

# SPOKE & PISTON

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*From*  
*The*  
*Editor's*  
*Desk*

## To Wear a Helmet or Not?

**W**e are often led to believe that the best things happen overseas, especially in North America and Europe and that there, in the cradle of civilisation the answers to most problems on earth are to be found quite readily. After all, they have the best seats of learning, spend vast amounts of money on research into every conceivable subject, and attract the world's best brains in helping to solve the myriad of problems facing the globe. But it has been said that being too clever can drive one to insanity as the following example hopefully serves to illustrate:

Please note that this item of research is about bicycles, not motorcycles, but perhaps the content is worth noting and pondering over.

Psychologists report that cyclists who wear helmets are more likely to be hit by overtaking motorists. Research reveals that motorists drive closer to cyclists in helmets because they are seen as being more experienced. Female cyclists, on the other hand, are given more room on the road than their male counterparts, according to the survey.

The findings are being published by traffic psychologist Dr. Ian Walker. He used a bicycle fitted with an ultrasonic distance sensor to record data from more than 2500 overtaking motorists. He said that drivers were twice as likely to get closer to his bicycle when he had a helmet on. "The perception is that those with helmets on are experienced and more predictable. But that is a dangerous thought as novices are told to wear helmets," he said.

Walker wore a long wig to see if there was any difference in passing distance when vehicles thought they were overtaking a female cyclist. Vehicles gave him more space. He said this may be because women are seen as less predictable road users or because female cyclists are more rare and therefore treated with more caution.

Despite his findings, cyclists who wear helmets are more likely to survive a collision with a car, so the increased risk of an accident could be outweighed by the chances of living through it. Fortunately the wearing of protective head gear for motorcyclists in this country is obligatory. However, with the dismal performance of our four and multi-wheeled road users nowadays, it is little comfort to discover that a helmeted two-wheeled rider is likely to be overtaken much closer by than would be the case if no helmet was worn, unless the rider is a woman! It really is a crazy world we live in, not so?

## Customers - Friends or Friends - Customers?

(Henri Heyns)

What kind of silly caption is this, the reader may well ask. But given a moment's serious consideration, this question emerges as a conundrum that traders have been asking themselves without being able to find the answer to since the advent of mercantilism soon after man became a rational being. Put in simple terms it asks whether a purveyor of goods makes a friend of the customer after the latter has bought goods from him, or does he make a friend of the potential buyer first before clinching the deal?

With the grey matter now hopefully working in the reader's head, he/she would probably come up with a 'it depends' interjection, signifying that no single correct answer can be arrived at. Sure, the owner of a café around the corner, selling an ice cream to a youngster doesn't much care whether he makes a 'friend' or not, as long as the product and the money change hands in conclusion of the transaction. It may be a one-off sale and he may never see the youngster again, or now and then, in which case the question does not arise. The answer then would be an unequivocal 'no' if the buyer is a total stranger, as would be a traveller passing through the town, or a person who normally never visits that part of town. In every other case the better answer would be 'yes', especially as the frequency of ice cream sales increases and the vendor gets to know the buyer and vice versa.

But the sale of an ice cream or not does not allow us to make a strong case for or against, so let's turn our attention to the marketing of more expensive and durable goods like motorcycles, for instance, to further pursue this trend of thought.

However, let us first define the word 'friend'. My one dictionary says: 'A person known well to another and regarded with liking, affection and loyalty'. Another says 'One joined to another in intimacy and mutual benevolence independently of sexual or family love'. Both definitions say just about the same thing but none helps us much in trying to find an answer to the question posed.

Another publication flippantly 'defines' friend in the following manner:

1. A friend in need is a friend indeed.

2. A friend not in need is a friend indeed.

3. A friend in need is a pest!

The above of course, is only an aside, but seriously, which one comes first? Friend and then customer, or customer first and then friend? I suppose whichever avenue to explore, is pretty much the question of what came first – the chicken or the egg? What does it really matter which one came first?

A prerequisite for either contention would possibly be an answer to the question as to whether everyone gets something out of the deal, but then by selling an ice cream everyone gets something but a bond of friendship isn't necessarily formed unless repeat business is in the offing. How then does the concept come to pass and what pre-existing conditions must there be for such a bond to be formed? To be sure, there must be a symbiotic relationship between the buyer and seller, meaning that each partner must derive a deep sense of satisfaction from doing a deal with the other and must be prepared to go a little further than merely exchanging the goods for money and money for goods.

