

OAD Newsletter

November 2019



The OAD Inaugural AGM

Oxfordshire Advanced Drivers It's Official!

As from 2nd October, IAM RoadSmart has a new local group covering the whole of Oxfordshire and part of Northants.

After a summer of sometimes quite complex technical work, OAD was formally inaugurated at our first AGM, on 2nd October. A good turnout of members were there to vote in the new group and elect the first committee. We also welcomed three members of staff from IAM RoadSmart.



Outgoing chairs of OAGAM, Alex Lewis, and BAM, Mike Bishop, began by strongly endorsing the merger into a single group for car members. They pointed out the strong and successful record of both groups in delivering the IAM Advanced Driver Course and improving the level of road safety in our area.

In addition, Alex stressed the very different communities that had been served by OAGAM, as a combined motorcycle and car organisation. IAM car members are a much more diverse constituency, with a wide range of reasons for signing up for the advanced course. On the other hand, motorcycle members tend to be self-selecting group of keen hobbyists who relish the opportunity for contact with other bike enthusiasts. OAGAM motorcycle members have now set up a new group, Oxford Advanced Motorcyclists. We wish them the very best for the future.

Having been elected as the first Chair of OAD, Alex Lewis was able to report that the group a comfortable financial position with assets totalling more than £7000. He also introduced a new subscription structure designed to encourage prompt payment and save administration time. (See full details below.)

Alex recognised the input from IAM RoadSmart HQ in the merger progress and thanked them for their support and help. He also thanked the implementation committee who had put in many hours of work. The group looked well set up now with twenty observers and thirty associates. With both groups having been financially sound, the future should be good, but it was important not to lose sight of the aim of IAM, to improve driving standards.

The meeting concluded with a number of questions from attendees. These focussed largely on the kind of events members would like to see organised for them and – crucially – where, in our enlarged area, meetings should be held. It will certainly be a challenge to find venues that will satisfy members based as far apart as Didcot and Brackley, Chipping Norton and Thame.

Paying Your OAD Subscription

Subscriptions will be issued through WebCollect, an online third party collection service specialising in handling accounts for small groups. As we align renewal dates across the new group, part year subscriptions may be necessary but no member will be disadvantaged financially.

Annual subscription: £30 per annum, reduced to £15 for prompt payment within a month.

There will be a further £1 reduction for payment by direct debit, please.

We would prefer payment by bank transfer, but cheques will be accepted, subject to a £2 handling fee.

Any outgoing payments will be made by bank transfer only.

Meet the Committee



l to r: Kromer Rogers, Ken Merry, Alex Lewis, Mike Bishop, Lisa Collins, Tony Carney, Geoff Ayres, Andrew Carter. Not included: Karen Liddle

Chair: Alex Lewis

Alex has been an IAM member since 2008 and an observer since 2010. He is a real petrol- and diesel-head, who very much enjoys driving different vehicles on different roads in different countries (on both sides of the road, regardless of the country). Outside of driving, Alex is a keen gardener and an excellent chef - his Tagines are to die for!

Secretary: Ken Merry

Ken has lived all over the UK from Belfast to Fort William, London, Norfolk, Birmingham and finally Chipping Warden. Ken has over fifty years experience providing support for networks and computers, driving some 35,000 miles each year fixing IT systems for people. He joined the IAM in 2013 and went on to get his Masters. He has been Events Organiser and Secretary for BAM. Ken is very interested in climate change although he thinks that's the wrong description as in his opinion it's humans and resources that ought to change.

Treasurer: Karen Liddle

Karen has been an IAM and BAM member for 10 years. She works in industry as an accountant and has worked with various automotive related companies. She has always been interested in different types of driving - advanced, rallying and track racing, being also a member of a car club.

Chief Observer South: Geoff Ayres

Geoff worked "On The Buses" for forty years, of which twenty were behind the wheel and twenty were in the office. Since retiring Geoff has been a keen supporter of the IAM and

has qualified as a National Observer. His other passion is photography and he can often be seen around Kidlington, camera in hand.

