

Slow riding session, 29 April

Alastair Lord

After the success of the October event, a rerun of the slow riding course was inevitable. And 29 April was the appointed day. Fine, clear, and with a bit of a breeze to keep us cool, we assembled in the British Energy car park at 13:00. There were 16 SAMmers there to have a go, plus a few extras to marshal the event.

Nigel Murray commenced with a safety briefing and then gave us a range of tips for us to try as we worked our way around the courses:

- For slow riding, the rear brake is your friend, the front brake is not!
- Keep a tension between the rear brake and the throttle/clutch at all times during slow manoeuvres, adjusting speed using the rear brake not the throttle.
- Keep it simple: constant revs (with enough to pull a bit and ensure no stalling) and a constant degree of clutch slip. Vary only the force of the rear brake.



Perfect execution of "look where you want to go"

- Look where you want to go, not where you are right now, and *not not* at your front wheel!
- Confidence and skill are equally important: if you chicken out half way through a do-able manoeuvre (in the real world, not just the test circuit) you might drop the bike. But if you commit to an impossible manoeuvre you might bin the bike too! So continuing practice is the only satisfactory solution, and why SAM will continue to run these sessions as much for experienced riders as for newbies.
- Don't be afraid to put a foot down if you need to. It's not a contest.

With the briefing sorted we split up into small groups to practice each of the coned sections in turn. They varied in difficulty from quite

easy to devilishly tricky. There were turns, circles, slalom courses, a tough "snowman" and a tougher "W". There

was also emergency braking practice, and a test to come to a stop for 2 seconds (both feet up) then ride on.



Dave Preest on full lock

I think everyone came away from the session having improved their slow riding; some by learning new skills and others by blowing cobwebs from skills learned long ago. And, like last time, it was clear that practice is the only way to maintain those skills! So, having marshalled the course for the afternoon, I was desperate to get on the Viffer and do some practicing myself.



Nige casts "good rider" spell on Ian, but it wears off

Having thought about how it went this time, and chatting to a few folks afterwards, I am hoping that the next slow riding event (probably later in the year) can offer more flexibility on the degree of difficulty. So, for example, if you're new to slow riding skills, it's probably best to warm up with basic techniques and simpler turns, and work up to the tricky "W" gradually. When we organise the next session I'll let you know what we've come up with.

Thanks to Nigel for running this fine event for us again, to Andy Downs for arranging the venue, and to Graham Bailey, Dave Bainbridge, Ian Stavert and Andy Downs for their sterling efforts with the marshal's vest on. Once I've edited the video footage I'll post it on the website. ◆

Rider survey

Three boffins in Bath are trying to improve helmet design to make them less noisy. As part of their work they would like you to complete a short questionnaire so that they can learn from your experiences. Find it at http://users.bathspa.ac.uk/holn1/bike_survey1/motorcycling1.htm. ◆