

RIDERS



... magazine of the KAMG

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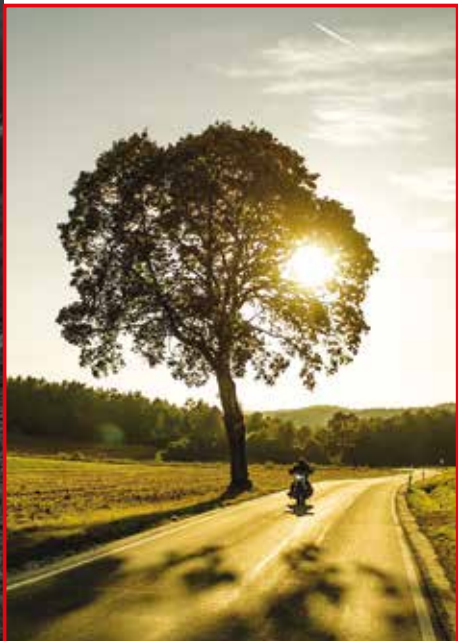
THIS EDITION INCLUDES . . .

REGULAR FEATURES:

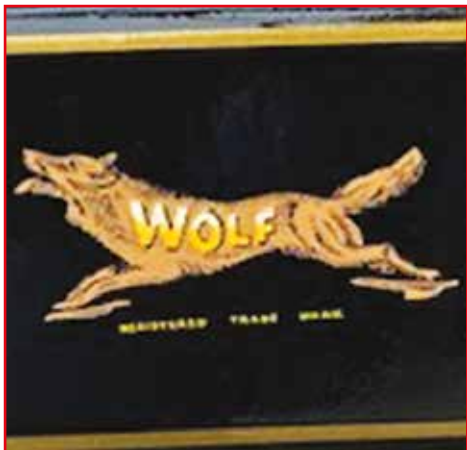
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The sun is setting on summer rides



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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Aug

Sun 31st Group ride to Arundel

Sat 18th
Sun 26th

IDCAM
Classic Bike Show. Ardingly nr Gatwick
RH17 6TL

September

Thurs 4th Fish and Chip ride
Sat 20th IDCAM
Sun 21st Machine Control Day
Sun 21st Champion of Champions Grasstrack.
Folkestone. CT15 7HF
Sun 21st Romney Marsh Bike Jumble TN26 2JD
Sun 28th Group ride to Birling Gap

November

Sun 2nd Group ride to Airport Cafe
Sat 15th IDCAM
Thurs 27th Christmas party/dinner.

This list is correct at time of going to press. Check all KAMG dates on Tracker to ensure that there are no changes. Details of contacts for IDCAM, Machine Control Days and Ride-outs are on pages 30 and 31.



Nick Farley, Editor

EDITORIAL

Going Dutch

Hertfordshire County Council have built another one of the new 'Dutch-style' roundabouts. Some of you will remember happier times when the Dutch used to rely on their ground-breaking work with tulips, windmills, clogs and cheese to get them the occasional headline and to make the odd profitable guilder. The tulip story is probably wearing a bit thin by now, which explains why they have decided to diversify into the traffic management industry and export a new concept in traffic roundabouts, and we, in England, have 'bought' four of them . . . so far. There's one in Cambridge, one in Sheffield, one in Chichester and now a brand new one in Hertfordshire.

The interesting thing about this latest one is that Hertfordshire County Council actually knows that it is a bit of a daft roundabout, because they have made a special video explaining how to use it! Having to make a special training film to teach people how to use a roundabout, acknowledges that it is a roundabout that operates counter to all previous roundabout logic, etiquette and protocol. I've watched the training video, and as far as I can see the only safe way to use this roundabout is simply to remain stationary at all times.

Who would have thought that the day would ever come when we needed to watch an instructional video before using a roundabout? Well, that day is already here. It's today. If you Google 'Boundary Way Roundabout' you'll find a couple of videos telling you what to do at this new roundabout. In order to try to justify the building of the roundabout, these videos use all the usual flowery and unnecessary 'government-speak' words including this little gem: "we [Herts Council] are delivering sustainable transport options". I think that simply means that Hertfordshire Council has got a few roads and pavements for us to use . . . just like every other council; and you can be certain that those other councils will be keen to be seen "delivering sustainable transport options" too, so there's going to be many more of these daft Dutch circuses foisted on us soon and there's absolutely nothing we can do to stop it.

Why are we doing this? We don't need to copy the road system of a flat country that's full of cyclists. Holland's needs are quite different from ours. We need to build and maintain a road system specifically developed to cope with our traffic and to meet our needs – and that means all of our traffic not just one small section of it.

Anyway, watch Hertfordshire Council's video, it'll give you a laugh, but it will make you feel very sorry for drivers of big lorries, and it might make you a bit cross too.

Riders

In the last issue of the magazine, I thanked some of the members who regularly contribute to *Riders*. They are so important. Everything in the magazine is written by KAMG members for KAMG members about KAMG members and what they are doing or have done. None of the articles in the magazine has appeared in any other medium – printed, broadcast or electronic. The magazine does a different job from Facebook and it can handle a range of topics better than social media, but it can only do this with contributions from the members. *Riders* is where KAMG members can express their views on all motorbiking matters. Everything you send is guaranteed to be printed no matter how outrageous it is or however it is written. Making it printable is what an editor is for. My email address is on page 31.

The views and opinions expressed in this magazine are solely the views and opinions of the people who write the articles, and those views and opinions should never be taken as, nor be presumed to be, the official view of, nor views supported by, either IAM RoadSmart or the KAMG.

Every article that appears in this magazine has been written expressly for this magazine and has not appeared in any other print or electronic medium before, and none of the material in this magazine may be reprinted elsewhere without the express permission of the KAMG.

Everything is done to ensure the correctness and accuracy of the editorial content of the magazine, but neither the editor nor the KAMG accepts liability for information errors, omissions or typesetting errors.

Riders is the place for every single member, or associate member, of KAMG to say what he/she thinks about anything and everything connected with riding and driving and the KAMG. Every article submitted will be published (provided it is legal) and no opinions or views will be changed or cut out. The magazine is apolitical, but criticism or praise of politicians of any political colour is welcome if the criticism, or praise, is about the politician's actions or views on road safety, roads or some other aspect of transport.

Please submit articles for publication, or letters to the editor, to the email address of the editor (see page 30). Please send pictures for publication as separate file attachments to an email if possible, rather than embedding them in the email content, and ensure that the pictures are of the highest resolution possible. Please do not send information or pictures via Facebook.

MAGAZINE DESIGN AND LAYOUT
BY JOHN GARDINER

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

We have all had a very busy couple of months since the last magazine, and the weather has been fantastic for us all. I relish looking at Facebook to see all the great riding holidays and training destination pictures that you all post. The group is running very smoothly with some extra social rides mid-week and evening fish n' chip rides. Machine Control Days have been very well attended and the observer team are working hard. KAMG barbecue in July was a big hit with over 120 attending, and collaborative events with local groups EKAM [East Kent], ESAM [East Sussex], LAM [London] and even ELAM [East London] have been very positive. Peterborough training weekends have now finished for this year but plans for next year are already underway.

I hope you are all receiving the e.news and items for this publication to advertise upcoming events

are welcomed by Ian Burchell as are any articles for the magazine, which should be sent Nick Farley. And speaking of upcoming events, at the October group night, we will be hosting Michelin Tyres who have given us the opportunity to raffle a new set of tyres for your bike. Please try to attend and support this evening.

