

Nairn, Scotland
10th 11th 12th September 2010



SCOTLAND FOR THE BRAVE...

WHEN THE CALL COMES...

And so it was that I found myself enjoying a brew in my old stamping ground – Yamaha Towers – when the maroon went up...

I was in the process of dropping off the trusty scooter and picking up a shiny Fazer 8 which was to be my mount for the next 5 days. My mobile softly beeped: it was set to a quiet alert as I didn't want to disturb the sleeping staff hive of industry that goes on around the clock within the in-field confines of the iconic Brooklands race circuit – just behind Tesco's.

The name on the screen of my phone announced it was Andrew Smith sending me a message. I mentioned this to the team around me and immediately; backs stiffened, ties were adjusted and skirts smoothed: the girls checked their make up too...

The message was simple, "Sorry for the short notice Mate but would you be Scribe for the weekend". My affirmative reply clearly must have lacked something for almost immediately a second text arrived from Captain Smith: "Surely you meant to say, many thanks for the 'unique opportunity' to be asked to be Scribe ahead of all the others we could have asked.." I, of course, apologised and replied "Yes that's exactly what I meant to say, thank you..."

I don't know about you but one of the eternal joys of the Club Run for those of us with less than photographic memories is not having to concentrate on where you are going as the army marshalling system, originally suggested by Dennis I am told, works so well that to get lost you have to be a complete Muppet. Now as Scribe, I would have to pay more attention to where we went and what we did!

MARTIN & SMITH - THE CLUB 'LAIRDS'...



Looking back at the club's history, it is hard to understand why the first run to go north of the border did not happen until the Spring of 2000, organised by our co-conspirators for this run, Messrs Martin and Smith.

The 2000 Run was based at the Ben Nevis Hotel in Fort William with a great view of, well, work it out for yourselves! It was to be The Club's first introduction to the fabulous scenery and great roads that Scotland has to offer.

On the ride up to Nairn from the Friday lunch stop at Port Appin, we rode right past the gate of the Ben Nevis Hotel and on past the Ben Nevis Distillery too where, as I recalled, we also made a visit. It set me thinking of that previous run and two things in particular had me laughing inside my helmet...

Firstly the Run Organisers donning 'Jimmy wigs' to introduce the route on the Friday and at Saturday's dinner, following a very dramatic address to the haggis, Nick Hopkins saying of the kilted Bard, "He's just spat in my dinner..."

In 2005, Frank Finch, ably supported by Keith Davies led the Autumn Run in to Alba again and the Dumfries and Galloway town of Carrutherstown. A run memorable for the torrential rain and high winds that seem unavoidable if you stay in Scotland for more than a day at a time!

Messrs Martin and Smith reclaimed the Laird's Seat in Spring 2008 with a run based at the Ballachulish Hotel. This event raised the organisational bar by being the first time that fuel costs were included in the run price. With over 40 participants and 300 miles to cover it was a necessity to avoid missing dinner - which I very nearly did owing to a puncture and subsequent 2 hour wait for the (much appreciated) RAC van to appear – such was the speed of the hard charging Peloton!

Riding past the door of the Ballachulish Hotel on Friday brought back memories. Rain and high winds (of course) prevailed on the early part of that run with large angles of bank required to maintain a straight trajectory through Glencoe and on over the moor. Thankfully it cleared pretty quickly but not before guest and British Superbike rider John Reynolds had registered on the Sergeant at Arms' radar for his "Designer Railtrack over-trousers".

And, who of us that were lucky enough to be there, can forget the Sergeant at Arms, Martin Lambert's performance, complete with a plastic Policeman's Helmet: priceless!

So the stage was set for this, the fourth incursion into Scotland and the third into the Highlands, again led by The Club's own Field Marshall George Wade – Dave Martin, ably supported by 2-I-C and 'Tail End Charlie' Andrew Smith.

The only questions were: what innovations could we expect on this run and would the organisers set the scene by dressing in the style of Field Marshall Wade?



BUT FIRST YOU HAVE TO GET THERE...

I have been pondering if Nairn was the furthest that we had travelled for a run. The results, thanks to dear old Google, were interesting. From my home post code in Maidenhead, it was clearly going to be the longest UK distance at 557 miles and that taking the direct route (which of course, we didn't) but what about those continental runs?

Looking back, we have visited Holland twice and France twice, the more distant locations were Hoenderloo by Arnhem (2005) at 389 miles and Blois in the Loire Valley (1996) at 460 miles. Not much in it with Blois you might think but the recommended route was via the Chunnel; not the ferry, which was the way we went!

