

WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



November 2023

EDITORIAL – JIM ROLT

Here we are in the land of storms. But here's something to help you pass a little time while you're not out riding around the fallen trees and floods, - this month's WHAM newsletter!

Naturally we have our usual pieces from chairman [Richard](#) and chief observer [Alex](#), but there's much more too!

Part two of Sam Green's account of the [epic trip to Belgium](#), in which we learn of Donna's hospitalisation; Ant Clerici tells us exactly what he thinks of his [new Triumph](#), apparently the honeymoon is over; and a little [number from me](#) to get you thinking about bike dynamics and tyres when the bike leans...

And not forgetting, the agenda and notice for the [WHAM annual general meeting](#), which will be held at 7pm on Wednesday 31st of January.

Sunday rides every week are always posted at this [wham website page](#), as are other events like Wednesday chat nights and things like the Christmas dinner:

<https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/events/>

Keep up with the latest club gossip at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/321150181285607>

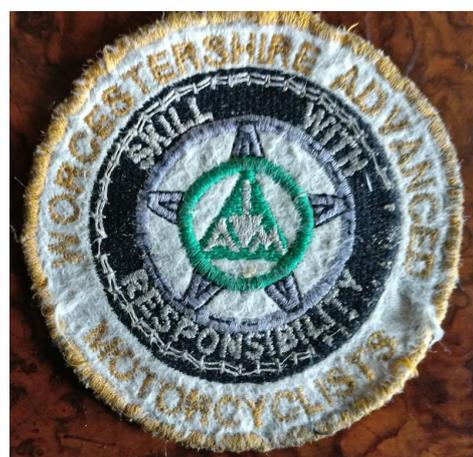
And, please consider joining the lovely company of members who contribute to this monthly publication. The editor is not going to write the whole thing, and it's success depends on input from you! Please send any thoughts or ideas to me and as long as they are not libellous or illegal I will publish them!

Jim Rolt

Newsletter editor

Contributions or correspondence to whamnewsletter@gmail.com

Have a great month y'all!



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CHAIRMAN'S PIECE - RICHARD HEWITT

In the past few months, I've had the pleasure of Observing at Thrupton on an IAM Skills day, and with West Mercia Police Observing on a Bikesafe course. Now I'll be honest with you, and whilst I enjoyed myself, and was grateful I was called upon, my overriding thoughts for the most part were slightly negative, as there were punters at both, saying, and doing, some very odd things indeed, and displaying let's say somewhat basic machine control skills.

I said to 'er indoors that I was surprised just how much 'development' some of these riders needed; some of them not meeting a bar where much about IPSGA, limit point, anything like that, was what they would benefit from. Whilst I did resist the temptation to come over superior, I was a little disappointed in myself for hurtling straight towards the conclusions laid out above.

And then it dawned on me that I was looking at things from the wrong end of the telescope. The shortcomings of the riders I saw did not mean all other non-advanced were going to be of the same standard; but it did mean that even though some strange stuff was being said, these riders were bothering themselves to attempt some self-improvement; and that was the point!

It didn't matter that I could objectively assess them as requiring serious improvement; that was the challenge, rather than the shortcoming.

And then you look at what we do with riders further down the line. We turn them into skilled riders. I'd wager almost the entirety of WHAM's current Observer bench and Committee, if being honest with themselves, would happily state they are safer, more knowledgeable, faster, and more relaxed than before they set out on moving from Bikesafe, to IAM test, and onwards.

And that gives us Purpose. We are a road safety charity; we may, within our own number make mucho controlled, skilled, progress on a Sunday, but at the core of it we have helped hundreds of riders fulfil their true potential. I have never experienced a situation where an associate, whether they choose to make it to test or not, don't end up in a situation where they are 'better' post training. And that makes me feel proud for us at WHAM. We deliver tangible results that enable people not only to enjoy themselves, but to return home safely to their families after they've been out riding.

And that my friends IS the point of IAM and WHAM. Thank you for indulging me yet it felt like it just needed to be said.

Currently we've 149 members, 23 active Observers, and 15 associates. I haven't got the pass figure for the year to hand yet, but I do know everyone that has tested has passed this year, most at the first attempt, followed by one or two at the second time of asking after a little more tuition.

