

WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



September 2026



EDITORIAL – JIM ROLT

Hooray for cooler weather, even if it means a chance of that funny wet stuff..

You know how your body sometimes tenses up when you're not quite confident? I've been monitoring myself to figure out when this happens and why, and found it was mostly at low speed, with the shoulders tensing and all that stuff.

It's counter productive, isn't it, and I discover, unsurprisingly, that identifying this and relaxing allows one to feel what's happening with the bike and how it's behaving..

My slow speed riding has suddenly become much smoother and more confident, amazing what a little self analysis can do!

Have you been taking part in the Falcon Flies Challenge? It's coming to an end this month at the Wednesday natter night, read all about it [here](#)

This month's content:

[Chairman's thoughts](#)

CO Richard muses on [Modern technology](#)

Andy Peckston has been out testing some really [tasty machinery](#)

A special natter night is coming up in October! Save the date, [check it out now](#)..

[September 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, lonely Editor, contact me at whamnewsletter@gmail.com



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CHAIRMAN – TONY DAVIS

Hi all.

Welcome to Autumn. Don't worry though, Spring and Autumn are the best riding months, especially given the ridiculously hot weather we've had this year. For me, riding in 30 degree + heat is not much fun even with mesh gear. The last couple of weeks have been great and I am hoping for decent cooler weather in Snowdonia this weekend for our annual trip.



One thing we have to used to all over again is riding in wet weather. Lots of people dread it but these days, with decent tyres and good waterproof gear it is not much different to riding in the dry and can be even more fun than the very hot weather we've had recently. I have found, over the years, that the key to riding in the wet is to relax. Keep on reminding yourself to loosen the arms and shoulders, if you tense up you are fighting the bike and not letting it react to the road surface. Keep you weight on the inside of the bike when turning (no need to hang off the bike, just weight the saddle) to lessen lean angle and let the suspension and tyres do their thing and find grip, you have more than you think. Obviously you do need to slow things down and reduce corner speed but keeping it smooth and trusting the bike to find grip means a smooth flowing ride which makes for a really satisfying ride.

One thing to remember though, if it rains after a long dry spell then all of the accumulated oil and rubbish comes up to the surface and can make things very slippery. The good news is that a couple of heavy rain sessions will wash this away.

So, don't let a bit of wet weather put you off joining us for a ride out. See you on the road.

Tony

Advanced Riding in the Age of Technology

Technology...

Half of you will already be muttering into your tea that motorcycles were better when you could actually see the road through all the wiring and when the rider rather than a microchip was doing most of the work.

The other half will be sat there quite happily having just bought a motorcycle with more rider aids than the Space Shuttle and wondering what all the fuss is about.

The reality, as usual, is probably somewhere in the middle.



I was stood in a dealership recently listening to a salesman explain the electronics package fitted to a new machine. By the time he'd finished we'd covered rider modes, cornering ABS, traction control, wheelie control, cruise control, emergency braking systems, hill-hold assist and a dashboard that could probably launch a satellite.

It was all very impressive.

The only thing he didn't mention was whether it came with an Observed Ride report writer built in.

Now *that* would be useful.

Modern motorcycles are quite remarkable pieces of engineering. There's no denying it. They start first time, generally don't leak oil all over your garage floor and can cover serious mileage whilst treating their rider to levels of comfort many touring riders could only dream about twenty years ago.

Likewise, the safety systems fitted to modern bikes are genuinely beneficial. ABS has undoubtedly prevented countless accidents and traction control can save a momentary lapse in judgement.

Modern tyres offer levels of grip we simply took for granted because we'd forgotten how much better they are than what was available years ago.

Progress has happened, but here's the thing; Has any of that actually changed what advanced riding is?

A real-world scenario....

I was out with a member recently who was riding a fairly new bike loaded with all the electronic wizardry you could possibly want. As we rode along a country lane there were a few clues of what was ahead:

- A farm entrance
- Fresh mud
- A tractor trailer parked in a field
- A couple of walkers standing beside a gate

What do you think happened next?

A tractor emerged.

Not quickly. Not aggressively. Just exactly as common sense suggested it might. Now not one electronic aid on that motorcycle could or did identify the risk before it appeared. Not one.....

What avoided any drama was not silicon chips, algorithms or sensors. It was observation!

- The rider had seen the clues
- The rider had processed the information
- The rider had adjusted accordingly
- The tractor's appearance was therefore completely unsurprising

Roadcraft 1. Technology 0

The Unchangeable Bits

When associates start with us, they often think advanced riding is going to involve some secret technique. Perhaps some magical positioning strategy known only to Observers. Maybe a special way of changing gear. Possibly an advanced handshake.

