

Pan Talk

Issue 11 - December 2015

The Occasional On-Line Magazine of The Northern Pan Riders



The Cover Photo



Alan, Nigel, Steve and Val at Cross Lanes Organic Farm prior to the final leg of the ride out on Sunday 11th October 2015.

Great to have 4 new members on the ride with us - welcome to the club !

Contents - December 2015

<u>John & Lynne's October Ride</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Dick & Ruth's November Ride to East Yorkshire</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Alan's Derbyshire Ride Out</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>West Yorkshire to The Cat & Fiddle</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>Annual General Meeting</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>New Members in 2016</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Christmas Do</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Sat Nav Mounts</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>RAM ball on BikeQuip Riser</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Migsel Mount</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Throttle Locks</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Power Supply</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Textile Riding Suit</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>DogCam Bullet Camera</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Advance Riding</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Club Rides Out 2015</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Members' Map Dec 2015</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>A Tour of Scotland</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Article Index</u>	<u>48</u>

Click on the title or the page number to go directly to a particular page.

John & Lynne's October Ride

Northern Dales and Beyond - 142 miles

Amidst forecasts that the weather was about to take a turn for the worse and that the country would be in the grips of bitterly cold easterly winds, the initial outlook for today looked grim. But closer to the day, things were starting to look a little more promising and the BBC forecaster described the day as having 'useable weather'.

Although the club has ridden in this area before, about half of the route today is on some excellent roads which the club has never used since I have been a member.

So we set off from Skipton Market Place at 10:00 prompt (ish) after a brief pre-ride pause to phone through the numbers for lunch. John, Lynne and Andy were joined by 4 new members on their first run with the club - Alan, Nigel, Steve and Val. 7 members, 5 bikes, 4 Pans and Andy sporting a grin almost as wide as his brand new K1600GTL.

Skipton Old Road is a little used route which links the towns of Skipton and Colne. The start of this delightful, high level road are difficult to find at either end, but on leaving the village of Carleton-in-Craven we pop out onto the open moorland road which runs in between the more commonly used routes of the A56 and the A6068.

A little deft manoeuvring around the back roads to avoid the always-busy Colne by-pass, and we emerge onto the A682 which snakes its way towards Gisburn and then on to Long Preston in a series of superb, nicely tight but flowing bends. Sunday traffic can make it slow moving at times, but today we are held up only briefly.

Onward to Settle for a short run along the main A65, before taking the superb north-bound road through Horton-in-Ribblesdale, past Ribblehead viaduct and on to Hawes. The new owners of the Pen-y-Garth café have at last realised that they get busy on a Sunday, and have now got 3 staff on the counter. This is a big improvement from the tediously slow service that we encountered in early July. Now, service is swift, and the baristas have learned that someone else can be served whilst coffee is filtering through the machine.

The run west on the A684 towards Sedbergh is a familiar one, but rarely do we take the B6259 over Mallerstang Common between The Moorcock Inn and Kirkby Stephen, alongside the Settle-Carlisle railway line. The distinctive ski-jump profile of Wild Boar Fell dominates the immediate skyline, and the ruin of Pendragon Castle pops into view briefly at the side of the road.



Onward to Brough, whence we head northwest across featureless moorland. We take it steady - the smoothed out bumps are invisible in the newly laid tarmac and the numerous blind summits hide the sudden deviations in the direction of the road. We are not in a rush, the Cross Lanes cafe cannot accommodate us until 1:30, and we are slightly ahead of schedule.



Cross Lanes Organic Farm is on the A66, just south of Barnard Castle and can be recognised instantly by the sheep that graze on its steeply sloping grass roof. The café is good but busy, and there is plenty of parking space for the bikes. It is Sunday, and with food being cooked to order, the initial wait is a long one - and we spend an hour and a half nattering and eating.

It's 15:00 by the time we leave. Steve and Val opt for the quicker route home to Scotch Corner and down the A1. The rest of us head over The Stang, down to Reeth and then past the firing ranges on Bellerby Moor to Leyburn. The A684 to Masham is fast, quiet and delightfully twisty and frankly a shame to leave it to head south once more, past Leighton Reservoir to Pateley Bridge.

A good run. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves and it was especially great to have 4 new members on 3 Pans joining us for their first ride with the club. It was hardly a typical ride - with only 5 bikes and no two-way intercom between leader and back marker, but after the first couple of junctions it was obvious that the normal drop off system was unnecessary - the riders were well able to see the direction to take from the riders in front of them so we stayed in a well spaced formation. Many thanks to Alan who acted as back marker for his first ride out - Alan has an intercom, but it was only working to transmit - he couldn't receive. In the end it was never used - or at least, I never heard him transmit anything !

Main observation of the day was at the start. Skipton Market place is getting rather full on Sunday mornings, and parking would have been difficult with the normal number of riders coming out. The cobbles are rather awkward for manoeuvring big heavy bikes, and there are no toilets other than the ones in the car park across the road. Yet we have often used it as a starting point, although we are not sure why. There is a perfectly good McDonalds (am I allowed to use those three words together ?) with coffee, clean toilets, and a smooth car park. This is to the south of Skipton centre on the industrial estate near to the roundabout on the A629 where the southern end of the Skipton by-pass starts. It's up to the ride leader, or course to choose the start point, but Andy's suggestion is a good one. The two flags on the OS Open Data Map show the current start point and the suggested McDonalds alternative.



Dick & Ruth's November Ride to East Yorkshire

An Impromptu change of plan in the wake of storm Abigail - 134 miles

The last few days had seen torrential rain driven hard by strong winds in many parts of Yorkshire. Sunday morning was a simple ride for me from between Ilkley and Skipton to our start point at Wetherspoons in Otley.

Dick had made his way from Skipton, and I met him coming in the opposite direction in Ilkley, having been turned back by the police. I wasn't surprised - the River Wharfe was higher than I had ever seen it in the last 30+ years, and had flooded over the flood defences on the A65 near Burley in Wharfedale. We detoured up the side of Ilkley moor, fully expecting every little hollow to be full of water escaping from the waterlogged hillside.

In fact, we made it Ok but decided between us that the ride that Dick had planned into the remote Dales wasn't going to be safe. At best we would have to keep turning back, and with the height of the flood water being forecast for mid-afternoon, we ran the risk of being trapped on the high ground between the dales. No one else had showed up, and we decided the best thing to do was to cancel.

Wetherspoons in Otley is brilliant. Plenty of open space and a bar that serves all kinds of breakfast. Dick's plan of arrive at 9:00 for a 10:00 start to make a breakfast stop out of it for members who have a long first leg of the ride was inspired.

Then Dale showed up, having made it from Tyne & Wear, closely followed by Alan from Doncaster. "It only started raining when I got to Wetherby", said Dale, "and the roads were clear, but it was very windy.". Alan reported no problems up the A1.

Now we had 4 bikes and 5 members: Dick, Ruth, Alan, Dale and John and we decided to give it a go - somewhere in that direction - waving vaguely east towards the A1 - to see what the conditions were like. So we made a plan to go to Squires - which was basically putting off making a decision until a bit further down the road. If it looked bad, then we'd have a short break and return home from there. However, on the way, the rain slowed down, we weren't getting blown around. It seemed to be just any normal wet



Flood alerts for Northern England



Alan, John, Dale, Dick, Ruth at Wetherspoons, Otley for breakfast.



day. So far we had not encountered any flooding to speak of, so we made another plan - not to go to Squires immediately, but first to head east towards Drifffield. "I'm sure I can find a nice little cafe that I went to once, near Beverley", said Dick, "and then we can stop at Seaways Cafe on the way back and finish off at Squires".

And so began the most circuitous route to Squires that I've ever taken. And it was brilliant. The roads had been blasted clean by the overnight driving wind and rain, and apart from a few patches of leaves and a rainbow streak of spilled diesel marking our route for 10 miles, it was an excellent run to Beverley. We stopped a few times for Dick to enter the next name that he could remember into his satnav - Tadcaster, Ulleskelf, Cawood, Market Weighton - and at each pause we were surprised that we hadn't actually had to reconsider the route or to turn back. In fact, for most of the run, there was little wind to bother us, and apart from spits and spots, there wasn't a great deal of rain.

Dick found the place that he had been looking for, and we descended on Folly Lake Cafe for an excellent, unhurried lunch.



Dick & Ruth, Dale, Alan about to set off after lunch from Folly Lake Cafe

Without the wind, it was actually quite warm and most of us removed layers when we got back on the bikes. The sky was brighter too, and I started the afternoon run wearing my Reactolite glasses.

The intended SeaWays cafe stop at Fridaythorpe wasn't needed, so we headed down Garroby Hill and along the excellent A66 through Stamford Bridge in order to pick up the back roads which lead onto the B1222 at Stillingfleet to take us back to Squires.

A coffee stop for an hour, but time was getting on and at 15:30, the light was fading. Dick & Ruth had a 90 minute run home towards Whitby, Dale would take a couple of hours to get to Tyneside. Mine and Alan's runs were in opposite directions, but would take around an hour each.

The map shows the route that we eventually took - taken from the GPX satnav log. Always interesting to find out where we have been !

A surprisingly good ride out given the conditions at the start of the day, and considering that we almost cancelled it before we had started out from Otley. The original route that Dick had planned would have been superb on a good day, but we made a good choice to change the plan.

And congratulations to Dick and Ruth who made the whole thing possible, choosing when to ignore the satnav instructions to pick out the better riding roads, and picking out an excellent pit stop at the start and for lunch.



Dale, Alan, Dick & Ruth on the way back to Sherburn, at Wheldrake

Alan's Derbyshire Ride Out

13 December 2015

Heavy evening rain followed by a hard overnight frost left untreated roads treacherous on Sunday morning. Where I live the surface water run-off from the hills had frozen into a thick sheet of ice, and a couple of cars were being recovered from the dry stone walls on the main road. Alex had a substantial covering of snow in Richmond, and Dick had a slow tentative ride, negotiating patches of black ice over the North York Moors.

The bottom line is that it was a very cold morning. Nevertheless, 6 bikes managed to make it to Squires for the 10:00 start - Alan (leading), Nigel, Steve, Andy, Dick & Richard (Back Marker).

The first stop was after an hour of chilly riding on the A614 near Blyth - Jayne's Place, arrived at by skirting the low lying lands to the east of Doncaster and taking the A614 to Bawtry - easy riding to start off with !

The next stage took the ride on a variety of main roads and quiet back roads, heading generally south-west towards Matlock and then north-west through Darley Dale and the Chatsworth House estate for the lunch stop at Hassop Station. A nice location with plenty of parking and a good choice of food.

The best riding was yet to come - or it would have been had the roads been dry and clear of the fog and mist which obscured the long distance views -and sometimes the near distance views too. The run headed through Peak Forest and Sparrowpit before turning north-east to head down the delightful coral reef gorge of Winnats Pass - now tidied, widened and with a decent surface since the main A625 route collapsed into the valley many years ago.

Castelton's narrow main street is unavoidable; we head north through Bamford, past the Ladybower reservoir and begin the climb over Snake Pass on the A57. The lower part is tree lined and requires care with soggy wet leaves compromising the best lines, but the higher section is recently rejuvenated with a grippy tar and chipping surface. This inspires a little more confidence, if you ignore the fact that it is wet and foggy, that is !

A right turn at the traffic lights in Glossop and we head north on the B6105, past the Devil's Elbow and join the main A628 Woodhead Pass near Crowden. A few hundred metres further on we head north again for the climb over a cold, wet and foggy Holme Moss and down to Holmfirth.



