



NEWSLETTER 2018- Issue 29

Chairman's Chat

The fine summer has given us all plenty of opportunity to get out into the countryside and enjoy driving on dry roads. However last week I had to return from Blantyre via the M8 late at night and met some atrocious wet conditions to deal with. Sadly the same evening a female motorist left the motorway around junction 3 and was fatally injured. It is a salutary lesson for us all to drive to the conditions at all times.

Your committee met recently to discuss a request from IAM RoadSmart to carry out a self-assessment audit. This has been completed and we are happy that we tick most of the boxes for a customer friendly group. We have agreed that our waiting list for car associates to commence their courses is too long and we hope to rectify this as soon as more car observers can be recruited and trained.

Angus Maciver
Chairman



GROUP NEWS

Dates for your Diary:-
Group meetings - 7.30pm

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| 11th October 2018 Topic: Road Engineering – presented by David Hamilton, Retired Road Engineer | Falkirk Fire Station, Westfield, FK2 9AH |
| 15th November 2018 Topic TBC | Smith Museum, Dumbarton Road, Stirling, FK8 2RQ |

Congratulations to the following people who have passed their IAM Test:

| Associate | Observer |
|---|-------------------------|
| Sandy Bloy (bike) 02/06/2018 F1rst! | Mike Calvert |
| Alan Hunt (bike) 20/06/2018 | Wilson Hutchison |
| David Hannah (bike) 15/07/2018 F1rst! | Lindsay Pyall |
| Neil Hendry (car) 27/07/2018 | Angus Maciver |

Your Committee 2018/19

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
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| Secretary | David Allan | | secretary@forthvalleyiam.org.uk |
| Treasurer | Lindsay Pyall | | |
| Membership/Liaison Secretary | Mark Elder | 07973217256 | membership@forthvalleyiam.org.uk |
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| Motorcycle Chief Observer | Fiona Robertson | | |

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CAR / MOTORCYCLE SECTION

DURNESS AND BACK

For those of you who spend your driving time in the Forth Valley I hope this will inspire you to explore more of our beautiful country.

Our friends Kay and Pete from Yorkshire have just, after many years of yearning, bought a Porsche Boxster that they managed to pick up for a bargain price. "We want to take it for a drive in Scotland, can you show us around?"

So Val and I became their tour guides. Pete had heard of the "North Coast 500" but I persuaded him that it already has too many car clubs driving around it, plus it omits the wonderful A93 and yet includes a long stretch of the boring A9 from Wick to Inverness.

We designed a route with hotel/B&B stops in Braemar, Kinlochewe, Kinlochbervie (near Durness on the north coast), Ullapool and Inverness. (Starting and finishing in Strathblane and beginning with the Duke's Pass on the north bound journey to get them in the mood). If you are a Forth Valley driver and don't know the Duke's Pass get yourself over to Aberfoyle and leave the village northward on the road towards Loch Katrine and Brig o'Turk.

The roads and scenery in the far north-west are beyond fantastic. Many of the views (even on our wet day) are for 20 or 30 miles in some directions. The coastal terrain is huge crags with big waves, but then delightful beaches. There are not many villages or towns but those we found are pretty (although "lived in" – especially Kinlochbervie, which does have a wonderful coast but also has the remains of a run-down 1970s herring factory!) The town of Ullapool is full of character with bookshops, live music, local knitwear, small and well-appointed hotels and bars with hand pulled beer.



The bends of Duke's Pass do not really match many of the roads up north, typically they are long sections with perfect visibility combining straights and then sweeping bends where the limit point is well beyond stopping distances even at the NSL. Most are wide EU-funded roads that replaced single-track roads (with passing places) – of which I think we only found about 20 miles in the 750 mile round trip.

I have mixed feelings about the North Coast 500. Although we didn't follow its routes we did cross it and use some of its roads and stay in Ullapool (which is one of its obvious overnight stops). We didn't come across any obvious car clubs out on the road and everyone we saw driving was doing so sensibly. Clearly also it is great for the local economy with hotel owners telling us car clubs are now a very significant part of their bookings (our Ullapool hotel had 17 cars all labeled up with a club logo and numbers). But is the Highlands going to become a race track? One hotel owner we talked to was worried about how many of the car-clubs groups are all men out for a driving "experience" and that's not necessarily compatible with the speed of life in the Highlands.

Nevertheless, we saw a large variety of people and cars with no sign of excessive speed or poor driving.

The only thing we'd do differently, if we did it again, was stay longer in fewer places (i.e. not be changing hotel/B&B every night).

So get out and drive up north!

Mark Elder
Membership Secretary

HOLIDAY ON A HARLEY

Our summer holiday this year involved flying into Orlando, renting Harley Davidsons and making our way across to New Orleans, via Sandestin on the Gulf Coast.

Now, as some of our group already know, I've got a slight dislike for Harleys, having watched my husband go through, what has felt like, torture for years with his pride and joy. His bike originally is a Softail Custom, however, in the last 25 years it has been modified slightly. Between re-builds from a couple of accidents to having to replace engines. We could have probably used the funds spent over the years to build a small house!

My Harley for the two week holiday was a Dyna Lowrider. 103 cubic inches of grunt. That translates to 1688ccs. Open the throttle in 6th gear, the thing will pull like a train.

The first challenge we faced was the weather. Now, I didn't sign up for anything other than sunshine. We were going to Florida for goodness sakes, they don't get much rain, surely? I have no idea what sunshine planet I was on, but it certainly must have been in a dream!

