

NEWSLETTER

Winter - January 2011



**GUILDFORD & DISTRICT GROUP
OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS**

Registered Charity No. 1051069

www.guildford-iam.org.uk

get a skill for life

Data Protection Act

Members and Associates are reminded that names, addresses, telephone numbers and membership details are stored on computer files to assist with the management of the group and the distribution of Guildford Group correspondence. 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 April 2011 edition is

Friday, 12 March

KEY DATES

Observed Sunday Runs 2011

16 January	20 February
20 March	17 April
15 May	19 June (Father's Day)
17 July	21 August
18 September	16 October
20 November	11 December (1 week early)

Committee Meetings 2011 (Wednesdays) - Ripley Small Hall: 8pm - 10pm

2 March	4 May
6 July	7 September
2 November	

AGM/Group Meetings 2011 - Ripley Large Hall: 8.30am - 1pm

NEW DATE Saturday 24th September - no clash with Goodwood event

Main Cover Photograph by Steve Hunt

Observed Runs

Third Sunday of each month at 9.15am, 10.30am and 11.30am
Guildford Borough Council, Woking Road Dept, Guildford
Telephone 07817 490 446 on Sunday from 9am to 1pm

Appointments for Observed runs - contact the Chairman on
07817 490 446 or 01252 519 355



Associate Membership £139

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

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

Welcome

Happy New Year - and thank you for reading and supporting your IAM Guildford Group newsletter during 2010.

We had more contributions from Members and Associates last year than ever. In this issue we have had many contributions too, so thank you again, your input is very valuable.

The cover image selected for this edition is thanks to Steve Hunt - a really striking image, and representing the "Let's decide; can we go or can't we?" impact that the snow and ice had on so many of us motorists! A selection of other images are included later on, thanks to those who sent them in. Please send in images for the Spring edition - motoring related images of things coming back to life after the cold months.

We introduce many new people who have kindly agreed to take on some key roles in the group. Thank you and welcome to Andy Griffiths, Barbara Needham, Steve McCormick and Colin Pound. We are looking for a front desk helper - if you think you could join Shân the details are later in the newsletter.

Safe driving,

Louisa Wright-Wastell
Editor



Your Letters

I'd like to give my thanks to Alan Hobbs for calming my nerves and making my test experience a pleasant one, and also to the Guildford group for progressing my skills and turning an 'ok driver' into an 'advanced driver'.

Paul Fry

As a new boy I thought I'd give you some feedback on my first Observed Run under the watchful eye of Terry Moody.

What an eye opener, it is nerve racking having somebody scrutinise your driving, but Terry was excellent and made the experience enjoyable, even though he very gently highlighted several of my shortcomings.

The challenge will be to change the habits of nearly 48 years of motoring!

Thank you too, to Paul Whitehead who introduced the course and gave a practical demonstration of his excellent driving skills.

Richard Nicholls

My IAM test was with Paul Marshall, the test went well. I'd like to say a massive THANK YOU... I really would never have got through it without your help and I do appreciate it your patience and recommendations as they have seen me through this programme to success.

Tom Cheke



Ever Tried a Skid Control Course?

It could save embarrassment... Or a life!

Courses are at Goodwood racetrack on various dates throughout the coming year - please check the website www.guildford-iam.org.uk

A 3 hour course covers an initial briefing on the causes of, and coping with, vehicle skids.

Most of the time is spent in a specially adapted car, on a prepared track, supervised by experienced, approachable experts.

Here you start developing your skid control skills and observing others.

Guildford IAM provides the courses at these discounted rates:

£50 for Members/Associates of the Group

£55 for Non-Members (family and friends)

Interested?

Contact Andrew Griffiths

Chairman's Annual Report – January 2011

First of all let me wish you all a very Happy New Year and hope you all had a very enjoyable and relaxing festive season. Your committee wishes you well for the New Year.

I note that the IAM has entered the debate about putting the clocks on by one hour in the winter and a further hour in the summer in order to coordinate our time with other North Western European countries.

Setting aside any benefit to industry, which I believe to be negligible given the 24 hour nature of business today (I have dealt with China and the USA and we had few problems with the time difference) the discussion seems to centre on whether children will be safer or not when travelling between home and school, that the change will lead to a reduction in road accidents and offer opportunities for energy saving.

Those of you of a mature age will remember double summer time and as a child I recall the sun setting at 10.30pm. My mother had great difficulties in getting me to bed – will this mean more youngsters on the streets late at night? One disadvantage of having the clocks one hour ahead of GMT in winter is that it will be dark till nearly 9am. Even in the south of England, this means that children will need to go to school in the dark! I am sure this debate has a long way to run and if you have a view one way or the other please drop a line to the editor.

