

September 2017

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

In Praise of Drivers and Riders

Advanced riders and drivers are typically obsessed by their bikes and cars. The technical specifications of different marques and models are discussed at length. Performance is carefully measured and compared. Prized vehicles are lovingly tended and are the source of immense pleasure when driven or ridden expertly.

But advanced riding and driving is about people as much as machines. The primary aim of IAM RoadSmart is, after all, 'to improve standards of driving and riding on the roads'.

So, this month we are highlighting many of the people who make up OAGAM and help to give the group its special character: members, observers, associates, visitors.

*We begin with some reflections on the advanced driving course from one of our younger car members, **Chris Pidgeon** who recently gained a F1RST.*

What can one find to write about regarding completing the advanced driving course, without resorting to the marketing lines and clichés that seem to suggest an unattached, holistic description of what one has been through as a driver? Was it transformative? A once-in-a-lifetime experience? A tick off the bucket list? Here is where my problem lies: for me, it was all this, and more!

I had been keen to do an advanced driving test from the moment I got my licence. It seemed like the logical next step as, although I was lucky enough to have had a very good instructor who left me a confident driver on the road, there were still aspects that didn't quite work for me and I knew there could be so much more to driving than I was currently getting from it. I drove for utility rather than pleasure and, as a person particularly regarding of the environment, I often opt to make longer journeys by train rather than get in my car, which minimised my ability to enjoy time on the road.



continued



It was not until four years after passing my test that I found myself in Oxford for my Master's degree, whereupon I finally decided to commit myself to taking the IAM course. I started with Chris Morris as my observer, who immediately put me at ease with the system of car control and began my training with plenty of tips and ways to improve.

With each observed drive, I could feel myself improving and slowly but surely I was beginning to 'get' what was required of me. By dipping my toes into the water of these new techniques, I found myself driving in ways that would have been totally alien to me before. But alongside this, I found a new degree of confidence in myself and a slowly burgeoning new philosophy towards driving – a planned system that left nothing to chance.

Unfortunately, it was not to last. On a dark, cold December night, I found myself in a road traffic collision, having collided with a car in front of me which had braked very suddenly. At 22, I was statistically in a bracket that is far more likely to be involved in this type of event but, as I found, nothing can prepare you for the wave of emotions that overtake you afterwards: worrying about the other people, the stress of insurance claims and, worst of all, constantly asking, 'How did that happen'? It is surely a rare chance to be involved in such an event, let alone in the middle of my advanced course.

Many months later, however, I was back on the road and more determined than ever to take my test within the limited time I had left before I graduated. My new observer was Alex Lewis, who quickly brought me back up to speed, alongside Geoff Ayres who was also particularly kind in organising some extra runs for me. Surprisingly, I had managed to retain an awful lot of the information I had gained before and six weeks and over a thousand practice miles later, I found myself taking my test.

It really is true what they say: the test is a truly fulfilling experience! Of course, on the day I had the inevitable test-day nerves, but my examiner proved to be adept in handling the situation. Working my way around the route, it was really fascinating to get his perspective on a wide variety of road topics, while also working hard to maintain my best concentration and performance at all times.

Upon finishing, I was thrilled to learn that I had passed, and to pass with a F1RST made it all the more special. After everything I had been through on this course, it was a fantastic way to finish and I walked away with great pride at my achievement, with a new love of driving and level of confidence which I think many of my passengers have noticed and enjoyed.

I do hope to maintain my links to the IAM as I move from university into 'the real world'. I gained so much from this course and I have already convinced my Mum to sign up for it! Becoming an observer is definitely in my thoughts; I'd love to help many more people experience the journey to the IAM advanced driver certificate.

Chris's was just one of many test passes gained by OAGAM associates over the summer. We offer our warmest congratulations to all those who passed the advanced driving or riding test.

The following pages give some insight into who they are and what they feel they gained from their course.



Paul Durrands, Advanced Rider

I passed my test in 1981 and I think I was fortunate to make it to the age of twenty on my CX500! A born again biker since 2009, I have enjoyed some big solo trips to Norway, Ireland and Scotland on my RT and to Sikkim with my son on Enfields.

