



Driveway

Issue: 181, Jan 2016

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From The Chair

A slightly belated Happy New Year to you all!

I am not a great one for New Year's resolutions as they are so quickly forgotten, but I would ask you all to make one and to do your best to keep it, namely, to encourage just one person each to join the group and improve their driving!

After a busy 2015, we are looking forward to a similarly full 2016, with plenty of driving related activities. The Precision Driving events at Throckmorton have been very successful and more are planned, (see page 3). The IAM Driving Skills Day will be held at Gaydon in early May, shortly before our Group AGM. The IAM has been developing new standards for driving over the past 18 months and they are now in the process of being reviewed by Chief and National Observers across the country.

I see that the Under 17 Car Club (U17CC) Pathfinder Project is offering places on driving tuition courses this Easter, which may be of interest if you have children or grandchildren who are under 17. Spread over five days, the course aims to teach them the key attitudes and skills for advanced driving. U17CC's Pathfinder project is open to "rising" 17s and Pathfinder has space during Easter break (4-8 April) exclusively for the children and grandchildren of IAM members. Actively supported by Gloucestershire Advanced Motorists and the police, Each place costs £170. To find out more visit the Pathfinder website here: www.under17driver.co.uk This could be the best present that you ever buy for your progeny and I urge you to take this opportunity if you possibly can.

I look forward to seeing you at our monthly Drive Sunday sessions at The Lock and at the various other meetings.

Let us hope that 2016 is a good year for all, individually and as a Group.

Andrea.



Charity No: 1098808

The Newsletter of Kidderminster Advanced Motorists

Group Contact: 07050 691252 & www.k-a-m.org.uk

A Physicist Writes

This diary begins on a dark evening in late September...

Tuesday: driving my VW Golf along Mill Lane, Bracknell (to weekly choir practice), busy road, weather dry. Arrived at large, poorly lit roundabout, stopped at line, in middle lane of three. Always hard to assess traffic movements here, looking right, so was cautious in moving off. As I released foot-brake, loud bang from rear, head-rest proved its worth. My first shunt.

Switched hazard lights on, turned engine off, got out. Forgot to put on hi-viz vest, or to collar witnesses, or to try to photograph scene. Young driver emerged from white Fiesta behind, said: Sorry, my fault, thought you were moving. Then said to phone in hand: Speak to you later. (Was he already speaking to "you" at moment of collision? Did he not see my brake-lights? I could & should have asked...) Exchanged details, inspected cars: rather more visible damage to front of Fiesta than to rear of Golf – plastic bumper obviously impacted, plus couple of bulbs blown.

Wednesday: in daylight, could see dents above bumper along tailgate, which had also become hard to close. Phoned IAM Surety (my broker), now part of Cornmarket (so let's call them C), to report incident. They said claim & repair would be handled by firm P, in conjunction with another firm K.

Friday: firm K phoned to confirm independent engineer coming Tuesday to inspect Golf. Repair to be done locally at Sunnyside Autos, of Reading (reassuringly, I later found excellent reports of them, on internet). K also offered free hire-car. I said: Not needed yet, thanks, maybe during repair?

Tuesday: engineer (all the way from Bristol!) said bumper & tailgate to be replaced, probably internal panels also, could take a week. My insurers KGM phoned to confirm other side accepted claim – but why hadn't I reported accident direct to them? (Because insurance certificate has C's number on it, not yours.) Anyway, they were closing their file, but could reopen if I needed to claim.

Monday: firm K (I never did hear from P) phoned to arrange repair – booked for Tuesday week at Sunnyside. And will deliver the hire-car. Actually, on thinking about it, I can manage without that, thank you, as we have my wife's. But if you don't take it,

sorry, can't arrange repair, it's part of package, you will have to go back to your insurer. Oh... OK, will take it, though can't promise to use it. But if you don't use it, sorry again, we will have to charge you for the hire. *What?* Then how low a mileage will you accept on it, without charging? (No clear answer.)

Phoned C to ask why they had put me in position of first having to take hire-car, and then having to use it. They didn't explain satisfactorily, but did apologize for being unclear initially.

