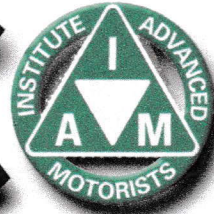


Intercom



THE MAGAZINE FOR WEY VALLEY ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS

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Tuktoyaktuk

Never Forget

Sound Advice

From Good to Great

A Necessary Evil




WVAM **iam**
RoadSmart



Rapid Training

Olie Lawson

Olie went on a Rapid Training Day in April and had a great day out. Here he gives us an insight into what Rapid Training provides.

For those of you who are time-pressed or unsure whether reading this article is a good use of your valuable time, let me give you the executive summary. Spending five hours receiving one-on-one tuition from a serving National Crime Agency Class 1 surveillance rider is an undeniably excellent way to spend a day!

You've spent lockdown avoiding boredom by gradually and possibly even surreptitiously working your way through the long list of bike mods...

You know what it's like. You've spent lockdown avoiding boredom by gradually and possibly even surreptitiously working your way through the long list of bike mods that you've had your eye on but never had time to worry about. You've literally just finished crossing the last item off your list when your significant other asks you over breakfast what you'd like for your birthday. "Birthday?" you cry in panic, "Sh**", I haven't forgotten yours again, have I? Oh, MY birthday? Err... no... nothing I really need at the moment thanks love (silent curse)... I'll have to have a think".

However, this year, my insurers, Bennetts, came to my rescue with an excellently timed Rewards email. They offered fifty per cent off the usual price of a bespoke training ride with Rapid Training, a company offering road and track-based training from current and former

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Police Class 1 riders. As a test-ready Associate (my test is now on 17th May), this seemed like an excellent opportunity for some intensive and valuable training in the run-up to my test. My very kind wife duly obliged and paid the necessary. After chats with Paul, one of Rapid's Directors, and Mick, my assigned coach, my session was arranged for the possibly inauspicious day of 1st April.

So it was that, after the school run, I jumped on board my now-extensively (don't tell my wife) farkled BMW R1250RS for the half-hour run down the A31 to the BP garage in Alton where Mick and I were meeting. The weather was fair, with patchy cloud and sunshine, and around 15°F – pretty perfect, really. Self-evidently meeting an operational police officer demanded punctuality, and thankfully, in a break from personal tradition (sorry, Gavin), I arrived a couple of minutes early.

Spotting another rider at the far end of the garage wearing a logo'd jacket, I managed, despite some nerves, to pull up next to him in a reasonably smooth and controlled manner and, above all, without dropping the bike. Mick very quickly put me at my ease however, and we had a good chat for about half an hour discussing what I was hoping to take away from the course (better cornering lines and improved smoothness through better observation) and what my longer-term riding objectives were.

Thankfully, most of my recent riding had been on WVAM Observed and Associate rides, so I was reasonably confident of not embarrassing myself.

Mick also gave me a bit of information about himself. He started riding in 1977, joined the Met in '79, and became a motorcycle traffic officer shortly after that. Having become a Class 1 rider, he then switched to Thames Valley Police, bizarrely had to requalify, and eventually left traffic policing to become a surveillance rider. As a surveillance rider, he was first with Thames Valley and then latterly with the SOCA and now the National Crime Agency. He is still serving with them but retires in September and has recently joined Rapid part-time intending to joining them full-time in due course. 'Nuff said.

Set against this was my own (in)considerable experience. I passed my direct access course in June 2019, commuted to London in almost all weathers for about nine months until Covid hit. Since then, I've probably ridden a total of around two thousand miles. Thankfully, most of my recent riding had been on WVAM Observed and Associate rides, so I was reasonably confident of not embarrassing myself. I could almost hear my By Appointment Observer and your esteemed Editor, Gavin Caddick, telling me I'd better bloody not or there would be hell to pay.

However, it was clear I was not fit to light a candle for Mick, let alone hold it. You would never have thought that from Mick's faultlessly friendly and approachable demeanour. After a summary of the run we were going to do that day, we mounted up for a forty-five minute "get to know you" ride where Mick would observe my riding and note any issues. Before getting underway, Mick said that while it was necessary to remain legal, particularly in 30 and 40 mph sections, he would be happy for me to look to make progress, mainly where national speed limits applied. The critical thing, as ever, was to remain safe. I was also outfitted with a Bluetooth earpiece as disappointingly getting our respective Cardo (mine) and Sena (his) headsets to talk proved to be too much of a mission. So much for the manufacturers' claims of cross-platform compatibility...