We are entering a period when driving conditions can be hazardous. In this newsletter you will see we are repeating an article published last winter on winter driving which is well worth a read. I make no apologies for repeating it as after the experience of last winter and the way this winter has started it is appropriate. Whilst we rarely have problems with snow and ice we often have wet, muddy or greasy roads and these can all induce a skid. Handling a skid is not that difficult when you know how but it does require you to be a smooth driver and to avoid violent steering, braking, gear change and acceleration. This year we will again be organising the popular Skid Control Courses. Even if you have done one before it is worth refreshing your skills every couple of years, I know I do. Courses are open to families and friends of Group members so don't delay – get your name on the list.

Further on winter driving; in Germany it is law to have winter tyres fitted from 1st December. They are made of softer rubber and provide a better grip in wet as well as snow and ice. Should we all be thinking about having a second set of tyres? KwikFit fitted 2,000 sets of winter tyres last year and this year they are up to 50,000! Food for thought.

Final thought: Remember 'patience' is something you admire in the driver behind you and scorn in the one ahead!

Happy motoring,

Paul Wallace-Stock
Chairman

We Welcome Our New Events Organiser

As you will have read from previous newsletters, I have agreed to take over from Terry Moody as Events Organiser for the group. I have been finding out what sort of things we would like to do and now have some suggestions:

- A visit to the Cobham bus museum
- Visit Reigate fire station
- A tour of Brooklands museum
- A lecture on 'mind driving'

Before organising these events I'd like to get an idea of how many would be interested in attending what. Please get in contact with me about these ideas or if you have any other suggestions for events via the website.

Colin Pound
Events Organiser

A Grand Day Out with the Police

Blue lights flashing, sirens screaming, 132mph, the Volvo thundered down the M25 and yes I was a front seat passenger. The driver Stuart calmly talking and then listening as the message is repeated on his radio, “Three hoodies seen making off on their bikes from break in at the pharmacy, Ewell Parade, Epsom.”

It's 10.30pm. Speed distorts time. Before I know it, we are now travelling along country roads heading for Epsom. Speed now below 100mph. Stuart is in a bubble of concentration - concentration – concentration, he is fully engaged. He taps in the post code he just requested from Control, into the SatNav. A good driver knows when to go slow. From 95mph down to 5mph safely to negotiate red traffic lights. Safely through up to 80 – roundabout, another roundabout, then High Street at 60mph.

We are there. Another set of blue lights appear from nowhere. They pull up at the pharmacy. We, now in stealth mode, cruise the local streets. Three corners later and there on the footway are three hoodies walking with their backs to us, no bikes, hoods up and hands in pockets. Stuart pulls along side them. They are calm. Stuart searches all three of them – nothing. Names taken he radios in to get their details and history. All known. The eldest was 19. Probably them?! Who knows? Nothing on them, names and addresses check out, so off we go. We return to base at Godstone at a sedate 85mph, outside lane M25. I wash the car down. Well we have been 150 miles. That's it I'm off home.

The day had started at 1.45pm, when I arrived at Godstone to meet John, the Sergeant. He introduces me to a health and safety form which I sign. He then takes me to meet his 'drivers' as they arrive for their shift briefing at 2pm. I am to be Stuart's 'attachment'. The car is a Volvo automatic. POWER and Cockpit Check done and at 2.30pm we are on our way heading for Guildford along the M25 outside lane 85mph. We are coming up behind the unwary speeding drivers. Just passing under the overhead gantry 'J10 15miles - 15mins'.

Radio, “Women with child in car broken down on the north bound outside lane of A3 exit slip road leading down to roundabout at M25 J10”.

Stuart to radio, “ETA 7mins”.

He meant it too. Blue light and sirens 120mph. There she is and he points.

He pulls the Volvo in behind her car to shield it from the traffic. The RAC is on their way.

“Cam belt broken.” reports the RAC.

Stuart assists the mother and Child into the police Volvo. I am allotted the task of steering the broken down vehicle now being towed by the RAC van. We go round the roundabout and stop in the lay-by on the slip road leading up to the A3 south bound. Stuart pulls up and the mother and child are reunited with their vehicle. We leave them with the RAC driver waiting for her husband, who is on the way, to collect her.

We cruise off, south bound on A3. Straight away another call.

Radio, “Accident on A3 at end of north bound acceleration lane from Cobham junction”. Blue light and sirens on, we turn off at the next junction passing Sainsbury on our right, over the A3 and back down onto it heading north. I can already see blue lights behind us; it’s a 4x4 and it’s catching us as we push our way through the traffic at 107mph.

