



WHAM! NEWS

July 2009

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www.wham-motorcycling.org
Worcester and Hereford Advanced Motorcyclists.
Affiliated to the Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists. Group No. 3260
mail@wham-motorcycling.org

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Introduction

Welcome to the July 2009 edition of WHAM!NEWS.

Summer is here, nothing to shout about again this year but at least it's not cold.

Test passes are coming in thick and fast now, we are reaping the benefits of our recruitment days earlier in the year and the Observer team is keeping busy. Well done to all those who have passed their test and to our newly qualified Observers.

Please note that, following a few incidents on our Sunday rides, the committee has decided to change the ride-out policy (see below).

Regards & safe riding,

Tony.

Sunday Ride Policy change

The Sunday Ride structure, from 2 August, will change so that the first Sunday of each month remains a ride open to all (full members, associates and prospective members). Full members will continue to form riding groups for a "free-ride". Associates and prospective members will undertake a pre-arranged observed ride: in the case of associates, preferably accompanied by their own observer (or a substitute who has previously agreed to cover the ride).

Prospective new members: either come along on the first Sunday of the month or contact our Membership Secretary to arrange another date.

The remaining Sundays of each month (usually 3 but sometimes 4) are open to full members and only those associates who have pre-arranged an observed ride with their assigned observer (or nominated substitute). All riders engaged on an observed run will either choose a different route or maintain time separation from full members' riding groups.

NB: it is the associate's responsibility to arrange all Sunday morning observed rides with his/her assigned Observer. Associates or prospective members will not take part in a "free-ride".

All Observers are encouraged to continually monitor the riding standards of other riders, and if it comes to their attention that poor standards are being displayed the Observer should take it upon him/herself to have a discreet word with the rider concerned (or raise it with a Committee member).

Successes

As predicted last month, we have more successes to announce this issue as a result of all the hard work put in by our Observer team:

Group qualified Observer passes:

Phil George - Observer pass trained by Eric Reynolds.

Guy Butcher - Observer pass trained by John Hodges & Steve Edwards.

Tim Wynn - Observer pass trained by John Hodges & Steve Edwards.



Tim Wynne accepts his Certificate from Tim Hutt

Advanced Test passes:

Dean Cardey - Observer: Tim Hutt

Adrian Wynne - Observer: Tim Hutt

Jonathan Telford - Observer: James Dickson

Nigel Stinton - Observer: Derek McMullan

Simon King - Observer: John Hodges

Martyn Newman - Observer: Steve Edwards (Martyn is also our reigning Slow Riding & Bike "Wimbledon" Champ).



Nigel Stinton



Jonathan Telford





Martyn Newman



Dean Cardey

Congratulations to all concerned, WHAM!'s success depends on growing our Associate numbers and Observers and this proves that the group is working

Chairman's note..

Things are certainly "hot" for WHAM at the moment. We have had excellent success in the early part of the year with the Hereford and Worcester Rider Skills Days, fortunately we have a number of members who have been in Observer training and now have the Observers to cope with the influx of Associates – though



we're all busy!

Some of us have just returned from the Pyrenees where we had a taste of the current UK temperatures as well as some terrific motorcycling and great company on the trip; more of that elsewhere in the Newsletter.

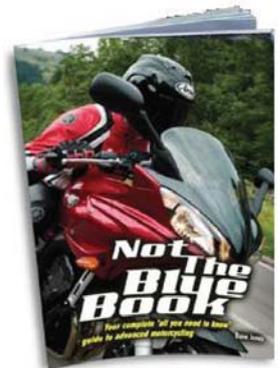
My best laid plan of having a single bike has been fulfilled – albeit not quite as I'd intended! As well as the K1300 I've bought a 650 BMW X Moto, totally different from the 1300, this is a single cylinder machine in the Supermoto style. It is remarkably able given that I have only 50% of the capacity and 25% of the cylinders of the 1300. The secret is in the weight – or lack of it! Fully fuelled it is less than 160 Kg. It reminds me of a nice old Velocette I had years ago but in this case older is definitely not better; this one's oil-tight, sips fuel, handles exceptionally well and has decent brakes. What a shame I can't get to the Slow Handling Day!



