AUGUST - 2010

BikeBytes

The Monthly Magazine Of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

Welcome

Since the last edition of BikeBytes, we have signed up two new members to the club. **Norman Gifford**, from Edinburgh, owns a Bandit 600 and came along on Ken Eddie's run to Falkland. We first met **Karen Sharp** (Faser 600), from Clydebank, at the Kelso Bikefest. She and partner Graeme subsequently joined us on Paul Broughton's recent Treasure Hunt and Judy Broad's Dunoon run. Welcome to you both and we hope you enjoy many runs and events with the SMC.

We all had a great weekend at the bmf's Kelso Bikefest, in no small measure due to Steve Panter who brought his van, BBQ and countless other crucial items and to Ken Eddie who raided the shelves at Costco to keep us well supplied with a vast selection of BBQ food. Thanks are also due to the many club members who stayed one or both nights and helped out on the stand. The event and entertainment was little different to that of previous years but hopefully Mulberry, the new organisers, will learn from the experience and bring improvements in years two and three of their contract with the bmf.

Coming events:

Wednesday 11th – Club Night at Black Bitch Tavern, West Port, Linlithgow. 8pm.

Sunday 15th – Susan Dundas's Cream Bun Run III. Meet at BP petrol station at Forth Road Bridge (South Queensferry side) at 10.15am.

Sunday 22nd – Alex Muir's Dumfries run. Meet at Strathclyde Park at 9.45am.

Saturday 28th – Ken Eddie's Five Counties run. Meet at Broxden Services, Perth at 9.45am.

As always, please keep up to date with the latest news and run info at:
www.scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

Steve MacKinnon
secretary@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

Editorial

Bit of a slim issue this month….everyone is out enjoying their biking no doubt….lucky so-and-so's!

I've included the first part of my tour diary from when I went to Germany on the Tiger a couple of years ago. The Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry has changed now, but I would imagine it's much the same sort of journey. I tried to keep a diary each day to record the trip….I was reasonably successful, but I've lapsed a bit on subsequent trips….you'll be glad to hear!

Anyway, part one this month, more to follow if space allows. Come on!, get some more articles in for the next few months, or you'll have to suffer more of this!

Steve has written an interesting piece on a loan bike that he was given when his was in being serviced. Has anyone else tried an interesting bike?

Well, what did you think of Kelso? The weather was disappointing to say the least, especially the gales on the Sunday, and that seemed to affect the number of day visitors we had. The camping numbers were extremely healthy though and it was great to see so many individual and club camping areas so full. We expected the numbers to be down a bit this year, due to the financial conditions, but it seemed to exceed expectations and the organisers were pterry happy in the end. Lots of lessons learned for next year though, in respect of ticket handling etc., so we can expect a few changes for next year.

One other, slightly smaller, event that I attended last weekend though, really showed up what a 'broad church' motorcycling is these days. I was manning the bmf stand at the 'NABD By The Trossachs' rally in Drymen. In case you haven't come across NABD, it's the National Association for Bikers with a Disability, and is actually a registered charity.

Contact the Scottish Motorcycle Club via the Membership Secretary:
Steve MacKinnon
Tel: 01786 475948 07802 200964 E-mail: Stephen.mackinnon@tiscali.co.uk



I hadn't done any digging into what NABD was all about before going to Drymen, so it was quite an eye opener. NABD exists to raise money to provide grants to motorcyclists, with a huge range of disabilities, allowing them to adapt conventional bikes and trikes and also towards the cost of refresher training and assessments.

Now, I don't know about you, but the number of people in wheelchairs and with crutches at biking events has always disturbed me a bit. I suppose it's in the nature of the extra risk of motorcycle riding that this is going to be the case. However, if what I saw at the weekend is anything to go by, being disabled after an accident, or by an accident of birth, certainly does not mean that you can't enjoy motorcycling.

The NABD event was good fun…they had great bands and reasonably priced beer….the company was great and we had some of the best 'camp' food that I've ever had (courtesy of the bmf's North West region!). It was pretty good for lots of other reasons too though and I can't say how inspiring I found some of the folk I met.

