

**SWINDON & DISTRICT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS**  
**www.swindondrivers.com**  
**07050 682842**  
**Newsletter**  
**Autumn 2006/Winter 2007**

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**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributor and are not necessarily 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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**Committee Member : David Douch** (daviddouch@yahoo.co.uk)

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**Non Committee Member : Tony Hand**

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**IAM Website : <http://www.iam.org.uk/>**

## **CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS**

Well it's been another busy few months. Thanks to all who came to the AGM and voted in the new committee. We are still a bit short on committee members, so I am still looking for volunteers - so do come to the Group meetings and give me a chance to get to know you and persuade you to help us on the committee!

At the AGM Paul Weston was elected to join the committee secretary "elect" - there is the small matter of making the transition from Associate to Member. So Paul is getting into the swing of the role, as well as working hard on his driving. Good luck Paul - I look forward to hearing that you have been recommended for a pass.

Talking of passes - I was delighted to congratulate Simon Western on his pass at the last Group meeting, and to note that we have two more recommendations - just waiting for certificates now. It makes me feel really positive to see the passes clocking up. As usual the Observers are doing their bit to help, however don't forget it's the Associates that are really doing the hard bit - changing the way they drive for the better.

I went to the IAM National Conference - you will see my report, and Albert's, elsewhere in the Newsletter. Les couldn't make it so Albert Webb joined me for the day. We drove up to Alton Towers - a lovely early morning start - clear weather and roads. Albert and I spent the journey talking about IAM things, and making the usual observation on the driving skills of those around us. The roads were pretty clear so only minor faults were on display for a change. At lunch, by chance, we sat down with two delightful ladies, Lorraine Brown and Beryl Scholfield, from the West Pennine Group. You will remember that David Gray has recently joined us from West Pennine Group. So we had a bit of a chat about that, and in the bygoing were interrupted by Nigel Mansell (IAM President) as he came round to meet everyone.

**Graham Mearns**

## **TEST PASSES**

Congratulations to :

Diana Payne

Simon Western

Matthew Haskins

Jonathan Paisley

Christopher Male

---

## **NEW ASSOCIATES**

Welcome to :

Keith Scattergood

Dave Scattergood

Amanda Cox

Christopher Lawrence

Patricia Snow

Kevin Smith

Mohammad Jallal-ud-Deen Ruhomaun

Simon Sheppard

David Love

John Williams

Alun Taysome

## National Conference, 7<sup>th</sup> October. Graham Mearns

This was my first visit to the IAM National Conference and I was pleased to have Albert Webb volunteer to come along with me. As I mentioned earlier we got a good early start from Swindon on a clear sunny morning. It was a real pleasure to have the early part of Saturday on clear dry roads. The conference was held at Alton Towers Conference centre, half way between Stoke on Trent and Derby. This seemed a somewhat surreal setting with the theme park next door, but a nice central location for many of the delegates. It also gave me an idea of what to do with my children for a day during half term days at the end of the month (and no I didn't take them to a conference...)

There must have been about 400 delegates there, so a pretty big gathering, a few more than we are used to at our monthly Group meetings! There are of course hundreds of people there - and very few people know anybody else - so if you feel brave you can strike up a conversation with anybody. Anyway we settled down at about 10:00, with Peterborough Group next to me. Of course I used to live in Peterborough, so we had an in depth chat about our respective groups.

The introduction started by painting a picture of Great Britain 50 years ago when the IAM was formed. In 1956 we had the Suez crisis, petrol rationing and the suspension of the L Test to save fuel. Other social highlights were Teddy Boys, the end of Third Class rail travel, and the introduction of traffic wardens. The Ford Popular was the car to have, average house prices were £2,280, a pint of milk 1 1/2d (0.6p) and beer 1s 8d per pint. Small amounts by today's standards, but I'm sure that take home pay was on a similar scale... It was in this environment that the IAM was born with a road safety vision "Saving lives by enabling people to drive better"

Moving forward half a century the Department for Transport reports that "5 of the 6 most frequently reported contributory factors were some kind of driver or rider error". I'm not sure I would have needed the survey - on the basis that vehicles rarely move by themselves! Anyway - I digress - it is our responsibility as IAM members to nurture and protect the vision, to understand today's needs and to evolve to meet those needs.

