BIMBLE
Commuter Special

How-do and welcome to Bimble, the newsletter from Quality Yorkshire Riders.Com

This is a special edition looking at urban riding, commuting and making the most of life on two wheels in town. A growing number of commuters are making the switch to two wheels; they may never go beyond their usual journey to work and a lot certainly don't see themselves as 'bikers' but that doesn't mean they're not part of the two wheel community so if you know one of them go and have a chat or forward them this newsletter, it might just be the start of something beautiful.

If you've got any comments, suggestions or enquiries about an event or you just want a natter please feel free to contact us at; qualityyorkshireriders@gmail.com or ring 0113 24 75804. Or you can even follow us on **Facebook** now too!

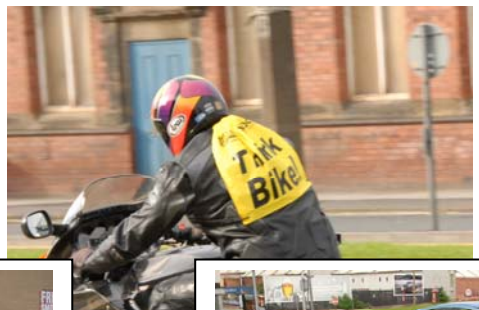
Breakfast:

For the last few years we've held a bikers breakfast in Leeds in July for those who use the bike to commute. Everyone turning up on a bike up gets a bacon butty and brew and the opportunity to take away a goodybag.

This year we're doing 3 of them to include more of you. One in Bradford on the 18th July at Bradford motorcycles on Canal Road, one in Huddersfield on the 19th July at DC Motorcycles on Alder Road and one in Leeds on the 20th July at Leeds Honda just off Armley gyratory. There should be a flyer for you to print out attached to the email you got this newsletter from, feel free to pass it on to anyone you think might be interested.

I know it means being slightly more organised in the morning and leaving a little earlier, but come along and say hello if you can. You might even get to nosey round the dealerships while it's quite and find yourself something shiny… Here's a reminder of what you missed last time:









Making the Switch:

So you've had enough of sitting in the car, burning fuel, wasting your time and increasing your blood pressure on your daily commute. Or you've decided that sharing the bus with that guy who plays music on his phone at full volume at 6:30am isn't the way you want to start your day. You've had a look at the alternatives and decided that getting a bike or scooter is the best option for you...

Well here is a brief guide to getting on to two wheels and the things you need to consider if you want to commute on them.

Firstly you'll need the right paper work. If you already have a car licence you'll need to get motorcycle entitlement added (category A) which is free. Once you've done that you'll need to do Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) which is a full day's course (or at least it should be…) involving a minimum of 2 hours road riding. This costs around £100 and includes use of a bike and crash helmet. A lot of trainers will lend you some gloves and maybe a jacket too but discuss this with them when you ring up to book. Consider what else you're going to wear. Shorts and flip-flops are a no no. Stout boots, a thick jacket and jeans are about the minimum.

Completing CBT validates your provisional cat A licence and allows you to ride a machine of up to 14bhp and 125cc on the road with L plates. CBT is valid for 2 years after which time you'll have to retake it. Ideally you'd take and pass your test within this time.

Once you've completed your CBT you'll no doubt want to get a bike or scooter. It's worth waiting until after you've done CBT in case you decide half way through that you've changed your mind. There is a bewildering range of machines to choose from but the type of riding you're going to be doing most and your physical size may well be the deciding factors. Your CBT instructor or local dealership should be able to give you some guidance but it's worth doing some internet research or finding someone else at work or in the pub who knows about bikes and asking them too. 9 times out of 10 they won't be as scary as they look.

Your choice of steed will need insurance and road tax and if it's more than 3 years old an MOT too just like the car.

Next on the shopping list is security, a disc lock or big chain and padlock should stop the opportunist thief and parking it somewhere well lit and busy and with CCTV coverage will help deter the more organised tea leaf. If you have to park it outside at home then a cover is a good investment too.

Kit is the main thing you need to consider. Buy the best you can afford but don't assume that just because it's expensive it's good. Lots of bike magazines do product tests but you don't have to go to specialist bike shops to get decent stuff. Aldi & Lidl do bike kit specials once a year and it's usually pretty good kit imported from Germany. If you're really on a budget wellies and thick socks will keep your feet warm and dry and high end builders / gardener's gloves are better than frozen fingers. A crash helmet must conform to ECE 22.05 but it's worth consulting the Sharp ratings (http://sharp.direct.gov.uk/) for a more informed opinion on what's worth your hard earned cash. A cheap lid might offer the same relative crash protection as a more expensive one but it may well be draughty, noisy and less cosseting too. Only you know what your head is worth.

After that it's all plain sailing.