I've survived so far by learning on the job. I took the advanced test because I'm interested in being a Blood Rider – I work in the NHS and I like riding. I have learned a huge amount during the training – thank you Rob Archer - and during the cross check and the test.

The system helps you work out the best things to do in the conditions and it challenges you

to try to keep improving – it makes riding more thoughtful and there are fewer dramas. I should have done this years ago!

Alexis Livadeas, Advanced Rider

For most of my life, my work has involved cars or motorbikes in some way. I am currently on a career break from Police detective duties, working at the Transport Research Laboratory near Bracknell, where I carry out research into road safety and investigate traffic collisions. Before that I was employed in motor racing for many years in research and development of race engines.

I was prompted to finally get round to taking my advanced bike test thirty years or so after passing my IAM car test following a decision to volunteer for the Blood Bikes. I came back to bikes after a gap of about twenty years but have been using my BMW K1100RS daily for the last two years to commute. I currently travel about 650 miles a week on it.

The IAM course not only sharpened up my rusty bike skills but also taught me new ones and I now feel more confident negotiating the traffic. I'm grateful to everyone who gave up their time to help me get through the test.





Lawrence Beaumont, F1RST Advanced Rider

Paul Thompson, Lawrence's observer, writes:

Its not very often we have young riders crossing our path, so I'm really pleased to share this encounter, that played out in an impressively short period over the past few months.

I first met Lawrence when I took him out on a free assessment ride on May 13th. He was a relatively inexperienced but enthusiastic and capable twenty year old rider, on a BMW G 650 GS, which he had purchased in April.

After saying that he was interested in doing the advanced motorcycle course, however, he explained that he had a time constraint, as he would be leaving Oxford in September to go to University to study for his degree, I told him if he put the training miles in, we could work with him, to get him to test before he departed for Uni.

Lawrence quickly signed up for the advanced motorcycle course and I became his Observer. Lawrence put the work in and he was rewarded with a Pass and a F1RST, on August 20th. From assessment ride to F1RST in barely three months!

We wish him luck with his next goal - to gain an unrestricted category A licence and encourage him to consider trying for the Masters next year.

Well done Lawrence, we wish you well with both your studies and your riding.

Geoff Coleman, Advanced Rider

I rode 250cc bikes with L plates as a teenager but found the usual course of events – work, mortgage, children, etc - took me away from bikes to cars. I spent my early working life toiling long hours developing the family business while also being a retained firefighter. Learning to drive a fire engine was fun.

But as time went by I found that I had could finally afford to run both a car and a bike, as well as time to enjoy some riding. I took my test in 2006 so that I could join a group of my close friends on Sunday morning ride outs and an annual biking holiday on the continent. I always intended to further my training as I am the sort of person who likes to do whatever I do to the best of my ability. However, then my wife decided that she would like to learn to ride too. When she passed her test last year she expressed an interest in doing the advanced rider course and that prompted me to sign up as well.

My wife has her cross check booked for the end of September so, all being well, she will be joining me in the newsletter very soon. We have both gained a huge amount from doing the course would recommend it to all riders.



Nik Bergson, Advanced Driver

Joining IAM has been a long-standing ambition of mine, for which retirement has finally given me the time.

Perhaps I am in some way taking after my Dad. He joined many years ago, and it was a source of huge pride for him. He never got tired of his favourite mantra: 'Take your accident elsewhere.'

I will always remember this advice and the importance, for all road users, of motorists continually striving to improve and optimise their driving skills.

I'd also like to thank all the IAM observers for giving generously of their time and for their skill, professionalism and patience.

Adrian Dodds, Advanced Driver



My work as a design consultant takes me all over the country, meeting and working with clients. My hobby – scuba diving – also means a lot of travelling to get to the sea. Although I also have a motorcycle licence, I do all my travelling by car.

Since passing my driving test thirty or more years ago I think I've driven fairly safely with only the occasional bump

and speeding fine and nothing in the last ten years. During this time I have seen cars getting more powerful and driven faster and roads getting more congested.

