



EXHAUST



NOTES

IAM Group: 1250

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As 90% of WaBAM's members are on the Internet, Exhaust Notes has been designed so that it can be viewed page by page when distributed electronically. This is why the format of the paper copies is unusual - turned on its side, so to speak.

Cover concept by Martyn Jefferies. Picture copyright Dynamo Humm, Canada (www.dynamohumm.com)

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Members should seek confirmation of event details prior to attending since, regrettably, last minute changes are sometimes necessary.



The Chairman Rites

Martyn Buckland

“Enjoy Autumn and I hope we’ll get another Newsletter out before Christmas as I’m bug*ered if I’m going to wish you Happy New Year whilst I’m preparing a BBQ!”

Well, that’s how I left you at the end of “Chairman Rites” in October. Despite my promise of one day undertaking a Christmas Day barby, it won’t be this year as the missus and I are going to do something even more unseasonable – like going to Las Vegas!



I know, how much further can you get from the Christian values of the season? On the other hand, I’m not really the one for doing things in the right way – in fact I normally go out of my way to do the opposite so this just fits a well-trodden path. I always fancied riding a Harley down the Strip on Christmas morning. If I haven’t lost all my money by then we’ll see what I can do and bring back a few pics!

Anyway, I’m very thankful for Martyn Jefferies for getting this issue of “Exhaust



Christmas Dinner at the Harley Cafe on 'the Strip?

Notes” out in spite of very tight deadlines and a limited amount of material submitted since the last issue.

It merely remains for me to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a VERY Happy New Year from all the **WaBAM** Committee.

We look forward to meeting everyone at one of our Socials or Group Rides soon!

Cheers,

Martyn

Allure de Cote D'Azure

Les Snelgrove

Fly to the South of France? – How ridiculous, especially when there's a perfectly adequate network of French roads that could be put to good use.



Our family had generously been offered the free use of a house in La Grande Freinet (a village in the hills above St Tropez) for a week in July, and not being a fan of EasyJet hospitality, I decided that riding down was a much better option. The family would take a flight and hire a

car, whilst I'd catch the ferry from Portsmouth to Caen and ride down via the most interesting route I could find.

The last time I did this journey was back in the early '80's on a Moto Guzzi 500 Monza, taking one girlfriend down to St Tropez and bringing another one back. But that's another story. This time I was on my own and I was determined to take in as much stunning scenery and excellent biking roads as I could find.



So, on 19th July I packed up the bike, resulting in it feeling decidedly top heavy and set off for Portsmouth where I'd catch the overnight ferry. As I travelled south I could see the weather brewing and as I filtered onto the A34 near Winchester the rain started, becoming steadily heavier as I travelled towards the huge black cloud that seemed to be enveloping Portsmouth harbour. It certainly made waiting at the terminal a rather damp experience, but thankfully the ferry offered good accommodation and after checking into my cabin I headed for the bar and a welcome drink, sharing a table with a biking couple who were heading for Brittany the following day.

Brittany Ferries certainly don't want anyone to stay in bed past 6am, as

despite turning the cabin radio right down before going to sleep, it still came on at full blast the following morning. But at least getting up early gave me the opportunity to shower and grab some breakfast before getting on the road. I was keen to cover a decent mileage first thing because the roads in northern France aren't exactly inspiring, so I pointed the bike south and maintained a good average speed until I reached Le Mans where I stopped for lunch and to sort out my mobile phone so that it worked in France. I recommend that you double check that your phone is

enabled for roaming before leaving the UK. It cost me a fortune in payphone cards!

Heading out of town I found myself on part of the famous Le Mans racing circuit, travelling down the Mulsanne straight - at legal speeds I hasten to add. Although the main roads were fairly clear and the surrounding



sunflower fields were beautiful, travelling through the numerous villages with 50kph speed limits meant that my overall progress was slow. I had vowed not to use motorways, but in order to make up some time I resorted to a short

stretch on the A28 through the flat boring countryside that characterises this region. For those not familiar with biking in France there are a couple of surprises in store. Car drivers tend to be very bike friendly, often pulling over to the right to allow easy overtaking, whilst French bikers use their feet to thank other motorists and to acknowledge other bikers. Somewhat different to the considerable number of uncommunicative bikers we encounter in the UK.

