

SWINDON & DISTRICT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS
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Newsletter
August 2004

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributor and are not those of the editor, the group, or of the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

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The Swindon & District Group of Advanced Motorists retains the names and addresses of all group members on computer for mailing and administrative purposes.

WHO'S WHO IN YOUR GROUP?

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CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

Welcome to the August edition of our newsletter.

First of all I must apologise for the absence of my ramblings in the May publication. Copy dates for submission to the newsletter are well known, but I have to admit to having a reputation of "going to the wire". On this occasion however, due to annual holidays, I was well in advance. I left for Gatwick on 17th April with a clear desk and in the knowledge that 4 fellow committee members had my article. Or so I thought; the wonders of e-mail!

Observing driver behaviour became a pastime during our holiday in Florida. In the US, motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for people between 15 and 20. In 2002, 5,933 teens died in road accidents, this is a sizable percentage of the total of c. 43,000 who lost their lives.

The legal driving age is 16, but in Florida any driver under 18 must hold a learners licence for one year during which time they must be accompanied by a licensed driver over the age of 21. Parents must sign the full licence application form certifying that the teen has at least 50 hours behind the wheel.

In the UK we are familiar with the "How's my driving?" sticker on commercial vehicles. In the US they are taking this a stage further and are rolling out a scheme for young drivers with "Go get Mom" stickers. Enrolment costs c. \$80; calls to the toll free number are recorded and then forwarded immediately to the parent's phone.

In a newspaper article the originator of the scheme described how she received a call about her son who had been seen driving 20mph over the speed limit. "I called him and said 'why are you flying down Lithia Pinecrest Road?', He was like 'Whoa! ". Ed - Trust he was hands free at the time!

Back to the UK; as advanced motorists we all support the government's initiatives to improve road safety. In its paper "Tomorrow's Roads - Safer for everyone" published in March 2000, the government laid out its plans to reduce the numbers Killed & Seriously Injured in road collisions by 40% generally, and 50% in the case of children. Amongst the Legislation passed, targeted at achieving this, are Hypothecation for Safety Camera Partnerships, (Investment and running costs of the scheme are covered out of speeding fines; only the balance goes to central government) and the recent changes to non hands free mobile phone use.

A recent article estimated the number of speed, sorry, must be PC, *safety* cameras to be 5,500 nationwide, raising an income of some £180m, with the number of drivers being fined increasing from c. 2 million last year to 3m this year. The same article referred to cameras on a section of the M25 between Jnc 12 and 14, part of a £147m carriageway-widening scheme running over a 2-year period. In just 10 weeks of operation fine income has exceeded £600,000. Over the 2 year period of the works this could raise £6.5m, and as it is a national motorway the proceeds go the central government, a nice rebate on an £147m investment some might say!

I'll end on the very serious note of committee membership. There are a number of committee members standing down at the AGM this September, and we need to replace them. The Committee's role is to run the Group in accordance with IAM guidelines and also to meet the needs of you, our members. The more people on committee the more we can achieve and the better the service we can offer you. We have had a volunteer to take on the joint role of Membership Secretary/ Associate Rep, thank-you Phil, if we could only have a few more that we would go some way to addressing the issue. So, if you are interested please talk to one of the committee members or contact Derek or myself.

Safe and happy motoring.

Mark Simpson

SECRETARY'S NOTES

We would like to welcome **Mr Mark Ellis**, who joins us from the Newbury Group, and is already a qualified observer. We hope that he will be able to assist us with reducing our waiting list of Associates.

New Associates joining the Group

We welcome the following new associates to the Swindon Group, and wish them well during their observed runs, and with their Advanced Driving Test. An observer will be allocated to them as soon as one becomes available.

Mr Robert Stewart

Mr Kieran Smyth

Mr David Douch

Miss Hannah Duncan

Mr Simon Clarke

Mr Michael Whittaker

Mr Craig Le Cappelain - who joins us from the Portsmouth Group

Sadly we have to say goodbye to **Ms Rebecca Twigg** who is moving with her job to St Helens and has not yet started with an observer. We wish Rebecca well, and hope that she is successful with her test in St Helens.

