

SPOKE & PISTON



Vol 9 No. 2

March April 04

From the Chair...



The club started off the new year with a streamlined committee for a more even work-spread and for the first time introducing subcommittees consisting of non-committee members who will be responsible for runs, support and training.

I would like to welcome the only new member on this year's Committee, Etienne van der Stockt. The support Etienne will have in his road run subcommittee i.e. Richard Hussey, Renier Jordaan and Johan Strauss, will ensure an eventful year as far as road runs are concerned. Pieter de Koker's GS subcommittee also has a lot of experienced people such as Adriaan Scheepers, André Henrico and Stefan Janse van Rensburg organising runs.

I would also like to welcome back Stuart Downie after a few year's absence. Stuart has offered to take over the subcommittee responsible for safety and support which has been a big drive by the Committee since the previous year. Stuart's portfolio has been e-mailed to members, will appear on the website and also in this edition of Spoke and Piston. The success of this support programme will depend on members' availability for the support roster. You are urged to put forward your names for this important facility at our club rides.

Deon Gericke, Chairman.

Report back from the Club A.G.M.

(Henri Heyns)

The Annual General Meeting of the Pretoria BMW Motorcycle Club was held on Friday 5 March 2004 at the Clubhouse at Bavarian Motorcycles. Some sixty people attended, a good turn-out, considering the good rains that had fallen in the City for most part of the day.

New Office Bearers.

The following members were elected to run the club's affairs for the year:

Deon Gericke – Chairman (second term); Basiliki Gericke – Secretary; Mike Hennessy – Treasurer; Pieter de Koker – GS Events; Brian Cannoo – Communications; Etienne van der Stockt – Road Events.

Because of work commitments, stalwarts Richard Hussey and Adriaan Scheepers asked to be excused from serving on the committee but offered their services as co-opted members on a piece-meal basis as and when required. The chairman thanked them for their past input and assured them that their expertise would soon again be called for.

Extracts from the Chairman's Report

1. The questionnaire sent out to members during the year, yielded valuable information and many of the suggestions made would be incorporated in club activities for the ensuing year.
2. The 'Extreme Rider' programme proves to be popular and quite a few riders have already achieved the gold and silver status, with many still in the pipe line. (Deon and Basiliki Gericke were the first rider-and-pillion couple to receive the coveted Gold award.)
3. Runs were generally well attended. Long tours undertaken were the Namakwaland/Alexander Bay and the Lesotho circumnavigation runs.
4. Due to a number of mishaps on club outings during the year, most minor but some serious, the committee has decided to institute a

four-wheeled vehicle back-up service for all major runs, serving both road and off-road groups at the same time. Members with suitable vehicles who are prepared to assist in this regard are requested to contact the committee for details.

5. The importance of wearing appropriate apparel during organised runs was again stressed. Run leaders have the authority to refuse participation to anyone not complying with this requirement.
6. New proposed additions to the premises of Bavarian Motorcycles during this year will benefit the club immensely. In so doing it has earmarked an office for the exclusive use of the club, a magnanimous gesture much appreciated by the committee and members.
7. The existing club house has suffered from poor ventilation in summer due to the low slung roof and windows not allowing for an adequate flow of air. This was modified by erecting a high slanting roof to allow for better circulation.
8. A special word of thanks went out to Bruce and Wendy Meyers for the continued provision, free of charge, of the excellent facilities and catering for the club's monthly Noggin evenings. Without this support there would be an enormous financial and organisational burden on the club's resources.

Extracts from the Treasurer's Report.

1. The club has 117 members (163 if spouses are included).
2. A total gross income of R30 876 (as opposed to R21 792 in 2002) was realised for the year under review, and after expenses, a surplus of R16 905 (R13 882 in 2002) was transferred to retained income.
3. Refreshment sales contributed R4 167 to the club's income.
4. The back-up vehicle used on the Clarens trip cost R1 679. (See also item 4 of the Chairman's Report.) It was suggested that run participants be called on in future to contribute towards expenses for the back-up.
5. Donations to charities only amounted to R430 (R2 000 for 2002). As the club's adopted charity, the Bramley Children's Home, is in urgent need of financial assistance, the new committee has undertaken to correct this oversight in the new year.
6. Printing and stationery amounted to R377 (R806 in 2002). This saving was brought about by the increased use of the Internet and E-mail. (The newsletter Spoke 'n Piston is also published on the Internet and only some thirty copies are printed for distribution locally.)
7. All BMW clubs affiliated to the parent body, Clubs Africa, receive an annual grant calculated on the number of members exceeding 100. This club received a grant of R3 815 (R4 032 in 2002). This lower amount is as a result of a slight dip in membership earlier in the year. As membership has now increased, it is expected that the grant will be higher for the ensuing year.
8. As members are reluctant to serve drinks during Noggin evenings, the club has had to employ two barmen. Expenditure in this regard amounted to R2 320.
9. The sale of club regalia brought in R740, reflecting a gross profit of 7%.
10. The club is in a financially sound position, its book reflecting a retained surplus of R60 259.
11. Due to the excellent financial position that the club is in, the committee decided not to increase subscription fees for this year.

