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THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR TVM MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2021

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Well the new website went live the last weekend of January and apart from a few glitches all went smoothly in the changeover. We really hope that once we are up and running it will be a great tool to drive new members to join us.

Triumph Bulldog have called me and said they have just received the new Triumph Trident demonstrator, shame I can't test ride it yet.

I sincerely hope that lockdown rules are lightened in the next few weeks, for those like me who live alone and have no 'bubble', life has been a lonely existence.

This month we continue articles from the last issue - looking at the rest of the offers for 2021 that manufacturers are unable to show off at the usual bike shows. We see how Jon is getting on with his BSA project and then we go travelling on the first part of a two-parter Balkan adventure - oh that we could plan some trips ourselves with some certainty!

And the Events Team are planning some online seminars to keep us thinking about riding, even if we can't do the real thing at the moment (see pages 8 & 9). Keep an eye on groups.io for booking information for these and our new BikeCraft course in case you missed out on the present series.

Take care out there and stay safe

Slip G.
Slipstream Editor



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TVAM ROLL OF HONOUR

BETTER BIKING

NEW MEMBERS

David Eggleton

Luke Graham

Graham Hattey

Simon Plank



FROM THE SADDLE

Hi everyone

Well, we're still in lockdown but the success of the vaccination programme is a brightening light on the horizon, and it seems that we are finally starting to plot a route out of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. So maybe it's time to start thinking about getting the bike ready for riding, and getting your riding gear ready too.

Thank you to everyone that attended the AGM. This was our first virtual AGM and once we got over a couple of small technical issues at the start it seemed to go very well with opportunities for questions and discussion.

I was sad to say goodbye to Andy Slater and Paul Taylor; it's been great working with them over the years. It was equally exciting to welcome our new Chair, Barrie Smith, and our new Treasurer, Bjorg Arnadottir; I'm looking forward to working with them on our plans for the forthcoming year.

As a committee we believe that it is important to keep planning for the future, even when there is little prospect of an immediate return to normal activities. Barrie outlined our objectives for 2021 and, whilst we might need to modify the timescales, or perhaps even the objectives themselves, having a plan and modifying it is a much better place to be than having no plan at all.

Do look out for updates in forthcoming issues of Slipstream, and on Groups.io, as to how to get back into riding and our progress towards our other objectives.

We also unveiled a fantastic new website for TVAM. It has, of course, attracted constructive criticism as to what we might have done better and we'll take this on board as we evolve the website. The new site is completely externally focused so that it better represents what we do to the world outside of TVAM and we hope that it will form a key platform for our ongoing recruitment activities. All internal communications and files for TVAM members have already been moved to Groups.io. We've had very warm congratulations and compliments on the website from IAM RoadSmart.

In the meantime, please continue to participate in your Local Team meetings and online activities, and in the virtual St. Crispin's each month. Phil Donovan and the Events Team (sounds like a group from the 60's) will be publishing details of some online seminars over the coming months, the first of which you will find on pages 8 and 9, and I hope you will find these interesting and informative.

We are, first and foremost, a bike club, albeit one with a focus on training and riding to Advanced Standard, so stay engaged and help newer members and Associates keep on track, until we can get out on our bikes for social rides, training and trips.

Chris Brownlee
Chief Observer



BIKECRAFT ONLINE ZOOM COURSE

Missing riding during lockdown? Worried you may not be up-to-speed with the theory when you go for test? Well, the BikeCraft team have put together an online event to help counter your biking withdrawal symptoms.

Our first course running over 6 weeks was fully booked in an instant so the team have now prepared the same content but over 3 sessions instead of 6. So from 7th March there will be three 2.5 hour Zoom sessions on what's behind all this 'advanced riding' malarky covering the infinite variety of scenarios you will encounter on the road, thus making it more fun and rewarding.

Starting at 9am each week and running til 11.30am the sessions will cover in order:

- WEEK 1 - March 7** Setting the scene; including how the eye can fool you; application of 'The System', especially the Information phase
- WEEK 2 - March 14** How a bike works; effects of brakes, throttle, steering, body position; Cornering and use of limit point of vision (vanishing point)
- WEEK 3 - March 28** Overtaking planning, preparing, execution, hints and tips; filtering, motorways and staying safe whilst making progress.

The sessions are open to all members. You can chose to join for a single session or all 3 of them and they're free, and together they produce an overall learning experience.

Attendees are advised to access the sessions from larger screens rather than mobile phones in order to benefit from the videos and other animations.



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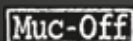




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ZOOM SPRING SEMINARS FOR THIS MARCH AND APRIL



Thursday 18th March

7.30pm – 45-60 mins plus questions

Steph Jeavons is an author, journalist, and adventurer who, in March 2018, completed a solo around-the-world (RTW) trip that took her to all 7 continents. A world first. The journey lasted a few days short of four years, during which time she logged 54 countries and more miles (over 74,000) on a 250cc Honda than anyone who's come before.

Since her return, Steph has walked 1,000km over several peaks for charity, led the first group of all women bikers to Everest Base Camp in Tibet, and taken on a few interesting freelance guiding jobs along the way! Lockdown has kept her home in Wales and writing about her adventures, but there is always more to come!

stephjeavons.com





magellanmotorcycletours.co.uk



Wednesday 7th April

7.30pm – 45-60 mins plus questions

Top motorcycle destinations you never thought of!

