

A typical Tuesday gathering

SOUTH CHESHIRE ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

S.C.A.M Chronicles, November 2026

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Publication is quarterly or sooner depending on the volume of material available.

News and Diary Dates

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

Next committee meeting

18 Feb 2027 at Warmingham Village Hall, CW11 3QL at 7.30pm. All members are welcome to attend and observe.

Social Rides every:

Sunday 10.00am Co-ordinated by Dave Coomber (*01270569439).* Meet at Shavington Costa, Jack Mills Way.

Tuesday 9.30am Coffee and chat/ride, meeting at Costa, Jack Mills Way, Shavington, Crewe. Co-ordinated by Howard (*howard.payne163@gmail.com).*

Social Events

Second Monday of the month evening socials at the Duke of Gloucester, Beswick Drive, Crewe, CW1 5NP. Don't forget to register your car in the pub if parking there.

"SCAM rider" - members informal WhatsApp Group

The club has set up an informal WhatsApp group to assist members to exchange information on ride outs and other social activities. There are still many members who have not yet signed up. If you would like to join (it is purely voluntary) please WhatsApp your name to Dave Lewis 07921518112

Your SCAM contacts:
Email: advancedmotorcyclists@proton.me
Neil Jewell, Chair
Dave Creedy, Editor
Richard Downes, Chief Observer
Neil Jewell, Membership Secretary
Andrew Gralton, Treasurer
Ian Cunningham, Secretary
Jackie Gorton, Social Secretary

Look smart! *Embroidered SCAM leisure wear.*

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

SCAM Christmas Dinner, Wednesday 9 December.



For those wishing to attend our not-to-be missed Christmas Dinner at the Duke of Gloucester, Crewe, please pay the full cost of your meal in advance to secure your place:

Two courses: £26.95 per person

Three courses: £30.95 per person

Full payment by bank transfer:

Sort code: 54-10-17
Account: 36603198
Reference: Your name

After paying, email your name, number of courses and menu choices to:

social@southcheshiream.org by Monday 23rd November 2026.

Looking forward to a festive evening with everyone!

Jackie

Editorial

The Chronicles have settled in as a quarterly publication. This, the final issue of the year, is a bumper edition. Some of our stalwarts have travelled far and wide in the UK and in mainland Europe to bring us tales of adventure and derring-do. Some prefer to move from hotel to hotel, while others operate from a fixed base once in theatre. Some prefer guided groups, while others like to operate as small self-navigating units. The comradeship among touring bikers is indefatigable. The bikes rarely collapse under the demands placed upon them. A puncture in the tread-line is a mere inconvenience. The first few expeditions by riders new to the experience can be tiring. But, resilience to extreme weather, distance and technical difficulty grows with practice. Regular hydration stops in hot weather are essential.

I look forward to continuing contributions from our star travellers.

Earlier, this year (Chronicles No. 6, April 2026) I introduced the eagerly anticipated backdrop photo competition for which submissions are due this month.

1. Only photos taken between 1 Feb 2026 and 31 October 2026 are eligible.
2. A maximum of three photos can be submitted.
3. Each photo should include a caption and name of the photographer.
4. An independent expert will choose the winner and runners-up.
5. Any disputes will be dealt with sensitively then ignored.
6. The images should be submitted in jpeg format to the Editor by the extended date of 27 November, via davidcreedy@icloud.com.

Happy and safe riding.

Editor

Features

Advanced Training Feedback

Thought I'd share the results of some research a group Chair from another area has recently carried out. He was looking into some people's negative perceptions of advanced riding / driver training.

Although it is motorcycle based, it includes some interesting information and food for thought relevant to both car and bike groups.

Key Themes

1. Perceived Elitism and Culture Issues

A recurring concern was the image of IAM and similar organisations. Several respondents felt that advanced riding groups can appear hierarchical, exclusive, or condescending towards non-members. There was a perception that some observers or members project an attitude of "we know better," which can put riders off before they even engage with the training.

2. Resistance to Being Told How to Ride

Many riders enjoy their current riding style and are reluctant to have others dictate how they should ride. Some felt that advanced riding could detract from the enjoyment of motorcycling by imposing a rigid approach, particularly when they already consider themselves experienced and safe riders.

3. "Progress, Progress, Progress" Criticism

Several contributors cited negative experiences or stories relating to an apparent emphasis on making progress, particularly overtaking. Riders objected to being criticised or marked down for choosing not to overtake when they were content with their pace. They felt that safe riding should allow for personal judgement rather than requiring overtakes simply to demonstrate progress.

4. Perceived Rigidity of the System

Some respondents felt the advanced riding framework could be too prescriptive. Examples included being encouraged to use specific road positions despite local knowledge of potholes, gravel, adverse cambers, or other hazards. These riders believed practical judgement should sometimes take precedence over textbook positioning.

5. Instructor Quality Matters

There was strong agreement that experiences depend heavily on the individual tutor or observer. Good trainers were described as adaptable, encouraging, and focused on rider enjoyment as well as safety. Poor trainers or mismatched tutor-student relationships were often cited as reasons for negative perceptions.

6. Training is Valuable, but Buy-In is Essential

Even some critics acknowledged that training can improve safety and awareness. However, they stressed that riders must be motivated to learn and that the training needs to be presented in a practical, real-world way rather than as a rigid set of rules.

7. Positive Feedback on BikeSafe

BikeSafe received consistently favourable comments. Riders appreciated the informal skills assessment, feedback from police motorcyclists, and opportunity to reflect on their riding without feeling pressured into a particular training path. Several considered BikeSafe excellent value and a useful stepping stone to further development.

8. Administrative and Organisational Problems

One contributor described a particularly poor IAM experience involving communication failures, lack of instructor availability, and broken promises. Such experiences create lasting negative impressions regardless of the quality of the training itself.

