

# The SAM Observer

September 2014



Registered Charity No. 1067800



IAM Group No. 7219

[www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com](http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com)

This month's cover picture was supplied by Roger Payne and was taken on the St Bernard Pass, France/Italy.

Mike Roberts did the picture editing and graphical work.



Bolddog-Lings Stunt Team from the Norfolk County Show. Sent in By Tony Argent



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No Calls After 9pm Please

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Kevin Stark

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Closing date for copy – **Friday after club night**. Send via e-mail or on a USB memory stick (which will be returned) or even hand-written, not a problem.

The Editor reserves the right to edit, amend or omit as he feels fit.

## WEBSITE ADDRESS

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# SEPTEMBER'S CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the September edition of our SAM magazine. I hope you continue to enjoy some fabulous summer motorcycling.

The subject of my chat this month is something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue, but I hope you'll forgive me if I juggle the order a bit as I'd like to start with something new.

The focus of my something new is actually someone new. Jamie Johns is not only a relatively new member of SAM he is the youngest member of the group. Having passed his IAM test at the tender age of 18, Jamie is committed to group life and it therefore gave me great pleasure to present him with his Ride Leader certificate that he successfully achieved just recently. Well done Jamie, you've done yourself very proud.

Something old is the seed from which SAM has grown. A few weeks ago I was delighted to hear from a lady by the name of Julie Hage, whose husband David had been Regional Coordinator of the IAM for many years. Whilst sorting out the attic Julie had uncovered minutes of the inaugural meeting of the motorcycle section of the Suffolk IAM, dating back to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1991. I hope you enjoy reading those minutes as they appear further on in this magazine.

Something blue relates to some sad news which actually links to those inaugural minutes. You will notice that Bob Gosden, one of our IAM test examiners, was there at the inaugural meeting to explain what the Advanced Test entailed. Since that very first meeting Bob has been a constant source of support and encouragement to SAM and has guided literally hundreds of us through our IAM test. In fact, I think it's fair to say that Bob has done more for motorcycle safety in Suffolk than any other single person and therefore I was very sad when Bob called me to say that he is retiring from his position as an IAM motorcycle examiner. I hope Bob will be able to join us at a group night

in the very near future as I am sure there are many of you who would like to thank him personally.

And as for something borrowed, I'm afraid I haven't anything to say on that subject, it just made a good opening line.

If you're currently preparing for your IAM test I hope you're enjoying the process and I wish you success in achieving a test pass.

With my very best wishes,

Beverley

# INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE MOTORCYCLE SECTION, 2.12.91

An inaugural meeting took place at The Airport Lounge, Ipswich on Monday, 2.12.91 to reactivate a motorcycle section of the Ipswich and District Advanced Motorists Group. Almost 50 people attended, including observers from the Norfolk Group of Advanced Motorcyclists and the local I.A.M. examiner, Bob Gosden. John and Jenny Maddock and Peter Gunstone, who unfortunately was unable to attend, were representing the Ipswich Group main committee and they were supported by other committee members.

Jenny Maddock, the secretary, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and outlined the events that had led to this evening's event. Patrick Metcalfe, the Chairman, then explained to those people who were not members of the I.A.M. what the Institute stands for and how Ipswich Group seeks to further its aims. Dave Walters, who is a member of Norfolk Group and also the Eastern Region Divisional Representative for the Institute, then explained the organisation of Motorcycle Sections, Groups and Sub-Groups within the Institute rules. He also emphasised the need for people to come forward to assist in the running of the group. Bob Gosden explained briefly what the Advanced Test would entail and Scott Ellis, Chief Observer from Norfolk explained how Observers from

his group prepared riders for the test. At this point there were questions from the floor, answered by whichever expert felt able and willing to pick up the challenge.

After a break which gave people a chance to think about the information they had received application forms were distributed and 14 keen motorcyclists joined the new Motorcycle Section of the Ipswich Group. They were to be rewarded because shortly afterwards the Norfolk Observers offered their expert help with a run to take place on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December.

Andrew Cook, David Cox, Rob Day, Robert Grimsey and Dennis Newby offered their help in supporting a steering committee and we are very grateful to those who are willing to stick their necks out at the beginning of a new venture!

A further meeting was arranged for 20<sup>th</sup>, January, 1992 at 8.00pm at the same venue. We would like to welcome all those who attended the inaugural meeting and any other interested motorcyclists to join us then.

## **IPSWICH MOTORCYCLE ACCESSORIES**

**HELMETS: SHARK, AIROH, DAVIDA, VCAN.**

**CLOTHING: RICHA, REVIT, SPARDA, RAYVEN,  
DRAGGIN JEANS.**

**BOOTS: TCX (OXTAR), SPARDA, DIORA, RED WING.**

**LUGGAGE: GIVI, BUFFLO, RICHA, BIKE IT, OIL,  
FILTERS, NGK, EBC, GOODRIDGE LOCKS, BATTERIES,  
MANUALS, OPTIMATE, BAGLUX, CHAIN/SPROCKETS,  
MIRRORS, ETC.**

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41 UPPER ORWELL STREET, IPSWICH, IP4 1HP**

# NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to our most recent Associate members:

Paul Ballard Paul Royal

If anyone else has joined us and not had a mention yet, let the Editor know and he will put your name in the next issue

## IAM TEST PASSES

Congratulations to the members who have passed their  
Advanced test this month.

Colin Will

his Observer was

Steve Studd

Bill Farrow

his Observer was

Lee Gage

When you pass your advanced test please let  
Derek Barker or Susan Smith know.

## AUSTRIAN ELECTRIC MOTORCYCLE

After three years of development, the first three production electric motorcycles by Johammer were handed over to their proud owners in May this year. (See [www.johammer.com](http://www.johammer.com)).

