

aamc



# TREADS

The March /April 2009 Newsletter of AAMC

## Editor's Bits

You will have noticed that this issue covers both March and April. For technical reasons it has been necessary to combine both issues. Normal service will be resumed with the May issue. **PLEASE** continue to send in your articles for inclusion. The more the merrier.

I guess we all read or saw on TV the report about the rider who was caught doing 122mph in a 60mph limit with his son on the back.

No one can condone this speed in a 60mph limit but I thought he was unduly harshly penalised with the prison sentence. The Judge summed-up with a lot of "ifs" and "buts". He was not involved in an accident and there were no allegations that he was causing any other vehicles to take avoiding action. The Judge also remarked on the fact that his son was not wearing protective clothing other than a "crash helmet". There is no legal requirement to do so (at present) so how did this come into the equation? He was punished with a heavy fine, banned for 12 months, required to take an extended test when the ban ends plus the prison sentence.

In our local newspaper there appeared two other court cases. Compare the sentences:

1). A drunk driver (also a GP) in Jan 2009 crashed his car on the M4 after topping up bottles of diet Coke with vodka. He was convicted for drink - driving, fined £500

and banned for 3 years. But in Feb 2006 he had been banned and fined £400 for 'guess what', drink driving!!

2). On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008 a businessman lost control of his £100,000 Porsche car, travelling at high speed round a bend and collided with an open - topped bus which attempted to swerve out of the way, but overturned and toppled over onto its side. Several passengers on the upper deck were thrown out, but fortunately did not sustain serious injuries. The car then collided with a VW Golf which had been following the bus.

He was found guilty of driving without due care and attention, banned for 6 months, given six days to pay £2,915 including a £1,100 fine, £15 to his victims and £1,800 towards prosecution costs.

If you're going to get caught, do it in a car!!!

### Change of subject!

You may recall that last month the Club Committee invited members to attend a Committee meeting.

Well at the last meeting Paul, Helen, Jaimie & Sandra and Steve & Karen came to listen in. Thanks to them it's nice to know members are interested in what is involved in running the Club. (Be careful, you may get your arm twisted!!)

*Keith*

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## View from the 'Saddle'

Well it's now been confirmed that the UK is in a recession - something that we probably all knew many months ago, but it is not all doom and gloom. After promising to do the washing-up for a whole month, I was allowed to stretch the purse strings, and purchase a copy of Bike magazine, which states 'Recession? What recession?' And 'Why 2009 will be the best year in biking'. The article covers the variety in choice of motorbikes available, fuel prices falling etc. One part that caught my eye was the factoid on the inflation beating prices of Motorbikes, due to economies of scale. For example, in 1998 a Yam R1 cost £9,199, in 2008 it was down to £8,999. Similarly a Suzuki GSX-R800 in 1998 cost £6,999 last year it was £7,046. It's not just the Jap machines - a Triumph Sprint in 1998 apparently cost £8,029, now it is only £8,079. The officially decreed bike should really be over £10k if it had kept pace with inflation. So in a nutshell it looks like it's never been a better time to buy a new bike. That's if you have the funds!

Here's hoping that the weather climate this summer is not as gloomy as the current economic climate.

Safe biking

*Mr August*

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## Fancy an electric bike? Watt!!

A company called Mavizen have put an electric powered bike through its paces on the road.

It uses a Suzuki GSX - R 750 rolling chassis but has 2 electric motors to produce 86 BHP and accelerate from 0 - 60mph in 3.5 seconds with an estimated top speed around 130 mph.

It works on a 'twist and go' throttle, gives a constant torque and weighs in at 165kg, which is lighter than a normal GSX-R. The test seemed very promising but at the moment the range is limited by the batteries (or a long extension lead...). With new battery technology imminent, you could be going into a garage shortly and asking for "200 amps, please". I suppose some 'Bright Spark' will ask "Regular or Super??"

*Keith*

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## Advertisements

The Club regularly receives e-mails offering accommodation or hospitality, both in the UK and abroad. As a Club we have no experience of the vast majority of these but publish their details purely as a service to the membership, not a recommendation. If you are interested, you need to contact them yourselves.

