

SWINDON & DISTRICT GROUP OF ADVANCED MOTORISTS

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Newsletter

February 2005

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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 February edition of your Newsletter.

As I write winter has yet to bite, with articles in broadsheets explaining that this is to do with more prevalent westerly airflows over the UK, displacing the (colder) easterly and northerly airflows that delivered 1963 and 1986. This follows the prediction of a particularly harsh 2004/2005 winter last November, so who are we to believe!

As Advanced Motorists and members of the IAM we are naturally supportive of the Government's measures laid down in its paper "Tomorrow's Roads - Safer for Everyone" the objective of which are, amongst others, to reduce KSI figures by 40% generally, and by 50% in the case of children. Those who have travelled the M4 over the last few months between Junctions 15 and 17, as I do every day, will have noticed the road works which are part of the Highways Agency's latest phase of improving the communications infrastructure. You may have noticed, the currently obscured, speed camera signs placed in pairs immediately prior to road bridges over the M4. Wiltshire & Swindon Road Safety Camera Partnership advise that they will be enforcing the national speed limit in the New Year, and will be making this initiative public through their web site and local media. Considering the fatalities on this stretch of the M4 this action is to be applauded. Saira Khan, David Frampton and Sgt Nick Blencowe of the W&SRSP gave a presentation at a Group Night back in late 2003 and have agreed to come back in 2005, this time including a demonstration of their enforcement equipment.

Group Night and External events for 2005 are advanced in their preparation, thanks to the Events Team. Immediate Group Night themes are St John's Ambulance, British Horse Society (we will keep you guessing on the link to Advanced Motoring), and PunctureSeal. External events in planning are another visit to Thatcham (a very popular event); Wiltshire Air Ambulance in Devizes, the annual car rally (June) and annual BBQ (July).

In life nothing is free, all these activities require investigation and arranging, your Events Team, Pete Thomson, Debbie Herbert and Ian Marshall deserve the credit, I thank them on the Group's behalf.

You may recall from the November Newsletter that this is my third term of office as Chairman, and in line with IAM guidance I will be standing down and not offering myself for re election to Committee in September. It may seem a long time off but time will fly! Over the last few years we have managed to recruit new faces onto Committee, new brooms, some strokes more popular than others, but still as a Group we develop and grow. There are those of you now reading this that know you can make a contribution to our Group to take it to the next level. I urge you to make that leap of faith to come forward and put something back into the Group. As someone famous once said "From each according to his ability.", the only difference is our revolution is for the continued advancement of road safety.

Safe motoring.

Mark Simpson

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FROM YOUR CHIEF OBSERVER

Well, the 'Swindon & District Group of Advanced Motorists' AGM has now taken place and we look forward to offering the 'new' committee our continuing support! Or do we!!!

Unfortunately this article was scheduled to be included within the last Newsletter but was 'Lost in Transit'.

We have some 'new' faces on the Committee and those people must be offered our appreciation and support in all they do. When they follow on from people like Kirsty Newland and Derek Sheldrake, (both previous Secretary's), they know they have a hard act to follow.

When I think back to over 30 years ago, when the 'Swindon' group was formed, I tell myself that, without those dedicated few people having a valuable foresight, there would be many others that would not have experienced the benefits to Road Safety as we in the Swindon group possess and share today. We must thank people like Ken Turner, (who still comes along but is now in 'Senior' years). Ken was one of the founder members of the group but over the years we have had people like Cynthia Howard, Nigel Cox, and Albert Webb, (all Observers for the group), also others that I have possibly forgotten, all giving their support in one way or another.

One person who has given valuable support over many years is Alan Stillman, our Group President. Alan has been with the group for many years and has contributed to the group in many ways and in many 'Roles'. He has been a stalwart for us all!

Alan gave his thoughts at the AGM, "Where are all of these members that we have, a membership of over 100 and yet we do not have them here".

In fairness, we did have a reasonable number attend the AGM but those were the dedicated few, so to speak! Our 'Staff Examiner', Andy Poulton did mention that the attendance on a 'percentage' basis, compared with other groups, was encouraging.