9. Outdated Stereotypes and Accessibility

Respondents suggested that advanced riding groups often appear aimed at an older demographic, particularly riders of large touring and adventure bikes.

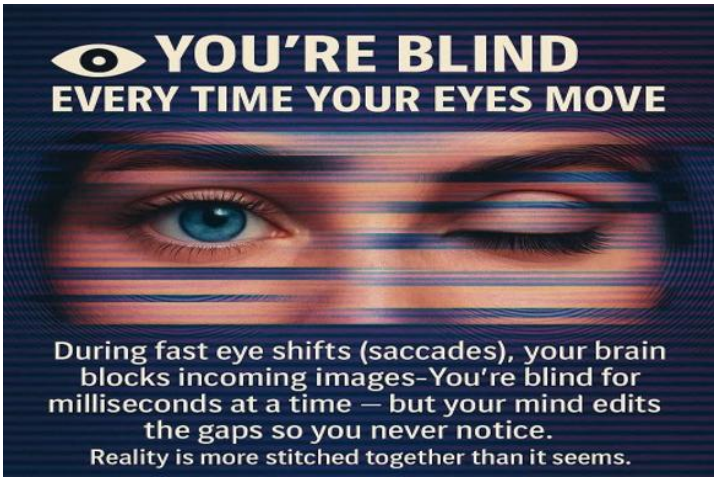
There was feedback that clubs need to demonstrate that they welcome all riders, regardless of age, motorcycle type, riding gear, or riding goals. Modern websites, social media engagement, and inclusive messaging were seen as important.

Dave Cox, Area Service Delivery Manager

Chief Observer, S.C.A.M:

We recognise the issues and have taken steps to "modernise " our training delivery. It remains work in progress but we are determined to broaden our appeal.

Saccadic Masking: The Motorcycle Rider's Hidden Perception Gap



When we ride a motorcycle, we often believe that our eyes are continuously scanning the road ahead and that we are taking in everything within our field of vision. In reality, our visual system works in a very different way. Our eyes are constantly moving, rapidly jumping from one point of interest to another. These rapid movements are known as **saccades**, and during them our perception of the visual world is temporarily suppressed. This phenomenon is known as **saccadic masking**.

For a motorcyclist, understanding this is particularly important because the consequences of missing information can be far greater than they are for a car driver.

What do the statistics tell us?

The latest Department for Transport figures show that in **2025, 386 motorcyclists were killed** on Great Britain's roads, with a further **5,710 seriously**

injured and **9,351 slightly injured**. That represents **15,447 reported motorcycle casualties** in one year.

The number of fatalities also increased from **340 in 2024 to 386 in 2025**, an increase of around **14%**.

Single-vehicle collisions are also significant. In 2024, **23% of motorcyclist fatalities occurred in single-vehicle accidents**. With 340 motorcyclists killed that year, this represents approximately **78 fatalities**.

Perhaps most relevant to the subject of this article is the DfT's finding that **53% of motorcyclists killed or seriously injured in 2025 were involved in collisions where ineffective observation was recorded as a road safety factor**.

What is saccadic masking?

Our eyes do not smoothly scan the world like a camera. Instead, they make rapid movements between points of interest. For example, while approaching a junction, your eyes may move from the road ahead, to a sign, to a vehicle waiting at the junction, and then towards the direction you intend to travel.

During these rapid eye movements, the brain effectively suppresses some of the visual information being received. This prevents the world from appearing blurred every time our eyes move.

The result is that there can be very brief periods where something is physically within our visual field, but we may not consciously register it.

This is **saccadic masking**.

The important point for riders is that **seeing is not necessarily the same as perceiving**.

Why does it matter to motorcyclists?

Motorcycling requires us to process a huge amount of information.

We are looking for:

- Junctions and side roads
- Vehicles emerging from concealed positions

- Pedestrians and cyclists
- Road signs and markings
- Changing speed limits
- Traffic lights
- Road surface hazards
- The position and behaviour of other vehicles
- Potential escape routes

At the same time, we are controlling the motorcycle, selecting the appropriate speed and position, and planning what we are going to do next.

Our eyes may therefore move rapidly between several different areas of interest.

A rider can quite genuinely say, **"I looked at the car,"** and still fail to recognise that the car was beginning to move.

The eyes received the information, but the brain did not necessarily process it in time.

The classic motorcycle example

Imagine approaching a junction on a motorcycle.

You look towards the right and see a vehicle waiting at the junction.

You then look ahead to check the road, perhaps glance at your speedometer, and return your attention towards the junction.

During those rapid eye movements, the vehicle begins to move.

When your eyes return to the junction, the vehicle is no longer where you expected it to be.

To you, it can appear as though the vehicle has **"suddenly appeared."**

Of course, it hasn't.

The vehicle has been there throughout. What changed was your perception of the information.

This is one reason why hazards can sometimes seem to materialise from nowhere.

"Look" is not enough

Advanced riding places considerable emphasis on **observation**, but observation should not simply mean moving your eyes around and looking at things.

The objective is to **identify, interpret and act upon information**.

There is a significant difference between:

"I saw the car."

and:

"I saw the car, recognised that it was approaching the junction, considered that the driver might not have seen me, and adjusted my speed and position accordingly."

The second example demonstrates effective perception and interpretation.

For a rider, this distinction is crucial.

How can a rider reduce the risk?

We cannot eliminate saccadic masking. It is a normal part of human vision.

What we can do is develop riding techniques that reduce the likelihood of important information being missed.

1. Keep your eyes moving

Avoid staring at one object for too long.

Continually scan the environment and collect information from different areas.

However, scanning should be purposeful rather than simply moving your eyes around.

2. Look well ahead

Looking further ahead gives the brain more time to process information.

If you are only looking immediately in front of the motorcycle, hazards can arrive before you have had sufficient time to recognise and respond to them.

3. Recheck important hazards

If something has the potential to affect your safety, don't assume that one glance is enough.