The bike design is innovative in every respect, from engine, frame, lights and instruments, not just in the use of an electric motor. This motor and its controller are integrated into the rear wheel, with single-stage transmission and both submerged in a sealed oil bath reducing maintenance and changing the balance and weight distribution. The 11kW DC motor gives both models a (electronically limited) top speed of 75mph, with acceleration 30 – 60mph in around 7-8s.

Importantly, their own design of Li-ion battery gives a range of up to 150km or 200km depending on model (battery pack capacity). The range is enhanced by

electric braking with power regeneration. Recharging to 80% using standard 250V wall socket and on-board charger takes 2.5 hours or 3.5 hours depending on model. Johammer states a service life of 200,000km or four years with a residual battery capacity of at least 85%.

A particularly novel feature is that all dash displays are integrated into each of the round rear-view mirrors. High resolution 2.4" colour screens provide information relating to speed, revs, warnings etc. at-a-glance.

It is described as a “cruiser” style and although single seater, is provided with two sets of pegs for either rear sports position or feet forward cruiser position.

Finally, if you wish to buy into green motor biking, you will need from €18,790 for model J1.150 and from €19,490 for the J1.200 model.

So if you are going on holiday near their factory in Bad Leonfelden, north of Linz near Czech border, get in touch with Johammer and arrange a test ride and sample the future!

David Wood



# SNEAKING UP ON YOU NOW A STEALTH MOTORCYCLE

You will have heard of the stealth bomber, well get ready for the stealth motorbike! Unfortunately, this does not mean radar speed cameras and police patrols cannot see it. (Not that as a responsible member of SAM, I am encouraging or condoning any illegal activity). Rather it means a silent motorbike suitable for covert military operations in remote areas behind enemy lines.

The USA has given a research grant to Logos Technologies to develop a military-use, hybrid-electric motorcycle with near-silent capability. When



developed, the bike will allow small military teams to move long distances quickly and stealthily across harsh enemy terrain.

Just like cars, the use of a hybrid diesel-electric engine will overcome the existing range limitation of all electric vehicles and enable it to go the necessary long distances.

The engine will use the frame and ride controls developed by California company BRD. You can already buy a production off-roader electric bike from them for around \$15,000. With a power of 25/40hp (continuous/peak), it has a top speed of around 85mph. However, the limited range of 50 miles (or 2 hours) shows the need for the hybrid engine to make the bike a practical proposition for the army.



When required, the soldier can switch to silent running using just the electric motor. You'll just have to make sure you can get in and out safely before the battery goes flat. (For future SAM social rides, will the club need to change the requirement to "*Have a fully charged battery*"?)

David Wood

# MY FIRST YEAR IN SAM

## BACK TO BIKING

My somewhat unplanned return to biking was in the very wet summer of 2012. I had passed my motorcycle test without training in, I believe 1970, on a trusty 250cc BSA. Now riding a 1300cc 'monster' and having not ridden seriously for about 30 years, I was concerned about my ability and safety. So I enrolled on the May 2013 BikeSafe workshop run by Suffolk Police. Karl Hale was my allocated Observer and through this excellent workshop some deficiencies in my riding were identified.

## JOINING SAM

Still feeling the need for more training, I contacted Linda Barker about becoming a SAM member. Clutching my application form, I duly attended my first group night in June last year and was made so very welcome. Soon after, I was joining in club ride outs, where on one such ride, Karl asked me if I had been allocated an Observer. As I hadn't Karl said that he could offer weekdays, and within 24 hours I learnt that he would once again fulfil that role!

## OBSERVED RIDES

On my first observed ride I recall not 'getting it together', forgetting things, and generally trying to run before I could walk. Subsequent rides showed how patient Karl is! I remember a particular eureka moment when he demonstrated the limit point and positioning by riding ahead.

On another occasion we stopped in a lay by and he said, "Let's do a walk through". I didn't realise he meant this literally, until I was asked to stand in the road and walk through the corner as if on the bike, explaining and justifying my position step by step. Karl stood mostly on the bank directing, questioning and giving me advance warnings of what was about to run me over!! With all this hopping out of the way of coming traffic I found it difficult to concentrate.

By now I was getting hundreds of miles in between observed rides, feeling that I was making progress, and just as importantly enjoying the rides. Karl announced prior to one ride that if it went ok, the next step for me would be the pre X check. Buoyed by the news and a desire to get my test passed before winter, I produced my best observed ride to date!

## X CHECKS AND TEST

Hoping for good weather I was greeted on that November day by rain! However the pre X check went well and after a more detailed de-brief than usual, I was cleared to proceed to the X check.

David Rudland was quickly allocated to do my X check. We met on a Sunday morning and the rain joined us! I had a 'confusing moment' on a roundabout and subsequently missed David's right turn signal, perhaps not the start I wanted! Fortunately, I managed to calm down and the rest of the ride progressed well. David recommended I apply for the advanced test, which I did immediately, not wanting to lose momentum with a potential winter break looming.

I met Kevin Stark, the Examiner, outside Orwell's on a Sunday morning, accompanied as usual on such days for me by rain! I had met Kevin before and was put at ease by the calm manner in which he explained the test and what he was looking for.

The wet conditions made me a little cautious, but despite not letting on for some time Kevin announced I had passed! Over 'champagne' coffee we had a general 'bike' chat and I came away realising just how committed Kevin is to biker safety.

## THE SAM COMMITTEE

Up until this point I had been 'consuming' SAM's resources, especially Karl's time, which I estimated to be over 30 hours spent just on my training. With the test behind me, and Christmas over I began to think about how I could redress the balance. After talking with Beverley she invited me along to a Committee meeting, "no commitment required", she said.