Unfortunately we have not had anyone ready to take the test since our last Newsletter, but there are several associates who are nearly "Test Ready". This should enable others to start soon.

Our thanks go to W H Smith, who allowed us to use their training facilities at Greenbridge for an Associates Training Course recently. We hope that those associates who were able to attend, have benefited from the course, and can assure them that we are doing all that we can to find them an observer as soon as possible, so that they can continue with their training.

Our thanks also go to the team of observers who gave up their time to prepare, and give the instruction, and for the effort that they put into the course. They will be meeting soon to evaluate the course results, and to see where improvements can be made for the next course, which we hope to be able to run soon. No dates have been made yet, but keep your eye on the next Newsletters, or any announcements when we meet at Blunsdon for our monthly meetings.

Re-admission of Lapsed Members to the IAM

If a member fails to renew their IAM membership within three months of the date of expiry of membership, membership of the IAM lapses. The person may no longer claim to be an IAM member and, if they are a member of an IAM Group, membership of that Group also ceases.

(Note that for this reason it is recommended practice for all Groups to include in their own membership renewal documentation, a declaration of current IAM membership which includes IAM membership number and expiry date. Apart from ensuring compliance with the Group Rules regarding membership entitlement, this is one simple way in particular of protecting the Group's insurance cover by preventing the Group renewal of a member who has been expelled from IAM membership).

Trevor Poxon MBE

Trevor Poxon retired as Assistant Chief Examiner at the end of June, having held the position since November 1995.

Steve Mead who was appointed as designate in March assumed the position on 1st July 2004.

Derek Sheldrake

FROM YOUR CHIEF OBSERVER

Well here we are well into the full throes of summer with those 'Downpours' onto very dry surfaces causing us all sorts of bother plus many other 'Hazards' which we all have to contend with. What about that 'Low Sun'. Have you, (especially all you New Associates out there, fresh from your Associates Course attendance and hopefully brimming with new information), considered that as you drive along with the Sun to the rear of you, it may be difficult for other road users to see you. I was given some advice some years ago about using my headlights when driving with the sun to the rear, now that is a very useful piece of information for you to consider when out for that summer drive. I always use my lights under those conditions now!

Take care when driving through flooded areas, Low Gear, High Revs and Slow! I recently spent some time in Sidmouth, Devon, which has a 'Ford' in the Town and I was surprised with the high speed that some drivers used to drive through it. I thought about that! What if you drove through that 'Ford' 2 or 3 times a day every day for a year. Think of how much water will splash up onto the exhaust, (created by driving through too fast), how much 'Expansion and Contraction' takes place, how long will the exhaust system last under those conditions? I bet some drivers are surprised!!!

Sharing the Road with Emergency Vehicles

I know that this subject was touched upon during the Associates Course but I would just like to add some things for you to remember. If you hear that familiar sound of any emergency vehicle, consider, 'Where they are?', 'Which way are they coming?', 'How many are there?', 'Are they all coming from the same direction?' What if you are approaching traffic signals, the light is on green, are you going to drive straight through because it's your 'Right of Way'! Please consider that a green light gives you the 'Opportunity' to proceed but not the 'Right'.

Always give yourself time to look, you may see that emergency vehicle coming through from another direction. In fact 'ALWAYS' look prior to going through that green light, one day that 'Look' could be a 'Lifesaver'!

I have been advised that, if you are facing a red light, maybe in a narrow street and planning to stop but you have an emergency vehicle close behind and to stop would impede it's progress, it may be wise to proceed slowly and take precautionary measures at the same time to allow the vehicle access through and past you. As long as it is to 'Save Lives' and 'Fight Fire'. But 'Be Warned', be VERY CAREFUL!!!

