



## MAMM Spring Newsletter : March 2025

### A message from our MAMM Chair : Tony Lunnon-Wood

A belated Happy New Year to all our readers and families!

It seems to have been a long, cold winter but finally the days are lengthening and Spring is not too far away. It is always a relief to escape from the dark December and January months where the nights seem to go on forever!

My wife and I were fortunate enough to spend Christmas in Bavaria with family who are living and working there. Snow on the days leading up to Christmas resulted in a "White Christmas", albeit a hard frost at minus 6. The Christmas Markets on the Continent are a true revelation and the "finger food" is delicious. Coupled with mulled wine and a sprinkling of snow, it is real winter wonderland!

Last season was one of the busiest in MAMM history for the motorcycle section, which ensured our observers were involved for most of the summer, trying to get associates test ready before the long nights, low sun and salt, curtail biking activities. The car section also had a successful year, albeit not as busy as the bike chapter.

MAMM associates gained 3 F1rst passes, which is a glowing testament to the work Vince Dobby, Billy Johnson and the observers contributed during the year. Team MAMM welcomes all those who passed their Advanced Tests and offers congratulations to you all. You are now full members and hopefully will remain part of the group for many years.

I hope you enjoy reading this Spring Newsletter. We are grateful to our MAMM secretary for collating and sending it out to members. Of course, the MAMM newsletter will only survive if members provide contributions. So, please send in any articles you think MAMM members would be interested in reading about.

The venue for the AGM has changed this year and will be held at **Duffus Village Hall**. We have deliberately pushed the date back to **26th March** to ensure lighter evenings. It is a delightful hall with plenty of parking and a host of facilities. The committee would be delighted if you would join us at **18:30 hrs**.

Just 2 quick parish notices. If possible, please pay your MAMM and IAM dues by standing order (SO). It makes life a lot easier for Bob our treasurer. The MAMM website now has a "General Information" section which is accessible without the need for a password. Tom Ireland our website manager has worked hard to ensure the site is more user friendly.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a safe successful 2025, hope you enjoy reading the Newsletter.

Tony Lunnon-Wood  
MAMM Chair

## MAMM Updates

### Membership Charges

#### Bob Drysdale, Membership Secretary

No, please don't stop reading now; please read on because this is important information for all members, but especially those who have joined the group in the last two or three years or who joined outwith lecture periods.

When you first joined up with IAM RoadSmart you paid a large amount of money which covered 12 months membership of IAM plus your test fee and book. Some of that money comes to the local group to which you are assigned; in our case that is Moray Advanced Motorists and Motorcyclists. Some of the money we receive (£5) covers 12 months membership of the Moray Group.

At the end of 12 months, IAM asks you to join up for a further 12 months. At the time of writing IAM annual membership is £52 or, if you choose to pay by direct debit, £47. In addition, the local group treasurer (i.e. me) invites the national member to remain a member of the Moray Group. Our membership fee is £5 per annum and payment of that ensures that you are covered by our group insurance for anything that hopefully will never occur to you while on a group activity.

Before I invite a member to remain with the Moray Group for another 12 months, I check against the national database to make sure that the individual is still a national member. I have to do this, as it is one of the IAM rules that, to be eligible to be a group member, you must be a national IAM member. This means that, in theory, I cannot invite you to remain a group member. Rather than just lose you as a member, I tend to flag up to the person that their national membership has expired and ask if this was accidental or deliberate. If it was intentional, then you cannot continue as a group member and we have to bid you farewell.

We always hope that our new members will remain with the group at least for a few years, or even for many years, but if you decide to leave us, we do ask that you let us know. We can then stop filling your email in-box with unwanted communications!

Bob Drysdale ([mamm@rosefield.me.uk](mailto:mamm@rosefield.me.uk))

### Membership Renewal

When it is time to invite a member to renew their Group Membership I send an email to each individual inviting them to remain with the group. If I do not receive a reply, I

usually send a second email. Sadly, on a number of occasions that also elicits no response.

