

The Monthly Magazine Of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

WELCOME

It has seemed like a very long winter with only a few days when it was possible to get out on the bike but, finally, spring has sprung and this month sees the start of a new season of Club Runs and activities.

At the February club night **Alex Barron** came along and became our newest club member. Welcome to the club, Alex, we look forward to seeing you and your Honda Deauville 700 on future runs.

A final reminder that the AGM is to be held on Wednesday 11th March. Please try to come along if you can as there is a lot to discuss and decide. If you have any questions I can be contacted via the website or at secretary@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

Other activities this month:

First Bike on Scene training day – Saturday 7th March

Scottish Motorcycle Show – Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th March

Pitlochry, Glenshee and Angus run – Sunday 29th March

Steve MacKinnon

SIMMER DIM RALLY

The Simmer Dim Rally is held every year in Shetland in June - as is fairly obvious from its name – at the time of the Summer Solstice and this year's is the 27th Simmer Dim Rally 18-21 June. It is a very informal camping weekend and a few folk can be a wee bit wild but it's mixed there is a great atmosphere with plenty of opportunity to avoid the excesses and yet have a brilliant time. You can join in all the activities or spend time sight-seeing, the choice is yours. People, including many couples, come from all over the UK and beyond, and keep returning year after year. I've been to two of them and Shetland is a fantastic place to visit with lots to see from pre-history right up to the present time, of course.

You would sail from Aberdeen on Wednesday and back on Sunday. Northlink Ferries are sponsors of the event and give a 30% discount, a good enough reason in itself to choose this time to visit. Last year,

and I think every year, one of the local guys had brewed a fine and very popular real ale specially and served it all weekend! There may be an extra 10% discount for groups of 15 or more so, if the Scottish Motorcycle Club could organise an event of at least 15, it would leave more beer money!

Rally tickets cost £60 per person (OAPs, disabled and children ½ price, under 5 years free). The price includes a badge and book of 25 tokens which can be exchanged for drinks and one meal per day.

The event is limited to 250 riders and passengers of only motorcycles, combos or trikes and it's by invitation and pre-booked only – no cars. I have my invitation already so, if you would like to go, I'll see about getting you an invitation too. There is live music on Thursday and Friday nights, a disco from midnight "till late" on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, bar opens at 6pm (11am on Saturday), hot food at 6pm on Thursday and Friday (5pm on Saturday) and lunch at 12 noon on Sunday, bike run at 11am on Friday, visit of the Viking Jarl Squad on Friday afternoon, Flavour of Shetland on Lerwick Pier on Saturday, and so on! But, of course, you can do your own thing and visit the places you want to see. I went to several of the large number of interesting sites, such as Jarlshof. I took many photographs and you can view them by clicking [here](#) (or copying this link into your browser's address bar: <http://www.photobox.co.uk/album/21763908>) without downloading megabytes or taking up SMC's web space! Get more information about Shetland in [Wikipedia](#) (or copy this link into your browser: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shetland>).

Instructions (from the leaflet) on how to get there: "On arrival in Shetland - if you don't know the way to the rally site, follow someone who does"! Contact me if you would like more information.

Arthur Shepherd Old Fine Art

THROUGH AFRICA WITH SAM AND LOIS

I bought Sam Manicom's book 'Into Africa' from Sam himself at last year's Scottish Motorcycle Show then, at the Kelso Bikefest, I purchased 'Red Tape and White Knuckles' by Lois Price. Unfortunately Lois was not in attendance. The books lay, ignored, for a while until I read them both in quick succession. Both

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were stories of lone motorcycle rides through Africa but they were very different reads, not least because Sam took a route through the east of Africa while Lois's route was almost a perfect north-south line drawn from Tunis to Cape Town.

I read Sam's book first. He set out on his adventure having done nothing like it before, in fact he was very much a motorcycling beginner at the start. Neither Sam nor Lois goes into much detail about their bikes, though Sam mentions that his was a BMW R80GS. I don't think Lois identified the bike she was riding at any point in her story, although on her website it is specified as a Yamaha TT250.

