



TREADS

www.aamc.co.uk

The August 2016 Newsletter of AAMC

Editor's Bits – Morton

Fewer Traffic Cops: The RAC tells us that in three-quarters of the country, the number of full-time roads policing officers has fallen steadily since 2010 and is still falling. These are officers whose responsibilities are mainly road policing and accident investigation. While the overall drop 2014-to-2015 was 5%, in Avon and Somerset it was 35% (and 61% since 2010). How one views this may be influenced by how “progressively” (ahem, ahem) one rides. The RAC was in no doubt: “These figures make for grim reading and are likely to be met with dismay by law-abiding motorists....a majority of forces have seen a further fall in the number of officers whose primary responsibility is tackling crime on our roads.”

Another RAC study has revealed that revenue from vehicle excise duty has **fallen by £93m** in the year following the abolition of the paper tax disc. The DVLA had predicted the new system would lead to savings of £10m. While other factors affect the loss, such as more low carbon-emission vehicles being taxed, the figure “may continue to rise as a result of increased evasion”. A year ago the Department for Transport roadside survey projected about 560,000 unlicensed vehicles, compared with 210,000 in 2013. What a surprise!

I did my CBT and test in 2004, so don't know about “the old days”, and I found this letter to “Bike” magazine (<http://www.bikemagazine.co.uk/>) for Sept 2015 interesting – it may bring back memories for some:

Passed master

Having never had a lesson and having barely glanced at the Highway Code I was a student when I took my test on a rainy November day in North London in '77. There were four of us there, three long-haired lads in leather jackets on two-strokes and me on my Honda four-stroke plodder. I had just had my fashionable shoulder length hair cut short and had bought one of those newfangled full-face helmets. My tester hid from the rain by standing at the end of a queue in a bus shelter and I could see him leaning out as I passed him on the figure 8 route I had to ride. He could only see me for a few seconds of each five minute lap. And he must have been run over by a previous candidate as he was about 200 yards away when he leapt out into the road and put up his hand to make me do an emergency stop. At first I didn't think it was him but he was still 150 yards away when I stopped in the middle of the road and sat like a plonker waiting for him to walk up to me and tell me to ride back to the testing station. He asked me one question about my brakes then told me I had passed. Outside I met three aggrieved riders who told me they'd all failed. I knew I had been on to a winner as soon as I saw them. Recently I went for a Sunday morning ride with a lad from the local pub. His long term girlfriend had dumped him so he cheered himself up with bike training and a second-hand Hornet. As we sped down the country lanes his head was bobbing about like a dog in the back window of a car. I could see him checking his mirrors and getting in the right position in the road so I knew what he was going to do long before his indicators

came on. Bike training and testing have clearly come on a long way since the days when a pass or fail depended upon your haircut and the type of bike you rode. I think I had better find a beginners course somewhere. I suppose there are quite a few dinosaurs like me who passed their tests as kids who never took riding seriously and now as we hit our 60s we find ourselves the owners of powerful bikes we were never really trained for.
Rob Bisset, Wilmslow, Cheshire.

That same copy of "Bike" told me that when Kenny Roberts (3-time World 500cc Champion) moved back to California his licence had lapsed so he had to take the test. He failed three times! He reckoned that the fourth time, they took pity on him, and passed him anyway.

Changing the subject, UK motorcycle registrations for Jan - June 2016 were 61,859 units, 8.3% up on the same period in 2015.

Plug & Grub date: the new date is now 26 November, venue to be arranged.

Finally, special thanks to Paul Batcheler for two cracking write-ups, one of which is held over for next time.

Legal Question

Summer kit: the legal ins and outs

In our north Atlantic climate we are not often bothered by temperatures which make regular riding gear too hot to wear. But on those rare scorching days when your bike kit boils you and you have a real risk of heat stroke, what does the law say about minimum protection levels? The criminal law says you must wear a type-approved helmet and be decent. The civil law says that if you do not get knocked off it is no one's business but your own.

But if you and your bike part company does the law hold the bare naked

rider at least partially to blame? The answer is not clear. If your feet are damaged and you were not wearing 'stout footwear' then you will be looking at a modest reduction of damages. In much the same way as your unbuckled helmet will attract a 10% reduction in a head or facial injury claim, not following clear Highway Code guidance on suitable footwear will result in some blame for any injuries swinging back your way. Riding in regular jeans, T-shirt, and soft boots would not usually attract any sort of reduction. Likewise choosing an open faced helmet and sunglasses is of no legal consequence. Your summer kit is a matter of personal choice so long as you have a legal helmet and stout footwear.

Some of the most horrendous and complex low speed injuries involve unprotected feet. Trainers offer no protection and, along with shoes, can fly off feet in an impact.