Once again, my message to those of you who are soon to take the Test. Do NOT consider it lightly, prepare well, know your vehicle, consider the 'System'. Don't say you will drive to it and then ignore the principles, CONSIDER the use of the 'System' because you will at times find that you did not use the 'System' as well as you could have done. If you do 'Pass', you will be deemed to have reached a High Standard of Driving Ability but you will not be 'Perfect', none of us are! Just remember it is a 'Skill for Life' and it takes a long time to come anywhere close to perfecting it.

I don't think anyone ever will!!!

But ...Through your own 'Observations, Actions and Reasons' you will be a lot, lot safer.

Yours in the 'Spirit of Safe Driving'

Chris Gleed (Chief Observer)

Footnote: As most of you know, I will be 'Standing Down' from my Role of Chief Observer in September and I ask any other Senior Observer to seriously consider taking on the role for the future benefit of the group. I do now have to 'Take Stock' and consider my Lovely Wife a little more than I have had time to do for the last few years. She knows that I 'Love her' but I 'Love' my Driving and I am 'Passionate' about 'Road Safety'

I would like you all to share my 'Passion' for the Swindon Group, Safe Driving and Road Safety. But...'Leave my Wife to me!!!!'

Be Safe!

Chris Gleed

AVOID DISTRACTIONS AND “DRIVE SAFE” THIS SUMMER

You cannot drive safely unless you are fully aware of what is happening around you. Therefore, you should try to avoid distractions such as:

- Playing excessively loud music
- Attempting to read maps, documents etc
- Searching for and inserting cassettes and CD's or tuning the radio
- Having heated discussions or arguments with passengers or other road users
- Eating or drinking
- Use of mobile communications devices, including hand-held mobile phones, laptops, Blackberries and any other similar communications device. The level of distraction creates an unacceptable level of risk.

The only exception to the rule is the use of hands-free communications. To be classified as 'hands free' the phone must not be held at any point during operation, including turning it on or off. If using a phone with a headset or earpiece, the phone itself must be held within a holder secured within the vehicle (e.g.. on the dashboard). Use of hand held mobile phones whilst driving is now illegal in the UK.

To reduce the need to use hands-free/headset-based communications whilst driving, consider :

- Use of voicemail
- Making critical calls before you start your journey
- Setting up automatic diverts to other team members
- Plan ahead
- Pull over to take/make calls, but not on the carriageway
- Take regular breaks to deal with calls and messages
- Ask your passengers to take and make calls on your behalf

If you have no alternative but to make calls on your hands-free mobile whilst driving:

- Use voice-activated dialling if available Inform the person on the other end of the line that you are driving
- Keep calls short, specific and to the point
- If possible, pull over to take or make any calls
- Do not take part in "conference calls"
- Do not have any qualms about ceasing talking when you need to concentrate totally on your driving

If you contact someone who may be driving:

- Ask if it is safe to talk.
- State how urgent the call is (e.g.. 'this isn't urgent, I'll call you back when you're available')
- Keep the message brief and if necessary ask the driver to call you back when he/she has pulled over and stopped

Journey Scheduling

- Restrict and plan your driving time
- Plan your route to arrive in plenty of time, build in extra time for delays/diversions and include at least one 5 minute rest break every two hours
- Avoid setting out on a long drive if you have worked a full day
- If during your drive you feel fatigued or sleepy, stop somewhere safe and take a short nap
- As a general guide, do not plan to spend more than 6 hours 'at the wheel' in one day

WEBLINKS

As you read this it will still be summer but it won't be long until we start to notice the nights drawing in and by the time the next edition of this newsletter appears the darker evenings will have arrived and Halloween will have come and gone. In recent years the media has fuelled interest in the paranormal and while this has prompted many people to pursue new interests involving them in private research a particular area of activity has received coverage where advanced motorists are uniquely well placed to contribute to a growing debate.

