



EASTER NEWSLETTER 2021

From the chair

Well, another month has passed by without many of us experiencing the freedom of two wheels on the roads.

I.A.M latest Covid Roadmap guidance, (which can be found on the I.A.M web site), is following the governments' guidelines to the letter, unless there are any changes in the meantime.

Currently from Monday 29th march, up to x 6 people can meet outdoors by socially distancing.

This does not mean we can start riding out in groups or start training again under the I.A.M banner.

I.A.M has advised that "Peer reviews" can take place, but only if all parties are in agreement and minimal travel adhered to. In practice the Training Team believe that this may not be practical as staying local and minimal travel is difficult if some observers live near county borders. Added to this, Peer reviews are only useful if observers have had riding practice to feel competent.

12th April is the date for everyone to work towards as we will be able to start observing with our associates again. As long as all parties are in agreement and again minimal local travel only.

17th May is probably the most significant date for everyone, unless any spanners in the works prevent this. Group rides will officially be allowed to take place. Up to x 30 people are able to meet up outside and hopefully we can start riding further afield in England without the minimal travel distancing.

We are more than aware that getting back to training affects all of us in different ways and not everyone can just get back on their bike and carry on. Associates are going to need more ride outs than originally planned to get them back to where they were when covid stopped play.

Confidence is also a huge Elephant in the room too and riders can feel pressurised into making decisions about their riding that are not comfortable for them. There should be no pressure or prejudice in taking time and voicing concerns. All of our Observers are here to help our associates to be safer thinking riders. As the roads start to get more congested, think about all of the road users that have not driven their cars for over a year too. Driving skills will not be so good and this adds to the pressure of the ride.

As the lock down eases through to the summer months please keep a check for upcoming events and ride outs that are being planned by our committee.

Happy Easter everyone and I hope you all have an "Eggtastic" weekend.

Helen



A look back

Stuart Haythorn's presentation on the Master's program made me reflect on just how far things have come since I learned to ride a motorbike all those years ago.

No such thing as CBT back then, and IAM was just a badge on a few old codgers' cars. After thrashing my mate's oily rag of a bike up and down the un-made road where we lived my sixteenth birthday arrived, as did my long-awaited provisional licence. I spent all my savings (£27.50 from my paper-round) on a clapped-out 250cc BSA, tied on L plates and off I went. No lessons and no need to take a test for two years. The freedom of the road at last!

Learning was done the hard way in those days, by falling off. I had six bikes and 6 accidents in as many years, so I wasn't a quick learner. Folding foot-pegs were yet to be invented so two crashes resulted from over-enthusiastic cornering and the rear wheel lifting and losing grip. I blamed one of those on my Triumph's over-generous automatic chain oiler which also lubed the tyre. The man whose car had gained a deep scrape along both doors wasn't happy with my excuse.

Those two I can put down to youthful exuberance, but if I'd known about IPSGA I might have avoided the others. Lack of observation, anticipation and planning when I tried to overtake a car which turned out to be turning right without signalling

left it with a dented bumper and me with a bent bike.

Another lack of anticipation caused me to T-bone a car emerging from the left. My passenger and I did great Superman impressions by flying over the bonnet. He impressed the on-lookers by executing a neat summersault and landing on his feet. My knees didn't fare as well – no leathers just jeans, so gravel rash for me.

The crash which put me in hospital for the first and only time in my life so far was due to the complete ignorance of all stages of IPSGA. I was following another rider at night, in the rain on a busy road. An approaching van was waiting to turn right across our path. The driver allowed the first bike to pass but didn't see my Joe Lucas glow-worm headlight amongst the car lights behind me. I assumed he would wait for me too and accelerated towards the gap. He turned. Bang.

So, if I had a time machine, what would I tell the young me?

Lots of acronyms, mnemonics and abbreviations? More likely it would be: -

Know yourself. Know your bike. Look ahead. Assume nothing. Expect the unexpected. Trust no-one.

And always be prepared to learn.

Alan



Advanced?

"I passed my IAM test a while ago, so I'm still an advanced rider, yes? 'Course I am.

But am I really, how would I know? IAM RoadSmart doesn't require me to prove it but I must be, mustn't I?"

Well, you're a full member of WSAM, so when did you last have a check-ride?
Last year, the year before, never?

