

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2015



GUILDFORD & DISTRICT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

Registered Charity No. 1051069

guildford-iam.org.uk

Data Protection Act

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We do not pass your details on to anyone else.

Editor's Notes

Please note that the views and comments herein are published without prejudice, being those of the writers and not necessarily those of the Group or the IAM. Deadline to submit articles for the Winter 2015 edition is Friday, 15 January 2016

KEY DATES

Observed Sunday Runs 2015/16: 09:15 onwards (Third Sunday in each month except December)

15 November, 13 December 2015, 17 January, 21 February, 22 March, 2016

Committee Meetings 2016 (Wednesdays)

Ripley Small Hall GU23 6AF 8pm - 10pm

January 6th, March 2nd, May 4th, July 6th, Sep 7th, Nov 2nd 2016

Observer's meeting

Ripley Small Hall - Saturday 30th January 2016: 09:00 - 12:30

AGM 2016

Saturday 24th September - Ripley Large Hall GU23 6AF - 09:30am – 12:30pm

Events

Advanced Driving Lectures at Ripley Village Hall – “Lines & Signs” and “Responding to emergency vehicles” – Saturday 16 January 2016 – 09:30 – details inside

Cover photo courtesy of David Harris – memories of summer holidays on the open road.

Photographs courtesy of Group members unless otherwise indicated.



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Observed Runs

These will be conducted on the 3rd Sunday of each month at 9.15am and 10.30am – refresher/taster drives at 11:30 am
Guildford Borough Council Woking Road Depot, Guildford GU1 1QE

Telephone 07791 914031 or 07817 490446 on third Sunday only from 9am to 1pm

Appointments for Observed runs - contact the Associate Co-ordinator:
associates@guildford-iam.org.uk 01252 519355



Skill for Life package £149

Entitles the Associate to 6 Observed Runs in their own vehicle during the 12 months following the date of their first appointment, and includes:

- ✓ the cost of the IAM Advanced Test
- ✓ the first year's membership of the Institute from the date of the first run
 - ✓ copy of 'Advanced Driving' manual
 - ✓ copy of the Highway Code
- ✓ Associate membership of the Guildford Group

Full Group Membership (whilst a Member of the Institute)
£7.50 per individual / £10 for a couple at the same address

Welcome

Firstly, some excellent news

Guildford Group announce new President

At their 40th AGM on Saturday 26 September Guildford Group were delighted to appoint Alan Bone as their Group President. The role of President has been vacant for many years, the last incumbent being Ted Clements who was a local resident and member of the Guildford Group as well as being IAM Chief Examiner. The appointment of Alan to the role has been widely welcomed as Alan has many years' experience as a Police Driving Instructor and is highly regarded for his pragmatic approach to driving.



Alan has in the past delivered fascinating lectures to Group members, using his expertise as an anti-hijack and 'T-pac' instructor to illustrate the more exciting parts of his daily life in the Police. Now retired from the force, Alan is busier than ever instructing and assessing paramedic ambulance drivers all around the UK, but he has promised to find time for the Observers and Associates at Guildford to benefit from his many years of driving experience. We are looking forward to many happy hours in the company of a great story teller and a highly experienced driving instructor.



Lecture dates announced

For one of his first activities as Group President, Alan Bone has asked a colleague Lester Parsons (recently retired from the Police) to come and give a talk on "Lines & Signs". We asked Alan to elaborate, but all he would say (so as not to spoil the talk) was that Lester gave a fascinating lecture and it was one not to be missed! He could not believe the wealth of information that was available to drivers just observing the tin plates and white paint that adorn our roads.

So please book the date in your diary – Saturday 16th January 2016, Ripley Village Hall, opening at 09:00 for a 09:30 start.

After Lester has given his talk, Alan will continue on the theme he started at the AGM where he spoke about dealing with emergency vehicles and the training he is doing with ambulance drivers and paramedics all around the country. Obviously lots more stories still to be told – don't miss it.

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LETTERS

Hi Gerry

I am delighted to say that I passed my test this morning. Vincent Hoar was delightful and took me on a trip that included Cobham and the A3. I suspect it was close, as I know it was not my 'best drive' but I was a bit nervous!

Please pass on my thanks to all the observers who were so very helpful over the last 6 months and I'm glad not to have let you all down!

