

HEREFORDSHIRE & MID-WALES SECTION NEWSLETTER



.....Issue 48-2 - May 2020.....

Editor Geoff McGladdery

IMPORTANT NOTICE

All planned section events, up to and including June 10th will **NOT** take place. Information on events following that date is listed below. There is absolutely no guarantee that these events will take place, so the dates are for planning purposes only. We will continue to update the calendar, based firmly on government guidelines at the time. You can be assured that the health and welfare of section members will be our only priority.

This statement will be continually updated to reflect the ever changing situation.

FUTURE EVENTS

We continue to take an optimistic view of the lessening of the current restrictions, but please be aware that some or all of these events may be cancelled, or modified in their detail.

Thursday June 11th Brightwells cafe, Easters Mart Leominster, HR6 0DE 10:00 for 10:30 – Across the roof of Wales.

A full day's ride on some of the best roads that Mid-Wales has to offer, skirting the Elan valley Dams and then following the superb Nant-y-Moch reservoir road. On to Machynlleth for lunch and then back to Leominster via Staylitttle, Llyn Clywedog, 165 miles in all – our longest of the year. Alternative meeting point at Crossgate Services - Llandrindod Wells LD1 6RE Llanidloes, Llanbister and Presteigne.

Sunday June 14th - Market Square, Bromyard, HR7 4BP 09:30 for 10:00 – Bob Buffon run.

Social run in memory of Bob Buffon, founder member of the Worcestershire section and long

serving section secretary. We are the invited guests of the Worcestershire section.

Thursday June 18th - The Moon Mordiford - HR1 4LW – 7:00 p.m. – Club night with optional Navigational challenge.

Club night plus an optional fiendish navigation challenge designed to take you down narrow lanes, to places you've never heard of!

Sunday June 28th – Herefordshire on the Edge, starting 09:00 from the Traveller's Rest, Ross-on-Wye, or The Lion at Leintwardine.

A FIRM DECISION HAS BEEN DEFERRED UNTIL MAY 11TH WHEN WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PLANNED GOVERNMENT ANOUNCEMENT ON May 10th.

If cancellation proves necessary, anyone who has already paid to enter will receive a full refund or can elect to have their entry carried forward to 2021.



Tuesday July 7th - Sally's Place (better known as the open air cafe) British Camp, Upper Colwall, Malvern, WR13 6DW – 09:30 for 10:00 - Breakfast meet.

Meet up for breakfast. A chance to show off your bike and join up with fellow enthusiasts. You choose your own route there and back.

Sat & Sun July 11th & 12th VMCC Festival of 1000 Bikes – Mallory Park.

STILL SCHEDULED TO GO AHEAD AT THE MOMENT BUT UNDER CONTINUOUS REVIEW.

Entry forms for the 2020 VMCC Festival of 1000 bikes can be downloaded from the VMCC website.

Tuesday July 14th Brunch ride-in - Honey Café in Bronllys, Brecon, Powys, LD3 0LH - 11:00

Just meet up for Brunch (morning coffee if you like), no organised ride, plan your own route.

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

Sunday August 16th – The British Motor Museum, Gaydon CV35 0BJ - Banbury Run 2020 – Date changed from Sunday May 31st

Entries are now open and forms can be found on the VMCC website. Entries are on a strict “first come – first served” basis, so don't delay.

STAFFORD CLASSIC BIKE SHOW RE-SCHEDULED

Originally planned for April 25th & 26th, then re-scheduled for June 12th & 13th, the 40th edition of the much loved Stafford Classic Motorcycle Show has been moved again, this time to Saturday and Sunday August 15th & 16th. As you might expect, Bonham's auction, an essential element of Stafford Shows, has also been re-scheduled for the same weekend. Organisers Morton's Media have announced that all ticket and trade bookings will be honoured for the new date, but are less than clear what happens if you are unable to make the new date. They suggest you get in touch with them.



Following the cancellation of the TT, the next biggest casualty of Covid-19 in the motorcycling calendar is the Classic TT. The website announces “All Official Tickets including Grandstand Tickets, Hospitality Packages and other Official Event Experiences

purchased through iomtraces.com will be automatically refunded in full in due course", but it is completely unclear what will happen to ferry and accommodation bookings. The IOM Steam Packet website, as yet, carries no announcement about the Classic TT, but it does make their position clear on the cancelled 2020 TT. "At present TT 2021 services are not yet bookable but the Company will be contacting all TT 2020 period customers from the end of April to offer TT 2021 Priority Transfer on the equivalent sailings or refund options. To assist customers, this will be an automated re-booking process and there is no need to immediately contact the Company as the list of options will be sent out via email/post. Existing TT 2020 customers will be given priority on the equivalent sailings for TT 2021 for a period. Other new bookings or amendments for TT 2021 will only be possible from the 25th May 2020". It would seem reasonable to assume that a similar arrangement will be made for Classic TT bookings, but then this is the Steam Packet, a company with a legendary and unfavourable track record for customer service.

