



VIRAGO STAR OWNERS CLUB

www.vsoc.org.uk
www.lostriders.co.uk

LOST RIDERS

December 2008



**Centre 9
East & North Midlands**

**Bumper Winter Solstice & Christmas Humbug Issue
Derbyshire, Notts, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Northants, Rutland**

Lost Riders

Nottingham Area
Christmas Party
Disco & Supper



Raffle

Grey Goose, Gedling.

20th December 2008 7-30pm

HOW ABOUT A NEW STAR RAIDER FOR CHRISTMAS?



Ever dreamed that Yamaha would launch a new cruiser capturing the cut-down chopper looks of a Virago 1100 combined with the grunt of a Wildy? Your dream has just come true - the new Star Raider features an **1854cc** 4-valve per cylinder, air-cooled V-twin engine, a massively wide **210mm rear tire**, and a 39.2 degree fork rake.

Note the **slim front forks**, **skinny front wheel** and **small neat headlight** - reminds you of a **Virago**, doesn't it? But just look at that engine... >>>



**Read more about the
Star Raider
on page 7...**

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27th November - Sunday 7th December

NEC Bike Show

Tuesday 2nd December

The Centre meet, 7-30pm at The Unicorn Hotel, Gunthorpe Bridge.

Wednesday 3rd December

quiz night at B and M Honda Ltd
5 Midland Court, Midland Way
Barlborough, Derbyshire
S43 4UL

Located just off J30 of the M1.

Free eats, and you are welcome to take your own beer, as it is a Honda Dealership.

Hope to see you all out there somewhere

Sunday 7th December

6th Annual Burton on Trent Toy Run

Saturday 13th December

Derbyshire Christmas meal at The Arkwright Arms Price for the evening is a £16 each.

This includes a FREE raffle. There are only 34 tickets available, so be quick if you want to join in the fun.

Every year the tickets sell out fast.

Sunday 14th December

BMRA Toy Run. Meet from 11.00am at Suzy's cafe on the A17 at Algakirk. Depart there approx 12.30. Riding to Pilgrim Hospital. They'd be grateful if each bike would bring a wrapped pressie suitable for a child aged between 3 and 15. The hospital has a few rules and each pressie should indicate the age and sex of the child it is suitable for and if the present contains confectionary.

Saturday 20th December

Nottingham Area Christmas Party at the newly re-furbished Goose, Gedling

Open to ALL VSOC Members

Disco, Hot Supper, Raffle

Tickets only £6 available at meets

Thursday 25th December

Santa gets stressed trying to force brand new Star Raider S (113 inch fuel-injected V-Twin) down chimney, drinks all the sherry, eat all the mince pies and forgets where he parked the sledge...

2009

Thursday 1st January - NEW YEAR'S DAY

Deadline for January Newsletter. This deadline is now always the Thursday before the following Tuesday C9 meeting unless otherwise notified (eg. in event of holidays etc. we might need to get it out earlier).

MEETING DATES & VENUES

CENTRE 9 MAIN MEETING - FIRST TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

The Unicorn Hotel, Gunthorpe Bridge, Trentside, Gunthorpe, Notts., NG14 7FB - tel: 01159 663612/01159 664801

DERBYSHIRE 1st Sunday of the Month Meeting -

Clay Cross Powersports 10.00 am. Coffee and a chat; possible ride-out.

2nd Monday of Month Meeting - THE ARKWRIGHT ARMS, Sutton-cum-Duckmanton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S44 5JG
Tel: (01246) 232053 (just off J29 of M1). Includes free food such as chip butties with home-made chips.

Third Sunday of the Month Fettle/Ride-Out starting from Clay Cross Powersports from 10.00 am.

LEICESTERSHIRE / NORTHANTS

The Tavern Inn

WALCOTE,

Nr Lutterworth

1 minute from J20 M1

2nd Wednesday of the month from 7.30pm

LINCOLNSHIRE

Trev & Rachels's or Castle Inn, CONINGSBY

2nd Wednesday of each month from 8pm

ALSO 2nd Sunday's - various locations!