With very many thanks

Candida

I wrote this short piece before I heard about the lecture to be given in January; maybe some food for thought?

Too many signs, not enough information

I expect many of you have heard about experiments in towns and villages, both here and farther afield, where road signs and painted road markings have been removed in an attempt to force all road users to be more careful and properly observe their surroundings. I believe some of these experiments were quite successful, reducing traffic speeds where it was appropriate to do so and reducing accidents, or certainly reducing their severity.

However, I did hear recently that some road safety experts were considering widespread removal many of the less useful signs at the sides of our roads, and this led me to ask which signs are not useful and which are.

Obviously, where the law requires a certain action (speed limit, one way street for example) there should be a sign. It is here that I think the original legislators got it right – 30mph speed limits are signed once only at the start of the limit as long as the lamp posts are spaced at a specified interval; this removes the need for repeater signs. And you cannot remove the signs that warn of unusual hazards such as low bridges or give specific instructions such as 'no entry'. But where else would you take down the unnecessary signs?

Roundabouts may be one place. If the roundabout has a direction sign on the approach to the junction, why does it need a warning sign as well?

Some of the 'bend' signs I see appear unnecessary; have you not seen that there is a slight curve in the road ahead? I am not sure of the precise definition of a bend, but a slight curve is not really a severe enough hazard to warrant a sign.



Other signs duplicate the paint in the road, bus lanes and cycle lanes for instance. I suspect I will be told that when it snows you cannot see the road surface so you need a sign as well.



Apart from the fact that if there is that much snow you will be travelling significantly more slowly and have more time to react, it is more usual for the painted information to be obliterated and unreadable, so let's save some money and only have the sign and a line?

And then there are the signs that tell you about a hazard that should not be there in the first place. 'Mud on the road' – why not clear it up and remove the hazard rather than spending money on a sign? 'Warning of pedestrians – no footway' – create a pavement if there are enough pedestrians that warrant a sign to be erected. 'Trams only' – have you not seen the rails and the sleepers? Not a great surface to drive on.

So I believe some of the signs we have on our roads could be removed without anyone noticing, and much of the coloured paint is superfluous as well. Have you noticed how some areas of coloured paint (including white lines) somehow seem to adversely react with the tarmac they are painted on, creating holes and ridges in the road? I presume someone tested all these chemicals before they laid them on the road surface?

Let us know where you think signs and lines could be removed. It may save the council some cash and then they could afford a pair of shears to go out and cut back branches so that we can see the signs that are useful.

Drive Safely
Paul Whitehead

News from the IAM

‘.. text messaging and social media are the two biggest factors threatening personal safety in vehicles.’

Motorists are now more worried about the dangers of distraction posed by technology and social media than drink-driving, according to the Institute of Advanced Motorist's (IAM) first major survey into safety culture.

The Safety Culture Index report was launched today by the IAM, and is a study of more than 2,000 UK motorists' attitudes to driving safety and behaviour on our roads.

This report will form a definitive baseline to track changes over time, providing the opportunity to examine how attitudes change over the years.

The report has found that while technology will form a fundamental part of improving road safety, it also poses some risks, in particular driver distraction – 77% of people say it is now a bigger problem than three years ago. This compares to just 23% of people feeling drink driving is a bigger threat than three years ago.

Those surveyed said text messaging and social media are the two biggest factors threatening their personal safety, with 93% and 92% respectively claiming these to be a 'very or somewhat serious' threat.

The next two factors they say are threats to their personal safety are drink and drug driving, at 90% and 89% respectively.

And while most people feel talking on a hand-held mobile phone is unacceptable in their own locality (just 15% said they found it acceptable), some 64% say talking on a hands-free mobile phone is acceptable.

Motorists are also much more worried about speeding in residential streets than they are about speeding on motorways - 86% believing this to be a very or somewhat serious threat; 24% higher than motorways.

This is borne out by the fact 61% feel it's acceptable to drive 10mph over the speed limit on the motorway, just 27% feel it's acceptable to drive 5mph over the limit on a residential street.

The IAM believes the report highlights the key areas of road safety and police enforcement priority that will command the highest levels of public support.

