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## EVENTS in November

**Motorcycle Law Scotland**  
**2nd November, 19.30, The Steading**  
 A talk by Brenda Mitchell

**Helite Airvest**  
**14th November, 19.00, The Steading**  
 A talk & demonstration by Peter Riley

Please refer to the EDAM Facebook page or website for the latest news about events:

<https://goo.gl/zyVD3q>  
<http://www.edam.org.uk>

## Where Did All The Daylight Go?

It doesn't seem like 5 minutes since I was excited about the prospect of long, light summer nights and yet now it's dark by 7 o'clock.

Riding in the dark is different - it's harder to see, obviously, and that makes a difference to our perceptions and ability to 'read' the road. Limit points can't be easily spotted and we need to slow down. The edges of minor roads can be harder to detect and so view needs to be sacrificed in the interests of safety.

All that said, riding on dark evenings can be good fun. There's generally less traffic and the dark throws a different perspective on things.

For obvious reasons, EDAM observed rides don't happen in the dark - it's too hard to 'observe' - but that's no reason not to try it yourself.

Apologies to those night-riding converts I am preaching to - if you can tell us anything about your experiences please feel free to write an article for Twistgrip :-)

As usual, articles, photos or suggestions on almost any subject can be sent to be at the address below:

Glynn Jones  
 editor@edam.org.uk



Previous PDF issues of TG are available here: <https://goo.gl/y2FcoR>

A WORD FROM THE CHAIR: The Effects of Sun & Alcohol by Sandy Dickson



I return from holiday and I am feeling very slightly mischievous, so be warned.

Well fat Ecks' folly has finally opened, it is not finished but it is open – but that's politicians & Queens' for you. You book them for an opening and they go in the huff if you cancel it. Luckily, very few Scottish businesses were involved with the bridge: designed by Americans, funded by the Spanish and built using Chinese steel (after all, Motherwell is really far away), so Jonnie Foreigner having lost his shirt building it, should not affect us too much. Anyway, it was on time and on budget (and the tooth fairy is alive & well).

One of the more interesting aspects of the new bridge has been its ability to magic up a traffic jam out of thin air. In any real sense, all that has happened is that a bridge has been built about a mile from where the old bridge stands. Now putting to one side we have the tree huggers to blame for not being able to use both bridges now, you might have thought moving the bridge a short distance and all other things being equal would not have caused the queues to increase. Indeed, some might have thought the traffic might have flowed a bit more freely but, alas, and alack, that seems not to be the case.

Now in my mad world, it may be that I am joining the dots up in a fairly random manner, but try this. The City of Edin-

burgh Council has introduced a blanket 20mph limit (or at least, is hoping to do so). The thinking being that the slower the traffic, the safer for pedestrian's cyclist and the more pleasant the city will be. So slow equals a green and pleasant land. Additionally, Edinburgh was very keen to introduce Low Emission Zones to allow drivers to be fined for using polluting vehicles. As one of the Councillors said: *"It would be devastating if Edinburgh lost out in the battle for cleaner air simply because Glasgow got there first."*

Now I may be off beam with this, but when I was watching the breakfast weather, I assumed that the wind carried air all across the country. Now I see that I was being foolish with such a notion and that Edinburgh and Glasgow have to fight one another for fresh air – well who knew? Although, it must be true, given the location of our Parliament, that Edinburgh produces much more hot air than Glasgow. (Quite right too, as you will all know, the wise men came from East and all went home again, in the end)

What has all of this got to do with motorcycles, I hear you ask. Well, I was getting to that. We all know that the UK is currently running a road death rate of something less than 2,000, (which is supposed to outrage all right-thinking citizens).

We as motorcyclists make up a disproportionate element of the killed and seriously

injured. Improving this situation is why our Observers spend their time taking out Associates and getting the good results that we have been getting; and well done to the Observers and their Associates for all of that effort.

However, I have found a much simpler way to make it safer on the roads. Yes, I know it flies in the face of some of Edinburgh's thinking but expert evidence (nothing to do with me & no I have not made this up) demands, yes demands, that we go faster, much faster.