I am aware of Alan's thoughts and I share his sentiments. We are a Group called the 'Swindon & District Group of Advanced Motorists',

we are part of the Institute of Advanced Motorists and what it stands for, 'Skill with Responsibility'!

Our 'Responsibility' started with joining the group, we then drew on the resources of the group and its Observers to enable us to become 'Advanced Motorists'. We then decided to further our skills and also to assist others. We became Observers and many others have been encouraged to do the same and this is of course the main function of the group.

We support the group meetings on a regular basis and I must say that we do see many 'Regular' faces, especially the Committee members, always doing their 'bit'. Sadly though, there are many who never come along to the group meetings but they have a desire to draw on the resources of the group by way of the Observed Drives and the Associate Training Courses, this enables them to reach the standard required to pass the IAM Test.

All of this is offered and carried out by volunteers giving up their 'free' time.

What are the reasons for people wanting to join the group? I will be controversial, but some of these people will never give anything back to the group or represent the IAM in the manner that I feel they should. Our Regional co-ordinator, Helen Schofield has often attended various meetings and has asked members to consider, "putting something back"! Helen was an 'Associate' once and has since supported the cause to the highest degree.

We have a great and worthy cause to support and I do not single out Associates. There are many of our longer serving members that do not attend as regularly as I consider that they could.

The Committee and the Group need the support of all of you. The 'Events' Team organise things for you. The 'Treasure Hunt' was attended by 5 Car entries! The 'BBQ' was sparsely attended, about 13 people, including 3 children and mostly Committee members. Others have dropped out because the Group doesn't do what they would like. Make your suggestions but please do not expect others to do it all! If you have an idea, then offer your help in organising it.

Don't castigate the Committee if they can't see their way clear to formulate your idea straight away.

In the interests of the Swindon Group let's all give a lot more support this year.

As a member for some time I am pleased to say that I have only missed a couple of meetings in 10 years. In my role as 'Chief Observer', I have carried out numerous 'Pre-Tests' etc, and it grieves me to say that some of the Associates have never been to any more than one Group meeting.

I suppose that 'Getting on my High Horse' so to speak will not please many and I suppose that I have been rather 'over enthusiastic' in my support of others and other Organisations etc, which makes me feel that others should probably do more. I do know that for many reasons some people cannot attend as required but why join the Group if you cannot support it? Why do they not just take the IAM Test on their own initiative?

My final utterance though is to add that I ask my Associates not to waste my time with lack of commitment, be dedicated, attend the drives on a regular basis, be enthusiastic and enjoy it.

Lots of you may think me a bit of an 'Ogre' and perhaps too 'outspoken' at times but I want you all to have that 'Skill for Life' which should serve you well for years to come. I know my Associates do enjoy their drives and their appreciation is apparent.

Their dedication and ensuing results are commendable. My observing role is also used within other Organisations and although I 'Stood Down' from the role of 'Chief Observer' for the Swindon Group at the AGM, I find that no one has taken over from me. The result of that is :- I carry on doing what I can, knowing that I have the support of the Committee and the Observers! What more can I ask!

We need to be at the 'Hub' of Advanced Driving & Road Safety with the Group activities revolving around that basis and perhaps some more involvement with 'in house' discussions on the subject at some Group nights.

I ask all of you to consider your support, and please further the cause by submitting your suggestions. It's what people like Ken Turner and the others who formulated 'Our Group' deserve!!!

BRIDGES

When I myself am taking any Associates out on Observed Drives I always point out to them the various objectives of 'Observation' and 'Observation Links'. One of the items that I cover is the crossing over or under Motorway Bridges, or in fact any bridges that we cross or drive under!

I ask my Associate to consider looking for anything untoward going on within the vicinity. As you pass over the bridge, ask yourself, "Is there anyone around who seems likely to cause any problems for people travelling underneath?"

If you are travelling towards a bridge that goes over your intended route then take a look upwards as you approach and again ask yourself, "Is there anyone above who seems likely to cause you or other drivers and passengers any problems".