*It was cold.
Richmond - Sunday morning.*

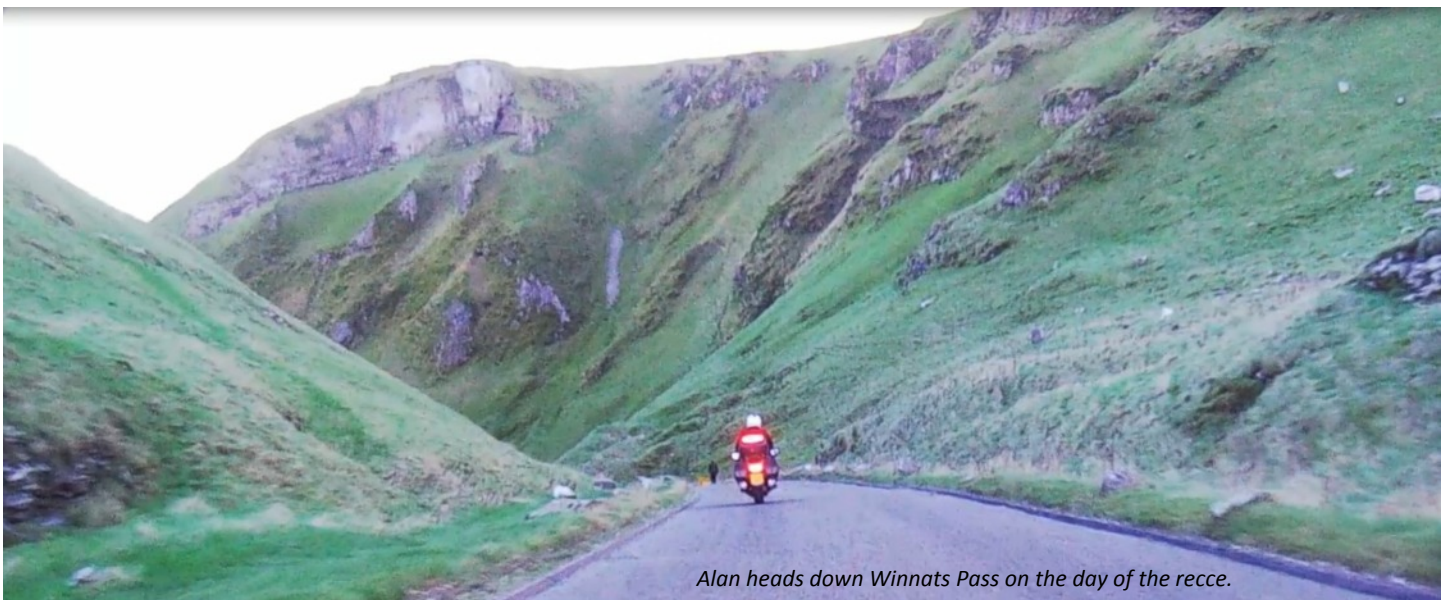




The day of the recce. Alan leads John through the Chatsworth Estate

A great run of 142 miles - but with the usual additional mileage for many members in getting to the start and returning home from the finish. A big thankyou from Alan to all of the club members who joined him on his first ride as leader.

The photos on this page are taken on the day of the recce - Tuesday 8 December - they are 'stills' taken from the DogCam HD bullet camera mounted on John's right hand wing mirror.



Alan heads down Winnats Pass on the day of the recce.

West Yorkshire to The Cat & Fiddle

A zig-zag route down the Pennines

As a kid growing up in the mining villages north of Doncaster, we used to take our annual family holidays in North Wales. There was no M62, the family van had an 1100cc engine and way after bedtime, we would head off across the Pennine roads towards the A5117 north of Chester. Here we would pull off onto the wide grass verge and spend the night, ready for an early start to avoid the morning rush around Queensferry.

Good memories, and I used to love watching Dad drive on the dark, unlit roads across the Pennines and into North Wales. Of course, it never occurred to me that he didn't actually need me to stay awake to help him navigate !

I still love these Trans-Pennine roads, and my favourite, if rather long, preference when heading to Wales is to zig-zag my way down the high ground, avoiding the motorways and the built up areas of Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Stockport and Manchester.

The route shown starts in Keighley and takes in the Moor to Hebden Bridge, Cragg Vale and the longest continuous incline in the British Isles (beware cyclists), the A672 over Moss Moor - an old, hardly used main route to Oldham, Saddleworth Moor, Holme Moss, Glossop, the A6 to Buxton, whence the A537 Cat & Fiddle road can be enjoyed to Macclesfield.

It is possible to avoid the towns of Holmfirth and Ripponden with a little careful C road navigation. It isn't possible to avoid a built up section around Delph and Uppermill, but there are excellent cafes in Uppermill, one of which is in the Garden Centre before entering Uppermill centre.

If you are heading to Wales, then the A537 Cat & Fiddle route will take you a little too far north and although this can be remedied after Macclesfield, the A54 option from Buxton is a pretty good road to ride. It leads to Junction 17 on the M6, and a quick sprint to Junction 16 will bypass the Sandbach and Crewe traffic.

Derbyshire nowadays has a blanket 50mph speed limit, which they enforce with average speed cameras and spotter aircraft, but it doesn't matter a great deal - the ride is plenty good enough at that speed, and if it's a little more excitement that you want, wait for a rainy day.

The road isn't particularly high, rarely climb to anything above 1700ft, but this is the only bit of high ground between the Irish Sea and the North Sea, and it can be extremely blustery.



A mapsource version of this route starting at the A65/A59 roundabout north of Skipton can be downloaded from [here](#).



Holme Moss - On a day that I wish I was somewhere else

Annual General Meeting

Squires Cafe 28 November 2015

Many thanks to everyone who turned up to the meeting on a very cold, wet and windy Saturday evening.

Alex gave some background to the club's affiliation with the BMF and the benefits that are available to members. All members of Northern Pan Riders are also members of the BMF. To see what the BMF has to offer, please visit their website at www.bmf.co.uk You will need our special membership code, which is available on request from any member of the committee. Sorry, I can't print it here as PanTalk is available on line to the whole world.

Dick's report as membership secretary quoted the club as having 144 members, including 59 pillion members. We have lost 17 riders and 13 pillion members this year, but we welcome 18 riders and 12 pillion members who are new to the club.

John reported on the club finances which remain healthy, with income falling only slightly behind the expenses - we renewed our banners and calling cards for the club's presence at the Police Bikewise Event. This is no problem as there is a reasonably healthy reserve fund from which we have had to draw funds only once in the last 3 years.

Alan passed on information about the club's rides this last year, including the trip to the Pan Gathering, the club's weekend away ride to Girvan in June and the mystery weekend to Caernarfon in March. Graeme as ride coordinator has plans for another challenge in 2016 which will be Yorkshire based and is likely to be open to anyone - not just club members - with proceeds being donated to charity. Details are still very sketchy, so please keep an eye on the website for any updates.

Speaking of which, the new website is almost a year old, and Richard described how he has been making efforts to direct people towards the site as a first port of call for information, and members seem to prefer the new format. Other than that, Richard receives notices and makes sure that they are broadcast to members by email.

Anne and Netty commented on the success of the various events this year - The Barbecue and the canal trip both went down particularly well, and Alan had put on a Fish Shop ride instead of us all sitting around a table at Squires for the social evening.

Elizabeth has decided to step down after 5 years of serving on the committee. She has done sterling work in organising events - particularly for members in the North East and especially in the Wednesday social evenings, the fish and chip rides, the Christmas Party and helping with the club's presence at the annual Bikewise event in Durham.

New Members in 2016

A very warm welcome to all of the club's new members this year.

We have:

Ian, Stuart & Sharon, Terry, Ian & Kim, Peter & Louise, Derek & Mary, John & Adele, Digby, Terry & Judith, Terry & Michelle, Joe, Fred, Steve & Val, Christopher, Nigel & Yvonne, Alan & Louise, Dave & Cath.

Christmas Do

Catterick Golf Club - 5 Dec 2015

A great evening of food, songs, music and dance. Many thanks to Alex & Ann for arranging things with the golf club, to Richard for the music and singing, to Anne, Netty and Richard for organising the event itself and to the gremlins for not interfering with the raffle this year.

Nothing more to say - pictures are on the next couple of pages.

Xmas Bash 2015



Xmas Bash 2015



Sat Nav Mounts

Lots of different Ideas for this



John's Zumo 600 is mounted on a diamond based RAM ball which is bolted through the top of the dash behind the screen. Thick rubber sheet and a metal plate underneath protect the dash shelf from vibration damage.

Its high up, left hand side location allows the rider to see the screen without having to look down, and allows the pillion to see the route over the rider's shoulder.

The only issue with this is that two 6mm holes have to be drilled in the top of the dash - but if the bike is sold, the RAM ball mount goes with it. It has never been an issue on any of my 3 previous Pans.

RAM ball on BikeQuip Riser

The satnav is mounted on a RAM ball extension which is fitted to the centre of the Bike Quip handlebar risers. A handy location - different size extension bars can be obtained to ensure the view of the speedo is not restricted.



Migsel Mount

This accessory ticks all of the boxes. It has the advantage of being mounted high, tucked in behind the screen, and the machined aluminium (?) base is attached to the fairing dash through the holes where the two popper rivets are located, so there is no sign of damage when the unit is removed.

The unit takes 3 RAM balls for mounting other accessories.

The Migsel GPS Mount comes in 2 formats for the ST1300 - fixed and articulated - 121 and 190 euros respectively from the Migsel site.



Throttle Locks

Two different solutions spotted on members' bikes.

The UK MOT demands that the throttle 'snaps shut' when it is released. Some long distance riders like to have the facility to allow the right hand be free to be exercised and stretched. The trick is not to be able to keep the throttle in the same position when the hand is removed, but to ensure that it can be quickly closed.



This device grips lightly on to the rubber twist grip and moves with it. If it is desired to keep the throttle in the same position, the arm is moved down to rest against the top of the brake lever, preventing the throttle from closing. The grip on the throttle is only very light, so manually closing the throttle allows the arm to slip easily.



A little more sophisticated, the castellated ring has a left hand thread which lightly tightens against the end of the twist grip if both the grip and the ring are 'accelerated' together. When the throttle is closed, the left hand thread releases its grip, allowing it to snap shut. The throttle lock only operates if it is deliberately turned when accelerating.

Power Supply

USB and Lighter Socket

Two shots of the same fitting secured to the lid of the right hand fairing pocket. A normal cigarette lighter socket is used to feed power to this device which provides USB power and charging and a couple of sockets for powering other devices - in this case the on-board video camera. Easy to get at, and clips are installed to keep cables routed away from the handlebars.



Textile Riding Suit

A Personal Review of the Rukka Arma-S Kit

For years, my Hein Gericke Master V textile jacket and trousers have served me well. Heavy duty Cordura outer, Goretex and Kevlar layers bonded together apparently as one thick material. It was warm, completely waterproof and did its job very effectively.

The sleeves were a mixed blessing - in summer I could leave the zip open and allow the stream of 70mph air to blast into the jacket, giving some much needed relief from the mid-day sun. (You remember that day). In prolonged heavy rain, even with the zips fastened, the rain would eventually work its way up the inside of the sleeve.



The storm collar for me was useless. It needed to be much bigger in order to fasten properly, and I resorted to a waterproof snood.

Even with the bib & braces, heavy rain would eventually get under the front of the jacket and work its way up to the top of the trousers.

But even with these little faults, it would keep me dry most of the time - it was only after a whole day of torrential rain that I started to get damp.

But then it failed at the elbows and the crotch. And so had Hein Gericke. All of their shops in the UK were closed down, and the kit which had stood me in good stead for a decade was no longer available.

So I went on the hunt for something similar and came up with the Rukka Arma S. Expensive, even by Gericke's standards. It had the same style of bonded Kevlar, Cordura and Goretex construction that was used in the Mater V and was highly praised by RIDE magazine. It was worth a look.

I found a shop that I have known about for years, and which I had ridden past loads of times, but at which I had never stopped. Head north out of Thirsk from the market place and you weave around the one way system to a T junction with a tiny mini roundabout. Directly opposite is [Teasdale Motorcycles](#). Around the back is a posh new annexe and inside they have all sorts of gear, not normally found in the bike shops that I have used. And they are a main dealer for Rukka.

When I phoned them up to see if they had the size I needed, they said no, but they could get them in by tomorrow. Tomorrow ? (Raises eyebrows). Yes.

Not only did they get my size in, but they ordered the size above, the size below and the size in different lengths. (Rukka have a very comprehensive sizing system). Brilliant service.

So what is it like ? Heavy and thick. It feels good and it feels warm, even without the thermal liner.

The sleeves have waterproof storm cuffs which fit inside your gloves. The outer sleeve folds back to allow you to fit this properly, and then folds and zips down over your gloves. It keeps out rain and draughts.

The storm collar is detachable, and for the first time ever with a motorcycle jacket, I find that it will fit over my mouth and nose, fasten securely and stay in position.

There is no bib to the trousers, but the high waist and long jacket provides an adequate overlap to prevent the rain from creeping up under the jacket, and the jacket zips to the trousers. There are plenty of pockets inside and outside. Outside ones have waterproof zips. The main 'zip' is a 100% waterproof Goretex closure system.

The reflective pads are large and dark grey in normal light, and the adjustable arm straps stop the sleeves from rattling in the wind. It doesn't come with a back protector for some reason, but Teasdale gave me one with the kit along with a superior quality hi-viz reflective waistcoat.

The whole lot comes with a 6 year guarantee. The kit is returned to Rukka to repair or replace if any faults arise, and you are provided with replacement gear to keep you on the road.

Teasdale Motorcycles is [here](#). Rukka's site can be found [here](#).

And since writing this, I discover one [newly opened outlet](#) for Gericke kit - and they now have the Master 7 textile suit. Too late Gericke, I like my Rukka gear now !

DogCam Bullet Camera

Personal Experience

Dave was asking about bullet cameras the other day. I passed on what I knew, and wondered if others might want similar information. I'm no expert, although I have had 3 different types of bullet camera - my current one being the best by a long way. All of them have been supplied by a company called DogCam who can be found at <http://www.dogcamsport.co.uk/>. A good company to work with who provide sound technical advice and backup.

My present model is the DogCam Bullet HD2 camera which I mount under the offside wing mirror. Although it has a built in battery which lasts about 90 minutes, I prefer to power it from the bike's battery.

