

Chronicle

Issue 5
Spring
2023

The Thoughts of Chair-Man Ben

Greetings from a sunny, but very cold, Ohio where I am visiting the company that builds Barefoot Caravans for the US market; all very impressive and exciting!

After what has been a mild winter, spring seems to be taking its time to appear. Not many motorcyclists have braved the cold, damp and dirty Cotswold lanes to visit us that's for sure! However the next Club Run is nearly upon us, which means that the spring sunshine is surely about to arrive.

We are all looking forward to an exciting year of motorcycling, with loads of great racing on the calendar and new events popping up to keep the two (and three) wheeled market alive and interesting. Unfortunately Irish road racing has been dealt a huge blow, with the news that all races have been cancelled due to increased insurance costs. Thankfully, it looks as though the NW200 has been saved through crowd funding and investment from a local business. That news could have affected the TT too, so let's keep our fingers crossed that a long term solution is found.

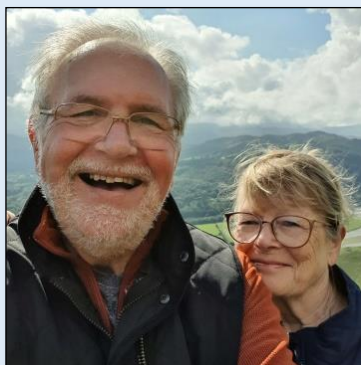
On a personal note, I have a trip of a lifetime planned later this year. My wife and I are doing Route 66 on a Harley: which reminds me, I must see if the RAC guys fancy following us!

I look forward to seeing you all in Bradford on Avon. It sounds like we have a great weekend planned, and we are fully booked, fantastic!

Ben

Mad Bob McMad, an update – your scribe caught up with Bob to see how he is faring, he writes:

Last Friday [10th March] I was taken off immunotherapy for 6 weeks; the side effects were harming my heart, which went down to 30% pumping strength. I was struggling with diarrhoea too and unable to walk for more than 20mins. Now I'm off the treatment - AMAZING DIFFERENCE! They have to change my heart tablets to build back up to 40/45% so it's all a balancing act.



The GOOD NEWS is my kidney cancer has reduced by 50% - brilliant - and my lung cancer has reduced by around 20%. The problem is in the balance of both treatments but I'm feeling good just at the moment and regular loo is brilliant after 6 weeks of the runs!

I have Super San [Bob's Better Half pictured] chasing appointments, tablets etc. I couldn't do it without her. After 55 years you realise just how lucky we were to meet and share the highs and lows.

Its nine months now since the heart attack on 9th July. The future Cancer treatment could be tablet form, not necessarily Immunotherapy.

Bob sends his best regards and a poem that appears later in this issue. I am sure you will join me in wishing him (and Sandra of course) all the very best for a speedy recovery and a return to the saddle.



Diary Dates: - Spring Run 14-16th April 2023 Autumn Run 15-17th September 2023

If You Want To Get Ahead Get A Hat! *Paul Haskins, LS2's UK Sales Director, gives us a heads up on the UK and European helmet scene...*

During these past few years the helmet market has gone, and is going through, some significant changes with this year seeing an update of regulation from ECE22.05 to the new ECE22.06.



Before the introduction of ECE22.05, I'm sure many of you will remember the old BSi Kitemark stickers that were affixed to helmets some 20 years ago: although the stickers disappeared, all ECE stamped helmets still meet the BSi standard too.

Well, as the 22.05 standard has been with us for around 20 years it is due an upgrade, which is happening this year. Helmets meeting ECE22.06 have already started to find their way into a few stores but until recently, it was quite a scary thing for distributors and retailers still holding 22.05 stock (which is probably around 99% of them) because the 22.05 stock was soon to become worthless!

Why's that you ask? Until a recent turnaround by the UK Government, it meant that any 22.05 helmets that had not been sold by 3rd January 2024 would be branded as non-saleable and that would be literally 100's of thousands of helmets! Where things stand now, helmet manufacturers have until 3rd July 2023 to produce 22.05 helmets after which they must stop and can only produce 22.06 certified helmets.

Like many manufacturers, LS2 are already producing 22.06 helmets but not every model is ready yet; testing is ongoing to either upgrade or replace models before July. Luckily (and correctly in my opinion) the UK Government have made the decision to allow the distributors to continue to import and sell 22.05 models until stocks are depleted and this, of course, is also the same for the retailer.