It is sad to report that Jon Potter, who was the group's membership secretary for many years, sadly died recently and KAMG members attended his funeral. It was a lovely ceremony and his wife Denise thanked the group for their attendance and flowers. And on that sad note I would like to say and ask you to remember that each day is not a given; be kind, be bold. Love and live each moment to its fullest.

Tina Underwood

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TEST PASSES

Since the last edition



Aryan Khanna receiving his Advanced Rider F1RST qualification from his observer John Gardiner



Tim Atkinson receiving his Advanced Rider F1RST qualification from his observer David Howard



Dmitry Pisklov receiving his Masters qualification from his mentor Steve Riches



Emlyn Jones receiving his Advanced Rider qualification from his observer Nicola Walker



Peter Findlay receiving his Advanced Rider qualification from his observer Nigel Clibbens



Rob Davies receiving his Advanced Rider qualification from his observer Colin Billings



Steven Watkinson receiving his Masters qualification from his mentor Ian Walker



Martin Williamson receiving his Advanced Rider qualification from Steve Riches on behalf of his observer Mark Brewster

INNOVA TO DAKTARI

Back in 2023 Martin Brown, possibly in a slightly pandemic-crazed state, asked this question in these pages: "What is the connection between a Doctor, a Honda Innova and The Bike Shed?" The answer, it transpired, was 'Daktari', which is apparently Swahili for Doctor, and was also the name of a television show that I was too old to remember and which many of you will be too young ever to have seen. Never mind. We all ride on.

Martin's question was an introduction to his story of building his own version of the Honda CT125,



The unavailable Honda CT125 that set the ball rolling

Hunter Cub, using the pizza deliverer's dream bike, the Honda Innova, as his starting point. The decision to do this was prompted by Honda's decision not to import its then new CT125 to this country. Having built his own version, Martin showed it at the Bike Shed Show in June of that year, 2023. That's where the story began, and we were treated to the early stages of this nail-biting project. The bike, which he calls Daktari, did appear at The Bike Shed Show, but it was not actually a runner then.

Anyway, that didn't really matter because having seized our imagination, Daktari disappeared from view and Little Zed suddenly re-emerged – the Brown projects have a habit of

coming and going intermittently like this, which keeps us on our toes – but now, as we wait for news of Zed's actual off-road performance, Daktari has resurfaced. You also need to know that the original 125cc Innova engine with semi-automatic gear box was not used in this build – it was seized. Instead, a 140cc high compression engine with manual transmission from OORacing in Sandwich was used.

Martin finished his 2023 article with these confident words: "The only thing left to do now is road and trail test it. Watch this space," he said, and we have watched, in vain, until now . . .

Martin takes up the tale again:

The Daktari livery displayed on the Brown dining room table two years ago. Sadly these beautiful panels no longer fit and will have to be remade.

Daktari Drama!

Custom bike building is never as easy as it looks on TV, and the bike in the 2023 Bike Shed Custom Bike Show was not a runner and in fact was not wired up. It looked the part but there was no chance of its running. After the show it was taken back to my friend's workshop so that we could finish it another day. Unfortunately, that day was some time coming due to my friend's untimely and sudden death. RIP Rob Aston.

Some while after that, KAMG stalwart and good friend Steve Riches helped me trailer the bike back to my house for finishing. Meanwhile I made other arrangements to get the wiring done and the bike went out again to another good and useful friend, Steve Hallam. He is well known at his workshop in New Addington. If you know of Steve you will know that he is a wiring guru with previous big-build customs to his name. As expected, the work was done supremely well and the bike was returned to me for final shakedown and to get it running. Now the drama.



The donor bike, a 2007 Honda Innova



The Innova stripped of its plastic



The bigger bore exhaust pipe on the left



Big bore stainless steel pipe at the top. Standard pipe below.

After finishing off pipework etc. I popped in some fresh fuel, watched OORacing's video on how to start high compression engines (they have foibles), and I started kicking. Nothing. Checked the spark – magnificent, and I gave myself a number of good belts during the checking. [see also page 19] Checked the carb – all good, brand-new. Air getting in somewhere? Maybe, but nothing obvious. After trying on and off for quite a few days I gave up. I was all out of ideas so I called Adrian at OORacing and he suggested that I should take Daktari down to his workshop for an examination. Done. I hired a van and off I went to Sandwich. As soon as the bike was on the bench (possibly even before), Adrian said, "that will never start". What? What had we done? And more to the point, why had we not asked Adrian first?

Problem 1: The exhaust pipe bore was too small. The high compression engine needs a big bore pipe to exhaust through, and our pipe was never going to work.

Problem 2: The carb manifold was WAY too small. See the pictures. We were quite proud of our fabrication



The carb manifold. The new big bore is on the right.

of this but although it would have been fine if we had retained the Innova engine, it was never going to work on the new engine.

Problem 3: Our initial routing of the air intake went through a flexible pipe up and into the seat bucket to give a 'snorkel' effect for riding in water. Adrian confirmed that even though it was quite a big pipe, the restriction would stop the engine running. Buzzer.



These two holes should be in alignment

Problem 4: Although this would not stop the engine starting, Adrian suggested that the motor was angled up slightly too high. The bottom of the engine needed to be horizontal as there is an oil feed pipe that scavenges from the bottom so if it's not level there could be an oil starvation issue. Hmm, more work.

Problem 5: Although the coil seemed to be producing a chunky spark, Adrian was not convinced; so out came a higher power coil along with a new plug. Okay, now we are set. Fuel on, ignition on, gently push the kickstart past its safety 'shear gear' point, and kick. Starts first time. Sounds great. Not too noisy. Just right. Hooray. That's the good news. The not so good news is that the two sides of the downtube panels we made, no longer fit. Grr. As Rob Aston was the mould making master on this



High tec CAD (Cardboard Aided Design) piece for making an ear to solve alignment problem . . . maybe.

job, I'm a bit stuck. I will try to see if I can adapt the existing panels to fit, but that's unlikely. If that is not possible, I will start looking for someone to fabricate a couple of new ones for me. Answers on a postcard please.

The next issue is the engine mounting. As you can see from the pictures the front mount is now a fair bit out. Ideally, I would like to get some extra 'ears' welded on but that means stripping out Steve's magnificent wiring, so I will have a go at making a couple of alloy ears to bolt on instead. Let's see how they come out. Last but not least, moving the mounting points also means that the engine guard will no longer fit. It mounts to the bottom of the engine so any drop means that the top mounting points need to re-extended. *Oh dear.*

FROM NEW RIDER TO MASTER

Aryan Khanna tells his story

At 22 years old, I recently passed the IAM RoadSmart Masters Test, an achievement I'm incredibly proud of, and one that reflects not just my commitment to becoming a better rider, but the extraordinary support I've received from the Kent Advanced Motorcyclists Group.

When I first began riding, I knew that I wanted to go beyond the basic licence and truly develop the skills and awareness needed to ride confidently, safely, and with purpose. I joined KAMG with only a few years of riding under my belt – far less than many of the experienced riders around me – but I was welcomed with open arms and open visors.



To be honest, I wasn't expecting that. Like many younger riders, I had the idea that advanced groups like KAMG were more of an 'old man's club', and I worried that I'd feel out of place or even alienated. But those assumptions were quickly proved wrong. I haven't experienced nearly as much age-related judgment or discrimination as I feared, though I'll admit, there are still the occasional few who are quick to make assumptions based purely on age. Fortunately, they're the exception, not the rule.

Passing my Advanced Test with a F1RST was a milestone that validated the hard work I'd put in, but more than that, it showed me just how much more there was to learn. I wanted to have a sense of progression and of always sharpening my skills and decision-making, and that's what led me to pursue the IAM Masters qualification.