Tuesday week: took Golf to Sunnyside for repair, Mrs S drove me back home. Trailer arrived with

“Then said to phone in hand: Speak to you later. (Was he already speaking to “you” at moment of collision?...)”

hire-car on back: another Fiesta, what an affront. Driver said he had come all the way from Hayling Island! Produced paperwork for signing, asked me also to fill in Statement of Truth (er, what other sort of Statement would they require, if not of Truth?), being detailed account of accident. Just as well I started keeping this diary...

Meanwhile driver unloaded car in rain, then tried to wipe every inch dry while noting down each scratch on new hire-sheet (why couldn't we simply agree on any scratches that hadn't been noted for *previous* hire?). Explained to me controls and T&C which included £500 excess, departed.

Later (in the dry) I checked hire-car over, discovered 8 lb pressure difference between rear tyres, 4 lb between front tyres, one tyre different brand from others, oil level at Min, coolant level well below Min, unpleasant smell inside car (lingered in nostrils all day after just 5 minutes sitting inside). Decided not to put any mileage on it at all, swapped it with Mrs S's Micra on driveway.

Wednesday: emailed firm K with list of defects, saying I couldn't really have faith now in general safety & maintenance of any car they might give me, though fortunately didn't need one anyway. Most of all, wouldn't want their next customer to receive this car in same state, and drive it unawares.

Friday: how appropriate, hire-car half-covered in avian deposit overnight – much thicker than from heron on previous occasion (see June column), perhaps red kite this time? At least Micra escaped! Wiped mess off as best I could.

Firm K phoned to apologize for defects, smell

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had been noticed during valeting but seemed to have gone, anyway would I accept goodwill £50? Certainly!

Saturday: man at Sunnyside phoned to say Golf would be ready Monday, but there was a problem – full-size spare wheel (which I installed in boot, replacing space-saver wheel, see July 2013 column) wasn't clamped, hence might cause injury in serious accident, so on safety grounds he couldn't release car. I confessed I hadn't found way of clamping thicker wheel in place. He offered to construct suitable fixing, I accepted with grateful thanks.

(Of course my tools, shopping, luggage etc in boot are always unclamped and a hazard! Also, noticed Fiesta hire-car has no spare at all, just sealant kit & tiny electric pump, ludicrous, can't believe anyone has succeeded in safely reinflating from puncture

this way, quite apart from the fact it puts tyre beyond repair.)

Monday: waved good riddance to hire-car, what a waste of other people's money & everyone's time. Collected Golf: four weeks after shunt, good as new if not better, sparkling clean inside & out, tailgate even easier to close than before, spare wheel now secured, lifetime guarantee on the new paintwork, can't praise Sunnyside Autos highly enough. Later, received copy of invoice: job cost more than £3K, money well spent, I say (though would much prefer that it hadn't been necessary).

Have suggested to Bracknell Forest Borough Council that they improve lighting at Mill Lane roundabout. Meanwhile, brother-in-law offered advice: take defensive measures – get tow-bar fitted!

Peter Soul

Skidpan and Precision Driving

After the success of the last two events, we are arranging further skid-pan training or "Dealing with Emergency Situations" sessions at Sanden Driver Training, Throckmorton Airfield near Pershore.

The half day experience is fun and highly recommended. Using three vehicles with three drivers in each vehicle in addition to the instructor/observer, the experience consists of three elements, each driver having approximately 20 minutes driving per element:

1. Dealing with emergency situations – (Used to be called skid-pan training)
2. Collision avoidance – (Steering to avoiding obstacles while using ABS braking at high speed)
3. Precision driving – (Driving through and reversing back through a slalom course)

The Vehicles are provided by Sanden Driver Training. There will be a mixture of manual and automatic transmissions, giving you the chance to drive both.

The sessions are open to Full and Associate Members, and their guests but please note that preference will be given to Members who have not previously attended.

Date & time:

Saturday, 19 March 2016 at 0830.

Cost remains at £80:00p per person, including light refreshments.

If you wish to participate, please respond by email to Andrea Beech <andrea-kam@uwclub.net> no later than Friday, 29th January 2016.

Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Your place will be confirmed, subject to receipt of the full payment. Please indicate if, in the event that the session is fully subscribed, you wish your name to be added to the waiting list.

