



ABRS OF THE FUTURE

ADVENTURE BIKE RIDER'S DAN AND ALEX TAKE ON THE BEAST FROM THE EAST AS THEY ATTEMPT TO SECURE THEIR FULL BIKE LICENCE AND EXPLORE THE ISLE OF WIGHT...

PHOTOS: SIENNA ANDERSON / SOULPHOTOGRAPHYIOW.COM

If you're reading this magazine, chances are you're passionate about motorcycles and exploring on two wheels. We're with you. And as part of the motorcycle community, we feel duty-bound to encourage more people to pass their test and enjoy the world we all know and love. At the very least, we'll be welcoming people into a world of distant horizons and new destinations, but hopefully, we'll also be helping to support a sustainable motorcycle industry.

With that in mind, we sent two of ABR's advertising staffers on a mission to become part of the future. This is how they got on...

The Isle of Wight is known for being home to the sunniest destination in the UK, Shanklin, so teaming up with Pit-Stop Training (www.pit-stoptraining.co.uk) for an intensive riding course seemed like a no-brainer for ABR's Dan and Alex. It was

the perfect excuse to get a week out the office and finally tick off their full motorcycle licence.

As the week got closer the weather warnings got more severe, but what better way to properly enter the adventure world than with a baptism of fire (or ice) to battle the minus temperatures and venture off the mainland.

DAY 1

After a slightly rough ferry crossing and a fantastic night's sleep at Albert Cottage Hotel, we met our teacher for the week, Paul Spreadbury, and followed him to Pit-Stop Training HQ. This was to be our training ground for the next week, situated next to Newport FC stadium.

After a quick coffee and debrief, we were able to jump straight onto the 125s to show off our slightly rusty abilities. Short of an annual ABR off-road day and the distant memory of our CBTs, taken just under two years prior, it would be fair ▶



to say that we started slowly. That said, Paul quickly got us back up on our feet and in no time, we were weaving through cones, mastering our clutch control and taking on the infamous figure of eight.

After a couple of hours training on the different techniques, we snuck inside to thaw out and plan our first foray onto the roads of the Isle. Over another coffee, Paul quickly demonstrated ideal road positioning and went over the basics of life on the road before we jumped back on the bikes and took it on for ourselves.

A quick whizz around the Isle, taking in some of the sights along the way, had us feeling like born-again bikers and we were ready to upgrade to what would be our bikes for the week, Honda CBF650s. Pit-Stop Training is an approved Honda centre and the bikes are supplied through Church Street Motorcycles in the seaside town of Ventnor.

The step up was noticeable (and exciting) and after a short practice around the cones we had our first taste of speed on some of the more open roads of the Isle. The end of the day saw the weather set in, but feeling happy with our progress we borrowed the 125s to head back to the warmth of the hotel, with the promise of a good bath to warm us up!

DAY 2-3

“By the end of today you’ll be sick of cones...” That we were, but in a good way. With the weather forecast looking to get progressively worse over the coming days, Paul made a solid decision to try and get us up to speed a day early, with ‘worse-case scenario’ being a pub-based snow whiteout the following day. We prayed for snow, of course.

Paul’s positive attitude pushed us through a cold few days of more refined Module 1 and 2 practice. With temperatures

averaging -3C and the snow holding out, we managed to nail the slow manoeuvres of slalom, figure of eight, slow ride and U-turn with ease. Paul then took us to a quiet, open spot a few miles away to go through the speedier test drills. One massive plus of going with Pit-Stop Training was that whilst we learnt all the necessary skills, Paul was very keen to make us see as much of the island as possible. It felt like a perfect combination of training and adventure all thrown into one.

Paul is an ex-policeman and a life-long islander, so he couldn’t help throwing a wave to everyone we rode past. His tutoring style is great, and dropping the odd historical island knowledge bombs in our headsets as we rode past tourist destinations made for a great break from the stopping distances and pillion advice information we had to absorb for the tests.

A first look at the swerve test and the emergency stop were next on the agenda and they were certainly a different prospect to the slower manoeuvres we had nearly mastered earlier. Whether it was the freezing cold, Paul’s great tutorage or because we were natural born bike riders (or a combination of all of them), we managed to pick up these faster and slightly more thought provoking drills quickly. After a quick warm up and a coffee we were out again on the road to sharpen up our general road awareness.

Everything felt relaxed but focused, and at this point we were feeling positive about the impending Module 1 test. And then the snow hit. We dipped into a local pub in Newport for a warm lunch and decided to call it a day after losing the ability to feel our fingers and toes. A quick look at the weather forecast for the Friday wasn’t pretty and with at least two inches of snow lying on the ground, we had mixed feelings about whether the Mod 1 would even go ahead as planned. Paul had hope, Paul always had hope, so we went to bed hoping the



weather would clear enough for our first test in the morning.

DAY 4 – MOD 1 TEST DAY

After a good night's sleep and some great grub, we threw the curtains open thinking the snow would be just a distant memory, but how wrong we were. A good two inches covered everything and the tracks of our car tires from the night before were a distant memory.

