



## The Magazine of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

### **WELCOME...**

to the latest edition of Bikebytes. We are well into the season now with Runs organised for most weekends, although at the moment the 20th/21<sup>st</sup> July is free, so if you fancy organising something get in touch with John M at [events@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk](mailto:events@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk).

By the look of the photos on the website and Facebook page, the weather at Kelso this year was fine and dry so hopefully a good weekend was had by all who attended.

Make a special note in your diaries for the annual Treasure Hunt on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August, organised this year by Graeme and Karen. The meeting point and time will be advised nearer the time but you will need the OS Landranger map no. 72 Upper Clyde Valley (Biggar and Lanark) if you want to take part.

The Club membership now stands at 57 which is about the same for this time last year.

Cheers, **Janet Moss**

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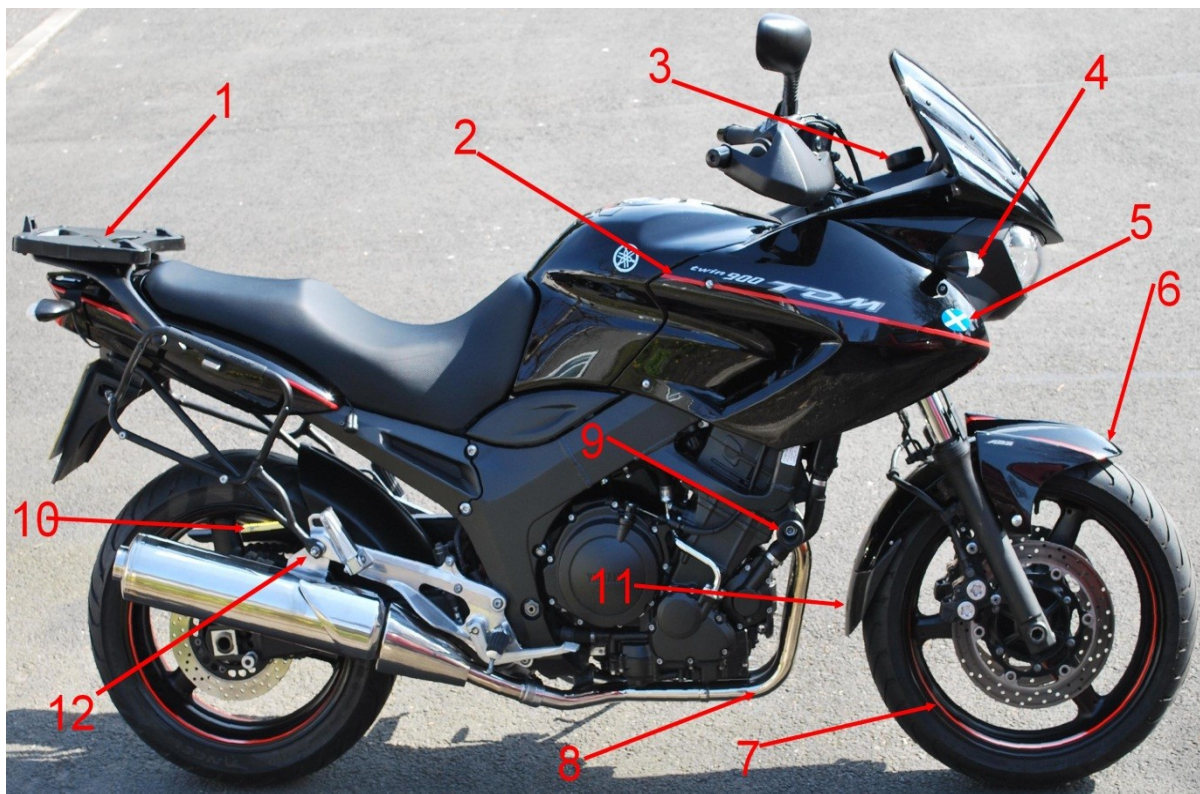
### **LANDMARKS CHALLENGE**

As at the 9<sup>th</sup> July, 109 visits had been made by 17 different members. Ken and Sarah Eddie have completed the Challenge and you can read how their epic trip went later in Bikebytes. Janet Moss joined the Bronze award qualifiers to make two by mid-June, and four more have qualified now - Steve Mid, David G, Michael W & George K. So far there are thirty pictures in the Best Landmark Photo competition.

### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Ken Eddie is looking to produce a calendar for the Club for 2014 using photographs that members upload onto the website. The photos need to show a bike or bikes, with or without people, against a good background. No registration plates on show, as this makes things more complicated. So, when you're out with the Club please keep this in mind. The calendar would make a good stocking filler at Christmas and earn some funds for the Club.

Here are the answers to Steve Middleton's 'Spot the Difference' from May's edition:



1. Givi Monokey plate – direct onto TDM rack
2. Red stripes on bodywork front and back, mudguard
3. Visor wiper sponge holder
4. Clear indicator lenses front and back
5. Saltire badges added, reflective
6. Saltire badge removed from nose of mudguard\*
7. Red wheel stripes front and back
8. Exhaust downpipes polished
9. Crash bungs added to engine mount\*
10. Scottoil label added on chainguard\*
11. Front Fenda Extenda added
12. Pannier rack front stays repositioned outside hanger\*

\*Nos 6, 9, 10 & 12 are kinda difficult to see, I agree. There is also the Scottoil feed pipe visible in the first pic thru' the rear wheel arch that has been repositioned out of sight.

**Steve Middleton**

## RABBIT IN THE HEADLIGHT

This time we turn the headlight onto Ken Eddie.



### **How long have you been a member of the SMC?**

I joined after the Honda UK Riders Club dissolved and I got my “welcome to the club” mention in the April 2002 issue of BikeBytes so I guess a month or so prior to that. I think I maybe had a year or so “off” in the mid “noughties” when I moved to Aberdeen for a couple of years, but started to participate with some “gusto” in 2008-ish.

### **When did you pass your test and what was your first 'proper' bike?**

I passed my test on the 19th May 1977 on my 1974 Yamaha RD200. I haven't had that many bikes, having had the common twenty year break for family rearing etc, so I can easily list them and let the readers decide which the first 'proper' one is. After the wee L plate Yamaha, it went: 1976 Suzuki GT500A, 1978 Honda CX500Z (my only ever brand new bike), 1978 Yamaha XS750, 1997 Honda CB600F Hornet, 1997 BMW R1100RS and 2005 BMW R1200RT.

### **What would be your dream bike?**

Might sound clichéd, but I think I'm lucky enough to already own it. If someone was to squeeze £15k into my hand tomorrow, I'd just go and get another R1200RT but brand new (although this year's colours are a bit naff!!).

Even if there was another few grand lying about for a second bike dalliance I wouldn't have a clue. Wouldn't be a sports bike for sure. More likely something classic looking and chromey like a Guzzi, or something like Sarah's.

**What is your favourite biking road?**

Too difficult!! Cairn O'Mount, or Dukes Pass, or Glencoe / Rannoch Moor, or Glenshee, or Glenfarg, or the Road to the Isles, or the Sma' Glen, or Lochearnhead to St Fillans, or, or.....Tell you what, try the Pas De Peyrol Puy Mary in France. Fab!!

**Where were you born and when (optional)?**

Forfar, Angus, 1959. We kind of moved around Angus because of my Dads work (Angus Constabulary) so when I was wee there was a time in Carnoustie, then from school age to flying the nest it was Arbroath. We'll probably drift back to the county when we retire.

**What do you do for a living?**

I'm an aircraft maintenance engineer to trade, starting as an apprentice when I was 16, and spent twenty odd years specialising in helicopters. Since 2000 I've been an Airworthiness Surveyor for the Civil Aviation Authority which involves surveying and evaluating aircraft and their equipment, monitoring maintenance programmes, along with aircraft maintenance and production companies to ensure compliance with relevant airworthiness requirements and also to ensure that acceptable standards of airworthiness are achieved by aircraft operators, and make it safer for you to fly off on your holidays!!

