December - 2011

BikeBytes

The Monthly Magazine Of The Scottish Motorcycle Club

Welcome

Welcome to the December issue of BikeBytes. As I write this, the temperatures are still unseasonably mild and a few brave souls are still out there, battling the wind and rain on their motorcycles. Hopefully, the balmy weather will continue, but I won't be surprised if we are under snow by the time you read this. I think it's probably time to send the Versys into hibernation, after a final wash, polish and liberal dosing with silicon spray. We are so lucky to be able to ride in Scotland, surely one of the great motorcycling landscapes, but wouldn't it be nice if the biking season was just a little bit longer!

Coming up:

Wednesday 14th December – Club night. Black Bitch Tavern, West Port, Linlithgow. 8pm. Come along and pit your wits against the usual eclectic mix of questions at the traditional December quiz night.

And finally…

May I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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

Steve MacKinnon
secretary@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

Editorial

First, a BIG thanks to everyone for their articles this month. It makes the editor's job a hell of a lot easier when I don't have to think of stuff to fill pages with….and bore the pants off the readers in the process!

Not every article is about motorcycling, but we're not just fanatical about bikes…are we? We all have other interests (when we get the time!), it'd be pretty boring if we were all the same. I've probably said this before, but it's great that motocyclists are part of such a 'broad church'.

I see that one part of the EU has ratified some of the proposals regarding tampering and 'power train' modifications as well as mandatory ABS on new bikes, including 125s.

The text of the legislation states that "*With regard to powertrain modifications [Article 18] IMCO adopted a compromise in line with the European Commission's logic, with delegated acts laying down measures for manufacturers to prevent subsequent modifications by the user that may have adverse effects on safety or the environment. Additionally IMCO added a new article 18a which requires that users seek inspection and approval "by the competent authorities" in case of substantial powertrain modifications. "A modification is deemed to be substantial when it renders the original type approval obsolete" or when it harms safety or the environment.*"

The BMF is proposing to fight this legislation as it's far too broad and unspecific. It will certainly mean getting major modifications 'inspected' though no-one has specified how this will be done (another MOT?) or explained exactly what modifications require such an inspection.

This legislation has quite a way to go yet, so there's no guarantee that it will be implemented in the UK in this way. There was also nothing in the legislation regarding any of the other scare-stories that had been banded about, so at least we all know what we have to fight.

There are some signs that the UK government may be prepared to allow some 'local amendments' to this EU legislation, so 'watch this space'!

Oh yes, and I hope everyone has a great Christmas and all the very best for the New Year!

Ken Glendinning
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Exploring Peru – Too

The Jungle!

Flying from Lima over the Andes entailed a stop at Cusco (altitude 3400m, 11,200ft), and as soon as the plane doors opened I could feel the altitude affecting my breathing. Luckily we didn't stop long, just a quick change of passengers, then it was off again, landing at Puerto Maldonado about 40 minutes later. The heat hit us as we left the airport building, and then the heavens opened in one of those tropical downpours as we got on the bus - the only rain we experienced.

Having reorganized our baggage to leave the bulk of it in the tour company's office for the 4 days we would spend up the Tambopato river, it was another 20 minutes in the bus to get to the river and into the motorized, covered canoe.



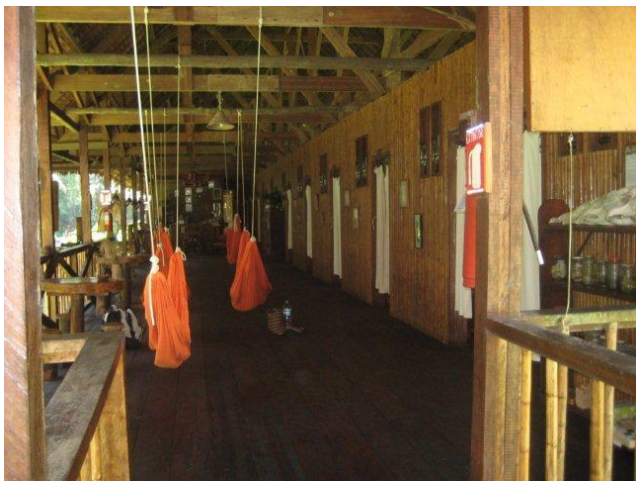
This was a pleasant 3 hours or so, with a lunch of fried rice and vegetables wrapped in a banana leaf. Arriving at Posada Amazonas where we were to spend the night, there was nothing to be seen except wooden steps going up the steep-sided river bank and the path at the top disappearing into the trees.