For more info click on some of these:
http://www.geton.co.uk/
http://www.begin-motorcycling.co.uk/
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/index.htm

Planning:

Planning your journey is the first step. If you usually do it by car at peak times it's reasonable to assume that you'll cut your journey time by 25 – 50% on a bike but it's worth doing your commute on quiet weekend afternoon first to see what it's like by bike without hundreds of frustrated car drivers and lemming pedestrians to deal with.

Also look at the route you're planning to take on a map or ideally an interactive internet based map like googlemap or bingmaps. There might be a slightly different route you can take which makes more sense by bike than by car etc.

After a couple of weeks revisit the map and see if there are any junctions, roundabouts or bottlenecks you've discovered that you want to avoid. You might even find that on a nice sunny day you want a slightly longer and more scenic route home…

Commuter Survival Guide:

The commuter survival guide is a DVD resource filmed in and around west Yorkshire by the guys that made 'Great Roads Great Rides' and features footage and in depth analysis of a number of urban riding scenarios.



You can lay your hands on a copy in most of the dealerships in west Yorkshire or you can have a look at: http://www.qualityyorkshireriders.com/commuter-intro.htm. Or come along to one of our riders breakfast events in July and pick up a copy along with a bacon butty and a brew.

Riding in town is a different skill set to the thrapping along the country roads, so if you don't often do it the DVD could still be well worth a look.

Parking:

Parking for bikes is mostly free, although some exceptions do apply. Most multi-storey car parks have spots where you can park a bike out of the way for free and many office buildings have areas that get used as impromptu bike parks – have a wander round next time you're out there.

You can get a ticket on a bike if you're causing an obstruction or blatantly parking somewhere you shouldn't, but use a bit of common sense and you should find you can park yards from where you work for next to nowt.

Urban Hymns:

In real terms urban riding is the most hazardous thing we as motorcyclists do. Yes twisty country roads involve higher speeds and there is a greater potential for it to go drastically wrong but in terms of the sheer number of hazards and constantly changing nature of the road environment urban riding is the riskiest thing we do. So how can we reduce that risk to a minimum? Without doing further training or learning the hard way there are some basic things any rider can do to help themselves get home in one piece:

Kit:

Buy and wear decent kit. Should the worst happen your suit trousers and work shoes will offer no protection against the tarmac or anything else. There's loads of good kit available now that you can wear over a shirt and trousers and it'll keep you warm, dry and comfy. Buy some, love it. It may one day save your skin.

The more visible you can make yourself the better your chances of being seen:

Sounds obvious but it's not as simple as you may think, it's not just about having your headlight on and wearing hi-viz. It's about actually giving other road users time to see you too. Yes drivers should look before they pull out or change lanes but many don't check properly if at all and we have to allow for that – it's been going on for long enough for it not to come as a surprise anymore. Use road positioning and appropriate speed to let others see you.

Think like a driver:

Most people on the roads have never ridden a bike. They don't know to think that you might be filtering down the outside of the line of traffic they're about to pull out from. Anticipate what others are likely to do and allow for them to make mistakes or do something daft. Dealing with traffic is like herding an elephant – if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time it will squish you. Plan well ahead, be calm and assertive (not aggressive), use smooth direct movements and treat it with respect and you'll be fine.

The main thing you can do with no expense is to improve your observation and planning. Go back to basics and on every ride use IPSGA (Information, Position, Speed, Gear, Acceleration) and create yourself a riding plan. Have an escape route. Give yourself space and time to get through things safely without disturbing other road users too much. Most drivers will give a rider a bit of space in the knowledge that the biker won't be in their way for long but if you're too cheeky expect someone to take offence and make life difficult for you.

Filtering is legal and if done well makes the best use of the advantages a bike offers. Done badly or overly aggressively and you could still get pulled for a discussion on your riding by the police.

Remember filtering is not overtaking in the traditional sense. On the open road you're taught to get out and past as swiftly as possible to get yourself back on the correct side of the road. Filtering though is a slow manoeuvre. It's about giving people the chance to see you and respond accordingly, about moving through traffic and using the space available to your advantage, not bullying your way through or just riding between two lanes of traffic. Think of urban riding as tai chi rather than kick boxing: unhurried controlled movements of deliberate intent rather than fast aggressive acts.

Speed:

The big danger in town is difference in speed - between a rider and other road users or between one lane of traffic and another - that's the issue. If one lane is slow moving on a dual carriageway drivers trying to get out into the freer flowing lane are going to do so quickly and possibly without warning. A rider filtering at 20 or 30 mph quicker than the surrounding traffic is asking for trouble regardless of the environment – that's 2 or 3 car lengths a second. Keep to within 10mph of other traffic and don't filter if the traffics moving at the speed limit or above 40mph.