

Safer Driving

*The Newsletter of RoSPA Advanced Drivers and Riders
Thames Valley Group*

Winter 2019



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Who is who on the Committee?

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The Editor writes...

'Accidents don't have to happen'. That is what it says on the front cover of *Care on the Road*, RoSPA's magazine for drivers and riders. I always make a point of reading it in the hope of discovering something new. An item in the October issue, entitled 'Biker Pippa goes for gold in her Jeep Grand Cherokee', caught my eye.

I learned that Pippa was a gold standard advanced motorcycle tutor with RoADAR in East Yorkshire. She took the car advanced driving test without any prior tutoring, hoping that her roadcraft from motorcycling would be a transferable skill to the wheel of her Jeep.

When she came to a long line of traffic, she says she 'really wanted to overtake two vehicles in front of her'. She waited 'four seconds too long to overtake,' she adds, and when she did make her move she came into conflict ('not literally, but not far off,' she confesses) with an oncoming vehicle as well as one she was overtaking. Her errors resulted in her immediately failing the test. On her bike, she tells us, 'the overtake would have been completed without so much as a thought.' Note that phrase, 'without so much as a thought'.

I was particularly interested in Pippa's story as most of the fatal and very serious accidents in my neck of the woods occur when overtaking, more accurately *thoughtless* overtaking. Recently two vehicles crashed head on a downward stretch of road about 300 metres long from the point where the national speed limit of 60 mph began and ended at a busy roundabout with a 30 mph limit. I know people are in a hurry, but is it sensible to attempt an overtake when someone you are overtaking is probably increasing speed and there is the prospect of an unseen vehicle emerging from the roundabout (or a side road)?

Locally we have by-passes which have been built with wide single lanes in either direction. Consequently drivers feel there is plenty of room to overtake without coming into conflict with oncoming traffic. The problem arises when someone has the same idea coming from the opposite direction and it ends up with a multiple collision. If only these by-passes could be marked out with double white lines for half the distance of one of the three lanes in turn to allow safe overtaking from either end, much as is done in Europe where the halfway point is marked with hatching and white plastic bollards, how much safer they would be.

I was also surprised by Pippa's 'four second' comment. It takes me at least four seconds to go through the key points of the 15 which are outlined in the *Highway Code*. I then perform the overtaking manoeuvre exactly as set out in *Roadcraft*, ensuring I have identified correctly where I intend to return to my own side of the road. If in any doubt, I abandon the overtake. The Department of Transport's *THINK!* TV advertising campaign was spot on. I know from my own experience (and I rebuke myself for this) that problems arise when you do not *think* properly before you act.

Accidents don't have to happen *if* you take care on the road. As for Pippa, she retook her car test and passed with a gold a few days later.

Max Davidson

From the Winter Chair

Wanted:

New Chair and/or Membership Secretary

The AGM which is covered in detail in this issue allowed us to discuss and agree some important changes to the way the Group is run, in particular the fees for new members and how annual fees from all members will be collected and managed from 1 January 2020.

The change to fees will apply only to new Members and has been introduced as one way of lowering the dropout rate of Associates who either fail to complete training or, on completion, do not then take the important step of taking the test. This phenomenon has become more prevalent in recent times and does real damage to the morale of our vitally important Tutors.

I am having to give up the role of Chair due to business pressures. We have one candidate already for this role Robin Carlyle (*who at the AGM was elected Vice-Chair*). However Robin already runs the membership management system and he cannot fulfil that role and become Chair.

If we can find somebody to become Membership Secretary that would allow Robin to transfer from Vice Chair to the Chair position. It is quite possible, however, that we will not receive any volunteers to take on the membership role and to cover that risk we are also seeking additional candidates to become Chair.

Anybody can put their name forward, providing they are a full Member of the Group and if they have the time and desire to spend time in the role of Chair.

As indicated above, the second role is that of Membership Secretary (enabling Robin to move and become Chair). Robin has made great strides in the way we manage membership details and renewals since taking on the role 12 months ago. Probably most significantly, after much pre-selection analysis and subsequent field testing, under his guidance the Group will be launching an on-line system to manage memberships in January.

This change will take a significant administrative burden off the role and will lower the time and personal interaction that has been required thus far. Again, anybody can put their name forward providing they are a full Member of the Group and if they have the time, desire and natural aptitude for attention to detail to succeed in the role.

It is vitally important that we all acknowledge that these roles are not optional; without them the Group cannot continue to exist. So your help and willingness to contribute free time towards the Group is incredibly important.

