

e-NEWSLETTER



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ROAD SAFETY 2011-2020

**TAUNTON GROUP OF
ADVANCED MOTORISTS**
www.tgam.org.uk



Number 141

Winter 2016



TAUNTON GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

e-NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly
Editor: David Walton

IAM Group No. 1005
Registered Charity No. 1062207

www.tgam.org.uk

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DATA PROTECTION ACT

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

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Chairman's Corner



Chairman's Report from 2016 AGM

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Taunton Group of Advanced Motorists Annual General Meeting 2016.

I can't be here tonight because I'm on a week's holiday in west Wales; despite being born and bred in the valleys, I still have to pay £6.60 toll charge for the Severn Crossing to return to this "Land of my Fathers" or, in Welsh "Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau"... now that's a challenge for Mr President to pronounce!

I have come to the end of my 4th year as Chairman of the Group and should you decide to re-elect me tonight, the coming year will be my 5th and last. I feel I have done my bit and that it is time to hand over the baton to someone else; I am therefore giving you a year's notice to make arrangements to appoint a new Chairperson. Please don't leave it until the 11th hour! And please be aware that the IAM's policy is that all Groups **must** have an appointed Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer to exist.



By Andrew Griffiths





Looking back over the last 12 months, I could provide a lot of statistics about our Group but I'll spare you the detail and just give you some headlines.

Our membership is around 100. We've had a respectable throughput of Associates and a 96% pass rate compared to the Regional average of 85%. We've had 8 F1RSTs (distinctions) and just 1 Fail. We achieve our results with just 10 Observers and you'll have an idea of how hard we all work and the hours we put in when I tell you that the Regional average of Observers is 25 per Group! Our Observer cadre comprises 3 National Observers, 1 Local Observer and 6 Group Observers who will become Local Observers over the coming months which will mean that all of our Observers will hold a qualification accredited by the Institute for the Motor Industry, in-keeping with IAM's aims and Objectives for standards, consistency and professionalism.

As Chief Observer for our Group (my other hat), I am always looking out for new Observers to ease the pressure on the 10 we

have and my priority is to have more in Taunton. Have you got what it takes? Have you passed the Advanced Driving Test in the last 2 years with a high score? Have you got good interpersonal skills? If so, I'd like to hear from you.

Our events calendar for the last 12 months has been interesting and varied and I'm pleased that our monthly meetings are well-attended. The aim is to provide informative and entertaining talks – and not necessarily all of them about motoring. One of the best attended interactive talks was about Lasting Power of Attorney by a local solicitor. I think it had connotations for most of us.

And of course, the Regional intergroup quiz draws us together with neighbouring Groups in Bristol, Weston and Bath. The 2016 quiz was hosted last month by Bath and despite putting in a splendid performance, Taunton came 3rd (and as Bristol didn't attend that means we came last!). It is our turn to host the next quiz night in September 2017 and I want to get our Group name on the trophy so if you are good at pub quizzes, you're who I'm looking for.





At this stage I want to personally acknowledge the work that Committee members put in to keeping the cogs going. They give freely of their time and make committee meetings great fun – and a challenge for me to control! So my thanks to David our Secretary, Isobel our Treasurer, Barry our Events guru, John our Associate Coordinator, Mike who ensures our Observers each have corporate clothing, equipment and training material, and of course Brian our President who provides worldly wisdom around the committee table.

Sadly we lose Janet who is standing down tonight and we also lose Grant tonight because his time is in demand from higher priority commitments in his life. I'll be sorry to see you go and thanks to both of you for your help. These two vacant committee posts must be filled tonight otherwise the remaining committee members will each have more work to do and this would be wholly unfair bearing in mind the Group has 100 members.

I want to thank our team of Observers for such an impressive performance over the last 12 months; without your expertise and knowledge,

TGAM wouldn't be achieving the superb results I mentioned to you earlier.

I want to thank the volunteers who help out with refreshments on members evenings and of course to Janet who runs the raffle. And it is the raffle which pays for the annual BBQ at our Classic Car show in July.

I want to thank all of you here tonight and our others who cannot make it. What impresses me about our Group is the comradery I see at members evenings (or club nights if you prefer). TGAM is like a cake; it has many ingredients; it has a committee, it has Observers, it has volunteers, it has Associate members and it has full members. All are a crucial part of the mix.

And so to the icing on the cake. The Chairman's Award. The recipient of this award is someone either on the Committee or in the Observer team (sometimes both) who in my view has stood out and made a difference. During my tenure as Chairman, all recipients have been deserving and this year's recipient is no different. It gives me great pleasure to present this award to Barry Keenan.





Let me tell you why I've chosen Barry. Firstly he slipped me 50 quid last week to help me make my choice😊. Barry passed his advanced test with a F1RST (mentored by Hugh Todd), he trained and qualified as a Local Observer and quickly moved on to train for the IMI National Observer qualification; his Examiner was Andy Poulton but despite this (joke!) he passed with flying colours. He has been registered by IAM and IMI as a Local Observer Assessor joining David Perkins and myself and he will be instrumental in the process of qualifying our Group Observers to Local Observers in the coming weeks. He establishes a great rapport with the Associates he mentors and I have witnessed this first hand when sitting in the back seat assessing him.

Barry hasn't stopped there. He joined the TGAM Committee and became our Events Coordinator; he has produced an interesting array of events not just for this year but right through to December 2017. He is there at outdoor events such as the West Somerset Steam Fair and the Watchet Show, admirably representing IAM and TGAM.

So, Barry, this award is fully deserved (and I recon it's worth another 50 quid for all the things I've said). Well done to you.

And so to the coming year: There is work to be done to attract young drivers into TGAM. These drivers aged 17-26 are in the high risk group because they lack experience older drivers have developed. They are also the future of IAM RoadSmart and without young intake, IAM won't exist in years to come because it will have no living members! So I am making this the priority. IAM RoadSmart has appointed Eloise Peabody-Rolf as "young driver ambassador". Eloise has been driving with the Under Seventeen Car Club since her feet could reach the pedals and passed the advanced driving test soon after her 17th birthday. With her help TGAM needs to develop strategies to attract the young drivers for example through colleges and Academies in Somerset. To do this, I need a full committee brimming with ideas and with the energy and skills to make it happen.

Thank you all for listening and I'll be toasting your health right now.

Andrew



THE COMMITTEE



Committee meetings (for Committee Members ONLY) are held bimonthly at 7:30pm on the first Wednesday 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.

Chairman	Andrew Griffiths	chair@tgam.org.uk
Secretary/Membership Sec.	David Walton	secretary@tgam.org.uk
Treasurer	Isobel Jennings	treasurer@tgam.org.uk
Associate Coordinator	John Gilbert	coordinator@tgam.org.uk
Support Officer	Michael Wotton	cmmw@tgam.org.uk
SRS Liaison Officer	Vacant	cmgl@tgam.org.uk
Events Coordinator	Barry Keenan	events@tgam.org.uk
Chief Observer/Masters Mentor	Andrew Griffiths	chair@tgam.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	David Walton	ed@tgam.org.uk
Webmaster	Paul Willitt	cmpw@tgam.org.uk
Committee Members	Brian Howe (President)	president@tgam.org.uk
	Matthew Murray	cmjl@tgam.org.uk



GROUP OBSERVERS



Chief Observer and Masters Mentor	Andrew Griffiths
National Observer	Barry Keenan
National Observer	David Perkins
Group Observer	Godfrey Davey
Group Observer	Brian Dodd
Local Observer	Isobel Jennings
Group Observer	Alan Thomson (paused)
Group Observer	Hugh Todd
Group Observer	David Walton
Group Observer	Timothy Wheeler
Group Observer	Michael Wotton

Group Observers must be fully paid up Taunton Group AND National IAM members at ALL times to carry out your vital Observer roles.

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 the Associate Coordinator 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 any problems please contact our Chief Observer, Andrew Griffiths.

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

Nick Tapp 07900 900678

Julia Beer 07738 573482

Marie Kynaston 07769 675248

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



CALENDAR



NOVEMBER

16	W	7:30pm	Members' Evening – The Taunton & Bridgwater Canal A brief history plus plans for future conservation & development. Mark Evans Waterway Manager Bridgwater & Taunton canal.
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DECEMBER

10	Sa	12 noon	CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON to be held at Oake Manor Golf Club
14	W	7:30pm	Members' Evening – Christmas Quiz Light hearted quiz with a mixture of motoring related, general knowledge and Christmas questions.

JANUARY

			No Members' Evening in January
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FEBRUARY

15	W	7:30pm	Members' Evening – Bloodhound SSC Martin Evans, a Bloodhound Ambassador and Secretary of the Bristol Group, is coming back to tell us more and update us on recent events.
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MEMBERS' PAGE



Advanced Driving Test Passes

Congratulations to three members who have recently passed their Advanced Driving Test.

OBSERVED BY

James Crocker
Neil Scott (First)
Philip Keenan

Barry Keenan
Hugh Todd
Mike Wotton

NOTE: If you have passed the test recently but your name is not on the above list please make sure that you inform John Gilbert, our Associate Coordinator. We would like to present successful candidates with their pass certificates at one of our Members' Evenings.

