



WHAM! NEWS

October 2010



**WHAM!'s Brilliant Slow Riding Day at Throckmorton
on Saturday 18 September.**

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www.wham-motorcycling.org

Worcester and Hereford Advanced Motorcyclists.

Affiliated to the Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists. Group No. 3260

Contact the Editor: Newsletter@wham-motorcycling.org

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Chairman's Notes

I'm back and suddenly it is heading into winter! I survived a fantastic but really rather hard physical trip through the Himalayas and am delighted to be back on roads and with traffic that mostly conforms to our "reasonable expectation" norms. More about the Himalayan trip on later pages.

My GS has just been serviced, I can proudly say it's a year old now so no more quips about my new bikes and hot dinners - OK we won't talk about the other one! As well as the routine the GS had as a recall item a replacement set of sprockets and a new chain (apparently chocolate used for the first one) and then the workshop discovered that the steering head bearings were worn, apparently no grease applied when it was built. BMW keep telling me they are improving quality control but my experience remains that there is still a way to go. Tony keeps whispering that Japanese bikes don't have these problems, maybe he's just stirring, maybe he's right... now what's that new Honda called?

WHAM remains strong with more than 100 members and a very healthy number of Observers and Associates. This is particularly pleasing for your Committee as other Groups locally are struggling to keep the numbers up.

Safe riding,

Derek

Bits and Pieces

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

A very warm welcome to **ROGER DAVIES** and **RICHARD FOXALL** from Droitwich and **DEL BRITTEN** from Hereford.

WHAM'S CHRISTMAS DINNER!!

Our annual WHAM! Christmas dinner will be held at the Falcon Hotel on Friday 10 December. The meal will cost £16.95 - see page 10 for the choice of menus. There are also a few rooms available for those who would like to really give their wives/girlfriends/partners a treat!

Please contact [Barb, our WHAM! Secretary](#), to book your place.

CONGRATULATIONS

Many congratulations to the following members who have successfully passed their Advanced Motorcycling Test .

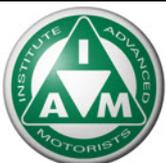
Dillon Muir Observer: Ant Clerici

Dave Sweetman Observer: Guy Butcher

Early Notification of WHAM!'s AGM

Please note that, in response to popular demand, our AGM will be held on Friday (as opposed to a Wednesday) 28 January 2011. There will be more details in following newsletters. However, there is a possibility that we will need a new Membership Secretary; if you are interested, please contact

[Barb](#).



September Natter Night with Jon Taylor

WHAM along with members from Redditch and Coventry and Warwickshire Groups filled the ballroom to hear **Jon Taylor**, IAM's Southern Area Staff Examiner. But first other important business: Andrew Wibmer and Brian Morgan received their Observer Certificates and we were all reminded about our Xmas meal on 10 December 2010 (see the website).



Andrew Wibmer and Brian Morgan receiving their group qualified observer certificates from Jon Taylor

Jon began bravely by admitting he began his riding at 16 on a scooter and survived on 2 wheels with no training until joining the Police 9 years later. The aim there was to ride with "invisibility of action". He became an IAM examiner in 1982 and 2 years later began to race. He recalled his first competition at Brands Hatch where he found his road riding experience gave him an advantage on the wet track. He raced LC250 and then RG500's and by 1987 had won the British 600 production and 500 open classes; and held the lap record at Brands.



Nurburgring.

As an instructor at the Nurburgring, Jon gave a fascinating insight into this unique circuit, from its construction in the 1920's to negotiating the 'carousel', Nurburgring taxis and a warning that the Germans will bill you for everything if you are unfortunate enough to come off: track down time (by the minute), air ambulance, bike recovery and even repairing any Armco! He advised it was better to go on a 'bikes only' organised day!

