

# LADAM Newsletter

January 2023



## *Congratulations to ...*

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Mark Docherty and Observer Greg Garner  
Dafydd Prichard and Observer Ian Payne

*Who have passed their Advanced test since the last newsletter*

## *In this Newsletter*

Happy New Year and welcome to the January newsletter. I hope you all had a great Christmas break and managed to get out on the bike in between the ice and rain.

The past year has been very successful for LADAM. Following the pandemic there was a focus on training new Observers to ensure the Club could manage to observe existing as well as new associates. The success of this plan is shown in the number of passes: **nine** passes and a further **five** passes with a F1rst. **Ten** new Local Observers have been successfully assessed, with three more in training, and **three** Local Observers have passed their National Observer assessment. Considering the size of LADAM, this is a great achievement and puts us in a very good position to continue to provide Advanced training on behalf of IAM Roadsmart. Congratulations and thank you to everyone!



We look forward to seeing you all in the new year, with our first meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> of January. Before then, the next Winter evening event will be on 10<sup>th</sup> January, when Jim Sampson will join us again.

Many thanks as always to all the contributors this month. Feedback and stories always welcome, contact [chair@ladam.org.uk](mailto:chair@ladam.org.uk).



## Chair's Update

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Happy New Year everyone! Looking at the statistics above, 2022 was a great year for LADAM and it feels as though we have finally put the disruption of the pandemic behind us. With the focus on training new Observers, we have reduced the waiting list to zero pre-Bike Show and are in a good position to train all new associates who have signed up.

Alongside training, we have also been able to look at what we can offer to Members once they have passed their test. While some have gone on to undertake Local Observer training, that's not for everyone and so we introduced a programme of group rides over the Spring to Autumn months. This has taken riders South to the Cotswolds, west to Aberystwyth (almost), north to the Pennines and East to New York as well as longer tours to France and to Wales. In addition, the monthly evening Chip Shop rides have proved popular, alongside the regular group ride on club Saturdays.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to lead a ride. Having now done a couple myself, I can say that it takes some planning, but is extremely rewarding. Perhaps you would like to give it a go in 2023? Let us know!

A huge amount of work goes into running the Club and we are extremely fortunate to have a hard working and committed group of volunteers on the Committee. My thanks to them and everyone else who volunteers for all their efforts for the Club, from managing the Associates' journey from the waiting list through to pre-tests and beyond; for ensuring that we are on top of the finances; maintaining the Facebook and website; putting together the events and group rides programmes and too much else to mention.

If you have any suggestions for what we may be able to improve or introduce, please let me know. We already have a full programme and I for one am looking forward to the upcoming year!

Ride safe!

Zoë



## AGM and "Examiner Q&A"

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The first of our Winter evening meetings was in November. This started with our AGM, and was followed by a session with Alex Hathaway, one of our regular examiners.

### AGM Key Points

Chair, Secretary and Treasurer Reports were circulated to all members with the AGM invitation, but if you would like a copy, please email Zoe or Bill. The minutes will be circulated in due course, but key highlights to mention are the re-election of the Committee and a discussion about the costs of training for Associates and expenses for Observers.

This led to an informal vote on whether the suggested voluntary contribution by Associates to their Observers should be increased to take account of increased costs. The majority vote was to increase this to £15 for a standard Saturday ride. This will be discussed by the Committee and a formal note to confirm the suggested rate will be sent out.

### *Q&A with Alex Hathaway*

Alex tests more of our members than any of the examiners in our area and anyone who has taken the test with him will already know him as an extremely experienced and knowledgeable rider. He also clearly thoroughly enjoys riding himself and understands why we all ride.

