

# SPOKE & PISTON



MEMBER:  
BMW Clubs Africa 

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## From the Chair...

### BMW CLUBS AFRICA & INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF BMW CLUBS



BMW AG in Germany is proud to recognise and support the largest worldwide marque club organisation that includes car drivers and motorcycle riders.

Through its division BMW Mobile Tradition, they control a body called international Council of BMW Clubs that acts as an umbrella body for all registered BMW clubs worldwide. Each continent in the world has an umbrella BMW club, registered with the aforementioned International Council, that oversees affiliated BMW clubs (car and motorcycle) in that continent. In Africa, the umbrella club is BMW Clubs Africa, which is registered accordingly.

#### BMW Clubs Africa

This body is controlled and run by an executive committee on behalf of the Member Clubs of Clubs Africa. It is an independent non-profit organisation and does not fall under the control of, or is dependent upon BMW SA, BMW AG, the International Council of BMW Clubs, or any BMW Dealer. It is a member of the International Council of BMW Clubs and may become affiliated to, or be a member of organisations with similar objectives, such as SAMCA, but shall not fall under the control of any such organisation. Through its membership of the International Council of BMW Clubs, Clubs Africa is recognised by BMW AG and BMW South Africa as being the 'Umbrella Association' for the Africa market.

The objectives of BMW Clubs Africa are to:

- Promote and encourage interest in BMW vehicles through the co-ordination of all the BMW Clubs within the Africa market area;
- maintain a Register of Member Clubs;
- assist all of the Member Clubs with the running of their Clubs;
- liaise with BMW SA and BMW AG on behalf of all of the Member Clubs;
- endeavour to get all BMW Clubs in Africa to become Member Clubs of Clubs Africa; and
- be the Member of the International Council of BMW Clubs, responsible for the Africa market area.

Membership shall be available to any BMW Club that complies with the Membership Agreement, and with the guidelines and the requirements of the International Council of BMW Clubs.

No club can be 'recognised' by the International Council unless it is affiliated to a member of the International Council, i.e. BMW Clubs Africa locally. There are obvious benefits to this recognition as, without it, the club concerned could not have an official relationship with BMW AG, the local subsidiary BMW SA, the Dealers, or with 'recognised' BMW clubs worldwide. Without the recognition, there could be a situation where BMW and the recognised clubs worldwide are instructed to have nothing to do with the unofficial club concerned.

BMW clubs affiliated to BMW Clubs Africa are obliged to operate within strict conformity of the rules and regulations of the International Council of BMW Clubs.

These individual clubs are operated/managed by private BMW enthusiasts, independently from BMW Group and/or dealerships and without involvement from the latter.

With regard to functions and procedures of a club and benefits for club members, each club decides for itself what the function and purpose of their club will be and what benefits they want to offer to their club members.

Eight local BMW clubs are currently affiliated to BMW Clubs Africa:

- BMW Car Club Western Cape
- BMW Car Club Natal
- BMW Car Club Gauteng
- BMW Motorcycle Club Cape
- BMW Motorcycle Club Durban
- BMW Motorcycle Club Pretoria
- BMW Motorcycle Club Namibia
- BMW Motorcycle Club Central (in JHB)

The current Exco Members of BMW Clubs Africa are:

President: Gerhard Nel

Vice-President: Richard Hussey

Exco members: Dave Grant, Derrick Watterson, Gary Moodie, Colin McKellar, Mike Hennessy.

Deon Gericke, Chairman.

## TT Racing at the Isle of Man

(Henri Heyns)

The Isle of Man is an island of 588 square Kms, situated in the Irish Sea some 110 Kms off the west coast of England between Cumbria and just about half way to Northern Ireland. This is where the TT, an abbreviation for Tourist Trophy, the world's most famous motorcycle race, is held every year, renowned since 1907 as the ultimate test of man and machine. The Isle of Man is one of the few places left in the world where motorcycle road racing is still allowed. For the thousands of fans who travel to this part of the world each year, it is a pilgrimage to the shrine of motorcycle racing. The written word, no matter how appropriate, cannot capture the spirit and character that surrounds the festival through the eyes of those involved. Bruce Meyers of Bavarian Motorcycles decided to get involved as a spectator this year. He returned home starry-eyed at what he saw and full of praise for the way everything is organised.

There are 960 motoring Kms on the island, which is 53 Kms long and 21 Kms wide. It has 26 beaches around the 160 Kms of coastline. A section of road on the island is known as Magnetic Hill where cars appear to roll uphill totally unaided.

