

e-NEWSLETTER



IAM
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DECADE OF ACTION FOR
ROAD SAFETY 2011-2020

TAUNTON GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

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TAUNTON GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

e-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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THE COMMITTEE

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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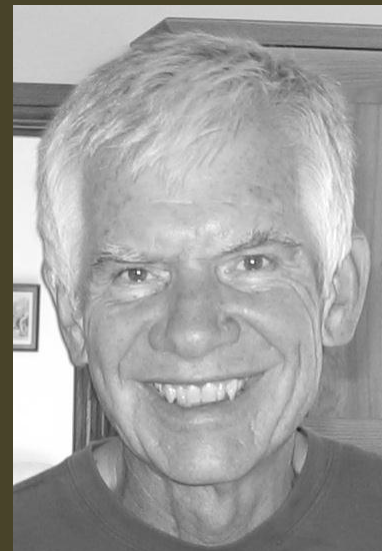
EDITORIAL



As you are aware by now our Quarterly Newsletter has been discontinued and replaced by a Quarterly e-Newsletter. This decision has not been taken lightly. I, like many others, prefer the look and feel of a book rather than a screen or a Kindle. I am rather proud of the standard of our Newsletter that has been achieved over the years by a process of continuous improvement and am very sad to see it go. However we must face facts and move with the times.

Our membership fees raise approximately £800 per annum. We have recently been enjoying cut rate printing charges but have now had to find a new printer and the total cost of producing and mailing the newsletter would have been approximately £900 per annum. There are so many more productive ways of spending our funds by recruiting new members, improving our c

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor



Members' Evenings and carrying out more training.

Until recently we could not have contemplated this change. However now that 83% of our members are on the Internet it is time to make the move. We do apologise for any inconvenience to those 19 members who are not connected but will try to minimise the inconvenience by sending this e-Newsletter to friends or relatives where they could view it or by mailing them an abbreviated news sheet.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN



By Kevin G. Grose
Chairman



Direct from the Driving Seat ... Or Chair, man!

Firstly, may I wish you all a very Happy New Year for 2012.

Right, I'll start this year with a few things to think about: Where's the winter gone? Who's piled up tonnes (tons – for those of older years) of salt just in case? Who's purchased a complete set of winter wheels/tyres after last year's bouts of severe ice and snow? Are we going to use them? Who knows?

A few more things: How secure is your vehicle really? Do you want your new car MOT'd after 3 or 4 years? ... and then re-MoT'd every 1 or 2 years? Do you know that JETs are unable to travel very far? How exactly fast is Superfast? Who IS that old man? ... and what a difference a year makes!

To find all the answers you really will need to look elsewhere in the e-Newsletter, so maybe that means you will have to read it all the way through this time and not just look at the pictures – like I do!





Many things have changed – some minor, some major. The first major item is what you are reading NOW. Just before Christmas 2011, we were informed that our long term regular printer was ceasing this part of their business and had sold it off to another printer based in Devon and after many years of a settled and comfortable alliance, we now have to find another printer – but at what cost? Quality and minimal cost do not usually go together and therefore, the current Newsletter in its present format is no longer sustainable. We cannot continue to take your annual Taunton Group subscriptions just to fund our award winning Newsletter and therefore, this is our FIRST e-newsletter, a 21st Century event!

I know many readers may be disappointed about this but your Taunton Group has no other option then to take this route. We have to accept this to enable the Group to move forward and that is the main aim of the dedicated Taunton Group Committee. 85% of the Taunton Group have email or computer access but we will also try and accommodate those 15% without those facilities by way of a shortened version of the full e-newsletter. If those Members can supply an e-mail address of a friend or relative, then we can immediately amend our details so that you can receive the full colour version of our quarterly e-Newsletters. This is a necessary progress to ensure quality, quantity and efficient data.

Normally, this time of year means skidding and sliding about in atrocious weather conditions (I know the sun's shining outside!), so we have sent three of our Group Observers on a skid awareness course so they can all enjoy the experience and then be certificated in this vital road safety requirement. We already have two other Group Observers who have undertaken this procedure and indeed, even your Chairman has participated fairly recently as well. This will really benefit all our members now as all our Observers will be able to offer more valid advice that is fully backed with practical skidding experience. The Group is partially funding this as we really do want our Observers to be fully qualified in all they do. They can then filter down all that experience and skills gained to our group members, new Associates and the general public in due course. This is definitely a “win win” situation for everybody, all the way. We envisage all our Group Observers participating on this venture in due course. This is part of our planned 2012 Training Programme to ensure you, as Group Members, will receive the best guidance we can offer, within the given financial constraints in the present economic climate.

Associated with Group Observer issues – we no longer have a Chief Observer in position or an official Associate Coordinator, so I have taken on the role of only allocating new Associates for





the time being to ensure we don't mess up our excellent system of getting them straight out there with practical driving when they apply to our Group. They have paid their money to be given advice and guidance on how to improve their driving skills – and that is exactly what we do through our Group Observers – this Group depends on our Observers – all IAM Groups need effective Observers – and we have them!

As you may know, due to fairly recent sad circumstances, we do not now have an official Group President. Some Groups have never had a President. You do not have to have a President to continue as an official IAM Group but your Committee has decreed that if this role needs to be officially reinstated, then all consideration will be given to this task. We will, however, continue to run without anyone in this role for the time being. This will certainly not affect our Group aims for 2012.

