

for all car and bike members of the Oxford Area Group of Advanced Motorists

## Happy New Year

### A Review of 2017 and a Look Forward to 2018



from

**Rob Archer**

*Chair, OAGAM*

*If it isn't too late to do so, here at the very end of January, I'd like to take the opportunity to wish all OAGAM members a happy and prosperous 2018.*

#### **Our Group**

Our group operates entirely through the work of volunteers: from bike and car observers – the foundation of what we provide - to group helpers, committee members and officers. We do our best to keep the group stable, look for ways to operate as smartly as possible and aim to improve wherever we can. We strive for a democratic organisation, by listening to members and implementing changes we believe necessary. First and foremost, we are obliged to further the objectives of IAM to improve road safety and deliver the advanced driving and riding courses. In addition, OAGAM aims to provide value for you, our members, and increase and maintain our membership.

OAGAM is fortunate to have a great committee, all of whom are dedicated to giving up their available time to support the group's objectives and to move it forward. But we also need your support, ideas and passion to help us improve and flourish. We are here for you as our members but be aware that we can only do so much as volunteers. We are always looking for people who might like to help us on our journey. We are stronger working together and happy to accept help, in small or large ways.

There will be an opportunity to contribute to the development of OAGAM at our next monthly meeting, on the **7<sup>th</sup> February**. Further details can be found on page 4.

Committee members and officers are also available to listen to any concerns individual members may have. We'll take these to the committee to vote on and take action as needed. We encourage constructive feedback but always respect the views of others. I therefore ask you all to follow the Code of Conduct for the Group and the IAM. The Code of Conduct is repeated on page 13 below.

#### **Achievements in 2017**

During 2017, we continued to move forward as a group. Yes we still have work to do and request you give us time to achieve this. Nevertheless, this year has seen some significant achievements...

This time last year we heard about plans for the future of the IAM from CEO Sarah Sillars. With

support from our Area Service Delivery Manager, Robbie Downing, we are working hard to introduce new approaches as directed by the IAM through new standards and a new Group Handbook.

There have been major improvements in the way we manage the collection of membership fees. We now have a much more accurate record of when membership subscriptions come due and a simple online payment system. Thanks are due to our treasurer, Paul Thompson, for seeing through these changes.

Thanks are also due to Harry Schoetz and Andrew Carter for drawing up a comprehensive guide for OAGAM car and bike observers. This aims to support observers in giving associates the best experience we can. It is also invaluable in training new observers.

Ian Hicks organised our events programme in 2017. It's not an easy challenge but one that was taken by Ian and driven forward very successfully and I hope you agree we have had some outstanding events and speakers. I would like to give a big thank you to Ian for doing a fantastic job. If you have ideas for future events the meeting on 7th February will be a chance to let us know. For personal reasons Ian has had to step down, so the role of Events Coordinator is currently empty. If you think you can help with this role, please let a member of the committee know.

Another great success is the newsletter. We aim to make it informative, reflecting the wide range of activities organised or supported by the group. Thank you to Andrew Carter for what he has achieved with the newsletter and his desire to keep improving it. If you have ideas for newsletter items – or some striking car or bike images - please let Andrew know.

James Henton has been working to set up our new website. There have been some frustrations and delays but it has now been agreed that the IAM will host the site, saving the group considerable running costs year on year. The new site will go live shortly.

The car section goes from strength to strength, thanks to the efforts of Alex Lewis and Geoff Ayres and their team of car observers. John Lang, Lynda Harding and now David Lisk have likewise kept the bike group progressing, delivering a very high standard of associate experience. Ted Tattersall has done a great job organising bike ride outs and events - not an easy task. Alex and Geoff initiated a programme of car drive outs during the summer. These were very well received by those who attended and are something we are hoping to grow and develop – see page 4. As I said, the car and bike programmes are the foundation of what we provide and Alex, Geoff, John, Lynda, David and Ted are the real stars of the show!