It was a 20 minute walk to get to the lodge, where the emphasis was on eco-friendliness and sustainability; the building was made of wood, electricity was only on for a couple of hours in the evening for re-charging batteries, there were no electric lights, just kerosene lamps which the staff lit at dusk and which were put out by them at around midnight.



In the bedrooms we just had a couple of candles, but the beds, with mozzie nets over them, were very comfortable, and we had ensuite bathrooms with all mod cons, flushing loos and a shower with hot water.



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The evening meal in the big dining room was buffet style, pasta and salad, plentiful and very tasty. The rooms were open to the elements and the floors were slatted - I think the idea is that anything finding its way into the room can easily find its way out again, and you certainly feel very close to nature. I was kept awake by the jungle sounds, mainly a troop of wild pigs snuffling and barking at each other, and at one point there was a very peculiar noise from below which we came to the conclusion in the morning had been a porcupine's quills brushing along under the room.



The next day we were up at 4.30am to go to a lake and sit quietly on a raft in order to see giant river otters; then it was back to the river canoe for a 6 hour ride up to the Tambopato Research Centre; a lodge built on the same principles where we spent the next two nights, getting up at 4.30 each morning this time to see a spectacular show of macaws and parrots flying down to the river banks to eat clay, which they need to neutralize the toxic seeds and fruits they eat in the forest.



At the Research Centre, and at Refugio Amazonas which we stayed in for one night on the way back, the showers were only cold water, which is a shock to the system when you are very hot, but quite refreshing! We weren't really bothered by mosquitoes, the worst thing was the little sweat bees which land on you in numbers. The most dangerous thing we encountered was a wandering spider, said to be the most venomous spider on earth, fast and extremely aggressive if provoked.

Judy Broad

Bikes versus Bikes

About a year or so ago, I rediscovered my old bicycle. It had lain dusty and neglected for many years, buried under miscellaneous junk at the back of the garage. I disinterred it, clean it up, lubed various bits and have had a lot of fun on it ever since. It occurred to me that there are many similarities and contrasts between motorcycling and cycling.

Clothing

It appears that in many sports, clothing evolves to the point of extreme silliness; diamond Pringle sweater, pastel pink Lacoste polo shirt and outrageous trousers, anyone? We shouldn't be too hard on golfers, though; motorcycling and cycling are just as guilty of inspiring bizarre fashion choices.

As an example, consider the skin-tight leathers, with obligatory aerodynamic hump twixt the shoulder blades, as worn by the committed race replica rider. These suits have evolved, on the race track, to be totally fit for purpose; they are both aerodynamic and protective. In any other circumstance, once the rider has levered himself off his machine, he finds it impossible to stand upright and an attempt to walk results in a stooped and knuckle scraping gait, reminiscent of a hunch-backed chimp.



The shaven-legged racing bicycle rider, on the other hand, clad in Lycra and with cleats on the soles of his shoes, can barely walk at all. With the cleats forcing him to waddle on the backs of his heels and the padding built into his shorts bulking out his rear

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aspect, an uninitiated bystander could easily come to the conclusion that our hero has recently suffered a childish accident.

It is imperative that the cyclist or motorcyclist thus attired stays in close proximity to his machine – the only justification for being dressed like this is in riding the thing. If he becomes separated from it, even by a few metres, his appearance may cause alarm, if not panic, amongst the general public.

