

WORCESTER & HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



AUGUST 2018



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD



For me group riding is THE way to travel on a bike. Yes, I've ridden solo a lot but when you are riding with a set of advanced riders two things happen.

The first is you learn. You see how others ride, their good and sometimes less good moves (nobody is perfect). I'm sure most of us have gained as much post-advanced test with the groups as through the formal training bit. There's a confidence that builds as you experience how we all ride to an advanced standard. A number of us have 1st passes or Masters, we have over 20 observers: all this makes WHAM one of the best groups and it's great to take advantage of those skills and on our fabulous roads.

The second aspect of group riding is the shared experiences with a diverse set of riders with a common passion. If you have limited experience of riding in groups then getting used to going in a group takes a little time. But it's worth it.

If you are new to group riding speak with me or one of our observers and we'll introduce you to the way we operate our groups. We limit groups to no more than 4, perhaps 5 riders; we ensure the following rider doesn't miss a turning and as your confidence improves you'll be part of staggered formations through urban areas, and more. Our library has our Group Riding Policy <http://www.wham-motorcycling.org/library/>

AUGUST CHAIRMANS FOREWORD

Join TEAM WHAM!

WHAM's events page shows 5 excellent rides this September beginning with a day ride to the Honey Café and Steel Horse Café. Sunday rides give us all a chance to practice and improve our skills with a smattering of banter thrown in over the bacon rolls. If you can't make the whole day you can simply ride leg 1 or legs 1 & 2 then head for home.



(my favourite WHAM photo expertly taken by Brian Morgan photo—ed)

We are also revising our data protection in line with IAMRoadsmart policies and GDPR and I would like to thank Tony Davis for taking on the role of Group Data Manager. Watch out for emails on this subject.

At the end of August WHAM is supporting the BMW Owners Club National Rally through Derek McMullan. 2 days of ride outs and bike handling based at the Fire College.

I'm off to Gloucester tomorrow as my Africa Twin has clocked over 24k and needs a service!

Safe riding

Ant Clerici

IAM SKILLS DAY—LYNNE SHERWOOD

IAM Skills Day, Thruxton Circuit, 25.07.18

I attended my first skills day at Thruxton this year, having previously been unable to attend due to work.

I have ridden on a track a couple of times at Llandow circuit, but never been given any tuition, so was really looking forward to learning some new skills on the day.

I had intended to go into the C group, but after a chat with Derek and Del, (lovely to see them there and a couple of other WHAM members too) I decided to ride with the B group.

I chose the lower end of the, 'least experienced' in the group as opposed to the upper end with more experience.

Our group instructor was Trevor, who rode a Kawasaki Versys, and there were three other lovely people in our group: Simon on a Fireblade, Jonathan on a Panigale 1099 and Dan on a Street Triple 675.

I was really excited and nervous to begin with, and I said that I would like to learn about improving corner speed. Simon and Dan were quite confident, and Jonathon was a little nervous I think-more so because he didn't want to damage his bike!



IAM SKILLS DAY—LYNNE SHERWOOD

On the first session we followed the instructor and each rider went to the front to follow the lines of the cones. It was a good calm session feeling comfortable. Steady away!

In the second session, as with all sessions, the instructor led the first lap-this was very reassuring for everyone. However! It was now time for the instructor to follow us one at a time-EEK I was number 1! I did my best to get close to the cones and it was always really helpful to see the other riders and instructor on the circuit.

On the third session I think I had a bit of cone obsession and had been aiming for the cones rather than following the line, so was trying to flow with the green cones, as I felt happy with the red and yellow cone procedure. Also, each session was getting faster and faster so I tried a higher gear than I had been using-as this was the place to give it a go-but I needed to then go a lot faster not a little, to ensure the revs were at the optimum range.

During lunch the four of us from our group went out to get fuel and sandwiches, and I spotted a great photo opportunity at the entrance of the circuit, so we took some snaps there.

The afternoon session came and it was overtaking time! Each lap the instructor followed us one by one. The hardest part wasn't doing the overtakes, but making sure it was a safe place on the circuit! If I've remembered the areas of the circuit correctly, I found it was easy to plan the overtakes at Village coming into Church. I felt like I wanted to overtake coming out of Club into Allard, and after reflecting, I think that this would have been a good place for me. I also had some opportunities to overtake between Allard and Campbell, but really wasn't sure about that as there was quite a deep braking area coming up so didn't go for that one this time around.

In the fifth session we were given the option to have the instructor follow us or go off and do our own laps. I decided to stick to the guidance that was on offer as did Jonathan.

I was aware that I would be very tired mentally and physically from the day, having concentrated on six 20 minute theory sessions, six 20 minute riding sessions and six 20 minute debriefs. I decided to ride on the final session and to my surprise, it was my best session! Each time I went out I improved on my skill and instructor had notice that my braking and corner speed were fine on entry, but it seemed I was too cautious exiting the corner before I added more acceleration. I feel I improved this at the end of the day.

Simon is heading to the A group next time and we all said we would meet up again next year. We have been sharing Go-Pro footage of the day which has been really useful. It was such a well run day, really safe and great fun for us all-can't wait to go again!



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TOURING THE PYRENEES—ROB HOLLIDAY

Touring the Pyrenees

by Rob Holliday

Pain and Gain, one of the first things I think about when starting to plan 'almost' anything but especially Bike Tours!!

When I plan a Bike Tour I want to get to the part of the world where I get the best out of riding my bike and where I can ride it for as long as possible.