However, one person above all I would particularly like to thank is someone without whom none of the group's success this year could have been achieved. So I must give a huge thank you to our secretary, Harry Schoetz, for his dedication, drive and desire to make the group as good as it can be. You have no idea of the amount of hours he puts into making sure the group runs efficiently and effectively.

As your Chair, I want to continue to drive the group forward, working together in a positive, respectful, open and honest way. I am grateful to my committee for the support they have shown to me and each other. It has not always been easy, but they keep at it, giving unstintingly of their time and energy.

*This is an abridged version of the Chair's report delivered by Rob at the 2017 AGM.*



2017 AGM: Rob, Harry, Paul, John

## 2017: Year of the Observer

2017 was the IAM RoadSmart “Year of The Observer” as the organisation celebrated and recognised the huge contribution made by its national network of observers. A badge scheme was launched to recognise and thank those observers who have guided many associates to pass our test. The badges come in four denominations – 10, 25, 50 and 100 test passes.

At the OAGAM AGM, the following observers were awarded badges in recognition of their past work preparing bike and car associates for successful test outcomes:

### 50+ Test Passes

\*Tony Chalky  
\*John Lang  
Clive Stayt

*\*Observers who collected their badges in person at the AGM (below)*

### 25+ Test Passes

\*Chris Burras  
\*Andrew Carter  
Liz Challinor  
\*Paul Flint  
Trevor Hipkin  
Duncan Jones  
\*Brian Layt-Williams

### 10+ Test Passes

\*Rob Archer  
Kevin Brady  
Alex Lewis  
Steve Savage  
\*Harry Schoetz  
\*Paul Thompson



### Trainee Observers

Thanks, too, to OAGAM members who are currently training to join our team of observers:

#### Motorcycle

Paul Durrands + Danny Reid + Paul Semple

#### Car

Nik Bergson + Graham Welby

If you have passed your advanced test and are interested in becoming an observer, contact Paul Thompson or Alex Lewis. (See p13 for contact details.)



Next OAGAM Meeting: 7<sup>th</sup> February, 7.30pm at Exeter Hall, Kidlington

# Have Your Say

## ***We want to hear from you***

- What topic would make you want to come along to a monthly OAGAM meeting?
- What kind of OAGAM sponsored event would you like to take part in?
- How would like us to support your interest in advanced motoring and riding?
- Do you think we should be offering more to particular groups within our membership – younger drivers and riders, for example, or women riders, or people who like tinkering with engines of all sizes...

## ***And – the killer question!***

- Do you have relevant skills and enthusiasms that you could use to help us plan and run events or activities for the group?

For the first monthly meeting of 2018, on Wednesday Feb 7<sup>th</sup>, we would like as many members as possible to come along to have their say on what drives, rides, events and activities they would like the group to put on.

We will start with a combined session then split into two cars and bikes sub-groups. Please come along prepared to talk about the things you would like to see us doing. Be honest about what you think we're doing wrong – but please come with some positive suggestions as well.

## ***Free Tickets!***

As if that is not enough to entice you out on a February evening, we will be offering a limited number of free tickets to attend the next Sunday Scramble, at Bicester Heritage. [Click here for more details.](#)

## ***Car drive outs***

*Following on from the above, Chief Car Observer Alex Lewis has the following invitation:*

We, as full members and observers, have a responsibility to maintain our standards and act as role models to other motorists. Driver training and learning happens predominantly on the road, so during the summer we'll be running a series of drive outs in parallel with the bike ride outs on the first Wednesday of every month. We'll meet at Exeter Hall from 7.00pm for a 7.30 pm latest departure. The aim will be to foster the following within the group:

- Excellent associate training
- New associates attracted by taster sessions
- Maintenance of observer standards
- Maintenance of full members' driving standards

We hope that the evenings will be sociable and enjoyable for all who attend. We are looking for feedback from all members, associates and observers on what they would find helpful. We can't promise it will run exactly as everyone wants but will try to incorporate as much of the aggregated feedback as possible. We anticipate that this format will involve some work on a monthly basis and would be keen to hear from members willing to support one of the six sessions this year. Decent IT skills and an ability to think on your feet are all that is required!