Will you accept the challenge to get one new associate to join the group in 2017? You must have one friend or relative who wants to get more fun and enjoyment from their driving. Also, if you are searching for a Christmas present for the person who has everything, why not get them an Advanced Driving Course? Buy before Christmas and quote "GROUP60" on your order for a 10% discount.

David Walton, Membership Secretary

The Membership Register

This quarter we have six new group members. We hope you enjoy your association with Taunton Group and we look forward to welcoming you to our meetings, events and activities.

	<u>TOWN</u>	<u>LEVEL</u>
John Chance	Chard	Associate
Mark Stephenson	Wellington	Associate
Alison Gilbert	Bridgewater	Associate
Jane Tocher	Wellington	Associate
Catherine Mair	Castle Cary	Associate
Freddie Williams	Bridgewater	Associate

We currently have 100 fully paid up members, with 39 yet to renew so far this year. We have 14 active associates.



PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS



President's Address from AGM (Adapted)

You will be pleased that I do not have a lot to say. We have a higher than average pass rate for Advanced Tests which reflects favourably on our Group, Local and National Observers and the training that they receive. We are still in need of more Observers to help spread the load, and the same can be said for the Group Committee. Too few are taking on too much of the work. If you can offer just a few hours a month we would be very grateful. Committee meetings are only held bi-monthly.

Please don't forget our TGAM Christmas Lunch. Only £14.95 for 3 courses; Saturday 10th December 2016, 12 noon for 12:30pm at Oake Manor Golf Club, Oake, Taunton, TA4 1BA. If you are interested in any of the above, please contact me by email at president@tgam.org.uk.

I want to avoid repeating Andrew's comments, as seen in "Chairman's Report", elsewhere in this issue. But I will just say that it was very sad to lose Janet Loader from the Group Committee. Janet has served as a loyal and regular Committee member for many years. Janet was presented with a bouquet of flowers by me at the AGM.



by Brian Howe





I am sure you have heard the expression, "It's been a funny old year". Well, it's been a funny old summer. So much has happened. A couple of weeks after my charity ride for Work-Wise, Taunton, on 7th July, Bob-E-Trike suffered a catastrophic frame failure. Luckily, it happened as I was getting on and not while I was riding through heavy traffic, which could have proved interesting if not somewhat dangerous. The suppliers of the trike have agreed to replace the entire frame, completely free of charge. The drawback being that it has taken over 3 months to obtain a new frame from the Taiwanese manufacturer. As it happened, Alice and I had planned a week's trip to Surrey and Sussex in October, to catch up with family and friends, so we agreed to take Bob-E-Trike to the supplier, Mission Cycles, just outside Maidstone, Kent. Not exactly on the doorstep, but it was a very pleasant drive through the leafy lanes of South East England, using my Garmin satnav on 'shortest route' not quickest. Try it sometime. It sharpens your senses when driving through narrow lanes with a ridge of grass growing in the centre and 3 metre hedges on either side. I am hoping to get Bob back again, by courier, in early November.



Then, of course, there was the TGAM Classic Car and BBQ on 20th July. I must say that I didn't enjoy it so much this year as I seemed to spend so much time doing other things. I have decided to pass on the responsibility for next year's show to others of a more youthful age, although I have already booked the catering supplier for 2017. Our own show was quickly followed by the WSRA Steam Rally at Norton Fitzwarren, held during the first weekend of August. Would you believe it? It was the same team of helpers at the TGAM stand. Again, next





year I will be reducing my input, probably to one day, or part thereof. The rest of August passed in a blur with the funeral of a close friend, and day surgery on my right hand to release two trigger fingers and to relieve osteoarthritis in the base of my thumb. Thankfully that appears to have been reasonably successful giving me more mobility in the hand but with a slight loss of strength.

Winter driving

With the onset of Autumn and Winter and the weather expected to turn colder than in previous years, it is time to make those all-important checks on your preferred mode of transport. Yours probably being a motor car or motor cycle, mine being a battery assisted tricycle and a couple of mobility scooters. First to check in these frosty mornings is the coolant. You may need to increase the strength of the anti-freeze mixture and the screen wash liquid. The next is the tyres. Although the legal minimum is 1.6mm across 75% of the tread, you may feel safer with at least 3mm across the full width. I heard this conversation from a young couple very recently. Young lady, "Darling, do you think my rear tyres are ok?" Young man, "No, I think you should get them changed as soon as possible." Young lady,

"But they still have some squiggly bits down the middle." The car in question was a rear wheel drive Mercedes SLK 200 Kompressor. I hope you grasp the significance of the previous sentence. The third item to check for Winter is of course the battery, although a lot of modern car batteries are now sealed for life. It will probably have to be checked by your local friendly mechanic or favourite garage. The colder weather reduces the strength of the battery and shows up weaker batteries at this time of year. As a friend of mine has recently found out. This being the second year that his car has suffered non-starting on early morning trips. Time for a new one I think. Other items that should be checked regularly anyway are, front and rear screen wiper blades, and all lights and indicator bulbs.

And, finally, please don't forget the annual TGAM Christmas Lunch at Oake Manor Golf Club on 10th December. Arrive 12 noon for 12:30pm seating. I have 20 places booked so far and we may not be able to exceed 30 places. Please apply to me as soon as possible. Places will not be available on the day. Brian L. Howe.

IAM PC/CV (Retired). TGAM Hon. President.



Events Corner



Greeting and salutations dear chums. It'll soon be Christmas (too soon, I hear you groan). But, like it or not, time flies and another year is fast approaching its end which is a fine time to remind you of the TGAM Christmas Lunch. Read on...

August

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th of August saw a few of us flying the flag (literally) at the West Somerset Steam Fayre & Vintage Vehicle Rally at Allerford Junction in Norton Fitzwarren.

And what a cracking couple of days it was too. The sky was blue, the sun shone and the crowds thronged. Oh boy, didn't they throng?! We were kept quite busy throughout the two days with lots of interest shown and many enquiries made. (Andrew even tried to recruit a 7 year old. Now that's starting them young!)



**By Barry Keenan, Events
Co-ordinator**





Hopefully most of our visitors will translate into actual new Associates, but even if they don't, by just getting out there and selling the TGAM brand enables us to get the road safety message out to a wider audience, and that in itself, is a success.

Why? I hear you ask. Well, selling the TGAM brand is important on two fronts:

1. The group needs new members to survive and we'll only get them if they know about us.
2. Road safety is all about the protection and security of everybody who uses our roads. That means that even if we don't actually recruit the people we talk to, by virtue of the fact that we are talking to them allows us to give some hints and tips and get the road safety message across.

But as I've mentioned before (and will mention again) there's a lot of work that goes into these events and if any of you good souls feel like joining us at the TGAM gazebo, meeting the public and having a laugh, then just let me or any of the committee know and we'll welcome you with open arms. Any time that you can give us will always be appreciated.

September

Our Member's Evening in September saw Tim Bird of Highways England coming to chat. You may recall that Tim is the Team Manager of the Highways Traffic Officers based at Chelston (M5 Junction 26). He and his team help ease and manage the flow of traffic on our stretch of the motorway between junctions 31 (Exeter) and 21 (Weston-Super-Mare).

Tim gave a very in-depth talk on the role and function of the Traffic Officers and mentioned some of the changes to the Highways Department that are in the pipeline. For those of you who couldn't be there (why not?!) you missed a treat. His talk was very instructional and he is very enthusiastic about his subject and I for one, learned a lot about the role and function of Highways England that I didn't know before.

Tim is keen to come back to us to have a further talk with us on the ever changing role so I've pencilled him in for 2018. Let me know if you'd like to hear from him sooner, or indeed, if you think that one talk from him was enough. They're your member's evenings, so let me know what you want to see and hear.





October

October was the time for our AGM. Our guest speaker that night was Richard Gladman who is the Head of Driving and Riding Standards at IAM RoadSmart Headquarters. Richard gave a very interesting breakdown on the development of the IAM RoadSmart re-branding and the proposed future development of the organisation. He spoke openly about the 'price wars' that are currently on-going within HQ and the drive to recruit what he called 'the younger demographic' i.e. those people between the ages of 17 and 40.

All of these changes will have a direct effect on those of us in the shires, so I would advise you to read as much information coming out of HQ as you can. As a follow on from Richard's talk at this AGM, I've already booked Sarah Sillars, (IAM RoadSmart CEO) to come and talk to us at our 2017 AGM. I expect that between October 2016 and our AGM in October 2017, there will be many, many changes that we're going to have to get our heads around!

November

Our meeting on 16th November will feature Mark Evans. Mark is the Canal and River Trust Regional Manager with specific responsibility

for the Bridgwater and Taunton canal. He will be coming to tell us all about the history of this rather splendid piece of industrial engineering as well as the proposed changes and upgrades to the canal and what it means for riverside conservation and regeneration.

Then we're into Christmas and the regular annual festivities.