Achieving a Masters pass at my age has been both humbling and rewarding. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my Advanced Observer, John Gardiner, and to my Masters Mentor, Colin Underwood; plus a few others in the group whose time, patience, and passion had a massive impact on my journey. Their feedback, encouragement and depth of knowledge not only improved my riding technique but completely transformed the way that I think about being on the road.

This journey has taught me that advanced riding isn't just about precision or performance, it's about mindset too. It's about being in control, anticipating hazards and riding with clarity and purpose. The difference it has made to my confidence, awareness and enjoyment on the bike is hard to put into words.

To anyone considering joining an advanced group like KAMG, I can't recommend it enough. No matter your experience level or your age, there's always something to learn and it's a community ready to help you grow. I came in as a relatively new rider, but thanks to the training and mentorship I received, I've achieved more than I ever thought possible at this stage in my riding life, and this is just the beginning.



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THE PIONEER RUN



If you fancy a coffee and a bacon sandwich ride-out on Sunday October 5th, in order to get the autumn/winter schedule off to a flying start, might I suggest a brisk spin down to Shoreham Airport.

Why would you do that? Because, as motorcyclists we are always looking for an excuse to ride somewhere, and it's always better if the ride has a purpose. Ideally that somewhere should be a place rich in bacon, cake, coffee and motorbikes; in fact, as many motorbikes as possible; interesting and out of the ordinary motorbikes. On October 5th Shoreham Airport will be knee deep in all of those desirable

things, because Shoreham Airport, on October 5th, will be the finishing spot for this year's Pioneer Run. I know we have mentioned the Pioneer Run in these pages before, in November 2021 to be precise, but that was an after-the-event report while this is an advance warning so that you can build it into your schedule and go yourselves this year.

Pioneer Run, you say? Wassat? The Pioneer Run is the two wheel equivalent of the London to Brighton veteran car run and it used to run similarly from London to Madeira Drive on the seafront in Brighton, but now it runs from Tattenham Corner on Epsom Downs to

Shoreham Airport, which is near to Brighton in the modern Ryanair way that being nearly somewhere is actually the same as the somewhere itself.

The actual Brighton town bit of the run had to be abandoned a few years ago because you have to remember that every bike on the run will be at least 110 years old and many of them, perhaps most of them, have no clutch; however, they do all have brakes although these tend to be of a 'spiritual' nature and very few have actual braking brakes. Restarting is also fraught for many riders as the only means of restarting after stopping at traffic lights and



An early Gold Wing? A 1913 Wilkinson (yes the razor blade people). 4 cylinder, 800cc, shaft drive, rear suspension by leaf springs, seat by Harrods? 65mph and no front brake!



1913 Flying Merkel. Owned by Steve McQueen's mate Bud Ekins. Reputedly capable of 96mph. No front brake, of course. Sold at auction for £132,000

zebra crossings is to run and bump and jump aboard. Some of the riders are nearly as old as their bikes so this can be an action charged with danger both for hopeful rider and inattentive pedestrian. Anyway, it was wisely deemed sensible to move the run to the expanse of Shoreham Airport where all could be brought safely to a halt and admired by us ordinary folk. It's really worth it. Put it in the diary today.

Pioneer Run, Sunday October 5th. The first bikes will leave Tattenham Corner at 8am and be arriving at Shoreham from about 10.30am. You can watch on the route and at the start, but it is best viewed at the finish at Shoreham.

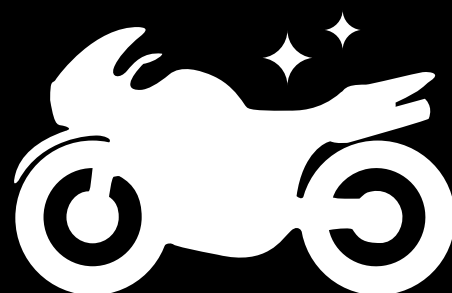
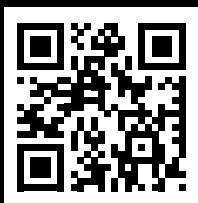


Not quite sure what this means . . .



. . . or how this suspension works.

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LET'S TALK TORQUE

Says Bob Phillips

Why are some fasteners on your bike tightened to a specific torque setting? It is to ensure that they are tight enough to do the required job without being over-tightened. If they are over tightened so that they are stretched, they are liable to fail. Bolts, set screws and screws are made from different grades of steel according to the job they are required to do and these grades are denoted on the head of bolts; for example, on metric fasteners you might see the numbers 8.8 or 12.9, and in the case of stainless-steel bolts, you might see A2 and A4. Each of these grades has a specific elastic limit – that is the point at which the thread will deform and the fastener will exceed its yield point, resulting in failure. It is a common misconception that stainless steel has a greater strength than carbon steel, but this is not the case. Although stainless is harder to cut and drill, it does not have the same tensile strength of a thread of the same size in carbon steel. Applying the correct torque to a fastener, ensures the maximum tightness, without over stretching the thread. It is also important to follow the instruction on whether the fastener is fitted dry or lightly oiled, as this can affect how the bolt is tightened. Oil reduces friction, so the torque setting could be lower than required on a dry thread. Reduce the torque setting by 10/15% for oiled threads.

Torque charts are available on the internet. In the following small example table, you can see that an 8mm bolt of 8.8 grade carbon steel requires torquing to 20nm (newton-meter is the measuring unit of torque.) Grades range from 3.6 to 12.9. Grade 8.8 bolts and above are the high strength bolts likely to be found in the automotive industry.

Next time you are fitting load bearing or critical fasteners and don't have the torque setting to hand, look it up and apply it, it may save you some grief later. And remember before putting your torque wrench away, turn the adjuster back to the minimum setting. This will prevent the spring from losing its force, and giving false readings.



Diameter	Grade	Grade	Grade
mm	8.8	10.9	12.9
8	20nm	25nm	30nm
10	40nm	50nm	60nm
12	70nm	85nm	100nm

BEING AN OBSERVER: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? WELL, IT DEPENDS . . .



We are all familiar with the term 'observer'. By definition, every one of us as a member of the KAMG has a green badge or is practising to get one, and that means that each one of us has been thoroughly 'observed' in the advanced-motorcycle sense.

'Observed' is such an ordinary word; it simply means 'watched', and what's difficult about watching? We all do it all of the time. We have no choice. And we are all very good at commenting on the driving or riding conduct of other road users every time we go out. That's easy too.

However, just imagine that the next traffic idiot you swear at, actually stops and says "sorry mate" and asks you to follow him for a few hundred miles spread over several days and weeks and months, and asks you to comment in forensic detail, constructively and knowledgeably, on each and every facet of his riding; I mean everything, every single thing he does, Every.Single.Thing. I bet you couldn't do it. Most of us couldn't do it because we're not good enough to do it. It's certainly way beyond me.

Fortunately, however, some people are good enough to do it because they have **learnt** to be good enough. Those people are proper 'observers' and they do much more than watch. Dave Howard became an observer, and his story of how he was trained opened my eyes. Read on . . .

People asked me a lot of questions about my path to becoming an observer: they ask the obvious things like how long did it take, what was it like, and how did I feel? Well, the straightforward answers are that it took six months – Jan to July last year, 2024; it took perseverance and a sense of humour; it was challenging, time consuming, intense and sometimes difficult, but it was always rewarding, and it made me appreciate and respect what my own observers had gone through and how easy they had made it look when I was an associate.

In some ways, for me, learning to be an observer was like going back to school as I had to learn so much that was new, and it tested my patience and my resolve. Sometimes I asked myself what the *@XX I'd done? I was challenged. Was I going to be good enough? How on earth was I going to remember everything? How was my own riding going to be affected? Was it all going to be worth it?