Alex had asked for questions in advance, so was very well prepared for his session. All in all, it was another great session with some interesting perspectives both from him and members of the audience. I'm sure that everyone took something different from the questions, but for me there were some key responses to questions we may have all pondered:

- You should never rely on the speed registered on your SatNav speed, as this is generated by GPS and is therefore always slightly out. Your bike's speed has been calibrated by the manufacturer and while you may feel that it reads under, it's more accurate than any other measurement.
- Filtering is OK on a test. However, you're unlikely to fail if you don't do it, but you will fail if you do it badly.
- Riders should show calm competence in their riding to pass. If they are fully in control and taking in information, nothing should be hurried or miscalculated.
- Mirror checks should not just be a quick flick of the eyes to the mirror, but you should move your head to look for longer than a nano second. Not only does this ensure you are actually looking and taking in information, but it also widens your view.
- Staggered crossroads, for example on the Fosse Way, are staggered for a reason, which is to make drivers stop and look before pulling out. Straightlining is therefore not advised as it possibly means you're in a hurry.

There were interesting answers to many other questions and of course, in every situation, the answer depends on the circumstances.

*Our thanks to Alex for taking the time to come and talk to us. Our next event is on 10<sup>th</sup> January when Jim Sampson will join us again. This will be another fascinating talk and we hope that many of you can make it for 7:30pm at the Fosse Riders Clubhouse.*





## Observer Training

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Maintaining and improving standards and consistency across the Observer group is key to our success as a club. We are very fortunate that one of our Observers, Greg Garner, has extensive training experience with the Fire Service, and he was able to engage a group of our Observers with a session on Coaching. This took place on an extremely cold Saturday, where with temperatures well below our recommended minimum for training, the usual observed rides were cancelled



At the heart of his coaching techniques is EDIP – Explain, Demonstrate, Imitate, Practice and an understanding of different learning styles and approaches. As always when the group are together, there was lively debate on certain topics, and Greg's encyclopaedic knowledge of the various rules and regulations was put to good use to settle some debates.

Our Associates should benefit from this training, and our thanks to Greg for both the insight and for providing the training room.

## Club Saturday Rideouts

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On most Saturdays throughout the year, there is a group rideout which is open to all members. This leaves Birstall at around 9:30am and finishes around lunch time, usually taking in a cup of tea and bacon butty or cake. We also require all Associates to join at least one ride with their Observer as part of their training.



Rodger will be returning to lead the Saturday ride, but to give him support and occasionally a Saturday off, we would like more volunteers to lead the group. You don't need to be an Observer, and we can give you guidance on how to plan a route which includes key elements of advanced riding and how to manage a group of riders, working with a Tail End Charlie. There will always be an Observer on the ride with you acting as TEC and if you've never done it before, they will be able to support you.

If this is something you are interested in doing, either regularly or occasionally, please talk to or email any of the Committee, details at the end of the newsletter.



## Tips from the Chief Observer

*In this newsletter, our Chief Observer, Steve, talks about Filtering.*

Just to clarify, when I talk about Filtering it is the act of riding in between slow moving or stationary traffic. One of the many joys of riding a motorbike is that it allows us to Filter through congested traffic, be it in city traffic at junctions or on a Motorway when the traffic has come to a standstill. However, it's one of the hardest skills on a bike to get right and one of the easiest to get wrong.

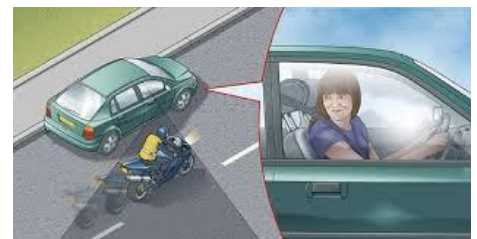


For a start your slow riding and manoeuvring skills are tested constantly, your concentration has to be at its absolute maximum the entire time. You have to be very aware of the width of your bike, especially if you have panniers on and are carrying a pillion and you must be acutely aware of your balance at all times.