**What's your favourite film?**

Nothing heavy. I have a low attention span!! I was always a sucker for the original Italian Job. The Holy Grail or Life of Brian also would be up there. Of more recent watches I enjoyed Django Unchained, and would give any of Tarantino's stuff a watch. Pulp Fiction was a particular favourite.

**What's your favourite food/drink?**

I'm a fan of the curry, and do enjoy my business excursions to India for the real thing. Favourite drink? Well, any drink!! Even tea.....☺

**What's your pet hate?**

People who start a sentence "With all due respect" then don't show any!!

**What 3 items (not including your family) would you rescue from your house if it was burning down?**

Two dogs and a cat.....

**Who from history would you like to meet and why?**

I think I'd like to go back and meet Igor Sikorsky (popularly held as the father of the helicopter – though that's not strictly true) and, for one, thank him for a lifetimes livelihood, and for two, convey to him what a huge impact that his "dream" has had on the world in the last 65 years. Without the helicopter, many things just would not be possible.

Kenny Anderson sent in this article about his and John Hill's extension to the Brugge trip and their foray into France.

## **BELGIUM & FRANCE 2013**

As an add-on to Ken Eddie's taster trip to Brugge in April this year, John Hill suggested doing an excursion into France. Response to his suggestion was disappointing (mainly, we assume, because of time constraints) so it was only the two of us who headed off into, for me, uncharted France. However, John had done a similar trip through France before (see BikeBytes June 2012) so I felt fairly relaxed about the prospect.

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April: Eight SMC bold adventurers set off on an almost incident free journey to Newcastle; it was here that Fiona discovered, to everyone's horror, that her passport was out of date and so had to head home by train. The rest of us caught the overnight ferry to Amsterdam and next morning rode the 180 miles to Brugge where Ken's group were based for the weekend. We had an enjoyable evening sampling some of the innumerable Belgian beers and next morning, Saturday 6<sup>th</sup>, John and I said our goodbyes and moved into France. Originally, we had planned to give Paris a wide berth and head as far south as possible on Saturday, although after a suggestion planted by Ken we decided to ride through Paris before heading southwards. He was absolutely right. The ride through Paris - along the Champs-Élysée, around the Arc de Triomphe (twice!), back down the Champs-Élysée, then over the Seine and along to the Eiffel Tower, was an absolute buzz. The time we'd spent savouring the Paris thrill meant that our next overnight stop was only 60 miles south of Paris at Chartres. Luckily we managed to get to the tourist office just as it was closing and a very helpful girl fixed us up with a *chambre d'hôte* near the centre of town. The owner greeted us as we drew up outside and we soon discovered that he was a real character. In his garages he had an amazing collection of bikes and cars, including a classic XK140 Jaguar that was in beautiful condition. There was evidence of his world travels all around the garage and on his GS1200. It was a pity that we didn't see him again, as he went off to take part in the Paris marathon the next day. We reckoned that he must have been in his late sixties!

### **Kenny beside the Eiffel Tower**



Sunday 7<sup>TH</sup> April: A long ride (360 miles) to get down to Montcuq, a beautiful little village in the Lot region. Despite our relaxed start, we were soon reminded that on Sunday in France everything is closed and getting fuel can be difficult! We used a number of *péage* (toll) roads because they had service stations and in addition they helped us make up some lost time. John stayed in Montcuq during his trip last year so we had pre-booked a lovely 4 story building for three nights from the same proprietor. It had a kitchen, three bedrooms and two bathrooms for 25 Euros each per night including breakfast! Incredible value. Montcuq was a great village to use as a base for exploring the picturesque historical villages in the area *via* some near perfect biking roads.

Monday 8<sup>th</sup>: We did a 160 mile circular route visiting a number of medieval villages, two of the most impressive being Rocamadour and Saint Cirq-Lapopie, both perched high on rocky hillsides. Fortunately, because it was not yet holiday season tourists were few and far between and the spectacular mood of these places was unspoilt. The monsoon-like rain even stopped to coincide with our visits!