Sadly not. The reality is usually rather less exciting.

The fundamentals win; every single time:

- Observation
- Anticipation
- Decision making
- Planning
- Positioning

Those things have never changed and I suspect they never will. I don't care whether your motorcycle cost £2,000 or £22,000. I don't care whether it has one rider mode or twenty-one.



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The rider operating it still has to understand what is going on around them. Motorcycling remains a thinking activity. The motorcycle may have become cleverer, the road certainly hasn't.

A Danger We Should Watch For

There's perhaps one small trap with modern technology. It's very easy to start believing the bike will sort things out for us.

I occasionally hear comments along the lines of:

- ABS will deal with that.

Or:

- The traction control will catch it.

Will it? Probably..... Hopefully..... Maybe.....

But that's not really the point.

The best riders I've known over the years generally use very little of the technology available to them. Not because they are anti-technology, far from it, they simply don't arrive in situations requiring electronic intervention very often.

Their planning has already reduced the risk. The electronics are acting as a safety net rather than the main performer in the circus. And that's exactly how it should be.

I'm very happy knowing the safety net is there I'd just rather not spend my entire ride bouncing around in it.

Are Riders Better Nowadays?

That's an interesting natter night discussion if ever there was one. Motorcycles are certainly easier to ride, many are easier to ride quickly, many are easier to ride smoothly. Yet when I look around at modern traffic, I wonder whether our observational demands are actually greater than they've ever been.

We've got distracted drivers, mobile phones, near-silent electric vehicles, and increasingly busy roads. Larger vehicles occupying more road space which translates into a mix of:

- More information to process
- More hazards
- More opportunities for things to go wrong

If anything, I think the advanced rider's skill set is becoming more important rather than less. The ability to look further ahead, read the road and create time and space around yourself remains priceless.

No software update can provide that....

The Point

You've probably noticed that within WHAM we spend a great deal of time talking about IPSGA.

Some people perhaps think that's because we're traditionalists who enjoy repeating what Roadcraft says. Actually it's much simpler than that.

It works.....

The principles worked before traction control existed, they worked before cornering ABS existed, they worked before motorcycle dashboards looked like tablets glued to the handlebars, and they'll still work long after the next generation of technology arrives.

Technology is fantastic and we all welcome, value, and appreciate it, and if it prevents a rider being injured then it has earned its place.

But, if I had to choose between a rider with exceptional observation skills on an older motorcycle and a poor rider on the latest technological marvel, I'd place my money on the first rider every day of the week.

Because the most sophisticated safety system on any motorcycle remains the one sat between the rider's ears.

Everything else is just there to help.

Yours in Sport.

Richard H

Chief Observer

WHAM

TEST RIDE SEASON AGAIN - ANDY PECKSTON

So, this year I have taken a different approach to test rides. Rather than blag a bike for a couple of hours and rag it round the closest WHAM route on the pretence of buying one I have taken part in 2 organised manufacturers test rides of 2 very un-WHAM bikes!

The first test ride was with (slightly predictably) KTM on a perfectly sunny Saturday morning in June. The event was based at one of my favourite cafes (Baffle Haus) which also has the benefit of being at the end of the Skenfrith road (ish) which of course meant the SuperDuke had to be used to get there in time for a 9am start.

On arrival I park the SuperDuke up next to the large KTM tent and immediately get told off "you can't park there sir". Hmm.

So, to the test ride. What do you think I took out? 1390 SuperAdventure? 1390 Super Duke? 990 Duke R?

Nope, none of the above. My morning companion was a 990 RC R, a full-on middle weight sports bike, a bit like a GSX-R750 from 20 years ago but stuffed with modern electronics.



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First of all, it looks beautiful. The black paint has a modern take on a pearlescent finish that sparkles in the early morning sun. I sit on it, and wow it is tiny (even for me !) but feels surprisingly comfortable. I then get told off for the second time "please don't sit on the bikes until you have signed the disclaimers" Hmm.

Next comes a safety briefing and the realisation that the test ride is a group ride with a KTM staff rider at the front and back of the group. Hmm.

I tell myself to behave and play nicely.

On being told we can now get on the bikes, and getting a bit of sales pitch about the TFT screen, built in SATNAV (which is excellent) and ride modes etc. I finally allowed to get kitted up and get going ... nearly. After 5 minutes of faffing about we set off with me following the KTM rider out of Baffle Haus and turning left toward USK. Almost, the group wasn't quite ready, so we stop again at the exit of the car park blocking everything while the lead KTM rider gave an excellent demonstration of how not to do slow riding much to the amusement of the assembled crowd.

