

February riding weather

SOUTH CHESHIRE ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS February/March Newsletter 2024

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

21 March at Warmingham Village Hall, CW11 3QL at 7.30pm. All members are welcome to attend and observe.

Presentation, buffet and AGM evening

25 March Members and associates, please support your club and committee by attending the AGM at the Duke of Gloucester on. Ideally, arrive around 7pm so we can be ready to launch into the presentations at 7.30pm. Let Neil know if you are attending: neil_jewell@btinternet.com so we can get things organised

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)

From 3 March 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 every second Monday of the month at the Duke of Gloucester, Beswick Drive, Crewe, CW1 5NP, from 7.30pm throughout the year. Come along for a chat.

Monday 11 March 7.30pm. Simon Weir (www.simonweir.co.uk) is coming to speak about "the secret life of road testers" followed by a Q&A session. This is one not to miss.



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>

BSB School

There is an offer again this year for IAM members for the road riders' course at £199/rider, (just over half price).

Venue: Blyton Park, Old Blyton Airfield, Kirton Road, Blyton, Gainsborough DN21 3PE.

[British Superbike School – Professional motorcycle training both for road and track riders. 12 Riders, 6 coaches, 1.6 mile track](#)

Lighter metal

Nowadays, potholing is a sport we all join in whether we like it or not. Each year the RAC estimates drivers (and presumably motorcyclists) must battle against at least one million potholes on the country's roads, but the actual number will vary from season to season. It is estimated that, on average, there are around six potholes per mile on council-controlled roads in England and Wales. [RAC Pothole Index – statistics and data for UK roads | RAC Drive](#)



Potholes are created by various processes including freeze and thaw in a fractured road surface, heavy vehicle loads, water infiltration, age and wear of road materials and poor construction and inadequate maintenance.

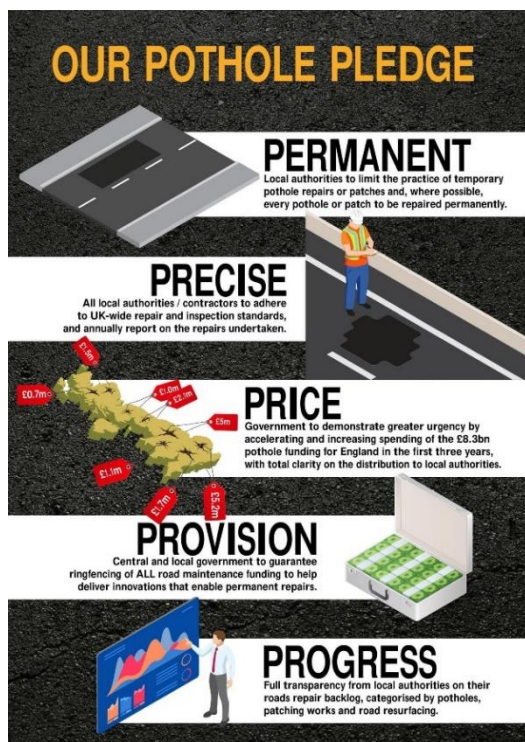


The UK's wet and cold climate makes its roads particularly susceptible to potholes, not just the roads carrying heavy traffic but also country lanes. The problem has been exacerbated by cash strapped local authorities with insufficient resources for maintenance and repair.

The councils leading the national pothole competition are: Derbyshire (90,596) followed by Lancashire (67,439) and Northumberland (51,703).

The area with the longest average time to fix individual holes was Stoke-on-Trent, with a massive 657 days. This was followed by Westminster (556 days) and Norfolk (482 days).

Potholes are a serious hazard to motorcyclists. What can we do to minimise the risks to our machines and ourselves, other than by staying at home? If you can see the offending holes then they can be avoided in many instances. However, "see and avoid" requires a gap between vehicles and suitable positioning without a sudden swerve. They are a good reason to avoid riding in the dark and



moderating speed to allow for the requisite action. Any suggestion that Wales has introduced 20mph limits to mitigate against pothole damage to vehicles and delay the need for road repairs could be considered mischievous. Puddles are best avoided as they could be hiding a bottomless pit. On some roads the deeper variety, often with water features, occurring near the road edge are marked by cones. There is no guarantee that the notorious sump line will be free of potholes and some corners can be treacherous as regular riders in and out of Buxton will have discovered.

