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DRIVING ROAD SAFETY



DECADE OF ACTION FOR
ROAD SAFETY 2011-2020

TAUNTON GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS NEWSLETTER

Number 121

Winter 2011/12

www.tgam.org.uk

Photo Gallery

Festival of Transport



A line up of cars at the Ilton Festival of Transport (All photos by Peter Lonton)



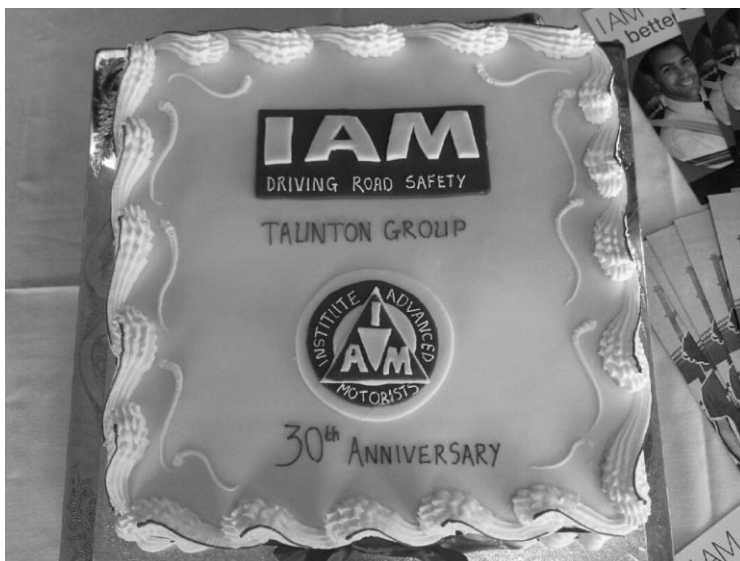
A 1932 Morris Minor belonging to Ted Cogger of Highbridge with a 1933 MG J2 to the right

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 bimonthly 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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ADVERTISING RATES:

Commercial Ads:

Full page (Portrait)	£10.00
Hall page (Landscape)	£7.50
Quarter Page (Portrait)	£5.00
Small ads:	£1.00 per line

Members' Personal Ads:

Full page	£3.00
Hall page	£1.50
Quarter Page	£0.75
Small ads:	Free

From the President

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

"...I feel strongly that the insidious disease of cancer is not something shameful to be swept under the carpet, but should be freely spoken about..."



THE END OF THE ROAD . . . Or from hillwalking to Blue Badge in three months

I feel that I owe members an explanation for my somewhat abrupt resignation from the Presidency and as a Group Observer. It is not due to an 'inappropriate' friendship with Adam Werrity – I'd never heard of him until the Liam Fox scandal came to light! No, a recent, sudden and dramatic decline in my health has necessitated a cessation of my non-domestic commitments. To put it bluntly, my life's journey has recently entered a one-way street from which there is only one exit

. . .

One can divide one's life into various phases and over the last thirteen years I have thought in terms of BC and AD: Before Cancer and After Diagnosis. Clearly there is an overlap between the two, particularly in the case of the rare and slow-growing thyroid cancer I have. Nonetheless BC/AD remains a convenient turning point in my life as it's all too true that life is never quite the same again after a cancer diagnosis.

It was in the summer of 1998 that I first noticed a lump in my lower neck which I thought may have been an insect bite. But as it did not shrink, in the autumn I went to my GP who referred me to a surgeon at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton. He took a needle sample which revealed no malignant cells but he decided that it would be best to remove the thyroid anyway. I was admitted to Musgrove about eleven days before Christmas for a complete thyroidectomy. After the surgery, instead of perking up, my condition deteriorated but the ward staff took little notice (a clear case of neglect according to a retired GP friend of mine) until they decided I was suffering from pancreatitis which is one of the most painful illnesses one can have. I was then put on Morphine and I was feeling rather light headed when the surgeon broke the news that a biopsy had revealed that I had Medullary Thyroid Cancer. There is no known cause. I seldom win anything in a raffle but had developed a rare disease with about only 35 new cases a year in

Britain – to put it into context, there are about six times as many new cases of male breast cancer which is regarded as very rare. I was eventually discharged from hospital on Christmas morning.

Ever since then I have had to take a daily dose of thyroxin, the hormone that regulates one's metabolism and which I call my HRT. Unlike the commoner forms of thyroid cancer, Medullary Cancer does not respond to radioactive iodine treatment, nor to chemotherapy, leaving only surgery as the principal weapon against it, so a few months later I was back in Musgrove. This time, lymph nodes were removed from my neck; and though this was a more complex operation, there were fortunately no painful complications.

My care was then transferred to the Bristol Royal Infirmary where I became a patient of the late Professor John Farndon, a great expert on Medullary Cancer. In early 2000, he removed another lump from my neck and ensured regular expensive scans. Like me, he was also an enthusiast for English Literature, with a particular love of John Betjeman. A couple of years later, I was upset to have a phone call from my GP to say that the *British Medical Journal*, had reported Professor Farndon's death in his mid fifties from a heart attack. It transpired that he had collapsed not long after a consultation I had had with him, so I was one of the last patients he ever saw. I was able to attend his packed memorial service at Bristol Cathedral, and one of my tributes to him was quoted in the order of service.

Another consultant then took over my care at Bristol – this eventually led in 2006 to a major operation on my neck and chest to remove a tumour from behind my sternum. Unfortunate collateral damage was the paralysis of half my vocal cords which left me with a weak voice. I have tried not to let this become socially isolating, but it explains why I have not been a very vocal President.

Late in 2007 I was referred to the Chelsea branch of Britain's leading cancer hospital – The Royal Marsden, which has involved many long day-trips to London by train via Crewkerne – to get to central London by First Great Western from Taunton by mid morning on a weekday would have been unaffordable. For three and a half years I took place on a trial of a very expensive drug, Sorafenib (financed by the drug company) which had shown some promising results with rarer thyroid cancers in addition to renal cancer. Earlier this year, unfortunately, it had ceased to work for me after the secondary tumours in my lungs and liver had initially shrunk, despite some unpleasant side effects, and I stopped taking it.

Between episodes of surgery, I had been able to live a reasonably normal life and take part in my wide range of outside interests and this continued until the middle of this year. Indeed in July my wife Jo and I had a break in Herefordshire to walk the Malvern Hills, but now I qualify

for a Blue Badge, such has been the rapid and frightening decline in my health since then. The bottom line is that I probably have only a few months to live.

I am writing this because I feel strongly that the insidious disease of cancer is not something shameful to be swept under the carpet, but should be freely spoken about. It has been one of my ways of coping. I am grateful to my friends in the Taunton Group who have kindly taken the trouble to send their best wishes at what is a very difficult time for Jo and me. I know that the Group is in the hands of a very capable committee and team of Observers.

TRIBUTES

I must say that John was a man of few words and those words spoken were always enough to inform. I remember John observing me for my Group Observer qualification (along with a few others) and conversation was sparse...but I did pass! John's words would always be concise, accurate and with meaning – never any drivel or rubbish. His commitment, devotion and drive towards and for the Taunton Group has always been immensely proactive and positive over all his attending years and I therefore only have a few last words to add:

John Pentney - a true gentleman, a valued wordsmith, dedicated Observer, Committee Member and Group President, your presence will be a monumental loss to the Taunton Group and the IAM.

Kevin G Grose – Chairman

A few weeks ago John decided to step down as TGAM President due to a sudden decline in his health. My first thoughts were how I would miss his wisdom, guidance and wit at our meetings, but his health and well-being is of greater importance, especially at this time. Since then, he has now sadly passed away leaving a huge void in all our lives.

Back in the late 1990's, John and I manned a TGAM stand in Asda's foyer, where we were confronted by a rather sceptical man who panned the IAM. We dealt with this by being ultra polite to him – I wonder if the fellow ever changed his mind!

