



Bannau Brycheiniog

SOUTH CHESHIRE ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS April/May Newsletter 2024

Contents

- News and Diary Dates 1
- Lighter metal 2
- Chairman’s Report 3
- Message from the President..... 3
- Chief Observer’s Annual Report 5
- Message from the Membership Secretary 6
- Social Second Mondays..... 6
- Presentations, buffet and AGM 7
- Tails from the Toolbox 8
- Desmo Danger!! 11
- The Dynamic Duo go to Spain, part five..... 15
- Appendix 1: Club Presentations and Awards, 25 March, 2024 17

The newsletter is a bimonthly publication. The next one will be issued in July 2024



News and Diary Dates

Keep abreast of upcoming activities and dates by regularly checking the Facebook page of the South Cheshire Advanced Motorcyclists Group.

Committee meetings

16 May at Warmingham Village Hall, CW11 3QL at 7.30pm. All members are welcome to attend and observe or, if you wish, to join the committee. The post of Vice Chair is currently vacant. Nominations please.

Associate training

All group training sessions start at Costa, Jack Mills Way, Shavington, Crewe CW2 5UZ at 9am.

Social Rides every:

Sunday 9.00am Co-ordinated by Dave Coomber (01270569439)
Meet at Shavington Costa, Jack Mills Way at 9am.

Tuesday 9.30am Coffee and Ride, meeting at Costa, Jack Mills Way, Shavington, Crewe. Co-ordinated by Howard (howard.payne163@gmail.com). Come for coffee and a chat even if you are not riding.

Forthcoming Social Events

Socials: The Duke of Gloucester has closed temporarily for refurbishment. The planned date for our next social there is **Monday 13 May** at 7.30pm. Keep a lookout for confirmation of the date on Facebook.

NEW EVENT - Friday 7 June: Skittles evening, Bickerton Poacher, Wrexham Road, SY14 8BE, from 7pm. Food will be available at the bar.

Look smart! Embroidered SCAM leisure wear.

<https://customsportskit.co.uk/other-clubs/south-cheshire-advanced-motorcyclists/>

For Committee contacts and newsletter back-numbers see:

<https://www.southcheshiream.org.uk>



Lighter metal

The controversial decision to introduce 20mph speed limits in built areas as the default limit in Wales was not taken arbitrarily. It was underpinned by research and from experience elsewhere. The Swedish government committed to a target of zero road traffic fatalities and injuries in 1991 and the introduction of 30kph (approx. 20mph) in areas where pedestrians may be struck by moving vehicles. Experience in Stockholm, Sweden, and Graz, Austria of fewer fatal and serious accidents was reflected in later trials in Scotland and a city-wide trial in Portsmouth. Click on the reference below for more detail.

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-08/the-state-of-the-evidence-on-20mph-speed-limits-with-regards-to-road-safety-active-travel-and-air-pollution-impacts-august-2018.pdf>

Successful implementation involves education and initial enforcement. There can be little doubt that a 20mph limit makes sense in busy pedestrian streets and that it saves lives. Other benefits are lower emissions from diesels, reduced tyre and brake dust pollution. A downside is higher emissions from petrol engines but these emissions are less damaging to human health than diesel. For bikers, there is an opportunity to look around, but not too much as collision risk will increase, and a greater chance of avoiding pot holes. I was quite happy with the concept until a recent trip into Wales where continually changing limits of 20mph, 30mph and 40mph in repeated succession in some urban areas started to jar. Sometimes the 20mph zones extended beyond the populated areas where they no longer seemed appropriate. A general conclusion is that the 20mph limit brings indisputable safety benefits but more consideration is needed on matching its implementation to the prevailing pedestrian risks. Such thoughts are widely voiced and the people of Wales have expressed discontent to their new leadership which could lead to a more reasoned approach to the placing of 20mph zones, hopefully, not to the detriment of pedestrians. Let's see what happens.

Editor



Chairman's Report

I have the honour of taking on the Chairman's role and must thank the previous incumbent, Phill Hamilton, for stepping in after Dave Cox left to join the hallowed ranks of the IAM. The mantle of Chief Observer has been passed to the very capable and adroit Richard Downes. More from me below.

