

HBAM General News

March saw some really nice weather, to get the HBAM Challenge off to a flying start. Some good challenge pictures have been submitted, which can be seen later in the newsletter.

Three rideouts also took place, as the riding season gets going again. The first, an AMR ride, starting at Baldock Services, went to Knead Food, in Braintree. It was led by Josh, with Dave E as TEC and with a mix of 20+ Associate and GBH riders.



The second rideout was a GBH ride from Bourne End Services to The Old Shed in Charlbury, led by Arif, on his first ride as Ride Leader, with Dan M as TEC, 19 GBH riders joined the ride. Surprisingly, we only got wet on the way home!!



The third rideout was a short AMR ride, starting at the Dunstable Flying Club. The ride went to Marston Moretaine, for the Milton Keynes Advanced Motorcyclist (MKAM) 'Bluetooth and Route Planning' event, at the invitation of MKAM. The ride leader was Roy D with Alan Y TEC.



HBAM General News

March also saw the first Slow riding course of 2025, held at the Herts Joint Emergency Services Academy in Stevenage, with a mix of 11 HBAM Associates and GBH members. We also extended an invitation to Cambridge AM and two CAM members joined in to see how the training was set up.

Roy Dennis attend the event and spent the morning taking some great photos. Most are posted on our Facebook group, with a few shown below. Thanks to Roy Brown, Graham Bass, Matt Howard and Russell Wenman for running the course



HBAM Slow Riding courses – 2025

The remaining 2025 course dates are noted below and can be booked on Ticket Tailor using the link. The course fee will be £20 for 2025, which includes a donation to the Fire Fighters Charity.

The courses will be held at the Longfield FRS Training centre, Stevenage.

W3W: ///aura.line.losses.

To register: <https://buytickets.at/hbamtraining/1476064>

Saturday 21st June 2025

Saturday 18th October 2025

Note: This course is available to any member and is a recommended addition to the IAM Advanced Rider Course.

HBAM March Club Night

We had a fabulous turnout back at The Bennets Club, Harpenden. The evening included the following.

1. We had a presentation from Felicity Walker and Nathan from Herts Police on their accident investigation techniques and the statistics for our area.
2. We also presented an Observer '5' pin badge and certificate to Ian Harris.

HBAM Advanced Rider Test Passes in February

Congratulations to the following member(s) who recently passed their IAM ARC test.

Alexandru Toea – Observer Bryan Bowles

Bob Grinyer (F1rst) – Observer Peter Rowland

HBAM Membership Status

We welcomed the following new members in March.

John Elvidge (GBH Full Member) Graham Martin (Associate)

David Boyce (Associate) Stuart Hawes (GBH Full Member)

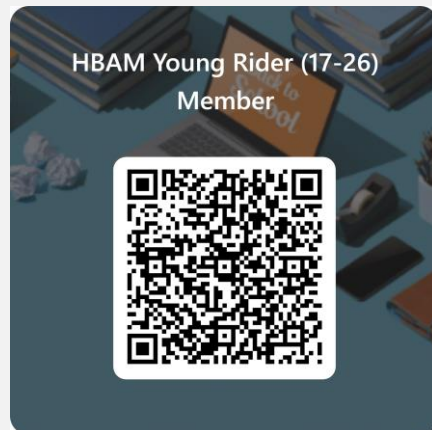
We currently have 50 associates in training and 480 members in total.

We have also introduced the HBAM Young Rider Scheme this month and welcome our first 2 members.

Dhillan Gajjar

Kade Mason-Smith

The HBAM Young Riders Scheme is aimed at new riders, between the ages of 17 and 26, who are working towards their DVSA full motorcycle Licence. The HBAM membership is free up until you either obtain your full unrestricted motorcycle licence, or reach the age of 26. If you have any friends, or relatives who are interested in joining the HBAM Young Rider Scheme, please ask them to scan the QR code and complete the form.