<https://www.iomtraces.com/classic/news>

UNDER £1000

Our series which finds useable, VMCC eligible (made before Jan 1st 1995), bikes, ready to ride, with MOTs (where required) for less than £1,000.



Just to show that the price of the Honda CB200 in our last issue was no fluke, we have another similar machine. This time a 1976 CD175, which sold on eBay for £921.11. A little scruffy, but if the vendors assertion that it has done less than 7,500 miles is correct, it would reward the time and money spent on refreshing it.



Staying with Japanese commuter machines, this learner legal 1989 Yamaha YB100, comes with an MOT (expiry Oct 2020) and less than 18,000 miles on the clock. Don't be misled by its small capacity, in unrestricted form, these little Yamahas can (allegedly) top 70mph. It sold on eBay for a mere £735.

NB - Prices are the advertised asking prices or actual selling prices and are correct at the time of writing. We have not verified any of the details vendors have used in their advertising – that has to be your responsibility.

TIME AND DISTANCE

Roger Bibbings outlines his ideas for the relaxation of "lockdown"

Until a vaccine is widely available, 'social distancing' and the adoption of basic hygiene measures like hand washing will remain a new behavioural norm for us all. (And even after mass vaccination takes off, let us hope these habits continue.)

At present, unless we are key workers, we are all required to stay at home, go out only to get food,

medicines or for health/support reasons and to take no more than one hour's socially distanced exercise a day. Going out for longer and lingering is forbidden. (<https://www.gov.uk/.../.../coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>)

HUFFING AND PUFFING CYCLISTS

The general scientific consensus seems to be that remaining a minimum of 2 metres apart in open air is sufficient to reduce the chances of inhaling exhaled droplet borne COVID 19 from those nearby who may be shedding the virus. The modeling, the maths and the safety margins behind this advice however are not well explained to the public and many prefer to stay further away, are wary of huffing/puffing cyclists and runners who pass them too close, preferring to hold their breath for a bit or stay upwind of them. By observing social distancing in open air the risk of infection from someone shedding the virus is generally deemed to be very low. Keeping your distance from such people in enclosed spaces however is regarded as far more critical.

The one hour limit is a bit of a rule of thumb, designed I suspect to ration time/space in crowded urban settings so that not too many are outside all at once. In country districts such as where I live, many people are obviously out walking and cycling for much longer, although they are being just as careful as their town dwelling cousins when it comes to limiting time going to the supermarket. People are learning that it's not so much about being outside the home but staying well away from one another.

MAKE A RISK ASSESSMENT

Similarly, the over 70 strict isolation limit is also a crude indicator. You don't suddenly become 'high risk' one minute after you cease being 69. Some 70 year olds have the bodies of those twenty years younger and vice versa. What you have to do is to think about your overall health and the extent to which your ability to survive a COVID 19 infection might be compromised by your age, general fitness and any underlying health conditions that you may have. If you are older you need to make a 'suitable and sufficient risk assessment.

6,000 DEATHS A YEAR IN THE HOME

At present things like recreational motorcycling or walking/climbing in the uplands are out because, even if those doing this were to be quite self sufficient and take all their supplies with them and keep miles away from others, they might still have an accident or mishap and have to call on the services of A&E, the RAC/AA etc. But equally the risk of injury while on the road applies to cyclists too and it also applies 'big time' of course to staying at home which is where most A&E level injuries actually occur. (Over 6,000 people die as a result of home accidents every year.)

Similarly, unnecessary car travel is discouraged because the assumption is that drivers and passengers (who may be carrying the virus) are travelling to somewhere other than their home where they may pass COVID 19 on to others. If on the other hand, they merely go on a circular drive for pleasure, they remain socially isolated and present no particular risk, provided they adopt appropriate distancing at filling stations and use gloves/gel at the pumps/kiosk.

NOT THE ONLY HARMFUL MICRO-ORGANISM

So as we go on through the rest of the year, if life is to become slightly more tolerable, a more 'goal setting' as opposed to strictly 'rule based' approach to social distancing is going to be necessary. And it, together with more hand washing, should have other benefits beyond halting the spread of COVID 19, since this is not the only harmful micro-organism in town which passes from person to person by touching or inhalation of exhaled breath etc. So we should also see a dramatic drop in cases of the flu, the common cold, in Noravirus, even sexually transmitted diseases.