At the January meeting she introduced me, and added that I would like to join the committee!! It's so difficult to say no to a smiling Beverley!! My escape route was instantly blocked! In February, after a shuffling of forms and a sleight of the hand I found myself proposed and seconded. Two weeks later, I was elected to the committee unopposed, stepping into one of the shoes of a 'departing' Karl; the Caring SAM role. I hope to tell you more about plans for this in the future.

## OBSERVER TASTER DAY

After a suggestion that it would be a good insight into what it was all about, I attended the Observer Taster Day. I was definitely curious, but also felt that it

might be too soon, after all I had only recently passed my Advanced Test! My experience was very similar to that of Dean Dredge (May 2014 SAM Observer article).

Following an excellent presentation by Leia, Steve Gocher was assigned to me for the afternoon on road session, which incidentally was dry & sunny! In the first ride, with me as 'observer', he became my slightly 'gung ho' (acting of course), novice associate who thought he was 'alright'. I was able to observe enough to give a half sensible de-brief, but very conscious of the need to put negative points in a constructive way.

In the second ride, metamorphous complete, Steve had also evolved into Valentino Rossi! The combination of me riding safely at that increased speed, plus staying close to observe, was already using 110% of my brain's processing power. Yes, I could see he was riding well, but with insufficient brain left to remember much else! In reality I needed about 50% just for the observation – if only we could upgrade our brains just like computers! I was humbled, to say the least, realising that this was an entirely different level of riding, coupled with demanding people skills. In the third ride with roles reversed, it felt a bit like the X check, but without the pressure. Will I follow up? I will see how the next section goes first!

## RIDE LEADER TRAINING & ASSESSMENT

Since passing my Advanced Test I had always considered becoming a ride leader. The reasons were threefold: to effectively continue my own training, to make a contribution to the club and to assist group rides as I attend many of them anyway.

On the 26th April I arrived at the classroom venue at Stowmarket Fire Station in, once again pouring rain!! Inside I found a few 'newbies' like me, several 'repeat offenders', and an impressive line up of Observers! Once again Leia, assisted by Stuart, delivered an excellent presentation. The jokes about satnavs certainly helped lighten the atmosphere - I had battled to download the route onto mine!

Before starting the on road assessment we all had an early & light packed lunch - except Trevor Adams, who produced a sandwich banquet! Ken Beckinsale and I were assigned to Stuart, with Ken leading the first leg to Hadleigh and me the second to Ardleigh. It continued to rain and I remember thinking, "make sure the pace is sufficient, but ride within the conditions", oh, and "stay calm"! I didn't get lost, which to me was a primary requirement, and it seemed to go well. Later I had an email from Leia congratulating me on my new status as a

ride leader. All I have to do now is to not take any of you along the wrong route - no pressure then!

## LOOKING BACK

It wasn't until I started to write this article, that I realised how much has happened in a year. SAM has been excellent in improving my riding skills and has been great socially. Who knows what the next year will hold?

Brian Ellis

# WOMEN'S TOUR OF BRITAIN

9<sup>th</sup> May in Kesgrave approaching Ipswich showing role and work of National Escort Group as per talk to SAM meeting a while ago.



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[www.mototechniks.com](http://www.mototechniks.com)



# GENERATE FREE CASH FOR SAM

## **Join The 'Giving Machine' and Start Shopping Now!**

During my day job, I work for a charity and understand how difficult it is to keep your services going when you rely on donations and funding especially in our current economic climate.

I was intrigued when our fund raiser Sarah (another one!) asked us all to sign up to the 'Giving Machine' as I had never heard of this scheme and being somewhat void of techno skills thought this might not be easy!

Having been sent the link and reading up about it the penny dropped (no pun intended) and I realised even I could manage to do this! So I joined the scheme by entering my email address and created a password and now had an account.

## **So what do you do?**

Well it is 'simples' as those furry creatures say, once logged into the 'Giving Machine' site you search for your favourite shops and believe me the list is endless from Amazon, Ebay, Tesco (to name a few), insurances, travel, days out, hotels, home & garden, footwear, clothing, sports and DIY.

Once you have found your shop, click on the link and it opens another page onto the shops website, you proceed to purchase items and pay as you would normally. When complete just exit shop website and log out of 'Giving Machine' site.

Once you have an account it will detail date/retailer/amount donated by them and you can watch it build up. There is a facility to invite family, friends and work colleagues to join the scheme.

## **So how does it work?**

Well this is the fantastic part whatever your total purchase price for each shopping trip the retailer you shopped with will donate a percentage to your

chosen charity, **SAM**. So it does not cost you a single penny, you donate nothing, it is the retailer who does, **REMEMBER IT COSTS YOU NOTHING!** (*even though the site refers to you as a 'Giver'*).

The only requirement for SAM to gain monthly money from this scheme is you have to visit the online shops via the 'Giving Machine' site, easy as that. It leaves me to say please join our new giving community by using the following link which will take you to the correct page on the 'Giving Machine' website and then click on 'Join & Support'.

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/tgm>

Let's see how much money we can make.

Thanks in advance for your support.

Sara Hale

## BAD THINGS COME IN THREES... OR FOURS...!

My nan used to say that bad things come in threes, but I'm now not so sure! I work 50 miles away from home, and last Autumn had a lightbulb moment whilst sitting in yet another traffic jam on the A12: "I know, I'll learn how to ride a motorbike – then I'll at least be able to move **through** the traffic like all these lucky so and so's whizzing past me right now!". And lo, I undertook my CBT on a crazily hot October Sunday, and then started draining my bank account to pass my Mods 1 and 2. Being plenty old enough to be accused of suffering a midlife crisis, I was able to do the Direct Access route, and did all my learning on a Kawasaki ER-6n (which still freaks my Dad out – he seems to think it's mad to be allowed on such a big bike when you have so little experience – this from a man who started riding a bike back in the day when you just had to fill in a form to have "motorbike" added to your driving licence!!).