Bar raised then...

For those of us travelling by road all the way, accommodation was again arranged for Thursday night at the hospitable Whoop Hall Inn by Kirkby Lonsdale. This motorcycle friendly establishment has played host to its own club run as well as being a stopping off point on previous Scottish excursions. I believe we may even be visiting there again in the not too distant future...



Now, it all seemed so simple. Load up the bike, leave after the morning rush and call in on a couple of old friends along the way, getting to Whoop Hall in time to fill up, take a shower and a relaxing beer before dinner. I would be an early arriver, of course, so that I could get out my Scribe's notebook and list others undoubted travel woes and last minute panics...

Wrong! (or, if you are a Twitterer, #fail)

Thanks to some poor unfortunates who took an early morning stroll along the M6 with disastrous consequences and my (misguided) view that if I stayed long enough drinking tea in Stafford, the M6 was bound to re-open again wasn't it, I was the last to arrive; stressed and with an empty-ish fuel tank. Still, that Black Sheep is a nice ale, despite the memory of the boring old fart we had to endure at the Masham Brewery visit in 2001!

Q: The Black Sheep brewery produce a strong ale called 'Riggwelter'. What is a Riggwelter?

A: A dead sheep lying on its back



In the final analysis, I wasn't the only one to arrive short on 'go juice' but I was the only one who tried to skirt the M6 problems by heading west: what a barn-pot...

Anyway, a fine meal was enjoyed by the 16 riders around the table with a particularly nice lamb shank or succulent steak being the prime meat cuts generally chosen. Over dessert and some rather spirited heckling, the instructions and ETD for the morning were delivered by our organisers.

No! Really! Are there *two* 8:15s in a day then?

After the usual "any more red in that bottle" banter, bed beckoned most about 11:00ish, some with the hope that BP would be more successful opening the fuel supply early, than they had been in closing the Mexican one...

FRIDAY DAWNS BRIGHT, ERR, NO...

Thinking back to previous Scottish trips, 2000 was bright, clear and cold as we headed up the M6 from Lakeland whereas 2008 started that way, only to deteriorate before lunch. On that last occasion I had taken time out to visit a dealer in Carlisle with a plan of meeting up with the main group again for lunch.

Glasgow is my 'bête noire'. The spirit of the Glasgow Empire lives on to catch out the unwary traveller and two years ago I had missed the signs for the M8 and Erskine Bridge, it was the roadworks you see...

When I had found myself, lost, in the middle of the city, my relief was palpable when I spotted Graham Goodman up ahead, he too having been confused by the traffic cones. I knew that as a BMW GS 'Superhero' he would have a GPS to lead us out of town. Joy! He had two running.

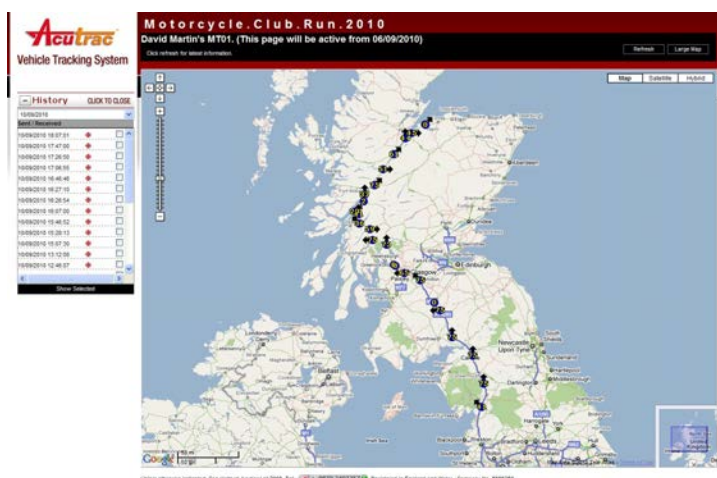
We splashed our way out of town without too much drama and just when I was beginning to relax in the knowledge that GG would get us to the fish luncheon on time, he hove to on the side of the road. "Whass wrong?" said I. "Bloody GPS's are arguing" came the reply. A deserved fine was duly imposed later by the aforementioned plastic capped Bobby...

Old Greyboots wasn't with us this time; perhaps the GPS's couldn't agree on the way out of East Sussex?..

As the first glimmers of dawn poked through the gap in the curtains, the drip, drip of rain invaded the awakening senses. Looking out bleary-eyed it was indeed wet with ominous black clouds rolling in from the Irish Sea. The BBC didn't hold out much hope of improvement either...