Sitting letting your engine idle is killing 40,000 people a year (according to the experts). Clearly, this is an outrage and all because we have failed - to keep the power on.

It seems that when I come out of the garage in the morning and leave the bike running to warm up, the next thing I know I will have died.

At no time in history have road deaths through speeding reached such numbers, so it has to be the case that we are much safer driving much faster. We will soon drive that 40,000 down. Just think how many you have killed whilst sitting on the bridge – do you not feel guilty and should fat Eck not hang his head in shame?

Experts & statisticians, don't you just love them?

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## SLOW RIDING PRACTICE

There will be a slow riding and braking practice/tuition session on 22nd October in Newbridge. More details to follow on the EDAM Facebook events page: <https://goo.gl/hoRvUQ>

Please contact Dave McCutcheon for more information or to express an interest:

[events@edam.org.uk](mailto:events@edam.org.uk)



## Tyres by Tim Knowles

Tim Knowles has but some miles on his bikes over the years, so he knows a thing or too about tyres - some of it learned the hard way!

After reading the recent article on tyres it prompted me to put fingers to the keyboard.

Another prompt was my first ride on my R1200RT after not riding for 6 months. I retired 18 months ago and the biking miles dropped from over 2000 a month on a Pan European 1300, daily commute 100 miles – Musselburgh to Glenrothes.

This is my third stint riding. At the age of 17 I wrote-off a CZ 125 two weeks after I bought it, having saved up for 3 years. No instruction at all – I thought I was Barry Sheene and quickly learned I wasn't! A second spell of 10 years, aged 38 to 48, passing my advanced test along the way with the West Yorkshire Group (WYAMS). Bikes in this period were: K75RT, two Fireblades and an RT1100. Third spell started about 3 years ago with a Pan European 1100, then the 1300 and now a RT1200 which will probably see me out...

**Practice Day:** Which brings me onto a day's course I did on a Honda 600 about 20 years ago (course supplied the bike and leathers) called something like: "Exploring the Limits". Riding in a straight line, we were asked to brake at a point with enough force that the rear tyre became so light it hardly touched the tarmac. The power required to do this was far greater than I could imagine and the braking distance decreased dramatically.

Then cornering... "the bike will lean over more than you can imagine and the tyres will take care of you".

Both of these were practiced in the morning. In the afternoon we eventually got on the track (an ex airfield in Derbyshire). After a few laps behind the instructor we got used to the circuit. There was a particular right hand 90-degree bend after a straight where during the day we witnessed a Ducati continue in a straight line into the gravel. There was no injury to the school bike or rider (a good advert for practicing away from public roads). At this particular bend on each lap I braked harder and later until the Oh Sh1t moment came. "Lean the bike over, add a little more gas and look at the exit, you'll be surprised but you'll get round the bend". On my last lap at this bend I went for it, braked later and harder BUT my brain was telling me I wouldn't get round! The temptation was to bang on the brakes

mid-corner and slow down - the instruction from the morning was telling me the exact opposite (counter-intuitive). So I put my trust in the training.

I leant the bike over even more (Oh God!) looked at the exit and gave a little more gas – I got round! The instructor flew passed me giving me a thumbs up. My brain was fried from too many conflicting messages! The remainder of the last lap was then ridden at a sedate pace, waiting for my mind to settle down! Thoughts of being a racer were put to bed because I really couldn't imagine myself doing this corner after corner, lap after lap. However, doing this once gave me the knowledge (not yet confidence) that if I was in this position on the road then: "lean over, trust the tyres, look for the exit and a little more gas". Yes, I have used this occasionally on the road! Twice in one year, that year completed 40,000 on the 1300 Pan.

**Squaring off:** Due to the large number of motoring miles, tyres were replaced when they affected the handling. Riding could be done even on these if I accepted that, when leaning over, there would be a slight resistance after which the bike would tip over more quickly. If you were expecting this, then it wasn't an Oh Sh1t moment.