Even the most sceptical reader cannot ignore the growing number of reports of paranormal events apparently occurring on our roads. Not surprisingly most observations take place at night and at certain times of the year. Significantly, they often occur in circumstances where an inappropriate reaction by the driver could be dangerous. Are these events real or do they tell us something new about the effect of the environment on the human psyche when driving under particular circumstances or at certain times of day and the year?

The most famous case in the UK of the so-called "Phantom Hitch Hiker" phenomenon centres on Blue Bell Hill in Kent. This is a classic tale of an apparition of a young woman appearing suddenly in the road in front of approaching motorists before vanishing completely following a collision. Reports peak in November on and around the anniversary of a fatal crash that occurred in 1965, although there are several sightings that predate this. Other common locations are the Blackwall Tunnel and the A38 in Somerset, although there are very many similar reports from around the UK.

Sean Tudor's website (<http://www.roadghosts.com/>) features a comprehensive collation of cases from the UK including accounts from the drivers and passengers involved. The site avoids a sensationalist approach to its subject and the accompanying discussion applies a scientific and objective analysis to the dynamics surrounding the events. In the case of Blue Bell Hill, for example, he draws attention to the possible impact of the local environment and speculates as to the subtle effects the presence of powerful broadcast transmitters and power lines in the surrounding area might have on the witnesses' subconscious.

Sleep Paralysis?

Some researchers have suggested that a recognised condition called “sleep paralysis” is a contributory factor in these events. They have also linked it to the “UFO abduction” phenomenon. It seems that drivers under the influence of sleep paralysis are most likely to:

- be driving on dull roads, usually in the early hours between 4 - 6am
- speed and/or drive too close
- make no attempt to brake before an accident
- be most at risk if a night worker and/or a truck driver

The roadghosts phenomenon, however, seems to occur on all types of road ranging from dual carriageway link roads to remote B and unclassified roads. It usually happens at night, but most commonly between midnight and 2am. As the roads are quiet driving too close is unlikely to be a factor and police officers that have attended the scene afterwards have found skidmarks that suggest that the driver has braked hard before the apparent collision. Moreover the events seem to happen to people in all occupations. A sample of breath is generally taken when such an incident is reported and the police have been in attendance and these tests always turn out to be negative.

It would be interesting hear from any of our members who have similar experiences to add to the report. As advanced motorists we are motivated to observe the road and the surrounding environment closely and we need to establish if this process of connection and interpretation makes us more or less likely to experience these events. We also need to find out if there is any connection between the phenomena and well known “mysterious” sites such as Avebury or if it is just or more likely to happen on seemingly unremarkable stretches of road.

Advanced motorists are open minded individuals who are always ready for the unexpected on the road and this is one aspect of driving that can't be ignored given the growing number of reports that are being made. The “psychology of driving” and perception have always been key issues for us and as such we are well placed to help the investigators with their research.

The following article has been kindly provided to us by the SALISBURY PLAIN ADVANCED MOTORISTS. You can read all about this group on their website at: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~steved03/>.

***Note:** Swindon has been an independent unitary authority since 1997 and as such makes it's own arrangements for highways maintenance. This item refers to activities carried out by Wiltshire County Council. Some areas of activity such as **CLARENCE** are jointly managed by Swindon Borough and Wiltshire County Councils.*

HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE IN WILTSHIRE

In my professional life I manage much of the routine maintenance of the county's road network. In a recent conversation with an Associate, it occurred to me that there were some aspects of my job which may be of interest to members of the Group. Rosie has kindly agreed to include an item in this edition. If you feel it may be worthwhile, please let her know and I will produce further items on different topics. In this item I have identified a most seasonal aspect of our role: the cutting of our extensive verges. As you read this, grass growth will be approaching its most vigorous, and you will no doubt be cursing me and my colleagues - quite convinced that you could do it so much better!