HBAM Observer Bluetooth Radio Communications

HBAM have invested in Bluetooth Intercom Radios for use between the Observer and the Associate during observed rides. The observers listed below have already completed the HBAM 'Radios Training' course and have been supplied with the Bluetooth equipment (or have their own). If you feel you would benefit from having radio comms during your observed rides, just ask your Observer, as we are running Observer radio courses throughout 2025. Observers can sign up for a radio course using the following link:

<https://buytickets.at/hbamtraining/1617804>

Peter Morgan (Obs)

Bryan Bowles (Obs)

Graham Bass (Obs)

Mark Lawrence (Obs)

Bruno Zago (Obs)

Tom Hyatt (Obs)

Peter Rowland (Obs)

John Brown (Obs)

Dave Edge (Obs)

Dave Dickens (Obs)

HBAM April 2025 Planned Rideouts, Tours and Events

HBAM April Club Night – ‘Meet the Examiners’ - Wed 9th April at 7.30pm.

For our HBAM April Club Night, we are at Moggerhanger Village Hall. The evening will be a 'Meet the Examiners' event. This event has proved very popular in the past and offers associates a good insight into what to expect on test day.

Both IAM examiners are also NOA's and Masters Mentors, so there will also be an opportunity for National Observers who want to know more about the assessment and anyone who is interested in doing Masters, to ask questions as well.

To make the evening work well, please send any questions you would like answered to Paul at chiefobstraining@hbam.org.uk, before the meeting.

A light buffet will be provided and refreshments will be available via the village hall bar.

Note: The April Club night is on the second Wednesday, due to hall availability.

‘Bedfordshire Fire Service Spring Start – Saturday 12th April

HBAM are supporting the upcoming Bedfordshire Fire Service Spring Start Up Road Safety Event on Saturday 12th April.

We will be there offering advice and information about HBAM and the IAM ARC, so why not come along to support and enjoy a nice rideout at the same time!



HBAM Associate Only Rideout to Silverstone – Sunday 13th April

This ride is to the Silverstone Café and return to Bourne End. Total distance is around 100 miles.

Refuel Café is open daily 10am to 4pm, to ticket holders and to members of the public.

With a range of hot and cold food items provided by our catering partner Graysons, our café is a family-friendly, relaxing spot for you to unwind and enjoy a quick snack or long lunch before continuing your exploration of the Museum.

<https://www.silverstonemuseum.co.uk/refuel-cafe/>

Bourne End Services start location

Start Time (Meet by) - 09.00

Depart - 09.30

RL – Mark Reddyhoff

TEC – Russell Wenman

The ride organiser has set a limit, so please register using the following link:

<https://buytickets.at/hbamrideouts/1515442>

HBAM April 2025 Planned Rideouts, Tours and Events

HBAM AMR Rideout to TTT Motorcycles – Sunday 13th April

This rideout to the TTT .motorcycle Village and Café is approximately 80 miles and will include the White Horse Motorcycle Show (£3 entry fee) which is on this day.

TTT Motorcycle Village in Sudbury opened in 2018 and has amounted over 100 motorcycles and hundreds of items of riding gear and clothing.

More details on the following Facebook link

<https://fb.me/e/6dhGjcV5q>

Baldock Services start location

Start Time (Meet by) - 09.00

Depart - 09.30

RL – Chris McFerran

TEC – Bernie McFarlane

The ride organiser has set a limit, so please register using the following link:

<https://buytickets.at/hbamrideouts/1515440>

HBAM GBH Rideout around the Bedford Loop – Sunday 20th April

This rideout is an approximately 170 miles loop around the Bedford area with lunch and refreshment stops.

Baldock Services start location

Start Time (Meet by) - 09.00

Depart - 09.30

RL – Ian Harrop

TEC – Bernie McFarlane

The ride organiser has set a limit, so please register using the following link:

<https://buytickets.at/hbamrideouts/1515441>

HBAM GBH Tour to the Lakes and Dales - Friday 2nd May – 5th May 2025

For the 2025 HBAM GBH Tour, we are going on a 4-day weekend to the Lakes and the Yorkshire Dales, starting Friday 2nd May to Monday 5th May.

This tour is now full and with several on the waiting list.

HBAM Future 2025 Planned Rideouts, Tours and Events

HBAM South Wales Associates Tour - Friday 23rd May – 25th May 2025

For the 2025, the HBAM SWAT will be heading for South Wales again, stopping in the Monmouth Premier Inn for two nights. Friday will be a ride to Monmouth, Saturday, a tour around South Wales, then travelling home on the Sunday.