**Balding Tyres:** Years ago I rode my bike, loaded with camping gear and new girlfriend on a from Wakefield to Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Orkney, Wigan and back to Wakefield. I didn't realise until getting home that my rear tyre had worn through to the cords. This didn't affect me until I realised it had happened, then the bike started to misbehave. Strange this only started to happen once I had discovered the problem! Mind over matter - if you think something is going to happen it will!

**New Tyres:** On the Pan 1300 on a solo trip to North Wales to visit the narrow gauge railways, I noticed my tyres were just on the legal limit and I didn't want to do the Llanberis pass on less than good tyres. So I called in at local tyre dealer in Leeds. While waiting for them (they had the contract to supply tyres to the Emergency Services, after booking in I wanted some fags and a newspaper. I was told by the receptionist that the tyres were in such poor state she would only let me on the road if I PROMISED to come straight back! Never been told that before or since! The new tyres were fitted. I have probably over my biking career had over 30 new sets of tyres fitted but what came next

was a total disconcerting surprise. On the first corner which happened to be a roundabout the bike slipped out; not dropping me but a definite Oh sh1t moment. Now it could have been cold tyres, diesel on the roundabout or the film on new tyres or a combination of all three.

**Scrubbing in tyres:** Thereafter, I worked the tyres gently, imagining removing the release film from all parts of the tyre. This mainly by riding in a straight line and leaning over the bike in gentle sweeping moves from left to right gradually increasing the angle of lean. Once home I have used wet and dry (sand-paper) to remove the shininess of the tyres.

**Tyres and a ford:** Not a car, but a 10-yard stream about 9 inches deep with concrete base under water. I think we were given the option to go round over the bridge and I remember somebody saying stay in the middle of.... About 4-5 riders had gone through - it looked easy enough: slow speed, no bow wave and up the other side. What could go wrong?

My turn came - second gear, in the middle of the concrete base between the car tyre tracks. In the middle, in full view of those who had gone before and those who were about to, bang! the bike had dropped in a blink of an eye. I can still remember my boots filling with water. I picked the bike up with adrenaline fueled by the shock and embarrassment. I rode out The older members who had gone first asked:

"You OK?"

"Yeah, a bit wet!"

"You should try and stick on the car tracks as they remove the algae that makes the rest of the concrete base as slippery as ace."

So that was meant by riding in the middle - of THE CAR TRACKS!

I rode over the bridge and did the whole thing again except on the car tyre tracks. No problem. I listened a bit more carefully as the leader advised test and dry your brakes when safe to do so.

**Snow and tyres:** My first R1100RT was an easy bike to ride. I tried to increase my envelope of riding skills by taking it out onto the Pennines east of Oldham one snowy day. Smoothness and slow speed - no problems. The only vehicles on the road were two police motorcycles; I guess doing the same. On a different occasion with a blizzard of snow that was rattling across the road, visibility was down to a

few yards. I dropped the bike 3 times. After the last occasion of picking it up I threw in the towel, pushed it to a farmer's yard and called for a taxi to take me back home. On a later occasion in Edinburgh, the bike slipped from under me on a back street. The road was compacted snow and ice and I wasn't aware of the differences between main roads and back streets. Needless to say I slithered along the snow, picked myself up and the bike and carried on with greater knowledge of grip.

**Tyre pressures:** Having been concentrating on passing the IAM Car Examination, I hadn't ridden for 6 months. Marion and I got on the R1200RT for a trip from Musselburgh to Glenrothes. I kicked the tyres and started the journey. Two warning lights stayed on, one for its annual service and another warning of low pressure in the tyres. The warning was in kiloPascals, a term I didn't comprehend. Marion also asked what the tyre warning lights were about? I thought it was a glitch in the all-encompassing computer! I stopped on the bypass for petrol and looked for an airline but couldn't actually see one. Kicked the tyres again – it was handling ok – a glitch in the computer?

I knew a petrol service station in Glenrothes with an airline so after virtually completing the journey I stopped to inflate both tyres (no glitch). Embarrassment prevents me from stating the actual pressures! With hindsight, I should have done my pre-ride checks before thinking that a virtually new bike would have no problems.