In Europe, Germany and Italy have decided to do the same as the UK whereas Spain are looking at different restrictions (not confirmed yet): finish production by 3rd July 2023, no more 22.05 helmets imported after 3rd January 2025 and both the distributor and the retailer have to finish selling any 22.05 stock by 3rd January 2027. The French, well, they just haven't made their mind up yet but it is rumoured that they will follow the same rules as Germany, Italy and the UK.

Luckily LS2 are managing the change well (like our motto says, Always Ahead) and we already have many models, old and new, being produced to the 22.06 standard. This doesn't however leave us in the clear as we still have plenty of 22.05 stock to sell - discounts for club members!!! (Ed: Orderly queue now chaps!)

So what is the new 22.06 standard? Well in brief it means a lot of investment from manufacturers in design, R&D and increased production costs. As an example, we have designed and manufactured a new touring helmet that has 6 different size outer shells and 6 EPS's (expanded polystyrene liners) to match. Long gone are the days of XXL shells padded out to make an XXS helmet!!

The upside to this is that it makes helmets safer in the event of an accident; the downside is that it can make helmets (especially larger ones) heavier as the outer shell sizes will have to increase. This is something that LS2 are overcoming by using high grade materials such as carbon fibre for high end helmets and KPA (Kinetic polymer alloy), a patented blend of aramid nano fibres and polymers to allow for a stronger, lighter and more versatile construction of the shell on entry to mid-range helmets like the **Advant** model pictured right.

Enough about the standards though, what about how the markets and trends have changed over the years?

Well, as everyone reading this knows, the average age of motorcyclists in the UK and Europe is rising year on year and we are riding different styles of bikes. Long gone are the days of whizzing around the country lanes on sports bikes, most of us now prefer a little more comfort which ultimately means we also wear different styles of helmets.





Left: Messrs Smith, McMillan and occasional Club Guest, Mark Davies (aka Tom, Dick and Arai) sport MX style lids.

The industry now sells far more touring or adventure inspired helmets such as MX style with visors and sun shields or 180 degree flip helmets as they're far more versatile when riding around town. These are outstripping the sales of 'traditional' race style helmet.

The mention of race style helmets leads me to one more thing; the general public consensus is that the ACU gold label attached to rear of a

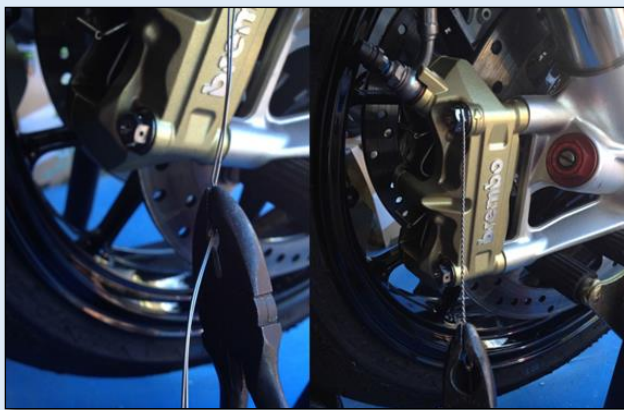


helmet is the standard that makes it legal. What a load of old codswallop! The ACU label is only required for competition on race tracks so therefore will not be attached to flip front helmets - plus it is only a UK requirement. The actual legal standards label, which carries the 06 or 05 information, is attached to the chinstrap.

Anyway, I guess if you've got this far you'll have had enough of me rambling on about helmets so all I need to say now is I wish you all well and good health and I look forward to seeing all on the next Club run in April!

My favourite tool (stop sniggering at the back Sager Minor!) – Frank Finch tells all...

Years ago when I was a young man, I used to spend hours in the garage fiddling with my favourite tool to ensure my nuts stayed tight. These days, not so much!



I'm of course talking about lock-wiring pliers – the essential tool for anyone fettling a race bike. While they would still come in useful for securing oil filters and the like, my nephew has recently borrowed my pliers on a long-term (i.e. never to be seen again) loan for use on his race bike. And so it is that he now gets to enjoy the simple but mesmeric action that turns boring lock-wire into the work of art that all self-respecting racers crave!