A vehicle waiting at a junction, a pedestrian near the kerb or a vehicle approaching from a side road deserves continued consideration.

Look, assess, move on, and come back to it if necessary.

4. Don't fixate

Target fixation is particularly dangerous for motorcyclists.

If we stare at a hazard, our attention can become locked onto it while other information is missed.

A good rider should identify the hazard, establish an appropriate response and continue to gather information.

5. Give yourself time

Speed directly affects how much time you have to process information.

The faster you travel, the faster hazards enter and leave your visual field.

Reducing speed when approaching areas of uncertainty isn't necessarily about riding slowly; it is about creating **time and space to process information**.

Observation is a continuous process

One of the most important lessons for an advanced rider is that observation isn't something we do once before a manoeuvre.

It is continuous.

The road environment is constantly changing. A vehicle that was stationary a few seconds ago may now be moving. A pedestrian may have stepped towards the road. A gap in traffic may have disappeared.

This is why good riders continually **update their information**.

Rather than thinking:

"I've seen that."

think:

"What has changed?"

That simple change in mindset can make observation much more effective.

The motorcycle advantage

There is an advantage that motorcyclists can use to compensate for the limitations of human vision: **planning**.

Good observation allows us to anticipate what might happen before it actually happens.

If you approach a junction and see a vehicle waiting to emerge, you don't need to know with certainty that the driver will pull out.

You simply recognise that it is a possibility.

Your response might be to roll off the throttle, cover the brakes, improve your position or increase the space available to deal with the developing hazard.

You have turned a potential surprise into a developing situation that you are prepared for.

The advanced rider's mindset

Understanding saccadic masking reinforces an important principle of advanced motorcycle riding:

We should never rely solely on what we have already seen.

Our visual system has limitations. We have blind spots, attention can be diverted, objects can be obscured and our eyes can momentarily suppress information during rapid movements.

The answer isn't to become paranoid or stare at every potential hazard.

It is to develop a **systematic, continuous and deliberate approach to observation**.

Look well ahead.

- Scan.
- Identify.

- Interpret.
- Predict.
- Plan.
- And continually reassess.

Ultimately, advanced riding isn't about having better eyesight than everyone else. It is about **using the information available to us more effectively**.

Saccadic masking reminds us that there can be a difference between **looking at something and actually seeing it**.

For a motorcyclist, understanding that difference could make the difference between a hazard being anticipated and a hazard appearing to come from nowhere.

Jackie

Motorcycle safety management

Safety triangles

Research on industrial workplace fatalities and injuries have been used to develop a conceptual safety triangle. Heinrich (1931) analysed over 75,000 industrial incident reports and proposed the relationships: 1 major injury to 29 minor injuries to 300 near misses. His hypothesis was that each fatality is underlain by many less serious incidents and by preventing those the likelihood of a fatality can be reduced. While, open to criticism as there is no justification for assuming all workplaces can be satisfactorily represented by the same set of ratios, the approach revolutionised safety management. Instead of relying on enforcement of regulations, attention was instead focused on improving safety performance at all levels of activity. Thus, the modern proactive approach to safety management was born aimed at addressing hazards before they could escalate.

Frank E Bird expanded Heinrich's theory after analysing 1,753,498 industrial accidents that were reported by 297 companies. These companies represented

21 different industrial groups, employing 1,750,000 collaborators who worked around 3 billion man-hours during the exposure period analysed. The result of this study was the 1-10-30-600 between the levels of the pyramid.



A Conoco Phillips Marine study (2003) found some 300,000 at risk behaviours for every fatality (see adjacent figure), a substantially larger base than Bird discovered. Clearly, there is no standard safety triangle data set. The core concept is that by addressing the minor issues, the more serious issues will be reduced. The weakness, of the theory is that the hazards defined in the different layers are not necessarily correlated.

The road to continuous safety improvement

So, can we create a generic safety triangle for motorcycle incidents? The latter represent a much tighter "workplace" environment than the wide range of industrial workplace settings. However, while there are good data on fatalities and serious injuries, lower level information is incomplete. Nevertheless, greater correlation between hazards at the different levels of severity might be expected. Although we are not able to quantify the hazard triangle contents, there is a strong case for focussing on the lower level hazards to reduce the serious risks at the peak of the triangle. Even if the correlation is not provable, purely by working to identify and responding appropriately to everyday hazards we will improve safety performance, enhance safety culture and achieve continuous improvement.

When riding in a group, members should not be afraid to speak openly about *unsafe acts* they observe and the recipient should treat the comment as a positive. Unsafe acts can include excessive speed, non-compliance with road

traffic regulations, too close following distance, poor road positioning, overtaking at a junction or at a blind bend, failing to have a proper look at junctions, missing a critical shoulder check, heavy use of brakes …….and so on.

Riders should be also critical of themselves and record any unsafe acts and how they might be avoided in the future. Jackie's article reminds us of the 386 fatal motorcycle incidents in 2025. Let's work on eliminating unsafe acts and ensure we don't become a fatal statistic. Near misses should also be recorded. These are incidents which only by chance narrowly avoided a serious outcome.

UK tours

Four on a tour of South Wales



There were three regulars, Richard, Shep, me and a guest, Steve, on his first tour. He was riding a 1300GS, a change to his previous Sports bike interests. Steve did not have comms and missed out on the wit and repartee we wish we had, as well as suffering confusion when side trips were added. He also missed out on traffic warnings on narrow lanes but managed to survive. Shep led with his usual panache and spirited riding.



Aberystwyth

Leaving Shavington Costa we headed to Crossgates for a healthy lunch. The wonderful Elan valley did not disappoint. Aberystwyth was memorable for sea, gloom, cake and coffee on a deserted prom. Following the coast we diverted to New Quay where motorcycle parking was inadequately catered for, as at other places along the coast. An overnight stay at the family run Llanina hotel, Llanarth, was comfortable. The food was ok but not exciting.



