

# July & August 2019



## For your diary Sunday Observed Drives

Aldridge Community Centre, on the  
**first Sunday** of each month (unless otherwise stated)  
at Middlemore Lane, Aldridge. WS9 8AN

Starting at 9.30am on  
Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019  
Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August  
Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> September

Since the last newsletter...

**WELL DONE & CONGRATULATIONS  
ON PASSING YOUR TEST  
TO**

*Mrs Julie Pegg*

Date: 8th May 2019

Observer: Martin Goad

Senior: Josie Hubbard-Palmer

**and**

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW ASSOCIATES**

*Mrs June Nicholls*

*Mr Muhammad Hanif*

Log on to our website where you can find back copies of the newsletter and where details of events will be published once confirmed.

[www.iamroadsmart.com/groups/walsallam/about-us/our-community](http://www.iamroadsmart.com/groups/walsallam/about-us/our-community)

### *Committee meetings:*

These will be on the **second** Tuesday of the month. Venue: Aldridge Community Centre

## Your 2019 diary

July: 6<sup>th</sup> - Pelsall Carnival. Volunteers are needed to assist on our stand - nothing hard, just talk to members of the public. Please contact Martin Goad if you are able to spare an hour to support the Group.

July: 7<sup>th</sup> July - Middleton Hall.

This is an opportunity to enjoy a local Sunday drive meeting up with other group members at a pleasant location. An email will be circulated. Cost: £6 to tour the house & gardens, if you wish. It's free to visit the shops.

**Second half of year - these are work in progress,**

However, dear Reader, this is where we need your ideas - What should we include for the second half of the year ??? All ideas very gratefully received.

August: Summer meal, possibly after a Sunday session - Any suggestions please

September: Visit to Bletchley Park - being researched

October: Talk by Jill Vincent re smart motorways

A Skittles evening, either at The Boat, Rushall or Walsall Arms



## Chairman`s Chat

*From Martin Goad*

As I was driving on my regular route from Brownhills to Willenhall this week I was thinking about the delights of Summer driving. There was a steady drizzle and the outside temperature registered 13 centigrade, I had my lights on and the aircon to keep the screen clear of mist. A week before it was 30 degrees and wall to wall sunshine. Ah the British Summer!

My thoughts went back to when I was young and my parents got their first car. We went out most weekends in the Summer just for a drive and it was great fun. We had a Morris Minor 1000 which we shared with my aunt and uncle. Dad could get it up to 60 MPH on the open road when Mother was being distracted by my younger brothers playing up on the backseat (not me of course). We often took a picnic and set out towards the Surrey countryside with no specific destination in mind, but just to drive and explore. On high days we would go down to the seaside for the day. Of course the sun always shone and we never had a cross word between us!

Apart from our biker friends and those with specialist cars such as MGs, we seem to have lost the joy of Summer driving. Our driving tends to be functional to get us to a place where we need to be to do something else. Often the drive is not much fun as the roads are busy and we get delayed. Certainly traffic has increased out of all proportion since those heady days in the 1960s when I was going out with my parents. Cars are much better now, full of modern conveniences and normally so reliable. Back then we expected to break down from time to time, but also we expected to be able to fix the problem on the roadside ourselves mostly.

In the Driving magazine from the IAM and in the press from time to time there are great drives highlighted. Routes to do just for the joy of it. An outstanding feature of any of these routes is that they are away from the busiest trunk roads and big conurbations. Last year, in my piece for this newsletter, I suggested trying to get off the motorway and find a route along A and B roads even for a long journey because the traffic is likely to be lighter and the drive is more stimulating. Admittedly these routes might take longer, but not always.

It is worth trying driving just for the sake of it. One thing we used to do going back, was treasure hunts. Last year we re-introduced the idea and the event that Ann and Sarah organised was great fun. They are doing another on the Sunday of the September drive in the afternoon. Give it a try, it could be one way back to driving for fun, there is that word again FUN.

## *Associate Co-ordinator Corner*

It is great to welcome new associates to our Group. Two new Associates signed up from our last Sunday drive. When someone new attends our Sunday run they are always made welcome and then asked to go out for an assessment drive with one of our Observers. At the end of the drive they are given a copy of their Driver Assessment which is explained and discussed by the Observer. The 'would be' associate then chats with me to discuss the option of joining our group. The Observer and I do our best to answer all questions and give the 'would be' associate all the information they need in order to make their decision. They can then apply by post, phone or on line. Within a few days of joining they will normally be allocated an Observer and are then free to arrange their first drive. Hopefully by then their Driving Manual will have arrived.

We ask that all Associates attend Sunday runs to experience the two - session theory course and benefit from drives with other Observers. Also the social aspect is so important where it can be so useful comparing notes with others. To ensure a positive outcome for all associates it is necessary to go out for drives on a regular basis and practice new skills in between drives.

