

IAM
DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



TAUNTON GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS NEWSLETTER

Number 118

Spring, 2011

www.tgam.org.uk

"BEAT THE SNOW" PHOTO GALLERY



A Ford Model T snow conversion in the Reynolds Alberta Museum, Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada



Serious snow clearing, a TowPlow on a Missouri rural interstate

TAUNTON GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

NEWSLETTER

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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 Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall. 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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FROM THE PRESIDENT

MINI-ROUNDAABOUTS

**By John Pentney, M.A.
President**

"...negotiate mini-roundabouts in accordance with the law where it is safe, feasible and unambiguous to do so, but take a more pragmatic course where this is likely to be the safer option"



IN the last Newsletter (No 117, December 2010), Editor John Gilbert raised the thorny topic of the best way to negotiate mini-roundabouts and the advice Observers should accordingly give to their Associates. John logically set out the legal position as stated in The Highway Code and by the Department for Transport that it is illegal to clip the painted white circle unless your vehicle is too large to avoid doing so.

This is because mini-roundabouts markings have the same status as other mandatory road signs and markings such as stop signs and double centre white lines. Thus, provided the mini-roundabout has directional white arrows painted around the circle, it is an endorsable offence (3 points) to clip the circle with your wheels unless unavoidable. However, I have never ever heard of a driver being convicted and fined for this offence – it seems to be one of those road traffic laws that are seldom if ever enforced. There are probably various reasons for this such as the police having better things to do than observe driver behaviour at mini-roundabouts; but also, perhaps, because it would be difficult to prove beyond reasonable doubt in a court that it was possible for the driver to avoid clipping the circle. The police might have to establish this by negotiating the roundabout in question in an identical vehicle and such a practical exercise would be both expensive and time consuming. Even then, a defendant could claim that at the time of the alleged offence that traffic conditions forced him to clip the white circle.

Except on new developments, most mini-roundabouts have been 'retro-fitted' to an existing road layout such as a crossroads or T-junction, and unless the kerbs have been cut back at the same time the layout is often cramped. In most such cases there simply would not have been space for full-size roundabout with a kerbed and raised central island. This can make it difficult to avoid clipping the white circle without steering an exaggerated course to avoid it. In some cases it is quite impractical – an extreme example is the mini-roundabout in

Taunton's Eastwick Road, installed as part of a wider traffic-calming scheme in the early 1990s. Here it is utterly impossible for any vehicle larger than a solo motorbike to avoid driving across the central circle – approached from the Cheddon Road direction, it's more like a fork junction than a roundabout as regards the course a driver has to take.

Another badly laid out mini-roundabout is in St Mary Street, Bridgwater, where it has a staggered crossroads with Dampiet Street and Friarn Street. Because of the stagger and the narrowness of the roads a driver turning right from Dampiet Street into St Mary Street has to pass to the right of the circle – to attempt to drive round it 'correctly' would not be feasible.

As John's original article states, drivers who do take the correct course round a mini-roundabout when heading for the second exit sometimes find that it results in drivers waiting to join at the first exit assuming that the driver already on the roundabout will be taking that exit and risk a collision by prematurely entering the roundabout. Although the latter driver would clearly be at fault, he would be less likely to make such a false assumption if the first driver took a straighter course, and clipped the circle in the process, albeit illegally. This is an example of where in the real world of driving it may sometimes be preferable not to stick to the letter of the law because some drivers, whether from ignorance or laziness, do not always expect other drivers to act correctly. Drivers who habitually do things wrongly can make it difficult for others to drive in strict accordance with the Highway Code in some situations – for example, those who block a congested junction because their exit is not clear can lead to a free-for-all situation in which other drivers are forced to do the same, otherwise they would never get a chance to make any progress themselves.

What I find irritating at mini-roundabouts (with the obvious exception of the Mary Street, Bridgwater example cited above) are those drivers taking an exit to the right who avoid clipping the circle by passing completely to its right – it's simply another variant of the probable 98% of drivers who cut the corner when turning right from major to minor. I hope such drivers would not contemplate doing the equivalent on a full-size roundabout, i.e. driving the wrong way round it!

In conclusion, I would advise drivers to negotiate mini-roundabouts in accordance with the law where it is safe, feasible and unambiguous to do so, but to take a more pragmatic course where this is likely to be the safer option. The letter of the law cannot take account of all traffic situations. Safety and common sense should take precedence over a strict interpretation of the law when that law is found wanting in some circumstances.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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

By Kevin G. Grose
Chairman

RIGHT – this really is straight from the driving seat...We have recently added another vehicle to “our” fleet – a Fiat Doblo 1.2 Diesel Multijet fitted with a wheelchair ramp and facilities, etc. It enables our old arthritic collie dog to continue to enjoy his, slightly lesser now, walks in the woods by making his access to a vehicle very much easier by just strolling up the rear ramp. It is also very useful for our friends in wheelchairs, etc., to enjoy a day out sightseeing or hospital/doctor appointments. It’s a brilliant vehicle but appears to have one major problem – there are no definitive indications of exactly where 30, 50 or 70 mph are on the speedometer. The speedometer rises in 20 mph divisions – 20, 40, 60, 80, etc., so it’s fine whilst cruising at 100 or 120 mph - I am joking of course, but I cannot easily define exactly where the 30, 50 and 70 mph indicators are, which is fairly important these days whilst driving on our British roads. I have spoken to a few people who also confirm my observations on their cars. So, I am going to add three very small, stick on indicator triangles highlighting these required mandatory speed limits – major problem solved!



Did you know it’s the Taunton Group’s 30th Anniversary year this year and we will be holding a special 30th Anniversary Luncheon on Saturday, 1st October at Oake Manor Golf Club from 12.00 noon onwards. So please put this date in your diary now – further details to follow in due course. Remember – 30th Anniversary year - 2011.

Those who attended our first 2011 Members’ Evening will have seen we have kicked off the year with a brilliant presentation from Terry Beale of the Somerset Road Safety Partnership in respect of collision/accident investigation procedures. This highly informative talk was very well received and I extend my sincere thanks to Terry for all his effort and time to enlighten us in such procedures. Thank you.

During all the recent bad weather with ice, ice, more ice and then snow, snow and more snow followed with some more ice, etc, etc., it

was uplifting to see some vital services never failed to deliver no matter what the weather threw at them. One such service was our paper man – he never failed to deliver during all that time and he also appeared to have never been late – don't ask me how because he certainly didn't have any flash 4x4 or anything special to cope with the weather – he just delivered with his old little van as always.

Same goes for our Postman – both to be highly commended. One day, my Father and I had to walk to North Curry, some 2 - 3 miles away to post some parcels. We also had to pick up some rather urgent prescriptions from the local surgery. No big deal you might think, apart from the fact the roads were barely walkable let alone drivable. It did take a couple of hours to complete but more commendable was that, at the surgery were two of our Taunton Group Members – Dr. James Hickman and Jude Hammond who had “borrowed” a 4x4 Land Rover to ensure they could actually get to the surgery to continue to supply a very vital service to the local community – well done to you both and I know your advanced driving skills helped in some way to ensure your safe journey.

Fuel costs have risen again. Insurance renewals have risen again. Taxing one's vehicle is disproportionate to the amount and level it is used. Repair bills rocket. Servicing never gets cheaper – if it does, is the vehicle actually being fully serviced? As we choose to be “motorists”, we are clobbered from all angles. Some have no choice to fit in with our chosen lifestyles. What do we do? Our Members' Evenings could not take place if everybody had to catch a bus to get there – impossible – it just will not work as the required service is just not in place. Do we then just give up as drivers and motorists, stay at home and admit defeat? NEVER, EVER and that's why we had over 30 people attend our January Members' Evening. We had almost 30 attend in December. All of us can make that effort to ensure the driver and motorist is catered for. We pay enough, more than enough to “enjoy” being drivers and motorists so make sure your journey is worthwhile and needed. Share your vehicle if you can – a few extra miles using one car is better than two cars making the same journey. Arrange to do several things within the same journey and don't make several separate journeys. We have to compromise for now until things get better – who knows, when prosperity returns, all those POTHOLEs may have been filled in by then making our necessary journeys much, much safer for everybody.