If you see anything that you think gives you sufficient cause for concern, then report it as soon as possible.

Recent publicity has reported :- *'Lady jumps off of Motorway Bridge'*.
'Driver escapes with his life after brick is thrown from bridge'.

'Passenger escapes with cuts after stone is hurled onto Dual Carriageway causing damage to car and broken glass to shower Occupants'.

It proves to us that there are people out there intent on causing us harm. It could be anyone, any age, any sex, any brain!! We do have enough to cope with when looking forward and also considering what is happening behind in case it could affect us. We now have to look 'UP' as well! Please consider 'Upping' your vision, it could save your life!!!

Yours in the Spirit of Safe Driving
Chris Gleed

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to all new members and congratulations to all those who have passed their test recently.

A full list will appear in the next edition of the newsletter.

BT people and their families are being offered the chance to take part in a driver safety programme to enhance their skills as part of an overall company strategy on road risk management.

NEW - Discount for BT People and their Families

From “BT Benefits Plus”

BT people and their families are being offered the chance to take part in a driver safety programme to enhance their skills as part of an overall company strategy on road risk management.

The Institute of Advanced Motorists’ “skill for life” programme - which includes the advancing driving test - is available at the reduced rate of £75 (normally £85).

For more information, call (020) 8996 9600 and quote “BT 05” to receive the reduced charge of £75.

HYDROGEN - An Immaculate Power?

Let me take you on a journey into the future. A future that is clean and free from the pollution of power production that arises from the combustion of fossil fuels. A power that is as quiet as the electrical flow itself, and that whose production requires no moving parts - that which requires no combustion at all - in fact, that which converts chemically from its physical form into energy and then neatly back into its physical form again.

All that is required is hydrogen, and hydrogen is all around us!

The future is very near and in some areas it is already happening! Already environmental, financial and security threats are bearing down harder and harder upon local government, governments, businesses, huge corporations and world leaders alike, and solutions to world energy demands are being investigated and challenged.

There are a number of alternative energy sources that come in many forms as described below.

Alternative Energy

- Wind power - wind turbines convert kinetic energy in wind into mechanical power that turns a generator that in turn produces electricity. This is an excellent resource where one has vast expanses of open land exposed to the elements, New Zealand, for example, but unfortunately not very productive in sheltered areas or when the wind stops blowing!
- Solar power - solar technologies use the sun's energy to provide heat, light, hot water, electricity, and even cooling, for homes, businesses, and industry. Again an essentially free and inexhaustible supply in areas where one has the luxury of unbroken sunshine during the day, for example California, but again not exceptionally productive in a country that suffers at the hands of a seemingly resentful weather system!

- Hydropower - conversely, great where much rain is experienced, Wales for example, in an area that is high above sea level, has large valley basins that can be dammed, and an equally large population of homeless sheep!
- Geothermal power - utilises the earth's own central heating system to produce power for the land dwelling population. Currently supported in two forms, that located at steam geysers e.g.. Northern California, or more commonly what are called binary plants where hot water from deep below the earth's surface is pumped through heat exchangers to produce electrical power.
- Biomass energy - power generation that utilises plant matter such as trees, grasses, agricultural crops or other biological material. It can be used as a solid fuel, or converted into liquid or gaseous forms, for the production of electric power, heat, chemicals, or fuels. By integrating a variety of biomass conversion processes, all of these products can be made in one facility, called a biorefinery.
- Fuel Cells - the most prolific being the Hydrogen (Proton Exchange Membrane) Fuel Cell (PEMFC)

Hydrogen is the simplest and most abundant element in the universe. Hydrogen can be produced from a wide variety of domestic resources using a number of different technologies. Fuel cells harness the chemical energy of hydrogen to generate electricity without combustion or pollution.

Some of the comments above might seem slightly flippant but to put the problem into perspective, in the absence of fossil fuels the world requires a complete solution to all of its power production needs, and this will come in many different forms from many different environments and utilising many different technologies.