I'm fortunate that I'm 'self managed' which means I can have as long as I can wrangle to go on that tour, however the limiting factors are, my wife (Who "misses me so much when I'm not there" = no one to walk the dog, help with domestic chores, cook dinner sometimes etc, etc) and my regular riding buddies who have 'proper jobs' plus the above partner/wife limitations and of course balancing their leave availability with other commitments that year. All round 'bit of a nightmare'

So the challenge is get to riding heaven as quickly and as easily as possible without it costing the earth, the usual issue.

Pain to me is riding long distances wasting valuable time on boring Motorways burning fuel, increasing wear & tear on my precious bike and ending up with worn and 'squared tyres' before I get to my target riding area. Add to that the cost of one or two nights in a transit hotel, lunches and dinners, not good value for money.

Gain is getting there quickly, in comfort, ideally in less time and arriving having spent no more money than the Pain option plus less worn and non 'squared tyres' and no wear & tear on the Bike.

So for this years Bike Tour to the Pyrenees we took the very civilised and pleasant Brittany Ferries boat from Portsmouth to Santander, a 24hr Port to Port trip which removes two days riding down France on very boring Autoroutes. Straight off the boat you arrive in Biking Heaven and Cost Neutral!! WINNER OPTION



'Why' The Pyrenees?

The Pyrenees are easy and quick to get to if you use the Ferry, Portsmouth is only 2 or 3 hours from the Midlands, taking an evening sailing and planning your trip around the ferry schedules gives 8 days riding in France and Spain for just 6/7 days off work if you schedule the weekends into the plan.

The Pyrenean landscape is really diverse and interesting, the mountains are generally lower than the Alps which means there's more green and less high alpine starkness. The riding is through rich pastures and up iconic Tour d'France climbs with almost no other traffic.



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That is unless you go during the 'Tour' (d'France) period when the mountains turn into a Mayhem of activity so check your dates carefully, same goes for all of August when Europe goes on holiday (all of them).

The other really great thing about the Pyrenees is the diversity of the roads, the difference between the French and Spanish sides of the mountains is quite remarkable but both equally interesting, engaging and often challenging on a Bike.

The French side has lots of tight winding 'D' roads linking up and down passes to sometimes small rural villages and big and tourist hotspots like Pau, Lourdes and Foix, however the bigger towns are easily avoided when you plan your route, to the point where seeing other vehicles is almost a novelty.



On the Spanish side there are some truly wonderful fast, smooth, twisting Mountain roads covered with sweet EC funded tarmac but still little or no other traffic.

On both sides of the border good value hotels and B & B's can be found quite easily with many having covered parking and all having some private form of parking where your Bike can be left secure overnight. Ask if there's a garage when you book to reserve a slot otherwise it's usually a first come basis.



Other things to see

There is a good scattering of 'Crusader Castles' along the French side with the well preserved Castle at Foix being one of the most well known. Look out for Pilgrims!! there are several routes that make up the Camino d'Compostela through the Pyrenees with St Jean Pied de Port on the French side being a concentration point before the mountains into Spain. If you end up in a Hostel with a group of Pilgrims they usually have great tales to tell, well worth a beer or two together.



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The highest passes will be open from mid May until early November, Spring gives Alpine flowers, lush green alpine meadows and snowy peaks whilst Autumn from mid September delivers autumnal colours as the leaves change to compete with destinations anywhere in the world.

Best road without doubt which runs almost continually along the Spanish Pyrenees from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean is the totally engaging N260, you just have to ride it to understand why.

Trails, if you are of the 'Adventure' persuasion it's easy to get off the tarmac onto some relatively easy forest road/trails from the "I just want to go up there and take a look" variety to some serious cross country stuff on enduro type bikes, there are several outfits running trail riding excursions with rented bikes (use your own pride & joy if you want to risk it) and gear in the Pyrenees, Google is the man to find them for you.

Something you might not want to see.

Andorra, that mystical tax free anomaly in the South of France or North of Spain depending on your perspective, on every trip to the Pyrenees someone says, "Let's go through Andorra" it's another country that's easy to tick off that "I've been all over the place list". Going back to the Pain v's Gain equation again, the scenery in Andorra is no better possibly not as good as a lot of other places in the mountains, in fact the North South main road through the principality is quite boring but the main reason to question the value of going into Andorra is how long it might take you to get out, The border points have such huge queues of 'duty free shoppers' having their cars pulled to pieces by the Customs guys that it's often a time consuming nightmare to leave.

I've been and got caught up in the mayhem so think about whether that tick in the box is really worth the pain.

Planning your trip

As always the time you have available (never enough) will determine your route and duration, if using the Santander or Bilbao Ferries their scheduling will be the limiting factor. It's easily possible to do the Atlantic Coast to Mediterranean Coast and back in eight days of diverse and excellent Pyrenean riding with hardly any 'Autopista' and only using 6.5 days leave from work.

Be advised though, Bike spaces on the Ferries are VERY limited so early reservation is essential to secure a place.

Variations can include a couple of days in the Picos d'Europa and less in the Pyrenees, however to me these destinations warrant two separate trips as trying to do both in one trip devalues each part.



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TOURING THE PYRENEES—ROB HOLLIDAY

Good/Memorable places to stay



Accommodation options are diverse and fairly easy to find but not in abundance in the mountains so advance booking is essential to avoid lengthy 'commutes' into the bigger towns. That said there are some great places to stay 'En Route' a couple of great places both in Spain but at opposite ends of the route,

Cadaques on the Mediterranean coast, a busy but pretty port town with a pebbly beach and an abundance of bars and restaurants, a great place for an afternoon dip in the Med and a good night out at the half way point.