IAM RoadSmart has joined a new national partnership tackle the pothole epidemic around the UK with the aim of pressing the case for more effective and



permanent road repairs. The other members are the AA, the National Motorcyclists Council, British Cycling, the British Motorcyclists Federation, and manufacturer JCB (the developer of a pothole repair machine).

Craig Carey-Clinch, Executive Director of the National Motorcyclists Council, said: “The situation is becoming ever more acute for motorcyclists, and the issue is a top-ranking concern among riders..... The same pothole that damages a car could prove fatal to a rider. Action is needed now to urgently clear the backlog of repairs. The NMC fully supports the Pothole Partnership and urges the government to frontload the £8.3 billion that has been announced. The problem is now, not in seven or nine years.”

Potholes are not going to be addressed quickly in the short term so we have no choice but to adapt our riding habits accordingly. I suppose if a national pothole party arises and wins the next general election, we might get a resolution but that is unlikely.

An inevitable consequence of climate change is more extreme weather. Higher temperatures mean more water vapour in the atmosphere and the increased likelihood of major rain events. Without massive investment, the pothole problem will continue to increase. Therefore, some bikers might wish to consider a switch to boating as a more survivable pastime.

On a brighter subject, I have met some very interesting bikers at Staffordshire Triumph. I was there recently, awaiting a new fog light fitting under warranty, when a conversation with Rev Tim Simms turned to big tours. He was telling me about a wonderful trip to Morocco when I started suffering ride envy followed by the thought what a great article it would make for our newsletter. Tim gladly agreed and you can read it in this issue. If you want to know more about the trip, or the Biker Church, please feel free to contact him: tim.simms@methodist.org.uk. He is a thoroughly nice bloke.

Editor



Chairman's Report

I thought (hoped) that my last chairman's ramblings would be my final one before handing over the reins to the newly elected Group Chair but no it wasn't to be! However, you will be glad to know that this is definitely my final report!

Spring is in the air and it's all go as we prepare for the Spring Course. Induction night is arranged and new shorter routes; the intention is to make the sessions more concentrated rather than riding for miles and miles between briefings. The new Observers have been trained and existing Observers briefed and ready for action! I believe we have around 12 Associates on this first Advanced Rider Course – so an excellent start to the year.

Don't forget to put in your diaries the Clubs 25th AGM & Presentation Night on Monday 25th March 2024. Free and bountiful refreshments will be served!

There also an unofficial club trip to the Isle of Man leaving on Friday 12th April and returning on the Sunday afternoon via Liverpool. Further details are provided in the previous newsletter. If you would like to join us you are more than welcome. We are all booked into The Sefton Hotel Douglas. Andy Gralton (Treasurer) is the point of contact. amgralton1989@gmail.com

I have decided that I will no longer remain on the committee due to the travelling time to the meetings but I would like to wish all the newly elected committee members every success in 2024. I will remain as an Observer and look forward to catching up with you all on the group training sessions.

Safe Riding.

Phill Hamilton

Message from the President

Here we are again, another month closer to hopefully better weather. Spring is round the corner so let us have happy thoughts about getting out on our bikes and enjoying them.

I hope to see many of you at our Presentation and AGM evening this month on March 25th. It has been a busy year for me carrying out one-to-one training with



Associates, my last one Mike Banner being successful last month. To all the Associates who have completed their course, many congratulations, hopefully you are putting your newly acquired skill sets into practice.

The Spring course has started and we are back to mass guidance. I am sure there will be a report, so I will not say any more,

I have continued my holiday ramblings with another episode of the saga getting to Canfranc Estacion, so if the Samaritans are engaged give it a read, insomniacs swear by it. That concludes my ramblings for this edition, enjoy your motorcycling and stay safe.

Chris Steel

Message from the Membership Secretary

Some membership subs are still due. The cost is very reasonable at only £12.50 for the year. You will still need to be a member of the IAM otherwise you cannot be a member of the group (sorry).

You can pay by Bank Transfer (preferred) to South Cheshire Advanced Motorcyclists

Sort Code: 54-10-17

Account No: 36603198

PLEASE add your IAM membership number to the transaction or your full name otherwise we will never be able to identify you as having paid.

If you pay by Direct Debit, please can you change the date to the first of January - this makes accounting easier. If any of your details have changed, moved house etc, please drop an email to: neil.ajewell1@googlemail.com so that I can update our system.

