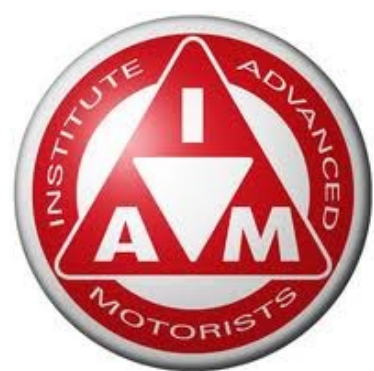




Newsletter Supplement ~ October 2015

St Helens Group of Advanced Motorists
Working to make our roads safer every day...



In Loving Memory of **George Gaskell**

21st March 1930 to 3rd September 2015



George joined the St.Helens Group of Advanced Motorists in 2001. After a short period of training he passed the IAM advanced driving test and stayed with the Group and became an 'Observer' – a volunteer who helps others to improve their driving and to get to the standard of the advanced test.

George was a stalwart of the Group and was one of its most loved and respected characters. It was easy to love George. His enthusiasm for both driving and the safe driving cause became part of his fabric and that enthusiasm was infectious, rubbing off onto both members of the public and his fellow Observers.

George continued to refine and im-

prove his driving and recently passed the IAM National Observer Test. This was a test of both his driving and how he engaged with members of the public in giving driving advice. George excelled in both and passed with flying colours. George was always up for a challenge and he recently passed the RoSPA Advanced Driving Test and he passed this at the Gold standard – a mark of an expert driver.

George loved driving and he told me that following the loss of his beloved wife Bess the group 'kept him going'. He told me that when Bess was alive he used to take her out on driving excursions and when she passed away he continued do these, either on his own or with members of the Group, particularly with Lee Westhead. Some of the trips were well over a 100 miles! To many, this would be a trial, but George relished these trips.

George could verbally dissect a bend or a roundabout to the nth degree – a mark of an advanced driver. George drove with deliberation and gusto. In April this year, George, Jim Cunliffe, Jeff Mather and I hired a car and we went off for the day, driving on some of the roads around Lake Bala in Wales. When George was in the back we'd hear him say "Go lad, go lad" – to whoever was driving. George called many of us 'lads' - that was George, down to earth and friendly.

On this day out we had lunch in a nice in a pub. George had fish and chips which I think he loved as much as the driving.

George was not only a great driver and Observer, he was also a great ambassador and advocate for the Group and he would frequently engage with local charitable organisations to deliver the safe driving message and secure donations to the Group. George was a unique individual.

George also enjoyed the social side of the group and earlier this year he had a go at 10 pin bowling for the first time. He used a ramp to aim and then slide a ball down. He quickly got his eye in and gave the rest of us a run for our money. George also participated in other Group events and developed deeper friendships with several members of the Group. Julie Brown, Liz Houston and Lee Westhead got to know George particularly well.

George was an inspiration and a gentleman, in the true sense of the word, to all who knew him. He was a father figure, indeed a grandfather figure to many. Above all, he was a friend to all who knew him. I know that I speak for all the IAM people who know George. Rest in peace dear friend.

Mark Farnworth



Tributes to George...

George was a really nice person – I never heard him speak ill of anyone. It was always “Oh he’s a smashing chap, you would have liked him etc...”

George loved talking and I liked listening to his stories, especially about getting a steam train up to Liverpool Lime Street or about the days when he worked at Pilkington. He was so descriptive in his language when he was telling you something. I remember on my demo drive, George was telling me all about Burtonwood. In fact, we had to keep telling ourselves to stop talking and concentrate on the driving. In the end, George said if Jeff Mather (senior Observer at the time) enquires about whether you learned anything, just say, I didn’t learn much about driving but I know all about the history of the second world war!

What was apparent to me was how much joy/enjoyment George found in everything:

- Bess and his family – he was so proud of them all
- Driving (goes without saying!)
- Ten Pin Bowling
- His lifetime membership of the Sunday Times Wine Club
- His work at the Rainford Trust
- Cricket
- The shipping forecast
- His surprise birthday meal for his 85th birthday at The Glass House in St Helens
- The day out at the East Lancashire Railway
- Anderton Boat Lift

It was blatantly obvious how much he loved Bess. When he used to tell me and Liz about how they met, I think he still couldn’t quite believe that she had chosen him! It was so lovely the way he went and lovingly tended her grave. We called in at the cemetery on our way back from the

Eccleston Lane Ends Gala so he could water the plants at the graveside.