In 2006 IAM membership stands at 115,000 - the highest ever. Membership renewal rate is 96%, which is good. However the IAM have an ambition to be bigger, better and more effective. None of us would disagree with that - the tricky bit is agreeing how to do it! The IAM have undertaken a serious review of long term direction, with various external and internal consultations with market research on: -

- Awareness and appeal of the IAM
- Perceptions of our road safety work
- Motivations and needs
- Reasons why they would join - or not

The aim to be bigger was summed up by saying that the IAM want to:

-

- Double IAM activity
- Directly influence 10% of road users
- Have major influence on road safety policy and practice

IAM are embarking on a publicity campaign to work on public perceptions. Full page advertisements will be appearing in many popular magazines, including Top Gear (I hope Jeremy Clarkson reads it...).

IAM also want to progress the idea of “Drive Check”. So far this has attracted 37 MP’s, 11 of whom have gone on to join a local group to train for their test. I know that in Swindon Group we have wondered about Drive Check, and felt that we might struggle to provide sufficient resources. Having heard how it could be used I think we could do something with it. We might try and tempt our local MP’s to give it a go, on the basis you cannot “fail” a drive check (and what MP would like a newspaper headline saying that they have failed at anything).

There was great emphasis on desire, and need, to maintain standards. Full membership of the IAM is only available to those who have passed the test. Maintaining standards has two elements - the entry level, i.e. passing your test and being recommended for membership, the second point is the small matter of maintaining your standards. As a Group we are here to support each other, so as a member of Swindon Group you can ask for a re-evaluation of your driving at any time.

We don't make any charge - as a colleague of mine once famously said "you don't have to be ill to get better".

The closing quote from the IAM 50th Anniversary National Conference 2006.

"Our singular objective is road safety, saving lives by enabling people to drive and ride better. Fewer deaths and injuries our sole reward"

**Graham Mearns**

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## **National Conference, 7<sup>th</sup> October. Albert Webb**

I attended this year's annual conference in place of Les Brown who was unable to go, albeit I wore his badge because there was no time to change the delegate names.

The badges were colour coded, to tell us which restaurant to go to for lunch, and numbered so that Graham and I would be sent to different afternoon "workshops". I had "number 2" so was allocated the "Young Driver Network" workshop. This session was conducted by the IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger assisted by Ben Devlin, a young member and observer from Scotland.

Peter Rodger introduced the session and asked for anyone whose groups ran a young persons course to put their hand up. Starting from one end of the hall a roving microphone was taken to each in turn and they told us what they did in their area to try and reach young people. Not knowing shorthand I was unable to take down the words of fourteen people, so I will summarise the salient points raised.

Most groups had approached, or been approached by, young people and arranged observed runs for the majority but found that when the initial interest receded the drop out rate was considerable. Various "carrots" were tried, i.e. assistance with the fees or refunding fees after passing the IAM test, perhaps after six months, but the number of observers coming from this group was almost non-existent.

Biker groups seemed to be more successful than car groups being more socially minded and where two and four wheel groups combined it seemed to be the two wheelers who were more involved and drew observers.

Ben Devlin stepped in to speak of meeting in pubs with groups of, say, ten to fifteen who were happy and laughing which drew enquiries from others to the extent that at one hotel where they met the entire staff have become interested and some have now become involved. Emphasis has to be on better driving/riding and increased enjoyment rather than road safety.

Various groups had approached their committee (Portsmouth & Havant), the Lottery and other local sponsors to fund under 25's to their IAM tests. Greater publicity is required in local papers, radio, TV, etc. by getting MP's, Councillors etc. involved. It was pointed out that local car sales establishments were not particularly interested in sponsorship.

