

WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



September 2021



EDITORIAL

First up: on Wednesday next week (29th Sept) the first natter night for a long time will be held at the Falcon Hotel, Bromyard. Be there at 7.30pm to see all your biking buddies and meet up with WHAM members you may so far only have heard of! As far as I'm aware there is no official 'ride' to the destination so come as you will on bike, in car, or on foot. The Falcon is easy to find, it's on the High Street in the middle of the town.

No Chief Observer's report this month, he's on holiday, lucky man! However, a cornucopia of articles follows:

- Steve Hackett's experience of a [Thruxton skills day](#)
- [A cautionary tale](#) from Mark Cooper
- [A day at bikesafe](#) with Gary Barnes
- [What to expect](#) on the Master's course with Tony Reusser
- [A Blood Bikers story](#) from a Severn Freewheelers Rider
- Gary Barnes' story about [changing to a new bike](#)
- Would you like to be a blood biker? Ant Clerici [invites you to apply](#).
- And finally, the second part of John Nixon's [culinary visit to Mallory park](#) to enjoy the sidecar races.



22 action packed and varied pages! A big thank you to all the contributors this month. My inbox is now empty so please send me anything bike related that I can include in the next issue..

whamnewsletter@gmail.com

Jim Rolt



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

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE EDITOR THE IAM OR WORCESTER & HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

page 1



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

Alex and I were discussing our test pass stats last week. And it's all good news. WHAMs Observers, expertly led by Alex, have mentored our associates to achieve a test pass rate at first standard of 30%. This is against a national average of 10%. These congratulations also obviously major on congratulating the associates who put much effort and thought into getting their test pass; whether first or standard. Well done all!

Whilst I'm on a congratulatory/celebratory roll; thanks to all our committee who through C-19 have met via Videocon and planned the route out of various restrictions and back onto the road. I shan't pick anyone out as I know you are a shy bunch; you know who you are.

Later in this very issue you'll see a nice piece by our very own Tony R laying out the ins and outs of the 'Masters' programme. Tony is the very latest member to pass this stretching programme and we thought aspiring Masters candidates would like an insight in what the Masters has in-store. Master is a bit like becoming a Parent for the first time; Until you've experienced it it's difficult to explain and understand; yet Tony has done a grand job giving insight.

C-19 had some unusual side effects on folk, and this has shown itself within the re-introduction of our weekly Group rides. We therefore decided last week to reinvigorate the Group riding policy process by making the pre-ride brief a little more fulsome and staggering the leaving times of the four person riding groups. Feedback on the day was that everyone had an enjoyable ride, courtesy between riding groups was elevated, and from my point of view the balance between safety and absolute 'progress' was restored. Let's keep this up now and if you've not made your way out on a Sunday ride yet, whether that be post-Covid or you've never been on one, please do try and make it on any Sunday soon; do come and seek me out, or any National Observer (see website), and they'll be pleased to ride with you and get you doing all the right things in the right order.

With the WHAM Snowdonia trip a week away there's still a couple of rooms left at the hotel. You can also independently of a night away in the hotel rock up at the start points Friday, Saturday, or Sunday and join in on one, two, or even six new routes. Thanks to Duane and Tony D for teeing this up; you've done a great job.

I can be found at the bar on Friday and Saturday night and please do come and buy me a beer if you've chance....

One thing you won't see just yet on the WHAM website is our first face-to-face natter nite upcoming at our regular venue of the Falcon in Bromyard. The date for this will be published very soon and it'll be nice to see more of you who can't yet make a Sunday ride out at that event. Watch this space.

Yours in sport.

Richard Hewitt

WHAM Chairman



IAM Skills Day at Thruxton – Steve Hackett

I always wanted to take a bike on a racetrack and did manage a lap of the Nurburgring once when on tour in Germany. Now that was scary given that you are mixed in with everything from high powered supercars to pick-up trucks; pocket rockets to street bikes. It wasn't relaxing but certainly an unforgettable experience. The only alternative seemed to be a track day, at least until the IAM came up with the Skills Day concept which goes a long way to removing the competitiveness and more stringent rules geared to racecraft that are embodied in a Track Day. I couldn't begin to entertain the idea of a Track Day unless I had zip-together clothing, ACU approved helmet etc and, while it's possible to hire these at some events, the Skills Day concept is about training and development of road craft so ordinary road-going clothing and bike were the norm. What's not to like about improving your riding skills in a safe environment with expert tuition and no traffic? That was me sold.