The group is Associates only and will be limited to 20. This will be on a first come basis so don't think too long.

Note: The tour is still open for registration to HBAM members who were Associates after March 2024, irrespective of whether you have since passed your ARC test.

For further details and to register, please use the link below.

<https://buytickets.at/hbamrideouts/1513244>

HBAM CJ France & Belgium Tour - Tuesday 15th July – 19th July 2025

The Continental Jaunt is a five-day, four-night trip through Belgium and France, taking in Germany, France, and Belgium. Two nights will be in Liege, Belgium, and then two more in Charleville-Mezieres in France. The tour starts in the UK on Tuesday, July 15th and the return trip will leave the Charleville-Mezieres area on Saturday, July 19th.

This tour is now full and with several on the waiting list.

Sweet Lamb Adventure Bike Weekend – 17th October – 19th October 2025

Sweet Lamb is a motorcycling adventure playground, with over 6,500 acres of undulating land criss-crossed with varied tracks: muddy or gravelly, flat or steep, rocky or rutted, with some water crossings thrown in. Amanda Washbrook (HBAM) has been negotiating with Sweet Lamb to organise a group weekend, with accommodation available onsite, providing there are at least 10 people interested in joining the off-road weekend (max 12).

Amanda spent a weekend in the mud last year and her experience was the subject of the December newsletter 'Nice Bike Mate' feature.

The event is full, but you can add your name to the waitlist, using the link below:

<https://buytickets.at/hbamrideouts/1591043>

The registration link includes more details, so please check the details before registering your interest.

Note: This event is being organised as a 'Mates' ride and is not subject to IAM insurance coverage during the ride to and from Sweet Lamb, or during the off-road riding.

HBAM Facebook Group

Our Facebook Members Group continues to increase and we reach 314 members in March, however after removing a few members who haven't renewed their membership this year, we dropped back to 303. Still over the 300 though, which is great. If you are not currently in our Facebook group, please consider joining as it is a good source of HBAM information!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/917586291668116/>

HBAM Newsletter

April 2025



HBAM Ride Leader Training - Sunday 27th April 2025



Rich Malloy and Dan McQuoid (along with the help of few others) are training volunteers to become new Ride Leaders.

In order to make this training as real as possible for the new Ride Leaders we need volunteers to act as stooges - and that means we need you! 😊

We need Full members and any Observers (sorry no Associates) who are willing to take part in 4 short ride outs from and to The View, Welwyn.

On the day:

We ask the new Ride Leaders to give a pre-ride brief, followed by a short (20min) ride to and from The View where they demonstrate leading their ride as well as dropping off markers.

In order to make this as realistic as possible we could do with around 20+ volunteers, so that we can split the new Ride leaders into groups.

If you can help, please register using the link below and you will need to arrive by 8:45, as we plan to start at 9am - we will begin with a short briefing before the ride begins.

We will have a coffee break around 10:30(ish) and aim to finish by 12:30(ish).

If at any point you wish to drop out, you can. The aim of this is to provide as realistic training to our new ride leaders as possible.

The last few years we run this it has always been fun and relaxing training - and it's been great to see people who we've not seen over the winter.

Plus, it's a great excuse to get your bike out and to support the group and the new Ride Leaders who have volunteered their time to be trained up 😊

Sign up is via TicketTailor: <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/hbamrideouts/1513251>

Thanks
Richard & Dan

HBAM Look Lean Roll courses - 2025



The 2025 course dates are noted below and can be booked on Ticket Tailor using the link below. The course fee will be £20 for 2025. The course will be held at North Weald airfield.

W3W: ///nobody.bronze.leave

<https://buytickets.at/hbamtraining/1476058>

2025 Course Dates:

Sunday 27th April 2025

Sunday 11th May 2025

Sunday 6th July 2025

Sunday 21st September 2025

Note: This course is available to any member and is a recommended addition to the IAM Advance Rider Course.

Biker Down and BikeSafe events 2025.

HBAM are supporting both Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Services Biker Down and Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Police Bike Safe events throughout 2025, so keep a look out for us!