Our route took us out of Alton on the new Odiham Road towards South Warnborough and Odiham. Once we got out of Alton, the road was fast and

flowing; making our way through Golden Pot and South Warnborough, we followed the road to Odiham and North Warnborough. We then turned right and then left towards the M3 before turning left towards Greywell and Up Nately (you have to love English place-names). At Greywell, we encountered the first of many unusual vehicles, hereafter called a "UV". A tractor with an entire spraying rig; thankfully, it was coming the other way, so it was soon behind us. A lovely stretch of twisty national followed, interspersed with 30 mph sections through villages.



Mick chills while I try to show off

At Cliddesden, we stopped for a debrief. Nervously, I waited as Mick dismounted and wandered over. It transpired I had been perhaps a little eager to show I had taken the concept of making progress to heart. Mick recommended a slightly more relaxed approach, taking ten per cent off progress to allow an early, detailed, and continuous assessment of my ride. We had a chuckle about the fact that I had been keen not to put my feet down and to show off my slow control riding while waiting for the aforementioned tractor to come past. Consequently, I needed to steer out from behind a parked car. In contrast, he had calmly sat well back with his foot down and waited in comfort. I didn't put my feet down, though.

He also picked up on an approach to a junction where he felt my observations had let me down slightly. I could have backed off the throttle earlier and thus achieved a safe speed to negotiate the hazard using acceleration sense and with less brake:



Don't you dare...



Careful...

After that, Mick took the lead and gave me the benefit of a demo ride with commentary to show me how it ought to be done. He did warn me that some of his positioning to the offside might be a little more adventurous than recommended at my riding level. Still, whenever he took such a position, it was always clear that it was both safe and beneficial in terms of view. Mick was, of course, smoothness personified, so much so that he barely touched the brakes; I have the entire section on video, though sadly without his commentary. We also passed UV No. 2 – which I think was an enormous eight-wheeler crane and attendant queue of traffic, again thankfully going the other way.

At Preston Candover, Mick waved me past, and it was back to me leading along a stretch of country road with a national limit. There were lots of good opportunities to practice observations with

It transpired I had been perhaps a little eager to show I had taken the concept of making progress to heart.

hedgerows and trees as visual cues. I tried to take Mick's earlier comments to heart; well, I'd have been an idiot not to, really.



I felt that some of Mick's smoothness during the section he led had rubbed off, and my riding improved. When we stopped at the Watercross line station at New Alresford, Mick said the difference was noticeable. While not quite qualifying as a UV, we were then interrupted for about five minutes by a colourful, overly chatty, and certainly unusual lady passer-by. She knew a surprising amount about bikes but would not take the hint that perhaps we'd like to get back to riding.

After a quick "comfort break", we resumed the ride, heading to Cheriton and then on to Winchester on the sinuous A272.



The Army Driver thought more of my overtake than Mick

We picked up a line of vehicles following UV No. 3, a slow-moving army recovery lorry, but after a long section of double white lines, we were able to get past with a series of overtakes. I had to drop in behind the army lorry itself for a while, though, and wait for a clear opportunity to pass, picking up a thumbs up from the Army lorry on the way past.

Mick later and rightly picked me up for clipping that solid white line after the overtake – I'll try to avoid that on the test.

After a stretch of dual carriageway, we re-joined the A272 towards Salisbury before taking the enjoyable B3420. I slightly goofed an admittedly sharp left, unhelpfully getting neutral on the approach (thanks quick shifter...), passed UV No. 4, a horse-drawn cart, and then enjoyed a pleasant run through nationals overtaking a queue of traffic behind a tanker into and through Leckford. We stopped for a debrief in Stockbridge, where Mick gave me some helpful feedback, particularly on my Army Lorry pass. He suggested that I would have been better off maintaining my safety triangle, dropping back and to the near side for better visibility on the long right-hander, all entirely fair. It wasn't all bad, though, as Mick did compliment me on my positioning and timing for a similar overtake on a box van coming out of Leckford, which put a smile on my face.

We then rode a nice fast loop from Stockbridge to Middle Wallop and Nether Wallop (more great place-names), before heading out of Stockbridge to King's Somborne, where Mick organised a photo op as we forded a stream:



Di, I'm an RS, not a GS!

That was fun; a sharpish downhill right caught me out a little, and I had to use some additional lean, but when we stopped, Mick told me that was my best corner, so I'll have to put that into practice a bit more!

We then travelled back through Winchester and out on the B3035 Morestead Road, had a quick, further short debrief and windblown photo stop.