IAM President and 1992 Formula 1 World Champion Nigel Mansell CBE said: "The good news is that the vast majority of drivers do value safety and they want to feel even safer on the road in the future.

"They take speeding and drink-driving very seriously and are happy to support even stronger legislation even if it may stop them doing things they admit to doing themselves. We do feel we can offer real world solutions to those drivers who through over, or under, confidence feel stressed on our busy roads."

Sarah Sillars, IAM chief executive officer, said: "This report is a crucial barometer of what drivers are really thinking. It is all about seeing what issues and factors the public see as important in their lives, and using that information to influence their behaviour.

"Understanding the issues drivers see as important when it comes to road safety is essential for establishing how best to communicate with them and so in turn to achieve behaviour change, on both a local and national level.

"It is up to all of us now, armed with this information, to do something about it."

To download a copy of the IAM's Safety Culture Index go to : <http://bit.ly/1MHqQrM>

Skill for Life for Christmas

How about giving a family member a gift voucher for Christmas so that they can take the IAM advanced driving test?

An ideal gift for a younger motorist, or a chance for a more senior road user to refresh their skills. Gift vouchers £149.

The statistics speak for themselves. We asked 2,500 drivers who passed the Advanced Driving Test what benefit they'd seen. They told us that taking the Skill for Life course:

- improved their driving (99%)
- gave them greater awareness of other road users (90%)
- helped them avoid a crash (66%)

Go to <https://iam.org/shop/motorists-shop/product/16> or call customer care on 0300 303 1134

AGM 2015

For those of you who could not make it to the AGM this year, here is my report of our progress in 2015.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

2015 has been a year of considerable change in the IAM and your group, with continued success in attracting new associates and a strong team of highly qualified Observers to provide some of the best available training for the advanced driving test.

Associates and tests.

We have had another good year with new Associates joining us at a rate of around one per week, somewhat better than other groups around us. We also managed to record 27 test 'passes' with a significant number of

First passes, again much better results than our local colleagues, although there were 5 Associates who failed to make the grade on the day. Our thanks go to all the Observers and Group staff for a very positive result, and to all those successful Associates who performed so well in front of their Examiner. It is still of concern that we gained 47 new Associates but only sent 32 to test, so we need to remain aware of the reasons why so many associates decide to prepare for the advanced test and then fail to complete the challenge.

One sad note was the death of one of our longest serving Examiners, Alan Hobbs. Alan had been an IAM Examiner in this area for many years and had also given talks and demonstration drives to members of the group, passing on his many years of experience as a Police driver. When he found a particularly good driver he always noted 'poetry in motion' on the test report, a phrase we came to recognise over the years as Alan's trademark.

A recent IAM initiative has offered free driving assessments to members of the public, and to date we have seen nearly a dozen potential new Associates apply to us for this assessment, so hopefully we can convince them all to take their advanced driver training and test.

However, one of the most important volunteers in our group has decided to retire and we have to convey our considerable gratitude to Chris Hughes who has, for around 13 years, been the 'First point of Contact' for the Group. Over this time I calculated that Chris must have spoken to 1000 people about advanced driving and turned many of them into Associates. This is a fantastic achievement and we wish Chris good health and happiness in his retirement.

The role of First Contact is vital but not overly onerous, so if anyone wishes to take up the challenge we will be very pleased to hear from them.

Observers and Training.

Observer Training and IMI Qualification remains a priority for us. John Panting successfully led this process during his term as Chief Observer and we thank him for his considerable efforts. John has decided to pass the baton to a worthy replacement so we are very grateful to Phil Headon for taking up the role of Chief Observer and carrying on the good work that John started.

We are currently in a very strong position with 17 National Observers (including 2 qualified to assess Local Observers), 3 Local Observers, 2 in training and 5 prospects who need to start their training soon – we have, on average, three times the number of National Observers in other local groups. Observer Training is now the responsibility of John Holcroft, supporting Phil and making sure we have all our Observers trained to the highest standards. All are volunteers, and many carry out Observed runs on days other than the usual Sunday Runs, so we remain indebted to all our Observers for the work they do on behalf of the group and road safety.

