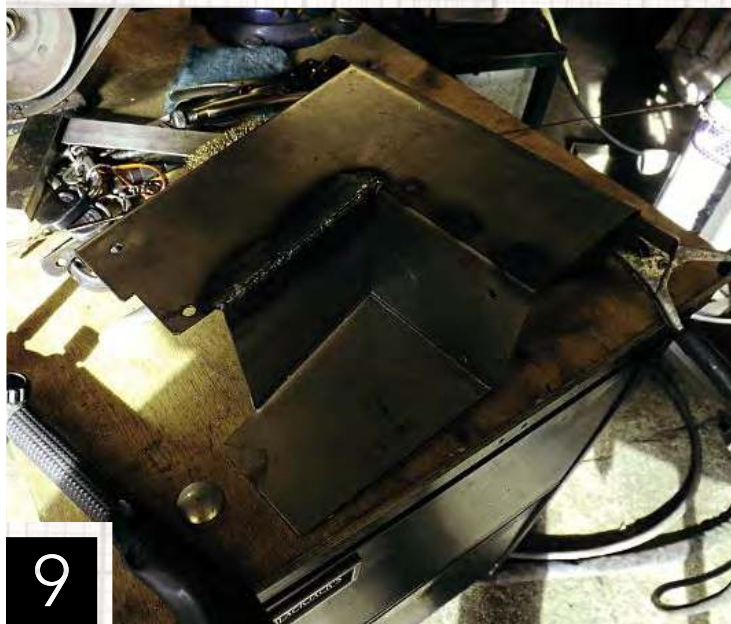
With that in mind it made sense to locate the solenoid somewhere along the shortest route from the battery positive

terminal to the starter motor. It also made sense to have the relay/fuse sockets on the same side of the motorcycle so that most of the things you'd want to check in the event of a problem were in the same place. The relay sockets lock together, and two of them make a relatively compact fuse box that has its mounting holes on a

the ignition coil. To mount the relay/fuse sockets, I cut out a small triangular bracket from some 1.5mm steel using the band-saw, drilled it for the mounting bolts for the sockets, and two larger holes for some plug-welds to attach it to the tray, and then bent the lips over in the vice (Fig.5). With that welded to the tray

bracket from more 1.5mm steel (Fig.8), it was definitely easier to solve at this stage than once everything has been made pretty and final assembly is going on – in other words, exactly the point of doing it at this stage.

With mounting for the solenoid dealt with, I made the three-sided box to sit



plane that's at 90 degrees to where the wiring enters and exits, which is often an advantage when it comes to mounting it.

For my particular jigsaw puzzle, arranging the two fused units in a vertical stack next to the battery seemed the best solution. I decided to add a three-sided box to the tray to separate the air filter from the electrical gubbins, which'd also give me somewhere to mount the rest of the relay sockets, and the flasher relay.

While I was doing all that, I was also thinking about where the main loom could run, and checking that there was enough room under the tank for

(Fig.6), I looked at mounting the solenoid, bearing in mind the runs of the battery cable, the accessibility and position of the multi-plug, and the clearance from the metal side panel. Ideally it wanted to be situated right where the tray support bracket was, so I cut a chunk out of the tray support to accommodate the starter solenoid bracket (Fig.7), which meant that the starter solenoid bracket was going to have to replace some of the strength I'd lost by cutting away the tray support bracket.

Despite that all being a lot of effort, and making for a complicated solenoid

over the air filter (Fig.9), drilled it for the remaining relay sockets, and made a tag to fit the rubber mount for the flasher relay which I plug-welded in place (Fig.10). I still need to make a couple of brackets to locate the battery in position, but I forgot to chase down a rubber mounting strap for it, and it's easier to make brackets to suit a strap than it is to find a strap to suit the brackets you've made.

All in all, I think it's going to look very much like it left the factory that way (Fig.11), and shouldn't spring any nasty surprises once the time comes to start attaching wires. ●

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MR BRIDGES' ^{VOL.III} ^{PART XXI} MOTORCYCLE DIARIES

ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO YOU MAY RECALL I WAS BUGGERING AROUND WITH A CX500 MONO-SHOCK CONVERSION? (FIG.1)

WORDS & PICS: MR. BRIDGES



1

Well, there's another CX500 lurking in the workshop (Fig.2), which is also due for some similar treatment – this one's getting a new seat subframe, and an over-braced swinging arm, and won't look too dissimilar to the Downshift Studio CX500 scrambler that you can find loads of pictures of on Google. I had planned on getting permission to use one of their photographs of it however, like most things lately, I'm running a bit behind so haven't managed to do it, but it's more or less the same sort of thing as the KLR so here's a picture of

that instead (Fig.3). I still had to steal that off the internet, but it's my picture so that's probably all right.

The obvious mechanical difference is that the CX setup, like the one from six months ago (see Fig.1) has direct-acting rear suspension with the suspension unit attached directly to the swingarm, and the KLR uses a 'rising rate' linkage. This makes a difference, but it involves a certain amount of maths, and a smidgen of geometry.

The first problem is that, to have half-way decent ride quality, the spring rate at the rear wheel needs to remain something like what it was originally. 'Spring rate' is expressed

in terms of the amount of force needed to compress the spring by a certain distance, so a spring with a rate of 100lb/in will compress by 1" when a force of 100lb is applied to it. It might seem easy enough to place the rear wheel on a set of scales, and see how much weight there is on the rear wheel with the rider on board, and then measure how much the suspension compresses by under that same weight, and do a little bit of arithmetic to arrive at the spring rate but, sadly, that's not the case. The problem is that the spring has almost certainly been compressed to fit it to the suspension unit, and so is exerting an opposing force on

the suspension unit so, in the case of a twin-shock CX500, assume the rear springs are each rated at 100lb/in, but have to be compressed by one inch to fit them to the suspension units. The two rear springs have a combined rate of 200lb/in then, but under no load they're already compressed by an inch so it requires 200lb of downward force at the rear of the motorcycle to make them start to move. With the motorcycle stood on

back on the stand, and adjust collars on the suspension units to further compress the spring by another inch. This time when the rider and the pillion climb back on board, the suspension units'll only compress by one inch. This is not because adjusting the preload collars made the suspension 'harder' or 'stiffer' – the combined spring rate of the two springs is still 200lb/in, and changing the preload simply adjusts the ride height.

the five coils will compress by $\frac{1}{10}$ th of an inch, so the spring will compress by $\frac{5}{10}$ ths of an inch – that's $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch so the spring now has a rate of 100lb/0.5in or 200lb/in. Obviously once the spring is compressed, and the coils are touching each other, its spring rate effectively becomes infinite as it can't be compressed any further, but if the spring's been wound so that the space between the coils isn't even, and they're



its wheels, and a rider sitting on it, then the set of scales we placed under the rear wheel might read 400lb (Fig.4), but the suspension units'll've only compressed by an inch because each spring is exerting an opposing force on the suspension unit. If the rider's 200lb friend climbs on board and sits on the pillion, exerting another 200lb of force on the suspension units, then they'll compress by a further inch but, despite doubling the amount of compression in the suspension units, the scales under the rear wheel have only gone from reading 400lb to reading 600lbs, and not doubled.

At this point the rider might put the bike

The exception to this is when the springs are wound with some of the coils at one end closer together than others - if we take our hypothetical 100lb/in spring off the suspension unit, and count the number of coils, it turns out to have 10 coils because we like maths to be easy. This means that, when a 100lb load is applied to the spring, because it has evenly wound coils, each of the spring's coils compresses by $\frac{1}{10}$ th of an inch. Each coil compresses by pressing on the coil next to it, so the 100lb of force is transmitted through the whole spring.

If I cut the spring in half so it only has five coils, and apply a 100lb load to it, each of

closer together at one end of the spring, say $\frac{1}{10}$ th of an inch gap between the first coil and the second, then the first 100lb applied to the spring'll close the first coil completely, leaving only nine coils in the spring, and meaning that the effective spring rate is now around 110lb/in.

Progressively wound springs, where the gap between the coils varies, can increase their spring rate when the pre-load on the suspension unit collar is adjusted. That's what's going on with a twin-shock set-up.