The dealer:

- Going that extra little bit out of his way in making the client feel welcome
- Notifying the friend of good buys and special deals that may be coming along
- Giving personal attention whenever possible
- Remembering names and personal details, diarising birthdays, likes and dislikes and so on.

The customer:

- Supporting the dealer and his product wherever and whenever possible, not only by word of mouth but by using his product yourself and by bringing him physical business
- Discussing product defects and suggested improvements with the dealer first
- Providing feedback to the dealer on what others are saying about the product and service, good and bad
- Being seen in the company of people using the dealer's product.

There is an old saying of one hand washing the other. This is what brings a happy and prosperous relationship into being. Remember though that it's not a physical advantage to be foremost in one's mind.

That emerges automatically as the association grows but it doesn't have to be on a *quid pro quo* basis. Like good friends, one anticipates what the other desires and tries one's best to bring about some degree of satisfaction. The other, eager to reciprocate, will in turn contribute something equally acceptable so that a balance is achieved and if possible maintained over time.

However, mutual benefit is the watchword in this equation and must be experienced by both parties alike and must be recognised by each as such. Those who aspire to earn an advantage there from should never forget this lesson. Those who do, do so at their peril.

## Two F800 BMWs tested in one afternoon.

(Renier Jordaan)



*The striking BMW F800 S*

It was a privilege to have been invited by BMW Motorrad to join them at Swartkops Raceway for an introduction to the new generation of parallel twin cylinder motorcycles. We spent a day with these machines, with the activities being divided into a track and an outride session. At the conclusion of the day's activities the group of guests were all in agreement that these are superb "little" bikes. But do not let the word "little" detract you because they are not little on performance and will delight anyone wanting that something extra that the F650 range cannot give. I will not swop my K1200RS for one but I would not mind owning an F800. It has all the extras; heated grips, on board computer, ABS, and an interesting rear brake disc configuration where the disc runs on the centre line

of the bike.

The belt drive is reported to have a life span of 40 000km with a replacement cost similar to that of a chain.

These bikes promise to be a great commuters with lots of low-down torque and nimbleness and a reported fuel consumption of 3.4L/100km@90kph. The test bikes showed an average fuel consumption for a combination of town and open road riding of 4.7L/100km. It must also be remembered that these bikes had only about 1500km on the clock and were being ridden quite hard.

Performance is not in the super bike class of similarly sized competitors but it is that low-down torque that gives these engines the edge. Change down to 2nd and the pull is amazing. It is easy to reach 210kph with revs to spare. Red line is at 8500rpm and 160kph could be a comfortable cruising speed for those who want it. Gear changes are smooth, crisp and positive. Braking comes from Brembo and once one got used to riding a bike with a conventional fork configuration instead of a telelever suspension system, it was fun all the way.

Handling is superb. Weighing in at 187kg., flipping it through corners is sheer pleasure. After being respectable on the outride and behaving like gentlemen, the invitation of the track was eagerly accepted. After a couple of laps to get the feel and understand the track, the fun really started. Down the main straight into turn 1, the hairpin turn 2, hard acceleration through the gears to 5th, 160kph through the long sweep of turn 3, hard braking for turn 4, change down to 4th and race for turn 5 at the top of the hill at 145kph. Brake hard, 3rd gear, 2nd gear for turn 6, into 3rd for turn 7 and down to the main straight to start the whole sequence again.

As I spent more time with these machines, a few hours with both the S and the ST, I even forgave BMW for not equipping them with a telelever suspension. There was never an occasion where I felt unsettled to be riding one of these machines.

The seating position on the ST is more upright than the S and promises to be more comfortable on a long trip. These are true blue BMW's and the ST will give you the option of kitting out for the long trip with panniers and a top box.

# Experiences on the Extreme Rider Programme (ERP)

(Basic text and pics by Peter Kirchner)

**H**ave you ever gone to a shop to buy just bread and milk and then returned home with lots more than you bargained for? Well, that's exactly what happened to me and my mates the past couple of days...