Social distancing is about being disciplined in keeping ourselves to ourselves - and while for now, compliance with black and white rules seems to be necessary, as we go on there is going to have to be more public education about how to use risk assessment and good judgment to find flexible solutions which maintain social distancing and good hygiene but which are effective at stopping the spread of the virus.

SANDWICHES AND A FLASK

Going to the park in a crowded city for not more than an hour and not lingering there may still have to be the rule, but going on your own to a remote location in the Cambrian Hills on your motor cycle and sitting alone to eat your sandwiches and drink from a flask of coffee which you've brought with you, should be perfectly OK.

There's no doubt that both citizens and the Authorities feel happier with the certainty of black and white prescriptive rules and there is always the fear that if we give each other a flexible inch some will take the opportunity to take a quite unreasonable mile. But the key thing to remember is that it's the distance you maintain from other people and limiting potential points of transmission which are critically important, not necessarily the amount of time you are actually spending outside your front door. – May 2020

PRODUCT REVIEWS

Whilst we are all in lockdown Paul Farley thought he'd share his experience of a couple of workshop products. Paul would like to stress that he has no financial interest or connections in either of the suppliers and neither does the Newsletter. If you have any any favourite products which you would like to share – feel free to tell us about them.

'Rhino Goo' is a radioactive looking bright green bike cleaner, non-irritant, non-caustic, aluminium and environment friendly. The economical way is to buy a 5 litre container, I bought my supply from A and B motorcycles in Merthyr Tydfil at the cost of £12.95.

I've used it for general cleaning of very muddy trail, trial and mountain bikes and also for washing off various oily engine components prior to rebuilds. This stuff works really well and seems to lift off most dirt reasonably easily, oil and grease is a bit tougher although lots of scrubbing with a stiff brush prior to rinsing off produces good results. It also did a good job cleaning mould off our camper van when used as a diluted solution. I won't go into the instructions for use as they are clearly stated on the container

but avoid spraying on hot surfaces or use in direct sunshine.



The best bit is the shiny aluminium that is revealed after rinsing off, painted surfaces do dull off slightly if left to dry naturally but a quick rub over with a chamois or dry cloth gets the shine back. I've not seen any evidence of parts corroding after washing off although bright alloy is best either re polished or given a spray with WD 40 etc otherwise the metal is so clean you will get some white oxidising marks.

In conclusion - I've tried 'Muck Off' bike cleaner; it's very good but expensive and I've used M and P's (Swansea) own brand but found **'Rhino Goo'** to be far superior.

<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/Rhino-Goo-Motocross-MX-MTB-Bike-Motorcycle-Cleaner-10L-Litre-Combo-2-x-5-Litre-/331990885549?hash=item4d4c32e4ad>

ThreeBond 1215 silicon instant gasket

A mate had used this stuff with good results on leaky Triumph engines and extolled the virtues of this product. I purchased mine via a well-known auction site, £13 for a 250 gram tube. The distributors are Speedsport promotions based at Silverstone.

I don't know if the composition of regular RTV silicone has changed over the years but I've found it doesn't seal anywhere near as well as the older, bright orange stuff used to do.

The **'ThreeBond'** is grey in colour and smells quite strong, so don't inhale. The silicon spreads and sticks to clean surfaces really well and a thin surface applied with finger or small brush is sufficient. It definitely seals well and dries to a rubbery finish. If in the future, engine cases need separating then a hide or soft hammer may be required.

In conclusion – **ThreeBond** is definitely better than standard RTV silicone that you get from motor factors, manufactured by Granville etc, it's easier to apply sparingly and therefore is less likely to block oilways as long as you aren't totally inept.



There is a warning that one of the components, H351 is 'Suspected of causing cancer' so probably best to wear gloves then! Also the manufacturers advise not using it on copper head gaskets although I have done so and haven't experienced any problems. It's quite expensive, double the price of the standard stuff but worth the extra I think as it appears to have cured annoying oil leaks on a couple of my bikes.

<https://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/THREEBOND-1215-HIGH-PERFORMANCE-ENGINE-GEARBOX-SEALER-250G-TUBE-/111912846248?hash=item1a0e8683a8>

WHEN WE WERE YOUNG – OR “THE OLDEN DAYS” AS THE GRANDCHILDREN CALL IT.