Cadaques also provides easy access to the eastern end of the N260 running westwards back to your return Ferry.

San Sebastián/Donostia on the Basque Coast just South of the French border buzzes with excitement and a cosmopolitan vibe, we use it for our last night on tour stopover, it's like a scaled down Barcelona, a great place to celebrate a wonderful trip through the Pyrenees.

Things to consider/look out for

Sheep, like Wales there are sheep about and they don't see as much traffic as the Welsh ones so even more stupid! plus they don't understand what you are shouting at them either!!!!

Rain, the Pyrenees are lovely and green and a pleasure to ride through and look at but it's the rain that makes them so, high summer it's quite dry but in shoulder seasons when it rains it does it properly, take the right gear.

Having said that, the closer you get to the Mediterranean side the drier (and hotter) it 'usually' gets.



TOURING THE PYRENEES—ROB HOLLIDAY

Taking the Ferry??

The Brittany boats are well equipped and very comfortable, a 'smooth' crossing is a real relaxing pleasure and a great start to your Holiday, if it's rough the stabilisers on the big new boats do a great job but it can be taxing if you suffer from travel sickness. (back to Pain v's Gain I suppose)

There's quite a lot to do en route with restaurants bars and a cinema, during our last trip there was an interesting Seminar on Dolphins followed by an outside deck Dolphin Spotting session hosted by a pair of Brittany Ferries sponsored Marine Ecology students, wonderful animals. (The Dolphins)

Not using the Ferry and have plenty of time to spare, then an extended trip through France is an excellent choice there are too many options to detail here but some research will give lots of interesting and diverse choices.

Would I do the Pyrenees again? Yes, anytime. Would I use the Ferry? Yes, every time.

Have a great trip.

If you want to discuss Tour Options or maybe join a Tour I'm organising drop me a line on: robholliday@me.com or call me on 07802 760245 for details or advice.



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IAM SKILLS DAY CONT'D—DEL BRITTON

'You shouldn't show a break light', my old associate said!



Thruxton IAM skills day July 2018

Talking to a member of my group after the first session on the track; I was the instructor for the group, we were discussing breaking and to my surprise he still thought 'not showing' a brake light was the credentials of an advanced rider.

The interesting thing was he was also a member of WHAM, his comments were even more of a surprise for me because, I was his observer several years ago. After reassuring him that I would not have instructed him to use his gears as breaks and thus not show break lights I was interested to hear that he thought everyone did the same! and this could be seen on Sunday ride outs.

In the past some members within the club and the IAM in general there was a misconception that not showing a break light was the credentials of a good advanced rider this, I believe came from an over-used and misquoted line in roadcraft which said, 'an advanced rider uses his breaks less'.

Gear boxes are more expensive to replace than brake pads I reminded him. Using accelerator sense to slow down can be used in some situations but it does not mean you are not an advanced rider if you show a break light to slow down.

Using good observation will identify hazards early and accelerator sense can sometimes be used, however, the use of the breaks is the most effective way to slow the bike down.

Let's look at the difference between accelerator sense and our use of gears, firstly what is accelerator sense.

Acceleration sense

Acceleration sense is the ability to vary machine speed and response to the changing road and traffic conditions by accurate use of the throttle, so that you use the 'brakes less' or not at all.

'Using your breaks less' does not mean use your gears to slow down

There is a misconception that; by not using your break lights mean you are an advanced rider. Remember **'Gears are for going, breaks are for slowing'**.

Using the gears

The way you use your gears can make or mar your riding. Correct use of the gears depends on accurately matching the engine speed through the chosen gear to the road speed and using the clutch and throttle precisely. This will give you smooth gear changes and greater stability. Avoid selecting a lower gear instead of the brakes to slow the machine down (pages 35 & 104 within Roadcraft)

Braking and changing gear

The sequential gearbox on a bike does not allow intermediate gears to be missed when changing up or down. When speed is lost through braking, multiple changing down of gears is often required. There are two techniques which can be used to do this:

During the later stages of braking, hold in the clutch lever and change down the gears until the appropriate lower gear is selected, then release the clutch.

This technique allows rapid movement through the gears but depends on correctly choosing the correct gear for the road speed and accurately counting the gears. If you select a too low a gear, there is a risk of locking the rear wheel and causing a skid.

IAM SKILLS DAY CONT'D—DEL BRITTON

As speed is lost during braking, work down through each gear, engaging the next lower gear as its optimum range is entered.

At each stage, accurately match the engine speed and gear to the road speed. This promotes smoothness and avoids locking the rear wheel. With this technique, engine braking helps to slow the machine. The appropriate gear for the speed is engaged throughout and, because the drive is engaged except during changes, the bike remains stable. You also have the option of immediate power if needed.

You should be able to use both techniques but whichever you use, it must be properly incorporated into your planning.

Releasing the throttle – engine braking

When you release the throttle, the engine slows and through engine compression exerts a slowing force on the wheels. This causes the engine to act as a brake, reducing road speed smoothly and gradually with little wear to the machine.

The loss of road speed is greater when you ease off the throttle in a low gear.

Engine braking allows you to lose speed in conditions where normal braking might lock the wheels. It is also useful on long descents in hilly country.

Engine braking operates only on the rear wheel, but it is an effective way of losing speed. Remember when you use engine braking that this gives no brake light signal to the following traffic.

In normal riding, engine braking can only be used to produce *gradual* variations in speed.