Fourteen different nations were represented at the 2004 TT, with 37 foreign participants, 14 female entrants, with a total of 731 competing in 8 races. They spend a week practicing and one week racing. There are small bike, big bike and side car races. To reduce disruption of everyday activities, practicing takes place in the early morning and late afternoons. The road used for the TT encompasses an area a little less than half that of the island with the starting and finishing point at Douglas, the capital.

Ordinary traffic, and pedestrians are not allowed to traverse the roads when a race is in progress and to enforce this prohibition, marshals are stationed all over at short intervals. People having to be inside or outside the race road perimeter must ensure that they do so before the start or after the finish. When the road is open to traffic, a car with a sign on its roof does the rounds informing people thereof.

The race is run on a main road through a number of villages, with homes, shops and other buildings sometimes on both sides of the road. Clumps of trees lining the roads often obscure the sun, causing dark patches and making it difficult for the competitors to

see ahead. The brilliant sunshine once through the trees also interferes with vision, which makes racing there all the more dangerous. There is a mountain section where the view is clear but where strong gusts of wind can interfere with the racing. As a commentator commented, the TT is like riding three different circuits in one. Being summertime in Europe when the TT is run, the Isle of Man is lush with all sorts of vegetation and beautiful tree-lined avenues, truly a joy to behold. Of course, rain is always a possibility, but as with racing anywhere else, the bad has to be taken with the good. It is not unusual for a race to start at 17:00 because in summer the sun doesn't set before 22:15 at that high-up latitude.

Contestants leave at 10 second intervals and cover some 240 - 360 Kms in a four to six laps race, depending on the bikes` capacity, on what is known to be the most dangerous circuit in the world. Riders often see 15 000 rpm coming up on the rev. counter dial for short stretches of road. This relates to speeds of 250-270 km/h and believe it, that's moving along a bit on a fairly narrow road with trees, paddocks, homes and shops flashing by quicker than blinking an eye! There are 264 bends in the 60 odd Kms race track, taking some 18 minutes to lap. The big bikes have to cover 4 laps per race. After 2 laps these big babies require refuelling and the replacement of the rear tyres.

Four riders with 60 TT wins between them are unfortunately no longer with us. They are Joey Dunlop (26), Mike Hailwood (14), Steve Hislop (11), and David Jeffries (9). We lament their passing but salute the pleasure they gave fans in the Isle of Man and elsewhere.

Bruce Meyers describes the TT as an experience of a lifetime. If you haven't been, you can never know what you're missing. He says that every person you rub shoulders with is extremely enthusiastic about motorcycles and the racing and you can talk to anyone there and they will gladly engage in conversation with you.

However, if you are fired up by the thought of going to the TT next year to see for yourself, take a hefty bit of cash with you. Living is expensive there, the same as in the UK. Of course, camping sites are available all over to save a bit of money, but that shuts out most of the fun of getting to know the island and its people. R10 000 pp is the minimum

you should be looking at, with R15 000 and upwards being nearer the mark. Remember that you have to fly to England and from Heath Row Airport, entrain to Liverpool and from there ferry across half of the Irish Sea to get to the Isle of Man (there is no international airport on the island). But it will be worth your while and perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The TT is surely the last of the world's great road races. If you like motorcycle racing and have an adventurous spirit, shake out your piggy bank (and a bit more I think) and make a beeline for the Isle of Man next year. You're not likely to be disappointed!

By the way, Bruce has a splendid DVD on the TT gathering. See inter alia a rider coming off at high speed after losing control and hitting a wall. The bike disintegrated but the rider lives to tell the tale. It may be viewed for free at Bavarian Motorcycles, with a cup of coffee thrown in. (Sorry, it may not be borrowed unless you have some special pull!)



*Who says the guys don`t rub shoulders at the TT Races at the Isle of Man?*

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## Bike For Sale

BMW R80 in very good condition with sports fairing and heated grips. Double disc front brakes, spoked wheels and stainless steel tail pipes. Bike repainted and new tyres fitted recently.

This bike runs beautifully and is a snip at R19 000 or nearest offer. Must be seen to be appreciated.

Phone Tony Sweet at (012) 430-4333  
Cell 082-4475219.