Finally, we get on the road, and I like the bike very much. The seat is as good as the SuperDuke's and the clip-on handlebars are not as low as they look. The bike is light and flickable, the controls all fall easily to hand, and when I leave enough of a gap to the lead rider it is quick!

Actually, it is a little too quick for the cold tyres. Coming out of the first corner I open it up good and proper and the back tyre spins up like the road has been greased. It looked impressive from behind apparently! The track day tyres fitted as standard (Michelin's Power Cup 2's) take far too long to warm up on the road. It was a good 10 miles before I could feel any grip when leant over.

In no time we reach Usk. Meeting traffic the KTM lead rider is taken by surprise by a car stopping in the road to turn right. It was a Range Rover that had signalled correctly, hard to miss! Luckily he did miss hitting it, just! Hmm.

At USK we turn on to the A40 and stay on it until we get back to Abergavenny. Hmm (yes the 5th Hmm).

I deliberately dawdle round the Abergavenny roundabouts to create a big gap to the front rider and promptly give it the berries (I mean make progress) until I catch up again. In those few minutes the bike is brilliant, just what a Supersports bike should be - engaging, brilliant handling, more than quick enough and of course fun.

Arriving back at Baffle house, I can't help but point out they had done a safety briefing that had been largely ignored by the KTM staff and that they had made no mention of track tyres, they really should.

After a good discussion where all of the KTM staff agree that the route and rules do not show any of the bike off as well as a simple test ride do, I retire to baffle house for some breakfast.

Thinking about the bike while I scoffed my breakfast bap, all I can think is I want a longer ride!

Thinking about the test ride event, I reflect that it would be hard to make it any "freer" in the modern world. One big thing KTM need to improve on is the competence of the KTM riders, any WHAM member would have done a better job, kept the group safer, been a better ambassador for Motorcycling. Please rest assured that I have fed that back to KTM.

4 weeks later, right in the middle of a heat wave I find myself on my way to my next test ride. This time starting from a new stop for me, The Oily Rag in Gloucester.

I'm on the SuperDuke again, from memory it was 35 degrees as I rode into Gloucester traffic and filter through about a million other bikers on an assortment of cruisers who, based on the many very rude hand gestures, don't seem to understand that they are allowed to filter.

Arriving at The Oily Rag, I spot the manufacturers stand, park up in the shade and go and get signed in. As usual I am very early, so wander into the cafe to get a coffee and a bite to eat. Then I hear the distinctive "potato potato" rumble of all of those cruisers I just annoyed coming into the car park. Oops.

So, what am I riding today? It a Norton Manx R. 208bhp V4 1200cc full on sports bike for the road. And what a stunning object it is to look at. No visible fasteners, polished aluminium everywhere. Wow!



After a short but effective briefing in the air-conditioned stand and then 1-2-1s next to the bikes we get kitted up and get on the bikes. First impression. It's a bit wristy! however the seat is comfortable (and looks beautiful) and the controls are all just right.

Then one of the group manages to fall off the bike before he even got on it. He got his leg stuck on the tail and fell over backwards in front of those lovely chaps on the cruisers.

Comedy over, I press the start button and the V4 bursts into life, settling into a very nice burble. So far so good.

I pull in the clutch, engage first and off we go. That clutch feels a bit odd I think, does it need bleeding? Oh, it's a cable. More on that later.

Pulling out of The Oily Rag we turn straight into a supermarket petrol station to fill the bikes up. It's 35 degrees remember. I wait my turn sitting in the shade with the engine off, then do the same after being filled up. The 2 Norton riders do the same as me, the rest of the group however sit in full sun revving their engines whilst loudly moaning about how hot it is.

Right, we are off. To get out of Gloucester we have to negotiate quite a bit of traffic. By the time we finally break free on to the B roads towards Stroud the rear bank of cylinders is making my inner thighs and gentleman's area uncomfortably warm.

Following the lead rider at a reasonable pace (he is a journalist now working for Norton), the bike is lovely, smooth, powerful, the suspension is more pliable than the SuperDuke. However, the fun does not last long as we have to wait in Stroud for the rest of the group to re-join us. No shade this time, Christ it's hot!

From then on there is too much traffic to really enjoy the bike, and unfortunately in traffic the bike starts to show some considerable issues. The clutch has become utterly un-predictable. Amazingly I didn't stall it but everyone else did. The heat coming off the engine is now beyond uncomfortable - it is burning my right thigh, in traffic there is a lot of weight on your wrists, and a suspension fault light has come on.