Contact with other local motoring groups had proved fairly successful as some of them did not know of the IAM.

In winding up the afternoon Peter Rodger emphasised the difficulty in turning young members into observers and stated that in these changing times Email was "cool" where telephone and letters were considered "old hat".

Attempts to get insurance firms interested are proving pointless since our membership percentage (0.03%) of all licence holders is insignificant so far as they are concerned, with their interest being financial rather than road safety based.

## **Albert Webb**

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### **How to Become an Observer / How to Advance your Qualification**

If you want to be an observer you will need to reread "Pass Your Advanced Driving Test" and your "Highway Code", you should also read "Roadcraft" and the DSA's "Driving Manual"!

Your driving skills must be up to test standard (you will need to do demonstration drives)

We will assist you with how to observe, what to look for and how to rectify faults.

Remember that your group needs both existing and new observers to continue the rewarding and fun activity of observing.

**Les Brown**  
Chief Observer

## **DON'T RISK YOUR NECK WHEN DRIVING!**

Recent research published by road safety charity, Brake, suggests that nine out of ten drivers and passengers are putting their necks - and lives - at risk.

More than half of the 2,000+ adults questioned said they NEVER adjust their head restraint and almost two-thirds didn't have a clue how high to set it for safety.

A spokesperson for Brake said: 'These findings are particularly important to us as a charity, and if drivers can spare just a few seconds to adjust a head restraint before setting off it can help to prevent whiplash, permanent spinal damage and even death in the event of a crash.'

Key findings from the survey include:

- 90% of drivers and passengers risk their necks by not adjusting their head restraint every time they get in a vehicle.
- More than half (52%) of drivers and passengers say they never adjust their head restraint.
- 65% of drivers and passengers said they did not know the top of their head restraint should be level with the top of their head.
- 59% did not know their head restraint should be set two inches or less from the back of their head.
- 77% of drivers admitted never making sure their passengers adjust their head restraints correctly.
- Men answered the head restraint survey questions more accurately than women.
- Older drivers showed a better understanding of how head restraints should be set - younger drivers and passengers were less likely to use them correctly.

Whiplash is responsible for causing injuries to more than 200,000 people a year in the UK, with 2,000 suffering a permanent disability. Whiplash can cause neck pain, back pain, restricted movement, headaches and nausea. It can also cause the neck to fracture or break which can result in death.

The spokesperson continued: 'One of the most common accidents reported to us is rear end shunts and these are a major cause of whiplash injuries. We are calling on all drivers and passengers to adjust their head restraint to the correct height before starting their journey'.

Tips for adjusting your head restraint:

- Make it habit to always check your headrest before starting a journey.
- The top of the headrest should be level with the top of your head.
- The headrest should be set as close possible to the back of your head, ideally touching, but no more than two inches (5cm) away.

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A recent survey of 2000 UK drivers carried out by Privilege Insurance found that using a satellite navigation system caused 19% of them to lose concentration.

1 in 10 drivers admitted to using the controls on their satellite navigation system while they were driving their car instead of programming their route before starting their journey. Over half of those admitted that this meant taking their eyes off the road and might have led to an accident.

1 in 8 did not check an unfamiliar route in advance, relying on the technology alone to find their way.

1 in 4 read maps whilst driving. The survey also revealed that drivers who used either satellite navigation or a paper map when driving took their eyes off the road for an average of 10 seconds, which at an average speed of 60 mph, means they had travelled the equivalent distance of the length of a football field in that period of time.

## **WINTER DRIVING 2007**

The end of British Summer Time on 29th October heralded the beginning of the most dangerous time of year on our roads. Last November saw road accidents involving approximately 3,000 pedestrians of whom more than 1,000 were children. Added to this, recent news stories warning of changing weather patterns due to global warming mean we are facing some of the most uncertain weather patterns on record.