Honorary member

The Chairman announced that the committee hadn't as yet identified a person for honorary membership for the year. There are presently only three such members, being Hennie de Beer, Allie Scheepers and Henri Heyns. Club members wishing to nominate a fourth person could do so by contacting the committee.

After the meeting, first-Friday-of-the-month socialising continued until late despite the rain that threatened to dampen spirits. However, everyone stayed behind, having a drink or two and enjoying the hospitality of Bruce and Wendy Meyers who provided a 'skaapbraai' and 'mieliepap' *par excellence*, with the result that people were still standing around long after bed time.

Any member who could not attend the A.G.M., and is interested, is welcome to request a copy of all the documents distributed thereat. Club Secretary Basiliki Gericke will be pleased to accommodate you. (See elsewhere in this newsletter for telephone numbers.)

The Training and Support Portfolio

(Deon Gericke)

The training and support portfolio (TS) has been given to Stuart Downie who will be the coordinating officer for the ensuing year. In order to give something back to the members and to uphold our *Safe* approach to motorcycling, we have decided that the club will try to provide some interesting and informative training and safety lessons. We will also attempt to assist in recoveries on the monthly runs and will try to provide a backup vehicle on every run that is of more than two days duration.

The portfolio will coordinate the following:

Training

- Road and GS riding external courses
- Internal maintenance courses
- First aid
- Protective Clothing
- What to take on a long distance run
 - o Road and GS
 - o Camping
- Communications on the road
- Using a GPS and what to look for when buying a GPS

General Safety rules
Riding distances and riding in groups (every run)
Safety tips (every run)

Support

Support is to be provided for the monthly runs and the longer tours.

Monthly runs

The club will be purchasing a trailer to use for recoveries. Each month the trailer will be placed in the care of a marshal at his home where he may be contacted for the use of the trailer or if needs be, the marshal will perform the recovery. In the case of a breakdown or accident on a monthly run the person in trouble may either request that a spouse, other family or friend, collect and use the trailer for recovery or where there is no other support, the marshal will collect the bike. ***Please reimburse the marshal for his fuel.*** We would like to have two marshals on duty for each monthly run, thus we will be looking for 24 volunteers. A roster of the volunteers will be available and each month the trailer will be moved to the next location. Should a breakdown occur the marshal will be contacted and arrangements to recover the bike will be made between the run leader, the stranded person and the marshal. Each marshal must be on call on one Sunday in the year. During touring events when the trailer is in use we will seek assistance from club members who have trailers, as well as Bavarian Motorcycles.

Touring Events

On each tour we will be looking for volunteer marshals to accompany the tour. The marshal will use the club trailer, his own transport and will be reimbursed for fuel and given a living-out allowance as compensation. Where the tour is based at a focal point for the duration of the tour, the marshal will be required to operate from the base only. Thus a marshal may have to trail his bike to the base camp and then can ride on a daily basis with the rest of the group. On return he would have to trail his bike back. Should a breakdown occur, the person incurring this may become the marshal. Run leaders and the marshal will work together on the ground to establish exact operations.

Where the run is continuous touring the marshal will meet the group at fixed points each evening and this could be on a rotational basis. In the event of a breakdown the recovery vehicle will be contacted and will proceed to such point. When covering areas such as GS terrain the vehicle may have to follow the GS route. Vehicle and run leader communication is being investigated.

Rental

When not in use the trailer will be available for hire to club members at 50% of the cost of normal trailer hire.

Accolade for doing a splendid job

(Henri Heyns)

Simon Pifold, the Parts and Service Manager at Bavarian Motorcycles in Pretoria has served his employer well for more than twelve years. He has a wealth of technical and business knowledge accumulated through all the years in the motorcycle industry and speaks authoritatively on just about anything within his domain. His colleagues and staff know him to be kind, understanding, supportive and above all, reliable in his dealings with them. But be sure that he expects a day's work for a day's pay and hence, displays impatience with mediocrity.



In the light of the above, one is therefore not surprised to learn that Simon recently became a shareholder in Bavarian Motorcycles.

But how did all this come about? Simon explained: "I joined Bruce Meyers in 1991 at (the then) Frates Motors in Villeria as a trainee in the parts department. It was a small establishment then, comprising six people. We were a BMW bike dealership even then, with Bruce, a bookkeeper, one mechanic and his assistant, plus myself and one parts assistant making up the full complement. When we moved to our present premises in 1992 as Bavarian Motorcycles, I had become Parts/Service Manager.

We worked very hard those days to get a foothold in a market that was controlled by bigger firms in Pretoria and Johannesburg. But tenacity and perseverance prevailed and soon we were getting a fair share of business in one of the toughest sectors of the market. I am happy to announce that our staff complement now numbers 29 people, including five fully trained mechanics, and that we are one of the biggest stand-alone BMW bike dealerships in the country".