I made good progress on the peage as far as Tours and then on the less densely populated N roads via Chateauroux and Montucon, before making my first overnight stop at 'Route 99', a specialist biker camp near Clermont Ferrand. I can certainly recommend it, either as a stop off point or as a base camp for exploring



the local area. They have a bar, restaurant, swimming pool, private rooms, bunk rooms, log cabins and a campsite. I took a basic room with a three course evening meal and breakfast, all of which cost less than 25 euros, so it's very good value for money.

It was from Clermont Ferrand that the roads started to get more interesting, the scenery more stunning, with the villages literally carved out of the rocky hillsides.



Travelling down the N906 through Ambert in the Monts du Forez region, I then turned south-east at Arlanc,

onto less well travelled roads. It was here that I encountered roadworks where the tarmac had been removed, leaving people to drive across a rutted gravel surface for several kilometres. Great fun once you get used to it! But from here the weather

deteriorated into wet and windy, so

I decided to get back onto the main road at Yssingaux. Here

I contacted my wife who was

already in St Tropez and I was reassured that sunny weather lay ahead. Reluctantly, I resorted to the motorway again to quickly motor south and get clear of the persistent rain.

Having unsuccessfully chased the continually receding blue sky for an hour or so, I eventually came off the motorway just south of Avignon in



order to find a campsite for the night. This was simple because the majority of campsites in France are municipal and are therefore well sign posted. This one had a swimming pool, bar and restaurant, so I was able to have a swim, a drink and a



meal without leaving the site, and after struggling to erect my brand new tent for the first time, I collapsed into my sleeping bag for a welcome rest.

The following morning was at least dry and I was looking forward to the final part of the journey, which on the map looked really interesting. I was not disappointed. The third leg of my journey through Provence was by far the most enjoyable, first heading due east along the N100 to Voix, then across the wide river Durance at Manosque. From here the roads just got better and better towards Riez before becoming simply divine through the Verdun Gorge, where it's difficult to decide whether to look at the stunning views or make the most of the sinuous road. I'd read a number of articles about this area and if you are into serious bend swinging, then I can confirm that this is undoubtedly a place you must visit.

It was an absolute joy to ride through the bends that follow the course of the river hundreds of feet below simply using the gears and maintaining momentum. I'm sure many riders and drivers have met their maker along this challenging stretch of tarmac, but there are ample opportunities to stop and take



in the scenery, from the precipitous rocky cliffs and the rapids in the river below to the tranquil lavender fields for which Provence is so famous. The weather here was also perfect, with blue skies, warm sun and a cooling breeze. The other joy of travelling in this part of the world is the culture. It's great to stop in a small town, buy some croissants from the patisserie, then sit outside a small café with the locals, enjoying a coffee and watching the world go by.

By late afternoon I had reached the end of the gorge and it was time to head south again via Draguignan, les Arcs and le Vieux Cannel, before taking the stunning road through the mountains to my final destination at la Garde Freinet. It was only upon my arrival that I was



told a fire engine had gone over the edge the previous year killing three of the crew! – a sobering thought.

The roads in this area are all worth riding, although you do have to keep an eye on the varying surfaces, especially after it has rained because gravel gets washed across the road. Apart from that, it's great fun. One day I rode across to the village of



Collobrieres to visit a friend who has a house there. The roads through the mountains were very technical – narrow and very twisty, with steep drops and corners with gravel. The ride back was even more enjoyable, following my friend (who knows the road very well) in his Subaru Impreza!

We were also lucky enough to be invited to spend a day on a sailing boat in Toulon harbour, as part of the flotilla bidding farewell to the tall



ships which were leaving on the next leg of their round the World voyage. It was a spectacular sight, seeing

these impressive ships, with their crews perched high up in the rigging unfurling the sails. Certainly not a pass-time for the feint hearted.

The Journey Home

Apart from the Verdun Gorge the only other place I really wanted to visit was the Milau bridge, so this was my first destination on the journey



home. Leaving later than anticipated I decided to get on the motorway again in order to knock off some miles and get past the heavily populated areas around Aix and Marseille. The weather was

scorching, so I was glad to be maintaining a reasonable speed, although the breeze wasn't exactly cool. The traffic was heavy in places, but the French drivers are happy to make space for bikes to pass between them, so it was easy to keep up momentum through the lines of cars and lorries. Once past Aix the traffic became lighter and I was able to make good progress past Salon, Arles and Nimes, eventually exiting the motorway to continue my journey west on the N999, which brought me within striking distance of Millau. The old road down into the town is a wonderful flowing switchback, with stunning views across the valley and of the impressive bridge in the distance. Hot and tired, I found the local campsite, had a welcome swim, put up the tent and then settled into the restaurant for a glass of wine and a decent meal.