John also trained me up to be an Observer many years ago – a role I was never able to take up due to a lack of Associate members at the time, followed by an increase in my work commitments.

My enduring memory of John over 17 years is his grace, dignity and integrity. Not only was he a gentle man, but a gentleman, and I will always hold him in the highest regard as a valued friend. May he rest in peace.

Serena Lonton, Group/Membership Secretary

A true gentleman in the true sense of the word. The Little Oxford Dictionary describes 'gentleman' as, man; chivalrous well-bred man; man of good social position. How can I, or anyone, not apply those attributes to our dear departed John Pentney.

I applied to join the IAM at the 1996 Motor Show. I can't remember now whether it was at the NEC in Birmingham or at Earls Court, London, but that doesn't matter. I had seen the IAM represented at previous Motor Shows and I decided in 1996 that the time was right. As I lived in Bishops Lydeard at the time, I was duly put in touch with the Taunton Group of Advanced Motorists. My appointed Observer was John Pentney, who was Group Chairman and a Group Observer. A more quietly-spoken and gentle man, I have never met, and have yet to meet another. John gently and quietly, pointed out the failings and weaknesses of my driving technique and then praised my use of the mirrors. Always finishing an after drive debrief on a positive note.

I went on to pass my Advanced Driving Test in January 1997, after which, John asked me, with no pressure or persuasion, if I would continue on to train as a Group Observer and then later to join the Group Committee. There was never any pressure or persuasion from John, I like many others, was just happy to comply. John had the knack of asking things in such a way that it was almost impossible to refuse a request.

As many of you know I was later elected Chairman of the TGAM and after the sad passing of our former President, John Carpenter, John Pentney was unanimously elected as the new President of the Group. I retired from the Chairmanship of the Group and withdrew as a Group Observer following heart bypass surgery in 2007. I have always maintained my membership of the TGAM and the IAM and I will always have a fondness and affection for the Group and a special fondness and affection for my memories of John Pentney.

Brian L. Howe, Former Chairman, Former Observer, Group Member 712-1005

It was John Pentney who trained me to be an Observer, and it was John who took me out on my qualification drive. I was expecting him to throw in all sorts of deliberate mistakes to test my observing skills but no, he just drove as immaculately as ever.

I have to thank John for being the perfect newsletter contributor. His pieces were always articulate, fascinating, topical and timely. His grammar, spelling and paragraph construction were perfect. I soon realised that I could quite happily publish his items without having to proof read them. Thank you, John, for making my life so much easier.

John Gilbert, Observer & Newsletter Editor

Please include my personal condolences to his family.

Andy Mayes, TGAM Member

How very sad. John was such a delightful man and I feel privileged that I was mentored by him to pass my IAM test this summer, when he must already have been very unwell. I much enjoyed our drives together and am grateful for the things that I was able to learn. As you so rightly say he was a great ambassador for the Institute. Thank you for letting me know this news. Best wishes.

Adrian Smith, TGAM Member

I was greatly saddened by the news that John Pentney has passed away. I was unaware that John was battling against a terminal illness, his demeanor did not show his struggle. The courage in his continuing involvement in the group activities was remarkable and his month by month contributions to the magazine showed his passion for the aims of safer motoring. I will not be attending the funeral, but my thoughts will be with his family on the 1st. Regards.

Ron Blake, TGAM Member

Really sorry to learn that John has passed away. I was very much aware of his on-going problems and recently I believe that the cancer spread. He will be very much missed within the group which he has supported for a long time. Although quiet he had an immense knowledge and forth-right views on a range of topics. I know that on the IAM quizzes which we attended he seemed to score most of the points!

Frank Richards, TGAM Member

I'm so sorry to hear that, my warmest wishes to you all.

Beth Webb, TGAM Member

I am saddened to learn that John passed away yesterday. Please convey my condolences to his wife and family – Thank you. Kind regards

David Woolfenden, TGAM Member

Many condolences to John's family and all at Taunton Group from Somerset Advanced Motorcyclists.

Peter Herridge, Secretary, Somerset Advanced Motorcyclists

I'm sorry to hear of your loss. Please pass on the condolences of Salisbury Plain Advanced Motorists to John's family.

Tony Jones, Salisbury Plain Advanced Motorists

Sorry to hear your sad news. Please pass our condolences to John's Family. I have notified both our Chairman Roger Jewell and Vice Chairman Roger Riddle. Best wishes.

Roger Foster, Secretary, Plymouth and District Advanced Motorists.

That's very sad. Please pass on my condolences. Kind regards.

Oz Warren, Chairman, Bristol Advanced Motorcyclists

I was saddened to learn of the passing of your Group President, John Pentney and although I only met him once he immediately struck as being a fine gentleman. Our condolences to you all, especially to Josephine and family and carry on the good work that you know John would want to see you all doing. Kind regards.

Roger Jewell, Chairman Plymouth and RLF

I am sorry to hear about the passing away of the Taunton Group's President.

I am sure he will be greatly missed by the Taunton Group.

Richard Furneaux, IAM Region 1 RCO

Very sad news about John Pentney, he was a valued and trusted member of the Taunton Group for many years.

Andy Ware, IAM Examiner

That is very sad news indeed – I always enjoyed John's lively contributions both to the magazine and at the meetings. He will be sincerely missed by many. Thanks.

Roy Scott

Alison and I are extremely sad to hear the news about the passing of John Pentney. He was indeed a true ambassador for IAM's and will so greatly missed. Yours sincerely.

John Budd

JOHN'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

19 October 1991	John joined TGAM
March 1992	Passed his ADT (Observer not known)
March 1993	Became Assistant Training Officer
March 1994	Became Vice-Chairman
October 1994	Elected Chairman (until September 2000)
September 1996	Became Assistant Training Officer again
September 2002	Qualified as Senior Observer
October 2008	Elected Group President

From the Chairman

**By Kevin G. Grose
Chairman**

"...John Pentney, a considerate person who will be very sadly missed and a great loss as a true Ambassador for road safety to both us, the Taunton Group and to the IAM as a whole..."



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

Unfortunately, I have to start with some very sad news that our Group President, John Pentney, has recently passed away. You will find John's honest and explanatory last article in his usual spot and I humbly pay tribute here and now, to a considerate person who will be very sadly missed and a great loss as a true Ambassador for road safety to both us, the Taunton Group and to the IAM as a whole. It is an end of another era and I sincerely relay my condolences to Josephine and John's son. My sincere wishes are with them both.

Second item of imminent news – Bill Coltham has resigned from his role as Chief Observer and Committee Member and Steve Selby, one of our "paused" Observers, has also resigned from his role due to a proposed move to Devon. I sincerely wish them both well in all they do in the future.

Thirdly, I also have stood down as one of our other Group Observers for the time being and it had also been my wish to stand down as your Group Chairman. However, in light of the other more important relative arising issues and some current Group matters, you may appreciate I cannot do this now and therefore, I have been re-elected at the recent AGM to be your Group Chairman for at least for the next year. I hope I can continue to benefit the Group in whatever way I can whilst serving in this crucial role.

Lastly on the sad news part – I have just lost my faithful companion of thirteen years – my Border Collie called Lucky – crazy and unpredictable but 100% faithful and a true friend now at peace.

Now some good news hopefully. Well, you've got me for another year but I'm not sure if that is sad or good – only you can tell me that! We do have three new Committee Members including a new Group Treasurer – brilliant. Our other two new Committee Members will also bring much needed new blood into the Group and with their respective backgrounds, I am sure the Taunton Group will continue to forge ahead in the future to the benefit of all our Members.

More good news – the AGM appeared to go very well and I think we managed to present a reasonably professional operation to our IAM HQ representatives – Caroline Holmes and Ben Schofield although I am told it's no longer IAM HQ – they like to be referred to as "Chiswick" now – it's more relative and nationally locative...OK!

The Group's finances appear to be sound although we are currently standing still – not too bad in the present economic climate.