Places are naturally limited and sell out quickly and even though I was quick to act many dates were already booked up. The events are not restricted to IAM members which further squeezes availability but I managed to get a place on a day at Thruxton in July. The pre-event info comprised an outline of the day; a covering letter to send to your insurance company which explained the purpose of the day, stressing the skills development and giving assurance it was not a track day; and a disclaimer. There was also location info which proved to be inaccurate (the postcode was for the nearby industrial estate and the what3words was for the off-road school) but as I had been to Thruxton several times for BSB and other events I wasn't perturbed.

My journey time was 2¼ hours so I allowed 3 hours to be certain I could stop for a comfort break, fill up with fuel and arrive in time for the briefing. Failure to attend would mean I would not be permitted on track and would have a very sad journey home. My pre-event bike check hadn't thrown up any issues and I made sure I had the allen key for suspension adjustment along with my lunch and drinks. On the day one poor soul had his bike rejected by scrutineering for insufficient tyre tread and missed the first track session while he got it sorted. All extraneous baggage was removed from the bike (panniers, top boxes etc are not allowed) but mirrors, indicators, lights etc are all left in place. It is, after all, a simulation of street riding.

As a first-timer I was in C group which suited me (A and B groups being for the more experienced) and within the C group we were further split into 6 sub-groups with five in each sub-group. So C group alone had some 30 bikes in it plus six tutors, one for each sub-group, along with marshals and other support staff; so over 100 in total for the day. I wondered how on earth they would give everyone sufficient track time to learn anything, but that was a testament to the excellent planning and organisation.

Each A, B and C group went out at different times, there being three activities for each group every hour: briefing, track, and feedback; meaning that when C was on track, B was in briefing and A was receiving feedback (or whatever was relevant to that group). I can only describe the day for the C group and that was based on the IPSGA system so each hour we had a briefing, the first one being about Information, ie learning the track, the best lines (not necessarily for racing), the safety flags etc. The instructor would lead the first lap setting the pace and indicating points of interest. On subsequent laps each rider in the sub-group would take the lead in turn with the instructor following immediately behind the lead rider to observe their technique. Six laps saw completion of each track session with the group returning to parc fermé for feedback.



The second session was on Positioning, the third on Speed followed by a break for lunch. Although it wasn't a really hot day the need to maintain hydration was very evident with bottled water readily available. After lunch there were further sessions on Gear, and Acceleration and I wondered what would be in the sixth and final one. Turns out it was, loosely, on Overtaking as we were allowed to set our own pace and to overtake, on straights but not corners, bringing together everything we had learned during the day. I have to say that there was a little competitiveness creeping in here and not a little raggedness at times; but boy, wasn't it just the best grin making experience!



Before the ride home I looked at my tyres to find they had had the most serious work-out of their lives. When you consider that I was on my Moto Guzzi V7 with 52 hp and not renowned for its blistering acceleration I was pretty astounded. They are feeling a bit better now, though.

The ride home was somewhat jarring and teeth chattering and I wondered whether it was the tyres letting me know they weren't happy. Then I realised that I hadn't backed off the suspension settings and it was the Hereford potholes welcoming me home!

A day or so after the event I received an email which gave the opportunity to give the organisers some feedback on how it had gone for me. This was an ideal

opportunity to reflect on all things about the day from organisation to what benefits I had gained and whether or not I had enjoyed the experience. Needless to say it was a well organised day with more grins per mile than just about anything else I have done to date. Whether or not I learned anything or indeed whether my riding had improved only time will tell. There is no doubt that it is possible to do any form of training and not derive benefit but, provided you pay attention, practise and then act on any feedback you receive you will not be the same rider you were at the start. Would I recommend it? Yes, whole-heartedly. Any and every experience is an opportunity to learn and this event condenses and distils so much into a single day that you are unlikely to learn every lesson but it raises your awareness of what is possible and does it in such a way that you are often humbled to realise that you are not quite as good as you thought you were but can see a clear path to improvement.