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## EVENT REPORT: IAM Croft Track Day

by Gavin Neill

When the wife asks what you want for your birthday and you can't think of anything, what better idea is there than getting her to pay for the Croft Skills Day? Roll forward months and I'm meeting Fiona Robertson and Alan Barrie at the Stair Arms for the run down the A68 to Darlington. We agree that we will stop at Jedburgh to let Fiona refuel and also stop for a coffee. Here she introduces us to a very well-kept secret – Border Meringues. It will definitely be the new watering stop for all my future runs. While stopped, the weather takes a turn and we sit looking out at the rain but thankfully, by the time



we finish our coffee and cakes so has the rain and we continue on the journey without any further wetness. Staying at the Premier Inn, we meet up with a few other instructors and members who will be attending and following day and have a very pleasant meal in the Beefeater while, again, watching the rain pour down outside.

In the morning, we awake to a lovely day with an almost unbroken blue sky and just a bit of a breeze. We have breakfast and head along to the track to meet up with everybody else. Registration has to be done before 9am and are told that the safety briefing will be held shortly and ALL must attend. Here we are told of the ob-

jectives for the day and the various flags that could be shown etc. We are also warned that only ROAD LEGAL machines will be allowed on track and with saying this three bikes are singled out and told that unless number plates, mirrors and indicators are fitted then they won't be participating. Once the briefing is finished we are all shepherded outside and here we are split up into three groups A, B & C. Group A being those that have done several track days and feel confident, B for those who are less confident or have only done the odd track day and C for the complete beginners or no confidence. After spending the previous night in the company of Colin Cowan both Alan and myself





decide to join his B Group.

We are told that the day will run with each group revolving around three twenty-minute sections. Our B Group will have a class-based theory session at twenty to the hour, followed by track time on the hour and then finishing with twenty minutes debrief by Colin before starting all over again.

The first theory session tells us that the day will be about getting to know our machines and following the IPSGA routines. Due to previous meetings and speeds getting too fast, two new coned chicanes had been added to slow us all down. We are told about the cornering ideas to follow the white cones as this will show you when to turn in as well as where the apex is on the corner. The first track session involves simply following the instructor around and each student taking it in turn to sit behind and follow his lines as well as getting to know the track and new chicanes. It soon becomes apparent that some people may not be so good at missing the chicanes as the instructors would have hoped!

The second theory session and we are learning to brake. As opposed to being in the right gear and letting the engine brake for you, we are taught to use the front brake effectively and how, by braking progressively harder, we can actually get more grip from the front tyre than most

would think. Again, this is followed by more on track practice. This time, however, we follow the instructor for one lap before we all have a go at leading the group for a lap.

The third theory session and we are talking about positive steering and how very little effort we need to put into the bars to get the bike to go around the corners. By this stage the corners were starting to click on the track and other than accidentally managing to clip an apex cone into the path of Colin while I was leading it is starting to feel more confident.

We stopped for lunch and while enjoying the onsite catering van, we discussed the joys of our varied IAM experiences and Colin did his best to encourage us to continue training with his tales of doing his Master with Distinction.

Fourth session and we are discussing overtaking and how it is best to get the overtake done within the first third of the distance you can see is safe thus allowing for you to be back in before any dangers coming the other way. We are encouraged to use harder acceleration due to being on the track environment. Back on the bike and we are all really getting into the swing of things and the group is making good progress around the track. Just as we are finishing the last lap a few spots of rain start appearing on our visors. Back in the pits and Colin is giving us all good feedback just as the heavens open for

about 10 minutes.

As we are about to head in for the next theory session, the bikes on track stop as one of the C Group has had an off at Hawthorn Bend. We continue into the Theory session and discuss the use of gears and especially now that the track is damp. Unfortunately, as we are heading out of the classroom we hear that there has been another bike gone down, this time within the A Group. As both circuit ambulances are now busy we are told that they can't continue with the event and would have to end at that. A bit disappointed, we all agree that it's probably for the best so Alan and myself pack up and head back up the road. Stopping for coffee just south of Newcastle we agree that we both had a great day and that although we would have potentially benefitted from riding the track in the damp neither of us was overly excited to do so.