Congratulations go to Phil George, Rob Edwards, Mark Hird, and Jim Rolt, all of whom passed their National Observer test recently; Rob Edwards also passed his master's test.

Thanks to my co-committee members for ensuring Vanessa "The Girl on a bike" Ruck received a



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warm welcome at last weeks exceptionally well attended Natter nite. November will see Andy Peckston and me delivering a slide pack from this year's IAM HQ autumn briefing forums. There's a distinct change of tempo and emphasis at HQ and if you've ever wondered "where/what are the IAM doing" please do come along and we'll share with you what we learnt for ourselves.

Lastly, there remain a seat or two for the WHAM Christmas doo at the Falcon on Friday 22nd December. Please see website to book.

My very best!

Richard Hewitt

WHAM

Chair

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CHIEF OBSERVER – ALEX HOYLE

Ear, Ear, or to Plug, or not to Plug, that is the Question.

Something very strange happened to me the other week on a ride back from Lee Motorcycles in Ledbury, for some absurd reason I left my ear plugs out, and it completely altered the way I rode my bike. I ended up riding it in a much higher gear than I would normally do in order to try and quieten the bike down. The knock on effect of riding in a higher gear dramatically affected the way the bike handled and how I rode the bike. I felt distracted by the noise and less confident in my abilities. With ear plugs in, you can focus on the road and your surroundings better and feel more relaxed and in control.

While all this was going on I thought I would just try and pen a few words about the benefits of wearing ear plugs when riding a motorbike. You may think that ear plugs are just for noise reduction, but they actually have a lot more advantages than that. Ear plugs can protect your hearing, improve your concentration and performance, and enhance your enjoyment of the ride.

First of all, ear plugs protect your hearing from the loud and constant noise of the engine, the wind, and the traffic. This noise can cause permanent hearing damage over time, and also make you feel tired and stressed. According to the World Health Organization, exposure to noise levels above 85 decibels (dB) can cause hearing loss, and the average noise level of a motorbike is around 95dB. That means that riding a motorbike without ear plugs can put you at risk of losing your hearing or developing tinnitus, a ringing or buzzing sound in your ears. Ear plugs can help you avoid these problems and preserve your hearing for the future.

Ear plugs can also help you feel more energized and relaxed after your ride. The loud noise of the motorbike can activate your stress response, which increases your heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels. This can make you feel anxious, irritable, and exhausted. However, this normally only happens to me when I am last at the café and late for my breakfast. Ear plugs can reduce the noise level to a more comfortable and safe range, which can lower your stress response and make you feel calmer and happier. However, this normally only happens to me when I am first at the café and early for my breakfast. You can enjoy your ride more without feeling drained or overwhelmed by the noise.

Ear plugs can also help you make better decisions and react faster on the road. The loud noise of the motorbike can impair your cognitive functions, such as attention, memory, and problem-solving. This can make you more prone to errors and accidents on the road. Ear plugs can prevent this by reducing the noise level and allowing you to think more clearly and efficiently. You can be more aware of what's happening around you and respond more quickly and accurately to any situation.

Finally, ear plugs can enhance your enjoyment of the ride. You can still hear the sound of your



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motorbike, but without the annoying and harmful noise. Should you wish to you can also listen to music through your helmet speakers, if you have them, without having to turn up the volume too high. If you have helmet comms and are Bluetooth linked to your partner or a fellow rider, ear plugs make these conversations much easier to hear, and much less likely to be misunderstood, very handy if you are being given directions in the centre of Paris on a Friday afternoon.

And the really good news, years ago The Safer Roads Partnership gave WHAM loads of free earplugs, I still have them in my bike garage, so don't buy them especially, just give me a call or an email, and I will try and get them to you at some point, or if there is enough interest I will bring them along to a club night with me.

Alex Hoyle

WHAM Chief Observer

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THE HONEYMOON IS OVER... ANT CLERICI

Many of you know that at the end of July I swapped my Triumph 900 Tiger for the 1200 GT PRO.

It's now done 2383 miles so perhaps time for a review.