NOTTS

The Grey Goose Gedling (now greatly improved)

3rd Tuesday of the month.

Tuesday 6th January C9 Monthly Meeting

Unicorn Hotel, Gunthorpe Bridge, see above

Sunday 4th January

Clay Cross Powersports New Year's Breakfast and possible ride-out from 10.00 am

Sunday 11th January

Lincs. meeting at 12:30 will once again be held at Trev and Rachel's with a view to planning the calendar for the coming year.

Monday 12th January

Derbys. Group meeting at THE ARKWRIGHT ARMS, see above

Friday 6th to Sunday 8th February

2nd Snooty's Frozen Brush Rally At 'The Snooty Fox' on the A64 Scarbro' Rd., East Heselton, N. Yorkshire, YO17 8EN. Band both nights & rock D J, Good pub food, bonfire, real loo's n showers. Electric hook up. Limited chalets both payable to the landlord. Tel 01944 710 554. £8.00 pre book or £10.00 o.t.g Tel 0778 487 9467 - email: karllfb@live.co.uk or sall127@hotmail.com

Cont. on page 3

If you have views on any matters, or would like to contribute a letter or an article for the newsletter, please don't hesitate to email me at: rumblyingstar@aol.com. x x x Gothic Keith

Wot's On • cont....

Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th April

Centre 6 (Northstars) Present -

Jumpstart 2009 -Golborne Parkside Social & Community Club, Rivington Avenue, Golborne, WA3 3HG.

Camping available - NO CARAVANS. B&B available nearby. Absolutely NO BIKES will be allowed on the pitch, assistance will be given with your equipment.

Good food all weekend at reasonable prices
Showers available for a small charge. 250 ticket LIMIT pre book only, so get em' quick. Tickets £7. Send s.a.e. to Jo Smith, 19 Pedder Street, Heaton, Bolton, BL1 4JX. Tel. 01204-846208

Friday 24th to Sunday 26th April

Southern Snakes - 5th Start of Season Rally - Holland

More information at www.southern-snakes.com

Friday 1st - Monday 4th May

VSOC Centre 2 Ireland Rally

Location: Raceview Road, Ballymena, BT43 7GX, Northern Ireland, U.K. The rally is from the 1st of May 2009 until the 3rd of May 2009. The rally team will be on site from Thursday the 30th of April until Tuesday the 5th, so all are welcome to arrive early or Stay late as they want. **Tickets: Please make all Sterling cheques payable to Brian O'Callaghan-Westropp.** Please send a SAE with you payment to: **Brian at 6 Hyde Square, Kilmainham, Dublin 8, Ireland.** The SAE's will be posted in Northern Ireland in batches, so please don't worry if there is a delay in receiving your tickets.

Ferries: The most direct route is to sail Stranraer to Belfast and head up the road 30 minutes to Ballymena. There are obviously other routes such as Fishguard/Pembroke to Rosslare, Holyhead to Dublin and Dun Laoghaire & Liverpool to Belfast. All route bookings on the ferries will be handled by Nutt Travel. They can be contacted at **Nutt Travel & Promotions, 14A Artillery Road, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, N. Ireland, BT52 1Q. Tel: 028 7035 1199 Fax: 028 7035 8974. Email: info@nutttravel.com** The reference when booking is "VSOC Ireland Rally 2009". It will cost you £79 return for a bike & rider and £89 return for a bike & 2 travelling from either of the requested ports.

Food on Site: All of the catering will be handled by Ballymena Rugby Club. They will be putting on Full Breakfast for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The lunch times will have rolls and a limited menu. The evening meals have yet to be confirmed, but we have requested that they provide basically pub grub if they can. Vegetarians will also be catered for at all meal times.