The trickiest part of the process remains allocating Associates to Observers at the Sunday runs, and this task was ably performed by Shân Hughes and Hilary Fletcher each month. Shân has, however, moved to other projects and is no longer attending Group events; Hilary has nevertheless stepped up to the challenge and is continuing this excellent and crucial work each month, recently assisted by Jacqui Mesquita-Morris –we thank them both for their commitment on Sundays – Hilary in particular does a lot of charity work and we are very grateful she makes time to support the group. Matching the number of Associates who are likely to turn up with the number of available Observers is often a delicate juggling act, so anything that you can all do to confirm appointments and guarantee attendance will help Hilary and Jacqui to achieve 100% success.

We are also very grateful for all the work Shân did for the group, not just on a Sunday but at committee meetings and attending promotional events, and she will be missed.

IAM Region and Chiswick liaison.

Many changes were announced at IAM House this year. We have a new Chief Executive, Sarah Sillars, and she has quickly made her hopes and aspirations for the IAM clear in her regular newsletters that all Members should be receiving. Hopefully we will get the opportunity to speak to her face-to-face at a future event.

During the year we also said ‘goodbye’ to Mark Trimmer who was the Regional Manager and Steve George who was our Regional Quality Officer in charge of National Observer tests and examiner standards for the Region. They have been replaced by Tom Docherty and Craig Gande, both of whom we need to invite to talk to us at future meetings.

There were two Regional Forum meetings during the year. These are useful for meeting other group officials and committee members, hearing what plans Chiswick have for our future, and allowing the opportunity to discuss proposals in open forum.

Events.

Our new Events Co-ordinator, Graham Ranshaw has started to organise events that he hopes will be attractive to all members, including an early morning run out to Goodwood to their Breakfast Clubs, and potential visits to Brooklands and other local attractions. Graham has a number of good new ideas for events, so please talk to him about what is planned and the type of events that would suit you.

Unfortunately we have run into difficulties securing a skid pan venue. The Goodwood facility we used for many years was sold earlier in the year, and although we believe it is running again under new management, the prices they are charging have increased significantly. Other options are Thruxton, also quite expensive, and Brooklands, very expensive and only really for Mercedes cars. There are no other skid pans available in the whole of the South of England, so this remains a difficult area for all Groups such as ours. We continue to look for suitable alternatives.

The annual 'Young Driver Day' at King's School in Wimbledon was unfortunately not held this year – this is an event we have attended with our friends from South London Advanced Motorists for a number of years, but low numbers of students willing to take part caused the cancellation.

Newsletter and web site.

We are very grateful to Martin Evans for taking the role of Newsletter Editor for the last year or so, but Martin has decided to retire and we are in the process of engaging a replacement. We decided that a move towards more frequent electronic newsletters would give us more opportunities to advise Members of forthcoming events and opportunities, always mindful that some people do not like their 'in-box' cluttered up with unsolicited mail and others (like me!) prefer their newsletters in hard copy format so that they can be read at leisure and passed on to others when read. This process is evolving, but there will be at least 2 paper copy newsletters each year in early Spring and late Summer to align with our responsibilities to ensure all members receive important information such as Membership rates/renewals and the AGM announcement.

We continue to promote our web site and this has been a useful function for attracting new members. Tony Ross has been our webmaster for many years, and despite now living some way away he continues to provide us with very useful support and we thank him for continuing to keep the web site up-to-date.

Summary.

Despite another challenging year with lots of changes we remain committed to the IAM and the training of Associates for their advanced test. My personal thanks to all my colleagues on the committee and all our helpers and observers for all their hard work – it is greatly appreciated.

Paul Whitehead
Secretary

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Free Driving Assessment
*Not sure if the IAM test is for you.
Want to find out more?*

Go to <http://iam.org/lovedriving> and book in for a free driving assessment. It could be all you need to avoid incidents on the road and help you enjoy your driving.

*Your comments and suggestions are valued.
Letters should be sent to
editor@guildford-iam.org.uk*

Succession Planning

We are a group of volunteers who run the Guildford & District Group of Advanced Motorists in roles such as front desk, associate coordinator, training team, observers, membership, first point of contact, news letter, marketing, recruitment and more.

Can you help with any of these roles; would you like to shadow a person in the role currently to see what's involved? Is there another skill you could offer to help the group?

Currently we have two roles where we urgently need your assistance.