# Looking Forward to Challenges Ahead



**John Lang**

**The Veteran Observer and New Examiner talks to  
Andrew Carter, Newsletter Editor**

*John Lang is one of the longest serving members of OAGAM. He is a National Observer for both bikes and cars, holds Masters Distinctions for advanced riding and driving and has been an important and influential committee member for many years. Recently, John qualified as an IAM RoadSmart Motorcycle Examiner, which means that he must relinquish his OAGAM responsibilities, though he will remain a member of the group and, I'm sure, continue to be available for good counsel and advice.*

*I met John at Hopcrofts Holt, his favourite starting point for check runs, observed drives and rides. This time, rather than venturing out onto the roads of North Oxfordshire, we settled in the hotel lounge over a pot of coffee to discuss his experiences in advanced driving and riding.*

AC: Can we start with some information about yourself – your background and your involvement in IAM and OAGAM.

JL: I started as a car associate in 1990. My observer was a surveyor who at that time was working on the building of the M40, so that helps to date it. I passed my advanced driving test in 1991 but it wasn't until 1993 that I passed the advanced bike test. I'm not sure why there was such a long gap but I think it was mainly family reasons because that was when my daughters were very young.

AC: You must be one of the longest serving members of the local group.

JL: There are a few who have been there longer than me – whose membership numbers are lower than mine – but we don't tend to hear from them very often now.

AC: So, when did you start observing?

JL: I became a car observer after I did my car test – so that would have been about 1991. I started observing bikes in around 1998.

AC: As you've been involved for such a long time, perhaps we could discuss the changes you have seen in the IAM, at both national and local level.

JL: Nationally, I don't really think there had been much change at all until around 2005. The changes that happened then and the changes that happened last year – the rebranding and the restructuring – came about because of the IAM recognising the need for a more structured approach, particularly regarding how observers were trained and what they were doing.

AC: So back in 1991, when you passed your advanced driving test, you wouldn't have had a score...

JL: No.

AC: So you couldn't compare your score to anyone else...

JL: No.

AC: Did people want that?

JL: I don't think so. If anyone wanted to up their game, they could always do the Special Assessment, which was a precursor to the Masters test. But that wasn't advertised very widely so there was a very limited take-up. You just got a pass and it was a pass for ever. That is still the case, of course, unless you want to become a Fellow (See page 12).

AC: After you passed your test, what prompted you to become an observer?

JL: I asked about the possibility of becoming an observer for the group. I went out a couple of times with a group member who was a Police Officer. He did cars and bikes but mainly bikes. I went out with him a couple of times and he gave me some hints and tips - and I was an observer!

There wasn't any kind of qualification process. We were perfectly good observers, but there wasn't the structure that we have at the moment.

AC: As an observer, did you get any further help?

JL: There were a lot of well-established observers but I don't think there were many new ones. If you needed it you could ask for it but, to be honest, I didn't feel I needed any extra support.

Eventually, in 2000-2001, I took over the running of the bike side of the group.

AC: Can we just turn back to the IAM changes nationally. There is a sense that the recent developments reflect a real attempt by the IAM to get a grip on what was a rather disparate organisation and bring about more consistency of approach.

JL: Yes, there's a higher level of regulation in driver and rider training in recent years. It was considered that an appropriate way to take the organisation forward would be to develop a really consistent approach to driver and rider training and testing. The aim was to make sure every associate got the same or a similar experience in their training and when they were tested it would be to a common standard.

It had got to a stage where the central organisation had lost control of the standards being applied. Now it's completely clear as to what the standards are. Now I've started working as an IAM examiner, I know precisely the standard that I'm working to.

AC: Yes, congratulations on becoming a bike examiner! You're the only examiner I know of who isn't a serving or ex police officer. Is there a conscious policy on the part of the IAM to recruit more what we might call 'home grown' examiners?

