



“IT WAS NICE TO SEE SO MANY WOMEN RIDING BIKES”

Fifty female bikers with vastly different experience made the most of a training day held by Dorchester and West Dorset Advanced Motorcyclists



How do you organise a motorcycle skills day for women that will have as much appeal to a non-biker as one with more than 30 years of riding experience? For Linda Ashmore of Dorchester and West

Dorset Advanced Motorcyclists (DWDAM), it was about putting together a great team.

“The women bikers skills event couldn’t have happened without the commitment and professionalism of a lot of people,” says Linda, who recently became the first rider in her group to pass the Masters assessment. “National observers and observers volunteered from groups throughout the region so that we could run practical sessions for all experience

Top: Women bikers came from far and wide to attend the day of talks and skills sessions

levels. We also had a range of inspirational women speakers who were brilliant at encouraging the riders.”

With its conference facilities, large car park and proximity to a range of interesting roads for assessed rides, Weymouth College was a popular venue for the event. Although the majority of the 50 riders came from the south-west, some travelled from further afield – a clear indication of the interest in this type of event.

To kick-start the day, national observer Dr Lillian Hobbs gave two talks on advanced motorcycle techniques, while the non-bikers and CBT riders joined Karen Taylor of Karen’s Motorcycle Training School in the car park for an introduction to riding.

The remainder of the day consisted of a rolling programme of two talks: first-on-the-scene first

WOMEN RIDERS

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aid given by Dr Wendy Peters, and travel and adventure riding by Sheonagh Ravensdale and Pat Thomson. On the practical side of things, skills sessions in the car park involved bike manoeuvring and slow riding, while observers were kept busy with a consistent stream of assessed rides. PC Leanne Godwin, one of only a few female police motorcyclists, was also on hand to give encouragement and expert tips.

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Jessie Normaschild travelled from London to Dorset on her Kawasaki ER-6 for the event. Having ridden since 1984, Jessie was one of the most experienced riders there, but embraced the opportunity to learn something new.

“The day was brilliant – it was nice to see so many women riding bikes,” she says. “The practical sessions were definitely the best bit. My slow riding skills have improved a hundred-fold. The instructors were encouraging, so it was easy to keep trying, and it was great to see women instructors of such a high standard.”

For Rachel Bannister, the event was life-changing. “I’ve wanted to ride a motorbike since I was a teenager, but this was my first time even sitting in the



Above: PC Leanne Godwin was on hand to give expert tips

saddle,” says Rachel. “It won’t be the last and this is the start of a new phase in my life.”

Having picked up her new Tiger 800 the day before, the event was particularly timely for Jane Neal from Poole. “I was very nervous about using my ‘new’ bike for the exercises but gained lots of confidence in the large, safe environment. I’m about to sign up for my Skill for Life.”

For those riders who could make it for a second day, Linda organised a ride-out around the stunning Dorset countryside.

There was certainly something special about it being an all-women event. Riders had a rare opportunity to exchange their experiences with other women bikers and were full of praise for the team of instructors. Some signed up for Skill for Life, others went away thinking about training to be an observer, while others dreamed of adventurous tours across South America. What they all agreed on was that they wanted “to do this again”.

Thanks to national observers Gina Herridge, Lillian Hobbs, Melanie Rowbottom and Di Woodcock; observers Mimi Carter Jonas, Sue Kolkowski, Penny West, Rose Young and Teresa Wood. Thanks also to Dr Wendy Peters, Sheonagh Ravensdale, Pat Thomson, Karen Taylor from Karen’s Motorcycle Training School, and PC Leanne Godwin.