

WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



August 2026



EDITORIAL – JIM ROLT

I was browsing through last month's newsletter and idly noticed a somewhat startling statistic in CO Richard's piece:

"On average, advanced riders covered around 15,000 miles between collisions compared with approximately 9,400 miles for non-advanced riders."

Say *what*? Are we to expect a collision every 15000 miles? Really? This motorcycling lark is obviously much more dangerous than I thought.. Can this be right? Most of us must be on borrowed time then.. Are we to include those times when someone firmly paddles their bike backwards into us in a car park at 0.3 mph? I must go and equip myself with an air bag jacket PDQ!



As ever, short of content, (but big thanks to Andy Pecks for TWO articles, I've saved one for next month) I had a dig in the archives and found some seasonally suitable continental riding tips from Derek McMullan in 2013. I would ask you to contribute, but that's a bit of a broken record isn't it.. go on, prove me WRONG!

This month's content:

[Chairman's thoughts](#)

Chief Observer Richard [From Observer to Mentor](#)

Andy Peckston reports on the [Roof of Wales run](#)

Derek McMullan's [Continental Riding tips](#)

August Club Events, also available on the [club website](#)

All events and rides can be found on <https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/events/>

Banter and more on the [facebook page](#)

Jim Rolt, Editor, say hi at whamnewsletter@gmail.com



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CHAIRMAN – TONY DAVIS

Hi all.

Last month WHAM rewarded our Observers with a weekend away in Llandrindod Wells for a training session. It was a huge success — until you do this kind of thing you really can't appreciate the value of getting together, sharing experience and building team spirit. Thanks to all who participated, and especially to Richard Hewitt, who put a lot of time and effort into making the weekend an interesting and worthwhile training event.

Last week was a good week for me — I replaced my S1000XR with a new-to-me R1300GS. I really didn't need a new bike, but I've got to say, this new GS is a huge step on from my 2016 1200GS: quicker, lighter, better looking (IMHO), and so well put together it's a triumph of modern engineering. The engine clatters a bit, but some earplugs easily sort that. The bike came with a genuine BMW top box with lighting and central locking — again, I don't need lighting and central locking, but it's a great demonstration of how well this stuff works these days. BMW wanted £1,000 for a couple of panniers that do the same job, so I really couldn't justify that. Instead I bought some converters from Wunderlich for £120, and my old 1200GS Vario panniers now work like factory-fitted items, without the unnecessary car tech. Saving nearly £800 made me feel better, and I really can't think of a better way to spend money than on bikes (my wife can, though).

Some of you may have noticed a few glitches on our website recently — it looks like these were caused by some automatic upgrades from the hosting company. I'll finish here and get these words off to Jim so I can get back to work on the site. Look out for more information on our Snowdonia trip very soon.

Keep safe.

Tony



CHIEF OBSERVER – RICHARD HEWITT

From Observer to Mentor

A few weeks ago a number of our Observers headed off to Wales for what turned out to be an enjoyable and thought-provoking two-day development event. The first day was spent out on the road, with some excellent team riding and mentoring opportunities, giving everyone the chance to observe not only riding standards but also how different people approach helping others improve. The evening between the two days was punctuated by a very enjoyable meal and, as is often the way with these things, some equally valuable team building in the hotel bar afterwards. By the time we reconvened the following morning there had already been plenty of learning, plenty of discussion and, thankfully, very little 'social' evidence preserved for posterity.



The second day focused on Observer development and, if I'm honest, it got me reflecting on my own observing and whether, after all these years, I might still have a few things to learn.

Slightly irritating, I know.

One of the themes we explored was the idea of moving from being an Observer to becoming more of a Mentor.

At first, I wasn't entirely sure I liked the phrase. Like many of us, I thought, 'Surely that's what we're already doing?' We observe, identify areas for improvement and help associates become safer riders.

Job done.

Or perhaps not quite.

What followed was a discussion that got me thinking about some of the best teachers, trainers and mentors I've encountered during my life.

Interestingly, no one that was particularly good at telling me what to do sprang to mind!

In fact, when I think about the people who helped me learn the most, I remember them asking questions, listening to my answers and then encouraging me to think a little harder. They seemed interested in helping me understand rather than simply helping me comply.

That led us neatly into a question that, as Observers, is probably worth asking ourselves from time to time.

What exactly are we trying to achieve?

The obvious answer is to help associates pass the Advanced Rider Test, and that's certainly part of it.

But it isn't really the whole story.

The real objective is surely to produce safer, more capable riders who can think for themselves.