Asked what his vision is for the future he said that he subscribes to the adage that if you're not expanding you're failing. This viewpoint has always been the hallmark of a successful businessman. As to his mission Simon replied that in 2002 Bavarian Motorcycle's sales were among the top 50 BMW motorcycle dealerships world wide. "Even if we now move up into the top 40 it will be an achievement, but that isn't good enough. My mission is two-fold: To end up in the top world 30 for starters, in the near future. Secondly, I would like to see Bavarian become the biggest and smartest stand-alone bike dealership in the country. Remember, there is only way to go and that is forward".

The club congratulates Simon heartily on his outstanding achievement. We, together with his wife Sarah and children Vicky and Brandon, are proud of him and wish him a long life and much success in his chosen career.

Getting to grips with riding reality

(Henri Heyns)

So, you're hot stuff on your motorcycle; have been riding for years and many kilometres without a serious prang and the little one you had some time ago was the other guy's fault anyway. Yes, you agree that you're not perfect and would never dream of taking on anyone in the 'S' Cup class, but by and large you can get by in any kind of weather and reasonably hold your own against most bikers. Need training in how to ride a motorcycle? No way! It would just be a waste of time and money. After all driver training is really meant for guys who are onto track racing, but for ordinary road use, what can they teach you that you haven't mastered already? Common sense is all it takes...

When Bruce Meyers, Bavarian Motorcycles' numero uno invited a few biking enthusiast to attend a motorcycle driving course at the BMW Training Academy at Swartkops, I immediately said yes thank you. Not only would I be able to upgrade my riding skills, but could get first-hand information on what the course comprises, the quality of instruction given, and above all the applicability of such training for commuters and other such road users. The Academy offers training courses for novices, intermediate and advanced riders and naturally the middle offering was the one I elected to go on.

Friday 27 February was a wet day and the rain came and went. Before leaving home I telephoned to enquire whether the course would still be held. Yes, of course they assured me, and added that this kind of weather was actually preferred because it would get the trainee better acquainted with slippery road surfaces, safe accelerating and braking requirements, the use of wet-weather garments, and so on.

The ten of us rode in convoy to Swartkops under the watchful eye of Emille Venter from Bavarian, and having arrived there, were welcomed by training director James McClelland and his staff, introduced to ten other trainees and offered coffee. After a brief orientation and signing the necessary indemnity, the programme started.

What is interesting is the emphasis on hands-on training. Classroom activity is virtually nil (despite the intermittent rain), with the exception of a general synopsis of what the course is going to be about, what is expected of each rider, the do's and don'ts and general information.

There are various exercises, such as proper mounting and dismounting, pulling away, the use of both front and rear brakes when making an emergency stop, coming to a dead stop without putting your feet down, swerving, experiencing the effect of negative and positive road camber in turns, and so on. Doing exercises at a moderate speed indicated by the trainers was well within the capability of every rider and no one appeared to be under pressure at any time.

The contingent was divided into two groups working from top to bottom and vice versa to facilitate the exercises. Each trainee manoeuvre was observed by one or more members of the training team (in different positions) and defects corrected on the spot. After each exercise we alighted from our machines (to stretch our legs) and formed a circle around James for a general break down

on observed errors and how to correct them, and so on. Questions and answers formed an important adjunct to this discussion. After an excellent finger lunch we continued with the training but exercises were conducted at a quicker pace as our experience (and confidence) grew. The end of the course saw one group at a time doing six laps around the circuit at one's own comfortable speed to get an impression of what track riding really is like. An interesting innovation is that groups then rode anti-clockwise to practice braking, accelerating and manoeuvring techniques in the other direction.

After the course there was again coffee and a run down chat on the day's events. Each participant was issued with a certificate of completion.

Useful tips learnt on the course

1. Look far ahead and in the direction you want to go. Never become transfixed by the potential hazard. Keep it in your peripheral vision but concentrate on the way out.
2. Condition yourself to drive relaxed yet alert. Rest your hands loosely on the controls.
3. Do not over inflate your tyres, especially when riding in wet weather when a bigger 'footprint' for better grip is required.
4. Be careful of manoeuvring on cold tyres. Give them a chance to warm up. This is especially important when setting off from home.
5. Turn your head left and right before pulling off or changing lanes. Regular glances through both your rear view mirrors are essential but will not show overtaking vehicles in the 'blind' spots.
6. Use your bike every day or at least as often as you can, preferably in traffic, to practice and sharpen your riding skills.
7. Practice the swerving and emergency braking techniques as often as you can, increasing your speed as you become more confident with the manoeuvres.
8. Remember that severe braking is only effective when the bike is in an upright position. Be careful of fully and semi- integrated (Evo) braking systems (one control operates both front and rear brakes simultaneously). Although improving braking efficiency immensely, improper use could cause a spill.
9. Practice observing detail in your peripheral vision. This can help you to detect surrounding hazards (vehicles, pedestrians, animals, debris, etc.) without having to interrupt your focus on the direction in which you want to go.
10. When dismounting, use the side stand first with the bike in low gear, and with the clutch pulled in, then lift the machine onto its main stand.
11. When stationary at a robot/stop street, engage low gear with clutch in, left foot on the ground and the right foot on the rear brake. Scan your rear view frequently to observe what is coming up behind you.
12. Never accept road conditions and traffic at face value. Things are not always what they seem. Always expect an unforeseen occurrence.

