



Newsletter

August 2014

National Relay

Earlier this month we had a break in the weather – for a few days it was almost summery, but of course these were days when I was sentenced to sitting shivering in a cold office. So when Saturday came I grabbed the chance on to get out for a decent run on the Commando. I managed to avoid getting a speeding ticket in Glen Coe (I heeded the warnings from oncoming traffic, the Ducati in front didn't!), then the road over the hill from Drumnadrochit to Beaully, Dingwall and Lairg was most splendid. But heading back to the west coast at Durness it started to look pretty dark and, sure enough, as soon as I turned south for Scourie, the heavens opened. The rainwater was running down the road deep enough for my front wheel to have a bow-wave. It was so miserable that I thought I would stop the night in Ullapool but couldn't see anywhere with vacancies. After filling up with petrol I had no choice but to carry on and hope I could run out from under the storm. Pulling away from the garage and climbing out the town the clutch cable suddenly let go leaving me to make an instant decision – blunder on with no clutch for 200 miles or roll back into town and try and sort something.

Did I have a spare cable? Of course I did: taped inside a pannier back in my shed. The same spare cable I bought for the Vampire tour and have carried round just about every country in Europe since! But of course, because the cable seemed good when I last lubricated it, and because it didn't feel heavy, snatchy, gritty or showing any sign of wear, I hadn't thought it necessary to have the spare with me. I suppose the fact that I fitted that cable when I changed to higher bars in 2005 should have been reason enough.

Anyway, with no real option, I phoned Carole Nash recovery and went to the pub to wait and get a bite to eat. Within a couple of hours the bike was strapped to the back of a lorry and we were home by 1 in the morning. I had just about dried out too!

That shocking lack of preparation led me to tabulate just how often I have used the rescue service in the last 10 years..

Commando: five times

- broken crank
- thrown rod
- flat tyre
- coil failure
- broken cable

Hypermotard: twice

- electrical/electronic problems. Yes, on a brand new bike!

Monster: once

- fuelling

Tiger: once

- seized

Now, while that may seem like a lot, the Commando is the bike which has done the most miles over that period – the Monster was pretty much off the road for two years, the Retard I owned for just over 18 months and the Tiger did under two thousand mile. So not the worst possible record and, had I really needed to, some of those incidents could have been repaired with a bit of effort and avoided completely with a bit more attention on my part. Or perhaps by carrying a greater inventory of spare parts!

Borders Camping Weekend

12th - 14th September at Kirk Yetholm, near Kelso. The owners of the site have been very accommodating and will have an area set aside for us.

Spaces are very limited and I have one only tent pitch left - any more places will be pot luck. Email me to book a spot.

If you prefer something more luxurious, there is accommodation in the two pubs near by.

Their details and more about the area can be found at <http://www.yetholmonline.org.uk>

Site details...

Kirkfield Caravan Site
Grafton Road
Town Yetholm
Kelso
TD5 8RU

Contact 07791291956

Rates (at discretion of warden)

Large Tent - 2 persons £15.00

Backpacker Tent - per person £7.00

We don't have any fixed activities, but there will almost certainly be a run going for an explore on Saturday. Very low key, no band or disco, just a run on your 'bike and a night in the pub. What more could one ask?

VMCC National Assembly

July was a good month for events with the VMCC hosting their Rally and National Assembly on consecutive weekends. The weather wasn't kind to the rally but the Assembly in Blairgowrie was glorious. Great to see some really ancient bikes being ridden on the road – with so many controls in unusual places I don't think I could cope. Despite the attendance of some real exotic models, I think my favourite was this race styled Model 18. I didn't see who owns it, but it sounded great coming into the field and it just looks so lean and purposeful. Don't know it would replace the Commando though, either in my shed or in my affections!

