

# WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



December 2023



## EDITORIAL – JIM ROLT

Here is a varied and interesting issue, apart from our regular items from the [Chairman](#) and the [Chief Observer](#), there is a [great article from Sam Green](#) covering her recent adventure off-roading in Spain – or should I say off-biking? Either way it looks like a tough way to spend a holiday in really hot conditions; well done, I say!

Have you ever thought of getting an automatic bike? Certainly not I hear you cry, but [Chris Richards has taken the plunge](#) and might convince you to think again.

And we have [test passes](#), a first and a masters distinction! Well done Steve and Steve, and observer Rob and Mentor Dell, more WHAM successes!

The [AGM is coming up soon](#). You can step up and do more to help your club if you like, you'll find an [application form](#); and if you'd like to add anything to the agenda for the meeting there's a place to do that too. Either way, don't forget to come along to the meeting and have your say at 7pm on Wednesday 31st January.

Remember, between newsletters you can stay up to date with what's going on at the [events page on the club website](#). Here you'll find details of the weekly group rides which are always excellent fun with groups to suit every mood. Detailed maps are included which you can download for your satnav if you're sufficiently tech savvy. If savyness is not your thing, there's also a handy how-to guide at <https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/garmin-help/>.

There's a new group riding policy available too. If you haven't done much group riding you might find it useful to have a look at the club library, at <https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/library/> where the relevant documents are near the top.

Finally, don't forget your newsletter, I very rarely have too much stuff for an issue, so do help out with anything bike related that crosses your mind. Send to me at [whamnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:whamnewsletter@gmail.com). Ride safely and enjoy!

Jim Rolt, Editor.



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## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

Travelling down to London on the train today I saw several pheasant 'beaters' moving down a field toward a single shotgun equipped 'shooter'. Obviously, the recent debate on the same topic, on the WHAM Facebook group, immediately sprang back into my mind and I pondered, again, into how quickly situations can escalate given a divisive topic, action, use of language, bringing people to express some very different points of view. Fortunately, we all seem to be accepting that opinions vary, and we reached ceasefire on that particular item...



But, what this item did underline was fact that words and actions can convert something enjoyable, into something that is not, in a matter of seconds. I wrote last month about the amount of development I'd witnessed as being required from non-WHAM members in order to reach a 'safe' standard of riding; the 'moments' that informed my views were measured in parts of a second.

Does that mean I think us advanced johnnies are exempt from having these 'moments'? It certainly does not!

This week, whilst driving in the roller-skate (MX-5) in a national limit I noticed a smart, Rukka-clad, GS rider appearing in my mirrors and so I just kept on at 60 and thought no more of it. For those of you that know the A38 Worcester bound entering the village of Fernhill Heath, you will know there's a decent right-hand bend just before the speed limit decreases to 30mph into the village. With a stream of traffic coming the other way accelerating out of the village where do you think our rider decided to pull his 'meat sandwich' overtake? Yes, you guessed correctly; on the bend, as I was sitting at 60, 18-inches from my door and the doors of the oncoming cars he came and then hooned into the village at just above 60mph. I'm sure I saw two oncoming drivers mouthing a most amusing descriptor for a phrase approaching 'pleasures oneself' at the rider and I must admit I did have a shake of the head and a tut.

We met again, our rider and I, at the traffic lights in the village, and much to my surprise, he turned around and waved a hand in apology; he knew me from an IAM event and is a current member of the IAM. Not WHAM fortunately.

So, in that split second prior to the overtake, an advanced rider, out on a leisure ride, disregarded SLAP (Safe:Legal:Advantageous:Perception), put himself and ten other people in a hazardous situation, gained nothing, and importantly, reinforced the narrative that all motorcyclists are selfish idiots, using the highway as a racetrack.

Me recounting this hopefully provides a timely reminder for us all; just because you can do something on the road, on your bike, it doesn't mean you should do it. I'm often asked by members considering gaining a master's qualification about the "what are the differences between advanced and masters"; well, the point about doing what's 100% right rather than merely possible translates into a pass/fail situation within the master's programme.