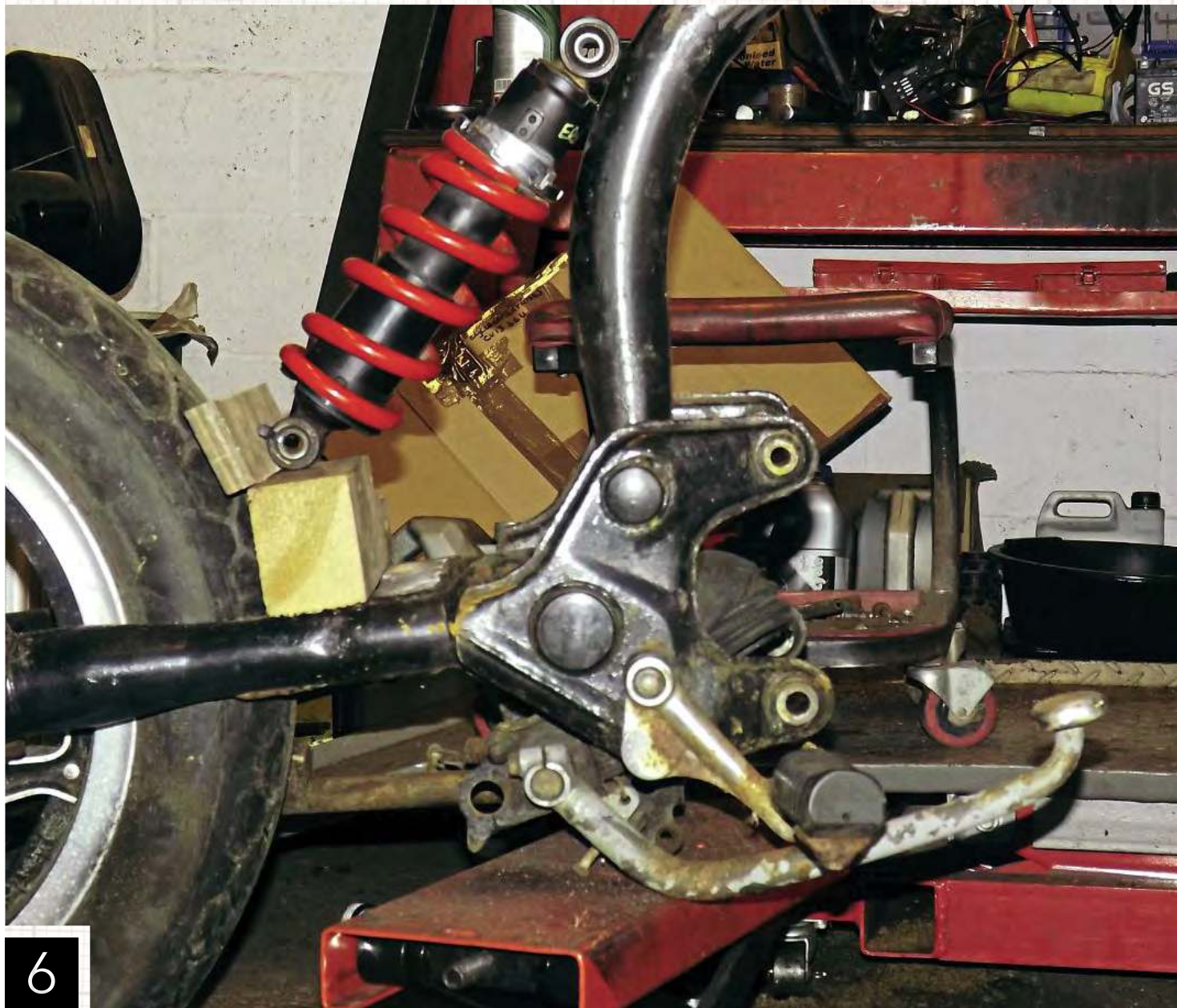
So for our hypothetical mono-shock conversion, you might think that what we want is a 200lb/in spring on the suspension

unit? Unfortunately there's more maths to consider. In the twin-shock set, as long as the units are relatively upright, one inch of wheel movement'll correspond to one inch of suspension unit movement, but with the units laid over that (Fig.5) isn't true any more or even consistent.

I've talked about spring rates, but what

Since we want the wheel to move one inch under a force of 200lb, and it's moving three inches to move the suspension unit by one inch, it might seem like the spring rate at the unit needs to be 600lb/in, but there's a 3-to-1 lever there so a 200lb force at the wheel end is 600lb of force at the suspension unit, and the travel is one-third of an inch. This

inexpensive, and the adjustable damping adjusts from "what damping?" to "does this actually move at all?" in around 24 steps, and they're designed to be dialled in to suit the application. While it's unlikely that you'd get the unit dialled in perfectly, the chances are very good that you'll get it very close, and a lot closer than you would by



6

we're really trying to achieve is a wheel rate – we want the wheel to move a given distance for a given force. What was happening in the setup we just looked at was the wheel'd move one inch closer to the frame when a 200lb load was applied as long as the preload on the spring was balanced out. In the case of the CX500 mono-shock, though, the wheel is roughly three times as far from the swinging arm pivot as the bottom of the suspension unit so the wheel has a 3-to-1 mechanical advantage over the suspension unit – if the wheel moves through three inches, the suspension unit is only compressed by one inch.

means that the spring rate needed is 600lb per third of an inch, or 1,800lb/in, which can come as a bit of a shock the first time you realise this.

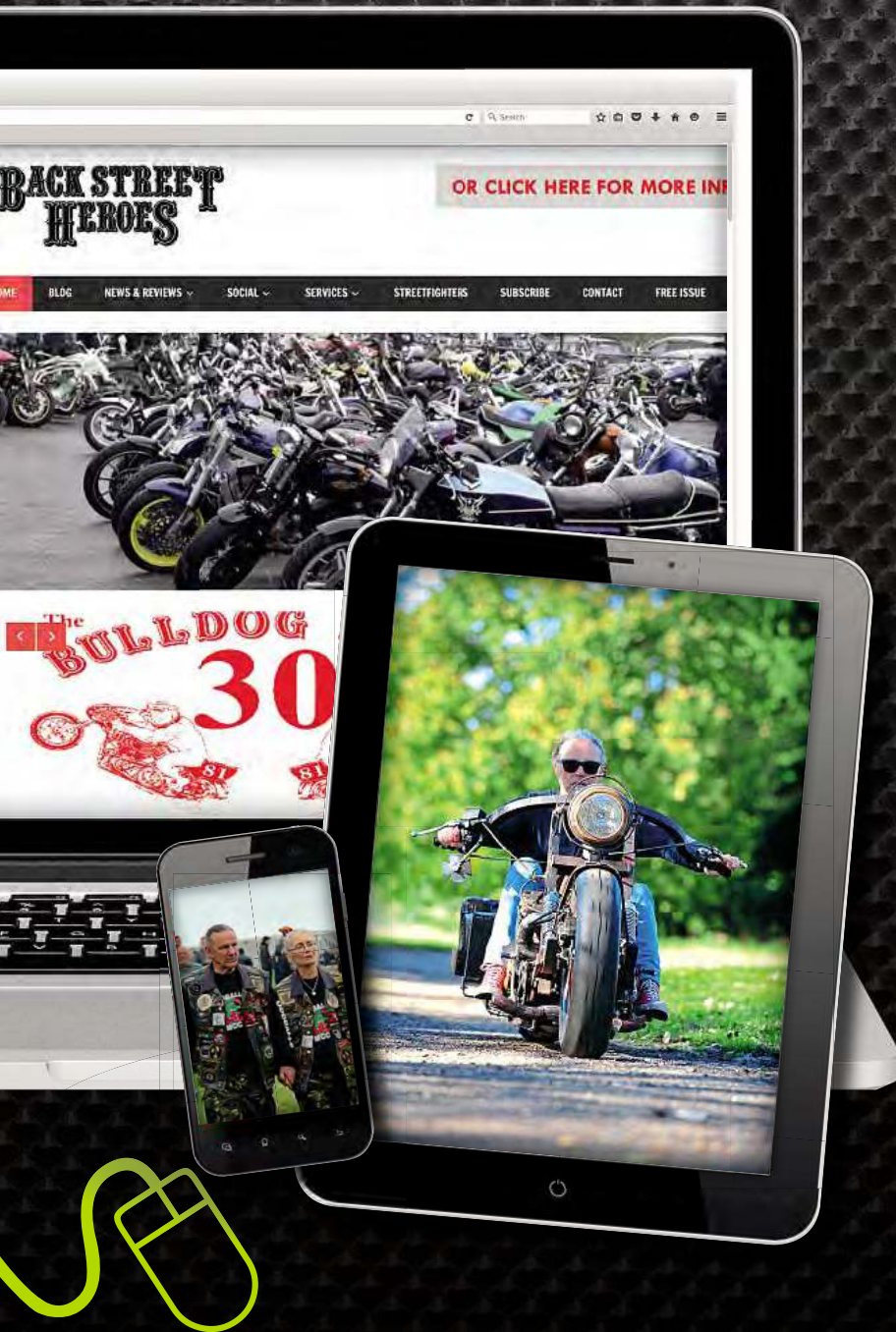
What might come as even more of a shock is that most rear suspension set-ups with linkages use wheel travel to spring travel ratios quite a bit higher than 3:1 with, consequentially, even more alarming numbers for spring rates.

In the past for scratch-built setups I've used coil over suspension units intended for race cars because they're not that dear, you can chose the spring rate you want, if you get it wrong springs for them are

using something that was hanging around in a friend's shed for the last eight years.

Another way round it's been to preserve the geometry of the original in a new frame and swingarm. The last CX500 that I cut in half used a kit of laser-cut bits that was imported from the US, and had been designed around a Kawasaki ER6 rear suspension unit, which makes sense as the ER6 has a direct-acting mono-shock set-up, and so the ratios of wheel movement to suspension unit movement are in the same kind of ball park. That's what this one is getting too (Fig.6) then; all I have to do now is figure where I can mount it, and have a nice linear wheel rate... ●

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GOOD MORNING, CAMPERS

Just use your imagination, huh? Well, for a start, I'll bet you never knew that an adult male mountain gorilla's most interesting feature (to an adult female mountain gorilla, that is) is unlikely to exceed 2.5 inches, whatever the circumstances. Who said this isn't an educational magazine? And I don't know about you, but that knowledge makes me feel a whole lot better, and always brightens up my day... although, I'd like to know who the hell measured it? And how soon he got out of hospital afterwards?