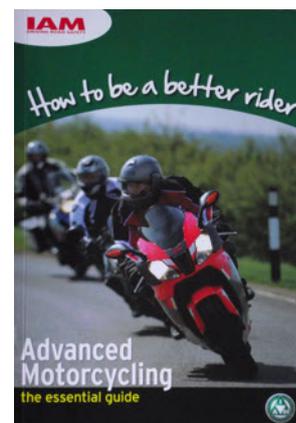
How to be a better rider

Jon ran through how the book was written, showed some of the photographs that didn't make the final version then highlighted the main points where the bike book differs from the car version:

- limit point,
- filtering and
- counter-steering (push right to go right, push left to go left)

He explained how the confusion about which foot to put down – left? or right? (*he never mentioned "both"!*) – because, from the Police point of view, riders needed to avoid scuffing their partners shoes so they gravitated to left foot down (or right foot down) depending upon which force! (*Ed - Was that a wind up?*) He showed the illustrations for riding position (you on the bike) elbows below your hands, push the bars perpendicular to the forks; bike position (when behind traffic) "face the space". Then a discussion about overtaking: 2-stage (no hazard apart from the vehicle to be overtaken) and 3-stage overtaking (as in the book) and finally "lifesavers". Here Jon succinctly explained we should simply check blind spots when you need to.

A brilliant talk!



Ant Clerici



Another Brilliant Slow Riding Day - with thanks to Den Osborne

We had another brilliant Slow Riding Day at Throckmorton airfield organised by Den Osborne on 18 September. A special thanks also to Roger Brooks for helping Den on “the early morning shift”, to Barb Dalloway for looking after the early morning refreshments, and to Ali Davis for the refreshments throughout the rest of the day. Many other people also helped - thanks to you all.



Barb Dalloway, our hard working Secretary, doing the early shift in the refreshments tent.



Rebecca Purt smiling - we think!



Congratulations to Roger Brooks and Craig Endicott who both made it through to the last 50 in the IAM “Best New Rider” Yamaha competition.



IAM Pass Certificates presented by our Vic-Chairman, Brian Morgan to Craig Endicott (far left) and Colin Brown (near left). Well done to both.



Ali Davis taking a chance to relax during the “second shift” in the refreshments tent - she’s smiling here but wasn’t when later in the day she had to hang onto the tent to stop it from blowing away. The “cavalry” arrived to help as seen on the right!





We had some keenly contested heats before the semi final and the final of the "Slow Riding Race!" .



Roger Brooks - Winner for the second time this year of the Slow Riding Cup.

The winners were presented with their fantastic prizes by our Chairman; Derek McMullan.



Colin Brown - a worthy runner-up.



Brrrrrrrrr.....*Ant Clerici*

All of a sudden it's turning **C O L D** and a time when some bikers decide to hibernate their pride and joy....because.....???? Well, I'm not sure; I've never done this, although I can see the merits of avoiding the **salt** corrosion and additional **weather** related hazards. But I feel they are missing out.

I've bought myself a can of ACF50 to protect the bike – this is new to me so I'll have to see if it works. But riding in **winter**? The fun has already started; I've zipped in thermal linings, dug out winter gloves and ridden with heated grips on. I've rediscovered that my older boots are NOT waterproof and that night riding becomes inevitable as the evenings draw in. The farmers are harvesting and once out of town there are numerous stretches of road covered in mud, some with warning signs but sadly most without. Riding towards a low sun is tricky especially if your visor is scratched. The leaves have begun to fall.....

So what should I be doing now that's different to the summer heat? Here are a few things that are on my agenda....

**Check the weather forecast**

True in summer too, but in winter look for the **sub-zero temperatures**, the rain/hail/snow and winds...I guess that's the whole forecast.

What to wear

Dress for the forecast, take spare gloves and wear that hi-viz. Some riders don't consider it's 'cool' but you know it makes sense. Cars with misted windows....you've all seen it...

Your bike

All the obvious stuff you know about. Don't let tread depth go too close to the legal minimum.

Plan your journey

First, if the conditions are bad or are forecast to be bad then DON'T GO

Then, if you are venturing out, make sure you start off warm and don't get too **cold** because **cold** makes riding miserable, it takes over your thoughts so you lose concentration. Often getting wet leads to getting **cold** too. Plan to stop; have a hot drink in a warm place and (**hot tip**) use the non-Dyson hand driers to blast hot air up the sleeves of your jacket!

