

ASK THE EXPERTS

Got a problem? MCN's team of specialists has the answers



TECHNICAL
Adrian Clancy
Head mechanic in various New York bike shops. Now at Total Triumph in Taunton



TYRES
Bryn Phillips
Product support for Cambrian Tyres, the UK's largest supplier to the bike trade



TECHNICAL
Stuart Gaines
Senior Technician at independent servicing centre, Herne Bay Motorcycles in Kent



TECHNICAL
Steve Scully
Service Manager at GT Motorcycles, Plymouth with 30 years' experience

My 2008 Triumph Street Triple has covered 12,000 miles and the engine now rattles like hell when I start it from cold. It seems to be from the camchain area and lasts for about 15-20 seconds, then all seems to be well. Apart from that the bike runs fine and there's no odd noise when I start it from hot. Does this mean the camchain tensioner needs replacing, or is there something more sinister going on?

A You are right, it sounds like it a problem with the camchain tensioner and its blades, although the unit shouldn't be badly worn at this mileage.

Have you kept your eye on the oil level as the bike is quite sensitive to this? Wear does accelerate if the oil level has been allowed to drop towards the minimum at any time, or the bike has had lower-quality generic engine oil in it. Another issue in our experience is poor quality aftermarket oil filters. They seem to slow the rate at which the oil pressure builds up on cold start-ups, causing excessive noise in the cylinder head area.

It sounds like you could be looking at camchain tight spots and some wear between the Street Triple's camshaft and cylinder head.

At 12,000 miles, it's due a full service including a valve clearance check and while I was in there I would ask the mechanic to check the valve clearances and inspect the camchain and camshafts for signs of wear. Specify Castrol 10w40 fully synthetic engine oil and be sure to use a genuine Triumph oil filter in the future.

Adrian Clancy, Total Triumph



Why is my Street Triple rattling?

DOUGLAS LAING, EMAIL

Beat the rattles by only using the best oil in your Street Triple

Is the FJR I'm looking to buy a ticking time-bomb?

Q I am thinking of buying an '04 Yamaha FJR1300A with 28,000 miles on the clock, but it makes a ticking sound when up to temperature. This gets louder and faster as the revs rise. I have had a test ride and it feels good apart from the noise. Phillip Butler, email

A Some early FJR's had a problem with mismatched valve guides and stems. The tolerance was a little loose, so you get that ticking. Yamaha didn't issue a recall as the problem was not getting worse and made no difference to the engine's performance over its life. But if owners complained during the warranty period, then the bike would have a replacement cylinder head and valve guides fitted free of charge instead of facing a bill of £1500.

Unfortunately there weren't any specific batch numbers affected, so you need to see the service history to check if the work was done. If the bike has a replacement head and guides fitted and is as noisy as you say, I would walk away as it could be another, more serious issue.

Stuart Gaines, Herne Bay Motorcycles



Check whether Yamaha has changed the head on the ticking FJR1300

I want to give winter the cold shoulder

JONNY MAXEY, HERTS

I've really been feeling the cold out on the bike this winter so I am thinking of getting a heated vest or jacket. What do you suggest?



There is plenty of choice with some good quality options.

Oxford have two models, a lithium battery-powered vest that will do about two hours between charges and a vest, which can be plugged in to any bike using provided leads. Both have four power settings and use four heated panels for warmth.

Keis do a few different models; the basic X10 vest can be bike or battery-powered - expect to pay an extra £55 for the battery pack. The higher wattage X20 is bike-power only, while the X25 jacket has heated sleeves and a heated collar. The X25 has a high (7A) current draw which provides 84 watts of heat, but a weak alternator on the bike will struggle match it.

The Keis range is modular with connection leads for their gloves, trousers and inner soles should you want to be really toasty. Keis also do leads that will hook into an Optimate battery charger connection, which can make wiring the kit into your bike quick and easy.

Gerbing have been supplying heated kit for around 40 years with a good looking gilet that has a wide range of heat panels, including the collar. There is an optional battery at £110, but with a 4.5 amp draw from the vest that's good for 90 minutes. There is also a dedicated £170 battery vest, including two batteries, plus a bike battery-powered fully heated jacket and trousers combo at £170.