The IAM does require some members to have regular formal re-assessments. National Observers are checked every 5 years to prove that their riding standard and observing skills are up to scratch. Local Observer Assessors have to re-qualify every 3 years. Master members are invited for re-test 5 yearly, or every three for Masters mentors.

"Well, I'm none of those so what is there for me?"

Two options are on offer: -

The informal one first. All full members are entitled to a free annual check ride with an Observer. Its purpose is to refresh your riding, remind you of anything you may have forgotten and to gently point out any bad habits you might have developed. All it will cost you is your time and a cuppa for your Observer. It's simple to arrange, just email your usual availability – weekdays, weekends etc to alan.cuthell@btinternet.com

Now for the formal route. IAM RoadSmart offers a Fellowship. The riding standard is the IAM test, but you have to re-take it every 3 years. If you're unsuccessful twice then you lose your full member status until you reach the standard. If your test was more than three years ago you would have to re-take it before being accepted onto the scheme.

Sounds scary perhaps, but its only what ROSPA members are required to do and, if you still ride as well as you think you do, it should be easy.

So, whether you choose to have a check-ride or become a Fellow, you'll know that you really are an Advanced rider.

Committee stuff

This is the time of the year where I normally have sent out the notice and call for candidates for our Annual General Meeting.

We had a well-attended virtual AGM on Sunday 11 October 2020, which replaced the postponed April AGM. Where this was an interesting and constructive meeting nothing can replace a gathering with the members present.

This is the reason why the Committee decided to postpone the 2021 AGM to a date later in the year where we hope we can sit together. This of course depends on the evolution of the COVID pandemic. We will keep you informed.

Frank



Club Activities for 2021 and more...

A cracking start to Easter:

So, a quick Easter quiz question....

Q: How many S's are there in Wales?

A: Well in 2022 there will be five.... Safe, Systematic, Smooth, Speed and Sparkle.

Yes, the moment we have all been waiting for...something to look forward to :-)

As many of you will be aware the WSAM Training Team sadly had to postpone our planned training event to sunny, yes "**Sunny**" Wales this May due to some little thing called COVID? (I looked in Roadcraft for the mnemonic, but I cannot find any reference to it anywhere, suggestions on a postcard please?)

Anyway, the great news is that in 2022 your hard working WSAM Training Team (we are guv, honest) has successfully secured a training event in Wales between 11th - 15th May 2022. We will again be staying at the wonderful Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells, set perfectly in the heart of Wales with access to the most amazing roads and scenery. Further details will be published soon but the event will be open to both WSAM Observers and Full Members and we be held over two consecutive two-day sessions. There will be Bed, Buffet Breakfast, Evening Meal, refreshments and Welsh Cakes!!! all included for the princely sum of £192 single occupancy or £162 per person double occupancy for a 2-night stay, excluding bar bills! (Rumour has it the first round is on Boris?)

Places will be limited, so please resister your interest with our Group Treasurer Rob Bright (rob.bright@btinternet.com) asap and we will publish further details on securing bookings with deposits etc in due course.

Stay safe and patient, we are nearly there....

Love, the WSAM Training Team



Bikes and me

I hope this article reaches all of you in good health, I for one am really missing riding at the moment, the situation looking up, vaccinations rolling out, spring has sprung, the days getting longer and British summer time now with us everyone is feeling more optimistic than a year ago.

Riding for me brings "release", "freedom", "exhilaration". To enable this to happen we all choose a vehicle which suits our needs. I am the first to admit it when it comes to choosing a bike I really struggle to settle with any particular machine. Bennett's insurance company office has me on a wager as to "how long for this one" I'm sure of it. One thing I do now is my wife is VERY understanding, over the years I think she has chosen to "turn a blind eye" to how many sleds I have had in the garage. It must amount to hundreds! I simply can't remember them all. When I first ride a bike, I know instantly if I will get on with it within a few gear changes, a few clutch actuations, the feel of the steering, the brakes, the seating position, any annoyances soon raise their heads, and I am evaluating at that point if I, a) can live with it (them), b) if it can be rectified, c) cost to rectify on top of the price and is it worth it? Do I really want the bike enough to start changing bits to make it suitable for me? Such parts will normally amass to, but do not end at (as my wife now asks me when I break the news of a potential new bike, swiftly followed by "would you like a cup of tea love?") a fender extender on the front mudguard, a taller screen, and some kind of exhaust... Normally some, if not all of the above arrive BEFORE the bike does, and delivery of said items are normally enforced by a photo from my wife to me on WhatsApp of my newly acquired sparkles and farkles with the addition

