The HELI BIKES - Motorcycle Safety Initiative was first conceived in 2004 but was formally launched in February 2011.
As a pilot working UK Air Ambulances for over 10 years, and having dealt with hundreds of motorcycle accidents, I wanted to set up an independent information service to help riders understand how motorcycle accidents happen, what factors are involved and ultimately how they can be avoided.
Although I draw from my experiences of my occupation and those of other emergency services, HELI BIKES is not connected to, nor form part of any other organisation, club, business, charity or emergency service. It has been established to be totally independent and the information is based upon the real world factors of motorcycle accident & injury dynamics.

Since its launch, HELI BIKES has continued to provide information in various forms and is constantly researching new ways to deliver content, not only to experienced riders but also to novice riders and this information is considered applicable to riders regardless of location, hence why this information has been distributed to many others organisations and individual riders around the globe.

2013 has seen many changes to not only the formats being employed but also the nature of the content being produced.

The website has had many changes throughout the year and in July saw its biggest change with many older information and pages being removed and the direction was turned towards HELI BIKES only information, whereas before it was a mixture HB and other sources.

Video & podcast productions were made and are now available through the youtube channel, whereas prior to this they were only available on the website.

In August saw the release of the final report of the HELI BIKES Motorcycle Accident Survey which ran for 2 years and is located on the STATISTICS webpage.

During the summer I embarked on producing visual content which demonstrated the effectiveness of protective clothing and equipment and illustrating motorcycling riding decisions, with more planned for 2014.

Throughout the whole year, there has been a steady release of graphics & images/posters produced and many articles written that cover many aspects and are all available to freely download from the website in a pdf format.

Whilst there are associated costs with running HELI BIKES, I strongly believe that the information should be free to access by any rider in any location. Safety should not cost nor should cost hinder the sharing and employment of safety information.
The Store page does have some items on sale or anyone can donate to cover some of the production and postage costs, but wherever possible I will send out information and promotional/safety products for free.

This year there have been a few merchandise items that have been made available for sale such as T Shirts & Patches, and these were intended to help raise funds and support some of the operating costs. I am currently exploring producing more merchandise items which will not only promote but help support HELI BIkes.

One of the best performing safety/promotional products has been the HELI BIkes - CRASH CARD which I launched in Aug 2011. I gained permission to distribute the card concept by the Ambulance Motorcycle Club, however I slightly changed the design to be more suitable to our needs and in 2013 I redesigned the card again to add extra features.

Since its launch I have distributed over 30,000 cards around the country and I continue to offer packs of cards to clubs, groups & businesses for free to any group that wishes them.

In 2011 & 2012 I organised a couple of low key events to promote HELI BIkes and I attended various events organised by other groups. In 2013, I made the decision not to hold an event and I attended only a handful of other events, but instead I placed more effort in placing HELI BIkes products and information into those others and concentrated on producing more content for the website and riders in general. As yet 2014 has not been formally planned, but I am looking at various new ways to have a direct or indirect presence at events and shows and to have direct contact and engagement with riders & pillions.

So what is in store for the future? Well, the goal is to form stronger links with individual riders as well as with groups, clubs and businesses to share this information and to also help promote the service that HELI BIkes provides.

There will be the tangible and continued online presence, however this year I have already streamlined the social media aspect to now having only one main page on Facebook & on Google+. The website will continue to hold all the main permanent content and the social media will continue to broadcast mini updates and information & images.

But clearly the challenge is to reach a greater audience on a regular basis and one concept is to narrowcast information directly through this newsletter via willing HELI BIkes ‘representatives’ within groups, clubs and businesses.

Each subsequent newsletter will be distributed by a pdf attachment to representatives on an email distribution list. This can either be forwarded to other members, or printed to physically handout or to have on display where other can read updates and information.

Anyone can ask to be added to or removed from the distribution list at anytime and that is asked is to help to share the information and to help promote the service.

If anyone would like to receive future news updates please email: news@helibikes.co.uk and I will add you to the distribution list.

Thank you for your support and consideration.

RIDE AWARE!/RIDE SAFE!

Best wishes

Alf Gasparro
HELBI BIkes
The first half of 2013 saw a marginal drop in accident statistics over the UK, however on the front line of emergency response it was apparent that in many areas around the country that spring saw a sharp spike, more so than in previous years. The early part of the year had still changeable weather which limited the number of motorcycle miles travelled, but as spring turned to summer, there were substantially more dry days which resulted in increasing rider traffic.

It was notable that the longer the dry spell continued, the more accidents the emergency services would be dealing with and whilst HELI BIKES was on full safety awareness offensive in early spring to warn riders of the potential situation, the ‘official’ advice sources were less eager to warn riders.

In fact, only after a string of serious incidents in a short period did certain police forces around the UK start to have a more visible presence on certain routes and this was then filtered through to TV media who then facilitated the public safety warnings. The reality was that the police were trying to tackle the accident rate head on by targeting motorcyclists with a mixture of roadside education, enforcement & engagement.

As summer continued with many dry riding days and hotter temperatures than had been seen for some years, many more riders were riding more frequently, for longer distances and inevitably wearing less protection. Although the accident rate did plateau, it was still at a high rate and did last throughout the summer and into the beginning of autumn.

As with many accidents, they are remarkably avoidable but riders need to read the tell tale signs and publicity of these need to be made much earlier on.

Reacting to accidents is what the emergency services are tasked with doing, but the goal should be to prevent the accidents in the first place and this is achieved by education, not only in the initial training, but also in the continued development of all road users. In the absence of this, ultimately riders and all road users are on their own and have to develop their own sense of ‘right & wrong’.

Whilst we could all be quoting ‘The Highway Code’, many road users have not read it since they passed their test and some have completely forgotten what many of the laws are. However, whilst that may potentially lead to unruly road use, this does not necessarily mean that those practices are unsafe or a risk to other road users.

There has to be a tangible link between what we are supposed to be doing and what the implications are if we don’t. Some of those are merely legal and some are related to risk and safety of others.

As 2014 develops we as riders and drivers alike need to learn from our collective mistakes of the past and continue to develop our skills to meet the future demands.

‘If you look to the future and keep one eye on the past you are blind in one eye. If you keep both eyes on the future and no eyes on the past you are blind in both eyes...’

Who’s Hogging My Tail?

Last year new laws and police powers were introduced in order to tackle ‘anti social’ road use. Most notably publicised were relating to lane hogging and tail gaiting, but actually many other infractions were included. In many cases this would be left to the interpretation of the officer who witnessed the event.

At the time, many...including myself, wondered how realistic it was to have the police manpower to enforce the new powers and would the use of cameras be used to service that need.

Since then there has been little air time given to this and practices on the road have not drastically changed and this applies to all road users, be those drivers or riders.

So, has it worked? Well probably not as well as some would have liked and for others nothing has changed, so carry on regardless!

This is becoming one of those hidden laws when it will only effect you if you are caught or involved in an accident or cause injury or fatality...then the long arm of the law will gain a very tight grip upon you.
HELI BIKES FORMS BONDS!
Key to the success of any safety campaign is to not live in isolation but to forge partnerships and associations with other organisations & individuals towards a common goal.
Since its inception the initiative has struggled to gain tangible links to manufacturers, dealerships and training organisations but has performed reasonably well with the online presence from the website and social media, but recently there has been movement with other organisations wishing to use and share HELI BIKES material.
Since the online launch 3 years ago, other websites and groups around the world have established web links to the HB webpages and groups & individuals have used and shared some content, but a formal association had eluded us.
Repeatedly has been the mantra..."Share & Discuss - Provoke open discussion amongst riders", but there was little evidence to substantiate this was ever achieved.
Herein the dilemma of any safety campaign...Does the message get through to its intended audience? How do we measure success?
Ultimately accident rates need to show a dramatic change and this has to be consistent. Unfortunately statistics can be misleading and can be used to suit, as in ‘Lies, Damned Lies & Statistics’, and accident rates can be affected by so many variables and one most notable is the weather. It would have been very convenient to claim HELI BIKES had contributed to the reduced accident rate of 2012, however the reality was that the wet weather was by far the biggest factor which resulted in fewer motorcycle miles travelled in the period.

Therefore a more realistic gauge of success is to improve access to information & resources and be sure that the information is credible and that it functions on multiple levels and at all experience levels.
Whilst we could claim some success in this regard, it could be said that other resources have improved somewhat also, hence why it is a collective effort between all campaigns, organisations, agencies and most importantly by the individual rider.
It remains a work in progress and we shall not forget the need to do better...for ourselves and the next riding generation.
GETTING IT RIGHT IN SHROPSHIRE

Hi from a not so sunny Shropshire. My name is Mick Sturland. I am a Police Officer of a shade over 26 years, working in the glorious countryside of Shropshire. Amongst my role as a safer neighbourhood Officer, I sort of fell into a bolt on role as a motorcycle guru for Shropshire working with our fellow partners from the fire service, council and safer roads. We call ourselves the Shropshire Motorcycle Road Safety Working Group. All very grand indeed! However, in a nutshell, we have the very serious responsibility of trying to reduce our biker casualty rates of killed and seriously injured, or KSI’s for short.

Up until 2011, Shropshire, like so many other counties, saw a disproportionate level of KSI’s amongst bikers. Our roads are some of the best the UK has to offer. We are next door to Wales, the biker haven ( at least now that a certain Chief Constable has gone ). The problem was that so many bikers hopped across the border from neighbouring West Midlands, Staffordshire and Cheshire, had a blast through our roads and somewhere along the way, fell off, hit something or something hit them. At one point in 2008, we saw 11 deaths alone on one road! Something had to be done.

Enforcement alone is not the answer. I believe that education plays more of a role than pure punishment. Sure, there are those who deserve to have the book thrown at them, but 99% of bikers, like me, are passionate about riding, serious about the kit they wear and take care ensuring they get home to their loved ones, in one piece. However, we can ALL do more to make sure we are as safe as we can be. That’s where we come in. We now attend over 60 events a year ranging from biker meets to carnivals, fetes, schools, colleges and military establishments. We now work with both RoSPA & the IAM in Shropshire, talking to bikers, asking about training opportunities and promoting both IAM and RoSPA courses.

It’s be no means the answer to all our problems. Casualty rates have declined, but remain too high. But at least we, as police officers, are talking to bikers not just telling them off or prosecuting them. At least we are being seen to engage with them. The hard work by all partners is paying off. Bikers are more aware of what we are doing and respond well. Local RoSPA & IAM groups report swelling membership numbers.

The cutbacks have taken their toll however. Our mobile display van has now been taken off us, to be used by the safer roads partnership as a tool to present road safety talks throughout the whole of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. It was once a tool to engage with bikers only but is no more. But we won’t give up. I believe the fight to keep KSI’s as low as we can, is an ongoing one and one I am prepared to tackle with my mates.

If you’ve got five, head on over to www.shropsbikesafety.co.uk to see what we’re about. Follow us on Twitter @shropssafebiker or if you’re a facebooker, you’ll find us @ shropshire motorbike road safety.


Everyone’s A Photographer These Days!

Camera technology has enabled millions of point and shooters to take reasonable to really good quality photos which we all like to share to our friends and the world on social media...but what makes a good bike photo? Is it the bike, the background, the selfie or anything else you could add to the composition.

We are looking for your reasons why and looking for your best photo for the next edition.

You can share your photo my messaging it to the HELI BIKEõ facebook page: www.facebook.com/HeliBikes or Google+ page: www.google.com/+HelibikesCoUk The one we like the most will be included in the next edition...so get sharing!
Who said mandatory helmet law was right?

In 1973 the UK helmet law came into being and since then more countries around Europe and the globe have followed suit. Many cry freedom and personal choice, but seldom do many argue with the benefit of wearing one...unless you live in a region that has not changed the law or has only recently changed it.

In those regions there remains passionate resistance to change but is it inevitable that all riders around the globe will wear helmets in the future? Even in regions where helmet laws were implemented some time ago, there remains, amongst some, the notion that the law is wrong and it should be a personal choice. But should some decisions be made for us, especially if it is for our own good, and is this erosion of free decision making the real issue and not the actual safety benefits.

Whilst many will comprehend the protective qualities of the helmet, there also remains limited understanding of the permanent or long lasting consequences of impacts to riders involved in accidents who were not wearing them. Unfortunately family and friends suffer the burden as well as the surviving patient...as does the health care system; not only in the initial treatment but also in the ongoing care. This is where public health laws are then passed and a helmet law is one such law which not only protects us from ourselves but somewhat protects the state from the burden of care. It is part financial, part moral and part state imposed personal protection that may do more good than not. It would appear the only freedom we have left in this regard is our freedom to have an opinion whether we agree or disagree with a helmet law.

The EU Kills Motorbiking!!

By Martin Wise, car and motorbike instructor from Cumbria

The death of motorbiking was foretold last year with the coming of the EU 3rd Driving Licence Directive! What has been the impact of 3DLD and what's the new test regime?!

Quick! Do your test!!

2012 saw an increase in the number of tests as the news of the 3DLD spread and many folk tried to get their licence before the deadline in Jan ’13. The frosty weather cancelling tests didn’t help those who had left it to the last minute! We were indeed busier in the last 6 months of 2012.

According to stats from the DSA, there was an 11% increase in both Theory and Practical tests in the year before the change. Predictably - it happens ever time change comes along - after the rush there has been a sharp fall in numbers of people doing their tests in 2013. The first quarter of 2013 saw a massive 48% drop in Theory tests as people didn't start the test process.!

So, 12 months on, what seems to have happened and how does the shiny new test regime work? Is it worth doing a test? How old do you have to be and what can you ride?!

2013 - trundling along!

Well, the year has trundled along, with training and tests for older folk who are unaffected by the changes, keen enthusiasts (I’m gonna ride anyway!!), and those looking to downsize from being a 2 car family with (usually) the bloke bravely volunteering to get a bike! There's been a fairly steady flow of new starters doing CBT and but only some then progressing through the tests.

It has undoubtedly been a quieter year, especially noticeable after the pre-change rush.

The missing people were the 17-18 yr olds, for whom taking a test is now mostly pointless.

Some 19-23 yr olds were either put off by the complicated system, or decided to wait until they were 24. At least the weather helped, being much less wet than 2012 - we even had quite a hot summer after the late spring!!

New bike sales!

UK Bike sales saw a 1% increase in 2012 over '11 despite the on going recession and the wettest year for a long time, and continued at the same level in 2013. Moped sales however, were down 7% in ’12. Are 16 yr olds becoming less independent?

2013 saw a huge 20% reduction in new ped sales. Are younger people being put off starting biking by a perceived ‘3 year long wait’ until 19? It’s not always easy to interpret the figures.

Before Jan ’13 you could take a test on a 125 @17 and then two years later get an automatic upgrade to an unlimited licence. In between you could ride up to 33bhp.

Now, to ride more than 125 you have to wait until 19 to do the test (A2). Two years later, you can repeat the test (A) to get an unlimited licence. In between you can ride up to 47bhp.

Although the new regime has pushed things back two years and it involves two tests, at least manufacturers have responded with new bikes to match the 47bhp restriction.
At 47bhp ‘medium’ sized A2 bikes are 50% bigger than the old 33bhp restriction. Pass A2 and you can ride about a 500cc machine (without restrictions) which are ‘big’ bikes by any standard, except the current fashion for litre-plus engines! You can also more easily restrict bigger engines down to 47bhp, thus opening up the wide range of 600cc+ machines. So, more hassle with licences, yes, but medium bikes have got quite a bit bigger with far more choice, and there’s plenty of fun to be had!!

Recap on the new licence system:

If you’re 24+ you just need to do one test, Category A. This is the same as the ‘old’ DAS - Direct Access Scheme, but now moved from 21 to 24. If you’re under 24 it now takes two tests and a minimum of two years to get an unlimited bike licence.

At 19 you can take the Cat A2 test - taken on a min 400cc bike. Pass and you can ride up to 47bhp, roughly a max 500cc bike, or a restricted larger bike. So, pretty ‘big’ bikes at 19.

Two years or more after passing A2, you can re-take the test on a 600cc bike and get an unlimited Cat A licence. So, ‘medium’ bikes at 19 and ‘anything you want’ at 21.

If you’re not yet 19, there is little point in doing a test until you are! You can do a test on a moped or a 125, but for only very limited benefits. Pass on a ped (AM) or a 125 (A1) and you’re not a learner any more: don’t have to repeat CBT, no L-plates, can carry a pillion, can use a motorway (125 only!). If removing these learner restrictions is useful to you - take the test. If not, just repeat CBT and wait until you’re 19.

On reflection!

2013 has been a quieter year for bike sales and training. By the end of the year things seemed to be picking up slowly and there’s several new bikes out and excitement in various areas of biking. 2014 will see more A2 tests as those who were 18 become 19. 2015 should, hopefully, get back to ‘normal’ as the previous 17 yr olds become 19.

The death of motorbiking would seem to be a trifle exaggerated and a bit premature! While the 3DLD hasn’t encouraged new riders, it hasn’t killed biking off! Ride on!

Links:
Some of the A2 bikes you can ride @19
https://app.box.com/s/u8sut9pwxfv0d00kpp
A video about the licence regime:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feaLpbLbo98&feature=share
Motorcycle Industry Association, bike registration statistics:
Gov.uk for all riding/driving officialdom:
https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving

Advanced Riding - Can You Teach Yourself?

A couple of months ago, I was asked if I would contribute an article for the new HELI BIKES publication: ‘The Lancelot’. ‘Of course’, I replied. And since then I’ve been sitting mulling over how best to write some kind of way to open up a debate on better riding technique that doesn’t simply say the same old things to the same old people.

You see, although post-test training is undoubtedly more popular than it was 30-odd years ago when I first got into working as a full-time courier, what hasn’t changed much is that ‘advanced riding’ still only attracts a minority of motorcyclists, and from the outside the advanced riding community can still feel like a closed shop. You’re either in, or you’re out.

But if the barriers are real enough, the idea that the only way to a rider can reach a high level of skills is by training with someone who already has a high level of skill is nonsense.

If we show a desire to improve, and approach new ideas with an open mind, we can all improve our riding however good we think we are, and that includes riders with an advanced ‘ticket’; we don’t need police system training to do that.

If you doubt that, think about the chicken and the egg and which came first. To develop the very first advanced training course, someone MUST have learned to ride without the benefit of it, but learned well enough to write the training course!

Nor is there any requirement to ride to an identikit standard to be ‘advanced’. And there’s nothing that should prevent riders from all backgrounds contributing to the debate on improving riding skills.

Let’s throw in a little background at this point. Whilst still couriering in the early 1990s I got involved with a university motorcycle club and found myself riding with some fairly new and inexperienced riders. I started offering some tips and teaching some basic defensive technique. I found I quite enjoyed helping new riders, and so in 1996 did an instructor training course with CSM, who at the time where the biggest bike school in the country.

I didn’t stay long with CSM but moved to Cinque
Ports Motorcycle Training at Lydd in Kent in early 1996 and spent three years there doing basic training, becoming one of the first Direct Access (DAS) qualified instructors in the country. I continued to work in basic training till early 2007. I started running advanced courses in 1996 for Cinque Ports, and in 1997 launched my own post-test training school called Survival Skills. I added a BTEC qualification as an advanced instructor in 2003, qualified as a member of the National Motorcycle Escort Group at around the same time and in 2007 I gained an NVQ in online learning, a qualification which hopefully gives me a sound grasp of "teaching by remote control". Since 2002, I've had a regular column the Motorcycle Action Group journal "The Road", where I talk about various safety issues and riding techniques. I've also contributed to various internet forums for nearly two decades.

Right, that's me. In my research to improve my Survival Skills courses, I found that nearly all post-test training in this country is based, directly or indirectly, on police system training and the police riders' handbook 'Motorcycle Roadcraft' which goes with it. "Motorcycle Roadcraft" is regularly referred to as "the bible".

So how good is 'Motorcycle Roadcraft'? Well, if we believe what we're constantly told, that UK police rider training is the best in the world, then I think we have a problem. It's very bold claim and one that I'm sure a lot of other national police forces would care to dispute.

By focussing so hard on 'Motorcycle Roadcraft' as a source of knowledge, UK riders tend to ignore research and training from outside the UK. Over the years, I've got hold of a library full of books, videos and DVDs on riding. Some excellent, some decent efforts and a couple of truly mediocre attempts that should never have been published. But because a lot of them come from outside the UK, many riders have never heard of them. This simply isn't a good thing. If we assume that training abroad has no relevance to UK riders, then we run the risk of joining that 'closed shop' I talked about earlier and missing out on the wider perspective available from looking at how other countries that do things differently. It's well worth absorbing those ideas rather than simply dismissing them because they are not 'police system'.

So I'll finish today with a review of a book that I found particularly interesting. US author Pat Hahn's 'Ride Hard, Ride Smart'.

The subheading "Ultimate Street Strategies for Advanced Motorcyclists" gives the target audience away immediately. Hahn's book is aimed squarely at the road rider.

Hahn's approach to riding mirrors my own. He starts by looking at where riders get hurt, and spends a lot of time breaking accidents down into how, where and why. This is a key approach if we're to understand good riding – take out the bad and you're left with the rather better. It may still not give you the perfect solution to safer riding, but learning machine control technique only goes so far – however good your control, you still have to know when you're about to do something stupid, even if you can do it perfectly!

Having studied what goes wrong, Hahn moves onto looking at risk. Riding isn't safe, it can't be but the level of risk depends on:

* who we are
* what we're doing
* where we're doing it

The chapter "Good Times, Bad Times" sifts a whole raft of data on the influence of time of day, time of year, holiday season, emotional and mental state and more on risk, and opens up a way for the individual to be self-aware of potential problems before they happen. There's also an excellent section on visibility and the need to see and be seen. These two sections together form the core thinking behind a very good exploration of "Trouble Areas" where Hahn identifies and finds ways out of a range of scenarios that spell risk to riders. As a long-time courier who spend some time finding easy ways round London, I particularly like the way he suggests looking round for alternative, simpler routes that avoid trouble spots, rather than simply bulling through them.

Hahn considers the powers of sports psychology and the technique of visualisation so that 'practice makes permanent', something I've been talking about for some years now. I also find his approach to changing the attitude of other road users to bikes by the way we ride a refreshingly different perspective to the "they're all out to kill us" slant we're usually fed by the biking media.
Hahn finishes up with a unique concept of the road as a river, explains how that can help us predict problems ahead, and suggests a few other distractions we should be aware of that can put riders at risk – group riding, temperature extremes, medication and passengers to name a few. There’s also a short but useful section on how to deal with a rider who’s just been upset by a minor crash – something I’ve never seen treated anywhere else.

Overall, the text flows nicely even if it is a bit heavy going in places, and the illustrations and box-outs correspond neatly to illustrate points in the main text. Hahn’s thinking processes are clearly laid out, but at no time are they dogmatic – he leads you to water, it’s up to you if you drink. The style is conversational and mildly amusing.

In summary, if you’re looking for a track riding book, don’t even open the cover. If you want to know about machine control techniques even for the road, ditto; leave it on the shelf. It’s not a “how to deal with gravel / traffic / bends / whatever” starter book, nor an overview of defensive riding like ‘Motorcycle Roadcraft’.

But if you’ve looking for a book that really makes you think twice about some of the commonplace things we do on a bike every day, a book that opens your eyes to risks in activities we can too often take for granted, and a book which makes you constantly re-evaluate what you thought you understood, this one is the one to expand your thought processes.

Just because it’s not ‘police system’ doesn’t mean Pat Hahn’s ideas don’t work!

Kevin Williams
Survival Skills Rider Training
www.survivalskills.co.uk
www.facebook.com/survivalskills

View From The Blue!

In upcoming issues I will be providing some information covering the main topics of advanced rider training. My name is Grant Thomas, I am a police motorcyclist, motorcycle instructor and Bikesafe coordinator for Thames Valley Police.

Filtering

There is no legal definition of filtering but is considered to be moving between traffic in the absence of a lane. The most common occasions are travelling along the line dividing different lanes of traffic.

This activity is inherently dangerous due to the fact that cars do not expect you to be there, may change lanes with little or no warning or cannot see you. A high proportion of collisions occur whilst filtering. The first question to ask yourself is do I need to do it, most of us do it out of habit rather than necessity.

Is it legal?

There are several factors to consider to answer this. The first is the road markings, if the lane line is solid on your side you cannot cross it unless turning right, overtaking a stationary vehicle or a road repair vehicle travelling at less than 10 mph. So filtering on the wrong side of a solid line overtaking moving traffic is illegal. The highway code offers conflicting advice.

In one section stating overtake only on the right in another when moving between lanes do so slowly and carefully.

Filtering in itself is not illegal, it is about how you do it. The potential offences are careless or dangerous driving. If you are moving between lanes of traffic with a small speed differential in slow moving traffic, no problem. Passing between lanes of traffic on a motorway which is travelling at 70 mph or undertaking free moving vehicles is a very different story. I like to apply my “Mum” test to this. If my Mum was one of the drivers you passed and she didn’t see you, good filtering. If she saw you and said “silly boy” – careless driving, if she saw you and said “you idiot” – dangerous driving.

How to do it as safely as possible

There are no rules about maximum speeds or speed differentials. Personally I stop doing it at 40 mph and will have no more than a 5mph speed differential. After all filtering is best for getting through slow or stationary traffic. Consider whether you could reduce speed enough to avoid a collision if the car you were about to pass changed lanes.
Plan it – do not set your sights at the front of the queue. Set your mind to overtaking each car individually, there is no change in how the bike moves just how you look at it.

That way you will look at each car and are more likely to react to changes in the driver prior to a lane change. Rejoin the correct lane in plenty of time.

If you have travelled between the queues for a roundabout make sure you are in the right lane when you get there, don’t make a third lane.

Be seen – if you arrive quickly at the offside of a car the chances are you were not in the mirror at the point the driver looked in it.

Positioning – If you need to slow down do so in the gaps between vehicles, not in their blind spot. Be especially cautious of large goods vehicles and left hand drives vehicles.

Be courteous – if a car moves for you a wave costs nothing and improves relationships. Filtering and the ability to cut through congestion is a key reason for using a bike, doing it safely, carefully and courteously will help change the perception of car drivers and ultimately improve riding for everyone. Doing it badly will make a driver less inclined to help bikers in the future and may allow you time to reflect whilst staring at the ceiling in A&E.

Filtering is one of the topics covered during Bikesafe, further information can be obtained at

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**Winter riding**

Riding in the winter is often a necessity rather than a pleasure. With some forethought and planning this necessity can become a pleasure. I’m sure you can all think of those cold clear dry days found in January and February, the leaves have gone and the rain has removed most of the road debris.

There are three main things to consider whilst riding in the winter.

Preparing yourself:

Your brain is a primitive machine, it will devote energy to keeping you alive. So, if you are cold and wet most of your brain’s power will be used for self preservation with little left to concentrate on your riding. Wear the right kit for the weather; several layers do a better job keeping you warm than one thick one. It sounds simple but stay dry, a £10 pair of over trousers will make all the difference and act as a windproof barrier as well. Cleaning and reproofing fabric kit will ensure it stays functional for years, if it is dirty the water is absorbed into the fabric and the fibres cannot do their job. Most waterproof boots just aren’t, consider waterproof windproof socks, they do a much better job. Heated clothing is becoming much cheaper, heated gloves do a much better job than heated grips as do bar muffs. Heated jackets and socks are also available. This largely depends on your budget and how much winter riding you do. Consider a high viz over jacket. I accept this is not the coolest item of clothing but neither is spending time under the front of a car driven by a driver who was half asleep on a cold winter’s morning. Visors misting up is an age old problem. I have tried almost every product ever launched.

The only solution I have found to be any good are visor inserts such as Pinlock or Fog City. There are numerous products to allow water to bead on the outside, I use squirt of furniture polish rubbed in every day just make sure this is compatible with the anti scratch coating on your visor.

Prepare your bike

Tyres are designed to get rid of water. Less tread means less water shifted and less grip. Why fit new tyres in the spring ready for the summer when they would do a better job if fitted in the autumn. Although the legal tread limit is 1mm across ¾ of the tyres breadth this is not enough to allow the tyre to perform at it’s best. If you don’t wash your bike at least wipe the lights and number plate. The plate is the largest reflective area on your bike. Lube the chain, chains hate rain and road salt. An un lubricated chain will overheat, stretch and cost you money not to mention the chance of it snapping. Give your bike a rinse when you get home, road salt destroys alloy and consider a protective spray.

The environment

Water reduces the available grip especially on anything that is not tarmac such as drain covers, tar banding, white lines and paved areas. The key to wet riding is smoothness. No harsh braking or accelerating and no sudden changes in direction. To ride smoothly you need to plan well then nothing will come as a surprise. Be aware of piles of grit in the areas where car tyres don’t travel, this is very slippery when wet and forms ridges when dry.
Ice and frost brings its own problems if it is icy try and avoid riding if you can. If you hit black ice your chances of staying upright are almost zero. If it has been icy overnight bear in mind micro climates which may be present until well after lunch time. These are areas of ice or frost in shaded parts of the road. They have not been warmed by the sun and are often difficult to see due to them being in the shade. Bear in mind that local authorities limit gritting to primary routes. Try and avoid riding through puddles and floods not only because you will get wet but you wont be able to see the big pot hole of lifted man hole cover.

Finally riding in snow. Unless you are on some sort of KTM having fun on green lanes then don’t!

These topics along with many others are covered on a Thames Valley Police Bikesafe course. Further information can be found at Bikesafe website.

Spring…A New Start!

Coming to the tail end of winter now and Spring means a new beginning for lots of different reasons. For riders…especially seasonal riders, Spring means getting the bike ready for the road again, getting insurance, dusting off the bike gear and making sure it still fits…or having to spend some of that Christmas present money on new gear that will allow for the tummy stretch after the winter slumber.

Even for the year round rider, Spring means the chance to put aside the heavyweight winter clothing for the lightweights and whilst recent riding experience isn’t really an issue in this case…the year round rider still faces the same potential problems in the Spring as does the seasonal rider.

Whilst we can all get prepared, by honing our skills, reading up and putting ourselves into a correct frame of mind for the riding season ahead…we all tend to focus on ourselves…our attitudes…our practices…our standards and probably most notably our own eagerness to get out on the road and hopefully find somewhere that is dry and bathed in sunshine…for some that will be easy to find…and for others, may have to settle for the occasional great riding weather day. One element that we tend not to focus on is the ‘Poor Defenceless Driver’

“What?” I hear you say!
Yes!…Many times perceived as the root of all evil for riders everywhere, drivers do need our consideration as the Spring starts!
Let me explain…(whilst not trying to sound too sarcastic!)
As riders, we need to ride our bikes in a manner that keeps us safe but still ticks the ‘fun factor’ box. We want to experience the ‘open road and being one with nature’, but we want drivers to be aware of us…especially when most riders are very aware of drivers…supposedly!
We need drivers to pay as much attention of riders as riders need to of drivers as well as own riding and driving standards.

So the question is how do we get drivers to pay more attention…or rather specifically in the Spring, how do we get drivers to remember that there will be more bikes on the road and how to make more allowances?

Well over the next couple of months, there will be the commencement of the annual bike safety campaigns to remind drivers to look for us riders. Some will regard this as a welcome reminder and some will regard this as ‘BBB’ - ‘Bloody Biker Bol* ***ks’ (as someone implied to me a while ago…tut tut!)

The fact is that, as well as all the TV & Radio adverts, newspaper & magazine articles, posters and flyers, there needs to be an acknowledgment that this campaign may never reach who it’s intended for.

So it comes down to us, as riders, to give drivers the best possible chance to be aware of us. We need to know that drivers may be caught off guard by the sudden increase in bike activity because for the last few months…over the winter period…most bikes have been stored away, so motorcycles have not been a consideration.

We need to know that drivers will not be as well rehearsed in looking for, spotting and making space for motorcyclists…so we need to make allowances for that.