Only Nick Hopkins seemed cheerful as we busied ourselves on the car park. "Look" says he, "It's brightening up!", I for one believed him.

Now there is nothing more useless in heavy rain than over-boots and over-gloves in your panniers is there? This thought entered my head as the water simultaneously entered my boots and gloves within half an hour of setting off up the M6...



Another first for this run was the ability for those not able to attend to track the progress of those who were via the tracker on Dave's MT-01.

A link was sent to all to follow not only the route but also the organisers' travels in the days leading up the run. The link will be live for a while should you want to have a look.

<http://devices.acutrac.co.uk/clubrun2010>

Looking at the track for Friday's run up the M6 it shows our Leader being true to his word of the previous evenings briefing, riding at a sensible pace all the way up to Nairn. I was 3rd man for most of the M6 stint and my speedo was showing somewhat more than 75mph for most of the way! Either Acutracs is pessimistic or Yamaha speedos are like Mr Smith himself – permanently optimistic...

The rain eased and the sun actually came out as we climbed up past Shap but alas, the respite was short lived...

By the time we were abeam the turn for Hawick the rain was reaching epic levels with almost zero vision. Seeing the exit sign reminded me of Hawick man, the late Steve Hislop and how he was cruelly taken when he crashed his helicopter in similar bad weather.



To those who knew him, Hizzy was an enigma. Extremely talented rider yes, but his mood swings when things were less than perfect represented a management challenge and he could be a PR nightmare. Still, he is sadly missed – RIP my friend.

THE SUN EVENTUALLY COMES OUT...

But not before the biblical rain had claimed a mechanical casualty. To allow for re-grouping, a stop was planned just after the Erskine Bridge. Here we heard that Nick H's guest, Joe Seifert had suffered water in the fuel of his Norton International. A decision was taken for the main group to push on and the stragglers to re-join at the lunch stop.

Once we left the urbanisation of Glasgow the roads were drying and the fun factor was to return.



Riding on past Lochs Lomond, Long, Fyne, Awe (well named!), Etive and Creran we made the Pierhouse Hotel at Port Appin after 2 hours of glorious riding roads and stunning scenery.

I thought at the time that I will never remember all of this for the report – thank heavens for Acutracs! The Scribe's job is made so much easier when you have something to refer back to... (Cheque in the post Dave?)

According to the Hotel website, the Pierhouse originally started life as the 19th century residence of the Pier Master, who was responsible for overseeing the cargo and passenger traffic waiting to board the numerous steam vessels that travelled up and down Loch Linnhe. Indeed it still serves a gateway function albeit now for private yachtsmen and the ferry across to Lismore.

With squelchy boots and a certain amount of inner dampness, we made our way into the dining room and were treated to a fantastic butter-nut squash soup, which absolutely hit the mark, followed by a fish platter which only needed a couple of small loaves and many, many more than us would have been fed...

Not even the announcement by Steve Callahan that he had sloped off to change his sodden shreddies could put us off this piscatorial feast!



The view from the panoramic window of the restaurant was just as breathtaking as the food had been and luckily, the small band of Joe's followers arrived in time to enjoy both.

After taking our fill, the warmth of the sun was employed to further dry out the moist but replete riders...

ONWARDS TO NAIRN AND THE DIGS...

Following lunch we headed out in the direction of Fort William past the previously mentioned Ballachulish Hotel in Onich, our base in 2008.

A ride alongside Loch Linnhe and a slow trickle through the traffic of Fort William saw the group pass the Ben Nevis Hotel overlooked by the Ben massif itself – although the summit was shrouded in cloud on this particular afternoon.



Heading out on the A82 via Spean Bridge the road runs alongside Loch Lochy (inspired name, wonder who thought of it...) and the lay-by where I spent that hapless 2 hours with the deflated tyre awaiting the RAC. It is a quick road and I was particularly impressed by the 'team riding' Nortons of Nick H and Joe, the latter's showing no ill effects from the diluted fuel of the morning. It was going to be an eventful run for Joe...

With a fast blast alongside Loch Ness we eventually hit Inverness in time for the evening rush hour, it made for some interesting marshalling challenges in the town centre! After filling 16 bikes in 7 minutes we arrived at the hotel just before beer o'clock; 18:00.

TELL ME ABOUT NAIRN THEN...

Apparently, a visitor to Nairn in 1886 described it as the 'Brighton of Scotland'. Hmm. In fairness, our schedule was so tight few of us had time to explore it to see if we agreed.

However, the website 'Undiscovered Scotland' opines that it has one of the sunniest climates in the country – presumably they mean Scotland...