of text reading "fender extender?" or "new screen? (larger box) and sometimes after years of training "new Exhaust?" Damn I have trained her to well... she even asks ME! Yes ME... "Has it got a screen?" sometimes sarcastically whilst supporting a sultry look..." does it give you the fizz Geoff????" Damn I must keep my mouth shut when criticising a bike or trying to justify my next sled.



I have bought bikes before simply walking up to them on looks alone, If I liked the look of it, I bought it, (within reason). I have a soft spot visually and aurally for Italian bikes, who doesn't! Older Italian bikes used to have reliability issues; in recent years they seem to have shaken that monkey off their back. Some now using German electronic components coupled with Italian design and style I think make the most pleasing to the eye coupled with way less issues than of old. The new Ducati v4 Panigale, the exotic Mv's, the Ducati Multistrada rocking that single sided swinging arm and 17" front wheel, making the bike feel really quick to turn whilst holding perfect lines with all the aids of active suspension and cornering ABS. Modern bikes sure do complement our riding nowadays. I started riding when I was about 12 on a Suzuki ts185er, (2 stroke twin shock trail bike). We used to take it over to Halnaker pit on a Sunday, the first of every month if I recall, in a trailer. As confidence grew so did my ability and my parent's anxiety as they watched on, which I can now appreciate being a parent! Roll on 35 years and I'm still on two wheels, in fact I am wheel mad, skates, one wheels, electric unicycles, cars, mountain bikes, motorbikes etc.

I cut my teeth riding 2 strokes on the road something I still love to this day, the sound, the smell and the power bands. But now I prefer to see and hear them rather than ride them as



they are hard work. I don't own a smoker anymore I have had loads of rd350s and some rgs up to recently. I tend to change my mind on what I want lots, and I get bored quick.

If I lose interest in the bike, then I lose interest in riding. I tend to lust for something that gives me "the fizz" a big twin KTM 1290 super duke r, massive torque, torque is the key for road riding, the "thrust" from a big twin cylinder is fun, the power does not take time to reach its peak power higher in the rev range, its instant. This makes for a great road engine when underway, you can wind on the power and rely on the massive instant thrust to get past things and then get back in, do the job quickly and safely. Also, the engine breaking on a twin is greater.

Some bikes I have bought quite generally were crap. Once I did a deal with a Honda Innova 125 for a Gilera fuoco (3-wheeler) it looked really funky. I was commuting a lot in the winter, so three wheels made sense, the front brakes were excellent, having another contact patch and braked wheel up the front was really reassuring giving increased grip and vastly improved braking. The difference of having another braked wheel up front is astonishing, not to mention the added grip. However, my one had a problem. *Some* of the Piaggio/Gilera dealers missed off a crucial part of the servicing in the early part of the bikes life's, they omitted the re-torque of the head bearings, as it was missed off in the techs sheet! Maybe lost in translation?? This resulted in premature wear causing "centering" when riding slow. Basically, a massive notch, like the steering wants to stay straight (maybe worse being a 3-wheeler? it's absolutely awful, when riding slow in traffic

constantly fighting the "notch" weaving all over the place. The bike was designed at home in traffic being based on a 500-single scooter. I tried to fix it, but it was unclear as to which part was worn, I think maybe the bearing race and the cup holders, these were pressed in the frame. It had another quirk, whereby less than something like 5mph, you could have automatic tilt lock activated, which meant the bike remained upright no need for feet down. How this worked was, half of a brake disc attached to the tilt mechanism up front with another piston which clamped down below said speed, so you could still turn the bars but the tilting leaning motion was locked, which meant that you could don an apron over your legs, one of those Tucano city type ones, so you did not get wet whilst sitting waiting or indeed riding as you never needed to place your feet down. My one had a problem; the master cylinder was losing fluid somewhere. So, after a few weeks, it needed refilling, which meant front panel off and a few other parts. Another common problem you must ask before you buy, which I did and yes it was working clearly, until the fluid had all leaked out. The parallelogram motion on the front was also complicated and you needed a special jig to align the wheels once taken apart. The bike was aging, and so was my patience...needless to say...she went.