Radio, “Debris in road at scene”.

Stuart to car behind, “Rolling road block”.

The 4x4 moves up, we move left and straddle lane 1 and lane 2 and slow the traffic down to a crawl to give the Highways Agency, now on scene, time to clear the debris.

Debris cleared, thumbs up, and we pull in to the scene. It’s a massive shunt. A Zafira has been rammed in the back at a slight angle by a black 4x4. Both cars look write-offs to me. The Zafira’s tailgate is touching the back seats.

Ambulance is at scene and the drivers and passengers, including two young girls, all go for a check up. Both drivers claim to have blacked out and don’t appear to remember much! The police wait for their medical assessment to finish. Amazingly, no one appears more than shaken up. Stuart starts the paperwork - it’s form filling time: Details of accident, names, address etc. all being cross checked with Control Centre via the radio.

Another car pulls in; the driver is a mate of the driver of the black 4x4 and has come to give him a lift home. Stuart politely points out that his road fund licence expired in October and it’s now December! Stuart listens to the

excuse and writes out a ticket for the offence. Stuart finishes up the accident details. The ambulance takes the two drivers to hospital. Another car pulls up with female driver. She has come to pick up the two young girls who were travelling in the Zafira. The police help them transfer children and other menagerie and off they go. A recovery vehicle arrives and we leave. We are both freezing cold, despite my woolly hat, substantial gloves, heavy duty shoes and well insulated yellow reflective jacket.

Now; northbound on the A3 round Esher Junction back on A3 southbound and heading for Bellfields. There, we patrol. A suspicious-looking Rover - hubcap missing, rear light out, dirty etc. parks up. Stuart gives it a miss.

Radio, "Trouble at ..." Blue lights and sirens - but we get bogged down in traffic on Ladymead. Another vehicle arrives at the scene and we are called off. Left down Woodbridge Road. Young 'motorcyclist' is riding in bus lane. No 'L' plates. Blue lights and along the bus lane we go. Stuart pulls him over and gives him a SMART leaflet and a 'talking to' and a ticket for the bus lane offence.

Its 7.30pm and we go to the Police Centre near George Abbot School for 'lunch'. This is the first break we have had. Twenty minutes later we are heading for Normandy to carry out some speed checks in an area where residents have complained about speeding in a 30mph limit. We meet up with a Community Officer in her van with all the equipment. Stuart thinks that most people 'booked' here live very nearby. A sort of a conflict of attitude I think.

We leave and head out towards the Hog's Back café on the A31 west going carriageway. It is apparent, (apart from lorry drivers) there are a few activities that go on in the lorry/car park that are best left unsaid. In any case its 9pm and we cruise through. I never did understand why that chap without a coat on was donning a 'site hat'. We move on.

Heading east into Guildford and just into Farnham Road.

"Armed robbery, near Walton on Thames." reports the Radio. "Suspects headed off in silver car possibly Escort. They are in possession of shotgun and pistol. Last seen heading for M3, believed to be heading south."

Blue lights and sirens. Stuart advises control he is heading for M25 J10 A3 roundabout and will keep watch for perpetrators going east on M25. Along Woodbridge Road as we pass 'keep left' signs on our left at 68mph! It's cold, as we stand looking over the barrier at the M25 and observe the traffic passing below. A silver car, I think it was an Astra, comes off at our junction and is driving suspiciously fast. We are in the Volvo, blue lights and sirens going and trying to catch the silver car as we go north up the A3. We are pursuing at high speed yet again. We slow to eyeball the cars we pass but alas we were now at Robin Hood roundabout and Stuart declares, "They must have turned off."

We head south on the A3 and turn on to the M25 eastbound now heading for Godstone, to complete my experience for the day. It won't be the end of Stuart's day as his extended shift runs until 2am. He has been allocated some more 'speed gun' duties.

I reflect it's more than nine hours since I left home. The time has whizzed by. What can I take home with me? Well Stuart drives with great confidence based on solid training and a calm demeanour. He has the ability to multitask and concentrate well beyond the 'average' driver. The variation in driving speed is staggering. He never took an unacceptable risk. By my standards when there was a need to go slower for safety he went much slower but picked the speed up quickly once the danger had passed. (I need to reflect on this.) He loves driving, it's a joy. He tolerated all the lesser drivers on the road that were hampering our progress to the scene. He never once chastised their atrocious driving but tried to see it from their point of view. However, he did think the standard of driving and observation for the driving public as a whole was dismal and definitely needs improving. He looked back with honesty about his own young driving days. He now recognises that he was often driving too fast and dangerously for his then ability. It seems to me that this is the crux of the phenomena with driving skills i.e. you can't comprehend how much your driving could improve until you have improved it.