Neil Jewell

Message from the President

South Cheshire Advanced Motorcyclist's thirty-not-out

March 25th was the group's thirtieth AGM. There are two members who were present at the group's formation evening at the Railway pub Nantwich in March 1994; namely Dave Coomber and myself. We were part of the Cheshire car group, and having gained a fair number of motorcyclists Bob Higginbotham, the IAM regional co-ordinator, suggested that the motorcyclists should form their own independent group. Bob made the necessary arrangements. The IAM divided the UK into seven regions in those days and Cheshire was in region 5. We were the 213th group so our group number was 5213. In March 1994 our launch evening was organised and advertised. To everyone's surprise about thirty people turned up and joined, a fantastic start. But like all new ventures all the details had not been worked out. How were all these new members going to be trained, and by whom. I was still an associate reaching the end of my training, but South Cheshire Advanced Motorcyclists was official.

In the run up to the launch evening Fred Dean had agreed to be Chairman, Dave Leader Chief Observer and Lorraine Rossiter was going to do the accounts. As for Observers it was a case of those who had passed the test were seconded to Observer duties. Fred Dean had a friend who was a publican and he agreed to let the group use his pub as our meeting point, the Hawk Inn, Haslington. The internet was just in its infancy so all correspondence was done by mail or phone calls. Luckily, quite a few of the thirty people who joined on the launch night never turned up to carry out their training, which gave the group time to sort out a routine. We had our social and committee meeting location sorted, the Hawk Haslington, but where to meet for training and social rides? It was decided



to use Crewe College car park on Sunday mornings, having met there on a couple of Sundays. One Sunday morning college security turned up and told us to leave. It was private property, so we moved to the access road leading to the car park. Training was done on a one to one basis. My Observer was Derek Gray, who passed on his knowledge to me and in June 1994 I took my test with examiner Geoff Windsor. I passed and was the first test pass for South Cheshire Advanced Motorcyclists. I was keen to hone my new riding skills and went on most social rides for the next few months. It was around September when Derek asked me if I would like to be an Observer. I thought I would like to give something back, and what better way than to pass on the knowledge that I had gained from Derek. Observer training was very different to the system in place now. It was a case of shadowing an Observer and interacting with Associates, then after a few sessions I had to go out with Dave Leader the Chief Observer and debrief him on his ride. Having satisfied Dave that I had the ability to recall the details of his ride and highlight the area of development I was elected as a group observer.

Having become an Observer, it was satisfying to assist in the improvement of rider skill sets. Dave Leader stood down as Chief Observer and Derek Gray became his successor. The training sessions were still a bit like when you were at school and it was time to pick a football team when two boys would call out who they wanted on their team. The training sessions were no different. Derek would say "Chris who haven't you Observed, and I would pick the Associate I had not Observed. The Induction evenings at the Hawk, were very much made up on the go. Having witnessed Derek do his best, I felt that although we are not professionals, we should be professional amateurs. To this end, myself and Brian Kitson another recently qualified observer took over the induction and theory evenings, and introduced a structure to proceedings. We applied for and received funding from Congleton Borough Council to subsidise the cost of training local residents. This along with high profile magazine articles regarding born again bikers lead to a flood of Associates. Derek stood down as Chief Observer and I became his successor. The next few years were hectic, averaging thirty to forty associates a year. In turn we set up an Observer training course, firstly with Nigel Curtis organising and then Pete Mathieson taking over from



Nigel. The number of Observers increased and we could process all the Associates. Having been Chief Observer and Chairman for many years I stood down. My successor as Chief Observer was Chris Mannix, followed over the ensuing years by Mark Rogers, Dave Cox, Neil Jewell and now, in 2024, Richard Downes. It is testament to the dedication of all the members who have given their time freely to the group in all the roles: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee member, Chief Observer, Observer, members, that after thirty years we are still active as an independent group and have not had to merge with another group due to falling numbers. To each one of you I say a heartfelt thanks. I have met many people over the thirty years I have been a member of this group. My life has been all the richer for your friendship, support, and company.

