

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

<http://www.iamroadsmart.com/groups/oagam>



*Like most car observers, the runs I plan for my associates always include a nice bit of open, curving road, writes Newsletter Editor **Andrew Carter**. You know the kind of thing: a country side road with plenty of challenging bends but wide enough to encourage careful positioning; lined with trees and hedges for practising forward observation; preferably national speed limit, so we can make a bit of progress. But over the last year or so, many of my favourite routes have been slowly falling apart, crumbling at the edges and scarred by potholes.*

Potholes! We seem to be suffering from a national epidemic of potholes. The vicious cold weather earlier this spring had clearly made a difficult situation much worse.

The RAC reported an 11% jump in breakdowns caused by poor quality roads in the last three months of 2017. This year, the RAC are warning that *as a result of the 'Beast from the East' some local roads will have deteriorated even further, possibly to the point that they represent a serious risk to the safety of users.*

Evidence is also growing of injuries to cyclists and pedestrians due to poor roads and pavements. It is estimated that around 24,000 miles of UK road will need essential maintenance this year.

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The Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance survey, published in March, reveals how councils are fighting a losing battle with potholes. Local authorities filled in 1.5 million last year in England and Wales – one every 21 seconds. Despite this, the report estimates it would take 14 years and £9.3 billion to complete a backlog of repairs.

Councils reported they are already £556 million short of the money they need to maintain the roads properly this year.

Although the government announced a £100m boost to its pothole fund recently, the work will no doubt take a while to complete.

Meanwhile, local campaigner **Mark Murrell** (*right*) has taken things into his own hands. Mark has been serving Section 56 notices (from the Highways Act) on Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire County Councils if roads that are 'out of repair' are not fixed.

Mark says: *I don't mind how many notices I serve but first I will put in formal complaints about the roads to give them the chance to make them good."*



Damaged surfaces are a big risk to vehicle suspension systems and the effects of the ruts on steering systems are especially harsh. On a roundabout or junction you have the combined distraction of looking out for oncoming vehicles and trying to avoid serious potholes.

The damage to suspension is far worse when the steering is engaged. The new 'run-flat' tyres do not give as much cushioning and when damage from potholes occurs it is a big problem as many new cars don't carry spares.

Mark's campaign has earned him the nickname 'Mr Pothole' and his threats to both councils have already led to repair work being undertaken in several places where pothole damage was particularly serious.

Mark insists: *We are not trying to catch the council out. We are following due process. If we go to court and win, it shows there is that due process.*

Elsewhere in the country, we hear of **Roy Owen**, a local councillor near Caernarfon, who is so fed up with receiving complaints about potholes that he has set out with asphalt and a blow torch to fix them himself. At the last count he had dealt with 93 of them.

And in Haverill, Sussex, a mystery graffiti artist has been highlighting clusters of potholes by painting rude images round them in bright fluorescent yellow. His aim is clearly to embarrass the local council into covering up the graffiti by filling in the holes. How long will it be before other guerrilla activists copy this approach?

In Scotland, potholes on the A82 have their own Facebook group, with 1500 members. One of these, an unlucky Fiesta driver felt his steering wheel start to vibrate. *A few minutes later there was a really loud banging noise with the steering wheel going absolutely crazy, he recalls. I don't actually remember hitting a pothole but the road was bad so it could've been any of them... The Fiesta had no spare, only the gunk that supposedly reflatates your tyre but rarely works when you've gashed it on a pothole. In any case, I'd already used my gunk after hitting a pothole the week before.*

It has been suggested that improved technology might help to ease the problem – even that cars of the future could be programmed to spot potholes and transmit the information to Highways England.

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But even with extra funding eliminating potholes is always going to take time. So let's end by turning for advice to **Neil Greig**, IAM RoadSmart's director of policy and research. Neil refers us to some basic principles of advanced driving:

Observation: expect potholes and look out for clues such as loose chippings, puddles or places where lorries or buses turn or stop.

Anticipation: potholes are creatures of habit and will return to the same places again and again, so remember where you last saw them and be prepared for cyclists and other road users trying to avoid them.

Planning: if you see a pothole, report it to your local council as it will help get it fixed and may also aid a fellow driver who may be making a claim. Have a camera handy to record any that you do hit.