Also the way he had recently embraced modern technology! Texting. While most people of an older persuasion would complain about technology today, George was so excited by it. I tried to show him how to use predictive text but I think that was a step too far (but I am sure he would have mastered it eventually!). He thought it was such fun and he loved learning new text speak and then inventing his own. I once got a text saying he’d been listening to TMS, Test Match Special! There is no point saying we WILL miss George, because we miss him already.

Julie Brown

This is not the article that I had originally planned to write but one I feel I must write, after the sad death of George Gaskell, one of the Group’s best and most experienced Observers.

It was shortly after 9am on the morning of September 3rd that I received a phone call from George, saying that he had had a dreadful night and was really worried about his health. I drove to George’s house and took him to the Doctor. The Doctor admitted George to

hospital by ambulance; he did stress that this was to have him checked out and there was no reason to be alarmed. After George was admitted to a Ward, one of our Members, who works at Whiston, saw him and, again, there seemed no reason to be alarmed or unduly worried. That evening, at the Induction session of the new Course, we all expected to see him again quite soon. However, shortly after 9am on September 4th, I received a phone call from one of George’s neighbours to say that he had died. Apparently he had had a heart attack and, although they got him into Intensive Care, he died at about 1am on the morning of Friday September 4th.

It is difficult to put into words the loss we all feel. George’s passion and enthusiasm for Driving and Observing was obvious to all who knew him. He was an example to us all.

George joined the Group in April 2001 and was then turned 70. He had his first Observed Run on April 8th 2001 and, after another eleven Observed Runs, he passed the IAM Test on July 9th 2001. Over the next fourteen years, he became one of our best and most committed Observers. He won both the Driver of the Year and Observer of the Year on more than one occasion. Never one to rest on his laurels, George went

George at the NSG/Pilkington Safety Day, 2014, Lathom Technical Centre





on to pass the ROSPA Gold, and then the IAM National Observer Test. This meant that he was now on the IAM's list of National Observers, recognised throughout the country.

I have already mentioned George's enthusiasm for Driving and Observing. However, he was also very reliable. Whenever I knew I would be missing on a particular Sunday, it was George whom I asked to cover for me. I just knew he would do a great job and would report back accurately to make my life a lot easier.

It is inevitable that in any Driving Group there will be people of all religious beliefs and none. Mine are that George is now with Almighty God. So I will close by saying, "George, you have been great. Thanks a million. Rest in Peace, Dear Friend."

Alan Prescott

Things won't seem the same without him, he was a true gentleman and a father figure to many.

Jeff Mather

I can't take this in! It's less than a week since we were out on a drive, you know how George lived for it! I really am lost for words, and he will be sorely missed.

Jim Cunliffe

That's very sad news, Alan. We all know George was a lovely gentleman who will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him.

Ken Nevitt

Terribly sad news and a great loss to all of his friends. George was a gentleman in the true sense of the word.

John Matthews

So sorry to hear the sad news about George, what a great ambassador for the group, and for driving in general, so precise, generous with both his talents, and his time. He will be greatly missed.

Les Roughley

I always found George so helpful and spot on with his advice, but I have to admit that he scared me a little, especially when he sat in the back of my car to observe the observer!

Kath Woodward

Thoughts and condolences to the family. I did not know him well but agree, he was a true gent, passionate about driving and passing on his wisdom.

John O'Leary

Loved George. My mentor. He was so passionate about his driving. Forever with Bess. RIP

Liz Howlett

This is very sad news. I always thought of George as a gentle man as well as him being a gentleman. There are not many folk who was as well thought of and as well qualified as George.

Paul Griffiths

I was glad to have the opportunity to give an observed run and also to take advantage of him observing me. I found him to be a great observer, keen, strict but fair and a gentle attitude.

Alf Birtle

George was one of those special people sent down to guide us. A LIFE LIVED WELL

Sue Hunt

He did so much for the group, both as an observer, as someone who would spend time trying to get us extra funding and as an 'all round' enthusiastic excellent driver. He loved driving and I am sure it gave him enormous pleasure. He was a true gentleman.

Val O'Hanlon

It was an honour and pleasure to have met such a wonderful gentleman as George, I have happy memories including the outings to the East Lancs railway and the night bowling but that I shall miss him dearly.

Liz Houston

George: Winner of the Observer of the Year Competition 2009





Funeral at Christ Church, Ecclestone, Friday 18th September 2015





George in the April 2015 SHGAM Newsletter

CONGRATULATIONS GEORGE



On the 21st March, stalwart Observer George Gaskell celebrated his 85th Birthday. To mark the occasion fellow Observer Lee Westhead, a sergeant with Greater Manchester police and Class I Police Driver organised a 'secret' gathering of members at the Glass House

pub/restaurant in St. Helens town centre on Mon 23rd March.

