NORTHUMBRIA BLOOD BIKES

Newsletter: March 2014

Cover Photo: Peter Robertson, John Parish & Geoff Spencer display our first two bikes at Newcastle Quayside for a photo-opportunity.
Photograph: Owain Harris

Same old "Same old"? - I don't think so!

As I write these newsletters every month to keep members informed of recent developments, I keep finding myself looking for the exact same phrases, like "It's been a busy month", or "There's been a lot happening". The truth is, *every* month is just that; busy, with an abundance of activity to report back to members! Our group is going through one of the most exciting and active phases, expanding at a phenomenal rate, and it's great to be involved in the sometimes chaotic activity that the group has to go through. No doubt in the fullness of time we will settle into a routine where we have an "average" number of activities, we report on the recurrence of annual events, and the occasional big development since the previous newsletter was published. Clearly, we're not at that stage yet, and we love to report a mass of activity, some of which was eagerly anticipated, and some that was completely unforeseen when we wrote to you last month!

– So sit back and enjoy this months round-up of what we've been doing, and be proud that you're part of a group that is increasing in size all the time, a group that always has something exciting to report, and is expanding at a rate which never fails to surprise people. It's a good feeling to be able to bring such a wide variety of activity to you, and long may it continue…

Second bike starting a permanent service!

We only launched on 3rd February, yet already we're starting to see a demand for two bikes per night. "Octagon" has previously been used for displays and events, but from Monday 17th March the Honda will be operating every night. This will help in many ways; firstly as an available resource when the existing bike is already on a call, which we expect will happen quite often as demand for our service grows. Secondly, long handover periods can be covered by one bike while another rider is being taken back home at the end of his shift, thus erasing the handover periods where cover is not readily available. Our coverage is increasing too, with regular runs from Darlington, so the timing is right to get a second bike on the road. As you know, we're getting Bike #3 ready, too. Twice as many bikes means twice as much expense, twice as much fundraising and double the volunteers, so we're going to have to ask for as much support from our members as possible as we steadily expand…

OPEN MEETING in March –

Is it that time again already? Our first open meeting of the year, and our first since going live. This is a chance for anyone who is interested in finding out about us to come along, see the bikes, meet the volunteers, and find out what we're all about. We're slowly inching away from the wintry weather into a warmer season, so we have plenty of events planned for the weeks and months ahead. Yes, it will be "all official" for some of the evening, we have decisions that we'd like peoples opinions about, changes that we need to impart to everyone, and an opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

Anyone can attend an open meeting. We're at Rutherford Hall in Northumbria University. The picture above shows the entrance & nearest car park. For those of you with Sat Nav, use postcode NE1 8ST.

Go Live with Northumbria Trust… and Durham & Darlington!

Peter and Richard had a meeting on 26th February with various members of Northumbria Trust, and an agreement was made to start our service with them on 17th March.

The bulk of the jobs will be from NHSBT to Wansbeck General Hospital and North Tyneside General (Rake Lane), with the possibility of occasional sample pick-ups between the two hospitals. Gary and Richard have recorded the instruction videos to show members where the pick up and drop off locations are. These are already on our forum, so please familiarise yourself with the locations if you are planning to ride for us! This is great news, and means that we will see two riders operating in the region per night. That may not sound like it's important, but we've already had an incident where a rider fell ill which resulted in suspension of our service for the night. With two bikes on the road, we can avoid this happening again, albeit that the remaining rider will have his hands full for the evening!

We mentioned in the last newsletter that we had a provisional go-live date of 3rd March for Durham & Darlington. This date was maintained and we started at 7pm on the 3rd March. – Our first call came in within fifteen minutes – for a run from Darlington memorial to NHSBT! Slowly but surely, the odds of having a quiet shift are becoming less and less.

