



# EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE WATOC CHALLENGE WINNER 2010

Words by Dan "The Dane" Christoffersen.

**John Curtis aka JC. A 46 year old Avionics Supervisor from Yeovil, Somerset, England.**

**John came second in last years challenge when he was narrowly beaten by Erik Hundsdahl with only 77km more. This year JC got revenge with more than 1500km. Riding 6945km (one way!!!) on his Daytona 675SE John won the 2010 WATOC Challenge. When I asked John why he wanted to win the challenge, the short answer was "It's a challenge"**

**Congratulations and well done. JC has bin riding bikes for years, but didn't start riding Triumph until 9 years ago when he got a Daytona 955i. "I did not start riding Triumphs until I thought that they were beginning to catch up**



**with the modern Japanese sports motorcycles. However after I got a Daytona 955i (a renamed T595 with a different ECU), I found the ergonomics were a little out. The angle of the handlebars was not conducive to distance riding, they were just at an unusual angle, and made the turning circle wider than I felt comfortable with. The footpegs although in a comfortable position, lacked grip, especially when it was raining. And I was well used to Kawasaki ZXR's and Suzuki GSXR's, and those motorcycles felt naturally comfortable! But I decided to persevere with Triumphs; after all they could not get any worse."**

**Over the years John has had different Triumph, trying almost all the sports bikes, he tells me that he's now happy to keep his 2 675 Daytona's. Before he got these he had: Daytona 955i, TT600, Speed Triple 955i, Daytona 600, Speed Triple 1050, Daytona 675, Daytona 675SE. (See John's experience with the bikes below). The 2 675's are still in warranty, so at the moment he only do minor maintenance like changing brake pads, chains and sprockets. "Once they are out of warranty I will do what scheduled maintenance that I can, leaving the electronic diagnostics, resets and valve adjustment to the Triumph dealer". The only problem with the bikes this year was cam chain tensioner issues. Leading to warranty work and the purchase of the SE model.**

**How did you made it possible to do so many km's? "At work, I can take leave as and when I want, within reason! And being single, and unattached, I do as I please".**

**Johns best memory from the 2010 Challenge was having 2 of his branch members (Somerset & Dorset) joining him for the German Sommertreffen.** “Once they meet other WATOC members at the Bonneville Celebrations last year, the seed was sown! However they managed to misplace their forms somehow”. **The worst memory being the 1247km long ride home from the Maribo Rally in September.** “I was still so tired from work, but I knew this was the trip that should achieve the year long goal”. **His best advice to anyone considering doing the WATOC challenge is that you shouldn't worry about going to a foreign rally for the first time.** “You'll get to know people there, and from then on at subsequent rallies. Even language will not be a barrier! As with most rallies, there will always be a nucleus of people you recognize, and that will be from various countries”.

**What's your plan for 2011, are you going to defend your title?** I don't intend to defend the title next year; however I will still be attending a few rallies, as always.

The **TT600** was the first Triumph that I attended a WATOC rally over in Europe, The Sommertreffen 2002. That was a light, agile bike that I used to commute 186 km round trip to work, every day for 15 months. That was reliable for the 50,000km that I owned it.

I got the **Speed Triple 955i** because I wanted an unfaired bike, my daily commute was now only 11 km away, and I did not want a faired bike. The front end always felt a little vague, even after I fitted Daytona 955i clip-on handlebars onto it. And the fat rear tyre (190/55ZR17) oversized for the rural country lanes of Dorset that I was exploring in those days.

I decided that I needed to go back to a sports bike, so I got a **Daytona 600**. I covered 50,000km on that, requiring the wheel bearings to be changed and the alternator to be replaced. This was the first bike that I used to get to the Britannia rally in Rodkaersbro, Denmark, covering 1474 km to get there. The handlebars although being clip-ons, were above the top yoke as standard and were comfortable all the way there, unlike the seat. The seat was comfortable for 1100 km only. I returned to Denmark the following year. The bike was fairly reliable, and the best 4-cylinder sports bike that Triumph made. Being previously used to Jap sports bikes, I preferred the 4-cylinder engine howl.

I went for the **Speed Triple 1050** because I wanted a little more performance, but also thought that maybe I should get away from sports bikes and something a bit more comfortable for my neck! I had tried sitting on a Daytona 675 and that it was a little to radical a position! At work I occasionally get lower back pain, helicopters are not ergonomically designed for maintenance! Sitting upright on this bike while hitting lumps and bumps on the road, it would jolt my lower back, causing some agony. Once I fitted LSL clip-on handlebars, this issue was solved. However the camchain tensioner decided to let the camchain have a go at eating through the engine casing and letting the exhaust camshaft advance an unhealthy 90 degrees. While this was fixed under warranty, it did take 14 weeks to get sorted, and for 8 weeks I was pedalling to work and TOMCC (S&D) branch meetings. Once repaired, I never fully trusted it, so sold it on.

However as content as I was at getting fit again cycling, it was summer and I was missing the rally season. I knew the local Triumph dealer had a few Honda CBR600RR's in stock, so I paid them a visit, and had a sit on the Daytona 675. The ergonomics felt just like my mountain bike that I was currently forced to use. So I bought the **Daytona 675** there and then. The first WATOC rally was once again to the Sommertreffen, and this time my shoulder was aching so much, that by adjusting my arm, my wrist started aching. Once I fitted Helibars (less radical clip-ons), it made it made a big difference, and I never got the shoulder ache again. I even travelled back across to Rodkaersbro with only minor irritation. Just like the Speed Triple 1050, both around 23,00km, the camchain tensioner issue surfaced with the same catastrophic consequences! This time it was sorted under warranty in 8 weeks.

Before the 8 weeks was up, I decided to visit the same Triumph dealer to view their selection of Honda CBR600RR's. That day, the 2009 **Daytona 675 SE** first appeared in that dealers. Well...I bought that. Now I aim to keep the two Daytona 675's, just in case one goes unserviceable, just like the older Daytona 675 has done this winter with the regulator/rectifier!

As for the best Triumph I have owned that would be my brace of Daytona 675's, although I have preferred all the 600's against the heavyweights. The Daytona 675 is light, agile, good acceleration and frugal. Once your bike is loaded up with luggage, I would be travelling at the same speed on any of these Triumphs, so ultimate speed is not an issue.