

Righty Tightly, Lefty Loosey

With the academic year back in full swing with essays, projects and lab reports all looming for almost everyone on campus right now minds may be far from clubs and socs but we have been keeping busy in the UCC Motorbike Club workshop.

Just as you see the GAA teams of UCC wearing O'Neills kit and other teams with Kukri and the like, the motorbike club seems to have some preferences as regards brands as well. Our current, and nearly completed project bike, is a Suzuki GN 125, long standing member of the club Dave Leen owns a Suzuki SV650, I myself own a Suzuki Bandit 600 as does another member of the club and current club vice-captain Gary Mulcahy used to own two Suzuki Hayabusa's. One after the other, not two at once but he can explain that one himself! So it seems that Suzuki's are the bikes of choice for the club but really that's not telling the whole story for Ciara Utsch, our captain, rides a Kawasaki while Martin our mechanic has a Honda CBR 600 hidden away somewhere in a secret lair. And then there's Damien with his Aprilia and Brian with his Honda Hornet 250 and small Martin with his Honda CB400. All in all then my brand theory has had a grinder taken to it. The point is, sometimes what you see is not exactly what you get.

This is typical of brakes. Typically the power of a bike is talked about more than the brakes but without brakes you won't be stopping too quickly and I had this firmly in my mind with a 900 mile round trip to Malin Head with Gary looming. I wanted my brakes to be in top condition for this so I took the front brakes apart to clean out the insides. Unlike in a car where most of the mechanical stuff, or magic stuff to some of you, is located under a bonnet and protected, most mechanical bits on a motorbike are outside and exposed. This is especially so on a "naked" style bike like my Suzuki Bandit 600. As such a lot of grime and road dirt can work itself into every nook and cranny and jam up components. My plan had been to clean out my brakes alone before the club would meet at 7:30pm in the workshop so I could take my bike out and make sure the space was clear for the project bike we are working on as a club.

As is so often the case with bikes though, things didn't quite go according to plan. I was being exacting, scrubbing callipers with brake cleaning spray and rags and then pressing the brake lever to equalise the brake and this was proving to be a long and torturous process. The fact that I was hungry didn't help matters either and soon I had given up, promising myself that things would work out after some food but knowing at this stage that there was no way the workshop would be clear for the project bike. From 7:30pm onwards the rest of the club began to make its way to the workshop and soon I had an audience and a few helpers. Martin, our mechanic, informed me that the brakes would equalise themselves upon reattachment to the bike, pointing out along the way that I had just wasted about an hour of my time on the futile task of trying to make two pistons slide out of the brake calliper equally by myself. Here was Nevin, the brake cleaning clown, on show for the rest of the club to now laugh at. I learnt a lesson though and the show rolled on, or so it seemed, but Nevin had one more lesson

to learn. Two nuts on another brake were proving severely stubborn and one of the guys saw my struggle (and heard it too as I was being quite flathulach with vulgarities at this stage) and informed me that I was turning the ratchet the wrong way. No way, I was convinced I was getting it to move, albeit very slowly. Further struggle ensued and a few more heads popped over to see the clown in action. “Righty tighty, left loosey” called Damien from the other side of the workshop. The ratchet in my hand had been going distinctly “righty” for some time now. The curtain came down when I finally gave in to peer pressure and turned it left so that I could get on with the job of cleaning this particular brake.

By now the audience had cleared up and I was in need of two strong cups of coffee but another lesson had been learned – listen to those around you and never take what you see at face value. Oh, and turn it left to loosen.

Nevin Power.