Its 10.26pm. Radio, "Three hoodies seen making off on their bikes from break in at the pharmacy, Ewell Parade, Epsom." Blue lights flashing sirens screaming 132mph...

John S Panting
Senior Observer

Winter Driving

Every year, motorists find themselves at the mercy of the British winter. Taking a few simple precautions BEFORE setting off on a journey could be the difference between becoming stranded or broken-down, and completing your journey successfully. Here are some tips:

BATTERY In cold weather, starting your engine causes more strain on your car battery than any other time. Have your battery checked by your local garage for efficiency and if necessary, have it replaced. At the very least, carry a good set of jump-leads to enable you to be started by someone else with a healthy battery, should the worst happen. Depressing the clutch when starting the engine reduces the strain on the battery.

LIGHTS Ensure that all lights are working correctly. Carry spare light bulbs, especially stop/tail lights and headlights. Do not drive on sidelights only - see and be seen. A vehicle with only sidelights is often lost in all the other lights, especially in town. Use main beam whenever possible but thoughtfully, although use in rain and snow can reduce visibility. Headlights (front and rear) must be used when visibility is below 100yds (91m) and fog lights when visibility is reduced further. It is illegal to drive on front foglights only. Use of rear facing fog lamps in rain can create a hazard for other drivers by blinding them and they can also mask the brake lights. Do not sit at traffic lights or other short halts with your foot on the brake pedal, this is particularly important in the wet. The high level brake light blinds the driver behind you.

FUEL Ensure that you have more than enough fuel for your journey. A good rule of thumb for normal fuel levels is never to let your tank get more than half-empty. This way, you could at least keep your vehicle running to keep the heaters active before you have to rely on the blankets and warm clothing. Have your air conditioning serviced – it's not only for summer, an effective air con system will demist windscreens much more quickly, helping visibility.

SNOW If you can, carry a snow shovel in your boot in case you need to dig your car out of deep snow. Foldable shovels for easier storage are available, including at Halfords (ref 262357-0) and with IAM Membership you can get 10% off vouchers at Halfords. Also carry snow chains if you have them. If you don't, a length of strong rope will suffice in an emergency. Take maps and plan your journey and ask yourself - IS THE JOURNEY REALLY NECESSARY?

If you are unlucky enough to be snowed in whilst traveling:

Try to ensure that your vehicle's exhaust outlet is not covered. This could cause your engine to stall and perhaps prevent it from restarting (as the exhaust gases cannot escape and will starve the engine of the air it needs to function.)

Another danger is exhaust gases leaking into the car itself (especially if your exhaust system has a fault) potentially causing carbon monoxide poisoning. Open the windows every half hour or so to replenish the fresh air in the car, they only need to be open for a minute or so to do this. If you or your passengers must sleep in the vehicle, make sure that at least one person is awake at all times (take it in turns to do so, if you are stranded for long periods of time.)

Bear in mind that when your engine has been switched off, cold air gathers first in the foot well of the car, so raise your feet to a higher level to sustain warmth for longer.

TAKE SOME ESSENTIALS to keep you as safe and warm as possible should bad weather strike:

Water - to keep you hydrated, but keep a second bottle to top up car radiator or screenwash. Make sure your washer fluid has the correct concentration of screenwash – windscreens get particularly dirty in the winter months and it helps prevent the liquid freezing. Have your coolant checked – the antifreeze needs to protect your engine against the lowest of temperatures.

Snacks - A light snack before a long journey is better than a heavy meal. Stop for more regular breaks. Chocolate is best for instant sugar and to lift your mood. It also keeps longer.

Gadgets - To make waiting for help more bearable, music, computer or board games, pads and pens for drawing or books to read. Take a mobile phone - charge it, programme the numbers you need and take a car charger if you can.

Warm clothing and blankets - huddle together under a blanket to keep warmer.

Winter Driving Techniques

Extend the distance from the vehicle in front, particularly at night when it is more difficult to judge speed. Be particularly cautious at dawn and dusk when headlights have reduced effect and the sun can be low in the sky. If you are travelling with the sun behind you, you may be invisible to oncoming traffic – use your headlights. As a very general rule; If your wipers are on then your headlights should be on.

Lights of oncoming vehicles will give advanced warning of their presence and helps to judge the layout of the road. Dip lights on approach to corners, junctions and crests of hills, it allows you to see oncoming lights and stops the last minute panic to dip lights because of oncoming traffic.

If dazzled, keep your eyes averted from the main beam, reduce speed and concentrate on left kerb. Remember it takes time for the eyes to readjust so reduce speed or even stop.