Windblown photo stop

Mick then set me the challenge of riding our last section on acceleration sense alone, only using the brakes if necessary. That was fun; a sharpish downhill right caught me out a little, and I had to use some additional lean, but when we stopped,

Mick told me that was my best corner, so I'll have to put that into practice a bit more! We then rode to our final stop at the BP at Loomies, where we would part ways after a refuel for both bike and riders, a chat, and a last photo op.

I can honestly say that was my best day on a bike so far. The chosen roads were great (definitely needs to be revisited), and Mick was patient and vastly experienced. A great coach, hitting upon just the right mix of fun and seriousness means that I both learned loads and enjoyed myself. I wish we'd been able to get our comms to work, but I could at least hear Mick's observations throughout on the Bluetooth earpiece.

So, what did I learn? Positioning on right-handers can be improved – Mick suggested enlarging my comfort zone for nearside positioning in 30 and 40 mph zones. He encouraged me to combine that positioning with the slow in – fast out approach to cornering for increased visibility and safety, avoiding any mid-corner corrections. Keeping twenty per cent in reserve and not being rushed was vital, but he did encourage me to overtake in a sprightlier fashion, the guiding principle being to move quickly past the vehicle you are overtaking once you have started to overtake (Highway Code Rule 163). I'm now actively contemplating doing Rapid's Level 2 Bikemaster Course, towards which my half-day session will count if my test goes well. Having never been on track, I think the combination of track and road tuition offered on that course will



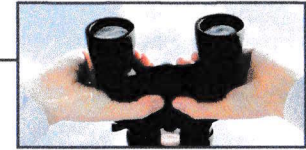
At Loomies, the end of a great ride

be both fantastic fun and very beneficial. As it is a reasonable investment, I don't think suggesting that as my next birthday present will be quite so warmly received!...

Following the course, I received a three-page report by email summarising Mick's points made throughout the day, highlighting

some areas to work on and making further recommendations. That's been a really useful aide-memoire in reviewing the day and a further example of the professional approach Rapid have to training. If anyone has any questions about the day, please drop me a line via the forum. I'm only too pleased to share my thoughts. Happy riding!

From Good to Great... ...Becoming an Observer



Neil Watson



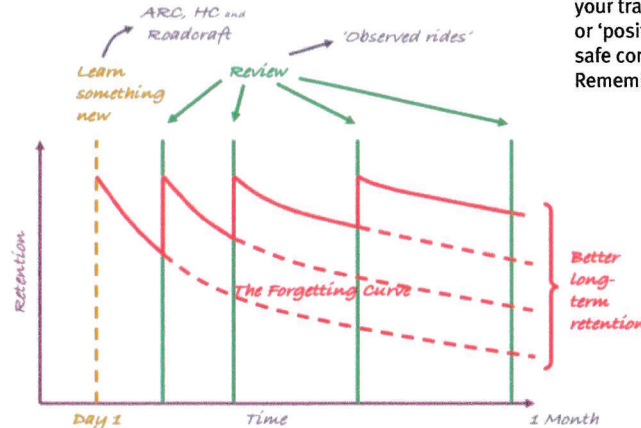
80%

Hermann Ebbinghaus 1885

80% gone in 4 weeks

It's a well-known fact that 80% of the stuff we learn evaporates within 28 days. In fact, some theories suggest as much as 70% goes within the first 24 hours. Scary!

The Forgetting Curve.



Use it or lose it!

And it's happening to us all the time unless we find ways to plug the leaking bucket.

You've opted to develop your riding skills, investing significant time and money to become an advanced rider, and you've worked hard to get to your green badge. Congratulations, you've passed!

But within a month, 80% of the skills you've developed may have disappeared! You could be left with just a few bits and pieces, those articles of knowledge that resonated with you during your training. It could be 'positioning' or 'positive steering', the 'five rules to safe cornering' or maybe just 'IPSGA'. Remember that?

Six months down the line will you be able to put all the pieces together and hand on heart say you're still an advanced rider?

What you need is a mechanism for continuously retrieving and using the information you've assimilated. You need a routine that refreshes your memory regularly

You can test this for yourself. Say you meet someone for the first time that you want to keep in touch with. They give you their name and reinforce this by giving you a business card or note. You put the card in your wallet and move on, but could you recall the person's name the next day without reference to the card. Probably not!

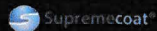
But don't worry, that's not just you. It's all of us. And it's not just advanced riding, it's life!

and provides a foundation for continued development. The IAM recognises this and offers several activities to help, such as skills days, the Fellowship program and training to become a MASTER!

'Advanced' riding is not about learning by rote; it's about developing a set of skills that you have at your fingertips ready to be deployed as and when the situation requires them. It's not just about reading the books; it's about



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