It's so easy to leave a bad impression that we all then battle against, and so, let's all hold SLAP in

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our minds before we cross that white line....

Thirty members have booked up for the WHAM Christmas doo at the Falcon on Friday 22nd December. We do have an upper limit capacity wise and so if you'd like to join in, please do make your way over to the [WHAM website](#) to book yourself a seat or two.

My very best!

Richard Hewitt

WHAM

Chair

## CHIEF OBSERVER – ALEX HOYLE

### Thank God for Heated Grips

Many people think that riding a motorcycle through the winter is a crazy idea, but there are actually some benefits to it. Not only can you enjoy the thrill of riding in different conditions, but you can also improve your riding skills, visit less crowded places, and appreciate the changing scenery. The last couple of Sunday morning rides that I have been out on, have been in the colder weather, but I just love it, I don't really know why, but I just do. It's much colder and can be quite muddy at time, you have to cope with the low sun shining on a wet road, it's just the challenge of it I suppose.

However, riding a motorcycle in the winter also requires some extra precautions and preparations to ensure your safety and comfort. Here are some tips on how to ride a motorcycle through the winter and enjoy its benefits.

- Choose the right gear. You need to protect yourself from the cold, wind, and rain, so invest in some quality winter motorcycle jackets, gloves, boots, and trousers. You may also want to consider heated bike grips, and gloves or electric vests and jackets that can keep you warm with battery power. Make sure your gear is waterproof, breathable, and visible to other road users.
- Check your bike. Your motorcycle needs to be in good condition to handle the winter roads. Make sure your tyres have enough tread on them, and are at the correct pressure, and that your battery is fully charged, your brakes are working properly, and your lights are bright and clean. You may also want to add some accessories like a bigger windscreen or some handguards.
- Plan your route. Winter riding can be unpredictable, so you need to plan ahead and avoid roads that can get icy or covered in snow, now to be honest I would not be riding in these conditions, but sometimes you simply cannot avoid it. Roads that are covered in leaves or loose gravel can



also be a challenge, as you can't always take the line that you would want to, so you have to make a decision there and then. You also need to check the weather forecast and avoid riding in storms or extreme temperatures. You may want to choose routes that have more sunlight, less traffic, and have more places that you can stop and warm up if needed. Sometimes in the winter you may want to stay on the more main roads, although not as much fun as a good B road they do tend to be cleaner and are also gritted more frequently.

Ride carefully. Winter riding requires more caution and skill than summer riding. You need to reduce your speed, increase your following distance, brake gently, and avoid sudden movements. You also need to be aware of the potential hazards on the road, such as black ice, wet patches, or potholes. You need to keep your head up and scan ahead for any signs of trouble. You also need to be alert and focused on your riding, as winter riding can be more tiring and stressful than riding in the summer.

Riding a motorcycle through the winter can be a rewarding experience if you do it right. You can enjoy some of the benefits of riding in cooler weather, such as visiting popular tourist destinations during their off season, seeing how the scenery at your favourite riding destinations changes with the seasons, or improving your riding skills by learning how to handle your bike in different conditions. We always say that those who ride all year, and especially those who use their bike to commute to work tend to make better overall riders. I put this down to time on the bike, there is simply nothing like saddle time to improve your riding, so get out there and give it a go.

Alex W Hoyle

Chief Observer WHAM 3260



## 'CLUTCHLESS MOTORCYCLES' SHOULD WE CARE? - CHRIS RICHARDS

### Background:

The point of writing this piece is to bring the growth of automatic/semi-automatic/DCT/DSG version motorcycles maybe a little closer to the front of our minds, and for us to consider how that might increasingly require some adaptation from the IAM and WHAM when training or observing riders who own these motorcycles. This piece is not intended as a marketing article for Honda!

It will not be of any surprise to WHAM members reading this newsletter piece, that most motorcycles that have been manufactured over the last 100 years or so, incorporate a manual transmission, where gear changes are made by the rider using a manual clutch lever or similar. Whilst some manufacturers have dabbled with automatic / semi-auto bikes over this time, up until more recently they have not gained much traction with the biking public. I can certainly recall Honda bringing a limited number of CB400 Dream 'Hondamatic' autos in the late 70's, though they didn't sell well.