All riders and drivers need to do their bit, but we as riders need to make sure that drivers are given the best possible information to be more aware of us and we need to be aware of our own deficiencies as well as theirs.

We need to tell drivers to ‘LOOK’ out for us…but we need to look out for them and help in any way we can.

We need to be part of a solution, rather than just point a finger and excel at playing the blame game.
The Night Shift …..

The following is an account from a front line ambulance crew having responded to a resulting fatal motorcycle accident after the rider had been found to be more than twice the legal drink drive limit and the coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death.

Myself and my crew mate were on our way to some overnight cover just after midnight in a more rural area in which I work, the computer system in our vehicle which we receive and react to 999 calls activated to let us know we now had a job……. Just a location was sent initially and we made our way as the job was about 8 miles from our current location….. Next update……motorcyclist RTC young male unconscious…. during this delay in receiving the next update myself and my crew mate were deciding who was going to collect what equipment to take directly to the patient on our arrival at the roadside and who was responsible for what part of treatment….. A sort of plan I know but in this job it’s easier to have a quick decision maker between you on route rather than duplicating treatment or equipment on scene and missing things.

With this out of the way we proceeded to scene, control called on the radio with an update……”pt now not breathing, police officer on scene doing CPR, we are sending you a second vehicle to assist, sorry there are no basics doctors available, please give us an update if you require further assistance, control out” we knew there was no air ambulance at night, the only other help we could have would be fire and rescue and an ambulance officer, so it was just us, everything had changed….. not only did this make my stomach turn but me and my crew mate knew that the chances of survival from traumatic cardiac arrest are slim due to the injuries involved in any accident.

We entered the high street in which the accident had happened, ahead of us in our headlights and the blue lights of the police car bouncing from object to object lay a slim young man wearing jeans a leather jacket and boots, his helmet had been removed for the resuscitation. On the other side of the road about 20 meters from the patient was a motorcycle against a wall with slide marks on the floor and bike debris.

A police officer was performing chest compressions and mouth to mouth using a mouth guard. We selected the equipment we had decided on and made our way over leaving our headlights pointing to the casualty for extra light, my crew mate took over from the police officer, I took control of the patients airway of which was covered in blood and with every compression was filling up the patients mouth and nose, I suctioned his airway and in doing this I could smell alcohol, this thought entered my head for a second and I never thought of it again until later, every type of airway I attempted to use was futile there was too much damage to his throat and ventilations to help him breath were unsuccessful. I made eye contact with the police officer to find he had blood on his face and was out of breath, I asked if he wanted to go in our vehicle and clean his face but he wanted to stay and help, he stayed at my side to assist with medical kit and an extra pair of hands for this I was grateful.

On my examination of the airway, head and neck it was clear that he had sustained a broken neck, skull fracture and probable chest injury, these things combined with the (csf) cerebro spinal fluid coming from the patients nose and ears indicated that our efforts would be futile and the breathing that the members of the public were describing were more than likely agonal breathing, which the body does for some minutes after the heart has stopped beating, but these breaths are not effective.

Our second crew arrived and the decision was made between 3 of us and the most senior on scene was to move the patient into our ambulance and declare him deceased, this would be for the benefit of the public which had now gathered into a crowd of around 50 people, it’s strange how much you don’t notice when your confronted with such a highly charged situation.

This was no longer a patient but a body, he was young and it was tragic to see such a person dead on our ambulance stretcher, someone’s son, brother or even a father?
part of the second crew is a friend of mine and fellow biker, we looked at each other as we worked but did not speak as we cleaned the body ready to be taken to the mortuary, he had no other injuries that we could find he had the correct gear on and was riding in a high street of which was a 30 mph limit, what had gone wrong? It’s not for us to judge, we deal with injuries and illness on a daily basis and every patient regardless of situation is treated the same, with the latest medical equipment expertise and professionalism, the body was transferred to the mortuary with a police officer escorting him, the body was handed over to the mortuary assistant and de clothed so the police officer could take his personal belongings for identification, we returned to base to debrief and clean our vehicle along with the other crew.

I chatted with the other biker about how vulnerable we felt as bikers and how situations can rapidly change, he was questioning whether to continue motorcycling? This is a normal reaction to any incident when the situation involves something you also do, or whether a patient’s situation or appearance reminds you of someone close to you or yourself. It’s only human nature to question your own life and vulnerability. If I stopped doing every activity or hobby which I have witnessed a death or serious injury I would never do anything, life is about choices whether good or bad you need to make them.

Writing this article bought back the same emotions as it did that night, although this happened a few years ago these things stay with you like they happened yesterday and we can remember every detail.

I’m in my 8th year as a motorcyclist and enjoy every moment of it, the preparation of equipment and bike, as soon as the engine has started to putting the bike away at the end of a ride and as long as I work for the ambulance service I will always see tragedy and death, people have choices to help limit injuries and situations but there will always be situations which have occurred regardless of preparation and thought, do everything you possibly can to keep yourself and others as safe as you can be, dangerous situations can be limited by forward thinking and preparation.

**The Consultant’s Diagnosis!**

It gives me great pleasure to write my first column for The Lancelot. As a keen motorcyclist and working on the air ambulance I believe this initiative is a superb one. I hope to become a regular with “straight down the line” comments and ideas!

My first issue is why when you get married the first thing to be sacrificed is your bike? I give you a clear example of myself – started off on an Aprilia 125 – went on to a Suzuki 650 and ended up on a triumph 600 – all whilst free and single! As soon as I got married the bike became an issue! Many arguments ensued – “you will crash” “you have responsibilities” “you hardly ride at all nowadays – what a waste of money” etc. etc. None of this was discussed within the wedding vows! Anyway the bike has gone sadly – however I have negotiated new terms – however with certain “constraints” applied!

I can have a bike but it cannot be used on the road – this leaves either “dirt biking” or simply track days. I suppose this is better than nothing! I would love to know from our readers of similar experiences and any advice on what would be the best way to go on this! Many would argue I just didn’t make it clear enough what was negotiable or not negotiable when we first got hitched – but I guess that’s just marriage! What would be good bike to buy when new to dirt biking?

It is unfortunately inevitable that some bikers will have accidents – so it seems proper to have some regular medical updates relating to biking. Did you know that the NHS has re-configured its trauma management aspects? It’s a bit like stroke and heart attack issues – patients will go to specific
hospitals that are equipped to deal with these illnesses. The days when you automatically went to nearest hospital are over. The same has happened regarding major trauma. If you get injured whilst riding your bike you should ideally go to what the Department of Health call a “Major Trauma Centre” or “MTC” hospital. An MTC should provide “gold standard” care for trauma victims. Now that’s fine if you’re riding around in London and get damaged – there are 4 MTCs all within short transport distances – however if riding north of the country MTCs are spread over far greater distances. So my advice to bikers is when planning your long weekends away etc – always worth checking where the nearest MTC is and whether there is a good air ambulance that can take you there if the worst was to happen!

For more information on MTC locations download the map on:


Finally my other greatest passion is food – well actually its kebabs! Shish kebabs – donor kebabs I don’t care. I would eat them for breakfast, lunch and dinner and often have. I have travelled the country and found some of the best kebab shops ever where the meat is succulent – the salad fresh and the chilli sauce has gut cleaning capabilities! I would love to know if your local kebab joint is as good and worth a visit – here’s one to start you all off – if riding around Oxford – visit The oxford Kebab House - 1 Manzil Way, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX4 1XD. Great portions – superb Persian menu and open just about all the time!

Signing off for now – remember ride safely – “kebabs – eat one – don’t become one!”

ENJOY THE RIDE!
AVOID THE SLIDE!

Join HELI BIKERS
helibikes.co.uk/helibikers.html
What’s In A Safety Poster?
What’s In A Safety Campaign?
DO THEY WORK?

WHY

should you ask...

HOW?

helibikes.co.uk
The Birds Eye View!

When we think about road traffic accidents and specifically here motorcycle collisions and incidents, we may be deceived into thinking that there is a singular major reason or factor that has caused the accident. “They were going too fast!”, “He came out of nowhere and I had nowhere to go!”, “There was black ice & the car lost control”

Whatever the reason we think has caused the incident or loss of control, the reality is that reason is only part of the full story.

I liken this to pulling triggers and dodging bullets! Either these ‘bullets’ are taking us by surprise and we are having to get out of the way at the last second or we fail to do so and have an accident.

When I look at accident scenes and causes it is virtually always the case that there has been a series of events or influences that led to the final major factor...if those influences were not there, then there would likely not be a major factor. This type of phenomenon is sometimes referred to as a domino effect or cascade effect.

This cascade effect has been extensively investigated over many years in the aviation world, where root causes and successive influential events are analysed to determine the ‘real’ cause of an accident. Sometimes the cascade string is quite short...but sometimes it is quite long and complicated.

Road traffic accidents in general are no different in this regard.

As well as investigation, the aviation world has also invested extensive time into aviation personnel for the education of recognition of these cascade factors...something that we have not realised so much in the road transport world.

Road Signs - That make you go huh?

How many times have you seen a road sign and thought...why?

Either roads are plastered with signs which may confound or conflict and many times are not noted. Many are frustrated by low speed limits on wide open roads, or caution or warning signs that state the obvious.

What about signs allowing higher speed on minor roads...is that correct?

Road users come unstuck at times when they ignore signs which give them clear instructions, but in part this is because of the over use of signs and poor signage. I know this is an old argument, but as a rider, what type of sign would you like to get rid of and what signs would you keep. If you had to design a sign, what would it be and why?

Send in your offerings to news@helibikes.co.uk
WE WANT YOU!

We’re looking for writers, photographers, story tellers!

If you would like to submit any account or story that relates to motorcycles or biking lifestyle & issues, then feel free to email your offering to: news@helibikes.co.uk

If you’re looking to buy another bike...tell us about it! Tell us about your test riding & decision to buy or not to buy! Write a review on the bike!

If you’re making any modifications to your bike...then tell us about it and why you decided to do it. How did this change the bike and was it all you hoped it would be?

If you’re a motorcycle dealer or service centre or individual mechanic and would like to have your say on your experiences in the motorcycling world. How would you describe your relationship with your clients? What advice do you give your clients when purchasing items or services from yourselves or others?

If you organise events of any kind relating to motorcycles, tell us about them and the process and work involved to make them a reality. What are the pitfalls, struggles, challenges and triumphs?

If you’ve had a motorcycle accident, would you be able to give an account of the circumstances involved and any reflections you may have. We would like honest assessments of the factors involved. It does not have to be a recent event and does not have to include any specific details that you may identify you or your motorcycle!

Could you give an account of any injury that you have suffered during a motorcycle accident! Can you give details or impressions of your treatment and rehabilitation process towards total or partial recovery. Has the accident & injury changed your approach & opinion of riding? Has it stopped you from riding or had no influence what so ever?

Would you like to highlight a safety issues or piece of equipment that is of benefit to or hinders the motorcyclist? Where would you like to see improvements made?
This is an account of an accident that happened a long time ago on a road far far away!

The weather was dry & sunny on a Spring day, on a main road - single carriageway, little traffic.

The bike had a 750cc engine and had some cosmetic modifications that did not alter the standard performance! The bike was in road worthy condition...disc brakes, suspension & tyres all in good order!

The rider was wearing a leather jacket (without padding or armour), gloves, boots, helmet & normal denim trousers.

Coming off a roundabout there was a slow moving bus in front of me. I overtook the bus as there were no oncoming cars and accelerated away. The road has a slight curve to the right and also was a slight downhill. Up ahead as I accelerated I could see two cars, of which the first car began to slow and indicated that they would be turning right into a lay by and at that part of the road there was a gradual left curve.

There was oncoming traffic so the car stopped before turning. The following car moved to the left and proceeded to pass and undertake and the road was a wide carriageway.

Whilst this was occurring I had started to slow down, but I was closing in on both cars. I was expecting the car to pass through and continue, but it suddenly stopped and by this time I did not react in time to avoid contact.

I had been slowing, but I was too close and ran out of brakes to avoid hitting the rear of the car. There was no damage to the car, but the bike’s forks were bent in a little way but there was no damage to the front wheel and it still had air in it too. I managed to stay on the bike and keep it upright...by chance. As I hit the back of the car and as I was still holding the bar grips I pivoted about them as my whole body lifted up almost doing a hand stand. As I did I could see the bus that was following behind getting closer and closer. I had no injuries and after the driver saw there was no damage to the car or me...he drove off and I was able to ride it back slowly as the impact had been square on.

I remember that I was quite eager to pass the bus, but that was completed ok. I wasn’t expecting the passing car to suddenly stop as I thought there was lots of room for them to get past.

Although I has seen the cars ahead, I probably did not react in time initially and I could have started to slow down a lot earlier.

From that moment on I changed my riding style, so that any time I faced this situation I would always make sure the following car has actually passed through and I would slow down a lot earlier, which gives me a lot more time to react and brake.

I actually look at these situations differently now, as I almost expect the following car to suddenly stop for no apparent reason, this way I am ready for it.

A big lesson learned that day!

Any news to stop the blues?

Is it naive to think that we can have a zero accident rate? Well maybe so...but does that mean we should stop trying? The reality is that regardless of what we collectively do...there will always be incidents and our best goal should be to make those as few as possible.

So, what new innovations are on the market that really do a significant amount to reduce the accident & injury rate. Do businesses produce any new products that really do make a difference or are they all claiming ‘significant advances in safety’ that really do not hold water?

The problem is that so many products are on the market and will continue to be designed that will claim many things to protect us and may also feed the safety paranoia.

Whether it’s the best armour or brightly coloured socks, very few actually deliver what is claimed. So do manufacturers need to reassess their claims or do we as consumers need to accept that it has marginal or null affect and we should focus on the standards rather than the ‘shield’?
Just another year...please!

As the winter draws to an end and we welcome spring, so do many riders take off the dust sheets covering their bikes and remember it's time for the annual road worthiness check.

Some approach this with confidence, knowing that it will pass...no problem. Others...myself included always seem to dread this time...never 100% sure whether my bike will get through without a fuss or will require lots of encouragement & expense.

It's the start of a busy time of year for dealerships, service centres & MOT test stations as they know there'll be reaching peak requests from eager bikers.

Maybe it's the pessimist in me, that I always think the worst. Even though I'll go over the bike and check all I can, I'll find myself double, treble checking everything until I'm confident it'll pass.

All the lights work!............................................Check!
Brakes work & pad thickness good!.................Check!
Tyres condition and tread wear!......................Check!
Horn!............Beeping?.................................Yep!
Front/Rear suspension!..................errrrrrm...OK!
 Structural!.........All Big bits still on!...........yeah!
 Drivetrain Chain.................................Yep...got one!
 .......................................................................Nope...got shaft!
 Exhaust noise?........is it too loud?...............No idea!
 All the other test bits & pieces?.........Haven't a clue!

Most road users, be them drivers or riders are vehicle operators...users...manipulators of controls to make the thing go in a particular direction. Some have a basic understanding of how things work and only the few...really know what they're doing.

For the modern rider or driver, this is probably getting more to be the case as vehicles are becoming more reliable and also cannot be played with unless there is a good level of knowledge and have specific tooling and diagnostics that the everyday chappy will not have.

So when I say I'll give my bike a pre MOT check, really what I'm saying is that I'll be checking the lights and beyond that it all gets a bit fuzzy.

So where does that leave me? Well it means that every time I take my bike for an MOT...I tend to be all ocy, bow my head, avoid eye contact and hope, with double crossed everything, that the thing passes.

Is this any way to carry on? Well, in short, No...it isn't! The idea for the annual roadworthiness is to make sure that at least once a year the vehicle is safe to be driven or ridden on the road. So what about the rest of the year? How do you know that the bike or other vehicle is still ok. Well unless something stops working or something falls off, then if you don't, at least, speak the same or similar language as the the MOT inspector, then you'll continue to ride/drive blind...as most of us do!

With older bikes & vehicles it was easier to get involved. They were generally a lot simpler to work on and to understand. They were also a lot less reliable which encouraged more DIY roadside repairs.

We have lost or are losing this relationship now but this doesn't mean we have to be disconnected or disengaged with what we are riding/driving and what makes the thing tick...over!

A good place to start: Online search “MOT testing standards” or check “Getting an MOT” on www.gov.uk
**Single Vehicle Accident on Rural Left Hand Bends**

By Duncan MacKillop

Many years ago when I was doing my ROSPA instructors diploma, one of the Instructors was also in charge of the North Wales Police motorcycle unit and it fell to this poor chap to be informed by text message, every time that there was a fatal motorcycle accident on his patch. We were sitting down to lunch one day when he got three such messages on the trot. Three separate accidents, three separate riders at three separate locations, but with one fatal result. These accidents were of course the dreaded single vehicle accident on a rural left hand bend, one of the major killers of motorcyclists and especially sportbike riders. Since then, I decided that whatever happens, I must find the real causes of these accidents, not only for my own satisfaction, but also because if I could find the cause, I could come up with a solution and maybe save a few lives.

The stock answer to the problem of the left hand bend is that riders are “riding at an inappropriate speed for the conditions. If they slowed down, then they would not crash, so we will lower the speed limit and that will fix it”. On the face of it, this is an obvious solution, but it does leave one or two important questions unanswered.

Why did these riders crash at a particular corner? After all, had they not successfully negotiated a lot of other corners before they reached the one that got them? Was there something about certain corners that made them more likely to be accident sites?

Why did these riders select a particular corner entry speed that proved to spectacularly incorrect?

What is the process that we use for judging the severity of a corner and selecting a suitable entry speed? Do we all use the same method, or are there a number of ways in which we can analyse a corner before we reach it?

There are probably a lot more questions you could think about on this subject, but that should be enough to be getting on with.

Of particular interest to a lot of riders is the A537, otherwise known as the Cat and Fiddle road between Buxton and Macclesfield. This has recently been selected as the most dangerous road in Europe by EuroRAP simply because of the vast number of riders that meet their end on this stretch. It turns out that the Local Authority spent half a million pounds on road improvements and signage when that didn’t work, they spent a further one point two million on installing average speed cameras! This is a bit of a shame as if they had spent that much money on trying to answer the unanswered questions, maybe they might have come up with a solution!

Because it has been so consistently lethal, the answers we seek will probably be found on this stretch of road.

How do we analyse a corner? What visual/mental process do we go through before we arrive at a bend and do we always get it right? Some years ago a team of scientists wanted to answer the same question, so they wired up some drivers with a device that overlays the point of a drivers gaze onto a video, so that they could see where they were looking as they entered and negotiated a corner (1). Their findings were quite interesting as it seemed that their initial gaze was directed towards something called the Tangent Point (TP) which is the point of the inner lane boundary bearing the most curvature on the retina. Looking at a 2D picture of a road, we see that this point of maximum curvature forms a hook in the kerb.

The scientists found that most of their test drivers naturally fixated on the TP as they negotiated a bend and in fact about 75% of their time was spent looking at this point rather than any other point on the road. They also found that drivers on their way into a corner glanced at the TP about two to three seconds before turning the wheel, then reacquired it at around half a second before making a steering input. The degree of hook at the tangent point will give a fair estimation of the severity of the upcoming bend and the rate at which it is coming towards a driver will give a good indication of by how much they might need to reduce their speed.

It seems then that the degree of curvature at the Tangent Point is the crucial piece of information we all use to set ourselves up for a corner. If this is the case, then if we get the corner wrong, we must have misinterpreted the curvature at the Tangent Point. This then is where the left hand bend finally begins to offer up its secrets.

Most of us think of a corner as being a constant curve linking two straights going in different directions. For most of the time, we would be...
right in this assumption, but not always. We now need to study a bit of history and strangely not of road transport, but of the railways.

When speeds on the railways were very slow, straights were indeed connected together by constant curvature bends as this was by far the easiest way of planning the layout of the tracks. It soon became apparent that as speeds increased, the passengers were getting thrown to one side of the carriage as the train went directly from the straight onto the curve. This sudden onset of ‘G’ in the corner was considered to be a bad thing for the passengers, so the railway companies started to look for a way round the problem. They soon came up with the idea of the spiral transition, or easement curve.

The easement curve as its name suggests, eases the carriage from going straight to going round the ultimate curve (2). By using this track layout, the railway companies discovered that the amount of ‘G’ could be increased gradually, thus allowing the passengers to feel its gentle onset and brace against it so no more spilt tea and passengers heaping up on top of each other in bends, a perfect result!

All would have been well had the spiral transition or easement curve stayed where it was on the railways, but somehow it escaped.

Those readers who have done an advanced riding course will be well aware of the quest to get riders to turn the bike quickly. Turning quickly is a very good thing to do, but no matter how quickly you turn a bike or a car, the path you take from going straight ahead to turning will ALWAYS be a spiral. If you can imagine turning slowly, then at the beginning of the turn the bike will not be banked over very far so it describes quite a wide arc. As the angle of bank increases, the radius of the arc gets smaller and smaller until it matches the arc we need to negotiate the corner; this then is a classic spiral. We can’t help but do this as it’s the laws of physics working away unnoticed and unheeded.

Back in the mists of time a chap called Henry Criswell who was the county surveyor of Devon, decided that in order to promote passenger comfort; roads should be designed with easement or transition spirals installed at the beginning of bends. His book “Highway Spirals, Banking and Vertical Curves” became the seminal work for all highway design and construction engineers and is still in use today. What he singularly failed to realise at the time was that the driver already had control over the rate of spiralling into a bend by dint of their ability to steer the vehicle, which is something that a railway train, constrained by the track, simply cannot do.

Thus the spiral easement became part of our modern roads landscape and everybody went on their way rejoicing in improved passenger comfort. Except that it didn’t improve passenger comfort as that was under the control of the driver not the road. What it did do was to fool riders and drivers into the possibility of making a very serious error.

Let’s hark back to the beginning of this little piece when we discovered that the rate of curvature at the Tangent Point was critical in our understanding of the severity of an upcoming corner. The spiral easement throws an enormous spanner in the works by showing a radius of curvature that is far less severe than the radius of the ultimate curve!

If we judge the corner by the curvature at the Tangent Point and the curvature is not that of the actual corner, we are going to get it wrong. If we get a left hand bend wrong, then we will run wide into the oncoming traffic, which unless we are very lucky, will kill us stone dead.

Is this then the secret of the single vehicle accident on rural left hand bends? I think it is and I’m not the only one. Many years ago, back in 1977, a young engineer called Doug Stewart who was working for Aberdeenshire Highways Department noticed a significant number of accidents were occurring on just a few bends in the County. Being of an enquiring mind, he wanted to know what the difference was between these bends and other equally severe bends that had noticeably fewer accidents. The bends in question, quite naturally featured our old friend the easement curve or spiral transition. As a Highways Engineer, he was lucky when one of the killer curves was scheduled for re-surfacing. He persuaded the Council to re-align the curve from a spiral to a circular curve so that they could see if the realignment made any difference to the accident statistics. As you might have guessed, the number of accidents fell away sharply after the change (3)(4).

So now we have identified the problem and worked out a way of realigning the corners to make the problem go away, what do we do in the meantime?

With the best will in the world it would take forever to realign every spiral transition in the country and that is supposing that the powers that be
admit that they are a significant problem in the first place. Once again it is down to us riders to work out a strategy for handling transitional spirals so that we can identify and negotiate them without running wide. First thing I did when I learnt about these horrid things was to go out and see if I could find any in the local area.

That proved to be an extremely difficult task as the easement curves are very well disguised, which I suppose is the reason we have the problem in the first place. I could only identify a transitional spiral for certain after I had gone round it and not before. The key identifier of a transitional spiral is the fact that you have to make two steering inputs in order to negotiate it. The first carries you round the spiral and the second to carry you round the actual corner.

This, sadly, is thruppeny bit-ing, yet unless we do it, we cannot safely negotiate a bend with a spiral transition, this is a terrible conundrum, but it is the lesser of two evils, either steer once and run wide or steer twice and make it round.

As we can’t tell by looking whether or not a corner has a spiral transition, we must be prepared to make two steering inputs at any corner, especially those we are unfamiliar with. Being prepared in this way means that we don’t have to work out a strategy on the fly, we can simply go to a pre-planned response once we discover the true nature of the bend. This does mean that we have to keep a fair bit of bank in the bank, but all riders should have no problem with doing that.

I would hope that in the very near future the Highways Agency and Local Authorities will face up to the fact that transitional spirals are extremely dangerous and that they will start the process of re-engineering them to make them much safer. At the very least, we might hope that they could dream up a new road sign that warned specifically of their presence.

The current bend warning sign shows a circular curve, but it would be nice to have one that shows a spiral, so that we know well in advance what to expect. It probably wouldn’t cost much money, but at least it might give us a fighting chance.

So what about the Cat and Fiddle? As you can see from the following illustration the curvature where the black van is, is much less than the curvature where the white van is. A rider adjusting their speed to one suitable for the transitional part of the upcoming curve will be travelling too fast for the curve itself.

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1) [http://www.journalofvision.org/content/9/1/11.full](http://www.journalofvision.org/content/9/1/11.full)

2) [http://www.cypress-engineering.com/ModelRailroadEasements.html](http://www.cypress-engineering.com/ModelRailroadEasements.html)

3) [http://www.dougstewartonline.co.uk/pdfs/lefthandbend.pdf](http://www.dougstewartonline.co.uk/pdfs/lefthandbend.pdf)

4) [http://www.dougstewartonline.co.uk/pdfs/bends.pdf](http://www.dougstewartonline.co.uk/pdfs/bends.pdf)

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[Behaviour Modification!](#) Have you modified a bike or bought one that has been modified that has altered its engine, drivetrain or structure. How has that affected performance and handling and has that impacted on safety.

Some would have us believe that modifications will make a bike more likely to be involved in an accident, but is it more the case that these are related to rider errors rather than poor modifications. Has a modification been successful or did it fall short of expectations? If you’ve changed your bike in any way... tell us about it and include photos. Email: [news@helibikes.co.uk](mailto:news@helibikes.co.uk)
“Errr... ah, ride! Down like bike, n’ cider n’ rallies...?”

“Please. Please... please!!

Ah... Yes! Finally... A biker chick!!

“Umm, I like motorcycle, white wine & glamping!!

Please go away... please!!

Oh dear no!! A dirty speedo biker!!

Arrchh!!

“Don’t turn your back on me when I’m trying to talk to you!!”

You still got a nice arse though!

“Why not? You turn your back on me when you want to take me for a ride on your bike!!

What an arsehole!!
Heli Bikers Cryptic Crossword
February 2014

Down Clues
1. Best cage hooked on Isle of Man. (10)
2. Bike & pal blowing clod winds. (4)
3. Still under guidance. (7)
4. Bart Simpson played cowboys & indians. (11,7)
5. Something to hold on to. (10)
6. It's agreeable to be covered up. (7)
7. Be careful to handle with care. (4,1,6)
8. There's lacking a limit on a bend. (5)
9. Hop, skip & jump over roads for this Triumph. (6)
10. Low intelligence Harley engine. (11)
11. Ducati love to holiday in this city. (7)
12. Streetfighter favourite brand. (7)
13. Annually maybe saving lives but unwelcome by some. (5,8)
14. Sucking linked to blowing. (8)
15. Way out in Japan. (9)
16. Silence in Slovenia. (9)
17. Linking nervously. (7)

Across Clues
1. Lane splitting in California. (9)
2. 2011 Moto2 Champion. (5)
3. Put your feet up...have a rest! (7,4)
4. Maybe Richard liked bike parts. (6)
5. Filtering (6)
6. Sifting Oxygen can make you cough with this. (6)
7. Helps with wobbles. (6)
8. See 12 Across. (1,1,1)
9. You'll likely to walk with this but it'll ache. (4,9)
10. Solitary mattress coil. (4,5)
11. Not enough caffeine for 70's Harley. (1,1,1,1)
12. Really liking old Italian off road builder. (6,5)
13. See 12 Across. (6)
14. See 13 Across. (8)
15. See 10 Down. (6)
16. See 14 Down. (6)
17. See 11 Down. (6)
18. Started off making pianos. (6)
19. Rock band do not build motorcycles anymore. (5)
20. Get new direction and we'll do better. (9)
21. Passenger no longer than necessary. (5)
22. Really liking old Italian off road builder. (6,5)
Behind The Music!

I’m often asked: “Why do you bother doing this bike safety thingy?” The answer in its simplest form is that as a passionate fan of all things to do with riding motorbikes, I have a frustration with seeing so many bike accidents occurring for the same reasons…I’m not an oncologist so I can’t help to treat cancer, but I do know bikes and bike accidents, so this is my way of trying to help!

But with any chosen path, it is seldom walked alone...or ridden...as the case may be! Although some might describe this as a lone crusade...it is not without help & support from colleagues, friends & supporters.

From the generous support of the Thames Valley & Chiltern Air Ambulance Trust and others who have helped to pay for the production of the HELI BIKES Crash Cards to my work colleagues who have willingly...and in some cases reluctantly participated in the production of videos for HELIBIKESTV.

To all helpers, event organisers & distributors of HELI BIKES information & promotional items...a massive thank you for your association and help to promote HB. It’s really appreciated...You know who you are!

And finally... whilst it is true that I spend much of my downtime either writing, taking photos, making videos or designing new posters & images or just brainstorming new ideas...I must also praise the contribution of individuals & other organisations around the globe in helping to improve rider safety...It is truly a collective effort!

And finally...finally, I would like to thank the contributors of this first edition and their help and enthusiasm for this new project...in no particular order...

Mick Sturland
Kevin Williams
Syed Masud
Martin Wise
Emma Freyne
Grant Thomas
Duncan MacKillop
Kevin Letchford

We hope you enjoyed the show!
RIDE AWARE!
RIDE SAFE!
helibikes.co.uk

To receive ‘The Lancelot’ email: news@helibikes.co.uk and say “ADD ME!”
Is ignorance bliss & is silence golden?

I have consistently said: "Information is power & knowledge is key!" It is the increasing library that we can draw upon to enable better riding decisions...it is the experiences that we can build upon that will improve our riding and how we deal with certain situations!

Having worked in the medical field of prehospital care for some years, where I might be unconcerned about a given situation or medical condition, I often hear medics say: "Unfortunately we know too much what might be wrong with this patient, so that's why there is reason for concern!"

You see, I'm looking at a situation with an untrained eye. I see a patient...and 'they seem awright!'...but what they may seem and what they actually are may be completely different. However, of course there are situations where I am correct. The layman's diagnosis does work in many situations...it is our common sense approach that enables us to make a judgement call to see whether someone needs to go to hospital or if an ambulance is required.

In my professional world I am constantly reminded that we actually know very little about what extent of injuries exist until the patient is in hospital and can be scanned and can undergo further tests. In the prehospital world, although there have been tremendous advances in medical care and skill afforded to a patient...whether they have a medical condition or have sustained an injury, the reality is that patients are stabilised as best as possible and sometimes medical interventions are necessary but ultimately that patient needs to be transported to a place of definitive care...a nearest hospital or a specialist medical centre for further treatment and from which the process of recovery may commence...if that is indeed possible!

In this regard, I have always held similar views about motorcycle accidents and rider safety. Is it better not to know too much about why accidents occur and how injuries are sustained? Is it better not to provide access to information that may not have a quantifiable benefit to rider safety and accident avoidance? Is not knowing how you can have an accident or get injured or suffer a fatal injury better in the long run?

I recall a brief conversation I had with a rider I got talking to at an event when I first started HELI BIKES. I was explaining my role on an air ambulance unit and my experiences of dealing with motorcycle accidents. I continued with what kind of accidents we saw and the common injuries etc and then he said: "Ah well...this is your business though isn't it?"

He was absolutely correct of course...because of the numbers of accidents that we attend, it would be easy to have a biased view and also it is something that I am very conscious of. But as the average rider does not have this exposure and as the probability of having an accident is so low, then there is not this awareness of accidents and injuries...and probably some would argue...nor should there be!

The honest answer is that I really don't know! I would like to believe it does have a relationship, but I have absolutely no way of proving it. But I can only go on the assumption that this knowledge has helped me make better riding decisions and has improved my hazard awareness, so it may help others also.