Jackets:

Most of our riders now have the fancy new "Urban Glow" rider jackets, some of which were handed out at our Angel photoshoot last month. Those who still need to order one should contact Barry Bullas (membership@northumbriabloodbikes.org.uk) to place your order.
One quick reminder though – these are intended for riding, not fundraising: We've had comments from several sources that we don't look the same at our publicity events! If you're ever bringing or returning a bike to/from an event and intend to stay around, please change into a fundraising vest so that we all look the same. The rider jackets are provided at no cost to fully trained, advanced riders who are actively involved in shifts on the bikes. We do ask for a £20 deposit which is returnable (or you can opt to donate it to the charity if you prefer). We usually have a few fundraising vests spare at each event we attend, and will be printing up new ones shortly.

Bike names:

There has been plenty of discussion over the naming of bikes as we increase the fleet, and a decision was reached in February to give us some degree of consistency. Working from our "Northumbria" name, the RT will be known as "Bamburgh", the Pan is (as named by the MG guys) "Octagon", and the FJR will be "Lindisfarne". Future bikes will be named after local castles, with "Warkworth" next on the list. The exception for this would be bikes which are purchased for us, in which case the donating company or sponsorship group will have naming rights over the bike they purchase. ….Unfortunately the castle name I suggested, castle "Maine XXXX", was not considered appropriate.

Trouble with the FJR:

Bike No.3 "Lindisfarne" is awaiting it's Livery which was ordered & delivered earlier this month, but unfortunately we've hit a problem. It turns out that there are two different designs for the 2005 FJR1300 – and we have ordered livery for the wrong one! Richard attempted to apply the livery and quickly discovered the mistake, which will delay the launch of the bike into full service by several weeks. We plan to correct the mistake and order the replacement livery as quickly as possible, and will decide what to do with the wrong panels (either offer them for sale to another blood bike group, or perhaps keep them for the next FJR we add to the fleet). Either way, we're facing a delay… ☹

ASDA Tokens on at the Metrocentre…

The Green Token Scheme is in full swing at Metrocentre's ASDA store this month. We won a substantial amount with the token scheme at Asda Gosforth last month; and we're very grateful to management & staff for allowing us to compete! These schemes provide valuable income for the charity with minimal resources, but only if we win! Please show your support whenever you're shopping and ask for some tokens at the checkouts… tell your friends and family too! We're also promoting this with an appearance of the blood bike in-store at Gateshead Metrocentre on Friday 28th March 2014 from 10am to 6pm.

Publicity events this month:

On Tuesday 25th February, Graham Moor & Owain Harris attended Bowburn Hall in County Durham at the invitation of Durham Advanced Motorcyclists to give a talk about the work of Northumbria Blood Bikes. Around 60 people attended the talk, and Mark Richardson (Duty Rider that night) brought the RT and updated the call centre to the fact that he was on duty at that location. The talk had one of the best attendances from recent D.A.M. meetings, and provided an opportunity for their members to ask questions and engage with us. There were one or two riders interested in signing up there and then, and it turned out that one of the attendees had recently joined us and was due for their assessment ride with Geoff the following day!

Saturday 15th March sees us making an appearance at Coopers BMW garage in Boldon. They are launching their new range of bike models, and thanks to some sterling work by Owain, we have a Bloodbike at the event, possibly upstairs!
It's another great opportunity to promote ourselves to a bike-friendly audience and could well result in additional sponsorship, donations and members. We'll have photos after the event on the website, forum, facebook and of course in next months newsletter.

NBB featured on BBC NEWS Website:

We've been featured on BBCs "Red Button" (the modern day teletext!) and on their news(Tees) website for the launch of our service in Darlington. The web address for the article is www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-26498449
Or just go to the main bbc.co.uk website and search for "Northumbria Blood Bikes"

Another radio interview…..

First thing on Monday morning, 10th March, there's a live radio interview on BBC Radio Tees during Ali Brownlee's breakfast show. Owain is doing the interview, and there's a link under "publicity" in the forum so that you can listen online. We'll also try to get a recording of the interview and, if we do, will post it in the same place on the forum.

Then Television!