I had read an article in an Afrikaans monthly "Weg" some time ago about the West Coast and all the intriguing little dorpies you might want to go and visit if in the area. Paternoster, among others, was mentioned, as well as the bar in the hotel with the same name, that has as its decoration a whole lot of G-strings hanging from its ceiling, belonging to honeymoon couples who had spent a night or two there. Something in me said I should go and check it out some time...

As it happened, my friend Ronnie came to me not so long ago and asked me to join him on his West Coast trip by bike. West Coast also meant Paternoster - this was my calling. So, I agreed. Ronnie also invited Gary, with me calling on Bruno, a handsome foursome, if ever there was one!

With five days leave, routes logged into the GPS, bikes packed, and off we went. The first night was spent camping at the Augrabies Falls, the second night via Alexander Bay ( the most Western point of South Africa) at Port Nolloth. Day three was thick sand day. We couldn't go through the diamond area due to lacking permits, so we were forced onto a little jeep track through the dunes between Kleinsee and Hondeklipbaai, and what an adventure that was! Travelling sixty kilometres took 3 hours...

Hondeklipbaai is a cute place but nothing really happens there. The next camping spot was Strandfontein. What a beautiful place that is, so much so that I almost bought property there. The further South we went the quicker the villages followed one another. Lots of development shows the huge influx of investment that occurs. Lamberts Bay, Elands Bay, Velddrif, Paternoster, Langebaan, Melkbosstrand, Bloubergstrand, they all came and went. Cape Town was very busy for this time of the year. We couldn't get accommodation at first. Only after having escaped to Houtbay did we manage to find something after 22:00.

So far so good! All went well - no trauma, only a broken pannier bracket and a cracked rear frame that was welded properly by BMW Cape Town and all within the anticipated time span, in fact we had an extra day at our disposal. Someone suggested Cape Agulhas....

All along the coastline to Cape Agulhas (most Southern point of (South) Africa was a dream come true. Best riding weather, minimal traffic. What else could a man want?

After Cape Agulhas came Mosselbay, George, Port Elizabeth etc. etc. Our rules were simple and hadn't changed— it had to be the closest road to the coastline, be it tar or dirt, and avoiding the highways as far as possible. The road between Kenton on Sea and Umtata is a motorcyclist's must. It is in very good condition with the odd stretch of potholes but 300 km of winding passes make it an absolute Utopia. (Taking corners at high speeds was getting easy after all the exercise!)

We turned off at Umtata to go to Coffee Bay and the Hole in the Wall. The fact that it had rained most of the day and the gravel would be mud didn't deter us. Riding 180 km in mud made us very, very tired and we only arrived in Port St. Johns at 21:00. Here we met up with another biking group (roadies) and booked in at the local backpackers overnight facility called Monkey Jungle. We hadn't even booked in properly before having been offered the first 'joint' by a lady...

This is not my scene, really, but boy what an absurd experience. About a hundred people looking like hippies, most of them "stoned", the other half dancing to the rhythm of African drums, some okes doing their artistic fire juggling stuff. Very interesting , really...

Kosi Bay (most Eastern point of South Africa) followed. I had to phone work to extend my holiday because achieving three out of four Extreme Points meant just as well getting all four Points of the RSA (i.e. Pontdrift – North, Alexander



Bay – West, Cape Agulhas – South and Kosi Bay – East)(logically). From here we gassed it. We ran out of time and still had about 1700km ahead of us. The BMW's, however, were more than willing to meet the challenge. What fantastic bikes - the engines just keep on purring for hours at high revs.

Pontdrift was the compulsory stop, the photograph taken and off we went, heading for home.

So, after originally heading out for the West Coast only, we returned with 7000 km more on the clocks. All in all it was an awesome experience. The moods were kept high, friendships formed and sore backsides retained... Just to get back to that bar in Paternoster. It has G-strings suspended from its ceiling. Hundreds of them, boet, hundreds. Go check them out!

**Editor's Comment:** Peter and friends are obviously staunch supporters of doing things the hard way, hence the adventures they experienced *en route*, some pleasant and some perhaps not so pleasant. The-more-the-enjoyment-the-more-the-risk theorem of living is once again apparent in the story of their wanderings. Quite a few members, not yet having tackled the ERP challenge, are gearing up for some exciting action this year, but view such an adventure as the one above with trepidation, for various reasons. Dropping one's bike on a sand patch with the risk of injury and perhaps damage to the bike, is not everybody's idea of fun in the sun.