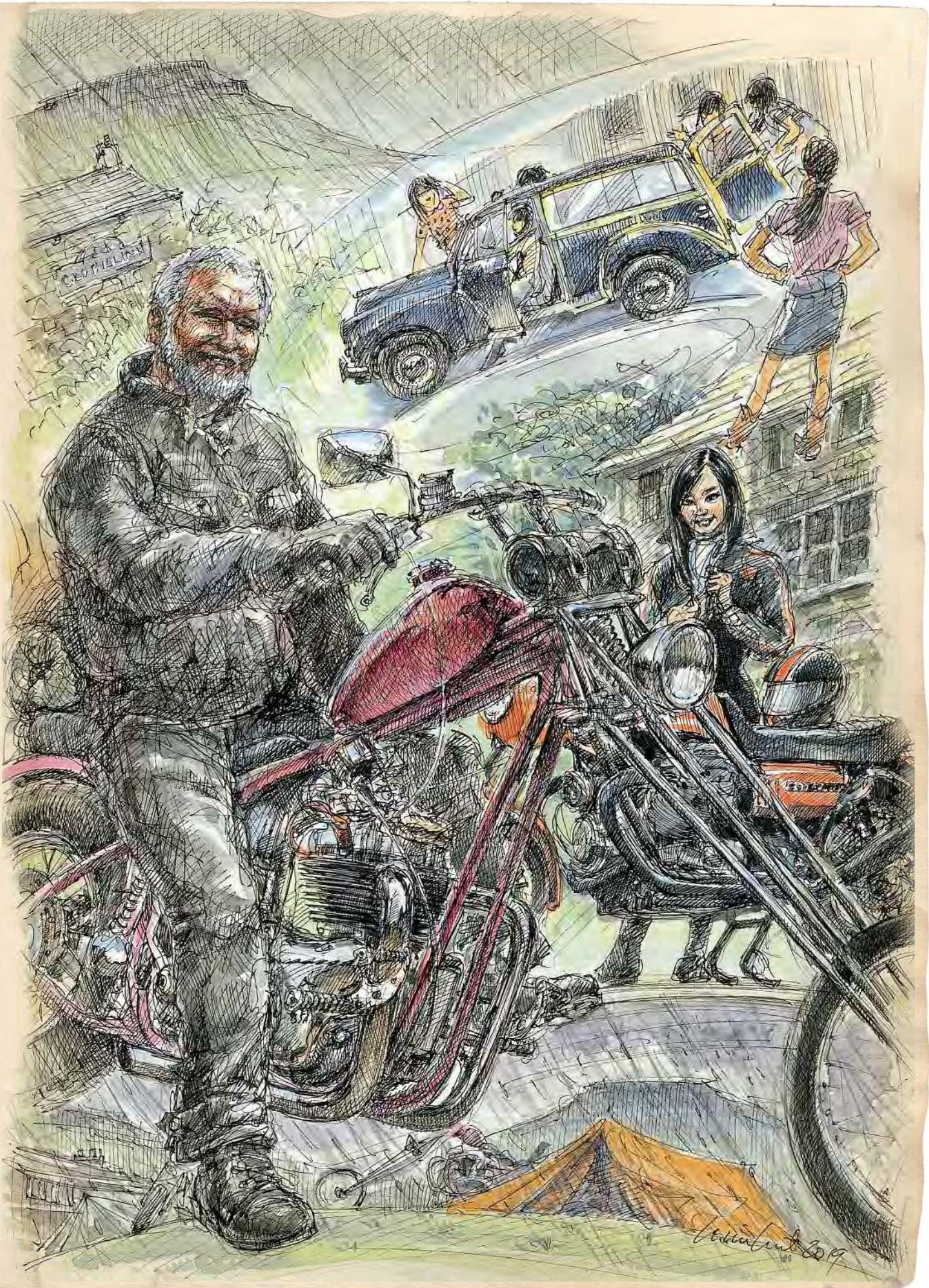
With conversation of such a high standard as that, it's difficult for an archaeologist to impress his fellow partygoers, believe me. Still, after an evening of Algerian red (I've got to admit I'd never heard of Château al-Firouzi '77... and I hope to God I never do again as well), Pernod, and a pleasant scented punch that I later found out was 35% surgical alcohol, I thought I'd better make the effort.

"Did you know," I asked casually, falling off the coffee table and splitting my lip on a pair of obstetrical forceps someone had used to take sausage rolls from where they'd been smouldering in the fireplace, "that XVIII Dynasty Egyptians believed that crocodile dung was an infallible contraceptive?" What a mind-blower... and it's true as well.

"Of course we did," everyone said, and the next and last thing I heard was that Augustus, the Elector of Saxony somewhere in the Middle Ages, was daddy to 365 children, and became known as Augustus the Strong... not surprisingly, either, as far as I'm concerned.

When I woke up next morning there was a Chinese girl bending over me, and about five other Chinese girls standing around looking inscrutable. I wondered where I was, and how I'd got there. In fact, this happens quite often. Years ago, when I used to live in Liverpool, and owned a Peter Fonda replica Harley 45, I had a similar experience. I was riding

it through one of the more... er... ethnic areas of the city, and it was raining, and the Harley was only firing on one cylinder. I know that half a 750 Harley is 325cc, and that this sounds big enough to get anyone home, but you've got to remember that they only put out 22bhp as standard, and half of that is about as good as a parachute might've been to a kamikaze pilot. Anyway, there I was on one cylinder, full throttle, doing about 35mph through rain-soaked and greasy streets when, that's right, all of a sudden the other goddamn cylinder starting firing again. The resulting wheelie was pretty good, I'm told, as were the looks I got from startled passers-by. What hurt was catapulting over the sissy-bar and being run down by my own bike as I was trying to get up. When I woke up that time I was surrounded by dark and aquiline faces topped by turbans of every colour and hue and, for reasons I can't explain, apart from concussion, I thought I'd been shot off my horse in the Khyber Pass, and that I was a subaltern



GOOD MORNING, CAMPERS

in the Indian Army c.1870 (steer clear of Rudyard Kipling – he can be pretty trippy, take it from me). Anyway, this probably explains why I struggled to my feet and said, “Dost thou not know there is peace between the Great White Queen and the Khans, O Pathans? Wherefore this outrage?” (They used to speak like that in Kipling’s day.)

“E’s bloody barmy,” said one of my Sikh rescuers. “He wants ‘is head X-raying ...” He was right, of course – I still do.

I only know two literary jokes. “Do you like Kipling?”

“I don’t know, I’ve never kippled” and, even better, “Do you like Dickens?”

“I don’t know, I’ve never been to any.”

But, to return to the recent past, the Chinese girl bent down, tapped me on the chest, and said: “Didn’t you used to be Jim Fogg?”

I’m still trying to work that one out, but I think it’s insulting.

As a matter of fact, she was the nurse I used to wake up every morning at 4am when I was not only a Triumph Thunderbird owner, but I was also going out with one of her flat-mates – a rather bosomy and crazy blonde nurse nicknamed Juicy Joycey... no, I’m not going to explain that either.

“These are friends of mine,” the Chinese nurse said. “They’ve heard a lot about you. You are well known.”

Everyone giggled, except me. Still, it’s not bad being a legend in your own lifetime, huh? That’s how I came to be eating pizza with six nurses at 10.30am. That’s pretty reasonable, because the Chinese invented pasta, and Marco Polo brought it back to Italy.

I’m not sure about ice-cream and Coke, though...

In the car park, they all tried to get back into a Morris Traveller, talking animatedly among themselves.

“So big,” one said.

“So handsome,” another put in.

“So powerful-looking and impressive,” a third added.

I smiled at them all.

“Not you, silly,” said Juicy Joycey’s flat-mate. “They mean your motorcycle.”

Instant downer... especially since it wasn’t my bike anyway – I’d borrowed it from a friend called Queasy Rider, who was a throwback to the Great Days of the ’60s. It was a BSA chopper with nine-inch over girders, a peanut tank, T-bars, pad seats and a couple of straight-thru pipes stuffed with glass wool. Oh yes, and great murals on damson mirra, and it’s called ‘The English Assassin’, which’ll probably mean nothing to you if you don’t read Michael Moorcock or listen to Hawkwind. This explains why I was wearing my Levi’s too – hell, you’ve got to dress the part if you’re going to pose at parties. I’m schizophrenic, of course. I always wear a tweed jacket and polished boots when I ride Velocettes... not that there’s much chance, these days – everyone’s putting them into numbered Swiss accounts now that they’re classic bikes, so how come nobody bought ‘em when they were in business, huh, except for me and a few other people?

“I have a motorcycle,” said Juicy Joycey’s friend, which is how I came to be taking her out, of course. I ought to explain why I sneered too – nurses, when I was a lot younger, used to ride LE Velocettes, Bantams and the occasional Tiger Cub, with screens, leg-shields and panniers covered in tartan. They were also all middle-aged, and’d been despatch-riders in the ATS. That’s why I sneered. I should’ve known better.

Incidentally, Juicy Joycey’s friend was called Mary Bernardette Lee. So much for the mystery of the Orient... It’s not easy for an English Zen Buddhist who likes dim-sum, oyster char su and lychees (and the 112 other dishes served up by my local Cantonese restaurant and, yes, I can use chopsticks, and I’m up to 97 at the moment), classical Chinese music and lapsang souchong tea to realise that some Chinese girls are Roman Catholic (which explains the Christian names), go a bomb on burgers,

chips and HP Sauce, and prefer the Boomtown Rats and (don’t ask me why) Plastic Bertrand.