The fuel cell potentially offers the most convenient and practical long-term solution of them all and this document aims to expound the rapidly emerging technology.

What do we mean by power?

Before we begin our journey let us take a quick look at the power itself. Generally speaking the power referred to is the electricity that we have come to rely upon in our modern lives. Can you imagine what would happen if that supply was suddenly removed or if for some reason the lights were turned out? For most people it would be unimaginable and would certainly plunge the world into absolute chaos.

The majority of fossil fuel combustion is performed in order to produce electricity for use in homes and businesses, for lighting our streets and keeping our clocks on time! But why then, do we rely upon the internal combustion engine for the generation of power to run automotive vehicles?

And why do we require huge generators based upon the same combustion principal for back up power or for portable applications?

There has been much interest in electrical vehicles over the decades, the Sinclair project for example, yet the most common use of the electric vehicle is *still* the ordinary milk float! One might scoff at the power of the ordinary milk float and not even consider the thought of seeing one on the motorway, but give it a big enough battery and these machines have been clocked at over 70mph - and to its extreme, electric vehicles have been raced across the Arizona desert at speeds in excess of a whopping 250mph!!!

The acceleration is quicker than that provided by an internal combustion engine, they are much quieter and far less polluting to the environment - so why oh why, I hear you cry, are there not more electrical powered vehicles on the road???

Well, the answer is the battery itself!

For example, the size of a battery required to provide the same amount of power as would a tank of fuel in an engine driven car, would be unfeasibly large, not to mention the amount of time taken to recharge such an enormous unit!

The global issue is with storage of electricity and this problem is reverberated across the board of power production/ consumption markets. This is why the national grid experiences so many problems

with the uncertainty of consumer supply and demand (though it has to be said that the predictive methods employed are seen to be increasingly superior) and why large factory sites in case of loss of power require huge generators. Uninterrupted power supply is big business and worth much capital, for example, consider the case of a company who run a large number of Fuel Cell test stands. When these test stands go down as a result of interrupted power supply they require restarting and reconditioning, which can be resource intensive and time-consuming. Time is money and the race is on, so the price of back-up power is high.

History of Fuel Cells

So let us begin our journey, but not in the present day - let us go back over 160 years to 1839 when a lawyer called William Grove considered whether the principals of electrolysis would be true in reverse. He observed that electrolysis took water, two electrodes and a current and produced hydrogen and oxygen. So, was it theoretically possible to produce a current from the combination of hydrogen and oxygen? Groves's initial experiments used platinum catalyst and showed that his theory was true! The first 'gas battery' had been invented!

Note: A minute quantity of catalyst material such as platinum is required to promote the chemical reaction that splits hydrogen into electrons and protons, as described later in the text.

So, again I hear you ask, 'why has this technology not been further exploited after all this time?'. Well, there are probably many answers for this but undoubtedly the main reasons are firstly the human logic that says 'if something is not broken then why fix it?' - in so much as there have not been good enough reasons to make huge capital investments to develop a power producing technology when we already have the superstructure in place to utilise the existing technology, and the second reason being exactly the massive global capital outlay required to develop the technology to the point of an affordable Fuel Cell solutions for everyone. But the time is nigh!

Back in the 50's NASA conducted much research into fuel cells. They were then employed for manned space flight (e.g., the Gemini, Apollo, and Space Shuttle missions) where a lightweight and very high

efficiency power plant (to reduce the amount of fuel and oxidant required) is critical and cost is not an overriding factor.

How does it work?

So! How does it work? Well, the principal of a Hydrogen Fuel Cell is actually quite simple. This simplicity is aided by the fact that hydrogen is *the* most basic of elements containing just one proton and one electron. As mentioned previously, when hydrogen atoms come into contact with a catalyst material, such as platinum, they split into protons and electrons.

The trick is to provide a barrier material that blocks electrons, allowing them to form an external electrical circuit, but at the same time conducting protons, so that on the other side of the 'cell' they can reunite with the electrons and oxygen (from the air) to form nothing more than water. No other bi-products form as a result of the chemical reactions and no polluting emissions are seen.