Try wearing sunglasses when it is raining - this will improve your vision

To warn oncoming vehicles their lights are up and affecting your vision, a quick flash of the headlights is acceptable but do not keep them up to retaliate.

When driving in snow and ice, bear the following in mind:

Keep in the highest gear possible to reduce the chances of wheel-slip and, therefore, skids. Never use your Cruise Control when it is very wet or icy - the car will aqua plane.

Avoid harsh steering and braking - these could lead to skidding.

Keep to a steady speed - avoid speeding up or slowing down quickly, these could lead to skidding and loss of control over your vehicle.

If you lose traction try sawing the front wheels from side to side; it helps with traction in snow or on a wet road. And remember - you will be much better prepared for skid situations if you attend one of our skid courses.

A Reminder About Tyres

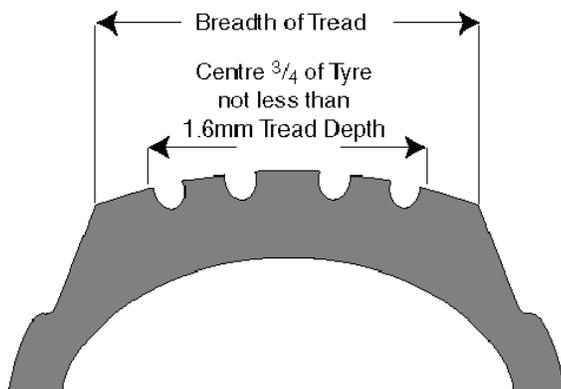
Being the one thing in contact with the driving surface, your tyres are a very important yet often neglected part of your vehicle and proper care and attention can mean the difference between a trouble-free or complete nightmare of a journey.

To make sure your tyres are in the best condition before starting your journey, you should check your tyres on a weekly basis. Run your hand around the back of the tyre where you can't see - you can feel for lumps, nails, stones, cracks, anything that may indicate your tyre has damage. You could prevent an accident spotting this before you set off. It could save you having a tyre blow out at speed, on the road.

Tread depth is also important; not only for safety, but for fuel efficiency as well.

The legal minimum tread depth of the main grooves of car and similar tyres in the United Kingdom and the European Community is 1.6mm.

This applies across the central three quarters of the breadth of tread and round the entire outer circumference of the tyre.



Most car type tyres have tread wear indicators, usually at least six small ribs across the bottom of the main tread grooves, and when the tread surface becomes level with these ribs the tyre is at the legal limit and must be replaced.

Simple and cheap gauges are available to give an acceptable guide to tread depth.

Tyre tread patterns are designed to give good grip in wet conditions. Generally speaking, available grip reduces as the tyre wears or as the road surface water depth increases - you should reduce speed in such conditions. The 1.6mm minimum limit applies to: cars and passenger vehicles with up to 8 seated passengers, not including the driver; and for motor vehicles & light trailers (including caravans) up to 3,500Kg gross vehicle weight.

A quick check each week to ensure correct tread depth and damage-free tyres is an easy way to maximise safety on the road in all conditions.

We Welcome Barbara Needham, Our New Training Officer

Hello everyone. Terry Moody, our Chief Observer, asked me to prepare a short profile to tell you all a bit about myself, so (takes deep breath!) here goes:



The first driving test that I passed was to ride a motorcycle: back in the good old days when 70bhp was a phenomenon and vehicles coming the other way were rare. The self preservation skills, essential for any motorcyclist, have not left me - along with a passion for all things motor and a fascination for the psychology behind motoring.

Having first waded through a number of second-hand hot hatches, in 2004 I decided to treat myself to a brand new Renault Clio Cup, a homologised rally car. Part of my deal with myself was that after talking about it for 10 years, I *really would* like to take the Advanced Driving Test! I was a splendid driver, 9 out of 10 no problem! How hard could it be?

OK, quite a few runs later, (thanks to everyone involved in this attitude adjustment process) I passed the IAM test in 2005, having spent the whole of the test talking to the examiner about, yep, you've guessed it, motorcycles. I was working towards becoming a "THINK" driver; www.dft.gov.uk/think/

Meanwhile, during my employment with a global IT company in 2002, I volunteered to manage our car fleet and I have managed a fleet ever since. A major concern in Fleet Management is to assess Occupational Road Risk. I persuaded my employers that they ought to support me through a number of RoSPA courses -culminating in my pièce de résistance in 2006: the National Diploma in Advanced Driving Instruction: www.rospa.com/drivertraining/trainerandassessor/national-diploma-advanced-driving-instruction.aspx

Having been trained by a class 1 Police driver and examined by RoSPA's Chief Examiner, I passed, thus acquiring the title Barbara Needham RoADA (Dip) I was delighted to be asked to take over as Training Officer for the Guildford Group.