It was my wife who bought me the IAM course as a Christmas present as she had seen my driving getting faster and more dangerous as I went along with the pickup in pace on modern roads. She suggested I needed to stop and take a good look at the way I was driving as she was becoming concerned for my future.

I embraced this chance to review my driving and was grateful for the excellent instruction I was given by my observer Nigel Champken-Woods. The result is I am a better, safer and slower driver than before. I learnt from the course that I don't need to rush around at 90 mph following all the others. I didn't need to whizz round every roundabout throwing my passengers from side to side. Driving should be done at your own pace - one that does not put others at risk. Completing and passing the IAM advanced driving course has made me a better, safer, wiser driver and my wife does not get thrown around in the car so much nowadays...

Alex Holmes, Advanced Rider



I'd wanted to get a bike since I was a kid, but the final straw was the daily frustrations with traffic and parking on my commute to work from Witney to Oxford, where I am a senior manager at the John Radcliffe Hospital. That gave me the perfect excuse to buy one.

So I did my test via Direct Access about six years ago. Then a couple of years later I did the BikeSafe course to improve my skills after being taken out a couple of times in traffic by drivers not paying attention.

I took the IAM course to further improve, as it's easy to get rusty - particularly when 90% of your riding is commuting through rush hour traffic five days per week. I wanted to be a better, safer rider - and to have that reflected in my insurance premiums. As riders, we're vulnerable and anything that makes us slightly more equipped to deal with the dangers of the road can only be a good thing. I'm also thinking about doing the IAM advanced driving course.

I do six to seven thousand miles per year on the bike, quite often with my daughter on the back. My bikes are the Street Triple RS in the picture and a customised Triumph Scrambler - one of the older, air-cooled 900's - which is my 'Bike Shed' bike!

Nick Sharland, Advanced Rider



Running two small businesses keeps me busy and I use the bike for work whenever I can.

I used to greatly enjoy riding green lanes with the Young Farmers, way back when I had both a waist and some hair. An early mid-life crisis saw me owning a quad bike before I finally saw sense and took my bike test in 2014. My first big bike was a BMW F650 before buying new my super little Honda CB500X.

Very soon after passing my test, I realised that there was so much more to learning to ride. I wanted to develop good habits and I'd always admired the road skills of advanced riders, so IAM seemed like the natural choice.

I can't really put into words how good I've found the whole experience - it's genuinely been life changing. I absolutely love riding and I've now learned the right balance between enjoyment and safety, all thanks to Harry Schoetz for his constructive advice and guidance.

Next steps will be to keep working on my riding skills. I've got visions of a couple of long road trips (the South of France is calling) and possibly Blood Bike riding when time allows.

Tim Swift, F1RST Advanced Rider

I started riding when I was 16, first on the family Honda PC50 before going on to a CG125 and a Revere before having a break when my own family came along.

After a seventeen year break from riding, when I got a job working in west London I decided that going back to a bike was the only option. I am a contract IT Project Manager, so the bike is perfect for commuting. I ride all year round and when I was still working in London I clocked up around 40,000 miles each year.

When I started riding again I thought I should do a refresher and so completed the BikeSafe course that was really useful. Then at the 2016 Motorcycle Live event I saw the Blood Bike stand and enquired how I could volunteer. I was told I needed to be an advanced rider and so signed up for the IAM RoadSmart course pretty quickly.

I have found the course really useful, with excellent instruction from my observer David Lisk. My style has completely altered and it has turned what had become a dull commute back into the fun ride I used to love.

I'm currently riding a BMW F800GT, with already more than 55,000 miles on the clock.





Martin Burgess, Advanced Driver

It was my wife, who has been an Advanced Motorist since 1999, who got me interested in the IAM. My work as a Surveyor takes me out most days and I am often on the road travelling to and from projects, including London, which is always challenging!

Working and driving in London means I'm interested in vehicles that are particularly suited to city driving and qualify for a reduction in the Congestion Charge. As a result, I have owned three Toyota Prius models and am now a BMW i3 convert. The i3 is wholly electric, but incorporates a small motorcycle engine - called a range extender or REX - that will recharge the battery. This means that I can get up to 200 miles using electricity and REX, if required. I drove the i3 on my advanced driving run and it was a completely new experience for my examiner.