Verge cutting: how we do it, when we do it, why we do it

In Wiltshire, the rural verges are cut twice a year. The purpose of this is to keep the roads clear of overhanging grass, which may interfere with passing traffic. Cyclists and pedestrians are particularly inconvenienced by this. It is also important to clear cow parsley and other tall growth, to keep visibility clear at junctions and on bends.

This two-cut approach is in accordance with the best practice guidance from a number of bodies, including the County Surveyors Society and our own Environmental Officers. Until 1995 verges were cut 3 times each season. A dramatic reduction in Highway Maintenance funding at that time meant that the county had to reduce this service to the recommended level of 2 cuts. Officers and engineers were still keen to see how to improve this service, despite the reduction in funds.

As a result of an experiment in the Vale of Pewsey in 2000, we now cut the local and minor roads in advance of our OEA and OEB class routes. The reasons for this include:

- 1) They are generally narrower and thus more sensitive to encroachment from long grass and, particularly, cow parsley.
- 2) They have fewer fully constructed visibility areas at bends and junctions, making early growth a more significant factor in visibility Reduction.
- 3) All of the junctions with major roads are cut during this local/ minor road cut. When OEA and OEB routes are subsequently cut, these areas are cut again. This means that these fast road junctions receive 4 cuts in any season; this is intended to reflect the potential such sites have for collisions, and ensures that these areas receive the best attention.

The first cut starts during the 3rd week in May and takes 6 weeks to complete. This year the first 2 weeks of the cut will see a break in the County Lengths man programme. This will enable these 8 general maintenance gangs to hand-cut sites known to be sensitive to early growth for reasons of visibility. The addition of this resource will enable the county to respond with greater speed to CLARENCE reports of obstructed visibility at junctions.

In between these 2 Network cuts, 2 tractor mowers are employed and rotated around the county to attend to reported trouble spots. This continues throughout July and August. The 2nd cut is left as late as possible, usually October. This clears the scrub and its lateness is an asset to the various species of plant and animal life which inhabit our roadside verges. The lateness is set according to the nature of the summer weather: the drier the year, the later we can leave it.

Every 3rd year our CEA class roads receive a full extent of highway cut, to begin to address the 30 years of over-growth of visibility areas. This most recently took place in November 2003. After the 2nd cut, a programme of Drainage grip clearance is undertaken, before the onset of winter. It is useless to proceed before this, as growth makes the grips hard to locate and the grass cuttings choke them. In many areas we cut multiple swathes. It is as a result of this that each full network cut involves around 8,000 miles of cutting. This costs around £85,000 and employs 12 tractors.

What about the plants?

There are 168 protected verge sites in the county, each with specified cutting regimes. We are currently drawing up additional practices to address Sites of Special Scientific Interest. This work is well progressed and there is nothing in our present work practices which would bring any particular problems to plants or animals.

Safety - the cold facts

It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that the County Council Highway Team cannot prevent grass growth or cow parsley growth. Neither can they have it cut before it has grown. What we can do is to programme Lengths men and tractor mowers to trim this growth which occurs every year. It is therefore both reasonable and sensible for all of us to adjust our driving or riding behaviour to reflect the consequences of this natural growth.

Remember: if you see a problem on the roads, please let the County Council know. It can cost you nothing but your time to call **CLARENCE** on **0800 23 23 23**.

Graeme Hay

Senior Observer

SALISBURY PLAIN ADVANCED MOTORISTS

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~steved03/>

Thanks to Roger Stimpson and the the Bristol Advanced Motorists & Motorcyclists <http://www.iam-bristol.org.uk/> (Car Section) for the following article:

SPEED LIMIT REPEATERS - What are the Requirements?

During the recent Observers Evening I asked for clarification of the legal requirement for speed limit repeater signs. The answer was inconclusive. So I thought I would ask John Fox from South Gloucestershire Council, who has the responsibility for road signs, amongst other traffic related matters for South Gloucestershire. I posed the following question:

"My understanding is that if there are streetlights at a set distance on a road without repeater signs then the speed limit is 30 mph. If there are no street lights, as on country lanes etc, and there are no repeater signs then the speed limit is the national speed limit. If a different speed limit applies in either of these two cases then repeater signs are legally required. My question is, is there a legal requirement for the spacing of the repeater sign. If so what is the spacing and where is the requirement defined?"