You will be informed in the confirmation, of the due date by which full payment must be received.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. There is no period of grace, if payment is not received by the due date, the place will be offered to the next person on the waiting list.
2. In the event of an individual being unable to take up their place, payment will only be refunded if that placement is taken up by another person.
3. Those who are notified that they are on the waiting list are asked to keep that date free in case of last-minute cancellations or to let Andrea know in writing that they wish their name to be removed from the waiting list.
4. Verbal messages will not be accepted.

Off Road Driving

Member John Smith noticed whilst skidding and slaloming around Throckmorton that Sanden Driver Training also offer an off road session in 4x4 vehicles. Their website has the following to say about it:

We offer a one day 'beginner' or a two day 'advanced' package which both incorporate recovery winching.

Our track includes the following:

Deep ruts	Steep ascents and descents
Sand and gravel	Water crossing (variable height)
Boulder run	Standing and fallen trees
Table top heaps	Side slopes

You will learn how to drive across ruts without getting your vehicle stuck, drive up steep inclines safely (including failed hill climbs) and then back down the other side. You will be taught how to safely negotiate side slopes, reducing the risk of sliding or toppling and how to traverse ditches and fallen trees. Sand and gravel offers a different challenge to mud and we will show you the different driving techniques. Water can cause lot of damage if you don't know your vehicles limits and the correct crossing procedure.

Prices:

One day 'beginner' package – from £200 per person.”

Please let me know if you would like to do this and if there is sufficient interest, I'll make further enquiries.

Bob Fox.

Cyclist Prosecutions

The number of reckless cyclists taken to court for ignoring traffic warning signs has doubled in the past four years, statistics show.

Bikers convicted of neglect of traffic directions rose from 52 in 2010 to 125 in 2014 - the year in which the latest figures are available for. Government figures also revealed that cyclists found guilty of careless driving in magistrates court increased from over the same time period.

Tensions between cyclists and other road users have ramped up dramatically in the past couple of years with the increasing use of dashcams and head cams. According to [The Times](#), the latest figures also show that 24 cyclists were convicted of reckless and dangerous driving and 332 found guilty of other cycling offences in 2014.

The paper said that statistics - released by transport minister Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon in a letter to Labour peer Lord Hughes, of Woodside - showed the total of successful convictions for riding on a footpath stayed constant, from 288 in 2010 to 282 in 2014.

The Times reports that Lord Ahmad told peers: 'I often said that the biggest challenge for a commuter in London was avoiding not trucks and cars but the cyclists who were possibly jumping red lights or riding on the pavements.'

He told The Times: 'When they ride on pavements or jump red lights, they break the law, and there is a need to review with the police how we can apply the law effectively to cyclists as well as to any other road users.'

Flood Water

With so much rain over recent weeks and months, it is timely to reconsider our approach to driving through water.

When confronted with water across our path, it is prudent to take the following actions:

Consider an alternative route to avoid the flood.

Check whether the water is standing or flowing.

Ensure that the water is less than six inches deep, (standing water), or four inches deep, (flowing).

Enter slowly, no more that 2mph.

Remain in first gear, keep the engine revs up and accelerate to no more than 4mph. This will create a "bow" wave and keep water out of the engine.

Drive on the highest point, usually the crown of the road.

On emerging, gently brake to dry them out, until they are fully effective again.

It doesn't take much depth of moving water to lift a car and carry it and the occupants down-stream, so four inches of moving water is the maximum to remain safe.

Why Bother with Penalty Points?

Members may have read in the national press recently that three drivers with more than 40 points on their driving licenses are still allowed on the road, according to a Freedom of Information request to the DVLA by the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM).

In addition, the numbers of drivers with 12 or more points has gone UP by 9% in just seven months between March and October 2015 - from 6,884 to 7,517.

“In the majority of cases where the driver has accumulated 12 or more penalty points, magistrates may have decided to allow drivers to retain their entitlement to drive where it is considered that disqualification would cause exceptional hardship,” it added.

Separately the IAM has looked into the ‘top four’ and has discovered the following:
51 points holder (Oxford): provisional licence holder, three speeding offences in 30mph zone, seven offences of not providing driver details - Not disqualified.

