

# WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



September 2024

## EDITORIAL – JIM ROLT

Here we are in official (Met Office) autumn.. what already?

Sad news this month, our much loved friend and recent Chief Observer, Alex Hoyle, passed away suddenly a few days ago. He will be sadly missed, Chair Tony has [more below](#)

There are a few interesting articles in here this time, CO Richard H continues [his series on IPSGA](#), this month we've arrived at Gear, the series must be nearly done!

Then [John Nixon shares his confessions](#) on what happens if you aren't careful to always be able to stop in the distance you can see to be clear... scary stuff

Controversial as usual, stalwart contributor [Ant Clerici shares his thought on IPSGA](#).. is it out of date? (Do let me have your thoughts on any of the articles, or thoughts in general, there's never enough!)

Finally, Colin Abbott shares his experiences of marshalling at the Isle of Man TT, lots of photos to browse through too..

Have a great month, see you on the road!

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](mailto:whamnewsletter@gmail.com)

Jim Rolt, Editor



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## CHAIR'S NOTES – TONY DAVIS

Welcome to Autumn!

This month's column has a sombre theme. As you will know by now, our good friend and long time valued WHAM Member Alex Hoyle passed away in August. Alex was just 66, he suffered a massive heart attack and it was over very quickly. In some ways that's a blessing as he did not suffer.

I've know Alex since he joined WHAM in 2010. He very quickly became an integral part of the club, always active in some form or another as an Observer, Committee Member and a hugely successful four year stint as Chief Observer. His attitude and persona was always appropriate for the roles, always full of quiet humour, patience and a desire to help everyone improve both their safety on the road and enjoyment of Motorcycling.



I spent a few weekend bike trips and a couple of trips to Luxembourg in his company, he was an expert rider, quick, efficient and safe, he loved his Motorcycling and it was always a pleasure to ride with him. Alex's ability to finish off a full English Breakfast was legendary, in fact I think that most of our Sunday cafe stops were his recommendations. I've witnessed him polishing off 2 big breakfasts on one day ride before now without even flinching. Rumour has it that he even went home and tucked into a Sunday Lunch with Joy afterwards. It's incredible how he managed to stay so slim and healthy. Having said that, his diet got him in the end. I think we can all learn form that and get ourselves checked out, here is a perfect example of hidden health risks.

Alex's funeral is set for 13:15 on Thursday 26th September at Hereford Crematorium. I've been talking to Alex's wife Joy and she is keen for us to provide a Motorcycle escort to the cortege. This will probably be from their home, details to follow via email. There will be a wake at the Falcon, again, details to follow.

In the meantime, stay safe, look after your health and get out on the bike at every opportunity, enjoy life!!

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page2



## CHIEF OBSERVER – RICHARD HEWITT

### Gears

This month we think about the fourth phase of IPSGA, gears. 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 their 'gears' as they do.

I've heard a few misunderstandings down the years about the use of gears:

- Changing up too early and not leaving yourself on a balanced throttle in the middle third of your rev range
- Changing up too late and unnecessarily reaching engine revs not actually giving any benefit
- Changing up (on a motorcycle) skipping through ratios more than one gear at a time and not really knowing what gear you definitely will end up in, or indeed what kind of balanced throttle experience you will enjoy post change
- Changing down and not matching engine revs with the new gear
- Using a downward change to effect a change in speed outside of what the normal use of a balanced throttle will deliver
- General lazy use of gears in the hope of using less fuel but probably not, labouring the engine and stressing the drivetrain and certainly not in a safe balanced throttle position

So why is this? Why are there quite so many misconceptions and bad processes around gear usage?

My own view on this is that matters are not made any better by manufacturers, particularly of DCT bikes operating in 'automatic' mode. In order to meet emission and fuel consumption 'targets' many gearboxes in standard automatic drive mode change up way too early and can be in sixth by 30 mph. This is fine when on a rolling road in a test situation where little to no stress or drag is on the transmission; in this scenario the best emission and fuel consumption figures will most probably be delivered. But what about on the road where variable road surfaces, and hazards are present? If you've ever ridden a DCT equipped bike in standard drive mode, you will know that you certainly are not ever on a balanced throttle and when you need to react to a situation you've got seconds to wait before the gear selector wakes up to you twisting the throttle, and then your revs shoot up rapidly. This will use more fuel and cause more wear to the transmission. But it keeps the regulators happy, and so that's ok (he says sarcastically).