It's well worth joining, or at least donating to….I also chipped in and bought one of their lovely, warm sweatshirts (it was cold and wet and I'd packed for a sunny weekend!).

If you'd like more information, try: www.nabd.org.uk

Ken Glendinning

Kawasaki ER-6n

When I dropped the Versys off at Perth Motorcycles for its 11250 service, they gave me an ER-6n as a loan bike. I say 'gave' but, although the cost is only £8 for the day, the excess is an eye watering £3000. I'd had a miserable ride there up in some of the heaviest rain in memory. Later, Perth featured in the evening news, so bad was the flooding.



So, it wasn't the most auspicious of days to take out an unfamiliar bike, given the awful conditions and the sobering influence of a possible £3000 bill looming over my head.

The ER-6n was undeniably attractive in its bright red paintwork (Pearl Blazing Orange, according to Kawasaki). It uses the basically the same engine as the Versys but with its very narrow seat at only 785mm above the road and no fairing, it felt tiny compared to my bike.

I headed out past Huntingtower, towards Crieff and encountered seriously deep flooding and a lot of mud on some stretches of the road. I liked the seating position, leaning slightly forward rather than bolt upright as on the V. I didn't particularly like the analogue speedo which has the 'even' mph (20, 40 etc) in small font and the 'odd' speeds even smaller. I'd prefer to be able to clearly see the crucial 30mph mark. The tacho used an LCD display which was both difficult to read and as pointless as any other revcounter. The Versys display has a digital speedo and an enormous, white faced analogue tacho. Why do they do it? Does anyone actually use the tachometer? The wee ER6 hustled through the bends very nicely but I was glad to arrive safe and soggy, back at Stirling.

In discussion with a fellow club member, it transpired that when he test rode an ER-6n, the seating position forced him into contact with the tank, resulting in a certain degree of discomfort in the nether regions. Having not experienced this problem, all I can say is that either I was sitting a little further back or the lucky chap is unduly blessed in the trouser department.

Later that day, having not received the promised call to tell me that the Versys was ready for collection, I phoned the dealer. Amazingly, the paperwork had apparently just arrived on the serive department desk, the very moment I rang. So, it was on with the waterproofs and off for a blast up the A9. The sustained run at 70mph confirmed to me that I should

This issue edited and published by: Ken Glendinning, 14 Craiglockhart Avenue, Edinburgh, EH14 1HW
email: bikebytes@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk Tel: 0131 443 2616/07774 135243

never again buy a naked bike as I found the wind blast and resultant neck strain really unpleasant. So, I guess my lust for a Monster 796 will remain a pipe dream.

It had been an interesting experience riding the ER-6n but, I must admit, I was happy to be back on the Versys which now seemed gigantic, by comparison. I left Perth Motorcycles £160 lighter, for what, it seemed to me, was just an oil and filter change. The service sheet shows a lot of ticked boxes but since many of them are just visual checks, how can the customer be sure they have been carried out? Over a year ago, after buying the bike new in Renfrew, I quickly came to the conclusion that I didn't want to subject it to another visit to their, in my opinion, careless workshop. I've had my bike serviced twice now in Perth, and, so far, have been much happier dealing with these guys, even though I'm still convinced that Kawasaki's regime of servicing such a simple, modern engine every 4000 miles at an average of about £200 per visit, is a complete rip-off.

If bikes from BMW, Triumph and even Ducati can last 6000 miles between services, then why not Japanese bikes?

Steve MacKinnon

Touring Germany

Thursday 19th May

Packing!

It's different on a bike isn't it! – Careful plans go hell when it comes to packing everything in the limited space of two panniers, a top-box and a tank-bag. No doubt some experienced tourers are already scoffing, but this is all new to me…OK!