Before the railway arrived in the mid 19th Century, Nairn had grown up as a market and farming community inland of the fishing village. Indeed, it supposedly marked the border between the Gaelic speaking Highland Fishermen and the English speaking North Eastern Farmers – no tension there then!



I did take a short detour to the harbour after waving off the John O'Groats group on Sunday and found this statue of a Nairn Fishwife, circa late 19th Century.

Apparently the Fishwives “Cared for the house and family, gathered bait, baited the lines, gathered the pine-cones for smoking the fish, then prepared them and did the smoking before selling them in the local area from a creel on their backs.”

The Blokes obviously had the hard job of casting out and reeling in the fish, phew...

THE NEWTON HOTEL...



The Newton Hotel is a former mansion house designed by Alexander Ross and built in 1872. It was converted to a hotel in 1949.

Standing in 21 acres, it has fine views over the Nairn Golf Course which hosted the Walker Cup in 1999 and, allegedly, welcomed Charlie Chaplin as a frequent visitor.

We just called it: a welcoming haven...

As the group unloaded in the designated parking area, those members already at the hotel wandered out to meet and greet. A flurry of other members and guests also arrived at the same time, the first raising more than a few eyebrows...

Crunching up on the gravel came an FJR1300 in full Police battenburg. Oh dear (or words to that effect) we thought, now what have we done? Turns out it was Dave Martin's guest Ian Kerr who, with his Yamaha Police Liaison hat on, was dropping the FJR off on the following Monday to the Lothian and Borders Police to boost their escort fleet ahead of the Papal visit to Glasgow. Oh how he laughed at our reaction - the pillock!

Shortly after P. C. Kerr's arrival, a taxi rocked up which quickly disgorged Frank Finch and his guest, Jon Fletcher, whilst the sound of Greg Elson's Akrapovic silenced (!) ZRX1200R burred into view as the taxi departed.

With luggage unloaded and billets allocated, it was time to freshen up before the evening meal.

FRIDAY NIGHT, FUN AND FROLICS - DRINKING BEER AND TALKING...TO OLD FRIENDS...

Down in the bar, another surprise awaited – no whip for the kitty! Seems that was included in the run costs too. Maybe this innovation and the Ferrari type fuel stop procedures will be standard in future runs? Certainly makes life easy...

After a welcome aperitif or two the call to arms was made and we trooped into the Chapel. Clearly, the original owners of this stately pile had a religious bent: whatever, it was just the right size for our merry band.

Before the trough arrived co-organiser and Club Chairman, Smith, gave apologies to hand and also identified Rick Parish as Locum Treasurer, Nick Jeffery as Run Helper, yours truly as Scribe and surprisingly, Keith Davies as Sergeant at Arms - to be ably assisted by Graham Matcham. I say surprisingly because this latter role is usually a closely guarded secret to ensure maximum impact come Saturday night. Hmm, another innovation?

Nick Jeffery said grace and offered thanks for Divine deliverance from the day's aquatic conditions. The food was excellent. Our band had a choice of tomato and basil soup or spring (?) vegetable risotto followed by roast beef or poached salmon, topped off with sticky toffee pudding or vanilla crème brûlée. Needless to say the food was washed down with some excellent white and red wine.

According to the menu, the meal was billed as the 'Club Acumen Dinner'. Another first? Commercial sponsorship of dinner – or just a pre-emptive strike ahead of the question “How did you find your meal...”

Now I didn't note Friday's wine (give me a break, it was my first Scribe job) but at a guess, it was the same as Saturday: a 2009 Chilean Sauvignon Blanc and a 2008 South African Cabernet Sauvignon. Remarkably, the wine bill was apparently a fraction of that budgeted by the organisers – must have been something to do with another 08:15 start and the prospect of the enormous distance needing to be covered.

The high spot of every Friday evening on a Club Run is of course the raffle. Creative gifts from some, last minute wine from others and of course the re-cycled tat of previous draws. Frank Finch and David Dew were the raffle Meisters this time around and made swift but nonetheless entertaining work of re-distributing the amassed prizes.

High-spots of the 'lucky dip' on this run were: 'the perpetual Charley Boorman prize' which went to Rick Parish – maybe we should invite Charley along to a run, just to take it out of circulation? A clock was won by Andrew's guest, Nick - *recently departed from Mitsubishi cars* – Palmer with the narrative, “For someone with time on their hands”. Bit harsh I thought...



Yamaha merchandise was also evident (not guilty this time) with mugs galore and a tasteful (not) pair of branded flip flops which went to Greg Elson. He was demonstrably delighted (not)..!