I must admit to having bought some Lycra cycling gear from Lidl, that well known sports outfitters. Now, it has to be said that a middle aged torso in Lycra is not a good look. A female journalist once described the Lycra-clad legs of a professional bicycle racer as looking like 'condoms stuffed with walnuts'. Sadly, the fifty-something male body encased in the same material is often more akin to a bin bag stuffed with blancmange.



Hardware

Motorcycle and bicycle companies try their utmost to convince us that if we don't buy the latest high tech, hot off the production line, super expensive machine, we will suffer the scorn of our peers. If it seems that motorcyclists have bought into this nonsense, it is as nothing to the fashionistas of the bicycle world for whom the tiniest component is worthy of hours of discussion and the outlay of vast sums of money.

The replacement of perfectly good components is justified on the grounds that the new gizmo weighs half a gram less than the lardy piece of outdated rubbish from last year. It is essential, while rationalising this expense on the grounds of weight reduction, that the cyclist conveniently forgets his expanding waistline.

Bicycles are the very embodiment of the 'less is more' mantra, by which I mean that the more you pay, the less bicycle you get for your money. Cheap bicycles are heavy and very expensive bikes are featherweight by comparison.

The opposite seems to be true in motorcycle design, with the possible exception of race replicas.

When Honda introduced the Pan Euro ST1300 a few years ago, it was found to be just a little bit lighter than the porky ST1100 it replaced. One magazine asked why they hadn't seized the opportunity to create a much lighter tourer. Honda explained that the buyers of these bikes *expect* them to be heavy so they had merely given the market what it demanded.



Cost

My own noble steed is a bottom-of-the-range 15kg mountain bike, crafted from girders in 1993. It's so old I think we can safely say the capital cost can be written off. Therefore, apart from the occasional drop of oil on the chain, it costs almost nothing to run, and this is part of the charm.

A reasonable bicycle can be bought for, say, £500. A very good one might be £1000 to £2000, but it is possible to spend much more than that to obtain the lightest possible machine. For the cost of a second hand, 300kg Pan Euro, you could probably get a carbon fibre and titanium super-bicycle weighing less than the Pan rider's surgical support.



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However, if we look at pence per mile, the cost of cycling can suddenly appear extravagant. Earlier in the year we had a long Distillery Challenge run. My total mileage was approximately 240 miles and the cost of the coffee stop plus lunch plus fuel came to £31.88, or just over 13 pence per mile. In contrast, I recently cycled from home to Cambus, Alloa and up the Devon Way to Dollar. Stopping at the Cafe des Fleurs (pretentious, Dollar?), I gasped out my order for a cappuccino and a generous slice of sponge cake for which I was relieved of £4.80. Returning along the quiet roads and tracks skirting the foot of the Ochils, my round trip distance totalled 33 miles, which worked out at a heady 14 pence per mile, the equivalent of only 42mpg.



Other stuff

There are loads of other comparisons, amongst them:

- cyclists vastly outnumber motorcyclists (at least 5:1, possibly as much as 16:1) leading to,
- the cycling lobby as an militant, vocal and hugely successful political force, compared to the largely apathetic motorcycle community.
- the drug-tarnished reputation of professional cycling compared to the comparatively clean image of MotoGP.
- the unbearably self righteous air of smugness exhibited by many cyclists who inhabit the sandals and yogurt-weaving end of the spectrum. The motorcycle world is thankfully free of this phenomenon, BMW riders excepted, of course.
- motorcyclists grin when they're enjoying a run; cyclists almost never look happy!

Steve MacKinnon

Pet Fostering – Can you help?



Some members know that my wife and I do dog fostering for a charity, and have had all sorts from a four month old collie up to a 16 year old lurcher. We presently have a pair of long-haired dachshunds.



This is an invitation to consider joining us as a fosterer.

Right now the charity has too many clients for the number of volunteers, and any help even for a short time would be very welcome.

Petcare Network is a charity staffed by volunteers and based in Edinburgh but whose clients can come from a wider area. It was founded in 1996 to provide help for people with disabilities and social needs by offering short term fostering and support with various aspects of pet care.