OAGAM Secretary **Harry Schoetz** adds this advice for bikers:



"For a biker, hitting a large pothole can be quite dangerous with the potential for causing serious injuries. Even if the rider manages the situation safely, harm to the bike can be very costly - from deflated tyres and bent wheels to damaged steering bearings, front forks, rear suspension or even the main frame. The risk is significantly higher when potholes are difficult to see, for example in deeply shaded areas or when riding at night.

Increased forward observation and good planning can reduce the risk but you can often find yourself running out of space or time to avoid an unpleasant experience.

My advice, if you suddenly find yourself about to hit a pothole, is to reduce as much speed as you can before the impact - and try to keep your bike upright. When going through the pothole, your bike will usually stay more stable if the brakes are released again. That will reduce the risk of a blocked wheel - less dramatic though if the bike is equipped with an ABS system.

A few years ago I had a very lucky escape on my way home from work. It was a dark and wet-cold winter evening and I just didn't see the massive crater in the tarmac until it was too late. The outer rim of the front wheel got a dent and the tyre was deflated but despite the shock moment I managed somehow to stay on the bike.

Not a very pleasant experience!"

Happy pothole spotting!

This article was compiled from the following sources: *The Guardian, Mail Online, The Banbury Guardian, The Oxford Mail, UKClimbing.com & IAM RoadSmart Inform.*



Did you know that the MOT test changed on 20th May?

A new MOT test came into effect on 20 May 2018. The new test includes new defect types, stricter rules for diesel car emissions, and some vehicles over 40 years old becoming exempt.

There are 5 main changes:

1. Defects are categorised differently

Defects found during the MOT are categorised as 'dangerous', 'major' or 'minor'. Dangerous or major defects will result in a fail. Minor defects have to be repaired as soon as possible but won't result in a fail.

And MOT testers will still give advice about items you need to monitor and repair if necessary. These are known as 'advisories'.

2. Stricter rules for diesel car emissions

There are stricter limits for emissions from diesel cars fitted with a diesel particulate filter (DPF). Your vehicle will get a major fault if the MOT tester can see smoke of any colour coming from the exhaust or finds evidence that the DPF has been tampered with.

3. Some new things are included in the MOT

Some new items are tested during the MOT, including the following:

- if tyres are obviously underinflated;
- if the brake fluid has been contaminated;
- fluid leaks posing an environmental risk;
- brake pad warning lights and if brake pads or discs are missing;
- reversing lights on vehicles first used from 1 September 2009;
- headlight washers on vehicles first used from 1 September 2009 (if they have them);
- daytime running lights on vehicles first used from 1 March 2018 (most of these vehicles will have their first MOT in 2021 when they're three years old).

4. The MOT certificate will change

The design of the MOT certificate has changed. The new design lists any defects under the new categories, so they're clear and easy to understand. The service to check the MOT history of a vehicle has been updated to reflect the changes.

5. Some vehicles over 40 years old won't need an MOT

Cars, vans, motorcycles and other light passenger vehicles won't need to have an MOT if they're over 40 years old and have not been substantially changed. However, each time you tax your historic vehicle (even if you don't pay a fee), you'll have to declare it meets the rules for not needing an MOT.

Full details of the new MOT are posted on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

OAGAM News

Liz Challinor

It is with great sadness that we report the death of OAGAM member Liz Challinor in an accident while walking in the Cairngorm Mountains.

Liz was a National Car Observer with the group and will be sorely missed. Our heartfelt sympathies go out to Liz's family at this difficult time.

A full appreciation of Liz's work with OAGAM will be included in the next newsletter.

OAGAM Featured in the Latest Edition of RoadSmart Magazine



OAGAM PROVE THE MASTERS OF MOTORISED MARSHALLING

Oxford Area Group of Advanced Motorists bike members became 'motorised marshals' for the day, helping the runners taking part in the Virgin Sports Oxford Half Marathon. Linked by radios, the bikers acted as the eyes and ears of race officials, and some were additionally equipped with GoPro cameras to record video footage.

Three of the group acted as advance riders to ensure the route ahead of the runners was clear; two more led the wheelchair competitors ahead of the timing car, and another pair followed the leading competitors around the course.

It's the third time OAGAM has helped with the event and, as in previous years, the group was rewarded with a donation towards training equipment for advanced courses. The biker Observers and full members who took part were **Rob Archer, James Henton, Jason Hopgood, David Lisk, Paul Thompson, Daniel Timmins** and **Harry Schoetz**.

In case you missed it...

OAGAM features in the 'Groups in Action' section of the Spring/Summer 2018 edition of RoadSmart.

