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EVENT: Royal Enfield and Top To Tip

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Despite what some might think working on a magazine isn't all glitz, glamour and press events with free booze. Except that, occasionally, it is. Sort of. A few weeks ago Back Street Heroes was invited to the launch of the new flagship Royal Enfield shop in trendy East London. "Cocktails and canapés will be served", the invite said. Motorbikes and alcohol? We're so there.

The opening of this Enfield-dedicated shop was by no means a random occurrence though. The timing had been chosen to coincide with the anniversary of an epic motorcycling event – the Top To Tip ride. Fifty years ago in the swinging Sixties, five men (including famous racers John Cooper and Geoff Duke) set out one freezing October

morning to ride from John O'Groats to Land's End. Completing the arduous 952 mile journey, they clocked up over 22 hours of riding. Before setting off, one of the riders, Brian Crow, dipped his rear tyre into the ice cold sea water – an act repeated by the relay riders on the anniversary event this year.



The inaugural ride back in 1964 was designed to mark the launch of Royal Enfield's 1965 Continental GT model. The GT, with its red fibreglass tank and clip-on bars, was their response to the rocketing popularity of Japanese and Italian lightweight machines. Costing the average bloke £270 to own – a hefty price tag for the time – the machine had some hard selling to do, hence the publicity stunt. At the end of the journey John Cooper ran the Continental round Silverstone race track, breaking records with one 73mph lap. This was a big coup for Enfield, who could then confidently claim they had produced the fastest 250 on the market.

This year the mammoth Top To Tip anniversary run was undertaken by a relay team on the new and improved Continental GT, which was released towards the tail end of last year. The team of riders managed to finish in just under 21 hours and were raising money for Riders For Health along the way. Back Street Heroes got involved too, as editor Nik joined the riders for a stretch of the trip (more than earning his free sausage roll at the opening).



The new shop in Poyser Street, East London, is one of a kind. The only shop owned by and exclusively for Royal Enfield it stocks not only their entire range of production machines but also helmets, jackets and other Enfield related apparel. There is also a fully equipped workshop on site, complete with skilled technicians and spare parts supply. The shop is an interesting place in itself with quirky motorbike-related touches (the 'chandelier' made from Enfield headlamps for example).

The canapés weren't too bad either.

You can get details about the [Royal Enfield shop here](#)