There is no doubt that bad weather and longer nights pose a danger - with about fifty percent of all reported road traffic accidents at night occurring in wet conditions; even though in the UK it is wet on average only 10% of the nights.

Between 3-6pm is also a dangerous time - when people are travelling home after a busy day at work and children are making their way home from school. During the summer up to a quarter of all accidents happen during these hours, but when the clocks go back, heavy traffic and rapidly deteriorating light increases this statistic to a third.

Now is therefore a good time to focus on staying safe on the road this winter - whether you are driving on work business or in your own time.

### **Before you drive**

Driving in winter weather - falling leaves, snow, ice, wet and cold - creates a great challenge for vehicles and drivers. Keeping yourself and your vehicle in good technical repair reduces your overall chances of any mishap or disaster while driving in winter weather.

To prepare your vehicle for winter driving give it a complete check-up - electrical system (battery, ignition and lights); brakes; tyres; exhaust; wipers; fluids, radiator/antifreeze and heating/cooling system. Keep your fuel tank near to full to ensure that you do not run out.

It is particularly important to check your tyres are in good order, and have plenty of tread depth. Recent research has show that effective well maintained tyres can have a major effect on stopping distances on wet and slippery roads. Weekly checks, or when refuelling, are recommended.

In really extreme weather, prepare an emergency kit for your car. Include things that cater for the unexpected - what would you need if you found yourself stranded miles from help during a snow storm? Include things like warm clothing, boots, gloves or mittens, flashlight with fresh batteries, blankets, and fresh first-aid supplies.

During bad weather if possible let people know where you are going, your route of travel, and when you expect to arrive. Plan your driving and likely arrival time in advance. Never drive if fatigued or under the influence of alcohol. Allow for extra travelling time or even consider delaying a trip if the weather is inclement. Is an alternative method of travel possible? Listen to weather forecasts, and if weather and visibility are hazardous, ask yourself 'is this trip really necessary?'

## **On the road**

Drive according to current road and weather conditions. Whenever driving conditions are less than ideal, it pays to be cautious. Make sure that all windows (front, side and rear) and mirrors are clear and that wipers and defrosters are in good working condition.

Drive slowly with low beam headlights on if visibility is poor, test your brakes frequently, leave a bigger gap and never tailgate. Posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions. Driving at reduced speeds, in a lower gear and at a safe distance from the vehicle in front are the best precautionary measures against any misfortune while driving on slippery roads. Lengthen your following distance behind the vehicle ahead of you - stopping distances double on slippery roads.

## **If the worst happens**

If you get stranded, don't panic. Keep yourself safe, and contact the appropriate support organisation, such as the AA or RAC and follow their guidance.

## **Safe driving this winter**

Remember to make sure you and your vehicle are in top condition; plan your journeys and adapt your driving style to allow for the road and weather conditions.

More detailed advice on winter driving is available on the Department for Transport's Think website ([www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk)) and from Brake the road safety charity ([www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk)).

# **Les Brown's Extra Winter Driving Tips**

## **Driving on Ice**

Always reduce your speed smoothly and in plenty of time. Avoid harsh braking and acceleration, or coarse steering. Slow down in plenty of time for bends and corners. To brake on ice and snow without locking your wheels, get into a low gear earlier than normal, allow your speed to fall and use your brakes gently.

Black ice, caused when rain freezes on the road surface, will make your steering light. Respond by easing off the accelerator and being delicate with your steering movements.

In icy conditions you may need to allow up to TEN TIMES the normal braking distance.

## **Winter and Spring Sun**

Winter and spring sunlight can present drivers with an unexpected hazard. The angle of the sun in the sky will frequently be too low for your visor to be able to help. If you are blinded by glare, reduce your speed.

Reduce the effect of glare by keeping both the inside and outside of your windscreen clean and grease free.

