

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 4 - July 2021



The Talking Chair

Welcome to this, the latest and last issue of The Club newsletter. As Corporal Jones would say, "Don't Panic!", the newsletter will not cease but such is its success we are putting plans in place to give it an actual title forthwith. Please see Geoff's reference to this later in this issue.

Once more we have corralled a diverse range of features for you and we sincerely hope all or at least some pique your interest... and if they don't, you will have a chance to tell us what you would like to see via the on-line survey. As Chairman, one of the things I wanted to achieve during my tenure was to broaden communication beyond the focus of the two Runs per year so that non riding members had more inclusion. In some ways the pandemic and lock-down has actually helped in this respect, forcing us to refocus on keeping in touch and looking out for each other; an ill wind etc. So, enjoy what follows, tell us what you think and be "prepared to participate" and help underpin the success of this worthy tome. *Martin*

NEW EVENT! - Classic Chilterns Ride – August or October depending on demand - please respond asap!

At the Sywell Run, Ian Kerr proposed a rideout for Members with Classic Machines. He has now developed this idea into a definite plan and invites you to join him...

The ride is aimed at members with pre-75 machines; although anybody is welcome to bring up the rear. Naturally, it will be more sedate than usual Club pace!

Starting at Chris' Café just outside Stokenchurch (M40 J7) at 10.00 am, the circa 65 miles route is mainly on quiet B & C class roads through the Chilterns. A stop at the Aston Martin Museum is possible to allow fettling to machinery and bladders, and there is the odd straight to check the work of your dentist and the strength of your bike's gaskets, we will end up at the Oxford Bus and Morris Motors Museum at Long Hanborough (OX29 8LA), between Woodstock and Witney where a packed lunch will be provided together with entrance to the museum; which will be open until 16.30.

Whilst I am sure that your machines will prove reliable, a mechanic friend (who ran a successful British bike garage) will act as Tail-End-Charlie with a car and 3 bike trailer. The overall cost for the day, to include admissions, food and back-up is £30.00 – based on 10 riders attending. There are hotels local to Stokenchurch if required.

Target date is Saturday 21st of August 2021, which I appreciate is not a lot of notice, but the Bus Museum is not open on Saturdays after the end of August. If this does not suit enough potential entrants, I would suggest Wednesday 20th October, when hopefully the weather is still favourable, the roads will be even quieter and the Bus Museum will be open.

Please could you respond directly to iankerr@wordsrider.com with a preferred date ASAP in order to gauge interest and firm up plans. He can also give you more details of the ride.

<https://www.oxfordbusmuseum.org>

<https://www.chrisscafe.co.uk/OurCafe>



Diary Dates: -

Salop Gallop 18th September 2021 Spring Run 22-24th April 2022 Autumn Run 16-18th September 2022

Readers Rides 1

As Covid restrictions eased, members hit the road. Jonathan Martin and Adam Kelley head for the Scottish Highlands. Jonathan writes...

Stayed the first night in the Crooklands hotel, just by J36 of the M6 - a much better option than the now out-dated Whoop Hall!

Next day was a drag of a ride up to Glasgow and then across to Queensferry near Edinburgh for coffee and cake overlooking the Forth Rail Bridge, this was where the trip really began!



We then made our way to Blairgowrie at the foot of the Cairngorms before the ride to Ballater where we stopped for

lunch. The afternoon started with one of the best biking roads in Britain, through the Cairngorms and Glen-Shee, over some incredible mountain roads and down into Nairn before stopping at Inverness for much needed caffeine. At 4pm we started our final leg up to Wick, this part of the journey was wet, windy and very cool and we arrived at 6pm in much need of a hot shower, a hot meal and a cold beer!

The following morning the weather hadn't changed but being that close to John O Groats we rode there to get the souvenir photo at 'the post'. Once that was done we chased the sun and headed for Durness.

What a road the A836 is! Even at 6°C with a strong northerly wind beating us, the road sweeps and undulates with so much scenery it's untrue.

We arrived into Durness late morning and, after the World's Best Hot Chocolate, (claimed the menu and it was true), we took the road south through the most breathtaking scenery to Ullapool. The road needs to be ridden to be believed: very little traffic, superb tarmac, amazing scenery and bends that never end!



We eventually arrived in Gairloch for a late lunch in that restaurant right on the sea front, after a good old filling of Cullen Skink we then headed for another highlight, Applecross.

What a sight for sore eyes Applecross is; steep, tight and quite busy but an incredible pass nonetheless, the views from the top are incredible and to think people were cycling up it!

From Applecross we headed for Kyle Of Loch Alsh before picking up the road east to Glenmoriston, an incredible way to end the day. Mileage today was just 342, but over 8 hours in the saddle!