This role will give me the opportunity to support the Group in all aspects of our training processes. I am always open to suggestions on how we can make things better and am keen to support a consistently high quality experience for all group participants.

My duties in this role will include meeting and greeting new trainee

Observers, appointing a suitable “mentor” to look after them, and generally keeping tabs on their progress.

I am also expected to carry out their written tests before handing them over to the Chief Observer for a final Assessed Drive.

In addition, I am responsible for monitoring the re-tests which all our Observers are required to take every three years to ensure their skills are kept up-to-date.

I plan to be actively involved in informal back seat runs to understand better our challenges and opportunities.

I am looking forward to working with you, our great team at Guildford.

Barbara Needham
Training Officer

NEWSLETTER COVER IMAGES!

Following the success of the Winter request for cover images, we’re running another request to put one of your pictures on the front of the April edition which is the Spring 2011 edition.

Send in your motoring relating pictures capturing the essence of spring and one will be picked and put on the cover.

Please email in your entries to the Editor. Images need to be 300dpi, JPEG or TIFF. Could you be the next cover photographer?

Could You Help on the Front Desk?

Need an excuse to get up early on an occasional Sunday morning?

Want to learn more about Advanced Driving?

Play a memory game and see how many people's names you can forget?

If so how about helping out occasionally on the
Front Desk at the Observed Runs.

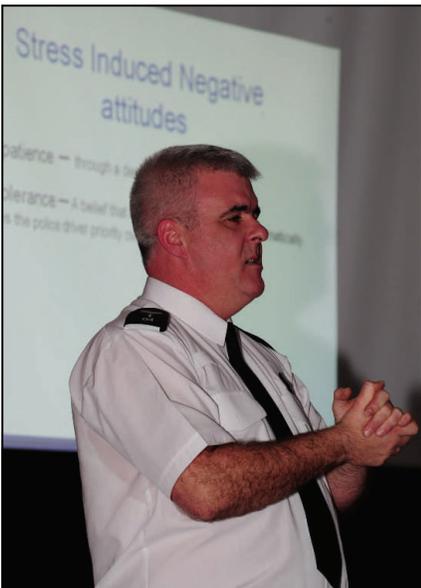
Shân could do with some help from time to time
8.45 am to 1pm on the third Sunday of each month

Contact via the website

Surrey Police “Better Driving Lecture” - November 2010

On a most foul Friday evening in November, and at the invitation of Colleagues from the Guildford Group of Advanced Motorists, my wife and I braved the elements to travel from Horsham to Ripley for a meeting with guest speakers from both the Metropolitan Police and the local Surrey Force.

Sergeant Robin Taylor of the Hendon Driver Training School gave a most illuminating and informative talk on the human aspects of driver training and the many issues which affect every driver's ability to concentrate fully on the task in hand and thus to ensure that safety remains paramount in the approach to any journey.



Touching on the research undertaken by Dr Gordon Sharp, (cf Roadcraft) our speaker reminded the audience of a range of emotions and issues which could affect any driver before or during a period spent behind the wheel: Tiredness, fatigue, family and financial issues, conversation, radio, noise intrusion, together with illness, residual medication and alcohol effects, to say nothing of intolerance, aggression and behavioural issues, all formed aspects of concentration and observation failure leading to inappropriate decision taking and potential disaster.

During the interval, guests were treated not only to liquid refreshments, but also to an amazing array of cakes (and calories) graciously provided by the Group.

Afterwards, PC Tom Arthur of Surrey Road Policing Unit gave a thoroughly interesting insight into initiatives aimed at tackling anti-social driving attitudes within the Mole Valley area, with a particular emphasis on road safety.

In particular, he highlighted local involvement in gathering intelligence to ensure that those who flouted rules regularly could be targeted with a view either to education or, as appropriate, penalties including both points and fines.



Towards the conclusion, we were shown a totally hard hitting video, aimed specifically at young drivers, showing the results of peer pressure and a lack of road experience, resulting in the familiar tale of a roadside disaster and the resulting Emergency Service involvement. Surely an item that should form a regular part of education for those who are yet to gain experience on our busy roads, and it appeared to have a salutary effect on the college group who were seen on camera viewing the video.

Considerable congratulations must be due to the Guildford Group for not only arranging the event, but also for drawing in such a large public gathering, particularly in the prevailing weather conditions, and also for the raffle, supported by IAM HQ, and the much appreciated refreshment.

Derek Williams
Crawley & Horsham Group

Our New Police Liaison Officer

One of our trainee Observers, Steve McCormick, has been appointed as the new Police Liaison Officer and has now taken over from Terry Moody. This is an extremely important role for the Group.