I subscribe to the view that if you are riding in no protective kit you will ride very carefully and I am quite relaxed about my own riding kit - I have been known to ride in a T-shirt and jeans in an urban environment, but always with solid footwear which covers the ankle. Just putting your feet down in a hurry on a tarmac road can cost you toes - experience has made me especially squeamish about unprotected feet. *[Apparently the foot and ankle contain 26 bones, 33 joints and 100+ muscles, tendons & ligaments - Ed]*

One of the saddest cases I dealt with was a young rider who died of gravel rash, riding in jeans and a T-shirt. Not a single bone was broken, but the shock of losing his skin killed him. His speed was 40-50mph. My conclusion is mesh gear is worth having, but if you cannot stretch to it protect your feet at all costs and if you are going to be riding at any sort of speed an abrasion resistant layer can save your life.

Statistically you are unlikely to be involved in a collision on any ride so I do not go along with the view that you need

fully armoured leathers to pop down to the shops. But, in the unlikely event of an off, protective kit so massively increases your chance of walking away that, ignoring the inconvenience and heat, I wear a minimum of an armoured mesh jacket with a back protector, soft motorcycle boots and gloves. I take my chances in ordinary jeans if Kevlar will cook me. Andrew Dalton, "Bike", [Sept 2015](#)

View from the Saddle -

Simon

This month it's my turn to write the View, and I've been having trouble making up my mind what to write about. I usually manage to find a current affairs topic, but I think this time I'll avoid Brexit and just give you all a brief update on what I've been spending my free time on recently.

I've been heavily engaged in the Club Bash to France over the past few weeks. In case you don't know, we're off to the Massif Central area of mid-France on 8th September, so the departure time is fast approaching. During last year's trip to Normandy I asked those present to make suggestions for this year. One of them was the Massif Central and this seemed to strike a chord with the majority.

I remember passing through the area some years ago and thinking how unpopulated it is and what great roads there are, so the decision was made. I put out a note in Treads asking for interest or bookings and quickly received five replies, which is about the usual number. I proceeded with booking the ferry and found a couple of hotels, so made a good and early start.

Christmas came and went, and then I had another booking. Not a problem to add another person, so that was done. However, over the subsequent weeks, I kept getting more and more bookings,

which really surprised me. The numbers slowly grew until one of the hotels I had chosen to use on the way back was no longer large enough to accommodate us, so I had to find another.

It's always a problem picking a hotel from a website, because even reading the reviews only gives you a vague idea of what it's actually like. Anyway, you can only do your best within a limited budget, so I just hope they all turn out to be good...

There was a lull in enquiries about the trip after Easter, so I thought it was all finalised, but then in July it all started again!

I suppose I could have said it was too late, but I aim to please, so it's back to e-mailing and faxing the hotels to increase the number of rooms, all the time keeping fingers crossed they can accommodate us. Nothing like making a rod for your own back...

The French are getting better with e-mail, but there are still plenty of people over there who don't use it, so the fax machine is put back into use.

The ferry has now run out of cabins, and with only three weeks to go before we leave, I don't think I can put up with the stress of any more changes!

The final result is we are a group of 15 people on 12 bikes, and I think that's plenty enough for a trip of this kind.

We always have a great time whilst we're away, with a load of laughs. If you've not been on one of these trips before, then you really should try it. Who knows, you may actually enjoy yourself!

Positioning – Stu Bullock

Just what is the consideration given to selecting a particular road position? There are two sections in Roadcraft that must be considered when teaching road position for bends:

Riders are more vulnerable than drivers. (You can't fall off a car. SB). If a rider makes an error of judgement the outcome is more serious, because there is no protective shell as in a car.

One of the commonest causes of all motorcycle crashes in the UK is loss of control in a bend, corner or curve on a rural road and in particular double-apex bends. When you corner you place extra demands on the available tyre grip. The faster you go and tighter the bend the greater those demands are.



On most road surfaces it is possible to see the 'tyre tracks' left by other vehicles. We use the tyre tracks to decide whether we should be in the right or left tyre track for best safety from other surrounding hazards. Where the road surface is good enough to maintain safety, stability and view it is acceptable to take a line outside the tyre tracks because that will reduce the tightness of the bend allowing more tyre grip for steering, braking and accelerating. However, the decision where to place the

machine is one for the rider, not anyone else.

We should always adopt a particular road position for SAFETY first that protects the contact patch of each tyre on the road surface. Having good stability is next, again to protect the tyre's contact patch, and so you are looking for a stable section of road to ride on. SAFETY is the overriding consideration. Always sacrifice position for safety. To keep the best stability, select a course which will provide the best tyre grip and reduce the tightness of the bend. If any of those standards cannot be achieved, we must reduce speed.