The third day in Scotland and the sun was out! It was dry and warm and we headed off for the Isle Of Skye, back along the A87 which is just as good in any direction. A coffee stop in Portree and I got thinking why on earth have I never ridden on Skye before! Amazing roads, stunning scenery and little traffic, I need to explore Skye again and again.

We made a quick stop at Mealt Falls Viewpoint before heading back east, over the island and into Armadale where we sat patiently with a coffee for the 45 min ferry trip to Mallaig, the home of the Harry Potter Train!

The ferry crossing was novel way to get back to the mainland and the road from Mallaig to Fort William is superb for bikes, twisting and meandering its way with tight and sweeping bends as you head past the Harry Potter Viaduct and into Fort William.

The next road was through Glen Coe, a road that must be ridden in early morning to really appreciate the area's beauty. We hit it at 3pm and the traffic was immense. That said, it was still a pleasure to ride and after a fill up at the biker stop, 'Green Welly Café', we headed south on our long leg to Kendall. The day's mileage was 447; our Thai meal was more than welcome!

What a whirlwind trip this was and on the way home I kept asking, "Why do I not do this more often". The whole trip, door to door was over 1,600 miles for me and more than 1800 for Adam, incredible and as I keep telling people, once you are north of Glasgow the roads just get better and better!



Readers Rides 2

Autumn Run 2014 Revisited – Nick Jeffery tells the tale...

Memo to self: must ask a 14-year-old schoolgirl how to operate my iPhone camera!

Why? Because of my ineptness, the presence on Tuesday 6 July of the 'Rule of Six' group at Carter Barr on the Scottish border could not be recorded for posterity. Mind you, the visibility was so bad that not much was really lost but it would have been good to compare with a shot taken in 2014 at the same place!

From which can be gathered that Alan Halford (Triumph Tiger 900) was leading a small group of Members; Tom Waterer (Honda NC750), Greg Elson (Triumph Thruxton), Frank Finch (Yamaha Tracer 9 GT), yours truly on BMW K75S and friend of Dave Martin, Tim Albone (Yamaha FJR1300), for a two-day tour oop't north based at Gosforth, North Tyneside.

The idea was to replicate, in part, the 2014 run organised by David and Jonathan Martin on some cracking roads up into Scotland and then have a westward day to the Lake District.



Well, the weather on Day One was absolutely foul for the greater part. In fact so foul that Greg decided discretion was etc and decided to catch a bus and explore the sights of Newcastle. We hardier souls headed west then north in the Persistent Precipitation through the Northumberland National Park to our obligatory stop on entering Scotland at Carter Barr, where fog had also descended. Then Jedburgh, Melrose and Galashiels, passing the Jim Clark Motorsport Museum at Duns, to the most welcome Eyemouth Golf Club lunch stop. Southwards back into England, still in the rain, and a decision was made in Kelso that there had been enough wetness for one day.

<https://calimoto.com/en/motorcycle-trip-planner>

The rain did indeed cease at some point which enabled us to have a leisurely evening stroll to grace 'The Days of the Raj' for a curry in homage to our 2014 organising team.



Day Two was the absolute opposite weather-wise, heading westwards with frequent reminders of when we really were part of a unified Europe, over Hartside Pass and at the edge of Ullswater to arrive at Ambleside. Here we partook of a relaxed lunch in the sunshine on the side of Lake Windermere observing the bathers, boats and steamer. Then hotel-wards with an interesting mixture of roads via Grasmere and the Lake District National Park ending in a lovely blat along dead straight Roman roads past the Temple of Mithras and assorted forts. In all, just over 200 miles of super motorcycling.



Tim then headed off back to Scotland on business, neatly avoiding the football fervour. Fortunately we were able to have a great pizza meal in the hotel restaurant away from the assembled big screen-watching horde. Thursday dawned fair, Frank departed early, the remaining four set off, with Greg quickly peeling off. Which left Tom, Alan and me to have an eyesight test in Barnard Castle on a lovely route planned by Alan's Calimoto app. Tom then peeled off but I decided to stick with Alan on a route intended to avoid all the nasty conurbations. Unfortunately ... somewhere around Holmfirth I lost Alan which resulted in an 11 hour door-to-door journey for me ... long story (and ride).

Many, many thanks from us all to Alan for his superb planning and Dave Martin and Frank for their route contributions (and of course Calimoto).

Cogs and Rockers

Tom Waterer reflects on his 1959 Royal Enfield Meteor Minor.

