

WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



August 2024

EDITORIAL – JIM ROLT

Hello fellow WHAMmers, your editor is back from a long adventure sailing the Atlantic solo to the [Azores and back](#) in a 55 year old 26ft sailing boat. And none the worse for it, apparently! A big shout out to Andy Chambers for taking over the reins while I was out of contact at sea, thanks Andy..

Enough of this non biking nonsense and on to the good stuff:

Not a huge newsletter this month, but real top quality content, please enjoy!

Chairperson Tony fesses up and muses on a personal mistake in his [notes below](#)

And Richard, our Chief Observer continues his excellent and thought provoking series, this month [he tackles speed](#), a thorny subject! Do feel free to contact me with any reactions or comments, it would be great to have more general content from you club members.

Stalwart of the pages, Ant Clerici, has another article for us too, this time he shares his [thoughts and ideas on overtaking](#)

We have some [recent test passes](#) too, (please send me details and photos, observers and members, we like to celebrate our successes)!

Don't forget to check out the website for the latest events and group rides at <https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/events/>,

And then join in with the gossip, news, and banter at the Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/321150181285607>

Finally don't forget to please contact me with any opinions, ideas, or reports at whamnewsletter@gmail.com Jim Rolt, Editor



Affiliated to the Institute of Advanced Motorcyclists. Group No. 3260



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CHAIR'S NOTES – TONY DAVIS

Well, its been a fairly quiet month for WHAM. Our Observers are still out there and we have a full book of Associates working their way towards their tests. We also have a number of members progressing on their Masters journey so WHAM is still a very active training group and our test pass success is still first class. Our Observer team is quietly getting on with an excellent job.

One of the main reasons I stay with WHAM is the training side of the club. It keeps things sensible and means that there are always plenty of experienced motorcyclists around to give advice and keep an eye on riding standards. Its easy to get a little complacent, especially when out on leisure rides.

I personally had a stark example of such complacency last week. Riding down a B road close to Builth Wells I was approaching a left hand bend with a blind exit. As the view opened up, there was a sheep sat in the middle of the road minding its own business. Fortunately it was a fat old lazy specimen so the sight and sound of a red Ducati approaching did not spook it and it stayed still and just stared at me. The situation was further complicated by a car coming the other way. Had said sheep been a little more flighty he may well had moved the wrong way, possibly forcing me into the path of the on-coming car, there would not have been much I could have done about it.

So, a perfect storm of events completely out of the blue on a quiet Sunday morning. Or was it? Adrian Wheeler was following me and his first comment on hearing me warn about the sheep over the intercom was "Tony... the clue was in the cattle grid you went over 100 yards before the bend". So there you go, a lesson in the system in a nutshell. **Information** - see the upcoming blind bend, notice the cattle grid. **Position** - Move to the centre of the road for a better view around said bend. **Speed** - Adjust your speed so that you can stop in the distance you can see to be clear on your own side of the road. **Gear** - Be in a responsive gear to cope with any unexpected sheep type reaction. **Acceleration** - Be ready to get as far away from the damn sheep as possible :-)

I had followed the system but was missing a critical point. I took in the information (cattle grid and bend), positioning is almost automatic, its the speed phase that needed a better reaction, that reaction would be to take into account the short distance I could see to be clear and the cattle grid warning that there could be loose animals on the road. I ended up riding too quickly into a hazard that I should have been able to predict. It bothered me a lot. My aim when riding is to remove any 'moments' from the ride such as this. I like to reflect on all of my rides and think about where it could have gone wrong, what I could and should have done about it and how I will modify my riding to prevent moments like that in the future. Riding with experienced Advanced riders helps to evaluate these moments and see them from another perspective. I appreciate the feedback from others, we should all be able to discuss moments like this with each other and try to eliminate them completely from all of our rides.



Enjoy the last few weeks of summer and please try to eliminate any 'moments' from your rides.
Tony.

CHIEF OBSERVER – RICHARD HEWITT

Speed

This month we think about the third phase of IPSGA, speed. A reminder that I'm writing these articles with the aim that the reader, the thinking rider, will be stimulated to have some critical thought of their own as to why they use 'speed' as they do.

I am confident that out of the five-phases of IPSGA this article is the one that will get the most reads, the most critical reception, and the largest potential for discussion within our friendship groups.

Speed, or more accurately the use of it, the rate of it, the differences in the speed of road users, the rate of change in speed, causes more chatter, more opinion, more furrowed brows, more 'wow' moments (good/bad), than any other element of IPSGA.