By now I was becoming expert at packing up the camping equipment

and also loading it all onto the bike, so I was on the road by mid morning, heading into town to find some fuel. There's a good view of the Milau



bridge from the town, but as I travelled north-west on the N911 and the road passed beneath it, I was totally awestruck by this wonder of



modern civil engineering. Looking up at the bridge for the first time is quite breathtaking. To give some idea of scale, at its highest point you can fit the Canary Warf tower beneath the bridge and it is near here that you can pop in to the visitor centre to buy souvenirs and look directly up at the impressive engineering. In order to fully complete the Millau experience I decided to go over the bridge as well, so that I could take in the scenery and study the engineering at closer quarters. The fact that this meant another trip up the windy road simply contributed to the enjoyment of the day, although it did mean that time was getting on by the time I started to make decent headway north.

Once off the motorway I was back on the windy roads, with wonderful scenery and places of interest to look at. This whole area is absolutely beautiful, with wonderful landscapes and equally interesting roads, so would be a worthwhile biking destination in its own right. The route passed through historic towns and villages and crossed over impressive hydro electric dams, my progress slowed simply by the volume of interesting things to see.



As I travelled further north the weather started to worsen, and by the time I reached Eymoutiers there

was rain in the air, so I decided to



stop at the campsite there in order to erect my tent in the dry. This campsite was rather more basic. It had modern, clean washing facilities, but no swimming pool or restaurant, which meant a trip into town for a well earned dinner and drink.

The grey weather theme continued the next day, with mist hanging heavily amongst the trees of the surrounding pine forest. I blame the mist for taking a wrong turn out of the campsite and heading in totally the wrong direction, only a glance at my compass revealing the fact about

10 miles later. A quick u-turn and I was back on track for another interesting day in the saddle, getting lost in Limoges and taking a rather circuitous route around Angers.

But it was clear that the area I was travelling through had once been home to the French upper classes, before they lost their heads! The density of chateaus was increasing as the miles passed by, culminating in



the Loire Valley where these grand houses were almost built close enough to each other to mimic a modern housing estate! It is also along this valley that some of the

residents have built their homes into the side of the cliff, with all sorts of grand extensions made of the local sandstone.



My final destination for the day was an unofficial campsite near Redon where I had planned to rendezvous with Martyn Buckland and a gang of WaBAM bikers who were across in Brittany for a long weekend. It was wet by the time I arrived, so I was glad to be offered the use of Martyn's tent for the night, as he had successfully blagged a bed in his sisters house across the road. After a great bar-b-q, a few drinks and

time spent sharing our biking experiences, it was off to bed early so that we would be ready for an early start the following morning.

The following day we followed Martyn on a circuitous route through the



French countryside, regularly stopping so that Martyn could check his directions with other in the group that had the benefit of SAT Nav. We stopped at Domfront for lunch, at a bike friendly café before completing the journey to Caen in double quick time to ensure that we didn't miss the ferry.

The channel was like a mill pond, so after a very relaxing channel crossing, sunning ourselves on the aft deck (rear end – oooer missus!) of the Britany ferry, the group disembarked at Portsmouth and disappeared off into the darkness to complete the final leg home, having thoroughly enjoyed our time in France.



Les

Why not share your experience of a biking holiday. Send your words with pictures if possible to Newsletter.Editor@wabam.org.uk



Adverse Camber

Martyn Buckland

Only time for a quick rant this time – and it's not really a rant either (well it is the season of good-will...)

Many of you will know that the Motorcycle Skill for Life Package is going to rise from 1st February 2008 to £109. They (IAM Head Office) are keeping the rise for Cars down in order to leave it under £100 – just – at £99. Why the difference? Because bike examiners charge more as they use their own m/c's basically. The IAM were losing money on every bike test. Why the increase at all? Because the cost hadn't gone up since 2003. If you look at the increase year on year, it's not such a big deal. Perhaps they should just increase it every year by the rate of inflation so it doesn't come as so much of a shock – and a shock it is to a lot of people, especially if you consider a M/cycle Associate also has to contribute to their Observer's running costs.

