

IAM
DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



**TAUNTON GROUP OF
ADVANCED MOTORISTS
NEWSLETTER**

Number 114

March, 2010

JAGUAR PHOTO GALLERY



Member Tony Hucker's Jaguar XF, just as handsome from the rear



Tony Hucker's 2005 model Jaguar S-TYPE Twin Turbo Diesel Sport

TAUNTON GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly

Editor: John Gilbert Printing: Heathfield Community
School

Circulation: 200

IAM Group No. 1005
Registered Charity No. 1062207
www.tgam.org.uk



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DATA PROTECTION ACT

Members' details, i.e. names, addresses and telephone numbers, are kept on computer for convenience. This information will only be used to further the aims and objectives of the IAM and is only available to Committee Members BUT can be inspected at any suitable time provided just cause can be proven.

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Committee meetings (for Committee Members ONLY) are held at 7:30pm on the second Thursday of the month at Heathfield Community School. If, as a Group Member, you need to raise any issue at Committee level, then please feel free to contact any Committee Member to put your views to the next Committee Meeting.

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**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CLOSING DATE FOR THE
JUNE 2010 ISSUE IS TUESDAY, MAY 4TH. ITEMS
SHOULD BE SENT TO
"THE EDITOR" ed@tgam.org.uk
OR, IF YOU DO NOT HAVE E-MAIL, BY MAIL TO
JOHN GILBERT, THE COACH HOUSE,
STOCKLAND BRISTOL, BRIDGWATER, TA5 2QA.**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By John Pentney, M.A.

ONE type of road user not often considered perhaps is animal life. Animals on the road fall into various categories such as horses being ridden or pulling traps etc., pets on or off leads like dogs and cats; farm animals like cattle and sheep being driven along or across the road (or even escapees from fields); farm animals - particularly sheep - and semi-wild horses/ponies in areas of open grazing like parts of Exmoor and the New Forest; and wild mammals ranging in size from tiny mice to red deer and also birds of course. Probably my most unusual encounter as a driver with animals was with circus elephants being paraded through one of Bridgwater's main streets about 30 years ago, to advertise the circus's arrival in town. As exotic circus animals kept for entertainment are now generally frowned upon, it's unlikely that I shall experience this again.

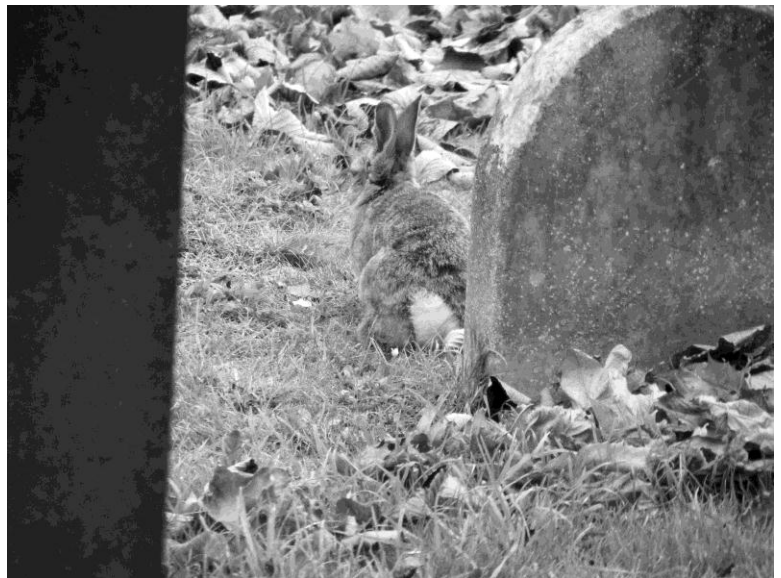
Animal life on the roads of course presents a potential hazard to drivers of motor vehicles, whether the animals are purposefully on the road under, hopefully, firm human control such as dogs on leads and horses being ridden, or there by default such as wild animals or sheep in open-grazing areas who seem to prefer to graze the grass on the verge whilst standing on the carriageway. As advanced drivers we have to factor the possible presence of animals on the road into our driving plans, particularly in a rural area like Somerset where we will probably encounter animals in all the situations outlined above, except probably for circus animals. London's parks contain a wide wide variety of wild life and are used for horse riding, while the urban fox is increasingly common, so even in built-up areas animal life is to be expected on the roads in addition to pets.

I grew up in the New Forest area of Hampshire, so have always expected to find animals on or close to roads. Apart from the wildlife of the Forest including deer and smaller mammals, under resident Commoners' rights ponies, cattle, sheep and even pigs (feeding on the beech mast in autumn in the northern fringes of the Forest) were all to be seen. The semi-wild New Forest ponies were by far the commonest and visitors were deterred from feeding them with the threat of a £2 fine (probably much more now) under a bye-law introduced for road safety. Ponies looked upon car-borne visitors as a source of food treats and congregated on or close to the unfenced roads. As a result many ponies were killed or injured and cars and their occupants damaged and hurt. Even without the allure of extra food, the ponies would gather on roads under railway bridges to find shade on hot days.

In the mid 1960s, the New Forest was quite literally ring-fenced (with cattle grids across all the roads that crossed the Forest boundary) to confine the Commoners' animals within the proper bounds of the Forest. Prior to that, it was not uncommon to find ponies in our family garden at Lymington, south of the Forest, and grazing in Lymington churchyard. My secondary school at Brockenhurst in the Forest had a cattle grid to keep ponies out of the grounds. The principal A-roads through the Forest were also fenced, and much later a blanket 40 mph speed limit was imposed on the remaining roads not subject to a lower limit. There is also a 40 mph limit on Dartmoor's roads where similar animal hazards are present.

These speed limits emphasise the need to keep one's speed down in such areas of open grazing so that you can always pull up on your own side of the road within the distance you can see to be clear. On open moorland typical of open-grazing areas you usually have a good view of sheep etc. ahead but only a moderate speed will enable you to avoid a collision when an animal suddenly steps into the roadway – most animals totally lack road sense and are predictable only in the unpredictability of their movements. If you drive across the famous Buttertubs Pass in the Yorkshire Dales between Hawes and Thwaite you will encounter three cattle grids. When you cross the second one from either direction you should not speed up because you have not left the open-grazing area – this middle grid simply marks a sub-division of the open-grazing land.

Some of my best views of British wildlife have been from my car when driving at night - safe encounters with deer, badgers etc. illuminated in one's headlights on country roads can be one of the pleasures of driving; but in my 40 years of motoring in mainly rural areas I have almost inevitably been guilty of some road kill. My tally is 1 badger, 1 hare, 2 or 3 rabbits, a few small birds, a stunned barn owl who hit my windscreen, plus one stray sheep from a local badly-run farm where the gate had been left open. Offset against this must be the far greater number of wild animals, birds and pets I have saved by being able to take



This bunny lives safely in a churchyard, but many of his cousins perish on the roads.

evasive action, whether by slowing, stopping or changing course. Road kill accounts for countless thousands of animals each year – most of us have probably seen more dead than living badgers for example, though it is alleged that some unscrupulous farmers dump illegally-killed badgers by the road to make them look like motor- vehicle victims.

Careful driving makes the roads a safer place not just for us humans but also for other animal life. For instance, always slow down for horse riders and pass slowly and widely when safe to do so; do not sound your horn in this situation, but it can be useful to warn birds of your presence when they leave it very late to fly away from the carriageway. But horns do not work with pheasants who are very very stupid or just simply suicidal. Do not, however, take sudden evasive action to avoid an animal if it will put yourself or other human road users in danger – an advanced driver's good observational skills will indicate whether it is safe to do so. One of the hazards with frightened animals is that they will often double back into the path of danger rather than continuing towards safety, making it doubly difficult to avoid hitting them. But if you kill a fox or other predatory animal you could be saving some of their potential prey – it's a Darwinian world out there.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

DIRECT FROM THE DRIVING SEAT...OR CHAIR, MAN!

By Kevin G. Grose

WHAT is more important – features, gizmo's, toys, extra's, benefits – call it what you like, or YOU?

I have three watches. One is unique as it is one of a kind. It has a solid quality feel to it. It has a plain but distinctive clock face. The bracelet is heavy and extremely well made with a dual safety clasp.

My second watch – my everyday watch – is extremely light. It has two time features – analogue and digital. It has a date feature. It has a seconds mode. It's water resistant to 100 metres. It has a stopwatch. It has numerous different alarms. It has a dual safety clasp on the bracelet. It has an adjustable bezel. I've just discovered it can tell me the time in 20 different world locations. It can also tell me GMT time. It can set different alarms for many different days. It can record time in a different time zone. It has a stopwatch facility. It has more things and features than I will ever need to use in my lifetime, but more importantly, as a main feature it can reset itself every night, up to three times each night, to a signal that gives the correct GMT time accurately to ± 1 sec per year. Apparently, this feature is called "Waveceptor" according to the extremely thick little instruction booklet that comes.

with it and NO, I haven't read it all – I can't be bothered.