John's response was as follows:

"Your understanding of the speed limit legislation is correct and yes; there are legal requirements for the spacing of speed limit repeater signs. These requirements were originally set out in the Department of the Environment Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 9, Tables A,B and C. They have more recently been up-dated in Department of Transport Advisory Leaflet 1/95. The spacing of repeater signs must be as follows:

1. Lit 30 mph road - with street lamps not more than 183 metres apart - no repeaters.

2. Unlit 30 mph limit [road more than 250 metres in length] - max distance between consecutive signs on same side of road - 400 metres. On alternate sides of the road - 250 metres. Max distance between start/end of limit and first repeater - 200 metres. These distances increase by 100 metres for 40 mph limits and again for 50 mph limits”.

It's interesting to me that as all road signs are legally required to be in imperial units that the law specifies the requirements in metric units. I hope this is of interest to members and clears any confusion.

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WHY YOU SHOULD THINK TWICE ABOUT "GO-PEDS"

Taken from, and with the permission of, the Thames Valley Police Neighbourhood Watch newsletter "Watch News".

Police are urging parents to think carefully before buying petrol-driven go-peds for their children, or allowing them to ride them in public areas. A number of complaints have been received regarding young people riding on pavements and generally acting irresponsibly; as a result, the Community Policing Team at Pangbourne has decided to issue the following guidelines to make people aware of the legislation;

1. Petrol-driven go-peds are classified as motor vehicles, meaning that if ridden on a public road, including the pavement, the rider should have a driving licence, insurance, vehicle excise licence (tax) and a crash helmet.
2. Therefore most teenagers and children can only ride them legally on private roads, or on private land. Even then, care must be taken that the land is not somewhere to which the general public has access.
3. Riders must be sober, and can be breathalysed.

Sgt Ian Henderson, of Pangbourne's Community Policing Team, said "I'm sure that the majority of people buying and riding these go-peds are simply unaware of the legislation and are not breaking the law purposefully."

"However, these rules are put in place for a reason; to safeguard both those riding them and other road users from injury. I urge parents to act responsibly, and to speak to their children to make sure they understand that they should be riding these bikes in a way that will not upset other people, and which is not breaking the law."

HIGHWAY CODE CHANGES

As I am sure you know, a new edition of the Highway Code has recently been published. So what has changed? I've been playing spot the difference and this is what I've come up with:

The first thing you notice is on the front cover where it has "revised 2004", which makes it easy to tell if you have the latest copy.

Inside there are a few rules which have changed:

- Rule 109, areas of diagonal white lines or chevrons.
- Rule 127, mobile phones.
- Rule 150, box junctions.
- Rule 154, advanced stop lines.

When you get to the traffic signs, there are changes to the wording for the warning sign for frail pedestrians and the bus lane sign.

The paragraphs on waiting restrictions and loading restrictions have changed and, on the same subject, the sign has been removed from above the double yellow lines. They now refer you to a different rule number for bus stops.

In the list of road traffic laws, the date of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions has been changed to 2002, and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 has been listed. Many references to the applicable regulations throughout the book have also been amended but there are too many to list here.

One final change which applies to several rules is that references to orange badges have now become blue badges, to reflect to the newer European standard format.

If you find anything which I have missed, please let me know.

Philip Pomeroy

IAM GROUP NIGHTS - GUEST SPEAKER REVIEWS

May 2004

The Group night on May 5th started off with Colin Reeves, consultant from Mouchel Parkman of Trowbridge who came along on the evening to promote Bike Safe - a scheme run in conjunction with Wiltshire Constabulary, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire County Council.