After sweating gallons wearing a helmet on that boiling hot CBT training day, I got used to the (for British riders) more familiar rain, wind and frost as I trained through the Winter – I finally passed my Mod 2 on 7 March this year –

phew! (Or, as my Instructor said, “Thank f\*\*\* for that!”). Picked up my shiny new ER-6f (figured I’d appreciate the fairing on the commute) on 8 March and began my independent riding life. Loved it, especially feeling more confident with every journey and being able to fill up for £15 instead of £45!!

My parents had given me an IAM Skills for Life package for Christmas and I had gone through all the IAM and SAM processes and arranged my assessment ride with my Observer, Paul Spalding, for 18<sup>th</sup> May. And then, on a sunny evening a few days beforehand, I was waiting at a roundabout for a minibus to go past and an ambulance drove into the back of me! Not one with blues – just a private one – a really big white box! I was pleased that my “both brakes on safety position” had meant I’d not gone over the white line, but gutted that my new bike was already broken. I was a bit shaken up but the ambulance driver, bless him, was really upset he’d hit a bike and it felt like he needed more looking after than me! What was really annoying was that it took 3 hours for the recovery vehicle to come and recover me and my bike – and I was only 6 miles from home, I could’ve walked home and back several times!

I had Honda CBR500 as a courtesy bike, which was ok, though for the first 20 minutes I kept beeping the horn when turning at junctions as the indicators and horn were exactly the opposite way round to my bike! Fortunately, only the light and number plate needed replacing on my bike so Paul and I were able to plan the second attempt at my assessment ride for the end of May. Unfortunately, the day before this rescheduled ride I dropped my bike parking on wet grass at work and managed to break my wrist! Paul’s response to my text informing him what had happened was much kinder than those from



family and friends who were beginning to question whether it was a good idea for me to persevere! Obviously, they should know me well enough by now to know I am not a quitter!

This is not to say that I have not had my moments of doubt! I had my plaster on for the sunniest, driest month, it was taken off on a Friday and then the rain started

- I rode out on the Sunday night when the rain finally eased off, as I wanted to feel confident about my wrist before commuting. It was great, and even

turning my bike around on the drive was fine. Well chuffed. Journey to work on Monday was bloody lovely, and coming home even better. Tuesday morning a car drives into the back of me a coupla miles away from work when I was pulling away at a roundabout! It took ages to move my bike off the busy roundabout because the bent bracket was acting as a brake on my back wheel. It truly was a bit of a hairy experience at rush hour, to say the least.

And I couldn't really even begin to explain to the woman who'd hit me what she'd done to my head!! One of the first things which went through my mind was "At least that's my 3 now, I can stop worrying!", but obviously it made me really really worried about my riding. My bike is white, and both times I've been hit I have had my panniers on, which are big and white with reflectors on. I am not a small person and have hi vis on my jacket and helmet. How come people cannot see me?!! I know falling off while parking was totally my own stupidity – I hope it's one of those things I only do once, like trying to start with the kill switch on, or in first! But being hit in the rear twice in two months seems really unlucky!

As I write this, my bike is still awaiting a part, but I am glad to say that I have had my assessment ride finally (third time lucky!). I did it on the courtesy bike as I didn't want to postpone it any longer. This time it's a Honda 750 s which I have actually quite enjoyed riding, though it's a totally different kind of bike to mine. Found the time with Paul incredibly helpful and interesting. His initial assessment was that I'd had a "good, safe ride" and I felt really hopeful that this IAM thing will help me build up my confidence big time – which is something I would really appreciate.

And then I managed to lose the key to the Honda – but that is a whole other story!! Suffice it to say that Paul went above and beyond the call of SAM duty!

All these trials and tribulations, plus late night working over the Summer, mean that I haven't made it to any of the social things yet, but I hope to meet some of you soon if I can just keep both my bike and myself intact for long enough!

Andrea Williams

# BREAKFAST RUN

12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER

Three Willows Garden Centre Café

Flixton Road

Bungay

**NR35 1PD**

Tel:01986 893268

Meet at Stowmarket Tesco's, **IP14 5BE**. In good time for **09:15** Briefing

## **All riders must attend the Briefing**

Ride Co-ordinator is Sara Hale

Take **A1120** out through Stowupland, across **A140** to Stonham Aspal.

**Turn left** as you enter village and follow road to Debenham.

**Turn right** at High Street and **left** past the church and out through Kenton, Southolt to Wilby.

**Turn left** onto **B1118** to Stradbroke, **turn right** on **B1117** until **left turn** to Fressingfield on **B1116**, staying on this to Weybread. At Water Park, **turn right** on **B1123** to Halesworth.

**Turn left** at main road then **right** at **third** roundabout to Holton, where you go straight on at the bend to **right**. Follow **B1124** to Brampton.

**Turn left** on **A145** to Beccles.

At traffic lights, **turn left** on **B1062**

Over staggered crossroads at **A144** in Bungay, **right then left**.

Three Willows is half mile on **right**.

**Please** check the SAM Calendar and SAM Forum on-line for last minute changes/cancellations. On the Forum you will also find the routes as text, route cards, and on Google Maps / Streetview, along with a photo of the destination, so you can familiarise yourself with the route before the day.