Paul Farley is pictured here with his Dad Richard on the first bike he had which actually ran. Paul remembers..... “I was about 13 and used to drag it up onto the ranges to ride it using a borrowed pig hand cart. It's a Francis Barnett with a Villiers 8E engine and a pair of Ariel forks which I found in a military scrap yard in Aldershot's North Camp. While I was getting the forks off a frame there were small explosions going off from a nearby bonfire, somebody had piled a load of unfired blanks on the fire!” This wasn't the only pyrotechnic event in Paul's childhood. He recalls this incident,” We used

spend loads of our time trying to blow ourselves up with unexploded ordnance. We were allowed to go cross country running at school, on our own, and once found some sort of explosive device, we emptied the contents into a tree stump thinking it wouldn't make much of a bang. After making a fuse from some newspaper it exploded and blew the tree stump to bits.....what fun!”



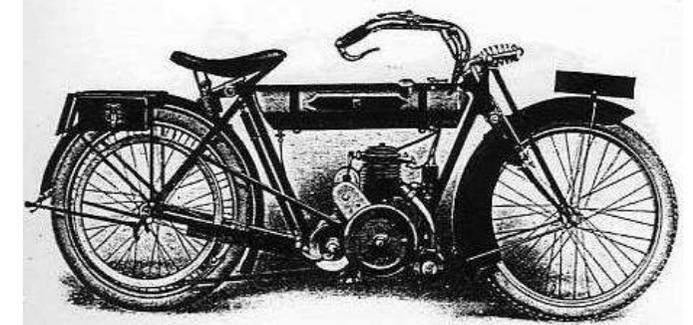
The bike below is Paul's second proper trials bike, “A 175 Bantam which I built..... quite competitive with a barrel ported by Reg May of Comerfords fame, probably about 1971 competing in a trial on Army land at Weavers Down, Hampshire.”



Thanks to Paul for scouring the family album – there must be lots of great pictures and stories out there – please share them with us, (Ed)

THE TRIUMPH JUNIOR MOTORCYCLE - MODEL LW

We are indebted to David Payne for this intriguing story.



2¼ h.p. Junior Triumph

Type L.W. With Patent Two-Speed Countershaft Gear.

SPECIFICATION.

ENGINE.—2¼ h.p. two-stroke, 64 x 70 m/m bore and stroke, 225 c.c. Triumph manufacture throughout; patent compression release valve, Patent No. 24664/13 and 24292/13 and effective silencer with extension tube to rear wheel.

TWO-SPEED GEAR.—Triumph two-speed countershaft gear with handlebar control, giving a reduction of 40% from high to low gear. Patent gear box fixing and chain adjustment. Patent No. 24663/19.

IGNITION.—High-tension ball bearing magneto; handlebar control.

CARBURETTOR.—Handlebar controlled.

FRAME.—Registered design. (Regd. No. 62563); Triumph patent spring forks. Front rim brake, rear foot brake. Saddle only 28½ in. from ground.

WHEELS.—24 x 2½ in.; Dunlop tyres.

TANK.—Cylindrical; all control wires taken through fore part, dispensing with clips; combined petrol filler cap and oil measure. Capacity: Petrol and Oil mixture, 9 pints; Oil 1 quart.

TRANSMISSION.—Chain from engine to gear box enclosed, thence by belt.

LUBRICATION.—Automatic. Oil mixed with petrol, correct proportion 1 part of oil to 12 parts of petrol, i.e., 4 measures of oil to a gallon of petrol.

STANDS.—Back and front.

MUDGUARDS.—Strong and wide, front guard fitted with side wings.

Footrests, Carrier, large padded top Saddle, pannier Tool-bags, and complete Kit of Tools.

FINISH.—Black enamel on Coslet-tised frame, all bright parts heavily plated. Tank enamelled, green panels, lined red.

Weight (for Registration purposes) without tools and accessories, approx. 129 lbs.

PRICE (for the United Kingdom only):

Type L.W.—Junior Triumph, 2¼ h.p. with Triumph Two-Speed Countershaft Gear £75 0 0

The above Price is subject to alteration without notice. We reserve the right to modify or deviate from Specification in minor details.

The Triumph Junior or Baby Triumph, as this model is generally known, manufactured from 1914 until 1925, was Triumph's first 2-stroke. When first launched it had a 225cc, 2.1/4 hp engine, a 2-speed gearbox, but no clutch or kickstart. Towards the end of the production run, the size of the engine was increased to 250cc, 2.1/2 hp, with a clutch and kickstart added.

