

DUMFRIES GROUP
OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2005

**STEERING A COURSE FOR SAFER
DRIVING AND RIDING**

The Chairman's Comments - Alan Jones

I am pleased to inform you that since the last Newsletter your Group has continued to grow with the motorcycle section now having over twenty members. Graeme McColm and his team are receiving so much interest from the public that they are quietly confident that by this time next year they will be around fifty strong. This is a phenomenal growth rate considering that only a couple of years ago this section did not exist.

In the car section we have had 6 recent passes, congratulations and well done to you all! See Helen Cameron's report later in this issue for more details. Eight new Associates have recently been put through the latest two classroom theory sessions by course tutor, John Pearson.

To help cope with the workload we have recently been running new Observer courses aimed at getting Observers up to the standards of the new IAM National Qualification. I'm pleased to announce Andrew Hastings, Ryan Fingland, Anne Lind and John Black have all passed the training sessions, as did Hamish Sellar, a little before Christmas; they are now all designated as Group Observers. Incidentally this scheme is open to all full members and is suitable for existing observers, who trained under the old system, as well as new participants who are looking to embark on observing for the first time. If you are interest in gaining the qualification yourself then please let me know.

We also have another four or five Associates who are close to being Test ready. So, all in all, 2005 should be a good year with a further increase in both our car and motorcycle membership. Our target for reaching 100 members is now not so far away.

Our monthly meetings in the Dalston House Hotel have seen some interesting speakers, a number of whom have been drawn from our own members, all have been stimulating and well received. I would encourage all our full and associate members to try and attend these meetings as they are a pleasant way in which to keep in touch with other members in general, and the topic of road safety in particular. It's good to see the odd Associate attending these meetings but I would like to see more coming forward as it is a good way of forging stronger links with the Group and perhaps, expressing an interest in helping others to improve their driving and riding skills by training to become an Observer, once through the Test.

The sale of DVD's on motoring topics is progressing well and the Group is now starting to be recognised throughout the UK for expertise in this area. We have even have even had enquiries and orders for multiple copies and so far well over one hundred copies have been sold. Thanks to Graham Watson for his efforts in this regard. We are hoping to produce more road safety related titles

in the future including a title aimed at helping motorcyclists to improve their 'on the road skills'. This year our DVDs are even better value at only £3 each to Group Members or £10 for four so if you have not invested in a set maybe now 's the time to do so, just speak to Helen Cameron.

Hopefully the modest income from the sale of these DVD's may mean the Group will become a little less reliant on outside bodies as a source of funding in the future. Please be assured that there are many ideas for spending any surplus money in ways that will help our Group further promote road safety in Dumfries & Galloway.

You will notice from the back cover that Deans are again sponsoring the costs of producing this edition. Our grateful thanks go to Deans for assisting us; although the costs may be relatively modest the sponsorship really does make a difference to the work that we do. Mark Ranshaw also deserves a mention for his help and expertise, at short notice, in getting the necessary advertising copy converted to the format we use, to enable us meet the print deadline.

I look forward to meeting many of you at our April meeting and the AGM in May. Until then, please enjoy your driving and riding as the light nights and good weather approaches.

The blind spot in your eye

Cover your left eye, put your face close to the paper, and look at the car. Slowly pull your face away from the paper and at some point the motorcycle will disappear. Or cover your right eye and look at the motorcycle, pull away, and the car will disappear.



Did you notice the effect and importantly did you notice that the blind spot does not show up, instead the picture simply disappears? The problem is caused by a blind spot in your eyes caused by the layout of the nerve fibres. You can't see the blank area because the brain fills in the empty spot and you see the surrounding colour where the picture is.

When out on the road you should recognise that not only are there blind spots caused by parts of your vehicle, street furniture etc but you have a blind spot in each eye. It is possible that this phenomenon could affect your perception of what is ahead, especially if you were to just stare ahead, but using a scanning method of observation should counteract this problem.

In this issue we'll be taking a look at the subject of blind spots, so look out for articles on the subject in the following pages.

Showing in a car near you?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (USA) has started a crackdown on vehicle customisers who remove drivers airbags and install video screens – in the centre of the steering wheel!!!!



The first fine (\$16,000) was imposed on a company who are affiliated with MTV's car makeover show "Pimp My Ride" and was brought not for installing the video player/ screen in view of the driver but for removal/ disabling of in-car safety equipment.

They say what starts in the US eventually comes over here - you may think we have regulations preventing this - but regulations stop nothing, they only allow a method of fining someone who transgresses the requirements and then it may be too late.

Over here a well known top of the range 4x4 has a Sat Nav screen which also doubles as a TV. The TV cannot be activated unless the vehicle handbrake is engaged but apparently drivers can, and do, get around this by driving with just one notch of the handbrake engaged!

Test your Highway Code Knowledge



Here are a couple of examples of road use seen every day on our roads, but do you know which Highway Code rule(s) apply to these situations?

British Nuclear Group assists Motorcycle Section

As part of their 'Chapelcross Care Scheme', British Nuclear Group recently made a donation of £250 to the Motorcycle Section. This scheme makes funds available to local organisations for the promotion of safety.

The Group has used the donation to purchase yellow reflective vests, printed with the Institute of Advanced Motorists logo.



Shown above are Group Observers and Associates with BNG representatives at the Chapelcross Plant in February this year.