Of course, I didn’t know that when I asked her out – in between sneering at the idea of a tiny and beautiful girl rolling up for a date on a Honda 90 step-thru, super-butch macho nearly-famous writer did it again... needless to say, she had a Guzzi Le Mans. They’re very low in the saddle, but that doesn’t mean they were designed by Matchbox to stand on a mantelpiece. Why do I always end up taking out exhibitionists? Because I like them, that’s why. And because they never say a goddamn word about it until it’s too late for me to back out.

And so away we went, about a week later, off for a holiday in the Yorkshire Dales for a weekend. A camping holiday. I don’t have to tell you what happened, do I? Tough, because I’m going to...

It rained.

So what else is new?

I don’t want to upset chopper builders and owners, but there’s something you all ought to know – they’re not as good as Guzzis in the wet. Particularly when the wet is on roads about as wide as the biblical needle they used to pass camels through, threading their sinuous way between high drystone walls of very solid and hard construction, and with newly dumped gravel lying around in piles on the apex of every bend.

Oh yes, and my famous waxed-cotton oversuit (okay, so it is 15 years old after all) started leaking in all the usual places (shoulders, zips, and especially the crotch, needless to say).

So this is the scenario; every time we went somewhere, I’d arrive there about four minutes later than Mary Bernardette, and find the Le Mans steaming gently in the torrential rain. I’d park The English Assassin, and go into the welcoming warmth of the hostelry, squelching slightly, and wringing the water from my beard. Sat demurely at a table, nursing (no pun intended, honest) a Coke-and-lime would be Mary Bernardette,

immaculate in a peasant-print dress worn over dainty bike boots. How many people do you know who wear frocks under one-piece leathers, huh? Don't answer that – what your friends fancy doing is their own business, after all. Not many, I'll bet, even so, but it poses quite an interesting problem – of course, I'm only guessing (we had separate tents, and, yes, mine leaked and hers didn't), but to wear a dress under leathers you'd have to roll it up to waist level, which must be... err... quite chilly on a bike. It's an interesting visual concept though, even if you're not a trainee dirty old man like me (and I expect most of you are).

Be that as it may, as soon as I set foot across a door, dripping and mumbling, people would come up to me and say, with varying degrees of politeness: "Piss off, mate – we don't like your sort in here."

"It's all right," Mary would say with a winning smile, "he's with me, more or less. He looks all right once he's taken his clothes off." Us bikers know what she meant, but it's a phrase that can obviously be misinterpreted. I should be so lucky. So I'd clamber out of my oversuit – you'd be amazed at how the dye runs on T-shirts and new Levi's; I had blue and red (from the shirt) and indigo feet the entire weekend... I had quite a few other things blue and red and indigo as well, but we won't go

into that here, okay?

We never seemed to stop long in one place – the muttering from the locals used to upset me, and you can get tired of people saying endlessly: "'Ere, is it true you bite the 'eads off live chickens then? Ey up, that's reet mucky..."

All they ever said to Mary Bernardette was: "And 'ow do you like our country then? By 'eck, it must be nicer than Shanghai" which is a pretty sensible thing to say to a Chinese girl... except she was born in Singapore, has never seen Hong Kong, let alone mainland China, and has lived ten years in England. Ah well, as you'll have realised by now, we can all make mistakes.

It was pretty much like that all weekend. No one knows what discomfort is until they've woken up at three in the morning in a soggy sleeping-bag floating on two inches of water, and it would've been worse if I'd gone to bed sober each night as well... not that you don't sober up pretty quickly anyway in those circumstances. Have I ever mentioned my haemorrhoids? Well, I've got arthritis as well now. And my skin went all white and wrinkly.

There are two ways to attract women (no, actually there are three, but the third'll get you locked up, and we're not all built that way in any case);

Number One is to charm them and/or impress the hell out of them, and Number Two is make them feel sorry for you. My own belief is that it's better to be pitiable than impressive – that way it always surprises them when you finally do something right (and if you can't finally do something right, you shouldn't be going out with them in the first place).

Saturday night saw me at my lowest ebb. I crawled out of my tent, strangled myself in the ropes, and fell over The English Assassin. I staggered over to Mary's tent, and knocked on the flap. It's not easy.

"Who is it?" a sleepy voice asked.

"Who the bloody hell do you think it is?" I answered.

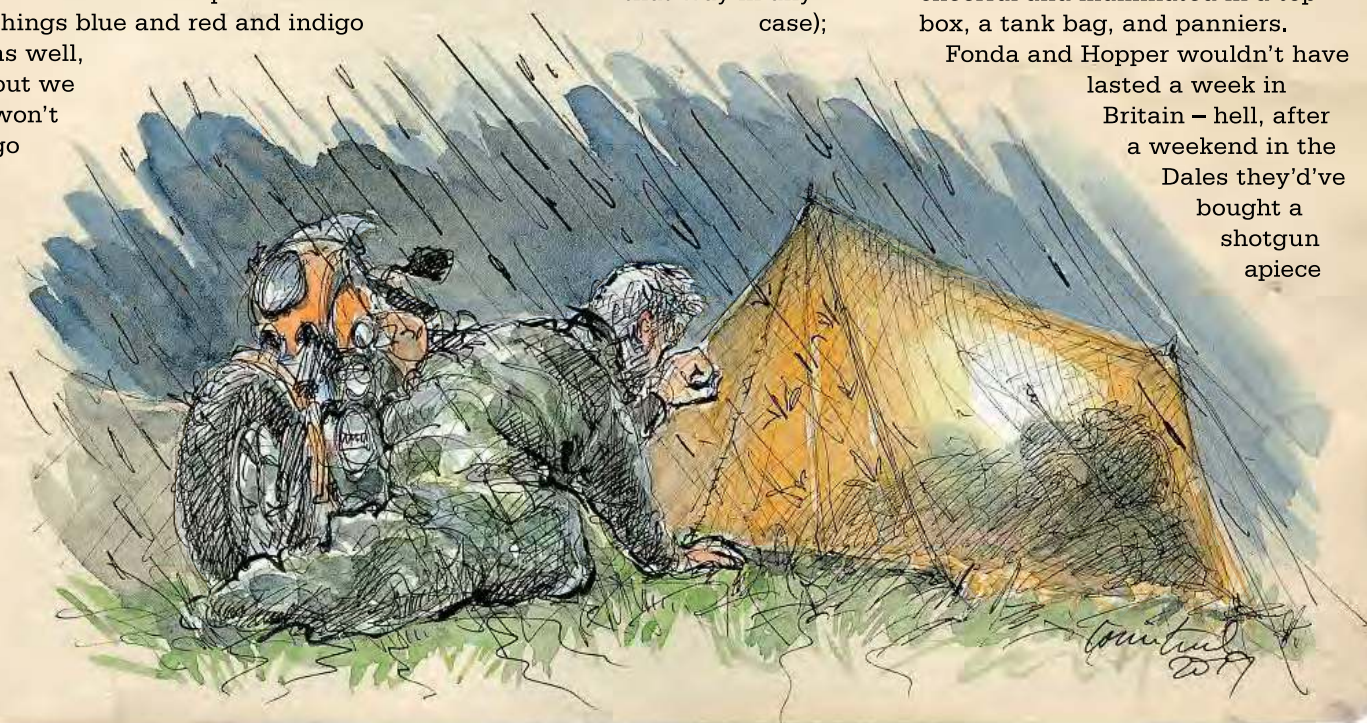
"Go away," was the reply. "No funny business."

There's nothing funny about potential pleurisy and hypothermia, as far as I'm concerned, and I said so.

The flap opened, and a tousled head peered out. "I shall make you some soup," she said. "You'd better come inside and wrap yourself in blankets. I shall turn my back." And she did.

There's another thing about Guzzis as compared to choppers – you can stuff a fantastic amount of stuff to keep you dry, warm, cheerful and illuminated in a top-box, a tank bag, and panniers.

Fonda and Hopper wouldn't have lasted a week in Britain – hell, after a weekend in the Dales they'd've bought a shotgun apiece



GOOD MORNING, CAMPERS

and shot themselves, never mind about having it done by red-necks in trucks... that's if they hadn't died from pneumonia beforehand.

When I woke up later in the morning, the sun was shining, and a plate full of bacon-burgers and beans was being shoved under my nose.

"Hello," said Mary Bernardette. "What a nice morning, Jim Fogg."

I think she thinks it's all one word. It probably means something in Cantonese, but I had to agree with her about the day. I'm not a nature lover – no one who's ridden a bike for 16 years is likely to be after all that rain, fog, black ice and snow – but it's true that you get good days as well as bad days, and that Sunday was one of the best. Things look clearer after rain; sharper, more defined, as if some of the dirt's been washed away, and a lazily revving big bike's the best way to see it, swooping along those narrow hill-roads like a big metal bird. There's time to look around, with the exhaust roar booming off the drystone walls, and the motor spinning over easily, the wheels turning with flashes of silver – there's even time to ride up alongside the person you're out on the road with and give them a big smile that says nothing but happiness. Okay, so I'm a big softy... and choppers aren't a hassle all the time either. Mind you, we'd swapped over bikes then thanks to the magic of Norwich Union. I was right about how low (that's not a criticism, by the way) the Le Mans is – my elbows kept touching my knees, but the seat was a nice change from the pile-crushing pad on the chopper... maybe I ought to consider a California after all.

By the time we got to Skipton (Gateway to The Dales, or their back door if you happen to be going the other way, which we were), I was feeling pretty good. If you're ever around there, go and visit Skipton Castle – it's got the best medieval latrine in Britain. I always like showing it off to friends, and I thought Mary Bernardette would appreciate it.