Biker Down provides some invaluable tips to help if you were riding your motorbike and came across another biker who'd had an accident?

To help Bedfordshire bikers know what to do if they do see a "biker down", Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is running free courses during the year for motorcyclists and motorcycle clubs in the county.

The Bedfordshire courses are held between 10am and 2pm at Shefford Community Fire Station on the dates noted below:

Saturday 5 April

Saturday 3 May

Saturday 7 June

Saturday 5 July

Saturday 2 August

Saturday 13 September

Saturday 11 October

Saturday 8 November

Anyone who would like more information or wanting to book a space on a course, should head to: [Bedfordshire BikerDown Link](#).

The Hertfordshire courses are held between at the Herts Joint Emergency Services Academy in Stevenage on the dates noted below:

Saturday 22nd March – FULL

Saturday 26th April – FULL

Saturday 17th May – FULL

Saturday 28th June - ONE place left

Saturday 12th July

Saturday 23rd August

Saturday 13th September

Saturday 18th October

Saturday 1st November

To apply please email bikerdown@hertfordshire.gov.uk, stating which course date you would like to attend.

[Beds Fire Biker Down Booking link](#) / [Herts Fire Biker Down Booking link](#)

[Beds BikeSafe Booking link](#) / [Herts BikeSafe Booking link](#)

HBAM Challenge 2025

HBAM Challenge 2025 Table Update				
Pos	Member	Location	Bonus	Points Total
1	Ben Waring	16/74	5/27	655
2	Amanda Washbrook	15/74	4/27	530
3	Bernie McFarlane	19/74	0/27	525
4	Darrell Watson	9/74	2/27	290
5	Roy Dennis	9/74	3/27	285
6	Rob Kelley	8/74	3/27	260
7	Steven Dean	7/74	4/27	255
8	David Hack	8/74	2/27	240
9	Graham Jenkins	8/74	1/27	220
10	Alan Clarke	7/74	2/27	215
10	Dave Hollins	7/74	2/27	215
12	Bob Grinyer	6/74	3/27	210
13	Peter Pearce	5/74	3/27	185
14	Paul Massey	6/74	1/27	170
15	Russell Wenman	5/74	2/27	165
16	Guy Haward	3/74	0/27	125
16	Rick Townsend	5/74	0/27	125
16	Charl Brits	5/74	0/27	125
19	Rick Mosser	3/74	1/27	120
20	Terry Elphick	4/74	0/27	100
21	Wendy Bloise	3/74	1/27	95
21	Alex Brind	3/74	1/27	95
23	Arif Ghazi	2/74	2/27	90
23	Richard Green	2/74	2/27	90
25	Gabor Szekeres	3/74	0/27	75
25	Ross Henderson	3/74	0/27	75
25	Mike Annetts (MKAM)	3/74	0/27	75
25	Chris Price	2/74	0/27	75
29	Steve Brind	2/74	1/27	70
30	Jonathan Moffat	2/74	0/27	50
30	Hilary Boyce	2/74	0/27	50
32	Sarah Wilson	1/74	1/27	45
33	Gary Cox	1/74	0/27	25
33	Jame Barrington	1/74	0/27	25
33	Nadia Cleaver	1/74	0/27	25
33	Hester Hopkins	1/74	0/27	25
33	David Boyce	1/74	0/27	25

The challenge started on Saturday 1st March and runs to the end of September 2025. The idea of the challenge is simply to encourage you to get out riding and to practice the skills picked up during the IAM Advance Rider Course.

So far, with only one month gone, you can see from the points table below, that the challenge is well underway!!

We currently have 69 riders registered for the HBAM Challenge. Registration will remain open throughout, so please just follow the link below to take part:

<https://buytickets.at/hbamrideouts/1526869>

You can also see this year's destinations, using the link below:

HBAM Challenge 2025

[HBAM Challenge 2025 Google Location Map](#)

Please remember though that there is no obligation to visit any of the locations and that you remain responsible for your own safety and for complying with the law on all rides.