Chris Steel

Chief Observer's Annual Report

Another exhilarating year zooming down the road with our group, and I want to extend a roaring thank you to all the avid riders who generously volunteered their time to work with 12 eager associates, guiding them into the elite ranks of IAM membership.

In our quest for perfection last year, we embraced the 1-2-1 observation system, a daring manoeuvre that challenged both associates and observers alike. While the feedback was mixed, we're revving up for another round of growth this year, shifting gears back to a group delivery style with the option for personalised 1-2-1 sessions for those who thrive on individualised attention.

Revving up the engines for our Spring Course in March, we're thrilled to welcome 3 new associates, bringing the total number of Spring Course participants to an impressive 11.

With the winds of change blowing in, the IAM is waving goodbye to the position of Local Observer come March 2025. But fear not, all our local observer legends have been given the green light to rev up their engines toward the National Observer qualification before the clock strikes midnight. Kudos to our dedicated team, as 2023 has seen a flurry of upskilling with 16 out of 20 Observers now proudly wearing the National Observer badge, with 8 earning their stripes this



year alone. And let's give a thunderous round of applause to Pete Matheson and Richard Downes for igniting the passion in our future four Observer stars with their top-notch in-house training.

Last year, under the guidance of our former Chief Observer turned ASDM, Dave Cox, we roared onto the scene with Cheshire Police, lending our expertise to their Bike Safe courses. This thrilling collaboration continues to gain traction, with 10 Observers from Cheshire hitting the road to spread the joy of safe riding. The official launch is just around the corner, with the first sessions revving up in April.

As we navigate the twists and turns of our journey, our group stats proudly boast a solid 10% of Membership sporting a F1RST grade. Let's rally the troops and encourage every member to rev up their engines for a re-evaluation of their skills, with the support of our esteemed National Observers by their side, aiming to cruise towards that coveted F1RST grade once again.

Neil Jewell

Message from the Membership Secretary

A reminder, to be an active riding member of the group you not only need to pay our modest membership subs but you must also be a paid-up member of the IAM.

Neil Jewell

Social Scene

Social Second Mondays

We are awaiting completion of the refurbishment of the Duke of Gloucester before confirming the next of our Social meetings that are mostly held every second Monday of the month, starting at 7.30pm at the Duke of Gloucester, Beswick Drive, Crewe, CW1 5NP. We are hoping that the DOG will be operational for a meeting on Monday 13 May after which normal service will resume.



On 11 March we were entertained by Simon Weir with the inside story of bike testing for the motorcycle press. Photographic shoots can be long and tedious. It's not always the easy life due to tight schedules. Nevertheless, the testing of new bikes, sometimes breaking them, can be fun and hazardous. Simon is well known for his route guide books for bikers and for his guided tours. The meeting was well attended and most enjoyable. Thanks are due to Howard for organising another very successful event.

Simon sent the following email after returning home offering a discount code applicable to any of his tours.

Hello chaps

I just wanted to thank you again for inviting me over to do the talk last night (11 March). Very glad I decided to come in the car not the bike as I was heading back this morning, though frankly a U-boat might have been a better choice (torpedoes for the middle-lane hogs).

As I'm a dreadful salesman, I forgot to mention when wrapping the talk up that if anyone in the club wants to order one of my off-the-peg tours, they can use the code T4B10 to get 10% off. It'll be good until the end of the year, so it could be used for next year's tour if this year's is already booked! I'd be grateful if you'd add that to any group email you have going out. The full menu of trips is at <https://www.simonweir.co.uk/tours>

Have a great week. I note that the sun's come out now I'm back at my desk...

Best wishes

Simon

Simon Weir

T: 01842 338209

M: 0780 123 9299

www.simonweir.co.uk

Presentations, buffet and AGM

On 25 March, 28 members and associates gathered to celebrate awards of certificates to associates who had completed the advanced riding course and passed the advanced motorcycling test. This was followed by presentation of the club trophies. See Appendix 1 for photographs.