Dark glasses (or prescription glasses if you are short-sighted) are suitable for combating glare, but should be removed whenever the sun goes in. They should not be worn in duller weather or at night as they seriously reduce the ability to see.

## **On the Road in Snow and Ice**

Hail, heavy snow and rain all reduce visibility - use dipped headlights. Only travel at a speed which you will be able to stop within the distance you can see to be clear.

Driving in windy conditions is stressful and tiring. DSA recommends a stop every two hours, for fresh air and hot drinks - but no alcohol. This is just a general guide - the important thing is that you stop before fatigue steps in, irrespective of how far you have travelled or how long you have been on the road.

Keep your vehicle well ventilated. The car heater full on can quickly make you drowsy.

## GROUP NIGHT - 4<sup>th</sup> October 2006

Our thanks go to Margaret Tester, Road Safety Manager from Swindon Borough Council and Colin Reeves, Road Safety Consultant with Mouchel Parkman.

Some mind boggling fact about “The White Van Man”

In 2004 the numbers were at 3053,000 an increase of 258,000 from the previous year.

Most of the vans are used by Home Delivery Companies and it is estimated that £28 billion worth of goods were moved around the country and in 2005 this increase to approximately £42 billion

There are around 290,000 dedicated van drivers on the road today and the majority of these are young males.

Peak times of the day for the van driver to be on the roads are between 8-9am and 4-5pm just when all the School mums are on the road.

It has been shown that the number of accidents involving vans has dropped in the last 10 years and is down by 43%.

The average age of a van driver involved in an accident is around the mid to late 20's - this can be surprising as it is not very “cool” image for a young man to be driving around in a white van and also most of the larger companies do insist that their drivers are over 25 years of age for insurance purposes.

Colin asked for comments, as Advanced Motorist, how group members felt about the firm they worked for and how they operated any company vehicle policy. There were a few comments from the floor.

Many drivers reported that after being interviewed only a quick check of their driving licence was made and no further training was given. They had not heard of a “Safety Policy”. Some were asked to drive long distances, which would be alright if they are allowed time for rest periods but a lot are driving to tight schedules. Not everyone has time to check the vehicle over, some are working with heavy loads, and all these factors can all contribute to a driver being involved in an accident.

Having a company vehicle that has no dedicated driver or a “pool” vehicle, leaves the vehicle open to abuse as tyres can get kerbed or run under inflated. There can also be problems with service and maintenance of the vehicle, not being completed and even putting the wrong fuel in the vehicle has happened.

Today many of the larger companies are working within the guidelines of Health & Safety and will carry out Risk Assessments but not all do so. It is worth remembering who is responsible when behind the wheel of any vehicle. Think about Road Safety.

Margaret Tester, talked about the 3 main factors that are helping with Road Safety.

- Safer Drivers - Education and Training
- Safer Cars - Ncap, Crash testing and Manufacturer Design
- Safer Roads - EuroRAP, (European Road Assessment Programme)

EuroRAP focuses on road junctions and where roads are dangerous.

**Safer Drivers** - Swindon Borough Council were lucky to receive a grant in 2002 to help subsidised 50% of the fee of Pass Plus for young drivers. The number of young drivers to take up Pass Plus in 2003 - 2004 was 1300. SBC sent out a questionnaire to those that joined up and have received positive feed-back from those that passed. Margaret’s team have this year put in for another grant and if this is approved they will be able to continue to support and promote the Pass Plus. The current fee for Pass Plus, which is also approved by the DSA is £125.00.

Another scheme, aimed at school students in the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> form, which is supported by the Fire Service and Ambulance Service is the screening at Cinemas of an advertisement called “Safe Drive - Stay Alive”. This is fairly hard hitting and very graphic, its aim is to make children sit up and take notice, feel responsible for their actions and change the attitude of young “joy-riders”.

I know Margaret is very much into Road Safety and starts with young children at Schools in our area. If you are a parent or grandparent, please visit [www.hedgehogs.gov.uk](http://www.hedgehogs.gov.uk). This is an excellent web page and great fun for young children.