December

All of the hard work and learning stuff for this year will have come to an end by now. So it's with great pleasure that I announce that our 14th December Member's Evening shenanigans will be none other than the annual Christmas Quiz! *(Please note the earlier than usual date; the normal third Wednesday of the month was too near Christmas)*

Now, this is rumoured to be a light-hearted quiz with a mixture of motoring related, general knowledge and Christmas questions. (Light-hearted being the operative word here. We don't want any fighting in the aisles because I get all the answers right and you don't!)

If you've found that you haven't been able to get to any of the other Member's Evenings throughout the year (again, why not?!), then you really must come to this one. It'll be a blast!





We round up the year with our annual Christmas Luncheon. As usual this has been expertly organised by Brian Howe. Next year Brian is handing over the reins for the organisation of the Christmas Lunch to me, so my advice is get there this year and see how it should be done before I make a complete pig's ear of the next one!

As a quick reminder, it's on Saturday 10th December 2016, at the Oake Manor Golf Club, Oake, Taunton. TA4 1BA. Arrive by 12 noon for a 12:30 start. Now at the time of writing this (24.10.2016) menus and booking forms are still available from Brian Howe. (email: president@tgam.org.uk) but don't hang about, get your order in as soon as you can. The earlier the better!

So that's it for this year. Thanks for taking the time to read my scribblings and (hopefully) considering my requests. In the meantime, here's to your continued happy, safe and enjoyable motoring.

Barry, Events Co-ordinator,

T : 01823 – 254621

M : 07776 – 124001

E : events@tgam.org.uk

November Members' Evening

Bridgwater and Taunton Canal - its history and future

A talk by Mark Evans, Waterway Manager, who will tell us all about the changes and upgrades that are planned for the canal.
(And there are plenty, apparently)



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Wednesday 16th November 7:30pm
Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall





**TAUNTON GROUP of
ADVANCED MOTORISTS
CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

to be held at

**OAKE MANOR GOLF CLUB
Oake, Nr. Taunton, TA4 1BA**

**on Saturday 10th December 2016
12 noon for 12:30pm**

Menus and booking forms are still available from Brian president@tgam.org.uk





Andrew Griffiths - A Hard Act to Follow



October, as you will recall, was the time for our AGM. I don't know about you, but I for one was more than a little shocked, saddened, but to be honest, not in the least surprised to hear that after what will be five years of dedicated service, Andrew Griffiths, our long serving Chairman, has decided that this coming year will be his last year in post.

Andrew has a drive and enthusiasm for advanced motoring in general and TGAM in particular that has served us very well over the last four years. His breadth of understanding of the inner workings of IAM RoadSmart has helped TGAM to negotiate the various (and often confusing) transitions that we have had to make in order to stay compliant with, and viable within, the IAM organisation.

Many of you may not appreciate the extremely long hours that Andrew puts in behind the scenes on our behalf. (I'm ashamed to admit that I'm not even half as dedicated!) Nor perhaps do you realise that behind his genial persona lies a formidable force in the field of road safety both as an advocate for TGAM and the Region. And this is on top of his roles as Chief Observer & Training Officer within the Group!

What I hope you *will* appreciate is that losing Andrew as our chairman next year will be a great loss to TGAM and the wider road safety family that he embraces. I'm sure that whoever eventually takes over from him will do a sterling job, but whoever that person is, they have a very hard act to follow. Thank you Andrew.

Barry

Events Co-ordinator





Another success story

Having sifted through a number of editions of the IAM magazine over the years, doing the advanced course was always in the back of my mind. Around a year ago I decided to get on with it, so rang the IAM and booked on the Skill for Life course. They put me in touch with the Taunton group, who assigned me to Isobel Jennings. We arranged to meet at her farm, where all journeys following would begin. After a very pleasant introduction, she proved to be a hard task-mistress, challenging me to correct flaws in my driving style, testing me on the Highway Code and working to adopt the IPSGA model, all whilst conversing on a wide range of topics. She even got me to have a crack at the dreaded commentary.



Our relationship seemed to work very well, with progress coming along, week by week. Our time ventured outside of the car on occasion, the highlight witnessing the calving of one of her many Herefords.

Eventually, she asked whether I was happy to book a pre-test drive with Andrew, who would decide whether I was ready for the test-proper. I agreed, with trepidation.

I met Andrew, who comprehensively went through how the test would proceed, and the bits that I gained from those two hours proved invaluable. Thank you Andrew!

A week or so later, the test with Andy Ware came around, and he was as nice people kept saying that he was. The drive went smoothly, after a typically inauspicious start, and the weather gods were kind, though one never does know quite what is being written on the notepad. Upon parking up, Andy proceeded to talk through the entire drive with unerring precision. He informed me that I had passed, and that it was good enough to gain a F1st certificate. I was over the moon!

A great many thanks go to Isobel for giving up a lot of hours to aiding my improvement and confidence on the roads, implementing skills that I hope will help me for life.

Rhys Llewellyn-Eaton





Help! You're Needed



As you know, Andrew has given us 1 years notice of his intention to resign. That means that you now have 10 months in which to accept that without members getting up to be counted and starting to volunteer their time & expertise to the committee either as a volunteer or indeed as a committee member, then TGAM could eventually fold; and I for one, really wouldn't like that to happen. Would you?

At the AGM two of our committee members who'd served you loyally and well during their

time in 'office' retired. A great loss to both the membership and the committee. (And to both Janet Loader & Grant Lewis, I'd like to give you my personal thanks for everything you did for the group. Thank you both). But yet, despite repeated requests, only one person stepped forward to volunteer his time and expertise. (Thanks, Matt you're a star!)

Please, don't be complacent about this.

To remain a vibrant, active and relevant organisation, TGAM needs new blood & fresh ideas. It's clear that you enjoy the benefits of the Group and it's also clear that you enjoy being a part of the Group. After all, you continue to pay your annual subs to maintain your membership. And yet, month on month, despite a membership base of over 100, we're lucky if 40 people turn up on the member's evenings. Why is that?





If you don't like the events we plan, let me know. If you don't like the guest speakers we invite, again, let me know. Think about it and come up with some suggestions of who you would like to hear. Perhaps even take to the podium and give your own talk, you know you'd be most enthusiastically welcomed!

The fact is people, the committee work hard to keep TGAM going. Not only in the running of the group for all our members benefits, but in getting out to various fetes, galas & public meetings to keep road safety and the TGAM brand in the public consciousness. However, as we've been saying for ages, the committee really does need our members to be more active in the group.

We need **YOU** to come with us and man the TGAM Tent at these various functions.

We need **YOU** to join the committee and to help both spread the load and to bring fresh, new ideas of how we can keep the group viable for the 21st century.

Without **ACTIVE** members, the group is nothing more than an occasional social club. Please don't let us become just that!

And despite the general view that all committees are just long winded "talking shops", ours isn't! We're a vibrant bunch of friends. We have a laugh every time we meet, but we also get on with the very serious work of running the group.

We don't need much of your time, we really don't. Perhaps an hour or two per month.

So if you fancy doing your bit, and having a laugh whilst you're at it, just speak to any member of the committee at the next member's evening or alternatively either phone or drop any one of us an email. (All of our contact details are in the newsletter) and we'll welcome you with open arms.

Believe me, whether or not you think so, you really **DO** have something to offer. And who knows? You may even find that TGAM committee work rewards you in ways that you just never expected!

Barry

Events Co-ordinator





December Members' Evening



A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

This will be a light hearted quiz with a mixture of general knowledge, Christmas and motoring related questions.

Come and have an entertaining evening and support your Group.



Wednesday **14th** December
7:30 pm (*note earlier than usual date*)
at Hatch Beauchamp Village Hall

February Members' Evening

BLOODHOUND SSC



Martin Evans works as a Bloodhound Ambassador, an unpaid volunteer position in the organisation. He is also an IAM member and is a Senior Observer with the Bristol Group and also their Secretary. He has given us very interesting and informative talks about Bloodhound in the past and is coming back to tell us more and update us on recent events.

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





Morocco – mountains and desert – a 4x4 experience

By Karen Hummel

Well, where to start. Phillip and I have a Land Rover defender 110 pickup. It has been transformed into an overland vehicle. We chose to go to Morocco as it's not somewhere we have been before and it has so much to offer from landscape to culture. We went on a guided trip that covered central to North East Morocco.

Due to my limited time off with work, Phillip set off first on the ferry. I was to catch up with him later in Malaga Airport. He caught the Plymouth to Santander ferry and drove the length of Spain, all in 3 days.

We met up with our group to get another ferry from Algeciras port to Ceuta (North Africa). Our group consisted of 3 other vehicles – all Land Rovers this time.

Once in North Africa, we had to enter Morocco through the border. This was an experience. It was chaos and a bit of a culture shock to be



honest. A lot of people in Morocco travel on foot across the border to Spain to get cheaper goods. Due to the amount of people traffic, border force staff had batons and lines were created with fencing. As it's an Islamic country this was very much reflected in their clothing. I suddenly felt a minority.