I did try the Nikken out, but the problems with my Fuoco were so engrained into my mind I was already on the back foot before testing it out. I found it (Nikken) to be too heavy, not good to filter, down on power probably due to the weight, no wind protection and it felt well all a bit budget, despite looking cutting edge. There is not a "perfect motorbike" or at least I have not found one despite me hunting. I



always seem to think the grass is greener, the 1290 Superduke r gave me "the



fizz", it was awesome to look at, not too bad on fuel, I saw 190 miles on a tank a few times (light riding), but I got fed up with wind blast, it was also lumpy at low revs, in hot weather you did have the feeling you sitting on a radiator, especially in traffic which is common for some v twins. For a while I had a 1150 rt, that was a great bike for weather protection and refinement, but the clutch slipped due to a leaking oil seal on the output shaft thus contaminating the clutch plates reducing friction and making it slip. Common problem apparently on the 1150s? You see, on the earlier boxer BMW's the clutches were dry like a car, sandwiched between the gearbox and the engine almost under the seat making the job an absolute pig because you almost have to peel away the rear of the bike practically folding it in half to access it, the faulty part costing pence, the repair bill approaching 4 figures. The (private) dealer had the bike back but it still leaked and slipped under load, the bike was gone from me for 3 weeks whilst the mechanic worked on it. I was assured it was fixed, but after a few miles the problem arose again (under load). At the time I was quite a way into my advanced course and at that point and I did not want to have more time away from riding. I lost faith in it and it had to go. Another bike I had was a 600 Fazer I won on eBay earlier in my biking days. I have no idea what I was thinking looking back. I remember my dad dropping me off to Uckfield to collect it, I rode it back and nearing home the temperature gauge rocketed up. I made it home but there was clearly a problem with it I think It may be down to the fact it had been owned by a courier and had covered over 100k miles. That was likely to have been the reason. I was assured it rode fine, and it really was a testament to the bike, having over 100k on it to still be serviceable (ish). A call to the seller concluded it was sold as seen and implied I must have been thrashing it. I can't remember what happened to the bike, I think I retired it to the sky, took myself into the corner with a dunce's hat on. I had a moment where I thought Supermoto was the way forward after

watching lots of blokes on you tube backing bikes into corners on tarmac tracks, it looked so cool. I drove to the middle of Oxford in my van and bought a Drz 400e, put road wheels on it, rode it to Midhurst, Petworth then to Whiteways. I could not wait to get off it, it was a thoroughly miserable experience, vibey, massive wind blast, massive fork dive, handlebars all over the place either from the wind on my upper torso or wheel out of balance. God knows it was probably the worst time I ever had on a bike on the road. Another bike I had was a r1100gs, these were highly regarded as "the last of the proper GS's" oil-based paint, proper heavy duty, reliable, I bought my red one from Worthing seafront, a retired chap who had an operation meaning he could not cope with the bulk. Now I know the earlier BMW boxer gearboxes had what is known as "character". I really found the gears really clunky, but what was really bad, it kept giving me false neutrals and occasionally jumping out of gear, this made one clench one's buttocks when in a bend applying the beans to then effectively have the bike spring into neutral. The bike wanted to stand up and yes you can imagine... very unnerving, I began to ride on eggshells... will it? wont it?... tensing up. After researching a bit, it transpired the "last of the best ones" were not so "best", pre-98. It turns out that they had a rubber part somewhere in the transmission either between the gears or near a selector somewhere which used to wear, giving you the false neutrals, and yes just lucky me, my one was one of them. I asked a chap up Whiteways, who often gravitated towards me, only turns out smarter as he owned a post 98 1100 rt and an 1100 gs he said, "ahhh yeaha yours is the pre-98..., that was a common problem on those ones" ... Why is it, the "common problems" only come to light, once I have parted with my shillings? Is this only me that finds this? If you do however decide to get an 1100 boxer, the sweet spot is post 98, they had what was called a m98 gearbox which was made without the rubber component. Also, if you look at the machining on the side case by the gear selector, after 5th some had "e" marked which was effectively and

