



TREADS

www.aamc.co.uk

The first 2023 Newsletter of AAMC

EDITORS BITS –

IN THIS EDITION:

This being the first 'new edition' means that there are some differences from previous issues of Treads. There are no 'Legal Matters' by Andrew Dalton or BMF articles but we hope to be able to include these again shortly.

Andy has written about his biking history in View from the Saddle and we would love to hear about yours.

ALSO;

New Year & New Beginnings

2023 is well under way now so it doesn't really seem appropriate to wish you a Happy New Year. However, this is the first Treads of the year and it is also the first issue under the 'new regime' so I will say 'hello' and 'welcome', especially to those who are receiving Treads for the first time.

Stuart has done a fantastic job over the last few years and developed Treads into an interesting read packed full of advice. As you know he has, unfortunately but understandably, had to step down from the role of editor.

Sadly, no one stepped forward to follow on from Stuart when Simon asked for any expressions of interest and so I have taken it on as I believe that the club should have a magazine as it helps to form the 'fabric' of the club and keeps people in touch with activities, both past and future. Not forgetting of course that there are the WhatsApp groups as well but I am aware that not everyone uses them.

I shall endeavour to produce as good a read as I can but realise that I can never match Stuart's experience and experiences. I tend not to follow current developments in the motorcycle world particularly closely but do have many years behind me [AKA BOF!]. If you don't want endless features on Oily Brits v Jap Crap then I encourage you to pick up the mouse and write something for Treads.

EVEN BETTER WOULD BE TO ATTEND THE FORTHCOMING AGM ON 9th MARCH [details tbc] AND BOOT ME OUT OF THE POST AS FRESH FACES / BLOOD / VIEWPOINTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME ON THE COMMITTEE!

Jim

The club diary

2023 diary

Helen is compiling the calendar for the 2023 riding year and is looking for volunteers to lead rides. She would love to hear from you, especially if you have not led one before.

If you are worried about where to go then I am sure that anyone who has led one previously would be happy to advise. For myself, I just keep my mind open to any road that I am travelling on. I have been trundling along a B road in the motorhome cursing the overhanging hedges and narrow twisty bits but thinking that it would be lovely to ride on the bike then look at the road atlas to build a route around it. Coffee and lunch breaks can be taken at garden centres which are easily found on Google Maps.

Please think about it and contact Helen.

Extra and impromptu rides can be advertised on WhatsApp.

There is still time to get YOUR ride organised. Just make contact with Helen to fix your ride date



TREADS - NEXT SUBMISSION DATE

We endeavour to issue Treads on a regular basis. Therefore, if you have any items to be published in the next TREADS, please can you ensure that they reach the editor (editor@aamc.co.uk) at the latest by;

FIRST WEEK OF March 2023

Submissions accepted in MICROSOFT WORD format. (May be edited to fit available space).

Photos are very welcome if correctly attributed to the owner, either as separate JPEG files, or embedded in the text.

We publish articles for the benefit of members – none are an endorsement or recommendation unless explicitly stated. You must make up your own mind if you think something is suitable for you.

Any images included in the context will be attributed to their provider/owner.



CHATTY CHAIRMAN - Simon Gough

Skills Development Course

The Club annual Skills Development Course will be run as usual again this year. The theory sessions will be on Thursday evenings about every two weeks, followed by practical sessions usually on a Saturday with the Club

Tutors. The exact dates are below. As previously, we are planning to include some basic machine handling skills, especially braking, but that will be dependent on the weather we get on the day. To get the most from this course, you should ideally have copies of the 2021 edition of the Highway Code and 2020 Motorcycle Roadcraft, together with a desire to improve your riding skills. I can supply the books at cost if you need them. It would obviously be best if you can attend all the sessions, but if you can't make one or two, you will still be most welcome to attend those you can.