MOVED TO IRELAND

My Triumph was purchased from new by Dr John Trumbull who lived in Coventry. The paperwork that

came with the bike shows that he owned it until 1941 by which time he had moved from his Coventry address to Mallahide in County Dublin, Ireland. Regrettably, there is then a gap in the information on the bike until 9th January 1975 when a Mr P Flanagan of Dublin sent a letter to the Motor Taxation Office at Warwickshire County Council to ask if they could help him with the date the bike had been manufactured, the Triumph factory records having been destroyed during the blitz. He believed the bike to be one of the first baby Triumphs' built, hence a veteran model, and thought the Council records may confirm this. They informed him their records did not hold that information but could confirm that it was first registered on the 5th March 1915.



In 1996 Mr Flanagan, having reached the age of 95, arranged for Mr Trevor Smyth to sell it on his behalf and so it came to be advertised in Classic Bike Magazine as a 1914 Triumph as Mr Flanagan still believed that was the year of manufacture. A friend and VMCC member Colin Missen saw the advert and was interested as the bike's age made it eligible for the SMCC Pioneer Run. After making several phone calls and having received a few photographs, he decided to travel to Ireland with a view to purchasing it. When he arrived, he discovered, on checking the engine and frame numbers it was a vintage model not a veteran as advertised. Although he was disappointed, he decided to buy it anyway, paid a deposit and arranged to collect it later in the year. A couple of months on, he completed the purchase and knew

that the first thing to do was to re-register the bike retaining the original registration number. He obtained the VMCC retention form which he completed and sent off to the DVLA.

A GREAT END TO THE YEAR

Whilst waiting to hear if his application was successful, he started work on the restoration removing the engine to give it a complete overhaul and sending the magneto away for refurbishment. On the 30th December 1996 he received information advising him that his application for the original registration number had been accepted and new documentation would be issued, "a great end to the year" he wrote! However, when the paperwork arrived, he realised it described the bike, somewhat bizarrely, as a "scooter combination". Notifying the DVLA immediately the error was soon corrected, and a replacement document received. Unfortunately, in 1997, with other commitments, any further work on the bike stopped and so it remained for some years. This was when in 2010, as I was nearing the completion of restoring my veteran bike, Colin asked if I would be interested in finishing the work needed on the Baby. I did not hesitate, we agreed on a price but, before I could arrange to collect it Colin was taken into hospital and after a short stay passed away, an incredibly sad time.

INSTRUCTIONS ON DISPOSAL

I discovered that Colin had left instructions as to how his collection, of bikes, parts, etc., should be disposed of, when I received a phone call from VMCC member and friend Ian Jennings, who was dealing with the disposal for Colin's widow.

In due course arrangements were put in place for me to collect the bike. I started stripping it down, taking photos where necessary, and soon had it all in pieces. Then the parts were professionally restored, either nickel plated, or vapour blasted and repainted. The work on these parts took a while as the companies had full order books, so to keep myself busy I checked over the work Colin had done on the engine and gearbox. I found that he had finished the work to his usual high standard and were both perfectly okay to refit without needing anything further to be done to them. Some-time

later with everything back in the workshop the re-building work began. After the frame was re-assembled, I worked on the wheels. The old spokes were badly corroded, so I replaced them with new ones, together with tubes and tyres.

BEWARE THE BEADED EDGE TYRES!

The wheels were rebuilt and then installed on the bike. I inflated the front tyre to 35psi, the rear to 45psi. The reason for higher pressures is because beaded edge tyres are only held on with air pressure, if this is insufficient the tyre can easily peel itself off the rim, especially when cornering or after a puncture. Another worry with low pressure in the rear tyre is the force exerted on it by braking or accelerating. Low pressure causes the tyre to move round the rim and take the tube with it, breaking the valve seal with a catastrophic result.



The engine, gearbox, magneto and associated parts, exhaust etc., were fitted, followed by the handlebars, front, rear brakes and footrests. It was starting to look great with the tank strapped to the top rail, the restored leather saddle and replica toolboxes in place. Just a few jobs remained, connect the carburettor fuel pipe and fit new cables for the fuel and air controls. The magneto timing, gearchange and front brake cables were also fitted. I had remembered that on this model the front brake lever is on the left, unlike my other old bikes which have it connected on the right...confusing! The gear lever is operated in

conjunction with the decompressor as there is no clutch, so it is difficult to get a smooth change with one hand when both are fitted on the left. I then set about timing the magneto at 7degrees btdc before petrol was put in the tank using 50 grade classic oil at a mix of 25 to 1.

Wheeling the bike onto the drive, after checking that all the controls were working properly, I felt a certain sense of apprehension as to whether it would start or not. This Junior Triumph has no kickstart, so I was told you start by sitting astride the bike and "paddling off," within two or three of steps the engine would fire; well it did, thank goodness! I am still amazed how easily the engine starts, obviously Triumph got this right!