My third watch is an unusual chronograph. It is completely analogue. It has a large second hand. It also has a small second hand. It has a separate minute counting dial along with a separate hour counting dial. It's classy but functional. Again, it's water resistant to 100 metres. It too, has a dual safety clasp bracelet. I love it because it has a rich blue clock face highlighted with fine gold features. To me it is unusual because I have never seen another one exactly like it. On purchase, although it comes from a mainstream global supplier of watches, I was informed it had a history – it was an ex-major London Show watch – another feature.

You may ask what all this has to do with motoring, driving, road safety, etc? Well, let me just add the following details. As you may or may not know, I mostly use three different vehicles.

Firstly, there's my "Sunday Best" vehicle. Used very rarely and only on special occasions. It's a timeless, quality classic. In it's day, it was the "best" car in the world, so they tell me. It has special suspension. It has special brakes. It has an electronically operated automatic gearbox. It has special power steering. It has electric windows, cruise control, self levelling suspension system, double twin calliper front brakes (yes, eight brake pads on the front), it has power seats, power boot lock, petrol flap, etc., the list is endless. It has many features, even more surprising as it's a 1974 car.



Kevin's "Sunday Best" vehicle



My second car is my daily runabout. It too, has many features. It's 22 years newer. Its engine is a quarter of the size of my "Sunday" car, but it is certainly not lacking in acceptable performance. Its suspension is completely straightforward. Its braking system is conventional. It goes



Kevin's everyday car

well, it stops well, it's quiet, quick and comfortable. Although it has many modern features – EW, SR, PS, EMS, alloy wheels, CD Player, etc., its main feature is that it is extremely useful as an everyday car. It does everything I require from it on a daily basis. In the real world, you do not need anything else – this ordinary car complete with it's modern features “does the job”!



Kevin's Classic car

My third car is something else. It's a classic that can be used every day. It doesn't have many features. There's no power steering. There's no electric windows, no ABS, no traction control, no engine computer, in fact, apart from wipers and lights, there are not many other extra features. But it is quick. It has enough power. It will stop safely. It can tow if needed. This is my favourite car, but I hear you say it hasn't got any toys, gizmos, extras or features. BUT it does have one

major feature – it is extremely entertaining. It is quite happy to burble along with the modern traffic minding it's own business. It doesn't shout out, “Look at me, I'm a classic”, it's conservatively subdued. However, with a shower or rain, this car transforms from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde. It becomes a hooligan. It will drive way beyond the normal limits of everyday driving. It takes everything thrown at it without even raising an eyebrow. It relishes performing antics usually reserved for those three “hoons” on the TV who always drive in the most “eco friendly” way (Jezzer, Hamster and Captain Slow).

So we can now establish, that watches and cars have very many different features. Some are useful, some are gimmicks, some are needed, some are useless, but they are all features. If you take the watches first, they tell me the time. That's it. I don't really need anything else. I only need to know the time. I look at my watch, whichever watch that may be, just to tell me the time. Once I have the time, I don't need to look at my watch until I need the time, er...next time! It could have a million features, but I only need one – to tell the time.

**Closing Date for the June, 2010 issue of the Newsletter is
Tuesday, 4th May.**

'STRAIGHT ON'

FOR THE SPRING

By Bill Coltham

Yes, it's 2010!

IT'S that time again when I sit down at the computer and start to put my thoughts down for the Newsletter. Now we are a Prize Winning Group in the newsletter stakes, nothing but the best can be enough, and I feel the stress of it all trying to keep my standards up for the sake of the Group.

The current thought I have is the little mind exercise I conducted at the Night Driving evening, just last week at our meeting place in Hatch Beauchamp.

For those unable to make the evening, I presented the twenty or so members with a task to write on a pictorial representation of their car dash boards all the positions of the relevant switches. The sort of problem one might have if parked in a completely dark spot, with minimal light to illuminate the inside of the car to show where the inside light switches might be, for example, or the rear fog switches, and so on.

Not an easy task, and Sue, my wife did her best, and got a bit confused by which Toyota she was supposed to be driving. Just the sort of thing that happens to most of us these days; and well done to you all for having a go – and as I bet most of you had some difficulty remembering all the exact positioning of the switches, I may catch up with you all again to repeat the test.

And thank you Sue, for sorting out the kitchen, coffee and teas being the most important part of any training session.

Did it snow a little?

One of the comments I heard this winter was that we did not need to practice any car skidding as we had had plenty during the snowy weather.

To be purist, the best of all Advanced Drivers might never need to go on a skid pan as they had driven so well, understood the road and weather conditions so acutely that they had never skidded, and had maintained a perfect drive in all the weathers this winter. B....ks, nobody is that good, and we need all the help we can get.



So, let's try to arrange a skid pan training session sometime this year to get ahead of the next year weather conditions (probably dry, sunny and like driving in the Sahara). It may cost you, but it would be well worth it.

Anyone ready for it?...and is that you in the picture above?

Did you know?

From February 2011, yes next year, all new cars sold in Europe, including us, must have daytime driving lights.

Comments to your local M.P. as to whether they will be helpful or just dazzle us a bit more.

Observer Update

As you know the Group has a very committed and knowledgeable bunch of Observers, and I, of course, include our other Senior Observer in that! There are fourteen of us at the moment, with one or two having a period of 'resting' to recharge batteries and deal with the gathering pace of home and domestic issues. May we all wish George Parker, Observer, and a popular speaker amongst the W.I's and groups in his area, quick recovery from poor health, and back into the driving seat.!

The winter has not been a busy time for Observers, but signs are that keen drivers are returning to the IAM for an outlet for their interests. That IAM has a new web site, is putting more active publicity out in the real world that does seem to be showing good results.

The two page spread in the Saturday Telegraph Motoring section regarding a comparison driving test between a 70 year old driver and a 17 year old driver might have been an obvious choice, but it is up-to-date and relevant. As someone heading to that magical age (no, 70 not 17!) I can see both sides of that argument very clearly.

All of us in the IAM Group structure are volunteers and give of their time for the benefit of others for a multitude of reasons. Many of us feel a great sense of pride when one of our associates pass the Advanced Driving test, and see him or her take a more responsible role in the Group, become a committee member or train to become an Observer too.

There's no doubt that the Group has moved on tremendously over the past couple of years, with the move to Hatch Beauchamp as a 'home', with more training of Observers and Members, now sometimes together, and the atmosphere of relaxed camaraderie is obvious too. Our IT hardware, posters and training aides have improved our lot.

What is he leading to, I hear? Well, there are members, not Observers yet, who are well up to the skills mark to add their weight and

join the band of 'involved helpers' within the Group. We do need one or two more trained Observers to be in the pipe line, a couple more committee members to inject new ideas and skills into the management of the Group.

Probably the weakest area for future planning is, in my opinion, the provision of speakers for the monthly gatherings. Anyone involved in other areas where speakers are required know that constant badgering is required to keep a high quality regularly attending month in and month out.

Please come forward, have a chat with me about what being an Observer means in time and commitment, chat with Kevin about being a committee member, and with any of us if you have ideas for activities and speakers.

It's your Group after all!

Are we now rehabilitated?

4X4s I mean- once the scourge or all things anti green, vandalised in Chelsea for not being a real tractor, and the object of punctured tyres by the unenlightened few (Diesel RAV 4s, one of the most environmentally friendly SUVs, were attacked in Kensington and Westminster Borough council area.)

Sixteen Off Roaders in our parish in the Blackdown Hills in East Devon joined together to form a 4x4 Snow Help Line to help the elderly, sick, or just nervous, to get to doctors and hospital appointments, or just a bit of necessary shopping, for 7 days over the worst of the winter in January.

The emergency services were calling for other off roaders to help out in a similar way in South and North Devon. And they did!!



And finally...

See you all at the various members' evenings, and at the training sessions we will arrange throughout the year to come. Let us know what interests you, and importantly, how you can help!!