# SATURDAY JAUNT

18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER,

Suffolk Waterpark

Lorraine Way

Bramford

**IP8 4JS**

<http://www.suffolkwaterpark.co.uk/cafe>

Tel: 01473 832327

Meet at Stowmarket Tesco's, **IP14 5BE** in good time for **13:15** Briefing and subsequent departure.

Ride Co-ordinator is Vini Evans

Follow the **A1120** down to Needham Road, **turn right** and head for the Magpie at Combs Ford.

**Turn left** up Poplar Hill and carry straight on at the top of the hill when the road takes a **sharp right**. Pass the Old Tannery then **turn right** at T junction into Straight Road.

**Take first left** then **first right** passing the old perimeter taxiways at Wattisham and eventually coming to the High Street at Bildeston.

**Turn right** on the **B1115** until turning off to the **left** at Hitcham White Horse, taking Bury Road to Brettenham area. At triangle green **turn left** to Lavenham.

**Turn left** on **B1071** to Great Waldingfield turn on **left** – **B1115**.

**Turn right** onto Powney Street near Milden, **left** at Boxford church, joining the **A1071** to the **left**.

At Hadleigh **turn left** on Red Hill Road.

At red phone box **turn left** to Elmsett joining The Street to the **right**.

At Offton **turn right** on Ipswich Road through Somersham.

At Little Blakenham bear **left** on Pound Lane until meeting **B1113** at Great Blakenham.

**Turn right**, the entrance to Suffolk Waterpark is just over half a mile on the **left**.

# SOCIAL RIDES

Please note that it is you, the rider, who is deemed to be in control of the vehicle at all times during an Observed Run and during all other Group activities and that the Committee of Suffolk Advanced Motorcyclists cannot and do not accept any liability whatsoever for any injury to person or damage to vehicle occurring in the course of any rally or other event organised by the Group. Any member attending such an event does so entirely at his or her own risk and must maintain their own insurance to cover any said injury to person or damage to vehicle and must be riding a road legal vehicle, having valid road tax, insurance and MOT certificate (if applicable).

Participants on S.A.M social rides are advised of the Events Committee's guidelines as follows:

- 🏍️ You will be expected to provide a suitable means of carrying a map of the route
- 🏍️ If possible, have breakdown cover for your machine.
- 🏍️ Be responsible for your own safety
- 🏍️ Rides will commence promptly at the published departure time.
- 🏍️ Have a FULL tank of fuel
- 🏍️ No more than 5 in a group.

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# AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE (R.E.M. 1992)

I dearly love BMWs. I've had two, starting in 1998 with a R850R and changing that for a R1200RT in 2005. I used to change my bikes quite often, but that stopped with BMW.

However...for the last year or so, anyone unlucky enough to get caught in conversation with me at SAM events, will have heard of my various ailments, leaving me today, a 14 stone weakling. There was always the fear in the back of my mind that one day the knee/hip/ankle/you-name-it, would give way at some busy junction somewhere, and deposit me and bike on the ground. I needed something lighter and easier to ride and soon!

The obvious choice was BMW's well written of, F800GT. I tried it's predecessor, the F800ST a couple of years ago and was very impressed, but found the slightly sporty setup a bit too small for my large body. I can't exactly put my finger on it, but I found the F800GT, well, boring. Sorry but for a bike costing over £10,000 (when all the whistles and bells are added) it was remarkably unimpressive.

What was impressive was Triumph's Street Triple R, but a touring fairing and panniers would kill it. My heart said MV Turismo Veloce 800, but as far as I know, it's still not appeared in the UK, and no one knows what the price will be (plus my last attempt at Italian bike ownership ended in tears).

Eighteen months ago I'd bought myself a Honda PCX125 scooter for the eight mile each way commute to work, as the constant first/second gear changing, and clutch feathering was agony on my increasingly arthritic wrist. This meant that the BMW was now only a weekend bike, and not getting the use it needed.

I tried out a Suzuki Burgman 650 Executive at last year's Suzuki Test event, at Orwell M/Cs and was mightily impressed. But the child in me feared the humiliation I might feel, if I turned up at a SAM event on one (I know you wouldn't do that, would you?)

Another big scooter that had impressed me was the Honda Integra 700, which I'd tried at a test event held at John Banks of Bury St. Edmunds. The Integra was inferior to the Burgman on luggage carrying capacity, but the DCT (Dual Clutch Technology) gear change is light years ahead of the conventional CVT (Constantly Variable Transmission) of every other scooter on the market.

So when Honda released a couple of “proper” motorcycles with DCT the die was cast, even more so when the original 700cc bikes became 750cc earlier this year. I was now looking for a Honda NC 750 X DCT, but finding one wasn't easy. According to the excellent NC owner's club, Honda only brought in a small number of the automatics, assuming the highly conservative (small c) British motorcycle buying public, wouldn't be interested in the exotic auto. How wrong they were!

Luckily for me, one of the first buyers from John Banks realised that the 750 was not really big enough for regular two up touring, and traded his bike in with just 600 miles on the clock for the DCT version of the big Honda Crosstourer. Not only that, the NC had all the extras I would have bought: full Honda luggage, centre stand and heated grips. I didn't even bother to test ride it. I just paid my deposit there and then.

My good luck was to continue, as my R1200RT was bought by new SAM member, Rupert Judge (so if you think you've been waving to me the last month or so, you haven't!)

So finally, what's it like? Well very different!

Weight is “only” 40 killogrammes less than the BMW, but the centre of gravity is low (due to the engine which is canted at 62 degrees), almost making it a “flat” engine. I've never ridden a bike that's so easy to ride at the kind of speeds you find in heavy traffic. (One of my first trips on the bike, was around London on the North Circular, on a Friday teatime!) So good is it at the job of commuting that I've since sold the scooter. The weight of the fuel is below the passenger seat, again lowering the centre of gravity leaving the “tank” as a storage space big enough for a normal type helmet (not those enduro things, with a built in peak).