Another feature, which I needed to identify before my test, is that the i3 has regenerative braking; think of a dynamo, for those old enough to remember one! Releasing the accelerator means the car slows rapidly and retrieves the kinetic energy as extra electricity, which is then returned to the battery. At full regeneration, the car really does slow down and the brake lights show. If you drive carefully there is usually no need to touch the brake pedal. This arrangement dovetails well with the need to anticipate the road ahead and gives a whole new meaning to the idea of 'acceleration sense'. I am now an enthusiastic EV convert.

My wife and I are also volunteers with Dogs for Good, who are based in Banbury. We occasionally board assistance dogs either whilst their owners are away or when they are in training. As you can see above, the i3 has proved to be a versatile dog carrier.

The opportunity to review and improve my driving skills is something that has been very beneficial and I'd like to thank both Liz Challinor and Colin Godfrey for taking time and trouble over my observed runs.

The skills I have learned with the support of IAM will help me going forward and this, combined with the growing use of technology in cars, makes for an interesting future for us all. I will certainly aim to maintain and improve on my newly learned skills and hope to contribute back to the IAM myself in the near future, hopefully training to be an observer myself.

Congratulations are also due this month to **Nigel Hawkey** and **Eleanor Kaye** who have both passed their advanced driving tests.

New Observers: Welcome to the Team!

Providing the advanced driving and riding courses is what IAM RoadSmart is known for among the general public. This couldn't happen without observers who are prepared to give time and expertise to prepare associate members for their advanced test.

This month the group welcomes three newly qualified Local Observers to our team. We'd like to congratulate and thank them for taking on this vital role.



Colin Godfrey MBE, Local Observer (Car)

I've ridden and driven motorcycles and four-wheeled vehicles, including emergency ambulances, at home and abroad since 1969 and find that I still enjoy driving and riding despite the exponential increase in traffic and road use over the years.

As an Observer I want to make a positive difference in driver behaviour on our roads and to show that consciously driving to a recognised and consistent system will reap its rewards not only on a personal level with the driver but also in enhanced safety on our highways. And I'm still learning...



Paul Barrand, Local Observer (Car)

I joined IAM in 1990 and became an active member of OAGAM, which included a short spell as an Observer. Sadly, work commitments meant that I had to curtail my OAGAM sojourn. However, advanced driving has always been in the forefront of my mind, and since 2006 I've been working as a part-time chauffeur, as well as doing a spot of acting on stage & screen.

Now, I'm glad to say, I have the time to, once again, help others to improve their driving and, with Andrew Carter's guidance, have restarted my LO role.



Paul Flint, Local Observer (Car) and National Observer (Bike)

I originally joined OAGAM to improve my standard of driving and after passing the advanced driving test was able to instruct my twin boys to pass their driving tests.

Shortly after passing the advanced driving test I took the advanced riding test and became an observer for bikes.

I have been a member for twenty five years and a couple of years ago I heard our group was having trouble recruiting car observers so I decided to get some training.

With the help of Tony Chalky and John Lang I have now become a car observer.

Changes in the OAGAM Committee

We are sad this month to see **Lynda Harding**, the only remaining woman member of the Committee, stepping down from the role of Bike Associate Coordinator because of other commitments. Lynda will still be active in the group and continue to support women riders.

Welcome to **David Lisk**, who has taken over from Lynda and is setting about the Coordinator role with characteristic energy and gusto.

Lynda Harding says: *The support from the group committee has been gratefully received during my short term as Bike Associate Coordinator and Committee Member. Since joining OAGAM in 2014, I'd like to say everyone encountered through my progress has been extremely supportive and encouraging.*

A big welcome to David Lisk the new Bike associate coordinator. I can already see his communication skills shining. Thank you.

I realise that my move has left the Committee without any women members; I would like to encourage any bike or car women members to join the committee. You can be assured of a warm welcome and it would be a positive move to have more women active on the Committee.