If you are interested in either role please email me at chair@roadartvg.org.uk

Keith Pruden

Chair Thames Valley Advanced Drivers & Riders

Key points from the AGM

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Traveller's Friend, Thatcham, on 20 November, and was chaired by **Keith Pruden** who spoke about the changes to the Group. A new enrolment and renewal system is to be introduced on 1 January, and, in a bid to increase the Membership, the website has been updated. Communication with Members will from now on usually be by email.

Social interaction within the car Members is very low, Keith said, and the Group also has a problem with the number of Associates who do not complete their training or, on reaching an acceptable level, fail to take their RoSPA test. On the first point, the plan is to hold advanced driving education classes in early spring in a bid to bring car Members together. On the second point, with Associates not taking the test, the plan is to increase the fees. As the test costs more than joining, it could be construed that not taking the test is an easy way to get the training on the cheap. Therefore, new Member fees will be increased with immediate effect, but the existing £17 annual Membership fee will stay the same for all from the second year.

Keith concluded by saying he had to give up the position of chairman, due to business pressures. His departure would mean that other replacements would be needed and he welcomed applications from anyone who feels that they can take on a Committee role.

What the changes mean to you

The treasurer **Mike Cowling** summarised the accounts and reported that they had been audited as required.

Robin Carlyle, the Membership Secretary, then explained the operation of MemberMoJo, which would assist with more frequent renewal reminders and more timely payment by Direct Debit as well as PayPal. He also informed the meeting that new RoSPA Members' fees would be £99 with existing RoSPA Members charged £27 on joining the Group. The renewal fee for all would be £17.

Neil Goodhand gave his Training Officer's report and indicated that he will be standing down next year. He warned that failure to find his replacement would mean disbanding the Car Section. The Motorcycle Section report was then given by **Robin Carlyle**.

The new Web Manager **Colin Ashley** presented the new website which actively interacts with MemberMoJo and social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter). He appealed for content to add to the site, particularly photographs of events. The new site, to be launched on 1 January 2020, can be previewed at r.caux.uk.

The new Committee was elected and the Members for the various post can be seen on Page One. Five Members were recommended for Honorary Membership in tribute to their service to the Group. They are: **Brian Allan, Adam Hardy, Sean Pearce, Sue Parkinson** and **Fiona Goodhand**.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9 pm.

Gerry's Wiltshire Wanderer

There are some things in life that bring huge pleasure and one of them is organising a RoSPA Thames Valley Group *Drive and Ride Out*. On Sunday 20 October I had a big smile on my face for most of the time as I had in fact organised an outing for 16 participants. We all met up at the Rosebourne Garden Centre, near Andover, and I am pleased to say that the massive gas leak caused by a crashing car the previous evening had no effect on us.



A table had been reserved for us in the restaurant, and the waitresses and I had never seen such a jolly crowd enjoying their coffee and eager to get out on the road. I had treated them all to their coffee and that made them even more jolly!

I led the way out of the car park in my red Mazda 6 closely followed by The Marmite Couple (Bev and Alan Painter who are passionate about Marmite) in Bev's red BMW Z4 and then Paul Sheppy in his red Porsche Boxter. Elaine and Sean Gates were close behind in their black Mercedes 2 seater with Alan and Pat Butt in their Audi Q5 tucked up close. Pat's BMW i3 may not have made the journey on one charge, so that had stayed at home getting a full charge no doubt. Frank Rawlings in his Honda Civic was still fumbling with his Garmin and missed the start, but he had nothing to worry about as his passenger Admira (what a lovely name that is) took charge and directed him all the way to the lunch stop, arriving just 10 secs behind us. Full marks for your navigational skills Admira.

The only bike, a two-week old BMW GS1200 being ridden by guest rider David Stevenson was the final one to set off, but after some 15 miles David came speeding past us in spite of the fact that he was still running the bike in.

The route out, which I call the Wiltshire Wanderer, managed to avoid any traffic whatsoever, so that everyone could enjoy the countryside and the roads while we drove at such a brisk pace that even the Porsche Boxter could keep up. During morning coffee I had given specific instructions that I repeated twice, 'Do NOT take the A36 at the roundabout near Warminster,' but, without mentioning any names, the Audi and the Mercedes drivers completely ignored my advice and took the A36. I hasten to add that they arrived at the lunch stop first due to the rest of us having pulled over to wait for them out on my designated route.

As we sat down together, now with Jean and David Hans, who had made their own way to The George Inn on the banks of the river Whyte, I announced that there was to be a raffle for a free lunch. The excitement level rose as one name was drawn out of the box, that of Jean Hans.

The carvery lunch was excellent, and even my pork crackling crunched easily between my ageing teeth. I noticed that Jean's plate was piled up, shall I say, rather higher than I would have expected for such a petite figure. We nearly all decided upon a sweet that finished off the meal in style.