Once you get the knack (a couple of days), it's simplicity itself to ride:

Turn on the ignition and raise the side stand (it won't go into gear if the stand is down). A couple of seconds later the bar on the screen disappears and pressing the toggle switch on the right hand bar turns it to D (for Drive, or Dreary, depending on your view). Press again and the D becomes S for Sport (or Sprightly). If you're not really up for this auto lark, press the headlight flasher type thing on the front of the right bar and both D and S disappear. You are now free to choose your own gears.

However, don't look for a gear lever, down by your left foot, as this bike hasn't got one (but you can buy one as an optional extra...why?). Gears can be

operated (even in auto mode, by pressing either the “+” or “-“ buttons on the left bar. Apparently the bike’s “brain” learns your inputs and alters it’s gear shift pattern accordingly. (Mine has learned that I don’t like D and in S, I want to hit the red line before changing up.) In manual, if you forget to change down as you come to a halt, the bike will do it for you. If you ask the bike to change down whilst it’s already near the red line, it ignores your stupid command, and waits until the revs fall enough to change down without wrecking the engine.

The red line on the bar graph type digital rev counter, comes up very quickly, at only 6,500 rpm. But I’ve found a way to ride to make the most of this limited power, and on the road, it’s still quite reasonable. (But don’t expect a Honda NC race series anytime soon).

In whatever mode, changing gear takes a bit of getting used to. If you “blip” the throttle in any way you get very jerky gear shifts. The way to do it, is to hold the throttle fully open (going up the box) and let the bike smooth the gear changes. Similarly on down changes, just close the throttle and leave it closed. Oh, and don’t blip the throttle at a standstill, or you’ll probably take off and hit something!

Apart from the ease of riding and exceptional comfort (I’ve done several 300 mile plus days on it, but it’s no BMWRT!), the biggest “feature of the NC is it’s fuel economy. Rumour (and I think it was only rumour) is that the engine started life as half of a Honda Jazz car engine. The car engine was designed for minimum internal drag, using special oils and bearings to decrease fuel consumption, and cut emissions. Just ask my Dad, who is on his third Honda Jazz and regularly gets fuel consumption figures, not far short from the ones he gets from his Kawasaki ER6f!

My average has been in the mid 70’s mpg, but using the Dreary , sorry Drive mode (where the bike is up to fifth gear before you reach 30 mph) it’s done well over 80 mpg. This means that the tiny 14 litre fuel tank, can still cover over 200 miles between fill ups.

So, is there anything I don’t like about the NC750X?

Yes: Don’t choose the modern funky matt white painted version. It looks great when it’s just been polished, but every tiny mark then shows!

The original Dunlop Trailmax tyres it comes with are made of putty. I wore mine out in less than 2,500 miles. The Michelin Pilot Road 4’s that are now on the bike, take wet weather riding to a new level!

If you want to use motorways, and are my height (5ft. 11in) then the original screen is useless. The German made MRA Vario screen makes motorways liveable.

Oh, and sometimes, the dual tripmeters reset themselves quite randomly. Apparently Honda are working on the problem.

Honda has said that they are considering introducing DCT transmission throughout their range eventually. Any one fancy an automatic Fireblade?

Martin Andrew

Picture page 39

# Thank You!

A very big thank you to all the members that have supported my fundraising for the World Scout Jamboree in Japan 2015.

The grand total from smartie tubes and the raffle is £152.16.

Thank you to Orwell Motorcycles, Lings and Stoke by Nayland Golf Club for Raffle Prizes.  
Charlotte Woodmore





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“SORRY FOLKS, anyone know where we are?” I asked Stoke-by-Nayland came back the instant reply, supported by a finger pointing towards the sign displayed outside of the school whose drive we were now parked on.

We were on the right road but pointing in the wrong direction. The unexpected road closure had not been circumnavigated by my optimistic attempt to use ‘gut instinct’ and a reluctant Sat Nav. Hohum. Coming from north of the border (Norfolk) I had no local knowledge to draw upon but as a democratic group it was quickly agreed to take a detour on convenient A and B roads which returned us to the expected route after passing through Hadleigh. Phew.

This was my first outing as a Run Leader with SAM and other than this hiccup it all went pretty well.

The title ‘Super Circuit of Suffolk’ provides the necessary insight to the day’s objective, starting in Ipswich and keeping close to the counties borders we return to Ipswich 180 miles later.

The weather forecast was not good. In fact it was very bad. The prediction for Saturday had been akin to Monsoon, very heavy rain accompanied by thunder and lightning. This hadn’t entirely swept through on the day leaving a real risk that it would reappear on the



Sunday, along with hot and humid conditions. Riding gear therefore comprised breathable summer kit with waterproofs kept readily to hand.

08:30, Orwell Truck Stop saw circa 30 expectant riders listen to Dave Wood’s excellent briefing as Run Co-Ordinator. 6 groups quickly formed and headed off into a very warm and dry morning with Bungay being our first scheduled stop.

A delightful series of B roads formed the back bone of our route linked with occasional excursions onto A and C class roads. Any risk that the Latitude Festival would disrupt proceedings proved to be unfounded, the first leg of 60 miles being covered as expected. The opportunity to savour a coffee/tea/coke/cake/sandwich/ice cream (delete as appropriate) at The Three

Willow Garden Centre Cafe was very welcome, allowing us to temporarily abandon our riding gear and to bask on the delightful terrace.



