



## Adelaide festival set for February

★ **WHAT'S** the difference between a top-flight racer and a retired one? The size of a breakfast they eat, or more accurately, what they leave on their plates.

At a morning press conference organised last week by promoter Billy Nutt to launch next year's Adelaide Motorcycle Festival '10 at the King's Hall, February 12 to 14, one speaker drew attention to the eating habits of our new World Supersport championship runner up, Eugene Laverty, and retired racer Phillip McCallen.

★ Eugene, from Toomebridge, a highly-talented rider and also an exceptionally nice person, (the two don't always go hand in hand), is a mere slip of a racer with more meat on a conrod. Phillip, slightly heavier, might just about squeeze into his old leathers.

The difference between the two was, the speaker observed, that Eugene had left some of his food while Phillip had cleared his plate. This drew a laugh from the audience and Phillip came back with the remark: "Give him 20 years (and we'll see what he eats then)".

★ Meanwhile, the festival continues to go from strength to strength. To date, the majority of the major marques will be represented next February and they include: Ducati, Honda, Harley-Davidson, Kawasaki, KTM, Suzuki, Triumph and Yamaha.

As Billy Nutt said, to have such a turn out from the dealers and manufacturers in the present, economic climate was very encouraging. For me and many others, I'm sure, the show is one of the few events that brightens a long winter.

★ One of the stars at the show hopefully will be Suzuki's new GSX1250FA (left). It's being released in the Spring and the price is likely to be somewhere in the region of £6,000, depending on the value of Sterling at the time.

Eagerly awaited:  
Suzuki's new  
budget special,  
the GSX 1250FA,  
bound for the  
King's Hall show  
in February

# A SURVEY YOU CAN'T MISS

## New research reveals the main reasons that cause bikers to have accidents and near misses

**I**F YOU'VE been riding for any length of time, you'll almost certainly have had a near miss experience. Perhaps a car driver pulled across your path without warning or you nearly came off after a bad slide on a diesel spill.

And it's not unlikely that if you've been on bikes for more years than you care to remember, you'll have had more near misses than you would shake a stick at.

It's all grist to the motorcycling mill, as they say, but what any near miss experience should do, apart from drawing beads of sweat on your forehead, is to make you're more alert, more aware of the dangers of other road users, mainly motorists, and other road hazards ranging from loose gravel to potholes, overbanding to manhole covers.

Elaine Hardy, research analyst of the locally based Write to Ride ([www.writetoride.co.uk](http://www.writetoride.co.uk)), has just published the results of a detailed new survey, the 'Near Miss Study of Motorcyclists'. While some of its findings are not unexpected, it's invaluable because the author has analysed and presented the information she collected from an internet questionnaire in a scientific manner.

Elaine, who has a PhD and lives in Belfast, surveyed 257 bikers from Northern Ireland, the Republic and Britain and



DAVID NEELY

### ON TWO WHEELS

almost 80 per cent of the respondents said they had a near miss/near misses experiences and supplied details.

Importantly, she said the findings have identified situations that appear to be more prevalent for motorcyclists. These are the potential for collisions between bikes and other vehicles, followed by problems with the conditions of roads and road infrastructure.

To ensure that she had a complete and well-rounded picture, she organised a focus group to get views of motorcycle experts, including trainers, road safety officers, user representatives and police officer.

The profile of the people who took part

in the survey suggested they were typical motorcyclists and had had basic training, were experienced and rode most of the year.

Examining the findings, she wrote: "Motorcycle accident causation has, until now, focused on post-crash analysis and only recently researchers have commenced making enquiries into pre-crash experiences.

"This survey has aimed to analyse the major reasons for near-miss accidents and has focused on skidding, loss of grip, loss of control

and braking and swerving as a direct result of experiences due to road conditions or due to other vehicles entering the space of the motorcyclist.

"Inevitably, the responses from the survey indicate that the riders reacted to situations which, according to them, were mainly due to circumstances beyond their control. The objective of the focus group was, on the other hand, to look behind these experiences and consider the underlying reasons for these incidents and way in which to overcome or recognise them in order to prevent or prevent further incidents."

The survey established that there were, predominantly, two main factors

responsible for miss accidents.

The first was due to interaction with other vehicles whereby the driver of the other vehicle had entered the rider's space causing him/her to react by braking or swerving (40.6 per cent);

And the second factor was due to road conditions: slippery or loose road surfaces loose gravel (45.3 per cent); potholes and grooves (34.7 per cent) and road markings or overbanding (32.1 per cent).

Just a few of the experiences the riders related were: driver doing a u-turn without looking; driver using a mobile phone turned across me; car driver changing lanes without indicating; guy pulled out and travelled on wrong side of road towards me to turn right into a junction which I had just passed and an elderly car driver drove through a red light.

And one which regular users of the Antrim Coast road will be familiar. Just south of Glenarm the road surface, when wet, has the coefficient of dieselised plastic: I rode on this stretch of road just a couple of weeks ago in the wet and felt my back tyre moving slightly. In places you're riding on pure tar.

A very small number of respondents admitted that near misses were their own

fault. One set down his experiences.

'Running wide, missing a junction, messing up an overtake (between cars) and just before corners.'

Of the 257 who take part in the survey, 82 were from Northern Ireland, 90 from the South and 85 from England, Scotland and Wales. Their average age was 40, the province had the highest number of riders aged between 17 and 30, an encouraging sign that biking is thriving here.

The average age of their bikes was seven and a half years, a majority covered between 4,001 and 10,000 miles a year and the most popular engine size was 401cc to 700cc, then 701cc to 1,000cc.

When it came to what purpose they used their bikes for, the first choice was leisure followed by commuting to and from work. Asked about what seasons they rode their machines, 88.7 per cent used them in summer, 70.4 per cent in spring, 65.8 per cent in autumn and 47.90 per cent in winter.

This column does not have the space to cover the survey in detail and I would suggest, you visit the Write to Ride website. Elaine Hardy is due all our sincere thanks for her excellent, painstaking and thorough work.