### **Rocamadour**



Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup>: An American tourist we were talking to yesterday at Rocamadour had been raving about another medieval town, Sarlat-la-Canéda in the Dordogne, so we decided to visit it today. The 140 mile round trip up through north-west Lot to Sarlat, let us enjoy near empty, twisty, well surfaced roads with the bonus of visiting another lovely town full of character.

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup>: Shortish run today (120m) to get down to Escures, over by the Pyrenees. When he heard that we were planning a biking trip to France, a former workmate of mine kindly invited us to stay for a few days. John and his wife Anita have been renovating a house in Escures over the past few years and they have now made it their permanent home. There was a welcome improvement in the weather compared to the previous week. John (my workmate friend) had got himself a GS1200 last year and took us on some great runs.

Thursday 11th: Ride down through Lourdes to the Pyrenees. Because of snow, all the passes over the mountains were closed. However, we managed to get as far up as Col du Soulor giving us great views of the closed Col d'Aubisque which has often been included in the Tour de France. Round trip was 100 miles.

**Kenny, John and John at Col du Soulor**



Friday 12th: 185 mile round trip visiting the beautiful towns of Sauveterre de Bearn and Saint Jean Pied de Port, which is only 5 miles from Spain and an important stop on the Way of Saint James pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. On our last morning in Montcuq, we were talking to a Scandinavian couple who had just started that walk. Apparently there are a number of pilgrimage routes that ultimately end up at Santiago de Compostela where, legend has it, St James's remains are buried.

Saturday 13th: Farewell to John and Anita with thanks for their great hospitality, then we headed 140 miles north to Bergerac in the Dordogne region; a brilliantly preserved medieval river port town, famous for its gastronomy.

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> – Tuesday 16th: Next, we headed 150 miles north-east to Riders Rest in Treignac. John checked out this place when he did his trip last year after seeing a recommendation in Ride magazine, so we had pre-booked accommodation for three nights here. We were welcomed by Tony and Wendy who ran Riders Rest but there were only two other bikers there and they were moving on to Spain the next day. On Monday, John and I visited the village of Oradour-sur-Glane about 65 miles north west of Treignac. The village had been preserved as a memorial to the 642 villagers who were massacred by the Nazis in the latter stages of the Second World War. On Tuesday, Tony suggested that he could show us some lovely biking roads on a run to the volcano Puy du Mary in Parc des Volcans D'Auvergne in the Massif Central. He said that the snow gates were still closed but he'd been there the previous week and it was possible to get quite far up the road. We did manage to get quite high up the mountain and were treated to fantastic views

of the surrounding range, as well as spectacular waterfalls from the rapidly melting winter snow. The roads were terrific and combined with Tony's local knowledge made for a very enjoyable 165 miles!

### **Parc des Volcans**



Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>: Time to head north towards our departure port of Zeebrugge, 550 miles away. We headed for the town of Troyes which was roughly half way. That gave us the opportunity to ride more interesting, scenic roads while bypassing Paris. Troyes was a vibrant place, the town centre bursting with restaurants and cafés; a good choice for our final night in France.

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>: We made an early start so that we could stop in Brugge before heading for the ferry. Everything went to plan and we were able to have lunch and a relaxed couple of hours in the city before going to the port. I had a moment of panic as we started to board the ferry when my bike wouldn't start and the alarm kept sounding. One of the other bikers said that he'd seen that problem before and reckoned it was something to do with the ferry's electronics messing with the alarm. Thankfully the problem didn't persist and I managed to get on board okay, although I didn't dare switch the engine off again until it was parked on the ferry!

Friday 19<sup>th</sup>: Our arrival port was Hull and as we'd hoped, the weather stayed dry so that we could stay off the motorways and enjoy a ride home across the Yorkshire moors. Despite the bitterly cold ride over the moors, it made a very enjoyable end to the trip. 3,081 miles of fantastic roads, picture postcard France, lovely food, drink and excellent company. A trip to remember!

