

DECEMBER 2010



BikeBytes



The Monthly Magazine Of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

Welcome

Welcome to the December issue of **BikeBytes**.

As I write this, most of the UK is suffering disruption due to heavy snow falls. So, not much in the way of news on the motorcycling front! Apart, that is, from motorcycle show reports which have been highlighting some interesting, and very different, new bikes such as the six cylinder BMW K1600, the Honda Crossrunner and, my particular favourite, the new Triumph Tiger 800. Dear Santa...

Just a couple of upcoming events:

Wednesday 8th December - Club and quiz night.
Black Bitch Tavern, West Port, Linlithgow at 8pm.

Sunday 12th December – Matinee panto at the
Traverse Theatre.

Please keep up to date by checking out the website:
www.scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

As the next issue of **BikeBytes** will appear in early January, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all club members, their family and friends a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Steve MacKinnon

secretary@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

DECEMBER QUIZ NIGHT

The December Club night at the Black Bitch on 8th will be our traditional Quiz Night. We will have as many rounds as can be fitted in, not just on motorcycling topics, but with General Knowledge too. Come prepared to scratch your head, dig into the memory and maybe learn from those questions you can't answer.

The usual refreshment break for sandwiches and coffee/tea will allow me to plan the rest of the rounds and tot up the scores. Bring your sharpened pencils!

Steve Middleton

Editorial

Well, I know it's that time of year again, but can anyone else remember snow like this in late November?

I remember deep snow when I was younger in Hawick...probably the winter of 1963, when the snow was more than halfway up our front door. But, I've never seen snow like this in Edinburgh, at any time of year. In our back garden, we've got the best part of 19-20" of lying, not drifted, snow...it's over the top of my wellies anyway!

My brother in law in Canada keeps telling me to get some studded tyres on the Tiger and go out snow/ice racing...well, you know, I don't think I'll bother. He's a bit more used to these conditions that we are and, quite frankly, he's bonkers.

In any event, like Steve Middleton's VFR (see below), the Tiger is sitting in the garage, covered in FS365 and, like me, dreaming of long Spring and Summer riding days and hopefully this year, some European touring.

So, what do you hope that the biking Santa will bring you this year? Have you resorted to leaving print-outs from web pages lying around, hoping that your loved ones will take the hint and dig out their plastic? I'm not sure it's working for me, but SWMBO is very good at not letting on that she's spotted my wish list.

I've been looking around for some good motorcycling touring books recently and Steve MacKinnon has a few suggestions in this month's **BikeBytes** if you're looking for some stocking-filler ideas.

Contact the Scottish Motorcycle Club via the Membership Secretary:

Steve MacKinnon

Tel: 01786 475948 07802 200964 E-mail: Stephen.mackinnon@tiscali.co.uk

I've just ordered up a new book by a very entertaining journalist and author, Geoff Hill, recounting his tale of travelling around Australia, from Adelaide to Adelaide. His last couple of books about trips through the Americas and from India back to the UK have been extremely funny.

As long as the postie can make it to the door (he hasn't been very successful this past week!), between online orders for presents and welly-booted walks to the local shops, we should be able to survive!

However, while we're all sitting around in the warm, enjoying the winter-wonderland views from our windows, I thought I'd update you on a couple of BMF/MAG campaigns that I know some members have been involved in this past year.

The possibility of bikes and other powered two-wheelers being able to use Edinburgh's bus lanes has been put back until next year. In a way, this isn't too bad, since the transport officials were going to recommend that the idea be dropped as they had 'analysed' an interim report on the Transport for London trial and come to the conclusion that it was likely to cause more accidents.

We at the BMF and MAG have also analysed the interim report and it doesn't really say that at all. Yes, the statistics show a small increase in the number of accidents to PTW users caused by cars (mainly by cars turning left across the bus lane into a rider's path), but since there was such an increase in usage of the bus lanes by riders, the percentage of accidents was much less.

Anyway, more 'sensible' analysis required and maybe next year we can get a favourable decision.

The loss of a large quantity of the City's motorcycle parking bays has been 'kicked into touch' for the foreseeable future. The proposal that included the changes to the parking regulations has been shelved due to cost constraints and only a small number of, mainly cosmetic, changes are being made to the residents parking conditions.

We're keeping a close eye on any orders that are generated by the City of Edinburgh council, just in case they try to slip something past us in the meantime, but it doesn't look like there will be any changes to the status-quo.

So, I hope you are all wrapped up warm and safe in these frozen times and I hope you have a great Christmas and all the very best for the New Year.

'Safe Riding is No Accident'

Ken Glendinning

WINTER IS HERE

I've put the VFR away for the winter now everything is under about a half-metre of snow. I've sent the tax disk back and claimed three months' refund. The CBX750 is still taxed should things suddenly turn fair.