About 10 days or so after the event you get a link to order photos of the day. You can buy a set of photos (about 30, download or CD) or a larger print of your favourite. I was a bit dubious that they would pick me out of all the ones they had taken but I needn't have worried, everything turned out perfectly – even my wife was impressed (I didn't show her the one of my tyres, though!).

A cautionary tale from Mark Cooper

One of my best buddies, a fellow biker, was the fortunate person to survive and be air lifted to hospital yesterday, following the otherwise fatal accident involving two pedestrians. This was on the Kington bypass yesterday (see Hereford Times and BBC West Midland feeds).

He was the same chap I shared a table with recently, some of you may recall, when we were independently out and about one Sunday, and came upon the "A Team" from WHAM scoffing food at the Honey Pot Café at Bronllys.

I personally was not witness to the accident but ironically was invited by my friend to join him on his trip yesterday. I declined the invitation because of work commitments.



Having ridden with my friend many times I do not consider speed was a factor. I do not even know whether advanced training would have averted the accident. All I do know, and hope, is that my buddy makes a full physical recovery (the mental scares might take their toll, later).

This accident might well have been simple fate, bad luck, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Having advanced training might have helped, it might not.

When I am out and about in non-WHAM biker environments I try, subtlety at first or by example, explain the benefits of advanced training. When I am riding I always carry a few IAM leaflets to advertise the training and benefit. At least I try and persuade others to consider BikeSafe as a start (as I did with my introduction to advanced training).

Just understand that your bike can be a very effective deadly missile. Treat this device with care, caution and with respect.

Remember: Be visible; be vigilant; prepare for the unexpected; be safe!

Mark Kirby-Cooper

A DAY AT BIKESAFE - Gary Barnes

I am sure you have heard of them and like me wondered what their course is like.

34 Police forces running 75 workshops throughout the country. A one day experience and a stepping stone for anyone thinking of going on to advance training with the IAM, ROSPA or ERS.

It's a full day, 8.30am to 4.30pm with E modules to watch at home, morning classroom and a full afternoon of riding with a police officer or an IAM/ROSPA observer. For one day it's a lot to get through.

So I decided to sign up and find out what it's all about. Having filled in the online form including previous experience which I declared my booking was accepted and the date set.



I received an email with a password to access the E modules which covered various aspects of motorcycling inc

- Attitude
- System of control
- Observation
- Cornering
- Overtaking
- Filtering
- Junctions
- Group Riding
- Hazards

All the above are accompanied with short videos of road situations and full open question/ answer discussions.

Again it's a lot to consume for people starting out but gives a good indication of the mindset required for advanced training. If I am honest it made me realise how far I have come.

That said remember training gives you the tools to stay safe, but the tool box is big and there is always room for more tools.

The day starts at 8.30 am for coffee and 9am classroom start. [Bring your own lunch]. Marcus Macormick ran the class with examples of what is expected from an advanced rider with short video clips. Marcus has many one liners that are well rehearsed, funny and gave all 20 students a chance to relax and quash nerves. It was great to meet the non examiner side of Marcus.

Another coffee break then we were all allocated to our respective observers. I made a special request to be allocated to a serving police officer. This turned out to be Dan Mendic who is with the West Mercia division.

Usual safety brief and following rules were discussed, then just a matter of saddle up thumbs up and off we go.

Alcester, Evesham, Fish Hill and bloody Sunday afternoon traffic. Still managed a smooth pace and enjoyed being out on the bike. Stop for a chat and discuss various parts of ride including positioning on dual carriageways. Time to swap lead rider and its Johns turn to lead the way. John passed his test in 2007 and has never had any further training. That said he rides well, is very much an open book to feedback from Dan and plans to join his local IAM group.

Another switch around and I am upfront on the B lanes around Throckmorton and Droitwich. Dan has good knowledge of the area, gave clear early signals and made it very easy to navigate the route. Final return to base and completion of feed back sheet and a chat.

All the above is what we do as an affiliated IAM group, the only difference is the run sheet which is marked A through to D giving four levels of critique.

It was a great day shared with people who have the same passion for safe biking. For me it was the opportunity to ride under the watchful eye of a police rider .Was it worth £65, yes absolutely. There is nothing better than a days training to reaffirm your skills. I think for anyone looking to go forward for advance ticket it's a great days training.

As for my run sheet and score,well you will just have to ask me next time you see me.