Neil Jewell



Social Scene

Social Second Mondays

Social meetings are held every second Monday of the month, unless advised otherwise, starting at 7.30pm at the Duke of Gloucester, just off the big Crewe Green roundabout, Beswick Drive, Crewe, CW1 5NP. Some meetings will be purely social and others will include an invited guest speaker.

These meetings are invariably well-attended and a hotbed of lively discussion on all club matters, topics including riding, bikes, IAM and total nonsense.



Tyres are the contact between joy and eternity for a motorcyclist. On the 5 February Simon and Baz entertained and educated us on tyres in general and the Pirelli and Metzeler range specifically. There is a lot of science, development and testing underpinning tyre design and construction. Tyres are not randomly allocated to bikes simply based on wheel size; they are tested on the machines first. When a manufacturer recommends

a tyre it will have been tested and proven on type. Tyre pressures are critical. Improper setting will lead to uneven wear and shorten the life of a tyre and we were shown graphs to demonstrate the wear characteristics and life. Do you check tyre pressures before every ride?

The meeting was well attended and most enjoyable. Thanks are due to Howard for organising a very successful event.

Forthcoming speaker events

11 March, Duke of Gloucester 7.30pm: Simon Weir (www.simonweir.co.uk) is coming to speak about "secret life of road testers" after which we will have a wide-ranging Q&A session which can cover anything from touring to his travel

business. This is one not to miss. Fill your Calendar with SCAM events and have fun. *Howard.*

25 March, Duke of Gloucester 7.30pm: Big club night of awards, buffet, AGM and bike talk. Not to be missed.

Features

The Dynamic Duo go to Spain, part 4

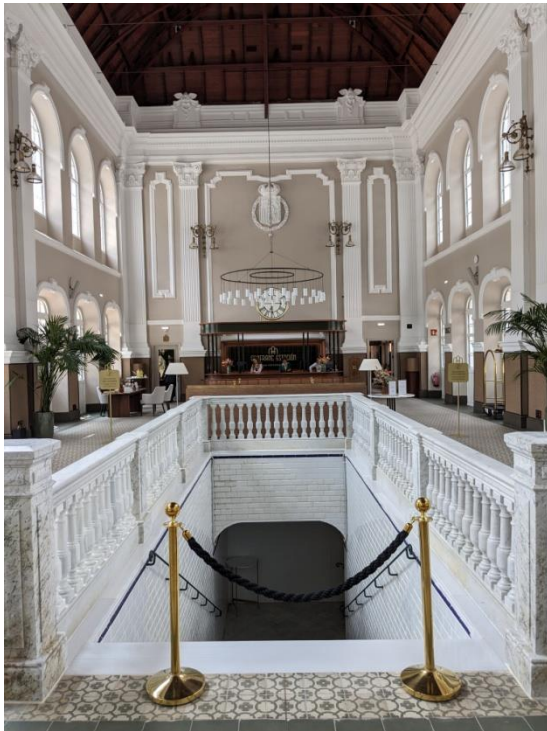
Thursday morning, the sun was beaming through the window, the conversation of two locals could be heard from the street. I think one of them said “they could not find Canfranc” the other one exploded into fits of laughter. We got ready and went and enjoyed our breakfast during which the conversation was about are we going to get there. The map was duly consulted and a circle marked round Canfranc, it was do or die day.

Having had breakfast we donned our riding gear, retrieved the bikes from the underground garage, looked at the map again, put Jaca into our navigation units and set off. The sun was warm, it was about 19 degrees and was only going to get warmer, the roads were quiet and fast flowing, but we did not need to break



any records. The distance was not that far now we had a clue where we were going. The scenery was beautiful, what more was there to ask for. As we approached Jaca we saw a sign saying Canfranc, now we knew we were going to make it. The road steadily climbed and the views become more

spectacular. In what seemed no time at all we saw a sign saying welcome to Canfranc. I was happy that at last we had made it. We parked outside the station and took in the sight. The station was opened in 1928 and was built to a grand design. As the French and Spanish railways ran on different track widths all passengers and goods had to change trains in order to continue into either France or Spain. During the second world war, Germany was purchasing raw materials from Spain, and paying for them in gold. This, stories abound of gold trains running into Canfranc. Whether they are true or not I don't know but we found no gold. Legend has it that a gold train disappeared, and fortune hunters have been looking for it since the end of the war. Who knows, maybe one day. Anyway I digress. Due to a train derailment in 1970 which damaged a key bridge the station closed and fell into disrepair, in 2020 a hotel group approached the