The night's star prize was a plain brown envelope: which contained a voucher for a complimentary Acutrak Tracking device. This was won by Ian Kerr and so, when it is fitted, we can all observe first hand 'How to ride like the Met...' (Ed: Not strictly true but couldn't think of a better line...)

During all this frivolity, Dave Hancock and guest Steve Martindale arrived. The Honda duo being suited and booted – arriving straight from a high level Honda management meeting. I wondered what all those VFR1200s were doing on the car park...

To round off Fridays fun, Frank Finch came up with a quick (at least it was supposed to be) quiz of multiple choice questions. Over-ruling objections from certain factions as to the accuracy of one of the answers, Frank declared Steve Martindale as the winner following a tie-break question; which was nothing more than self promotion of the Quiz-master's fastest TT lap.

SATURDAY WAS DRY & BRIGHT THEN..ERM, WRONG AGAIN...

A repetitive pattern was emerging: overcast and wet but for added spice today, a warning of severe weather over the Western Highlands – oh joy!

No matter what precautions were being taken, nothing was going to prepare us for - or shield us from - the rain of diluvian intensity which was to hit us shortly after we set off from the hotel. Whilst there were some brief breaks in the gloom in which we could admire the view, for the most part it was a test of testicular fortitude just to reach the coffee stop – some 2 hours away. For one of us though, the rain was going to be the least of his worries...

FIRST EVER GERMAN AIRBORNE LANDING IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS...

As the main group hove to in the car park of the coffee stop, the Kintail Inn, and proceeded to wring out gloves and empty rain from helmets, news was breaking of a serious incident back down the road. As to exactly where on the route it was or how it had happened, details were sketchy. What we did know however was that it was Nick's guest, Joe, who had come to grief.

According to Adam Kelley - who was following him at the time – Joe left the road after a blind crest and before he could aim the Norton back to the black stuff, the front wheel dropped into a drainage ditch catapulting both bike and rider high into the air, subsequently to land back in the road. To say it looked serious would be a massive understatement...

Help had to be summoned and it seems that there too there were difficulties as there was no mobile signal to be had. How that particular problem was overcome is unclear.

Contact was finally made with the emergency services and as a back injury was suspected, the Air Ambulance was scrambled to take Joe to the A & E unit in Inverness. Tail End Charlie Andrew later reported that everyone involved: passing motorists, the Police and Ambulance Service were superb and just got on with the job with no 'bloody motorcyclists' type recriminations...



The before and after of Joe's first run...

Needless to say, the dampness and discomfort of the rest of us paled into insignificance as the details of Joe's 'excursion' filtered through. It was a subdued group that pressed on into the rain heading for the lunch stop at Achnasheen.

Scheduled at around 300 miles, this run was always going to be a test of endurance and I for one, just gritted my teeth and hoped that the weather would pick up as it had done on



Fort William, Spring 2000
"That's me ", say's Strathcarron

Friday. As a result, my recollection of the section between coffee and lunch stops is restricted to just two things: firstly what seemed to be the entire Caravan Club of the Netherlands travelling in the opposite direction and secondly, passing through the village of Strathcarron where back in 2000 we had stopped for a group shot with our late and much missed friend, Lord David Strathcarron...

Given the atrocious conditions and rumblings of a possible abandonment (what would have been the point, we were the opposite side of Scotland to Nairn!) leader Dave took a decision to miss out a 20 mile technical section and press on to the lunch stop at the Ledgowan Lodge Hotel where we rocked up, horribly early, at 4 minutes past 12 (marvellous that Acutract!) with the rain still falling.

Unfazed - well except Graham, Nick and I who were riding Fazers - Craig and his team at the Ledgowan simply pointed the bedraggled bunch past the craft fair that was also taking place at the hotel and on into the lunch room where the floor was soon awash with the run off of 20 plus sets of riding gear. Welcome hot drinks soon appeared and everyone started to warm up and recount their own particular take on the mornings ride.

In what seemed no time at all, a particularly fine lunch of hearty stew and vegetables followed by enormous sweets, some even had *custard*, was delivered, devoured and despatched back to the kitchen leaving only the residue of a few crumbs and an overambitious attempt to transfer a Bunteresque slice of Pavlova - which had missed the offenders plate and been hastily slid under the table!

Thus fortified and updated with news of Joe, we padded back past the jams, marmalades and stuff made from wicker, to find that the rain had finally stopped and there was a good chance for some fun on the afternoons roads...