Secretary's Report - Helen Cameron

Once again we are approaching the last quarter of our syllabus and the AGM. We've had a varied group of speakers this year but the numbers at meetings has been disappointing at times. If you have a particular subject or person you would like to hear about, or if you can offer a talk yourself then let a committee member know. Please pass your thoughts and ideas on. Why not come along to the AGM and after a brisk run through the formal part of the evening you can try your hand at Rallying -Table top style - it's great fun and also taxes the brain.

In the last newsletter I reported that we were without an Examiner - this is still the case but Robin Bell from Penrith has been standing in. Congratulations to John Black, Nicoll Milne, Steven McColm, Brian Armstrong and James Sisi who all passed their Advanced Driving Test. Congratulations also go to Ryan Fingland who passed his test back in November 2004 (just missing the print deadline for the last issue) and is now an Observer along with Hamish Sellar, Anne Lind, Andrew Hastings and John Black who are all aiming to achieve the IAM National Observer Qualification. Congratulations also to Mark Ranshaw on becoming a Qualified Car Observer and to Scott Anderson, Andrew Bird and Graham Abrines who have achieved Qualified Motorcycle Observer status.

We are just putting a group of new Associates out onto the road with their Observers so good luck to you all. I hope we will have a good turnout for our last few events of the syllabus and I particularly look forward to seeing a few new faces.

Observe - correct sign?

Westbound travellers on the A75 between Hetland and Collin may have noticed this sign at the side of the road - but is this the correct sign for the circumstances at this location?



Mind that silly trucker

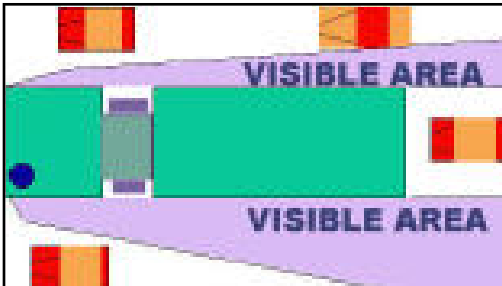
When you drive on motorways and dual carriageways are you paying enough attention to the movement of lorries on the road?

It is not easy driving a large goods vehicle; although you may have a good vantage of the road ahead, your view behind is dependant on the several mirrors on either side of your cab, and maybe a rear view camera.

If these mirrors are adjusted to the optimum there will still be significant blind spots on either side of the vehicle, dependant on the field of view of these mirrors. Generally there will be more potential for a blind spot on the offside (RHS) of a left hand drive lorry or the nearside (LHS) of a right hand drive lorry.



If you pay maximum attention to your motorway driving you will identify a foreign registered lorry as you approach and recognise that the driver may have an increased likelihood of a blind spot to his offside. But wherever a lorry



is registered it still requires the driver to correctly adjust, and use, the mirrors to be able to see you! If another driver cannot see you or does not look in his mirrors, then he won't take you into account when making a manoeuvre; even if he is only driving a car!

So the best advice when closing on other vehicles, especially lorries in nearside lanes, is to monitor their actions and position. Are they closing on other vehicles? Are there vehicles joining from a slip road? Are they likely to want to pull out to overtake? Can you see the driver in his mirrors? Is he looking at you? What is happening behind you and further ahead?

All these factors need to be taken into account when devising your driving plan. If traffic conditions allow, it probably would be advisable to move to lane 3, enabling you to move away from danger and maintain a safe space around your vehicle. If this is not possible then, of course, you should reduce speed and hold your position, behind the vehicle which may move out, until it is safe to proceed with your overtake.



This foreign lorry may have a better view in his nearside mirrors than a UK lorry!

It may even be a wise manoeuvre to move over to lane 3 to pass a lorry in lane 1, even if it is the only vehicle in that lane, providing conditions allow you to do this without affecting other traffic. Such an occasion may be where the vehicle to be overtaken is exhibiting poor lane discipline or, for example, in conditions where strong side winds may affect a vehicle you are gaining on.



Is the driver of the overtaking car taking other traffic into consideration? The foreign registered lorry (the one in front) has drifted to the offside? Is the lorry alongside gaining on the red lorry and will it want to overtake? Can the lorry driver alongside see the car driver and has he seen it? Can the driver of the red lorry see the car or lorry? Would the car driver have been wiser to either hold back behind both lorries or move to lane 3 to overtake away from danger?

It seems that there have been quite a large number of accidents involving foreign registered lorries side swiping vehicles to their offside (and nearside). Indeed this type of accident is not uncommon involving UK registered lorries, so if you are about to overtake any vehicle consider the circumstances and plan your move taking into account what you can see, what you can't see and anticipate what may happen. Remember to identify other driver's blind spots and don't maintain a position where you are not likely or can't be seen.

Events on the horizon

April 11: Visit to John F Black's garage - "What's involved in an MOT?" See P14

May 9: Table Top Rally and AGM - Dalston House Hotel. See P18

June 13: Treasure Hunt - Departing the car park, Dock Park 6:30 - 7pm

(This is a change to the previously published programme of events)

From Cradle to Grave

Children are still killed in car accidents because they are not properly restrained. You can best protect children by putting them in a properly fitted child car seat which is appropriate for their weight and size. But even at low speeds, a child passenger in your car sitting in an incorrectly fitted child seat could increase their risk of injury. In certain circumstances an incorrectly fitted child seat could lead to the unnecessary death of a child involved in a collision.



