

## The Monthly Magazine Of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

### WELCOME

Welcome to this edition of **BikeBytes** and I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to two new members Robert Gray and Martin Pennycook, who joined at the Kelso Bikefest. Both from Bathgate, Robert rides a Kawasaki KLV 1000 and Martin has a Kawasaki ZX6R. We hope to see you both on a ride out soon.

Another action packed month has come and gone. The activities included a (very long) day trip to Northern Ireland, a great weekend at the Kelso Bikefest, Ken Eddie's South Loop Run and a very enjoyable BBQ at Ken's house to celebrate his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

We submitted an article on the club to the BMF Rider magazine and were lucky enough to have it published in the latest edition. Hopefully, this will raise the profile of the SMC amongst the Scottish BMF membership.

Events planned for August:

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup>: Judy Broad's Dunoon Run.** Meet Dobbies, Stirling 9.45am.

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup>: Ken Eddie's Chip Shop Run to Bridge of Allan.** Meet West Port car park, Linlithgow 6.45pm.

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>: Steve Middleton's Brechin & Braemar Run.** Meet Kinross Services 9.15am

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>: Club Night.** Black Bitch, Linlithgow 8pm.

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>: Susan & Una's Cream Bun Run II.** Meet Kinross services 9.45am for 10am start.

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup>: David Jerome's Weekend Camping Trip to Applecross.** Meet Stirling Services 9.45am.

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>: Ken Eddie's Half Day Museum of Flight Run.** Meet Dreghorn Services 12.45pm

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>: Ken Eddie's TayForth Run.** Meet Broxden Services, Perth 9.45am.

As always, please log in to the website at [www.scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk](http://www.scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk) for all the latest news, run reports, photos etc.

**Steve MacKinnon**

### EDITORIAL

Well, another month has flown by without much biking, mainly due to work commitments and subtle hints about the state of the garden!!

Had a great time at Kelso and it was good to see the new marquee giving the SMC a bigger presence....possibly at the expense of camping space!!

Numbers attending this year's event were definitely down on previous years, especially campers, possibly due to the changeable weather and the 'economic climate'. The number of traders was down as well and the BMF did make a bit of a mistake by not having any motorcycle related events in the arena. The guy on the mountain bike was good, certainly, and the 'Highland Games' strongmen were impressive, but in trying to appeal to a family audience, they did let the biking fraternity down a bit. I'm sure mine wasn't the only feedback on that score.

Anyway, I'm glad to say that I've had a couple of articles from one of our newer members, Paul Cameron. One of which follows here and the second I'll keep till the next edition in September. Many thanks Paul, it's great to have a 'fresh face' contributing to the club newsletter. Keep it up!

Steve Middleton has a rummage in his garage and finds a long-lost friend and gives us an introduction to his Brechin and Braemar run.....There's someone who is just too organised! Janet Moss tells us a bit about the Moss holiday to Shetland, with Orkney tales to follow next month. A bumper edition again!

Enjoy YOUR magazine!

**Ken Glendinning**

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## The Story So Far.....

As a new member, I've decided to finally sit down and start tapping out an article for BikeBytes. Usually it's time that restricts me rather than a lack of willing!



I wanted to share my experience of biking thus far, and the methods I used to improve my skills in the hope that others struggling with any particular aspects of their riding may be given hope, hints or avenues to explore to help them.

My first introduction into the world of mechanically propelled two-wheeled vehicles began when I was 16 (some 19 years ago), when I realised that the only way I was ever going to be able to visit members of the opposite sex without relying on a lift from my older brother (which usually involved me pretty much selling my soul to him in return!) was to get a motorbike. Plus....I thought I'd look cool!

So I bought a Kawasaki AR 125 (pictured) for the princely sum of £1500. I had no idea about two-strokes, or about adding oil to the mixture, which very nearly ended in calamity until I was informed in the nick of time. I turned up at my CBT (in Cupar), and promptly got off the bike and dropped it in front of everyone! At 16 years old, where image is everything, I'm not sure it's possible to be any more embarrassed!