GROUP OBSERVERS

CHIEF SENIOR OBSERVER

Bill Coltham 01297 631818

TEAM WEST SENIOR OBSERVER & TEAM LEADER

Colin White 01823 257196

TEAM EAST TRAINEE SENIOR OBSERVER & TEAM LEADER

Frank Richards 01823 412916

TRAINEE SENIOR OBSERVERS

Kevin Grose

John Pentney

OBSERVERS

Guy Denton
Tudor Humphreys **(PAUSED)**
Faye Markham
Alan Thomson
Russ Williams

John Gilbert
Ron Holdom
George Parker **(PAUSED)**
Steve Selby

Group Observers must be fully paid up Taunton Group Members AND fully paid up National IAM members at ALL times to carry out your vital Observer roles. There are NO exceptions. You must always check that your Associate has an up to date membership card before departing on any observed drives. Please try to make and maintain contact with your new Associates, and listen to any concerns or fears they may have. When Associates pass their Advanced Driving Test, PLEASE inform your Team Leader as soon as possible as we have a duty to keep accurate and up to date records. All new Associate Members are normally teamed up with a conveniently placed Observer. If you have or encounter any problems please contact our Chief Senior Observer, Bill Coltham, or the Group Chairman.

TGAM & LOCAL DRIVING INSTRUCTORS

The following IAM & TGAM members are both Driving Standards Agency/Approved Driving Instructors and TGAM Qualified Observers:

Guy Denton 01984 633467

Tudor Humphreys 01823 277353

Members and/or enquirers must establish their own facts and details when contacting a Driving Instructor. If any other IAM & TGAM Full Member Driving Instructors wish to be on the above list, then please contact the Group Secretary or the Newsletter Editor. (Note: You MUST remain FULL IAM & TGAM members at all times.)

MEMBERS PAGE

ADVANCED DRIVING TEST PASSES

CONGRATULATIONS to the following who have recently passed their Advanced Driving Tests.

Sonja Daly
Mary Evans
Tom Baker

OBSERVED BY
Colin White
George Parker
Russ Williams & Colin White

NOTE: If you have passed the test recently but your name is not on the above list please make sure that you inform Serena Lonton, the Membership Secretary. Also, in a change from our previous procedure, we would, in future, like to present successful candidates with their pass certificates at one of our Members' Evenings.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Serena Lonton

MANY thanks to those of you who have renewed your membership so far. There are still 29 of you out there who have yet to renew your TGAM membership, so please don't delay! We need your renewal by 31st May 2010, or sadly you could drop off our member list. Just think, this could be your last award-winning Newsletter, which just gets better and better. If however you have decided not to rejoin the Group, would you please let me know in order to avoid the expense and inconvenience of reminders. Many thanks.

THE MEMBERSHIP REGISTER

THE following have recently joined the group. We hope you enjoy your association with the Taunton Group and we look forward to welcoming you to our meetings, events and activities.

	<u>TOWN</u>	<u>LEVEL</u>
Janet Loader	Tiverton	Associate
John Sharkey	Otterhampton	Associate
David Ledger	Corfe	Full Member
Caroline Facey	Bridgwater	Associate
Mark Egan	Westonzoyland	Associate
Jos Bennett	Over Stowey	Associate
Justin Pepper	Sampford Brett	Associate
Nigel Steady	Chilton Polden	Associate

NOTE: If you have recently joined the group but your name does not appear on the above list then you probably joined after we went to press. You will be welcomed in the next newsletter.

CALENDAR

All displays, events and talks, etc., are always open to you as Members, your family and friends. We welcome as many new faces as possible to come and join us. We endeavour to make sure that full details are made available in each Newsletter. The latest news on events can be found on the up to date Events page of the Group Website at www.tgam.org.uk or by contacting any of the Committee Members (please see Page 2).

MEMBERS' EVENINGS ARE HELD EVERY THIRD WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH AT HATCH BEAUCHAMP VILLAGE HALL, TA3 6SG, AND ARE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS, FROM 7:30 PM TO 9:30 PM.
POP ALONG AND SEE WHAT WE ARE ALL ABOUT OR HAVE A LOOK ON: www.tgam.org.uk

MARCH

11	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members Only)
17	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

APRIL

8	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members Only)
18	Su		Peugeot Event at Barrington Court (Observers Only)
21	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

MAY

13	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members Only)
15	Sa		RLF AGM at The Clay Pigeon
19	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

JUNE

10	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members Only)
16	W	7:30 pm	Members' Classic Car Evening

JULY

8	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members Only)
17	Sa		IAM National Motorcycle Conference
21	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

AUGUST

12	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members Only)
18	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

SEPTEMBER

9	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members Only)
15	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

CHEDDAR VALLEY MOTORCYCLIST AGM, 9th NOVEMBER

By Kevin G. Grose

TGAM were kindly invited to attend the AGM at Cheddar Valley Advanced Motorcyclists on Monday 9th November 2009. Our Group CSO – Bill Coltham, acted as my chauffeur again as we set off on a cold, misty and murky night. Bill's satnav did work fairly well this time, so I couldn't argue much with "Katy's" instructions!

We arrived in very good time although it appeared that the venue had swapped sides from one side of the street to the other – I must have read the map upside down previously – but no matter as Bill safely reversed parked into a very tight angled parking space – ten out of ten, full marks! Grabbing a quick Coca Cola each at the bar, we then joined the contingent of bikers gathered for the CVAM AGM. Of course, we stood out a little bit, virtually being the only car group people there with red IAM badges instead of green IAM badges. No matter, we were still acknowledged and warmly welcomed – maybe because we did know quite a few of the people present – Jim Newman (Somerset Road Safety Partnership), Robbie Downing (IAM MC Examiner), Ken Crane (WsM & Mendip Group Chairman and CVAM), Tim Soper (IAM MC RCO), Maria Brierley (CVAM Secretary), Eddy Lambeth-Stoate (CVAM), Duncan Day (CVAM), etc., and by the end of the evening, we certainly felt we knew a whole lot more of the CVAM Group.

The official AGM proceedings started and then concluded in a fairly straight forward manner. After a short break, Robbie Downing took over (at the very last minute, I gather) as the Guest Speaker and proceeded to run through the sequence endured by prospective motorcycle Police Officers who wished to join the Traffic Division, or as it is now known – Road Policing Unit (RPU). It appears quite a task to complete over 2 to 3 weeks and is obviously an exhausting and tiring experience for all those who take part. Then again, only the best get through and it would appear, they must have a flair for such a job with obvious hard biker tendencies throughout.

Being an RPU Motorcycle Officer is quite a position to hold and involves continuous, professional attention to detail and presentation to ensure the correct procedure and corporate image. I think I can safely say that I have never seen a Police Motorcycle Officer behaving in a dangerous or inconsiderate way and I think some motorists don't always respect and appreciate the number of tasks that they have to undertake to maintain that level and standard of professionalism to ensure their safety and the safety of all those around them. Robbie allowed questions to be asked at any time throughout the talk and also managed to finish within the given time scale.

I enjoyed the insight given by Robbie and I am sure Bill found the same. Evening over, we said our good byes and proceeded to leave when we were "accosted" by Jim Newman to discuss SRSP issues – thanks Jim! Bill and I then left still within good time and followed his satnav home again – apart from a few loons and idiots on the road, we arrived home safely. Thanks to CVAM for inviting us; thanks to Robbie for his talk and thanks to Bill for chauffeuring me to the event. Finally, I don't think I shall be taking up the RPU Motorcycling course described by Robbie because my feet would not even touch the ground – literally – my legs are too bl**dy short!

TGAM MEMBERS EVENING, 18th NOVEMBER

By Kevin G. Grose

Today's the day, we met the man from the DSA!

I don't really know how, but after a few random missives, the Deputy Chief Examiner of the DSA, Steve Froud agreed to come along to our November Members' Evening. We had about 28 members and friends attending on the night and after my usual ramblings to start off with, I introduced Steve for his DSA presentation. Before Steve proceeded, I made another attempt to present a few more ADT Test Pass certificates but not one of the eight successful candidates were in attendance. Shame, because not only do you miss the evening's guest speaker and presentation, you also all miss out on getting your picture in our award-winning Newsletter!

Anyway, Steve proceeded with a quick overview on himself and the DSA before embarking on the "ECO" way of driving. Steve allowed questions at anytime during his talk and when at a natural break, we stopped and all had a cup of tea or coffee with biscuits. Being an

Observer, I noticed some have more biscuits than others...mmmmm! When all the chit chat and munching of biscuits had finished, Steve restarted the "ECO" drive again.



Steve Froud in deep conversation with Rina Cameron of the SRSP while the rest of us munch the Chocolate Bourbons

He enlightened many on the future plans and ideas being mooted around; convoys of vehicles that “talk” electronically to each other; cars that stop at STOP signs/junctions, or go if electronically “told” to go; is control going to be taken away from the driver? and much more from various countries around the world.

General “learner drivers” and the DSA “test” were also discussed. It’s amazing how little people will spend to just pass the “test”. Then that’s it, they decide they don’t have to do anything else. They have their licence and that’s all they have to do. They feel they do not need or require any further driver training. They are that good!