However, over the last ten years or so, things have slowly but surely started to change. Twist-and-go scooters are becoming ever more popular, and of course the continued growth of electric bikes seems almost inevitable, which of course have no gearbox or clutch, such as the Harley Livewire and Zero SR/F.

Various major manufacturers have started to offer Direct Shift Gearboxes (DSG) /Quick-Shifters as an option, which provides the choice whether to use the clutch or not when changing gear, though still a manual transmission.

A few manufacturers have dabbled in the auto or semi auto market over the years, though it is Honda that have been making the greatest strides in developing motorcycles that use their own patented semi-automatic 'Dual Clutch Transmission' (DCT), which allows the rider to select between four fully 'automatic' modes, or a manual transmission. Trigger switches (somewhat like using paddles in some automatic cars) rather than a clutch allow gears to be changed at any time whilst either in full manual mode or in any automatic mode. DCT versions are available on the Africa Twin, Goldwing, NC750, NT1100 and other models including scooters also.

### Why the growth?

These motorcycles are becoming more and more popular. My local Honda dealer stated to me that most sales of the NT1100 have been the DCT version, even though they offer both a fully manual clutch controlled, and quick-shifter version which are both significantly cheaper. I could see that trend also on FB forums, where certainly over the first year or so of its launch, they were

selling like hot cakes.

I've not done any deep market research on this matter, though I did speak to several people who have or had experience of DCT or similar, did some research on forums, read magazine reviews etc. I then bought a brand-new Honda NT1100 DCT. This touring model design incorporates the Africa Twin engine, DCT transmission as an option, frame and instruments.



So, after 46 years of motorcycling, and around 20 different bikes, this was my first machine without a manual clutch.

In part, my reason was because I was finding the clutch on my tourer (Pan European ST1300) more and more tiring on my left hand, particularly when in heavy traffic or urban settings. There was also a part of me that just wanted to try something different, that still had enough horses (101bhp) and was a little lighter...in this case around 50kg lighter.

Having now owned the NT for a while, I can also appreciate that the more likely reason I'm picking up from most owners is that they are easier and fun to ride, certainly after a day or two getting used to them. DCT and presumably other auto variants are also very difficult if not impossible to stall, which could be an attraction to some riders.

## **Was it the right decision?**

For me, yes, absolutely. I've had the bike for around 18 months, and it's been a joy to ride, no regrets. Honda build quality being almost a given, its very comfortable and the DCT option has proved to be the right choice. As mentioned earlier, It took a couple of days to get used to, but that was just about getting to grips with some settings and modifying my riding technique a little whilst riding. I would occasionally forget and instinctively reach for the clutch lever, before very quickly remembering there wasn't one! It also has a hand brake, which can be very useful when parking on hills!

I did find initially that rear braking was required more than typical to control the bike at low speeds, going around roundabouts etc. Further tweaks of the settings, together with a few more miles under my belt seemed to resolve that issue.

Gear changes are smooth, and acceleration just fine, using the triggers to go up and down the box as and when necessary, at any time. The more I've ridden it the more confident I've become in its capabilities, and hence smoother it seems to have become.

You cannot block shift gear changes as you can with a clutch controlled gear shift, so each gear change requires an individual press of a trigger, whether up or down the box. I've not found that to be a particular issue, at least to date.

## **Is it just a matter of time before we are all riding Autos?**

I am in no doubt whatsoever that the manufacture of motorcycles fitted with manual transmission and clutch will continue for a very long time to come.

However, given the meteoric rise in the sales of automatic vehicles generally in the UK and elsewhere, how long will it be before we see the same with motorcycles. Notwithstanding the inevitable growth in electric vehicles, there seems to be a reasonable amount of information around to at least indicate that this growth trajectory for autos has already started.

The rather negative image of the automatic motorcycle of the past, also seems to have been overcome to a significant degree through marketing those associated technological advances.

Surely, given the success that Honda is achieving, it can only be a matter of time before the other major manufacturers are seriously investing and developing their own range of similar semi or auto options, alongside that of quick-shift and electric motorcycles.