I was worried that my communication skills wouldn't be up to the job of explaining to associates what I had seen without destroying their confidence? How would I find the positives in a ride and communicate them? How would I condense everything into the recommended timings? There were so many questions and concerns, and sometimes I felt that I couldn't see the wood for the trees. It was a lot harder than I ever imagined. But what helped me in the difficult times was that I was part of a team – 'the Class of 2024'. We all felt the same way. We all struggled at times, but we all helped each other. I felt too that I was giving back, and I would eventually have a national accreditation. It will be worth it. And I felt proud and a sense of achievement when things started to fall into place.

I had always thought that I would like to become an observer; I had achieved all the other IAM riding standards and I wanted to give something back and have



Not all observing is from behind. Here Tony Young 'observes' from the front

something that I would enjoy doing in retirement. I was also encouraged by several other KAMG members who said that they thought I would make a good observer. So, on Jan 30th of last year, I had my first meeting to find out what it was all about, and whether I wanted to continue, or whether I would be selected. I did and I was, and in February I was officially registered on the IMI [Institute of the Motor Industry] IAM observer training programme.

The rest of February and March were spent gaining knowledge and experience via third-man rides, which meant following qualified observers on actual observed rides that they were conducting, and listening to them and asking questions. Getting third-man rides was sometimes a challenge and I needed to be flexible and prepared to move at short notice. In the end I set up and co-ordinated a WhatsApp group for the 'Class of 2024' in order to improve the contact between us and the existing qualified observers, and this made it easier for everyone to get in touch and organise third-man rides. We, the 2024 trainees, also organised our own practice observing rides, shared our difficulties and, importantly, encouraged each other. At this stage of training, you are exposed to the NOPS form [National Observer Progress Summary form], which is a record of a trainee observer's journey to becoming a qualified observer. It's heavy but you do get there.

During this period, I attended an IDCAM in order to remind myself of what new associates experience when they begin their training and I also helped at Machine Control Days for the same reason. All the time I was trawling the IAM and KAMG websites too and amassing information from qualified observers about their documentation in order to help me create my own documents and style. And I spent time designing routes that I would later be able to use on my own observed rides.

By April I was in the third month of the training programme, and April is always a very busy month for me as Membership Secretary of KAMG. It's the time of year when membership renewals take place and I'm chasing payments and lax renewals, and now I was attending training workshops every week and evening classes too – with homework. Yes, homework! Oh, and I was also co-ordinator of the WhatsApp group. What on earth had I let myself in for?

Then it was late spring, and May was a month of practise and more practise: practising route planning; practising briefing; practising post briefing; practising everything. There were more third-man rides with even more involvement; I was by then actually providing feedback under supervision. There was also a Peterborough training weekend where I even 'observed' under the watchful eye of Mark Brewer. In June there was an on-road training workshop, under supervision, with real associates, where we trainees had to do everything: pre-brief, 60minute observed ride with a mid-point stop and feedback, post ride feedback and complete a run sheet. This was followed in mid-June by an assessment ride to find out if I was test ready. The test assessment ride is the full Monty and you are expected to be able to conduct a competent observed ride including all the relevant points from your training. Would I be test ready?

I was. Now it was just more practise until the real test day, July 24th. The actual test was intense and I learned a lot from it, but it went well thanks to the training I had received and the work that I had put in. I passed! Then it dawned on me that I was now an accredited National Observer and from here on I would have to do it all for real and on my own!

September 3rd 2024 was the big day. I had been allocated an associate, John Speers. I made contact with him, introduced myself and gathered information about his experience, riding style and other information. I had practised my route time and time again. I sent him an email with meeting instructions and some documentation to read in advance. Was I nervous? Yes. Was I quietly confident? Ye-es. But what if I was asked a question I couldn't answer? What if I freeze? So many 'what-ifs'. But I needn't have worried, the first meeting went well and my confidence grew.

In February this year, one year after starting on my own path to becoming an observer, I was asked to assist Steve Port, a trainee observer from the class of 2025, and to share my experiences and to pass on what I had learned so far about being an observer. I have enjoyed mentoring and helping someone else, just as I appreciated the help I had received from other observers when I was training. I have helped with planning routes, doing briefings, de-briefs and together Steve and I have devised a great routine for coaching overtaking. It was also in February that I was allocated my second associate, Tim Atkinson, which meant I was managing two associates and assisting a trainee observer. JS and I continued throughout the tail end of winter and the bad weather didn't stop us; even torrential rain and high winds didn't stop us. We would meet in a café and go through the handbook or The Highway Code or look at video footage that I had taken of his riding.

His test day was March 9th 2025 and we went on a warm-up ride en route to the test, and then I accompanied the test as third-man, which was another learning experience for me. JS rode well and then came the moment of truth for both of us – he passed! This was my first success as an observer and going on the test as third-man was invaluable; I learned so much more and understood more about what the examiners are looking for.

In the meantime, my second associate Tim was progressing well and over the next four months and eight observed rides his skills were at a level that I felt confident would result in a test pass. Following a successful check ride, a test was applied for and we continued with fine tuning and ensuring that sparkle was evident in his rides. On his test day, and after a good warm-up ride, we met the examiner at Bluebell Hill. I again rode third-man on the test and for the first 30 minutes the weather was atrocious with torrential rain and flooding, but it improved and I was smiling as I watched a very good ride. When I sat next to the examiner at the debrief, I could see the scores on the sheet, and every section was a 1. My second associate had achieved a F1rst! I don't know who was more chuffed, him or me. That was a very rewarding experience, and it was an

honour to present him with his **F1rst** certificate at July's Group Night. [See page 7]

This observing and mentoring lark has turned out to be fun, rewarding and enjoyable. I have learned that you get out what you put in. I've learned that I have had to adapt and adjust my expectations; I can't expect an associate to ride at my own 'Masters with Distinction' level; people learn in different ways and I have to adapt my teaching style to suit them. Am I still learning? I am a National Observer now, but I'll never stop learning.

I am deeply indebted to all those who were part of my training journey, and I would like to say a special thanks to all the observers who helped with third-man rides and who passed on their wise words. I owe particular thanks to Bob Phillips, Colin Billings, John Gardiner and Steve Riches, all of whom provided much additional help and support.

Now, one year after passing my observer test, I am observing my third associate. Has it been a rewarding year? Definitely. Has it all been worth it? Certainly. Am I chuffed? Absolutely!

Why don't you apply to join 'The Class of 2026'?