The return journey was almost traffic free as I had chosen roads for much of the way that I knew were not used much. We could all relax and enjoy the



wonderful views, particularly on the Upper Woodford road with its panoramic views across the Avon Valley, as we made our way back to the Rosebourne Garden Centre for an afternoon cup of tea before making our way back home.

What a lovely way to spend the day out in our cars and bikes. We will have to do it again at some time.

Gerry Gooch, Run Leader and Organiser

Comments on the drive out...

Met up with fellow members for morning coffee at Weyhill the start and finishing location. An 80-mile drive with wonderful views of the open Wiltshire countryside painted in the colours that only autumn can. Through Olde-Worlde Villages with magnificent thatched roof cottages that adorn the lids of chocolate boxes.

We had the mid-day break for lunch at the George Inn to have a good chin wag and ended the day back at Weyhill, where Gerry amused us with his stories of happenings from his many previous biking trips. So please, can we have a repeat next autumn but the other way round, so I can keep the Sat-Nav happy. FR.

Just to thank you for yesterday - we both enjoyed it – it's been a while since we had a decent run in the car and good company for lunch. AB.

Thanks for the excellent organisation of another splendid day; I enjoyed it immensely. PS.

Bev and I wanted to thank you for a well-organised and enjoyable event. Good roads, good scenery, good cars, good food, good weather and good company, a wonderful way to spend a Sunday. We are looking forward to the next one hopefully in the springtime. B & AP.

Bright future for hybrid motoring

Mahle is one of the world's largest car components makers with its HQ in Stuttgart. It has six factories and offices in Britain alone helping to develop a complete hybrid-drive propulsion system for a wide range of vehicles to cut car manufacturers' costs. By providing an engine and gearbox, the so-called 'powertrain', common to most vehicles in a company's range it should bring down the overall price of hybrid petrol-electric cars. With the latest generation's very low CO2 output, it could be a more sensible solution to global warming than pure electric with all its charging problems.



The new unit, called the Mahle Modular Hybrid Powertrain (MMHP), can be adapted in size to a wide variety of vehicles and could be in production within two years, ready to power anything from small hatchbacks to large SUVs. The MMHP incorporates an all-new turbo-charged petrol engine in two and three cylinder forms with a customised gearbox, from one to four-speed, and a compact but powerful electric traction motor. The hybrid system was featured at this year's autumn Frankfurt Motor Show.

It can be fitted to several cars currently in production as well as to those still at the concept stage. Mahle's new unit can provide an all-electric driving range of 50 to 62 miles, depending on the battery-pack capacity. It is adequate for most commuting and city use, while the entire petrol-electric range is up to 311 miles for longer journeys. The company's objective is to reduce the number of powertrain variants and to achieve greater sharing of components across all manufacturers' models. As car makers move to electrification, many do not have the scope for the development needed to produce individual power units. So the ability to provide an off-the-shelf powertrain for a wide range of vehicles should prove to be good business for Mahle as well saving the car makers money.

Other companies are working on similar solutions, but Mahle believes its system can be tailored to a wider variety of applications. The MMHP project was started a year ago and the prototype is in the final stages with individual components being rigorously tested. The major strength for Mahle is that it is able to design, build, and supply from its own factories almost all the parts needed with all the core elements, including power electronics, tailored to specific requirements. Hardly anything has to be bought from an outside supplier.

The company intends that the MMHP powertrain will be ready from the early 2020s to meet the European Union's stringent average fuel consumption and emissions legislation for 2030 when the CO2 emissions across a manufacturer's range of vehicles must be 59.4 g/km.

The challenge for a wide-ranging, cross-industry powertrain application is meeting requirements for an engine that will be readily identified with the the brand with regard to how the engine sounds and how it responds to the accelerator. Mahle does not see this as a problem for the market at which the MMHP is aimed, since sound-generation and noise-cancelling could be used if necessary. The company believes that drivers will like the instant acceleration from low speed and the flexibility of the high torque delivery of the new engines and gearbox.

The hybrid powertrain (the MMHP) promises to improve a car's performance. Its weight is similar to that of a current four-cylinder, two-litre petrol engine with manual six-speed transmission. The great advantage of the modular system is the ability to reduce the size of the battery pack to achieve a usable range of around 300 miles without having to refuel. The Mahle powertrain with a battery pack, providing a pure electric range of 50 miles, will achieve an equivalent CO2 figure of 18 g/km, well below the target of 59.4 g/km for 2030.