After all, the associate who genuinely understands why they are adopting a particular position, speed or gear doesn't need us sat behind them forever offering reminders.

Success, in many ways, is creating riders who no longer need us.

That change in perspective sounds subtle, but it has quite an impact on how we approach our debriefs.

Most of us have years of riding experience. We see something happen out on the road and often know immediately what caused it and how it could have been improved.

Naturally, we want to help.

So we explain it.

Problem identified. Solution provided. On to the next point.

Efficient? Certainly.

But is it always the best way for someone to learn?

That's one of the questions we explored during the day.

When we provide answers too quickly, we can unintentionally rob associates of the opportunity to work things out for themselves. They may accept what we tell them and even demonstrate improvement, but they haven't necessarily developed the thought processes that will help them identify similar issues independently in the future.

It reminded me of something I've seen more than once over the years.

An associate completes a ride, the Observer conducts most of the debrief, the associate nods politely throughout and everyone goes home happy.

The following ride reveals exactly the same issue.

Sound familiar?

Perhaps the learning wasn't quite as embedded as we believed.

This is where open questions come in.

Now don't worry, this isn't the point where I'm going to unleash a complicated coaching model or introduce an obscure acronym.

The concept is wonderfully simple.

Instead of immediately explaining what happened, ask something like: 'What did you notice about that situation?' or 'How did you make that decision?' or 'What options did you think you had available?'

The goal isn't to catch anyone out or lead them towards a predetermined answer.

The goal is simply to encourage them to think.

More often than not, associates already know far more than we give them credit for.

The discussion also touched on something called the 70/30 principle.

Not a rule. Not a standard. Certainly not something you'll find me measuring with a stopwatch.

The idea is that during a debrief the associate should ideally be doing around 70% of the talking, leaving the Observer contributing the remaining 30%.

When I first heard that, I found myself wondering how many of my debriefs would actually pass that test.

The principle isn't really about percentages. It's about recognising that learning tends to happen when people are actively engaged in the conversation rather than simply listening to one.

If we're doing most of the talking, we may also be doing most of the thinking.

Perhaps the most reassuring message from the day was that nobody was suggesting wholesale change.

This wasn't about abandoning existing observing techniques or replacing Roadcraft with the latest fashionable theory.

The message was that most of us are already doing many of these things.

So, if there's one thing I took away from Wales it wasn't some new acronym, a complicated coaching model or a radical change to the way we observe.

It was simply this.

The next time an Associate does something that isn't quite right, perhaps resist the urge to immediately explain it.

Ask a question first.

Then another.

You might discover they already know the answer.

And if they don't, the process of thinking about it may teach them more than listening to us talking about it ever could.

As I've written before in these pages, learning should be enjoyable. If we can create an environment where Associates feel comfortable enough to think, discuss, question and occasionally make mistakes, then we're probably doing a better job than we realise.

After all, the real measure of success isn't an Associate who rides well when we're watching.

It's an Associate who rides well when we're not.

Richard Hewitt

Chief Observer

WHAM



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THE ROOF OF WALES : IT'S BEEN A WHILE! - ANDY PECKSTON

It has been quite a few years and many bikes ago since I managed to do the complete Roof of Wales day, and although we ride some of the roads a couple of times during the year, when you put it all together the Roof of Wales was and still is an almost perfect day of motorcycling through fantastic scenery.

As the weather was forecast to be in the sweet spot of 25ish degrees centigrade and dry I checked over the SuperDuke on the Saturday evening, ready to head off the Wooferton early on Sunday morning.

Sunday morning comes, and as there is a faint risk of rain, I chuck some lightweight water proofs in the tank bag and head off to Wooferton early enough to be there to meet a new member and help with the pre-briefing and getting us all in to groups. After the usual 30 minutes of banter the briefing is done, we are in groups and ready for the off. I am riding with Andy Chambers, Mark Saxton, Mat Sheen and John Powell, 4 excellent riders I have had the pleasure of riding with many times over the years.



The first leg of the route winds its way from Wooferton to the first stop at Beulah (officially billed a petrol stop). As we approach the fantastic Hundred House road the group wave me to the front and I ahem, bugger off. But with a purpose, to get the photographs of my riding buddies as they go over the most roof like part of the route you can see placed through this article. You will notice the friendly and appreciative waves from Messer's Sheen and Chambers....

On arriving at the petrol station stop at Beulah it is a petrol station without any petrol! It transpires that the local petrol delivery company had fired 5 of their drivers for stealing, specifically the fuel left in the hose after every delivery. It was not all bad as the café that is never open was open and the tea and Welsh cakes were lovely.