We should all acknowledge that having access to more information and increasing our knowledge actually means having more things to consider and this may mean more options available when riding. Of course we are factoring for more variables, more hazards and more scenarios and that may mean that some riders are empowered with a heightened awareness of hazards & consequences, but some may be paralysed with fear and will opt to never ride again or be overly cautious. Some will take this knowledge and modify their riding to suit the situation and few will carry on regardless.

If I think about diagnosis of a situation, as medics do when they treat a patient, the diagnosis is largely based upon the clinical knowledge of that medic, depending on their clinical role, be that an ambulance technician, paramedic, nurse, doctor, consultant etc. But it is also determined by their experience of diagnosing similar situations in the past, what their area of expertise is, what is their environmental experience and how they have 'uploaded new learning into their personal library' and embraced new methods and technologies.

This same principle can be applied to anything we do...and riding is no different. The more knowledge we have, the more experience we have, the more practiced we are...ultimately the better we should perform and the better our decision making process should be.

They say ignorance is bliss...but I'd rather know as much as I can. They say silence is golden...but I would rather more people spoke about this kind of thing...but maybe that's just me!
BIKERS DOING GOOD!

The event began as an idea for a friend and it has evolved into something very special. Imagine the sight of 100 women on motorbikes, dressed in head to toe pink, donning pink Mohicans, sprinkled with a few choice gentlemen, who embrace the event by wearing heavily decorated bras, something they seem strangely willing to do... whizzing around the West Coast of Scotland over three days!

BREATHE WAY ROUND

When Alyson Porter was diagnosed with cancer, she very quickly became unable to ride her motorbike. Even though she was unwell she opened a Biker drop in as she wanted to stay involved in something she loved. A group of close friends attended the launch day. Inspired by her spirit they set out on a mission and fundraising began. After a lot of hard work, they had built Aly a trike.

This set sparks flying, and plans were made to take Aly on a tour of Scotland, while raising money for Macmillan Cancer support. Unfortunately Aly was too unwell to take part in the first Breast Way Round event in May 2008, and sadly succumbed to her illness on the 2nd July 2008. Aly only rode her trike once; it was the perfect parting gift.

Breast Way Round then became a tribute to her life.

We set off from Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire and our route takes us on some of Scotland’s great roads and we take in some beautiful scenery. We stop at Inverary, then onward to Oban where we stay the night. Then we move on, travelling through Fort William up to Avimore and back down to Fort William, where we have our final night. We set off home, through Glen Coe en route to Tyndrum, where we stop for a wee bit of cake! Then we travel along the shores of Loch Lomond finishing up at Balloch, Argyll & Bute, where we have our finale and release balloons over loch with memory tags attached, remembering everyone we ride for.

We have people from all walks of life within our BWR Scotland family. We are united by one common factor, Cancer. We have girls that have been diagnosed with cancer themselves; indeed some have joined us whilst undergoing treatment, including Wynn Taylor and Carolyn Falconer, who both lost their battles. We remember them fondly. Others ride in memory of a loved one that has lost the fight against this ravaging disease.

We are now in our 7th year, about to set off on our journey once more. In excess of 600 riders have taken part and we have hosted many an event, including two annual events, one held in Ayr town centre, Bikefest (19th April 2014 at Harleys Bar), and the yearly main event of the run itself, kicking off this year on the 30th May and returning on the 1st June 2014. We have had support off many famous faces, including the First Minster, Alex Salmond, Ant & Dec, and the legend that is Mr John McGuiness (We did try to convince John to join us but apparently he is busy doing some race or something in the Isle of Man at the end of May!).

We work hard for our cause and to date our 6 year total is a staggering £251,654.08, all donated to Macmillan Cancer support. This has been made possible by all that take part and our sponsors, they keep us going. Without the efforts of such companies as Motorcycle Law Scotland, Mickey Oates Motorcycles, Route 66 Rider Training, West and East Coast Harley, HairyRS, Western Ferries, Real Food Cafe and MCS Scotland, to name a few, we could not keep this event running year on year.

So what are you waiting for... come join us on a fabulous journey for a worthwhile cause. Have a look at our website, [www.breastwayround.com](http://www.breastwayround.com) or send us an email at breastwayround@aol.com. Or you can make a donation at [www.justgiving.com/Breast-Way-Round-Scotland2014](http://www.justgiving.com/Breast-Way-Round-Scotland2014). We would love to hear from you.
Bike4 Life

In 2008, there was a biker fatality in North Shropshire outside a pub called the Stormy Petrel. This location was a popular biker meeting venue with over 800 bikers turning up every Thursday evening, to meet like minded people and show off their machines. Almost all of them acted responsibly but every now and again, one or two would take the opportunity to show off by pulling wheelies and carrying out burn outs to the adoring crowds.

This biker, however, pulled a wheelie into the path of an oncoming vehicle, which killed him instantly.

This tragic incident resulted in PC Mick Sturland from West Mercia Police, an avid biker, working with his family, to produce a video called 'Dying for a Ride?' and from that, began the path to what is today, the biggest FREE biker safety event in Shropshire.

Mick worked with both the IAM & RoSPA in Shropshire, to attend biker meets throughout the County, to engage and educate bikers into doing some form of post test training. Both the IAM & RoSPA gained from this, with increased membership. The casualty rates of bikers fell County wide in 2009/10, although it cannot be said directly as a result of the joined up partnership working between the Police and IAM & RoSPA, it surely counted towards it. A group was formed called the Shropshire Motorcycle Road safety Working Group and was joined by representatives from Shropshire Fire & Rescue and Shropshire Council.

Funding was secured to purchase a mobile display van from which presentations could be given. The group were now attending over 60 events a year.

In 2011, the first Shropshire motorcycle safety festival was organised. Named BikeFest, this event attracted 3000 bikers to its inaugural event held at Shrewsbury Town Football Club. With safety presentations, workshops and training opportunities, it was an excellent one stop shop for bikers. This event was supported by a handful of manufacturers and traders and entertainment was laid on in the form of live music and arena displays.

With the success of this event, another was staged in 2012 which also raised funds for the Midlands Air Ambulance charity. Again, support was growing for this type of event in Shropshire and space was running out so in 2013, we moved the event to RAF Museum Cosford, where we partnered with the RAF Museum charity and Midlands Air Ambulance charity to jointly stage an event which is now known as Bike4 Life Fest. This event joined up the successful ride out run in previous years by the two charities, with our Bike Fest offering bikers the opportunity to help two worthy charities raise money as well as the chance to learn new skills, get additional training and be entertained.

Over 5000 bikers came to this event with unrivalled support from all of the major manufacturers as well as over 50 trade stands.

In 2014, the event will be staged on Sunday 27th April and we now have Planet Rock radio as a media partner, injecting £50000 of media coverage and sponsorship. The event is still free to enter, we have arena activities and displays, live music all day on the Planet Rock stage, with Planet Rock DJ’s, traders village, club stands, Get On rider experiences, training schools, the IAM & RoSPA, special guests and loads more.

Over 5000 bikers came to this event with unrivalled support from all of the major manufacturers as well as over 50 trade stands.

The event has a brand new website www.bike4lifefest.com and bikers of all abilities are encouraged to sign up for the ride out from Shrewsbury, 23 miles into RAF Cosford for the Festival. Gates open at Cosford at 10am.

You can also follow us on facebook @ Bike4 Life Fest or Twitter@Bike4lifefest.

A website is also available to take in a wealth of safety advice, tips, ride outs and in fact anything to do with bikers for Shropshire. See www.shropsbikesafety.co.uk
Kissing the surface!

A few years ago…whilst riding into college, in the busy morning rush hour, I turned off a road into a smaller side road which had a slight incline and negative camber.

There were lots of stationary cars in traffic and the road was damp. My speed was no more than 15mph and as I turned I rolled on the throttle and the bike slipped from under me, more so the front wheel first it seemed.

I slid for some time but I did not hit any of the other cars. I bruised my shoulder a little but no other damage apart from torn jeans and a slight cut to the knee. As I got to my feet I noticed that the surface of the road was very slippery and when I looked at the place at which I came off I saw that there was a small patch of diesel. I picked up the bike and was able to continue the ride and later had to reset the forks and handlebars.

Looking back I probably didn’t expect the road to be that slippery and didn’t expect there to be diesel at the junction. Although my speed was low, it was the wrong combination of speed and manoeuvre which caused me to slide off.

I became much more aware of turning at junctions especially in the damp and when I thought there was oil or diesel on the road. I changed my riding style from then on to steer around the turn at a junction, rather than lean and I was a lot less eager to open the throttle so soon.

I also, from that day on became a ‘student’ of road surface conditions and types of tyres and the interaction between surface and tyre. I soon learned that having the best tyre on the market does not necessarily mean that I will be more secure on the road or less prone to slide or lose traction. It is a combination of factors, as is always the case, that largely determines stability and in this case…grip!

I am sometimes confused by reviews or recommendations of tyres, either by manufacturers, press or other riders. What do they mean…? “It’s a great tyre!” “…It’s brilliant in the wet!” “…It’s fantastic for touring and great mileage!” etc.

I suppose my indifference to other opinions of tyres…is because it is just that! It is their opinion or experience of a particular tyre on a specific bike with a certain rider with a certain riding style in a geographic area with local weather conditions, etc.

Manufacturers will extensively test patterns and compounds to perform in particular ways and they will test with multiple models of bikes and possibly with very experienced test riders…but dare I say it...how do I know those testing standards are “down at my level!”

What I want to know is how a tyre that I choose will work on my bike, with the way I ride and with the road conditions I encounter. It is not that I do not believe the reports or opinions…but it doesn’t tell me anything until I actually start to ride.

So in general, I’ll go on consensus opinion or reviews for a tyre that will suit my general riding style or for the types of journeys I’m likely to take and of course that will be acceptable for my finances. But, then it’s down to me to ‘listen & feel’ how my tyre is doing.

It is the feedback from the tyres, the small lateral movements at particular speeds and with certain conditions, that I’m really interested in.

I am constantly scanning the road surface for levels of moisture, contaminates, fuels and oils, debris, grit & mud…anything that will interfere with the interaction between tyre and surface that may cause a loss of grip and I will adjust my riding accordingly.

Under deteriorating conditions I do not test the performance limits of the tyre…it just isn’t worth it!

I look for changes in the road surface structure; cracks, potholes, painted surfaces, camber, manhole covers…anything that may affect the stability of the ride or may affect the ‘contact patch’

And there it is…‘CONTACT PATCH’…that phrase that we’ve probably heard so many times but how much emphasis do we place on it?

That part of the tyre that actually is in contact with the road surface can and will change during the ride and will be affected by the load imposed on the tyre either by speed changes of acceleration or braking, suspension settings, weight, by turning forces or the curvature of the road. It will also be affected by the condition, wear and pressure of the tyre and how it will function at varying temperatures.

Regardless of how a tyre is supposed to perform on a bend or under braking etc, I always defer judgement until I ‘field test’ the tyre in my riding. I constantly test the tyre to varying degrees but always exercise caution, especially in unfavourable conditions. I gradually bed or scrub tyres in, always monitor tyre condition, wear and pressure and I’m always thinking ahead about the contact performance and how it might be affected and how I will change my style as appropriate.

I am very selective about testing or nearing the limits of the tyre. I acknowledge that I may not have the same high riding or testing standard of those ‘test riders’. Whenever I do, I am acutely aware of the feedback from the tyres and environment in which I’m riding…and of course my own ability!

Maintaining grip is so much more than avoiding diesel spills, greasy roads or manhole covers. It is about interpreting the feedback from the tyres and making decisions based upon the road and weather conditions of the day. But most importantly it is about the relationship between one rider, one tyre (or two, three, four tyres etc), one bike and one environment!

It is about the rider’s choice and the ultimately the rider’s decisions that will keep within the limits of the tyre under varying conditions!
"I'm a motorcycle enthusiast!

One of my interests in life is my mild fascination with languages...in fact if I wished for a super power, then being able to speak and understand any language in the world, would come very close to the top of my list.

I am intrigued and confused by words, terms and phrases in equal measure and, at times, I wonder why people place meaning and emphasis on a particular word.

I think back to early last year when the Oxford Dictionary changed the definition of the word: ‘BIKER’ to: “A motorcyclist especially one who is a member of a motorcycle gang or group”

This was changed from its predecessor of: “A motorcyclist especially one who is a member of a gang...a long haired biker in dirty denims”

The term...’BIKER’ means different things to different people, and this is replicated all over the world in all sorts of languages. There are bikers, motorcyclists, riders..."I am a biker!", “Je suis un motard!”, “Sono un motociclista!” etc.

When I was growing up in my home town in the 70’s, British bikes were a dying or forgotten breed...certainly for my generation at least. European and American brands were not known or were so rare that they never came up in conversation. So the only bikes that were around...were Japanese bikes! They were motorbikes and the people who rode on them were termed ‘Bikers’

I never used the term: ‘Motorcyclist’ or ‘Motorcycle’...in fact I only started to hear those terms when I sat in front of the TV and watched some American programmes like ‘CHiPs’

Of course you could always spot the difference between riders...be those the ‘long haired greasy biker’ or as was locally known ‘Grebo’ and the riders who would just get on their bikes with white helmets, white top box and high vis sash, like my old French teacher would do! There were of course the moped riders and the everyday rider...but they were all referred to as ‘Biker’...someone who rode a motorbike!

As the 70’s moved into the 80’s, then as fashions & music changed, so did motorbikes! Now more ‘motorcycles’ were emerging with hidden engines by plastic fairings, those impersonating the race machines of the track. Films like ‘Silver Dream Racer’ starring David Essex, making race bikes cool, thus encouraging manufacturers to bring to the market race replica bikes.

As years passed, motorbikes and motorcycles became more powerful and more importantly more reliable. Riders were less inclined to make repairs and perform maintenance and hence less likely to be covered in grease and oil. The ‘Dirty Biker’ became ‘cleaner” and 'brighter’...the motorcyclist became a rider of machines that would serve multiple purposes depending on the requirement of the individual! So as motorcycles mirrored the track bikes, so did the everyday rider follow suit and copy the track stars. One & two piece leathers of varying colours were evermore available to the average rider to wear on the road...complete with in built armour and the oh so important knee sliders, race hump & race boots!

During these passing years...the ‘biking community’ has grown bigger, stronger, more affluent, and technology has enabled more travel and better communication...especially through social media.
It is now one big happy family of different people who
ride different motorcycles, motorbikes, mopeds and
scooters...not forgetting those off roady types on
motocrossers, enduros and adventure bikes, etc.

When I think of a definition...I want it to be definitive
and I want it to accurately represent something.
Unfortunately, for me, the dictionary has failed in this
regard. It was outdated and inaccurate then as it is
now. It does not represent what I remember and what
I see today...but are we all to blame for that
inadequacy?

We all use terms like: “Bikers”, “Motorcyclists”,
“Riders”...and for some they mean the same thing, for
others they mean something completely different. Is it
the mere fact we ride bikes...or is it something deeper,
more soulful than that? Is it about lifestyle...is it about
being part of a biking group or community...Is it about
having a tangible everyday involvement with bikes
and an overriding passion for all things motorcycle
related?

If you ask 10 riders to define these terms, you’ll
probably get ten different answers as each will
personalise the definition and this may have been
influenced by their own experiences and how these
terms have been used in social circles, local
environments and by media and film.

I may be a ‘Biker”...but I may not be your type of biker!
I may be a ‘Motorcyclist’...but resemble nothing like
others you know! I may be a 'Rider' or even a pilot...but we could not be more unlike each other!

The biking community has changed...it has grown and
become more widespread, but it is vastly different
around the world. We share a common bond in that we
ride predominantly on two wheels...but that can apply
to three as well. We may share lifestyle & preferences
choices with others, we may belong to groups or be as
individuals. We may be more inclined to spark up a
conversation with another rider who is a stranger to
us and we may eagerly nod or wave at another passing
rider...but...we may also be not so inclined!

“The times they are a changing” Bob Dylan sang, and
no more has it changed in the biking world. Are we
less likely to address a ‘biking community’ but more
likely to address a ‘biking faction’ these days? Is it
possible to truly define the undefinable?

How do you define yourself and what are your biking
values? Do you openly acknowledge other bikers &
would you stop to assist another in need? Would you
walk into a biker pub or go to a biker rally and feel at
home, welcomed...or intimidated? Would you define
your interest in bikes as a passion, as a lifestyle, as a
mode of transport or all of them?

How do others regard you...do you live up to their
preconceptions and is it common to break down
barriers?

For me...the term or the word is not important! It does
not define who I am or what I may appear to be or
even how I wish to be considered. It is a feeling, it is
the sensation, it is the highs and lows and the riding
experience, the people you meet and the places you
go, that make me such a motorcycle enthusiast...no
no...a motorcycle passionista...errm...well maybe bikes
are just in my blood!

They were put there as a child and have never left...
regardless of whether I do or don’t ride, whether I ride
alone or with other riders and whether I go to biking
hangouts, events, rallies or races!

Motorcycling, I suppose, is a sub culture and within
that there are many further sub cultures. When trying
to engage with the ‘motorcycling sub culture’, many
struggle with a mass appeal to the whole audience and
more so nowadays...the sub - sub cultures are now
individual targets for manufacturers, event
organisers, accessory and apparel vendors, etc.

This is one hurdle that has hindered my path since
launching the safety initiative 3 years ago. How to
make something that can apply to all and how to
engage with the whole biking community or the sub
cultures within it! How to appeal to experienced
riders and novice alike...those interested in sports
bikes and those more into cruiser styles, etc.

It’s great to be different and the same, and it would be
great to know the difference...but maybe some things
should just be left unanswered!
THIS IS AVOIDABLE!

helibikes.co.uk
What’s the right bike...for me?

Like many who ride bikes, I am easily enticed by another bike or a newer model.

Don’t get me wrong...I love my bike and think it’s the best bike I’ve ridden...but...I sometimes feel that I wish it was good...or better, for this or that type of trip. I wish it was great for autobahns and green lanes alike...a thrill sports and a laid back cruiser...a bar hopper and a grand tourer.

In brief I want it to be an individual bike with its own character, but I also want it to be the ‘everybike’. I don’t want much do I? And I can see why for some riders out there, that having one bike is just not enough, and we’d like to build up a stable of bikes...a bike for each occasion!

How do we choose our next bike or why do we stick with the one we’ve got? What do we look for in a motorcycle? Is it: speed & handling performance, economy, versatility, off road capability, aesthetics or safety?

SAFETY!!! Urrgh...there’s that word again! Would this really be a consideration when buying a bike? Unlike cars in which there is a measurable safety testing system such as ENCAP, bikes are much less considered.

Yes, we’d like bits to work properly and not be falling off...so safety is a consideration in that regard, but not necessarily when comparing one model against another, unless we’re factoring for mechanical features e.g. ABS, traction control etc.

So, really, we have a general idea of what make and model we like and then all of our attention is focussed on whether it will suit our needs and fulfil our wishes. Do we like the look of it...will it be a head turner...will it cause uncontrollable grinning anytime we ride it? Have we made our choice before even viewing the model of bike?

A few years ago I actively changed the way in which I selected a bike to buy. Whereas in the past I would look at a bike that I liked the look of or just thought..."That'll do", this time I approached from another angle.

I focussed on what kind of riding I wanted to do, what kind of distances and would I likely carry a pillion? I considered engine sizes and power to weight ratios but one of the most important things was the overall size of the bike...would it fit me...or rather would I fit it?

I really focussed on ride-ability and comfort, and when I had figured that out then I looked at the types of bikes that I thought might do the job and that I thought I’d like to ride and I liked the look of...
WE NEED YOUR INPUT!  
WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR SIDE!

Submit articles of approx. 1000 words on any of the following topics...and more!

Accidents  
Modifications  
Rules & Training  
Equipment & Accessories  
Bike Reviews  
Road Trips & Events  
Meeting Places  
How you ride & Safety Tips

to: news@helibikes.co.uk

Brace! Brace! Brace!

In aviation terms, when dealing with an inflight emergency, where applicable, pilots will instruct their passengers to adopt the brace position prior to performing an emergency landing.

We are asking the passenger to prepare themselves...guard their body...for an impending impact. This will limit to some degree further injury or unwanted movement leading to injury thereafter.

Pilots and aircrew of all types train repeatedly for emergency situations, when to expect them and how to deal with them and how to secure the aircraft, occupants & contents...however, only when actually dealing with a real emergency will anyone really know whether the training was successful in preparing the pilot/aircrew to adequately deal with the emergency and the reality of a stressful situation. 'We plan for the worst & hope for the best!'

Flying for the air ambulance brings its own challenges and 'our passengers' are usually those who have very recently been involved in a serious traumatic incident or have suffered a critical medical condition.

If we were to say: “Brace! Brace! Brace!” then usually I am telling the aircrew to adopt the brace position...but the passenger is usually already strapped down & secure...and maybe they could have benefitted from that preparedness prior to their incident.

As we now move into Spring, then emergency crews, ambulance staff, hospital emergency departments etc will start the ‘Brace! Brace! Brace!’ period.

We are expecting the weather to improve...and when it does, so people start to venture out more and get ever more creative in ways to have accidents & hurt themselves. Longer dry periods & longer, lighter days means road users will generally travel more and at the top of the list for increased mobility during this period are motorcyclists.

Of course motorcycle & scooter accidents occur during the winter months, but in the Spring there is a sudden increase in motorcycle traffic on the roads which will mean more motorcycle accidents...it’s just a numbers thing!

Every year, without fail, there is a sharp increase in motorcycle accident statistics in the months of March - May and this generally continues until the autumn period. Some years the numbers are a lot higher and for longer periods and this relates to longer drier periods.

The drier it is, the more likely it is riders will get on their bikes and go for a ride and the greater numbers will inevitably be involved in an accident...be that or not involving another vehicle.

This peak period is one that riders need to be highly aware of and be extra prepared in terms of riding skills and hazard perception but also be ever mindful that all road users will be increasing and not necessarily be used to seeing so many riders on the road...regardless of the rights and wrongs...let’s deal with the facts first and avoid the dangerous situations, modify our riding styles and gradually build our riding proficiency throughout the riding season.

Get ready!...Get prepared and brace yourself, avoid danger and deal with your emergencies...so we don’t have to!
Saddle up for Summer

Winter's finally over! The roads are dry and salt free and the sun is gently warm on your back. The bike's out of winter storage, you've changed the oil, adjusted the chain, checked the tyre pressures, cleaned the visor and checked the tax and insurance are up to date. It must be time to park the car at last and go for a blast on the bike, right?

Wrong. Whilst people say you never forget how to ride a bicycle, it's not strictly true.

Early spring rides after a winter lay-off are a time a lot of riders come to grief, even on roads they know well. Simple corners, roundabouts or filtering situations can take us by surprise. We were negotiating with ease last autumn are suddenly a heart-in-the-mouth experience.

On the first few rides out, it's easy to be disappointed with your performance, particularly if you are out with mates who've been riding all winter - you won't be able to keep up. Your memories are telling you that you were as fast as they were back in October, but reflexes aren't keeping up and comfort levels get eroded, so stress levels go up and enjoyment goes down. Boxers call it ring-rust.

Continuing the self-help theme from our first article for the Helibikes newsletter, the answer isn't to try harder. In fact, it's exactly the opposite. The trick is to take it easy and give yourself a little extra time whilst you polish up your mental agility, toughen up your muscles, and rebuild your riding skills. Here are some areas you can think about working on.

Get comfy with the bike's feel and handling again. Cast your mind back to the sort of exercises you did on basic training; u-turns, figures-of-eight, emergency braking, counter-steering are all techniques that benefit from a few minutes being polished off-road. Find an empty car park and spend just a few minutes on all of them. Start easy - wide and slow turns for example.

Out on the road, look for the clues you're mentally lagging. Braking too late or having to make corrections to line or speed in the middle of a corner are good warning signs you're riding out of your comfort zone. Your observation skills are off, your anticipation skills are rusty and your inputs into the bike are neither as timely nor smooth as they were a few months earlier. Leave a little extra room between you and the vehicle in front to help see what's coming next.

Slow down a touch so you use a little less lean angle, avoid extreme positions at the edge of the lane and concentrate on reading and following the corner until the smoothness comes back.

Work on your braking, steering and throttle skills too, remembering to get the braking done upright, to use steady throttle through the corner, driving away from the bend once you know where you are going next. Use the brakes gently and early, and strive for smoothness on the controls. This will build confidence, and as it feels easier, so the stress levels drop and the enjoyment soon comes back.

We're pulling in and processing a huge amount of information through our ears, our eyes, our hands and our feet, and if our brain is in low gear after the layoff, it's easy for some of that incoming data to be processed incorrectly or even to go missing altogether, particularly if we're focussing on a task like trying to keep up with our buddies.

Junctions are classic locations for bike accidents. So are overtakes, so think twice before committing yourself. Heed the warnings. If it doesn't feel right, then it almost certainly ISN'T right. Remember your judgement will be rusty and your reaction times and braking skills not as sharp.

Minor mistakes are made much worse if you get tense, and tenseness has a knock-on effect that means we make more mistakes. We get stiff on the bike, we stop looking up the road but instead begin to target fixate on what's scaring us.

The simplest solution is to slow down a little. It's not necessary to make huge reductions in speed, just knock off five mph and that will give you that little bit more time to see what's happening and to react appropriately. Once the scares go away, so does the stress and the target fixation, the long view comes back, and you relax. And once relaxed, back comes the speed soon enough.

The key to dealing with 'ring rust' is not to let it worry you. It can be frustrating, but just accept it happens to virtually all of us. Patience is key. Remember that you're not starting from scratch. You were bike-fit not all that long ago, and those skills and road sense are still in there somewhere.

Just as all racers do early season training to condition their body AND their mind, so think of your first few rides in the same way. You will get better, so just relax and use the early rides as training for the rest of the year. With a relaxed mindset, you'll quite quickly return to form and be back in the groove.

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Standard Accidents

Chances are that if you crash your bike, the type of crash you are involved in will be one of the so called standard crashes i.e one that has happened many, many times in the past and no doubt will happen many times in the future.

The various road safety institutions have compiled a handy list of these crashes which are

- The rural bend crash
- The 'looked but failed to see' crash (SMIDSY)
- The nightmare overtake crash
- The shunt
- The 'loss of control' crash

I must admit that the 'loss of control' item does cover a multitude of sins so it's probably used as a catch-all heading, but it can be safely assumed that loss of traction due to panic braking or too much throttle probably accounts for the majority of them.

When analysing incidents and accidents it always pays to see if there is some common thread that binds them together rather than treating them as entirely separate entities.

At first glance none of them seem to have any commonality at all as they happen at different places on the road and in differing traffic conditions, but there is one common factor that does feature in all these accidents and that is that there was a human being somewhere in the mix.

The common factor is the human factor and more specifically that one or more of the humans involved in the accident has made some sort of gross error somewhere in the time leading up to the eventual collision.

Human error is one of those subjects that effects us all yet for some reason we all go around assuming that if there are any errors to be made it will always be the other fellow that will make them.

We ourselves are absolutely incapable of error and so it follows that if something happens to us then it must be someone or something external to us that is to blame for the entire incident.

Of course we are not incapable of error and in fact we probably make hundreds or even thousands of them every day of our lives. Somehow we manage to sweep these errors under the carpet by creating an internal narrative that rationalises these errors and paints us as victim rather than perpetrator.

Tripped over the carpet? Then someone should have stuck the carpet down a bit better. Forgot your car keys? Someone must have moved them from their normal place. Lost the front? Then that was diesel or gravel or a badly maintained road surface and so on and so on.

Sadly finding fault with others and apportioning blame to others does not really do us a fat lot of good as it allows us to miss a valuable learning opportunity and thus increases the chances of the same error happening again.

In my many years in the motorcycle industry there has been a saying that he who has an accident is doomed to repeat the same accident over and over again until it finally gets him. You would have thought that once we had suffered from one particular type of accident we would be so wary of it happening again that we would avoid the circumstances that led up to the previous accident, but that simply isn't true.
Thanks to fault and blame we rationalise the circumstances of the accident, paint ourselves as the good guy and continue as if nothing had happened. Trouble is that if we have suffered a particular accident and it is true that it is us that has made a fundamental error and not the other fellow, then that error is still there within us just waiting to be called up the instant the circumstances dictate.

Effectively we become a walking time-bomb carrying around a resident pathogen that could quite literally kill us at any moment.

Let’s look at just one of our favourite accidents and see if we can find the resident pathogen that will eventually get us. Take the rural bend for example and be honest and say whether or not you have ever been surprised by the actual severity of a corner when you were committed to entering it. Chances are that all of us have had this happen and so all of us are carrying around the resident pathogen called ‘corner severity judgement error’.

Unless we take the time and effort to learn why and how we made the error we are certainly going to make it again and the next time it might be with fatal consequences.

Take a look at all the other top five accidents and I’ll bet that you have probably had a near-miss in each and every one of these scenario’s and so it stands to reason that you are carrying the same resident pathogen’s that caused so many other riders to come to a sticky end.

Thanks to a mental limitation called ‘cognitive strain’, finding fault and apportioning blame is so much easier to do than working out why a close call or near miss actually happened and so taking the easy option is what most of us do quite naturally.

Rather than taking the easy option we need to just take a few moments to ask ourselves what learning opportunity we are missing every time we realise we have made a mistake?

In the case of the ‘corner severity judgement error’ we perhaps need to look at exactly what mechanisms we use to judge the severity and extent of a corner, what mental process we enact and what are the possible error modes in these processes.

Chances are that most of you will have no idea where to even start this process let alone finish it and that is where we all have a big, big problem in that apart from one or two very wise people there is nobody out there that can really tell you what you need to know.

This very sad state of affairs has been brought about because everybody from the Government and on through the licencing authorities has relied in exactly the same way as we have on finding fault and apportioning blame as the solution to all the underlying problems.

Misjudge a corner and you were going too fast, slam into the back of a rapidly slowing car and you weren’t paying attention, smash into a tractor that turns into a farm gate and you should have been more careful etc.

Now we know about human errors, resident pathogens and cognitive strain these simplistic statements that explain away crashes simply no longer stand up to close scrutiny.

We all need to change our emphasis from blaming to learning and by doing that simple task we can go a long way towards understanding errors and eradicating resident pathogens.

Duncan MacKillop is an independent road safety researcher and Chairman of the Moto Gymkhana Association. www.motogymkhana.org
HOW DID WE GET HERE?

A journey starts and the driver or rider does not consider they might be involved in an accident!

The rider or driver, makes an error...a misjudgement, an overestimation, fails to observe, fails to make allowances, fails to make more space, make correct control inputs and reacts inappropriately!

Someone rides or drives with excessive speed, does not compensate for the weather & road surface conditions or the density of traffic. Someone overestimates their own skills or standards & underestimates the errors of other road users.

A would be road user does not identify or ignores the fact they may be unsafe to drive; either due to alcohol, drugs, medical, physiological or mental impairment! They discount emotional & life distractions and ignore performance inhibitors such as dehydration & low blood levels, fatigue, stress, illness - minor or major! At some point...

someone gets it wrong! Either the rider, or driver...or both! It can result in a near miss or a minor accident with non or minor injuries...or it can be major with severe or fatal injuries! Survivable injuries may take weeks or months to recover from...Sometimes they never fully heal & there are permanent disabilities to live with! There may be financial and legal ramifications and possibly the greatest crime is when we do not learn from these accidents, and carry on regardless!
WITHOUT ME, MY RIDER WOULD BE BAREFOOT & NOT LOOK LIKE A BIKER... EHH! I GIVE A SOLID BASE TO WORK THE BIKER AND DANCE ON THE PEGS!

WITHOUT ME, MY RIDER WOULD BE A NAKED BIKER, BUT WOULD BE NAKED! I SHIELD THE HEAD... NUFF SAID!

BUT... I CAN KICK THINGS & STEP ON HORRIBLE STUFF, TOO!

