

You're in safe hands – all BMW Rider Training Instructors are RoSPA Diploma Advanced Instructors or examiners



OUR INSTRUCTOR



IAN ROGERS

RoSPA
Instructor Ian

started as an army trainer, before joining BMW Rider Training. With years of practical experience – plus local knowledge – he's the ideal man to get the best training opportunities out of the South Wales roads.

BEAR WITH ME, but I need to talk about roller skating for a while. The other day, for the first time since I was a kid, I went roller skating. It was much more fun than I expected. It was also easier than I remembered.

More precisely, it was easy to get started. But then, quite quickly, I stopped progressing. I was still having trouble with the corners. And I was a long way short of the sub-teens who were able to text while they were going along backwards.

So I asked for help. Try this, someone said. Try that, someone else said. Stop doing that, you berk, said somebody else. And then I was making progress again. Some things that 20 minutes earlier had been a real effort were now coming naturally, and some other things that had seemed impossible now felt do-able.

And that's when the penny dropped. This is pretty much exactly the same process that's involved in advanced motorcycle tuition. A

degree of imitation. An element of discussion. A lot of practice.

For some reason I found it much easier to set aside my ego and seek help in a roller skating arena than I generally do when it comes to motorcycling. Maybe it's something to do with the fact that me on roller skates is so clearly, thoroughly absurd that I've got nothing to lose by admitting to my cluelessness.

A couple of weeks earlier I'd been given some of the finest motorcycle training that money can buy. I benefitted hugely. But lord was it a struggle. If Ian Rogers, my instructor, wasn't such a patient man he could so easily have resorted to poking me with a sharp stick, screaming "NOW DO IT PROPERLY", and there isn't a jury in the land that would have convicted him.

Ian is the chief instructor for BMW Rider Training, the on-road riding course element of World of BMW. World of BMW is the semi-detached division of BMW Motorrad UK, based in Wales and

Learning curve

BMW Rider Training will help you get the most from your riding

Words **Colin Overland**
Pictures **Llewellyn Sullivan-Pavey**

focusing on the experiences, the lifestyle and the training aspects of motorcycling.

Global adventuring deities Kevin and Julia Sanders are the key figures in World of BMW, and most specifically in the BMW Tours bit. You'll have heard of Simon Pavey, the off-road legend who runs their Off Road Skills course and whose son Llewellyn took the pictures on these pages, some of them from the back of a bike ridden by Simon.

BMW Rider Training's job is to get you from where you are to where you want to be. Whether that means passing your test, or passing your RoSPA Advanced Rider test, or getting ready for a big trip, or exorcising a few personal demons on one of the BMW Road Skills courses, there's an option that will suit you – and if there isn't one waiting to be plucked off the hook, they'll tailor one to your specific requirements. It's not necessarily cheap, but

you can rely on them to bring out the best in your riding.

You've got no excuses. You do the training in and around the Brecon Beacons – some of the finest riding roads in the country. You have a choice of BMW bikes to use for the training. You can hire riding gear, except boots, so you should be warm and dry. You're connected by radio to your instructor – and your instructor will be one of the best.

I did some Individual Premium Training, which is the most flexible of the courses on offer, and can work however much or little experience you have. This course was two days long. The cost varies with the season, but you're looking at something like £200 a day, plus B+B, plus the cost of getting to the Brecon Beacons.

The format isn't revolutionary; it's the same sort of approach taken by advanced on-road instructors everywhere, it's just that here the execution is superb.



There's a thorough briefing before every ride



And plenty of stops during the day for even more feedback



Ian reminds Overland of the system again



It's starting to sink in. Practice makes perfect

The instructor has a good look at your riding, hears about your experience and aspirations, and decides which aspects of your riding can most effectively be worked on.

Like a lot of instructors, Ian is convinced about the effectiveness of the system detailed in *Roadcraft*, the police riding manual.

It's a system that relies on constant observation of your ever-changing environment (the roads, other road users, the weather etc), and then adjusting your road position, speed, gear and acceleration depending on what information is telling you. That's a crudely over-simplified summary of a system that seeps into everything you do on the road.

Personally I've been grappling with *Roadcraft* for 30 years or more. I say grappling but that's not right. It implies a contest of equals. What I really mean is that for 30-odd years, ever since I first read my dad's old copy, I've failed to rise to its challenges.

It's a brilliantly clear book. You know exactly what it thinks you should do, and exactly why. What it wants you to do is follow the system that it outlines, because it's a system that only works if it's followed all the time.

For 30 years and more I've had trouble with this. I don't want to follow systems all the time – I like to dip in, to try something else, to consider alternatives, to dabble. Thirtysomething years of this... and Ian spotted it in minutes.

"Following you, it's really obvious that there are some bits of the system that you've taken on board, but not others. And then you'll do something weird, especially if there's a puddle in the road."

He's had plenty of experience of dealing with *Roadcraft* unbelievers, agnostics and deniers, and doesn't attempt to impose his faith on you. Instead he does something much more powerful: he shows you how well it works. Ian is a brilliant advert for the system. You follow him and you see how smooth he is, how well

You can carry on riding longer and faster, staying fresher, if you're smooth and in control

prepared he is for hazards, how he's always in the right gear, on the right bit of road, looking way ahead. When he stops and takes his helmet off, he's calm and collected but he's also grinning as much as anyone who's been riding soaked in sweat and adrenaline.

That's the thing about Ian's take on the system: it enables you to have more fun, and to *keep on* having fun. "You can carry on riding longer and faster, staying fresher, if you're smooth and in control, than if you're wrestling with the bike."

During my two days with him I made some progress. Ride, chat, ride, chat. Usually him following me, sometimes me following him. I got better at looking over my shoulder to be certain I knew exactly what was going on behind me. My positioning on the road got better. I was overtaking more efficiently. I was dodging more manhole covers and I was in the right gear more often.

I wasn't doing as many lifesavers as Ian would have liked, and my idea of a good overtaking opportunity wasn't the same as his. I continued to take some odd lines as I approached roundabouts – but not as odd as before.

The challenge now is to maintain that progress. And, most importantly, I need to give the system a chance. I need to apply it rigorously and consistently.

I need to keep on with the running commentary: "Car pulling out ahead, hedge goes to the left at the brow of the hill, Fireblade catching me up fast, distracted-looking truck driver approaching..."

I need to keep an open mind. Try different things. If I see someone whose technique I admire, I need to ask them how they're doing it. And I need to learn how to roller skate backwards.

For more about BMW Rider Training www.bmw-motorrad.co.uk/world-of-bmw/rider-training/