My role as Bike Observer will continue and I hope expand and I will also continue to support OAGAM whenever I can, in particular encouraging women ride outs for members and potential members.

If anyone would like a chat about any of the above please get in touch.



Some members of the women's ride out group - L to R: Alex, Julie, Rachel and myself - stopped for a coffee break at Lechlade, following a super twisting Cotswold route chosen by Alex. It certainly put a smile on our faces and gave lots of practice at the same time. (LH)



David Lisk says: *I was happy to take on the Associate Coordinator role when the proposal came my way. It will be another way to support OAGAM as well as giving up my time in guiding associates to hopefully pass the IAM test.*

If you hadn't noticed I'm the tall chap with a toy giraffe fixed to my bike luggage rack, having accepted many years ago a nickname of 'mad giraffe' due to height and a sense of humour in a previous demanding career. Mind you, I must have had a sense of humour when I started riding back in 1979. On my Honda SS50, at six foot six I must have looked like a contorted spider trying to fit around the moped!

As I have settled into the Coordinator role I have already made some changes by standardising the letters I send, avoiding various types of free flow text emails to make things uniform and easier for audit and reference. I am keen to promote observers' communication and I hope to offer support to observers when needed.

October Meeting

Challenging Vehicle Security

8.00pm Wednesday 4th October

Exeter Hall + Kidlington

**Challenging Vehicle Security – how vehicles are attacked and why we let it happen,
A presentation by OAGAM member John Walker**

Back in 2015, in the US, Chrysler Corporation were forced to recall 1.4 million vehicles after Security researchers Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek demonstrated that they could remotely hijack a Jeep's digital systems, and remotely control aspects of the car whilst it was being driven on the highway.

OAGAM member John Walker will explain how hackers can carry out these take-overs and, in the worst case, what the hijackers can achieve.

John will then explain what both manufacturers and owners can and should do to protect against take-overs and what the future might hold if we are lucky – or unlucky.

John's career has taken him into the world of IT security and cryptography. These days he acts as a consultant in the realm of cybersecurity.

John's talk follows a very enjoyable presentation at the September meeting by Martyn Hillier, an IAM RoadSmart motorcycle examiner for our area. Martyn is based in Gloucestershire and, until recently, most of our associates living to the west of Oxford, Witney & Carterton will have sat their test with him.

Martyn (below) served in the Gloucestershire Constabulary as a Traffic Officer for 41 years, retiring in 2012 with a Queen's Police Medal for Distinguished Service. He was also instrumental in the foundation of BikeSafe, the nationally recognised road safety initiative for motorcyclists.



Our thanks go to Martyn, whose talk was entertaining, humorous and always informative.

For those of us of a certain age, Martyn recommends two vintage Police road safety films:

[*Without Due Care*](#) (1973)

[*Roadcraft*](#) (1971)



Breaking News – OAGAM Website Relaunch

We are delighted to announce that our new website will go live in October



OAGAM Web and Social Media Editor, **James Henton**, writes:

It's been a bit of a journey to find the right platform that will remain professional while giving our group a sense of identity. After much consideration - and testing - we decided to go with an official IAM branded platform. As it is provided by the IAM for local groups to use, it is also free – which means quite a saving for OAGAM.

The new site will unite cars and bikes under one roof, which will be a very positive message to our community and others who wish to join. It will feature information about our group, where we meet and how to connect with us. We expect the site to be more of a 'living' form of information and media,

which will evolve over time with your help. At first the information you see might be slightly limited but will broaden over the coming months.

We hope this will be an exciting first step towards improving our social media presence so we can engage with a wider audience and attract new members.

Expect an email message soon with a link to the new OAGAM website.

OAGAM Group Scorecard

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

Test Statistics				Status: 01/09/2017
(over the last 12 months)				
	OAGAM Group	OAGAM Car	OAGAM Bike	Region Avg.
	12 months	12 months	12 months	12 months
First	8	3	5	3.2
Pass	35	18	17	10
Fail	8	5	3	2.2
%Pass	84	81	88	86