Listen to an inspirational evening with Magellan Motorcycle Tours who will guide you to some of the most exciting destinations they visit to get your engines revving for your next big adventure post lockdown. Come and learn about all the fantastic places you would not usually find, and all the countries you will want to put on your 'must do' list – to include Europe – the Alps, Spain, Croatia, Norway, but also Greece, Morocco, Romania and how about Alaska! This will expand your horizons – visit beautiful places and meet local people in adventures hard to beat!



Ride the world, without the hassle

**ZOOM SEMINARS WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON GROUPS.IO
SO MAKE SURE YOU BOOK YOUR SEAT IN THE WEB SHOP**

A CHANGE OF SEASONS

PART TWO



*The V7 lives on thanks to a heart transplant from the V85TT.
But what happens when Euro 6 arrives...?*



THE OTHER ITALIANS

While Ducati may be the quintessential Italian motorcycle, it's easy to forget that their sales volume is completely overshadowed by those of the Piaggio Group. Their Moto-Guzzi brand has taken the best part of their V85TT adventure-touring bike – the charismatic 850cc air-cooled engine – and used it to give their ageing V7 platform a new lease of life. Keeping air-cooled engines alive post-Euro5 is going to be very difficult indeed, and it will be interesting to see just how long the traditionally-minded manufacturer can keep it up. With the death of the old V7 engine, Moto-Guzzi is now a single-engine manufacturer, building effectively just three models. I suspect that the next couple of years' sales figures will determine whether or not parents Piaggio decide to invest the considerable resources required to develop a future-proof, potentially electrified drivetrain for



Light, the right amount of power, sensible suspension and leading edge electronics? Consider me intrigued...

this niche brand. If you like old-school, air-cooled naked bikes, buy one while you still can.

On the other side of the corporate roster sits Aprilia, another Piaggio brand that's been shedding models for years now. With every penny apparently going into keeping the remaining few models competitive through occasional nips and tucks, this 'other' Italian sportsbike company surprised everyone last year by announcing their new RS660 sportsbike. Lightweight, festooned with high-end running gear, and extracting an impressive 100bhp from a 660cc parallel twin engine, almost 50% more than the Japanese competition. The price tag (£10,000) is closer to what bikers used to pay for their 600cc-class sportsbikes than the current crop of more practical middleweights, so it will be interesting to see if there's really a market for such a machine. The reduced piston count should mean a less peaky, more road-focused delivery and Aprilia promise that the suspension is tuned for bumpy B-roads, not glass-smooth racetracks. I'm looking forward to finding out if it can live up to the hype.

But while many won't agree, the Italian bike I'm most keen to actually ride after the Multistrada V4 does, in fact, sport an exposed trellis frame and single-sided swingarm. What it doesn't have is front forks, a pillion seat, or a surfeit of power. The Italjet Dragster 125/200 look, quite frankly, like concept bikes or one-off specials made by someone who really misses their Peugeot Speedfight. Even Italjet's own webpage has to confirm that no, they are not joking – this really is a production bike. It's expensive for a 125/200cc scooter, but at around £5,000 it's still nothing compared to what most people spend on their two-wheeled toys. And imagine the crowd you'll draw after parking up at your local bike meet on one of those!

THE REST OF JAPAN & EUROPE

Slim pickings here – mostly just new paint and stickers across the board. Plenty of models are living on borrowed time, with derogation rules allowing pre-Euro5 models to be sold only while limited stocks last. Suzuki and Yamaha's showrooms will look noticeably less diverse as 2021 progresses and for the first time since the 80's Honda won't have a V4-powered bike in its line-up. The Yamaha FJR 1300's almost two-decade-long

production run is coming to an end, with changing tastes having already killed off the Honda ST1300 Pan European and Kawasaki GTR1400. But even though adventure-tourers are the flavour of the month, the Yamaha Super Tenere never found much of an audience and the cost



The end of an era; if you want to tour with lots of luggage and a pillion, you'd best buy an adventure-tourer. Everyone else is...

of Euro5 compliance was evidently too high to justify.

On the other hand, Tracer 700 & 900 have become Tracer 7 & 9 respectively, the larger of the two gaining a number of high-tech features alongside its fractionally larger and cleaner

three-cylinder engine. It sounds like some of the things I complained about in my review have been addressed (better handling, new up-and-down

quickshifter), along with a few things I didn't really have a problem with (bigger panniers, new electronically-controlled suspension). The latter could result in another unwelcome price bump, and given that the Tracer 900GT was already in danger of losing the value proposition compared to the Kawasaki Ninja 1000SX, this could be a real problem. Move too far up-market and suddenly the more prestigious European offerings start to look more reasonable by comparison.



Nips, tucks, and new tech abound, but still no word on a UK price...

Speaking of the Europeans, BMW has updated their S1000R naked bike. No ShiftCam technology here, just mild Euro5 tweaks, but the styling is much more cohesive and



Looks great, probably handles well, and will have fantastic electronics. So why aren't I excited?

makes for a significantly more attractive motorcycle in my opinion. But I'm afraid it's also one of the least interesting offerings in the segment. Flat-plane crank inline-four naked bikes are a little bit like washing machines. They're very good at their job, they just aren't usually terribly interesting. And when similar money buys you almost any other engine configuration, you've got to discount a lot of other really charismatic motorcycles to end up at the S1000R.