Bar Times: On the Thursday the bar will close at 11:30. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, there will be bar extensions to 1 a.m. The Rugby Club

President has asked that the VSOC ask the members not to bring in their own drink. They will provide cans for "carry out".

Entertainment: There will be bands and DJ on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Tea & Coffee: There will be 24 hour tea and coffee facilities as normal.

Showers: There will be access to the showers for 18 hours each day and separate showers for men and women.

Parking: Hardstanding is provided for parking all 'bikes.

Security: We will have regular security patrols throughout the rally.

Rideouts: Because of the size of the club rideouts and the history in the 6 counties, we are officially required to register with the Parades Commission and notify them of our intent. It may be, at this stage, that we will issue route cards to Rally Attendees that show the different routes and places of interest that we are looking at for possible rideouts.

Currency: You are still in the UK, so Sterling applies at the Rugby Club and in the 6 counties.

Staying Longer? If Rally attendees plan on staying longer or are coming earlier, please feel free to drop Brian a line and we can assist with information on their stay.

Ride safe,

Brian, Adrian, Steve & Tommy

Friday 22nd - Sunday 24th May

2nd Belgian/Dutch Virago & Star Club Rally

More information at www.viragoclub.com

Friday 29th - Sunday 31st May 2009

7th Treffen 2009 Rally - Holland

See - <http://www.wildstarfan.nl/Treffen/2009.htm> or <http://www.vsoc.org.uk/index2.html>

Friday 12th to Sunday 14th June 2009

VSOC International Rally - C16 Solent

Download the flyer:

http://www.vsoc.org.uk/vsoc_rallies/vsoc_rallies2009/Int_Rally_2009_flyer.jpg

Friday 3rd - Sunday 5th July

VSOC Centre 8 - West Midlands Alouettes Rally

Friday 17th - Sunday 19th July

Wedding of Terry and Sue

Doncaster Rugby Club, Castle Park, Armthorpe. DN2 5QB - FREE Do Again From The Yorkies

Bands, Hog Roast, Disco, Fancy dress. Friday night is Stag & Hen Night. Saturday is the Wedding.

Download the flyer: http://www.vsoc.org.uk/vsoc_rallies/vsoc_rallies2009/Terry_Sue_wedding_flyer.pdf

Friday 24th - Sunday 26th July

VSOC Centre 14 Cockney Rejects Rally - Esher

Rugby Club, 369 Molesey Road, Hersham, Surrey KT12 3PF

Friday 28 - Monday 31st August

EJ's Corner

Hello all,
Well it's been quite a busy month for me.

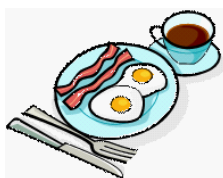


On the Centre's behalf, myself and Trev went to the **National AGM** in Rugby and I put our Centre's views across about opening up the club to other Yamaha cruisers and the V-Max but unfortunately the other Centres did not agree with ours and the proposal was voted out 2 for 15 against.



There was a long debate about the "once a member always a member" rule and in the end no one could agree so it was agreed to put out a referendum to the members. Since then there have been several emails flying through cyberspace about the referendum, which for some reason had been watered down so much that it didn't even mention the "once a member always a member" rule.

Kevin Hoyte has written something for the Clatter where he is asking for members comments. Please read this thoroughly when you get your Clatter and let him know your views. He has asked members to email him and I know there are some of our members who aren't up to speed with email, but if you write down your response and let me have them, I will forward your views to him. It is important that your views are heard so please make the effort to let him know how you think about the issues. I'm sorry that I cannot be much clearer on this but when you get your Clatter it should become a bit clearer.



One of the other issues I brought up at the AGM was the food at the international rally. The hosts have assured me that if when you send off for your tickets, you specify any food allergies or intolerances then the chef will do his best to accommodate you. Also I clarified that children 16 and under go free, but also add their details when you send off for your tickets so that they know how many people to cater for. There is no option to buy a ticket without the food included.