JL: I think there is a move to 'de-police' the IAM. There have always been close links between the IAM and the Police Service but it is quite important to stress that the advanced test isn't the same as a Police test. Couple this with the fact that in some areas – particularly where there aren't large stretches of motorway - there are simply fewer Police motorcyclists to recruit as examiners and you'll begin to understand why I know of at least five other bike examiners who don't have a Police background. There seems anyway to be a larger pool of car examiners and that's probably why I'm only doing bike tests.

As you know, in our area we have a group of long serving car examiners who are well known to us.

AC: When you first began observing, was there any contact between the group and the examiners?

JL: There were a couple of examiners who engaged with the group, for example on training runs, but we really had to work hard to make that happen. Nothing happened unless we orchestrated it.

AC: As an examiner, are you now encouraged to engage with local groups or is it still left up to the individual?

JL: The guidelines we are given do suggest that examiners can support their local groups in training observers – National Observers in particular. In fact we are encouraged to maintain a good relationship with local groups. However, in order to remain impartial we aren't allowed to engage in the training of associates or the running of the group. But there's no reason why you can't keep a good relationship with the group.

AC: And are you planning to do that?

JL: Oh definitely. Actually, most of the tests I've conducted so far have been with candidates from other groups. Though my very first candidate – the one for which I was assessed – is an OAGAM member (See page 10)! I remember it was during a period of very cold weather and we really struggled to get it done.

Since then I've had five or six candidates from adjacent groups. Where I live, near Banbury, is on the edge of a number of local IAM groups. Candidates are allocated to me according to how close their postcode is to mine, so I'm expecting to see candidates from Coventry, Birmingham and so on.

AC: It must be quite interesting to find out what other groups get up to – what activities they put on, for example.

JL: Yes, but remember most of these other groups are dedicated bike groups. Originally, I think the IAM consisted almost entirely of car members but with the growth of interest in motorcycles there are many more bike members than when the IAM was founded.

AC: Is it fair to say that, within OAGAM, the car group and the bike group have tended to be quite separate?

JL: Well, first of all, it's important to understand that the objectives for driver and riders have been quite different. This may be a factor just in our group but I guess it may also be more widely the case.

Among the car associates we have fewer what I'd call enthusiastic drivers who live and breathe their driving and really get a buzz out of it. Whereas bikers who join the group as associates are nearly all enthusiastic motorcyclists and their reasons for doing the advanced programme are to improve their enjoyment as well as their safety.

AC: And the group is able provide enjoyable experiences for them?

JL: Yes. There are more proactive social functions within the group for bikers – ride outs and longer trips like the ones to Keswick. On the car side there's been some interest shown in doing that, but with very limited take-up. I think that's because the reasons why car members join the group are quite different from those on the bike side.

AC: So, with your relatively unusual experience of being both a car and a bike observer, you are in a good position to talk about the different cultures in these two sides of the IAM.

JL: As I say, the bikers tend to be enthusiasts who think of the group as a way to feed their enthusiasm and build their network of like-minded enthusiasts. On the other hand, car associates come from a much wider range of backgrounds and those who sign up for the advanced course are not just keen 'petrol heads'.

Quite a number of our car associates come to us because they have had an unsettling experience – a speed awareness course, a bad accident or a narrow escape. Or they may recognise that their skills are failing a bit due to age and they want a refresher, a second opinion. That really doesn't happen with the bikes to the same extent.

AC: Do you think, then, that it's a mistake to try to encourage our car members to be like the bike members and organise similar activities for them?

JL: I'm not sure what the benefits would be of doing that because the objectives and the type of person in most cases are different. That's not to say that the programme of drive outs that is being planned for this summer won't be of immense benefit for individual associates, observers and members (See page 4). But we must acknowledge that, although we have some real driving enthusiasts among our car members, there are others who joined for completely different reasons.