Del Britton

NO WHAM

RIDING FOR REAL! - Part 3

Now that I've been able to research this item properly, full credit for it's original (yes original) production, goes to the veritable John Nixon. To spare his blushes I won't reveal the year, yet John ran a successful marketing business (before selling it all off and retiring to his country-pile) back in the day and one of it's UK clients was no less than Gulf Oil.

The impetus behind getting together this publication to provide some accessible 'advanced' riding tips and commentary was unfortunately, as most things can be, born out of tragedy in that someone close to the commissioning party lost someone in a motorcycle incident.

Additional local interest abounds in that Martyn Hillier and colleagues provided input, scenarios and locations to bring the 'story' to life.

In a nutshell that's the history however I'm sure whilst John is a shy retiring type he will be able to speak further on the matter should you ask at a Natter nite near you soon...



RIDING FOR REAL! - Part 3

Don't bunch-group

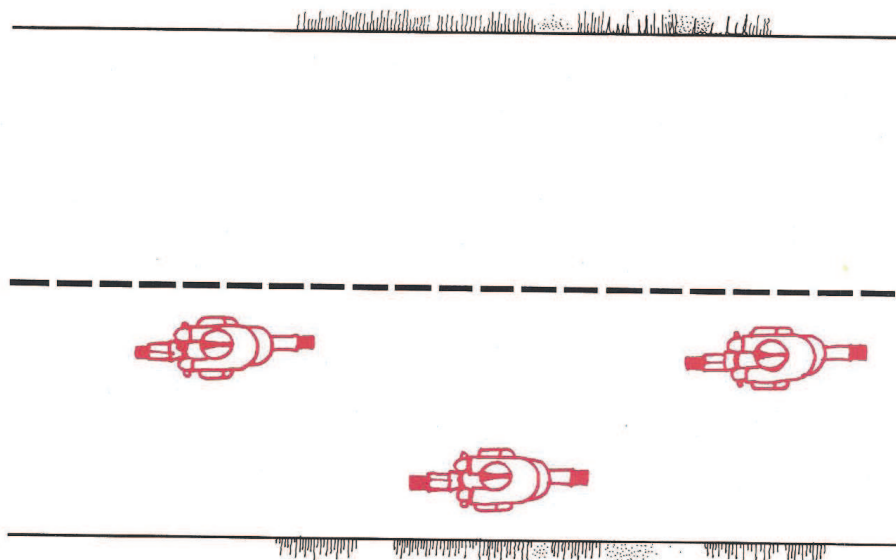
Group riding requires certain disciplines. Quite often it isn't considered as anything more than 'riding with a bunch of mates' and everyone just hurtles off to wherever it was decided to go. That's what keeps the plaster of Paris suppliers in business! If you're going to travel in company, do it properly or don't do it at all. It's certainly no place for the show off of the pack to be because the risks are multiplied tenfold when a bunch of bikes bomb around the streets.

Things can happen very quickly and go very wrong unless a few rules are observed. Four or six bikes together is

enough. For some reason the back marker always seems to travel quicker than the rest to keep up, especially when getting past other traffic, so bear that in mind if you're leading the group.

Always ride in an offset pattern: First in line should be out near the crown of the road. Next bike should be a reasonable distance behind but over to the left. Third man should be a good distance away but in line behind number one. This offset crocodile pattern is by far the safest and quickest for groups. Don't stick hard and fast to this formation when making good headway along a fast, sweepy road. You should all use the correct line into and out of bends, but keep a good distance from each other and reform into the offset pattern along the straights. Space is your best mate in groups, not the smarty who keeps his front wheel up your exhaust

pipe and telling you he could have got through that last bend a lot quicker. In heavy traffic don't be pulled from the front or pushed from behind. Do it all in your own time. In the final analysis it's every man for himself when negotiating hazards but you can help each other by being constantly aware of the bike behind. If you can see that the road is clear ahead, stay out once you've overtaken and keep your winker on. That tells the guy behind he can at least poke his nose out and take a look for himself — but be sure you've all discussed these things and understand them all before putting them into practice. Otherwise you could lead someone else into trouble. So remember, group riding is *teamwork* and to do it properly you need a team. Not a bunch of individuals. If you have a long distance to travel (say 200 miles or more), always do one third that distance before stopping for coffee or fuel. Otherwise the day can seem endless and you could find yourself trying too hard to beat the darkness. That's daft because you'll be getting cold and tired then. Pace yourself through the day and it will be easy. And always check your bike over (tyre pressures and oil) and refuel before putting it away for the night. Whatever the distance though, remember the risks of riding in a bunch as opposed to the satisfaction of riding in a group. Get all your mates plugged in to the same standard of safety. When you stop, always 'park pretty'. Line your bikes up neatly and take as little space as you need.



Suggested group riding-road positioning.

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RIDING FOR REAL! - Part 3

Water sport

Rain will always be your biggest problem. It makes you wet, therefore cold, therefore your concentration is sapped. It also puts a film of slippery lubricant between your tyres and the road. It shortens your visibility and does the same for the other road users. Spend what you have to in order to keep dry and warm. That will allow you to expend all your concentration on the job in hand. Slow down when the road is wet, even when it's drying out after a rainstorm, because there is no way you can travel quickly *and* safely under these circumstances. Make sure you're seen by using dipped beam and never be afraid to stab the horn button just to make sure you've been noticed. Extend your safety margin to allow for others — and extend your braking time and distance too. This is where you'll need to be ultra-smooth if you want to avoid a spill. In rain, use your brain!