The item, on page 49 celebrates the role of some of our bike members as 'motorised marshalls' for the 2017 Oxford Half Marathon.

A full report was included in the October 2017 newsletter.



GDPR Update

All OAGAM members have now been sent a communication asking them to state their preferences regarding retention of data.

If you have any questions on this or any other matters relating to data management at OAGAM, please contact Paul Semple at GroupDataManager.oagam@gmail.com.

OAGAM Newsletter

Do you have ideas for topics you think we should cover in the newsletter?

Or maybe you would like to write something yourself.

Perhaps you have photos of OAGAM events or images that you think could be used to illustrate newsletter articles.

If so, get in touch at newsletter.oagam@gmail.com.

Bendy Roads and Brave Riders Recent OAGAM Rides & Events

We had a really good turn out of twelve bikes for the monthly **Wednesday Evening Ride Out** at the beginning of May, including two new associates keen to see what the social side of OAGAM is about. I think they were satisfied! I led the ride which took in some scenic roads out towards Bicester, down towards Thame, then along back roads through the pretty villages of Stanton St John and Islip to end at The Rock Of Gibraltar in Enslow for a welcome drink.

The weather was fine, the bendy roads were fun and the Oxfordshire countryside was as pleasant as ever - wonderful!



Two brave riders made the trip to Donington Park for a **Moto Gymkhana Experience Day**. If you've seen what the experts can do with their bikes you'll know why we were apprehensive. However the instructors couldn't have been more welcoming and immediately put us at ease.

We realised this was not a tough test against other riders but an exciting opportunity to improve our own bike handling skills. We started with warm up exercises following an instructor round a circuit laid out in cones designed to familiarise us with the sport, then moved on to GP8's - a set of five figure of eights round two cones 12 metres apart against the clock. We managed to improve our timed runs with each go! Next was the competition course with a mixture of slaloms, figure of eights, twists and turns through cone channels and tight loops of cone circles.

We didn't set any records but we had a great day out and definitely felt more comfortable with extreme lean angles and tight turns. I'm looking forward to next time I need to do a U-turn in a car park!



Upcoming Events for Bikers

Evening Ride-out - Wednesday 6th June

Meet at Exeter Hall, Kidlington, OX5 1AB at 7.00pm for a 7:30pm departure



Ride-out to The Brecon Beacons

Sunday 17th June

Steve will be leading this ride. Meet at Hopcrofts Holt, Oxford Road, OX25 5QQ at 08:45am for a 9.00am departure.

Please email rides.oagam@gamil.com if you plan to come along.

Cassington Bike Night - Monday 25th June

This is a great event if you are at all interested in bikes. We will be setting up a stall once again to promote IAM and we need volunteers to help out. If you can spare an hour (or more!) to hand out leaflets and chat to any potential associates about the benefits of IAM Roadsmart then let me know at rides.oagam@gmail.com.



Unlike last year we are situated in the main event area this time so we will really feel part of the festival! Please do come and support your club - we can't run the stall without your help!



Ride-out led by Rob Archer

Sunday 1st July

Details will be announced once finalised!

Ted Tattersall
Bike Rides & Events Co-ordinator



June Drive Outs

6th June

Don't forget that on the first Wednesday of the month until September we are running a series of drive outs for all OAGAM members who wish to polish their advanced driving and observing skills.

The drive outs offer sociable and enjoyable evenings to support:

- excellent associate training;
- new associates attracted by taster sessions;
- the maintenance of observer standards;
- helping full members to keep their driving up to standard.

Meet at Exeter Hall, Kidlington from 7.00pm for a 7.30 pm departure.

If you are planning to come along on 4th April please register by following this link. → → →

[6th June Sign Up](#)



*OAGAM member **Alexis Livadeas** recently visited Castrol's UK headquarters and Global Technology Centre in Pangbourne, Reading for a tour around their technical facilities. Alexis writes:*

The visit was organised by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers but it occurred to me that it could be of interest to OAGAM petrolheads (and oilheads – that's not a BMW reference!).

At Pangbourne, Castrol carry out research and development on lubricants and fuels and the facilities include rig testing, engine dynamometers and state-of-the-art laboratories. New products are developed there and samples of used lubricants are also tested for product development, troubleshooting and failure analysis.

The staff on my visit were very friendly and knowledgeable and made us feel very welcome. I was told that Castrol have previously hosted visits for IAM groups.

I understand they may be able to host an OAGAM visit for a group of about 20 in October or November on a Monday evening between 18:00 and 21:30.