## **Does this matter for the IAM and WHAM?**

Well, it probably raises a few questions at least.

Does the IAM need to consider the growth in 'Autos and Semi-Autos' more proactively within the training methods, materials, and control systems to cater for a potentially fast-growing trend in autos? There is barely a mention of automatics within the 'The Police Riders Handbook - Motorcycle Roadcraft', other than, in summary (p.118), advising riders of those motorcycles to consult the machine handbook.

Is the IPSGA motorcycle control system entirely relevant for autos or semi-autos, or might that require some further consideration and even modification?

Like most trends of successful products, growth tends to be exponential rather than straight line,



so this may be upon us far sooner that we think.



I hope this piece will create some food for thought and possible debate.

Author:

Chris Richards

Advanced Rider – 24 years

IAM membership number: m00298533

DVSA ERS Qualified Trainer



## SAM DOES SPAIN! - SAM GREEN

After returning from the adventures of Belgium, I rested for a week, and then flew off to Lloret de Mar in Spain, with my work colleagues for our annual 'Big Break.' We have a choice of activities and I chose a day out Enduro biking.

My first time Enduro biking with Torotrail was last year and it was fantastic ([www.torotrail.com](http://www.torotrail.com)) but as we were in a different area of Spain this year, we tried a different company 'Enduro Barcelona.' ([www.endurobarcelona.com](http://www.endurobarcelona.com))

After enjoying a coffee and a croissant at a little café at 07:30am, I joined eight other colleagues to meet the taxi. If I am totally honest, I was bundled into this dark windowed, black taxi, taken 30 minutes to an unknown location, beaten black and blue and was dropped off at the hotel. But as this is a WHAM newsletter, the Editor wanted me to elaborate more...



We arrived at Enduro Barcelona, which was located in an industrial street, in Calella which is about 50km from Barcelona. There were two other ladies with me, and we enjoyed putting on our Madonna-esque protective gear. It gave us the giggles as this instructor tried to maintain order as we were trying to Velcro this, clip that...



The melting started here, with our protective kit on, we stepped out into the sunshine. With my little legs, I was given a Scorpa T-ride 250cc 4T to play with. The bike was a little more rough and ready than the Husqvarna FE250 I had enjoyed the year before. It had a trail bike gear box, so with my little feet there was no way of getting into second gear without standing on the pedals. We rode the road around the block to get used to the bikes.

The rules, never sit on the bike with the stand down, they can snap; always stop the engine when we stop and if we stop, stop in the shade. Failure to comply was 20 press ups ... I had a feeling I was going to die.





One more circuit around the block, and then suddenly we turned off onto this dirt track which I never would have noticed, and so our adventure started into the Montnegre mountain range. We went a few hundred yards and stopped at the top of a hill. We were to ride down it, using the 'smoothest' path but to my amusement, the path ended on a public roundabout, with traffic coming from a blind junction on the right, but we weren't to brake until we were on the actual road. In my mind, I was hoping the road below was not a busy one, but luckily, I landed without incident. Once completing this little exercise, we headed off back into the mountains.

We were under a lot of instruction - uphill, downhill, rocky terrain, sandy terrain, sharp lefts, sharp rights. The sun was getting hotter, and I was drinking more from my camel pack (the best purchase I have ever made). The instructor wanted us to bump start the bike, rolling down a hill in second, releasing the clutch, and at the same time keeping an eye out for the best 'track' to follow on this rough terrain, without falling off! Giggles!





We pulled over in this open area, to wait for some of the group to catch us up. The wait was longer than usual and so the instructor sped up the track to find them. Eventually the two last riders rolled up. One of the ladies had an 'off' on a bend, so we took a gentle ride to the lunch location. We stopped at a Catalan restaurant off the tourist beaten track.

Whilst waiting for our 3-course meal, I helped my fellow injured rider remove her protective clothing, and she was pretty scratched, bruised and grazed. No broken bones thankfully. I nursed her with lemon tango and an ice bag which melted gradually. What better thing to do with a bag of cold water, other than slap the bag on my face when I least expected it? Inappropriate jokes were made and I only let her get away with it because she was injured. The food was lovely but unusual. I enjoyed my Spanish sausage and pig trotters and the dessert was a tart topped with popcorn and pork crackling. I will leave you to process that for a moment.