**Kenny Anderson**

As you read earlier, Ken and Sarah completed the entire Landmarks Challenge in one week, no mean feat, as you will find out in Ken's article below:-

## **Landmarks Challenge in a week.**

### **Day minus 92 (Mid February)**

With the 2013 challenge having been published on the SMC website, and the first visit postings starting to trickle in, Sarah and I started to ponder how we were going to approach it this year. Having had a pretty good long trip out last year, overnighing at Ullapool to do the Kylesku Bridge, and a long day trip to the Sligachan Bridge on Skye, among other highlights that resulted in Sarah achieving a surprise "Gold" for the Bridge Challenge, we were confident about the long distance targets, and after Sarah recce'd a "round robin" route on Google Maps, amounting to 1400 miles we quickly concluded that, as a bit of a holiday, we could both take a week off work and at a steady plod work our way around all sixteen, with the odd night stop here and there. Fiona seemed keen to pillion a bit on some of Northerly targets too. Time to do a bit of planning.

### **Day minus 53 (26 March)**

With holidays booked now, for 20 – 25 May, and the two weekends either side, some accommodation requirements need to be fulfilled. Armed with Sarah's strict budget restraints, time to hit laterooms.com. Planning has taken us (roughly) to a clockwise Southern loop to start with, with one night stop, a day trip to catch the Eastern side, then a three day trip to the West and North, coming back down the easterly side. Hotel bookings made then in Dumfries, Conon Bridge and Brora.

### **Day minus 1 (17 May)**

Figured that May would be a good bet weather wise.....but having checked the weather forecast for the coming days a bit of last minute route changes begin to take priority, along with packing the one piece waterproof suits, and making sure the jacket and trouser liners are in. Temperatures were forecast to remain in single figures with high probability of rain. The original clockwise route from Dunblane for the southern targets starting on day 1 changes to an anti-clockwise one, to hopefully reduce the time spent in constant rain. Another change of plan is that we had originally thought we'd have two days on the road, one day off, one day touring, another day off, and then a three day trip. Change the first day off to a trip out west, to ease the three day trip a bit.

### **Day 1 (May 18)**



#1 of the challenge – **Finnieston Crane**

We left Dunblane around nine with partial tanks remaining from the last outing, beating the rain at that point. Bit of chilly start heading straight out onto the motorway for a direct route into Glasgow, bouncing off at the M9 J19 toward the SECC. Bimbed about the area a bit before deciding that the Rotunda Car Park, which is now in the custody of the Campanile Hotel was a reasonable vantage for the purposes of a snapshot for the record. (I'm not one for all this photo competition stuff, just want to ride my bike! If I wanted to be judged as a photographer, I'd join a camera club....) Sarah was a bit cissy about mounting the kerb to avoid the Campanile barriers, but with all the construction going on for the new commonwealth stadium, nobody seemed to get bent out of shape!! So far so good.



**#2 of the challenge – Ailsa Craig from Girvan.**

Negotiating around the barriers once again we headed out of Glasgow on the M77 to head for our first fuel stop of the week at the Kilmarnock services at the junction of the A77 / A71 / A76. So far it had remained dry, but we thought it prudent to suit up with the waterproofs at this point. Sometimes it works to keep the rain away! We carried on down the A77 and by the time we got down to Turnberry we were encountering ever increasing showers, and elected for a tea stop at the Balkenna Tearoom just south of Turnberry. Lovely view of Ailsa Craig from that spot and as we looked out of the Tearoom window it looked very spectacular, very clear, with a strange blanket of cloud over its summit which almost looked like snow. We debated taking a snap, but the bacon rolls turned up. By the time the bacon rolls were gone, so was Ailsa Craig! A band of heavy rain came between us and the rock, and out of view it fell. We carried on down to Girvan, with Ailsa remaining elusive. Kind of a pointless landmark if the weather is crap! For the evidentiary snapshot we had to wait a good twenty minutes for the weather to blow through so that you could at least almost make out Ailsa Craig through the clag. Snapshot above is from Balkenna tearoom after the rock vanished. I think in the photo submitted for the challenge, you can at least see the outline.