## Letter from a reader

Hi Henri,

Great mag. It must take a lot of putting together. It is certainly appreciated & avidly read by both my girlfriend & I. Here is a letter in response to your "The question of toll" article in the last edition, It might help you fill you next edition, or be deemed too radical. Your choice ☺

This is an age-old complaint, and I am anti toll, but I am not convinced about the way that this "question of toll" has been approached. Maybe I'm the only one, but here are my thoughts for what they're worth. I too have adopted the "refuse to use them" option, I have "discovered" many great towns & roads by using this approach. I have also, depending on my mood, used the "howie zowie - marvel at my BMW's acceleration" technique. Funny, It leaves one with the immense feeling of being a criminal, a renegade when really all you saved yourself was R2.

Firstly I am not advocating lawlessness; I would be opposed to any illegal action. The "prominent SA motorcycling magazine" editor who appears to be spearheading the negotiations, has stated that a "co-operative" approach was better than a "antagonistic" approach. He also states that we must take cognisance of his previous victories, freeway use & lane splitting. Well it is my belief herein lies the problem. It's a law of nature, as a person ages their beliefs/ideals "soften", although admittedly one should become wiser. It seems strange that the editor has failed to remind us, he wasn't always a law abiding citizen. Does he think I have forgotten, that in the early 80's he rode a blue BMW K series from Durban to Taylor's travel lodge In JHB In 2hrs 13 min. I was a young boy at the time, but it was at that point, that I decided I wanted a BMW motorcycle (a dream that took a further 16 yrs. to realise.) But I digress. A structured, well thought-out approach was a far better option. However things have changed, a protest seems to be the way to have injustices brought to light. Otherwise dealings become entangled in red tape & investigative committees etc. (How long have we been asked to be patient on this issue?) Due to the vast tiers of management in government structures, one only has to look at the Taxi Industry, trade unions etc. Large industries that use mass action serve as a means to highlighting an injustice. In Durban the other week, disgruntled Metro policemen blocked peak hour Friday traffic over a pay dispute. It is not a solution in my eyes, but does seem to speed up negotiations or at the very least make the public aware of a plight, & hopefully create some empathy.

I personally would like to see organised blockading by bikers, I would certainly support it. Just maybe the powers that be would then sit up & take notice. Yes, we all complain when there is a taxi blockade, but it is soon forgotten. Am I to believe that the average South African would harbour ill feelings towards me as a biker, for years to come because they struggled to get to Durban?? Yes, they would get irate, but how much notice do they take of bikers anyway (Brian Cheyne accident & others). The "aggressive rebel biker club" image seems to have been established In the 50's & 60's; nothing to do with us present day motorcyclists. Biking seems to be more about lifestyle now as the cost of motorcycles & spares have put it out of the reach of most people, which in itself is a crying shame. But I digress again. We are still branded as "biker scum" so why do we not use this "rebellious" image to our advantage but in a highly

organised way? Does the toll road company realise or care how many motorcycles there are in the country?? The charity rides like the toy run never get much publicity in the mass media. It is not just unfair, but downright blatant extortion when a huge 4x4 loaded with 7 people, towing a double axle caravan & a cabin cruiser or jet ski, gets charged the same amount as a guy In a BMW C1 for using a public road.

I know, too radical for the average BMW owner, but it is my belief that there is a strand of rebellious DNA in every biker. Maybe when I grow up & aspire to an RT, (Sorry Brian, I just don't feel old enough to own one now) I will think differently. I really feel we as a biking community need to stand together and voice our opposition. Somehow I don't think this is being effectively communicated from the seat of the magazine editors.

Sticky.

### Editor's reply to Sticky's Letter

Hi Sticky,

Well well, at least some response from a reader. This at least shows that Spoke `n Piston is read over the Internet. I'm not sure if you are a club member or not, but it doesn't matter as we welcome comments, suggestions and even ordinary chatter from who ever wishes to communicate with us. To hear that you and your girl friend find our newsletter interesting and that you are regular readers of our web page, warms the cockles of one's heart.

I believe it to be true that the gentleman mentioned holds the unofficial speed record for a motorcycle between Durban and Johannesburg, set up sometime during the eighties. However the time mentioned by you is doubtful unless this guy happened to be flying at the time, as a simple calculation will show. To have covered the distance of some 578 km in 2 hours and 13 minutes means that he must have been travelling at an average speed of 261 km/h. (This is impossible even had he been riding a BMW K 1200 GT!) A time of 4 hours and 13 minutes is more realistic but when I see him again I'll pop the question. But let it be as it may. Anyone trying this kind of trick nowadays is likely to land in jail with the key thrown away just for good measure. So, friend, don't even think about proving or disproving the above claim! Yes, you are right in one respect. As people grow older they become wiser. It is a matter of not crashing through a fence to get to the other side, but rather looking for a gate through which to pass without fuss and bother.