On returning to the Oily Rag, the chat is interesting and somewhat polarised. Half the group loved the bike, but upon further discussion this was mainly because their Dads used to ride Nortons back in the day. The other half of the group (which included me) were disappointed. This could be a brilliant bike with another year of development. It is just not good enough (yet) to pose a serious threat to any of the established sports bikes, and at £25k for the base model and £35k for the one that drips with carbon it really needs to excel. Which it doesn't and that is a real shame, because oh my god it is pretty. Wouldn't it be great to have another British company challenging at the top end of the market with a bike that is built in the U.K. (The Manx is built in the U.K.. The Atlas is built in India), to achieve that Norton need to get serious, quickly. I, for one, hope they do.

Writing this at the end of July I am pondering what have I learnt more broadly.

First and foremost, organised test rides are an excellent way for manufacturers to get marketing content, they are also a good way for new riders to try a bike without having to go into a scary dealer. Equally they are quite a nice way to spend a morning, meet some people and talk about motorbikes. But (and it is a big but), for experienced motorcyclists (i.e. the WHAM membership), you will not really learn enough about a bike on an organised group test ride to persuade you to part with your hard-earned pounds. In my opinion, a good 2-hour (or so) test ride is still the gold standard to let me experience a bike enough to make an informed decision.

What both events also reminded me is how much I value riding with other advanced motorcyclists, and just how well developed and practical our group riding policy is compared to how both test rides were run. That is something we should be very proud of and cherish.

The final question is, am I going to buy either bike? Possibly the KTM but let's see how I feel next spring.



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THE WORLD'S TOUGHEST ROW PRESENTED BY ADAM ROWLATT



WHAM October natter night: Wed 28th October **The World's Toughest Row presented by Adam Rowlatt** **Find out just what it takes to row 3,000 miles across the Atlantic**

The 'World's Toughest Row' brings together teams from all walks of life united by the same objective: to take on the unique challenge of crossing an ocean in a rowing boat.

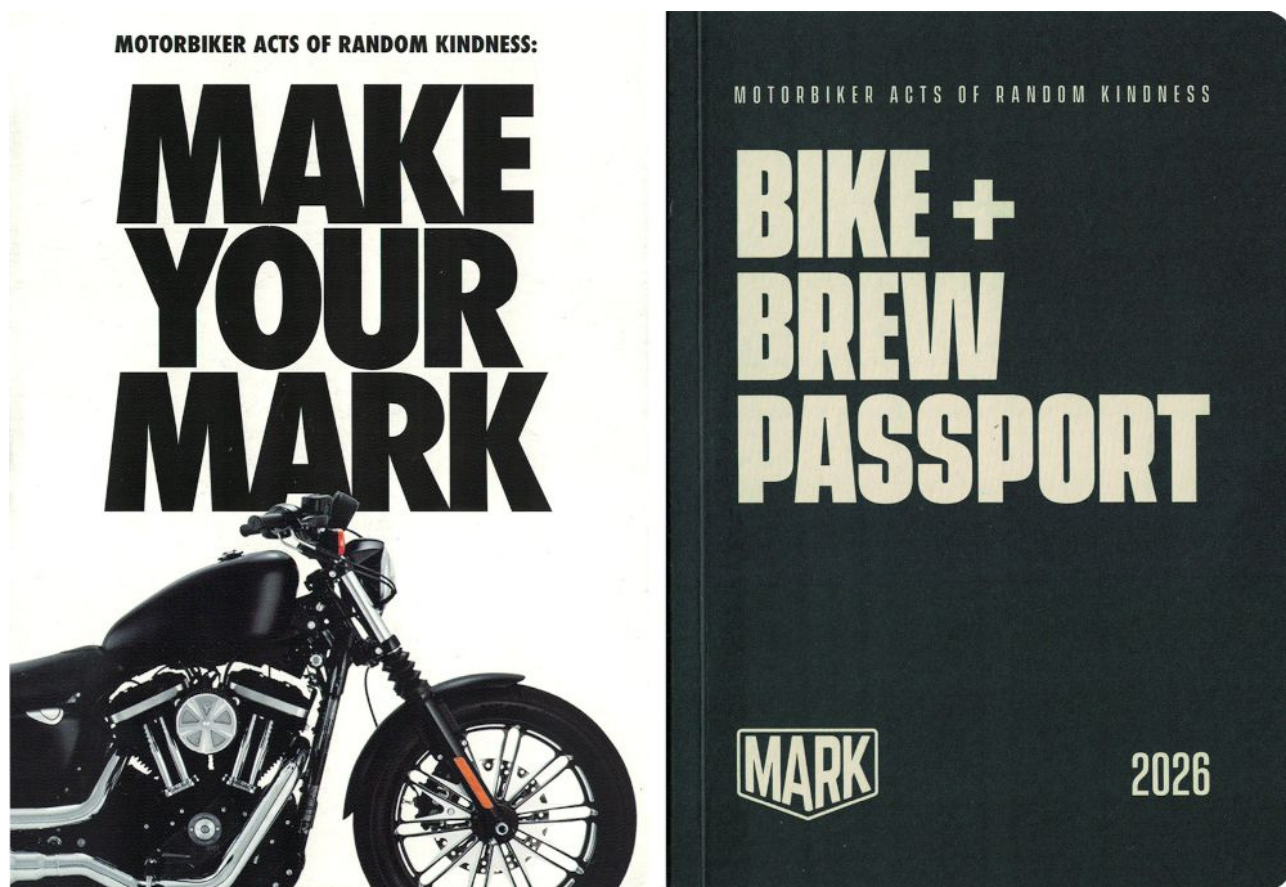
Adam Rowlatt and Jamie Kidd joined 41 other boats in a race that would test their endurance skills to the max, battling 40ft waves, seasickness, storms, sleep deprivation and sweltering heat. Rowing in excess of 12 hours a day the crews push the very limits of human endurance, but it is their mental fortitude, physical stamina and technical ability that will result in a life-changing achievement when they step on land once more on the shores of Antigua.