The outside edges of a road are where you are more likely to find a broken or worn road surface. This is because the weight of other vehicles 'leans' onto the outside tyre track when they negotiate the curve and causes damage to the road surface. Debris from road surface wear, as well as objects that fall from vehicles, will also be thrown to the outer verge. The very centre of the road will often be a resting point for debris because that part of the surface is not swept in the same way as the tyre tracks are. By moving close to those areas the risk of making a mistake and losing control is raised significantly. Why do that?

It is irresponsible to influence riders to adopt the very extreme road position and ignore a safer position that will always be

preferable. Some riders will decide not to go to the extreme edge of a road surface because they feel unsafe in some situations. That should not mean they cannot be graded at Gold if they have a plan and a reason for implementing that plan. Guidance to Examiners and tutors is provided in RoSPA Advanced Test Guidelines:

Positioning. The Examiner will note how you position your machine for safety, stability and view on the approach to hazards both on the open road and in urban areas. He will also note your use of lanes. You should understand that at times a position for view or speed will have to be sacrificed for the sake of safety.

The above guidance shows very clearly that a rider may not have an opportunity to ride through a curve in the most extreme position on the road due to other hazards that affect safety and stability, and still ride to gold standard.

So, why do some riders think position comes before safety and stability? Let's be realistic. Straightening bends and using every millimetre of road surface is practised to go fast. It appears to be a measure of skill, ability, bravado, application of The System. Or is it giving the impression the rider can copy a police rider responding to an emergency? Either reason raises the risk of a loss of control and is inappropriate in applying The System in a flexible way. What for instance, would be the point in taking an extreme position when you already have a mile of view and the road surface is sound? What can be the point in taking an extreme position at lower speeds in town situations, or on a multi lane road?



How about when you have no view at all, so you cannot see what may be approaching? What about where you see the centre lines are worn away in a bend?

So never mind style over function, safety is the key and comes first every time. Anyone who fails to grasp that just does not have a defensive attitude and is frankly potentially dangerous. Let's have it consistent and safe for everyone by reducing the risks to riders.

Eddy's Day Out

On Wednesday 20th July I pitched up at Castle Combe to undertake a qualification course for an ACU competition licence put on by the North Gloucester Race Club. The day was split between theory and practical. That well known trainer, racer and mechanic Rob Jones headed the practical elements.

I am pleased to report that my bid was successful but I came away with some memorable sign-posts. At the written test stage we were required to put our names and date of birth on the front page of the answer sheet. I glanced at my neighbour's sheet and noticed DoB 1997 - I gave him a nudge and showed my 1947 - "Bloody hell" came the response. I was quietly - but not so quiet that I can resist mentioning it here - gratified that I was smoother and quicker on the track than my new friend, but that won't last for long of course.

Two other abiding memories are firstly how relatively poor were the riding standard and riding lines needed to achieve a pass. The basic level seems to be, can you ride a bike such that you won't be a danger to yourself or others in a race? The road riding skills that we are more used to are much more demanding.

The other memory I took away came from Alan, a young naval airman who was aiming to become part of the RN race team and compete on the Isle of Man. His determination to be 'up there in front' was palpable. My horizon is more on the lines of 'taking part is the main thing!'

Again a little frisson of pleasure came when Alan had to use the run off at Bobbies, I passed him and he was unable in spite of sparks and knee-downs to pass me back - not, I might add, because of any exceptional skill on my part but because his CBR600 just couldn't crank up the pace to pass even my old 1998 R1 when winding it up on the straight bits.

Next job is to sort myself out a dedicated track bike.

On the subject of the Wales ride out through Talybont on Usk, I use that stretch quite a lot and find the key is to hold uppermost the reasons for positioning, Safety Stability and View: if the view element is not forgotten then Safety and Stability are pretty well assured and a smooth, pacey ride is the result. If you lose the View, whilst the Safety and Stability elements can be preserved you tend to lose the pace.

Finally, on the subject of prop stands and slopes I parked up just so on a trip with someone I hadn't ridden with before and he remarked - 'Of course I can't do that 'cos I don't have a handbrake'. He then discovered that gear boxes have more than one use!

Eddy L-S

Nigel's Tour - of the Cotswolds, Hereford and Worcester, and then a bit of Monmouth

Our meeting point for the ride was the Cross Hands Hotel where a bumper turn out of AAMC riders met at the allotted hour on a dry Sunday morning

Our ride leader Nigel lives pretty close to the Cross Hands so left it until the last minute to turn up. Sandra and Helen had been quietly enquiring who would like to lead the ride, (or any ride for that matter) should 'Red Leader' fail to show. Nigel's Triumph was heard from some miles away approaching the start point; cool as Steve McQueen in his pomp, our Nigel hove into view and took instant command.