First Contact Point

This is the person who responds to all the requests from the public for information about the IAM and the Guildford group. It is an 'ad-hoc' role, not requiring any specific time commitment except attendance at the six

committee meetings during the year. All we need is someone with a few hours spare each month to respond to e-mail and telephone enquiries and 'sell' the IAM to interested parties. No cold calling, just a friendly chat with like-minded motorists. We provide a mobile phone to allow you to accept and return calls at times to suit you.

Newsletter Editor

One of the unsung roles that is essential to the aims and objects of the Group and the IAM and can be done in any few spare hours you may have during the year. We aim to publish 4 printed newsletters each year and a number of electronic versions as well. Material is freely available from a number of sources and it is simply a matter of compiling the text and photos into an appealing and interesting journal for our members. Once again, the only time commitment is attendance at the committee meetings to keep up to date with group activities and adherence to a publication timetable.

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These roles are essential for the running of the Group and we would welcome any assistance you can give to help us out.

Please contact Steve, chairman@guildford-iam.org.uk and he will give you a call to discuss.

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Highway Code on line

Everything you need to know about the Highway Code in one place at last – well worth a look

<https://despatch.blog.gov.uk/2015/10/08/7-ways-weve-made-the-highway-code-easier-to-use-online/>

Road casualties falling

Neil Greig, IAM director of policy and research said recently: "It is indeed good news to see that in spite of an increase in volume of traffic by 2.3 per cent that the numbers of casualties has fallen by 7 per cent. However, fatal accidents on non-built up roads have increased by 7 per cent.

"Highways England has published a vision for zero deaths on trunk roads and we believe this commitment should be adopted by the government for the whole country. The DVSA has stated a desire to encourage lifelong learning in driver and rider training and we firmly believe that with the right framework in place, which recognises the issues faced by road users of different ages, this approach will form a vital part of ensuring that fewer lives are needlessly lost on UK roads."

Key findings from the report:

- A total of 22,830 people were killed or seriously injured (KSI casualties) in the year ending June 2015, down by 7 per cent from the previous year.
- There were 180,500 casualties of all severities in the year ending June 2015, down by 7 per cent from the previous year.
- Motor traffic levels rose by 2.3 per cent compared with the year ending June 2014.
- Child KSIs (killed or seriously injured) decreased by 8 per cent to 530 in Q2 2015.

This is the lowest quarter 2 on record.

Motoring data from the IAM

Figures obtained by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) have found that, over the last decade, speeding is still the biggest motoring-related offence where the defendant is found guilty in court. And the numbers of those found guilty have risen sharply in the past 12 months to 148,426, an increase of 28% which is the highest number since 2005. The 2014 figures were 2% greater than 2004.

The next highest offence where defendants were found guilty was vehicle insurance-related crimes, although the percentage has fallen dramatically since 2004. Some 118,254 people were found guilty in court of this, which is 7% up on 2013 but 84% down on a decade ago.

The figures, obtained by the IAM from the Ministry of Justice, also show that vehicle registration and excise duty offences and driving with alcohol in the blood above the legal limit are both offences that have fallen in huge numbers in the past ten years. The top five list of offences where offenders are found guilty in court is as follows:

Offence	2004	2013	2014
Speed limit offences	146,161	115,935	148,426
Vehicle insurance offences	218,142	110,843	118,254
Failing to supply information as to identity of driver when required	not applicable	50,687	54,372
Vehicle registration and excise licence offences	192,959	55,182	46,636
Driving with alcohol in the blood above the prescribed limit	74,055	40,683	37,853

Other offences with a large number of guilty verdicts other than speeding are neglecting road regulations at 16,951 in 2014 (up 2% from 2013), using or causing others to use a mobile phone whilst driving at 16,025 (down 8% from 2013) and driving licence-related offences at 15,982 (down 10% from 2013). New offences such as causing serious injury by dangerous driving are also showing signs of more widespread use which reflects the life changing nature of these crimes.

Sarah Sillars, IAM Chief Executive Officer, said: *"We can see from these figures that as the UK comes out of recession traffic levels have risen, speeding appears to be becoming more prevalent and regrettably casualties are rising again. The government and police forces cannot afford to take their eye off the ball and more visible policing is, in our view, the key way to ensure that people don't think they can get away with speeding. In addition local campaigns must remain high-profile to make sure drivers don't get complacent, or forget that speed can kill."*

According to the government's THINK! campaign, speed is "one of the main factors in fatal road accidents". In 2013, 3,064 people were killed or seriously injured in crashes where speed was a factor.