Chris Steel was deservedly awarded the *President's observers achievement award* based on the exceptional number and results of his observer rides.

The committee decide to award the prestigious Honda Points Piston Trophy to a deserving contributor to the 2023 SCAM newsletters and the award was made to Rob Halsall for his willingness to write an article for the club newsletter having had no previous experience of this nefarious art form. We hope it serves as an inspiration to others to share their adventures in print.

The next item on the agenda was a sumptuous buffet. The few crumbs remaining at the close of the evening testified to the acceptability of the feast.

The final event was the AGM which was conducted with great efficiency with the help of our President and Chief Photographer.

The President thanked the Observers and the membership for their dedication and commitment over the years. Thanks, were also expressed to Phill Hamilton for accepting the role of Chairman until the AGM and for his hard work during the year. The committee are sorry to lose him but pleased that he will continue as an Observer.

Features

Tails from the Toolbox

It seemed like too long since I had a project bike in the garage, so with a call to a mate of mine, “you still got that old BMW?” I asked.

“Yes” he replied, “but it jumps out of first gear and I’ve not ridden it for a year”

And with that the deal was done. The ride home proved that the gearbox was indeed an issue. Rolling on the throttle in 1st caused a big clang and an involuntary shift back to neutral. The rest of the ride home avoided 1st gear.

The BMW K1200R sport is a great bike, but unloved and misunderstood by many. Maybe it’s the 165bhp inline four engine people don’t like. Personally, I think

that engine is a peach and that the K bikes offer class leading power to weight ratios and apart from the ridiculous BMW indicator layout there is nothing else to get upset about. Except maybe the front suspension. The gearbox design however is a work of genius.



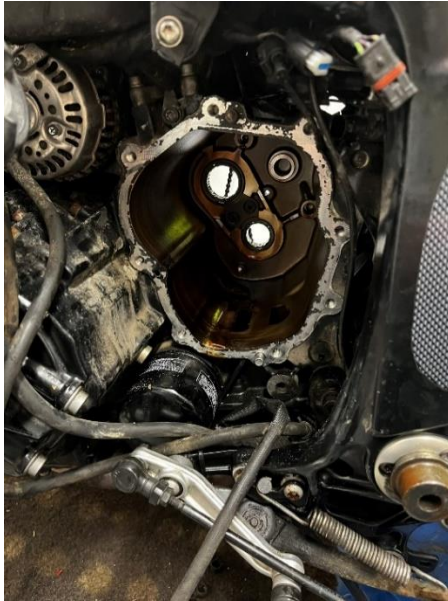
A Cassette type gearbox that can be removed and fettled without needing to remove the engine and split the casings or as in the case of the GS split the bike in half completely.

A bit of research made me worried. The spare parts for the gearbox that I thought I'd need to fix it are not available separately. A new gearbox from BMW if over £2500 and second hand there are in the £600-£1000 range. An engineering fix was clearly required.



To remove the gearbox first remove the clutch, simple apart from the nut holding the clutch onto the input shaft being impossibly tight. Now there are special tools you can buy but I used this as an excuse to invest in a battery-operated impact wrench which made light work of said nut.

Once the clutch assembly was out, focus shifted to the other side of the engine. Eight bolts hold the gearbox into the engine and, after removing the driveshaft, the gearbox came out of the bike with very little effort.



I visually inspected the first gear set and confirmed my initial thoughts that the dog teeth on the gear had worn to a taper, and that was enough to push the gear out of location when pressure was applied.

I set to with the Dremel and fettled the worn dog teeth back to being square.



In the adjoining pictures you can see the gear teeth and the dog teeth on the side of the gear itself. Dog teeth transfer the drive between the shafts and the gears. They slide along the shafts when you operate the gear lever and engage and disengage different gears against the shafts giving you the range of gears we need. Very clever stuff.



Once I was happy that the gears were now square, I bunged it all back together. I was very pleased with the result. Video of the disassembly is available here for your viewing pleasure.