Fuel Cells have three main areas of potential. That of **stationary and back-up** power, supplying energy to anything from a small house to a large factory, **portable** power, for example mobile phones, video cameras or lap-tops, and **automotive** applications. This text will concentrate predominantly on the automotive aspect of Fuel Cell potential, but please excuse me if I stray from the wayside at any point!

Many of the Key Benefits of the Fuel Cell are as follows:

- Customer Benefits
 - o Efficiency, reliability of supply, quiet
- Social Benefits
 - o Air quality
 - o National security and the need to reduce fuel imports
 - o Global climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
 - o Global population and economic growth and the need for new clean energy supplies at affordable prices (hydrogen is potentially available in virtually unlimited quantities)

- Manufacturer Benefits
 - o Novel products in an increasingly competitive and more legislative environment
 - o Customer retention & acquisition

Another benefit is the space required to house the Fuel Cell. It is inherently much smaller than the combustion engine, has no moving parts, and is therefore considerably lower maintenance. It is even considered that in the future the cars body shell itself could form the Fuel Cell, thus maximising the room in the car for your kids and your shopping!

So, what does the future hold?

Well, as mentioned previously, to some degree it is already happening. Having lagged since invention in 1839 we have seen a boom in activity since the late 80's and early 90s with all the major players from automotive giants to the oil companies themselves, leaping dramatically onto the fuel cell bandwagon.

For example, recently the South Korean government invested a massive 500 million US dollars into research and commercialisation of fuel cells. California have launched the 'hydrogen freeway' project where they demand that all commercial vehicles (taxis, buses, coaches) will be powered by Fuel Cells within the next ten years, or so. London recently invested in two Fuel Cell buses - however, the current reality is that although it sounds impressive, these buses cost over one million pounds sterling each! So, it's early days yet but companies' main commitments are to bring down the price of the MEA and Fuel Cell to a consumer affordable unit by the earliest 2015.

One of the first steps towards long-term commercialisation of Fuel Cells in the automotive sector is the 'Hybrid' car. This car is already on the market, for example the Toyota 'Prius', as reviewed recently on TVs '5th Gear', and runs on a combination of fossil fuel (usually natural gas) and electricity. The electricity is stored in a secondary battery that is charged from the motion of the engine and the otherwise unrecoverable losses, for example during breaking. An intelligent engine management system distributes the power relative to the

demand of the driver and the computer switches gracefully between electric supply when travelling in towns or traffic, to conventional engine supply when accelerating, driving at speed or when the secondary battery requires charging.

The principal of the hybrid vehicle is relatively well understood and seen as the natural progression toward the Fuel Cell Hybrid Vehicle and eventually full-scale commercialisation of the Fuel Cell vehicle.

What to expect next

PROTOTYPES • BUSES, URBAN DELIVERY VEHICLES • TAXIS, REGIONAL DELIVERY VEHICLES • COMPANY CAR FLEETS, COMMUTER VEHICLES • PRIVATE CARS

Although a precise date can not be associated with the widespread commercialisation of the Fuel Cell car, at a cost that everyone can afford, it is thought that delivery of this promise should be within the next ten to twenty years. Already we have seen prototypes and hybrid cars, busses, taxis and delivery vehicles, and widespread projects are in place to develop the hydrogen-fuelling infrastructure.

Just as an example of the activity over the last few days, on November the 10th 2004 Shell Hydrogen opened the first hydrogen outlet at a retail petrol station in Washington DC, to service fuel cell vehicles from General Motors. On the same day American Honda Motor Co., Inc., announced the delivery of a Honda FCX, the world's most advanced hydrogen-powered fuel cell vehicle, to the city of Chula Vista. Just two days later in Berlin, the world's largest station for fuelling car-driven hydrogen was opened (details taken from 'Fuel Cell Today' - please visit www.fuelcelltoday.com for more information).

All of the major automotive manufacturers have been researching fuel cells for many years now and the above example (Honda) is just one of many from the last year or so.

Watch this space!!!