Prior to George arriving for his meal, Lee had taken him on an Observed run to fine tune George's driving on a 100 mile route! To many this would not seem like fun but to George, one of the Group's finest and most enthusiastic drivers, this was something he was up for and he revelled in the opportunity.

When they arrived at the restaurant for their meal George was taken aback when he saw a number of Group members waiting for him!

Apart from the get together, Lee presented George with his 'wings' (shown below) which are issued to all Police Advanced Drivers, but if George does get it wrong and ends up in a hedge bottom, then Lee gave him a real Police whistle to call for help!

But for George, the real icing on the cake is to be a day out with GMP on an Advanced Driver Training run.



George enrolled with the IAM on the 1st July 2001 and joined the St. Helens Group as an Associate. It didn't take long for him to reach test standard and in September 2001 he became an Observer.

George's enthusiasm for driving and observing is second to none. He is an example and inspiration to us all and a gentleman with it.

So George, congratulations for your birthday and I look forward to many more years of your involvement with the Group. And thanks Lee for organising this for George.

**Mark Farnworth,
Group Chairman**

Thank You

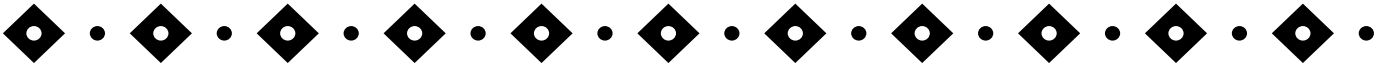
Dear Drivers,

I want to thank the Group for giving me a wonderful time on my 85th birthday. It was such a surprise and quite overwhelming – in a nice kind of way, of course. Thank you all so much – it was a birthday I shall not forget. Yours for hundreds (or thousands?) of miles more.

George

George at the Glass House Pub/Restaurant





George: Driver of the Year 2011
Presented by Jim Cunliffe



Ten Year Service Award 2011
Presented by the Mayor,
Councillor Tom Hargreaves



George: Observer of the Year 2014
Presented by Deputy Mayor,
Councillor Steve Glover,

**Visit to the East
Lancashire Railway, Bury**
Saturday 18th April



George—front row, second from left



A short, humbly addressed letter to all recently successful Associates

I remember passing my Advanced Driving Test. Likewise, as time moves on, I am sure you will still remember passing yours. I remember the dry mouth, and getting to the rendezvous about a quarter of an hour before the Examiner; the meticulous reverse into a parking bay – ruler-straight between the lines, at the third attempt; a hasty, final shuffle through the pages of The Highway Code, and then the wait for the Examiner to appear. It is one of those events in life you do not easily forget. An hour and a half later, it had happened; I had passed my Test. For a brief (thankfully brief) moment, I felt that the roads had suddenly become my oyster. An Advanced Driver! Reality, however, quickly reasserted itself. The roads had not suddenly changed - there remained the usual mix of hazards: the weather, corners and bends, junctions and roundabouts, parked vehicles, other drivers...still there, indomitably challenging.

When I took my Test, mid-2001, Associates were not at the end of it given a piece of paper showing numbers in boxes indicating how well they had done, they were told whether or not they had passed - some comments on performance, and that was it. If, at the time, there had been numbers' ratings, I know for sure that I would not have received loads of '1's'. For most of us, such 'excellence' comes only after further effort so do not be discouraged by the '2's' and '3's' you may have been awarded. Those numbers are Passes in their own right. Aim to reduce them.

Getting through the Test is not a passport to permanence, whatever the markings. Far from sounding a downbeat note, and this is the heart of the matter, it is what makes Advanced Driving so interesting; resolve to become a better Advanced Driver. Now that the rigours of the Course and the Test are over, begin to enjoy the more subtle aspects of Advanced Driving. You know what they are; build them into your everyday driving. The positioning, seamless gear-changing, stopping without the trace of a jerk, eliminating gear-

brake overlap, enjoying the pleasure of restrained progress through urban clutter, stretching third gear away from hazards on country roads, reducing the frequency and intensity of braking through the use of engine-braking and well-judged deceleration...even giving a commentary. The list goes on. Oh, I nearly forgot! Smoothness – this is the thing to aim for. Make everything nice and smooth – it is the hallmark of Advanced Driving. But never forget the importance of safety. Always drive so that you are able to stop safely on your own side of the road in the distance you can see to be clear. This message is repeated throughout 'Roadcraft'.