Lastly, we have recently received notice of “losing” two of our treasured Group Observers – George Parker and Steve Selby. I sincerely thank them both for all their time and effort given freely to the Group over so many years. Thank you and the door is always open if you decide to return. That's it, enough from me for now.

'STRAIGHT ON'

...FOR A FUN WINTER, 2011!

By Bill Coltham Chief Senior Observer

*Some say he is made from titanium,
others, that he is a ballet dancer,
but all we know is*

- that he is the Twig!



Do you enjoy your driving?

It struck me quite forcibly recently that there may be some Advanced Drivers that see their IAM badge as a statement of their ability to be boring old f..ts in their driving, rather than a public statement of their skill in driving.

There is not an automatic entry to the boring old whatsits club when you take and pass your ADT, you know. What has happened to the flair and enjoyment of driving these days?

Passing the test allows you to build and develop your driving. It's not the end of the world as

we see it, it's just the start.

So get out there and put some revs into your driving, let's see you taking the corners with relish, planning and using the road to its full advantage.

It's just what bikers do every time they go out!!

It's fun being an Observer.

I really hope that Observer Allan Wellwood felt proud when he received his Observer Certificate recently. He should do, for he worked hard and studied his theory to pass the not easy test to become one.

WHEN I took my Senior Test three years ago, Sue, my wife, told me she had not seen me so nervous in all the 40 odd years of taking exams and tests required for the Police and the NHS subsequently.

But I value the certificates and know that I put a lot of work into learning something new and less usual.

But thanks to the four of you who have let us know you are interested in studying to be an Observer, for over the next few months you will find it hard, challenging and worthwhile.

We hope you do, then you'll value it the more when you pass. Oh yes, have some fun too! After all, none of us have to do it. do we?

Members Evenings

We've been at it a while now, haven't we? No, not that, you'll have to read my article later in this mag if you want to read the tasty bits. No I mean the monthly meeting of us all at the member's nights in the hall.

Have you noticed how much more relaxed everyone is with each other now? Chatting with each other after the speaker, looking after a new member, eating Faye's great choccy

biccies, and helping wash up or move chairs. There seems to be a natural air about it all.

I spent much of the last members evening talking. Now that is not unusual and other committee members will say-well, he always does that, but you had queries, questions and just needed to say something.

Great, and thank you, keep them coming- I'll do my best to answer.

Just a 'Thank you'.

Some of you, and I think you know who you are, just turn up to the Members' Evenings regularly as clock work, come rain or shine, come poor speaker or brilliant evening. You make it for us, and without you, it's all a waste of time. Thanks.

MARCH MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents

A TALK ON SHELTERBOX

"An International disaster relief charity that delivers emergency shelter, warmth and dignity to people affected by worldwide disaster"

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

EDITORIAL

I am, at the moment, banned from driving due to recent half knee replacement surgery. Unlike John Pentney, who was very frustrated at not being able to drive for six weeks (see last issue), my downtime should only be two or three weeks, much more acceptable. I have been spending my down time compiling this spring edition of our newsletter and getting my right knee operating again by walking around our garden. I was struck by the contrast between the warm sunshine and all of the signs of spring in the garden, bulbs appearing and deciduous shrubs starting to show their leaves, with the very chilly contents of the newsletter. I suppose it is inevitable that, with a quarterly newsletter, we are always one season behind the times.

The very early and severe winter that we experienced at the end of last year certainly seemed to make a deep impression on our readers resulting in several articles on the subject. There are plenty of tips in those articles for safe cold weather driving but hopefully we won't need to use them until next winter although, as I write this in mid February, we still have several weeks of winter to endure.

You may notice some subtle changes in the format of this edition of the newsletter. These have come about as a result of suggestions by members of the committee and are a part of a process of continuous improvement. I will always be interested to hear from you, the readers, on how the newsletter could be further improved. This is, after all, **your** newsletter.

I was very pleased to receive several articles from the general membership recently. This does help to provide a much more diverse and interesting newsletter. Thank you and do, please, keep those articles coming.

You will see from the Calendar opposite that we have a very full programme of events planned for the first half of the year and hope that you all make the most of them. The Bloodhound presentation in May should be particularly interesting and, as one of the aims of this project is to get young people excited by science, you are all encouraged to bring your family, friends, children and grandchildren. That will be followed in June by our traditional classic car evening so again, if you have friends or family with classic vehicles, they and their vehicles would be very welcome at that event.

Last month's **FROM THE PAST** was about one of the most famous partnerships in British motoring history, that of Rolls Royce. Rounding out the newsletter this month we have, in contrast, an article about one of the least known partnerships, the GWK concern which started motor production 100 years ago but only survived for 20 years.

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 4).

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.

MARCH

10	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
16	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening - Shelterbox
31	Th		IAM Track based Skills Day at Silverstone

APRIL

14	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
20	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening – Truck Driving

MAY

10	Tu		IAM Track based Skills Day at Pembury
12	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
18	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening – Bloodhound SSC

JUNE

9	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
15	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening – Classic Car Evening
29	W		IAM Track based Skills Day at Knockhill

JULY

14	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
20	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

AUGUST

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

SEPTEMBER

8	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
21	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

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TEAM WEST SENIOR OBSERVER & TEAM LEADER

Colin White 01823 257196

OBSERVERS

Guy Denton
Kevin Grose
Faye Markham
Russ Williams

TEAM EAST TRAINEE SENIOR OBSERVER & TEAM LEADER

Alan Thomson 01460 55919

TRAINEE SENIOR OBSERVER

John Gilbert
OBSERVERS
Ron Holdom
John Pentney
Steve Selby (**PAUSED**)
Allan Wellwood

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 Driving Standards Agency/ Approved Driving Instructors:

Guy Denton 01984 633467 also a TGAM Qualified Observer
Tudor Humphreys 01823 277353
Nigel Steady 01278 722944

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.

Robert Leadbeater
Rina Cameron

OBSERVED BY

Kevin Grose
John Gilbert

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 Membership Secretary

THERE are still a few people who have not renewed their Group Membership for the current year, therefore enclosed with this Newsletter is a Renewal Form for your convenience.

If you have decided not to renew, please accept my apologies for having troubled you, however if this is the case, it would be a great help if you could let me know. I will then take your name off the Group mailing list and you will not be troubled further.

If you would like to renew your membership, please complete the form and send it back to me with your cheque for £5.00 or £10.00 by 31st May 2011. This will prevent your membership from lapsing, and guarantee that you continue to receive our brilliant Newsletter, which I am sure you will agree is always a very good read.

Some of you when you renew your Group membership enclose a letter, usually to explain the delay in renewing. I apologise for not always being able to reply but I always read the letters, and where a reply is necessary I make sure I do so – even if it is on a post-it note! Many thanks to you all for your continuing support.

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>
Grace Tantam	Culmhead	Associate
Anthony Brown	Bridgwater	Associate

MEMBERS' MEETING, 17th NOVEMBER

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor

THE speaker at our November Meeting was Suzi White, the Somerset Coordinator for Community First Aid Resilience for the British Red Cross. Suzi gave a very professional and fascinating presentation which was thoroughly enjoyed by everybody in attendance. She also brought along two of her colleagues, Bernard Serle and Malcolm Cook and one of the organization's impressive Fire & Emergency Support Services Vehicles which, fortunately for us, was able to stay with us all evening due to the lack of any local emergencies during the evening.



Suzi White

Suzi started her presentation by giving a brief summary of the mission of the British Red Cross, its origins and a little of its history. Despite its name the organization does not limit its activities to the UK alone. It is involved in emergencies worldwide such as tsunamis, etc. Typical of emergency situations in the UK at which it would be very active would be the recent floods in Cornwall.