As a training outfit how do we expect associates to plot a course through all the above, how do we equip them to know "what's the right speed" for any given situation? My aim through this article is to answer that question; and maybe, just maybe, debunk some of the myths about speed in the process.

Let's try and de-mystify 'speed.'

Does speed cause accidents? – NO

No – because that's too simplistic an explanation and provides no useful guidance to associates.

Does speed inappropriate for a given situation cause accidents? – YES

There is a further complication because the law comes into play, setting, usually upper limits on actual speed, yet at the same time these limits provide limited guidance as to what a safe and appropriate speed is.

Sixty mph on a wide out of town A-road maybe appropriate. Sixty mph on the little country lane you turn off onto, whilst posted at sixty, will most probably be far less safe. 'It depends' being the guiding factor, which in itself is unhelpful as there is no rule as to what 'it depends' actually means.

With regard to the law though, the advice is clear. The posted speed is the absolute maximum, exceed it and you have an accident, or you attract the attention of a Traffic Officer, and you only have yourself to blame. No buts, ifs, maybes; that's it!

Moving on...



There's a famous quote by Jeremy Clarkson where he offers "Speed has never killed anyone. Suddenly becoming stationary, that's what gets you."

And he's absolutely correct. The translation of this into 'what we do' is if you can't stop safely in the distance you can see to be clear, on your side of the road, you are going too fast for the given situation.

Advanced riders come under much criticism for going too fast around corners. I don't personally think this is confined to the advanced rider, I just think they can do it more often with more speed than your average Joe.

Setting a speed for a bend with the mantra of "can I stop in where I can see" will save your skin nine times out of ten. If your riding buddies don't do this, and pile round with gay abandon, leaving you feeling 'slow' when you come around the corner and see them half way down the next straight – that's on them, let them take their risks. However, we shouldn't teach what is 'excessive speed for the circumstance' and you can certainly expect no leniency from either the law or your insurance company if an accident does occur.

But more than that, do you want that perfect Sunday ride to end in an incident, all for the potential for five extra seconds down the road?

This is beginning to read like a lecture I know, yet the points are still relevant and need to be said in terms of what we should espouse to associates and demonstrate to the general public.

'Excessive speed for the circumstance' – one of my favourite terms. Let's move away from the upper edges of the speed limits and consider excessive speed at thirty mph in a sixty limit? How can that be a thing I hear you say?

I saw a Masters candidate once wedged up behind a mahoesive farm tractor/trailer on a country lane with high hedges and a posted sixty limit. Our rider was well within 4 seconds following distance, probably within 2 seconds, and could see nothing other than the granules of manure dripping from the trailer onto the road.

His Mentor (not me), was not matching the tractor at thirty mph, was well back, at about twenty mph, and from this vantage point could see the glimmer of an overtake down and up the valley in front. When the overtake was 'on,' and to make the point, the mentor moved up and overtook the mentee, and the tractor, in a smooth, planned, meaningful, and safe manner.

The mentee, being up the obstacles chuff, didn't see the overtake, couldn't plan for it, and saw the end of the possibility to overtake, prior to being able to take any overtaking action. In this case, slower = better = more progress!

Hands up, who had been reading this thinking "he hasn't even mentioned progress yet?"

I was getting around to it.

An advanced rider makes good progress using speed as one of the tools to achieve this. As the case study above demonstrates, that speed can be one approaching the legal limit, or it can be one well below the legal limit; one that actually enables greater progress. The goal, by using the IPSGA system, is to figure out what the best speed is to make the most effective progress.

Progress, in this context, can be best described as, the journey being completed safely, legally, in a

timely manner, arriving at the destination in one piece and having not caused other road users the need to brake in response to your actions.

Progress therefore has within it the element of speed, but speed is not the sole element. An 'appropriate' speed can be a big one, or a small one. Think on that.

Returning to IPSGA, and setting an appropriate speed prior to the next change in on-road circumstances, guiding thoughts when taking this action are:

- Does the speed I am changing to leave me and for those around me safe, stable, and with good vision?
- The good vision allows me to stop safely on my side of the road in the distance that I can see to be clear
- I want to leave myself at a speed where I can select the appropriate gear for the change in speed, therefore leaving me remaining on a balance throttle. i.e. small adjustments in throttle opening will affect smooth acceleration and retardation in speed
- Increasing throttle opening is to speed up, and brakes, yes brakes, are to scrub speed off. A balanced throttle can only do so much scrubbing off speed and varies from bike to bike, and so where you really need to slow, or indeed stop, use the brakes, not the gears
- Braking should ideally be concluded in one cycle, with the brakes (and importantly the brake light) going off when the next gear is engaged and off you go again. Brakes on and off makes you look unsure, and unreliable as a rider

There's more that could be written yet following the principles above covers most if not all situations where a change in speed is beneficial.