### #3 of the challenge – Mull of Galloway Lighthouse

We headed out of Girvan continuing South on the A77 until just outside Stranraer, where we veered off onto the A751 toward the A716 to Drummore, where we picked up the B road to the Mull of Galloway. The rain was pretty persistent by then and I was glad of the pinlock I'd fitted to my visor after similar conditions proved troublesome on Ruby's fine dining weekend to Argyll. The waterproofs held out, and the café just by the lighthouse was a welcome sight. This was the last landmark for the day, and, after a warming bowl of soup and a couple of cups of tea, we headed for a night stop in Dumfries. A straight forward route back up from the Mull to meet the A75 and apart from a fuel stop for Sarah at Newton Stewart, direct to our hotel, The Queensberry, in the centre of Dumfries, to dry out!!

### Day 2 (May 19th)



### #4 of the challenge – Gretna Green Blacksmiths Shop

After day 1's 227 miles then a nice meal, a couple of beers and a bit of telly a good night's kip was had at The Queensberry. After breakfast (included in our £35 rate!!) we headed out of Dumfries for a fairly straightforward zip down the A75 to bag No 4 at Gretna. The heavy persistent rain from the previous day had gone, and the forecast looked good for the rest of the day.



### #5 of the challenge – **A1 Saltire @ Border**

Leaving Gretna, we joined the A7 to head out toward the East coast, skipping between Scotland and Englandshire, then joined the A698 at Hawick where we stopped for fuel and a comfort break. The nice dry roads continued through the border country and with Sarah close behind, we soon were at the end of the A698 and joining the A1 at Berwick upon Tweed, for the short run up to the Border viewpoint, and Landmark number 5. Snapshot in the bag, we then continued up the A1 to Granthouse for a well-earned cup of tea and snack at the Cedar Cafe.



### #6 of the challenge – **Forth Bridge**

We left the Cedar, and continued on up the A1 for our last target of the day. I had identified a good viewing point to head to, using Google street view, at the Scouts Water Activity Centre, South Queensferry. As we got closer to the Forth estuary, rather worryingly a bit of a mist became apparent, and I started to wonder if we would see the bridge at all. Ailsa Craig all over again!! Making matters worse, when we arrived in South Queensferry, there was a bit of an event taking place, and the whole waterfront was mobbed. The access road to my viewpoint was blocked off, as there was abseiling taking place off the Rail Bridge. We took second best and got a picture sufficient to meet the needs of the challenge, and didn't linger for long. By now Sarah was bit road battered with the faster dual carriageway sections we'd done, so we elected to head home on the A904 instead and after another fill up for the Bonneville at Murco's in Newton we headed for Bo'Ness

then picked up the A905 at Grangemouth, to take us all the way to Stirling, then back to Dunblane. 209 miles for the day, and 436 clocked up thus far.

### Day 3 (May 20th)

The original plan had this down as a rest day, but with the somewhat disappointing weather we decided to use it to clear some of the westerly (from us) targets in case the situation worsened later in the week, and also to ease the mileage a bit for the three day trip planned to start Thursday.



### #7 of the challenge – McCaigs Tower

We left from home sharpish in the morning for the usual trip up to Oban through Callendar, Crianlarich, with a stop planned at the Real Food Café at Tyndrum. Didn't realise that it didn't open 'til 11am, so the Green Welly it had to be. After a cuppa, we headed out on the A85 toward Connel Bridge, then on to Oban. Squiggling our way up the steep inclines and twisty backstreets to get up to the Tower, it occurred to me that this may be a challenge for some riders in a group environment, but Sarah and I managed fine with a bit of spacing between us and a degree of anticipation. Once the snapshots were addressed, we headed back down into town for a fill up of both the bikes.