They added that the risk of death is approximately four times higher when a pedestrian is hit at 40mph than at 30mph.

Sarah added: *"On a positive note, the joining up of databases across agencies and the increased use of number plate recognition cameras means some motoring crimes have fallen in big numbers."*

Human factors outweigh other reasons for crashes

Analysis by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) has found that human factors continue to significantly outweigh other reasons for crashes on British roads, and have called again for drivers to look on improving driving skills as part of their lifelong personal development.

The figures from the Department of Transport show that in 2014 driver/rider error or reaction were cited as contributory factors in 74% of accidents, involving more than 117,000 casualties. Some 20,830 of these were in London alone.

Police can cite up to six factors for the cause of each accident they report.

The second highest factor was 'behaviour or inexperience' which was cited as a contributory factor in 26% of accidents, accounting for more than 40,000 casualties. In London the number was 9,508.

The main contributory factors were:

Contributory factor reported in accident	Number of casualties	Percentage of accidents cited in
Driver-rider error or reaction	117,524	74%
Behaviour or inexperience	40,778	26%
Injudicious action	39,354	25%
Impairment or distraction	21,916	14%
Road environment contributed	20,253	13%
Vehicle defects	3,230	2%

Neil Greig, IAM director of policy and research, said: *“People often blame their car, the road, or the other driver for the accidents and near misses that they have. These figures show that in the vast majority of cases, it’s the driver or rider themselves who is to blame.*

Changing attitudes is the key factor when it comes to reducing the numbers of casualties on our roads. People must accept responsibility for enhancing their own skills and recognising their limitations. The first step towards that is to think about advanced training and right now you can get a free IAM taster session at www.iam.org.uk/lovedriving.”

He added: *“It is not enough to leave people to their own devices once they have passed their test. Like so many other areas of life extra coaching pays dividends – and for a driver or rider, that means keeping their skills fresh by continuous assessment.”*

Events news

Marketing events

Recently we spent a very useful morning (until it poured with rain!) outside the shops in Cranleigh talking to Saturday shoppers about the IAM. The presence of a Caterham car attracted lots of people and we had many positive conversations with interested drivers and passed on a large number of IAM leaflets to the public.

Let's hope that at least a few of them will take up the challenge and join us for preparation for their Advanced Driving Test. Our thanks go to the owners of the land in the shopping area who allowed us on their premises for what turned out to be a really useful day. Other towns and villages are to be targeted for the same event in the near future.

Skid pans

We have spent some time looking for a skid pan venue over the last few months. Many local organisations are in a similar situation because these facilities are getting harder to find, certainly at the price we were able to find before. We have tried the Thruxton circuit, and Phil Headen reported a very positive session, but groups of drivers looking for a more cost effective solution may find that it is better to organise a trip yourself; group sessions seem to allow less actual driving time.

Other locations such as Goodwood and Brooklands are available, and they do provide a worthwhile experience, but costs are higher than we are used to so we are using the contacts that Alan Bone has built up over the years to try and find alternatives. Watch this space as we may well be able to bring good news in the Spring. In the meantime, try not to get into a skid, and if you do, don't look at the nearest tree because you will hit it – aim for the gaps!

Police Lectures

We have been able to organise a lecture for Saturday 16 January in Ripley Village Hall. Alan Bone has asked a colleague, Lester Parsons (recently retired from the Police), to come and give a talk on "Lines & Signs". We know nothing more about the subject but are assured that this is one of the most interesting talks you will hear.

Please book the date in your diary – Saturday 16th January 2016, Ripley Village Hall, opening at 09:00 for a 09:30 start.

After Lester has given his talk, Alan will continue on the theme he started at the AGM where he spoke about dealing with emergency vehicles and the training he is doing with ambulance drivers and paramedics all around the country. Bring a friend – all welcome.

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Need a refresher?

Lost some of those finely tuned skills?

Book a refresher drive with our Associate Co-ordinator and get back to 'test standard' with our experienced volunteer Observers.