One other issue over restricted finances is the Committee's decision to hold bi-monthly Committee Meetings which releases another small amount of capital for Group funds. This also means that Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall lose that same amount – sorry! Our monthly (yes, every month) Members' Evenings will still continue to be completely FREE – FREE Tea, Coffee, Biscuits, Parking, Leaflets, Advice,

Presentations, etc., sometimes, even FREE cake - all FREE and open to all our Associates/Members /Supporters and their relatives/friends/work colleagues, etc., in fact anyone who has an interest in improving their driving skills and associated vehicle knowledge.

Another minor issue recently raised – all past approved and officially signed Committee Minutes have always been available for any Group Member, Associate or even the general public to view at any time by request – we're not "MI5" or the "FBI" you know! You will now be able to see copies of the approved Minutes of our bi-monthly Committee Meetings in a new Members' section of our "www.tgam.org.uk" website in due course – the website is currently being redesigned to allow better access to constantly updated information on YOUR Taunton Group; the IAM and other associated road and safety partners. This will take a bit of time to finalise but again, it highlights our immediate aims.

No matter what problems have arisen or any matters that may give concern, your Taunton Group Committee are fully dedicated to moving YOUR Group forward for YOUR benefit throughout 2012.

So, a fairly short report here this time and all other above details are found elsewhere in our FIRST e-Newsletter – good hunting!



MEMBERS' PAGE



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>
Michael Hall	Cullompton	Associate

Advanced Driving Test Passes

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

Robert Cartman
Peter Hammet
Alan Baker
Philip Brimson

OBSERVED BY

Tony Hucker
Guy Denton
John Gilbert
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. We would like to present successful candidates with their pass certificates at one of our Members' Evenings.



GROUP OBSERVERS



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.

	TEAM WEST	TEAM EAST
TEAM LEADERS	Colin White (01823 257196)	Alan Thomson (01460 55919)
SENIOR OBSERVER	Colin White	
TRAINEE SENIOR OBSERVERS		Alan Thomson John Gilbert
OBSERVERS	Guy Denton Tony Hucker Faye Markham Russ Williams	Ron Holdom Janet Loader Allan Wellwood

The following IAM & TGAM members are Driving Standards Agency/Approved Driving Instructors:

Guy Denton	01984 633467 (also TGAM 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)

CALENDAR

COMMITTEE MEETINGS
THURSDAYS @ 7:30 pm

12 April

10 June

9 August



MARCH

10	Sa		NRG Meeting
21	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening - Nursing in Northern Canada
23	F	7:30 pm	Skills Day at Croft

APRIL

11	W		Skills Day at Stowe
18	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening

MAY

16	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening
19	Sa		Regional Liaison Forum (RLF) AGM at The Clay Pigeon

JUNE

6	W		Skills Day at Stowe
20	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening – Classic Car Evening

JULY

18	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening
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AUGUST

15	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening
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SEPTEMBER

19	W	7:30 pm	Members' Evening
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MEMBERS' EVENING

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor



16th November – Truck Driving Part 2

This was a follow up to Andy's previous talk given earlier in the year. Andy explained that trucks are governed to different maximum speeds, and not necessarily 56 mph as widely believed. His maximum speed when driving for Wincanton Transport was 52 while other companies used even lower speeds, Tesco and Sainsburys limiting to 50 mph.

He spent some time discussing his roundabout technique where he tries to keep his truck moving if at all possible. He also spent some time discussing the use of lights and indicators by motorists and certainly had some very strong views on the design of modern headlights.

All in all a fascinating and somewhat controversial talk on driving from the truck driver's point of view.



TGAM Member Andy Mayes describes his roundabout technique



MEMBERS' EVENING

By John Gilbert
Newsletter Editor



21st December - Christmas Quiz

As has been the recent custom our December meeting took the form of a seasonal quiz ingeniously set by our Chairman, Kevin Grose. The answers to the questions created a lot of controversy and much lively debate and general merriment ensued.

The winner, again, was Brian Howe who scored a maximum of 30 out of 30. There were three runners up – Faye Markham, Mark Bennett and Mike Keough so a tie breaker had to be held to decide which of the three would win the two remaining prizes.

To end the evening the “kitchen staff” served up a very tasty collection of seasonal food which was much enjoyed by all.



Quiz runners up Mark Bennett and Faye Markham



Straight On!... and looking back controversially

By Bill Coltham

Ex-Chief Observer's Comments

Mindful that some of you sharp eyed Members may have noticed that I am now missing from the Committee Members list in the newsletters, and that I am not in the list of Officers in our web site, I am guessing that you have deduced that I am not around anymore in the Taunton Group.,

STILL HERE. Almost correct, but I am still a member and will be sitting on the back benches at members' evenings doing my usual stir up of some of the speakers to create controversy and interest.

OPEN DEMOCRACY. Yes, I have resigned from the committee, and most regretfully, from my post as the Chief Senior Observer. You may, or may not, be asking why, and you would be right in doing so, as it was very sudden and I seemed to some (to those many who contacted me) to have disappeared off the face of the IAM earth. Quite simply, I could not go on with the style of decision making taken outside of committee as it stood then, and the best option was to leave quietly, without disrupting the good work of the Group

through its dedicated and hard working Observers.

Having played a substantial part in bringing new talent to the committee, welcome fresh air, I did feel I had let down a number of friends and told them so. I am relieved that the group has moved on and my absence is not missed.

NEWSLETTER. We all look back a bit, and I remember playing my part in the committee over several years. Agitating for change over a year or two, we eventually moved to a new style newsletter from the 25 years of the successful Julia's pages, and JG won [actually joint runner up – Ed.] the IAM newsletter of the year to boot. Maybe it's time to move up a gear now too!