## Country Inn and Restaurant

Hello to all at the Avon Advanced Motorcycle Club.

Just to let you know you are always welcome to drop in here. We now provide basket meals at £3.95 and Malvern Hills Brewery Real Ale and if you need it, some emergency petrol! Hope to see you.

Regards Simon and Dianne

[www.lion-inn.net](http://www.lion-inn.net)

## The Pines Country House

Dear Sir,  
Could I take a moment of your time to introduce ourselves to your motorcycle club.

We are Tim and Gloria of The Pines Country House, a small family run guest house on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales. The Pines is ideally situated for motorcycle rides around the Yorkshire Dales, Lake District and Lancashire.

We can accommodate up to 14 people (3x Twin rooms + 4x double rooms) and have a secure garage with space for 8-9 motorcycles.

We already cater for the Suffolk Advanced Motorcycle Club who have stayed with us for the past seven years.

If you would like any other information please contact us or visit our website

[www.pinesingleton.com](http://www.pinesingleton.com)

Many thanks for your time

*Tim and Gloria*

## **Biker friendly accommodation**

We thought our guest house, the Olive Tree just over the Devon /Cornwall border might be of interest to your club. We've had a number of bikers stay who have been very happy with what we have to offer:

- \* Plenty of safe well-off-the-road parking
- \* Garage to lock bikes up should you so wish
- \* We're happy to dry you out, make endless tea and feed you should you so wish!
- \* Hearty breakfast to start the day off!

Have a look at our website [www.theolivetreebandb.co.uk](http://www.theolivetreebandb.co.uk) and feel free to make any suggestions of ways that we could be helpful or make bikers feel more welcome.

Kind regards,

*Elaine and Tim*

## **More about licences etc.**

Reading about photo card licences in February TREADS (and the start of the 10 year anniversary renewals) reminded me of the enquiries about licences that I made before going to Romania a couple of years ago. The photo card licence was introduced to EU standard in 1998 and separates the type of vehicle the holder is entitled to drive or ride from the section giving the holder's history. That is because the UK is the only EU country to record offences in this way, everyone else having gone to computer records years ago. It is traditionally believed that if you have a photo card licence, you will be able to use it in all EU countries. It was envisaged that as travelling across Europe was easier, a form of licence common to all would enable all EU countries to establish the identity and driving history of a driver and be able to record driving offences wherever they occurred. To begin the process, UK drivers who tow large trailers with their cars were subject to a trailer test for the first time, in addition to the standard driving test. The test examines knowledge of gross towing weights, trailer nose weights and trailer loading skills. However, the plan has gained little ground since inception and most EU countries have retained their respective laws and controls.

My experience has been that some areas of Spain do not recognise the license for UK holders, and authorities require an International Driving Permit (IDP) as well. The IDP is about £5 and obtainable online from the AA and the RAC. You can also get one from large post offices. You will of course require a passport type photo and that is possibly the answer to the Spanish requirement. An IDP lasts for 12 months and means you will always have an up to date photo, in comparison to the photo card licence, which could be up to 10 years old, or your passport.

Back to Romania. Knowing I was going to cross France, Belgium, Germany and Austria was not a worry because I have been to those countries before and not

had any problems. There was a chance I would go into the Czech Republic and was definitely going the length of Romania and into Hungary, so I contacted our Embassy for their view. The Czech Republic is not EU so I would always have an IDP for that country. Romania and Hungary had just joined the EU before we left and the Embassy advice was to be safe and have an IDP for those countries also. I also contacted the Czech and Romanian Embassies in the UK and they supported that view. The Hungarian Embassy didn't reply.

Another source of information that should help is your insurance company. They are going to cover you to use your vehicle in the countries you wish to travel to and they should be able to advise you on the type of licence you will require. It might be sensible to obtain an IDP in any event, particularly as it costs so little. However, it is something else to lose and could it create more problems than it solves if you have changed a lot since your licence / passport photo's were taken. (I'm thinking surgery or even Botox here folks).