GOOD ROADS, GOOD FUN AND FINALLY, THE SUN...



After leaving the Ledgowan we pushed almost due east to Gorstan before heading back north west via the A385 and the wonderfully picturesque run alongside of Loch Broom into Ullapool (note to self: must come back and explore Ullapool!).

After another lightening fuel stop, we headed out north east to Ledmore and the A837, a narrow but thankfully dry road which was to prove to be the highlight of the days riding for most.

My road atlas shows that the A837 is a 'narrow major road with passing places' and it is absolutely correct. I slotted in behind Nick Hopkins on the surviving Commando and Keith Davies with his Triumph Rocket 3 Wide-Load. It was very enjoyable both from the scenery aspect and, as the road opened up a little, watching Keith trying to keep said Rocket 3 between the verges at speed – a sphincter exercising experience as he later admitted!

On the car park at the afternoon tea stop everyone sported a beaming smile and chattered excitedly about that excellent stretch of road. The mornings abject misery was completely forgotten...

From the Dornoch Bridge Inn back to the Newton Hotel we had to use the main A9 route which was understandably busier than the previous roads and far less picturesque. Still, we managed to ward off potential boredom by cocking a snook at the speed camera warnings and, whilst sitting in the road works on the bridge over the Cromarty Firth, treating the surrounding motorists to a symphony of horns with a two-tone finale from Madame Battenburg.

After negotiating (snarling up?) the centre of Inverness we arrived back in Nairn for the final fuel stop of the day and thence back to the hotel where we were met by the management with hot toddies and to everyone's relief, a battered but upright Joe.



Hot toddies and an upright Joe far left...

AND SO TO DINNER, REELIN' & A-ROCKING...

During the pre-dinner banter the group was joined by William Colquhoun who, it turned out, was staying with friends in Grantown-on-Spey and had been enjoying a spot of salmon fishing. I recollect that he mentioned that the weather had been good there all day, giving credence to the 'sunniest climate' claim perhaps?

Your scribe took the preprandial opportunity to solicit some run 'memorable moments' from a few of the early arrivals...

Graham Matcham: Having come off point duty to enter a long valley just ahead of Tail End Charlie to see the Leader some 5 miles ahead and the group spread back behind him.

Andrew Smith: Referred to Joe's misfortune and the efficiency of the Police, RAC and especially the Air Ambulance.

Rick Parish: He too referred to the crash and how, as the rider immediately in front, he had to take an agonising decision – stop and help or take over the responsibility of Tail End Charlie and carry the news forward, a hard call I think that you will agree.

Rick chose the latter on the basis that the following riders would take care of Joe, something that would obviously take a considerable time and so thus he would be more useful as TEC. Despite making a good decision he beat himself up about it for the rest of the day...

Jonathan Martin: Loved the road to Ullapool, immediately after the lunch stop.

Bob McMillan: 3 VFR's in echelon with him (naturally) as Red Leader followed by Steve Callahan and Robert Paschetto as his 'wingmen'. It reminded him he said, of his poem 'Mad Bad Bikers' – reproduced below...

MAD BAD BIKERS

Who says they're mad and bad
Who says they're bikers, who says
They're a problem, what problem
We say, why worry, be happy.
Live for to-day, one life, live it.
Why not, what else is there,
What for, who cares, why should
They, what's the problem, scary,
Are they. Really truly scary.
Who says. I don't think so. I don't.

Size and shape and type and
Build and colour and creed.
They ride, to live, for life, for
Them, for why, who knows,
You don't, do you, anyway why!
Why bother, they don't, do they.
Bother you. Doing this, doing
That. Riding like a prat. You say.
They don't, you see think like that.

Road types come in fast and slow
Some say so, some say no,
Don't know why they ride so
Slow or fast or steady or
What. Is it tyres or forks
Or springs or is it me or
He or her, don't know why.
But ride they do with smiles
Aplenty, watching wary, twitching
Stary for all those car types.

Not just car types, trucks, and cabs
And vans and push bikes, people
Too just try to stop their way.
No way you say. No way Jose.
You see we see what you don't
See. That's why, you see we ride
Bikes and you don't, you see!

But if they don't see you just
Once you see. Then that's it for
Them. You don't see them and
That's it. At least for them not
You. Encased in metal music
Box, so hot, so safe, so bloody safe,
But not for them you see. Don't you?

Bob McMillan 5th December 2005

With a Smith and Martin production there is always a surprise or two and once settled into the chapel dining room, the group were treated to a display of Highland Dancing by Laura, Siobhan and Dennis who performed a programme of 3 Scottish Dances rounded off – perhaps surprisingly - with a Scottish version of the Sailors Hornpipe which is apparently more popular than the English version...