Henri Dunant

The Red Cross started after a Swiss gentleman by the name of Henri Dunant from Geneva travelled to Solferino in 1859 and witnessed the after effects of the Battle of Solferino. He saw thousands of dead and dying soldiers who were apparently not receiving any attention. He took the initiative to organize the local civilians to provide assistance to the soldiers and financed the purchase of necessary materials and helped erect makeshift hospitals. As a result of the publication of his memoirs of his experiences at Solferino and his ideas on setting up an international organization, the International Red Cross was set up four years later, in 1863, based in Geneva.

There followed a description of the Fire & Emergency Support Services Vehicle which was standing outside the village hall, and open for viewing by our members. The vehicle is controlled from the Somerset Fire & Rescue Services control room in Hestercombe House. The vehicle, which is set up to be a temporary shelter, is one of 53 around the country, one being based in Bridgwater and another in Plymouth. The vehicle carries three sets of clothing of all sizes. It is equipped with water, a cooker, fridge, freezer, and showers. The cost of each vehicle is £45,000 and it costs £125 to fully kit volunteers, plus fuel, food and clothing. No funds are obtained from the Government, they are fully funded by the British Red Cross through donations. The crew can contact relatives, pets, and children if necessary. The vehicles cannot be called directly, you have to go through the other services and they are mostly manned by volunteers.



Malcolm Cook, Suzi White and Bernard Perle in front of the Fire & Emergency Support Services Vehicle

Suzi then went on to describe various services that the British Red Cross offer:

- **Medical Equipment Service.** Can loan wheelchairs but do ask for a donation.
- **Care in the Home.** If there are no relations after a stay in hospital they can take patients home and do shopping for 3-6 weeks, but no medical nursing.
- **Transport & Escort.** Can take to patients to a consultant and also for treatment.
- **International Tracing and Messaging.** Can find people and help asylum seekers and immigrants, they are non-denominational.

Following this came a description of how passing motorists can help the victims of road traffic accidents. It was pointed out that this is the latest advice which may differ from what you have been used to if you haven't updated your first aid training recently. For example the Recovery Position is now called the Safe Position. It should also be noted that the notes below are meant to be a record of the meeting, and **not to be used as a text book for emergencies** – do get yourself updated with first aid training by an appropriate organization.

- **Check for breathing.** If a motorcyclist, decide whether to remove the helmet. If not breathing take it off using a gentle rocking motion while keeping head straight if possible. This is the first level of first aid before emergency services arrive. You have 3 minutes. If the victim is still not breathing in the safe position use compressions. 30 compressions then 2 breaths (breaths are not essential). This pushes the blood and oxygen around, don't stop until paramedics arrive. It is extremely unlikely that you would get sued for helping if things go wrong.
- **Bleeding arm.** Apply pressure first then wrap round with, for example, a Tee shirt and raise the arm above the heart. This slows down the blood flow and keeps a supply of blood to the brain. Clean if possible, no tourniquets.
- **Burns.** Place in cold water for as long as possible, at least for 10 minutes, then wrap it up in something like cling film. If bigger than a 50p piece send go to hospital.
- **Choking.** Five hard slaps on the back (between the shoulder blades) and then check to see whether anything has come up. If the victim is really choking then press up on front. If neither works the victim will slip into unconsciousness.
- **Bones.** There could be swelling, bruising or a strange position. Attempt to get the victim to support themselves with their hand or a cushion, etc. It hurts so they will need reassurance, they might go into shock so keep them warm, and maybe raise their legs to get blood to drain, don't move them.

- **Heart attacks.** Pain in chest, maybe pale, sweaty, dial 999, put in w-position. Also make them cough, give 300mg aspirin to chew.
- **Diabetes.** Could be suffering from high or low sugar, won't know which. May appear to be drunk but not smell of alcohol. Give sugar.
- **Strokes.** Face will be slack, won't be able to smile, can't raise an arm, act quickly.
- **Seizures.** Get victim on the ground so they can't fall, put something around the head to protect it, let them work it out. If it goes on for more than 10 minutes get medical help.

Finally Suzi talked about Community Resilience. The first level is up to the individual; know your gas/water/electricity suppliers and how to turn off supplies, prepare a grab bag in case of emergencies. The grab bag should contain 14 items, namely a torch (wind up is best) money, glasses (if you wear them) fresh water, whistle, medical kit, wind up radio, coat or blanket, any medication you need, a swiss army knife, documents in waterproof folder, spare keys, pencil and paper, mobile phone (and charger) and a first aid kit. And in the car keep willies, a spade, water and chocolate bars.

After Suzi's excellent presentation an Advanced Driving Test Pass Certificate was awarded to Geoff Beechey by his Observer, Alan Thomson.



Geoff Beechey receives his ADT Pass Certificate from his Observer, Alan Thomson (left) while President, John Pentney looks on

EXACTLY WHERE IS SMALLRIDGE?

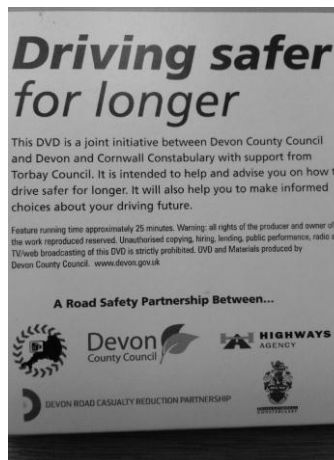
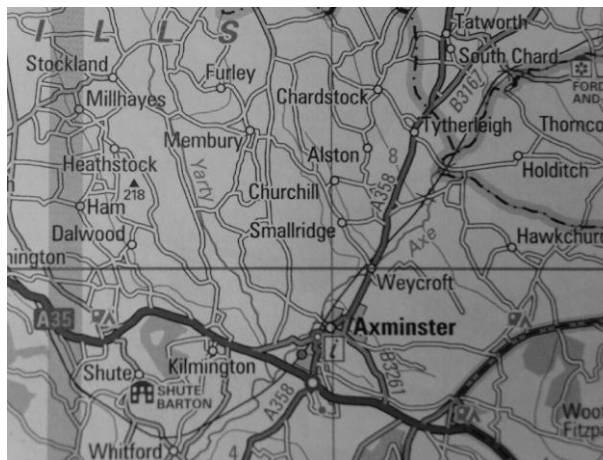
By Kevin G. Grose
Chairman

"The main point of this exercise was that it was very well supported by the local community..."



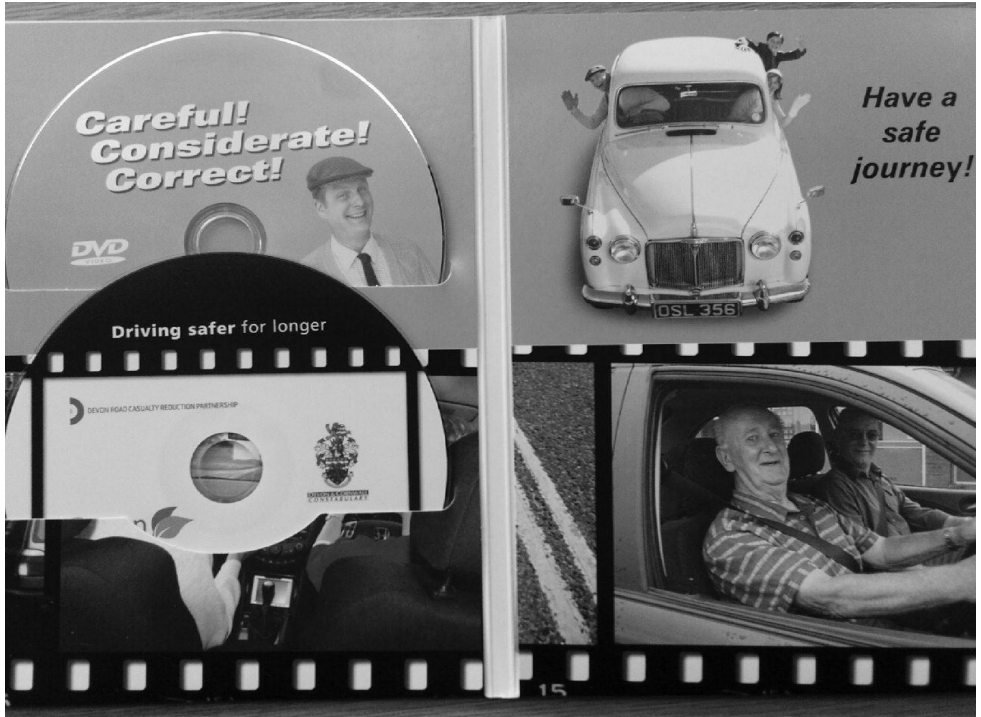
ON one of the coldest evenings in November, 2010, Alan Thomson and I attended at the Smallridge/All Saints parish Road Safety event. This was a presentation from the Devon Road Casualty Reduction Partnership given by Mike Hull from the Devon Driving Centre and coordinated by our very own Taunton Group Chief Senior Observer, Bill Coltham.

