

DUMFRIES GROUP
OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

Spring 2004

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

Chairman's Report by Alan Jones

In the Winter Newsletter I said that, by the time you read this Spring Newsletter, Graeme McColm would be a Senior Observer, and that he and Andrew Bird would be the proud users of state of the art 2-way radios with which to guide their motorcyclist Associates. Well, I can report that the radios are now in use and proving to be extremely useful in improving the effectiveness of the guidance. I can also report that while my second prediction may have been a little hasty, Graeme is in the process of applying for the Senior Observer motorcycle test. We wish him well in this endeavour, as success here will further strengthen the motorcycle team. At the rate they are growing we may well see a Motorcycle Group in the not too distant future.

There is a lot of activity within the Group at present. John Pearson has just completed another series of classroom training sessions for our new Associates. The motorcyclists, under the guidance of Graeme, have 6 new Associates, while Peter Dodds and Paul Sharkey have achieved Qualified Observer status. Congratulations are also due to Michael Churm, who has recently passed his Test. In the wings, Graham Watson continues to hone his skills in producing video's illustrating aspects of Road Safety. So far we have, 'The Art of Positioning' and 'The Demonstration Drive' videos available to members, which can be obtained from our Group Secretary, Helen, for a small charge. Soon to be released is a presentation, which can be used with members of the public, to test their general driving skills, and hopefully interest them in becoming Associates. If you have not seen these video's then let me strongly encourage you to do so because they are an excellent way of maintaining and enhancing your driving skills while sitting in the comfort of your armchair!

On the negative side, the rate at which we have brought Associates up to Test standard over the past year has fallen. There are many reasons for this and while I will not go into detail here, this is an area we must improve. We must ensure, from the commencement of guidance, that there is commitment from the Associates to work towards taking their Test. It is very disheartening for Observers, who give their time freely and willingly, to lose an Associate part way through their course. Hopefully, now that the lighter nights are almost upon us, this will provide an encouragement to fit in drives during an evening rather than be constrained to valuable time at weekends.

On a brighter note, a local policeman, Iain Howie, who runs a scheme for young motorists in Stewartry, called

CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

Mind that Deer!	P4
Dealing with Traffic Congestion .	P6
Observer Training Experiences ..	P9
For whom the road tolls ...	P12
Observers Corner	P15
Grumble Corner	P18
How Motoring has changed ..	P20

“Safer Wheels”, has approached us. This scheme aims to coach young drivers in aspects of safe driving, which are not examined as part of the normal Driving Test. Iain Howie has approached our Group to see if we would be prepared to accept a number of his students as Associates. This is an excellent idea and we will be holding discussions with him to work out the details of how and when this will happen. He has assured me that due to the fact that government funding, for which he is accountable, will be used to pay their fees, only those who are totally committed will be put forward.

This past Quarter has seen another three Group Meetings take place. We have had two interesting lectures, one on First Aid and the other describing the work of the Moffat Mountain Rescue. I think everyone who attended enjoyed themselves and also learnt something new. One of our lectures had to be cancelled but an impromptu event was organised which examined members' knowledge of Road Safety. This proved very popular and I think that this could well become an annual event. Once again, let me encourage as many of you as possible to attend our Group meetings. It is particularly good to see our motorcycle Associates attending these events, but please remember that our motorist Associates are also welcome.

Let me give you a timely reminder for our 12 April meeting, lest you forget. We meet at James Haugh, Dumfries at 7pm prompt. These garage visits prove very popular so why not come along and get to drive some of the 12 demonstrator cars they will have ready for us.

Finally, let me thank Graham Watson for putting together this Newsletter and John Pearson for organising the printing. This is a very professional document, both in content and presentation, and I commend it to your attention.

Mail shot

You may have been lucky enough to have received a mail shot recently about the 'The Stealth Driving Manual' which tells you, amongst other things, that buying the book will enable you to learn:

* How to almost telepathically 'control' other drivers so that they will do precisely what you want ... and not even know it!

* A revolutionary braking technique developed from the one used by Formula One racing drivers and taught at the FBI training centre in Quantico, Virginia ... which makes ABS virtually obsolete.

* How to effortlessly create your own 'safety zone' on a busy road while every other car is bumper to bumper. An astonishingly simple technique which will take just 7 seconds to learn.

If only it was that easy!

Brewery visit

December saw the Group visit Sulwath Brewery, Castle Douglas where the members were treated to a very entertaining evening in the company of the Managing Director, Jim Henderson who conducted a tour of the brewery.



Here Jim explains the secrets of traditionally crafted ales to members.

Steering a new course

The spring driving course started on 9 March - a warm welcome to all new Associates and good luck.