Using a child seat incorrectly could give you, the driver, a false sense of security where, instead of protecting and cradling a child

in an accident, it could contribute to them being sent to their grave.

In 2003, 30 children aged 0-11 were killed and 481 seriously injured in cars. Of this group the number of 0-4's killed was 15, 173 were seriously injured and 2,344 were slightly injured in cars. In 2004, a survey conducted by the Transport Research Laboratory showed that 5% of 0-4 year olds were not restrained in any way in the rear of cars!

Children up to 11 aren't big enough to travel without a child seat of some sort until they are about five feet (150 cms) tall. Until then, the adult belt will not fit safely and they are safest using a suitable child seat.

So how do you go about getting the right seat for any child passenger that you may have in your car?

Choosing - The right seat depends on the child's height and weight. They should be labelled to help you. Try it for fit in the car - or cars - you will use it in. Look for the official approval mark. It is not advisable to use second hand seats as they could have been damaged and may not meet modern standards. The fitting instructions may also be missing.

Fitting - *Fit it properly every time. It's no good if you don't.* The child seat must be tight in the adult seat. Push all your weight into the child seat as you tighten the belt. Keep the fitting instructions in the car. Any doubts, ask a professional to show you how.

Airbags - Never fit a rear-facing child restraint in a seat with an active airbag in front of it. Forward-facing restraints should be as far back from the airbag as possible. Check the car handbook.

Seating your child - *Take time to get the child comfortably strapped in.* Make sure the harness is correctly adjusted - only one or two fingers should fit between the child's chest and harness. If you are using a booster seat or cushion, the adult seatbelt should rest on the child's shoulder, not neck and from hip bone to hip bone. Never tuck the seatbelt under the child's arm or behind their back.

A detailed a guide to safely fitting a child restraint can be accessed from <http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk>

The table below summarises your responsibility, as a driver, under the Law:

	Front seat	Rear seat	Who is responsible?
Driver	Seat belt must be used if fitted		Driver
Child under 3 years of age	Appropriate child restraint must be used.	Appropriate child restraint must be used if available.	Driver
Child aged 3 to 11 and under 1.5 metres (approx 5ft) in height	Appropriate child restraint must be used if available. If not an adult seatbelt must be used.	Appropriate child restraint must be used if available. If not an adult seat belt must be used if available.	Driver
Child 12 or 13 or younger child 1.5 m or more in height.	Adult seatbelt must be used if available.	Adult seatbelt must be used if available.	Driver
Adult passengers (aged 14 and up)	Seatbelt must be used if available.	Seatbelt must be used if available.	Passenger

Source: *Department for Transport*

From the table you will see that children don't necessarily always have to use a child seat or seat belt but would a responsible driver or parent be happy letting a child ride in a vehicle unrestrained?

Finally did you know that Euro NCAP has introduced a star rating for child protection? This rating is for a combination of a car with specific child seats that have been recommended by the car manufacturer.

Statistics from the IAM

The following statistics come from the IAM's Associate Recruitment Guide.

- There are more than 23 million regular drivers in the United Kingdom. this represents 52% of the population over 17.
- There are 4 million motor insurance claims a year in the UK (one every 8 seconds). 78% of these involve cars.
- 20% of cars are less than 2 years old - but they account for 30% of car accident claims.

- Over a third of all motorcycle accident claims involve a provisional licence holder.
- A driver with less than 2 years experience is twice as likely to have an accident than a more experienced driver.
- 20% of all accident claims involve drivers under 25.
- The worst time of year for accidents is October and November.
- 10% of night time accident claims involve injury. 7% of day time accident claims involve injury.
- The worst time for accidents is between 4pm and 5pm on a Friday.
- 15% of all vehicle miles are on motorways. But less than 4% of accident claims relate to motorways.
- 75% of all accident claims relate to roads with a 30mph speed limit.
- 30% of all drivers claiming for accident damage say that their vehicles were parked or stationary in a line of traffic at the time!
- 9% of claims involve turning right. 4% of claims involve turning left.
- For commercial vehicles 1 in 6 claims involve reversing.



This booklet has been produced by the IAM for Group Members who meet potential Associates at exhibitions, events and other functions, indeed for anyone in any circumstance where they seek to persuade another about the benefits of Advanced Driving/ Advanced Motorcycling to themselves, their families and society in general.

Contact Helen Cameron if you think you can help with the recruitment of new members, even if it is a friend or relation and you would like a copy of the booklet to help you get the message over.

Clear to go



You are approaching this roundabout in your car, this is the view of the roundabout you are approaching. What happens next?



Thanks to the trend towards stronger and thicker 'A' pillars you are more likely to have your forward offside and nearside vision reduced. For those who aren't familiar with the phraseology 'A' pillars are at the front - adjacent to the windscreen, 'B' pillars are at the rear of the front doors and 'C' pillars are adjacent to the rear screen.

Road users, especially the more vulnerable ones, using smaller vehicles such as motorcyclists or cyclists, are the most likely to be lost in a blind spot. Dependant on the size of the 'A' pillar and the angle of approach even cars can be completely obscured from view. In town the trend towards reduced forward visibility can have particular implications when trying to identify pedestrians about to cross the street.

If you drive an MPV or SUV you may find that the pillars are significantly larger on these types of vehicle, but additionally they are likely to further suffer from reduced visibility due to the arrangement of the frame to support the mirror. This can make a big reduction in the field of view.