Derek's new BMW - using this for the slow handling day would have been classed as cheating in my book!

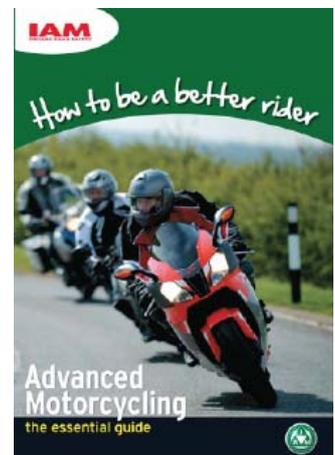
Date for your diaries

WHAM! have invited Dave Jones, author of "Not the Blue Book" to speak for us on our September Natter night at the Falcon, Bromyard. Dave has been a lifetime motorcycle cop with experience on diplomatic and royal escort duties. In addition to his own books Dave was a co-author in the production of Motorcycle Roadcraft. The event takes place on Wednesday 30th September, 7:30 for 8:00 pm



IAM Rider guide revamped

Talking of books, the IAM released their latest Motorcycling guide at Mallory Park on the 14th of July. The new book replaces the old Advanced Motorcycling book and will be issued to Group Observers and new Associates. It is also available at 50% discount to current Associates. The new book is a vast improvement on the old one with information and content that is more relevant to modern motorcycling. It's a good sign that show that the IAM are responding to member feedback and moving with the times.



Chief Observer's Column..

Food for thought – follow-up

If you recall I posed a scenario to you last issue, one in which you are confronted with a solid white line in the centre of the road and stationary traffic due to temporary traffic lights. The conundrum was whether it was legal to cross the white line in order to progress to the front of the queue, and I'd asked for comments to be sent to the Editor to see what the consensus was. Unfortunately responses were not forthcoming, ie we didn't get any at all! Ah well, never mind.



I can tell you that there is, in fact, no definitive answer to this. The Institute of Advanced Motorists magazine "Advanced Driving" covered this very subject a few years ago and they have stated that the Guild of Experienced Motorists view is that if you cross the line you are "...almost certainly breaking the law...". However, it accepts that until a "...test case with a definitive judgement..." occurs the interpretation of Highway Code Rule 129 will continue to lead to confusion. Presumably this is basically saying that no-one has yet challenged a conviction for this (or ever received one?) and until someone does the confusion will remain. The uncertainty of it surrounds the use of the word "necessary" in the rule definition, so the question would be asked 'was it necessary for you to cross the line to filter', or just convenient for you? What about a car doing the same thing, as the rule covers both cars and motorcycles of course? Is it ok for one and not the other?

I'm sure we all have differing views on this and I know both serving and retired Police Officers who would give you different answers. So, be careful out there!

Tim Hutt



The IAM National Motorcycle Conference – Brilliant!!!! (Really)..

2009 IAM Conference notes by John Hodges.

On Saturday 4th July Derek and I had a brisk morning ride across to Warwick University where we were attending the IAM National M/C Conference.

We arrived in good time and enjoyed meeting many old friends and acquaintances before getting down to the serious business of the conference itself.

The first change was that, instead of just sitting at tables with all your own group or old friends, we were directed to specific tables where we were sitting with strangers – all of who were from different groups. Although initially I was a bit dismayed (half the fun in the past was reminiscing with old friends) this new system proved to be so much better and more positive. It enabled us to exchange all sorts of ideas and information and to find out that, although we all do approximately the same thing, there are many variations on the same theme.

IAM Standards

The morning of the Conference was taken up with formal presentations. After the usual opening remarks, Peter Rodger, the IAM Chief Examiner, talked about "IAM Standards." The IAM are confident that, although the method used by many groups to achieve their aim of achieving test passes vary, the system of having the Staff Examiners approved by the DSA, Senior observers being assessed by the Staff Examiners and then observers being trained by Seniors, combined with the IAM test by examiners who are also assessed by the Staff Examiners, ensures a uniform standard.