It has been suggested that the best structure would be for combined groups like OAGAM to have two quite separate sections, each with its own membership, leadership and programme of activities. However, at the moment, the IAM is looking to reduce the number of groups nationally – often by amalgamating smaller groups – rather than encourage combined groups to split into two. Larger groups offer economies of scale in terms of cost and labour. And remember, there is a large area of common

ground between the two sides when it comes to the best ways of managing associates and guiding them deftly through the advanced programme to a successful test. In any case, our group is functioning very well at the moment offering good support to both car and bike members. I wouldn't want to compromise or weaken that, as long as the differences of culture are understood and taken into consideration, for example when planning the monthly meetings and other events.

I must emphasise again that we must not forget the main reason we're here.

AC: Which is?

JL: To improve driving and riding standards.

Admittedly I've only done a few tests so far, but one of the most interesting things for me since becoming an examiner is that I'm seeing the same strengths and areas for improvement across candidates from different groups, particularly when it comes to positioning and cornering. I think we should be offering more demo rides to demonstrate these skills to associates as part of their observed runs.

It's the same with demo drives. A good driver gets the car balanced and set up well for a corner; it's difficult to explain it but it's relatively easy to demonstrate.

AC: As always, John, you home in on the practical essence of good advanced driving and riding.

JL: Yes, thank you – but I must say that, particularly for car associates, alongside the practical skills we are often helping them to overcome a lack of confidence. Improving an associate's confidence is often the key to success.

AC: Finally, can we take a brief look to the future. Obviously, we all wish you the very best as you embark on your new role as an examiner and I'm sure you'll relish the new challenges that will bring.

JL: Well, from a personal perspective I'm going to miss training people because I have very much enjoyed doing that over the years. However I needed to do something different and when the opportunity came along I jumped at the chance and I'm looking forward to the challenges ahead.

AC: John, thanks so much for giving up time to share your experiences and insights. We look forward to hearing from you soon at one of our 'Meet the Examiner' sessions...

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The sign outside the old coaching inn at Hopcrofts Holt is a familiar sight to many car and bike associates as they prepare to go on the infamous run through Middle Barton to Enstone.

The sign shows the notorious murderer and highwayman Claude Du Vall. 'England's illustrious thief' reigned terror on the road between Oxford and Banbury in the 1660s.

He was hanged at Tyburn on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1670, aged 27.



## November & December Test Passes

*We offer our warmest congratulations to members who passed the advanced driving or riding test last month.*



**Julie Fitchett** had been thinking about doing her IAM advanced bike test for a while and finally took the plunge last year.

*I've met some lovely people through the OAGAM and have also really enjoyed ride-outs organised through the women's ride-out WhatsApp group.*

*I'd like to thank my observer, Rob Archer, for all his patience and advice; Lynda Harding who carried out my cross check ride; and also my examiner John Lang. Mine was the first test John carried out as an IAM examiner.*

*Now I've passed my advanced riding test, I just wish I had taken the plunge sooner!*

Particular congratulations are due to **Simon Woolaston**, who is an Area manager for Aggregate Industries and recently gained a F1RST in his advanced driving test.

*My work covers an area from Oxfordshire to Kent and east to the Wash so, as you can imagine, I spend a lot of time in the car – in fact last year I did approximately 45,000 miles.*

*continued...*

The industry I work in is driven by health and safety concerns and ensuring that everyone goes home safely. While there is a focus on safety for the van drivers, the professional car driver is somewhat overlooked. So, with support from my managers, I enrolled with the IAM and was then introduced to the OAGAM. Gaining the accreditation allows me to demonstrate a level of competence that many of my peers claim but can only support by saying that they have never had an incident on the roads. Personally I believe that is a lot down to luck – and the risk increases the more miles we do.

So I started on my journey. I've been driving cars since I was 10 years of age and passed my driving test after four lessons shortly after my 17th birthday. That didn't stop me being nervous, half expecting to be dealt a harsh blow about my driving and the bad habits we all inevitably pick up along the way through life, especially after more than thirty years. However my fears were unfounded. Tony Chalkly and Andrew Carter were perfect gents and very soon I was relaxed and doing what comes naturally. Of course there were things I needed to do differently but they were presented positively and actually made it easier and more relaxing to drive.