Recruitment drive

The Group's membership recruitment drive got underway in November, at the Dumfries Charities Fair, where our stand raised a fair amount of interest. Hopefully this will lead to several new Associates during this year's activities.



We are still looking for more Associates however so please help by suggesting that friends and colleagues consider making themselves safer on the road, by undergoing an advanced driving course and gaining a 'skill for life'. Please put any potential members in touch with Helen Cameron or direct them to our web site.

The Art of Positioning

November saw an Observer's training night presented by Alan Jones. A number of advanced driving and observer topics were covered and the event included the showing of the group's new video production "The Art of Positioning" (25 minutes).

It is available in VHS or DVD format for hire, at a nominal charge, from the group's library. Copies are also available for sale at £5 to group members (£7 non members). If you are interested in seeing it please contact Helen Cameron.



Mind that deer!

Road traffic accidents involving deer present a major problem in the UK as well as in many other countries in Europe. In Germany last year over 120,000 traffic collisions occurred involving deer; over 800 of these led to human injuries and 27 to human fatalities.



In the UK there is at present no system for central registration of road traffic accidents involving deer or other wildlife. There are estimated to be 30 - 50,000 deer killed annually in traffic collisions in the UK. Records are sketchy but suggest that the actual number of human fatalities is typically around 14 – 15 per annum. Deer numbers in the Britain have doubled in the past 25 years with six species of wild deer and a total population of over 1 million animals; deer of at least one species are believed to be present in nearly every 10 kilometre grid square of England, Wales and Scotland.

The few records available show that the accident rate for Scotland is lower than for England and Wales despite the larger numbers of red and roe deer found there. This is possibly due to lower road and traffic density.

A two year study by The Deer Initiative in England and Wales commenced in January 2003 to establish a national register for deer-related traffic accidents in England and Wales, recording details of the circumstances surrounding each incident. Research is also being undertaken into deer management including fences, deer mirrors and other deterrents aimed at reducing traffic collisions.

General advice for minimising your risk of an accident includes:

As with all elements of Advanced Driving observation, anticipation and planning are the key skills to a safe journey.



Don't ignore deer warning signs, slow down and drive with caution. Signs are positioned only where deer are likely.

Don't forget just because there are no signs doesn't mean there are no deer. Have a look at the photos overleaf!

The road below has no deer warning signs but obviously is in 'deer country'. If you look carefully at the photos you will see where a car has swerved off the road, probably to miss a deer, hit a ditch and stopped against a tree where amongst other debris the broken windscreen lies on the ground.



The majority of deer-related traffic collisions occur in May and between October and December. The high risk periods are from sunset to midnight followed by the hours shortly before and after sunrise.

Be aware that further deer may well cross after the one(s) you have seen.

As advanced motorists you will be using full-beam headlights whenever possible on the open road, these will illuminate the eyes of deer on or near the road and can give you advanced warning. When a deer (or other animal) is spotted on the road, slow down and dip your headlights as animals startled by the beam may 'freeze' rather than get off the road.

Don't swerve to avoid hitting a deer. If a collision with the animal seems inevitable, then hit it while maintaining full control of your vehicle. The alternative of swerving into oncoming traffic or a ditch could be even worse.

Try to come to a stop as far away from the animal as possible to enable it to leave the roadside without panic.

Should the worse happen, report any collision with deer to the Police (who should be able to contact a local person familiar with the British Deer Society advice note "Road Traffic Accidents and the Humane Dispatch of Deer").

Remember to ... **SLOW DOWN FOR WILDLIFE and SLOW DOWN FOR SAFETY'S SAKE.**

There are accessories available, to fit to your car, which claim to deter deer such as air whistles (www.deerwhistle.co.uk) and an electronic deer control system (www.deer--whistles.com). The jury is still out regarding their effectiveness, especially the air whistles which only work when the vehicle they are attached to is travelling at over 30mph. Another problem is that these whistles may not scare deer off, rather they tend to freeze, possibly on the road in your path, so the whistles cannot replace keen observation and a safe speed.

Dealing with future traffic congestion in the Netherlands

Ever wondered how other countries approach the problems of road transport today and in the future? The Netherlands and UK have similar problems with traffic congestion, so a look at what the Dutch are doing may be of some interest

The following information comes from 'Roads to the Future' (RtF), an innovation programme of Rijkswaterstaat, part of the Dutch Public Works Dept, which is aimed at finding future 'smart' solutions for mobility and the infrastructure. Pilot projects they are actively working on include:

Missing Link: The components of road infrastructure were developed independently of each other and as a result, transport networks do not always interconnect everywhere as well as they could. The project looks at connecting these networks more efficiently so that traffic flow can be controlled more easily. It also recognises that the underlying road system is often used for access to/from motorways and not enough by traffic that should not be on the motorways.