Another interesting fact – the number of complaints the DSA receive from parents, informing the DSA of the amount of money they have paid out and that their offspring have passed their DSA driving test, and then they can’t drive the family car or their own car, safely. They stall the engine, can’t change gear, don’t brake safely, etc., however, what has been missed is the very obvious. Most, if not all learners, have learnt to drive on a new or virtually new vehicle. They have passed their test in a new or virtually new vehicle. When they then drive their own car, it may be a 10 to 15 year old car. The family car may be a 4x4, SUV, People Carrier, etc., and all are quite a bit different from a new, small driver learner car. What about all those electronic extras on the new cars? How many of those features are on the older car? Petrol/diesel, which is best to learn to drive on? Both act differently – they both have vastly different characteristics – different torque curves, power bands, tickovers and idles. All cars are different. Driving them (all) takes time and experience – the older we get, the more experienced we are – well, some of us are! Knowledge is the key to everything...add experience – sorted!

Anyway, thanks Steve for all the information and for enduring some unusual questions, especially involving the “twins”! Once again, those present on the night learnt a great deal – those that didn’t turn up, missed another informative presentation involving life’s driving experiences and what the future may hold. No one knows it all and driving is a lifetime learning experience – remember, it’s a “Skill for Life” ...only £139.00. Bargain!

**Members’ Meetings are held at
7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday
of the month at Hatch Beauchamp
Village Hall**

TGAM CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON, 5th DECEMBER

By Kevin G. Grose

WELL, here we are again – the Taunton Group annual Christmas Luncheon at Oake Manor Golf Club, near Taunton. The weather behaved itself for most of the time spent there with rain only arriving later in the day when we were leaving. However, it was not too bad and something that could be easily coped with.

I left home fairly early on the day as I had to collect on the way, some donated gifts from a lovely Taunton Group member who always gives so generously to the Group, especially at raffle times. I made good time and found Julia (Steer), Brian (Howe) and Alice already at Oake setting up the decorative raffle table. As I started to put out the little TGAM table cards with their names and luncheon requests on, I suddenly realised we didn't appear to have enough places set out. A quick count established my fears and I asked, "Where's the other table?" A quick dash to reception and after a fight out on the lawn (Brian held my coat), we quickly got the other places set up. Phewwww...all sorted. Finished putting all the cards out as our members started to appear when I suddenly spotted three people in a party of four who I knew, and that two of the party were Taunton Group members. My first thoughts were, "Oh no, we are going to need four more extra places as none of these were on my list; It looks like another fight out on the lawn; and Brian, can you hold my coat!"

Fortunately, my fears were quelled when they explained they were with another group from a bowling club who were also having their Christmas Luncheon at the same time. Phewwww...again! Anyway, members started to drift in and take their places. Many placed raffle prizes on Julia's very posh raffle table and I thank every single one of you who kindly donated such gifts, they really are gratefully appreciated. After many introductions with new members and friends attending for the first time, we all gradually seated ourselves so that the luncheon could begin. Speaking for myself, I found the meal excellent and fine, although I did seem to have a HUGE portion of whipped cream on my trifle – I like whipped cream but not that much – blimey!

We had 29 attendees this year – only a few less than we did last year – which again, is brilliant in light of the prevailing economic climate. We started on time and proceeded efficiently at an acceptable rate. The usual noisy balloons and party poppers were instigated and fully used to good effect. I don't think we annoyed or upset any other groups or parties attending and again, I confirmed with "the management" if there was any discontent, then I would take the blame. As lunch was coming to a close, I then felt I had to give a very short speech...yes, I know

some of you wanted to leave right there and then...but many people have to be thanked for just attending the event; their continuing support; their kind gifts; etc., and to thank all our Group Observers and Committee Members and Julia Steer for all her work in helping out with this annual event but we did limit the number of raffle prizes this year after last year's total of 60 items!

Again, this event was well supported and everybody appeared to have had a good time and left the venue happy. The staff at Oake Manor were again, very courteous, excellently efficient and nothing was too much trouble for them, especially with accommodating the extra spaces at such very short notice and because of this attribute, I have provisionally booked for next year again with Saturday, 4th December 2010 already pencilled in. It's ok – I have paid the bill and we can go back again (another fight out on the lawn!). So, date to remember – Saturday 4th December 2010...put it in your diary now; come along, meet other Taunton Group Members, bring your wife, bring your partner, bring your friends, bring someone else's wife...and enjoy yourselves at this excellent venue. Excellent company, excellent food, excellent raffles prizes, EXCELLENT!

Just to finish, here's a few short incidents that happened on the day: someone thought that if they put all their raffle tickets – yes, both copies – in the draw box, then they would stand twice as much chance of winning! We did have a "celebrity" present who didn't want their photo taken! You would be surprised at what subjects are discussed during such a luncheon as this! My ex-wife is not "actually" floating around in Bristol Docks – I did mean on a boat! You can have TOO much information some times!

AN APPRECIATION FROM JULIA STEER

Again a personal thanks to everyone who donated the excellent raffle prizes for the Christmas Lunch. You really do turn up trumps with your prizes and I do appreciate whatever is placed on the raffle table.

If you missed the Christmas Lunch I am sorry as there were ample prizes for all. Many thanks again.

TGAM MEMBERS EVENING, 16th DECEMBER

By John Gilbert

THIS Members' Evening started off with a presentation of his Advanced Driving Test Pass Certificate to Sam Worley, who also just happened to be our speaker for the evening. Sam, a fourth year medical student at Bristol University, is also St John Ambulance Bristol LINKS Operations Coordinator. Assisting Sam with his presentation was Craig Wilkins County Staff Officer Cadets, and a First Year Student Paramedic.



Sam Worley receives his ADT Certificate from TGAM President, John Pentney. Sam's Observer, John Gilbert, is on the left.

Formalities completed Sam started his presentation on St John Ambulance with a brief description of this well known and respected organisation. He then moved on to areas which were, perhaps, of the most interest to his audience, namely a description of the vehicles used

by St John and the qualifications required to drive them. Included in the list of vehicles was the Land Rover Discovery, one of which was driven to the meeting looking very smart in its St John colours.

The required driving qualifications were graduated according to the duties of the driver. At a certain level an IAM Advanced Driving Test Pass was required. At the next level a RoSPA qualification was required.



Sam Worley and Craig Wilkins during their demonstration of Defibrillation

The implication that a RoSPA qualification was higher than an IAM qualification was greeted by the audience with the derision it deserved!

Sam then invited the audience to name the three ways in which an ambulance driver on an emergency call can break the normal driving regulations. These are, in fact, exceeding the speed limit, driving through a red light, and driving around the wrong side of a keep

left (or right) bollard, but only when safe to do so. Note that ambulance drivers cannot break the rules concerning crossing a double white line so the only way a car can be overtaken on a double white line is if it is stationary (see the Highway Code, 2007 version, rule number 129).

Finally Sam and Craig demonstrated the current CPR technique. It was interesting to note that the procedure had changed somewhat since the last time I had received any instruction, too many years ago. Dummies were then laid out around the hall so that the audience could practice their CPR abilities.

It then became very obvious how rusty I had become. It really is important to take CPR training on a regular basis if you are to be of any use to somebody in distress.

Sam would like to thank you for your donations to the St John Ambulance, £30 being raised at the conclusion of the meeting. I am sure we all wish Sam success in his medical training and his planned career as an emergency room doctor.



Sam and Craig demonstrating CPR



It looks as though Alan has given up on his patient

TGAM MEMBERS EVENING, 20th JANUARY

By John Gilbert

THE main event for this Members' Meeting was a presentation on the exciting Jaguar XF by Joshua Worden, one of the sales team at Taunton Jaguar. Before getting into the details of the design of the car Joshua started his presentation with a brief look at the history of the Jaguar Company from its early origins.



It was in Blackpool in 1922 that William Lyons and William Walmsley went into partnership by forming the Swallow Sidecar Company to start the commercial production of motorcycle sidecars. In 1927, with increasing sidecar production, the company announced that it would be producing fashionable car bodies to be fitted to existing chassis; the result was the Austin Seven Swallow. Over the next few years original bodies were produced for a number of other existing models.

Finally, in 1931, the company went the whole hog and produced a new car of its own called the S.S.1 coupé. It is still a matter of debate whether S.S. stood for Swallow Sidecars or Standard Special. This led to a series of classic designs culminating in the SS100 in 1935. Recognising the undesirable link of the initials SS with the Schutzstaffel of Nazi Germany the name of the company was changed to Jaguar Cars in 1945.



Member Mark Bennett in detailed discussion with Joshua. Did you buy one, Mark?