EMBRACING CHANGE. Putting forward written proposals to the committee for change in how Associates were allocated to Observers three years ago, led by a Chief Observer position in the Group in 2008 to provide necessary support and training for Observers, Observers elected me to the first post. They then helped me through introduction to changes in training, re-qualifying





and allocation of Associates. Observers are much more professional and up-to-date in their approach in recent years. They re-elected me in 2011. It's our **CORE BUSINESS**.

UPDATING OUR SKILLS. *Training of Observers and Members was always high on my priority list, and I remain very grateful for Observer Alan Thomson to agree to step up and take on the new role of Training Director for the Group.*

I was asked to join the District 'Flying Squad' of Trainers by Andy Poulton, and together we were able to re-hash the initial training style for new Observers, the results of which are obvious in the presence of new Observers recently.

NATIONAL UPDATING. Membership of an IAM motorcycling group in Devon, Senior Observer Tests, and attendance at IAM Car Conferences in Warwick University gave me a wider perspective of the IAM that few others had in the Group. Changes in structure for the IAM Observers function were discussed there and to be welcomed. The necessary changes and emphasis on 'Customer Service' I introduced three years ago to the Taunton Group.

A FIXED BASE. Moving our members evening from the school to Hatch Beauchamp, via the village hall at West Monckton was a leap of faith, but has proved very popular.

DO WE NEED A PRESIDENT? The sad deaths of the last two Presidents of the Group, both too early, beg the question whether the Group needs a President. Some have said that it does not. I differ, as usual, for I feel that we need a figure head that leads the Group in a manner and style that raises our profile at an occasional formal dinner, public meeting, or meeting public figures. The Group has not been very forward in recent years at publicity, and rarely has content in local media or TV. Where is the Taunton Mayor, the local MP, or the senior police officers meeting with Group Members? I think we can do more for the Group.

ARE WE WELCOMING? Over the years growing friendships and lack of formality within the group has flourished. Members' Evenings have welcomed new members, and those who have dropped in just to have a look. It is important that we actively introduce ourselves to those popping in, and show that we are not a stuffy clique, just pretty normal individuals and couples all with a shared interest.

So, see you all in due course - and, **DRIVE YOUR SKILLS UPWARDS!**





Petrol Prices – How to pay less for your fuel

By Frank Richards

The price of petrol always seems to be in the news – it's going up in price because of a tax increase, currency fluctuations or because OPEC is restricting supplies. Currently a refinery in Essex has gone bankrupt and that is causing a shortage and in turn that is putting up the price.

My local Tesco petrol station is currently selling the stuff at 135.9p per litre although this week they are offering 10P off if you buy £60 of shopping in store. There are 4.54 litres in a gallon and that works out at £6 per gallon. The £100 fill up is nearly here. You spend a fortune on petrol but rarely do you see it. It goes in a hose from the pump to your car – what does 12 gallons look like or feel like if you had to carry it? In fact it weighs about the same as two large sacks of potatoes.

The price has been outstripping the RPI inflation consistently for a long time. According to information I have googled the price per litre has gone up since 1990 as follows:-

1990	40.2p
2000	76.9p
2010	111.9p
Jan 2012	133.9p

Whereas car manufacturers used to spend fortunes on improving the 0-60 times and top speeds and then even more money on marketing, now they spend it on developing cars which are more frugal and making it a virtue. There are noticeably more diesel cars on the road now and 45 – 50 mpg is fairly commonplace whereas 30 mpg used to be the norm. This has happened at the same time as cars have generally got bigger, faster and heavier.

Assuming that we don't wish to trade in our present cars and spend a further £15K plus on buying the latest hybrid or other eco-friendly car, what can we do to reduce the cost of filling up at the pumps? I believe there are a number of ways of making savings and together they should enable you to reduce your fuel costs by up to 25%.

Is your journey really necessary? If your journey is less than a couple of miles, consider walking or cycling. A cold engine is not very efficient and could double your fuel consumption. Also don't keep your engine ticking over to warm up. It's healthier to walk or cycle but not as quick.





Don't accelerate harshly and change up to a higher gear as soon as you can if you have a manual box. Make use of all your gears – most cars have a 6 speed gearbox now. Also don't brake harshly – drive as if you were taking your IAM test and read the road ahead.

Correct tyre pressures are very important. Driving a car with under-inflated tyres could be adding 3% to your costs. It is estimated that fuel consumption is reduced by 0.4% for every psi. That means tyres under inflated by 7 psi reduce fuel consumption by at least 1 MPG. Check your tyres regularly and as well as optimising your fuel consumption you will achieve better wear from your tyres. Some energy saving tyres are also being advertised that save fuel. In particular Michelin promote their particular tyres which they say have less resistance to roll.

Don't speed. There is currently a move to increase the speed limit on motorways to 80 mph. By driving at 80 mph instead of 70 mph you will be increasing your fuel consumption by 15% - 20% to overcome the increased drag created by increased wind resistance. When possible use cruise control if it is available on your car.

Keeping your car serviced at regular intervals will pay dividends. Using the best synthetic oils and replacing the air filter and plugs at the proper intervals should help extend the range of a tank of fuel.



Photo by Andreas Fränzel

A collection of historic Petrol Pumps in the Deutsches Museum, Munich

Turn off your engine if you are stuck in a traffic jam. If you can see that the traffic is not going to move, turn off your engine. Many new cars come with this feature built in.