Citybox Transport: Daily provisioning of shops is a growing source of inconvenience and irritation. Increasingly large lorries in cities is a nuisance for the general public, heavy goods traffic also claims a large part of the road capacity outside the cities. The solution being looked at is the use of goods boxes that fit on large and small lorries, suitable vehicles and boxes are now being developed.

Remediating roads: Can more efficient use of the space taken up by roads be made and can more be done with the road than just drive on it? In this pilot contaminated material is used for road construction, rather than being sent to landfill, thereby remediating the material at the same time.

Traffic Projections: At the moment traffic and travel information is mainly reactive, this project seeks to make better use of the road network by anticipating what could be happening tomorrow. The point of the pilot is to offer travellers information in advance on various route and travel alternatives along with relevant travel times, as well as to provide updated projections while en route.

In-car information: Maximum speed, parking options, the next closest petrol station, the fastest route and local weather forecasts - if such details were provided right in the car with pictures or sound, and specific to the driver, this could ultimately result in roads no longer lined with traffic signs. This pilot will set up a section of motorway in such a way as to pass on road information to passing motorists. A special device to receive and display the information will be installed in the cars of a pre-selected user group.

Close contact: This pilot looks at developing a system through which road users have contact with each other and the outside world whilst travelling. This will likely be a public-oriented service focusing on contact, communication and safety. Glancing through the news or making contact with other motorists in the traffic jam, while you inch your way forward on a congested road. Talking with colleagues, for example, because your car is equipped with an interactive Internet connection; information on Internet pages can be read out, via a voice interface.

Modular Road Surface: This project involves manufacturing road surfaces in factory conditions, much like roofing felt, then brought to site on a roll. The prefabricated asphalt has an adhesive layer allowing it to be fixed in position or removed quickly. Site trials have already started but only on a straight section of road. The sketch below shows you the concept.



Bonus driving: The aim of this pilot is to give meaning to the concept of `valuable travelling time` by looking for ways of encouraging the use of cars in a socially responsible manner. A reduction in the adverse effects of traffic and transport (e.g. traffic jams and accidents), could follow through changing the behaviour of drivers by rewarding positive behaviour. For example, drivers could be rewarded for agreeing to give a ride to other people with money and parking facilities. Other ways to encourage positive behaviour are through respecting traffic rules, taking a recommended route or performing a social service. Besides money and parking facilities, good behaviour could also be rewarded with travel information, support while underway, facilities for transferring to other modes of transport including public transport or access to special parts of the road. Further options may include the granting of specific privileges, discounts on insurance premiums or road tax, or even providing free tickets for public events.

Cold Turkey

The Editor's correspondent in Turkey tells of severe disruption in Istanbul in January, when over 8" of snow fell in 36 hrs, resulting in thousands of stranded motorists.



Apparently the city does not have snow ploughs which could deal with these unusual conditions so troops with bulldozers were called out to assist. Travel was effectively paralysed for 3 days and it happened all over again in February.

Secretary's report by Helen Cameron

Time seems to zoom by and this will be the last newsletter before the AGM in May. I would once again like to thank all the members of the committee for their support in the past year and also say a big thank you to Alan Jones for stepping in as Chairman after only a couple of months as Vice-Chairman.

This session has also seen a change in venue to the Dalston House Hotel where we have been made most welcome. The monthly meetings have been well attended and we have had a wide range of subjects. In the past year we have also regained the 10 Pin Bowling Cup and retained the 3 way quiz trophy (although there were only 2 teams), so well done to everyone who participated.

We held 2 courses this year, are in the process of training 2 associates by 1-1 and have 4 new observers under training. Although our systems all seem to be in place, we have not had a high pass rate. We still have associates from the course before last who have not sat their tests. On a positive front we have had 3 passes in cars and 4 on motorcycles.

Please remember that if you have any views or suggestions on how to improve our group then share your ideas with any member of the committee.

AGM

Notice is hereby given that the AGM will be held at the Dalston House Hotel, Dumfries on Monday 10 May 2004. All members are invited to attend.

The AGM should only take up a small part of the evening, the major event will be taken up by a table top rally, an annual event which proves to be very popular so please come along.

Death of former Chairman

It is with great sadness that we report Sandy McKay died on 11th March 2004 after a short illness. Sandy was always a keen member of the IAM and was our Group Chairman from 1994-1998.

It's all Helen's fault - Observer training experiences

It's not really Helen's fault of course, but I'd better explain. I had thirty something years of motoring along in blissful ignorance of The System. Increasing thought (and age) made me realise that 30000 or so miles a year behind the wheel put me in a statistical bracket where I was likely to come to grief at some point.