Take a mobile phone.

Why put yourself through this.....?

Riding in winter can be as exhilarating as at any other time of the year. It tests your skills and can be as wonderful as during the summer. Some might say even better because there are less day trippers, the "sports riders" are all at home on the internet and virtually every caravan is on blocks with the grass growing up under its wheels.

Don't forget WHAM! winter rideouts start at 0930 once the clocks go back.

Natter Night - Falcon Hotel - Wednesday 27 October.

Ant Clerici will continue the informal discussion on Group Riding that we started in August. We look forward to seeing you there!

Will Hopkins has arranged a 10% discount for wham! members buying their helmets from Just Helmets - the new helmet specific site from the Sound Distribution team. Simply enter the code 'WHAM' at the shopping basket and all orders will be discounted by 10%. This represents great value for money as some helmets are already discounted and you get free P & P and a free helmet bag and neck warmers on all orders over £100. Visit <http://www.justhelmets.co.uk/> . **Thank you, Will.**

BREAKING NEWS. Well done to Roger Brooks who has now made it to the last 5 in the IAM competition for the best new IAM Rider. Commiserations to Craig Endicott who now cannot win the Yamaha R1 but he did brilliantly getting to the last 50. Now all our best wishes to Roger in the final shootout!! (An assessed ride with one of the IAM Staff Examiners!)



Himalayas – August/September 2010 Episode 1*Derek McMullan*

It's billed as "The Adventure in the Sky". On a Royal Enfield Bullet - all 346cc of it, producing a blistering 18hp - I did wonder whether "The Adventure on the Runway" might be a more appropriate title. Preconceptions probably are best in the coconut-shy of life and my view of the Enfield's suitability for the trip was dealt with in time! By way of revenge on my condescending views the Enfield would deal out a range of riding challenges to the modern motorcyclist:

- I'm old enough to remember a kickstart, a decompressor, a choke and a carburettor but I've never had to manage all of these in the wildly variable climate and altitudes of the Himalayas.
- The drum brakes pass only superficial resemblance to what we regard as brakes on a modern bike: one handle bar lever and one foot pedal – albeit the pedal on the wrong side! The simple test of trying the brakes confirms that there is absolutely no similarity in performance.
- The gears are shifted by a foot pedal too but you'll realise that if the footbrake is on the wrong side so too are the gears. Not content with that complication the gear pattern is also reversed (one-up; three-down). The gearbox also had an endearing quality of presenting an ill-defined number of neutrals; the impish nature of the machine was to ensure that one of these was always selected when the rider least wanted it!



My trip was organised by Enduro Himalaya, a specialist motorcycle adventure company. I and 19 other "punters" were supported by what seemed to be a cast of thousands: motorcycle-mounted guides, paramedics and mechanics as well as a fully equipped 4x4 ambulance and a mobile spares and repairs "garage" in a heavy truck. Most of the Group were British with an international dimension added by a German, a couple of South Africans, a Swede and a Kiwi.

We were told that the legal requirement in India is for the motorcycle to have a horn – that's all – no requirement for brakes, lights, etc., just a horn. On this equipment the Enfield won some respect, in contrast with just about every modern machine the horn was loud! ...and with the Indian traffic that turned out to be just as well.

Transfer to Shimla

After the International flight to Delhi and an internal flight to Chandigarh we started the most electrifying 4 hour trip up the Himalayan edge in 4x4s in the dark. The Indian drivers have a fatalistic view of life which is ostentatiously displayed in their driving. If the appointed day for their departure from this life arrives then it will happen. There is nothing for them to do but accept that: they all do so and in the interim drive "with panache". Panache means getting the overtake in the most impossible circumstances; any driver who does not is clearly not a real man. Countless times on that four hour transfer we passengers were cringing against the inevitable impact as we hurtled into totally blind left- or right-handers on a road busy with heavy trucks (it is the trunk-road route to Leh). The only concession to mortality was the endlessly used horn, the more risky the overtake the more heavily the horn was used. Well, having survived that, I looked forward to a good night's rest and the introduction to the Enfield in the morning.