After a brief survey of postwar Jaguar models Joshua started a detailed discussion of the XF model. His description of the car was very professionally interspersed with a sales video of the car. This technique certainly enlivened the presentation and helped to keep the attention of the audience. I have to admit that I did not personally find the XF video particularly appealing: I found the soundtrack raucous and the camera work annoying.

At the end of his presentation Joshua opened it up for questions. This gave one of our members the opportunity to enlighten us on his own experiences of owning an XF. I am sure that Taunton Jaguar will have found this frank exchange of views with one of its customers most useful. A vote of thanks was then proposed by our Chairman, Kevin Grose, to show our appreciation of an excellent presentation.

During the break it was our ladies turn to strut their stuff. Kirstie Mayes received her ADT Pass Certificate from her Observer, Faye Markham. Many congratulations to both for a job well done.



Kirstie Mayes receives her ADT Certificate from her Observer, Faye Markham



Even though it was dark outside the fine lines of the metallic bronze demo XF were very evident

TGAM TRAINING EVENING, 27th JANUARY

By Alan Thomson

DRIVING AT NIGHT

AS you are all aware, the Taunton Group have over the past twelve months organised a number of training days, both for Observers and group Members alike, in an effort to maintain and improve driving skills. These events have been enthusiastically received, well attended and from the feedback, very much appreciated. It was not surprising therefore, that the Night Driving evening was again well supported.

The evening itself was organised and presented by Bill Coltham (Chief Senior Observer) and Alan Thomson (Group Training Officer). The first of two planned evenings, the first of which was theory based to be followed by a second on 24th February, which would take the form of an in-car practical experience.

The agenda for the evening, was as follows:-

- *Know your car exercise* (can you identify all controls in the dark if required?)
- *Why is night driving dangerous?*
- *Driving tips for night driving.*

This was followed by a break for tea/coffee and of course the "famous" lemon drizzle cake – thank you Sue, and then:-

- *Practical discussion, legal issues and research.*
- *Final question and answer session.*

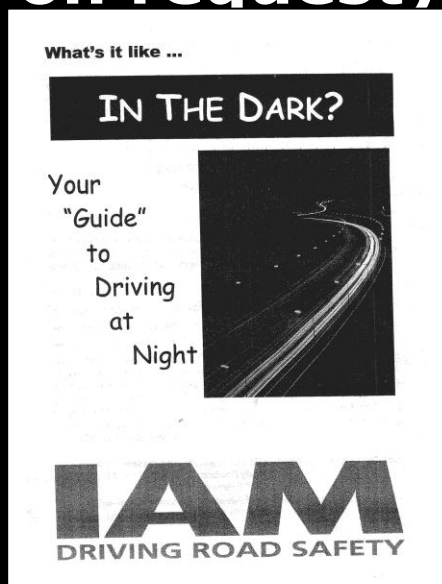
The evening itself took on a practical "workshop" type format, involving individual group research and joint group discussion, followed by an analysis of the points raised and a question and answer period towards the end of each section.

*For those in attendance, please note:-
Lighting Requirements. Para 113 Highway Code,
2007 Edition.*

I can clarify that "rear and front position" lights (i.e. sidelights and number plate lights) must be put on at sunset and can be turned off at sunrise. Headlamps, except where they are not required to be used, must be put on, half an hour after sunset, and can be turned off, half an hour before sunrise (this is the period called "Hours of Darkness" within the Regulations).

During the course of the evening the opportunity was taken to present two more Advanced Driving Test Certificates, this time to Kerry Dougall (observed by Ron Holdom) and Allan Wellwood (observed by Alan Thomson).

**FOR
FURTHER
READING
ON NIGHT
DRIVING
PICK UP A
COPY OF
"YOUR
GUIDE TO
NIGHT
DRIVING"
BY STAFF
EXAMINER
ANDY
POULTON
(Available
on request)**



Kerry Dougall receives her ADT Certificate from Chairman Kevin Grose



Allan Wellwood receives his ADT Certificate from his Observer, Alan Thomson

MEMBERS' CARS

By Steve Selby



A 1932 Austin Seven Saloon

BEING asked to write a short piece on the cars that I have owned was initially a daunting task; when I thought about it a little further the task became easier – most were distinctly unremarkable so that is half the job done!

My first car back in 1965 was a 1932 Austin 7 Saloon. I think my idea at the time was to understand the basics of mechanics and driving and a 1932 Austin would help me understand both. At the time I was a hotel management

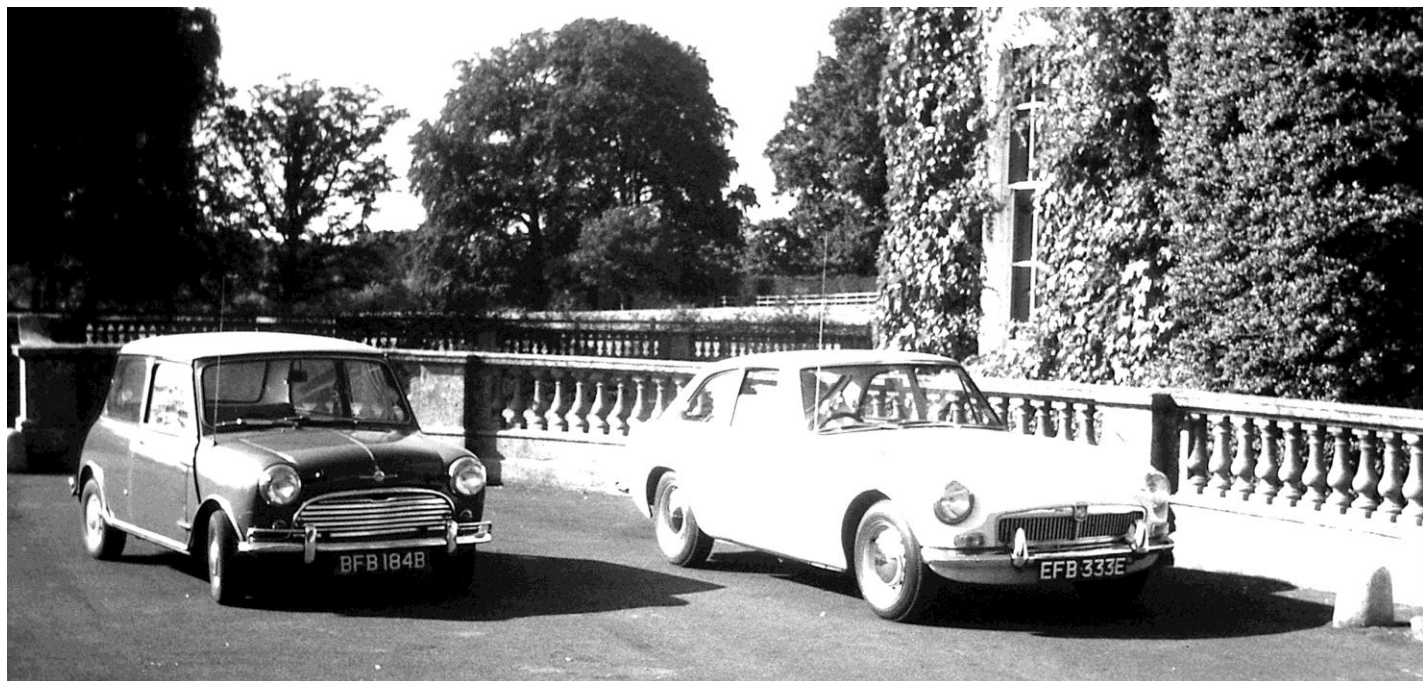
trainee in Torquay but my home was near Chippenham, for those in the know about 110 miles apart. Journeys home were usually undertaken late at night and being a teenager as quickly as possible, something I quickly realised that a car of that age was not up to! So having had the white metal bearings replaced two or three times I decided it was time for something a little more modern.

The next car I owned was a Morris Minor 1000 Traveller, LGL 205, in Yukon Grey, how's that for memory - I love trivia. I was still in Torquay so the journeys home were a little less daunting and the M5 was still some ten years away. In hopes of improving the performance of the Morris I fitted a larger carburettor, spacers on the back wheels and a 'straight through' exhaust, none of which really achieved very much! For many years prior to passing my driving test and for a good few after I spent a fair amount of my time at Putsborough Beach in North Devon surfing. With it's long roof the Morris was ideal for transporting my nine foot Malibu surfboard.