To those not so stout of heart as our colleagues above, there are other exciting, yet easier routes by which to get to these points within the specified time with road bikes. Chat around during our monthly Club Noggins and people who have followed the more benign routes will gladly offer the fruits of their experience in achieving the ERP award.



*Road conditions only for hardened GS riders*



*The gates at Pontdrif, the northern-most position in the R.S.A for the Extreme Rider Award.*



*The way to go if you're not very careful*



*Slipping and sliding is the name of the game on an adventure such as this.*



*The hare and the tortoise in close-up*



*The adventurous group relaxing at a spot on the West Coast somewhere.*

# ’n Meisie duisend op meer maniere as een.....

(Henri Heyns)

**L**orette Janse Van Rensburg is aan almal van ons bekend as die sekretaresse, dié persoon wat na al die administrasie van ons klub vir die afgelope drie jaar al omsien. Skraal van postuur maar breed van sjarme en bevoegdheid, altyd onberispelik netjies, ken ons haar almal as die vriendelike, vlytige en pligsgetroue donkerkop vir wie se hande daar niks verkeerd staan nie. Male sonder tal was dit al vir die bestuur asook vir die gewone lede nodig om oor een of ander klubaangeleentheid op haar nommer te druk en altyd is hulle van haar toegewydheid en besonderse probleemoplossingsvermoë verseker.

Trou aan haar nering is sy ook tans in die diens van Denel Aerospace Systems, in Irene, waar sy die afgelope elf jaar al as persoonlike assistent vir die Bestuurder: Ingenieurswese werksaam is. Saam met haar man van agt jaar se verbintenis, Lukas, vorm hulle ’n goedaangepaste span wat in redelike groot mate aan al hulle buite- aktiwiteitsverwagtinge kan voldoen. Die rede is heelwaarskynlik onder andere omdat hulle geen kinders het om oor te bekommer nie en dus sommer baie meer vryheid geniet as wat andersins die geval sou gewees het.

Maar wie is hierdie meisie eintlik en wat weet ons van haar, behalwe dat sy ideaal geskik is om die pos van administratiewe assistent by die klub te vul? Lorette (en Lukas) is versot op die buitelewe en hulle het so pas vir haar ’n splinternuwe (geel) BMW F650 GS motorfiets aangeskaf. Waarom? Sodat sy onder andere aan die eerskomende GS-motorfiets Groot Uitdaagkompetisie op 10 en 11 Maart te Sabie kan gaan deelneem. Gevra watter klas sy in wil meeding het sy darem toegegee dat aangesien dit ’n eerste probeerslag gaan wees, het sy en Lukas (wat ’n groot GS 1200 ry en op ’n vroeër ouderdom ’n Dak-van-Afrika toer voltooi het) besluit om vir eers maar vir die effens minder-uitdagende Groen Roete in te skryf.

Dat Lorette uit ’n sportgeesdriftige familie kom, spruit uit die feit dat haar pa ’n Noord-Transvaalse duik- en swemkampioen in sy dae, en haar ma ’n Springbok hokkiespeler was. Lorette, op haar beurt, volg in haar ouers se voetspore, is ook ’n hokkiespeler en het Noord-Transvaalkleure daarvoor verwerf.

Nog is dit die einde van ons meisie se veelvuldige talente nie. Sy is ook lid van die Kanoklub in Centurion en het reeds vyf kanovaartmaratons van twee dae elk op die Visrivier agter die rug. Die veeleisende Comrades Maraton hou ook vir haar geen vrees in nie want in 1996, 1997 en 1998 het sy met die drie wedrenne klaargespeel. Hierbenewens nog het sy ook ’n groot liefde vir perdry, soveel so dat saals en tooms met elke

moontlike geleentheid saamgery word vir ingeval daar ’n ry-situasie hom voordoen.

Selfs militêre verpligtinge het Lorette nie laat verwaarloos nie. Sy was ’n luitenant in die Weermag in die ou dae, dus moet die manne fyn salueer as hulle met hierdie dame te doen kry!

Daar moet egter nie gedink word dat Lorette nie ook bedrewe is in die ‘fynere’ dinge van die lewe nie. Sy is baie kunstig en geniet brei- en borduurwerk baie. Voorwaar ’n lid van die skoner geslag met vele talente!