Speaking with Paul, we discovered that he'd been up half the morning concocting plans for how the Mod 1 could go ahead, only to be stumped by the DSA closing the entire school for the day. We feared the worst, with thoughts of running back to the mainland, tails between our legs and a barrage of abuse waiting in the ABR office, but when we got back Paul once again became our saviour. He'd managed to get the final two tests on reserve for a couple of days' time, and so invited us to his house for a coffee and to give the best directions to our next temporary home, the Seaview Hotel.

After a few wrong turns and having been rescued from the snow by a local, we finally arrived in Seaview and decided, rather sensibly, to spend the rest of the day testing the ales of the island in the hotel bar. The Seaview Hotel is right on the beach and has a great mix of a relaxed bar and high-end food restaurant.

DAY 5-6

With the temperature soaring to a solid 4C, we woke up to what felt like tropical conditions. Unfortunately, much of the snow remained and the journey to Pit-Stop Training was as treacherous as ever, but eventually we arrived.

A few coffees later and the car park was looking slightly more do-able, so we pulled the bikes out and tentatively weaved around the worst of it. Deciding to head out on the

roads, we spent the morning choosing our route based on what roads we thought would have been cleared by one of the island's four snow ploughs.

As the day continued, much of the snow melted and we were able to head back to the industrial estate, where we aimed to master both the emergency stop and swerve test. This consists of hitting a speed trap at 32mph or more and either slamming on your brakes, in a controlled manner of course, or swerving around a cone before coming to a stop.

Trundling through a 30mph zone feels like the slowest you could possibly move on a bike, but put a speed trap down and a limited space in which to hit it and we felt like we'd moved into warp speed. Many attempts and a few smashed cones later, we managed to get the hang of the technique and then it was all about finessing the manoeuvres to ensure the test center would be left unscathed. Once we were happy, it was back to the Seaview where we enjoyed one beer too many with the hotel locals and some well-deserved dinner.

Day six was much of the same; practicing, polishing and preparing, and by the end of the day Paul had us feeling we could smash Mod 1 with our eyes closed. Which was good, as test day meant a 5am start.

DAY 7-8 - MOD 1 AND 2 TEST DAY

The alarm went off at 4.45am; it was Mod 1 test day and we had a ferry to catch. The test was in Lee-on-the-Solent as there is currently no Module 1 testing course on the island – something that Paul is hoping to change for the future. Although we were thoroughly prepared by the Pit-Stop Training team for the test, we were still slightly nervous. Taking a test as an adult isn't a particularly regular thing you have to do, so it felt a bit odd having the same feelings that harp back to ►



school and college days with the usual butterflies in the stomach and slightly clammy palms.

It turns out we were worrying for nothing, and we both passed the Module 1 test with flying colours. The key to this was the instant relaxing notion that Pit-Stop Training had actually made the practice exercises slightly harder and in tighter spaces than the official sizes, so that when we approached the cones or the space in which to do the drills at the test centre, we found it to be much easier than anticipated.

We zipped back to the island to spend the rest of the afternoon polishing up on our road riding routes in preparation for Module 2 and, with another early start required, we found perfect refuge by the sea in our final hotel of the week, the absolutely stunning Royal Hotel in Ventnor. We trundled into the glamorous reception of the hotel in our soaking wet bike gear feeling a little underdressed, but were greeted with smiling faces and the keys to extremely comfortable rooms where we showered off and met for dinner to discuss the big day.

Paul is the kind of bloke that can drag you around an island in -5C temperatures and freezing rain, and you'll still want to take him for a pint. And we did that night. After an event filled week we couldn't have asked for a better tutor than Paul and the team at Pit-Stop Training. What they have created is a friendly, relaxed and hugely focused operation that offers everything from CBT to full bike licence and advanced training. You get the impression from the amount of ex-students Paul has dropping in for a coffee that once you take your training with Paul and the team, you create a great bond with them. We certainly did.

The most important part for us was the fact that we weren't from the isle and went to do the test without the distractions of home. With the pass rates on the Isle of Wight being amongst the highest in the country, doing this direct access

in such a focused environment was the perfect way for us to get our full licences. We lived, breathed and slept Motorcycle Tests for the week.

So, the big question is, did we pass our Module Two? Are we now fully-fledged members of the world's biker community? Well, to find out you'll have to have to wait until the next issue of *ABR*. Nah, only kidding, of course we did! It was never in doubt with Paul at the helm. **ABR**

STAY HERE

ALBERT COTTAGE HOTEL

Built in the 1840's, Albert Cottage Hotel is steeped in British royal history and is located on the outskirts of East Cowes. The rooms are very in fitting with the era of the building, beautifully kept and the hotel is ideally located a 10-minute drive to Newport. See www.albertcottagehotel.com

THE SEAVIEW HOTEL

The Seaview Hotel is situated in the quiet eastern town of Seaview. The friendly team has managed to strike the perfect balance between cozy beach hotel and top class dining. With the beach a stone's throw away, it's a perfect camp for exploring the island's stunning coastline. See www.seaviewhotel.co.uk.

THE ROYAL HOTEL

Founded in 1832, The Royal Hotel is one of the oldest hotels on the Isle of Wight. Originally built as a coaching inn called Fishers Hotel, it became known as The Royal Hotel after enjoying Queen Victoria's patronage. Steeped in history, yet offering every modern comfort, The Royal Hotel is a great option as a place to wind down for some luxury after a day of exploring. See www.royalhoteliow.co.uk.