We now have a stronger team of Group Observers who are still achieving high test passes through their continuing dedication and efforts given to the cause. Our ongoing training regime/scheme implemented by Bill Coltham (Chief Observer) and Alan Thomson (Training Officer) continues to deliver the goods –very good news.

Our 30th Anniversary Luncheon was well supported – more good news and our 2011 Christmas luncheon bookings are going well – great news on both fronts.

Even better news is that in today's national newspaper, it has finally been officially recognised that the average car is more eco friendly and has a lesser carbon footprint than a bus as most buses only ever carry 15 passengers at the most which makes them 66% inefficient on a 45 seater bus and at least 50% ineffective on a 32 seater bus – the car wins...again! Don't get me wrong as I fully support those that need to use a bus when an appropriate bus is available; is on time; is reasonably priced; efficient; clean and can fit in with MY requirements to conduct my normal business. In 53 years, this has not happened to date, hence I drive my own car which official figures now tell me is better than the bus – thank you!

What does annoy me and this is very sad news, is that all us conscientious motorists have been contributing vast amounts of our own hard earned money towards something that has been grossly inefficient and ineffective for so many years now and recently have had to pay vastly increased car parking charges to continue to subsidise a service that is now officially declared as partially useless and not fully used to the effect we have been led to believe. The amount "conned" from the motorists must run into many millions, if not billions of pounds over so many years – it is absolutely unbelievably ludicrous – we have paid many, many times over for the privilege for the right to drive our more eco friendly and less carbon foot printed cars to enable the councils and government to mislead us in to thinking that the "bus" is the way forward – OMG!

**1981-2011 30 YEARS OF
ROAD SAFETY TRAINING BY TGAM**

'Straight On'

By Bill Coltham
Former Chief Observer

"...My Special Award goes to Alan Thomson
for all his efforts..."



CHIEF OBSERVER'S REPORT TO THE AGM

I report on a year that has seen a reduction in the numbers of new members and those going for the ADT in the Group. This may seem a little depressing starting like this but, getting the poor news out of the way now, means I hope to end positively.

Number of Associates, October 2010 to September 2011

We have seen 27 members go through our system over the year compared to 46 last year, and 38 the previous year. The number of new Associates in the year has been 16 compared with 28 last year, and there have been 15 passes in that time, compared to 14 last year. The 55% pass rate is higher than previous years, with no failures this year. The number of 'drop outs' for whatever reason is 11, also lower than previous years.

The figures are always confusing as they reflect that Associates take differing lengths of times to gain the skills necessary to pass the ADT and don't always neatly fit into the October to September time frames. However it seems clear, to me at least, that a higher proportion of tests are successful.

Observers

We have a total of 13 Observers. Two are Senior Observers; Colin White re-qualified with a national test last year, and I with a local test with Andy Ware this year. Of the remaining eleven, one is 'paused' at the moment due to a health issue, with all others active.

I would like to send our best wishes to the President, John Pentney, an Observer too, who is not well and is in hospital at this moment.

Observers carried out 346 hours of observed drives with Associates last year, pre Test Assessment Drives, and re-qualification drives. The previous year it was 331 hrs, amazingly a few less.

All Observers are allocated their Associates by me, using a criteria that attempts to match the new Associate to my knowledge of the Observer, and to the geographical location of both. We all have lives to lead and Observers have time constraints in their personal lives that I am informed about or get to know!

All Observers are in one of two teams led by a Team Leader, Colin or Alan Thomson. The Team Leaders undertake Pre Test Assessment Drives which gives them knowledge of the Observers' skills as well as the Associates'. I am in discussion with them about issues that arise.

There are times when it is in the interests of the Associate that they change Observers- differing skills of Observers can be a key change in the attitude of the Associate- leading to a much coveted pass of the ADT. I believe that this strategy is now leading to a better pass rate, as we ring the changes from time to time.

Observer Training/Re-qualifying.

I have been carrying out re-qualifying drives for a number of Observers. All have passed and a couple more are in the pipe-line. Some have been a little surprised when I asked them to show 'flair' and 'joy de vivre' in their drives to me. No pedantic, technically super correct, slow drives - show you enjoy the driving to your Associates, which may then rub off on others and encourage more to come to us. Let us all show we enjoy our driving to the general public - cast off the old age, flat cap image that the IAM is reputed to have.

Our Training Officer, and a Team Leader, Alan Thomson, has conducted an Observer initial course over the year. Taken in our Members' evenings, in a little room at the side of this hall, Alan has combined theory with practical drives, leading to a final test with me. I am pleased that we have two new Observers, Tony Hucker and Janet Loader, and that I was able to allocate an Associate to each within days of their passing the final test.

We have now had four new Observers join the teams in the past two years.

Having attended the recent IAM Car Conference at Warwick University, I can see that our Training Course is matching the ethos and skill mix of the proposals for the new Observer course. I intend to inject some of the training skills mentioned at the Conference into our training this year, and to continue to encourage our Members and Observers to shout loud about the successes of our Group, to encourage retention of new Members and a helpful and considerate approach by all of our Group to the public, who may be our future members. Enjoy your driving-don't be a slow coach!



We have had no major training exercise for Observers this year, but have included in our Members evenings some aspects of driving- a New Technology evening recently being a particular success. We will run an evening or two in the New Year, just for Observers.

Senior Observers

It's important that Observers strive to improve and update their skills, and training for the Senior qualification is one way of doing just that. We have had a number of Trainee Senior Observers over the past years, and we have two at the present. Sadly, one failed his test with Andy Poulton last year, but is bouncing back and will have a go again soon. We do all we can to encourage and help them, but the qualification is no easy walk over, quite rightly.

Last year I indicated that I would resign this year, for Observers to be given an opportunity to choose their Chief Observer after three years, and I did so in August. An election was run by the Chairman, and they elected me again! So much for trying to escape. Thanks guys.

Thanks to Observers

The core business of the Group is to help and support Associates to pass their ADT, and Observers do just that. It's not any easy task and is done in one's spare time, with their enthusiasm for driving and training.

One such Observer with a long and distinguished record of passes to his belt is our Chairman, Kevin Grose. For personal reasons, Kevin has stood down as an Observer just recently, but fortunately, not as our Chairman. I would like to thank him personally, but I am sure that all or you would join in as the Group and thank him for his past efforts to get many of you through your ADT.

Other Events

We have had no Drive Checks or Max Control type of events this year, but we have just started to offer an informal test to our Members who may have had no update training for several years, and be a little rusty. I have been asking them to ensure they know the System, and the Handbook inside out before their drive, and hope they keep themselves up to date as well.

Our Friends.

Our Regional Liaison Officer, Richard Furneaux, our Examiners Andy Poulton and Andy Ware, the other Roger Ware and Dougie Milner who test our Associates on occasions, and are all an integral part of our organisation. We value your support and friendship. Putting up with the jokes is not a real trial, even if we groan when we hear the same one several times. Thanks, Gents.

And Finally,

Thanks to the committee for putting up with my ideas, my groans and requests for Observers, and welcome to the new members joining this team.

But particularly, thanks to one of us who has put in just a special amount into the Group this year, working things out from scratch and just getting on with it. His year has been a little difficult personally, yet he has contributed magnificently.

My Special Award goes to Alan Thomson for all his efforts, his contribution to the Training of our new Observers, and for his support and involvement in all parts of the Group this past year.



DECEMBER MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents

A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

**Wednesday, 21st December at 7:30 pm
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall**

Members' Pages

**By Serena Lonton
Membership Secretary**

"...Many thanks for your continued support.
Happy and safe motoring!..."



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

A little update – we have had a good number of membership renewals since 1st October, so at the time of printing we have 110 fully paid up members with 36 who have not yet renewed their membership from last year. Included in the 110 are six new members who have joined TGAM.

Our numbers have reduced slightly from last year due to a number of reasons, but probably mostly due to the economic situation.

However the "Skill for Life" programme is still a worthwhile and enjoyable experience, with the benefits of being able to drive safely and economically, so tell everyone you know about it!