Driving with the air con off will reduce fuel consumption by about 10%. However this is not really practical on really hot days. However do you really need it on at other times? Research also shows that driving with the windows open also wastes fuel. The aerodynamic shape of the car can be compromised by driving with the windows open.



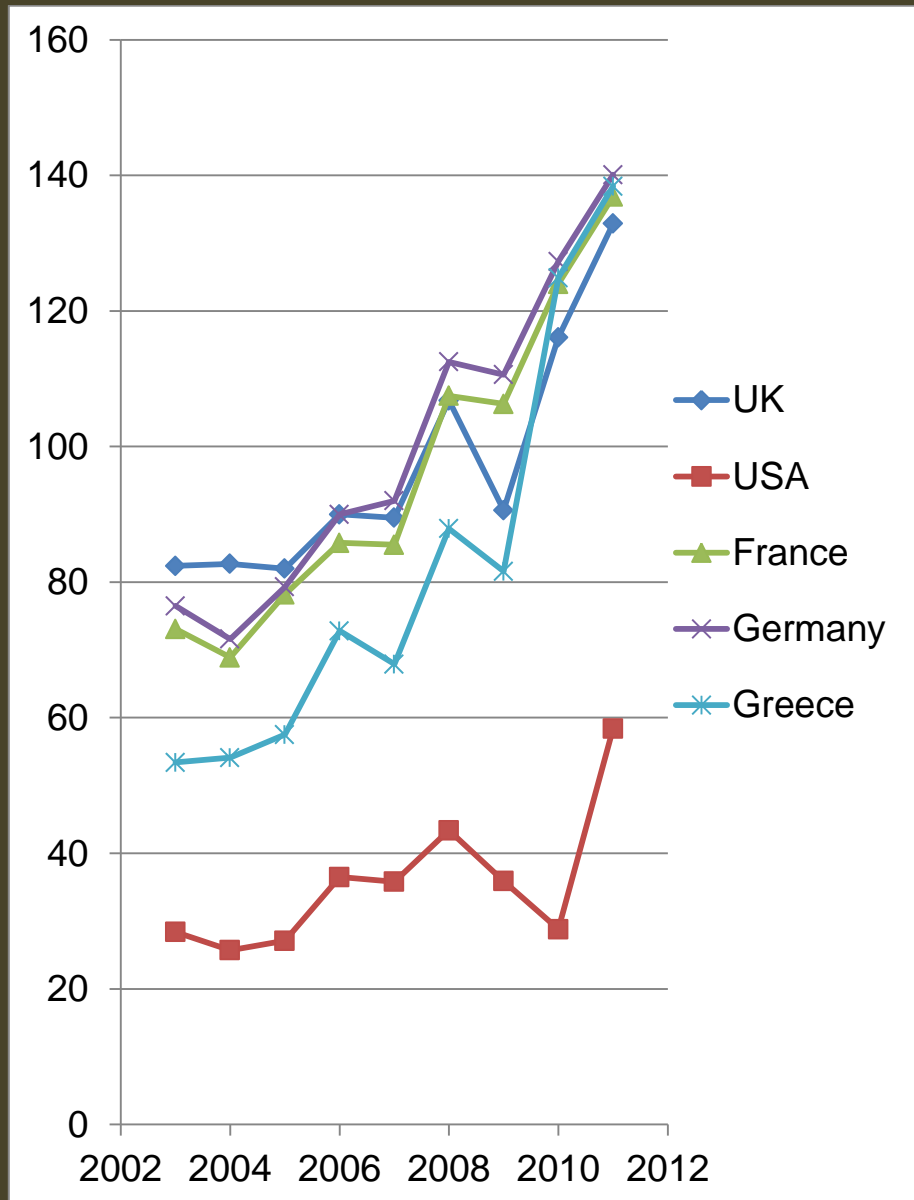


Don't carry unnecessary weight in the boot. It's surprising what some people keep in their cars. More weight will obviously increase fuel consumption.

Do you put standard unleaded or super unleaded in your tank? It's important to use what the manufacturer specifies but there is at least 5p per litre difference. Perhaps you can alternate between the two.

Drive a clean car. Research has shown that a dirty car has more drag which can marginally increase fuel consumption. Washing and polishing can pay dividends.

Perhaps huge quantities of oil will be found in Antarctica or perhaps the new controversial technology of fracking will provide further reserves of oil and gas. It is important that we conserve our reserves of oil by using it sparingly. Like electricity and gas the price of oil/petrol may go down in the short term but over the long term the only way is up. No doubt technology will bail us out in the end but electric cars and hydrogen fuelled cars are not yet an economic proposition. For the foreseeable future I believe that research will be directed mainly at the efficiency of the petrol and diesel engines. It would be good if 100 mpg became achievable for the family saloon car. Whatever car you drive you can save some money by doing the common sense things covered in this article.



Source: The GPPI website

Petrol Prices at the Pump from 2003-2011
Pence per litre





How far can a Jet travel?

By Kevin G. Grose (Rocket Man)

You may have noticed recently that the IAM and JET service stations joined together on a mutual joint venture – brilliant, a nationwide fuel supplier and the largest road safety organisation in the UK, promoting together. Guess who my most local, nearest, usual fuel supplier is? Yes, it's JET...well, it was until very recently.

One day, not so long ago (maybe a few years now – time flies when you get older – or so they tell me!), my local fuel station changed its alliance to the JET brand. New canopy, signs, pumps, etc., very bright and modern and the price of fuel decreased slightly – all good news and whilst discussing the issue with the manager and staff one day, things looked altogether better for the future for all concerned.