### #8 of the challenge – Ardnamurchan Point Lighthouse

We left Oban, heading back up to Connel Bridge, to join the A828, and a Soup stop at the Castle Stalker view café. Onwards to Ballachulish, and a short spell on the A82, turning off onto the Corran Ferry, and the A861 at the other side. Then there was the B8007 to Ardnamurchan. What can I say about that? Probably the most appalling road I've done in

a long time. Lots of gravel, tourists that don't know how passing places work, and white van men that think there's another lane somewhere for oncoming traffic. Don't get me wrong, it's a pretty spot, with interesting wildlife in abundance and we were blessed with nice weather on the day, but I don't think there is much that would draw me back until the road is improved. All in all, it dampened the elation at making Bronze. Compounding the matter, after the white knuckle ride that it was, we kind of forgot the fuel opportunity at Kilchoan, and once back on to the A861, then the A830, we started to look out for a filling station for the Bonneville, to no avail. I have no idea what vapour the Bonneville was running on by the time we got to Fort Bill, but it was a relief that we made it. I had visions of a siphon job out of the beemer at the roadside!! Mind you, other than the angst about fuel for Sarah, it was actually a nice run along the A830. Love that road.



#### #9 of the challenge – **Commando Memorial**

After getting the Bonneville filled up, we headed North out of Fort William to Spean Bridge then on to the Commando memorial. We got to monument about 6 pm and were surprised at the number of people still stopping to visit at that time, particularly on a Monday evening. After this, a straight run back down through Fort Bill to return home via Glencoe, Rannoch Moor, another leg stretch stop at the Green Welly then home. 345 miles for the day, and 781 miles total for the 9 visits so far.

#### **Day 4 (May 21st)**

After our long day, Tuesday was a more leisurely start with the intention of getting a couple of the closer targets accounted for, while the weather was still holding out.



#### #10 of the challenge – St Andrews R & A Clubhouse

After a quick fill up of both the bikes at Morrisons in Stirling we took the straightforward route through Coalsnaughton to the A944, to meet up with the A91 after Milnathort, and followed it straight into St Andrews. Once at the clubhouse, we found that it was quite congested with a full car park and not a lot of roadside spots to make use of for picture taking purposes due to localised road repair works. We squeezed the bikes into what space was available in the car park, took the snapshots, and then hit the road again.



#### #11 of the challenge – **Meiklour Beech Hedge**

After St Andrews, we stopped at the Tay Bridge greasy spoon for an egg roll and a cup of tea. Sarah's Bonneville once again became a conversation piece with a couple of passing classic bike enthusiasts. Heading over the bridge, we passed through Dundee then headed onto Coupar Angus, then down the A984 to meet the A93 and the Hedge. Nice hedge. Full of leaves and things.

To get home we just zipped into Perth, and home via A9, with a fuel top up for Sarah at the Shell just before Dunblane. Quick little 129 miler, taking the weeks cumulative to 913 miles.

#### **Day 5 (May 22rd)**

Day off. Washed and checked over the bikes and caught up with domestic chores. Packing and final planning tweaks to the routes. Weather forecast looks like snow and sub-zero temperatures out toward Achnasheen on the proposed route to Inverewe, so we decide to go to Aberdeenshire first rather than last, where we would have to contend with forecast high winds, but looking like it would at least be in the main dry. It's May!!

#### **Day 6 (May 23rd)**



#### #12 of the challenge – **Mormond Horse**

Back on road on the Thursday, but now with pillion Fiona joining us. A bit breezy as we are leaving Dunblane from where we head straight to Perth, and then take the A94 to Forfar, out through Aberlemno to Brechin for a tea stop at the Brechin Castle Tearoom. Temperatures were a bit on the cold side, and when heading over the Cairn O'Mount to Banchory we were sweeping snow from the visors for about three quarters of a mile. We took on fuel for both bikes at Inverurie, and then headed out to Oldmeldrum and on to Strichen. The Horse is visible from the village, so we just pulled over there and took a snap. The forecast wind had by now made its presence known, and we were so wind beaten and cold at this point, we didn't take on board at the time that this was silver, and we did pass through the challenge millennium mile on the way.