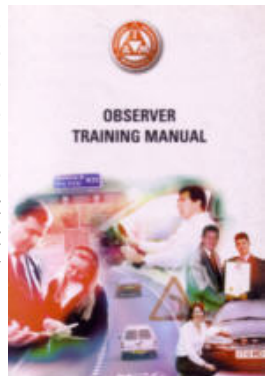
I thought that becoming an Advanced Driver might at least keep body and soul together a bit longer, so became an Associate with the Dumfries Group. Thanks to the enormous professionalism (and even greater patience) of Alan and Sandy, I was successful and became a Member of the IAM.

Fine. I motored along carefully (I thought) until one day I had a near miss on the motorway. Reflection, once the shakes had subsided, led me to the conclusion that my concentration had not been of the necessary high standard.

At this point, I remembered Helen saying that she had become an Observer so she didn't lose the skills she had gained while preparing for the Advanced test. This struck a chord with me and I made it known that I wanted to do the training to become an Observer. Years in training in various forms, both inside and outside work, have made me aware that the best way to ensure a thorough understanding of any subject is to try to share your knowledge. Altruistic motives apart – the more people who have improved their driving skills, the safer all road users will be.

One evening after work, another Observer candidate and I met Alan, one of the Senior Observers. He explained that the Observer training had now become structured and that following training sessions with him, we would undertake a spell of observing with an Associate, which would allow us Trainee Observer status. There would also be regular Observer training sessions, organised by the Dumfries Group, which we should attend.

Alan explained that to attain Qualified Observer status we must have carried out at least ten hours of Observed runs with Associates and had six months practical experience of observing within the Group in the preceding twelve months. There is a written test, and 80% must be scored in each section. It is also necessary to achieve a 'Satisfactory' grade in a practical test conducted by a Senior Observer. Alan also told us that to maintain Qualified Observer status, we must carry out a minimum of ten hours of Observed Runs each year, and re-qualify every three years with the Qualified Observer practical test conducted by a Senior Observer.



We were then given lots of bed-time reading in the form of The IAM Guide to Observer Qualification, the Dumfries Group Observer Handbook, and the IAM Observer Training Manual.

The other candidate and I would take turns at being an Associate, then an Observer, with Alan in the back seat of the car, to observe our antics and give us feedback to assist our progress through the training.



My colleague proved to be an excellent commentator, which I found quite daunting as I couldn't get a word in! I had the opposite problem – despite usually being able to blether for Britain – I find commentary while driving really difficult. Role-play is never easy, at least until you get to know the other participants. I think we both found it quite hard to get away from a slight resentment of our peer who was criticising our driving efforts and remember that we were supposed to be Associates. This got easier with practice, and was greatly aided by the quality of Alan's feedback.

After the first drive, we were provided with detailed feedback sheets including a review of the previous session (a repeat of the debrief last time), a review of objectives for the current session, guidance notes, and a reminder of the disclaimer. We were encouraged to develop our own notes for each session around the main points of the Advanced Driving System.

The Observed Runs became more enjoyable and beneficial each time as we both included 'deliberate mistakes' so that the task of the Observer became more realistic. We were both much more at ease with the whole business of Observing when we had completed the five sessions arranged with Alan.

The next step of course is a real live Associate! I found the experience of having to get used to my colleague very useful as I was able to relate this to my first encounter with 'my' Associate. The various handbooks for Observers alongside Alan's very complete and helpful advice gave me plenty of tips and hints. I hope my Associate will have gained from this, but only time – and the Test result – will tell!

I am much more self-critical of my own driving these days and I am sure my level of concentration has got better. I relate this not only to the need for self-preservation but also to the added responsibility of assisting others to improve their driving skills and safety on the road.

Margaret Vaughn

Too far?

You'll have heard that the Government are bringing in legislation (The Traffic Management Act, England and Wales) to make it an offence to park more than 19 inches (50 cm) from the kerb, drivers who do could be fined £100.

The provisions of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (civil enforcement of road traffic contraventions) require Councils to make representations to the Government, once it becomes law, for permission to apply fines.

But which is worse too far from the kerb or on it?



News from Dumfries & Galloway Constabulary

This is a selected summary of what happened in the last 3 months of 2003.

* During the first month of the new legislation, six people were charged with using a mobile phone while driving.

* The festive drink driving campaign showed that, after years of falling figures, drink driving is on the increase.

* The Safety Camera Unit reported 5,630 drivers for speeding, in 95 locations.

* In Galloway Division 98 drivers were reported, in November, in a street racers initiative.

* There were 3 fatal and 14 serious collisions resulting in 3 deaths and 18 serious injuries. In addition 97 slight collisions were reported with a further 135 people suffering injuries.

Unsurprisingly, once investigated most of the serious collisions in the region were found to be caused by driver error.