Social Media: Michael Bishop

Michael's first driving lesson was on his 17th birthday. He has always loved cars and has even taken part in a track day at the Laguna Seca Raceway. Michael is also a keen runner and regularly trains for events between 5km and Ultra Marathon distance.

Events: Tony Carney

Tony has been a member of the IAM for eight years and a Banbury based Local Observer for five of those years. After a career in engineering he opened the first coffee shop in Banbury, was a local Cherwell District Councillor, Banbury Town Mayor, and is currently President of the Rotary Club Banbury Cherwell. Tony joined the IAM to improve his driving skills and now helps other drivers reach the IAM test standard.

Newsletter & Website: Andrew Carter

Andrew has lived in Oxford for the best part of forty years. Before retiring he had a career in education, as a teacher and adviser. Since becoming an observer, he has guided over forty associates through the advanced driving course.

Assistant Secretary: Lisa Collins

Lisa retired early from secondary school teaching to follow her dream of being as self-sufficient as possible. She has chickens and geese, as well as a herd of rare breed Golden Guernsey goats raised for milk, cheese and meat. Lisa makes and sells jams and chutneys and grows all her own vegetables and fruit. She loves driving and passing on her skills and knowledge – that's why she volunteered to be an observer.

Chief Observer North: Kromer Rogers

Kromer settled in the Banbury area in 1980, having moved around the country working for Boots the Chemists. He joined the IAM in 1998 and, soon after passing the Advanced Driving Test, decided to give something back by becoming an Observer. Subsequently he progressed to the National Observer standard and provided further support to the Banbury Group as Joint Chief Observer. When not enjoying these advanced driving activities Kromer's time is taken up with DIY, home and family.

Also, not a committee member, but fulfilling an important role:

Associate Co-ordinator: Nik Bergson

Ever since his childhood, Nik had an ambition to follow in his father's footsteps, having seen the enormous pride that he had in his membership of the IAM. But for more than forty years, family commitments and a busy career in teaching somehow meant that there was never enough time - until early retirement presented the perfect opportunity to join the Oxford Group and enrol for the Advanced Driver course. After that, the obvious next step was for Nik to train as an observer, in an attempt to give a little something back, while at the same time continuing to improve his own driving.

Fine Driving Skills on Show at Banbury



Colin Godfrey manoeuvres slowly.

Sunday 22nd September saw Banbury Market Square transformed from a short stay car park into a tricky slow driving course.

The previous week had been a succession of perfect late summer September days – a cloudless sky and a warming sun. But the day of the Banbury Skills Event started with a distinct air of autumn – lowering clouds, a chilly breeze and a definite hint of rain.

Rotary Club of Banbury Cherwell and Banbury Advanced Motorists group had organised a Driving Skills Event in the Market Square at which all comers could show how adept they were at slow manoeuvring.

Despite the weather, the volunteer stewards donned their hi-vis jackets, took up their 30cm rulers and waited for the stream of intrepid drivers to come and demonstrate their skills in a bid to earn a winner's cup.

Competitors were challenged to excel in eight driving disciplines. These ranged from a simple parallel park alongside the kerb to the fiendish 'drive forward for the exact distance it takes for your wheels to make a single revolution'. That last one certainly sorted the sheep from the goats. Mind you, so did the parallel park.



Suzanna Jeffery enjoys the challenge.

This was before the merger into OAD had been completed. The Banbury Skills Event was the ideal opportunity for ex-members of BAM and OAGAM to work together for the first time. There's nothing like sheltering from the rain in a shop doorway to encourage a spirit of camaraderie. And coaxing nervous competitors to relax and perform their best is a soft skill already well developed in both groups' observer teams.

Both groups have a proud history of delivering the Advanced Driving Course to drivers in Oxfordshire and Northants and, over the years, each group has developed a style and personality of its own.