Then, a short time ago, I noticed even more new signs, pumps along with newer canopy decorations – “What’s going on this time?” I ask. “We have had to change again because JET inform us that we are too far away for deliveries and that JET do not deliver past Bristol!”



Photo by Betty Longbottom

Blimey, I didn't know that JETs were limited to how far they can go! I thought JETs could cover the whole length of the UK in a few minutesbut now they don't travel any further than Bristol!

Although I've enjoyed using “JET fuel” in my vehicles for a while now, it looks like no longer. It also looks like the South West country loses out again folks – no JET fuel and no IAM/JET alliance for us – but I do hope the rest of the UK is successful with this joint venture - Skill for Life applications may even sky rocket!

So, it's back to using normal fuel now, no JET stuff – still, I could always fit a NOS bottle....or two!





MoTs – Do we really need them?

By Kevin G. Grose (ex Dot MoT Tester)

In the UK, a new car needs a MOT test when it's three years old and then every 12 months/1 year from there on. In Europe, I am led to believe a new car's first government test is at 4 years old and then every 2 years after that. Why? With so many different makes and types of vehicles prevalent in all our European countries now, why the vast difference?

Surely a Renault/Peugeot/Audi/BMW/Seat/etc., used in a European country is virtually the same as the ones being used in the UK apart from obviously, the different location of the steering wheel and other minor locally required amendments. So, apart from these minor adjustments, I don't believe manufacturers build a completely different car for use in most different European countries.

The same Renault/Peugeot/Audi, etc., etc., model used in the UK has a 27% chance of failing its first MOT test at three years, but in France say – the same models have only a 6% chance of failure being tested at 4 years old. I'll repeat that – 3 years 27% fail in UK; 4 years 6% fail in Europe. I don't think that really adds up ... or does it?

Statistics can be used in many ways – does the above mean that, we in the UK, do not maintain our vehicles properly – hence our 27% failure rate, but in France, vehicles are maintained better because of only a 6% failure rate? In France, it could also mean that a vehicle at four years old has already had many parts replaced because of its age, hence the low failure rate. On the other hand, should a new car need major MOT failure items to be replaced when only three or four years old? Obviously, mileage is a great factor in all of this as a three year old similar model car could come with vastly different mileages – 100,000/150,000 miles plus is not uncommon on a three year old car whereas Grannies same make/model only has 7,500 miles on the clock but which one fails the MOT with most failure items?... and would those failure items be the same here in the UK as they would be in Europe? Who knows?

However, all the above might be completely irrelevant depending on how the government tests are actually carried out – they all operate within certain laid down guidelines but they also operate in different ways and many may use the government test to make more money than is





necessary. It appears the UK motorists are fairly gullible and will just accept the failure with a “how much to get it through the test?” approach and then just pay up to get their MOT test certificate but it appears maybe our European patriarchs are not as easily led.

The main priority is that your vehicle should be safe AT ALL TIMES. As the driver of the vehicle, you have a legal duty to maintain your vehicle safely for the benefit of all your passengers. It does not matter how new or old your vehicle is – it must be safe AT ALL TIMES, and that means whether “whizzy rep” is clocking up 50,000 miles a year or Granny accumulating 2,500 miles a year.

Hopefully, you maintain your vehicle but what about you? Have you had an “MoT” on yourself? Age is not the issue here whether you are 17 or 70...or even 85 plus, just make sure you are up to “MoT” standards – you get your vehicle MoT’d every year, why not yourself? Not only Doctors and Hospitals – what about the opticians, even something as simple as wearing the correct footwear when driving – it all helps you to remain safe and in better control.

So – do we really need MoTs on our vehicles? YES we do. Maybe they should be based on a fairer mileage basis especially with today’s excessive high mileagers (I know because I have



Photo by Basher Eyre

been one) but on the other hand, an under used non maintained vehicle can be more dangerous than an overused highly maintained vehicle.

I know an MoT is £54.00+ and it’s expensive for a piece of A4 paper but it is cheaper than having half your car fall off someday and causing a massive accident (that can cost millions) regardless of whether you are in the UK or somewhere in Europe. There are too many people that do absolutely nothing to their vehicles maintenance wise until it’s too late...or illegal...or breakdown...or kill someone - £54.00 is nothing compared to being dead.





How Secure is Your Car...Really?

By Kevin G. Grose (Adviser to “Gone in 60 sec”)

Many cars have basic security measures, be that maybe only a steering wheel lock which manufacturers started fitting somewhere in the 1960s/70s and the normal door/boot locks. More modern cars have a plethora of security features and gizmos which should make them fairly secure in all attempts to steal them or gain entry.

How really secure is secure? I only ask after a very recent incident involving my grumpy old uncle who having just left me after his weekly lunchtime visit, suddenly came storming back through the side gate of my house within a few minutes, obviously on a mission.

“I’m locked out of my confounded car, old chap”, he said – or words to that effect interspersed with other words I can’t write here or not commonly found in the English dictionary. After calming down a bit and establishing exactly what had happened, I drive him, along with my father to the spot where his Mondeo car is still happily ticking over to itself in a bus lay by, not far from home. All the doors are locked solid; the boot is impenetrable; entry under the bonnet inaccessible and where are the keys? Sat there, right in full

view nestling in the ignition lock. The engine’s running; the handbrake is fully on and much head scratching takes place. What to do next?