So why is there a trend towards thicker pillars? Manufacturers are under pressure to produce vehicles with good passenger cell safety in the NCAP ratings and consequently increased rigidity helps - this necessitates stronger and thicker pillars. The trend towards vehicles with higher rooflines (e.g MPVs) and consequently bigger glass areas also increases the need for stronger pillars to increase the strength of the body shell.

You may ask are there not rules which manufacturers have to abide by when designing vehicles? Well indeed there are and, of course, no vehicles are sold which fail to comply with the regulations. It is true manufactures will use the rules to maximise any advantage to passenger safety ratings and it can be argued that decreasing visibility may be a result of fundamental shortcomings in the regulations.

Some manufacturers are aware of the problem and are looking at technical solutions to help drivers maximise their vision.

Take the Volvo Safety Concept Car, one of the main ambitions of which was to create 'superior vision'.

Volvo's solution enables the driver to see through the A-pillars, thanks to a frame-work structure made of a combination of metal and Plexiglas. The B-pillar curves inwards and follows the shape of the seat frame to provide better visibility to the rear.



Volvo Safety Concept Car. Note vision is available through the 'A' pillars minimising potential blind spots.

The press are also aware of this and several magazines have published articles recently on the subject even listing some of the cars with best and worse forward visibility. Apparently cars like A4, Mondeo, Polo and Astra offer some of the best results whereas at the other end of the scale drivers of the Altea, Meriva, Jazz, MX5 and Yaris may have their forward view more greatly compromised.

Having recognised the increased potential for reduced forward vision it is important as advanced motorists and motorcyclists to take this into account in driving plans. Have a look in the Observer's Corner section for tips from the motorist and motorcyclist's perspective.

CIRCUIT TRAINING - Stuart Cowan

I suspect that, like a lot of advanced motorists, the main reasons I became a qualified member of the IAM were because I love driving, and am always up for exploring my own abilities behind the wheel.



It is for those totally admirable reasons that last November I, found myself sitting in a queue of cars waiting to roar around a sodden race circuit! I am taking part in a Hot Hatch Day at Knockhill, Fife. With speed cameras getting more common place, many race tracks offer track days, where the public can take their own car on track. This gives them the opportunity to fully explore their cars performance without worrying about the numbers on their speedo. They don't race; just enjoy the track for as many laps as they want. Sounds like fun to any driving enthusiast.

Obviously, there'd be little point to driving on race track if it was no different to being on the road, but I was surprised at just how many IAM principles I would use to get the most out of my day. Looking at the weather it was immediately clear that one key aspect of IAM driving would come into play - smoothness.

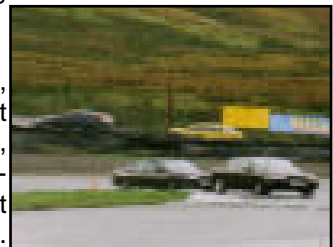
With a track that wet, any sudden movements with steering, braking or accelerating would mean my excursion on track would be a short and embarrassing one! That doesn't mean you dawdle round; rather you discipline yourself to separate out everything (brakes, steering etc) so you don't unsettle the car or get yourself flustered. Although Hot Hatch Days are open to anybody in any car, many of the others were in purpose built vehicles and had clearly done this kind of thing before. I've never felt so slow!

As the track dried, I found myself gaining confidence and was soon hurtling towards Taylor's Hairpin at over 70mph. It quickly struck me that if I was to avoid getting in the way of the would-be racers catching my 'bespoilered' behind, I would have to make the transition between slowing and going as smooth and swift as possible. Hmm, sounds like a cue of sustained rev gear-changing to me. I can't pretend I didn't lapse into a little BGOL initially, but as soon as my hand reached for the gear stick, I was busy trying to match the engine speed to coincide with the necessary change to second. I got it spot-on most times and would often leave them behind as I exited.

I seem to have got the hairpin 'sussed' then, but what about the other corners? As you can probably guess, the procedure for taking a bend on a track is somewhat different to cornering on the A75! The position on the run-up to the corner may be similar, but here you are encouraged to turn into the apex early, then get on the power promptly, using all of the track. The corners had cones to mark the apex and stop kamikaze taking you on the bends, so the first part wasn't too difficult, but the latter was. As someone who is used to keeping things smooth and tight, it felt strange to let the car run wide. I would instinctively fight it by backing off and applying more lock, but that only actually forced the tyres and me to work harder.

The best way I found was to stay on the power and just adjust the steering progressively and the car would seem to glide to the exit and beyond. It also set you up for the next bend effortlessly. It was an incredible feeling when it worked. All this talk of early apexes and letting the car 'slide' through bends doesn't sound very IAM, but what steering method do you reckon works best here? Pull 'n' Push. The very fact that you have to steer so deeply and be ready to adjust the steering on your way round means your hands need to be at the right place all the time. Static hand steering or all crossed-up just isn't going to work!

A track day also gives you the chance to, ahem, experiment with those 'DO NOTS' you read about in the booklets, in relative safety. For example, that rule about not braking while cornering. Working my way through Duffus Dip - a tricky right-left combo- I, 'inadvertently' stomped on the brakes.



My Mondeo's tail swished one way, then the other as I hastily corrected what could have become a spin. So, that'll be why it says DO NOT in big letters, then. But seriously track days do allow you to find out how you and your car would handle things when pushed to the limit - just check all round first. The only way I had to concern myself with overtaking was exercising observation and courtesy when letting others by.