All it takes is an hour or so of your time and a gallon or so of fuel.



Call Paul on 01252 519355 and arrange an appointment for 11:30 on one of our Sunday Runs – it's free for Guildford Group members.

Don't delay, call today

News from IAM House

The Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) has called for a raft of measures to reverse the disappointing increase in numbers of people killed on UK roads as announced in September by the government.

The Department of Transport's Reported Road Casualties Great Britain: 2014 Annual Report says there were 1,775 reported road deaths in 2014, an increase of 4% compared with 2013.

It added the number of people seriously injured in reported road traffic accidents increased by 5% to 22,807 in 2014. A total of 194,477 people were killed or injured in reported road accidents in 2014, the first increase in overall casualties since 1997.

And the most common factor which contributed to accidents in 2014 was **drivers failing to look properly.**

The IAM is especially concerned that pedestrians accounted for three-quarters of the increase in fatalities between 2013 and 2014. Pedestrian fatalities increased by 12 per cent from 398 in 2013 to 446 in 2014 (all statistics: reference 1)

The IAM urges the government to take radical steps to reverse these worrying figures before they become a long-term epidemic, in particular that pedestrian protection must be made a much higher priority, and the decline in numbers of police traffic officers must be reversed at the earliest opportunity.

Neil Greig, IAM director of policy and research, said: *"These figures are very worrying, especially the fact that driver behaviour remains the top cause of crashes.*

We are clear on what needs to be done here. We call again for road safety targets to be reintroduced – they are an internationally recognised way of ensuring reductions are measured and achieved.

There also must be a greater focus on driver and rider quality and incentives for companies and individuals to continuously develop their skills.

There also needs to be a focus on tackling pedestrian deaths, an area which is often ignored. We believe that car technology and design should now shift from occupant protection to protecting the vulnerable outside cars."

Neil suggested manufacturers should pursue developments like pop-up bonnets, pedestrian airbags and detector systems.

He added: *"We also need better pedestrian facilities to segregate traffic and vulnerable users where speeds are high, and campaigns to educate pedestrians themselves as they are most often at fault in crashes."*

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Photo courtesy of Peter Soul

A PHYSICIST WRITES . . .

Peter Soul

Peter is an IAM Advanced Driver and writes a regular column for the Thames Valley Group newsletter – reproduced here with permission.

(first published May 2015)

Let me continue a topic from my column last month [in the Thames Valley Group Newsletter], namely traffic signs, which I do like to think I pay good attention to. I described an alarming evening journey from Hartley Wintney towards Reading: our car was suddenly surrounded by a herd of deer who were evidently under the impression that they had the right of way in crossing the road, at a speed not far short of ours along it. Later, on the internet in Google Street View, I scanned along the road and there, just outside the village, was a red-triangle deer-warning sign. But I had no memory of having seen it in the flesh (or do I mean in the metal?)...

Well, a few days ago we happened to take the same route in the same direction, this time in daylight (though I still had a feeling of trepidation as we drove through Hartley Wintney). The deer-sign came into view – and then so did another, and another, and another: four signs warning of deer, in the space of half a mile or so! I think this confirms the theory I offered last month, which was that my subconscious brain had dismissed such signs as irrelevant, probably because I had never previously encountered deer while on a road or anywhere near one.

*Since then, of course, every deer sign that I've passed has rung alarm bells in my head nearly loud enough for Mrs S to hear in the passenger seat. Also, I have been wondering which other signs I might similarly be ignoring, by looking at them but not taking them in. So I skimmed through my copy of *Know Your Traffic Signs*, and with some relief I think I can safely say that no other red-triangle signs would normally escape me in this way: they all seem either relevant to what I'm likely to meet beyond them, or else so improbable that if I ever passed one, I would very likely stop and go back for another look!*



In the latter (improbable) category were just four signs. Would you instantly identify the shape in this first one as a migratory toad? Do we really have such species in the UK anyway? To my astonishment (after a little research), the answer is yes, we do. Though it seems to me that you would need to slow almost to a standstill to have any chance of avoiding them in a swarm (or rather, a knot, which I've discovered is their collective name).