We have discussed this at committee and it has been agreed that, from now on, if the original invitation plus the reminder does not trigger a response, we shall assume that the member no longer wishes to be linked to the Moray Group and we shall remove the link.

Of course, as our Chairman has said on several occasions, the easiest way of keeping your group membership active is to set up a standing order — and tell the treasurer that you have done this and what the payment date is. This is then recorded and you do not receive a renewal email. To date only 10 members out of 66 have done this and we would encourage the other 56 to do so.

Our bank account is with the Bank of Scotland and the details are these:

Sort Code: 80-06-66

Account Number: 00552531

## Bike section – Congratulations!

Many congratulations to Iain Lax who recently passed his Advanced Motorcyclists Test and gained a F1rst. Iain has kindly shared his fantastic bike trip to Norway with us in this newsletter.



### Norway by Bike in Summer 2024 : Iain Lax

Sitting here at the start of 2025, I am reflecting on my thoughts of 12 months ago, when I was looking forward to retirement, working towards my IAM test and a bike trip that had been on my bucket list for over 40 years. I was finally going to have enough

time to do a trip through Norway and up to the NordKapp justice; departure booked for 21<sup>st</sup> June, returning home on 14<sup>th</sup> July. Only 3 weeks, but an expected trip of over 5500 miles.

Of course, me being me, I couldn't do it the easy way and just take the bike I was used to, so on 18<sup>th</sup> April I took delivery of my brand-new BMW R1300GS.

Unfortunately, technical issues meant that BMW were unable to supply hard luggage for the bike, which meant I had to try other companies and suppliers. The week prior to departure was quite busy, as the bike had its first service, necessitating a 3 day stay at the dealers to rectify a couple of teething issues under warranty which could have been problematic had they happened on my trip. The original tyres, which had already done 1200 miles, were removed and a new set fitted that I knew would last the length of the trip.



21<sup>st</sup> June dawned fine and sunny, and I was all ready for the off, planning to catch the overnight Newcastle-Ijmuiden ferry. That first day was spent largely getting used to a fully laden bike, as I rode across the Lecht, Glenshee, and then through the Borders, avoiding dual carriageways as much as possible, in the knowledge that days 2 and 3 of the trip were simply motorway slogs through Holland, Germany and up to Hirtshals in Denmark for the overnight boat to Stavanger.

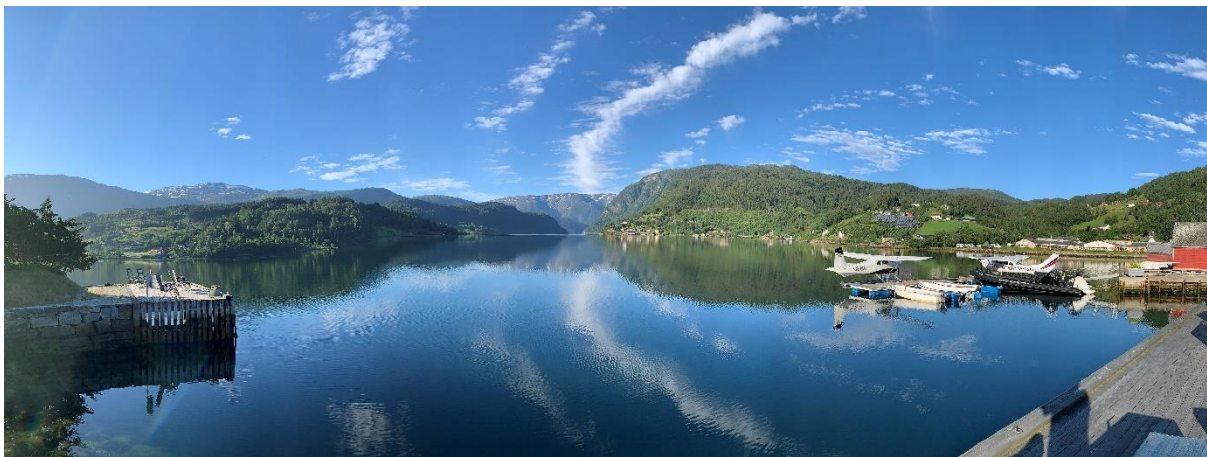
Whilst overnighting in Germany I met up with the other riders on the tour, with a selection of bikes including a ZZR1400, a Z1000 (the only one 2 up), a1290 Super Adventure, an 1190 Super Adventure, a 1200 GSA and an F850 GS (which performed surprisingly well throughout the trip). At least I knew with that selection, my 220-mile tank range wasn't going to be an issue.