Grainy picture with camera shake - courtesy of Nick Jeffery...

The acoustics of the chapel certainly enhanced the 'skirl of the pipes' and the rendition of 'A Scottish Soldier' filled the room with sound...and not a little fear methinks!

A question and answer session followed with mostly intelligent questions and one from a wag who asked "How much are your socks, oh, and are they waterproof?" It was £90 and no, for the record...

"ABSENT FRIENDS AND THE GOD OF NEAR MISSES..."

Following Grace, again ably delivered by Nick J, we tucked into a 2nd 'Club Acumen Dinner' which offered Goats Cheese or Stornaway Black Pudding starters followed by Chicken Supreme or Monk-fish and rounded off by Chocolate Mousse or Toffee Cheesecake and Cheese and Biscuits: where did they say they kept the defibrillator? The wine of course flowed like glue...

Keith Davies offered a vote of thanks on behalf of the members for the superb organisation: time, distance and places and this resulted in a standing ovation for David and Andrew. Graham Matcham raised a toast and John Wakefield added his vote of thanks on behalf of the guests.

Chairman Smith, re-capped the run and praised Joe for going through the pain barrier to make dinner – all agreed. He also re-iterated his praise of the RAC Patrol, Police and Air Ambulance for the efficient way the incident was dealt with, without recrimination. A collection was proposed for the Air Ambulance where, said the Chairman, the Club would match the amount raised around the table – the fantastic sum of £700 was duly and jointly raised.

SERGEANT AT ARMS ISSUES A PARENTAL WARNING...

And so the Chapel door was closed to avoid offending other guests! Keith and 2IC, Graham M, then proceeded to wade through the woeful list of misdemeanours whilst Nick J demanded the money with menace. The fines as they were levied...

Nick Hopkins & Adam Kelley: Passing the run leader and for AK, a complete catalogue of other stuff including a squared off rear tyre.

Norman Hyde: Was fined in absentia - for what I cannot recall but it was levied on Alan Halfords ticket.

Steve Callahan: Heckling at Thursday's dinner.

John Wakefield: Just in time arrival on Friday morning.

Joe Seifert: Building a Norton with a BMW engine and breaking down on the M6 at which GM fined himself for riding off and not stopping.

Dave Martin: Speeding on the M6 against his own express instruction.

Andy Mayo: Poor marshalling and *Frank Finch* for the poor briefing that caused it!

Bob Mac: For having a bigger camper than Graham M – eh??

Nick Jeffery: For top box demeanours, including attaching draught excluder to the tank of his (new!?) GT750 to avoid damaging the (hand) paint job.



**Nick J's run mount, a Fazer 8, turned back to a turnip at six o'clock:
'Pimp my ride...'**

Frank Finch (again) & Guest Jon Fletcher: For arriving in a taxi

Dave Martin (again) & Andrew Smith: For 'Castleupmanship'.

Nick Palmer: For running into & subsequently 'dead-legging' Run Leader Dave.

Geoff Selvidge: Having a tail-pack full of spare gloves.

Dave Martin (again) & Greg Elson: For mixing up the start time for the RAC Patrol.

Robert Paschetto: For 'Off-Roading' (??)

Dave Martin (again): 3 Maps, 3 wrong dates.

Frank Finch (again): Over-running impromptu quiz timing by 5 minutes.

Tony Dawson: For having his gloves dried by the hotel (he told them they were Herb's)

Joe Seifert (again): For taking an unscheduled helicopter ride.

Tom Waterer & Greg Elson (again): Wrong coffee stops.

Adam Kelley (again): Best dressed 'Rain Man' (and thus staying dry – wimp!).

Graham Matcham: Fines Andrew Smith (again) for forgetting a wheel lock then fines himself & Adam Kelley (again) for following Tail End Charlie.

Messrs Elson (again), McMillan, Waterer (again), Halford & Dawson (again): The Short Cut Crew 2010...

Geoff Selvidge & Nick Hopkins (both again): For speeding whilst the Sergeant was sandwiched between them.

INDICATORS: *Dave Martin (0.8m), Steve Callahan (1.5m), Tom Waterer (5.0m) Geoff Selvidge (90% of the Run)*- Don't s'pose there's an appeal process? No. OK...

Jonathan Martin: Peeing whilst looking like a Marshal. (What's *that* you're waving?)