Straight after the live radio interview, Owain will be heading down to Darlington Memorial hospital to do a television feature for ITV. Again, it's all happening too close to the release of this month's newsletter, but we thought we'd share the news with you anyway, so you can be on the lookout for it – we've been told that it will most likely be aired on the same days new programme!

Fundraising activity this month:

Centre stage this month was our event at Tesco, Trinity Square, Gateshead on Friday and Saturday 21st and 22nd February. Despite a somewhat ropey start (the first customer to sit on the bike told us how he would steal it and asked if it was fast enough to out-run the Police!) The two day event went very well. We raised awareness of the charity to a new audience, as well as raising £636.00. Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped us to make this a successful event.

The Return of "Nigels Tea Trolley" !

The "Nigel" in question is Nigel Toase, a former manager who has worked for both Tesco and Asda, but is now the Community Champion for the Sunderland Extra store. Famous for his hospitality, and almost legendary for his frequent delivery of tea, coffee & biscuits to the volunteers who staffed our publicity event in the store last year.
Nigel has kindly invited us back for a bigger, better fundraising event at Sunderland; this time with bag-packing, and with the bike upstairs in the main part of the store!

We still need as many volunteers as possible for this event, as it will most likely be one of the biggest events to date. It's a flagship opportunity to fundraise, and a great atmosphere… Please help if you can….or come shopping & get your kids photographed on the bike!

The lions are helping our engines ROAR!

An unexpected surprise arrived courtesy of the Sunderland Lions Club; a check for £500.00! Graham Moor(Fundraising) and Owain Harris (publicity) had previously visited their monthly dinner event at Ashbrooke Cricket Club, and were very well received. They subsequently were invited to a regional meeting. The cheque was not expected, but very much appreciated. Thank you, Sunderland Lions!

AMEX Newcastle donation:

This one was just too late to reach the newsletter last month, but the staff of AMEX in Newcastle were kind enough to give us a donation of £800.00….

Pictured left are Richard and Peter from the committee, who visited with "Ocatgon" to provide a photo-opportunity. Sitting on the bike is the Amex Call Centre Manager Kevin Thompson. Many thanks to all of the management and staff at Amex for their generosity, and thanks also to Richard's friend who facilitated it! We're always looking for sponsorship from groups and businesses, so please let us know if you spot an opportunity…

How could we forget?

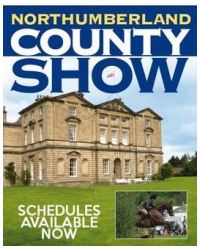
Within a few minutes of publishing the February newsletter, Ken Kelly got in touch with me to point out that an important donation had been omitted. Ken arranged for a £500.00 donation from the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) which reached us in the last week of January. News of this generous donation had somehow managed to miss me, otherwise it would definitely have been included. Hopefully this makes amends; Please accept our apologies, Ken!

Future events to put in your diary:

Prescott Bike Festival:
With Bloodbike groups from all over the country converging to take notes, compare advertising, discuss suppliers etc.
We could learn a lot from the other groups!

ASDA Blyth:- Bag packing & publicity: Sunday 24th May.
Sign up for this if you can spare a couple of hours- the diary is open already on our events calendar: www.nothumbriabloodbikes.org.uk/fundraisingcalendar

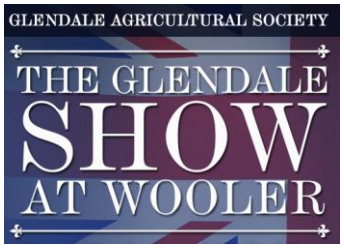
Northumberland County Show:
We've have a stand at this show on Bank Holiday Monday May 26th and we're fully staffed for this one. But we'd still love to see you drop by if you're going!



Bikewise 2014:
We have a stand booked…..add your name to the events calendar if you would like to help out on the day (Sunday 20th July 2014).
Spaces filling up quickly for this !