Right, now for the fun bit. The Devils Staircase. It is an ominous name for a series of tight single track and slightly gravelly hairpins that take you up to some of the best views in Wales.

The Devils Staircase has been the subject of much discussion over the years, but as advanced riders we apply the system :



Information, Speed, Position, Gear, Accelerate : like we do for any other corner or hazard.

Information : There is a sign post a mile before the first hairpin displaying “Devils Staircase 1 mile” along with several steep gradient and S bend signs as you get closer. It is a single-track road in good condition; the road is lined with walls and hedges that make the vanishing points easier to follow and the weather conditions are perfect. Approaching the first hairpin I have developed 3 plans in my head. The “all goes well” plan and 2 “how to avoid gravel, sheep, cyclists, cars, etc. I can’t see” plans. I don’t stop gathering information then, the information phase is a continuous process. When I did my advanced training 20 plus years ago my observer helped me build this habit but encouraging me to constantly ask myself “what can I see” or “what is that car going to do”. I still do this as anyone who connects with me on intercom can testify!

Speed, Position: As I approach the first left hand hairpin I have taken my speed off and moved as far over to the right as I am comfortable with to be as far away from the gravel, broken tarmac and steep bit on the inside of the bend as I can safely be as well as drastically improving my view to the road above me to the left. Yes, I am very much on the wrong side of the road at this point, with the best view I can have at the right speed with 3 plans ready to execute.



Gear, Accelerate : As I continue to gather information I snick into first gear before I peel into the turn. This makes sure the bike is settled, my clutch hand and right foot are ready to balance speed against the back brake if need be and really importantly I am maintaining just a little bit of positive throttle until I can see the exit is clear when I roll on the power smoothly towards the next hairpin and do it all again until I get to the top.

Getting to the top is worth it, the views are stunning, and the road is a lovely bit of fairly wide single track that winds its way through valleys, hills and more hairpins to the lunch stop at the Owls Nest. Bliss.

About halfway there I have a bit of a moment. I am approaching a fairly blind tight left hand bend with a car parking area to the right and a load of gravel and grass on the inside of the bend that was flat and obviously had been used for parking as well. As I tip into the bend a car in the parking area pulled out, I had spotted the car manoeuvring as I approached the bend and had taken off enough speed to stop if he pulled out, which he did. At that second a bloody huge a campervan came into view as he approached the corner from the opposite direction. Bugger. New plan required, If I stop the camper will hit me. My new plan is tighten my line and be upright in time to go over the grass and gravel in a straight line. Which I do without issue or drama and made my

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way to lunch.



Why was I able to do this and not end up parked in the front of an RV? Following the system combined with great coaching from many WHAM observers over the years had saved me. Not magic, not luck, the system.

The remainder of the route was event free but was an excellent afternoon of motorcycling with 4 top class riders who also happen to be top class blokes as well!

When I got home after a day totalling 240 miles on the SuperDuke with a nice cold beer in hand, I thought about the day and with a smile reminded myself how being advanced motorcyclists not only makes us all safer, but makes our motorcycling far more enjoyable, less tiring, more fun and gives us a great excuse to get out on the bikes with a great group of people. What more could any of us wish for?

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TOURING THE 'CONTINENT' - DEREK MCMULLAN

Derek McMullan has kindly put together the following advice for those who will be venturing over to the continent on their bikes. There are a number of members who are doing this very thing, now and in the coming months.

Time for a bike trip!

Planning a trip on your bike? A weekend away or a more ambitious tour into Europe or beyond they all need the bike to be “fit” for the ride and some contingency planning for those events we never want - they're so much more trouble when you're away.

The first decision is probably “where”, as soon as that's settled you'll know how far the bike will have to travel to get you there and back home afterwards. With “how long” you'll be able to estimate the trip's total distance so now you know whether the bike needs servicing immediately or can wait 'till your return. It's your holiday so enjoy it – don't waste your holiday time fixing the bike when you should be on the beach, mountain trail, or whatever it was that made you want to go there!

If it is an overseas trip you will need to take documents to prove ownership (or the owner's permission), that you're insured, etc. The specific requirements of the countries you're visiting should be checked but general requirements in Europe are:

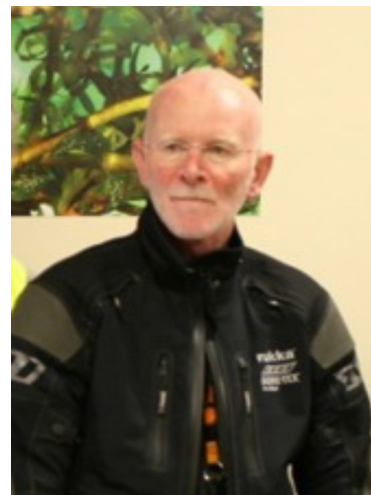
- Log book (or copy and owners written permission)
- Driving licence
- MOT if applicable
- Insurance valid in Europe
- Hi-Viz /Reflective clothing

Before you go.

