

MSR Corner Marking System

Easy to understand, the Corner Marking System is one of the strong points of our Club. For it to work well it is important that everyone has a thorough knowledge of how it works and the underlying philosophies. In no way is it perfect: we are always looking for ways to improve. So, if you have an idea or any constructive criticism, please contact the Committee.

Historically this article was written for the benefit of new and prospective members back in 1988. They were given a copy of it or received a copy in the post. Later it was given to new members as part of their show-bag of Club goodies. It was written with a view to it being of a timeless nature, wholesale modifications hopefully unnecessary. Reprints have appeared in the Club Magazine ever since. Hopefully there is something in it for all of us, new or old.

There is a *Leader* and a *Rear-rider*. Ideally, no-one passes the Leader, and the Rear-rider passes no-one. When the Leader comes to an intersection at which they are deviating from straight ahead, or there is any likelihood of confusion, the Leader will point to the side of the road indicating that the following two riders are to stay there corner-marking until all the following riders have passed through, and the Rear-rider arrives. The corner-markers then proceed until next required to corner-mark.

By corner-marking we mean indicate by using the bike's indicators or pointing out the direction the riders should take. Good corner-markers work as a team positioning their bikes to indicate the direction taken by the leader. Let the bikes do the talking.

Be considerate! Corner marking is not the time, for example, to gamble on completing smoking a cigarette before the rear-rider arrives. The rear riding position is onerous enough without making them wait while you hastily prepare to leave.

Be safe! Parking on the 'riding line' is very dangerous. Park as far to the left as possible, or better still and where appropriate, mount the kerbside, traffic island, median strip, etc. Otherwise, you are likely to get run into, not by the bike approaching, but the one behind who does not have a fair view - or worse still, the car behind the car. If someone is travelling too quickly, then the riding line should include the wide riding line and the straight-ahead riding line, especially at T-junctions at the end of dirt roads. It is better to never double-park.

Be in communication! Ideally, park within talking distance of your corner-marking partner, or at worst, within visible communication, in case action is required.

Be visible! Positioning your bike to indicate the direction taken by the Leader only works when that bike is visible to the following riders. On right hand corners it works well, especially at T-junctions where one bike can park at the end of the 'T', side-on to the following riders, the other bike parking before the intersection leaving its indicator on.

Left hand corners are more difficult. If visibility is good, one bike can creep just around the corner. If visibility is poor, for instance there is a building on the corner, it is ineffective parking around the corner - the communication link is broken. It is better for two bikes to be stopped one behind the other before the corner, indicating. To get around this, some riders might park on the other side of the road, like a right-hand turn at a T-junction, but this time facing the other way. This is obviously a highly illegal manoeuvre as at some stage you must ride on the wrong side of the road. Which leads to the next point:

Be discreet! Corner marking is probably illegal in the first place. Parking on the wrong side of the road with your headlight blazing and blinkers flashing isn't discreet. Oncoming car drivers at best will be confused and more likely irate. The police will probably take a dim view.

Depending on the size and style of ride, we often have groups of bikes forming at intersections, usually waiting for the Leader to get a little ahead. Don't obscure the field of view for the following riders of the corner marker with either your bike or body.

The onus is on the Leader to drop corner markers at potentially confusing intersections. Large roundabouts with multiple exits spring to mind.

Night rides (now a thing of the past) offer the greatest potential for the Corner Marking System to fail. Consider, "If I was on a night ride, would this be a suitable place to corner mark?" If yes after considering the safety, visibility, and communication aspects, then it is most likely suitable in the daytime.

Two bikes are left to corner mark for a few reasons. Primarily, if a rider misses a turn, one of the corner markers can chase and bring the errant rider back. The remaining rider continues to perform the function of corner-marking, and the ride 'flows'. Most riders are not inconvenienced and little or no time is lost. So if there is only one bike on a corner, make a second.

If a rider breaks down, gets a puncture or crashes, the following two riders must stop to offer assistance.

After an incident the Leader will eventually run out of corner markers and stop. The Leader must be informed of the incident and the estimated time delay by a messenger sent by the rear-rider. A decision can then be made by the Leader where best to regroup. Therefore, it is important that corner markers never leave their corner until the rear-rider, or his messenger arrives. After an in-ordinate amount of time has elapsed (usually greater than 10 minutes) since the last bike passed through, one rider may leave the corner and (normally) back-track down the corner markers to render assistance and determine the cause of the delay.

If on arrival at an unmarked intersection there is any doubt as to which way the Leader has gone, proceed straight ahead. At Y-junctions, take the major road; at large roundabouts (though often marked), go straight ahead.

Using a corner marking system makes for a smooth ride. Riders can travel at their own pace; if they wish to travel faster, they will end up corner-marking more often; if they ride at a leisurely rate then only occasionally will they be required to corner-mark. Effectively, riders can travel at any speed they wish. Other advantages of this system are that riders very rarely get lost, and there is no need to be constantly looking at a map - in fact you don't even have to know where you are going!

Ben Warden

Major revision: 31st August 1995, Ben Warden - delete male language bias

Minor revision: 12th August 1997, Ben Warden - spelling, grammar

Minor revision: 28th June 2005, Ben Warden - name change

Minor revision: 30th March 2010, Ben Warden - delete reference to Emergency Kit

Minor revision: 26th January 2023, Ben Warden - converted from .html to .pdf; removed italics, grammar