Jonathan Tuck

HOW THE IAM STARTED - A BRIEF HISTORY

Next year, 2006, the IAM celebrates its 50th year. Have you ever wondered how it started?

I was asked recently to give a talk to a Business Group about the IAM, and expected someone to ask just that question. In my research, I contacted Sandra Worsfold at IAM House for some information. She kindly sent to me some copies of items published at that time, which I have condensed to the following. My thanks go to Sandra for her response.

We need to go back to 1934, when the “L” test started. In the same year, the Home Office set up approved driving schools, the most famous of which is at Hendon, in London, where the Metropolitan Police are trained.

In 1954, Mr Denis O’Neill, a senior civil servant at the Ministry of Transport, was studying a set of figures compiled by the Home Office relating to accidents in the Metropolitan Police Force. These figures disclosed a remarkable decline in police car accidents over a 20-year period following the setting up of these driving schools.

The Advanced driving techniques taught in these schools are in turn attributed to the members of a committee set up by the late Lord Trenchard, to investigate accident rates among Police Drivers. The committee included such famous drivers as Sir Malcolm Campbell and the Earl of Cottenham. By 1939, after only 5 years, accidents in the Metropolitan Police Force had declined from one in 9,000 miles, to one in 25,000 miles. By 1954, 20 years later, when Mr O’Neill was looking at them, it had fallen still further to one in every 72,500 miles, despite the large increase in vehicle density.

From these figures, it was beginning to appear that there was a very definite relationship between driving proficiency and subsequent accident rates. It was also about this time that the first edition of a book called “Roadcraft” was first published. Later editions are still used today as a basis of our training to be an Advanced Driver.

The then Minister of Transport, John Boyd-Carpenter MP, was due to be the principle guest at a dinner, which took place at the Savoy Hotel on 2nd November 1954. It was the first evening of the National Road Safety Congress of that year. In the chair was Sir Charles Bartlett, the President of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA).

The occasion was used to float the idea that there might be a kind of Honours Degree for motorists, a standard, which the elementary driver should aim to achieve, and which should be attained by experienced motorists.

One might have thought that the Royal Society itself, the hosts on this occasion, would have seized upon this idea, but it seems to have been ignored. However, one guest present at the dinner was Stanley C H Roberts, always known as “C H”, and best known perhaps as the founder of the British School of Motoring. Oddly enough, C H was considering at that time, the formation of a “BSM Club” to keep together the ever increasing number of successful L-Drivers, then approaching 1 million, in some form of membership association.

In the minutes of a BSM directors’ meeting held in November 1954, it was reported that: “It was intended to form a BSM club, but in view of the detailed discussions required, it was agreed that a separate meeting should be convened to consider this”.

C H saw the much wider possibilities of combining his idea with the Minister’s suggestion, and early in 1955 he had private talks with Mr Boyd-Carpenter, and Mr Lennox Boyd of the Ministry of Transport. A memorandum was prepared on 5th May 1955, referring to an “Institute of Motorists”. It set out a method of improving the standard of driving, and the promotion of road safety in the United Kingdom.

Throughout 1955 a number of meetings took place, the most notable being on July 16th when Miss Denise McCann, a fellow director of the BSM, spoke on behalf of C H, who had just had a stroke, and she outlined the object of the meeting.

The Ministry expressed interest, but said that it was in no position to act. RoSPA, through Sir Howard Roberts, announced that the principal of an advanced driving certificate was accepted, and after several other speakers had given their views, Miss McCann suggested that the matter should be left with Sir Howard Roberts, to be carried forward by RoSPA. Copies of the memorandum were sent to Major General B K Young, the Director General of RoSPA, who wrote to C H in August 1955 saying that “The project to found an Institute of Motorists does not find very great favour”.

C H and his colleagues, who may well have feared that their idea would founder, pressed ahead with the groundwork, and a steering committee was set up which met on 14th September 1955 when a draft Memorandum and Articles of Association were considered. Further meetings took place, and other notable people joined their ranks during the winter of 1955/1956, and eventually the Institute was registered on 10th March 1956, as a company limited by guarantee and having no share capital.