Now you may ask several questions here – where's Smallridge/All Saints? What are we doing in Devon? Why were Bill, Alan and myself involved? and maybe many more questions but the answers are very simple – Bill lives in Smallridge/All Saints, Alan and I were invited, and it's good to see how the other County Partnerships work.



The parish of Smallridge/All Saints is one of those parishes that is sometimes forgotten by the big boys at County Hall and unless they look it up on a map they have no idea where it is but no matter, we courteously invited the Exeter and Torbay Group to attend and they kindly sent along one of their Committee Members, Andrew Cleare, to represent their interests. The main objective was to get certain messages across to the older generation within the community and I firmly believed it worked. Mike Hull's presentation was excellent – informative, constructive and involving. Questions and banter progressed and a very positive evening was had by all.

Alan and I set up our table displaying IAM leaflets and Road Safety information. During the break, many more questions were asked and we answered all we could. A twin CD and dual booklet package was handed out by Mike Hull and having now viewed this item – one CD is absolutely spot on along with the booklet and the other CD is a light hearted attempt to convey a serious message...and it sort of works.



The main point of this exercise was that it was very well supported by the local community; the Devon Partnership conveyed road safety in a positive manner; inter IAM Group coordination was present; all supplied information appeared to have been taken on board and the village hall venue was excellent – all this on an extremely cold winter's evening when most people wouldn't even venture outside their own doors. So thank you to Bill Coltham and the community of Smallridge/All Saints for inviting us, and thanks to Alan Thomson, Andrew Cleare, Mike Hulls, Devon Road Casualty Reduction Partnership and all, etc., for your support and commitment with showing that events can continue and be well supported even in extremely bad weather conditions – Bravo!

TGAM CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON, 4th DECEMBER

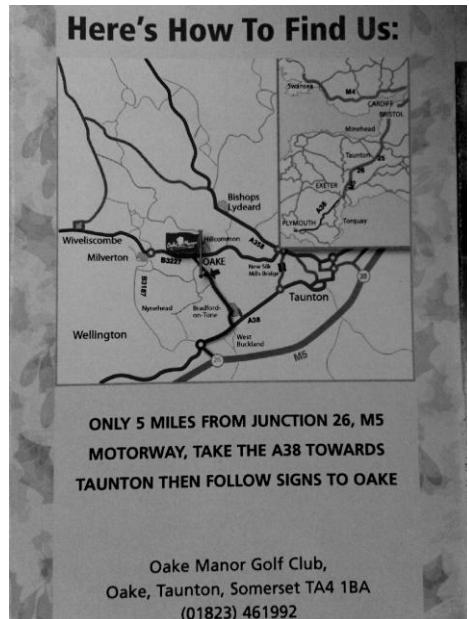
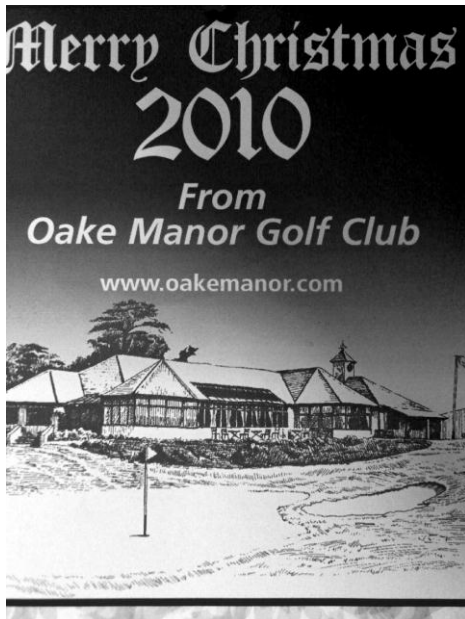
By Kevin G. Grose
Chairman

WELL, another successful Christmas Luncheon has been enjoyed at Oake Manor Golf Club.

We had 32 attendees from the original 34 noted with only two absent due to an illness. This event took place on the Saturday after one of the coldest, most frozen, icy, misty, snowed in weeks of the year so far and I thank all of those who made the effort to attend on the day. Conditions had improved although some areas were still deemed dangerous and slippery.

Well done to you all, as an experience of driving in extreme conditions whilst under a controlled environment increases your driving skills no end. By proceeding with caution and care, our motoring world continues and our skills increase, as they say – nothing ventured, nothing gained – but please only continue to proceed and venture out safely.

I must thank all your generosity again for the many raffle prizes kindly donated this year and Geoff and Beverley Worby kindly ran the raffle for the Group which proceeded to make £72 at the end of the day. So a big thank you to all who participated and for Geoff and Beverley for running it.



APRIL MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents

MEMOIRS OF A TRUCK DRIVER

by TGAM Member Andy Mayes

**Wednesday, 20th April at 7:30 pm
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall**

The meal, service, surroundings and views were again first class and we must thank Oake Manor, Steve, Mark, Ashley and all the staff for an excellent luncheon and service – nothing appears to be too much trouble for them – many thanks.

We had many new members and friends attending for the first time and I was delighted to hear their experience of the day was very positive. Thank you all for your kind comments.

So, as I have settled our account once again, this means we can go back next year (2011). Another excellent Taunton Group event, well supported and enjoyed by all and I look forward to seeing you all again at the 2011 Luncheon.

**Closing Date for the Summer, 2011 issue of the
TGAM Newsletter is Sunday, 8th May.**

All contributions would be very welcome.

**All items should be sent to "The Editor" at
ed@tgam.org.uk or, if you do not have e-mail, by
mail to John Gilbert at
The Coach House,
Stockland Bristol, Bridgwater, TA5 2QA.**

MEMBERS' MEETING, 15th DECEMBER

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor



Tony Hawkins receives his Advanced Driving Test Certificate from his Observer, John Gilbert while Chairman, Kevin Grose, looks on.

AS members arrived for the final meeting before Christmas they found rows of tables neatly laid out with pencils and paper. Yes, obviously the Chairman had been busy preparing another of his fiendish quizzes. However, before we started the quiz there was a brief ceremony to perform. Another Advanced Driving Test Certificate was to be awarded, this time to Tony Hawkins by his Observer, John Gilbert.

Formalities having been completed it was time to start the quiz. The multiple choice questions, compiled by our Chairman, involved the legalities of operating a reindeer propelled sleigh through UK airspace by a certain gentleman in a red cloak. Now it soon became obvious to this participant that the answers to the questions rather depended on whether the said vehicle was assumed to be a motor vehicle, an aircraft

or that mythical vehicle we see on Christmas cards. Was this a serious quiz testing our driving knowledge dressed up in Christmas decorations or was it really about Father Christmas and his sleigh? For example the question on required lights at night; would that be headlights at front and red lights at the rear as per DVLA regulations, red light on the left side and green light on the right hand side as per CAA aviation requirements, or simply one red nose at the front? What was going on in our Chairman's brain?

This uncertainty led to much debate, both serious and otherwise, and made for a most enjoyable evening with a real Christmas spirit in which everybody took part. Considering the possibility of answering the questions in several different ways it is truly amazing that two of the participants, Brian Howe and David Walton, managed to score almost full marks.

In order to decide the winner there was a run-off between these two contestants, David Walton finally emerging as the victor winning what appeared to be a bottle of champagne but Brian did not go away empty handed, winning a bottle of wine. Clearly everybody enjoyed the evening and we owe a debt of gratitude to our Chairman for compiling such entertaining questions.