Whitesands Bay

Day 2 took us round the SW peninsula Newport, a glance at Fishguard, coffee at Whitesands Bay and on to St David's where we viewed the Cathedral. Tenby provided unofficial parking by the city walls and cake. A drizzly Saundersfoot was passed before heading up country to eventually descend into the middle of nowhere to find the Brunant Arms, Caio. A peaceful hamlet with a golden hearted pub landlord. Tuesday night meant any beer from the pumps £3.50. The landlord was also celebrating his 66th birthday and we were invited to join the locals in a free buffet. Even a Yorkshireman would have forced a smile.

There was no room for Shep at the Inn so he stayed in a hotel about 20 minutes away, missing the party. We met up in the morning and were soon headed for more adventure in warp drive. Black Mountain and the Brecon Beacons beckoned, the peaks hiding in the mist. Few cars blighted the roads and those that did were summarily dispatched. Shep delivered the coolest cafe, Parc Ferme, for morning coffee, cake and running repairs to his front mudguard at Caer Bont. Nondescript from the outside on an industrial estate, a bikers

treasure house inside. Before reaching Crossgates we pulled into a Greggs that was closed and made do with a Burger King, not my usual lunch of choice. We arrived at Shrewsbury via Knighton and Bishop's Castle, dodging a section of closed road. Only three of the group were on comms. The non comm kept following the GPS route through Whitchurch and Nantwich chased by me. The other two took an alternative route home. The three day ride was a classic, I could do it all over again.

Editor

The NC500 with a Difference

Like most great journeys, this one was hatched in a pub.

As a group of six on five bikes, we had taken several trips together, mostly to Europe, but this one would be different. The six people on five bikes came about because one of us — we will call him Dave — never seems to ride without his wife on the back. I have certainly never seen him ride solo.

I had a vague recollection of reading a magazine article — or perhaps I dreamt it — about riding the NC500 from a central base. The idea was simple: no luggage to unload and reload each morning, and the route could be tackled in roughly triangular segments.

As the route already exists and is signposted for most of the way, the only real planning was to link each section with routes from, and back to, our base.

We chose Lairg, a small town around 50 miles north-west of Inverness. This brought us in from the coast to a slightly more central location.

The next decision was the route to our base. We had two choices: take two days and enjoy the scenic route, staying somewhere overnight, or simply go for it. We chose the direct option: 464 miles by motorway and major roads, with two stops for fuel and food.

On arrival, the house we had booked through Airbnb was even better than we had hoped for. Each couple had a large double en-suite bedroom, and the house



sat on the shore of Loch Shin. We also had the use of kayaks and paddleboards, should we feel reckless, and a large hot tub to ease ageing, aching bones.

Lairg is not a large place, with a population of around 700, so facilities are somewhat limited. However, the house was perfectly placed: around 100 yards from a Spar minimarket and, surprisingly, a chippy. Another 50 yards away was a restaurant, which early in the year only opens on Friday and Saturday evenings; for the rest of the week, it operates as a very nice café.

Day 1. On our first day, we headed south-west back towards Inverness and joined the A9 at Evanton, where we had left it the day before, before heading north.

We chose to ride the route anticlockwise, as the scenery becomes more interesting as the route progresses around the coast and onto the glorious west coast of Scotland.

The day was cool and blustery but offered clear skies and good views ahead. The A9 is never the most interesting road, but it was quiet that day and gave us a swift, traffic-free ride. We rode through the coastal towns of Tain, home of the Glenfiddich distillery, Golspie and Brora. We left the A9 at Latheron and joined the A99, which took us to Wick, a larger town and home to the Old Pulteney distillery. From there, we continued north to the village of Reiss and stayed on the A99 towards John o' Groats. One of the last villages we passed through was Keiss, which got me wondering whether it had anything to do with the company of the same name that produces heated bike gear.

John o' Groats was our stop for the necessary pictures and lunch. For those who haven't been, it is not the most dynamic of tourist destinations, but it seems to get better each time I go. We then headed west along the north coast towards Thurso. On the way, a slight detour took us to Dunnet Head lighthouse, the most northerly point on mainland Britain. More photos followed, then it was back on

the road. Thurso is a reasonable-sized town and had, shock horror, traffic lights. Further along the coast is Dounreay, a nuclear power station in the process of being decommissioned. Another few miles brought us to Melvich, where we turned inland through the Highlands and back towards base.

This road — the A897, B871, A873 and A836 — was a dream: 71 miles of single-track road. We did, however, have to stop twice: first for a herd of sheep being driven down the road, and then for around twenty deer lying in the road, from a herd of sixty or seventy.

We arrived back in Lairg around 4 o'clock after covering 204 miles. Another bonus was the small petrol station about half a mile down the road: top up the bikes, then back to the house.

Day 2. We were back onto those amazing single-track roads, turning left at the coast. The views along the north coast get better as you head west. Our first stop was at a café, campsite, and hostel just before the Kyle of Tongue. Coffee and cake time — well, it would have been rude not to. Refreshed, we headed over the causeway and on towards Durness. Then it was tourist time: we visited Smoo Cave, which was very busy. I had been before, so I knew what to expect; the others had not. Note to self: it is quite a climb back up in bike gear. A short distance from there, we stopped for lunch at Cocoa Mountain. This is based, with other arty studios, on a former Second World War radar station. It was taken over by a hippy commune in the 1960s and continues today.



Back on the road, we were now heading south-west. More single-track A-road took us down to Laxford Bridge, where we turned inland again to head back. This was

the A838: another superb 34 miles of single-track road. We met only two other vehicles; both pulled over to let us pass. Another fabulous day: 134 miles of joy.