As usual I haven't given much in the way of answers, only more questions. Another word of caution though comes from reading 'the comic', Motorcycle News. I have noticed, over a period of time, that people have applied for a photo card licence and then found that not all of their former entitlement to drive certain vehicles has been carried over to the new licence. If not spotted straight away, some people have eventually had to retake their test because they were not able to produce their test pass certificate. That being the case, it seems prudent to me to take a copy of the photo card section (both sides) before I send mine away for renewal. Then I can easily compare one with another and will have something tangible to produce if there is a problem.

Here's to progress.

*Stu*

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## Club bash to Germany

At the end of last year, I put a few details in Treads about the 'foreign' bash I was organising for this year. To recap, I intend leaving on the afternoon of Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June, crossing the channel (probably by tunnel) and stopping in France for that night. On the Thursday we travel on into Germany for a three-night stay on the banks of the Mosel River, probably at Bernkastel. I have already found a small guest house and café with adequate facilities and en-suite rooms. I dare say that some bottles of wine may be consumed.

We tour the area on Friday and Saturday, and leave for home on the Sunday morning, stopping in France on the Sunday evening and getting home on Monday 15<sup>th</sup>.

I currently have six names (seven including me) on my list of members who are interested, and I need to press ahead and start booking things now, so if you haven't told me you are interested but would like to come (or at least know a bit more), please contact me a.s.a.p.

Thanks,

*Simon.*

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## Counter steering

Anyone who has ridden will have come across various methods of steering the motorcycle. Although counter steering is a natural product of our ability to balance, we need to understand why it is done and how it links to steering techniques overall.

Most of us can steer naturally. Around walking pace we steer the bike left for left - right for right but as speed rises we need to lean the bike in the direction of the turn. Counter steering is a natural

phenomenon and it is the weight we apply to the end of the handlebar on the inside of the turn. We do this to stop the front wheel from turning towards the inside of the turn and to commence the leaning of the bike as we start to corner.

So, accept the fact that we will observe well ahead; get our braking and gear changes over with on the straightest section; be ready to use positive throttle to keep weight of the bike and rider over the rear wheel and balance the bike. Be ready to increase speed depending on the road surface, weather, forward view and the rider's expectations of what follows. What we will examine are what techniques that we can apply through the curve.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that as you lean the bike into corners, remember that you have less braking ability through losing some grip. Looking ahead will allow you to identify bends that may have road surface problems. You will be wise to slow down before entering such hazards to allow for the tyre grip trade off. More lean means less braking force can be applied.

As you enter the curve, keep looking across towards the exit, or where you expect the exit to be. Some riders lean their head away from the curve. You may find a better technique is to lean your head forwards. Try to point your chin towards your mirror, or the exit of the bend. This technique will help keep your eyes level with the road, despite your angle of lean, which helps with confidence in leaning to extreme angles.

You can make the steering circle tighter and quicker by putting some extra weight onto the inside handlebar. As you enter a corner just try gently pushing down on the inside bar. As you get used to the feel of the steering getting quicker, add more weight and also try the other following methods of steering until they become second nature to you.

You can also help the steering by pressing your foot down onto the peg on the inside

of the turn. Do this with care as you learn how this feels. Lowering the inside elbow can also help steering the bike as it moves your upper body to the inside of the bike. You are creating a counter balance to the forces acting on the bike.

Moving your head towards the inside of the curve can help steering, but remember to keep looking to where you want the bike to go, and keep scanning through the bend. If you keep looking you will keep assessing, which helps being smooth. Use your forward vision to maintain good all-round observations.

Getting a knee down on the road is not a good idea as a road is not as smooth as a racetrack surface. It can cause the rider to have less control, and often means the bike is going slower through a curve than one with a more upright rider.

That does not mean you cannot lean, but lean into the inside of the curve by lowering your elbow, the one inside the curve, just a touch. Even for straight roads you should not have rigid arms. Sit in a relaxed position with your arms bent and hands resting on the bars, not gripping. It all helps you to be smooth when operating the controls. Keep your legs relaxed but ready to grip the tank when braking or steering. Your pillion also needs to learn to be relaxed so as to assist the rider and machine through curves. The pillion input is quite simple. On approach to a bend to the right, the pillion should look over the rider's right shoulder. The pillion should look ahead and adopt the position before entering the curve. Look over the left shoulder on approach to a left curve.