KTM realised that everyone was pushing 800cc adventure bikes up to 900cc and did the same thing, creating the 890 Adventure in the same various flavours as the previous 790. I really wanted to consider that bike as a V-Strom 650 replacement, but the damning reliability reports from the then-new power plant combined with the existing stories I keep hearing about electrical problems prevent me from seriously considering the Austrian brand. Maybe the new 890 platform will be the point when things change; maybe not.

In Kawasaki's world things have been pretty quiet, save for the unveiling of the

updated Ninja ZX-10R. Speaking as something of an apologist for what many people would consider to be ugly motorcycles, I am afraid to say that I haven't seen a front fairing design this...unfortunate in a very, very long time. Then again, given that no-one except racers buys them anyway, and the fact that they'll just replace all the bodywork with race fairings, it probably doesn't matter too much.



Sounds good on paper, but have the clutch-cooling oil jets been fixed on this one?



I know you can't see it while you're riding it, but...

models in showrooms. Chinese manufacturers desperate to shed the stigma of their previous sub-standard efforts have been snapping up defunct British nameplates and using them to flog ultra-trendy small-capacity bikes for years, and some of the results have been just as bad as you'd expect. But for every zombified AJS there are a few that claim to source their engines and electronics from China, yet assemble them in Europe according to our more exacting quality and longevity expectations. Herald even claims that they are graduating from this process after ten years and that their new Brute 500 is wholly manufactured in the UK. Now there's something I'd like to see in person...

Regardless of where they're built,

INDIA & CHINA

This is where things get a little left-field. There are now so many Chinese manufacturers masquerading as old European brands that it's hard for even an obsessive like me to keep up. Traditionally fiscally flaky Italian firms like Benelli have enjoyed drinking from the financial firehose of Chinese investors and have a slew of impressive-looking, if rather underpowered and overweight



Designed and built in the UK, they claim. That exhaust system certainly screams "small-series type approval"...

it's true that the quality and dealer support for these less well-established brands has improved dramatically in recent years with the more successful and, one hopes, trustworthy of them all branching out into larger capacity offerings. CFMoto have been selling ultra-budget, Kawasaki-derived 650cc motorcycles for a few years now, and a recent tie-up with KTM is set to extend their range with engines sourced from their new Austrian partner. Chinese police are already testing a 1290-derived fully-faired bike that would be an interesting BMW R1250RT competitor, especially at half the price.



The styling is a little messy, but the price and feature list beggar belief.

Their countrymen over at Zontes haven't been selling products in the UK quite as long, but they're clearly determined to catch up fast. While their 125cc selection does a good job of imitating Kawasaki and Suzuki's various naked models, their catchily named ZT310-T looks like a Triumph Tiger 1200 that shrank in the wash. Part of the truly enormous Guangdong Tayo Motorcycle Technology Company, Zontes are keen to follow CFMoto in demonstrating that Chinese brands can deliver more than just throw away learner bikes. The spec list is quite

frankly incredible given the £4,199.99 asking price. Keyless start, TFT dash, electric screen, backlit switchgear, Bosch-sourced ABS, Lithium-Ion battery...some of these are features that bikes four times the price don't always offer.

It's also available with either forged 17" wheels or a spoked 19"/17" combo, depending on whether you expect your journeys to take you onto gravel or not. This thing undercuts the much-vaunted Royal Enfield Himalayan on price and weight while beating it handily on features and performance. It's well worth checking out the feature video on their UK website which, unlike a few Chinese brands I could mention, actually works and looks like it was designed by professionals. No, I don't expect the bike itself to be up to the standard of bigger, more expensive European or Japanese fare, but my own experiences with the Himalayan weren't great and plenty of people took a chance on those at a similar price point. If your £20,000 BMW is too precious to actually take off-road and comes out in a rash in the winter salt, then maybe a Zontes ZT310-T could be worth a look.

Speaking of Royal Enfield, their less off-road focused bikes continue to show promise. Hot



If the Interceptor is anything to go by, then the Meteor could be the bargain of the century.

Nick Robinson

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on the heels of the universally acclaimed and best selling Interceptor 650 comes the Meteor 350. A more cruiser oriented offering, the new bike will cost just £3749 on the road here in the UK. If the quality and riding experience are up to that of the Interceptor, that price could help move a lot of metal once stocks arrive at UK dealers. Japanese small capacity cruisers have always struggled to maintain the all metal authenticity cruiser riders crave, and the Interceptor's success proved that well-judged running gear and an ultra-competitive price can make up for the power deficit that often prompts the Japanese to choose water-cooling for their offerings. Royal Enfield has serious ambitions for the western market and I'm very interested to see if the Meteor helps maintain their momentum.

ELECTRIC

Those of you who have been paying attention at trade shows over the last couple of years will have noted the proliferation of small electric motorcycle and scooter companies. SuperSoco always stood out for me, simply because their design spoke of ambitions beyond the fray of rushed lookalikes. Their bikes have a unique visual aesthetic that suggests actual care and thought are steering the brand even if the performance limited my interest in the past. But while many of these cheap cash-in marques have come and gone, SuperSoco is still here, and frequently sold alongside the more established electric brand Zero in dealerships. What's more, for 2021, they're finally offering a 125cc-equivalent option in the shape of the TC Max. It's currently available for just £3,825 after the UK government's OLEV Plug-In Motorcycle Grant, which is slightly cheaper than Honda's similarly styled and performing CB125R. 125's aren't exactly expensive to fuel and tax, but charge the removable battery at the office and the savings could add up quickly. Definitely worth a look!