The first day, we rode through the heaviest rain I could have imagined. I've never ridden in conditions like it, even in Tyndrum. I have also never seen lightning like it either. The Queen song, Bohemian Rhapsody, sprang into my head, "Thunder bolt of lightning, very very frightening me....". Now, it transpires that not only do Americans prefer straight roads (how boring), they also pretty much avoid the rain too (how sensible). My bike wasn't designed for rain. Some idiot at Harley had slapped an open air filter on the side. The rain was soaked in, and into the bargain, I had severe power loss. So much so, I had to go down to 2nd gear to resuscitate the motor. This was a big learning curve. Our solution was for Edward to ride behind me any time it rained. For the first day, that was quite often!

Some say that Harleys can't go round corners very well. Actually, it's a myth, they do. There are some models that do have some 'issues', however, I actually quite enjoyed learning about the nuances of my bike. It handled like a blancmange, but I soon got to grips with it. It's like any bike, just ride it and get used to it.

So, we went through torrential rain. It resembled riding through a car wash, minus the brushes. Not that I've done that, however, I have it first-hand what it would be like! Interestingly, when the storm hit the traffic on the highway it did slow substantially, however, they also put on their hazard lights for good measure. This helped no end. Visibility at some points was less than 5m. In some areas of America though, you aren't allowed to use your hazard lights in rain.

I can only imagine what the car drivers were thinking when they saw the bikes during the rain storms. Probably something along the lines of: "They must be Scottish. Only the Scots are daft enough to ride in THIS!" Then there was the heat. And humidity.

After the 'car wash', there was the blow dry. Like a hairdryer. This was exacerbated by the heat coming off the engine and the exhausts of the bike. Often I was wishing for longer legs, so I could put a bit of space between my legs and the hot, unrelenting heat from my portable hot water bottle. When we arrived in New Orleans, it was about 35 degrees and top speed in town would have been a heady 20mph. When we stopped outside our hotel, I couldn't get off the bike quickly enough! I'm an ATGATT (all the gear all the time) kind of girl and was wearing my fully protected jacket, vented gloves

and Kevlar lined jeans, oh, and my helmet too. Thank goodness for a convertible helmet, an open face was essential. I did an undignified strip outside a 5* hotel.

The choice of roads that Edward mapped were really nice and about as exciting as they could be, given it was America! We weren't on this holiday to munch miles and tick off mountain passes, however, we did see parts of Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. They were quite pretty.

The bit you don't bargain for is the effect the heat can have on you. Bimbling along at 50mph, the wind in your face, bright blue skies and sunshine without any worries, can bite you on the bum. It's not like you get a clue; it might be your tongue being stuck to the top of your mouth, it tends to be a bit less obvious.

It was a long stretch of road and late afternoon. Edward was in front of me (he had the sat nav), there was nothing behind me. In the distance, I was aware that I saw something red. Pillar box red. My senses took in that much. The next minute I was aware that my bike had been buffeted by the wind, followed by the battering of dust over my face. I looked in my offside mirror to see the huge, bright red, Mach truck that I had been oblivious of as it disappeared behind me.

Luckily, that made me realise that there was something very wrong with me. Very, very quickly I was aware I was dehydrated, so therefore, tired. I had 'seen' the red 'thing', but didn't register what it was until it went past me. I closed my throttle, slowed down, and gave myself a shake. With hindsight, I should have just stopped right there at the side of the road and had some water. I didn't though, I kept going, even though I knew that Edward would realise I wasn't behind him and would stop. I caught up with him at a stop line. Luckily, there was a gas station just at the crossroads. Had the Highway Patrol seen our next manoeuvre to access the gas station, they would have had words. Let's just say it was um, 'imaginative'.

Needless to say, Edward hadn't realised what had happened, or, what potentially could have happened. It was blisteringly hot. My energy boost of choice was Starbucks Frappuccino (2 of) and about a half a litre of water, fluid and sugar all in one! Whilst we were there, the till operator in the gas station said I could go into her walk-in fridge. It was tempting, however, it wouldn't have done any good. I would have melted going outside again.



Some locals were in paying for fuel. They were complaining about the heat too! One lady in particular said that it was so hot, they chose the car over the bike. So, it's not just the rain the Americans are sensible about!

So, the moral of the story? Drink plenty fluids. If you go to the loo, and nothing happens, it's probably because you haven't drunk enough. Start to lose concentration? Stop. Take a drink. Feeling tired? Have a drink.

For me, it was a massive wake up call. Especially when I heard a true story about a friend who ran out of road whilst touring on his motorbike on the continent. He was in intensive care for a long time. He had been dehydrated. It's so simple to hydrate, it doesn't take long. It's also too easy not to recognise the symptoms of dehydration; it can creep up on you when you least expect it.

The last leg of this particular journey was, thankfully, uneventful, my recovery was very quick. The liquid input saved my day and also saved me from wrecking a great holiday! So, wherever you are going, whatever you are doing, drink lots of water!

Fiona Robertson
FVGAM Honorary President
Chief Observer

NATIONAL NEWS

Fatigue and Sleep Apnoea

Fatigue is a major contributory cause of crashes. At least five per cent of the adult population is thought to have undiagnosed sleep apnoea, of which about a quarter has the more severe form of the condition, OSA Syndrome.

<http://www.roadsafe.com/fatigueandsleepapnoea>

New mobile phone detection signs trialled in Norfolk

Norfolk County Council is trialling road signs that detect when drivers are using a mobile phone.

The council's road safety team has been working in partnership with Westcotec, a local company, to develop and deploy the new mobile phone detection system for use on the county's roads.

<http://www.roadsafe.com/newmobilephonedetectionsignstrialledinnorfolk>



Scotland achieves road safety targets with years to spare.

New official statistics showed Scotland's road safety targets - as set out in the Scottish Road Safety Framework - have been achieved years in advance, after deaths on roads fell by nearly a quarter in 2017.

<http://www.roadsafe.com/scotlandachieveroadsafetytargetswithyearstospare>