Venturing out on the first ride the next day, I had to master changing the gear without a clutch but once done a couple of times it came quite naturally, and I completed a trouble-free run of 8 miles. I understand the top speed is about 40mph - downhill with a following wind - but with a bike of this age I only ride at a gentle pace finding enjoyment from tootling gently round the lanes.

5 WHEELS TO LEWIS (part 2) – Mike Hunting

Monday started with an excellent breakfast prepared by our hostess. She is, if I remember correctly, Lithuanian and very enthusiastic about her new home. She has a map of the U.K. on the

landing wall which she is covering with highlighter pen and names of places and events she wants to see, like a sort of "wish map". It is a good selection and a good proportion of them I have already covered by bike over the years, which seemed to impress her.



From Bainbridge a minor road on the north side of the Dale leads to the road over Buttertubs Pass and the roadside Pothole which lends its name to it. This was our first stop of the day to take photos. Linda was intending to send a picture back to the guys at Bodenham every day to give them a flavour of the trip. From there we dropped down to Thwaite and the B6270 up through Swaledale, all excellent with its drystone walls and barns giving way to the open road over Birkdale Common with its wide views as the summit is reached and crossed for the descent to Kirkby Stephen.

Five miles of the A685 take you from Kirkby Stephen to Brough and are the transition from the Yorkshire Dales National Park to the North Pennines

AONB. The B6276 climbs out of Brough and gives a superb trip over the open moorland of Lune Forest (no forest), passing Selsset Reservoir before dropping to Teesdale - a truly Superior route! (Oh come on, don't tell me you didn't see that one coming). I've used this road a few times and never found it busy so far. Most memorable traffic that day was the horse drawn caravan being slowly led up the hill out of Brough, presumably coming away from the recent Appleby Horse Fair. At Middleton-in-Teesdale Linda had to stop for petrol, her minimal tank giving only about half the range of the GSA with its 30 litre cavern. The garage was a proper old fashioned affair with a female attendant operating the pump whilst admiring the Lomax. Fortunately they were sufficiently up to date to also sell us some rather nice flapjack, though I was a little sorry that it wasn't a Thursday because then you can get tea and home-made cake at the church hall, as I discovered on a previous tour. The B6277 took us the 22 miles to Alston, initially up beside the Tees amongst the trees and passing High Force, then opening out past Langdon Beck over unfenced moorland to the watershed at Yad Moss where there are ski tows on the hillside and the gradual descent of the South Tyne valley commences. This is another of my favourite roads, the descent of which I recall from passing in the opposite direction a few years ago by bicycle not long after dawn (the reason for which is a sidetrack too far), a memory I refer to as "scattering the early morning rabbits". On another occasion one February I passed this way on a Honda between walls of snow thrown up by the recent passing of a snowplough. This wasn't the first road of the tour equipped with snow poles and certainly wouldn't be the last, though thankfully this time they were superfluous.

SOUTH TYNE DALE RAILWAY

We entered Alston (at about 1000ft altitude, apparently the highest market town in England) down the stone setts of the Main Street and from there joined the A689, continuing down the South Tyne valley to leave the Pennines behind us. The route initially runs alongside the narrow gauge South Tynedale Railway which uses the former track bed

of the Old Alston branch which joined the mainline at Haltwhistle, just beyond an impressive viaduct bridging the river where it swings east heading for Newcastle. The line closed many years ago and the embankment

onto the viaduct cut through to make way for the Haltwhistle bypass. I



mention this because when a friend and I set out to walk the Pennine Way, he was taken ill during the trip and we finally abandoned the attempt at Alston. We caught the train back to Plymouth, changing at Haltwhistle! Oh dear, was it really that long ago?

Our road, however, took us through Brampton and Longtown to Langholm across the border in Scotland. Here we turned onto the B709 for the climb up into Eskdale, it was good to be back on minor roads and into our last hills of the day, the Southern Uplands. Eskdale is largely given over to forestry and the often narrow and twisty road sees little traffic apart from logging lorries which take their toll. Shortly after Eskdalemuir we passed the Kagyu Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Centre. The first time we came this way it was a bit of a culture shock seeing the monks in their orange robes and the Tibetan architecture in the middle of a Scottish glen, but nowadays we look forward to it as a landmark. The road soon becomes unfenced over open moorland once again as another watershed is crossed and Ettrick Forest entered.