Every time there is a cost increase, the Membership (especially motorcyclists) throw their toys out of the pram citing the difficulty of getting new Associates to part with that sort of cash. I acknowledge the difficulty but still think that it represents incredibly good value for money. If you consider the average number of hours an Observer puts in to get someone to test standard – it's reckoned about 10 hours – where can you get 10 hours of any service and an examination process for that cost or less? **RoSPA** I hear you shout quite rightly -and there is our challenge as an Organisation.

Personally, I've taken both tests and don't think there is much between the preparation and execution of the Test - the difference is in the grading and re-take process. I'd like the Organisations to come together and perhaps the untimely death of Christopher Bullock may see

something along those lines - but there's a lot of intransigence in both camps so we'll have to see.

WaBAM has been borne through the IAM and owes all its existence to that organisation and those in the Region and at Head Office who supported us. **WaBAM** has always said that its primary objective is the development of rider skills – and therefore its organisational allegiance should be a secondary consideration. From where I sit, that is still best served from within the IAM and if we don't like what comes down from on high then it's our duty to try and change from within.

Anyway that's the view from an outgoing Chairman (lest you forget). It's your Group. What do you want to do? (please don't choke on your Christmas Pud!)

Safe riding.... And have a very Happy Christmas!

Martyn

Editors Notes

Martyn Jefferies – *Newsletter Editor*

Just a short issue this month as Decembers Newsletter is actually being compiled quite soon after the last issue, and, due to a disaster with my home PC, I've had to put it together at quite short notice.

It's not until something happens to your computer, that you actually realise just how dependent you are on it. Contact details, household account information, Newsletters, all went missing without trace when my hard disk failed!!!

Fortunately I've since managed to reclaim much of the data, but I will certainly be creating more backup's in the future, and you may want to learn from my mistakes too.

As a committee, we have now agreed deadlines for submission of articles for the Newsletter, which is to be the 15th of the month prior to publication.

This should ensure that throughout 2008 we are able to issue the newsletter at more regular intervals, on the cover date (ie: March, June, September and December.

I have let Les take over this issue with his excellent review of his French holiday. What with the pictures as well, we can really appreciate what a great time was had. If you have been on a motorcycling holiday, or had any other experience that you can share with our members, or maybe you have a new bike that you could submit a report on, please forward your article to me using the email address at the end of this Newsletter. It would be great to hear from you.

I do have a couple of items ready for the next issue, so there's something to look forward to next year already,

but it's always easier deciding what to leave for next month, rather than having the problem of knowing what to put in this month, so put pen to paper / fingertips to keyboards and share your experiences.

Have a great Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year

Martyn J

CONGRATULATIONS

David Charleston

on being recommended for IAM Membership under the guidance of Observer,

Peter Hawkes.

Thanks to all Observers for their time throughout 2007 to enable Motorcyclists of Bath and Wiltshire achieve this goal, keep up the good work.

Events – Regular or Not

First report suggest the Group Christmas '**Do at the Dogs**' was a great success. So much so that Nigel is considering a similar evening at the **Speedway** in the Summer of 2008.

Talking of the Summer of 2008, their will be a **Wabam Weekend away**, 6,7, 8 and possibly 9th June, taking in the delights of Ashbourne and Matlock, with a choice of accommodation from Youth hostels,

camping and B&B's, more details to follow.

The **February Social** meeting at the King Alfred will be a **Quiz Night** and some food will also be laid on, so come along and show us just how clever you are, or just to meet with other members in a different environment to the usual rideouts.

Rideouts continue through the winter

months. **Januarys ride (20th)** will be led by Rideout Coordinator Rob Blackburn. Meet at the usual place (Little Chef, A350 Chippenham) at 09:00 for an 09:30 departure. Despite what the weather may throw at us, you can be sure that there'll be some good roads.

Another Karting night is also being planned for next year, following the success of the previous event.

Our Sponsors

George White Superbike Centre www.georgewhite.co.uk	Athena Avenue, Elgin Drive, Swindon, SN2 8EJ Tel: 01793 716716	<i>Show your current membership card to obtain a 10% discount on accessories, clothing and workshop services.</i>
Artdeans Motorcycle & Scooter Centre www.artdeans.com	207 Rodbourne Road Swindon Tel: 01793 574800	<i>Show your current membership card to obtain a 10% to 20% discount on accessories and clothing. Ask for details.</i>



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