Some of the participants enjoying the quiz



The winner, David Walton, accepts his prize from Kevin Grose...



...and the runner-up, Brian Howe, accepts his

MEMBERS' MEETING, 19th JANUARY

**By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor**

THIS Members' Evening kicked off with a brief ceremony to mark the fact that Allan Wellwood had successfully completed his Observer training. He was presented with a Certificate by Chief Senior Observer, Bill Coltham, and Training Officer, Alan Thomson.



Bill Coltham and Alan Thomson
present Allan Wellwood with his
Observer's Certificate



Terry Beale

The main event of the evening was a fascinating presentation by Terry Beale, an Accident Investigator, who works with the Somerset Road Safety Partnership (SRSP). Mr. Beale had spent 25 years with the Avon & Somerset Police Road Traffic Department and joined Somerset County Council on his retirement in 2001. He transferred to the SRSP in 2007. He went on to describe how he interacts with various other bodies (police, etc.) when investigating road traffic accidents.

TGAM 30th ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON

**Saturday, 1st October
at Oake Manor Golf Club**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE CHRISTMAS LUNCH

CAN anyone tell me where oh where did the party atmosphere go to at the Christmas Lunch held last December?

I have never been to the Group Christmas Lunch, or Dinner as we used to have, where it has been so quiet, even the staff at the venue asked me what had happened.

This is the first year since 1984 that there have been no party pieces – party poppers, balloons, flying saucers, etc. I did not see any items promoting the Institute or the Group. And where were the photographs from the 2009 Lunch?

Thank goodness for the raffle as that brought a few laughs to peoples' faces. I would like to thank Geoff Worby who took my place after 28 years of organising the raffle.

Oak Manor Golf Club is an ideal venue – it is nicely furnished with plenty of room for everyone, superb views across the Blackdown Hills, excellent value for money regarding the menu and plenty of parking spaces.,

If you have not been before remember to book your places next year.

Last but not least we should all also thank Kevin for the amount of work he puts into organising the event and printing up all the invitations and place cards. It all takes time and that is something we all seem short of these days.

Julia Steer

Previous Newsletter Editor & Raffle Organiser

TO VERY SUPERIOR EDITOR OF VERY GOOD MAGAZINE FOR DRIVING.

I write as you, my friend, have been good to me and make me blush all over my fur. I thank my good friend for all peoples who have made me good driver and pass the driving test for advanced meerkats. Simple.

Your very good Meerkat friend,

Meerkat Bogdan
Meerkovo

ICE, ICE, BABY...OR SNOW, SNOW, QUICK, SLIP, SNOW!

By Kevin G. Grose
Chairman

BY the time you read this basking in sunshine and warmth, you might ask, "What is he talking about?" but do you remember those couple of weeks of extreme cold, ice and snow before Christmas 2010?

Have you ever tried "dancing" on ice? Have you been ice skating? Have you been snowboarding? Have you ever been glacier racing? Do you ski?

Well, I have in a manner of speaking but all in my car. My Astra "shed" still bears the scars and damage from my exploits – only minor scars, etc., but scars of experience, endeavour and achievement. Have I been stupid, foolhardy or have my journeys been unnecessary? No, not at all. Which journeys are really necessary are down to the individual, but food, fuel, heating supplies, medicine, hospital, doctors, etc., are necessary and any such journey that must take place, must be taken seriously and carefully.

There is really only one thing that really matters – that's YOU. Secondly, your safety. Thirdly, your passengers' safety – then all those other drivers on the road. Remember – vehicles, possessions, etc., can all be replaced – human life cannot.

Right, back to my Astra "shed" – the damage amounts to: one nsf indicator lens assembly; one slightly damaged rear exhaust tail pipe; one minor glancing dent (nsf); a few hedge scratches (ns & os) and loads of mud, snow, packed ice, etc., and masses of grit and salt damage which, hopefully, will all wash off!



I have been here, there and everywhere in my old "shed", sliding, slipping, spinning, etc., and I only got stuck momentarily once – not really stuck, just not going anywhere at all due to absolutely no traction or grip or anything whatsoever, but I did extradite myself in the end...finally!

Do you know you can do 70 mph to 80 mph whilst not moving anywhere on ice? It does not matter which gear you use either – I

selected fifth gear and managed 85 mph once – stood still on solid ice, no traction, no grip, nothing.

Anyway, enough of my “hooning” around and anti social behaviour – what about our Associates, Members and friends, etc? Have you been out in the ice, snow, mist, etc? As a Group Observer, I have continued right through this bad weather as my allocated Associate wanted to. He wanted to really experience these conditions and how to handle them. He needed to know as he had to travel some 7-8 miles each day to get to work and he didn’t miss a single day throughout the bad weather. We also drove in the night time, on the ice and snow, in the mist and blizzards, etc., all the elements all in one go.

Hopefully, this young lad will continue to build his confidence and skills to cope with these extreme conditions therefore ensuring his safety and the safety of others around him. I have never been deterred from driving in “bad” weather ever, but there is still always a limit, a cut off line, a definite NO! That’s your decision and no one else’s, only you know your limits.



So enjoy the ice, snow, mist, darkness, rain, floods, etc., and learn within your own safety limits. If you need any advice, guidance or help, then just contact us and we will try to help but please remember one thing above everything else – it’s the drivers sole responsibility for any actions that occur whilst driving – it’s not the car; it’s not the road; it’s not the weather; it’s not the “other” driver, etc., it’s YOU and only YOU – YOU are responsible, when you finally accept this responsibility, you can enjoy safe, winter motoring – you can also enjoy safe summer motoring which is much, much easier!

SNOW IS FALLING (AGAIN)

By Frank Richards
TGAM Member

WHEN we decided to move to Dover we were aware that the climate was warmer and dryer than the West Country in the summer but colder in the winter. However we hadn't bargained on the amount of snow. So far we have had 16 in. in December alone! It isn't helped by the fact that we live on the top of a hill at Whitfield a few miles outside Dover.



After the initial fall of snow in early December I decided to carry a spade in the back of my BMW and a blanket in the front. Today, (18th December), the spade proved to be worth its weight in gold. We had driven to Ashford to pick up my daughter who had travelled by train from London. It started snowing as we arrived at 12.15 p.m. but quickly the conditions changed to "blizzard". Things had gone according to plan up until then – no need to worry about the snow as it was motorway almost all the way back – less than 20 miles. However the train was delayed by an hour whilst the rails were de-iced. In this time about 4" of snow had fallen. After clearing the windows we emerged out of

Ashford International railway station on to a short hill. Cars were slipping and sliding and going nowhere. Through a combination of clearing snow around the rear wheels (with the shovel) and some pushing by a few friendly pedestrians we got to the top of the hill and joined the main road. Job done and problem solved – that's what I thought. We drove on and joined the dual carriageway leading to the M20. **Three hours** later and we were only a mile down the dual carriageway! A combination of deep snow and ice, which prevented vehicles getting up a hill, and accidents, meant that thousands of vehicles were caught up in a log jam.

Around me in the traffic jam drivers were trying to find out information, a Tesco fuel tanker driver was concerned that he was going to over-run his hours, a family had a baby which needed feeding and a lady was running out of fuel. One couple were on their way to Germany to pick up a new Mercedes. Others were desperate to go to the toilet. Everyone had a story to tell. Blue lights – both Police and Ambulance – were frequently trying to get through the traffic.

After yet another hour we managed to get home. A journey which had started in good weather and should have taken 1 ½ hours ended up taking 6 hours. All too easily the trip could have rapidly turned in to a serious situation with serious consequences. Another couple of inches of snow in the freezing conditions would have resulted in complete chaos. Instead it was just a tedious journey. Be prepared for the unexpected. Here are some fairly obvious suggestions for a safe winter journey.