My assessed drive went well and was away from my local area, which arguably helped as I didn't know the roads or the area so there was no element of familiarity.

Since I became an advanced driver, some of my colleagues are now considering doing the same and of course I can't recommend the experience enough.



Simon's report: *An excellent drive in all aspects. Well done!*



Tom Watson started riding about ten years ago and spent eight of those years travelling a long commute to work as his bike was his only means of transport.

*During that time I gained more awareness on two wheels by experiencing different road situations in all weather conditions. In the last two years my commute became shorter and I had the added luxury of owning a car so my riding started to become more of a summer hobby.*

*I had heard of the IAM advanced course and it was highly recommended to me by someone who had already completed the training. It just so happened that I was given a gift voucher for my birthday and from there I didn't hesitate to get started. After passing my advanced riding test, I have to say a big thank you to my observer, David Lisk, for his great support and guidance throughout the course. I gained a great deal from the observed rides, which I feel has made me become a much safer and experienced rider.*

## Resetting the Standard



### **Become an IAM Fellow: new membership tier is now open**

IAM RoadSmart has introduced a new kind of membership. The Fellow level of membership has been created in response to insurance findings that the longer it has been since an IAM member passed the advanced test, the more likely they are to be involved in an incident.

The aim is to reward members who make the effort to keep their skills current and refreshed by retaking the advanced test every three years.

How it works:

If your advanced test pass was over three years ago, you book a Fellow Entry Test – which is basically the advanced test again. Once you have passed the entry test, IAM RoadSmart will award you Fellow membership, issue you a new card and certificate and plan to contact you again in three years for your reassessment.

If your advanced test pass was less than three years ago, you can become a Fellow right away.

You'll also be able to benefit from an enhanced insurance package from IAM Surety including no upper age limit, free legal helpline and free breakdown cover.



OAGAM stalwart, Tony Chalkly, recently became a Fellow. Here he tells what the experience was like:

*At the AGM I heard that we had only one Fellow in our group and I did not want that member to be alone nor exclusive!*

*Not only am I an IAM National Observer, I am also a MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) Driver Assessor and Trainer for minibuses and Car/MPV. To maintain that qualification I have to have a refresher course which includes a driving assessment, every two years. I am also a gold member of ROADAR (Rospa Advanced Drivers and Riders).*

*I feel that my driving is better than some and not as good as others. I am still prepared and willing to learn and the way to do that is to be assessed by others as well as appraising my own driving.*

*As I give guidance to associates, I feel that my driving should be exemplary and set a good example. I am happy to have my passengers make comment about my driving and if I am unable to satisfactorily explain my actions then I have clearly done something wrong!*

*I also believe that doing the retest sets a standard which should be respected, as well as showing commitment and dedication to improving road safety.*

*My test followed the normal test format as for an associate. One big advantage of doing the retest is that if you nearly got a F1RST on your original test or if you took your test before the F1RST came in, you could be in line for a F1RST this time.*

*I would certainly advise established members to consider becoming a Fellow.*

Full details of Fellow membership and how to apply can be found [here](#).



and finally...

## OAGAM Committee: Contact Us

### *General enquiries or comments*

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## Group Scorecard

The group scorecard (below) is published here each month and shows the test statistics for the previous twelve months.

Test Statistics				
(over the last 12 months)				
				Status: 02/01/2018
	OAGAM Group	OAGAM Car	OAGAM Bike	Region Avg.
	12 months	12 months	12 months	12 months
First	10	6	4	3.3
Pass	28	13	15	11
Fail	9	6	3	2.3
% Pass	81	76	86	86

## IAM/OAGAM Code of Conduct

- We treat everyone equally and fairly
- We adhere to policies of IAM RoadSmart
- We only communicate the IAM RoadSmart position
- We take responsibility for our actions & decisions
- We take pride in where we meet and host events
- We respect confidentiality of information gained as an official via memo/data
- We respect confidentiality of individual personal information
- We respect all members regardless of gender or beliefs
- We are proud to be part of IAM RoadSmart