We will hold the Thursday evening sessions in a meeting room at my offices, just off the Feeder Road, St. Philips, where there is plenty of free parking. The Saturday and Sunday sessions will start from Starbucks / Greggs BS4 5NL (100 metres down the road on the same side as McDonald's), opposite the Park & Ride in Brislington.

There will be a charge of £40 for the course and you will need to be a Club member. In addition, you may be expected to pay your Observer's petrol expenses.

The Thursday evening dates are:

16th March, 30th March, 13th April, 27th April and 18th May.

The Saturday / Sunday dates are:

18th March, 1st April, Sunday 16th April, 29th April and 20th May.

Please complete and return the application form at the back of this edition by **10th March**. Please either enclose a cheque with the form or make an online payment to the Club, details of which are as follows: Bank: HSBC, Sort Code: 40-14-15, Account no: 91070770. Please put your name in the reference.

I will advise every one of the final arrangements a few days before the course starts. Thanks very much.

First Club Ride

I'll be leading the first Club ride of this year on Sunday 5th March. We'll meet at Starbucks, 821 Bath Road, Brislington (just down from McDonald's), at 10:15am for a 10:45am start.

Lunch is planned for the café at Stourhead Estate (National Trust, but the café is free entry).

The afternoon route will depend on the weather, but we're likely to finish at Farrington Farm Shop café by 3:30pm. 100 miles or so in total.

Hope to see you there.

AGM

The Club AGM is due to take place on Thursday 9th March – exact details to be confirmed. Please come along and have a say in how your club is run. We need as much help from members as we can get!

Simon



VIEW FROM THE SADDLE – Andy C

With most of the riding and trips I have been on this year *[written in 2022 – Ed]* having already been expertly written about in Treads, I have decided to take you on a trip through my motorcycle ownership history. This may not be as long or as varied or even as exotic a journey as some among you, but here goes. I did already tell a couple of tales of some of my bikes in my last submission to the magazine but they were somewhat out of sequence under the “poetic licence” heading, so here goes with the authentic timeline.

My interest in bikes was started by a classic bike picked up as scrap, refurbished and rebuilt by my Uncle Jim *[not me! Ed]*. It was a Matchless G2 250cc and being from an older generation, once he got it running he used to

ride it down his road without a helmet because as he said “I didn’t need to wear one when I learnt to ride and besides, are they going to lock me up at 92?”



Although I certainly wouldn’t now condone this attitude it did, I think, initiate the theory in my head that “motorcycles equal freedom and excitement”. At this point I should add that I was under the legal age to ride a motorcycle and it would have been totally illegal for me to do so or for my uncle to allow me and so I couldn’t enjoy that interesting first clutch release to noisy single cylinder straight through exhaust noise moment. So obviously I had to wait for that time to come along in the future and the next connection with a motorcycle came in the form of another old British classic, namely a Velocette LE 200cc affectionately known, I believe, as a Noddy bike as the Met Police used them in the 50’s. This was left to my older brother in a distant relative’s will but was not a runner unfortunately, as it had been laid up in his garage for a good few years due to his health. But when this bike came to us it again sparked (see what I did there?) something in me to get it going. This was a completely different beast to the Matchless as it was a water-cooled, horizontally opposed engine with shaft drive and hand change 3 speed gearbox with foot operated clutch, and without any mechanical knowhow at the time this proved tricky. I did have the help of my

best friend who did have some knowledge of bikes but as I recall the results of most of his tinkering ended with me pushing him up and down the road to try and bump start it. Still the seed was sown to learn how to fix and ride bikes.



My next bike experiences came, as described in my previous article to Treads, in the Army where I was learning to be a mechanic, although predominantly on main battle tanks and tracked vehicles which are predominantly diesel engine, except my favourite, the Centurion. This beast was first brought into service in the late 40s just after the war and had a beautiful Rolls Royce Meteor 4B petrol engine, 27 litres, V12 running with magneto ignition and twin plug heads and a massive bucket-like carburettor.