IAM RoadSmart

The Motorcycle Observer's Guide



A TRULY SHOCKING STORY

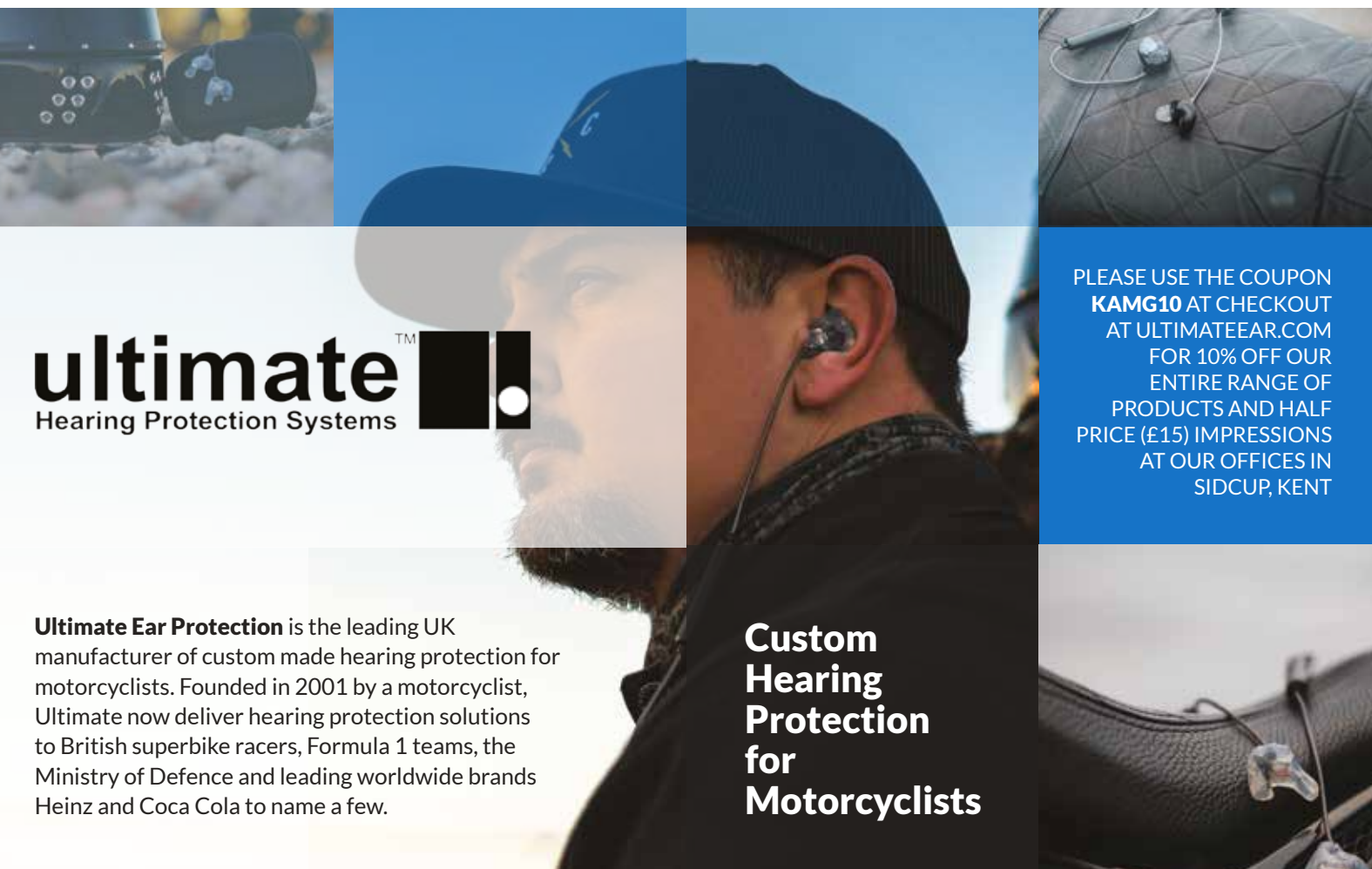
I bloody hate electricity! Well, more accurately and perhaps less dramatically, I hate some electricity. As you all know, there are two kinds of electricity in this world: there is 'proper electricity' and there is 'motorbike electricity'. 'Proper electricity' goes round your house on a circuit a bit like the Circle Line and at various points some of the electricity jumps off to drive the dishwasher or the telly. 'Proper electricity' is, by and large, and all things considered, useful stuff. 'Motorcycle electricity', on the other hand, is a malignant and evil commodity and is the sworn enemy of mankind. Part of the problem is that I simply don't understand the stuff. Mechanical stuff, I get. Gears and shafts and cams do perfectly understandable, respectable and

honest things and they do them proudly and unashamedly out in the open, whereas electricity is a secretive, furtive, dingy, underhand, snide commodity that does its work unseen. It uses ridiculous little components with ludicrous names like condensers and capacitors and diodes that don't have any moving parts and which you simply have to trust and believe in, and I don't.

I was twelve years old when I first began reciting the mantra about needing fuel and a spark to make a motorcycle engine work, and I've been chanting those same demonstrably unhelpful words for the last 70 years. And every time – and I do mean Every-Single-Time – it's been because I have been looking for the bloody electricity part of the equation.

I have never been short of the petrol bit. Never, ever. Finding fuel is easy: you know where to buy it; you can see it; you can touch it and you can smell it. You know that it definitely exists. You can turn a can upside down and let gravity do the simple job of transferring it from a can to your tank. You can watch this perfectly explicable and logical physical process take place and thus you know with certainty that it actually has taken place. Once in the tank you can easily trace the fuel on its onward route to that mystical instrument the carburettor, which will mix it with a bit of air before chucking it into the engine. No problem. But you can't do any of that with electricity. Oh no!

The biggest problem with electricity is that you can't see



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**Ride to the East
May 3rd to 5th
(Bank Holiday)**

This is a gentle 3 day tour staying in the same hotel for both nights. This a great new ride around Norfolk and Suffolk. Including a day around the coast.
Room cost £280/£310.
24 rooms available

Rutland Water
May 24th to 26th
(Bank Holiday)

Rutland Water is a gentle 3 day tour staying in the same hotel for both nights. It's an easy but still very enjoyable tour for all levels of riders. It's the first one of the year to Rutland. It's a great tour, or a relaxed practice.
Cost for rooms £260/£280
15 spaces available.
Day 1-180 miles, Day 2-138 miles, Day 3-180 miles

Wales

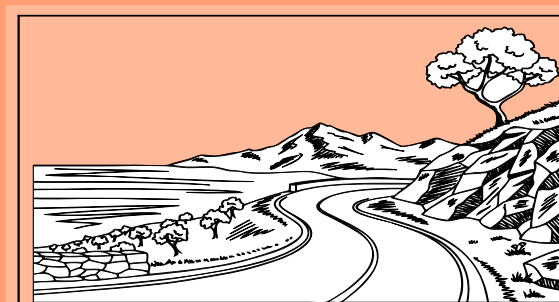
June 2nd to 6th
Mid week 5 Day Tour
 A medium level tour around the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia. 2 nights in each hotel, total of 1000 miles. Leaving from Paddock Wood and returning via the M25 through Essex. The scenery and stops are great.
10 Space available. £660

Yorkshire Dales and Moors
June 20th to 23rd
4 Day tour

4 Day tour
A great ride up to Yorkshire,
in the middle of the country.
A Day around the Dales and a
day around the Moors.
15 Spaces available.
Single occupancy £450