Drivers of more economical cars will already have become used to the smoothness of three-cylinder engines and engines capable of closing down cylinders for motorway cruising. Now they will have to learn to love two-speed and four-speed transmissions, which are promised by Mahle as being worthwhile improvements. The company's two-cylinder engine is one litre, and the three cylinder is 1.5-litre.

With the hybrid powertrain, Mahle has been able to simplify the construction of the engine and still achieve excellent fuel efficiency through more effective ignition of the petrol-air mix. Its engines have a small pre-chamber, housing a conventional sparkplug, fitted within the engine's primary combustion chamber. This generates hot radiating jets that create a very brief combustion in the engine's cylinder, allowing a high compression ratio and high exhaust gas recirculation rate.

These innovations combine to reduce fuel consumption and exhaust emissions. By using fuel injection and a single overhead camshaft controlling just two valves per cylinder without variable valve control, the cost of the engine is lowered. Savings on the new engines alone are estimated at up to 30 per cent compared with engines currently in production.

As drivers, we may have become indoctrinated to the idea that the future is purely electric, but the internal combustion engine, known in the jargon of Mahle as ICE, is still very much alive with a great potential ahead of it to enable us to enjoy motoring without the range anxiety we may have about undertaking longer journeys in a purely electric car. For the avid motorist, thanks to the likes of Mahle, the future of hybrid motoring is looking very bright indeed.

Max Davidson

Could you lead a Sunday ride?

If you are a motorcyclist and have never led a monthly RoSPA Sunday ride out, here are some tips, based on my lifelong motorcycling experience, to help you decide, with the right qualifications and training, if you could give it a try. It is a good way for anyone who has passed the RoSPA Advanced Test to put something back into the Group.

To lead a RoSPA ride, the first thing to do is to contact Tim Cuell, the RoADAR Thames Valley Events and Social co-ordinator, by emailing tim.cuell@roadartvg.org.uk to say that you wish to organise a ride. He will sort out a date and a start point for your run that is convenient for you.

Once you have contacted Tim to arrange the date, the next task is to settle down with a map and note pad. Are you going to do a full day's run or just a half day? This will be the first decision that you will need to make. A 100-mile ride with a group of 10 riders or so with a stop for coffee or tea may take up to 3 1/2 hours from start time to stop. Anything much over a 100 miles will probably become more than a half day trip.

Try to choose somewhere interesting as a destination, or even a nice pub for lunch. The Dog and Partridge in Crewkerne, Glastonbury Cathedral, Midsomer Norton, Monmouth on Wye, the source of the River Thames... the list of possible destinations is endless, but do try to choose somewhere new where your fellow riders have not been previously as that is much more fun.

Next you need to select a route that avoids major roads if possible. Many secondary roads are pleasant to ride. Just because they are marked yellow or gold, or even white, on your map does not mean they are not good riding roads for us bikers. You do not need to take the shortest route to your destination. So choose a route that uses all types of roads.

Motorways can be used to get to a good bit of road if necessary. It may be a good idea to avoid narrow roads or lanes with loose surfaces and blind corners, as no one really likes those, particularly when they are riding a new Ducati or a nice Harley Davidson. Check the mileage, and amend the route to lengthen or shorten it as required. If you have a sat nav, this job will be much easier. So put in as many 'via points' as you need. Remember that a Garmin may add two minutes to the overall time for each via point. Mine does.

Of course, you will need to think about comfort stops on the way. Pubs will often do morning coffee, and garden centre coffee/food stops are very good, but do not forget local café stops.

Phone the planned stop venues to confirm that bikers are welcome and reserve tables if necessary.

Many riders lose concentration after an hour in the saddle. So I always liked to stop at this point in time for a brief leg stretch, or perhaps to refuel, as a good way to re-focus attention. If you are able to recce the run before hand and sort out the stops for lunch etc., that is a bonus, but it is not a prerequisite for being a run leader. I never did recce my runs.

You will need to decide if you wish to lead a leisurely, a moderate or an advanced pace run. Then take a look at the RoADAR Document number 005GG Group Run Leader and Back Marker guidelines as that will give you further information that you will need to consider. If you are able to mark up a map with a highlighter, that is a good idea, yet not essential, but the Back Marker could find such a highlighted map useful. You will discover, when you arrive home after the run, that you will have a big smile on your face and feel very good about yourself. It really is fun organising a Group Ride. Contact me if I can help in any way at gerrygooch@btinternet.com

Gerry Gooch

Editor's note: Gerry has asked me to stress that the views expressed are his own and may not conform with the Group's current guidelines on leading a Sunday ride out. Please do contact either Robin Carlyle or Gemma Allen for up-to-date advice.