Often the clients have no family to care for their pet when, for example, they need to go into hospital or respite care, or are temporarily homeless, perhaps due to a house fire. Knowing their pet is being well

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looked-after is one less thing they need to worry about.



The pets come in all shapes and sizes – mostly cats and dogs, but also rabbits, guinea pigs, budgies etc.. Often volunteers have experience of and a preference for particular animals. Elaine and I are dog lovers and since the death of our springer spaniel we have fostered a variety of dogs, some for a week or two, some for several months. Sometimes the same 'lodger' comes back on more than one occasion. Over the last six years we have had about a dozen different dog visitors, plus budgies and guinea pigs.

We don't do cats! We benefit as well as the dog owners; the dogs are great company and regular walks (in all weathers!) keep us fit. Of course, not all dogs are perfectly behaved, but I can honestly say there is never a dull moment.



Most of the time the pets return to their owners after their 'holiday', but occasionally they need to be rehomed and the charity will make every effort to find a suitable new home. It is not uncommon, in these circumstances, for the volunteer who has been caring for the pet to adopt it themselves. In the case of a dog or cat this can make fostering another animal difficult or impossible, and the charity loses a volunteer. Recently for this very reason five volunteers have been lost and the number reduced to 20. Petcare Network is therefore keen to recruit new volunteers.

Do you love animals but do not own a pet because you don't have the time to make a permanent commitment? If you would welcome the chance to care for a pet on a short-term basis, this may be the ideal volunteering opportunity for you. If you think you may be interested or wish more information, I suggest you look at the website www.petcarenetwork.co.uk or you can phone me or Elaine for a chat on 01506 842626

Steve Middleton

Arai Helmet Maintenance

I paid a visit to Hein Gericke in Glasgow last Monday with my Arai Condor helmet hoping to get a new visor.

Unfortunately the release mechanism for the visor had become somewhat sticky, and the chap in the shop gave me a severe warning that if he broke anything whilst trying to release the visor, it would be my responsibility.

Fortunately as soon as he tried to release the visor he realised that it would break and stopped. He then recommended that I take it home and pour fairy liquid into the side pods of the helmet and leave it for a day or so.

I did this, an, as if by magic, the release mechanism freed itself and the visor popped out without any force at all. So if your Arai visor has become stiff, follow this simple procedure and all will be well (OK, it worked for me!).

Handy hint: prop the helmet up on a poly bag or something non-porous as the towel I used had to be rinsed many times to remove the excess fairy liquid from it.

John Moss

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Events

If you check the calendar of events on the website site you will see there are a few free spots in the coming and future weeks. If you fancy organising a run or other type of event, or just suggesting something that we can arrange for you, then please let us know at events@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk and we'll see what we can do.

Run reports

Remember, there's lot's of reports online and photos in the gallery!

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

Articles for BikeBytes

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

bikebytes@scottishmotorcycleclub.org.uk

FOR SALE

Please let me know if you've anything, bike related, that you want to advertise for sale.

BikeBytes Crossword

This month, we have the answers to the last edition's 'blast from the past' crossword. How did you do?

AND a Christmas crossword provided by Ruby and Steven….how good is that!

A new crossword next month.