Southern Scotland
July 19th to 26th
8 Day Tour

8 Day Tour
A medium level tour around the Southern Scotland and Northern England. If you have never been to Southern



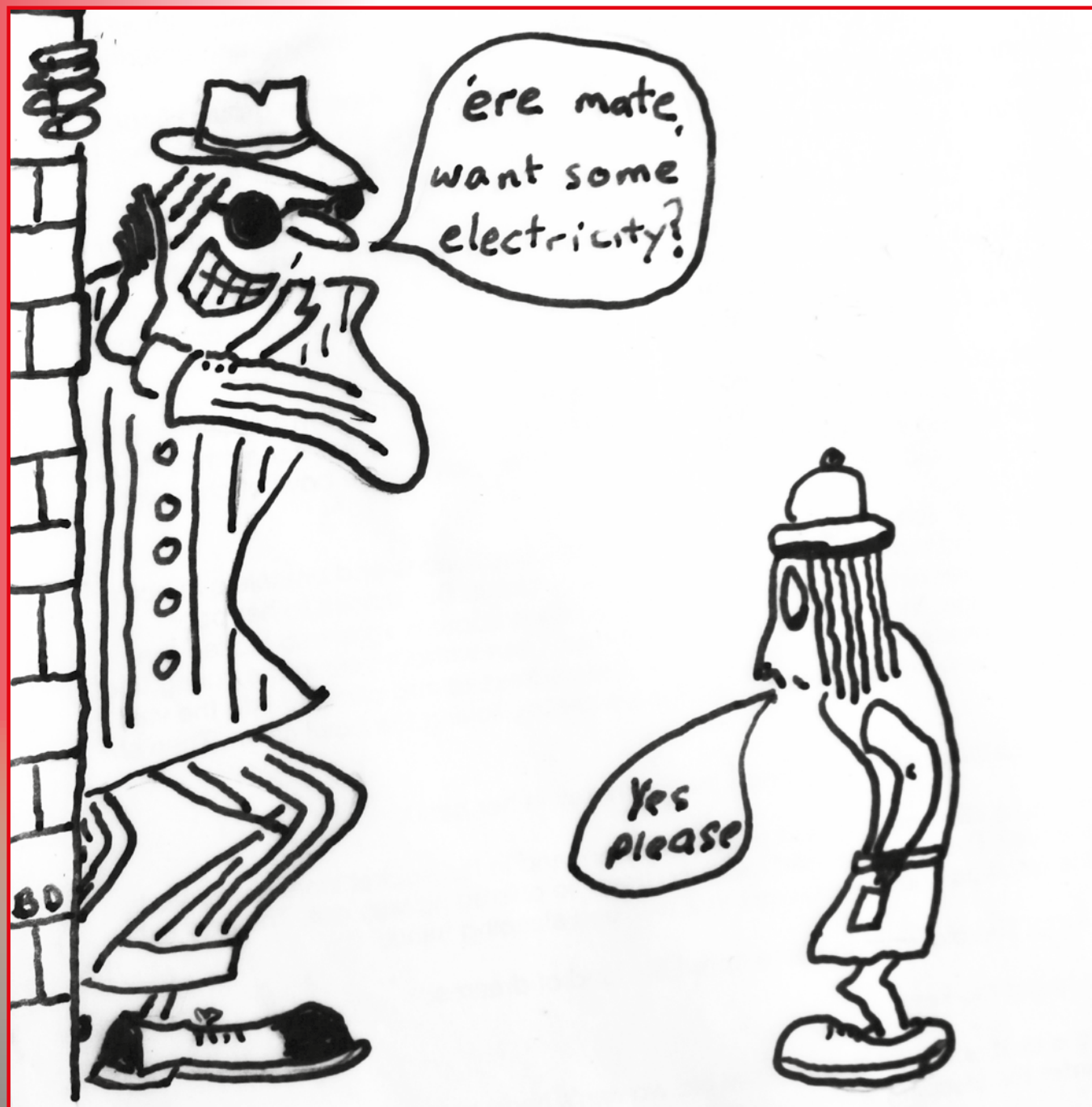
MotoRoadTriP

Scotland its an absolutely great 1700-mile tour of which only 200 miles on the motorway. There is an option to go into Beamish Living Museum, great sweeping roads, empty most of the time, great cafés, wonderful views, what is not to like. 10 spaces available. Single £— Double £— includes access to Beamish Museum. Awaiting confirmation of prices

Rutland Water
August 23rd to 25th
(Bank Holiday)
Rutland Water is a gentle 3 day tour staying in the same hotel for both nights. It's an easy but still very enjoyable for all. It's the last one of the year.
Cost for rooms £260/£280
24 space available.
Day 1-180 miles, Day 2-138 miles, Day 3-180 miles

I will be running other trips during the year, please see the website for further details and availability

www.motoroadtrip.co.uk 07786 592845 steveriches12@gmail.com



it. What a stupid and completely unnecessary complication that is. Why can't we be allowed to see the wretched stuff? Another mystifying thing is that some motorbikes actually make their own electricity. I know it sounds daft, but they do. No, I promise you, they do. They don't need batteries; they make the stuff as they go along. My first motorbike in 1955 was an ex-WD 125cc Royal Enfield Flying Flea that made its own electricity from nothing, just like that. I've no idea how it happened, but one minute there was empty air and the next minute there was mysteriously air

with a tiny bit of electricity in it... sometimes. Today I've got a 1970 250cc Montesa Scorpion enduro bike that makes its own electricity too. I have absolutely no idea how it does it. It just does. I assume that it condenses and capacitates and diodes away until magically electricity happens. And all of that would be fine if all I had to do was pour in the visible fuel and leave the invisible electrical side of the job to the machine itself to look after, but that doesn't happen. The sodding motorbike can make electricity out of thin air but, on a whim, it can equally well choose not to make any at

all, and because you can't see the wretched stuff you don't know whether it's making any today or not. Then there are the even worse times when it goes to all the trouble of making its own electricity but carelessly manages to lose track of it before delivering it to the spark plug. When you 'lose' petrol it's obvious, because it flows out of a leak that you are able to identify and repair. But seeing leaking electricity? No chance. It's just not there. Perhaps it's not really leaking at all, perhaps it was never there in the first place. Who knows? Or perhaps it's just gone somewhere

else, or perhaps it is there but at the wrong time. How do you know?

Being there at exactly the right time is an important part of 'motorbike electricity's' life and it involves something called 'timing', which is another facet of the 'free-masonry' world of those who understand motorbike electricity and who want to keep the rest of us in the dark – literally.

In all this hunting for invisible electricity you inevitably get sucked into the time-honoured ritual of 'cleaning the points' and the equally time-honoured and equally time-wasting performance of 'checking the gap' of the points and plug. After that, and if you are not very careful, you can quickly get drawn into the world of the multi-meter, which you absolutely must try to avoid at all costs; it is highly addictive and you will become a helpless, gibbering wreck, forever sitting beside your silent engine, day and

night, stabbing wildly at various electrical components with the multi-meter terminals. Using a multi-meter is a very dark art; it's like shining a cricket ball for a Test bowler. Before you know it, you will be watching endless YouTube multi-meter videos, and you will be on friendly terms with ridiculous words like 'ohms' and 'continuance', and none of these false gods will help you find your lost electricity. At this point your life will be spiralling downwards at terrifying speed to a deep hell where you will share your misery with thousands of other lost, electricity-lacking souls on forums around the world. Such will be your misery you will even contemplate travelling by car!

And then, on one magical, uplifting, sunlit day, for absolutely no apparent reason, right out of the blue, and just as you are about to slit your wrists, 'motorbike electricity' will suddenly and inexplicably re-appear. Ta-da!

And it will deliver sparks to the right places at exactly the right time. Joy will be unconfined, and the carburettor will rejoice as it at last sees its fuelling labours properly rewarded when the engine bursts into glorious roaring life. You will laugh; you will dance; you will drink celebratory champagne, and you will make far-reaching plans believing that from now on there will be a never-ending supply of 'motorbike electricity'.

Well, enjoy it while you can is my advice, because, based on a lifetime of dealing with 'motorbike electricity', I can tell you not to trust the evil sod. Don't make any plans for the day after tomorrow and none at all that involves riding a distance greater than 10 miles. Just enjoy the fleeting unexpected moment, and remember that chainsaws, strimmers and mowers use 'motorbike electricity' too.

NF



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FRIGHTENING SPEED LIMITS

Not all signs are as clear as this

I was bowling along the other day at 32 mph in the middle of open countryside on a dead straight road where I could see for perhaps half a mile, and I thought this is daft, why am I doing this? Well, of course, I was doing it because I was in a 30mph limit, but it set me thinking: why do we obey speed limits? It's certainly not because they are sensible limits.