42 points holder (Basildon): seven offences, all of which were for failing to report driver details. Previously held points for speeding including one at 109mph, as magistrates accepted mitigation of

‘extreme hardship’ through loss of income - Not disqualified.

42 points holder (Liverpool): seven counts, including two of speeding in 30mph areas and five of not reporting driver of vehicle - Not disqualified.

38 points holder (Burnley): 10 counts of speeding in 30mph areas - Not disqualified.

speeding is still the biggest motoring-related offence where the defendant is found guilty in court.

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. The numbers of those found guilty have risen sharply in the past 12 months – from 115,935 to 148,426, an increase of 28% which is the highest number since 2005.

DVLA data shows that some 100,000 have been disqualified over the past four years for reaching 12 points and 4% got twelve points in one go. The DVLA evidence suggests that 90% of the drivers not disqualified are due to ‘judicial discretion’.

Why are these offenders allowed to keep their licenses? What consideration is there for the “extreme hardship” of those who stand to be maimed or killed by these offenders?
Ed.

UK Driving Re-testing

Half of experienced drivers would fail their driving test if they were asked to take it again – if the results of an experiment by Auto Express and the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) are anything to go by.

Going by the criteria of the IAM’s qualified assessors on the day, just 50% (six of the 12 who took part) would pass if they took it again today.

Auto Express revealed that at the start in 1935, the pass rate was 63% - today it is just 47%.

Failing to use mirrors enough, overspeeding and underuse of signals were typical of bad habits picked up by the IAM’s volunteers on the day of the experiment.

Of twelve volunteers, seven had undergone advanced driver training with the IAM. Of those, six passed the mini test. And of the five who had had no advanced tuition, just one passed.

Steve Fowler, editor-in-chief of Auto Express, said: “Driving standards has always been a hot topic and the result of our tests shows that too many people just aren’t as good at driving as they think they are. Although technology is making driving safer than ever, the attitude and ability of the person behind the wheel is the most important element.”

The online version of Auto Express’ feature can be read here: <http://www.autoexpress.co.uk/car-news/first-cars/93439/would-you-pass-your-driving-test-now>

Better Driving, Pt 2.

In the first article, the four factors affecting our driving were discussed, human (ourselves), the journey, traffic situations and the vehicle. The System of Car Control, (IPSGA), was illustrated.

This article looks at Information in more detail, coupled to observation and anticipation. Drivers have a lot of complex information to process. Gather information by constantly scanning from the horizon back to the front of the vehicle, the sides and behind via the mirrors and then the instruments on the dashboard. Additional information may be gained through sounds, e.g. emergency vehicle sirens before they come into view; and smells, e.g. new mown grass warning of the possibility of a mower adjacent to or on the road.

From these inputs we form a constantly evolving mental image of what is happening, identifying hazards and taking appropriate action to deal with each one safely. A hazard may be defined as anything which is an actual or potential danger. Hazards fall into three groups:

1. a fixed, physical feature;
2. the position or movement of other road users and animals;
3. the prevailing weather and it's effect(s) on driving conditions.

There are four limiting factors to the amount of information we can process at any one time: reaction time; errors of perception; attention span and memory storage.

1. Reaction time – the time between identifying a new hazard and responding to it.
2. Errors of perception – (a) Errors of judgment, e.g. finding a bend to be tighter than initially thought. (b) Habit and expectancy – a familiar route leads us to expect what we encountered previously instead of the unexpected.
3. Attention span – distractions such as cell phones, passengers and in car entertainment are distracting. Fatigue is also detrimental to our ability to maintain a high level of attention.
4. Memory storage – Too much input and our brains cannot cope with the load. e.g. if we cannot read all the road signs, we are probably driving too fast.

By regularly practicing driving techniques and manoeuvres, using the System of Car Control and concentrating on observational development we improve the way in which we process and prioritise information. Ask yourself "What if?" the unexpected happens and consider the escape route options.

Beware of looking but not seeing, particularly when at road junctions when it is easy to miss those on two wheels and fast moving small vehicles.