Gary Barnes

The Masters – A Skill for Life - Tony Reusser

In 1971 when I started motorcycling I would never have imagined to have been as proud as I was last Tuesday when my Masters Examiner told me I had passed with distinction.

I want to firstly try and encourage everyone to always consider continuing their development with the Master's program and secondly to share with you what I learnt on my masters test day.

Before I go any further I've got to give a big thanks to my Masters Mentor Del Britton for his knowledge, skill and superb coaching that helped me fine tune my riding.

Why did I do it? Arguably for me it's the ultimate civilian test of motorcycling skills, so it was a challenge that in the end I could not resist. You definitely have to be committed, not just to hone your riding to the next level and be prepared to change and improve aspects of your technique, but also to be prepared to know inside-out "Motorcycle Roadcraft", "In Full Control" and the "Highway Code", and I had questions that required knowledge from all of the above.

However, in addition to the challenge, I believe as motorcyclist we should always be reflecting on what we could do better. We should never be complacent, therein lies danger. Every time we are out on our bikes from the very start we turn on the "The System of Motorcycle Control" in our heads. We love it, it keeps us safe, we get pleasure from doing it as well as we can, on our own or when group riding. For me it's a continual learning process even when we discuss the experiences of observations over a breakfast on a Sunday WHAM ride.

That brings me finally onto one of the key points I learnt from the feedback on the day of my Masters Test:

Cornering – We've all learnt the "Five key Principles of Safe Cornering" over the years, but just as reminder they are:

- Be in the right position on the approach
- Be travelling at the right speed for the corner or bend
- Be in the right gear for that speed
- Be able to stop in the distance you can see to be clear on your own side of the road

Open the throttle enough to maintain a constant speed round the bend – maintain positive throttle.

My examiner thought a few of my bends did not leave a lot in reserve should something untoward occur! Overall my progress & restraint were described as excellent. However, I did reflect on his very wise words. It is very easy, even for a few moments, to let the joy of controlling a motorcycle in bends to become to hedonistic. Carrying too much speed into a bend is asking for trouble. If



something untoward does occur our actions, (however skilled) are very likely to change the balance of the bike affecting its grip and stability on the road etc. etc. Going into a bend a few mph slower lets us come out with progressively more positive throttle, as the limit point opens up, maximising grip and ultimately stability and our safety.

Ride Safe

Tony Reusser

So, what did I learn from that? – A Blood Bikers story

A Severn Freewheeler's candid account is reminder for all riders....the rider kindly allowed his article to be included in WHAM's newsletter.

Its 9:10 Saturday and I'm on the last day of my 4 day duty on the Bloodbike. I've agreed with the next rider that I might be able to handover in the afternoon. There's not much on so I think I might go for around 2ish as I'm feeling tired. The early handover never happen.

OK it's now 16:30 and I'm in Gloucester A&E with a broken big toe, how did I get here!

Simple really, "I AM SAFE", or was I? When I got up and knew I was going riding, as usual, I asked myself:

"AM I SAFE?"



Answers to all the letters was good except for 'S for Sleep', hmm – feeling tired, need to ring my relief at a sensible time to see about early handover, and 'E' – I was in a good mental state and was feeling 'up' just ...tired.

Well, there's your answer, I'd had enough sleep, or had I? I'd worked at home for 2 of the 5 days

and not had many miles on my own bike and hadn't really racked up too many between Wednesday to Friday on SFW BMW but Friday night I'd been out until around at least 00:30 and time ran out. I just couldn't complete all the jobs so I was looking to deliver a non-urgent TTO (delivery to someone's house) Saturday morning.

The incident. Saturday afternoon I was coming off the A417 Barnwood roundabout and going to Gloucester Hospital Pathology. Riding in lane 1 down Corinium Way (the Walls ice cream dual carriageway) and looking to change lanes to lane 2 to move away from traffic queuing behind a stationary car in lane 1 in preparation to be in the right lane for the roundabout to take me to the Hospital.

OK, shoulder look prior to indication/manoeuvre, all clear – indicate, look again, and move – whoa!!! Where did that navy blue car headlight cluster come from that I'm now leaning against?