For our Observers, who give up their time voluntarily, their reward is to see progress and a successful test pass. What disappoints us all is when associates do not arrange regular drives or cancel regularly making progress impossible and preventing an Observer doing his / her job.

I would ask that any associate that is having difficulty arranging runs or not feeling at ease with their Observer to let me know straight away. Thank you to everyone that helps to make our Group a success.

*Mike Bentley Associate Co-ordinator*

We've received a

### **Letter of thanks from Midland Freewheeler Blood Bikers**

If you remember last month we reported on our AGM, which included a presentation from the Midland Freewheeler Blood Bikers - a group of volunteer bikers who assist the NHS, without charge, by transporting vital supplies. There was a donation from our Group together with a collection on the evening. Here's a letter of thanks sent to our Chairman, Martin:

*Dear Martin*

*Thank you so much for the most generous donation of £142 for our funds . We really appreciate the effort your members and friends have made in order to help our Charity maintain the service levels required of us.*

*Without continued help we would not be able to fund the 24/7 Free of Charge service we currently provide to the NHS and the Midlands Air Ambulance. We have now passed the 10,000 job mark and are on target to hit 11,000 jobs in the next couple of weeks. That's more than 10,000 deliveries for the NHS totally free of charge. We are truly humbled to receive such support. Please pass on our since thanks to everyone concerned.*

*Treasurer - Midland Freewheeler Blood Bikers*

## *Forensic Collision Investigation, a talk by Mark Weaver Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019.*

Well there was certainly plenty of interest in Mark's talk. We had 80 people in the Calderfields suite from all over the Midlands, from Shropshire to Redditch and across to Loughborough. There were bikers and drivers who had gathered for a really interesting presentation.



Mark is one of ten specialist collision investigators who go out to all incidents where there has been a fatality. He told us about his work which is to gather evidence, principally for the courts, to support any prosecutions that might arise from traffic incidents. They have to analyse the scene to try to find out what caused the collision and to gather evidence from witnesses, CCTV, vehicle damage, marks on the road and the final positions of vehicles.

One aspect of their work is to interrogate the black boxes in vehicles, where present, to get data about speed, driver actions etc. He told us that car companies hold this information and that it can be difficult to get them to disclose it. So often they have to use other ways to work out what went wrong.

The work is exacting using detailed scientific techniques and of course it's time consuming. Mark told us of the conflicting pressures to get all the evidence whilst being conscious that the road needs to be opened up to traffic as soon as it can safely be. I'm now far more aware of what goes on at a collision scene and I'll certainly never again complain when I find a road closed for a lengthy period after a fatal collision.

Mark is a relaxed and interesting speaker who managed to deliver a fascinating and poignant subject in a fairly light-hearted but respectful manner.

The evening raised lots of questions from the audience during the presentation. The second half of the evening was almost in its entirety a Q and A session. The questions came in thick and fast with the audience really engaged.

Huge thanks to Mark for coming to speak and thanks to Josie for inviting him and doing most of the organisation.

## **Emergency Lifesaving Skills**

On Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June, over 20 members and friends, enjoyed a very enlightening evening learning about emergency lifesaving skills with Jill Vincent - Wilson. Jill has been a member of our group for many years and is just requalifying as a Group Observer. Jill is also involved with Fleet Driver Training, putting on Speed Awareness and Drink Driving Courses and is an A.D.I. She was until recently a First Responder. In all a very busy lady.

Jill's presentation covered choking, bleeding, heart attack and cardiac arrest. She also discussed the use of the A.E.D. ( Automatic External Defibrillator). These portable devices save countless lives and are being situated within communities. They are completely automatic and tell the user exactly what to do.

I will not go into details here as you need have the benefit of the course given by an expert. One thing I will share with you is D. R. S. A. B. C. or doctors ABC.

- Danger** - protect yourself and the patient.
- Response** - try and get a response for the patient.
- Shout** - shout and get help
- Airway** - check airway
- Breathing** - check for breathing
- C.P.R.** - Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation.

In conclusion I would like to thank Jill very much for her most informative talk which was appreciated by us all. *Please get yourself a place on a similar course, what you learn might save someone's life.*

Michael D Bentley Associate - Co-ordinator and Vice Chair

## Advice from the Highways England

### Safety tips for motorway drivers at start of the breakdown season

New data shows more than 48,500 motorway breakdowns happened over the summer holiday period, between the final week of June and the first weekend of September last year. Highways England is expecting to respond to an extra 700 breakdowns a week for the next 10 weeks, taking the average number of motorway breakdowns each week to almost 5,000. Highways England have launched a new safety campaign encouraging drivers to remember the basics of motorway driving, including what to do if you break down.