Hopefully that will lead to our numbers increasing and more people enjoying our excellent Newsletter.

Many thanks for your continued support. Happy and safe motoring!

DE MORTUIS – Roger Sutton

It is with great sadness that TGAM received the news that Roger passed away in September.

Roger joined the TGAM in November 1991 and has been a loyal member ever since, joining the committee in 1993 having passed his ADT in March the same year. He then resigned from the committee in September 1994.

Roger owned a Mini, which he adapted to accommodate his wife's wheelchair by literally raising the roof! His car was often seen around Taunton causing many a double-take. Sadly his wife passed away a few years ago.

Our sympathies go to Roger's family and friends.

Thanks go to Julia Steer for her notes on Roger Sutton

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>
Matthew Scotter	Taunton	Full Member
Philip Major	Burnham-on-Sea	Associate
Alan Baker	Bridgwater	Associate
Michael Keough	Chapel Cleeve	Associate
Joanne Clements	Wiveliscombe	Associate
Isobel Jennings	Broadway	Associate

ADVANCED DRIVING TEST PASSES

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

	<u>OBSERVED BY</u>
Nicholas Tapp	Ron Holdom
Adrian Smith	John Pentney
Brian Buzzard	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. We would like to present successful candidates with their pass certificates at one of our Members' Evenings.

MARCH MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents



NURSING IN NORTHERN CANADA

By Committee Member

JANET LOADER

Wednesday, 21st March at 7:30 pm
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall

Group Observers

	TEAM WEST	TEAM EAST
TEAM LEADERS	Colin White (01823 257196)	Alan Thomson (01460 55919)
SENIOR OBSERVERS	Colin White	
TRAINEE SENIOR OBSERVERS		Alan Thomson John Gilbert
OBSERVERS	Guy Denton Tony Hucker Faye Markham Russ Williams	Ron Holdom Janet Loader 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 Group Chairman, Kevin Grose.

--- **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	
Nick Tapp	07900 900678	

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.)

The Calendar

All displays, events and talks, etc., are 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 Events page of the Group Website at www.tgam.org.uk or by contacting any of the Committee Members.

**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**

DECEMBER			
21	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening – A Christmas Quiz
JANUARY 2012			
28	Sa		Regional Liaison Forum (tbc)
FEBRUARY			
9	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
15	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening – Car Maintenance
MARCH			
10	Sa		NRG Meeting
21	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening - Nursing in Northern Canada
APRIL			
12	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
18	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening
MAY			
16	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening
JUNE			
9	Sa		NRG Meeting
10	Th	7:30 pm	Committee Meeting (Committee Members only)
20	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening – Classic Car Evening
JULY			
18	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

REGIONAL LIAISON FORUM - 21st SEPTEMBER

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor

It was all arranged. I would meet Bill Coltham at M5 J23 and he would drive us both up to Portishead for the Regional Liaison Forum (RLF). Then, just before I left the house, the phone rang. It was Bill; he was sick so I would be on my own. No problem, a quick look at Memory Map and Google Earth on my laptop to plan my route (no SATNAV for me) and off I went with just one lingering doubt. Would I be able to get into the Avon & Somerset Constabulary as they had required car registration numbers to be notified in advance, and only Bill's had been supplied.

After a pleasant drive I reached the Constabulary and was let through the barrier by remote control and proceeded to the parking area through amazingly attractive grounds. The £31m headquarters were built in the early 1990s on a 47 acre site which used to be known as Highlands Farm. It still has a wide variety of wildlife and features a Japanese garden. The Portishead Down Training Centre is located on the site and that is where the RLF was held, in its very well equipped main conference room.



Part of the extensive grounds at
the Avon & Somerset
Constabulary's Headquarters in
Portishead

After registration and refreshments the first item was the Chairman's welcome and introduction by Roger Jewell. Apologies for absence were then read out, including Bill's, followed by approval of the minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising. Next came the Regional Coordinator's Report by Richard Furneaux, This was followed by the Chairman's Report by Roger Jewell who mentioned the Taunton group's upcoming 30th anniversary, gave his congratulations, and announced the upcoming celebratory lunch at which point someone in the audience asked whether it would be free! The secretary, Jane Percy, then gave a short report during which she promised that the meeting minutes would be available earlier in future. The treasurer, Carol Shergold, reported that the funds currently stood at £3000. It was agreed that we didn't need that much and there was some discussion on how to reduce the amount. Carol promised to e-mail the groups to

Solicit ideas on how to reduce the funds. A provisional date of January 28th was suggested for the next RLF but who would host it?

Dave Shenton then gave an IAM House update. Some of the items he mentioned were that managers Lyn and Sandra are sinking under their workload, group mail is now dead, the SfL packages, produced by an external company, have gone out for re-tender, and in the first half of the financial year £4K worth of pens were supplied to the groups. He also mentioned that the problem with the supply of observers' bags was due to the fact that with the red or green interiors they were special order and could only be ordered in large quantities. If they were simply black it would ease the situation.

This was followed by a very interesting and impressive presentation by Dr. Catherine Lloyd, one of three IAM Trustees who sit on the NRG. She gave a very comprehensive presentation on exactly what the Trustees duties are. Dr. Lloyd is a Senior Observer with the Newbury group and assists with the training of Associates and Observers. She also holds a RoSPA Advanced Driving Instruction Diploma. She enjoys driving, and the occasional track day, as well as playing piano and harpsichord.

Roger Jewell then spoke on the National Representatives Group (NRG). Some of the items mentioned were that 25% of the groups had less than 50 members, most groups didn't want mobiles, the average group fee was £17.50, and Roger promised to circulate his meeting minutes out to the groups as the official minutes were inaccurate.

Andy Poulton then had a few words to say. He mentioned that there has to be at least one score of 4 to fail an ADT candidate. Examiners have just three weeks to contact and conduct an ADT – if you don't hear, do something (check junk mail, for example).

In Roger Jewell's National Representatives Group (NRG) report he mentioned that NRG meetings would be held four times a year from next year and only two representatives from each group would attend. After a break the delegates were split into Car and Motorcycle groups.

At 1:00 it was time for lunch which was taken in the nearby restaurant. Reconvening at 2:00 pm Martin Evans, secretary of the Bristol group gave his fascinating talk on the Bloodhound SSC Supersonic Car Project which TGAM had the pleasure of hearing several months earlier. The meeting broke up at 3:30 followed by an uneventful drive home.



The facility's restaurant

TGAM 30th ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON AT



30th

30th

Is it our newsletter that brings a smile to Andy Poulton's face – or is it just the bread roll?

30th

30th



Committee members past, present and new, cut the Anniversary cake

OAKE MANOR GOLF CLUB – 1st OCTOBER



30th

30th

One of several tables enjoying an excellent lunch on a warm, sunny October afternoon



30th

30th

Richard Furneaux presents Kevin Grose with a Certificate of Appreciation for 30 years service by the Taunton Group

Members' Evening

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor

21st SEPTEMBER – NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The first item on the agenda was the presentation of an Advanced Driving Test Pass Certificate to David Horne by his Observer, Bill Coltham. This was followed by a number of news items. It was announced that group members would be offered free reassessment drives by one of our Observer body if they so wished at no cost. Members were then reminded about the upcoming 30th Anniversary Lunch and the AGM. It was also announced that, although



David Horne receives his
ADTCertificate from Chief Observer,
Bill Coltham

they performed brilliantly, our quiz team had not succeeded in winning the Inter Group Quiz (again).

The remainder of the evening was taken up with looking at developing technology in modern cars. Four of our members kindly demonstrated the new technology in their vehicles, namely David Horne with his Range Rover, Tony Hucker with his luxurious Jaguar XF Turbo Diesel, Russ Williams with his equally luxurious BMW 5-series Tourer but probably the star of the evening was the Park Assist demonstrated by Bill Coltham in his VW Tiguan.