Seek out interesting roads. I shall mention just three. The A49 South, through Cheshire into Shropshire and beyond; the A548 from Abergele to Llanrwst; the A682 from Gisburn (on the A59) to

Long Preston. You will not be disappointed. These roads have lots of bends and they run through beautiful countryside; there are parking spots from which to admire it. Somehow I seem to miss them on the way to the next set of bends.

Finally (I did say this was a short letter), you have worked hard to get the nod of approval. It is up to you now to capitalise on this. It is the start of an enterprise that will go on for as long as Mother Nature and the money in your pocket (or purse) will allow, provided –and this is the important thing – you continue to practice Advanced Driving whenever you drive. You will be learning all the time.

Congratulations on passing your Advanced Driving Test.

George Gaskell

Church Square Event - 11th September 2014



George and Jim Cunliffe at the SHGAM display in Church Square, St. Helens



I can't help but feel that it is too soon to be writing this piece. In George's birthday 'thank you' he asked the question as to whether he would be with us for hundreds or thousands of more miles. He deserved a hundred thousand.

George and I often discussed literature. We both loved to read and had started to share books with each other. At the time of his death, George was reading my recommendation, 'A History of Loneliness' by Patrick Boyne, I on the other hand had been presented with a copy of 'A Glass Act', by David Pilkington.

We both enjoyed brass bands and again we often shared CD's of each others music. As a former National Service soldier, George's taste was more military and marching band. I on the other hand enjoyed the more contemporary music of a colliery brass band. Our drives often contravened the silent car rule and the speed into our corners and bends was often dictated by the tempo of the William Tell Overture or similar.

George took pleasure in everything. He appreciated a nice view, a walk around an art gallery, a good bottle of wine (or vodka) an interesting conversation and a

good plate of fish and chips. George was not frightened by being ordinary. He was never pretentious or boastful, he was devastated if he felt he had appeared rude, let alone hurt somebody's feelings.

If I had to explain George's manner to someone, then I think I would say,

"Imagine being able to predetermine your child's behaviour when they grow into an adult. Imagine how you would want them to conduct themselves, how hard you would want them to work, the diligence with which you would like them to apply themselves to tasks, the way you would like them to treat the people they meet, the way you would wish them to love and care for others, the impact you would want them to have on the world. You would want your child to grow into a George."

As we go through life, we meet all sorts of people. Some of those casual acquaintances remain just that, others go on to become our colleagues, our associates and even our partners and family.

A small number of the people we meet go on to become our friends. In today's society, I can't help feel the word friend has lost its meaning. There are people who delight in advertising their hundreds of 'friends'

on facebook and such like. In that context the word 'friend' deserves the quotation marks, these people don't know the meaning of the word. George Gaskell will be remembered for a number of reasons, but for me he will be remembered for his friendship. George was a wonderful man, I was privileged to get to know him and to share time with him.

In writing this, I remembered a poem that I had once discussed with George as one of my favourites. I will remember George Gaskell forever, he is one of only a handful of people I can say genuinely shaped my view of the world and I am better man for knowing him.

*Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there, I do not sleep
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am the diamond glints on snow
I am the sunlight on ripened grain
I am the gentle Autumn rain
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am that swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight
I am the soft stars that shine at night
Do not stand at my grave and cry
I am not there, I did not die.*

God bless George, rest easy now
Lee Westhead

Troop Aid and the Willowbrook Hospice were two charities that were also close to George's heart. Due to the generous donations of Group members £70 has been sent to both these charities



Troop Aid was founded in November 2006 by three ex servicemen as a result of a visit to Selly Oak Hospital's Alexandra Wing in Birmingham. This was the home of the Defence Medical Welfare Services who are responsible for the welfare of all Armed Forces Personnel, male and female who were injured during the conflict in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Troop Aid understands that everyone who joins the Armed Forces may one day go to war and fight for their country. At the Queen Elizabeth Hospital injured servicemen and women receive the very best medical care.

Willowbrook Hospice is an Independent Charity established in 1993 by a group of local people to raise funds to build and run a Specialist Palliative Care Unit. We work very closely in partnership with the local health care community to improve the quality of people's lives living with their illness. We liaise with the Hospital Specialist Palliative Care Team, the Community Specialist Palliative Care Team and the local Primary Care Teams, which includes local GPs and district nurses. Although we provide care for patients at the end of their life, our statistics show that over 50% of our inpatients are discharged back to their preferred place of care, usually home, dispelling the myth that a Hospice is just a place where you go to die