Remember there may be another hazard just out of sight, so the rider should be ready to stop, or at least slow down and deviate. Make sure you keep looking well ahead and try to anticipate problems. Use a suitable gear, one that allows gradual throttle movements and good pulling power, without over-revving the engine, or making it struggle. Be smooth with all the controls and keep scanning for the next hazard to prevent surprises.

On entering the curve stabilise the angle of lean, apply positive throttle [not acceleration] to balance the bike. If the curve opens apply gentle acceleration to suit road surface and any further hazards. Keep looking through the curve for what is ahead and to help turn the bike through the curve.

Through the turn apply small amounts of throttle (positive throttle) to keep the machine under power. This helps to keep stability and prevent the bike wallowing. The bike will perform better with positive throttle as it travels through a curved path. However, be wary of road surface problems that may cause the tyres to lose grip.

As the exit appears, gradually open the throttle to provide smooth acceleration. This helps you bring the bike upright, but you must be aware of what you are approaching. Throttle is related to forward view and forward view is essential for control. This brings us back to the first comment above. There may be another hazard just out of sight, so be ready to stop or at least slow down and deviate.

Above all else make sure you keep scanning ahead. Keep your head turned in the direction of the curve exit as that helps you turn the bike naturally. Where you look is where you go. Be smooth in all operations of the machine's controls, leaning and changing road position.

On wet roads you need to be more relaxed and smooth to corner well. As you begin the curve, try pressing your foot down onto the OUTSIDE footrest. This action puts you into the correct seat position for the curve, and steadies the bike onto the road surface.

Try these techniques with extra care in wet weather. Be aware of spray and 'visor fog' reducing your vision. Allow more room for decelerating and braking. Gauge your speed for the start of the curve, and obtain a gear to allow the engine to pull the bike and rider freely without any risk of the

rear tyre spinning. Employ smooth steering skills through the curve and keep the throttle settings so that speed is maintained to pull the bike through the curve.

Keep speed increases small until the bike is upright again. Allow more room and time to see tar strips and damaged roads, especially when leaning the bike. Remember also that other road users will not be able to see you as well in wet weather.

The answer is that one technique on its own may not have much effect. However, try working out which techniques suit you and try them out until they become a natural part of you and your riding style.

*Stu Bullock*

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## National Speed Limit

*We have received the following notification from Steve:*

The speed limit on single carriageway rural roads is to be cut from 60mph to 50mph under government plans announced yesterday (9<sup>th</sup> March).

The lower limit is to be enforced by a new generation of average speed cameras capable of catching motorcycles. It could be imposed by next year.

Roads minister Jim Fitzpatrick said the move was needed to cut the death rate on rural roads, where seven out of 10 car crash fatalities occurred in 2007.

The 50mph limit will be proposed in a consultation to be published this summer.

Follow the link and sign the petition.  
<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/noNSLr/education/>

*According to the press release that I read, this is a proposal but is being decried by the opposition who believe that the problem should be targeted at the culprits and not a blanket national change. It's also tied up with average speed gatsos,*

*extra penalty points (6) for 'excessive' speed above the limit and includes the use of mobile phones.*

*Before long we'll be back to a man holding a red flag walking in front!!*

*Bring back the Traffic Units, I say.*

*Keith.*

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## Speed Choice Workshops

*Thanks to both Liz from the North Somerset Road Safety Office and Nick who both sent in the following article:*

Motorcyclists who break speed limits or commit other endorsable traffic offences in Avon and Somerset are to be offered the chance to attend a special road safety workshop instead of having penalty points on their licence.

Speed Choice courses have been available to speeding motorists for the past six years and more than 120,000 drivers have chosen to attend a workshop to avoid penalty points.

Now, from the beginning of next month, the option is to be extended to motorcyclists who break speed limits, ride through red traffic lights, cross double white lines or commit other traffic offences that would normally result in a licence endorsement.