National motoring charge

The Institute for Public Policy Research has suggested the Government introduce a nationwide 'congestion charge' to help cut rising traffic levels.

Imperial College, London found that a scheme involving the monitoring of vehicles via a satellite tracking system and charging 10p per km in rural areas and 20p per km in urban areas could reduce traffic by seven per cent and raise up to £16 billion per year. It could be introduced by 2010.

For whom the road tolls

These pictures show the M6 Toll road and were taken in December and January. Note the consistent lack of traffic especially when you consider the photos were taken in mid morning on a Thursday and Sunday! Note the fact that only two pay stations were open at the toll plaza - but no queues.



How are vehicle insurance ratings calculated?

In 1992 the Association of British Insurers increased the number of insurance groups from 9 to 20. Seventy percent of the information used to assess the group ratings is by Thatcham (the motor insurance repair research centre).

The basis of the assessment is the internationally recognised insurance standard 15km/h impact which is used as the basis on which to calculate the cost of returning the vehicle to its pre-accident condition. In addition a vehicle's group rating is also determined by:

- The new car price which reflects the various models and the cost of settlement in the event of a "total loss".
- Vehicle performance i.e. the 0-60 mph acceleration and top speed.
- Availability of a replacement body shell.
- Vehicle security effectiveness i.e. alarm, immobilisers, locks etc.

Head restraint effectiveness has also been assessed and will be appended to the individual ratings as a prefix indicator. Insurers will then be able to monitor performance/ claims record and adjust premiums as necessary.



You can now check the effectiveness of new car head restraints on line; to do so go to: <http://www.thatcham-sites.org/ncwr/whiplash.htm>

Beating congestion Texas style

You might think we have increasing traffic in the UK, but in Texas they have serious increases in traffic, partly brought about because they handle about seventy percent of the trade with Mexico. Freight volumes passing through the state increase by an incredible 30% per annum!



To tackle this the Texas Dept of Transport want to build four 400m wide 'Trans Texas Corridors' totaling 6,700km in length. Each corridor will have a six lane passenger vehicle route, a four lane lorry route and six rail lines. The proposals include two rail lines each for freight, commuter and high speed services.

The freedom of motoring

Time was that motoring promised freedom for the public; families used to dream of the joys of the open road as they set off on empty country roads scattering chickens as the friendly farmer welcomed them to picnic in his fields. The AA patrol men would salute and traffic policeman cheerily waved them on their way. But has the dream finally turned into a nightmare?



As we crawl along on congested roads, trapped in our cars, with a sea of brake lights ahead as the vehicles slow down for the speed camera; we are safe in the knowledge that the cheery traffic policeman is now enjoying his early retirement. He has been replaced by a civilian contractor sitting behind banks of screens sending out fines to errant drivers from the safety of his locked control centre.

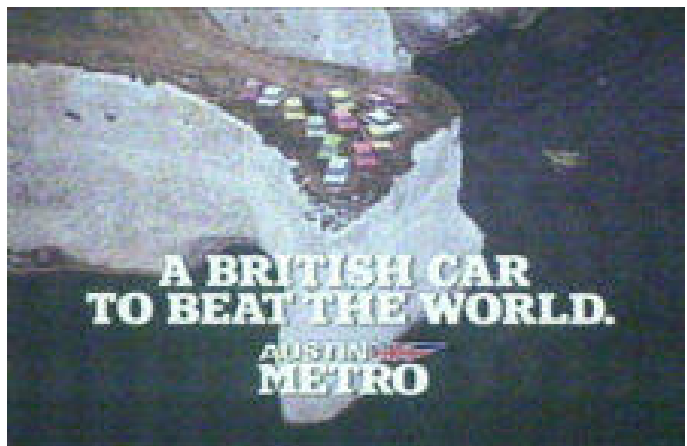


More facts

Did you know that the retail motor industry in the UK has an annual turnover of around £130 billion with 69,000 businesses and 1.9 million jobs!

Old Adverts

Following our last newsletter which showed an old Morris advert we have now been given the adjacent picture from the advertising campaign for the Metro, must have been dated around 1980. Do you remember it?



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.

Observation - bridge abutments:

Those with a keen sense of observation may have noticed that problems with the road surface can occur at bridge abutments especially in the first few years of a bridge's life. This is caused by differential settlement below the road surface at the point where the backfill against the bridge abutments meets the thinner road construction running over the bridge deck.



Here two abutments each display signs of distress and a step in the road level. Note on the right the road is breaking up and forming a pothole.