European Union for funding to reconstruct the station back to its former glory and turn it into a hotel. The funding was provided and it was transformed back to its original grandeur but in the form of a hotel. You can enter the main reception area and admire the sheer splendour of the building. On YouTube you can immerse yourself in its entire history. Having wandered round the station and been impressed with the whole scale of its immenseness we found a little cafe for lunch; can't go wrong with a ham sandwich followed by coffee.

Having taken in the scenery and partaken of lunch we set off back for Ainsa. The sun had taken the temperature to 23 degrees. It was a beautiful day, we enjoyed the ride back, no rain storms to shelter from, just what motorcycling is all about. Back at the hotel we discussed the day and got ready to hit downtown Ainsa where we ended up back at the restaurant from the previous evening for a nice meal and a bottle of red wine. We were quite pleased with ourselves having



made it to the gold train station. Having had a great day it was time to retire and see what could top that for the next day's ride.

Chris Steel

To be continued.

A Trip to Morocco by guest writer Tim Simms

What I love about motorcycling is that it doesn't matter where you are in the world, if you ride a motor bike you will always find someone to talk to about bikes. It was great to meet and chat with Dave Creedy at Staffordshire Triumph the other day, which is why this total stranger to your group is writing this article for you. The focus is to tell you a little about our trip to Morocco in the Spring of 2023, which I will get to after a little bit about me.

I am not one of those people who can talk endlessly about sprockets, or this screen or tyres. I don't know the HP of this bike or that one or the top speed of a Kawasaki xyz9000. When it comes to techy stuff all I'm interested in is if a bike rides well and I like riding it. That generally means can I make a bit of progress!

I came back to biking at forty, a mid-life crisis and a sudden divorce led me back to a pastime I had loved as a teenager putting about on my nifty fifty. Twelve months later, and three attempts to pass my test, and I was the proud owner of a Yamaha Fazer 600, all the kit and very few skills. Fortunately for me there was a local IAM group which I joined about eighteen months after passing my DVSA test.

I took and passed my advanced test and then became an observer until a house move for work drew a line underneath that part of my life. I am happy to say





that I nurtured six riders through the course all of whom did better in the test than I did.

Riding a motorcycle has meant that I have been to places that I never dreamt I would go. France, the Pyrenees, Spain, Peru and Morocco. I met my wife through the IAM and have had many adventures on and off road in our time together. I went to the IOM TT last year for the first time and will be making the pilgrimage again this year, marshalling for the second time, this time with my wife – just awesome!

I am a member of the Christian Motorcyclist Association (CMA) and have worked closely with the CMA in and around Stoke-on-Trent and Warrington where they run BIKER'S CHURCH. More info can be found on Facebook – search Biker's Church UK. We are the ones with the big white crosses on our backs.

(Bikes above in order top to bottom: Yamaha 125. Yamaha Fazer 600. Suzuki GSX 1250 FAST Ducati Multistrada 1200 S).

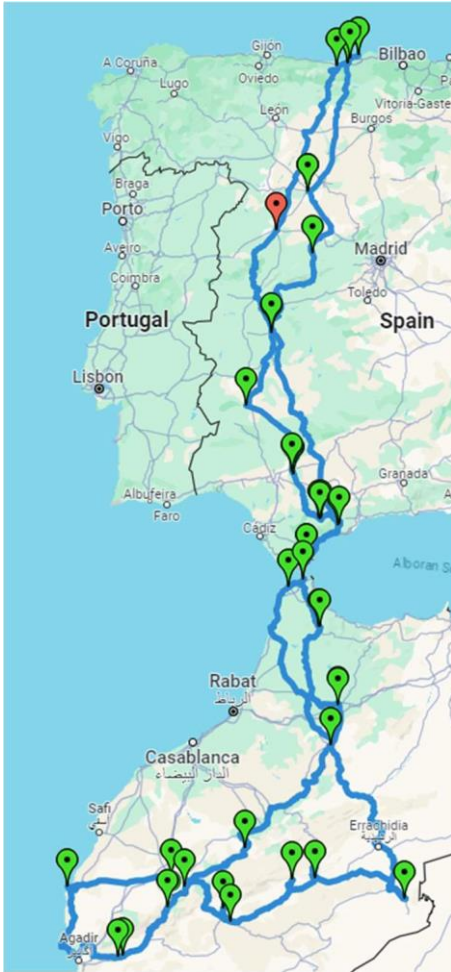
When people say that they have been on the trip of a lifetime and you see that sparkle in their eyes you know that they have truly experienced something BIG, REALLY BIG.