I'm a fickle man however and the pliers have recently been replaced in my affections with an Impact Wrench. Maybe it's because I'm not as strong as I used to be or just that I'm lazy but for those stubborn clutch centre, alternator or sprocket nuts, it's magical. And who can resist that professional workshop sound as it rattles into action – simply marvellous! Try it once and you'll wonder how you ever managed without one.



Where there's muck there's brass... *Martin Lambert reports on the prospects for future bike servicing*

Who remembers the “careers advisor” at school? In my state comprehensive it was a chap who told all the clever kids to join the civil service, those of intermediate intelligence (like me) to become a postman “it’s a job for life” or a mechanic and, at the lower end of the scale, to enlist in the armed forces to “learn a trade”.

That advice was dolled out year after year yet in some ways it resonated with some of those who it was aimed at. For many of our gang who had a field bike in pre-teen years and a moped on the day they were 16, becoming a motorcycle mechanic seemed like a dream job; not just enjoying bikes but being paid to work on them too.

The recent dearth of powered two-wheel mechanics suggests that the modern teenager no longer aspires to “getting their hands dirty” or is simply not being made aware that such opportunities exist... or how to access them? Step forward Tony Campbell at the MCI and BikeJobs.com, the industry labour supplier. Hearing from several manufacturers that there is a growing staff pinch point in workshops, Tony put the wheels in motion to find out what the situation on the ground was.

Tony has a great deal of experience in the trade from his time at the Piaggio group and knows that the workshop side of a business can either be a profit centre or its downfall. Accordingly, he recently asked BikeJobs to undertake an exploration into the whys, how’s and possibilities to create awareness and see if, in this modern age, youths still wanted to become motorcycle mechanics to use my terminology or “technicians” in the modern parlance – and the news is not awful.

“Before Motorcycle Live, I might have been pessimistic and agreed that things were bleak but there are some encouraging signs”, said John McAvoy on the specially constructed stand at the event.



“We spoke to many parents last weekend and took a simple straw poll of teenagers, asking them to say if an apprenticeship or some kind of introduction to the world of being a motorcycle technician appealed and almost 100 said yes. The weekdays are less productive here but that’s because the kids are at school. If we end the show with 200 young people expressing an interest in a career as a motorcycle technician, then I think that’s pretty impressive”.

Being interested is one thing, but that leading to training and a career is sure to be a barrier that needs to be surmounted as John concluded. “These are young adults we are talking about so not cash rich and many not so mobile.

We need to identify certified training establishments close by in order for them to take their first step towards employment so now we are creating a countrywide map of recognised trainers and courses to see if the welcome demand we have seen on this albeit limited test project can be satisfied”.

So, working on motorcycles actually does appeal to at least some of the X-Box generation, which is a relief! It won’t solve the immediate demand for technicians, but the signs are more optimistic for the future along with a welcome upward realignment of average wages for qualified technicians according to BikeJobs. And, to update the title of this piece, perhaps I should have typed wearing CE approved neoprene workshop gloves... “Where there are ECU’s there’s brass”...



Hitting the Apex - Alan Halford proves size isn't everything as he tackles 3934 Thai Lovelies....

There was a biking connection in the middle of my recent trip to Thailand. After spending a week in Hua Hin in the South, daughter Louise, her partner Andy and myself flew up to Chiang Mai in the North on New Year's Day. I had been to C-M many years ago but the focus this time was to be the Mae Hong Son Loop, purported to be Thailand's best motorcycle adventure.

There are plenty of bike hire shops in C-M so we had booked nothing in advance giving us the chance to inspect our potential steeds first. This turned out to be a little more difficult than we had anticipated. As it was high season some shops were completely emptied out and others had only very limited choice. Our research ahead suggested a minimum of a 125 scooter and this suited Andy's quite limited biking experience. Louise has ridden a lot more and had set her heart on a Honda MSX; I thought a 250 trail bike would be ideal. Starting to get worried at the lack of options we returned to the first shop we had visited and luckily a group hire had just returned three 125 Honda Click autos. Strike while the iron's hot, was our decision. It would add to the fun all being on the same model and we would fit in well with the thousands of similarly equipped locals although with slightly more considered clothing than their typical shorts and flipflops.