Our route started at the Cross Hands Hotel and we departed this hostelry turning left and heading for Castle Combe, one of many stunning villages that were to make our acquaintance that day. We then skirted across the top of Chippenham and then north just before Royal Wotton Bassett; all wide open A and B roads which gave us plenty of opportunity to overtake, I noted that Sandra was making very good progress on her lovely Triumph Speed Triple.

After a couple of hours of excellent riding we arrived at Kemble 'International' Aerodrome for a Tea Stop. And Mark's first (of three I believe) cream teas!

Andy and Paul said goodbye at this point and made their way back to Bristol.

The clouds over Kemble looked ominous and talk of wet weather gear grew amongst the remaining AAMC riders, luckily although the clouds threatened throughout the day, hardly a spot of rain fell.

From Kemble, we skirted around Cirencester and up the "Whiteway" through some beautiful and very expensive looking villages, which all seemed to be sponsoring bicycle or Triathlon events! There were many hundreds of contestants out that day, slowing much of the traffic almost to a standstill. This is where the motorcycles came into their own, carefully and majestically some might say, picking their way through these cyclists and continuing on to our lunch stop at Broadway Tower. Which is yet another fine example of the high-end eateries we have all grown to expect from these outings, and this venue did not disappoint. This Hostelry will undoubtedly feature in our chairman's long awaited first book aptly entitled: A Hundred Excellent Garden Centre, Castle and Folly Cafés that will not eject you for drinking weak tea. Bound to be a best seller, methinks.

Mark took full advantage and had another cream tea and let Helen watch him mournfully; I do believe he belatedly and seemingly begrudgingly spared a small crumb of scone and an inconsequential smear of clotted cream for his good lady; but in truth, it was a pitiful amount that he allotted her! No wonder Helen is so tiny; his betrothed seemingly lives on scraps...

At one point Mark sent Helen off to 'scrump' in the hedgerow for an apple, things had got that bad. (A bit of artistic license has been applied here; the apple was actually safely ensconced in their (refrigerated?) BMW top box; (but can't these people read the signs about bringing and eating their own food!)

We left the folly that is Broadway Tower and its epic Tea Rooms and headed West and crossed the river at Upton upon Severn and then skirted south of Malvern, on some 'green lanes' which I am sure Nigel thought would slow the bigger bikes down and settle our lunch in one fell swoop. Back onto better roads we headed

towards Ledbury and through another stunning village of Much Marcle (made up name no doubt) and then onto Mitcheldean following the roads by the river around to the mythic Goodrich Coffee stop at Goodrich Castle, this is a spot that only Nigel can find, or so Carezza once told me at a Thursday evening RoSPA Training session, "I'm sure Goodrich Castle doesn't exist, Jim couldn't find it, and we searched for hours!"

I may have over-egged the 3 cream teas that Mark ate, as at this stop he chose the biggest Custard Cream biscuit known to man; as you've probably guessed by now, Helen didn't fare well. The Robins (No not the Aprilia owner, the indigenous bird population) did better for crumbs this time around...

To bring this excellent ride to a conclusion we headed back along the side of the river Severn returning towards Chepstow via St Briavels and parted company just before the Old Severn Bridge.

An excellent ride, through some stunning English countryside, thanks to Nigel for leading and Rick and Joy for going back marker.

PS - I received one apology for Nigel's Cotswold Tour; from Bryn who was selflessly off that day helping a friend to bring back an old tractor from 'up country'. I'm picturing a silver BMW 1200RT towing a farm vehicle down a country road near Frome. With Bryn and his mate at the wheel of the tractor singing a random Wurzles number at the top of their voices. Oh the fun they must have had....And I suspect Bryn still got a few measured overtakes in!

Ride Safe,

Paul B.

Biker Down Workshops

- *Chris*

Biker Down workshop dates for this season are detailed below: -

23rd September,
21st October,
18th November &
9th December.

Please email bikerdown@glosfire.gov.uk to reserve a place and we look forward to seeing you at SkillZONE.

Nearer each workshop we will be advertising each one.

We endeavour to issue Treads on a regular basis during the third week of the month. Therefore if you have any items to be published in Treads, can you please ensure that they reach the editor before or during the first week of that month. Contributions for Treads are always needed, whether they are motorcycle related or of general interest! Please don't be shy.

E-mail editor@aamc.co.uk

NB – We publish articles for the benefit of members – it is not an endorsement or recommendation. You must make up your own mind if you think something is suitable for you.