The reasons underpinning some of the other bullets noted above are a combination of bad training, limited understanding of what works best, poor machine sympathy, or people just having opinions that they are seeking to cling to.



## “Gears are for going”

And in concert with “brakes are for stopping”

There was a time, not that long ago that it was considered ‘bad form’ to ever show a brake light. You were unskilled as a rider to show a brake light, and you should be riding up and down the gearbox without any need to use the brakes unless you were actually stopping altogether.

Fortunately, that’s now seen an utter tripe and we are encouraged to use the tools we have, gears and brakes, to work together as they were designed to.

However, is there a case to be made for trying to move up and down the gearbox maintaining a balanced throttle within the lauded middle third of your machines revs range? Yes, there very much is. However (again), where the rate of decreasing speed is high, the less so it will be possible to rely purely on a balanced throttle. Much better to get a good braking effort in, block change down (never up on bike – ask Richard Gladman the IAM’s Chief Examiner), and then resume your ‘drive’ in the right gear and at the right revs.

Again, I think the old method of never showing a brake light would be ok when on escort duty or at low ‘touring’ speed, but not when you want to make any sort of progress.

So, gears are for going? So that means when accelerating? Nope, not so, you need to be in the right gear for the situation you are in, all of the time. This means going up and down the box, within the middle third of your engines rev range, on a balanced throttle, all of the time. Seeing a bit of a pattern here in my words? I hope so.

If, during, between, and into a set of bends you find yourself on a balanced throttle in the middle third of said rev range, you do not need to change gear and will be riding on a balanced throttle, most probably without using the brakes. And this is one of the most stable situations you will find yourself in.

Too often I see associates changing up gears because they think that is the pre-ordained “right thing to do”.

I was out on a Masters ride with one of our members this year and during almost the entirety of the ride we were in third and fourth gear on the twisty country roads we were riding along. Neither of us hardly got into fifth and reflected afterwards that we’d not been in sixth at all. We also hardly ‘needed’ to use our brakes as we were in the middle third rev range twisting the throttle up and down on a beautifully balanced throttle.

Do not think getting into sixth as quickly as possible is either the right thing to do, or the thing to aim for; better to think about matching gears to road speed to engine revs.

Changing down proves much harder for some associates than changing up.

If you can’t reach the reduced speed you want to be at on a balanced throttle, and you need to just slow down a little bit, can you change down and do it that way? Well, yes you can but there are limits as to what is possible, and from a stability and machine sympathy point of view, this action might not make sense.

If you are just about on a balanced throttle and at the bottom end of the mid-third rev position, it is often possible to change down, match the revs, and return to ‘drive’ position on a ‘better’

balanced throttle position with a better spread of revs above and below the ideal position. If when you've matched revs and changed down and returned to drive mode and you're nudging the rev limiter (extreme example) this is not the best use of the gears and will most probably leave the bike feeling jittery and less stable. Better use the brakes for a period of time to scrub off speed.

If you are riding a DCT bike, and I note Yamaha are just about to re-join those that do, you need to find a setting (usually D, S1, S2, S3) that suits your style of riding on any particular day/road conditions/progress wanted. When I rode one of these my go to was S1 unless I was cracking on and then S2 was more fun.

Safe riding.

Richard H

Chief Observer

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## I DON'T HAVE A CLUE! - JOHN NIXON



Well, that's me saying this and while the less generous of you might think "He's right, you know", there have been occasions when I was frankly ashamed of my 'moment' on a ride.

A year or so ago, riding my BMW R1200R, lovely bike but boring to ride after my Guzzi V11, I left Ross-on-Wye riding in a northerly direction, on the A449 Ross to Ledbury Road. This road will be familiar to many WHAM members, I'm sure.

Thus, when I mention the crossroads where the A449 intersects with the B4224, which has Woolhope to the left and Newent to the right, you'll know where I am. The road has a slight incline down and, though it's 40 limit each side of the junction, it immediately reverts to 60mph. I stop at the lights. The next hazard is a tight right-hander with a cottage on the inside just after the bend. It's all under trees. I slow, then open up for the straight. There's not been any traffic in front of me. I know this road, I'm aware of the nature of the upcoming bend.

That short straight precedes a long sweeping left which tightens up. I've shed speed to what I deemed 'safe enough'. I'm in the right position, right gear. There are double white lines so we know it's a hazard.

As the bend tightens, forward vision becomes more limited. I kind of remembered this, but the surface is bad (no surprise there) which is not helping because it occupies some part of my concentration. Oh yes, and I was quite tired.