Eight of us was a nice size of group, particularly given that all bar one had ridden independently on the continent before, and we didn't feel we had to stay together as one group throughout the day but could enjoy meeting up in the evenings and chatting over the day's highlights.

My first sight of Norway was on the approach to the ferry port at Stavanger, and already you could see the promise of stunning scenery and landscape, although to be fair I couldn't really appreciate until later just how much better it was going to get.

Having disembarked in the middle of the morning rush-hour, the first hour was a bit tricky as we wound our way through industrial Stavanger towards the Ryfylke Tunnel, the longest subsea and deepest in the world. It was an interesting first day, as we also crossed the Hardanger suspension bridge (the longest in Norway) and came across the novelty of roundabouts in tunnels.

I'm not going to go through every day's route here, because you would get a litany of 'saw a beautiful.....'\* Insert as appropriate at least one of view, waterfall, fjord, mountain, river. Just when you thought you'd reached peak appreciation of the country, you go round the next bend and just go 'Wow' again. For a one sentence descriptive summation I would say the scenery is very much like the Western Isles, the West Coast and once above the Arctic Circle, Sutherland, but everything's been on steroids. It is simply stunning.



WOW, what a view!

Another thing Norway has is similar road infrastructure; what this does mean is that trips take as long to cover as we are used to around the Highlands, so you need to bear that in mind. You may also come across a lot of road works, even at weekends. In many cases this was because the affected roads had just reopened to vehicular traffic and were being repaired after the ravages of the seasons.

Three areas worth special mention are Geiranger, Sortland, and of course, the NordKapp. Firstly Geiranger, where we spent 2 nights, arriving via the 63 from Dalsnipa viewpoint, 10 miles of beautiful technically challenging downhill tarmac.

Although the town itself is a favoured stopping point for fjord cruises, I would have to say that for me there was nothing in the town itself, which is why I used it as a base to explore the wonderful scenery of the area, meaning I got to ride the 63 between Geiranger and Eidsal 3 times in total, which if anything was even better than the route into Geiranger.

On the free day there, I decided to go and ride the well-publicised Atlantic Road. To be fair, the road itself was a bit of a letdown, as although it was scenic enough, I didn't find the road as spectacular as I was expecting (the Kylesku Bridge, although flat, is

just as good for me). I had planned to come back via the Trollstigen road, but unfortunately it was closed throughout 2024.



**The long and not so winding road**

In Geiranger, I was feeling we were quite a way north, but it took another 4 days riding and over 1100 miles via the Arctic Circle Visitor Centre (which to be fair is worth it for a photo from the outside, but not for the tourist tat) to reach Sortland.



**Arctic Circle Centre**



**Lovely wee museum in the Arctic Circle**

With 2 full days free in Sortland I opted to spend one on a full day ride out in the Lofoten Islands, which had some of the most spectacular scenery of the trip, but lots of tourists (fancy that!!!) and some quite slow roads, so allow time.

The second day I decided to do something a little different, so went on a shorter riding day, concentrating on local wildlife, including spending time in the Arctic Ocean (ok, the Norwegian Sea part of it really) in a 25ft RIB watching pods of killer whales in their own environment. It was a wonderful experience, and well worth the cost. On that same trip I also got to see a white-tailed sea eagle and spotted the one and only wild moose we saw on the trip.