## RIDING ASSESSMENTS

If it's a while since you passed your IAM test they you might like to check that your standard of riding is still at the same level

All EDAM members are eligible for a FREE Full-Member Riding Assessment from an Observer. All you need to do is ask. The Observer can give you suggestions for improvement, if required and can also suggest further training, maybe to Master level? This is available to all EDAM full members every 3 years.

If you would like to arrange this please contact Greg Symons by email:

[gofar@edam.co.uk](mailto:gofar@edam.co.uk)

While on the subject of riding assessments; if you know anybody who is interested in further training but is unsure what is involved, why not suggest they undertake a free GoFAR free assessed ride? This will give them a report on their current riding standard and more information about the IAM RoadSmart Advanced Rider Course.

Again, this can be arranged with Greg.



## NEW FACES

EDAM welcomes the following members:

Andy Garrett, Livingston  
Andrew (Sam) Szkudro, Dunbar

## IAM TEST PASSES

Congratulations to the following associates:

**Rob Tofield & Alistair Cameron** on passing their tests with assessor Alistair MacLean.

**Jamie Harrison** on gaining a F1rst with Alistair MacLean.

**Graham Baxter & Owen O'Neill** on gaining a F1rst with assessor Lee Fisher.

**Nick Slane** on passing his test with assessor Lee Fisher.

**Allan Brown** on gaining a F1rst with assessor Ian Wightman.

**Daniele Iannarelli** on gaining his Masters with assessor Scott Tulip



Above: Dave Ellis collects his test certificate and Shaun Bloomfield his LO certificate from Elliot Beattie



Above: Gary Blair receives his test certificate from Elliot Beattie

## EDAM EVENTS

We try to advertise EDAM events on the front page of Twistgrip but, inevitably, new events arise in-between publication dates and dates may change or be cancelled. So, please check the EDAM Facebook page: <https://goo.gl/zyVD3g> or the website: <http://www.edam.org.uk/events> for the latest news of ride-outs, talks, theory lessons and any other events.

## LIDLAW TROPHY 2017

The Laidlaw Trophy competition was held at Saltire Motorcycles on 24th September and an amazing 9 people took part! That's the worst turnout for a number of years but those who attended and took part enjoyed the experience, if only because of the free bacon roll and coffee!



The three members going through to the ride-off were:

Jamie Harrison  
Graham Baxter  
Elliot Beattie

## RIDING TIPS by Elliot Beattie

### Foreign Lorry

I noted at the start of the clip that this was a truck & tow - not common in UK lorries which usually are artic. Once round the corner, lorry was thinking about turning left up the Pomathorn Road - which is unsuitable for large vehicles.

License plate & graphics confirm foreign (French) so LHD with potential rear view issues. So whilst he considers his sat nav - best to give him a wide berth?

<https://youtu.be/nXOoZz4Nr5U>

### Erratic driver

This actually cropped up on my session going into Ballater with Roddy on Get2Grips day which Roddy picked up

very quickly and commented on, predicting what then happened a couple of minutes later. But it also occurred again on a mock test recently.

"When you are following a driver who seems to be driving slowly/erratically he may be looking for an address, and may be liable to brake, stop or turn suddenly without signalling"

<https://youtu.be/FQDAF5CMK2M> (best viewed from 4.00 minute into video)

## Malcom MacKinnon

by Elliot Beattie

I was very sad to hear that Malcolm MacKinnon had died after a short illness on 21st September.

Malcolm was a great supporter of EDAM runs, and chummed Peter & I on many run reccies.

He was a true gent, great rider, and his chat will be sadly missed at cafe stops. Despite joining EDAM later in his motorcycling career, he remained a very regular EDAM run attender, showing that age is no barrier to progressive motorcycle riding, as Malcolm was 77 this year.

Here is a picture of Malcolm on a recent run at the Big Red Barn (courtesy of Carina)"



## PERCEPTIONS: Beardy Old Blokes and GSeS by Sandy Dickson

I heard some rumblings, as I often do, about IAM Roadsmart & that the image that we have is putting people off joining. Funnily enough, the powers that be look into these things but never actually ask us, the Observers, what we can do about it; so here are my thoughts.

