

Passed the IAM test so now for some safe and serious biking.

I have a history in biking going back to my early teens when I was a real tearaway, and I count myself lucky to have made it this far. Last year, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to make my biking as safe as I possibly could and, earlier this year, finally contacted Geoff to enrol me on the IAM course. At the time, I was thinking about offering to do some Blood Biking, hence the need to be IAM approved.

My first outing with Phil Fairbrother revealed that, despite my initial thoughts, I was in fact a safe rider but, as Phil said, I wasn't doing it the IAM way. Thus, he, and more recently Geoff Salt, embarked on a mission to massage my misgivings into something a little more palatable so that I could think about the IAM test.

After eight observer sessions, four each with Phil Fairbrother and Geoff Salt, it was muted that I should put in for my IAM test, which Roy Stevenson confirmed would be on October 2nd 2016.

Well, the day didn't start too well. With road closures for the Chesterfield half marathon creating havoc across the town and many feeder roads, Roy had to change the route on several occasions on-the-fly, which only added to the 'moment' (I think I'd call it stress). We were on roads I had never seen, saw place names I'd never heard of, and was on high alert to make sure I didn't take a wrong turn, with adrenalin pumping at vein-busting pressure, but I went with the flow and carried on regardless. We went this way and that, backtracking and trying to avoid the snarl-ups, passing through Bolsover, Pleasley (I think) and then via more unknown villages to Heath, which is where Roy overtook me and gestured for me to pull in. 'Oh no', was my first thought but, on stopping at a CO-OP in deepest Derbyshire, Roy got off his bike and gave that all-revealing stern, negative look, but immediately followed through with an equally-revealing smile and said "it's a first". I guess teasing goes with the territory. Thanks for the quick follow-up, Roy. Roy stated that he normally uses the 'Remark' section of the Rider Report Form for constructive comments for those who have not done too well, but he said that he wanted to use it at the end of my ride to congratulate me on the test. Roy wrote, "Despite changing routes several times (due to road closures), Mr. Milner coped very well and produced an excellent ride. He was smooth and systematic. His positioning was exceptional. He could have done a bit of filtering but chose not to. However, this was one of the best rides I have ever seen."

I look back at where I was as a rider and now know that I have improved beyond belief. I feel that I am a safer and more confident rider, and I read the road better as I travel across Derbyshire. My approach to biking has changed forever, thanks to Derby IAM's Phil and Geoff.

I'll close by thanking Phil and Geoff for their dogged determination to get me there. For six sessions I felt as if I had a monkey on my back, always managing to foul up the first part of each session, but then recovering on the second stage. The penny dropped and I then started to have my own pre-meeting rides to get the niggles and demons out of the way, have a monkey-less ride, and prepare myself for the important stuff, that darn scrutinised ride. It was then that things started to come together, ending with my last two rides being reported as near perfect . . . you always do one darn thing wrong, don't you! Seriously, all comments were helpful, the approach was gentle and encouraging, and the bruises never showed! These guys know how to deliver the message, and I thank them for their steadfast approach.

Geoff and Phil – I'd be very happy to ride out with you but there are a couple of prerequisites . . . no trips top Nottingham (Geoff) and you drive up front!

Thank you and good luck to all IAM riders – budding and approved

Steve Milner

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Old enough to know better, but still too young to care.