Once through, we found somewhere to park up to exchange our currency to dirham. As it's a closed country you can only get this once you're there. You get 12 dirham's to the pound.

We travelled on main road to cover some distance and our first night was spent in Chefchaouen – the blue city, in the Rif Mountains. It is steeped in history and the colour represents God's power according to Jewish teachings. We ate our first Moroccan dishes at a local restaurant and soaked up some culture.

The next part of our trip was to head towards the mid Atlas Mountains. On route we stopped at the Roman Ruins of Volubilis.



Wow! what a settlement this had been. It dates back to 3rd century BC. It was abandoned in the 18th century. They are currently still preserving the site and a museum is being made. The weather had reached 36 degrees – awesome.

Our onwards journey from there took us through some towns. It was here I noticed traffic lights with a countdown system.



We headed to our camp for the night in the cedar forest. We came across baboons and packs of dogs. The cedar forest has the oldest tree, which is now dying, but stands as an





icon. It's 800 years old, 8 metres in girth and stands about 40 metres high. The route to it in the forest had been barricaded off but you can get to most places in a 4x4! Here we camped at 5,000ft.

The trip next day continued to the Atlas Mountains. It was a 175 mile drive but the scenery and the views were so rewarding. We crossed dry riverbeds and climbed approximately 7,500ft. The road had turned to track and was clinging to the mountain edge in places. The weather turned and a thunderstorm came in. It was pretty awesome.

The weather was too bad to camp that night so we stayed in an auberge, where Milike provided such warm hospitality and a delicious tagine supper. The auberge was on Lac Tislit. In the morning the weather had cleared and there was the most beautiful sunrise across the lake.

Our adventure continued along mountain tracks; the terrain was challenging. We climbed to our highest point this day to 9,000ft.

Children from the local villages all run to the side of the roads expecting pens, sweets or anything they can get and women were doing





their clothes washing in the streams. What a different world from what we know. The journey lead us back down the mountain towards Dades Gorge and Todhra Gorge. It was here that one of the drivers heard a loud bang so we stopped to investigate but couldn't find anything wrong with his vehicle. Our camp was just up the road so we headed there. It was soon evident that the loud bang had been displacement of his roof top tent and it was now holding on by one pin. We shared ladders and fixings and such like and all was mended.

80% of the drive the following day was off road. We headed to the low Atlas Mountains. It was vibrating and jarring. The tracks would twist and turn. The tracks were being used by the locals for general traffic in 2 wheeled drive cars, mini buses and stock vehicles. How they made it I don't know. We found a café built into the rocks called 'Hardrock Café' and stopped to have a beverage and take in the spectacular view. It must take days for their supplies to reach them!

We followed the date palm oasis in the Dara Valley to reach our camp in a town called Zogora. Road works were underway and instead of cones in the road they used painted stones. As we drove through the town, the

local mechanics followed us on their mopeds touting for business. For one unfortunate group member some repairs were required!

The following morning we all fuelled up, as there would be no access to fuel for 3 days. Some final repairs to the vehicles were done at a bargained rate. During this time the girls did a spot of shopping and bought some hijab head scarves, water and some local dates. Couldn't miss that opportunity.

Off to the desert. We crossed desert plains, dried up salt lakes, dry river beds, fesh fesh sand (grey thick dust), small sand dunes and mountain roads.





We were shaken to bits on all the trail corrugations. I never knew the desert could vary so much in terrain. The journey covered 150 miles covering tracks of previous Paris-Dakar. We ended up in camp Lac Maider. The sun was beating down and we were welcomed with some Moroccan tea on arrival. The evening ended under the stars with bats swooping through our camp. It was idyllic.

We left Lac Maider a little later than expected due to the need for more vehicle repairs. Unfortunately all the repairs done so far had been for the same vehicle. Being in the middle of the desert with an ignition that didn't want to fire up meant one thing – with no spares to hand it had to be hot-wired.

There was no tarmac today. We all lowered our tyre pressure down to 25psi. We crossed more desert terrain etching our way to Erg Chebbi sand dunes. The plan was to wild camp but due to a sand storm this was not possible. We continued to Nomad Palace to spend an extra night there. We stayed here for 3 nights, which was a delight. It was beautiful yet casual. The few days here allowed us to go out dune bashing. There was an option to relax

by the pool but this was far too sedate to do. Our vehicle were emptied literally and we stored spare tyres and supplies in our rooms. The land rovers had to be as light as possible for the sand. Getting stuck was not an option!

We were taken to a local working mine where the workers had uncovered what is thought to be turtle fossils. The men working in the mine are lowered in a bucket down a 65metre shaft. There's no health and safety here.

Our last evening at Nomad Palace was spent taking a camel ride into the dunes to watch the sunset.





From leaving Nomad Palace we had a plan to head North West with more off road driving with mixed terrain of rock, sand and open plains. We had been given co-ordinates from fellow travellers of a place of interest on route which was worth seeing; called The Rock. To get there was a little adventurous. We followed the Algerian border for a few miles. It was a little unnerving having military posts every half mile knowing we were being watched by armed men in their towers. We ventured in land and saw our route to get the The Rock. This bit was technical and we managed some 3 wheeled driving and side slopes.

Unfortunately because we didn't have a beefy engine (4.2 litre, 6 cylinder land cruiser) or locking diffs we couldn't manage the final incline so we had to call it a day. It was just as interesting getting out. A few hours later we arrived at Boudnib Berber camp and were fortunate to get a hot shower (for some!) and food before a restful night's sleep.



Before we knew it the call to prayer started at 5am and the communal dogs all started barking so I guess it was time to start the day. We worked our way up to a town called Midelt. It is well known for its apples, which are sold from every road side. We were back on normal





roads now and working our way north to head out of Morocco. We stayed in the cedar forest camp again. This time we had an open fire and shared some cheese and biscuits. Very civilised.

Our last day in Morocco was spent in Fes, the oldest imperial city. We left camp and travelled to our hotel.

We lunched on the veranda overlooking the city. We had a guide take us to see the sights, sounds and smells of the Medina (walled town) It dates back to the 9th century and is home to the world's oldest university. We saw Morocco's oldest tannery and visited a weaving shop where some bought scarves made from cactus silk.

After a good night's sleep our time to return home had come. We shared our breakfast with the call to prayer, which had become quite normal to hear and something we would oddly miss. Our exportation cards had been filled in and passports ready for border control.

Visiting Morocco had touched every sense. It was an impressive expedition. The scenery was astounding and the different ways in which people live was just remarkable. Morocco is beautiful and unrefined.



Words into action

By Sarah Sillars OBE, IAM RoadSmart Chief Executive Officer



For those of you who came along to the IAM RoadSmart Annual Conference this year I'm sure you've had the chance to reflect on

what you saw and heard. I'm delighted so many of you have taken the opportunity to feedback what you think; whether that's positive, negative or neutral.

As you know, last year we talked about the need of creating a new IAM for a new era. We proved this wasn't just talk.

In the past 12 months we have carried out the following:

- Sold IAM House, allowing valuable release of funding for our core road safety work
- Launched our new brand
- Launched a modern new website designed from scratch

- Adopted a new tone of voice; less instructional and more working alongside our customers in co-operation
- Pursued a new media style; showing our new tone of voice which was noticed by key media
- Launched a new members' magazine
- Appointed a Young Driver Ambassador and Mature Driver Ambassador

Changes here won't end with these.





We have a new Group Guidelines and Handbook coming soon. The guidelines outline the daily requirements that groups should always consider when functioning as an affiliate group of IAM RoadSmart. The guidelines are the first point of reference for all group related enquiries in relation to IAM RoadSmart.

We also have a Membership Group Sign-Off Guidelines and Requirements programme in preparation. This means those groups achieving the highest standards will be provided with the privilege of signing off associates as members.

We will also be introducing Fellow membership. For taking a three yearly mandatory retest there will be enhanced benefits and recognition, free legal help, free breakdown cover, your own register and badge, and priority status for events and activities.

So as we get near the end of the year, I can safely say we have together achieved a great deal in 2016. As always you are IAM RoadSmart's front line – nothing would happen without you.



During the year I had the honour of meeting with over 4,000 members; I was keen to make sure that I learned first-hand what you think. This is an accessible organisation and hopefully you know you can approach any staff member at IAM RoadSmart whatever their seniority.

So please continue to be honest and engage with us. And I look forward to meeting many more of you around the country into 2017.

Sarah





Don't you just love motorway driving?

A couple of months ago Maggie and I had to make a trip up to Bristol so naturally set off along the M5. What was I thinking?!

No sooner had we joined the motorway at Junction 25 than we became snarled up in the very slow-moving northbound traffic. Now, had the drivers of the various vehicles around us driven sensibly and used the inside lane, which for a few miles at least was pretty empty, traffic would have flowed. Driver frustration would have been kept to a minimum and tempers would have remained calm. (I'm not talking about me here, you understand. I was as cool as the proverbial cucumber. We weren't in a hurry and already had a plan to get off the motorway and use a different route).