Now I could talk about this vehicle for hours and tell many a story about my time using, mending and driving this recovery vehicle, as pictured above, but this article is about motorbikes and besides I may well have bored some of you to tears about tanks and military stuff already. Sorry!!!

Anyway, while in the Army I managed to get to take my bike test, which was done on an Armstrong MT500 – a single cylinder Rotax powered despatch rider's bike. The main issue with these meaty bikes was that they only had a kickstart at this time and were notoriously hard to start when warm. So during my test while one of the 5 students was with the examiner trying to restart his bike the rest of us were riding round the block waiting to do our emergency stop. Four or five trips around and finally the instructor called us together, worn out from trying to kickstart the bike and said "that will do, get back to camp, you've passed". I did not get a chance to do much further riding in Germany and again had to wait awhile before riding again.

After a good few years posted in Germany, I finally got sent back to sunny Wiltshire and the less sunny Tidworth garrison. I was temporarily living at my parents in London so needed a commuter vehicle, so up comes my first legal UK bike riding and to maximise the steepness of that particular learning curve I bought a Honda 250 Superdream to properly test myself. The most exciting parts of this I remember being the ride down the A303 on a Sunday night returning to camp with my Bergen on my back, riding along heavily cranked over on the bike, not on the bends but the straight sections between the trees due to high winds, I put it down to "character building". Can't remember much else about the bike, apart from part exchanging it for my next steed, a Yamaha XJ900 shaft drive.





The XJ was a great bike for the commute and lasted for the last couple of years of military service most of which was spent in Belize in Central America and the bike at my parents' house. On my return my motorcycle direction had been changed by a colleague out there and my best friend at home. I got rid of the Yamaha and went to a Harley Davidson Softail 1340 belt drive V-twin for my long hair and not shaving every day, phase. I had a great couple of years with this bike riding through the British countryside and took my first European trip with a great friend and our respective partners. We went to Holland, Germany including Berlin and the old East Germany as well as Austria with our open face helmets and tents. A great summer indeed and a great way to meet like-minded folk from all those countries and more which sparked that foreign bike trip bug that I think most AAMC members can relate to. This country has vast amounts of brilliant roads and places to visit that are just as beautiful and exciting to visit but for me visiting another country with different languages and cultures both road network wise and people just has that extra "je ne sais pas" that draws me back time and time again. I am obviously discounting Wales in this description although it does have a similar vibe sometimes!!



My time with this bike ended with the arrival of my daughter and getting a proper job which again required me to commute, this time from North to West London down the North Circular and A40 – two of the most uninteresting and hazardous roads I think I have had to ride regularly. My bike for this was initially a Yamaha FJ 1200: a great bike and now a bit of a classic in its own right.



This was fairly quickly replaced by a 1979 Kawasaki KZ1000LTD which was an American imported bike but with that same classic 4 cylinder engine with the distinctive camshaft covers as the UK version and only a king and queen style seat to mark the difference. I loved this bike and rode it all year round including one memorable trip to Devizes in the depths of winter for an interview to join the Fire service. I remember it vividly as it was the first time I rode Beckhampton Straight. Memorable, as I could not feel my hands at all and still couldn't after the interview, but I think they must have been impressed that I had ridden from London on a naked bike on such a cold day and gave me the job. Only themselves to blame really!!!



Unfortunately, on the last day of work in London, on my commute home I was knocked off this bike in a hit and run, with a car driving through a set of temporary red traffic lights and hitting me head on in the centre of his bonnet. Luckily, I was only badly bruised but the bike, as you can imagine was a total write off, but the worse bit was that the car driver although finally located by the police, some 8 weeks later, not only denied the incident but had already had his car repaired. I had to take him to court in N London, as I had witnesses including the off-duty paramedic who gave me the appropriate first aid on site, while still working in Wiltshire, which took some 15 months in total. So here I was with all these fantastic roads and no bike at all with which to enjoy them.