Ahh its drawing back the driver is obviously decelerating and I'm counter steering BUT the bike is unstable, its slow speed (around 15-20mph) and I've not got enough momentum to fully come upright, and the bike is wobbling, I'm going down. Right step off the bike and give it a push away, hit deck, form ball, roll majestically on Corinium Way toward the gap in the central reservation – where are the cars around me – ahh good they've seen what's happened and all slowed down/stopped.

OK I've stopped moving – gentle head movement, ok, shoulders, arms, back, hips, legs, feet, toes – ow. Result broken big left toe because I was more fatigued than I thought.

My second life saver prior to moving wasn't good enough so I didn't see the navy-blue ford fiesta slip into my back right blind spot because I was just not concentrating enough which bore out the IAMSAFE checks earlier that morning.

Conclusions. 'I AM SAFE' is there for a reason and even though I asked myself 'Am I fit to ride?' I obviously wasn't. I should have thus taken the Professional and safe Rider option of handing over early as I was going to but didn't really do anything about it properly and lady luck ran out. Fortunately for me it was at 15-20MPH, I was wearing Leathers and everyone else was taking proper note of what was going on, but it could have beenlet's not go there eh?

Big Toe repaired, ego still deflated, Professional skills re-examined, back on bikes, Blood Bike back on the road following replacement plastic (Good old BMW Crash Bars, fairing and panniers) .



Fortunately, the only thing that ripped was the Blood Bike jacket and my pride.

A question...how did the car manage to arrive in the blind spot after mirror and blind spot checks?

I have a theory but I'm interested in your views – Ant Clerici

OLD METAL v NEW METAL – Gary Barnes

The heading says it all, today's bikes have the ability to hurtle us down the road at great pace with all the technology wrapped up in a very comfortable package. They are getting smarter, smoother, faster with so many rider modes and aids its mind boggling. How did we ever manage without all those gizmo's." Well of course we did because "what you ain't got you won't miss".

OLD METAL

For those who don't know me "and you're the lucky ones" I owned a 2007 BMW R1200GS air cooled boxer for some nine years plus. Pretty much a factory standard bike.

What you got for your money were luxury items such as two wheels, an engine that sounds like a ditch pump, a speedo that lets you know what gear you are in and a very comfortable sit up position. The unsung heroes on the bike were the shaft drive, the front tele-lever suspension "no fork dive" and the heated grips that took the skin of your hands on number two setting.

Not a lot for your money compared to today's bikes I hear you say. Well that's true, if all the gadgets are what you are after. I agree ABS and traction control really do help to keep the two round bits of rubber from losing grip as and when required. My 2007 old metal did not have either. Let's be honest ABS and TC should be treated as angels on our shoulders there ready should we need them but not ridden to on a continued basis.

Old metal took me on some fantastic tours all over Europe and never once missed a beat.

Across the Millau bridge and up the Gorge de Tarn to the central massif in deep France. Two tours of Luxembourg where my fellow mates wanted to go a bit quicker than me but Adrian stuck with me at a comfortable 130kph. When the rest enquired why we did not join in Adrian said he thought it would be nice to wait for CHUGGER BARNES. And so the name stuck.

The Black forest in Germany again another epic tour for old metal and the birth of the BELL END Manoeuvre. If you don't know what it is ask Tony. I think he has it on film. It involved only me no Germans, no fellow tour mates just me and a section of ascending bends in the road. The mind boggles.

Spain, France again and two years ago Corsica and old metal still never missed a beat.

Why on earth did I sell it I hear you say. Well somewhere in the back of my mind I knew one day old metal would fail, most likely the clutch after all it had done 68000 on the original clutch. Also the worry of a critical engine failure mid point in a bend or 2000 miles away from home.

That said the bike was tidy even though I never wash or clean my bikes. Actually the bike was mint



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



THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE EDITOR THE IAM OR WORCESTER & HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

page 12



and a dream to keep that way.

Old metal went on the market and sold in three days to a nice blood biker chap in Chester.

As it left the drive I was proppa full up and had to wipe a tear.

When you live with a bike for 9 years plus and have had such great times its a bit hard to let go, but I did and so along came

NEW METAL

So now came the huge task of searching for new metal, well actually newish metal. A trip to BMW Oxford to view a 2018 used fully kitted out GS was promising .By the time i had driven home i made the decision to put a deposit on it only to find some other geeza had already bagged it "BUGGER". More tippy tapping on the internet proved fruitless. Then Adrian found a gem for me. A 2018 1200 exclusive with 2680 miles on the clock. £11750 and £300 for a demo nav6. Sorted. At the time we where in lockdown so no biking so lots of standing looking at it and chomping at the bit.