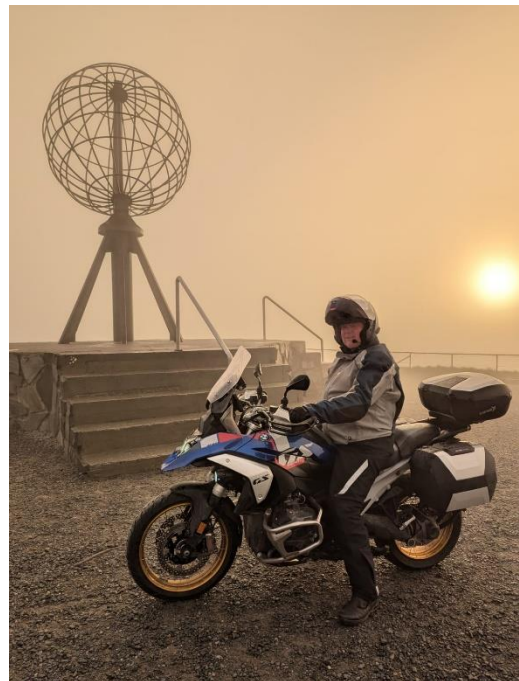


Finally, the NordKapp itself. Not sure why I wanted to get up there, but ever since I read my first bike mag in the early 70s it held this strange attraction, so finally off I went. Our accommodation up there was in Honningsvåg, located 22 miles south of Nordkapp.

This photo was taken at midnight, approaching Nordkapp

You may have seen photos of bikes in front of the globe at the visitors' centre in Nordkapp. As you can only get them down the track to the globe when the centre is closed, we decided to leave the hotel at just before midnight. It was surreal riding that road in bright sunshine, although there were the odd bits of haar coming in from time to time. It was also quite amusing when the visitors' centre closed, as about 100 bikes of varying shapes and sizes started up, and we all traipsed down to get the obligatory photo.

A bit contrived, but I actually felt a bit emotional having got there and having the photos to prove it. I admit to being a little sad when we started heading south again, but even if some of the roads were the same as the ones we had ridden northbound, I'm a firm believer that the roads look different going the opposite way.



Just a few things I found about my trip.

1. Card is king. I took €200 cash with me, and I bought €200 cash back. Every single purchase was made using CC, no matter how small.
2. Fuel was slightly more expensive than the UK, but not horrendously so.
3. Overnight ferry crossings were comfortable, and on all crossings clean straps were readily available, although assistance provided by the staff was variable.
4. Internal ferries are reliable, convenient, and an excellent way to get across the fjords. A FerryPay account is worth setting up, as once on the ferry your number plate gets photographed, and payment is charged to your CC. I did have a problem with a couple of crossings where the system logged my bike as a car,

but that was quickly and easily sorted out through their help system. Link is here: <https://ferrypay.no/Main.aspx>

5. Speeds – the traffic in rural Norway does not sit at the speed limit, but you're in the IAM and on holiday, so why wouldn't you?
6. Campervans – be prepared to be stuck behind them, but just sit at a decent distance, and understand that they will frequently pull over at viewpoints or laybys.

Was it worth it? Unequivocally yes. Would I go again? To Norway yes, but probably no further north than the Lofoten Islands, although if time is tight I may just stick in Fjordland

Some stats:

Length of trip: 19 days

Total riding: 130.5 hrs

Distance: 5492.6 miles

Avg fuel consumption: 60.1 mpg

## Car section - Congratulations!

Many congratulations to Simon Swanson who also achieved a F1rst in his recent Advanced Motorists Test. Here's his story....

### How I Achieved an IAM F1RST : Simon Swanson



As a member of my local 4x4 volunteer Responder group, Community Off-Road Transport Action Group (COTAG), one part of their training requirement is the need for its members to have passed a professionally recognised advanced driving course,



before members can be deployed. Having been recommended to contact the Moray Advanced Motorists & Motorcyclists IAM group, I commenced my training with Vince Dobby, their Chief Car Observer....GULP.