- Drive according the conditions (in icy conditions the Highway Code suggests that stopping distances could be 10 times longer than in optimum conditions)
- Make sure your car is prepared for the winter – check tyre tread and pressures/clear snow off the car before driving and demist the inside/check windscreen washer is full and the right strength/check wiper blades and lights
- Carry a shovel/ice scraper/torch
- Take a warm coat
- Check that you have more fuel than you think you need.
- Carry a mobile phone (that is charged up)
- Carry medication that is needed regularly

By the time you read this the winter should be over with spring on its way. Will you remember next year to put in to practice these simple measures or will you be caught out one day? Better still, when the weather is poor ask yourself whether your journey is really necessary. Remember also that in a 4 wheel drive vehicle you are not immune to the conditions – my experience showed you can be just as trapped in a serious traffic snarl up.

WINTER DRIVING, CANADIAN STYLE

By Tony House

Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada

OH to be in England now that winter's here! Our part of Canada (Fredericton, New Brunswick) is now replacing snow and ice with the renowned English damp as of December, 2010. It was not always so as over the 56 years I have been driving I have encountered all sorts of hibernal challenges.

In the 1950s, we lived at the bottom of a hill and, come the snow, all the Detroit Iron came to a sliding halt. No Chevrolet, Ford or Chrysler moved on that hill; however, VW Beetles, Morris Minors and all things British did! This was before most people had snow tires. Why did this happen? Was it weight distribution, engine power, gear and differential ratios? I suppose an automotive engineer would say all of the above. All I know is that for sheer entertainment that snowy hill proved to me that big heavy V8 engines were useless.



A typical street scene during the Canadian winter. This is a residential street in Montreal. Note that traffic is still moving.

As the 1960s brought us more snow tires, things got better. One only needed two such tires on the rear wheels as that was where the power was. Still, the sports cars from Britain were more agile in snow and ice than the "big boys". We also learned to put weight in the trunk, aka the boot of the car, for traction.

Pirelli brought out a convertible tire called the Iverno; one could change the treads according to the season. Only one problem: the tread bands kept falling off!

There were "sporting events" called *Dice on Ice* where semi-intoxicated lads tried to negotiate a cleared oval track on a frozen lake in Muskoka, Ontario. It was here I witnessed the effects of understeer and oversteer in various cars. Understeering US sedans ploughed and went sideways on curves, rear engine cars did both but often did what we called *donuts*. Until the four-wheel drive cars came onto the market, the VW Beetle with its rear engine was THE car to beat in snow and ice. It went through anything. (The heater was not so great but they put in a gasoline heater which worked sometimes.)

Flash forward to the 1990s: studded snow tires, all-wheel drive and various electronic devices. Still, the ice will defeat all systems. Driving a Subaru all-wheel drive, I spun out on a flat straight road as ice under the snow caused the four all-season tires to break loose. Solution? I bought four snow and ice tires and put three sand bags in the rear. Studded tires are banned in some areas as they harm the roads. They cost \$20 per wheel and I do not use them as I drive less these days.

Now that the winter driver has all the tires and sand bags on board, what to do next? No winter racing is recommended but find an icy parking lot with nobody around and try out some moves in your car. You will find a surprisingly new ride, almost a fun experience if you like a scary ride.

Now that our snow has arrived and despite all preparations, the truck has frozen to the driveway as I spin wheels on the snow-covered ice. Quick, get out the traction pads, two ladder-shaped steel devices with sharp claws underneath. They do nothing. I open a bag of road salt, sprinkle it around the truck wheels, wait and – bam! – out comes the truck. Lucky no one was at the end of the driveway!

It is obvious that one needs special equipment to keep going in the winter. Here is a partial and minimal list, all depends on how far and where one is going: *small shovel; traction pads; snow brush scraper; lock de-icer; low temperature windshield washer; booster cables; weight (salt & sand) for trunk; gas-line antifreeze; optional block heater; optional battery warmer!*

Finally, for a complete look at winter driving, you can Google www.mto.gov.on.ca or Transport Canada at www.tc.gc.ca.

ONE OWNER CARS

By Tim Radcliffe
TGAM Member

HAVING seen in the December issue magazine a brief article about length of car ownership I thought I would send you a picture of my late Father's Car. It could be a test question as to what it is but I expect all of you would recognise a 1923 Vauxhall 30/98 - known as the "thinking mans Bentley" in its day apparently according to a member of the VSCC I know. Anyway the point is that this picture is from a post card which is dated 1938. The card is to his sister in America and he would have been 28 at the time. I do not know when he bought the car but I would imagine that it was some time before this. He was only the second owner and the car was sold after this



'Belinda', a 1923 Vauxhall 30/98

death (rather than passing into my hands which would have been far better but the reasons why are not to be gone into here! This was in 2002 so he had owned the car for at least 64 years and I suspect for at least several prior to 1938. She was always known as "Belinda" and my sister and I have many happy memories of riding high up in the back seat. With or without the weather gear up and getting badly sunburnt

knees! On mechanical points of interest to those who are like me sad in terms of vehicle history the car is fitted with a Lagonda front axle which gave a wider track to the front than the rear but had the advantage of giving what was a very fast car for its day front brakes. My father also cut off the "duck tail" rear end (what the young will do!!) so as to fit a larger fuel tank.

Whilst I cannot reach these levels of ownership I have had my MGBGT for 26 years and I hope also many more.

However whilst writing if I may address a different topic and that concerns the European Union and the common or garden MOT. I have been told today by the man who looks after my Defender that there are "plans afoot" to introduce new rules regarding the MOT - it should be in line with other countries with it being carried out every 2 years! This would possibly result in less money being spent on maintenance with the consequence of perhaps more unsafe vehicles on the road! Have any other members heard of this "plan" by our leaders! And if that is not bad enough he also tells me that another idea being considered is that vehicles over 25 years old and those which are tax exempt would be limited to 1200k a year. Here I must protest as the owner of 2 tax exempt cars which cover between 1500 and 2000 miles a year.

Any feedback on either of these "interesting" points would be of interest I am sure to all members. It seems to me that the whole idea is to get rid of all "old cars" and have everyone driving around in computer controlled boxes which require very little driver input, can only be serviced by authorised dealers at vast expense and to my limited mind introduces a false sense of security as "the car knows what it is doing" and I don't have to think! Reliance upon technology is all very well but personally being of the old school I prefer to be in control of at least 1 ton of metal and not rely upon all sorts of electronics. What do you think...?

MAY MEMBERS' EVENING
Presents
BLOODHOUND SSC
By Martin Evans
Wednesday, 18th May at 7:30 pm
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall

SIGNALS OR COMMUNICATION?

By Colin White
Senior Observer

*"Communication is not just about speaking,
but being heard"*



YOU are driving on a motorway. Medium density traffic. The car in front starts to move out then signals right. A common scenario. Most people probably wouldn't even notice this discrepancy but as an advanced driver (by which I mean one who has studied the subject in some detail both theoretically and practically, who is more self critical than most and whose observational skills are more focused on the driving situation) you think – well, what was the point of that signal? The car was already moving out so I could see he was overtaking/changing lane, therefore the signal was pointless.

And you'd be right. So a 'signal' is not restricted to your indicators, or your brake lights (how many other forms of signalling can you think of?) but also the positioning of your vehicle – and, unlike a signal which you may apply too early, or too late, or forget to apply at all, or has been left on by mistake for the last 3 miles the position of your vehicle (Body Language) is a pretty sure indication of your intention – or at least it should be.

It would make sense then that your applied signal (the orange flashing one) should 'harmonize' or agree with the Body Language of your car, i.e. it would look a bit odd if you were signalling right but steering left!

Interestingly there are situations where this can happen. One example is when approaching a mini roundabout where you wish to turn right (2nd exit). Most mini roundabouts have enough space to negotiate easily but some are so tight that although you approach with the right signal on, you are forced to apply some left hand steerage to avoid the white central marking. The problem here is that the average driver approaching from the first exit would see you signalling right but steering left. Now this ambiguity may be lost on your average driver at the end of a busy day, who is more than likely wondering what's for tea or what to watch on TV later.

The result may be an increased likelihood that said driver may enter the mini roundabout in front of you, or even on a collision course, owing it has to be admitted, to an over pedantic approach by you (or me!).

