



VMCC South Midlands Area – October 2023 Newsletter



This is the first of what I plan to be a monthly newsletter to the South Midlands sections, primarily to pass on any news I have gleaned at the Area Reps meetings. These are normally held on the last Wednesday of each Month. The next is scheduled for 29th November 2023.

Head Office Bulletin: Neil Lewis, the chair is also an AR and he gives us a briefing on what the board has been working on. He also issues a Head Office Bulletin at the end of each month and usually this is published only a day or so after the AR's meeting. You will already have received his October bulletin and I will not duplicate that information here unless I need to expand any topics or seek section views.

New Club Awards: The club has a wealth of silverware lying unused at Allen House and we discussed introducing a number of new awards. Five were agreed, some for sections and some for individuals. These will be submitted to the board for consideration at their November meeting and details will be published in the Journal early in the New Year if approved. They will be for activities in 2024 and awarded at the 2025 AGM.

Digitising Old Journals: Club journals in digital form are available to view and download as pdf files from the club website but only going back to about when we switched to A4 format. We discussed digitising the older journals, not necessarily the whole journal in most cases but to make available specific articles of particular interest or merit to be available on-line to members. This is obviously a significant task and the views of the volunteer library team led by Pat Robotham are being sought. It is anticipated that it will be mainly technical articles initially. I would be interested in the views of your section as to the merit of this idea and what if anything you would like included.

Club Bikes: John Donaldson the FD has been working very hard to establish the status and location of the club bikes which have proliferated in recent years. He produced an update which at present cannot be shared in full for privacy reasons. However, it does list over 60 bikes which fall broadly into three categories. Around 22 loaned to the club; these are being returned to their owners as soon as possible, ideally by end October. There are roughly 30 bikes owned by the club which were either purchased or donated which are considered to have little historical or technical merit. Seven of these were sold at the recent Pughs auction and it is intended to sell the rest over the coming months. The third category amounting to circa 10 bikes (like the Brough and Dreadnought) will be retained by the club primarily for display but may be available for loan once they have all been recovered to Allen House, checked over and a new loan process agreed. This is a monumental but essential task that will put some money back into club funds, reduce expenditure in the longer term and the diversion of management time.

Club Finances: The Q3 (up to June 2023) results were published on the website at the end of September. They show a net loss of £44k which is a concern obviously but actually an improvement against budget which forecast a £70k loss by Q3. This reflects a huge effort by the board and particularly John Donaldson the new FD to contain costs since taking control after the 2023 AGM in March. The Q4 (up to year end September 2023) results should be available mid-November. The forecast for the 2022-23 FY was a £35k loss. A profit is unlikely but something closer to break even would be very welcome.

The 2023-24 Budget: JD announced that the board had set next years budget and it will be published to the membership in mid-November. He gave no specific details but as I understand it, break-even is based on continuing very tight control of expenditure, retaining the £55 subscription rate and ideally growing or at least maintaining the present levels of membership. I doubt any of this is a surprise though doubtless some would have hoped for a reduction in the subscription rate. Given the club's very high fixed overheads, a reduction in subscription will realistically need these to be addressed as well as an increase in membership to share those costs. That perhaps is where we can help at section level by continuing to promote the club to recruit new members and more critically trying to persuade existing members not to lapse. Neither are easy and I am aware that some sections are struggling with attendance and finding volunteers for section officer posts.

As a matter of record since 1st January 2022 in the SM area we recruited 165 new members but 354 members lapsed and only 45 rejoined. The membership figures in recent copies of the journal suggest this downward trend is continuing though it may be slowing a little. For my own part I am proposing to carry out a survey of those South Midlands members who lapsed in the past 2 years or so to identify their reasons. For sure the subscription rate will be one, possibly major, reason but there may well be others that we could do something about to encourage them to rejoin. Time to find out.

Section Visits: Part of the role of an AR is to establish and maintain contact with the section membership. So far I have been doing this mainly by email and the odd phone call as the summer has been a busy period for me personally. I do plan to visit sections but my location puts me at the bottom of the SM Area so a round to trip in many cases is between 100-200 miles. Winter is drawing on and I don't like driving in the dark these days so it's unlikely I will be able to manage an evening visit to section meetings until the Spring for which I apologise in advance. However, I am studying SM section calendars and will try to fit in daytime visits to events. I'll let individual sections know when I plan to come out of courtesy.

Safe Riding

Peter Fielding – Area Rep, South Midlands VMCC



Couldn't resist including a picture of my new baby picked up yesterday. It is a veteran of 3 Colombes Rallies in the hands of previous owner and I always admired it. I just had to have it when it became available. I can start it easily enough at the moment. The electric starter is my way of future proofing my riding. All being well I hope to ride it to future SM section meetings.