It is a High quality HD camera which offers 1080p (Full HD) or 720p resolutions, the 720p giving a lower resolution but a faster frame rate. It is fully waterproof, unless you opt to screw on the rear cap which has holes to allow for better quality sound recording - but on the motorbike, waterproof is the better option and the sound is perfectly OK without the holes. In this configuration the camera is fully self contained and will give around 90 minutes of recording time on its built in battery. It comes with mounts that allow it to be fastened to your helmet, your bars or adhered to the fairing. I have my mount stuck to the underside of my offside wing mirror (photo).

The wiring harness to connect the camera to the bike's battery is an optional extra. The lead plugs into the mini USB socket at the back of the camera and is securely held in place by the extra waterproof cap which comes as part of the lead. Turn on the ignition and the camera springs into life and stops recording when you switch off.

This is a big improvement over my two previous bullet cams, both of which failed because the various leads and flimsy connectors could not cope with the vibration of the bike. The setup on this new cam ensures that the lead is held firmly in place and is not subject to additional vibration.



It pays to spend a bit of time with the camera settings before using it on that trip of a lifetime. Various settings can be adjusted (sound level, light level, image orientation, contrast, saturation, etc), but these all have to be done when the camera is connected to a computer. Once set, you can forget about them. I find that the light level adjusts itself automatically, and the resolution (1080 or 720) can be changed by flicking the switch at the rear of the camera.

If going on long trips, then I found the cheapest way to keep loads of video was to buy enough memory cards for the entire tour. I have 14 x 32Gb Micro SD cards and 4 x 16Gb cards. This works out to about one card per day, and if we have a long day, then the 16Gb card goes in at the end of the day. Still expensive, but cheaper and more convenient than carrying a notepad around with me. I use 'Integral' SDHC cards Class 10 (or UHS Speed Class 1).

I use the 'Moving Time' feature on my satnav to keep track of how much video I have recorded. When I put a new card into the camera, I reset the 'Moving Time'. This gives a good approximation as to how much space I have left. Recording at 1080p, when the moving time gets close to 4hrs 30 mins, it is about time to change the card.

Does it have any major issues ?

None that I have not been able to solve. I had a period of time when the camera would freeze up with the laser beam turned on. There's a hidden reset button which I found out about later, but finding the cause of the problem was more important. This turned out to be to do with how the memory cards were formatted - they need to be formatted as FAT32 with 32K allocation sectors. Also, it is good practice to reformat the cards rather than just wipe the card clean.

Since I have done this, I haven't had a repeat of the problem.

One of my previous cameras used to fog up with condensation on the descent of high mountain passes. Nothing I did would prevent this. The new Bullet Camera has had no such issues. Water got in past the seal once, but after drying it out, fitting new seals with a little silicon grease, it is perfect again.

The camera creates .MOV files which can be played without problems on Windows Media Player and on Apple's Quick Time player. The files load easily into every Movie editing software that I have tried, including the free Windows Movie Maker. This wasn't the case with either of my previous cameras which used some proprietary file format which I had to convert before I could use them. It is well worth asking about the file format used before purchasing any video camera.

The DogCam HD2 camera that I have has been replaced recently with the DogCam Bullet R+ . This is an improved model which has additional features for the same price, including an improved lens (even though the original is pretty good). It looks identical to mine, and has a 'Loop Mode', which means that (if you wish) when the memory card is full, it will continue recording, overwriting the previously recorded files, oldest first.

Advance Riding

Preparation - Are you Ready to Ride ?

It seems a straight forward enough question, but how many of us actually think about what we are about to commit to when we take our pride and joy out on the Queens Highway? Be honest with yourself; have I planned the journey? Is this journey really necessary in these conditions? Am I fit to ride? Is my machine in a roadworthy condition? Do the brakes work?

The Highway Code, the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM), the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and The Police Rider's Handbook – Motorcycle Roadcraft, all recommend that you carry-out an honest assessment of both yourself and your machine before venturing out on to the roads. The following extracts come directly from Motorcycle Roadcraft:

Are You Fit To Ride?

Even before you get on a bike, you should always assess whether you're fit to ride. Do a self-check using the **I AM SAFE** checklist.

Roadworthiness / Pre-riding checklist - Is Your Machine Fit to Ride ?

Before you start to ride a motorcycle for the first time each day, you should ensure that it is roadworthy. Always carry out the **POWDDERSS** check (see next page).

Test the brakes

Brakes are a very important part of your motorcycle. Check the brakes both before you move off and when the bike is moving.

The Stationary Test

Check that the hand lever and foot pedal move freely and give a firm positive pressure that can be maintained for 3 to 4 seconds.

The Moving Test

The purpose of the moving brake test is to:

- Check that both brakes are working efficiently under running conditions
- Learn how much to apply the brakes on that particular bike
- Identify any unexpected problems.

A moving brake test is vital when you move off on an unfamiliar machine. Test both brakes as soon as possible after moving off. Always consider the safety and convenience of other road users before you do a moving test:

- Choose a flat, level road with good surface conditions.
- Check the road is clear behind you.
- Apply both brakes gradually and progressively – not harshly.
- Feel for anything unusual (e.g. a tendency to pull to one side, any vibration or pulsing) and listen for anything unusual (e.g. noise from the brakes could mean they are binding).
- Release the pedal before you reach a standstill to check that the brakes release fully and are not binding.

Okay, so we are not all police motorcyclists, and you might feel that the foregoing checks are onerous and a bit over the top. However, I'm sure you will agree that getting into a habit of routine safety checks is not only common sense, but will save you money and possibly save your life. We all know our own machines intimately, and what to check, but guard against complacency and assumption.

Merry Xmas and safe riding in 2016.

IAMSAFE Checklist

- I** Illness – do I have an illness or symptom that might affect my ability to ride?
- A** Attitude – How do I feel about this journey? Am I fully focused on the riding task? What human factors do I need to take account of?
- M** Medication – Am I taking any medication that might affect my performance?
- S** Sleep – Am I suffering from lack of sleep/fatigue?
- A** Alcohol – Have I had a drink? Am I still affected by alcohol?
- F** Food – Am I hungry or thirsty? Could low blood sugar or dehydration affect my judgement?
- E** Emotion – Am I angry, depressed or stressed? Could this lead me to take risks?



To summarise:

Plan your journey

Check yourself – are you fit, healthy, booted and suited?

Routinely maintain your bike in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations

Check your bike is safe to use before every journey

Check your brakes



POWDDERSS checklist

Petrol Ensure that you have sufficient fuel

- Visual check
- Fuel gauge (if fitted)
- Re-set trip meter

Oils Oils – follow manufacturer's recommendations

Engine oil

- Dipstick/sight glass – secured/clean
- Secure oil filler cap – top up if required

Brake/clutch fluid

- Levels and colour correct
- No water intrusion/bubbles
- Check for leaks on reservoir, hoses and connectors

Water

- Coolant level check - include anti-freeze mixture
- Check for damage to radiator fins and hoses

Damage Visual examination of machine

- Insecure panels and/or damage
- Panniers/luggage – secured and balanced

Drive Visual examination of drive mechanism

- Chain – oiled and correct tension
- Sprockets – no hooked or missing teeth
- Shaft – no leaks, gaiters in place and not damaged.

Electrics Verify operation of electrical systems

- Lights – mandatory running lights (main and dipped beam)
- Brake light
- Indicators and hazard warning lights
- High intensity lights front/rear (if fitted)
- Number plate light
- Interior instrument warning lights
- Horn
- Ancillary systems (heated grips/windshield position)

Rubber Wheels – free rotation

- Tyres – tread depth/free from cuts, bulges, tears/pressure/compatibility
- Valves – caps in place and free from damage
- Handlebar grips – secure
- Throttle (twist and release)
- Footrest rubbers – rider/pillion.

Steering / Suspension

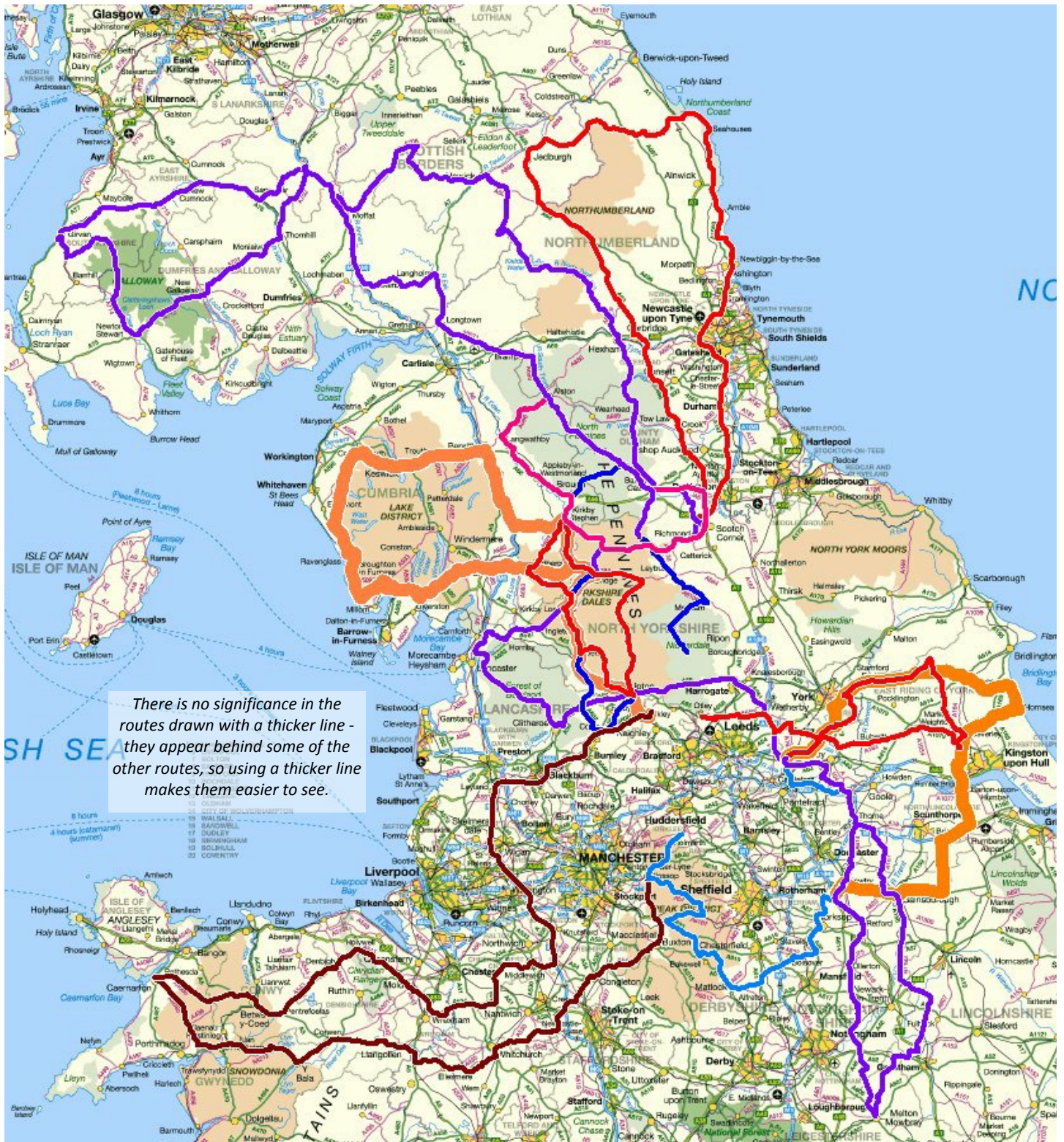
- Headrace bearings – free movement lock to lock and self-centring
- Trapped cables (engine tone increases)
- Suspension set for weight – damping/rebound
- Pillion/luggage adjustments
- Fork seals – clean and no leaks

Club Rides Out 2015

A Summary of all of the Organised Rides this year

Sunday and Long Weekend Trips are shown.