Don't forget to get your ticket for the Christmas Party at the Grey Goose. If you can't get to a meeting to get one then please let Terry Warren or Paul Cain know you are going and you can pay on the door.



May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let's all pray for better weather for motorbikes for next year, you never know it might work, anything is worth a try.

That's all for now, ride safe.

Ride Safe, **EJ (Centre 9 Rep.)** darlington@aol.com

FROM 'AH BIG TEL'

Hi All, Christmas just round the corner, **Derbyshire Xmas party, 13th December at the Arkwright Arms, and Nottingham Xmas party, 20th December 2008, at the re-furbished Grey Goose, Nottingham.**

Disco, hot supper, raffle, loads of friends, and 5 days before Christmas. What are you waiting for? Tickets on sale now, **only £6 each.**

Several members have financially backed this party, so please get your tickets and come along to have fun.

Everyone is welcome, **tickets from Paul Caine**, and at all the meets from now.

Ride Safe, have fun, **and don't forget to tell me about it.** See you at the meets.

I tell you, people will be amazed at the change in the Goose.

Terry
Centre 9 Webmaster
billio51@hotmail.com


SPRINGFIELDS

One of the first events of 2009 will of course be the **Springfields Show**. Steve and Cathy have volunteered to run the stand this year but if you can, please offer to help out for a couple of hours.

We will have a stand at Springfields (both days) for information, if anyone want to volunteer please contact Trev.

01522 750395
trac5641@yahoo.co.uk






Don't forget to sign up for the mobile texting service, you will get reminders about all the meetings and get notified about short notice events straight to your phone.

Your number will not be given to anyone else. You can send messages to everyone else that has signed up just by texting the VSOC mobile number and that message will be forwarded to everyone else that has signed up.*

All you have to do is text your name and membership number to 07751 695284, it will cost £1 until April as a trial, after that £2 per year from April to April.

How easy is that!

*(offensive messages will not be forwarded)





Paul's Ponderings (Notts)



Not much to say this month as the weather seems to be settled in for Winter although I did manage 25 miles on the bike last Saturday and it felt great. It is Bottesford Toy run this weekend (Sunday 30th) and I am really hoping that we manage a dry day. It is always a well attended event.

Some of us are now receiving details of our events from the Club mobile (07751695284) and from Terry via his email (billio51@hotmail.com). These seem to be a really good ways to be advised of events and I would recommend members to 'sign up'.

This is the last newsletter before the Notts. Lost Rider's Christmas Party which is on Saturday 20th December from 7:30pm. Arrangements are now sorted and we are planning the 'supper' so, don't be shy, keep buying the tickets from Terry or myself to help us work out the numbers otherwise the 'loaves and fishes' will need to be rationed. Raffle prizes have been donated and are looking good (tempted to keep the best stuff for myself!).

I am building up the dates in my diary for 2009 starting with the Springfield's Bike Show in Spalding as early as 17th & 18th January and the Donington Classic Japanese Show 7 & 8 February! What with Rallies, BMF and the other small shows it is starting to look like a full biking calendar. Don't know when I'm going to fit in the home DIY - Ah well - that's a shame - roll on 2009.

Don't forget the next Notts. Grey Goose meeting - Tuesday 16th December in the lounge. Chip butties now a regular event and the atmosphere in the lounge is excellent.

The Notts Lost Riders Christmas 'bash' is going to be grrrrreat and you will be sorry if you miss it so get those tickets - it is open to all. I will post them out to you if you would rather send me a cheque - remember only £6 a head for a brilliant night.

Paul (Notts. Rep.)

p.caine@ntlworld.com

LETTERS

Hiya all, just a few words to express my deepest thanks to 3 fellow members who worked all day to get my bike running.

They did all that and would not expect any payment at all, I did not think there were any people like that left in this world,



Hi all, hope you are well and looking forward to Christmas; talking of Christmas, Derbys.