As an ex BSA man, Royal Enfields have always been something of a mystery to me. Perusing eBay shows that Redditch Royal Enfields are pretty rare. BSA A7s, A10s or A50/65s are fairly common; as are Triumph twins, but Redditch REs (Crusaders aside) seldom appear. In fact, mine was bought via the RE Owners Club, thanks to the previous purchase of Joe Stollery's 700 Constellation Long Distance Trials bike, but that is another story.



A very handsome machine

RE twins are notable for the massive appearance of the engine/gearbox unit but they have a reputation for 'incontinence'. The Meteor Minor is definitely a handsome machine, the engine and chromed tank are things of beauty. The lines of the machine flow nicely from the casquette, down over the tank and along the seat to the final swoop of the rear mudguard. The forks have nice alloy sliders and the full width front hub is a beautiful aluminium casting. Only Norton had front hubs as pleasing as those of the REs. The metallic paint of the tank and side panels contrasts tastefully with the chrome of the tank and mudguards.

When acquired, my MM suffered from a slipping clutch. It's a "scissor" clutch, introduced in 1959 to handle the increased power of the new Constellation but dropped two years later, presumably it didn't handle the power after all! The primary chain case came off easily enough and the clutch was in good condition but the push rod had no free play so it was duly adjusted and reassembled.

Riding the Meteor Minor – the Minors like to be revved, and after fettling, with no clutch slip! Bends can be negotiated in some style; the steering is light and accurate however, the suspension is less satisfactory: fairly supple at the front but unforgiving with little movement at the rear that is emphasised on

bumpy local secondary roads. A project for the future perhaps?

The throttle is light and acceleration progressive with no flat spots. With a well warmed up engine, perhaps the greatest praise that I have is for its smoothness. None of the 1950s/60s British manufacturers seemed to appreciate just how badly vibration hit the pleasure of riding their products! Power is "adequate" and an indicated 60 comes up quite readily, and she feels happy to cruise at this sort of speed.

The seat has proved to be reasonably comfortable despite the foam being overdue for replacement. At modest speeds the rather forward footrests assist with the comfort. The gear-change lever is set a little high for downward changes without lifting one's foot off the footrest. The footrest position was adversely commented on in the road tests of the 1960s but clearly ignored by the RE designers and engineers!

Finally, I must address the reputation of Redditch REs for oil leaks and I think that this can be dismissed as "no worse than other British twins of the era". I recently parked in Kenilworth High Street and not a drop defaced the pavement after 10 minutes!

My Favourite Tool – Tom Waterer

Those who remember Tom in MCIA meetings may have thought this would be a flip chart but no, he writes...

I must confess that I'm a 'fettler' not a restorer. The nearest I came to restoration was my Series 3 Land Rover, which was a body off job that took so long I used up all my restoration ambitions! I currently have the 1959 RE, a 1967 Victor Special, a T100C, and a 'Saint Bonneville'.

My favourite bit of kit is a Bahco adjustable spanner with a Thor hide/copper mallet running it a close second.



The Victor and T100 are both ex USA, and have required a bit of fettling but are basically sound. The Saint Bonnie currently suffers from a chronic primary chaincase oil leak and so my favourite tools will be seeing more action soon!

More TT Memories

In the category, 'The Older I get' etc, Frank Finch writes...

After reading Ray Battersby's excellent feature on Mike Hailwood's Suzuki ride at the Isle of Man TT in the last Newsletter, I have been encouraged to write about a couple of my own TT experiences which are most definitely from 'the other end of the field'!



The TT has played a large part in my life and continues to do so. I started short circuit racing in the early 80s and was an OK club racer but quickly realised I wasn't going to set the world on fire as there were plenty of riders around me who had far more talent, bravery and funding! My main driver soon shifted towards enjoyment rather than a slavish focus on winning. Don't get me wrong, I still wanted to beat everyone but it wasn't the 'be-all and end-all'. A trip to the Manx GP in 1984 helped me decide that racing in the IOM was going to be a very enjoyable new experience.

Sitting on the bank at Kate's Cottage, waiting for the Classic 500s to come by, I was with a racing buddy discussing what class we might enter. We agreed that the racers in the big bike classes were too fast for us to stand any chance of early success so we naively thought that we would fare better in the Classic 500s as they mainly seemed to be ridden by grey haired old men. How wrong we were! We nearly fell off the bank when they blasted past us on that first lap, not even shutting off. The riders included Dave Pither, Bill Swallow and Club member Neil Tuxworth. Duly chastened, we went back to the drawing board but the seed was sown and a lesson learned!