Speed Myths

- The sign says I can do sixty mph, yet I feel uncomfortable going that fast
 - Sixty therefore makes you feel unsafe, if you feel unsafe, you probably are – slow down
- I had to remain at a slower speed than I could, not making the progress I could, so that my riding buddy could make the overtake with me also
 - Really? We ride our own ride as advanced riders. Make your overtake and you'll be amazed your riding buddy will be with you very shortly as you wait for them at the next change in direction on the route. Or overtake, and slow down a little just in front of what you have overtaken if you want to regroup as quickly as possible
- The posted speed limit has increased how quickly should I up my speed?
 - Get on with it! You are on a balanced throttle and so accelerate briskly whilst clicking up the gearbox, gear by gear. If your traction control triggers or your front wheel goes light, maybe a little less throttle

- The blanket twenty mph speed limit through Welsh villages is way too slow
 - Can't help you there; write to your MP or suck it up
- I pulled up way before the stop line at the traffic lights and am now paddling forward
 - You braked way too hard and need to come to the next WHAM slow riding day to learn what your brakes are capable of
- The group that left first on the Sunday ride got to the café seemingly well before my group
 - Did you see what traffic they came upon – NO. Did you see if they individually made the best progress and therefore all moved forward with the best progress possible – NO. Was their route exactly the same as yours? Did they take a shortcut – UNKNOWN. Bottom line is, don't stress it, we are all different riders, and the circumstances of our individual rides can be very different.

Safe riding.

Richard H

Chief Observer

Worcester & Hereford Advanced Motorcyclists

RECENT TEST PASSES

Martin Wood, another BMW rider (1000XR), passed his test with Marcus, gaining a first! Marcus doesn't give these out lightly, so very well done Martin!



Here he is receiving his certificate from Phil George, his observer. Well done Phil, too!

PLANNING OVERTAKES- ANT CLERICI

(as usual these are my own views so please read with a critical eye)

Having read Alan Anderson's article from May's newsletter 'SOME LINES ABOUT PLANNING' I wanted to explore one of the most tricky aspects of riding: executing a safe overtake.

Overtaking involves other road users and, at the same time, usually places you on the "wrong side of the road".

Sounds dangerous: is potentially dangerous!

Roadcraft describes two versions of an overtake: a single stage or 'momentum overtake' and a '3 stage overtake'.

Momentum overtakes are rare and involve a simple ride past the other vehicle.

Imagine a straight road, you are approaching a car that's travelling much slower than you, you have good vision of the road ahead and behind so you are able to confirm no hazards: the overtake is a straightforward ride past.

Simples!

More common overtakes involve 3 stages comprising:

1. The following position
2. The overtaking position
3. The overtake

As you catch up traffic ahead and you cannot see a way to overtake immediately you should follow at the appropriate distance: 2 seconds if dry, a bigger gap when wet or if the vehicle ahead is large where following even at 2 seconds compromises your view ahead and/or safety.

A good following position will enable you to see cyclists, horses, cars etc ahead or vehicles waiting to join your road etc

If in doubt hang back and consider increasing the gap to improve your view.

Don't hassle the vehicle ahead by following unnecessarily close. If you are in a section of road with double white lines or other obvious hazards there's no need to stay close until you suspect an



opportunity is approaching. So whilst following, you should plan by observing the road ahead, use the signs, use the white lines, topography, hedges etc. Are there lamp posts signalling a roundabout ahead? Are there buildings meaning you are about to enter a village or town with slower speed limits? Warning signs are obviously important as they usually indicate hazards that should prevent you from overtaking: junctions, level crossings, traffic lights etc Solid white lines don't mean "no overtaking" but "don't cross" however they usually indicate a lack of forward vision which means an overtake isn't on.

When you feel an overtake might be 'on' general advice is to close the gap in preparation for the overtake. Now some question the merits v risk of giving up your safe following position to close the gap. Even this requires planning to be sure it's a safe manoeuvre; however with the acceleration available on most bikes a close following position isn't always necessary.