Maybe I've got an odd sense of humour, but that's how you are when you're an archaeologist. It's called the Long Drop – it's a square hole in the overhanging castle wall, and it's 165 feet down to the river. Imagine being sat on it when some unfriendly baron tries to storm the castle, and says to his archers: "Aim for that pink bit up there." Makes you think, huh? And you'd be surprised how many castles were taken by guys climbing into them through the sanitary arrangements – it probably took a lot of nerve... and blocked sinuses. Needless to say, while I was describing this to Mary and an admiring party of schoolkids, Kraut tourists, and bemused visitors from Idaho, I managed to drop my helmet down it. It's lucky no one was walking around underneath.

I can also recommend the nearby Chinese restaurant. I don't know what was said there, but there was a lot of chat in Cantonese over the sweet-and-sour pork and crispy noodles, and everyone seemed amused by me. They might've been discussing what an idiot I was, of course, and I managed to prove it on Sunday night... or rather Monday morning, very early. By that time, Mary Bernardette and I were sharing her tent (my tent was being used to cover up the Guzzi and the BSA, which was all it was fit for), and we were camping alongside Ingleborough. We'd spent an enjoyable evening in The Hill Inn, which is not only a good place, but actually welcomes bike owners as the National Chopper guys'll confirm. We walked back (I know you all think I'm a confirmed drunkard, but I don't actually ride bikes much when I'm seriously partying), and after cocoa (no, honest), we got into our sleeping bags and fell into dreamless slumbers.

I woke up in the early hours aware of a pressing need of nature, but then don't we all, one way or another? I decided to put on my one-piece (I'm modest, and the need wasn't all that pressing), and make my way out into the

field, via the sleeping form of my partner. I was just struggling into the suit when I fell over, completely paralysed, with stabbing pains from ankle to navel.

"Aaaarggh!" I screamed, and fell on top of Mary Bernardette.

"What is it? What is it?" she shrieked.

"Ogodogodogod," I whimpered, "I'm paralysed."

"Don't move," she said, which was pointless, "I'm a trained nurse."

"You're a trained children's nurse," I replied, sweating and struggling to stand up. I didn't want a potty.

"So what?" she answered. She put the light on, and fell about laughing. I'd been trying to get into her one-piece leathers. And, no, I'm not five feet tall and 32-30-32. In fact, they're about the right measurements for my left leg. No wonder I got stabbing pains, and a feeling of claustrophobia. And no wonder I've become a legend, either... but then so are Charlie Chaplin, and Laurel and Hardy. Just as well Mary Bernardette was a trained children's nurse as well... they've got a good way with tantrums and hysterics.

And as Master Po said to Grasshopper shortly before he left the monastery to make kung-fu movies in Hollywood: "The green-backed frog sits on the lily-pad in the pouring rain, Grasshopper: but if Buddha was a red horse with a golden saddle, who would ride him over the mountains?" Makes you think, huh? I don't know what the hell it means either. Of course, I asked Mary Bernardette one day, while she was setting the tappets on her Guzzi,

"What a load of rubbish," she answered. "Ridiculous." There's nothing wrong with her Rs... or the rest of her.

I get a lot of funny looks from all the other Chinese nurses, though, and they all seem to giggle a lot whenever they see me trying to start my bike. Mind you, they're all mostly psychiatric nurses. And none of them has a Guzzi Le Mans, either. 🍷

SEND PICS OF YOUR BIKE, YOUR LADY, YOUR BLOKE (BUT NOT YOUR DINNER, THIS ISN'T FACEBOOK) TO **NIK@BACKSTREETHEROES.COM**



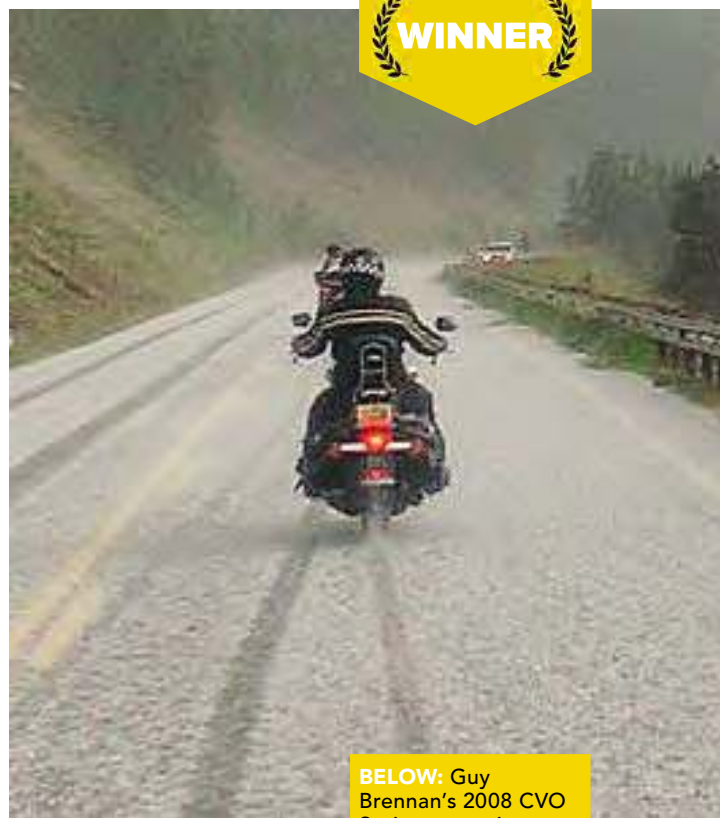
BELOW: "Dear BSH, pic of our triumphant return from Helmsley this weekend. We got the sun and back to Willingham Woods for a coffee. Great weekend! Jamie M." That bloke at the front doesn't look like he had a great weekend... or maybe he did, that's the problem.



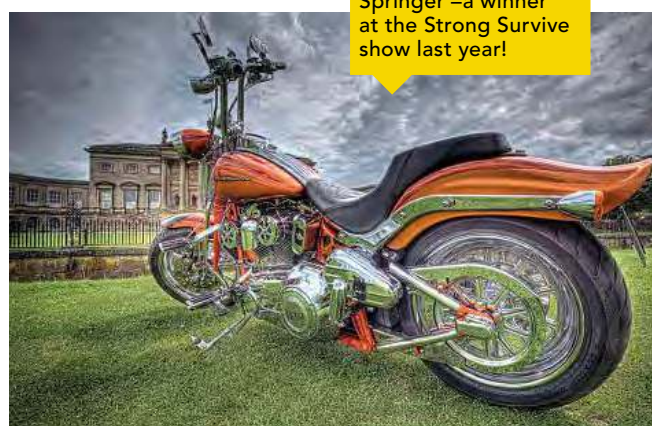
LEFT: Stephen Finch sent this pic, along with the words 'good-looking machine'... he's not wrong!

BELOW: "Dear BSH, you asked for pics for the mag – this was taken going over Highway 212 (the Bear Tooth Pass) into Montana in the US. This is in August... (road's closed half the year). Bob"

WINNER



BELOW: Guy Brennan's 2008 CVO Springer – a winner at the Strong Survive show last year!



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Hunter's 13 months old, and here's him sat on his grandad Andrew's Sportster. Andy's bought him his first bike jacket, with 'Hunter Racing' all over – it's too big for him at the mo' but they're getting him started early!

READERS' Lives

SEND PICS OF YOUR BIKE, YOUR LADY, YOUR BLOKE (BUT NOT YOUR DINNER, THIS ISN'T FACEBOOK) TO **NIK@BACKSTREETHEROES.COM**

RIGHT: Rufus' 'Pie-Heater' – about 35 miles heats them to perfection! (Trev Dowling)



Robbie's rather cool, lemon yellow 'Arley chop' shortly after it was finished. Tres cool, Robbie, tres cool!



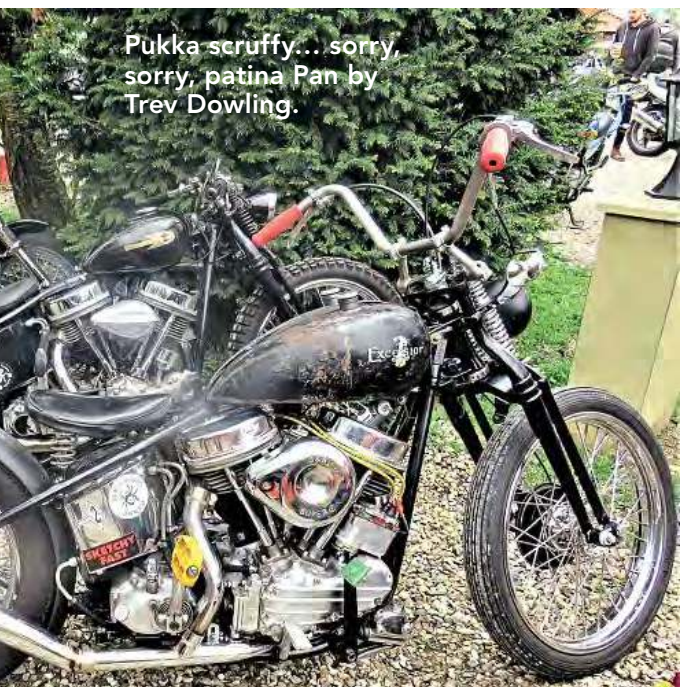
BELOW: When you're American and just too cool to ride your own bike... pic by Chris Ryder.