FEBRUARY MEMBERS' EVENING Car Maintenance

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

24th SEPTEMBER – WESTON TRAINING DAY

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor

The Regional Observers Training Day, hosted by the Weston Group, was held at Puxton Park in Hewish. The purpose of the day was to permit all participants to share their Observer knowledge and to enhance their skills by practical involvement. There were a total of 17 delegates representing Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Melksham, Swansea, Taunton but mostly, of course, Weston. Of the 17, two were Senior Observers, two were Trainee Senior Observers, 11 were Observers and there were two Trainee Observers. One amusing incident, at least I thought it was amusing, was that one of the delegates was late. When the other delegates from his group were asked if they knew whether he was coming or not they claimed they had never heard of him. Upon his eventual arrival he explained that he had been an Observer with that group for over ten years! At least we are better organised than they are.

The day started with a presentation on Observer Coaching Skills by IAM Staff Examiner, Andy Poulton. Then it was time to drive. I was paired with the other Trainee Senior Observer, John Tibbs, the Devon Group's Vice Chairman and Skills Co-ordinator and we were very fortunate in having Alan Hale, Senior Road Safety Officer for South Glos Council as our examiner. John and I took it in turns to be driver or

Observer. The subjects of the four sessions were cornering and managing bends, the application of the system (IPSGA), overtaking and entry and exit from motorways.

All in all it was a thoroughly enjoyable day and I am sure that John Tibbs would agree that we both benefitted greatly from Alan Hale's experience and mentoring. I would thoroughly recommend all members of our observing team to take advantage of any similar training day in the future.



Trainee Senior Observer John Tibbs and IAM Examiner, Alan Hale in front of the author's BMW 323i

IAM CAR CONFERENCE - 8th OCTOBER

By Bill Coltham
Chief Observer

Ere we go again, another Car Conference being held in the Rootes Building of the Warwick and Coventry Uni - same ole faces and hundreds of tables set out for the 300 or so delegates.

Usual motivational type presentations to get us all out selling the message to the same old (and I mean old) faces of the public who might be half interested in joining our ranks...but actually No!

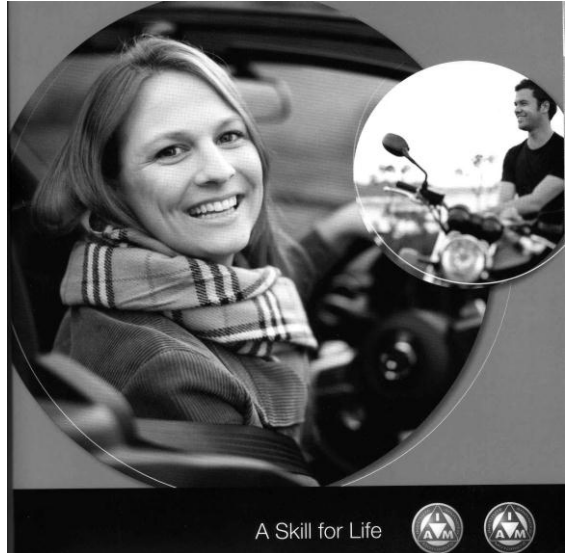
The last time I went, two years ago, I came away with the Newsletter of the Year award [actually joint runner up - Ed.] (well done, John) and was feeling rather pleased for the Group. This time, may I say it now... No we didn't!

Stoked up with caffeine as usual I found my way to Table Number ONE - important or no? No, not important, the furthest away from the action, Number ONE has to start somewhere.

Met my fellow delegates from Shropshire, Dewsbury and Batley, Widnes, Runcorn, Aberdeen (flew down) and Milton Keynes, and Rob Downing, a M/C Examiner. And the Voice...Oh Dear...the one who had to question everything he was told, and then some - like me but ten times worse! But there we go.

The welcomes from the Chairman, updates on IAM issues, open question time, all took the same format, and has been repeated within our Group, first by Andy Poulton when he visited on behalf of Richard Furneaux, and the AGM presentation on communication.

So what made it a little different this year?



IAM
DRIVING ROAD SAFETY

The three workshops held during the day, on Observer qualification, Member retention and Trusted Adviser.

Of the three, the **Trusted Adviser** workshop was novel.

A presentation involving actors, one of whom purporting to be an IAM Member in a 'shopping precinct' endeavouring to 'sell is wares' to members of the public by handing out leaflets and speaking about the IAM. We were encouraged to participate, offer suggestions and comments to the actors who modified their 'behaviour' to suit the lady member of the public.

Clearly we were given the 'worst' and the 'best' of the behaviours by the actors, and judged the end result by speaking to the actors themselves to gauge how they felt they had been treated. An interesting approach which went down well with most.

In our Group in Taunton we are moving on well with our approach to new members. We process them quickly and efficiently, and encourage them to join in with the social side of the 'business'- I think. Do we really though, and I hope we can discuss these issues firstly in committee, then in the wider audience of the Group-the suggestion by Andy to have a discussion group could well fit the bill.

Is it worth going all the way to Coventry for the Conference? It's worth it in my opinion if anyone wishes to have a wider look at the organisation, and to appreciate more of the structure. There is much going on that we do not take much notice of in our countryside neck of the wood.

I would support any Member, committee or not, to attend if they have the interest. Just ask next year!! Oh, Yes! And what happened to the Voice? He got silenced...!



I AM
a trusted adviser

Committed to road safety
USE IDEAS, YOUR IMAGINATION
AND COMMITMENT

Develop relationships
TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS YOU
HAVE TO COMMUNICATE

Trusted adviser
PEOPLE BUY TRUST FIRST
PRODUCT SECOND

BY THE WAY – nothing to do with the conference, but you all failed me. What do I mean? Well, I still have the bottle! See the last newsletter.

Members' Evening

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor

19th OCTOBER – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM opened with Chairman Kevin Grose welcoming the two Andys (Poulton and Ware) and reading out apologies from President John Pentney, Roger Jewell, Region 1 Regional Liaison Forum Chairman and Martin Evans, Bristol Group Secretary.

The previous year's minutes were then approved with no corrections. Kevin then read his Chairman's Report which is shown below:

"This is my third annual report as your Chairman of the Taunton Group of Advanced Motorists and I hope it will be accepted as an accurate, true and valid indication of the current activities, aims and results of the Group to date. The Group continues to thrive, survive and aims to continue to improve especially within the present economic climate.

Right the bad bits first – the Committee needs a few more members to help spread the increasing load already being borne by the present few, we really do need a Treasurer. Costs are increasing and we are trying various things to keep things running smoothly and efficiently but more on that with the Treasurer's Report later. We have not attended any outside events – mainly due to costs and the lack of invites.

Our Group President, John Pentney, has some impending health issues and I take this opportunity to sincerely wish him well as can be expected in the given circumstances. John has been there for the Group for many, many years quietly working away and achieving the necessary results whether with Committee issues, Observer issues or in his present role as our Group President – I sincerely do wish him well.



Kevin Grose presents
John Gilbert, Newsletter
Editor, with the
Chairman's Award for
2011

Due to financial cut backs, our own Somerset Road Safety Partnership friends have taken a huge hit this year, therefore introducing a forced reigning in of resources and support to all those within Somerset in relation to the road safety organisations linked to the Partnership.

Unfortunately, we have had to put our Membership fees up this year to try and keep on an even keel. We have tried to keep any travel

expenses down to a minimum bearing in mind that, with the extortionate cost of fuel these days, no one can expect our volunteer Committee Members to attend outside events and fund then from their own pockets – same goes for our Observers who attend the necessary courses/training days, etc., your Committee has agreed to fund all necessary mileage costs to enable the required IAM requests to be met and maintained – if we do not have properly trained Observers, we cannot process the new Associates correctly. Safety costs and it is a cost that has to be borne by the Group.