Every biker probably reaches a stage of overconfidence over time, with bad/dangerous habits becoming ingrained in his/her riding style. It takes a course like this for some expert rider to gently point out imperfections

in one's riding style. I liked the way in which James and his team went about the business of helping trainees develop their basic skills, passing on vital tips on how to overcome problems, and generally guiding each individual along the road to better motorcycling. Thank you James and team for your effort, patience and encouragement. I for one, look forward to doing the advanced course with you in due course.

As I see It...

The shape of things to come?

(Henri Heyns)

Whichever way one looks at it, it seems as if the authorities are really gunning for ordinary road users in order to try and stop the carnage on our roads these days. The paper recently hinted at the possibility that the speed limit on roads other than highways could soon be limited to 50 kph. What daftness besets such people in high positions? What will happen to our economy if such legislation is imposed on our roads? We know that the railways are not nearly fulfilling their obligation to get passengers and goods to where they need and want to be. Most of all this is being ~~done~~ by road. If the authorities are convinced that this is the way to go to reduce accidents, why not reduce the speed limit to 25 kph? They could even do better by bringing it down to 10 kph! Why not ban all vehicular traffic from our roads and I'll guarantee a total cessation of road accidents for all time to come! Ridiculous is what some readers might say to this train of thought. But where does 'ridiculous' start and stop? We all know that the road accident problem is much more complex than a simple decision by some one person higher up the circus pole.

However, if the reader surmises that it's only our traffic authorities putting the wrong foot down the wrong way in order to address the accident problem, take a look at what's happening in the UK.

A British biking magazine recently lamented the stringent new European regulations due to be introduced on June 17 this year. All new motorcycle models registered in the EU (European Union) will have to comply with the Whole Vehicle Type Approval regulations (WVTA). This in effect means that those with engines designed before the mid-nineties are unlikely to survive, the magazine surmises.

Ten Areas subject to WVTA.

1. Noise. The motorcycle may not produce more than 80 dB(A) in hugely complex ride-by tests. There are also static idling tests. In future, more and more sound-dulling measures will have to be taken, from bigger, more complex silencers to sound damping materials on fairing inners, engine casings – to damp transmission noise – and air boxes. They may even see fully enclosed transmission chains in the near future.

2. Passenger hand-holds. Must have a strap, grab-rail or handholds if there's a passenger facility. It must also be capable of handling 2000 Newtons of force.
3. Exhaust system. The longevity of the system is tested, with special regard to any noise-killing materials and emissions they may cause when heated.
4. Electro-magnetic compatibility. Tests to ensure your bike won't blow up next door's microwave.
5. Projections. A victory of endless bureaucracy over common sense, covering everything from screen edges to the rubber piece on the back of the key.
6. Controls. This ensures the uniformity of warning lights and control symbols. Also buckets of tests for the functionality of every conceivable controlling mechanism.
7. Hooter. Again, daftly complex testing procedures, e.g. 'Electro-pneumatic audible warning devices may be lubricated with oil recommended by their manufacturer every 10 000 operations'. (Who'll be counting?)
8. Speedo. This must read in mph as well as kph and be suitable in terms of incrementation for the speed range of the machine. Speedos must not under-read, so every error tends to over-reading within permissible percentage limits (different for different speeds).
9. Mirrors. An awesome complex set of requirements for these infinitely simple devices.
10. Brakes. Must perform in relation to size/weight/speed and are tested for progression of application and stopping distances – measured wet and dry with cold brakes and tyres. Brakes should become more powerful and easy to use. Perhaps they'll see more servo assistance on heavier models.

From the look of things, we bikers are seemingly up against a lot of people all over the world who begrudge us the roads on which we put our wheels. Be it as it may, we riders should do everything in our power not to antagonise other road users. Sure, there are hooligan bikers as there are hooligan car drivers. (Pity that only the bikers are earmarked as such). But courtesy begets courtesy as I've often said in this newsletter. One would be surprised at the goodwill one can generate on and off the road by showing a little consideration to other road users who (perhaps unbeknown to them) are not as fortunate as we, to be doing it all on two wheels!

A true story as told by a good friend

(Etienne van der Stoekt)

This dear friend who shall be nameless, is an avid motorcyclist and a true enthusiast, and had been toying with the idea of replacing his trusty BMW K1200 RS with the newer GT version of essentially the same motorcycle.

After due deliberation and some negotiation the deal was struck and my friend was now the proud owner of a brand new K1200 GT. Now, whilst the new version of this particular model has had rave reviews from all who have ridden it, the choice of standard colour schemes offered are definitely not intended to excite or stir the soul. In fact words like "bland" and "unimaginative" spring to mind. However, these are merely minor irritations and as my friend, the new owner, is neither "bland" nor "unimaginative", the decision to have the new bike "personalised" and custom painted in an eye-catching and very distinctive "Ducati yellow", prior to him taking delivery, was easily and wisely made. The newly coloured panels were duly returned with painstakingly applied fresh paint and expertly fitted and the day dawned that delivery could physically take place. So, excitedly the new owner hastily made his way to the dealership to collect his new "baby".