I may not have set any lap records (my personal best was 1:36 but ssssh! Lap timing isn't encouraged) but I did thoroughly enjoy myself and have found another driving challenge. I'm not going to embark on a race career just yet, but do want to master the art of track driving. I will be back! I'd also advise anyone who is serious about the driving to give it a go. They have bike track days too!

Mobile safety - ed

Having recently had a close encounter when a car leaving a school car park struck the kerb just a couple of metres away from several mothers, their children and me, I was reminded of the subject of using phones on the move. In this incident the driver, her child strapped in the back, was talking on a mobile phone and so could not steer properly.

You often see examples of compromised driving style associated with the use of mobile phones and it is a frequent daily occurrence to see drivers using them. It is, of course, a very hard offence for the Police to enforce.

A recent survey by the Association of Car Fleet Operators found that well over half the respondents operated policies that prohibit the use of hands-free mobile phones while driving even though their use is 'legal'.

A frequent response to the subject of using mobiles on the road is "I need to use the phone while on the road do my job", but is your job to reduce your safety on the road and that of other road users? No journey on the road is so urgent or important that we don't have time to do it safely - have an accident and suddenly your urgency evaporates. Have a look at the Highway Code Rule 127 which advises against using any type of phone whilst driving.

In regard to mobile phones, whether hand-held or hands-free, ROSPA tell us that drivers:

- ~ are much less aware of what's happening on the road around them
- ~ fail to maintain proper lane position and steady speed
- ~ are more likely to 'tailgate' the vehicle in front
- ~ react more slowly and take longer to brake
- ~ are more likely to enter unsafe gaps in traffic
- ~ feel more stressed and frustrated.
- ~ fail to see road signs

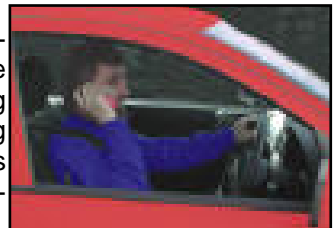


Research indicates that these drivers are also four times more likely to crash, injuring or killing themselves and/or other people. Using a hands-free phone while driving does not significantly reduce the risks because the problems are caused mainly by the mental distraction and the divided attention of taking part in a phone conversation at the same time as driving.

Increasingly there is an emphasis on employers to develop policies, advice and training for line managers and drivers in regard to safe driving issues such as mobile phones. ROSPA advise employers not to expect drivers to make or take calls, send messages or transact business whilst driving but to stipulate that these activities must only be done when parked.

Some enlightened employers not only specify that they do not expect or require the use of any type of mobile phone whilst driving, they even require staff receiving or making calls from offices, from or to mobile numbers, to ascertain if the other party is driving, if so they must end the call immediately.

The big task is to educate all drivers and employers about the dangers. Many employers have removed hands free equipment, neither expecting nor requiring drivers to use a mobile in a moving vehicle, but sadly many employers and individuals seem to ignore the safety considerations surrounding the use of mobile phones whilst driving.



Tougher legislation is on the way but whether it will have any major impact remains to be seen.

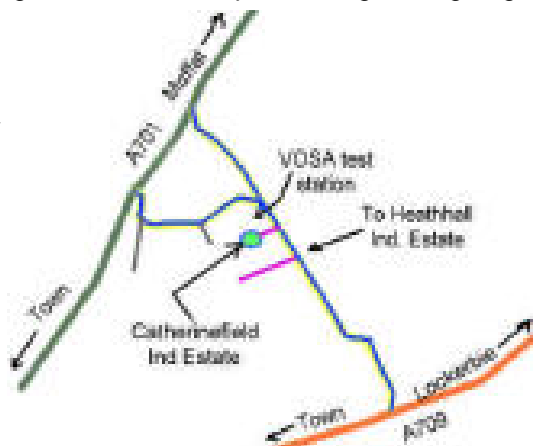
What's on in April?

Member, John Black has kindly agreed to host the April meeting at his garage: Unit 6B, Catherinefield Industrial Estate Heathhall, DG1 3PQ.

The event will centre on how the MOT test is conducted (a car will be tested when we are there). There's more to it than you might think!

Tea and coffee will be provided and there may well be a couple of racing motorcycles on display.

Meet at the venue between 7 and 7.30pm., April 11th.

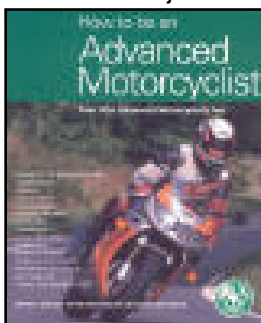


OBSERVERS CORNER

This section is intended to help when considering the best course of action. It is up to every driver to actively assess each scenario.

Roadcraft or How To Be An Advanced Motorist/Motorcyclist?

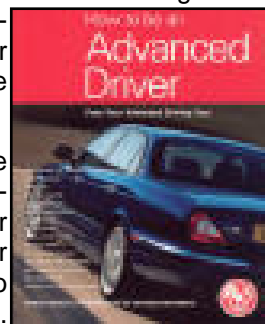
What is the difference between ‘Roadcraft’ and ‘How To Be An Advanced Driver/Motorcyclist (HTBAAD/M)’? Why are there two books covering much the same subject matter?