EMPIRE BISCUITS

After turning left to go over another pass a crossroad on the A708 is met where our route was straight across, but we opted for a detour to the picturesque St Mary's Loch for a stop at the cafe there. A popular bike and biker stop, it has served me a few times but it was new to Linda. She was delighted to find that they had Empire Biscuits - jammy dodgers on steroids - a delicacy mainly confined to NE England, and the borders. The lad

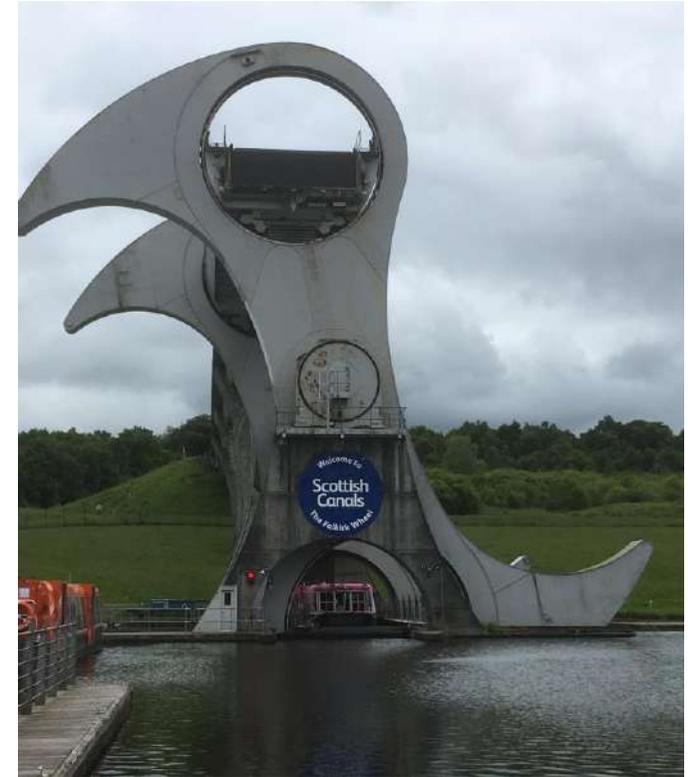


serving was astonished that no one has heard of them south of Hadrian's Wall. Back at the crossroads we got back onto the B709 for the last significant hill of the day, over to Innerleithen.

By now we had a Travelodge booked for the night at Falkirk, still some distance away in the Central Lowlands, and had to cross the busy belt linking Glasgow and Edinburgh. Fortunately the worst of the traffic uses the east/west roads, whilst our direction was a little more northerly and Linda's Sat Nav was used to give us a fairly painless route, give or take the odd delay for roadworks, and taking us to a different motel, luckily quite close-by. So that was another good day, taking in three attractive areas of climbs, descents, twists, turns, and beautiful views on a sunny day, what more could you want? We had crossed the bulk of the Lowlands fairly quickly and were at Falkirk so that we could do some touristy stuff in the morning. Neither of us had visited the Falkirk Wheel, or the nearby Kelpies. We intended to put that right in the morning.



TUESDAY got off to a rather overcast start, though still dry, the promised storm having not yet caught up with us. We soon arrived at the car park beside the Kelpies and wandered over for a closer look. Kelpies are shape-shifting water spirits, in this case they take the form of a pair of 30 metre high sculptures of horses heads, situated beside the Forth and Clyde Canal, which were completed in 2013 as a monument to Scotland's horse power heritage. Impressive as they are, we didn't stop too long, the car park opening time was imminent and we might have to pay (and we hoped to get breakfast soon)!



The Falkirk Wheel was already starting to get busy but we were able to watch it in action and then get into the cafe for breakfast ahead of the crowds. The "wheel" carries two opposing caissons which raise and lower canal boats 35 metres in one movement. A sort of modern equivalent of the Anderton Boat Lift in Cheshire, the Wheel was opened in 2002. A flight of 11 locks previously did the job of linking the Forth and Clyde to the Union Canal. These took

nearly a day to negotiate, but were demolished in 1933! The Wheel is their somewhat belated replacement.

INCREDIBLE VIEWS

In the Grampians, the mountains are such that the only practical routes are in the Glens. The choice of route is limited and virtually all ways are on main roads carrying more traffic than we'd previously encountered. There are still passes between the Glens however, and it is near impossible to find a road that doesn't have incredible views all the way! It all makes for very enjoyable motoring on either two or three wheels. Our route took us through Lochearnhead, Crianlarich, Tyndrum and Bridge of Orchy to the climb beyond Loch Tulla where we stopped in the car park to look back over the route. I can't pick out one highlight from this stretch, it is all a pleasant blend of wooded sections, roadside lochs and open mountain views, all of it scenic.