Familiarisation Day

The view that greeted me in the morning from my room balcony was simply stunning:



After a respectably late breakfast we were introduced to the Enfields at 10am and advised we were on a 50 km familiarisation ride across various types of terrain. The Enduro team showed us over the bikes emphasising the differences from a modern bike and the norms of Indian traffic. The British legacy in India is everywhere and that is evident on the roads in that they drive on the left – mostly!

The driving norms were “interesting” and vital to know before venturing out. The indicators are used not so much for turning but often to invite the overtaking traffic to one side of the vehicle to be overtaken. So left side or right side overtakes are “invited”!

Many trucks and cars drive with the external rear-view mirrors folded flat (high traffic density and narrow mountain roads). This was my first conscious thought of “The System” and I resolved to make absolutely sure I knew there was space, visibility, and particularly, no possible junction or turn-in before committing to overtaking – and the horn advertised my presence to the folded mirror brigade.

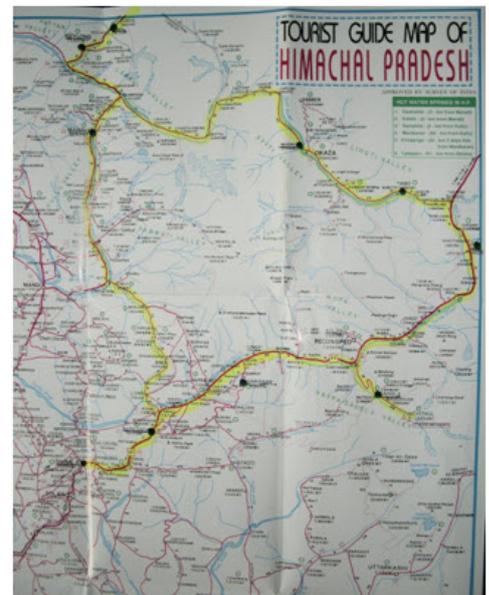
Out on the road this was a comic day; we all discovered the reality of the reversed bike controls! With alternate locked rear wheels and clunky up-changes (when we really wanted to brake) we faltered out of Shimla to the amusement of the local people and the orchestral accompaniment of a thousand vehicle horns. Re-grouping on the edge of town we quickly realised there was a wide range of riding confidence or risk tolerance in what are extraordinarily different circumstances from what most of us normally experience. The Enduro team have done this before and set up frequent roadside stops for “Chai” so that we could re-group, take a break and some welcome refreshment. I don’t normally drink tea but the Chai was good being boiled (so safe) and usually spiced with something exotic like Cardamom, Ginger or Cinnamon.

After our stop we were pleased to move off the highway and get onto some mountain tracks. That’s when the fun started! It was wet, rutted and muddy alternating with loose shale or glassy rock slabs; different, but the two common things were gradient and lack of grip – well it is the Himalayas! The worst was saved for the descent back to the highway when we encountered a delightful slurry of thin mud and diesel; absolutely no grip if we so much as touched the apologetic brakes. Thank goodness for the engine braking of an old-fashioned single. These tracks had less traffic but still many people most of whom seemed to be very pleased to see us: one man insisted on stopping each motorcycle and shaking the rider’s hand with a booming “Welcome to India”.

The Roads

Our tour was all contained within Himachal Pradesh, a northern state of India at the Western end of the Himalayan mountain range. Himachal Pradesh translates as “Region of Snowy mountains” so that sets the scene! Himachal Pradesh covers some 21,500 square miles; that’s about 40% of the English land area. In this region of snowy mountains the major roads follow the river valleys and so our tour made its way through 4 major river valleys: the Sutlej, the Spiti, the Chandra and the Beas .

