and I was the only scooter taking part. My classmates included 2 Ducatis from the UK and a superb Pannonia motorcycle and sidecar with Texas plates.

The event started in Bologna and made its way up to Treviso, an inland town not far from Venice. Each day's stage was around 300km and contained several stops with special 'agility' tests that involved negotiating tight routes marked out with traffic cones in a set length of time, usually in the main square of some town or village to provide entertainment for the locals. These tests are timed to hundredths of a second and are the real deciding factor on who wins the event overall.

It wasn't too hard to navigate the road sections, as there is a printed route book and most turns are clearly marked, and the set average speed is low enough that you rarely have to ride flat out. I was happy with how the bike performed on the first day, and that evening all I had to do was take up a bit of slack in the new control cables. Some of the classic bikes from the '50s and '60s had much more serious problems – in one case someone was replacing his complete engine in the hotel parking lot!

Day two took us through flat countryside from Treviso to Udine and Oderzo, before returning us to Treviso. The finish was set up in the city's Cathedral Square and came complete with open-air disco, local nibbles, and wine-tasting, after which we were escorted en masse back to our hotel by the squad of Polizia Stradale motorcyclists who blocked traffic for us and sometimes led us at high speeds on the wrong side of the road!

On day three, we headed into Prosecco and Grappa country, in the foothills of the Dolomite mountains. Again the bike performed well, and the low ratio gearbox was great as the roads got steeper and the hairpins tighter. I was able to overtake many of the 250cc bikes going up the mountains. The downside of the low ratios was a top speed of only around 100 kph (60 mph). The route took us over some hairy 2,000 meter mountain passes where there was still quite a bit of snow. There were countless hairpin bends to negotiate before we stopped again at the foot of the mountains.

On day four, we started our journey back to Bologna around the laguna of Venice and the delta of the river Po. After a bit of early morning rain and some very busy roads full of trucks, we were back in the flat coastal countryside. My only drama was almost running out of gas with no gas stations to be found. This was the second downside of the low gearing, around 100 km to the tankful. A couple of my teammates stayed with me in case I finally ran dry, but with the rust visible at the bottom of the tank, I finally reached a working gas station!

The last day dawned bright and sunny. Our route took us to the Mugello race track near Florence, where we had our own mini track day: 6 laps of the famous Ferrari Grand Prix track. The test was to set a time for the first lap, and then repeat that time as closely as possible for 3 more laps, followed by a cool down lap. The reality was, of course, everyone went balls-out. It's not every day you get to ride a great track like that. To get to the track, we rode the famous Paso di Futa, probably one of the most famous motorcycling roads in the world. It's where Ducati road tests its bikes. The road was crammed with all kinds of exotic sportbikes and sports cars all out for a Sunday morning blast. After the track session, we did it all over again in the other direction!

In the evening, the whole group cleaned themselves up and we were bussed into Bologna for the awards dinner at a very classy palazzo. Of course, the Italians scooped most of the awards – the overall winner got a brand new Alfa Romeo! At least I managed to get second place in the Touring SuperSport class, which made me happy!

Well, the next day the guys from Rimini Lambretta Centre came to collect the bike, and accompanying them was Martin 'Sticky' Round, who came to interview me for a piece in Scootering.

The bike is now back at Rimini Lambretta, waiting for me to pick it up for the 2010 Motogiro. The lads have cleaned it up like new and taken it to a few shows in Italy. This year I will be doing a second Motogiro d'Italia event as well, this one organized by the Motoclub Terni, so I will probably need an ass transplant by the time the 3,500 km of the two events are complete!

The 'new' Motogiro d'Italia – Tenth anniversary of the revival is this year: www.motogiroditalia.com