When approaching a line of traffic where there is potential for filtering there are a few questions you need to ask yourself:-

1. **Is it legal?** For a start the rule of not crossing a solid white line still applies even if the chevrons are surrounded by such a line. In a Zig Zag zone you can't pass the lead vehicle until they have passed the crossing. Also if you tour in Europe in some countries Filtering is illegal, so before you set off know the local laws.
2. **Is it safe?** If you are in a busy city centre with cyclists, pedestrians, scooters, goats, cattle (don't tend to have these in European countries) mopeds etc...etc.. coming at you from all sides, the risk sometimes is just too high.
3. **Is it worth it?** For example, if the lights causing the traffic to stop are likely to change while you are mid filter, then it's probably not worth it.

So having worked out all of the above and decided to go for it, **Information** is absolutely key; really think about what the other road users are doing and what they are likely to do. Give everyone the maximum chance to see you by having your lights on (not main beam). Non-standard exhausts may help at times like this (NB non-standard NOT illegal!).



*Of course, this happens all the time! 1*

Remember the surrounding vehicles are full of drivers who are unlikely to be thinking of a motorbike wanting to filter by them. They will probably have their music on, or on the phone, thinking about work or anything other than what is happening behind them on the road. So you have to think for them.

Information is constantly changing and will need to be evaluated, so kill your speed to give your brain a chance to process it:

- Look in the wing mirrors of the vehicles to see where the driver's head is looking and look through the windows of every vehicle for that nugget of information on what the driver is doing.

- Look at the lane positioning of the vehicles to not only see if you can fit through but to assess whether the gap may narrow.
- If you are in a built up area add in the fact that pedestrians could be stepping out from the side at anytime.
- MIRRORS, know what is behind you all the time, there could be cyclists, other bikers not applying the same level of thought as us or just on narrower more nimble machines than us. There could also be an emergency vehicle trying to get through the congestion.
- THINK about gaps, if there is a gap in the lane in front there's a good chance someone is going to swap from one lane to another without checking in the mirrors and without indicating. Expect them to do it and prepare for it. As soon as you see a vehicle's wheels start to turn, slow down further and let them go.
- Also look to use these gaps yourself for a rest - concentrating and thinking constantly will tire you massively, so it's always a good idea to take a minute to recharge before starting again. If you're on the motorway stop at the services for a coffee.
- Watch out for drivers who really don't want bikes to filter. They *will* move across the line to try and reduce your opportunity to get past them. Be patient and don't react.



### *Do...*

1. Practise, practise, practise slow riding. Try and get down to almost a standstill going forward in a straight line. If you tour with fully loaded luggage, then practise with the bike fully loaded. The bike feels very different. The slower the speed you master, the more confident you will be filtering.
2. Practise riding slowly on white lines as you will be amazed at how different bike tyres feel and how the bikes react to riding on the white lines, particularly in the wet. Some tyres are brilliant, and the rider doesn't have a problem, but some tyres are dreadful and will throw you off-line whenever you touch them. The same applies to metalwork in the road such as manhole covers and cats eyes.
3. Be patient at all times and be cautious - for obvious reasons.



4. Be courteous and polite; if you can see drivers in front parting to let you through, thank them with a wave of the hand or a kick of the leg as an acknowledgment. The more bikers do this the more drivers will see it and possibly will be more aware next time. (Not all drivers will see or understand a kick of the leg, so if it's OK to remove your hands from the handlebars, a wave is more obvious).

### Don't...

1. Be impatient – once you stop thinking logically you are less likely to make the right decisions and Filtering is all about decision making quickly.
2. Trust to luck – if you ever go for a manoeuvre in the “hope” it will be ok, you really haven't grasped the art of Advanced Riding.
3. React badly to other road users getting it wrong – you should expect them to. If you react to every motorist getting it wrong, especially in a long queue of traffic, you will lose concentration very quickly.



As ever there is a lot more detail I could add to this subject, particularly around “Landing Zones”, but I don't want you to fall asleep over the newsletter! Should anyone want to discuss anything with me regarding anything I've said please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Please feel free to get in touch with Steve to discuss further on [steve\\_r@ladam.org.uk](mailto:steve_r@ladam.org.uk).