Robert Paschetto (again): Riding 1.5 miles on the wrong side of the road and standing on the pegs. (numerous sightings)

Tom Waterer (again) & Adam Kelley (again): Delusions of being BMW GS riders.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: *Frank Finch (again) & Greg Elson (again) for noisy exhausts on the Cromarty Bridge & Ian Kerr for the blues & twos aria that followed.*
Rick Parish: For pointing out the Venhill brake lines on Joe's bike – post crash.

AND FINALLY – TO RAPTUROUS APPLAUSE...

Team Honda and particularly Dave Hancock: for forcing an oncoming Police Car (going to an aforementioned incident perchance?) off the road with a dodgy overtake...

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND A NEW CHAIRMAN...

Acting Secretary Nick read out apologies and announced that the next 2 runs will be:

Spring 2011 – 8~10 April – Keith Blair, assisted by either David O'Neill or Tony Dawson based at the Whoop Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale (we should take them one of them plaques like the Rotary Club does).

Autumn 2011 – 16~17 September – Steve Callahan assisted by Dave Hancock based somewhere in Kent.

Following the surrogate Sec's announcements, Chairman Smith officially closed his four Run tenure of office and handed on to new Chairman Tony Dawson, universally popular and a man totally committed to motorcycling. We all wish him well as he guides The Club through the next two years.

The new Chairman then took over and announced that the winner of the Saddlesore Award for the greatest distance covered by bike to attend the run was guest Andy Mayo with 1100 miles. A tube of 'Sore Arse' Cream was duly presented.

After thanking Frank for his impromptu competition, Chairman Dawson wound up the official part of the evening and we are retired to the bar/bed/kebab shop...

SUNDAY - ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER CHALLENGE...

Sadly, I couldn't attend the Sunday run up to John O'Groats and so I must rely on Nick Jeffery's account of the day which is reproduced here in its entirety:

By the way Geoff, the Sunday lunch was remarkable with a garrulous Jim reciting the life history of every fish within 50 miles of the restaurant. A memorable meal served by nubile females. Run to John O'G and then the westerly run back south were fantastic with good weather, lovely rolling roads, very little traffic and just the odd sheep to contend with.



So there you have it, three runs in three days; hundreds of miles – just to eat!

FOR THE RECORD, WHO RODE WHAT...

MEMBERS	
David Martin - Organiser	Yamaha MT-01
Andrew Smith - Organiser	Yamaha YZF-R1
Tony Dawson – Chairman Elect	Yamaha FJ1200
Rick Parish – Acting Treasurer	Yamaha FJR1300
Nick Jeffery – Acting Secretary	Yamaha Fazer 8 + Kawasaki GT750
Keith Davies – Sargeant At Arms	Triumph Rocket 3 Tourer
Graham Matcham – Deputy S.A.A	Yamaha Fazer 1000
Geoff Selvidge - Scribe	Yamaha Fazer 8
Tom Waterer	Suzuki DL650
Greg Elson	Kawasaki ZRX1200R
Tony Jakeman	BMW K1300 GT (Exclusive Edition)
Steve Callahan	Honda VFR1200
Bob McMillan	Honda VFR1200
David Dew	Honda CBR900RR Fireblade
Alan Halford	Suzuki GSX600F
Dave Hancock	Honda VFR1200
Frank Finch	Yamaha YZF-R6
Nick Hopkins	Norton Commando Fastback (Long range)
GUESTS	
Robert Paschetto (Steve Callahan)	Honda VFR1200
Ian Kerr (Dave Martin)	Yamaha FJR1300 Police Spec
Nick Palmer (Andrew Smith)	BMW R1200R
John Wakefield (David Dew)	BMW GS1200 Adventure
Andy Mayo (Frank Finch)	Kawasaki Z1000
Joe Seifert (Nick Hopkins)	Norton C652 + Eurocopter EC135
Jon Fletcher (Frank Finch)	Yamaha FZ1
Adam Kelley (Andrew Smith)	Yamaha XTZ1200 Super Tenere
Jonathan Martin (Dave Martin)	Suzuki GSX1250FA
<i>Steve Martindale (Dave Hancock)</i>	<i>Honda VFR1200 (Didn't ride on the run)</i>

Organisers total mileage as recorded by Dave Martin and Acutrac – 3106.91 in 53.31 hours of riding at an average speed of 58.28 mph.

FOOTNOTE: To complete Joe's weekend, his van jammed in 1st gear and he had to spend an extra night at Whoop Hall whilst it was repaired. At least he could pass the time laughing at the recollection of Tom undoing the wrong strap whilst unloading the Norton and dropping the DL 650 off his trailer...