In the same vein we have relative newcomers Horwin, imported to the UK through electric scooter stalwarts Artisan Electric. I've never been overly impressed with Artisan's product: plastic and fake chrome covered imitations of classic Italian scooters matched with relatively low-tech electric drivetrains. They've lately diversified into more futuristic designs which I think are much better executed. Their tie-up with Horwin brings the very stylish EK3 electric scooters to the UK for under £4k, but it's the CR6 retro-bike and upcoming CR6 Pro that really caught my eye. The latter uses



60 miles of range at 30mph isn't much, but then it doesn't cost much either...

the same motor and battery combo, but adds a 5-speed manual gearbox and clutch to eke out every drop of performance and theoretically push the bike up past the 60mph mark. I'm forever pondering the idea of getting another 125cc motorcycle to handle my 70-mile round-trip commute and it would be very interesting to see if the technology has finally reached a point where electric becomes a viable option.

BRING ON 2021

As you can see, there's lots to be excited about for the 2021 riding season.

Motorcycling was one of the few success stories of 2020 as dealers reported record sales following the first lockdown in spring. Commuters were encouraged by the government (and, perhaps, common sense) to avoid the crowded petri dish that is public transport but unable or unwilling to switch to their car or bicycle. It seems they suddenly discovered what the rest of us have known all along: that motorcycling is the perfect way for most people to get to work. CBT's were booked solid and 125's flew out of showrooms.

But bigger bikes sold well too, even amongst the luxury brands. Perhaps those buyers were simply looking for an outdoor hobby that allowed them some fresh air with built-in social distancing. Perhaps the sobering news gave people the nudge they needed to finally get up off the couch and live a little. All that lockdown enforced time for self-reflection may have helped many realise that life can be short, and that no amount of risk-aversion, healthy eating, and clean living can fully protect us from something like Covid-19. As an otherwise fit, young, healthy individual who caught it early on and was on oxygen a week later, I can confirm that it's not just the frail, infirm, or incautious who can fall victim to this invisible killer.

Yes, motorcycling can be dangerous, and going for a ride without the right gear and training can multiply that risk significantly, but perhaps 2020 helped a number of non-riders consider that a little bit of risk can be worth it, given the thrill and excitement that motorcycling offers. None of us really know how much time we have on this planet and, as the saying goes, don't put off until tomorrow what you could do today.

Nick Tasker

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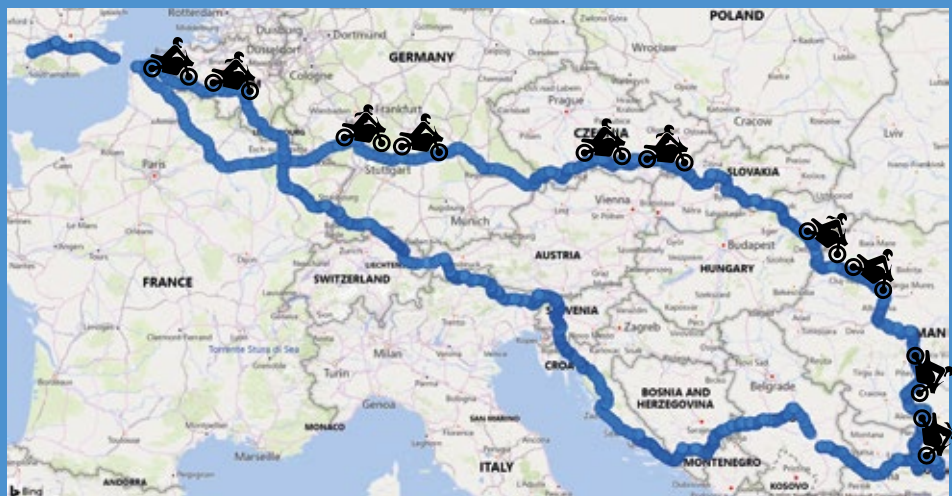
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THE BALKANS TOUR

PART ONE



It was dusk when we rode into Idilevo after a long day's ride which had started in Romania. There were no street lights or signs so I was relying on the satnav to guide me through the small lanes. I followed the instruction to turn left up a farm track, made up mainly of stones embedded in the soil. I left then a right at the end, up another much steeper track. At the top an open gate, the satnav directing me to hug the stone wall beyond, the stones having run out leaving a muddy track. I paused thinking if my road tyres couldn't grip I'd be stuck with 250kg of Africa Twin to turn around. A call from behind me, "That's not the way to Motocamp." I turned to see a man sitting on a small scrambler bike, shorts and t-shirt, no helmet. As he turned and headed back down the hill, I followed.

How it all came about

Over the last few years my fiancée Marije and I had attended the Horizons Unlimited and Overland events and listened to tales of two-wheel adventure all over the world. Two of our close friends had recently moved to New Zealand and one day when thinking about visiting them we toyed with the idea of quitting work, renting the house out and riding half way round the world to visit them... as you do.

When discussing the approach to the trip we decided it was to be an open-ended journey with no deadlines, no pre-booked accommodation or ferries to catch, with time to explore as we went. One thing kept coming up in our research, having identical bikes can be a benefit, with interchangeable parts and tools, so we went bike hunting. At the

time the new Honda Africa Twin had been around for a year, so after test rides we bought a secondhand one and an ex-demonstrator and prepped them for the trip.

First though, we decided a couple of shakedown trips would be a good idea. The first in 2018, Eastern Europe and the Balkans and later in 2019, Morocco, leading up to the big one starting in 2020.