Amazingly, I managed to get through my CBT, and even more amazingly managed to get myself home on the bike in a thunderstorm. I then went on to use the bike for the following year, in mostly bad weather to and from work. I think through that whole time I couldn't get to grips with cornering, and had at least two offs on corners which didn't help my confidence. Suffice to say that when I turned 17 and passed my driving test, the motorbike was sold in favour of four wheels, roof, heating, stereo...and backseat! Well...to be fair my reason for biking in the first place probably wasn't as honourable as others!

That pretty much summed up my early years of biking, and I didn't even consider two-wheels again

until 2002 (12 years later) when, having spent the previous year attempting the commute of Fife-Edinburgh for University and back again for work in the evenings. So I did the Direct Access course in one week, passed and bought a 2002 Suzuki SV650.



Due to shortage of time, (and finance) I didn't do any more advanced training, and commuted to and fro with the occasional near-miss and obvious attempt by some car drivers to deliberately obstruct me. I went on one (yes...only one) weekend run to the Isle of Bute....and crashed it on a corner! As you can tell, confidence for corners was developing in to an all time low at this point. Shortly after, I finished my degree and got rid of the bike, never thinking I'd get another one.

However, in 2007 in a flash of spontaneity (and I think I'd just watched the MotoGP) I bought a 2002 Yamaha Thundercat. This time, I decided, I was going to get over my fears of corners, and improve my skills on the bike properly. Plus, I didn't want to crash again!



My first step towards this was to attend the **Fife Police Bikesafe Initiative** <http://www.fife.police.uk/Default.aspx?page=2834>

The instructors there were excellent. Considerate to everyone's different levels and needs, and gave individual feedback and pointers, and then watched us to see if we implemented their advice.

Having been a Police Advanced Driver myself in cars, I found the principles were the same, however they helped show me that my bike was able to do

more than I thought, and in addition helped me figure out the appropriate gears to be in to maximise performance and control. Unfortunately winter came shortly after this, limiting practice time for these techniques (yes, I'm a fair weather biker).

In 2008, I was able to start putting the theory in to practice, and felt that my control had improved, however corners still sent shivers down my spine, and I would find myself stiffening up as I approached them and 'comfort braking' constantly. I think most of us could relate to being too tense on a bike as the elbow, neck and shoulder ache afterwards is an excellent tell-tale sign! An obvious problem with the fear of corner speed is that too much time is spent on worrying about corners, and less time is spent taking in all the other dangers around you, and your road positioning, speeds, gear control and other skills all suffer as a result.

To address this problem it was suggested to me to try taking my bike on to a race-track, and luckily for me Knockhill <http://www.knockhill.com> is only 5 minutes away from my house. Now, the thought of going on to a race-track with my motorbike initially filled me with dread, but when you consider that it is a wide, one-way road, with no pedestrians, no oncoming vehicles and a nice man waving a flag at you if there's a problem around the corner then all things considered, it's not a bad idea!



So I booked on to the First-Timer Novice track day. Now, this is slightly different from the normal novice track day/nights, as it involves more of a 'soft' introduction to the track including a drive around the circuit in a car, with an instructor pointing out braking and turning-in points on the track. It's then followed by the instructor escorting you around the track with you following the car on your bike. He positions himself where you should follow, and turns at the point you should turn. I was extremely lucky on the day I visited as it was scorching sunshine, so I didn't have to be too concerned about road conditions. After following the instructor for a few laps you are then left to carry on yourself, which is the time you

spend pushing yourself to the limit you feel comfortable.

Following this track session, I felt much more confident on the bike, and felt more 'at one' with the bike (very Zen-like), and more in control. My cornering improved and my speed was more consistent. This was confirmed by my wife, when I received a few more slaps to the side of the head when she was pillion, as she had decided I was leaning much further than I used to! Oops...should have warned her?