Observation Post

Don't just leave MPs to decide on road signs.

We all need to get involved in road safety issues

On his first test, an Associate was driving in a 40 limit at about 38 mph. He noticed that the road was now provided with street lamps and realised that he had entered a 30 mph zone. He came off the speed and acknowledged that he had not seen the change of limit. 'No,' said the examiner, 'the signs are obscured by bushes and shrubs on both sides.' The examiner exercised his judgement and no more was said. A camera would have taken a picture and a ticket would probably have resulted.

I was recently out in the reverse situation. There were street lamps and I was driving at what I considered the correct speed. My observer asked me about the speed limit. I remarked that I remembered the area as 40, but that the street lamps suggested 30 since there were no repeater signs. About a half mile later I saw on the offside a 40 repeater sign clipped to a lamp standard. My passenger (*a retired traffic officer*) said that he didn't think that the signs complied with the regulations.

Quick fixes with unintended consequences

A few months ago, a comment was made from within the Westminster-Whitehall bubble that there were far too many signs on our roads and that this led to confusion. Instead, it was suggested, we should remove all signage from motorways and trunk roads and project the necessary information on to the vehicle's windscreen. There was even a proposed implementation date (within the next five years, I think).

You cannot make this stuff up, you really can't.

- Would the necessary software be retrospectively installed into vehicles?
- If so, who would pay?
- If not, what would drivers who don't have heads-up displays or satnavs be supposed to do?
- How far in advance would the information be displayed?

- Would drivers plan better as a result or would they continue to leave it till later?

***I could make a list of questions that would fill the Newsletter.
But why bother? You can make your own lists.***

What can be done?

By the time you read this, we will have a new government in place. You will be able to write to your MP about roads policy and invite them to look before they leap.

The Roadcraft System is founded upon one absolute priority: information management. What we don't see, we won't deal with. What we see late, we will deal with poorly.

Road safety is compromised when the maintenance of signs and markings is left until a fatality or life-changing injury is sustained. While RoSPA and other organisations do make representations to government, those talks happen in meetings with Whitehall departments. Such submissions are vital, but inevitably ministers and civil servants will consider whether expenditure can be justified in the light of competing interests and concerns.

Committees are important. However, there is always the possibility that they become bodies which 'take minutes, but waste hours'. And we all know that a camel is a horse designed by a committee.

You and your MP: road safety

Towards the end of the last Parliament, I wrote to my MP about a set of proposals relating to newly qualified drivers. The underlying concern was to reduce accident rates – something we will all applaud. However, the attempt to solve one set of problems raised a number of other potential inequitable outcomes. In the event, the dissolution of Parliament meant that the question was not determined.

However, my remarks were passed to the relevant Minister and I received a holding reply, which acknowledged the validity of the points I had made. I intend to raise issue again and to press for a clarification.

I think we need to raise road safety issues directly and at the personal level with our MPs. A polite question with clear reasoning will produce a response. We may not always get the answer we want, but we will keep road safety actively on the agenda. Governments can fob off committees. Ministers tend to get much more worried by questions from constituency MPs which they are obliged to answer directly and honestly.

Making our voice heard

Motorists are under attack as an ecological enemy. I understand the need for change, but until we have a coherent transport policy and system, we have to make do with what we have. Piecemeal change is rarely good, and as members of a road safety organisation we should make our voices heard.

We may throw out the bathwater, but what of the baby?

Paul Sheppy

Bideford revisited... more to see

In a previous issue of the *Newsletter* I published an article about the North Devon town of Bideford with some pictures to illustrate its long maritime history. I would now like to share with you some more photos that are also associated with the trading and industrial activities of Bideford's past to give you a better feel for this interesting old town.

Bideford's location on the estuary of the river Torridge has made it an important sea port. By the sixteenth century it was the third largest in England and the place to where Sir Walter Raleigh brought the first shipment of tobacco.

The quayside is a good place to park for a walk around the town. In this view, looking back up the Torridge, the town is to the right. The Long Bridge, as it is known, dates back to 1474 and was once the longest in Devon. There have been many concerns over its strength and safety, but nowadays the main traffic along the North Devon coast road is carried high over the Torridge on a new bridge near the northern outskirts of Bideford.



The main road runs alongside the quay, but the main shopping and commercial districts are on the many narrow hilly roads which lead off to the right of the scene above. There is also a network of cross roads before you reach the main residential areas atop the hills. The photos, which follow, were taken within a small area beside or near to the quayside road.