If you are interested in taking part, please let me know via newsletter.oagam@gmail.com.

For further information visit [the Castrol website](#).



April Test Passes

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

Alex Richardson recently passed the advanced driving test, gaining a F1RST. Alex is a professional driving instructor. His enrolment on the advanced driving course raised the inevitable question: what can a driving instructor possibly have left to learn about driving?



Alex says: I qualified as a DVSA approved driving instructor back in January 2017. Following my training I noticed my driving could still improve. Even though I had passed the instructors test, I wasn't happy - I felt that if I was going to teach people how to drive, I myself should be driving at the highest possible standard.

Upon commencing driving tuition, I realised I was spending 50-70,000 miles on the road. Realising I was technically a high risk for an accident due to the amount I'm on the roads, I wanted to look into ways I could reduce the risk. Whereas I feel no-one can ever be the 'best' at anything and that we can all improve, I feel that you have to strive to be better. Challenging yourself is the only way.

I took to the IAM Advanced Driver training as I'd heard very good things about the training and also it covered everything I was looking for. The training really opened my eyes - it was great. It was strange at first to have someone sitting where I would usually sit telling me things to do differently or how to approach them better - but that was just what I was looking for. I have noticed my awareness improving and it's not only made me a safer driver but I

feel it has also improved my safety on the road when teaching.

I found after passing my ADI tests I was classed as a professional driver. Having driven on farms since the age of nine I've always loved anything with an engine and wheels. Passing my Class 1 and 2 LGV tests really gave me a wide skill set on the roads, understanding how others have to use the road to the advantage. All the skills I learn I can pass on to my pupils to hopefully make them safe

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and competent drivers on the road, instead of just showing them how to pass the driving test. I am also a fleet assessor, allowing me to assess company car drivers. Knowing that I have passed my advanced test is appealing to companies when they're looking for their drivers to be safe on the road, as I can pass some of this knowledge on to them.

I still feel I can go further and better. I will be doing my masters soon to see where this journey can go and I'm looking forward as to what's to come. People look at instructors on the roads and think that we should be perfect but no one is perfect, I believe. We can all benefit from someone else's views on what we do, it's good to go out of your comfort zone.

I absolutely love driving and even more so after passing my advanced test!!

Alex is too modest to add that his test report included a 1 for every competence. A perfect score! Congratulation and well done!

Gabor Javorsky, who recently passed the Advanced Driving Test, says: *Thank you very much! It was an exciting experience to go through the lessons and I've learned a whole deal.*

David Golding has also passed the Advanced Driving Test.

Sharing Experience and Knowledge

OAGAM member **Daniel Timmins** (right) is just beginning to train as a Local Bike Observer, under the practised eye of coach Paul Thompson. At 27, Dan is set to become by far our youngest observer – for bikes or cars. He has agreed to keep a diary of his experiences as he prepares for the Local Observer assessment later in the summer. We look forward to hearing about his experiences and hope that Dan's enthusiasm may inspire other young members to consider becoming a car or bike observer.

This month, Dan tells us about his background in biking and explains what led him to enroll on the observer training course.

I am about to embark on my next motorcycling challenge, which is to start my observer training. As this training progresses, I will report back to the newsletter, describing my woes, victories and of course amusing events.

I got into the IAM through a recommendation by a friend who had completed the course and as I commuted to work daily on a bike. I thought I could improve upon my skills for a safer ride. What got me on course to become an observer was Rob Archer planting the idea of being one after I had completed my IAM training a couple of years ago. At the time I was moving house, which was not the time to dedicate myself to something so time consuming as training. What got me to finally commit was the simplest of events.

I was at ASDA picking up some items (on my motorbike) and, as I often do, I gave a friendly hello to a learner motorcyclist parked next to me. He then asked me about some riding skills he was finding difficult and things about his bike he was unsure of. This conversation went on for about



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half an hour. I really enjoyed sharing my experience and knowledge and decided there and then that I should volunteer to help more motorcyclists with the knowledge I have gained through the IAM.

My interest in motorcycles started young with my Dad having a motorcycle and me going on the back. I actually got my motorcycle licence before my car licence. My first motorcycle was a mighty 11 hp 125cc motorcycle – a Suzuki Van Van/RV125 - with a top speed of 60 mph. This got me to University and work for three years. I am glad I did start on a light 125CC bike because like all new riders I made mistakes but was never going fast enough to get into real trouble.