I expect you have read the biker mags and can reel off the facts and figures so this is more about the bike in use: riding for fun, observing, two-up and on a recent trip to the Ardennes. But for those

who don't recall the Tiger GT PRO has 148bhp and 130 Nm torque @ 7,000 rpm and as we all know it's the delivery that's crucial. The Tiger has 100Nm torque from just over 3000 revs, climbing to the maximum 130Nm at 7000 revs then tailing off slightly to 110Nm at 9500revs; the power curve is a straight line from 40 at 3000 revs all the way to 148 at 9000 revs. What does this mean? Well a gentle, smooth, controllable performance between 3000 and 4500 revs, with relaxed cruising at motorway speeds, progressively leading to an exciting, horizon chasing Tiger above 6000 revs.



It is a well put together design with shaft drive and, on my bike, the technology has worked almost faultlessly. I like the radiators which are split with one on each side each with its own fins to push hot air away from my legs.

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Once run in and the upper reaches of the rev range could be explored I've found it's a very quick bike and with great handling. The engine is superb and although there are some vibes at 80'ish mph (remember I have been to Europe on it) they don't hamper the enjoyment of the big Triumph.

It's an "all day bike" in terms of comfort. We tested this returning from the Ardennes; a mere 444 miles accompanied by Mark Saxton on his Multistrada. With few stops en route, the comments over our comms about aching body parts began on the M40 which I guess isn't bad.

Cruise control is a real bonus to help with long trips and where speed creep needs to be avoided.



Ardennes lunch stop

Two-up is fine. Gill used to say our 1200 Multistrada has the best pillion seat but the Tiger has taken the top spot in comparison with the Ducati and previous bikes: an Africa twin and 1200GS's. The suspension sorts itself out for the load; be it me without luggage or two of us with panniers and stuff. The slight niggle used to be the bike remembered the setting so getting on after a two up journey put the seat higher than was comfortable until it sorted itself out. But after the first service a mod to the programming introduced the option of pushing the "home" button to activate suspension lowering – hey presto - both feet flat on the ground. The process is reversed by pushing the "home" button again or just wait for 50mph to self-cancel and revert to the programmed settings.

Whilst I'm on electronic glitches; the cruise control display occasionally loses the speed indicator. Cruise control still works it's just a display issue. Apart from that I've had no other problems.

I've discovered hill hold works when you're pointing down as well as up!

Another downside is that I find it difficult to use the centre stand; I'll have to put on weight!?

What about riding? Well it has good presence on the road with excellent lights. I'm not convinced about the cornering headlights but that's after a single trip after dark. The bike feels lighter than it should for a 1200 and nimble enough on the twisty B roads.

I prefer the engine to the 1250 BMWs (the jury is out on the new 1300). It looks great and the panniers work well. Average fuel consumption is around 51mpg so over 200 miles between petrol stations.

Overall.....the best bike I've owned.....ever!

Ant Clerici

AN ENGLISH GIRL, IN BELGIUM PT2... - SAM GREEN

Sunday is a morning of rest from the bikes. Wearing our biking civvies, we were taken to Spa Town in the van. To the boys' delight, we visited a huge flea market (Brocante) which was stacked with records, ornaments, glassware, musical instruments, a ship and lots of pornography magazines. Donna and I could have filled our panniers several times with this crazy stuff.



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We had a brief coffee break with the boys, and then we nipped to the supermarket for a special purchase, before heading up the road to talk to the nice ladies at the Tourist Information Centre. It wasn't long before Dad Ken was asking where we were and we had to return.



Sunday afternoon, we rode to Sy for lunch. Neil helped a young boy with his bicycle chain, whilst I munched on a Salade aux lardons – bacon pieces with a lovely runny poached egg – I enjoyed that very much. The atmosphere was relaxed and the location was idyllic, alongside a river, which was clearly a popular family location.



It was time to ride back. The roads threw up their twisties of varying angles. Some just kept going and going as they swept around; to the left, and to the right – my lunch didn't know what to do with itself. Seriously though, I couldn't deny the quality of roads and as the group described, it was like a biking playground. You could try stuff; in my case some I won, some I lost, but it all

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builds on an experience I had never had before. It was a biking masterclass and I was in the thick of it.