The weather did deter many possible contestants from coming along but there were still enough takers to keep the stewards on their toes. That is, apart from a patch of steady rain around lunch time.

Among the competitors were a father and daughter competing against each other. The young learner was driving with L plates but still managed to outscore her Dad by quite a measure. And there was the young woman who signed up for the Advanced Driver Course, then took the challenges in a bid to prove that she was already quite a skilled driver – with mixed results.

Everyone who took part enjoyed the challenge and went home with a sense of achievement – along with a few moves to practise quietly on their own.





Sam Giles measures up.

The challenge now will be to meld the best features of each to form a new group identity that will stand OAD in good stead for the future. That's quite a challenge but both sides are up for it.

So the Skills Event was BAM's last public outing and it was the first public outing for OAD. A stall at the event introduced local people to the new group and advertised what the group – and IAM RoadSmart - has to offer. By dropping in at the OAD stand at the Banbury Driving Skills Event, six local drivers were able to buy the Advanced Driving Course at a special discount and become Associate Members of OAD.

Thanks go to Rotary Club Banbury Cherwell for initiating this event and all from BAM and OAD who helped to make it all happen.

Signpost Scatter: Sallying Forth

Sunday 13th October was the date of the OAD Signpost Scatter competition, organised by Peta and Richard Simmons. Once again, the weather was – literally – a bit of a dampener, but the relatively few participants refused to have their sprits dampened and report a thoroughly enjoyable and challenging morning.

The proud winners were Colin and Jan Godfrey, who achieved a perfect score of ten out of ten. Colin takes up the story...

Jan and I turned up at the Old Shed, Banbury Hill Farm, looking forward, despite the unrelenting rain, to taking part in the Signpost Scatter Rally.

On entering the Old Shed, a warm and welcoming place of good coffee, cake and bacon butties, we discovered that we weren't about to sally forth with lump hammer and pitchfork to actually scatter a few signposts about the countryside. So we reluctantly put the tools back in the car and set about the less destructive task of plotting a route. This had to be based on photographic clues to help us find identifying letters attached to signposts and note their OS grid references.