The workshops for motorcyclists will be held at three centres - Shirehampton, Keynsham and Taunton. They are non-profit making with a £60 charge being made to cover the cost.

The three-hour long courses, taken by expert instructors, will emphasise the importance of safe riding behaviour and the responsibility riders have for their own safety and that of their passengers and other road users.

The Rider Choice workshops are being

organised by the Safety Camera Partnership – now known as Safecam - in conjunction with Avon and Somerset Constabulary, as part of the education campaign to cut the high number of deaths and injuries among bikers.

During the past five years 80 motorcyclists have been killed and 821 seriously injured on local roads.

Richard Fairhurst, the Speed Choice education development manager, said: "Motorcyclists are an extremely vulnerable group. They represent only one per cent of traffic – but a quarter of all those killed and seriously injured on local roads."

"Rider error is cited as a factor in the majority of motorcycle collisions. Safe motorcycling begins with good rider attitude backed up by good riding skills," he said.

"Quite simply, these courses will give motorcyclists constructive advice on how to become better and safer riders.

"We believe they will help to change rider attitudes and behaviour and bring a lasting reduction in the number of motorcyclists and their passengers being killed and seriously injured on our roads."

The feedback from those taking the Speed Choice courses for speeding motorists, which were launched in 2003, has been tremendously positive with 98 per cent of attendees grading them as "good" or "excellent".

A follow-up survey last year showed that most believed their driving had improved as a result of attending the workshop.

The full range of Speed Choice workshops and education programmes can be found on its website [www.speedchoice.org.uk](http://www.speedchoice.org.uk)

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## First club ride of the season – 15<sup>th</sup> March

The nearer we got to the weekend the better the weather forecast became, so I unusually took some extra time to plan my ride. Over the winter I had decided that my rides had become boring and predictable because I had tended to stick with the same roads, so I determined this year I was going to try harder and find some new routes.

Fortunately (in a way) work has been very busy for me since the beginning of the year, but this has meant no possible time to spend riding the bike or scouting for new routes, so it was down to the detailed map. I had already decided to go to Hay-on-Wye as it is a nice town with a good café within easy commuting distance this time of the year. I picked a route via the Wye valley and Monmouth, going north nearly as far as Hereford before turning west to Hay on a little-used B road.

We usually get a pretty good turnout of members for the first and last rides of the season, especially if the weather is kind, so I wasn't surprised to have 18 bikes out (or that's what I think I counted). That should give me the prize for the most number out on a ride at this year's presentation dinner. I can visualise the shiny and expensive award sitting on my mantelpiece already...!

We made it into Hay just after 12 noon. Parking outside the Granary café (my favourite café in Hay) was even worse than usual, unfortunately, and we had to squash ourselves into places that weren't exactly ideal. Geoff was so put-off by all this that he decided not to bother to stop, but to carry-on riding as he was having such a good time. Personally I think he was just off to visit the in-laws for a free lunch, but don't tell him I said so.

The weather was really warm and sunny for mid-March (up to about 14 degrees), and we were all having a good time, so I decided to make a swift change to my

route-plan and add an extra 20 mile loop north through Kington, then back over the mountains and down the hair-pins into Erwood to pick-up the A470 back. (I couldn't go any further than Kington because that's where my map ends and I didn't want to fall off the end...)

At Abergavenny we picked-up two police motorcyclists who were intent on overtaking us and then stopping a little while later. This happened three times, and I couldn't quite work out what they were doing, but they seemed to be enjoying themselves (like the rest of us) and didn't really bother us.

We finished at Chepstow around 3:15pm, and I rode 185 miles during the day, door to door. If the weather is that good for the rest of this season, we will all be in for a real treat. And not before time too.

Long may the good weather continue!

*Simon.*

P.S. When we got to the end of the ride, one of our new members Linsey said that he had noted the route we had taken on his Sat.Nav. and would let me have a copy. Another member, Barry, who was also on the ride has a gadget that automatically records the route it's on and then you can download this onto your pc.

We are currently investigating ways in which club ride routes could be published on the website. If you have any advice or knowledge of this, please get in touch with me so we can take it further.

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