One of the privileges of my vocation as a Minister in the Methodist Church is that every seven years, I get three months off to re-charge. That is how we came to the decision to take a long road trip and when we found the twenty-one-day trip to Morocco advertised by Globebusters (<https://www.globebusters.com/>) we grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

The trip began in Cheshire on a miserable wet day, all we had to do was get to the ferry in Portsmouth. There we met up with the nineteen other riders and seventeen bikes that we would be spending the next twenty-two days with. We got on well from the start. Bonus!



We had the calmest ferry crossing I have ever experienced and were able to chill and enjoy the trip which was two nights on the ferry so that we could whale watch around the French coast. In to Spain at Santander and a



Sapin, Castile and Leon, La Pernia 1

three-day trip took us through stunning scenery stopping overnight at Salamanca, Zafra and Monda.



Salamanca by Night

The relatively short ferry crossing from Spain to North Africa went very smoothly departing from

Algeciras to Tanger Med. In Morocco there are many forms to fill in. Insurance to buy and customs officials to keep happy. We all had our maps confiscated as they showed “Western Sahara” not “Moroccan Sahara.” Fortunately, they didn’t take our Satnavs!!

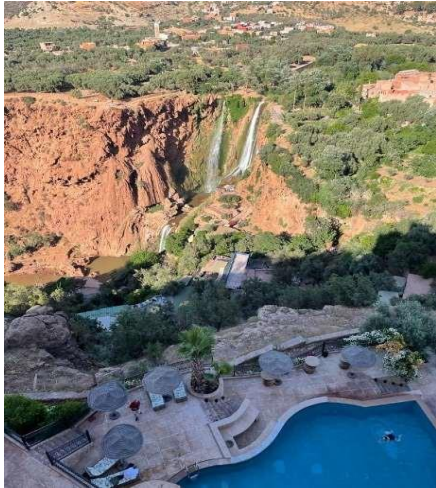


After clearing all the legal stuff, we made our way through the Atlas Mountains on stunning twisty, steep roads through woodland along challenging but beautiful roads south-east to Chefchaouen – famous for its blue buildings and narrow steep



streets.

After a night in Chefchaouen we made our way down to Fez where we were treated to a



guided tour of the medina and the tannery,



which stank! I would say that you won't find any better leather goods anywhere in the world.

The following day we began the short 238-mile ride to Cascades, to the hotel with a stunning view of the waterfalls for which the area is famous. We parked on the roof! Taking a dip in the infinity pool with the falls below in the relative cool of the

evening – about 25 degrees. After the 39 degrees we had faced all day, it was a cooling relief! At this point we are only eight days into the trip and have already covered 1205 miles since leaving the ferry.



Day nine was a 229 miles ride to and over the Tizi n' Test pass at over 2000 metres where we headed south to Taroudant. No trip is complete without a trip to the seaside so next we made our way to the Atlantic coast and the fortified town of Essaouira before

heading to Marrakesh for a two-night stay at the Kenzi Rose Garden hotel.



Marrakesh is stunning both day and night! Generally, the people are amazing too though there are some rogues out there that will try to get money out of you. We picked up a 'friend' in Marrakesh who offered to act as a guide, but took us in the



opposite direction to the way we wanted to go. He was a very pleasant man and when we told him that we were going to meet with a local business owner, and offered him some money for his 'care' of us he asked for more. So, we topped up our gift and said goodbye! Thank goodness for Google maps as it is very easy to lose your way in the twisting, narrow streets of the city.



The Yve St Lorain Garden in Marrakesh is something to behold and cost about £6 each to get in. Nothing in Morocco is expensive and the local roadside cafes are amazing. We had good food every day and lunch for two of us was about £3!

