

Remembrances

Dave Bucher looks back at some little gems of experience from his 45 years of riding and writing.



Paying the Piper

When I look back on my 40-plus years of riding, with memorable experiences too numerous to count, one trip always stands out as the best ever.

It was in 1992 and involved a 10-day tour of the British Isles organized by a well-established international tour company. As a "motojournalist," I got a chance to go along to write about it.

This was my first time across that particular pond, so I went early and spent three glorious days exploring London. When it came time to ride, through the north of England, to Hadrian's Wall, around Scotland and down through Wales, the highlights were so numerous that I will surely recount more of them in future Remembrances.

But one, in particular, bordered on the bizarre. We had just left a rest stop somewhere over the English border and were headed to Edinburgh via a series of extremely narrow, sparsely

trafficked roads. I remember us twisting up and around a low mountain, through a forest, on tarmac about eight feet wide. Suddenly we broke into a clearing. And there he was. The Piper.

Mind you, we hadn't seen a structure or even a car for a long time. The road and the surrounding area were absolutely deserted. The weather was typical British... a kind of constant, misty rain. Yet out in this field was a guy in full Scottish regalia, blasting away on his bagpipes. We didn't communicate, because he just kept on playing, seemingly oblivious to us. But I recall there was some mechanism for leaving him a gratuity and we all ponied up.

I never did figure this out. And our German tour guide was no help. I think it was his first time on this route and he seemed as amazed as we were. Maybe this was a regular road for tourist buses and the fact that we'd passed no traffic for such a long period just an anomaly. But I have no idea what possessed this lonely piper to stand out in the rain at this particular time, on this desolate stretch of highway (and calling it a highway is a stretch) blowing his brains out in the hope of getting a couple of shillings. Just another one of those "Celtic Mysteries" so common when you get off the beaten track in these parts.