<https://youtu.be/mT3MTGeGJh0>

Neil Jewell



Desmo Danger!!

In June 2023 I realised that I would have to start to plan for my Ducati's Desmo service [Desmo is short for Desmodromic which refers to the way the valves are operated purely mechanically without use of springs thus eliminating valve bounce at high revs]. I had bought the bike with 10K on it and it had its belts changed the year before. The choice was to move it on or start to plan a future together. After riding it in Spain, the decision was made, I would keep it.



Ducati Stoke wanted £1,100 for the work, an independent Ducati service centre wanted £900. Both were using genuine Ducati Parts (they have special magic added at the factory) and the only difference was the hourly rate.

I decided I would give it a go myself. Recognising I would need a long weekend to do it, I planned the work for the end of December as I had five days off work. I knew the mileage would be at 18-19K by then but the Ducati guy had said if the service was done by 20K it would be fine.



I searched on the internet for a genuine parts seller and found Bike-Parts-Ducati.com (they provide parts for lots of makes under the various manufacturers names) The parts were ordered, £270 paid and they arrived within 7 days.

Unfortunately, a long-standing condition resurfaced at the end of November which floored me until early January and then I was only able to do an hour a day. The suggested overall service time was 6-8 hour so I thought it was still an option. I needed a couple of tools, in particular, an OBD reader to reset the service at £250 and a belt tension meter at £100. When I say



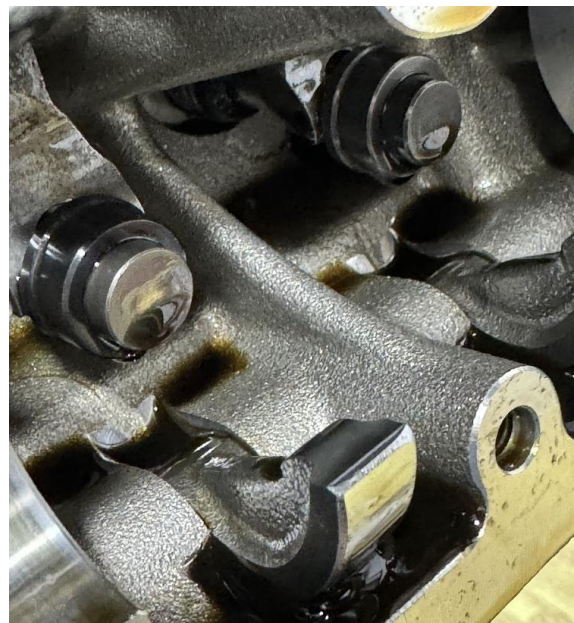
“need” what I should say “preferred to buy” as the alternative would be to pay a workshop £60 to reset and hire a meter at £30. The tools will come in handy.

The first job was strip off the body work. An investment of £30 at Halfords provided shelves to stock the bits on. Then, I started to clean everything before taking stuff apart. As I was replacing the air filter (with KN of course) I decided to attempt removal of the air box. Unfortunately, that is easier said than done by someone who hasn't a clue. After the second day (2 hours) I decided it wasn't worth the effort. Fate was going to make me remember that choice.



The belt covers, sparkplugs and valve covers were removed. Then I had to determine TDC for horizontal piston. Time to watch a few YouTube videos. I can recommend “Superbike Surgery Ltd” and “Practical Enthusiast.”

The belts and teeth were marked and taken off, the new belts teeth counted twice and the marks swapped across. I measured the gaps on all 16 shims (Desmo in Italian means “expensive and double the normal number”). A mate's Excel Shim measure programme suggested the vertical left inlet closer and the left and right horizontal exhaust closers needed to be changed.



All four camshafts had been taken off, shims removed and measured. I ordered the two new ones which I thought I needed on the strength of the spreadsheet. Within a few days they arrived, were fitted and remeasured. Two of the gaps

were virtually closed, showing that the Excel file was nonsense. An Internet search led me to a shim calculation sheet in which I entered all the numbers to find that the original shims were all in spec. Off came the cams again and the shims replaced in their original position, cams back on, TDC set and new belts put on.