I needn't have worried! Armed with my shiny new copies of the IAM booklet, the Roadcraft Police Driver's Handbook, and the latest Highway Code, I underwent a detailed and methodical course of instruction, using the system of vehicle control. I also supported this practical knowledge and instruction, with many additional hours watching the excellent videos produced by @RegLocal, another IAM member and ex police instructor.

Taking me from what I believed to be a good and safe driver, to an advanced driver, Vince prepared me for my IAM Roadsmart Test, including post driving run sheets, to provide feedback and highlighting areas for improvement. I am pleased to say that I passed with a F1RST.

## Driving in Europe

### **The Financial Joys of Driving in Europe : Bob Drysdale**

In the course of 2024 I found myself in no fewer than 11 different European countries and, in some cases, more than once. As a blood donor, that renders me a significant pain when donating, as every one of these countries has to be detailed. I have learned to go armed with the list of where and when.

While my car did not accompany me into Hungary or Slovakia, it did make contact with the road surface of France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany, The Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy.

It is perhaps wise to draw a veil over some of the lesser roads of Belgium, although a Belgian might feel quite at home driving in Edinburgh. Some of these countries allow drivers to use their motorways free of charge; others do not. Just to complicate matters, some motorways in some of these countries can be used free of additional charges, while others charge. It is a potential minefield! On top of all of this, there are different ways of paying depending on which country you are in.

We can remove Belgium, Luxemburg, The Netherlands and Germany from the equation at the moment. Instead, in The Netherlands, you have the fun of not being allowed to drive at more than 100 km/h during the day, even although they have superb motorways, some of which have 12 lanes in total. It is little wonder that, once you cross the border into Germany, the foot often hits the floorboards, as on many motorways the speed limit is what you can get out of your Porsche, Ferrari, or even more modest motor. I digress.

In France some of the autoroutes belong to the state; they are free. The others belong to a variety of private companies and you pay to use them. The method is simple — you arrive at a toll booth, acquire a ticket and when you exit the autoroute, you roll up to another toll booth and pay and for some journeys pay a large fee. Paris to Bordeaux,

for example, will set you back more than €60! My little journey on a paying autoroute in Normandy set me back €4. Otherwise, I managed to get from Cherbourg to Caen to Honfleur to Rouen to Reims and out of the country without paying anything else!

The other fun, if you are travelling alone, is that at each toll point you have to stop the engine, get out of the car, run round to the other side, do the business and then repeat the action in reverse. Apparently, there is something called a Ulys e-toll badge which you can acquire. This costs €2 for every month in which you use it but it speeds up getting through the toll points and you receive a bill each month for the charges you have incurred. (It would also stop the runs round the car!)

In Austria you cannot use any motorway at all without having paid your toll. In the past I have always bought a 10-day-Vignette which you put on your windscreen. Each year has a different colour (2025 green) and the price tends to rise each year. For 2025 it is €12,40. You also have the option of a 2-month Vignette at €31,10 or even a one year one for €103,80. However, in this digital age, you can download the ASFINAG app (Autobahn and Schnellstraßen-Finanz-Aktiengesellschaft) and buy it online. As you approach Austria from Germany there are signs telling you that there is an option to buy the Vignette at the next service area and there is also a kiosk just over the border. It is perhaps less clear within the country where you can buy another one, if your first one has run out, as mine had. The app made life so much easier as I could buy the Vignette before I needed it and set the date to when I wanted it to start. Through the app there is also the option of a one-day ticket at €9.30 which would be perfect if you were just needing it to leave the country.

Next country on my list was Slovenia, although on this occasion I was only driving through a small part of it. However, there is no way round the toll here and no option other than a one-week virtual Vignette which costs €16. It does grate a little when you know you are only going to be there for an hour or so!

Next on the list was Croatia and I had been advised about the system there which is like the French one. You can drive free on some parts of the motorway but on others there are toll booths where you collect your ticket on entering the section and pay your dues when leaving, which again involves stopping the engine and running round the car feeling apologetic about the queue building up behind you. However, the wonderful thing about Croatia is the price of fuel — there is no need to use an app to find where it is least expensive because the price is the same at every fuel station and yes, that includes the motorway fuel stations; they are not allowed to charge more than elsewhere!