Jan	Cancelled - bad weather	Jul	Ravenglass - John & Lynne
Feb	Winter Dales - Dick & Ruth	Aug	Melton Mowbray - Richard & Anne
Mar	Swaledale & Bowland - Richard & Anne	Sep	Hornsea - Graeme & Sally
Mar	N Wales Weekend - Richard, Anne	Oct	North Pennines - John & Lynne
Apr	Scottish Borders - Dale & Sue	Nov	East Yorkshire Floods - Dick & Ruth
May	N Dales - Ken & Sue	Dec	Derbyshire - Alan
Jun	Girvan Weekend - Alan, Jeanette		



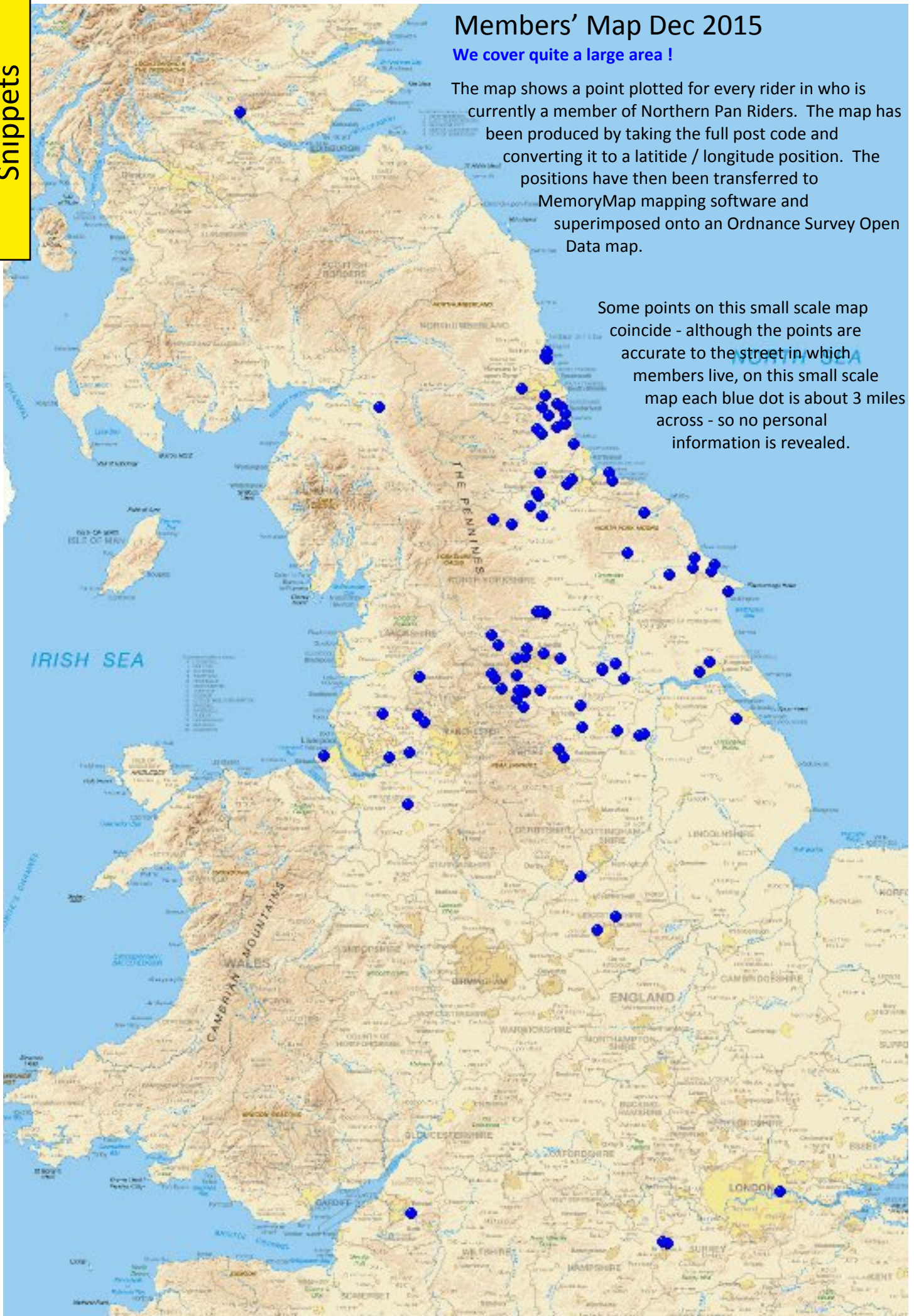
There is no significance in the routes drawn with a thicker line - they appear behind some of the other routes, so using a thicker line makes them easier to see.

Members' Map Dec 2015

We cover quite a large area !

The map shows a point plotted for every rider in who is currently a member of Northern Pan Riders. The map has been produced by taking the full post code and converting it to a latitude / longitude position. The positions have then been transferred to MemoryMap mapping software and superimposed onto an Ordnance Survey Open Data map.

Some points on this small scale map coincide - although the points are accurate to the street in which members live, on this small scale map each blue dot is about 3 miles across - so no personal information is revealed.



Scotland 2001

After an 18 year break from motorcycling,
having only ever toured with a bike and sidecar,
we embark on a 2000 mile tour of Scotland,
on our new Pan European ST1100,
at Easter



A Tour of Scotland

A New Type of Holiday

Easter 2001

Our two lads had left home. Not because they were fed up with us, (I don't think anyway), but because they had grown up, been to University, and had met new friends and new partners. It was up to them now. We will always be there for them, but at some point we have to make the hardest decision any parent has to make - to let go. To not interfere. To let them sort out their own problems. Our job was to do nothing - except to keep a worried, watchful eye, and to be there should the need arise. We would spend the next few years anxiously hoping that they were OK and that they wouldn't get into the sort of mess that would require our intervention. What we forget in all of this worry is that they aren't kids any more. Far from it. They are intelligent and sensible adults and we are extremely proud of them.

Once we started to settle into the idea of not having them around, we noticed a number of things that we had never even considered before:

The house was quiet, incredibly quiet. We thought we had gone deaf. No longer was there music from the plethora of guitars, the hundreds of CDs, a fistful of mouth organs, and the accompanying rhythm from the considerately dampened drum kit. We'd had a decade where the house was full of their music, bought and home-made. It had become a delightful soundtrack to our lives, and suddenly it was gone.

But now as if by magic, the fridge was full. We would go shopping, stock up the fridge, and two days later come back to it and there was still food in there. The stock pile of cereal which would normally disappear within a couple of days was now preventing the cupboard doors from shutting. The answer was simple - stop buying it, don't go shopping as often, but somehow it took us a while to get out of the habit.

Then there was the sound of the thump, thump, thump, pause, THUMP as the first flight of 6 steps of the staircase were taken two at a time, and the last set of six steps were negotiated in one swing from the newels at the bottom. Now the evening relaxation was no longer punctuated by that asynchronous beat of the half hourly pilgrimage to the fridge.

And now we have money left over at the end of the month. This is unheard of. In spite of subsidising the student drinks, the CDs, the clothes, the odd handouts, providing food parcels and paying university fees, we suddenly seem to have more money.

Then there are the holidays. We'd never had to arrange a holiday just for two before. CenterParcs had been our most recent favourite - a place where we could go, everyone could do their own thing, and members of the extended family could come and see their grandchildren turning into rather exceptional young adults. The lads, having tolerated the 'My, hasn't he grown' comments for a respectable amount of time, could safely disappear to go paint-balling each other.

Many years ago as a student, I had a BSA Bantam D14, got knocked off it by a car racing across a junction at which it should have stopped. The two statements the driver made once the bike had stopped bouncing and I had finished rolling, presented two mutually exclusive opening gambits. "Sorry Mate I didn't see you" were his actual words, and "You were shifting down that

hill". The second statement gave the lie to his first, and was in itself euphemism for "I thought I could nip across before you got there".

My dad, concerned about my visibility and vulnerability convinced me to buy a bike and sidecar. He was presumably going through the same emotions that I have just described,



The Cossack Ural 650cc Combination

as I left home and started to fend for myself. Dad helped me to find a cheap outfit, helped me to pay for it, spent hours with me tinkering to get the shaft drive sorted out, the carburettors adjusted properly and the sidecar toe-in and lean-out as they should be. For many years, until the lads were too big for it, the bike and sidecar combination was our

only mode of transport. Admittedly it had two new bikes and one new sidecar in that time, but we remained faithful to the notion of riding with three wheels.

Apart from anything else, in 1977, I couldn't afford a car. Income Tax was 33% and VAT had increased to 15%. My mortgage was £70 when we first bought our house and increased to over £90 for a few desperate months, leaving us very little of my teacher's £124 per month salary on which to live.

I had not yet passed my test but in those days, I could ride a 650cc motorcycle with a sidecar attached on 'L' plates, and carry passengers. It was ideal but became totally impractical as the boys grew a little older and I needed to get a car.



Yamaha XS650 + Squire Sidecar

All of that was a generation ago, and now, looking for things we could do as a couple instead of as a family, the holiday arrangements didn't need to be so complicated. The possibility of having a motorbike again began to excite us.

We saw the bike that we wanted, but it was far too expensive. A big, shaft drive, touring bike with full fairing and integral panniers rather than bolt-on additions. The sort of bike that I had lusted after when I was younger and getting the rain blasted straight into my sieve-like waterproofs. The sort of bike that wouldn't require me to stop every 30 minutes in winter to grab hold of the exhaust pipe with leather gloved hands, just to get some feeling and movement back into my frozen fingers. It was a Honda Pan European, and at the time, there was at least one picture of a 'Pan' somewhere in every popular monthly magazine for bikers. It kept appearing in the top 3 of the annual RIDE polls, year on year. But there was absolutely no way that we could afford one - they were twice as much as the £5,000 that we had available.

So instead, we started looking at a couple of other shaft drive bikes - the Yamaha Diversion 900cc, and the Honda Deauville, 650cc. The Deauville was half faired, and we could probably manage with that. The Diversion was not faired at all, and we couldn't find a company that made a fairing to fit.

After a long day of hunting around, we came to 2 inevitable conclusions. First, the Diversion was not the bike we were after. Second, the Honda Deauville would do, but we needed to find a low mileage second hand one if we were to be able to afford it. We visited one dealer who happened to have all three bikes on display, side by side, and this convinced us that what we really wanted was a Pan European.

So we trudged back to the car, resigned to the fact that we couldn't afford what we wanted, and headed off towards home, pausing only to visit one last showroom that caught our eye as we passed a tiny back road on the left. There, tucked in between two small roadsters and looking unloved and nothing particularly special, was a Wineberry Red Honda Pan European. It had 28,000 miles on the clock, and once reversed into the open away from its much smaller neighbours, it looked magnificent and in pretty good condition. The sign said £4,995. We sat on it, listened to the engine, looked it over, and bought the gateway to our new holiday adventures.

This was the end of August 2000. Between paying for the bike and being able to organise insurance, the country was gripped by a fuel shortage, artificially created by fuel depots being blockaded by angry lorry drivers and farmers. The shortage had generated its own lack of supply as people began to buy up containers and kept large amounts of highly inflammable fuel in their garages. For the majority of people it began a period of frugal driving, of car sharing and of not taking the car to go anywhere. When the fuel eventually began to get out of the depots, it would be a good few days before it actually reached the pumps.



Wineberry red, 1996 ST1100T

All of which led to the most frustrating 3 weeks ever. My bike was bought, paid for, taxed, insured, 40 miles away in Lancashire and no access to enough fuel for a 120 mile combined trip to bring it home.

Eventually the wait was over and we spent some of the winter planning for our first big trip on a motorbike together. I wanted to give the bike a good check over, but apart from some aluminium corrosion around the radiator, it seemed to be in very good shape. We bought some mid range biking gear and I

fitted an Autocom to the bike and to the helmets, and we took it out whenever we could on short rides to get used to riding this beast. After all, it didn't have a sidecar, had twice the horsepower of my previous bike, and it had been 20 years since I had even sat on one. Just having to remember to put my foot down when I came to a halt would be the first hurdle.

For me though, our planned tour in April couldn't come quickly enough.

This is a retrospective record of our first ever tour on our first ever solo touring motorcycle.

Friday 6 April 2001

Home to Lazonby

So here we are. The end of the Spring term in 2001. I have been riding our new-to-us Pan to school regularly over the winter, but today it is packed and ready to escape at the end of the day. I normally leave school at around 18:00, and it comes as quite a revelation to find so much daylight and so much of the day left as I ride up the steep drive out of the school grounds to start this new adventure. This early in April, the clocks have only just gone forward for British Summer Time, but Summer is a good way off yet. The skies look pretty full, and the roads are damp as I ride home.

Lynne is ready, waiting. I get out of my school clothes, have a shower and drink and in 10 minutes we are setting off on our first big motorcycle tour together. In the half hour since leaving school, the skies have become darker it has started to rain. At the last minute I reverse a previous decision and pack my down filled waterproof coat into a stuff bag and find a corner for it in the top box.

It turns out to be a very, very wet ride. The destination for today is Lynne's Aunt's in Lazonby, normally a 2 hour trip and a quick stop to get the holiday under way. We find that getting away immediately during school holidays is one way of forcing us to stop thinking about work. We had learned the hard way not to leave it a day or two before setting off, because we just spend most of the extra time on school related stuff. Oh, I'll just plan this; I'll just mark those. No, we want to be away from that, otherwise it will take over the entire holiday, and we really do need a proper break.

We had previously tackled the A65 on the new bike, and I was quite happy with it. Today the bike is a good bit heavier, has a full top box, 2 full panniers and a tank bag. We will be staying in hotels and bed and breakfasts, but we have booked only a couple of key places, one of which is at the very north of Scotland for the Easter period. The remainder we will sort out each morning before we set off for the day. We have a rough plan of where we will be riding, but nothing is fixed.