Our club's motto is printed on the last page of Spoke `n Piston for everyone to see. It reads: "Shared riding pleasure whilst fostering fellowship by the safe, supportive, responsible and courteous enjoyment of

BMW motorcycles". These seventeen words say it all. The club therefore cannot support the use of 'strong arm' tactics in the form of mass protests, disrupting traffic, blockades and similar actions as espoused by you. Any such action leads to inconveniencing other people and that leads to increasing the antagonism toward bikers. Remember that motorcyclists are in the minority by far compared to other road vehicles. In most democratic systems minorities are usually allowed to 'say what they like but have to do as they're told'.

We, in the club and I hope it goes for many other bikers as well, believe in the adage 'if people speak ill of you, live so that no one will believe them'. We encourage riders to observe the law meticulously, to ride within our ability, to constantly improve our riding skills and to do nothing that will brand us as inconsiderate hooligans. Some individuals and perhaps even rider groups unfortunately sometimes do not live up to such a standard and this attitude is something we frown upon. It is often ill-considered single actions of bravado, selfishness, self-importance, arrogance, call it what you will, that brands us as something with the public that we're not.

In all my years of biking, having travelled many thousands of kilometres, I must truthfully say that instances of antagonism towards me as a biker can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Yes, one does come across road users who begrudge you your existence but don't forget that courtesy begets courtesy and that one-upmanship on the road is just looking for trouble. Let us acknowledge that motorcycling can be dangerous if we're not very careful. Other road vehicles can hurt you more than the other way around as accident statistics have proved over and over. So, let us hope that good relations and common sense prevail with the authorities and that they will eventually agree that the toll fees for motorcycles, as they stand today, are unreasonable and be prepared to offer us a reduction. Meanwhile, I for one, will continue to exercise my right to search for alternative routes to avoid having to pay toll fees. Remember that, as is also the case with taxation, toll evasion is a criminal offence, whereas toll avoidance is not.

Wishing you everything of the best and happy riding,

Henri Heyns.

## Nog Silwertoeennings vir Uithoekryers

Dit verg 'n groot lus-vir-ry poging om die uithoeke van ons land te verken en klublede wat die kompas se vier uiteindes met 'n motorfiets besoek, kry spesiale erkenning. Vir Goud moet hierdie vier punte binne drie weke by aangedoen word. Vir Silwer is daar geen tydsbeperkings nie. Twee kategorieë word toegeken, naamlik dié vir enkelryers en dié vir ryer en passasier.

Die reëls is maklik. Besoek die noordelike, oostelike, suidelike en westelike punte van die Republiek, lewer bewys daarvan en doen aansoek om 'n toekenning by die Klub.

Geen volgorde of roetes word voorgeskryf nie, maar die groot geeste wat Goud wil verwerf moet sowat 8000 km binne die voorgeskrewe drie weke aflê (en dit wil nogal gedoen wees.) Die vier punte is so gekies dat dit met veld- en padfietse bereik kan word.

As u lus is om bietjie te ry en nie weet waarheen nie, probeer gerus hierdie avontuur. U sal dit geniet!



*Klubvoorsitter Deon Gericke (links) oorhandig die Silwertoeënnings aan Johann en Aida Botes in die Ryer en Passasierkategorie.*

*Hieronder kry Pieter De Koker sy Silwertoeënnings (enkelryer) van Deon Gericke.*



Techno-speak for the not so technical...

Part 7

## Electronic wizardry on new BMW models

(Henri Heyns, assisted by Bruce Meyers and his staff, with the technical bits  
supplied by BMW Media Information)

**T**here was a time when auto-electrics was not such a big deal. In the days of my youth, (and that was a long-long time ago) if you knew the difference between a starter motor and a (then) generator, high and low tension wires, a voltage regulator (cut-out before then) and a light relay, you could tackle a wiring job anticipating a reasonable degree of success. It was a cumbersome operation to be sure, because every wire had to go through a fuse box, but a guy with a wiring diagram, common sense, an assistant, plus a few tricks of the trade could do it over a long weekend from back to front and from top to bottom.