So, I hope you will all realise that we are doing the very best we can with the very little that we have got. We will continue to try and improve things whilst ensuring a value for money policy for all our Members. There are many things we want to do but they all cost money – a lot of money. There are some things we HAVE to do that will cost us money and there are things we will need to do that are going to cost us more money.

Now, the good bits – this is our 30th Anniversary Year – 1981 to 2011 – the Taunton Group is now 30 years old and I believe we still have a few of the original members here tonight who started all this over 30 years ago because we were originally a sub group to the much larger Exeter Group. You must appreciate that much has changed in that time: the cars, the roads, the technology – SATNAV, CD players, iPod, MP3, Bluetooth, Park Assist, Traction Control, ABS, etc., etc., the list is becoming endless now – technology marches on but what about the drivers? Have they changed over the last 30 years? Have you changed your driving skills over the last 30 years? I bet you've changed



Chief Examiner Andy Poulton presents
Adrian Smith with his ADT Certificate

your car many, many times over the last 30 years. So, 30 years – a third of a lifetime gone and we are still here. I thank you all for your continued support given over all those years and I sincerely hope that will continue in the future. We held our 30th Anniversary Luncheon at Oake Manor Golf Club on the 1st October – a great event enjoyed by all who attended.

Other events this AGM year – Suzi White, Red Cross; 2010 Christmas Luncheon, Your Chairman, Christmas Quiz; Terry Beale, Somerset Road Safety Partnership and Road Traffic Incident Investigator; Jim Newman, SRSP Coordinator; David Guy, Shelterbox; Andy Mayes, HGVs; Martin Evans, Bloodhound SSC; Group Classic Car evening; Paul Youd, Bread Making; Andy Poulton, IAM News and our recent Group Car Technology evening. We have attended the RLFs, Regional Observer Training Days, Haynes Motor Museum, the IAM Inter Group Quiz and the IAM National Conference to mention but a few and we still have our annual Christmas Luncheon at Oake (Sat, 3rd December) and a couple Members' Evenings to come.

I think you could say we have tried to provide a varied, interesting and informative sequence of events for your entertainment and I must thank all the Committee and those Members, who have stepped forward to provide a presentation for the rest of the Group Members, for all your hard work and effort to make sure everything runs to plan – it is not easy to do, but it can be done with the right amount of help, input and commitment. We will continue to do this for you, the Members. If you have an idea that's viable, then please tell us and we will try to accommodate it.

Your Group Committee/Observers continue to strive to provide a professional image to all who have dealings with the Group. We invite, welcome, process, accommodate and support all new Associates and enquirers to help them achieve their goals to improve their driving skills, experience and qualifications. We try to continue to be



Chief Examiner Andy Poulton presents Brian Buzzard with his ADT Certificate

conscientious, polite, punctual and methodical in our approach to helping them achieve their goals. No one likes their driving skills to be criticised or pulled apart but we encourage, guide and show all Associates the necessary route to improve their skills for the future, for their life as it is a "Skill for Life" and I fully believe we, as a joined Group, achieve this aim confidently and safely. Our Chief Observer, Bill Coltham will update you all with any Observer issues in his following report.



IAM Examiner Andy Ware presents Nick Tapp with his ADT Certificate

Finally, I wish to thank you all for attending tonight. I thank all our Observers for your continued support and hard work and I fully appreciate you all carry out this work way beyond the normal call of duty and devote so much free time "to the cause". I need to personally thank Tony Hucker for joining us this year and taking on quite a few tasks straight away; I need to thank Faye Markham for all the "kitchen duties" at our Members' Evenings; I need to thank Alan Thomson for his role as our Training Officer and a great big thank you to Bill Coltham for overseeing everything "observer" related. I thank John Gilbert for the excellent quality and presentation of our Group Newsletter and lastly, I thank Serena Lonton for not only being the Group Secretary but also being the Membership Secretary and the joint Group Treasurer for the last year. I sincerely thank you all."

The Chairman's Annual Report was followed by a report by Bill Coltham, Chief Observer, on the activities of the Observer body. This report is shown in full under **'Straight On'** on pages 14 and 15 of this edition. He ended his report by presenting an award to Alan Thomson, our Training Officer for his contributions to the training of new observers and his support in other areas (see page 15 for details and photo - Ed.).

Then came several other awards. Firstly Kevin Grose presented his Chairman's Award for 2011 to John Gilbert for his work on the

Group newsletter and for other contributions. This was followed by the award of three Advanced Driving Test Certificates by Staff Examiner Andy Poulton. The first was to Adrian Smith who had been observed by John Pentney, Brian Buzzard observed by Colin White, and Nicholas Tapp who had been observed by Ron Holdom. Nick was also congratulated by Examiner Andy Ware for gaining membership to the F1RST Register. Next came some comments from both Andy Poulton and Andy Ware who always prove to be both enlightening and highly entertaining.

To conclude the evening there were two presentations by Chiswick personnel, the first by Communications Manager, Ben Schofield and the second by Senior Communications Officer, Caroline Holmes. Ben urged



Senior Communications Officer
Caroline Holmes and Ben Schofield,
Communications Manager

members to take part in the IAM polls; he said that IAM policy would be based on the views of its member rather than the views of a few experts. He also stated that the IAM only gets about 40% of the level of media coverage enjoyed by the AA although the IAM did only cover safety aspects.

Upcoming campaigns would include Winter Driving, an evaluation of how well advanced driving works, behaviour reports on young

drivers attitude to road safety and the effects of in car distractions (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and a young driver campaign. He noted that when Blackberry went down recently there was a 20% drop in the number of accidents. He also mentioned that the IAM was broadly in favour of the 80 mph speed limit on motorways but would want a pilot test first.

Finally Caroline provided some useful information on what was available for our use on various websites. Firstly she mentioned the winter driving campaign at www.drivingadvice.org.uk which is well worth taking a look at as winter approaches. She also mentioned www.iam-groupsmarketing.co.uk which contains a lot of useful items such as logos, posters and images which we could use for our own marketing purposes, and gave us the username and password. Lastly she said that we could get help with proof writing and invitations, creating media lists and sending letters to lapsed members, etc. and gave the appropriate e-mail address, press.office@iam.org.uk.

THE CHAIRMAN'S SOLD HIS "SHED"...

**By Kevin G Grose
Chairman**

Yes – the "Shed" has gone – my beloved old red coloured Astra Estate commonly known as the "Shed" by some, is finally gone but not gone too far away as I believe it is now regularly commuting between Taunton and Tiverton each day. So although it is gone, it is not forgotten and is still very much alive!



The Shed



Renault Scenic MPV

With the "Shed" now gone, I have had to replace it with something else but what would be appropriate? Well, it's been replaced by what I initially thought was a very inappropriate vehicle – a Renault Scenic MPV. However, it appears that this vehicle has been absolutely ideal for everything I have asked from it recently. It's perfect for carrying out road traffic surveys; it's an excellent towing vehicle; it's perfect for transporting dogs – even my daughter's massive Dogue de Bordeaux and he is a BIG bully boy!

But no problem for the Scenic – it goes well; it handles well; it's quiet, quick and reasonably economical for its size, much better

the Astra. In fact, it's brilliant apart from one little niggle – its engine immobiliser system. Don't get me wrong but it does work very well and it does completely immobilise the vehicle but there are many, many times I wish it wouldn't! I know it only takes a few seconds to rectify but it is slightly annoying at times and apart from that, it really is a brilliant all round vehicle – well done Renault.



Suzuki Swift Cirrus



Fiat Doblo

So, what's really in a name – is my present Renault really any different from my outgoing Vauxhall "Shed"? Let's start at the beginning – my Opel Manta is made by Opel which is really General Motors (GM); my outgoing Vauxhall Astra is made by Vauxhall which again, is really General Motors (GM); my daughter's recently sold Suzuki Swift (the older model) is made by Suzuki which I believe has major connections to General Motors (GM); my previous Vauxhall Corsa "Tractor" (it did have a crude diesel engine) – again GM made – ok, Isuzu engine actually which is also owned by GM; many new Renault/Vauxhall vans are identical in shape, size, engines, etc., only the names are different...guess what, GM is involved again; our present Fiat Doblo "Tractor" uses a Vauxhall diesel engine – GM springs to mind again, so it appears no matter what you may

think you are buying by the indicated name, it may be a completely different vehicle that lies under the skin which brings me onto our latest addition to the fleet. Is it or is it not?