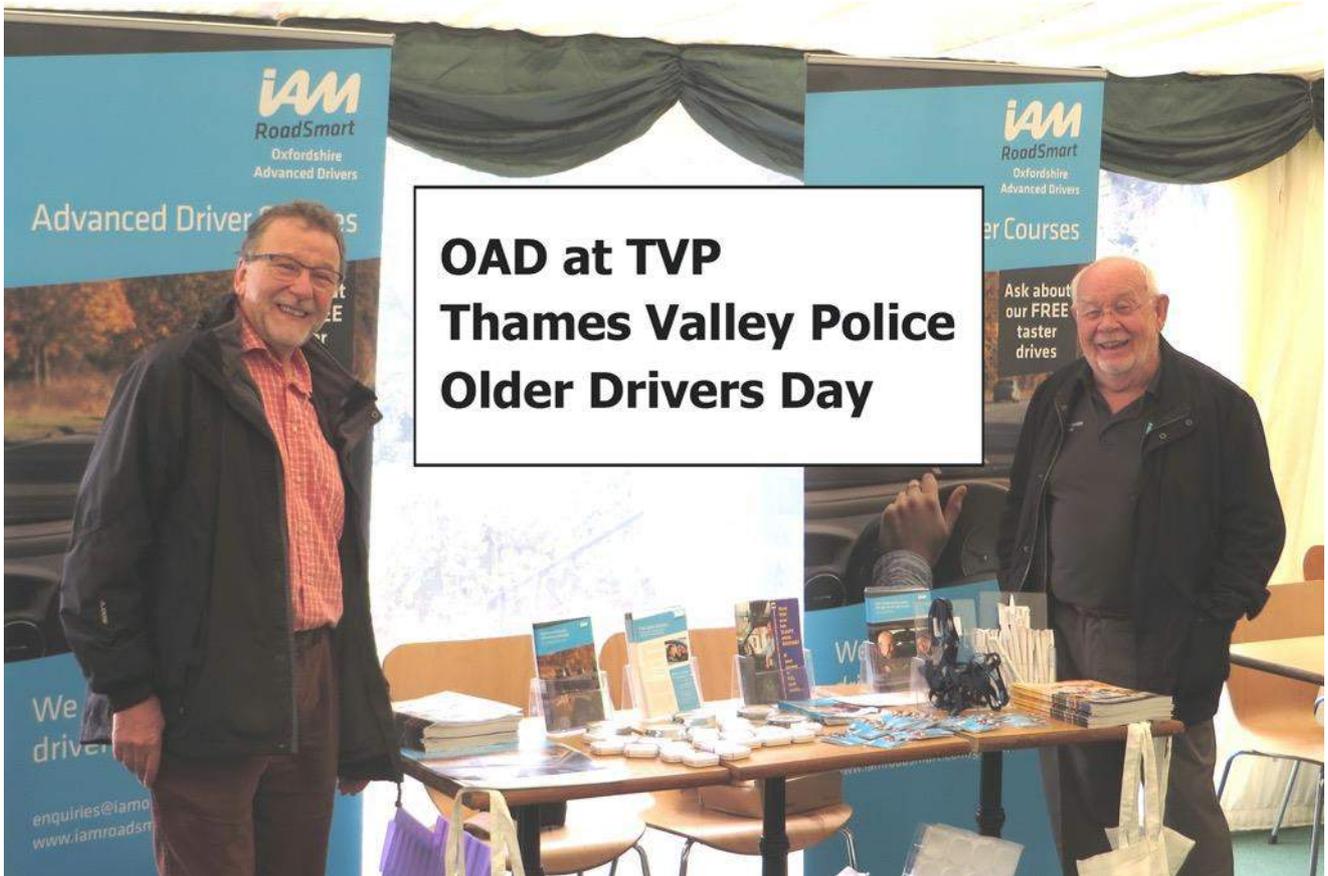
After about an hour of deliberation which included a cup of coffee and some cheesecake - it was Sunday after all - we left and set about driving the route, taking in some interesting backwaters and waters more evident - ie lakes and ponds on the roads. A further two hours saw us back at Banbury Hill Farm, having managed to locate all ten signposts and identifiers.

We were then honoured to be presented with a quite charming cake baked by Peta, complete with a signpost indicating 'BAM 1, OAGAM 1, OAD 2'. It was good fun and took us to places we haven't seen...

Thanks especially to Peta and Richard for the work and preparation they put into the event. And it stopped raining...



Jan Godfrey: Ten out of Ten



Geoff Ayres and Nigel Champken-Woods turn on the charm.

OAD at TVP Older Drivers Day

This information fair, held at Millet's Farm Centre and organised by Thames Valley Police, was for older drivers to be encouraged to think about their driving and advised on ways to drive safely for longer. There have been similar events in previous years but this was a first for our part of the TVP area.

If you are an older driver and didn't manage to attend the event, you can still find useful information at: <https://olderdriversforum.com>.

IAM RoadSmart Mature Driver Review

Undecided whether it's still safe to drive? Get an impartial opinion and reassurance behind the wheel.

- Renew your confidence
- Get a trusted second opinion
- Sharpen your skills
- Reassure your family

Full details on the [IAM RoadSmart website](https://iamroadsmart.com).



Visit to Williams F1 2nd December

Visit to Williams F1 Headquarters

Monday, 2nd December, 7.00 – 9.00pm

The Conference Centre
Williams F1
Station Road, Grove,
Wantage, OX12 0DQ.

Tea, coffee and soft drinks will be provided on arrival.

The visit will begin with a short presentation by OAD member Jeremy Taylor, exploring the ways in which Williams are bringing Formula One technology to the world outside motorsport.