To be honest, I cannot say I blame anyone, the perceived image put me off for long enough. I had assumed it was full of old, beardy tut-tutters and, like any organisation, there are bound to be a few. Have a look at the local golf club and the members wear the 'golf uniform': a jumper, often pink with a logo, trousers (no jeans or chinos allowed) and 'golf shoes' (spiked or otherwise).

The fact is, stereotypes exist for a reason. All lawyers are overcharging posh boys working for crooks, judges are out of touch, the Scots are all drunks or 'freedom' screamers, the Irish are all thick etc etc; and all bikers are wheelie-mad hooligans.

In fact, we (EDAM members) are just bikers like any others, from a variety of backgrounds with a variety of life experiences and from both sexes. Yes, females can ride bikes just as well as the males and can teach just as well as the males. It does seem to be the case that there are not a lot of death's head badges, chains or leather chaps but that does not make us bad.

Sometimes you will come across members (in any organisation) whose main concern is talking about the activity (golf, motorcycling, cricket, football, flying etc etc) rather than 'doing' it. Sometimes such individuals are a font of knowledge about all sorts of obscure facts and information, particularly if you happen to have some rare old bike and sometimes they are just a pain but, so what?

If you want to improve your skills, you need to ride with people that are better than you and that actually *know* more. In time, it may be that the situation will be reversed (even Valentino had to learn). If you get to the point of being 'better' than

the person that taught you, then well done. All great sportsmen/women have a coach and often, outside of the sport, no one has ever heard of the coach. People take tennis lessons to get better, but no one ever died from being a poor tennis player.

A coach is someone who has patience, can see, understands technique and can point out the difference between what you think you are doing and what you are actually doing. No one looking in a mirror sees what their colleagues sees. Observers are there to coach you, to see what you are doing well and what you are doing less well and to explain the benefits of adjusting your riding style. A great number of bike accidents are single bike events with no other party involved: a case of ambition far exceeding skill.

Learning to ride a bike is like an apprenticeship. You may have some skills when you come to the training and you may have some preconceived ideas about how things work because you read it in a book or a magazine or had a mate who told you. This might help your learning and it might not. A tradesman usually recognises that he has learned skills far above that which he had as an apprentice.

We all went to school at some point and we all had in common the same thing: the teachers were older than us. Now age does not necessarily equal skill and it might not even equal experience and some teachers were, frankly, useless but it is common that the 'teacher' will be older, so being an 'old bloke' should not be an issue for anyone. Even young teachers have to learn before they are allowed to teach. Anyway, age is simply relative - the young are invincible, until they are not and often the 'born agains' (of which I was one) are not nearly as skilled as they imagined they once were.

Within IAM, beards are not compulsory (although sometimes I do wonder) and indeed, a few years ago, the psychologists had us believe they were a sign of an untrustworthy nature (trying to hide the

face). Now, a beard is a sign of being a hipster or cool & fashionable. So again, having a beard ought not to be a barrier unless of course the Observer is female (no - do not go there).

But surely the IAM is all about rules and which foot to put down first. Well, see stereotypes above - if your guy or gal is about rules & which foot to put down first, simply request a new Observer and let us know, as 'old bufty' is past his sell by date.

The only rules which are rules are those set out in the various Road Traffic statutes and they apply to every single road user - even the polis (who are permitted exceptions under certain circumstances).

So no, IAM training does not permit you to break the law and neither does anyone else's on the road training offering (ooh err missus).

The training is not really about bike control, you are already a rider so have been taught bike control. Or, perhaps you haven't or were not listening or do not properly understand how to use the controls appropriately. If that is the case, then that can be sorted.

What *will* be explained is how to think and how to apply thought to live situations: how to prioritise the situation which is unfolding in front of you. It should be easy really, you might think. After all, despite the twaddle put out in the press, even the most dangerous road in Britain does not actually move about. Going from point A to point B cannot be that hard, can it? So why do so many solo bikers have to get pulled out of the scenery by the emergency services?