As we drove along, we remained blissfully ignorant that this particular traffic jam extended all the way from the Exeter side of Wellington to Junction 21 at Weston-Super-Mare where, apparently, two cars had collided and one of them had promptly had a temper tantrum and burst into flames. How do I know this? I

mentioned it to my chum Tim Bird of Highways England and he told me.

Anyway, having got as far as the 'Argos' viaduct at Junction 24 what little movement there had been on the road came to a complete stop. (Just past the off ramp for 24, would you believe?!). In fact, it was a good 25 minutes or so before there was any sign of movement at all! So to pass the time, we listened to some music, chatted and just 'people watched'. And boy, wasn't that interesting?! The amount of raised voices, arguments, fights and domestic disputes that were going on in the vehicles around us was amazing. It was like sitting in on an episode of Jeremy Kyle. (And no, I wouldn't do that, either!)

The phrase we often use to describe such a high volume of traffic is that it was 'nose to tail'. Such a phrase certainly gives you an immediate understanding of the type of jam that we're talking about here, but to say 'nose to tail' is actually a misnomer.





Whilst 'The System' and common sense dictates that you should leave a sensible gap between you and the vehicle in front (when they're actually moving, that is) I just never understand the need of some drivers to leave a gap of anything of up to a ¼ of a mile or so in standing or very slow moving traffic! To be stuck in a long, long traffic jam is bad enough, but to compound that by getting stuck behind some dawdling clot who won't close the gap, not only adds to the length of the queue but also causes a lot of frustration and angst amongst other drivers who would just like to make a little more progress and at least feel that they're getting somewhere.

And what happens when people get frustrated? Tempers fray and driving standards plummet.

Despite searching through government stats, I've been unable to find actual 'vehicles on the road' figures from the Department for Transport (DfT) over the 2014 / 15 period. Instead their reports measure the use of Britain's roads as so many billion vehicle miles. So, for example, in 2015 Britain's motorway network carried 65.8 billion vehicle miles. In contrast, records from the Motor Accident Solicitors Society

www.ukmotorists.com/motorways.asp show that there are now over thirty million cars using our roads network. (That, by the way doesn't include other vehicles such as lorries and motorcycles etc. nor does it include foreign tourist vehicles).

So, whether you look at 65.8 billion vehicle miles or 30 million cars on the motorway, with such a volume of traffic it's hardly surprising that there are so many accidents on the roads. And because of these enormous figures, you might be forgiven for not realising that of all of Britain's roads, our motorways are statistically the safest roads of all. Did you know, for example that on a daily basis, though they carry a good 15% of traffic, they only account for about 3% of annual accidents? The downside to this is that due to the sheer volume of traffic and high speeds involved, many accidents are usually serious, though only a small percentage result in death.

Indeed, the key findings on page 84 of the DfT annual report (September 2015) entitled **Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2014, 'Moving Britain Ahead'**

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467465/rrcgb-2014.pdf





show that although there were 5,630 serious accidents on the motorway network during 2014, of those number there were **only 85** fatalities. (In total, on all road types, there were 194,477 people were killed or injured in reported road accidents in 2014, the first increase in overall casualties since 1997).

The most common contributory factor to accidents in 2014 was **drivers failing to look properly**. This factor, the report states, has remained the most frequently occurring one since 2005, when contributory factors were first introduced. *(glad I decided to reprint the piece on eyesight – Ed)*

So how do you keep yourself safe on the motorway? As a quick reminder, I'd suggest that you review your copy of 'How To Be A Better Driver', pages 88 – 93. Or, if you've got a copy, look at Roadcraft chapter 12 or go back to the TGAM website and re-read Andrew's newsletter article of autumn 2015.

In essence the rules are quite simple: First, make sure that your car is completely roadworthy (You're an Advanced Driver, of course it is!) and has enough fuel to complete the journey. (Again Advanced Driver ... !) As you drive (on any type of road, really) remember that concentration and good, all

round observation are key. Don't forget that motorway driving can be boring and even hypnotic. Stress and tiredness will drastically lengthen your reaction times so to ensure that you remain alert at all times, pull off into the services every 2 hours or so and have yourself a good break of at least 20 minutes.

Even as an Advanced Driver, sustained motorway driving could make you less aware of your speed, so don't forget to monitor your speed as you drive along and remember that the overall stopping distance at 70 mph is 96 metres or 24 car lengths. You need to double that in wet weather and increase it to a factor of 10 in icy conditions. Giving yourself space gives you time to react. Having time to react means that you're far less likely to get involved in an accident. (I paraphrased Andrew there).

And that's the point; there's a difference between needless dawdling, (see my earlier gripe) and leaving a good safe gap between you and the vehicle ahead so that you can stop safely in the event of an emergency.

Also, don't forget about maintaining good lane discipline and avoid hogging the middle lane. We all know it's sometimes tempting to stay in





lane two more than you should so that you're not constantly having to pull in and out to overtake slower vehicles. But! Hogging either lanes two or three increases the likelihood of congestion and can be extremely annoying for those who want to get pass and get on. This leads to frustration, possibly stupid overtake, or even undertake, manoeuvres and potentially accidents.

As long as you drive to the system, maintain good observations, obey the speed limits and posted instructions, you'll be fine. Despite various rumours to the contrary that surface every now and again, the national speed limits on the motorway are:

- 70 mph if you're driving a car, motorbike, light goods vehicle not exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight and buses or coaches under 12 metres long.
- 60 mph if you're travelling in a car towing a caravan or trailer, goods vehicles exceeding 7.5 tonnes maximum laden weight or towing a trailer, buses or coaches over 12 metres long, LGVs and articulated lorries.

Keep alert, there may be other, local speed restrictions in force due to road works,

breakdowns or accidents etc. Even if speed restrictions are not in force you should always slow down in busy conditions, bad weather or if there's been a traffic accident.

And no matter what the temptation, if you come across an accident make sure that you pay attention to what ***you're*** doing and don't 'rubber neck'. So many secondary accidents happen when drivers become too pre-occupied with other people's accidents and fail to concentrate fully on their own driving.

But you're Advanced Drivers. You don't need me to tell you any of this, so just go out there and continue to enjoy your driving. If on the other hand you feel that despite all of your knowledge and experience that you rather like the idea of having a refresher assessment drive, whether on 'normal' roads or indeed on the motorway, give John Gilbert our Associate Co-ordinator a ring on 01278 – 651222 or email him at coordinator@igam.org.uk and he'll sort you out with an Observer; and what's more, you won't have to pay a penny.

Happy motoring,

Barry

National Observer





The big debate – which sex makes the better driver?

When I used to teach people to drive I was asked this all the time. I'd immediately ask what they meant by a better driver. This is where it became obvious that being a better driver means different things to different people.

When we think of the question what is the first thing that pops into our heads and how did we decide upon our answers?

I think it is safe to say in general young men between the ages of 17 and 25 pose the most risk to themselves and others on the road. I ask you - is this their fault or is there something that has not yet developed, like the frontal lobe of the brain which is responsible for planning, strategising and risk taking? Most experts will tell us this part of the brain does not fully develop until a person's mid 20's, which explains one reason why young people would be more vulnerable but does not tell us why young men have more crashes than young women.

There is no doubt there are some excellent female and male drivers but in the battle of the sexes who comes out top? From a small survey conducted last year it would appear women have

come out on top despite only 13% of men thinking women were superior behind the wheel. They looked at behaviour as well as skill in different driving situations and unfortunately for the men they were proven to lack certain skills, take more risks and behave more aggressively in some situations.

I wonder if the way we behave when behind the wheel goes back to our genetic make-up, with women tending to have more of a flight rather than fight reaction to things, making women in general more likely to avoid confrontation and take less risk.

To me a good driver is someone who observes, anticipates and plans during their journey and drives the car in a smooth and competent way. This is irrelevant of gender.

Many surveys tend to tell us women are the safer drivers, however my brother in law has just arrived at my house moaning and groaning about a woman who had just drifted onto his side of the road while trying to use her mobile phone. I guess the debate goes on!

Rebecca Ashton, commercial learning and development manager





Fuel champs Shaun Cronin and Paul Clifton scoop MPG runner-up slot



A team starring Shaun Cronin, regional service delivery manager (south) and Paul Clifton, transport correspondent for BBC South, achieved a magnificent second place for greatest economy percentage improvement (car category) in the MPG Marathon which took place last week. The pair took part in the three day challenge organised by Fleet World magazine driving a Honda CR-V EX 1.6 i-DTEC 4WD. For more information about the MPG Marathon click here:

<http://thempgmarathon.co.uk/>

Drive with Julia

I am a female driving instructor based in Langport, Somerset, supporting tests at the Yeovil and Taunton test centres. I am proud to be a member of the IAM and passed with a F1RST.



I provide high quality driving lessons in a diesel Peugeot 208, using resources and teaching styles designed to meet each learners needs, as I understand we all learn differently.

If you are interested in learning to drive, please contact me by phone: 07738573482 or by email: drivewithjulia@gmail.com

I also have lots of information on my Website www.juliabeerdrivinginstructor.com so do have a look.