Leant well over, I round the tightest part to find a Transit van **absolutely stationary** on my side of the road. Stop? Not a chance. I braked hard but had to pass really close on his offside and unavoidably cross the whites. Had a truck come the other way, I might not be writing this. As I slid by the van, the passenger dashed across the road carrying something, God knows what, (a dead pheasant?). Later, as they were now behind me, I briefly considered flagging them down and questioning their stupidity, but thought better of it.

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Was there a **clue** that van might be there? I don't think so. I'm open to suggestions.

What did I take from this awful near disaster? Firstly, now and **always, always** when I weigh up a bend, I think "*Can I stop in the distance I can see to be clear on my own side of the road?*" And, I am much, much, more careful and therefore slower.

Despite that experience, this time on the outfit, again on the A449 and travelling downhill after passing the Malvern Hills Hotel, I am in the left-hander, that comes a while before the junction with the A4104 to Welland. And there's a lay-by on the nearside with two entrances, one on the short clear straight and the second just at the start of the next right-hander. Bushes on the right obstruct vision. Round the left I come at 30mph to find a huge lorry about to enter the lower, downhill entrance to the lay-by. Fortunately he stopped just a bit across my side of the carriageway and I squeeze by.

On both instances **I didn't have a clue** other than the double whites and you're not supposed to stop where they are. Therefore it was entirely up to my judgement as to whether I could 'stop in the distance..etc.' A judgement which was clearly inadequate.

What effect have these two near-misses had on my riding?

The roads are very crowded now. I started riding (legally!) 60 years ago and it was all so very different then. Driving and (some) riding standards seem to have slipped ever more since lockdown. Drivers, and again some riders, seem to ignore urban speed limits. Now I'm certain I have to expect the unexpected and imagine there's a stationary something where it shouldn't be. Or someone lurching out from a line of traffic coming the other way, head-on to me. Or a sudden, zero indication change of lane on the motorway. I can't filter so the 'sudden open door' that Ant (I think) suffered won't get me. But there's still lots that could. And I take up more space than you solo riders.

In conclusion, despite my IAM certificates, RoSPA certificates, loads of training and observing and all those years of experience on many different solos and outfits, there's no substitute for a riding plan that includes 'expect the almost unthinkable'.

Happy riding.

John Nixon

## IS IPSGA OUTDATED? - ANT CLERICI

(or let's think the unthinkable?) As usual these are my own views so please read with a critical eye.

You have to go back a long time to find when "the system of car/motorcycle control" and its acronym "IPSGA" was created. Around 90 years back to the 1930's.

Yes 90 years.

"The Evolution of 'The System' was initially devised to focus purely at early traffic police officer's driving standards. Despite being in existence for over 90 years it remains the tried and tested method for all emergency response and advanced driver training delivered by the police services across the UK today. It has been adapted by other emergency services, has been accepted as the highest standard of driving by other countries for their police driver training and is what aspiring and seasoned advanced motorists set as their disciplines."



For us advanced motor bikers: it is the corner stone of IAMRS's advanced training from the advanced test to Masters.

Should it remain the tried and tested method?

In the 1930's the roads and traffic were very different.

Only 2 million vehicles were registered rather than the over 40 million today. If you look at popular motorbikes of the time you'll find singles and twins producing between 16bhp and 34bhp. They were heavy and had drum brakes, hard tyres and, of course, no electronic aids. Foot change gear boxes were new. There were no motorways, fewer traffic lights, no yellow boxes and far less white paint.

"Although a foot change mechanism was fitted to the 1932 VH it was a bolt on external after thought, a proper enclosed foot change mechanism appearing in 1934, initially as an option, later to be standard with the hand change version becoming optional."

You would have seen bikes such as the predecessor of my 1200 Tiger: the Triumph Tiger 100 plus the Matchless "Silver Hawk", Rudge "Ulster", Ariel "Red Hunter" and the Velocette "KSS".

So is IPSGA as relevant now in 2024 where bikes have better engines, brakes and gears?

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page8





Better everything!

Their performance is virtually incomparable: in comparison my Triumph Tiger 2023 1200 GT PRO has 148bhp compared to the 1930's Tiger 100's 34bhp. I have ABS, riding modes, traction control, electronic suspension and a host of other riding aids.