Having enjoyed the track so much, I took part in a few more sessions, wet and dry, and felt my confidence continuing to grow. However, I noticed a new problem forming. As my speed and control improved, I noticed my own position on the bike needed adjusting, and I needed more instruction on my corner entry and exit speeds and positioning for apices. Now, some may say that this applies to a track only, but all roads have corners, with apices, that require good positioning and appropriate speed. So with this new dilemma, I signed up for the **Ron Haslam Race School** <http://www.haslamraceschool.com/> (separate article to follow on the format for this day). The school was well run, and very informative, with a format allowing the individual to work on their own weaknesses with input from a professional. Money well spent, as the Thundercat suddenly began to feel VERY slow in comparison to the Honda CBR 600 race-spec bike used at the school. A fact which made me, at the end of 2008, buy my current bike a Suzuki GSXR 1000 K8. A much more powerful beast, yet one that only 2 years ago I would not have felt I could have come close to handling. I've now taken this bike on to the track, and have found my own control sufficient enough to give me time to start working on my position on the road, and on the bike and to play with different braking points and corner speeds.



My new bike will always be more capable than I, and I would never be so naïve as to think that I've suddenly turned in to Valentino Rossi. But through this article I wanted to share with others, regardless of their experience, that if they have concerns or short-comings in their riding, don't be shy, be honest with yourself and go and access the numerous worthwhile courses out there. Believe me, if I'm anything to go by, it's worth it!

**Paul Cameron**

## LOOK WHAT I FOUND

I have been insulating and reorganising the loft and violently pruning the contents, and have moved on to the garage, both thinning the contents and transferring suitable stuff to the space released in the loft. I found my old first Givi Monokey topbox that I had for my Kawasaki 400/550. I bought it from a dealer, now defunct, in Edinburgh when I saw it lying in a corner, unloved and secondhand, - and cheap. I attached the plate to a rack and it matched the white Rickman fairing at the front end.



It did sterling service to hold my work kit on the commute and my helmet when shopping, but got replaced by a more sober black E45 box from a Club member changing bikes. Since then, for about seven or eight years, it has moved from corner to space in the garage, unused but now earmarked to go on the back of the white Cagiva, whenever I get that back together.

So, it was in line to go up into the loft *pro tem*, but its weight intrigued me. The keys were attached and worked the lock, and it opened to reveal things I had forgotten.

I had fitted it with a lining made of heavy corduroy and added pockets (I once worked in the clothing industry) to hold my stuff and save it rattling around inside. There were the extra fittings I'd taken off the E45 (top rack and straps, backrest), earplugs, hand warmer, reflective sam browne, small towel, paper hanx, an SMC embroidered badge, and in the pockets a bottle of visor cleaning wash and a torch.



- and the torch still works! Not just a dull glow but a full strength white beam from the high-power Ever-Ready batteries inside. The picture shows it alight.

A nice trip down Memory Lane and a bonus of some lost kit.

What have you got lying around from your biking past?

**Steve Middleton**

## BRECHIN & BRAEMAR, 8th AUGUST

I'm going to take us the other way round this well-liked run. It's on Saturday to give a chance to those who find it difficult to free-up Sundays, but we will have to start earlier than usual.

The main features are Glenfarg, the south Tay coast road, [Brechin](#) (for coffee at the Northern Hotel who impressed us at lunchtime last year), [Cairn o' Mount](#) pass, along Deeside past the Royals at Balmoral and Braemar to the [Spittal of Glenshee](#) hotel for lunch in their attractive bar. Blairgowrie, the [Beech Hedge](#) and Stanley lie on the run back to Kinross. Go see the Calendar on the Club website for a Google Maps route and further details.

To get to the stops at reasonable times, and to fit in the 197 miles we will meet early for a briefing at 9:15 to depart at 9:30 from the Kinross services on the M90 @ J6. I shall have summary routemaps to hand out.

As usual, please be prepared at the start with full tanks and empty bladders. Fuel will be available near the coffee stop (and after the lunch stop if really necessary, but not at the Spittal itself)

Be advised that this is a "making progress" run and I won't be hanging about basking in the scenery, so that we can make the stops at appropriate times. We shall use the Drop-Off system to mark turns; if you are not familiar with this go see the description on the Club website under Articles/Services – Club Runs. I'll clarify as necessary before we start.

I look forward to seeing you at Kinross – bring some good weather.