From Croatia it was back through Slovenia (no motorway this time but it would have been OK, as I was still within the 7-day validity of my Vignette) and into Italy. I had wondered what it would be like to be on the autostrada along with excitable natives but it was as smooth an experience as in all the other countries. Toll system? Exactly the same as in France and Croatia with some sections free and others with toll booths. According to the internet the Ulys set-up is available for Italy as well.

So there it is, but not quite! Just because you have a Vignette for Austrian Autobahnen does not mean that there are not more charges to pay. There are some amazing

tunnels within the network and these do not come free; nor does the Europa Bridge after the Brenner Pass. In fact, in 2023, when I drove from Ljubljana to Salzburg there was a Slovenian tunnel toll to leave the country, followed by several more charges to travel through the Austrian tunnels on a road which, at its highest point, is on a par with the summit of Ben Nevis.

So, when you are driving in Europe, you do need to factor in these tolls, but one thing is certain — whether in Austria, Slovenia, Croatia or Italy you are driving on roads of a much better quality than many of the motorways in the UK. Happy driving!

## **A car trip to Siena : Tony Lunnon–Wood**

A long journey on a motorbike is a totally different experience to the air-conditioned sanitised sojourn in a car. You feel like a pilgrim of old. The experience of smelling the hay, tasting dust, touching the road and feeling the heat of the sun or being hammered by torrential rain make it a very different journey. Very satisfying and fulfilling but mentally challenging due to all the potential hazards on high-speed autobahns or high Alpine passes.

On our latest journey to Siena, we decided to travel by car and I must confess it was a pleasant change. Heavy rain and soaring temperatures are a doddle in the car!

**Overnight ferry North Shields to Ijmuiden**



Traffic jams are a way of life on German Autobahns and sitting in air-conditioned comfort while stationary in temperatures in the high 30s was far more comfortable than sitting slowly roasting on a motorcycle.



**Over the Moselle**

The aim was to get to Siena as quickly as possible avoiding the scenic route over the Grossglockner high Alpine route then through the Dolomites and back over the Timmelsjoch pass. A route which we regularly do on the motorcycle. Our route was Autobahn from Ijmuiden in Holland through Germany, visiting family in Bavaria then

enter Austria via the Fern pass to join the Brenner Highway heading south to Italy. Routing south past Lake Garda, Verona, Bologna, Florence and onto Siena. Quick but not exactly scenic!



Duomo, Siena



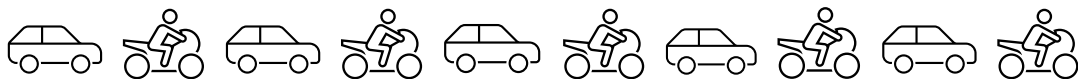
Piazza del Campo, Siena



Ulm with the Munster in the background

A round trip of 3,000 miles, £320 petrol and 60 euros toll charges on the Brenner Autostrada. I tend to plan on a maximum of 5 hours' drive time. This will nearly always result in a 7-hour travel day, allowing for pit stops and traffic jams. It does increase the number of night stops, but we feel it makes the journey less tedious. A tired driver is prone to errors and driving on the 'wrong' side of the road can be catastrophic; we often hear of tourists making that mistake on our scenic Scottish country roads and nearly always after a stop at a viewing point or picnic site.

In the 15 years we have been touring the Continent, mostly by motorcycle, the increase in traffic is astounding. On occasion you feel one could walk for miles on the roofs of lorries travelling nose to tail in the slow lane. It is a sobering thought to realise that the traffic you are witnessing is a tiny snapshot of what is happening all over the continent!!



Once again, many thanks to everyone who has contributed to our Spring MAMM newsletter and made it possible.

If you have a memorable driving or motorcycling trip you would like to share with MAMM members, please send your article to the MAMM Secretary at this e-mail address.

[MAMMsecretary24@hotmail.com](mailto:MAMMsecretary24@hotmail.com)

**Happy driving and biking**