Thanks heavens for a practical and sensible other-half. Clothes rolled up take up a hell of a lot less space and don't seem to crease so easily either. Everything I was planning to take (excluding the extra underwear and t-shirts that my wife suggested 'just-in-case' fitted neatly in the available space. The tank-bag for immediate essentials and documentation; clothes, including a spare pair of shoes (with my feet these take up a large space!) in the newly acquired Triumph pannier inner-bags and tools, spare bulbs, torch, copies of documentation, jacket and trouser liners and, as a last thought(!), my rain suit, in the Givi top-box.

We're off!

The bike feels OK despite all the extra weight, but I'm still as nervous as hell…..too much stress and too little sleep. Filling the tank makes the bike feel a little top-heavy, but I'm coping!

It had been a very windy morning and high-sided vehicles were not allowed across the Forth Road Bridge. Visions of having to get from West Edinburgh to Rosyth via Kincardine and late arrivals at the ferry terminal were beginning to haunt me. I didn't know how much grief the wind was going to cause later though!

The run to Rosyth was fine though and I've been on the bridge on windier days.



There were already a number of bikes waiting for the ferry (most obviously in a large touring group) and we were soon to be joined by some 68 bikes and scooters for the trip to Zeebrugge. The party of scooters had turned up with a couple of interesting 'home-built' or very customised ones and seemed to be heading for some rally in Belgium.



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A lot of the other bikes appeared to be heading for Le Mans. They were all looking a bit nervous though as the weather forecast for France for the following day was terrible and most of them were camping.





After a number of cars had already boarded, we were allowed on board and we were squeezed in to the available space around the middle stairwell area on the upper car deck. No-one was waiting to tie-down the bikes, but I was assured that would be done later. So, along with the other bikers, drivers and coach passengers, we all headed off to find our respective cabins or 'sleeper-seats'. So far. so good. I had packed one pannier bag with all that I needed for the outward ferry trip and, luckily, this was the one that wasn't squashed up against another bike. So, the tank bag, pannier bag and my helmet were carried upstairs.

Next time, I'll leave the helmet attached to the bike by some means, but at least it gave me a chance to clean the visor.



I was fortunate to have booked a one-bed cabin and, although it did cost be a fair bit more, it had enough room for me and all my stuff and would allow me a good night's sleep. It had four beds though, as per all the other cabins, two 'normal' and two 'bunk'. For four people and all their luggage it would have been pretty cramped and I wouldn't like to try that unless you knew the other people pretty well and were fairly relaxed in their company.

We 'weighed-anchor' just after 5pm and – did I mention that it was windy – not that many people were on the outside decks for the trip under the Forth bridges. It was a shame really, as it's very impressive and there didn't seem to be a lot of clearance under the centre cantilever span of the rail bridge.

Despite the high winds, the trip, to start with, was very smooth and there was a good turn-out in the restaurants. I thought that I'd give the buffet restaurant a try on the way out….maybe saving the A-La-carte restaurant as a treat on the way back at the end of my holiday. For £18, the buffet restaurant was rather good, but, I suspect that people with a 'foreign food' phobia may have had a problem with it.

There was lost of different fish to choose, from smoked salmon to various flavours of pickled herring. Lots of cold-meats and a delicious pork-roast, with fruit, yoghurts and ice-cream for deserts……along with a good assortment of cheese.

But no, as far as I could see, chips or beans!!!

After dinner, and a few Drambuies, it was time for a relatively early night at ten-past ten. By this time we were heading South and the sea state was beginning to get a little rough, though this newish ferry seemed to be coping fairly well. I had a great night's sleep……sort of 'rocked' to sleep like a baby.

Now, I have never, thankfully (touching wood), suffered from sea-sickness, but, I understand how people can be affected. My wife only has to look a a few boats bobbing about in a harbour and she begins to feel queasy.

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Friday 19th May

By the morning, the sea was fairly rough and there was a pronounced roll and some yawing as the bow ploughed through the waves.



There was a much smaller turn-out for breakfast!

Breakfast though, at £9.20, was great though and you could choose between a continental style, with cold meats and bread or a more traditional cooked British breakfast…….or, a combination of both!



We arrived in Zeebrugge at around 11:00 am (bst - ship time is always UK time), but didn't finish tying up until nearly noon due to the very high winds. The ferry needed two tugs to assist in berthing.