This situation had arisen as Uncle had to answer a call of nature and had gently let the driver’s door close with the car engine still running. Call of nature answered, he grabs the door handle – nothing – it’s locked. He tries the other door handles – all locked. The car has locked itself securely allowing no access or entry. After much cursing, swearing and threatening to beat it up with a tree branch (I think that has happened before somewhere ...), Uncle got a lift back to my house, leaving his confounded car where it was.

I tried all the usual entry tactics but no luck. I tried several other electronic key fobs as sometimes, this will work – no luck. Having spent many years in the car trade, there are many tricks of the trade you learn – none of these worked. All the time, the Mondeo is quietly idling away with its engine fan coming on now again. It was like it was laughing at us – being very smug and secure. “Houston, we have a problem!” Uncle says, “Brick the so and so window” but luckily I didn’t have a





brick on me at that moment in time. Uncle is getting more and more angry and the level of threats aimed towards his beloved Mondeo are becoming increasingly violent – again, I cannot list the words or comments used here!

After much more thought, it appears now we have a damage limitation exercise. Without going into too much detail, I'll just say that two pieces of wire, a screwdriver and a helping pair of hands made reasonably quick and virtually non-damaging entry by very simple means.

This enabled Uncle to calm down as he realised his whole world hadn't actually come to an end. All his threats were now rescinded.

I then offered him two little bits of advice – firstly: stop relieving yourself in bus lay bys and secondly: do NOT leave your car keys in the ignition and shut the door whilst the engine is STILL running.

The modern car is too clever – it can think for itself – this makes it very dangerous to the unsuspecting motorist. It can detect something is not quite right and will smugly secure itself without a care in the world for the careless owner – or should that be carless owner. I hope he's learnt his lesson as I know I have learnt one – I can now open a very securely locked, smug vehicle quite easily with just a piece of bent wire! Take care out there.



MARCH MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents



NURSING IN NORTHERN CANADA

By TGAM Committee Member

JANET LOADER

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



How Fast is Superfast?

By Kevin G. Grose

Now that's a question but in what context? Are we talking cars, motorbikes, trains, planes, my Opel Manta ...?

No, I'm talking the internet and superfast broadband. I am very sceptical about all the hype, alleged capabilities and perceived abilities of this much needed facility. In a perfect world – or “lala” internet land, things are brilliant but in the real world, things are very different.

I live within one mile of our local landline exchanges – maybe slightly shorter than one mile, but half the time, the internet is down – not accessible. It appears that if more than a few residents use the internet at the same time, it throws a wobbly and collapses under the sheer load! If some idiot plays some moronic game online – then that's it for hours on end – red light on my server device – no access – STOP, do not go pass go.

This is incredibly annoying to all those who just need to use the internet to facilitate a fast transaction and then get off line. The internet is a very useful tool to the sensible people of the

world. It makes information available very quickly. Information is the key – I was told many years ago in many sales seminars – information is business and business is information. We now have quite a few small businesses in our village who all use the internet – without this facility, information on their businesses would not be so accessible to the general public – much like the Taunton Group.

Without the internet, the IAM would have a much harder job making the general public aware of available packages and information from the IAM. These are a few examples but there are many millions of UK internet users who must encounter the same problems as I do.

Now we are to have Superfast Broadband but it COSTS. It costs us all a great deal of money but who really benefits in the long run – I doubt it will really be me or the hundreds of thousands of quick, occasional users who get the job done and then move on.

So once all this Superfast Broadband is in place (in years to come), will it really be any better? Let's say I have some incredible 100 million





gigabyte download superfast broadband that takes a mere nanosecond to cover the circumference of the earth several times over – I send some huge load of information right now and it's virtually there in New Zealand before I've removed my finger from the send button ... and there it lies waiting to be read for ages. It just lies there ... waiting and waiting and waiting. The recipient then opens his message and thinks – I'll look at that again later. Much later – maybe a few hours, days, even a week later, the message is read again. The reader starts the reply but is then unhappy with their reply. They rewrite the reply – they check it, they are finally happy and they send it. Mere nanosecond, I've got it but I've also waited quite a few days to get this reply.

Why do we need Superfast Broadband – I could have picked up the phone – spoke to the person I needed to contact and got an instant answer – far faster than Superfast Broadband. It appears we have lost the ability to talk to people directly and because of this situation we now go out of our way to develop something we maybe don't really need. We have had the telephone for donkey years now – maybe we should all use it a bit more at times – as the adverts of old used to say, "It's nice to talk" – I think we really should.



JUNE MEMBERS' EVENING

Presents



CLASSIC CAR EVENING

*If you've got one – bring it.
If you don't – bring someone
else's!*

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



Ever thought about getting a motorcycle?

By Kevin G. Grose

Are there times when you think about reliving your youth and getting a motorcycle again? When ... and I do mean when we do get some nice weather, even warm weather – ok, as long as it's not freezing cold or torrential rain like most of our summers, I always think about getting another motorbike for that occasional dash to the Post Office or quick trip into town, etc., just something to get “ME” to somewhere without loads of baggage and stuff, etc.

Most journeys do not need the full use of a motor vehicle especially when you may need a bit of cash; post a letter or two; get that forgotten last minute birthday card ... or deliver that last minute birthday card – if it's fairly local; loaf of bread; pint of milk, etc.