The boats average just 8 metres in length and under 2 metres wide, with 2 small cabins for protection against storms and crashing waves.

So join us at The Falcon Hotel, Bromyard at 7:00pm for a fascinating insight into this mad, crazy, life changing adventure that has an impact on everyones life who decides to take on the challenge.



AS THE FALCON FLIES CHALLENGE



Whammers - at the end of this month our Bike + Brew passport 'As The Falcon Flies Challenge' comes to a close and so it's time to get those last calories on board and get your final stamps in your passport.

We won't be having a 'weigh in' or a prize for the most cakes eaten but we will be awarding prizes for the following:

- Furthest venue visited
- Most venues visited
- Cumulative mileage (measured as a direct line from The Falcon Hotel, Bromyard)

Each person entering can only win one of the above categories.

To qualify, try and get yourself to our September natter night (30th September) and hand your passport book over to Donna Saxton who will record all of your information before passing them on to 'Make Your Mark'. If you can't get to the natter night then please find a way to get them to Donna before 30th September, she will need to process them for our awards before passing them on to 'Make Your Mark' for 4th October. This is to ensure your passport goes into their raffle

(providing you have a minimum of 10 stamps) for some stunning prizes.

Here is a reminder of some of the basic rules and the prizes you could win from Make Your Mark.

For every 10 stamps collected you will receive a ticket in the prize raffle up to a maximum of 28 tickets in this year's draw. Each rider can only enter one passport into the raffle. You will be required to submit/return your passport in order that the organisers can verify the number of stamps. Please therefore ensure that you complete all of your personal information in the passport. Further details on the draw will be issued in due course

What are the prizes this year:

- ➔ Triumph 400 Tracker
- ➔ Triumph 765 RS Street Triple
- ➔ Triumph Alpine Tiger 900
- ➔ 961 Lambretta series 2 scooter (with 2000 hours of engraving)
- ➔ Litelok locks
- ➔ Beeline Moto II

When do I need to return the passport?

Passports need to be handed in to be verified by 4th October 2026. We will provide more details on the Closing process nearer the time

How much of the donation for the passports goes to charity?

100%. Every penny of your £10 donation will go into our Grant Fund be passed on to appropriate grassroot community organizations and charities selected by the venues and the bikers.

WHAM SEPTEMBER EVENTS

September 11 - September 13

WHAM is pleased to announce the return of the epic Snowdonia North Wales Weekend. Those of you who have partaken in this excellent weekend know just how good it is, those that haven't, its your big chance to spend three days riding some of the best roads in North Wales.

Sun 13

Sunday Ride - Malvern to Craven Arms - Route 50

September 13 @ 8:30 am - 1:30 pm

Sunday Ride From McDonalds Malvern to Craven Arms Cafe. 08:30 for a 09:00 start.

Sun 20

Sunday Ride - Honey Cafe from Hereford or Worcester - Route 22

September 20 @ 8:30 am - 2:00 pm

Bit of a blast from the past this one.... Resurrected route with a choice of Hereford or Worcester start points ending up at the Honey Cafe. 08:30 arrival for 09:00 start.

Sun 27

WHAM Day Out - Brecons & Chepstow Backwards

September 27 @ 8:30 am - 4:00 pm

WHAM Full day ride. Starting at McDonalds Hereford, we follow the Brecons & Chepstow route but the other way around. 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.

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