DID I MENTION? NUFF SAID... DON'T ARGUE! UP HERE FOR THINKING... DOWN THERE FOR DANCING!

KNOWLEDGE: DID I NOT MENTION I'M GOOD AT KICKING, HEADS TOO... YEAH!

ARE YOU BLIND? "I SHIELD THE HEAD!"

SON! WHEN YOU GROW UP... YOU CAN BE A BIKER BOOt... JUST LIKE YOUR DADDY!

YOU CAN RIDE ON BIKES & TUG IN MUDDY FIELDS & STUFF!

WHY... DO I HAVE TO GET MUDDY? MUMMY SAYS DON'T GET DIRTY... OR ELSE!

WHEN I'M BIG, I WANNA BE FAMOUS... AND AN ASTRONAUT... OR A FIREMAN... OR AN ACTOR...
HELI BIKERS CRYPTIC CROSSWORD - APRIL 2014

Across
1. Harley engine to move coal (6,4)
6. Italian akin british clothing maker (5)
11. Old Birmingham bikes (3)
12. American chaps dressed in orange (6,8)
13. There no rat is this custom builder (5)
14. Slowed by percussion (4)
18. Head fruit (5)
19. Popular Japanese starter bike (5,3)
20. Engine has too much fuel (4)
21 & 26 Acc Off road routes (5)
23 & 29 Acc German motorcycle model (3)
24 & 38 Acc Open up it high gear (2)
25. Where to lay your feet (3)
26. see 21 Across (5)
27. see 17 Down (4)
29. See 23 Across (2)
30. Ambrosini - Italian road racer pre 50’s (5)
32. Taiwanese scooters (5)
33. See 16 Down (5)
34. Yamaha 600 (5)
35. Stoppie (4)
36. Comic book FMX grab (8)
38. see 24 Across (3)
40. Low Profile (4)
43. see 36 Down (6)
44. Adams... FMX World Champ (4)
45. Malaysian Motorcycle Co (5)
47. Redding Brit GP Rider (5)
48. Chicken on the side sir? (5)
49. Very attracted to visor (5)
50. Long time off road (6)
51. Vintage Wolverhampton Motorcycle engineers (8)

Down
1. Movement(6)
2. Italian scooter (5)
3. Makes brake pads (3)
4. Wrap around engine (6, 6, 5)
5. Rickshaw type (3, 3)
6. Going in a hurry...but tut tut (8, 4)
7. Vintage british bike (3)
8. Good for braking? (3)
9. Angle double cylinders (1,4)
10. Turning against the grain (7, 8)
15. FMX godfather? (4, 7)
16 & 33 Acc hurry for teas (4)
17 & 27 acc Italian heavyweight (5)
22. MOT check (4,5)
28. wire wheels (5)
30. sliding purposefully (5)
31. fuel metering device (11)
32. Unconscious (1,1)
36 & 43 Acc Late 20’s Scott machine (8)
37. Freestyle Motocross for arse about dance (3, 3)
39. knight shield (6)
41. Rim (6)
42. Italian helmets (3)
43. Flying (6)
44. Nate (4)
45. Demak (4)
47. Scott (5)
48. Strip (3)
49. Bug (3)
50. Enduro (6)
51. Villiers (8)
We need volunteers who have a genuine interest in rider and motorcycle safety and biking issues. We need writers, photographers, promoters, event organisers, group & club members, businesses to help increase our reach, promote our information and name. We need you to contribute articles for THE LANCELOT, share our content over social media and promote our website. We need you to develop your own ideas and initiatives…put on your own events…promote open discussion on rider security amongst riders and friends. Please use the website to freely download, articles, posters and graphics to use at events, as handouts or on your premises. Create your own, send us a copy and we’ll add it to the site too. Raising rider awareness & improving biking safety has to be a collective effort and it has to be a collaboration and we all need to get involved and get engaged.

RIDE AWARE!/RIDE SAFE!

Enjoy the Ride - Avoid a Slide!

JOIN

HELI BIKERS

www.helibikes.co.uk/helibikers.html
Modifying...Accidents, Injuries & Treatment!

Motorcycle accidents largely occur for similar reasons, however the contributing factors can be extensive. A rider may lose control under braking for example...but the interesting element is not the actual loss of control but rather why there was one and what were the factors leading up to that!

Anything that affects the performance of the rider...or driver will have a direct impact on how they act, react and make judgements and decisions!

E.g. If someone were to drink alcohol and then get on a bike and ride off into the sunset...depending on how much alcohol they have drunk and how that has been metabolised by the body etc will determine the level to which the rider performance will be affected.

In many ways attitudes towards drinking and driving/riding has changed in many parts of the world...but in other parts there is still an ongoing issue. This is not solely a driver's negative contribution to road safety but many riders contribute also.

How many times have you changed your behaviour because of something that has happened to you or something that you may have heard about?

“My friend was killed by a drunk driver...so I'll never drink and drive again...!”

This is modifying behaviour, but anything you change because of something that you have learned may have a beneficial impact...just as modifying speeds or overtaking decisions or road positioning at junctions or bends or creating more space between you and other vehicles...etc!

When we take on board new information and modify our behaviour accordingly, then we have learned from the errors of ourselves and others.

As we extend this modifying approach to explaining why accidents occur and what elements were involved then we can also apply this to how injuries occur.

If we consider the dynamics involved during impacts; speeds, forces, angles of impact, collision object density and protective equipment and clothing, then we will know the factors involved and why injuries occur, when they occur and how best to minimise or avoid injuries.

This same modifying process is also applied to medical treatment in pre hospital & in hospital and during the subsequent recovery & rehabilitation therapies.

Medical intervention and treatment is constantly evolving...looking for best practice methods and best results in patients. Either through improving knowledge, techniques, equipment & technology!

E.g. A decade ago, if a rider sustained a traumatic leg injury with significant bone fractures, tissue and blood vessel damage...then there might be a higher probability that this would have resulted in an amputation of the limb...either as a direct result of the impact or due to medical intervention at the road side or in the hospital at a later stage.

However, alcohol is not the only performance inhibitor that may lead to accidents...and one of the few underestimated inhibitors is tiredness and fatigue which may have an even greater influence.

When riders and drivers make errors and misjudgements, for whatever reasons, there may be consequences of those actions. These consequences are not only legal & financial, but may also affect other people’s lives.
However, in modern day accidents with improving pre hospital treatment by medical crews, more efficient clinical systems and practices, better protective equipment to a certain degree and improved in hospital interventions, technology and surgery and rehabilitation, then there is a greater probability that the limb might be saved or reattached...Of course that is not always possible, but the future awaits more modifications and improving results for us all.

Again, this modification theme continues through to post surgery and post hospital recovery and rehabilitation for both physical injuries and psychological & emotional disorders.

Advances in therapies, methods and improving access will improve the recovery rate and recovery success...even having easier access to information at our fingertips with online specialist sources may assist anyone who is in need of attention.

When we as riders or drivers can modify our practices, we will alter our performance and affect our accident and injury probability, whilst knowing that medical interventions are modifying to provide improving care...or at least we hope so.

Advances in treatment are usually born out of dealing with tragic circumstances, be those traumatic injuries from road accidents, industrial accidents, personal injuries and conflicts...and in many ways these fuel the advances.

It is not something I would encourage anyone to test, however if anyone should have an accident, then try to have one in the distant future but for now the best course of action would be to modify your own practices and encourage others to do the same.

Provide access to good information, solid resources, good initial and recurrent training and share experiences amongst ourselves within the riding community but also further into the general community.

We can learn...We can modify...We can lead by example and we can teach!

### Behind The Music!

Again a big thank you for your contributions to this edition and their belief in this project.

Kevin Williams
Duncan MacKillop
Kevin Letchford
Mick Sturland
Breast Way Round

I look forward to more contributions for the next edition and to include some that didn’t make it to this one.

**We hope you enjoyed the show!**

### Making contacts & going it alone!

This last month I have been contacted by numerous people, not only in the UK, but also from Europe, USA and other parts of the world...all expressing an interest in using HELI BIKES material or even to possibly start up their own rider safety initiatives or even independent HELI BIKES ‘support’ groups.

It’s sometimes hard to gauge the reach and enthusiasm for HELI BIKES, especially when for many it may appear to be another ‘Safety Nazi’ program.

It is really encouraging that other riders in other areas whom I do not have direct contact with are wishing to engage with this and proceed further within their own communities...to act independently and to provide a good source of information & advice for local riders, develop new ideas and put on local events to showcase the risks and benefits of riding!

It should never be: “Do as I say!” but it should always be about: “Here is some information that may help you...It’s up to you!”

To that end I was very pleased to see a new group being developed on Facebook: **South Derbyshire & Leicestershire Heli Bikes**

I wish them best wishes and thank them for their support & enthusiasm.

**RIDE AWARE!/RIDE SAFE!**

Cheers

Alf
Decisions, Decisions!

Making a journey requires a choice...which mode of transport do I choose. Is it the bike... the car...the bus?

For some, there will always be the first choice, the preference and for some it will be their only choice, but is it the right choice?

Decision making error chains are primary causes of accidents and this chain is often started before the journey starts!

I have often written about the affects of weather & temperature on the stability of a ride or drive. E.g. If there is moisture present and the temperature falls to near zero degrees then there will be a high risk of road icing.

When starting a journey we should be taking in as much information as possible in order to make a go/no go decision. In the above example going by bike might be the wrong decision or certainly riding without any regard for the conditions and without modifying your riding style may indeed lead to a loss of control and having an accident.

So many of the accidents that the emergency services attend, and we on air ambulance units, see many of the serious road traffic collision where errors of judgement were made and commonly where inappropriate mode of transport was chosen.

It is not the case that you should never ride your bike in inclement or deteriorating weather, however when choosing to do so there should be more gathering and consideration of available information.

It is about making the right decision at the right time and being able to review that decision at any stage and determine whether to proceed or change.

This decision making loop, of sorts, should be present in almost everything we do, but especially when riding motorcycles.

Some would argue that this is over thinking things. “I don’t have time to do all that!” But really there isn’t a time issue at all...it should be a constant process and actually we’re already doing it for the most part. What we need to learn is to fine tune this decision making process.

The next time you go for a ride or drive, consider the available information: the weather, your health, the journey, is the vehicle suitable...etc.

Sometimes it’s right to take the bike...I know I would want to and it would be my first choice, but sometimes the ‘bus' is the best option. It’s better to make this decision than to take a ride in an ambulance!
Recipe for self preservation!
LOOK out for other road users and verify they have seen you too!
Make good eye contact!

I SEE YOU!
DO YOU SEE ME?

helibikes.co.uk
Do Emergency Crews Care?

The emergency services are largely tasked with responding to emergency situations, be those of medical, risk to life or property, security or public order and enforcement of laws. Depending on the type and severity of the emergency will determine the type and level of response.

In terms of traumatic accidents and road collisions the emergency services will tend to despatch the available and appropriate resources all independent of each other, however they do liaise towards a common goal. Those predominantly being, Ambulance, Fire & Police…and if appropriate specialist response units will be despatched such as the local Air Ambulance (Helicopter EMS) or in some cases S.A.R. & Police helicopters or specialist medical and rescue teams by land resources.

Over recent years, the emergency responses have evolved and become evermore sophisticated and capable of delivering a reactive service that meets the demands of the new challenges, however rarely are there sufficient or rather wasted resources. The population gets bigger and the services are called upon more and more with only finite budgets and resources available at a given time.

The Air Ambulance operations all over the globe have also evolved with varying and specialist capabilities and this has been largely determined by the operating geography and the size & isolation of different populations.

In the UK, the Air Ambulances are at the forefront of prehospital medicine and rapid response, with many units now operating with medical crews consisting of Paramedics and Doctors who have specialist training and experience in pre hospital care, and no more is this put to the test when responding to road collisions.

I sometimes look at myself, my air ambulance colleagues and colleagues within the rest of the emergency services and I wonder…DO WE CARE?

Generally speaking, are we affected by the traumatic scenes, do we feel sorrow for those involved, do we empathise with those injured or with the loved ones who are delivered the sad truths of what we see? Again the answer is YES…What we see and deal with can be very difficult to come to terms with at times and we may be truly saddened by what we see!

However, are we also desensitised somewhat to what we see and is this more so with more years of experience? Is this actually a good thing? Well YES... and NO!

As emergency crews who routinely respond to traumatic incidents, we are clearly affected by what we see, but we must be able to put that to one side, temporarily at least, in order to be able to deal with the given situation. If we break down, then we are no good to anyone…not ourselves and not the patient or situation! By the very nature of our roles, we know that as soon as we clear down from one incident, we may be called to another equally, if not a more severe incident soon afterwards…and yet again we need to be able to disassociate ourselves in order to deal with the next emergency!

Well the answer is undoubtedly…YES!...but maybe not in the way that you might think.

No one is immune from being affected by what they see and the injuries and fatalities they encounter, and individual crews deal with it in different ways...it is purely subjective, however these days there is a greater awareness from within the services of this and greater support and debriefing is becoming more common to assist crews.
When arriving at a scene emergency crews tend to perform their specialist role...‘they do their thing’ and also work with each other and liaise in terms of operation and command in order to satisfy the requirement. We tend to look at the situation, the scene...rather than the individual person per se.

Of course we deal with and attend to individual people in terms of injury or situation but we tend not to personalise this...of course we sympathise and we care because we want to help someone in their time of need...but we have ‘A Duty Of Care’ For the most part it protects us and provides you with better care, the less emotionally involved we are, the better we perform.

However ask any crew how they would react if they attended a family member or close friend who had been involved in a traumatic accident and it would be very hard to resist being personally involved!

I suppose I am talking about professionals and professionalism and how that translates into dealing with pre hospital and hospital emergency department scenarios.

I see this every time I respond to any emergency with my colleagues...I see the ‘CARE’ they give...to the patient, the victim, the property & the situation! If we didn’t care, then I could not see a reason why we would want to do our roles, however we leave our personal thoughts away from the scene...for the most part at least.

Do we judge? Well...sometimes YES and sometimes NO! We can all make assumptions and judgements on what has caused a particular incident or how it might have been avoided, however that is largely where it stops.

Judgements are best served away from incident scenes and by others with specific roles, certainly from our medical roles...judgement of fault, or culpability is not our concern...but how we judge a scene or the cause of an incident may assist us to provide improved care.

If we know what has happened and why it occurred, then we may have a better understanding of what injuries may have been sustained or what injuries may be hidden from obvious view.

Do all emergency crews have sympathy with injured parties? Well, the truth is YES & NO! In terms of motorcycle accidents, some accidents and injuries are completely avoidable and this may even lead to some individuals having ‘less’ sympathy.

I mean this in general terms...not that it affects the treatment of that person or patient, but it does generally go towards the general opinion of the resulting consequences be those the cause of the accident or the severity of injuries.

When I think of the emergency services I think of dedicated, professional and yes caring individuals who do their best for the rest of us in our hour of need and who sometimes wished we could help ourselves more. Some show this at scenes and some are reserved, some take this with them and some are able to shrug off what they witness.

Some form opinions and some judge and make judgements, have bias for and against...and some will think we’re all lunatics for getting on two wheels..."You know what we call you lot don’t you?...Organ Donors!"...and some will think bikes are fab...live and let live!

Some will do their job and do something else in their spare time...and some will be spurred on to form safety campaigns and initiatives to help riders and all road users.

Now...is that caring or is that just plain old crazy?
I can't actually remember the first time I heard about ‘Biker Down!’, but in May of 2012 I found myself heading to Ashford fire station in Kent to find out just what all the fuss was about.

It was there that I met Jim Sanderson, a firefighter, very enthusiastic motorcyclist and the man that had the vision that became ‘Biker Down!’. I don’t think that vision came to him in a particularly biblical way, but I do know that it was born out of a deep desire to do something to protect fellow bikers.

His original thoughts were fairly straightforward; use his Fire Service experience of crash scenes and mix it with basic first aid training that bikers could use to help out fallen friends. So the first seeds of ‘Biker Down!’ were sown….

Jim had very soon worked out two distinct parts of a presentation. The first part would look at how to manage the scene of a crash, based on Fire Service principles.

This stuff isn’t rocket science, just a set of very straightforward things that (preferably) ought to be done in the right order to help ensure that you, the casualty and others are safe. When you consider that some motorists fail to see big red lorries with flashing blue lights on them, you can see that how little protection your bike would give you from other traffic.....

Jim was able to call on the experience of some his Kent colleagues who are motorsport marshals and who have dealt with many, many bike and car crashes in that time. With their help Jim put together a very practical first aid session that shows how simple procedures can help keep someone alive until skilled medical help arrives.

As bikers we could well find ourselves at a crash scene with little more in the way of resources than the clothes we are wearing, but that doesn’t mean that we should feel helpless; giving someone an airway so that they can start breathing again need be no more complicated than tilting their head back slightly to lift their tongue off the back of their throat. The human body is an amazing bit of kit and once we understand a bit about how it works we can do a lot to maintain life until that person can get definitive medical care.

I guess the ‘big issue’ for bikers is crash helmet removal; Do I? Don’t I? When? How? All these are real concerns but, again, an understanding of the human body and a bit of hands-on practice can make all the difference to someone’s knowledge and confidence. Only days after a lady came on one of our courses in Bucks she helped an off-duty paramedic remove her son’s crash helmet. But I’m getting ahead of myself....

With the two parts of the presentation sorted, Jim chanced upon Kevin Williams. Kevin can be variously described as (in no particular order), a motorcycle trainer, an academic and a writer on all things motorbike (see his Facebook page ‘Survival Skills’).

He kindly agreed to provide a third module to add to the fledgling ‘Biker Down’ presentation, entitled ‘The Science of Being Seen’. Though not as technical as it may sound, this module examines the value of conspicuity aids and also reveals the limitations of human eyes and brains and how these limitations can cause ‘SMIDSY’ type collisions.

So it was this three-part presentation that Jim, his colleagues and Kevin began delivering to riders in Kent. Thanks to Jim’s tenacity courses started to fill and word started to spread. It wasn’t long before their collective efforts resulted in ‘Biker Down’ being deservedly awarded the very prestigious Prince Michael of Kent Road Safety Award (among others) and the rest, as they say, is history!

After my visit in 2012 to watch a course I had no doubts that this was something that Bucks Fire & Rescue Service could and should be delivering. I was lucky to find first one (Colin), then a second (Chris) ‘volunteer’ to deliver the first aid module on each evening, though I don’t think they (and I) quite realised how quickly things would escalate! But I’m getting ahead of myself again.....
We delivered our first Bucks and Milton Keynes ‘Biker Down!’ course in February of 2013, to members of our local MAG group. Using our Facebook page (‘Biker Down Bucks & MK’) and emailing local bike clubs, we soon generated more interest and bookings and we ended up training 313 people in 2013, on 31 courses. That far exceeded our expectations, but also showed us that bikers really want this training. Feedback from these sessions also underlines how much this training is valued by participants and the level of ‘word-of-mouth’ bookings is a further testament to that.

2014 has continued in the same vein; bookings keep coming in and courses fill up pretty quickly. We will train our 500\textsuperscript{th} biker sometime April, something we are immensely proud of.

Our neighbouring Fire & Rescue Services in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire have started their own ‘Biker Down!’ sessions and other Services around the country have picked it up too. Details of all the locations of courses across the country can be found on the Facebook page ‘Biker Down UK’, which Jim keeps updated in what little spare time he has!

I can think of nothing worse than standing watching a fallen rider, perhaps a friend or family member, struggling to stay alive after a crash and you can do nothing but watch in complete helplessness. There IS actually quite a bit that you can do that may keep them alive until medical help arrives and the ‘Biker Down!’ courses show you that.

Get your name down for a course now.

Keith Wheeler
Road Safety Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADVERTISE YOUR PRODUCT OR BUSINESS IN THE LANCELOT...PLEASE EMAIL: news@helibikes.co.uk for details & pricing!

HELBI BIKES Supporters & Selfies!

Over recent months we’ve been able to send out some of our merchandise and promotional items. It’s been great to have photos sent back to us of supporters wearing them with pride.
If you have ever received any HELIBIKES items, either a T Shirt, Sew on Patch, Stickers, Badges, Pens, Keyrings etc then we’d love you to take a photo of you and it and send it into us. We’ll add it to the ‘Supporters’ album on our main Facebook HB page.
We Can Do It Too!

We enjoy going to bike shows and also run an event based Facebook page advertising shows and events, ‘Biker nights, Shows, Rideouts and Events’ so it seemed like an obvious idea that we did a show of our own.

In our area we ride with other bikers from our region, attending other shows and rallies in the south-west. We also man our own stall at some of the local shows. Organising our show was basically straightforward, first we had to find a venue, then contact the local council and fill in an on-line application.

In response to the on-line application we then had to fill out risk assessment forms, management plans and a detailed site plan. Next was to contact the local emergency services to notify them of our event and finally decide on charities and contact them to make sure they would be happy with us collecting on their behalf.

Once the permission was granted by the council we then had to confirm with the charities and obtain the charity numbers. It was then time to sort out sponsors and donations, stall holders and commercial traders, invite other groups and clubs, sort the public liability insurance, permit for collection buckets, organise first aid, sort posters and flyers to advertise and collect prizes for the draw.

As of now there have not been any pitfalls in organising the event, we won’t really know until the day if we could have done anything differently and then we will know for next time.

Hopefully it will be a big success for Bideford.

Lisa Elston and Terry King

Twisted Iron

“When you do things from your soul, other people really dig that shit!”

After a few years of helping to organise some very successful charity events for other biking organisations such as Chinnor Bike Dayz, Russell and Beverly Cort decided to organise an event that was their own. In addition to the four other bikes they already owned, Russell had bought a 1970, Harley-Davidson Ironhead Sportster XLCH 900 and was building it in the garden shed every spare moment he had. It had always been his passion to engineer and build vehicles, and then he came up with the name Twisted Iron.

Twisted Iron is for those ‘garage artists’ who sweat long and hard to create their own unique motorcycle. They have a vision and spend every spare minute building their dream. And built, modified (not production custom),

Lord Damian-Wass - Completed Buell Boardtracker

Twisted Iron is for those of us who have a vision of what we want to ride and then go and build it – a community for like-minded shed dwellers!!
Starting out with the Twisted Iron Facebook page this year, the couple invited people to upload photos of their builds and say a bit about them. The page soon had over 200 followers in just couple of weeks, which then turned into 1000's, many of them from overseas such as Sweden, America and Australia.

Photos of some really lovely builds were uploaded in different stages of completion, from Harley’s to Triumphs. Realising that it was important to build the brand, Twisted Iron launched a t-shirt and had a friend put up a website in order to sell them.

Planning is still in the early stages, but the couple aim to launch a local event in Great Missenden in September called “Twisted Iron The Happening”.

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The Consultant’s Diagnosis!

Dear HELI BIKES supporters...

I return after a short interval due to work pressures. “Work pressures” you lot shout - what do I know about work pressures....well let me first answer the fact that does anyone else in the medical world work to a 4 hour “sort them out” rule?

This 4 hour rule is something the department of health put forward to make sure patients were seen as quickly as possible - don’t get me wrong - I don’t totally disagree with it!

Previously before the rule, patients sat in corridors for days before being seen so not a bad thing - however this 4 hour rule has become a managerial centred target rather than a patient focused one!

Seeing everyone in 4 hours is simply not feasible – if we get a major trauma patient it will not take just 4 hours to sort them out in the emergency department and if we are concentrating on a critically ill patient then I am really sorry but person with 5 day history of sore foot will have to wait!!

I know as motorcyclists the vast majority of you lot understand the term/word “emergency” however please help me educate others before the NHS fails entirely! If you are using terms such as “sore”, “several days/months” or I’ll “pop in to get it checked out” use your GP or other primary care facilities – almost inevitably it is not an emergency! NHS rant over.
THE LANCELOT

Now over the years both in pre-hospital care and within the hospital I have noticed there is one thing that really annoys motorcyclist if they have an accident.

No it is not the state of the bike – it is usually “DO NOT CUT MY LEATHERS OFF”. I haven’t had to sedate someone yet for not allowing us to get their leathers off however it has been close at times.

Now we get how much money is devoted to looking good on the road and best of all I appreciate bikers who wear the correct protective clothing (the right gear will save your life!) however let me explain why the whole “cutting of the leathers” is important.

We have a term in the HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) world called “skin to scoop”.

This relates to taking all clothes off the patient and then putting them on the “scoop” stretcher. This is not simply to show all that you still wear spider man underpants or worse!

We are paid as enhanced care to make sure that we do not miss any injury however trivial it may be – although good we are not that good – we DO NOT HAVE XRAY VISION.

So that is why we need to “strip” you (want of a better term) in order to fully check everything for injuries – obvious or hidden.

This is turn speeds up your clinical journey in the hospital. So please work with us – I know it is not ideal but there is a really good reason why emergency services will cut off clothing.

On the same note cold is bad for trauma healing and survival – so if cold tell us – we can wrap you up as “snug as a bug” etc. We have special heater blankets and the helicopter has heating!

Finally still awaiting suggestions of gastronomic kebab houses around the country.....come on ladies and gentleman please support your local kebab houses and tell us about how good they are!!

Signing off for now – remember ride safely – kebabs – eat one – don’t become one!

Dr “Shish” Masud
Consultant in Emergency Medicine & Pre-Hospital Care

JUNE 2014

How well do you know your motorcycle?

by Phil Jennings

Do you know it as well as you know the bloke you give a slightly embarrassed nod to every morning whilst walking the dog, do you know it as well as you know your own mum, or do you know it as intimately as you know a lover?

Do you know what makes your bike tick? That’s tick as in work, as opposed to it having badly adjusted tappets.

I’m a life long lover of motorcycles, the first hands on experience I had, was taking apart a Norton 750 Commando engine, with help from my biking next door neighbour, at the age of 7. Once it was in bits, he told me to put it back together again, so being a 7 year old with an attention span measured in nano seconds, I left out the heavy and difficult to refit parts, and basically bolted the crankcases back together, and stuck the cylinders and head back on, and called it a day. Leaving the crank, con rods, pistons, valves, and gearbox internals in a bucket. But it did fire up my enthusiasm.

Move forward 10 or so years to my first motorcycle, or moped to be more precise. A Suzuki ER50. Resplendent with its 5hp of snarling death. A single cylinder 2 stroke. It oiled its spark plug regularly. Regularly enough that I wore out the spark plug thread, and needed it Heli-coiling, which meant taking the head off.... Terrified doesn’t fully describe how I felt undoing those four 10mm nuts... But, as I lifted it off, no springs or cogs flew out, and I was looking at the top of the piston, caked in black muck. The engineering shop who were fitting the heli-coil for me, was run by a motorcyclist. He looked, sucked air in through his teeth, took a drag on his fag, and said ‘You’ll need to decoke that before you put the head back on’. I didn’t have the faintest idea what he was talking about. I stood. Scratched my head. I pressed on the kick start and watched the piston going up and down. Gave myself a massive shock off of the HT lead, and got covered in petrol from the drain crew on the carburettor. I went inside, and asked what a decoke was. Armed with screwdrivers, newly acquired knowledge and wire brushes, I set about removing the carbon from the top of the piston, and the exhaust port....
This small piece of knowledge, coupled with a small amount of routine maintenance, and a gas tight spark plug thread, meant that my pride and joy was a good 5mph faster on the way home, as the exhaust port was actually the correct size, and the compression wasn’t altered by the build up of carbon on the piston crown, and it wasn’t getting quite so hot. I was hooked!

There is no better way of knowing your motorcycle, than actually doing some work on it yourself. There are a few reasons why it’s a good idea to have a go at some of the simple stuff. It can be fun, well, to some of us it can. It’ll save you a few quid.

You’ll know that all of the work that needed doing has actually been done. And, perish the thought, your pride and joy breaks down miles from home, you may have enough knowledge to effect a repair, rather than sitting resplendent on the bottom of the AA’s priority list for several hours, waiting for them to turn up with the wrong recovery vehicle...

So, you think you are a mechanical incompetent? No knowledge at all? And there is nothing you can do yourself on your bike? You leave it to the local bike shop to service it regularly for you. Well, once every 5 years IS regular isn’t it? There is still plenty you can do yourself, you can get on your hands and knees, and look into the engine sight glass with a little torch, and see if you have any oil in your engine, easy, the owners manual tells you where it is, there is usually a line next to it saying the level the oil should be at. Chances are, if your bike is reasonably modern, and doesn’t ‘mark its territory’ every time you park up, its probably not going to lose much oil. If it has, learn how to top it up.

The oil is the lifeblood of your engine. It gets pumped around the engines veins and arteries, it keeps the engine cool, it keeps metal to metal joints lubricated, it keeps metal components apart, it reduces friction. Without oil your engine will die. Just like your own blood, oil doesn’t live forever. From the moment oil is put into an engine, it picks up dirt, and other contaminants, it spends its life being mashed up by the reciprocating parts of your engine, heating it, squashing it, and chopping it up. So, although it passes through a filter, eventually it’ll need replacing, as it just won’t be able to do its job properly anymore. Oil that’s not working properly will reduce the life of your engine. Keep it topped up to the proper level, and change it, or have it changed, at the proper intervals, along with the filter, and your engine will live longer, and work better.

Check your tyre pressures. A simple LCD pressure gauge, available in all sorts of automotive out of town, silver sheds, for a few quid will do. Check them at least once a week. Check them cold, before you’ve ridden it anywhere. Tyres have a weird habit. They stay at the same pressure for years. You check them.... 36psi.... and again, 36psi..... and again and again.... Then one day you hop on the bike, and you wobble off down the road, and for some inexplicable reason, your front tyre has decided to let 15psi go overnight, leaving you on a bike that handles like a Blancmange. Keep the tyres inflated to somewhere close to the manufacturers recommendations, and you’ll have a bike that handles like it should, uses less petrol, and doesn’t wear its tyres out every 1500 miles.

If its liquid cooled (a clue here, but not exhaustive, is a radiator at the front, as it could be an oil cooler). Check your owners manual, find out where the reservoir is for the cooling system, its often found inside the fairing, or behind a side panel, lurking behind some magic secret door to Narnia. If your bike is liquid cooled, it definitely needs liquid in it. The water is as important as the oil. Without it, your bike will eventually die. There will be upper and lower level marks on or near the reservoir, keep the liquid between these marks, and all should be well. Check the levels cold.

Fuel. Sounds obvious... but its your engines food. Its like a Mars Bar to you, instant energy... Petrol is changing, its not like the heavily leaded stuff of yore, that actually smelt like petrol, it’s a mixture of petrol, fairy liquid and alcohol. Well, ok, not actual fairy liquid, but detergents, and Ethanol. Most forecourt petrol these days is getting up towards what Europe call E10. 10% Ethanol. Remember this, its important....Ethanol eats things, like plastic and rubber. The higher the percentage of ethanol, the quicker it eats it, and it also evaporated off. Petrol straight out of the pump these days is virtually clear.
Leave it a few weeks and it looks like a first thing in the morning pee. Dark yellow. It’s gone off…. It can make starting your bike more difficult, it can make the bike feel ‘lumpy’ until its warmed up. It also contains water, not intentionally, but its in there.

Try if you can to use as much of the petrol in your tank, as often as you can. This will help avoid water collecting in the bottom of your tank, and making it rust, which causes its own problems. Because of the ethanol, its worth casting your eyes over the fuel lines you can actually see through the Tupperware, and the seal around the inside of your fuel cap. The pipes and seals are designed to keep the petrol in. And that’s where you want it.

If you have a super-moto, or an old ‘adventure’ style Honda, with a plastic tank, E10 petrol has been known to dissolve the plastic fuel tanks, check regularly. Evaporating fuel can leave a sticky residue behind it, so be aware, that on bikes with Carbs, if you turn the fuel off when you leave it in the garage, it can be an idea to turn the fuel off outside, and leave the bike ticking over until it runs out.

This can help stop the carbs filling up with a ‘varnish’ that bungs up all of the small passages in the carb. Its not possible to do this with many of the more modern bikes, especially with fuel injection, as most don’t have a fuel tap…..