My observation is that most of us drive up to the limit most of the time, which suggests that most of us would very often be riding faster if we were allowed to. Yet, it is also the case that if the limit is, say, 30, we sometimes go more slowly than that. In other words, we exercise some judgement about what is a safe speed or the 'right' speed. In certain circumstances; we ignore the fact that

we could legally travel at 30mph and instead we ride at, say, 22mph because that's what conditions dictate. The key words are, 'exercise some judgement'. We are capable of doing that. Everyone is. Although, obviously we need to have some official speed limits to enforce a level of 'good judgement' on everyone, and rightly so.

However, I recently started asking myself why I was riding or driving at certain speeds and I came to the conclusion that for almost all of the time I was just obeying the speed limit out of fear; fear that I would be fined and pick up licence points if I was caught breaking the posted speed limit. Obeying the speed limit had got nothing to do with its being a sensible or 'correct' limit, it was only my fear that if I were caught exceeding it, I would be



A narrow national limit side road about to enter an 'A' road with a 50mph limit. The 50 limit sign is not visible no matter how hard someone is looking. The 50 faces into the field beside the road.

punished in some way, and if I broke it frequently, I could lose my licence.

When you are riding on roads you know none of this really matters, you don't think about it because you know what the speed limits are and you automatically, unconsciously ride to them. It requires no thought and doesn't detract from your road behaviour and you don't have to waste concentration and attention on wondering what speed you should not be exceeding. You know what it is from regular use. You may not think it a wise, sensible or justified limit, but it is what it is, and that's that. You know it and you don't have to think about it. However, we are not always riding on roads that we know and then we do have to think about it all of the time, and that's when the problems arise.

Left to my own judgement when riding on strange roads, I believe I am perfectly capable of deciding what a reasonable speed is for me, in most conditions. What I certainly don't need to be doing is wondering whether I am in a 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 or 70mph limit. I admit that I am unlikely to be thinking I am in a 50mph limit when I am actually in a 20 limit, but being unsure whether the limit is 30 or 40, or whether it's 40 or 50 is not an uncommon feeling on roads that I don't know. And don't bother to tell me that I should have been looking for limit signs; I know that. My point is that on strange roads I shouldn't be wondering what the limit is and whether I have seen the sign. I should be deciding for myself, within reason, what speed I should be riding at. Nor should I be spending so much time looking at the speedo: within reason I should be judging the speed at which I ride or drive, and



The car in this picture has just entered a 40mph limit, not that he'd know it, and it could just as easily be a 50 zone or national limit.

whether I see a limit sign or not I should be able to assess what the likely limit is based on experience. However, I can't do that because we have such a ridiculous and bewildering range of unnecessary limits that are inconsistently applied. On one stretch of open country road I could be in a 30 limit and on another very similar stretch I could easily be in a 40, maybe a 50 or even in a national limit. How do I know which of these limits is in operation? Obviously, the limit signs will tell me, if I see them, and that's a separate problem: if I see them.



These hidden signs should be telling drivers that they are entering a 40mph zone, but it could easily be a 50 or even a national limit.





GS STABILITY PROBLEM OVERCOME

In last November's issue of Riders there was a request from KAMG Honorary Life Member Brenda Vickery, who had been forced to sell her bike and give up riding. She said that although she had to give up riding herself, she still had all her gear and would love to "hold the back down" for anyone who had a vacant pillion seat. As luck would have it John Lemon had a lively back end on Saturday Aug 2nd and it was the work of seconds to get Brenda aboard to stabilise the job. Brenda was helped aboard the Lemon GS by Kevin and Pauline Chapman and the mini convoy set off for Rye.

Brenda said that she was able to see over John's shoulder and "I was really riding the bike," she said. "I didn't look around me, I was in the ride, and we ended up at my favourite place, Rye Harbour, for a bite to eat and a leg stretch. On the way home we took some roads I'd never ridden before. Thanks for giving me a wonderful time. It was just super being free with the wind in my face. I will be forever grateful, and hope this may not be the last time!"

Well, Brenda, you never know.



Well, why wouldn't I see them? They are there, you say, and it's the job of anyone considering themselves to be a competent rider or driver to look for them and take note of them. But that reinforces my point: I think that we are required to spend too much of our time and use up too much of the reserves in our concentration bank looking for this basic information that should be obvious. (It is in France.) It shouldn't be necessary, when riding on strange roads, to be perpetually wondering what the speed limit is. It should be obvious, but it isn't. We should have a pretty accurate feeling for what the speed limit is based on our experience of similar roads elsewhere.

Why do we need 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 mph limits? Why do we need anything more than, say, a 30mph and a national limit? Is it because our roads today are policed by cameras rather than by policemen? And if we are going to have this myriad of different limits,

could they at least be applied with some consistency? If I am riding on a road that is completely unknown to me I should, based on my road experience, have a fairly good sense of what the limit is, whether I have seen the signs or not, but I can't have that sense because the sort of road that in one place is 40 can easily be a 50 or a 30 elsewhere. Apart from the obvious stupidity of a system like that and its attendant dangers, I could innocently pick up undeserved licence points and fines, which could make a big difference to my life and to my insurance cover.

When riding on strange roads, when my eyes should be on the road, I spend too much time checking my speed, not for safety reasons, but simply because I'm afraid not to, and that's daft.

NF



Brenda 45 years ago at one of the first KAMG gatherings

BIKING BITES

It's some time since we had a 'Biking Bites' column in the magazine and this one may surprise you. You will think that the old fool has finally gone off his trolley. Well, that's possible, but I'll press on anyway.

The other day The Lady Pillion and I rode to Rochester Cathedral. I must admit that we are not frequent visitors and on this occasion we had not come for any pious purpose, rather we had come specifically to see an aeroplane. *A full-size aeroplane that was on display in the nave of the cathedral.* I guess that it's not often that an aeroplane gets displayed in any church let alone displayed as the star of a show inside a socking great cathedral. Yet that is exactly what has happened at Rochester, as you may have seen on TV news.

The aeroplane in question was a Short Scion that was built in Rochester in 1937 at the Short Brothers' factory

on The Esplanade beside the Medway. Today, The Esplanade is a posh riverside drive of smart apartments overlooking equally smart marinas housing even smarter boats, but, as some of you will know, it was once a hive of dirty, heavy, industrial activity. It's difficult to imagine now, yet it was where Blaw Knox bulldozers were made and exported all over the world, and it was where Shorts built their enormous seaplanes like the huge wartime Sunderland and the post war British Empire flying boats that were the first of the truly international long-haul passenger aircraft. The concrete ramp from where these monsters were launched, and which ran down from the factory to the Medway, is still there intruding into the gleaming marina landscape, and it is the only sign that one of Britain's war-time aircraft factories ever existed right in the middle of Rochester. Believe it or not, Kent was the cradle of world aviation, and the original Shorts



This is not your average biker caff, which is the entire point



This pathetic picture doesn't do justice to this truly majestic doorstep egg mayonnaise sandwich. I should have added a tomato for a bit of colour

factory on the Isle of Sheppey at Eastchurch, was the very first aircraft factory anywhere in the world!

Sorry to get carried away there for a moment, I know you are wondering when and where the 'bite' bit in the headline takes place: well, surprisingly, it too takes place in the cathedral, because in the crypt under the cathedral there is a very good bitery. Not the first destination you'd think of for a ride-out, I know, and Rochester High Street is already full of places to buy food and drink so why, you ask, would you want to drink coffee in a very big church? The answer is that the High Street lot are either ridiculously twee or they are dull and ordinary, whereas the crypt at the cathedral is extraordinary. The sandwiches – ah, the doorstep sandwiches – are lush; the cakes are, like cakes should be, they are soft, sweet and delicious, and the coffee is good. What more can I say? What more could you want? And when we were there, we were not the only ones in Rukkas and carrying crash helmets.



Certainly not your average biker caff.