For all location picture submissions, please send them, with the visit date etc, to: challenge@hbam.org.uk

Any initial questions, please contact Russell Wenman at: chair@hbam.org.uk

HBAM Challenge 2025 Locations.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Ace Cafe | 50 | Norfolk Tank Museum |
| 2 | Angel of the North | 51 | Oily Rag |
| 3 | Ardnamurchan point | 52 | Old Bull |
| 4 | Ashness Bridge | 53 | Original tea hut |
| 5 | Balmoral Castle Café | 54 | Owls Nest Tea Rooms |
| 6 | Beatles statue | 55 | Goodbrand & Ross Corgarff |
| 7 | Beatrix Potter Attraction | 56 | Pendennis Castle |
| 8 | Beryl Swain mural | 57 | Pendennis Motorcycle plaque |
| 9 | Bike Shed Café | 58 | Revved up café |
| 10 | Bikestop | 59 | Ribblehead Viaduct |
| 11 | Blackpool tower | 60 | Soe barn tempsford |
| 12 | Bovington tank museum | 61 | Springbank distillery |
| 13 | Bridego bridge great train robbery | 62 | Stonehenge. |
| 14 | Brighton Pier | 63 | Summer field miniature railway |
| 15 | Cafe Amigo | 64 | Swilcan bridge |
| 16 | Cambridge American cemetery | 65 | Tan hill inn |
| 17 | Cheddar Gorge | 66 | The English Electric Motor Co |
| 18 | Commando memorial Scotland | 67 | The Veloce Club |
| 19 | Dunsop bridge | 68 | The Victory Café |
| 20 | Eilean Donan Castle | 69 | Tintern Abbey |
| 21 | Emma's Café | 70 | Titanic Experience |
| 22 | Exercise Tiger Memorial | 71 | West blockhouse fort wales |
| 23 | Flamborough head lighthouse | 72 | Whalebone Arch Whitby |
| 24 | Flitwick Motorcycles | 73 | Whitewebbs museum of transport |
| 25 | Glen Café | 74 | Yellow brick road street sign |
| 26 | Glen Shee ski centre | | |
| 27 | Glenfinnan Viaduct | | |
| 28 | Goonhilly | | |
| 29 | Holly island causeway | | |
| 30 | Holme Moss summit | | |
| 31 | Hughenden Manor Map Rooms | | |
| 32 | Ilfracombe Quay | | |
| 33 | Jim Clark motorsport museum | | |
| 34 | Jimi Hendrix statue | | |
| 35 | Kelvedon hatch secret nuclear bunker | | |
| 36 | Lakeland motor museum Peak District | | |
| 37 | Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre | | |
| 38 | Loch Ness visitor centre | | |
| 39 | Locomotion Museum | | |
| 40 | Louis bleriot memorial | | |
| 41 | Lowestoft Ness Point | | |
| 42 | Lydford Gorge | | |
| 43 | Lynton Cliff Railway | | |
| 44 | MacCaig's Tower | | |
| 45 | Melford Hall | | |
| 46 | Menai Bridge | | |
| 47 | National memorial arboretum | | |
| 48 | National Museum of Flight | | |
| 49 | National Railway Museum | | |



April 2025



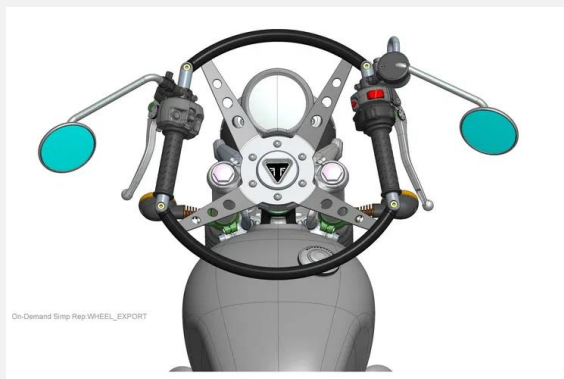
HBAM What's Around the Corner, to look forward too!!

This is a new section for this month's newsletter which includes a look at some up and coming ideas you can expect to see in the near future!

No.1 Triumph's HandleWheel

Triumph's HandleWheel replaces conventional handlebars and has been designed to make Triumph's motorcycles easier for car drivers to adapt to,' according to a release from the firm.

Optional Countersteer compensation gearing available for car drivers!!