The handover of keys, papers and documents, owner's manuals etc. completed, my good friend the proud new owner bids the dealer farewell and excitedly jumps aboard his stunning new steed to begin the 60 km ride home to Pretoria on a sweltering Highveld afternoon in typical Friday peak hour traffic. He is however unperturbed by the heat due to wearing his new airflow jacket, bought at the same time as the bike. After 10 minutes of riding he became aware of extreme heat on his legs and buttocks. He recalled that this new model came with a "heated seat" (which his old bike didn't have) and so he imagined that it had been inadvertently switched on and started to look for the "off" switch for the heated seat. (Clever fellows these BMW engineers. They think of everything don't they?)

Now, trying to negotiate bumper to bumper traffic and to simultaneously look for an elusive "off" button on a brand new, similar but not quite the same motorcycle, is not to be attempted unless you have lost the desire to live and wish to become a bonnet adornment for a mini-bus taxi.

By now the temperature of the "heated seat" combined with the sweltering heat of the day were, to put it politely, not just toasting but ROASTING the sensitive bits of the now completely bamboozled rider who had turned every available switch at his disposal

to the "off" position. (This is to say all except for the headlights as you have to make sure you give other road users as much opportunity possible to see you and hopefully avoid crashing into you.) The mind, regardless of it being the most powerful tool we possess, is still unable to completely switch off the synapses that are processing and by now registering severe discomfort and excruciating pain from an extremely sensitive part of our rider's anatomy, caused by a heated seat designed to keep German bums warm during fierce sub zero Bavarian winters and not 30+ degree African summer days.

Now to be fair to our undaunted rider, and not to be put off by a "non-existent" off button, he continues the rest of the journey home standing up "enduro" style to the bemused and amazed looks of the car drivers, who no doubt put his antics down to that of just another crazy kamikaze bike rider. Upon his arrival home and still unable to find the "off" button, the thought occurred to him that somehow during the re-assembly process after the spray job, one of the wires controlling the heated seat had been inadvertently re-routed and was now malfunctioning. This was the only logical explanation to our rider's temperature-increased mind.

As a celebratory "run-in" ride to the Eastern Transvaal and an overnight stay at the wonderful Woodsman had been planned for the next day, the only solution would be to find the errant wire and cut it, thus ensuring that the heated seat remained "off" and cool for the remainder of the weekend's planned riding. In desperate need of some cool refreshment and fortunately prior to embarking on the all-important wire cutting task, a generous dram of medicinal spirit was added to lots of ice in a long glass and a quick sit down on a comfortable chair to rest those aching legs caused by the long standing ride home, was in order.

During this moment of fortitude the all-important "Owner's Manual" happened to come to mind and to hand and after a quick read all was to be revealed. It goes something like this: "Thank you for having purchased a BMW..... Your new motorcycle has been fitted with all the latest gizmo's and in keeping with new international standards your motorcycle's headlights are automatically switched on when you start your engine. The switch that controls the heated seat is now located where the previous headlight "on/off" control button used to be. "Up" is for the hottest setting, "Down" is for off...."

Clever fellows these BMW engineers. They think of everything, don't they?.....!!!!!!

PS. The moral of the story: Read the Manual!

Great excitement at the Buff 2004

(Henri Heyns)

The Buffalo Rally, or Buff as it's briefly called, took place at Sea View in Port Elizabeth again, this time on the 19 – 21 March. Well attended, as usual, by some 4000 bikers, the Rally again proved that fun is to be had by all. It is not a gathering of drinking, fighting and swearing leathernecks from the bad part of the woods, as many uninitiated critics may surmise. Admittedly, accommodation and facilities are basic in the sense that camping is almost the only option on the terrain, ablution facilities are strained because of the number of people involved, and food, although plentiful, is limited mostly to the fish and chips/hamburger/hot dog varieties. And yes, there is a lot of around-the-clock noise as rallyists amuse and enjoy themselves with loud music, revvies, wheelies, stoppies, burnouts, making 'doughnuts', singing, dancing, having a drink or two and generally letting their hair down to escape the responsibilities and tensions of earning a living nowadays.

Our two club committee stalwarts Brian Cannoo and Etienne van der Stockt are enthusiastic Buff supporters. They plan to do the Rally route again next year, this time to be held at George in the Cape. All are welcome to join them on this adventure (and perhaps to peel off to somewhere in that beautiful part of the country after the Rally). It really is great fun and promises to be a never-to-be-forgotten experience. More details will be available later on in the year. Meanwhile keep end March 2005 open for an unusual adventure and a good laugh!