So – what should we do? One obvious solution is to position yourself in such a way that any left steerage is minimised or preferably

eliminated. The printed page can only go so far saying how this should best be achieved since every situation is different but an awareness of the possible scenarios and common sense should guide you in real life situations.

The problem with an ambiguous signal being misinterpreted is that there is no signal for 'No, I didn't mean that!' This is why as advanced drivers we should not only think about the signal given but the wider concept of communication, which after all is primarily about collision avoidance and assisting traffic flow.

Other situations illustrating signalling but not communication are:

- (1) Turning right at a large roundabout (not a mini) and exiting with the right signal still on.
- (2) Signalling left and pulling up just after a junction on the left (or entering premises just after a left junction).

That little book the 'Highway Code' says exactly this in Rule 103, so much quality information in there, but it needs common sense to interpret and take out into the real world, otherwise we end up 'Driving by Numbers' and the art of driving is lost. Lastly I ask you to consider this – 'Communication is not just about speaking, but being heard'.

HIGHWAY CODE

Rule 103 – Signals

Signals warn and inform other road users, including pedestrians of your intended actions. You should always

- *give clear signals in plenty of time, having checked it is not misleading to signal at that time*
- *use them to advise other road users before changing course or direction, stopping or moving off*
- *cancel them after use*
- *make sure your signals will not confuse others. If, for instance, you want to stop after a side road, do not signal until you are passing the road. If you signal earlier it may give the impression that you intend to turn into the road. Your brake lights will warn traffic behind you that you are slowing down.*
- *Use an arm signal to emphasise or reinforce your signal if necessary. Remember that signalling does not give you priority*

CALIFORNIA DREAMING – PART 1

By Stuart Bullock

RoADAR Senior Motorcycle Examiner

RoSPA Motorcycle Diploma Course Director

THE dreaming went on for some time before hard and fast plans were made for our 2008 holiday. California was just the start because other USA states were in the frame for a visit also. I had a big say about the location of the holiday because this year I had reached a reasonable age for one with such a chequered history. Luck? Not at all. Careful planning and a penchant for being in the right place at the right time.

So my choice was to visit the West Coast Pacific Highway from San Francisco to LA, simply because I have read so much about the wonderful scenery. Next came Monument Valley, because I like cowboy films. Next was Route 66 because it just has to be done once in a lifetime. Sequoia trees because I like trees. Mazda raceway, because I have so many memories of the tremendous racing seen at this circuit.

Dates were agreed, flights and bike hire checked out, and hotels researched. Then, a friend told me about HC travel from Hampshire, (01256 770775 – www.hctravel.com) and I had a chat with them. In my experience of travelling around the world, anyone with a bit of common sense can book a road trip. However, one problem on route can quickly escalate into a trip spoiler, so it is best to have an agent in the country you are visiting as a backstop. I told HC when I wanted to fly and where I wanted to fly from and to and who with. I told them who I wanted to hire bikes from, and the sort of bikes we wanted. I told them which locations I wanted to visit and what days we would spend where. After a few days they provided an itinerary. I checked it out, changed a couple of hotels and made a couple of date corrections. They were not charging me any extra on top of any airfare, hotel cost or bike hire charge that I had looked at and, to coin a phrase, the price was right. HC then booked all of our choices, provided air tickets, bike hire and hotel vouchers in due course. They were professional, friendly, knowledgeable and very good indeed. We were however, going on a well-trodden tourist route.

So, we flew from Heathrow to Los Angeles. An 11-hour flight to a place that is 8 hours behind the UK. The afternoon following landing and booking into a nice hotel were spent exploring Manhattan Beach. Very nice it was too. Next day we took a taxi to Eaglerider premises to collect our bikes. A Harley was not my choice, having ridden one several years ago and making myself a promise. Never mind what it was, I kept it! BMW GS1200s were our choice. Charlie and Ewan look

alikes? I certainly hope not. For a start there would be just three of us without any backup. At Eaglerider HQ a large number of Belgian riders were in front of us going through the ritual of hiring bikes. That meant we were not ready to roll until lunchtime. However, all too soon we were heading east towards the edge of the Mojave Desert and Palm Springs. Only 190 miles, with a great deal on 'freeway', similar to our motorway.



Susan and one of the BMW 1200s

Palm Springs, home to millionaires, Cahuillan Native American Indians, the Betty Ford rehab centre and San Jacinto Mountain. As the journey went on the temperature rose, the valley became narrower, the mountains higher. The amount of wind turbines increased to huge numbers. Windy place then. Hot? Oh yes, 104F hot. Hotel found, pool swam in, showers taken, meals eaten, sleep slept, we were soon setting off for our next stop, Laughlin, 230 miles away northeast on the banks of the Colorado River. To get there we were to pass through the Joshua Tree National Park. Full of what we know as Yucca plants, and once through the low-ish mountains the desert heat soon built up. The whole huge area of Mojave Desert is one of sand, rocks and boulders

from volcanic activity, and old gold mines. There are also a couple of military bases, glimpses of which can be seen occasionally. The first half of the day we rode through small villages and hamlets. These consisted of buildings much like our Park Homes, or even tin houses and caravans. There are however, lots and lots of open unused land. And Yucca trees. Big Yucca trees.

We took our morning tea stop in the town of Twentynine Palms at a traditional American roadhouse café. Buckets of coffee with free top-ups. Pancakes like Sombreros and "have a nice day" everywhere. From here on it was desert all the way. Ever been in a real desert? The road was fairly straight simply because it didn't need to turn corners. Fairly flat and it was very hot, around 100F most of the time and like having a hair dryer blowing into your visor. This is pure heat though, as humidity is minimal. However, hot is hot and plenty of water is required to keep from bursting into flames!!

Eventually we reached the outpost and major crossroads of Vidal Junction where we were able to download lots more fluid before we turned north towards Laughlin and our next hotel. We rode on through Chemehuevi Mountains, a sandy barren range, with blown sand on the road as we travelled down onto the plains alongside the Colorado River. The hotel and most of Laughlin could not have been more opposite than the sand strewn desert. Loud and bright and brash, Laughlin has aspirations on a Las Vegas scale sitting as it does very close to the borders of California, Nevada and Arizona. Our hotel was a Casino and huge. However, the massive pool was great after such a hot day and the restaurant (1 of 3) was superb. The temperature stayed high well into the evening and was brewing up nicely the next morning as we set off east in the direction of Flagstaff on the first leg of our third day.

Route 66 comes into the equation now as we left Laughlin and crossed into Arizona. With a film and a song to make it known world wide, Route 66 was opened in 1926 to connect Chicago with Los Angeles. 2,500 miles of winding road was the first to be 'black-topped' for the entire length. It linked hundreds of rural communities in Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California and is commonly referred to as 'The Mother Road'. Due to its importance as a means of crossing the USA, by 1970 nearly all segments of Route 66 were bypassed by a modern four-lane highway and completely succumbed to the interstate system in October 1984 when the final section was bypassed by Interstate 40 at Williams Arizona. The interstate system was designed to allow American Military to reach its major bases in minimum time and distance. The fact that the public can use the system is a secondary consideration.

Look out for the second part of this trip in the Summer edition.

MEMBERS' CARS

CARS I HAVEN'T SCORED IN – FINAL PART

By Bill Coltham
Chief Senior Observer

YOU may be pleased to know that this is the final part of my trip down memory lane in the cars that featured in my younger days, mainly in the time that I spent in my first days in the Kent Police, in the Training Centre at Sandgate near Folkestone (photo thanks to the Kent Museum), and then, in this installment, during the first few months of an eighteen month posting to my first station - more later so read on with baited breath.



One of the major events at the Training School was the distribution of the 'Postings Notices' that occurred near the end of the three month course, when it became probable that a student was likely to pass and go out into the big wide world as a Probationer Constable.



A big day indeed! We gathered in one of the halls and waited with bated breath for the name of the station to which we were to be sent. We wanted, of course, to go to the big and busy stations, Chatham, Margate, Maidstone, or Gravesend so we could get in amongst things and crack a few yob heads.

