

# VSOC Centre 12

## The Thames Valley Vultures

### RIDE-OUT PROTOCOL

These basic rules and principles are intended to help the group travel from A - B safely, without getting lost, and without constantly having to wait for those who have got stuck at traffic lights or junctions, etc.

At the start of the run, everyone should make a point of knowing who the designated Ride Leader (RL) and Rear Marker (RM) is and what bike they are riding so that you may instantly recognise them. It is important that both the Leader and the Rear Marker wear a high viz jacket if available and it is recommended that all riders use their dipped headlights during the ride. Spot lights should be turned off (if possible) as they are not helpful to the rear view of riders ahead. There should be no overtaking each other during the ride, with the exception of Marshals and other Ride 'Officials'.

Each individual is responsible for their own and their passenger (if they have one) safety and actions during the ride, and the VSOC, Centre 12 The Thames Valley Vultures, their officers and members cannot be held responsible for any loss, theft, accident or damage, no matter how caused. Participation in the ride, rally or event is indication of your acceptance of this caveat.

When moving together, on an open road, the pack should ride in staggered formation, so each rider has a suitable braking distance, but the overall length of the column is minimised to reduce inconvenience to other road users.

When the road ahead is clear, but has bends, the column can spread out a little, to allow each rider full use of the lane width for correct positioning for safety, view and progress around the bends. However, the gaps should not be big enough to allow an impatient motorist into the middle of the pack. As road or traffic conditions cause the column to slow down, the staggered position is resumed.

When overtaking, or changing lane DO NOT SLOW DOWN once you have completed your manoeuvre. Remember there will be other riders following you needing a space to pull into. If you slow down they will be stuck in the other lane with nowhere to go!!

A point to note here is, that whichever position you start off in, ie... outside of the lane, or nearside of the lane, is where you should stay throughout the ride. If, for any reason, a rider in front of you drops out, do not change sides to maintain the correct stagger, merely move up one position on the same side, thus re-establishing the formation without affecting other riders. (The exception to this rule is when you have rejoined the pack at the back having been a Second Man Marker)

The Ride Leader and Rear Marker will use the full width of the lane, as they see fit.

The rider immediately behind the RL is known as the 'Second Man' (SM). The Second Man should leave a slightly larger gap than normal between himself and the RL to give himself time to react to any signal given by the RL. The third rider should be alert to the prospect that the Second Man may suddenly stop or cut across their path in order to take up position. At a road junction, and usually when a change of direction is being made, the RL will raise his arm indicating that he wants the Second Man to become a Marker.

At, on, or before the junction or roundabout, the RL will point to the spot where he wants the SM to stop. The SM should, having done all the necessary mirror checks and signalling etc, pull over and

stop where shown, in such a fashion that he is not causing an obstruction to the flow of traffic. He then indicates to the following riders, by use of hand signals, which way the RL went. DO NOT use indicators for this purpose as it can cause confusion to other road users who will not understand the purpose of your signal.

Now, VERY IMPORTANT.....the SM remains at the junction until the Rear Marker comes along.....no matter how long that may take.

As the RM approaches, he will drop back slightly from the rider in front, to provide a gap into which the Marker should slot to rejoin the ride.

As all this is happening, the next rider in the pack, becomes the Second Man, and the process can be repeated as required. The golden rule is:- if there is no Marker at a junction, you should assume the ride stayed on the same road.

Using this system, it does not matter how much you may get separated from the main group because of traffic conditions or signals, you will always know where to go, but it only works if the Marker remains in position until the RM comes by.

NEVER, pull out of the pack for any reason (such as to re-fuel) without making the RM aware of your intentions. Otherwise you run the risk of becoming parted from the ride. On the subject of fuel, you should always have a full compliment of fuel at the Departure Point for the ride out. The RL will schedule stops appropriately for the bike with the shortest range on the ride, or 100 miles whichever is the lesser.

At petrol stops you should ensure that you have enough fuel for the next, (potentially 100 mile) leg of the journey and fill up if in doubt. There is nothing more annoying, than having to stop for someone who could not be bothered to fill up when they had the opportunity. Do not wait until you are empty to re-fuel.

If a rider has a problem, he should flag down the RM who will try to assist, and will wait with the rider if necessary.

The RL will (to the best of his ability.....we all make mistakes!) lead the ride on the planned route to the destination. He will control the speed of the pack, taking into consideration Learner or inexperienced riders in the group, weather conditions and other influencing factors.

Speed limits will be strictly obeyed in 20, 30, 40 and 50 mph zones. Each rider is responsible for his own conduct and to ride within his / her own capabilities and the law. Having said that, each rider should, in consideration for other riders, do their best to keep up and maintain the speed of the pack. The RM, will make space available between himself and the last rider, for the 'Second Man' to filter back in at each junction / change of direction. If for any reason this is not possible, the RM will slow to allow the SM to overtake and rejoin the group immediately. On Dual Carriageways and Motorways, the RM will where possible aid the RL to initiate lane changing manoeuvres when required, by changing lane in advance, thus making space for the column to move into. He will do the same where lanes of a carriageway merge, to prevent following vehicles overtaking and ending up causing problems for riders in the middle of the group. Even when riding in the middle of the group, riders should constantly be checking their wing mirrors to be aware of the situation behind, and ready to react to the changing situation. If a rider has difficulty, or has to stop for any reason, the RM will stop and establish the nature of the problem. Both riders will continue on the route as quickly as possible, and where conditions allow, make progress to rejoin the main group.

If there is a serious problem or one which will have an impact on the group, the RM should telephone the ride leader and leave a message detailing the situation and his proposed course of action. It will become apparent that there is a problem, when the pack dwindles in numbers, with riders waiting in their Second Manning positions for the RM.

Always ride within your capabilities.

## Disclaimers

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*John Bryning - VSOC President 01 January 2004*

*Centre 12 of the VSOC, The Thames Valley Vultures, insist that when attending club nights or venues, and whenever riding with any other club member, only road worthy, fully taxed, insured and where appropriate MOT'd motorcycles are used. The act of participating in such meeting, event or ride shall be taken as the member's acknowledgement of this condition and their personal assurance that they fully comply with it.*

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