The day finally came when I could get out on new metal and what a fantastic smooth, seamless gearbox and engine. The throttle response is immediate and continuous. The first impression of the feel of the bike was good and a round trip of 40 miles put a smile on my face. BUT something was not quite right, and it took a number of short trips to actually discover what it was. It certainly was not the

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



THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE EDITOR THE IAM OR WORCESTER & HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

page 13



- RIDE MODES Rain, Road, Dynamic, Dynamic pro [if plug the widget in]
- TFT SCREEN with pages of menu and adjustments.
- WONDER WHEEL to help jog through menu pages and zoom into the nav screen.
- CRUISE CONTROL to help turn you into a switched off unskilled womble.
- BLUE TOOTH that connects your helmet the BMW app, the nav the TFT and smart phone
- HILL START ASSIST which can be a sod to unlock sometimes
- SEMI ACTIVE SUSPENSION don't ask.
- GEAR SHIFT ASSIST so you can give your left hand a rest.

No, none of the above, the something not quite right was me allowing all the above to take my focus off the real job in hand. To ride the bike as I have been trained. Use your gearbox and look ahead and don't let all these gizmos and gadgets take your eye of the real job.

Six months later and a few thousand miles and I have to say NEW METAL is a very fine bike to ride. Bloody heavy but still a great bike.

Do I wish I had changed to new metal sooner. Not a chance, the old chugger was always great fun.

As for "what you ain't got you wont miss" I have got it all now and I tend to leave it all off.

Stick it in DYNAMIC and just ride!

Gary Barnes

SEVERN FREEWHEELERS: AN INVITATION – Ant Clerici

If anyone is interested in becoming a Blood Bike rider then please let me know.

ant@clericidesign.com The essentials are an advanced qualification and time to dedicate to the job.

SFW is a well-established charity with a robust set up. The service runs 7pm to 7am weekdays plus 24hrs over weekends and Bank Holidays. The week is split with a duty running from 7pm Wednesday to around 7pm Saturday then 7pm Saturday to 7am Wednesday. There's an online booking system.

A controller looks after the calls from the NHS and hands out jobs to the 4 bikes (N Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire).

Getting started

To become a volunteer you will have to be checked by SFW and then your first annual observed ride on a Blood bike which forms part of the training. In addition there's a requirement for a 3 yearly qualification by repeating the IAMR or RoSPA test. There's a buddy system for the first time out.

So what's the job?

Typically, the bike arrives at your house, delivered by the previous rider. The bike stays with you until you get it to the next rider.

You both carry out the pre ride checks and inform the bike manager all is ready. It is possible to be very busy or have a quiet evening and a good night's sleep: things are unpredictable!

One night on a recent duty I rode 123 miles with a 1914 departure and 2339 return:

WR1 (my home) to Kidderminster Hospital to collect a sample for Worcester Royal Hospital pathology, then I collected a letter for a nursing home near Inkberrow, almost home then another job this time a blood sample for the Blood Bank in Edgbaston from the Alex in Redditch.



Occasionally there are calls in the middle of the night; again a recent example was a package which was being taken from Salisbury to City Hospital in Birmingham. I was bike No 3 in the relay collecting the sample near M5 junction 7 from SFW Gloucester bike.

SFW is part of the National Association of Blood Bikes.

What do you need?

To be able to manage a BMW 1250 RT in all weathers and on all roads. One minute we find ourselves riding to an obscure address on narrow rural roads; and the next taking the M5 to Brum.

We all learn about the hospitals; where particular wards and laboratories are located. But there's great back up from the controllers if there are any problems. They have access to tracking so can see where you are.

Sometimes you have to be tenacious in getting access to securely locked down hospitals in the dark.

What do we deliver?

Anything that will fit on the bike! Usually small samples and notes but occasionally whole blood boxes (which fills the rack) or medical equipment. Apparently there's been a job involving false teeth!

Other roles

Fundraising and controlling are perhaps the other main jobs. The event at Prescott sees most of us helping out.

Why volunteer?