Leg 2 was another 60 miles which took us to La Hogue farm shop near to Mildenhall. This had several ‘interesting’ roads to follow if we were to satisfy the day’s objective, the single track and gravel strewn nature just being part of the fun. However, the

accompanying B roads more than compensated for this, allowing us to make good progress when safe to do so. Over reliant on the Sat Nav I failed to notice that on a tight right hander we should have actually veered left down a side road such was the enjoyment of riding these roads. Ooop. Fortunately no one appeared to mind and we were soon back on track.

The final leg, also of 60 miles, took us via Haverhill, Long Melford, Sudbury, Hadleigh (ahem) and Cattawade back to Ipswich. At this point a very light rain started to appear but nothing of significance although donning wet weather gear as a precaution ahead of the ride home felt like a good idea. I shouldn’t have bothered as it was all dry again before the A14/A140 junction had been reached.



Arriving home in glorious sunshine to find that Mrs J had been gardening all day and then prepared a very welcome bbq for our evening meal. Some thunder had been heard in the distance but no rain.

We were therefore somewhat aghast to see the significant damage caused by flash floods and lightning strikes only 10 miles away. The predicted bad weather was therefore in existence but very localised. My 280 pretty much dry miles had been fantastic and very lucky.

We all know that days like this don’t happen on their own so a big ‘thank you’ is due to Dave and Vini for making it possible.

I would also like to give an even bigger ‘thank you’ to the happy band who with good grace followed their Run Leader virgin. They made it great fun and in no way was it intimidating or difficult, in fact I’m looking forward to doing it again.

John Jenkins

## EDITORIAL



Oh dear, went to the garage to get the bike out and a bramble had grown over it... looks like I’m not using it enough ☹ perhaps my bike should be known as “ Sleeping Beauty ” now 15 years old and only 36,000 miles.... Not even run in. I’m on versus forums and one chap in the States has just past 250,000miles. At my current rate, I’m good to ride for another 104 years.... As the population is

getting older I might just do it..... ☺

Work is pretty manic, and to top it all we are doing the next stage in our project, rebuilding the garage which is going to keep me busy for a few months as I can only work at weekends.

Great to see that most of SAM are out and about, enjoying the fine weather and an extra slice of cake... mentioning no names.... Through them and social media sites, I’m managing to see lots of different parts of the country and world. This is why the magazine is so important for the club as it lets other members experience trips that they might not be able to do or take, so we should have a good flood of articles pouring in for the winter months, which are fast approaching. So don’t be a meanie and get scribbling, share your trip and others will share theirs. I’m find it easier to have a “ Target ” when I go out rather than just go. I also do Geo cashing, which my family don’t like, but if we go for a walk I can search and find one that’s on route.

As I write this, I’m up in the Highlands on our annul visit to the in-laws, Temperature is half that of home, quite chilly,

Safe Riding

**Felix..**

Editor

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[editor@suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com](mailto:editor@suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com)

## Thank you

To all the members who have contributed to this month's magazine.  
CLOSING DATE FOR COPY FRIDAY AFTER CLUB  
NIGHT

<p>ADVERTISE HERE</p> <p>£25 FOR 1/8 PAGE</p> 	<p>ANNUAL ADVERTISING RATES:</p> <p>ADVERTISE ON THE SAM WEBSITE FOR AN ADDITIONAL £25.</p>
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If you'd like to help save the Group on the printing and postage costs of your monthly 'hard copy' of the 'SAM Observer' by opting to receive an email notification instead, then please give me your email details on Group Night or send me an email.

I hope that you have been enjoying the reports that members who go on ride outs have written, and as you can see, it doesn't have to be a wordy passage, so feel free to scribble a few words down, a few pictures and next month you will have another great magazine to read

Don't forget to take your cameras and a notebook to record your trip then you can write a nice article about it for your favourite magazine. I have a word template if anyone would like it, email me and I'll send you a copy which has all the formatting re-set on it. Please remember that we use Times New Roman as the main font for the magazine at a size 16 so that when the printer converts

the A4 pages down to A5 the font looks like a 12. I like pictures to be separate to your articles because I can make them bigger or small to fill the page

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## MEMBER INFORMATION

A lot of useful information about SAM and its activities is available on our website. Below are some key links members will find useful.

### CONTACTS

Contact details of SAM's Committee & Observers, complete with photographs so you can recognise everyone.

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/com>

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/obs>

### CALENDAR

Our online calendar with relevant links which can also be linked to your smartphone. Contact: Mike Roberts

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/cal>

## OBSERVER ASSOCIATE CHARTER

What is expected of the Observer and Associate while preparing for the IAM motorcycle test. Contact: Derek Barker

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/chart>

## CARING SAM

Our customer service & complaints procedures. Contact: Brian Ellis

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/care>

## DISCOUNT SCHEME

Proof of identity will be required to be shown. (e.g. Current IAM/SAM membership cards)

Save your membership fee, and more, by using these retailers who give a discount to SAM members. Contact: Graham Parker

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/disc>

## ADVERTS

Got something to sell? Want to see what other members are selling? See our online adverts section. Contact: Mike Roberts

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/ads>

## SHOPS

T-shirts, sweatshirts, fleeces, hats, and more are available from SAM's two online shops. Contact: Mike Roberts

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/shop>

## FORUM

All the latest news and discussion on all things SAM and motorcycle related. Have a read, and then register to join in. Contact: Mike Roberts

<http://www.suffolk-advanced-motorcyclists.com/forum>

# SAM EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

## SEPTEMBER 2014

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup>**      **Saturday Jaunt**, The Lollipop Diner. **IP22 2PY**. Meet in Beacon Hill truck park **IP6 8LP** in good time for **13:30** Briefing and subsequent departure.