IAM RoadSmart announces HQ move to Welwyn Garden City in late 2016



The UK's leading independent road safety charity IAM RoadSmart has announced it will be moving its head office from Chiswick to Welwyn Garden City at the end of the year. The move will be a gradual process over the coming months, with front-facing operations relocating to the new site first.

IAM RoadSmart, which until April was known as the Institute of Advanced Motorists, made the decision at the start of the year to move out of its current offices in Chiswick and seek accommodation away from the capital.

Having investigated many possible locations in the south-east, it settled on Albany Place near the town centre of Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire.

Sarah Sillars, IAM RoadSmart chief executive officer, said: "As a charity it is important for us to make the best use of our resources to achieve our goals – to improve road safety in the UK by making better drivers and riders. Relocating will free up vital assets for us to achieve more than ever before.

"Albany Place gives us flexibility to expand, with great links to London via the railway network and instant access to the rest of the country from the nearby motorways. We are looking forward to becoming a part of the Welwyn Garden City community and invite expressions of interest from residents looking for their next career move."

IAM RoadSmart celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. During this time more than half-a-million people have taken its advanced driving and riding test.

Caroline Holmes, IAM RoadSmart press office





A Fighter Pilot's Guide to surviving on the roads

By John Sullivan

I have been asked to repeat this piece from a newsletter several years ago as more than half our current membership have joined the group since then, so apologies if you have seen it before. Ed

John Sullivan is a Royal Air Force pilot with over 4,000 flight hours and a keen cyclist. In this article he describes why collisions can occur and, in layman's terms, how some of the techniques of flying fast jets can be used to increase your chances of survival on the roads.

“What’s wrong with you - are you blind?”

Who hasn’t thought this at some point whilst cycling or driving?

Now, before we go on, who can say that, at some point in their own driving history, they have not been about to manoeuvre - pull out from a T-junction, etc - when a car or bike seemed to come out of nowhere? Hopefully, it was just a close shave and no doubt quite frightening. You may have wondered how you failed to see it and concluded that they must have been driving too fast or you would have seen them. Perhaps, on such an occasion, you were the recipient of that loud and urgent query, ‘Are you blind?’

Well, here’s the bad news - yes, you were. For small but significant periods of time you are completely incapable of seeing anything at all.

Most of the time, as I shall explain, this is not a problem. But if it means that you fail to see a vehicle that is just about to occupy the same point in space and time as you are - then this is a big problem!

The good news is that understanding why we sometimes do not see things allows us to adopt some defensive strategies that tip the odds back in our favour. This article, then, is a fighter pilot’s survival guide to avoiding collisions.

Fighter pilots have to cope with closing speeds of over 1,000 mph, and they don’t always get it right! But crashes are always analysed carefully to learn the lessons that might prevent future accidents. This article reveals the hard-won techniques that fighter pilots are trained to use.





First some background. We have evolved, over hundreds of thousands of years, to our environment. We are highly adaptable and have eyes in the front of our heads, which gives us binocular vision for judging distance to prey or threats.

Our eyes and the way that our brain processes the images that they receive, are very well suited to creeping up on unsuspecting antelopes. We are even pretty good at spotting sabre-toothed tigers creeping up on us! We are, however, rubbish at spotting vehicles that hurtle towards us at high speed.

Let me explain why.

Light enters our eyes and falls upon the retina, whereupon it is converted into electrical impulses that the brain perceives as images. Clever stuff. Only a small part of the retina, in the centre and called the fovea, can generate a high-resolution image. This is why we need to look directly at something, by moving our eyes, to see detail. The rest of the retina contributes to our visual experience by adding the peripheral detail - hence peripheral vision. Peripheral vision cannot resolve detail, which prevents the brain from being overloaded with too much information, but it is very good at detecting movement. Any movement, such as the twitch of an antelope's ears or the swish of a tiger's tail,

immediately alerts us to something of interest which we can then bring our high-resolution fovea to bear upon. And our eyes move fast, really fast - no doubt spurred on by the motivation of not ending up as food ourselves.

So what?

Well, first, it is an unfortunate fact that if you are converging on a given point with another vehicle at the same speed and assuming that you are both traveling in a straight line, then there is no apparent movement noticeable by the occupant of either vehicle. That is, to the driver of each vehicle, the other will remain in exactly the same position in the windscreen up to the point of impact. There is no relative movement - so our peripheral vision is not suited to detecting it.

Remember, our peripheral vision is not good with detail - in fact, just 20° away from your sightline your visual acuity is about one tenth of what it is at the centre. Not convinced? Well, the standard eyesight requirement for driving in the UK is to read a car number plate at 20 metres. Go outside, now, and stand just 10 metres from a car and look at the number plate. Now, without moving your eyes try and read the number plate of the car on its right or left. Now try it again from 5m. Clinically, you are blind in your peripheral vision.





That's not to say that we cannot see something in our peripheral vision - of course we can. As you approach a roundabout you would be hard pressed not to see a dirty great articulated lorry bearing down upon you, even out of the corner of your eye - obviously, the bigger the object the more likely we are to see it. But would you see a motorbike, or a cyclist?

To have a good chance of seeing an object on a collision course, we need to move our eyes, and probably head, to bring the object into the centre of our vision - so that we can use our high-resolution fovea vision to resolve the detail.

Now for the really interesting part. When we move our head and eyes to scan a scene, our eyes are incapable of moving smoothly across that scene and seeing everything. This makes perfect sense: just like trying to take a picture without holding the camera still, the image would be blurred. So, our clever brain overcomes this by moving our eyes (really fast, remember) in a series of jumps (called saccades) with very short pauses (called fixations) and it is only during the pause that an image is processed. Our brains fill in the gaps with a combination of peripheral vision and an assumption that what is in the gaps must be the same as what you see during the

pauses. This might sound crazy, but your brain actually blocks the image that is being received while your eyes are moving, which is why you do not see the sort of blurred image that you see when you look sideways out of a train window.

Not convinced? Okay, go to a mirror and look repeatedly from your right eye to your left eye. Can you see your eyes moving? You cannot. Now have a friend or partner do the same thing while you watch them. You will see their eyes moving quite markedly. The reason you couldn't see your own eyes move is because your brain shuts down the image for the instant that your eyes are moving. Experiments have shown that it is impossible to see even a flash of light if it occurs within a saccade.

The saccade/fixation mechanism has always served us rather well and means that we can creep up on antelopes without being overloaded by unnecessary detail and a lot of useless, blurred images. But it does present us with some shortcomings now that we routinely climb into metal boxes and hurtle towards each other. Our eyes and brains are just not designed for this - our world has changed far faster than our bodies can adapt.





So what?

As you get to a junction and move your head right and left to look for oncoming traffic, you need to understand that you cannot guarantee that you have seen approaching traffic. It is entirely possible for our eyes to 'jump over' an oncoming vehicle during one of the saccades. The smaller (and, specifically, the narrower) the vehicle, the greater the chance that it could fall within a saccade. You are not being inattentive; you are physically incapable of seeing anything during a saccade. Remember the 'Think bike!' adverts, where a driver pulls out into the path of a motorcycle? I am convinced that it is the phenomenon of saccades and fixations that is most likely to lead to this sort of accident.

It gets worse. The faster you move your head, the larger the jumps, or saccades, and the shorter the pauses, or fixations. So, you are more likely to jump over an oncoming vehicle and less likely to detect any movement in your peripheral vision (because there is even less time available for slight, relative movement to become apparent).

It gets even worse. Not only can we not see through solid objects; research has shown that we tend not to look near to the edges of a

framed scene. In plain language, we tend not to look at the edges of a windscreen. So, not only do the door pillars of a car represent a physical blind spot, but our eyes tend not to fixate near to it, leading to an even bigger jump, or saccade, past a door pillar. This is called windscreen zoning.

One further point of interest, our ears usually contribute to the process of building up a picture of our surroundings too - the snap of a twig from an unwary paw is another prompt for us to direct our vision towards something of interest. But in our metal cocoons, with the radio or MP3 device playing, this is yet another cue that we are denied.

So, you are approaching a big roundabout or junction, looking ahead of course, and the road seems to be empty. As you get closer, you look right and left as a prudent, final check. You see no other vehicles and proceed. Suddenly, there is a blast of horn and a car flashes across in front of you, missing you by inches. Sound familiar?

So what happened? On the approach, you did not see that another car was on a perfect collision course, with no relative movement for your peripheral vision to detect - possibly compounded by being behind the door pillar.





Lulled into a false sense of security you looked quickly right and left, to avoid holding up the traffic behind you, and your eyes jumped cleanly over the approaching vehicle, especially as it was still close to the door pillar in the windscreen. The rest of the road was empty and this was the scene that your brain used to fill in the gaps! Scary, huh?

You were not being inattentive - but you were being ineffective.

Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse, there is also the phenomenon of 'expectation' - your brain is less likely to recognise something that you are not expecting to see. This now enters territory that pilots prefer to leave to a scary breed of creature called the aviation psychologist, but suffice it to say that, if you think that the road is empty, you are less likely to register that a vehicle is actually present.