This will be followed by a tour of the Williams Heritage Collection - the largest private collection of F1 cars in the world.

There will be plenty of opportunities to ask questions.

The maximum size of the group will be 40, so there should be space for everyone, but please reserve a place early to ensure you don't miss out - and are allowed past Security!

Details of how to register for the visit will be circulated shortly.

Many thanks to Jeremy for organising this exciting event.



Future Events in the Pipeline

A number of group events for 2019-20 are still at the planning stage. Look out for mailouts with further details, dates and instructions for signing up to take part.

Christmas Dinner

Our scouts are currently researching – and sampling – possible venues for a Christmas meal and get together.

Cornmarket Insurance

We are in discussion with Cornmarket Insurance Services Ltd to arrange a presentation which will offer a chance for OAD members to hear what Cornmarket can provide for them.

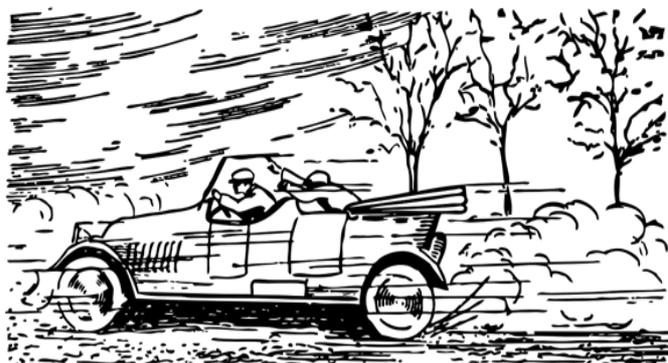
British Horse Society: 'Pass Slow and Wide' Campaign

This will be an opportunity to learn the safe way to deal with horses and riders on the road – useful for all OAD members and with important information for observers to pass on to our associate members.

Drive outs

Don't forget these well established and popular events. Regular monthly drive outs will resume next spring but in the meantime we are organising occasional Sunday morning meet ups.

The drive outs are for all members - full or associate. The aim is to offer sociable and enjoyable events to support your interest in advanced driving.



The drive outs are particularly recommended for associate members as an extension to the advanced driver course.

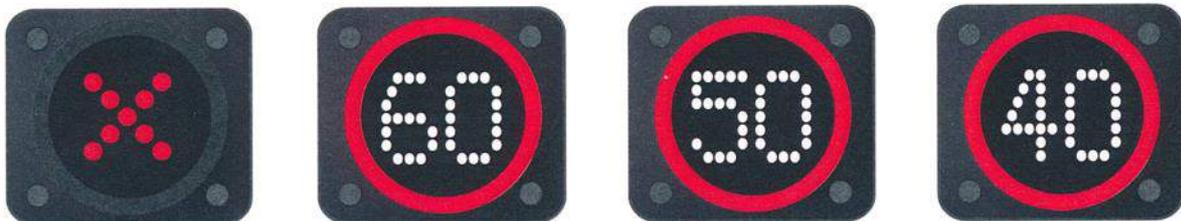
Smart Motorway

but how smart is the driver?



Many of us will be visiting relatives over the Christmas period and it's likely that the journey will include motorway driving. For anyone travelling north, or using the M25, that will probably involve a stretch of 'smart motorway'. You've heard that term before but are you sure you understand what it actually means? No? Neither did we.

Smart motorways use innovative technology to actively control traffic flows and improve your journey. Varying speed limits and using the hard shoulder as an extra lane during busy times, helps to avoid having to brake or be at a standstill so that drivers are more able to complete their journeys on time.



Variable mandatory speed limits displayed in a red circle mean it is the law to follow the speed limit. They are a key feature of smart motorways and are used when traffic volumes increase. Monitoring sensors activate lower speed limits to smooth congestion and keep vehicles moving. These speed limits are used along with red X signs to indicate lane closures, to slow traffic when incidents occur and to create as safe a working environment as possible for traffic officers and emergency services.