I guess we all have different motives but there's a warm feeling from being able to use our biker skills to help people in need.

Ant Clerici

A DAY AT THE RACES – MALLORY. PART 2 - John Nixon

So, where did I leave you? Oh yes, trying to sleep despite the clattering generators. The last one went quiet at about 1230 to a full-throated cheer from those likewise desperate to drift off.

Now I don't know about you but in my household, when our kids return, it doesn't take long before the conversation takes a downturn to include some reference to do-dooz, poopy, shyte, call it what you will. I blame the parents. I mean, let's face it, the whole business of number two's is a nightmare away from home. You of course may be more sophisticated than me and if so, good for you. It's 5.30am and I wake. A touch too early for my normal 'routine' you understand, but here at Mallory I contemplate the situation. Five cubicles to service well over a hundred males. And Covid. No, I haven't lost my sense of smell, though that might be handy in this situation.... So I'm not infected – yet. I try to sleep a bit more, but abandon. Having noticed the queue at the gulag the prior evening, I think I'll nip up now..... success...straight in!

Moving on (I know you're grateful) I make breakfast. Start with Sliced Banana, layered with Waitrose Maple Crunch, topped with Homemade Granola, caressed with Greek Style Yoghurt and lubricated with Almond Milk. Next, it's Sourdough Toast (I simply brown the bread in a non-stick frypan) and a carefully-boiled Egg achieved by popping it in the micro kettle on the gas. Yes, I've achieved 'dippy dippy' egg. Nice!



©John Nixon 2021

Looks like an ad for Waitrose..

A proper start to the day – 'breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, dine like a pauper'

It's not raining. Time to tidy the bed away and make a Fruit Tea – Lemon and Ginger. By now you've gathered I'm on a food regime which seeks to cut out the CRAP - being Caffeine, Refined sugar, Alcohol (and how's that going John?) and Processed food. But you don't care about that, why should you. I open the side door to see Paul emerge from his awning. He's blinking and

possibly reflecting on the Spitfire and Tribute ales of the night before...or possibly not. “Morning Paul, want some breakfast?” “Oh go on then.” I craft a bowl of Granola with Banana and a cup of normal breakfast tea.

I tidy the van, check if Paul needs anything I can do, but he’s busy talking to other drivers.

It’s closing 9am and a queue of solo bikes and outfits are inching past the front of my van filling the air with burnt fuel fumes and a brain numbing racket. It’s the regulation Noise Test carried out on the paddock road down to Edwinas Chicane. This started at 7.30am!



© John Nixon 2021

‘Free Practice’ starts at 9.30 and where’s Paul? He’s just taking his outfit to Noise Testing. Cutting it fine, but he’s relaxed. A little later I’m watching him and passenger Lewis don leathers, fire up and drive off towards the assembly area by the start.

Time to wander down to watch at Edwinas, which is about the only place you can see the racing from the paddock area and remember...the footbridge to the outside of the circuit is closed due to Covid, also denying access to a million more loos!. Alongside Andy’s missus Kath and Lewis’s partner Steph against the rail at the chicane, I wait for their practice laps. Sure enough Paul and Lewis come by, the red with yellow fairing fairly distinctive, though there’s another red and yellow outfit just to confuse.

But where are they now? Loads of outfits gone by and no Paul. Back to base. “Lewis got arm pump” says Paul. “Had to pull off”. Oh dear. First race is at 0958.

Time to watch the race.



Click the image to see the YouTube video!

These 600cc engines really scream, a phenomenal noise. 14,000 rpm or more. Truly Awesome! - despite that word being well overused.

At this point, just as you're getting bored with this article (how very dare you!) I can tell you the weekend racing doesn't play well for Paul and Lewis.

Saturday

First race – Stopped after another outfit crashes at Edwinas. Fibreglass bits fly past me, bike piles into bales. Mangled front end. Driver and passenger are ok, thank goodness.

Second race – Paul gets brake drag problem – retired.

Third race – Brake problem – ditto.

Overnight strip and rebuild front brake set up. My job – passing Paul spanners.

Between rebuild challenges in the canvas workshop, I manage to squeeze in a little supper, mais naturellement!

Sirloin steak, home grown salad and toms. Looks a touch too well done, n'est-ce-pas? It is, but does the job. Finish off the Cab Sav. To follow..... fresh home-grown fruit, yoghurt and that oh-so-versatile Granola! (Hardly a 'pauper's supper' John...?)



