



# Thought's of an Associate

By Frank Lea

I attended the Chickerel Skills Improvement Event in 2013 and went out with a DWDAM Observer for a ride out and advice on my riding. Previously I had been riding smaller bikes but had just purchased a Hyosung Aquila 250, basically because my 125 failed it's MOT and this bike was in the showroom at an affordable price, bigger but not too big. ! I knew I was a pretty rubbish rider and needed to improve, so I joined up, was assessed by Jim Hill and then allocated David Luke as my observer, to whom I am very grateful for his patience. I had passed my IAM car test some 35 years ago but still attend driver improvement courses and was very impressed to listen to Doug Miners at his recent car lectures (*he does a series for the car group as well. ed.* ). He is the IAM examiner and told me he prefers assessing bike riding as he can then ride. He also offered to hypnotise me, amazing character !

I have been practising my rider skills and am making progress. Sometimes it goes well, sometimes it doesn't. In both situations it soon passes. It is not how good you are at your best, but how bad you are at your worst –because that is when things can go seriously wrong. 'Winners' never quit. 'Quitters' never win. You just have to keep on going and believe in yourself taking and following as much advice from your observer and reading your books, watching DVD, You Tube clips, etc.

Last summer I turned up for a Group Ride Out being foolish not understanding the rules or etiquette and was politely told that perhaps I should complete some more practice as I would not be able to keep up with experienced riders and may compromise safety. I did not mean any disrespect by my foolishness but simply did not understand riding standards and that Group Ride Outs were for riders up to a certain standard of riding. (*New Associates need the OK from their Observer prior to going on a ride out. Ed.*)

However, on the first ride out of this year it was agreed that I could ride out at the back of the group for safeguarding being personally supervised by my observe David Luke. If I messed up with riders behind me I could compromise their safety. Dave told me to ride at my own comfort level and not try to keep up with those in front if it felt unsafe.

I arrived at the Top of Town car park with trepidation. Twelve bikes and one pillion met at around 9.45 am, signed up and gave contact details. We were informed of the rules for informing directions , there would be a leader and a back marker, overtaking allowed.

We set off on the higher Sherborne road past the Sun Inn at Charminster riding up over the chalk es-

carpment to Ridge Hill above Buckland Newton then passing downwards into Cosmore and Middlemarsh. Middlemarsh is appropriately named as there are many springs coming out of the bottom of the chalk escarpment around Cosmore. Then we turned left at Middlemarsh and turned right towards the top of Batcombe Hill and Holywell crossing the A37 Yeovil road towards Evershot ( old English for corner of land frequented by wild boars) through Horsey Knapp & Benville Lane ( old English bean and field) crossing the A356 Crewkerne road going down into Beaminster ( Saxon personal name of a woman called Bebbe and Old English mynster for large church ). We then turned left on the A3066 into Bridport taking the coast road to a pub on the far side of Abbotsbury ( old English for fortified manor of the Abbot ).

It was drizzly at the start, and heavy mist on the top of the hills with leaves and mud on the road in places. However, it dried up and the sun came out as we hit the coast road from Bridport. Somewhere along the way the back marker and two other riders became estranged from the group. They eventually arrived at the pub suggesting the roads were a bit congested at Plymouth !!

One bike (I'll mention no names) went ploughing in West Dorset into a soft muddy bank verge having caught his front wheel on some slippery clay on a right hand bend. Experience is something you do not get until just after you need it. I tried to pick up the bike and ride on before anyone notices, but not quick enough. Damage of minimal, just hurt pride.

I have trained in martial arts for many years and I now practice Taijiquan & study Chinese philosophy. There is a good moral story as to the repercussions of any event. Will it be good or will it be bad? **"We Shall See!"** So I fell off my bike but no one was hurt and little damage was sustained except for pride and letting down my observer, who was very understanding. If I learn from this it will make me a better rider and make the road safer both for me and for others.

The pub refreshments very nice as was the company. We played a game of killer in the skittle alley adjacent to the bar. There were many styles of 'throwing' the ball, the most impressive seemed to be the least effective! Debbie threw well whinnied on by her horse that was in the field next to the alley, "Close the window Debbie!" Tony and Mike popped in asking about the 'ploughing' match. There was a close battle at the end between Dick Catton, Mike Groves (who won last year) but they were both eventually beaten by Linda Ashmore to whom I thank for organising it as I very much enjoyed the ride, the skittles and the company.

Maybe the Group will let me ride out with them again? "We shall See"!

If this is published in the next newsletter maybe it will inspire someone else to take up IAM motorcycle advanced training. Personally this has been very inspiring for me and I really enjoy it. It gives me a buzz! There is such a level of skill and knowing how to ride your motorbike better gives so much enjoyment. I cannot believe how much I have improved in such a relatively short time. 🍷

**NOW** is as good a time as any !!