I reached the junction of the N645 and saw that Donna had a stationary mishap; it seemed her bike had fainted on the side of the road, breaking her leg in two places. Hi-vis on, Ant and I, using our comms, did traffic control whilst the others saw to Donna. Five of us rode back to base, leaving our friend, with Neil who was absolutely brilliant. Donna said in her own words, within four hours, she had an ambulance ride, assessment, x-ray, operation and was settled in a ward, laughing at chubby bunny videos... ahh yes! Chubby Bunny...!

Ken had told us about a game called Chubby Bunny; remember I said Donna and I had gone to the supermarket for a special purchase? – it was for marshmallows!!! In her absence, we decided to play Chubby Bunny, stuffing marshmallows in our mouths to cheer our 'sicknote' friend up. It was the funniest night and a real tonic for everyone. We did save her some marshmallows to see if she could beat Mark's five! I'm yet to hear the score!

Monday morning was the morning after Chubby Bunny and I watched people eating breakfast, moving bikes, bags, phone calls, Eric leaving the door open – it was a hive of activity. Mark and Ant decided to head back to the UK, not in abandonment, but to go on an epic journey to pick up the car and trailer and return to Belgium! The adventures really started here. We waved the travellers off, and it left me, Ken and Eric. Possibly the most unlikely trio to head off in to the wilds of Belgium, but I decided to just 'go with it.'





Neil and Ann visited Donna daily, and Ann, a multi-linguist translated what the doctors and surgeons were saying. The operation had been successful and Donna was resting well. I had been reliably informed that the ambulance men and consultants are rather easy on the eye. I decided to Google to validate and verify this information as any journalist would. It was a very difficult job.

Dad Ken had booked the eldest and the youngest into a hotel in Mons. Road trip! But alas it was time to say goodbye to Ann and Neil who had been so fantastic during our trip, and for looking after our friend Donna. We set off, riding through the Ardennes' twisties one last time. As we progressed the roads flattened out, straightened out until such time we met the motorways and off we went!

One of my memories was riding through roadworks, and seeing a road resurfacing project in progress. There were miles of metal rods clipped together to create the flat road service, then another team lumping on the concrete, another raking it through and this system went on for miles. Their cones are sticks, evenly spread along the carriageways. Ken (my new comms mate)

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informed me we were stopping for petrol. I explained I had seen a sign with a line through the petrol symbol so it would be a waste of time going there. After the roadworks, Ken went down the slip road to the petrol station, and from the outside lane, Grandad Eric did the fastest slalom around these sticks, in front of a lorry that I had ever seen, and I thought 'b*llocks to that' and carried on up the road. Dad Ken decided to continue around the fuel station and back on to the carriageway to catch me up. It was a comedy event that we could never do again if we tried.



Eventually, we arrived at the hotel in Mons. It was a really busy road and single file, on foot, Eric and I followed Ken to find the nearest restaurant. Eric was fascinated by the bus timetable, and Ken and I continued to stroll up the street (his one stride was three of mine). Realising the nearest restaurant was around 20 minutes away, we returned to the hotel, prizing Eric away from the bus stop. Once back at the hotel, we caught up with the phone updates from Mark, Ant and Donna, over a stupidly strong Belgium beer. Sitting under shelter in the garden, we witnessed the first of the biblical rain fall, which Mark and Ant had described as they approached Calais, earlier in the day.

In an attempt to ignore that there was a strong chance of getting wet the next day, we went back inside. This hotel, although not the most salubrious-looking from the outside, served up cracking burgers and expensive wine! However, listening to Ken and Eric debate 'wind direction - is it

where it's come from, or where it's going to' debate was a mind-boggling game of semantics. Don't get them started, you'll regret it. I just ate my burger; I'm sayin' nothing.

Tuesday morning, it was time to head home to Blighty – the wind debate was a sure sign that one of us will be murdered, if we didn't get home soon. We had heard of the 45-50 mph winds waiting for us in the UK. The wind was already present in Mons – a gentle introduction to what was ahead. I don't usually attempt a ride in winds above 40mph but we needed to get home. I told myself, if it gets too much, find a Premier Inn. However, it may sound daft, but for Donna, I wanted to get back for the girls (she will know what I mean).