After lunch, four of the group, including my injured colleague, wanted to return to base, and decided enough was enough. I must say I was tempted to bail, but I only do this once a year, so I decided to stay on. Last woman standing. Enduro riding is heavy on the knees, hips and bottom as you don't sit on those bikes for very long over this terrain. Leaning into bends was counter intuitive as you tip the bike right but put your body to the left. There was a lot to remember as it is a different style of riding completely. It is a sport; it is physical but it's pretty cool when you master it. One of the instructors told me that Spanish kids will ride their bicycles around these tracks from the age of 4 and then grow into enduro motorcycling which is why they are so good at it. I can't say I felt great knowing that there was a 5-year-old somewhere, better at this, than me! They definitely have the terrain for it.



Concrete roads would just run out and turn into this uneven, dangerous track, and then a car would appear around the corner, or joggers – these were public roads, and I thought our pot holes were bad. We were exploring quite remote locations. The views were amazing but I confess, I kept my eye on where I was going, as I couldn't afford to be complacent!

We headed up some tarmac roads and then veered off onto a woodland terrain. We were hurtling through weeds that were knee high – I had no idea what the surface was underneath, but I just accelerated through. The bikes are built for this after all!

The trails were getting more complex, using all the instruction from the multiple scenarios shown to us in the morning. I admit I was getting tired, so it was now time to dig deep and tackle each task one by one. I took a sharp right-hand bend and my front tyre burrowed into a deep patch of sand. I lost that one and ended up on my side, with the bike on top of me. Quite graceful but as I moved my right ankle out the way, I felt something twinge. Eventually I stood up and it was weight bearing so that was enough for the Spanish instructor to say, right come on, back on the bike and join the group again. My ankle was aching but at least it wasn't my gear foot so I carried on.

We were hurtling through the bends, dust kicking up and I was getting into my groove, parading my backside in the air, as you use your body to tip and balance the bike. All was going great, and we were heading back to base. I was really proud of myself until the back wheel spun out from

under me on a sharp left-hand bend. Whoa, off I went, left hand went down, and the bike roared as it fell on me. 'Oh fiddlesticks!', I thought, as the rider behind me stopped and helped me get the bike off me. 'That went a bit wrong...' I said, then I could see I had ripped my glove, and my hand and wrist was coming out with lovely grazing and bruising. I was pretty sure I had bruised my big toe nail on the steel toed boots. Ouch that hurt. The instructor had eventually circled back and he checked the bike. The electric start was broken. He managed to kick start it and he said two things to me.

'You see that line you slide... that was the wrong line; you should have taken the other channel.'

Sam nodded, and thinks to herself, 'No sh\*t Sherlock.'

He then said, 'bike is started; ride back, it's not far now.'

Sam nodded, and thinks to herself, 'No, I haven't broken anything, thanks for asking. I shall ride back.'

I rode the motorcycle back to base; we were all glad to be back. We had been riding these terrains for around 7 hours and were pretty battered. This lady instructor who was hard as nails cleaned and dressed my hand. She recalled the time when she fell off 11 times in a day – it seems to be the done thing in Enduro. It's definitely a softer landing than on the road. I felt like Private Benjamin and I survived it. It was fun but it is not for the faint hearted. It works you hard physically and mentally but it's really great to ride and have a burn out.

We returned to the hotel and in reception was one of the many free bars. I convinced the lads to have a whisky with me to numb the aches and pains. We ended up having a couple and then I met up with my colleagues, in my dirty sweaty attire. I limped across to them and I was greeted with 'what the hell has happened to you?!'

Turned out there was a plan to go out for the evening. I was so shattered. I had a shower, freshened up, and with the help of several Johnnie Walkers and around 4 Sambucas, I did karaoke and 'limp danced' until 5am the next day. I admit, I am still recovering and decided this will be the last midlife crisis for a little while ... but it was fun!