I also remember the time when a complete and bulky 'Wiry Joe' wiring harness could be bought at a dealer and that, armed with a cutting pliers and a few screw drivers of various sizes and heads and other odds and ends, one could undertake such a job with confidence. Of course, there were countless wires, seemingly kilometres long and running from the tail end to the parking lights and from top to bottom, to connect. The fact that even then, use was made of a common ground on the body, also made things easier. On a motorcycle, things were obviously less complicated. There weren't as many wires and their sheer bulk was less to contend with.

There was one wonderful aspect though: Colour coding! There were whites and greens, blues and reds, blacks and yellows, and to allow for further differentiation, there were a myriad colour combinations, so that connecting the wrong colours was almost an impossibility. So, as long as you weren't colour blind and saw to it that the same colours were connected, the rest was a piece of pie!

### New technology

But this is not the case anymore as new technology does away with most of the wiring by making one wire do the job that was once done

by umpteen others. A further upset to tinkerers and would-be thieves is that colour coding is no longer so important because malfunctions are detected by built-in sensors and reacted upon appropriately. So, by cutting the wires behind the ignition lock (or under the dash board) and reconnecting red to red and green to green for example, to circumvent the obstacle and to get the engine started, is no longer a viable proposition to an aspiring car/bike thief because it doesn't work like this anymore.

The new R1200 GS BMW motorcycle is the epitome of electric/electronic wizardry that one can wish for. An outstanding feature of this machine is the all-new on-board electric system. The Single-Wire System (SWS) describes a highly innovative on-board network, using electronics and CAN-bus (Controller Area Network) technology to offer functions and features never seen before. In essence it means that one wire can be used for multiple functions. For instance, one wire is connected to the fuel gauge, heat gauge, oil pressure 'idiot' light, and direction indicators. Electric current is sent along this one wire continuously but at different frequencies. The sensor housed in each instrument picks up only the frequency intended for it, relays the information to its processor, which acts upon it in a specific way for which it was designed. It must be patently clear then that, when fault finding, without knowing what to look for and using a sophisticated instrument to determine the exact location and nature of the malfunction, one would be wasting one's time.

### Fewer and shorter cables

By reducing the number and length of cables required, this network then offers a much wider range of functions than a conventional on-board network, with information being transmitted along just one single path (hence 'single-wire'), as opposed to the double-wire system otherwise required.

Apart from the wide range of functions, the main advantages of this intelligent combination of electrics and electronics are the lighter wiring harness, substantial resistance to interference, and the complete range of diagnostic functions. A further point is that the system may be flexibly expanded by simple updates. Also, the need for colour coding is done away with.

All control units are connected to one another, thus being able to communicate directly and exchange

data in a bi-directional mode. This allows simple and comprehensive diagnosis of the overall system from one central point, the electronics incorporating suitable programmes to filter out unimportant data and interference signals within a defined tolerance. This makes the system less sensitive to electromagnetic disturbance.

In all, the new R1200 GS comes, in standard trim, with three control units (the cluster instrument also representing a control unit of its own). The control unit for the Digital Motor Electronics is not only responsible for the engine management already described, but also transmits all data to the central diagnostic system. Central Suspension Electronics (CSE) in turn, serves to mastermind the electrical units and functions not specific to the engine. If the motorcycle is fitted with integral ABS and an anti-theft warning system as an option, the control units are also integrated in the network.

There is no need for conventional fuses at any point throughout the on-board network, with the electronic 'brain' simply switching off the function involved in the event of a short circuit or malfunction and subsequent diagnosis serving to quickly trace and remedy the defect. Since the other functions are not affected in such a case, the network approach featured on the R1200 GS again offers further advantages in terms of reliability and failsafe operation.

## Electronic immobiliser

To ensure optimum security at all times, the R1200 GS comes with an electronic immobiliser naturally fitted as standard. Controlled by a transponder in the key, the immobiliser offers the very best in anti-theft security.

As soon as the rider inserts the key and switches on the ignition, a chip within the key communicates with the electronic immobiliser integrated in the Digital Motor Electronics via the ring aerial integrated in the ignition lock. This allows the systems to exchange and compare the coded chip data on the one hand, and the electronic immobiliser data on the other. After confirming that the data and signals comply with one another, the engine control unit will release the ignition and fuel injection, allowing the rider to start the engine.