Lubricate… Again, it sounds obvious, but there are a multitude of cables, joints and linkages on your motorcycle, that will benefit massively from a drop of oil every now and again. Footrest pivots, gear changes, hand lever pivot points, locks and hinges will all benefit massively, and operate more smoothly if they are lubricated regularly.

A badly adjusted chain will wear your sprockets out, a chain that’s covered in grit and dirt will wear the chain out. A stitch in time on your chain will, without doubt, prolong its life. Check your manual for the recommended free play.

Don’t forget to check it a few times around its travel, chains stretch, and you could have the free play perfect in one area, and it be too tight in another. But whatever you do, make sure the chain is lubricated! Wipe it off with a rag once a week, and give it a coat of Chain Lube. Make sure you get a specific product, or you’ll be wiping oil off of the back of your crash helmet for a week when it gets flung off of the back sprocket as you ride.

You CAN do all of the above yourself. None of the regular maintenance tasks are particularly difficult. But, if they do sound too tricky for you, as a motorcyclist, you are part of one of the biggest, and friendliest, families in the world. If you don’t where to start with maintenance, I’d be prepared to bet that one of your riding mates does. So ask. Perhaps they’ll pop round one evening and tighten your chain for the price of a cuppa, or do an oil change for coffee and a bacon roll, while you observe, and perhaps help.

There is no better way of getting to know how your bike works, than learning how to look after bits of it yourself. And if you look after it regularly, it’ll work better, last longer, and cost you less.

You just need a basic tool kit, and possibly a Haynes or Clymer manual. Oh, and some Swarfega. And for goodness sake, don’t use the kitchen tea towels to dry your hands after you’ve washed them. The maintenance is easy. Explaining to the Mrs, that you have written off another towel is where the trouble usually starts.....
Riding To The Wall!

by Emma Freyne

The ride to the wall RTTW is now in its 7th official year and takes place this year on 4th October 2014. It all began in 2007 when an ex serving soldier called Martin Dickinson visited the national memorial arboretum in Staffordshire on armistice day to lay a wreath at the memorial with some of his Harley Davidson chapter. It was here that the idea of the ride to the wall began..............7 years later it has grown from the first organized ride in 2008 with a group of 1100 motorcyclists growing in number and popularity to last year in 2013 when 20,000 people attended so far raising £218,000 for the upkeep of the national memorial arboretum.

The arboretum itself is situated in the heart of the nation amongst 50,000 trees and 160 memorials, the wall itself is made from 200,000 Portland stone faced bricks, 45 metres in diameter containing the names of service men and women of the armed forces and merchant services who have lost their lives in conflict since the end of the second world war. This is an overpowering sight.

We have attended every year so far and as soon as the annual leave is allowed to be booked our requests go in, this is an event we will never miss!

The opening of the registration for start points which are all over the country opens in March and on this date the web site goes crazy as we sit trying to book from the point we need, this year we have once again managed to get Drayton Manor. This start point is very popular as the standard bearers and RTTW organisers ride from here, all 15 of us in our group will be joining here, we pay £10 per person to register and all of this money goes directly to the arboretum. This year we are all staying in the same hotel on the Fosse Way for two days so as you can see this is an important event for us as a group.

Our weekend always starts on a Friday when we all finish work, we would have packed all our weekend gear days beforehand in anticipation and the bike will definitely be ready.

We all wake on the Saturday morning meet for breakfast, gear up and make our way to Drayton Manor with what seems like every bike in the country on the roads & nodding at everyone can give you neck ache, also you start to resemble a nodding dog, so a leg stick out is the preferred option here!

Arriving at Drayton Manor is surreal, very quiet and respectful we chat and mingle with the other riders asking: “How far have you ridden, what the ride was like? Who did you serve with? What’s your connection to the RTTW?” etc. Most people are emblazoned with military badges and berets so all are easily recognisable to each other as to whom they served or are still serving, the atmosphere is buzzing with chat and laughter, tea is limited on this bit as the last thing you want is a full bladder on a bike in a ride amongst thousands!

It’s a little cold as its October but every year the sun always shines on this day everyone always comments on this but it’s true. (Pack the Shades) A quick brief on group riding is spoken over the mega phone, usual things about distance and staggering the riders, yet nothing about behaviour, as there just doesn’t need to be, we all know why we are here!

The time has come to leave, gear and helmets on bikes idling, the head of the group starts to beep and rev their engines and the noise is incredible! I learnt here what the expression “rolling thunder” meant!
We’re off………..we start our marshalled road blocked route to the national arboretum and the streets are lined with people waving and cheering, each bridge is full of people doing the same, a good 12 miles later as we all know we are getting closer our beeping stops, and we respectfully ride into the arboretum amongst a sea of motorcycles totalling last year 20,000.

The whole of the arboretum is full with little room left, as the group we are in are the last to enter. Martin Dickinson and the other dignitaries we ride with arrive at the front of the wall ready for the service and spitfire fly past; we park up and join the masses.

During this part of the day I can honestly say that there is not a dry eye in the place and every one of us has our own reasons why, an arm over your shoulder may well appear or yours may lean towards another rider irrelevant of whether you know them or not.

I asked my fellow riders to text me 1 word to describe this moment as I was writing an article for the Lancelot and these are what I received grateful, Humble, Awesome, Moving, Tearful, Belonging, Inspiring, Comrade, Overpowering, all of which I agreed with.

The day is spent after the service taking in the arboretum and how beautiful it is, walking up to the wall which towers above and finding the name of someone you know and have served alongside, for me I have not experienced this but those I ride with have, 11 of our group are ex serving soldiers of the duke of Edinburgh’s royal regiment, they take the time they need at the wall and we spend the rest of the afternoon taking in the atmosphere. I sloped off to find the ambulance service memorial, which I had heard they had and paid my respects there.

After such a emotionally charged day we struggle to remember where we have parked so every year we stay until about 1800 hrs sit on the tables outside the café and when we can see a little group of stray bikes that belong to us we wander over and gear up for the ride back to the hotel for the Saturday night, we socialise and swap stories as we always do some of which are told year after year.

This is a ride that I will always be proud to ride with, the people involved and the organization is just beyond anything and last year they were awarded with the queen’s award for voluntary services.

Riding in a group this size is breath taking and very emotional as everyone who rides among you has a story to tell, age is irrelevant and the photos people ride with are a great way for them to pay their respects.

www.rttw.org

www.thenma.org.uk

With thanks to those I ride with and Martin Dickinson for input and photos.

I SEE YOU! DO YOU SEE ME? refers to a rider establishing eye contact with a driver to gauge each other’s intentions. If the driver is not looking at you… you cannot be sure they have seen you! But it is more than that…It is about looking for emerging hazards, vehicle movement and closing spaces etc. Be ahead and be prepared!
45 Years of Trail Riding!

by Eric Mulraney

Motorcycling for me began in 1956, when at the age of sixteen, I bought my first bike. It was a road bike, and at that time any thoughts of riding anywhere but the roads never entered my head. The blokes I worked with at the time convinced me that it might be a good idea to join a club. Their thinking was that it might instil into me some sort of discipline and road sense, and thus could prolong my life.

I joined the club, but stayed on the edge of club matters for a few years until the early 1960’s when I began to get involved in things like trials, scrambles and grass track racing. This side of motorcycling (the off road bit) began to grab my attention more and more. Then somebody (there’s always a “somebody”, isn’t there? Suggested that we should get hold of “trail bikes” and ride some of the green lanes in our area. I live in Wiltshire and we are blessed with many such lanes.

Thus began an activity that has been a huge part of my life. The bikes we used to start with were older British bikes (because they were cheaper and we had no money), and they were really converted road bikes. Reliability was always an issue the things only had to smell water and they would pack up. Chains were little more than bicycle chains, no wonder they showed their displeasure at the treatment they were receiving, constantly came off the sprockets, or worse still, broke. The result of all this was that we were spending as much time trying to coax the bikes back into life as we were riding them!

Gradually, foreign bikes took over and now the Japanese offerings ruled the roost. Present day trail bikes are quiet, most have electric starts and are really reliable.

Back in the mid 1960’s, a lot of lanes and tracks weren’t well defined on the OS maps. My knowledge built up over the years, and as I’ve been blessed with a good memory, most of that knowledge has stuck.

In my early days of trail riding, pretty much any green lane was open to everyone. Over the years, to go along with other aspects of life, more and more legislation has crept in, with the result that green lanes fall broadly into one of the three categories. The first is lanes classified as footpaths, as the name suggests these are for people on foot. Next along is bridleways. Again, the name gives the clue; these are for people on horseback, and for those on foot.

These two are not for the motorcyclist. The third category is byways these are open to all traffic, but traffic is subject to road traffic regulations.

This means that ALL trail bikes using byways must be registered, taxed, mot tested and insured (if applicable), and comply with construction and use regulations. It goes without saying that the rider must hold the appropriate license. That is not to say that byways are the sole preserve of motorcyclists. We share the use of byways with ramblers and horse riders.

So what we (the trail riders) have seen over the years is a huge decrease in the mileage of lanes available to us. A great loss to us came when Oxfordshire county council closed the ridgeway to all traffic. The ridgeway is an ancient road running from Alton Barnes in Wiltshire right through to Streatley. In the 1970’s I, together with my companions, attended two ridgeway enquiries.

Both were held at public expense (well you wouldn’t want it any other way would you?) with the intention of closing the ridgeway. Motorcyclists and others put up a spirited defence, so much so that in both cases, the inspector decided that there was no case for closure! Enough was enough for the OCC and so a few years later they closed it anyway. The net effect of this meant that other lanes in the area got used a bit more.

I together with my companions, now all in our seventies, have had so much pleasure from trail riding over the years. We go to places that “normal people” (as we call them) can never visit. Sometimes it’s a bit of a battle to get along, particularly when the weather is unkind, but there’s always a sense of achievement when we get to the far end of a lane.
I have read of conflict between motorcyclists and ramblers but the only cross words I have ever experienced came just a few months ago, in a byway just outside Lambourn.

We met a lady (?) leading a pony, upon which was a child. As usual, we stopped, shut the motors off, and waited till the pony had passed us. To our amazement, the lady (?) tore into us like we were the devil incarnate!!

I spent my whole working life in the motor trade, and I reckon I know some bad language, but I learnt some new words that day! To cap it all, her parting words were “you’re all too ******* old anyway”. The child (it was a little girl) didn’t bat an eyelid, neither did the pony, so maybe that sort of language was common place in the household.

When you’re dying...we’re flying!...We’ve been training, If you need saving!

As well as HELI BIKES providing information to riders about accident/injury causes & avoidance...it is also about explaining some of the processes involved when responding to and dealing with motorcycle accidents.

This is not to say that this is a one way street...in fact, another aspect of this initiative is to promote open discussion about safer riding practices amongst riders and also to learn from the riding community in order to help the emergency services better serve you in your hour of need.

I often talk about new designs of motorcycle clothing and equipment with my colleagues and explain how they may benefit the rider...but also how we in the emergency services can take that information and improve patient care or efficiency of dealing with patients at the roadside.

It doesn’t stop there either. I have, for a long time, accepted donations of used clothing, equipment, boots, helmets, etc to help with training of medics in accident scenarios and also provide a better understanding of how protective clothing may or may not function in the real world.

Sometimes I produce equipment test videos, which are available on the youtube channel: HELIBIKESTV and sometimes I film mock accident scenarios with donated equipment...which is cut off the ‘patient’...all of this we can then review afterwards to hone our skills and discuss improvements and learning points.

When actually dealing with an emergency situation, we often review the whole job when we come back to base.

We then are able to draw upon this information when we set up training scenarios, where we are training and testing treatment procedures and best practices.

This particular scenario was a rider who came off the bike and slid on the ground and was partially ran over by a car with severe arm & pelvic injuries and minor head injuries.

...Now to set up the next scenario!...
To receive THE LANCELOT send an email to: news@helibikes.co.uk and state: “ADD ME” or Download it directly from the website at: www.helibikes.co.uk/thelancelot.html

HOW DO YOU RIDE ON THE ROAD?
ARE YOU IN CONTROL?
WHAT IMPRESSION DO OTHER ROAD USERS HAVE OF YOUR RIDING?...
WHAT IMPRESSION DO YOU HAVE OF THEIR DRIVING?...

PULL FROM PERIL!

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TO PLACE AN ADVERTISEMENT HERE AS EITHER:
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1/2 Page
or
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Email news@helibikes.co.uk For Prices!
Are You a PEEPING TOM?...

Whether I’m driving or riding, I always make a point of looking around my road environment to spot early hazards or look for hidden dangers or potential situations!...Just put it down to my slight personal paranoia!

I’m constantly scanning all around me...in front, to the sides and yes...behind me too! I’m looking at other vehicles...bikes & bicycles and pedestrians...whether they’re on the road...or not.

I acknowledge what I can see...and wonder what I can’t see!

E.g. I’m approaching a queue of slow moving traffic with a mix of cars, vans and lorries. I’m on a minor, winding road with many property entrances. At certain points there is a gap in oncoming traffic and space to reenter the queue further ahead.

Why do I not choose to overtake the traffic, when other riders may easily want to? What am I thinking of that stops me from making a ‘safe’ overtake.

Well it’s a combination of factors, but the following gives an insight!

1. My long view of the road ahead is partially obstructed. I cannot see vehicles coming from a bend...especially...a left hand bend...obscured by vehicles and a right bend obscured by vehicles and side verges & vegetation!

2. Vehicles may suddenly emerge from property entrances to either merge with the queue or cut across it...and this is compounded by greater likelihood during the rush hour traffic.

3. Vehicles doing U-Turns. Especially so in stationary traffic, vehicles may suddenly pull across my path.

4. Vehicles may close gaps which I want to sneak into or may drive closer to the centreline, thus closing the gap between the rider and oncoming traffic...whether the rider is stationary or not.

5. Driver profiling! (I’ll discuss this more later)...do I get an uneasy feeling that the drivers ahead have either not seen me or will obstruct my movement in some way.

6. I’m in no rush! In fact I rarely am, so I do not use higher speeds around slow or stationary traffic. Be that overtaking or filtering through. I tend to make gradual movements and progress through/past traffic, giving myself lots of space and margin for anyones error. I always say to myself..."I’m going slow, but still going a lot faster than these queuing cars!"

I often see other riders ahead of me (as I did on the morning of writing this article) making their way through traffic...some being cautious and some being...well let’s just say...enthusiastic, and some that are generally cautious and making slow progress but then who lunge for an overtake and narrowly avoid an accident or were plain lucky that a vehicle didn’t emerge from around the bend.

It is so easy to make errors in judgement when around slow moving or stationary traffic, and I’ve certainly made a few howlers over the years, but many incidents that the emergency services deal with and that occur in these situations are for the most part a combination of riding error and driver poor observation.

One technique which I have used for many years is to try to identify potential hazards from other road users. I use ‘Driver Profiling’ to determine whether they are a potential threat to the stability of my ride.

I look at their driving speeds, road positions, vehicle spacing, observation of other road users and use of their mirrors & indicators. I check whether they have foreign number plates or generally seem unaware of their location.

I start analysing from some distance away and as I approach I’ll look through rear and side windows to check whether the driver is paying attention to the road or are they being distracted by something or someone else...either inside or outside of the vehicle.

When I’m on the road...I’m looking at driver’s & rider’s actions and what they potentially will be and most of all, I make early decisions to give myself extra buffer room and enough time to stop...just in case!
Behind the rider

By Emma & Mary Freyne

Mary is our daughter she is 18 years old, her first experience with anything to do with motorcycling was when she was 6 years old watching her dad change the oil on his Kawasaki GPZ 550, there she was sat on the doorstep eagerly watching, head on hands.

The bike was on our driveway on its centre stand, it had been running for a few minutes was then turned off ready to empty the oil, then the plug was released running warm black oil into a big bowl (From my kitchen as always!)

After at least half an hour of chatting between them and talking about the tools which were lined up on the path in size order (sorted by Mary’s small hands) she informed her dad that the dripping had stopped! On to the next bit, a new filter put in and 3.5 litres of new golden oil poured into the oil filler, can you see where this is going???

Yep straight into the bowl! Mary had the plug and 10mm spanner in her hand, head turned upside down and said “dad is it meant to be coming out the bottom! From then on this is a story she tells to all her dads biker friends with great amusement!

Mary always kept on about being pillion on the bike and was forever trying helmets and gear on whenever we were anywhere near a bike shop, chatting to the sales people about how great everything fitted and then turning them on to us like some sort of protest, we just wanted to make sure she was ready and old enough to get decent gear, a helmet that fitted correctly also to have some understanding about what being a pillion was like and how much responsibility a pillion has, we told her that this would become a reality at the age of 13.

Well as you can imagine the 6 month lead up to her birthday We were kitting her out and buying 1 bit of kit per month, boots, helmet, gloves, trousers, jacket, back protector, all purchased and worn-in way before the first encounter because if we were going to put our child on a bike at least install the correct principles, you teach them what is best as a parent and what they take from that into adulthood is up to them,

I think I can safely say it has worked. I listen to her lecturing others and moaning about peoples choices of garments, shorts and flip flops are her favourite moan! I really don’t know where she gets it from?

The birthday was not far away and coincidently it would be the Brighton rally so we said we would take her there, but before that she needed to go for a few little rides.

Little rides turned into hours as she didn’t want to ever stop, we would be achy, tired and cold and she just wanted to keep on riding! The ace café was one of the “little rides” and she absolutely loved being in that atmosphere chatting to others about her dads bike and where she was going, being all grown up and drinking mugs of tea, a compulsory badge was purchased here and swiftly sewn on to her jacket as proof of her visit to the world famous café!

One of the first things I got told as a pillion was to never put my hands or feet down if we come off, sounds like common sense really, but I took it a little bit serious, as a result when we stopped to wait for the rest of our small convoy, we skidded on some wet leaves and managed to just ‘topple’ off, not even going anywhere, simply just fell to the side, as my dad jumped off, I just sat there and went down with the bike, not thinking to jump off because of what they had previously told me.

The Brighton rally day arrived and I can honestly say that I’ve never seen someone grin for that length of time without getting jaw ache, giving me the loser sign as she and her dad over took me on the dual carriageway and us giving each other the thumbs up and the nod to check all is well, she loved being part of the group, I as her mum, have chatted enough about it now and will hand over to Mary to tell you how it is from her perspective behind the rider and what her thoughts are.
Once the others had caught up and come round the corner, all mum got to see was me on the floor with the bike on top of me, I can honestly say I’ve never seen her look so worried and almost throw her bike down in a panic! Luckily I wasn’t hurt considering I took the full weight of the bike!

Was an experience I thought I wouldn’t have to deal with again... however a few years later and my dad had upgraded through a few bikes we ended up with a Triumph Trophy which was a lot bigger and a lot heavier, my dad could only just reach the floor as it is, so when we stopped on a speed bump, front wheel on and back wheel off, take a guess what happened? Because he couldn’t reach the floor we, yet again, ‘fell off’ this time however, I thought I’m not taking the weight of this thing and jumped off, ending up about two meters away!

Everyone we were with couldn’t help but burst into laughter, and I couldn’t help laughing at three ‘almost’ grown men trying to lift the bike off the floor! Two memories I will not forget and will not stop telling for years to come!

Doing events such as the Toy Runs for Christmas & the Easter Egg Runs, when the streets are lined with people and children waving and cheering us on, it really does give you a good feeling, going past slowly with people filming and taking photos and ‘high fiving’ all the kids as you go past, and seeing them laugh if you’re dressed up as Santa or the Easter Bunny.

The first time we went to the annual Chinnor Bike ‘Festival’ we thought we would ride up on the bikes with a relative following in a car with all our camping gear, parking the bikes in the middle of the field with everyone else’s. Not realising that the torrential rain we had overnight would make it extremely impossible to get the bikes out of the middle of a waterlogged field, seeing everyone else wheel spinning and flicking mud up everywhere was a good laugh for us pillions which were just waiting for our ride

To summarise what I’ve been speaking about, being a pillion or being involved in the biking community one way or another is a great feeling, everyone’s friendly and everyone helps one another out, also plenty of laughs as you can clearly tell, or that might just be us fools!

Endurance riding, or the Art of the Iron Butt....

By Phil Jennings

There is nothing better than getting out for a blast on your bike. The wind up your trouser legs, bugs in your teeth. You tentatively peep out of the curtains on a weekend morning, see the roads are dry, the forecast looks good. Suit up, drag the bike out of the garage, already you can feel yourself beginning to smile.

Head off, meet your mates, what will it be 50 miles? 100 miles? Head to the café, grab a cuppa, share a yarn or three, knee down on that tight bend, idiot pulled out in front of you at the T Junction, a smoke, a joke, then head home a different way. Lovely. A 200 mile day under your belt, no real incidents, and a grin that lasts until tea time.

Endurance riding is something a bit different. Same smile at the end, but for different reasons.

I’m a member of the Iron Butt Association UK. You can only get to be a member, by completing a verified ride, all of which are over 1000 miles, in under 24 hours.

1000 miles in under 24 hours. That’s an average speed of just under 42mph. Not too bad at all. Yeah, but that’s if you don’t stop. At all. Factor in fuel stops, stops to eat. Stops to relieve yourself. Rest stops, and it starts to get a bit more tricky.

Endurance riding isn’t about all out speed. Yes, you do need to get a move on, at times, but it’s about being steady, planning ahead, knowing when to go faster, knowing when to stop and rest.

All of my endurance rides have been on the RBLR1000, which happens mid June every year. You’d rather hope that in June, the weather would be ok.
Well, it hasn’t been yet! We have had torrential rain, gale force winds, and both together. Its been boiling hot one minute, and then freezing at night, its not a challenge to take up in summer gloves.

What does it take to ride a long way, non stop? A reasonably comfortable bike helps, and it could do with being reliable, and not a massive guzzler of petrol.

There will be times in your ride, where you would rue the day you started it on a bike with a 100 mile tank range. It doesn’t need to be kitted out like a Paris-Dakar racer, but any creature comforts on board will help ease you through the pain.

My long distance bike is a 1991 Pan European. It’s got a big, soft seat, a sensible, upright riding position, doesn’t make epic amounts of noise, has a big fairing to cower behind, and does 300+ miles on a tank of fuel. Its what it was designed for, mile munching. It may be a big lump of a bike, but it handles ok, and you don’t need to think too hard to ride it, which really helps 20 hours in…

And how about you? What do you need? Comfortable kit is essential. A helmet that pinches your forehead after a normal couple of hour ride, will be unbearable after 10 hours. You also want your helmet to be quiet, the latest lid, with all the fins and vents will create some wind noise. Which again, for a couple of hours will be fine, but after 12 hours, you are going to want to smash it with a hammer.

I use a Shoei Qwest, which is a mid range touring helmet. Decent waterproofs, or all weather riding kit. You need to be comfortable, dry and warm. With the option of being cool if its hot.

Tight enough to not flap about, which is really wearing, but loose enough not to be tight, if that makes sense, as a jacket that’s tight on the elbow, or trousers that are tight on the waist, or behind the knee, really sap your patience. I use a Frank Thomas 2 Piece, with a removable thermal liner. I have yet to remove it. It’s never been nice enough!

Two pairs of gloves, at least. You’ll get wet at some point, and we all know how nasty it is trying to put wet gloves back on after a fuel stop. Do yourself a favour, and take at least one spare pair. I’m lucky on the Pan, I can put a wet pair inside the engine fairing, and they are warm and dry by the next stop, if you don’t have that little luxury, take spares to change into.

I guarantee that having cold hands, for hour after hour, is one of the most miserable experiences, and will absolutely take all of your concentration. Take a lighter pair for day, and a thicker pair for night, you will appreciate them, I promise. I use Freeway gloves, and Oxford Hotgrips.

I didn’t have Hotgrips on the first Iron Butt ride. I did for the second. They were the best investment I ever made. Boots. Comfortable, and waterproof, you’re going to be in them for a long time. Make sure you can fit an extra pair of socks in, your feet will get cold. The type doesn’t matter, as long as you can spend an entire 24 hours riding in them.

Check your bike thoroughly. Top up whatever needs topping up. Oil change if its needed, water in the Rad if it has one, check the brake fluid and pads. Check the tyres, if they are near the limit at the start, change them. And carry a means of repairing a puncture, even if its only to get you to the nearest town.

Make sure your recovery membership is paid up to date. If you carry the card, and the puncture repair kit, you won’t need it, but if you don’t carry it, sure as eggs is eggs, you will. And it’d be no fun walking miles at night, to find a phone box, as your mobile went flat.

Take whatever tools you can sensibly fit on the bike. Again, with the Pan, I could take almost my entire tool kit, but you should carry a minimum of a puncture repair kit, and a means of inflating a tyre, or two.

Some spare lamps, for headlight, tail light and indicators. Perhaps a spare throttle and clutch cable, and a set of spark plugs. But definitely spanners, sockets, Allan keys etc, to carry out any minor roadside repairs.

The main object of all the checks and wearing the right kit, is to take away the chances of breakdowns, and fatigue, which will allow you to concentrate on your riding.

Make sure that you fuel yourself up. A decent nights sleep the night before is essential, as is being, and staying hydrated. If your wee is anything but almost clear, you haven’t drunk enough.

Try and avoid caffeine, as the stimulation it provides, drops off as quick as it comes. Avoid coffee, as it’s a diuretic, and will make you need the loo, and dehydrate you.
Try and stick to water if you can, you’ll know when you need to stop for a drink. You can also help keep yourself fresh, by taking some citrus sweets, or mints. They can give you a little zingy boost if you’re feeling a bit jaded. And don’t under any circumstances stop off at McDonalds for a big meal. A full stomach will make you feel sleepy. Better to stick to small, regular snacks.

Satnav on the bike allows you to concentrate on riding, rather than navigating. There are kits available to put a standard satnav on, and power it from the bike, now. And most smart phones have an app available, and waterproof cases. I use my iPhone with a case and power supply from Ultimate Addons, and the TOMTOM app, which has never let me down, or driven me through a river or off a cliff.

The single most important bit of advice I can offer, is know when you have had enough. Know when to stop. In the endurance riding community, there is no shame in saying you need to stop. You’ll get more respect by stopping because you are too tired, than by pushing on, and crashing. Pace yourself, have a plan. Know where you are going. And most important of all, ride your own ride. Don’t be pulled along by others who may be faster than you. It’s not about finishing first, its about finishing within time, alive, and in one piece.

There is an incredible feeling of achievement to be gained by completing a long distance ride. I look at my Iron Butt Association Membership Certificate, and my RBLR1000 completion certificates, with pride.

You will feel at one with your bike after 1000 miles in 24 hours. Literally. You’ll feel like you need it surgically removing. But, that grin won’t last until tea time, it’ll last for days.

More info [http://www.ironbutt.co.uk/](http://www.ironbutt.co.uk/)
Behind The Music!

Cheques & Balances!

For nearly 4 yrs, HELI BIKES was ran on a very modest shoestring budget and was privately funded to cover some of the costs. Although we gratefully received some assistance in gathering supplies and to cover some operating costs, there has been a limit to what could be achieved.

One of the main issues has been how to transparently and legitimately raise funds to pay for the direct operating costs of HELI BIKES and how to fund future projects.

After much consultation it was decided in April to launch HELI BIKES - Motorcycle Safety Initiative Ltd, which is listed as a private limited company by guarantee with Companies House. In essence nothing will change in that the budgets will remain modest and will rely on voluntary contribution to keep the organisation running, however it will also enable us to accept donations and receive funds from item & advertising sales.

Any revenue gained will be solely used to cover operating costs and to fund any future projects if possible and wherever possible it is hoped that we can still get individuals, groups and businesses to either volunteer their services or supplies to us.

As a not for profit organisation in spirit and structure, there had to be a method of securing the future role and work of HELI BIKES in helping to raise rider awareness and improving biking safety. This can only be achieved by generating funds and having 100% transparency for anyone. We will not be able to employ anyone, nor will we be able to pay anyone for their content contributions and will rely heavily on volunteers..as has always been the case!

If you have any questions please feel free to email: enquiries@helibikes.co.uk

Thanks
Alf.

A big thank you for all of the contribution articles, guest writers and our recent free subscribers.

Emma & Mary Freyne
Phil Jennings
Erin Mulraney
Dr Syed Masud
Russell & Beverly Cort (Twisted Iron)
Lisa Elston & Terry King
Keith Wheeler

I look forward to more contributions for the next edition and to include some that didn’t make it to this one.

We hope you enjoyed the show!

12/24

On a date to be arranged soon, I shall be embarking on an endurance ride around the GB, on my trusty bike... or I hope it will be at least!

I shall be riding a loop of England, Wales & Scotland and hoping to cover over 1200 miles in a 24 hr period. Unfortunately I will not be able to ride into Northern Ireland as time will not allow it...but maybe next time!

The purpose of the ride is to promote HELI BIKES and the work it does. There will be regular posts across all of our social media pages leading up to the ride and there will be progress reports along the route.

The other reason for the ride is to raise funds for the local air ambulance and anyone can donate by visiting: www.justgiving.com/helibikes

Further information is located on the website: www.helibikes.co.uk/eventsnews.html

Once completed...successfully or unsuccessfully...there will be new webpage developed to describe the ride, the planning & execution and all the physical considerations for the ride.

Check out the next edition for some further details.

Wish me luck and please donate.
DOWN
1. Foot powered ignition (9)
2. Rally accommodation (4)
3. Passenger (5)
4. Parts (1,1,1)
5. Tap & (3)
6. Long electric motorcycle (9)
7. Helmet with a smile of sorts (4)
8. High gear ratio (4)
9. Helpings riders org. (1,1,1,1)
10. Big Wobbles (4,7)
11. One Cylinder Power (7)
12. MC Cincinnati Kid (5, 3)
13. Nuts, bolts Parts (4)
14. Motorcycle TV presenter (5)
15. Fixing equipment (5)
16. Being of Angels (2)
17. Looks stiff but is spongy (4,4)
18. Suzuki early 80's icon (6)
19. Stem of Angels (2)
20. Org Hendee Manufacturing Co in USA (6)
21. Trials world champion (4,3)
22. Fraternal salutation (3)
23. Frame & wheels to start? (7,7)
24. Something to keep things in (6)
25. Looks stiff but is spongy (4,4)
26. One Cylinder Power (7)
27. Motorcycle TV presenter (5)
28. Engine speed abr. (3)
29. Pole Benders (5,5)
30. Ambivalent (1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1)
31. Back support? (5,3)
32. Rubber on the wheel, edge (4)
33. High bars (3)
34. DILLIGAF (6,6)
35. CrashBungs (4)
36. Parts (1,1,1)
37. Ape (5)
38. Roll setting (3)
39. Motorcycle Co for QR codes & ITS (5)
40. Quick ride out (4)
41. Shadow of Angels (2)
42. Motorcycle Co for QR codes & ITS (5)
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3. Long electric motorcycle (9)
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HELI BIKERS
CRYPTIC CROSSWORD
June 2014
Having organised a few small scale events in the past, I know full well the work involved in putting on an event...especially those that require so much dedication from largely volunteers.

Every year I am amazed at the ingenuity, dedication, resilience and focus of the organisers who put on a show for fellow rally goers.

The Lion Rally is organised and run by members of Reading MAG, who give their time willingly and sometimes coerced...probably. But it is not run in isolation, it requires help and support from other MAG groups in the area...and no amount of small favours asked of so many ‘external’ groups.

Most events of this nature around the country...in fact around the world...are organised in this fashion. Be it a local group, a club or interest all relying on volunteers to come together under guidance to put on an event...that hopefully...people will come to, enjoy themselves, want to come again...and hopefully spend some hard earned cash to either help cover the costs or to make a profit that can be reinvested for the following year, or can be donated to a cause or to a charity.

What makes the Lion Rally so special? Well it’s a combination of things really! It’s welcome to all atmosphere, the day & night entertainment, the music, location and ease of access, secure camping...and the beer tent is probably a favourite for most.