It is a Chevrolet and yes, it is another GM vehicle. I know it's not a real Chevrolet in the vein of the old American muscle car theme but it is a Chevrolet...or is it? It is definitely a GM vehicle and originally comes from another GM subsidiary of Korean descent which I also believe has used older discontinued GM Vauxhall production processes and equipment to produce their vehicles which is not such a bad thing as most GM vehicles perform well, handle well and are well built and there isn't much wrong with that in the real world.

So, "we took the Chevy to the levy, but the levy was dry" as the song goes...and the levy was dry on the day we went anyway! It therefore appears that General Motors (GM) have many fingers in many pies and it also appears we have sampled quite a bit of "their" pie over the years and all has been good to date. So – is the GM Chevy good? Yes it is; it's quick, quiet, smooth and easy to drive and everything is where it needs



Chevrolet Tampa MPV

to be – no stupid gimmicks or unnecessary toys – it does the job and it does it extremely well; it a very impressive vehicle – very well done to General Motors again.

That then only leaves one question – can I actually "drive the Chevy to the levy" when it's NOT dry? Watch this space...!

Chairman Grose ...eater/supporter of the GM American Pie!

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**Closing Date for the
Spring, 2012 issue of
the TGAM Newsletter
is Sunday, 22nd
January, 2012.
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.**

IS THIS REALLY A STRETCH TOO FAR?

By Kevin G. Grose
Chairman

How far is too far? Have you heard the saying, "I'm going down for a long stretch? What does it mean? Is it a good thing? Is it safe?

I don't really know – it depends on your personal opinion, like Marmite – you either love it or hate it and the same can be said for some stretched limousines, love them or hate them, it's your choice.

How about this one then? Like it, love it...or despise it and hate it?



It is long and it is stretched but it is also very PINK and because it is very PINK and very long, do you love it/hate it, even more maybe?

At one time, this type and colour of vehicle were all the rage – they were in vogue/fashion/demand – you just had to be seen about town in a stretch limo...even a bright PINK one, but is it really a stretch too far? Have the normally conceived limits been well and truly broken? By limits, I do mean both the colour and the overall length of this particular vehicle. It is very long measuring about 9.5 metres to the younger members and just over 31 feet to the older members – that is a long car compared to the average saloon being about 3.5/4 metres long. It really is a big car to drive, park and move around especially as it is also left hand drive – yes, you do sit on the wrong side of the lane on our small, quaint British roads.

Its turning circle is also limited as it does not "bend" in the middle to get around some of our corners. It is NOT easy to manoeuvre, even with power assisted everything – brakes, steering, seats, windows, mirrors, automatic gearbox, etc., and not only that, because it is so

long, you also have to watch out for grounding it's underbelly in the middle on some speed humps or excessive undulations in our roads – a limousine with its exhausts inconveniently removed by an abrupt sleeping policeman is not how any limousine should be heard!

So, it's an absolute nightmare to negotiate our small roads in this big car on both the two levels of horizontal and vertical plains – not much fun for the poor driver. Of course, the passengers are listening to the vast stereo system; watching TV in the back; quaffing champagne or just posing like they are film stars; the latest celebrity or something...this is a posing car – that is what it was built for – ideal for posers; wannabes and of course the school proms! Now, what about the colour? Is it the right colour for the car? Is it the right colour for any car? Can it carry off this colour because of the type of car it is? Again, it's all down to personal choice – the Marmite factor or test, love it or hate it.

All I will say, is that it's very PINK colour absolutely guarantees 100% that you will be noticed anywhere...and I do mean, ANYWHERE you go within the UK. How can anyone fail to notice a huge, very PINK, long American stretch limousine with an immense white vinyl roof pulling up outside, or alongside anywhere it wants to? If you miss this one, then you must be blind – you cannot fail to see it and maybe that's the whole concept of having a vehicle like this – it is especially made to be seen by all and obviously not purchased or used by any shy retiring types – which raises another question – if this vehicle is used solely by those who WANT to be seen, why does it have completely blacked out privacy glass in all the rear windows? No one will see you now and there is no way on earth you could sneak up on anywhere for that matter, without being seen – it is very PINK, very long and very American.

It is my cousin's car and he has finally come to his senses and just sold it because he's finally realised that it will not fit in his garage; it will not fit on his driveway; it hardly fits in the road outside; it not easy taking one's Daughter to school in it; it's not easy shopping in Asda's either; it's a bit of a pain trying to park it anywhere; it takes twice/three times as long to wash it/clean it/polish it; it's a very long walk to open the rear door or put something in the boot; he's fed up with jumping in the wrong side and wondering where the steering wheel has gone and apart from that, it's a bit dear to use to go down the road to get his fish and chips now and then!

Finally, as an avid diehard American car fan – I think the Yanks really messed up on this one – it really is a "stretch" too far and that's from someone who loves virtually all American Cars!

Chairman "Boss Hogg" Grose (now – where is my "Smokey and the Bandit" film?)

BRANDS HATCH

By Frank Richards
TGAM Member

I 've driven a single-seater racing car at Silverstone in the pouring rain so it's no surprise that I found myself doing a rally course in the scorching sunshine at Brands Hatch. Part of my leaving present, from colleagues, when I retired last year was a driving experience at Brands Hatch. The gift voucher was valid for a year and I could not decide whether to opt for a 4 X 4 experience, a racing car, rallying or a Porsche 911 drive. I decided upon rallying but rallying in the winter in the snow was not for me. By the time I rang up to make the booking, dates were limited and I decided to opt for 31st July.

Brands Hatch is less than 60 miles from where we live in Kent but I had never been there before. I had expected an almost empty circuit but this was not the case. On arriving at our destination we found that many of the car parks were full. I could see motor cycles racing around the circuit – had I come on the wrong day or booked the wrong event? I need not have worried - there was a motor cycle club event on the same day and we were able to watch for free.

I booked in good and early and we settled down to watch some friendly motor cycle racing. Within a short space of time a rider became parted from his machine on the exit of a bend right in front of us and slithered into the gravel trap. Assisted by the marshals the rider managed to hobble to a safe position. During this time the race had continued under a yellow flag but now the race was back on. Very quickly there was a similar incident – again right in front of us. I was beginning to feel these incidents were bad omens for later.

Time for a quick lunch and then it was time to sign on for the rally experience and produce my driving licence. Five drivers together with spouses/friends were ushered in to a small room for the briefing /safety meeting. We were told that the hot hatches we would be using were stripped down Peugeot 206's turning out 150 bhp through a six speed gear box. However we were unlikely to get out of second and third gear. We would be using two short stages with a mixture of tarmac and gravel. We were told to hold the steering wheel at 'quarter to three' and I began to think that my advanced driving skills would stand me in good stead. Then the talking turned to hydraulic assisted hand-brake turns and I thought my advanced driving technique may not assist so much after all.

We were all allocated mentors and made our way to the cars. With a crash helmet on I climbed in around the rigid safety cage and was secured by a full racing harness. I soon found out why the cars were



The line up of Peugeot 206 hot hatches at Brands Hatch

referred to as hot hatches – with a crash helmet on, the windows closed, no air con and being a hot day it was very sticky. I was encouraged to find my way around the first stage with advice being shouted above the noise of the engine about the line to take and when to brake - through the water and across the gravel and then in to a couple of tight bends. So far so good and I felt confident. More acceleration and a hairpin bend on tarmac. Unfortunately it was a case of too much power too early and we ended up facing the wrong way! I was told that the wet tyres had not yet generated enough heat. After another lap or two it was time for the hand brake turns. Most of the corners were sharp and I was encouraged to do what did not come naturally. I drive a rear wheel drive car and most of the cars I have definitely quite different in a front wheel drive car. The aim was to drive into a corner still braking (without the aid of ABS) and then apply the hand-brake which would slide the back of the car around. Whilst this is happening and when the car is straight it helps to apply harsh acceleration to pull the car in the required direction. (Not what we are taught to pass the IAM test – brake in a straight line/one thing at a time/ car sympathy). Never-mind I was holding the steering wheel

correctly! A few more laps and I felt I was getting to grips with the car. Then it was the last lap for this stage and I had to go as quickly as possible to get a good timed lap.