Malc's Bits

meal is now booked up, so that's it, no more bookings can be taken, sorry 'bout that. If anyone wishes to donate a raffle prize, if possible could you bring it to our December's meet please, we would be eternally grateful. Ok, bit of an exaggeration there but it would help with our planning of the evening.

Up here in Derbyshire we've been keeping ourselves busy, breakfast on the 1st Sunday surrounded by the latest exotic bikes at Clay Cross Powersports.

The quiz nite at B & M Honda is always a pleasant fun nite out, and the 3rd Sunday meet and ride-out again from Clay Cross Powersports; this is now firmly established in the calendar. Last month the ride zag-zigged its way thro' the Peak District. The Peak is a beautiful part of the country, the colours are constantly changing, the sights and roads are undoubtedly some of the best anywhere.

Our November's meet was very well attended, the atmosphere was friendly, amicable and a nice place to be, and that's down to you lot, so thanx for that.

That's it, that's me done, just to thank everyone for supporting me and helping in the running of the Derbyshire Area of Centre 9. Of course when we say Derbys. area we certainly are not excluding anyone who doesn't live in the best county in the country, you are all more than welcome.

Ride safe,

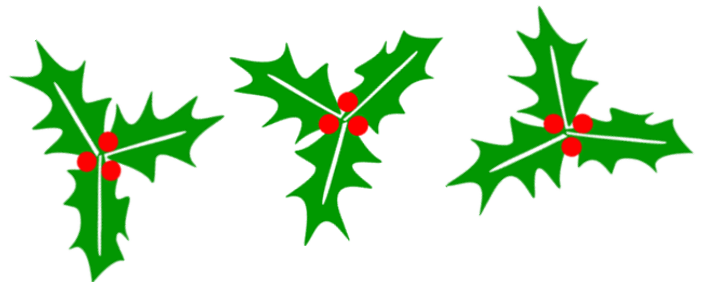
Malc

Have a **HAPPY CHRISTMAS** and a very **MERRY NEW YEAR**

Malc, Derbys. Rep. (Good to see you back!)

bloodymalc@hotmail.com

(Malc, can you send me a new photo? - Ed).



how wrong can you be.

I would return the favour ten times over, but may not be able to, (they know why). I can only finish by saying: what a privilege to know and have friends like that, and what an honour to be a member of a club like ours (Centre 9 VSOC).

I wish you all a very **Merry Xmas**, and a brilliant **New Year**, and many more to come. Ridesafe, ride often.

P.S. I can't sign off without saying, thanks a million to ken, leon, malc, but I know if they could not have helped me, lots of other members would have done, that's what makes a club like ours special, the willingness to help each other, **bob**



Lincolnshire December 2008

Another month has passed and it's time to write my article for the newsletter, on time for a change thanks to our Editors reminder. Personally I've not used the bike at all this month as it's been off the road for most of it. It had a major service early in the month and we discovered a sheared bracket (supporting the air intake) and more worryingly one of the four bolts that hold the whole rear mudguard assembly on was also sheared. The bracket had to be ordered from Japan and took two weeks to arrive. Anyway it will all be back together this weekend. You may have seen on the website that the Fireworks were well attended and everybody had a good time despite the weather. I have already e-mailed the campsite asking them to reserve us places for next year, so make a note in your diaries. On the 9th November I attended the VSOC AGM in Rugby with EJ. It gives you a good idea of the geographic size of Centre 9 when you realise that most of the hour and a half journey was through our centre area! The big topic was the future direction of the club and the outcome was to have a member wide vote. This is a topic that has come up a lot in recent years so please take the time to cast your vote and hopefully we can finally put the issue to bed.