Enthusiastic bikers in the persons of Dave Preston and his girl friend joined the Pretoria contingent to the Buff and back and Dave gives his impressions in a very descriptive and amusing article on our website. The photographs of the trip there and back, as well as of the happenings at the Buff, are also of a high quality, giving an insight of what such a rally is all about. Read all about it on:

< www.bmwclubs.co.za/pretoria/articles/buff2004/index.html >



Merry makers at the Buff doing their 'doughnut' thing as part of the good clean fun to be had at such a gathering.

Those were the days

(Henri Heyns)

We sat talking the other day and as usual, bikes and biking proved to be the favourite topic. The old 'ballies' among us recalled the old days when biking down to the corner café for milk was said to be an experience and anything further afield an adventure. Yes, we told our amazed and disbelieving young friends, in those days the only tarred road through some of our small towns was the main road and super markets had not yet been thought of. As youngsters (and this was just after WW 2), we considered a 125cc two-stroke machine something to dream about and recalled fondly the single cylinder British made Famous James (that was its name) and the Royal Enfield and a dozen other makes manufactured in a period when the Brits made more bikes than anyone else). To us, a 350cc was a big bike and a 500cc, like the Norton Dominator, a huge monstrosity that did not even feature in our list of desirables. Fuel injection, disc brakes, tubeless tyres, self starters, on board computers, electronic ignition and such items for bikes were a mere figment of someone's imagination.

Yet, we had a great deal to be thankful for. Bikes were less complicated, traffic less congested, and petrol could be had for 2/6 a gallon (5½ cents per litre). This means that a biker could travel all the way to Durban for less than R10! We recalled that if the government found it necessary to raise the price of petrol by one penny a gallon, there was a public outcry with citizens threatening to take the law into their own hands. Roads were safer with toll roads unthinkable, highjacking was unheard of and you could park your bike in the street in front of your house every night with little risk of anyone stealing it from you. One also did not have to wear a helmet when biking, we remembered. The old days may not have been sophisticated, but were nevertheless safe and great fun as our survival clearly indicates.

PS. If there are other old 'ballies' who would like to remember about biking in the the old days, let us hear from them. Tell us of your adventures on your favourite two-wheeler. Perhaps the youngsters can learn a thing or two!

Wanted

Articles, news items, anecdotes, experiences, stories, jokes, etc. for publication in our newsletter. Everyone knows something or has had an experience that he can share with others. Pictures are also welcome.

If you have had an interesting or perhaps unpleasant experience on holiday, on a trip or even at home, tell us about it. If you wish to share a tip or give advice relating to motorcycles or motorcycling, we would like to hear it.

Don't be concerned about grammar, spelling, word choice or such mundane matters. We will attend to that.

Afrikaanse bydraes is ook welkom.

Revenge of the celery stalk

(Richard Hussey)

Sunday morning. The rain has stopped at last - good weather for today's short run. I shower, dress in my riding gear and have a cup of coffee. Clad in leather with helmet in hand, I lean over to kiss my sleepy-eyed wife, still curled up under the duvet. "See you later, love." I undrape Candy, my trusty R80, carefully removing the two rain covers so as not to get my pants wet. "Twit!" I tell myself. "They're Gore-tex pants - they can take it!" I give Candy a quick check. Tyres, lights and indicators - all OK. Fuel is sufficient for the trip to Stuart's house. I turn the right petcock on and depress the choke lever under the tank. Ignition on. Engage neutral and press the starter button. Whirrrr! She's cold and the bendix gear doesn't kick out to engage the flywheel. Try again. The motor turns over for second or two and roars into life. Idling on the choke I let go of the throttle and put on my helmet and gloves. I mount the bike and lift her off the side stand. "Easy does it now!" I tell myself as I inch over the wet grass down to the garden gate. As I brake the disks squeal from rainwater. I unlock and open the gate. I set Candy on the side stand to close and lock the gate again. She stalls. I turn the choke off and start her up again.

Gloves on, visor down and I ease into the road, checking right-left-right. I pull off slowly and change up into second. I gently apply the front brake against the throttle to clear the wet disks as I ride up the road toward the first stop street. I check the mirrors, left and right before I ease into the bend 50 metres from my driveway and feel the front-end wash away.... WHAM!

I am lying on my back on the tarmac, my legs pointing up the road. My right thigh feels like an elephant has kicked me. My left thumb is throbbing like the last time I hit it with a hammer. I can't hear Candy - she must have stalled. I lie there for a minute, wondering: "What the hell happened?" My mind races, replaying everything I did since leaving the house. "Don't get up too soon - you may be stunned" I tell myself. I slack off the helmet strap and ease my helmet off. I hear a car stopping and turn to see a young student in a Corolla turn in to block the road behind me. I sit up slowly - the muscles in my thigh protest vehemently. "Are you hurt?" she says. "Mostly my dignity, I think" I reply sheepishly. "Are you alright?" comes a voice from up the road. My neighbour has also come down the road to assist. I stand up shakily and gingerly take a few steps. "Your bike is leaking petrol - we had better pick it up off the road!" the Corolla girl says. My neighbour and I walk slowly over to the bike. Candy is lying diagonally across the median line in the road on her left side. There is a two-metre stripe of oil running alongside the white paint and there are isolated spots of fuel on the wet tar. We pick her up; I engage neutral and turn off the ignition. I ease Candy back to the edge of the road and put her on the side-stand.