European travel cover is “a good thing”, the cost of recovering a bike from Europe is fantastically high. So, wherever you're going is the bike ready? Long trips, possibly with sustained periods at high speeds on motorways, have a knack of finding any problems with the mechanical components. Make sure your engine, transmission (especially chain), suspension, wheels and tyres are good

High-speed motorways sections consume fuel fast too; make sure you have enough for the next leg of the journey.

“Should I change the tyre, or will it last” is repeated many times each year at the beginning of the summer. Tyres are the other thing that can catch us out, particularly if you're going to the continent bear in mind that there are some very aggressive road surfaces in the mountains which



can quickly chew through tyres. Speaking from personal experience continental pricing for tyres can be eye-watering too!

Route planning saves you time and money! When you're not familiar with an area it is easy to take a wrong turn, and with motorways in particular, for that to result in a "magical mystery tour" as you try to recover your original route. GPS can be a fantastic aid but old-fashioned map-based route planning has the advantage of familiarising us with the roads and towns en-route so if the GPS throws a wobbly (and they do!) you will still be able to take the general direction and let the GPS regain its composure.

Travelling abroad introduces all sorts of challenges. At least on a bike we don't have left- or right-hand drive but it is still foreign! Different signs, different traffic rules, and most continental countries have stricter drink-drive laws than the UK - not that I'm suggesting alcohol and bikes mix at all! It's worth preparing and checking on all the local requirements, speed limits, etc. In France watch out for "Priorite a droit" - there are still places where the traffic from your right side has priority even if you're on the main road (or roundabout).

A motorcycle trip inevitably involves carrying more luggage than most bikers do on a regular basis, particularly if it is a camping trip. Check your luggage and its loading on the bike before you go. It's vital that your luggage is securely strapped down and not likely to move. At worst poorly packed luggage has fouled the rear wheel and taken the rider down; at best you could be trying to recover your smalls on a windy mountain road!

Speaking of more to carry, a few basic tools can make a huge difference, as well as your toolkit think about these:

- Puncture repair kit
- Tie-wraps [Zip ties to us in 2026 - Ed]
- Gaffer tape

The most important element on your trip is you! You want to have fun and be able to tell your mates what a great time you had. Think about investing a little time into your bike skills and get yourself ahead of the game, there are many local motorcycle groups who have good experience of foreign travel trips and can help you to hone those skills.

EVENTS THIS MONTH

WHAM Day Ride – Aberystwyth via Elan Valley

Featured August 9 @ 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

Full day ride to Aberystwyth starting at Starbucks Wooferton, via Kerry, Newtown, the Elan Valley & Devils Bridge. Cant make the whole day? Then just join us for as much of the ride as you can and make your way home. 08:30 Meet for a 09:00 Start.

Sunday Ride – Wooferton to Kinlet via Long Myndd

August 16 @ 8:30 am - 1:30 pm

Sunday Ride starting at Wooferton to the Kabin in Kinlet via the Long Myndd. 08:30 Meet for a 09:00 Start Download Routes: Garmin Format GPX Format Google Maps

WHAM Day Ride – Aberdovey via Mountain Roads

Featured August 23 @ 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

Starting at Starbucks Wooferton.

Leg 1 – Some familiar roads to start with then it gets interesting on the Llanbister road, ends up at the Halt Cafe south of Rhayader for coffee.

Leg 2 – Uses some brilliant mountain roads not seen on any of our regular routes. Ends in Aberdovey where we park up in the main carpark. Walker's Fish and Chip shop over the road from the carpark is recommended for lunch.

Leg 3 – Heads down to Aberystwyth then avoids the busy A44 in preference to the excellent A4120 to Devils Bridge then over the Elan Valley to the visitor centre for afternoon tea.

Leg 4 – Back to Wooferton via Builth Wells and Hundred House.

WHAM Evening Ride 4

August 26 @ 7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

WHAM Evening ride and Natter Night. Join us for a ride to the Falcon in Bromyard. Leaves the start points (Hereford or Worcester) at 19:00, arrives at the Falcon at around 20:15. Please arrive in time to organise riding groups. All members very welcome..

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