At the time I'd recently read a bike adventure travel book by Graham Field where he mentioned MotoCamp in Bulgaria, a popular stopping place for overland travellers. It sounded like a great place to aim for where we could take a mid-trip break and meet other overlanders. I emailed MotoCamp and Ivo confirmed two nights for us. The only other bookings were the Eurotunnel and a hotel on the first night in Europe to ease us in.

The trip

Rolling off the early morning train in Calais we were greeted by clear blue skies and balmy temperatures. The satnav locked onto the GPS, telling me 445 miles to go to the hotel. This would be the longest day ride of the trip, getting out of Western Europe as quickly as we could, aiming to be in Czechia the following day. Although the day proved to be a dull ride on fast roads it got us comfortable on the heavily laden bikes.

I'd rate my ability to speak other languages as limited to different flavours of English, whether that be American, Australian or Irish. In order to break the language barrier I had two secret weapons. The first is the Point It travellers' book. This handy little book that lives in my tank bag has pictures of everything from a pharmacy sign to a chicken, as sometimes the need for a pharmacy can follow consumption of a dodgy chicken. The second is Marije, fluent in five languages and passable in more, she makes up for my linguistic ineptitude. I keep the bikes running and she does the hard stuff like getting us through borders and customs and checking into hotels.



Cesky Krumlov is an historic town in the South Bohemian region of Czechia and as we arrived in late afternoon the 11th century castle dominated the skyline. We rode directly into the centre and parked up next to the river, alongside four heavily customised Harleys with German plates. The 14th century old town itself is on a horseshoe bend of the river with bridges to cross on foot. Looking at the information panel next to the river we decided to stay and explore.

Just then the German bikers came back, looking all the part of a biker gang; large, hairy, black leathers. We chatted for a few minutes about their bikes and our trip, their English perfect. One of them started taking pictures of some blossoms on a tree while

his mates jokingly chided him for ruining the biker image. They said their goodbyes and headed for a campsite south of the city, the bikes making a great roar as they headed up the narrow hill, exhausts echoing off the stone walls.

We had parked next to the Hotel Gold which looked impressive, with a small courtyard behind large wooden gates. Marije went in to find out how much it would be for the night and after several minutes came back chuckling to herself. We found in much of Eastern Europe that as well as the local language, the older generation could speak Russian and the younger generation English. Upon going into the hotel and finding the receptionist to be in her sixties, Marije had tried Russian to no avail, then German, then English, no luck. The receptionist looked at the passport Marije was holding in preparation for booking a room and broke into fluent Dutch. It turned out she had spent many years in the Netherlands as an au pair and had picked up the language, much to our benefit!



Parking in the courtyard of Hotel Gold

Checked in, we were then instructed to ride our bikes into the courtyard where they would be locked in overnight – for those guests having refreshments we became a great source of bemusement.

We had chosen to do the trip in early September when the weather was likely to still be warm and when many Europeans had finished their August break. The old town was still busy with tourists, mainly from outside Europe, taking pictures and selfies on the bridges. It wasn't overcrowded but had a lively buzz with local entertainers and artists scattered amongst the streets.



Obligatory pictures next to the old border sign

As we sat down outside a traditional alehouse with local musicians playing we found ourselves talking to an elderly German lady and her son who had come on what was an annual break to the town. They had lived in East Germany before the fall of the wall and this was one of the regular organised holiday destinations – not too shabby at all, although some of the tales were also of hardships experienced.

Riding through the opened gates of the Hotel Gold, up the hill and out onto open roads and clear skies we headed east with no particular destination. This, to me at least, is the freedom of the open road.

The route was generally straight and flat, the weather still warm and we were both tired at the end of the day so we had an early night in Trencin, Slovakia, an historic city we'll have to revisit one day as we didn't have time to do it justice.

Around 4pm we stopped for a coffee and I booked an apartment via booking.com in a town not far ahead to give us time to check in and find somewhere to eat.

Hajdúböszörmény is a picturesque student town and the owner of the apartment we'd booked was waiting for us on arrival. He opened the gates to the gardens for us to bring our bikes in and gave us a tour. Large lounge, kitchen diner, utilities, double room, Wi-Fi, milk, tea and coffee, all for £34.

At this point I'm started to get excited as we're fast approaching one of the routes I've been looking forward to, the 56 mile long Transfagarasan in Romania. Famously featured on Top Gear, Clarkson called it better than Stelvio, the best road in the world.

Almost all the countries on our trip are in the EU so we were surprised to come across a border check when entering Romania. It was little more than a passport check for us but I later found out that although Romania and Bulgaria are in the EU they are not part of the Schengen zone so travel into the zone requires a visa or stamp.

The roads in Romania seem to be either single lane or new-build dual carriageways, funded by the EU. East to west routes are congested by trucks and it's common to see horse and carts still used, the drivers giving a friendly wave as we pass. I put the Pensiunea Leia, Cârțișoara in the satnav, it's a guesthouse in a small village on the road



Romania

to the Transfagarasan. I always stipulate parking when looking on Booking.com and it seems to work, especially if you add a note saying parking for two motorcycles. We arrive at the village and the sat nav has a spasm, rerouting over and over again. We ride around randomly for a few minutes. Two old men sitting on a bench wave at us as we ride by, all smiles. When we turn around and ride back they wave again.