The biggest problem that we have to face is the IAM/Group/ Customer interface; the IAM lose approximately one third of the potential membership because riders who have signed up and paid for "Skill for Life" get "lost". Some are never contacted by groups; others are initially contacted but there is no follow up; some do some training but then stop and a number complete their observed runs but do not take the test. The importance of the initial contact and follow up cannot be overstated and groups should ensure that new associates are contacted quickly and that contact and follow up is then maintained. This is the simplest way of increasing membership and the success rate.

New Advanced Motorcycling Manual

The Conference was then addressed by the 2 authors of the new IAM Advanced Motorcycling Manual, Stefan Bartlett and Jon Taylor. They took us through the various issues



involved in producing a modern, relevant and interesting manual. Once again, the emphasis was made that Roadcraft is a far more technical manual which covers everything in far greater detail and at a level above that required by associates. The new manual is all the associates need to complete the "Skill for Life" and generally is the only manual that observers will need to refer to. (Observers should of course continue to have the greater understanding that is provided by having a knowledge of Roadcraft.).

(NOTE. Conference attendees were issued with a copy of the new manual "How to be a better rider" and all observers should be issued with one after the official launch on Tuesday 14th July at the Rider Skills Track Day at Mallory Park.).

Group Achievement Awards

I am delighted to report that Worcester and Hereford Advanced Motorcyclists were awarded a "Group Achievement Award" for "dedicated service in promotion and commitment in preparing people for the standard for the IAM test during 2008/2009". The winner of the Group Achievement Award was the South Lancashire Advanced Motorcyclist Group with an astonishing rate of each observer on average getting 5 associates to the test during the year.

Lunch

Lunch was excellent!!!

IAM The Future (Crystal Interactive)

I always dislike it when, at Conferences, as opposed to some really boring afternoon lectures when one can catch up on some much needed sleep, the organisers think it's a good idea to divide the conference into small groups, give them various topics to discuss, and then finish with a centralised discussion to see if any good ideas have materialised. But, this session with "Crystal Interactive" has changed all that. I've never seen this system before but it changes the complete dynamics of "small group" feedback in a large conference setting.

Firstly, we all remained on the same tables with the people we had got to know during the morning. (Remember, we were all from different groups as well.) There were about 6 persons at each table and approximately 20 tables in the hall. Each table was issued with a "tablet computer" which is linked directly to the main computer and to the large screens positioned throughout the hall. We were then given various topics to discuss and we could input our views, opinions and suggestions into the tablet computer and they then appeared, as did everybody else's, on the screens. So, we chatted happily about everything whilst one of our number (luckily we had a touch typist at our table) inputted our views. After about 20 minutes of discussion during which time we didn't really look at the large screens, we then stopped and the panel of experts who were assembled at the front, then picked the major and common themes that had developed from the list on the screen (which now showed the input from all the tables). Having then discussed the various pros and cons, we were then given the next subject to think about at our tables. The subjects we covered were:

Retention and Recruitment

Advertising/Communication/Magazine/Newsletters
Skill for Life
Policy and Research

It is beyond the scope of this article to try and record the hundreds of inputs and many discussions that there were but IAM HO will consolidate the lists and common themes/suggestions/problems will be reviewed. The only one that I can clearly remember is that there were significant numbers who wanted to see the words "Institute" and "Advanced" removed from our title. "Institute" because there is something old-fashioned about the word and "Advanced" because far too many riders find it off-putting. It is of note that the title of the new manual is "How to be a better rider"!!! much more inclusive and encouraging than "Pass Your Advanced Motorcycling Test"

This IAM National Motorcycle Conference was the best I have ever attended. I sensed a real desire from those at the top to listen and value the opinions of "us at the bottom". It was apparent that they are already moving in a more positive and modern direction.

John Hodges



WHAM! Slow Handling day 2009.

Dennis Osborne triumphs again! Meticulously planned and prepared Dennis set out our traditional slow handling manoeuvres and braking performance courses together with some new, and more challenging, "pick and place the tennis ball" manoeuvres, very appropriate for Wimbledon finals weekend.