Die moontlikheid het onlangs ter sprake gekom dat daar gepoog behoort te word om ’n dames-alleen rygroep in die klub op die been te bring wat so nou en dan met ’n vakansiedag êrens in die omtrek kan gaan saamtrek om die dag te geniet. Gevra wat sy van die idee dink, het Lorette haar ondersteuning daarvoor gegee en gesê dat soiets die dames-ryers in die klub geweldig selfvertroue sal gee en het dan ook aangebied om met die organisering daarvan te help. Maar het sy toegevoeg, dit moet net nie te gereeld gebeur nie want dan sal die mans jaloers word!

Gevra wat haar siening van die lewe is, verklaar Lorette dat sy probeer om positief te dink en te doen met alles wat sy aanpak. Sy is gelukkig in haar handel en wandel, kom oor die algemeen goed met mense klaar, en geniet omtrent alle soorte sport.

Die klub wens vir Lorette en Lukas alle voorspoed en geluk toe vorentoe. Gedagtig aan die feit dat die lewe is wat mens daarvan maak weet ons dat hulle geen steen onaangeroerd sal laat om soveel moontlik daaruit te haal nie. Ons hou ook vir hulle duim vas vir die eersdaagse Groot Uitdaagkompetisie!



*Hier sit Lorette op haar splinternuwe GS.  
Ons wonder wat op daardie oomblik in dié  
donkerkop se gedagtes omgegaan het.*



# The End of a Beautiful Friendship

(Henri Heyns)



The photograph above reminds me of a song with the above title, quite popular some years ago. It saddens me to see the remains of a beautiful R136 000, K1200 RS machine, finished in bright yellow, with its life ended after seemingly having served its owner for only a few hundred kilometres.

Who, what, where, how and why are questions that cannot be answered here. Even the people directly involved would in probability for one reason or another not be in a position to give an exact account of what the true conditions/actions were, to have caused the mishap. What we see here, however, is the mute testimony to something which we can only surmise as having gone terribly wrong on a South African roadside somewhere. Judging from the obvious blood spatter on the fuel tank, the rider didn't come out of this mishap without a scratch.

Yes, the inevitable questions and almost certain inappropriate answers quickly enter the mind of the reader. A dozen reasons, singly or in combination, may exist for such a mishap but to most bikers, only one stands out like a pinnacle above everything else: It's the other guy's fault! How often do we hear the lament: "I was travelling along the freeway when all of a sudden, the taxi (truck, car, bus, pedestrian, whatever,) swung into my path of travel and made me lose control of the bike.

But is this contention always true? Do we bikers recognise the small profile that our machines create for other road users, especially given the enormous

speeds and almost breathtaking acceleration our machines are capable of? Are we always as visible to others as they presumably are to us? Are we always exercising 100% concentration on what we are doing, meticulously observing what is going on around us and ready for instantaneous reaction should something untoward be occurring?

Travelling on our motorways nowadays is not for sissies and doing so on two wheels amidst the plethora of vehicles with operators ranging from wizened half-senile oldies, through inebriated, incompetent, inexperienced, psychologically disturbed, drug addicted, to normal people, just in too much of a flap to care about other people also using the roads.

The THINK BIKE campaign aimed at motorists for making them more aware of motorcycles in their midst could equally be applied to bikers themselves. "How am I riding?" should also be an essential question, the answer to which could possibly provide at least part of the answer in helping to reduce the ever-increasing incidence of motorcycle accidents. Let us take it upon ourselves to be better (and safer) motorcyclists.

Readers are requested to respond to this article by writing in and suggesting ways and means of reducing the horrible carnage on our roads and especially as it applies to motorcycles. Despite all the hazards there still are many motorcyclists who manage to ride/commute every day, year in and year out, without so much as even a scratch to show for the hazards they're exposed to. Is it just luck or is there something they know and do to make their motorcycling safe? Please tell others what you know and do!

As an aside, the other day I was walking to my bike in a parking lot and noticed a lady, obviously in her deep eighties, dragging one foot and using a walking stick, painstakingly battling to step down a shallow pavement on the way to her car. I offered to help but she gratefully declined, explaining that the very next car close by was hers. I nevertheless helped to see her to it and was amazed to notice her laboriously climbing into the driver's seat. Asking subtly whether she should be driving at all, the lady sweetly replied that there was no problem as the car was equipped with an automatic transmission! Makes one think, doesn't it?