Next day saw a 9am start from our hotel. The first 40 miles on the R108 heading South is not so exciting, with the initial urban sprawl, some fairly straight roads and quite a lot of heavy trucks. A right turn at the appropriately named town of Hot (30C typical in the day throughout our stay) and the real fun began. Initially the road follows a river and the twisty bits come thick and fast but soon it was lunchtime and we spotted a roadside eatery. Finding food in Thailand, even in less touristy areas, never seems to be a problem and whether it's a full-blown restaurant, a shack on the side of the road or a street food cart, in my experience, the quality is always good. I am amazed at what you can get from a set-up that is basically a wok and a gas bottle sitting on a sidecar attached to a step-through scooter.

All too soon we were at our first overnight stop in Mae Sariang. The value for money in Thailand is staggering, a typical mid-range hotel or guest house is £20-£25 a night with breakfast, big clean room, decent shower, air-con and swimming pool. Similar value is found with food; we ate that evening in an adjacent hotel, plenty of yummy Thai food, beer and a bill that left change out of £20! (that's for three of us, not each).



The Loop can be done easily in less than 3 days if you push on, but there is so much to see and do as you travel round and we were soon on our way North, now towards Mae Hong Son and the roads continue to please. After initially wishing I was on my Tiger 900 I realised that, with hardly ever seeing a straight of more than 100yds and excellent surface for small wheels, you can have just as much fun on a scooter. You don't even need more power to zoom past traffic as there really isn't any to speak of.

Mae Hong Son town is a captivating place, surprisingly un-touristy, centred around a beautiful lake with a stunning Wat (temple) on its shore and surrounded by mountains. We had planned to spend a couple of days there but it turned into three. A trip out to Ban Rak Thai, which translates as 'Thai loving village' and was founded by Chinese refugees, found us just yards from the Burmese border. Then onto Kho Ku So Bamboo bridge, which is more of walkway over extensive rice paddies and exotically beautiful.

Having collected our Loop certificate and T-shirts proving we had completed 1864 curves on the R108 we were now heading North on the R1095 and the promise of another 2070 curves before arriving back at our start point. After a lot more full throttle fun on the Clicks our next stop is Pai, the most Northerly point on the route. Pai has replaced Chiang Mai as *the* hippie/backpacker destination in the North in the last few years and is not so much to my liking. Still, it has some delightful parts if you avoid all the weirdos. We stayed in another good hotel on the outskirts and used the bikes to visit out of town attractions such as Pai Canyon, which, if it were in the UK, would have been fenced off years ago as an unacceptable hazard.

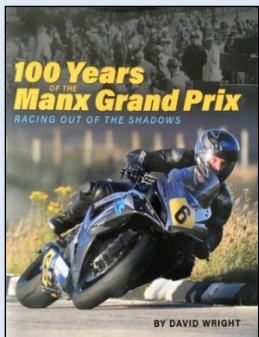
All too soon we reached the final day and the bikes had to be back at the hire shop by mid-afternoon. The rest of the R1095 is reckoned by some to be the best bit, descending from the mountains to the plain where Chiang Mai sits. Could the roads really get any better, all those twists and hairpins, the impeccable road surface, so little traffic? Well probably yes, it did if only marginally. Although we had to descend several thousand feet there were still plenty of upslopes following the mountain valleys and always cornering. When we reached the bottom I had to admit to a near 'moment' when I was being much too enthusiastic on a right-hander and went wide onto some gravel. This time, fortunately, my trials experience and a good right foot 'dab' got me through.



The Loop is shown as 375 miles and we had covered just over 500 with our excursions and running around. The Clicks were perfect and worked out at about £12 a day each for hire, insurance and petrol. We were stopped three times by the Thai police, all in Chiang Mai. The first was within a mile of the start but their only concern was seeing our International Driving Permit. The £5.50 fee at my local Post Office was money well spent and, as it will last three years, I hope to show it to more Thai policemen soon. Planning is underway!

100 Years of the Manx Grand Prix - *Ian Kerr reviews a David Wright book...*

Although the Isle of Man TT races have always been seen as the premier event getting the lion's share of publicity, not to mention the bigger number of books chronicling this unique historic event, the Manx Grand Prix has also had just an impressive history. So the sub-title of this book 'Racing out of the Shadows' is somewhat appropriate.



Originally called the Manx Amateur Motorcycle Road Races when it first ran in 1923, before being renamed the Manx Grand Prix in 1929, its aims were to provide a race over the TT course for amateur riders on standard machines. It also aimed to reduce the commercial pressures for the riders and as a result no prize money was available to winners, which still applies today!