Riders line up for the "slow race"



Tim expertly demonstrates the pick & place maneuver

Dennis obviously has good connections as even the weather smiled on the day - just a little less hot next time Dennis?

We started with the usual weaving between cones exercise and then moved on to figure of eights and Dennis's ingenious obstacle course. Associates then got the opportunity to thrash their bikes down the runway and practice braking hard from speed, always a good exercise that few of us get the opportunity to practice in safe conditions.

The group then moved to a much wider runway that Dennis had gained permission to use, here we were able to lay out a much wider slalom course to practice big turns and counter steering. A very useful and enjoyable session this one, I volunteered to organise the ferrying of bikes back to the start of the queue, a job that entailed running a demo ride back down the cones every 4th rider, brilliant fun on my Fazer!

To finish the day we ran 2 slow riding competitions, firstly the pick and place mentioned above. The idea was to ride slowly past two traffic cones, pick a tennis ball off the first one and then place it on top of thesecond, all without stopping, putting a foot down or falling off. Initially Dennis had placed a funnel in the top of the second cone to throw the ball into but this proved too easy, balancing the ball in the 1 inch hole in the top of the cone proved a lot more difficult. Those who failed to place the ball or put a foot down were out while the successful ones went around again. It was not long before our winner, Martyn Newman emerged. To prove it was not a fluke, Martyn won the Slow Riding competition to round off the afternoon, well done!

Special thanks also go to Alison for organising and running the refreshments on the day. Overall another great success and here's looking forward to next year's event.

Tony.



Dennis leads the obstacle course walkthrough



Tiring work this Observing lark..



Tim congratulates Martyn, winner of both competitions.

WHAM Summer tour 2009 - Spanish Pyrenees.

This year our intrepid travellers returned to Spain for our summer tour, this time we visited the Navarre region, staying in a small town east of Pamplona in the foothills of the Pyrenees. One of the best reasons to go to this part of the world for a bike trip is the Plymouth Santander ferry. This picks you up from Plymouth at 3pm and deposits you in Santander the next day leaving you to get nicely drunk with a few hours to sleep it off, you arrive in Spain refreshed with tires that are still round and happy Pillions, the perfect start to a perfect trip. To Tip - Leave yourself plenty of time to reach the Plymouth Ferry, blasting down the A38 because you misjudged how far it is to Plymouth is not recommended.

We stayed in a village called Ecay. Ecay is ideally located at the bottom of the Pyrenees. It was possible to check out the weather in the morning and make a decision to either head into the mountains or go south to the flatter but dryer roads for the day. This meant that the week's riding varied between tricky high mountain passes, sweeping A roads and fast straight bits (we even reached the speed limit in some places). So, something for all bikes and all tastes.

This part of Spain (as with the Picos two years ago) has benefitted from EU money to upgrade its roads and this really shows. The surfaces are mostly excellent, smooth with plenty of grip and very little in the way of traffic. This place really is a biker's paradise.





Oops!

Oops is a column dedicated to owning up to mistakes. Hopefully we can all learn from other's experiences... Ant Clerici starts us off this issue with some sound advice for foreign travellers. Read, laugh and learn!!

Payment slips

Having just reintroduced myself to PEAGE stations on the French autoroutes I was reminded that the payment booths where everyone stops are some of the trickiest place for bikers.

Putting aside the often clumsy process of fishing for money or credit card ...oh "dear"...first gloves off, then which pocket is my cash? Bonjour, un moment please (my best franglais). And then "quanta costa" ahhh sorry I mean "combien?" Oh yes it's on the display 1.55Euros....meanwhile the queue of Citroens and Renaults that had been passed during the previous 10 minutes of high speed riding is rapidly building into a traffic jam large enough to have its own radio slot. Finally, a smile from the operator (is that what they are called?), collect the change and the barrier immediately raises in expectation, the queue behind edge forward in anticipation of movement but no....carefully place the change in your pocket, zip it up, one glove on and then the other, Velcro the straps, tuck in the sleeves (because you know you'll be doing 130kph very soon), visor down, into first gear and off....BUT AAARRGGH

And here is the lesson....these places often collect more oil and debris than anywhere else on the planet.