**Safer Cars** - David Douch, one of our Committee members and Group members has previously talked about car design and the goals manufacturers are continuing to strive to achieve through the Ncap safety ratings. We will ask David to give an update early in 2007.

**Safer Roads** - Swindon Borough Council are working hard to reduce the number of deaths and seriously injured on our roads. The target nationally is to reduce the number by approximately 50 deaths and 300 seriously injured persons in a year. If they can achieve this it would reduce costs to the National Health Service by £10 million.

Motorways are five times safer than the average single-carriageway road and twice as safe as a dual carriageways. It has been found that on single carriageways most accidents occur as a result of : - a head-on collision, collision at a junction or as a result of a collision with a roadside object or person.

If you visit the web page [www.eurorap.org.uk](http://www.eurorap.org.uk) you will find that this has some good points of interest. The Swedish Road Administration, Vagverket, have put together a very graphic video showing the “Effects of Impact with Roadside Objects”.

EuroRAP have colour coded many roads with the most dangerous identified in black. If you look on the web page the map indicates that the most dangerous roads are “up north”, Macclesfield & Stoke on Trent (A54-A537). Some of the other areas are the A682, the A54 Congleton to Buxton, and the A61 Barnsley to Wakefield. Medium to high-risk areas are shown in Red, on the map, our nearest is located around the Worcester area.

The Government has asked all local authorities to review their speed limits in 2007.

Margaret advised that of 22 sites around Swindon, that have Road Safety Cameras, most of the roads have shown a reduction in the numbers of accidents.

Margaret asked if there were any questions on road safety issues.

One of our Group members asked Colin and Margaret what they knew about the “Safe Areas” on the M42. Certain sections of the M42 motorist are now allowed to drive down the hard shoulder. There is a 2 year trial going on to see if this can reduce the number of accidents and also by giving an extra lane to drive in keep vehicles moving and prevent hold ups. They have installed “Safe Areas” along side the hard shoulder at set intervals, which allows for up to 3 vehicles to enter the area in an emergency situation. The Highways Agency has also installed overhead gantrys at 500 metre intervals with illuminated signs advising when it is safe for drivers to use the hard shoulder, and any other changes to road conditions ahead. At this early stage most driver are compliant with the driving conditions and the systems does seem to be working well.

This was an excellent evening and we would look forward to welcoming Margaret and Colin back in the New Year.

**Debbie Herbert**

## EVENTS

Expressions of interest are invited for a possible visit to the Melksham factory of Cooper Tire and Rubber Co (Europe) Ltd, who have now acquired the Avon Tyres brand. The visit would take place on a weekday morning, probably in April 2007 and lasting for around two hours.

Avon was, and still is, a household name in rubber products. The firm's brand name could at one time be found everywhere from the soles of National Servicemen's boots to the tyres fitted as standard on Rolls Royce and Bentley motor cars.

Today, Avon is still based at Melksham, but now it is owned by one of the world's largest tyre manufacturers, Cooper Tire. The Melksham facility not only produces high performance car tyres, but also conducts research and development into new car, motorcycle and race tyres. It also has its own rubber manufacturing and processing division supplying other tyre and rubber companies throughout Europe.

Cooper Tire recognised the heritage of Avon and retained the brand name, which is synonymous with the luxury car market and a front runner in the motorsport sector.

In the UK the company continues to develop and market high performance tyres with the latest quality control technology. Quality is a key selling point with Avon and its high standard often requires tyres some other companies would pass as fit, being sent to the recycling plant.

The parent company, Cooper Tire & Rubber Company, has more than 20,000 employees and 51 manufacturing facilities in 13 countries.

If you are interested participating in this visit could you please let **Debbie Herbert** know.

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## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

**7th February 2007**

Group Night at the **Blunsdon House Hotel, 7:30pm**