

Helmet & Goggles



Highland Classic
Motorcycle Club
Newsletter
Autumn 2024



CLUB NEWS.

Meetings - first Tuesday of every month (except January). Chieftain Hotel 7:30 pm.

Newsletter editors ramblings.

In case you are wondering; the cover pic is of the very fine Listed A Victorian cludgie in Rothesay; visited, perhaps in ones or twos (geddit?) of the intercontinental Bute trippers - see more pics later.

Once again this edition has been festering somewhat as I dot about the Hielunds doing extremely manly things, meeting interesting (obviously) people, driving motorcycles, and just, well, enjoying the "summer". With, it must be said, an occasional tincture based around the Pimms no. 5 recipe.

As we slip into the shorter, colder days there will still be opportunities to get out and about on our machines. The HCMC website calendar is the place to start if you want to join in the club activities. I have decided not to include a summary of the calendar in the edition as it's frankly too much effort to duplicate and re-format the info. If you need hard copy then in 2025 I will try to make a pdf print out available from the website.

Currently the remaining 2024 diary consists of **runs out:**

28th Sept - West coast - depart Tesco Inverness at 1000 - ish

13th Oct - Tiddlers run Tesco - Elgin ditto timing

27th Oct - Run out from Nairn (Basils) ditto timing

agm:

5th Nov - agm & monthly meet up. 7 pm start to allow for agm business.

Christmas meal:

14th December - Chieftain Hotel - more info in due course.

There are two main articles in this edition. One from our previous editor; Malcolm Davidson, and one from a pal of mine, who is a motorcyclist in the HAIBB unit. There is also a wee article drawn from Bennetts Insurance about winter gear.

A couple of other random bits and bobs to fill up some white space and here you have it.

Remember: no copy = no newsletter. Fire it in, or it will all go even quieter.

Mean while I hope you enjoy this edition.

Arrabest, Gavin [hcmc.webmaster@gmail.com]

VOSKHOD by M. Davidson.

The VMCC magazine has a monthly feature recalling articles from motorcycle magazines from 100, 50 and 25 years ago. This article on the right from Bike magazine in August 1974 caught my eye. It records opinions on the testing of a Voskhod 175 motorcycle and it was of interest because I had one of these as my first motorcycle.

No windscreen and leg shields on my one so nothing good about it at all according to the report but even so I don't recall it being as bad as all that. I rode it from Glasgow to Nairn on the old A9 and A82 several times without incident. I passed my test on it and the brakes were good enough for that! In fact, I don't remember the front brake being that bad; what could be worse than the single leading shoe front brake on a Triumph 500?

The tyres were terrible though and I fell off a couple of times in the wet before changing the back tyre for something decent. It was a 16inch wheel and I had a problem getting a suitable tyre in Glasgow. I eventually found one in a shop in Alexandria Parade and rode back through the city with it slung over my shoulder. (One fitted tyres oneself to save money).

On one occasion going over Rannoch Moor the clutch began to slip but that disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared and never occurred again!

I also took it down to Bedford (on the train) where I had a summer job in 1974. Train from Glasgow to London on the Midland Road alighting at Kettering then riding to Bedford. It was early on a Sunday morning and the roads were busy with men on small bikes and scooters loaded up with gear going fishing.

The Voskhod was one of several post-war bikes based on the German DKW; the BSA Bantam was another. It was a single cylinder two stroke twin port and had a decompressor for going down hills. That always leaked and eventually I glued it closed.

Spares were always a problem and if something broke you had to take it off and go round the bike shops to see if they had something similar.

A rear wheel bearing collapsed when riding in Bedford but replacements of a better quality were easily found in a bearing shop (!) in Bedford. It's a weird sensation when the rear wheel suddenly goes off line and wobbly!

When the gear lever return spring broke, I was able to find a Bantam part that looked exactly the same in Bryant's in Biggleswade. I think I had to dismantle the engine to replace that.

I also rode it to the outskirts of London to Hendon to look at the aircraft museum. The run through Luton and St Albans was a nightmare with heavy traffic. It was a minor navigational miracle to find my way around there.

All that summer the Voskhod took me around the south midlands on day trips at the weekends without any real problems.

August 1974

Oh dear. Martin Harrison tested the Voskhod 175 in Bike magazine and did a veritable hatchet job, though it sounds as if it deserved it. True, the Russian two-stroke was cheap at £195, it started well and the standard screen and legshields kept the weather off, but that was about as far as the good news went. More fundamentally, the front brake appeared to do very little useful work, as Martin found out when a car in front turned right without warning and he was unable to slow enough to nip up the inside. Adding insult to injury, "the tyres grip about as well as the brakes stop."