No.2 BMW Motorrad introduce their xDrive Hybrid R1200GS

BMW Motorrad are about to reintroduce their reliable 1200 cc engine in the new two-wheel drive R1200GS 'xDrive Hybrid', which will use regenerative braking to power the front wheel and do away with one brake disc.



No.3 Kawasaki Developing 300 Horsepower Electric Sportbike

Due to a recent major technological breakthrough, the bike, dubbed the ZX-1EV, may soon be available in dealerships.



HBAM Newsletter

April 2025



HBAM Member External Benefits & Merchandise

Veloce Club Discount for HBAM Members

We are really pleased to let you know that Veloce Club are supporting HBAM members with a discount of 15%. This is available to members instore, or online with the code 'HBAM'.

[Veloce Club](#)

Infinity-BikeStop Discount for HBAM Members

We are pleased to confirm that following the acquisition Bike Stop/Infinity Motorcycles have confirmed their continued support with a 15% discount for HBAM and IAM members on full RRP items online and in-store at Bike Stop Stevenage.

Members can redeem this discount by showing proof of HBAM or IAM membership in-store or using the code HBAM15 online.

Please note that some exclusions apply and there is a minimum order value of £50 in place. Terms and conditions apply.

Adventure Drone Biker Tours - Discount for HBAM Members

Adventure Drone Biker Tours - 10% off Croatia tour prices for HBAM members, regardless of the motorcycle you choose to ride.

To qualify for the discount, you must be a member of the HBAM and the members only Facebook group.

Visit the website for further information: [Adventure Drone Biker Tours](#)

Flitwick Motorcycles - Discount for HBAM Members

We are really pleased to let you know that Flitwick Motorcycles are supporting HBAM members with a discount of 10% (excl. tyres). This is available to members instore with the code 'HBAM'.

Flitwick Motorcycles are a Premier Exclusive Yamaha motorcycle dealer located in the small town of Flitwick in Central Bedfordshire. Run by husband and wife partnership Steve and Carole Linsdell for over thirty-five years, there's not much that our friendly team don't know about Yamahas and bikes in general!

[Flitwick Motorcycles](#)

DS Roadcrafts and Tours - Discount for HBAM Members

DS Roadcraft and Tours – 10% off Scotland, IOM, Germany and Northern Europe tours and roadcraft training packages prices for HBAM members.

To qualify for the discount, you must be a member of HBAM.

Visit the website for further information: [DS Roadcraft Tours](#)

HBAM Member External Benefits & Merchandise

Not Just Travel - Discount for HBAM Members

Not Just Travel – offer Worldwide Holiday packages for HBAM members. Kate is a personal travel consultant, who can arrange any type of holiday, from a weekend getaway to an epic round the world trip. She works with specialist suppliers who can also create bespoke travel experiences for bikers, offering fully tailored trips that fit your preferences, whether it's a solo ride or a group tour. From accommodation and bike transport (or rental) to route planning, tour guides, back up vehicles etc.

All HBAM members will be able to claim a 10% discount on bike tours, or receive a £50pp discount on any other travel package (T's & C's apply).

To qualify for the discounts, you just need to provide your HBAM membership number. Visit the website for further information: [Kate Parkyn Not Just Travel](#).

Biketrac 3-Month Extended Cover for IAM Members

We are really pleased to let you know that Biketrac are supporting IAM members with a free 3-month extension on your Biketrac tracker subscription. This is available to IAM members by contacting Biketrac on the email below.

You will need to provide you Biketrac tracker serial number and your IAM membership number, in order to have the 3-month extension added to your account.

julie@biketrac.co.uk

HBAM Merchandise

For 2025 the HBAM Tour t-shirts (Yorkshire and Dales GBH, SWAT and CJ tours) are now available to buy, if you are registered on the tour.

There is also an HBAM Challenge 2025 t-shirt available, so why not register and you'll get sent the shop link.