There was quite a crowd waiting near the staircase to get to the vehicles on the car decks, along with all the luggage and other bits and pieces. Venturing on to the outer decks was quite an experience as the winds were very high.

We were eventually allowed down to the vehicles and myself and the other bikes arrived in G8 (garage - level 8) to find that all the bikes had been very securely tied down for the trip and the crew were only just removing the large number of ties and straps. Getting the bags back into the bikes proved a bit of a tight squeeze as we were all trying to get our bikes packed at exactly the same time, but, after a short wait, we filed out onto the rather steep steel ramp, when our turn came. I'd read lots of comments about how slippy ferry decks and ramps can be, so I was a little nervous, but it was fine.

What took myself and the other bikers by surprise though was the strength of the wind, which nearly blew me from one side of the loading ramp to the other. It was hellish windy – directly from the right, and all the bikers were veering about all over the place. I was wondering whether the scooter riders would find this easier of more difficult than us on much heavier machines.

There was quite a long delay at passport control before we could 'hit the road', as everyone had to have their passports checked individually. Goodness knows what the people behind us all were thinking, there was only one booth and we'd been the first off.

When I had eventually had my passport checked and stowed away safely in the tank-bag, it was a rather slow, very careful start to the journey. It was impossible to lift up my helmet visor as a lot of sand was being blown from a nearby beach right across our path and we were being fiercely sandblasted.

The Gamin GPS instructions were excellent and I was soon in a slowish column of bikers leaving the port are and heading onto the main motorway. Most of the bikes took the route directly South into France and I seemed to be on my own, heading East. I did come across a couple of other Scottish bikers approaching Brussels, but I'm not too sure where they were heading.

Traffic extremely busy around Brussels and I was stopped quite a few times in traffic queues. I wasn't very sure whether filtering in Belgium was legal or not.

Driving on the right was proving to be very easy, but anyone can ride on a motorway when there's lots of other traffic to follow.

I stopped for lunch near Liege and it seemed that I was closely following some very heavy rain showers. There was a lot of water on the road and the spray was making riding quite

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difficult at times, coupled with the fact that it was still extremely windy. Once I reached the German border though, at around 4:20 cest, I was still following the downpours, but the sun came out and the traffic was flowing fast.

Eventually, the GPS directed me off the autobahn and onto some really great roads. It took me to the hotel by the shortest, bust vastly more interesting route through two or three small, very typically German villages, then onto some narrow country roads and some great hairpins on the way down to the Mosel itself.



Fantastic, just what I'd come here for!

I arrived at the Hotel Zur Post in Klotten and pulled up behind an exact copy of the car that I'd left sitting in my driveway the day before – spooky!

The owner's wife, Bettina, greeted me and first showed me where to park the bike – in a large hall adjacent to the hotel. There were already a number of bikes in there – BMWs, Suzukis, a Triumph Trophy and a Gold-Wing – all German or Dutch. The hall had hangers for wet riding kit, lots of shelves to leave helmets and other items and lots of bike washing and cleaning kit. Wonderful!

When I had unpacked the bike and went back to the restaurant/bar to fill in my room card I was given a glass of champagne and made to feel very welcome by Bettina and Klaus, the owner and this was to be the way that I was made to feel during the whole visit.

I was given a small but lovely twin room on the second floor, with old oak beams across the sloping ceiling – Yes, I did keep bashing my head on them! The room has a lovely view of the vineyards on the south facing hillside behind the village. Chocolates on the pillows…Great!

Dinner was fantastic…what great value this place is for €65 – Dinner, bed and breakfast. Home made asparagus soup, steak and venison medallions, with wild mushrooms and pasta noodles. Followed by fresh strawberries and ice-cream – Delicious!

The beer was going down well too and later I was asked by Klaus to join other guests in the wine cellar, under the hotel, for some music and drinks. A few more beers later (I'm not a great lover of white wine!), that was me for the day.

Ken Glendinning



I was really impressed with this!

Run reports

Lot's of reports online and photos in the gallery!