Once I had finally got my compensation from this charming chap, I quickly got hold of my next bike, a Suzuki Bandit 1200 and still remember the first ride I took after getting it home to Trowbridge. Up to Seend and then down and out across the plains via Tilshead etc. to Salisbury Fire station, a quick cuppa with the Watch (a wee obviously as it's quite a long way,) and back home. Even took a picture on the day, see below:



Another great bike but it was a bit tired and after having to helicoil the third spark plug I thought it time to move on again to something new. Indeed, this was the first brand new motorcycle or vehicle of any description that I had ever purchased, a lovely yellow and black Yamaha FZ1000. This was a total change in riding for me really as it was such a short and powerful bike, but absolutely great fun, I even did a track day at Castle Combe on it. Buying this bike also tied in with meeting Caroline and a new biking era for us both. She had been riding a Yamaha Thundercat but again this was quite a tired machine and only seemed to go quickly in straight lines when I was following her!! Anyway to get to the point, she swapped this in for a new Yamaha Fazer 600 and our joint European touring days began. We started with a long weekend to Normandy and the battlefields etc. which for Caroline was a massive adventure as she was more used to a rideout being a trip to the bike meet at Wincanton or Avebury!! The weekend was great and she really enjoyed and embraced the challenge so I planned our next trip which naively was a bit too ambitious. We were to stay at the Riders Rest B&B in Treignac, Nouvelle-Aquitane, France via the east coast down as far as La Rochelle and then inland, a round trip of approx. 2500miles in 10 days. Well as I say it was a great experience and we both really enjoyed it, meeting lots of people and seeing lots and lots and lots of the country but we were both quite tired on our return, especially Caroline.



We decided that we would exchange the two bikes for one more capable of this type of touring, so we picked up a Yamaha FJR 1200 which had been used for tyre testing by Cooper tyres of Melksham so had relatively low mileage and full hard luggage to make the loading and unloading of our kit far more streamlined and efficient.



We set off again for Europe on multiple adventures, which included Holland, Belgium, Germany, France, Spain and Italy. Not all in one go this time as I had learnt my lesson of over committing, but still some fairly good distances which the FJR handled in its stride with absolutely no breakdowns or problems at all as far as my memory goes. It coped with way too much luggage, really hot and really wet conditions, including an awful Autobahn jaunt in Bavaria, to make up some time due to the weather, which saw us in almost "white out" conditions due to rain without missing a beat or causing me as the rider any scary moments.

It was with this bike that I started my route into an advanced riding course, predominantly to give us both some extra knowledge and skills

to get the best from our joint riding experiences at home and abroad. It also led me into the Blood bike scene which has also been invaluable to enhance those everyday riding skills. This all then led me to the AAMC where I undertook my first training and test with RoSPA as well as the first club European trip, all done on the faithful FJR.

It was time to change bikes again for no other reason than wanting a change really and managed to pass the business case to purchase a new bike through the finance department, aka Caroline. Still not sure how I swung it but as soon as she had signed off on it, it mysteriously was ready to collect from Dick Lovett, a sparkly new bright red BMW S1000XR on a PCP contract. Now I loved this bike for so many reasons and tied in with the riding we all do together and the club run training and can fairly safely say it was my favourite of all the bikes described here, well obviously up until the chance to replace it with the Triple Black model that I have now.





Well, there it is; my potted bike ownership history. As I said, not too many bikes and nothing extraordinary or exotic but in-tune with me as I have progressed through my biking career I guess. I am sure there are many tales to be told by other club members that will make interesting reading so don't forget to submit them for issue in Treads and if you have a knack for writing or editing don't forget to get in touch with the committee and help the club keep the magazine going as it is the glue to keep us together along with the actual riding.