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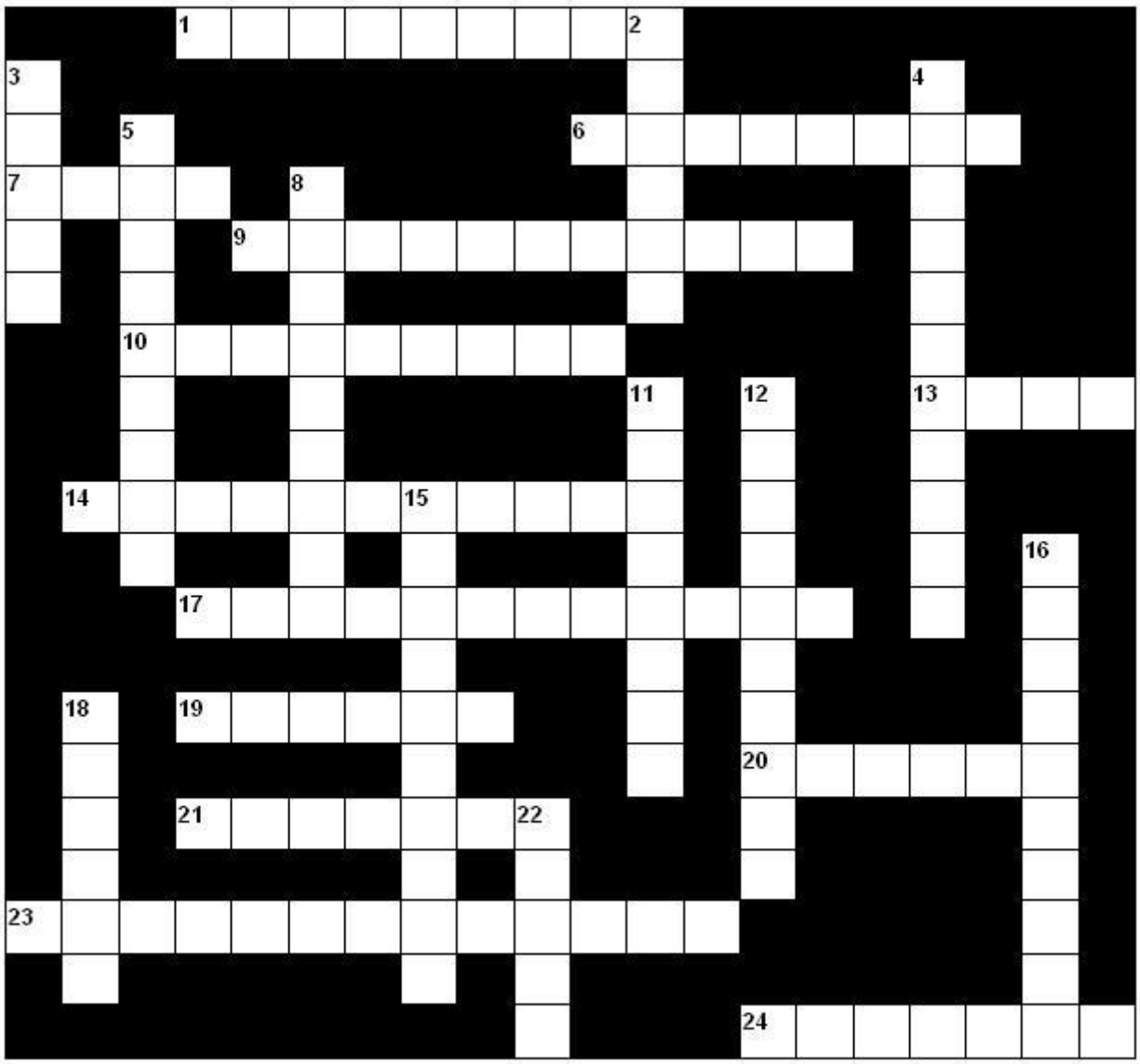
Ruby and Steve's Christmas Crossword



Across:

1. pie filling
6. what the Christmas fool is
7. Polish Christmas dinner
9. campanology at Christmas
10. wise old Melchior was joined by ...
13. don't eat the yellow stuff
14. the most famous non-successful bike jump
17. let's hope it's not annus horribulus this time
19. a smart friendly ghost
20. spending the kids' inheritance
21. with red nose
23. Mr Odbody is the guardian angel
24. plum duff

Down:

2. Eastern European country
3. most popular present
4. goes with 24 across
5. goes with 2 down
8. I melt toes is a bit of a mix up
11. misled ghostly feelings
12. singer of White Christmas
15. jolly round
16. star of Crossroads
18. Oeuf Noggin's brother
22. spikey Valance