And I now know of at least one road that is closed off for some weeks every spring to protect them: it's in Richmond (London), would you believe, where the toads 'migrate' 350 yards from Richmond Park to a pond on Ham Common (and presumably back again). But I don't understand the point of any permanent sign that warns us all the time of a problem that exists only for a few weeks in the year. It's like (or perhaps even sillier than) placing an icy-road sign where there's a frost-pocket only in cold winters.

ED – I recall a migrating toad sign on Salt Box road, but often covered up – is it still there?



This horse-drawn vehicles sign is another puzzle: is it intended to indicate the exit from a stables that has such carriages? Or maybe to warn you that you are approaching a stretch of road on which they are likely to be driven? I've no idea, never having seen the sign anywhere! I do recall that carriages are raced at horse shows – but will they fit into a lorry, or do they have to be horse-drawn all the way there? If it's the latter then I suppose you might meet them anywhere, so again a fixed sign seems to have little usefulness.



The next in this set of signs that I've never met is potentially the most helpful, warning you of "low-flying helicopters or sudden helicopter noise" (according to the book). But surely this is only a risk if they are taking off or landing close to the road. I can't really believe that a heliport would be located near enough to traffic for there to be any danger of an accident, or even just alarm, being caused in this way (and hence requiring a warning).



I think this sign is the most frightening in the book: its meaning is "slow-moving military vehicles likely to be in or crossing the road". That's heavy stuff, then, not the fast-moving convoy of green-camouflaged trucks that you sometimes see. But firstly, won't you already have received plenty of hints of military might as you approached the area, whether it's a large army camp or a training ground? And secondly, if the sign was in any location other than these two, wouldn't it be giving away

valuable information to the enemy? Or perhaps I've been watching Dad's Army too much...

It has only just occurred to me to see if I can find any of the above four signs actually on a road, with Google Image Search. I've located a migratory-toads sign in Derbyshire, and another one with the relevant months displayed below it (which makes rather more sense) in Cumbria. The helicopter sign can be seen, not surprisingly I guess, on the road approaching the Helicopter Museum near Weston-super-Mare! And there's a military-vehicles sign in or near the village of Redmire, N Yorks, though maybe I shouldn't be drawing attention to it.



Before you read on, think where you would expect to find this much more familiar warning-triangle, and then I'll tell you a story about it. Yes of course: you see it on a slip-road (or similar) that's about to merge with a major road. In 2013, while on my way to look at a VW Golf in Twickenham, I noticed the sign on the A316, but something seemed amiss. Then the penny dropped: I was on a main road already, in fact on a flyover above a big roundabout junction!

A week later (going to trade in my Toyota Corolla and collect the Golf) I checked again, and reassured myself that it was the wrong sign. How – and how long ago – was such a mistake made? On the other hand, how did even a keen eye (for traffic signs) like mine then spot it? Anyway, I reported it to the local authority, they agreed with me that the sign was erroneous, and I hope the flyover now carries this correct one:-



Peter Soul

MEMBER INFORMATION

Annual Membership of the Group is from 1st April each year.

NEW ASSOCIATES

Welcome to:

Katherine Barwell; Arlene Campling; Graham Beckett; Craig Gallagher; David Gilbert; Amy Oldale; Mark Lundquist; Neil Armstrong; Donna Cole; Paul Arnett; Marion Millinger; Luke Noble; Caroline Sanderson.

We hope you enjoy your observed runs and wish you luck taking your Advanced Driving test.

RECENT TEST PASSES

Congratulations to:

Zoe Stokes (F1rst); Candida Purser; Milton Loane; Jennifer Milligan; Terry Bailey; Gurthej Deusi; Colin Hanner.

Well done on passing your advanced driving test; keep up the skills you have demonstrated.

Can't make your Observed run appointment?

We try to match the number of available Observers (all volunteers) with the number of booked Associates, but sometimes we realise things can go wrong. If you cannot attend your booked appointment please let us know. Call the Associate Co-ordinator on 01252 519355 any time, or on the morning of your appointment please call 07791 914031 or 07817 490446.

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Do you have a friend or relative who would benefit from
our advice and guidance?

How about Skill for Life as a Christmas present
for a younger driver?



If so, please put them in touch with us,
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Please pass on this newsletter once you're done with it –
how about taking it to the garage where you have your tyres fitted
and asking them to support us?