

VMCC WEST WILTS SECTION

NEWSLETTER 27th August 2026

Recent events

- The August Wandering was to the Old Brewery at Wyke – now fully resurrected from its last former life into a great cafe and still with a very good display of classic bikes – via Ginny's excellent café at Boynton. A great route and venues; it was an eventful run with a few breakdowns and other incidents. Accordingly there was a lengthy discussion at the meeting re. group runs:

Please note the key points below. Apologies for length of notes but it reflects many people's comments.

1. **Occasional breakdowns and minor spills** will happen; fortunately they are rare. In the event of such an incident, if as a following rider you feel able to assist (e.g. to help the other rider diagnose/fix a problem) please pull over and do so. The drop-off system will continue to work and it means the tail end rider is not always left to address every breakdown. Overall this means that the group is less likely to get overly spread out. If you suffer a breakdown or other incident, and decide to leave the ride, please (a) wait until the tail rider appears and inform them, and (b) if you have a smartphone, put a short message on the West Wilts WhatsApp group to let the lead rider and others know you've left.
 2. **Re-grouping.** While this is not strictly needed in the drop-off system, and bunching/large single group of bikes is not always desirable, especially if travelling on major roads below normal traffic speeds, on balance it was felt helpful if ride leaders occasionally wait in a safe location (large layby, quiet road) to re-group, especially where difficult traffic lights, roadworks etc. have broken the group up widely. This should then reduce the chance of long waits for turn markers at turns later in the run.
 3. **Turn marking.** It was clear that this is the key issue. Hence several points to note please, as below. On our group runs and wanderings, the lead rider will have spent time planning and probably riding/checking the route, as well as identifying and contacting the cafes, pubs etc. in advance. The tail rider will often also have put time and effort into preparing for the run. As participants therefore, able to enjoy an easy ride out together, it's not much to ask for us all to mark turns, and to do so effectively for everyone's benefit. That means:
 - a. When behind the lead rider, being alert and ready to stop promptly and mark a turn where requested.
 - b. Marking it clearly, so that following riders can easily see you and know where to turn. This is mainly about your position (hence the need to be alert and stop promptly at the turn point, not a way down the turn-off). Also please make yourself visible – not necessarily in hi-viz but if you're on a green bike wearing camo gear, don't wait in a hedge, and if in all black leathers, black lid and sitting on a black bike in November, maybe wave your arms around.
 - c. Being ready when the tail rider arrives, to spot them in good time and move off promptly (thus saving the tail rider from having to slow right down or stop in the road; they often have traffic already building behind them). If for some reason you're slow to move off, perhaps acknowledge and wave the tail rider on and then safely catch and pass them once you're going.
 - d. **And now the main thing: please, please Stay Put until the tail rider appears.** People reasonably ask how long we should stay there and go on waiting. The basic answer is (and I think this came from the VMCC website; sounds familiar but I'm not 100% sure): *"We shall not flag nor fail. We will go on until the end. If necessary, for years; if necessary, alone. Until in God's good time the tail rider appears, or the lead rider returns, or there is a message on the group WhatsApp from the lead rider with instructions for everyone"*. In practice it is rare for the wait to be over 10 minutes, it's very unlikely to be more than 30 minutes even in the worst cases, and the impact of leaving our position empty is likely to be a greater delay all round or the ride falling apart.
- Scamper: The West Wilts Scamper on Sunday 23rd August had 35 entries and 30 starters, around half were pre-war and many different marques were present. Most riders used the 40 mile route; several did the 80 mile route and included some or all of the green lane options. A good day in perfect biking weather and with most bikes making it to the finish (two stopping in sight of Yatton Keynell). A separate note will be issued on the event. Current intentions are to repeat the event in 2027, and to consider two such events during the year. Thanks to all entrants and to those helping with the event; and as ever to The Bell for allowing us to use it as the event base.

- Coffee morning Tuesday 25th August at Sleight Valley, was well-attended and the owner remarked he is delighted to be a regular fixture on the West Wilts café meetings list.

Coming up

- September's mid-week run on Thursday 3rd September will be led by Richard Sansom, and will include a coffee stop at Williams Automobiles (Norton and Morgan dealership) en route to lunch at The Bell, Frampton-on-Severn. Details and pre-order menu have been sent out.
- Non-section events locally: On Sunday 6th Sept. it's the Arbutnot Trial starting from Barford St. Martin. Tuesday and Weds 8th and 9th Sept. are bike track days at Combe circuit.
- On 8th September there is a full day green lane run scheduled; and also a gentle run on 15th – details to come on Green Lane WhatsApp group.
- Next Section meeting is Thurs 10th Sept. at the Bell, 7:30pm as usual.
- On Sunday 13th Sept. it's the final VMCC Relay Baton Handover from the Moonrakers, at Honeystreet Mill Café SN9 5PS – gathering from around 10am to noon; handover will be around 11am.
- The Treasurer's short run will be on Thursday 17th September (in place of the Wandering originally shown in the calendar). This will be suited to older/smaller and slower machines. Destination The Berkely Arms at Purton, via coffee stop at Leaf & Ground. Possibly visiting the "ships' graveyard" on the Severn in the afternoon. Pre-order menu to follow shortly.
- On Tuesday 22nd Sept. we're back to Honeystreet Mill café for the section coffee morning. Going to Honeystreet twice in quick succession is not a hardship.

AOB

- The nights are drawing in; so questions had been raised about the Xmas lunch. There was support for return to the Old Royal Ship at Luckington (still under same ownership), but also consideration of patronising The Bell (but subject to how they could accommodate a large group comfortably). To be investigated by the secretary and committee for a decision in September.
- Bristol classic bike show, Feb. 2027. Kevin Phillips wished to gauge interest in having a Section stand again. There is general interest but the issue is lack of support to man the stand on the Saturday, which has relied largely on Kevin and Carol in the past 2 years (as it effectively means exhibitors travelling to Shepton on 3 successive days). We will return to the topic at the next meeting to see who might volunteer. Mark Udall noted that it is possible to unload bikes very early on the Saturday morning. This might be a solution – some arriving Friday afternoon to unload bikes and set up the stand, others early on Saturday to bring the balance of bikes and help man the stand that day – but further discussion is needed.