The cost of keeping one vehicle on the road can be extortionate and keeping several vehicles on the road these days – well, you do the sums! Anyway, to cut a long story short – my daughter rings me to ask if I would like to accompany her to Bristol to drop off her partner's recently purchased new motorcycle for its first major

service. What my daughter really wanted was someone to “drive” in Bristol ... so, muggings here agrees as usual (I also got landed to pay for “brunch” as well, I always fall for it – well, she is my ONLY daughter). All booked in, we then all have a stroll around the huge motorcycle store called “Fowlers” near Temple Meads Station.

What a store and what a selection. There must have been a hundred or more motorbikes – maybe two hundred – I lost count. All makes and types – something for everyone. Crash helmets – maybe a thousand or more; boots, gloves, appropriate clothing, etc., so much choice it gets confusing. Then there's all the “badged” stuff, themed items relative to the make of your chosen bike – KTM, Triumph, Honda, and many, many more – again so much choice.

So which one would I choose? Although the selection of beautiful bikes on show was vast, most of them available would not have been any use to me whatsoever. Why, you may ask? There's absolutely nothing wrong with anything on display – it's just me.





One easy conclusion – it's because I am short. I have short legs and therefore on virtually 99% of the available bikes, my legs would not touch the ground – that's what you get for being a "short ass" in this world! But no problem, the very helpful sales guys found me two appropriate machines – a Yamaha and a Honda – both semi trail type bikes – which I really love the style of. Could you imagine me on a Harley or a Honda Blackbird; the new massive Triumphs – even some of the modern scooters are just too big for me – NO, the two selected for me were just right and the best thing of all was the right approach by the sales people. They didn't push any sell; they weren't edgy; they knew their stuff; they were very helpful, casual and accommodating – maybe it was because I am now becoming an "old grey guy" (read my other reports elsewhere) and not long due for a wheelchair ... whatever, I was quite impressed by the service and hospitality given by all at Fowlers on the day – well done.

I didn't buy anything though – nearly did! The main thing was the information they gave me. I haven't actively ridden a motorcycle for years now but any question I asked about insurance, tax, running costs, engine type, construction, facilities were all answered positively and in my mind correctly – nothing was covered up – it's rare to find such honesty these days ... and very commendable.

Would I go back and buy something? Well, it certainly would be a first point of call if I get very serious in purchasing something. I am now armed with today's information on today's bikes, so if finances allow, who knows? If the weather stays fine, who knows? If petrol keeps increasing, who knows? Am I reliving my youth, who knows?

Whatever I decide, first there's the CBT (Compulsory Basic Training) test; then the DSA Motorcycle test. I must have the correct gear – helmet, jacket, trousers, boots, gloves, etc., then undertake the IAM Motorcycle test – the motorcycle can be great fun, but you must make sure you stay alive to enjoy it all. You can save money in one way, but you will need to spend money on your safety, etc., better to be poor, safe and alive than wealthy and incapacitated or even dead – no one gains that way, apart from maybe my daughter in my will who will only spend it all on handbags and shoes!

If you do buy a motorbike then keep fully legal and safe – be seen, be safe as well - that way you get to enjoy it more. So if you really think about going on two wheels again, or for the first time, go and get some fully appropriate and proper advice – it may save your life.

Kevin "Valentino Rossi Grosi" (Yeah ... I wish)





Renewing your Licence – who is that Old Man?

By Kevin G. Grose

I have had to renew my photo licence recently as my allocated ten years are up. So what you may say – well, it's caused me anguish then some laughter but overall some considerable concern.

Part of the process includes a new passport size photo – this is now required every ten years. Now, I have a choice of finding a suitable suggested passport photo booth – going to my main Post Office about 6 miles away; going to another Post Office some 18 miles away or supplying my own complying photo which conforms to all the necessary requirements laid down by the DVLA. This is quite a list – background colours; size; what to wear; what not to wear; how to look; where to look ... it's really is quite a demanding list.

Anyway, have you ever tried to take your own passport sized photo with your mobile phone camera? First, you have to find a suitable background – light brown or grey is suggested, not as easy as you may think. Then try and look normal is suggested – that's harder for some than others, especially me and after about 25 attempts, much swearing, much deleting and many more

adjustments, I finally had some photos which vaguely looked suitable so I downloaded them onto my computer. I arranged them, resized them, cropped them, removed shadows, adjusted contrast, etc., etc., and then I ran them as a slide show on full screen to see which was the best one to use.

As the youngsters constantly say now, “OMG (Oh my god...) who is that old man?” He's hardly got any hair, he's got a double chin, wrinkles, frowns, and because he wore his glasses (against DVLA advice), he had two sets of ears – one set normal and another set highly magnified! I laughed then I cried...

I was very shocked because I didn't really recognise that old man in the photo – who was that old man? They all looked like the prison shots you sometimes see on TV or the wanted criminal shots used in the press. I looked in the mirror. I looked in the mirror for a long time – surely that wasn't actually me in those photos ... but it was.

I looked awful – so awful, I couldn't use any of them. It says the camera never lies so I had to





admit to the truth. So whilst feeling and looking completely dejected, I perused my other saved photos section and wonders will never cease – I then found a very recent photo I had taken for a job application which actually did look like me. Yes, it was me and I did look quite normal. I know that's hard to believe but I did, so I used that one. So, form filled out; good photo attached correctly; cheque enclosed and all DVLA requirements met – job done! I also deleted all the “old man” photos as I'm not quite an “Albert Steptoe” lookalike just yet; I don't intend going to prison and I'm not wanted for anything ... yet!