# In a roadside classroom

(Richard Hussey)

I'm riding my almost-new GS along the road, wind in my face, a smile on my lips. Freedom and the open road! Huh!?! The motorcycle beneath me ignores my throttle hand and slows down, all power lost. My eyes rapidly check the instruments - no fault lights, fuel is low but the rider display says 63kms left. I search for a safe place to stop so other traffic will not pose a danger to me. I come to a halt on the dusty roadside and switch off the ignition. Side stand out, rest the machine at the slight angle and get off. Helmet off and hook it on a convenient mirror.

So what now? I open the fuel filler cap and peer inside. There's still some fuel left in the tank. Perhaps it's not getting through the t-pipe? I place my helmet out of the way on the ground and kick up the side stand. Holding the bike firmly, I gently and gingerly lean it over to the left until the cylinder is almost on the ground, in order to get the fuel in the right half of the tank over to the left. (Groan, puff-puff!) With great effort I lift it upright again and back onto the side stand.

I turn the key and try again. The starter motor turns it over, but there is no life in the big twin engine. Ignition? Who knows...these new generation machines only tell their secrets to technicians with computers and I don't carry them in my top-box! So, to cut a longer story short, I get the number of BMW on Call and start the process of arranging a pick-up. Being near home, I call my better half and ask her to bring me something cold to drink while I wait. As is my wont, I consider what I have learned from the experience of break-down.

Firstly, never assume that cell phone reception will be available to summon immediate assistance. So, what do I need to carry with me all the time in case of such an event? Being stranded on the side of the road can kill you. Aside from possible passing predators or criminals, the environment can kill you. Sunstroke can kill you first within hours, followed by thirst, then hypothermia if you are stranded overnight in a Karoo winter. Hunger will only kill you in days if not weeks, so you really don't need to carry packs of energy bars!

But within just a half hour standing alongside the road without a tree in sight I was really sweating (read dehydration!). My riding gear was black and

absorbing every bit of solar energy it could. I took the jacket off for relief. Within a minute, I felt the blazing heat right through the t-shirt on my skin. I needed something to shade me, to absorb or reflect the killer sun. I put the jacket on again - I'd rather sweat than roast like a 'flattie' chicken! In the Sahara desert, the Bedouin tribesmen wear dark blue woollen robes with long sleeves to protect them from the African sun - but they wear them very loose with flowing cotton undergarments to protect their skins and white cotton turbans cover their heads and necks. Riding jackets are close-fitting and synthetic or leather. They are hot without the speed-induced breeze blowing over them. My mouth is dry, my tongue thick and sticky. I can't swallow. I need a drink of water. Yes, there is a shopping centre in sight - about twenty minutes walk away - but what about all my stuff on the bike and the bike itself...?

Relief came in the form of my loving spouse and a six-pack of ginger beer. I sat in the car, shaded by the roof and peeled off as much clothing as modesty would permit. The relief of a support vehicle is not always at hand, so bikers need to be self-sufficient. I would strongly recommend that every motorcyclist always carry two bare essentials - protection from the sun and water. (Yes, your pillion needs their own!) A foil 'space blanket' wrapped around a 500ml bottle of still spring water. Chances are it will not fit under your seat (a half-decent toolkit will not fit there either!) but it will fit into a top-box, a tank bag or a backpack. Some backpacks even have external pockets for two bottles. Your essential carry-pack is compact and weighs a little over 500grams. It may just save your life - or someone else's!

*Editor's Note.*

*Thanks for that piece of advice Richard. Very appropriate indeed! We often make the mistake of assuming that help is always just a cell phone call away. What if you get stuck somewhere in the Cape, far from anyone you know? I always get a list of BMW Dealers (bikes and cars) of the area in which I will be travelling so that in an emergency, help could be solicited in that way. Weekends are always a bother though.*

*Another pearl of wisdom is to never travel any considerable distance alone. Always take a companion biker or two along.*

*Any other ideas from anyone?*



## ASSUME also spells making an ASS out of U and ME

(Henri Heyns)

The other day I came upon the scene of an accident minutes after it had happened. No, luckily it had nothing to do with motorcycles otherwise the same age-old lament on their inherent dangers and so on would again have been heard, but two cars were involved this time and the nature of the accident prompts me to mention it in this newsletter.