[HBAM Challenge 2025 T-shirt](#)

IAM RoadSmart Rewards Club launches on 1st February

Your IAM RoadSmart membership unlocks exclusive access to the Rewards Club, offering discounts and deals from top brands across various categories:

- Everyday Savings: Groceries, fuel, car maintenance, mobile phones, and household essentials.
- Health & Fitness: Gym memberships, eye care, bikes, and digital fitness subscriptions.
- Shopping & Dining: Discounts at major retailers like John Lewis, ASOS, and M&S, plus savings on dining out and takeaways.
- Tech & Entertainment: Savings on Apple, Dell, cinema tickets, streaming services, and more.
- Travel & Leisure: Deals on holidays, hotels, flights, theme parks, and experience days. Use our travel concierge, "It's Your Holiday," to plan your dream trip.

Log into your IAM membership area on the IAM Roadsmart website and click on the IAM RoadSmart Rewards Club link under 'My Membership' to start saving!

www.iamroadsmart.com/

Nice bike mate! – BMW ORS Group - by Chris Price!



I'm a relatively new rider. I rode in my teens but only saw the light in 2020 and bought my first bike for 40+ years. My last bike had been a Kawasaki 500 triple 2-stroke. After a few test rides, I decided on a Triumph 900 and later a changed to a BMW 1250GS.

After riding on the road for a while I was tempted by the call of the green lanes. I have great memories of when I rode my Yamaha DT175. So, in addition to my road bike I bought a Honda CRF250. After falling off on the slippery trails I did a couple of days training with Sweet Lamb, the same guys that Amanda had fun with. This gave me a solid off-road skills foundation to build on.

Having got the off-road bug I joined the TRF and took part in local rides around Herts green lanes. Then somebody let me try their KTM250 & I found it so light (sub 110kg) that I swapped the CRF for a KTM. The KTM is so much easier to handle and more powerful.

Starting motorbiking after such a long break meant I almost had to learn to ride all over again. So, during my return to biking, training has been very important to me. My initial call for training was The IAM. The IAM provided the Roadcraft skills and some useful bike handling skills. Then after completing the Advanced Rider & my Masters I started the Off-Road journey. I have found that riding off-road has taught me a so much about handling bikes and a lot of that has come from the BMW Off-Road Skills team based in Wales.



Nice bike mate! – BMW ORS Group - by Chris Price!

I attended my first BMW Off-Road Skills level 1 course in 2022. I rode their GS1250 around Walters Arena in Wales. I learnt so many things and was amazed by the capability of the big bike off road. It wasn't just the riding on dirt but also how to balance the bike, pick it up &, get on & off, & clutch control etc etc. Since then, I have done a level 2 course, a 2 day & 5-day Off-Road trip across Wales, & last year 5 days in Portugal on the new 1300. Every day is a school day as they say. I continue to learn.

Last year I started taking my 1250GS off road. I've ridden Rally Moto events in the Kielder Forest, Wales & Thetford. It's definitely more challenging than the KTM but I can ride to the events on the GS, which is something I can't on the KTM.

Earlier, this month I returned for 6 days in sunny Portugal. Well, that was the plan. It rained almost every day! However, the fun still continued.

BMW Off-Road Skills (ORS)Portugal 2025

I was met by a taxi at the Faro airport where I met a few other participants. I knew a couple of guys from last year and there were others who were returning having attended before. The record for someone returning is 11 years on the trot!

The taxi delivered us to the Dom Pedro Marina hotel, which was very comfortable for the week. That evening there was a welcome drink & chat. Simon Pavey (ex Dakar racer) runs the school & does some introductions & outlines the week ahead. Then the instructors cover each day in turn which was, as always, entertaining.

Sunday - Day 1 – Refresher day

It was cold & wet. The bikes were all lined up outside the hotel next to ours. They were 3-week old 2025 GS1300's. I had one with the automatic ride height adjustment to make it easier to get my foot down. The bike lowers when below 30kph & raises it when above 50kpm, when in road mode.



After dividing into groups with instructors we headed off from Vilamoura to the surrounding hills via some local dirt road. The quick shifter felt better than the 2024 model. The engine was just as nice & a definite step up from the 1250.

Once in the hills we divided into 3 groups for designated refresher exercises on different trails.

My first session was with Neil Hawker (Dakar rider, super talented & he usually does the stunts at the bike shows).

Nice bike mate! – BMW ORS Group - by Chris Price!