Day 3. The weather was warming nicely now, reaching a very pleasant 19 degrees. Fuel was potentially an issue, but hopefully we would find some on the busier coastal roads. We headed 34 miles along glorious single-track roads towards the coast. It was busier that morning: two cars, a tractor, a bus and two girls on bicycles loaded with camping gear. Rather them than me. Back at Laxford Bridge, we again turned left and onto the NC500 route. Today we were heading into an area called Assynt, a wild place with amazing beaches and views, 1-in-5 hills, and hairpin bends. What could possibly spoil that? As this is on the NC500 route, it does get "busy", and we met quite a few cars and delivery vans. It is narrow single track, so courtesy is the name of the game. On one particularly nadgery section, we could smell the coffee before we reached the café — always a good sign. Coffee and cake at the Secret Tea Garden, then onwards and upwards. A few miles down the road, signs warned of roadworks. The work involved resurfacing the road, which is something of a challenge on a single-track route. As we came to the bottom of a particularly steep section, cars were stopped in front of us and a man in reflective orange was walking towards us. "The road will be closed until they have laid a wagonload of tarmac. It might be twenty minutes, or it might be an hour." It was almost an hour, so we sat, chilled out and listened to the wildlife. Thankfully, it was not raining. Once on the move again, we saw that they had covered about 300 yards and were sitting with a brew, watching us all pass. Back on the wider roads, we continued to Ledmore before turning inland and heading "home". A shorter stretch of single track took us back — only 18 miles — and conveniently passed the fuel station. Slight problem, though: they had no petrol. We had covered 125 miles, so still had a few bars left on the fuel gauges. We decided to sample the chippy next door instead, but what to have? Fish, chips and peas, or throw caution to the wind: battered haggis, chips and peas.

Day 4. Leaving Lairg and heading west we again headed for the coast. The fuel station was still 'dry'. Back along the A837 to Ledmore, another amazing ride along this mostly singletrack and almost traffic free road. At Ledmore a left turn

onto the A835 heading down to Ullapool, and fuel. After queueing for around 15 minutes, we were heading south and onto the A832 and stopping for coffee and a walk to the Corrielshallock Gorge. A very nice visitor centre here now with full facilities. Out onto the moorland roads along the coast again and heading for Gairloch. Into the village from the main road looking for more coffee. We stopped at the Mountain Coffee Co. café. A great stop with large car park. Its run by two 'elderly Hippies' who seem to have been there forever. Attached to the café is a book shop with a huge selection of local history, travel, and mystic books. Well worth a visit. The coffee was very good. They serve coffee from Marley coffee estate in Jamaica. It was planted by Bob Marley and is now run by one of his sons. This was accompanied by a huge cheese scone. Delicious.

Back on the road and heading inland along the banks of Loch Maree and on to Kinlochewe, where we took the A832 east towards Garve and Dingwall on the East coast. Back onto the A9 for a short distance then inland for the return to Lairg. Fuel being delivered at the petrol station as we passed so we entered into the store for a drink and waited till the tanker had finished.

Day 5. This was a day we had been looking forward to. Back to Kinlochewe on



the roads we had used yesterday but so different in the opposite direction. Onto the A896 and heading to Torridon and then Shieldaig for coffee. It's definitely worth the short detour from the main road into the village. The views are spectacular and the coffee isn't bad either. From Shieldaig it's onto the very narrow unclassified road that takes you along the coast to Applecross. Time for food again at the Applecross Inn. Well actually from the Airstream food bar outside. Then on to Bealach Na Ba. I've ridden this road several times in both directions. Today was the best time though. Not a cloud in the sky and very little traffic. Heading back to Lairg from here we took the A896 to the A832 for the second time today.

Day 6. We had included a spare day in our plans just in case of poor weather or other bike related problems. Everything had gone so well we took a day to look around the local area. Lairg calls itself the hub of the Highlands a name that is perfect for it and it makes an ideal base to explore the Highland region.

Day 7. Unfortunately, its home time. After a week of amazing weather (each day had been 20 degrees plus), riding, scenery and adventure today started with a 6:30am departure and low cloud. Heading back to the A9 we followed roads that we had ridden a few times that week but were still exciting to ride. The early start gave us a good run down the A9 and past Inverness before the roads started to get busier. The rain started and the temperatures dropped. As we were riding by the edge of Cairngorm National Park the temperature dropped down to 5 degrees, which lead to an unplanned stop and more layers being found to get us comfortable again. Back on the go again and heading south to Glasgow and back onto the motorway system to get us home. As we headed south the weather improved and turned into a reasonable trip home.

A great trip which I would happily do again. It turned out at a distance of 1797 thoroughly enjoyable miles door to door.

Dave Lewis

International Adventures

Belgium – a Goldwing Adventure

Belgium is often underestimated as a motorcycle destination, but it has so much to offer and is remarkably easy to reach from the UK.

For this 10-day tour I decided to take my 2023 Honda Gold Wing Tour. Five days of the trip were spent with a guided tour group organised by Kraken Motorcycle Co., while the remainder of the trip gave us the freedom to explore Belgium and some of the important First World War sites in northern France and Belgium.

Day 1 – Heading South

A quick blast down the M6 took me to Corley Services, where I met my mate Tony. After a quick sandwich and coffee, we set off for our overnight stop.

We had to navigate the dreaded M25 before finally joining the M20, after which it was a relatively straightforward run to the Village Hotel at Maidstone.

It was an easy start to the trip, but tomorrow was going to be an early one.

Miles: 220

Day 2 – Calais to Dinant

An early start was in order as we had to meet the tour group at 6:30am at the services on the M20. After around 30 minutes of riding we arrived and met the group we would be travelling with for the next few days.

The shuttle was on time and we arrived in Calais during the morning. Almost immediately we were on the motorway, crossing into Belgium and heading towards our first coffee stop at Poperinge.

Poperinge turned out to be a fascinating and historic town, with a strong connection to the First World War. After a quick sandwich and coffee, we were back on the road, heading towards Tournai.