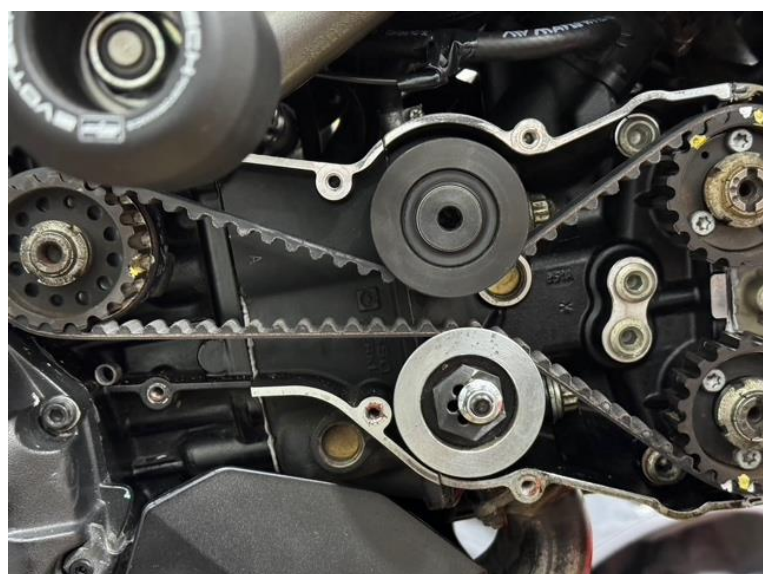
Setting belt tension was a pig of a job but I finally achieved a setting as specified. There were no clunks on turning the crank over a few times so *winner winner chicken dinner* I thought.



After new plugs, oil and attaching the petrol tank, it started after a couple of stutters (Yeah) and then stalled and didn't start again. WTF I thought, put the code reader in and it read "Throttle Spring" issue? I couldn't find anything online so after checking everything was plugged in and that the belts hadn't moved, approached a local mechanic to see if his reader may give a bit more info. He was a nice guy but he openly admitted that he didn't touch Ducati but he referred me to the guy he

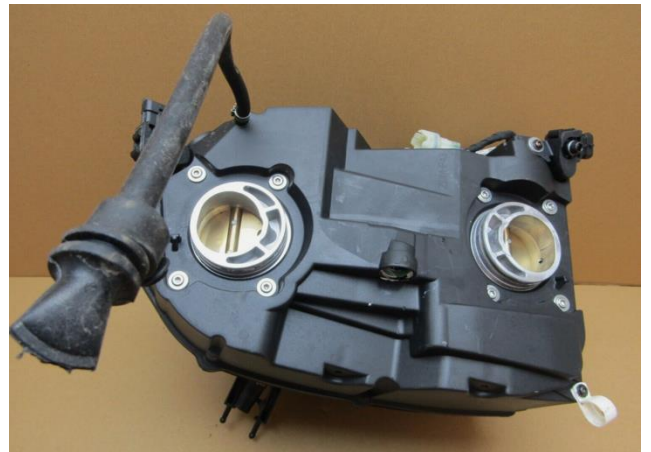
uses who is based in Northwich specialising in Racing Ducati's.

I gave him a ring and it was a like a double act, the mechanic from Czech Republic and the other lad not entirely sure of his role. The upshot was that on the 848 the throttle bodies were known to break springs and you had to replace a throttle body, but he couldn't be 100% sure until it was in the workshop.





I was going on holiday the next day so it would have to wait, although it did give me chance to price up a new throttle body on the website at £2,000. It wasn't a great night's sleep. Nevertheless, a week on the beach off the coast of Africa was very pleasant. Using the hotel's excellent WiFi I found a used (660 miles) airbox and throttle body for sale at £160, thought that was worth a shot, so bought it.