If the hard shoulder is being used as an extra lane, use the designated emergency areas for emergencies.

Advice from Highways England

- Never drive in a lane closed by a Red X.
- Keep to the speed limits shown on the signs.
- A hard shoulder is always identified by a solid white unbroken line - if there's no speed limit displayed above it or a Red X is displayed, do not use it except in emergency.
- A broken white line indicates a normal running lane.
- If the hard shoulder is being used as an extra lane, use the designated emergency areas for emergencies.
- If your vehicle experiences difficulties, eg a warning light, exit the motorway immediately, if you can.
- If you break down, put your hazard lights on.
- Most breakdowns are preventable - keep your car well maintained, check your tyres and make sure you have enough fuel for your journey.

For more information about smart motorways, visit [the Highways England website](#).

Test Passes: August - October

We offer our warmest congratulations to members who passed the advanced driving or test recently.

Jenny Harris:



I started driving lessons when I was seventeen in the days of double declutching, no synchromesh on first gear and no power steering. I passed my test first time and have loved driving ever since. My first husband was a member of the Civil Service Motoring Association and as a result we took part in lots of treasure hunts and manoeuvring tests. We also did the occasional overnight rally, although I was always the navigator - yes, women can read maps!

I am now retired, but when I was working in sales, I used to cover around 30,000 miles a year and, if I am honest, not always to advanced driving standards. It is a pleasure now to be able to drive without the pressure of having to get from Manchester - or some other far flung place - in time to meet my husband off the train at Didcot.

The Advanced Driving Course has taught me to be far more observant, keep to the speed limits and brake and change gear far less frequently. The result is that I am a better and safer driver and my fuel consumption has gone down – win-win.

Why did I want to take the advanced course? I always thought I was a good driver, but then we all do don't we? So I wanted not only to make sure that I was fit to drive, but also to see if, at the age of 72, I could pass the Advanced Driving Test. My motto is 'You're Never too Old' and it would appear that I'm not. I look forward to many more years of happy driving - to IAM standard, of course.

Jovan Korica:



I'm currently studying in London, so it may seem odd for me to be taking the IAM RoadSmart Advanced Driver Course. But I am and have always been interested in cars.

Since a young age, I started to be shown the basics of a car - and even some utility vehicles - on my father's farm in Croatia. Additionally, prior to passing my driving test, I had a few under-17 car club sessions - of course, nothing as thorough as the IAM.

After passing my driving test, I was surprised to find how much more there is to driving in comparison to what I had learned up to that point. Coupled with my passion for cars, I thought that the IAM course would be perfect, as in the future I plan to own a few performance vehicles and so the more training and experience I can acquire the better. Furthermore, for the sole purpose of being a safer and more proactive driver, I can say that the IAM training is invaluable.

The whole team was very welcoming and informative and the summer drive-outs were great fun, while also being a learning curve as I was in the run up to my IAM test on these drive-outs. I feel more confident now as an advanced driver and the biggest difference I find is that I now anticipate better and see further down the road.

Since passing, I wouldn't say people should do this for the sole purpose of reducing car insurance premiums, as for a young driver like me any car policy is expensive, but I must say it has saved a significant amount on my latest policy which is a very welcome benefit.

I am very happy as a member of the OAD group and look forward to future collaborations. May I say a personal thank you to Nik Bergson, Alex Lewis, Andrew Carter, Geoff Ayres and my examiner Ade Larner for great tuition and making the process enjoyable too.

Iain Stirling

I am 73 years old, having qualified as a chartered surveyor in 1973. While I still retain a small consultancy business, I retired some twelve years ago as the MD of a national estate agency business with offices from Shropshire to Kent. During those years I was driving about 25,000 miles each year.