But for me...the reason why this rally is a favourite is because I know the people involved and I know how much work and planning they have done in the lead up to the weekend. I know how they have welcomed & supported me and I know how they welcome others and make it so that others can have a great time...amongst friends, amongst companions and amongst strangers who may well soon become friends!

When I come along to this rally, I’ll stop and chat to the organisers and see part stress, part relief & part exhaustion expressed across their faces but forever with a welcoming smile and I’ll always congratulate them for their gargantuan efforts!

Last year I was invited to put on a HELI BIKES display and this year I was gratefully asked again. It is their continued support and interest in what I do and what I hope to achieve in the realm of motorcycle & rider safety that further proves they’ll do that extra bit more to put on a show and support those with interests in rider issues...whatever those issues might be!

I’m sure this dedication is replicated right across the country at other events, so wherever you go and to whatever event you attend, please raise a glass and give a big cheer to those who have put on a show...
THINK BIKE, THINK BIKER...
BIKER THINK!

Last month HELI BIKES became recognised as a road safety organisation with the DfT, and as a road safety professional we are able to order in bulk...THINK items, which we'll make freely available at any event we attend.

Whilst the THINK campaign should be applauded for attempting to raise the awareness of motorcyclist and motorcycle safety amongst other road users, we also know that is only half of the story.

BIKER THINK should also have been added and promoted amongst the riding community. We are just as responsible for our own safety and as well as expecting others to be engaged with their own and our safety and also to monitor how other road users are operating in appropriate ways...ways that don't get us injured or killed!

To address rider issues & safety in isolation many times leaves a void, which left unattended will never resolve itself!

It has to be a collective effort, by the authorities, the government, law enforcement & road safety professionals to develop practical and sensible solutions that are based on fact and are tried and tested.

However, there also needs to be a check to this, and this is where the riding community can really make a difference.

We as groups, clubs, businesses and as individuals need to truly and honestly engage in biking safety issues. For sure we need to address other road user awareness of motorcycles...but we also need to look at ourselves and ask: “How can we do better, What can we do to improve ours and other riders safety?

We should lead by example and show other road user groups how connected we are with these issues and what we can offer from the coalface, and input to help improve not only rider safety but safety for all road users.

We can offer practical solutions to problems that we deal with on a daily basis. I don’t mean just simply blaming or pointing the finger at others...I mean looking at situations and issues and coming up with practical solutions.

We can do this...and the people at ‘THINK’...think so too.

We have all been invited to contact them and offer any opinions and solutions for rider safety issues, so let’s take this opportunity...let’s get involved...let’s come up with solutions, as individuals, as groups and collectively improve things for now and future riding generations.

If we don’t, then it’s likely that those in positions of influence will come up with ‘solutions’ that don’t really solve anything, don’t work, don’t address the real issues...and the void just gets bigger and our motorcycling experience will be diminished in the name of ‘SAFETY’!
Don’t you just love our Senior Citizens!

Every now and again I’m reminded of just how brilliant some of our older generation can be. Just taking a moment to have a chat with them can turn into an insight into the past as they tell their tales of yesteryear.

Of course, some may not be as able, some may not be willing, some may not even be very nice, but every so often, just by chance I come across one who seems to defy convention...or rather what I may have perceived that to be.

Just a couple of months ago I was riding my bobber around and stopped off in Henley on Thames for a coffee. As I stood outside the over-priced coffee house, next to my bike which I had recently built, and feeling quite proud of myself for it hadn’t broken down...yet, I was passed by many people of all ages.

Some, just seemed to want to ignore me and not make eye contact, some would hide their children away from me, some would look at my bike with a puzzled expression...and then some...(mostly young fathers) would pass by with their young children saying...“Ooooh Look At That Bike! Isn’t It Great?” Well I think that’s what they said anyway...

Then out of the blue, a little old lady...and she really was!...just came up to me...so matter of fact, without prejudice, uninhibited and sparked up a conversation about the joys of motorbikes and how lovely mine was and how she and her son always loved bikes!

We chatted for a while, then said our goodbyes and she carried on her way! All the while, I noticed we were getting quite a few stares from onlookers...hmmm...was I about to mug her, they might have thought! I don’t think she even noticed...and even if she did, she didn’t seem to care...and neither did I.

Today, was yet another such occasion! Whilst on duty at the air ambulance base, we had a visit from a group of older ladies & gents who had raised lots of money whilst enjoying their pastime of sequence dancing!

After chatting about our work and showing them around the helicopter, one of them enquired whose motorbike was parked by our offices. After explaining it was mine and the work I do with HELI BIKES, one of the ladies cheekily asked me if she could go for a ride!

Well, brilliant I thought! So when we got back to the office, I asked if she would like to sit on it and helped her climb aboard. After she got on and whilst noticing her big grin, I asked again...“Do you still want to go for a ride?” “Oh yes!” she came back!

Well, I luckily had some donated clothing and helmets with me in the hangar, which fitted her (well almost) and then took her for a little jolly around the air base.

Of course I didn’t need to make her wear any kit as we weren’t on public roads, but it was a good example to set...so why not!

Anyway, after a quick...(slow)...blat around the base, she loved it and it was great to see someone still have that zest for life and it certainly made our day too.

So, just a couple of instances of breaking down barriers and having a great time too.
**Strike A Pose!...Lights, Camera...Action!**

Working on an air ambulance, you could imagine we see more than our fair share of traumatic injuries and life threatening incidents.

The bulk of our work tends to be road traffic accidents, followed closely by medical incidents and recreational injuries, however we do cover the full spectrum of pre-hospital care if and when required to do so.

Some days we are rushed off our feet without enough time to grab a sandwich or take a few minutes down time...and at other times we could be very quiet and that leaves us lots of time to do some training or other base activities.

We tend to average 3-4 missions a day, but the most we’ve done in one duty was 13, and there are of course days when we don’t get called at all...but not many!

![Helicopter in flight](image1)

We can respond to pretty much anything if required and land almost anywhere if safe to do so. We are very selective about our decision to land and security and safety is always a priority as well as trying to get to the patient as timely as possible.

Sometimes it’s all hands on deck to help out, and sometimes the medics do not require extra assistance, which gives me time to take the odd snap or two.

I tend to take some pictures of the helicopter in situations, so that the air ambulance charity might be able to use them for publicity at a later date.

I also take pictures at times to assist medics in later training scenarios and to relay information to hospital medics to assist in patient treatment (a picture does paint a thousand words)...and of course I’ll take photos to be later used in HELI BIKES literature to highlight safety issues and to improve biking awareness.

Since working on the air ambulance, there has been increasing interest in the work we do and none more so than from the work of TV. Our particular unit has appeared on a few programs over the years and some of our medics might well be recognisable to some of you.

Over the next few months we shall be one of a number of units around the country that shall be followed by a TV production company and over the last couple of days, the base has been quite busy, not only in terms of jobs, but also in the set up for filming soon to take place. ‘Pre Production’ in TV parlance!

So interesting times ahead...but hopefully we’ll be able to show a more in depth view of the work we do ‘out there’ and what we do back at base too.

Although I’m not completely comfortable with being in front of the camera, I have been known to do my bit with videos on HELIBIKESTV and take ‘nearly selfies’ photos, all to promote HELI BIKES, motorcycle safety and biking awareness. So hopefully the upcoming filming will also be a good opportunity to get some further exposure...because in the end, the more people that know, the better it can be for all riders.

So stay tuned for flying & riding tales of a chunky bald bloke over the next few months or so.
Hot bodies & cool winds!

So, Summer is upon us and there will undoubtedly be many days when the temperatures get quite warm and there will obviously be the temptation to shed the clothes and show some flesh!

It’s easy to defend against wearing protective clothing…especially when the weather is warm and dry…or rather it’s easy to rationalise it. “Nothing will happen…surely!” “Look…I’ll be riding really slowly so even if something did happen I’ll be fine!”

For some, there will be nothing wrong with that argument…for others there will be complete outrage at the lack of personal responsibility. Just a couple of weekends ago, I was taking a family trip in the car; it was a balmy Sunday afternoon and typically I saw a number of riders on the road just wearing shorts and a t-shirt.

Typically my young son piped up from the rear seat…”Look Daddy…He’s so stupid, it’s so dangerous, he’s not wearing anything!”
I quickly told him: “It’s only dangerous if he has a crash!…and how he’s riding!”

What I was thinking was less about the lack of protection, but more about the way in which they were riding. Riding erratically, screeching up to traffic lights, taking bends at speed and on inside lines whilst trying to get a knee down…without sliders…OUCH!…DOH!

In my working life, we talk about ‘Gold Standards’…in care given to patients, in performance, in delivery of service etc. Certainly the gold standard for motorcycling is to wear protective clothing and equipment, but a failure to do so can be compensated somewhat to achieve an ‘acceptable silver standard’ by modifying riding styles and practices.

Don’t get me wrong, I believe in freedom of choice but I also believe in personal responsibility and accepting the reality of consequences. The problem is I know exactly what the consequences can be as I see them regularly at scenes of accidents.

What I find difficult to accept is when I see riders of all experiences, but mostly of limited/learner experience riding around in warm temperatures with little more than a bit of cloth between their skin and the road, and riding without any real control or any comprehension of the errors they are making or the possible errors of others.

I could stand on the soap box and scream…”Wear some protection…Wear Leather…Put some gloves on!” etc but the reality is that the riders who ride like that may not have a full comprehension of what they are doing, possibly do not care or are so confident in their own abilities that they feel an accident will never happen to them.

Here’s the scoop!…Nobody starts a journey knowing they will or will not have an accident! I guarantee virtually every accident I have attended whilst working on air ambulances in over a 10yr period…not one driver or rider thought to themselves…Today I’m going to have an accident!

Interestingly I would say most accident victims, when asked afterwards, would say they would not do that again…or would do something different. They would not go so fast, they would wear better protection etc.

I’ve sometimes asked accident victims afterwards, “Knowing what you know now…would you have done something different?”…The answer is almost always…”Yes!”

So if we have this foresight of what might happen and what problems we could have during an accident and how long it really does take to recover from injuries…if indeed we can recover at all…then are we in a better position to spread the word amongst our fellow riders to wear something…and if not then seriously modify riding styles and reduce speeds?

Collectively it is possible to change attitudes…and that is what this really is about. It is about attitudes to risk, attitudes to hazard avoidance and the realisation of potential consequence.

Some of course will dismiss this…and that’s ok!…some will carry on regardless, some will occasionally ride without protection and some will always ride with. It will be a matter of choice. We as riders can only lead by example and demonstrate gold and silver standards every time we ride.

Wear appropriate clothing, gloves and boots, wear a fastened helmet. There are lots of alternatives for lightweight/Summer riding. Ride with greater awareness of hazards, greater control & purpose & modified styles & speeds!

Still not convinced…Well…over to you & I wish you well this summer!
GET GEARED UP!

WEAR MOTORCYCLE PROTECTIVE KIT THIS SUMMER & ALWAYS!

helibikes.co.uk

Wherever & whenever you can...wear protective clothing!
There are lots of summer weight alternatives available on the market that will keep you cool & still protected.
If you don’t want to wear any protection...then seriously modify your riding styles, reduce your speed and be ultra aware of developing & potential hazards!
Good luck & I wish you well!
Many motorcycle accidents over many years, and I’ve seen all sorts of damage to all sorts of bikes and parts.

However amidst all the carnage, splintered plastics and broken headlights, the damage that always catches my eye is usually that which is immediately less obvious.

It’s those parts on the bike that tend to yield so much more information about the kind of impact speed and the type of object collided with and it’s those parts that make my eyebrows leap and then furrow soon afterwards when I’m often heard whispering... “What the f**k happen here then?”

Usually a frontal impact tends to bend & twist fork stanchions, occasionally breaking and cracking yokes because the ‘higher’ part of the front suspension is the pivot point for the bike in an initial impact. However, every so often, normality is put to one side and more damage occurs lower down, even to the point where the sliders are cracked or snapped, but the stanchions and yokes seem relatively ok.

This aberration is usually associated when the front and lower forks tend to get trapped between two other points. E.g. a curb and a high bumper on a van, where the front end slides into the rear and submarines beneath, which causes the ‘snap’ to occur lower and there is less pivoting higher up.

When I look at motorcycle damage, it will tend to indicate what kind of injury we might expect...If I see a deformed petrol tank, especially from the crotch area moving forward, then that would indicate a high impact load as the pelvis & crotch were propelled forward which would indicate probable injury in that area.

When I see snapped handle bars or grips, that would indicate a high load on the wrists, arms and shoulders, etc.

A bike can appear to be totally destroyed, but it may only be cosmetic damage, but when the stronger areas of the bike are broken, cracked or twisted...such as the frame or wheels...then this may indicate a component weakness but highlights a potentially worse injury and something even more immediate.

When a motorcycle has a high load impact with a solid object, then all of the impact energy is transferred to the motorcycle...there is little in the way of crumple zones on a bike, however the deforming wheels, forks & tank etc do absorb a little energy.

The rider is also then subject to those forces but the extent is determined by what the rider then collides with also...do they impact the first solid object? Are they propelled clear initially? Do they then collide with another object? Do they land on hard or soft ground, etc?

When I see a cracked or broken frame, this indicates a high load to the bike and possibly to the body, with probable internal injuries, some of which may be treated at scene and some severe damage to arteries and organs...which may not be survivable!
Time For Change!

Over many years, I have attended many motorcycle accidents and even early on it seemed quite obvious that the accidents were occurring for the same reasons...over and over again. It was true then as it is today!

Indeed it was this feeling of frustration that led me to start HELI BIKES some years ago, a way to shed light on the causes of motorcycle accidents where we associate the most severe injuries, and to offer some guidance how the accidents might be avoided & injuries prevented or minimised.

It became evident very quickly that there were relatively simple solutions to many of the accident scenarios, but fundamentally there was a problem! This problem was less to do with the individuals involved (although of course they were involved in the accidents and their actions resulted in a collision), but more to do with a ‘system’ that seemed to fail and not address the root causes.

The major problem is how we investigate road accidents, or rather collisions as they are termed! How do we determine not only the superficial and immediate causes, but also how do we determine the root causes or rather how we don’t.

We know what causes accidents, but do we know what ‘caused the cause’ and do we ever ask: “Is it a system failing?” More importantly, do we ever question the system and ask it to improve, change and modify to solve an issue. Do we ask this of it immediately and do we get a rapid response.

I’ll give an example! A rider decides to take a trip along a set of twisties...all is going well and every bend is negotiated successfully, until one particular bend where the rider runs wide, crosses over the white line and collides head on with an oncoming vehicle, resulting in catastrophic damage to both vehicles, severe injuries to the driver and the rider suffers a fatal injury!

You investigate this and you come to the conclusion that the rider went too fast for the bend, ran wide and hit the car, therefore...riders fault!

However, what you didn’t ask was why do so many riders run wide on bends? Why did this rider negotiate every other bend ok, but failed on this one? What you have not done is start at the accident scene and work backwards until you have investigated every contributing factor, not only in the immediate cause of the accident, but also in the lead up to it. We refer to this as an error chain, or cascade or domino effect!

What was the rider doing before the ride, the night before, the week before etc.

What was the rider’s history and what was their training and recent experience?
What state of mind was the rider in and what physical condition was applicable.

What were the environmental and road surface conditions, road design and maintenance, road signs and markings?

Was there a history of accidents on this bend? How many and how far back in time?

The questions can be endless, but suffice to say that once you have asked these questions and determined answers, then do you ask the system to be reviewed...does anything ever change?

We know that motorcycle riders were running wide on bends since the dawn of riding bikes and they continue to do so. So what is it that makes riders do this and why is it that this will continue to be so in the future? For it will be so unless there is a quantum shift in how we address these kinds of incidents.

Is this a training & testing issue? Is it the lack of recurrent training and recent riding experience? Is it down to poor signage and poor awareness of the road environment? Is it poor road design and poor appreciation...is this a case where machine performance is out performing physical performance?
Is this an attitude towards risk that is ignored by both motorcycling media and manufacturing alike that gives the rider a false sense of infallibility?

So now we have identified immediate and root causes...now we need to ask what can and will be done to help prevent future similar incidents!

If we are not asking the right questions, then we are left with only superficial explanations which lead to vague management and application of blanket policy.
If we do not ask questions, then the theory will be that the rider was going too fast for the bend and so ran wide...therefore the policy will be to apply a reduced speed limit which will surely cure this problem! Well for sure it will prevent some, but not all, therefore the real issues still remain!

So what do we do? Well I set up HELI BIKES to help explain some of the reasons for accidents and how we as riders and drivers can develop better awareness and coping strategies...but the issues are still there!

How many times how you heard calls for driver training to include greater awareness of motorcycle use? How many times have you called for drivers to use their indicators more and how many times have you called for drivers to “Open your Fu...ing eyes!”...but nothing ever changes.

How many times are we blaming drivers for the majority of accidents and how many times are we looking at riders who cause accidents in the same manner? Have we ever considered that those who are to blame, may also be victim of a system that fails to properly address these issues.

I’m not saying that anyone who has an accident is not to blame for their actions...they are responsible for their actions and consequences, however they may not be alone!

So what can you do? Well recently I added a page to the website called: ‘Time For Change’ and it is there to act as a platform to ask questions of the system, the authorities, the designers & testers!

Drink lots of water, eat regularly, take a break, take your meds!...Tell me something I don’t know!!!

Many of the accidents...all types, and motorcycling is no exception, there are supporting contributing factors that form a general cause.

Many causes are due to a physiological distraction, be that a driver or rider has lost attention, concentration or the physical ability to operate the controls properly to avoid a collision.

On a long hot day, have you not drank enough to keep hydrated, not eaten enough, not rested enough and not taken medication that you should have...or even taken medication but still drove or rode, even when you shouldn’t.

The problem is that most of us generally know this and we know ‘on paper’ it sounds logical and on any day, we would probably follow the advice. But most of us probably think it won’t affect us...we’ll be alright!

I’m not saying that anyone should be paralysed by the notion of this, more that there should be a greater understanding & awareness of this, and we probably should not be so quick to dismiss these issues.

I’m not saying that there is a high incidence of these factors either, however they do occur and more than you might think. So doing all the planning, sensible...and yes maybe even boring things, may actually contribute to a joyful but uneventful ride.

It is there to inspire anyone to raise their hands and ask... “Have we got this right?” What can we do to improve the underlying issues?”

What we can do as road users is offer our own ideas and expect to get answers and explanations why they are valid & practical...or not!

We can act in the same vain as a quality control department in a manufacturing plant. We can inspect the products and identify the faults and identify the failings in the production process. Then we can affect change in the process, solve the failing and prevent those particular faults, instead of just constantly discarding the faulty items and never addressing the production failures.

I think it’s time for a change! Do You?
A recent development over the last couple of years, certainly in the UK, in pre hospital medicine on air ambulances is the potential to administer blood to a patient.

More services are now operating with doctors and many techniques and procedures have evolved over recent years, mainly because of lessons and procedures learned from military operations in both Iraq & Afghanistan.

Trauma was being dealt with with such intensity that it has spurred evolution in medicine and medical techniques & interventions, which has then filtered through to the NHS and the ambulance services.

Some of the first areas where this has filtered to is on the air ambulances, where they deal with a much higher number of traumatic incidents in all sorts of situations.

Being involved in a motorcycle accident is deemed to potentially cause traumatic injuries, that left unattended will pose a significant or absolute risk to life.

One of the countermeasures now being adopted across some units is to carry universal O Negative blood, whereas before they were only able to administer units of sodium chloride solution which would bolster the fluid volume and help to maintain blood pressure.

The problem with traumatic injuries and high blood loss, either internally or externally, is that when only replacing with fluid, there is marginal benefit to the patient apart from volume issues.

Hence why blood is the best solution to administer prehospitaly as it replaces blood and provides oxygen and other gases transport to and from parts of the body, where it is needed most, as well as supporting the volume function.

Currently we have 4 deliveries of blood per week, which we keep in a sealed temperature controlled case for 48hrs. If we use the blood at accident scenes, then when we transport the patent to hospital, we then get re stocked from the hospital blood bank.

If we don’t use the blood within the 48hr period, then the blood is returned to the blood bank and is then returned into general circulation...pardon the pun!

Since starting to carry blood over 12 months ago, we have used it in many traumatic accident situations; road accidents, industrial & agricultural accidents also.

As a unit we are already seeing the tremendous benefits that giving blood at scene can bring, however we are constantly gathering more data, for those patients that have survived and are recovering from their injuries and when blood has been used.

Whenever I speak to anyone regarding the air ambulance, not only the unit I work on, but in general terms; I always describe it as an evolving service.

The implementation of blood is just one of many evolutions that I have witnessed over the years and I imagine there are many more to come!

So more and more we are now able to provide hospital emergency department level care in the pre hospital environment; at the roadside...where you need it most!
I’m NOT a SAFETY NAZI!!!
...honest I’m not, but just do as I say and you’ll be ok!

I’m obviously interested in motorcycle awareness and rider safety! I like to think that I can provide useful information that any rider can benefit from...but what I do not want to do is provide information that does not inform, does not educate, is not practical and most importantly is not true and not based on fact.

The problem is, with anything to do ‘safety’ then we may have a tendency to readily dismiss it...even without hearing what it has to say! So safety, in general has got a bad reputation because it is interpreted as being restrictive, sometimes rightly so but many times not!

I too am equally frustrated by many road or rider safety campaigns, schemes, agencies etc which proclaim to hold the solution to rider safety, and much of what is claimed...I have not seen as an overriding concern at accident scenes. I am not even convinced that many who make the suggestions are even motorbike riders, either current or have been in the past!

However, of course some suggestions do have merit...but more and more there is little in the way of providing really good sound information and reasoning...especially when it comes to motorcycle awareness and rider safety.

Just take a peak at most road safety websites or at their literature and you’ll see hardly any content with any real substance that will at least be of interest to riders, let alone engage with them on rider safety issues.

No wonder a lot of people will roll their eyes whenever they hear anything to do with motorcycle safety because usually it is pedestrian/cyclist and car centric and many times the solutions are focussed on speed reduction and vilification of riders and motorcycles.

I too have had my fair share of dissenters in the past, but most have made comments before they have even read my information! So why is that?

I have always stated that the information HELI BIKES can and should provide, is to be based upon experiences of dealing with motorcycle accidents. It is the information that riders may not want to hear, but it may be that what they need to hear!

However, all information is offered and should never be forced, because the primary goal here is to engage with riders, to promote open discussion and debate...be factual, be honest and provide practical solutions!

I don’t expect everyone to agree with me at all, just as I don’t agree with much of what is held up as gold standard safety advice!

Hence why the website and social media pages, the videos and podcasts attempts to break down myths and misunderstanding both in terms of injuries and causes of accidents...and the validity of solutions and policies.

One of my greatest frustrations is not only with the quality of information and the reasoning behind safety advice, but also with the general application of blanket policies.

I recently posted on various threads on the main Facebook page, whether there is a problem with how speed and safety are linked and whether the focus on speed by safety agencies is actually ignoring the more prominent accident causation factors. Should we be reviewing the way in which we think about speed and risk and whether we need to review some speed limits.

I received varied comments, which was to be expected but also there was quite a polarised view of what was safe speed and what were acceptable limits etc.

The problem with any kind of definitive policy...it is a line in the sand and therefore it will not solve all situations and will not be reasonable in all circumstances!

The problem with having an unyielding faith for either side of the divide, is that the reasoning is then applied to all situations...and if it doesn’t fit...well that’s just an acceptable consequence.

As a rider, as a member of the emergency services, as someone who has dealt with hundreds of motorcycle accidents and had an uneasy interest in them for over a decade, as a lobbyist for practical and reasoned solutions to ‘real’ safety issues, I sit in the void as do so many others...asking “Is this right?” “Are we right?” “What can and should we do?

In the void, I see the ‘safety nazis’ high up on the hill...looking down upon us, tutting as they form policy. On the other side of the hill I see the dissenters either with their backs turned to us all, or just trying to find a way to climb over us so that they could throttle their opposites.

As the roads get busier and new riders and drivers start to gain experiences, I think it is upon us to not only bridge the divide but also to find common ground. We as riders and drivers should be willing to listen more to suggestions, be more engaged with debate and not shrug our shoulders in apathy! As policy makers and campaigners we need to adopt new methods and new ways of thinking and provide more reasoning and be prepared to listen to the road using public more.

Rider safety is for us all...if only it is reasonable and right...and only if it works!
WHICH ROAD DO YOU LIKE BEST?

WHICH HAS THE MOST HAZARDS?

LIMITS SAVE LIVES?

SPEED KILLS?

WHAT SPEED IS BEST?
Faster or Slower?...or most suitable?

WHICH SPEED IS SAFEST?
Should limits change?
Away With The Birds!

A couple of weeks ago I had to do an overnight stay in Worcestershire, but had to get up early to be on duty at 7am. That meant up at 4 and out the door by the latest 5, so quick shower, mandatory caffeine, breakfast nibbles etc.

I stepped outside and it was one of those perfectly clear warm mornings! Birds were chirping, sun had just risen above the horizon and all-around was quiet and peaceful...until of course I started the engine and created a disturbance...but then again I wasn’t being disturbed so I didn’t mind at all!

As I set off, I took great delight in being the only vehicle on the quiet country roads, until I got to the main A road, but surprisingly that was quiet too, for the next 10 miles I saw only a single car. My whole journey, which took just over an 1hr 10mins, would normally have taken nearly 1:45 but could easily be over 2 hrs depending on traffic, was possibly the best ‘green run’ I’d ever had.

My speed was generally at the appropriate limits and because I wasn’t delayed at any stage, my progress was relatively rapid. The road conditions were dry, and the temperature was warming but still a bit cool. The sun was rising but was not so bright that impacted on vision at any stage!

It was so quiet at one stage, I had to do a double take of my watch to make sure it was 5:30 a.m., because although it was early, this road would normally be busier. I suppose I just lucked out, and although it was quite eerie, it was the most peaceful and almost spiritual ride I’d had in many a year...Yes, I know...a bit soft, but in truth that is exactly what it was like!

After I got to base, I remarked at what a great ride it had been and it was said that it was probably the kind of journey that would make you want to get up early as often as you could, just to experience that kind of ride.

In truth, I always thought that the early morning was the best part of the day, but it usually came a distant second to sleeping, but my mind could be easily changed on that one!

On the way I came across one of those signs that are put up with the best intentions, I’m sure, but I was wondering how much notice people ever take of them and was it really applicable to my ride.

Ride Safely!, Ride Slowly!, Be careful! etc.

They all seem to have the same sentiment and I always feel; well it’s nice to be reminded but honestly! Do riders really need to be told & would they listen? Would this just reinforce a driver’s preconceptions of what riders might be like?

The problem with any kind of static sign, and certainly one that is left in one place for too long is that it loses its impact and its message...if ever there was one...is lost!

As I rode on, I smirked as the road was wide, clear, dry and traffic free and wondered what am I supposed to be unsafe about, what does the sign mean by safe!

As there was nothing immanently hazardous in my path, I surmised that the only ‘safe’ thing I could do was ride at a ‘slow’ speed! Is that what they meant? But what was ‘Slow’ at this time of day with no other traffic...was it below the limit, was it at the limit or would safe even be above the limit?

Who or what determines what safe is. because it changes throughout the day, with different traffic & road conditions and also it depends on the experience and skill of the individual.

And that is the essence of riding up to a set limit, it is there to enable ‘safe’ travel for all and for all conditions and for any time. Hence why riding at or below the limit on quiet, wide & dry roads would be deemed incredibly safe, and riding at the limit at other times would not be as safe! But what is safe? Confused? Well so was I...in truth I wasn’t concerned about safety...I was just enjoying the ride for what it was!
THE LANCELOT

My leg trailing memories

In 1946 our neighbouring farmer named Joe, a hard working and kind man with an enthusiastic personality introduced me to speedway racing. Joe had been a keen supporter of Newcastle Diamonds speedway before World War II in the days of Canadian George Pepper. Living in a farming community then, meant school summer holidays were spent assisting with the annual harvest, the work was heavy and totally manual from dawn to dusk during fine weather, if it rained we cut thistles. The only farm horsepower had four legs and a tail, mechanised farming had not yet arrived. My surprise reward took away all aches and pains when Joe invited me along with three sturdy farmers to a special speedway gala meeting at Brough Park; our transport a Ford ten saloon. The 40 mile journey seemed endless sandwiched between two burly farmers in the back seat. No one elaborated on what to expect and my parents were not familiar with speedway. I was told the programme included local riders Jeff Lloyd and captain Norman Evans competing with some of the best riders in the country, however Joe had a quiet admiration towards one special rider.

This was my first experience of a stadium packed full of people, it was daunting being squashed together waiting for the event to start and where I lived three was a crowd. More concerning was when my hosts instructed me to stay in that spot and ‘do not move’ whilst they disappeared. I stood there looking up at people from different aspects of working life I distinctly remember the sound system playing “The Twelfth Street Rag” by Pee Wee Hunt, it was lively music fitting the occasion perfectly it also introduced me to traditional jazz. Team supporters with knitted scarf’s and wooden rotating rattles in Newcastle Diamonds colours was also new to me. The noise of speedway machines warming up was my first smell of that wonderful alexia, Castrol R adding further excitement to the night. My hosts returned in a more jovial mood than when leaving and breathing another unfamiliar smell, I later found out they went to something called a bar that served a particular medicine namely Newcastle Brown Ale. I must point out we lived in a strict temperance area of about 30 square miles in the lowlands of the Cheviot hills and I was extremely naïve outside of country life.

At 7.30pm Johnny S Hoskins went into action with a fast rider parade (without helmets), followed directly by the first race. When the tapes went up I was truly stunned by the spectacular action and when eventual darkness came with only track lights on during racing, the event became even more dramatic highlighting the riders in black with their respective team colours. Anticipation from the crowd came in the third race and clearly surrounded one rider namely Oliver Hart. I was hoisted onto the shoulders of two farmers each grabbing a leg and told to watch closely at Oliver’s different riding style. At least at that height I escaped Joe’s exictable reaction of being hit over the head with his flat cap (the standard northern male headaddress) Oliver riding from number 4 gate position went into the first bend giving me the impression he was going around the outside dog track, he somehow emerged round the bottom of the fence in the deep cinders fully displaying the artistry of leg trailing, I could not believe it possible. Spontaneous crowd ovation followed the race; a clear indication of Oliver’s popularity and this happened everywhere he rode. Johnny Hoskins the master of any ceremony kept the event moving quickly with little time allowance to fill in the programme before the next race.

The interval was a show on its own with Oliver the prankster venting Johnnie’s hat with a shotgun and burning his coat with methanol (health and safety came much later). Bill Kitchen was the event winner but Oliver was the spectator’s winner. The Newcastle team rider Pat Smith was a big man, a farmer from near Rothley about 8 miles from Joe’s farm on the B6342. As they knew each other Joe probably thought some friendly encouragement would help, by shouting “come on stiffy” Not the language you might hear today, it had no effect as Pat remained a 2-point rider. Pat had a very big brother Barney, a well known Cumberland and Westmoreland wrestler. It is a discipline of skill, strength and tactics, whereby two opponents take hold of each other. Left arm over the shoulder and right under opponents left shoulder, with hands clasped tightly around each other’s backs this hold brings their heads together side by side. Given the impression of two men cuddling, then at some point both apply their tactics to try and floor the other to become the winner.

With my first speedway meeting over and Joe still in racing mode we ran for the car, it was keep up or get lost in the crowds of flat caps and head-scarves running for the waiting tramcars. I had the speed but not the height, once in the car I could only reflect and dream of things to come. Would I ever be able to ride one of those very different machines as I was already acquainted with my fathers Norton from an early age straddled on the flat tank operating the hand gear change.
The long journey home meant a necessary stop for greasy fish and chips in newspaper. I continued with my questions regarding the merits of spectacular leg trailing compared with the less spectacular foot forward method. Also that wonderful smell and noise from the machines and what was so special about the riders; We left the lights of Newcastle and arrived home about 11.15pm in complete darkness, the only lighting at home apart from a full moon was from oil hurricane lamps for outdoors and oil table lamps indoors.