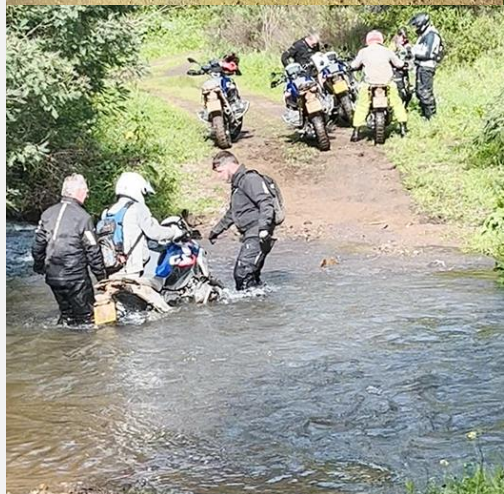
He recaps the standing position. He emphasises it's importance. He says before every bend, hill or obstacle, he asks himself "is my position correct?". Something to think on for the week. We then ride a short course with tight bends, a hill start and some hard braking areas to practice riding position. Then Neil praises the latest version of the ABS on the GS and sets up an exercise where we accelerate on the wet loose dirt road before braking very hard when told. It takes a lot of faith to do that off-road but with practice you can brake so hard the brake lights flash to warn drivers behind. Amazing! Lastly, we practice trail breaking around bends. The next session was with Gwyn Barraclough & Sam Davidson. Gwyn is 74 and still going strong. He may have to retire next year due to the insurance at 75! Such is getting old.

This track includes a long steep loose hill. The aim is to practice using the engine braking in 1st & the front brake (which is linked to the rear). It takes a very smooth gentle pressure using 1 or 2 fingers to stop the front locking & the ABS cutting in. Then we include a stop whilst still standing on the downhill & lastly practicing releasing the brake to imitate allowing the bike to roll over obstacles & then slowing down again. A great exercise.



The last practice area is with Si Pavey & Roger. Roger demonstrates the technique to pick the bike up. We've all done it before but usually we pick the bikes up with someone helping. I volunteered to practice as I always end up using the bum on seat & squat the bike up. Roger was using the handlebars for the lift. With coaching I realise I have not been walking towards the bike in line with the front wheel. Another skill learnt. Then we practice turning in tight areas using a number of techniques, riding stood up, seated dabbing one foot, rolling up inclines & back with the clutch whilst swapping feet etc.

The day had been cold & wet but a great day. We lunched in a mountain restaurant with a 3 or 4 course meal. The meals were really good all week.



Nice bike mate! – BMW ORS Group - by Chris Price!

The rest of the week we rode in groups of 6 with 1 or 2 instructors each day. The routes and challenges varied. Due to the rain, dry riverbeds were full. So, we either had to divert around if it was too deep, ride through if it was OK or lastly, walk with the bikes using the engine. Walking resulted in knee deep water, wet boots & some very high heart rates!

On Tuesday we rode around a lake that has hundreds of corners. These are normally fairly grippy & are great practice for trail braking. This year the trails were very slippery with a fine layer of sloppy mud in places making it impossible to turn or brake, and it was important to keep the bike vertical. We had to pick our lines carefully and use the grippier surfaces to turn on. Hard work and nerve racking but it helps get you used the front & rear sliding beneath you.



The trails varied each day. We used the fire-track roads in the hills which flowed around the ridges of the mountains and narrow single tracks which dipped in and out of streams. These are all connected by the wonderful windy roads which were generally very well maintained surface (pot-hole free). We even rode across a slippery wall with fast flowing water one side and deep the other. Although a metre wide the thought of getting it wrong & ending up in the water was “interesting”.

Thursday the day was planned to have evening Tapas in the mountains and then ride back in the dark. The BMW lights are good & the trails were ones we'd ridden a few times in the week so a simple fun night ride.

I survived the week with 2 minor topples. One on a steep hill trying to get around someone who had stopped and then I lost grip & put the wrong foot down. And the other when stationary. Not bad considering the ground we covered.

All in all, highly recommended. I definitely improved. So, now I just need to keep practicing. If you have big bike and find it a handful, try the Level one course, I think it could make it easier.