ABOVE: Kevin Crane's purple Z650 survivor chop – loads of fun to ride, even though stopping is always, shall we say, exciting?

RIGHT: All you need for jungle survival – a UXB sweat, an LS2 fluorescent lid and a bike! Beat that, Bear Grylls. Hawk on yet another jungle ride in 'Nam.



Pukka scruffy... sorry, sorry, patina Pan by Trev Dowling.



ABOVE: Richard Enfield bought his trike as a wreck many, many moons ago, rebuilt and sorted it, and has been riding the arse out of it ever since. Good work, Rich!



RIGHT: Frank Bull's 2002 Triumph America, that he's been around Europe on, just chilling at home on the Isle of Wight. One day, he says, he will clean it...

BELOW: Adam's super-swirly goose-necked Suzook chop, spotted by John Bolt.



Gav Coles' flat-tracker was first featured back in April 2010. It's changed a bit now, but still looks the dog's...



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DEMOCRACY THAT WORKS

MAG HAS HAD ANOTHER LIVELY MONTH WHERE THERE'VE BEEN MORE POSITIVES THAN NEGATIVES, INCLUDING ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE TO ENSURE EVERYONE KNOWS WHO'S DOING WHAT, HOW AND WHY.

MAG

right now is fighting on many fronts, and we took stock of all this in our annual review of activity. We're always keen on the democratic processes and so, on the weekend of 28th September, we held our Annual Group Conference (AGC). This year it was hosted by the West Yorkshire MAG branches, and I'd be lying if I told you it was all business. Yes, that's a large part of it, but there's also the socialising part – not only do members from all over get to discuss and shape MAG, but they get to let their hair down in the evening.

This year we had not just the political unit (Colin Brown, director of campaigns and political engagement, and Lembit Öpik, director of communications and public affairs), but also our administration team, Carol and Julie, in attendance. The AGC keeps everyone accountable to the membership, and it's an event I truly look forward to each year. We're a team that really works as a team, and for the movement, without anything getting in the way. It's a kind of democracy that works... maybe Westminster could learn something from us!

By contrast, you might've noticed that Parliament continues to be in a state that I believe can best be described as 'utter chaos'. I'm never sure, when I tune in to the national news, what I'll hear next, or which individual is going to be interviewed by a probing reporter looking to find some gem of previously undisclosed information that'll provide the key to unlock the mayhem we now seem to be embroiled in. Where does that leave MAG? Well, we keep working with all the politicians on a local and national level because riders and motorcycles, not parties or Brexit, are what matter to us. Lembit told me we'll be having a General Election soon, and I'll share his prediction with you – let's see if he's right by the time you read this?

We've been able to update our bike theft ranking data, having received responses from Leicestershire and Humberside forces, and we're now working on ensuring that we get responses next year from the six 'offending' forces that refused to respond this time round. It seems that the relevant police and crime commissioners just aren't that interested, saying it's an operational matter for their force commanders. Okay then, we'll continue to contact chief constables. We've had some positive engagement from Nottinghamshire Police, and are hoping to get in to actually meet Merseyside soon as it's an area with a huge bike theft problem. Work with West Yorkshire is ongoing, and we're hopeful this'll lead to results.

Highways England covers England's main road arteries, and has a committee which deals exclusively with motorcycle issues. Colin attended their latest meeting on 25th September in Manchester. Currently, the committee is engaging with safety campaigns and we, along with others, are helping to shape those campaigns. It's a good example of the mainstream environment in which MAG now operates. We'll be taking forward members' concerns about SMART motorways, and how the loss of the hard shoulder leaves any stranded rider at extreme risk.

There's concern here, and across Europe, regarding electric scooters and the law. To be clear, this isn't scooters using an electric powerplant instead of an internal combustion engine, it's the type of machine you would've previously propelled by foot, and they don't require any type of licence to operate. Keith Prince, a London politician and friend of MAG, has an interest in this area, and contacted Lembit to discuss the subject. The two met in September, and Lembit outlined MAG's position. In short, we support the legalisation and regulation of these machines, because it's far more sensible than simply letting them run around without any control whatsoever. Keith said: "I'm working with Lembit to get the Government to change the law so that we can have a sensible approach to this valuable means of personal transportation. However, we don't just

want to change the law on this one issue. We want the Government to give regional authorities overarching powers to be able to respond much more quickly to technical innovations, especially with regard to the grey area between motorcycles, scooters and electric devices." In other words, the idiots who have no respect for anyone else could end up being regulated like the rest of us. It can't come a moment too soon.

On with the good news; I'm delighted to be able to tell you that Leeds City Council Scrutiny Board has now recommended that Leeds City Council conducts a 'bikes in bus lanes' trial. Local MAG members've been fighting for the right to access bus lanes in Leeds for more than seven years, and they know that while this is by no means a done deal, it's a big step in the right direction. Well done to Manny and all the other activists who've put untold hours into this battle. I can't report quite the same level of success in the West Midlands – there's been some progress in Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton, but it's slow going. Rest assured that the pressure is being applied consistently and relentlessly.

Work is still ongoing in respect to Clean Air Zones (CAZ) which are a concern across the entire country. We keep our document regularly updated, so you can know what we know. Find it on the Wki.mag-uk.org page. We search for, and read up on, any CAZ consultations, and make written and verbal responses as the opportunities arise. If you see anything, do check the link to make sure your local situation is in the system. It would help a lot if you let us know via the office (details below) if you spot something we might not know about.

Recently, we received a request for an interview from Mathew Humphrey, a professor of politics at the University of Nottingham. Mat, who's a MAG member, contacted us as he'd been successful in securing a grant to research 'Riders Rights: Freedom, Identity, and Authenticity in Grassroots Activism.' The political team and I were all happy to oblige, and have met with Mat, and he'll also be meeting other key MAG members over the coming months too, and we look forward to seeing the results of his research, which he envisages will take him about a year. It'll be interesting to read what he makes of it and, potentially, it could influence the way MAG works in the future.



Finally, remember that if you visit Motorcycle Live! in Birmingham in November, you can drop by the MAG stand for a chat, to renew your membership, join or get that mate who constantly says 'I've been meaning to join' signed up. We're proud to have a willing army of volunteers who freely give their time to attend and help Bill Green, our stand manager, to run the stand. We've done a lot, and we can do a lot more with your support – so if you're not already a member, now's the time to join up.

Ride free
SELINA LAVENDER

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TO JOIN YOU CAN CONTACT CENTRAL OFFICE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE (WWW.MAG-UK.ORG) OR SIGN UP AT A LOCAL MEETING OR MAG STAND.

FIND MEETINGS CLOSE TO YOU OR EVENTS, BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE / FACEBOOK PAGES.

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NOVEMBER

8th Nov: An Audience with Peter Hickman & Jamie Whitham at Point 4, Venns Lane, Hereford. More info from 07932 724462.

8-10th Nov: Welsh Coast MCC's Winter Rally at The Ship Inn, Strand Street, Moffat, Swansea. Tickets £15. More info from 07948 417280 or Facebook.

8-10th Nov: Adventure Motorcycle Club's Almost Christmas End of Summer Adventure Bollix Party at the Giant's Seat Scout Camp, Ringley Road West, Outwood, Manchester. Tickets £20. More info from Facebook.

9th Nov: Millennium 2000BC's Rock Night at the BAE Samlesbury Canberra Club, Myerscough Road, Balderstone, Blackburn, Lancs. Tickets £6. More info from ugotcoach@blueyonder.co.uk

10th Nov: Poppy Day Parade & Service & Military Vehicle Meet

at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

10th Nov: Brighton MAG's Remembrance Day Ride from Madeira Drive, Brighton at 9.30am. More info from Facebook.

10th Nov: Yorkshire Ride of Remembrance from Squire's Cafe, Newthorpe Lane, Newthorpe, Leeds, Yorks at 11.20am. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

10th Nov: Mid Kent Autojumble at Lockmeadow Market Hall, Barker Road, Maidstone, Kent. More info from 01732 840787.

10th Nov: M25 Ring of Red at various sites around London. More info from www.therideofrespect.co.uk or Facebook.

17th Nov: Derbyshire 623MCC's Pheasant Plucker Rally at Lumb Farm, Marehay Ripley, Derbys. Tickets £20. More info from Facebook.

16th Nov: Cogheads MCC's Nightmare at Brooks Club, Infant Street, Accrington, Lancs.

Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

16th Nov: Giant Auto & Bike Jumble at the North Yorkshire Events Centre, Scorton, Yorks. Tickets £3. More info from Facebook.

16-24th Nov: Motorcycle Live at the NEC, Birmingham. More info from www.motorcyclelive.co.uk

17th Nov: Ariel OC & Classic Bikes at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

17th Nov: 'Normous Newark Autojumble at Newark Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts. Tickets £10 early or £7 after 10am. More info from www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

17th Nov: Haynes Biker Breakfast at the Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset. More info from 01963 440804 or www.himm.co.uk

21st Nov: Wild Geese

MCC's Social Night at the Tame Valley Hotel, Park Road, Dukinfield, Gtr Manchester. More info from Facebook.

23rd Nov: Leyland Eagles MCC's Rock Night at the Leyland RAFA Club, Westby House, Golden Hill, Leyland, Lancs. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

24th Nov: Mud Pluggers Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

24th Nov: Windsor Toy Run from Ascot Racecourse at noon. More info from Facebook.