The scheme was started in 1999 and has seen some 500 motorcyclists take part so far. Last year it was reported that there were 9 motorcyclists killed and that for every fatality it was costing the community more than £1m in police time, ambulance services and hospital time and individual's loss of earnings

The courses are being run on various Sundays throughout the year till October 17th and there is a £10.00 booking fee, which is refundable on completion. You start off with a "classroom" chat and coffee as an introduction, and then go on to view a video, which is to enhance the importance of the use of speed and overtaking safely. The group then split into 2 or 3 smaller groups and with an advanced police-driving officer go out on the motorbikes for an assessed ride, which will last up to 2 hours.

Colin left several leaflets on motorbike safety - some of you may think these do not apply to you but when was the last time you nearly missed that biker. They are a lot smaller on the road than us car users so please be ever vigilant and help to keep the static's down - "THINK BIKE" next time you take your motor vehicle out. You can contact Colin Reeves on 07770695792 or via E-Mail at colin-reeves@wiltshire.gov.uk

After Colin gave his talk we had a ten minute break and our guest speaker for the second part of the evening was Brian Halling from HGV Training Services of Devizes. Brian brought along his wife Edith who works within the office keeping the admin side up together.

Many of you found Brian's talk on the various driving licence categories very interesting and it was good to see so many of you asking questions and getting involved.

Just by looking over the old green driving licence, the pink format and now the new 2 part photocard driving licences that are issued today one can see the changes that have been implemented over the last 25 years, the majority of us at the meeting who have cat. B and possibly D1 on our licences can drive small lorries or small lorries plus trailer and mini buses not for hire or reward, and a mixture of other vehicles, against those who passed their driving tests after 1 January 1997 would have to be tested separately to drive these types of vehicles.

Brian had various slides that he used to show the combination of vehicles that would take a normal licence holder over the legal weight limit and into HGV territory whereby further training would be required before going in for the HGV test.

For HGV driving you need to be over 21 years of age and from the age of 45 you would need to have a doctor carry out an examination and also have him complete a medical form D4 and this would only give you entitlement to drive for a period of 5 years after which HGV drivers have to reapply for their licences.

Brian talked about the new changes coming into force shortly, one of those will be digital tachograph for lorry drivers again with the emphasis on safer driving. He has left a copy of the "What you need to know about driving licences" D100 booklet with me.

Whilst talking with Brian and Edith at the end of the meeting, they talked about being members of the Devizes and District Rally Club, and attend their meetings on the 1st Tuesday of the month in the Fox and Hound Pub, Andover Road, Devizes from 8:30pm. If any of our members have any questions they would like to put to Brian at HGV Training Services or any of the above issues, I have a contact number and I am sure he would be only too please to respond.

June 2004

Unfortunately the meeting held on 2nd June was a little disappointing. We were due to have Paul a Patrol Officer from the RAC attend but unknown to the committee members Paul was rushed into hospital and we did not find out until the following day, we wish him well and understand he is now back at work.

As so many of you had joined us at the group night we did not feel that we could just cancel the evening, so we turned to the observer team members to take to the floor for a question and answer session. This I feel worked well for the newer members of which there was a gentleman by the name of David Douch who for many years had worked for the Renault group. David did actually stand up and introduced himself and has since agreed to give a talk at our AGM on Insurance ratings. I have also put together a quiz paper should we be let down at any other meetings, of which Mark our Chairman has a copy of the questions and more importantly the answers, just in case I also don't turn up.

July 2004

Having had several phone calls with Mary Standley, Conference and Community Relations Manager for the RAC, she turned up trumps and arranged for Mark Osland a RAC patrol officer from Devizes to come and give us a talk on the History of the RAC from 1897 to the current day and how the vehicles have changed during that period - from bicycle to Ford Transit vans equipped with Global Positioning Systems.

Mark has been with the RAC for the last 10 years and had 4 years workshop experience before joining them.