It is raining hard and the M6 is like a river. It slows our progress



considerably, and the late evening light illuminates the road spray in front of us, making visibility poor. Riding in the wheel tracks of cars in front that have shifted away some of the water seems like a good idea. Cars are getting very close behind me before pulling out to overtake, and it occurs to me that higher vehicles may not be able to see me at all because the top box masks the rear light when they get too close. It occurs to me that in the heavy spray, the rear light is nowhere near bright enough and I pulse my brake lever to activate the brake light as cars emerge from the spray in my mirrors, and that seems to help. I also reassure myself that it will help to keep the pads dry should I need to slow down - not that there is any road surface visible for the tyres to grip. I am still learning this bike, its power, its weight and the skills of riding on two wheels. I don't feel nervous, but I find myself gripping the handlebars too tightly and have to repeatedly force myself to relax.

We arrive at Lazonby dripping wet. The gear we had bought wasn't cheap kit, but it turns out not to be entirely waterproof - although we manage to prevent it leaking through to the under layers. Lynne is now wearing my large waterproof down coat over her own motorcycle jacket. This looks massive on her when she stands up but on the bike it keeps her warm and it stops the rain from getting anywhere near her gloves and jacket. My Sidi boots turn out to be useless, and my feet are soaking. They were supposed to be waterproof. I'll be resorting to the plastic bags tomorrow then. At least the huge fairing diverted much of the weather around the side of us.

Lynne's uncle Mike, has a garage to die for. Twice the size of a normal garage, tools are exactly where you want them to be, and everything is in its own special place. He just happens to have a rear fog light and we spend a happy couple of hours mounting the lamp to the outside edge of the underside of the top box mounting plate. We tap into the wiring for the tail lights. It is always on, far enough above the Pan's tail lights and not quite as bright as the stop lights. It is a good job, and makes the rear of the bike much more visible.

Overnight, our clothes dry out - well, very nearly. We can't help reliving the rather scary ride on the M6, apparently invisible to cars in the heavy rain and surface water, and drivers seemingly oblivious to the possibility of aquaplaning. Mike's rear fog lamp was a great idea and would help to restore confidence as well as alert drivers of our presence.

Saturday 7 April 2001

Lazonby to Melrose

We set off late into the morning, having spent some more time with Pauline and Mike. We are invited for lunch, but we really want to be on our way. The A6 is close by, and we head up this wide, quiet, one-time major highway into the ancient city of Carlisle. It is still raining as we set off, and although it is only 15 miles from where we had started, we park the bike somewhere near the station in Carlisle, and wander off to find coffee and lunch. This turns out to be a takeaway submarine sandwich sitting outside by a statue.

The rain had stopped halfway to Carlisle and this brief break is pleasant. We are warm and dry although we note that the wind seems to be picking up a bit. Yesterday evening seemed like we were just travelling to the starting point of our tour and it was a horrendous couple of hours. Today, it feels as though we have finally started our adventure and it looks like we have the prospect of dry day in front of us.

Heading out of Carlisle and onto the new M74, we are getting blown around. The wind is coming from the west, and we are heading due north. The Pan European is beautifully aerodynamic, but when the wind is blowing so strongly from the side, its aerodynamic properties begin to resemble those of a barn door. We are being tossed around our lane in a manner that makes it uncomfortable, and still not entirely familiar with the bike's handling, to me it feels dangerous. Riding the ST1100 in a crosswind requires skill confidence and experience, and as yet I don't have any of those things. Instead, we decide to turn onto the A75, head west straight into the wind, and then turn north along quieter country lanes, where hopefully, walls and hedges will offer some shelter.

This is much nicer. The roads are drying, the wind is coming head onto the fairing and the riding is much more pleasant. We head west towards Annan and then head north on the B7020, This road is an amazing find which later gets closer to the main M74 North. Slightly further west than the old main road of the B7076, but much more interesting. The ride to Moffat almost makes up for the drenching that we received on the M6 yesterday. We take our time, riding majestically on our magnificent steed on deserted country roads.

We stop briefly in Moffat, partly to check the route, and partly because a car driver pulled across the front of us as we were about to set off, jumps out of and starts admiring our bike.



He obviously knows the Pan and he tells us of a Pan-Clan ride-out tomorrow in the Kinross area. Never before or since has our mode of transport been looked at so enviously by someone who had just jumped out of a Rolls Royce.

Distracted, we head north up the A701, realise our mistake, find a safe place to turn round and head back into Moffat to locate the correct route. I've done this same route many times since and enjoyed the magnificent twisty, gradual climb up the A701 to the Devil's Beeftub and the Source of the Tweed, and onward to Edinburgh.

Today though, we were looking for the A708 which heads north east from Moffat, but to find it, we have to take a road which looks as though it will only lead to the dustbins at the back of a coach park. A strip of tarmac eventually takes us past the speed de-restriction sign and into the countryside. The roads are suffering the after effects of a harsh winter, the tarred chippings which have been broken free as a result of the freeze-thaw action are now strewn across the surface. The countryside is also suffering from the worst epidemic of Foot and Mouth disease that the UK has seen since the 1960s. Here along this quiet country back road we balance the bike precariously as we are forced to ride through deep troughs of disinfected straw which have been placed at regular intervals. The farms that we pass are full of sheep, baa-ing pitifully in the yards, awaiting their turn to meet their fate and to join the others on the back of a trailer, carcasses piled high, eyes open, but staring unseeing down the beautiful Scottish glen.

Eventually we leave the farms behind and climb the head of the glen on a narrow, twisty road where iron railings protect us from the drop to the valley floor. Some posts are falling over, their angled poise distorting the view of the line of the road ahead. Others are twisted, rusting pieces of metal, skewering themselves in the direction of the unwary motorcyclist.

The ride down the other side of the col, passing St Mary's Loch is superb. At Selkirk we make our first stop for fuel although the tank is quite a long way from being empty. But we are in Scotland and I have 170 on the trip for this tank. Never being entirely sure of where the next Sunday opening fuel stop may be, it seems to be a prudent thing to do.

Melrose is one of the hotels that we have booked in advance. The bar is warm and welcoming, and we settle into our room, with the bike secured in the cobbled court yard beneath our window. We have a brief wander, a walk along the river bank and across the 1826 suspension bridge, then back to the Kings Arms. Lynne has a cup of tea in the bath and warms her toes, and later we sit by the fire next to the window and enjoy a reasonable evening meal. Today has been a good day.



Sunday 8 April 2001

Melrose to Pitlochry

The bike is filthy from the rain a couple of days ago, and I pop down to the petrol station which has a jet wash which brings it back to its former glory. Today is dry and cloudy. We head off westwards on the A72, across the A701, and onwards to New Lanark via the A721 - a nice, quiet country lanes with a grippy road surface.



New Lanark is one of those historical industrial villages that are preserved for posterity. This one was built in the 18th century by Robert Owen - a mill owner who not only created the mill, but also provided the homes and schools for his workforce. Similar to Port Sunlight, North of Liverpool, and Saltaire in West Yorkshire.



The Falls of Clyde, further up river are a short walk away through woodland on a boarded path, and very impressive. The water from the river feeds a canal of fast flowing water which serves all of the houses in the village and powers the water wheels for the mill.

The sun has come out and it is nice to have taken the bike boots and other gear off in the car park and to be able to enjoy the stroll, stretch the legs and exercise the muscles which have so far remained unused sitting on the motorbike.

After a pleasant stroll, a tour of the well preserved buildings and a coffee, we head off again across the Kincardine Bridge over the Firth of Forth, and eastwards towards Culross. This is a very old village - thatched cottage buildings from around the 16th Century, preserved in their higgledy-piggledy original locations on cobbled streets. It is mainly a tourist trap now, but extremely well preserved. And on this particular Sunday, there were not many tourists. A very pleasant wander around.

On the way to Culross, the bike loses power quite dramatically. I'd had it serviced a few days before we set off from home and it has been running fine, but as we join the main road to the bridge, the engine cuts and splutters in mid-overtake.

We need to get out of the outside lane and Lynne gesticulates to the traffic that we we have just overtaken, that we need to get across to the hard shoulder, and we cough our way to a standstill.

In fact the engine manages to keep running at tick-over, but it is misfiring,



and backfiring as soon as I touch the throttle. Eventually, I realise that I can coax a little speed out of it if I ease the throttle open very very gradually. It works but the bike is pulling at a very reduced power, and manages to get up to 50mph in what seems to be about about 3 minutes.

After Culross, we head delicately up the A9 to our B&B place at Port na Craig, opposite Pitlochry, the engine backfiring like an old banger.

We arrange to stay for an extra night to give us time to sort out the bike problems and to get on the phone to a local Honda dealers. But this can wait for now and we head off to wander around Pitlochry, make the mistake of engaging Mr Robertson at the inconspicuous 'Whisky Shop' in conversation, and learn more about the maltings, flavours and ages of Scotch Whiskies than we will ever need to use. We view the impressive Dam and Salmon ladder, and wander back via the Pitlochry Theatre where we note that a day earlier we would have been able to see a performance of *The 39 Steps*, re-written for the stage by Nobby Dimon, an old school friend.

The late afternoon is full of phone calls to sort out the bike. Dicksons in Perth agree to take a look at it in the morning, and we alert my sister in Dundee that we may be dropping in, providing that we can get the bike fixed - it will be nice to see her. We make a call to book an evening meal at a nice little place by the river, which surprisingly turns out to be next door. Excellent food. Really excellent.

I'm worried about the bike, and what it might mean for our trip, and try to reassure myself that as long as I can get it started, then we just have to trust that the Honda experts can sort it out. I know my way around a Bantam, a Cossack and a Yamaha, or at least I did many years ago, but this ST1100 is still completely new to me. I wouldn't know where to start.



Monday 9 April 2001

Perth, Dundee and Fort William Circuit

We coax our asthmatic bike the 10 miles to Dixons in Perth. Good of them to fit us in like that, even though they were obviously very busy. A small youth heads out to the bike. No way, I think, is he going to be able to handle the sheer mass of the Pan European. Looks can be deceptive, he sits on the bike, throws it around the car park a couple of laps, got it to backfire, and drove it into the massive workshop and straight up the maintenance ramp.

Taking off the left side panel, and obtaining a set of long nose pliers, he fiddles around for about 10 minutes, jumps back on the bike, rides it backwards down the ramp with both feet on the pegs, parks it, and comes over to us. 'There you go'. It turns out to be a vacuum tube from the inlet port of the LH rear cylinder, which had become dislodged. The offending cylinder was sucking in air. "We get a lot of these bikes from the Police - and get to know them quite well. They're comfy, aren't they?" He points to the corner where a Police Pan European was lurking with its front end smashed in. "That was brought in the other day. The policeman riding it fell asleep and smashed into the back of a lorry."

Brilliant. £9.60 and we are on the road again, after spending £20 more on other biking bits and pieces in the shop.

From Perth, we pop across to Dundee and have Coffee with my sister. The last time we had been up here was over a year ago, when Dad had come up to Scotland on holiday and ended up at Dundee hospital, diagnosed with cancer. He died with most of the family with him. He never saw our return to motorcycling, or the bike, but he would have loved it. The little boy in me still misses the opportunity to show Daddy my new toy.

Around midday, we head back towards Perth, and take the A85 and A82 to Fort William via Crieff, Crianlarich, Tyndrum and Glencoe to Fort William. We stop at Tyndrum, and Lynne notes 'We didn't buy anything at all'. A rare occasion indeed. It is cold, my Sidi boots are pathetic and letting in water through at the join between leather and sole. My Shoei gloves are also leaking, but the heated handlebars are helping to stave off the cold to my fingers, and my textile over-trousers are keeping the damp areas warm. The gear isn't breathable, so I don't know if they are leaking, or whether it is condensation. I just know that it is damp.

The Sun comes out in Glencoe, and we return back to Port na Craig on the A86 via Spean Bridge and Dalwhinnie. The A86 is a magnificent, newly revamped road which winds its way quickly up Glen Spean and then maintains a fairly level, but windy course towards Glen Lagan.

The sides of the valleys have what look like a series of strange 'Parallel Roads' which mark old shorelines formed when the glacial lakes in the valley were damned in by ice. Best viewed on the road North from Roy Bridge, but evident here too - if you can spot them through the trees. We head for Dalwhinnie where we escape a sudden, freezing cold downpour in the cafe. I remember this place from my years as a student hitching lifts to Scotland. Dalwhinnie which was a major transport stop in the mid 1970s before the main A9 was rebuilt and re-routed. Nowadays it has a much more welcoming atmosphere than it had then and was full of lorries, and truck drivers with hands stained from diesel, oil and armed with an oily rag to help to



redistribute the thicker deposits to the cleaner parts of their hands. The garage across the road was a thriving business as the old trucks stopped for a breather after their exhausting climb over Drumochter Pass. Nowadays lorries take such climbs in their stride and continue their way north to Inverness without a second glance at Dalwhinnie which is by-passed. We make our bowl of soup last for as long as it takes for our fingers and faces to warm up and for the rain to pass over.