A good part of the problem is that in general, no one wants to be first to put their hand up and admit they are scared or unsure what to do. Actually, it is OK to be scared, it is nature's way of telling you that you are at risk and out of your comfort zone. If you were not 'scared' by things, a roller-coaster ride would not provide any thrill. Humans are not de-

signed to ride bikes at 200mph and lean at 50+ degrees. To accomplish this, they have to learn their limits and the limits of their machine and you learn incrementally. When I was at school you learned progressively, you started with the 1x tables and ended up (much later) with Calculus. When you first learned to ride a bicycle, it seemed an impossible and frightening thing and then it became simple and fun and then you started to push it and fall off again.

The riding schools teach 'basic arithmetic' as that is all they are required to do (or allowed – DVSA has a lot to answer for), to get you through the basic test. So why would you expect to be an expert, when you have passed the basic test if that is all you have been taught?

Learning to ride a bike to a decent standard takes time and miles. If you do not do the miles, you will not improve and if you do not take your time, you may not get the time to learn. Nonetheless doing the wrong thing many times over only makes you good at being wrong. (Valentino broke his leg practicing, why does he have to practice if he is acknowledged to be the greatest of all time?)

If you want to learn to race a bike, get lessons from a bike racer, it is not the same skill set as road riding. If you want to learn to ride a bike on the road, get lessons from a road rider. If you want to learn off road, get lessons from an off-roader. Some of the skills are interchangeable, particularly the bike control skills learned from track and off-roading, but neither help you to read an unfamiliar road.

But why a course? – because anyone can improve for an hour, but can you maintain an improvement and continue to improve week after week under different weather & traffic conditions on different roads? Is one golf lesson, one flying lesson, one tennis lesson going to get you to the standard you hope to get to & keep you there? Is the single lesson a waste of time? No, of course not, if it improves a single aspect of your riding or understanding it must have been worthwhile.

So, the thing about us beardy weirdies is that we do not all have GSeS or beards or beer bellies or indeed are we all male and over the age of 50. What we do have in common is we believe 'the system' works (it is taught all over the world because it does work). We apply 'the system' and we do the miles. It does not matter how trick or untrick your own bike is, if you are not applying the system, you are an accident waiting to happen whether you ride at 50mph or 95mph. A well ridden GS on a twisty road will leave the average Ducati rider for dead when things get interesting. The reason the polis take such an interest in us bikers is because so many manage to throw themselves into the scenery every year, all by themselves, but also on occasion manage to involve some unsuspected motorist in the carnage.

So, if you have an open mind, why not come along and have your riding assessed? It is free, there is no obligation, we don't bite and you might even learn something (but you will be paying for the tea & scones).

So why IAM Roadsmart? Well that is the

umbrella which provides us with the materials and examiners and standards; but we are the individuals who deliver it. Your Observer, male or female, might work in IT, in a garage, be an engineer, a doctor, a lawyer, a surveyor, a delivery man, drive a taxi or a bus or be a driving instructor and on and on, who knows. They are not all boring old b'stards. All they expect from you is an interest in bikes, a willingness to learn and an appreciation of the time and effort that we put into you. Will we make you a better rider? – that is up to you, we cannot 'make' you do anything.

But "IAM is not 'cool or trendy' but a bunch of old farts"? Well, I have often thought that you probably get a bit of peace in the back of an ambulance on the way to hospital to consider what you could have done differently or at least I did many years ago. In hindsight, it might have been better simply to have done something differently in advance, much less painful.

PS: we have never, ever, had anyone say it made them a worse rider and many go on to do all sorts of further training.

### Ingenuity

The bike shown on the front cover of this issue is a 1929 Triumph CTT (498cc). The owner has magic fingers (but a dodgy leg) and restored the bike from a rusty pile of scrap. He shared the accommodation at the Classic TT this year (see page 9). As part of his running repairs he fashioned this cylinder head gasket out of lead flashing. It didn't work, but you have to admire the skill. In the end, the bike ran fine without a gasket!