The worst I've seen was here in the UK: at the Severn crossing where bikers don't have to pay but are still forced to negotiate a slippery, grotty "stop and go" routine. (Why not have a bikers narrow lane?) One time the oil was a pond, possibly several inches deep, covering 80% of the stopping area; and although the operator gestured to me to avoid it (I worked out that one afterwards) my gentle squirming acceleration away from the oil lake was a very unpleasant experience.

So be careful at these places where oil and time pressure can lead you to miss your footing or worse!

Ant Clerici



Avoid Diesel – another twist

As motorcyclists we all have an aversion to diesel. Out on the road or in the fuel station we look for and carefully avoid the patches we too frequently see. It is a particular gripe of mine that certain garage forecourts are not kept clean for their motorcycle customers.

On my way to meet an Associate for a check ride I noted I had only 50 miles remaining and pulled into a garage to refuel. I picked the cleanest looking pump and parked quite well away from the pump as I'd spotted those wet patches where the diesel nozzle comes out of the tank. I opened the tank and pulled out the unleaded nozzle. What I hadn't noticed was that the diesel and the unleaded hoses were intertwined. Yes it happened - the diesel nozzle was pulled off the pump and immediately shot a good slug of the smelly stuff all over the tank, seat and right footrest of my bike! If it had calculated how to prevent me riding away it couldn't possibly have done a better job.

Fortunately it was nothing that a ream of paper towels, a quarter gallon of petrol and 15 minutes of elbow grease couldn't solve but I admit to drawing the line at clearing up the forecourt mess I'd made – I can just imagine what the next biker thought! From now on I'll be looking closely at the fuel hoses!

Derek McMullan

You've been Garmined..

A new word has entered our vocabulary - "Garmined". You've been garmined when your Zumo sends you off on one of its more "interesting" roads. This could range from a dirt track along side a perfectly good tarmac road or a completely unnecessary diversion through a nasty little Spanish town. It goes down a treat when you are leading a large group and Garmin decides to send you up a gravelly farm track then instructs you to "Do a U-Turn".

In another twist, I was Garmined in a hire car in Italy last week. I planned a nice route up through the Dolomites to an interesting looking lake. We started to climb up a pass and the road gradually got steeper & narrower. I was eventually greeted by a nice Italian Policeman who duly instructed me to stop and step out of the car. He had a gun so I did not argue. Turns out that my stupid GPS had sent me up a private road, "residents only" a 38 Euro fine later he sent me on my way.

I am still considering claiming compensation from Garmin, however a better option is not to rely on the damn thing. Read the old fashioned road signs! Tony.



Your WHAM! Committee



Chairman & Webmaster

Derek McMullan.
Bikes: BMW K1300S
email: d.mcmullan@tiscali.co.uk



Treasurer & Senior Observer - Blue Group:

Eric Reynolds.. Bike
Suzuki Bandit 1200GT
Email: ericbike@hotmail.com



Events & Senior Observer - Red Group:

John Hodges Bike:
Honda STX1300 Pan
European email: wham-sec@tiscali.co.uk



Ride Coordinator:

Alan Wright.. Bike..
Suzuki SVR1000
Email: iamretired@talktalk.net



Newsletter Editor:

Tony Davis.. Bikes:
Suzuki GSX1300R
Hayabusa. Yamaha
Fazer 600
Email: tonyzr@hotmail.com



Group Secretary:

Jonathan Richards.
Bike: Honda CBF
1000. email: wham-sec@btinternet.com



Chief Observer:

Tim Hutt. Bikes -
Honda CB1300. Aprilia
Mille R.

email: whamchiefobserver@hotmail.com



Contacts & Membership Secretary:

Andy Peckston.. Bike
Suzuki GSX1000R
email: Andrew.peckston@csplc.com



Asst. Events coordinator

Steve Edwards. Bike: Triumph Tiger 1050. email: sales@dampproofingman.co.uk