24th Nov: Huddersfield Autojumble at the Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield, West Yorks. More info from 07795 505388 or www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com

30th Nov: VMCC Autojumble at the Royal Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset. Tickets £3. More info from www.vmccsomerset.co.uk

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EVENTS

DECEMBER

1st Dec: Bike Day & Ace Cafe Club Xmas Meet at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

1st Dec: Unwanted MCC's Toy Run from The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports Club, Shobnall Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs at 9am. Tickets £5. More info from 07761 931226 or 07976 322993 or www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

1st Dec: Elf & Santa Onesie Run from the Full English Cafe, Halesowen Road, Halesowen, West Mids at 10.30am. More info from Facebook.

1st Dec: Southwell Toy Run from the Market Square, King Street, Southwell, Notts. More info from 07785 185544 or Facebook.

7th Dec: Southern Classic Off Road & Racing Show & Motorcycle Jumble at Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Rd E, Shepperton, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey. More info from www.kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk

7th Dec: Santa's Toy Run at the Sammy Miller Museum, Bashley Cross Roads, New Milton, Hants. More info from 01425 620777 or www.sammymiller.co.uk

7th Dec: Three Amigos & Dollies Christmas Toy Run from Commons (SA71 4AE), Pembroke at 1pm. More info from Facebook.

7th Dec: Midlands Motorbikes' Crap Christmas Jumper Convoy from the BP station, Stonebridge Highway, Coventry, West Mids at

noon. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

8th Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

8th Dec: Paws 'n' Claws Pet Food Run at 11am from the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

8th Dec: 'Normous Newark Autojumble at Newark Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts. Tickets £10 early or £7 after 10am. More info from www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

8th Dec: Stinkwheel Charity Motorcycle/Scooter/Hot Rod Christmas Fancy Dress Run from the Victoria Bikers Pub, Whitwick, Coalville, Leics at 3.30pm. Tickets £5. More info from www.vicbikerspub.co.uk

8th Dec: Roughleys Christmas Toy Run from Tesco Extra, Tiviot Way, Portwood Roundabout, Stockport at 11am. More info from Facebook.

8th Dec: Reading CMA's Reading Toy Run from Foster Wheelers, Shinfield Park, Reading, Berks at 1pm. More info from 01189 787095 or www.readingtoyrun.org

14th Dec: Dregs MCC's Christmas Party at the Salutation Inn, Hounds Gate, Nottingham. Free entry. More info from 07759 498054 or www.dregs-mcc.com

14th Dec: Unwanted MCC's Christmas Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports Club, Shobnall Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs. Tickets £5. More info from 01776 1931226 or www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

14th Dec: Widows Sons Masonic Bikers Association Southern Chapter's Toy Run from the Kings Court Centre, Winchester Road, Chandlers Ford, Hants at 10am. More info from wsmbs.southern@uponthellevel.co.uk or Facebook.

14th Nov: Mono Motorcycles Christmas Charity Quiz at the Pallant Centre, Havant, Hants. Tickets £15 per team. More info from www.monomotorcycles.co.uk

15th Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

15th Dec: Xmas Toy Run at 10.30am from the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

15th Dec: Xmas Carol Service at 7pm at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

15th Dec: The Big One Toy Run from Streetbike, Dudley Road, Halesowen, West Mids. More info from Facebook.

15th Dec: Haynes Biker Breakfast at the Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset. More info from 01963 440804 or www.himm.co.uk

17th Dec: Bikers Christmas Bash at the Kings Arms, Severn Drive, Newport Pagnell, Bucks. More info from Facebook.

20th Dec: Panthera MCC's Christmas Party at the Cottenham Club, High Street, Cottenham, Cambs. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

22nd Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More

info from www.london.acecafe.com

22nd Dec: NOTAS Xmas Toy Run from Salhouse Lodge, Vicarage Road, Salhouse, Norfolk at 11am. More info from 07720 756117 or Facebook.

26th Dec: Classic Bike Meet at the Pied Bull Farningham, Kent. More info from Facebook.

26th Dec: Cold Turkey Meet at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

29th Dec: Bike Day at the Ace Cafe, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

29th Dec: Huddersfield Autojumble at the Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield, West Yorks. More info from 07795 505388 or www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com

31st Dec-1st Jan: Unwanted MCC's New Year's Eve Party at The Rockbar, Shobnall Sports Club, Shobnall Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs. Tickets £6. More info from 07761 931226 or 07870 474207 or www.unwantedmcc.co.uk

2020 JANUARY

5th Jan: The Brass Monkey Run from the Victoria Bikers Pub, Coalville, Leics at noon. More info from Facebook.

18th Jan: Rockers Reunion Winter Party at the Riverside Leisure Complex, Richfield Ave, Reading, Berks. Tickets £29 prebook or £32 on door. More info from 01689 860980 or

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24-26th June: BSE Mad Cows' Mad Cow Rally at the British Sugar Sports & Social Club, Hollow Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Tickets £15 prebook. More info from www.bury-st-edmunds.mag-uk.org

FEBRUARY

1st Feb: Uxonians' Kick Off Party at the Bradley House Club, Bradley Street, Uttoxeter, Staffs. Free entry. More info from Facebook.

1st Feb: Brigantia Rebels MCC's Birthday Bash at The Old Spring, Springs Road, Wigan, Lancs. More info from Facebook.

7-9th Feb: Dangermouse RC's 34th & Last Frozen Nuts Rally at Bignall End Cricket Club, Boon Hill Road, Bignall End, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs. Tickets £15 (£16 if paying by Paypal) prebook or £18 on gate. More info from 07735 958566 or www.dmrallyclub.co.uk

15th Feb: Stunt Fest at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.StuntFest.co.uk

21-23rd Feb: Oddballs MCC's Frozen Balls Up Rally at Sleaf, Harmer Hill, near Wem, Shrops. Tickets £15 prebook only. More info from www.oddballsmcc.com or Facebook.

MARCH

8th March: Kenley Autojumble at the Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamis Avenue, Caterham, Kent (junc 6, M25). More info from Facebook.

22nd March: Straightliners

bike-only RWYB at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from 01484 718164 or www.StraightlinersOnline.co.uk

APRIL

4-5th April: Assembly Chopper Show at the Flatlands Motorama at the Autotron, Rosmalen, Holland. More info from Facebook.

10-12th April: Festival of Power at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

13th April: Devitt Southend Shakedown at Southend sea front, Essex. More info from Facebook.

19th April: Kenley Autojumble at the Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamis Avenue, Caterham, Kent (junc 6, M25). More info from Facebook.

MAY

1-3rd May: Yorkshire MAG's Into The Valley Rally at Sledmere, East Riding, Yorks. More info from www.yorkshire.mag-uk.org

2-3rd May: Springspeed Nationals at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

8-10th May: Shadow Crew's Out of the Shadows at the St John's Arms, Knotting Road, Melchbourne, Beds. More info from www.shadowvrev.co.uk

8-10th May: NSRA Nostalgia Nationals at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.NostalgiaNationals.com

10th May: Stonham Motorcycle Show at Stonham Barns Showground, Pettaugh Road, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket, Suffolk. More info from 01449 711111 or Facebook.

14-17th May: BMF's Bears & Bikes at Traquair House, Innerleithen, Scottish Borders. Tickets £25 prebook, non-BMF members or £20 members. More info from 0116 279 5112 or www.bmf.co.uk

15-17th May: Tyne Cyclones' Reivers Rally at Clennell Hall, Alwinton, Northumbria. Tickets £15 prebook or £20 on gate. More info from 0191 264 3506 or Facebook.

15-17th May: The Doorslammers at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.TheDoorslammers.co.uk

20th May: The Victoria Bikers Pub's John Coghlan's Quo at the Victoria Bikers Pub, Coalville, Leics. More info from www.wegottickets.com/thevictoriabikerpub

21-25th May: Biker Fest Italian Bike Week. More info from www.bikerfest.it

22nd May: Warrington Wheels Youth Bike-Building Comp at Chaigley School, Lymm Road, Warrington, Cheshire. More info from 07949 337507 or bobtowler57@hotmail.co.uk

22-25th May: The Main Event at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.santapod.com

23-25th May: Peterborough Festival of Wheels at Peterborough Lions Rugby Club, Bretton Park, Peterborough, Cambs. Tickets £2. More info from www.pbfow.co.uk

29-31st May: Rat & Survival Bike & Trike Show at the Ogri Clubhouse, Kemble Airfield, Kemble, Gloucs. Tickets £20. More info from Facebook.

29-31st May: South West Chopper Fest at a site in Devon. More info from www.southwestchopperfest.co.uk

31st May: Kent Modified Mash-Up at Faversham Showground, Faversham, Kent. More info from Facebook.

JUNE

5-7th June: Leyland Eagles MCC's Tyred & Exhausted Rally at Edgehill Farm, Bolton Road, Withnell, Chorley, Lancs. Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info from 07393 412265 or Facebook.

7th June: Kenley Autojumble at the Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamis Avenue, Caterham, Kent (junc 6, M25). More info from Facebook.

19-21st June: Yorkshire MAG's Farmyard Party at Dunscombe House, Helmsley, Yorks. More info from www.yorkshire.mag-uk.org

20th June: Dirtiggers Unorthodox Flat-Track Racing at the Eddie Wright Raceway, Normanby Road,

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EVENTS

Scunthorpe, Lincs. More info from Facebook.