This means that it would be impossible for your bike to be stolen by the hot wire method. Of course, a would-be hijacker could force you to hand over the key. It would also be night for the owner to get the bike started should he lose the key. By carrying a spare key hidden on the bike somewhere seems to be the best solution. Of course, thieves are also well-organised nowadays. They don't seem to be bothered by fork and wheel locks at all. If they decide to steal a bike, they lift it up bodily, put it into a panel van and drive off nonchalantly. Seemingly, the best way to prevent theft is to 'sleep with your bike under your pillow' or as close to it as possible.

But, looking at things from the positive side, the new R1200 GS is a beauty, full of all sorts of new ideas and innovations. Every time I read something about it, I like it more and more and then the little devil voice in me says 'go man go'. I'm not due for a new bike yet, but without the old lady knowing it, have already begun making sums with which to confront my bank manager. Who knows, I may even be able to buy into the new technology sooner than what I thought! Who's with me on this one?

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### Quotable Quotes

- "Success consists of a series of little daily victories." – Anon
- "A man in the house is worth two in the street." – Mae West
- "Drama is life with the dull bits left out." – Alfred Hitchcock
- "The best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up." – Anon
- "Pure truth, like pure gold, has been found unfit for circulation, because men have discovered that it is far more convenient to adulterate the truth than refine themselves." – Charles C Colton
- "My candle burns at both ends, it will not last the night,  
But ah, my foes and oh, my friends, it gives a lovely light." – Edna Millay
- "Three things come never back – The spoken word, the sped arrow and the neglected opportunity." – Persian Proverb

## “You must be a Biker”

(Henri Heyns)

The other day my wife invited two ladies to tea and naturally I had to be introduced for closer scrutiny to determine whether I met with their approval as to what a devoted and faithful husband should look like. Of course, to make a good impression, my dear wife took out our most precious tea-ware which even I only get to see, let alone use, on rare occasions. In the course of the conversation Roné picked up a cup from its saucer on the table to ask me to pour milk into it. But unfortunately something tacky stuck the two together so that the saucer came up along with the cup, unbeknown to her of course. As usual, the saucer came away at the most awkward time, fell back onto the table and was smashed to pieces, to the embarrassment of all. Exit one English bone china saucer!

Naturally I remonstrated with Roné for being careless in not looking at what she was doing, adding that one should always consider every action and possible implications. “You must be a biker like my husband!” the one lady exclaimed to my surprise. “He’s always on to me about not looking where I go, not weighing up the pros and cons with every step I take, not being in a totally alert mode all the time with everything I do,” the lady added.

This well-intended remark set me thinking. I know a guy who has coined the phrase that there are only two types of bikers – those who’ve already come off and those about to do so. I don’t know that I fully agree with him. Biking mishaps yes, because that is the price we pay for indulging in our particular activity, but a come-off in the real sense of the word is never a given scenario. I know people who have been riding for many years, covering great distances, without even so much as a serious scare, and I’m not talking about a ninny chugging around the block once in a blue moon!

Safety is a frame of mind, whichever way you look at it. If a rider is not capable and actively engaged in weighing up the facts unfolding before him as he rides, selecting a course of action based on responsible decision making and being prepared for a rapid amendment/adjustment of such action as unexpected factors are added to the scenario, he shouldn’t be riding. It does not mean that biking so ties up one’s mental ability that there is nothing left to enjoy. On the contrary, the process of scanning, digesting, selecting, and reacting becomes automatic with practice and leaves plenty of scope for enjoying the hundreds of stimuli around one that make biking a pleasurable experience.

If more riders would ask the ‘what if?’ question ten thousand times a day in every situation, and attempt to find sensible answers for basing their actions on, most accidents could be avoided. Yes, one cannot answer for other people’s actions, but being sufficiently alert and learning to anticipate what the other guy may or may not do together with rapid decision-making on your own part, could mean the difference between a near miss and a mishap. Remember, to avoid riding accidents altogether is to not be riding at all, a choice too ghastly to contemplate.

As I see it...

## Driving relaxed yet alert

(Henri Heyns)

A newly-found friend and neighbour two doors down from where I live, had the good fortune of being presented a virtually new R1150 R by his dad who bought it for himself, but found that, due to ill health and the bike’s weight, he could not lift the bike onto its centre stand. Tony, as my friend is called, is not a BMW fan, especially of the Boxer variety, but of course, in not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth, he gleefully accepted this generous gesture of goodwill from his old man.