He concluded: "I just can't think of any circumstance where this bike would be good for anything...With bike riding getting increasingly hazardous all the time, anything like the Voskhod is a killer. I hope to God I never see one on the road."

Bike

On the way home I had to get to Rugby for a train to Inverness. Riding across country from Bedford without getting lost was also a miracle but it was managed in time. In those days OS maps and street maps were essential.

I had bought the bike for £110 from John George Motorcycles of Claythorne Street in Glasgow; past the Trongate and The Barras. I remember collecting it one Saturday morning and riding it back down Argyle Street without having had any sort of tuition beforehand. In those days Argyle Street was open to two-way traffic and there were traffic lights every few yards. Lots of Saturday traffic and very stressful but my cycling proficiency training came in handy.

The end of the Voskhod came when the engine seized as I was going along the A80 towards Perth. I was doing around 65mph (indicated) so I got a bit of a fright. I waited until it had cooled and freed itself and then rode gently back to Glasgow. By now it was very rattly but John George generously took it back and gave me £70 for it.

I still have the tyre pump, now attached to my A10, and the petrol coupons issued for it in 1973.

My next bike was a BSA A10 and I've previously written my story with that one.

Not my Voskhod but one very similar found on the internet.

Post script: They might have been considered dangerous junk but one advertised as a 'sports twin' was recently sold by H & H Classic Auctions for nearly £1400. The twin exhaust pipes must have fooled them into thinking it was a twin cylinder motor.



Winter & Gear

I know it's a bit of teaching your granny to suck eggs however below is an article from Bennetts Insurance "Bike Talk" inter web thingie by Gordon Stuart, on staying warm and dry and, more importantly, being able to function in the colder wetter months if so minded.

Know how cold it's going to be. Riders often forget, but always check the weather forecast for the temperature, wind speed and direction. And also consider how fast you plan to ride – there's a big difference between motorway riding and tight mountain roads. When I was in Iceland in 2018 I was getting blasted by 70mph winds with an air temperature of 6°C; when you apply the wind chill factor it feels like -3°C. And that was before I opened the throttle.

Layers, layers, layers. As the article says, if you think it's going to be cold, layer up and bring a spare layer with you too. Even in early 'Summer' in Arctic Norway I had a base layer of thermals plus trousers, T-shirt, woollen shirt and jumper as well as my bike gear.

A waterproof over-suit was at the top of my pannier ready to chuck on if I got too cold, and boy did that help.

The key thing to layers is making sure you have enough room in your bike gear to accommodate the extra padding. Whenever I buy a new jacket, I always size up in preparation for being cold on the bike.

Keep the draughts out. Know where your helmet vents are and close them. Get a neck warmer and tuck in your gloves before you set off. These sound like simple things, but they're effective; I've ridden with mates who've been chilly because they didn't spend an extra 60 seconds on the basics.

One of the biggest draughts is through your visor; I discovered the hard way in the Scottish Highlands when, due to the setting sun, I opened my visor to beat the glare, only to realise 30 minutes later that my body temperature had dropped and I was suddenly feeling rather worse for wear.

Keep dry. I didn't get a Gore-Tex textile suit until I'd been riding for 15 years, but earlier in my bike career I invested in three very important bits of kit:

Firstly, some fully waterproof boots. These tend not to be the most stylish, but they're worth the investment.

Secondly, some quality waterproof gloves. I picked some up before my trip to Iceland for £50 and they've been worth every penny.

Thirdly, that all important waterproof over-suit. This can make up for being unable to invest in expensive textiles. My waterproof suit was the perfect addition to my leathers for the best part of 12 years.

Invest in some tech (if you can afford it) For most of my life on the road I've been a budget-biker making the most of what I could afford, but in 2018 I was lucky enough to get a loan from Suzuki of their top-spec adventure bike and did more than 5,000 miles in the comfort of all things 'heated'. Heated grips are a game-changer riding in the cold, and I urge you to try them if you haven't already. It was only this year that I took the plunge and invested in a heated vest, which wasn't just a game-changer but a life-changer. I can't believe I waited almost two decades to feel the switch-adjustable heat warming my core.

I (and HCMC) don't endorse Bennetts in any shape or form but I find some of their articles give timely reminders. HCMC also don't endorse the Inverness Biker Gear shop but it, the shop, has, in my opinion, some excellent / quality gear, which although not cheap, is certainly worth a visit if you haven't already done so.

