



Recommendations on how to Ride as a group during Ride-Outs

Ride-Outs

By definition, this means an organised trip where we ride together as a Group of individuals from a known start point to a known venue.

If a ride-out is published on our web site, or by telephone, then it is probably an organised event and our own Rats will marshal the ride-out itself. These Rats whose names you will find on our Web Site, are there to serve as route guides, group safety controllers, and ride leaders. Their instructions are to be followed wherever possible. Although you are reminded, that any action taken by you (when on a ride-out) as a result of an encouraging request from a Rat or other member is done of your own free will and discretion. Only you are in control of your vehicle and the overall responsibility for the safety of your machine, is yourself, your passenger and ultimately those riding with the group are in your hands. You should only attempt a manoeuvre or speed if you feel comfortable with it and only within the laws of the land.

If we are on a ride-out organised by another Chapter or by HOG on official Rallies, then their Road Captains Marshals will have overall control of the ride-out and our Rats will help, either directly or by marshalling our group within their place in the ride-out (this will be decided by their captains/marshals and by the number of Road Marshals available).

Formation Riding - Convoy

Where space and road type permit, for safety and overall length of the convoy, we will be riding in staggered formation, with

Rats in charge.

The columns will not ride side by side, but alternately staggered, evenly spaced at a safe distance apart.

The recognised safe distance apart, thinking of braking distance, in fine weather is two seconds minimum, four seconds in the wet or at night, between you and the bike immediately in front of you in your column.

Quote "Only a fool breaks the two second rule"

Due to the staggered formation, the bike in front in the adjacent column will be 1 or 2 seconds minimum ahead while the bike immediately in front of you in your column will be 2 or 4 seconds minimum ahead respectively.

Do not ride in the blind spot of the adjacent bike ahead of you as in the event that they swerve, you may get taken out! You should also check your mirrors before setting off so that you can see the bikes behind you.

The staggered formation therefore will effectively reduce the length of our convoy by about half. Riding in this way requires discipline and restraint. If you do not have it, then make your own way there; you may be a danger to everyone else.

To marshal the group there will be The LEAD Rat, and the TAIL Rat or Sweeper.

Remember, an erratic riding style is most undesirable and your fellow Rats can and will ask you to ride safely and, if they think your riding style is continually unsafe to the group, they may ask you to leave the ride-out and make your own way to the venue — *Group riding must be safe riding.*

Group Configuration

The basic arrangement is to have a LEAD bike at the front, positioned in the middle of the carriageway so that he can see the TAIL in his mirrors through the two columns. The Lead bike will be the Rat who best knows the It is a very responsible and quite difficult job. He must ride at a speed under the speed limit, bearing in mind that the riders at the back may, at times have to go considerably faster to catch up. He must think of himself as the driver of a train (not an individual motorcyclist). His actions affect everyone. He must also spend well above normal observing his mirrors, checking the group are still in touch and looking for signals from other Rats or the Tail Rat . The Lead Rat should wear some form of bright clothing or a flag/pennant, as should the Tail Rat.

Behind the Lead Rat, positioned to the Nearside of the carriageway is the SECOND RIDER. This is important, see "Second Rider Drop off System".

Behind the second rider, and evenly staggered, are the rest of the group. If you want to ride near you friends, then get it sorted quickly before we start the ride, there should be no overtaking of each other within the group, apart from the Lead, Tail and Second Rats, who may need to overtake to do their job and should be allowed to do so as soon as it is safe.

Dispersed through the group (numbers permitting) should be Rats who will be in the offside column and act in a sweeper role to relay messages to and from the LEAD and TAIL, and to ensure overall safety of the group. To do this job, they must obviously

TAIL RAT



Second Rat



LEAD RAT

overtake you, so please do not mistake their actions for that of an erratic ordinary member on the ride. If you are in trouble, need to top-up with fuel (although stops will have been planned for this) or bursting for the loo, or a coffee to warm up, then catch the eye of the LEAD or Tail.

At the rear of the group is the TAIL Rat who should position himself in the centre of the carriageway so he can see the Lead Rat through the two columns. He should wear some form of bright clothing to identify himself, and to warn following vehicles of our presence. His job is to watch everyone for problems and notify the Lead Rat, either by radio or through another Rat being sent to the front. He can pick up stragglers or arrange for someone to be sent back to look after anyone who's broken down etc... the Tails is a boon to overtaking enmass on motorways or dual carriageways.

No other riders should follow behind the Tail otherwise; he will no longer fulfil that role.

A designated Rat should position himself immediately in front of the Tail Rat to aid communication with other Rats .

Overtaking.

Normal overtaking on a single carriageway roads may be instigated by the LEAD Rat whereby each successive bike takes up proper position to overtake i.e. comes out of the stagger to the outside of the lane and executes the manoeuvre when safe to do so. They should also accelerate once clear to leave room behind them for the following bike. If there is time for more than one bike to overtake together, then do so in single file, not in formation. Once past, maintain speed for a while

to gain a lead on the overtaken vehicle. This will provide room behind you for successive bikes to pull in without cutting-up the overtaken vehicle.

Remember, the more bikes remaining, still to overtake, the more room you must provide. Pull back in and reform the staggered formation in your original position.

Multi Carriageway Overtaking

We will or should be travelling in lane 1. If the Lead Rat feels we need to overtake he should signal to the Tail his wish, although, hopefully, the Tail, from his better viewpoint, may already have pre-empted this.

In a long convoy where the distance is too great for the Tail to properly perceive the leads intentions, and no radio link is available, then the signal must be transferred to the Tail Rat.

The Lead Rat indicates and holds his position. Each convoy member indicates and holds position --- start rear view mirror observations.