Pitch black

The black of night presents hazards that are all too easily overlooked. Sure, it gets darker when the sun goes down, any fool can see that — but it also gets colder. So dress for dark. Put something extra on, don't just ride on in your daylight clobber. Use an oversuit, even a lightweight one. You should wear some reflective tape on your clothes. Wipe over your headlamp and tail lamp, wipe your goggles or visor. Zip your collar up to keep warmth in and don't ride beyond the extent of your headlamp beam. Commonsense, but all too easily forgotten. The one advantage

of night is that it does allow you to see oncoming headlamps around blind bends. But treat that as a bonus, not a firm, indisputable thing. Don't short-cut corners thinking that if anything's there you'll get advanced warning of it. All too often there's some joker on the road with just sidelights or no lights at all around the next bend. Or a bicycle with a dim lamp in need of a new Ever-Ready. Think bad, not good, and you'll survive a lot longer. Keep warm, alert and on *your* side of the road.



Bolt-ons

Accessory manufacture is big business these days and there is a wide choice of goodies to bolt onto your bike. Panniers and bike luggage are covered in another section of this booklet and they are probably the most practical of accessories. Of the others, a screen can be of most use for it protects you against rain and cold. Some screens are built with a part fairing and these often have useful space in them for carrying bits and pieces. Screens and fairings do their primary job well in most cases, but some penalty is paid in other ways — noise for example. Engine noise is often amplified and thrown up at the rider and the result is an aggravation that can tire. Handling can be affected too, some being heavy enough to need alteration to the front suspension to cope with the extra weight. And when you're tucked in behind a screen or fairing you can lose your sense of speed because the elements aren't tearing at your face. If you fit a screen or fairing, be prepared for these alterations in performance and feeling. Rear carriers do not themselves affect handling, but what you strap onto them can. Being at the very back of the machine, way behind the rear axle, any load strapped onto them can have an adverse affect on handling. The front end of the bike will be light so your steering will be less positive. Don't overload rear carriers and over the first few miles ascertain just how your bike's handling has been altered.

If you have money to spend on your bike, spend it first on servicing and necessary replacements before buying luxuries. Put more lighting power on the front by adding a more efficient headlamp or spotlamps, but make sure your battery can take the extra load. Add a decent air horn or buy an intercom system for yourself and pillion passenger. You can add a sporty exhaust system, one that not only personalizes your machine but one that could improve performance or give you a better return on fuel. But before you spend anything else, make sure your bike is up to scratch mechanically. In tip-top order. That's more important than all the bolt-on goodies in the world.

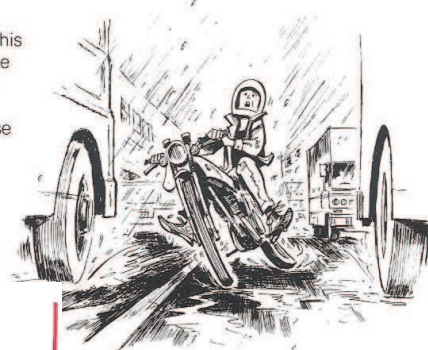
Make it fit

When a motorcycle comes off the production line it is complete and ready to run but it needs at least some alteration before it suits you entirely. The handlebar, footrests and suspension are generally adjustable, so alter them to suit. It only takes a short while to get it right and make it fit, so do it. Make sure the rear brake pedal sits just under the ball of your foot when you're sitting in a comfortable riding position. The same goes for the front brake and clutch levers — your hands should fall onto the handlebar naturally and both levers should be right under your fingers when you extend them. And how about all those other things you may have to reach in a hurry? Horn button, headlamp flasher and dipswitch? Everything that can be adjusted to suit you should be done as soon as you get the bike. Your bike should be like another part of your body, an extension of your arms and legs.

Boots

Tyres are of the utmost importance. They, more than any other single factor, influence the way the machine will behave. They are expensive items and often the most neglected. Unlike the fuel tank, they cost nothing to keep filled and they are your prime lifeline. Run them at the correct pressure for solo or two-up riding. Over-inflation will give less contact with the road and under-inflation will overheat the tyre — amongst other serious problems — and both will affect handling immensely. Remember too, incorrectly inflated tyres are an offence and if they are wrong in the event of an accident, possibly not your fault at all, it may be brought as evidence against you that your bike was not in a roadworthy condition.

Check your tyres regularly and protect the valve with a screw-on cap. Keep an eye on tread wear and the condition of the sidewalls and remove any trapped stones from the tread. Don't bump over kerbs — this can split the inner casing and you won't see the damage. Don't forget the tubes inside the tyres either. If you get a puncture, replace the tube; don't just patch it because a patched tube is unreliable.



Eyes

At night, your lights are your eyes. If you have none, you can't see. If they're only half good, you're half blind. Worse still, you can only be half seen or not seen at all. And that's like playing Russian roulette. If you want to gamble, play poker — all you can lose is your money!

The energy for your lights in most cases comes from a battery. They are not pretty things so they get tucked away where they are easy to forget. They, like you and I, need water once in a while — and a smear of Vaseline in certain places! Keep them topped up with distilled water and make sure the two terminals are clean and covered with a light smear of Vaseline.

Frayed wires shed power and can lead to a short, bringing total loss of both lights and ignition. The earth lead should be spotlessly clean to give full power. Check to see that all wiring connectors are tight and insulated and that no wires rub or chafe against any part of the machine. Replace dull bulbs but be careful not to touch the glass, this will blow the bulb prematurely. Never touch lamp reflectors. If they discolour they should be replaced. Don't forget the switches either — horn, headlamp, brake lights and indicators. Use an insulating grease on them if they are prone to a drop in performance in wet weather.