Inverness Biker Gear

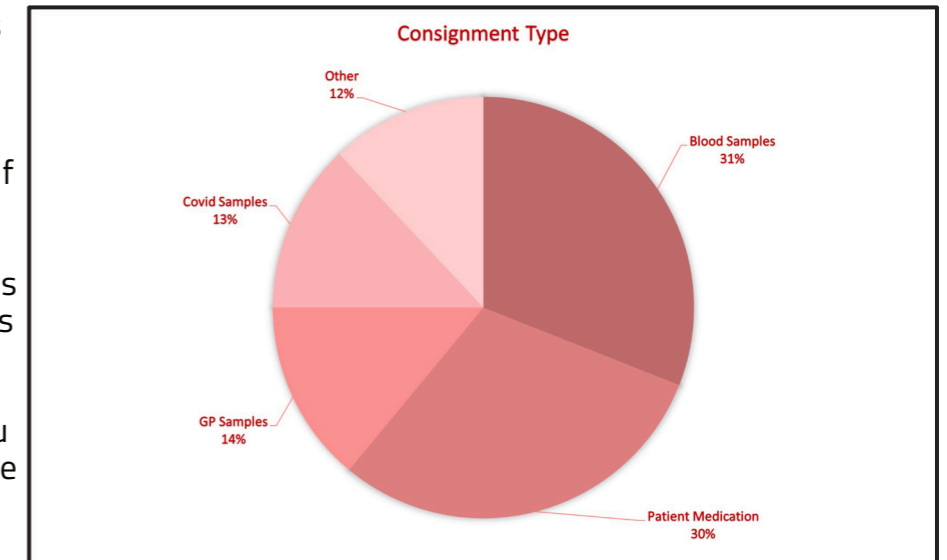


Volunteering with HAIBB

Highlands and Islands Blood Bikes is a volunteer-run charity set up to provide an urgent medical collection service for the National Health Service. While the majority of local work is centred around Raigmore Hospital in Inverness, there are volunteers in Skye, Oban, Fort William and Caithness allowing relays from these areas to shorten the distances volunteers have to travel.

Most of the work is centred around Raigmore laboratories, with routine runs of tests and samples to and from all the Highland hospitals and Health Centres but also Perth, Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh. Having the samples collected and delivered promptly allows quicker test results, greatly improving patient care.

HAIBB also delivers prescriptions direct from the pharmacy at Raigmore to patients all over the Highlands. Locating some of the houses can be a challenge in itself but the relief on the face of patients who would otherwise have no access to the pharmacy is a real measure of the value of this service. All the volunteers agree that this is the most satisfying aspect of the work, you know you are making a real difference to the patient when you hand over the package.



Keeping the fleet running also relies on volunteers, while each rider or driver is responsible for daily vehicle checks prior to runs, there are weekly checks to be completed and servicing to be organised. The fleet travelled over 100,000 miles in the last year, and is getting busier. Work is organised through volunteer controllers who are in contact with the NHS and provide details of each job either via text or phone. Mobile signals in remote areas can also be a challenge!

Riders need to be Advanced IAM / ROSPA / Police trained, but drivers do not. Livered bikes and cars are used but you can use your own vehicles if you want, subject to approval from your insurer.

Regular coffee and cake mornings are held at the Inverness garage to allow volunteers to meet and get to know each other. Fundraising events at supermarkets and shows are also sociable events and advertise the charity to the public, these have proved to be really valuable and we get very positive feedback too.

The more volunteers we have spreads the load on the current team, so if you fancy getting involved as a rider, driver, controller or fundraiser get in touch!

We could really benefit from another few members, especially in Wick & Oban, so if you live in those areas have a think about volunteering.

Have a look at the website for more information:

Haibloodbikes.co.uk or contact our Chairman, Graham Allan, at: Chairman@haibloodbikes.co.uk

Stewart MacInnes



Isle of Bute weekend - pics credits - by various





The annual HCMC BBQ hosted by Lexi and Ralph

Club members winning stuff
Pic credits - not known.



John the "Cashier" wins at Brodie. If yer no in, y'll no win!



Robin (XT 500) & Paul ('62 Triumph) win at Nairns Wheels event. Congrats to both.



Two pics of runs out....



HCMC Newsletter is produced quarterly-ish.

Cut off date for next copy is 26th Nov 2024

Please send articles for inclusion to:-

hcmc.webmaster@gmail.com