By 1969 I had moved up in the world and like Serena Lonton, I too owned a Mini, a 1964 Morris Cooper S, BFB 184 B, Almond Green and an Old English White roof (yet more trivia) it went like the ----- clappers! The gear changes were marked on the speedometer, 80+ in third and wheel spins possible on all gear changes except fourth! In those days the IAM and Eco-Driving had not entered my vocabulary! But as you can imagine I loved that car and would have another one now but

my 'captain sensible' hat tells me that it would not fare too well in the Euro NCAP tests; eventually the piston rings gave out and the car had to go.

Speed was now in my blood; surely I didn't really say that did I. It was 1972 and next came my first MG. A 1966 MGB GT in Old English White, EFB 333 E, but no overdrive. It had red leather seats with white piping. I owned this car up until early 1975 when marriage and insurance costs ruled. More of MGs later.



Steve's 1964 Morris Cooper S and 1966 MGBGT

Now comes the period of car ownership that is best forgotten, they are in order I think, a Morris Marina 1.3 Coupe – probably the worst of them all, a Triumph 1500TC – pretty to look at, a Talbot Sunbeam – a rust bucket. Then came an Astra 1600GL Estate in Gold, CDD 95 Y, maybe I can only remember the registrations of cars I liked. The down side of this car was that it only had four gears. After the Astra it was downhill again, but on the plus side we now became a two car family, these included a Peugeot 309, a Datsun Stanza and a Fiat (fix it again tomorrow) Punto.

By now it was 1993 and I had become a driving instructor and so began a long relationship with Vauxhall Corsas, to date six in all with no complaints. The family car was an Astra 2.0 Sri Estate, this too went well! My two sons used to refer to it as the 'Beast', guess what, I can remember the registration number of this one too, J 290 HAE. Up to a year or so ago it was still in the Taunton area; it had been previously owned by a computer engineer who had a very sophisticated alarm fitted which was the car's Achilles Heal, the door lock motors failed and as

they were non standard the cost of replacing them and the alarm system proved prohibitive, so it had to go!

The next family car was another Astra Estate, an 1800 16 valve; it was ok but it didn't hold a candle to the Sri, hence, surprise surprise, I can't remember the registration number. Suffice to say this car went as part of a divorce settlement in 2002.

In early 1997 I was driving along the Wellington Road in Taunton and saw a White 1967 MGB GT on Dennis Venn's lot; nostalgia got the better of me so I crawled all over it. There was an ominous pool of oil underneath but everything else looked ok. Engines are easier to repair than bodywork. The short story is that I bought it and I still own it, however it has had some minor modifications – the engine was rebuilt and converted to unleaded petrol. Other modifications include a stainless steel manifold, a Kenlowe fan, a sports distributor, alloy wheels, electronic ignition and it has been resprayed. It is fun to drive and I get about thirty miles to the gallon. It is very similar to my first MG, the trim being black leather with red piping but with the advantage of overdrive.



Steve's 1967 MGBGT

In late 2002 whilst at a Classic Car restoration show at Shepton Mallet there was a 1969 Red MGC GT for sale. Again I crawled all over it and as it is a rare car I was quite interested but the owner was not too sure of several details so I walked away with only his name and address. In early 2003 a small insurance policy matured, so I looked up the MGC and found out more about it. It had only had two owners and the current

one had rebuilt it in 1975 at the British Leyland dealership he owned in Evercreech and used it for three years, winning some Concours Events before storing it away in a dehumidified garage with several other classics for the next twenty five years, only bringing it out for its MOT. I eventually bought the car and I still own this one too! It is a great touring car, capable, so I am reliably told of 120 mph plus, 70 mph at 2500 revs. The downside is that with half as many more cylinders than the 'B' it does two thirds as many miles per gallon! I need a petrol tanker behind me on long journeys; at speed you can see the needle move even in overdrive.



Steve's 1969 MGCGT

The plan, if indeed I can be said to have one, is to sell both of the GTs and with the proceeds purchase an MGB Roadster, one in a heritage body – for those not into classic cars, new bodies can be bought off the shelf.

My current daily use car is a top of the range 1.3 Corsa CDTI Design with six gears, automatic headlights and wipers and other goodies making it quite a nice car to drive and managing 55 miles per gallon.

As a final plug I am on the committee of The Yeovil Car Club, if any TGAM member is interested we have a website: www.yeovilcarclub.com the Club is multi-marque covering all of Somerset, Dorset and surrounding counties, any 'interesting/classic' car would be most welcome.

DAT YUR WHEELS BRO?

By Kevin G. Grose

Hey, my man, blinging wheels. Like, it's a Classic, yeh? Like does it go and all that? Is it kwik? Rapiiiiiid.

I was like down the road and wow, innit like, blown man and all that stuff. Is it for real, man? Yeh, banging.

Wot motur it got? 1, 8 – that like tiny man – wheelbarrow. My bruv's lawn mower is like betuur den dat.

No way, bro – it dat kwik, for real? Me oll man, he ad a Manta. Brill, best car he ever ad.

Bit like Capri, Fooord innit? Wot? No way, bro? U reckon. Well, I dunno, is dat true? U reckon it dat kwik.

U reckon it kwiker den my motur – no way.

U dissing my motur, man? Don't diss my motur, man – it ain't fair and all dat.

No way, man – elf and safety like and rozzers and all dat, innit like.

U got "nos"? U not "nossed" man? No "nos"? U's joking bro. U's kiddin me. U's dissing me.

Me got "nos". Yeh, blinding. Woooosh, outa space – spaced, man. No wot I meen, man – wicked. Latterrrrs!

Have you ever had a conversation like the above? Have you any clue to what it all appertains to? It may look like a foreign language but it is far from it. It's a form of English – not sure what form, but it's certainly within an English context of a conversation between two English speaking people. Both are car drivers. One is a classic car driver, the other a modern modified car driver – boosted, chipped, uprated, lowered, turbo'd and nos'd – or to you and I, "not quite as the manufacturer intended when new and on leaving the production line".

It still makes no difference. They are both car drivers. They are both drivers. The cars do not matter. Both cars are irrelevant. BOTH drivers are relevant. Assuming both drivers can drive and can drive safely, then the cars are completely irrelevant. It's the DRIVERS who matter. It's

the DRIVERS who drive the cars but which one is best? Who knows? Let's assume BOTH drivers can drive their cars safely. If that's the case, then either driver can drive either car safely. YES? As long as you know your car and how your car operates, then as a responsible driver, you can drive any car – safely. Remember, both of the above drivers may have spent huge amounts of money on their individual cars to achieve their personal goals – the immaculate classic car, virtually as new, completely restored and just like it came off the car production line – the other, highly tuned and modified to way beyond the manufacturer's intentions. Thousands and thousands of pounds spent. Neither one wants their cars damaged or wrecked. So, were they really speaking different languages? No, they were speaking the same language. Two different enthusiasts, two different cars, two different age groups, but both speaking the same language. Respect bro, it's all about respect, man. Respect. Let's show some more respect to other drivers on today's roads, regardless of what language they speak. You dig, bro – wicked, innit!



Are you under 25 on August 1st, 2010?

Do you live in Somerset?

Do you have a full valid driving licence?

Do you want to win a new car?

Then go to: www.maxcontrol.org.uk

and find out more...

Can you read this clearly?...or this?...how about this?...better now?...even better?

By Kevin Grose

Can you read a vehicle number plate at 20 metres (20.5 metres – older style plate)?

Can you see all you need to see when driving? Do signs appear hazy?

When did you last have your eyes officially checked by a fully qualified optician?

I only ask the above questions having just had (November, 2009) my bi-annually eyesight check and you'll be pleased to hear that I passed again with flying colours. Although I have had to wear glasses from about aged 11 years, I realised recently that my eyes have changed very little over the last six years (3 bi-annual tests). My optician informs me that this is apparently quite normal in some circumstances. However, I did notice over the previous eight years my eyesight did slightly worsen at each two yearly test, which could be attributed to my constant daily use of the dreaded computer for work purposes. Since my change of jobs in 2002 and less use of a computer on a daily basis, my eyesight seems to have levelled out. The only slight difference now is in the very close up department – about 15 cm to about 5 cm from the end of my nose! This is easily compensated for by looking under the rim of my glasses – bit of a pain sometimes but also very useful to intimidate someone if you also look over the top of your glasses – a trick commonly used by barristers, solicitors and Judges sitting in Court! So, be honest – when did you last have your eyes checked?

No one wants to be told their eyesight is failing, but as a decent and honest driver, if your eyesight is getting worse, you have to do something about it. If you can't see properly, you should not be driving. If your eyesight is getting so bad you can't see road signs clearly, or read car number plates, you seriously have to sort things out. There are so many things that can be done now to help your eyesight, no matter what age you are. There are also more tests undertaken by your optician. It is a more comprehensive testing schedule which checks for many more things now and it doesn't cost a lot, either. It is not a ploy to get you to buy new glasses every time you have your eyes checked, but it is very important to make sure you can still see properly. If you cannot see very well, how are you going to see the child running out in front of your car?