Stoppers

The question every would-be motorcyclist asks is 'How do I make it go?' A far better first thought would be 'How do I make it stop once I've got it to go?' — which brings us to brakes. Two kinds of brake are used on motorcycles — discs and drums. Properly set up, each is as good as the other but both require regular checking to keep them at their best. Disc brakes are now more popular than drums and most manufacturers, for styling reasons, fit stainless steel or chromed discs. Better performance may be got from cast iron discs although they do rust over quickly and look less attractive. Get an expert to tell you what's best in the way of discs or brake pads for your kind of riding. And be warned that it is dangerous to finish up with a bike that is overbraked for everyday riding. Too much brake can be as stupid as too little. Regular servicing is the answer and your owner's manual will show you how to maintain your brakes. Keep an eye on brake pad wear and the fluid level in the master cylinder and leave the rest to your dealer.

Drum brakes are less complex for the average do-it-yourselfer and can be kept in trim by simple cleaning and adjusting. Keep all brake cables well lubricated and ensure that there are no kinks in them. A smooth brake operation gives you maximum 'feel' with no snatch. Brake performance deteriorates slowly over a fair period of time,

RIDING FOR REAL! - Part 3

not suddenly when it would be very noticeable, so don't leave adjustment or replacements until they really are needed! A spare cable taped in line with the original — along with spare bulbs — provides good insurance against inconvenience.



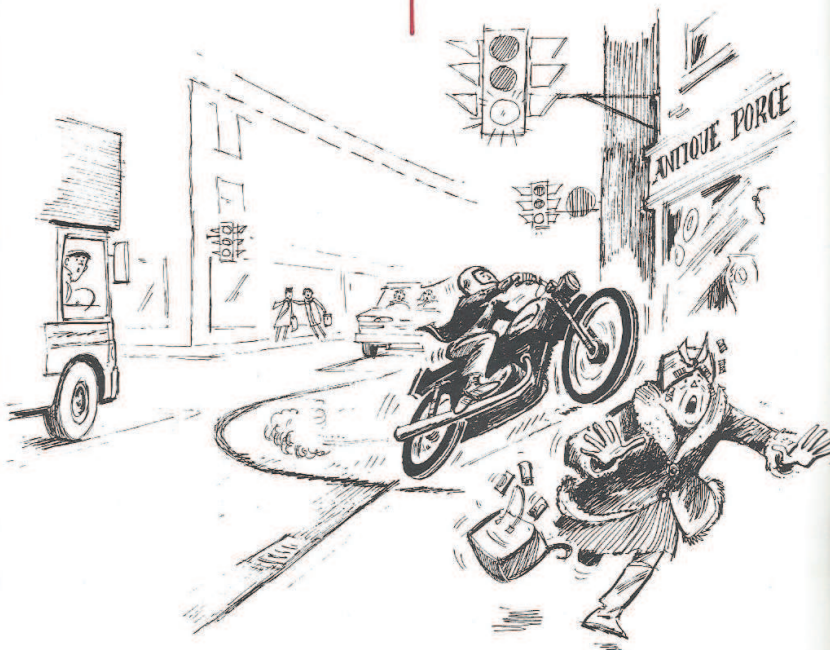
Fettling

No machine will perform properly unless it is regularly serviced. The simple stuff like battery, tyres, oil levels and brake adjustment should be regularly checked anyway. But things like carburettors and ignition points need the once-over too. These things — and others — are all catered for if you get your dealer to service your bike to the book. That's not always possible and maybe you like looking after your own bike rather than getting someone else to do it. Keep a notebook in the garage and record all your purchases, replacements and oil changes.

Whoever does your servicing, it should be done regularly and thoroughly, not piecemeal as and when problems arise. Something like a maladjusted or dirty carb, fouled plugs or incorrect timing will affect performance and often lead to more expensive damage. Any of these simple wrongs can get you into trouble too. If you want to overtake in reasonably quick fashion and all you get when you twist the throttle is a hiccup or an actual loss of power you are in danger. If it happens once it can happen again — and next time could mean disaster.

Poor wheel alignment will not only scrub your tyres badly, it will affect the handling of your bike enormously. If the rear wheel is cockeyed, you'll soon have to replace the chain and rear sprocket. Both are big money items these days. See what I mean about more expensive damage? Remedy is always better than cure — but you need to keep a close check on things. If it needs doing, do it. And do it *now*. If you

don't know much about mechanical things, buy a good manual or join a motorcycle club. Knowledge is so easily gained.