We skipped breakfast (the Scotsman didn't want to pay 13 euros which I was inclined to agree) and to top it off, there was no black tea or kettle. We wanted to leave early so we can source the necessary fuel for us.

We filtered through the rush hour traffic in Mons and headed out on to the motorway. This was the last leg (Donna had the other one... too soon?). Dad Ken led us home, and Eric and I played between middle and tail end Charlie behind him. This had been a long few days, and we were acutely aware of human factors, so we stopped at a services for breakfast.



2.50 euros for a very small cup of tea in a tall cup?!?! It was an expensive break, but it was needed. I indulged in a croissant with ham and cheese. Another 80 cents for a view of men standing by the urinals... oops, wrong door, I meant to go in the Ladies!

It was as we were back on the motorway, heading towards the ferry, I said to Ken on the comms, 'Is this a good time to tell you that I have my hotel key in my pocket?'



We made it to the ferry, and queued in a very uneven lane. The rain started so it was waterproofs on. As we waited in the lane to board the ferry, the wind was gearing up. This was not going to be a calm crossing. I rode on to the ferry, and unlike the UK side, there was no one to help strap my bike in and no random cyclist to say that I entered the ferry like a 'beacon of light.' Ken (Dad) strapped his and Eric's bike in, and then mine and then a new friend I had made who had parked next to me. He was as clueless as me, but expressed how lucky I am to have a friend like Ken. This emerging bromance made me laugh. Remember, everyone should have a Ken in their lives.

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We steered Eric in the right direction, and hiked up the stupidly high steps to the canteen. We placed ourselves at a table. Six of us on the way out, three of us on the way back. This was a proper adventure, and with that thought, I got my plate of fish and chips. I needed the fuel of an athlete to get home. As we crossed the English Channel, the waves crashed against the bow to sounds of oohs and ahhs from the ferry passengers. Then this huge wave splashed over all the front glass triggering car alarms, smashing of crockery from the kitchen, passengers shouting – it was far from the sunny, calm crossing to Dunkirk only a few days before. I went and got another cup of tea, feeling unphased but excited to be heading home; Eric had a lie down, but with his eyes open and Ken was the man who all people should have in their lives (no I won't drop it, Ken).

We arrived at Dover, on the earlier ferry, but they wouldn't allow us in port, due to the extreme weather conditions. We wallowed away for a good 30 minutes before it was our turn to be amused by the little tug boat, looking after the front end. Rear end first, we eventually moored and were advised to return to our vehicles. I was not convinced my bike would be standing. Lesson learned, Ken is good with a ratchet – it never moved.



We left the boat and it felt weird being on the left again. It was harder to adapt this way than riding on the right. It's strange but true. The side wind pushed us hard on the A2 and as we got onto the motorway it pushed, swiped, and battered us. I was ticking off, mile by mile, just to get home. There was so much traffic. Gone had the days of cars respecting motorcycles. Filtering the M25 at 17:00 was a battle, whereas in France, it was the parting of the waves. As an advanced rider would, I demonstrated restraint, courtesy and then let out a rude word or two! Smile and wave...

We stopped at services... somewhere... I had lost the will and it was Eric's turn to get a round in at Costa. There was a hint of the 'wind conversation' coming up again, but I nipped it in the bud. Our aim was to head to the M40 and I was going to head off A40 Oxford towards the Gloucestershires and Eric and Ken would head off to the Worcestershires.

At the M40 slip road, goodbyes were said and I headed off, like the lone ranger towards home. The wind was slowing down and I started reflecting on what the last week had been. Then I hit a two mile tail back, so I went into filtering mode, swearing at the inconsiderate... wotzits. Then the rain came down and visibility was very low. It was going to be a fight to the end. As I turned off the A40 down the A436 to Gloucester, the sun came out and so I breathed a sigh of relief and

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knew it wasn't long now. Once home, I unloaded the boxes, and put clever Winnie to bed, I looked out the window and the rain came down. Just in time.