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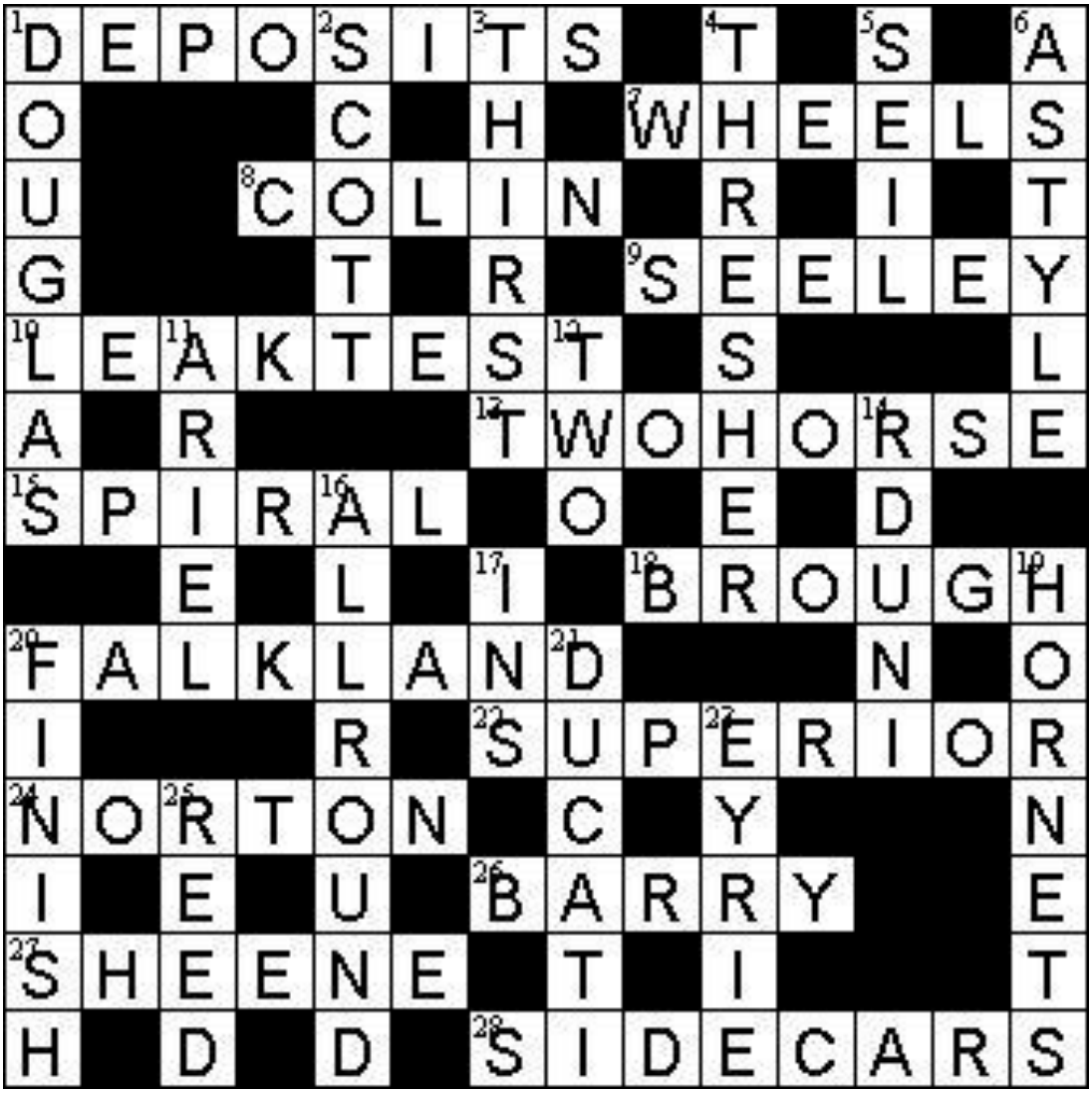
Answers to the BikeBytes classic crossword from last month



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