Within the UK there are 3 main call centres Glasgow, Stratford and Bescot in the Midlands on a busy day they have taken 12,000 calls. They currently have approximately 1400 patrol officers and aim to reach a breakdown call within 45 minutes. With 80% of breakdowns repaired at the side of the road. All faults are fed back into the computer log with "Fault Codes" and this information is then passed back to the manufacturers to highlight common faults. Most lease companies have a tie in with one of the main breakdown companies and packages offered by RAC to Ford, Jaguar, Toyota and many other major manufactures help keep membership numbers up.

On the night the elements were against us with strong winds and raining hard Mark was hoping to show us a full test on one of our vehicles of the new laptop computerised diagnostic testing equipment known as "RACscan" and the recovery trolley which a must when recovering a front wheel drive vehicle.

With thanks to the Blunsdon House Hotel, Mark was able to park his vehicle under the front entrance canopy and after the meeting closed people then had the opportunity to take a closer look and ask further questions.

SUMMER CAR RALLY

This year's car rally/treasure hunt took place on Wednesday 16th June, where the starting point was the County Ground car park.

We would like to thank Chris, Phil, Derek, Dave and Ian and their teammates who took part in collecting the correct answers to the clues on-route. Although this year we had a tie, with Ian and Chris both scoring 36 out of 37. Prizes were duly awarded at the Club night.

The final destination point was the Sally Pussey Inn, which unfortunately having just undergone a refurbishment/extension was probably understaffed for the number of people they were trying to serve.

I'm sure everyone found the evening as a whole most enjoyable and I know those who took part much appreciated the hard work of Alistair and myself in setting out the route and questions.

I would also like to thank Alistair for the teamwork throughout the year helping on the Events Team organising guest speakers and outside events - he will shortly be moving to London therefore leaving a gap on the committee in September. If anyone out there feels they would like to join the team or has good ideas on who to approach as guest speakers please speak with either Mark or Derek.

Thanks to **Debbie Herbert** for the reviews.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

28th/29th August 2004

RAF Brize Norton Charity Motorcycle Event

Start time **08:00** - events happening over the weekend period are Mini-Moto's, BBQ, Bouncy Castle, "Motorcycle News" Stand, Various Stalls, Quarter Of a Mile Run (Timed), Stunt Show, Lightning Motorcycle Training (Beginner to Advanced Training), Lightnings Rolling Road, and Thames Valley Police.

See: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafbrizenorton/events.html>

1st September 2004 - Annual General Meeting

followed by Guest Speaker - **David Douch** on Insurance Ratings at **Blunson House Hotel** starting **19:30**.

12th September 2004- Thamesdown Transport 100th Anniversary

Bus rally celebrating 100 years of passenger transport in Swindon. **Science Museum, Wroughton**

See: <http://www.skylineaviation.co.uk/buses/events.html>

6th October 2004

Presentation by Wiltshire Air Ambulance Paramedic followed by a **Q&A Session** at **Blunson House Hotel** starting **19:30**.

REMEMBER - FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS ABOUT YOUR GROUP

**Swindon & District
Group of Advanced Motorists**

Welcome to Our Website

The Swindon & District Group of Advanced Motorists offers guidance to those who want to improve their driving skills. We cater for everyone on four wheels. Most members take and pass the Advanced Driving Test and become full members of the Institute of Advanced Motorists. We also have a wide ranging social programme open to full members and associates, including a regular monthly meeting at the Blunson House Hotel - click [here](#) for details and directions.

Use the Navigation Buttons to find out more.

We hope that you find our site useful and invite you to contact us - click [here](#) for details.

NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Our next meeting is on **Wednesday 1 0th November (not the 5th)**.
Click [here](#) for details.

The next edition of the **Searchlight** will be available at the meeting.

Articles for publication welcome - click [here](#) to email.

2003

Last Updated: 08/10/2003

Swindon & District Group of Advanced Motorists
Registered Charity No. 1050397

<http://www.swindondrivers.com>