

Here, Jonathan (Joff) Christie, our Chairman, answers a few questions about his bikes and biking experiences.

### **When did you pass your bike test and what was your first machine?**

*I passed my motorcycle test in summer of 1990 at Southampton when at college. At Weekends, during CBT training, I travelled to Rustington to a mate's house where we re-built – complete strip down - my first bike, a Honda CB400 twin. I recall people called it the Honda 'wetdream' as it was the lesser of the Honda range when produced.*



### **What particular things do you remember about your early biking years?**

*I recall the freedom, excitement, adrenalin of being on the bike; exposed to the world in which I was riding heightening all your senses. It was also, because I could not buy the best kit, on wet days, emptying my gloves and boots of water and hanging my leather jacket to dry and then treating it again with leather wax – Ahh the good old days – Brrrrrr.*

*I recall very well to this day, the night before I set off on my first long haul, Southampton to Perth, I dreamed of all the risks which could take me off the bike, almost nightmare stuff. However, when I got all my kit on, loaded the bike, I rode safely through the night – less traffic – leaving Southampton at 23:00 arriving at Perth at 07:15. This bike got me to and from Scotland three times, before I moved to Edinburgh to continue my studies.*

### **Tell us about the different bikes that you've ridden / owned.**

*My stable of motorcycles, to be honest, has been very limited. At primary school, I had, for a short while, a Suzuki 50cc trail bike for riding on the farm. Then I had my first road bike, a Honda CB400 twin followed by a Kawasaki 750 Zephyr (too much chrome!). I traded this in for a Honda VFR750-g geared cam. I then got married.*

*After seeing a 10-year biking drought, I re-entered the biking world on a second hand VFR800-04, which I bought for a princely sum of £1,800.00 with 38k on the clock. This is when I sat my advanced driving test in 2003/2004. I still have this VFR today and now has around 70k on the clock and is still going strong, this being my weekly/observing ride.*

*I then saw an opportunity to buy a second hand BMW1200 RT, a 90<sup>th</sup> limited edition with low miles and could not resist, it appeared in my garage as if by magic. The BMW1200RT and I completed our first Spanish tour in 2019, covering just shy of 3,000 miles, which was great. (Check out Joff's Spanish trip on our [Oot an' about](#) section) To be honest, I do love this bike for long trips; it still amazes me how nimble it is, considering its size, handling very well on the windy Scottish roads, e.g. the A93 which takes you past Balmoral and over Glenshee etc.*

**Pictures of your current bikes in the fleet**

The Honda VFR800 and BMW 1200RT.

Showroom	Actual
	
	

**What is or has been the best bike that you’ve owned and why?**

*I think my VFR800 is great; the 2004 model was when Honda adjusted the power band, it jumps into life around 7000 RPM, so you have the ability to have some fun and get out of trouble should it arise. Over all, a great day-to-day bike, is very much bullet proof and good fun as it’s still basic enough for me to carry out my own maintenance, although I do leave the electronic fuel injection system and carbs alone.*

**Do you regret selling any particular bike?**

*To be honest, I wish I had kept my original VFR750, a great bike, no cam chain and it would have meant not having had to re-buy everything! Yes, definitely the VFR750 - a great bike, good trips with fantastic memories.*

**What has been your most exhilarating moment on a bike?**

*Without doubt for the experience, crowds, comradery, the Isle of Man TT in 2001. Weather was great that practise week, we had friends on the island which helped. Unfortunately, making it real was the time when I got passed on the hill section doing 120mph by a chap on a Suzuki slingshot but when I reached the museum corner, the dust was settling as he and his bike had gone off. The chap was ok, but his bike was a right off. This incident reinforced the point that you have to ensure that when you rode, you did so in your own limits of ability.*

*My VFR750, when arriving on the island, had only just reached 500mile on the odometer, but by time I got back home, it was close to the 2000-miles mark.*

*I also did a track day at Donnington which was a great experience but that really didn’t come close to riding the Isle of Man TT.*

**What has been the scariest moment on a bike?**

*I can recall several incidents I had within quite a short period after I had passed my test.*

*a) My back wheel locked up at 70mph on the M3 when I was driving to London. The root cause was that I had overtightened the drum brake, the pads overheated and then gripped, locking the back wheel. After leaving my mark on the middle and inside lanes into a hard shoulder, I slackened the assembly off, let it cool, then rode on.*

*b) On another occasion in autumn, when coming onto a small double roundabout, a VW Beetle appeared in front of me. In order to avoid it, and I still don't know how I did it to this day, but I stood up on bike, locked the back wheel, turning the bike right, released the back brake and drove around the front of the now stopped Beetle. I managed to stop safely a further 20m down the road, but as I got off the bike to speak with the driver, the car suddenly took off.*

**Which are your favourite biking roads in Scotland?**

*The North Coast 500 with the A93, Glenshee to Aboyne chucked in for good measure.*



**What is your worst road in Scotland?**

*Generally, all dual-carriage ways and motorways.*

**Thanks very much, Joff, for sharing your story with us.**