The roads weren't particularly exciting as the objective was simply to reach our hotel that evening. Just outside Tournai we started to encounter light showers, and navigating the cobbled streets of the town became an interesting experience. Unfortunately, much of the centre was closed because a parade was due to take place.

After quite a bit of messing around, and being told by the police to move on, we headed out of town towards our next coffee stop at Beaumont.

The final section of the day's ride was much more enjoyable, as we tackled some tight and twisty roads alongside the Meuse River before arriving in Dinant.

Our hotel was the Château de la Poste at Pont-à-Lesse, a couple of miles outside Dinant. After checking in and parking the Gold Wing in the secure area, we settled in for the evening.

Miles: 230

Day 3 – Mettet, Chimay and the Ardennes

After a lovely breakfast we set off to visit the historic Jules Tacheny Circuit at Mettet.



The circuit has a long association with motorcycle racing and has hosted many famous riders over the years. It was fascinating to stand in a place with such a strong racing heritage.

A short ride later we arrived at another famous Belgian circuit – Chimay. The circuit is still used for racing today and had recently benefited from major new facilities, including an upgraded pit and hospitality area.

We were taken around part of the circuit, much of which uses public roads. After the rather sedate tour, a few of us decided it would be good fun to remind ourselves just how bad we were at racing motorcycles. I have to admit that, despite riding a Gold Wing, I did manage to get fairly close to the maximum speed indicated on the speedometer!



We stopped at a lovely auberge just around the corner, where a local car club was also enjoying the excellent food and drink.



Sufficiently rested and well fed, we made our way back towards the hotel through the French countryside. We stopped at Rochehaut to admire the stunning view across the Semois valley.

It was a great ride back to the hotel and another excellent day, although we hadn't covered a huge distance.

Miles: 150

Day 4 – Riding Spa-Francorchamps

Another early start was in order as we had a couple of hours' riding ahead of us to visit the legendary Spa-Francorchamps Formula One circuit.



Unfortunately, some of the riders were caught out by the very strong low sun, which resulted in us arriving later than planned.

We were given a quick behind-the-scenes tour, including the press room and paddock areas. There was also a track day taking place, with lots of very expensive Porsches hurtling around the circuit.

Then came the really exciting part.

We were informed that, if we went to the correct gate, we would be allowed to ride around the circuit behind the pace car, provided we followed the list of rules.

We jumped on the bikes, formed up at the gate and were led onto the circuit. Riding up through Eau Rouge and around Spa-Francorchamps for two laps was absolutely fantastic.

After completing our two laps, we headed into hospitality for some excellent food. On the way out I bumped into Tom Kerridge and Claude Bosi, two Michelin-starred chefs who were also there for the track day.

We saddled up and rode back to the hotel after what had been a fantastic day.

Miles: 150

Day 5 – Luxembourg and the Ardennes

We had a later start today as we were heading towards Luxembourg.

After a quick motorway journey we stopped for coffee in Bastogne, another historically important town with numerous Second World War memorials and monuments.

Back on the bikes, we headed into Luxembourg. The first thing you notice is how smooth the roads are. We continued towards our lunch stop at Esch-sur-Sûre, a lovely little town sitting beneath the ruins of its medieval castle.

After lunch we crossed back into Belgium, but this time the route was fantastic. The roads allowed us to enjoy some of the tight and twisty riding that the Ardennes are famous for.

We headed towards La Roche-en-Ardenne, where we stopped for coffee and cake before making the final run back to the hotel.

Miles: 150

Day 6 – Mahymobiles and a Personal Journey

Today was our last day with the group, as they were heading back to the UK while we had decided to stay in Belgium for a few more days.

After around 90 miles we arrived at Mahymobiles, an automobile museum housed in an old industrial building.

It turned out that this huge collection of cars and motorcycles had been assembled by the Mahy family. Many of the vehicles were unrestored or retained their original patina, which made the collection particularly fascinating. Among the exhibits were some extremely valuable and rare cars, including Bugattis.

After coffee and a good look around the collection, we said our goodbyes and headed towards France.

I wanted to see if I could find the place where my grandfather was commemorated on a First World War memorial.

After around an hour and a half of riding through some lovely roads, towns and villages, we arrived at Vis-en-Artois.

I managed to find my grandfather's name among the 9,843 names on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial to the Missing. It was a particularly poignant moment to stand there and see his name among those of the men whose bodies were never recovered from the First World War.

We then climbed back on the bikes and headed to our base for the next few days – Ypres.

Miles: 190

Day 7 – The Ypres Salient

For the next few days I was fortunate to have my mate as a guide as we explored the First World War battlefields around Ypres.

We started the day at Hill 60 before heading to Messines.

We then visited St Nicolas Church at Messines, where Adolf Hitler, then a German corporal, was reportedly treated in the crypt after being wounded during the fighting around Messines in 1914.

We then visited the site associated with the famous Christmas Truce of 1914, when British and German troops are believed to have played football in No Man's Land.

From there we headed to Ploegsteert, known to the British troops as "Plugstreet", and visited the Ploegsteert Memorial and Berks Cemetery Extension. Next came Sanctuary Wood and its museum, where we were able to see some of the surviving trenches and get a real sense of the conditions in which the soldiers lived, fought and died.



After lunch we visited Tyne Cot Cemetery near Passchendaele. The sheer size of the cemetery is difficult to comprehend.

We then visited Polygon Wood and the Brothers in Arms Memorial before returning towards Ypres.

The day finished with a visit to the Menin Gate for the Last Post Ceremony. Hearing the Last Post played beneath the enormous memorial, surrounded by hundreds of other visitors, was a very moving experience.

Miles: 65

Day 8 – More of the Ypres Salient

We started the day at Railway Wood, where we saw the memorials and enormous mine craters left by the fighting.