This region of India is close to China, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan and India are in a constant state of tension. China invaded Tibet and parts of India in 1968 and to this day keep military forces in disputed territories. The Indian military are everywhere in this area and supported by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), a quasi-military Engineer Corps with the specific task of maintaining the road network in some of the most difficult mountains in the world. Even the Indians say the BRO is so efficient they can’t possibly be Indians!



The BRO are essential to keeping the roads open; heavy rain or glacier-melt in the summer cause large water volumes to cascade down steep mountains and inevitably the dirt-track roads give way – sometimes nothing a bulldozer can't sort within a couple of hours, sometimes it's several bulldozers and several days!

The Trip Starts

Our route initially struck North-East towards the Chinese (Tibetan) border on the rather grandly named National Route 22. I say grandly named having ridden the road, even road is stretching a point on NR22, track might be appropriate in places, and for other parts bomb-crater or landslide would be appropriate.!

The day we left we were pleased to start out in the dry; our problem was in getting through the early-morning gridlock traffic. Our huge luxury hotel was buried down a very narrow lane which was either the town rat-run or maybe the primary route had been closed. Whatever the reason the entire world was on that narrow track that day. We filtered as far as possible but soon became stuck where two opposing 4x4s were attempting to pass each other. Despite the complete jam all the traffic was honking the horn to advertise their presence and intention to pass anyone/everyone.

After what seemed an age the 4x4s gave up the struggle and made enough room for us to paddle the Enfields through the gap and so we were off at last. Turning on to a major road we had enough space to ride but the opposing traffic was jammed solid heading for the mess we had just cleared. Interesting filtering! Wall-to-wall 4x4s, box-vans and heavy trucks provided good cover for Taliban pedestrians, holy cows (yes they are!) and my special treat – a mapcap Indian motorcyclist. The Indians largely believe in Karma. On the road this approximates to “if my number is up I'm going to die so it doesn't matter what I do”. Practically this translates into an approach which includes flying around blind corners on the wrong side of the road and making outrageous overtakes which only succeed because of the intervention of the Gods! I faced the long line of trucks and chugged up the incline with my finger machine-gunning the horn, scattering pedestrians and stopping occasionally for holy cows. Just after one herd had laid a fresh carpet of organic matter for me I set off through the stench and a motorcycle shot out at right-angles presenting a full broadside target for me! He had been filtering on the inside of the trucks and suddenly decided he'd be better on the outside. No attempt at looking to see if the coast was clear, no gentle easing of the front wheel into the roadway, just full on presentation to the freely flowing traffic - and I was literally **on** the shit! I slithered to a halt and when the shock subsided I had to laugh; my front wheel had plastered the smelly stuff over his lower leg, that and the slippery surface conspired to provide just enough shock to him to lose balance and fall into the road. When he got up his immaculate business suit was completely caked! Karma at least ensured a penalty that day.

We were fortunate in starting out in the dry but you may remember that Pakistan in particular had really bad floods and in the Himalayan foothills it was very wet too. After re-grouping for fuel the rain started and became progressively heavier until “stair-rods” became an appropriate metaphor. We had intended to take a detour through a side valley off the main road but it became too dangerous to attempt that narrow track in the rain and lowering cloud so the day became a “character building” exercise dodging trucks, potholes and holy cows to reach our hotel. On the final approach to Sarahan, our overnight stop, the rain let up and we had the opportunity for a few photos of the valley.

...and that was the first day.



Worcester & Hereford Advanced Motorcyclists

2010 Christmas Party Menu

To Start

Creamy parsnip and onion soup with croutons.
Melon with marinated pineapple and a damson compote.
Warm chicken, crispy bacon and walnut salad.

Main Course

Roast Turkey with tarragon stuffing and cranberry sauce.
Roast Pork with orange and lemon stuffing and apple sauce.
Wensleydale cheese tartlet with ratatouille.
(All served with new potatoes and seasonal vegetables).

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Dessert

Homemade Christmas pudding with brandy sauce.
Apple and cherry strudel with a vanilla cream sauce.
Selection of cheeses with biscuits, celery and grapes.

Coffee and petit fours