Statistically, 69 former Manx Grand Prix riders went on to enjoy professional status, win TT races and, in some cases, become world champions. Another interesting fact is that sidecars have never been included in the race programme! However, this new book published by the Manx Motorcycle Club, who have been responsible for the races from the very beginning, is not just a series of race reports and results from circa 450 races, but an in-depth look at all aspects of the event over the

past 100 years, as well as looking to the future.

Written by Isle of Man resident and prolific author David Wright, who has many excellent motorcycle books to his credit, including many about the TT, *100 Years of the Manx Grand Prix* explores the many and varied facets of an event run purely for the good of the sport.

In this hardback publication, twelve chapters break down the 272 pages into logical periods and tell the 'behind the scenes' stories which, in the early days, led to riders entering under aliases. Obviously as you would expect there are race results dotted here and there, but only the podium three, rather than a comprehensive list of finishers and entrants.

Thanks to David's research and access to the various archives, I found many names not normally associated with the IOM jumped out of the pages. Names who have accepted the challenge of the mountain course through the MGP.

Period black and white images mix well with colour plates of riders, images of race programmes and even postal first day covers, all helping to break up the well laid out quality pages. It is easy to dip in and out of and, as ever, the writing style of David Wright makes it an easy read as he uncovers many unknown facts as he leads you through the extensive history of the Manx.

Certainly fans of the most famous mountain road course will want to have this book, but I would suggest those who love motorcycle history and the people who make it, will also want this excellent work especially as it is extremely reasonably priced at £25.00. **ISBN 978 1 3999 3542 5**

Available directly from the Manx Motorcycle Club www.manxmotorcycleclub.com

From Wheelies to Barrel Roles – Tim Maccabee surprised many with his complete career change last year. The Chronicle asks him how it's going...

Chronicle: Tell us about your new venture, where is it and how's it going so far?

TM: The Eagle, 3 The Holloway in Warwick town centre opened on April 22nd 2022. It's a small bar in a former cellar in which we carried out a complete refit. The Bar now has a capacity of just 34 people and while we offer a full range of drinks (we don't do food - too complicated) we specialise in cask ale, real ale as some would call it, and craft ales.



We're free of tie and therefore I have free rein to order whatever I choose. This has allowed us to be quite adventurous getting through well over 150 different cask ales in our 11 months and 100 different craft ales. This is something we have become known for, along with an eclectic choice of music!

Chronicle: How long had you had a hankering to change your career so comprehensively?

TM: I've always loved beer and pubs! I know half of the male population would say that, but for some years I have perused pubs for sale, and when visiting pubs, I will usually appraise the beer while my wife, Rachel (behind the bar with me in the picture) would critique the decoration and furnishings. We've taken those "skills" and put them to the test in our own pub and we're now looking for a second venue!

Chronicle: How long were you at Ducati in total? What do you miss most (and least) about the bike industry and Ducati in particular?

TM: I was at Ducati for just over 20 years, first as Sales Manager and then for more than 15 years as Managing Director. In my time there we sold over 50,000 bikes in the UK which means the vast majority of Ducati bikes sold in the UK were sold on my watch - something I am obviously quite proud of.

I miss (some of) the people in the industry along with the involvement we had in British Superbikes, which I always used to enjoy - especially when we were doing well! That said, one of the motivations for starting the 848 Challenge, which then became the TriOptions cup, was that it ensured at least one Ducati winner on a weekend at a time when our fortunes were at a lower ebb!

I don't miss the reporting and in particular the level of "compliance" that seemed to get ever more arduous as time went on. The Club remains a valuable method for keeping in contact with at least some of the camaraderie that the bike industry has to offer.

Chronicle: I think you joined Ducati from Ford; were you already a committed biker before joining?

TM: Joining Ducati was in the realms of being a dream job. I started biking at 16, appropriately enough with a Garelli Rekord and I have owned various marques including Suzuki, Yamaha, Honda and Moto Guzzi over the following years. My first Ducati came when I worked for the company as they had always seemed out of reach before that.

Chronicle: Do you still get time to ride (if so what bike) and, most importantly, are we likely to see you again on a run or has the business taken over?

TM: Though the pub is a very busy occupation and not set to get much quieter in the coming months, I am expecting to come along to the spring run in Bradford on Avon, for which I need to borrow a bike so we'll have to see what I turn up on! It might not be a Ducati!