Over the next few hours, updates were coming in one by one, that Ken and Eric had reached home, after enduring another coffee break but no rain! Mark and Ant had arrived home before us and Mark was preparing for his return journey to Belgium in the car. Donna was still enjoying the hospitality from the Belgium hospital staff and the secret sweetie supply from Ann and Neil. Donna is safely back in the UK, thanks to Mark's endurance and stamina and the bike only suffered minor cosmetic damage, so we all live another day... for another adventure soon.



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LEAN IN OR LEAN OUT? - JIM ROLT

As road riders (Most of the time), most of us probably don't think too much about the relationship, gravity and balance wise, with the bike we are on. But those who think they are 'fast', will often hang off the bike on the inside as they corner. Why, you may ask? Well, I reckon they have been watching the GP riders do their stuff..



But wait, there is another approach! In a different sort of riding - super moto - they lean the bike more than the rider, AKA counter leaning...



Now, what's going on, which is best for the road? Or is it neither? Does it matter?

There's an interesting youtube on this, [here](#), that goes into all this, (the images above are borrowed from it,) and well worth watching.

Why do GP riders hang off the bike? It's because of the extreme angle of lean; once you are there are bits of the bike scraping along the ground the only way to move the centre of gravity inwards and therefore get more cornering speed is to shift some weight to the inside of the bend. On the road it's very unusual to encounter this situation; just have a look at the tyres on the parked up

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bikes the next time you're at a bikers stop, you'll notice that 95% of the bikes have a spare bit of tread at the edges that has never touched the ground, - the infamous 'chicken stripe' - so the bike has never been leaned anywhere near the design maximum of the tyre. Yet most of the self styled fast riders are dangling off the bike as they corner, chumps!

Here's a thought that doesn't appear in the video above: bike tyres are designed to put more rubber on the road as they lean further, and in usually the tread at the sides of the tyre is a different and stickier compound than the tread in the centre, which is harder, to give longer life.



Here's a Michelin (Road 5) and it's easy to see the lighter coloured, harder compound in the centre of the tread. Also notice that there are less (no) rain grooves towards the edge. More like a slick. As it's not possible to use large amounts of lean in the wet, it's not necessary to have rain grooves in this area, so there's more rubber on the tarmac in the dry. Furthermore, the cross section shape of the tyre gives a larger contact patch as you lean further - until you run off the edge, which is not going to happen on the road!

So, the bike has more grip if you counter lean or stay neutral until bits of the bike are creating a shower of sparks as they drag on the ground, which is very unlikely away from the track. Counter leaning also gives you a better view, and puts you in a position to better control the machine if something unexpected happens.

Personally, like most of us, I ride pretty neutral but may counter lean a little if something unexpected happens.

Surprising, isn't it, that the quicker and safer way to ride is the exact opposite of the tactics the suicide squad use!

Feel free to disagree and send me your views on the subject...

2024 AGM ADVANCE NOTICE

2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WORCESTER & HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

MEETING AGENDA

At the Falcon Hotel Bromyard, Wednesday 31st January 2024.

1. Apologies
2. Chairs report
3. Treasurers Report
4. Chief Observers Report
5. Appointments 2024

a. Appointment of officers

- Chairman
- Treasurer
- Secretary

The positions of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are nominated as:

- Chair – Richard Hewitt to step down from Chairs position after serving statutory 3-year term with Matt Dent putting himself forward as new Chair.
- Treasurer – Andrew Peckston to stay in role.
- Secretary – Andy Chambers to stay in role.

b. Committee Members



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- Vice Chairman
- Webmaster
- Chief Observer
- Newsletter
- Membership Secretary
- Events Manager(s)

Matt Dent stands down from Vice-Chairman, thanks to Matt for his commitment to the post for the last few years.

Tony Davis continues as Webmaster.

Jim Rolt continues as Newsletter Editor.

Simon Tibbetts continues as Membership Secretary.

Mark Saxton and Duane Sanger continue as events managers.

6. Events for 2024

- Sunday rides
- Luxembourg May 15-19th
- Observer Training Day – Llandrindod Wells March 22nd
- North Yorkshire trip October 10th-13th
- Slow riding day June 29th
- Christmas party December 13th
- Karting August 3rd

7. Any Other Business