Exo2 use 'Fabroc' heating panels, which means they can be machine washed unlike their hand-wash only rivals. Their Stormrider vest carries the coveted 'RIDE Recommended' triangle from MCN's sister magazine and has bike or battery pack options (the pack only warms the kidney panels). Exo2's Storm Walker is also dual power kidney/abdomen heating unit with zip off (non-heated) sleeves. The top-of-the-range Storm Chaser heated jacket has the same limited heating battery pack, but wired directly it offers a full 50°C of warmth.

I also found a US-made battery-pack base layer top on the web. The Venture top gives a claimed 3.5 hours heat on a medium setting and is designed to be worn tightly underneath your bike gear for £103 with battery and charger. Keith Roissetter, Infinity Motorcycles



CENTRAL HEATING FOR BIKERS



Oxford lithium-ion £79.99



Oxford plug-in £150



Keis X10 vest £109.99



Keis X20 vest £139.99



Keis X24 jacket £169.99



Exo2 Storm Walker £110



Exo2 Storm rider £179.99



Exo2 Storm chaser £260

Does this sound like a bad botch?

Q I have just acquired a 929 RRY Fireblade and have discovered that the steering lock won't go on. My mechanic found it had pattern head bearings fitted, which had dropped the yokes by 1mm. His suggestion is to file a bit off the hole in the headstock on one side. Is this a botch job or okay to do? Robert Cree, email

A The later RR2 Blade had a product update for a similar problem, which was caused by head bearings not seating properly, so the fix is sensible. As long as the bearing is level there shouldn't be any problems caused by filing the headstock. Chris Dabbs, MCN



Mechanic's suggestion of filing the Blade's headstock isn't as mad as it sounds

What tyres for my new GSX-R1000?

Q I commute in all weathers and I've stepped up from a Triumph Speedmaster to a Suzuki GSX-R1000 K8 running Bridgestone T30 tyres. Will these tyres suit my riding needs day-in, day-out? Vic Waggett, email

A As one of the new breed of sports-touring tyres you can have faith in your T30s to deal with riding in the cold and wet as well as on fine, sunny summer days. Since you're commuting you'll also like the durability of a sports-touring tyre. To give you extra confidence, even though the T30 is a sports-touring tyre it is the choice of the Ron Haslam Race School. Bryn Phillips, Cambrian Tyres

MCN LAW

Your legal questions

WHY IS MY CRASH CLAIM ON ICE?

Q I was riding down a country lane when I came off on what I think was black ice and fractured my shoulder. I want to sue the council for not gritting the road and have a witness who agrees that there was ice on the road, but I am having trouble finding a solicitor willing to take on my case.

Gavin Flint, email

A The fact that the council did not grit the road alone does not necessarily mean that they are liable to compensate you. In order to successfully claim against the council, you would need to establish that the failure to grit meant that they did not comply with their obligations under the Highways Act 1980, which requires that they 'ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered

'Claims for ice on roads are difficult because courts take multiple factors into account'

by snow or ice'. In order to do this you would need to either prove that the failure to grit was because their winter service code was not reasonable, or if it was reasonable, that it was not implemented correctly.

Claims for crashes on icy roads can be difficult because the courts take multiple factors into account such as the council's available resources, weighing the cost of gritting against the risk to road users and prioritising gritting certain areas (e.g. main roads, roads to hospitals and schools).

Write to the council to ask for a copy of their winter service code, inspection and maintenance records and any other risk assessments. Then contact a solicitor with the evidence if you cannot find one to do these preliminary investigations for you.



Andrew Campbell
Solicitor and author of the MCN Law column for the last five years

Andrew Campbell, Bikelawyer.
Visit www.bikelawyer.co.uk or email andrew@bikelawyer.co.uk

CHOOSE BEFORE YOU LOSE IF I FANCY A TOURER FOR £5000
MCN bikesforsale.com
I'm looking for a decent tourer for sensible money. What are my options?
Alan Graham, email



The flat-twin option

BMW R1200RT £4295-£15,250

Only an early R1200RT is within budget, but the bike has superb ergonomics and you can hustle it with gusto down twisty roads.
110bhp | 229kg | 271 | 780mm seat



The V4 option

HONDA PAN-EUROPEAN £3499-£14,499

The Pan does everything you ask of it and more. It's smooth, comfortable, fast, powerful and well-built with a low seat and easy manners. Superb.
125bhp | 287kg | 291 | 805mm seat



The inline-four option

KAWASAKI 1400GTR £4750-£13,999

The 1400GTR is a classy, smooth and potent bit of kit, delivering a magic carpet ride across continents. It's hard to beat.
139bhp | 279kg | 221 | 815mm seat