26-28th June: AMOC (American Motorcycle Owners' Club) Rally at Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamish Ave, Canterbury, Kent. Tickets £10. More info from 07782 357067 or www.amoc1994.com

26-28th June: Punta Bagna French Alps Chopper Party at Valloire, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France. More info from www.punta-bagna-valloire.com or Facebook.

28th June: Ton-Up Day at Jacks Hill Cafe, A5, Towcester, Northants. More info from Facebook.

JULY

3-5th July: Wycombe MAG's Chinnor

Bike Dayz at Little Horsenden Farm, Lower Icknield Way, Princes Risborough, Bucks. Tickets £15 prebook. More info from www.wycombemag.co.uk

9-12th July: Northern Comfort Blackpool V-Max Rally at Villa Football Club, Stalmine, Blackpool, Lancs. More info from 07850 711788 or Facebook.

10-12th July: Pre-Evo Party at Grevenbroich, Germany. More info from Facebook.

10-12th July: Tomintoul Motorcycle Gathering at Tomintoul, Moray, Scotland. More info from Facebook.

10-12th July: Dragstalgia at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.dragstalgia.co.uk

12th July: Mono Motorcycles' Summer

BBO at The Greyhound, Cocking Causeway, Midhurst, West Sussex. More info from www.monomotorcycles.co.uk

17-19th July: TWATS' Zombie Rally at the Brighton Ferry, Brighton, near Selby, Yorks. Tickets £21 prebook only. More info from 01709 648966 or 07766 308668 or Facebook.

17-19th July: HAMC Lincs' Bullfrog Bash at a site in Lincolnshire. More info from Facebook.

17-19th July: Road Dragons MCC's Over the Edge Rally at a site in Cheshire. Tickets £18 prebook or £20 on gate. More info from 07841 391345.

18th July: Hextable Motor Show at Hextable Park, Hextable, Kent. More info from Facebook.

18-19th July: Summer Nationals at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

19th July: Prescott Bike Fest at Gotherington, Cheltenham, Gloucs. More info from Facebook.

24-26th July: Halfway Heroes MCC's Leathered in Lincoln Rally at Carbourne Parva, Caistor, Lincs. Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info from 07709 907745 or Facebook.

25th July: Calne Bike Meet at Calne, Wiltshire. More info from www.calnebikemeet.com

31st July-2nd Aug: FUBAR MCC's Feked Up Again at Marstons Sports & Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton

upon Trent, Staffs. Tickets £12 prebook or £18 on gate. More info from mrsknobhead.fubar@yahoo.com

31st July-2nd Aug: Yorkshire MAG's Yorkshire Pudding Rally at Escrick, near Selby, Yorks. More info from www.yorkshire.mag-uk.org

AUGUST

7-9th Aug: Oddballs Rally at Abingdon Rugby Club, Lambrick Way, Abingdon, Oxon. Tickets £25. More info from Facebook.

26th Aug-2nd Sept: Lincolnshire Bike Week at the East Coast Showground, Skegness, Lincs. More info from www.lincolnshirebikeweek.co.uk

31st Aug: Kent Chrome & Cruisers at the Faversham Showground, Faversham, Kent. More info from Facebook.

SEPTEMBER

10-13th Sept: The European Finals at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

18-20th Sept: Cernunnos MCC's Mabon Rally at the Robin Hood, Church Lane, Clifton Reynes, Bucks. Tickets £10. More info from 07870 704533 or www.cernunnos-mcc.org

18-20th Sept: NSRA Hot Rod Drags at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.HotRodDrags.com

20th Sept: Kenley Autojumble at the

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Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamish Avenue, Caterham, Kent (junc 6, M25). More info from Facebook.

26-27th Sept: National Finals at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

OCTOBER

18th Oct: Kenley Autojumble at the Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamish Avenue, Caterham, Kent (junc 6, M25). More info from Facebook.

18th Oct: Straightliners bike-only RWAYB at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.StraightlinersOnline.co.uk

31st Oct: Flame & Thunder Show at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

NOVEMBER

7th Nov: Fireworks Frenzy at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

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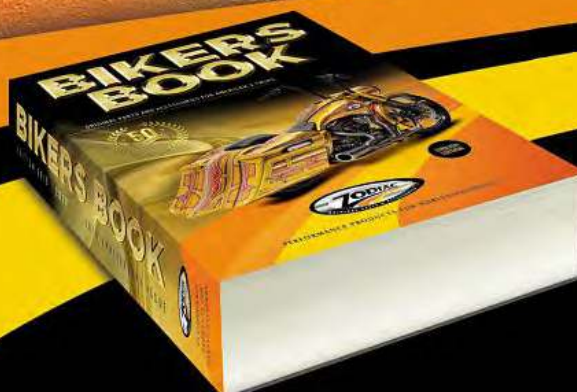
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MILE**



RICK HULSE

I and my lovely partner Mandy have recently returned from a holiday in Marrakech, Morocco. Marrakech sits just a stone's throw from the Atlas Mountains, which separate the Mediterranean and Atlantic coastlines from the Sahara Desert, so we knew it was going to be hot, but, as neither of us'd ever been to Africa before, we were somewhat taken aback by quite how hot it was!

MOTORCYCLE MADNESS IN MARRAKECH

WE

arrived at Marrakech Airport at 8pm, and the temperature was a balmy 33 degrees Celsius. Thankfully we'd done enough research

to be dressed accordingly, with Mandy wearing a light, floaty dress and myself doing a passable impression of Hannibal Lecter in the final scene from the film *Silence of the Lambs*. The drive into the centre of Marrakech was our first experience of the madness of Moroccan traffic – on the face of it, the only rule seemed to be 'every man, woman, or child for themselves'! Bearing in mind the fact that I have, in the past, driven and/or ridden in Paris, Rome, Seville, Madrid and Lisbon, I didn't think there could be a more nerve-racking free-for-all traffic system anywhere other than, perhaps, India, where I'm told, it is truly insane in the bigger cities. By the time our taxi reached our wonderfully Moorish hotel in the Medina (the ancient walled town at the heart of Marrakech), you couldn't've got a Rizla paper between the cheeks of my arse!

The following day, as temperatures quickly rose to 36 degrees C, we decided to begin our exploration of the Medina and its legendary 'souks', which are narrow streets packed with market stalls, and street vendors of an impossibly wide selection of goods, from spices to clothing, baby tortoises and tacky jewellery. Our initial foray into the spice souks was as atmospheric as we'd hoped it'd be; the wonderful aromas of jasmine, amber, patchouli, and a thousand other fragrances were quite intoxicating, and the constant questions from stall-holders, as we meandered by their precipitously stacked wares, were so practised and smooth that we soon fell into the trap of conversation.

"Hey English! What is this?" asked a young trader, pointing to a pile of small resin blocks.

Of course I couldn't let his question go by without a witty response: "Well, you're the one trying to sell it, pal. If you don't know what it is, I don't think much of your chance of flogging it to anybody!"

Thirty minutes later we left his stall with all sorts of sweet-smelling things, and we were 25 quid lighter than when we started. Lesson learned, I responded to all further enquiries of this nature from traders with a polite shake of the head, and a smile.

As we had started our explorations fairly early in the day, the souks were relatively easy to meander around but, as the morning wore on, they became more crowded, and through those crowds a seemingly constant stream of mopeds and scooters, some piled high with goods, zig-zagged their way through the throng, very rarely coming to a halt as their riders exhibited some incredibly well-practised slalom stunt-riding as if they were born to it!

In the afternoon, we sat in a wonderful vegan restaurant near the Palace El Badi with a view out on to a busy intersection of five roads. Here the true scale of insanity was evident to even the most casual bystander; hundreds of small-capacity motorcycles and scooters vied for the right of way with buses, cars, taxis, horse-drawn carriages, half-starved donkeys pulling unfeasibly large loads on rickety old carts, little kids on roller skates and, of course, hundreds of pedestrians whose attitude to road safety was on a par with that of the many pheasants that can be seen squashed on the rural roads of Britain.

In amongst this grand melee of suicidal driving, we were both drawn to the strange 'rules' that seem to apply to the motorcyclists – about 90% of the riders wore helmets of one sort or another... however we never saw a single individual who'd actually

fastened the chin strap. Then there were the pillion passengers, often as many as three, and in some cases four per machine (plus the rider) – not one single pillion passenger wearing any form of helmet, and every single person wearing either flip-flops or open sandals on bare feet. Often a woman wearing some sort of sari'd be riding a scooter with a small child squashed between her and her husband, with another small child clinging to his back while perched on the tiny wire luggage rack. In at least two instances we saw this with the addition of the man also holding a baby under one arm!

Weirdly, each time there was a near-miss or the screech of brakes, a smile, a hand to the chest, and an acknowledging nod from whoever was at fault seemed to be all that was required to dissipate what in the UK would have engendered a road-rage incident. I can only surmise that, being a quite devout Muslim country, people simply place themselves in the hands of their god, and hope for the best. Sadly that trust seems to be somewhat misplaced when the official statistics show the rate of road fatalities in Morocco to be almost four times higher than in the UK...

It'd be too easy to dismiss the bikers in Marrakech as 'mad bastards', but here in the UK we still have people who think crown green bowling is an interesting sport, and tonight my lovely partner Mandy and I will be talking to a terrifying group of Brownies in Stockport about why they should care about hedgehogs... ain't none of us free from the influence of 'la folie'!

Would I recommend people to visit Marrakech? Hell yes, it's a fabulously evocative place!

Would I recommend anybody to go there on a motorcycle? Not on your nelly! 🍷

RICK HULSE

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