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## RECENT TEST PASSES

Steve Edwards passed his masters test with distinction! Wow... in his words:

*"Del has asked me to let you know for a newsletter article that I passed my masters with distinction on 14<sup>th</sup> November, and I'd like to put on record my grateful thanks to Del for his invaluable and detailed input as my masters mentor."*

*The test itself was in horrendous weather conditions with driving rain, flooded roads and debris from fields, verges and no shortage of leaves on the road. Great fun!*

*Robbie Downing did a good job of putting me at ease and despite the awful conditions the ride was very enjoyable – it's basically two people out for a ride on their bikes, and any day riding your bike is a great day isn't it?*

*I'd thoroughly recommend anyone thinking about doing their masters to give it a go, it boosts your confidence no end and makes you a far more relaxed rider which gives extra enjoyment to the ride.*

*Thanks again Del,*

*Steve Edwards*







This is Steve Dear who passed his advanced test with a 1<sup>st</sup>! Well done Steve and well done star observer Rob Edwards for his usual great job! Here are the 2 of them out on a jolly in what looks like Wales:



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# NOTICE OF AGM

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### WORCESTER & HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024

The Group AGM will be held at the Falcon Bromyard, Starting at 7.30PM

The main purpose of the AGM is to review the events and finances of the past year and to elect the committee for the coming year. All full members and associates are invited to attend but only paid-up full members of the Institute and the Group may vote. (Those who have passed their Advanced Test)

#### **Committee Changes**

The current officers – Chairman, Secretary, & Treasurer must stand down but can offer themselves for re-election. The current known intentions of the Committee are given below.

**Officers:** Chairman: **Richard Hewitt** Standing down **Matt Dent** proposed

Secretary: **Andy Chambers** Seeking re-election

Treasurer: **Andrew Peckston** Seeking re-election

#### **Committee Members**

Vice Chairman: **Matt Dent** Standing down **Tony Davis** proposed

Newsletter Editor: **Jim Rolt** Seeking re-election

Membership Secretary: **Simon Tibbetts** Seeking re-election

Webmaster: **Tony Davis** Seeking re-election

Routemaster: **Tony Davis** Seeking re-election

Events Coordinators: **Duane Sanger** Seeking re-election, **Mark Saxton** Standing down, 2<sup>nd</sup> role withdrawn

Chief Observer: **Alex Hoyle** Standing down - Committee Appointment

# Nomination Form

For the election of

Worcester & Hereford Advanced Motorcyclists Committee 2024

TO BE HANDED/TO ANY OFFICER/COMMITTEE MEMBER OF WORCESTER &  
HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS PRIOR TO THE AGM OR TO THE  
SECRETARY ON THE EVENING OF THE AGM ON:  
WEDNESDAY 31<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2024

I .....

(Name in block capitals) wish to stand for election to the position of:

.....

Signature..... Date.....

Proposed by: (Name in Capitals) .....

Signature..... Date.....

Seconded by: (Name in Capitals) .....

Signature..... Date.....

Nomination Accepted by.....

In the event of 2 or more nominations for the same post, I agree to a vote by ballot on the night  
& will abide by the majority decision. Please note: You may not stand for the committee if the  
law debars you from being a charity trustee. If you wish to volunteer for the committee but do  
not know someone who can nominate you or second your nomination

## COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS

Any WHAM full member wishing to put themselves forward for any of the officer posts or the vacant committee posts should complete the attached nomination form.

Voting will take place to fill the three officer posts and vacant Committee positions at the AGM. In the event of 2 or more nominations for a post, there will be a vote by show of hands on the evening.

Nomination forms are attached to this notice. Please remember, only fully paid up members of the Institute and the Group may nominate or be nominated.

Please return nomination forms to any of the Officers/Committee Members as soon as possible or hand them into the Secretary at the start of the Annual General Meeting.

All members are invited and indeed, encouraged to attend the A.G.M., not only to participate in voting in your committee, but also to volunteer your ideas, express your views and discuss where/how you would like the Group to progress.

Any member can submit items for inclusion in the AGM Agenda. Items need to be submitted to the Secretary Andy Chambers on E-mail [andy.chambers@btinternet.com](mailto:andy.chambers@btinternet.com) at least five days before the AGM.