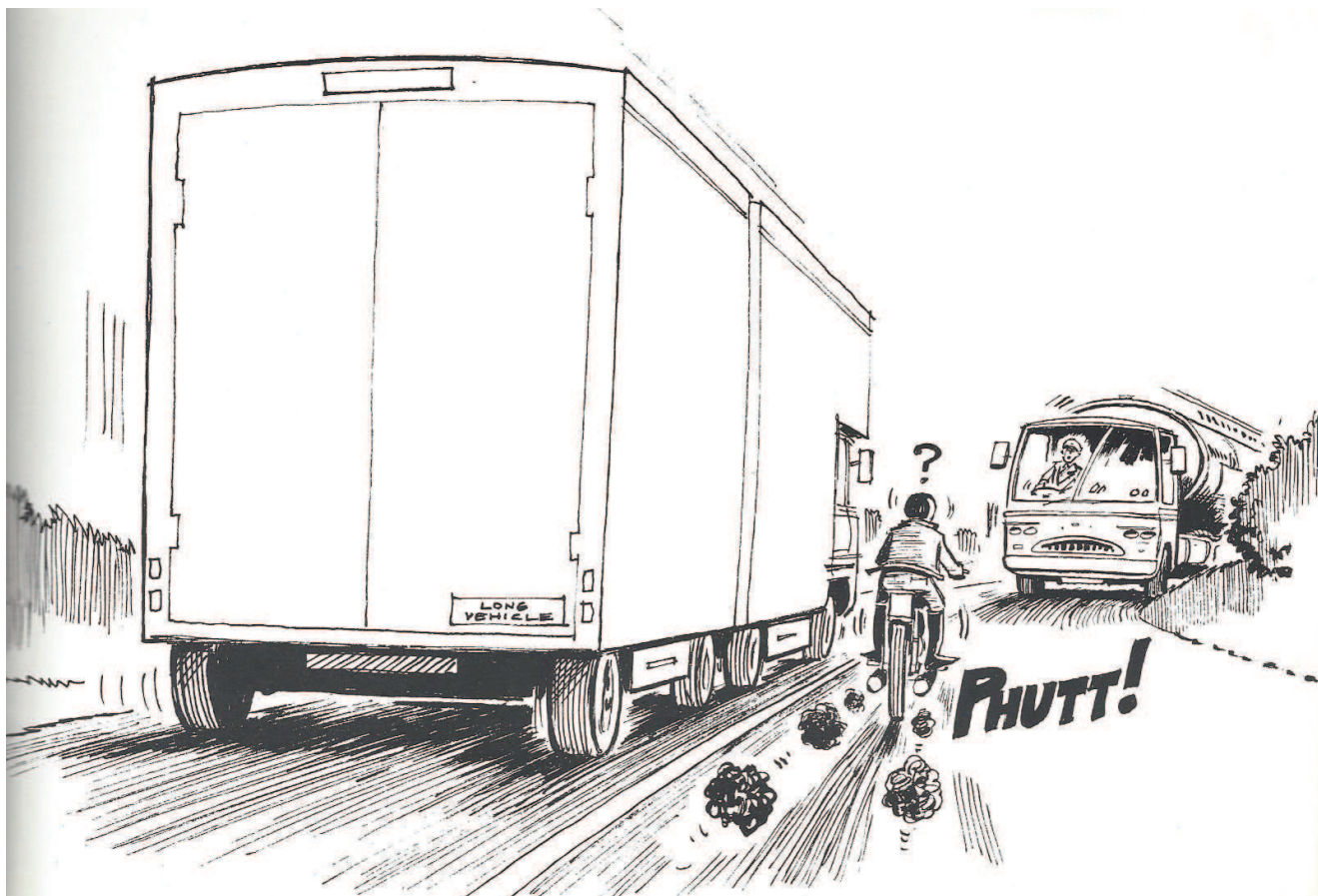
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THE IAM OR WORCESTER & HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS





Hoots

One thing I've never understood is why manufacturers insist upon equipping powerful motorcycles with a pathetic horn. What I call an *inaudible* means of approach. Some are little more than a mechanical burp that would hardly raise an eyebrow at a church fête. Although rarely used, when they are needed, they should be *loud*. Buy one that can be heard, one that could someday save you from a nasty smash. Air horns are best and can cost less than a tenner. See, be seen and be heard!

Visibility

Being seen is something that's needed all the time. A hooter is required when people haven't seen you, as a second line of defence. If you are seen then half the battle's over. Use dipped headlamp at all times, not only when it's dark. The movement given to a light just by the jogging of the front fork as it travels over bumps makes it a mild irritant to the eye, even if that eye is not looking directly at it. And that's just what's needed. It irritates enough to attract attention just like a morse code flasher. Dipped beam is usually good enough but if the sun is bright and behind you, use main beam to make double sure you are seen. Headlamp covers are not a lot of good, even the fluorescent ones. They are not strong enough under many circumstances to attract attention,

and it is illegal to ride with the headlamp on whilst covered by one of them. All they do effectively is keep bugs off your headlamp glass.

Fluorescent jackets, on the other hand, are good. They present a large area of noticeability both to your front and rear. If the jacket has reflective bands on it, so much the better, for it makes the garment good for both day and night riding. Fluorescence or reflective tape only do half the job each: one needs daylight and the other projected light in order to work. The combination of both is obviously best.

The new-style yellow number plates are good for this reason, so if you buy a machine with an old black plate on it, get a reflective one made up. At three quid or so, it's good insurance. Put some reflective tape across the bottom of the mudguard, on the mud flap or down the panniers if you have them fitted. A piece on your helmet or the belt of your jacket helps too — but check that the adhesive won't damage your helmet; see the later paragraphs on polycarbonate helmets.

Luggage

If your bike offers more than just 'about town' performance, sometime you'll want to go touring — or at least take it down to the coast and back. So you'll be in the market for some custom made luggage. Bikes are designed to take a rider and passenger plus an extra bit of weight here and there, so it's important to know what to buy and where to hang it without giving yourself handling problems. The best way to tote luggage is by

fitting panniers. The glass fibre type are best in most respects because they are light, easy to clean and fairly waterproof even in storm conditions. Being stronger they can give your legs more protection if you have a spill. Some people prefer the elegance of leather panniers or the economy of PVC, but glass fibre is best all round.

Check the panniers themselves and also the mounting frames before you buy. The whole lot should be light and strong, and allow the panniers to be carried as close to the sides of your bike as possible. If they are high and wide when fitted they not only look ugly, the weight is badly distributed and could affect handling at high touring speeds. If the pannier boxes are quickly detachable from the frame that's good too — but you should be able to lock them on the frames for extra security, both from accidental loss or light-fingered prowlers!