#### #13 of the challenge – **Sueno's Stone**

Leaving Strichen, we were still contending with high winds and I had a couple of moments with the weird angle going round bends with greasy deposits on the road wanting to wrest the front end from me, as we made our way round the back roads to meet up with the A98 to head through the wee coastal towns of Macduff, Banff, Portsoy and Cullen, before taking a sustenance stop at the Baxters factory outlet and café at Fochabers, having joined the A96. After a bite to eat, we headed straight to Forres and the Stone, which is just a few yards off the main road. By now the wind was noticeably easing, and we took an uneventful run in to Tesco's at Inverness for a Bonneville fuel stop, then over the Kessock Bridge to the A835 turn off to Conon Bridge where we were booked into the Conon Bridge Hotel for the night.

254 miles for the day, bringing the challenge total to 1170 and odds.

#### **Day 7(May 24<sup>th</sup>)**



#### #14 of the challenge – **Inverewe Gardens**

After a pleasant enough stay at the Conon Bridge Hotel (Rooms basic, but clean and comfy, good food, and overall good value for money at £70) we had a coldish start out in the morning. We head out the A835 toward Ullapool, and then veer onto the A832 for the duration of the journey to Inverewe. Lovely road, all the way. Plenty of evidence of fresh snowfalls on the higher ground around us as we passed through Garve and Achnasheen, but the road was nice and dry. A dozen hundred challenge miles passed this leg. At Inverewe we had a tea and scone in the superb restaurant that they have there. By now the temperatures are elevating, and it is getting quite pleasant.



#### #15 of the challenge – John O'Groats

From Inverewe Gardens, we continued around the A832 to meet up with the A835 again, and then around to Ullapool where we stopped to fuel up both the bikes and have a bit of a leg stretch. Carrying on around the A835 to join the A837, and then the A839, we continued on to Lairg where we stopped at the Crofters Restaurant by the “Dunroamin” caravan site for a nice bowl of home made soup. We joined the A9 a few miles south of Golspie, then headed north to stop off at Brora where we were booked into the Sutherland Inn for the night. As it was turning out to be a very pleasant evening Fiona elected to remain in Brora for a wander about, while Sarah and I headed on up to John O'Groats to get the piccie. A9 / A99, no deviations other than a Bonneville fill up at Wick, and an ice cream at JO'G!! Brilliant quick run with blue skies and sunshine for once, and we got back to Brora at exactly beer o'clock. Over 1400 challenge miles now logged .

#### Day 8 (May 25<sup>th</sup>)



#### #16 of the challenge – Cairngorm Mountain Funicular Railway

Sutherland Inn, Brora – Pleasant enough, if not slightly disorganised. Good food and price is about right at £65 for a double and £40 for a single.

After our night stop, probably the most enjoyable weather of the week presented itself, and we had a superb run down to the Cairngorm Mountain Park. We followed the A9 down one of its prettiest sections crossing the Dornoch Firth then down along the Cromarty Firth. A fuel stop for both bikes, back at the Tesco in Inverness, then onwards to Aviemore and the road to the Park.

Once there, we realised we'd probably never been there before. All three of us had no recollection!! One to revisit methinks. Loch Morlich looked stunning from the viewpoint at the funicular car park, some of the walks were very inviting, and there just seems like loads to do for two or three days.

Running home, we meandered on and off the A9, following some of the "B" roads, that are actually the original A9, and nice and twisty, (and with less traffic), and an obligatory Fiona stop at the House of Bruar (Ice cream stop, due to the weather), then peeled off at Ballinluig for Aberfeldy, another fuel stop for the Bonneville, then through to Crieff and then home.

A wee bit over 210 miles for the day, and FINAL challenge mileage - 1688.8 (According to BeeEmm milometer!!)

Quite a week. - It has taken Sarah and I through some pretty stunning parts of the country, and we've been subjected to about every seasonal weather element (wind, heavy rain, snow (!??!) cold, hot, sunny, misty, and temperature ranging from 0 - 21 degrees C). The Bonneville required fourteen fill ups, to the BeeEmm's seven, but the actual fuel uplift in litres was about the same for both the bikes, and works out at over 50mpg. And we've found a couple of spots that we would like to return to for a longer stay and explore. (Not along that Ardnamurchan road though, for sure!!).

## Ken Eddie

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