Pensiunea Leia has large wooden gates and Alin the owner stands at the smaller door in them, seemingly waiting for us. News travels fast around here. He opens the larger gates and beckons us through, indicating that we should ride straight into his garden. It seems we aren't the only bikers as another bike is already parked up. Alin shows us our room and we settle in, stepping out onto the balcony, overlooking our bikes.

Later that evening more bikes turn up and we get talking to a couple of Polish bikers who are also heading south the next day. We'd planned to visit Bran Castle, the inspiration for Dracula, the next day but they told us it was packed with tourists and overrated. Maybe next time.

The Polish guys had a very novel way of planning their sightseeing. They would go onto Wikipedia and put in the area they were riding through and see what attractions



Transfagarasan

there were to visit. The previous day they had visited Merry Cemetery which has brightly coloured tombstones with poetry and naïve paintings describing the people buried there. They showed us pictures of what has now become a major attraction.

Alin joined us around the communal tables later on and told us about how he had built the place based on speculation

that ski resorts would be built in the Carpathian Mountains. The resorts never materialised but he found the place busy enough with bikers and petrolheads visiting the area. He brought out some plum liquor for us to share. It was delicious and dangerous, definitely no more than a couple of shots, a clear head needed tomorrow.

Another clear sky day, perfect weather for biking, warm already by eight. No need for a satnav route today, head south into the Carpathians, all the way through. The long, straight road with the mountains tantalising close seemed to stretch on forever, building the anticipation. Then we were into the climb. The road twists and snakes constantly. I think back to the look, lean and roll course and soon have pegs scraping the ground. It really



Transfagarasan



Traffic jam

doesn't get better than this, we've picked the right time of year, little traffic, the sun is out, it's warm, the road and scenery are fantastic and the bikes perform flawlessly.

After what seems like minutes rather than hours we are back down out of the mountains. I could turn back and do it again, and again, but we're booked in at Motocamp tonight and Ivo has emailed to check we're still coming.

Our only ferry on this trip is coming up, we're crossing the Danube which runs through the most countries of any river in the world. As we approach there is a guard asking for documents. I haven't expected this so handed him the ones from my tank bag. He flicked through them until he got to my passport and looking confused asked "Copies?". "Yes, copies" I replied, "do you want originals?", "No", he pointed me to another building "Tickets".



Ferry Romania to Bulgaria



Backroads of Bulgaria

I carry two sets of documents, one is the full originals and the other are all copies, laminated, with extra ones of my driving license. I'd use my originals for official border crossings but this one had caught me off guard. The theory is that if stopped by a crooked cop for example I hand the copies over and if they try for a bribe and

won't give them back then they can keep them, a gift.

One of the sights I wanted to see while we were in Bulgaria was the Buzludzha monument, built in the communist era but now rather dilapidated. The road up to it was potholed and broken up but it was worth the visit, it must have been impressive when in use and there is a group trying to raise funds to renovate it now.

As we left the monument the sun was setting and we'd underestimated the time to get to MotoCamp. It would be pretty dark by the time we got there but we had our trusty satnavs. What could go wrong?

Damien Murray & Marije Schillern



Buzludzha monument



Confessions of a First Time Restorer

PART TWO - THE STRIPDOWN

So, where did we leave it last month? Oh yes, me standing in front of two 1960s BSA C15 Stars in the back garden and thinking 'Oh, Good God. What have I done?' I had the outlines of a basic plan of attack in my mind. For starters I was going to do one bike at a time, the red 1961 bike being the first victim. Surely that being the older bike, it would be the simpler bike? I still don't know on that one, I'll let you know in a year or so after I've tackled both.

I had been planning in advance though, and even before the bikes arrived, I did know several things for sure – I had bought and built my Mancave, I needed to be methodical and meticulous, I needed new tools, I needed a subscription to Amazon Prime for the tool deliveries, I needed good reference and information sources, and I needed good people for good advice.

Some of these had already been put in place. Whitman tools – bought. Amazon Prime – subscribed. BSA Owners Club membership – sorted. BSA C15 Restoration Group on Facebook – joined. Space for computer and Wi-Fi in Mancave – done. Raiding of my wife's old crafting storage for empty containers – check.

I had been recommended some BSA reference books called the 'Rupert Ratio Unit Single Manual', volumes 1 (the Engine) and 2 (Everything but the Engine). Unit single denoting the BSA models that had the engine and gearbox in one single 'unit', and they were 'single' cylinder. The Rupert Ratio books had been recommended to the extent that buying these was a no-brainer – without exaggeration, everyone told me to get them (I have since noticed them in the background of YouTube videos about C15 restoration as well). Therefore, they were ordered, and I duly received both



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BSA 15 Star



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Front wheel



Inner gearbox

books, signed by the author no less! These two books (there is a 3rd volume which covers the lesser-known models) look at the BSA unit singles in great detail and make the task of working on the bikes a lot easier. Well, they actually make it possible to do anything at all for someone with my level of knowledge. What I also found out later is that 'Rupert' and his wife are members of the C15 Facebook group and join in many a discussion. I've bought a centre stand off them as my bike didn't have one and I couldn't source one anywhere at all. I was contacted by them to say they had one. 'Rupert' (a.k.a. Dave) and his wife, Lisa, are very generous with their advice and knowledge. If you do any work on a C15, you need these books.

Talking of knowledge – what on earth were all these bits and pieces that were going to come off the bike called? Easily sorted. A Google search later provided schematics for all sections of the engine and frame were printed off and laminated. These schematics are labelled with the original BSA part numbers, and I put these numbers and their relevant descriptions on the back of each sheet – very useful. Now covered in oil and grease, hence the laminating.