We then headed to Hooge Crater Cemetery, where we saw the grave of Australian Private Patrick Bugden VC, the cemetery's sole Victoria Cross recipient.

From there we travelled to Essex Farm Cemetery, where Canadian medical officer Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae wrote *In Flanders Fields* in May 1915 while treating wounded soldiers.

Afterwards we headed back to Poperinge for lunch and visited Talbot House, the famous "Every Man's Club" where British soldiers could rest and escape the pressures of the front.

It was another fascinating day exploring the history of the Ypres Salient. Although the riding distances were relatively short, we were constantly stopping to absorb the history of the places we were visiting.

Miles: 50

Day 9 – The Journey Home Begins

Today we said goodbye to Ypres and began our journey back towards the UK.

We made a quick blast up the motorway towards Calais and managed to get onto an earlier Eurotunnel crossing than originally planned.

Once back in the UK we joined the M20 and then the M25, where we were held up for around 45 minutes because of a four-car pile-up.

Eventually we arrived at our hotel in Meriden, where we had just enough time to sample the Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar & Grill.

Miles: 220

Day 10 – National Motorcycle Museum

After a lovely breakfast we headed to the National Motorcycle Museum to have a look around its remarkable collection of historic motorcycles.

There is something rather appropriate about finishing a motorcycle tour surrounded by some of the machines that have shaped British motorcycling history.

This was where Tony and I finally split up. He headed off on his route while I took the M6 north, eventually leaving the motorway at Stafford so that I could enjoy some of the A-roads on the way home.

Miles: 100

The Verdict

This was a fantastic 10-day motorcycle adventure covering around 1,600 miles.

Belgium proved to be a far better motorcycle destination than I had expected. The Ardennes provided some excellent riding, with plenty of tight and twisty roads, while the towns and cities offered an interesting mixture of history, architecture and excellent food.

The trip also demonstrated just how much history is concentrated within a relatively small area. From the First World War battlefields around Ypres and the racing heritage of Mettet and Chimay to the legendary Spa-Francorchamps circuit, there was something different around almost every corner.

Taking the Gold Wing proved to be an excellent choice. It swallowed the miles effortlessly, provided plenty of comfort on the longer motorway sections and, despite its size, was perfectly capable of tackling the tighter roads of the Ardennes.

Perhaps most importantly, however, the trip provided the opportunity to combine two of my passions – motorcycles and history – while sharing the experience with good friends.

Total distance: approximately 1,600 miles.

Rob Halsall

Black Forest Tour: August 2026

For this tour, I chose my 2023 Honda GL1800 Gold Wing, as the plan was to cover some major routes.

I was riding with the East Midlands Honda Owners Club. Our group comprised 19 bikes and 21 people.

Day 1 — Wednesday, 12 August

I rode solo to the Premier Inn in Folkestone, where I met up with the rest of the group. To keep things simple, I took the motorways. For once, the M25 was kind to me, and I arrived in good time.

Day 2 — Thursday, 13 August

The next morning, after fuelling ourselves and the bikes, East Midlands Honda Owners Club chairman Graham Brown led us on the short ride to the UK Eurotunnel terminal.

After a 35-minute train journey, standing alongside our bikes, we disembarked and began the first long day's ride. The temperature was around 40°C as we headed southeast through France on well-maintained, fast-flowing roads. Two and a half hours and hundreds of miles later, with several comfort and water stops and one toll paid, we arrived in Tinqueux, near Reims, in the early evening. Our basic but functional accommodation was just what we needed: a shower, food and a good rest.

Day 3 — Friday, 14 August

In the morning, we repacked the panniers and luggage, loaded the routes and destination into our sat-navs and set our helmet intercoms to group-chat mode.

Another long, hot day in the saddle took us along some truly stunning roads: twisty, undulating and scenic. Eventually, everyone arrived safely and regrouped at our base for the trip: a large lodge in Menzenschwand, near St. Blasien, deep in Germany's Black Forest. The lodge had a well-equipped kitchen but no food, so we ordered €150 worth of assorted pizzas. They were delivered and eaten with gusto!



The view from my room was absolutely stunning and the nearby town of St. Blasien was very pretty too.



Days 4–7

We spent the next few days exploring the local area from our base, on foot, by bus and by bike.



It was a wonderfully relaxing break. We walked to local beauty spots, including a nearby waterfall, rode into town, visited another impressive waterfall and saw the world's largest cuckoo clock. We also took the bus several times to swim in a lovely local lake. Evenings were spent chatting, playing pool and cards, and enjoying one another's company.



We were lucky to have a trained chef among the riders, so we ate very well.

Day 8 — Wednesday, 19 August

The morning began with handing the lodge back to its owner. Then we set off northwest, back onto the fast-flowing roads for several hundred miles.

The day wasn't without incident. One rider's rear cowl cover—a piece of cardboard used to protect his pannier—got so hot from his under-seat exhaust that it caught fire on the Autobahn! Once the flames were out, the bike had been checked and nerves had settled, we regrouped and continued to our overnight stop: a posh hotel at Liège Airport in Belgium.

Day 9 — Thursday, 20 August

Half the group rode directly to our final night's accommodation. The other half headed in "the wrong" direction, back across the border into Germany, to visit the large motorcycle accessories shop FC-Moto.

After plenty of window-shopping, one member was pleased to avoid delivery charges and import fees on a new pair of bike boots. Our half of the party then retraced its route across the border towards that night's destination.

Before turning in, the indefatigable Marc arranged for us to spend the last of the pooled food money at a local all-you-can-eat Chinese restaurant. Everyone made full use of the offer: great food, and plenty of it! The Travelodge-style accommodation was basic but functional, with clean, inexpensive rooms where we could rest our weary heads before the final day. It was also conveniently only 30 minutes from Calais, ready for the morning ride to Le Shuttle.