Both the motorcycle and car versions of Roadcraft are written in more technical terms and cover the subjects in more detail. Many of the theories discussed in these books require an in depth background knowledge or significant guidance from a Course Tutor or Observer to enable them to be fully understood by a new Associate.

The aim of the IAM books however is to set out the essential elements of advanced riding and driving in a more readily digestible format for those coming to the subject for the first time. Importantly the IAM books also contain a “What the examiner looks for” section within each chapter which sets out the Advanced Test criteria.

It is perfectly acceptable for the Roadcraft books to be used by Associates, especially those with a keen interest in the subject or those who want to build on their initial understanding. They are particularly useful for Observers who need to be well informed and able to provide more detailed explanations for their Associates.

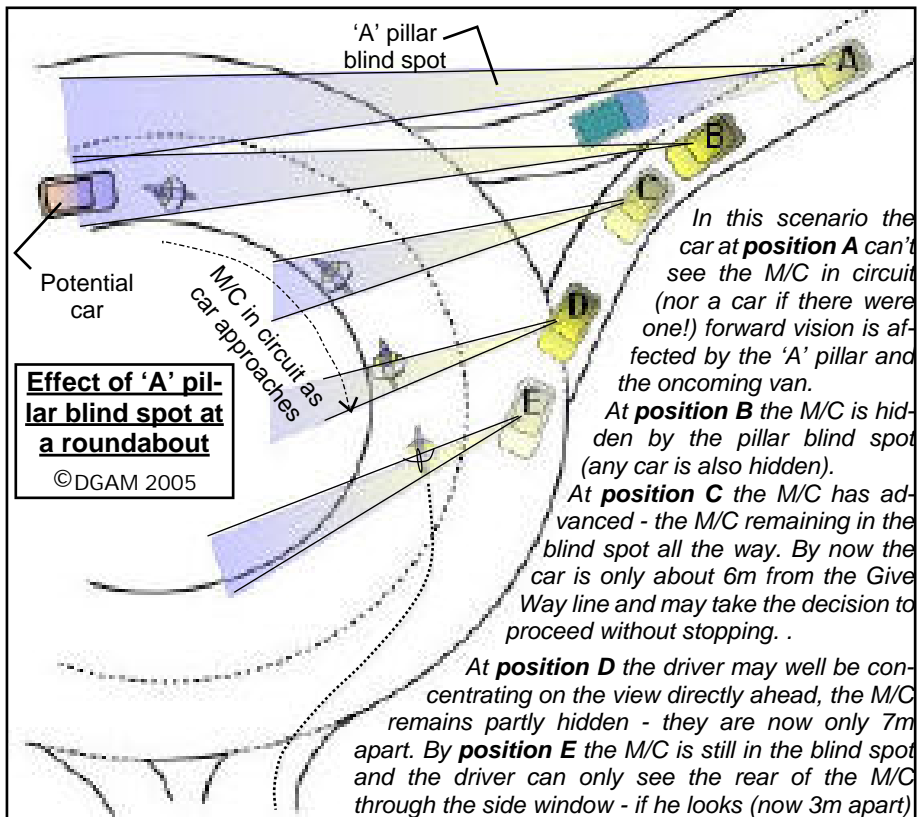


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Full Active Scanning

Earlier we identified that the trend towards thicker ‘A’ pillars can have a detrimental affect on forward vision, but what steps can we take to overcome this potential problem? First let’s consider a typical scenario where a car driver is approaching and about to join a roundabout, which in this case appears to be very lightly trafficked. Hopefully the sketch overleaf is self explanatory.

Roundabouts, of course, are not the only situation where other road users may be hidden from a driver in a blind spot. Similar situations may apply at junctions or virtually anywhere, especially in a built up area for instance.



The sketch above assumes a 6deg blind spot in the field of view caused by a windscreen pillar; this is the maximum allowable under current regulations. In reality the effect may be greater; because immediately either side of the pillar vision can only be achieved with one eye so it will be more difficult to fix the 'spatial' position of anything seen in that zone.

The key to dealing safely with any such situation, of course, involves recognising and assessing the dangers and planning your best course of action to minimise the risks for you and any other road user.

Here we are specifically considering risks relating to windscreen pillar blind spots, and from the sketch above we can see that it may be possible for another road user to be hidden from view, and remain hidden, almost until the risk of a collision is inevitable.

Using a scanning technique is recommended as the best method of maximising your observation skills but this may not be good enough in these sorts of situation. Instead the best method to locate road users potentially hidden in your blind spot is to ensure you use a **full active scanning technique**.

This involves **moving and turning your head** as well as your eyes rather than just scanning with your eyes from a fixed head position.

Scanning (not just staring fore or aft which just relies on peripheral vision) uses deliberate, frequent sweeps of the whole environment to build up a picture of what is going on around the vehicle. Scanning can be carried out by moving the eyes only; using the eyes and turning the head; or using a fully active technique where the eyes move, the head turns and moves 'left and right' and 'forward and backwards' as appropriate. This latter method is clearly the best method to be employed in situations such as those outlined in this article because it gives the driver the potential of looking around the blind spot caused by the windscreen pillar.

The results of tests* show that using a full active scan method will help maximise your ability to spot hazards and minimise the risks of collisions. The significant improvement in identification of hazards and reduction in collisions shown in the results below speak for themselves.