Right – my DVLA Licence renewal has cost me £20.00; an afternoon of time consuming photo taking session; much anguish, swearing and frustration and a first class stamp but it's all worth it in the long run because it means I can still drive legally with a fully correct licence that's all in order as required by the DVLA guidelines. I also get to do all of this again in ten years time – oh what fun.

I also learnt a lot more about the art of photography – you would have thought after 45 years of using a camera, I would have learnt something more and have a much better idea by now!

Your Group Chairman (never proclaiming to be David Bailey)

Addendum to the above...

You will never believe it – after all my efforts to comply with the law and to do everything by the book, DVLA did actually return my application a few days later because my supplied photo didn't quite have the right colour grey background on it – can you believe that?

There are thousands of people out there driving illegally either without any licences or inappropriate licences who couldn't care less about being legal or otherwise and I do everything that's required to stay legal and they return it because I'm not grey enough!

Everything else in my life is turning grey but apparently not my passport sized photo – what can I say? So, after much time spent amending and correcting my photo and it's all gone off again to the DVLA – fingers crossed, successfully this time. So if I am at the next TGAM Meeting, then you will know everything is ok – if not – then I'll just have to go even more grey!

Your Chairman (YES – that very old grey looking man...)





Grand Touring 2007 – Part 1

By Stuart Bullock

In November 2006 we began the planning process for our annual tour of somewhere European. Our buddy Simon, Sue and me on two bikes is the general order of things and this year the mounts were newish BMW K1200S sports tourers.

Earlier in 2006 we had discussed some ideas for 2007 and Eastern Europe had been mentioned. Sue and I hankered after visiting Berlin and Budapest to follow up on our visit some 11 years ago. So, where to start from and where else to go? Around this time we saw a brochure for MCI Tours. Included was a tour that intended visiting Romania, and was heavy on the Dracula theme of Transylvania. It is fair to say group riding requires one to adopt a slightly different style and I don't find it easy on long tours. However, when I looked up hotels in Romania to book myself, I found it was not so easy. In the end a plan was agreed on. Travel to Berlin for a weekend visit. Then on to Nuremberg to 'join' the rest of the tour and decide on our own daily routes based on the hotels booked for the tour.

Early August saw us ride to Dover and the next day we crossed into France. We rode across Belgium and Holland, mainly because the motorways are toll free, and made our first stop in Dortmund after 280 miles. Rain plagued us in Belgium, getting heavier the

further North East we rode.

The area around Dortmund is industrial. This means sharing the often badly worn main roads with lots of lorries. Most important is that Dortmund was about halfway to Berlin. In the planning stage you have to decide first whether the day is a travelling day or a sightseeing day. The object was to spend as much time in Berlin as possible so we ignored any places of interest and got on with getting there.

A good hotel, a pleasant meal and a sound sleep saw us all ready to face the second day and the 300 mile journey to Berlin. Not so wet and we also used Autobahns without an upper speed limit. A couple of hours travel at high speed accompanied by big engined Mercs and Beemers sharpens your concentrating skills no end. We came across several delays caused by accidents. When you see a five car shunt created by vehicles travelling faster than we are used to seeing, you understand why no UK Government will ever raise our motorway upper speed limit. However, on a pleasant afternoon we found our way into Berlin. Using Simon's natural ability to find his way, a printed Autoroute map and a Garmin sat-nav we found the hotel in short order and were soon relaxing in the bar with the bikes safe and sound in the car park.





We spent the rest of the weekend in Berlin. On a showery day we did some walking and also took a bus tour. This was a great way to get our bearings and decide what we would do the next day. Our hotel was at the western end of the famous Kurfürstendamm, which has every sort of up-market shop you can think of on it. Also at the western end are the bulk of hotels and the famous Berlin Zoo and railway station. At the Northern end is the Tiergarten, or Public Park. At its eastern end are the Brandenburg Gate and other major tourist sites of historical interest. Hitler used the road through the Tiergarten between Brandenburg Gate and the Victory Monument to parade his troops and there are testaments to this period and other signs of Germany's history all around the park. Simon had never been to Berlin and Sue and I wanted to see what had changed since our last visit. At that time we had found difficulty in finding a walking tour, as the Berlin government did not recognise such enterprise. We also saw the vast numbers of cranes rebuilding the areas left devastated by being part of the dividing Berlin wall and also from having little money spent on maintaining their structures.

A check on the Internet showed us that the very same company were still offering walking tours. There was now more variety but we chose the one that took us through mainly the old East Berlin areas, directed us to the more important and impressive buildings and gave an overview of Berlin history. Berlin is not just about Hitler. It is also a very lively place for entertainment and I am fascinated by the city.



Kurfürstendamm
Photo by Peter Kuley

The tour started at 2:30pm and ended at 5:00pm. Near the end of the tour we visited a building used as Luftwaffe (German air force) Headquarters in the 2nd World War and later became the Ministry of Finance. 11 years ago we stood outside this building and looked across the road to buildings that had formed part of the infamous Berlin Wall. What a dreadful state they were in after 28 years of neglect. How brilliant it was on this trip to stand in the very same spot and see the huge development programme that has produced new magnificent buildings and places of interest. The cynic might say that Germany wants more countries to join the European Community just so they get more Euros with which to complete the rebuilding programme. It is fair to say several times we were told that Berlin is bankrupt! Checking out the new Central Railway Station and nearby government buildings it is easy to imagine why. The fantastic glass station, opened in May 2006, cost Deutsche Bahn, the German Railway, 700 million Euros.



To be continued...



**Closing date for the Summer Edition of
the TGAM e-Newsletter is
Friday, 20th July.**

**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**

