

## FIVE CITY CHALLENGE

Having being a member of the Glanford and Lindsey Lions for about 18 months, I was finding it increasingly difficult to juggle the pressure of work and leisure time with what I thought the Lions were about.

I had upon joining promised that I would act as a Lion and carry out duties within the spirit of being a Lion, and I was starting to ask myself if I was letting down the members of our group by my continued absence at meetings. The reason for so many no shows at the meeting wasn't due to a lack of interest but due to the unconventional way I earned my living.

Working onboard a gas platform in the middle of the North sea meant that my time at home was limited, but due to a shift change, and an equal time rota it was difficult for me to make any of the meetings due to being away at work for most of them, and having to fulfil my family requirements in the time I was at home, I was beginning to think I had spread myself too thinly to be effective.

One of my passions in life has always been motorcycling. If the sun shines when I am at home, then I like to take one of my 4 bikes for a ride. Sounds extravagant to have 4 bikes but to put it into prospective the oldest is 20 years old and lovingly rebuilt, and the rest have been restored to immaculate condition, all by my own hand, so as you can understand I see them as more than just machines, they represent hundreds of hours of tinkering and cleaning. In the summer of 2008 I was lucky enough to take my family on holiday into the south of Spain, our destination was be an apartment belonging to another member of our Lions group located in Mojacar. The town of Mojacar is built into the side of a mountain and holds some stunning views and whilst in this beautiful town I came across a BMW R1200 GS, a bike that looked so out of place it looked spectacular. The following months left me thinking about this type of machine and I finally made my mind up and spent some of my hard earned cash and found myself the owner of a blue BMW 1200 GS, if its good enough for the likes of Ewan McGregor, and Charley Boreman, to take around the world its got to be good. This machine is without a doubt the only one to own if you want to find yourself heading off on a trip of a lifetime, and this is where my story starts.

What an opportunity, what if I could make it happen, the chance to combine what I love and my work as a Lion. How perfect could that be. I had remembered the vision of the big Hypermoto motorcycle in the mountainous area of Spain and without realising had become obsessed with the idea of a big trip, freedom of the open road with friends and using the trip as the backbone for raising the profile of the Lions group I belonged to as well as raising funds for a charity. It all seemed perfect only the, what, where, how, and when remained.

Producing an idea, which seems to be unique and not impossible doesn't come as easy as you might think. The thoughts of straight onto a ferry and drive across Europe became the direction I started to take and then quickly realised that I should build up to a journey like that, after all there are plenty of places within England that I have never seen, places of such beauty, that are so often missed whilst in a car, yes that's it I thought, lets do a ride from the top to the bottom of the country. "But its been done before mate, lots of times" the voice of truth, the levelling that I didn't want to hear, but I had to concede my friend at the bar was most probably right, who would get behind a project that had been done on everything from motorcycles to roller skates, Lands end to John O Grotes although still a formidable route was well known and had been done by so many before.

The same conversation took place so many times over the next few days, with different people, during one of the conversations a friend of mine also a keen motorcyclist, asked if I would like some company on the ride, I was pleased, now it meant that there was two of us, it meant that I wouldn't just let the dream fade away, now I had to find a route, something that wasn't too usual, something I could use to help raise some funds as a Lion, - Game on.

Over the next few weeks several suggestions were picked apart like a vulture picks the meat of a roadside carcass, different ideas were explored and dismissed, looking for the rare factor seemed to be like trying to find the elusive needle in a haystack.

As the year grew old and the nights grew shorter, the chance to ride the motorcycles became fewer and fewer, although the big BMW had extended my riding year somewhat with the heated grips and big screen, it was obvious that opportunities had to be taken and if you didn't grab what you could then you lost out, it was also common at this time of year to set of with a bright sun in the sky and return with the rain in your face. During one such ride Dave and myself had decided to pull into a local café, wet and cold the thought of a hot cuppa and a bacon sandwich were heaven sent. The smell of freshly cooked bacon is without doubt one of the most magnetic smells in the world. The conversation soon turned to the trip, the thought of a few hundred miles in sunshine, such an overpowering feeling I forgot momentarily about the water now running all over the café floor from my boots and waterproof trousers.

The extraordinary views you tend to notice when on board a motorcycle the smell of the surrounding countryside uncomplicated by air conditioning and tinted glass, the freedom of the motorcycle, the ability to make your heart pound with a simple twist of power from the throttle, we just had to find an adventure, something to enjoy and something that I could bring to my fellow Lions and say, "I have an Idea"

"What about a Capital City" A top suggestion I thought but which one, London is the most obvious, "I fancy going north, I haven't seen much of Scotland" Dave's face said it all, a capital would be a good idea but we were going in opposite directions to each other, "Well Dave there are 5 UK Capital cities, I'm sure we can decide on one" Dave smiled and said "otherwise we will have to do them all" Silence..... Not a word was said for a few moments. "Well that's a top idea, all 5 of them, now where shall we start" This was the moment the 5 Cities challenge was born, fine tuning over the next few weeks gave us a route and a timescale, 5 Capital Cities, 5 Days, ambitious, you bet !!!

**Lion (biker) Rick**