Experience and circuit knowledge count for so much at the IOM and I am indebted to many riders who helped me along the way including Neil Tuxworth. I remember being driven around by Neil and by Nick Jefferies; being shown lines, circuit markers etc. which was invaluable. I also owe a huge debt of thanks to Bob McMillan and Andrew Smith for their support with machinery in the mid-90s. Top men.

Further learning often came by being overtaken by faster riders in practice. One such was Steve Hislop. He overtook me on the brakes going into a corner which I always struggled with, on the bumpy section towards Ramsey. It's a blind corner with a wall on the exit but it eventually opens out more than you think. My brain always took precedence over my right wrist and every time, I waited until after the apex when I could see the exit and then cursed myself for not going quicker. On this occasion, Steve was off the brakes and hard (and I mean, *really* hard) on the gas well before the apex and as a result he disappeared like a bullet. What it amply demonstrated was that in places you need to trust your knowledge even if self-preservation instincts are telling you otherwise! This corner leads on to an uphill section about 1km long and carrying that extra corner speed along this 'straight' makes a big difference to your lap time.

One time I was overtaken in practice by the legendary Joey Dunlop. Approaching the very fast Rhencullen section, the road kinks slightly so you make a straight(ish) line between the kerb on the left and then the bank on the right to line up for the jump. In my mind, my right shoulder was going to gently brush the long grass on the right before leaping majestically off the brow to admiring gasps from the spectators (did I say I have a vivid imagination?!). All such dreams were shattered when Joey blasted past between me and the grass in a gap I didn't even know existed! By the time I had ridden through the clumps of grass and dirt flying through the air, he was gone. Bugger!

I have so many great memories of the TT but if I can leave you with one more, it would be my fleeting experience of what it must be like to be a TT winner. It was 1993 and Nick Jefferies was coming over the mountain on his sixth and final lap towards victory in the Formula One race. I was on my fifth lap and, through the Bungalow section, I became aware of the spectators clapping and waving their programmes.



This was of course to cheer on Nick who was fast closing in on me. He sped past on the exit and I can only imagine what a feeling that must have been for him all the way round that lap. He certainly earned it just like Mike Hailwood in that final win of his in 1979.

Photo of Nick Jefferies (7) and Frank (64) copyright Nigel Kinrade

My Other Bike is a...

Remember all those stickers on shabby cars in the 70s – My Other Car is a Porsche? Was it the MCI who used the same theme with their 'My other car is a bike' sticker? I recall displaying one proudly on the Kawasaki company car.

Anyway, sparked off by a recent enjoyable morning spent with the Club's own 'Casey Jones', Dan Sager, on the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway I thought it might be fun to feature pictures of unusual bits of kit that members have taken charge of.



This is Dan in the driving seat of a Type 37 diesel loco of 1960 vintage: 1500bhp and 100 tons. And your scribe can attest to the fact (from the carriages of the train he pulled) that if he ever needs a career change, this could be it!



<https://www.chinnorrailway.co.uk/>

Do you have any snaps of you in the cupboard that you would be willing to share? You know the address: scribe@the-club.org.uk

The Scribe's Last Word

As I write this piece, the short heatwave has come to an end and we are again staring rain in the face, hopefully it will not last for long. I managed to get out for a couple of rides, albeit the last one was cut very short indeed, thanks to a lynch pin in the back tyre! Graham Matcham will no doubt rub his hands together at the thought of another Conti sale!

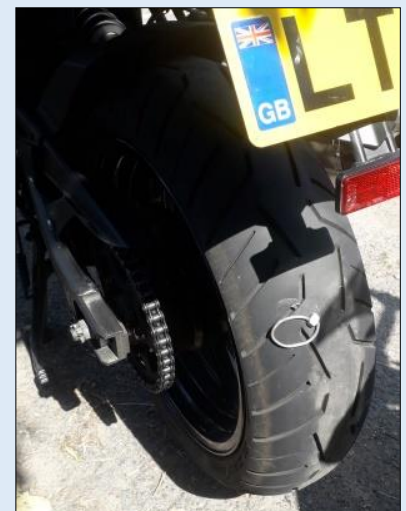
Don't forget, if you are a 'Classic Buff' or just fancy a bumble around the Chilterns, let Ian Kerr know which date for his ride you would prefer. He can also give you more information as required.

For **Andrew's 'Salop Gallop'** on 18th September; he tells me that he will shortly be checking the route and confirming final details directly to attendees (of which there are a goodly number) very soon.

And finally, it's about time that we had a proper name for this communication vehicle rather than just 'Newsletter'. Following a conflag with the Chairman, we plan to invite you to give your views on potential titles via a short on-line survey. It will also include a few other questions about future frequency and content. Look out for the link!

Until we meet again chums, ride safe!

Geoff



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