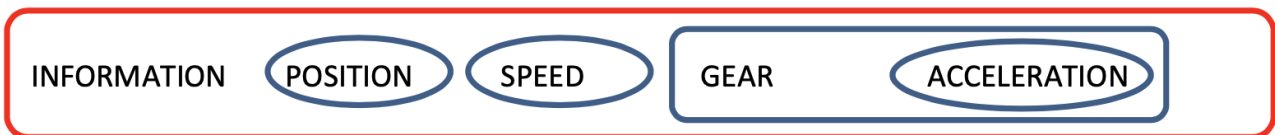
But should I ride to IPSCGA as they did before WW2?



I find myself questioning the way 'G' for GEARS is described within "the system".

G for gear change (up) isn't shown during the acceleration phase. I made the point about considered gear changes as you accelerate in my 'A for acceleration' article a few months back.

How could that look?



For example, if you've negotiated a hazard in 2nd and then accelerate to the national speed limit you will almost certainly change up during the acceleration phase before you hit cruising speed. However the Advanced Rider Course talks mainly about 'leaving the hazard safely' so perhaps this phase isn't necessarily the whole acceleration up to cruising speed? I'm thinking that the diagram isn't to be taken too literally.

G for gear change (down) is after your reduction in speed, as you approach the hazard. The thinking behind this is that brakes are for slowing and the use of gears to slow might lock your back wheel causing a skid. However the Advanced Course talks about being in the right gear 'to deliver the required performance in all situations'.

Actually I like that phrase: "required performance".

Let's call it RP for later on.

IPSGA was created when gear boxes frequently found the neutral that sat in between the constant mesh gears, that the flexibility of engine output was limited so that being in the correct gear at the correct speed was essential for machine sympathy and good progress.

We find our bikes of today to be from a “different planet”.

We could redefine a 1250cc BMW’s gear box as having 1st, 2nd, ‘automatic’, 4th, 5th and ‘autobahn’.

So where does this leave us with gear changing?

I’ll look at manual boxes (with or without quick shifters) later but let’s deal with DCT first.

Unless you’ve ridden one, you won’t have experienced the smoothness of a good DCT box in “automatic”. The bike’s mode setting and processor will dictate when gear changes occur, including in the middle of a bend, but the change is almost imperceptible. The risk of a loss of grip is so small that it’s not worth mentioning: but there’s always traction control in the background. There is an override where you can click a switch with a finger to change gear; but after a few seconds the bike will reassess your speed and gearing and change according to its algorithm. So DCT’s automatic mode will change gear regardless of IPSGA.

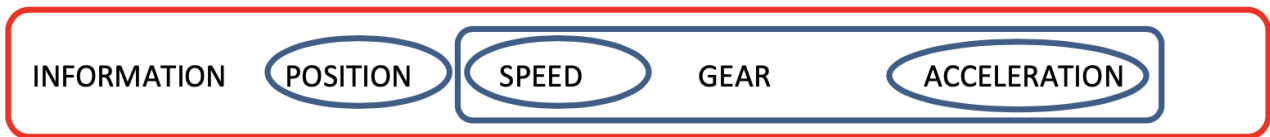
Here’s the DCT version.



With a manual box, if you are competent with matching revs with speed, gears are so flexible that having to wait to change down until you have reached the desired speed isn’t necessary and can feel awkward. With a good quick shifter the electronics are proactive enabling smooth changes up and down the box.

When slowing for a hazard, or potential hazard, it’s easily possible to select a lower gear before you slow. This gives you more revs and better acceleration sense. It’s a matter of judgement if clicking down a gear or two early, before the reduction in speed, gives an advantage or not.

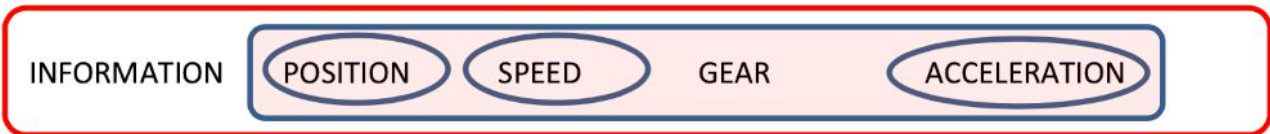
How might this look?



So let's take this line of thought to its conclusion.

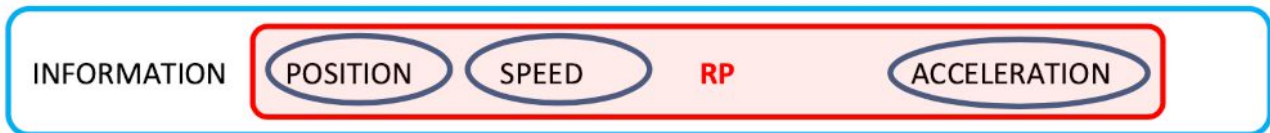
Occasionally there might be an advantage of changing gear before you change position. Again more revs can be useful in anticipation of what's ahead.