What about the dog...the deer...the rabbit...what about the chap on his bike...the motorbike...the other car...the lorry? If you have any concerns

about your eyesight, go and get it checked out NOW. If you can't see very well, then you are an accident waiting to happen. However, if you know your eyesight is failing and do nothing about it - is it accidental when you have a collision or is it now intentional because you know your eyesight is not what it should be and you still decide to continue to drive. It is just not worth it - go and get your eyes officially checked out - £20 (approx.) is better spent now than someone's life you may take in the future - what cost do you put on a human life? Come on, we all know human life is priceless.

You'll be pleased to hear that when I asked the "eyesight test" question recently at our November Member's Evening, there was a huge positive response from those who had recently had their eyes tested - about 75% or more put their hands up. Well done all of you for being responsible citizens. Let's try and make that 100%.

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE GOT A SILVER IAM BADGE?

By Kevin G. Grose

I haven't but I do know someone who has. Did you know that there was such a thing? I didn't. Do you know anyone who has one? Do you know what they are for? Would you like one? I would, but I am going to have to wait for a while yet because the IAM only issue them to IAM National Members who have maintained a continuous membership of the IAM for over 25 years. Blimey, that means I've only got another 17 years to go.

At our last Members' Evening in November 2009, a very excited young lady came up to me and said, "Look at this...have you ever seen a Silver one like this?" "No, I have never seen a Silver IAM windscreen sticker badge, ever!" The young lady then proceeded to inform me that the IAM are issuing these special coloured badges for long-term members who have been with the IAM for over 25 years. Brilliant. So, during the usual meeting announcements, I had to let everyone know about this special event. Not many people stay for 25 years with the IAM and I think it needs to be officially announced and recorded both verbally and in our Newsletter.

Congratulations to Jude Hammond, a very recent Taunton Group Member (she didn't know we existed) and 25 years as an IAM National Member - Well done! No doubt Jude is now looking forward to her Gold badge!

If anyone else has received a Silver or Gold (does it exist?) badge for the IAM then please let me know so that we can officially announce it and make all those "provisional" members have something more to look forward to.

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SNOW BUSINESS...!

By Kevin G. Grose (aka Kevvy the snowman)

DEVON has a skid pan facility, as has Wiltshire, and most other counties. Somerset does not. All skid pan facilities cost YOU money no matter where they are. In Somerset, it costs YOU nothing because we have not got one. So I hope everybody made full use of the fully weather supplied Somerset Wide Skid Pan over the last few weeks. Everybody keeps on about going on a skid pan – well, most of us have had the biggest and best skid pan to practice on for over two weeks...and we have been lucky to have all this for nothing...absolutely nothing...all for FREE! Everyday, all day, for almost two weeks. Brilliant! The local councils even helped out by not gritting most of the roads, purely to help your enjoyment for as long as they could. Somerset knows it has not got a skid pan, so it did what it could, when it could. Fantastic – FREE skid pan!

I suppose I have been luckier than most because the small lane I use every day to take my faithful old Collie dog to his favourite place – the “WOODS”, has been covered in snow and ice for most of the time during our recent extreme weather blitz. We have slithered and slid, skidded, pirouetted, spun around and generally “hooned” about for days on end. We could use any gear in the gearbox we liked, which on solid ice, seemed to have little effect in forward motion due to the contours of the landscape and the lane. I had an indicated 85 mph on the speedo once...and we were not even moving forward at all. On the steep inclines, I had NO brakes one way and an impossible ascent the other way. I have driven many, many miles on snow, ice, mud and slippery conditions (ex club rally driver, sales rep, recovery driver, etc), but the recent events were far worse than I can ever remember in the past years. When I was younger (and obviously more stupid), I would go looking for snow-covered roads to practice on. I would drive all the way to Exmoor to find some snow. Even Dartmoor some years. The Mendips would even help some times with a scattering of snow to entertain me.

Some of you may think I'm mad, crazy, even foolhardy maybe – why should I endanger my life, my car or other people just so that I can drive in the snow? Well, I didn't do it to show off. I never went out to deliberately crash my car. I didn't go out to get stuck either, or put myself, any passengers, or any other road user at risk. NO, I took a calculated risk to learn to drive a vehicle when one wheel is skidding. I increased the risk to learn to drive with two wheels skidding...three wheels skidding, all four wheels skidding, left, right, straight on, sideways, even backwards. Remember, those of you who know me – I was skidding about in cars, in a muddy field and a scrap yard before I was allowed legally anywhere near a public road. I have never forgotten

that first time a car skids. The tyres can no longer offer full grip and the vehicle moves out of line. The vehicle does different things now; the steering acts differently; the brakes act weirdly; the back of the car steps out of line; the car no longer follows the intended original path – it is on the edge of going out of control...and I LOVE it! It's an incredibly fine line between fully controlling a car and trying to control an "out of control" car – it's like a sixth sense!

All I will say is that I have never been fully stuck in the snow (I might have had to dig myself out a very few times), I have never crashed a car in the snow or ice (although I might have been very near at times), I have never injured myself or anyone else in the snow or ice and strongly continue to intend to never injure myself or anyone else, I have always completed my intended journeys in the snow and ice and I have thoroughly enjoyed every skidding, sliding, pirouetting minute that I have encountered throughout my 35 years experience of "hooning" around in the snow, ice, mud, etc. Driving in these extreme conditions really are a SKILL (learnt) FOR LIFE.

So, when the gods are kind to us again and cover everywhere with a coating of snow and ice – MAKE THE MOST OF IT – don't whinge and whine and moan about the council not gritting everything in sight, get out there and clean off your own drive; dig your own car out of the snow drift; assess whether you actually NEED to make that journey – is it really necessary? Is your life at risk? Is someone else's life at risk? By making that journey do you put yourself at risk...someone else at risk...is it really a life or death situation? Do you need to take the car at all? What has happened to common sense? Do you really use your brain anymore? THINK before you ACT. If you decide to make your journey, be prepared. DON'T rely on others, do it yourself. Carry some food and something to drink; carry a shovel, blanket, some grit or sand; carry a towrope, jump leads, extra water, etc., most importantly, make sure you have more than enough fuel at all times. Be prepared, think, assess every situation before acting on it. Proceed with extreme caution at all times – you may be making good safe progress but what about the "IDIOT" driving too fast for the relevant conditions? Have you left enough room to avoid this "MORON"? If they want to end up in the ditch, let them. It's not your problem they only have ONE brain cell to use. Stay safe, leave room, proceed cautiously and above all, SLOW DOWN to maintain what little grip there is.

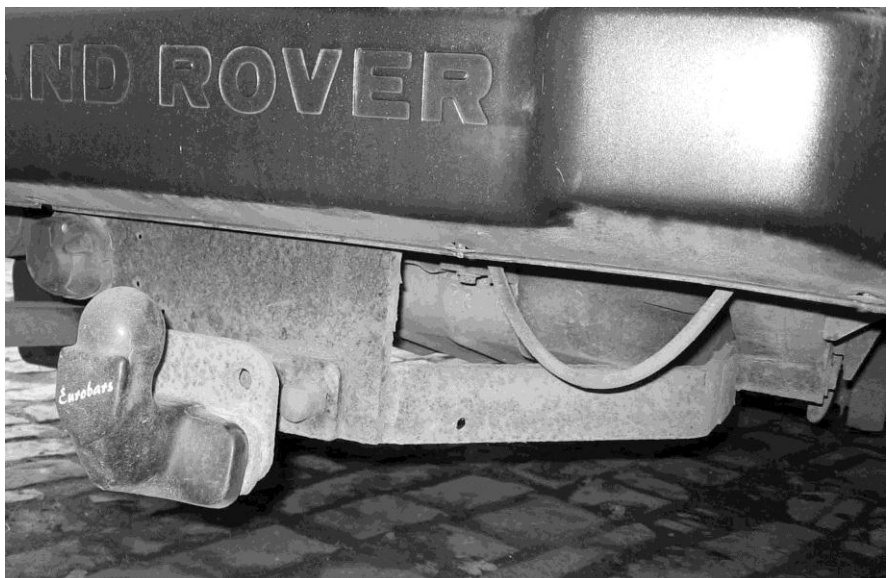
It will seem strange but by going slower in the snow and ice, you will make more progress and there aren't many times you can say that. Next time it snows, enjoy it – use it to practice in and remember – you will have NO GRIP at all for most of the time – it's just like driving on solid ice...YEAH! Try it, learn the limits, enjoy!