This may present problems to drivers or riders of a whole range of vehicles as the vehicle dynamics can be adversely affected, especially if the joint is not running across the road at 90 degrees to the direction of travel or the road is curving as it crosses the joint. In cold weather of course, you will be aware that frost often forms first, or lingers longer, on bridges all of which can be made worse if you have to drive or ride over a bump just as you pass onto the colder section of road. Even in good weather the effect on the vehicle stability could have serious consequences to the smoothness of the drive or ride, especially to the inattentive driver or rider.

So what can be done to minimise adverse effects? Observation and positioning are the key, of course. Where appropriate and safe you may be able to adjust your position to enable you to cross the dip in the surfacing in a straight line minimising any lateral forces on your vehicle, you should also of course aim to miss the pothole if you can. Remember you always have the option of slowing down. These photos were taken on the B793 at Dalbeattie.

Can you be seen - by that lorry?

Understanding and anticipating the problems of other road users, including large vehicles such as buses and lorries, can make driving safer for you. If you understand the problems of others there is a lot you can do to reduce the risks to them and yourself.

Ever thought about what a lorry driver can see from his high up vantage point? Well maybe less than you think because the high up driving position, whilst offering a commanding view ahead around bends and over hedges etc can also bring reduced vision to the rear and sides and also perhaps directly in front, close to the vehicle.

Malcolm Polhill of DFDS gave the Group an interesting presentation in 2003 covering just this subject. The DFDS presentation was aimed, at least in part, at schoolchildren although the basic message equally applies to all. Here we are reproducing, with their permission, some of the images used in their presentation.

Below are two images showing a large goods vehicle alongside a car, a common scenario on our roads at junctions for instance (or perhaps on the A75 when one of those Irish registered lorries is rushing from the ferry!). Car drivers and motorcyclists are no doubt very aware of their proximity to LGVs but do they understand that their car may not be visible to the lorry driver?

The exact view available to the lorry driver depends on the design of the lorry, the driving position and the type of mirrors fitted, however it is a brave or misinformed driver or rider who assumes that the driver will have seen you.

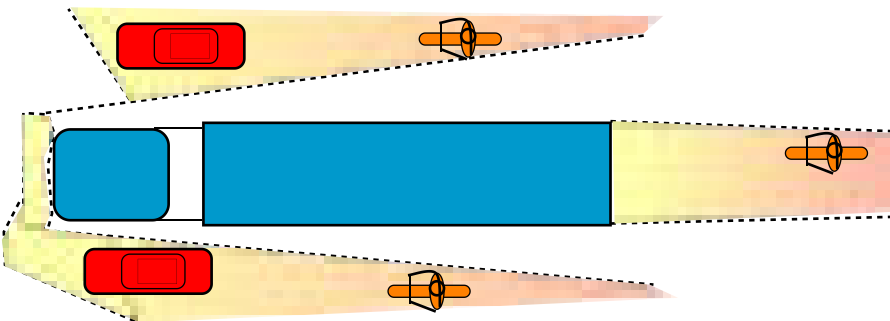
In this example the lorry driver may at first glance see an apparently clear nearside, although there may be perhaps a glimpse of the car in the lower nearside mirror there is no sign of the car directly through the windows!



Equally of concern is the next pair of photos showing the view of the apparently clear road ahead, through the windscreen, when in reality a pedestrian is standing directly in front of the lorry!



The sketch below serves as a reminder of the visibility problems the driver of a large vehicle may suffer. The shaded areas represent potential blind spots; of course the actual visibility from any particular lorry may not be so restricted but on the other hand it may be worse! The motorcycles and cars indicated are all potentially not visible to the driver of the large vehicle.



Whilst it may well be impossible never to drive into a potential blind spot, recognising the visibility restrictions of other road users will help you to consider the advisability of your potential manoeuvre. Actively considering if another road user, such as lorry driver, can see you may lead you to sacrificing your position or delaying your manoeuvre, for safety, with good reason.

Cars and bikes at junctions

Heard this advice? “Make eye contact with the driver waiting at the junction on your left so that you know he has seen you”? This advice is not good for car drivers and especially not for bikers. A waiting driver will often stare into your face, maybe stopping for a long time and then pull out in front of you - he did look, but didn't see you! It's a classic accident - don't let it happen to you.

How do you respond to this question? “When do you know that a vehicle will not pull out of a junction into your path”? The answer of course is, “Once you have passed it”. This is good advice for all road users and especially for bikers.



.... your chance to comment on motoring matters - but you don't have to have a grumble!

In this edition Sandy Greig writes:

There are two matters I want to write to you about, which perhaps the Committee could give some thought to:

(1) On the important matter of getting lots more associate members and therefore increasing the standard of driving in the Region. It would be good if some of the group members who can address a public meeting were to get on to the programmes of all kinds of local organisations. I am thinking of the W.R.I. Guilds, works social clubs, young farmers meetings, etc. Having seen at the recent Group meeting the kind of visual interest that is available, our speakers would not be boring.