In 2018, to my dismay I was clocked for speeding in a village only two miles from home - something I thought I would never do, especially on my own patch. I chose a speed awareness course which I found very beneficial. The cost of the course was virtually identical to the alternative of a £100 fine, although it did mean that my licence remained clean. Then, a few months later, a car drove into my off side on a roundabout. The driver claimed I was in the wrong lane.

These two incidents made me realise that perhaps I needed a refresher so I signed up for the Advanced Driver Course.

I was contacted by a chap called Mike Falconer Hill who I was surprised to find lived only three miles away. After an initial drive, Mike, who turned out to be my observer, came out



with me every other Sunday morning for up to two hours and we drove around North Oxfordshire. I was at an advantage as I have lived here since 1964 and knew the road network more or less backwards. This was a two-edged sword as there were various pinch points which Mike picked me up on. Observation was a key element, including mirror checks, road signs, road markings and speed limits!

Not having looked at the Highway Code since I passed my driving test in 1967, I found that, although I had reckoned to be a pretty safe driver, there were large gaps in my knowledge which Mike patiently guided me through.

I attended two meetings of BAM. Jim Henderson, a senior member of the TVP Forensic Team, was very informative and showed us horrifying photographs of accidents he had investigated which were truly thought-provoking. He also explained what his team could deduce from studying the tyres and skid marks of vehicles involved in road accidents. They could tell for example whether a tyre was under-inflated and he advised us that if any of our tyres were 25% or more under-inflated, we could expect to see him in court!

After several months, Mike said I was ready to drive with Kromer Rogers who was Chief Observer in the BAM team. Kromer was equally helpful and patient and it was his task to fine tune my driving technique. I was very surprised to find that Mike, Jim and Kromer gave their time, services and experience completely free of charge.

Eventually Kromer said I was ready to take the test and an appointment was arranged three months ahead. Jim Henderson was the examiner and we met in the Tesco car park in July. After driving around Banbury town centre, we proceeded up the M40, turning off at Junction 12 and then through a couple of Warwickshire villages and on back to Banbury.

At the end of the drive, although Jim picked me up on four faults - which I thought meant curtains for me - he congratulated me and said I had passed. Constant mirror checks is perhaps the most important thing I have learnt and, not the least, to obey speed limits!

Quite honestly I felt more relieved for Jim and Kromer than I did for myself. If I had failed then I would have let them both down.

Am I a better driver post test? I would like to think so and this is due entirely to the hard work and dedication of Mike, Kromer and Jim. My very grateful thanks to all three.

Simon Venn (F1RST):



I'm 28 and have been in Oxford for nearly three years. I work for Oxford University in the Oxford Robotics Institute which had the first ever fully autonomous vehicle on UK roads. I am one of the hardware engineers.

In my time, I have driven in many places and countries and in many vehicles from buses and vans to clapped out old bangers. But I originally signed up to the course so that my dad would let me drive his Austin Healey 3000 mark 2 – he made completing the advanced driving course a strict stipulation. Unfortunately, the

weather has meant that I am yet to take the Healey out.

Nevertheless, I have found that the advanced course has been good for my work and more generally, as I do a lot of travel.

Advanced Driving: for everyone no matter their age

My journey to becoming an Observer, *by Chris Pigeon*



Having passed my IAM test in 2017, I felt I wanted to give back to the community, both to the group that had trained me, but also to the road users with whom we all share a responsibility for safety. In addition, I could not help but be aware that the age profile of IAM members was very much slanted in one direction, which to my mind bore little relation to what we are trying to achieve in this organisation. I believe advanced driving should be for everyone, no matter their age, and as a young person, I wanted to do my small part to encourage others my age to get involved and learn potentially life-saving skills that are so important in the early years of driving. I felt that becoming an Observer would be the ideal way to make a difference.

Earlier this year, I found myself with the time to begin observer training, and so after getting all the pre-course admin done, I was soon under way, mentored and guided by Geoff Ayres (Chief Observer South). After a few runs with Geoff observing my driving and ensuring I was still up to standard, I was soon paired with

my first associate; the course has very much a 'learn on the job' approach.