It was on to the next stage and more of the same. I began to realise there were some similarities to advanced driving. Good observation and smooth driving did pay dividends. However this had to be combined with hand-brake turns and only small steering adjustments. After about 10 laps it was time for a fast lap against the stop watch. The combined times of the two recorded laps would be our 'race times'. I then swapped places into the passenger seat and experienced a 'hot lap' and found out where I could have knocked another 10 seconds off my best time! I got out of the car feeling as though I was getting out of a bath – I was dripping and pleased to remove my helmet.

It was now time for the de-briefing with the other four drivers to hear how we had all managed to cope. Some fun was poked at all of us for spinning and knocking cones over – apparently nothing was missed by the marshals. Names were called out in reverse order of the fastest times and I was pleased not to be named first or second. I would have liked to be able to say that I won the event but I didn't. I was called out third and therefore my time was in the middle or as my wife would say 'pretty average'.

The rallying session was very enjoyable and was a demonstration of trying to drive at the limit of adhesion on varying surfaces to achieve the fastest time. The difference with normal road driving was that only one car was allowed on a section of track at a time. In the event of an accident the worst scenario would be hitting a bale of straw and rolling over. We were wearing safety harnesses and crash helmets and protected by a roll cage and unlikely to suffer. It was however easy to see how inappropriate speed, harsh steering and poor observation on the track could result in dented pride. On the road it is clear that the consequences of such poor driving could be somewhat different.

It was now time to watch some more motor cycle racing on the Brands Hatch circuit and think about those three words I had forgotten about for a few hours - 'mirror, signal, manoeuvre'.

**1981-2011 30 YEARS OF
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CALIFORNIA DREAMING – PART 4

By Stuart Bullock

RoADAR Senior Motorcycle Examiner

RoSPA Motorcycle Diploma Course Director

By choice we took a rural route for the first half of the journey, riding northwest along the Sierra Nevada Mountain range through what had been the scene of the famous Californian gold rush. There were silver mines too, but maybe they didn't have to rush them. All too soon we were crossing the plains through Lodi to Concord and finally, San Francisco. 3 nights here and we had a tight schedule. We had pre booked a tour to the island and former prison of Alacatraz, and needed to have a trolley bus ride, check out Fisherman's Wharf and the elephant seals, visit the famous Golden Gate Bridge, do a tour to Muir Woods (more Sequoias) and check out the fabulous restaurants. Our hotel was a 2-minute walk from Fishman's Wharf, the centre of activity for us as boat trips and trolley busses leave from the



Sue in the former prison of Alcatraz

Wharf. Everything was just great and a thoroughly enjoyable place it was. It has the same kind of liveliness as New York or Berlin, noisy and so much fun. However, it was time for another ride anyway.

Getting onto Highway 1, or the West Coast Pacific Highway took some patience as we rode through the grid network of streets out of San Francisco. Morning tea was provided by the owners of an Italian Café (don't ask) who were kind enough to explain the region, and their inevitable English roots to us. Every now and then another beach would appear, some remote but many with surfers clad in their wet suits to keep out the cold from the Pacific Ocean. We lunched at Santa Cruz on recommendation and rode out on the boardwalk, a wooden pier. Very cool, we thought. All too soon the 120 miles had been eaten up and we were at a very swish hotel in Monterey. Dump the kit because we were now on one of my missions. The task was to ride the 6 miles east on Highway 68 to the Mazda Speedway. You may know it better as the Laguna Seca raceway. Oh boy, was I excited at being at this stonking circuit. Only a couple of weeks before we left home we had seen Valentino Rossi demolish the skill and spirit of the whinging Ozzie Casey Stoner in a fabulous knee-bashing race. The others were thinking about wasted pool time so the visit was ended all too soon and back we went for a swim.

Next day we needed to ride 150 miles to Pismo Beach. We started with a short tour through the homes of the rich and famous in Carmel. Beach Lodges they are called. Lodges? Most are bigger than normal houses, so some sort of Lodge. Back on Highway 1 morning tea was taken at the Big Sur information point cafe. More big trees but you have to walk off road to see the best bits. We were satisfied with riding through this spectacular region although rather sad to see the forest on fire at one point. (Since getting home more fires have started, causing great damage). The slopes of the Santa Lucia Mountains on the left, the Pacific Ocean on the right. The road rises and falls sweeps and swoops through the small villages that cling to this route so well used by tourists. At San Simeon we turned off the road into the grounds of Hearst Castle. Built by a newspaper baron, the father of the notorious Patricia 'Patty' Hearst, of the Baader Meinhof gang fame, the Castle is more fairytale than defensive. At one time it was the party home of those of note from the film world. It cost a bomb to tour the building and we did not have the time, so onwards we went. Pelican Point, Pismo Beach. Beautiful white beaches stretched in either direction in the evening sunshine. However, all pelicans do is eat fish and poop. I don't know where they eat but they poop at Pelican Point. When it's cool it's great. When it's hot it stinks. However, a wonderful restaurant provided a great evening meal (we didn't have anything that resembled bird) and all too soon we were ready to head back to Los Angeles.

225 miles today so we used Interstate 101 to get to Santa Barbara as Highway one wanders a hilly route through Vandenburg Air Force Base. There is a launch centre for one of the space shuttles there but we didn't have time for such a diversion. We took a stop at Santa Barbara and I found my retirement location. Simply great with huge flat beaches and warm walkways. No time to drool, as we had to be back in LA for 5pm at the latest to return the bikes. We took the Interstate to Oxnard then Highway 1 through the suburbs of LA back to Eaglerider HQ. Thanks to the guys for sorting us out in short order so we could get to the hotel for a celebratory beer. Or two. Next day we had a half-day tour around the sites of LA before presenting ourselves at LAX airport for the 11 hour flight back to Heathrow. I have to say that LA does not do it for me. Too much concrete. Too much poverty. Too much richness.

What a tour this was, the most ambitious and best yet. What a country. So much space and wonderful scenery. San Francisco, Monument Valley and the Sequoia Grove at Yosemite were tops for me, as well as that short visit to Laguna Seca. The bikes were good, although for me were underpowered after my own K1200S. However, they carried our possessions and us in comfort and made a stable base for our camcorder, which my wife used to record the best bits of the road trip. My thanks to my travelling companions for their tolerance, perseverance, humour and great ideas.

Our most grateful thanks to HC travel, Eaglerider Bike Hire for their professionalism and courtesy. It all goes into the making of another unforgettable road trip.

Anyone thinking of a US road trip, I advise you to get on and do it. We have been to the USA before this trip and then and on this one found nothing but friendliness and courtesy from the locals, wherever we went. Roads are generally well paved and signed but of course nothing beats a good plan. Sat Nav maps are available for the USA. Hotels are more like the traditional motel then here in the UK. Again, we found keeping to known brands, like Best Western works well. They do slightly sterilize 'real America but are reasonable value. We try to find interesting local eating-places and are not often disappointed. The worst place on this trip was in Las Vegas!

All you need to do now is get a good map.

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Photo Gallery

Festival of Transport



A 1968 Triumph Spitfire Special built by Martin Harcourt, a retired aircraft engineer, inspired by 1930s Grand Prix cars



A 1947 Reliant Girder Fork Van equipped with a 748cc 4-cyl side valve engine and crash gearbox

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