Steve has a background in project management which should stand him in good stead when organising events including future police "Better Driving" lectures which are so successful, informative and well attended.

Steve will maintain our fantastic relationship with Surrey Police and the Metropolitan Police, as well as the Highways Authority.

He takes over responsibility for organising the Police " Better Driving " Lecture in November, and hopes to arrange at least one other event with one of these organisations - probably in the spring - please check future newsletters and the website for details.

This role is separate from that of Events Organiser - currently being taken care of by Colin Pound - which encompasses any event other than the Police or the Highways Agency.

We wish Steve and all our new volunteers best wishes and offer our sincere gratitude for taking on a variety of roles to enhance the Group, allowing it to provide even more value to Associates, Members and the wider driving community.

What Does That Switch Do?

During an Observer's meeting recently, a discussion took place on the different types of "gadgets" we have in modern cars; from automatic gearboxes of many types through to skid control devices; ABS to satellite navigation and camera assisted parking. It prompted some further thought and a little research, and an attempt to answer the following question: As Advanced drivers, how much should we be using all this new technology?

There is not space here to go into the range of different automatic gearboxes and other automatic transmission systems, so I will leave that for someone else who maybe knows a little more about them. But what about all those other gadgets? Some of which you will have selected for your new car from the list of available options, some of which will have been supplied whether you asked for them or not, and all of which you have paid for!

And what about the more familiar controls – do you know where all the buttons and switches are and exactly how (and when) to use them? I am reminded of the story of an Associate under test who was driving along quite happily when it started to rain heavily. The windscreen wipers were immediately deployed to good effect, but soon afterwards the inside of the windscreen started to mist over, and the test route became a drive through fog! Apparently, the Associate had no idea how to operate the demister facility on their car and had to stop at the side of the road to find the right buttons to press and clear the screen. We were not told the result of the test, but the message is clear.

I also recount quite often the run I had with an Associate in a very grand German-built limousine and he freely admitted that he had owned the car for several months and had absolutely no idea what all the buttons and lights in his 'cockpit' were for! Terry Moody, our Chief Observer recalls, "A year or two back, I was stationary at traffic lights behind a car which had its rear high-intensity fog lights switched on when there was no fog. I actually got out, tapped on the driver's window, and pointed out that the fog lights were on. He said how could he be expected to know that? I pointed to the little orange indicator light on the dashboard. Although it was on, he had no idea what it meant!"

So let's look at some of the more common features of the modern vehicle on the next few pages and see if we should be paying more attention to them or disregarding them as marketing gimmicks. In no particular order:

Anti-lock Braking System (ABS)

Not possible to disable this feature – required on all new cars by EU legislation

Allows the car to be steered when under heavy braking, and some say reduces the stopping distance, although this is not proven in all circumstances. Feels odd under foot when first encountered, so get on an empty road and try an emergency stop to get used to the ‘pulsing’ under your right foot. Do not ‘pump’ the brakes if the ABS operates.

Anti Skid Control (ESP)

Usually not possible to disable this feature

Similar to ABS but tries to adjust the engine power and braking forces to each wheel individually so that a car tending to skid is brought under control. Don’t rely on this to get you out of trouble – use your observation skills and common sense!

Cruise Control

Driver selects on or off

Allows you to drive at a steady speed regardless of the road layout and gradient. Can be useful in long sets of roadworks with average speed checks, or on long relatively traffic free motorway cruises, but otherwise not really useful for the advanced driver – use your observation and car control skills!

Adaptive Cruise Control

Driver selects on or off

Allows you to drive at a steady speed and maintain a suitable distance from the vehicle in front. Has its limitations (mainly related to ‘seeing’ other vehicles on bends and in other lanes) so needs to be used with extreme caution - not really useful for the advanced driver – use your observation and car control skills!

<p>'Sport' Mode</p>	<p>Driver selects on or off</p>	<p>Changes some of the engine and suspension settings to set the car up for more progressive driving. Use with caution.</p>
<p>'Winter' Mode</p>	<p>Driver selects on or off</p>	<p>Changes some of the engine and suspension settings to set the car up for potentially slippery driving conditions. Are you watching the road conditions or letting the car do it for you?</p>
<p>Satellite Navigation</p>	<p>Driver selects on or off</p>	<p>A real distraction for many motorists. Always set it up before you drive the car, and know how to turn it off if it gets too noisy or intrusive. Never to be used on an Observed Run or IAM test as you will be given clear directions by your passenger.</p>
<p>Adaptive Air Suspension</p>	<p>Driver selects settings to personal preferences</p>	<p>Changes suspension characteristics to produce a smooth ride or more dynamic suspension response for more active driving. Has some limitations (towing, parking, jacking etc.) and needs to be used with care. May suit some drivers.</p>
<p>Traction Control</p>	<p>Usually not possible to disable this feature</p>	<p>Reduces engine torque to match the amount of grip available thus helping the car to start moving, accelerate up a hill etc. Otherwise called 'clutch control'!</p>
<p>Electronic Differential Lock</p>	<p>Driver controlled in some cases</p>	<p>Detects wheel spin and automatically brakes the spinning wheel and directs power to the other driven wheel(s). When was the last time you had wheelspin?</p>