Obviously you need to recognise situations where you may be in another drivers blind spot and take appropriate action such as slowing down, adjusting your position or maybe using your lights or horn. Have a look below for a biker's perspective on dealing with this sort of situation.

**The effectiveness of methods of observation in relation to "A" pillar blind spots has been the subject of scientific investigation using university laboratory simulators. The results of such tests (carried out by Minnesota Department of Transportation 2002) have shown up a big variation on the numbers of drivers who saw cars approaching from the side and the resultant number of collisions.*

- A) Observation by eyes fixed ahead: 7% saw target 57% collided
- B) Observation by eyes only scan: 46% saw target 56% collided
- C) Observation by eyes/head turn scan: 79% saw target 34% collided
- D) Observation by full active scan: 86% saw target 11% collided**

Dealing with 'A' pillar blind spots from a biker's perspective



Just like any road user you can only defend yourself from being hidden in a blind spot by recognising situations with potential for this to happen. Monitor other traffic, look at the drivers, their demeanour, the position of their vehicle, their speed of approach to the junction or roundabout (or other circumstance), Can you make eye contact? Look for recognition that they have seen you.

Using an active style of observation, where you move your helmet and not just your eyes, wearing high visibility clothing and riding with your headlight on can all help you to see and be seen (but don't guarantee it).

Adjust your speed as necessary and always maintain an escape route, adopting an appropriate gear and getting your bike in an upright stance where the results of your observation show that a driver might not have seen you, and consequently you might have to brake, is also important.

When approaching a junction or negotiating a roundabout where other traffic is joining your road or lane, irrespective of priority, consider easing back on the throttle allowing your speed to drop gently; you may also want to cover the brake. Position the bike to maximise your view and others' view of you (subject to safety) - this also usually means moving away from the danger e.g. with a junction to the left you would usually be moving towards the offside of your lane or towards the centre line. When in circuit on a roundabout riding near the centre usually moves you furthest away from danger, but don't get so close to the edge of the carriageway that you have no room for manoeuvre.

There are many variables and circumstances which dictate your precise actions (e.g. proximity and actions of other road users, weather and road conditions etc.) but as a priority you should look for signs you have been seen before proceeding into danger. Slow down if you have not or can't be sure you've been seen. Remember to keep watching what is happening behind you too, especially if you have slowed or adjusted your position.

AGM

Notice is hereby given that the AGM will be held at the Dalston House Hotel, Dumfries on Monday 9 May 2005. All members of the group are invited to attend and participate but only full members, on the production of a valid IAM membership card, will be allowed to vote.

The AGM should only take up a small part of the evening, hopefully there will also be time for a table top rally (or something similar), an annual event which proves to be very popular and great fun so please come along .

New ground covered by bike section



The bike section is breaking new ground this year with two new firsts: the signing of the first female Associate, Ingrid Wilson and the first side-car outfit rider, Pete McCartney. They are pictured here, with other members gathered at St Michael's Services for the weekly Sunday run.

Essential reminders for car Associates

When working towards achieving the standard of the Advanced Driving Test remember these key points:

1. Your car should be safe and roadworthy, a quick check is all it takes to make sure. The glass should be clean (including lights) and your view free of obstructions/ distractions such as unnecessary stickers and dangling objects.
2. Practice your starting and stopping drills. You should be able to carry these out quickly and efficiently without being reminded by your Observer.
3. Read and understand the Highway Code. Make sure you understand the meaning of road signs and markings; drive accordingly.
4. Read "How To Be An Advanced Driver" (aka: Pass Your Advanced Driving Test) and your Associate Handbook. It can be a difficult subject, so ask your Observer to clarify any elements you don't fully understand.
5. Study "The Planned System Of Driving" and try to put it into practice at all times, not just on an observed drive.
6. Maintain a safe following distance and consider your position at all times.
7. Don't 'snowplough' (i.e. stare at what is just in front)! Practise raising your observation skills, use a full active scanning method; don't just adopt a fixed look ahead. Look in the far, middle and near distance, in front, to the rear and sides. Prioritise the most important hazards.
8. Develop a smooth steering style and hold the steering wheel in the correct position. Use pull/push not push/pull.
9. Don't slow down by taking a lower gear; brake first then change gear, if necessary. Brakes are for slowing and gears are for going.
10. Develop finesse, take pride in raising your standards and controlling your vehicle as near as you can to perfection.
12. Obey the rules of the road including the speed limit. Remember no journey is so urgent or important that you can't afford the time to do it safely.
13. Practice advanced skills at all times while you are driving, not just on observed drives. The more you can do to master advanced techniques on your own the more time your Observer will have to pass on his/her expertise.
14. The Examiner is looking for a safe drive, one where you see all the hazards and react to them. A drive which is **Safe, Systematic, Smooth**, with appropriate use of **speed**, within the limits, and one where your drive shows **Sparkle**. **This means a progressive, polished drive, your vehicle always in the right place, at the right speed, in the right gear and always driven so you can stop safely in the distance that can be seen to be clear.**
15. DVDs and helpsheets are available to assist you - see the Group web site.

100 years of petrol prices

1901	4p	no tax
1911:	5.3p	23.5% tax
1921:	14.8p	16.9% tax
1931:	6.5p	45.16% tax
1941:	10p	41.7% tax
1951:	16.6p	47.8% tax
1961:	24.4p	56.41% tax
1971:	34.25p	65.69% tax
1981:	160.0p	52.45% tax
1991:	228.1p	67.7% tax
2001:	368.93p	72.72% tax



The above table shows the approximate price for a gallon of petrol every 10 years since 1901, together with the percentage of tax included within the fuel price. The prices are based on 4 star or equivalent. Source The AA.