The top box is the most popular luggage carrier but has the disadvantage of putting weight in the worst possible place — high and far back. That too leads to handling problems, especially in high winds. Its main advantage is that a top box gives you plenty of space to park your helmet when off the bike and it can take no end of clutter like oversuits, warm clothing and suchlike. Tank panniers are a good idea, these being leather or PVC. Their greatest advantage is that they keep whatever weight they are carrying in the best possible place: well forward, between the wheel axles and at engine height. They don't suit machines with low handlebars and if they are too large they interfere with legroom — and one is tempted to carry too much in them.

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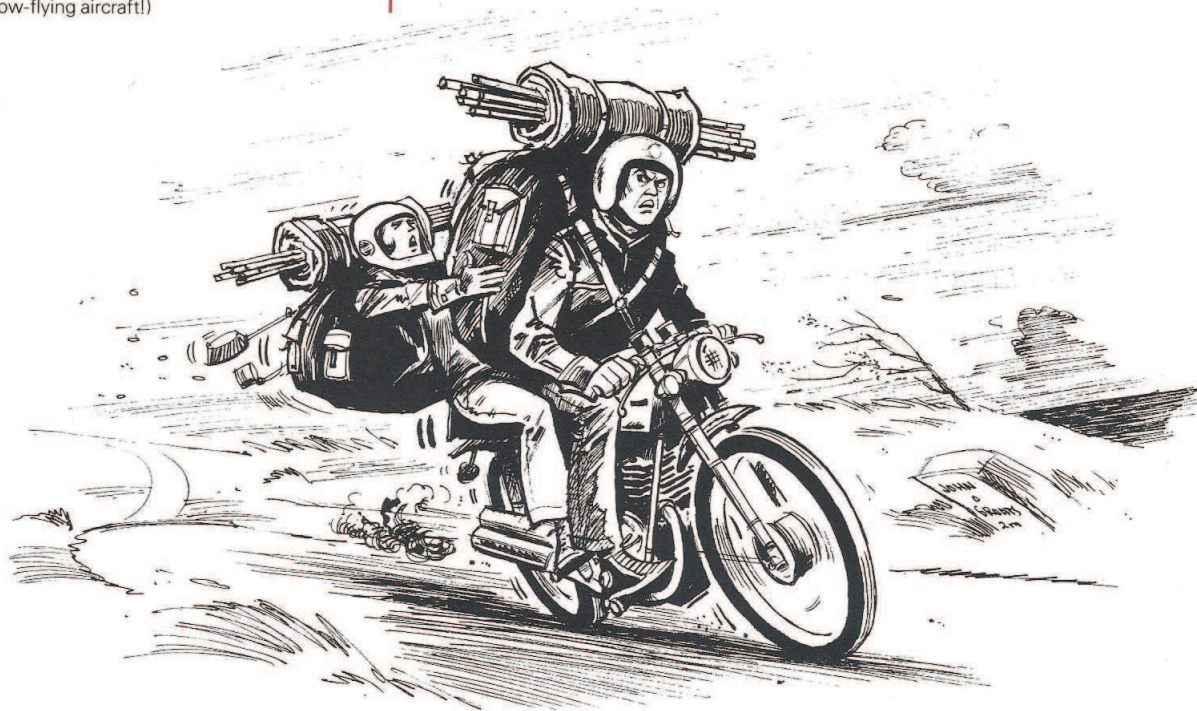


The best bet, apart from panniers, is a tank top bag. Most have a clear map window in the top and a handy pocket for things like a camera, wallet or passport: main body of the bag can take a surprising amount of stuff and I always use this for 'first off' items at the end of a journey: my washbag, a change of clothes, shoes — things like that. The choice of bike luggage is tremendous and suits every budget. But buying is only half the problem. How to load whatever you buy is just as important.

Always put the heavy items at the bottom of your luggage. The lower the weight can be put, the better. Put the weight high and you'll be wrestling with the handlebar as if it was a rodeo steer. Grade all the stuff you're taking according to weight and load heaviest first, lightest last. Remember though, there will be certain things you'll want first at the end of your



journey — tent, washbag or brew-up kit. Never carry anything yourself or ask your pillion passenger to either. Haversacks are uncomfortable enough when walking, let alone punching along a bumpy road at 70mph! They also keep the weight high. So high in fact to be affected by crosswinds (or low-flying aircraft!)



BIKER DOWN 2018



Upcoming Biker Down courses in West Mercia:

- Sunday 20th May 2018 – Bromsgrove Fire Station, Worcestershire (10am-1pm)
- Saturday 17th June 2018– Peterchurch Fire Station, Herefordshire (10am-1pm)
- Friday 7th September 2018 – Bromsgrove Fire Station, Worcestershire (10am-1pm)
- Saturday 22nd September 2018 – Shrewsbury (10am-1pm)
- Sunday 7th October 2018 – Telford (10am-1pm)
- A limited number of places are available on each course. If you would like to attend one of these courses, please email:

Roadsafety1@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

Places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. We will confirm if you have a space on the course and confirm location and details for the day.

BIKER DOWN POWYS 2018



**WOULD YOU KNOW
WHAT TO DO?**

**[Powys County Council
Road Safety Unit & M&WWFRS]**
is offering a **FREE 3 HOUR COURSE**

On completion you'll get a First Aid Kit

- 1** Accident scene management
- 2** First Aid for motorcyclists
- 3** The science of being seen

To Book:-
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