Hondafest or 'The most fun on 2 [3] wheels?' - Jim

It seems hard to believe now, but in the late 1970's / early 1980's [before some of you were born!] the big Japanese motorcycle companies were on a roll and appeared to be awash with money. Their global dominance had solidified over the previous decade with the British bike industry teetering on the edge of extinction and

Harley Davidson lurching from financial crisis to financial crisis. The Eastern Bloc countries produced cheap commuters of greater or lesser worth but nothing that would pose any commercial threat. Even the Italians could be generally ignored as their bikes were often expensive and of dubious build quality however well they handled.

This period also saw the move from two strokes to four strokes continuing apace. Kawasaki had discontinued the large capacity Ks and expanded the Z range to cover 200 to 1300 cc. Suzuki replaced the GTs with GSs. Yamaha was continuing with the RD lightweight sportsters but brought out 4 stroke options in the XS250 and 400 and was releasing new models at an alarming rate, to wit the XZ V twin and XV customs which could probably have benefitted from a little more development before release.

Perhaps not surprisingly though, it was Honda [the biggest brand] who were flexing their corporate muscle the most and showing what they could achieve in an engineering sense. They updated their range with new 4 valve models [XL250, CB750], went OTT with the CBX 6 and plain cuckoo with the CX 500 which, for a 'middleweight', had so many innovations, being a 4 valve watercooled V twin with twisted cylinders, shaft drive, cast wheels, tubeless tyres, dubious styling and far, far too much weight.

There is no point in doing all of this if you don't flaunt it and in 1979 and 1980 Honda took over Donnington Park for a weekend to hold a 'Hondafest' and celebrate all things Honda. It may have been held on other years but these are the ones that I attended and remember.

At these events you could book test rides on the bikes and ride around the circuit. I recall that you had 2 laps and were not allowed to overtake the lead 'guide'. Only a full bike licence and a disclaimer signature was

required – no stipulation for leathers or anything like that.

Both years I went along with my brother. The first year we didn't really know what to expect and just rode one bike each, he rode the XL500 trail bike which he said was 'interesting' on the track and I just rode the 400 Superdream which compared very favourably to my Yamaha XS250 [I know, we all make mistakes and I had 2 of the things]. The lack of rides was compensated for by the demonstration of racing machines. The stars were the Mike Hailwood 500/4 from the mid 60's which was sooo loud and sounded sooo good and the V12 F1 car from the same period which never quite managed to fire on all 12 cylinders at the same time.

The following year we went with a plan to ride as many different bikes as we possible could, no matter what they were. The first one was an absolute hoot. Part of the grassy car park had been coned off and a track laid out to ride the ATC110 around. This was a leisure / agricultural vehicle that was probably aimed for the American market. It had a thumb operated throttle, 3 wheels, no suspension and big fat tyres that were only inflated to about 5 psi. Turning the handlebars to go around a corner had no effect and you had to lean over the inside rear tyre to squash it down to initiate the turn. Many crashings into the cones and many giggles ensued. Suitably immersed into the world of Honda we wandered over to find the road models on the track.

As I said, the plan was quantity of rides, not quality, so the idea of joining a long queue to ride the top of the range models [i.e. CBX1000] did not appeal. I noticed that I could hop straight onto the CB650, an OK model in its day but nothing special. As you were not allowed to overtake the lead guide at the front the tactics were to cruise around for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a lap to let them build up a gap and then thrash around for the remaining lap and a bit.

Some people, perhaps not surprisingly, went too far and the organisers announced that all track rides would be suspended for an hour as 'punishment' for someone dropping a bike. Apparently, they slid the CBX into the Goldwing – the two most expensive models! Rather than kicking our heels for an hour, my brother and I wandered off to see what else we could find.....

In the centre of the circuit a fairly muddy off-road course had been set up to try out the trail models and, as this wasn't affected by the track ban, it would have been rude not to have a go. The first one I tried was the MT50 trail style moped [remember quantity not quality!] The weedy [non] power output meant that it struggled to get up the hills and just stopped in one of the larger ruts! A much better option was the XL185 which was punchy but light – even if I did fall off in the mud when my [spectator] brother distracted me.