In alphabetical order, Coltham was near the front – and Whitstable was my destiny. Where? And who knew anything about Whitstable - no one else did but a little snigger went up and someone mentioned Oysters (in the context of being good for your sex life particularly).

I arrived in Whitstable in style on my first day. On the top deck of a No.72 double decker bus, ducking my head through the Westgate Towers of Canterbury, and then into a coach for the 10 mile drive in Whitstable, it seemed an age for me to find my digs.

But you only are reading this for the bits about my cars, aren't you? And I haven't mentioned anything about one yet, so on to the juicy bit - the Sunbeam.

What a
looker she was,
long, sleek, with
curvy bits all in the
right places, she
was sex on wheels
for a nineteen year
old. Her backside
had the right
amount of curvy
lift, and, some 50
years ahead of
Renault
advertising,
attracted admiring
glances and
comments. And
she was all mine



1953 Sunbeam Talbot 90

for £125 pounds! Another idiot parting with his hard earned dosh to a greasy car salesman in Canterbury.

I sat admiring the engine for hours, dreaming of the days spent touring the wine fields of the Rhone Valley and supping glasses of white, eating cheese and baguettes. It never happened.

In an out of the garage, valves re-ground, suspension re-fitted, and other expensive repairs kept me poor. I wasn't happy.



Under the bonnet of the Sunbeam

Until one of the young married coppers in the town mentioned to me that a widowed mother of two young boys needed a 'lift' and would enjoy being taken out for the evening.

Now, don't get me wrong, whilst I was a nineteen year with all the correct hormones in all the right places, I was a very responsible and shy

lad, who always ate his greens and said the right things at the right time! Baby sitting for some of the other officers added a bit to my £12per week basic policeman's pay, and an occasional meal with them made a change from the landlady's stodge that she thought I needed to 'put a bit of weight on, you need it, lad' meals served up in the digs.

So it was a very nervous nineteen year old sitting in his lovely, but old, Sunbeam outside of a new, large, detached house awaiting a blind date that had been arranged for me with the widow, and wondering what sort of evening was in store for me.

The widow, and in the time honoured way, let's call her Janice, was 28, mother of two, and had seen a bit of the world herself. She knew I was a bit green behind the ears, needed a bit of encouragement and, possibly, mothering! She took the lead, directed me off to the pictures in Canterbury, sat holding my hand in the weepy bits, but kept me pure and sweet, and 'in charge'!

Again, the evening came and went and the time came to drop her off. By then it was eleven-ish, and my next duty was to start at 6 in the morning. No worries, several times I had survived on a couple of hours sleep in the past, I could always catch up with the rest of the sleep at a later date.

Now, sitting in a car with an attractive woman for an hour or two when you are aged 19 does have its effect, and I don't know who started the close contact bit, but it wasn't me. But I joined in and I learned a lot in a short time about the mechanics of bra straps, and other matters not to be detailed here. Before I knew it, it was past one in the morning and life seemed very rosy. The seats of the Sunbeam were very comfortable and we both appreciated the column gear change. Janice murmured something like 'shall we go indoors?'

Panic struck! Life flashed before my eyes and I saw two young boys without a father, the domesticity of a suburban kitchen, but most of all, life without my Sunbeam, being too expensive to run with a detached house, and a wife

and children to support. But actually, I just panicked.

Disentangling myself, I croaked about having to get back for duty in the morning, that I needed to be bright and bushy tailed for a big police operation in the morning, and pushed her out of the car, thanking her for a 'lovely evening'! I roared off in the Sunbeam, thinking how lucky I was to escape.

What a prat I was.



A LUCKY ESCAPE...

**By Serena Lonton
Membership Secretary**

THEY say every picture tells a story! This used to be a smart little Vauxhall Corsa 1.4 automatic belonging to my son before he hit some black ice on a downhill bend and collided with a coach (no less).

No, son Steve is not a hot headed teenage boy racer, but a careful 29-year old! He only passed his driving test in July 2008, so may not have had the same experience as some, but I wonder if that would have made much difference – who knows?

Anyway, a minor cut to the hand and knee plus a few bumps and bruises were the only physical outcomes – I think the pride suffered more!

Looking forward to Summer...!



JUNE MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents

CLASSIC CAR EVENING

**Wednesday, 15th June at 7:30 pm
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall**

UPCOMING TALK ON BLOODHOUND SSC

BLOODHOUND SSC is a World Land Speed Record car being designed and built in Bristol. The project's aim is two-fold; to inspire young people to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and to break the current record of 763mph and push it to 1000mph – yes, in a car! The team is headed by Richard Noble, himself a previous record holder, and the driver will be current world record holder, RAF fighter pilot Andy Green.

The Bloodhound SSC will be featured in a talk at our Members' Evening on Wednesday, May 18th. The presentation will be given by Martin Evans who is a trained Bloodhound 'Ambassador' and will include videos and lots of technical details to tell you all about the project, the record and how **you** can get involved.



An impression of Bloodhound SSC courtesy of Curventa and Siemens

The 13 meter car has a carbon fibre front end and a steel lattice frame covered with an aluminium shell at the rear. In the centre of the car is an 800 hp Formula One engine built by Cosworth which also acts as an auxiliary powerplant (APU) to fire up the other two engines, a Eurojet EJ200 (as used in the Typhoon fighter aircraft) and a high-test peroxide powered rocket. These powerplants provide a total output of 133,000 bhp. The two major concerns are preventing the car from becoming airborne and ensuring that the wheels do not damage the surface of the desert on which the record attempt will take place, planned to be the Hakskeen Pan Desert in South Africa.

Make sure that you don't miss this very interesting presentation and bring your family and friends, their children and their grandchildren. It's all free, including refreshments!

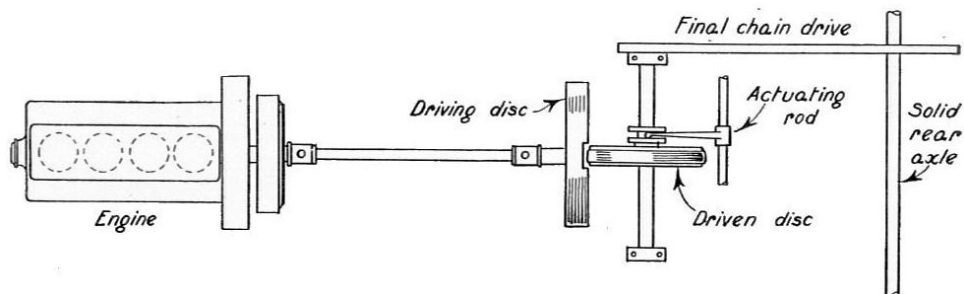
FROM THE PAST

100 YEAR AGO..."GWK Starts Car Production"

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor

GWK entered the car manufacturing field in 1911 when they produced a prototype car in Beckenham, Kent. The company derived its name from its three founders, Arthur Grice, J. Talford Wood and C. M. Keiller.

Their design featured a rear mounted vertical two cylinder Coventry-Simplex side valve engine. It was notable for having a continuously variable friction drive which eliminated the difficulties of gear changing. This was achieved by the engine turning a driving disc across which a driven disc could be moved from its centre to its periphery. Top speed would be achieved when the driven disc was at the periphery of the driving disc and, for reverse the driven disc would be moved back beyond the centre of the driving disc.



GWK friction drive with a front mounted four cylinder engine

GWK went into production in 1912, initially in Datchet, but moved to Maidenhead in 1914, the Model B being produced at this time (see photo opposite). After initially producing the Model B after the war as the Model E, a new front engined car, the Model F, was introduced in 1919. It had a 1368 cc four cylinder engine Coventry-Simplex with a drive train as shown in the diagram above. The Type H followed, which fixed the noisy transmission of the Model F, and 1700 Model F and H cars were produced by 1926 at which time production was ended due to stiff competition from the Austin 7 which was faster, more economical and cheaper to produce.

A Model G was introduced in 1930 which reverted to the rear engine configuration but very few cars were made and the company finally closed down in 1931.

GWK PHOTO GALLERY



A 1914 GWK B Type at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, 2009.
(Photo by Brian Snelson)



A 1921 GWK

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