It is however vitally important that the theme of advanced driving be taken to young people who are already driving, or who, at school, are looking forward to the experience in the near future. Would there be an opening in High Schools to address 5th and 6th year pupils? There might also be openings in the Technical College so that young drivers could become keen to learn. But knowing how hard up most young people are, £85 could be a turn-off. Is there any way around this do you think?

The second matter that concerns me is the recent news of the great number of drivers who do not pay the Road Tax and therefore also do not have insurance. I firmly believe that the best way to deal with this is to add a small tax to the fuel we buy at the pumps. Business drivers could be compensated for extra large mileages through their income tax returns. There would be an added advantage in this simple-to operate scheme in the gaining of some revenue from tourists visiting the UK. I have discussed this idea with other drivers and they also think this is an excellent idea. The Association of British Insurers estimate that one million motorists are driving without any insurance and that this costs the industry £500m per year. This adds £30 a year to everyone else's premiums.

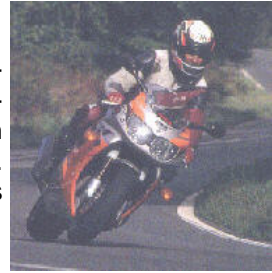
I know this is a thorny matter to consider but I would dearly love IAM Groups to get behind this basic idea (and for experts to work out the details) and for Groups like ours to lobby our headquarters so that they will begin a national campaign for Government to look seriously into the matter.

Editor's comments:

The IAM's Skills for Life programme is only available if you've held a full licence for at least 12 months, £10 discount is available for drivers 25 years of age and under. You can have insurance without road tax but can't buy road tax without insurance. See also 'Did You Know' - page 19.

Design for bikes

The DfT, The Institute of Highway Incorporated Engineers and the British Motorcyclists Federation are funding the TRL in a study aimed at looking at the design of the road environment to make motorcycling safer. This is in an effort to help meet the Government's targets to reduce motorcycling casualties.



There has been a significant rise in two wheeled traffic in the recent past especially in cities but motorcycle riders account for a disproportionately high percentage of the figures for death and serious injury (around 14%). The study results will be used in the preparation of highway design guidelines for motorcycling.

Did you know?

- According to the RAC Report on Motoring 2004 38% of motorists polled think the tax disc system is outdated whilst 54% are opposed to the introduction of satellite tracking based road user charging. The poll also found that 30% of drivers would continue to use their cars even if annual motoring costs and taxes were increased by a further £1500!

- Oxford University zoologists believe pigeons use the motorway network and road junctions to navigate!

- In Australia it is illegal to drive wearing thongs. In Australia flip flops are known as thongs by the way.

Black box in the car

Latest from the USA is a black box system you fit to your car which you can use to monitor, second by second, the habits of anyone driving your vehicle.

It is targeted at parents who lend their car to sons and daughters to help ensure that they drive safely and in accordance with the rules you set down. "Simply pop the memory card out of the "black box" and plug it into your family computer to display the reports and graphs then review them with your teenager and let them know that you care how they operate the vehicle - no speeding, no aggressive driving - just like being in the car with them every second they drive"

Whilst not identical a similar system is now available in the UK at around £800 plus £120 annual fee. This one uses GPS technology which is used to track your vehicle and can provide 'real time' information rather than statistics recorded from a black box in the car. You'll need to decide for yourself if this will be a contribution to road safety?

How motoring has changed!