Thus the Institute was born. It must be emphasised that while these directors of the BSM, and other company directors who had joined the steering committee, played such a major role in its early days, the Institute has never had any kind of business connection with them. From the very beginning the Institute itself has been entirely independent, and run along business-like, but strictly non-profit lines. Any surplus funds are ploughed back into the quest for road safety.

The official publicised launch of the IAM came in June 1956, and the first test was carried out on 25th June 1956 by George Eyles, the Chief Examiner, who tested and passed Miss Sheila Van Damm, a leading rally driver of the day. In the autumn of that year, some 400 applications per week were being carried out by Examiners, located in 12 principal towns and cities in the UK. All Examiners had to hold a Class One police certificate.

Since that date, the activities of the IAM have grown. In 1962 the first Commercial Vehicle Tests were carried out. 1976 saw the start of Motorcycle Tests. The 250,000th member was enrolled in 1994, followed by the 1st Mini-bus Test in 1995. 1998 saw the 200th local group formed, and in 2002, the IAM opened an office in Ireland.

In 1986 the IAM started a separate company called “IAM Fleet Training Ltd”. This was in answer to the demand for Companies and Organisations to take more responsibility for the actions of their drivers. IAM Fleet Training Ltd, are nationally accredited to ISO 9001 standards. They have a team of driving instructors with top qualifications, the majority being ex Police Class 1 instructors, all holding ADI certificates, who will look at the needs of a Company, and customise a course to suit the company requirements.

Statistics have shown that up to a 40% reduction in company car collisions have been reported following IAM Training. It has to be stressed that they do not take the full IAM Test at this stage, just “Driver Improvement”, though many of those trained do go on to take the IAM’s Advanced Driving Test. The improvements include :- fewer accidents, less time off the road (damaged vehicles and damaged drivers), lower insurance costs, lower repair costs, lower maintenance, replacement and depreciation costs, lower fuel costs, a more positive driver attitude, both on and off the road, more responsibility towards your company assets, an increased awareness of the importance of road safety and driver training, and a reduced number of convictions for driving offences.

Among the many IAM customers are national names such as, BBC, BP Castrol, BOC, TNT, Ernst & Young, Sothebys, and one organisation who have to take safety very seriously, the Health and Safety Executive.

Moving on from Fleet Training, I mentioned earlier that in 1998 the 200th local Group was formed, which I believe is now about 210 throughout the country. The Swindon Group was formed in 1970. Mr Ken Turner, who at that time was a serving Police Officer, and Road Safety Officer in the Swindon area, was asked to form a Group. Following a number of meetings, the Group was formed, and is still running today with Ken continuing as a member.

Just think, if RoSPA had accepted the challenge fifty years ago, we could all have been RoSPA Members instead of IAM Members.

The IAM, Region, and the Group, are all looking at ways that we could celebrate the fifty years anniversary. If you have any ideas and suggestions, then please let your committee know so that we have time to organise it.

Derek Shel Drake

Thanks to Derek for the article. As Derek says the IAM celebrates it's 50th anniversary next year in 2006. And as described in Jonathan's article about fuel cells another 50 years will inevitably see the motoring environment change dramatically in terms of technology.

A striking and inspiring thought is that anyone passing their test now, at age 17-19 years of age, and then going on to pass the IAM test shortly afterwards could easily be a member at the IAM centenary in 2056 and still not have had to renew their driving licence under current rules. They will surely have a story to tell in the group newsletters of that year! Their next milestone will then be the Swindon Group centenary in 2070.

The political dimension is likely to become a very significant factor too. The next article invites you to consider the effect European integration is likely to have on the regulatory and advanced driving environment. When that centenary comes will we instead be founder members of the Euro-IAM?

This group likes to encourage it's members to think about the future and we would be very interested to hear your views on the issues raised by these articles and publish them in the newsletter. Please send them to the Newsletter editor. Contact details are on Page 2.