Day 10 — Saturday, 22 August

On the final day, we set off together, then "dropped off" riders at the various junctions and turnings. Everyone arrived in time to ride safely onto Le Shuttle.

We disembarked at Dover mid-morning. I split from the group and tried to beat the traffic on the M25, but the M25 and M40 had other ideas. After several traffic jams and drivers who wouldn't let me filter, I finally arrived home several hours later.

After more than 2,100 miles of largely incident-free, fun-packed and at times exhilarating riding, it was time to say farewell until we meet again. We came away with plenty of memorable moments, just two dropped bikes, no serious damage and no breakdowns—apart from our very own "firestarter".

Rob Halsall

A French Alps Tour: July 2026

After reviewing the proposed routes for our trip to the French Alps, I decided to take my Honda VFR800X Crossrunner. It's light and very manoeuvrable, which made it a good choice for the roads ahead.

I was riding with 15 other riders and one pillion passenger, all friends from Cheshire and the East Midlands.

Day 1 — 180 miles

I met up with Dave and we set off for a hotel near Heathrow, where we were due to meet another rider and stay overnight. We took the main roads, which weren't especially kind to us. A few hours later, we arrived ready for a cold beer.

Day 2 — 171 miles

After fuelling up, we made our way to the rendezvous point to meet the main group before continuing to the Channel Tunnel. The crossing was quick, and from Calais we set off for our overnight stop. With temperatures in the mid-30s, we chose the quickest route along the A26.

We eventually reached our hotel in Reims. The B&B Hotel had no parking, so we found a suitable spot for all 15 bikes, checked in and then headed into town to find a restaurant.

Day 3 — 260 miles

A quick search on Google Maps turned up a nearby bakery serving beautiful pastries and coffee. It was a welcome start to a long day on the road to Bourg-en-Bresse.

Once the bikes were fuelled, we set off along the autoroutes. The temperature was already in the mid-30s first thing in the morning. We stopped at various *Aires de service* for fuel and, more importantly, to keep ourselves hydrated as the temperature climbed into the low 40s.

After seven hours, we arrived at the hotel. Following a quick shower, we found a Buffalo Grill for food and drinks.

Day 4 — 220 miles

After some discussion, we split into two groups. That arrangement continued for most of the tour.

The heat was still intense, so we took the smaller roads, which made for a more interesting ride. We stopped for a drink in Hauteville-Lompnes, then continued

with a lunch stop and several more breaks for drinks before reaching Digne-les-Bains.

This typical French hotel would be our base for the next seven days. It had no lift or air conditioning—both would have been welcome in the heat. After a seven-hour journey, we were ready for something to eat, a drink and a decent night's sleep.

Day 5

After the previous day's ride, most of us decided to take a rest day, explore the town and generally take it easy.

After lunch, we heard that a couple of the lads had gone out for a ride and one had been involved in a serious crash. He was airlifted to hospital and had broken his collarbone, shoulder and three ribs, as well as puncturing a lung. We recovered his bike and brought it back to the hotel. We later heard that he was comfortable, although he was being treated at a hospital four hours away.

Day 6 — 125 miles

After a quick breakfast, we fuelled the bikes and set off on our planned route to the Gorges du Verdon. The forecast was for temperatures in the mid-40s.



The route was amazing, with tight, twisty roads and spectacular views. We stopped in Aiguines to watch some brave souls bungee-jump from the bridge. We then stopped for lunch by the Lac de Sainte-Croix, which was stunning. Some of the group went for a swim, while I chose to ride back to the hotel alone along the tight, twisty route we'd taken that morning.

Days 7 and 8

We took it easy over the next couple of days while Digne-les-Bains held its lavender festival. The town was extremely busy, with parades, marching bands and locals in traditional costumes.

Each evening, we sat down to dinner as the local marching bands visited the town's establishments, playing into the early hours. On a couple of evenings, we also watched amazing firework displays.

Day 9 — 197 miles

After breakfast, we left town and headed into the mountains to ride some of the Tour de France routes. Before long, we were climbing Col de la Bonette, passing people cycling, running and Nordic skiing their way up to the 2,800-metre summit.





Having descended the mountain, we stopped for lunch in Saint-Étienne-de-Tinée, a typical ski resort. After lunch, we rode Col de la Couillole, another amazing mountain route, before making our way back to the hotel.

Day 10 — 285 miles

It was time to pack up the bikes and begin the journey north through France to our next hotel in Dijon. Once again, the extreme heat led us to choose the quickest route along the autoroutes.

By then, the heat was relentless, and we took plenty of breaks to refuel and keep hydrated. After almost eight hours, we arrived at the B&B Hotel in Dijon city centre, desperately in need of showers.





That evening, we explored beautiful Dijon, found a suitable bar and restaurant and then headed back for a good night's sleep.

Day 11 — 337 miles

We made an early start for the long ride to Lille, our planned overnight stop. With temperatures still high, we took the autoroutes and made good progress north, stopping every 100 miles to refuel and drink.

After about six and a half hours, we arrived at the B&B Hotel Lille Lillenium, next to a large shopping centre. The hotel was lovely, with large, air-conditioned rooms. We headed out to find dinner, but after a short walk ended up in an area that could only be described as very rough. A quick meal and an early night were very much in order.

Day 12 — 350 miles

We set off early for the Le Shuttle terminal, only to find utter chaos when we arrived. Queues stretched everywhere because of a systems failure. After 50 minutes, we managed to board the train and take off our helmets and jackets, which were dripping with sweat.

We arrived in Folkestone, where I said farewell to the main group. Then we set off on the long journey back to Middlewich. The trip was fantastic, even though the heat made it hard work at times. The bike performed extremely well, and I was glad I'd chosen it for the trip. My only criticism was buffeting at high speeds. So, I'll be looking for a wider screen.

Total distance: 2,200 miles

Rob Halsall

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

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