overdrive maybe (economy?), this lowers the revs in 5th a fair amount making the mpg go up on a run and much more relaxing ride at higher speeds. This model was more desirable. I have had a love affair with boxer engines for years, they have evolved massively, the earlier units had "character" (crudeness) by today's standards. The introduction of the twin cam oil cooled incarnations (2008 to 2010), some will say the last of the great oil head (cooled) engines, they were livelier and freer revving than the previous single cam engines, and by then had ironed out some of the issues with the first 1200s that they had with the GS'S at least. Rear drive failure and "ring antenna" breaking, resulting in the bike being immobilised, as it cannot read the chip in your key, when you were out in the middle of Mongolia doing your "long way round". This was most unwelcome, and you saw some intrepid explorers "piggybacking" a spare one, near the ignition, in preparation for the failure. The early 1200s were plagued with abs issues to, some had servo assisted brakes, which were common for failing and to be avoided at all cost due to the eye watering cost to repair.

"The long way round" series really was a marketing masterpiece for BMW and the GS, I bet KTM are still kicking themselves to this day when they refused to donate bikes for the series.

The water-cooled boxer engine was a massive leap forward and now the latest shift cam motor is for me arguably the best road engine out there, the fuelling is absolutely perfect, you can hold a steady throttle at any speed without searching or hunting, which makes slow riding in traffic so much easier. The torque (not bhp) is ever so slightly more than a 1290 Superduke r (benchmark on tyre shredding power) so no end of thrust, couple this with the low centre of gravity the engine configuration offers and in the GS guise, wide handlebars giving you lots of leverage, makes for a really, really good bike.

Which is why you see so many GS's out there, to boot they offer excellent mpg, and are shaft drive so low maintenance, you just have to not want to "stand out from the crowd" if you are thinking of owning one. There popular bikes for a reason! Nostalgically looking back, one of the most engaging thrilling bikes I have ever owned was probably my 1000cc v4 Tuono, the soundtrack of that v4 was amazing, the handling razor sharp. It looked to die for with a 190 rear section tyre, I also fitted a rsv tail unit, the front end looks a little dated now to be honest, it gave me the fizz that bike... wow! So much so in fact that I bought another one about a year ago... "no! you didn't?!" I hear you say, ...I have to admit... I hated it! rock hard seat, crap fuelling, exhaust too loud (my fault for adding it), too much wind blast, rubbish mpg, no fuel gauge, no abs, (post 13 did) the new ones still no fuel gauge to date! sold it... came to a conclusion... I'm getting old!

At present I have a st1300 pan European which I love, it's a shame they don't make them anymore as there a great bike. I am still battling with the heft moving it in and out of the garage and if I was to be honest it is feeling a little old now. I have been spoilt with owning so many newer bikes with better brakes, suspension, and electronic aids.





Since passing my advanced test my riding style has changed 100% for the better, I am still not a fan of inline 4 engines, they to me seem so busy and lacking punch and engine braking. All this is subjective of course, it's not always the case, Yamaha's cp4 engine they use in the mt10 is an absolute peach without trying to sound to contradictory, it sounds lovely and goes like the clappers from the off and does not stop pulling, the only achilleas heal probably is it loves a petrol station when you're giving it the berries. Whatever we look for in a bike, is totally dependent on our own opinions and what they prefer, which makes motorcycling so diverse and interesting whether it be Harleys, trail bikes, 2 strokes, scooters whatever. To be honest when I look at how I used to ride, I am a very lucky boy indeed to still have a licence and still be around. It's kind of a reform for me passing my advanced. I only came about it as I started to ride with another local bloke, who politely steered me towards the advanced route. I always remember he said, "do the BikeSafe course with the police, it costs £50.00 and is the best £50.00 you'll ever spend trust me, it has saved my life more than once". So, I did, since that I am now badgering him to do his advanced course. I have grown to like quieter refined bikes as I have got older, but they still have to boogie when the time is right.

I would like to thank everyone in the group for all the time spent on making the group so good and hope you enjoy reading some of the bikes I have owned. I look forward to seeing and riding with you all very soon.

Geoff



If you have any articles that may be of interest to other members,

please forward them to me. (frank@wsam.org.uk)

Cheers,

That's all for this time

Helen

Affiliated to IAM RoadSmart



Registered Charity No 1080296