4 Wheels Bad, 2 Wheels Good – Our Current Affairs Editor, Groucho Sparks, mixes his classic novel metaphors in a Tale of Two CSI’s...

I drive a car of the brand that Jasper Carrott ridiculed and our dear friend departed, David Strathcarron, loved. The model nomenclature leads you to believe that it is a most excellent vehicle; and by and large it is. However, last December it developed a fault – and that’s where the wheels fell off...

This car (the 2nd of the brand I have owned) was first registered in March 2020 and when I bought it in May 2021 it had just 30 miles on the clock. The sales personage said the manufacturer had had it on their rental fleet but it had never gone out. After explaining that I had not fallen out of the nearest coconut tree, we mutually agreed it was a pre-reg that had been stood in a field for a year. Provenance agreed I splashed the cash and the car was mine.

All was good in the first 10000 miles until I realised that the auto-hold brake wasn’t working: I was alerted to this by a parking sign the car rolled back into! I called the local Main Dealer (who had supplied my first car) and after negotiating a remote switchboard in a town 25 miles away, finally spoke to a service advisor who told me that it was a ‘not unknown’ problem with this manufacturer’s vehicles and that they would need the car for 2 days. Good news! It would be covered under warranty which runs to the 1st MOT. Bad news, they couldn’t fit it in until late January - 6 weeks away!

Rocking up at 8.30 on a particularly icy Monday morning I was kept waiting half an hour until a young lady advisor finally booked me in (something I had already done on line as requested) and, after prompting, took the key to mine and went to get the loan car.

The loan car was only partially defrosted and after I liberated the ice scraper from behind the fuel flap, she said “Oh, I didn’t know that was there, I did it with my [ungloved] hand.” Inside it looked like a pack of hounds had slept in it but let’s not dwell!



Later that day my phone pinged with a text link to my ‘vehicle inspection report’ - it didn’t work. A quick copy and paste later and I was rewarded with a picture of my car and a note that it needed a camshaft sensor. So, of course, I called and went through the remote switchboard challenge to enquire as to why a brake problem would be solved by a camshaft sensor. “Ah well, the brake problem is the symptom not the cause” I was told. Hmmm, really?

Calling again the following afternoon (you’ll note who is calling who here!) to see if it was ready I was told “Ah well, the technician was not happy, it’s running rough and back in the workshop. It needs a new fuel pump, and they are on back order with an ETA of 10 days.”

You can imagine the subsequent spluttered conversation.

After a week of hearing dick all I finally went into the dealership and was told that the part had arrived that day and I would be able to collect the car later. I did and it has been fine since, except...

I took the car for MOT at my local Independent workshop who gave me an advisory that the front shocks had a misting of oil and, as it affected all group vehicles I should contact the main dealer and complain. It was with a heavy heart that I again negotiated the switchboard minefield.

The operator asked me if I wanted to book the car in for service or enquire about the progress of a service it was in for. My response of “Neither, I want some advice” was met with silence. The system apparently didn’t offer that option!

After eventually putting me through to an unanswered phone that reverted back to the switchboard 3 times I eventually rang off (in a huff, naturally) and sent an email direct to the sharp suited chap I dealt with on the brake issue. I’m sure I’ll get a reply eventually; it’s only been 3 weeks after all.

Compare that with this...

It is a damp, cold St David’s Day. St David is, as you know, the Patron Saint of new registrations. After completing the formalities and waving my trusty Versys farewell, I set off home on my spanking new steed (no, it remains a secret for now!). Pulling up on the drive I was enveloped in a cloud of steam so large it would have given Pete Waterman a stiffy. I called the dealer.

“It’s pumping the coolant out” says I. Within half an hour the Showroom Manager himself rocked up in the van, loaded the bike and disappeared, quite literally, into the sunset.

The following day he called me (note the change in who calls who) to explain that a coolant hose had been wrongly routed in the factory and the front sprocket had eventually worn through it, which explained why it had not been picked up at PDI. The part was on urgent VOR order and the bike would be fixed the next day.

The next day was a Friday and I called mid-afternoon to find out when the bike would be delivered back. It was just being finished and the Service Manager promised to call me within the hour to confirm delivery details. It didn’t happen.

Fearing another car type saga, I was on the keyboard at double-oh-crack on Saturday morning, emailing my displeasure at the broken promise and enquiring as to whether they were treating the problem with the same urgency as I was.