ASDA Gosforth:- Bag packing & publicity: Sunday 26th July.
Sign up for this if you can spare a couple of hours- WE HAVE TEN TILLS to staff!
The diary is open already on our events calendar if you can help us: www.nothumbriabloodbikes.org.uk/fundraisingcalendar

The Crawcrook Fair
Saturday August 2nd from 11am-4pm Would you be able to support the stand for an hour or two while the rest of your family look around the show?



The Glendale Show (Wooler):
Is on 25th August (Bank Holiday Monday) between 9am & 5pm.

Eldon Square Shopping Centre, Newcastle:
Confirmed as Saturday and Sunday 6th & 7th September.
Drop the kids off in town with the other half & give us a hand!
(Possibly holding two events at both entrances to the centre)

Great North Run 2014:
Brilliant publicity last time, so we're trying for it again! We also have several people taking part in the run itself. Rather them than me…..

And possibly two more:
We're negotiating for the new COLOUR RUN event (Sunderland) on 20th June, and for a spot at Sunderland International Airshow on 25th-27th July. Watch this space…

….You'll be burning our fuel? …Let's see you earning our fuel!

Next Dates for the diary: **29th /30th March** – Tesco Sunderland. Huge store, first proper bag-pack. We could need up to twenty people per day, and would appreciate any help if you can spare an hour or two…. Even if it's just to get away from the wife & kids while they do the weekly shop! All events are on our fundraising calendar at www.northumbriabloodbikes.org.uk/fundraisingcalendar So please add your name to any you can attend. No fundraising=no fuel=no Blood Bikes! We also want to hear if you know of ANY potential fundraising opportunities….contact numbers below.

You may think we tend to go on & on about the importance of fundraising, and deservedly so…we do!! However, we also fully understand that everyone has lives and commitments of their own to cope with. Please don't feel that you will be looked upon in a negative light if you are unable to fundraise…… we understand that circumstances differ for each and every member, and we won't think badly of you if you are unable to attend. We do still need to promote fundraising and encourage attendance as much as possible in order to survive as a viable organisation, and will always be asking for volunteers to help. But if circumstances dictate that you are unable to attend, we won't think any less of you, so please don't feel pressured! ……. Perhaps if you feel this describes YOU, you might be interested in easy fundraising below…..which costs nothing, and benefits us each time you shop online. We're already seeing good results from this, so spread the word!

easyfundraising.org.uk

You can also contribute by signing up with easyfundraising.org.uk, a free way to raise money for our cause when shopping online. Our charity is already on there, just search for Northumbria Blood Bikes when you sign up. A full explanation of how it works is on the site.

Training statistics…

We at Northumbria Blood Bikes are lucky to have Geoff Spencer as our training officer. He's one of the most highly qualified people in the region to assist us in ensuring that our volunteers make the grade… and this month he's kindly provided an update on our progress since the group began:
We have 42 riders who've gone through an Assessment ride. 38 riders have also had familiarisation sessions to acquaint themselves with our fleet bikes. At the time of writing, 38 have also been trained in the appropriate use of blue lights (classroom based). He's still very busy with recruits adding their names to these statistics month after month, and the annual assessments are becoming due, so he'll be even busier!…. – We salute you, Mr.Spencer!

And finally…

I just noticed that my final comment on last month's newsletter was "Look out for the new bike on the road by the time our next newsletter comes around." Sadly, we may have to wait a little longer. Still, we now have a very active service with calls coming in from several hospitals on a daily basis. Our rider volunteers are finally getting to provide a service to the NHS, and it won't be long before we are completing several calls each shift….. Lots of publicity in the coming week, lots of events planned for our future! Take care & ride safe ☺

FUNDRAISING HOTLINE: 07766 479 770 - for any opportunities to increase our funding through sponsorship, locations for collecting tins, supermarket events etc…

NORTHUMBRIA BLOOD BIKES

www.northumbriabloodbikes.org.uk

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Providing effective and timely transportation of essential blood and medical products

Registered Charity Number 1152745