Drumochter pass is cold and rises gradually as we head south. The snow line is clearly visible on the hills around us, and the long, gradual ascent brings us closer to it with every mile. By the time we reach the top of the pass, the grass verges are covered over with snow. In those few miles, the temperature has plummeted, the air is biting cold and although the rain has stopped, there are still small flecks of snow in the air, windblown from the surrounding hills. The descent heading South is much steeper than the ascent, and as we lose height, the air becomes significantly less cold. Riding more slowly helps cut down the wind chill, but keeps us out longer, and today I have bitten off more than I can chew. We want to be back to Port na Craig.

This trip becomes known as "The day that you took me over Drumochter Pass in the snow", and "The day we were on the bike in a raging blizzard in Scotland", depending on the event and the audience.

It has been a good run though, if a bit too ambitious on a day such as this. It is Scotland after all, and it is still only the 9th April.

Tuesday 10 April 2001

Trip to Rannoch Moor

Today, my right arm aches as if I had been playing too much badminton. Lynne's neck and shoulder both ache. Perhaps the 250 miles yesterday had been too much. It was probably our longest ride out on the Pan European so far, and it was certainly the coldest. Lynne reckons that 10 miles was too much for the temperature yesterday !

The forecast for today is for showers, but it turns out to be quite nice. It is cloudy, but with lots of sunny intervals. We ride up the old A9 to Killiecrankie and stop at the visitor centre and



take a walk down the valley where the river and the railway line occupy the same narrow route as the wood and the footpath on which we are walking. The main A9 is much higher up, perched high on the valley side on concrete stilts. Down here, the traffic noise and exhaust fumes don't reach us, and it is very peaceful, and very pleasant.

A little further North on the A9, the House of Bruar stands out from the scenery with its white painted turreted walls echoing the style of the nearby Blair Castle. It has excellent, if expensive shops, a superb restaurant / cafe and an opportunity to stretch the legs. It has since become a regular stopping spot for us, and we had intended to take a stroll up the path which ascends steeply to the 'Falls of Bruar', a pleasant aerobic hour long stroll, but apparently today it is closed.

Instead we take a tour towards Tummel Bridge along the B847, a very quiet road which climbs up the hillsides to the west of the A9. Here we find a quiet place to stop and have a cup of coffee. The nearby mountains are snow-capped and the spot we have stumbled across is at the highest point of the road, giving us excellent views across to Rannoch and Beinn a Chuallach. Out comes the Primus Stove, pans, water, cups etc etc and we brew up in the cold, sunny air surrounded by nothing but beautiful, cold scenery. A magic moment.



Further exploration is curtailed when we spot that the fuel gauge would not allow us to go to Rannoch and return. Instead, we head back alongside Loch Tummel, past The Queen's View and using the throttle as little as possible, head down to the Petrol Station in Pitlochry. My right arm is playing up quite badly now - possibly as a result of gripping the handlebars too tightly. I am after all, still getting used to riding this massive solo bike, and prior to this tour, had covered only 800 miles since we bought it in September. I find that counter-steering with mainly the left hand helps to relieve the load on the right, and makes the journey more comfortable.



Later in the afternoon, we decide to visit Rannoch Moor. The railway line from Tyndrum follows the contour lines in a big sweep eastwards on its journey towards Glasgow. In the middle of Rannoch Moor it meets up with the end of the B846 at an altitude of about 1000 ft, where there is a small station, and a hotel and a little way down the road a small community and a school. We are coming from the A9 way over to the east. To get to Rannoch we must turn left alongside Loch Tummel and go as far as we can westward on the B846 to the very end of civilisation. Rannoch Station is 5 miles beyond that.

From this point there is nowhere to go. Over to the west we know there is 10 miles of the wild, watery wilderness of Rannoch Moor. The main A82 route picks a route gingerly through the numerous small lochs and bogs as it heads North West towards Glen Coe - there are no other roads across Rannoch Moor. Although it is only 10 miles to the west as the Golden Eagle flies, to get to the A82 from here you have to take a 100 mile trip, starting by heading east for 40 miles.

Rannoch Station seems to keep the pub going, and it is a recognised stopping point for the fishers and those attracted to the deer and grouse that make the wild moorland their home. The local gillie lives near to the station, and he gets a lot of custom. The teaching population make their contribution to the hotel's clientele, and the local community use the station for commuting, judging by the number of cars that are in the car park when we arrive. If you were to take away any one of the components of this small community, and you get the feeling that the whole place would become a deserted village, although the nearby army barracks, present here since 1746, must have an impact.

The pub fills rapidly shortly after the departure of the train from Glasgow. The food is excellent, and the walls are covered in small blackboards giving quite detailed descriptions of the choicest of whiskies. We steer away from the Glenfarclas and the Talisker that we know and love, and Lynne samples a few of the others. Ben Romach is a good find - I take a small sip from each new whisky that she samples, mindful of the numerous sharp corners that I will have to negotiate in the dark on the return journey. Tonight the pub has a random selection of visitors. A few locals, but mainly people who have come here just to come here. It is 40 miles from our B&B. Some idiots will travel miles to go to a pub!

which slalom their way down the hill uninterrupted for 9 exhilarating miles to Braemar. We stop in the visitors 'enclosure', sheltered from the biting wind, which in spite of the bright sunshine, makes it cold to be outside. Good Friday tomorrow, but visitor attractions and cafés are not yet open for the season. We had made a flask of hot water at our B&B before leaving and we make ourselves a hot chocolate drink.

The road from Braemar to Grantown is normally excellent and great fun. Today, spin-drift is snaking its way across the road surface and although it doesn't settle and the roads remain dry, we are at 2000' on the Lecht Ski road, it is bitingly cold and the wet patches have a glazed stare which demand a certain amount of respect.

Generally, the roads have been heavily gritted, and the granite chipped road surface is breaking up, exposing the striations of the road laying equipment underneath, which try to grab the front tyre. The combined debris of grit and chippings accumulates between the wheel tracks in the centre of the lanes and periodically we have another straw bale disinfectant bath to cope with.

The road is great fun to ride, but there is a lot to focus on.

We get into Grantown and have a snack at a café and then make our way to the A9 and north to Inverness. As main roads go, the A9 is pretty good - wide open bends, superb scenery and typically wide bottomed valleys but nowhere near as nice as the road that we have just come over.

We find a Bed and Breakfast in Inverness, at the side of the Glen Mhor hotel. Quite a poky little room, made pokier by the tiny built-in shower, with a loo and washbasin arranged in such a way that it is be entirely possible to wash your face while sitting on the loo. The hotel looks out over the River Ness, and the street is lined with mature trees forming an avenue alongside the river. Messing around, I walk around the opposite side of one tree from Lynne, came round the other side of it and said 'Boo'. I don't know who she thought I was, but she jumps out of her skin.



The walk around Inverness is interesting, first up one side of the river and then down the other side, crossing on two of the numerous pedestrian footbridges.

Not wishing to stay cooped up in our tiny room, we take the bike east for a short way on the Nairn road to the Multiplex cinema. Here we watch 'Men of Honour', eat popcorn and warm up, and then go back to the hotel for a Ben Romach nightcap from the bottle that we had bought in Pitlochry.

One of the things that we had not thought about was how short the days are in April.

Friday 13 April 2001

Inverness to Portree

Today, we decide to head over to Skye. It is not necessary to pick and choose the best route, there is only one and it is brilliant. The chill in the morning air is to be expected, but the sky is bright and the clouds are white. The day looks promising.

It is a nice easy ride along the A82 towards Drumnadrochit, alongside Loch Ness. We are happy to travel at 40-50mph most of the way - there's no rush, the scenery is magnificent and the slower speeds keep the wind chill down. Most Scottish drivers don't rush you - they stay well back and are not in a hurry to go anywhere. As I am still getting used to the bike, this trait is most welcome.



We turn right at Invermoriston and take the A887 and A87 towards the Kyle of Lochalsh. By now, the sun has burnt off the white clouds and it is now behind us, keeping our backs warm, staying out of our eyes and illuminating the views ahead of us. This is sheer magic - the lochs are calm and the blue sky and surrounding hilltops are reflected perfectly on ripple free surfaces. As we head west, the distinctive mountain tops of the Five Sisters come into view, capped with

pristine white snow which is picked out against the blue sky in the strong sunlight. We are living and moving through the most incredible scenery.

The twin six-car ferries at Kyle of Lochalsh have long since disappeared, a long tradition dispensed with in favour of the new bridge which arches steeply over the straights of Loch Alsh. This is the first time that we have seen the new bridge and the extortionate prices - the charge of £11.40 return comes as quite a shock. Fuel by comparison is around 77p per litre. However, we want to cross over, so we pay the fee and ride steeply over the narrow channel between the mainland and Skye.

I remember the narrow, winding country road to Broadford from when I came here to map the geology of the Strathaird Peninsula around Elgol in 1974. That old road is barely visible now, its tarred and chipped surface appearing every now and then in the verges of this new, wider and straighter road. This short trip from the ferry used to be a slow, stop/start affair as traffic slowed to pass at passing places, and the few miles seemed to take forever. Today though we reach Broadford in very little time at all. If this new road came with the bridge, then maybe the toll fee is worth it.

Passing through Broadford, the road continues in the same vein as the earlier run to Kyle, following the coast, weaving in and out of inlets, climbing over headlands and diving back down to the sea on the other side, all the way to Sligachan, and then on to Portree. The sun stays out



until it sets, which isn't half bad considering the forecast had been for heavy rain and strong winds.

We arrive in Portree, take off our jackets and sit for a while in the square, soaking up the sun which is cracking the flags. Finding somewhere to stay was easy. We pick a hotel, walk through the door and ask for a room.

Once settled, and having snacked and rested, we decide to take a ride up the north east coast road to the top of Skye, but we don't make it. The roads are atrocious, and no fun to ride on at all. Potholes have been 'glaciated' out of the road surface, their depth hidden by the infill of water. Debris from the holes is heaped behind and it is extremely difficult as we try to plot a route between the gravel and the puddles. By the time we get to the Old Man of Storr, I've had enough of the riding, and Lynne has had enough of banging helmets. So we stop, take a couple of photographs, pretend that this is our intended destination and return to Portree to spend the rest of the afternoon wandering around the small town and harbour, looking in the craft shops and generally enjoying being warm.

Our bed for the night is at The Bosville Hotel - quite a nice little place, very welcoming when we turned up without a reservation, and the food is really very good. We have an excellent meal and enjoy the evening thoroughly, finishing off with a coffee. Although I don't often take sugar, there is a smell about some fresh ground coffee that seems to suggest that something to take the bitterness away is required. The hotel hasn't been opened long for this season, Easter is the start of it, and today is Good Friday. Someone in a rush has not got things organised properly, and the sugar bowl has been filled with salt. The coffee and the sugar bowl are replaced, and the mess that I make as a result of spluttering out my first mouthful of coffee is cleaned up, apologetically.

Saturday 14 April 2001

Portree to Tongue (Borgie Lodge)

Potholes and road debris aside, once the first few miles from Portree have been covered, the run back to Sligachan, Broadford, and Kyle of Lochalsh is one of the most exhilarating rides in the country. The Cuillin Hills as we approach Sligachan are magnificent, dark and imposing.



From Kyle of Lochalsh we head North on the A890 and North East towards Dingwall and Lairg, up the A835 to Ullapool and Ledmore Junction. On the A837 near Brae, we take a rest. We have that horrible drizzle that makes you wet through without it ever seeming to rain and there is no where around to get out of it. Although we are not camping, I have primus stove, billy cans, cups and stuff to make hot drinks. I have also packed a walkers emergency shelter and we sit face to face

with the bike on its centre stand drinking freshly made tea and coffee. Very cosy.

It continues to rain until we reached Lairg where we have another stop. Beyond here, the rain eases off and it brightens up. This part of Scotland is relatively flat compared to the highlands - open moorland between 500 and 1000 ft above sea level. With no mountains or valleys to provide any shelter, the wind picks up again and the bike is tossed all over the place.

From Lairg to Borgie Lodge is about 40 miles, and it takes us an hour and a half. We dare not go faster. The moorland is too remote and inhospitable and the gusts of wind are strong enough to blow us across to the other side of the narrow road. Leave the tarmac here, and we will be in serious trouble.

With only road maps we start hunting for the Borgie Lodge. The road signs are confusing and seem to direct us the wrong way round a circuit of a tiny back roads towards Skerray. We must have missed it, so we turn round to repeat the 5 mile circuit in the opposite direction. No problems this time - the sign is only visible from this direction, and we are relieved to be safe and dry.

The weather brightens as we settle, shower and have a late lunch. We think about going to Durness in the afternoon, but the bitterly cold northerly wind is blowing straight from the Arctic and is far too strong along the north facing cliffs, so we potter to see what Betty Hill is like. Only about 6 miles up the road, it is far enough and we return, opting instead for a short walk across the stream and towards the dunes in Torrisdale Bay.