Shortly after 8.30, the Service Manager called, apologising profusely for a ‘misunderstanding’ as to when he would be calling. He told me the bike would be delivered before 10.00 and that as a gesture of goodwill, both parts and labour content at the 1st service would be FOC and what size tee-shirt would I like.

The Moral of the Story; complaints build business!

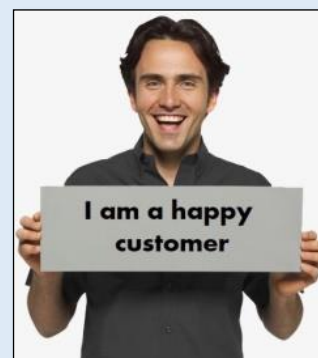
The drive by business in general to automate, digitalise and streamline systems is relentless. What, to company bean counters, seems the only way to greater profits, regrettably takes away the human elements that make shopping for anything from a loaf of bread to a major capital purchase pleasurable and, more importantly, marginalises any form of ‘customer care’.

Thankfully, for us in the bike world, it is not quite the paradigm that other businesses believe. Our purchases are emotional not distress based and as such human interaction is important. Some years ago I organised a customer survey of our then ATV buyers. It was quite sobering to find out that customers put Dealer reputation ahead of Manufacturer reputation when buying their kit.

So, would I buy another car from that dealer group? Not on your nelly. On the other hand, the bike dealer is almost certain to see more of my money in future.

In the 90s the biking ‘Alternate Business Guru’ Geoff Burch wrote a book called *Resistance is Useless*; in it he opined that if a customer has a problem that is dealt with well, 80% will buy again compared to only 40% of those who never have a problem. And, here’s the crunch, of those who have a problem badly dealt with, only 5% stay loyal.

I still have that book if you are interested...



The Road Racer

A kind of madness, they call it ‘Road Race’,
Infects the minds and hearts of Racers.
The Racers eyes look clear yet distant,
They speak of things so strange and different.
Of grunt and springs, of jets and settings.
They meet at night and talk and fix things.
Through the dark much mumbled chatter.
Dawn breaks, what’s with the clatter,
With push and shove, bike barks to life
Screaming, jumping and scaring cattle,
One last run and She’s ready for battle.

***A tribute to the Greatest Road Racer of them all – ever.
By Bob McMillan.***

‘Midst smoke and dust and maybe strife.
The roads are closed and people do wait
In places good, to cheer on their mates.
One Racer arrives in ‘nick of time’.
Paddock bustles with a tension sublime.
‘Yer Maun’ walks through with clear intent.
People part, His gaze fixed and set.
Respect for ‘Himself’ is clear to see,
For the quiet, shy man from Ballymoney.



Pyjama PowerPoints – *Martin Lambert considers the new work order...*

It's generally accepted that there were scant few positives to come from the Covid pandemic and that it will take the global community many years to readjust and get back to how it was before – if ever.

That said, one of the changes that has been welcomed by certain sections of the working population is 'remote working' or 'working from home' and there are several reasons for this. The most obvious has been the flexibility it offers which, in reality, runs deeper than simply being able to answer your emails wearing your jim-jams.

The pandemic was stressful for the whole of society, and it has been followed by unpredictable economic pressures resulting in even greater pressures on the employed section of the community. With many 60+ year old workers opting for early retirement (and taking their knowledge and experience with them), the expectation on the remaining working pool is even greater. Any concession therefore has been welcome. Just being around when the Amazon driver delivers, being able to pop to the Post Office or calling into the shop for a pint of milk, these things are a revelation to those that had their noses to the weekday grindstone for decades; and there are other benefits too.



For many, the worst part of their working day was simply getting to and from their office or place of employment. In my case it was a 98 mile commute (each way) that – on a good day – took 1.5 hours and, at worst in snow, took an epic 5 hours. The prospect of being mentally drained as you sit at your desk to start work is not good and productivity is bound to suffer. In my case I have transformed commuting time into working time.

I am happy to start early in the morning and work on to a similar time to that which I previously walked back through the door. The company gets 3 extra hours a day and I no longer have to worry if the traffic is backed up on the M40. Of course, there are issues of domestic heat and light with some employers being more insightful than others in compensating employees for using their own utilities and attitudes to this are changing as companies adjust to 'Hybrid' working practices.