For a few weeks he was all excitement and as I also have a R1150 R, regularly popped in to my place to compare notes on the running-in pro-

cess, handling characteristics, fuel consumption, pulling ability, braking efficiency, and so on. Gradually though, as his bike became fully run-in, and his visitations into the plus 4000 rev. range more frequent, I detected an uneasiness in Tony as regards his BMW. At first he didn't want to talk about it, but then, in a moment of desperation, he admitted to a vibration at some 4500 rpm in the Boxer engine that was worrying and would I please let him ride my bike for comparison sake. Now my insurance policy specifically states that the bike is only covered when I am in the saddle and I was naturally a little reluctant to hand over my keys. But wanting to help a friend and having had my curiosity aroused to feel his complaint for myself, I acquiesced and one Sunday morning early we went out on the Witbank freeway for a long ride.

Of course the slight vibration was there, as is characteristic of all Boxer motors, but quite normal and certainly nothing to worry about. I told him so over coffee at the change-over and added that his bike pulls better than mine, presumably because with a bigger mileage on the clock, it was better run in. Tony, however was most impressed with my bike, claiming that there was hardly any vibration and that the ride was also much smoother than his. This set me thinking and I carefully enquired into his riding style. It transpired that he was a dedicated, experienced and very efficient, yet tense rider, the latter characteristic possibly contributing to his sense of excessive vibration. I found that his grip on the controls was intense, with the effect that road shocks, steering feed back, and of course, engine vibrations became much more pronounced than would be the case with a more relaxed grip. Second, with engine controls exposed to the wind, one's finger tips tend to become chilled and therefore less pressure sensitive with the effect that one's grip tends to become firmer around the controls. (The fact that these bikes are equipped with heated hand grips does not solve the problem because the heat warms the inside of your gloved hands and not your outer finger tips.) Third, the small windscreen on this model, whilst wonderful on a hot summer's day and riding around town at moderate speeds, does not deflect enough wind from the rider, resulting once again in a firmer grip on the controls. Fourth, and perhaps most important, is the fact that the return spring

on the accelerator cable is quite substantial, necessitating a firm grip with the right hand to keep the throttle open.

In order to make the ride smoother, I suggested to my friend that he applies the following remedies:

1. Adopt a more relaxed riding style. This is something that one tells oneself to do consciously and should practice regularly. I doubt that racing riders ever relax whilst on the track, but that is something totally different. It is possible to relax whilst driving without sacrificing alertness and constant vigilance. The looser one's hands fold around the controls, the less the vibration transmitted to the hands.
2. Fit a set of hand guards to your bike. With your gloved hands not exposed to the full force of a frontal wind, the risk of finger tip chill is greatly reduced, even when it rains, and the less you need to hang on to the controls.
3. Fit a speed control device. This is a nifty mechanical device, easily fitted and adjusted to maintain just a little pressure on the accelerator mechanism to prevent it from snapping back to a closed position following the slightest relaxation of the hand's grip. This enables a softer touch and reduces the vibration felt.
4. Fit a larger windscreen. It is surprising how much better the bigger screen reduces the wind blowing on to the rider. This in turn allows a softer touch on the controls.

Of course, one could also go the more radical way towards reducing vibration, like altering shock absorber settings, playing around with tyre pressures, keeping your bike below (or above) the 4500 rpm mark, wearing thicker protective clothing, and so on, but please remember one thing. Biking is a fun thing and should always be treated as such. No matter what bike you ride, there will always be vibrations, and perhaps the best way out is to accept them at face value for the sheer exuberance of riding.

Tony is away on holiday, so I have not yet been able to determine whether he has heeded my suggestions. My experience is that they go a long way towards achieving their goal. If a reader has a different view or has suggestions to make, please let us hear from her or him. Your comments will be transmitted to Tony which I'm sure he'll appreciate.

# Pretoria BMW Motorcycle Club

## Events

Last update: 23 April 2004.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Route/Destination</b>	<b>Kms.</b>	<b>Organiser</b>
Aug.	1 Sun	Cars in the Park	50	Deon Gericke
	7-9	Swaziland - Kosi Bay	?	Stuart Downie
	8 Sun	Van Galens Cheese Farm	250	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
	16-19	Drakensberg	?	E. vd Stockt
Mar. 05	16-23	Bufalo Rally George, Cape Aghulas	3500	Brian Cannoo

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](http://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](mailto:henrih@netactive.co.za)

## Indemnity

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