Electrically Operated mirrors	Driver Controlled	If you think you will gain an advantage by 'dropping' the nearside mirror during manoeuvres to better see the nearside kerb, then why not use it? But remember to return the mirror to its proper position before setting off again.
Fog Lights	Driver selects on or off	Do you know where the switch is? And do the front lights come on before the rear, or both together? And when was it last foggy enough REALLY to need them? If you can see the headlights of the car behind you then you do not need your rear fog lights, and front fog lights are mostly for decoration.
Electric Handbrake	Essential feature fitted to some modern cars	Labour saving device that is manually engaged and automatically releases when you move off. Can be a nuisance as it will not let you move the car unless you are in the driving seat with your seat belt on, the engine running and the pedals pressed in the right order! No idea how it would work if you had an emergency and you thought your footbrake had failed. Prompts careful thought as to how close you park to other cars or walls when on a steep slope and you have no manual control of the handbrake release rate and timing.
Automatic Windscreen Wipers	Driver selects on or off	Probably one of the most useful modern gadgets as they will self adjust to the intensity of the rain. Especially useful when overtaking HGVs in wet weather as the wipers should speed up as you pass the truck to deal with the additional spray.

Automatic Headlights	Driver selects on or off	Useful, but to be used with caution as you do not necessarily know or notice when they are on or off, and sudden unprovoked switching on and off of headlights as you pass under trees or through short tunnels may be mistaken by others as a 'headlight flash' with inevitable misunderstandings.
Speed Limiters/Alarms	Driver selects on or off	Select the speed at which you wish to be reminded of potential speeding issues! Advanced motorists would be far too observant to need this feature, and if you set it to the 'wrong' speed you might not be too happy with the result.
Lane Assist	Driver selects on or off	Follows the white lines in the road and tells you if you are drifting in and out of the chosen lane. Radar can be confused by road surface irregularities, snow and heavy spray etc. Advanced motorists would be far too observant and alert to need this feature.
Parking Sensors (rear and front on some cars)	Usually not possible to disable this feature	Useful feature that senses how close you are to the car behind (and sometimes in front also). Beware getting into a car without this feature if you have become reliant on it! And look out for thin obstructions such as the corners of walls as they can be very difficult to sense early enough.

Sleep Detectors	Usually not possible to disable this feature	Sensors that look at your eye movement and detect changes that might indicate a drowsy driver. Advanced motorists would have stopped for a break well before the sensor saw the problem.
Four Wheel Drive	Driver selects on or off in some cases, but can be permanent	Found in high performance sports cars (Jaguar, Subaru, Mitsubishi EVO etc.) as a permanent feature and in traditional 4x4 vehicles, often as a switchable function. 4 wheel drive can result in reduced fuel consumption and increased tyre wear so if it is switchable then do so. Otherwise, select the features that best suit the terrain and conditions.

And one last thing: The point of the car is to get you from A to B safely, and if ANYTHING disturbs your concentration whilst you are driving it is not a good thing.

The primary consideration is always the full concentration of the driver. Leave the gadgets alone until you stop, and be sure if you turn them on you know how to turn them off again!

Please let us know if you agree with the comments above or have any other gadgets fitted to your car that help (or hinder) your driving.

Paul Whitehead

Member Information

Welcome New Members

Caroline Ebbage, Tim Goodman, Margaret Higgins, Richard Nicholls, Steve Parrott, James Pewtress, John Williams.

We hope you enjoy your Observed runs.

Test Passes

Nicola Benton, Tim Cheke, Giesla Farmer, Paul Fry, Colin Jones, Nicki More

Congratulations on passing your Advanced Tests!

Random or What?

Our Chairman spotted these signs on his travels recently!



Winter Pictures

Some of the snow scenes sent in for the Winter newsletter cover;



Thanks to Steve Hunt and Alan Philpott for these fantastic pictures.

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



**If so, please put them in touch with
Chris Hughes
Contact details on the inside back page**

**Please pass on or recycle this newsletter
once you're done with it!**