Back to Lincolnshire issues our January meeting on Sunday 11th at 12:30 will once again be held at mine and Rachel's with a view to planning the calendar for the coming year. You are all welcome to attend but if you can't make it please contact me before hand with any suggestions for events. The first event of the year will of course be the Springfields Show, Steve and Cathy have volunteered to run the stand this year but if you can please offer to help out for a couple of hours.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Regards, **TREV** (Deputy Centre 9 Rep. & Lincs. Rep.)

Gothic rumblings

**Obama Special -
Jan. '09 Issue
of Newsletter ...**

Some of you may recall with amusement last January's special 'Church of the Lost Riders' edition of the Newsletter.

To keep up the tradition of doing something daft each January in the Newsletter, the next (Jan.) issue will be a **Special 'Obama' Edition**.

Trust me, **Barek Obama's** inauguration as the 44th President of the good 'ole God-damn U.S. of A.

- the country that gave the world the Harley-Davidson - is going to be big, big news in January, so we are going to celebrate this by asking you to get busy and cobble together **photos of Barek Obama standing with members of the Lost Riders...**

**Ride upright, Gothic Keith
Please send your .jpg's to:**

rumbingstar@aol.com



BRANDY WHARF

Oooooooh aaaaaah bang! Bang!

Yes, it was bonfire night again! Nottingham was there – celebrating yet again at the great Brandy Wharf extravaganza. The weather forecast was not great so we were all on four not two wheels but it did not stop us. The tent was erected while Moira sat in the car making sure it was to her satisfaction! Tent up, sleeping bags inside we joined the other hardy members already there enjoying the comforts of the camper driven by Sue, Johns ' new friend.

Deciding the best way to start the evening was with a good meal we all left for the pub, good food, a selection of cider you wouldn't believe, and good company. What more could you want?

John had the idea to try the Cider, not being able to decide which one he asked and received free samples of several – not daft our John. He finally decided on one but ask him which it was and he couldn't remember. No more free samples for him. Having finished we walked back to the site in time for the fireworks display. A great show was enjoyed by all even though Paul was hit twice by falling rockets and Moira had something small and hot drop inside her coat (no, it wasn't me!).

The display ended just as the rain came – perfect timing. We retired to the marquee for free food chicken, steak sausage, the usual trimmings and music. Heating inside ensured we kept warm and dry to enjoy the entertainment – no Elvis this year perhaps he really is dead!

The night was a great success; with the music behind we left for the tents, or for the lucky ones - campers and caravans. We were soon asleep and without the usual noises of a rally had a quiet night. It was not until the morning that I discovered Chris had made the unfortunate decision to place his tent in a hollow and found his tent flooded and he and Wendy spent the night in his car.

Departing on the Sunday, we looked back on a great night – free display, free food, drinks for which you only made a "donation" all for £5.50! We will be there again next year to enjoy it all again, put the event in your diary and join the Notts region for a great weekend.

Jim Salmon

MORE ABOUT THE NEW STAR RAIDER...

Yamaha calls the Star Raider a “performance custom.” It shares its mechanical underpinnings with the Star Roadliner, but adopts the style of the current trend in custom bikes, as filtered through the mind of a big corporate lawyer. Safer, more solid, more sane than the bikes that inspired it from the workshops of Jesse James, the Teutuls and **Arlen Ness**, the Star Raider is built around a **massive engine – 113 cubes (1854 cc) of V-twin, splayed out at 48 degrees**. Star Raider’s other most conspicuous feature is a dogleg-shaped set of chromed two-into-one-into-two exhaust pipes, bucking tradition by pointing downward toward the pavement on the right side of the bike.

Star Raider’s designers have used repetition to great effect, echoing the shape of the side covers in the foot pegs, in the mirrors, in the center console. There’s a tail at the back of the front fender that is duplicated at the tip of the rear fender, tying both ends of the bike together.

The flat, drag-style handlebars are neat and clean, with the wiring hidden inside. All of the wiring on the bike is cleanly routed, giving an impression of great fit and finish.