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup>**      **SAM Group Night.** Announcements at **19:30** Followed by guest speaker traveller Graham Field <http://grahamfield.co.uk>

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup>**      **Theory Evening.** Come along and learn more about Roadcraft. **19:30.** Topic: Overtaking

## OCTOBER 2014

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup>**      **The Copdock Annual Bike Show. Organised Copdock Classic Motorcycle Club.** Help needed for bike parking. See article in July's Observer or contact John Sillett.

**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>**      **Breakfast Run,** Three Willows Garden Centre NR35 1PD, Meet at Stowmarket Tesco's IP14 5BE, in good time for **09:15** Briefing and subsequent departure.

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup>**      **Saturday Jaunt,** Suffolk Waterpark, IP8 4JS, Meet at Stowmarket Tesco's, IP14 5BE, in good time for **13:15** Briefing and subsequent departure.

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup>**      **SAM Group Night.** Announcements at **19:30** Followed by guest speaker Alex Jackson from Kaapstad Motorcycle Adventure Tours <http://www.kaapstadmat.com>

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup>**      **Theory Evening.** Come along and learn more about Roadcraft. **19:30.** Topic: Planning & Positioning

## NOVEMBER 2014

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup>**      **Breakfast Run,** TBA

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup>**      **SAM Group Night.** Announcements at **19:30** Followed by guest speaker is sidecar racer, Sean Hegarty.

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>**      **Theory Evening.** Come along and learn more about Roadcraft. **19:30.** Topic: Cornering

## OTHER DATES THAT YOU MIGHT WANT

### SEPTEMBER 2014

**Fri 19<sup>th</sup> ~ Sun 21<sup>st</sup>**      **A short jaunt to the British Superbikes** at the Cathedral of Speed sees the 10<sup>th</sup> round of the British Superbike series, Assen, in northern Holland. See article in the June Magazine or contact Martin Andrew.

OCTOBER 2014

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup>  
Sillett

Copdock Bike Show, Help needed for Bike parking, see John

## NOTE FROM EDITOR

Please check the SAM Calendar & Forum for further details and for any changes after going to press. Especially in winter months when the weather can be unpredictable.

### DISCLAIMER

The articles published herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute of Advanced Motorists or the Suffolk Advanced Motorcyclist Group. They are the opinions of individual contributors and are published with a view that free expression promotes discussion and interests.

## NORFOLK ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

**3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month**, 19:30, at Dunston Hall, A140,  
Norwich, NR14 8PQ

Chairman,  
Secretary,

Rob Chandler,  
Alex Mason,

01493 730409  
01603 716735



Picture supplied by Paul Jocelyn-Brown of the Millau Bridge, South of France

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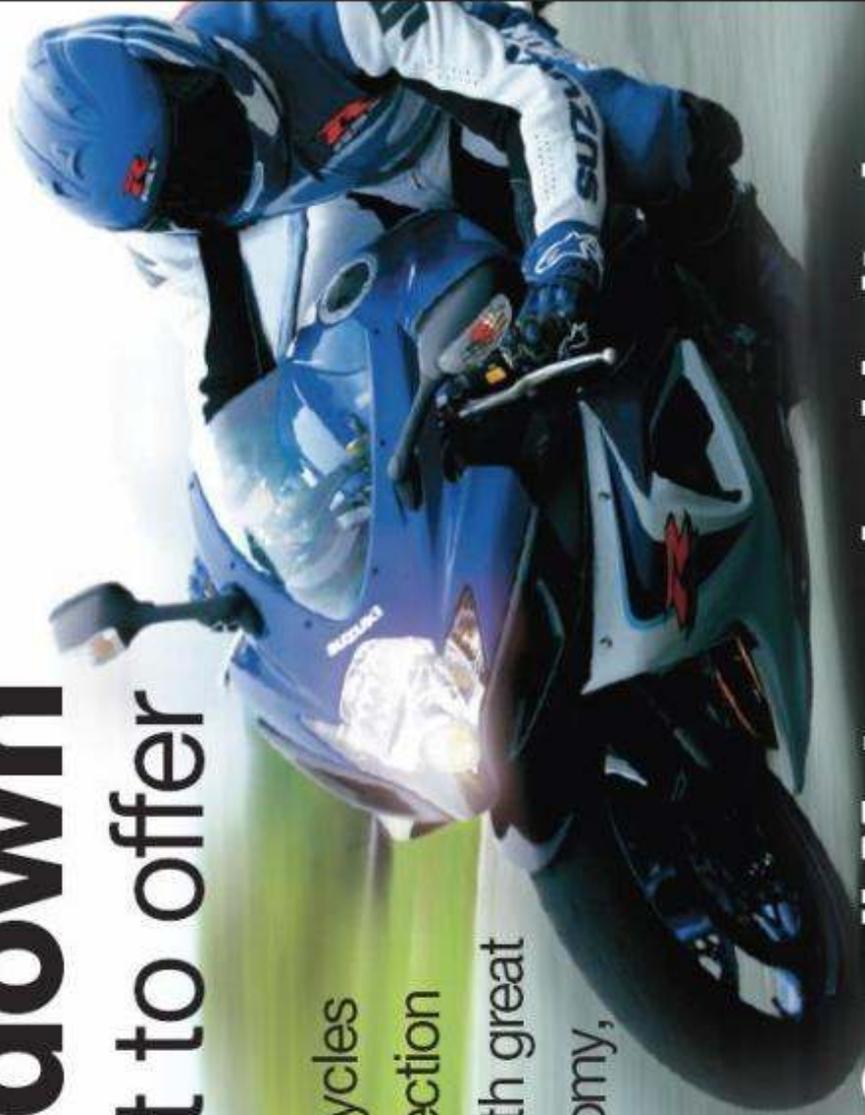
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Bryan Duncan getting to grips with the local pronunciations