"I'll be OK - thanks for your help!" The Corolla girl gets back in her car and leaves. "What happened?" my neighbour asks. Walking slowly to get feeling back into my leg I go through the process aloud, looking for clues on the road surface. I see the silver arc-shaped gouge where the right tappet-cover must have slid across the surface. I look beyond to search for the diesel, the loose gravel, any external cause for the loss of traction. There is none - just an old discarded celery plant lying crushed on the curb.

What could have caused the front wheel to give way as if on a banana-peel? Banana-peel? Banana is a fruit - the fruit of a plant? Celery is a plant? The celery! I gingerly walk on my increasingly painful leg to the green smudge and examine it. It has severely crushed stalks and is pancake flat - not the usual crescent-section. I cringingly make my way back up the rise to check the right edge of Candy's front tyre. Telltale green plant fibres are imbedded in the Metzeler's tread.

I thank my neighbour, replace my helmet and mount up. I start her up with difficulty; gently ride back home and limp into the house. My visor has a few minor scratches - but I've been meaning to replace it anyway. My BMW Gore-tex trousers and my trusty old leather jacket are totally unmarked. I peel them off to make sure that there is no damage to my own surfaces. My muscles are really aching now and my right knee is a little wonky. I fetch my hiking stick and pick up a box of washing powder to pour over the oil-stain in the road - I don't want anyone else slip-sliding away on my oil-stain. Oh well, at least the neighbourhood Medical Centre is open now - perhaps a visit would be in order to make sure that I haven't done any more serious damage.

As I wait for the doctor to examine me, I think about celery. I've always loved celery - it's great in soup, and spaghetti sauce and many other dishes. Was this an avenging celery plant sent to exact retribution for generations of plants I have ingested and digested? I ponder the point as X-rays are taken and I'm told there are no bones broken. Tired and torn muscles are my problem, it would seem. Rest, gentle exercise, a knee brace and crutches are advised. I should be okay in a week - two at most. There goes my Volksrust long weekend - but I should be okay for the family's April holiday at the coast. My long-suffering wife drives me home. I walk up and down the passage to keep the muscles moving.

So what did I learn? Wear that protective gear every time you ride - even to the corner shop. Protective gear is not a fashion statement, a chore or an unnecessary expense. I shudder to think what a denim-clad thigh or a T-shirted shoulder would have looked like after impact with the coarse macadam. Can I use them again? There is no visible abrasion damage to pants or jacket. The helmet didn't make contact except for the visor. A cheap let-off, it seems. So why does my hip hurt like 'ell? I look over the pants again.

Right there when the hurt is, a small pocket in the trousers is waiting – waiting for that shaped protective high-density foam cushion that I **didn't** buy with the pants. The trousers were on sale, but the pads weren't. "I'll buy it next month!" I remember thinking to myself over a year ago. "You twit!" I tell myself for the umpteenth time – but aloud this time.

I lie down on the bed on my left side and pull the rug over me. At least that big white pill the doctor gave me is starting to take effect...

Editor's comment:

Thank you for the poignant account of a personal experience Richard. Sorry to learn about your mishap. Fortunately you got off lightly, but it could have been very different. This sort of thing happens unexpectedly and so quickly as many of us have already discovered. As you say, the wearing of adequate protective equipment is an absolute requirement. Without it you don't stand a chance. Get well quickly and let us see you around soon.

Guffaws

A motorcycle mechanic was overhauling an engine in the workshop when he spotted a well-known heart surgeon in the shop, waiting at the spares counter. The mechanic shouted across the garage: "Hey Doc, can I ask you a question please?" The surgeon, a bit surprised, walked over to the mechanic who straightened up, wiped his hands and said: "Doc, look at this bike. I also operate on it. I open its heart, take out the valves, overhaul them, make fine adjustments to the way they work, put them back and when finished, they work just like new. So how is it that I get such a small salary and you get the really big bucks when both of us are doing basically the same work?" The doctor paused smiling, leaned over, and whispered to the mechanic: "Try doing it with the engine running. Now that would be something wouldn't it?"



Biking Blues

A biker became lost in the Free State during a thunderstorm one night. He was drenched throughout and decided to ask for assistance at the nearest light that he could find on that dark night. After riding for some time he saw a light shining in a window through a clump of trees, and headed that way. Any dogs that there may have been were probably as wet as he because he stopped in front of the house without molestation.

Upon knocking and waiting a while, the door opened and an elderly man appeared. After the greeting formalities had been completed, our friend asked the old man how far the next town was. In reply he was told that it was not too far away but was inaccessible as a low water bridge had been

washed away. The biker then asked the old man if there was a place in his house to stay over for the night. He had money and was prepared to pay any reasonable price. The old man was reluctant at first, looked him up and down slowly and said: "My wife and I don't really have accommodation, but I feel sorry to have to turn you away. The young school teacher staying with us has a spare bed in the room that you can use. You seem a decent sort of person to me and I'm sure it will be all right and that you won't cause trouble".