TRIP REPORT: Classic TT & Manx Grand Prix 2017 by Glynn Jones



only 45 minutes before the day's racing begins. To manage the closure and ensure the safety of the public and competitors the event requires a minimum of 520 volunteer marshals. Marshals have the same powers as a police officer for the duration of each race day. That effectively means they can open and close the roads and prevent people from crossing them. Although marshals have powers of arrest and detention, in practice these are rarely needed and it's always best to call the cops unless there is no alternative.

This was my second year as a marshal, having fully qualified in 2016 after being a newbie marshal at the event and then taking a 1-day training course in Liverpool. There are only 2 benefits of being a marshal: the racing goes ahead (because too few marshals = no racing) and you get a great view. You have to pay for all your travel and accommodation yourself, so you do it "for love". Dave McCutcheon also marshalled this year, having followed the same path as me in 2016.

In 2016 I stayed in a B&B in Port St Mary in the south of the island, but it was expensive and shabby so this year I opted to stay in Sulby Village Hall with Peter Wright and a bunch of other hooligans. This had the advantage of being cheap but the disadvantage of all the night-time noises you might expect 12 guys to make after a large meal and too much whisky! The accommodation was spartan but functional (airbed on the floor) but the food was good and the camaraderie excellent. Oh, and the Sulby Hotel was but a stone's throw away.

The trip began with Peter and I meeting at the Esso station near The Steading and riding down to Heysham for the 02.15



The Isle of Man is the home of motorcycle road racing and each year sees the world famous TT (Tourist Trophy) races take place in June on the 37.73 mile mountain course. In August each year they also hold the Classic TT and Manx Grand Prix races on the same circuit.

The Classic TT is a recent invention created in 2013 as a event to showcase classic bikes ridden by today's racers. There is a lot of debate about the true classic nature of some of the bikes but it's a great opportunity to see, hear and smell some of the racing bikes from the past. The Manx GP has been around since 1923 and is

considered to be the "amateur" alternative to the TT. It is run on modern racing bikes in a number of capacity classes and many of the riders are riding the circuit for the first time. That said, there are riders who have competed in 100 MGP races. In general, TT riders don't ride in the MGP – it is seen a stepping stone to the professional event.

The combined Classic TT & MGP take place over 2 weeks in August, with the first week being for practice and the second for racing. This takes a huge amount of organising because the races take place on public roads which are closed typically



noon a bike managed to lose its drive chain just as it passed my location. Fortunately it simply flew off the back of the rear sprocket and laid in a perfectly straight line along the road. It could have been a lot worse if it had wrapped around part of the bike. One of my fellow marshals retrieved the chain from the road and the bike ground to a halt and was parked in someone's garden for the rest of the race.

Aside from the racing there are a number of other bike-related events held on the island. One of the biggest is the Festival of Jurby held each year at a disused airfield in the north of the island. There are static displays of racing bikes from the 1920's

ferry. An uneventful journey by road and sea saw us arriving in Douglas at 06.00 with a quick ride on empty roads to Sulby. Even at 6am there were police camped out on the mountain road in an attempt to slow down riders out for an early lap, and this continued throughout the week.

I had pre-selected a couple of points to marshal at but, when I got to the TT Marshal's Association HQ (wooden hut) on Friday morning to collect my warrant card, it was quite obvious that my chosen locations were over-subscribed and other areas were crying out for volunteers. I elected to go to Hillberry for the Friday evening practice session and then Ramsay bus station for the remaining races.

To be honest, every marshal prays for an uneventful race where everyone makes it around the course in one piece. Many



parts of the track are lined with stone walls, fences and buildings and any slight mistake can have catastrophic results. The racing is made harder by the need to cope with variable weather and lighting conditions (gloomy, densely wooded areas one minute, bright sunshine the next) and some very rough sections of road. Although there were some serious accidents this year, none was in my section but some were just after, meaning that I spent a fair amount of time holding or waving a yellow flag.

During racing on the Wednesday after-

onwards and many more bikes being ridden around the airfield in a cross between a parade and a race. Earplugs are essential! Rather than reading any words – take a look at the pictures !

Peter and I travelled home separately on the final Friday, with me taking the later boat and arriving back at my garage around 02.30 on Saturday morning. I then had to bicycle the 3 miles home – it's amazing how many people are out in town at that time of night!