The initial session was quite daunting, as being familiar with the knowledge in theory does not always translate into being able to teach it effectively. Luckily, with the support of Geoff - and my associate - I was able to develop my skills and deliver sessions with confidence. Not only were there materials from the IAM providing guidance on how best to deliver observed runs and teach each of the skills, I was grateful also to benefit from our wider group, speaking to other observers at the drive-out sessions.

It was a joy to see my associate progress and build an effective two-way relationship with them that enabled both of us to fulfil our potential. Of course, I was delighted when test day finally came and I received the news that they had passed. Test day nerves seemed to hit both myself and my associate, but it was highly rewarding to see them impress the examiner after all their hard work and achieve their well-deserved pass.

Now that I'm fully qualified, I am continuing my observing, using each session as an opportunity to learn something new. I really enjoy the new perspectives each associate brings with them, and working with each individual's unique approach, helping them implement the advanced driving principles in sympathy with their goals and driving style. I hope that, by delivering informative, but most importantly, fun sessions to each of my associates, they can go away and spread the word. In doing so, we can together build the next generation of advanced drivers and help make the roads a safer place for everyone.

Suggestion Box

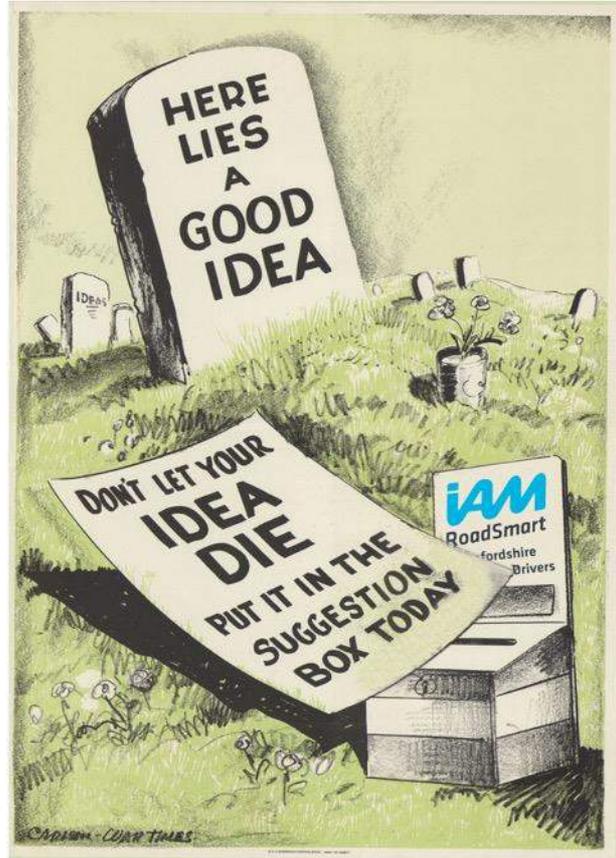
Good ideas welcome

The aims of IAM RoadSmart are to improve the standard of driving and promote road safety.

Your committee is working hard to extend the range of support we offer to OAD members and associate members in achieving these aims.

We therefore welcome ideas – and practical help - from members that will enhance and widen the activities of our group.

In particular, we'd love to hear suggestions in the following areas:



Visiting Speakers

We're looking for talks and presentations on subjects of interest to drivers of all levels of skill and enthusiasm

Outings and Visits

Do you know of places of interest for a group of advanced drivers to visit?

Newsletter Items

Interesting articles and photos are always welcome.

Providing for Under-represented Groups

Top of the list has to be young drivers, but there are other groups under-represented among our membership.

Suitable Venues for Meetings

Now that we cover the whole of Oxfordshire and beyond, we need to find affordable venues that are accessible for all our members.

All suggestions – and offers of help – will be very welcome!

If you have a suggestion, please reply to newletter@iamoxon.org .



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Please don't use our personal email accounts for OAD business.