I get to bed at midnight.

Sunday doesn't go any better.

Warm Up – Brakes fine.

First race – Lewis slips off the sidecar at Bus Stop, a devilish section at Mallory.

Second race – Fuel pump fails.

Not what you want when you go racing, but that's what you have to deal with.

I just catch a pic of Paul No.66 entering Edwinas with the other red outfit prior to Lewis 'abandoning' the rig!



© John Nixon 2021

I promised you a bit more about Johnny Luebke, maestro of Dirty Weekender Adventure Vans and of Worcester Auto Services as well. Johnny used to race as passenger with Phil Dongworth as driver, but my understanding is that for reasons of them both being business partners in Worcester Auto Services, it was only wise that they stopped doing so.

And tragically, the very successful Phil Dongworth (aka Dongo) had a fatal accident while racing in the Isle of Man's Southern 100 event, back in July 2009. In his memory, not only does Johnny organise a van camping weekend for his customers, but sponsors four races and presents The Phil Dongworth Memorial Trophy every year at Mallory to the winning crew.



Courtesy of Johnny Luebke 2021

Left to right excluding commentator. Tom Kirby, Johnny Luebke, Paul Kirby.

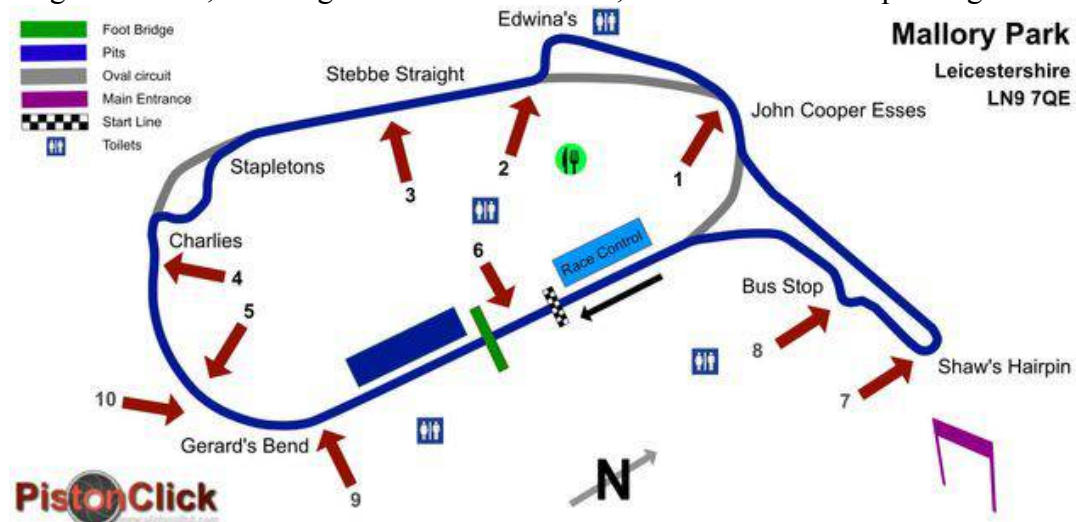
I decide to leave after lunch and am able to exit the paddock at lunchtime before it's locked down again for the afternoon races. But I stop to watch at Bus Stop on the outside of the circuit as I haven't been able to do so until now for Covid reasons, as you'll recall.

The solos come by and next race, the sidecars.



John Nixon 2021

The passengers come round Shaw's Hairpin over the back of the outfit, move just a little centre to steady the rig for the first left into Bus Stop chicane, sidecar wheel lifts, then over the back again for the right before getting ready to hang out left into Devil's Elbow, in the process most drivers put the sidecar wheel over the rumble bumps which frequently smack the passenger's bum clear of the tray. Driver gets as much power down as they can for Kirkby Straight. These boys and girls are tough! For sure, there's girls both as solo riders, sidecar drivers and passengers.



Courtesy of Wikipedia

And there we have it. Not what I am hoping for 'Team Lumley' but it's an absorbing and eye-opening weekend. The Team is now heading for Cadwell Park, but I won't be there.



© John Nixon 2021

Next event for me to enjoy, and support the Team where I can, is Donington in early September.
John Nixon