After crossing Rannoch Moor we drop into Glen Coe, passing the driveway to Kings House Hotel and Jennie's cottage between the two. We had already decided it was too early in the day to take up her accommodation offer so weren't going to stop now.

THE CLAN NOT THE BURGERS

Two things stick in my memory of the pretty bleak crossing of the Moor, the Lochs, the Lochans, and the wind! I can't remember ever crossing the moor without a gale force side wind making life uncomfortable on a bike. Today was to be no exception, though at least this was one of the occasions when I wasn't pedalling! We were soon dropping down the pass over the river and waterfalls into the Glen. I always find Glen Coe to be something of an enigma, it never feels quite right. I don't know if it's the way clouds can often roof the Glen over, or the ghosts of the massacred MacDonalads (the Clan, not the burgers), or just my imagination but it always feels strange yet looks magnificent. Not surprisingly Scotland is significantly busier with visitors these days compared to my first visits some 40+ years ago. It seemed that we couldn't pull in anywhere without a coach load of tourists appearing (mainly Japanese it seemed) who would leap out, take pictures of everything in sight,

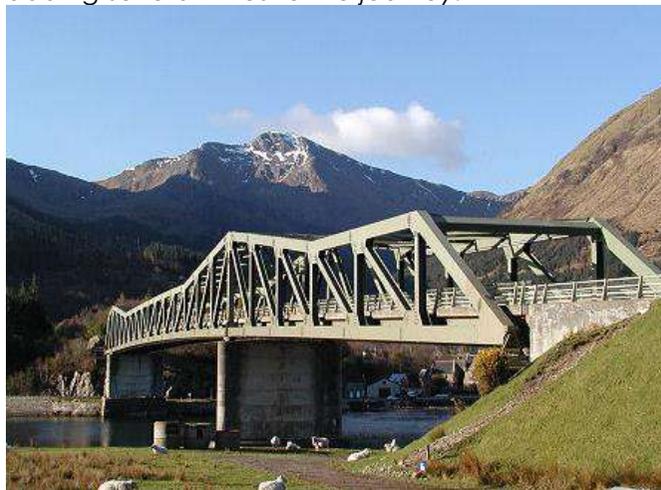
starting with the Lomax, then within 2 minutes be off again for the next leg of their "see Scotland in a day" tour.

BALLACHULISH NARROWS

After Glencoe village the tidal Loch Leven is met and followed for a while as far as the Ballachulish Narrows which have long been the main crossing point for road traffic.



Since 1975 there has been a steel truss bridge open, but before that up to three turntable ferries handled the traffic, as on many Scottish crossings on the west coast. Linda isn't too happy with crossing bridges, especially over water, but fortunately this one didn't cause much distress, as it was at a low level. Fortunate really, as the only alternative is to drive to the head of the Loch and back down the other side, adding several miles to the journey.



We were soon turning the point to follow the edge of Loch Linnhe to Fort William where we were

confident of finding a B&B for the night! There are a great many such establishments lining the right hand side of the road into town, we would just stop at one without a "NO VACANCIES" sign. By the time we emerged from the far end of town without stopping we were a little concerned! Time to turn around and look a bit harder. A small hotel was the first port of call, Linda went in and enquired and, yes they had one suite left and quoted what sounded like their telephone number as the nightly rate. Even haggling still only brought it down to £160. We moved on! Shortly after that we did spot a B&B which looked a possibility, unless of course they were so busy they just hadn't had a chance to hang NO VACANCIES on their sign yet. Fortunately they didn't need to do that until after we'd booked in, we got an indifferent double en-suite room with breakfast for a mere £100!

ABERDEEN ANGUS STEAKS

If you have some spare capital going unused, buy yourself a big house in Fort William, we reckon they were easily turning over £3000 a week, and would do for several months of the year. To be fair, the town is well situated, being virtually at the base of Ben Nevis (Britain's highest peak) and convenient for Glenfinnan with its Harry Potter viaduct, day trips to Loch Ness etc. We were more interested in finding somewhere to eat and walked into town. The old Main Street is now pedestrianized (unless you are Japanese and driving a hire car, apparently) and we soon arrived at a Wetherspoon's! Oh well, at least we knew what to expect, except we didn't! The Aberdeen Angus steak was by far the best we'd ever had in a "Spoons", possibly something to do with being just down the road from the Great Glenn Cattle Ranch perhaps? Even the Scottish beer was a vast improvement on some of the dubious offerings of earlier times, so, all in all, not a bad day yet again..... **To be continued**

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