I explained the whole experience to my mother by reliving the nights adventure and had great difficulty going to sleep that night. I continued to support Newcastle by cycling some 5 miles to meet a special bus service from Otterburn, a utility Bedford with wooden slat seats capable of 45 mph and a driver with only one eye. This service allowed me to see most great riders of the day including another late leg trailer Syd Littlewood. Speedway had a detrimental effect on schooling; my thinking being if you are going to ride speedway why was school so important. Most everything I witnessed that evening was a first experience.

At that period a family friend had become a prominent government minister and when visiting our home he always gave me half a crown before leaving “I liked him” He was always interested in my activities and he followed my instructions to become proficient at catching trout by hand (tickling) in our nearby river appropriately named “The Hart” but he knew little of speedway or of Oliver Hart. At 12 years of age I was invited to his family home in Hampstead London for a three-week summer holiday to join their son of similar age. Travelling from Newcastle central by steam train we shared a carriage with other colleagues that prompted many questions and suggestions of places to visit, such as Lords or the Oval. Speedway was not mentioned and that’s where my thoughts were, clearly it would take some convincing.

On the journey south I sat by the window opposite the then minister of agriculture, it was harvest time and whilst passing fields of cereal crops the agricultural minister remarked “what a wonderful field of wheat” and without thinking I replied “its barley not wheat” Fortunately the train slowed down for the quarter mile signal and the barley was plain to see. The TUC chairman began teasing the agricultural minister of his visual mistake or not knowing, but still I was extremely embarrassed. Arriving in London the minister of agriculture gave me 10 (bob) shillings; perhaps it was in retaliation to others, as they were obliged to equal his gesture, “I was rich”

Despite London’s grandeur I began campaigning for a visit to one of the cities 5 speedway tracks. Without knowing, my host quietly investigated and Odsal were at Harringay on July 23rd a Friday night of my stay. This time we went in a Woolsey 18 and on the way I gave a full briefing of speedway’s procedure telling them to watch carefully when Oliver Hart appears. Oliver was in fine form that night the shale was flying and he scored 45% of the Odsal points total. The Harringay crowd showed clear appreciation for Oliver while my wide-eyed host completely endorsed his spectacular performance and the speedway meeting in general. Once again we relived the event but without fish and chips this time, I felt my objective concluded, now for the cricket.

I wasn’t to escape lightly, a penance was to be paid and during one of our regular visits to the House of Commons, other prominent people had been briefed by my host of the Harringay night out. At lunch on the House of Commons embankment restaurant I was asked to explain speedway racing, as I knew it. At 12 years old and still in short pants with a northern accent I somehow became known as “the lad from the Cheviots”. My explanation must have been satisfactory considering I was invited back. (If only I had known then of the greedy governments unfair entertainment tax on speedway) On my return home I gave Joe a full appraisal of Oliver’s night at Harringay.

After army national service in Kenya chasing Mau Mau, I met my future wife and we decided to visit New Zealand in 1962. During our stay I had the opportunity to ride handicap speedway on harder surfaces than cinders or shale. I enjoyed the two seasons of riding speedway as it gave the opportunity to appreciate the art and discipline of riding, whilst endorsing my admiration for riders past and present. Back in England my work included world travel that kept me from speedway, apart from a period of working on the track at Poole in the late sixties. This was another wonderful period in speedway when the Polish and Russian riders rode in Britain.
Since retirement from work my involvement with vintage speedway (Douglas and Rudge) has often brought reflections of past riders, but Oliver remains vivid in my memory of that night in 1946, leg trailing the wide line like no other. He could have changed to foot forward style as other riders did and benefited financially, but the family haulage business and farm was Oliver’s livelihood, speedway was his enjoyment. This unique position allowed Oliver to be singularly different as the last fast leg-trailing entertainer whilst still a major points scorer. In the 1948 British Riders Championship Final, Oliver scored 9 points against the best in the world, only a machine failure in heat two reduced his chances of a fourth place. Wembley 1949 records Oliver as the last leg-trailer to be seen in a world final at the stadium, his three rides were displays of his artistry to be remembered.

Riding in the shale out beyond the three quarter line accompanied by the safety fence was Oliver’s preferred racing line. As the great Jack Parker once remarked, “Oliver should be paid more because he travels further”. By knowing that his singular artistic style carried such popular public appeal, perhaps that was his self-satisfaction, he certainly gave value for money and promoters gained by his presence through the turnstiles. A rider who knew Oliver told me that other riders in the same meeting would go to the pits fence simply to watch him perform. Odsal speedway fans were fortunate to have that wonderful amphitheatre stadium with wide track, I can only imagine Oliver must have been a sight worth seeing.

Some sixty years after that memorable night at Brough Park, I had the privilege of speaking with Oliver’s wife Mrs Ann Hart before her passing. After reading my memories of Oliver, she gave me permission to write further on her husband’s life in speedway. My research through the Hart family produced considerable personal information I was not aware of. My tribute was serialised in the "Friends of Speedway" journal “The Voice” and then compiled into the booklet “Harts of Coppull”. Knowing the sale potential was to a limited age group many tributes followed proving I was only one of many to remember Oliver with admiration. It would have been enjoyable to explain my memories to him in person, and without knowing that his early accident was overcome by determination to produce an unmistakeable racing style that fascinated the speedway world for years, also a prominent government minister who later became an industrial Lord. Since retirement from work my challenge was the restoration of a 1936 Douglas roadster which I rode until last year, my latest project has been building a very special Norton single rotary engine grass-tracker which I ride on grass hill climbs and display publicly. As with Oliver Hart, it is one of my singular personal achievements.

TAG Allison 50.8 FRE----WPS 26.1

Motorcycle Safety & Accidents!!!...The truth is out there and it's coming soon!

"You take the blue pill, the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes."
‘The Matrix’ - Morpheus to Neo
Riders Tales

Overtaking Queuing Traffic!

Nearly 25 years ago now I had a ‘smidge’ of an accident whilst overtaking a line of queuing traffic in the morning rush hour.

I remember like it was yesterday…I was on my way into college and running a bit late. It was a main artery into the city centre, single carriageways. lots of parked cars and multiple property entrances and side roads on either side.

I came up behind some stationary traffic and just automatically went to the outside to start overtaking and was making good progress past as you might imagine.

All was well with the world, I would get to college in time, ‘they’ would still be stuck in traffic - ha ha, I’d be able to get my morning coffee before lectures started... Great!

Then all of a sudden, a dark metallic grey VW Golf, decided to turn right, across my path, into a side junction, obviously trying to get out of the queue and seek another route.

The driver didn’t look before he turned...otherwise he would have seen me! Of course he should, even if I was in his blind spot just over his right shoulder...the git! As soon as he turned right, I knew that I was going to get hit, as the car started to swipe me from the left. Luckily I had invested in some tough steel toe-capped biker boots a few weeks before which left a lovely gouge along his driver’s door, the rest of the knock was taken up by the engine casing.

I managed to kick myself away from the car, steer around the front of him and pull over on the side, whilst he did the same...in the side road. I kept telling myself as I inspected my bike for damage..."His Fault... Didn’t Look...Didn’t see me...His Fault!"

As we both inspected our vehicles, we probably thought that his had more damage and I told him that he was to blame, so he should take care of his and I’ll take care of mine...which wasn’t more than a scratch really! Great, little prang, but no claim on insurance... so result all around!

The reality was at the same time I was also thinking..."I hope I get away with this one!", because I also knew that I wasn’t really paying attention, not allowing for blind spots or prepared for a driver not being able to see me or not look and turn across my path. He wasn’t expecting me to be there and I wasn’t expecting him to do that! It was a lesson that has stayed with me ‘til this day!
Heli Bikers Cryptic Crossword Aug 2014

Across
1. Lady Stunter (6,5)  
5. Battery Acid (11)  
11. Timing base? (1,1,1)  
12. Tough lining. (6)  
13. Home bike builder cave. (4)  
16 & 15 Down Waterproof Material (4-3)  
17. Wind blown engine (3,6)  
19. Spanish bike builders (3,3)  
21. Early 1900 British bike builder (3)  
22. Tank & mudguard perhaps (4)  
23. Ride like you stole it! (8)  
25. Triumph in Florida (7)  
29. Solo rider preferred. (4,4)  
32. Get out of wind (4)  
34. Speed spray (1,1,1)  
36. Cooling grill (8)  
37. Fork holder (4)  
38. Old bike (3,7)  
40. Lock maker (4)  
44. HD performance enhancer (9,5)  
46. Kawasaki bike (3)  
49. Ducati tint (3)  
50. Exhaust (4)  
51. Can let it in and out. (5)  
54. Exit pipe maker (5)  
58 & 42 Down Race garage team (3-4)  
59. Grip (8)  
61. Topsy turvy dampers (6,4,5)  
62. Early 1900s American bike builder (3)

Down
1. Going Fast (6,2)  
2. Revolution (5)  
3. Japanese carb diet (6)  
4. He had roots in denim (4)  
6 & 7 Down. Simple cyclists (4)  
7. See 6 Down (6)  
11. Balls to run smoothly (8)  
14. Air passage to contain (3)  
15. See 16 Across  
17. Short Slovenian exhaust (4)  
18. Shiny surface to polish (6)  
20. Lone anarchist (3)  
24. Columbian Bike maker (1,1,1)  
25. Record stopper. (4,5)  
26. Mixed metals (5)  
27. Accept best price (1,1,1)  
28. Fuel tap (7)  
30. Break (8)  
31. Spanner (6)  
32. Linear expandable (10)  
33. Dead Centre (3)  
35. One help from above (1,1,1,1)  
36. Behind (4)  
39. Exhaust (3)  
41. HD Home (9)  
42. See 58 Across

Answers

1. Chesca Miles  
5. Electrolyte  
11. BDC  
12. Kevlar  
13. Shed  
16. Gore  
17. Aircooled  
19. GasGas  
21. OEC  
22. Tins  
23. Hooligan  
25. Daytona  
29. Lonewolf  
32. Tuck  
34. NOS  
36. Radiator  
37. Yoke  
38. Oil Dripper  
40. Abus  
44. Screaming Eagle  
46. Zed  
49. Red  
50. Pipe  
51. Valve  
54. Remus  
58. Crew  
59. Traction  
61. Upside Down Forks  
62. ACE

43. Hip injury (6)  
45. Famed American 99%ers (1,1,1)  
46. Zig zag hold (1,3)  
47. Stop banging on about it (4)  
48. Fine squirt (5)  
52. Tuning components (4)  
53. Muscle bike (4)  
56. Modern Brain (1,1,1)  
57. Foot brake? (4)  
60. Go the 100! (3)
IS IT SPORTS DAY TODAY AT SCHOOL SON?

NO...WHY!

IT JUST LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GOING FOR A RACE!

WELL... I'M NOT JUST LIKE WEARING THEM...OKAY!!

OK.... MRR RROSSI!!

SOD OFF... FATTY!!

WEATHER FORECAST IS SUNNY, DRY & HOT!

I KNOW! IT'S SO UNFAIR!!

DON'T WORRY SON! I'LL GET THE HOSE & FILL A FEW POTHOLES IN THE ROAD WITH WATER! LOADS OF PUDDLES!

YESSS! THANKS DAD!

ANYTHING FOR MY BOY!! THAT REMINDS ME, I MUST GET ONTO THE COUNCIL ABOUT THEM BASTARD POT HOLEs! THEY'RE A JOGGING KILLER!
Why do they make mistakes!

You know how it is...You're riding along minding your own business, enjoying the ride, getting bugs splat on your visor or in your face, depending on your choice of headgear, then in an instant you transform from serenity supreme to the god of war because some idiot on the road has done something that has made you nearly have a prang or nearly wiped you out!

Many if not most riders will lean towards blaming the ‘devils in cages’ for all or most mishaps...sometimes justified too, but many times not.

Of all motorcycle accidents, anecdotally, approx. 30 - 40% only involve the rider, so no one else to blame there! Another 30 - 40%, the rider contributed to the accident cause, so jointly culpable. 30 - 40% of the rest of motorcycle accidents you can claim the driver caused the accident! So approx. 60 - 70% of bikes accidents are caused or partly caused by the rider themselves, and this is where I’ve noted over a few years a ‘trend of thirds’!

For sure, many driving standards are below par, but the same can be said of riding standards. So it becomes a point of perception...what do we think is wrong and who do we think is doing it!

Joseph T Hallinan wrote in ‘Why We Make Mistakes’ ...

“We are subconsciously biased, quick to judge by appearances and overconfident of our own abilities. Most of us believe we are above average at everything - a statistical impossibility that leads to slip ups.”

As a riding community we are more likely to focus on the faults and errors of others and overlook those of our own...as a biking community and as a biking individual. Those errors of others we tend to view from on high with the wrath of judgement... how could anyone make such an avoidable mistake or be so negligent!

If you drove a car, before riding a bike...were the mistakes of current drivers, the same as yours when driving...what did other drivers or riders think of your skills then?
Now that you’re a rider and you drive your car, what do other drivers think of your driving...do they now think you're the devil in a cage? Are you now immune from making errors when driving and riding or are you the only one who thinks so?

When we ride our bikes, we should be aware of developing and potential hazards and a large part of the information gathering process is to be prepared for errors...those of others. but also those by ourselves. Sometimes those errors are avoidable, and more so with correct practice, because incorrect practice just makes errors more probable.

Sometimes errors are less avoidable and less obvious to recognise in the early stages, also too in the later stages when it’s too late.
We think that a driver should ‘see us’, because we think we are seeing them and others on the road. However one of the greatest deficiencies that the human suffers from is poor eyesight, even with 20/20 vision it’s still relatively poor at detecting colours and linear oncoming motion. We are subject to visual anomalies and illusions, which we act upon given a certain set of skills and experience.

We think we do not see anything, so the road is clear...but we do not consider what we can’t see or even do not consider that something might be hidden behind an obstruction to our view...be that a door pillar, a tree, building or large vehicle! We may not see because we are mentally overloaded with internal & external vehicle distractions!
The visual error of a driver not looking over their shoulder and looking around a door pillar, is the same visual error of a rider overtaking a large vehicle at a junction and not looking beyond and directly in front. It is the same visual & perception error where a rider is positioned in a driver’s ‘blind spot’ and does not see if the driver is looking and assumes that the driver should see!

Our mistakes are not merely visual but they can also be procedural, perceptual & mechanical which combine to create a error of judgement and or control input! The greatest error may be not recognising your own errors, nor the deficiencies of others...nor your own errors when you are looking at the road or even when you are looking but not seeing because your concentration may wander! This may appear that I am defending all drivers actions, which is not the case...but I am also not defending all riders actions either:

By acknowledging that we all make mistakes and that theirs are no worse than ours, then we are better prepared to expect them, practice the error avoidance and increase the error compensation performance that we all share! We can illustrate bad practice, error forming and poor decision making! When we consider errors, the first step to understanding them is to firstly acknowledge they are there, that we all make them and they can be reduced either by design or by attitude and practice! We need to look for errors and seek to prevent them from happening again! If we know the same kind of error is made by many people, then we can design modifications to prevent them! Either a change to bike or road design, or a change to how we are trained or how we perceive hazards and errors. It is all manageable once we know the causes of mistakes and how we can compensate for them. Repetitive mistakes are the fools that laugh & poke fun at us!

‘Fool me once...shame on you! Fool me twice...shame on me!’
Behind The Music

Since the last edition in June, there have been some interesting developments in not only the information being made available, but also who might be gaining access to it.

In my day job on the air ambulance, I have responded to many motorcycle accidents, which is not surprising given the time of year.

I’ve also come across, during my flying duties; patients, medics, other emergency service workers & general workers who have been aware of the HELI BIKES information resource!

I’ve been contacted by various individuals, groups, businesses & local authorities all wishing either to access & share this information, or develop a working relationship for the future.

So although the online reach is quite strong, it is always really interesting and very pleasing to actually be contacted by or meet people who appreciate the work and messages I’m trying to promote.

As I said to a chap the other day; “You can use the information as you wish…for yourselves or for your friends within your group, even if you already know this stuff, it might help you to help someone else! It’s not hyped and it’s not based on myths that you might read about. It is purely based upon the experiences and facts at accident scenes…so take from it what you wish and I hope it serves you well!”

Last month I gave a few interviews to local radio & TV news on the reasons for motorcycle accidents & injuries, and although there seemed to be an interest from them, it also came across as a passing interest. The problem is that this subject is too involved and has many elements to it, to be merely reduced to a soundbite, so the real reasons and sound safety advice is never really portrayed properly.

Of course, the media have a story or a headline to make and also have preconceptions, but we can only work to get them to look deeper and to ask more questions…to look beyond headlines and to get to the real stories and the real reasons for accidents on our roads.

Local authorities want your opinions and they need to hear it!...The last couple of months I have been contacting various local councils to request reviews on certain roads in terms of pothole & side verge maintenance, road signs and speed limits.

The overall response from them has been very pleasing and it appears they are eager to know your opinions or any reports of any hazards to motorcyclists on the roads. There are various ways to contact the councils for these reasons either through 3rd party websites, phone apps or directly to them...so it’s always worth getting in touch and making reports, even though they may not be able to act immediately due to funding issues etc, at least the report is logged, which is a good first step to engaging and letting the authorities know that we as road users have a voice and we are interested in these issues.

The website had a couple of new webpages added this last month: ‘Teachers Apple’ & ‘Time For Change’

Time For Change provides a framework to discuss and report issues that may affect rider safety. You may have an opinion on training & testing standards, road designs, road signs, speed limits, driver & rider standards & attitudes etc. Anything that may be an issue and could be a factor in motorcycle accidents occurring.

This is really about moving beyond the initial causes of accidents, but now asking what factors cause the causes and do we need to start looking at other ways and methods...do we need to move away from convention to have a more successful way of dealing with and preventing motorcycle accidents & injuries that consistently repeat themselves.

Teachers Apple provides a framework for anyone to use when wishing to show or teach new or refresher information either to existing or new riders. It is about adding to existing training standards, emphasising awareness and hazards...and preventative measures. It is available to all people, all riders of any level to use or to supplement the training of other riders and also to use as an aid to self education.

Although in the middle of Summer, I’m already looking ahead to Autumn & Winter and starting to review what we can do to prepare ourselves for riding at those times. The website already contains lots of information for seasonal riding, but over the next few months the information stream will look at planning ahead and expecting the variations in riding but also the associated hazards.

More and more, I am describing HELI BIKES as an information resource! It can be used to refresh knowledge, skills & attitudes, but also to fine tune where the hazards may lurk, when to expect them and what to do to avoid them. It is about highlighting the real factors...be those either environmental, physiological, psychological that affect all road users; both riders and drivers and how we can develop coping strategies!
Using Indicators!

When do you use them? Where should you use them? Do you expect other drivers and riders to use them? Always be prepared for another bike or car etc to suddenly move, change lanes, change direction or turn across your path without indicating!

You know others should be indicating and indicating in plenty of time before turning...you know you should be indicating to others around you...but always remember that some road users may not, may forget it, don't think it's necessary!

Always be prepared to indicate a change in direction or movement to change lanes or to overtake and be ready for those that don't!

We’re all making decisions!

A lot of the decision making process you make when riding is the same as any other task...flying being no exception!

Gaining knowledge, feeding on past, current and new information enables sound decision making but this also has to be constantly reviewed to check you’re making the right choices!

Make an informed decision, but always ask yourself...is it the correct one!
What does flying helicopters have anything to do with riding motorcycles!

I’m sometimes asked how the name ‘HELI BIKES’ came about. Well in its simplest form it was because of my work on helicopter air ambulances and the consistently high number of motorcycle accidents that we attend, but also because I’ve had an almost lifelong passion for riding bikes.

But it actually goes beyond that in lots of ways, both in terms of discussing accidents and injuries but also discussing environmental, physiological and psychological factors.

A lot of the information that is produced by HB is applied to motorcycle accidents & causation factors and the same principles and similar types of information streams are also found in other industries, aviation being just one!

In aviation, for example, there is great emphasis on initial and recurrent training with a close relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

There is an application of knowledge in terms of physical and mental states, human factors, environmental conditions such as weather...and technical in terms of aerodynamics and engineering!

But there is also a system and structure that constantly reviews itself and periodically asks itself if anything can be improved.

Much of aviation is based upon regulations, protocols & procedures and applying knowledge to given situations, but most improvements in aviation performance are based upon something that went wrong, something that was found to be defective, the results of intensive crash investigation but mostly because of the dissemination of that information thereafter into the aviation community and industry.

Whenever there is an accident, there is an investigation which in time produces conclusions which are then made available to the public. The industry and/or regulators then act upon those and changes things so that it doesn’t or very unlikely to occur again. Of course there are still air crashes, but not anywhere near as there might be if this system wasn’t in place.

We can all draw inspiration from other areas of our lives, other industries etc and apply some of that to motorcycling, of course mine comes a lot from the helicopter world.

Many of the aspects of riding are also to be found in working with helicopters. E.g. Having an appreciation of the weather forecasts can assist in making better riding decisions, but also the how we work with our senses, how we interpret them and mostly how we act upon them!

There are similarities in terms of riding and flying, especially when turning as there is a rolling or lateral movement or motion along the longitudinal axis, and we will tend to turn our heads in the direction of travel.

But the greatest similarity is how we take available information and combine that with what we already know, what our past experiences are and what our expectation will be for the future.

We can review our own recent experience, how much weather and route information have we gained, have we checked out our vehicles to ensure they are air worthy or roadworthy as the case may be!

In the end, we are all using what we know, what skills we have and making the best informed decisions and we are trying to ensure that our journeys are pleasurable but wholly uneventful in terms of problems.

ENJOY THE RIDE & AVOID A SLIDE!
GET READY TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES!

helibikes.co.uk
“All the leaves are brown…and the sky is grey…”

So summer came & went with generally lots of dry riding days, although August was slightly changeable, but now entrenched in autumn and staring down the barrel of winter…what’s in store for us riders and what perils lurk ahead?

During these coming months we see a dramatic reduction in motorcycle traffic on the roads, certainly so during the week, however weekend traffic can still be quite high and especially so when the weather is favourable.

For many, the inclement and changeable weather heralds the winter rest period, but for others it is business as usual and riding continues in all or most weather conditions.

The emergency services still have incidents which they attend, but not nearly as many as we do during the spring & summer months and for the most part, motorcycle accidents at this time of year are more due to misreading weather & road surface conditions, rather than due to ‘excessive speed or flamboyance!’

So generally we’ll see wetter and colder conditions which will affect rider and motorcycle performance...especially those of the tyres and we’ll see a degrade of road surface condition both in terms of structure and from foreign debris. We’ll see reduced vision due to weather such as drizzle, rain or fog etc...or from condensation & resting water droplets on windscreens and visors...all of which can be major contributing factors in motorcycle accidents...especially where riders and drivers do not make allowances for this.

The key to riding in these conditions is to first acknowledge and prepare for the deteriorating weather and modify riding styles. Ride more conservatively, ride more upright and gain a better view of the road ahead, but also leave extra space in between vehicles and prepare for greater errors from other road users.

The other key is to practice riding in these conditions and practice emergencies and avoid techniques but always have a clear view of your own limitations.

Riding through the autumn and winter months, means the rider needs to be more in tune with physical demands and machine performance but also need to plan further ahead and look at long term weather forecasts which will enable better riding decisions.

This does not mean that the rider should necessarily choose not to ride in any of these conditions, but it means that there has to be a better and more informed choice over routing, clothing, journey times & travelling speeds and the forward planning before and during the ride has to be more conscientious.

The mistakes we see from all road users during these coming months are avoidable but they need to be recognised early in the development phase, not only by those making the mistakes and by those witnessing them also.

As riders, we should have a higher expectation that something can and will go wrong along our journey that may or may not affect the stability of our ride.

By being ready and being practiced in emergencies we can expect the unexpected and have uneventful autumn & winter journeys!
GET READY FOR AUTUMN!

It’s never too early to start thinking and preparing for the changing seasons ahead! The weather will deteriorate, get colder and changeable! Start dusting off the winter riding gear or consider in investing in some, because rider comfort is a large factor in maintaining concentration.

Motorcycle Tyre & Braking performance will reduce so give yourselves an extra margin of safety and time to react. Be prepared for changing road surface conditions and alter your riding style to suit.

Riding in low light conditions & twilight will alter visual perception and riding in the dark will reduce your forward vision. This will be a good time to check all of your bulbs on the Headlight, Tail/Brake Light & Indicators…where installed! Possibly even consider adding brighter bulbs. Remember that headlights performance will reduce forward vision when riding around a bend as the angle changes.

Consider wearing bright or high visibility clothing, but do not rely on other road users to see you just because you are!

As the weather deteriorates and gets colder, be aware of reduced rider performance and concentration levels in the changing conditions, but also consider that drivers may also be suffering reduced performances. Be ever vigilant or your own riding standards and practices, but also be ever vigilant of other road users and vehicles as they adapt to the changing weather.

REMEMBER: ‘I SEE YOU! DO YOU SEE ME?’

Also keep in mind during the changing seasons that it is easy to get caught out by the weather. Watch out for cold mornings and surprise fog and maybe even ice patches forming on the roads. Watch for the road surface as it may change from dry to damp to wet on the same journey. Watch for debris that may have been washed onto the road after recent rainfall. Keep a good lookout for weather forecasts...especially on longer journeys and possibly when not wearing wet weather clothing, maybe carry wet weather over clothing on the bike or on a back pack.
The label loyalists!

We’ve probably, one time or another, been in need of replacement motorcycling clothing or equipment… whether it’s a new jacket or helmet, etc and I often hear or see advertised equipment that promises so much but does it ever really deliver on that promise?

What’s more I often hear many a rider proclaiming how much they have spent on their top quality equipment because it is the best and will save their lives if it is ever called upon to do so, but is there any truth in this and can it be ever substantiated?

I have attended countless motorcycle accidents where the so called top quality equipment failed to save a rider’s life, in fact it has seemed to have the same performance as the lower quality gear too. I have personally seen the most expensive helmets shattered and resulted in fatalities, but the same can be said of the cheaper helmets too…all resulting from very similar impacts!

Of course we have to understand that much of the cost of equipment is based on styling, comfort & fit and the types of materials used, but for now I’ll put those to one side and just concentrate on approved clothing and protective qualities only. I mention this because if equipment is not approved and or is fake then it is likely not to have undergone at least some standard industry testing or may even fail a lot sooner than legitimate brands. There is some anecdotal evidence of this and I have seen some examples of poor quality items failing in accident scenarios, but it would be difficult to say for sure, however these types of items are usually made of poor quality materials which will fail and wear through a lot sooner than approved clothing will.

At many accidents, injuries have been sustained where there was a failure of the equipment, e.g a helmet strap breaking, clothing stitching breaking, zips ripping apart or even armour that has shattered too. I’ve seen this with all types of equipment and all types of brands but usually it seems to have happened with older equipment.

So possibly this is a key point to keep in mind… that equipment may degrade slightly, or rather just enough, over time that it may even fail at the most crucial time.

As well as dealing with & analysing equipment in post accidents, I have often performed my own tests of equipment and try to demonstrate how equipment functions, how it protects but mostly how and wear it does not! I always try to emphasise that any substantial impact to the body will result in an injury or fatality with a high probability regardless of the type of protection worn, however light & glancing impacts will tend to result in lesser, minor or non injuries and any slide or slight rolling along the surface, the protective equipment will offer some good abrasion resistance too.

I’m often asked which is the best equipment to have and which will perform best for a rider in an accident. I’ll tend to give a standard response: “Well, it depends on what kind of crash you want to have!”, because regardless of branding and expense all protective equipment will offer some good levels of protection, even multiple layers of everyday clothing will perform to a certain degree, but all equipment will only protect up to a certain point and then it fails to deliver.

At post accident scenes when talking with patients or witnesses I often hear two claims…either when the rider has survivable injuries… “Well the protective clothing did it’s job and saved his life!” or when the rider has unsurvivable injuries or even has standard injuries… “Well that protection didn’t do anything did it!”

At many accident scenes I have witnessed where injuries have been minimised by the wearing of general protection, sometimes it is the really expensive brands and sometimes too the lesser known brands.

At many accidents injuries have been sustained where there was a failure of the equipment, e.g a helmet strap breaking, clothing stitching breaking, zips ripping apart or even armour that has shattered too. I’ve seen this with all types of equipment and all types of brands but usually it seems to have happened with older equipment.

So possibly this is a key point to keep in mind… that equipment may degrade slightly, or rather just enough, over time that it may even fail at the most crucial time.
So this is the key thing to remember, that the protective equipment tends to perform at its best at low speed, low angle impacts with less dense objects or for slides along the surface without any objects collided with.

The best protective performance will generally be derived from items that are constructed of better quality, harder wearing and ‘thicker’ materials. So multiple layers of thicker garments, or thick leather or textile etc.

Whenever I buy or look at any equipment, I tend to ignore brands, but concentrate on comfort and fit and mostly the material that it is made of. I have not been adverse to buying certain items online but really seeing, touching and trying on items in a store is probably the best practice to follow. If I buy items online I’ll make the final assessment when I receive the goods and check the quality.

One question I’m often asked is “Would you buy cheap products & equipment?” well the answer to that is... probably! It depends if it has been tested to an acceptable standard, is the material durable and is its construction of sound quality?

I do not tend to consider items as having a time - life limit...more an on condition - life limit. So if I’m wearing or using lesser quality or even wearing less equipment, I tend to change my riding style to suit. I generally ride a lot more conservatively, however regardless of brand or expense of equipment, I never assume that it will save my life or provide optimum protection and when wearing cheaper products I do not assume that it will be suitable for more than a single season. The old adage: ‘you get what you pay for!’ is probably most suited to motorcycle protective clothing & equipment!...but spending a fortune on equipment is not always justified or supported with evidence from accident scenes.

All equipment has a performance limit, some more than others but usually the difference is marginal in comparison because at higher impact forces all equipment suffers a rapid decrease in performance. So when I wear protective clothing or equipment I always try to ride in a manner to always avoid an accident, never wanting to test the protective qualities...but I always wear some, just in case I do have an accident and I ‘hope’ it will protect me somewhat or just minimise some of my injuries.

RIDE AWARE!/RIDE SAFE!

WANTED:

HELI BIKERS

We need volunteers to help promote & represent HELI BIKES within organisations, clubs & groups!

All we ask is for you to give regular updates within your group about HELI BIKES activities & information!

Please sign up to receive our monthly update by email at helibikers@helibikes.co.uk
EVENT PACKS

are available to download from the website at www.helibikes.co.uk/helibikers.html

If you would like to help promote HELI BIKES & its information at your events or rallies, the free event pack will help you to help us.

All it requires is for the event organisers to download and print the pack items, and pin them to a notice board and display it on your club or group stall. There are also flyers to print off and hand out too.

We need help & we need champions for HELI BIKES and the information it provides to help all riders of all bikes of all experiences!
Location, Location, Location!

The last month or so I have expanded the website with additions concerned with off road motorcycling pursuits. This does not necessarily mean Trials or MotoX etc (Although there is subject matter in this area), but rather providing information on track riding and riding at extreme high speeds off public roads and the safety issues to consider.

Being involved & interested in rider & motorcycling safety issues, you might think I would be adverse to any form of racing, high speed riding or performing stunts of any kind. However this could not be further from the truth, but I do think that these endeavours should not be practiced on public roads and not where they contravene any road law…regardless of my personal thoughts on speed restrictions etc.

Many might disagree with me on this subject, but I do not consider riding at extreme speeds or racing etc is ever possible to be accomplished on public roads…without there being a very high and highly probable risk of accident and injury to either the perpetrators or innocent parties.

