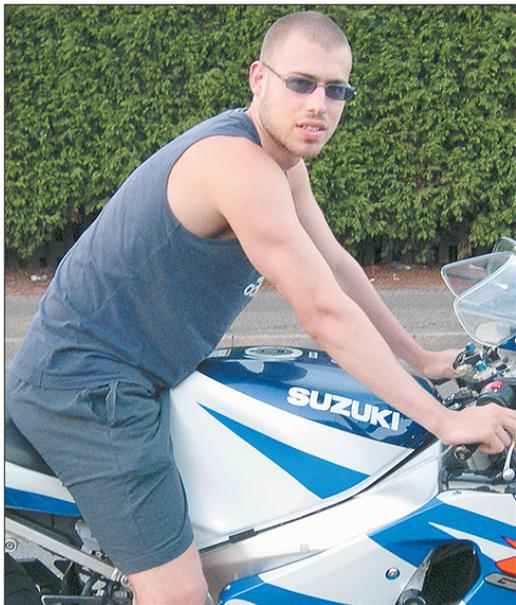


Laser speed charge thrown out



DANIEL PIKE: Speeding case was dismissed in court

AN MCN reader who set out to challenge a speeding allegation using evidence uncovered by MCN has had the charge against him dismissed – before being able to make his case.

Daniel Pike, a 23-year-old IT consultant from Reading, said he knew he wasn't speeding when he was accused of doing 37mph in a 30 zone on his Suzuki GSX-R600 in Nottingham last year.

Pike was snapped by a speed camera van using an LTI20.20 laser. He decided to challenge the charge after reading in MCN about how inaccurate the devices can be when used on bikes.

The case was dropped when the Crown

Prosecution Service (CPS) failed to produce evidence.

"The video of the alleged offence was never produced. The prosecution asked for an adjournment, but the magistrates refused, so the CPS had to ask for the case to be dismissed due to lack of evidence."

Pike didn't get to challenge the laser's accuracy. "That would have come into play if I'd lost and had to appeal to Crown Court," he said.

It will take a decision in Crown Court to set a precedent, potentially enabling thousands of appeals against convictions.

Other MCN readers are challenging similar charges. We'll update you on their progress soon.

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MCN INVESTIGATION

GATSOS



Letter confirms traffic cops are being scrapped in favour of Gatsos

BY STEVE FARRELL

MCN has obtained proof that the government is using speed cameras as a substitute for traffic police officers.

It means traffic crimes other than speeding are being left un-policed, including those which put us most at risk, like careless, dangerous or drink driving. It also supports the link which camera partnerships have long denied between more Gatsos and rising deaths.

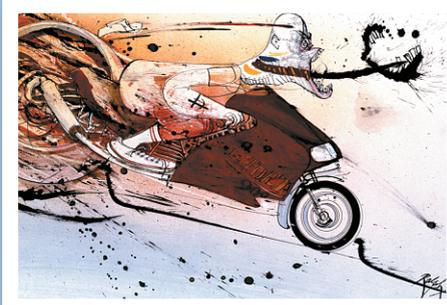
In a letter obtained by MCN, Roads Minister Stephen Ladyman reassures MP Don Touhig about the falling number of dedicated traffic cops by claiming speed cameras were doing their work for them.

Ladyman says: "The importance given to road policing should not be measured solely by the number of dedicated traffic officers. Speed

Fast News

BUY A PRINT TO HELP CHARITY SPRINT

TIM FRANSEN, 31, will set off on a 3700-mile charity ride on Boxing Day, hoping to reach Gambia in Africa in just 20 days – on a Suzuki RV125 Van Van beach bike! The ride's first sponsor was cartoonist Ralph Steadman, who has allowed Tim to produce a limited-edition print of this cartoon (see right) to raise funds. 1000 of these A2-sized limited-edition posters are available for £10, plus £3.50 p&p. You can order them at www.essex-dakar.org



Yes, crashes hurt. We don't need reminding

'All this kind of sick stunt does is put people off bikes - we're amazed show bosses even allowed it'

THE job of speed camera partnerships is to reduce deaths and injuries on the roads. So why are they wasting money they make from speeding fines on schemes that will just make the people they're trying to reach with their go-slower message even less likely to listen to them?

The Midlands partnership's stand at the NEC Show this week recreating a gory crash scene is an insult to motorcyclists. We don't need reminding that if we're in a crash, we suffer. Most of us have been there and felt the pain.

If anyone needs to be shown graphic scenes of bike crashes, it's car drivers who have never considered what the terrible consequences of a moment's inattention on their part can really be.

All this kind of sick stunt does is put people off bikes - we're amazed that the show's organisers, whose job it is to get people on to bikes, have even allowed it.

If you're going to the show, why not let the camera people know what you think?

Government's biker popularity update...

FINALLY, our regular update on how the government is faring week-to-week with regard to biking issues. Since last week we've been awarding them a point for every good thing they do and a minus point for every balls-up.

Unfortunately it's one of each this week, keeping our running tally steady at minus two points.