Once in the overtaking position either continue with the overtake.....

....or if the opportunity evaporates modify your plan and revert to the following position.

Don't follow in the overtaking position hoping something will turn up: regroup and plan again.

When planning your overtake look for places that will slow the vehicle ahead: a bend, roundabout, change in speed limit or other hazard. It's far easier (legal?) to use your acceleration rather than pure speed to get past.

Practice looking through roundabouts as you approach to plan your overtake on the exit. If the road changes to a dual carriageway you should be exiting the roundabout in lane 2 rather than following the vehicle ahead in lane 1 then having to sort out the overtake after the roundabout.

Look at the "body language" of the vehicle you are following: are they getting a move on? Are they looking for somewhere? Are they focussing on something apart from their driving?

So that's nearly 600 words on getting to the place where you might overtake!

You've planned the opportunity, moved up and checked ahead and behind.

You are in the right gear.

You signal if it's going to inform other road users.....but you aren't yet clear to "go"!

The next part of this choreography is to move out BUT without accelerating.

I recommend thinking about this action as a 4th part to the overtake.....

So why wait?

What are the benefits?

Moving out without accelerating allows that final check ahead. Your vision opens and extends as you move out and gives you the last opportunity to see anything masked by the vehicle you intend to pass.

Because you've not accelerated you have a route back to safety: back to the following position. Always double check a following vehicle hasn't taken your space!

Which is why our group riding policy emphasises the role of the second rider here.

By waiting until you are out before you accelerate your bike is upright and has cleared the (potentially slippery) white lines. You can accelerate with confidence.

DON'T GO UNLESS YOU ARE 100% SURE

Decide where you need to be during the pass. Ideally not too close to the vehicle you are passing but an awareness of the potential hazards and view will determine how far across the carriageway you go.

When you see the whole of the vehicle in your nearside mirror then move back to your side of the road. Avoid cutting up that vehicle: something that doesn't look very elegant on their dash cam footage! Consider a "thank you" wave if they have slowed or moved for you.

Consider staying out if there's an advantage and you are 100% sure it continues to be safe. The last point is particularly relevant to passing a line of vehicles: taking one at a time should be your plan with a safe haven for each overtake.

So given a line of cars the plan should be "one at a time" even if you stay out and execute several overtakes one after another.

There is a real danger here of losing control of your speed. As you pass the second or third vehicle there's a strong tendency to stay on the



throttle so before you know it your speed is excessive.

One challenge of riding to Masters standard is maintaining legal speed limits at all times! Even on overtakes.

So back to Alan's point about SLAP in particular how other vehicles perceive our actions.

Overtaking in the face of oncoming traffic will disturb those drivers. You might have confidence that there's plenty of road in which to get back to your side of the carriageway but a single headlight heading towards you can be very intimidating to the oncoming traffic. One technique is to overtake giving a clear gap to the overtaken vehicle so that as you move back it's obvious to the oncoming driver.

Here are my personal top 10 overtaking opportunities:

1. After the second bend of a double bend:
2. After sharp bends:



3. Approaching an oncoming sharp bend which will obviously slow oncoming traffic; ensure you return to your side of the road before the inevitable solid white lines.
4. Exiting roundabouts: try for that view beyond the exit as you approach.



5. After vehicles have slowed or stopped for someone turning right: after they clear the junction pass by out accelerating
6. When you and the vehicle ahead are turning right: use a tighter turn and out accelerate the vehicle.



- Don't rush this option as they might be performing a U-turn. Similarly for vehicles on a right turn after a give way.
7. Changes in speed limit, in particular to a national speed limit from 20, 30 or 40. As always a take good check behind for anyone pre-empting the faster road.
 8. 2 lane slip roads, entering a Motorway or dual carriageway. Exit slip roads can be problematic when vehicles change lanes as they work out what happens next.

9. Space created by hatching. Only when bounded by a broken line. Watch for debris. However there's a question here: the Highway Code says "if the area is bordered by a broken white line, you should not enter the area unless it is necessary and you can see that it is safe to do so." So when is an overtake "necessary"?

Your call.....

10. Filtering including lane splitting: perhaps the subject of another article!!!????



Overtaking can be fun and is one of the tangible differences between us and car drivers who seldom overtake. A well-choreographed overtake is a thing of beauty: a close shave or trip to A & E is not!

Ride safe

Ant Clerici