There are two main considerations here: Other road users may not be able to react in time and will not be used to other traffic travelling at such high speed. Also there are so many emerging and oncoming hazards on public roads that if riding or driving at extreme speeds, there will not be enough time to detect, react & avoid any developing hazards, of which there are many. What’s more I acknowledge that I have limited talent and although I might have an Italian name, it isn’t Rossi or Biaggi…so I don’t ride like them either.

One of the major contributing factors in high speed accidents is where drivers or riders overestimate their own competence and reaction skills, interestingly even with those that are inexperienced there is this common factor, hence why coupled with youth, there is a high accident rate in the young & inexperienced drivers and riders.

When we take this kind of riding off the public roads and onto a ‘sanitised’ track, then we are eliminating the hazards normally found on roads and so can apportion much more concentration and mental processing ability to riding skills and gaining a lot more feedback from the machine.

When on a track or drag strip a rider can make gradual incremental improvements to machine & rider performance for the conditions at the time and there is always a ride through or sighting lap to not only gauge the surface & cambers but also how tight the bends are, when to apply power and accelerate and when to brake, slow down and change gear, etc.

We obviously know that riding is not without risk and riding at higher speed is also littered with pitfalls, but being able to ride on a wide open track with run off areas and very few obstacles will provide a buffer that will limit the cause of the most severe injuries.

By riding with a known set of variables in a controlled or semi controlled environment the rider is able to make technical decisions and not be so concerned about external hazards…and the more you practice and more experience you gain at doing this, then ultimately you’ll become more proficient at riding at high speed on the track.

So, even after taking a bike on the track and trying to go faster and faster with each lap and always looking forward to the next time, do I think that this has any benefit for public road riding?
Many would argue with me and many track courses will claim to make you better at riding on the roads, but I really don’t see it that way…well not totally anyway.

You take a bike to learn a track discipline and techniques that although could be used for the road, aren’t really necessary because you’ll never need to be pushing it that far…or not supposed to be anyway! For sure you’ll improve your riding capabilities, machine control & positioning but you’ll be improving them for track riding and the lines will not be the same at all.I take the view that I go away from the roads for a specific reason…and that is to improve my skills and enjoy myself and push my own limits in terms of skills, but also speed, all of which should not be attempted on the roads.

photo by www.picman.co.uk
HELI BIKES
RIDER’S CHECKLIST!

Remember Riding Basics - Consider Advanced Training
Be Aware - Your Riding & Others Driving
Pay Attention - Road & Weather Conditions
Know Limits - Your Skill, Recent Riding Experience

Ready To Ride?
Blood Sugar Level, Fluid Intake
Alcohol, Drugs & Medication
Life Stress

Roadworthy - Tyres, Brakes etc
Protection - Helmet, Boots, Clothing Etc

www.helibikes.co.uk
Preparation is Everything!

As the light fades, the nights get longer, get colder with more rain and risk of icing, so making the right decisions at the right times becomes ever more crucial.

One of the most crucial decisions is whether to ride or not, but if you do, you need to increase your forward planning to take into account the deteriorated conditions, reduced machine & tyre performance and not forgetting reduced rider & driver performance.

Preparing to ride in these conditions is an active and constant process both in mental terms but also physical. Anything that can improve your riding comfort...keep you warm & dry, will ultimately increase your concentration levels as you search for hazards but also acknowledge that we all will be suffering from reducing capabilities.

From reduced forward vision, due to the dark, headlight functionality on bends and the eye’s decreased effectiveness in the dark, to lack of proficiency by all road users and greater error chains.

Expectation of these issues & preparation of dealing with them will be the best strategy for riding in the winter.

From early autumn, always think ahead and prepare, get some training, practice skills & avoiding hazards and emergency drills. Think ahead & make the right decisions & evaluate your winter riding strategy!
Do you have a winter project?

How many of us have at some point, thought about doing a winter project bike? Either a simple to complex modification or restoration or even a total custom project!

Those long winter evenings hiding in a shed or garage, freezing your bits off, tinkering away and dreaming… it’ll be great when it’s done and ready for the spring!

We associate the winter with riding downtime, so this is the perfect opportunity to start the project, but so many are started but so few are ever completed, certainly not by spring anyway. Personally winter is probably the worst time for tinkering as my shed is already full of clutter and has a broken window and my garage has become an extension of the household, so I’m really lacking a suitable workshop area.

Any winter tinkering is usually limited to mini projects that will only take a couple of hours or could be performed in the garden…or in the kitchen (don’t tell the missus!) So on my last build I purposely started it in the summer, so I had space in the garden and the warmer climate to do it all in. “Wimp!” I hear you say…well I’m not ashamed to admit it, but I also have other reasons too.

There are certain things that of course can be done in the cold and damp conditions, but rarely are the results anything other than rubbish. Have you ever tried to spray paint a bike in the cold and moist air…well don’t…it’s much better done in the warm & dry air. I’m talking here of the home painter and not the pros of course.

Have you ever tried to fit rubber seals or hoses in the cold, well it’s a right faff! Even dipping the rubber in boiling water is a pig and you usually end up with scorched fingers and the rubbers still don’t fit great as metal surfaces are still cold. This was one of my big headaches last year when I had to repeatedly test fit carbs and manifold rubbers on my bobber project. I only got a better fit in the late spring when the temperatures got above: “Oh my god it’s fff….ing freezing!”

So what pearls of wisdom might I bestow upon a would be winter project builder? Well unfortunately not too many pearls but more like lemons in my case.

I managed to complete my build in about a month but that was pretty much full time as I’d had some leave booked and the rest I could tinker with after work. But although I thought I had planned it properly and had costed to the penny…ish, the truth is that the planning wasn’t near enough and the budget did go over a bit too, and that was mainly due to sourcing parts at short notice and having to do some unexpected repairs & work.

The bits I did get right were actually nothing to do with the building part, but more the ‘vision’ of what I wanted. I always had a clear idea of what kind of bike I wanted to build and how I would go about it, what tools I would need and most importantly what skills I could cope with and those that were beyond my capability.

I think having done this, actually saved me lots of time and money in the long run and all the mistakes I made, I’ll be sure not to make them on the next project. So, having a clear idea of what bike you want to build and how you’ll do it, what equipment you’ll need and where you’re going to do it…is probably a good place to start…before you invest any money and start a project.

Always keep in mind, that if something can go wrong… it probably will, which means budget busting additional costs and more time. This bit of advice I learnt many years ago…especially for the amateur; if you’re going to buy a car or bike to restore or modify, it is best to buy the best your budget can afford, because any project can be a real money pit, so buying good quality in the first place will save you money. I wish I’d listened to my own advice :)

But eventually, with luck, dedication, lots of head scratching & caffeine, the project comes together and you get to fire it up and go for a test ride, pass an MOT and marvel at your own magnificence!…Well almost! A full write up of my build and the considerations involved are on the website: ‘Bike Building & Modifications’ page, if you’d like to read more. If you are thinking about or starting a project, all I can say is: “Good luck & I wish you well!” because when it comes together and you get to ride it, there’s no better feeling than knowing you’ve built your own bike, even if everyone else thinks it’s crap, it’s still your masterpiece and the detractors, if any, obviously have no taste!

Well just keep telling yourself that, anyway!
THE LANCELOT

A Rider’s Story!

The Eighth of February 2012 was a day completely set apart from the norm. I had finished work for the day and had just put on my leathers and thought to myself “nah I doubt I’ll need to wear my spine protector today it’ll be alright.” (I’d been wearing it almost every ride for years, never get complacent) to make the short ride from Loughton over to a motorcycle shop I was doing some voluntary mechanic work at in Wolverton in Milton Keynes. As I pulled out of the driveway I shut the gate behind me and swung my leg back over the bike, dropped it into first gear pulled my visor down and set off.

It became one of the shortest, but also one of the longest journeys of my life.

I remember very little of the accident itself, only vivid flashbacks give me clues to the extreme pain and carnage that was the outcome. What I do remember was a beautiful act of kindness from two local Milton Keynes residents who stopped and ran to assist in restraining me from my injuries and shock, and contact emergency medical assistance which came in the form of the wonderful BOB Air Ambulance and its crew.

I do honestly believe this was the defining moment that saved my life. I can’t even begin to imagine what a sight they had to deal with from the wreckage of the car, my motorcycle, and me laying twisted bent and bleeding catastrophically in the road surrounded by debris, but both the chief police officer who was leading the clear up of the scene and the lead paramedic on board the helicopter said that in both of their extensive careers this was one of the most destructive scenes they had ever seen and they fully expected me to die from my injuries or at the very least lose my right leg, yet I was to survive and succeed in my fight and my recovery thanks to my willingness and determination and the selfless help of many others along the way.

As I became more aware conscious and alert after arriving in hospital pumped full of sedatives and painkillers, I was to learn of the extent of my injuries. My head had sustained a blow, despite my racing spec approved helmet, that was hard enough to cause an internal haemorrhage. In my spine I had fractured one of the vertebrae between my shoulder blades. Fractured my right femur (the strongest bone in the human body) in two places. And then there was what was left of my lower right leg.

Fortunately I was assigned to some truly amazing and skilled plastic and trauma surgeons at the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford who have collectively spent well over 50 hours over two and a half years with me on a operating theatre, gradually reconstructing my right leg and enabling me to not only walk again, but one day ride again.

At this point yes I knew the extent of my injuries but it would take many more months possibly years for it to fully sink in and become accepted as these injuries are with me for the rest of my life.

And there we move smoothly onto the mental side of things. It’s one thing to physically recover from something like this and I am proud I have, it’s a massive achievement for me. But it was nothing compared to the mental impact the accident had.

I spent near as makes no difference eight months in the confines of one house, not even an environment that I was happy in either. And this mental state of being confined and stuck led to depression which then has an impact on physical recovery speeds and thus it creates an infinite cycle that’s very difficult to break.

I don’t think there is any way to put into text what this kind of event can do to the human mind other than it will make or break a person.

It nearly broke me. Luckily along the journey of recovery at a time where everything felt at its lowest, physically, recovery to the bone wasn’t doing well, and my personal life was suffering hard, I came across someone who has become very valued to me as they went far beyond their duty of care and advised me as a friend (which is what I really needed at the time, a friend) to seek some mental counselling which after some thought I agreed to. Turning point!

Now I am still living and feeling the after effects of my decisions that have led to this point, but I have a very different and much clearer outlook and following all the love and help from people along my fight for survival and life I have been inspired to follow their act’s and train to become a paramedic myself.

I hope nobody ever has to live similar events to what my motorcycle crash has caused me but the fact of life is that while we all live with free choice these events do happen.

So be as best prepared to fight your defence as you can. In the respect of motorcycles I know at times it
can be a lot easier to say “I’ll just stick my jacket and helmet on and go in my jeans” if it’s a short ride, but the defining factor that I still have two legs to walk on was that I was wearing good quality leather trousers that did more than their jobs worth, it meant the surgeons had something to work with.

I’m not trying to preach and make motorcycling boring, far from it. I’d love to see more people out on the roads enjoying the feeling of riding a bike.

But the moral I will say to you is have fun and enjoy it responsibly. Take the extra 5 minutes to find your gloves or change into your leathers, trust me its worth it should you need to call on them to defend your corner.

Behind The Music

Over the last couple of months or so I have been reviewing the future of HELI BIKES, both in terms of, as an information resource but also in terms of expansion and new projects.

After funding HB privately since I started a few years ago, it was evident that if it were ever to grow beyond a website and social media presence, then it needed substantial funding and investment...both in finances and personnel.

After a few years of trying to raise funds and approach many companies and industries to gain sponsorship...without success, I started a company in the name of HB to be able to raise funds and seek funding in a transparent way.

Unfortunately, since the company started and relentless attempts to gain funding and to create a 'sellable' product, there has been little success in this regard.

Over the years, I have been asked on a regular basis whether I would be able to take HELI BIKES 'on the road' to events, rallies or shows and the issue has been time and funding to do that.

In truth it would require a small volunteer force to go out to all rallies etc and take a display unit, but again this would require funding which still was not available.

Other projects in the pipeline, were to have a permanent base or visitors & information centre. After many months of searching through commercial properties and looking at many different sites, it became evident that...again funding was the big issue that would prevent a future, that had a big potential but alas would not be profitable or at least self supporting.

There were & are still many ideas and projects as yet developed which would have brought information and training to the rider both physically and online.

At the start of August, I had to take stock of where we were and what the likelihood was for the future, and whilst I’d had much support & enthusiasm for HELI BIKES amongst the biking community, that had not translated into a secure foundation to build upon.

So I have decided to cease & dissolve trading as a company and to not seek any funding for projects at the moment. This process is currently underway, however I have decided to continue with the website and online presence until at least spring 2015, where I will review the situation once more.

So, really nothing has changed in terms of the information available...the website and social pages are still running and the promotion continues in various forms, but the funding behind it will revert to private sponsorship.

The Lancelot, may return for a December edition, but more likely to return next spring, where upon I’ll look to develop this further.

As far as the information goes, I will continue to add to the website and write more articles both for HELI BIKES and external publications, but I will also be trying to further develop the HELI BIKERS Network.

Currently on the HELI BIKERS webpage there is an event pack which can be downloaded so that any event organiser can print it off and display HB information on their stalls and I would still like to develop more reps within groups & clubs to help promote this information further.

HELI BIKES is still working to develop a presence within the emergency services, air ambulances and biking community & industry.

Stay tuned for any updates and developments over the next few months. Thanks.
Across
1. Quick ride (4)
3. Clueless power ranger (1,1,1,1,1)
5. Australian Sporton builder (1,1,1)
7. Mallard from Bologna (4)
9. Long Bolt (7)
12. Upgrade brake lines (7,5)
15. Go round & round (4)
16. & 5 Down Rigid (4)
18. Sticking (7)
20. Old Brit bike late 40's (3)
24. & 19 Down Get in without carb (4)
25. Speed wobble (4,7)
26. Tatty homebuilt that's a beauty (3)
28. Racing tyres (6)
29. Fast triumph (6)
32. & 11 Down Manual ignition (5)
33. & 27 Down brake fluid brain (8)
35. Unique (3,3)
36. Thin & weak (4)
41. Uncommon (4)
42. Single or Dual on top (8,3,6)
44. Spanish motorcycle (4)
48. Lots of Locomotive torque (5,4,1)
50. & 55 Down 20's German bikes (2)
51. Power Maker(6)
56. Beyond legal confines(6)
57. Grease monkey (10,8)

Down
1. Money pit bike (6,4)
2. Clean old english bike (5)
4. Classic Suzuki model prefix (2)
5. See 16 Acc (4)
6. Stable spinner (4)
7. Oil measuring (8)
8. Austrian Mudder (3)
10. Angelic home (3,7)
11. See 32 Acc (4)
13. Harley saviour engine (3)
14. Husqvarna motorcycle (5)

HEL BIKERS CRYPTIC CROSSWORD OCT 2014

HELI BIKERS CRYPTIC CROSSWORD OCT 2014

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56. Beyond legal confines(6)
57. Grease monkey (10,8)
"Hey guy... are you going to the Halloween party tonight?"

"Yep... I'm all ready to go!"

"Who you going as?"

"Duh! Guy Fawkes!"

"Or... going for originality then!!"

"Hey... what do ya mean?"

"Never mind! Do you fancy a pre party drink?"

"Yep, I'll have a flamin' sambuca with Irish! (Er, too)"

"Of course you will! What a moron!"

"Wont be long before Christmas is here... again!!"

"Yep... great stuff! Always a busy time for me!"

"Why's that then?"

"I'm a Santa boot... you twat!"

"I see! Best work on your Christmas cheer, then!"

Ho Ho Ho
THE LANCELOT

Bike Tour 2014
By Emma Freyne

After a year of some sort of planning and endless double checks, preparation, equipment and motorcycle maintenance, the day had come to leave for our first ever “don’t know where we would end up” motorcycle tour, already delayed by 24hrs due stormy weather we made the decision to go even though the storm had not passed it was now or never!

Saturday 24th May

We load the bikes up in the rain so we were wet through before we even got off the driveway! Keith and I rode from Bracknell Berkshire, to Cricklade in Wiltshire to meet Marc and Mike.

With the bike to bike communications already sorted a week before I pre-planned a shout out to find them as we entered Cricklade high street….. “Mark …...Mike …...its Em are you here?” nothing! Maybe we are on different channels? I tried again and a voice answered “were behind you”…..a quick glance in the mirror and there they were just riding up behind us a couple of cars back, great they work all on the same channel!

The radios were the start of a great week of Mickey taking, talking about things passing by, general chit-chat like needing to refuel, toilet breaks and leg stretches, also invaluable comments from whoever was leading the ride like cyclists/horses round the corner, mud/diesel on the road, sharp bend or oncoming cars on a single track road of which there were many in Yorkshire and Derbyshire! We all loved this bit of kit and won’t go without it next year.

(Despite a technical issue with mikes which was sorted out by Maplins in York)

We all pulled in at Tesco Cricklade as we were soaked, not through to our base layers but de-natured through the gloves and boots from the motorway ride, all hoping for a quick brese and toilet stop but the café was closed for refurbishment!

Keith came out the shop with a glamorous pair of marigolds to go under his bike gloves, good idea we all thought, but where were ours? This is where Keith got the nickname “jack” as in “I’m alright jack”.

I went into the shop and bought a pack of four (team player) and handed them out. This was much better and drier also no black hands from leather dye.

Still raining we set off as a team of four and rode the A-roads through Shropshire and on into north-wales, giving this day’s riding a total of 248 miles with three further stops and leg stretches.

Betwys-coed in conwys, north-wales a beautiful place, couldn’t get there quick enough the driveway of the bunk house was very steep so we all conquered it one at a time, we all made it up laden with panniers tank bags and dry-sacs tied on to the rear seats, I had barely enough energy left and walked the bike back into a wall and cracked my number plate! We all had trouble getting off the bikes and being able to walk was just as bad, we were all stretching our legs out and standing up on the pegs in the last 20 miles!

The bunk house was lovely and had a much welcome DRY ROOM for all our kit. (Now owned by an ex-London bike courier) Marc couldn’t have picked a better place.

3 sets of bunk beds 1 room loads of space and warm showers, once all the kit was sorted bikes locked up and dry clothes put on we went down to the pub for a pint and some food, we spoke about the ride and agreed that we would never ride that distance again in one day, let alone in the rain! That night we slept VERY well

Wednesday 28th

After breakfast at the cavalier, we sorted the bikes and were asked by the owners to pose outside for a photo for the bike guide, well of course we obliged. We hadn’t yet had a photo with us all in it other than the obligatory selfies! Today we would ride from York to Scarborough the long way round and yes it was!

Takin in the views on the moors Keighley, Northallerton, (costa coffee stop at another garage), Pickering, another bike guide gem was sourced and we were booked into the rose dene B and B in Scarborough. It was wet, cold and very windy, we rode along the seafront where we all opened the channel on the radios and in turn shared with the group what riding on cobbles sounded like when your heads bobbing up and down! Another great day had passed with great company.

Still no candy-floss although we knew we were now close!

Thursday 29th

Whilst at breakfast marc and mike re-enacted what riding on cobbles looked like much to the amusement of the B&B owner and other diners!

Lots of laughter to start the day off as always.

We knew that today was the day to go to the seafront in Scarborough to buy a bag of candy floss and eat it all! A great thing to have before your ride, plenty of sugar!

From the cold wet, windy Scarborough we rode to Whitby east Yorkshire to visit the Famous biker meet the whistle stop café.

We met a lovely old chap who had a helibikes sticker on his top box! Well we had to have a chat with him didn’t we and it turned out he was from Yorkshire and was given the sticker by his nephew from down south (proof that motorcycles schemes can travel)

The roads in the dales were calling so a quick visit to the Famous biker meet the whistle stop café.

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The roads in the dales were calling so a quick visit to the pound shop for another butt cushion for mike and we were good to go yet again.
Saturday 31st

We had now ridden as high up the country as we could go due to work commitments and knew that we had to start thinking about working our way back down, mikes partner Andrea lives in derby and she very kindly offered us a bed for the night.

Before riding the snake pass for the second time we just had to stop off again in Skipton as it was so nice the first time, the owners of the union jack were pleased to see us again their great service was welcomed.

It was here that mike found out what a fun snap felt like when it hits you in the face, he had no idea it was incoming! And here commenced the game of “fun snap at force to the face” marc was next then me and Keith being last. Back on the bikes with fun snaps under all the wheels (thank you Keith) it frightened onlookers more than us!

We rode the snake pass again but in reverse, it was just as brilliant as before and the roads were lovely and dry with the sun on our backs as we rode.

We were stopped by marshall’s half way along the snake pass and got asked to pull into a car park as filming was currently taking place on this road for the forthcoming Le tour cycle race, we watched as cyclists were sprayed with water to imitate sweat and then followed a big filming rig out of the car park and down the hill...... twenty minutes later they returned and we were allowed to continue with the advice of take it steady as the road was empty.

Downhill we went with sweeping bends and open road, we could see for miles let alone metres and the road was as the marshall said...... empty, a biker’s paradise. Matlock was the next stop to meet with the other Saturday bikers at the cafe there very nice people and Keith did a bit of helibikes PR and handed out cards. This was a nice meet with plenty of different bikes and groups to chat too.

The roads here are just brilliant and I would recommend a trip up this way to any biker, we have some nice roads where we all live but the roads of the dales in Derbyshire, Yorkshire and the Lake District are 10/10.

Visibility and forward vision are a dream here due to the height and location, not a junction, traffic light or roundabout for miles and miles to see. Arriving in derby we looked the bikes away for the last time and met up with Andrea it was lovely to have some female company after a week of being with the boys, we all chatted and ate dinner at the restaurant down the road and then went back to Andreeas house for a hot shower and chat, all of our stories about the tour she had to listen to within a couple of hours.

I slept very well same as everyone else, a big thank you to Andrea for her hospitality

Sunday 1st June

The reality of the ride home and going back to normality has set in, all knowing what a great adventure we have had. Bikes loaded for the last time comm on and we set off after breakfast, weaving our way down from derby to Coalville in Leicestershire for a stop off at a friend’s house that we ride with every year to the RTTW. It was good to see them.

Off we go again for a quick bite to eat in our usual pub and we are already talking of plans for next year and what we would do differently.

Hinkley, Rugby, Northampton and here we split. Our team is now pairs Marc and Mike will return to Swindon and we will ride down to Bracknell through Buckinghamshire.

The radios go quiet as we ride away from each other I will miss the radio chat of saying whatever you’re seeing and taking the mick out of one another. We arrive home and unload the bikes. my speedo has gone round the clock and now reads 56 miles so in all 1056 completed and I’m surprised my bike went so well.

To summarise my week I have really enjoyed being part of this tour we had no real plans, no real direction, no real need to be anywhere, which I believe was why it worked so well.

Doing things in our own time with no hurry involved. Life is fast paced as it is, so just riding and taking it all in was head time for me and much needed break from my job.

I’m sure Keith Mike and Marc enjoyed it just as much. This is just my view through the visor, in the saddle, what I saw, what I remember, if we were all to write a blog I’m sure each one would be different only the route would be the same. We all had our own journey. Duct tape can fix anything and nothing is really waterproof!

The following weekend we had withdrawal and rode to Poole harbour the long way round and covered 210 miles!

Excerpts from Emma’s Tour diary! What would you write about from your tour! Thanks Emma for sharing and laying it down for future reflection. Great!
False Horizons

In aviation, pilots are subjected to various visual illusions and sensory deceptions and many of these may also apply to riders of motorcycles.

False horizons are situations where the pilot gets a false impression of what the horizon is and then wrongly adjusts the aircraft position, thus placing it in a potentially dangerous configuration which may lead to an accident. This can be caused by reduced visibility, terrain & cloud formations, by rows of terrestrial lights or even by stars in the night sky…all giving the pilot the visual cue that they are flying referencing the horizon, but which they actually are not.

We all rely on our bodies to provide us with information and feedback from the external world so that we can gain perceptions of what we are experiencing and through training and understanding we establish a course of action to achieve a certain goal. We do this in everything we do and at every waking moment!

The problem is that these kinesthetic senses will tend to lie to us…especially when we lose visual cues, such as riding at night or in fog, rain or drizzle!

Our bodies are designed to assist our orientation in our surroundings and they provide feedback to us. How our senses detect environmental changes and how our actions then interact with the surrounding environment will determine how we ‘think’ we are doing…especially when in motion.

So how does this relate to a rider and can it really be an issue. Well the short answer is yes…very much so and especially as we move into night riding or periods of deteriorating weather.

The way the body detects motion, either turning or accelerating and decelerating, etc is by the vestibular system or commonly known by the workings of the inner ear especially when vision is impaired.

As the rider loses visual cues when riding at night or in poor weather and is reliant on the headlight to light up the road ahead, then much of the view ahead is masked…or rather much of the peripheral view is.

When you’re riding you are picking up visual cues which help to supplement the body senses to tell you how fast you are going, how fast you are turning, if your position is correct and how you are navigating through a bend, what forces you are experiencing, etc. What helps you at night are road markings, cats eyes and street lighting (if any) and even other traffic’s headlights & tail lights.

Consider if you’ve been riding on a well lit & marked road for some time, then all of a sudden you ride along a new stretch of road that has yet to be marked or on a country road without lighting or markings.

For some time, there is a period of disorientation...for some slight and for others, quite substantial. As you lose the visual markings cues, you then lose your visual performance and capability to differentiate between variations in road surfaces, layout and condition.

It is at this point that the body starts to rely on its senses to determine what the body is doing. If the rider starts to lean in a bend or make sudden head movements, then there is a risk of further disorientation, which can lead to further deterioration in the rider’s capability to determine what the road configuration is.

A few nights ago as I was returning home from work in the dark and as I approached a brow of a hill, there were road works, on which a dual carriageway had been split into 2 single and opposing lanes. Dividing the lanes were a long line of pole type bollards which weaved down the other side of the hill to the end of the works.

The road was not lit and there were no other road markings and free of any other traffic. So as I proceeded down the hill, I noticed that my attention was starting to wander from the road layout to the layout of the bollards, which were very bright from my headlights.

As I continued I noted that the road had a slight bend to the left but the bollards gave the impression that it was a straight road. As I started to follow the bollards ‘horizon’ I noted that I was veering towards the offside of the lane and this is basically a rider’s false horizon.

Becoming disorientated when turning can occur at any time, and in reduced visibility it can be compounded, as can occur with false horizons too. The way to combat this, is to first acknowledge the reduced visibility and the deterioration in perception. Seek out other visual cues and not focus purely on an individual one.

When riding at night, there may be ‘tricks of the light’ in the peripheral vision and when turning as the headlight beam changes, the rider can lose a substantial view ahead. With oncoming traffic with high beams on, the rider can lose a view of the road ahead, so always be looking, scanning to pick out other landmarks to guide and regain a positive impression, such as the nearside curb or other road furniture…but mostly importantly…reduce speed in deteriorating conditions and at night to begin to compensate for reduced vision and false impressions.

Pilots are trained to consider the reduced performances of the body, the visual illusions and the sensory deceptions and use techniques to overcome them, but the primary countermeasure is to first be prepared for them, to acknowledge them and take active steps to avoid and deal with them.

Beware of false horizons and impressions!
The Longest Ride!

For a few years I had wanted to do an endurance ride as a personal challenge but I also wanted it to help promote motorcycle awareness & safety but also do my bit for charity.

After much thought I eventually decided to commit to it in spring this year and the planning for ‘12/24’ started. The goal was to ride in England, Wales & Scotland…covering more than 1200 miles in 24hrs. I decided on a mainly motorway & dual carriageway route to complete a full loop which would total over 1400miles and that was ultimately my personal target distance in the time.

The preparation started with planning route and fuel stops, going on test rides for equipment, clothing, bike set up…but also consideration for fatigue management, energy & hydration levels. It became a challenge to ‘train’ my body to sustain repeated long periods in the saddle and maintain a safe level for concentration and alertness but always knowing that it had to be a constant assessment along the route and always to prepare to abort the ride if it became an issue.

The day finally arrived to start on the 23rd Sept 2014 and after checking the weather I decided to leave Reading at 3.30 am for my first leg to Plymouth. The timing had to be just right to avoid heavy traffic near Cardiff, Birmingham and then London.

The first leg turned out to be a nightmare with many patches of thick fog and the temperatures dropping significantly. Riding speeds got down to 50mph at certain points but eventually made it to Plymouth, cold, fed up and my hamstrings were killing me.

A warming coffee helped at the fuel stop and being off the bike eased the pain a lot. So next on to Swansea/M4 which went really well. Traffic was light and flowing without delays and the warming sunrise helped with visibility and lifted the spirits too. By the next fuel stop and food break it was after 9a.m. and the morning rush hour was over which meant I had a good chance of getting past M5/M6 interchange before lunch which meant I would be on schedule.

The next stop was at Stafford services which I stopped for fuel and food & drink, again easing my aches & pains whilst off the bike. I checked the weather and put on a rain suit as there was forecast rain ahead but it was the roadworks that had the biggest impact on my ride and frustration.

Almost from Birmingham to past Manchester were roadworks & although it was flowing, the speeds were down to 40 & 50mph which would impact the schedule. However once past Preston, the roadworks eased off as did the traffic, so onwards to Lockerbie services to refuel bike & body. This leg was when the pain really started to take hold, which meant I had to constantly change my body position which had a knock on effect on my knees, but the regular breaks and food/drinks meant I felt alert and was able to safely concentrate on the riding, all the time giving myself lots of room for error and keeping my distance from other vehicles at all times.

At this point I calculated it was unlikely that I would be able to make the distance in 24hrs, so I decided to cut down on the break duration and hoped this would make it up somewhat.

The route thereafter, through Scotland was a dream… the weather was dry, overcast but warm, light and flowing traffic. Even on the Edinburgh bypass with queuing traffic, so many drivers yielded to let me filter through and then to Newcastle on the A68, I hardly saw another vehicle which meant I could keep rolling on.

I had a quick bike & body fuel stop at Jedburgh, then a quick stop at Durham to meet a pal for a supportive chat, then onto M1 near Sheffield for the next stop, but this is when the next nightmare began.

From Durham, south towards London & M25 was seemingly endless roadworks and rain, which was soul destroying really, but determined to continue whilst assessing myself constantly and eventually reached Dartford crossing services.

Another quick bike & body fuel/break, then onto the last leg to Ashford in Kent, then home to Reading, which seemed the longest leg of all and this required the greatest evaluation of my wellbeing but also whether it was even possible to complete the route. I was battling with the idea of missing out Ashford and going straight to Reading, but I also was determined to do the route that I had stated. So although feeling physically tired, I did not feel fatigued & mentally I was still alert & able to concentrate, so I continued and decided just simply to take it a few miles at at time.

The traffic by this time was very light and the weather was dry and clear and temperatures were cool but not cold. There had been many high points along the route, but also lots of frustrations and low points, but doing my social media updates along the way and receiving supportive messages really helped keep me going.

I always knew that it would be both a physical & mental challenge and that is what I trained & prepared for...just like an athlete before a big race prepares... aahhh, although many would agree I’m no athlete!

I eventually arrived back home in Reading at 3.30a.m. having ridden 1457miles in 24hrs.

As I got off the bike for the last time, I paused for a couple of minutes to take stock of what I had done and to ease the pain I had been going through in my legs. A quick update of the social page, put the bike away, undressed and soon into bed to regenerate! It was an odd feeling at this point, totally buzzing with adrenaline but totally shattered also. I really think the preparation was key for this ride, but the willpower to ignore the pain just enough to continue. It’s not for everyone and I’m not sure I’d do it again either…but then again I just might…

more at www.helibikes.co.uk/enduranceriding.html
ARE YOU FIT TO RIDE?
GIVE YOURSELF THE ‘IMSAFE’ CHECK!

Constantly evaluate your wellbeing to make a go/no decision!

I  ILLNESS
M  MEDICATION
S  STRESS
A  ALCOHOL
F  FATIGUE
E  EATING