With Marrakesh under our belts, we made a 222-mile trip to Dades Gorge where we stayed the night in a hotel perched on the edge of the gorge. Sadly, part of the road through the Gorge was unusable, even by the locals and we had to turn back and use another route to our next stage, the Tizi n Ticha Pass.



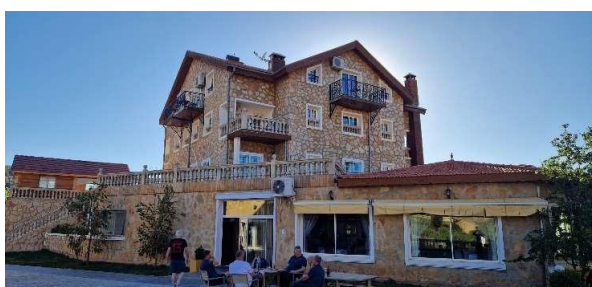
This section included a visit to Atti Ben Haddou, (pic right & above right) the set of Lawrence of Arabia and Gladiator.



Merzouga, is on the edge of the Sahara where we stayed for two nights. One night in the desert in a what they called a 'traditional camp' was the biggest let down of the trip (the only let down in fact) as the 'tents' were metal



huts with carpet draped over them. It was like sleeping in one of those sweat boxes you see on old war films and many of us ended up with sickness and diarrhoea from the dodgy catering. The highlight though was riding through the desert on camels as the sun went down, an experience that will stay with me forever.



By the end of day 16 we will have travelled 2339 miles, but first we must leave the heat of the desert behind

and head to Alpine like village of Azrou through cedar forests with wild monkeys in the trees and at the road side. From Azrou, we continue North, now we are on the way back to Tanger and the ferry back to Spain.



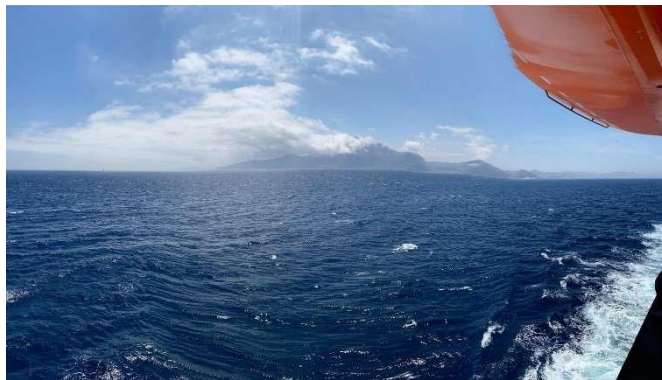


We are back in the (relatively) green section of Morrocco now as we head up to the Mediterranean coast. The landscape is still dramatic with many twists and turns and the heat is still in the high 30s as we descend to the coast.

..Earlier I mentioned Douglas Adams' quote about the size of space. Earth is huge as well and there is so much more to explore out there. Even at this point of our incredible trip we still have three days of riding through Spain and then the relatively short trip back to Cheshire from Portsmouth. The trip through Spain was just as awesome, with our scheduled stop at the Castle in Monda.



Sadly, we were greeted by cloudy skies and a distinct drop in temperature. However, we rode North through Parque Natural Sierra de Hornachuelos, with a huge variety of roads, from fast sweeping bends to small single track country roads. We also had the threat of torrential rain which meant that we cut out the more adventurous sections on the last day which was very cold (by comparison) with temperatures as low as 15°C.



By the time we pulled onto our drive on the 22nd day of our trip we had ridden 4040 miles, travelled through three countries, and had met some of the most amazing people and seen the most amazing views you could ever wish to see. The people of Morrocco are generous and welcoming to visitors, though do not get on the wrong side of the local constabulary who will fine you on the spot for speeding, and if you are in a group will fine all of you.



I had planned to film the entire trip and bought a Insta 360 camera. Sadly, the heat affected the camera and I lost most of my footage owing to corrupt files. Lesson learned, but the memories will last forever

This is only a glimpse of the adventure. My wife and I loved every minute of every day. If you have any doubt about taking on an adventure like this – just do it. Life is for living!



The last picture is my wife and I somewhere in the Atlas Mountains on our trusty Triumph Tiger 900 GTs. These bikes are amazing. They never missed a beat on the whole trip and we kept the right-side-up as well.

See you out there, *Tim Simms*.



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