TOWARDS AN EU-WIDE DRIVING LICENCE?

UK Transport Ministers working with their counterparts from other EU member states recently agreed a common format for a new driving licence - equipped with photo and (potentially) a microchip. The new format is expected to easily recognised and understood across the EU. Although commonly described by the media as an “EU Driving Licence” a closer examination of the proposals as they stand reveal that in fact member states retain a wide scope for derogation within the new format in line with national practices and customs.

The transport ministers agreed on plans to phase in new credit card sized licences - replacing over 110 different styles of driving licence currently in use across the Union. This number increased markedly following EU enlargement to 25 countries last year.

The proposed co-operation is intended to improve the free movement of the 200 million licence holders across Europe, combat fraud and contribute to the EU’s mission to make Europe’s roads safer.

Once the new agreement comes into force, EU countries will have ten years to start issuing all new driving licences on a harmonised model. The licences will be valid 10 years for cars and motorcycles and 5 years for trucks and buses. Current photocard licences for car drivers are already subject to renewal every 10 years. MEPs refused the Commission’s plan to make drivers over 65 renew their licence every 5 years and additionally decided to respect the principle of “subsidiarity” within the proposals so that member states can decide for themselves on the rules concerning expiry dates for licences related to age (currently 70 years of age in the UK) and on rules concerning the notification of medical conditions. When the proposals were first mooted, for example, the Commission had called for every driver over 45 to be subject to a compulsory medical examination. This matter has been left to individual member states to decide (subject to the confirmation of the the European Parliament).

Paper licences which are easy to forge and often decades old will be no longer issued, and will be gradually be replaced by plastic cards equipped with a recent photo of the bearer and a smart chip carrying his or her driving information. It is hoped that a new Europe-wide

database associated with the new licensing regime will eliminate the problem of drivers disqualified in one country being able to obtain a new licence in another one.

Old licences will be exchanged for the new ones as and when they expire to avoid the administrative nightmare of replacing millions of driving licences all at once. It is anticipated, however, that all licences should be replaced with the new model within 20 years.

Drivers already in possession of a licence can keep their existing documents for the time being, and will not have to retake their tests.

A potentially controversial aspect of the new system is that member states will also have the option of incorporating additional information about the driver into a microchip built into the licence.

Ministers also agreed to introduce driving licences for moped drivers across the EU and gave the go ahead to minimum qualifications and training for driving test examiners.

The proposals will now be scrutinised by **your** MEPs. The first reading in the European Parliament is scheduled to take place this month.

It is strongly suggested that members keep a close eye on the progress of this proposal - and be ready to ask appropriate questions should the need arise. This is fast becoming a “hot” issue. Transport is defined as a “shared competence” under the terms of the new EU Constitution should this be ratified. If so, the Commission will only be able to initiate proposals in this area where a pan-EU approach is clearly necessary and will from the outset have to take into account the views of member states including those of the UK.

Readers may be aware that the Republic of Ireland has recently changed its system of speed enforcement and road distance signage to the metric system in the interests of “harmonisation with Europe”. The UK Department of Transport has suggested that there are no plans to follow suit here “for the foreseeable future”. The UK is now the only member state within the European Union to use the Imperial system of measurement for road distances and signage. In a few years any movement in this area could provide a clear indication of the direction in which the new European regime is taking us.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The following event is scheduled to take place at the Blunsdon House Hotel (commencing 19:30):

2nd March 2005

British Horse Society (Julie Garbut with a Road Safety Officer)

Peter Thomson is organising a trip to **Thatcham**, the world-leading automotive research and technology centre that provides the automotive and motor insurance industries with valuable commercial information through research and development, consultancy, training and publishing services.

The visit will take place on either 30th March or 7th April. Further details nearer the time on our website (www.swindondrivers.com) for details or from Peter (contact number obtainable via 07050 682842).

Looking further ahead, our April meeting will take place on **Wednesday 6th April**. The next edition of this newsletter will be distributed at our meeting on **Wednesday 4th May** (possibly the day before the General Election). Please send in any contributions in good time!