So, what can we do about it? Well, quite a lot actually, as forewarned is forearmed.

Drivers

Always slow down as you approach a roundabout or junction, even if only by 20 mph or so, even if the road seems empty. Changing your speed will immediately generate relative movement against a vehicle that was otherwise

on a collision course - not only are you then more likely to see it, but you are no longer on a collision course!

Never just glance right and left - this leaves it entirely to chance whether you see an approaching vehicle or not - and if you glance quickly, the odds decrease markedly.

Always look right and left methodically, deliberately focusing on at least three different spots along the road to the right and three to the left - search close, middle-distance and far. With practice, this can still be accomplished quickly and each pause is only for a fraction of a second, but this means that you are now overriding the natural limitations of the eye and brain. Fighter pilots call this a 'lookout scan' and it is vital to their survival.

Always look right and left at least twice. Not only does this immediately double your chance of seeing a vehicle, but, if you repeat the same scan as you did the first time (which, when it becomes a well-practiced habit, you almost certainly will), an approaching vehicle will have moved to a different part of the windscreen by the time you look the second time and is less likely to be masked by a saccade. Just note that this will not work if you charge into a junction at a constant speed





because any vehicle on a collision course will stay in the same position in the windscreen - if you miss it the first time, you will probably miss it the second time too!

Make a point of looking next to the windscreen pillars. Better still, lean forward slightly as you look right and left so that you are looking around the door pillars. Be aware that the pillar nearest to you blocks more of your vision. Fighter pilots say 'Move your head - or you're dead'.

Clear your flight path! When you change lanes, especially into a slower lane, you should, of course, check your mirrors and will undoubtedly have been watching the road ahead of you, naturally. Your last check must be to look directly at the spot into which you are going to manoeuvre, otherwise you could easily have missed a slower motorbike, cyclist or even car in that lane, one that was only in your peripheral vision as you looked ahead, and over which you 'jumped' as you looked over your shoulder or checked your wing mirror.

Drive with your lights on or, if this seems extreme have daylight running lights fitted - if you don't already have them. Aviation research

shows that contrast is the single most important factor in determining the likelihood of acquiring an object visually. This is why military aircraft camouflage is designed to tone down their contrast. On the ground, dark-coloured vehicles or clothing will result in reduced contrast against most usual backgrounds and this is why high-visibility clothing (for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists) and/or bright lights are so important; in the daytime as well as at night.

While it is generally understood that a low sun can make it difficult to see, it is probably not generally understood why: driving into sun reduces contrast, especially when vehicles and pedestrians fall into the shadow of larger, up-sun objects. You must beware that even large vehicles, and especially motorbikes, cyclists and pedestrians, can become completely impossible to see under these circumstances and you must moderate your driving accordingly. This is why fighter pilots attack from out of the sun!

Keep your windscreen clean both inside and out! Seeing other vehicles can be difficult enough, without tipping the odds against you by having to look through a dirty windscreen. You never see a fighter jet with a dirty canopy.





And finally, don't be a clown - if you are looking at your mobile telephone then you are incapable of seeing much else. Not only are you probably looking down into your lap, but your eyes are focused at less than one metre and every object at distance will be out of focus. Even when you look up and out, it takes a fraction of a second for your eyes to adjust. This is time you may not have.

Motorcyclists and cyclists

Recognise that you are especially at risk - not only are you more vulnerable but the narrow profile of a motorbike or cycle makes it far more likely that you can fall into a saccade. So tip the odds in your favour - always wear high-contrast clothing and use lights. Flashing LEDs (front and rear) are especially effective for cyclists as they create contrast and the on-off flashing attracts the peripheral vision in the same manner that movement does.

The relatively slower speed of bicycles means that they will be closer to a point of collision if a vehicle begins to pull into their path. Turn this to advantage - when passing junctions, look at the head of the driver that is approaching or has stopped. The head of the driver will naturally stop and centre upon you if

you have been seen. If the driver's head sweeps through you without pausing, the chances are that you are in a saccade - you must assume that you have not been seen and expect the driver to pull out!

Be aware of when the odds are really stacking up against you. If you are cycling into a low sun, have a think about how difficult it is to see the vehicles in front of you. Now imagine that you are also looking through a dirty windscreen, or one with rain beating against it! Are you content that drivers approaching from behind have a realistic chance of seeing you? Maybe today is the day to take a different route - or time your journey to avoid the sun being straight into the eyes of drivers on that particularly busy stretch of road. Or take the bus.

Having a really low heart-rate at the point at which you go under the wheels of a truck is rather pointless. This is risk management.

So is wearing a helmet - every fighter pilot wears a helmet, even though it won't make much difference if they hit the ground at 700 mph! It's about reducing the chances of less dramatic incidents causing fatal cranial injuries, unnecessarily. Go figure.



Social media – a power for good

Social media, it seems can bring out the worst in people. For some it offers an opportunity to share negative opinions that would most likely be internalised, in any other social setting or interaction. Trolling and fat shaming are just two examples. A whole host of celebrities have ditched their social accounts due to harassment and bullying.

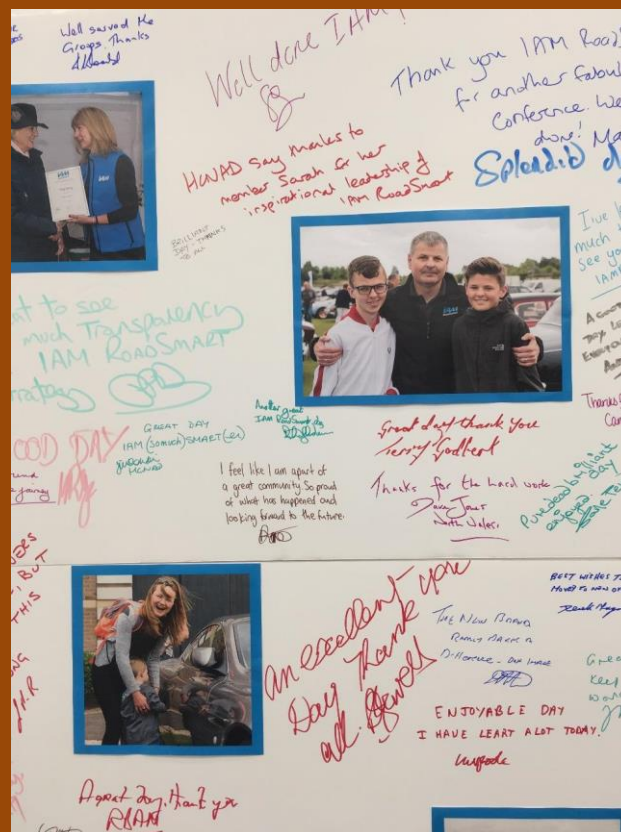
But this isn't the whole picture. For an organisation like IAM RoadSmart, social media can be a huge force for good.

It's our 60th birthday this year and last weekend we held our conference in Birmingham. This is an event where representatives from our volunteer network from around the country and staff come together to discuss ideas and strategy about where we, as an organisation, are going.

The nature of the conference is very much internal. How do we work as a team to get the best results? But the outputs and outcomes give us an ideal opportunity to demonstrate to others what exactly advanced driving and

riding is about. It's fun, it's social and it's relevant to all drivers and riders.

Social media provides the ideal channel for making the jump between an internal story and an external one.

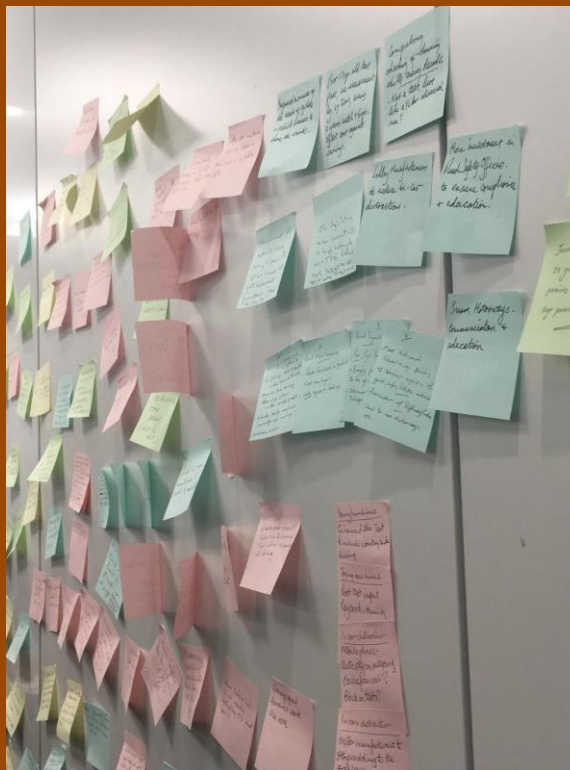




At the event we had a message board, where guests could share their thoughts on the day, as well as leave feedback for other attendees and staff. As well as providing a heart-warming keepsake for the office this allowed us to visually share the sentiment of the day.