For a brief time, between 1901 and 1907, a local railway ran along the quayside to the naval base at Appledore and this is commemorated on an intricately carved stonework inlaid on the end wall of a building at the end of the quay:



The original function of that old redbrick building is also commemorated on a carved stone plaque, which also bears the names of the stonemason and the architect:

In a narrow road behind this building we find more evidence of the past commercial activities which were associated with a busy port. Blackmores Depository is a huge building which extends either side of the main doorway for at least as much again as can be seen in the photo below. Like many of these old buildings around the country it is now let out



as many smaller units, although, with a renewed popularity due to the TV series, I guess the Dance Studio, advertised beside the doors, may get well used.

The area opposite to the depository is now fairly run down and this abandoned building is a typical example of what can be found when business fortunes change. Fortunately, some of the other old sites along this road have found new use as garage workshops etc.

Venturing around the corner to a more open area which obviously once overlooked a beach (note the road name) we find a property still in use as a traditional seaside



business. (Note the address.)



Further along this road (and opposite the local football ground) we find an imposing house now used (like many large old houses) as a dental practice.

Now take a walk back through the side streets, spending some time just wandering and browsing, and you will be amazed by what you find. Eventually you will get to Mill Street. This a little wider and where you will find a cornucopia of eating houses and old-style shops selling everything from fruit to furniture and everything in between.

Carry on down the tiny lanes towards the quayside and more surprises await you. Here you will find some of those 'essential' premises such as this 'Ale and Cider House'.



This hilly road is typical of the many narrow streets in the old part of Bideford as can also be seen in this other view.



As you find your way back to the car park, don't be too startled by the young lady looking down at you from over the pottery! I think she may have well once adorned the prow of a ship. The gallery is located near to the quay and Rope Walk is the name of the street.

So now you should be back on the quayside and a short walk back to the car park. I hope you have enjoyed this taster of Bideford and will be able to see it for yourself some time. It takes more than one visit to get to know any place. We go to Bideford every time we visit North Devon. There is always something different to find.

Peter Caton



LiveWire lives up to its name

The American motorcycle company Harley-Davidson has always struck a chord with me ever since I produced my credit card in Fairbanks, Alaska, and I was asked, 'Does the H. before Davidson stand for Harley?' I had to confess it did not, much to the assistant's disappointment. (It is Hugh, actually.) Not that I would mind having a stake in that very successful company.



Its motorcycles always seem very old fashioned to me unlike their sleek Japanese rivals. So I was surprised to see their latest offering called the LiveWire, which is a dramatic change of bike from a company that produces traditional but, to my eyes, sometimes odd-looking machines particularly in the handlebar and frame area.

This is Harley's first venture into an electric powertrain, and the LiveWire went on sale in the United States in August for \$29,799 (about £24,800), which makes it one the most expensive bikes in its range.



But a well-made bike like a Harley can be a good investment, and the LiveWire also looks better than most.

It is also very different from the usual Harley-Davidson concept of a big V-twin engine with a variety of strange motorcycle frames surrounding it. That tell-tale pattering engine sound with loud exhaust pipes, seemingly misfiring when the throttle is opened, is to me what distinguishes a Harley. It always sounds to my ears as if the engine is running rough, but then ‘rough and tough’ is probably the image the company hopes to convey to its customers who include Hell’s Angels dressed in their seemingly always black and orange motorcycle gear with an odd taste in hats and helmets.

Some Harleys can be relatively light, such as the Sportster, or monstrous, as in the model famous for its movie image, the Electra Glide, but it is always that engine and its characteristic sound, unlike no other motorcycle I know of, that up until now that is associated with Harleys first and foremost



The LiveWire, as I say, could not be more different. This is the real electric gliding machine with the ability to reach 60 miles an hour silently in three seconds. It is completely automatic with no gears to hinder you through having to be changed, and the throttle response is controlled to make slow progress easier through traffic and to ensure safer handling on the open road. The bike has devices too to prevent

you from doing wheelies or getting the bike to stand on its nose.

It certainly breaks the Harley tradition of the engine dominating the whole concept of the machine. There is no V-twin or any other kind of conventional engine. Instead you get a 105-horsepower electric motor all set up to look like an old-fashioned petrol engine, but, despite the mandatory Harley chromium plating for the dedicated owners to polish, what you get is a battery pack that replaces the petrol motor at the heart of the bike. Harley has carefully avoided the term ‘battery pack’. It has decided that ‘renewable energy storage system’ has a better ring to it.

Whatever you call it, it stores 15.5 kilowatt-hours of electricity in its lithium-ion heart, enough for the LiveWire to cover a claimed 146 miles of maximum range, but that only applies if you stick to low-speed city or town riding. Take it for a swift blast out of town or on the motorway and you will be lucky to do 70 miles on a full charge. The combined figure for a mixture of rides is 95 miles, although the LiveWire achieved 98 miles on the World Motorcycle Test Cycle. That is a lot less than a conventional Harley which should do about 200 miles on its big tank of petrol.

A full charge takes less than an hour from a direct current charging point, and an 80 per cent charge takes 40 minutes. It is also claimed you can also charge the

batteries from a conventional household electric socket. With such a low range and the time it takes to charge the batteries, even if you can find a charging point immediately, I cannot imagine how Members of the Group’s motorcycle section will manage to take part in ride-outs in the future once petrol engines are banned without a substantial improvement in battery performance.

The LiveWire comes equipped with a fully adjustable suspension, dual disc brakes at the front and a maintenance-free belt drive. It weighs 250 kg and has such refinements as four rider modes, according to how you wish the bike to cope with road conditions, in addition to the normal traction control and ABS.

There is also a six-axis accelerometer to help you get the right degree of lean while cornering, and something called an ‘anti-wheelie’ should you suddenly apply too much throttle. There is also an ‘anti-stoppie’ to ensure the braking is effective and progressive without you performing a somersault.

The LiveWire has LCD touch screen controls that work even when the rider is wearing thick leather gloves. The various LCD screens are accessed by pressing toggle switches close to the right grip on the handlebar. The idea is to tailor the bike to suit your individual preferences, something that for the most part should perhaps best be done before you set out on the road.

The look of the bike with its lower and smaller seat, just 30.7 inches off the ground, and what I would call conventional handlebars has more the appearance of an Italian Ducati than what many expect of a Harley with American bull-horn handlebars and feet placed firmly forward instead of neatly back as on the LiveWire.



What this bike needs now is for someone from the Thames Valley motorcycle section to take one out for a test run when it makes its debut in the UK and to report back if it rides and runs as good as it looks. That short range could be something of a problem for future monthly Sunday ride

outs. All the North American Harley-Davidson dealers offer charging points. I am not aware if such electric motorcycle facilities are planned to be provided here.

Max H Davidson

Electric at half cost of a Harley

If there is one thing that Erik Buell has shown over the years, it is that he can't be kept down for long. Decades ago, while working as a motorcycle mechanic by day and an engineering student by night, he still managed to get his time in at the track, going so far as to set the fastest qualifying time as a rookie at the Daytona 200 in the Seventies while he was still a teenager. Since then, he has tackled several start-ups of motorcycle companies bearing his name, an uphill battle since day one.

Though his collaboration with his former employer, Harley-Davidson, when his operation was known as Buell Motorcycle Company, is now almost a decade past, and the subsequent Erik Buell Racing part of a liquidator, somehow producing a tiny amount of bespoke motorcycles, Buell is back once again with a company called Fuell, a new maker of electric bikes and motorcycles.

Billing itself as *'the new urban mobility brand that brings back the pleasure of city riding'*, Fuell is a collaboration between one of America's most innovative engineers and two successful Frenchmen who also have high-performance vehicle construction experience on their résumés. Fuell will introduce two electric models, both intended for urban use, one a motorcycle and the other an electrified bicycle.



The Flow motorcycle will be available in two power output levels: 11 kW (about 15 horsepower) and 35 kW (about 47 horsepower).



Presumably following Buell's pioneering work in 'mass centralisation' low in the frame (*underslung exhaust, frame doubling as fuel tank, oil reservoir in the swingarm, etc.*), the Flow will have its proprietary motor mounted in the rear wheel, doing away with the need for any chain, belt, or other indirect drive.

Fuell expects its Fluid bicycle to have a range of up to 125 miles, thanks to removable batteries with a

total of 1,000 Wh of storage. The Fluid's electric motor will be rated at 100 Newton-metres, which is approximately 74 lb-ft of torque. Fuell will release two versions of the Fluid, one with a maximum speed of 20 mph and an S version with a maximum speed of 28 mph. High-tech materials and sleek, futuristic designs appear to be part and parcel of both models, but both still have conventional rubber tyres, a throttle on the handlebars, a front fork with suspension built in, disc brakes, and sleek lines.



Like Erik Buell, Frédéric Vasseur has a racing background, but it was honed on four wheels, not two, and at the highest levels. Current team principal and CEO of Alfa Romeo Racing (the Formula One team formerly known as Sauber) and owner of Spark Racing Technology (the sole provider of chassis to the ever-expanding Formula E racing series), Vasseur also led championship-winning teams in Formula 3 and GP2, both top-level feeder series for F1.