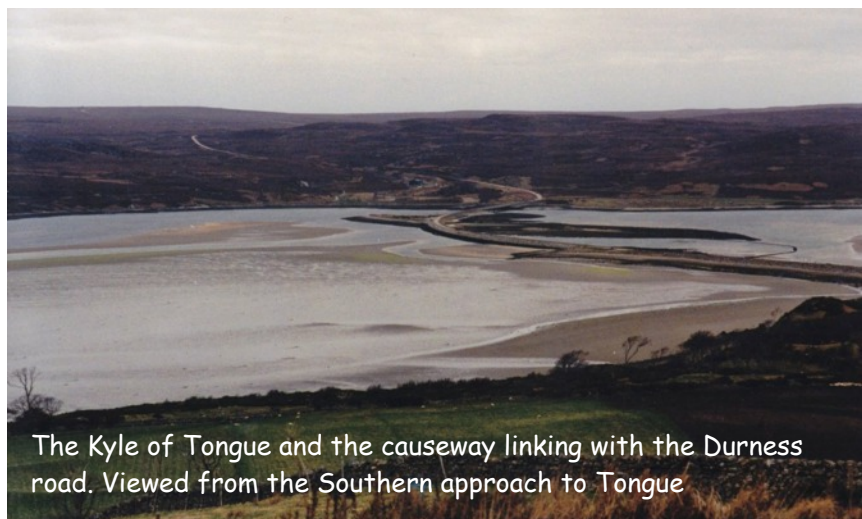
Borgie Lodge is a curiosity. It becomes apparent that rather than a hotel, this actually is a hunting lodge, with its own gillie, and a brace of residents who are very keen on their salmon fishing. We are engaged in conversation for the entire evening, without really having to say anything. The matronly woman and the old grey hard man out-anecdote each other for the duration. The words of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor spring to mind as the conversation seems inescapable, but scenario is entertainment enough. One of the jousters puts forward a story about fishing with a gillie in some Indian river, with an expression that barely hides the smugness of an unspoken "Go on then, beat that!".

The other immediately raises the stakes with a 'Yes, I've been there', and adds the name of the gillie and tops it with an anecdote about having tea with the gillie's boss.

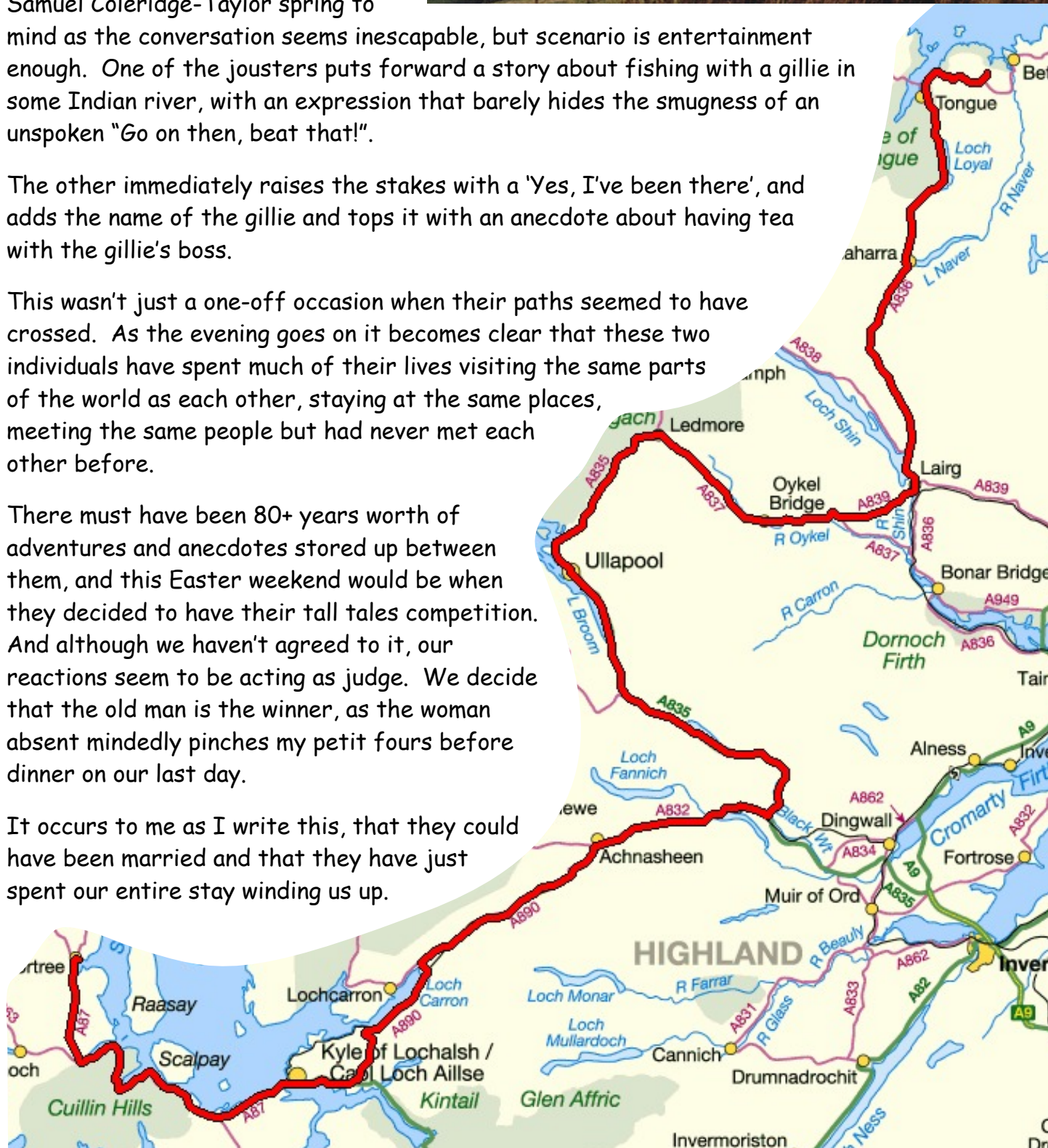
This wasn't just a one-off occasion when their paths seemed to have crossed. As the evening goes on it becomes clear that these two individuals have spent much of their lives visiting the same parts of the world as each other, staying at the same places, meeting the same people but had never met each other before.

There must have been 80+ years worth of adventures and anecdotes stored up between them, and this Easter weekend would be when they decided to have their tall tales competition. And although we haven't agreed to it, our reactions seem to be acting as judge. We decide that the old man is the winner, as the woman absent mindedly pinches my petit fours before dinner on our last day.

It occurs to me as I write this, that they could have been married and that they have just spent our entire stay winding us up.



The Kyle of Tongue and the causeway linking with the Durness road. Viewed from the Southern approach to Tongue



Sunday 15 April 2001 - Easter Sunday

North East Corner of Scotland

Although the wind is still strong this morning, we set off to Thurso on the eastern end of the northern Scottish coast. The wind is blowing straight off the sea from our left hand side and the Pan is behaving like a barn door again. The frequent road cuttings introduce another level of excitement as far from offering a brief respite from the crosswind, they create eddies and the wind instantly switches direction and blows just as strongly from the right hand side.

Thurso is cold, windy and deserted, nothing much is open and we forget that this might be because today is Easter Sunday. The only thing that seems to keep this place going is the nuclear power station just up the road at Dounreay. We have a coffee in one of the few places that seem to be open, although rather than being opened for today, it had the atmosphere of a working man's club that hadn't quite managed to close from the night before.

I haven't been up here, and haven't thought about this place since I got my degree in 1975. Bored and on a whim, I had hitch-hiked to visit a friend and was here the day my results came out. I was able to make a long distance call to London. The memory has been left here until now, awaiting my return and it jumps back into my mind as I walk past the phone box. For a few minutes I am 21 again as more forgotten memories are shaken awake.

The ride down the north east coast to Wick and onward to Helmsdale is pretty good. The road is quite close to the coastline and the steep cliffs have numerous inlets which force the road to wind their way around, up and down the sides of the gullies. It has stopped raining and the wind is now behind us and is of little consequence. This has been a good section of the ride and I imagine that the rest of this north-east coast would be a brilliant run.

Helmsdale is a pleasant fishing town, well kept, with a great little harbour, a café and a museum / craft centre which is interesting to look around, and which more than compensated for the poor display that we had in Thurso. Even the sun came out to greet us.

From here we turn right and head inland - westward at first and alternately north west and north up Strath Ullie towards the north coast at Bettyhill. Skirting around Badanloch and over the forested col at its head, we pick up the rain again. No shelter now, we are heading straight into the wind from the sea, as it is funnelled down Strath Naver. These are real Scottish Glens - they look as though they should be inhabited, but there is nothing. Just the fast flowing river, a wide, watery valley floor which rises at the edges to merge into the surrounding hills, and a narrow country road. And us.

My visor has misted up, so I have to open it in order to see. The wind is blowing straight at me, so I have to keep it as closed as possible to protect my eyes from the stinging shafts of cold rain. The mist clears with the flow of air, but the inside of my visor is now covered in water and it is impossible to clear. Looking through the screen doesn't work either - the rain drops stay firmly attached so I resort to riding one handed with the visor part raised, with my left hand shielding my face, my palm just below my line of vision, angled to deflect the wind and rain above my eyes.



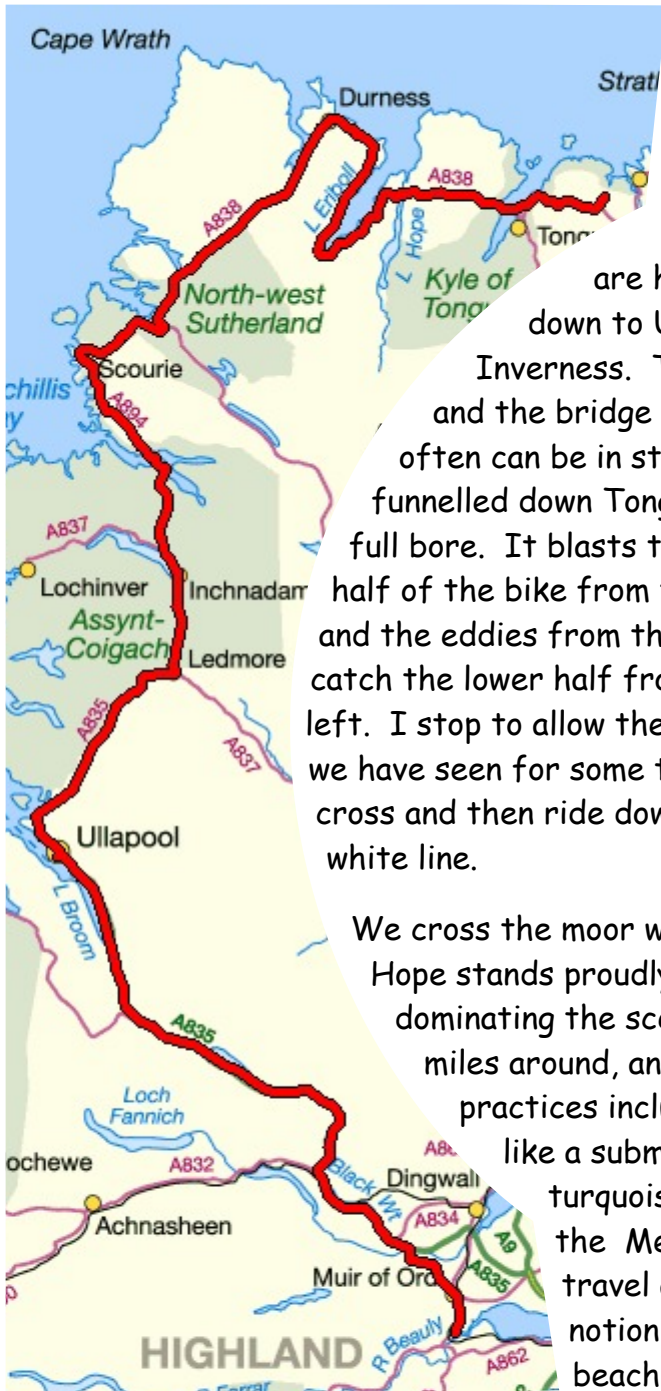
Farther north, the glen is riddled with clusters of ruined buildings where there had once been communities of crofters, renting their properties and eking a living from the land. We discover later that this cold deserted glen was one of the scenes of the infamous Highland Clearances, where the inhabitants were forced off their rented land by their landlord, the Duke of Sutherland, 200 years ago. The Duchess of Sutherland, Elizabeth, had an alternative village built for them on the coast and named it after herself. Bettyhill.

We return to the welcoming warmth of Borgie Lodge and we dry off. I attempt a modification to my visor which would allow it to stay closed but should enable air to flow inside through the small gap that I fashion in the lower edge of the visor. That's the theory anyway. Anything would be better than the blind riding that I had endured today.

The evening meal is brilliant, and the lounge with its roaring open fire before is very much appreciated. We like this place. We hadn't enjoyed being on the bike in the wind and rain - it didn't seem like much fun, although the day had some high points. Being back here in the warmth is certainly one of them !