But how would I remember where each bit was from after it came off the bike? This is where I went a bit OCD. When I was a teenager in the 80s (you know, the last decade of decent music, and the decade responsible for my love of cruisers) my Dad got an Armstrong Siddeley Star Sapphire which he did up. He had a lot of knowledge about cars and engines, but he still took some photos to aid him when it came to reassembly. Not many though – they had to go to Boots to be printed. Other people had also said to take photos. I decided that I needed a cataloguing system. Therefore, each part that came off the bike was photographed and given its own unique code. Lots of parts were also photographed in situ to aid reassembly. This code and the part description were duly entered into a ledger (it's going to be on a spreadsheet for the second bike). The camera's photo file name was manually changed to the code and description (hence I can now search the photos by part name and code). Each part was then put in its own bag and the part code written on the bag. A bit of a faff, and definitely time

consuming, but I know that I will be very glad of it when it comes to reassembly. I know where each part is and have a photo and description of it. So far, I have over 750 photos! Thank goodness for digital photography.

As an aside I have just realised that maybe some theme is going on here – my Dad had an Armstrong Siddeley Star Sapphire. My day-to-day bike is a Yamaha XVS950 Midnight Star. And these two bikes I have inherited off Sharon's Dad are BSA C15 Stars!

Anyway, it had occurred to me that as I was going to be doing this properly, I needed some new toys. Shame! Out came the bank card and I hit the internet. Parts washer, ultrasonic cleaner, tap and die set, gear pullers, tyre levers, valve spring compressor, torque wrench. All needed and bought. Along with other speciality BSA tools. These were not all bought before I started. Some were ordered as I went along and realised that I needed them. That Amazon Prime next day service has really paid for itself.

I felt I was as prepared as I could be, so I set to it. On day one I just tackled easy bits of bodywork to settle in. Petrol tank, mudguards, oil tank, seat. It was an easy start and got me going.

Things got more difficult though, not only with things that I couldn't work out how to do (that bloody engine just wouldn't budge out of the frame), but also with the joys of BSA design – I mean, who really thought that having to take off the chain before you can take off the chainguard was a good idea?

I felt in my comfort zone with the frame and its bits. I may not have experience or knowledge when it comes to bikes, but my basic DIY know-how worked reasonably for these parts. I still have a lot to learn – like what a rectifier does when it's allowed out at the weekend, and I'm not even going to go there on the wiring, that bit is just frightening to me. But, in general, I knew what I was doing. Everything was systematically stripped, studied, photographed, bagged and labelled. It all seems to have gone smoothly. There is one part that I definitely made a mess of. The rear wheel hub. I got my sides mixed up on the schematic and ended up breaking off part of the hub itself instead of unscrewing the lock ring on the other side. Totally my fault and potentially an expensive mistake, but you live and learn. The stripdown has proved to be very worthwhile though, not only was everything absolutely filthy, but I also found things that need attending to. For example, one of the front forks was filled with water, not oil.

So, the frame was now stripped and ready to be painted. However, when it came to the engine that was a different matter, my DIY knowledge had a reduced impact. I'll come to that shortly but, firstly, there were more important issues.

I had been working on the patio as the weather was mild, but I soon had to move into the Mancave due to the rain and then because of the cold. And it did get cold – too cold. How could I continue if I couldn't feel my hands? I had to think outside the box. There was no way in hell I was going to be allowed to bring the bike inside and work on it there. I would have been instructed to 'remove myself from the premises with immediate effect'!

Therefore, an intricately planned, and painstakingly executed, military style



Inside front brake assembly



Crankcase (right hand side)



Petrol tank disconnected



Part strip

operation was carried out. In other words, whilst my wife was out, I nicked the heater from the conservatory. At the time of writing, it is 6 weeks and counting that I have got away with this. I guess this being published will tell how closely Sharon does read my ramblings! My progress may be about to slow considerably due to the injuries I'm going to sustain.

But I am, at present, able to work in a nice warm Mancave. Please also note in the photo above, on the floor next to the heater, that most vital piece of equipment when dealing with a vintage motorbike – the club hammer! And yes, the toolbox is fine on top of the heater. The heater is designed to allow things to be put on it. I can see people shaking their heads in disgust.

Anyway, back to the engine. In the end I was very pleased with how the engine came apart. I learned a huge amount. There was the odd time that I had to resort to the blowtorch I'd nicked from the kitchen (oh Gawd, now I'm in more trouble) and rubber mallet but in general it came apart well. Again, things were very dirty though. I am glad that I have taken it apart. There were several things in the depths of the engine that will need attending to. A previous owner had filled up an internal gap with red hematite. This hematite fell out of the gap when I reached that area of the engine. I thought that the casing was falling apart, so asked advice only to be told that the gap was meant to be there to allow oil to move around. That was a relief but made me wary that a previous owner may have had a similar level of knowledge to me and done some things wrong. Several components will need replacing. The distributor drive shaft and the distributor drive pinion both have teeth missing from them (that may sound all knowledgeable, but I had to look up their names to write this!). Coincidentally these are right next to the hole that was filled in. Other parts such as bushes, springs and bearings will need replacing as a matter of course.