Test your Highway Code Knowledge (continued from page 3)

A: Mini roundabouts - Extract from Rule 164: “All vehicles **MUST** pass round the central markings except large vehicles which are physically incapable of doing so”.

B: Vehicle on the pavement - Rule 123: “You **MUST NOT** drive on or over a pavement, footpath or bridleway except to gain lawful access to property. Several other rules may apply here dependant on the circumstances e.g. these double yellow lines signify no waiting at any time but a driver may stop to load/unload (except where there are loading restrictions) or to allow a passenger to board or alight the vehicle. (see Rules 213, 215 & 221 P79 & P80). Rule 218 may also be applicable.

Page 4 of the Highway Code tells us that rules using the words **MUST** or **MUST NOT** signify legal requirements and if you disobey them you are committing a criminal offence.

What Highway Code rules apply in respect of the double parked red van?

New scheme to help Group funds

Thanks go to Jamie Woods of St Michael's Services Ltd (BP filling station), St Michael's Street, who has helped the Group out with the purchase of additional radio communication equipment for use by the motorcycle section.

Jamie has also set up a scheme whereby you can help the Group funds when you purchase fuel from this filling station. When paying for your fuel just ask for the nectar points to be added to the Group's Nectar Card which is held behind the counter.

Mobile Support Group

The February meeting saw Constable Les Kirkpatrick of Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary's Mobile Support Group give an entertaining and humorous talk on how the role and image of the region's Police has changed during his twenty plus years with the force.



Pictured are (left to right): new member Nev Parker, Group Chairman Alan Jones, new member Phil Kirby, Constable Les Kirkpatrick and new member Nicoll Milne.

Potholes - don't ignore them, report them say BMF

'Report-A-Road' is the name of a new web-based facility set up by the British Motorcyclists Federation to address the problem of badly maintained road surfaces, it can be accessed at <http://www.bmf.co.uk/report-a-road/index.html>

Although motorcycles and scooters cause less damage to roads than any other motorised vehicle, they are more susceptible to defective road surfaces but, until now, say the 120,000 strong BMF, it has not always been easy to find the right people to report a road defect to.

Now, using data based on county, local, and unitary authorities responsible for road repairs and street lighting, the BMF's new Report-A-Road facility brings all these authorities together in an alphabetically indexed list of counties for the whole of the UK. By clicking on the appropriate link and sending an email, the fault details are now automatically sent to the right person.



'Skill for Life' course can make you safer on the road

Would you like to improve your driving or riding skills?

Would you like to be safer and more confident on the road?

Would you like to reduce your chances of having an accident?

Would you like your driving/riding to be more relaxed and enjoyable?



Dumfries Group of Advanced Motorists exists to promote road safety and the improvement of driving & riding standards to all motorists and motorcyclists through the provision of driving and riding courses.



So whether you're a newly qualified driver/riding or have had many years of experience on the road why not find out more?

Contact the Secretary, Helen Cameron, to find out more about how we can help you to help yourself - it's a 'skill for life'.

Your Group Committee Members for 2004/05

Alan Jones (Chair + Chief Obs) 820527; Graeme McColm (Vice Chair) 720425
Helen Cameron (Secretary) 264005; Allan Graham (Treasurer) 269421
John Pearson (Course Tutor) 720847; Scott Anderson (Events Sec) 257826
Andrew Bird (Newsletter Dist) 259500; Andrew Hastings 01556 611229
Valerie Wilson 710898; Charlie Allman 263750
Russell Wears 263893; Peter Dodds 261523

This newsletter was published by the Dumfries Group of Advanced Motorists;
more details of our activities can be found on our web site at:

www.iam.org.uk/groups/dumfries

Contact the Group Secretary: dumfries@groups.iam.org.uk

Newsletter comments and contributions to: editor@iamdumfries.f9.co.uk

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Editor, Group or the Institute of Advanced Motorists, to which the Group is affiliated.
.....Registered Charity No. SC 023511



THE VRS RANGE.

Octavia VRS from £13,990 RRP.

- 1.8 20v Turbo 180 bhp
- 0-62mph in 7.9 seconds
- Top speed 146 mph*
- 17" alloy wheels
- Rear spoiler
- Climate control
- Partial leather upholstery
- Leather steering wheel
- 6 CD autochanger

Fabia VRS from £12,380 RRP.

- 1.9 TDI PD 130 bhp
- 0-62 mph in 9.5 seconds
- Top speed 128 mph*
- 16" alloy wheels
- Rear spoiler
- Air conditioning
- Sports seats
- Leather steering wheel
- Remote central locking with Thatcham Category 1 alarm
- 6 speed gearbox

Dean of Dumfries

Edinburgh Road, Heathhall, Dumfries

Tel: 01387 263817

Model shown is a Fabia VRS, £12,660 RRP including Black Magic Paint at £280. Official fuel consumption for the VRS range in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 26.2 (10.8) - 29.8 (7.1) Extra Urban 44.1 (6.4) - 62.8 (4.5) Combined 35.3 (8.0) - 52.3 (5.4) CO₂ Emissions (g/km) 146 - 102
*Where the law permits.