Upon receiving the signal, the Tail will instigate the overtaking manoeuvre by observing in his mirrors for a suitable gap. When ready, he will indicate and, when safe, he will pull out and claim the overtaking lane and hold station.

Each successive bike in the Tail to the Lead order should then move out into the overtaking lane as quickly as possible and hold their position. If well practiced, this will result in a wave effect from Tail Rat forward to Lead Rat.

Pulling back into lane 1 should be as organised as the pulling out, with the Lead moving over first and the Tail last, thereby the Tail is protecting lane 2 from encroaching cars for as long as possible.

Important Overtaking Notes

When overtaking on motorways, get it done as quickly (but safely) as possible. Just chugging along at only a few miles per hour faster means effectively blocking the overtaking lane and we become a menace to other road users.

Do not just move from lane to lane on any other members command. Yes we do want you to move, but please do your own road craft safety check first.

At the Lead discretion, it may be prudent in heavy motorway traffic conditions to stay mainly in lane 2. This is not strictly correct practice in accordance with the Highway Code, but it is safer and effects better progress than constantly changing between lanes 1 & 2.

Motorway Junctions and Slip Roads

Joining a motorway en-mass is difficult and dangerous. You may collide with the bike in front while looking over your shoulder for a gap. It is recommended you drop back from the bike in front and join in your own time, and then regroup once on the motorway.

Once on the motorway a very vulnerable area is when passing the exit slip roads. A large convoy can easily mask off a slip road to other road users.

- For an appreciation of convoy length, here is an example:
- 10 bikes travelling at 70mph at 1 sec apart (staggered)
- Each bike will be 32.22 yards apart having 9 gaps between Lead Rat and Tail Rat
- This will form a convoy $9 \times 34.22 = 308$ yards long

Be very alert for cars still in lanes 2 and 3 who have not prepared to exit the motorway in due time, so they cut across only to find us — a single mass of vehicles 300 yards long. Look over your shoulder into those blind spots and let the car through.

Road Junctions and Traffic Lights

When the group pulls up at various junctions or traffic lights we should close ranks by forming into double file (not staggered) to compact the convoy as short as possible. This will allow as many bikes as possible to clear the junction in one go. No rider should pass another whilst doing this.

If the entire group does not make it through the junction first time, then the Lead Rat should proceed slowly until the rest catch up, or if convenient, pull over onto the hard shoulder or into a lay-by.

Group riding in Towns

A difficult one this, there being so many distractions — zebra/pelican crossings, mini roundabouts, pedestrians, your reflection in the windows etc.

Where possible, keep tightly grouped in a double

file e.g. in congested slow moving high street traffic, and single file down narrow side streets. The Lead Rat must give clear direction signals prior to turning, if necessary using hand signals, to avoid the following group and other motorists being taken by surprise and running into one another.

Be very aware of all the bikes immediately adjacent to you, as maintaining your station relative to others is critical to everyone's safety. You will most likely be in each others blind spots.

General Points

Before a ride-out, ensure that you have a full tank, an empty bladder and your waterproofs. If you have a mobile phone please bring it. It would be an asset in summoning emergency help in the event of an accident. Keep alert and be aware of what is going on. Use those mirrors. Do not just stare at the bike in front's number plate.

Look out for the bike behind you. In the event of that bike getting into trouble, slow down or stop as appropriate. The bike in front of you should do likewise until the effect reaches the Lead Rat.

If the bike behind is just dawdling, then your action of slowing down should help in keeping the group together.

Removing an alien vehicle from the group

From time to time, another vehicle i.e. car, may find itself amongst the group, which we assume doesn't want to be there. A few drivers do this on purpose, annoyed that they cannot overtake in one go and become aggressive. The danger roads are single carriageways with short dual carriageway passing places. The car driver doesn't have enough time to pass at their first attempt.

A car driver in our midst may be quite nervous, assuming us to be "Bushey River Rats" and may make rash moves to complete their fly past only to cut in again suddenly, scattering bikes. This is dangerous, so the car must be removed from the group as quickly and safely as possible.

On multi carriageway roads, this is quite easy, the car can move out into the next lane and go when the opportunity arises or be encouraged to by the Tail Rat.

On a single carriageway road it is much more difficult. With the car unable to go due to oncoming traffic, the car can be encouraged to pass, one bike at a time on our side of the road, by you the Rats; it requires all riders in front of the car to respond with the following procedure:-

The bike immediately in front of the car moves over to the nearside and then beckons the car past — hopefully the car will take the hint.

The next rider does likewise and so on until the car has passed without crossing into the opposing lane.

When the car has passed, the riders behind resume their normal staggered position.

Second Rider Drop off

This is a well-used practice for navigating a group of riders through any deviation from the straight ahead route.

As the name suggests, the second rider — when approaching any left or right turn — will drop off the group and stop in a safe and prominent position from where he/she can point the following riders in the right direction. When the group has passed, he/she will rejoin the group just ahead of the sweeper.

It is a system that greatly reduces the risk of riders missing a turn, or getting lost, and is useful when driving through towns and cities.

Disclaimer

It is stressed that the above recommendations, although common practice within HOG, are recommendations only and are not enforceable instructions. As such, the authors, Bushey River Rats and HOG in general do not take responsibility for damage or injury to persons or their machines caused in the use or misuse of these recommendations.

You are reminded that any action taken by you (when on a ride-out) as a result of an encouraging request from a member is done of your own free will and discretion. Only you are in control of your vehicle and the overall responsibility for the safety of your machine, yourself, your passenger and ultimately those riding with the group are in your hands. You should only attempt a manoeuvre or speed if you feel comfortable with it and only within the laws of the land.