**Steve Middleton**

## THE MOSS' DO SHETLAND & ORKNEY

Thought you might like to hear about our recent holiday on the bikes to Shetland and Orkney. First thing I must say is that we will never be able to go back again and that was nothing to do with our behaviour! The weather was fantastic, the occasional bit of haar in the mornings but when that cleared it was sunshine all the way. And wind – what wind? It wasn't until the last couple of days on Orkney that we realised why there aren't many trees in that part of the world.

Anyway, let's start at the beginning (which is a very good place to start). Got the overnight ferry from Aberdeen to Lerwick. The cabin we'd booked was great; comfy beds, big window and a wee ensuite shower. We got into Lerwick at 7.30am, found where we were staying and then explored the town. I had booked us into a house which was owned by a hotel in Sumburgh. It was serviced rooms, which meant there were no staff on the premises. We collected our key from the local Chinese restaurant on our first day and kept it with us all the time, leaving it in a box in the hall at the end of our stay. The ensuite room was serviced each day and a continental breakfast, which consisted of juice, fresh milk, cereals, croissants and muffins, left in the fridge.

The rest of the day was spent exploring the west side of the mainland – Twatt (yes really, John insisted we went even though there was nothing there), Sandness and Scalloway where we looked around the castle, had a lovely lunch of haddock and herring in the Marine College canteen and learnt about the Shetland Bus. After dinner in a great cafe in Lerwick called Osla's, we found a pub called The Lounge, where we researched the local ale and listened to some live music.



Day 2 we went north, up to Toft to get the ferry to Yell then on to Gutcher and another ferry to Unst. Avoiding the shetland ponies and foals grazing by the side of the road, we rode upto the Boat Haven museum in Haroldswick, where we had a lovely lunch in a cafe/gallery (I think there's a theme starting to develop here). I wanted to see Muckle Flugga but that involved a long walk from Hermaness and as the weather was so hot and the roads were starting to melt, we settled on a visit around the Unst Heritage Centre instead.



Back on Yell we took the single track route to catch the ferry to the mainland. The roads on Shetland are awesome, even the surfaces of the single track ones were in good condition (apart from the melty bits) and there are some wonderful sweeping bends, added to which there isn't much traffic so it's a biker's dream. That evening we went to a talk by Simon King, who has been making a film diary of his visits to Shetland, then it was Chinese for dinner and more research – Simmer Dim and Auld Rock were becoming the favourites.

Next day we went south and after exploring St. Ninian's Isle ended up getting a ferry to Mousa, where we had a picnic sat on some rocks being spied on by seals, looked around the Broch (a 2,000 year old fortified building) and got dive bombed by Arctic Terns as we walked around the island.



Dinner that night was Nepalese (got to keep the theme going). Day 4 saw us going south again, all the way down to Sumburgh Head where is was wall to wall seabirds, mainly puffins. We explored Jarlshof (a prehistoric settlement) then decided to try and find another iron age building and have our picnic. Unfortunately this involved about a 3 mile walk so by the time we got back to the bikes the sun had worked its magic and we were fairly glowing. Dinner that night was pizza and John standing with his head under a cold shower to try and ease his sun burn.



Our last day on Shetland found us going north west up to Northmavine. We rode up to Esha Ness and looked at the incredible cliffs and stacks. There's also a good cafe up there at Braewick. We went back to Lerwick for lunch at the Lerwick Museum and spent a good couple of hours learning even more about Shetland and its heritage. Then it was time to catch our ferry for the 6 hour journey down to Orkney and the next part of our holiday.

Anyway, readers, you'll be delighted to know that you'll have to wait for the next edition of Bikebytes to hear all about the Orkney adventure. I bet you can't wait can you? By the way, the steak pie on the ferry was great! To be continued...



**Janet Moss**

## Run Reports

The website is being regularly updated with run reports and photographs, so why don't you log-on and read some of the recent run reviews at:

<http://www.scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk/>

## Articles for BikeBytes

It's been great to have another bumper, six page, edition this month and it's not just all from the usual suspects. So, let's be having you!

Send any articles, pictures, funny stories or anything vaguely motorcycle related to:

[bikebytes@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk](mailto:bikebytes@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk)