

The Rideout – Second Man Drop-off

Safety First...

On group rides it's necessary for all involved to understand that individual's actions can affect the safety of other group members. Group rides are not for the selfish. Group members must be prepared to give some thought and consideration to the safety of others, and enjoyment of all.

On ride-outs, we want everyone to ride safely and within their abilities at all times. To avoid the need for anyone to have to "ride like a nutter" in order to keep up with the bikes in front, we use the "second man drop-off" technique to signpost the route taken by the ride-out. Then everyone can ride as if they were out on their own and just enjoy their bike, the road and countryside.

There is a **no-overtaking** protocol within the group on ride-outs, again for safety reasons. This means that, after setting out from each stop, riders should keep to a fixed running order and a **safe distance**, no matter how slow the rider in front of them may be. A group ride-out is not a race and the overall pace must be set to cater for the slowest group member. Please also note that ***overtaking riders on the inside is extremely dangerous and should never be attempted under any circumstances.***

The Second Rider Drop Off Technique

Groups of five or more will have clearly identified lead and tail riders who take responsibility for briefing the group prior to moving off. Normally, both of these riders will be familiar with the planned route for the ride-out.

The lead rider will follow a predetermined route while the next rider in the group, the "second man", no offence ladies, will be responsible for keeping the rest of the group on course. Roundabouts are to be treated as any other junctions. At junctions, the second rider will stop in a safe place before the junction to show following riders the route taken by the lead rider. For a right hand turn "second man will pull over and demonstrate with hand signals the next turn. Note, however, that there is no need to do a second man drop off at junctions where the main road direction is straight on, and the ride is following that direction.

The second rider remains stationary until the arrival of the tail rider. The second rider then rejoins the ride and takes up a new position immediately ahead of the tail rider. In some cases, it will be necessary for the tail rider to ride past the stationary second rider, before the latter can rejoin the group. If this happens, the tail rider will either slow down or stop in a safe place to let the second rider catch up.

As the journey progresses all the riders in the group, apart from the lead and tail riders, will have their turn as the second rider.

As previously stated, group riding is not for the selfish, it's not a race so don't chase the rider ahead. But do keep the rider behind in view at all times - slow down and/or stop and wait if contact with the following riders is lost.

Develop a safe attitude and ride with pride. Maintain a good margin of safety at all times, whether it be the gap between riders, the distance from opposing traffic, keeping within the capabilities of machine rider and observing all speed limits (remember, some of us still have pre-TwinCam 88 breaks). Overtaking opportunities should be taken as they are presented but, if in doubt, hold back.

On straight open sections of road, riders should aim to ride in a staggered formation. The lead rider will ride in a central position and the second rider should ride on the left side of the lane. This allows the lead rider to have a good view to the rear and makes it easier for the second rider to pull over and stop at junctions. The third rider then takes up a position on the right side of the lane and so on. The tail rider will also ride in a central position, so that the lead and tail riders can see each other along the central gully between the other riders in the column. *(Note that crossing over from inside to outside staggered riding position (or visa versa) can be hazardous if the gaps between riders are too short. Remember the two-second rule and maintain a safe distance).*

It is not always possible or safe to travel in a staggered formation, e.g. on narrow roads, when adopting the correct line for a bend, or when part of the lane surfacing is in poor condition. In these cases riders should move into single file and increase the distance from the rider immediately in front.

When the group stops, riders should close up side by side so that the group occupies the minimum length of road necessary. This is especially beneficial in built-up areas in getting as many Harleys through a junction or traffic light sequence in as short an interval of time as possible.

Note for Road Captains.

Before the ride-out remind the group that they should not pull up within 25 feet of a junction for two reasons.

1. They could get the good news from the man in blue (get a ticket).
2. If a third party were to cause serious damage to the rider the insurance company could claim that they were illegally parked and not payout.
3. Always remember to brief the ride-out on the second man drop-off technique – there may be new riders in the group!