HAVE YOU GOT A TOW BAR ON YOUR VEHICLE? HAVE YOU HAD A MOT RECENTLY?

By Kevin G. Grose

I have. Did you know that your tow bar now counts in a MOT test? I thought they always did but I have now been told it's official. Yes, if you have a tow bar fitted to any of your vehicles, your local friendly MOT tester will now give it the once over. This new legislation has just come in this year 2009. Being an ex MOT tester myself, I have always checked tow bars and advised if they appear unsafe in any way. In the past, tow bars were not an MOT failure, but I believe they are now, folks. I have always believed that if you have anything extra fitted to your vehicle, then it should work properly. If you fit an extra pair of fog lights, then they should both work. If you fit an extra rear red fog lamp then they should BOTH work, even if the law dictates that legally you only need one fitted and working on the driver's side (offside). New laws have been in since about 1998 in relation to the type of tow bar you can fit to your vehicle. After certain years, only a specific type can be fitted. Some have to have the removable ball type; some have to be European type; some have to have silver attachments; some have to have gold coloured attachments; some have to have different wiring packages; there are now loads of extra things to consider when having a tow bar fitted. You also have to consider if it is fitted correctly and attached correctly to your car, van, etc. The area around where your tow bar is fitted also has to be free from corrosion – obviously, I would have thought – no good attaching a tow bar to a pile of rust and then wondering why your caravan's disappeared one day!

However, don't worry too much – seek professional advice and get the right kit fitted in the first place. If your vehicle is showing signs of distress or corrosion around the tow bar area, then maybe you should seriously consider changing your tow vehicle or getting the appropriate repairs done very quickly. It's not just the tow bar itself – what about all the



Is YOUR tow bar rusty?

wiring and sockets, etc. Get the right ones, get them fitted correctly and look after them. Tow bars, sockets, chains, cables, etc., are all seriously neglected by car owners until they need to use them and then moan because they don't work or are damaged in some way. Now your local friendly MOT Tester is going to swing around, tug and bash your tow bar – make sure it's securely fitted and everything works correctly. If your tow bar fails, so might your car fail it's MOT although I am informed that only a visual test is currently carried out on an MOT Test and an Advisory Sheet is issued. Remember, all the recorded details are held on a computer database now at every MOT Test, so an Advisory Notice issued this year will still be able to be seen on your car MOT details for next year. If you haven't done anything about it, you are already in with a very good chance of failing your MOT before you start the Test procedure.

If you need further details about tow bars, etc., contact Taunton Trailers, Halfords, Towsure, Witter, Dixon Bate, etc., and any other reputable tow bar sales and fitting dealer. One last thing – please remember to get a new rear number plate for your trailer, caravan, etc., and when you do, also remember to take along your vehicle documents and driving licence, etc., it saves another journey later, because you will not get your new number plate without having the appropriate details – same applies if you need a new front plate as well.

JUNE MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents

MEMBERS' CLASSIC CAR EVENING



Wednesday, 16th June at 7:30 pm
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall

MOTORING MISCELLANY – PART 10

By Don Hendy

WHY is it that all good things come to an end? There was I enjoying life living and working in Jersey, with my children attending local schools when my life style was suddenly shattered. These days it is relatively commonplace to read about people losing their jobs, but in those far off days it was more unusual.

One day I was called into my Managing Director's office and out of the blue he calmly announced that he would like me to find another job. I asked him if he was going to find it for me or if I had done something wrong, to which he answered that I would have to find a job for myself and no I had done nothing wrong. My immediate response was to tell him I would not resign.

Days passed by and it was becoming increasingly difficult to work under these circumstances and they tried to make my life as uncomfortable as possible by blocking my car in the car park. So I returned to the MD's office and said if I was willing to leave I would need a letter of reference. The MD said this was no problem and he promptly wrote me a glowing reference.

Armed with this I walked over to the Royal Court of Justice and showed it to a solicitor friend. I explained what had taken place and explained that the Trust Company was attempting to send me home to the UK without a proper redundancy package and repatriation costs for my family and household goods.

The Solicitor said he felt I had a very strong case to take the matter into court and I said I was willing to take this drastic step. He wrote them one letter and they did not wish to incur the acrimony that would ensue with a court case, so they offered me an acceptable package to enable me to return home to Guildford.

Over the next few weeks I learned that the assistant Managing Director and another senior member of the staff had also been shown the door. The assistant MD promptly landed a job as Managing Director of a Trust company in Guernsey.

There was a lot of trauma suffered by my three children as I had to terminate their Jersey education. Once I had rented accommodation in Guildford it was necessary to get them enrolled in state schools. I purchased a Nissan Sunny which had a good sized boot and we started to look at the possibility of buying our own home. This just happened to coincide with the invention of a new word in the real estate world - gazumping.

We located a 3B/R semi-detached in the Worplesdon area and I was faced with the unenviable task of locating a job to pay the bills as my

cash resources were rapidly running out.

I must have a good guardian angel as after a number of temp jobs including playing Santa Claus in Debenhams Christmas Grotto I heard about a job working as an Assistant Manager in the Cayman Islands. I went for an interview and secured the job. So another saga was about to begin.

Please submit all contributions for the June 2010 issue of the Newsletter to The Editor (see Page 2 for contact details) by Tuesday, 4th May. Thank you. All contributions, whether they are articles or Letters to the Editor, will be most gratefully received.

NEWSLETTER

By Julia Steer

MANY congratulations to the Taunton Group of Advanced Motorists on having won the runner up award in the "IAM Newsletter of the Year Awards". Having been the previous editor I can appreciate what a task it is in trying to get the reports from members and more importantly getting them in on time.

Keep up the good work and who knows perhaps next time it may be the Taunton Group who wins the top prize. Best wishes to all members.

MEMBERS' EVENINGS

Wednesday, 17th March

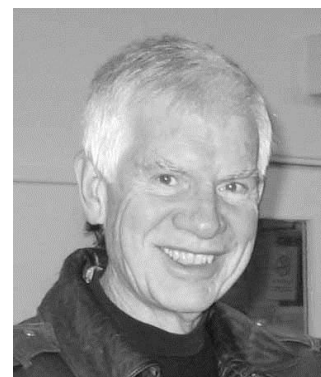
Wednesday, 21st April

Wednesday, 19th May

Fun, entertainment and fascinating programs, and free tea, coffee biscuits, parking, your family and friends welcome

**Further details to be announced
Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall at 7:30 p.m.**

MEET YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBER



Name:	John Gilbert
Group Position:	Newsletter Editor & Observer
Drives:	BMW 323iT, Land Rover Discovery II, BMW 120d
Dream Car(s):	AC Cobra, Bentley Speed Six, Bugatti T35, Bugatti T57, Ferrari 375MM, Jaguar D-TYPE
Current Job:	Retired (best job I ever had), but thoroughly enjoyed my career in Aircraft Flying Qualities
Dream Job:	Airline Pilot
Hobbies:	Anything to do with Aviation, Jazz, Playing Piano, Classic Sports Cars, Cooking, Gardening, Hiking, Backgammon
Pet Likes:	First class rail travel, a good book, comfortable sofas, anything Greek
Pet Dislikes:	George W. Bush, racism, BNP, Marmite, spiders
Favourite Food:	Salads, Salmon, Pasta, Cheese, Kettle Chips (potato, lightly salted), Mars bars
Favourite Drink:	Sherry, Saugivnon Blanc, Prosecco, Bitter shandy, Orange juice
Favourite Actors:	Edward Fox, Hugh Grant, Geoffrey Palmer, Peter Sellers, James Stewart,
Favourite Actresses:	Jacqueline Bisset, Julie Christie, Judy Dench, Helen Mirren, Susannah York
Dream Date:	I'm married, but if I wasn't...H'mmm
Best TV Programmes:	All Creatures Great & Small, Fawlty Towers, Have I Got News for You, QI
Best Films:	All That Jazz, Circus, Dr. Strangelove, Four Weddings and a Funeral, The Great Race, Those Magnificent Men & Their Flying Machines
Best Group/Singer:	The Duke Ellington Orchestra, Dave Brubeck Quartet/Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra
In CD Player now:	David Benoit, Peter Cincotti, Gene Harris, Diana Krall, Hugh Laws, Ramsey Lewis

JAGUAR PHOTO GALLERY



California Dreamin' – the Editor's dream car, a Jaguar D-TYPE



Also somewhere in California, a Jaguar SS

WOULD YOU LIKE TO:

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For more details contact the IAM at 020 8996 9600 or enquiries@iam.org.uk

or talk to the Chairman of your local Taunton Group, Kevin Grose, at 07788 863981 or chair@tgam.org.uk



www.roadsafety Somerset.org.uk