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

Last month's crossword solution is on the next page…..did you get them all?

A new brain-teaser in next month's edition!

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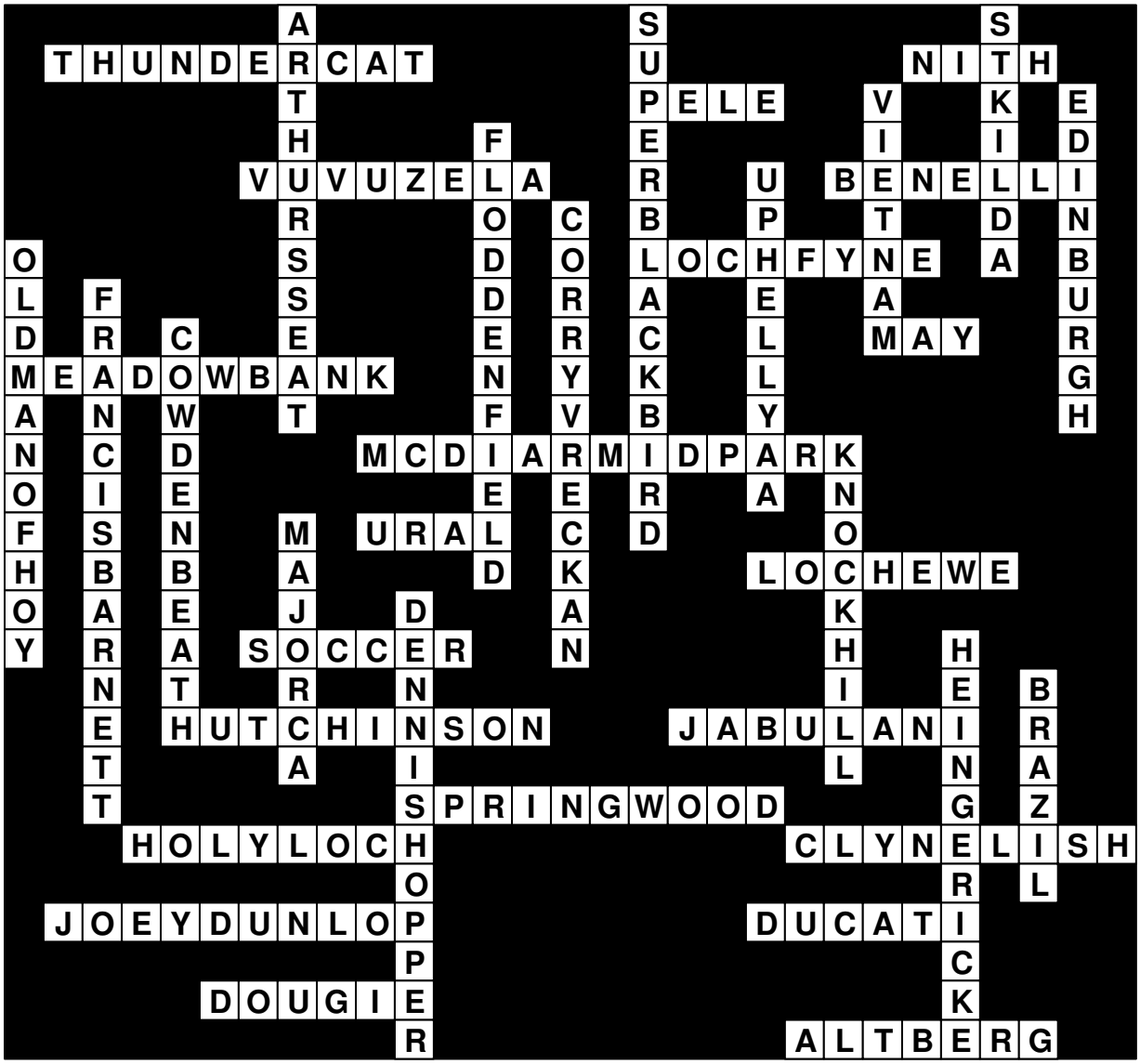
July's Crossword Quiz Solution



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