Over the two days, 400 of our group representatives attended 50 sessions. From motorcycling, to new drivers and riders, to insurance, we tackled the topics which affect our work the most. We shared information and ideas. A session on policy and research generated several hundred post it notes of new ideas on the things we should be looking into.

IAM RoadSmart has 92,000 members and 5,000 active volunteers. We have a huge network of individuals supporting us and spreading the message of improving driving and riding standards and enjoyment through life-long learning. But social media



allows us to expand that reach by an infinite amount. Many of our groups are also using social media to great effect. Shropshire Advanced Motorists and Motorcyclists took our social media award home from the conference. Check them out on Twitter @SAMMShropshire.

As demonstrated by Three's #holidayspam campaign – the video is well worth a watch – in 2016 everything a company does is driven by what its customers want. Not the other way round. What do drivers and riders want from us? What worries people on the road? What are the road safety topics we should be campaigning on?

Social media is a fantastic way for us to answer these questions. Let us know your thoughts via twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, or of course put pen to paper or pick up the phone.

Caroline Holmes, IAM RoadSmart's communications manager





Recent Releases from the IAM Press Office

Don't be 'in the dark' on the roads

Now that British Summer Time has come to an end, IAM RoadSmart brings you some tips to make your journey as safe as possible in the dark.

1. With fog expected during mornings and evenings, it's important that you keep your windows clear of ice and frost throughout. Use a good quality windscreen washer fluid to keep them clean, and keep the reservoir topped up.
2. As you will be using your dipped headlights more often it's important you make sure they are working properly. The same applies for all other car lights, indicators and tyres too – make sure you check the tread depth regularly. If any of these need replacing, do so as soon as possible. A spare set of light bulbs is a very worthwhile investment for your car.
3. Automatic headlamp systems do not always put dipped headlamps on in foggy weather conditions, so you may need to switch them from an auto to manual setting. Remember, you don't need to wait until it's completely dark before you switch on your dipped headlights – you may need to use them in reduced daylight conditions too.
4. Where there are no street lights or you are driving on an empty stretch of road in seriously reduced visibility, switch on your full beam to help you see further ahead. However, you mustn't use your full beam during the day even in poor visibility as you risk dazzling other road users.
5. Look out for vulnerable road users in the dark including motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians. Take particular care when driving near schools in the late afternoon when children are travelling home – see and be seen at all times.
6. Pedestrians are not easily spotted when they wear dark clothing. Keep your eyes





peeled and avoid speeding when your vision is reduced in both dark and bad weather conditions.

7. Judging the speed of vehicles is difficult in the dark – increase the distance between you and the car in front of you. If you cannot see ahead, you must slow down to give yourself more time to react to a potential hazard.

Richard Gladman, IAM RoadSmart head of driving standards, said: “It might sound obvious, but you cannot drive the same way in the dark as you would in daylight – but that’s what a lot of people do.

“Don’t forget that dark mornings are likely to make you feel more tired. Make allowances for your own abilities in darkness; your eyes take time to get used to the dark. And be aware others might not be as careful as you, and might not be wearing reflective or bright clothing as they should do. Take on the responsibility of looking out for others, and your journey will give you a warm glow inside – even if it’s chilly outside.”

Surge in van traffic ticking accident time bomb

Van drivers are almost twice as likely as car drivers to use hand-held mobile phones – 2.7% compared to 1.4% of car drivers – according to figures from the Department for Transport. Of these van drivers, the majority were using a phone in their hand rather than holding it to their ear; 1.9% of van drivers in England and Scotland were observed holding a phone in their hand compared with 0.7% observed holding the phone to their ear.

And this trend comes at a time when van traffic is growing rapidly, reaching the highest ever level at 45 billion vehicle miles last year, according to Road Use Statistics Great Britain 2016.

This increase in van traffic is thought to be closely related to the 10% year-on-year growth of online and home shopping. This increase has shown a natural increase in employment within the road freight industry, up 6% in 2014, to 222,000.





But whereas van traffic has shown an increase of 12% from January 2013, the opposite trend is true of HGVs. Research suggests that increased van use may be substituting for HGVs. Factors include the lower wages of van drivers, the rise in home deliveries and lastly, the fact that both the fleet management and drivers of vans are less regulated than HGVs.

IAM RoadSmart director of policy and research, Neil Greig, said: "There is no additional test or qualification required to drive a van, over the basic car licence. This compares directly to drivers of HGVs, who must undertake a test in the vehicle they drive and continued professional development through the driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). As more and more orders are made online, it is very likely that the increased growth in the number of van drivers will continue.

"But whether your fleet is made up of vans or HGVs, the same corporate manslaughter

laws apply and as an employer it is not enough to assume that just holding a driving licence will keep your drivers safe. With additional pressures on them, including often overly optimistic delivery schedules, van drivers face challenges car drivers rarely will.

"With the Christmas delivery surge fast approaching be stringent in your risk assessment process and ensure every individual you have on the road receives the training they need to get their valuable cargo and themselves delivered on time and in one piece."

While companies may feel that managing driver risk is difficult and perhaps costly, the reality is very different. The essential tasks of checking licences and risk assessing drivers are both done online, meaning costs are low and fulfilment is easy and quick. By completing these tasks, companies identify those most at-risk and can prioritise further training.





Be a bright spark! IAM RoadSmart backs safety campaign to cut child casualties as days get shorter

IAM RoadSmart is backing the FIA's Stay Bright campaign, which is encouraging youngsters to wear bright reflective clothing on their way to and from school as the days get shorter.

The campaign is a Europe-wide initiative timed to coincide with children returning to school this month – and aims to support them in getting safely to and from school, during the key risk periods of early morning and late afternoon.

Each year, more than 800 children under the age of 15 are killed on European roads and 100,000 are injured with the biggest 'at risk' age for accidents being 12-years-old.

In the UK, total reported child casualties rose by 6.2% to 16,727, compared with 2013 - there was a similar rise of 5% in the number of seriously injured child casualties and five more child deaths in 2014.

The FIA campaign has won the backing of a host of Formula 1 stars including McLaren pair Jenson Button and Fernando Alonso, Mercedes'

Nico Rosberg and Red Bull driver Daniel Ricciardo.

IAM RoadSmart has been actively involved in the campaign and through its local volunteer network will be handing out reflective key rings and stickers to 2,500 school children.

Sarah Sillars, IAM RoadSmart chief executive officer, said: "We all remember walking to and from school in the dark. Young school children are likely to have other things on their own minds - not road safety. So it's important for us grown-ups to make sure children are aware that as drivers, we can't always see them – and they have to literally 'stay bright' to make sure they don't become a victim.

"School years, for many of us, are our happiest and enabling our children to enjoy the freedom of the journey to and from school safely, is an important life lesson as well as something they'll hopefully remember favourably."

For more information about the campaign visit <http://www.staybright.org/>





IAM RoadSmart's Mature Driver Assessment isn't 'half baked' for queen of cakes Mary Berry!

Great British Bake Off judge Mary Berry is the latest high-profile driver to take IAM RoadSmart's Mature Driver Assessment.

Mary was presented with her certificate for having completed the assessment by IAM RoadSmart chief executive officer Sarah Sillars at the Kop Hill Climb on Saturday, a Buckinghamshire-based celebration of all things car and bike which raises tens of thousands of pounds for local charities.

Mary has been an IAM RoadSmart member since the 1950's, when she took an early version of the current Advanced Driver Course.

In addition Paddy Hopkirk, winner of the 1964 Monte Carlo Rally and internationally successful race and rally driver, was on hand both days of the Kop Hill Climb in his capacity of IAM RoadSmart Mature Driver Ambassador spreading the word about the organisation's safe driving courses.

Sarah said: "Mature drivers are statistically one of the safest age groups, but age-related changes can knock confidence. The assessment aims to give a mature driver the reassurance to continue driving happily into the future, while also ironing out any problem areas the assessor might spot."

Added Paddy: "It was great to be a part of Kop Hill Climb, meeting so many new and not-so-new friends! I always enjoy talking about the work of IAM RoadSmart and especially that driving doesn't have to stop when you reach a certain age.

"I have taken the Mature Driver Assessment myself and the Advanced Driver Course twice. So it shows whatever your level of driving experience, everyone can benefit from a helping hand."

Mary presented certificates of achievement to some of the IAM RoadSmart volunteers who worked on its stand over the weekend.

Meanwhile Paddy took competition winners for high-speed runs up Kop Hill in a replica of his iconic 1964 race winning Mini Cooper.

"I think a few people lost their fillings that day!" he said.

For more information about IAM RoadSmart's Mature Driver Assessment, which costs just £49, click here: <https://www.iamroadsmart.com/courses/mature-driver-assessment>. The assessment does not deliver a pass or fail at the end; it is purely advisory.





**Closing date for the spring 2017 edition
of the TGAM e-Newsletter is 20th
January.**

**All contributions would be very
welcome.**

**All items should be sent to
“The Editor” at ed@tgam.org.uk or
by mail to David Walton at
Little Paddocks, White Street,
North Curry,
Taunton TA3 6HL**