Star Raider’s scooped-out, low 27.3” seat puts you



in the bike, a great position for the custom cruiser feel. The small pillion pad sits higher than the operator’s seat, making a nice perch for pas-

sengers. **Yamaha’s parts and accessories catalog lists a broader, cushier pillion pad, which most wives/husbands and partners will require before they will climb aboard for a lengthy ride.**

Style requires sacrifice, as any supermodel will tell you. In order to ride in the feet-forward, splayed out position that the custom scene demands, you have to sacrifice a bit of comfort and a bit of maneuverability. Riding with your feet forward feels great for a little while, but it keeps the weight on your tailbone. Eventually, that can cause fatigue and pain. It also keeps you locked in to one spot on the bike, making leaning and shifting your weight in the curves more of an effort. It’s the sacrifice you make to look cool.

Though **Star Raider’s** cool-looking telescopic fork is pushed out some, the rake and trail are modest at 39 degrees and 4”. Travel is a generous 5.1”. Out back, a Softail-style swingarm with a single shock hidden under the seat give a hardtail look, but with 3.5” of travel to cush your tush.

Five-spoke cast wheels complete the suspension, with a 21” hoop up front and an 18” one out back. The



front wheel wears narrow, mid-profile (120/70) rubber, while the rear is wrapped with wide, thin meat (210/40).

Note the **Star Raider’s** low tank-mounted speedo (above).

That big V-twin produces its peak torque at about 2500 rpm, and peak hp at around 4500. Yamaha doesn’t report



horsepower or torque figures, but it’s safe to say that the Star Raider makes over 100 lb-ft of peak torque, and over 80 peak hp. Considering the bike’s 692 lb dry weight, that’s not superbike territory but it does crush the competition

– the Harley-Davidson Softail. Mated to a five-speed transmission, Star Raider can get up and go, and it will achieve extra-legal speeds in a hurry. You will over-run the capabilities of the chassis and suspension long before you run out of speed, especially when the roads start to twist.

The dual front 290mm discs and single rear 310mm disc brakes work well. No fancy electronics or linked setups here, just good old hydraulics.

Star Raider’s 4.1 gallon fuel tank is on the smallish side for such a heavy, big-engined machine. Your fuel requirements will probably match your need to stretch your vital parts, so that shouldn’t be a problem, even on long rides.

The horn has great, car-like tone and volume, but it is mounted low and pointed toward the ground – nobody even notices when you beep, and you’ll get more attention by revving the growling V-twin instead.



For full specs see: <http://www.starmotorcycles.com/star/products/modelspecs/587/0/specs.aspx>



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to **VSOC Centre Nine**
Please send to:
Miss EJ Darlington,
30 Mareham Lane,
Sleaford,
Lincs,
NG34 7FR

HAS YOUR LICENCE EXPIRED?

Thousands of motorists are at risk of being fined up to £1,000 because they are unwittingly driving without a valid licence.

They risk prosecution after failing to spot the extremely small print on their photocard licence which says it automatically expires after 10 years and has to be renewed - even though drivers are licensed to drive until the age of 70.

Motoring organisations blamed the Government for the fiasco and said 'most' drivers believed their licences were for life.

They said officials had failed to publicise sufficiently the fact that new-style licences - unlike the old paper ones - expire after a set period and have to be renewed.

To rub salt into wounds, drivers will have to pay £17.50 to renew their card - a charge which critics have condemned as a 'stealth tax' and which will earn the Treasury an estimated £437million over 25 years.

The fiasco has come to light a decade after the first batch of photo licences was issued in July 1998, just as they start to expire.

Official DVLA figures reveal that while 16,136 expired this summer, so far only 11,566 drivers have renewed, leaving 4,570 outstanding.

With another 300,000 photocard licences due to expire over the coming year, experts fear the number of invalid licences will soar, putting thousands more drivers in breach of the law and at risk of a fine.

(Report by Jayne Bell)