My next motorcycle was a Honda Hornet sport 2001 600cc 98 Hp, which I believe most of you have seen me on. I have been running this for five years, using it as both a commuter and social bike. I have taken my bike several times down the quarter mile track at Santa Pod with a best time of 12.1 seconds at 109 mph. This was quite a lot of fun for just going in a straight line. I have been on a European riding holiday, a couple of track days and been a fair few places around the country. All of which I hope can be of some use when I become an observer.



Dan doing 109mph at Santa Pod

We look forward to hearing more from Dan in next month's newsletter.

The Difference Advanced Driving Makes

This extract is from a letter sent in 2002 by a newly qualified IAM member to his observer. It was published in Go! the OAGAM newsletter from that far off time.



I found myself driving the road between Chalgrove and Watlington the other day - a route you chose for an early tutorial - and was delighted to realise that, this time, bends were long anticipated and entry was controlled at an appropriate speed with absolutely no excitement at all. It dawned on me that I had a driving plan - doubtless not the best one, but a plan nonetheless - and was using a speed that would have allowed evasive action before whatever surprise was round the corner. The untutored me rushed those corners with little forethought and enjoyed the adrenalin of 'swooping', on the assumption that it would be all right round the corner and the excuse could have been 'I had nowhere to go - it was the other silly sod's fault for... being there.' And, of course, you were right. Overall rate of progress is not diminished when acceleration and speed are used properly.

Driving plans and negotiating bends able to cope with unknowns were two items of which the old me had thought 'Bah. Humbug!' on first reading of the manuals. As I proceeded I thought most kindly of the patience and good humour with which you had introduced and imbued me with the right way to do it.

2018 Events Checklist

Wed 6 June

7.00pm for 7.30pm - OAGAM Drive-out & Ride-out Meeting
Meet Exeter Hall, Kidlington

Mon 11 June

Thrupton Skills Day

Sun 17 June

8.45am for 9.00am - Ride-out to Brecon Beacons
Meet Hopcrofts Holt

Mon 25 June

4:00pm - 8:00pm - Cassington Bike Night
Cassington, Witney

Sun 1 July

Ride-out led by Rob Archer
Details to be finalised

Wed 4 Jul

7.00pm for 7.30pm OAGAM Drive-out & Ride-out Meeting
Meet Exeter Hall, Kidlington

Sat 7 to Sun 8 July

National Road Rally

Sat 21 July (or Sun 22 July)

Ride-out led by Harry Schoetz
Details to be finalised

Wed 1 August

7.00pm for 7.30pm - OAGAM Drive-out & Ride-out Meeting
Meet Exeter Hall, Kidlington

Sun 12 August

9:00am - 4:00pm - Brackley Festival of Motorcycling

Fri 17- Sun 19 August

Keswick Trip

Sun 2 September

Ride-out to Lincoln led by Steve Savage

Wed 5 September

7.00pm for 7.30pm - OAGAM Drive-out & Ride-out Meeting
Meet Exeter Hall, Kidlington

20 to 23 September

Proposed Trip to Normandy

Wed 3 October

7.00pm for 7.30pm - OAGAM Monthly Meeting

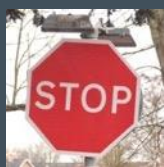
Wed 7 November

7.00pm for 7.30pm - OAGAM Monthly Meeting

Wed 5 December

7.00pm for 7.30pm - OAGAM Monthly Meeting

Check for updates of this list by visiting <http://www.iamroadsmart.com/groups/oagam>



and finally...

OAGAM Committee: Contact Us

General enquiries or comments

Rob Archer, Chair

Harry Schoetz, Secretary

OAGAM subscriptions and other financial questions

Paul Thompson, Treasurer

Enquiries from or about car associates & observers

Alex Lewis, Chief Observer Cars

Geoff Ayres, Car Associate Co-ordinator

Enquiries from or about bike associates & observers

Paul Thompson, Chief Observer Bikes

David Lisk, Bike Associate Co-ordinator

Bike Rides & Events

Ted Tattersall, Bike Rides & Events Coordinator

Membership enquiries

Phil Hine, Membership Secretary

Newsletter items, comments and enquiries

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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)				
	OAGAM Group	OAGAM Car	OAGAM Bike	Region Avg.
	12 months	12 months	12 months	12 months
First	11	7	4	3.5
Pass	30	15	15	10.9
Fail	8	5	3	2.1
% Pass	84	81	86	87

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