When I got home a parcel was waiting for me. A couple of days later I swapped the airbox, an easier job than I had made of it previously. As I had a spare, I was happy to apply a bit more pressure. All fitted and the bike started and ran well. I gave it a couple of starts and no problem or so I thought. Two days later, I put all the body work back on and b***** h*** the bike wouldn't start again. I stripped it down, still wouldn't start, unplugged and re plugged everything in and no change. I checked the code and it indicated the throttle spring. At that point I had three choices, take it to the Ducati man, swap back to the original airbox and throttle body or set it on fire. After long consideration and lack of a box of matches I decided to go for option 1.

I arranged for a local motorcycle mover to take it to the shop and took the original airbox and other parts to the workshop.

I spoke to him a few days later. He told me that he had spent all the previous day working on it but couldn't find any issue although it was running on single cylinder when it got there. Eventually, he decided to put the original airbox and throttle bodies back in and it worked perfectly. He also found a long 40mm air box screw had been used rather than a 25mm screw and he felt that had damaged the new airbox motor. Money changed hands (hourly rate about 50% of a Ducati dealer)

I collected my bike, it was running perfectly indeed it felt a little "tighter, fresher" so I was a happy man. Later that week I looked at the Airbox with the screw,



and found that while the screw was pressing on the throttle bottle motor outer housing it hadn't gone all the way through and it didn't look like it had pressed on the gears at all.

I am not sure what my money paid for other than that most special thing "Ducati Magic Dust" which is a bit more reassuring than a loose connection somewhere. In total, I spent less than the Main Dealer but more than the independent. On the positive side I have some shiny new tools, a new mechanic I can trust and a spare airbox and throttle body unit too 😊.

Andrew Gralton

The Dynamic Duo go to Spain, part five



Friday morning, our last day based in Ainsa. How can we top finding Canfranc, well, by finding somewhere else. Given the fact that we are in the Pyrenees it will have to be exploring the mountain range. During breakfast Ian I looked at the map and decided let's just see where we end up. The sun was out, it was time to ride. We put a destination into the sat nav and just went for it. The scenery was stunning and more picturesque the higher we climbed. Eventually reaching a peak we were enveloped in low

cloud. The temperature had dropped massively to the point where admiring the view was not an option, because there wasn't one. We descended to warmer temperatures. I am constantly saying that the roads in Spain have very few cars on them, and that motorcycling is a pleasure, compared to the amount of traffic we have here. As with every day, no rush, so a leisurely coffee stop was called for. Again, it was time to consult





the map and programme another unpronounceable name into the sat nav, hit go, and carry on. Having taken in more breathtaking views, it was time to think about lunch. Most villages we passed through had an eatery, so we chose one and partook of food. My favourite was on the menu, gambas al ajillo, garlic prawns. Needless to say they did not disappoint. After lunch, followed an afternoon of discovery and enlightenment, great views, great roads. It just doesn't get any better. Having reached the point where it was time to be heading back, we put Ainsa into the machine and wound our way back to base camp. We visited the restaurant from the previous evening, drank wine and reflected on the days ride. It had been a good place to stay and we had increased our knowledge of the local scenery and educated ourselves in the process. We took a leisurely walk back to the hotel and prepared for our move to Hondarribia on the coast for two days of rest and recuperation, before going home. Having stayed there before, we knew what to expect, although we were staying in the new town this time as opposed to the old town.

Saturday morning, we had breakfast and consulted the map, it was about 196 miles, and the machine said it was going to take about three and a half hours, so we could take it slowly. Belongings were packed, the bill paid, farewells made to the staff and off we set for the coast. The sun was out, the temperature a pleasant 25 degrees and the day was filled with great roads and few cars. We rolled into Hondarribia mid-afternoon and set about finding our hotel via the one-way system. After unloading at our hotel, we were directed back into the one-way system to find the hotel car park which was about five hundred yards away underneath some shops. The bikes were parked for the weekend pending departure for Santander and home on the Monday. It was time to shower, change and explore our new surroundings.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Chris Steel

Many thanks to this month's excellent contributors. Please keep writing about your adventures and misadventures! Editor



Appendix 1: Club Presentations and Awards, 25 March, 2024

Photographs courtesy of Chris Steel