Our friend, at hearing this offer couldn't believe his ears. After a quick bath and fresh clothes, and perhaps a drink or two from the old man's cellar to warm the cockles of the heart he thought, anything could happen before the night was out. He thanked the owner graciously, saying: "Thank you kind sir for honouring me with your hospitality. I really would be in a mess if it hadn't been for your offer. And as far as sharing the room with the young school teacher is concerned, don't worry about a thing. After all I am a gentleman." The old man looked him straight in the eye and replied: "So is the school teacher".

Super wish granted

A short, corpulent man once walked in the woods and came upon an old lamp lying in the path. He picked it up and started fiddling with it and to his surprise, with a flash, a genie appeared. She thanked him for freeing her from a life of bondage in the lamp and invited him to make a wish. She warned him though that any wish granted would be irreversible and that he must therefore be careful what he wished for. He thought a while and said that he wanted to be something slim, sleek and irresistible to women.

"I think I can do something about this," replied the genie. "Are you sure this is what you want?" The man reaffirmed his decision. The genie then lifted her magic wand, spoke a few words and in a brilliant flash the man's wish had been granted – he had been turned into a credit card!

Vindingrykheid

Ek het nou die dag op 'n interessante motornommerplaat afgekom. Daarop het gestaan XKREEWP en dan die nommer. Na 'n tyd het ek agtergekom waaroor dit gaan. Dit is een of ander slim wynboer daar doer in die Kaap se manier om te sê: "Ek skreeu vir die WP."

Modern Quotations

"Adventure is the result of poor planning"

Col. Blashford-Snell.

"Abstract art is a product of the untalented, sold by the unprincipled to the utterly bewildered."

Al Capp.

"An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have; the older she gets the more interested he is in her."

Agatha Christie.

Pretoria BMW Motorcycle Club

Events

Last update: 26 March 2004.

Month	Date	Route/Destination	Kms.	Organiser
April	4 Sun	Waterberg/ Rooiberg	300	Deon Gericke
	24-27	Blyde River	1100	Renier Jordaan
May	1 Sat	Cullifest - Cullinan (family outing)	150	Deon Gericke
	1-2	GS Training camp (Nkwe)	?	Committee
	9 Sun	Magaliesburg – 3 dams	300	Committee
June	5 Sun	Bronkhorstspuit – Cullinan	?	Committee
	12 Sat	S-Cup Racing - Swartkops Raceway	N/a	
	16-20	Soutpansberg/Pontdrif/Lowveld	?	Johan Strauss
July	4 Sun	Treasure Hunt (family outing)	?	Committee
Aug.	1 Sun	Cars in the Park	50	Committee
	7-9	Swaziland - Kosi Bay	?	Stuart Downie
	8 Sun	Tba	?	Committee
Sept.	5 Sun	Loskop Dam	?	Committee
	18 Sat	S-Cup Racing – Swartkops Raceway	?	
	18-26	Alexander Bay- Namibia	?	Mike Hennessy
October	3 Sun	Tba	?	Committee
Nov.	7 Sun	Tswaing Crater	?	Committee
	20 Sat	Club Xmas Lunch	N/a	Committee
Dec.	3-5	Golden Gate/Clarens	1200	Deon Gericke
	Sat 4	S-Cup Racing + 3 hour endurance – Swartkops Raceway	N/a	
	5 Sun	Tba	?	Committee
Mar. 05	19-21	Mpumalanga	?	Committee
Apr. 05	23-2	Garden Route – Cape Aghulas	?	Committee

This events calendar also appears on our web page, but to make it easier for readers of Spoke `n Piston to plan rides in advance without their having to page backwards and forwards through the Web, it is also attached to this page of the newsletter. Please note that as the schedule is updated throughout the year, readers are advised to rely only on the latest information. Please check with the organisers before making a commitment.

Spoke`n Piston also appears on our website at www.bmwclubs.co.za Visit us there and become acquainted with the comings and goings of our club, together with newsy bits, information on new products, what is happening on the motorcycling scene, etc. Please send all articles, pics, comments, etc. to: The Editor, Spoke `n Piston, P.O. Box 40422, Arcadia 0007, or E-Mail to: henrih@netactive.co.za

Indemnity

Although reasonable care has been taken to ensure the correctness of all material contained herein, the publisher cannot be held liable for any inaccuracies that may occur or damage/loss sustained as a result of advice given.

Club Address: Bavarian Motorcycles and Accessories cc, 7 Ockerse Street., ARCADIA 0083. P.O. Box 23848, Innesdale 0031. Tel. (012) 323-4865/6. Fax (012) 323-1630. E-mail: bavarian@mweb.co.za

“Shared riding pleasure whilst fostering fellowship by the safe, supportive, responsible and courteous enjoyment of BMW Motorcycles”