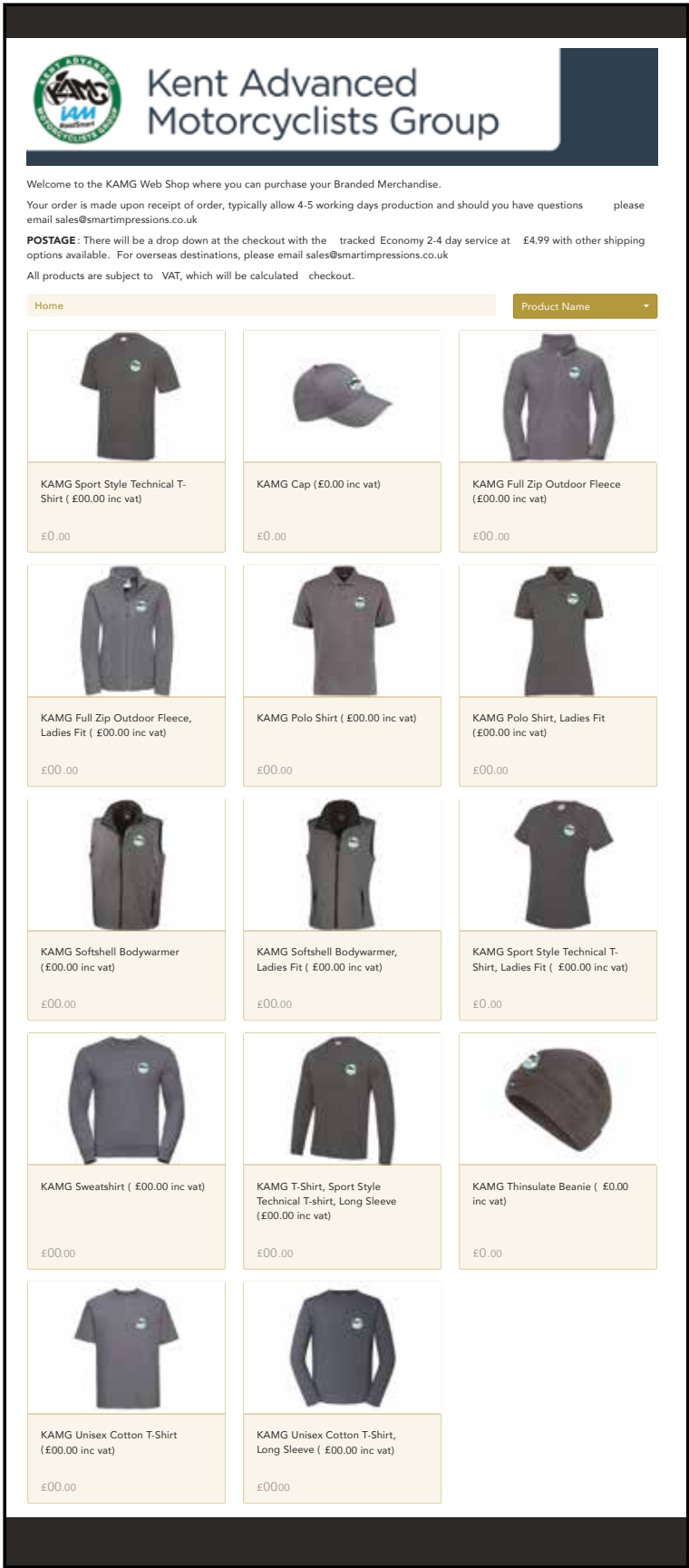
If you find yourself looking for a different destination for a ride, or perhaps even an observing debrief, you may not have thought of visiting a cathedral, but with or without aeroplanes in the nave, Rochester cathedral is worth a trip and the café in the crypt is a bonus that really surprised me. Admission to the cathedral is free, unlike

most other cathedrals, which is another bonus. If you are lucky enough to read this in time you could even still have a chance to see the plane; it's there until Sunday 31st of August, but a biking bite in the crypt will be just as worth it any time after that.

NF

KAMG MERCHANDISE

is here now . . .



There is a big range of excellent stuff including fleeces, bodywarmers, sweat-shirts, polo shirts, beanie hats, caps and, of course, T shirts – including 100% cotton, long sleeve T shirts. How about that? Everything comes in a wide range of sizes ranging from XS to 4XL, and in ladies versions too. And everything is branded with a choice of two KAMG logos. How about that, again!

RIDERS' RANTS

Geoff Curtis is cross again

Recently I discovered that some small screws had gone missing from the panels on my bike, and so I rode over to Laguna in Maidstone, where (being the somewhat old-fashioned fool that I am) I expected them simply to fetch a box and count out the quantity that I wished to buy, but oh no – they don't F*#!X### stock them! Ridiculous. Do they never lode one in their workshop?

They assured me they could order just the five I wanted (to have some spares) and it would take a couple of days to get them, and then a couple of days more to post them on to me. OK, fine.

Two weeks later I rang to chase up my order to find that they had the screws but had just not got around

to posting them to me. Surely it's not too difficult to receive goods and determine who they're for and send them on?

Later a package arrived and inside the padded envelope (padded presumably to ensure that the solid alloy screws didn't break in transit) there was a plastic bag, and inside that there were five more smaller plastic bags, each one containing one screw. Plastic waste – what's that?

[This story has been edited. The original version of this little episode was unprintable, but I think you get the gist. Ed.]

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IDCAM

INTRODUCTORY DAY COURSE IN ADVANCED MOTORCYCLING

2025 Dates

- Sept 20th
- Oct 18th
- Nov 15th



Our IDCAM is held at the Kent Fire and Rescue Road Safety facility in Marconi Way, Rochester, ME1 2XQ. If you wish to attend, please register your interest via the calendar on Tracker. Attendees are asked to arrive at 08.45 for a prompt 09:00 start. The morning session consists of a presentation about IAM RoadSmart, about KAMG and the aims of the course, and how to check that both the rider and motorcycle are fit for the road. This is followed by a coffee break.

The second presentation is all about the system of motorcycle control and, if time permits, a *Highway Code* quiz. The morning session will finish at approximately 12:15.

Please note that lunch is not provided. You may bring along your lunch or, if you wish, your allocated Observer can take you to a local café.



The afternoon session consists of an observed ride with a National Observer, and includes a pre-ride briefing and post ride debrief. The finish point is at a mutually agreed location that is usually closer to home than the start. The afternoon session lasts around two and a half hours.

If you would like to attend as an Associate, please contact associates@kamg.org.uk.

MACHINE CONTROL DAY

Our machine control days are organised by David Austen. If you have not yet signed up then do it now – simply log on to Tracker and register your participation or contact email below:

mcd@kamg.org.uk

Held at: Car Park D, Ebbsfleet Station,
International Way, Gravesend, Kent DA10 1EB

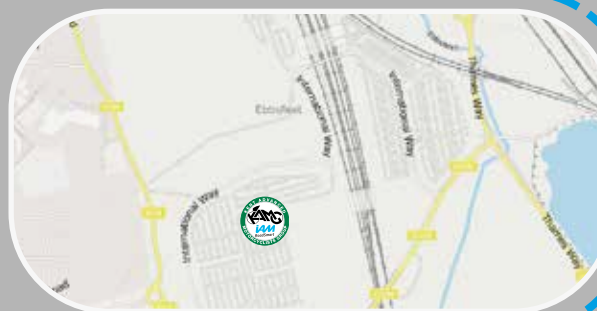
2025 Dates

Sat Sept 13th

Non-KAMG members will be asked for a small fee of £10.00 contributing to the running costs.

Arrival time: 08:45 for 09:00 start

Finish Time: approx 13:00 Hrs



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