In terms of productivity and accountability, a good Manager should be able to see if a remote employee is achieving their targets and with tools such as Microsoft Teams there is a way to show that you are either available, in a meeting or away from your screen. In the end it's down to trust and having a feel for the attitude of the employee. If someone is lazy at work then they are liable to be equally slack at home whereas a productive employee is liable to be even more efficient when trusted to work in their own environment without the many distractions that the workplace makes available.

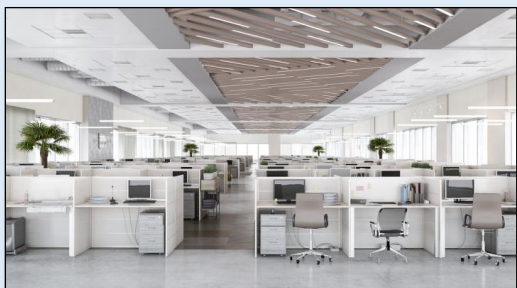
So far this seems like some broad sunlit upland and a 'new dawn' for the formerly office-based workforce but there are two sides to every story and this is no different. The problems seem to be age/experience related and are favouring the older employees over their younger and less time served colleagues. For those that have 'seen it and done it' and find themselves in a comfortable position with a network of contacts and colleagues, the need to be in an office is frankly not strong. Perhaps in the maturity of their careers, the big decisions have been made, the points have been proven in terms of career and progress and it's a case of 'straight and level flight'. But consider the situation of the younger employee at the other end of the spectrum; someone in perhaps their first or second appointment.



For these people the community atmosphere that an office delivers is very important, creating learning opportunities via direct interaction with colleagues and honing important interpersonal life skills. Working alone and remotely it is impossible to gather and exploit many behavioural skills vital to self-worth and career advancement leaving the employer (or Manager) to judge them simply on work rate and not an assessment of a person 'in the round'. Productivity is one thing but being responsible for the career advancement and general workday health of the employee is something all employers who offer Hybrid or remote working should reflect on and take seriously.

Of course this is a very small cross sectional look at the workplace and takes no account of those such as nurses, taxi drivers and dealership staff who simply cannot work from home. It also pays little attention to those – and every employer has them – who seek to work from home in order to simply not really work at all. Additionally, it's also not addressing the fact that many office buildings are on long leases and have to be kept lit and warm for those that do occupy them and are an ongoing overhead on the balance sheet.

As these leases reach maturity who will take the building over and what local businesses will feel the brunt of the knock-on effect of the decline in trade? Already there are many former office buildings being turned into apartments



and LinkedIn is awash with Hybrid job adverts. It's unlikely we, as a society, will ever return to the 9 to 5 style office work pattern and, for some, this has changed their lives for the better. But we should all take some time to consider that for every positive there is likely to be a negative.

For every person taking early retirement there is someone who is going to have to keep working (and perhaps working harder) to support their pension. Equally, we have to consider the welfare of a generation of

workers who might now spend a large part of their working life in a fairly isolated environment with all the mental health downsides that could come with that. It may not be a wholly dystopian landscape but for sure we need to be aware that one size (even in pyjamas) does not fit all.

The Scribe's Last Word



Sitting down a week or so back to put together this issue of The Chronicle I was faced with mainly blank paper. A few emails later and we have another 'bumper issue'. My profound thanks, as ever, are extended to all the contributors and, especially, to Webmaster Alan Halford for juggling it all to fit!

A couple of things have caught my eye this week. Most notably the news that Vlad the Invader is decrying the UK's proposed supply of depleted uranium tank shells to the Ukraine - along with some tanks to fire em from. I recall the visit we made (Banbury run, autumn 2007?) to the Royal Ordnance Corps at Kineton where our guide casually handed one of these around for us to inspect as he described their quite mind-boggling potency. Fastest game of 'Pass the Parcel' I have ever been involved with!

The second thing was pointed out by Mrs Scribe. Whilst watching the 'Idiots Lantern' we noticed how supermarket giants Tesco and Sainsbury were very keen to point out in their marketing campaigns, 'Price matched to Aldi'. It never struck me before what good (free) advertising this was ... for Aldi! Marketeers need to be so careful that what *they* perceive as a consumer benefit is not highlighting their competitors' strengths: in the case of Aldi their pricing, at a time when the focus is on cost of living!

Now, if this current wet weather wouldn't mind, I need to get the new ride run in before Bradford on Avon!

TTFN!

Geoff

END