Three cars were involved in this mishap: A BMW, coming down C.R. Swart Drive (80 km/h speed limit), travelling in the direction of Waverley, a Toyota (Corolla), making a right turn at a robot-controlled intersection, heading towards Queenswood, and another Toyota, coming from Queenswood towards the intersection. (There are no green arrows in the robot allowing for the lateral movement of vehicles off the main road.) The BMW had hit the Corolla side-on, seriously injuring an elderly couple therein, so much so that Jaws of Life had to be used to extricate the woman from the passenger seat. The impact had caused both cars to slide along the side road, hitting the other Toyota, stationary at the intersection waiting for the green light, head-on, but causing only slight damage. The BMW, whose driver was badly shaken but not injured, and the Corolla are write-offs.

The question is who, between the BMW and the Corolla can be blamed for the accident, or are both equally guilty? People who observed the collision say that the BMW had crossed the intersection whose robot had already turned red against it and that the Corolla's driver, who had stopped in the intersection momentarily, had every right to proceed down the side road at the time.

The question arises as to the purpose of the amber warning light in the robot that comes on for a few seconds before switching over to red. To my way of thinking it gives about ten (adjustable to a longer period, depending on the speed limit applicable) seconds clear warning of the light changing to red, which means that driver's should prepare to stop if anything more than 100 metres or so from the intersection.\* On face value, it would appear that the BMW is the guilty party for 'beating' the robot despite ample warning of the changing robot having been given.

However, there is another interpretation at play here. Our traffic laws clearly state that turning in the face of oncoming traffic is a punishable offence. This means that the elderly driver, despite the fact that the robot may have turned in his favour, should have waited to ensure that it was safe to proceed on his way before doing so.

The major proportion of traffic accidents occur due to a misunderstanding between the operators of vehicles, each one ASSUMING that the other was going to act differently to what actually transpires. The BMW's driver, although perhaps crossing the intersection seconds after the robot had changed, had the right to ASSUME that the driver of the Corolla would have enough sense to allow her to pass first before turning. The Corolla's driver, on the other hand obviously ASSUMED that the BMW would pull-up, seeing that the robot had already turned against her. Both were wrong as the catastrophic results proved.

How many times a day does it happen that someone is trying to make an ASS out of U and ME on our roads? To avoid becoming one, be on the alert constantly!

\* When travelling at 80 km/h 22,22 m/sec are covered. This is equal to some 110 m covered in five seconds.

## Date of 2007 AGM.

Please be informed that the 2007 **Annual General Meeting** of the Club will take place at Bavarian Motorcycles on Friday evening 30<sup>th</sup> March.

As the following Friday, being the first Friday in April, is Good Friday and therefore a public holiday, the committee has decided to hold the April monthly social on the same evening as the AGM.

All member items for inclusion on the agenda must please be communicated to the Club Secretary, Lorette Janse van Rensburg timeously. She may be contacted by:

e-mail at [lorettej@kentron.co.za](mailto:lorettej@kentron.co.za) or on mobile at 082-7893825.

# Official Club Activities Calendar 2007

Date	Route /Destination	Dist.	Contact Persons
7 Jan.	Babsfontein (Social braai)	200	Dave Swart/ Rupert Richter
4 Feb.	Three Dams		Richard Hussey
4 March	Cradle of Mankind	200	Colin King
10-25 March	Cape Extreme/Buffalo Rally	4000	Richard Hussey
30 March	AGM		
1 April	GS Training/Cosmos	100	Pieter de Koker
6-9 April	Ivory Run/GS Overland	1500	R.Jordaan/Rupert/Adriaan
21 April-1 May	Paternoster/ABBG GS Run	4000	Pieter/Colin
27 April-1 May	ABBG Victoria West	3000	Richard Hussey
6 May	Treasure Hunt		Adriaan Scheepers

All runs and events are subject to confirmation at the prior club social meeting. This is a work-in-progress schedule and may be altered at any time. No responsibility will be accepted for changes to the programme.

**IMPORTANT:** Non-club members are welcome to attend club riding events as guests. Non-members, however, are required to sign an indemnity form before participating. The form can be downloaded from the Home Page. The club has an official policy regarding the use and financial compensation of support vehicles on official overnight club trips. Details appear on the Home Page.

**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)

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