Monday 16 April 2001

Easter Monday - Borgie Lodge to Beaulieu



Today is pretty good by yesterday's standards. We are heading along the North Coast to Durness, and then down to Ullapool and on to Beaulieu in the direction of Inverness. The wind along the north coast is still quite strong, and the bridge across the Kyle of Tongue is a challenge, as bridges often can be in strong winds. The wind from the north is being funnelled down Tongue Bay and hits the right hand side of the bridge, full bore. It blasts the upper half of the bike from the right and the eddies from the low wall catch the lower half from the left. I stop to allow the first car we have seen for some time to cross and then ride down the white line.



A838 - Loch Eriboll

We cross the moor where Ben Hope stands proudly dominating the scenery for

miles around, and go round 3 sides of Loch Eriboll, where wartime practices included the bombing of an island whose profile looks like a submarine. Approaching Durness, the seas become turquoise blue, and the beaches are golden. They look like the Mediterranean beaches that you see in photos in travel agent's windows, but the temperature belies this notion. We stop briefly in Durness, wander onto the beach and catch the full effect of the rollers that are coming in from the Arctic. Up on the cliff, they looked

like little ripples. Down here, they are taller than us and the noise as they crashed onto the shore is overwhelming. Pretty though.

The coffee and bookshop at Balnakeil is only a mile away to the west in an old army camp that has been taken over by traders. It is well stocked and the coffee and cakes are excellent. It has since become a favourite stop whenever we are here.

The road to Ullapool is a delight. The wind is now behind us, urging us southwards and is having little effect on the handling of the bike, and the road surface is also very much improved.

The first section of the ride towards Laxford Bridge is single track, but visibility ahead is good,



The Beach near Durness



A894 - The Bridge at Kylesku

and it doesn't slow us down. It's nice to be making progress again, and travelling closer to the speed of the wind and it no longer whisks away the heat from our bodies. We began to feel much warmer than before and this is helped by the sun making frequent appearances as we ride through superb scenery through Scourie and towards Kylesku on the A838 and A894.

At Kylesku bridge, we stop to take photos and have a leisurely picnic lunch. As we

continue South, the sun spends more and more time keeping us warm and the run from Kylesku Bridge to Ullapool on the A894 and A837 is magical.

It has been a long way to come, but today's ride has been well worth it. A stop in Ullapool is always welcome, and we have a coffee and a snack and then continue down the A835 towards Inverness. This is a fast, high level road through wide glens surrounded by snow capped mountains - very similar in fact to the A87 that we had ridden in similar glorious weather a few days previously. I change my mind about the road on Skye. This 100 mile run from Durness to Garve is now my favourite.

We turn off the road near Dingwall, before reaching Inverness, and head for Beaulieu, our destination for the night. The sun is trying to make up for lost time, and the roads and pavements are steaming in the heat. We have obviously just missed a shower.



A835 - Approaching Ullapool

Lynne had made a morning phone call and had booked the room in Beaulieu. Following on from our pokey little B&B a few days ago, she made a point of mentioning that we had a lot of wet biking gear and that I am 6ft 4ins tall.

We arrive and are escorted to one of the best rooms that we have ever stayed in - palatial, and although not designated 'disabled', it is big enough to accommodate wheelchairs and has a massive bathroom with two washbasins set at different heights. This is ideal. Down the road is a craft shop, so we wander off for a bit of exercise, and return later to the hotel for dinner, feeling rather smug in our good fortune, and wondering how the B&B in Inverness could justify charging the same rate as the hotel room that we are in today.

Tuesday 17 April 2001

Heading home via Moffat



It is time to strike out for home, and we set off from Beaulieu and decide to take the A9 south. The ride is uneventful and we make good progress past the lines of traffic returning from their Easter Break. It is overcast and we take a couple of short breaks along the way - south of Inverness and Pitlochry. Around the Forth Road bridge, the skies look menacing and we decide to call it a day and book into the hotel for the night.

The walk-in price is astronomical, and we decide that it is too expensive and we continue towards Moffat, through Penicuik and down the A701. This turns out to be one of the most frightening rides we have ever had. The dark clouds became darker and as we climbed the hill there was a distinct layer boundary where the brighter sky met the black cloud. As we went over the top it felt as though we could reach up and touch it. The heavens opened and it started lightning all around us, the accompanying thunderclaps were almost instantaneous.

The road surface was grippy, but it is impossible to see. The sudden downpour runs straight off the hills at the side and flows straight across the roads, and I can feel the flow of water hitting the front wheel. We decide that we would be as exposed on the bike as we would be crouching down on this high hilltop, and we continue, dropping down into relative safety on the other side of the hill.

We find a bed and breakfast in Moffat - a large house on the right hand side on the road leading towards the M74. White painted stones outside, they have a place and invite us to park around the back. It is nice to hang the wet gear up, have a shower and take a walk into Moffat for an evening meal at the pub in the evening sun. Funny thing, Moffat weather !

We return home the following day down the M6 and the A65.

Having written this from notes and then reading it back, it sounds to have been a pretty grim holiday. It certainly wasn't our best tour and we learned a lot from it, but I remember it fondly as our first proper motorcycle tour together.

There were a few things that we got wrong - Scotland in early April was perhaps a little too ambitious; although not cheap, the gear wasn't good enough, and with no heated jackets we got pretty wet and cold on a number of days; my supposedly waterproof Sidi Black Evo Rain boots were terrible.

But we had some really good high points - we remember fondly having freshly brewed tea and coffee at the side of the road; staying at the Port na Craig B&B; the visit to New Lanark; the superb ride from Tongue to Beaully and the size of the hotel room; getting superb weather for the ride to Skye; the benefit of having the extra waterproof down raincoat for Lynne on the back.

We also took our time on many of the days - plenty of time to potter on most days, and stopping off for a walk on a few days, stowing our gear on the bike while we walked on the beach at Durness, wandered around New Lanark village, took a woodland stroll at Killiecranke; wander round the ancient village at Culross.

We pack differently now. We have excellent riding gear and have heated jackets. I no longer take the primus and tea/coffee making equipment - instead we budget for commercial coffee stops. I don't take the tank bag unless we are camping nor do we carry much in the way of emergency warm clothing.

For a first trip, at Easter, in Scotland, the distances were too much on some days. We didn't allow for the really wet weather - we assumed our gear would be good enough.

Total distance covered (using MapSource) was 1948 miles.

Article Index

A Résumé of Articles Published in PanTalk with Dates.

Membership

Club Membership	July 2013
Membership Map	July 2013
BMF Membership Details	October 2013
Membership Map 2015	December 2105

Members Bikes & Guess Who

Guess who - A Panther, C90, Bantam, Ural, XS650, ST1100, ST1300	December 2013
Barry's Ex Police Pan	February 2014
Guess Who - BSA, 125 Kawasaki, ST1300	February 2014
Alex's article Motorbike, Milestones and Memories	February 2014
John Buys a new Pan	May 2014
Guess Who - Loads of bikes	June 2015
New Members - 2105	December 2105

Club Events

Pete's Scotland Tour May 2013	July 2013
NPR at Biker events 2013	October 2013
Thunder in the Glens 24 August 2013	October 2013
Map - Rides out and Rides to Eat in 2013	February 2014
2014 NPR Challenge	February 2014
Online Logbook for NPR Challenge	May 2014
Canal Trip - Skipton to Kildwick - 1 June 2104	August 2014
Pete & Helen's tour of Northern Scotland, May 2014	August 2014
NPR Trip to Mosel Valley, June 2014	August 2014
Durham Bikewise	August 2014
The 2014 Challenge	December 2014
Canal Trip June 2015	September 2015
AGM 2015	December 2105
Christmas Do - 2015	December 2105

Member's Tours

Dick and Ruth's trip to Scandanavia	October 2013
Britt Butt Rally 2013 - Graeme and Sally	December 2013
Belinda and Graham's Spanish Tour July 2012	December 2013
John's 9000 mile, 2 month American Tour 2012 - Route 66	February 2014
Tony's 3,100 mile Tour of SW USA	May 2014
Camping with a Pan European. John & Lynne share some tips	May 2014
Black Pudding Run October 2014	December 2014
Tour des Grandes Alpes	March 2015
Pan in the Sand	March 2015
Ticked off the List - Ayshire Coast	March 2015
A Tour of Scotland	December 2015

Routes

Clwyd and Snowdonia	December 2013
A Tour of the Lake District passes	February 2014
A Long Scottish One Day Circuit	May 2014
Romans and Leadmining -240 Miles in Northumberland	August 2014
Routes - A Border Raid	December 2014
A Five Day Tour of Scotland	December 2014
A Mid Wales Traverse	March 2015
West Yorkshire - Cat & Fiddle	December 2105

Maps, Pcs and SatNavs

Google Maps to GPX (but Google has changed since this was written)	February 2014
SatNav Speed and Indicated Speed on Vehicle Speedometers	December 2014
Continental Riding and Garmin Speed Alerts	December 2014
Zumo Maps & Routes	March 2015
Moffat Figure of Eight	June 2015

Snippets

Sorry Mate, I didn't see you; Access Service Database; Pinking engine	December 2013
Driving Licence Renewal Age 70. Alex's useful insight.	May 2014
So You Think You Can Ride ? Info about advanced training from Dick	May 2014
Observation musings	May 2014
Filtering	December 2014
Pub Talk	March 2015
Bridgestone T30GT Tyres	March 2015
USB Charger and Hi Viz Indicator Warning	March 2015
Insurance Premiums - NPR Members Reveal All	March 2015
IAM - What is Advanced Motorcycling	June 2015
USB Charger, SMC, Top Box Spoiler, Rear Visibility	June 2015
Bridgestone T30GT Tyres (more news)	June 2015
Highway Code Quiz	September 2015
Advanced Riding	December 2105

Show & Tell

Heated grips, Video cam, satnav, cup holder, topbox rack, Radio	September 2015
SatNav Mounts, Throttle Locks, Power Supply	December 2105
Rukka Textile Riding Suit	December 2105
DogCam Bullet Camera	December 2105

Workshop (not motorcycle)

Radio & Autocom: Prevent accidental transmit	September 2015
--	----------------

Club Rides Out

Where have we been	July 2013
Northern Pennines, Dick Brew 7 April 2013	July 2013
Alston Run - John & Lynne - 9 June 2013	July 2013
Tan Hill - Ken - 14 July 2013	October 2013
Hard Knott Pass - Pete - 13 October 2013	December 2013
Blackpool - Richard - 8 December 2013	February 2014
A Frozen East Yorkshire - Richard - 12 Jan 2014	February 2014
Fridaythorpe -Alan - 9 February 2014	May 2014
Snowdonia - John & Lynne - 9 March 2014	May 2014
Northern Pennine Tour - Dick - 13 April 2014	May 2014
P & T stops - Richard's on-line Map	May 2014
Northumberland Borders - Alan & Jeanette - 8 June 2014	August 2014
National Arboretum, Lichfield - 11 May 2014	August 2014
Glasson Dock, Lancaster - Andy & Tracy - 13 July 2014	August 2014
A Tour Around Nidderdale	December 2014
Lincolnshire and The High Peak	December 2014
Middlesbrough & Zoe's Place	December 2014
Rides Out in 2014	December 2014
A Dales Dawdle 8 Feb 2015	March 2015
Swaledale, Buttertubs and Trough of Bowland	March 2015
A Scottish Border Run	June 2015
Mystery Weekend	June 2015
Scotland Weekend - June 2105	September 2015
Ravenglass Ride - July 2015	September 2015
Melton Mowbray - August 2015	September 2015
Hornsea - September 2015	September 2015
Northern Dales - John & Lynne - Oct 2015	December 2015
East Yorkshire - Dick & Ruth - Nov 2015	December 2105
Derbyshire - Alan - Dec 2105	December 2105
Where we have been 2015	December 2105

PanTalk is an occasional magazine produced by and for members of Northern Pan Riders - a motorcycle touring club for owners of touring motorcycles.

Suggestions for articles are most gratefully received, and we are always looking for tour reports; your favourite roads; technical articles; simple modifications to your bike; your own brief riding history.

Photos help make articles more interesting about 1280 pixels wide works best for me. I can produce a map of routes taken using gdb (mapsource / basecamp) or gpx (log from satnav) format.

Please contact pantalk@nprclub.co.uk with suggestions or articles

Many thanks to:

John & Lynne for the Northern Dales Ride
Dick for the impromptu 'Day of the Floods Ride'
Alan for his first ride as leader to Derbyshire
Dick for his Advanced Riding article
John for various snippet pages, Show & Tell, the Route page
and the Scotland 2001 tour
Various members for letting me include photos of Farkles

Further Information about the club, can be obtained on our website:

www.northernpanriders.co.uk

www.nprclub.co.uk

Previous copies of PanTalk can also be found on the above site.

Also, random notices and comments on Facebook:

[Northern Pan Riders Pan European](#)