By the time we returned back to the track the ride ban had been lifted but there were still big queues for the 'glamour' bikes. Totally ignored and immediately available were 4 of the newly released CB250RS singles. These were beginning to receive good press reviews and handled well. With their light weight and willing engine they were much better bikes than the stodgy 250 Superdream [or XS250!]. Coincidentally, another pair of brothers turned up for a ride at the same time as we did. Needless to say, these were by far the slowest bikes on the circuit but this didn't stop us having a little mini race of our own at the back. Great fun! My brother told me how he was flat out in top, just about on the redline when I came past with a twitch of throttle and a puff of exhaust as I changed up into top gear – well, we were testing them!

As the afternoon wore on the crowds dwindled and I was able to ride the new 16 valve CB750F without a wait. I don't recall much about it apart from it being very different to my Yamaha SR500 single.

So, 6 different bikes ridden [some being very different] and we had an absolute blast. To the best of my knowledge Honda did not repeat this again and I cannot see such an event ever being held again – more's the pity.

This probably wasn't my best ride ever but is certainly a strong contender for my best biking day ever. What's yours? Tell us about it.

AND FINALLY – Ed

Thank you to Andy for his contribution.

More articles are wanted!

Stuck for something to write about? Then tell us about your favourite road, your first bike and why you started biking, where to find the best bacon buttie, your worst breakdown or your best biking experience. Anything!



1. Where club events are detailed in TREADS, WhatsApp or Facebook club sites, it would be sensible to contact the ride leader to confirm final details and let

them know you are attending. Please advise the ride leader well in advance if you plan to bring a *guest rider*.

2. Please be sure to arrive at the starting point promptly, with a full tank of fuel.
3. Each run will have a **leader** who leads the group, and a **sweeper** who stays at the rear of the group. Both will be clearly identified at the start of every AAMC ride.
4. At any junction, deviation or situation which may cause confusion over the route to be taken, the leader will signal to the rider immediately behind him/her to drop-off and stop at or close to the point of deviation. The dropped rider should ensure their own safety, be visible to following traffic and be able to clearly indicate the correct route to following AAMC riders.
5. The rider who has been dropped to indicate the correct route, will wait until the sweeper has passed before re-joining the group and overtaking the sweeper can be carried out safely. ONLY if the sweeper clearly indicates can the rider re-join the group in front of him/her.
6. Overtaking within the group is allowed provided it is carried out safely and with courtesy and consideration for ALL road users.
7. ALL riding in groups organised under AAMC rules must take account of the varying skill levels that may exist within each group. Putting any road user at risk and/or bringing AAMC into disrepute is unacceptable behaviour.



NON-CLUB EVENTS that may be of interest.

Castle Combe info and contact details

Castle Combe 'action day' dates available from
www.castlecombecircuit.co.uk

Castle Combe Motorcycle Track days are detailed at
<https://castlecombecircuit.co.uk/motorcycle-track-days>



BMF DISCOUNT CODE.

Club members can use in conjunction with the Club Name, to receive discounts on advance tickets to all BMF rallies and events; discounts on Insurance and other BMF member benefit.

BMF INFO – Benefits of membership

The British Motorcyclists Federation is one of the largest motorcycling groups of its kind in the world. United by a love of motorcycling, we represent our members by safeguarding their rights on and off the road. *(AAMC is a BMF affiliated Club – Ed).*

Join the BMF community today!

Just £28 a year. Alternatively, save £22 and create a joint membership for both you and your riding partner (if you live at the same address) at only £34 per year.

Political representation

The BMF represents the best interests of UK motorcyclists, whatever machine you ride.

Discounted insurance with Bikesure

Receive a great discount on your motorcycle insurance in a special deal with Bikesure.