While reading Lois's book I had the nagging feeling that there was something missing but couldn't put my finger on what it was until I realised that, unlike Sam, she made hardly any mention of the African flora and fauna. I thought this was odd as, having been conditioned by a lifetime of watching David Attenborough programmes, I was under the impression that the place was awash with lions snacking on gazelles and other examples of nature in the raw – surely worthy of mention.

There were more hassles for Lois travelling alone than there were for Sam. One unexpected problem for her, early in her journey, was actually getting anyone to speak to her in Algeria. The Algerian men ignored her because she was female and she couldn't interact with Algerian women because they were hidden away! However, as she travelled deeper into central Africa this reserve disappeared to be replaced, at every stop, by crowds appearing and bombarding her with questions. While Sam found the peoples of Malawi and Zimbabwe to be friendly and helpful, Lois's favourite country was clearly Angola. Although wrecked by 27 years of civil war and crushingly poor, she found people would help her with no hint that they should be rewarded for their trouble.

Although Lois was probably at greater risk than Sam, her book gives the impression that she considered herself to have been in real peril only once, when she and her bike were stuck on a train in the Democratic Republic of Congo and her fellow passengers were a large contingent of loud, drunken soldiers. Sam, on the other hand, was involved in two major accidents, one in Tanzania where he was involved in a collision which seriously injured a pedestrian and the other in Namibia where he crashed very heavily and required a long convalescence.

I enjoyed both books though I thought 'Red Tape and White Knuckles' was by far the most entertaining read, due largely to the humour Lois manages to inject into every page. To be fair, this is Lois's second book while 'Under African Skies' is Sam's first. Lois's first book is 'Lois on the Loose' and tells the story of her trans-Americas ride from Alaska to Argentina.

Sam's second book is 'Under Asian Skies' and his latest is 'Distant Suns' where he is again back in Africa. He will be book signing on the Traveldri-Plus stand at the Scottish Motorcycle Show – 13th to the 15th of March

Steve MacKinnon

SPUR OF THE MOMENT RUN – 1ST MARCH

This was very much a last-minute, short-notice run. The weather forecast for the weekend looked reasonable and after a winter of very little motorcycling, I was desperate to blow away the cobwebs. However, when I arrived at the West Port rendezvous a light rain had started to fall and the sky was leaden. I'd arrived much too early so decided to kill time with a walk down to see the wildlife on the loch. Then the rain began to fall more heavily. It was depressing. Even the ducks were down.

Squelching back through the puddles to the car park, I was happily surprised to see George Kay and Michael Wight had turned up. Michael was on his new Yamaha Fazer 600 and George on a Yamaha T-Max. We were soon joined by Steve Panter (Kawasaki Vulcan 900), Bob Kibble (ST1300 Pan Euro) and Alex Barron (Honda Deauville 700).

My plan, such as it was, was to head down the B7016 to Biggar then take a gamble on which direction would offer the best weather. I like the 7016 though today, it was wet and, in places, muddy. At Biggar a quick decision was made to continue south to Moffat. We saw some sun on the way past the Devil's Beeftub and had a pleasant lunch stop at the Rumbly' Tum. Good food and quick service.

Next we rode up the A708 passing St Mary's Loch and the Glen Café. This stretch saw the best of the weather with periods of brilliant sunshine and, more importantly, dry tarmac. We turned north on the B709 (very nice winding road through rolling hills) and then took the B7062 into Peebles. We rode along High St then headed north on the A703 as far as Eddleston and the The Scots Pine Tearoom, a place I've passed on many an occasion over the years but had never visited. It was very good indeed with quality coffee and a great selection of home made cakes.

We called an end to the run after our tea break and set off home on our mud caked machines. It had been a damp and, at times, cold trip but that didn't spoil the enjoyment of getting out for a Sunday run for the first time in ages. Thanks to George, Michael, Steve, Bob and Alex for providing excellent company.

Steve MacKinnon