## My LADAM Journey

*This month, it's the turn of Mark Smith, who is currently training as an Observer with LADAM.*

My LADAM journey is one of two halves, originally commencing in May 2019 and, tutored by the excellent Steve Tamsett, I got to the stage of being 'test ready' in October of that year. Sadly, due to some personal issues I had to take a short break from the training programme and along with Covid it was not until August 2021 that I finally started to continue the journey (again with Steve), passing my test on the 15th December 2021.



There were two key drivers to why I commenced the IAM programme; the first was to measure my E2E riding ability. Having never touched a motorbike previously, I gained an unconvincing pass on my test back in 1996, after signing up to a 1 week 'all in' crash course during a break from an operational tour with the military. There is no way I should have passed that test, but as luck would have it the examiner was an ex-military gentleman and following at least 30 mins exchanging war stories there was no way I was going to fail the test.



I walked away with a full licence and a brand new Kawasaki ZX6R (P361 EOK). However, after less than two years in the saddle I got married and had children, resulting in the sale of my bike and a gap of 19 years before a return to two wheels.

My second key driver is my passion for road safety. Until the middle of 2022 I spent thirteen and a half years serving as a Special Constable with Thames Valley Police, consisting of an initial four years serving as a response officer based in Slough and the final nine years attached to the Roads Policing Unit based in Amersham and then Milton Keynes.



Sadly, during that time, I experienced the 'not so lucky' riders and drivers where the impact not only affected the deceased family, but also and equally affected the person held responsible. I think collectively whatever our role within LADAM (chief observer to group ride out member) our attendance, training and questioning each other about various scenarios contributes to and aids that continual improvement and education of all existing and future LADAM members.

LADAM has allowed me to understand my riding competence and certainly become a risk averse, safer rider. I enjoy riding to IAM standards, whether that be solo or on group rides as I find I appreciate the ride and scenery a lot more. Passing the test for me is just the tip of the iceberg and I have decided to go down the observer route which I hope will aid my continued personal development, but also aid others in becoming safer and more aware riders.

I would like to ask a couple of things. If you see a new face in Birstall, having a brew on his / her own, then go out your way to invite them into some conversation. Finally, for those that haven't dipped their toe in yet put yourself down for the LADAM trips and activities. I have been on a few group rides and went on the France 2022 trip and can honestly say I learnt a lot more about people in four days than I would have in four years of weekend chatter and made some friends.

*Thanks Mark and a really good point made about talking to other members, whether they are old or new. We aim to be a friendly club and club Saturdays are where it all starts.*



## *And in other news...*

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Not really news, but another plea for ride leaders. To continue to offer events and to promote safe riding, we are heavily reliant on volunteers. If you can help with leading anything from a Group Ride on a Saturday, a trip to an amazing chip shop, or a full day's tour, please let us know. You don't need to be an Observer although you do need to have passed your Advanced Test. An Observer is required for every official ride, so you will always have support.

If you're interested contact any of the committee. Details at the end of the newsletter.

## *IAM RoadSmart*

The latest IAM RoadSmart News is [here](#), their tips and blogs are [here](#).

You may be interested to read Biker Kaz on her IAM RoadSmart journey with the Milton Keynes club [here](#). Not only is it interesting to following her journey, but also to see how other clubs approach training.



## *Contact Details*

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Website: <https://www.ladam.org.uk/home>

Facebook Private Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/LADAM>

For future events check out the [Calendar Page](#)

Chair & Newsletter Editor: Zoë Eastwell – [chair@ladam.org.uk](mailto:chair@ladam.org.uk)

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Treasurer: Steve Tamsett – [treasurer.ladam@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.ladam@gmail.com)

Chief Observer: Steve Rowthorne – [steve\\_r@ladam.org.uk](mailto:steve_r@ladam.org.uk)

If you would like to provide a story, maybe about your journey with LADAM or an event coming up, please contact Zoë. If we don't get any volunteers, be wary, you may be volunteered! The same applies to ride leaders. You have been warned!

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