Francois-Xavier TERNY, the second Frenchman, is billed as a 'Transatlantic entrepreneur' who found great success as an expert in supply chain management and cost optimisation, and later working in private equity out of a family office based in New York. In 2013, he co-founded Vanguard motorcycles, based in Brooklyn. Though it appears Vanguard has delivered none of its V-twin-powered exotic bikes, about a year ago the three partners announced a company to build electric motorcycles, using the working name of VanguardSpark. Those plans have solidified into Fuell. In the announcement, Buell carries the title Chief Technical Officer and TERNY Chief Executive Officer. Vasseur has no job title.

Fuell currently plans to deliver the first Fluid bikes this year with prices starting at \$3,295 (£2,636), and the first Flow motorcycles in 2021, with a planned entry price of \$10,995 (£8,796) which seriously undercuts the competition from Harley-Davidson which introduced its electric motorcycle, the LiveWire, last summer at \$29,799 (£23,839).

Following the modern fashion of car sales, Fuell is making a fundamental change in what we think of as 'owning' a vehicle. Fuell promises 'financing options that favour usage over ownership (credit, leasing, battery leasing).' And, again, in this world of the smartphone being our most vital possession and 'tech' ruling all, Fuell promises an 'upgradeable' experience, noting specifically the battery, motor-driven wheel, and charger. Fuell also offers riders an app for 'digital services around mobility for an enriched experience.' Fuell and his French partners have a good understanding and respect for driving and riding high-performance vehicles, but it now has to be seen if that rubs off on its products.

John Booth



Congratulations...

.....to the following people who have passed their Advanced Driving Test.
We would all like to say 'Well done' to them and their Tutors.

Car Members

Associate/Member	Grade	Tutor
*Joe Rush	Gold	Retest
Tony Higgins	Silver	Diptendra Ghosh
Denis Smith	Gold	Tony Parish
Stuart Colwill	Gold	Retest
Alan Painter	Gold	Retest

**This is Joe's ninth consecutive Gold! Joe is 85. Who says driving deteriorates with age?*

Motorcycle Group

Associate/Member	Grade	Tutor
David Tomlinson	Silver	Mark Benians
Steven Moxey	Gold	Mark Benians
Simon Walton	Silver	Jason Goode
Tom Hyatt	Silver	Andries van der Watt
Simon Fullalove	Silver	Robin Carlyle
Nathan Parker	Silver	Andries van der Watt
Neil Matthes	Silver	Graham Knight
Paul Barnes	Silver	Allan Craven

Paul Sheppy has passed his retest as an Advanced Tutor (Cars)

Please remember to notify Max Davidson editor@roadatvg.org.uk
or Robin Carlyle membership@roadatvg.org.uk of your Test success.

Please also remember to let us have a note too of any re-Test result.
Publishing results encourages those Associates who are about to take the Test and gives an indication of how the Group is performing.

Your contributions to the Newsletter either 'Letters to The Editor'
or articles of interest to members are always welcome.
Please send them to The Editor, Max Davidson ...editor@roadartvg.org.uk

REMINDER

The full colour edition of the Newsletter will still be available four times a year online at www.roadartvg.org.uk

Those of you who do not have access to the Internet will still receive a printed copy, but the pictures, regrettably, will all be black and white as the cost of colour printing has proved prohibitive.



What's On - 2020

MONTH	Committee/Tutors	All Full & Associate Members
JAN	25th :Induction Day. (by invitation only) Venue Theale See NOTE 1	See NOTE 2
FEB		See NOTE 2
MAR		See NOTE 2
APR		See NOTE 2

The following was published in a previous issue of this Newsletter.....

***“If you have any suggestions for a Group visit
or a guest speaker for a meeting then please let us know !”***

There were NO responses - so NO further events have been planned.

***Please help us to remain a growing, friendly Group by letting
the Committee know your wishes for future activities !***

NOTES :

1. New Associates may join at any time by contacting the Membership Secretary.
Induction Days for new recruits are held quarterly.
Contact Paul Sheppy or Neil Goodhand for details.
 2. The regular Monthly Meetings have now been replaced by one-off special events suggested and organised by members. These may be targeted visits to places of interest to members or special guest speakers. Full details will be advertised on the website and e-mail notices sent out to enable members to register their interest.
- PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE REGULARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT-**
3. Please note that Guests (potential members?) Are usually welcome at our events. Any exclusions or charges will be made clear before booking.

Motorcycle Section Social Rides

These normally take place on the first Sunday of each month - details can be found on our website under Events - but being weather dependant are often not confirmed until a week beforehand. Contact [Tim Cuell](#) for more information.

In case of changes please refer to the website for latest information.

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N.B.

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Where 'xxxxxxx' = committee post.



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