Has anyone else worked out how to get almost a "free" month of tax if you normally only tax the bike for six months a year? Instead of paying the 10% premium to get one and pay £33, purchase a full year for £60 then claim back five months for a net cost of £35 – an extra month for only £2 more! It's easy with a simple form to fill that you can get from a taxing Post Office or print out from the DVLA website.

I've got the bike covered up in the garage and will spray Scottoil FS365 on exposed (non-braking) metal, plus a generous layer of oil on the chain. I've not had the fairing panels off of the "new" VFR800 apart from one to change the coolant so I'll strip it and give them a double side polish. That will expose the electrics for a full check on the connectors and earth points, and the Optimate will keep the battery topped up. Apart from maintaining the battery and preventing it going bad the full charge will (should?) keep the alarm happy and stop it from going off on a false alarm.

One annoying effect of the snow is its effect on the postal service. I've bought a Melvin seat from another VFR owner in the web Club and it is stuck somewhere between central Englandshire and Linlithgow.



However, the riding kit is not lying around unused. Winter motorcycle gloves are warm and waterproof, and ideal for walking the dog and digging snow. My pair has a double cuff arrangement that does up tight onto the sleeve of my GoreTex outdoor jacket, keeping snow and cold out.

The special socks are great too in my walking boots, and my SMC cap keeps the snow off my head and out of my eyes and specs.



Steve Middleton

Biking Books

Three motorcycle-related books I've read recently:

Uneasy Rider by Mike Carter

Mike Carter unashamedly admits right at the start of his story that, as a mere stripling of 42, he's going through a mid life crisis and has decided that a long trip on a motorcycle would be the perfect way to lay his demons to rest. This is a risky gambit with which to start the book. Readers younger than the author probably won't relate to his angst, while the reaction of those, like me, who have left our forties far behind is more likely to be 'get over it, you big girls blouse'.

What makes the book so enjoyable is his self deprecating sense of humour as he lurches 20,000 miles through Europe and beyond on his BMW GS, meeting a host of characters and stumbling into occasional, and brief, romantic encounters.

Old Man on a Bike by Simon Gandolfi

Well, this one does what it says on the tin. It's the story of 73 year old Simon Gandolfi's, long journey from Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico to Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, at the southernmost tip of South America.

Judging by how many 'top to bottom' trips through the Americas are made these days, Ushuaia must be busier than Princes Street in December.

Unlike most riders on a trip such as this, Gandolfi didn't ride the almost obligatory BMW GS; instead he chose a Honda 125cc 'pizza bike' for its simplicity and light weight. Whereas Mike Carter (and Lois Pryce) have a background in journalism and therefore have the style to make a book both informative and funny, there aren't a lot of laughs in Gandolfi's book.

Like Sam Manicom's motorcycle travel books, I found this one worthy and interesting, but just a bit dull.

The Rugged Road by Theresa Wallach

Now this is something completely different. In the introduction to her hugely enjoyable book, Red Tape and White Knuckles, Lois Pryce mentions that The Rugged Road was her inspiration to make her own perilous journey through Africa. Having enjoyed Lois' books, I bought The Rugged Road to find out more about the epic trip.

In 1934 Wallach and her companion Florence Blenkiron were 25 and 30 respectively. They both resented the restricted range of interests which were deemed 'proper' for young women at that time and both had a passion for engineering and motorcycling.

They managed to persuade the Phelon & Moore motorcycle company to provide them with a Panther 600cc single motorcycle, complete with a trailer and Watsonian sidecar.

They then set off, on 11th December, to travel from London to Cape Town, through the centre of darkest Africa. They endured very difficult conditions and constantly had to make running repairs to the outfit. It's difficult from a 21st century perspective to understand the social conventions of the time but the fact that they referred to each other as 'Wal' and 'Blenk' gives a hint of a forgotten time and social conventions, as do the colonial names in Theresa's journal – Belgian Congo, Tanganyika, Rhodesia, Nyasaland etc.

The book provides a glimpse of Africa in an altogether different era; a time of British, French and Belgian colonial rule, meddling missionaries and a strangely detached attitude to the indigenous peoples.

After many trials and tribulations they eventually arrived in Cape Town on July 29th 1935. Theresa fell ill and sailed back to Britain while Florence rode back through Africa – alone! Unfortunately, only Theresa kept a log so Florence's even more remarkable solo return has gone unrecorded.

It seems there was a falling out between the two women after they reached Cape Town, and there is no record of them ever meeting again.

This is a fascinating book, written in a style which now seems a little stilted and remote but which is well worth reading.

Steve MacKinnon

Run reports

Not too many recent runs for obvious reasons, but the website has lot's of reports and photos in the gallery from our busy year's activities.

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

Articles for BikeBytes

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

bikebytes@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

BikeBytes Crossword

The answers to last month's crossword quiz are below. Did you get them all?...did I spell them all correctly?



OK, I know it's Photoshop'd, but it's pretty well done!



Too much clowning around on bikes these days!

Solution to the BikeBytes November Crossword