Another carefully planned sneak attack also had to be enacted. When it came to removing the aforementioned bushes and bearings the advice I received was unanimous – put the casings in the

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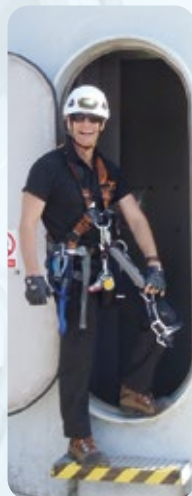
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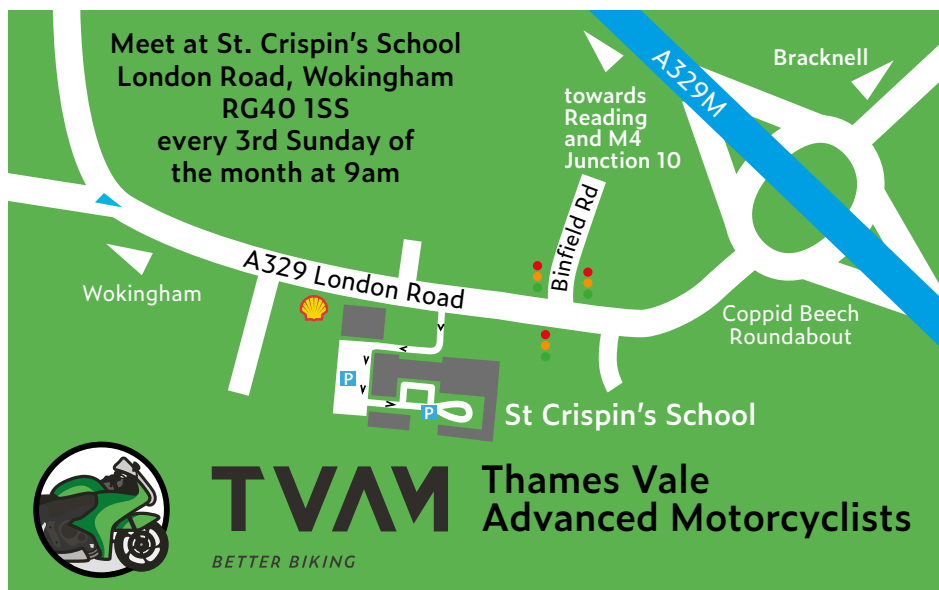


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CLUB MEETS - Online Zoom monthly meeting only at the present time

Monthly meetings were held at 9am on the 3rd Sunday of each month at St. Crispin's School, London Road, Wokingham, RG40 1SS. At the present time we have a Zoom meet on that Sunday - see groups.io or Slipstream for joining details.



LOCAL TEAM MEETS - contact your local team for online meeting times.

To join a team other than your own, go to groups.io all members and see Wiki - Join a subgroup

Basingstoke (BAR)

When: First Monday of the month
Where: Jekyll & Hyde, Hartley Wespall,
Turgis Green, RG27 0AX
Time: 7.30pm

Camberley (CLAMs)

When: 1st Tuesday every other month
Where: The Bee, School Road, Bagshot,
Windlesham, GU20 6PD
Time: 8pm (Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec)

Great Northern (GNATs)

Meet 1: After each St Crispin's for coffee at The Farm Café, Ashridge Manor Garden Centre, Forest Road, Wokingham, RG40 5QY.

Meet 2: Rideout first Sunday of the month.

Reading (RAMs)

When: First Monday or Tuesday of the month
March/Tuesday; April/Monday etc.

How: Join us – sams@tvam.groups.io

Time: Zoom call at 8pm

Slough (SAM)

When: First Saturday of the month
Where: Jenners Riverside Café, Ray Mead Road,
Maidenhead, SL6 8NP
Time: 9am

Wantage & Newbury (WAGs)

When: Second Wednesday of the month
How: Join us – wags@tvam.groups.io
Time: Zoom call at 7.30pm

Wokingham & Bracknell (WOBMOB)

When: 3rd Tuesday of the month
How: Join us - wobmob@tvam.groups.io
Time: Zoom call at 8pm

Green Team (Full Members)

Meet 1: Last weekend of the month – see *Slipstream* or groups.io calendar
Meet 2: Wednesday following St Crispin's at The Crown, The Street, Swallowfield, RG7 1QY
Time: 7.30pm

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Observer Group <https://tvam.groups.io/g/observers>

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Slough (SAM)	Ally McCulloch	slough@tvam.org
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Wokingham & Bracknell (WOBOB)	Andy MacWalter, Ian Gaitley	wokingham@tvam.org
Green Team	Alan Hudson	greenteam@tvam.org

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Slough (SAM)	Ally McCulloch	slough.social@tvam.org
Wantage & Newbury (WAGs)	Keith Miller, Mimi Carter Jonas	wantage.social@tvam.org
Wokingham (WOBOB)	Andy MacWalter and Ian Gaitley	wokingham.social@tvam.org
Green Team	Alan Hudson	greenteam@tvam.org



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CLUB CONTACTS

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Nigel Fowler 1996, Richard Tickner 2005, Nigel Taylor 2010, Charon Willis 2016

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Green Team Leader	Alan Hudson	fullmembers@tvam.org

Committee Meetings: These are held at James House, Mere Park, Dedmere Road, Marlow, SL7 1FJ
 Next Meetings: (M – Marlow/Internet), 9th March 2021 (I) – all meetings normally on second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm and for the present all are Internet meetings. If a member wishes to attend they should contact Adrian Ellison – secretary@tvam.org before the meeting date.

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