- 1861 – 12mph speed limit imposed
- 1865 – Speed limits now 2mph in town & 4mph elsewhere. Red flag required.
- 1878 – Red flag made optional in certain circumstances.
- 1895 – Speed limit raised to 14mph.
- 1896 – Vehicles must now have lights and a horn. First speeding fine issued.
- 1899 – First fatal road accident recorded.
- 1903 – Number plate & driving licence introduced, speed limit now 20mph.
- 1904 – First guidelines on use of road signs.
- 1921 – First use of tax discs.
- 1923 – First general use of roundabouts.
- 1927 – First automatic traffic lights & single white lines as road divider.
- 1930 – Speed limit for cars abolished. 3rd party insurance compulsory.
- 1931 – Highway Code introduced.
- 1934 – Flashing amber globes introduced at pedestrian crossings.
- 1935 – 30mph limit (town). Driving test compulsory. First windscreen wipers.
- 1936 – Installation of ‘cats eyes’ commences.
- 1937 – Windscreen safety glass & speedometers required. Dipped headlights introduced.
- 1940 – Road signs removed (War!).
- 1951 - Zebra Crossings introduced.
- 1956 - Advanced Driving Test introduced.
- 1954 - Flashing indicators on cars legalised.
- 1959 - Double white lines introduced.
- 1960 - MOT test introduced (vehicles 10+yrs). Learner motorcyclists restricted to machines under 250 cc. First Traffic Wardens.
- 1964 – Yellow box junctions introduced.
- 1965 - Continental style traffic signs. 'Halt' sign replaced by 'Stop'.
- 1966 – Priority to “vehicles on” roundabouts - changed from priority for “vehicles entering”.
- 1967 - MOT test for vehicles 3+yrs. New cars to have front seat belts. 70 mph speed limit introduced.
- 1969 - Pelican Crossings introduced.
- 1971 - Zig-Zag markings at Zebra Crossings.
- 1976 - Mini-roundabouts are introduced.
- 1983 - First road hump regulations. Wheel clamping starts. Front seat passengers and driver must wear seat belt.
- 1987 - Zig-Zag markings at Pelican Crossings. Cars to have rear belts.
- 1991 - 20mph zones introduced. White chevrons painted on motorways to help drivers to keep their distance.
- 1992 - Speed enforcement cameras introduced at permanent sites.
- 1993 - First trials of Puffin Crossing.
- 1999 - Photo driving licences and new highway code introduced.

Augmented Reality

Just when the idea of satellite navigation in a car has started to become a reality, the technology may become outdated by new developments.

Siemens recently unveiled their 'augmented reality navigation concept' which moves in car satellite navigation on a step. The system uses a tiny video camera mounted behind the interior mirror to monitor the view ahead. The camera view is fed to a navigation display. A computer also uses details of the vehicle's position and direction of travel to augment the view of the road ahead.

The display shows the video footage of the road ahead with the path the vehicle needs to follow highlighted. This way the driver will know which lane to choose on approach to a junction for instance. The display can also superimpose three dimensional direction signs and is supplemented by audio instructions.

The system needs a high degree of computing power and a great deal more development work is needed before it becomes viable for everyday use.

Wind assisted parking

A country park in Leicestershire has become the first car park in the UK to have barrier controlled parking powered by wind turbines.

IAM News releases

Since last December IAM have made the following news releases:

- Free Guidance on Minibus Driving from IAM Fleet.
- Road Safety Minister presents IAM Award.
- Gloucestershire IAM Road Safety Man recognised in New Year's Honours.
- "Wrong Gear" contributing to Safety Camera Misery says IAM.
- IAM warns "breezy riders" as Scooter Commuters face their first winter.
- IAM seeks Nominations for Prestigious Road Safety Award.
- IAM Team to gain Motorcycle Specialist.
- West Pennine & Mid Kent Groups win 2004 Dunlop Road Safety Awards

For full details go the IAM web site or contact the Secretary.

Testing times

Since the first Advanced Test in 1956, the IAM has helped more than 300,000 drivers and riders to prepare for, and take, the IAM Advanced Driving Test.

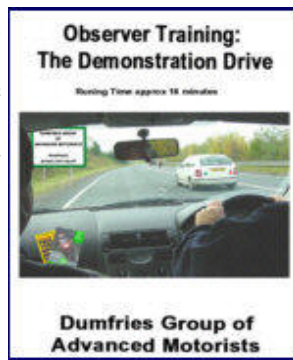
Recycling

Please don't throw this newsletter away. It can be a point of contact with the general public. When you've finished reading it why not pass it on to a friend, neighbour, or leave it in a waiting room somewhere?

The 'System' in action

At the March Observer training night another new Group video was shown "The Demonstration Drive". This 16 minute presentation uses 'in car' footage of a journey from MFI car park along the bypass, up the old Glen Road and return - with a voice over explanation of the key features of the 'System'.

Whilst primarily aimed at Observers the presentation is also available to others who may find it useful as a reminder of the principles of the 'System'. It is available in VHS or DVD format for hire, at a nominal charge, from the group's library. Copies are also available for sale at £5 to group members (£7 non members). If you are interested please contact Helen Cameron.



What's on reminder

10 May Table Top Rally & AGM starts 7:30pm at Dalston House Hotel

14 June..... Treasure Hunt (meet at Dock Park 6:30 - 7pm)

Alan Jones (Chair & Events Sec)
Helen Cameron (Sec) ; Allan Graham (Treasurer)
John Pearson (Course Tutor) ; Valerie Wilson
Graeme McColm (Publicity); Charlie Allman
Andrew Bird (News Dist) ; Graham Watson (Editor)

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: dumfries@groups.iam.org.uk

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this news letter 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

This newsletter was sponsored by:

**Edinburgh Road
Heathhall
Dumfries
DG1 3NU
Tel: 01387 263817**

For new and used Skodas and much more.

www.skoda.co.uk