So now the system could look like this:



I mentioned the advance course advice that says "Accurate use of gears allows engine to deliver the required performance in all situations" I called it **RP**

So here's my final version of the IPSGA diagram for 2024



### In summary

The "system" remains unchanged apart from when gear changes can take place. Our modern technology allows this to be a useful addition to our riding options.

The fundamental foundations of INFORMATION with TUG still encompass all phases and enable planning. For me robust information gathering, processing and anticipation = good planning

POSITION is next. There are two reasons for changing position:

1. to allow better gathering of information by improving the view,  
and/or

2. to manage hazards, both real and anticipated.

SPEED (see also Richard's excellent article last month) is, on the surface, easy.

Your speed should be between 0mph and the speed limit; and always recognising that "advanced riders do not plan to exceed the speed limit". SPEED here could be written 'APPROPRIATE SPEED FOR THE CONDITIONS and/or HAZARDS both seen and anticipated'.

You'll see "GEAR" has been changed to "RP" (required performance) in recognition that changing gear can be taken outside of its current place after "Speed" and before "Acceleration". Gear changes should achieve the RP with purposeful changes and certainly not by habit. They should always be part of your plan.

It's not uncommon for riders to change down for bends when they are not necessarily planning to slow for those bends; instead they have opted for more revs and greater acceleration sense for control in anticipation that something might require a change in position or speed.

ACCELERATION completes the action, again with gear changes as appropriate.

**Should the system remain the tried and tested method?**

**I'd say "yes but....."**

I'll leave it to you to consider if this revised diagram better represents machine control in 2024...or are you happy with the pre-war "system"?

AC August 2024

## MARSHALLING THE IOM TT - COLIN ABBOTT

Joined WHAM a few years back, don't get down Worcester way very often since losing my house of 30 years in a divorce last year. I'm now up in the Black Country and ever so grateful to my elder brother, not only did he fix me up with a flat but it was him that got me into biking circa 1978, CB100N and then the Superdreams. Haven't seen my observer Rob for a while though we keep in touch via phone, must get out on the bike with him soon.

I write this as I've just packed ready for the morning's IOM ferry. For a few years now I've been marshalling on the famous mountain course at both TT and Manx GP.

If any of you have ever thought of doing it I can fully recommend it. It's a huge honour to be a small part of something so famous. I've been going over since 1989 to spectate, seen some greats in those early years, The Dunlop brothers, Hislop, Fogarty, Nation (met the bloke last TT at Peel, see attachment), McCallen etc.



Last TT I got off the ferry, the roads were closed for practice so I rode to a point above Ballacraine to watch as I wasn't signed on to marshal til the next day. A sidecar outfit pulled in, it had started dropping oil. An engine case bung was borrowed from a spectator's Kwak 650 but the pilot didn't know the way back to the paddock via the back roads. I escorted him via Foxdale back to Douglas. I was handed the bung back and promptly took it back to our Swiss visitor.

News got back to my DSM (Deputy Sector Marshal) at the Mountain Box and that coupled with my knowing the role and procedure at the Marshalling post, he put my name forward to the CSM (Chief Sector Marshal). I was invited to do the online exam which I passed.

Two days later I was thrust in at the deep end and put in sole charge of the Mountain Box, this post covers Mountain Bridge and Caseys Advanced. The first session through that fateful morning was the sidecars, Ben Birchall was leading the practice session when his outfit failed to take the left apex at the Box. He careered off the road at a rate of knots (in excess of 130mph. I can't go into anymore detail other than the orange button was activated on the Tetra Radio, this alerts race control but also automatically gets Airmed scrambled. Luckily he and his French passenger sustained nothing more than superficial injuries and were back to it after a few days of missed track time.

What a baptism of fire! Ben sought me out a few days later and gave me one of his racing caps as a thank you.

Last year I went up to the circuit via green lanes from Ginger Hall with a young lad by the name of Tom Knight. He can do things on a bike that most could only dream of. Mind you his old man is Juan Knight and his uncle is Dave Knight, no intro required!

Colin Abbot, Mountain course marshal

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my steed outside the office (Mountain Box). Back on my second GSXS 1000.

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page14





Looking back down the course towards Mountain Mile.



With Trevor Nation, saw him manhandle the Norton Rotary round this course.





Fellow marshals, a great bunch.

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page17