The first weekend in August was the busiest weekend for breakdowns on England's motorways in 2018 shortly followed by the final weekend in July, with one breakdown reported every two minutes as drivers set off on day trips and holidays. However, you should make sure you know what to do if your vehicle does break down. Therefore drivers are urged to remember the basics of motorway driving, including carrying out simple vehicle checks before setting off. to help keep us all moving.

Around a quarter of summer breakdowns are caused by punctures or other tyre issues. Vehicles running out of fuel and engines overheating are also other common reasons for breakdowns on motorways. Highways England is advising drivers that regular car checks help avoid breakdowns:

- Check tyres: prior to setting off
- Check engine oil:
- Check water: to ensure you have good visibility, always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen
- Check lights:
- Check fuel:

Highways England has also issued five basic safety tips to follow if your car does break down on a motorway:

- Get away from the traffic: exit the motorway or get to an emergency area or hard shoulder and use the free phone provided
- If that's not possible, move left onto the verge
- Get out of the left side of your car and behind the barrier if you can and it is safe to do so
- Get help - contact your breakdown provider or Highways England on 0300 123 5000.
- If you break down in moving traffic and cannot leave your car, keep your seatbelt and hazard lights on and call 999

*And*

## Further tips from the IAM

### Is your vehicle ready for the summer?

It may not feel like summer, but the winter season is officially over. And this means that many of us are keen to get out and enjoy the weather. It is amazing how the sunny days that we are eagerly waiting for can improve our mood when we are travelling.



**Petrol (fuel):** check have you got sufficient fuel for the journey, or at least enough to make a good start? Remember, old fuel may cause starting problems, especially on a bike that has been standing. If necessary, clean out the old fuel and fill up with fresh.

**Oil:** check you have the right amount of oil by using the dipstick or use an on-board computer function if necessary - your vehicle handbook will give you the preferred method for your car. Remember, over-filling is also likely to cause damage, so top-up slowly and check regularly.

**Water:** check the engine coolant which is very rarely water and instead, an alcohol mixture designed to improve both heating and cooling. If this needs topping up, only remove the cap when the engine is cold and make sure the mixture is right. Screen wash should also be checked, a good solution will be needed for the mayflies.

**Damage:** check for any damage. Body damage is annoying and it is best to catch it early, even a stone chip if left untreated can lead to issues. Also look for problems under the car; loose cable or wobbly exhausts need attention before you go out.

**Electrics:** check all the lights, preferably with a helper to operate the switches or walk round whilst you do. Failing that, use the reflection of the lights in a window or another car.

Be considerate when checking the horn and the windscreen washers, waking up the neighbours or puddles on the garage floor may not be popular.

**Rubber:** check for cuts and bulges in tyres and adjust the pressures when cold, preferably with a calibrated gauge. The recommended pressures will be in the handbook or somewhere on the vehicle frame, door shut or petrol flap. The legal limit for tread depth is 1.6mm across the central three-quarters around the whole circumference of the tyre, this is about the depth of the rim around a 20p coin.

**You: are you fit to drive?** Tiredness, illness or medication are just some of the factors that will affect your ability to drive. Check that you are fit for the journey before you commence it, a short delay at home is better than a long delay on route.



## *Theft of house keys A Warning*

This is a warning to drivers, particularly of vans and commercial vehicles. Recently, there have been a number of thefts from vans, particularly of house keys. The thieves have been able to use documentation found inside the vehicle or other means to then locate the home address of the victim and use the keys to gain access. Property, including cars, then been stolen. Whatever your job, be it a trades person or delivery driver, resist the temptation to leave your house keys in your vehicle when you're at work. Though it may be less convenient, keeping them on you, or nearby, will greatly reduce the risk of your home being burgled and your property stolen. Although this type of crime is still rare, by being aware and taking simple precautions you can reduce the risk.

**and finally.....  
something for you to ponder on !!!**

“The surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that it has never tried to contact us.”

### **Group President: Trevor Poxon MBE**

**Chair:** : Martin Goad  
120 Hednesford Rd, Brownhills  
tel. no. 01543 371516  
martingoad@mail.com

**Group Secretary:** Josie Hubbard-Palmer

**Treasurer - Ann Humble**

**Assoc Co-ordinator:** Mike Bentley

**Chief Observer:** Josie Hubbard-Palmer

Group Registered Charity no. 1082326

### **Committee Members:**

Kath Hawker  
Sarah Harrison  
Karl Spooner  
Chris Rice  
Alison Kimberley

### **Newsletter Editor & Minutes Sec**

Sandra Wootton  
Email: sandrawootton.flowers@gmail.com

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