This enables us to anticipate situations, prioritise our plans and act in a systematic way. The five continuously cycling elements of this are:

1. Observe – look, listen, smell, think. Scan the scene ahead, to each side and behind.
2. Anticipate – what sort of area am I driving through? Rural? Urban? Town centre? What hazards may I expect?
3. Prioritise – what is the highest risk? Where is it most likely to come from?
4. Decide – what to do, e.g. alter position, steer, brake,
5. Act.

Observational skills may be improved by increasing concentration, (for example by switching off in-vehicle entertainment systems), visual scanning, from the far distance, middle distance and foreground, to each side and behind making full use of internal and door mirrors, augmented where necessary by shoulder checks. Make good use of peripheral vision by not concentrating your central vision on any one small area. In this way you will develop the ability to consciously identify what you can see; take account of what you can't see and deduce what you might reasonably expect to happen; prioritise the hazards; formulate a contingency plan to meet an unexpected development.

Be particularly mindful of small objects such as ~~pedestrians and those on two wheels which are~~ easy to miss until they are very close. Make good use of hearing to identify motorcycles and emergency vehicles at the earliest opportunity. When in town and city centres, don't dither, drive with a sense of purpose. If unsure of your whereabouts find a safe place to stop and get your bearings.

Making good use of visibility zones aids anticipation

Be particularly mindful of small objects such as pedestrians and those on two wheels which are easy to miss until they are very close

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by gaining information about the road ahead but not yet in direct view. Examples include the moving shadows of approaching vehicles, breaks in roadside hedges allowing views across bends, shop window reflections, clusters of streetlights, suggesting a junction and the angle of approaching headlights. Then get your position right to maximize forward vision; early vision enables an early decision.

Remember to drive at a safe speed for the situation, which may be below the posted limit. The faster we drive, the more difficult it is to process information close to us and the further we have to look ahead. Always drive at a speed which permits you to stop within the distance you can see to be clear on your side of the road.

Letter to the Editor

I would like to make a few comments about Joe retiring. Firstly I am sorry to hear that he has decided to retire from the branch as he was a real credit and asset to it. When I went for my pre test drive with him we needed to polish up a few points of my driving performance. Joe took me out in his own car to demonstrate how it should be done. On going from this we went out a further couple of times in order to close the gap between my actual driving ability to the desired level of skills expected. I will always be in Joes debt for his attention to detail, his enthusiasm and the added value he brought to the advanced driving experience.

Thanks Joe

Ray Stilgoe

Keep your distance, remember the rhyme about minimum distances - only a fool breaks the two second rule. When conditions are poor, best make it four. And if conditions are severe, at least ten seconds may be safer.

Keep an eye out for the actions of other drivers; some will be distracted by their mobile phones or passengers, others may be driving aggressively. Keep your distance, check you blind spot frequently and don't try to stop faster vehicles passing. There is no point in getting involved in a road-rage incident.

Keep a check on your alertness, especially if you have a cold, are tired or on medication. If on a long journey, consider stopping for a ten minute leg-stretch every hour or so. If you misjudge a hazard, ask yourself why; if you misjudge more than one on a journey you almost certainly should take a break, have a coffee and walk, even a short nap.

Above all, by being self critical you will be able to identify areas where improvement is needed and start to work on them.

And remember, there is no such thing as a perfect drive.

Stay safe at the wheel.

Bob Fox

Driving in Snow

After a mild first half, the winter's weather is forecast to return to normal, so we may reasonably expect icy conditions, with or without a little of the white stuff!

- Think about the safest possible way to get to your destination. If you can, avoid travelling on quieter roads or country lanes as these are less likely to be gritted.
- Don't forget to clear off snow piled on the roof and bonnet as it can fall and blow on to the windscreen or the vehicle behind.
- Start your car gently from stationary and avoid high revs. If road conditions are icy and you drive a manual car, move off in a higher gear rather than first gear. Stay in a higher gear to avoid wheel spin.
- Never drive too fast that you risk losing control, but avoid driving so slowly that you risk losing momentum, especially when driving up a slope.
- Double your stopping distance from the vehicle in front of you. This will give you more time to slow down without relying on your brakes.

IAM Advice.

