



Road to recovery

When life is tough, biking can be the silver lining that helps you get through it all.

When Samantha Brooman married her childhood sweetheart, Mike, the closest she thought she'd get to riding a motorcycle was to be a pillion on the occasional ride. What she had in mind was raising a family.

But life had other ideas. Becoming a mum had always been the plan, but that was not to be. After fertility treatments, setbacks and much heartbreak, Samantha and Mike had to accept the fact that they would be a family of two.

With Mike being a biker, and to have something fun to concentrate on for a change, the pair headed off to the ABR Festival in 2022, and that's where Samantha's biking plans changed.

She loved the festival, she loved the bikes and she decided that she'd had enough of being a pillion – it was time to get her own licence and her own bike.

After the festival she put the plan into action. A bike from eBay (a 125 that had seen better days) and a CBT from a local trainer were the first steps. The journey to becoming a biker had properly begun.

As any budding biker knows only too well, a CBT is great when you first get it, but you soon start to hanker after bigger bikes. Samantha was not interested in an A2 licence that restricts your choice of bikes, so she went straight for the full licence to have the option to ride whatever she fancied. The wheels were, quite literally, in motion.



Things went well, and after just two attempts at both Mod 1 and Mod 2, Samantha rocked up at

the ABR Festival 2023 on Friday, June 23, straight after passing her test, with a brand new full licence



in her pocket and a huge smile on her face.

At her second ABR Festival, and now able to ride bikes herself, Samantha took the opportunity to go trail riding with Phoenix Trails (www.phoenixtrails.co.uk), which was offering free trail riding training and trail rideouts at the festival. With expert training from the Phoenix coaches and the beginner-friendly Fantic 125 trail bikes, the experience got Samantha hooked on this type of riding. She'd only had her licence two days by this point, but her experience at the festival convinced her that riding bikes was what she wanted to do.

Back from the festival and off the dirt, Samantha was

determined to keep pushing the envelope with her riding. She bought a red Kawasaki Z650 – the same model that she'd done her bike test on – and named it Connie, which would have been their daughter's name.

In October 2023 Samantha and Mike joined their biking friends and rode across Europe on their bikes. Still new to riding, she ended up doing more miles across Europe, on the wrong side of the road with Connie, than she'd done in the UK up to that point.

It's fair to say she had certainly caught the biking bug. Granted, there were tough moments on the Europe trip, but she also found that her skills improved every day, while she was also having the best time. She loved the trip, and came home wanting to learn more.

After their Europe trip Samantha and Mike bought a Honda CRF250 for trail riding, and they have since been learning the skills of dirt riding together. In addition to hitting the green lanes local to them, they also wanted some more trail coaching. Following their great experience with Phoenix Trails at the ABR Festival, they signed up for a full-day's training on Salisbury Plain. With the



combination of riding their local lanes and the coaching from Phoenix Trails, Samantha and Mike were hitting the trails with not just a lot of enthusiasm, but constantly developing skills, too. Riding bikes on and off road seemed to be the way to go.

But again, life had other ideas. In March 2024, Samantha was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of breast cancer, which changed their plans once again.

Treatments started, and by the ABR Festival 2024 Samantha was halfway through her chemotherapy, but still full of hope to realise what she had set out to achieve back in 2022: Sure, she had already gained her licence, got herself a bike and started on her riding adventures, but the more she did, the more she realised there was still to do.

Against the odds, and full of determination, Samantha made her way to the festival, and not only enjoyed the festival vibe, but took her own bike, 'Rhonda the Honda', round the Bridgestone Adventure Trail. This was no mean feat. Samantha's verdict was that: "It was amazing. I've never felt more proud of myself. I realised at that moment, riding the trail on my own bike, just one year after gaining my licence – and with the added bonus of cancer – that I'm far stronger and more resilient than I ever give myself credit for."

The good news at the end of a long journey, full of highs and lows, is that although the treatment is not all over yet, Samantha has beaten cancer. She is now officially cancer-free.

The timelines of Samantha's desire to ride and her cancer journey are closely interlinked: "I've taken Connie to every blood test. I've ridden her throughout my treatment. I've gone to

various places with her and Mike. I'd say that being on the bike and being at the ABR Festival gave me the fight when chemo and cancer had stolen it all."

So, what's next for her? Well, with the health worries easing, there's more time for biking. That means plenty of riding and the temptation of new bikes – the latest addition to the dirt fleet is an AJP PR7, so things are getting tastier there.

It also means more exciting new challenges, such as making 2025 the year to head over to Portugal for some proper off-roading adventures with the same group that did the original Europe trip. And if Samantha continues her biking journey with the same bravery and determination as before, who knows what might come along after that? We can't wait to see.



Fight cancer

You can help fight cancer by donating through Samantha's fundraising page for Breast Cancer Now: www.justgiving.com/page/louisefieldhalfmarathon13oct

Phoenix Trails

Phoenix Motorcycle Training offers trail riding training from absolute beginner to expert level at venues across the country; Salisbury Plain, the Peak District, Kent and West Pennines. It is also the headline sponsor of the training zone at the ABR Festival. Tel: 0330 223 4000 Web: phoenixtrails.co.uk