We like the fact that former roads minister David Jamieson has taken a job as figurehead of Britain's bike industry (see page 3) - biking is desperately short of influential people like him to represent our interests. But we're giving Jamieson's successor Stephen Ladyman his first black mark after admitting (left) that it's OK for cameras to replace traffic police...



THIS letter, from Roads Minister Stephen Ladyman to MP Doug Touhig, proves that traffic police officers are being replaced by speed cameras



cameras, which act as a deterrent, actually free up police time for other duties, including other roads policing work."

The term 'roads policing' was coined when police forces renamed their traffic divisions after giving them a range of extra duties, so it doesn't necessarily mean traffic policing - and according to Ladyman's letter, the 'freed up' cops won't necessarily be doing it anyway.

During a two-day enforcement campaign in Belfast last month, police officers detected nine dangerous drivers, 93 careless drivers, 20 drunk drivers, 35 uninsured drivers, three unlicensed drivers and 97 speeders. If those officers had been 'freed up' for any duties other than traffic policing, only the 97 speeders could have been caught.

We already know falling traffic cop numbers are connected to rising deaths on the roads,

after government figures last month showed a 35% fall in breath tests led to a 30% rise in drink-drive deaths between 1998 and 2004.

The revelation that speed cameras have replaced traffic cops could explain why an MCN investigation in July found that deaths had risen in areas where speed camera numbers had risen. It would also explain why Devon and Cornwall Police reduced its traffic force by 11% in 2001, following the introduction of speed cameras in the area.

It adds insult to injury for riders, who are not only being put at extra risk as a result of speed cameras, but who were also told by the Home Office in MCN last week that none of them have ever been tested for accuracy on bikes.

The news has even brought the government under fire from staunch speed camera supporters.

Aimee Bowen, spokesperson for the road safety charity Brake, said: "Where the government is getting it wrong is in taking traffic officers off the roads and thinking speed cameras are enough."

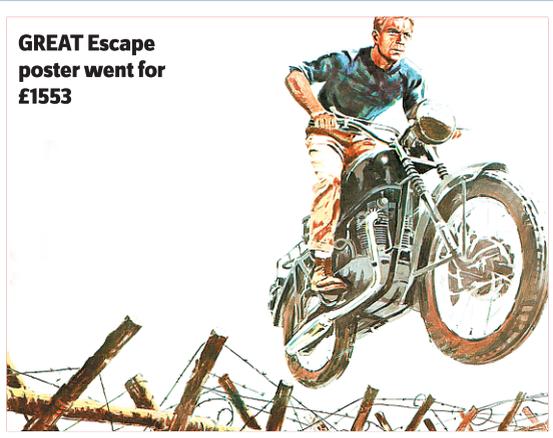
Robert Gifford, chief executive of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS), wouldn't comment directly on the letter, but said: "We need traffic police to enforce the law on things like the wearing of helmets and seatbelts, driving un-roadworthy vehicles, and the most serious traffic offence of causing death by dangerous driving."

The Department for Transport continues to officially deny speed cameras are replacing traffic police. A spokesman wouldn't comment on the letter, but said: "Traffic policing by individuals is still a priority. Speed cameras add to, rather than replace, traffic officers."

BONHAMS BOUNTY

BONHAMS' auction of motorcycle memorabilia at the Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show in Stafford this week saw record prices, with total sales reaching nearly £750,000. Highlights of the auction's memorabilia section included a signed photograph of Mike Hailwood (£299) and an original poster for The Great Escape (£1553). A magnificent 1928 McEvoy-JAP V-twin sold to a private collector in the UK for a record price of £66,400 while a 1948 KTT MkVIII Velocette set another record at £38,900. Modern bikes also commanded high prices: a 2002 MV F4 Senna limited edition with 930 miles sold for £17,825 and one of the earliest 1985/86 Buell RR1000R racers went for £15,525.

GREAT Escape poster went for £1553



CELEB SUZUKI SALE

HOW many people can say their bike has worked with Jennifer Lopez, Beyonce Knowles and David Beckham? Well, *you* could, if you buy the Hayabusa used in a Pepsi commercial featuring all of those stars. The bike is being sold by exclusive British bike designers 4th Dimension - it's an official UK Hayabusa with custom-made bodywork and wheels, so it looks like nothing else on the road. The bike was used as a stunt-double for the bikes in the final cut. With only one mile on the clock, the Hayabusa is in mint condition. The owner of 4th Dimension, Neil Foster, is open to offers on the bike, so if you're interested call 01932-251800 or visit www.4th-dimension.co.uk.

TARTAN TEARAWAYS

SCOTTISH road users are the most likely to speed, a recent survey has revealed. Direct Line insurance surveyed its UK customer database and found that a staggering 94% of all motorists admitted to speeding. However, the Scots proved the most likely to venture over the legal limit, with one in three survey respondents freely admitting to regularly speeding. The slowest road users were found to come from the south west of England, with only 11% admitting to regularly speeding. The Welsh motorists surveyed said they were also very cautious with their speed, citing the influx of speed cameras in the country as a major reason for keeping an eye on their speedo.